ARCTIC
VOL. 46, NO. 1 (MARCH 1993) P. 88-89

Froelich Gladstone Rainey (1907-92)

Froelich Rainey, one of the central figures in the development of arctic archaeology, died on 11 October 1992. He was a leader in world archaeology and had made important discoveries on four continents during a career that spanned half a century; yet it was his early work, in Alaska, that he regarded as his most significant research.

Fro grew up in eastern Montana as a working cowhand on the "R-lazy-B," the Rainey Brothers Ranch. His innate curiosity about the word at large was ignited by Ralph Linton during a university anthropology course, and in 1929, with new horizons before him, he shipped out on a tramp freighter bound for Shanghai. There a cable from his father informed him of the stock market collapse and of the fact that no money would be arriving from the family.

He had planned a trip to inner Mongolia, but suddenly finding himself on very short rations, he signed on with a crew of Hawaiians, Filipinos, and Malays — "the dregs of Asian ports," as he put it — to continue his voyage. They fought off pirates in Formosa Straits on the way to the Philippines, and there Fro jumped ship and found a job teaching English in Luzon, an experience that opened his eyes about the difficulty of communicating culturally laden abstractions between widely differing ethnic groups.

A year later Fro returned to the United States intent on joining the Army Flying Corps, but shortly before signing up he received a letter from Cornelius Osgood, of the Peabody Museum at Yale University, who convinced him to enter graduate school in New Haven. He did pioneering fieldwork in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico before accepting an offer from Clark Wissler at the American Museum of Natural History to collaborate in Alaska with Otto Geist, a German naturalist who had excavated a huge midden on St. Lawrence Island near Bering Strait.

"I left Puerto Rico in late August [1936] to arrive in Fairbanks by the middle of September, just in time for the first snowfall," he wrote.

> With the thoroughness of a nineteenth-century naturalist, Geist collected everything. There were scores of crates of walrus bones, stones, very crude potsherds, fragments of tools and weapons collected all over the island, and natural history specimens of all kinds. In the few buildings of the new university at College, Alaska, near Fairbanks, there was not even a room to unpack in, to say nothing of storing such collections. My first step was to sort out those crates of excavated and labelled specimens, then dig a large hole out back of the main building and rebury a large part of the rest. It was one way of clearing the deck so that some sort of publication could be prepared during the winter. Geist suddenly became ill and went to bed for most of the winter with a supply of cigars and muscatel wine.... [Rainey, 1992:48.]

With the onset of spring Fro began a regular pattern of research: early summer hunting for Athapascan sites in the interior, late summer working on the tundra with Eskimos, and the rest of the time teaching and writing up his collections. His quick description of the Geist collection from the Kukulik midden on St. Lawrence Island had, however, left him "very uneasy" about his conclusions, so in the summer of 1937 he returned to the excavations. To his relief his discoveries largely confirmed his original conclusions (Rainey, 1937).

But all of this was preamble to Fro's seminal work at Point Hope. "Chance, surely, is one of the most imponderable elements in any life," he wrote, and in 1938 at an international congress in Denmark he met his future colleague and life-long friend Helge Larsen, "a chance meeting that was to change both our lives." "Helge was bursting with energy and ideas....We agreed to set up a Danish-American expedition to Point Hope, Alaska, where his compatriot, Knud Rasmussen, had found in the 1920s what he thought to be the most interesting site in the American Arctic" (Rainey, 1992:62).

In the summer of 1939 Larsen and Rainey were joined by a young assistant, J. Louis Giddings, and flew to Point Hope, where they discovered the Ipiutak site, one of the largest archaeological sites in the Arctic — and the Ipiutak culture. This culture, which they defined, has surely proved to be one of the most enigmatic, both because of its lithic relationships to American Eskimo traditions and because of its tortuous ivory carvings, which bear strong resemblance to the artistic traditions of northeastern and central Asia (Giddings, 1967:106-126; Rainey, 1992:63-66). Larsen and Rainey's site report (1948) remains an archaeological classic.

Fro and Helge immediately understood the significance of their discovery and realized that to better interpret these finds they needed to know more about the lifeways of the Eskimos of Point Hope. Rainey accordingly returned there in January 1940 with his wife and daughter to spend the next nine months. He joined a whaling crew and his research resulted in a highly acclaimed ethnographical monograph, *The Whale Hunters of Tigara* (Rainey, 1947).

The success of these ethnographical investigations led Fro henceforth to emphasize the interrelatedness and combined usefulness of ethnographical and archaeological research. And the Eskimos of Point Hope themselves quickly understood the value of these investigations for the preservation of their own history. Such was the goodwill they felt for Fro and Helge that subsequent investigators of the next four decades (among them James VanStone, Don Foote, Ernest Burch, Douglas Anderson and myself) were greeted there with friendship and assistance.

At an early "What in the World" television show, WCAU, early 1950s. Left to right: Carleton Coon, Froelich Rainey, Ralph Linton, and Wilton Marion Krogman.

With the American entry into the Second World War Fro's manifest competence and easy adaptability were quickly put to use in his assignment as director of the U.S. Quinine Mission in Ecuador. Soon Fro found himself at 15 000 feet in the Andes running a band of local *vaqueros* and hijacking German mule trains of cinchona bark, which he then shipped to the United States for processing into quinine and reshipment to the South Pacific, where more soldiers were dying of malaria than bullet wounds.

By 1944 Fro had joined the Foreign Service and had been assigned to Robert Murphy's staff for the planned Allied Control Commission for Occupied Germany. He survived a brutal winter crossing of the North Atlantic in which his convoy was savaged by storms and U-boat attacks, only to arrive in London as the first V-2 rocket bombs were falling. On finally meeting Murphy, the ambassador's comment was, "My God, now they are sending me experts on Eskimos and quinine!" Rainey advanced across western Europe with the troops and was one of the first Americans to reach Vienna — seated in a turret of a B-25 bomber, watching for flak bursts from Soviet anti-aircraft guns on the approach into the city. Later he landed at a Copenhagen airfield still controlled by the Luftwaffe (no one had yet arrived to take the surrender) and then "liberated" the Danish National Museum, where he surprised an old friend, Kaj Birket-Smith, who failed to recognize him in his military uniform.

With the war's end Fro was appointed U.S. Commissioner for the Rhine and he set about working to rebuild the Ruhr coal industry in the face of a cold winter. Viewing the utter destruction before him and realizing the urgency of the situation, he was one of the first U.S. officials to call for massive American aid to those exhausted countries, an initiative that was ultimately coalesced into the Marshall Plan.

In 1947 Fro was hired as the director of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, while at the same time he commuted to Washington to help establish a branch of what eventually became the Central Intelligence Agency. Despite this work, he saw clearly the desirability of keeping academic research separate from governmental affairs and constantly emphasized this opinion during his three decades as director of the museum.

In Philadelphia Fro's energies made the University Museum one of the leading archaeological research institutions in the world. His sense of mission, wisdom, and charm led him to become an enormously successful fund raiser and his efforts produced seed money for hundreds of University Museum expeditions throughout the world, as well as for founding the Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology (MASCA), where the latest techniques and technologies are applied to the study of excavated materials.

Perhaps his most important service was, however, in introducing archaeology and anthropology to television. In 1949 he developed a small "stump the experts" show called "What in the World." Improbably, it ran in various venues for 15 years, gaining a huge audience and becoming a CBS prime-time feature. I remember clearly the first time I saw the show, for it was a wonderful departure from the usual programming and to me, at the age of 10 or 11, utterly absorbing.

Looking back on "What in the World," I find it amazing that a small group of experts could have been even remotely interesting as they sat stiffly under severe studio lights discussing

A Christmas party at the University Museum with staff members dressed in ethnographic costumes from the collection. Left to right: Loren Eiseley, in Chinese court robe; Froelich Rainey, in Tlingit potlatch costume; Henry Fisher as Arabian sheik; and an unidentified person. Photograph courtesy of Froelich Rainey.

the provenance of obscure artifacts — yet for a vast number of people they *were* fascinating, and for many young people, including myself, Fro's production helped to launch us on careers in anthropology and archaeology.

More significantly, Fro opened the eyes of his audience to the fundamental importance of conducting research into all aspects of mankind's history and development, while at the same time he managed to put a human face on these arcane pursuits. Thus Fro did great service for our discipline and was instrumental in broadening its base of support throughout the globe.

Today, recalling my vivid memories of "What in the World," I realize that it broadcast the same compelling qualities that Fro himself radiated when it was my good fortune to have been his student. His intellectual curiosity simply overwhelmed us all and swept us up in the thrills and challenges of research into distant cultures, both ancient and modern. But writ larger was his profound respect for all the peoples of the earth and his manifest humanity and utter decency.

My life and the lives of many others were enriched by our association with Fro. I know I speak for many people throughout the world when I state that I will always be grateful to him and proud to have been associated with such a marvelous human being.

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