

“Introduction” - Nathan Schlanger

“A Feast for the Eyes” - Nathan Schlanger and Philippe Soulier

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## **VII. Death Notices of Colleagues**

**Professor Gordon Randolph Willey passed away on 28 April 2002 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Professor Willey was one of the most prominent figures in Americanist archaeology of the 20th Century. Born on 7 March 1913 in Chariton, Iowa, Gordon was to grow up in a small town atmosphere where his father owned a drugstore. In 1925, he moved with this parents to Long Beach, California where his father bought another drugstore and enrolled in the public schools there.**

**In 1999 Professor Willey told me that he had a very clear recollection of his decision to become an archaeologist. His decision came in the spring of 1929 when in a high school English class he was asked to write the usual essay on “my intended career” (Givens 1999:Willey Audio Oral History). As he thought back, he confessed that he knew almost nothing about the subject. He further told me that his father passed on to him bits and pieces relating to archaeological discoveries that he found in the popular press (Givens 1999:Willey Audio Oral History). At the close of his high school career, he met with his school counselor and was presented with a copy of the University of Arizona catalog**

of courses of instruction. From this introduction, he decided to attend Arizona and would begin his association with Byron Cummings.

While an undergraduate at the University of Arizona, Gordon enrolled in courses in taught by Byron Cummings ("The Dean"), Clara Lee Fraps and John Provinse but never became truly interested in Southwestern archaeology. While at Arizona, Gordon spent much of his "off-hours trying to become a track star" [Gordon proudly displayed one of this track competition bronze plaques on his office desk] (Givens 1999: Willey Audio Oral History). His interest in running track led him to train vigorously. As he told me, "I remember [my training] well because the windows of the pottery laboratory, which was housed under the athletic stadium, were on a level with the track, and I could see my more diligent student colleagues down there working away, as I sped past. It always gave me a twing of guilt." (Givens 1999: Willey Audio Oral History).

After his undergraduate work, he continued studies at the University of Arizona writing a master's thesis on proper field excavation techniques which Cummings signed-off on. Gordon told me that he always wondered if "the Dean" secretly thought of his master's effort as somewhat presumptuous.

After leaving Arizona, Gordon set off for Macon, Georgia to work with Arthur Kelly and was introduced to the dendrochronology of the area.

In 1938, Gordon married Katharine Whaley of Macon, Georgia and shortly thereafter moved to New Orleans where he joined Ford in his WPA project in Louisiana Archaeology. Katharine would lend her hand in her husband's work by undertaking artistic renderings of archaeological materials and aiding in laboratory work, especially pottery restoration. All of this was done while raising two daughters, Winston and Alexandra. He also came to know James Ford during this period (1937-1938). Ford and Willey had field work going on at two locations: at the Crooks Mound and the better known site of Marksville. During this time Gordon was also in charge of the New Orleans Laboratory and Ford was the overall director.

Gordon then enrolled as a doctoral student at Columbia University and studied under Duncan Strong. Some of Gordon's classmates who also studied with Strong were J.B. Birdsell, Lawrence Angel, Charles Wagley, H.Y. Feng and Walter Taylor. His interest in Southeastern and Maya archaeology continued to blossom. This interest can be seen in his biographical essay on James Ford in Gordon's *Portraits in American Archaeology* (University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

Upon receipt of this Ph.D., Gordon took up professional residence Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology where he assisted Julian Steward in editing the *Handbook of South American Indians* and eventually found himself working for Matthew Stirling at the Bureau.

In 1949 Professor Willey's now classic volume *Archaeology of the Florida Gulf Coast* appeared and, as has been said many times by its readers, "became an instant classic."

In 1950 Gordon was "brought in" by Alfred Marsten Tozzer as the first Bowditch Professor of Mexican and Middle American Archaeology at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (Harvard University). Gordon's creation of "settlement pattern" studies in archaeology (the idea was initially hatched through long discussions between Willey and Julian Steward while Gordon was at the Smithsonian) was pioneered in the Viru Valley on the northern coast of Peru in the late 1940s.

His seminal work at Baron Ramie, Seibal Altar de Sacrificios, Copan and his "settlement pattern" approach made him one of the 20th Century's central figures in Maya archaeology.

At the suggestion of Glyn Daniel, Professor Willey began his great synthesis of New World Archaeology *An Introduction to American Archaeology* (Volume I, North and Middle America; Volume II, South America) (Givens 1999: Willey Oral History). Many students of American archaeology in the 1970s cut their archaeological teeth on this synthesis, then the current source of the what was known of New World archaeology.

Professor Willey was also very interested in the history of archaeology. He and Professor Jeremy Sabloff collaborated on three editions of *A History of American Archaeology*. Much of the current interest now in the history of Americanist archaeology is traced to the pioneering work of these editions as they appeared through the years.

Professor Willey served as past president of the American Anthropological Association (1960-1962) and the Society for American Archaeology (1967-1978). His numerous awards include the Kidder Award for Eminence in the Field of American Archaeology from the American Anthropological Association, the Viking Medal from the Viking Fund (The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research), the Huxley Medal from the Royal Anthropological Institute (U.K.), the Order of the Quetzal from the Government of Guatemala, and honorary doctorates from the University of Arizona and the University of Cambridge (U.K.). Professor Willey was also a member of the American Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Sciences, Cosmos Club (Washington D.C.), and the Tavern Club (Boston, Massachusetts). (D.R. Givens)

Gordon's wife, Katharine, preceded him in death in 2001. His daughters Winston Adler and Alexandra Guralnick survive him. A memorial service for Professor Willey was held on 8 May 2002 at Christ Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Henning Siverts died on 1 December 2001. Siverts was an anthropologist in Norway. (Char Solomon)

Professor Desmond Clark, FSA, the eminent African archaeologist, recently passed away. His obituary can be read on the University of California-Berkeley website at [http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2002/02/15\\_clark.html](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2002/02/15_clark.html), and on The Independent website at: <http://news.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=250034>. (Peter Robertshaw)