

IN MEMORIAM

REMEMBERING FRANK D. MCCANN:
BRASILIANISTA EXTRAORDINAIRE

W e students of Brazil owe a big debt to Frank McCann's research and writing over the past half-century. His books and articles have plumbed and recorded the history of Brazil's relationship with the United States and, especially, its military's role in politics. Beyond making this crucial contribution to modern history, Frank inspired many others to follow in his tracks and to make Brazil better known in the United States. He not only helped coin the term "Brazilianista" but also mentored a generation of historians of the country he loved so much.

Frank inclined toward military and diplomatic history partly because of his experience in his college's ROTC program. Later, in grad school at Indiana University, he met some Brazilian exchange students who changed the course of his life by inspiring him to go there and study their little-known nation. The Brazilian Army coup of 1964 had raised the country's profile and encouraged many students to redirect their research toward understanding the military and how its behavior and actions fit into the Cold War in Latin America. Frank became a leader in a cadre of Americans studying Brazil. He also taught two years at the United States Military Academy at West Point, satisfying his military duty.

Frank's dissertation on Brazilian-American cooperation in World War II became a major work about a crucial period in the two countries' histories. Brad Burns had earlier elucidated the early twentieth-century relationship in *The Unwritten Alliance* (1966), but Frank shed light on events of the 1930s that had interrupted that partnership. His award-winning book *The Brazilian-American Alliance, 1937–1945* (published in 1973) showed how America's strategic need to shore up defenses in South America coincided with Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas's desires to play a larger role in world affairs and to use his

nation's cooperation with the United States to strengthen its economic and military institutions. Frank's book brought the story forward to the overthrow of Vargas and his replacement by his own former war minister, Eurico Dutra, and in doing so elevated Brazil from a historiographical backwater to a key player in inter-American diplomacy. The book won the Stuart L. Bernath Prize and was awarded honorable mention for the Eugene Bolton Prize.

When the military regime that began in 1964 resigned in 1985, civilians steered their country back toward democracy and respect for human rights. By this time, many US researchers—neo-Brasilianistas—had forged new lines of study into economics, society, government, culture, diplomacy, and the environment. Frank co-edited and contributed to a reader for classrooms through which a new generation of Americans could learn about the country once called the “sleeping giant.” The reader encompassed new research into twentieth-century topics, organized around the theme of *Elites and Masses in Historical Perspective* (1989).

Frank then plunged back into military history, undertaking a huge project to tell the story of Brazil's army from the 1880s through the dictatorship that ended in 1985. No longer constrained to binational perspectives, he delved into the doctrines and inner workings of the institution itself, using a rich literature of memoirs and biographies and consulting archives in France and Germany, nations that had trained earlier generations of Brazilian officers. Knowing the US Army as he did, Frank was able to measure and document Brazil's military actions (primarily those of the army) in cautious comparisons, aware of certain inferiority feelings and inclinations toward political involvement. *Soldiers of the Pátria* (2004) stands out as the best and most comprehensive story of a Latin American army to date.

Frank continued to interview informants and probe fresh sources, a body of work that expanded greatly with institutional efforts to assemble documentary evidence from the past. He became convinced that so much new had surfaced during his research that he could now revisit the World War II alliance in a new book, *Brazil and the United States during World War II and Its Aftermath* (2018). Among the stunning additions to his sources were Getúlio Vargas's published diaries, new archives and oral histories in the archives of CPDOC (the Contemporary Brazilian History Research and Documentation Center) and an array of political and military files released by the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Frank used these to reconstruct almost daily progress in the formation of the wartime alliance that dominates his narrative. The high points of the book include Vargas's decision to go all-out in cooperating with Roosevelt, preparations for Brazil's sending an infantry

division to fight in Italy in 1944-45 and the dispatch of that division, and the curious decision by Brazil's leaders to forego participation in the post-victory occupation in Europe. Happily, Frank chose to add highlights of the Brazil-United States relationship well into the twenty-first century, most of them related to events he witnessed personally. This book represents the capstone of an incredibly productive and wide-ranging academic research career.

Along the way, Frank published dozens of chapters, articles, and reviews about the Brazilian military that merited broader dissemination in Portuguese, as did his first two books, and his last, which is now in press. Through these books and his many lectures and visiting professorships, Frank became an eminence among Brazilian historians and leaders. The Brazilian Foreign Ministry awarded him high honors in 1987 and 1995, and his passing elicited an outpouring of condolences from friends and colleagues there.

Many of Frank's contributions to the field remained in the background yet enriched our knowledge immeasurably. He reviewed manuscripts and grant proposals and consulted with program directors. For many years he served as contributing editor for the entries on Brazil in the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*. He worked hard to create the International Studies program at the University of New Hampshire, where he taught from 1972 to 2007. In these and many other ways, Frank became a pillar of Brazilian studies.

Frank developed a secondary field in Native American history, in which he published his first article, spurred by his growing up in upstate New York and excelling in the Boy Scouts. He once led an exciting tour of the Gran Chaco in New Mexico during a Columbus quincentennial institute. This interest led him to travel to most of the Amazonian states and to visit indigenous peoples there. He was revered as a friend by the Seneca Nation for his contributions to their history and culture.

Frank generously left his books and research notes to the Lilly Library of Indiana University, where the papers of other diplomatic stars like Robert Ferrell and Charles Boxer are housed. Several of his former students will carry on his work. His parting thought may well have been "*Viva Brasil!*"

San José State University
San José, California
michael.conniff@sjsu.edu

MICHAEL L. CONNIFF