

Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, 1877 San Francisco-1948 Palo Alto

Most widely known for being 'The Pres', or President of Mills College from 1916 to 1943, 27 years in all.

She was an attractive tall woman with a commanding voice, a formidable presence to some, a charismatic leader to others. Her unusual mannerisms made it easy for people to parody her, which she enjoyed. She was smart, talented, effective, well-educated, well-traveled, and widely acknowledged by many people as "one of the most remarkable persons I've ever met." Or, "She was the most vital person I every knew". Other comments about her refer to her "great zest for living", her "tremendous energy", "alive in her whole being", "a magnificent body".

"Her vision was set above the trees, and her spirit carried her far beyond them."

She herself said: "To graduate a woman, a whole woman, is, I should say, the distinctive effort of the American college for women."

Town & Gown Club, Berkeley, Ca 1919

During her presidency of Mills College she took it from a small, finishing school with a dwindling enrollment to a vital women's college with an international reputation. She raised huge sums of money, initiating a very successful building campaign, dedicating many new buildings during her tenancy, increasing the size of the student body, and adding the graduate program.

She did not come from a particularly wealthy background but could trace her lineage from the Pilgrims to the covered wagons to the West Coast. She was born in San Francisco on April Fools Day, 1877, which was also Easter that year. Her mother paid close attention to fashion in clothing, news of the day, good sense, good manners, and good humor. "Furnish your mind well, Aurelia; you'll have to live with it a long time". While growing up, Aurelia recited poetry and played the violin at many recitals.

She was in the first group of girls who attended Boy's High School in San Francisco. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UC Berkeley in English literature, did research at Oxford, and earned her Ph.D. in from Yale in 1905, also in English literature. She had about 6 years college level teaching experience (elocution, physical culture, French,

literature at colleges in Moscow & Lewiston Idaho, and at UC Berkeley) before she was appointed to the Presidency of Mills in 1916.

In her lifetime, she delivered more than 5,000 speeches, authored more than 120 articles, 13 introductions to books, and 2 books of her own authorship. The two books were: a translation of Dante's De Monarchia, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1904 and an analysis of Ben Johnson's Epicoene, or the silent woman, published by Henry Holt in 1906. She wrote and lectured about education, poetry, international affairs, war, peace, patriotism, politics, ethics, music, and the arts.

She was a world traveler (no airplanes then!), and a world citizen; was an excellent speaker and actress, even briefly considering a career as an actress, was widowed with two small boys at a young age, a single mom who believed in both family and career, not finding any contradiction between the two. She was selected as California's Mother of the Year in 1946 (with her name inscribed in Oakland's Rose Garden).

In politics as in everything else Aurelia was a maverick. She spoke for the conservative Daughters of the American Revolution and Pro America (whose motto was "Patriotism, Politics, and Peace" which she subverted just a bit to "Peace, Patriotism, and Politics). She was member of the Communist-leaning League Against War and Fascism, and the pacifist Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She was appalled that the radicals of the S.F. waterfront strike of 1934 were mobbed and had their homes pillaged, so she joined the Citizen's Constitutional Rights Committee. At the same time she helped organize the California League Against Sinclairism to combat Upton Sinclair's EIPC (End Poverty in California" campaign. Her name was on the letterhead of the California League Against Sinclairism, and the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.

She was a national leader in the American Association of University Women serving as its Vice-President, President, and Chair of International Relations, raised the money for its own building in Washington D.C. She was a leader in the Unitarian Church at the national level, as both an auditor and its first woman moderator. She was a delegate to the World Federation of National Educational Associations, a delegate to the International Federation of University Women. She was a life long Republican active at the national level as elector or delegate but broke ranks the Republican party over the League of Nations. She introduced Democrat Woodrow Wilson to Oakland in 1918, one year before the League of Nations was founded,

(the precursor to the United Nations). She was on the executive board of the National Academy of American Literature, was elected to life membership in the California Academy of Sciences, one of 10 outstanding American women in 1940, launched the cruiser the U.S.S. Oakland in 1943. She was elected to the very first board of directors of East Bay Regional Parks District in 1934, was re-elected in 1942, was the AAUW representative to the United Nations conference in San Francisco at which its charter was established. She loved nature and was a mountain climber.