In Memoriam

Robert L. Lineberry was born on May 4, 1942 to John and Julia Lineberry. He learned from them to care passionately about people and the world. His father was an avid gardener and Bob followed in those footsteps. He not only loved to care for his own garden but loved visiting gardens around the world. His mother fostered his interest in learning, always setting high goals. His first interest in history, which he would often remind people was his original major, came from listening to his mother and his grandmother’s tales of the family emigrating to the United States from France through Canada and then down the Mississippi River.

In middle school, he developed an interest in classical music. He played the piano and dreamed of writing music and conducting orchestras. While neither of these happened, he loved music all his life and enjoyed attending concerts in cities around the world.

In high school, he found a calling as a debater thinking that he would someday be a coach. He worked on developing a deep voice and eliminating nasality. And he developed a voracious interest in everything from the Nuremburg trials to Sherlock Holmes. He loved to read, a quality which would continue throughout his life. After graduation from high school, he turned his debating skills into a scholarship to Central State College later transferring to the University of Oklahoma. During his tenure at OU, he and his debate colleague were awarded the high honor of being selected to attend the National Debate Tournament then held annually at West Point.

In 1964, he made two important decisions. He accepted a graduate research appointment to the University of North Carolina and he married Nita Ann Ray to whom he would be married for forty-eight years. In 1966, he was given the title Lecturer and appointed to lecture several large American government sections and to supervise all discussion sections lead by teaching assistants. As a Ph.D. candidate he spent only three years in Chapel Hill. In 1967, there were three more important milestones. His daughter Mary Nicole was born; he and his fellow graduate student Terry Fowler had an article accepted by the American Political Science review, and he accepted a position as Assistant Professor at the University of Texas.

In Austin, he finished his dissertation and received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at just about the same time that his son Robert Keith was born. It was also at this time that he began what was an almost lifetime collaboration with the sociologist, Charles M. Bonjean. Chuck had taken over a small journal published by the University of Texas and he asked Bob to be the associate editor for political science. The two of them worked tirelessly to encourage submissions from all the fields represented by the association. They worked at cutting the review time so that authors would be willing to take a chance with a fledgling journal. It was during these first few years at the University of Texas that Bob published his first book on urban politics with Ira Sharkansky. At the end of his third year he was promoted to Associate Professor. He also was asked to teach a series of courses for the US Air Force both at home and abroad.

 In 1974 Northwestern University came calling with an offer he could not refuse. The Institute for Urban Affairs at Northwestern University had a diverse and interesting set of scholars from a number of fields. He decided to take the offer even though it was difficult for him to leave his colleagues with whom he was working at the University of Texas, especially Chuck Bonjean.

During the years at Northwestern, he worked on several major grants including a large grant on policing with Herbert Jacob. This work produced several papers and books including Crime and City Politics with Herb Jacob and Anne Heintz (1983). It was during this time that Northwestern University offered him a paid semester and summer’s leave to work on personal research. He chose to take that time at the University of Kent in England, located in the lovely city of Canterbury.

After returning to Northwestern, he authored a text on public policy and completed the work on an American government text entitled: Government in America: People, Politics and Policy. (Later he would add two coauthors. First George Edwards III and then Martin Wattenburg.) He also developed an interest in environmental politics working with Paul Fresma. After seven years of research and teaching, he rekindled an interest in administration deciding to move to the University of Kansas to accept an offer to become Dean of the College of Arts and Science.

As luck would have it, he began his deanship just as a budget rescission hit the state of Kansas and the university. While he worked to balance a tight budget, he also instituted reforms on the academic side including a reworking of the core curriculum. Both Bob and Nita also became very involved in the music, theater and art programs at the university. He developed a love for Kansas basketball and continued to follow their ups and downs for the rest of his life.

In 1988, Bob was offered the position of Vice President/Provost at the University of Houston. In 1991, Bob moved back into teaching, taking up his place in the Department of Political Science. A past interest again reclaimed his interest. Chuck Bonjean had just been appointed to a post he had long coveted at the Hogg Foundation and he wanted Bob to take over his much loved journal. At first, Bob was reluctant, but eventually, he threw himself into taking over a now-respected journal and making it better. He spent seventeen years as editor of the journal making several important innovations. He looked for and found a new publisher, one with a more international focus. The journal had periodically done special issues on topical problems. These now became regularized. The journal moved from publishing four issues a year to publishing five, four regular issues and one topical issue

Gaining more flexibility as their children left the nest, Bob and Nita began to exercise their interest in travel. They visited over fifty nations. Bob was fortunate to be invited to various international conferences and asked to lecture at numerous universities in both foreign and domestic locations. He also lectured at the Chatauqua Institute series in New York and the American embassy in Helsinki. Bob was particularly gracious to those visiting America, sympathizing with their desire to learn and absorb American culture. He himself was drawn to other cultures and other people, always interested in their way of life and especially their politics, food and music.

On December 5, 2012, Bob Lineberry died after a brief illness having lived too short a life but a very rich one. He summed it up in his own words when he told his oncologist “I have done most of the things most people want to do in their lives.” He had indeed and he had done them well.

Bob was a wonderful colleague and student mentor. He often said that teaching was his greatest passion. To spend time with Bob meant enjoying a gracious conversation about world events and politics, national cultures, art, and literature. He is greatly missed by a loving family, his many colleagues and personal friends, and thousands of students.

Bob is survived by his beloved wife Nita, his children Mary Nicole and Robert Keith, six grandchildren, one great grandchild and his devoted brother Richard his wife Karen, Richard’s two children and five grandchildren. Bob’s family, colleagues and students have established a scholarship fund in his honor to continue his legacy as a teacher.

Harrell Rodgers

Nita Lineberry

February 1, 2013