

This issue of the Journal is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Merrill Jensen, honorary member of our Association.

Merrill Jensen, who held the prestigious Vilas chair at the University of Wisconsin, first came to Japan in 1955 as a lecturer for the American Studies Seminar held at the University of Tokyo. With that visit, Jensen developed a keen interest in American studies in Japan. He returned to Japan eight times as a lecturer at the Kyoto American Studies Summer Seminar, as a counselor to American studies programs, or as a speaker at academic conferences. Until his sad death in January 1980, he always served as an invaluable advisor to the American studies community in Japan and a generous friend to many Japanese Americanists. He especially cared about Japanese scholars of the younger generation and unsparingly gave them his advice and affection. In appreciation, the Japanese Association for American Studies elected him an honorary member in 1978. Since this issue of the Journal features the American Revolution, the Editorial Board considers it fitting to dedicate this issue to his memory.

Akira Imazu, JAAS President, 1982–84, who was one of Jensen's closest friends in Japan, here offers a brief tribute to Jensen's distinguished scholarship and his benevolent interest in American studies in Japan.

**A Historian Living with Us Still:
A Tribute to the Late Professor Merrill Jensen**

The late Professor Merrill Jensen inherited the legacy of earlier Progressive historians and further developed the Progressive perception of the American Revolution. Indeed, he was one of the few great scholars who preserved the tradition of the Progressive School in the community of American historians in the post-World War II decades.

Interpreting the American Revolution as an “internal revolution” undertaken by radicals who represented democratic forces, Professor Jensen argued in his first book, *The Articles of Confederation* (1940), that the Articles of Confederation were indeed the expression of the democratic ideas current in those days and that the Articles might have functioned well with a few revisions, had they been given a chance. Then, in his second book, *The New Nation* (1950), Jensen repudiated the conventional thesis of the “Critical Period,” demonstrating persuasively that there was no economic or political chaos despite the weaknesses of the Continental Congress during the so-called “Critical Period.” Both of these works, bold in interpretation and solid in documentation, had a great impact upon the historiography of the American Revolution and have ever since remained standard readings for the students of Revolutionary America.

Jensen never substantially changed his interpretations during the 1950s and early 1960s when Neo-Whig interpretations of the American Revolution became fashionable in the American historical world. He did, however, make a slight modification of the views he held in the 1940s, when he differentiated “popular leaders” from more devoted democratic reformers. Popular leaders, he conceded, were not necessarily interested in political and social democratization. But their agitation helped politicize common men, thus giving rise to new political thought as well as to new leaders from the populace. Therefore, the American Revolution turned out to be a democratic movement in the end, if not in its origin. This view was reflected in his detailed description of the American road to independence, *The Founding of a Nation* (1968). As the title, *The American Revolution within America* (1974), suggests, the last of his numerous works was in essence a reconfirmation of the thesis of the American Revolution as an internal movement.

By the time Jensen wrote this book, his former students had produced a number of works which reflected their mentor's influence. Moreover, a new generation of historians critical of Neo-Whig interpretations had appeared. As he mentioned in the same book, historians of the 1970s came to pay much attention to the social aspects of the American Revolution and to recognize the historical significance of the social tension and conflicts that had existed during the revolutionary period. It may be said, therefore, that recent studies of social history inherit, to a considerable degree, the viewpoints and interpretations of the Progressive School, to which Jensen made significant contributions. The grand project he could not complete, *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, will soon be completed by his former associates and become a great monument in the study of the making of the Constitution. In so many ways, Jensen's scholarly influence will remain alive for many years to come.

Since Jensen's democratic perception of the American Revolution fit well the intellectual climate of postwar Japan, Japanese historians, including myself, were greatly influenced by his writings. Thanks to his keen interest in American studies in Japan, which prompted him to make frequent visits to this country, many members of our Association, non-historians as well as historians, came to know him personally. We were, of course, impressed by his formidable scholarship and by his devotion to research and teaching. But we were also charmed by his style and personality. He was infinitely warm and generous, frank and unpretentious. To us, he seemed to embody the best of American qualities.

Japanese specialists in American studies benefited a great deal from his benevolent interest in our activities. Because of his presence, a number of us went to Wisconsin as graduate students or research scholars. We were often visitors at his house, where we enjoyed his and Mrs. Jensen's warm hospitality. We will always treasure our memory of Merrill Jensen. If I begin to reminisce about my associations with him, I shall not be able to stop before filling many pages. Therefore, I would like to say simply that it was my rare privilege to learn from his scholarship and develop a mutual friendship with him.

AKIRA IMAZU
President, 1982-84