

## Obituary: Richard Robinson

Richard D. Robinson - teacher, author, journalist, explorer, internationalist - died on September 5, 2009 at age 88 after a long illness in Gig Harbor, Washington, his home for the past 23 years. He was the author of sixteen books and the editor and/or contributor to five others, plus many articles. Upon his retirement from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after 26 years of association, he was named a Professor Emeritus. While at M.I.T. he founded the study of international business management at the Sloan School of Management, and established M.I.T.'s post-war relationship with the People's Republic of China (1979). Subsequently, he was active in a number of projects relating to the PRC, including the sponsorship and funding of the first book on contemporary U.S. life by a Chinese writer targeted to the general Chinese public. It proved to be a runaway best seller in China.

Robinson was a graduate of the University of Washington, the Harvard Graduate School of Business and of M.I.T., from which he received his PhD. He also spent a year at the London School of Oriental and African Studies focusing on Turkish history, literature, and language and Islamic law.

At the close of World War II, he was assigned to military intelligence in South Korea, where he uncovered (1946) a plot by South Korean rightists to provoke North Korea into a preemptive attack on South Korea. It was assumed by the conspirators that the U.S. would become engaged in the ensuing fight, thereby unifying the North and South and placing a united Korea under rightist control. Few listened to Robinson's warnings, and he was very nearly court-martialed for his efforts. Later, he wrote a book-length analysis entitled Betrayal of a Nation (under the pseudonym Will Hamlin). The English version was never published, but copies were placed in several American libraries. The Korean version was published and circulated in Korea in c. 2003.

Moving to Turkey in 1947, he became known over the next decade as a recognized authority on contemporary Turkey. In reviewing his 1963 book, The First Turkish Republic (Harvard Press), a New York Times reviewer (Dec. 28, 1963) described him as one "who may know more about Turkey than any other living American."

For several years he lived and traveled in rural Turkey as one of the first Americans to explore, photograph, and write about central and eastern Turkey.

Initially, he was in Turkey as a Fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs, then as the Turkish area specialist for the American Universities Field Staff. Coincidentally, he worked as a part-time journalist for the Chicago Daily News Foreign Service. In this latter capacity, he wrote the first articles published in a major U.S. newspaper about the Palestinian refugee problem (1949). These articles caused controversy, for many denied that there were any Palestinian "refugees."

Returning to the U.S. in 1956 after nearly ten years in Turkey and the Middle East, he taught contemporary Turkish history at Harvard for several years, meanwhile doing research at the Harvard Business School into the activities of U.S. corporations in lesser-developed countries. He was so appalled by the lack of sensitivity and of the naiveté on the part of many corporations in making decisions relative to the commitment of corporate resources abroad that, after several years of study, he resolved to pursue an academic career in international management. He wrote some of the first textbooks on the subject and established the field at the Sloan School of Management at M.I.T., the second such program in the U.S. His first text, International Business Policy (Holt, 1964) caused one reviewer to condemn Robinson as a "traitor" to American capitalism. As a founder of the Academy of International Business, he is generally regarded as one of the very early pioneers in the study, writing, and teaching in the international management field. Early on, he introduced the subject of culture and values to international management study and practice.

Later on, this last innovation brought him to the attention of the Bellingham-based Florence R. Kluckhohn Center for the Study of Values, which he chaired for several years prior to his death. The Center has been instrumental in paving the way for the resolution of cultural conflict in a number of areas, most notably between Native Americans and others, such as the Department of Defense in Alaska. Robinson was also active in the Tacoma-Seattle World Affairs Council and in the Hamlin Robinson School for Dyslexic Children in Seattle. This School was established in the memory of his older brother by his brother's widow. Robinson's last publication was a co-edited volume of his father's writings, In The Process of Creation (privately published, 2002). His father, Reverend William D. Robinson of Yakima Washington, was a much esteemed friend of the late Supreme Court Associate Justice William O. Douglas.

Robinson leaves a wife, Carol and three children - Linda McCaffrey of Brookfield Center, CT; Kermit Robinson of Hanover, MA; and Wendy Robinson of Bethlehem, NH; five grandchildren and one great grandchild. His children were by

his first wife, Elizabeth Ann of Grosse Pointe, MI., who died in 1979. He also leaves six stepchildren - Steven, Shelley, Michael, Terri, Julie, and Eric Schreiber - plus four step grandchildren.

His family always took top priority in his affections, time, efforts and resources. He tried to maintain a loving, supportive environment both for his natural children and for his six stepchildren. They were all loved, but particularly his wife, Carol, who remained steadfastly supportive and caring up to the end. She deserves an ever-shining halo.

A memorial reception will be held on September 19, 2009 at the family home in Gig Harbor, WA from 1 to 4 pm and on October 2, 2009 in Denver, CO. Donations may be made to the Hamlin Robinson School for Dyslexic Children, Seattle, WA or Minerva Scholarship Fund for deserving women returning to school, PO Box 2705, Gig Harbor, WA, 98335