

Sunday, January 21, 2007

A farewell to Art.

Art Buchwald. Art Buchwald left the planet last Wednesday. I read his columns from time to time, and found him good-natured with a joie de vivre. I later learned that he suffered from clinical depression, but he kept writing his columns, right through last month. He was well liked, apparently more for himself and the way he liked so many people, than for his columns or fame. Mr. Buchwald probably had the ability to use a sharper tongue. By being more warmly humorous than caustic, he probably got his views across more effectively to more people. Perhaps both types of political observers are needed: those to whom a large cross section of the public will listen, and those who will use a sharper pen to more pointedly rally like-minded people and some who are on the fence. I admired Mr. Buchwald, and very much enjoyed bumping into him one day near his office, which was near my law school. He was good-natured then, too, and gave me the time for a short chat. I next heard him speak at a reception for a human rights organization. The third and final time I saw him was at a local bookstore around eighteen months ago, where he was scheduled to speak. Unfortunately, I arrived late, and he was slowly walking out. I said hello, and he said hello back, sounding weak; I don't know if it was the late hour, his general health, or both. He once joked that although he had contemplated suicide before, he was concerned that another more famous person would die the same day and bump his passing off the front page of the New York Times. I did not check whether he got on the New York Times's front page last week, but he certainly is on mine. Jon Katz. ADDENDUM: "Hi. I'm Art Buchwald and I just died." Art Buchwald's video obituary on the New York Times's site, where he hopes that, after his death, "everyone would say what a wonderful guy I was."

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 01:00