



IN MEMORIAM

Susan F. Rasky
Senior Lecturer
UC Berkeley
1952 - 2013

Susan F. Rasky, an award-winning Congressional reporter who returned to her native California to teach at U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism for more than two decades, died Sunday, December 29th, following a long illness. She was 61.

As a teacher, she was known for her passion for politics and her attentiveness to her students. Her connection to her students often extended years past their graduation.

A Los Angeles native, Ms. Rasky received a bachelor's degree in history from Berkeley in 1974. She then traveled to England where she earned a master's degree in economic history from the London School of Economics.

She began her journalism career in Washington at the Bureau of National Affairs, covering economic policy, and five years later she moved to Reuters where she reported from Capitol Hill and the White House. In 1984, she joined the New York Times, where she worked as an editor and reporter in both New York and Washington. Ultimately, she became the Congressional correspondent for the Times.

Ms. Rasky wrote more than 1,700 articles for the Times from both New York and Washington, many exploring the intricacies of the tax code and the Federal Reserve.

"She was a dogged reporter," Adam Clymer, a former Washington correspondent for The Times, recalled. "Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of Ways and Means, once fled into a men's room to escape her. She waited."

In 1991, she came back to Berkeley to teach journalism, at first in a temporary capacity and eventually as a full-time senior lecturer. Within three months of her arrival at Berkeley, she was notified that she had won a George Polk award for national reporting, among the most prestigious prizes in journalism, for work she had done the previous year.

The awards committee cited Ms. Rasky and her colleague David Rosenbaum for "meticulously and insightfully" covering the "greatest budget debate that has ever taken place in the United States."

Moving effortlessly from the newsroom to the classroom, Ms. Rasky left an enduring imprint on a generation of students. In her years at Berkeley, she specialized in teaching political and government reporting, the foundational courses of the school since it began 20 years earlier.

Ms. Rasky was “the most profound influence of my career,” said John Myers, who graduated in 1995 and now is political editor of the ABC- TV affiliate in Sacramento. “Susan became a guiding force in my professional life in August 1993 and never wavered in her willingness to advise, promote and tutor my work as a political reporter.”

Mr. Myers recalled how her former students referred to themselves as “Rasky- ites.” Bruce Cain, a former political science professor at Berkeley and then at Stanford, recalled a different nickname —“Raskyfarians”— because “she so successfully imparted her own tenacious political reporting style and they were so devoted to her.”

While teaching, Ms. Rasky delighted in writing about arcane, political tactics as well as big policy issues. She continued to report for a number of outlets, including the Los Angeles Times, the California Journal, the Sacramento Bee and NPR.

“She was a great reporter,” recalled Peter Schrag, the retired editorial page editor of the Sacramento Bee. “I was close to things in Sacramento for 20 years, but I learned a helluva lot from her about the things I thought I already knew. I think between her reporting and her students, to whom she devoted endless amounts of time and, I think, real love, she must have worked 18 hours a day.”

She is survived by her mother, Evelyn, and her brother, Louis.

The Graduate School of Journalism created the Susan Rasky Scholarship Fund for Journalistic Excellence in her honor.

Tom Goldstein
Rob Gunnison