

ROBERT WELLES BOOTH

Robert Welles Booth, a man distinguished more by quiet presence than by bluster, died Wednesday, February 26, 2003, at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center in Worcester. He was eighty-seven years old. Booth will be remembered as a self-effacing, contemplative man, more deeply connected to the subtle nuances of art and nature than to the hurly-burly of commerce and society.

Booth had been a member of the American Antiquarian Society since October 18, 1978. In his twenty-five years of membership, he was a loyal and attendant supporter of the Society, both in service and in generosity. Booth served from 1981 to 1984 on the Committee on the Hall, with a particular interest in the security of the Society's collections. Further, he served on the Committee on Nominations in 1984 and 1985. It was as a member of the Worcester Committee of the 175th Anniversary Isaiah Thomas Fund that Booth was able to make significant contributions to the future of the Society. He was active in raising support for the fund, and he lent his personal support to the fund with a gift of \$100,000 to endow library staffing. He expanded on this support of the library in 1992 by providing \$75,000 for the endowment of the librarian's chair honoring President Emeritus Marcus A. McCorison. Nancy Burkett is the first Marcus A. McCorison Librarian. This extraordinary generosity was the beginning of Booth's selfless direct and indirect support of the Society; in all, the Society was the beneficiary of his kindness at a level exceeding half a million dollars. Whenever approached for support, he invariably responded at the upper range of what was asked.

Robert Booth was the son of Worcester newspaper scion George Francis Booth and his wife Minnie Welles Booth. The father was a self-assured, highly public protagonist, who realized early that his second son was not similarly disposed. Writing in 1927 to a summer-camp director about his ten-year-old son's recent camp experience, George Booth said: 'I knew that he had got

to have the rough and tumble and give and take of competition with other boys. I realized that unless this matter was straightened out now that [later] he was going to lose a lot. . . . The camp accomplished for him what I wanted, not only gave him the outdoor life and the exercise but it gave him the "know-how" and the feel of being part of the game. . . .'

Summer camp notwithstanding, Booth was inclined to the more sensitive side of life. He had a lifelong interest in, knowledge of, and appreciation for the theater, a sphere that he pursued with ardor. He was also an amateur indoor and outdoor horticulturist, taking a great interest in houseplants and in his gardens at his summer home on Brooks Pond, in North Brookfield, Massachusetts.

His interest in plants was evidenced in latter years by his allegiance to Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, Massachusetts, but also much earlier in his life, as shown in a letter from Lieutenant Booth written to his family in 1943 from the South Pacific (actual location then withheld for war purposes): 'I am continually amazed at the luxuriousness of the tropical growth around here. There are so many types of ferns and palms and exotic flowers, which I never used to see until I arrived here. . . . There are tiny orchids growing all through the woods near here—about the size of a quarter and with four or five blossoms on a stalk. There are so many things that I would like to describe, but to do so would give away my [location]. . . .'

Booth's other abiding interests lay in art and antiques, both of which were clearly exhibited at his longtime residence on Drury Lane in Worcester. As such, he was a loyal and generous supporter of the Worcester Art Museum, where he established the Robert W. Booth Gallery, of Old Sturbridge Village, and of the Worcester Historical Museum.

Booth's most notable philanthropy was his gift of ten million dollars to establish a community fund at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation in honor of his father and mother. The largest bequest ever made to this foundation, this legacy will serve the city in perpetuity and has itself been the source of major

gifts to the American Antiquarian Society. Booth was also extremely generous in the fields of biomedical research and to his church, First Unitarian Church, Second Parish, of Worcester.

He received his education at Bancroft School, Deerfield Academy, and Williams College, where he was a member of the class of 1937 and president of his college fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta. After Williams, Booth studied English literature for one year at Cambridge University in England. He returned to the United States to be employed in Worcester at the radio station WTAG (*Worcester Telegram And Gazette*), the AM and FM stations then part of the Worcester newspapers owned and run by his father. Starting out as traffic manager, a position that scheduled on-air advertising, in 1951 he became vice president of the radio station and later its president and general manager, and eventually vice president for radio and a director of the parent company. He was active in regional and national broadcasting organizations at a time when radio was a relatively new and a fast-growing medium. In service to his country, Booth enlisted in 1941 as a private in the United States Army. After training, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to land duty in the Pacific Theater. At the end of the war, he mustered out as a captain.

Predeceasing Booth were his older sister, Doris Booth Butler, and his older brother, Howard M. Booth. A bachelor, Booth leaves his niece, Penelope Booth Rockwell, and nephew, George F. Booth II, who are members of AAS, and his sister-in-law, Barbara Allen Booth.

Bruce Bennett

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

Daniel Patrick Moynihan was a noted figure on the American public scene. There were few people in New York, where he lived, or in fact in the nation, who were not aware of his many accomplishments

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