
IN MEMORIAM

JAMES R. SCOBIE

1929–1981

Jim Scobie died suddenly on 4 June 1981. He was a member of our Editorial Board; he was a professional colleague of many years standing; he was a valued friend. On 11 June 1981, members of his family, colleagues, and friends gathered in the Humanities Library of University of California, San Diego to pay him tribute. Thanks to his widow, Ingrid Winther Scobie, we offer here, as a memorial to Jim, a selection from the statements made at that service.

David R. Ringrose

Chairman, Department of History, University of California, San Diego

We have come together here for a special purpose—to remember James Scobie. You have been invited from many parts of a remarkable life. The invitation comes from those of us who were Jim's friends and colleagues in the history department, from those close to him in the more private world of family life, and from his wife and children.

Jim was born in Valparaiso, Chile, in 1929; he graduated from Princeton in 1950; and took his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1954. He spent three years in army intelligence before joining the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1964 he moved to Indiana University, and in 1977 he came to the University of California at San Diego. Along the way he edited two collections of documents and published three major books, both in English and in Spanish—books that established him as the leading Argentine historian in the United States. At his death, he was completing a complex and imaginative study of provincial urbanization that promised to make him a leading expert on urbanization in developing countries everywhere, as well as just a specialist on Argentina and Latin America. He held numerous fellowships of great distinction: Guggenheim, National Endowment for the Humanities; Organization of American States, Social Science Research Council; he had been a fellow at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies, and had

received an invitation to spend a year at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford.

But remembering a man has a larger meaning than such a bare list of milestones, and a larger meaning than the word itself first evokes. Each of us knew Jim in a different context—as a teacher, as a world-renowned scholar, as a parent concerned about his children, or simply as a person with common interests and concerns. By remembering the parts of Jim's life that each of us knows as individuals, together we can transcend mere remembrance and aspire to true commemoration—the building of a more complete and lasting memorial in the form of an enduring awareness of what it means to be a person truly worthy of long remembrance.

Ricardo Romo

Department of History, The University of Texas, Austin

Jim was an esteemed colleague. He served as a scholar and faculty member to whom junior faculty could look for direction, inspiration, and assistance. The younger faculty members especially admired the high standards he maintained, the wise counsel he offered, and his unpretentiousness as a scholar, teacher, and researcher. Although he came to UCSD with an established reputation, we came to know Jim as a warm, modest, and patient co-worker. He was always generous with his time and resources, helping younger colleagues and supporting them in numerous ways. Quick to share information and contacts related to research and teaching, he contributed to the professional growth of beginning scholars. Despite his unceasing and important activities, Jim still made himself available to those who needed his assistance in details or matters of policy, for reviewing manuscripts, or for any other request. Jim's good sense and even temper, his personal integrity and sound judgment made him an ideal and logical choice for important committee duties. He did more than his share of departmental work at UCSD and all of us, his colleagues, students, and family will remember him as a fair man. He succeeded in sharing and caring about the well-being of others.

Brian Loveman

Department of Political Science, San Diego State University

I met Jim as an undergraduate at Berkeley in 1962. I really wasn't sure why I was at Berkeley or where I was going; but, before I knew it, I cared about nineteenth-century Argentina and I cared about Latin America. At the end of the semester, Jim invited all of the students in his class to his home for dinner. It seemed to us as if Jim had concern for every one of us. He wanted to teach each of us; he wanted to know who each of us was; he wanted to befriend. Jim left Berkeley before I graduated. We stayed in touch by mail. When my wife and I thought we had

decided to join the Peace Corps in 1965 but weren't quite sure, I called Jim for advice. We joined the Peace Corps and went to train at East Lansing, Michigan. When training was over we still had some doubts, so we hitchhiked to Bloomington and spent two days with Jim, again to take counsel, find direction, get help. Jim was a firm believer in field-work; since he couldn't think of a better place for it than Chile, where he was born, we went to Chile for two years in the Peace Corps.

When we got back, I went to Indiana University to do graduate work, to again become Jim's student. Of course, I needed help again, needed advice again—needed Jim again—needed help with course work, with the dissertation, with what to do next; and Jim was there. I remember giving him the first chapter of my dissertation. When I went back to pick up what I thought was just a terrific piece of work, I looked at it and saw that there wasn't a sentence left untouched. Jim had changed every sentence in which I had used the passive tense to the active tense; every sentence had a definitive subject, every sentence conveyed action. And that was just like Jim, because he lived in the active voice; he loved and taught and befriended and encouraged. Most of all, he inspired—he inspired me to be critical and to be honest in my own work; he inspired me to challenge the conventional wisdom; he inspired me to give each task the very best, to take what was to be done at hand and give it my best effort and then move ahead. That inspiration is a gift I will always treasure.

Richard M. Morse

Department of History, Stanford University

Just a quarter of a century ago, I was placed on a program committee for the American Historical Association, and my chairman, Charles Gibson, accepted with his customary benevolence my suggestion for a session on the terra incognita of Latin American urban history. A name I proposed for the panel was that of one James R. Scobie, simply on the basis of an article he had written on Argentine cities. After Charles had predictably agreed, I mustered courage to address this unfamiliar colleague with Harvard credentials and a Berkeley affiliation, and I wrote to Jim. He amiably accepted, but couldn't attend the session because he was off for a stint of military service.

The other day, I reread the paper he submitted on that occasion. His topic was formidable: political aspects of Latin American cities in the last century. Given the mystery then enshrouding this theme, Jim's instinct was to make it manageable not by hacking off a fragment but by widening his lens. Showing easy mastery of the classic Spanish historians, he calmly dropped back to the Middle Ages to differentiate the Iberian from the North European city. He then sketched the role of cities as outposts of colonization in America, their colonial political function,

and their pivotal importance at independence. Only then was Jim ready for the assigned topic, which he handled by astutely comparing the divergent cases of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Here, in short, was the agenda to which he and I were to devote much of our scholarly lives, condensed into twelve pages. If I haven't acknowledged that essay as often as I should have, I suppose it's because he expressed himself with such ease, clarity, and command that one absorbed unwittingly what he had to say.

I don't wish to harp on a piece Jim might have regarded as an item of juvenilia. What I'm after is the man behind the writing, and I simply follow his example of starting at the beginning—in this case the beginning of our friendship. At the same time I must take cues from the writing because, while our mutual interests forever threw us together in starchy committee meetings or the jostle of cash-bar cocktail hours, we were able to share relatively few relaxed and collegial hours over the years. At the start, moreover, our respective mentorship may have put each of us a bit on guard. Jim, after all, had been the student of Clarence Haring, who developed his capacious historical interests with firm moorings in the evidence and meticulous attention to his craft, whereas my own preceptor, Frank Tannenbaum, had an academic style best described, in a phrase of Henry James, as that of a "loose and baggy monster." Yet all this is a bit off the point. When people share abiding interests one writes with the other in mind; one even knows at what points one will evoke approval and when one is testing one's own mettle by risking a flicker of skepticism. All this breeds communion in absentia without need for incessant face-to-face reinforcement. During the last few years, as Jim and I did find it possible to see each other more often and at greater leisure, and as our telephone calls became more frequent, I think we both tacitly acknowledged that understanding which, like any growing thing, so dearly needs sheer time for its fruition.

So let me return to Jim's writings. Some folks start history books nowadays with such a statement as: "The following analysis of a household in Patagonia assumes a central paradigm that unifies the conceptual frames of reference of Marx, Freud, Durkheim, Weber, Milton Friedman, and my dissertation adviser, Dr. Horatio H. Pangloss. Data were collected by the stochastic method by twenty-nine research assistants under a therapeutic grant from the National Institute of Mental Health." Jim opened his books like this: "Our history starts on a warm summer day on the third of February, 1852." Or: "The sixteenth-century conquistadors dreamed of the Rio de la Plata—the land and river of silver." Or again: "The Argentine pampas of the sixteenth century were the first grassland frontiers encountered by European man." He locates us, that is, in time, place, and environment and puts us in someone's shoes. Even when he tackles a "thoroughly modern" economic or sociological

theme, he never depersonalizes his actors, he never abandons the historian's time-honored commitment to a "story."

When one receives a colleague's book, one tends to scavenge it for data, references, new viewpoints, felicitous quotes, and laudatory references to oneself that will excuse the author's foibles. A couple of days ago I reread Jim's *Buenos Aires, Plaza to Suburb* trying simply to catch the echo of its author's voice. Here is another opening sentence: "The Spanish fleet that tacked up the wide, brown estuary during the hot summer month of January 1536 carried with it the idea of a city." Most of us would have said "sailed" but Jim said "tacked." I guess he took into account the prevailing wind in January in that corner of the world but spared his reader a ponderous meteorological footnote. He wanted that reader to share his understanding as a participant, not as a pathologist. Yet Jim's mission was not merely to entertain and inform. It was, in the most honorable sense, didactic. And to be a teacher in the grand tradition you don't plunge the student into a maelstrom of catchy details and let him swim for himself; nor do you keep rapping his knuckles with the ruler of hard Gradgrindian fact; nor do you insert his mind into a straitjacket of prefabricated laws and paradigms. You start where *he* is and lead him forth, in the true sense of "educate." A classic way to accomplish this is to point out differences and ask the student to help elicit their meanings. That's why photographs were so important to Jim, not simply because they convey the flavor of an era but because they yield an unmediated glimpse. And then his caption brings Jim's gentle hint: compare with illustration 8; compare these with illustrations 29 and 30. Or look at Jim's title—"Plaza to Suburb"—and his chapter headings: "The Paris of South America and the Gran Aldea," "Plaza and Conventillos," "Streetcar and Neighborhood," "Social Structure and Cultural Themes." And the final chapter—not, as is so fashionable nowadays, "The Commercial-Bureaucratic Model"—but more humanly, more open-endedly, more suggestively—and with more respect for the reader's private imagination—"The Commercial-Bureaucratic City." These pairings do not flow into an overpowering dialectic of a Marxian brand. Jim's dialectic was the original Greek art of disputation by question and answer. Fin-de-siècle Buenos Aires was just right for his gifts, as an unprecedented arena for the mix of what was most modern in the West with the recalcitrancies of Spanish tradition and an overseas hinterland. The composite is richly recoverable in memoirs, travel accounts, literature, photographs, newspapers, government reports, and statistics; yet the vision of the contemporary actors had not yet been anatomized by routine economic analysis and political polarization. In retrospect, fin-de-siècle Buenos Aires remains familiar, yet a bit inscrutable; lavishly documented yet elusive; a human kaleidoscope yet a coherent, signifi-

cant entity unto itself. This was the challenge Jim was looking for and the subject that he found.

All this is not of course to say that Jim's work has a homespun quality. He knew his dependency and his Marxism, his spatial ecology and his location theory. He knew how to make statistics speak to his central questions. Or if he didn't know, he had no hesitation in asking someone who might. He was always modest about his accomplishments, always learning, always in quest. The point is that once he mastered a theory or a technique, he absorbed it into his story. What bothered him about the book he left unfinished—but thankfully, I gather, virtually completable—was, Ingrid tells me, that he hadn't yet decided which statistics to incorporate and which to put in an appendix. He liked a well-supported text but not a cluttered one, which is to say, he hated to leave his reader adrift. Jim expressed his concern for large issues in the prospectus for an interpretive book on the whole of Latin American history that would bring into focus the grand policy dilemmas of our day. The scholars he adduced as exemplary for such an enterprise—Albert Hirschman, Stanley and Barbara Stein, and even my "baggy monster," Frank Tannenbaum—can scarcely be called practitioners of an anecdotal or purely evocative style. That book, which would have been, I think, his seventh, will remain unwritten. Yet our intellectual deprivation is less than in the case of the scholar who leaves us prematurely after a life of merely clearing the ground for a magnum opus. Jim's books are not fragments. They are centrally informed by large ideas and judgments. If we read them carefully, they point us toward what the more ample study might have said about nationalism, social structure, intellectuals, economic development, and Latin America's relations with the world.

I hope you'll read, or reread, Jim's book on Buenos Aires one of these days. Not tomorrow, not next week. Maybe next year if you have time. There's no hurry. Jim will always be there at your elbow, telling you which photographs should be compared, or which tables will support his vivid descriptions of bourgeois life, of slum life, of the bustle and cacophony of the streets of Buenos Aires. He won't of course give you a paradigm. He'll pass along to you a torch.

A research fellowship in the memory of James R. Scobie has been established to provide field research opportunities in Latin America for outstanding undergraduates and graduate students. Those who wish to make a contribution may send donations—made out to the Regents of the University of California, Scobie Fund—to the UC San Diego Foundation; 103A Administrative Complex Q-011; University of California, San Diego; La Jolla, CA 92093.