



In Memoriam Henry N. Michael 1912–2006

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In Memoriam

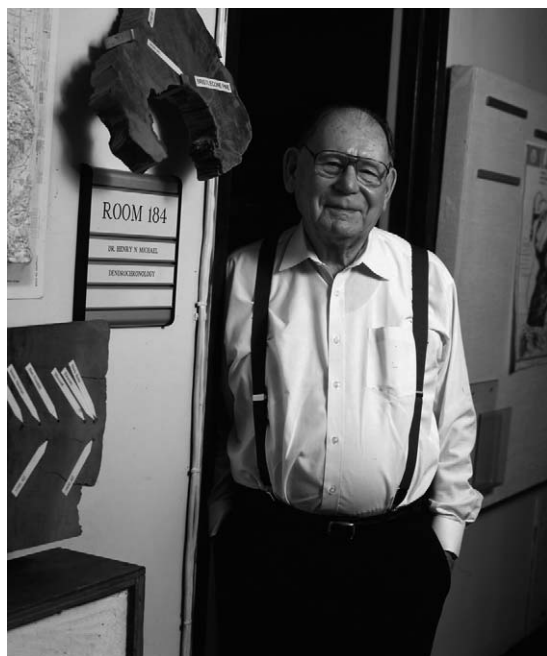
HENRY N. MICHAEL 1912–2006

Dr. Henry Michael, a widely-known anthropologist and geographer, was a professor in the Geography Department at Temple University until his retirement in 1980. Dr. Michael was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Pennsylvania, after which he took an assistant professor position at Temple University in 1959. He was departmental chairman from 1965 to 1973.

Dr. Michael's anthropological work included studies of Eskimos and other people in the Arctic of Alaska and Siberia, including translation of work from original Russian works. Early in his professional career and continuing long after retirement, Dr. Michael was interested in questions

about the validity of radiocarbon dating with respect to archaeology, and he played an important role in the effort to develop a “calibration curve” for radiocarbon dates based on determination of radiocarbon activity in samples of known age, namely tree rings. To this end, Dr. Michael began collecting tree-ring samples from the bristlecone pine of the White Mts. of California in the late 1950s.

His interest in developing a radiocarbon calibration curve based on the bristlecone pine led Dr. Michael to cooperative research arrangements with the radiocarbon laboratories of Prof. Elizabeth Ralph at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Hans Suess at the University of California–San Diego, and Dr. Paul Damon of the University of Arizona. Promising radiocarbon dates of bristlecone sub-samples that Dr. Michael collected in the White Mts. together with their exact location were conveyed to Prof. C. Wesley Ferguson of the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona, who in turn would collect the complete specimens and use them in his construction of the master bristlecone tree-ring chronology. In 1972, Dr. Michael published the first radiocarbon calibration curves with tables back to 5400 B.C. based on tree-ring radiocarbon analysis (Michael and Ralph 1972). He continued, immediately before and long after his retirement, taking regular pilgrimages to the White Mts. in an effort to find ever older wood that would extend the calibration beyond its current length of 8,600 years. In the 1980s Dr. Michael transferred his field notes to the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, where they are now being used in an ongoing program to re-examine archived specimens and collect new samples to further extend the chronology. Dr. Michael continued working on the volunteer research staff of the University of



(Photo credit: Richard Bowditch/University of Pennsylvania/MASCA)

Pennsylvania's Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology until 2005, and passed away in February this year.

—*Editor*

Michael, H. N., and E. K. Ralph, 1972. Discussion of radiocarbon dates obtained from precisely dated *Sequoia* and bristlecone pine samples. In *Proceedings of the 8th International Radiocarbon Dating Conference*, edited by T. A. Rafter and T. Grant-Taylor, pp. 28–43. Royal Society of New Zealand.