

Obituaries

JAMES PHINNEY BAXTER 3RD

James Phinney Baxter, 3rd, teacher, college president, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, and government administrator, died last summer in his eighty-third year. Having known him since my undergraduate days as mentor, scholar, academic president, wartime chief, and personal friend, I can testify to the combination of energy, intelligence, warmth, and periodic temper he brought to all these tasks—a combination those who worked with him will long recall with wonder and affection.

Born February 15, 1893, in Portland, Maine—a state to which he maintained a fisherman's lifelong allegiance—he was the son of James Phinney, Jr., and Nelly (Carpenter) Baxter and nephew of Percival Baxter, the Maine governor who created Baxter State Park. After graduating from Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, he entered Williams College, from which his father had graduated in 1889. As a member of the Class of 1914, he became president of his class and of the senior honor society, editor of both the paper and the yearbook, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. It was no surprise that his classmates voted him the 'Man Who Has Done the Most for Williams' and 'Most Likely to Succeed.'

After graduation he worked briefly for the Industrial Finance Corporation in New York, but within a year contracted tuberculosis and went to Colorado to recuperate. While there he met the late Anne Holden Strang and married her on June 21, 1919, in Colorado Springs. She was a woman of strength and character who had done graduate work at Wisconsin in geology, and who added greatly to the worlds they entered.

Baxter's advanced study began with extensive reading of history while convalescing in Colorado. After a year as in-

structor at Colorado College, he returned East for graduate work at Harvard that led to an M.A. in 1923 and a doctorate in 1926. A member of the Harvard faculty from 1925 to 1937, he taught courses in diplomatic history, naval history, and international relations with zest and solid scholarship. In 1931 he was promoted to the rank of associate professor and in the same year was named first master of Adams House. He became a full professor in 1936. During these years and at intervals thereafter he maintained his vigorous interest in national defense as a lecturer at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, and, at various times, at the National War College, the Air War College, and the Canadian Defense College.

He often related, however, that his most challenging teaching experience occurred not in the classroom but while fishing the Miramichi River in New Brunswick, Canada. He and a guide were returning to camp when they came upon a bear, caught in a trap and obviously in pain. Lacking a gun, the guide suggested that the animal might be put out of its misery with an axe if the beast could be approached from the rear. He suggested that the professor attract the animal's attention. Feeling like an accomplice in a murder plot, Baxter recalled, he walked slowly toward the bear, expounding in emphatic tones on the pros and cons of the Florida boundary dispute. A sportsman's magazine later carried the story under the headline: 'Harvard Professor Talks Bear to Death.' Asked why he had chosen that particular topic, Baxter replied, 'It was always a difficult thing to explain to a class, and I felt if I could hold the attention of students with it, I might hold a bear's.'

Known throughout life to his Harvard friends as Jim and to his Williams friends as Phinney—and deeply devoted to both institutions—he made the transition in 1937 to begin a college presidency at Williams that would continue for twenty-four years. His deep attachments to the social traditions of a

proud old college in no way impeded his intense commitment to building a first-class faculty and sustaining a serious academic enterprise. As my thesis director (I was his only student in that first year) he gave me a glimpse into the measured life of a college president as I read parts of my senior thesis to him while he shaved before leaving for the Washington plane. The pull of patriotism and national affairs soon took him into government service for the nearly five years of World War II—as director of research for the Coordinator of Information, 1941–42; deputy director in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 1942–43, where he recruited academic personnel for the OSS staff; and historian for the Office of Scientific Research and Development, 1943–46.

In the latter role he entered a whole new field of history and wrote a remarkable book, *Scientists against Time*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947 and chronicled the application of science and technology to the war effort. Interestingly, his doctoral dissertation and first book had examined the introduction of the ironclad warship, finding an antecedent to the celebrated *Monitor* and *Merrimac* in a French vessel of 1859, *La Gloire*. Baxter was elected to the American Antiquarian Society the year it was published, in 1933.

A lifelong and ardent Republican, he brought equal passion to the defense of academic freedom. During the assaults of the McCarthy era he was resolute in upholding the rights of faculty members to speak their views. And on almost any subject those who can recall his resounding voice and exuberance will have difficulty remembering that he operated for most of his adult life on a single lung. Many can remember times when he put it to full use, not least on occasions when his opening comment, 'Now this is confidential . . .,' went ringing across a wartime Washington courtyard. In a period that typically led people to rein themselves in, Phinney—Jim—plunged into the waves of his times with an innocent vitality, a Teddy Roosevelt-like exuberance that lent color,

spirit, and, on occasion, real excitement to life's surrounding greys. It was a more interesting world for his presence.

After retiring, Baxter went to New York City to serve as first senior fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, living at the Union Club. In 1965, his health failing, he returned to Williamstown. For the past several years he lived at the Sweet Brook Nursing Home. Following his death on June 17, 1975, and a funeral service in Williamstown, James Phinney Baxter, 3rd, was buried in the college cemetery. There beside his splendid wife, who had died in 1962, lies a gifted teacher, a brilliant historian, a stouthearted defender of his country and of the best in American higher education. He leaves a sister, three sons, and eight grandchildren.

John Edward Sawyer

EDWARD CHASE KIRKLAND

Edward Chase Kirkland died in Hanover, New Hampshire, on his eighty-first birthday, May 24, 1975. Thus was stilled the peal of laughter which for many years delighted and enlightened his friends, laughter which for those who really knew him conveyed a wealth of wit and learning as well as an ironic regard upon the world around him.

Kirkland was born in Bellows Falls, Vermont, on May 24, 1894. Educated in the local schools, he entered Dartmouth College at eighteen and took his bachelor's degree there in 1916. He retained a lifelong attachment to the college and to its environs that brought him back after an early retirement to Thetford Center, Vermont, a few miles from Hanover.

In 1917, at the outbreak of war, he enlisted in the United States Army, and served in the ambulance corps with the French until 1919. A wound earned him a *croix de guerre* and left him with an abiding hatred of war.

His discharge allowed him to return to Dartmouth where

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