

Richard R. Beeman, John Welsch Centennial Professor of History, Emeritus, at the University of Pennsylvania, died on September 5, 2016, at the age of 74. Beeman was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1942 and was raised in Long Beach, California. He received his BA from the University of California, Berkeley (1964); an MA from the College of William and Mary (1965); and a PhD under the supervision of Daniel Boorstin from the University of Chicago (1968). Professor Beeman spent his entire career at the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught colonial American and the early national history of the United States for over forty years. He chaired the Department of History, and was afterward appointed Associate Dean and then Undergraduate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. At the same time he maintained a full teaching schedule, and was a stellar undergraduate lecturer to hundreds of students each year, and a crucial mentor to graduate students.

In the late 1980s Beeman took a prominent role in the planning for what became the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. He devoted much time to its organization and, after it became a reality in 2000, served on its Board of Trustees.

He was the author of eight books in his field of colonial and early-national America. *Patrick Henry* (1974) was a popular and successful biography of the famous American patriot. But Beeman also wrote a pioneering study in the then new field of the social history of politics: *The Evolution of the Southern Back Country* (1984) was a history of Virginia local politics at the grass-roots level from the middle of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. Toward the end of his career Professor Beeman wrote two large books that are already part of the honored canon of works in the nationalizing politics of late-eighteenth century America. *Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor* (2013) is the story of the coming of the

Revolutionary War and the writing of the Declaration of Independence; and *Plain Honest Men* (2010) narrates the history of the construction of the Constitution of the United States. Drew Gilpin Faust, president of Harvard University, wrote that Beeman “made our national origins matter to generations of appreciative students, of which I was one. His books will keep his voice alive for many years to come.”

Beeman received much professional recognition for his scholarship. He was the Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford University, and received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Huntington Library.

During the last two years of his life Richard Beeman was preoccupied with the cruel disease that ultimately took his life, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. In this period he showed a remarkable grace and dignity in dealing with mortality. He was a lesson to many people in how to conduct oneself when faced with irreversible adversity. He is survived by his wife, Mary Cahill; two children, Josh and Kristin, two grandchildren; his former wife, Pamela Butler; and a brother.

Bruce Kuklick

Nichols Professor of American History Emeritus

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