



## IN MEMORIAM

Earl F. Cheit  
Professor, Haas School of Business, Emeritus  
UC Berkeley  
1926-2014

Earl “Budd” Cheit was born in Minneapolis in 1926, and received his undergraduate, law and doctorate in economics from the University of Minnesota. After practicing law and labor arbitration, he joined the faculty of the Department of Economics at Saint Louis University.

In 1957, he became a visiting associate professor and research economist at UC Berkeley’s Institute of Industrial Relations, Haas School of Business. Cheit headed a Ford Foundation sponsored research project on occupational disability law and published its findings in his first book, *Injury and Recovery in the Course of Employment*. He subsequently became the Institute’s director, beginning a long and distinguished record of university service. Following the Free Speech protest movement in 1962, he was elected to an emergency committee of the Academic Senate. Between 1965 and 1969 he served as Executive Vice- Chancellor, helping to manage the university’s response to campus student unrest. He served as vice- president of financial and business management for the University of California system from 1981 to 1982. In 1993 and 1994, he was the campus’ athletic director.

As a faculty member at Berkeley’s business school, a position he occupied from 1957 to his retirement in 1991, Cheit taught classes on industrial relations, labor law and labor economics as well as a new class on the impact of business on society. Among his most important academic contributions was the development of the school’s teaching and research program on the social, political and legal environment of business. Cheit convened a multi- disciplinary academic conference on the role of the corporation in society, which led to the publication in 1964 of *The Business Establishment*. This influential volume, which Cheit edited, played a major role in creating the academic study of business- society relations.

According to Haas Dean Richard Lyons, “He sowed many of the seeds of our school’s recently established Institute on Business and Social Impact, which helps for- profit and non- profit enterprises magnify their impact on society. Budd influenced management education more broadly through his research and teaching on the role of business in society and the potential for markets to create a better world.”

While on sabbatical with the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, Cheit undertook an extensive study of the finances of higher education. This research led to the 1971 publication of the report, *The New Depression in Higher Education*, which concluded that universities lacked the financial resources to meet the increasing student demand for higher education. As the costs faced by colleges were rising at a faster rate than their incomes, colleges would need to receive more public support, cut costs, and raise their fees. This study, which has proven remarkably prescient, received national attention, including a front- page article in *The New York Times*. He subsequently participated in a follow- up study that reported that universities had only

achieved a “fragile stability” and were still “living on borrowed time.” Cheit subsequently served as the program officer in charge of higher education at the Ford Foundation.

In 1976, Cheit became dean of UC’s Berkeley’s business school, a position he held through 1982 and also during the 1990-1991 academic year. He served at a critical time for the school as it faced state funding cuts and campus enrollment cutbacks. To help transition the school from an academic department to a professional school he worked to increase its autonomy, enhance its professional reputation, and forge closer relationships with the business community. He and his wife, June, with warmth and hospitality, regularly held dinner parties at their home for faculty and their spouses which played an important role in fostering a sense of community among the school’s growing faculty, and forged many enduring friendships.

Cheit’s close relationship with the Haas family played a crucial role in securing funding for a new home for the business school, which was named for Walter A. Haas Sr., a 1910 graduate of the school and former president and chair of Levi Strauss & Co. When the school moved into its own buildings, becoming the Haas School of Business, the classroom building was named Cheit Hall in recognition of his longstanding development efforts on behalf of the school. To further honor Cheit’s role in business education, the school’s prestigious teaching award was named the Earl F. Cheit Award for Excellence in Teaching. In 1989, Cheit himself received the campus Distinguished Teaching Award

Among Cheit’s wide ranging interests was the performing arts. His association with Cal Performances began during the 1960s when Zellerbach Hall was still being constructed. He created and chaired a board that developed a budget for the new facility and in 1996 was elected founding chair of the Cal Performances Board of Trustees, remaining an active member until his death.

Cal Performance Director Matias Tarnopolsky recalls that Cheit “had an incredible capacity to bring together the visionary and the practical, with his unabashed advocacy for quality and for the essential importance of the performing arts. His voice at Cal Performances’ board and committee meetings often would be the last heard, and importantly so – summarizing up the issues in an artistic, historical and economic context which simply made sense. And showed us all a clear path for the future.” In 2010, Cheit received the Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts from the Cal Performances Board of Trustees.

Cheit’s extraordinary impact on the university has been codified in a Bancroft Library Oral History. It offers a fascinating account of the University through Budd’s vast experience and enlightened perspective, demonstrating the depth and extent of his dedication to it, the myriad roles he played and the sheer delight he took in each of them. Jenny Chatman, who served with Budd on the board of the Simpson Manufacturing Company, stated at his memorial service that “reading the oral history is like spending an afternoon with him. You can see his eyes twinkling, and hear his wonderful, hearty laugh, and of course it is easy to spot his rare combination of attributes - strong views tempered by a modest ego, regular expressions of sincere admiration for others and a man who was truly gratified by the many ways in which he was honored over the years.”

Cheit’s extensive professional activities included service as a trustee for Mills College, board member of the University of California Press, board chairman of Shaklee Corporation, board director of CFC Transportation, board director of Simpson Manufacturing, associate director of the Carnegie Council of Higher Education and a senior advisor on Asia- Pacific relations for the Asia Foundation.

Budd Cheit’s impact on the university, the Haas School, the many organizations he served, and on the many people who were privileged to know him, was enormous – and endures. He was truly one- of- a- kind and is greatly missed.

Cheit is survived by his wife of 63 years, June Cheit, his daughters, Danielle Cheit and Julie Ross, his sons David and Ross and three grandchildren.

David Vogel