IN MEMORIAM

LELAND JAMES THIELEMANN

Leland James Thielemann, professor emeritus of French, died December 24, 1987, after a long illness. Born in Portland, Oregon, on June 12, 1915, he studied at Reed College and the University of Oregon, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year and from which he was graduated in 1938 with honors in French, German, and Greek. At Reed, he had fallen under the sway of an inspired and charismatic professor of history, one Reginald Francis Arragon, who instilled in his students an undying love and reverence for learning and humanistic studies, which accounts in part for Lee's extraordinary devotion to his chosen field and the tremendous impact he was to have on his students. Under Professor Arragon's guidance, Lee read widely in pre-Socratic philosophy and studied Greek, which he eventually taught at the University of Oregon.

On graduation from Oregon, Lee accepted a resident fellowship in the French Department at Columbia University and on completing his Master's in 1939 was appointed a University Fellow. His doctoral studies were interrupted by Pearl Harbor and an invitation in early 1942 to work in cryptography with the United States Army in Arlington. In 1943 he was commissioned in the USNR and sent for intensive language training in Japanese at the Boulder Language School. On completion of his studies he served as translator and interrogator with the armed forces in New Guinea and the Philippines; he subsequently went to Japan with the US Strategic Survey. Released after the war to inactive duty, he resumed his thesis research at the Library of Congress and in the New York City libraries. He accepted an instructorship at UCLA in 1947 and, after receiving his doctoral degree from Columbia, was promoted to assistant professor of French in 1950.

Lee's studies at Columbia coincided with the flowering of one of the great French departments of the day. Setting out to follow Gilbert Highet's example of building a truly outstanding Classics Department, Professor Horatio Smith assembled for the French Department a
stunning galaxy of eminent scholars and teachers, among whom were Jean-Albert Bédé, Jean Hytier, Otis Fellows, and most notably that incomparable scholar and humanist, Norman Torrey. Smith's next move was to scour the country for bright college seniors interested in the French language and literature who, one day, would do credit to their chosen profession. Leland Thielemann was one of these.

Lee's experience at his first post in California was marked by great personal happiness and professional frustration. His marriage to Marjorie Houghton, dating back to graduate school days at Columbia, was indeed a joyful one, and the couple was blessed with three beautiful children, Susan Lee, Nancy and Alan, whose formative years were spent in Los Angeles in a hillside house with an incomparable view. One surmises, however, that the intellectual orientation of his department proved less fulfilling. Lee's training at Columbia had been in a masterful type of scholarship stressing rigorous historical research and elegance of expression. His scholarly outlook was by the mid-sixties beclouded by what he called a transformation of the department into a New Critical stronghold decidedly not in keeping with his temperament.

Though his dissertation committee had recommended publication of his thesis, *The Tradition of Hobbes in Eighteenth Century France*, the perfectionist in Lee persuaded him to publish only certain aspects in a series of articles. He devoted progressively more of his efforts to acquainting his students with the preeminent writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment. He was especially noted for his *cours magistral* on the eighteenth century and his graduate seminars on Rousseau and Diderot. He felt increasingly, however, that his brand of scholarship was not in keeping with the prevailing emphasis in the Department. No doubt it was this less than idyllic professional situation that enabled us to attract him to our campus. Appointed as a full professor here in 1964, he brought with him some of his best graduate students, notably one whom he was able to place later at Harvard.

Professor Thielemann's publications dealt with Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Holbach, Hobbes, and Jules Romains. Though not extensive, they were always meticulously researched and
marked by felicity of expression. Despite his relatively modest scholarly output, his erudition and authority on eighteenth-century French literature and thought was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. He was dubbed "a scholar's scholar" by one of the most eminent of his contemporary dix-huitiémistes. This did not mean that he discoursed in obscure jargon that only his fellow scholars might fathom, but rather that his knowledge of the period was so vast and authoritative that they sought his counsel and submitted their works to him for his comments and suggestions. Regrettably one of his own major undertakings remained unfinished at his death. It was the collation and editing of important but non-sequential fragments of the Ouvrage sur les femmes of Madame Dupin, an illustrious 18th-century feminist and patron of the philosophes. Jean-Jacques Rousseau served as her secretary during the five years immediately preceding his first Discours. The manuscript acquired by the HRC was in exasperating disorder since it had been sold piecemeal at auction by the Hôtel Drouot in the 1950's and had been scattered among many collectors. The section owned by the University of Texas represented roughly a third to a half of the entire opus, but important fragments lay elsewhere and proved difficult of access. The work Rousseau did for Madame Dupin constituted unmistakably, in Professor Thielemann's opinion, the primary source of the original system formulated in the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences and in the Discourse on Inequality. Lee did live to publish a major article outlining this influence; it appeared shortly after his retirement in the Romanic Review, which is published by Columbia University, where his scholarly career began.

Perhaps Lee's greatest contribution was his abiding concern that his doctoral students attain their full potential. To this end he was indefatigably committed. He was particularly successful in attracting some of our best graduate minds to eighteenth-century studies. In twenty short years here he oversaw the completion of thirty-two doctoral dissertations and master's theses. It was not only his scholarly authority that attracted graduate students to him, but the sure knowledge that they had in him a steadfast advocate who would encourage them, guide them, and challenge them to do their best and who furthermore would not abandon them afterwards. Unlike many scholars nowadays
who farm out to their students research which they later incorporate into their own publications, Lee did just the opposite. He set the students onto the trail of projects he had already conceived and nurtured and knew could be brought to fruitful completion.

This was made abundantly clear on the occasion of his retirement in 1984. A most festive and joyous banquet marking twenty years of happy association was organized by his students and colleagues. Many toasts were proposed, anecdotes related, and reminiscences shared. But the high point of the evening was the presentation of a handsome and weighty carton holding some sixty-odd letters from colleagues and students and far-flung scholars. The tributes came from four continents and bespoke the love, esteem, admiration, and gratitude his admirers felt for him and were a striking testimonial to the extraordinary impact Lee had had on their lives and careers. His students' devotion was imprinted glowingly on every page, a reflection of the equally deep devotion and loving concern Lee had always shown them and a vivid reminder of how noble and rewarding a life of teaching can be when pursued with the dedication Lee exemplified.

Just as Lee's life and career perpetuated the ideal of his early mentor at Reed College, so will Lee's inspiration live on no doubt in the attainments of the many students who were privileged to come into contact with him.
This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors James F. M. Stephens, Jr. (Chairman), Theodore Andersson, and A. Donald Sellstrom.