A prolific, insightful, and remarkable scholar, a charismatic and inspiring undergraduate and graduate teacher, a nurturing mentor to a whole generation of medievalists presently teaching and training other scholars throughout the country and advancing the boundaries of our knowledge about the Middle Ages, a superb and cherished administrator whose work as chair has catapulted the History Department at Princeton to new dazzling heights, a man who has, through his service to the ACLS and as president of scholarly organizations, served the discipline and the humanities in this country and abroad in distinguished fashion, William Chester Jordan is also a cherished friend. For me, he is Bill Jordan, a friend for more than four decades. In fact, the longest continuous friendship at Princeton or since I arrived in the United States more than fifty years ago.

Although John Baldwin, a distinguished scholar himself, has already contributed a formidable assessment of Bill's scholarship in the historiographical introduction to this much deserved and loving tribute, I would be remiss were I not to mention briefly some of Bill's towering scholarly achievements and contributions. These contributions are not limited to French and English medieval history, but they have benefitted the discipline of history at large. Trained, as I was, in the kind of institutional political history with a focus on late medieval France that was our beloved master, Joseph R. Strayer's, trademark, Bill has shown such a broad range of interests as to elude classification as a specific type of historian. Although we have both shared a commitment to what he has jocularly described as “meat and potatoes history”—though of course there were no potatoes in the Middle Ages, but meat and potatoes may be Bill's favorite food—Bill's enduring love and loyalty to rural history has been a constant in his life. All of his students may remember either with elation, or trepidation, Bill Jordan's long seminars and extended discussions on pigs (one of his favorite topics), the agricultural cycle, rural yields, agricultural tools, and other such subjects that, when studied with due attention, unmask the real core of medieval life. Whether writing about “rustics” or farmers, as Bill has named them, or peasants, as I tend to do, we have
always been of one mind in our knowledge that, regardless of whether we write on other topics, we always return to the peasants—oh no! Sorry, to the rustics—as the core foundation of our knowledge of the medieval past. I must confess that the first graduate seminar I taught on rural history at UCLA was modeled on, nay plagiarized in toto from, Bill’s very successful similar seminar at Princeton. Mine went down like a lead balloon, as my California students looked at me with disbelief, as I, like Bill, waxed rhapsodically about agricultural yields, pigs, rural diet, and other such topics.

From his early and remarkable work on St. Louis’s crusade and on the saintly king’s efforts to reform the kingdom, a work that Jacques Le Goff never fails to praise every time we speak as one of the fundamental books on that king, Bill moved to his paradigmatic work on credit and women. One must also note his perceptive study of peasant manumissions and his path-breaking book on the early-fourteenth-century famine. Most recently, he has published a luminous comparison between the abbey churches of Saint-Denis and Westminster. Through these and many other monographs, articles, and papers, and his active editorialship of the Dictionary of the Middle Ages, Bill has long established his reputation as the best senior late medieval historian in this country and abroad. Few match him in the broad scope of his work. Few come close to his linguistic skills—on this, his study of the early fourteenth-century famine represents a masterful mining of the extant documentation in a wide variety of languages far beyond the abilities of most of us. Few scholars in the world command the erudition that Bill does. Few can articulate the historical problematique as forcefully as he does. Well, I think that I have fulfilled my duty in informing the audience, as if the audience needed to be informed, of Bill’s remarkable life of learning, and of his commitment to the transmission of that knowledge to his graduate students, and to the discipline at large. Few indeed practice the historian’s craft as well as Bill does.

But I am not here to praise Caesar, sorry to praise Bill, as much as he deserves to be praised. I am here to share my memories of an earlier Bill. Some of these memories are, I hope, humorous; others are heartfelt. Although I intrude into the narrative, this is of course not about me, except that these are shared memories of trials, tribulations, and some successes that we experienced together in those halcyon, yet difficult, early days as graduate students at Princeton and as junior faculty. One may argue that we are composites of all of our times, of all of our previous experiences. In Bill, besides the stately senior scholar of today with his distinguished graying hair, there is within the young twenty-something that entered