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PIONEERS

The Pioneers section of the Journal features personal reflections on major figures in the study of the indigenous cultures of the region. Neither obituary nor memorial, Pioneers shares candid recollections that convey insight into the personalities and the cultural context of anthropology that shaped the scholarship of these pioneers.

Pioneers began with the 2015 issue, and in these first few years the focus has tilted toward the Great Basin rather than interior and coastal California. This decision was based on the existence of a similar effort, “Sands of Time,” in the journal California Archaeology that does an admirable job of remembering some of the early scholars of California anthropology. Perhaps it is time to broaden our geographic range for the JCGBA Pioneers section, and to also remind readers that the subject matter is anthropology, not just archaeology. The Pioneers sections in the 2016 issues of the Journal featuring Isabel Kelly and Julian Steward remind us of the intellectual breadth of these pioneers. If you have suggestions regarding a potential Pioneer, and the names and contact information for those who may wish to share a recollection, please contact Steven Simms (s.simms@usu.edu).

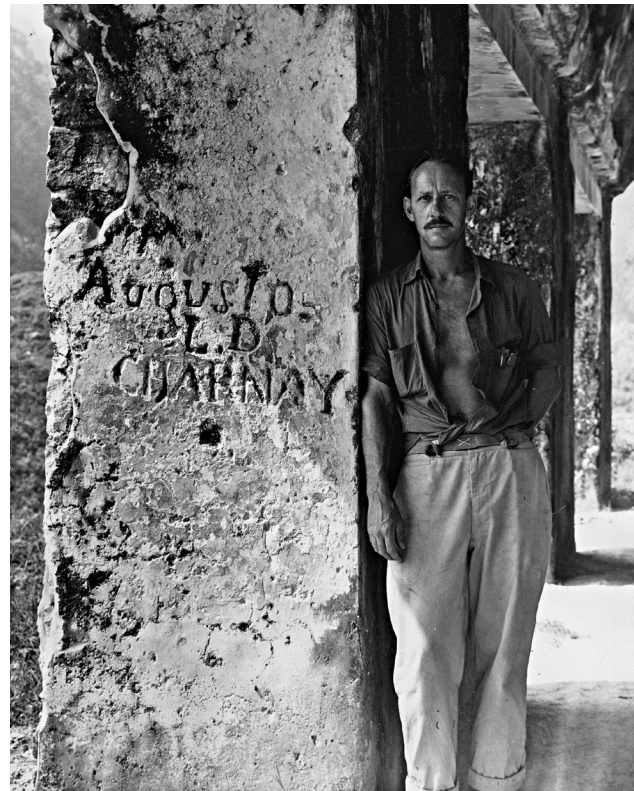
MEMORIES OF ROBERT F. HEIZER (1915–1979)

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Robert F. Heizer was born in Denver, Colorado, spent his youth in Lovelock, Nevada, and went on his first excavation in 1932 at the age of 17 during his high school years. Surely his youthful imagination of a vast Native American past was stimulated by the wilds of western Nevada. Few archaeologists among us today can identify with such a place in that era.

I knew of Robert Heizer through my early teacher Jesse Jennings. Their strong personalities were counterweights in a discussion that encompassed normative generalizations and variability. I recall a class in North American Prehistory in 1972 where Jennings would defend his concept of the Desert Culture against Heizer, presented to us as a guy from the western Great Basin, who offered the marsh adaptation of the Lovelock Culture as an example of variation in apparent contrast to the Desert Culture. Sides were taken, and personalities were strong. Some things never change, and archaeologists still spend much of their effort arguing about categories, and the mistaken notion that somehow variability must be pitted against the normative. A few decades later, likely well after graduate school, it seemed to me that they were both talking about the same thing—just different facets of the gem.

There are several obituaries and memorials to Heizer (Clark 1979; Hester 1982), a catalog of his publications



A particularly insightful and previously unpublished photo of Robert F. Heizer at Palenque, 1955. (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution Photo lot 77-59. Research and permissions courtesy of James F. O’Connell.)

(Wilke 1979), and a very good Wikipedia page. More interesting is Heizer’s substantial and influential intellectual biography, and I encourage readers to see the work of Albert Elsasser (1979), published the year of Heizer’s

passing, and the excellent biographical memoir on Heizer by Thomas R. Hester (1996), published by the National Academy of Sciences, as well as a recent consideration of Heizer’s intellectual impact by Richard Hughes (2017). Some of Heizer’s younger students offered memories in the “Sands of Time” section of the journal *California Archaeology* (Moratto 2010), the sister column to *Pioneers*. Following are two memories to highlight Heizer’s contributions to Great Basin anthropology. Indeed, his Great Basin work may have been central to his career, not only in terms of intellectual content, but in terms of life history, arising from his childhood roots in Lovelock, Nevada in the 1920s and 30s. Part of the rationale behind *Pioneers* is to offer younger members of our profession a glimpse into the times that created the archaeologists who shaped our discipline. Just plain old cultural context, and we know that is a good thing.

* * *

ON HEIZER

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I worked as Robert Fleming Heizer’s (RFH’s) research assistant for a year, beginning in the fall of 1965. I was in my last semester as a Berkeley undergraduate before moving to the graduate program in anthropology that coming spring. The project, collating data on pre-European California rock art, found me at work most weekday mornings in one of two offices assigned to the University of California Archaeological Research Facility. RFH was the Facility’s Coordinator (Director). The other office, immediately adjacent and accessible through an always-open door, was the workspace for Edna Flood, the Facility’s diligent, kind-hearted secretary.

The Old Man (he had just turned 50) arrived most weekday mornings at nine, often dressed in the same ensemble: brown tweed sport coat, tan twill trousers, heavy brown shoes, white shirt and a dark, knit wool tie. He was in good shape and looked professorially sharp. His long, narrow face and carefully trimmed beard always reminded me of the author, John Steinbeck. I don’t imagine the resemblance was accidental. Books and papers for the day were carried, not in a leather satchel,

the standard academic accessory for the time, but in a 12-bottle cardboard wine box, held lightly under one arm.

After a greeting and brief exchange about news of the day, Heizer sat to dictate his correspondence. He spoke slowly but steadily, always in complete sentences, with punctuation and paragraphing stipulated, but with no draft or other *aide memoir* in hand. Edna would later type it all up for his signature. His performance was impressive, if not unusual in a time before word processors. I can still recall the measured rhythm of his speech, and in it an echo of his distinctive, slightly discursive prose style.

He wasn’t always so professorial. I recall following him into a bar in far northeastern California late one summer afternoon in 1968, looking for a bottle of JD. Experience had shown that its regular patrons were often unfriendly to outsiders. It was worse that summer—political assassinations, urban riots, and marches against the war hadn’t helped. The Old Man was wearing khaki work clothes, topped, incongruously, by a Venetian boatman’s straw skimmer, complete with a broad red hatband, the loose ends of which trailed halfway down his back. It definitely drew one’s attention. I expected a provocative remark from the fellows at the bar, a few already heavily into their beer and bourbon shots. I’d mentioned the potential problem just before we entered, but he ignored the advice. Having spent much of his life in rural Nevada, he certainly knew what he was doing. He could have gone to the grocery store just down the street, but the bar was closer. As it happened, no one said a word; they just stared at him until we left. Perhaps the way he carried himself made them think better of it. Maybe he was making a point.

As my friend and age-mate Billy Clewlow likes to say, RFH was a complex person—highly intelligent, extremely well-read in both his discipline and a wide range of other subjects, passible in spoken French, Italian, and Spanish, and quite engaging when he cared to be. His home in the Berkeley hills had many touches reflecting his skills in carpentry and cabinet making. The terraced garden was a delight, in a certain style. The A-frame cabin he built in a private enclave on Tahoe’s south shore was rough but well-conceived, right down to the professional-grade chef’s stove and the bright Guatemalan textiles accenting the walls and furniture. One often ate well with him. Steaks, potatoes, green