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Helena Znaniiecka Lopata: Remarks to the ASA Section on the History of Sociology²⁸

Mary Jo Deegan

THE DEATH of Helena Znaniiecka Lopata represents a significant loss to the History of Sociology section because she was a good friend and colleague. Because of her direct family tie to the early years of sociology, especially at the University of Chicago, her passing also signals the end of an important era in the discipline. I knew Helena for over 30 years, and I was asked to reflect briefly on her life and career at our section reception in Atlanta. For those members not at the reception, this is what I said.

Helena Lopata was a friend to many of us in the History of Sociology section. She passionately loved and hated sociology, and these strong emotions were tied to the complex career of her father, Florian Znaniiecki; her uncertain place in Polish and American society; her roles as a daughter, wife, housewife, and intellectual; and her ambivalence to Chicago sociology.

I met Helena in 1971, and we had a long and complicated relationship. As a feminist, she loved my work.²⁹ As a loyal yet confused Chicago alumna, she hated my work.³⁰ But her relationship to the History of Sociology section and to the Harriet Martineau Sociological Society was strong, positive, and brimming with curiosity. I recall her enjoyment of the long

²⁸ **SOCIOLOGICAL ORIGINS**, Volume 4, No. 1, Fall 2005: 35-36. All rights reserved. Please visit our free website (www.sociological-origins.com) for additional information and other features.

These remarks were delivered to the American Sociological Association Section on the History of Sociology Reception, August 16, 2003.

²⁹ Helena was very pleased with my book on Jane Addams and writings on Harriet Martineau, and she was pleased to be included in a project I organized (*see* David Maines, "Coming to Grips: Aspects of the Life History of Helena Z. Lopata," *Midwest Feminist Papers* 4 (1983: 112-124)); several panels for the Midwest Sociological Society, and the inclusion of an essay on her, by Barbara Ryan, in my book on *Women In Sociology: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* (Greenwood Press, 1991:261-72). [A revised and updated survey by Ryan is found above, this issue – Ed.]

³⁰ A sign of this ambiguity can be found in her comments on my work, "The Second Sex and the Chicago School: Women's Accounts, Knowledge, and Work, 1945-1960," in *A Second Chicago School?: The Development of a Postwar American Sociology*, edited by Gary Alan Fine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995: 322-364). *See* Helena Znaniiecka Lopata, "Postscript," in *A Second Chicago School?: The Development of a Postwar American Sociology*, edited by Gary Alan Fine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995: 365-86).

drive from Chicago to Mackinac Island in 1997,³¹ and her delight in finding good food, welcoming friends, and congenial ideas at the end of her journey.

She joined many of us in Bielefeld (Germany), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), and Torun (Poland) as we presented our work to the ISA. At these international conferences she told stories about her father, his important work, and his significant role as the founder of Polish sociology.

We miss her tonight but we can remember her best by celebrating the rich heritage she left to us and other sociologists.



**AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION SECTION ON THE
HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARLY
BOOK AWARD PRESENTATION, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 2002.**

[Award to: *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, edited by Michael R. Hill and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale, with an introduction by Helena Z. Lopata. (*Women and Sociological Theory*, Mary Jo Deegan, Series Editor). New York: Routledge, 2001]. (Left to Right: Lopata, Kimberly Guinta (Routledge representative), Deegan, Pat Nation (Chair, HOS Distinguished Scholarly Book Award Committee), Hoecker-Drysdale, Hill). [Photo: Shulamit Reinhartz].

³¹ For her reflections on the Mackinac Seminar, see Helena Z. Lopata's "Introduction" in *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, edited by Michael R. Hill and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale. New York: Routledge, 2001: xiii-xvii).