

*A Friend of Bancroft*

# AL BAXTER

With the passing of Alfred W. Baxter on March 7, The Bancroft Library lost a dear and dedicated friend. His contributions and their impact on the Library stand as a memorial to him. While professionally a management consultant and a producer of fine wine, Al seemed always to be giving more of himself to his diverse personal interests. As he was by inclination and talent a scholar, he probed deeply into each of the fields that fascinated him. An active climber and leader of expeditions into the high country in Africa, Asia, and Alaska, he proceeded to compile an extraordinary mountaineering library, reportedly of more than 4,000 volumes. He was the author of some 49 articles and books on subjects as varied as mountain climbing, wine, poetry, military and naval history, Latin poets, social clubs, and California history and architecture, in addition to considerable humorous verse. At heart, he was a great bibliophile.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, Al served in World War II in the U.S. Army Air Force Intelligence, graduated from Stanford University in philosophy, and went on to graduate work in Zurich and the Universities of Maryland and California, Berkeley.

After serving as Budget Officer and Assistant to the Chancellor at UC Berkeley, he was a guest lecturer at a succession of seven universities: the University of Colorado at Boulder; Athens Technological Institute; Oxford; American University, Beirut; University of British Columbia; Stanford University Graduate School of Business; and Sonoma State University.

Mr. Baxter formed his own consultancy, Baxter, McDonald and Company, Berkeley, but winemaking at home, by himself and his family, drew him into serious wine production and sales. Typically, he went all the way, becoming Wine Maker and Managing General Director of Veedercrest Vineyards, Napa, which developed an international reputation; he became a consultant in the industry.



Throughout his life he was devoted to service, first on the Secretary of the Army's National Advisory Board on Bases and Installation and the California Health Manpower Council. He later held leadership roles with the Sonoma County and California Historical Societies, Institute of Historical Studies, Golden State Rehabilitation Hospital, San Ramon, and the Friends of the Bancroft Library.

A genial companion and clubman, Mr. Baxter was a member of the Himalayan (Calcutta), American Alpine, UC Faculty, Roxburghe, and Bohemian Clubs.

A man of indomitable spirit, Al Baxter overcame the terrible injuries and personal loss suffered during the Berkeley-Oakland hills fire of 1991 to win 14 more years of research and writing and zestful living. Finally, in a hospital in Phoenix, Arizona (the Baxters were staying at their second home), Al Baxter's strong heart gave out at the age of 78.

His first wife, the architect Gail Allison Fleming, whom he married in 1952, perished in the Berkeley-Oakland hills fire. In 1993, he married Mary Sherrill Mead who survives him, along with three sons, Eric Baxter of Novato, Anders Baxter of Ashland, Oregon, Willard Piers of San Leandro, and four grandchildren.

—Robert Commanday