

## A Remembrance of Stanley Rubenstein

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A week or so after Stan's death on September 30<sup>th</sup> of this year, his wife Bobi called to tell me he had died after experiencing a severe heart attack. Stan was in his 86<sup>th</sup> year. I first met him early in the 1980s (I do not remember when exactly) either at the Henry George School of Social Science in New York or at one of the annual Georgist conferences I began to attend. Stan and I eventually became colleagues and formed a close and lasting friendship.

Stan was, first and foremost, a person committed to his wife and family. For much of his adult life he also devoted his time and talents to the promotion of the principles he came to share with me and others in our quest for real equality of opportunity in this world.

For twenty years he taught history at Oceanside High School on Long Island, New York, retiring in 1983. During the early years of the 1960s, Stan was introduced to the writings of Henry George, decided to take courses at the Henry George School in New York and a few years later established an extension of the school on Long Island. During that year (1967), Stan produced fourteen hard-hitting historical essays dealing with land-related themes and issues. He wrote on the "Anti-Rent Riots in New York State in 1839," "The Dutch and the Patroons," "The Erie Canal," and on other important lessons of our historical experience. He also began to contribute articles regularly to The Henry George News, published by the New York school. In 2000, he wrote about those years:

"It was begun in 1967 with the help of Bob Clancy. Our main focus was on the basic courses. During a peak period, between 1968 to 72, we graduated over 140 students in one year, operating mainly with adult education programs. In one class, Valley Stream in Nassau County, we had our largest graduating class, somewhere in the vicinity of 60. At that time, Bob Bianco was teaching for the Long Island Extension."

Stan also established a relationship with the person who managed the radio station of Hofstra University. He was invited to host a program during which he introduced listeners to the ideas he had come to embrace and also brought in public figures to be interviewed.

In 1973, after several years of troubling changes in the governance and direction of the Henry George School in New York, Stan was brought in as Acting Director. He stayed on for two years even though he was still teaching high school history full time.

The trustees of the Henry George School continued to struggle to find a way to reinvigorate its program despite the loss of much of its financial base by withdrawal of support by the [John C.] Lincoln Foundation and the removal in 1971 of Robert Clancy as Director. Phil Finkelstein, a former deputy mayor of New York City, was eventually brought in to head the school, which sold its headquarters of many years and moved into a building near Grand Central Station.

When Phil Finkelstein died suddenly of heart failure in 1983, Stan agreed to come back as Director. This was a low ebb in the school's experience with classroom instruction. The new location proved to be less than satisfactory for the school's offerings on political economy. Stan turned his energy to an area of education with which he had sound experience: the high schools. He began to develop lesson plans on land-related topics for use by social studies teachers. Convincing teachers to make use of these materials required the building of personal relationships with individual teachers and department heads. Slowly, but surely, Stan's efforts resulted in a growing list of teachers signing on to use materials provided by the Henry George School.

Our relationship became more personal after I was elected a trustee of the Henry George School in 1985. Then, to my great surprise, just a year later the then President, Paul Nix, approached me asking if I would be willing to succeed him as President if he submitted my name in nomination. As one would expect, once I became President, Stan and I had reason to speak and meet frequently in preparation for the monthly meetings of the board of trustees. We quickly formed a working relationship based on trust and mutual respect.

By 1988, Stan and I, along with many others on the board, concluded that the move to 5 East 44<sup>th</sup> Street had been a mistake. The decision was made to sell the building and move the school to a neighborhood where evening classes would have a fair chance of success. Stan, as Director, responded with great patience to all of the challenges associated with this move and the renovation of the new building at 121 East 30<sup>th</sup> Street. One problem after another seemed to arise as the new building underwent renovations to meet the almost endless list of city demands.

Once we were in the new building Stan came to me with a request that we relieve him of overall responsibility for the school's programs. He wanted to concentrate on his work with the high schools. So, in 1989, the position of Director was offered to George Collins, who accepted and moved from Philadelphia to New York.

George brought a renewed commitment to the adult education effort and soon the classrooms of the school were once again filling with students. George and Stan also worked together to produce -- in-house -- new educational materials, including film series on U.S. history and Fundamental Economics.

Stan continued his work with the school until 1996. That same year I declined to stand again for election as President of the school's board of trustees. While Stan was now looking toward retirement and a more relaxing life in a new home out at the far

North Fork of Long Island, my reasons involved increased responsibilities at work. A year later I resigned from the board altogether. Although Stan rather quickly put behind him his association with nearly all of the people we both knew in what I refer to as the “Henry George community,” we talked every few months.

As the years came and went, our conversations became less frequent, as happens when distance prevents friends from getting together. I managed to make the trip to Long Island one year to spend a few days catching up. Several years ago, Stan stopped to have lunch with me on his way south through New Jersey to some sort of retreat. I had been thinking of him and planning to give him a call soon when Bobi called to tell me he had died. He may have been thinking about picking up the phone to call me; but, then, Stan was always busy doing something.