

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM R. COE: AN INTRODUCTION

by Robert Sharer and Christopher Jones

A tribute to the late William R. Coe was held at the Penn Museum on April 9, 2010, attended by a number of Bill's colleagues and former students. People spoke of his professional achievements and their recollections of working with Bill during his career at Penn spanning almost 40 years. The attendees also told a number of stories about Bill. After this event several people suggested that these recollections and stories should be collected and recorded so that they could be more widely shared and preserved. Word went out by email to colleagues and former students to contribute their accounts and over the following weeks and months many people shared their recollections and stories about Bill. Accordingly, we wish to thank the following colleagues who contributed to this cause, Wendy Ashmore, Wendy Bacon, Marshall Becker, Mary Bullard, Arlen Chase, Diane Chase, Pat Culbert, Ginny Greene, Peter Harrison, Anita Haviland, Bill Haviland, Chris Jones, Eleanor King, Joyce Marcus, Hattula Moholy-Nagy, Vivian Morales, Payson Sheets, and Bernard Wailes. We are all grateful to Anita Fahringer, who suggested these accounts could be published in *The Codex*. Thus the contributions from colleagues and students have been assembled, along with two more formal resumes of Bill's professional achievements, as a tribute to Bill, who was certainly a memorable mentor to us all. Because of their length, these accounts have been divided into two parts. Part 1 follows in this issue, while Part 2 will be published in the next issue of this journal, volume 19, issue 3 (June 2011).

THE PROFESSIONAL LEGACY OF WILLIAM R. COE

Bill Coe's career as an archaeologist was closely tied to the University of Pennsylvania and its Museum from his undergraduate and graduate student days (1946-1958) to his 28 years as a Museum Curator and Professor in the Department of Anthropology (1959-1987). As a Penn graduate student Bill excavated at Chiripa, Bolivia, with a Penn Museum project directed by Alfred Kidder II. In 1954 he conducted excavations at Chalchuapa, El Salvador, for his PhD dissertation research. Although this dissertation was thwarted when his excavated artifacts were confiscated, Bill's Chalchuapa research initiated 21 years of fieldwork conducted in the Maya area for the Penn Museum. His dissertation was based on the artifacts of Piedras Negras, Guatemala, excavated by an earlier Penn Museum project, directed by his mentor, Linton Satterthwaite.

In 1956 Bill began 14 seasons of research in Guatemala with the Museum's Tikal Project. During that span he worked at Tikal as an excavator, director of summer fieldwork, and from 1963 to 1970, as overall project director. In 1971 he directed a new project sponsored by the Penn Museum at Tayasal, Guatemala. The Tayasal Project ended after one season, and in 1973 Bill initiated another Penn Museum project at Quirigua, Guatemala. Bill directed the Quirigua Project from 1974 to 1979, although he spent only one field season excavating at the site (1975). Thereafter, Bill spent the remainder of his career preparing and publishing his Tikal reports.

As of this writing two formal accounts have been prepared that summarize Bill Coe's numerous accomplishments as a professional archaeologist. We begin this homage to Bill by presenting both of these accounts here.

William Robertson Coe 1926-2009*

by Christopher Jones

William Coe, long-time former curator of the American Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia, passed away on November 23 of this year (2009). He was best known for his role in the Museum's archaeological investigation of the Classic Maya site of Tikal, in northern Guatemala, Central America. He joined the project as a graduate student initiating his excavations in 1956, starting his superb photographic record of artifacts, organizing the catalog system which has become a model for many others in the field, and publishing the first of the long series called the *Tikal Reports*. In 1963 he took over the directorship of the project's field operations and continued in that capacity until 1970 when the site and the entire collection was formally turned over to the national Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology in Guatemala. In 1964 he oversaw selection and installation of the exquisite art objects from the excavations into the newly built Sylvanus G. Morley Museum at Tikal. The Government of Guatemala extended him the highest honor for his work at Tikal, membership in the Order of the Quetzal.



Figure 1. William Coe receiving the Order of the Quetzal at the Presidential Palace along with George F. Guillemin and Linton Satterthwaite, November, 1969.

Coe's 1967 guidebook entitled *Tikal: A Handbook of the Ancient Maya Ruins* ran through many printings and new editions and is still available at the ruins today. In 1975 Coe contracted the Museum for excavation at Quirigua, Guatemala, and directed the first field season before returning to his primary obligation of finishing his Tikal Report.

William Coe's standing in the archaeological community was established by the completion and publication in 1990 of *Tikal Report 14: Excavations in the Great Plaza, North Terrace and North Acropolis of Tikal*. This six-volume report contains 1007 small-type pages of text and 238 pen-and-ink drawings of excavation detail, many of which had to be folded many times to fit into a box volume. The work received immediate recognition as one of the most significant archaeological reports ever, totally matching in scale the 17 years of painstaking excavations, which it documents as well as the monumental achievements of the Maya themselves. William Fash of Harvard University said in his long and thoughtful review (*American Anthropologist* 94: 400-5. 1992): "The quantity and quality of time, and the dedication, respect, and courage required to produce this voluminous and tremendously informative report should serve as an inspiration, no

less so a humbling lesson, to all those attempting work of this nature in the future.” For his achievements in archaeology, Coe was awarded the Drexel Medal by the University Museum in 1991.

Another of Coe’s legacies was his superlative teaching skill. His survey of Mesoamerican Archaeology was an intense imparting of knowledge, enhanced by his personal collection of photographs and his encyclopedic synthesis of the literature. The overriding lesson was that theories must rise from the facts established from careful reporting and inferential reasoning. He often said that this point of view came from his mentor, Linton Satterthwaite, who first trained as a lawyer. Later, he continued to influence students through teaching with Bernard Wailes a greatly loved seminar on Archeological Theory.

The early members of the Tikal Project were largely imported from other institutions but soon the enterprise was staffed by Penn graduate students, whose work he diligently supervised both in the field and back at the University. These produced a long list of doctoral dissertations and archaeological and teaching careers. Bill, as his students called him, made sure that they held to the strict field recording and publishing standards that he had established. Every few days in the field, he would leave his own work in the North Acropolis trenches and review the progress of each student, rarely praising and never hesitating to point out sloppiness and challenge strategy and conclusions. He freely shared in these sessions his respect for the big and small truths discovered by curiosity, temporary bewilderment and continued search. A huge part of his mentoring lay in his accessibility, especially in the gatherings in the “sala” before dinner, where serious discussions of the Maya Collapse mingled with friendly conversations.

William Robertson Coe’s high standards of precision and detail, which he demanded for himself, sometimes got in the way of his friendships and sympathies. This weighed on him heavily in his later years. He resigned from the Museum in 1987 and then about ten years later resigned further involvement with the Tikal Project. The news of his passing renews the sense of loss. Bill will be missed by many of his colleagues and students but the legacy of his genius has become firmly established in his chosen field.



Figure 2. Photograph from *Expedition*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Fall, 1965).

**This obituary written by Chris Jones was distributed as a press release by the Penn Museum in December, 2009.*

Remembering Bill Coe (1926-2009)**

by Robert Sharer



Figure 1. Bill Coe.

Dr. William R. Coe, Curator Emeritus of the American Section and Professor Emeritus in the Anthropology Department, was something of a legend within the Museum's American Section. He learned his archaeology at Penn (B.A. 1950, M.A. 1953, and Ph.D. 1958), joined the Penn faculty as an Assistant Professor in 1959, and became an Assistant Curator the Penn Museum that same year. Bill retired from Penn in 1987 and he died on November 23, 2009, at the age of 82. A memorial in his honor was held at the Penn Museum on April 9, 2010.

Bill was widely renowned for his research and publications on Tikal, the great Classic Maya city in the rain forest of northern Guatemala. He joined the Museum's Tikal Project in 1956. It was there that he honed his meticulous archaeological recording skills, producing superbly drawn archaeological sections, architectural drawings, and a cross-referenced catalog system, which have set the standards for Maya archaeologists to this day. Bill became the third and final director of the Tikal Project in 1963, a position he held until the project ended in 1970. A generation of American and Guatemalan archaeologists was trained at Tikal under his leadership. His generosity in establishing an endowed American Section research fund some 30 years ago ensures that the Museum's Maya research can be published to this day.

Most of Bill's publications involved Tikal. His 1967 guidebook, ***Tikal: A Handbook of the Ancient Maya Ruins*** is still in print. His 1965 ***Science*** article, "Tikal, Guatemala, and Emergent Maya Civilization," initiated a search for the Pre-classic precursors of Classic

Maya civilization that has revolutionized our understanding of the origins of lowland Maya states. But his monumental achievement remains ***Tikal Report 14: Excavations in the Great Plaza, North Terrace and North Acropolis of Tikal***, published in 1990. This six-volume report exactly documents 17 years of excavations in the heart of Tikal with over one thousand pages of text and 238 excavation drawings.

The Penn Museum's Tikal Project was instrumental in establishing this ancient Maya city as the national symbol of Guatemala. Today Tikal is one of the most visited archaeological sites in the Americas. In recognition for Bill's commitment to the site's archaeology, he received the highest honor bestowed by Guatemala, the Order of the Quetzal. And after his retirement in 1987 the Penn Museum confirmed his archaeological achievements by awarding him the Drexel Medal.

I was one of Bill's students, and did my dissertation research in El Salvador under his supervision. I worked with him in 1971 when he directed a season of excavations at Tayasal, southwest of Tikal.



Figure 2. View of the northern shore of Lake Petén Itzá and the peninsula of Tayasal.

In 1975 I spent a memorable field season with Bill at Quirigua, Guatemala, excavating that site's royal acropolis together. That was Bill's final season of fieldwork—he spent the last 12 years of his career publishing his Tikal research. But I will always remember him for his support while I was a graduate student and during the early years of my academic career. And as an archaeologist I will always honor him for setting rigorous standards for excavating and documenting archaeological sites.

***This Portrait of Bill Coe was published this past spring in Expedition (Volume 52, number 1, 2010), reprinted here by permission.*

BILL COE AND THE PROYECTO TIKAL/TIKAL PROJECT JEEPS

by

Anita Haviland, Pat Culbert, Peter D. Harrison, and Marshall Becker

Among the collection of Bill Coe stories gathered for this issue of *The Codex* are several regarding the extracurricular uses of the ProyectoTikal/Tikal Project vehicles, Jeeps to be exact. These tales all date to the early 1960s and deserve a place of their own, especially as they depict another side of life on a dig: the ways crew members let off stress and tension.

Here then, we present several tales of Bill Coe and the Tikal Project Jeeps, illustrating that vehicles on a dig have uses other than those for which they were intended.

The Jeep Race (Anita Haviland)

With Bill Haviland at the helm of the big Jeep, me in the center and Linton Satterthwaite on the right, and Richard Linnington and Denny Puleston standing in the back, we raced Bill Coe, in the little Jeep, driving the other to the end of the airstrip.



Figure 1. Bill Haviland and one of the Tikal Jeeps, 1960. (Photograph courtesy of Anita Haviland.)

Linton, a RAF pilot from WWI, was yelling, "Take off!" Came close to it, darned close. We were ahead, turning to come back, when we realized that Bill was cheating, cutting early to beat us back!

Bill Coe got back first, but we went through the soccer goal posts and scored, with our workmen cheering us on! How Linnington and Denny got down low enough to survive it is beyond me. Of course this incident was but a prelude to what was to come.

The Jeep That Tried to Fly, Tale 1 (Pat Culbert)

At Tikal in the early 1960s there was no piece of straight road anywhere within several hours drive. In fact the only road connection to Flores was a hazardous venture that could not be attempted except at the driest part of the dry season.

Given that, the only place to satisfy an urge to drive fast was the airstrip at Tikal. A problem was that there was a deep ditch just at the end of the airstrip.



Figure 2. Unloading Cargo On Tikal Airstrip, 1959; photo taken after the airplane crashed. Notice the propeller in the mud and the broken landing gear. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX59-4-190 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

On the day of what I am fond of calling “Bill’s midnight flight” we had been partying. Several of us were in the Jeep when Bill got the urge to drive fast. I was copilot, sitting in the front seat next to him. So there we were dashing along the airstrip, with Bill joking along the way about another project member who had not stopped fast enough and left his vehicle with the front wheels hanging in the ditch so that he had to be pulled out.

Then, suddenly, in view just ahead of us was the end of the airstrip and the ditch. Bill gunned the engine as fast as he could in hopes that we might be able to jump the ditch, which wasn’t very wide. He managed to get the front wheels across and we stopped with a great jolt as the back wheels hit the side of the ditch. Bill’s decision to try to jump the ditch may have saved our lives because otherwise we would probably have overturned in the ditch.

After the smash, the first noise was Bill saying, “I’m bleeding”. We searched out a flashlight and looked at Bill’s face where there was a cut across the bridge of his nose. We decided that we had never heard of anyone bleeding to death from a small cut on the nose. So then we got out of the Jeep, and Peter Harrison, who had been in the back seat, announced, “Don’t worry about me, I’m going to pass out”. And he fell over on the ground. So we looked at him and talked about head injuries until we managed to rouse him. Then we walked back to camp. Now the old airstrip is overgrown and there are ROADS, so there will be no more airstrip adventures at Tikal.

The Jeep That Tried to Fly, Tale 2 (Peter D. Harrison)

Spring, 1962. There was great excitement in the camp as I had uncovered a royal tomb in the West Plaza, and during the previous week had cleared down over the skeletal remains to reveal a magnificent greenstone pendant on the breast of the deceased.



Figure 3. Jade pendant from Burial 77; Object 41F-7/4, MT-18. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative C62-4-71All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Bill decided to spend Saturday with me in the tomb taking “publicity shots” and I was the ecstatic subject. Tatiana Proskouriakoff was visiting the site and watched the proceedings with great interest. We finished photography by noon and began to celebrate, a joyful process that lasted until after dinner.



Figure 4. Publicity shot, Peter Harrison with Burial 77 in situ, April 2, 1962. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Still feeling like celebrating, Bill proposed that we do something he had always dreamed about: see if we could make the little Jeep fly off the airfield. Pat Culbert was with us and took the passenger seat in front. As junior member I was squatting in the rear flat-bed. As we were pulling the Jeep out of the garage, Tania came by and asked where we were going. Bill explained and asked her to join us for the Jeep's inaugural flight. Tania looked us over slowly, and decided very wisely to take a pass.

There was little moonlight, and the little Jeep's light beams stayed on high as we began to zoom down the runway, past the Aviateca office and into outer darkness. That little Jeep really could go, and our exhilaration flew with us, but we were still on the ground. Faster, and faster we went, our light beams cutting a swath through the night insects filling the air.

Suddenly, Bill exclaimed "Oh, no" and other expletives, as he caught sight of the ditch that crossed the end of the airfield. For a few seconds we all could see the black gap growing in size like an entry to hell. Bill thought fast and overcame the temptation to hit the brakes. If he had, we would have all been dead. Instead he accelerated to the poor little Jeep's maximum, forcing it to go even faster. We reached the ditch. We were flying. We were flying! A split second later we stopped flying and landed with a mighty WHAM, which sent birds flying out of the airfield aguada.

There was a dust cloud and silence. Bill had broken the steering wheel with his broken nose. Pat had badly banged his shin on the sharp underside of the dashboard. We didn't know until later how bad his wound was. The impact had torn off my wrist-watch and one leg of my jeans. I had hit parts of the front seats with various parts of my legs and upper body. Bill asked tentatively, "Everyone OK?" I started to climb out of the jeep and said calmly, "I'm fine. I am going to lie down and pass out, but don't worry, I'll be up in a minute." I did exactly that. From the fog of unconsciousness I could hear the sounds

of consternation. I opened my eyes and got up, starting to feel sore. Bill's nose was bleeding rather badly and he was trying to staunch it with his sweat rag. Pat opined that he was the least hurt, so he would walk back to camp and get the other Jeep.

The lights of our Jeep were still on, sending beams a bit limply in the wrong directions. Pat disappeared into the darkness. Bill sat beside me and took my hand and said, "Well Peter, now we're blood brothers". I swelled with pride. I had found a magnificent artifact and become Bill's blood brother in one day.

Pat returned quite quickly. When we got back to camp we noticed that he had a pronounced limp. He later discovered that the shin had been splintered and took quite long to heal. Were we all heroes? The Director, Bob Dyson, did not think so, and the next morning he visited us all separately and gave us his opinion of night-time high jinks. Rafa Morales, the park director, drew a wonderful cartoon of the damaged Jeep, with its headlights drooping and shedding tears.

(I swear that every word is true)

The Spirit of '62 (Marshall Becker)

My observations took place the day after the runway Jeep adventure when, as I recall it, the 3 bloodied and bruised warriors arrived at the hotel dining room a bit late for breakfast. Since all of the Tikal Project people were extremely eager archaeologists, and some of us were extremely young, the day always got off to an early and cheery start. On this morning, a Sunday as I recall, there was no particular need to be off to our various projects, yet everyone kept to the same daily routine and all were present except for the famous trio. They had become famous between the time that the first breakfaster arrived and their dramatic entry, perhaps 15 minutes later. That the Jeep had been in an accident, and that no one was killed, seemed to be the only facts agreed upon by the sundry diners.

Bob Dyson was then project director, which would place the event in 1962. Bob was seated at table and, as I recall, not participating in the speculations that were flying among us. There had been no new arrivals at table for several minutes when in came the three flying Jeepsters, seemingly shoulder to shoulder through a door far too narrow to have permitted that kind of dramatic entry. They approached the long table at the western end of the room, where the Project people usually congregated, looking like The Spirit of '76--no flag, no fife, no drum--but limping, and heads held high nevertheless!

By the time they reached the table they seem to have come to grips with the reality of their crime and their heads were not held as high as I first thought. Vehicles were few at Tikal, and they were kept in running order only through the miraculous skills of Don Max, a brilliant mechanic whom Ed Shook knew from Guatemala City and had enticed to live with his very large family deep in what was then a frontier wilderness. Tales relating to Don Max and his feats with automotive objects, plus his personal life, could fill a volume of its own. Were he not available to repair damaged vehicles, the problems generated by the airstrip adventure would have been far greater!

Bob Dyson's gracious few words to the three arrivals suggested to me that he would speak with them privately about their delinquency. I didn't realize until I read Peter Harrison's narration (Tale 2, above) that Bob had already resolved the issue. The tale became an instant legend at Tikal – one that has become an amusing memory in a sea of pleasant memories.



Figure 5. Tikal staff 1962. Back row: Hattula Moholy-Nagy, Aubrey Trik, Helen T. Webster, Marshall Becker, Kathy Stone Becker, Juan-Luis Echigoyen, Peter Harrison, Alfonso Mora, Robert Dyson. Front row: John McGinn, Alfredo Siebold, Ismael Tercero, Bernard Walden, José-Luis Leiva, William Coe. (Photograph courtesy of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.)

Jeep Ride to Piedra Blanca (Peter D. Harrison)

In late May and early June the temperature and humidity at Tikal begin to build in preparation for the coming rainy season. One Saturday night in the mid-60s Bill and his graduate students were sitting around the sala sweating and complaining of the heat, when suddenly Bill perked up and said, "Let's go swimming at Piedra Blanca." "What's Piedra Blanca?" I asked. This was a small Maya village at the extreme east end of Lake Petén Itza, the closest point of lake water to Tikal.

We all piled into the back of the big Jeep without a moment's hesitation and with Bill at the wheel we took off. Just a breeze from driving was a relief, the faster the better the breeze. Bill surprised us with a tremendous skill in double clutching thus being able to keep up a good speed on the old, rutted and pot-holed road.



Figure 6. Stuart Scott and a Tikal Jeep. (Photo courtesy of Peter Harrison.)

At one point an adolescent jaguar leapt into the headlights in front of the jeep, and kept running in a zigzag manner in front of us. We were all thrilled by this visitation of a living namesake of one of Tikal's oldest ruling families. The gorgeous creature kept ahead of us for about half a kilometer, and then, tiring of the game, disappeared to the left of the road and into the forest.



Figure 7. Jaguar at Tikal.

We reached Piedra Blanca by around eleven pm and the small cluster of thatched houses was in darkness. The village had a pier to which a couple of canoes were tied on one side leaving the other side open and clear for us to swim. We all stripped off most of our clothing and jumped into the tepid and murky waters of Petén Itza. As my feet sank in

an unknown muck and water plants wrapped around my ankles I began to wonder what the northern range of the piranha might be. However, the water was a few degrees lower than our body temperatures and we splashed around with great delight, led by Bill, who swam out further than anyone else dared.



Figure 8. Sunset on Lake Petén Itza.

Eventually we had cooled off enough, and became scared of the black waters enough that we retreated to the pier to stretch out or dangle feet in the warm water. From somewhere out in the lake came the faint sound of marimba music. A haze was rising off the water and we could barely see the glow in the sky from Flores. Someone softly said, "Look" and pointed out into the haze. Two faint lights were approaching us together with the marimba music. Each cargo canoe had a canopy, dangling lanterns and four marimba players, stood in the moving canoes.

We recognized the song as "Mananitas" the Spanish birthday song and realized that it had just turned midnight. The miniature, musical flotilla drew up to the empty side of the pier and stared at our group of near-naked gringos. Not missing a beat, the marimbas were lifted ashore and carried across the bare dust toward the village. Lights began to come on in the houses. We discovered that the birthday was for a five-year old girl, and the birthday always starts at midnight.

The effect of the surrealism was stronger than the aguardiente we were consuming, and we danced on the pier and the beach for a couple of hours in the euphoria than can only happen in one time, in one place and under one leadership.

By the time we miraculously got back to the Tikal camp, the sun god was sending his first rosy signals into the eastern sky, and the birds, which herald its coming, were welcoming us home exhausted and somewhat changed forever. How Bill got us back safely I don't know. Most of us slept while he drove.

At that point in time, if Bill Coe had asked any one of us to jump off Temple I, we would have gladly done it - for him. Goodbye, Bill. We will always remember the good times.

Gertrude and the Jeeps (Peter D. Harrison)

The archaeological scholars were transported by jeep each day from the garage in camp to the Great Plaza using both Jeeps. Bill usually drove the large one as senior scholar, and I sometimes got to drive the little one. We drove in tandem in the lovely morning light in cool breezes. As we reached the ramp up to the Plaza, it was necessary to rev the motors to make the climb. This increased our noise level and ground vibration. In the spring of 1965, we first became aware of a visitor in the Plaza. This was a very large tarantula who ran out of a hole in the SW corner of Temple I and waved her long front legs. We quickly interpreted her action as a greeting, and we all greeted her in return. She was dubbed "Gertrude," and we assumed she was protecting a young brood in her small cave in Temple I.



Figure 9. Guatemalan Tarantula.

The same event happened every morning, and we became quite fond of Gertrude as a Plaza pet. I was working on the excavation of the stair of 5D-122 facing the Plaza and observed that Gertrude always retreated to her hole as soon as she was sure we meant no harm. Still, she came out every day.

One morning around 10 am we were surprised by the sound of approaching Jeeps. A convoy of Guatemala military was starting up the ramp. I was conferring with Bill as this happened, and we looked at each other in surprise. The first Jeep, a small one, roared into the Plaza and began a circuit around it uncaring of floors, the trenches and the stelae. The second Jeep was larger and was graced by a young soldier with a mounted machine gun. There was a moment of anxious expectation. Sure enough, Gertrude came running out in her customary attitude of greeting. The soldier spotted her. She was threatening the safety of the convoy, and without hesitation he opened fire and blew Gertrude to smithereens. Bill and I watched in something close to horror. Not satisfied with his show of machismo the young soldier continued to fire, this time aiming at the roof comb of Temple II. Fragments of temple stone flew around the Plaza. I whispered to Bill if there was anything we could do. "No", he replied, "they have the guns".

After the convoy had all circled the Plaza they shot off past Temple II heading towards Temple IV. We heard several more shots from the west and wondered what more natural history had been obliterated to protect the safety of the military.

I walked over to the scene of the murder and found only two long legs and a mass of bullet holes in the ground around the corner of Temple I. With the toe of my shoe I eased the legs back into Gertrude's cave along with a bit of earth. She died from the lure of a jeep's vibration, not knowing it didn't belong to the people who loved her. Temple I would be her monument: Gertrude's temple.

I don't remember who else was there at the time.



Figure 10. Temple I viewed from the North Terrace, looking East, consolidation nearly complete, 1963. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

SITE-SEEING: REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

RECOLLECTIONS OF BILL COE AND HIS CAREER AS A MAYA ARCHAEOLOGIST

Part 1: The Tikal Years

Compiled by Robert Sharer

RECOLLECTIONS OF BILL COE DURING THE TIKAL YEARS

The following recollections have been provided by Bill's colleagues and former students. Some of these were submitted for reading at the Penn Museum's tribute to Bill held on April 9, 2010, and many more were circulated by email following this event. They have been arranged according to several topical categories dealing with Bill's years when he was working at Tikal. They are presented as received from their authors with minimal editing, although several of the more extensive accounts have been divided among the different topical categories used here.

Bill Coe at Tikal

Remembering Bill at Tikal (William Haviland)

As I remember Bill Coe, I think first of his extraordinary abilities as a field archaeologist—to my mind the best in the business. His meticulous attention to detail and his single-minded tenacity and perseverance in unraveling some problem in the field were, in my view, unmatched. I recall one Sunday, when most Tikal Project members were relaxing after a week of hard work, Anita and I wandered up to the North Acropolis, and there was Bill. By himself, in the hot sun, he was checking out a particular structure-floor relationship that was “bugging” him. There splattered around the otherwise pristine acropolis floor was blood—not from some ancient Maya sacrifice, but from Coe's toe, on which he had dropped a plumb bob! So focused was he on his objective, he was quite oblivious to his injury.

Bill was a perfectionist, not just in excavation. His drawing abilities put us all to shame, and he was a superb photographer as well. When emerging one day from the Tikal Project darkroom, I encountered Reuben Goldberg, the museum photographer, who stopped to chat. In the course of our conversation, I recall him saying: “That Bill Coe is a fanatic!” This from a man who was a master photographer. Truly, Bill excelled in all he did, and expected the same from the rest of us. It was not always easy to live up to.

Bill was not particularly interested in theory, and often railed against those he thought sought to use data to support their own preconceived ideas. He would have agreed with Stephen J. Gould's assertion that: “The greatest impediment to scientific innovation is usually a conceptual lock, not a factual lock.” (*Wonderful Life*, 1989, p.226) What he was interested in was a carefully reasoned argument, much like a legal brief (here, the influence of his mentor, Linton Satterthwaite shows), backed up by a mass of factual data. I recall sitting drinking in the bar of the Pan American Hotel in Guatemala City with him and Bill Bullard, discussing the problem of identifying Maya house ruins. The conversation became increasingly animated, with Coe waving his arms and loudly proclaiming: “I won't believe they [small mounds] are houses until you show me a toilet!” (Hattula Moholy-Nagy remembers his comment as “I won't believe they are houses until we find the toilet seats!”)

Although Bill could be quite intense, he could also be quite playful. After an evening of photographing monuments, he enjoyed racing jeeps down the Tikal airfield. He also loved to show off his ability to double clutch when driving up to the Great Plaza. I remember at the end of one day of hard work sitting in the *sala*, drinking rum, and Coe thinking up names for newly discovered Maya sites, such as “Uaximaxin”, “Taxi Cab”, or “Mixta Xuc”. On another occasion, at a meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Detroit, we were in an exotic restaurant when a belly dancer came up to our table, took Coe’s drink from him, and balanced it on her belly as she danced. It was one of the few times I have seen him speechless.



Figure 1. William Haviland Takes A Moment To Read, Tikal , 1959. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX59-4-135. All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

The Early Years at Tikal (Vivian Morales)

On my way to my first season at Tikal in 1957, I boarded the Panama Limited from Chicago to New Orleans. From there the Pan American flight went to Merida for a short stop and on to Guatemala City. I had been told by Ed Shook that Bill Coe and I were on the same plane. I spotted Bill. He was ahead of me on the other side of the aisle. When we arrived at La Aurora airport we were met by Ed and Jim Hazard and the three of us were introduced to each other. Jim was born and raised in Guatemala. He looked like a gringo but had the slang vocabulary. He was always surprising natives who made rude remarks about him and returned them in kind. He had an engineering degree from Canada. I was only one year older than Bill and two years older than Jim. I had had previous field experience. My B.A. was in Romance Languages (Spanish, French and Italian).

Ed had set up camp by the aguada in Tikal the year before. Workers were flown in from Flores and other villages around the lake. Ed brought in by plane young men he knew from the city as volunteers. There were no roads, only the airstrip or a 5-hour mule ride from Uaxactun to Tikal. We three staff members got together and realized we were clueless, and sensed we would remain so for some time.

There were four champas on the North side of the Aguada. Ed's was a two-room champa, bedroom and office. A long champa would serve as a laboratory, but at the moment, men slept in hammocks there. Next came the sala (common room) and kitchen.

The other two were for a staff dormitory and a small commissary for supplies. Ciriaco Contreras was the stock keeper and slept there.



Figure 2. Aerial view of camp, 1958. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX58-4-21 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)



Figure 3. Washing sherds by the camp aguada in the early morning, 1959. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative 59-4-10 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Bill, who had spent 1956 setting up the cataloging system at the University of Pennsylvania, was anxious to explain it to me. I could see he was hot-wired fast-forward. I felt I could handle it. The day after my arrival, Bill and I sat down in the laboratory for

me to learn the catalog system based on the one used by the University Museum Project at Piedras Negras. The first step was to give everyone a field book and a number (Bill's was 4 and I was 7). In this we were to write up our field notes every day. I found the system very well designed. Bill asked me if I thought I could work with it, as I was to do the cataloging. I told him it would be no problem. He was so relieved he could hardly believe it. We became a team.

There was nothing to be cataloged at first, a few surface collections only. One of the most interesting was the one Bill found close to the road running out of the campsite toward the Main Plaza. He took me to see it soon after my arrival. A large tree had fallen over the road and had been removed in the 1956 season. The roots, however, were left like a plate set vertically and filled with sherds. Of course, the limestone surface did not permit the roots to grow deep. There was scant topsoil, so the roots spread out around the base of the tree. When the tree was fully grown and caught and twisted in a high wind, the tree lost its poor grip on the surface and peeled off. We made our "surface" collection reaching up over our heads to pick sherds out of the up-ended roots.



Figure 4. A Workman And Vivian Broman Wash And Sort Sherds , April 1957. (George Holton, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative C57-3-15 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Getting a cook and a well driller were high on the list. In the meantime, meals were handled by the staff. Charlie Barr would wake us at six. He would have prepared coffee and oatmeal for breakfast. Then we would be off to join the workmen in the Main Plaza. Only Bill and I knew how to cook. Bill's specialty was spaghetti. His mother's sauce recipe was spectacular.

We were waiting for Morris Jones, a cartographer, from the U.S.G.S. in Washington. He was to spend the month of February getting Jim started on the mapping. Meanwhile, our next task was to excavate a stela discovered in December of 1956. Jim had to map the area that had been cleared. No digging can be done before a map is made so that the position of whatever is found can be precisely recorded. We three went down the road to the Temple of Inscriptions with one of the workmen who took a wheelbarrow. The Temple of Inscriptions was on the widest causeway in Tikal, so we had no trouble getting there. But going on to Stela 23 was not easy, since the trail was barely marked. The workman laughed at us. For him, the forest was as streets and avenues were to us. We were in a different world altogether. We learned the first rule of the jungle: Never go out alone.

Often Charlie would come out with his camera before lunch to see what was going on and to take photos. We had become accustomed to the path out to the temple. But once, when Charlie had finished taking the pictures, he decided to return to camp. I went behind him to check on the lunch. Very soon, we heard voices and we stopped. Looking through the trees, we saw we had come in a circle and were back at the excavation. We walked in nonchalantly, saying we had left something. By then, it was time to go back to camp for lunch, so we all went out together. I had certainly learned another lesson: Pay attention to where you are going.

Bill and I would often go to work on Sunday when there were no tourist groups to guide, or it was up to Ed and Jim to take them around since Bill and I had done it the week before. Bill became more oriented than I. He suggested that we go back to camp by a shorter way. He had brought a compass and set off until he could hardly see me. I then joined him and he set off again. By this means, we eventually came out upon the road to camp on the last stretch by the sherd tree.

Morris Jones arrived. Jim, Bill and I were eager to learn mapping. The alidade was an instrument well adapted to the forest environment, and was used on a plane table. Thanks to Bill's initiative for us to two-step with a compass, I didn't mind being rod man. This meant that I must pick a position where I was on the line where the road must go. Then the mappers moved on and selected the next point where they could see me. I would then move ahead and having them in view, look ahead to the next setup. This group effort moved us ahead faster. Morris was pleased.



Figure 5. Vivian Broman, William Coe, and Morris Jones surveying, February 1957. (Walwin Barr, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative C57-8-8 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

The rainy season supposedly ended in October. November and December were to dry up the area allowing excavation to begin in mid-January. The Stela 23 group, discovered in December 1955, had been cleared in 1956 when the Project camp around the aguada was set-up. But in my field notebook, which I carried tucked into the back of my pants, I recorded rain every single day but one for February. There were showers usually just in the morning when we were out mapping, The plane table and alidade covered with a sheet of plastic, served as some shelter for the mappers but I had to stand

with both hands on the rod. I really didn't mind because it was a gentle rain and body temperature, but it WAS WET. I wore a scarf on my head and tucked my jeans into the tops of my boots to keep out ants and other crawling insects. This, however, did not keep out the rain.



Figure 6. Stela 23 Excavation (L-R: Vivian Broman, James Hazard(?), Antonio Ortiz, Edwin Shook, William R. Coe), January 27, 1957. (Walwin Barr, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative C57-8-79 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

On the day before Morris was to leave Tikal to return to Washington, Bill and I took him to Temple IV. As we were approaching the huge platform on which the pyramid is built, a hummingbird fell to the ground at Morris's feet. He picked it up and saw that it was alive but exhausted. He had brought an orange with him. He poked a hole in it with his pencil and inserted the beak of the hummingbird into it. Sucking up the orange juice, it quickly revived and the little bird flew away.

Sunday we took turns guiding day-trippers, Ed and Jim or Bill and I. On our free Sunday Bill and I would go out early, taking our lunch to spend the day on the excavation. There were Ramon trees on the north side of the site and the fruit was ripe. We had begun to eat lunch in the shade of these trees, when a band of spider monkeys moved in to eat right above our heads. All of a sudden a flock of parrots swooped in and the battle was on. The squawking parrots pecked at the monkeys who shrieked and tried to catch the parrots. This didn't last long as each side realized it was a no-win situation. There were Ramon trees with ripe fruit everywhere and the contending parties went their separate ways. As more and more people came to the park, this kind of encounter would never occur again. The birds and animals very quickly learned to avoid areas where there was human activity. Our Tikal would soon become Paradise Lost. Spider monkeys were the exception, of course. Monkeys and men fascinate each other.

I was still managing the commissary of the Project where its supplies were stored, starting with the yearly supply from Boston. Otherwise I ordered weekly through our

agent in Guatemala City. The most important item was peanut butter. We now had two tables for staff. I would put out one jar of Gato Gordo (Fat Cat) brand and would bring out another only when it became a “knife rattler”. Dr. Satterthwaite and Bill were the most conspicuous consumers, slathering it on tortillas. I also provided jam under the same conditions. Commercial drinking water in 5 gallon glass jars, Salvavidas (life saving water), came in by plane or there was water from the aguada. This must be boiled before using.

At the end of the 1960 season, Mary Ricketson had married William R. Bullard. Bill Bullard was a student of Dr. Gordon Willey with whom Bill had worked in Belize and Petén (Seibal). The families of both had come to Guatemala for the wedding. I was glad the season had ended because Mary and I had become overwhelmed by the cataloging. Material came from buildings and caches, offerings of grave goods in burials (skeletons in good and bad condition). It was slow work and usually kept students in thesis material years after the project was ended.

I had told Bill that I had decided that I would resign from the Project at the end of the 1960 season. When I came into the sala from the plane in January, I found a young man in a jacket and tie waiting at the table. He was obviously a Guatemalan and not looking for a job. The Guatemalan government under its development program for the Petén, FYDEP, had finally placed an official administrator of the Tikal National Park under the orders of their department. And here was Rafael Morales to formally meet the incoming Project staff, anything but formal by its 4th season. Rafa had come to Tikal at the end of October.

Rafa had had time in the “off-season” to assess what his job might be: maintenance, of course. He had no housing, no staff. Orders came out from FYDEP to put up signs on the trails to the ruins. The Project workers at the aguada camp now had housing. There were two other champas for workers who lived close by and went home on weekends. The wives of the workers who had houses built “champitas” for “comedores” (dining rooms) to feed all workers. Rafa ate at one of these, Doña Elvira’s; Doña Elvira was a cobanera. Rafa was from Cobán and spoke Kekchi. Tourists could stay at the Jungle Lodge (La Posada de la Selva) and eat there.



Figure 7. Rafael Morales and Santiago Cifuentes excavating Cache 70, February 1960. (Bernard Golden, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative 60-25-59 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Rafa made the signs with wood from the Project's sawmill and installed them. He took note of the storehouse (bodega) where thousands of artifacts were stored after being cataloged. He saw the urgent need for a museum. He was everywhere. He joined the mapping of my test pits when he had time. When the season ended, Rafa was often in the laboratory where we could speak Spanish. We got to know each other; we were each alone, far away from our families. Tikal was literally our only world. We decided to get married.

In 1959, Bill Haviland launched a summer Project (Operation 20). It resumed during the summer of 1960 after the regular Project staff left in June. They were going to investigate a house mound group where the village of Tikal would be built. Bill Coe arrived for the 1960 summer season to check and verify data for the cross-section cut across the Main Plaza that extended from the North Acropolis to the Central Acropolis. He was, therefore, on hand to check on the excavations of the house mound group. It was a wonderful field school with Luis Luján from Guatemala and a Mexican, Eduardo Martinez adding Latin flavor. They had both been on the January-June Project season and had stayed on.

I told Bill that Rafa and I would be married in July, and that I would remain in Tikal. I would not be going back to the United States. Bill came to the lab one afternoon to take a photo of Rafa. I was overcome. What a wonderful thing for him to do! We were in the laboratory and Rafa was quite relaxed. (Neither of us liked to have our picture taken.) However, Bill and Rafa had gotten to know and to like each other. The photos were splendid, naturally.

We went off to Guatemala City to publish the banns in three newspapers a week before we were married in City Hall. This made it legal. We went to Antigua for the weekend, our honeymoon. Aviateca flew us back to Tikal, where we were met by Bill Coe and Bill Haviland. I had changed from Management to Directorship, side by side with Rafa. Bill and I remained in contact by notes. He always signed "Yr. agt."

Bill Coe in the Field (Chris Jones)

I met Bill Coe for the first time in the fall of 1959, my first year of graduate school at Penn. I came because my professor, Gordon Willey, had recommended I apply to Penn so that I could get on the Tikal Project and study under Coe. Actually, I did not go to Tikal until 1962, because I had not majored in anthropology and needed to take courses. With his course on Mesoamerican Archaeology, Bill began teaching me the lessons that he thought were the most important. Bill believed in the importance of the record. We read no secondary textbooks, only the original site reports. His lectures were based on slides, which he had taken himself, and his lectures summarized current knowledge and theories. I remember especially his lectures on La Venta and the Olmecs as he reviewed the rather sketchy stratigraphic record and challenged the proposed chronology.

Bill's profound influence on me continued during four field seasons at Tikal. He was in the trenches in the North Acropolis most of the day. He knew that he alone was responsible for the correctness of his record and this required that he be present during working hours as floors and walls were uncovered, and work on the photographs and the detailed 1:20 section drawings of buildings, additions, rip-out, abutments, and floors. He would take a few minutes, at least once a week, to visit our excavations, to look at our drawings and listen to our ideas of what we were seeing and ask us what we were going to do next. In doing this, he assumed responsibility for the accuracy of our record as well as his. At the inception of the Tikal Project, he himself had established the drawing standards, and made sure that all of us adhered to them. Perhaps the best lesson that he taught as a field director was that the work is serious, that we are in at least some degree destroying the site we dig.



Figure 8. Dennis Puleston, Christopher Jones, and Peter Harrison at the Aguada la Valanza, on their way to El Encanto. (Dennis Puleston, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative 64-37-66 University of Pennsylvania Museum. All rights reserved.)

Memories of Bill Coe (Hattula Moholy-Nagy)

Time is always limited on an archaeological excavation, and no one seemed more aware of time and the need to make use of every possible moment than Bill. He was an extremely hard worker and he expected the same dedication from his co-workers. But there was also a lighter side to him.

Bill had a way with words that could be funny, provided, of course, that his remarks were not directed at oneself. For example, in response to persistent nagging, “No, I haven’t yet done it--I want to titillate my ulcer”; with regard to the much-discussed geophagy of a child at Tikal, “If we had Ernestito in the lab, he’d go through those sherds like an earthworm”; and a description of his pets, “All of our cats are cripples.”

He also loved a good party. I think perhaps people who knew him at the Museum might not have been aware that he possessed a playful, almost sociable side and it was fun to see this aspect of him emerge during the course of an evening.



Figure 9. Bill Coe and Hattula. (Photograph courtesy of Anita Haviland.)

We had several impromptu parties out in the woods every field season. The tradition, as it were, probably began during the spring season of 1960, when Bill actually wasn't there. The administrator of the Tikal National Park, Rafael Morales, had a portable record player powered by batteries, so we could have music at our bonfire gatherings. Another Guatemalan participant in that field season, Luis Luján, gave our assembled company the elevated name of El Ateneo de Tikal.

The ateneos carried over into the 1961 season and beyond. Occasionally after dark on the weekends, we'd gather around a fire to cook food like tamales or chicken, drink Guatemalan beer and rum, and listen to loud music. Some of the best parties were in the Great Plaza. Its acoustics amplified Rafa's phonograph when it was hauled up to the doorway of Temple I. Camaraderie is often in short supply in the biosphere-like atmosphere of a months-long excavation in the rainforest. Those gatherings in which Bill was always an enthusiastic participant--indeed the life of the party--are how I like to remember him and us years ago, when we were all young.

Bill and The Extraordinarily Naive Student of Archaeology (Marshall Becker)

I had never been interested or involved in archaeology prior to the chance encounter with Ted Kidder that ended with my arrival at Tikal. I had no idea what archaeologists did or what there was to do while I was not learning-by-doing during daylight hours. Fortunately I was assigned to Bill Haviland's team of house mound excavators, doing what may have been the first salvage archaeology of its kind. Whereas Near Eastern excavations might shovel into oblivion half of an ancient city-mound to reach levels of "interest," Ed Shook elected to conduct excavations to recover data from some clusters of small structures where some Tikal project buildings were to be located. These excavations included the use of Haviland's effective trenching system that we affectionately termed the "bash" technique. Bill Coe cringed when we used the term, although it was, in effect, a scaled down version of what Coe was doing on the North Acropolis.

Early in my first week on site, before the huge volumes of artifacts began to emerge, I was examining the library in the small *sala* where we relaxed after dinner. There

I also found three of four jigsaw puzzles, one of which I selected to pass the time. I may not have been as far as turning over the pieces when Bill came through and went wide eyed over this lost time. Bill pointed out that in the laboratory, the next building up the line of structures along one side of the aguada, were huge piles of potsherds that needed sorting and mending. I believe that Hattula Moholy-Nagy or someone else was already there working on some project or cataloguing artifacts until the electricity was turned off. I was immediately fascinated and spent every night, seven days a week, with all the others, cataloguing, mending, drawing and otherwise doing the work of archaeologists until the lights went off. To this day, my favorite part of archaeology is gluing pots!

Reminiscence of Bill Coe at Tikal (Mary Bullard)

Knowing very little about field work, but knowing a good deal about departmental warfare, I was always uncertain of my status at Tikal where I served as a lab assistant in the 1959-1960 seasons. I had been hired by Ed Shook and turned up in the Petén on schedule, as required. My first evening at the camp revealed my embarrassing ignorance about stone tools. Bill Coe--whom I hadn't really heard of before--could be seen off in a corner, shaking his head. Even Ed himself, who asked me if I could play bridge, looked disappointed when I said I didn't know how. When I hauled out from my duffel bag a 2-volume study of Maya ceramics by the redoubtable Bob Smith (given to me by the author himself!), the sternly disapproving faces of my various chiefs softened somewhat. Not until when I later displayed considerable flair for distinguishing one dirty brown sherd from another dirty brown sherd, did Bill relent--and then only somewhat.



Figure 10. Mary Ricketson Bullard And Linton Satterthwaite With Stela 29, Back, 1959. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX59-4-78 All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Bill and the Marmalade (Ginny Greene)

I have a lot of classic Tikal stories (the fer-de-lance in the latrine, the bottle of kerosene that was put on the dining room table instead of water, using the Thermofax copier) but only a few involve Bill more than peripherally. My favorite is Bill and the Marmalade. It's better told than written, but here goes.

When the Tikal camp was built, someone planted a number of sour orange trees between the sala and the aguada. They were attractive, but not edible. When the oranges were ripe, we occasionally juiced one to mix with rum, but I can't remember anything else they were good for. One day we were all sitting around the sala and Bill decided that the thing to do with all the ripe oranges was to make marmalade. Marmalade? In the course of the following discussion, it was clear that no one present had made marmalade, but Bill insisted that it was easy. Right. You put the rind and the juice and water and sugar in a pot, and heat it up. Right. Sure Bill, we'll make marmalade, why not? The only thing we had to buy, after all, was the sugar, not much of an investment. So someone went to get the sugar, and someone else to pick oranges, and someone else got out the big pot and spoon, and we found some jars, which we rinsed out, and a machete. We cut up the fruit with a machete, on the sala table. I think someone wiped off the machete first.



Figure 11. Sour Seville Orange (English), Su'uts' pak'aal (Maya).

"Is that enough rind, Bill?" "Keep going, I'll tell you when it's enough. OK, now add water and the juice." "How much?" "I'll tell you when to stop. OK, that's enough. Now the sugar." "How much sugar Bill?" "Just keep adding, I'll tell you. OK, now heat it up, and keep stirring." So we took turns stirring, and every time we asked if it was ready, of course we got the same answer: "I'll tell you when." Eventually he said it was done. It was quite thick even when hot, and about the color of the old brown varnished doors in the Museum. When it cooled, we put it into the jars.

That evening we brought a couple of jars to the dining room. It looked like nothing you would want to eat, but it was without doubt the best marmalade anyone of us had ever had, and as far as I'm concerned, the best I have ever had since then, not too sweet, full of rind, and very thick. It didn't last very long. Bill looked like the cat that swallowed the canary, with marmalade.

Did Bill really know how to make marmalade? Had he ever even seen it made? I doubt it. I think it was nothing but dumb luck and the fact that this was not exactly gourmet cooking. But he deserved all the compliments he got - for chutzpah while sober, if nothing else.

Bill Coe at Home

Sectioning the House (Ginny Greene)

Bill was one of the few people I have ever known who, if he said he was working at home, really was. And I remember him coming in to the Tikal Room one Monday and telling us that he had just had to take a break that weekend, so he drew a section through his house! We were speechless. Would anyone else have called something like that a "break from work?"

Cats (Anita Haviland)

We were invited to the Coe's place in Radnor for dinner one evening, driving carefully and very quietly, following Ann's hand lettered sign. There was a deer sleeping in the bushes that she did not want anyone to wake up!

I have no memory of the meal itself, but Ann drew me off into another room to show me what she was doing. This was when she first had the shop in Matawan (?) that Bill designed, an octagon or series of them I believe. She had purchased some lovely quilts from the Pennsylvania Dutch country, was building lovely little "rooms" from miniatures... enjoying herself and making money along the way. Meanwhile, there were cats walking around us, asleep in on the chairs, one even with kittens. Wait, I did a double take on the one in the chair with kittens - it was a fake! Then Ann told me this little tidbit.

They had agreed on no more cats, for at least the present. Ann took care of the world as much as she could, but she agreed with Bill that adding more cats then would not be possible. He came home the evening before, and then saw the new cat with kittens! He yelled, and asked her what is this? He then poked it, and realized after a second or third poke that it was stuffed. She was very, very amused by him.

The Broken rung (Marshall Becker)

There were occasions when Tikaleños joined the Coes for dinner in Radnor, and I don't recall ever seeing a cat! Perhaps they were herded into a guest free location! I do recall that at one of these gatherings one of the more robust male guests put his feet/heels over a rung of a delicate chair and put a bit too much pressure, snapping the rung!

Bill, sitting nearby at an equally delicate chair (but I believe a chair for two, with longer rungs), said, "Oh, don't be upset . . . we do that all the time," and then hooked his heels over the rung and gave an elaborate show (I believe) of putting pressure on the rail - and it snapped! Bill's look of embarrassment suggested that he had not meant to be the PERFECT host, just meant to put his guest at ease--Ann looked a bit perturbed, but said nothing, and the party went on!

Documenting Tikal

Drafting Tikal Pots (Ginny Greene)

I can't remember who told me that the Tikal Project was looking for people to do inked drawings of pottery for publication, but I found Hattula, did a couple of samples for her, and was hired. I came back from Christmas vacation early that year, to earn a bit more money doing drawings, and was on the spot when Hattula's lab assistant decided at the last minute not to go to Tikal. The next thing I knew I was finding my passport, getting shots, and packing a suitcase instead of registering for the spring semester. And that's how I got involved in the Tikal Project. Like many other people, it's been Once In, Never Out.



Figure 12. Tikal staff 1964. Back row: Christopher Jones, Bill Coe, Dennis Puleston. Front row: Hattula Moholy-Nagy, Hans-Ruedi Hug, Virginia Greene, Peter Harrison, Sally Bates, András Nagy. (Photograph courtesy of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.)

I had forgotten about Bill's pocketful of pencils until Bob Sharer mentioned them--mine weren't in my pocket (they were hidden away at my desk) but we all had them. You needed an assortment to deal with the climate. Hard pencils produced a finer and more accurate line, but early in the morning the graph paper was soggy and hard pencils just tore holes in it. As it dried out during the day you gradually switched from softer to harder pencils.

At the time no one ever told students things like this until they got into the field, which is why the Archaeology Practicum that Bill and Bernard Wailes developed was so valuable (see Part 2). The two of them had to do some pretty fast talking to get the University to accept the course--the bureaucrats kept saying it didn't have enough 'theory'. But they got it through, and all of us who were involved (I taught field conservation and pottery/artifact drawing) found places to stuff in bits of 'theory' along with the useful information.

I think I got on well with Bill for so many years because we had much the same attitude towards drawings--if they weren't perfect, they weren't good enough. Since there was some loss of accuracy at every stage of the process, if it wasn't damn near perfect at each stage, you ended up with something that was not worth much. When I discovered that many of the pottery sections done in the field were inaccurate--Maya pots don't have perfectly flat bases, for example--I insisted on redoing them. Bill understood immediately. And I was probably the only person around who was willing to spend endless amounts of time talking with him about our conventions for illustrating pottery: Would the Uaxactun standards work for Tikal? What thickness of line should we use, at what scale? What kind of pattern to represent what color?

I certainly wasn't able at the time to appreciate his skill as a field archaeologist, but I could see that his drawing skills were extraordinary. Plans, sections (oh those sections!), elevations, stelae, sculpture, pottery--you name it, he could do it. He was also a

master of one of the most difficult media I have ever encountered: coquille board. For those too young to remember, it was an illustration board with a pebbled surface. The board was important because at the time, it was much more expensive to publish photographs than black and white drawings. The coquille board drawing looked to the eye like a halftone but to a camera as black and white. You built up the drawing gradually, light to dark, using a conte crayon or something similar, and like watercolor and fresco, you could not correct mistakes. If something went wrong, you started over. I became an expert at stippling with a Rapidograph pen, but I never could learn to deal with coquille board. Bill's drawings were masterpieces.

The Inked Line Memo (Marshall Becker)

And let us recall the long Tikal Project discussions over the weights of lines used in inking our field drawings with Rapidograph inking pens, instruments that had variable sized nibs. Bill was superlatively concerned that lines be distinct, yet the drawings be visible. Problem was, like everything, he changed his mind or disregarded the consensus REGULARLY. John (Jack) McGinn was doing inking back around 1963 and after one such meeting he went to his office up in the American Section and typed a memo summarizing that "THE WEIGHT OF A LINE USED FOR X WILL BE 2.0" and walked back into Bill's office and asked him to initial it! Bill hit the ceiling, flailed his arms while Jack stood silently (he may have been taller than Bill, and certainly outweighed him) juggling the slip of paper. Bill finally took it and initialed it!

Bill on Writing (Marshall Becker)

I was Bill's first MA candidate. Back in 1960-1963 Bill was a peon in the Anthropology Department and his famous criticism of my writing was, I believed, a function of his own struggles to create an effective archaeological "write up." Bob Sharer's experience says it all, or almost all (see Part 2). After the first of Bill's massive editings, I learned to incorporate the useful and ignore the rest. Regardless of how many changes I did or did not make, he always wanted more, which led to me making fewer. On occasion, my famous lack of concern for spelling did elicit a bon mot. Bill, who had not yet reached the bottom of the impressive North Acropolis excavations, was wrestling with how to write up the sequence. So the most annoying part of his own lack of experience was that I was being made the guinea pig for how one writes up a structure excavation (bottom to top or top to bottom). Since I had dug to bedrock a bunch of small structures, and suffered from an abundance of logic, I said bottom up! After writing it *bottom up* Bill requested that I rewrite the entire thesis describing the sequence from the *top down*, and when that was done he returned to *bottom up* again! But then, when Bill suggested a fourth draft written *top down again*, I quit! I rashly took a teaching position in Ohio and packed my bags! When Bob Dyson got word of my abrupt departure he volunteered some important advice. Bob recounted his experience with leaving Harvard for Penn without having his MA or PhD in hand, and suggested that I be sure to get the MA before decamping. So I took a copy of my proposed MA Thesis (it was published bottom up in 1985) to Bill's office and requested that he sign off on it. I quietly informed him that regardless of his actions, I was about to leave. I now believe that I promised to work on a dissertation that would include my Tikal excavations from 1962 and 1963. Bill signed the thesis, and handed it back with only a mild grunt!

Bill Coe and Ed Shook (Robert Sharer)

Edwin M. Shook was the creator of the Tikal Project, and the project's first director. When the Penn Museum "retired" Ed as Project Director, Bill eventually took his place. I know nothing about the events surrounding this directorial change. What I do

know comes from working and talking with both Bill and Ed over the years that followed this change.

I remember first hearing about Ed's work in Bill's Mesoamerican archaeology class. Bill praised the skillful excavation of the adobe architecture and tombs at Kaminaljuyu, conducted by Ed and his "boss," Alfred V. Kidder. When I was planning my dissertation research Bill told me to use Shook and Kidder's 1952 report of the KJ Mound E-III-3 excavations as my "bible."

We all know Bill's professional standards were high, and just about everyone fell short in Bill's eyes at some point. That includes me, and all of his other former graduate students, along with most if not all his professional colleagues. So Ed Shook came in for his share of criticism from Bill. I remember Bill criticizing Ed for holding to the Carnegie Institution of Washington standard of drawing sections at 1:50, which Bill always said obscured significant information. Bill insisted on 1:20, and he was right, at this larger scale section drawings can depict far more detail. But Ed was trained by the CIW, and worked for them for some 30 years, so it is understandable that he continued using their standards. Bill also criticized Ed for his failures to publish his data. Ed was dedicated to gathering data, and in his career undoubtedly collected more than any archaeologist who has ever worked in Guatemala. And Bill was right since Ed never published a large proportion of this information. But in his defense it should be pointed out that Ed's library and pottery type collections were always open to other archaeologists, and he freely shared whatever information he had. At the end of his career Ed donated all his drawings, maps, notes, along with his type collections, to the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, where they remain accessible to students and scholars today.



Figure 13. Antonio Ortiz And Ed Shook Talking At Camp, 1956. (Edwin Shook, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX56-1-113All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

During the years I got to know Ed better, and he was always forthcoming about his Tikal experiences. Ed was critical of Bill for demolishing Tikal Structure 5D-33, but he certainly wasn't alone in this. Otherwise Ed always praised Bill's abilities as an archaeologist and I never heard him blame Bill for his removal as director of the Tikal Project. Ed's wife, Ginny, had a different take on things, but Ed always blamed the Penn Museum's "administration" for firing him. In fact in later years Ed told me that he always intended to step down as director as soon as a qualified successor could be found, adding that he and Fro Rainey had identified Bill as the best candidate several years before Bill actually took over.

Two further observations: Bill dedicated his magnum opus, Tikal Report 14, to his mentor, Linton Satterthwaite, then added "Sharing in the author's gratitude is Edwin M. Shook, who clearly foresaw, then worked to realize, so much of what these pages contain." Soon after the publication of TR 14 Ed Shook was honored by the Penn Museum at a Maya Weekend dedicated to Tikal. Bill was invited but did not attend. And just before the event began, several of us had lunch with Ed in the Museum Cafe. During the lunch Ed noticed Bill sitting alone at a table on the other side of the cafe, and said, "Isn't that Bill over there; I wonder why he doesn't come over to say hello?" Shortly thereafter Bill got up and left.

Publishing Tikal (Chris Jones)

When the Tikal Project ended its excavations in 1970, and we went off to find jobs in other institutions, Bill Coe intensified his work. He committed a substantial part of his wealth toward establishing a fund for publication of the reports, beginning with the inking of the thousands of illustrations of artifacts from field drawings. These were also based on the enormous collection of photographs, which he had taken in the laboratory at Tikal. He himself created and inked drawings of every carved surface on the stone monuments and wooden lintels, again based on the controlled light photographs that he had personally taken in the field. These were published in Tikal Report 33A.

In the 1970's and 80's, he focused on his greatest work, what became the six-volume report on the North Acropolis and Great Plaza excavations. Every inked line and paragraph of these volumes is from his own hand. It is in itself his monument to the Maya, matching in its scope and vision the great temples of the Maya city. It is hard to read, but contains every detail of what he saw while digging, every piece of evidence, question and possible doubt about what happened in the building and re-building of the site.

The vision is not just in the detail. From the beginning, Coe had the idea that he would try to present the growth of Tikal in what he called "Time-spans" which were based exclusively on demonstrable stratigraphic connections between floors and buildings, burials and caches of the North Acropolis and Great Plaza. All the other standard chronological determinations, such as architectural and artistic style, ceramic phases, had to become ordered by the stratigraphy. To a great extent, the Tikal Report 14 achieves this lofty scientific goal because of the record, so that the reader can be convinced that the thousands of disparate events happened in a certain sequence. As decipherment of inscriptions in these burials and on these monuments and temples yield the names of rulers and the historical records of their reigns, these pages and drawings have become more and more important in writing the history of the Maya. Bill's legacy in the record and publication of the Tikal Project has been recognized. In the ensuing excavations at Quirigua and Copan, this stratigraphic emphasis has continued to dominate Maya research at the University of Pennsylvania.



Figure 14. North Acropolis Deep Trench, 1963. (William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

Note: Part 2 of “Recollections of Bill Coe” will be published in the next issue of ***The Codex***, volume 19, issue 3 (2011 June).