

John F. Manley

Ron Rebholz Eulogy, January 31, 2014. Encina Hall

Ron Rebholz was not just an inspiring teacher of Shakespeare. He was throughout his years at Stanford a principled, courageous political activist who challenged the University to live up to its highest ideals, and regularly found it all too often a failure. You could write a good history of Stanford by following the life of Ron Rebholz, as I will try to demonstrate in this eulogy. For a dozen years or so, I was privileged to have Ron as a friend and fellow trouble-maker.

I met Ron Rebholz when I was gathering signatures in a petition calling for an investigation of the political activities of the Hoover Institution. Someone mentioned an English professor who might sign, so I contacted Ron.

Ron was a member of the Faculty Senate and he suggested that we focus the petition on the Senate. On May 26, 1983, after Ron and I addressed the Senate, it voted “overwhelmingly” urging the Board of Trustees to study the relationship between Hoover and the University. The fight was joined.

From then on, Ron and I worked to divorce the political operations of Hoover from the University, to kill Donald Kennedy’s and Hoover’s plan to bring the Reagan Presidential Library, the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, and an associated Reagan Museum to Stanford. We also joined forces to get the University to take responsibility for the migrant workers who lived and worked in poverty on Stanford land. And we supported Kennedy’s resignation when a government investigation and a House Subcommittee showed that Stanford’s accounting practices charged the American taxpayers for part of the costs of flowers, social receptions, an Italian fruit commode, the Stanford yacht, and many other embarrassing items.

I do not have time to recount all of these, so I will discuss Ron’s and my battle with the Hoover Institution and Reagan complex, but I will be glad to discuss others if anyone wishes.

The roots of the Hoover fight lie in the Political Science Department. When Hoover’s help was sought in retaining a professor who had an outside offer, W. Glenn Campbell declined, citing the Department’s lack of “sufficient reciprocity” toward Hoover. Two names were mentioned as possible joint appointments.

If the Hoover proposal were accepted, Department appointments would not be based solely on the best candidates identified in national searches, but partly, at least, on a quid pro quo with Hoover. I called the proposal improper but it made me curious about Hoover, so I got a copy of its 1982 Annual Report. I found there all of the evidence needed—from an unimpeachable source—that Hoover was extensively involved politically.

The Report proudly took credit for playing a major role in Ronald Reagan’s political career. Reagan openly thanked the Institution for its help. Martin Andersfron from Hoover was appointed a leading domestic advisor, and Richard Allen was appointed National Security Advisor. The joke around Hoover was last one out for Washington turn out the lights.

In 1959, Herbert Hoover and David Packard led an effort to make Hoover independent from Stanford control, so Hoover could more effectively promote conservative policy. Herbert Hoover made this clear when he said the Institution must not be merely a library, and when he declared its job as exposing “the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx.” By 1980, Hoover was not just heavily involved in Republican politics, its program included major efforts at shaping public opinion through literally hundreds of op-ed pieces placed in national media.

The question Ron and I asked was, What is such an institution doing on a university campus? By allowing Hoover to pursue its objectives aided by the good name of the university, Stanford crossed a line. The only answer for us was a divorce.

At first, Donald Kennedy and the Trustees in response to the Senate vote discussed appointing an independent, distinguished visiting committee, but this was soon shelved. Kennedy decided to appoint a committee chaired by a political scientist with a joint appointment with Hoover. Kennedy charged the Ward Committee with finding ways of strengthening ties between the two institutions. A critical review ran the risk of imposing controls on Hoover, which prospect had strong opponents in Hoover’s and Stanford’s camp. No one representing our views or the Senate’s was on the committee. The Ward report endorsed closer ties between Hoover and Stanford, going as far as criticizing some departments for their hostility to joint appointments.

Kennedy’s backing of Hoover was crucial. When Ron and I and a group of student leaders met with Kennedy he called our effort “unseemly.” This was a shocker. All we had done was circulate a petition, address the Faculty Senate, talk to the media, and enlist student support through the Daily and other sources. At no time did Kennedy challenge the veracity of anything we said about Hoover’s activities. Had Kennedy remained neutral it might have been possible to impose some rules and controls on Hoover, but with his support of Hoover we and our supporters forced a formidable foe.

What we did not know at the time was that secret talks were being held between the University and the White House, guided by Hoover, to bring the Reagan Presidential Library and the Reagan Center for Public Affairs to Stanford.

Wasting no time, W. Glenn Campbell opened discussions over the Reagan Library in 1981. He, Ed Meese, and Kennedy relied on the obvious academic value of a presidential library, but others cited the already strong ties between Stanford and the Reagan Administration. Especially objectionable was the Reagan center for Public Affairs, which Campbell insisted would be run by Hoover. Campbell and the White House’s demand that the Center be run by Hoover almost scuttled the entire project. A 1988 petition signed by 57 Stanford faculty demanded that the Center be subject to normal academic governance. The White House reluctantly agreed to this, and, with that, the project was set for Stanford.

There the matter stood until architectural plans for the project created a new firestorm of objections. The size of the project scheduled for the foothills overlooking Lake Lagunita, and the prospect of busloads of visitors offended environmentalists, homeowners, and, of course, Ron and me. All this proved too much for the White House which withdrew the offer. Had Kennedy,

the Trustees, and the Hoover Institution had their way the complex would today be gracing the foothills not far from where we are sitting.

After the Reagan Library proposal died, another controversy broke out when we learned that Stanford had for decades rented land for a migrant farm where workers lived and worked in poverty. Again we turned to Kennedy for action, and again we failed to get it.

Many people were shocked and appalled to learn that Stanford had its own migrant farm. Press coverage was extensive. Jane Gross of the New York Times filed a story complete with a photograph. Locally, Mary Madison of the Peninsula Times-Tribune, Bill Workman of the San Francisco Chronicle, Carl Irving of the San Francisco Examiner, and the Daily all followed the story closely.

Kennedy's response was a surprise. He declared that Stanford had no more responsibility for Webb Ranch workers than for Macy's employees who also work on Stanford land. The university's lawyers and Kennedy simply ignored the obvious differences between migrant farm workers and employees at the Stanford Shopping Center. After Kennedy resigned, his successors, Gerhard Casper and John Hennessey, were publicly asked to intervene on behalf of the Webb workers, but they reaffirmed the legalistic reply of Kennedy. After a long struggle, the workers at Webb Ranch voted to join the United Stanford Workers, and remain members today. It should be noted that when negotiations with the Webbs bogged down Kennedy did intervene with a threat to turn the land over to academic use, which was followed soon by a labor-management agreement.

The forced resignation of Campbell at age 65 opened the way for a new, more skillful director, John Raisian, who joined Kennedy in establishing closer, more agreeable ties between Hoover and Stanford. Hoover's mission, however, remains the same: Hoover's 2010 Annual Report repeats Herbert Hoover's directive that the Institution is not, and must not be, a mere library. Hoover continues major efforts to influence public opinion through hundreds of op-ed pieces, the internet, a television series, a large media fellowship program, and the Hoover press. Hoover has tempered its rhetoric but still pushes its agenda aided by the good name of Stanford.

What did Ron and I and our supporters accomplish?

1. We told the truth, which is supposed to mean something in a university.
2. But Hoover and the University have become closer. Kennedy deflected the Faculty Senate's vote. Hoover is less controversial now, but it still operates as an independent institution within the frame of the University.
3. Some departments have been Hooverized, as Alex George feared, through joint appointments. The deputy director of Hoover is a member of the Political Science Department, now riddled with Hooverites/joint appointments.
4. The Reagan Library complex is in the Simi Valley, not the Stanford foothills, and we played a role in this.
5. Kennedy left office under a cloud, but Webb Ranch endures with little University involvement.

6. To students: telling the truth does not mean the truth will prevail, for the power in power is formidable. Most important: don't give up. Much work remains to be done at Stanford.

Thank you.