



THE CALIFORNIA GEOGRAPHER: THE FIRST 20 YEARS

*William J. Frazer\**

As we look back on two decades of publication of the California Geographer, and the more than three decades of the parent organization, the California Council for Geographic Education, the membership is justifiably proud. Rapidly increasing publication costs, uncertainties of supplies plague all journals. Thanks, however, to an energetic geographic constituency, a series of highly capable editors and the University of Southern California's Graphic Services, major publication problems appear to be under control and we look forward to the coming decades with confidence.

Meeting in Fresno in 1978, the California Council for Geographic Education honored its founding members:

Homer Aschmann	V. Calvon McKim*
Ruth E. Baugh*	Robert Pease
Rex Brittingham*	Lauren Post*
Henry Bruman	Ida Mae Shrode
Myrtle Grenels	Adolph Stone
Walter Hacker	Alfred Sumner
Cecilia Irvine	Walter Wiley
John Kesseli*	Clifford Zierer*

(\*=Deceased)

Present at the annual banquet were three of the founding members, Homer Aschmann, Arthur Carthew and V. Calvon McKim, who passed away in summer 1978. Surviving founding members were presented with life memberships in the organization they helped to found in 1948.

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## TWO DECADES OF THE CALIFORNIA GEOGRAPHER

From the earliest years of the California Council of Geography Teachers certain founding members intended that the organization should eventually establish its own publications. Lauren Post of San Diego State took the first step in the late 1940's when he began publication of the Newsletter of the CCGT to provide basic communications within the membership. In a few mimeographed pages published several times a year the Newsletter covered annual meeting plans, program developments on the campuses, professional notes and similar matters.

At the 1953 meeting in Fresno, upon completion of his term as president, Chester Cole recounted the organization's needs and urged action on a more inclusive publication program, including a journal if possible. As a first step, with the Board's approval, he established the Bulletin to replace the Newsletter and to serve as an outlet for some of the work of the Council. This larger publication provided space for a few short papers, reviews, grant notices, and similar matters, in addition to the more basic organizational news and notes of the former Newsletter. The Bulletin continues in a more inclusive and elaborate form to provide the Council with a wide range of materials for, by, and about the membership.

Despite the substantial advance represented by the Bulletin over the next seven years, the organization's goals still called for a journal. The 1959 Executive Board, looking at the strong post World War II expansion of geography and higher education in California, was

particularly aware of this need. California had become the location of the largest and fastest growing concentration of professional geographers in the nation except for Washington, D. C. In addition to their memberships in the several national organizations, they were active in a number of regional and local geographical associations. Nevertheless, the Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers was the only journal at all oriented to this group, and many in the CCGT wanted a journal to represent the organization as well as to provide additional avenues for publication. The members' thoughts on this aspect of the matter were varied. Some saw the journal as a means of publishing more material on California, on the work of California geographers, or perhaps as an outlet for work which was not finding space in the four national professional geogrpahy journals of the time.

The problems of establishing a new journal appeared insurmountable. Although membership in the CCGT was growing rapidly, individual dues were only \$2.00 and the Council's yearly income totalled less than \$500. Clearly this was not enough to support a publishing venture, especially one that was expected to be of high quality, well printed and illustrated, and representative of a significant professional association.

Despite this discouraging outlook the 1958-59 Board, chaired by Robert Eidt of Los Angeles State, resolved the matter at its May 1959 meeting in Long Beach City College by taking action to establish The California Geographer and asking this writer to serve as editor. Ways and means were yet to be found, but there was some

hope of getting a foundation or corporation to provide a publication grant and a prospect, thanks to ground work by Howard Brunson of East Los Angeles Junior College and Arthur Carthew of Los Angeles City College, for economical printing arrangements through the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College.

Much of the editor's available time in the succeeding year was devoted to the initial issue of the journal. The critical problems of publication quickly focused upon the matter of printing. All other matters - the number and quality of papers, editorial policies, subscription lists, business procedures - were for the moment secondary to the cost of printing. The hopes for great monies faded rapidly, but we were fortunate in finding receptive and helpful people in the Printing Trades Department at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. Recognizing the value that experience with a carefully printed, serious professional journal would have for their students, they agreed to accept our work if we were willing to accept their conditions. The only monetary cost was to be reimbursement for the costs of paper, ink, and engravings. It was understood that the work would be done entirely by students and that our publication would have no priority over any of the work of the department. While we mutually hoped that each issue would be completed and distributed before the annual meeting in May, there would be no assurance of this.

As the 1960 May meetings approached, the result of this preliminary effort was that the editor reported in the Spring Bulletin that Volume I

was almost ready for the mail and described the first year's efforts as follows:

This first issue has necessarily been reasonably modest and conservative in both size and variety of content, as we have tested the adequacy of the budget, refined the printing arrangements, developed some simple business procedures, and generally assessed the scope and complexity of the job and the resources available to us. In the future, as less effort needs to be devoted to mechanical and business matters, it should be possible to devote more attention to the editorial aspects of the job and to elaborate upon the content of The California Geographer in several ways.

As it turned out, only modest expansion and improvement were undertaken in the succeeding nine years. With the help of additional income from subscriptions sold nationwide to libraries, geography departments, and schools, the journal printed 60 to 90 pages each year except in 1969 when it reverted to its original 48-page size. Income was adequate for that level of publication and for building a small cash reserve against the day we might have to turn to other printing arrangements. Funds were never sufficient, however, to permit consideration of expansion to larger or more frequent issues. In consequence, the possibilities of developing a broader base of publishable materials were not seriously explored.

The 1962 and 1967 volumes were particularly noteworthy for their inclusion of Festschriften honoring two major California scholars. These were publications proposed and organized by former graduate students of John E. Kesseli and Clifford M. Zierer. In each instance the former students arranged for the papers, provided for initial editing and shared the costs of publication with The California Geographer.

Now, in retrospect, it appears that The California Geographer

made a useful contribution to its parent organization and its field. It was able to offer the membership a number of outstanding works and many valuable professional contributions. It also provided an outlet for the first published work of a number of beginning professionals. The cumulative index for the first ten years shows that it was, as it tried to be, an open journal which neither favored nor excluded works because of their source or viewpoints.

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WHAT THE CALIFORNIA GEOGRAPHER TAUGHT ME

Somewhere on the library shelves, toward the top near The Canadian Geographer, I spied a set of journals I didn't know existed. The California Geographer? Here was a journal from my home state that was exactly what I needed for my senior term paper! Since that time, I have often wondered how many people have had occasion to read the C.G. and how useful it has been to them. Fifteen years after my introduction to the journal, I have learned that The California Geographer serves a variety of purposes, some of them unique and all very useful.

Foremost, it is obviously an information source for those wanting to know more about the Golden State. There are both topical and regional articles with information about California, written by Californians, that equal the diversity of the western landscape itself. The recently published Cumulative Index to the C.G. lists essays and research articles on California-related topics that have perked the interest of readers from all over the world. The editor often gets requests for permission to reprint articles in foreign journals.

Not just a geographic journal about California, the C.G. is also a means by which readers can learn where the interests of Californians lie. Reference to the Index shows a fairly even balance of topics of interest to California geographers. Historical and cultural themes seem to outweigh such topics as statistical and population geography, but that should hardly be news to West Coast geographers. Regional

interests by California geographers seem to be local or focused toward the Americas, with some neglect of Europe and Asia. Curious, but not surprising.

The C.G. has also been a forum for expressing geography as taught in California schools from the primary grades up. Since the California Council for Geographic Education is indeed a group made up mostly of teachers and students, the journal has inspired more than a few good ideas on both sides of the instructor's rostrum. Along with the Bulletin, it serves as a resource base for instructors seeking subject matter content as well as teaching techniques.

In addition to the journal's main function as a resource base, it provides many limited but important services. For example, I found that the privilege of editorship enabled me to meet many of the colleagues while tracking likely manuscripts. One of my favorite satisfactions from the editor's job was to be able to work with authors in their own area of specialty, thereby giving me an educational experience in a variety of geographic subjects.

Memories of my own first manuscript submission to a journal reminded me that one of the most important functions of a "local" journal is to encourage first-time submissions. Many graduate students have "gotten their feet wet" through the C.G. If there is any extra time required of the editor for preparation of an author's first article, it is more than made up in the satisfaction of having helped a newcomer into the field.

Perusing the programs of past annual meetings and the contents of past issues of The California Geographer demonstrates to me that the journal truly has reflected the trends and interests of its parent organization. I anticipate that it will continue to do so.

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The first cover design by John A. Crosby