David Weber and the Borderlands Past, Present, Future: Conference on Latin American History/American Historical Association Annual Meeting Boston, Massachusetts January 8, 2011: Borderlands and Frontiers Studies Committee Panel Honoring David Weber
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David Weber and the Borderlands

Past, Present, Future

Conference on Latin American History/
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Borderlands and Frontiers Studies Committee Panel
Honoring David Weber

ABSTRACT: David J. Weber, eminent borderlands scholar, died on August 20, 2010. Six scholars formed a panel to pay tribute to him at the 125th Annual Meeting of the AHA in January 2011. Their remarks, printed here, form not only an account of Weber's impact on the borderlands field, the scholars in that field, and the individuals who knew him but also a means of reviewing that field of history and its flowering during, and in large part due to, his influence.

I.
Introduction

By Steven W. Hackel, University of California, Riverside

In August 2010, the historical profession was deprived of one of its most articulate and important voices with the death of David J. Weber, a leading scholar of the Spanish Borderlands. David had just retired from his teaching responsibilities at Southern Methodist University (SMU). I was never a student of David's in a formal sense, but like all Borderlands scholars of my generation, he shaped my career and my work and I am greatly in his debt. How could it be otherwise? David J. Weber was everywhere, involved in everything, and known to everyone.

I met David through his writing. It was 1988, and I read *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* during my first

year in graduate school. At that point I was unsure which direction my career would take. Would I venture into Colonial, Native American, or Western history? It was still too early in my own intellectual development for me to realize that I could combine all three of my interests in one study. In *The Mexican Frontier* I found what I so desperately needed as a first-year graduate student at Cornell: an orientation to the literature of California and the Southwest during the Mexican period that made clear to a novice how generations of scholars had approached the study of the Borderlands of northern Mexico. Here was a colorful and engaging narrative that combined exhaustive synthesis, archival research, and lively anecdotes. The annotated bibliography in *The Mexican Frontier* constituted (and remains) a historian's dream. Its lengthy thematic discussions organized by region and time period effortlessly survey the major historiography of the Mexican North. Thanks to *The Mexican Frontier* and David's other writings, especially two volumes of essays, *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540–1821* and *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest: Essays by David J. Weber*—when I read Al Hurtado's *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* and Ramón A. Gutierrez's *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away* later that year, I had the beginnings of my own intellectual framework within which to place those path-breaking monographs.

I first met David in person in 1992, in the Beinecke Library, at the Annual Meeting of the Western History Association. By then I had decided to write a dissertation on Spanish California. David had just published *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. With the publication of *The Spanish Frontier* it was clear that David was coming to dominate and embody the field of Spanish Borderlands history as no one had since Herbert Eugene Bolton. At the opening reception of the conference, I waited until the crowd had thinned and then I introduced myself. David was interested to learn about my work, and I was incredibly intimidated. He explained to me how much work had gone into *The Spanish Frontier*. Never having written a synthesis of my own, I could not understand what he was talking about. He made it look easy. Years later, when I tried my own hand at the type of writing that David had mastered, I would think back to that early conversation and wonder what David must have been thinking during our chat.

Several years later, when I was a post-doctoral fellow at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and David

was a member of the Institute's council and an early reader of my unrevised dissertation, we talked and corresponded more frequently. David read more deeply in Borderlands historiography than anyone of his generation. He probably read in manuscript nearly everything that was eventually published, and he must have read mountains of essays and dissertations that would never make it into print. As I revised my dissertation and a few early essays for publication, I leaned heavily on David's commentary and his magnum opus, *The Spanish Frontier*, which I consulted daily. In fact, I have turned to this book so many times over the past two decades that the binding of my hardcover copy, purchased new in 1992, has become cracked and broken.

As I progressed from post-doctoral fellow to assistant professor to associate professor, and as I moved from Virginia to Oregon to California, and as I undertook various research and publication projects, David Weber, as did others, played a huge role in my career development. Much has been written about David's humility, his generosity, his tremendous work ethic, and his vast knowledge. But he should also be remembered as a tough reader and spirited critic. He combined a sharp and tough mind with a vast storehouse of knowledge that ranged from local developments in the borderlands to the most recently published historiography—all of this allowed him to provide the close readings at many levels of engagement that scholars need in order to move their work forward. David's own origins and modest sense of self made him a champion of those whose work did not emerge from the halls of the Ivy League or that focused on areas such as colonial California that had often been overlooked or dismissed by the larger profession.

David's immense intellectual gifts, his character, and his devotion to history meant that he was unusually comfortable working as a Latin Americanist in what was, during his early and middle career years, a marginal field. His unique accomplishment was to bring a generation of scholars and scholarship on the Spanish Borderlands to the center of American history. Yet this could not have happened without larger forces and transformations: the changing demographics of our profession, the increasing importance of the western states (politically, demographically, and economically), the Columbian Quincentenary and the light it cast on the Spanish borderlands, and the decline of the nation state as *the* organizing principle among U.S. historians. However, without David Weber's enormous energies, great generosity, and intellectual

might, American history would be less diverse, less continental, and less relevant to many Americans. Beyond his books and articles and institutional accomplishments, his primary scholarly legacy is that he broke down borders. By highlighting exceptional work and by showing the depth, breadth, and humanity of the Spanish colonial frontier in its many forms and contexts throughout the Americas, David moved the Spanish Borderlands to the heart of an ever-expanding American colonial history. For all of these reasons, David Weber is clearly the preeminent historian of the Spanish Borderlands of the last half century, second only to Bolton in overall influence.

When I think of David now I think of how much his death has deprived our field of its most important scholar and spokesman. But David's legacy goes beyond his professional accomplishments. I think about his warmth. In the fall of 1999, when the Western History Association met in Portland, Oregon, I traveled there with my wife and our newborn daughter. I remember how truly delighted David was to see our five-week-old infant. I had wanted him to see me as more than the sum of my limited professional accomplishments, and I was touched that he did. A decade later, in 2009, when David was battling the cancer that would kill him, he produced on time, with good cheer tempered by exhaustion and a sense of his own mortality, a revised chapter for a book I was editing. In that chapter and its accompanying email, it was hard not to see the human touch behind so much of David's life and work. That winter David's health improved, and we exchanged warm greetings in San Diego at the 2010 American Historical Association (AHA).

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Just after I last saw David in San Diego, I began my term as Chair of the Borderlands/Frontiers Committee of the Conference of Latin American History (CLAH)—a group that David helped establish. It was in that capacity that I organized a panel to convene in Boston in January 2011 at the Conference on Latin American History to celebrate and examine David's enduring contribution to the study of the Spanish Borderlands. Even though David was ill, he was eager to attend this meeting, as was his wife, Carol. That was not to be as David died in August. In late December, just before the CLAH meeting in Boston, Carol wrote that David had very much hoped to join us

in Boston. She stated that David "cherished all of the opportunities and professional and personal relationships he had acquired through academe, always wishing they would go on forever." Surely he would have enjoyed such a gathering of his friends and colleagues who met to discuss his work and his field.

After David's death, the AHA council made our CLAH session one of its own in recognition of David's long service to our profession and to the AHA. At the time of his death, David was completing his third year as vice president of the Professional Division of the AHA. At the AHA session, we heard from five scholars who knew David and his work as well as anyone; their presentations, with minor modifications, are printed here. To those of us who work in colonial Latin American history, the Spanish Borderlands, or Early American history, these scholars are the masters of their fields. They have all written works that define their fields, and David, as you'll read below, helped shape their careers and their written work.

The program of speakers began with three colonial Latin Americanists: Bill Taylor, Amy Turner Bushnell, and Cynthia Radding. Bill Taylor is Muriel McKevitt Sonne Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, and was a colleague of David's at SMU during the mid-1980s. At last count he had written twelve books, three of which—*Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca*; *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages*; and *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*—would be the crowning achievement of any career. Professor Taylor presented a paper titled "David Weber, Latin Americanist."

Amy Turner Bushnell's most important publications to date are *The King's Coffer: Proprietors of the Spanish Florida Treasury, 1565-1702* and *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida*. The working title of her current project is "Resistant Peoples: Autonomy and Its Markers in the Indian Americas." Since 1999 she has been an Invited Research Scholar at the John Carter Brown Library, and at Brown University she is an adjunct associate professor of history and an affiliate of the Center for Latin American Studies. Amy's paper was titled " 'Lengthen Thy Cords and Strengthen Thy Stakes': Enlarging the Spanish Borderlands."

Our third speaker was Cynthia Radding, the Gussenhoven Distinguished Professor of Latin American Studies and Professor of History

at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She has published widely on Sonora, the Pimería Alta, and Bolivia, and is working on what will certainly be a fascinating follow-up to her 2005 book, *Landscapes of Power and Identity.* Her current book project carries the title *Bountiful Deserts and Imperial Shadows: Seeds of Knowledge and Corridors of Migration in Northern New Spain, 1680–1820.* Her talk was on the subject of "Intersecting Borderlands: 'los bárbaros' in the Enduring Forests between the Andes and the Paraguayan River Basin."

With our fourth speaker, Peter Onuf, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Professor of History at the University of Virginia and a colleague of David's at SMU in the late 1980s, the discussion shifted from the impact of David's work on colonial Latin American to a larger discussion of American history. Professor Onuf's numerous books and articles touch on a range of frontier issues and personalities, from Thomas Jefferson and the Northwest Ordinance, to concepts of regionalism in the early American Republic. Peter discussed "The New American Nation in a New American Framework: Beyond David Weber's Borderlands." His comments attached here have been co-authored with Pekka Hämäläinen, associate professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of the noted monograph, *The Comanche Empire.*

Our final speaker was Ben Johnson, the Associate Director of the Clements Center at SMU and a colleague of David's from 2002 to 2010. Ben is an Associate Professor of History and Global Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. He has written books and articles on revolutionary Texas and border towns. He co-edited, with Pekka Hämäläinen, *Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands.* Professor Johnson's remarks were titled, "Pasó por Aquí: David Weber, the Borderlands, and Beyond."

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This session was in many ways, with the exception of the large room that we found ourselves in, what we had planned for David a year earlier, with the obvious and painful difference that he was not with us. David's voice and intelligence, of course, survive in his many books and articles. But I thought that I would begin the session by reading something more provisional, more revealing, before we embarked on the formal papers. Therefore, I began the session with an email from

David to Elizabeth Fenn, written in September 1999, responding to her request that he describe for a class she was teaching how he became interested in Borderlands history. It is quite fascinating, and it sheds light on how David came to be a historian of colonial Latin America, and how he came to write three of his most important books—*The Taos Trappers*, *The Mexican Frontier*, and *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. In its tone, its voice, its humility, and its use of detail and anecdote—this email reminds us who David was and why we will miss him so much.

The words are David's:

E-mail from David Weber to Elizabeth A. Fenn, September 12, 1999

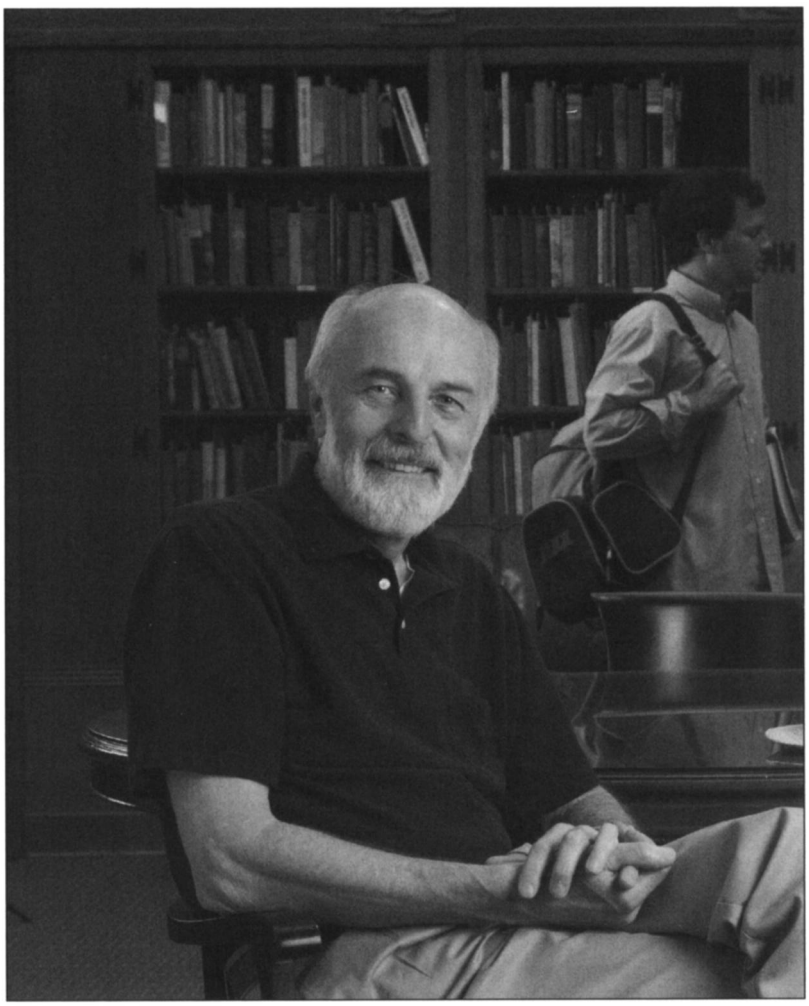
Elizabeth:

Congratulations on the book contract! I read your proposal for Oxford and told them it was extraordinary. Smart of you to use an agent. Johnny has urged me to do the same, and I certainly will if I ever write a book that anyone might want to read (not the case with my present project).

I've never done the kind of biographical interview that you are looking for, but occasionally graduate students get in touch with me and ask me questions about my intellectual biography—I should put some of that in writing so I'm not doing it over and over, and you've given me the incentive to write something autobiographical and save it. This is the first draft.

Let me begin with the question that is always asked: How did I become interested in the Southwest/Borderlands/etc. The answer, as in so many cases, is through serendipity. I went to SUNY Fredonia to become a music teacher. I had a fine time in high school and wanted to be a teacher—music seemed like the best vehicle since I admired the ex-marine who directed the band and orchestra. In those days you could be a jock and a musician at the same time. By the time I graduated from college four years later, in 1962, I knew that I didn't have any talent as a musician but still thought about becoming a high school teacher of something. Fredonia was too small to have a history department. I majored in social sciences and loved History and English. So, I thought I'd do an MA in one of those disciplines so I could get a permanent credential and not have to take courses in "Education." As I tried to decide between English and History I discovered American Studies, which seemed like the ideal solution. I went to see the Latin American historian at Fredonia, Marvin Bernstein, and told him that I'd been reading about American Studies and that [the] interdisciplinary degree was the wave of the future. "It is," he told me, "and always will be."

Bernstein urged me to stick with a single discipline if I wanted to get hired, and suggested that I might think about a PhD as well as an MA. Since I was the first person in my family to go to college, and my dad had an eighth-grade education, that seemed like a radical idea. Bernstein pushed



David J. Weber.
© SMU 2011, *Photo by Hillsman S. Jackson.*

me further to think about his field—Latin America. I'd taken the one Latin American history course offered at Fredonia and had two years of high-school Spanish. With this preparation, and a new bride (Carol and I met in high school and went to Fredonia together), I headed to Albuquerque the next fall. The University of New Mexico was not too big, Bernstein assured me, for someone from Fredonia. Larger places like Berkeley, Texas, or Florida that also specialized in Latin America might overwhelm me, but he thought I might do the MA at UNM and then move on.

At age twenty-one, I found myself alienated by the impersonal treatment that I (and others) received from the "star" [Latin Americanist there], but was much taken with the warmth and enthusiasm exuded by the borderlands historian, Donald Cutter, when I took his seminar in my second semester at UNM. By then, I'd also become enchanted with the Land of Enchantment. New Mexico and Arizona fascinated me, and early contacts between Anglo Americans and Hispanics in this region drew my particular attention. Cutter suggested that I write a thesis on early Anglo American fur traders who came into New Mexico. The book had never been done, he said, and the archives were right there. The thesis evolved into my dissertation and then into a book, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1821* (1971). I took my doctoral exams in Latin American history, with a subfield in U.S. history, but worked in an area that had [only later] become part of the U.S. In those days, fellowships for sending graduate students to Latin America [were] scarce unless one worked on a twentieth-century topic, and an extended residence in Latin America would have been difficult for us (Our son was born in 1964 and Carol taught in a local high school and was finishing her MA in British literature). Working in the borderlands allowed me to do most of the research close to home, with brief forays to Mexico City, Chihuahua, and Parral. It also expedited my completion of the PhD, which I did in five years even though I'd had to take additional history courses when I entered UNM with undergraduate "deficiencies" because I hadn't had enough history as an undergraduate.

In 1967 I was lucky enough to get a job teaching Latin America and the Borderlands at San Diego State College. As I was completing the PhD, I edited two books that appeared that year: *The Extranjeros: Selected Documents from the Mexican Side of the Trail, 1825–1828* (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1967) and *Prose Sketches and Poems Written in the Western Country (With Additional Stories)*, by Albert Pike (Albuquerque: Calvin Horn, Publisher, 1967). Those books in press, plus an article that had appeared in *The Americas*, probably helped offset the liability of my not [having received] degrees from "name brand" universities—even then a serious handicap in the job market.

I taught at San Diego State from 1967 to 1976. Fine colleagues, like Joyce Appleby, Richard Steele, and Doug Strong forced me to think harder about what I was doing. A Fulbright lectureship to the University of Costa Rica for two semesters in 1970 gave me a chance to live in the Spanish-speaking world. And Latino students forced me to think about why borderlands

history ended in 1821. By the late sixties, I had moved away from the fur trade. I'd delivered a revised dissertation to [the University of Oklahoma Press] in 1968 (where it took three years to be published), finished editing *The Lost Trappers* by David Coyner (which appeared in 1970), and begun work on the book that was to become *Foreigners in Their Native Land: The Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (1983). [A Chicano historian] who had been a colleague at San Diego State for a year, and I planned a two-volume anthology of primary sources on Mexican American history, with him doing the twentieth century. When [my colleague] didn't complete his half, my wife persuaded me to publish my half (which ended in 1910) as the "historical roots" of Mexican Americans, turning what seemed to be an unpublishable half of a book into a book that remains in print and still used in classes to this day—it's all in the name.

Teaching in southern California gave me still another perspective. I began to think about the differences and similarities between California and New Mexico, and the fact that borderlands historiography after 1821 quickly became state history rather than regional history, and that those state histories were cast in the framework of an expanding United States rather than [as a view of] the region as part of Mexico. I proposed to Ray Allen Billington that he add a new title on the Southwest when it belonged to independent Mexico to his Histories of the American Frontier Series. Ever gracious and supportive, Ray took a chance and gave me a contract. The result was *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1946: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). Out of my interest in that era, also came several edited or edited and translated books: *Northern Mexico on the Eve of the United States Invasion: Rare Imprints Concerning California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, 1821–1946* (New York: Arno Press, 1976); with Duane L. Smith, *Fortunes Are for the Few: Letters of a Forty-niner* by Charles William Churchill (San Diego Historical Society, 1977); with Conchita Hassell Winn, *Troubles in Texas, 1832: A Tejano Viewpoint from San Antonio* (Austin: Wind River, 1983); *Arms, Indians, and the Mismanagement of New Mexico: Donaciano Vigil, 1846* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1986); *The Californios vs. Jedediah Smith: A New Cache of Documents* (Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1990); and the biography of an artist, *Richard H. Kern: Expeditionary Artists in the Far Southwest, 1848–1853* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, for the Amon Carter Museum, 1985).

In 1976, in the midst of writing *The Mexican Frontier*, I had the opportunity to move to SMU, where I've enjoyed a lighter teaching load and smaller classes than San Diego State offered, and where I have also had a chance to live in Madrid and direct SMU-in-Spain (which I've done twice, in 1977 and 1989–90). Living in Spain gave me a chance to become acquainted with both that remarkable country and its historiography and pushed me toward working in the Spanish period rather than the nineteenth century that had been my primary intellectual home since my dissertation days. Parts of *The Taos Trappers* and of *Foreigners in Their Native Land* treat the

Spanish era [and] I had edited a book of essays on the Spanish era, *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540–1821* (1979)—arising out of an anthology that I first published in Mexico in 1976, *El México perdido: Ensayos sobre el antiguo norte de México, 1540–1821*. Nonetheless, the nineteenth century remained home until 1986, when I completed a seven-year stint as department chair and was lucky enough to be appointed a fellow at the Center for Advance Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford for a year. There, in that fortunate setting, I began work on the book that would become *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992), and completed it over the next few years—thanks to a year in Madrid, 1989–90, and an NEH grant, 1990–91.

Since I have been teaching a course on the Spanish borderlands ever since my student days, I knew we needed a book like *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. My students rebelled against [a current textbook on borderland history], both because of the quality of its prose and its lack of sophistication. Moreover, American history needed a good book on the borderlands so that American historians might take the borderlands more seriously. It was difficult for me to imagine, however, that I'd be the one to write it—especially not in mid-career. The temporal and spatial scope seemed too daunting. Indeed, there were entire areas of the borderlands that I knew nothing about, namely the entire region from Louisiana to Florida. There I'd have to start at ground level—not, I thought, a good place to begin for someone doing a synthesis. Eventually I talked myself into starting the book by remembering that I hadn't known anything about other subjects before I'd chosen to write about them, either, and that this was only a larger version of a problem that I'd faced before. Indeed, there's little question in my mind that without the research and writing techniques that I'd developed in working on smaller regions, I could not have completed *The Spanish Frontier* successfully—and certainly not in five years.

Since finishing *The Spanish Frontier* and some related articles and a book of essays, *The Idea of Spanish Borderlands* (New York: Garland Press, 1991), I've taken a breather with some less complicated projects: a little book, *On the Edge of Empire: The Taos Hacienda of Los Martinez* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1996), and a large book of letters that I edited with Jane Lenz Elder, *Trading in Santa Fe: John Kingsbury's Correspondence with James Josiah Webb, 1853–1861* (Dallas: SMU Press for the DeGolyer Library, 1996). I've also resumed work on another large canvas, a book to be entitled, *Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* [published as *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (2005)]. In this project, I'm working on the edges of the Spanish empire in the late eighteenth century (1750–1812), from Chile and Argentina to North America[—w]herever Spaniards still come into contact with independent, as opposed to conquered, Indians. In *The Spanish Frontier in North America* I failed to put North America fully in context. I tried to remind the reader here and there that Spain's provinces in North America were only part of a larger empire to which Spain

had to commit resources and manpower. But occasional reminders don't substitute for stories and details. I did not, however, have space for those. So, my agenda now is to put the Spanish borderlands of North America into an empire-wide context, looking for ways in which it will be typical and atypical. To do that effectively, I thought I'd need to choose a smaller unit of time, but a time characterized by change (the Enlightenment) and a time when scholars of colonial Latin America cease to think about Spanish relations with independent Indians ([their] focus, instead, is on the Bourbon reforms and the coming of independence).

If there is any thread that runs through all of this work, it might be that I like to take what is familiar and make it strange: to put westering Anglo American trappers in northern Mexico instead of the American West; to find Mexican Americans in the history of the "American" Southwest; to tie the "American" Southwest into Mexican history, to make the Spanish frontier in North America harder for American historians to ignore: to connect the borderlands, which Latin American historians have dismissed as part of U.S. history, with other peripheral areas of Spanish America.

This is running on, and may seem exhausting if not exhaustive to your students. But there's also a lot left unsaid.

All the best,
David J. Weber
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II.

David Weber, Latin Americanist

By William B. Taylor, University of California, Berkeley

It is hard to escape the somber mood of an elegy this afternoon or to refrain from a vain attempt to make sense of the life lived. But when this session was planned, David expected to join us, and I mean to follow the original plan to say something about his work as a historian that he would have recognized as true without much benedictory exaggeration.

David Weber is well known as a Western history writer in the distinguished company of the Ray Billingtons, Walter Prescott Webbs, Howard Lamars, and Donald Worsters of the field, and like them, he is not so easily contained. He was a "maestro de las inmensidades," as the Spanish historian of frontiers, Salvador Bernabeu, put it. New Mexico and Texas were special wellsprings of his scholarship, and the

whole Southwest was his main canvas. Among academic historians, he is especially known for refocusing Borderlands history in a way that reckons with neglected perspectives and blurs the temporal and spatial boundaries between the United States and Mexico. But I want to reclaim the Latin Americanist side of this historian who has been honored by Spanish and Mexican colleagues, and suggest how his way of thinking about frontiers and borderlands expresses a creative tension in his scholarship as a Latin Americanist bridging traditional fields of historical study.

It still seems to be news to some that David's PhD was in Latin American history, and that during much of his university career he taught Latin American history as well as Southwestern history and comparative topics. He continued to teach the modern Latin America survey when I joined the History Department at SMU in 1993—he said it was his favorite course—and I remember him saying that he had never taught survey courses in the U.S. field. For years, his beginning students at SMU knew him and Luis Martín as the department's historians of Latin America. More advanced students discovered the facets of scholarship and teaching interests for which he is best known.

How have the separate strands—Latin America, Spain, and the American Southwest—come together in his historical studies? This brings me to my second point: that David emphasized frontiers and border crossings as a way to think synoptically about Latin American and western U.S. history. Notice the titles of his well-known books—*The Spanish* ***Frontier*** *in North America*, *The Mexican* ***Frontier****, 1821–1846 . . .* , *Where Cultures Meet:* ***Frontiers*** *in Latin American History*, and the crossing borders chapter in *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*. What he meant by frontiers—which he thought of as a larger category than borderlands—is a key to how he brought together his fields of history. He was always less interested in edges of the Spanish empire as bounded and remote than as areas of intense interaction. He worked against the idea of places in the Spanish and Mexican Southwest as geographically isolated and in a state of suspended animation. Not for David Charles F. Lummis's New Mexico as the land of *poco tiempo*. I think of this every time I come across another example of New Mexicans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries embracing miraculous images from faraway shrines—the Christ of Esquípulas from Guatemala; Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos,

Our Lady of El Pueblito, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Santo Niño de Atocha from central and western Mexico. No other region in New Spain was quite so open to incorporating others' ways to the sacred.

David was not the first to concentrate on the northern edges of the Spanish empire that were largely neglected by both historians of Latin America and the United States. Herbert Eugene Bolton and his many students had written about what they called the Spanish Borderlands of North America, but Bolton's Delphic vision of borderlands was not the same as Weber's frontiers. For Bolton, Spaniards were the heroic agents of this history, on a mission to expand and civilize the ragged edges of empire—intrepid explorers, conquerors, and evangelizers—knights of pueblos, plains, turquoise trails, and epic pageants in the wilderness, ripe for Cecil B. DeMille's big screen. David's frontiers are precarious and porous locales of transforming interactions, exchange, inclusion, imposition, violence, and fear, with many actors and ambiguous outcomes. As he and Jane Rausch wrote in *Where Cultures Meet*, "we are not using the [term] frontier in the restricted sense of a border or boundary, as it is commonly used in Latin America (and . . . Europe) . . . nor as the narrow edge of civilization encroaching on savagery or wilderness, as it has been imagined in the U.S.; [rather, we use it for] geographic zones of interaction between two or more distinctive cultures . . . places where cultures contend with one another and with their physical environment." David was interested in these places as borderlands, too, and here he meant what Bolton effectively had meant—Spanish representations, policies, and initiatives. Spaniards and state builders were still the principal actors, but his abiding interest in the consequences of their policies, the blurring of categories in practice, where rules bend and sometimes break, where unruffled narratives of conquest and durability are interrupted; the interactions of everyone trying to make a life there transformed Bolton's borderlands into Weber's dynamic frontiers.

Weber's last big book, *Bárbaros*, was an extension of his work as a Latin Americanist, not a departure or a long delayed return to his graduate student roots. In *Bárbaros* he focused on Spanish interactions with autonomous, independent Indian groups on the shifting, evanescent margins of empire in a time of late, but widespread reforms. As he said, he was interested in "how people called savages shaped Spanish policies and behaviors as well as how Spaniards' actions shaped the

policies and behaviors of independent Indians," and he took in all of Spain's imagined American empire. As in his other major works, Weber gives us the variety and complexity of situations, actors, actions, interactions, and changes, as well as the main and enduring threads. Again he shows how places on the periphery were anything but peripheral or with unremarkable histories.

My final thought touches on the life lived, which I promised to leave strictly alone, but finally cannot, because the professional life David Weber led had much to do with how he combined what others might regard as separate scholarly interests. He not only redefined and energized the study of frontiers in the Americas as a field of study in itself, for which there was no respectable home in most departments of history even in the Southwest when he started his career in the 1960s; he also kept abreast of the constituent fields—Western U.S. history, Latin American history, and Iberian history—and sought out and befriended colleagues like me who mainly go about our business within the convenient confines of one of these established fields. Perhaps you know how he accomplished this institutionally and personally: at Southern Methodist University, especially through the Clements Center; in the National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars he led for college teachers from all parts of the country and beyond; through his loyal presence, participation, and leadership in professional meetings like this one; and through the collegial friendships he nurtured. I met David for the first time nearly forty years ago when he came up to me at a Conference on Latin American History cocktail party with a warm smile and friendly handshake. I had barely finished my PhD and he was already an established figure at San Diego State, yet he knew something about my work, not just my name. It was a kind and generous invitation to a more ample vision of the historical profession than a young scholar and hopeful teacher with his nose then in the land systems of rural southern Mexico had imagined. I wanted to know more about this welcoming colleague and the interests that made him as much at home with historians of Latin America as with historians of western Americana and Spain. David was an indispensable colleague and wonderful friend of mine all these years. He has many such friends and admirers in the profession because he was a good friend to so many.

III.
Lengthen Thy Cords and Strengthen Thy Stakes: Enlarging the Borderlands

By Amy Turner Bushnell,
John Carter Brown Library and Brown University

I too want to welcome you to this meeting dedicated to the memory of David J. Weber, our mutual friend and colleague. Other members of the panel can speak more knowledgeably than I can about David's early monographs, his teaching, his services as an administrator, his stays at research centers, and his role as a public figure. His work received a bevy of prizes, and his contributions to the histories of Spain and Mexico were duly recognized. For me, however, David's most important achievements were, first, to revitalize the Spanish Borderlands, and second, to reconnect them to the Latin American frontiers.

David was already a well-known Western and Borderlands historian when he conceived the notion of putting all of Spain's northernmost colonies into a single book. I came to know him in 1984, when he was making the rounds of Early Florida historians, asking us to enlarge upon what we had written and direct him to sources that he might have missed. He was candid about his reasons for hewing to the Spanish Borderland boundaries that Herbert E. Bolton had set in the 1920s and limiting the book to those parts of the northern frontier that would in time belong to the United States. He knew perfectly well that the western Borderlands were part of Greater Mexico, that the eastern Borderlands were part of the Caribbean and the Southeast, and that, if you got right down to it, Florida had more in common with maritime Chile than with land-bound New Mexico. But David's monumental volume, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (Yale University Press, 1992), was meant to bring Spain's northern colonies and contested grounds to the notice of two groups: the Early Americanists—who at the time were seldom lifting their eyes to see past the English settler colonies—and the students of the Early Republic, the Backcountry, and the West. With a storyline that was part sequential occupation and part over-settlement, the book was a tour de force. American historians were ready to be won over. The shorter version of the book that came out just a year ago has no doubt seen many course adoptions and influenced a new generation of young historians, though it's just not the same without David's footnotes.[1]

1. David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, the brief edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Not long after 1992, however, David set his sights on another and yet more difficult challenge: bridging the gap between the Borderlands and Latin American history. For reasons of economy or a focus on the nation state, Spanish Americanists had long since dropped from their colonial narrative all of the provinces and dependencies that would eventually fall into the hands of English-speaking Americans, even Florida and New Mexico, which stayed Spanish for three centuries. Always an advocate of inclusion, David had lobbied for a Borderlands regional committee in the CLAH (Conference on Latin American History), was appointed its first chair, and then, at its first meeting, urged it to change its name to Frontiers and Borderlands, and issued a call for comparisons, in which he led the way. The collection of readings on the Latin American frontiers that he and Jane Rausch put together and published in 1994 helped to make frontier comparisons and courses possible.[2] David's own broadening research was revealed in his conference papers, such as the one that I heard him give in Santiago in 2003 about forts on the Araucanian frontier.

So it was no surprise to those of us who knew him to see David move into the South American frontier, with *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (Yale, 2005). In that book, juxtaposing the equestrian peoples of the Plains and the Pampas and examining Spain's policies toward them, the Borderlands historian stretched a hand to his colleagues in southern South America and invited them to join him in examining something that they had in common. A bonus of the book was that it pulled together the scattered ethnohistoric literature of southern South America. In 2009, as a guest professor at the Free University in Berlin, I discovered that the younger scholars who were there from Spanish South America saw David Weber as one of their own, a historian who had managed to integrate the histories of the equestrian nations with the histories of the small areas under Spanish control in colonial Argentina, Chile, and the Banda Oriental. They were especially impressed by the way he structured the book as a conflict between Enlightenment ideals and frontier realities.

David thus turned himself into an intermediary, explaining the Spanish Borderlands to British Americanists horizontally, and explaining the Spanish American frontiers to Latin Americanists vertically.

2. —— and Jane M. Rausch, eds., *Where Cultures Meet: Frontiers in Latin American History* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1994).

Although he prudently declined to call himself an Indian historian, the numbers, whereabouts, and interests of native peoples were never far from his mind, and in both major books, he added considerably to the complex history of autonomous Indian nations in the Americas. Disposed to be conciliatory rather than confrontational, David was pleased any time his work could illuminate old controversies or mediate new ones.

As everyone here knows, David's books are readable. He was a master of the well-turned phrase, the representative incident, and the apt quote. An avid researcher, he had the ability to control masses of material, going straight to the sources, yet he was also familiar with and appreciative of the work of earlier historians, whose interpretations he reviewed and evaluated in footnotes that are gems of historiography. Last year, when I was looking for something about captivity narratives in the "southern cone," I went to *Bárbaros*, and there it all was in a footnote, complete with analysis. David never thought of himself as a theorist, or a constructor of models. His métier was to find new readers for an old field and encourage his peers to take a fresh look at it. Not one to play the great man, David was humble when he sought criticism, generous when he gave it. He was equally ready to write an introduction to an art exhibition, speak to a local historical society, edit a collection of essays, contribute an original piece to someone else's collection, or participate in someone else's symposium.

Receiving more invitations than he could possibly accept, he passed them on, and his friends found themselves reviewing books, sitting on editorial boards, or attending conferences as his proxies. Thanks to David, I have not only seen nuns sway to mariachi music at a diocesan retreat in Amarillo, but I've been a passenger on a Mexican bus that was twice stopped and boarded by men with guns between Guanajuato and Zacatecas. Once, in Santiago, David was walking with Jack Greene and me, taking a shortcut in broad daylight, when Jack felt a hand in his front pocket. He let out a roar and began chasing the man down the street, with me behind him, yelling that he was going to get himself stabbed, again. The pickpocket threw down a pen and a comb, crying "nada, nada," and we abandoned the chase. Later, as we sat in a café, calming down, David told us mildly that his way of dealing with pickpockets and muggers was to give them money. I could go on reminiscing; we all could. But this is not a wake, and I'm going to

spend the rest of my time asking a very Weberian question: *Quo vadis?* Where are you going, with your interest in frontiers and borderlands?

Working in a field that has made a virtue of being undefined, we have come up with frontiers and borderlands enough for everyone. The traditional, Boltonian borderland begins when Europeans or Euro Americans first explore and attempt to settle in a given place, and ends with independence, or rather, incorporation into a nation state. Historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have defined the borderland even more eurocentrically, as a space contested by two or more European empires or their descendant states. Historians of American Indians have insisted that indigenous nations too have their borderlands, which may or may not include Europeans. Small wonder that for years few history departments in the United States saw fit to hire a specialist in the Borderlands, preferring the catchier specialties of Greater Mexico, Chicano or Boricua Studies, Caribbean, Western, or Atlantic history. History departments in Latin America, for their part, concentrated on post-independence politics, treating their frontiers like backwaters and turning frontier characters like *bandeirantes*, *gauchos*, *llaneros*, Guaranís, and *maroons* into the subjects of myth.

Following the lead of Bolton, Borderlands historians at first concentrated on the colonial institutions—missions, presidios, and ranches—of what Silvio Zavala called "Arid America," only gradually coming under the influence of their colleagues studying the frontiers of colonial Spanish and Portuguese America, whose emphasis was social and economic. Now that the two groups have joined forces in the CLAH regional committee on Frontiers and Borderlands, we who work on the Spanish frontier in North America can assure you that we have overcome our slow start. Geography has given us, as well as other scholars, an awareness of ecotones—grasslands, jungles, forests, and coasts—areas that are habitable without being horticultural and lend themselves to mobility. Anthropology has shown us the influence of culture on such constructs as gender, family, and community. Linguistics has taught us about migration and survival. Demography has alerted us to epidemiology and ethnogenesis. Comparative literature has taught us to question our sources, and postmodernism, to question ourselves.

Riding the waves that crash across academe, we have learned to present ourselves in terms of the Atlantic world, of empire, of continent, of region, of middle grounds, and, laying aside the polity, of

transnation. We have tried to be indigenocentric, some of us to the point of romanticism, and others of us refusing to temper judgment on the basis of race. Better than anyone, we understand the importance of continuity and constituency, without which a people's history can vanish into thin air.

I have concluded that there are five basic ways of approaching frontiers and borderlands generally. We can study them in terms of place, of people, of innovations, of power, or of teleology. Let me elaborate.

Those who concentrate on *place* follow a given region over time regardless of who happens to live there; the place itself is their subject, not its sequent occupants.

Those who concentrate on *people* follow their chosen group from place to place, as they experience seasonal migration, resettlement, or exile.

Those who study *innovation* are interested in the diffusion and effects for good or ill of new technologies and biota, from cattle and horses to iron tools and firearms, and from fruit trees to germs and weeds.

Those who focus on *power*, also conceived of as mastery or the monopoly of the means of coercion, are interested mainly in the peoples who wield power and the areas under their control, with other places and peoples falling away as irrelevant to the principal narrative.

Finally, those who select on the basis of *teleology* see history as a preamble to the present and do not waste time trying to suspend their knowledge of how things are going to turn out. These are the scholars who gravitate to the largest constituency and supply it with pasts and ancestries and founding fathers.

If I were advising a young person who was thinking of taking up the study of frontiers and borderlands, I would tell him or her that the tent keeps getting larger and that raising it will call for longer cords and stronger stakes. I would tell her to start by becoming an expert on the inhabitants of a specific region over time, immersing herself in its documentary base, its archaeological reports, and its secondary literature. I would advise him to choose his secondary fields and languages with comparison in mind—early modern across the board: Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, and Dutch, plus any pertinent Indian language. I would suggest that she choose her dissertation topic partly on the basis of how it might fit into a later joint or collective project.

For we have begun to think bigger. Now, when we use the term

borderlands, some of us think of North America, some think of Latin America, and for some of us, only the hemisphere is large enough. We have moved from colonies to continents, and from a focus on European claims and hegemony to a focus on Indian autonomy and reconciled frontiers.

Do the Americas have a common history? Bolton raised that question in his 1932 presidential address to the American Historical Association, and, before the advent of the new social history with its narrowing dissertation topics (a function of the new history's new sources), much effort went into ambitious, multi-authored projects of hemispheric history, with uneven results.[3] Perhaps a better tactic is for historians of the Americas to search out and pay attention to those rare individuals who stand taller than the rest of us—persons who see across national boundaries and can tell us about the commonalities of the world that we have lost. We are here to remember and honor one of those rare seers, our friend, David Weber.

IV.

Intersecting Borderlands: "Los bárbaros" in the Enduring Forests between the Andes and the Paraguayan River Basin

By Cynthia Radding, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

I first met David J. Weber in 1973, when I had recently relocated to Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, to begin my professional career with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in the regional center for northwestern Mexico established in Hermosillo that year. David came to our provincial capital in the heat of the summer to give a series of lectures under the auspices of the U.S. Information Service, at the time a cultural arm of the American consulate in Sonora. At that time, nearly four decades ago, David Weber spoke of the different frontier histories that spanned the U.S.-Mexico border horizontally, contrasting the Anglo-Hispanic intersecting borderlands from California to Texas. That vision rooted in broad territorial comparisons would later mature in his seminal works on *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (1982); *The Spanish Frontier in North*

3. Amy Turner Bushnell, Introduction to *Establishing Exceptionalism: Historiography and the Colonial Americas*, Amy Turner Bushnell, ed. (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Variorum Press, 1995).

America (1992); and *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (2005). I will focus most of my comments today on this last major work.

Our friendship and mutual professional support developed over the ensuing years, as David's career took him from San Diego State University to Southern Methodist University, where he held the Robert and Nancy Dedman Chair in History and founded the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies. Weber wrote and edited over seventy scholarly articles and twenty-seven books, demonstrating his strengths in regional histories and in ambitious narratives of comparative borderlands in both North and South America. As my career developed in Mexico and later took me to teaching positions in the U.S., we maintained communication by *mail* (before the dawn of the Internet), reviewed each other's work, and exchanged archival tips and bibliographical references. Beyond these communications, we met occasionally at academic conferences, particularly at the annual meetings of the AHA, but did not have the opportunity to visit personally for any length of time until 1994, when our research took us both to Bolivia.

Quite unexpectedly, I met David and Carol Weber in Sucre, Bolivia, in July 1994, where we each explored the rich holdings of the Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales de Bolivia (ABNB). We greeted one another warmly, after a moment of recognition and surprised exclamation—"what are *you* doing here?!" For a little over a week we worked together in the labyrinth of rooms and hallways that wound through the old ABNB building on Calle España, for which some of us hold a warm nostalgia, complete with teatime in the afternoons in what was then a frigid internal environment. This was my second visit to Sucre and David Weber's first exploration of Bolivia's national archive and library; its extensive cataloguing system was entirely on paper at that time, in rows of *tarjeteros*. We met mainly at the catalog, as each of us mined different veins of that abundant storehouse of colonial history for the northern Andes (the vast Audiencia de Charcas) and Bolivian national history.

We were each testing new frontiers and trying out new thematic pathways for our research. I had begun a comparative history of environmental change and cultural endurance focused on northwestern Mexico and eastern Bolivia, resulting in *Landscapes of Power and Identity* (2005). David was energetically at work on his new project only two

years after the publication of *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. The motif that had guided much of his work for Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest centered on the problem of *borderlands* and *frontiers*: why, he asked, had something like the Turner thesis not stimulated historical scholarship or created controversy in Mexico? David Weber's intellectual probing of these questions motivated a number of his edited volumes, published in both English and Spanish, and—as a number of my colleagues on this panel have highlighted—led David to reconstitute the field of borderlands history in the Anglophone canon, establishing this committee of CLAH firmly in the community of Latin Americanist historians.

When David began his research in Bolivia, he had selected a comparative conceptual framework that arose from a simple, historically grounded question: did the importance that Bourbon administrators placed on the professionalization of the presidios that guarded the northern frontier of New Spain in the midst of a thick network of tribal hunting and raiding trails carry into the Spanish borderlands of South America? And its corollary: what did Spaniards mean when they labeled so many different indigenous groups "bárbaros"? Thus, David Weber staked out two important comparative signposts for his research on Spanish frontier policies. His engagement with the Spanish frontiers of the interior of South America led him in new directions both geographically and intellectually. In subsequent years, David carried out research in Venezuela, Argentina, and Chile, as well as in Spain, to complete this project. *Bárbaros*, David's culminating book, became a hallmark of his already honed skills of historical synthesis as well as an innovative intellectual history of the philosophical principles and pragmatic choices that undergirded Bourbon administration in the borderlands, which they were forced to admit they could not fully control.

Impeccably honest and ever mindful of the boundaries that he had set for his project, David Weber stated in the introduction to *Bárbaros* that his subjects were Spanish and criollo administrators, military captains, and—occasionally—missionaries (David tended to give the missionaries short shrift) who wrote copious letters, reports, and statistical documentation to their superiors in Spain's viceregal administration and in the metropolitan court. As he explained, "I make no claim . . . to write Indian history. . . . I unfashionably focus more on the record-keeping observers than on the observed." (17) For

the most part the actors in this history are the *savants*—Spanish men of the Enlightenment—who articulated "new sensibilities" toward their colonial subjects but labeled as "savages" the thousands of independent Indians who moved at will across the pampas of South America and through the sierras and arid plains of North America. Nevertheless, in the final chapter, titled "Crossing Borders," David brought to our attention fugitive colonies of African-descendant slaves and free persons of mixed ethnicity, the go-betweens who moved between the colonial and indigenous worlds. In this chapter and in other sections of the book, the "observed" appearing in colonial documents, emerge as *actors* in this complex history of borderlands confrontations. In the epilogue, David carried his comparative history into the nineteenth century with a discussion of power and the contradictory policies of inclusion and exclusion put into practice by the new republics of Mexico and South America that, in Weber's estimation, inherited the governing framework of Bourbon administrators.

During our brief encounters in Sucre and later that same summer in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, I learned more about David Weber's mode of research. While working in the Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales, David tended to stay on the library side of the ABNB labyrinth, while I settled into the archival side, delving into the many volumes of bound documents dedicated to the mission provinces of Moxos and Chiquitos. David moved quickly and masterfully through the card catalog and selected the bibliographical veins that would best support his project. He read libraries voraciously and, as the bibliographies to his published work reveal, he compiled extensive sets of notes that he could retrieve and compare to bring quotations and ideas to bear on the specific arguments that he made and episodes that he summarized.

As David Weber opened new frontiers throughout his career, he developed multiple networks of enduring professional contacts in Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Chile. He shared his work in progress—through his generosity *and* his enthusiasm for exploring ideas—and, thus, gave lectures and participated in numerous symposia, seminars, and conferences. As we know, his intellectual achievements and his strong personal and professional collaborations garnered him accolades and the highest recognitions bestowed by Mexico and Spain on foreign scholars: the Orden del Aguila Azteca and the Orden Real de Isabel la Católica.

I will end briefly on a personal note: in 2007, David Weber honored me with an invitation to hold a senior Rita and Bill Clements Fellowship at the SMU Clements Center. I spent a delightful and productive semester there, and I am grateful that I was able to work with David in the year before his Lamar residential fellowship at Yale, and before the illness that would claim his life took over so much of his time and energy. David made a point of showing me his now computerized systems of bibliographical notation and, through both the formal Clements Center workshops and the informal meetings and conversations among colleagues and students, David shared his wit, insights, and good humor. David and Carol generously invited me to their home in Dallas during that semester, and later that year, my husband and I visited their beautiful home in New Mexico. I was one of hundreds of people who followed the email updates on David's condition from Fall 2007 to Spring 2010. I saw him in the early spring of 2009, at the occasion of one of the Clements Center workshops, and we were able to talk a number of times during the AHA 2010 annual meeting in San Diego. I personally mourn his passing, and I join my colleagues on this panel who wish that he were with us today. We remember his unstinting generosity as a colleague, mentor, and friend at the same time that we honor his outstanding contributions to creative scholarship and his dedication to the highest ethical standards of our profession.

V.
In Memory of David Weber

By Peter Onuf, University of Virginia and
Pekka Hämäläinen, University of California, Santa Barbara[4]

David Weber is irreplaceable. Though he played a very different role in each of our careers, we both welcome the opportunity to say something about what David meant to us. Scholarly tributes necessarily focus on scholarship, and we could add little to the many assessments of David's contributions that are being published in the wake of his untimely death. We would instead like to emphasize the personal dimensions of our encounters with David. We came to Dallas from great distances: Peter

4. Peter Onuf offered extemporaneous comments on David Weber's career at the American Historical Association in Boston in January 2011. Meeting for the first time at a conference in Oxford, Pekka Hämäläinen and Onuf reminisced about David's role in their lives and careers and decided to collaborate on this testimonial.

Onuf in 1987 from Worcester Polytechnic Institute to join the Southern Methodist University history department; Pekka Hämäläinen in 2001 as a fellow at the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, where David was the founding director. We both quickly moved on. Yet if our time with David was brief, his impact on us was lasting.

David was a modest man, never claiming much for himself, and he would be embarrassed by all the attention he's been getting lately. He would probably tell us all to get on with our work. Modest as he was, he would also say that he was fortunate to be at SMU, and to be able to work with the many fellows and other scholars who passed through the Center and with colleagues who spent some time in the department.

When David began graduate studies at the University of New Mexico, he could have had no idea that he would find himself in a part of the country—and on scholarly terrain—that then seemed marginal to national life and national history but that would become increasingly central and important over the course of his lifetime, and to a significant extent because of his efforts. Far from being the lost world of missions and explorers and cowboys and Indians that the tourist industry evoked, David helped us see that the Spanish-American borderlands had played, and would continue to play, a key role in North American history. It was the right place and the right time for David to shape a field. That much we can say was *his* good fortune. But David was also the right man, and that was *our* good fortune.

Any effort to catalog or characterize David's qualities as a man and a scholar would necessarily fall short. The first thing to note, however, would be his extraordinary work ethic. He was not, as so many of us are, driven by neurotic compulsions; it was more like a vocation or calling, in a very modest, this-worldly sense. David was an indefatigable researcher and an eager, all-absorbing synthesizer, eager to hear what others had learned and had to say. His modesty and generosity were critical to reviving Borderlands scholarship, for David did not seek to rally followers around a master interpretation or trendy new paradigm. Quite to the contrary, David saw and pursued connections among diverse scholarly strands, weaving them into a broader tapestry. Most importantly, he was able to recognize the historical logic and integrity of the history of a region that had no coherent history, that had fallen between the cracks—more accurately, the chasm—of imperial and national historiographies. David was a good reader and

a good listener: he heard things that "mainstream" historians, carried away by the teleological torrents through familiar channels, could not hear. Now we're all listening.

Pekka Hämäläinen recalls:

> My first contact with David was in 2000 at which time I was a high-school teacher in Finland and finishing my PhD. Out of the blue came an email from David J. Weber, who until then had only figured in my mind as the mythical father of new borderlands history. Weber invited me to apply for one of SMU's year-long fellowships, which I found very surprising as I had published only one rather obscure article in the U.S. and had very limited connections in American academia. Encouraged by the warm message, I applied and ended up spending a career-changing—indeed life-changing—year in Dallas.
>
> At the time, the Clements Center was expanding and David was busy writing one of his masterworks, *Bárbaros*, but this was something I would only realize later. As far as I was concerned, David appeared to have limitless time for the fellows. He never seemed to be in a hurry and was always willing to entertain tentative ideas and formulations, no matter how crude. I had not really thought about staying in the U.S.—I had merely taken a one-year leave from my teaching job and had all intentions of returning to Europe. But David's gentle nudging made me consider giving a try at the U.S. job market. Once I was committed, I found David a staunch supporter. He put his weight behind a rather uncertain prospect, and so I landed my first academic post.
>
> Looking back, a defining moment of my SMU year came during one of our chats in David's office. I was worrying about the controversial aspects of my work and wondered whether I should moderate my arguments and steer them towards the mainstream. Anxious about push-back, I was concerned that my first book would be seen as too outlandish for serious consideration. David listened patiently in his characteristic way, and then, slightly tilting his head, gave me one of his kind, yet penetrating looks and said in a soft voice: "Pekka, sometimes it's good to be controversial." That was it, and it was all that I needed. That one sentence carried me over the next years of seemingly endless revisions and eventual publication of *The Comanche Empire*.
>
> David's comment resonated so strongly precisely because David himself was so famous for his extraordinary judiciousness and for his carefully balanced and nuanced arguments. But I think this was illuminating also in another, much broader way: David was so well-known for being the master synthesizer, who could navigate intellectual debates with aplomb, that we don't necessarily appreciate just how avant-garde his scholarship was. While blending numerous dangling threads into smoothly flowing narratives, he also opened entirely new investigative paths that have continued to keep

> historians busy for decades. He integrated fields and methodologies into new constellations, pioneered new hemispheric approaches, and forced us to see the clashes and convergences that define American history in entirely new ways. Over the years, I tried many times to tell David in person how much his support meant to me, but he would have none of it. I never really got further than "David, I know you don't want to hear this, but I want to thank . . . ," at which point he would cut me off with "You are right, I don't." But fortunately, as in the beginning of our relationship, there was e-mail.

As one of those "mainstream" (American) historians, Peter Onuf writes that he

> had no particular reason to be interested in the far Southwest. But my work on federalism and the American founding predisposed me to be interested in the contingencies of an expanding union. If the "republican experiment" was always on the verge of failure—until it did fail in the American Civil War—then there was nothing fore-ordained or "manifest" about the new nation's "destiny." And if that was true, borders—and borderlands—were indeterminate, and the United States "west" could very easily have been the Spanish, or Mexican (or even Comanche) "east" or "north."
>
> I like to think that David and I mapped out a borderland of our own. During my two years in Dallas, we would have periodic lunch-seminars, chewing over our current projects and surveying our common ground. I have no idea what exactly we talked about, but David's generosity and warmth stayed with me—and stay with me now. I would have kept these conversations going indefinitely, but David always had to get to work. It was his work ethic alone, he insisted, that accounted for his productivity. This absurd claim always led to some good-natured teasing by me: "Whatever you need to think about yourself, David, keep thinking it!" Of course, David was a brilliant historian, a giant in his ever-expanding field.
>
> My wife, Kristin, and I would only see David and his wife, Carol, on rare occasions after we moved away, but those meetings were inspiring. I can't tell David now how much the conversations we had in the last year of his life meant to me, or how much we admired both Carol and David for their extraordinary spirit. In some ways, it was the way it had always been: for my part, endless talk about the state of the profession and of our respective fields and, most memorably, about important work still in progress. . . . Yet again it was the things unsaid, his generous openness to the family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who made up his world that leave the lasting impression of a great man.

The David Weber we knew—modest, thoughtful, and generous—always saw himself as an ordinary, hard-working man. He was absolutely wrong about this. David was one of a kind—an exemplary scholar with a quiet, unassuming authority. He will and should be remembered

for his scholarship. But he should also be remembered for the careers he so profoundly influenced and, in so many cases, made possible.

We cannot begin to do justice to David's memory, and we know that many, many others would have much more to add. But we are grateful to have the opportunity to say something, however inadequate, about an extraordinary man whose memory we both cherish.

VI.

Pasó por Aquí: David Weber, the Borderlands, and Beyond

By Benjamin H. Johnson, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

I had originally intended to write this as a historiographic reflection on David, from the point of view of somebody invested in the so-called "new" borderlands history. This is how I came to know *of* David in the first place, by reading his work in the mid-1990s as an aspiring historian who entered graduate school drawn by the New Western history, but who increasingly looked southward. I've always been oriented to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but as my interests were drawn more and more to connections between U.S. and Mexican history, I became more and more intrigued by Weber's career and intellectual trajectory.

Certainly there is much to be said in this historiographic vein, for David was the most influential and wide-ranging scholar of the borderlands since Herbert Eugene Bolton. What particularly strikes me in thinking about the corpus of his work is his ability to put into the *same* story those historical actors and developments that are generally segregated from one another by the way that the profession is organized. As he wrote to a colleague in 1999,

> if there is any thread that runs through [my] work, it might be that I like to take what is familiar and make it strange: to put westering Anglo American trappers in northern Mexico instead of the American West; to find Mexican Americans in the history of the 'American' Southwest; to tie the "American" Southwest into Mexican history, to make the Spanish frontier in North America harder for American historians to ignore; to connect the borderlands, which Latin American historians have dismissed as a part of U.S. history, with other peripheral areas of Spanish America.[5]

5. See above, page 324, email from David Weber to Elizabeth Fenn, September 12, 1999.

But when I sat down to write this talk, I found myself drawn away from David's place in borderlands historiography, and much more toward his fundamental qualities as a thinker and a person. And these qualities, of course, are directly related to his lifetime of scholarship: you cannot draw a neat line between the person and the thought, between the scholarship and the human being who conceptualized and wrote it. Who we are structures what we can think and know, in ways that give us the vision to see some things even as they prevent us from seeing others.

That is true of all of us and our work. But I think that it is particularly true of David, whose life and work were so marked by the same values and characteristics: intellectual integrity, awe at the complexity and sometimes-strangeness of the world, a strong aversion to religious or any other dogma, and a warm if sometimes pointed sense of humor.

I actually came to know David in 2000, when we were both conducting research at the Huntington Library, and became his colleague in 2002 when a search he led brought me to SMU.

In retrospect, I realize that the David I knew was at the height of his power and influence—after the Clements Center for Southwest Studies was up and running and beginning to make a name for itself, after his *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992) helped to re-orient the study of colonial North America and won him a wide readership inside and outside of academia.

But since his death I've had the occasion to think about other David Webers: earlier, different incarnations of the man who would become one of my closest friends and most valued mentors:

- I think here of the young man whose father, born in the nineteenth century, ran a furniture and electronics store and knew little of things academic;
- the graduate of the public schools of Cheektowaga, New York, and the SUNY–Fredonia, who had no familiarity with the southwestern United States, much less the wider Hispanic world;
- the assistant professor at San Diego State who looked at his colleagues with degrees from Johns Hopkins and Harvard and wondered (as he told me in one of our last conversations) if he had what it took to earn tenure.

If David Weber the scholar and David Weber the person were so congruent, then that fact may help explain the remarkable, consistent

expansion of the reach of his scholarship. The scope and significance of David's work grew as his experiences as a person broadened.

His University of New Mexico dissertation, published as *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1846* (University of New Mexico, 1971), examined early Anglo-Americans who came into New Mexico. He credited living in southern California (particularly having so many Latino students) and a year in Costa Rica on a Fulbright with helping him to see the continuity of borderlands history across 1821. This perception was evident in two subsequent books: *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (1973), which became a foundational work in the burgeoning field of Mexican American history and is still in print and widely used in classrooms; and *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (1983), which treated the region as a cohesive unit in the context of Mexican history, rather than as separate state histories within United States history.

Weber's final two major books reflected the continued expansion of his interests and helped to secure the integration of borderlands history into the larger study of the colonial Americas as a whole. In *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992), he offered a synthetic account of the colonial period, including both the contemporary U.S. Southwest but also present-day Florida and Louisiana, that he hoped would prompt "American historians [to] take the borderlands more seriously." In *Bárbaros: Spanish and Their Savages in The Age of Enlightenment* (2005), Weber placed developments in late northern New Spain in the broader empire-wide context of Spanish encounters with independent Indian peoples in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

My favorite passage from David's work comes from his last major work, *Bárbaros*. There is a scene where a Mapuche man, whose name is lost to us, is being entreated by a Spanish priest to let him come and baptize his people. The Indian man seems to sense that this might be bad news, but also that his supplicant is too powerful to simply reject outright. So he suggests instead that the priest baptize his penis, which would thereby not only secure his salvation, but also that of all of his progeny.[6]

I remember the delight with which David told this story in public. To me it is a salute and a wink across the gulf of culture and of

6. David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 129.

centuries from a scholar who admired the crafty, if irreverent, intelligence at work—an intelligence and humor that reminds me of one David J. Weber.

In David's very last class, some of his graduate students interrupted the session and came in costume to reenact scenes from his work—a trader from the *Taos Trappers*, the reading of the *Requirimiento* from the *Spanish Frontier*, and the like. It was extremely disappointing to me that this baptism proposal was not among them.

This vignette I think suggests an important point about David's work, one as impressive as the continued expansion of the scope of his studies: David had an ability to analyze and explain historical events and developments without in the process *reducing* people in the past to mere points of evidence or proofs of theories. One can read his work and see in it evidence of the rise of gender history, ethnohistory, environmental history, and other specializations. His work changed as borderlands history, and the practice of history more generally, changed. But he was never seduced by the latest, greatest thing, like an old man always chasing after younger women. He had the confidence to know who he was, to write in his own voice, but the humility and wisdom to continue to grow throughout his life. David was a historian and more broadly a humanist before he was a specialist. History is made by human beings, and the characters in David's books were just as weird and wild and puzzling as our species really is.

There is no doubt that David was gratified by the honors and recognition that he attracted later in his career, especially his inductions into Spain's equivalent of a knighthood, the Real Orden de Isabel la Católica (2002); Mexico's Order of the Aztec Eagle (2005); and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2007), here in the United States. A less modest person would have attributed them to his own accomplishments, but David usually explained them to me as the result of larger shifts, especially to the way that the rise of the U.S. Latino population made the classic Spanish borderlands seem much more important to contemporary Americans, Latin Americans, and Spaniards. The way he told it, he was just along for the ride.

And David wore his prizes lightly. To invoke an overused phrase, he remembered where he came from. He rolled his eyes when a colleague called him "Sir David." When *Park Cities People*, the local rag for the posh municipalities around SMU, ran a story on his knighthood,

I told him that the paper had a more exacting standard for *limpieza de sangre* than did the Spanish Crown. He laughed. David continued to take great delight in pointing out mediocre works by people with Ivy League degrees, which always made me a little nervous. He respected ideas and people, not titles or rank.

Particularly in the last several decades of his career, much of David's energy went into mentoring and program-building. After years of mentoring MA students, he played a key role in founding SMU's history PhD program, which began admitting students in 1998, and the university's William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, which opened its doors in 1996. Weber directed the Clements Center until 2010.

As with his scholarship, these efforts were marked by his blend of intellectual ambition, personal modesty, and intellectual integrity. David attracted students and postdoctoral fellows from the United States, Mexico, Spain, Finland, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines, taking a great interest in their well-being as people in addition to doing what he could to advance their careers. The Center, I think rightly, has been described as the most influential institute for the study of the U.S. West. David used the financial resources provided by the Clements gift to foster scholarship first and foremost. Almost all of the Center's budget goes to supporting fellows—people finishing books on some aspect of the U.S. Southwest or U.S.-Mexico borderlands. What has stood out to many about this fellowship program is the manuscript workshop, a half-day gathering of a room full of scholars who have read an entire draft of the book and meet to discuss its potential and what work remains to be done. David was a historian's historian, as an institution-builder as well as a scholar. In some measure the work of the fifty-three fellows who have come through the Center will be a part of David's legacy for the profession, as well as the nine edited volumes that have come out of conferences sponsored by the Clements Center.

As his students and other colleagues can attest, to the very end of his life teaching and grading despite his grave illness, David was as generous to others as he was invested in his own work. We can thus say that David Weber is survived not only by his wife, Carol Bryant Weber, their two children and three grandchildren, but also by the countless friends, students, and colleagues whose work and lives were touched by his writing and his presence as a human being.