

goods 8,000 miles from Liverpool to the head of the Magdalena River, in central Colombia, than it was to move them from there up through the mountains to Bogotá, less than 100 miles away. When these constraints lifted—as new transportation technology conquered the Andes, and as the world grew addicted to coffee—Colombia quickly responded. No “backward culture” barred the way.

Like so many of Safford’s ideas, these still feel fresh. Current work on economic growth often echoes *The Ideal of the Practical*. One hot-off-the-press working paper, for example, argues that the professionalization of engineering in Britain was key to sustaining the gains of the industrial revolution (Hanlon 2022), bringing to mind Safford’s emphasis on the rise of Colombian engineers: the growing number of engineering students at top universities, the proliferation of engineering specialities (industrial, petroleum, chemical, etc.), and the eventual ascendance of engineers to the highest social ranks and to cabinet appointments lie at the center of Safford’s story of Colombian development.

Another new paper uses a rich quantitative data set to classify Bogotá in 1800 as “self-sufficient,” meaning that Bogotanos had all the food they needed within arm’s reach, and argues that self-sufficiency was (perhaps paradoxically) bad for long-term economic growth (Haber et al. 2022). Safford, writing nearly half a century ago, alighted on the same theme. He quotes a nineteenth-century visitor who observed that “there is not perhaps a place in the world which can provide for itself the elements necessary to enjoy such an absolute independence and isolation from the rest of the world.” Self-sufficient, indeed. As for the long-term consequences, Safford writes: “This superficially ideal situation tended to stultify the economy, discouraging the development of a national market ... as it was possible to get along using the products of the immediate area, there was not a strong imperative to improve roads.”

In *The Ideal of the Practical*, as in his other work and his teaching, Safford deftly defends his thesis with vivid detail about individual nineteenth-century Colombians. He claims that the Colombian elite of that era, far from rejecting technical education, often promoted it. As evidence, Safford introduces us to men like

Mariano Ospina, who was then Secretary of the Interior and who later served as president of Colombia. Writing to his sons—one of whom became head of state, another of whom fathered a third President Ospina—Mariano Ospina exhorted them not to take up “overrefined” subjects like higher mathematics; impractical sciences like zoology; or literature, “which tires the mind without profit.” Instead, Ospina wished his sons to pursue mechanical engineering: “not so much theoretically as practically,” which is to say, he wanted them to man pulleys, saws, water wheels, mills, and “the construction of wooden bridges, etc.”

These details—the tone of Ospina’s letters, his liberal use of “etc.,” the texture of his parental aspiration—are often considered the province of the humanities, useful for the political scientist (even the qualitative political scientist) only as background, or to enhance readability. Safford shows us that these seemingly minute details are the best way to truly understand and evaluate his proposal that substantial faction of the Colombian elite embraced “the ideal of the practical.”

Safford also set an example of how to engage with other people’s research. *The Ideal of the Practical* never trucks in backhanded compliments or accusations. And yet throughout the text there runs an undercurrent of gentlemanly indignation at those who “so confidently pronounce judgment on other cultures,” as he puts it. For colleagues who had merely done fieldwork in Colombia—rather than living there, loving the country, and returning regularly over the course of an entire life, as Safford did—he has gentle reminders (“It is well to remember also that not all the plans of Latin Americans go awry”) but no slights. On that count, Safford was ahead of his time, keenly aware of his positionality as a gringo writing about Latin America, conscious of the privilege of being let into someone else’s society. But he was never sanctimonious, in writing or in person. Pancho—as he was christened by his nanny in El Paso—was warm and welcoming and exuberant.

Pancho is survived by his brilliant wife, Joan Safford; by his two children and their partners, whom he adored; by his beloved granddaughter; and by countless lucky students, including me.

—Dorothy Kronick, University of California, Berkeley

Susan Welch

Longtime academic and philanthropic leader Susan Welch passed away on March 28, 2022. Welch was born October 3, 1943, in Galesburg, Illinois, to Delbert and Marie (nee Satterfield) Welch and grew up in nearby Bushnell. She enrolled at the University of Illinois in 1961 with the intent of majoring in mathematics.

She also enjoyed history, however, and continued to study it during her first three years at the University of Illinois. Her instructors at Illinois nurtured that interest in history to the point that she changed her major at the beginning of her senior year.

She later changed disciplines again, this time to political science, and eventually earned her doctorate in political science from the University of Illinois in 1970.

“Susan was a role model, pioneer, visionary and incredible leader who helped make Penn State into the world-class university it is today,” said Penn State President Eric J. Barron.

Welch became an assistant professor of political science at the

University of Nebraska after graduation, embarking on a more than 50-year career where she established herself as one of the foremost political science scholars of her generation.

She wrote more than 170 peer-reviewed articles and authored or co-authored eight books—including her renowned *Understanding American Government*, a three-time winner of the American Government Textbook Award from the Women’s Caucus for Political Science and currently in its 14th edition.

Her published works have been cited more than 11,000 times, and her article “The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators,” co-written with Sue Thomas for *Western Political Quarterly* in 1991, is the most cited work on women in politics and considered a breakthrough in the study of women’s potential political behaviors.

Read Penn State’s Tribute to Professor Welch (<https://www.psu.edu/news/liberal-arts/story/penn-state-liberal-arts-community-mourn-passing-susan-welch/>) or learn more about her here (<https://polisci.la.psu.edu/people/sxw11/>).

—Karima Scott, American Political Science Association ■