

# Walter Allyn Rickett, SAS

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Walter Allyn Rickett (“Rick”), emeritus professor of Chinese and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies in the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Arts & Sciences, died peacefully in his Medford, New Jersey, home on April 18. He was 98.

Dr. Rickett served in the Navy and Marines during World War II and studied at the US Navy Japanese Language School in Boulder, Colorado from 1943 to 1944. He used his Japanese language skills during the engagement at Iwo Jima.

After receiving his A.B. degree from Penn in 1948, he was awarded a Fulbright Grant for study in China. From 1948-50, he studied Classical Chinese language and history and was a part-time lecturer in English at National Tsinghua University in Beijing.

During 1950-51, he held a Social Science Research Council Traveling Fellowship to study modern Chinese history at Yenching University in Beijing. In July 1951, he and his first wife, Adele (G’48, Gr’67) were arrested by authorities of the new People’s Republic of China on charges of espionage and imprisoned there until 1955, when he returned home to continue his studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his PhD degree in 1960.

He would later write a book called *Prisoners of Liberation* about the experience, which he co-authored with Adele, who was also at Penn and the first M. Mark and Esther K. Watkins Chair in the Humanities. She passed away in 1994 (*Almanac* February 22, 1994 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v40pdf/n23/022294.pdf>)).

In 1959, Dr. Rickett joined the faculty at Penn as a lecturer in the department of Oriental studies (now the Center for East Asian Studies). He became an assistant and then full professor before retiring in 1987, earning emeritus status at that time. During his time at Penn, he also held a secondary appoint first as a professional consultant legal research in the law department, then becoming a research assistant and then academician in FAS Special Programs. He served as chair of the University Relations Committee and on the Steering Committee for the University Council and on the Faculty Senate Advisory Committee, was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1969 and Fulbright Fellow as well as the author of several books on Chinese history. He served on the executive board of Penn’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

He is survived by son, Jonathan Chen; adopted daughter, Rebecca Lai Long; and four grandchildren.

The family requests that all contributions be sent to The W. Allyn Rickett Endowed Fund Administered by the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilization, University of Pennsylvania, room 847 Williams Hall, 255 South 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6305.