



In Memoriam  
Robert L. Middlekauff (1929–2021)

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THE QUARTERLY sadly acknowledges the passing of the distinguished early American historian Robert L. Middlekauff, a long-time member of our Board of Editors and a judge of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts's Whitehill Prize Committee. A consummate scholar, Bob brought his erudition and wit to numerous topics, ranging from the theology of New England puritans to the humor of Benjamin Franklin, winning the Bancroft Prize for his probing intellectual history, *The Mathers*, and becoming a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his lively general narrative of the American Revolution, *The Glorious Cause*. He also excelled as an administrator, entrusted with demanding positions as director of the Huntington Library and dean and provost of the University of California Berkeley, known, perhaps most of all, for his unwavering integrity. Drawing perhaps from his early years in the Marine Corps, Bob could be tough and reserved as an authority figure. But in his interactions with students and colleagues he remained at the same time unwaveringly modest, unassuming, and attentive to the input of others. He was, much like the historical figures he most admired, someone who embraced leadership with high ideals and few illusions, as well as someone who enjoyed a good joke. To those who had the good fortune to work closely with him, he will be most remembered for his generosity and kindness.

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## An Editor's Reflection

The early days of editing the QUARTERLY were much like first learning to play baseball: fielding a ground ball required having to remember what to do faster than a child's brain could process. Time passed faster when I first assumed the editorship of the QUARTERLY because I had to adapt to a different rhythm of academic life, of time dictated by printer deadlines and the actions of others. The QUARTERLY absorbed and accelerated time leaving a constant sense of impending doom: that a deadline would be missed or a submission misplaced and overlooked. In the rush of that early chaos, Bob Middlekauff's gift was to slow time. My first request of Bob was to review Timothy Breen's *George Washington's Journey*; he responded affirmatively and promptly with a fine review but one that contained, I thought, an infelicitous phrase. In the midst of those harried moments, I hesitated; I had read Bob's work on *The Mathers* as an MA student at the University of Hawai'i, used it in my own work, assigned *The Glorious Cause* to classes at UMass, but above all respected the range and quality of his writing. I deliberated over whether to question a Bancroft prize-winning scholar, Pulitzer finalist, judge of the Colonial Society's Whitehill Prize, and a long-serving member of our Board of Editors. In truth I labored more on the diplomatic and frankly deferential language in my email asking Bob's approval of my edit than I spent copy-editing his review. His brief, simple response was that he liked my phrasing better. What followed after that first contact were occasional, encouraging emails and phone conversations expressing his approval of an article or, more important, of the way in which I had assembled a particular issue. One especially memorable conversation was a response to my request he write a reflection on the evolution of the scholarship on the Revolution since his writing of the *Glorious Cause*. In his unassuming way, Bob let me know what he thought and why he felt he had to decline. In his infrequent, but valued

correspondence, Bob continued to teach and slow time for me. I did not know him well enough to ask if he liked baseball; if he did, I could have been a better second baseman.

—Jonathan M. Chu