IN MEMORIAM

Clemens Rainer Berger
Professor of Geography and Anthropology, Emeritus
Los Angeles
1930– 2003

The passing of Rainer Berger is a sad occasion for those of us who remember his generous contributions to scientific knowledge, his challenging intellect, gregarious personality, and unusual wit. His association with UCLA spanned four decades, and at one time or another he was associated with the departments of Geography, History, and Anthropology; the Archaeology Program; and the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics. Such was the nature of a man whose interests knew few bounds and whose kindness influenced many.

Clemens Rainer Berger was born on 3 July 1930 in Graz, Austria, to Anton Berger and Marie Schnoor Berger. He studied at Cambridge University from 1951 to 1953 and Kiel University from 1953 to 1955 before immigrating to the United States in 1955. He undertook graduate studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and in 1960 received his Ph.D. degree in organic chemistry with emphasis on isotope chemistry. While at Urbana, he met and in 1959 married Christine Marie Perry, by whom he had two children – a son, Wolfgang Christian, born in 1960 and a daughter, Gabriella Marie, born in 1961. He became a naturalized United States citizen in 1963. He was married two further times – to Ildiko Viola Martha Borbely in 1973, and to Roberta Marie Johnson in 1981.

Following graduation from the University of Illinois, Rainer Berger worked briefly with Aero Research Limited, General Dynamics, and Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. In Lockheed's division of plasma physics, he investigated problems of life detection in extraterrestrial systems and non- biogenic synthesis of biochemical systems.

Rainer Berger began his lengthy association with UCLA in 1963 when Willard Libby, Director of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics (IGPP), invited him to become a research associate in order to assist in the development of a radiocarbon laboratory on campus. Willard Frank Libby (1908-1980), professor of chemistry at UCLA from 1959 to 1976, had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1960 for his pioneer research in radiocarbon age determination. In Rainer Berger, Libby recognized a young and enthusiastic colleague whose broad interests could advance the application of the radiocarbon- dating technique beyond its scientific roots. Rainer Berger's association with IGPP at 33% time continued to his retirement.

Rainer Berger subsequently became an assistant professor in the Department of History, a somewhat unusual appointment at the time but justified by history's interest in dating the more distant past. He soon rose to associate professor but transferred to the Department of Geography in 1972 at a time when the latter department was moving strongly into the environmental arena. Meanwhile he also held a zero- percent appointment with the Department of Anthropology and became affiliated with the Archaeology Program. He was elevated to professor of geography and anthropology in 1974. He formally retired from the university in 1994 and, after several years of declining health, died peacefully in his sleep in Le Vignau, France, on 8 January 2003.

Professor Berger will be best remembered for his broad interests in the application of radiocarbon- dating techniques to a wide variety of archaeological, historical, and environmental problems. He was ever willing to turn his attention to new problems, to accept requests to 'date' specific samples and thereby shed light on

perplexing problems regarding the age of certain cultural and environmental events. Thus he applied his knowledge and facilities to materials ranging from prehistoric wooden idols to medieval clothing, and from archaeological samples in their stratigraphic context to organic sediments from marine and terrestrial environments. If these samples fell within the useful range of conventional radiocarbon dating (approximately 40,000 years), Rainer Berger was likely to derive an age for them, even if that age sometimes raised further questions among scientists and caused them in turn to revisit and perhaps modify cherished theories. His widely ranging bibliography of published papers and reports reflected these broad commitments.

Inevitably, with such a broad range of interests and with the radiocarbon- dating facilities that he helped to develop, Rainer Berger influenced many students. He would work with them in his laboratory and among the procedures that he and his students developed was a method for the separation and purification of bone collagen from contaminant organic debris. Several of his students were subsequently appointed to leading universities across the world in order to establish laboratories similar to that developed by Willard Libby and Rainer Berger at UCLA.

While at UCLA, Rainer Berger was active in many interdisciplinary groups, including the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, the Center for Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and the Archaeology Program. He also served as scientific advisor for early space exploration, most notably on the Physics Panel for the NASA Lunar Exploration and Support Program (1963-1964) and on the Emergency Committee on Contamination for the Apollo 12 and Apollo 13 missions (1968-1969). He served as a consultant to many organizations, including the Leakey Foundation, the Isotope Foundation, and the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation.

Rainer Berger received several awards during his early career, including a Fulbright Scholarship (1955-1957), a NASA Fellowship (1966-1967), a NSF Fellowship (1967-1968), a UCLA Distinguished Service Award (1968) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (1969).

The passing of a respected colleague is always a sad event, but it is also worth remembering the humor and joy behind the scholarship. In faculty meetings, Rainer Berger had the habit of injecting comments that were seemingly unrelated to the matter at hand, but which often had the effect of relieving tension, causing all of us to take matters just that little less seriously. In the many social gatherings that he seemed to frequent, he was unsparingly cordial and gregarious, and armed with a bottle of good wine could often be seen recharging the glasses of others so that they too might enjoy the gathering as much as he. He will be remembered as one of the pioneers of radiocarbon dating, and be missed as much for his personality as for his scholarship.

Antony R. Orme