

Inter-American Notes

OBITUARY

Michael C. Meyer (1935-2007)

Michael C. Meyer, emeritus Professor of History at the University of Arizona, died on March 31, 2007. Mike leaves a legacy of scholarship, teaching, administration, and friendship to our profession. His roots ran deep in the borderlands region, as he was born, raised, and educated in New Mexico, and he taught for many years at the University of Arizona. He loved both sides of the border.

As a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, Mike formed part of the significant group of historians whose study of the military in Latin America under the tutelage of Edwin Lieuwen had a major impact on Latin American historiography. Rather than undertake a dissertation on the Mexican military, as Lieuwen intended, Mike instead chose to follow the path of the Mexican Revolution, writing on Pascual Orozco, a revolutionary who defeated the military in 1911. After receiving the Ph.D., Mike took up a teaching position at the University of Nebraska, where he replaced Stanley Ross, and built on the university's early relations with El Colegio de México to establish a graduate program committed to Mexican history. He began to play a significant role in bringing Mexican historians together with their U.S. and European counterparts in conferences held every four years (*Reuniones de Historiadores Mexicanos, Estadounidenses y Canadienses*), and he took special pride in his work as a member of the generation of historians who professionalized the study of the Mexican Revolution.

At Nebraska, he served as the mentor of Ph.D. students William H. Beezley, Mark T. R. Gilderhus, Anthony Bryan, Peter Henderson, and John Kulecka, as well as dozens of M.A. students, including Susan Deeds and Miguel Bretos. He sent Thomas Davies and Allen Gerlach to his alma mater, the University of New Mexico, for the Ph.D. Even as he maintained demanding expectations for his graduate stu-

dents, he also communicated to us his great affection for Mexico and a deep commitment to progressive humanitarian values. He was an outstanding undergraduate teacher, and was recognized for his lively courses on Mexican and Latin American history. His dissatisfaction with the lack of an appropriate textbook for his Mexico survey course prompted him to revise his lectures into the hugely successful *Course of Mexican History*, published in five editions with coauthor William Sherman, and subsequently with Susan Deeds. Eight editions of the textbook, spanning more than twenty-five years, carry his imprint and influence on the study of Mexican history, as does *The Oxford History of Mexico* (2000), co-edited with William Beezley.

Mike's tremendous commitment to scholarship quickly resulted in the publication of his dissertation as *Mexican Rebel: Pascual Orozco and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1915* (1967). Within the next five years, three more books came out with the University of Nebraska Press: *A Bibliography of United States-Latin American Relations since 1810: A Selected List of Eleven Thousand Published References*, co-edited with David and Roger Trask (1968); *Latin American Scholarship since World War II: Trends in History, Political Science, Literature, Geography, and Economics*, co-edited with Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo (1971); and his second monograph, *Huerta: A Political Portrait* (1972). The latter biography underscored his reputation as a painstaking researcher confident to advance a revisionist interpretation. During this period, he also published numerous journal articles and book reviews.

This record of both publication and teaching excellence resulted in an offer for Mike to join the History faculty at the University of Arizona. There, he helped to build a strong Latin American program. He served as the first Director of Arizona's Latin American Area Center from 1975-89. During his tenure approximately 85 students were awarded the B.A. in Latin American Studies, and 65 students received the M.A. In the History Department, he served as the adviser for an outstanding cadre of Ph.D. students that included Rob Buffington, John Sherman, Phyllis Smith, and Marie Francois.

Along with teaching, directing the Latin American Center, and founding the Southwest Center at the University of Arizona, Mike served a five-year term as the Editor of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* (1975-80), as the President of PROFMEX, the Consortium of United States Research Programs for Mexico, and as General Editor of the PROFMEX Monograph Series (1986-88). At the same time, he did not neglect his commitments to colleagues in the Conference on Latin American History, serving on numerous committees and ultimately becoming head of the organization in 1986. While CLAH President, he led a delegation to the Soviet Union to meet with Soviet scholars of Latin America. In 2001, CLAH awarded him its distinguished service award for his remarkable efforts. He was a life member and president on two occasions of the Rocky Mountain Conference on Latin American Studies. In RMCLAS, he worked to create the sense of informality, combined with excellent scholarship and welcome to graduate students, for which this organization has become famous. He served for many years as the Mexico area editor for *The Americas*.

In the latter years of his career, Mike turned his sights closer to home in the Spanish borderlands, beckoned by an interest in water issues in northern Mexico and the southwestern United States. His work as an expert witness in a New Mexico water rights case led to his ground-breaking *Water in the Hispanic Southwest: A Social and Legal History, 1559-1850* (1996), a pioneering work on Latin American environmental history that examined through case studies the evolution of Spanish and Mexican water law and outlined the criteria that determined the allocation and administration of water in the arid borderlands. He continued to consult on numerous irrigation rights cases as an expert witness in state and federal courts.

Turning from Mike's quite extraordinary scholarly and professional accomplishments, we believe that his career is also fittingly measured by the relationships he sustained with family, friends and professional colleagues. He was a demanding mentor with high standards; those who met his expectations enjoyed his boundless generosity of spirit. They felt his influence throughout their careers. His earthy sense of humor belied his characteristically earnest demeanor and he frequently made us laugh at off-color jokes and plays on words in Spanish. Mike had a passion for sports (Nebraska football and Arizona basketball); he had been an all-state high school basketball point guard, where he exercised control in directing the game, a talent that continued to serve him throughout his career. Mike valued above all people—those around him including his family, especially his wife, Goldalee; those he worked with in his profession; and those he studied. He personified the humane life.

The Meyer family and friends have established a speakers fund in his name at the Center for Latin American Studies. Contributions can be made to the Michael C. Meyer Speakers Fund, CLAS, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721.

University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

WILLIAM H. BEEZLEY

Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona

SUSAN M. DEEDS

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS & PRIZES

CONFERENCE ON LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

As announced at its luncheon on January 4, 2008 at the American Historical Association in Washington, D.C., the Conference on Latin American History recognized the superb achievement of the following scholars:

The Bolton-Johnson Prize (For best book in English on any significant aspect of Latin American History [\$1,000 award]):

Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988* (Duke University Press, 2006)