



**PASSING THE MANTLE:
THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO
GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT**

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The following four papers are presented as a special tribute to a team of geographers and a Geography Department that functioned effectively together without any significant personnel changes until 1985. The "old" Chico tradition focused on teaching and especially mentoring bright students into academic geography, public service, and a broad variety of private sector careers. Ultimately new hires starting in the mid-80s brought new talents, insights, and interests into the faculty mix at California State University, Chico. By 1991 there had been a 50 percent personnel turnover in the Chico Geography Department and "The Chico geographers" as they were perceived for years by members of the California academic community in general and practitioners of geography in particular were no more. Now, the question remains: what will be the focus of the "new" Chico Department? Where to from here?

In the fall of 1991 there are fourteen permanent faculty in the Department of Geography at California State University, Chico. Seven of the 1991 faculty are replacements for those

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who retired between 1985 and 1991; Emeriti Rolland Berger, Ladd Johnson, Arthur Karinen, David Lantis, Louis Mihalyi, Frank Seawall, and Margaret Trussell. The first of the Chico Geographers who came and stayed was Dave Lantis. Dave was hired at Chico State College in 1957 as the sole geographer in the Social Science Division. By 1959 Art Karinen joined the staff and the nucleus was created for what eventually would become a "real" department of geography. Time and chance cast Art and Dave in the role of builders. The passage of time and additions of staff in the late 50s through the early 70s and their work with literally thousands of students demonstrates that they had the required desire, insight, and will for the task. Art and Dave envisioned a teaching department of geography; the emphasis was on caring, and effective teaching was the primary mandate. Reflecting back now, most of us who were brought in to assist in the process of program development at Chico recognize that Art and Dave did what was required to bring together the necessary mix of potential talent to do the job.

Geography at Chico State expanded in the 1960s with the addition of Ladd Johnson and Margaret Trussell (1966), Louis Mihalyi (1967), Bruce Bechtol (1968), and Frank Seawall and Jerry Williams (1969). The 1970s brought Ralph Meuter (1970), Bill Collins and Ed Myles (1972), Rolland Berger and Gene Martin (1973), and Dick Haiman (1974). After 1974 the Chico Department was forced into a "steady state" personnel situation. Restrictions on university growth and administrative constraints on new position allocations resulted in no new permanent faculty hires in the Chico Geography Department until the mid-1980s.

The cycle of retirements from the Chico Department began in 1983 with Rolland Berger and Dave Lantis; unfortunately, the University allowed no new permanent faculty to be hired to fill the position vacancies. When Margaret Trussell retired in 1985 the Department was given the

authority to hire its first new fulltime probationary faculty member in over a decade and Paul Melcon joined the Chico faculty. Art Karinen retired in 1986 and his position was subsequently filled by Susan Hardwick. Two years later three new fulltime faculty, Don Holtgrieve, Guy King, and Susan Place were added to the staff following the retirement of Ladd Johnson (1987) and Louis Mihalyi (1988). Finally the recruitment of two more women geographers, Christine Rodrigue (1989) and Eugenie Rovai (1991) foreshadowed the most recent retirement of Frank Seawall (1991).

What the personnel changes in the Chico Department portend for the future is anybody's guess, but it appears certain that the infusion of new faculty ideas and talent will steer the department along a different course. As a former "young Turk" who somehow became the senior professor in the department, it is my fervent hope that as we change directions we retain our sense of place and mission. Those of us who remain clearly owe much to those who went before; our tradition of service is strong. If the best of that tradition is maintained, Chico will continue to be a very special environment for geographers.