



Friends, faculty remember legacy of history professor

OBITUARY: Renaissance art expert Albert Hoxie loved travel, slide shows

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Albert Hoxie, the UCLA History professor who inspired Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to pursue a history major, died Jan. 3, at the UCLA Medical Center of complications from pneumonia. He was 86.

An expert on Renaissance art, Hoxie, who joined UCLA in 1950, was renowned for his love of travel and teaching. Upon his death, Hoxie bequeathed his extensive slide collection, as well as his personal library, to the university. According to his colleagues, this final gesture was indicative of Hoxie's teaching style. He often showed slides from his travels to illustrate concepts in class to humanize history.

"He taught me that authentic history was not dry, lifeless facts but rather the living legacies of real human beings," wrote Abdul-Jabbar in his book, "Black Profiles in Courage."

The over 200,000 slides procured during Hoxie's annual trips to Europe often found their way into his lectures, explained Professor Geoffrey Symcox. Such presentations were celebrated by his students.

In addition, his lectures were tremendously popular with students and Hoxie was often applauded at their conclusion, said Symcox.

When on vacation Hoxie always stayed at the same hotels.

"The employees knew him. He was a regular," Symcox said. "He liked to travel first class. He was from a more leisured, a more civil, genteel age. Someone who insisted on the social proprieties."

Symcox learned first hand the benefits of such slide-oriented lectures. Returning home from abroad, Hoxie would often invite friends and colleagues to view his slides.

"The sense I have of art history I owe principally to him and those slide evenings," said Symcox.

In fact, Symcox had the opportunity to learn first hand of Hoxie's classroom presence, for he served as one of his teaching assistants in the early '60s.

"He walked into lecture with no notes. Then he lectured and chain-smoked throughout. For him, lectures were a performance," Symcox said.

Reflecting this, Hoxie was awarded UCLA's distinguished teaching award in 1973.

Hoxie was a legitimate UCLA institution, said Harlan Lebo, UCLA spokesperson.

Largely uninterested in research, Hoxie concentrated almost exclusively on his students.

Having worked as a Hollywood agent in the 1950s, Hoxie stumbled into a job at UCLA even though he had no doctoral degree. Invited by friends to lecture, Hoxie casually slipped into a full-time position, Symcox explained.

Hoxie was unconventional in several ways. Born of a wealthy family, he lived in the same house for 70 years and was deeply unreligious.

"He didn't have time for religion. And he occasionally said rude things about Luther and Calvin," Symcox said.

Hoxie's love for Renaissance art and architecture blossomed while stationed in Italy by the U.S. Army Air Corps. This love was later translated to his students.

"He lectured about the things he loved and so when he talked about these things, he talked with a deep understanding and enthusiasm," Symcox said.

Born on April 22, 1912, in Adrian, Mich., Hoxie moved to Beverly Hills in 1929. He received his bachelor of arts degree from Stanford in 1935 and his master's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1936.

According to Symcox, his legacy will live on.

"He has left an incredible following of people," said Symcox.



UCLA history department

Albert Hoxie, professor of history, died Jan. 3 at the age of 86.