



IN MEMORIAM

Gordon E. Baker
Professor of Political Science
Santa Barbara
1923—2003

Gordon E. Baker passed away on January 13, 2004, a little more than a month after celebrating his 80th birthday. Born December 6, 1923, in Poughkeepsie, New York, Gordon was raised in Tacoma, Washington. His education — interrupted by service in World War II — included a B.A. from Reed College (1948), an M.A. from the University of Washington (1949), and a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University (1952).

That same year, Gordon began his teaching career at the Santa Barbara Teachers College's Riviera campus. Gordon was a major figure as the College evolved into UCSB, a major research center. He chaired the Political Science Department in the pivotal period from 1965 to 1971. He gained emeritus status in 1993, but he continued to teach through 1998.

His most influential work was undoubtedly *The Reapportionment Revolution: Representation, Political Power, and the Supreme Court* (1966), and subsequent articles on gerrymandering. He advised the court-appointed Masters who redrew the boundaries of California's legislative and congressional districts and later served as a consultant and expert witness on reapportionment and related litigation in other states.

A specialist in American political thought, Gordon co-authored (with his Princeton mentor Alpheus T. Mason) *Free Government in the Making: Readings in American Political Thought* (fourth edition, 1985). He won research grants from the Guggenheim and Social Research Foundations. NEH grants funded his special eight-week seminars for college teachers (1979, 1980); the acclaim of his students from these seminars recognized his distinction as a teacher.

Gordon was a Jeffersonian democrat: his department was a democracy, not an oligarchy. Not fanatical about consensus, Gordon nevertheless thought it beneficial for his department, and worth spending some time to achieve. But at heart he was inherently conservative: he could leave Jefferson with Burke. Favoring discipline and experience over consciousness raising, he resisted the radical proposals urged by student activists of the 1960s and 1970s. Long after he had left the chair, he remained the department's memory and the guardian of its precedents. His command of the rules of departmental practice, most of which he had nurtured into existence, was astonishing.

Gordon was a caring, gentle man whose mentoring was warmly remembered in cards and letters sent by dozens of his students to mark his 80th birthday. He was a model as well for his colleagues, especially the junior faculty who were nurtured by his encouragement and his strong instinct for fairness. When the department moved into Ellison Hall, he assigned office space on the basis of use rather than seniority — a courageous strategy.

His optimistic, informal style was pervasive and hardly ever left him, even as he struggled with a debilitating stroke. One of the endearing attributes that sustained him in this trying period was the joy he always could

find in small things: his quest for the perfect dessert remains the stuff of legend in UCSB food management circles.

The strength of Gordon's character is captured in one of his favorite quotations: "The teachers you seek: Truth, Wisdom and Strength . . . They are all within you."

Roger H. Davidson