



## Roberta Park

July 15, 1931 - December 5, 2018

Roberta J. Park was born on July 15, 1931 in Oakland, California, the daughter of Robert Donald and Grace E. (Faulkes) Park. She earned an AB degree from the University of California, Berkeley (1953); a Master of Arts from The Ohio State University (1955); and Doctor of Philosophy from the University of California (1970). She was an Instructor at The Ohio State University from 1955-1956; a teacher in the Oakland (California) Public Schools, 1956-1959; and a supervisor and then professor, at the University of California, Berkeley, 1959-1994. From 1982-1992, she was Chair of the Department of Physical Education, which then became the Department of Human Biodynamics in 1995, merging in 1997 with the Department of Integrative Biology.

Robbie, as she was known by her close friends and colleagues, was a passionate scholar in the field of sport history with a specialty in the history of health exercise and physical education in the 18th and 19th centuries. She edited a number of seminal books and monographs as well as many chapters in books and monographs. She published at least one hundred articles in scientific journals (and another sixty in proceedings, abstracts, book reviews and other journals) including the *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *The Journal of Sport History*, *Quest*, *British Journal of Sport History*, *The International Journal of Sport History*, and the *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* (now *Sport History Review*). She delivered lectures and research presentations in all parts of the world, often as keynote speaker or in an honor address. Her research output is truly outstanding and her extensive work on embodiment, sport, health and physical practices in historical context is widely admired. One of her most important contributions to the field was a substantive review article entitled "A Decade of the Body: Researching and Writing about the History of Health, Fitness, Exercise and Sport, 1983-1993" published in the *Journal of Sport History* in 1994.

Roberta was a lifelong proponent of physical education and worked tirelessly at CAL and in various professional organizations to promote the field. She was a fellow of the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical education (inducted 1979), serving as President of that organization (1990-91); fellow of the British Society for Sports History;

Vice President of the International Association for the History of Sport and Physical Education (1989); President of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education; and Vice-President of the International Association for the History of Sport and Physical Education.

She was on the editorial boards of numerous journals including the Journal of Sport History, International Journal for the History of Sport and Physical Education, and the Journal of Physical Education and Recreation. She held editorial positions for Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, Quest and The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play.

Roberta was also the recipient of countless awards recognizing her outstanding and extensive contribution to the field. Among the awards she received are the D.B.Dill Historical Lecture, American College of Sports Medicine; The Reet Howell Memorial Address, Australian Society for Sport History; the Distinguished Scholar Award, National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education; the Alliance Scholar, American Alliance for Health and Physical Education; International Sport History Scholar Award; and Seward Staley Address, North American Society for Sport History.

Dr. Park found herself fighting against shifting priorities at CAL and declining support for the Physical Education Department. When the administration decided (in spite of three positive reviews by Academic Senate committees) to dis-establish the Department and convert Harmon Gymnasium into Haas Pavilion, Robbie retired to focus on the research and writing that was so important to her.

During her retirement, Dr. Park never wavered from her strong stance on the importance of exercise and sports for children and everyone else. She came to her campus office every day, swam in Hearst pool at noon, and spent the afternoon with her research. She was a force of nature, never missing an opportunity to educate anyone willing to listen to the attributes of staying active, and the many benefits to the mind and society as a whole. The Department of Physical Education, UC Berkeley is greatly appreciative of the Robbie's lifelong effort to return to its rightful place as vital to the success of Berkeley students and of humans in general.

Robbie was an aficionado of the San Francisco Opera (her favorite was Bellini's Norma), commenting frequently that the Opera was her movie theater. She used to listen to recordings of her Aunt Lilly (Lillian Hopper), who was a New York opera singer during the 1930's, the Welsh singer Llewellyn Cadwaladr, and Maria Callas. Robbie was also an avid reader of non-fiction, history and biographies.

Roberta was an oil painter; among her work there are many silhouettes of boats, marinas, sunsets, wildflowers and open skies. She was also a great photographer. She was passionate about California flowers and plants and for years she cultivated her garden with native plants which she captured on camera. She had a Japanese bonsai that she took care of until her final days.

Another remarkable part of Roberta was her adventurous spirit, and she explored places such as Russia and Germany before they were fashionable. One particularly memorable trip was taken in the 1950's when Robbie and three friends drove to Alaska from Oakland.

During her last 8 months, Roberta was discovering the delight of being a grandmother, spending her Sundays playing and singing with the little boy of her adopted daughter. She celebrated Thanksgiving with family, and was planning her next trip to Scotland to show the boy the Highlands. Once there, she hoped to sing him the song:

Where the heather bells are blooming just outside Granny's door,  
Where as laddies there we played in the days of long ago.

Neath the shadow of Ben Bhragie and Golspie's loudly stane,  
How I wished that I could see my Granny's Hielan' hame.

(Song: Granny's Hielan' Hame written by Sandy Macfarlane)

Roberta passed away peacefully at home in Oakland.

# Comments

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“ I just heard of Dr. Park’s passing yesterday. She was such an inspiration to me throughout my 39 year career teaching PE. I often heard her voice in my head while dealing with life as a PE teacher/coach. I feel so privileged to have had her as an instructor and mentor. Carolyn Booth Hutton ‘75

Carolyn Booth Hutton - December 22, 2018 at 08:20 PM

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“ My sincere condolences to Dr. Park’s family. She was a fabulous person, a wonderful coach, and a great mentor. I am sorry that I did not get a chance to tell her that before she passed...but I know she knows how much she has meant to me...and to a lot of other people as well. RIP Dr. Park. You will always have a special place in my heart.

Donna Seid (Class of 1976) - December 22, 2018 at 05:49 PM

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“ So sorry I had to miss the service honoring Robbie. She was a great lady and a good field hockey player

Linda Scott “Scottie” - December 19, 2018 at 03:44 PM

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“ So sorry to hear about Robbie. My sincere condolences to the family. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend the services. I spent many hours competing against Robbie on the field hockey field.

Marie Sugiyama - December 18, 2018 at 05:16 PM