



World War II veteran H. B. Nicholson, back from the war, and back at UC Berkeley, in 1946. Nick's Combat Infantryman's Badge is pinned over two rows of "fruit salad." Nicholson family photo.

INTRODUCTION

Brian Dervin Dillon and Matthew A. Boxt

H. B. Nicholson was recognized everywhere as the world's foremost Aztec authority and as a pre-eminent Mesoamerican scholar; he was a giant in his field. Both of us knew, liked, and admired "Nick" Nicholson, and we interacted with him in many different ways for more than 30 years. His death in 2007 came long before his work was done; his many friends and loving family have still not recovered from it. Nicholson may be gone, but his written body of work will continue to influence future generations of Mesoamericanists.

Shortly after Nick's passing, we solicited papers, tributes, and reminiscences from dozens of Nicholson's students, colleagues, friends and family; the response was overwhelming—overwhelming in the truest sense of the word, for the volume we compiled out of the nearly 70 separate contributions was too large and unwieldy for publication as a single book. The logical solution to this dilemma was to create two books from one, each with a different approach and

range of authorities in different fields of Mesoamerican research. All their writers were connected in one way or another with H. B. Nicholson.

The present, much shorter volume offers chapters from H. B. Nicholson's personal history. It constitutes a retrospective of Nicholson, the man, scholar, teacher, and friend, from diverse viewpoints, nationalities, and generations. One of our favorite books is Robert Wauchope's (1965) *They Found the Buried Cities*, a wonderful collection of biographical sketches of some of the founding fathers of Mesoamerican archaeology. We have compiled the present volume in the same spirit, for it is a biography of H. B. Nicholson, albeit written by many different hands. In the following pages, we come to know not only H. B. Nicholson the scholar, teacher, and writer, but also Nick the student, soldier, father, and estimable friend. If much archaeological writing since the advent of the dehumanizing trend of the "New Archaeology" almost 50 years ago suffers from an excess of uninspired word mongering, then the following pages provide an antidote. History is biography, or it is nothing at all. Nick Nicholson comes back to life at many different points over his long career between these covers. We are happy to call attention to this volume's "California connection" as well, for most of its contributors are either from Nick's beloved Golden State, teach or conduct research here, or both.

The present paean to H. B. Nicholson is divided into two parts; the initial division is introductory and biographical, and the second incorporates personal reminiscences from Nick's friends, students, and colleagues. The first nine papers are biographical sketches describing Nicholson's childhood, early life, and the path that led him both to the study and practice of archaeology and to the University of California, Los Angeles. The papers in this section were written by Nick's three children, his student contemporaries in the early 1950s, and his own students and colleagues from both early and late in his teaching career.

Nicholson was a patriotic California boy, born and bred. He was immensely proud of his home state and would trumpet its advantages to anyone so unfortunate as to live elsewhere. He was thrilled and gratified to have been educated at UC Berkeley and to be teaching at UCLA, for he believed that the University of California system was not just the best in the country but the best in the world. When it came to Aztec studies, Nick in fact personally guaranteed that it was. Over the many years that he taught at UCLA, Nicholson came to represent not just the University of California to his Latin American archaeologist, art historian, and ethnohistorian peers, but also became the spokesman for all that was good and admirable in that most Latin American of all the *Norteamericano* states, California.

Bruce, Eric, and Alice Nicholson reveal a dimension of Nick that few of us ever saw, and none but them could ever know: the loving father. John B. Glass and H. B. Nicholson were fellow graduate students at Harvard; he paints a compelling picture of their life and work at that institution. Glass notes that Nick's conscience was still troubled seven years after he had pilfered a book in Germany as a teenaged U.S. Army infantryman. If Private Nicholson "liberated" only one book while in the smoking ruins of the Third Reich, then he was a model of decorum and restraint in comparison with most other G.I.s. The vast majority of American combat troops considered souvenirs an infinitesimally small price for the Germans to pay for having started the war and having enacted and condoned wholesale murder, and, if Nicholson kept the book, then he was one in a million. The average American soldier carried German books around only to harvest individual pages while at the latrine or while trying to get fires lit.



*Montezuma [sic] takes Cortés by the hand so as to show him Tenochtitlan, an illustration by Keith Henderson from *The Conquest of Mexico*, by W. H. Prescott (1922:I:382). The book and drawings inspired Nicholson as a child and helped set him on his career path. Courtesy of the Royal Watercolour Society, London.*

René Millon befriended Nick in Mexico City while both were graduate students in the mid-1950s; they became lifelong mutual admirers. Brian Dervin Dillon, albeit a generation younger than Nick, nevertheless studied under some of the same professors that had so impressed Nicholson and recalls the firm grounding in anthropology and archaeology that Nick obtained at Berkeley and brought with him to UCLA. David M. Pendergast, one of Nick's first students, provides an insider's view of his first field season working for the academic institution that would become Nicholson's touchstone for the remainder of his life. Rudy Troike pens a captivating eyewitness account of experiences Nick loved to retell for almost 50 years. This harum-scarum recitation of a lifetime of adventures was crammed into a single summer. In Troike's "cheated death again" reminiscence, one of the lead characters, the homicidal Land Rover that almost killed Nick in Tamaulipas a half-century ago, may be familiar to filmgoers as

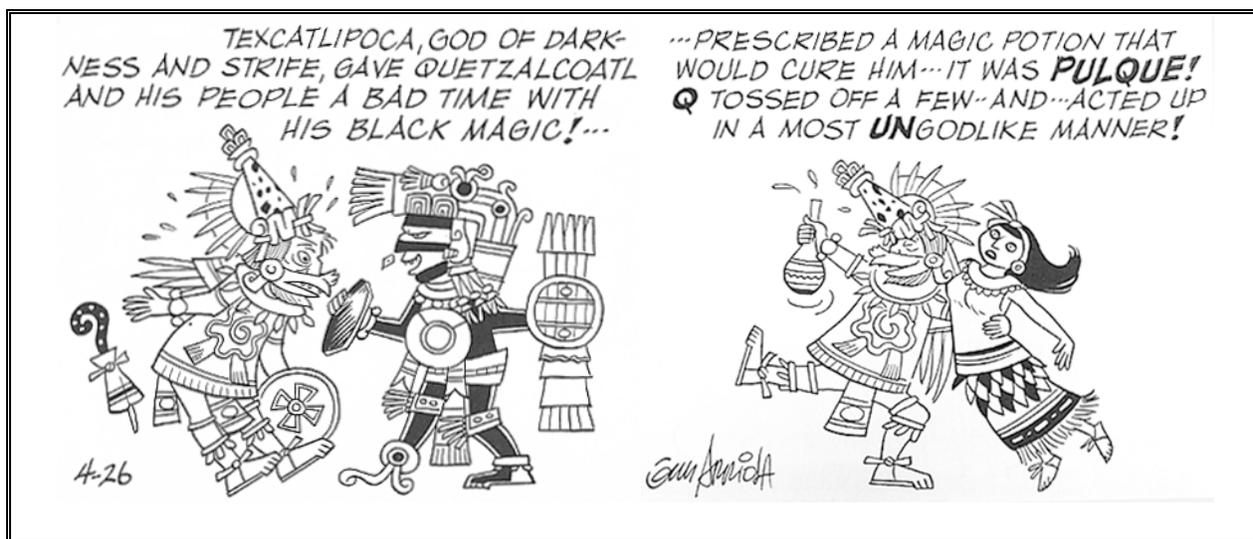
an ancestor of the *Anti-Christ* from the 1986 quasi-anthropological film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. Then, as now, British vehicles in general are of indifferent reliability at best, and the concept of *British off-road vehicles* is a contradiction in terms if not an actual oxymoron.

Nicholson was particularly attached to ethnohistory and was a pioneer of that discipline. Nick's intellectual antecedents here were on the West Coast and inspired him long before he turned up at the Peabody Museum. Precedents for the broad, multidisciplinary approach to Mesoamerican ethnohistory were obvious during Nicholson's early years at the University of California. A. L. Kroeber and his many students had been doing ethnohistorical research since the turn of the nineteenth century, and ethnohistory was being practiced and taught at Berkeley in the 1940s by scholars such as John Howland Rowe, one of Nicholson's favorite teachers, albeit in Andean context. The groundbreaking *Ibero-Americana* publication series at Berkeley pioneered, from the early 1930s, the multidisciplinary approach, incorporating studies in archaeology, demography, ethnology, geography, and history and featured Mesoamerican authorities such as Robert H. Barlow, Ralph L. Beals, Woodrow W. Borah, Sherburne F. Cook, and Carl O. Sauer. Simultaneously, albeit south of the border, were influences from the Mexican school, incorporating such luminaries as Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, Alfonso Caso, Manuel Moreno, Alfredo Barerra Vásquez, and Salvador Toscano, amongst many others.

The second and final division concludes our volume with a different kind of Matrícula de Tributos, 28 reminiscences by individuals from key periods in Nick's professional life. Here are memories of his undergraduate years at Berkeley, his graduate education at Harvard, his earliest archaeological field experience in Mexico, his 35 years at UCLA, and his intellectual love affair with Middle America. These remembrances reveal what the academic community thought of H. B. Nicholson. Some reflect on Nick's life and his research legacy; other contributors recall moments in time when Nick either inspired or actually changed professional lives.

A common theme running through many of these tributes is humor. Nick was serious about his chosen research subject but never took himself too seriously. He enjoyed a good joke and managed to keep his sanity within the stressful academic milieu mainly through his well-developed sense of humor. Haskett's humorous tribute reminds us that Nick was very much a Stone Age Man when confronted with modern technology. As many modern lecturers can attest, the designers of the kinds of computer age "smart" classrooms and audio-visual facilities described by Haskett surely were, are, and will always be strangers to academic study themselves. Such designers obviously never have actually taken a class in one of the classrooms they designed, much less taught one. Haskett terms them *mischievous* but we are less sanguine in believing them to be malevolent. Anyone who ever watched H. B. Nicholson prepare a slide lecture will remember his paranoia about his slides, hoping against hope that once they passed from his hands, even if only for an hour or two for the duration of a lecture, they would not be mangled, melted, or lost by well-meaning but inept projectionists. If you knew how to gently push down a stuck slide in one of Nicholson's 140-slide carousels with a clean pocket comb (which, of course, is how we do it in Latin America, thereby bypassing all typically gringo high-tech fixes up to, but not limited to, projector disassembly), you were Nick's friend for life.

The title of Lockhart's tribute, "Nick and the Historians," conjures up a mental image of a new twist on an old Gary Larson cartoon, with a pith-helmeted Nick striding up the hill outside the proverbial grass shack as the panicked historians inside rush around, trying to hide their precious documents from him before he gets there. Many students, especially after Nick grew his beard, were convinced that Nick actually was the inspiration for those Gary Larson cartoons



Codex-style cartoon by Gus Arriola, 1962, from the Gordo comic strip. Courtesy of Ramona Arriola McNamara, and the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

featuring crazed anthropologists doing weird and humorous things, and when students brought him such cartoons and laid the charge against him, he never denied it. In fact, Nick had a strange and wonderful affinity with cartoons, both as author (Quiñones Keber 2012:12) and as subject (López Austin, this volume; Restall, this volume). Probably without any subconscious intent by its talented artist, one of López Austin's cartoons (this volume) might be interpreted by persons unfamiliar with its three luminary subjects as a kind of allegorical Soviet pantheon of past days, featuring Trotsky, Lenin, and Marx from left to right, instead of Nicholson, Matos M., and Carrasco.

While on the subject of cartoons, we are pleased to include some Gus Arriola artwork courtesy of Ramona Arriola McNamara, Gus' granddaughter, and the Bancroft Library, which now holds Arriola's collected works. At the same time that Nick was bringing Mesoamerican studies to the forefront of scholarly consciousness at UCLA, another honorary Angeleno, Arriola, was introducing the rest of California and the United States to Mexican archaeology, Aztec mythology, and the wonderful blend of cultures that is rural Mexico. Gus Arriola began his strip 16 years before Nick came to teach at UCLA, and once Nicholson began publishing voluminously on Mesoamerican topics, Arriola read everything of Nick's he could get his hands on. For years, students would bring Nick those *Gordo* comic strips with prehistoric or culture historical themes, and Nick would sit, Solomon-like in judgment, pointing out where Arriola had got it wrong, but much more frequently where he had got it right. By the 1970s, the *Gordo* comic strip had become one of the best recruiters for Mesoamerican archaeology in the United States.

Gary Pahl's tribute mentions an aspect of Nick's commitment to the study of Mesoamerican art that requires comment. Archaeologists and Central American government officials directly confront the problem of looting, and most of us take a very dim view of those at the top of the illicit food chain. These are the collectors who stimulate the looting which destroys archaeological sites. Once Nick ceased doing actual fieldwork, he nevertheless felt compelled to maintain contacts with various collectors so that he might, at least vicariously, share in the excitement of new finds and discoveries without himself excavating. Such behavior was absolutely unacceptable to many of his peers, yet Nick may have justified it through the

precedent of Diego Rivera and Miguel Covarrubias. Nick was certainly aware of how much bad feeling the actions of these two great Mexican artists generated in archaeological circles, which still reverberates on both sides of the border decades after their deaths. Nicholson's hobnobbing with antiquities collectors and art dealers was, and still is, troubling to many of his students and professional associates.

Just as we are proud and gratified to incorporate contributions from Mesoamericanists from both sides of the border and both sides of the Atlantic, we are also very pleased to offer writings by multiple generations of Nicholsonians, those who knew him as a student, a teacher at UCLA, or after his retirement. Some contributors are even the students of Nicholson's students, essentially his intellectual grandchildren, who had the good fortune to have met him before he left us all. Nick and Margaret Nicholson's children, Eloise Quiñones Keber and Michel Besson, supplied many outstanding and unique photos, mementos, and anecdotes that have enriched the present memorial. Thanks also to our friend, the late W. Michael Mathes, for help with Spanish translation.

A poignant moment came when, soon after Nick's death, the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México (INAH) in August 2007 discovered a stone monolith of Tlaltecuhli and what may be the royal tomb of Ahuitzotl, the Aztec ruler at the time of Columbus' landfall at Hispaniola. One can only imagine Nick's unbridled enthusiasm were he to receive news of this discovery. Soon afterwards, Nick missed out on one of the biggest archaeological shindigs of all time—the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the discovery of Templo Mayor in downtown Mexico City, culminating with the exhibit, *Coyolxauhqui and the Templo Mayor: 30 Years Reconstructing the Past*. Nick's absence would have been unimaginable, something like an Independence Day celebration in Washington, D.C. without fireworks. This was the first major Aztec-related event in over 40 years without Nick Nicholson in attendance.

The present volume brings together many voices raised in thanks to a single man, H. B. Nicholson. Each of us knew a different Nicholson; all of us treasure the travels back through time he shared with us.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Dr. Henry Koerper and the members of the Pacific Coast Archaeological Society board for making our volume welcome within their publication series. We are also grateful to Virginia Kelker and to Rene Brace for their careful reading of the manuscript and for their useful suggestions, which have greatly improved it. Nick's three children have been a constant source of help and inspiration; we hope that the present volume does justice to their father. Rusty van Rossmann as always helped us find the best way to improve problematic illustrations. Last, but certainly not least, we owe a tremendous debt to Dr. Nancy Troike and the Patterson Foundation of Texarkana, Texas, whose support made the present publication possible. Nancy's steadfast and enthusiastic encouragement through thick and thin over a five-year period made working on the *Codex Nicholson* a rewarding and pleasurable experience.

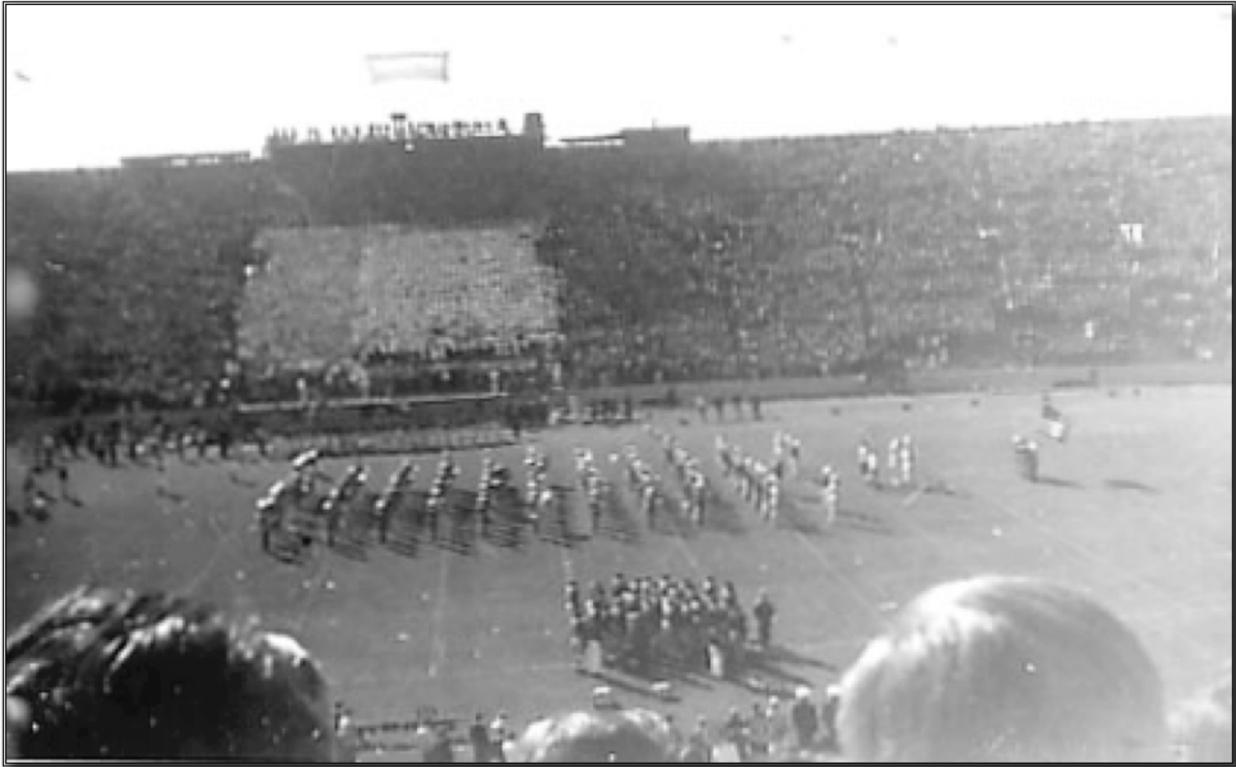


H. B. Nicholson at age 5, La Jolla, California, 1930. Nicholson family photo.

H. B. Nicholson: September 5, 1925 – March 2, 2007

Bruce Nicholson

Henry Bigger Nicholson was born at Scripps Hospital in La Jolla, California, on September 5, 1925. The Nicholson clan was from the Isle of Skye and adjacent Highlands on the Scottish mainland, while his mother's family was originally from the English Midlands. Few of his professional colleagues knew that the "B" of Nick's middle name stood for his mother's maiden name. My father was very proud of his Scots and English heritage and was happy to wear his Clan Nicholson tartan tie, first given him by Nancy Troike, at every opportunity. He never liked his given name and encouraged everyone either to call him Nick or H. B. throughout his life. Nick was extremely proud to have been born "above the pounding surf of the Pacific," and he held a lifelong adoration of La Jolla, particularly the La Jolla Cove.



*Stanfordiensis delenda est, but the Bears got “axed” instead. On November 21, 1942, the last big game of the war years was played at California Memorial Stadium against archrival Stanford, and Cal lost 26 to 7. Three months later, 17-year old H. B. Nicholson began his college career at UC Berkeley.
Richard H. Dillon photo.*

Nick was an only child, and he and his parents, J. Harry and Evelyn Nicholson, lived for about four years in a house that his father designed. The house still stands on Pearl Street in La Jolla; Nick was able to pay a sentimental visit to his first residence shortly before he left us for good. With the Depression, the Nicholsons were forced to move to more affordable accommodations in Hillcrest, a beautiful part of central San Diego. The family lived on Laurel Street for several years. This was on the eastern side of what Nick and his friends called “Pill Hill,” because there were so many San Diegan doctors who lived there in mansions perched above San Diego Harbor. The Nicholsons finally settled on 4th Street in the heart of Hillcrest, and they stayed in the same house till Nick took off for college at the University of California, Berkeley.

Hillcrest was an ideal place for a young man to grow up during the depression years. It was a quick bike ride away from Balboa Park, one of the most beautiful public parks in America. Nick particularly adored the San Diego Museum of Man at Balboa Park, and he often credited the Museum of Man for first sparking his interest in archaeology. During these formative years, Nick attended Florence Elementary School, Roosevelt Junior High School, and finally San Diego Union High School. He excelled in every academic subject. While in junior high school, Nick and his friends formed what they dubbed “The Hillcrest Gang.” Each member of “The Hillcrest Gang” affected the name of one of the Seven Dwarfs from Disney’s *Snow White*, and as you might imagine, Nick was *Doc*.

Nick graduated from San Diego Union High School in February of 1943, a semester early, and a half-year ahead of most of his age mates. He immediately moved on to the University of

California, Berkeley. Nick would tell anyone who would listen that the moment he arrived on the Berkeley campus, he “knew that this was the place!” He would also say that it was rather strange to be one of the very few males out of a student body of around 9,000: most of the men had joined the war effort. Nick was only seventeen at the time of his arrival at UC Berkeley, and when his birthday came in September 1943, he enlisted in the Army. He often told us how strange it was for a San Diego native not to join the Navy, and when my father enlisted at the recruiting station on Market Street in downtown San Francisco, the navy recruiter scoffed and told Nick, “You can have the damn Army!” Nick joined the Army not only because he felt a genuine need to enlist as did so many others of that time, but also because of the G. I. Bill that would pay for much of his tuition upon (hopefully) his return.

Nick was sent to the 86th “Blackhawk” Infantry Division of San Diego, and he endured boot camp at Camp Roberts, just north of Paso Robles, California. The 86th had originally been formed in World War I but saw no combat in that conflict; with the advent of WWII, this West Coast division was trained from the outset for amphibious combat in the Pacific Theater. While at Camp Roberts, Nick was almost crushed to death when he was launched from a half-ton truck driven by a reckless, Midwestern farm boy. After being thrown almost 50 feet from the back of the truck, the vehicle capsized and landed just about a foot away from his head. This was just one of many amazingly close calls. Nick would often remark how his love of the Pacific Ocean served him well at this point in his life, because much of the advanced amphibious training he participated in was conducted at Avila Bay near Pismo Beach, California, on San Nicolas Island, California, and at his beloved Coronado Strand in San Diego, California. My father always thought it highly amusing that the U.S. Army invaded a benign strip of sand at the western edge of his own home town.

The Battle of the Bulge, which took the entire U.S. military by surprise in December 1944, led to cancellation of the original plans for the 86th Division’s Pacific deployment. Nick’s unit was instead rushed to bolster those units already fighting in the European theater. Consequently, Infantryman H. B. Nicholson and his unit shipped out in February 1945, arriving in France in early March, and reinforcing the line in Germany late in that same month. Nick would often tell how particularly beautiful that spring was and how absolutely tragic it was to see Germany in ruins. While in the city of Ingolstadt in the heart of Bavaria, Nick and his fellow soldiers suffered heavy shelling from across the Danube River. One shell landed just feet from Nick and his buddies, who were trying desperately to reach sanctuary in a church cellar. Nick would relate that the soldier immediately behind him was wounded by plaster chips in his face, for which he received the Purple Heart, thus cheating my father of the Purple Heart by only a foot! After only a month and half of combat for the 86th Division, the European War ended. Shortly thereafter, in June of 1945, the Blackhawk Division was sent back to the states for more training, en route to the Pacific. The invasion of Japan was in the final planning stages, and Nick’s Division would now resume the role for which it had been originally constituted.

During leave, Nick was able to visit his mother one more time in July of 1945. Given the way the Pacific War was going, both were convinced this might be their final time together. At San Francisco Nick and his unit boarded ship once again at the end of August, 1945, after the atomic bombs had been dropped earlier in the month, but before the Japanese surrender had been finalized. He was at sea when the surrender documents were signed aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. Fortunately for Nick and his buddies, the surrender ended any necessity of invading Japan, which, as Nick often said, would have been “a bloodbath.” The 86th Division nevertheless



Private Nicholson home from the European War, with his mother in San Diego in July 1945, prior to being sent off to the War in the Pacific. Note the Combat Infantryman's Badge, other "fruit salad." Nicholson family photo.

continued on to the Philippines, where Private Nicholson spent his final months in uniform prior to demobilization.

Nick couldn't wait to return to his beloved Berkeley, and he resumed his studies at Cal in 1946. My father majored in Anthropology, and he excelled at almost every subject he studied. Nick was particularly proud of one semester during which he took seven classes and received the grade of "A" in every class. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1949, Nick enrolled at



Nick and Margaret's wedding while at UC Berkeley, June 17, 1951. Nick's mother Evelyn at right, Margaret's mother and father, Alice and Wendel Ambler, at left. Nicholson family photo.

Boalt School of Law at UC Berkeley. He did this only because he thought that he should pursue a lucrative career. However, Nick hated the study of law. His eventual career as an archaeologist was at the behest of his future wife, Margaret Ambler.

Nick and Margaret Ambler met at Berkeley's renowned International House. "I House" always had the highest percentage of foreign students of any UC Berkeley residence hall. English was only a minority language amongst the many spoken therein. Nick had been living at his much-loved "Co-ops" for the duration of his undergraduate studies, but he finally decided to move to what he and Margaret always affectionately called "I House." Margaret, a native Oregonian, was studying for her Ph.D. in California history when she met Nick. They met at breakfast, and Margaret loved to tell how she was first attracted to Nick because of his booming, authoritative voice. It wasn't too long after they met that they married, on June 17, 1951, at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church on College Avenue in Berkeley. For their honeymoon in 1951, Nick and Margaret drove down from San Diego to Mexico City in a beat-up Ford that they dubbed "Pedro." Upon their return, the young couple left I House for a house on Stewart Street in Berkeley. Nick returned to his studies at Berkeley's Boalt Hall Law School and a potential career as a lawyer, but because of Margaret, that was soon to change.

Nick was dissatisfied with his law studies, and Margaret urged him, at the expense of her own degree, to go to Harvard and pursue a Ph.D. in archaeology. The decision to leave Berkeley for

the cooler climes of Cambridge, Massachusetts, was made at one of Nick and Margaret's favorite haunts, the White Horse on Telegraph Avenue. Nick finished his Law Degree in 1952, but he never took the California Bar Examination. The newly married couple packed up and left for Harvard the same year. Within his new academic environment Nick excelled, earning his doctoral degree in record time. Margaret, meanwhile, taught at a high school in Brainerd, Massachusetts, her salary enough to support the couple. She also diligently typed Nick's dissertation.

Nick and Margaret were desperate to return to Mexico. Thus, it was with great joy that they were able to return and live in Mexico City for over a year in 1955 and 1956 because Nick received a Doherty Fellowship. It was in March 1956 that Nick and Margaret's first child, Bruce, was born. It was also around this time that Clem Meighan flew to Mexico City and interviewed Nick for a position at UCLA. Nick had extremely high recommendations from his professors at Harvard, and Dr. Meighan practically hired Nick on the spot. After Nick, Margaret, and Bruce left Mexico, they settled in Santa Monica, California, and Nick commenced his 35 years of teaching and research at UCLA.

Margaret taught English at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach, California, while Nick was beginning his academic career at UCLA. In 1959 Margaret became pregnant with their second child, Eric, and the couple decided to move to a house in Westchester, California. It was while Nick and Margaret were living with their two sons in Westchester that their third child, Alice, was born, and Nick and Margaret decided they needed a larger domicile. Our family moved to the 156 Camino de las Colinas house in Redondo Beach in May of 1964, and my father lived there until his passing in 2007.

Nick's career in Mesoamerican archaeology was remarkable. An incredible archivist, he was a veritable encyclopedia of all things historical. My father's true passion, he often admitted, was art history. Nick's knowledge of the iconography of the Aztecs was unsurpassed. He loved stone sculpture particularly, and he also had a passion for Aztec codices. Nick published academic article after article throughout his career, and he was especially proud of his book *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl: The Once and Future Lord of the Toltecs*. My father was highly influential in many of his students' careers up until, and even after, his retirement in 1991. Many have observed that with his retirement, Nick then really went to work, spending most of his time doing the research he loved best with many fewer student and administrative entanglements.

It was while Nick was hurrying to a conference at UCLA's Royce Hall that he fell and suffered a major heart attack. By the grace of Quetzalcoatl, he was rushed immediately to the UCLA Medical Center where he underwent triple bypass surgery. My father made a thorough recovery, and he lived for 16 more years despite the surgery and complications from Type 1 diabetes, a disease he had suffered from since the age of 39. It was his heart that finally gave out. H. B. Nicholson died peacefully on his bed surrounded by the books that represented his life's work. He was buried wearing his Nicholson tartan tie.

My father, H. B. Nicholson, was an extraordinary man. He owned a remarkable intellect, a ceaseless desire for knowledge, a commanding voice, a wry sense of humor, a sentimental side that people closest to him knew all too well, and a never-ending compassion for humanity. Listing all the things my father was passionate about during his life would be too voluminous for the amount of space I have here. My brother Eric and sister Alice (this volume) have filled in some of the spaces I have left blank. Our father was a self-professed "Truman Democrat" who



*Margaret, Bruce, and H. B. Nicholson at Olmec, Maya, Aztec, a symposium at UCLA, November 13, 2004.
Eloise Quiñones Keber photo.*

held a lifelong condemnation for all Republicans, a self-professed lover of all things UC Berkeley, and a great admirer of “The Bard.” He loved, and I stress *loved*, all things Egyptian, all things Arthurian, all things early Disney, all things Balboa Park, all things that had to do with Layard of Nineveh, all things dealing with Howard Carter, all things that were associated with the La Jolla Cove, all things that dealt with Sir Francis Drake, all things Assyrian, Babylonian, Hittite, Greek, Roman, British, Spanish, Italian and every nation and culture in between, all high Renaissance art including but not limited to El Greco, Titian, Canaletto, Vermeer, and Holbein, all periods of architecture, all things Californian, Harry James, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, and all things swing, the Saturday Metropolitan Opera opera quiz, Quetzalcoatl, World War II history and reminiscences, traveling, skin diving, the Pacific Ocean, my mother, Margaret, my brother, Eric, my sister, Alice, and perhaps most extraordinary of all, me, his son Bruce.

My father’s interests were so expansive and so variegated that it’s impossible to list them all. Many people often remarked how encyclopedic were my father’s mind and memory. Within his chosen field of expertise, Mesoamerican archaeology, few would argue that my father’s knowledge was anything less than absolutely comprehensive. My father could never bear to be incorrect about anything dealing with history or archaeology, and he was an endless source of information to those who wanted “just the facts” about any aspect of history. However, my father would rarely ever deliver “just the facts” in a mundane or tedious manner, rather he would illustrate historical information in his inimitable animated and dramatic fashion, living the adage of making history come alive.

My father’s heart was enormous. Most people who knew my father only casually nevertheless immediately detected a genuine air of congeniality and erudition. Those who dealt with my father professionally knew him to be a brilliant historian, a remarkable archivist, and a great

scholar. What most people don't know is that he was also an extremely talented cartoonist, loved poetry, and, beginning in 1939, listened to the Metropolitan Opera of New York's radio broadcast every Saturday when he could. He was a doting husband and father, a man who could have spent his whole life snorkeling at the La Jolla Cove, who lived for museums, who was truly in love with the Aztec, and a gracious person who possessed a sarcastic wit. Most of all, he was the most unusual, loving, brilliant, eccentric, erudite, scholarly, academic, and caring father any son could ever wish for.

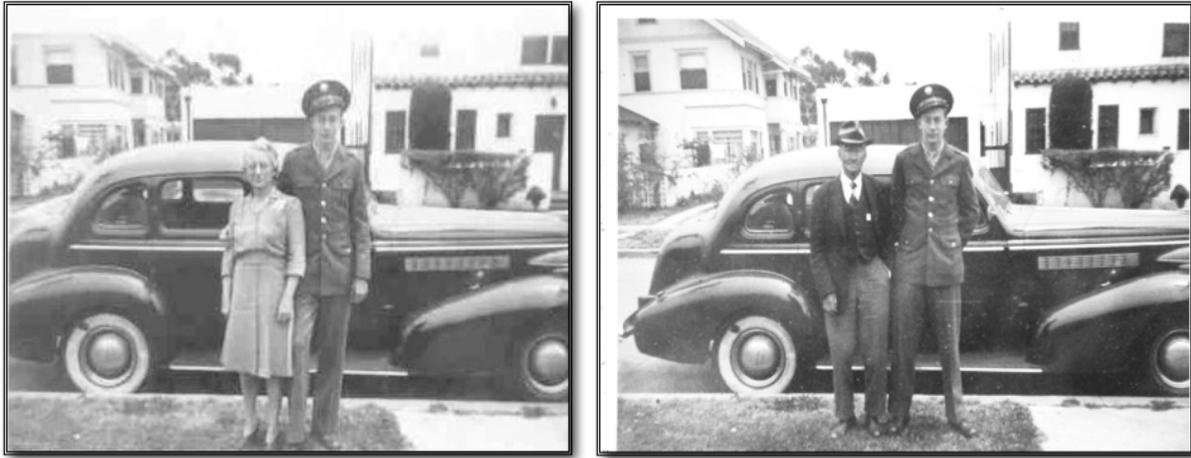
One of my father's favorite questions asked of his UCLA students during his 35 year tenure there was, "If you had a time machine and could only go to one place in time and space, where would you go?" My father often told me that he himself would have a hard time deciding between Cortés' arrival at Tenochtitlan and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Knowing my father as I did, I think he leaned towards the former choice.

The most glowing tribute I can leave to my father is that his family and friends truly adored him. As we will attest forever, H. B. Nicholson was one of the world's most unusual, passionate, compassionate, and loving persons. My father adored Aztec stone sculpture, Aztec codices, Aztec religion and ritual, Aztec iconography, and all other things Aztec; if there is any cosmic justice, I know that my father is presently residing in the Fifth Heaven of the Aztecs.

The last words that I spoke to my father were:

May the blessings of Quetzalcoatl be with you now and always.

I know that he would wish you the same.



Left: 19-year old Private H. B. Nicholson with his mother on April 23, 1944, in San Diego while on leave from his U.S. Army training. Right: And then Nick poses with his father, J. Harry Nicholson. Nicholson family photos.

NICK MAKES THE SUPREME EFFORT

Eric Nicholson

As my brother Bruce notes in the preceding tribute to our father, Nick passed away peacefully amidst his cherished library, which literally had come to surround his bed. As we remember him and celebrate his remarkable life, I would like to add a few more loving recollections of our genuinely erudite but also exceptionally compassionate and generous papà (and recently, grandfather). Nick had a special penchant for coining and sharing little catch phrases, some admittedly more amusing than others, but all bearing his own distinctive stamp. One of these was “it takes a dedicated nut,” which he used to refer to scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. He would apply the phrase to an absent person, but of course the truest, most wonderful dedicated nut was Nick himself! He gave his life to his passion for intellectual inquiry and expression, and best of all, he transmitted this steady enthusiasm to so many others. Also a lover of poetry, he fulfilled Chaucer's description of the Clerk of Oxford, that glorious English university town that Nick knew and loved, who “on bookes and on lernynge spent his stipend, of studie took he moost care and most heed, and gladly would he lerne and gladly teach.”

As his children, we had the extraordinary good luck to benefit for many decades from Nick's brilliant learning and teaching. Both he and our beloved, dearly departed mother Margaret had an unquenchable love of adventurous traveling and took us on trips that in and of themselves formed a priceless education. To mention just two memorable examples, we trundled into station wagons in 1966 and 1970, both times braving tropical thunderstorms, rivers in flood, irregularly operating ferries, washed-out or cattle-blocked roads, and a host of other difficulties in our indefatigable mission to visit remote (back then) Mexican sites like Palenque, Uxmal, and Chichén Itzá. Almost 40 years afterwards, we still remember how our uniquely playful father improvised *wizard* routines as we climbed the spiral stairs of the famous Caracol temple at Chichén. Following a series of extensive travels through Europe, beginning with our moving merrily about in a red Volkswagen beetle in 1968, I became enchanted by European culture and have lived for many years in both England and Italy. My brother Bruce, my sister Alice, and I

thank both our parents, infinitely and forever, for their incomparable gift of opening our eyes to the entire world around us.

Another of my father's favorite phrases was "make the supreme effort," with which he often used to exhort us towards achieving a certain goal or project. Again, though, these words applied especially to himself, as Nick frequently overcame adversity to accomplish a variety of undertakings through sheer willpower. He gave his all to almost anything he set out to do, and his interests and activities knew very few limits. Although his passion for museums and artistic and archaeological sites was the stuff of legend, Nick also loved nature and animals of all sorts. In his beloved Balboa Park, San Diego, he made the Museum of Man his second home, but he also spent innumerable happy hours exploring the outstanding San Diego Zoo. By the time we children were old enough to walk, Nick became our learned and enthusiastic guide to the various attractions of this zoological park, including his favorite old haunts of the polar bear enclosure and the snake house where, at the latter, we never did spot the original Quetzalcoatl or an actual feathered serpent!

My father had a remarkable capacity to orchestrate a range of interests, to move with ease from one ecosystem or social situation to another. His boundless curiosity and eclectic tastes took him snorkeling through waters Californian and tropical as well as hiking past crimson-flowered ocotillo trees and across massive boulders in the deserts east of San Diego. In the human context, he was no less energetic in cheering on his alma mater Berkeley—he remained loyal to the Blue and Gold all his life—at Big Games against archrival Stanford, or in attending performances in the world's great opera houses, including the Metropolitan of New York. At this particular venue, Nick and I had the good fortune to see the late, great, Luciano Pavarotti in 1990. This was a classic Nicholsonian *supreme effort*, as we had to pray along an old ramshackle Honda Civic through pouring rain and heavy New York City Friday rush hour traffic to find one of the last spaces in the Met parking lot, before sprinting our way through halls and staircases to reach our seats. We made it, however, just as we had in 1976, when racing through the Rotterdam art gallery minutes before closing to get a glimpse of Pieter Bruegel's famous painting, *The Tower of Babel*.

We hadn't been so lucky when a young, grinning campesino informed us that it was *demasiado tarde* to visit the pyramid of Teopoztlán, but later that same year, we did manage to ascend the imposing Giralda tower of Sevilla in 42° C heat. Such moments are unforgettable. A lifelong Sherlock Holmes fan, Nick recalled just as vividly our 1987 pilgrimage to Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, scene of the great detective's supposedly fatal tangle with the criminal mastermind Dr. Moriarty. This event occurred just a few days before I would see my father's face glow with happiness as he examined the original Codex Cospi in the Biblioteca di Bologna. To call Nick intrepid and indefatigable is of course an extreme understatement. He thrived on adventures of all kinds, and these included, it must be remembered, his hundreds of research and publication projects, which, thanks to his many hours of "burning the midnight oil," saw determined efforts become true achievements. As a boy, I sometimes wondered if my father ever slept at all.

Nick's lively wit and irrepressible sense of humor shone through on a daily basis, distinctly flavored by his rich supply of memorable experiences. A gifted storyteller, he enlivened our journeys with tales of his own earlier ones, including his sometimes death-defying episodes in World War II and of his encounters with a panoply of intriguing characters, such as the "hustling, bustling" waiters of Sanborn's Casa de Azulejos restaurant in Mexico City, or a pair of overly suspicious train conductors near Cold War Vienna. Just to focus on the 1970s, Nick was

also sighted riding a camel past the Giza pyramids, entering the time machine of ancient Herculaneum, removing his shoes at the Blue Mosque of Istanbul, spouting verses from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in the Gardens of Isfahan, and climbing and climbing through the rose-red canyons of Petra to arrive at a high cliff terrace and gaze, Moses-like, toward the Promised Land far beyond. With his amazing memory, he brought back a treasure trove of tales and impressions from these travels.

Some of you may have heard his humorous story of our Egyptian tour guide who told us not to visit the Ramesseum because it *was* “just a bunch of old ruins” but was overruled by the ever-determined Nick. The guide became duly humbled when Nick identified all the deities carved on that temple's venerable walls and then deftly recited Shelley's *Ozymandias*, a poem inspired by the colossal wreck of that very site. In short, no film or novel could hope to capture Nick's incredible life of travel and learning. Take that, Indiana Jones, you never drove through most of the Middle East, including Iran and Iraq, in a little blue Citroen 2CV *deux chevaux* that somehow survived break-ins, sandstorms, and falls from mountain roads in the middle of the night! Nor did you share slide after slide and anecdote after anecdote from such adventures. If García Márquez advises one to *live life in order to tell stories about it*, then Nick realized that advice as well as anyone we have ever met.

So much to celebrate, then, about my father—his warm and congenial spirit, his true dedication to almost everything that engaged his open and nimble mind, his gracious ability to welcome others into his world of scholarly study. Age could not wither nor custom stale him in the least, and he undertook new projects and kept exploring new possibilities well into his seventies. I feel particularly blessed that I was present for the generous recognition Nick received in 2002, when the H. B. Nicholson Award for Achievement in Mesoamerican Studies was inaugurated at Harvard's Peabody Museum.

Switching gears and crossing the Atlantic again, as Bruce aptly emphasizes, our father was a true lover of Shakespeare's plays, many passages of which he knew by heart, and just one week after the Peabody ceremony, he attended, despite the attempt of an officious usher to block his entry, a scintillating, all-male performance of *Twelfth Night* at the restored Globe Theatre in Southwark, England. I see him even now, enthusiastically remarking that this show was “wonderful,” and had made him laugh, think, and see the play in an entirely new light.

Wonder, enthusiasm, novelty, light, and delight, all these were Nick, and all these he gave us, and will forever give us, in abundance. The Rubaiyat's cupbearer Saki may turn down an empty glass, but our cup runneth over, the cup of delicious and loving insight we have all been so blessed to inherit from Nick.

Fly on, O rare plumed serpent!

Papà, we love you.

Eric Nicholson, father of Caterina (born 2004),

Florence, Italy, 1 October 2007



Mom and Dad, Margaret and Nick, at UC Berkeley, 1950. Nicholson family photo.

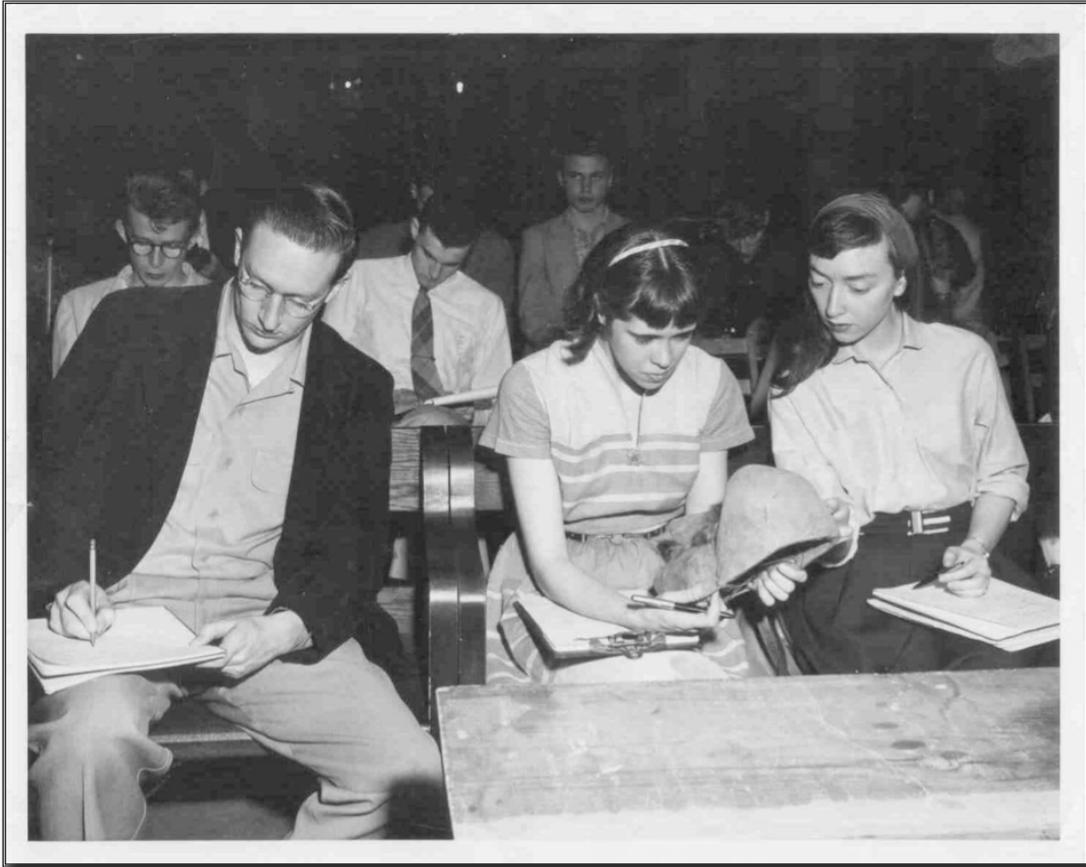
SCHOLAR, INTELLECTUAL, FATHER

Alice Nicholson

My father was special in so many ways. His keen mind was always searching for knowledge on a great variety of subjects, and this made him a true intellectual. As a boy in San Diego, his interest in pre-Columbian studies began when he went to the local public library and found books on the Aztec and Maya cultures that captured his imagination. At the time, I'm sure he never dreamed that he would become one of the leading scholars in that field. Of course, he was always eager to learn all he could about the past and how history affected the modern world.

He also had a wry sense of humor and came up with many memorable one-liners. My brothers and I were truly privileged that he shared his wealth of knowledge with us and the many stories of his childhood that I heard so many times but never grew tired of hearing. He was an involved, loving father who was always interested in what his children were doing and dedicated to expanding our horizons. We carry on his legacy of enthusiasm for learning and his love of travel.

Dad earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues because of his unwavering professionalism and dedication. We were truly blessed that he shared his wit and wisdom with us. Few people had the kinds of adventures he had. He would look back on these experiences and wonder how he had survived. Naturally, we are glad that he did. My father, Nick, will be missed greatly, but his spirit will always be with us.



Nick (left) at Harvard in 1953, taking a class on North American Indian ethnology in Room 15 of the Peabody Museum. Nicholson family photo.

1952: NICK AT THE PEABODY

John B. Glass

Henry B. Nicholson (“Nick”) and I entered graduate school at Harvard at the same time in 1952. We were enrolled in the Department of Anthropology, housed in the Peabody Museum. The department and the museum were separate divisions of the university and were bulwarks for what was considered the traditional definition of anthropology, a field consisting of five branches—social anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, comparative linguistics, and physical anthropology. About that time the Department of Sociology was taken over by social anthropologists and became a Department of Social Relations (“SocRel”). It also awarded a Ph.D. degree in anthropology but eschewed the fields of archaeology and physical anthropology.

The road to the doctoral degree at the Peabody had several obstacles. One was a requirement of two years in residence and course work, perhaps so that Harvard could collect tuition. Another was proficiency in two unrelated foreign languages. Of most concern were the “generals,” a three-hour oral examination before a board of the anthropology faculty, possibly including someone from another university. Here one was expected to demonstrate one’s mastery of the five fields. Finally, of course, was the written thesis, typed on Crane’s dreadful paper according

to strict specifications. The thesis was to present a publishable contribution to knowledge based on original research. Its purpose was to admit the degree candidate to the company of scholars. There may also have been an oral “specials” exam and a thesis defense, but I don’t recall either.

Such was the academic world in which Nick and I (and others) found ourselves. I was freshly out of college and had not served in the military. Nick, however, came with a very different background. By 1952 most veterans (recipients of the G.I. Bill) had moved on, but Nick was not only a veteran but came to the graduate school with a degree in law from Berkeley. Nick explained to me that he had entertained a fantasy that as a practicing lawyer he could support personal research into archaeology. He was already in law school when he realized that this ambition pertained to some earlier century and culture. He nevertheless completed law school but did not take a bar exam. On one occasion Nick told me a little about his military adventures. After more than 50 years, my recollection may be faulty, but I retain the impression that Nick entered Germany with an infantryman’s rifle in his hands. After his unit had taken some village, he entered a private home. With some embarrassment, he told me that he had liberated a book from that house, a punishable military offense. In my imagination, I believe—perhaps hope—that it was a volume of Eduard Selser’s (1902-1923) *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*.

Nick was not only a veteran with a degree in law, he was also married and had an apartment within a few blocks of the museum, and I was entertained there on several occasions. Since he had an apartment and wife, he did not join us other students for lunch or dinner in Harvard Square restaurants. One evening he showed me a copy of the cheap reprint of Torquemada’s *Monarchia Indiana* (1943-1944) from his personal library. The margins were crammed with his handwritten comments and notes. I thought this was a sacrilege of some sort but eventually recognized that the book was his, not mine, and accepted that he could treat it as he might choose. Nick always had a pocket full of three-by-five inch index cards. Whenever he saw a new or unfamiliar book, reprint, or pamphlet, he would unflinchingly make a hurried bibliographical note. I doubt that they were of publishable accuracy or format, but in time, they contributed to the control he exhibited over his field.

Study was not the only activity for the graduate student of archaeology at the Peabody. A special treat was tea with A. M. Tozzer at his home, a short walk from the museum. Gordon Willey (Bowditch Professor of Middle American Archaeology) might dismiss Tozzer and others such as Samuel Lothrop as “pre-stratigraphic,” but Tozzer was greatly respected. He had supervised the education of a whole generation of archaeologists. Later he gave Harvard an entire library building. Nicholson and I were among a new generation of archaeology students not required to read Maya Initial Series dates! The Peabody was a great center of archaeology, and the faculty included independently supported (wealthy) experts who were accessible to students. The headquarters for the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Maya archaeologists was next door.

Nick came to Harvard with an intellectual enthusiasm for the Aztecs (now called the Mexica). I think it could be called a monomania, a dedication that he never abandoned. In the course of one memorable account, Nick told me, with amazement, affection, admiration, and awe, of a long experience that began at some time in his past. As a boy, he had written to George Vaillant (then or later author of the *Aztecs of Mexico*, 1941) at the American Museum of Natural History. Vaillant answered, and the two maintained this curious correspondence for some years. Nick held a special place in his heart for this experience, and he narrated it to me with considerable emotion—the curator and the boy.

The Ph.D. oral examination was a rite of passage faced by most of us with great anxiety and trepidation. It would determine whether you proceeded toward the thesis and degree or whether you would be dropped from the program. It could be failed outright (“goodbye”), or perhaps the marginal student might be given a Master’s degree and advised to continue his (or her) career elsewhere. Some candidates took the exam several times. The examination was conducted in the “smoking room,” a faculty and student lounge in the Peabody Museum basement.

In Nicholson’s case, the examiners included Gordon Willey and others, perhaps Doug Oliver (Social Anthropology, Polynesian ethnology), Hal Movius (palaeolithic archaeology), and faculty whose identity in this case never concerned me. After Nick’s exam, a startled report was circulated, not that Nick had done well or poorly, but that he had treated the examining board as “a captive audience.” This was an extraordinary verdict, and perhaps only one other student (David Kelley) in that time frame might also have earned such an accolade. Amazing! Nick also amazed his examiners by his response to a question posed by Gordon Willey. After being examined on various subjects, Nick was asked (completely out of context), “who was the Sultan of Swat?” Without hesitation, Nick replied, “Babe Ruth.” The encyclopedic man.

In my own case, the orals experience was quite different. I doubt that Gordon Willey had any idea of showing off this student, but when I was asked to discuss the subject of “retainer burials among the Maya,” I froze, wordless to continue. Of the thousands of things studied, such as Australian kinship systems—that was a subject I had ignored. If I hadn’t served a field season in New Mexico with J. O. Brew (the Museum’s director) and two seasons with Willey in British Honduras (now Belize), I believe that I would not have passed that hurdle on the first attempt.

At that time the anthropology faculty at the Peabody did not have a linguist, so one studied that subject in the library in the hope of being prepared for some question. And what, Mr. Glass (or Mr. Nicholson), “is a glottal stop?” Nick’s experience with Harvard’s language requirement is unknown to me but must have been similar to mine, for different reasons. I selected Spanish and German because I had lived in both Central America and Germany. Nick perhaps made the same selection because the one is spoken in Mexico and the other written by Eduard Selser. The language exam at the Peabody was somewhat cursory. I met with Professor Oliver in his office. He drew a German book from a shelf and asked me to translate a page at sight, or perhaps just a paragraph out loud. I did that, not terribly well, and made a polite comment about the weather in my barely adequate German. I had passed. The Spanish exam with Dr. Willey was conducted in a similar way. My examiner, however, took me to task for not knowing the Spanish word, *cimientos* (foundations). Had the Peabody had an instructor in Nahuatl, I am sure that both Nick and I would have dropped German for Aztec.

After graduate school Nick and I were next associated in connection with the *Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Glass 1966, 1975a-d; Cline and Glass 1973). In an early stage of planning for a volume of ethnohistory, Nick had been given a contract for an article on Mexican Indian pictorial manuscripts (“codices”). For that project Nick distributed a preliminary checklist of such documents, classified by cultural areas of Mexico. When it became known that Donald Robertson (at Tulane) and I (still a student in Cambridge) were also engaged in the study and bibliography of that subject, the contract was modified to include Robertson and myself.

After several years the ethnohistorical section of the *Handbook* grew considerably, and the original outline was abandoned. Of the several persons involved in ethnohistorical sources, all under guidance of Howard Cline (1972-1975) at the Library of Congress—Charles Gibson (at

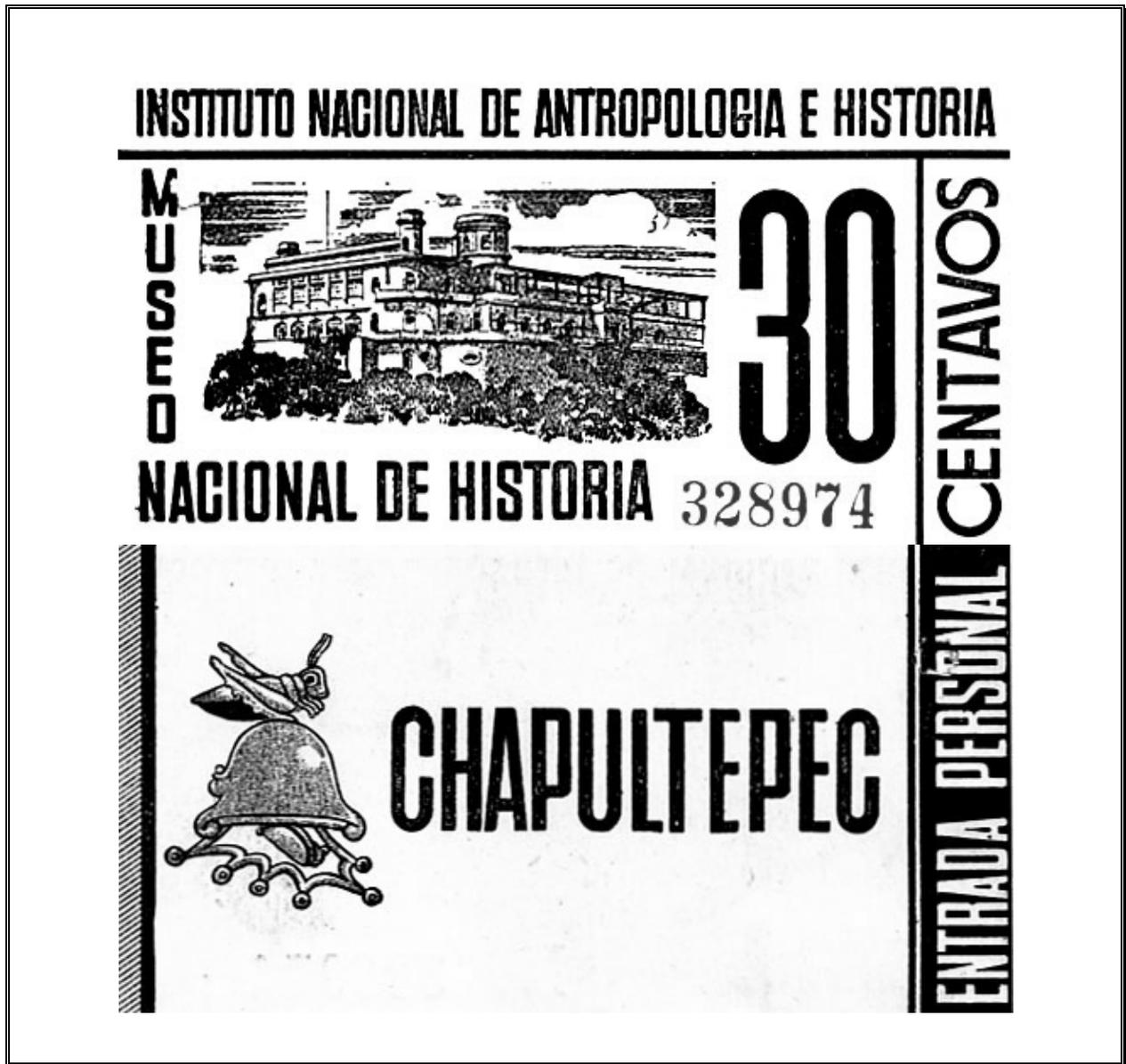
Michigan), Robertson (at Tulane), and Nick (at UCLA), I was the only one not occupied with the demands of teaching. During this time Cline and I awaited expected contributions from Robertson and Nick (Robertson 1972). They seemed forever too busy to comply. I proceeded, gradually and somewhat unilaterally, to complete the pictorial coverage of historical documents. When it was learned at Harvard that what I had written was my own work, J. O. Brew suggested that I submit it as my Ph.D. thesis.

At about the same time Nick withdrew from the project. I always suspected that he never forgave me for usurping his subject. His withdrawal was surely a deep disappointment to him, but he did write an overview for one of the ethnohistory volumes (Nicholson 1975). Nick was good at that; it displayed his deep bibliographical knowledge and ability at synthesis and summary. He also contributed to other parts of the *Handbook* and consequently had an important role in that monumental effort (Nicholson 1971a, 1971b, 1973a, 1973b; Cline et al. 1975).

The final ethnohistory volumes of the *Handbook* were published around 1975. I found employment outside of anthropology, and I fell quite out of touch with Nick. In the last few years, however, we again communicated. He sent me a collection of reprints, and we spoke on the telephone about such important matters as Sahagún and Boturini. I also happened to see on the internet a lengthy bibliography of Nick's scholarly writings. I was able to mention an article he had forgotten, written, as I recall, when he was at Harvard. Nick confessed to me that he had become a captive to "publish or perish." One result, a disappointment to me and surely to others, is that book-length monographs were lost to a narrow sighted and supposedly unforgiving academic policy, probably unnecessary after he had tenure. Did that shibboleth disguise the very human frailty of procrastination or the scholar's delay while seeking the unobtainable goals of completeness and perfection?

One such example of how research might be lost is illustrated by a paper Nick showed me while we were still graduate students. It concerned "Dates of Historical Significance in Aztec Sculpture." He had written it at Berkeley, before coming to Harvard, and then perhaps continued revising it within the grand library of the Peabody Museum. It deserved to be completed and published. In the world before the Xerox machine, Nick let me photograph his manuscript with my 35 mm camera, but I no longer retain prints. I have been told that Nick expanded that subject into what was to have been a major study of Aztec sculpture. Perhaps that work can be rescued from among his papers even though he now is gone.

Nicholson was rewarded for his study at Harvard by an appointment to UCLA. He was expected to study and report on a ceramic analysis project left unfinished by George Brainerd, but potsherds were not Nick's fascination. After moving to Los Angeles, Nick visited Cambridge several times. My wife recalls that he would visit us in our walk-up apartment. We could identify the visitor as Nick by his unusually heavy tread on the stairs. If the apartment rattled, it was our friend Nick! We had a baby girl, and Nicholson had a boy of the very same age. Henry looked closely down at our baby and made some loud but friendly greeting. Julie reacted with some withdrawal from this tall and large stranger with the sharp nose and booming voice. Henry exclaimed, "She reacts to me just like my little Bruce!" In those years Nick's conversation was often addressed to some distant point over his listener's left shoulder. Nick appeared to be reciting what he had to say, as if being recalled from some distant publication. I do not know if he continued that habit. The world was a better place for H. B. Nicholson's having been in it, and the legacy of his work will continue to make it so.



Things were cheaper then. Ticket to the National History Museum in Chapultepec Park from the summer of 1946, the first time H. B. Nicholson visited the INAH facility. Richard H. Dillon collection.

1956: ¿SIGA LA HUELGA?

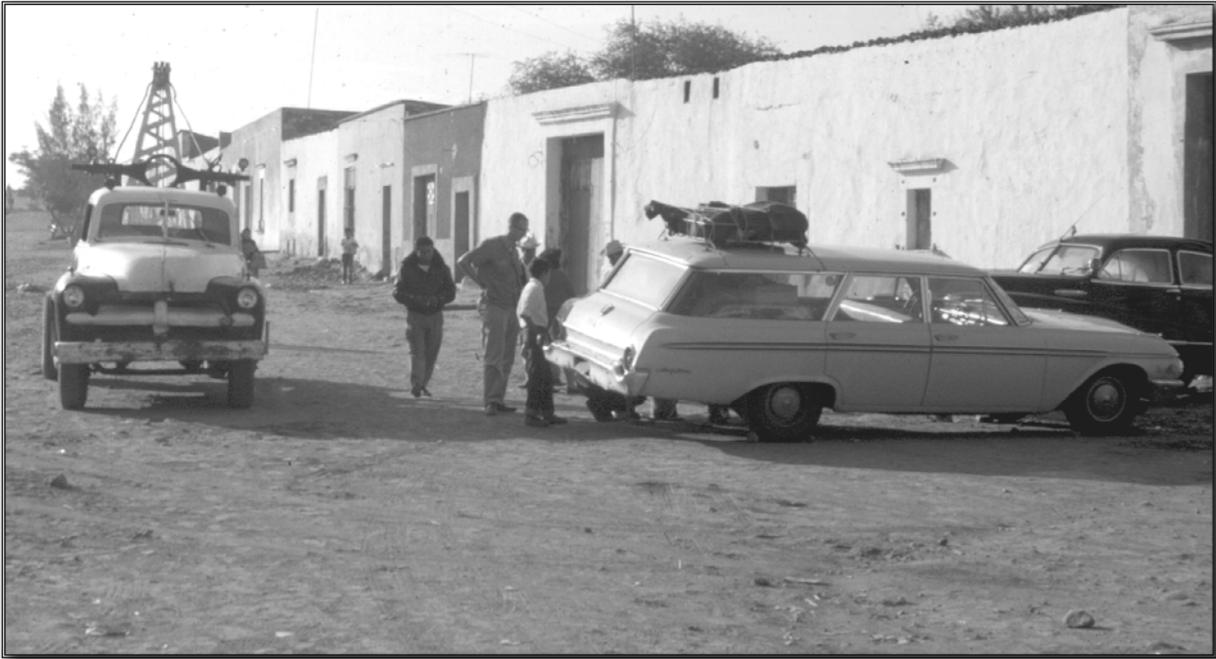
René Millon

Nick and I became acquainted in Mexico City in 1955-1956 after we each had been awarded Doherty Foundation Fellowships for Mexican Study and Research. I moved there with my family, and as I recall, Nick did so as well. We met at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia on Calle Moneda just off the Zócalo in downtown Mexico City. We found when we got to the Escuela that it was not functioning because the students were on strike. We each returned to the Escuela every day at the same time for about two weeks. Then we got an Escuela phone

number, and we each phoned in daily to ask *¿Siga la huelga?* only to find that the answer was always *Sí*. Finally, I started going out to the Teotihuacan Valley daily to work there while Nick continued to live in the city, for he had begun working with documents in the archives.

During this time Nick and I were always in touch. We found that we had a range of similar interests and had many conversations during that year and for years thereafter. I soon realized what a truly brilliant mind Nick had and what an extraordinary range of knowledge he possessed in such a variety of fields, ranging from art, archaeology, and history to economics and law. We shared many views and differed widely on others. He always had strong views on which he expressed himself vigorously but never offensively. I learned so, so much from these conversations.

Years later, in 1972, we were both invited to a meeting in Cambridge, England. While in London at the same time, he suggested that I ask his son, Eric, what was the best time—when the lines were shortest—to visit the Tutankhamen exhibit then in the British Museum. I did so and was pleased to be ushered into the exhibit in the space of a very few minutes. Years later, Eric Nicholson recalled this when we spoke after his father's death. I have the fondest memories of Nick and join so many others in mourning his truly untimely passing.



Nick (at center, in his pre-beard days) in 1963, having a Mexican automotive adventure while en route to field research. David C. Grove photo.

1956: NICK COMES TO UCLA

Brian Dervin Dillon

H. B. Nicholson came to UCLA primarily through the good graces of Clement W. Meighan. Meighan interviewed him, hired him, and became his lifelong friend. If not actually two peas in a pod, then Nick and Clem were, at the very least, from different pods on the same vine. Both were California boys from UC Berkeley, both were World War II combat veterans, and both were tireless workers and incurable optimists, completely western (as in Western U.S.) in their outlook and opinions.

Clem had come to UCLA from UC Berkeley just four years earlier, in 1952, with the promise of a tenure-track job contingent upon finishing his dissertation within a year. Meighan did just that, becoming a full-fledged member of the faculty in 1953 and its youngest Ph.D. Although Meighan and Nicholson had been contemporaries at Berkeley, they had never met there while students. This notwithstanding, Nick's strongest selling point with Clem was their Berkeley connection. Icing on the cake was Nick's Harvard training, making him doubly attractive to the UCLA Selection Committee. In fact, Nick may not have gotten the job had his graduate work been done at Berkeley instead of Harvard. This was because Meighan was no admirer of Robert F. Heizer, Berkeley's archaeological czar from the mid-1940s onwards for the next three decades. If Nick had been a Berkeley Ph.D. candidate, instead of a Harvard one, he might have been suspected as a Heizer fifth columnist.

Fortunately, while Nick had been an undergraduate at Berkeley, he had come to know and admire John H. Rowe, the Anthropology Department's brilliant young Andeanist. This

remarkable scholar, who had transferred his academic interests from the Classics into South American culture history, picking up several Indian languages along the way, awakened Nicholson's interest in New World Conquest Period ethnohistory. The ember passed to Nick by John Rowe at Berkeley would later flare into full flame at Harvard some years later. John Rowe gave Nicholson his highest rating when Clem Meighan contacted him for a recommendation during the UCLA selection process.

The Berkeley approach to humanistic studies was then somewhat unusual and the envy of most other universities, or at least the envy of their long-suffering students. The usual pattern at most American universities was that of rigidly separate departments jealously guarding their turf and of professors no less than students disdaining any work by those "outside their own" department. At Berkeley, however, nobody seemed to care what department you were getting your degree from provided you had a common research interest. Consequently, some of the best writing and publishing at Berkeley in anthropology, culture history, historical demography, and even in archaeology was done by faculty in the History Department, the Geography Department, the Spanish Department, even the Physiology Department. Likewise, if you were an Anthropology major, like Nick in the late 1940s, you could take many if not most of your favorite classes in the History Department and nobody would bat an eye. As late as the 1970s, the highest ranked Berkeley geography undergraduate could be an anthropology major, while a junior staff member on Central American excavation projects could be a divinity student. Meighan had imported the Berkeley archaeological approach to UCLA in 1952 with the goal of transforming "Little Brother U" into the best archaeological institution in the country. Hiring Nicholson in 1956 was part of this long-term plan. Nick and Clem were both extremely proud of the Berkeley tradition, and they held it dear all of their days. At the beginning of their association, it was their closest link.

George Brainerd, the first permanent archaeologist at UCLA, had been trained as a zoologist, and he was the very last and the youngest of the "Carnegie Boys" continuing Sylvanus Morley's tradition of Mesoamerican research begun before World War I. Brainerd had hired a very young (27 years old) Clement W. Meighan as UCLA's newest archaeologist while Clem was still only a Berkeley graduate student. Clem landed the job in no small part because of their shared interest in faunal analysis and the application of scientific methods to archaeology (c.f. Meighan et al. 1958a, 1958b). Brainerd died unexpectedly at age 47 on February 14, 1956, and Meighan, the rising archaeological star of the department, fought both to keep his position open for an archaeologist and to keep the geographic focus for the replacement firmly within the Mesoamerican culture area. This geographic focus was not accidental or strictly academic; Clem's own first foray to Mexico had been at age 17 in 1942, and his first archaeological fieldwork outside the US had been in the Belizean Mayalands in 1950 (Dillon 2005).

Most people today have forgotten that at the time, UCLA archaeologists worked within the "Department of Sociology and Anthropology" and that any important departmental decision governing prehistory had to be unopposed, not only by the vastly more numerous cultural or "social" anthropological luminaries, such as Ralph L. Beals, Joseph B. Birdsell, Harry Hoijer, and Walter R. Goldschmidt, but also had to pass below the potentially censorial radar of the vast swarm of sociologists, most of whom knew nothing about archaeology but, fortunately, cared less.

Clem Meighan took the lead in the search for Brainerd's replacement. In early 1956, en route back to UCLA from the East Coast, Clem "bent" his return somewhat by flying back via Mexico

City so as to interview possible candidates then actively pursuing Mesoamerican research. H. B. Nicholson came to be on a very short “short list” of only three candidates for the UCLA job. Because Nicholson was the only one of the three who had not yet actually earned his Ph.D., he seemed to be the least likely prospect. It is a testimonial to the faith that Meighan had in Nick, and to his powers of persuasion on the other members of the faculty selection committee, that Nicholson was hired on the promise of finishing his dissertation within his first, “trial” year as a lecturer at UCLA. Meighan’s argument was, of course, that if he himself could do it, then so could Nicholson.

One of the conditions of the hire was that the new archaeologist would take over ongoing research projects of Brainerd’s that had been stalled by his untimely death. Consequently, Nick had to tiptoe around the rocks and shoals of the Brainerd legacy during his first few years at UCLA. Brainerd’s primary claim to fame at the time of his death in 1956 was as the editorial heir apparent to the great Mayanist pioneer Sylvanus Morley. Brainerd had revised Morley’s *The Ancient Maya* (1946, 1947) in an attempt to bring it up to date and make it more “scientific.” The posthumous result, Morley and Brainerd (1956), was a much shorter book with none of Morley’s earlier excesses of analogy (“Old Empire vs. New Empire,” “Greeks of the New World,” etc.) yet little of the charm or excitement of the original.

Brainerd had been given the job of revising Morley’s classic book because of his Carnegie Institution connection and his productivity in publishing brief notes on Maya archaeology in the Southwest Museum *Masterkey* as well as a very slim, stand-alone volume on the Maya (Brainerd 1954). Brainerd had spent the final years of his life attempting to reduce laboratory archaeology to a mathematical exercise, coding individual potsherds onto punchcards, a dead end exercise in futility that a younger generation of archaeologists would repeat some 30 years later with personal computers. Brainerd’s (1958) most significant contribution to Mesoamerican ceramic studies would, unfortunately, only appear postmortem, some two years after his death.

Nobody could have been more unlike Brainerd than Nicholson, a kind of ethnohistoric wolf in archaeological sheep’s clothing. Nick was very much a humanist of the old school; to him, all history was biographical, and prehistoric archaeology just didn’t have the names yet. Yet, if the price Nick had to pay for getting the UCLA job was to become a “BB stacker” (California slang for what East Coast types would call a “bean counter”) and inherit Brainerd’s potsherds, then Nick was willing to pay it, at least for a while.

UCLA at the time of Nick’s arrival was still very much “Little Brother U” to the academic colossus to the north. Clem Meighan’s personal goal in building up the archaeological reputation of the UCLA Department of Anthropology, soon to shake off its sociological shackles and become completely independent, was not just to achieve national and international respect, but to specifically meet and even beat the archaeological reputation of Berkeley. In this objective he found a willing and enthusiastic ally in Nicholson, and together the two men, along with dozens of loyal and hardworking students, associates, and fellow researchers, pursued this goal over the next two score years.

By the end of their first decade as collaborators on various Mesoamerican field projects, Clem was firmly established as the leading expert on West Mexican archaeology, and Nick had extricated himself from the entanglements of Brainerd’s moribund mathematical approach to ceramic analysis and shown his true colors as an ethnohistorian. Unfortunately, by the 1960s, introduction of many stellar students to Mexican archaeology, the UCLA archaeologists had run

afoul of some of the younger generation of Mexican archaeologists and government officials. Nationalistic xenophobia, combined with personal dislike, resulted in UCLA being blacklisted for many years despite repeated attempts to heal the breach. Meighan eventually swore that he would never work in Mexico again, and many of Nicholson's forays south of the border for a good many years were limited to "hit and run" visits to archives, libraries, and museums.

Neither Clem nor Nick were invited as representatives of the United States to the grand opening of the Mexican National Anthropological Museum, timed to coincide with Mexico's hosting of the 1968 Olympics. This honor of representing the country fell, instead, to two scholars from Big Brother U, one an archaeologist, the other an anthropologist. The Mexican suspicions of the UCLA researchers, as it turned out, were as misplaced as were the trust and confidence given instead to the gringos from Big Brother U.

At a reception held at the Presidential Palace, many toasts were drunk with tiny brandy snifters with the Presidential Seal of Mexico. The Berkeley anthropology professor representing all gringo anthropologists first filled his own pockets with these miniature mementos, and then his wife's purse, noting many years afterwards that when he passed them out amongst the Mexican Indians and peasants he had been studying for nearly three decades, there was no telling how "high his stock would rise." Meanwhile, the archaeology professor helped himself to several remarkable lance points of green Pachuca obsidian during a tour of the "no public access" storage areas of the National Museum. These "souvenirs" would afterwards reside in a desk drawer in his office, occasionally shown to selected students along with a recounting of their "high-grading" out from under the noses of the Mexican officials conducting the tour.

But time heals all wounds, and eventually UCLA archaeologists would once again be welcome in Mexico. Better yet, Mexican students in increasing numbers would come north to study at UCLA and then return to Mexico with a much kinder, positive impression of the place. After UC Berkeley's archaeological high water mark in the mid-1970s, the department began to lose archaeology students, faculty, and its premier position within the field. This was occurring just as UCLA began to aggressively build up its own archaeological program, not only within the Department of Anthropology, but in many other departments as well. As UCLA did more and more fieldwork, UC Berkeley did less and less. As Berkeley publications in archaeology came less and less frequently, those at UCLA increased, and as the Berkeley archaeology student population dwindled, that of UCLA exploded. If both Nicholson and Meighan retired from formal duties at UCLA by the early 1990s, they still remained active within the field as emeriti, continuing to do the research they loved and publishing as much if not more than before.

Clem went west first. Nick (2005a) penned a brief but memorable farewell to Meighan which appeared only two years before his own passage to academic Valhalla. If it had been the other way around, an epistle from Clem for Nick would take a place of prominence within the following pages. The two old friends got their wish; by the dawn of the new millennium, there was no longer any doubt that UCLA had surpassed UC Berkeley in what it had to offer within the archaeological discipline. Clem's dream had come true in spectacular fashion, and Nick, his first and most loyal recruit, had been instrumental in making it happen.



The Cerro Portezuelo Site under excavation by UCLA in 1957. H. B. Nicholson photo.

1957: TRAVELS WITH NICK IN MEXICO

David M. Pendergast

It is a daunting task to produce a record of the trip I am about to describe, not because the events were traumatic or because they are not still fresh in my memory, but rather because as I set the words down on paper, I am forced to realize that the journey took place more than half a century ago, and of the participants, I am the only one who remains. In a sense the trip began not with Nick but with George Brainerd, whose excavations at Cerro Portezuelo in the Valley of Mexico created the reason for our travel back to the site in 1957. Brainerd chose Cerro Portezuelo as a place to which he could apply the seriation technique that he had developed with W. S. Robinson, and the choice was based on the large quantity of pottery to be found there. In fact his excavations yielded a quantity that was not just large but truly massive, and the shipment of the sherds, reputedly 26 tons of them, to UCLA set in motion two things. The first was the sorting of the material, a task in which I became involved in 1956 as the result of a meeting with Brainerd. The second grew out of his unexpected death not long thereafter and the resulting question of how the pottery was to be treated. Nick's arrival on the scene gave force to the second question, and it was decided that further excavation was advisable in order that a sense of context be developed for the ceramic sample. The time for the work was set as the summer of 1957.

In Nick's mind there was a second sort of impetus for the excavation, which was that Brainerd's excavations had cleared the faces of a small platform which bore traces of mural painting. Unfortunately that event took place very near the end of the project, as such things always do, so there had not been time to produce a record of the evidence. Nick was, of course, an ethnohistorian and a student of Mesoamerican art first and an archaeologist second, and to him the possibility of adding to the corpus of Mexica mural painting by clearing and recording the platform was a huge attraction. I imagine that he could hardly wait for midsummer to arrive so that the work could begin.

The early summer of 1957 saw Nick taking on the task of teaching the UCLA archaeology field school at Paragonah in southern Utah, and I was his teaching assistant. By that time I had already been chosen, perhaps because I had spent a number of months up to my eyes in Portezuelo potsherds, as a member of the crew for the Mexican project. The third member of the team was Clem Meighan, whose interest in Mesoamerica was always strong and whose archaeological experience was, of course, impressively extensive. We were to meet Clem's wife Merilee in Mexico City, but for the trip there were only the three of us. Almost as soon as the field school came to an end, we put together the last of the equipment we would need at Portezuelo and were ready to set off on the long journey.

Our transportation consisted of a Chevrolet Carryall, a forerunner of the later Suburban and of today's minivans, that was much favored by the UCLA motor pool. Its rather forbidding-looking military green paint appeared to be the only color available, for I never saw a Carryall in any other color. I suspect that there are few people around today who remember the vehicle, which had the advantage of holding an impressive amount of cargo as well as several passengers but looked very much like a product of the same committee that intended to design a horse but produced a camel. Various elements of its makeup made it seem very long and rather narrow, and its roofline made it appear quite tall, as if its center of gravity was a considerable distance above the ground. A bit of time behind the wheel showed that the vehicle's appearance was not particularly misleading; especially with a load of equipment in its cargo area, it had many of the handling qualities of a drunken pig. It was, however, rugged enough to withstand the lengthy journey into Mexico and back, and as long as the driver kept hands tightly on the steering wheel, it submitted to human control without too much of a struggle.

The route for the trip took us first through the Southwest and into Texas. The border crossing, never a time without a fair measure of nervousness, turned into a true adventure by the quantity and variety of material with which the Carryall's cargo space was stuffed, but with sufficient discussion we were finally allowed to continue on our way. From the outset the three of us alternated behind the wheel, with the aim of covering as much distance each day as we could manage. The Carryall was obviously not the sort of vehicle in which one could expect air conditioning, and so we tried not to think about it as we drove, sweat-soaked, through each day. At day's end we faced what used to be every traveler's nightmare, the task of finding a place to stay for the night. I do not think that Nick had been through most of northern Mexico before, and neither had Clem, so we had to trust to luck each night, and in addition we had to find a motel or hotel with a walled parking area, because none of us had the strength after a day's driving to unload the Carryall and none of us wanted to start the next day with reloading.

Finally we arrived on the outskirts of Mexico City; now Nick was in familiar territory. His driving, which had been standard enough on the roads of the Grán Chichimeca, took on a new quality as he leapt into the city's traffic and transported us to a small hotel, the Concordia on

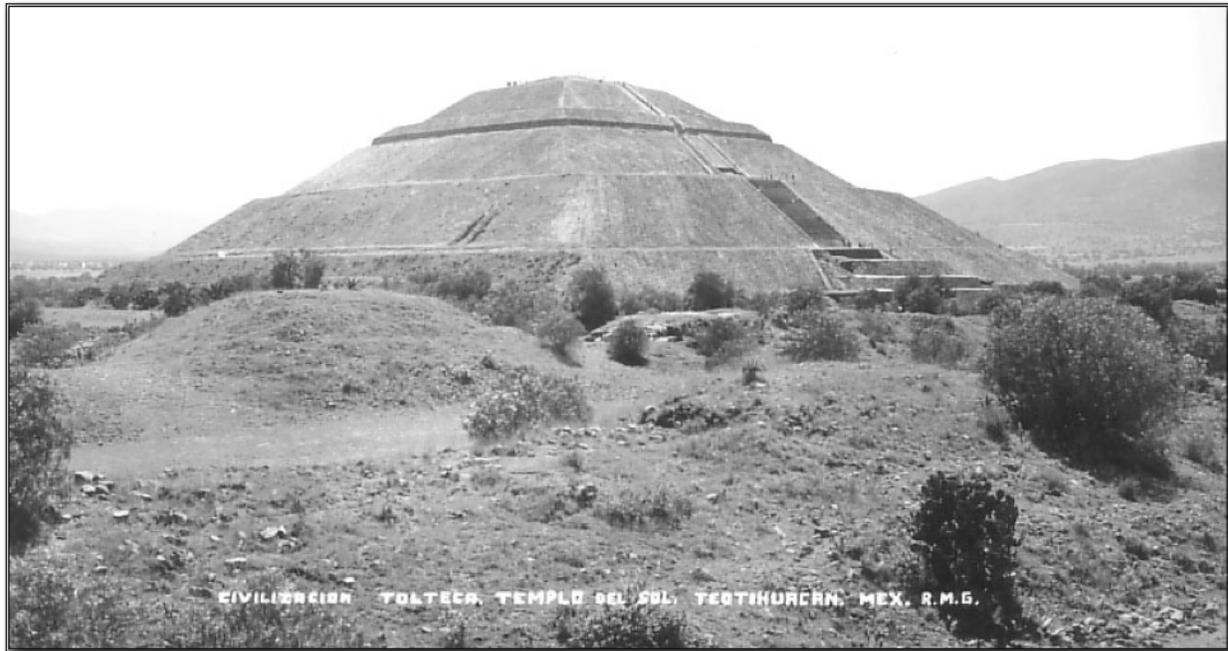
Avenida Uruguay, where he had arranged for us to stay for the first few days. The Concordia was a hotel for Mexican travelers, mostly business people, and throughout our stay we were the only North Americans in the place. The advantage that the hotel offered lay not in magnificent rooms and facilities but rather in its location, just a short distance from the Zócalo and convenient to almost all of the attractions of the city's core. Nick delighted in taking us to places he knew well, such as the Lady Baltimore and the Café Tacuba, and Clem also knew a number of them, so the two of them opened a window for me on the tremendously vibrant city, remarkably alive even though a severe earthquake had struck just a short time before.

By the time Clem's wife arrived, we had begun a daily routine that involved driving out on the ancient causeway across the dry bed of Lake Texcoco to the site area, spending the day sorting out matters with Antonio, who was to be our foreman, and local authorities, including the *ejido* (landholding organization) boss, and then returning to the city generally after dark. As is very frequently the case, we found ourselves caught up in the mesh of local politics, and as is almost always the case, virtually every aspect of the arrangements took far more time to sort out than we had anticipated. Nevertheless, we soon had the necessary permissions; we had arranged a price to be paid to the landowner for any stalks of corn we might destroy during the excavations, and we had a crew of excavators almost as eager to get to work as Nick was to see those murals.

As soon as we could, we moved from the hotel to an apartment house much closer to our route to the site. The two apartments in which we lodged gave us space for some work, the location of the building shortened our daily drives to Portezuelo and back, and additionally a fine little restaurant was right next door. In the apartments we managed to fashion something that passed for a sort of breakfast, and we took food to the site to serve as the midday meal. We always looked forward to dinner at the Restaurante Ingrid when the workday was over.

The restaurant was a very small place whose owner waited tables; as a result we soon became known to the staff, not just for the number of elaborate drinks (*Pai-ais*, they were called) that Nick and Clem consumed but also for our almost unvarying orders each night. We were also known for occasional tricks with the chalkboard, which had the appearance of being the listing of specials but in fact contained exactly the same information during our entire time there. One of the items on the board was *lengua ahumada* (smoked tongue). Time after time Clem used a dampened finger to change *ahumada* to *humana*, and time after time the proprietor carefully chalked the missing bits in again so that he did not appear to be offering human tongues, with never a comment to us or even a piercing stare.

When the day arrived for the start of work, we walked for the first time down the rows of corn to the small rises that marked the site's structures. I remember to this day the sound and feeling of that walk, for we were treading on a mass of Aztec sherds that formed a thick carpet over the entire area. At that point my only experience with ceramics had been at Paragonah with Clem and Nick and through a brief stretch of work at Tikal in 1956 with Ed Shook as Director, neither of which prepared me for the ringing *crunch* of the high-fired Aztec pottery under my feet. Nick and Clem seemed oblivious to the sherds, a view which in Nick's case probably reflected the fact that his interest was focused elsewhere. What the crunching told me was, first, how Brainerd's relatively limited excavations could have produced the tons of pottery that I had been going through at UCLA and, second, how inadvisable a choice the site was for application of the Brainerd-Robinson method, because the quantity of pottery was so huge that even a test excavation would yield far more than anyone could sort and assimilate for any sort of study, whether typological or mathematical.



*Teotihuacan in 1957, as it was when Nick, Clem Meighan, and David Pendergast visited it.
Note incorrect cultural attribution at bottom. Commercial postcard, Matthew A. Boxt collection.*

We had a six-day workweek, with Sundays free. It was on these days that Nick's knowledge of the region and his numerous connections came most forcefully into play, giving us a greater variety of experience of the local situation, archaeological and otherwise, than we could reasonably have expected. We visited the Texcoco market, famous as the source of pottery used by people throughout the area; we saw a bit of the Museum of Anthropology (a very far cry from today's institution) despite its closure some time before; and we visited archaeological sites. We also found, rather to our surprise, that if we were around the city center or even at a site we were quite likely to attract the attention of North American students, a good many of whom were eager to serve as volunteers on the excavation project. Most such offers are the sort of thing that one is well advised to refuse. However, one or two of the students proved to be real assets, especially as regards recording, and so we benefited in more than one way from our free-day travels.

The best experience on one of the Sundays was a visit to Teotihuacan. The great center was, of course, far less developed than it is today, and none of the structures had seen the sort of restoration that has brought the ancient city back to a semblance of its Classic Period grandeur. Beyond the buildings there were contacts with those who were excavating in outlying areas, including René Millon, whom Nick had known for some time, and I was also introduced to Carmen Cook de Leonard, who was engaged in a small excavation. I remember the day at Teotihuacan most vividly for another sort of experience. On the Saturday night before our trip to the site, Nick and Clem had been invited out by friends of Nick's, and on Sunday morning they were very considerably the worse for wear as a result. They had spent the night drinking *submarinos*, a lethal concoction that consists of a large glass of beer with a shotglass of tequila resting at its bottom. The idea is that the drinker will down the beer, catch the shotglass in his teeth, and down the tequila. The skill needed for the task is appreciable, but the ability to carry on the activity for an evening and survive is granted only to a few. Nick and Clem appeared to have survived, but only barely.

Despite their rather ruined condition, the two of them accompanied Clem's wife and me on a tour of the site center. Such an endeavor in the increasing heat of a summer's morning should have driven away some of the effects of the preceding night's partying, but it seemed not to have done so. The evidence of this consisted of an idea that sprang into the head of one of them—I cannot remember which one—that we should run a race up the Pyramid of the Sun. They were in no shape to run a race on the flat, let alone up a steep stair, whereas I was in as good condition as I usually managed and had the additional advantage of a lesser weight of years upon my shoulders. So we ran. I gave the ascent everything I could muster, not just in order to win but also to get to the top well in advance of my two opponents. I succeeded far beyond my expectations, with the result that I was fully able to do what I had hoped, which was to stop panting before the other two appeared at the building's summit.

Eventually they showed up, Nick first as I recall, and it was not possible to say which of the two came closer to the color of the building's stones, for both were a rather striking shade of greenish-gray. When they had caught their breath, which took quite a while, they began talking about the night before and about the final element of the evening's festivities in which their friends took them to a restaurant for a supposed cure for the drink-induced suffering they were beginning to endure. Clem remarked, rather weakly, that although the soup they were served was tasty enough, it had not really helped the hangover. Nick agreed, and Clem then asked what the soup, called *mondongo*, was made of. "Tripe," Nick replied, at which point Clem turned a darker shade of green and proceeded to decorate an edge of the building's top with his stomach contents. How they managed to get back down to ground level, I cannot remember.

The meeting with Carmen Cook de Leonard was the start of intermittent contact with her that stretched over a fair part of our remaining time in Mexico City and, at one point, brought us to her rather grand office in the city center. She was pacing about the space in a state of high anger over newspaper coverage of her recent excavations on the Island of Jaina, which the press had characterized as the work of a *Norteamericana*. Although Carmen was half-North American, she took great offense at the characterization and was probably more concerned about it than about the reports that she had sent a planeload of jade from the excavations out of the country. The other accusation was that she had kept the Jaina figurines she had recovered for herself; in the newspaper she handed to us, there was a government statement in refutation of that charge, with the declaration that all of the figurines from the excavations were securely stored in the Museum of Anthropology.

Nick and Clem and I had taken places on one of two matching long leather-upholstered seats framed in dark wood, rather like elaborate church pews, which were set back to back in the center of the office; each had at its top a flat piece of wood, and the two met at their edges to form a fair-size shelf. On the shelf, at about the height of our heads, stood an amazing assemblage of Jaina figurines, augmented by others that stood on flat surfaces elsewhere in the office. None of us had ever seen so many Jaina figurines before, and I, at least, had never even been close to one. To be able to remove headdresses and see the hair depicted beneath, to withdraw scepters from hands, to remove cloaks and other pieces of clothing, was an experience beyond description, albeit with the slight difficulty that the evidence before our eyes did not quite seem to support the government statement.

After a relatively short time our excavations at Cerro Portezuelo reached the critical stage. We had, over the course of the work, essentially reopened Brainerd's excavations, though we had gone beyond them in several areas. Now we were ready to expose the faces of the platform on

which the mural remains were to be seen. Nick had not actually been hopping up and down before this, though he often seemed to be, but now I thought that I could detect some light between the soles of his boots and the ground. As the excavators removed the last sections of earth, the platform faces came slowly into view, and when they were cleared, we had before our eyes the evidence that the building had indeed once borne mural paintings. Unfortunately the evidence consisted of a few streaks and blotches of red paint, just enough to show that there had been something more than the common sort of monochrome red-painted façade, probably paintings of some complexity. Nick stopped hopping. He bore the disappointment well, but he was noticeably quieter than usual at dinner that night; there was less spring in his step when we returned to the site the following day.

There was now just one task remaining, as no recording of the paint patches was necessary: backfilling. Always a boring job and almost always done when too little time remains for the task, backfilling is unquestionably the most “down” of the downside of archaeology. I intended to help, though we had the local men to undertake the bulk of the task, but to get it done in time they needed some extra encouragement. For that purpose the foreman Antonio undertook to arrange some liquid refreshment, which arrived in the form of a gigantic demijohn containing what appeared to be about five gallons of *pulque*—not the sanitized version that is generally found today but the old-fashioned, chewed-agave-spat-into-a-container kind. With the greyish and rather swirly appearance of milk gone badly sour, and a smell that made sour milk seem like ambrosia, proper antique-style *pulque* had the appearance of being potentially lethal and certainly of such potency as to put *submarinos* entirely in the shade. The question, I thought, was whether the foul liquid would pep the men up or lay them flat.

The answer was not long in coming. As the pulque fuel began to fire up the men’s engines, I found myself surrounded by seemingly maddened shovel-wielding men who appeared to be bent on creating such a flying cloud of earth that it would be visible from miles away, if not from the moon. I tried to keep pace, but without the rocket propellant that was driving the others on with the job, I had no hope whatsoever. After a bit I retired, sweating profusely and with my honor very obviously besmirched, to the huge merriment of the men, who paused for a brief moment in their headlong flight to make a variety of comments, not all of them disparaging, as I stepped back from the trench. Nick and Clem had the good sense not to get stuck in the operation in the first place, and so they were able to comment on my defeat from a vantage point a little distance away. Their comments were entirely disparaging, although uttered in a humorous tone.

The rush to complete work at the site was engendered by the next item on our agenda, which was a trip to Oaxaca to attend the Mesa Redonda conference of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología (Mexican Anthropology Society), scheduled to begin a few days hence. Accordingly, once the work was done and the men paid off, we arranged for storage of our equipment at Antonio’s house, gathered together what we thought we would need during our sojourn in Oaxaca, and were off in the Carryall once again. At least this time there was not the great weight in the back, but absence of all that ballast proved to make little difference as regards the handling qualities of our redoubtable vehicle; the pig was still drunk.

There were several possible routes from which to choose, but Nick was insistent that we head down to the Gulf Coast and then on to Oaxaca, by far the least direct route possible. His choice stemmed partly, I think, from his desire that we see the lowland tropical environment of the coastal area, but after a time I came to believe that his principal motivation lay elsewhere. To descend from the highlands to the coast one has to negotiate the Tamazunchale grade, which



UNSTOPPABLE IN OAXACA, MEXICO. 1957

The Road to Oaxaca in 1957: Airstream Trailers and Detroit Iron on the same path as Nick and David Pendergast. Commercial postcard, Matthew A. Boxt collection.

Nick knew about but we did not. Tamazunchale resembles (I assume that it has remained unchanged in the past half-century) more than anything else a fiendishly complex slalom course on an extremely steep ski slope, and it has the additional attractive quality of being carved out of the cliff face so that on the outer side one is constantly made aware of the land that lies far, very far, below. As a vertiginous experience, it ranks near the top; it is no place for anyone with acrophobia, and is quite likely to induce it in people who have never before been afraid of heights. Nick knew all of this when he set us on our course. I think that Clem actually did the driving down the grade, and if I can trust my memory, Nick was at least grinning, if not chuckling, as we descended to the lowlands to the accompaniment of frequent screams from Clem's wife.

The time in Oaxaca was a highly rewarding one on many counts. In addition to the opportunity to see most of the leading lights of Mexican anthropology, including Alfonso Caso, and to meet some in person, we were able to visit Monte Albán and Mitla, the only sites open to visits in those days. We also had the great pleasure of coming to know something of Oaxaca City, a place that remains my favorite urban spot in the country. The conference lasted for almost a full week, and we remained for all of it, though by its end Clem and his wife were coming fairly close to the day when they were scheduled to catch a plane from Mexico City back to Los Angeles. We had expected to start the trip back to Mexico City just as we had made the trip down, but near the end of the conference Nick's plans changed. He was offered the chance to accompany several individuals on an expedition into the Mixteca Alta, an area that he had never seen, and he leapt at it. While he headed off into the mountains, the rest of us boarded the Carryall for the journey

northward by a route much more direct and less scream-inducing than the one taken on the way down.

Very soon after our arrival in Mexico City, Clem and his wife departed for home, and I was left to see to arrangements with Antonio. I had an unknown but probably long time ahead of me before I could expect Nick to arrive. I had the Carryall at my disposal, and for the time being the city was my oyster, or so it might have been but for one thing—in the scramble to arrange the trip into the Mixteca Alta, Nick had forgotten to entrust me with any of the project funds. I was a typical graduate student, which is to say that I had only slightly more than enough pesos with me to cover the cost of two Carryall trips to Antonio's house. On the second trip Antonio very graciously invited me to stay for lunch, my first meal in a local home and a very great honor for a mere graduate student. Once I had packed the equipment into the Carryall and made my way back into the city, I drove the vehicle into its arranged parking space in the knowledge that I would not see it again for some days to come, for I could not afford to refill its gas tank. My few remaining pesos were just sufficient to drive home the overwhelming need to hoard my cash carefully, and as it was clear that I could not be off touring round the countryside, I saw that the city would have to provide entertainment despite my impecunious state.

By the time we left for Oaxaca, I had seen most of the free attractions in the city center, but I toured all of them again, some for a third time. I passed a good many hours in bookshops, but was reluctant to remain for too long when it was painfully obvious that I was not about to purchase even a cheap volume. Having learnt that a single cinema ticket entitled me to stay through a run of films that sometimes extended to five, I spent quite a bit of time in theaters along the Paseo de la Reforma, and when I had exhausted that time filler, I simply wandered the city, enjoying the architecture and the crowds.

I do not mean to recount all of my adventures during those slowly passing days, but one event is absolutely deserving of a full description. One day, just past noon, I was walking along Reforma when I saw a large crowd gathered about a block ahead of me; "must be an accident," I thought, as I hurried toward the scene. By the time I arrived there was nothing to be seen in the street, and so I asked a bystander what had happened. He told me that a short time before an obviously upper-class woman in a Cadillac had stopped for a red light, and the equally large car of the woman behind, who failed to notice what was going on, had struck the rear bumper of the Cadillac a slight blow. The woman in front, jolted by the tap, looked in her rearview mirror and saw what had happened; not willing to bear such an attack on her dignity without retaliating, she pulled forward into the intersection, slammed the car into reverse, and gave the offending woman's car a fair bash in the front. The rear driver was not about to take this in silence, and so she backed up some distance and roared forward into the rear of the Cadillac. The woman in front could not fail to respond in kind, pulled into the intersection and screeched backwards into her attacker. Then the rear attacker...well, you get the picture; by the time the impromptu demolition derby ended, both cars had to be towed away.

Diversions such as this kept me entertained until Nick appeared, several days after I had begun to despair of his arrival. When he showed up at the Concordia, he looked as if he had walked into Oaxaca's mountains and back and then hitched a ride in a cattle truck to get to Mexico City. He was clearly exhausted and could barely muster a bit of enthusiasm for dinner at the Tacuba Café, something I was looking forward to with great eagerness since I had been subsisting on precious little for several days. The meal perked him up a trifle, but as soon as we got back to the hotel, he fell onto his bed and was unconscious before I could even say, "Good night."

The following morning saw Nick a trifle perkier than he had been on his arrival, but he was still obviously in need of sleep. Nevertheless, he set our departure for the following day, which meant that we had only a day to recover our equipment from Antonio's house and pack it into the Carryall, and then our trip would not be directly back to Los Angeles but rather into the northernmost corner of the country, the state of Tamaulipas. I knew nothing more about Tamaulipas than that Scotty MacNeish had carried out some excavations there, but Nick was in possession of an invitation to examine archaeological sites on the ranch that belonged to Clint Murchison, a spread so large that on the map it appeared to occupy at least half of the state. We started off with our same sort of driving routine, though the division of labor was not equal because Nick was not really up to the task, and we stopped when we could go no farther and found a suitable place for the night. In rather less time than I had expected, we found ourselves at the jumping-off spot for the trip to the ranch.

Nick had directions to the ranch that appeared too minimal to be of much use, but as it turned out, the area offered very few alternatives as regards passable roads; in fact the route to the ranch was somewhat beyond the "passable" category, as it was mainly the dry bed of a rather rocky stream. It was a several-hour fight to get to the ranch, and as soon as we arrived, the foreman took us on a trip, this time on rock-free tracks, to see the sites. They proved interesting, very interesting indeed, consisting as they did of small mounds in regular arrangements around plazas or courtyards, and none appeared to have suffered from looting. We could do nothing but observe them and make a mental note that their excavation would almost certainly prove rewarding, and then we were off to the ranch house for a tour round its magnificence in advance of our trip back down the riverbed. It was nearing dusk when we started the return journey to the highway, and it was dark long before we were back on macadam again. By this point we were both worn thin, but in the course of the trip, Nick had expressed a concern that made our condition irrelevant. He was extremely anxious to be back at UCLA by Tuesday in order to meet the first session of an extension course that he was scheduled to teach that semester, and it was already Sunday evening.

The road to Brownsville, Texas lay before us, albeit invisible in the darkness, and so off we set. I had taken the wheel for the descent from the ranch, for Nick was in no shape to drive, and I stayed in the driver's seat, because he had very much the appearance of having been dragged down the riverbed. In a few minutes he was sound asleep, despite the lack of comfort that characterized the Carryall's seats. He slept the sleep of exhaustion, with only the briefest of breaks when we passed through a village where a very elaborate celebration was in progress and the exploding fireworks jolted him from his slumbers. I drove on through the night, and as dawn was breaking, we arrived at the border crossing.

We had documents to show who we were and why we had been in Mexico, and once the U.S. Customs officer had looked them over and then managed to roust himself from his chair, he came out to examine our thoroughly stuffed vehicle, the back of which I had opened to reveal the very formidable jumble of things in the mass. "Unpack it" was all he said as he headed back to his office, so I removed all of the items and laid them out on sloped tables provided for the purpose, with Nick helping as much as he could in his fatigue-drugged state. When I had everything ready for inspection, I informed the officer, who emerged from his office, walked past the array of stuff at a brisk pace, and said "Pack it" as he headed back to his chair. We were the only people there, the border post was far from civilization, and the officer never knew in what real danger he had placed himself. Both Nick and I made some comments about his

ancestry as we got the mass of material back into the vehicle and started on our way westward toward Los Angeles.

Once we were well beyond the crossing point I asked Nick if he could drive for a while, as I had been at the wheel for something over ten hours and was beginning to feel the need to close my eyes for a while. Nick took over, and I dropped off to sleep only to be awakened about half an hour later by several stiff jolts as the Carryall bounced over the rough ground of the highway's shoulder. Nick had fallen asleep at the wheel, and he declared that he could not manage another mile. So, not entirely willingly, I took the wheel once more, having decided that I would rather perish in a crash at my own hands than be awakened for a millisecond before we plowed into a tree with Nick driving. The road ahead was clear enough on the map, but I tried not to think about it, for its length was so great as to be frightening. On we went, Nick still sound asleep, through the day and into the night, and still we went on, stopping only when the need to refuel arose. Each hour of that night was at least a week in length, but somehow we survived into the first light of morning, by which time we were in eastern California. "Almost home," I thought, but the words followed immediately, "Almost isn't enough."

Finally we were on fully familiar ground again, heading down what is now the I-10 Freeway through Riverside County in Tuesday morning's rush hour. There was now very little difference between Nick and me, for we were both unconscious, although I still had my eyes open. As we boomed down the freeway, surrounded by the standard impatient morning commuters, I was hallucinating. I could see the roadway; I could also see, and hear, a scene in a kitchen in which two women were discussing something (what, I could not tell), and while I watched the scene unfold, I knew with absolute certainty and total clarity of vision that the whole thing was taking place in the Carryall's right rear hubcap. The thought occurred to me at this point that after almost 36 hours at the wheel I was probably not in the best condition for freeway driving, especially in the morning rush hour, but I plowed on nonetheless; around midday we arrived at my apartment, near the UCLA campus. When I could pry my hands loose from the steering wheel, I transferred full management of the vehicle to Nick and staggered off to my home. I do not know if Nick made it to his class that night, for I never asked; as for me, I slept almost without a break for nearly 48 hours.

As a postscript to the tale, I will only add that when I look back at that world through the lens of what I have written, I realize how truly distant those times are and how much enjoyment they held, though I may not have seen things in quite that way at the end of the trip. I am conscious, too, that words cannot re-create the sights and sounds and smells of times and places that have descended into history. You had to be there.



*A hatless, beardless H. B. Nicholson (center) excavating at Chimalhuacán, 1958.
David C. Grove photo.*

1958: Nick's Narrow Escape—Chimalhuacán and Beyond

Rudolph C. Troike

Ebullient is the word that best captures Nick Nicholson—head bobbing above a throng on a crowded sidewalk as he strode along, charging up a hillside to reach an archaeological site, recounting endless anecdotes about people and places, laughing raucously at his own or others' jokes, commenting cynically and ironically on frustrating people and events, always with the same full endowment of enthusiasm and endurance that made it a constant pleasure to be in his company. It is difficult to realize that this restless, questing spirit is now quiet.

In August 1954, when I and Nancy Patterson Troike, newly married in Texarkana, Texas, arrived at UCLA, where I had received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, the “classic” Department of Anthropology and Sociology was at its height. Joseph Birdsall had recently completed his survey of red-headedness among Australian Aborigines, Ralph Beals was in the midst of his extensive study of the ecological foundations of California Indian tribes as part of their lands claims cases, George Brainerd had recently published his modest but masterful summary of Mayan civilization, Harry Hoijer (with whom I had gone to study) was the leading figure in American Indian linguistics, a young Clement Meighan was beginning his important work in California archaeology, and Walter Goldschmidt was making his mark in social anthropology. Beals, a genial figure, invited Nancy to be a member of his project, and I enrolled in George Brainerd's seminar in archaeological theory, the topic of which was acculturation. The seminar was a

unique experience, since Brainerd began by introducing the topic and issues, and we discussed some basic readings for a few weeks. Then the class was dismissed until the end of the semester, when members returned to present their papers.

This was a heady time to be a graduate student in anthropology at UCLA. Dell Hymes was there on a postdoc to study with Hoijer, and Keith Dixon (who later worked with Nick at Ixtapaluca Viejo) had come from Arizona to pursue his Ph.D. with Brainerd. In the spring of 1955, Meighan offered a field methods class on Saturdays, excavating a shell midden near Point Mugu, where we learned precise methods of troweling to find tiny shell beads which would readily have been lost even with a fine-mesh screen. Brainerd, who had invited me to be his grader in his course on Primitive Art, became ill early in the semester and took medical leave. Although he secured a Teaching Assistantship for me for the following year, my professors at the University of Texas arranged a fellowship for me there, and so we returned to Austin in the fall and began work on our MA degrees in Anthropology and my Ph.D. in Linguistics.

Nancy was fortunate to be awarded the E. D. Farmer Fellowship to study at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City, then located at Moneda 13, the site of the present Museo Nacional de Las Culturas. She went down in early 1956, as the school year then ran from March to October, driving a Ford station wagon, which provided a rare source of transportation not available to most students or even Mexican professionals, few of whom could afford to own a car in those days. It was a happy coincidence that Nick Nicholson came to Mexico that spring as well, and Nancy got to know him through their common interest in Mesoamerican ethnohistory. Thanks to the station wagon, she made it possible for Nick to visit many archeological and historical sites in the area which he had known about, often in exquisite detail, only from the writings of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. One notable, almost inaccessible, site was the still-attached statue of the goddess Cihuacoatl, frozen in the process of creation by the tragic events of 1521, which now graces the front of the new Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

We had returned to the University of Texas in 1958 after my receipt of the E. D. Farmer Fellowship had enabled us to spend an additional year in Mexico, during which time we had had the opportunity, together with John Graham, later of UC Berkeley, to initiate a site survey and preliminary excavation at a Classic Period site in the Río Verde Valley of San Luis Potosí, part of the traditional Huasteca (Troike et al. 1972). Earlier, George Brainerd had contacted me and invited me to join him as his assistant in an archaeological project in Baja California, an invitation which would certainly have meant my return to UCLA and completion of my interrupted Ph.D. program there, utilizing the project as the basis for a dissertation. These plans were suddenly terminated by the tragic news of Brainerd's untimely death, so I ultimately remained at Texas to complete my Ph.D. in linguistics.

Nick Nicholson's appointment to fill the position vacated by Brainerd's death brought about the circumstances to be described here. A wealthy California oil man, who was then a Regent of the University of California, happened to learn that Clint Murchison, a Texas oil tycoon, owned a ranch in the Sierra de Tamaulipas which contained the northernmost Mesoamerican site in northeastern Mexico, and he persuaded Murchison to support a study of the site by an expedition from UCLA. Nick, presented with this "command performance" charge, contacted Nancy and me to see if we would join him in the effort. We happily accepted, and accordingly Nick arrived in Austin in June in the UCLA Carryall, accompanied by Dave Grove and his wife, Gretchen. Tom Walsh, a student at the University of Texas, also signed on. Before leaving for Mexico, I

had the opportunity to introduce Nick to George Charles Marius Engerrand, the senior member of the Anthropology Department at Texas, who had succeeded Franz Boas as Director of the InterAmerican School of Anthropology and Archaeology in Mexico prior to the Mexican Revolution. Engerrand, who had a photographic memory for detail, on learning that Nick had participated in fieldwork in Puerto Rico with Gordon Willey, asked what site he had worked at and began quizzing Nick on details of pottery types and stratigraphy that Nick could only fumble over, with the excuse that it had been several years since the excavation—the only time I ever saw Nick at a loss for words.

We set out for Tamaulipas and reached Victoria, the state capital, where we stayed before backtracking to reach the entrance to the ranch, further inland and north of the main highway. We found a guardhouse there and a two-way radio to communicate with the ranch. The ranch was managed by Howard Ward and his younger brother, Robert. Robert had been a local football hero in my hometown, Brownsville, Texas, several years ahead of me in school, so I knew him slightly. In talking with Robert Ward, it quickly became apparent that Murchison had neglected to inform them of our “invitation,” and he “freaked out,” becoming almost hysterically incoherent in rejecting the possibility of such an interruption in the operation of the ranch, for whose financial success they were responsible. Eventually we extracted an agreement for us to return and talk the next day, which would give him time to contact Murchison and confirm our invitation.

We used the extra time to locate the site in Pánuco where Gordon Ekholm (1944) had done his original definition of the archaeological sequence in the Huasteca, and we returned to the ranch the next morning. This time the conversation was more coherent, but we had to counter arguments attempting to dissuade us from undertaking the work. Finally an agreement was reached by which we would be admitted to the ranch in two weeks, evidently after some essential roundup work had been completed, and our research time thereafter would be limited to only three weeks.

With two weeks of enforced idleness facing us, Nick decided to head south to Mexico City and see whether it might be feasible to do some follow-up work at Cerro Portezuelo where Brainerd had worked earlier. Along the way Nick regaled us with a running encyclopedic account of the ethnohistory of the area we were traversing and with amusing and sometimes surprising anecdotes about other members of the profession, including a comment that one lusty archaeologist had left his genes all over northern Mexico and the revelation that a certain well-known model for historical reconstruction published by one scholar had actually been a joint seminar report at Harvard in which Nick had participated. Arriving at Cerro Portezuelo, Nick determined that circumstances were not appropriate for work there, and he somehow arrived at the alternative of doing some salvage archaeology at Chimalhuacán, a small community on the eastern shore of Lake Texcoco, south of Texcoco City, which had not been studied before. He obtained the necessary official *permiso* from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and presented it to the mayor of the town, who duly signed it. Roberto Gallegos, a young archaeologist from INAH, was assigned to work with us with the help of the custodian of the small INAH museum in Texcoco, who agreed to be our field boss. Some local workmen were recruited, and we commenced excavations.

Chimalhuacán clearly showed its Prehispanic roots by a small mound in the center of town which had been the ceremonial nucleus. The mound had unfortunately not escaped the attention of *huaqueros* (pothunters) who had looted its interior in a futile search for treasure. However, we

hoped to recover information on the dimensions and structure of the mound and collect samples of pottery and figurines which would help date the history of its construction. After we had worked for about four days, collecting and documenting bags of *tepalcates* (potsherds) and occasional figurine fragments, which were nightly taken to Texcoco for storage, late one morning several large black cars appeared, and several men in dark suits emerged and began talking with the workmen, who one by one began putting down their picks and shovels and moving away from the site. Engrossed in the excavation, I had not paid much attention to our visitors until one of them came up to speak with the workmen I was supervising and then told me that it was in my best interest to stop working and come with him to the mayor's office.

Accordingly, we trooped down to the mayor's office and waited outside as a small group of curious townspeople gathered. Shortly the bell in the local church tower began tolling, and soon people began pouring in from all quarters, the crowd swelling to perhaps a hundred. After some time waiting, the mayor finally appeared and sat down at his desk, at which point we were led into his office, and the aim of the intervention was revealed when one of the men in black asserted that we had been conducting our excavations in contravention of the law. When the mayor responded that we had presented proper documentation from INAH and that he had duly signed it, he was told that he had no authority to do so since the archeological material removed was the property of all the people of Chimalhuacán; therefore all the people of the town had to give their permission for the excavations to take place. When the mayor continued to protest that everything had been in legal order, he was verbally pilloried for supposedly illegally usurping the authority of the people, and we were led outside after the mayor slipped away. Given the evident tenseness of the situation, Dave Grove, Gretchen, Tom, and Nancy were sent back to the Carryall to wait, and Nick, Roberto, our INAH foreman, and I remained in the square, more or less under guard.

Most of the black cars then left, but one man remained who began to incite the crowd with denunciations of our work as stealing the *patrimonio* of the people of Chimalhuacán. While I did not follow his argument too closely, part of it included suggesting that the potsherds we had excavated must have some intrinsic value, else why would we come from outside and pay good wages to dig them up and take them away?—an argument reminiscent of the one which forced Franz Boas to abandon his effort at the first stratigraphic excavation in Mexico (then still observable at the *Pozo de Boas*), when villagers supposed that through alchemy he could turn potsherds and figurines into gold.

As the agitator continued fervently denouncing us, the crowd began to become hostile, and some began picking up stones from the street. At this point I suddenly realized what it was like to be the object of a lynch mob and what it must have felt like for victims of lynchings to be in such a position. This concern was concretized when one sweet-looking grandmotherly woman began jumping up and down, crying, “*¡Los linchamos, los linchamos!*” Although I had never before heard the verb in Spanish, I had no trouble immediately grasping its meaning.

Just as it appeared that the crowd was about to turn on us and let fly with their stones, the agitator suddenly switched from his harangue and urged calm, saying that we had not yet had a chance to tell our side of the story and that we needed to have an opportunity to defend ourselves before any final judgment was rendered. Accordingly, Roberto Gallegos was lucklessly recruited as a witness to explain the purpose of our mission, which he did by trying to explain the principles of stratigraphic excavation in relation to historical interpretation. This rather dry and uninteresting account soon lost the attention of the crowd, who began putting down their stones

and drifting away. Upon seeing this, the agitator intervened and began once again inciting the crowd as before. And once again, as they retrieved the dropped stones and were about to set upon us, the agitator halted them with the caution that they had not yet fully heard the argument from our side.

After this drama had been repeated two or three times, it became apparent that the agitator was simply playing with the crowd and did not wish any real harm to result. Eventually, it was accepted that we were not there working on our own initiative but rather under INAH auspices, and so this was a federally authorized project. Therefore INAH should be allowed to send out a representative to render an accounting. Our Texcoco foreman was then permitted, under close guard, to use the one public telephone in town to call INAH and ask someone to come out.

We waited for about an hour, hanging around the Carryall, which had had rocks placed under the wheels, for the INAH representative to arrive. The crowd remained surrounding us, and the sweet grandmotherly woman who had called for our lynching proudly told me that she was the one who had rung the church bell to assemble the village. It was particularly ironic that we could clearly see the Torre Latinoamericano in downtown Mexico City across the lakebed (now impossible because of air pollution), while the events unfolding made it feel as though the city might as well be a thousand miles away.

In due time a red Jeep from INAH arrived carrying the representative, and we were called to return to the square. He was invited to address the crowd and began by rather officiously informing them that they were interfering with a duly authorized federal activity. The agitator quickly interrupted him, informing him that while that might be true, he was now in the hands of the people of Chimalhuacán. The INAH representative suddenly turned quite pale and then began addressing the crowd in much more conciliatory terms. After some time a compromise was struck by which all of the excavated materials were to be brought back from the museum in Texcoco and turned over to the village authorities. We were held in the square while the INAH jeep went to Texcoco and retrieved the bags of *tepalcates*, which were lined up in front of the village offices, and a receipt was given to the INAH representative for them, along with assurances that they would be kept in protected storage.

Once all the sherds were set up in a row, the assembled crowd was allowed to inspect them, forming a single file and walking past the bags. Very amusingly, some people dipped into the bags and retrieved a few sherds, surreptitiously slipping them into their pockets. Realizing that the bags of sherds had so absorbed the attention of the crowd as to leave us standing momentarily forgotten, I suggested that this was an opportune time for us to slip away, and so we slowly moved to the end of the building and around out of sight without attracting attention. Then we sprinted to the Carryall and the jeep, removing the rocks from under the wheels as we went. As soon as the crowd heard the motors start up, they realized that we were escaping, and they came roaring around the building shouting “¡ladrones, ladrones!” (thieves), futilely throwing rocks after us.

That evening there was a formal reception at INAH headquarters to which we had been invited, and so, cleaning ourselves up at our hotel after our harrowing encounter, we found ourselves only a few hours later rather bizarrely and incongruously enjoying a highly civilized and sophisticated cocktail party. Nick took it all in stride, his equanimity seemingly unfazed, as though it had been just part of a day's work. When we encountered our friend Ignacio Bernal, later head of INAH, at the reception and told him our story, he laughed and said that he had

heard about it and explained to us that we had been made the scapegoats in a political fight between the governor of the State of Mexico, which encircles much of Mexico City outside the Distrito Federal, and the federal government. The agitators were from the governor's office, and the intent had been to embarrass the mayor, who was on the wrong side of the dispute. We were merely caught in the middle, having provided a convenient provocation.

Our efforts at Chimalhuacán thus thwarted, we returned to Tamaulipas, where the Ward brothers had had time to check with Murchison to verify that they were to host us on the ranch and provide support for our excavations. Accordingly, we were admitted and drove up to the ranch complex, which was located about halfway up in the Sierra de Tamaulipas. The Sierra is unique in not being part of the Sierra Madre Oriental, which marks the eastern edge of the *altiplano*—the high plateau which occupies the center of the country. Rather, it is entirely isolated, an island rising from the level coastal plain to a height of about 3,000 feet, with open live oak pastures in its uplands, having a relatively cool climate in the summer, contrasting with the tropical heat of the surrounding lowlands.

Arriving at the ranch, we were assigned to guest quarters some distance from the Big House, where the Wards lived. Only once during our three-week stay were we invited to visit the Big House. On that occasion we were hosted for afternoon tea by the two wives, both Brownsville women I had known slightly. Nevertheless, the accommodations, designed for Murchison's guests, were comfortable, and all our needs were provided for in the way of meals and laundry. However, from the beginning, there were clear signals that our presence and the drain on the resources of the ranch that support for our work required were only reluctantly and begrudgingly agreed to.

As we were anxious to see the site, late in the morning we were given some horses and several guides to lead us to the site, which was located below the top of the Sierra at about 1,500 feet, several hundred feet above and some distance from the ranch house. About halfway to the site, it became evident that we had been given the poorest and oldest horses on the ranch. The horse Nick was riding simply gave out under his weight, with the result that he had to dismount, and walk the rest of the way up pulling the horse behind him—an unforgettable sight.

On our return, walking the horses all the way, Nick insisted that a better means of transportation be provided, and so we were given a Land Rover which had also seen better days. It got us more rapidly though less directly up to the site, as we had to follow a rudimentary road that had been bulldozed around the mountain. I was the designated driver, and one morning as we were going along a stretch of the road that had been cut into the mountainside, with a 300-foot drop-off on the left, the Land Rover suddenly veered out of control to the right and stalled in a small bush.

Not fully grasping what had occurred, I moved the gear lever into reverse to back the car up and found to my astonishment that the gear lever simply came off in my hand! It seemed at the moment to ludicrously epitomize, like the horses, the quality of support provided us. Earlier we had used baling wire to keep the exhaust manifold attached to the cylinder head. The true seriousness of the situation only became apparent when we had pushed the Land Rover off the bush and discovered that the tie-rod ends, part of the linkage connecting the steering wheel to the front wheels, were missing their nuts and cotter pins and had slipped out of their sockets. We realized that, but for the grace of God, we could just as easily have gone in the other direction, over the 300-foot cliff.

The Laguna de Moctezuma site, as it was locally known from a depression which collected water during the rainy season and had provided a rare source of water for the builders of the site, is a remarkable ceremonial complex consisting of a number of mounds that had originally supported temples or residences on their summits and the northeasternmost ballcourt in Mesoamerica. The site had been previously but cursorily mapped by Richard MacNeish (1958) in his archaeological survey of Tamaulipas, but no prior excavations had taken place. Given the short time we had available, Nick deployed our team and the available workmen to make the most effective use of our limited resources. Nancy was designated to work on mapping the peripheries of the site so as to determine its outer limits. In the process, one day she stepped on what she took to be leaves covering the ground and discovered that they were in fact covering branches of a tree growing up from below a cliff. Again, but for the grace of God, she could have fallen through and been injured or killed, but she was able to grab a bush and pull herself to safety.

While Nick concentrated on detailed mapping of the site and making a preliminary stratigraphic excavation between two mounds, I was assigned to work on the excavation of the ball court. Because of the limited time, we concentrated on securing an accurate determination of the dimensions of the construction. One afternoon, one of the workmen near where I was troweling turned over a stone, and a short red, yellow, and black snake came out. I thought at first that it was a harmless king snake, but the workmen insisted that it was a *coralillo* (a coral snake) and killed it. They carried it with them back to the ranch house, and we confirmed that it was indeed a coral snake.

The morning of our departure, we decided to take one last nostalgic visit to the Laguna de Moctezuma, and so Nick drove the Land Rover up to the center of the site, where we took a few pictures. The ranch cattle, which had apparently been kept away from the area during our excavation, were grazing on the lush grass, and one large bull took exception to our presence and challenged us. We piled into the vehicle, and Nick started driving away, with the bull making threatening advances. When it was evident that we were indeed retreating and leaving the territory to its proper inhabitants, the bull turned and ceremoniously strode up to the top of the largest mound. Our last view of the site was of the bull triumphantly bellowing his success in driving us from his domain.

I cannot refrain from adding a denouement here. In 1995 I had occasion to drive by Chimalhuacán and out of curiosity wanted to revisit the scene where we had narrowly cheated death. The village, once isolated, is now engulfed by the massive outflow of humanity spreading out from Mexico City and is merely a hardly distinguishable part of a continuum of heavy polluting traffic and buildings which stretch across the former lakebed. Finding a small park in the center of town, I looked in vain for any sign of the storied *montículo* which had been the point of so much passion. Where I judged it to have been, there was now a neat line of small shops. Uncertain of my identification, since so much of the terrain had changed, I asked an older man sitting in the park if there had been a mound there and what had happened to it. He corroborated the correctness of my memory and explained that someone had wanted to put in some shops there a few years before, so they had simply brought in a bulldozer and cleared the site, with no protest by anyone. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

Nick generously invited me to co-author a report on the Laguna de Moctezuma ballcourt excavation with him, but circumstances intervened as I continued to pursue a career in linguistics, never having the opportunity to fulfill his invitation. Nancy, whose interest in codices kept her in contact with Nick, later famously solved the much disputed question of which side of

the Codex Nuttall was painted first and went on to complete her Ph.D. at the University of London. Nick finally put a preliminary account of the Laguna de Moctezuma excavation on record (Nicholson 2005b), though his formal scientific prose necessarily omitted much of the drama that made the summer of 1958 so memorable for those who shared it with him.

NICK: FULLY ENGAGED

Philip P. Arnold

It was 1982, and I was an undergraduate Religious Studies major at the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Student Research Assistant for the new Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project. The latter was the brainchild of David Carrasco, the most charismatic and popular teacher of History of Religions at CU. In spite of having met my future wife, who is a Mohawk woman, and being involved with Native North American traditions, David had inspired me to pursue my interests in the Aztec deity Tlaloc.

It was not until I found H. B. Nicholson's (1971b) famous article "Religion in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico," however, that my ideas began to take on shape. His analysis of the Tlaloc cult was a key element of my academic development. In this remarkable essay Nicholson put an array of gods and goddesses in close proximity with one another. He utilized an enormous diversity of pre-Columbian documents, and ethnographic and archaeological evidence.

Some years later, while writing my dissertation on Tlaloc at the University of Chicago, Nicholson did me an enormous service once again. His bibliographical article on the work of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún was a monumental resource. My dissertation focused on four Tlaloc ceremonies recorded by Sahagún in the Florentine Codex. Nicholson's article focused my research on ethnographic writing and the consequences of Sahagún's contribution. I am happy to say that this research eventually was published in book form (Arnold 1999). It is likely that my work would never have materialized without the foundational scholarship of H. B. Nicholson.

Later in my career, I was fortunate to know Dr. Nicholson personally through the Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project meetings in Mexico, Boulder, Princeton, and Harvard. I discovered that the scholar I had relied on for so long in print was charming, funny, and ever curious in person. "Nick," as we all affectionately referred to him, was always fully engaged in any new information or points of view. He was also completely interested in the more edgy interpretations. Nick seemed to have limitless energy, in spite of his physical limitations. I felt as if he were open to talking about Mesoamerica from virtually any perspective, as long as you could substantiate your point of view. Nick was a great Mesoamericanist, a formidable scholar, and a generous spirit. He is dearly missed and without parallel in the field of Mesoamerican studies.

A SHARP INTELLECT AND A CARING SPIRIT

Wendy Ashmore

Among the many contributions H. B. Nicholson made at UCLA, he regularly taught a pair of undergraduate surveys of Mesoamerican archaeology. As a senior anthropology major nearing graduation in the late 1960s, I enrolled in those courses, two of the last ones I took as an undergraduate. Having lived in Mexico City briefly as a very young child, I was intrigued to learn about places I had glimpsed, such as Teotihuacan, and peoples I had heard about, especially the Aztecs. As for anthropology more generally, I had chosen that as a major principally because it offered the widest range of what struck me as consistently interesting and thought-provoking classes—a rather dilettantish approach but intellectually rewarding. Never, however, had I considered making anthropology or any part of it my career. H. B. Nicholson changed all that.

Dr. Nicholson (as I knew him then) relayed fascinating accounts of exciting places, events, developments, and people, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl prominent among them. He introduced us to engaging new books—Frances Gillmor’s *The King Danced in the Marketplace* and the freshly revised version of J. E. S. Thompson’s *Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*—along with multiple shorter scholarly pieces from such key sources as the monumental *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, then in the process of publication. In addition, there were the wonderful slide images, often with Nicholson family members, that made the subject matter come alive even more—a heady and (frankly) transforming experience for a young student who had thought she’d “just” be exploring a few places out of her childhood.

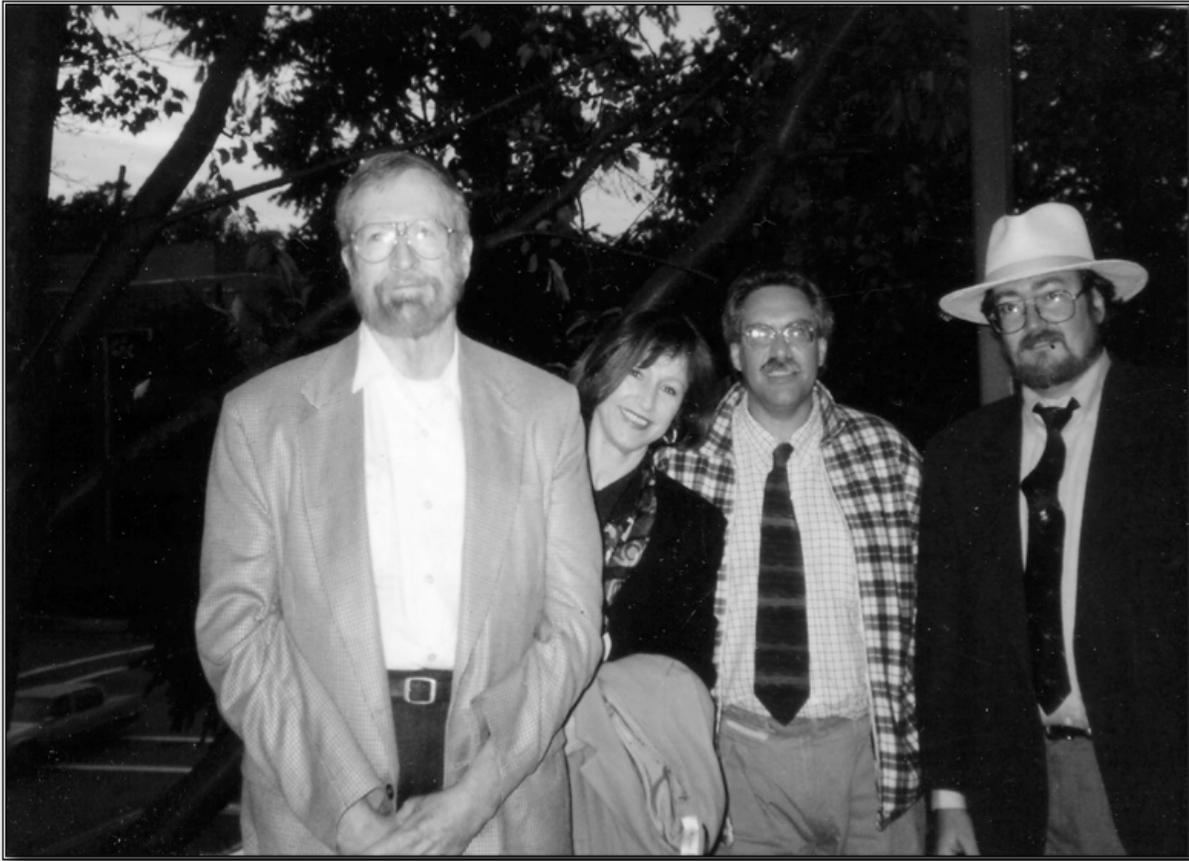
Some of the Nicholson slide collection may still include a handful of simple Teotihuacan images my grandfather took in the early 1950s, which I’d then given to my admired professor as thanks, after I’d completed his courses. Dr. Nicholson was quite gracious, if perhaps a bit puzzled, at receiving this tangible offering of thanks, and indeed, much as I loved my grandfather, I sincerely doubt that the images were particularly noteworthy except as family, tourist memorabilia. Nonetheless, they seemed to deserve a chance to be useful, and I “knew,” of course, that I wouldn’t be using them!

After commencement, my new life took shape across the country from UCLA, working for a political philosopher while my husband went through the tenure stream in psychology. Still, the ideas that kept stirring my thinking were those Nick had stimulated, about Mesoamerica and its peoples’ pasts. Because of his teaching, little more than a year had passed before I was applying to graduate schools on the East Coast. Every bit as generous and supportive as he was intellectually stimulating, Professor Nicholson kindly agreed to write letters of reference for this faraway student who had rarely spoken up in class, and who had visited his office only a couple of times—probably with shaking knees. Notably, in my view, the correspondence was 100 percent between programs where I was accepted and those to which Dr. Nicholson had been asked to write. Somehow I doubt the correspondence was coincidental.

With Ph.D. in hand and increasing travel opportunities, I met H. B. Nicholson anew, now as Nick. Although I’m not sure that he remembered the quiet undergraduate from decades past, he definitely made me welcome as a colleague, whenever and wherever our paths crossed. Those opportunities grew when, in 2000, my new husband, Tom Patterson, and I moved to UC Riverside. The semiannual Mesoamerican Network, as well as other events at UCLA and

elsewhere in southern California, offered wonderful collegial interaction for Mesoamericanistas, and Nick was always a prominent, generous, intellectually stimulating contributor to the gatherings. Tom and I were pleased immensely at being invited to take part in honoring Nick, in a wonderful semiroast celebration at UCLA.

Indeed, what I will always remember about H. B. Nicholson is his special and enduring combination of sharp intellect and caring spirit. Both made a fundamental difference in my life, and although I wasn't his doctoral student or research collaborator, I nonetheless owe my career to Nick in specific and fondly remembered ways. And along with many others who were privileged to know him, I miss him greatly.



H. B. Nicholson, Elizabeth Baquedano, Frank Crohn and Geoff McCafferty at Princeton University, October 1996. Elizabeth Baquedano photo.

THE CHAMPOLLION OF THE AZTECS

Elizabeth Baquedano

I first met H. B. Nicholson in 1984, attending one of David Carrasco's meetings at the Moses Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project of the University of Colorado, Boulder. He was certainly well known to me through his writings, but we never had been formally introduced. I was so looking forward to meeting the Champollion of the Aztecs. I encountered "Nick" at the reception organized by the archive staff and, on that day, made an eternal friend. Nick also became my sympathetic guide for incursions into the world of Aztec sculpture. We met at many international conferences and enjoyed an active correspondence all the years we knew each other. I cherish our lively conversations about archaeologists, archaeology, and the people he liked and respected, including Dón Ignacio Bernal, with whom I had a firm friendship.

Our paths crossed next in London. At the invitation of Warwick Bray, Nick lectured on Aztec iconography at the Institute of Archaeology, University of London. After his presentation, many of us, including students from the Institute and his friend and colleague Warwick Bray, whose company and conversation Nick always enjoyed, dined at an Italian restaurant in Southampton Row not far from the Institute. That evening, I mentioned my involvement in the *Aztec Treasures*

from Mexico exhibition at the Museum of Mankind, the Ethnography Department of the British Museum. I assisted the Curator, Liz Carmichael, in organizing the reception for the State Visit of Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid in 1984. Ever curious about everything related to Mesoamerican archaeology, including behind-the-scenes politics and the scholarly achievements of students and peers, Nick wanted to know all the details; he loved the exhibition poster featuring Mictlantecuhtli (Lord of the Underworld), requesting one for his archive.

In 1986 I was asked by Hans Prem and Ursula Dyckerhoff to join them at the conference on Aztec Mexico Seen from the Templo Mayor—Consequences of the Recent Excavations, held at Hildesheim, Germany. Quite unexpectedly, I was asked to serve as “official” interpreter, translating Spanish into English. Needless to say, I was not certified to offer a professional translating service, but there wasn’t a translator at the conference and several people needed help. I tried hard to memorize everything and to jot things down quickly and translate when needed. All the participants were very grateful and appreciative of my efforts, including Nick who said I could get a job at the UN! Bless him!

Nick returned to London in 1988 when there was a fascinating exhibition on the Spanish Armada (1588-1988), so we headed off together to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. We spent hours at the exhibition, examining maps, paintings, medals, weapons, engravings of Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540-96), and portraits of Philip II. Nick and I talked for hours about the power of the Armada, a story of enduring appeal, recognizing the heroic climax of a long maritime, military, economic, and ideological struggle between England and Spain. We discussed the risks of maritime ventures in distant seas and the actions of pirates and privateers. Nick was fascinated by the “Jolly Roger” of pirate flags, the skull-and-crossed-bones a borrowing, of course, from the Aztec earth goddess motif. For pirates, it denoted death and for the Aztecs permanence, amongst other things. Likewise, we talked for hours about Philip II and the risks he took sending his fleet against England in 1588.

Our trip to the Armada exhibition was transcendental. The ride from London to Greenwich was the perfect opportunity to show Nick my photographic corpus of Aztec sculpture and ask him questions about my dissertation. Nick requested several of my photographs for the UCLA Aztec Archive, which was a perfect trade-off. I was writing my dissertation on Aztec death sculpture, one of Nick’s favorite subjects. Although my thesis was still at an incipient stage, we discussed the iconography of the Lord/Lady of the Earth, or Tlaltecuhli. I would later (Baquedano 1993) use Nicholson’s (1967, 1972) work to describe the three main representations of Tlaltecuhli. With Nick’s grouping, I assembled a list of iconographic elements in a computer program, demonstrating that this god/goddess was related to both agriculture and human sacrifice.

During that very same sojourn, we had lunch with Professor David Harris who was at the time Director of the Institute of Archaeology at the University College London (UCL) and Barbara Ghaleb, a friend of Nick’s son Eric who was, like me, a student at UCL working towards a Ph.D. degree. We indulged ourselves in an exquisite Indian meal whilst the conversation revolved around India, Florence, and Professor Harris’ Australian fieldwork. The delicious Indian food and the fact that Eric was studying in Florence made it a lively and memorable evening.

Nick and I met next at the II Colloquium on Codices from Mexico organized by Constanza Vega and Jacqueline de Durand-Forest in Taxco, Guerrero in 1994. When the meeting concluded, Patty Anawalt, Elizabeth Boone, Nick, and I drove back to Mexico City. We stopped for lunch at the lovely Mañanitas Restaurant in Cuernavaca, Morelos. Everyone had been there before, and

all had admired their beautiful gardens where peacocks paraded amidst a collection of sculptures. We spent a delightful afternoon together, drinking Margaritas as aperitifs, wine with our meal, and Tía Marías with compliments of the restaurant. I should say they enjoyed their drinks. Since I was the designated driver, Nick generously helped me finish my Tía María.

Nick and I always stayed in touch, checking to see if we were going to connect at conferences and symposia, etc. One of those meetings was at the 1995 Congress of the History of Religions in Mexico City. Nick seemed especially tired as he had been ill, and Mexico City's altitude was affecting him. He often needed to sit down, which was very unlike the Nick I knew, who always stood erect and poised when he made public comments or when he asked questions. We chatted about one of his favorite hotels in Mexico City, the Grán Hotel de la Ciudad de México, with its distinctive Art Nouveau style, including a stained glass canopy crafted by Jacques Gréber in 1908. This hotel had been the famous Centro Mercantíl (a department store) where several Aztec objects had been found during construction.

At the end of the History of Religions Conference, Nick, Eloise Quiñones Keber, Susan Milbrath, Phil Arnold, and I visited the ongoing excavations at Xochicalco. As we started our uphill climb to the ruins, Nick became too winded to walk, and so he decided to rest beneath the shade of a tree, waiting for us. We carried on, promising to share our "findings" with him. Upon our return, Nick wanted to know all the details about the newly discovered ramp with animals carved in relief. He said, "I hear there are snakes and scorpions." He was well informed on what were called Special Projects (archaeological projects of great importance), which received generous financial support from the Mexican president in the 1990s. Xochicalco was, of course, one of them. Nick and I met again in October 1996. This time, David Carrasco had invited us to a conference at Princeton University entitled *The Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Templo Mayor*. When the conference concluded, Frank Crohn, Geoff McCafferty, Nick and I spent a delightful few hours driving to New York City.

When I pondered a Tezcatlipoca Symposium to honor *Maestro* Nicholson, I thought long and hard about holding it at Buckland Abbey, home of the Elizabethan seafarer, Sir Francis Drake. Nick approved wholeheartedly, as this was the perfect place to hold a conference, especially for someone so knowledgeable about the Armada. I tried to organize the event in conjunction with Plymouth University and in so doing talked to the Deputy Regional Director to the Southwest of England, Richard Bayly, and his wife, archaeologist Lee Jones, both of whom relished the idea. Unfortunately, the distance was too far, and our travel budget was limited; thus, I talked to Ignacio Durán (Minister for Cultural Affairs), seeking sponsorship from the Mexican Embassy. Eventually the Mexican Embassy graciously hosted a reception for the Tezcatlipoca Symposium participants, defraying the travel expenses of two Mexican scholars who attended the event.

The Tezcatlipoca Symposium took place in November 2005 at the University of London. At the convocation Nick talked about the roots of his mother's family in the English Midlands, indicating how much he loved visiting the UK, the land of his ancestors. Nick proudly wore his Nicholson tartan tie, bespeaking his paternal connection to the Scottish Highlands and islands. As always, his questions and incisive comments enriched the proceedings. My dear friend Juan José Batalla attended the symposium and was thrilled to make Nick's acquaintance at long last. Nick was equally pleased to meet Juanjo.

Although he is gone, to this day Nick plays an active role in my professional life; one book I often consult is *Art of Aztec Mexico: Treasures of Tenochtitlan* (Nicholson and Quiñones Keber

1983). I miss the academic aspect of our friendship; above all, I miss not being able to ring Nick at home, asking Margaret to put me through to his upstairs office. I miss his wit and sharp sense of humor. Nick's passing leaves an enormous personal and academic void. We take solace in knowing that his scholarship will inspire future generations of academicians. I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to enrich my life with his wisdom. In closing, the immortal lyrics of Dame Vera Lynn's signature World War II tune come to mind: "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again some sunny day..."

HAIL TO NICK

Marilyn Beaudry-Corbett

My relationship with Nick began in 1973 when I decided to change professions. I left marketing and advertising research and wanted to start over with a second career in archaeology. This meant returning to school to pursue a second MA (my first in Industrial Sociology was not considered pertinent) and continuing on for a Ph.D. It was not easy getting professional academicians interested in a middle-aged woman with such a background. I knew that I wanted to specialize in Mesoamerican archaeology with a focus on economic activities.

I took a chance, contacted H. B. Nicholson, and went to see him during his office hours. He heard me out and said he would serve as my chair if I were admitted. Such euphoria as I left Haines Hall! Even though our primary research foci were quite different, Nick always had good suggestions whenever I contacted him from the time of my admission (1974) through the completion of my Ph.D. in 1983. I am forever grateful that an illustrious figure like Nick was willing to mentor me, an unlikely candidate, through my academic incubation. Nick's unsurpassed scholarship and incredible personality continue to reverberate within his chosen field.

CE QUALLI OHTLI

Frances F. Berdan

I feel particularly honored to have been asked by the editors of this volume to write a little something about Nick's impact on my professional career and, indeed, on my life. I can say at the outset that he entered my life at a critical intellectual juncture and for several decades continued to serve as my dedicated friend, esteemed colleague, and scholarly mentor. I first met Nick in the fall of 1971. At that time, I was a humble graduate student poised to write my Ph.D. dissertation on the Aztec economic system. The one anomaly was that I was pursuing the degree at the University of Texas at Austin, not UCLA. I had an excellent faculty committee at Austin; however, none was an Aztec specialist, and I was in dire need of that specialized expertise and guidance. One might say that I was in the hands of fate, if one were an Aztec. As it turned out, in that fall of 1971 the fates were with me (in the Aztec sense, of course). Situations landed me in southern California, and I was already familiar with Dr. Nicholson's writings and reputation as an Aztec scholar. Indeed, my committee chair, Jeremiah Epstein, strongly recommended that I get in touch with Nick, since I was in the neighborhood.

Although not formally a student of Nick's, I nonetheless boldly tracked him down at the first meeting of a UCLA seminar on Aztec codices. I sat there amongst his students as he went around the room asking each one his or her particulars. He finally landed at me, and apologetically, I introduced myself, noting that I didn't really belong there, but wanted to be there nonetheless. I vividly recall his reaction; he welcomed me unconditionally and was immediately (and genuinely) interested in my project. From the first I was struck by Nick's unlimited generosity and his boundless love of scholarship. That perception only grew and intensified as I came to know and work with Nick over the succeeding decades. Along with him, I came to share the excitement of scholarly discovery and those little lightning bolts of illumination.

With that propitious beginning, I knew I was going to make it (meaning, at that time, complete the dissertation). Nick willingly shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Aztec culture and documentary sources, sending me hither and yon but always in the right directions to pursue my research and conceptual goals. In the course of all of this, I learned a supremely important lesson from Nick. No matter how much you know, there is always more to learn out there. As a graduate student, my greatest anxiety had been in settling upon a dissertation topic. I had wracked my brain until it hurt. But then it came to me that no one really understood how the complex Aztec economic system worked—I would do that. Breathing a sigh of relief, I recall thinking that I sure was glad I got that idea, since I was absolutely convinced that it would be the last good idea I'd ever have. All that would change, and Nick had a great deal to do with my future professional trajectory.

First came the *Matrícula de Tributos* (Berdan and de Durand-Forest 1980). Nick, always wired into whatever was happening in Mesoamerican studies, knew that Graz (Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt) planned to publish a fine edition of the *Matrícula de Tributos* and was in need of someone to interpret the glyphs and translate the Nahuatl glosses. He asked if I was interested (indeed I was), and he recommended me to them to do the job. Not only was this a nice publication for a young scholar, but it also focused my research on a very concrete and very necessary component of my dissertation (and subsequent) research. I am forever indebted to Nick for affording me this early opportunity.

Over the subsequent decades, Nick continued to play a significant role in my scholarly and intellectual development. While he had many students to attend to, he never hesitated to answer a query or solve a documentary puzzle on my part. He was never far away. One great pleasure was the Tertulia events that Nick organized at UCLA. These stimulating gatherings allowed us to touch base, exchange ideas, and probe Nick's endless encyclopedic knowledge, all on a regular basis over the course of many years. The fact that these events were so persistent is an enduring commentary on Nick's constant striving for more and more knowledge and for a better and better understanding of all things Mesoamerican.

Mesoamerican research, and particularly studies on indigenous codices, blossomed during the decades of Nick's highest productivity and greatest influence. However, in the 1980s, facsimiles of many of the most important codices were still underpublished and underanalyzed. Some existed only as partial documents or in hastily produced editions. At best, good editions were available only in special collections. Such was the case with the Codex Mendoza, the largest and most comprehensive of the Aztec codices. A copy of the famous James Cooper Clark (1938) edition of the Codex Mendoza was housed in the UCLA library special collections, and as it was essential to my research on Aztec tribute, I frequently trekked to that repository to work directly with that excellent facsimile. Yet, it was clear that many scholars and students could not avail themselves of such an opportunity, and I set out to produce a full-scale facsimile and analysis of that prominent document. The first thing I did was call Nick to see if he thought this was a good idea and whether anyone else was already undertaking the project as I conceived it. Nick always knew everything going on in the field, who was doing it, and where, and when, and how. I could not have undertaken the project without Nick's support, and he also kindly agreed to contribute a major chapter on the historical background of the Codex Mendoza (Nicholson 1992). Ultimately, the project, collaborated with Patricia Anawalt, required a dozen years to complete, and ended up as a four volume, large format, work published by the University of California Press (Berdan and Anawalt 1992, 1997).

Nick's ability to move easily between identifications of specific artifacts and formulations of general principles has been repeatedly demonstrated and was, in a word, inspiring. He published numerous works on specific Mesoamerican artifacts and sculptures. These display the highest scholarly documentation, care, and standards. A fine example is his paper and subsequent article on the central image of the Aztec Calendar Stone presented at a symposium in his honor at the San Diego Museum of Man on February 16, 1992 (Nicholson 1993). This and other articles of the genre have conveniently provided models for the next generation of scholars, such as myself, to emulate. In the realm of generalizations, perhaps most persistently cited and discussed is his classic article on Aztec religion in the *Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Nicholson 1971b). His success at systematizing this confusing and complex religious system is evidenced by the fact that few subsequent studies of Aztec religion have moved forth without either beginning with Nick's formulation or referencing it. Throughout his distinguished career, Nick provided me and innumerable scholars and students with a cornucopia of specific knowledge, scholarly tools, and personal support. I feel very fortunate to be a recipient of all of these, always offered by Nick generously and without hesitation. Every generation of scholars owes a debt of gratitude to its preceding generations. Mine is no exception and I am pleased to be able to not only thank a specific generation, but to pinpoint one individual as pivotal in my own scholarly pursuits. *Ce qualli ohtli*,¹ Nick.

1. Loosely translated, "May you travel a good road."



*H. B. Nicholson in his Haines Hall office, UCLA, BCE (Before the Computer Era).
Raymond Sidrys photo.*

IN THE ZONE WITH NICK

Matthew A. Boxt

Nick's passing has awakened in me memories of graduate school that have lain dormant since 1978, when I entered UCLA. I remember clearly moving through the corridors of Haines Hall like a human pinball, bouncing between two pillars of New World archaeology, Clement W. Meighan and H. B. Nicholson. My difficulty in those early days was scoring valuable points with these venerable icons before running out of quarters, as it were.

Clem and I discussed his adventures in Baja California with Erle Stanley Gardner and his research in Belize, and in the years before his retirement, we spoke often about NAGPRA, the repatriation of American Indian artifacts and human remains, and how this mandate would reverberate within the walls of academia and beyond. Nick patiently fielded all of my questions about Mesoamerica. I was delighted to be in such illustrious company. My professional career has reflected the passions of these intellectual giants; I have devoted three decades of my life to research in Guatemala, Belize, Mexico, and southern California.

My counseling sessions with Nick in Haines Hall 341, which invariably coincided with his lunch break, were particularly memorable. Gaining access to Nick during his office hours was almost always a losing proposition. A crowd outside his door snaked its way down the hall like patrons at Pink's Hot Dog Stand in Hollywood on a Friday night. Students eagerly waited for one of Nick's verbal chili dogs. I was amazed at his ability to do many different things simultaneously. Nick multi-tasked before the term entered the vernacular. He would take care of unfinished business while gobbling tuna fish sandwiches lovingly prepared by Margaret, his wife of 54 years, munch carrot sticks, and take phone calls from Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, Nigel Davies, Hasso Von Winning, or Thelma D. Sullivan. In retrospect, it would have made sense for me to have sported a poncho, for I invariably left those brief meetings wearing a good third of Nick's lunch. Gary Pahl and Raymond Sidrys might show up; all the while Nick engaged me in conversation, during which he convincingly pretended to care about the problem I sought his assistance in solving.

Over the years some things have changed. Paunches and children have grown; our hair has turned gray, and we need prescription glasses. Even Nick's beloved Mexico City has changed dramatically. Case in point: the Café Tacuba, once renowned as a quaint restaurant for local families, vagabonds, expatriates, and intellectuals is now better known as the moniker of one of Mexico's top rock and roll bands. However, some things will never change, like my respect and admiration for Nick.

Knowing Nick was a great privilege. He was a man who could not be separated from his work. And what didn't he know? I will always be in awe of the vast storehouse of knowledge he possessed and the alacrity with which he could tap and articulate that repository. The breadth of his knowledge was both intimidating and inspiring. Listening to him speak, I sensed Nick making history come alive.

I recall being at his house one afternoon, questioning him about some trifling bit of sixteenth century Tabascan arcana. In an instant, just like he did in lecture or during every one of our counseling sessions, he'd be *in the zone*, eyes closed and on autopilot. His recitation was as grammatically correct as his written text; every comma, every semicolon, and every parenthetical aside helped to paint a word picture that was as vivid as were the Aztec codices and Mixteca-Puebla pottery that inspired him.

UCLA is renowned for its storied basketball program, which was helmed for 27 years by Coach John Wooden, who was called the Wizard of Westwood. We in anthropology had our superstar. We all are grateful for the decades of friendship, guidance, and excellence in teaching rendered by H. B. Nicholson, *Huey Tlatoani* of Westwood. Nick's passing leaves a void in the field of Mesoamerican archaeology and in the hearts of many of its practitioners that can never be filled. All of us who knew Nick are deeply saddened by his death. We derive solace from the certainty that his voluminous body of work will live on, continuing to inspire all students of Mesoamerican archaeology today and in the years to come.

Adios, Nick. Siempre estarás presente en nuestros pensamientos.