A kind and generous friend left us recently, one who unfailingly shared with us his time, his hospitality, and his wisdom. More than a few of us called on him frequently just to talk, to ask specific questions, to request evaluations of our historical compositions, or for other reasons. Although "Phil" always had projects of his own in progress, never were we turned away. He made us feel that he enjoyed our company, that he was glad that we had asked for whatever it was that we wanted. If we would join him in having some refreshments while we talked, he seemed to think it so much the better. He provided what we needed with humility, gentility, and a sharp wit.

Throughout our contacts with "Professor Klein," he was teaching us, sometimes obviously and at others subtly. After he officially retired from the history faculty at The Pennsylvania State University, he would return to the classroom when asked to discuss Pennsylvania—its history, its politics, or its only contribution to the presidency, James Buchanan—almost always with a fresh and timely approach to his topic. Even some undergraduates recognized that they were in the presence of a great mind. Some would ask him to autograph their textbooks, A History of Pennsylvania, that he co-authored. Graduate students, however, were even more appreciative of his efforts. He taught his research seminars in the "old-fashioned way," expecting his people to work through all steps of the methodology. Under his guidance, students turned out manuscripts that became not only excellent essays, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations, but also, sometimes through his academic contacts, papers that they presented at professional conventions, articles that they published in scholarly journals, and books produced by reputable presses. Amid the lore of academe, the stories of tangled and sometimes turbulent relationships between students and their teachers loom large. Professor Klein, however, was the ideal mentor—even tempered, supportive, sensitive, and unfailingly courteous.

Much of Professor Klein's effectiveness as a teacher emanated from his scholarship, which he shared with his students, fellow historians, and the general public. At the root of his scholarship was his intense curiosity about everything. As
an adolescent, he wanted to know more about a new method of communicating called "radio," so he made a crystal set. Wanting to develop a faster method of transportation, he adapted a Ford Model T to his own specifications. As an adult, he wanted to know how model train locomotives worked, so he took them apart to find out. A few weeks before he died, he remarked that he was not afraid of death, but that he certainly was curious.

Despite the variety of directions to which Professor Klein's curiosity pointed, it was in historical scholarship that he made his reputation. He was best known nationally for his biography of President James Buchanan and was the honorary chairman of the conference that in 1991 observed the two hundredth anniversary of Buchanan's birth. In this and in his numerous other publications, he stressed
the universality of themes in western civilization, one of which was the inhumanity of war. Buchanan, he insisted, was an effective diplomat who preserved peace and a president who avoided civil strife. Another of his themes was the "connectedness" of national, state, and local history. This, too, is obvious in his publications. He made no apology whatsoever for publishing so frequently about Pennsylvania. He claimed that much that happened in this state was characteristic of what occurred elsewhere and influenced developments in other states and in the nation. Furthermore, this is where James Buchanan began his political career, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to be exact. He wrote also about people who were less famous and who came from Pennsylvania communities that were even smaller.2

More than most academics, he was involved in the work of the historical organizations of his Commonwealth and locality, serving several as president, secretary, and member of their board of directors. His thorough research even qualified him to become a technical advisor on the preservation and restoration of their historical sites. He delivered addresses at many of their meetings. Scholar though he was, he related successfully to the amateur historians with whom he often cooperated in these endeavors. They too recognized his ability and appreciated his concern for their interests and for them.

"Mr. Pennsylvania History" we called him. He was truly a "Keeper of the Past," especially Pennsylvania's past. He kept it not only for himself, though he cherished it, but also for his colleagues, students, neighbors, and for our posterity. We know more about Pennsylvania, about history, and about life as we should live it, because was to so many of us a friend and teacher.3

Roland M. Baumann
John F. Coleman
John B. Frantz

Notes
2. A complete bibliography of Klein's publications appears in ibid., 273-75.
3. Biographical data concerning Philip S. Klein can be found in ibid., 243-271.