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## THANKING DONALD MEINIG

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If you happen to be a masochist and are willing to try a truly nasty thought experiment, then imagine the state of American human geography today if Donald Meinig had never been born or had failed to survive World War II. Give up? What flashed into my mind's eye when I gave this counterfactual exercise a whirl (but admittedly overstating the case a bit) was a classic *New Yorker* cartoon entitled "Life without Mozart": a desert plain strewn with debris. Clearly a definitive account and appraisal of this extraordinary scholar—a challenge that some brave soul really must rise to some day—would call for more prose than the editor of this or any other journal with page limits could tolerate. Consequently, what follows is a mere sketch, a much smaller bouquet than is warranted, a token payment toward a huge debt.

The bare biographical details are as follows. Donald William Meinig was born in Palouse, Washington, on 1 November 1924, a self-identified "Saxon-Anglo" of German and British ancestry. After World War II he earned a baccalaureate degree at Georgetown University majoring in foreign service, then proceeded to the University of Washington, where he received advanced degrees in geography in 1950 and 1953. During his student days, our honoree was always his own man, never becoming anyone's disciple. However, the Australian geographer Graham Lawton, who served as his advisor, was a cherished mentor, and the late historian Carroll Quigley had an enduring impact on Donald's thinking. From 1950 to 1959 Don held an appointment at the University of Utah—with memorable results for our understanding of that state and region—but he took off in 1958 for a Fulbright scholarship at Australia's University of Adelaide, again a sojourn yielding some memorable publications. From 1950 through 2004 he illuminated the geographical scene at Syracuse University, rising from associate professor to Maxwell Professor of Geography. When he finally surrendered his campus digs in 2004, Don repaired to his beloved Syracuse domicile—and he shows no sign of ever departing.

This exceptional person's impact on the scholarly world flows through more than a single channel. First there is the man himself, gracious, warm, articulate, generous, and utterly lacking in malice or an inflated ego; in short, the choicest of

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