



NBASLH

Resound)))

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NBASLH

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Farewell to Dr. Robert Screen



Dr. Robert Screen founded the program in Communicative Sciences and Disorders in 1954. Under his leadership, the program became a department in 1968. Dr. Screen successfully led the department until 2010, and continued to serve the department until 2012.

In the University's press release announcing his passing, Dr. Pollie Murphy, Assistant Provost at Hampton, and a speech-language pathologist, was quoted to say that "Dr. Screen's students are everywhere" and we are ...

We are the Chief Staff Officer for speech-language pathology at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA);

We are ASHA staff members;

We are a past president of ASHA; a mentor of a past president of ASHA;

We are recipients of our professional association's highest award given, "Honors of the Association;"

We are fellows of our professional association;

We are the creator of the only doctoral granting degree program in communication sciences and disorders, at an HBCU (the other HU);

We are founding members of the National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing, (NBASLH), executive directors of NBASLH, Board members of NBASLH;

We are a past president of the Speech-Language-Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV);

We are university vice presidents, assistant provosts, deans and directors;

We are US Department of Education Program officers and Program Officers in State Educational Agencies;

We are superintendents of public school systems, owners and CEOs of private practices, university clinic directors, university professors, department chairs, lead speech-language pathologists, school-based speech-language pathologists, medical-based speech-language pathologists, rehabilitation directors, clinical specialists, audiologists, educational audiologists, sign language interpreters, school administrators, speech and hearing scientists, published authors, researchers, grant writers, etc.

All because Dr. Screen was an exceptional teacher, a mentor extraordinaire, a renaissance man.

Sarah Ban Breathnach is an inspirational speaker and author who is quoted often. One of my favorite quotes written by her is this:

"The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers. But above all, the world needs dreamers who do".

Dr. Screen was a dreamer who did. I believe Dr. Screen is resting in peace because of a job well done.

Dorian Lee-Wilkerson, PhD, Chair and Associate Professor

Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders,
Hampton University

He Let His Life do the Singing A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Robert Martin Screen

“At some point in our lives, there is a kind of glory that comes over us and makes us realize what our lives are truly about: About giving, and helping others, and learning to understand that whatever achievements we accomplish are the result of the compassionate support of those who gave to us. It is with this spirit that I accept the award, ASHA Honors. It is because of the love and support of my wonderful family ... and the magnificent students at ... Hampton University that I am receiving this award. For you as my family, your love and commitment [have] shown itself to be a kind of glory from above. Indeed, you have truly gone forward and ‘let your lives do the singing.’” **Dr. Robert Martin Screen: 2001 Honors of the Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).**

Hampton University faculty, students and alumni recently mourned the loss of Dr. Robert Martin Screen, former chairman of the Communicative Sciences and Disorders Department at Hampton University who passed away in Newport News, Virginia, on Wednesday November 18, 2015. Dr. Screen (Bob) was a graduate of Hampton Institute – now Hampton University – in 1953, and returned to Hampton in 1954 after earning his Master’s Degree at New York University in speech-language pathology, where he founded the first speech and language pathology program – then named the *speech correction program* – in a historically black college and university (HBCU). Bob would go on to earn his PhD at Michigan State University in 1968. The name of the program was later officially changed to *speech and language pathology*.

Bob was the cornerstone of the program (later becoming a department) that he chaired for more than 50 years. Under his direction, a master’s level graduate program in speech-language pathology was created in 1975, and accredited by ASHA in 1986. Bob eventually retired as chair in 2010.

Bob was not just a professor; but a tennis coach as well, and in both professions he was amazingly successful, personally giving each profession a lifetime of passion and creativity.

My relationship with Robert Martin Screen (Bob) goes back more than fifty years, beginning with my enrollment as an undergraduate student at Hampton Institute in 1959. I was interested in becoming a speech therapist. During the early chapters of my education in speech-language pathology at Hampton, primarily under Bob’s tutelage, I acquired a deep sense of reverence for the young spirited professor who, it seemed at the time – without my knowing for certain – appeared to be not much older than I was. I observed early on that he was tracking an academic path to make certain that he was going to make a difference in the training of black students in the speech-language pathology profession. He held to a standard of extraordinary support and commitment to his students, and to his profession – a striking standard of distinction that would eventually steer him onto the stage of receiving ASHA’s highest two commendations: *Fellowship* of the Association in 1982, and *Honors* of the Association in 2001. It should be noted that at that time, Bob was only the third African-

American recipient of ASHA’s most distinguished honor, the first having been awarded to Dr. Orlando Taylor – also a Hampton University graduate – in 1991, and the second awarded to Dr. Sandra C. Holley, then of Southern Connecticut State University, and former ASHA president, in 2000.

During his year of study as a graduate student at New York University, and later his years at Michigan State, Bob’s agenda persistently included an intense commitment to pass on to his students at Hampton the academic and clinical competencies he had mastered at those universities – the skills he knew each of them would need to successfully compete in the profession.



I witnessed his immeasurable loyalty and steadfast resolve to educate black students in the speech-language-hearing disorders professions with the assurance that once we graduated, we were knowledgeable and competitive. He was particularly unyielding in his certainty that historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were the prime resources available to black students in all undergraduate programs. The program started by Bob Screen at the then Hampton Institute, was the first and only undergraduate program in the field at an HBCU for many years.

During my enrollment in the program, our academic household at Hampton consisted of a small, soft-green painted two-story wooden light-frame structure – with a narrow staircase leading from the first to the second floor. The structure housed classrooms and instructors’ offices. Courses in English, public speaking, foreign languages and speech-language pathology were all taught in that small building. There was no speech and hearing clinic, mainly because there simply was no space in our small educational setting to provide on-campus clinical services. But Bob established practicum agreements with public school districts in Hampton and nearby Newport News, and Hampton’s own child development center. It was in those educational settings that we acquired our practicum experiences. And I must note that not having a speech and hearing clinic on campus was not in actual fact an academic drawback, merely because except for the few students who graduated and went on to attend graduate school in predominately white universities, the great majority of us were destined to begin our careers in public school settings.

Over time, my insight into Bob’s instructional firmness and vision of our academic welfare became increasingly focused. Furthermore, he extended to us a distinct presence of understanding, support and care. We were his students. We were going to succeed. He presented us with a genuine spirit of compassion; a spirit of care, warmly projected – and the blanket of standards as a professional with which he so earnestly covered us, we embraced with deep gratitude. In short time, we came to know him and appreciate him not merely as our teacher, counselor and mentor, but as our friend, one who cared about us academically – and personally. He was always available to go the extra mile to help us confront head-on

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He Let His Life do the Singing (continued)

the academic challenges during the developmental stages of our education under him.

And for me, personally, that engaging commitment to his students extended beyond Hampton's borders. A few years after graduating from Hampton, I enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Bob was completing his doctoral studies at nearby Michigan State in East Lansing. It was summer, 1968. I reached out to him – seeking the personal and academic support and guidance that I knew so well he could provide. He responded immediately, traveling the 60-plus miles to Ann Arbor to provide me with the support and self-assurance I needed to heighten my outlook toward completing my Master's Degree. I did not go to him; I called and he came to me. He still cared; from professor to student: commitment, concern and support. His open, unreserved backing never lapsed.



Robert M. Screen delivering the keynote address at NBASLH's first convention, 1979

Years later, when, in 1979, the National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing (NBASLH) held its first Annual Convention at the Center for Inner City Studies, a program established in 1966 by Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, Bob – then serving on NBASLH's Executive Staff as its Deputy Director – was invited to be the keynote speaker. He accepted. I was honored to introduce him.

The title of his speech was "Let Us Step To The Music That We Hear." His

view was that we, the members of NBASLH, were embracing the birth of a new group of African-Americans in the speech-language hearing professions – African-Americans who stood out with pride and dignity in support not just of our newly formed association, but also the HBCUs that have historically hoisted the pillar of support for many of the leaders of black organizations already formed. "NBASLH is long overdue," he said. Bob echoed with deep certainty that it was from those institutions that the great majority of black professionals earned their college degrees. "By far, the most notable Black leaders in every segment of our society have come from Black colleges. The list is endless..." he said.

Moreover, Bob impressed upon his audience that evening that there was a great need to develop strategies for getting into our black communities and identifying individuals with communication disorders; that we must develop strategies for serving those populations – urban and rural. And he strongly pressed his belief that we must use our solid sensitivity to our culture to get to those who need our services; that there was a whole body of untapped information on black individuals with communication disorders, and it was our responsibility to do the research on their behalf.

His urging was quite fitting considering the fact that we were witnessing an era when many white researchers – including speech and language pathologists – were flooding educational journals

with controversial deliberations that black children residing in low socioeconomic communities were essentially linguistically and intellectually inferior; primarily because their cultural and linguistic behavior did not bear a striking resemblance to the behavioral patterns of white, middle class children. Black children, they charged, were, in effect, culturally deprived and cognitively deficient.

Nothing if not an exciting model of excellence, Bob eventually became engaged in a second career – simultaneously – as Hampton's tennis coach. It was a career that was equally as impressive as his professorial calling in speech-language pathology. Bob earned the fame and reputation of being an outstanding tennis coach who sustained the awesome grit to excel with both gender sets during his specialized charge as a coach: the men's and women's tennis teams.

Coach Herman Neilson, having observed Bob's ability as a talented tennis player, coached and inspired Bob to become a better tennis player. Reportedly, during his youth, Bob learned to play tennis on a clay court built by a local black grocery store owner in his hometown of Augusta, Georgia. It was during the Jim Crow era when community tennis courts in his hometown were not available to blacks.



Robert M. Screen (holding trophy) and his men's tennis team
Source: the Official Athletic Site of Hampton University Pirates

Years later, in the late 1960s, Neilson asked Bob to replace him as Hampton's tennis coach. Bob accepted: Teacher, mentor, counselor, and coach – all walks of excellence – at every turn. Over the course of coaching Hampton's tennis teams for more than 40 years, Bob earned more than a thousand victories, which included two National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II Tennis Championships; 22 consecutive Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) titles; and 11 consecutive Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) championships. Hampton is the only HBCU to win an NCAA tennis title, and Bob has been hailed as the most accomplished black coach in the history of college tennis. After retiring in 2010, he was inducted into the Hampton University Athletic Hall of Fame the following year, in 2011. And in 2012, he was inducted into the Hampton Roads African American Hall of Fame.

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He Let His Life do the Singing (continued)

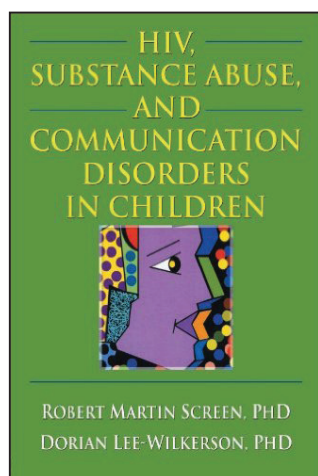
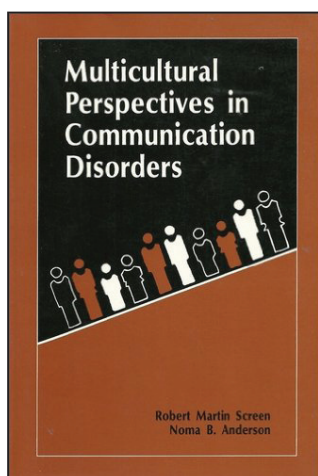


HAMPTON UNIVERSITY: Neilson-Screen Stadium

Today, on Hampton's campus, the university's tennis workstation is named the *Neilson-Screen Stadium*, named in honor of Herman Neilson and Bob Screen.

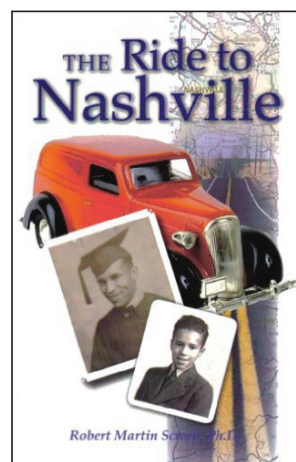
And then, there was Bob's flair – his love – for writing. Having enrolled in the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop for a yearlong course of study that boosted and intensified his calling as a writer, Bob went on to write novels that often reflected his youthful years in America's Jim Crow South, and textbooks that focused on racial, social and multicultural issues in the communication disorders professions. He was greatly inspired, and he inspired so many others.

Bob received many awards during his career. And clearly, given the commendable teaching, mentoring, support and love that he alone extended to hundreds of students – as both professor and coach – and to the professions, for nearly sixty years, such a rich, passionate contribution is worthy of accolades all by itself. His program has received the *Diversity Incentive Award* from the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders. And in 2001, along with receiving ASHA Honors, the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia presented Bob with the *Outstanding Faculty Award*.



Further, under Bob's leadership, Hampton has graduated more African-American speech-language pathologists than any university in the country. Among the hundreds of students this honorable man educated, a great many of them have gone on to not only earn doctoral degrees at other universities, and launch successful careers over the years, but have also received

comparable awards of distinction that he received from ASHA. Just recently, for instance, during the November, 2015 ASHA Convention in Denver, Colorado, two of his former students, Dr. Donna R. Brooks and Dr. Dorian Lee Wilkerson, were awarded *ASHA Fellowships*, and a third former student, Dr. Noma Anderson, who had reached the summit of her professional career when she was elected ASHA's President in 2007, was awarded *ASHA Honors*. She became the third Hampton graduate to be awarded ASHA Honors, and the second of Bob's former students to receive that premier award.



Across the years, Bob and I remained in touch – as his former student, as his colleague and as his friend. I deeply admired him. I shall always remember and love him for being such a brilliant, caring teacher, mentor, and person – for having fashioned a heartfelt friendship that I will always treasure. And I am proud to note that the deep feeling of friendship is mutual. Years ago when he gave me a copy of his book, *The Ride to Nashville*, Bob autographed his book: *To Gene, I shall always cherish the beautiful friendship over the years.*

In his keynote speech during NBASLH's first Annual Convention that I referred to earlier, Bob concluded his address by reflecting on his alma mater's school song and sharing the song's refrain with the audience, which he obviously viewed as particularly fitting to the theme of his speech:

*O Hampton, we never can make thee a song
Except as our lives do the singing,
In service that will thy great spirit prolong
And send it through centuries ringing!*

And then he said, "Indeed we as Black men and women will continue ... to excel – letting our lives do the singing ..." Indeed.

I, and so many others – across so many years – have been lifted and stand with pride and gratitude on the gigantic shoulders of this brilliant, honorable educator, coach and writer: Dr. Robert Martin Screen.

M. Eugene Wiggins