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## Goodbye Andrew Chamblin

Clifford at 3:01 pm, February 8th, 2006

I'm still shocked and upset as I type this. My friend and collaborator Andrew Chamblin died on Monday. I've no details to pass on about the circumstances, but I have learned that he was ill in recent times.

Andrew was simply one of the most delightful people I've met while working in this field. His enthusiasm and generosity were extraordinary, and this extended beyond physics into all aspects of his life. He brought so much into a room full of people when he walked into it. People would always brighten when he would show up. He had so many wonderful stories and anecdotes, and was full of really original ideas. As I sit here remembering the times we spent together socially, or in a working context (the two were always nicely mixed together actually) I can't picture anything but a broad smile on his face, and he always put some of that smile on the faces of those he came into contact with.

His training began in mathematics, for which he had considerable skill, and he started his graduate work with Roger Penrose at Oxford (he knew a huge amount about twistors and the geometry associated to those constructions), before moving to Cambridge to work with Gary Gibbons and Stephen Hawking, which brought out a lot of his physics talent. So working with him was a delight, since his different background –and his knack for living life on full beam–made things so interesting and enjoyable. He was really sharp, and brought a new perspective to every physics conversation we had, due in part to his “non–traditional” background: Our collaborations with Roberto Emparan and Rob Myers (who also have unusual trajectories into string theory) were among the richest and most enjoyable – both for physics and socially – I've ever had. The highlight was when Rob, Roberto and Andrew showed up to visit me when I was at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, and we just had a blast for few days and turned out a wonderful [detailed paper](#) in an incredibly short time. It is still one of my all time favourite papers (on which I've been an author, I mean), not just because of the excellent physics, but because of the tremendous fun we had calculating together and writing it.



I'll miss Andrew so much. The sad thing is that I'd been missing him already, (I had not seen him since he moved to a faculty position in Louisville, Kentucky) and just this weekend while I was on a hike, I was wondering how he was doing.

Oh, hiking! Andrew *loved* the

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outdoors, and was very keen on keeping physically fit. The last time I spent a good amount of time with him was at a physics workshop in Aspen in the Summer of 2002, and my most vivid memory of him that time was rather typical Andrew: spontaneous, and living life to the full. Let me tell you the story:

Four of us (Malcolm Perry, Anna Zytkow, Samantha Butler, and

myself) set off very early one morning (September 2nd) to hike up to Cathedral Lake and the Electric Pass beyond. Samantha and I were not going up to Electric, and so lingered at the old Ashcroft ghost town for a while, the others setting off up the mountain earlier, the idea being that we would meet up at Cathedral Lake (2/3 way up) when they were on their way down. We were having lunch on the shores of Cathedral Lake after a long slow toil up the mountain to get to it, (we were a bit worse for wear after a late night dinner with lots of wine with Malcolm and Anna), shod in heavy boots and with extra gear in our backpacks in case it rained, lots of water, food, etc.

After a while, we heard the sounds of someone approaching and thought that it was the rest of our party. We turned around and there was Andrew in sneakers, a sweatshirt and sports shorts, carrying a little water bottle! (See the photo that Samantha took.) He said that he'd heard that we were up at the lake, went out for a run, and "just thought he'd pop up and say 'Hi' "!" So he ran all the way up, sat with us for a while and no doubt told us one or two of his always wonderful stories, and then ran all the way down. That, in a nutshell, was one of the many wonderful aspects of Andrew.

The field has lost a really great guy, and a true original, who definitely walked a different path. He was just so warm and generous. I'm going to miss him terribly.

Goodbye Andrew, dear friend and colleague. Thanks so much for everything.

-cvj

P.S. The funeral is at 11:00am this Friday in Amarillo. If interested in attending let me know by email and I can try to put you in contact with people who know the detailed arrangements.

Update (1): See comment stream (#7) for more information about the arrangements.

Update (2): An obituary appeared in the [Amarillo Globe-News](#) on Thursday.

Update (3): See comment #25 for information about the arrangements for the memorial service in Cambridge.

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1. **Samantha** on Feb 8th, 2006 at 3:34 pm

Here are a few things that I would have liked to have had the chance to thank Andrew for:

[Manly, Sciencey Manliness](#)  
[The Return of Bérubé](#)  
[Mapping Skid Row's Homeless](#)  
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1. For introducing me to the Peachy Canyon winery.
2. For driving a pink Cadillac (OK maybe it was a Thunderbird) but it was old, it was large, it was American and it was pink.
3. For being the sort of person, that when you, a non-physicist, enter a room full of physicists but then see Andrew, you think, great, it's going to be a fun party after all.
4. For dinner at high table at Pembroke College, Cambridge (that was a fun party – yes really).
5. For wanting to take me on a 2 day hike in the Rockies that I was patently not fit enough to do, but that I nonetheless really looked forward to doing one day.
6. For being the sort of person that when you meet another person who knows Andrew, you immediately have something in common.
7. For all the stories and all the conversations.



I hope that there will be something (a travel grant to Aspen?) set up in Andrew's memory.

2. **Mark** on Feb 8th, 2006 at 4:12 pm

This is truly sad and upsetting news. I did not know Andrew terribly well, but he was a great guy and will be missed by family, friends, colleagues and by physics.

I got to know Andrew when we shared an office together when I was on leave at the KITP in Santa Barbara in the Fall of 2003.

Andrew and I went out for drinks a few times and since we were two of the rare physicists who play golf, we played a few rounds together. My best memory of this was when we dragged our friend and colleague Don Marolf out for 9 holes. Don has no interest in golf, but I think he came for the fun of hanging out with Andrew, including the stories he was bound to tell over a few beers afterwards.

As well as being a talented physicist, as Clifford has described, Andrew was great fun and his laughter and energy were infectious.

Goodbye Andrew.

3. **Sean** on Feb 8th, 2006 at 5:07 pm

Andrew was a great scientist and a valued friend. He was a unique combination of influences, from earthy Texas charm to Oxford-inflected mathematical rigor. Always fun to hang out with and talk about theoretical physics or the state of the world.

I'll miss him a lot.

4. **Roberto** on Feb 8th, 2006 at 9:03 pm

Hi Clifford,

I'm still too struck to really have assimilated the news. These days I'm at the KITP where almost exactly ten years ago Andrew and I first met, both of us beginning our first postdoc stints. We quickly hit it off —with him it was easy— and began working together.

I owe him a lot, he's been one of the biggest influences in my career. He was unique in so many ways. Not too many people I know can play Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, translate straight from Latin, embark on a several-day trip from Santa Barbara to Amarillo on a 1964 pink T-bird that leaked oil and gas from all pores, and convince you to study the physics of two-timing monopoles in Kleinian manifolds, and all this without ever losing the smile in his face — for my wife he always was "tu sonriente colaborador".

Recently we were a bit out of touch, but one of the nicest things about the academia is that you never really lose track of your friends in the field, you're always going to see them again in some conference. Or so you think. Last time Andrew and I exchanged emails, over a year ago, we made a point that he should come to visit us

in Barcelona. I'm deeply saddened to know that's not going to happen.

I like a lot the picture you posted, it's the way I remember, and want to remember, him.

Adios Andrew, te vamos a echar de menos.

Roberto

5. **Harvey** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 8:30 am

I am shocked and saddened by Andrew's untimely death. It's a while since I last spoke to Andrew but, as Roberto said, in academia one always expects to run into one's friends in the not-too-distant future. It is awful to know that this will not happen now.

I first met Andrew in Cambridge when I was a first year graduate student and he a postdoc. Looking back on that time, what strikes me most is how Andrew seemed to dominate the relativity group in DAMTP with his infectious enthusiasm for everything from physics to politics. He was always full of ideas and very generous in sharing them, even with a humble graduate student. This led to a very successful collaboration: we wrote five papers together. In each case, the initial idea for the paper originated with Andrew. I think that Andrew had just as much influence on my career as Stephen Hawking, my supervisor.

As others have said, Andrew was an extremely sociable person. He knew a lot of people. He introduced me to lots of physicists who otherwise would never have heard of me (including Roberto and Clifford). This was obviously a great advantage when it came to applying for jobs.

On a personal level, Andrew was an excellent friend. I have so many fond memories of time spent with him, from high table at Pembroke College to the "Big Texan" steakhouse, driving the T-bird (white by this time, but still leaking gas and oil) from Amarillo to Santa Fe, staying at his house near Los Alamos, his ridiculously skimpy running shorts (see picture above), visiting the UFO museum in Roswell, running on the beach in Santa Barbara, and, above all, his humorous reflections on life, the universe, and everything.

Harvey

6. **Tom** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 10:04 am

I can't believe that Andrew is dead. I had just assumed I would see him again next time he was in Cambridge for a conference (or just a visit).

A few I will never forget about Andrew:

1 The night he took me to high table in Pembroke. (Not that I ever fully remembered it.)

2 The sight of him in his Daisy Duke shorts.

3 The night he and Stuart both ended up in Casualty.

4 His smile (see <http://www.physics.louisville.edu/public/faculty/achamblin/>)

5 Cadillac ranch (see <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/attract/TXAMAcadillac.html>)

6 Duke Nukem and Doom. (Did I get fragged again?)

7 Evenings in the Mill then back to his room in Pembroke.

8 His stories.

I will miss him a lot.

7. **Al** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 10:15 am

Here is some information about Andrew's funeral and memorial service that his department chair, Dave Brown, sent out this morning. Details about where to send cards, flowers, and gifts in memory is also included. Dave Brown may be overwhelmed by requests for information, so I'll be happy to serve as a local

contact.

- Al (shapere at pa.uky.edu)

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From: David N Brown

Hello,

A number of people have been asking for information. This is my attempt to answer as many questions as I can in one note. Please forgive its length and delay.

1. Writing a letter/sending a card to Andrew's family. Their address is:

Ed and Caroline Chamblin 7211 Versailles Amarillo, TX 79121 USA

2. Flowers may be sent to Andrew's parents at the address above, or to the Schooler Funeral Home, 4100 South Georgia, Amarillo, TX 79110-1124 USA

3. Gifts in lieu of flowers: If you would like to make a lasting tribute, the family suggests a gift in Andrew's name to the Physics Division at West Texas A&M University. I do not have a specific contact name there, but checks could be sent to their Development office:

WTAMU Foundation WTAMU Box 60766 Canyon, TX 79016-001 USA

4. Funeral will be held at Schooler Funeral Home in Amarillo, Texas, on Friday, February 10, at 11:00 a.m.

5. Memorial Service

at the University of Louisville will be held on Wednesday, March 22, 4:00 pm at the University Club, Ballroom B. A reception will follow.

If you would like to send a memorial note or eulogy for viewing, please send it to me:

David Brown Department of Physics & Astronomy NS 102 University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292

6. Lasting Memorial We intend to establish an endowed lectureship, the H. Andrew Chamblin Lecture in Cosmology, at the University of Louisville. More details will be available at a later time.

The family and this department appreciate your kind words and thoughts.

When I return from the funeral this weekend, I will create a web page with more information for those who would like to participate in our memorial service. I will place it at the web address <http://www.physics.louisville.edu/Andrew/>.

If I can be of more assistance, please let me know.

With Best Regards,

Dave Brown

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8. **Eric** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 11:02 am

Thank you Clifford for such a nice message about Andrew. Like Roberto, I can't believe that I won't be seeing him soon at some conference. I'd been meaning to get in touch

with him, to see how things were. I feel so sorry I won't get the chance anymore.

I will always remember Andrew in three places. First, in Santa Barbara, where he always dreamed of returning, drinking fine California wines and driving that convertible. I remember how he used to push us to think outside the box. While black holes were the craze, he wanted us to think about Anti-deSitter spaces and deSitter spaces.

Where I remember Andrew the clearest is in Cambridge, in that amazing suite in Pembroke. He took so much pleasure in the history of the place, in being the exentric Texan in a place full of excentrics. Eating at high table, punting up the Cam, long night discussions over Stilton and port, "Cadillac Ranch" of course. Andrew was such a generous spirit. I remember how proud he was of Harvey, making sure to let everyone know what a strong talent was entering the field. Visiting DAMPT is not the same without Andrew.

Finally, I remember hiking with Andrew, especially in the high peaks by Aspen. Who can forget those daisy-dukes, that infectuous smiles, those crazy night-owl hours? He had an uncommon vitality that will be sorely missed!

Goodbye Andrew, and thank you for being such a great friend and colleague.

- EG

9. **Raphael (bousso - at - lbl.gov)** on [Feb 9th, 2006 at 3:09 pm](#)

Thank you all, especially Clifford, for sharing your memories of Andrew. I think it's only just starting to really hit me.

Andrew was one of the first people I met in Cambridge as a clueless beginning graduate student. He was incredibly welcoming, warm, and open, and helped me find my orientation (whenever he wasn't helping me lose it by being so much fun to party with).

Andrew knew the most wonderful runs near Cambridge (he'd wait patiently while I schlepped my tired limbs back into the college, then announce, beaming, that there's still plenty of time for a good long gym session). Not to mention the best runs in Santa Barbara. (At the bird refuge, he introduced me with some amusement to the "least sandpiper".) Andrew understood the importance of listening to the Grateful Dead while driving around the American Southwest. And how to nucleate membranes. There may be others who can converse about the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, or about the Goldberg variations, but few can do it in the same sentence.

Andrew was a rare combination: intellectually sparkling, personally warm, and simply a joy to be with. Thanks for making our lives richer.

10. **Jerome** on [Feb 9th, 2006 at 4:09 pm](#)

I was totally shocked and very sad to hear of Andrew's tragic and untimely death. It's hard to grasp the reality that I won't be bumping into my Texan friend and colleague somewhere soon.

I first met Andrew when he was in Cambridge. He was such a friendly and vivacious person, so bright and enthusiastic! In physics he was always catalysing thought provoking discussions and he had interesting things to say on almost any topic.

Later when I was at Caltech, he was just down the road in Santa Barbara, invigorating the whole institute. When I came back to the UK in 1996, he bought my 1963 white Thunderbird: during my stint I had patched up a few things on the old beast, but in Andrew's energetic hands, with the help of some cousins in Texas, he took the restoration to a higher level (well, it was certainly leaking a lot less oil than when I had it!).

I also remember around this time that he was into Doom in a big way: "A little Doom anyone?" moving his fingers as if along a keyboard. At the time I thought I was perhaps an OK player, but he very quickly demonstrated what a Grandmaster can do.

Without exception every time I was with Andrew he was fantastic company. I will always remember your smiling face Andrew. So long.

11. **Jennifer** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 4:17 pm

I found out today that Andy had died and simply cannot grasp that such a wonderful man has gone. (A man! He was a barely more than boy when I saw him last.)

I knew Andy in high school. He was an extremely talented piano player. He seemed to know all of the Bach cantatas from memory. He was great fun in Latin class. And his lasting fame; Andy will be remembered as the kid who took the SATs twice because he got one-and only one-answer incorrect on the math portion the first time he took it.

Here's my Andy story. The last time I saw him was in 1988. We were 19 years old. It was the summer after our freshman years in college and many of us were spending our summers in back Amarillo with our parents. Andy was his usual self-fascinated by what the world had to offer and full of humor and good fun. I once scolded him for routinely running red lights. (He drove like a crazy drunk when he was a teenager.) He proceeded to give me a lecture to the effect of: red lights were "mere ideas" that only required attention when there was a a) police officer or b) another car in the vicinity; upon the arrival of either a) or b), the "mere idea" became a "reality" that required attention.

His professional success is, naturally, no surprise. Even among those in the gifted and talented programs at Amarillo High, Andy's intellect burned the brightest. I am shocked and saddened that I'll never see him again. He is going to be deeply missed.

-Jennifer Walsh

12. **Stuart** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 8:59 pm

I must admit that I wasn't at my most intellectually competent when I read the email containing this devastating news, early on Wednesday morning UK time, the previous evening having been somewhat misspent. I remember reading the message several times, trying to grasp completely what it meant, and feeling that I wasn't quite managing to do so.

Almost two days later now and I suppose I'm still trying to grasp it properly. The routine of work has ground on. There was a moment yesterday when I caught Gary's eye in the central core (which is what we call the place where they used to serve food in the new DAMTP) at which point I (suddenly and unexpectedly) felt a perilous wobble, in the midst of seminar escapees and undergraduates. I was (not for the first time) rather grateful for the large computer room few know how to find.

I have a clear memory of the first time I noticed Andrew Chamblin, which occurred while I was trying to write up my thesis sometime in the early 90s, deep in the bowels of the old DAMTP building, in the public computer room known reassuringly (and officially) as "The Dungeon". Concentrating as I was on LaTeXing some equation with a ludicrous plethora of indices, I was less than thrilled when the roar of the air conditioning was interrupted by the ebullient arrival of something that was clearly American in nature (minus cowboy hat) in company with something equally charismatic (but redder and more female). This striking phenomenon I later came to know as "Andrew and Jo" although at the time I suspect I quietly cursed the wild extroversion of Relativity Group students (I was at that point a member of the "other" group). A little later there was some awed conversation around the HEP coffee pot (which was a talismanic focus around which most students of my era orbited with grim determination) concerning rumours of amazing food appearing at Relativity Lunchtime Seminars, which was attributed to Andrew and Jo. At the time (there being ghastly things happening in my own life) it didn't really occur to me to seek out the truth of these rumours.

If I had, I may have been on speaking terms with Andrew well before 1995, which is when I myself entered the Relativity Group as an all-singing, all-dancing computer officer and administrator. Which is where I still am, of course, in the capacity in which I met most of the contributors to this blog. Others have already mentioned Andrew's

relentless good humour, his wit, intelligence, knowledge, disturbing dress sense, sense of fun and excellent company. In DAMTP, these qualities stood out a mile (apart from the disturbing dress sense. Sack me, I dare you). The next few years were a great period in my personal Cambridge existence, and with that Andrew Chamblin had a great deal to do. He was even thoughtful enough, when a couple of underachievers took offence at the integrity of my jaw one evening, to schedule a trip to casualty of his own at the same time, and kept me relatively cheerful during the (long) wait to be seen and not dwelling overmuch on the implications of not being able to locate my bottom teeth. And then of course there were the many and highly ill-advised late night sessions of Doom. Well, what else is a network for (downloading preprints? Rubbish).

Andrew eventually (as we all do) underwent the viva experience. As I recall it was extremely short, because various renowned beings were late, and it quickly boiled down to something like "cut out chapter N". (I've wondered since what was in chapter N.) Most of it I think was taken up with Andrew arguing about this mutilation. Anyway, out N went and then we all trundled next door to the Mill, where the landlord was famed for disliking customers generally but who for some reason liked us.

The time came of course, when Andrew left Cambridge. But since most people who leave Cambridge seem to remain attached to it by a long piece of elastic, I was confident he would be back. And he was, a few times.

Email and the internet generally are marvellous technological devices for reducing length scales, as we all know, so geographical distance seems less important in this glittering chromium-plated age. But perhaps that's a complacent view – I'll always regret not getting around to visiting the US despite the standing invitation.

The last time I spoke to Andrew was last August. He rang me at home one weekend to ask me to help him out with an application, which I happily did, although I was disturbed by the implications of our conversation. I had no doubt that I would hear from him again.

I can't speak as to the loss to Physics, but this is a great loss to me.

Stuart

13. **damp\_dweller** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 10:18 pm

I can't comment on Andrew as a person as I never had the pleasure of meeting him, but the mood at DAMTP has become very noticeably more sombre over the past day or so. My condolences to his family and friends.

On a somewhat related topic, I've always found [this](#) to be a wonderful photograph. I can't explain why, I just do.

14. **Michael** on Feb 9th, 2006 at 10:29 pm

This is awful! May he rest in peace. My thoughts are with his loved ones.

15. **david** on Feb 10th, 2006 at 3:56 am

Some memories: Sitting in boston bars with andrew, mulling over women and the world. Watching the stars at his brothers shack in the hills. And the wonderful roadtrip to meet the aliens in roswell. We almost ran out of gas in the desert on the way back home, driving 40 nervewracking miles on empty. Andrew, behind the wheel, helped by explaining exactly what the truckers would do to the two nice english boys sitting in the back when they found them on the side of the highway. But we figured we wouldn't be first in line once they saw andrew's hotpants.

Andrew, you will be very badly missed.

16. **Neil** on Feb 10th, 2006 at 1:35 pm

Thank you all for your postings, and thanks especially to Scott Hughes for directing me to this website and to Clifford for his moving obit. I have been reeling since hearing the news on tuesday evening, and reading your posts has helped enormously.

Andrew holds a major place in my memories of Cambridge – despite his best efforts to erase them with rare whiskies and fine wines back in his Pembroke rooms. His passion for physics came with a strange mix of South Park, Doom, short shorts, golf, crazy women, politics, obsessive fitness and a wicked sense of humor. Andrew was a wonderful travel companion – in a Hunter S. Thompson kind of way – and I'll never forget our tour of Israel with Chris Hunter or the time they let a Texan and an Aussie play golf at St. Andrews.

I hadn't seen Andrew since Hawking's 60th, and I had been meaning to drop him a line to see how things were going, maybe meet at some conference and catch up over a few drinks. But now he's gone, and the bartender never told us it was last call. I miss you mate.

17. **Rob** on [Feb 10th, 2006 at 4:56 pm](#)

I have just come from the memorial service. It was very nice; I think he would have liked it very much. His ex-wife spoke as did a neighbor of his family from Amarillo. There was music, of course. An opera singer sang Amazing Grace. A concert violinist played Massenet's Meditation. The church was filled with well wishers including our old high school math teacher and several of his friends and colleagues from England and the States.

I never imagined having to make this trip; never thought to see the end of such a good friend and person. I had rather imagined that I would be flying to Sweden to watch him pick up a Nobel prize some day. We as a species lost something last Monday. For how many others can we say that of with certainty?

But let me close with this, my favorite memories of the times I spent with Andrew: running through the streets of Boston and Cambridge; hiking through Palo Duro Canyon; camping; scotch dogs; writing mathematical equations in chalk on the high-school walls; breaking into the chemistry building at Rice; drinking at Valhalla.

You were a Prince, Andrew. We will miss you.

18. **Neil C** on [Feb 12th, 2006 at 12:31 pm](#)

As a recent defector from the world of physics this tragic, tragic news has been somewhat slow to reach me. Without restating what has been said already let me just say that much of the time I spent with Andrew remains among my best memories of my life as a physicist—even if we never got around to writing that one paper we always talked about. Whether riding our bikes to mountain lakes in Aspen or exploring the Tuscan country side on lengthy runs, Andrew was among the very best travel companions I knew. Without a doubt Andrew was a class act and I am very saddened that we have lost such a great guy.

Good bye, Andrew. You will be missed.

19. **Andrew S** on [Feb 12th, 2006 at 9:20 pm](#)

What a tragedy. Andrew was one of a kind, as can be seen by all of the above anecdotes. My memories are from Andrew at Cambridge. I remember 'Andrew and Jo', the Mill, runs along the Cam and many rounds of golf with Neil C, Dorje and myself hacking up the course while Andrew calmly shot some sort of very low number and classily neglected pointing out how bad we all were.

I remember rides in Neil's car with some \*very\* loud rap music. I also remember some very good food at Pembroke and elsewhere.

I remember a conversation in the tea room (this was the \*old\* DAMTP) that led to two papers (wrong as it turned out) on black hole hair and cosmic strings. There were also many more conversations about various aspects of United States defense policies.

I miss him and will miss him more as I continue to remember my very memorable two years at Cambridge. But I am glad to see how many people really loved him along with me. It is good to hear from you all.

20. **simeon** on Feb 13th, 2006 at 12:19 pm

I was shocked when I heard that Andrew passed away. I connected with Andrew on a human level in a way I haven't often connected with other scientists, or other people altogether. A truly genuine and warm person, he generated many happy memories. During my first lonely months of adjusting to life as a new postdoc, Andrew really offered me the hand of friendship and it made a big difference to me. I will never forget his sincere kindness and I wish I could somehow repay it.

Andrew: Goodbye. I am so sorry to lose a great friend like you. Thank you for letting me stay with you at your place in Los Alamos. Thank you for showing me around the mountains, for explaining to me what pinors were, for your long and fascinating stories about Texas and your family and friends and colleagues. Thank you for showing me that old radioactive museum in Los Alamos. Thank you for taking me to that gay bar in Santa Fe. Thank you for always making me feel at ease and never judging me. Thank you for reminding me how to enjoy life again at a time when I sort of forgot. I will really miss you Andrew.

21. **sophie** on Feb 16th, 2006 at 2:00 pm

I can't tell you how wonderful it is to hear about Andrew from his friends and colleagues. And I know that we will all miss him very much. Thanks to Clifford for this post.

22. **Neil L** on Feb 17th, 2006 at 6:23 am

I am deeply saddened by Andrew's death. As a scientist Andrew was very sharp indeed. But I think perhaps his most important role was played because he thought so differently to anyone else. This led to interesting questions followed by interesting answers.

As a friend he was unique. I have a million good memories of him. Like everyone else, many involve the hotpants and daisy-duck shorts or getting slaughtered in Doom. I also remember climbing up Aspen mountain with Andrew running up and down backwards as I struggled just to get up at all. Of course I also recall that he promised me that there would be water on the way, which there wasn't. And when I finally reached the top he pointed to hut in the distance, far from where we'd come from, and assured me that there was water over there. However most of my memories are of all the in-jokes that we used to share. Quite frankly the world will forever be a much less interesting place without Andrew.

I've just come back from Texas and his funeral. So I have finally gotten to see Cadillac Ranch, Palo Duro Canyon and met some of the people he spoke about. I also know that the other comments on this website were of great comfort for his family and they would like to thank everyone for them. There will be a memorial service in Liouville on March 22nd to which people are invited to attend.

23. **caroline & ed chamblin** on Feb 25th, 2006 at 9:05 pm

We have been so pleased and honored to read all of the dear remembrances of Andrew. Of course we thought he was a beautiful, unique person and we are so glad to hear from those of you who also loved him. We miss him terribly. We can only hope that his spirit soared into the galaxy when we released his ashes at the top of the mesa of his beloved Palo Duro Canyon. We appreciated those of you who came for his memorial service here. We hope some of the others of you will be at the memorial in Cambridge which I understand will be on Saturday, June 3. And we would always love to have any of you come and visit us when you are in the American Southwest. We feel you are each a special attachment to Andrew—one that we value greatly. He loved his friends and he would love for them to see the things he talked about—Cadillac Ranch, Palo Duro Canyon, and maybe even Happy, TX. We have friends there and we can vouch for the sadness that is in Happy tonight. Again, thank you and please stay in touch. Caroline and Ed Chamblin

24. **Clifford** on Feb 25th, 2006 at 10:26 pm

Caroline & Ed,

Thanks so much for commenting. It is a real honour to read the comment and to learn that you read the tributes from several of Andrew's friends here on this blog. I wish you all the comfort that you need as you go through this period of sadness. I'd also like to thank you so much for being so welcoming to me when I visited in Amarillo all those years ago, when Andrew took me to see Cadillac Ranch and out for authentic Barbecue. I hope to see you not too long from now.

Best Wishes,

Clifford.

25. **Clifford** on [Mar 1st, 2006 at 9:02 pm](#)

Dear All,

There has been a date change: The Memorial service in Cambridge will be at 2.30 pm on Saturday 10th June in Pembroke College Chapel.

Jo Ashbourn asks that you email her at the following email address:

hacmemorial (at) yahoo.co.uk

if you have any questions about it or to let her know that you're coming. This will be very useful to her in making arrangements.

-cvj

26. **Delane** on [Mar 4th, 2006 at 8:53 am](#)

I knew him first as Andy and later as Andrew. I miss him, for he was a great friend and a wonderful person. I will always remember Blue Velvet in his room at Rice and screwdrivers when we should have been in Latin.

Goodbye.

27. **Robert Mann** on [Mar 10th, 2006 at 3:43 pm](#)

What a shock to hear this news. I first met Andrew when I was on sabbatical in Cambridge.

He immediately came across as a very personable and incredibly sharp guy. I had a number of very interesting discussions with him during my year there, and learned a lot from him. In the years following I met him again several times at conferences, and always found my meetings with him to be profitable.

This is a great loss for physics — how sad to lose such a talented mind. My thoughts and prayers for his family.

28. **Sav Sethi** on [Mar 10th, 2006 at 8:24 pm](#)

I am still in shock from hearing this news. I fondly recall hanging out with Andrew in Aspen. We biked up to Maroon Lake and Ashcroft many times. Andrew was an enormous amount of fun to be around.

My heart goes out to his family. He will be greatly missed.

29. **Robert Fulton** on [Mar 22nd, 2006 at 11:50 pm](#)

I write today in total humility and honor for a man who was truly a man in many senses of the word.

Goodbye Dr. Chamblin, you were too young for this world.

I apologize readily for those of you who were recent friends of Andrew Chamblin and may my remarks be not taken as flippant, but rather in the spirit that I knew him. I also realize that I am but a shade in his life and have not participated in recent events, but I will be honest, I cannot say that someone has been more in my mind than Andy Chamblin has in the back of my mind. He was a model beyond comprehension and the

second such death that I have encountered this week. I believe that the world IQ has been lowered by a significant measure these past few weeks.

Andrew (Andy as he was known then, and even playfully Howard) went to the same High School as me, as Jennifer Walsh has said, it was Amarillo High. This school is a name that I only associate with regret, except for Andy Chamblin. I was the unfortunate Valedictorian for his graduating class and one of the finer moments of my life was to communicate to Andy while I was at the Univesita di Bologna that I have never been comfortable with that title knowing that he was in my class. I felt it absurd that I should be honored with such a specious title when a trure genius was in my class. I let him know this and I hope that this menial honor was conveyed to him as the true deserver. There were numerous other things I wanted to convey to this great soul, but alas, will not have the chance.

Also, in our belated conversation, Dr. Chamblin sent me a copy of his script, "Cadillac Run" which I read and admired. My life has been languages and literature with physics as my side passion, and Andrew had physics as his life and literature and languages as his passion outside of work. We were hopefully to meet again in Irlay, but that did not happen. My father was also faculty at the U of L and died last year and I never had the chance to visit them both. That is now the one of the saddest missed opportunity that I have had in my life.

Andy and I were in Calculus together in high school. Every day I went to class with the enhtusiasm that he exuded, and as you know, he did. Mr. Martin would tolerate our banter each day as I always had a new language pun for Andy and he always had a stumper for us in math. I remember when he came up with a solution for trisecting an angle without a protractor and the air was charged. It was amazing to be in the presence of a true and spirited genius. As I said, I was embarassed to be honored at graduation knowing that Andy was part of my class. I remember him building his own harpsicord and cheating in golf. The irony of his spectrum.

Two things stick out. We used to have a running joke (he more with two other friends, Rob Jones and Dan Thompson) about the Spanish Inquisition from the Monty Python skit. When I wanted to contact Andrew again after 17 years or so, I used "What, were you expecting the Spanish Inquisition?" or so. He responded within 10 minutes as if he had never been out of conact. I was impressed and honored. However, it may have been his nature of not being exclusive and for that I honor him dearly.

I have lost two mentors in the past month. One, Mark Southern, a willing participant on my PhD committee who was conversant in over twenty languages and a true teacher at every level and then Dr. Chamblin, about whom, and ask my wife, I have never not thought of when I pursue an option in my life. I once taught a course called, "The Curse of Socrates," as the Athenian specter permeates our thinking process regardless of our wishes, so did Dr. Chamblin with mine. I always kept him in mind, knowing that such a superior mind and good-hearted soul was out there.

In short, I grieve that I did not know this man later in life, and I truly grieve for his family and friends who did. Andrew Chamblin was a great soul. We should all be happy that we met such a man. I know that I shall not soon forget.

Sincerely,

Robert Fulton

30. **Dom** on [Mar 24th, 2006 at 12:26 am](#)

I hadn't seen Andrew for some time and, having now left physics, it might have been some time until I saw him again. I have some fond memories, however, and was so very sorry to hear the news of Andrew's untimely death. As I said to Jo in an email, I think the world will be a lesser place without him.

My overriding memories of Andrew were from the time he put me up in his place outside Los Alamos. I was sleeping on his floor when 9/11 happened, and awoke to him kicking me saying that the Pentagon had been attacked. We spent the rest of the day bar and restaurant hopping since he didn't have a TV, and in the end we just went out

and bought one. It was a surreal few days as you can imagine.

The following weekend, Andrew took me up to what I think were the Crestones in Colorado, which I think his brother Jonathan mentioned. I can't be sure that was the place, but we certainly spent a couple of days hiking up a big mountain – at over 14,000 ft still the highest I've scaled. I remember getting the fear during a hairy bit at the top and having to sit and have a cigarette to calm the nerves. It was truly a beautiful place and, although some of his colleagues couldn't understand why he was going out to the wilds straight after 9/11, it somehow seemed fitting.

–Dom

31. **Tony Simpao** on [Mar 26th, 2006 at 4:43 pm](#)

[Remarks removed by request. –cvj]

32. **Pingback from In Memory of Andrew Chamblin | Cosmic Variance** on [Apr 17th, 2006 at 11:59 pm](#)

[...] You will recall that last month I went to a memorial service and all-day symposium for Andrew Chamblin, who died in February. (You can read much more in this link, particularly in the comment thread.) The memorial was in Louisville, Kentucky, where Andrew was on the Physics Faculty. Several of Andrew's friends, colleagues and collaborators came to the event. The dominant component of the attendance was from people who were in either of the physics departments at Louisville, Lexington and Cincinnati, the three closest cities, which have physics links with each other (some of those links involved collaborations with Andrew). Andrew's family and several close friends were there, and some physicists from further away, such as myself. There were also readings of the numerous letters that were sent and from other communications (e.g. from the thread of the post I did on this blog). These were from friends and colleagues from much further afield who were unable to make it to the memorial symposium and service. [...]

33. **Brett Sovereign** on [Apr 20th, 2006 at 9:45 am](#)

I just learned of Andrew's death through the Rice alumni site. I knew Andrew well through his undergraduate years at Rice, and kept in touch for most of our graduate time. It's been almost 10 years since I spoke with him, and it's a punch in the stomach realizing he's gone. He was one-of-a-kind, and my life was enriched for knowing him. Your post and all the other comments on it show that I wasn't alone in this feeling.

Brett Sovereign  
brett.sovereign 'at' gmail.com

34. **Andreas Ritter** on [Apr 24th, 2006 at 12:35 pm](#)

When asked what I liked most about my time at University of Oxford I always said the international bunch of fellow students at Christ Church. And then I told the story about this very bright, extremely polite Texan physicist with whom you could discuss philosophy, time machines and the rest of the world but also play Bach sonatas.

35. **Random grad student** on [Jun 12th, 2006 at 10:45 am](#)

I saw Andrew give a couple of seminars at Notre Dame where he was applying for a job. My impression was 'Damn, this is a real physicist and cool person in one!'. I was seriously hoping he would move, but it was not to be. That a stranger can make such an impression so quickly says a lot.

36. **Angela Smith** on [Jun 21st, 2006 at 5:41 pm](#)

I am very grateful for this site and all the posts. I just learned of Andrew's death today, in the Rice Classnotes, and came right online to see what else I could learn.

My one Andrew story fit for consumption is from the summer after his graduation from Rice. He was staying with his parents in Hinsdale, Illinois, and invited me to a theater in Chicago to see "A Brief History of Time". I haven't a single scientific bone in my body, but it was the best movie I've ever seen, thanks to Andrew sinking into the back row with me and explaining every bit of it. (He also shared a great story about his encounter with Kurt Vonnegut.)

Andrew was always 'My friend who studied with Hawking' (as other non-scientists rarely know of Roger Penrose), which I was reminded of when I told the news to my mother and her first reply was 'Oh, no, the one who studied with Hawking?'

It never failed to amaze me how Andrew could be so clearly brilliant yet unaffected, and rather than feeling an utter idiot, actually manage to make me feel more intelligent for finally understanding some tidbit of information he wished to impart. I cannot imagine the pain of those losing a close colleague; my heart and prayers go out to all of you.

37. **Pingback from [Andrew Chamblin Memorial Conference | Cosmic Variance](#)** on Jul 21st, 2006 at 5:04 pm

[...] There will be a conference in memory of Andrew Chamblin at Trinity College, Cambridge, on October 14. The registration deadline is September 1. Anyone who knew or worked with Andrew is encouraged to attend. Andrew, a theoretical physicist who several of us here at CV knew very well, passed away in February, and there was previously a conference in his honor in Louisville in March. [...]

38. **Pingback from [Memories, Physics, and Celebration – Asymptotia](#)** on Nov 3rd, 2006 at 10:57 pm

[...] That Saturday of celebration of Andrew's work (The Andrew Chamblin Memorial Conference) at Cambridge was a remarkable experience. (See here for my first post on Andrew, with tributes.) I was exhausted through a good deal of it, since I had eight hour jetlag, but I'm so glad I went, and that I could contribute a talk. I met many old friends and colleagues, drawn mostly from the UK and European side of Andrew's collection of friends, collaborators, and admirers in the field. [...]

39. **Trackback from [Cosmic Variance](#)** on Feb 15th, 2007 at 12:54 am

#### First Andrew Chamblin Memorial Lecture

Just over a year ago, Clifford reported the shocking news that Andrew Chamblin, a wonderful young physicist, great guy, and a friend of a number of us at Cosmic Variance, had died. Many people used the comments section of that post to recount fond mem...

[« Warm Dark Matter? Cartoons »](#)

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Comments may take a few minutes to appear.

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