

# SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

*Office of the President*

SHEAR Distinguished Service Award

for

**James H. Broussard**

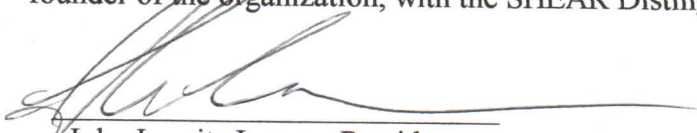
James H. Broussard is simply the reason SHEAR exists. Jim earned an AB at Harvard, and an MA and PhD at Duke University. After a short stint teaching in Texas he took a position on the Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly. That could only turn out badly (it did), but while Jim was stranded in Indianapolis he got the idea for starting a society for fellow historians who cared about the founding of the American republic.

Jim taught briefly at Ball State in Muncie before taking up his position at Lebanon Valley College, where he continues to teach and write about American history and politics. His first book, *The Southern Federalists*, alerted us to his keen eye and contrarian perspective. His most recent work, *Ronald Reagan, Champion of Conservative America*, is due out this fall, and will ruin forever any hopes we had that he might be rehabilitated.

A natural impresario, for the inaugural SHEAR Conference in Annapolis Jim staged the “Roger B. Taney Memorial All Night Fire Drill,” featuring Ed Pessen in pajamas singing Tin Pan Alley. What a beginning. Many of you recall being accosted by Jim, whenever you ventured out of your room at an AHA, OAH, Southern, or any other gathering of history professionals. He wrote thousands of letters, handed out invitations to receptions, and hosted those infamous “smokers” in crowded hotel rooms with the beds turned up to the wall and bathtubs filled with ice and beer. Like a White House reporter, he confronted the best and the brightest historians of our period, inviting them to participate, hold office, give papers—and daring them to refuse. No doubt startled by his directness, most agreed. Had he been selling AMWAY products, he would be a wealthy man; instead we have a wonderful, thriving society, and he’s about to get a small plaque.

For fifteen years Jim ran SHEAR quite literally out of his pocket, fixing the conference on the professional calendar and the journal on the shelves of the best college libraries. In the mid-1990s, before the law caught up with us, we finally chartered a corporation and reorganized. Jim took a well-earned seat on the back bench but continued to serve as chief recruiter and flag waiver. We named the First Book Prize for him, but in those days we were penniless and made him pony up the money for the prize! Here at last, we have an honor that won’t cost him anything.

For initiative, drive, perseverance, good humor, southern charm, extraordinary vision, and an infectious certainty that his dream could not fail, we hereby recognize James H. Broussard, founder of the organization, with the SHEAR Distinguished Service Award.



John Lauritz Larson, President

July 19, 2014