

Office of the President

SHEAR Distinguished Service Award
for
John Lauritz Larson

SHEAR is long overdue in recognizing our debt of gratitude to John Lauritz Larson. There are many things I could say about John as scholar, teacher, and director of a graduate program, but I have only time—and yet not time enough—to address his dedication to SHEAR.

Of course, some of John's service was in league with Mike Morrison. When Ralph Gray retired as founding editor of the *JER*, he characterized his replacements as "capable, energetic, imaginative, and more." He did not realize the truth of his words. John and Mike brought a levity and joy to their work often not found in academic journals. The Editors' Page filled with humor, celebratory news about SHEAR members' activities, and occasional apologies for misspelled names, making the society seem more personal and less, well, an organization. But they also took our collective intellectual undertaking seriously, elevating the quality of articles and shepherding special issues on gender, capitalism, racial-consciousness and nation-building, and of course their ambitious final issue which resulted in the thought-provoking volume *Whither the Early Republic: A Forum on the Future of the Field*. Ralph Gray had created a niche for the *JER*, but between 1994 and 2004, John and Mike made it the unparalleled journal that we have come to expect.

In those same years, John served as SHEAR's business manager, collecting dues, maintaining membership lists, tabulating ballots, and overseeing fiscal affairs. As John noted in his citation for Mike's service award, Mike was the force behind moving the *Journal* to Purdue University. John, however, was the energy behind almost everything else, including the decision to move to Philadelphia and the SHEAR-NEH-Library Company summer seminars on which he and Mike again collaborated.

A decade later, as president of SHEAR in 2013-2014, John did what he always has done: attended to the organization's common good. When the *Journal* required a new editor, he found her in Cathy Kelly. When I retired as conference coordinator, he persuaded Robyn Davis to take on the challenge. He also originated the SHEAR Distinguished Service Award, led revision and updating of SHEAR's website, worked to simplify the organization's budgetary process, and joined in creating the Mary Kelley Prize in the history of women, gender, and sexuality.

Upon retirement from the *JER*, Mike Morrison wrote that he had "enjoyed laboring these past years with my creative, hard-working, and supportive co-editor and good friend," who he defined as among "the very best in our profession." I could not agree more, not only about John's stature in our profession but the enjoyment one takes in working with John and watching John work. For his spirit of service, his good humor, his friendship, and his dedication to SHEAR, we hereby recognize John Lauritz Larson with the SHEAR Distinguished Service Award.



Carol Lasser, President

(Written and presented by Craig Thompson Friend.)

July 22, 2017