

Charles A. Povlovich
1919 - 1989
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, EMERITUS

B.A., University of Kansas City; M.A., University of Missouri; Ph.D., History,
University of Southern California, June 13, 1953
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1969 To July 1, 1987
Birth: December 18, 1919; Death: July 24, 1989

All of us who knew Charles Povlovich feel our loss deeply. He was a different person to all of us, of course--historian and teacher to some, family member or counselor to others, bridge companion to still more--yet he was always the same individual, really, with that hard rock of intelligence coupled with his inquiring mind at the center of his being.

We all could relate stories about him endlessly, too, but I like to remember Charles as the friend who dropped into my office from time to time, asking what was going on, wanting to know if he was interrupting me, taking time for a cigarette and a cup of English department coffee, and chatting, amiably, entertainingly, often wittily about almost anything under the sun. I remember once inquiring about some Latin deponent verb, for heaven's sake, and he not only knew the answer to my question but he took the time to look it up and give me reason why "patior" did not operate in quite the same way as "fruor" or "sequor." That was the kind of mind he had, an incredible insatiable curiosity about the world and the activities of its people.

In many ways he was the only true polymath I have ever known. His eidetic memory helped him become one, of course, but his learning was prodigious. Yet it was not limited to knowing such esoterica as the Army serial members of all of the first hundred officers after General Pershing. Rather, he took a simple delight in anything of the world--anything. Any where. Any time. But what is most important here is that he never overtly displayed his massive learning. Rather he seemed to be almost diffident about his erudition, giving a suggestion here, a hint there, as he relayed some marvelous fact to you.

His interests were truly catholic. They ranged from the minutiae of military history to science fiction, and included the order of battle of "General Patton's Third Army" and how it was supplied, the complicated rules of precedence of motions in Robert's Rules of Order (he was a nationally recognized, certified parliamentarian) and exactly how all the permutations would work out in something as complicated or arcane as setting up twelve tables of duplicate bridge under either international rules or simple duplicate scoring.

A fine bridge player himself as well as a games master, I did not hesitate to ask him to contribute to The Dune Encyclopedia a few years ago. He wrote a wonderfully funny, dry, dead pan entry about the fictional three-

dimensional chess game called Cheops, an essay so good I sent it to every other contributor as a sample of what I wanted for the book. His sense of humor never showed better than in that little article: he told everything about the history of the game, named its great masters, its tournaments, its difficulties, its tricks and dangers, the elements of good play as well as the difference between "formational" and "linear" play, even remarking in one place, "The great Garan Akbar once committed a premature eclipse and thereby lost a tournament." I even recall his droll pause as he read it aloud to me. Yet he never told the reader how to play the game and took a wry delight in that fact. After he gave the entry to me, almost diffidently, as I said, he later took considerable quiet pride in the fact that he was now a professional published writer.

It's almost too easy to talk about Chuck and his prodigious memory, and to overlook Charles the man, the friend. I will never forget his tears when he told me that our close friend, our colleague Lee Grannell, had died. We hugged each other and sobbed openly at the loss of a friend, as perhaps we should do today, perhaps not weep - he would have been embarrassed -- but at least hug each other and shed a tear or two as we praise his memory.

As we know, he was very fond of the classics, of Greek and Roman literature and history. He often pointed out, quite accurately of course, that with both the Greeks and the Romans, the two were virtually inseparable. This I don't think he'd mind my quoting the Roman writer Terence as a part of his eulogy today. "Homo sum, et humani nihil a me alienum puto." I am a human being; therefore I consider nothing pertaining to humanity foreign to me.

Charles was a human being. Nothing human was foreign to him. Let us remember him that way. R. I. P. Charles, R. I. P.

Submitted by
Willis E. McNelly
Professor of English, Emeritus
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