

Obituaries

Richard L. Park (1920–1980)

Richard L. Park died on September 8, 1980. He was the author of more than sixty papers and the author, co-author, or editor of ten books on the history and politics of South Asia. He was a past president of the Association for Asian Studies, and served for five years as its secretary-treasurer. He was, with W. Norman Brown, a founder and prime mover of the American Institute of Indian Studies and its former vice-president. He was an associate of the Council on the International Exchange of Scholars and a consultant on South Asia to the U.S. Department of State. He was the first director of the South Asia Program at the University of California at Berkeley in 1950s and the first director of the Center for Southern Asian Studies at the University of Michigan. He was on the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh, where he also served as Dean of Social Sciences.

He was also a dear friend, trusted confidant, and source of unending strength to many of us who were privileged to be his students (many times in the past few months, I have heard people say that "I would not be in this field if it had not been for Richard Park"). There were many who thought of him as formidable, and, in his size and his knowledge of the politics of the subcontinent, perhaps he was. But no one who ever heard him reminisce about "my Gurkhas" with a twinkle of self-deprecating humor, or heard his understated yet passionate plea for better understanding of India, as in his presidential address to the Association, or saw his dedication to those who loved India, from prime ministers to undergraduates, or brought to him a personal or academic problem will remember him as anything but a deeply compassionate man.

Richard L. Park was born in Savannah, Georgia, on March 29, 1920, the son of Leonard and Alice Farrell Park. He took his B.A. at Northwestern University and, after two years in India and another in Japan as a captain in the U.S. Air Force, went on to take an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Harvard. He then took a position at Berkeley, moved to Michigan, to Pittsburgh, and back to Michigan. For many, the wide-ranging humanism of his evening seminars at Berkeley, in which political discussions included wrenching observations on the Great Bengal Famine and pithy comments on Nirad Chaudhuri's interest in artillery, was an irresistible introduction to the man—and to India. He loved India. I was privileged to be with him on the last trip he made there. Although he was ill, it was clear from his sparkle and the responses that he evoked from his many old and dear friends there that India loved him in return.

He served us well. He urged the study of the modern culture of Asia before it was fashionable to do so. He spoke for the field and for greater understanding, wherever and whenever he had the opportunity. Until the very end of his life he offered leadership both by idea and by example. One of his last acts was to undertake the chairmanship of the Committee on Development of the AHS. That kind of devotion can only be inspiring, and it is a measure of the man. He has left his mark upon us as

individuals and upon our field, and we can only be thankful that he was among us. A leader of this quality does not often come along.

EDWARD C. DIMOCK, JR.
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Walter Francis Vella (1924–1980)

Walter Vella was struck and killed by a bus in Bangkok, Thailand, on December 30, 1980. He had arrived in Bangkok a few days earlier to participate in the ceremonies for the 100th anniversary of the birth of King Rama VI on January 1. Vella's most recent book, *Chaiyo! The Role of King Vajiravudh in the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu, 1978) was to be presented to the King of Thailand on that occasion.

A native of San Francisco, Vella entered the University of California at Berkeley in 1942 but was soon drawn into military service. Placed in an ASTP program, he began his study of Thai language and was then assigned to serve with the OSS in the China, Burma, India Theatre of operations. Taking a discharge in Asia, he stayed on for a year in Thailand working as a code clerk in the U.S. Embassy. He returned to Berkeley and finished his B.A. degree in 1948. He then went to work for the State Department as a political analyst on Thailand. A year later he was back in Berkeley where he completed his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, concentrating on Thai language and history. While a Ph.D. candidate at Berkeley he wrote *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand* (Berkeley, 1955), an insightful survey of the effects of Western institutions and ideas in Thailand. His doctorate was awarded in 1954 on a dissertation, which later appeared in book form under the title *Siam under Rama III, 1824–1851* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: The Association for Asian Studies, 1957). This book made extensive use of Thai language sources, integrating these into the information contained in basic Western-language histories of Thailand.

While at the State Department, Vella met Dorothy Burgeson; they were married in June 1951. She has worked closely with him on his research and publishing, being listed as co-author of his latest book. With their two sons, Eric born in 1953 and Paul born in 1954, the Vellas left Berkeley in 1955 to work on the HRAF Handbook on Thailand, which was being prepared at Cornell University; Vella was co-editor of the handbook. There were no academic jobs available in the Southeast Asia field at the time, so in 1956 Vella took a one-year Ford Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University to study international relations. The next year, 1957, he accepted the position of head of the John G. White Orientalia Collection of the Cleveland Public Library; he remained in this post until 1962. During these years he wrote chapters on Thailand for edited composite volumes and contributed pieces on Thailand to various encyclopaedias. His involvement with bibliographic work at this time bore later fruit in his publication of the *Summary Report/Conference on Resources for Research on Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1963) and *Asia: A Guide to Basic Books* (New York, 1966).

In 1962, Vella was appointed Associate Professor of Southeast Asian History at the University of Hawaii. In 1965 he was promoted to Professor and held this position until his death. While at the University of Hawaii he taught courses in the