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**“MEMORY LANE” - RECOLLECTIONS
ON THE EARLY YEARS WITH JUAN MATEU.
HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR DEAR FRIEND,
PROFESSOR JUAN MATEU BELLÉS**

“MEMORY LANE” - RECUERDOS SOBRE
LOS PRIMEROS AÑOS CON JUAN MATEU.
FELICITACIONES DE CORAZÓN A NUESTRO QUERIDO AMIGO,
CATEDRÁTICO JUAN MATEU BELLÉS

Following the Congreso de Geógrafos Españoles in Palma de Mallorca in 1979, my husband, Karl, and I were offered the opportunity, thanks to our friend, Vicente M. Rosselló, professor and chair in the Department of Geography at the University of Valencia, to explore the Valencia region in the coming days. (Vicente and Karl had already met during an excursion at the 1957 International Quaternary Congress held in Madrid and Barcelona.) On the morning after our arrival in Valencia, Professor Rosselló introduced us to one of his doctoral students, Juan Mateu. At the time, he was finalizing a dissertation on the coastal geomorphology north of the city of Valencia: *El ámbito prelitoral del norte del país valenciano, aspectos geomorfológicos*. Driving north along the Mediterranean coast from Valencia to Peñíscola, Juan expertly explained the stratigraphy of the Quaternary deposits, inviting Karl's input and suggestions. This was our first encounter with PhD student Juan Mateu Bellés, and the beginning of our decades-long friendship with him!

Over the course of the next eight days, we were privileged to visit Karl's choice of prehistoric archaeological sites and the places of my interest in the cultural hinterland where Muslim communities persisted, and new ones were founded after the Christian Reconquest in 1238. Professor Rosselló had kindly arranged for these special field trips.

But it was day 2, a trip to the Sierra de Espadán, ca. 50 kms north of Valencia, that served as the catalyst for years of collaborative research between Juan, Karl, me, and a variety of faculty members

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of the University of Valencia. Thus began our detailed study of the cultural landscape and historical archaeology of the Sierra de Espadán. Over the course of six field seasons, between 1980 and 1987, our research project initially concentrated on the archival and archaeological records of the Sierra de Espadán and surrounding area, the province of Valencia, from the time of the Christian Reconquest to the expulsion of the Moriscos.

Later, our focus was greatly expanded in time and scope from medieval times to the present, encompassing the environmental history, geomorphology, and changes in landscape, economy, and demography. Juan took me to different communities so I could investigate the demographics in the parish registers, research archival documents in the Archivo del Reino de Valencia, and study historical reports. The information gathered from local informants, often related in conversations to Juan and Karl, specifically related to traditional land use and irrigation practices, was invaluable.

With pride in his rural Valencian roots, Juan was continuously educating Karl and I in matters of agriculture and the cultural world that we sought to understand. He helped us lay the groundwork for our environmental, historical, archaeological, and archival work. During those memorable adventures, Juan, always positive, was a great collaborator and wonderful communicator, an integral member of the research team in all phases of the very ambitious research project.

And, of course, because of our adventures and mutual academic interests, our connection with Juan also became personal! On various occasions, he invited us to his home in Valencia, as well as to his country house, Mas del Canari, where he generously prepared incredibly tasty meals, while entertaining us at the same time. On a memorable Sunday in September 1981, Juan took us to visit his parents' home and farmlands in Vall d'Alba, so we could better appreciate Mediterranean ways of life. We were privileged to share the special Sunday dinner with his whole family, including his dear, kind parents and his siblings.

In 1987, while we were still working in the Sierra, Karl and I were honored with an invitation to attend the Tribunal to vet Juan Mateu for the position of professor in Physical Geography at the University of Valencia. Juan's brother, Jaume Mateu, picked us up in Aín early in the morning for the special occasion. On the second day of the Tribunal, Juan gave an important presentation on anthropogenic geomorphology, focused on soil erosion and human interaction. Juan's presentation was followed by a period of rigorous questioning and commentary from the accreditation committee.

Congratulations, Juan! Juan's promotion to the position of professor was then celebrated with a festive *comida* in the Restaurante del Condestable in Valencia. Karl and I were privileged to have been invited and present at this very special occasion.

During the 2000 Conference of Latin American Geography's (CLAG) closing meeting held in Austin, TX, it was decided to hold the next annual conference in June 2001, in Benicassim, in the province of Castellon, Spain. Karl and I were asked to organize some field excursions in a region with which we had become familiar during the 1980s that would be of interest to the conference participants. Accompanied by our colleague, Professor "Bill" Doolittle of The University of Texas, we flew into Valencia in March 2001, to meet with Juan Mateu. The three of us explored the wider region,

concentrating on specific themes for each of the three, one-day field trips: 1) Community (Aín, etc.) and Ecology in the Sierra; 2) Sheep, Wool Towns, and Agriculture, and 3) Meseta and Coastal Plain.

Thanks, in great part to Juan Mateu, the actual excursions in connection with the CLAG meeting three months later were a great success.

At the end of May 2016, I informed our dear friend, Juan Mateu of my husband, Karl's passing earlier that month. Following this news, he did something unexpected and unimaginable for me, that moved me greatly. He organized four days of field sessions for his students in Physical Geography at the University of Valencia. One of them was purposely held in the Sierra de Espadán (and especially in Aín) TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF HIS FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, MY LATE HUSBAND KARL BUTZER. Not only that, but I then received an email from Juan:

Last Sunday, the 12th of June, a Mass was celebrated in the church of Aín in honor of Karl, with the assistance of Professor Vicente Rosselló and other people that appreciate you (Remé, Herminia, etc). When we exited the church, we took some pictures. People in the village of Aín send deep condolences to you.

Along with his brief letter, Juan forwarded ca. 40 photos that he and Professor Rosselló had taken of Karl's and my friends in the village, during and after the special Mass, and of beautiful Aín and its Castillo in the Sierra!

Thirty-five years have passed since our last working season in Aín and the Sierra de Espadán, and it has been 21 years since our last visit to Aín. I will always cherish the wonderful memories of Juan's kindnesses, our weekend adventures, and our partnership with him.

Thank you, thank you, dear Juan, my friend, and colleague!

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