

IN MEMORY OF

**PETER
CUSHING
ROLLINS**

Obituary for Peter Cushing Rollins



Peter C. Rollins, PhD, retired Regents Professor of English at Oklahoma State University and resident of Stillwater, Oklahoma died on March 23, 2015 at Stillwater Medical Center. He will be available for public viewing from Wednesday afternoon through Thursday at Strode Funeral Home, Stillwater. His funeral service will be held at 11:00 am Friday, March 27, 2015 at St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Westport, Oklahoma. Interment will follow at Oak Hill Cemetery, Cleveland, Oklahoma. Strode Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Born on April Fool's Day of 1942, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Daniel G and Myrtle A Rollins, he was raised in a privileged environment of Brookline, Massachusetts. His older brothers, Phillip A and Daniel Jr preceded him through the excellent public school system of that Boston suburb. During a Spring break of his freshman year at BHS, he completed four book reports for English, discovering through this experience, the wonders of the life of the mind. In high school, he participated in major sports and was selected by the Boston Herald as the third string center for football, state wide. Concurrently, he found the joy of expression in creative writing classes taught by Francis Newsom, the guru of creative writing. Under Newsome's tutelage, he won from The Atlantic Monthly secondary school competition an honorable mention for a sonnet in his junior year and then a 2nd place for short story during the next cycle. Although the Atlantic offered him a four year scholarship in creative writing at Pittsburgh U, he was told by his father that it would be better for him to be "on the sacred soil of Dartmouth College."

After two years in the shadow of the Rollins Chapel, he transferred to Harvard College where he was attracted by the History and Literature, an interdisciplinary major conceived in 1909 by Barrett Wendell. As an honors student, Rollins had full access to the stacks at the Widener Library and the privilege of sharing a carrel, a private scholarly space where books and notes could be deposited safely. His senior essay focused on Orestes Brownson, a mercurial public figure who

moved through most of the major political and religious groups of his day in a search for both God and a social vision. The research and writing were thrilling and he committed his life to scholarship.

Meanwhile, he signed up for the Platoon Leader Corps of the U.S. Marines and attended bootcamp in the summers of his freshman and junior years. The program was physically challenging and he completed it proudly. At the end of June, 1963, upon graduation with high honors, he was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the US Marines. His father, who was a notary public, administered the oath and pinned on his bars. Because his father had been a Captain in the Marines during WWII and his brother, Dan, had been a Marine in the Korean Conflict, this service continued a valued family tradition-and may have made up for the rejection of dear Dartmouth. Peter served from that date until 1966, gaining an education in politics, leadership, and human relations-both at home and in Vietnam.

From the Marines, he returned to Harvard to earn his Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization, writing his dissertation on Benjamin Lee Whorf, a linguist whose work reflected the spiritual angst of post-WWI America. Upon graduation, he moved to Oklahoma State U to be the assistant director of the Will Rogers Publication Project. This transition was comfortable because Rogers was a public spokesman for the ordinary-and many extraordinary-Americans during the same period which cultivated Whorf's ideas about culture. The Will Rogers project eventually produced 21 volumes.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in Peter's name to OSU Foundation Library Endowment Fund, Acct #2018700, 400 s Monroe, Stillwater, OK 74074; USMC Foundation, 3800 Fetter Park Dr, Ste 104, Dumfries, VA 22025; or USO, PO Box 96322, Washington, DC 20090-6322.

Condolences may be emailed to the family and an online obituary may be viewed by visiting www.strodefh.com .

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