



Obituary

In Memoriam Robert C Stuart

PAUL GREGORY

University of Houston.
E-mail: pgregory@uh.edu

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Robert C Stuart passed away in Bellingham, Washington after a long illness. He is survived by his wife, a son, daughter, grandson, and brother.

Robert C Stuart was born in British Columbia, where he attended the University of British Columbia, before completing his dissertation in economics at the University of Wisconsin in 1969. Robert served as a faculty member at Rutgers University from 1968 until his retirement in 2005. Bob taught for many years at Princeton, filling its gap in Soviet/Russian economics. He served as chair of economics at Rutgers from 1976 to 1979 and from 1986 to 1989. Robert edited *Comparative Economic Studies* from 1997 to 2002. Many of today's scholars of comparative economics got their first publications under Bob's editorship.

Robert was one of the few PhDs produced by an unsung pioneer of Soviet and comparative economics, David Granick, who, along with Joseph Berliner, wrote the classic works on Soviet enterprise management. It was only natural that Bob turned to the study of the management of Soviet collective farms. Bob's 1972 book, *The Collective Farm in Soviet Agriculture*, remains the standard work on this neglected topic. Bob joked that he would title the book *The Red Peasant* (Granick's book was the *Red Executive*), but he eventually opted instead for a more conventional title.

Robert wrote his dissertation while at Harvard's Russian Research Center (1965–1968), during its peak of activity that centered around the Wednesday lunch presentations attended by such notables as Abram Bergson, Evsey Domar, Frank Holzman, Joseph Berliner, Marshall Goldman, Gur Ofer, and assorted distinguished visitors. I joined the Russian Research Center (RRC) as a graduate student at the same time. Robert and I sat quietly in the corner at the



Brown Bag Presentations, both intimidated by the illustrious crowd, especially by Abram Bergson. In those days, we all had the title of 'visitor' at the RRC, which to Bob's and my ears sounded too much like someone who has dropped in for a day visit. But rules were rules, and we both felt privileged to be there at that time and place. Among the distinguished visitors and guest speakers, I remember Alex Nove, Meryl Fainsod, a young Janos Kornai on his first visit to the United States, Alfred Zauberman, and Charles Feinstein, to name just a few.

Robert joined the Rutgers economics faculty in 1968, championed by Alexander Balinky, who wanted Rutgers to have an economist to teach the Soviet Marxist model.

Robert and I began our collaboration in 1969. We decided to try to write a textbook that offered a paradigm for teaching the Soviet economy that was deeply embedded in the literature. The result was *Soviet Economic Structure and Performance*, which evolved into *Russian and Soviet Economic Structure and Performance* after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the time we began, there was only Alec Nove's *The Soviet Economy* and his short economic history of the USSR. Nove's were great books, but they relied largely on his reading of the Soviet literature and paid, we felt, too little attention to the growing Western literature.

Bob and I were gratified that the text proceeded through numerous editions, and this success prompted us to write a text on *Comparative Economic Systems*, which also went into higher editions as we struggled to chronicle the replacement of the old capitalism *versus* socialism paradigm with modern comparative economics. The likely final version now entitled *The Global Economy and its Economic Systems* appeared shortly before Bob's passing. We both felt we were getting closer to a decent text on comparative economics in the non-black-and-white context of capitalism *versus* socialism, but we did so in an era of regrettable US\$200 textbooks.

A 45-year collaboration in textbook writing is rarer than a golden wedding anniversary. We usually split the chapters and then edited and commented on the other's work. I labored for years to rid Bob of his academic style of writing, which I felt had to be toned down for textbook writing. A memorable example would be Bob's: 'Many observers have concluded that ...' I must confess I never fully succeeded and resorted often to the red editing pen. Bob was pleased to pass on reports that readers could not really figure out who did what chapter, if anyone cared to speculate about this.

Robert Stuart was never much of a networker or conference junkie; so many in our profession did not get to meet him. That is a shame. Bob was extremely modest about his scholarly work (much with fellow Rutgers faculty member, Ira Gang) on urbanization and housing in a comparative context. His colleagues at Rutgers praise him as a popular teacher and colleague, ready to



pitch in with advising and administration, including weekends on campus to meet and advise students. (Who is willing to do that these days?)

Bob's two stints as department chair and one as associate chair are remembered by his colleagues as a time of even-handed management, patience, good humor, dedication, and initiative. During Bob's first stint as chair of the department Rutgers implemented a severe middle-of-the-term budget cut. The cuts meant Bob could not afford to purchase blue books for exams. Bob, sensing both a problem with this and a solution, organized a bake sale on the lawn in front of the department. He called the local newspapers and invited them to come and support the university and buy a brownie or cookie. Needless to say, the next day's headlines were merciless and the University was duly embarrassed. Money was put back in the budget before the end of the week! As an extraordinary act of recognition, Rutgers University ordered the lowering of the flag to half-mast for 2 days in recognition of the passing of Robert Stuart.

In his quiet way, Bob promoted the development of Soviet studies in Russia, although he was a rare visitor there. Upon retirement, he donated his massive library to the economic history department at Moscow State University, which lacked not only Western publications, but also basic statistical publications in Russian. Somehow Bob accomplished the task of sending what must have been a half ton of books to Russia from New Jersey. Leonid Borodkin, the guru of Russian and Soviet economic history, remained forever grateful to Bob for supplying his students and graduate students with what was basically a credible library of English-language works on the Soviet economy.

Robert and son Craig were avid collectors of automobiles, a hobby I could never understand. Bob built a 'pole barn' in the backyard of their New Jersey home to house up to seven of his collection of automobiles. Bob and Craig became skilled mechanics. Robert's colleagues recall driving their cars to the 'Stuart garage' for an instant diagnosis of the problem. Colleague Tom Prusa writes that: 'It was like a circus trick. Worst case was that it required a short ride for the diagnosis. Unless you witnessed it, you wouldn't believe it. Bob and Craig were our version of "Click and Clack" if you know that NPR radio show'.

Robert Stuart retired young and was able to spend a decade of retirement in the Pacific Northwest. Bob and Bev spent the summer months in a vacation home on Thetis Island, British Columbia. They enjoyed hosting friends, family, and former Rutgers faculty at their beautiful island home. We visited only by Skype, despite numerous invitations. The idyllic images of their garden and view exerted a considerable draw, but we never made it.

The late James Millar was the informal historian of the study of the Soviet and East European economies. He divided us into a first generation, largely of emigrants or children of emigrants from what had been the Russian empire, a second generation to which Bob Stuart and I belonged, and a third generation



so small that the field was threatened with extinction. The collapse of the USSR changed all that. We now have a surfeit of native Russian-speaking graduate students and distinguished economics programs in Russia and Central Europe. I am sure that Bob Stuart was gratified by this rebirth, which is now reaching back into the study of the Soviet and Stalin period, thanks to the opening of the Russian archives.

We in the profession, the economics faculty of Rutgers University, and friends and family miss Robert Stuart. He did it right and provides an example for all.