

RICHARD ANTHONY PARKER

1905–1993

In early June, the Oriental Institute received word of the death of Professor Emeritus Richard A. Parker on June 3, 1993, at the age of 87. Professor Parker's distinguished career in Egyptology and his long-standing connections with Chicago and the Oriental Institute merit the inclusion of an appreciation in this report.

Richard Anthony Parker, son of Thomas Frank and Emma Ursula (Heldman) Parker, was born in Chicago on December 10, 1905. He grew up here and would later recall that he attended high school with James T. Farrell (1904–1979), author of *Studs Lonigan*. Dick Parker went away to Dartmouth College, where he received an A.B. degree in 1930. He married Gladys Anne Burns on February 10, 1934; they had two children, Michael (who predeceased his father) and Beatrice Ann.

By Autumn 1934, the Parkers were back in Chicago so that Dick could begin his graduate studies in the University of Chicago's Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures; the only other beginning graduate student in Egyptology that year was a man named George M. Lewis. It must have been a stimulating time to begin a career in Egyptology at the Oriental Institute. Although James Henry Breasted was retired from active teaching, he was still Director of the Oriental Institute, and he maintained a strong interest in the teaching program. John A. Wilson and William F. Edgerton were the senior faculty members for Egyptology. The Oriental Institute Fellows/Research Assistants in Egyptology for 1934/1935 were Francis Olcott Allen, George R. Hughes, and Charles F. Nims. George Hughes taught one Egyptology course each quarter, beginning with the spring quarter in 1935. Working under the supervision of Breasted's former student Harold H. Nelson, Keith C. Seele and the German Egyptologist Siegfried Schott were the epigraphers at Chicago House that season; Charles F. Nims was scheduled to join them in the winter, before moving on to the Oriental Institute's Sakkarah Expedition, under the direction of Prentice Duell.

Dick Parker's first publication assignment, "The Oriental Institute Archaeological Report on the Near East, Second Quarter, 1936," appeared in the departmental journal, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Volume LIII, in October 1936. Upon completion of his dissertation, "Medinet Habu Demotic Ostrakon 4038," Richard A. Parker joined the ranks of Oriental Institute Research Assistants on July 1, 1938, and received a Ph.D. degree in Egyptology from the University of Chicago in August 1938. He served as an epigrapher with the Epigraphic and Architectural Survey at Luxor, Egypt, from October 1, 1938 until April 1940, when Chicago House had to be closed down until after the end of World War II. During a period of hard economic times, when Ph.D. dissertations were not being published by the Oriental Institute as a matter of policy, John A. Wilson (who had succeeded Breasted as Director) approved a

subvention of £30 (\$150 U.S.) in March 1939, so that Parker's revised dissertation could be published in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*; it was printed in Volume XXVI (1940), under the title "A Late Demotic Gardening Agreement: Medinet Habu Ostrakon 4038." On July 1, 1942 Dr. Parker was promoted to Research Associate with the rank of Instructor, and it was he who carried on the sole responsibility of teaching Egyptology in the department during the war years (1942–1946), at a time, Parker writes, when "the staff of the Oriental Institute had been decreased by half, chiefly through the voluntary entrance of its members in government service as specialists in decoding for the Army, or in matters connected with the Near East." Parker's outstanding student during that period was Ricardo A. Caminos.

After the war, Richard A. Parker returned to Luxor to resume his work as a staff member of the Epigraphic Survey; he was appointed Assistant Professor of Egyptology and Assistant Field Director in the Oriental Institute on July 1, 1946. A year later, he succeeded Harold H. Nelson as Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey. In 1948, Parker was offered the newly-created Charles Edwin Wilbour Professorship in Egyptology at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Although Oriental Institute Director Thorkild Jacobsen proposed to match Brown University's offer, the opportunity to start a new program in Egyptology in America was simply too good to pass up. An agreement was reached in order to allow for a smooth transition at Chicago House: Parker took up his appointment at Brown on a part-time basis, beginning on July 1, 1948; he remained Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey until December 31, 1948, and then became Consultant Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey until June 30, 1949. George Hughes succeeded Parker as Field Director of the Survey. In the 1950s, Professor Parker developed and expanded the new department at Brown University by hiring Ricardo A. Caminos, Hans Goedicke, and Caroline Nestman Peck. Today, under the direction of Chicago Ph.D. Leonard H. Lesko, the Department of Egyptology at Brown remains the only academic department at an American university that is solely dedicated to the teaching of Egyptology.

Richard A. Parker will be remembered especially for his contributions in the areas of Egyptian language (including Demotic), astronomy, and chronology. He was the sole author or a collaborator in the production of the following Oriental Institute publications: *Medinet Habu, IV: Festival Scenes of Ramses III*, by the Epigraphic Survey, Oriental Institute Publications (OIP) LI, 1940; *Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C.–A.D. 45* (with Waldo H. Dubberstein), Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization (SAOC) 24, 1942, and the 2nd edition, 1946; *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (sole author), SAOC 26, 1950; *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak, III: The Bubastite Portal*, OIP LXXIV, 1957; *Medinet Habu, V: The Temple Proper, Part I*, by the Epigraphic Survey, OIP LXXXIII, 1957; *Medinet Habu, VI: The Temple Proper, Part II*, by the Epigraphic Survey, OIP LXXXIV, 1963; *Medinet Habu, VII: The Temple Proper, Part III*, by the Epigraphic Survey, OIP XCIII, 1964; and *The Temple of Khonsu, I: Scenes of King Herihor in the Court*, by the Epigraphic Survey, OIP 100, 1979.

John Larson

Those who knew Richard Parker will remember a kind, generous friend and scholar who was always happy to help colleagues. I remember when I was first re-establishing the Demotic Dictionary Project how much assistance Parker offered, answering questions, making suggestions, writing recommendations to granting agencies, and the like. Through the years, I would contact him regularly and he never failed to provide a thoughtful answer or comment. I once asked George Hughes, who was a close friend of Parker, why Parker, who clearly enjoyed people and who was such an important member of the Egyptological community, rarely attended the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt; the answer surprised and pleased me: Parker was a “fanatic” about Brown University football, had season tickets, and never missed a game. As long as the meetings of the American Research Center in Egypt were held on a weekend in the fall, he was otherwise occupied! For many of us, the older generation(s) of Egyptologists, and other Near Eastern specialists, are only names; it is always nice to know that, behind the name, was a well-rounded person, with diverse interests.

Janet Johnson
