

## **Jack Temple Kirby**

Jack and I were in Baton Rouge for an environmental history conference a few years ago, and we found ourselves with some time one morning and adjourned to the nearby levee. As we watched the tows and tourists, we talked. One did not worry about silences when talking to Jack; he brimmed with information.

Jack and I were born a month apart and a state apart (less than a hundred miles), and our careers had a remarkable convergence--writing books on agriculture in the 1980s and on environmental issues in this century. We aired these topics, of course, but we meandered, gossiping about our colleagues, ranking old and new southern fiction, and screening previews of our next projects. I recalled a time in the 1990s when he and Constance miraculously appeared on Beale Street as our Rock 'n' Soul exhibit crew shot b-roll. I also reminded him of his contentiousness at a conference at Mississippi State. We laughed at our foibles. When I learned that Jack was president-elect of the Southern, I smiled, knowing that few of our presidents embodied his strengths.

Over the years Jack and I had discussions that were not paced so well as our talk on the levee, and some, I fear, were fueled by alcohol and fumbled into incoherence. No matter how offensive we were, we managed to survive these moments and remain friends.

Jack personified the values of the Southern Historical Association. He was a scholar and a gentleman, he was gifted and eccentric, he was fun and contentious, and he moved among us with intellect and wisdom. We were fortunate to have him, for a time.

Dr. Pete Daniel  
Smithsonian Institution