

Charles Eugene Rozaire (1927–2016)



Charles Rozaire 2003. Photograph by Trudy Haversat and Gary S. Breschini.

Charles Rozaire, an archaeologist who was Curator of Archaeology at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County from 1964 to 1990, died barely 2 weeks after attending the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Society for California Archaeology, where he was honored for his substantial monetary donation to the organization. I met Charles in late 1958 or early 1959 at the Southwest Museum, where he was a curator from 1955 to 1962. I encountered him at an information desk (I was spending part of my Saturdays at the museum's wonderful library), and in the course of our conversations he encouraged my interest in archaeology in his always friendly manner.

We kept in touch, and later he offered me a chance to join the Southwest Museum's 1962 Tule Springs project in Nevada, the focus of which was to discover whether any of the remains of Pleistocene fauna there were associated with artifacts. I was disappointed that my obligations as a student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) prevented me from participating. I have learned over the years that my experiences with Charles were similar to those of other young scholars with an interest in archaeology, California archaeology particularly. He was a wonderful human being with an engaging personality. Archaeologists who knew Charles appreciated him as a friend and colleague.

Charles was born and spent his childhood in Culver City, a community adjacent to Los Angeles within a short drive of the Southwest Museum, where he volunteered before entering college. All of his higher education was at UCLA.

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He obtained his Bachelor's degree in anthropology in 1949, his Master's degree in 1952, and his Ph.D. in 1957. UCLA's archaeology program was in its infancy in those years. Clement Meighan, who started teaching there in 1952, became Charles's doctoral committee chair and guided the development of his dissertation, *Twined Weaving and Western North American Prehistory* (Rozaire 1957). Aside from his curatorial positions at the two above-mentioned museums, he was Curator of Archaeology at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City in 1962 and 1963, and between 1959 and 1975 he intermittently taught at California State University, Northridge.

Many readers of *California Archaeology* will be most familiar with the substantial work Charles conducted on the Channel Islands, but he also was a recognized expert on the analysis of woven materials, including basketry. Aside from his dissertation (Rozaire 1957), which focused on the analysis of twined woven containers from sites on San Nicolas Island and are now housed at the Antelope Valley Museum, he also analyzed woven materials from sites on San Clemente Island, in Nevada, and in the Santa Monica Mountains (Rozaire 1959a, 1969, 1974; Rozaire and Craig 1968). As well, in 1977 he served as guest curator of a special exhibit of western North American basketry and wrote much of the content of the exhibit catalog (Rozaire 1977).

Charles's research on the Channel Islands began in 1958 and involved survey, site recording, and excavation. His initial experience was on Anacapa Island, in conjunction with the UCLA Archaeological Survey's early focus on Channel Islands archaeology (Rozaire 1959b, 1978a). On this island, he excavated at a rockshelter site, returning in 1965 to do more excavation at this site and at another (Rozaire 1978b). His excavations at several sites on San Nicolas Island between about late 1959 and 1962 were stimulated in large part by the prospect of encountering additional woven materials (Rozaire 1959c, 1970). Having first visited Santa Barbara Island in 1961, in 1964 he carried out survey and site recording on the island, as well as a small excavation at one site (Rozaire 1978c, 1989).

San Miguel Island was the venue for his most extensive efforts on the Channel Islands (Rozaire 1965, 1978d, 1983, 1993). He first visited San Miguel in 1962, and from 1963 to 1968 he and his assistant George Kritzman surveyed the entire island and recorded 542 sites. He conducted excavations at three sites on the island, including Daisy Cave. Because of his comprehensive involvement in Channel Islands archaeology, Rozaire was invited to participate in the first California Islands Symposium, held in 1965, and his article in the symposium volume (Rozaire 1967) provides an overview of what was known about Channel Islands prehistory at that time.

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Charles also worked at a variety of other locations in the U.S. and Mexico. At the beginning of his college education at UCLA, he was on the crew of the Southwest Museum's 1945 excavation at Borax Lake in northern California (Harrington 1948:45), and later he was a student crew member on a variety of projects in California and elsewhere in the U.S. After finishing his graduate work, he excavated at a site in the Los Angeles suburb of Encino (Rozaire 1960), participated in major excavations in Chiapas, Mexico (Hicks and Rozaire 1960), and was involved with the Nevada State Museum's project at Tule Springs (mentioned above).

Charles spent his whole career as a museum curator, and much of his professional activity involved overseeing the care of museum collections and helping to produce museum exhibits. He understood and appreciated the research value of museum collections (as his dissertation clearly demonstrates) as well as the role museums play in exhibiting their collections for public education and appreciation. At the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, he was instrumental in building its significant Latin American collections, and he worked closely with the museum's staff in developing the exhibits in the Ancient Latin American Hall. A catalog he authored highlights some of the exhibits in the hall (Rozaire 1966).

Because of his many years of research on the Channel Islands, Charles's knowledge and his collections at the museum are valuable resources tapped by many archaeologists and other researchers over the years. His last two publications concerned aspects of Channel Islands prehistory: an article for which he was a coauthor regarding the chronology of occupation on Santa Barbara Island (Erlandson et al. 1992) and a study of bladelets (microblades) from Anacapa and San Miguel islands (Rozaire 1993). I believe I can speak for many archaeologists who interacted with Charles over the years when I say that we will miss his geniality and the font of information he was always happy to share.

(The following references include the majority of Charles's publications and reports aside from items appearing in *SCA Newsletters*.)

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