

Kenneth D. Roose

11/05/19 to 04/24/16

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.

In his 2009 book *Resisting McCarthyism: To Sign or Not to Sign California’s Loyalty Oath*, author Robert Blauner profiled Kenneth Roose. “Roose’s principal reason for not signing was an opposition to political tests for employment,” Blauner wrote. “He also believed in defending everyone’s civil liberties, without exception.”

“My father, supported by my mother, was capable of making great sacrifices to remain true to his values,” said his son Paul. “Dad had grown up in southern California. He was happy to go back there to teach at UCLA, and he had three children under the age of six. Yet he took a stand on values that would cost him his job and cause him to move his young family 2500 miles away.”

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.

After teaching at Oberlin College for eleven years, Roose accepted an offer at Michigan State University Oakland (later Oakland University) to set up a new business administration program. Drawn increasingly to the challenges of college administration, he moved from Michigan to serve at Penn State as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts in 1964. Roose topped off his higher education career with a stint as Vice-President of the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C. from 1968-1970. “I was on a career path that was leading me to a college presidency,” Roose said later. “But the campuses were on fire with student protests at that time. I thought it would be a no-win proposition to try to balance the first amendment rights of the students with the educational mission.”

A lifelong avid tennis player, Ken Roose moved with his wife Gretchen in 1970 to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, in order to enjoy weather that permitted year-round play. He managed to combine his business acumen with his love of the game by being named court-appointed receiver of the bankrupt Fort Lauderdale Tennis Club in 1974. During these years, he also developed a strong interest in his family roots, tracing the Roose lineage back to the 18th century in Germany. He helped to found, and was for many years president of, the national Roose Family Association.

He and Gretchen relocated to the retirement community Kendal at Oberlin full-time in 2006. “Of all the places my parents had lived,” his daughter Deborah said recently, “they felt most at home in Oberlin. Dad proudly reminded people that he was the three-great nephew of the first president of Oberlin College, Asa Mahan.”

Early Years in Kansas and California

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

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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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