

## WALTER DEAN BURNHAM: In Memory and Appreciation

Dean Burnham, who died in San Antonio in October at the age of ninety-two, was an active and enthusiastic supporter of this journal from its inception. His loss deprives editors and managing editors of his energetic and assiduous counsel, especially regarding any writings or commentaries devoted to political parties, elections, political realignments, political polling, and the deep literature on the evolution of American democracy from originalist founding days to the rise of reactionary recent presidents.

Because this journal was originally housed at MIT, it was both convenient and illuminating to stroll into Burnham's office and ask his opinion about a submission or about an idea for a special issue, or to request advice about some aspect of American or European political development. Burnham would always answer the precise questions and then, unprompted, provide context and a compendium of intellectual discourse related to the inquiry. He was integral to the growth of the *JIH* from its formative years, and ever since.

A student of Harvard University's V.O. Key, Burnham in 1965 published a defining article on declining voter turnout, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," in the *American Political Science Review*. Among his many seminal books were *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (1970), *Democracy in the Making: American Government and Politics* (1986), and *Voting in American Elections: The Shaping of the American Political Universe Since 1788* (2009). In 2014, he co-wrote—with Thomas Ferguson, a former student—"Americans Are Sick to Death of Both Parties: Why Our Politics Are in Worse Shape Than We Thought," a study of the 2014 American elections. He also commented in print on the 2016 "change election" that brought Donald Trump to the presidency. As the *New York Times'* obituary indicated, Burnham was "one of the most influential political scientists of his generation." Among Burnham's many intellectual contributions to this journal was his path-breaking

article, “Those High Nineteenth-Century American Voting Turnouts: Fact or Fiction?” XVI (1986), 613–644.

Before joining the MIT political science department in 1971, Burnham had taught at Boston University, Kenyon College, Haverford College, and Washington University. In 1988, he departed MIT for the University of Texas, Austin. His students there were as devoted to his breadth of learning and his clever wit as those at MIT had been.

Burnham was profoundly interdisciplinary in his interests, his discourse, and his approach to political and social history. He extolled the craft of translating compelling theories and concepts into accessible articles and books, thus contributing mightily to the fashioning and qualitative uplifting of this journal for decades. The *JIH*'s readers and editors will sadly miss his profound insights and unparalleled wisdom.

—R. I. R.