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Dr. Dan Arreola: Recipient of the 2003 Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholar Award

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The Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers is pleased to award the 2003 Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholar Award to Daniel D. Arreola, Professor of Geography at Arizona State University. This award is given in recognition of the corpus of geographic research that has made Professor Arreola a leading authority about the cultural geography of the Mexican-American borderlands.

Dan Arreola is himself a product of the borderlands. He is a third generation Mexican-American, born in Santa Monica, California. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents came to California from Jalisco, Mexico. Dan was brought up experiencing the bi-national

character of this region. His love of “reading” and interpreting the cultural landscape was instilled in him very early on as a child during long walks through the built environment of Southern California with his grandfather, León Díaz, while his parents were working. The many stories of different places his grandfather told sparked an early curiosity about our world. He completed his B.A. in Geography from UCLA in 1968, then an M.A. in Geography from Cal State Hayward in 1975. While at Hayward, he further developed his interests in the cultural landscape and explored a growing interest in Asian culture by completing a study of the Chinatown in Locke, CA. Dan returned to UCLA for his Ph.D., where he originally intended to pursue research in Asia for his doctorate. During the graduate school journey, however, Henry Bruman opened Dan’s eyes to the possibility of Mexico as a research laboratory, and Dan followed that path. Under the tutelage of Kit Salter, Dan’s mentor who truly nurtured his landscape sensibilities, he completed his doctoral dissertation on *Landscape Images of Eastern Mexico: A Historical Geography of Travel, 1822-1875* in 1980. His doctoral research addressed the perception of selected cities in eastern Mexico in the nineteenth century, particularly how foreign images of these places influenced their growth and role in the development of early modern Mexico.

After completing his Ph.D., Dan held positions as Visiting Assistant Professor at Texas A&M and the University of Arizona. He returned to Texas A&M as Assistant Professor in 1983, was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987,

then came to Arizona State in 1990. He was promoted to full Professor in 1994. Arreola has held affiliations with the Hispanic Research Center and the Center for Latin American Studies at Arizona State. He has been a member of the CLAG since 1982.

As Dan's career developed, he has concentrated on two research agendas: the urban geography of northern Mexico and the cultural geography of Mexican Americans. Throughout nearly all of his work, landscape interpretation has proven to be his primary method of analysis. He has a keen eye for detail in the built scene, quickly reading symbolic meanings and subtle clues about places and their personalities. In many instances, field observations are richly supplemented with archival research and historical narrative, among other sources. He is the author of 24 research articles in refereed journals and 21 book chapters on these topics. Highlights of research articles on these themes include several classics of cultural-urban geography, such as "Mexican American Housescapes," "The Mexican American Cultural Capital," "Urban Ethnic Landscape Identity," and "Border City *Idee Fixe*" (all published in the *Geographical Review*). He has also published articles on such topics as plaza towns in South Texas, migration origins from Mexico to South Texas, and curio consumerism at the borderland cities. Arreola served as President of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers in 1997-1998, and his Presidential Address "Across the Street is Mexico: Invention and Persistence of the Border Town Curio Landscape" was published in the 1999 *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers*.

In addition to the contributions he has made through research articles, Dan has published two books, and is working as the editor on a third. The first, *The Mexican Border Cities: Landscape Anatomy and Place Personality* (1993, University of Arizona Press) he co-authored with James R. Curtis. This book argues that these border cities are inherently Mexican, in spite of the oft-repeated claim that the border is not "the real

Mexico." The extensive field analysis and case studies in this book make clear the love of field work and insatiable geographic curiosities of both authors. Dan's most recent book is *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (2002, University of Texas Press). This is a vital resource in regional and ethnic studies, a much needed foray into the subregions that exist along the border and in the Hispanic community of the United States. This book was the winner of the prestigious J.B. Jackson Prize in 2002 from the Association of American Geographers. Finally, Dan is currently editing a volume on *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places* that further seeks to identify the myriad ways Hispanics carve out their spaces in the United States to build their own sense of place. Many fellow CLAG members are contributing to this volume.

Perhaps Dan's main contributions to geographic research can be summarized by his insights into the notions of identity and place, mainly through his ability to show landscapes as signifying systems. He has paid attention to and clarified such contemporary themes as identity construction, landscape symbolism, and cultural processes, and done so without delving into the social jargon inherent in these fields. His ability to demonstrate the recursive nature of the built landscape as both contributing to and a product of cultural identities, in clear grounded case studies, is truly an accomplishment. Because of this clarity in research, he has given numerous invited lectures across the United States.

Apart from this impressive body of research, it is only fitting that the CLAG make this award to a scholar strongly committed to field work. Most of Arreola's research he conducts without external funding, on his own time and with his own dime, and he is always open to exploring some new curious "corner" of the borderlands. Dan regularly takes both undergraduate and graduate students on field courses and field trips to both sides of the border, contributing richly to their education by

means unavailable in the classroom. This has led him to be quite popular with graduate students who appreciate the field component of research and the richness that landscape interpretation brings. Dan has mentored five Ph.D. students, currently is advisor for three more, and has or is currently advising eight Master's students. He exposes undergraduates to the geography of the borderlands through such courses as the Geography of Hispanic Americans, Geography of the Mexican-American Borderland, Urban Geography, Cultural Geography, American Southwest and Northwest Mexico, and Cultural Landscapes. Always he is on a quest to make

students think in new ways about the commonplace world around them.

Dan is a geographer at heart, equally at home in the classroom and in the field. He combines academic rigor with clarity of explanation, the mark of a true scholar. He is a fine mentor, as well as a good friend. Given the clear contributions that Daniel Arreola has made towards understanding the cultural geography of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, The Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers takes great pleasure in bestowing on Professor Daniel D. Arreola the 2003 Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholar Award.

Dr. Pedro Pinchas Geiger: Recipient of 2003 CLAG Enlaces Award

We are proud to honor Dr. Pedro Geiger with the 2003 CLAG Enlaces Award in recognition of his ongoing contributions to further relations between geographers and geography departments throughout Latin America.