

RICHARD PAUL ROARK
(1936 - 1970)

Richard P. Roark died in a scuba diving accident at the age of 34, while vacationing with his wife in the Caribbean, in April of this year. In addition to his wife, he left a young child. His death has brought a feeling of great sadness to those who have known him, because he was a very kind, generous, and idealistic man and a gifted teacher.

Roark was born in Colorado on July 7, 1936. Later his family moved to Los Angeles, where Roark went to high school. His undergraduate work was done at the University of California at Los Angeles for the first year, and then at the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his B.A. degree in 1958. He graduated with highest honors in anthropology and with a Phi Beta Kappa key. He then continued his graduate studies in anthropology at Berkeley, and received his Ph.D. in September of 1964. After that he went on to become a faculty member in the Social Studies Department of the State University of New York at Genesco, a position he continued to occupy until the time of his death.

We at Berkeley inevitably lost touch with Roark after he went to Genesco, but he is well remembered here as one of the most valuable and interesting students and research colleagues in our department. He had an unusually distinguished scholastic record, and all professors who were called on to comment on it through the years pointed to his exceptionally acute mind, wide ranging interests, powers of organization, and clear expression of ideas. In particular, everyone stressed the originality of the ideas he contributed to discussions and research. His principal research field was Andean archaeology, but he also had an extensive interest in linguistics. His third field of specialization was the study of the Indians of North America, and he had considerable background in social anthropology and the theory of anthropology as well. He also did a great deal of work in physical anthropology, and distinguished himself

as a teaching assistant in that field. In other words, he was one of the very rare individuals who had some expert knowledge and insight in all major branches of modern anthropology. Rarer still was his success in seeing the relationships of all these specialized areas of research to one another, and the manner in which they were working in complementary ways toward the same goal, which he saw as the understanding of cultural processes. Roark's conception of cultural processes was, as everything else that he did, original and, to some, controversial. However, it was very difficult to quarrel with his reasoning, which was based on concrete evidence and skillful logical argument. Perhaps the best testimony to the quality of his scholarship is the high esteem in which he was held by professors such as Theodore D. McCown, John H. Rowe, and Eugene A. Hammel.

His most distinguished publication is on the subject of Peruvian archaeology, a monograph entitled "From Monumental to Proliferous in Nasca Pottery," a revision of his dissertation. In this study Roark showed how one art style changes into a very different one by a process of internal development; techniques borrowed from linguistics were used to demonstrate the process.

Perhaps not least among Roark's endearing qualities was a certain awkwardness and shyness in personal relations, qualities that his friends knew how to appreciate as part of his personality. Unfortunately these were also qualities that made field work in unaccustomed cultural settings difficult for him. This awkwardness turned out to be a very good fortune for students, however, because it caused Roark to dedicate his professional life to teaching, an occupation at which he excelled. There are a great many people whose paths he crossed who will always remember him as someone who enriched their lives and made them aware of the dignity, greatness and comical aspects of people, in times of good fortune as well as in adversity and sorrow.

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