

IN THE MIRROR: REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGINS OF THE BASQUE STUDIES PROGRAM

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RIEV. Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos.
Año 41. Tomo XXXVIII. N.º 1 (1993), p. 185-198
ISSN
Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza

In 1967 the University of Nevada System launched its Basque Studies Program. While commemorating its 25th anniversary the present article discusses the challenges posed by the new initiative. Written from the perspective of BSP Coordinator, William A. Douglass, particular attention is given to the synergism among the three founding figures —Douglass, Jon Bilbao, and Robert Laxalt— and their respective personal and professional agendas.

1967an Nevadako Unibertsital Sistemak bere Euskal Mintegia(BSP) sortu zuen. Sorrera honen 25. urtemuga ospatzerakoan, artikulu honek ekimen berriak planteatu zituen erronkak aurkezten ditu. Mintegiko Koordinatzailea den William A. Douglass-en ikuskeratik idatzirik, sorrera hartan esku hartu zuten hiru pertsonalitateen arteko — Douglass, Jon Bilbao eta Robert Laxalt— sinergismoaz dihardu bereziki, beraien curriculum pertsonal eta profesionalak ere nabarmentzen direlarik.

En 1967, el Sistema Universitario de Nevada creó su Programa de Estudios Vascos. Al celebrarse el 25 aniversario de dicha fundación, este artículo presenta los desafíos planteados por esta nueva iniciativa. Escrito bajo el punto de vista del Coordinador del Programa, el Sr. William A. Douglass, se presta una particular atención al sinergismo entre las tres personalidades que intervinieron en su fundación —Douglass, Jon Bilbao y Robert Laxalt— así como a sus curriculums personales y profesionales.

My academic discipline, social anthropology, is undergoing considerable soul-searching. Reflexivity and deconstruction abound. The old paradigms have crumbled before paroxysms of self-doubt. The very relevance of anthropology is in question, as are its ethical premises. Feminists accuse it of a male chauvinist bias, while non-Europeans upbraid it as a handmaiden of imperialism. Some critics decry the cultural relativism which imbues so much anthropological work as incompatible with the concept of universal human values and a common humanity, while others contend that anthropology is a tool of the western intellectual establishment and therefore incapable of truly understanding the very human cultural diversity that it contemplates. In addition, the discipline's heuristics are under assault as positivism struggles with hermeneutics, cliometricians with subjectivists, and extremists maintain that there is no cultural reality outside the investigator's mental constructs. In short, the operative questions today regard the very feasibility and value (if any) of the anthropological enterprise.

In the process considerable attention has become focussed upon the relationship between observer and subject, and particularly the observer's account, the anthropological text. Increasingly, univocality, in which the omniscient voice of the narrator tells us about otherness, that is, the world beyond our own cultural limits, is suspect. Today, in diverse forms and varying degrees, multivocality is intruded into most anthropological accounts. On the one hand, the omniscience of the narrator fragments into autobiographical glimpses of the travails of field research, and how they might have affected the investigation and its conclusions. On the other, we now hear directly from the subjects themselves and in new fashion.

If the old anthropology quoted informants directly it did so in order to corroborate more than inform the narration. In this regard the subjects served as the anthropologist's Greek chorus. In contrast, today's account likely contains different, even irreconcilably diverse, viewpoints. Formerly, the anthropological monograph was likely to conclude on a note of *voilà*—"There you have it," whereas the spirit of the contemporary monograph might better be summed up by the recurrent phrase from Kurt Vonnegut, Jr's novel *Slaughterhouse five*.—"And so it goes."

These are heady, challenging—for some depressing while for others exhilarating—times. There is, however, a danger in all this reflexivity and introspection. Both anthropology and anthropologists are careening on the brink of narcissism—a liminal state of near total self-indulgence in which preoccupation with ourselves and our texts eclipses that with our subject matter.

The current polemic within my discipline is not the subject of this lecture. However, I believe that it serves as the necessary backdrop against which to stage my real performance. For today, as we celebrate, commemorate and hopefully contemplate a significant milestone of the Basque Studies Program I pose the question—how has it influenced Basque-American culture? In doing so I obviously run the risk of wandering through a hall of mirrors, of lapsing

into the narcissistic trap. Indeed, in today's lecture I want to pause self-consciously before a mirror or two, if only in the interests of conserving aspects of the record of our formative years that exist largely in my memory alone. However, it is my purpose ultimately to take us through the looking glass and out into the Basque-American community. In my second lecture I will view the Basque Studies Program from that perspective.

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It is difficult for me to determine the boundaries of the Basque Studies Program and thereby define it. In many respects it is the sum of the efforts over the past twenty-five years of hundreds, or rather thousands, of persons. From the outset its activities and influence went far beyond the confines of this institution. As the most elaborate and serious Basque-culture-centric scholarly effort outside of the Basque Country it assumed regional, national and international dimensions. That it was launched during the dark years of the Franco dictatorship within much of the Basque homeland itself, served to heighten the importance of the Program and even confer upon it the historic mission of torchbearer and guardian of a sacred trust.

For me the Basque Studies Program is the modified life of the student who participated in one of our study abroad programs; it is the private reverie of the reader of one of our thirty book publications; it is the thousands of volumes brought together painfully over a quarter of a century, each of which constitutes a brick in the edifice of one of the world's best Basque library collections; it is the voluntarism of persons who donated their money to fund our activities or their time to send out our newsletter; it is the willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty that has regularly characterized our staff over the years because it truly believed in what it was doing; it is the unfaltering support provided to what might have been regarded as an exotic if not downright esoteric concept by the administration of this university and by officials of the State of Nevada; it is the faith placed in us by the several private and public foundations, as well as the Basque Government in Europe, that have funded many of our grant requests. I could go on and on. The point is that, to my mind, the Basque Studies Program far transcends the individual activities of its staff and the murals of this institution. Consequently, it would be impossible for me to detail the contributions, large and small, of everyone, who has moved within the Program's orbit. Rather than omit and possibly offend some by highlighting others, I will confine my narcissistic remarks to our formative years and particularly to the synergism that developed among a trio of its founders —Robert Laxalt, Jon Bilbao and myself. For I believe that the thrust of most of what today constitutes the Basque Studies Program evolved out of the interplay among our differing personal backgrounds and private agendas.

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A narrow and egocentric view of the history of the Basque Studies Program would suggest that we are in our twenty-fifth year, approaching our silver anniversary next summer, since it was in June of 1967 that I was hired by Wendall Mordy, President of the Desert Research Institute, and charged with implementing the concept. A broader view might date the Program from a 1961 meeting held in Reno when a nascent Desert Research Institute invited three consulting anthropologists to suggest a possible research agenda for one of its components —the Center for Western North American Studies. Robert Heizer of U C Berkeley, Fred Eggan of the University of Chicago and Omer Stewart of the University of Colorado-Boulder proposed that a Basque Studies Program would afford the Center a unique emphasis, and one that had been largely neglected by other American universities. Nevada's location was

central to the settlement of Basques in the American West, the Basque-American contribution to the region's history was but little understood and, as a bonus, the Basques of Europe posed major enigmas for ethnology, prehistory, physical anthropology and linguistics alike.

DRI accepted the recommendation but found it difficult to implement. I was a student at the University of Chicago at the time and on his return Fred Eggan, knowing that it was my intention to do field research in the Basque Country, told me about Nevada's plans. Mordy contacted Robert Laxalt, director of the fledgling University of Nevada Press, and asked him to become involved. From the outset Bob was enthusiastic, but made it clear that his Basque background and authorship of *Sweet Promised Land*, the narrative of his father's life in the American West and return visit to his natal village in the Pyrenees, scarcely qualified him as a "Basque scholar".

Publication of the book in 1957 had, however, established Bob as the literary spokesman of the Basque-American experience. It had also fanned the first embers of a Basque-American cultural resurgence. He received hundreds of letters from Basques throughout the American West thanking him for giving voice to their story by simply recounting his family's own. When, in 1959, Dick Graves, a Sparks casino owner, decided to sponsor a Basque festival Bob was recruited to serve on the organizing committee. His letter file served as the tenuous link, the jungle drums as it were, for a sparse Basque-American population scattered widely throughout the entire American West. It made possible the launching of a major festival, indeed the first national Basque festival.

Bob and the other members of the committee were somewhat tenuous and ambivalent as they approached their task. They were fearful that the event might be a flop and that non-Basques might ridicule the ethnic display. It should be remembered that ethnic was not particularly deemed beautiful in 1959. The Civil Rights Act lay five years in the future and the emergence of what has been called the "new ethnicity" among white, hyphenated Americans came even later. There was also the issue of substance, since no one on the committee knew of what a Basque festival consisted. Indeed, in order to write their description of the Basque people for their literature the organizers looked up the entry "Basque" in the *Encyclopedia Americana*.

In short, when Wendall Mordy approached Laxalt, Bob was more disposed to facilitate the concept of a Basque Studies Program than to implement it. He was about to leave for Europe on his own personal odyssey to learn more about his ancestral heritage. He planned to spend a sabbatical year in the Basque Country researching material for a new novel. He assured Mordy that, while there, he would explore with European Basque scholars the feasibility of a Nevada-based Basque Studies Program.

It was just prior to Bob's departure that we met, but not through academic channels. I was back in Reno working a summer construction job and planning to leave in the fall for the Basque Country to begin my anthropological field research. I had a cousin who was the secretary to the Secretary of State in Carson City most of her adult life. She knew "Frenchy", as he was called in his hometown, and offered to introduce me.

She called Bob and he invited me over to his house in Reno. Our meeting was brief but in retrospect significant. It was then that I learned of his plans and we bonded through our mutual exhilaration and apprehension over the impending adventure of living abroad for an extended period. If our perspectives differed, our aim, to understand and then write about the Basque people, was identical. We resolved to meet in the Basque Country and did so on one fine afternoon in St. Jean Pied de Port. It was then that we first discussed the possibility of my returning to Reno after completing my graduate work.

While in the Basque Country Bob compiled Basque bibliography for the Library of Congress and as groundwork for the acquisition of Basque materials should DRI implement its plan and establish a Basque Program. More importantly, he convinced noted scholar of the Basques, Philippe Veyrin, that Nevada's plans were serious, Veyrin was dying and specified to his wife that our university be given the first option to purchase his fine private library.

In 1966 the American Anthropological Association held its meetings in Denver. By then Wendall Mordy had contacted me and we planned to meet at the AAA. He was accompanied by his assistant Joy Leland and anthropologist Warren D'Azevedo, the then director of the Center for Western North American Studies. Joy Leland had a strong and growing interest in anthropology. Both she and Brooke Mordy, Wendall's wife, were working part time at the Center.

I recall being very attracted and flattered by the prospect of being entrusted with the concept of the Basque Studies Program. However, when Mordy offered me a position the following month while I was home on a Christmas visit I declined. Impatient to launch the Program after years of anticipation, he wanted me to come immediately. I had not finished my dissertation, I was somewhat ambivalent about returning to my hometown, and I had someone whispering in my other ear. That is, Morton Levine, an anthropologist at Vassar College who worked in the French Basque area, was trying to recruit me. He claimed to have a commitment from Margaret Mead to establish some sort of Basque Studies Program at the American Museum of Natural History. In the end a combination of reservations about Morton and apprehension over living in New York, as well as the prospect of working with Bob Laxalt and Warren D'Azevedo, prompted my decision. Another major factor was my personal commitment to Basque culture. I had been highly influenced by close friends in the Basque Country with strong nationalistic sentiments. I admired their courage and personal sacrifices. To facilitate the Basque Studies Program in Reno afforded me a way of furthering a cause which I greatly admired even if it could never be truly my own. It was decided that I would assume my duties here in June of 1967, a week after graduating from Chicago.

In the runup to graduation I scarcely had time to think about the Basque Studies Program. It was only during the long cross-country drive and the first few weeks here on the job that the enormity of the undertaking began to sink in. I had the vague expectation that a framework existed here into which I would simply step. For its part, DRI, while recognizing that I was an untried rookie just out of graduate school, figured that I had some sort of plan, or at least so it seemed to me. The truth is that neither side really knew what a Basque Program might be or do, and there were precious few models around to coopt or copy. I recall my first meeting with Mordy in which he said, "We'll have to give you a title. 'Director' is inappropriate since no one works for you. I guess we should call you something like 'coordinator'. We can change it later after the program gets going." It is a title that I cherish and retain to this day.

That summer was a series of false starts and much contemplation. The previous year Joy Leland and William H. Jacobsen, Jr. had prepared a proposal to the National Science Foundation essentially seeking an institutional grant to help launch the Program. It did not receive funding and I cannot remember whether the agency's decision had been made before or just after I assumed my duties. But in any event I inherited the document and its promise of launching the Program through grant support. The real question was what to propose. On the positive side the Veyrin collection arrived shortly after I did. The library had committed \$6,000 for its purchase. It expected to be repaid once the Program was up and running (a debt that was paid only partly and then forgiven some years later).

That first summer I attended several Basque festivals in the American West, in part to tell Basque-Americans about our plan (as vague as it was) and partly to make the necessary

contacts that would allow me to frame some sort of meaningful research in the American West. The truth was that, despite growing up here, like most Nevadans of my generation I knew little about the Basque-Americans. In fact, as a student at Manogue High I thought that my schoolmates, Harvey and Jose Gastañaga, were Italians!

Meanwhile, Wendall Mordy proposed that we should approach the Basque-American community with a fund-raising campaign, holding out the prospect, only half-kiddingly, that we might one day have our own building. He hired the chief fundraiser of the University of California, Berkeley as a consultant, and after our first meeting I knew that I was in over my head. I would estimate that during the next year or two DRI spent about \$40,000 (including my salary and travel expenses) in order to raise \$10,000. I criss-crossed the American West and made many contacts, but was an ineffective fundraiser. I could never quite bring myself to ask for money directly, and few responded to, or probably even discerned, my subtle pitch.

The culmination was a weekend when the Western Range Association held its annual convention in Reno. We made up a list of about twenty of the wealthiest Basque ranchers and a few nonranching business people and sent them an invitation to a Saturday afternoon meeting on the Reno campus. That evening, through Bob Laxalt's good graces, Governor Laxalt was to host a dinner at the mansion in Carson City. Most came to both events. In the afternoon the chancellor of the University appealed for support of the Basque Studies Program. Each of those in attendance was asked to make a personal contribution and to contact other potential donors.

In the aftermath we received a few hundred dollars and a few vague promises to do more. Ironically, Gene Gastañaga of Reno and Alfrida Poco Teague of Southern California, while unable to attend, both made significant personal donations and solicited others. Between them they pretty much accounted for the \$10,000 we raised, and have remained two of our major benefactors ever since.

Midway through our second year we brought Jon Bilbao to Reno as guest speaker. I was approaching decision time. I was tired of the fundraising and the guilt of its failure. I was not particularly worried about job security since the times were bullish in academia. I knew that I could go elsewhere and by then the prospect of a regular teaching job was becoming appealing. DRI remained supportive but I fully understood that within its softmoney world our support could not be indefinite. Jon and I had many conversations during his visit. In fact, I would say that it was through them I began to regain faith in the Program. He not only believed in the concept, but had specific thoughts about its shape.

When I asked him before he left if he would consider coming here he said yes. The reason he gave was the phone call I made to David Heron, the then director of the UNR library, when Jon told me of a collection of documents regarding Basque nationalism that could be microfilmed in the Basque Country for about \$500. Heron committed the funds over the telephone. Jon, too, had been approached by Morton Levine and had himself submitted a proposal to the University of Indiana to create a Basque Studies Program there. Both had resulted in much positive feedback, a few promises and no action.

Wendall Mordy and I had a conversation which bordered on the father-son variety. I laid out my misgivings, apologized for failing to meet his expectations, and told him that I could no longer remain a one-person program. I mentioned Jon and my regard for him as the best and maybe last hope for launching the BSP. Mordy asked two questions that I shall never forget. First he wanted to know if Bilbao was first rate. I said that he was. He told me to be sure because, in his view and words, "first-raters hire first-raters; second-raters hire third-raters."

In short, I was to be judged by the outcome. His second question took me by surprise. He said, "Have you been working?" I began to describe my most recent swing on the fundraising circuit but he stopped me and said, "I mean have you done any real work?" I then confessed that during the evenings I had been revising my M.A. thesis on funerary ritual in Murelaga and planned to submit it for publication consideration as a book. He replied, "Good, never lose sight of what is really important."

Mordy agreed to hire Jon, not as a regular faculty member but as a consultant. I was authorized to offer him \$1,000 a month for a nine-month commitment, at which point the arrangement would be reviewed. Jon didn't hesitate in accepting. Again biography becomes the key to understanding why he risked his personal security.

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War Jon was a fledgling graduate student at the University of Madrid. It was his intention to become a medieval historian, in preparation for assuming that chair in the future Basque University that was the dream of many Basque intellectuals of the day. He had chosen medieval history because his peer, Julio Caro Baroja, was studying ancient history. Jon rushed back to the Basque Country to enlist in the army. Despite having no military background he was made an officer in the Corps of Engineers. He followed the officials of the Basque government into exile, first settling in Paris. When the Basque Government-in-Exile purchased a building in that city as its headquarters, Jon was the owner of record. After the German invasion of France the edifice was given to the Spanish Government and became its embassy.

Jon followed Basque President Jose Antonio Aguirre to New York as part of strategy to convince a nascent United Nations to recognize Basque sovereignty. In that city he was a member of Aguirre's inner circle. His birth in Puerto Rico made him an American citizen and his knowledge of English was most useful to the delegation. He had been a part of the translation project that produced the English version of Aguirre's autobiography *Escape via Berlin*.

Jon's dedication to Basque nationalism was near total. At Mrs. Aguirre's suggestion he married Marta Saralegui, daughter of a powerful Basque publisher and opinion-maker in Havana. Again, when the Basque delegation in New York decided to proselytize the Basque-American population to gain support for the cause, Jon was dispatched to Boise. He lived there for a year and had about as much success in raising political consciousness among the Basque-Americans as I had raising money some twenty years later.

He left Boise and studied at U C Berkeley and then Columbia University, shifting his academic focus to linguistics. In the process he started, indeed got bogged down in, collecting Basque bibliography. This compulsion kept him from ever completing his degree, but laid the foundation for his massive *Eusko-Bibliographia*.

During the 1950s Jon lived for several years in Cuba where he had mining interests and then moved to his father's ancestral home in Getxo near Bilbao. He gained the Bilbo franchise for Frigo, a brand of ice cream. However, his heart was never really in business. In Cuba he had researched and written a book *Los Vascos en Cuba*. He had also continued his relentless collection of Basque bibliography. Back in the Basque Country this became his real passion, or rather his second passion after Basque Nationalist Party politics.

Jon is a firm believer in the United States. Even after US. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made a deal with Franco in the early 1950s whereby the West got military bases in Spain in return for American economic aid and political recognition of the Spanish dictatorship, Jon retained his commitment to the American alternative in world affairs. For some

Basque nationalists, and particularly those with a leftist orientation, he has therefore always been suspected of CIA affiliations. However, he continued to work for the nationalist cause and carried out several actions on behalf of the Basque Nationalist Party. In 1960 he was expelled from Spain for his political activity.

After a brief residence in St. Jean de Luz he came to the United States, in order to earn a living he taught Spanish, first at Georgetown University, then at the U.S. Naval Academy and finally at Washington College in Maryland. He was there when I met him in the autumn of 1967 at the meetings of the American Anthropological Association held in Washington, D.C., and it was then that he agreed to come to Reno as guest lecturer.

The offer from the Desert Research Institute, however tenuous, represented for Jon a chance to meld his professional and political interests into a single effort. It also held out the prospect of permitting him to complete and publish the first phase of *Eusko-Bibliographia* and institutionalize an ongoing bibliographic effort.

So, by late 1968 there was a triumvirate in orbit around the Basque Studies Program concept, but one which remained in search of a mission. Each of us had our own agenda. Bob Laxalt was committed to the idea of creating within the University of Nevada Press a Basque Book Series, beyond that he was unflinchingly supportive of anything that Jon or I might propose but had no suggestions of his own.

Excepting his commitment to *Eusko-Bibhographia*, Jon had no specific scholarly agenda. Rather, he was more interested in pedagogy and political activism. Jon believed that the Basque Studies Program should become involved at several levels, indeed at times it seemed to me that he advocated involvement at every level. Jon believed that the Program should strive to conserve the Basque language in the United States as the key to preserving Basque-American culture. It should publicize Basque culture to non-Basques within the United States as a means of ultimately molding American sentiment for the Basque cause. It should serve as a conduit between New World and Old World Basques, creating a dialectic between them that would sensitize the Basque homeland to the potential of its emigrant diaspora while energizing the diaspora through renewed interest in the homeland and its political plight.

Despite my profound love for Basque culture and personal commitment to the nationalist cause, I believed that excessive involvement in and advocacy of either Old World Basque or Basque-American causes could prove fatal for the Program. That is, first I believed that a blurring of the line between advocacy and objectivity would undermine our academic respectability (it should be remembered that our program-building took place during a time in which all kinds of questionable initiatives and excesses were transpiring within American academia under the rubric of ethnic studies). Second, I feared that advocacy could lead to identification with persons and factions in both the Old World and New World contexts, linking our destiny to their successes and failures. I felt that the long range stability and future prospects of the Program required it to remain above the fray as it were. Third, I felt that if the Program was to conduct meaningful research it had to remain somewhat removed from its subject matter. Advocacy for me posed the danger of confounding our analytical gaze by becoming enmeshed in the maze of Basque affairs. In this regard I was reflecting the methodological strictures of my discipline. For the anthropologist of my day, participant observation might mean gaining experience *in* a cultural context but there was also the admonition or warning against becoming *of* it.

In retrospect, I believe that Jon and I complemented each other well. Left to his own devices, in my opinion, he would have taken the Basque Studies Program down the path to perdition experienced by many of the ethnic studies initiatives of the late 1960s and 1970s. Left to my own devices the Program would have remained excessively academic, insular and esoteric. In the early years it was as if the automobile had two drivers. Jon had his foot on the throttle and mine was firmly on the brake. The result was not a particularly smooth ride, but we herky-jerked forward without careening over the cliff.

The disparate agendas of three very different individuals might not seem likely material with which to build anything, but in fact the opposite proved to be the case. In fact, in retrospect we were a pretty potent mix. Bob commanded enormous respect within the Basque-American community, which translated into instant credibility for the Program in that context. Given the political prominence of his family he also held the attention of University and State officials alike. In point of fact this influence was almost never mobilized; the mere possibility that it could be sufficed. In his role as director of the University of Nevada Press he was uniquely situated to launch our publications.

I held a Ph.D. in a hot field from a good university. I was therefore able to get grants to fund most of my own activities and some of the Program's during our critical first ten years, or before we were transferred from DRI to UNR and began to receive regular state funding. I was able to publish, and rather quickly, much of my European research, broadening the awareness of our activities within academic circles,

As Basque bibliographer Jon was at the vortex of Basque scholarship worldwide. He possessed encyclopedic knowledge of who was doing what. His contacts were global. As the volumes of *Eusko-Bibliographia* began to appear in Europe the credibility of the Basque Studies Program soared. He also took a strong interest in our Basque Library collection, serving as its *de facto* first librarian. One could scarcely imagine a better individual for collection development. Finally, while Jon was capable of proposing absurd or impossible projects he also possessed vision. It was he who proposed and executed our first study abroad efforts which he regarded as a means of introducing Basque-American and other students to the Basque homeland. He offered the first Basque language class at this institution. His extensive personal network within moderate Basque nationalist circles provided us with critical contacts among the clandestine Basque leadership in both Europe and Latin America. Such personal ties facilitated the subsequent institutional ones that we presently enjoy within European Basque academic and political circles.

The early years of the Basque Studies Program may best be characterized as an ad hoc shifting exercise in survival. I had a salaried position with DRI but was keenly aware that it was not only non-tenure track but also that the commitment was short term if unspecified. An appointment at DRI was a license to fund yourself through grants while you contributed to the overhead of the Institute through the indirect cost recovery from sponsored projects. At the time there was the belief, one that ultimately proved to be largely chimerical, that social scientists could survive from granting sources alone.

At least I had a Ph.D. and qualified as a Principal Investigator and hence an eligible applicant. Jon had never completed his doctorate and was therefore disqualified from applying to most funding agencies. He was further handicapped by predilection since he was a humanist in a world which placed its premium upon the sciences. Bob Laxalt did not enter into the financial equation since he had a full-time position as director of the University of Nevada Press.

It seemed like the first year when I wasn't fund-raising I was writing grant proposals. I was finally successful with an approximately \$30,000 grant request to the National Institute

of Mental Health to study Basque ethnicity in the American West. It was, however, of a year's duration and nonrenewable. It covered my salary and a part of Jon's. It gave us a bit of breathing room but the respite was to be obviously brief. It had the added drawback of committing our time to a specific research project. Successful conclusion of it scarcely constituted program-building, indeed the Basque Studies Program concept threatened to languish in the interim.

The physical layout of our activities was equally fragmentary and tenuous. Jon and I had our offices at Stead in the Center for Western North American Studies. Through it we had access to secretarial assistance but precious little else since the Center was enmeshed in the same soft-money survival struggle. The Basque book collection began as a part of the Special Collections Library of the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). However, as one of the university's most unique and rapidly expanding collections we were soon assigned a small room and then another adjacent one in the basement of the library.

Given his bibliographic interest Jon began to spend afternoons with the book collection. It was only through his presence that we could even open the door to the public since there was no staff. Virginia Jacobsen, who was married to William Jacobsen, Jr., our Linguistics Coordinator, became a faculty-wife volunteer for about twenty hours weekly. This permitted us to establish regular, or more accurately, sporadic hours for the collection.

I don't want to paint too bleak a picture of the early years since, in fact, they were laced with excitement and optimism. I was young, Jon was foolish and we were both having a ball. Each day was a challenge and, save for the constant financial difficulties, we were at liberty to shape the Basque Studies Program as we wished. We both wore every hat. If a scholar wanted to visit the collection we met the plane. As often as not he or she stayed with one of us, dined with us, was transported to Lake Tahoe by one of us. It seemed like we spoke to every Boy Scout troop, church group and service club in western Nevada. In fact we practically begged to be asked as we struggled to establish a public image for the Program. I have special fond memories of the period, such as the time I travelled through a snowstorm one evening to address a tiny group of University of Nevada alumnae women in the living room of a ranch house. Afterwards they gave me a sack of potatoes, another of onions and a bag of garlic as a token of their appreciation.

As we fumbled our way forward there began to emerge the broad outlines of the program that exists today. The collection grew and began to attract national attention, by 1969 we had founded the newsletter and the Basque Book Series, the next year Jon took our first group to Europe and we were offering both the language and a Basque culture class through the Foreign Languages and Anthropology departments at UNR, and Jon and I had embarked upon the research that ultimately culminated in *Amerikanuak*. Our real problems concerned out finances

It was therefore necessary to devise a strategy which would ensure proper institutionalization of the Program with guaranteed prospects of long-term survival. By the early 1970s it was apparent that 1) many of our activities were meaningless in DRI terms and that UNR provided a more appropriate institutional setting, 2) the growing importance of our research collection and its discrete physical quarters within the library made it an obvious place on this campus in which to situate the program and 3) that it would be impossible to fund and thereby protect Jon Bilbao's position at DRI for much longer.

We therefore opened up a dialogue with the presidents of DRI and UNR in which we proposed transferring Jon Bilbao to UNR and funding his position with the title of Basque Bibliographer as a part of the university's regular state funding. We also requested half-time secretarial

assistance. Harold Morehouse, Director of the Library, agreed to assume administrative responsibility for the Basque Studies Program under the rubric of UNR's Statewide Programs.

For the time being the research function of the Program was to remain with DRI, essentially personified in my continuing presence there. I had been awarded an NIMH Research Scientist Career Development Award which provided me with up to ten years of salary support, so I was no longer at issue as a financial liability.

As the plan wound its way through the political process our proposal received support from the regents and was sent to Carson. The governor's budget officer promptly axed the whole deal as a part of its perennial posture of scotching practically any new program. It was then that the Laxalt connection came into play. Bob contacted Chancellor Humphrey and requested that he be allowed to lobby for the Basque Studies Program in the legislature. The chancellor said that he had other priorities for the system and couldn't champion it himself but gave us the green light to fight for ourselves. I prepared a position paper and Bob did a thorough and excellent job of making our case. The Basque Studies Program was approved and added to the university budget through a special motion in the legislature. A few years later we negotiated a similar course regarding funding of the new position that permitted me to walk the bridge from the DRI to UNR.

Such, then, are some of the highlights of our early history, reflections in our own mirror as it were. In my next lecture, entitled "Through the Looking Glass or Becoming the Datum" I will venture some observations regarding the impact of the Basque Studies Program upon Basque-American cultural reality.