Kenneth D. Roose - economist, educator, and civil libertarian - passed away at his home in Oberlin, Ohio on April 24, 2016 at age 96. Roose, who wrote “The Economics of Recession and Revival, An Interpretation of 1937-38,” was influential among business cycle theorists of the mid-twentieth century. He served from 1956-7 as a Senior Staff Economist on the President’s Council of Economic Advisers in Washington, DC.

After completing his PhD in economics at Yale University in 1948, he was hired to teach economics at the University of California Los Angeles. Just two years later, he was one of three UCLA professors who declined to sign the McCarthy-era loyalty oath that was later ruled unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court. On the verge of being fired by UCLA (the Board of Regents had already approved a motion to terminate the non-signers), Roose accepted an offer to teach economics at Oberlin College in Ohio.

No stranger to controversies of conscience, Roose had already taken the unpopular stand of declining to serve in the military in World War II. He applied for and was granted conscientious objector status. He did alternative service in a U.S. Forest Service Camp in Glendora CA from 1943-46. A staunch civil libertarian, Roose served as state Treasurer of the Ohio Civil Liberties Union in the 1950s.

During his Oberlin years, he co-founded and served on the Board of Directors of Oberlin-based Gilford Instruments Laboratories, Inc. until its merger with Corning Glass Works in 1980. For several years he was President of the Oberlin Consumers Coop Board of Directors. He served one year as president of the Allen Memorial Hospital Board.

Kenneth Roose was born on Nov 5, 1919 in the small town of Argonia, Kansas, 12 miles north of the Oklahoma border. His father, Paul Hughes Roose, was Superintendent of Schools, and his mother, Virginia Davis Roose, was a schoolteacher. In 1928, the family emigrated to North Hollywood, California. Ken’s parents worked hard to make ends meet during the Great Depression. Ken’s father ran a small wholesale grocery business, he and Ken’s mother both
taught school, and he sold real estate on the side. Ken Roose was active in Methodist youth groups that advocated that America stay out of war. These experiences influenced his later decision to become a conscientious objector. Roose graduated from North Hollywood High School in 1936.

Roose attended the University of Southern California, graduating Summa Cum Laude in 1940. At Yale in the 1940’s, he studied business cycles under the renowned professor Joseph Schumpeter. Shortly after graduating from college, he met his future wife Gretchen Burns, a student at UCLA. They were attending a summer conference at the Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, CA. They married in Washington D.C on June 12, 1942.

Memorial Service Planned

Roose is survived by his wife, Gretchen Burns Roose, and four children: Christina Roose of Olympia, Washington; Kirk Burns Roose of Lorain, Ohio; Deborah Roose of Oberlin; and Paul Davis Roose of Oakland, California. He is also survived by 6 grandchildren and 2 great-grandsons. His only sibling, brother Beverly Judson Roose, died in 2009.

A memorial service will be held at 2:30 PM Sunday June 19, 2016 at Kendal at Oberlin. Interment will be a private ceremony for family at the Westwood Cemetery in Oberlin. Memorial gifts may be given to the Kendal at Oberlin Residents Assistance Fund, or the Kenneth D. Roose Scholarship at Oberlin College.

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