



IN MEMORIAM

James H. Kettner
Professor of History
Berkeley
1944 — 2002

Professor James H. Kettner, one of the most esteemed members of the faculty of the Department of History, died June 24, 2002. He was 57.

Professor Kettner was born in 1944 in Greenville, Ohio, the son of a Lutheran pastor. He attended local schools, was graduated at the top of his high school class and, although he hoped for an appointment to the Air Force Academy, had to settle for Harvard University. After graduation from Harvard (*magna cum laude*), he won a Marshall Scholarship and took a second bachelor's degree at the University of Sussex, England, with First Class Honors. Then it was back to Harvard for graduate study in early American history under the direction of Professor Bernard Bailyn. He received the Ph.D. in 1973.

He was appointed to the University of California, Berkeley in 1973 and taught here until his death. Kettner was a superb teacher of both undergraduate and graduate students. Most years he gave the undergraduate lectures on the colonial period of American history, as well as an assortment of seminars for students studying for the B.A. and the Ph.D. He almost always taught one of these seminars for freshmen and sophomores, but he did not neglect history majors or graduate students. In fact, he served as the chair of the graduate advisers committee for many years and as vice chair for graduate affairs for 11 more years when the post was established. He was also a thoughtful adviser of undergraduates — majors and non- majors — during his entire time at Berkeley. Kettner was also a linchpin in the small but exacting joint J.S.D./ Ph.D. program in legal history.

As a teacher, Kettner preferred a quiet style over flamboyance. Students found him always prepared, a careful listener to their questions and comments, and a rigorous but generous judge of their work. They also discovered early on that he was eager to help them in their work outside of the classroom. He never refused to give a tutorial or serve as a reader of honors essays, or as a dissertation director. Perhaps as important as all these tasks was his willingness to act from early morning until the end of the day giving aid and advice to students, including those far from his own professional field. He arrived at the office at 6:30 a.m., opened his door and left it open all day, except for those hours spent in the classroom or in committees. The open door invited colleagues to make a quick foray into an enormous and seemingly chaotic library for a last- minute check on something before class — and sometimes resulted in a book carried off, though always returned. And his early arrival assured the same slot in the Dwinelle Hall parking lot for a succession of Toyotas of uncertain vintage and varying reliability. (He much preferred talking with students and colleagues to sitting on any committee.)

Outside the department Kettner served the University and the history profession in many ways. Only a few can be listed here. His service to the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate included membership on the committees on Educational Policy, Elections, and American Cultures. He also sat on the Committee on Committees and the Course Committee of the College of Letters and Science. The college appointed him to the position of assistant dean, a post he especially welcomed for the contact with students it brought. Kettner

gave much to professional organizations as well. He served on the board of editors of the Journal of American History and read papers for the journal long after he left its board. From 1986 to 1987, he was an eager, though skeptical, member of one of the committees of Project Eighty-Seven, a national commission planning commemorative activities for the bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States. Kettner's wry sense of humor served him well in the work of this commission, for he felt gentle amusement at some of the fancy effusions of celebrants of the Constitution. He was a serious scholar of the history of the Constitution and contributed the informed advice that the national commission needed. He also answered the call of other professional groups, most recently the Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Virginia), which asked him to help choose postdoctoral interns.

Students, indeed, figured most prominently in his conception of his purposes as a member of the faculty. At the memorial service held for him in August 2002, dozens appeared, several from points far from Berkeley, California. Those who spoke at the service commented with feeling about what he had meant to them, and many more who could not attend sent messages of praise and sadness. The theme common to all of these testimonials was Kettner's devotion to learning — not in the abstract, but learning defined by the intellectual and moral growth of those who took his classes and seminars. The tributes to Kettner were well deserved.

Though his publications were not numerous, he was a lively and deeply committed scholar. His book, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870*, won the Jamestown Prize awarded by the Institute of Early American History and Culture. Kettner's argument that Americans in the Revolution conceived of citizenship as "volitional" has been accepted and praised by historians and legal scholars. Both the idea and the book will endure.

The admiration and, for many of us, affection, felt for Kettner was richly deserved. Those terms "devoted teacher," "learned scholar," and "dedicated servant to the campus and department" used by friends and colleagues to describe Kettner conceal almost as much as they tell. He was everything these colleagues said he was — and much more. He gave himself freely without expecting thanks, and usually seemed a little embarrassed when he was thanked. The example he set of quietly serving students and colleagues was extraordinary — and yet he did his work as if all his efforts were quite commonplace. Professor Kettner's service almost always went far beyond the ordinary. He clearly enjoyed it, took satisfaction from his efforts, and expressed his delight at the growth and success of colleagues and students.

Kettner never married, but is survived by five brothers and sisters. His death came much too early, but we can take consolation from the knowledge that we had him as a colleague, teacher, and friend over the last 30 years.

Thomas Barnes
Jon Gjerde
Robert Middlekauff