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Foreword

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Robert E. Bieder

(Courtesy of Martin Zanger)

Foreword

Leo Schelbert

Although we were for a time colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I got to know Robert E. Bieder only superficially. There was something reticent about him and contacts remained marginal and occasional.

Furthermore, two dimensions of his life remain unknown. On the one hand, no information seems to be available about Robert E. Bieder's background, his parents and siblings, his growing up, his schooling, and his teenage years before college. On the other hand, there seems no explanation in reach why Robert E. Bieder did not receive a permanent academic appointment despite his productive research and publication, and why, after two to three years at an institution, he was again on the move. He seemed to be changing from position to position in the United States as well as abroad.

Looking back, I am puzzled why I did not make a concerted effort to establish genuine friendship and why our relationship remained academic and marginal, if friendly. Perhaps something else prevented him from collegial ties that seem to have remained peremptory.

This issue of the *SAHS Review*, the periodical of the Swiss American Historical Society, intends to honor Robert E. Bieder as a Swiss American, as a scholar, and as a colleague. Although there are gaps in the biographical data, those presented provide some insight into his complex and somewhat elusive personality.

On 16 October 1990, Robert E. Bieder had sent a letter to me with 41 neatly arranged poems. Today, I cannot understand why the letter and its content, a precious creative endeavor, disappeared in the stacks of put-away items, and why I did not pursue the possibility of the poems' publication to which the poet would also have added pictures he had

taken on his journeys. In methodically ordering papers, I discovered with joy as well as embarrassment those endeavors that reflected the colleague's experiences of places, people, and love. To at least marginally undo my failure of promoting their publication as a unique achievement, Professor H. Dwight Page, Editor of the *SAHS Review*, has agreed that this special number be devoted to this late Swiss American colleague as a sign of belated appreciation.

First the issue presents the 41 poems as Robert E. Bieder had typed and arranged them. A search whether they had been published elsewhere led to no discovery, and they are possibly given here in print for the first time. Next the *Review* presents a sample of Robert E. Bieder's scholarship, an inquiry into the issue of treating archeological remains of the indigenous people of the northern Western Hemisphere; it is typically precise in data and measured in interpretation. Memories by three of Robert E. Bieder's friends follow, then his academic positions are given, followed by a list of his publications and reviews of two of his books.

This issue of the *SAHS Review* is a modest attempt to preserve and honor the memory of an American scholar of Swiss descent whose work will endure.

