

Development, on Propaganda and Covert Action, on gender, on labor, on Jimmy Carter's foreign policy, and on Eisenhower's foreign policy.

J.E.

CULTURAL NEWS

WILLIAM L. SHERMAN (D.1998), A FOND RECOLLECTION

One of our first mentors in the study of Spanish Central America, William L. Sherman, died on January 26, 1998 in Lincoln, Nebraska after a disruptive struggle with illness. He was seventy years of age. While neither of us ever studied formally with him, we had the good fortune to bump into Bill in the course of archival work in Guatemala City and Seville. We also corresponded with him, intermittently but memorably, over the years. He taught us much, and fobbed us off with genuine modesty when we told him so. We first met Bill at a stage when we were not far enough along in our own research to offer him much in return besides earnest appreciation and the odd reference to a document we thought might interest him. It was always, we felt, an uneven exchange, but one we hope did actually mean something to him, for it seems to us that the man and his work never quite received the recognition both deserved.

While Bill is known to us foremost as a scholar of sixteenth-century Central America, he did not in fact obtain his Ph.D. in History in this field of research until 1967, by which time he was in his late 30s, having already experienced a full life and having seen a fair bit of the world. Bill was born just before the Depression and, like many young men of his generation, served in World War II—in Bill's case in the U.S. Navy Air Corps from 1944 to 1946—while still a teenager. After the war, Bill went to Woodbury College in Los Angeles, where in 1949 he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. A year later he added another Bachelor's degree to his credentials, from the American Institute for Foreign Trade, now the American Graduate School of International Management, in Glendale, Arizona. After college, Bill worked in Alaska and in the Marshall Islands for the Atomic Energy Commission. From 1951 to 1953 he worked in Europe for the United States Foreign Service.

Bill apparently left the Foreign Service with the intention of one day going into business in Latin America. In the mid-1950s, however, he enrolled in the Master's program in Latin American History at Mexico City College, an institution at that time highly regarded for its distinguished record in the training of Latin Americanist historians. He graduated with an M.A. in 1958. While at Mexico City College, Bill had the opportunity to study with the notable Mexicanists Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, Fernando Horcasitas, Pablo

Martínez del Río, and a youthful Richard E. Greenleaf, with whom he coauthored *Victoriano Huerta: A Reappraisal* (Mexico City: Mexico City College Press, 1960).

Bill embarked on his professional academic career in 1959 by taking on several administrative positions at Mexico City College, today the Universidad de las Americas, now long since relocated east of the capital in the outskirts of Cholula close to Puebla. That same year he began to teach at Mexico City College as an Instructor in the Department of History. In 1960, he was admitted to the doctoral program in Latin American History at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, where he studied under Edwin Lieuwen, Troy S. Floyd, and France V. Scholes. It was Scholes who most influenced Bill's interests and concerns as a historian.

By now a family man, Bill served the University of New Mexico in a number of ways—as Teaching Assistant, as Coordinator of Latin American Area Studies, and as Lecturer at the Peace Corps Training Center—while simultaneously engaged in doctoral research. Prior to completing his dissertation he taught as an Assistant Professor at California Western University (1965-66) before moving on to a two-year stint at Colorado State University (1966-68).

Mid-way through his two-year appointment at Colorado State, Bill was awarded his Ph.D. from New Mexico. He had somehow contrived, with the help of a Del Amo Fellowship, to spend academic year 1964-65 conducting research at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, an undertaking that also allowed him to visit other Spanish archives, where he pored over thick *legajos* and collected microfilm copies of documents that allowed him to continue his dissertation research back home in the United States. Bill wrote his dissertation on “Indian Slavery in Spanish Guatemala, 1524-1550,” covering the crucial period from the chaotic first years of conquest through to mid-century, by which time a semblance of order had been imposed, chiefly through the efforts of Lic. Alonso López de Cerrato, the reform-minded President of the Audiencia de los Confines who freed thousands of Indian slaves from the shackles of their *conquistador* masters. Cerrato also attempted to curtail the most barbarous abuses relating to Indian labor and tribute so common under the *encomienda* system.

After Colorado State, Bill moved on to an Assistant Professorship at the University of Nebraska, where he remained until his retirement in 1993. He was appointed to the rank of Associate Professor in 1970 and to a Full Professorship in 1976. Bill was Visiting Professor for one year at the University of California, San Diego (1976-77) and also spent time as a Visiting Professor at Tulane University (1989) and at the Universität Hannover (1991). He served on the Editorial Board of *The Americas* from 1981 to 1992 and received numerous grants for scholarly research over the course of his career.

One of Bill's research grants, in 1984-85, was from the National Endowment for the Humanities. With NEH funding he carried out a paleography project in Mexico and Spain. For committed, early-colonial specialists, paleography is an indispensable tool of the trade. It was one that Bill took seriously, enjoyed immensely, and of which he was a skilled and creative practitioner. He took to scribbling his colleagues the occasional postcard from the field, which he penned in Spanish in flowing, sixteenth-century script that most of them would have found difficult if not impossible to read. It was Bill's way of making a point. While he loved working in archives, he was conscious of the wear and tear that inevitably results from hours of perusing faint and difficult-to-decipher script. He was also sensitive to the fact that early colonial historians often had little to show for their efforts in terms of career development. More than once Bill lamented how historians of the modern era could process immeasurably more raw material than their early colonial counterparts—clearer, more legible handwriting, not to mention typewritten or printed sources, he maintained, is a reality for the former that the latter seldom enjoy. This resulted, so Bill reasoned, in "modernists" producing more books or articles than "colonialists," and reaping the professional rewards therefrom. To his way of thinking, this was not only unfair but also largely unrecognized as such by the history establishment.

Despite his late start in academe, and the consequent lack of time to research and write the works he would have liked to, Bill was nonetheless a productive and gifted scholar, leaving an enduring mark on the fields of Central American and Mexican studies. A year after completing his dissertation, he began to publish a series of important articles, a handful of which are read and referenced still. Among the most consulted of these are "Abusos contra los indios de Guatemala: Relaciones del Obispo, 1602-1605," which he published in *Caravelle: Cahiers du Monde Hispanique et Luso-Brésilien* 11 (December 1968); "A Conqueror's Wealth: Notes on the Estate of don Pedro de Alvarado," which appeared in *The Americas* 26 (October 1969) and which, for anyone who has any lingering doubts, firmly establishes that the notorious *conquistador* of Guatemala really did run things as if the land and the people he subjugated were his own personal fief; "Tlaxcalans in Post-Conquest Guatemala," which he published in *Tlalocan* 6 (1970); and, perhaps his most-cited contribution, "Indian Slavery and the Cerrato Reforms," which appeared in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51 (February 1971). In addition to these classic essays, Bill published numerous other articles and book reviews in a variety of publications in English and in Spanish, as well as presenting aspects of his research at conferences in Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and the United States. In Guatemala, at a convocation marking his election to the Sociedad de Geografía e Historia in 1972, he spoke on "Abusos contra los indios de Guatemala," pretty much akin to presenting one's work in the belly of the beast.

During the 1970s, Bill pushed himself to complete two challenging projects: the first was his coauthorship with Michael Meyer of a comprehensive survey of Mexican history from pre-Columbian times to the present, the second the reformulation of his doctoral dissertation on Indian slavery in Guatemala, which in book form was to become his major contribution to the historiography of Spanish Central America. Both these initiatives came to fruition in 1979. Bill wrote the pre-Columbian and colonial-period chapters of *The Course of Mexican History*, Meyer the chapters pertaining to the national period. The collaborative effort was published by Oxford University Press. Choice named it one of the Outstanding Academic Books published that year, a distinction the journal also bestowed on *Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth-Century Central America*, Bill's magnum opus published by the University of Nebraska Press. Being singled out twice the same year for scholarly excellence is a rare feat indeed.

Both books have enjoyed sustained success. *The Course of Mexican History* is now in its fifth edition, having been revised and reprinted in 1983, 1987, 1991, and 1995. In 1988, Bill was co-recipient of the Lieuwen Prize for "outstanding service in the promotion of teaching" for his and Meyer's widely read volume. In 1987, the Seminario de Integración Social Guatemalteca published a Spanish-language edition of *Forced Native Labor* under the title *El Trabajo Forzoso en América Central, Siglo XVI*, translated by Flavio Rojas Lima.

While few commentators would characterize Bill's scholarship as one that was fuelled by a political agenda, he was nonetheless deeply concerned with the plight of the native peoples of Central America, especially the Maya of Guatemala, for whom the events and circumstances of twentieth century often bear striking resemblance to those of the sixteenth. It was certainly not lost on him that the mistreatment and exploitation he unearthed from obscure archival sources was a common feature of everyday life four and a half centuries later. Bill's strategy was to allow the harrowing experiences that befell usually nameless Indians to rise to the surface while contextualizing the life and times of prominent Spaniards like Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco Marroquín, Bartolomé de las Casas, Alonso López de Cerrato, and lesser-known players like Cristóbal de Pedraza, Antonio de Valdivieso, and Juan de Ramírez. Many of the historical figures Bill focused his attention on were either members of the clergy or individuals with some religious background. None of them, surely, were without flaws, but Bill argued that we should not forget at least some of what they tried to do, often at considerable personal risk, in defense of the Indians, for these men (much like the recently assassinated Bishop of Guatemala, Monseñor Juan José Gerardi) were hated and persecuted by their enemies, who stopped at nothing to silence those who opposed them.

Tinged when we got to know him with more than a hint of melancholy, Bill

was no exuberant *bon vivant*. He did, however, know how to shake off his burden and enjoy a good meal, a fine glass of sherry, a well-acted play, an inspiring piece of music, and the company of friends. He loved the myriad small-hour joys of a night in Seville, where singing, dancing, conversation, and laughter come more naturally and are sensibly less stigmatized than in other ways of life. When he retired from the University of Nebraska after a quarter-century of service to it, Bill more or less abandoned the academy to indulge in his passion for painting. We will remember him fondly as a gentle, principled, pleasant-mannered colleague, one whose scholarly example we respect and whose dignified presence we shall miss.

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MICHAEL C. MEYER PRIZE

At the annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies held in Missoula, Montana, in April 1998, the second Michael C. Meyer Prize was awarded to Prof. Enrique C. Ochoa of California State University, Los Angeles. Given by Scholarly Resources, Inc., for the best unpublished first manuscript submitted in the previous year, the Prize carries with it an award of \$1,000 and a commitment to publish the manuscript. Ochoa's work, entitled "Feeding Mexico: The State, the Marketplace, and Social Policy Since 1934" treats public policy toward food supply and distribution in Mexico from the early twentieth century to the present.

The 1997 award went to Prof. Adrian Bantjes of the University of Wyoming for his manuscript entitled *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1998).

Submissions for the 1999 prize may be made to Richard Hopper, Vice President and Editorial Director, Scholarly Resources, Inc., 104 Greenhill Avenue, Wilmington, Del. 19805-1897.

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JOURNALS

COLONIAL SPANISH AMERICA

"Diversity and Social Identity in Colonial Spanish America: Native American, African, and Hispanic Communities During the Middle Period" is a