

FROM THE EDITOR

We start this year's first issue on a sad note, as former Managing Editor Renee Kra passed away shortly before press time. Renee will be missed by her friends here at the journal and by countless others in radiocarbon community. Kim Elliott has written an obituary, which appears on page vii of this issue.

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This issue features a variety of articles which should be of interest to many readers. The papers in this issue fall roughly into five general areas, which we hope will also generate some discussion. First, some historical perspectives on radiocarbon dating. Nicole de Messières' perspective on the life and science of Willard Libby, the "father of radiocarbon dating", may draw mixed responses from different readers. Libby and his co-workers were the first to demonstrate the feasibility of radiocarbon dating, for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1960. Nicole has reconsidered the life of Libby in a more kindly way than has perhaps been done in the past. In addition, a much shorter historical technical note from S Niese discussing the first paper on liquid scintillation methods.

The second aspect highlighted in this issue is factors influencing radiocarbon ages. A paper on environmental influences on the diet of small mammals, by a New Zealand group, shows how diet can affect apparent radiocarbon ages. Druffel and colleagues focus on ^{14}C variability in the subtropical North Pacific Ocean and its correlation with climatic effects. Similarly, in an interesting paper on the question of dating forest fires, Gavin discusses the problems of the "in-built" age of the charcoal. This is a variant of the "old wood" problem familiar to many radiocarbon scientists.

Our third theme is archaeology. Lu et al., from Peking University, report on some new radiocarbon measurements from cemeteries in China, and Petchey discusses archaeological studies in Western Samoa. We also have 2 papers that discuss the possible most recent ages for glyptodonts in South America, which are usually considered to have become extinct along with other large megafauna in the late Pleistocene. A short note on archaeological shell fishhooks completes the section.

Fourth, we have some papers discussing pretreatment methods and sample selection, two themes which should always be key to any good radiocarbon study. Turney et al. apply a new oxidative cleaning technique to radiocarbon measurements in Queensland, Vogel et al. discuss problems with radiocarbon dating of ostrich shells, and Rasmussen et al. discuss the possible effects of contaminants on the ages of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Finally, we have some discussion on calibration. Knox and McFadgen show the effects of different filtering techniques on the calibration curve for the last 1000 years.

At *Radiocarbon*, Kim has a new assistant, Agnieszka, to help her deal with the imminent task of the Proceedings of last year's 17th International Radiocarbon Conference held in Israel. The Proceedings, guest edited by Israel Carmi, Elisabetta Boaretto, and Hendrik Bruins, will take up the next two issues of *Radiocarbon*. I am also happy to report that the finances of our journal continue to improve. The generosity of the readership and friends of *Radiocarbon*, as well as our own financial measures, have resulted in a dramatic improvement. We are grateful for your continued support.

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