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Memorial to
Robert Fleming Heizer (1915-1979)

ROBERT FLEMING HEIZER, who died 16 July 1979 at the age of 64, was one of the best known and most outstanding archaeologists to have been trained and later to teach at the University of California, Berkeley. His contributions to his profession, to the scholarly world and the public in general, and to his university, were continuous and at an extraordinary and prodigious rate and level of creative excellence that is rare, even in the most distinguished communities of scholars. He was the author of 24 books and nearly 400 scientific articles and monographs that express the remarkable breadth and wide-ranging interests of California’s pioneer scientific archaeologist. To Bob Heizer archaeology was a kind of condensed social history from which something valuable could be learned about the facts of man’s cultural and intellectual development. To help interpret the past, he drew on a wide range of sources of information and he believed that it is impossible to understand mankind or formulate “laws” of culture without using the data of prehistorians. “I have always believed,” he said, “that the information and investigative methods of the natural and life sciences should be brought to bear as much as possible on the materials of archaeology.” The way he put this into practice, thereby developing a new insight into the anthropology of past human culture, is apparent from his excursions into subjects such as toxicology, geology, mineralogy, organic chemistry, pedology, demography, mathematics, architecture, history, limnology, law, conchology, zoology, and economics. Bob was one of the few gifted with such broad intellectual interests and encyclopedic knowledge and he also possessed the energy and creative ability to get so many of his ideas and findings into print. Ranging from book-length treatments of the Olmec civilization of Mesoamerica, or the prehistoric rock art of California and Nevada, to a study of prejudice and discrimination against Californian minorities under Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. regimes, or X-ray fluorescence analysis of obsidians and replicative experimentation in archaeology, his work is both the foundation stone on which systematic archaeology in California is based and a contribution of major significance for the science of archaeology in general.

That Bob Heizer was equally at home and successful as a prehistorian, ethnographer, or historian was in large part due to his early upbringing in Nevada. His father was a mining engineer, and Bob grew up in mining towns where he early learned self-reliance and came to identify with both the solitude and the company to be met with in the high deserts of the Great Basin. “A small desert town,” he said, “can be a boring place,” and he found talking to local Indians and writing down what they told him more interesting than playing pool. It was here, therefore, that he first acquired his understanding and sympathy for the Indians and an appreciation for the antiquity of their highly successful adaptive behavior that was brought to an end by the flood tide of Western culture after 1846. This
shows through in his numerous ethnographic writings and in his more popular books such as *Almost Ancestors: the First Californians* or *Ishi, the Last Yahi: a Documentary History*, both written with Theodora Kroeber; or again in his testifying with Alfred Kroeber and two other anthropologists at the Hearings on Californian Indian Land Claims in 1954 and 1955. Indeed these hearings were mainly responsible for United States Government recognition of the claims of the California Indians and for the settlements that followed.

Heizer graduated from Lovelock High School in Nevada in June 1932 and from there went on to attend Sacramento Junior College for the next two years. The year 1932 was a time when systematic field techniques were just beginning to be developed and put into practice in the United States. He himself said, “American archaeology was just being born and the news of the nativity had not reached Sacramento.” Most outstanding archaeologists are fanatics and Bob was no exception. His deep and abiding interest in prehistory was encouraged by his tutors at Sacramento and showed itself in the role he played in leading a small group of students on the first archaeological field program in California. Carried out on weekends, these excavations revealed the three basic cultures of the Sacramento Valley region and led to his publishing later, in collaboration with other students, a manual of field techniques. This was the precursor of the most widely used and best known text on archaeological field techniques in the country, *Field Methods in Archaeology*, now in its sixth edition, written in collaboration with T. R. Hester and J. A. Graham.

He was admitted to the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall of 1934, and received his A.B. degree in 1936. Later, as a graduate in the Anthropology Department, he benefited greatly from some of the foremost teaching in anthropology then available and was greatly influenced by Kroeber, Lowie, and Gifford. Bob was a rarity in the department at that time, as there were no formal courses offered in archaeology. Kroeber was impressed by Heizer’s organizational ability and the field techniques he had developed and encouraged him and provided the necessary funding for further fieldwork. Accordingly, between 1936 and 1939 Heizer directed a small student group in the excavation of a number of sites in Nevada and California, and, funded by the California Historical Society, he excavated for two summers, in 1940 and 1941, at Indian occupation sites at Drake’s Bay. Though evidence of Drake’s visit eluded him, he did recover part of the cargo of Cermeno’s ship, the *San Augustin*, wrecked there in 1595. Between 1936 and 1941, therefore, Heizer and his associates had been able to establish the essential framework of Central California prehistory, tying it into an historical event.

At the time Heizer was a graduate student, there was no formal course of study for the Ph.D. degree. He attended seminars, read a great deal, learned from other students, and waited for Kroeber to tell him to take the written qualifying examination. In those days the qualifying examination took the form of 30 hours of written papers on such varied subjects as history and theory of anthropology, cultural history, linguistics, and American Indians, and the examination was spread over five days. Meeting Kroeber in the hall one day, he was told that he should take the examination, which would be held in two-weeks’ time! His dissertation was not, surprisingly, an archaeological one, but a treatise on the subject of “Aboriginal Whaling in the Old and New Worlds.” The selection of this topic was not so much one of his own choosing as that the objective of the Department at the time was to produce professionals with a broad interest in anthropology. He received his doctorate in 1941 and the publication resulting from the dissertation is a major compilation and indispensable reference work.
In 1940-41, he was appointed Instructor in anthropology at the University of Oregon. Later, during the war, he saw service in a naval shipyard at Richmond, California, helping to build Liberty Ships and AKA Attack Transports. In 1946, after a brief period as Instructor at UCLA, Heizer was invited to join the faculty of the Anthropology Department at Berkeley, where he taught and researched to the time of his death.

Heizer’s first concern after joining the Berkeley faculty was with the archaeology and cultural history of California, and in 1947 he persuaded the authorities to establish the University of California Archaeological Survey. It remained under his direction until 1961 when, its main purpose fulfilled, it was reorganized and the research objectives broadened as the Archaeological Research Facility. Heizer remained Coordinator of the Facility until his retirement in 1976. Between 1947 and 1960 some 13,000 archaeological sites in California had been recorded, scores of prehistoric sites excavated, and over 150 articles or monographs published on the findings. Students trained by the Survey hold academic posts all over the country, and the organization served as a model for a number of similar state surveys. All this was done while holding down a full teaching load in the department.

In North America, where archaeology and ethnography have always been closely intertwined and culture-historic interpretations draw perhaps as much on archaeological material as they do on ethnographic, Heizer’s long-standing interest in ethnographic matters and problems, as well as more specific archaeological ones, is understandable. Extraordinary, however, is the broad range of these interests, and he investigated almost everything that he considered might have direct or possible importance for archaeological interpretation. It is impossible to make more than brief mention of some of them here.

In ethnography he wrote extensively about Indian material culture and behavior. Papers on plank canoes, fishhooks, and navigational and hunting practices on the Northwest Coast, arrow poisons and points, atlatls, basketry techniques, aboriginal shell currencies and trade, Indian vocabularies, and California population densities and settlement patterns poured from his pen and show something of the great range of his interests. As editor and member of the Advisory Committee for Volume 8 (California) of the Handbook of North American Indians, published a year before he died, he was able to ensure that the information it contained was as complete and accurate as possible.

His historical interests resulted in articles and monographs on the early Spanish explorers of the Coast, including Drake; on excavations at the California Missions and the Sutter Sawmill site where gold was first discovered in 1848, on Indian relationships with the Spanish, Mexican, and United States Governments, and on the unratified treaties of 1851-52.

His contributions to archaeology, both of the western United States and the discipline in general, are those for which he is best known. His work falls mostly into three main categories: that on western American archaeology (in particular of California and Nevada), that which he carried out in Meso-America, and his contributions to archaeological methods and theory, in particular in his investigation of new techniques and their potential for the discipline. To this end his work was often carried out in collaboration with colleagues in other disciplines and with his own students, and it resulted in some of his most significant publications. In particular must be mentioned his happy association with his friends Sherburne Cook of the Physiology Department, with whom he collaborated on population and nutritional studies; with Howell Williams of Geology on ancient heavy transport; with Philip Drucker at La Venta,
the Olmec center in Mexico; and with Fred Stross, a chemist working on analyses of archaeological materials.

Bob Heizer’s three most important excavations in the West are probably Leonard Rockshelter, Lovelock Cave, and Humboldt Cave in the Humboldt Sink region of the Great Basin, where the first occupation level is dated to 9200 B.C. These were dry caves with a series of deep deposits in which were preserved very important artifacts of perishable materials such as basketry and wood, as well as many human coprolites—in Lovelock Cave in particular. The analytical teamwork on these coprolites has resulted in very precise knowledge of the changing dietary habits of the occupants through time as they kept pace with changing climatic conditions in the Basin. Another of his interests was petroglyphs, and his surveys and resulting jointly-authored publications are the definitive works on the rock engravings of California and the Great Basin, showing their association with game trails and hunting places.

Early Man sites were another of his interests, and he examined the claims made for some of these—Texas Street, Louisville, Gypsum Cave—or for human skeletal remains—with a thoroughness that generally left little doubt as to the accuracy or otherwise of such claims.

In 1956, his interest expanded to Mesoamerica and with Drucker and Squier he excavated at the great and probably earliest of the Pre-Classic ceremonial centers at La Venta, an island in the Tabasco lowlands not far from the Gulf of Mexico. The extensive ceremonial mounds and terraces, extending for over two kilometers, were mapped and excavated, and many outstanding features of Olmec art were discovered, including mosaic pavements of serpentine and dedicatory caches of jade objects. What interested Heizer most about the monumental stone structures and sculptures, including the large human heads, was how and from where they had been brought to La Venta, a distance of more than 100 kilometers from the nearest source of stone. This initiated several field seasons with Howell Williams, resulting in the location of quarry sources for the stone at La Venta, as well as in the Valley of Mexico and Guatemala, and caused him to develop a world-wide interest in the transport of megalithic monuments and the methods of moving and erecting them. With his colleagues at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, he completed a brilliant piece of research that identified the quarries on the Nile from which the stone for the Colossi of Memnon had come. He amassed a great deal of information on the subject of monumental building and the monograph on ancient heavy transport was well on the way to completion at the time of his death.

Bob was quick to examine, with typical thoroughness, the potential of the new methods and techniques that were beginning to become increasingly available to archaeologists from the 1950’s onwards. But he also went out of his way to interest natural and physical scientists in developing additional ways in which prehistoric artifacts and settlements might be dated, material sources identified, and quantitative analyses and assessments applied to demographic patterning and prehistoric economies. The magnetometer was used to identify the presence of a structure within the pyramid at La Venta. Obsidian sources in the Sierras and in Meso-America and the resulting trade routes were investigated by X-ray fluorescence and neutron activation analysis, which was also applied to identify clay and quarry sources for pottery and stone; chemical analyses of archaeological residues resulted in estimates of settlement size and dispersal and decay rates of occupational debris. The volume, co-edited with Sherburne Cook, “The Application of Quantitative Methods in Archaeology,” which followed from a symposium organized at the European
headquarters of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research at Burg Wartenstein, Austria, was one of the first of its kind to stress the importance that quantitative studies would have in archaeology and remains an invaluable source of analytical techniques and dating methods.

His interests led him to publish also two bibliographies on replicative experiments in archaeology, as well as an edited volume of a series of carefully researched excerpts to show the development of man's study of his past. *The Archaeologist at Work* is another edited volume of significant excavation reports, reconstruction, and application of dating techniques in prehistoric and historic archaeology throughout the world.

The quantity and quality of his research and publications may in time tend to obscure his work and ability as a teacher. In this, however, he was equally successful and was an inspiring lecturer at all levels of instruction. His teaching ranged from North American and Meso-American archaeology to Californian Indians, archaeology and society, and science in archaeology, and he was equally as successful in field courses as he was in the classroom and seminars. He was always available to talk with students and found it especially stimulating when one of them propounded an original idea. His students were encouraged to broaden the base of archaeology by using the insight that comes from looking at prehistoric data through the eyes of another discipline. “Discovery,” he said, “is a creative process and the person who devotes himself to a research subject and who is lucky enough to achieve new insights can really ask nothing more to feel successful and satisfied.” He never spared himself and he expected his students to be equally as devoted to an archaeological objective as he was. When some failed to do so, this sometimes led to strained relations while those who “stood the pace” retained the greatest respect and affection for him.

Bob was not only active in research and teaching but he also found time for much university and public service. He was a member of various university committees, for example, on research and on the editorial board of the University Press, and he was also, for a time, Curator of North American archaeology in the Lowie Museum. He gave freely of his time to advise and help such organizations as the California Historical Society, the State Division of Mines, the National Park Service, and the State Division of Beaches and Parks, and he was a member of the Governor’s Task Force on California Heritage Commission since 1972.

He was honored, and his work recognized, by being elected to the Society of Sigma Xi; he was twice a Fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation; he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences; and he was elected a member of the National Academy of Sciences in 1973. He received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Nevada in 1965.

Bob was a kind of scholar who will not be seen again for a long time. He was a great archaeologist to whom prehistory in the western states will forever be indebted. He was possessed of a rather rare sense of humor and could be extremely witty and good company. Critical of others, he was equally critical of himself and in some ways was a “loner.” His friends remember him for his humor, kindness, and generosity, his students for the way he shared with them the excitement of new discoveries in the field, and his colleagues and students alike for the magnitude and depth of his scholarship and for the stimulus that he gave to the discipline in general.

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PUBLISHED WORKS OF ROBERT FLEMING HEIZER
ARTICLES AND MONOGRAPHS

1937
A Unique Type of Fishhook from Central California. The Masterkey 11:96-97.

1938
A Folsom-Type Point from Sacramento Valley. The Masterkey 12:180-182.

1939

1940
The Introduction of Monterey Shells to the Indians of the Northwest Coast. Pacific Northwest Quarterly 31:399-402.

1941
The Use of Plants for Fish-poisoning by the California Indians. Leaflets in Western Botany 3:43-44.
The Plank Canoe (dalca) of Southern Chile. The Masterkey 15:105-107.
Aboriginal Trade between the Southwest and California. The Masterkey 15:185-188.
The Origin and Authenticity of an Atlatl and an Atlatl Dart from Lassen County, California. American Antiquity 7:134-146 (with F. Fenenga).

1942
Archaeological Evidence of Sebastián Rodriguez Cermeno’s California Visit in 1595. (Same title as above [1941] published separately by the California Historical Society, with an introduction by
A. L. Kroeber and a report on the metal spikes by C. G. Fink and E. P. Polushkin.


1943


1944


The Use of the Enema by the Aboriginal American Indians. Ciba Symposia 5:1686-1693.

The Use of Narcotic Mushrooms by Primitive Peoples. Ciba Symposia 5:1713-1716.


The Use of "Poison Gases" in Warfare by the American Indians. Ciba Symposia 5:1906-1907.


1945


1946


1947


Historical North Pacific Culture Influences in the Santa Barbara Region. The Masterkey 21:150-152.


1948

1949

University of California Correspondence Course (Anthropology XB 1) in General Anthropology, Parts I and II, 30 lectures. Mimeographed (Revised and reissued May 1953.)

1950

1951
University of California Correspondence Course (Anthropology XB 137), "Indians of California." 15 lectures (mimeographed).


1952


1953


1954


Summary of address given before the California Historical Society, November 12, 1953. California Historical Quarterly 33:85-88.


1955


1956


1957


1958


1959


1960


Olmec Lithic Sources. Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Antropológicas de México, No. 6:16-17 (with H. Williams).


The Aleut Sea Otter Hunt in the Late Nineteenth Century. Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska 8:131-135.

[Editor of] The Application of Quantitative Methods in Archaeology. Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology No. 28 (358 pp.) (with S. F. Cook).

1961


1962


Scraper Plane Burins: A Newly Recognized Tool Type. The Masterkey 35:146-150 (with H. Kelley).


1963


The Background of Thomsen's Three-Age System. Technology and Culture 3:259-266.


Early California Indians. The Southern California Rancher, Nov.-Dec., p. 34.

1963


1964


1965


A Pre-Ceramic Stone Tool Collection from Vis-cachani, Bolivia. Nawpa Pacha, No. 3:107-113 (with T. Patterson).


1966


Salvage and Other Archaeology. The Masterkey 40(2):54-60.


1967


Analysis of Two Low Relief Sculptures from La Venta. Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Research Facility Contribution No. 3:25-55.


1968


The La Venta Fluted Pyramid. Antiquity XLII:52-56 (with P. Drucker).


One of the Oldest Known California Indian Baskets. The Masterkey 42:70-74.


1969


1970


Environment and Culture: The Lake Mohave Case. The Masterkey 44:68-76.


1971


Two Ethnographic Chumash Stone-weighted Digging Sticks. The Masterkey 45:64-68.


Prehistoric Cultures of Kodiak Island. In: Encyclopaedia Arctica, V. Stefansson, ed. Published on microfilm by Dartmouth College Library 8 pp.


1972


Check List and Index to Reports of the University of California Archaeological Survey Nos. 32 (1955) to 74 (1968); checklist of Contributions of the Archaeological Research Facility of the Department of Anthropology, Nos. 1 (1965) to 14 (1972); other information on activities of the Survey and Facility, 1948-1972. Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Survey Report No. 75:1-80. (Reprinted with additions, 1976.)


1973


Archaeology of Bamert Cave (Ama-1), Amador County, California. Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Research Facility, 87 pp. (with T. R. Hester).


1975


[Editor of] Seven Early Accounts of the Pomo Indians and Their Culture. Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Research Facility, 63 pp.

1976


1977


Some Chumash Pieces in the Cessac Collection. The Masterkey 51:73-78.


1978


1979


Scheduled for 1980


II. REVIEWS

1938


1941


1944


1948


1950


1952


1953

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III. BOOKS

1947

1951

1952

1959

1962

1965
1966

1967


1968


1971


1973


1974
The Destruction of California Indians. Salt Lake City and Santa Barbara: Peregrine-Smith, 321 pp.


1975
The Costanoan Indians. De Anza College, California History Center, Local History Studies Vol. 18, 112 pp.


1977


1979

Scheduled for 1980


IV. FILMS

1952
Training Film for Recovery of War Dead. Made under contract with Research and Development Branch, Office of OM. General contract number DA 44-109-qm-620. Thirty minutes, black and white.
1963

The Excavations at La Venta. Twenty-nine minute sound-color film of the 1955 excavations of the site of La Venta, Tabasco. Produced by Motion Picture Production Department, University Extension, University of California, funds provided by National Science Foundation, Course Content Improvement Section. Grant No. G25205.

* * *

In addition to the works listed above, there are a number of prefaces and introductions to the various volumes in the Reports of the University of California Archaeological Survey and the Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility that were authored by R. F. Heizer. Brevity precludes a listing of these. In addition, there are several volumes in the above series, including Contribution No. 32 ("Author and Title Index, University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vols. 1-50, 1903-1964" [1976], that he apparently assembled, although no by-line appears in them. And doubtless this listing is incomplete in terms of standard articles and reports, but for the time being, it will have to do.

At the time of his death, Heizer was working on a number of papers and monographs. Some of these were essentially completed manuscripts; others are more properly called working files than manuscripts. Those papers accepted for publication (so far as we have been able to determine) are listed above; other manuscripts and working files have been turned over to his students for completion. Since these constitute a significant body of research, which we hope will ultimately see the light of day, and since other researchers may be interested in these projects, they are listed briefly here.

Colin Busby is completing "The Rock Art of Lincoln County, Nevada" (which he jointly authored with Heizer), "Some Prehistoric Stone Sculptures from Western Nevada," "The British Crown Inspects California: Vancouver's Visits of 1792 and 1793, as Reported in the Journal of Archibald Menzies," "Anthropologists at Work at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," "The Archaeology of Hidden Cave, Churchill County, Nevada" by N. Roust and G. Grosscup (co-edited with C. Busby), and an as yet untitled comparative study of tule duck decoys from the American West and from the vicinity of Venice, Italy.

Karen Nissen is currently in possession of working files entitled "When was the Ethnographic Present?" and "Early Descriptions of Rock Art in Western United States."

T. R. Hester is completing a monumental work on "Ancient Heavy Transport," which Heizer had been preparing for many years. (In a recent letter, Hester indicated that he thought Heizer would be amused if he were around to realize that moving all the materials for this volume to the University of Texas, San Antonio, had turned out to be such a task in "heavy transport—14 large boxes; 500 pounds.") There is also a paper jointly authored by Hester and Heizer on basic field methods that is scheduled to appear in Vol. 1 of the Handbook of North American Indians.

Sean Swezey has assumed responsibility for completion of two projects that are in the manuscript stage. One of these is a biography of Lorenzo Gordon Yates and an edited presentation of Yates' papers on various ethnological subjects. The other is a short biography of Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta, together with an edited version of his ethnological and linguistic notes on Native Californians in the vicinity of Missions San Juan Bautista and San Luis Obispo.

Martin Baumhoff is currently editing three volumes of collected works of R. F. Heizer for publication through the Ballena Press. These should appear starting in 1980. Almost Ancestors: The First Californians (with T. Kroeber; Sierra Club, 1968) will be repub-
lished by the Friends of the Earth, and the University of California Press intends to republish *Drawn from Life: California Indians in Pen and Brush* (with T. Kroeber and A. Elsasser; Ballena Press, 1977).

Most of Heizer's papers have been deposited in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. His library is now housed at the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, and his extensive notes and records on rock art of western North America are housed at the Rock Art Archive, Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles.

T. R. Hester has generously offered to update Heizer's bibliography at an appropriate time in the future.

*Editor*