Roberto A. Scalapino

A Remembrance

With great sadness, we note the passing on November 1, 2011, of our friend and colleague, Robert A. Scalapino, Robson Research Professor of Government Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. He was 92 years old.

It is probably unnecessary to remind the readers of Asian Survey of Bob’s many achievements. He was a major presence in the field of Asian Studies for well over half a century and worked closely with scholars throughout the world. To note but a few achievements, he was the author of some 553 articles and 39 books or monographs dealing with Asian affairs. He was a founder and the first chair of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and also of the Institute of East Asian Studies at UC Berkeley. He received numerous honors from academic institutions and governments from around the world. He was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was affiliated with numerous other prestigious scholarly organizations.

Almost as impressive as the quality of Bob’s work was the great breadth of his knowledge and interests, and the remarkable longevity of his career. Starting in the 1940s with a stint as a Japanese language officer in the U.S. military, he was at first a Japan specialist but gradually extended the reach of his interests to encompass most of East Asia. He was a relentless world traveler, even to the end, making a trip to Beijing in June of this year.

Notable among his many other accomplishments was Bob’s role as the founding editor of Asian Survey in 1961. He remained active as editor for many years, well past his formal retirement from the University in 1990. In large measure, the success of this publication is due to Bob’s vast network of knowledgeable contacts and his skill and judgment in helping to find authors who lent their talents to the production of a wide array of scholarly articles. The annual review of the year’s events in various countries is a “must read” for those interested in Asian affairs.

Another important facet of Bob’s long career, and one of which I personally was fortunate to be a direct beneficiary, was his role in the development of successive generations of students, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in the field of Asian Studies. I entered Cal at about the time
Bob started teaching there, and it was as a result of taking a course from him that I ended up deciding to make Asian Studies my life’s work. Many others have had similar experiences.

Asian Studies is far richer today because of Bob’s contributions. It can be truly said that there will never be another like him.

Joyce K. Kallgren
Editor Emerita
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