



## IN MEMORIAM

James Leiby  
Professor of Social Welfare, Emeritus  
UC Berkeley  
1924-2012

James Leiby, Professor Emeritus of Social Welfare, died in Berkeley, California, February 12, 2012 at the age of 87. Born June 5, 1924 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, he graduated from Muhlenberg College (Allentown) with a bachelor's degree in English and then went on to Harvard Graduate School in American Civilization where he received his Ph.D. in 1954 under his mentor Oscar Handlin, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian. Professor Leiby joined the Berkeley faculty in 1961, and served as an esteemed colleague until his retirement 28 years later in 1989. The School of Social Welfare was both fortunate and unique among social work programs in having a Harvard-trained historian on its faculty, one who devoted his historical attention to research and teaching which benefited the profession and students at all levels of education. He received the Citation for Distinguished Teaching in 1964 and the Berkeley Citation in 1989.

Leiby was particularly interested in social welfare as a social institution, especially the historical development of welfare policies. Choice magazine selected his book, *A history of social welfare and social work in the United States*, for its list of best academic books of 1978. It is considered one of the best historical reviews of the field. Other books included *Carroll Wright and labor reform: The origin of labor statistics* (1960), Harvard University Press; *Charity and correction in New Jersey: A history of state welfare institutions* (1967), Rutgers University Press; and *A history of social welfare and social work in the United States* (1978), Columbia University Press. *Charity and correction in New Jersey: A history of state welfare institutions* provides an in-depth view of the various social welfare institutions in that state. He received a commendation for this book from the American Association for State and Local History. In addition to these books he published many articles in key sources such as *Social Service Review*, *Encyclopedia of Social Welfare*, and *Public Welfare*. Examples of key contributions include *Charity Organizations Reconsidered*, *Social Service Review*, 1984, and *The Moral Foundations of Social Welfare and Social Work: A Historical Review*, *Social Work*, 1985. He prepared *Social Welfare: History of Basic Ideas* for *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (National Association of Social Workers) in 1971 and 1977. He was also a prolific reviewer of other books, offering welcome insights and overviews of such material.

He taught courses in social welfare policy, library research, and history of the profession, and for 25 years served as Chair of the Undergraduate Program. He served as a consultant for the Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Project, was a member of the Academic Senate's Library Committee, and advisor on the Earl Warren History Project. As teacher and mentor, he possessed a deep concern and commitment to high quality teaching and scholarship. His writing was clear, flowing, and engaging, and he was always willing to give generously of his time to doctoral, master's and undergraduate students in terms of feedback on their own writing.

Jim had many wonderful personal traits and is fondly remembered for his piano playing. He was a professional jazz piano player and took advantage of this throughout his life, even as an adolescent. He often delighted colleagues by playing at many School- related functions. At his memorial service held at the Faculty Club, his son reflected, "Starting at the age of six and becoming so skilled at 14 that he could earn a good living gave him a self- confidence all kids crave. This self- confidence was an integral part of his personality. Piano playing probably kept him alive during the war by keeping him in Honolulu to play at the Officers' Club. Piano was what he did weekends, playing jobs for fun long after the money wasn't so important."

Jim maintained a presence at the School during retirement, and will be remembered for the remarkable way he handled his gradually waning vision. For years he rode his bicycle to campus, but during his later years due to macular degeneration his sight gradually faded so he walked to campus from his residence until his last days. Each day was engaging. He gave enormous encouragement to other individuals he met at the low vision clinic on campus. Jim was an optimist: a remarkable man in many ways who gave much to the University and to those who knew him.

He is survived by his son, Adlai Leiby, daughter, Ellen Franzen, and two grandchildren. His wife, Jean, predeceased him.

Eileen Gambrill  
Jim Steele