

DON MEINIG AS A TEACHER

JOHN WESTERN and CYNTHIA MILLER

DON MEINIG AS AN UNDERGRADUATE INSTRUCTOR (BY JOHN WESTERN)

It is abundantly clear that Donald Meinig, though so very eminent a research scholar, never skimmed his undergraduate teaching. Entirely appropriately, his first arrival at Syracuse University from the University of Utah saw him rostered in, yes, Geo 101: "World Geography." Our not-quite-complete archives reveal that from then until his retirement from undergraduate teaching in 1989 his major lower-division contributions were twofold. First was "Man on the Earth": In the 1960s this was a year-long, two-semester sequence; it was retitled "Cultural Geography" in 1972, and he taught it at least nine times. Then there was the semester-long "Political Geography" course, which he also taught at least nine times. "The Historical Geography of the U.S." found itself taught at either the lower-division or at the joint upper-division/master's level; he offered the course a dozen times.

In the upper division, Don taught "World Cultures" fourteen or more times. In addition, there were a number of other offerings over the years, with titles like "American Culture" (three times), "Canada" (three times), and "American Diversity and Unity," an honors-students-only undergraduate seminar that he handed on to me when, in 1986, I was in my fourth semester at Syracuse and that I have held tightly and delightedly onto ever since.

Vicki Andersen entered Syracuse University in 1985. When, after a hiatus of at least fifteen years, I contacted her to enquire whether she might be interested in playing a role in this tribute, she volunteered with alacrity. Here is what she then wrote to me:

My first encounter with Professor Meinig was in a freshman geography survey class. His booming voice filled the auditorium as he lectured us. I remember thinking two things: he was a bit intimidating with all the information he presented, and this guy knows his stuff! He had so much knowledge to impart to us, though as a freshman I couldn't yet appreciate just how much.

Senior year I took his Geo 414 class, "American Historical Geography." Again, there was an amazing amount of information to digest, but in this small class setting, Professor Meinig's joy of teaching and his kindness made an impression on me. We became immersed in the development of America and used volume 1 of his *The Shaping of America* [1986], recently published at the time, as one of our textbooks. This fascinating book gave me insights into cultural patterns and the migrations of settlers in North America into separate regional societies, something I had not been aware of

✪ DR. WESTERN is a professor of geography at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York 13244. DR. MILLER is an associate professor of geography at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota 56001.