

## IN MEMORIAM: *Ray Sadler*

**L**ouis Ray Sadler, Professor of History Emeritus at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, passed away October 10, 2021. He had held the Emeritus title there since 2000 and was known for his now-standard studies of the Mexican-US border and the Mexican Revolution.

Ray, born February 5, 1937 in Newton, Mississippi, grew up in nearby Union. Through high school, he had a successful career as a Boy Scout, earning the Eagle award and the William T. Hornaday Award for a major conservation project. Marking his scouting achievement, Ray was chosen to present the annual Boy Scout review to the state governor. He entered Mississippi State University as a forestry major, but soon discovered journalism as he worked in sports information and on the university paper. He spent his college summers at the *Jackson Daily News*, where he took a job after graduation. At the newspaper, he met Betty Miller, and they married in 1961.

Ray and Betty reported on a variety of stories, from “giraffes to high crime,” as Betty recalled. Ray also covered civil rights efforts in Mississippi, including marches, sit-ins, and voter registration efforts by Freedom Riders. He held an unwavering belief in the political, constitutional, and humane goals of the anti-segregation and civil rights campaign and the courage of the activists. He had a significant covert role in this campaign. He also developed a strong interest in history, and re-entered college, earning a BA and MA in history while serving in the Mississippi Air National Guard. In 1965, he joined the PhD program at the University of South Carolina, where he studied Latin American history and received a doctorate in 1969.

William H. Beezley is Professor of Latin American History at the University of Arizona. His focus is on cultural history. He has written or edited more than 25 monographs and anthologies, among them the well-known *Judas at the Jockey Club* and *Amending Memories: The Nimble Mnemonics of Mexican Popular Culture* (translated into Spanish). With Judy Ewell, he edited *The Human Tradition in Latin America*. He also wrote *The Oxford History of Mexico* with Colin MacLachan, *The History of Greater Mexico*, and three volumes on the Mexican revolution. He served as the inaugural editor of *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia for Latin America*, and for the University of Nebraska series *The History and Culture of Mexico*. He has been a guest cultural expert in more than 30 episodes of the PBS television series *When the Desert Speaks*, and the series *In the Americas with David Yetman*. He cowrote and coproduced the documentary *Mexican Women Use Embroidery to Express Domestic, Political, and Human Rights*. Most recently, he published *Latin American Cultural Objects and Episodes*. His current projects include articles on Malbec wine in Argentina and *Porgy and Bess* in the Cold War.

Ray immediately received an appointment to the History faculty at New Mexico State University and remained there until his retirement in 2000. On his first day at NMSU, he met another new History faculty member, Charles Harris III. The two became close friends, colleagues, and coauthors. Together they wrote a foundational series of histories that became the standard explanation of the Mexican Revolution in the borderlands. They also studied US-Mexican joint programs on the border in pursuit of revolutionaries, German spies during World War I, and military cooperation programs.

The eight books that Ray and Charles Harris published together, with a ninth in progress, established an interpretation that today is taken for granted and often not recognized as the result of their scholarship. Such outstanding evaluations and biographies as *Pancho Villa* by Friedrich Katz and studies of the Flores Magón movement on both sides of the frontier by Dirk Raat, Ward Albro, and others, of anti-Mexican policies in Texas, of German programs of espionage and sabotage on the border, and, in Yucatán, of the Pershing Punitive Expedition with its impact on the US military, diplomatic relations with the Carranza government, and US Chinese policies—all of these rest solidly on the scholarship of Harris and Sadler. Beyond their books, the two published award-winning articles, and produced unpublished reports, such as “Fort Bliss and the Mexican Revolution.”

Their coauthored books are:

- *The Border and the Revolution: Clandestine Activities of the Mexican Revolution: 1910–1920* (1990)
- *The Archaeologist Was a Spy: Sylvanus G. Morley and the Office of Naval Intelligence* (2003)
- *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910–1920* (2004)
- *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906–1920* (2009)
- *Texas Ranger Biographies: Those Who Served, 1910–1921* (2010)
- *The Plan de San Diego: Tejano Rebellion, Mexican Intrigue* (2013)
- *The Great Call-Up: The Guard, the Border, and the Mexican Revolution* (2015)
- *The Texas Rangers in Transition: From Gunfighters to Criminal Investigators, 1921–1935* (2019)
- “The FBI and the Mexican Revolution” (Forthcoming)

Each book is characterized by solid, innovative, exhaustive research, and skillful concise writing. Collectively, they won a half dozen awards. Among those awarded is *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution*, which won both the Spur Award for best nonfiction book from the Western Writers of America and

the T. R. Fehrenbach Award from the Texas Historical Commission. The two received other awards for their writing, including the Conference on Latin American History's award for the best historical article in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, an outstanding examination of the "Plan of San Diego" in southern Texas. Their books earned both student and popular sales. The History Channel brought the authors to Belize for the filming of a television episode on World War I German activities there.

Beyond his scholarly efforts, Ray took an active role as a teacher and as department chair. He founded the Latin American Studies program at NMSU and served as its director. The program and center remain a major part of the university's educational efforts.

Ray also took on other service activities. He, John Hart, and Colin MacLachlan traveled to a meeting of the Rocky Mountain Conference of Latin American Studies in Tempe, Arizona, only to find that they were the only persons there. They decided to revive the organization and Ray became leader of the effort, eventually taking the title of executive secretary and arranging collaborations with Teo Cravena at the University of New Mexico, Mike Meyer at the University of Arizona, and others, and making RMCLAS the first and largest regional Latin American organization. Ray later served a term as executive secretary of the American Historical Association's Conference on Latin American History, but RMCLAS remained his major organization and he supported it in many ways, including financial contributions.

Ray also had an active political career as a leading individual in the Doña Ana County Democratic Party and worked actively with New Mexico elected authorities on state educational and economic programs. He worked from his informal office at Choppy's Café, known for its *chile verde* and cold beer and as the gathering spot for the county's branch of the political party to talk over elections and programs coming out of Santa Fe. He had a major role in the creation of eastern New Mexico's Santa Teresa Port of Entry with Mexico. Ray's commitment to US democratic political and social principles also resulted in a career-long relationship with national intelligence organizations.

He accomplished his politics, teaching, and scholarship with a genuine commitment, an easy laugh, and support for his family and friends.

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