

Accidental Archaeologist: Memoirs of Jesse D. Jennings, Foreword by C. Melvin Aikens. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1994. xxi + 307 pp. \$29.95.

by

Richard B. Woodbury
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

The history of archaeology is nourished by many sources of information, including the books and monographs that reflect archaeology's changes through the years (compare, for example, the important works of Squier and Davis, of Kidder, and of Flannery), the formal histories of the discipline (few and far between, though we are fortunate to have the differing views of Trigger, of Willey and Sabloff, and most recently of Thomas Patterson), and not the least important, the occasional biography or autobiography of an archaeologist, such as the one here reviewed.

In his foreword C. Melvin Aikens writes, "Jesse D. Jennings is one of the most distinguished and influential founders of North American archaeology as it is known and practiced today, and this memoir offers a glimpse of the field's crucial growth period as reflected in the real-life experience of a leading protagonist" [p. ix]. This is a fair appraisal—during Jennings' career archaeology has undergone profound changes and he has played a major role in many of them.

Born in Oklahoma in 1909, Jennings moved with his family to New Mexico in 1919, where they farmed long hours for small returns. After four years at Montezuma College, near Las Vegas, Jennings was admitted to graduate work at the University of Chicago. The "accident" of becoming an archaeologist was due to the requirement that each student attend the archaeological field school. He was much better with a shovel than most of them and in a few weeks he was dig supervisor, returning the next year as Thome Deuel's paid assistant. So, as he says, he had become an archaeologist.

He was 23 when he was hired as a supervisor on a CWA (Civilian Works Administration) dig in North Carolina. This was followed by work in Florida with Matthew Stirling (a project of the FERA—Federal Emergency Relief Administration) and field work in Tennessee with T. M. N. Lewis (for the TVA—Tennessee Valley Authority). Today it may be forgotten how much excellent archaeology was done during the Depression; the unemployed could be put to work with a minimum cost for equipment and with relatively few low paid (but dedicated) supervisors. Jennings, like many other students in the 1930s, depended on these relief programs to help get through graduate school.

In 1937 Jennings was in Guatemala, working with A. V. Kidder at Kaminaljuyu. Next he was asked by the National Park Service to plan the interpretation for the Natchez Trace Parkway. Soon after, the NPS transferred him to Omaha to help plan the Missouri Valley Project, thus further widening the range of his field experience. When "threatened" with transfer by the NPS to Washington he accepted an offer from the University of Utah to join their young anthropology department.

In Utah he developed an archaeological survey, built (against great obstacles) an anthropology museum, and undertook the excavation of Danger Cave, a landmark in American archaeology. Deposits turned out to be not 5,000 as expected but 11,000 years old, after Clovis the oldest documented North American culture. He coined the term Desert Culture for it, which later became the Desert Archaic.

In 1956 what he calls "my largest research opportunity" came "just when I decided my edge was blunted and I should move to some other school." This was the Glen Canyon Project, a large and difficult program, rescuing archaeological information before Glen Canyon was lost forever by dam building. In 1969 and 1973 Jennings

was a visiting professor at Hawaii and in New Zealand in 1979. Becoming interested in Polynesian prehistory he turned his research skills to Western Samoa. As with all his previous field research, he published the results promptly. After retiring from Utah and moving to Oregon he taught each spring quarter at the University of Oregon until 1992.

Jennings' years of experience as archaeologist, administrator, author, editor, and teacher make a fascinating chronicle. But along with his personal achievements is the valuable light he sheds on how in the sixty years of his experience archaeology has changed—university field schools, federal relief programs, large scale “salvage” ahead of dam building, CRM, and many new aims and techniques. He provides a close-up, warts-and-all view of archaeology's changing ends and means and includes candid vignettes of many well-known colleagues. Because the history of archaeology includes both the research projects and the people who carry them out and this autobiography is generous in discussing both, it is a particularly valuable contribution to our understanding of “where we've been and what we've done.”

Jennings closes with a chapter modestly called “Archaeology without Theory,” in which he discusses his views of what archaeology is and how it should be done, with scepticism in some instances, enthusiasm in others, but bluntly giving his personal reaction to the many trends, innovations, and fads of archaeology during his long career. Given his unique breadth of experience, it is a fascinating analysis and commentary, with neither false modesty nor false pride. We can all think of other archaeologists from whom equally detailed and insightful autobiographies would be welcome, and in fact are needed, if the history of archaeology is not to overdepend on final reports that omit much of what really happened.

“The First Twenty Years,” by Bernard J. Siegel. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22 (1993), pp. 1-34, Annual Reviews, Inc, Palo Alto.

by

James A. Delle
Department of Anthropology
University of Massachusetts-Amherst

After twenty years as editor of the *Annual Review of Anthropology* (ARA), Professor Siegel took on a daunting task with this article. In his words, he set out to “ponder the developments in the several subfields of anthropology over this period of time, as reflected in the topics selected for review in this enterprise” (p.8). To this end Siegel, a cultural anthropologist, mined the collective knowledge contained within twenty years of the ARA. In his presentation, he considers the intellectual developments within each of the five subdisciplines separately (he includes applied anthropology), concluding with some brief remarks on the importance of maintaining a four or five) field approach to anthropology. For our purposes here, I will limit my comments to his section on archaeology.

In reviewing the history of archaeology as it has been presented in the ARA, Siegel begins with an eloquent reflection on the modernist/postmodernist dialectic which emerged within in archaeological discourse in the 1980's. This, he believes, in part resulted from the “close attention archaeologists have paid to the theoretical and conceptual developments” in cultural anthropology. With this said, Siegel lists what he considers to be the principle categories of archaeological research, although he does not take the opportunity to discuss each of these in detail: