

Memorial Minute for Peter N. Rowe, Professor Emeritus of Government, 6 March 2023

By Gregory White, Department of Government, Smith College

Peter Rowe died last January 2022 at the age of 92 years. A dear colleague and friend, Peter was the very first person I met when I visited Smith for an interview. As chair of the search committee, he picked me up at The Autumn Inn for breakfast at the beginning of my visit. I will never forget how welcoming and kind he was to me on that nervous day.

Peter was born in 1929 and raised in Washington, DC. His stepmother, Margaret Brewer, was the Dean of Women at Washington College in Maryland. And Peter credited her with sparking his early interest in theater and literature. After graduating from Cornell University in 1950 with a degree in English Literature, Peter entered the military and served in Army intelligence in Germany for several years. The experience transformed him. He returned to the US in 1952 and devoted his graduate studies to international law and diplomacy. He first earned a Masters in International Politics at American University; he took evening classes while working for Radio Free Europe at the Library of Congress during the day. Peter went on to earn his Ph.D. from Yale University. He eventually arrived at Smith in 1958, working at the college for 42 years until his full retirement from teaching in 2000. He taught popular courses in international relations, US foreign policy, Cold War diplomatic history, and international law. Peter chaired the Government Department and served on major college committees. He was especially proud of his service as the faculty liaison on the wholesale renovation of Seelye Hall in the early 90s.

Peter possessed many scholarly and intellectual interests, but he had two in particular. The first was a fascination with Indian politics. This began in 1961 when he obtained a Fulbright grant to Osmania University in Hyderabad, India, where he earned a certificate in Indian Civilization. Peter continued to cultivate a lifelong interest in Indian politics and law, often traveling there as well as studying Hindi at the University of Pennsylvania during summers. He taught classes on Indian Politics at Smith, Wesleyan, and Amherst. A second key interest of Peter's was the 1982 UN Law of the Sea. He argued not only that it was a central achievement in its own right, but that it also illuminated key aspects of international law: the evolution of norms of sovereignty and territoriality, the challenges of fraught multilateral compliance and, of course, the ongoing environmental impact of human maritime activity.

Peter led a vigorous, active life. He was devoted to his wife, Barbara Ray Carpenter, whom he had known since high school. Barbara and Peter were married for 57 years until her death in 2013. In retirement, Peter was also deeply engaged in the community. He volunteered at the Survival Center, served on the boards of Historic Northampton and the Lathrop Communities, and was an active member of the Broad Brook Coalition. Peter was especially enthusiastic about his election to serve as a Forbes Library Trustee. He spoke passionately about Forbes' architecture, its prominence in Northampton's downtown landscape, and its vital role in the community as a center for learning and culture. Finally, Peter was a voracious reader, music enthusiast, gardener, practitioner of Tai Chi, and passionate traveler throughout his life. He was always off on some spectacular trip and was especially active in the Alumnae Association's Travel program, traveling with and lecturing to Smith alums on trips to destinations such as Morocco, India, and Holland. He also lectured to many Smith Clubs across the US.

Peter cherished his students. His boundless intellect and generosity of spirit made him respected by his colleagues, and deeply loved by his family and friends.