

RECOLLECTIONS OF BILL COE AND HIS CAREER AS A MAYA ARCHAEOLOGIST

Part 2: After Tikal – Chalchuapa, Quirigua, In the Classroom, and at Home

Compiled by Robert Sharer

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. The two formal tributes to Bill and part 1 of the recollections were published in *The Codex*, volume 19, issue 1-2 (October 2010-February 2011). Part 2 appears in this issue.

CHALCHUAPA TO QUIRIGUA

From Tikal to Chalchuapa (Robert Sharer)

Some 13 years after Bill excavated at Chalchuapa, El Salvador, I was following in his footsteps. During that 1967 field season Bill took some time off from Tikal to return to El Salvador to inspect my excavations. After reviewing all my work Bill made one or two suggestions and that was that. I only recall two specific things from that visit, neither of which pertained to my research. On our drive from San Salvador to Chalchuapa, we spied two American Mormon missionaries hitchhiking to the Guatemalan border to have their visas renewed. They were very grateful when we stopped to pick them up, but about an hour later when I left them off in Santa Ana their gratitude had vanished. Bill, chain-smoking in the front passenger seat of my old Chevy Suburban, explained that we were archaeologists and asked if they were interested in the archaeology of El Salvador. They said they were, and the conversation was calm and orderly until one of the missionaries mentioned that archaeologists in Chiapas had found a carved stone with figures from "the holy land" wearing "curled toed shoes." I don't recall Bill's exact response. "That's crap!" would have been his favorite phrase--but I believe he was more circumspect and said something like "Nonsense!" In any case, the two young men were subjected to a lesson in Mesoamerican archaeology for the remainder of their ride, complete with chapter and verse citations from the relevant published literature.

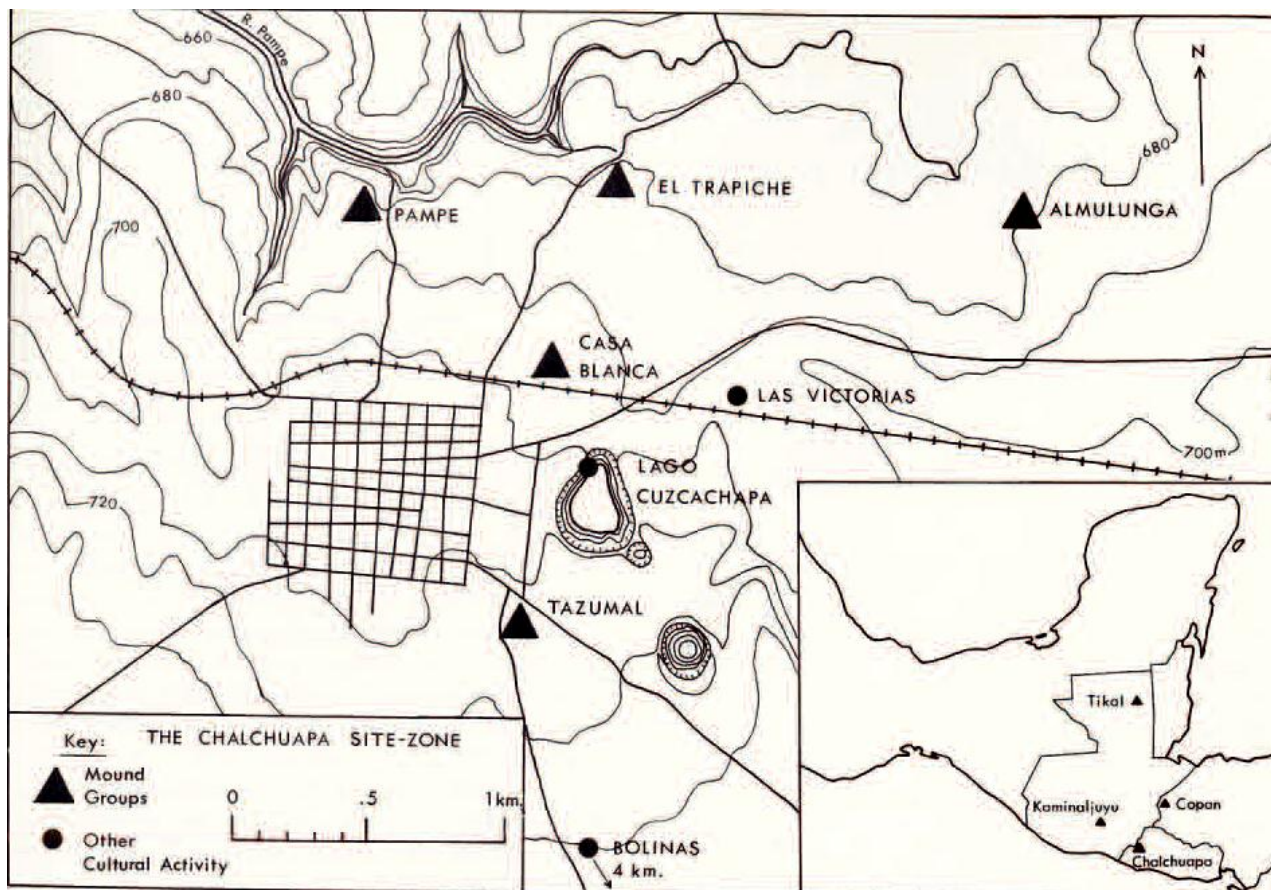


Figure 1. Map of the Chalchuapa Site-Zone. (From: Sharer, Robert. *Chalchuapa: Investigations at a Maya Highland Ceremonial Center. Expedition, v.11, no.2: pp. 36-37.*)

The second thing I remember is that while driving into Chalchuapa Bill spied the old adobe wall in front of the Finca Casa Blanca and excitedly told me that that was the very wall where back in the 1940s “old man Kidder” had spotted embedded Preclassic sherds that matched types from Kaminaljuyu. It was this discovery that began a chain of events culminating in Bill’s being selected by Fro Rainey to dig at Chalchuapa in 1954.

Bill Coe and Ed Shook

The Tikal Connection (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.”



Figure 2. Linton Satterthwaite and Ed Shook pose at camp, 1959. (Edwin Shook, University of Pennsylvania Tikal Project Negative CX59-1-7All rights reserved. University of Pennsylvania Museum.)

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.

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 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.

The Quirigua Connection (Robert Sharer)

In 1973 Bill and I were in Guatemala City to select the best possible man to be the foreman of our Quirigua excavation crew. Bill had decided on a Tikal Project veteran. But when we tried to contact him, we discovered Bill's candidate was in prison for attempted murder! Bill was unable to come up with a substitute. So, unsure of Bill's reaction, I suggested we ask Ed Shook. Bill agreed and I called Ed and asked if Bill and I could come to Antigua for a chat about Quirigua. Ed said sure, when do you want to come? I believe it was the very next morning. Ed welcomed us, offered us coffee, and asked what he could do for us. Bill gave him a quick update on our plans and prospects at Quirigua, and came right to the point—who would Ed suggest as a suitable excavation crew foreman? Ed replied immediately, "Enrique Monterosso." The name meant nothing to me, and Bill said he knew him from his work at Tikal but not very well.

To make a long story short, we tracked down Enrique, then living in Guatemala City, and interviewed him. Bill and I were impressed with Enrique from the start, and we hired him. Enrique was our crew foreman throughout the Quirigua Project. The Instituto also put him in charge of the Quirigua consolidation program, so he worked year round at Quirigua for some six years. Bill later acknowledged how valuable Ed's suggestion had been. Hardworking, honest, loved by everyone who worked for him, "Kiki" was an excellent choice, and we have Ed Shook to thank for that.

Bill Coe Between the Tikal and Quirigua Projects

Bill's Visit to the Salama Valley (Robert Sharer)

In 1972 while excavating Preclassic sites in the Salama Valley in the Verapaz with David and Becky Sedat, I invited Bill to visit our dig. When Bill accepted, plans were made for a special welcome. David had a large stone hauled into the patio of our San Jerónimo dig house and set about carving it into a convincing miniature version of an Olmec colossal head. Meanwhile Becky taught Mugsy, her pet parrot, to say "Welcome Bill Coe!" Mugsy was a quick learner, and already possessed several stock phrases. On the appointed day David and I met Bill in Guatemala City and drove him back to San Jerónimo. We arrived late in the afternoon and, after Bill was settled in, we invited him into the Patio for a scotch before dinner. Bill's chair was carefully placed opposite the "Olmec" head nestled among the Patio's tropical plants. Mugsy, who began his chattering around sunset, was brought out and placed nearby. Unfortunately Bill was chattering himself, and didn't notice either the carved stone or the parrot. But Mugsy came through, and we soon heard the familiar strains of "Ho, ho, ho and a bottle of rum," and "I'm a pretty boy, pretty boy!" But Bill was oblivious, still talking a blue streak, even as we heard Mugsy clearly say, "Welcome Bill Coe, pretty Bill Coe!" Becky and David looked shocked—Mugsy was ad libbing! Then with a loud squawk, we all clearly heard him say, "Pretty Bill Coe, pretty Bill Coe" and all three of us started laughing. At this Bill stopped talking, perked up, and blurted out, "Is that crazy parrot saying my name?" and started to laugh himself.

But Bill still hadn't noticed the "Olmec" head, so David had to prompt him by asking if he would like to see a new Preclassic sculpture we had found. At this point Bill spied the head and said, "What the hell is that?" followed by, "Don't tell me you guys found that thing here!" But everyone was laughing too hard to answer, and Bill then realized the joke was on him, and laughing himself asked for another scotch!

Fun on the Bus (Robert Sharer)

The end of that San Jerónimo visit produced another unforgettable Bill Coe experience. I had planned to drive Bill back to Guatemala City in our project vehicle. But when informed of this, Bill exclaimed "Why drive to the city, it will be lots more fun to take the bus!" Adding, "I have never taken a Guatemalan country bus; come on it will be fun!" Of course I had taken a Guatemalan country bus—too many times, and knew only too well it was seldom "fun!" But Bill was adamant, so we prepared to catch the first bus to Guatemala the next day, which came through San Jerónimo at 5 am. Bill and I shared a room, and I was sound asleep when I heard him shout, "Bob! Wake up! I hear the bus; we've overslept!" The light was on and Bill was rushing around gathering his stuff. Sure enough, I could hear a racing engine out in the plaza, but I looked at my watch and it was only 3 am! Rather than a bus, it sounded like a truck, which I verified when I opened the shuttered window. So I told Bill it was only a truck and we should go back to sleep. I turned off the light, but the next thing I knew there was another shout from Bill, "Its time; the bus will be here any minute," followed by a blaze of light. My watch said it was now 4:30, but it was no use, there was no holding Bill back. I remember thinking that for Bill the prospect of a bus ride to Guatemala City was as exciting as a kid anticipating a first roller coaster ride!



Figure 3. A 'Chicken Bus' makes a pit stop delivery near Santa Katarina, Guatemala. (Courtesy Manfredwinslow.)

We were out in the dark plaza by 5 am. It was freezing cold, and predictably the 5 o'clock bus was late. But it finally arrived and we piled into an already packed bus to begin the "fun trip" to Guatemala. The only good news is that we actually found a couple of empty seats. Bill was smiling and chatting about how much fun this was going to be. Although Bill was happy at the start, his demeanor slowly changed, for we were in for a five-hour bus ride from hell! Our driver was a maniac even by Guatemalan bus driver standards, passing or trying to pass every other vehicle on the road, especially on curves! And every time he stomped on the accelerator too hard, **bam**, the fan belt broke and we coasted to a halt. Then in what became a familiar ritual, the driver's assistant grabbed a belt from the overhead rack, went out, replaced the broken belt, and away we went. Of course the belts kept breaking because they were used - we were dependent on fan belts that were already frayed and weakened by hundreds of thousands of kilometers of use in other buses!

So, our fun trip fell into a predictable rhythm. Our beloved driver stomping on the gas to pass another vehicle at full speed (usually on a curve!), everyone on board falling silent waiting for the belt to break, then when it did, the rapid slow down, stop, and ritual replacement of a new/old fan belt. A feeling of impending doom set in.

After the second or third broken fan belt I looked at Bill, and couldn't resist asking, "Are we having fun yet?" Bill said nothing. His smile was gone. At the fifth or sixth fan belt, he began to swear. I said nothing. While trying to pass a huge truck about 30 kilometers from Guatemala City, the seventh fan belt broke. This time as the assistant grabbed a replacement he looked back at the passengers and said with a big smile, "Este es la última cinta!" The last belt; everyone on that bus knew if the damned driver broke this one we would be stranded on the side of the road for hours. But just to make sure he hadn't missed the implications of the moment, I said to Bill, "Gosh, if we break another belt we'll be stranded by the road for hours!" Bill looked grim and muttered something about the goddamn driver and his ancestry. But fortunately, by some stroke of pure luck, we actually made it to the City on that last fan belt.

Waiting for Quirigua (Robert Sharer)

The 1973 start up for the Quirigua Project was time-consuming and complicated. Preparations for the beginning of research in 1974 continued even as we waited for the slow wheels of the Guatemalan government bureaucracy to turn. We had selected people to fill some key staff positions, and most were people Bill knew from the Tikal Project. One exception was David Sedat, my former MA student and a Guatemalan citizen. Bill was impressed by David's work in the Salamá Valley, and he hired David to be the Museum's representative in securing authorization and a contract from the Instituto de Antropología e Historia (IDAEH). Nonetheless, both Bill and I had to be in Guatemala City for protracted periods to meet with our lawyer, various government ministers, vice-ministers, and officials during various times during 1973.

At these times David's wife Becky accompanied him when they came to the City from their home in San Jerónimo, and the four of us stayed at the Hotel Pan American near the Palacio Nacional. At the end of a boring day of waiting to meet with some official in the National Palace, or riding the Number 5 bus out to La Aurora to talk to Luis Luján or someone else at IDAEH, we would seek recovery in the hotel's bar, a favorite hangout for archaeologists. The biggest question to be decided was which of Guatemala City's mediocre restaurants we would visit that evening. After dinner Bill liked to take us all down the street to "El Gallito," a rundown nightclub that looked like a time capsule from the 1940s. They had a piano player Bill called "Fish Hands" from the way he played the piano with his limp and slow-moving hands. At El Gallito I learned that Bill was quite a good dancer, and he clearly enjoyed dancing with Becky, although they were often the only couple on the dance floor.



Figure 4. Looking northwest, an aerial view of the central core of Quirigua shrouded in forest cover, and the surrounding floodplain, under which much of the Classic settlement lay buried. (From Ashmore, Wendy. *The Classic Maya Settlement at Quirigua. Expedition*, v. 23, no. 1: pp 20-27.)

I recall that Bill also spent a lot of time trying to convince David to return to graduate school. David had dropped out of Harvard's PhD program a few years before and had decided to live in Guatemala as an archaeologist. His role model was Ed Shook who shunned the academic life and was dedicated to field research. So every time Bill advocated grad school, David would respond by saying that just like Ed he didn't need a PhD to practice archaeology. This always angered Bill, and predictably he would ask David how he planned to support himself and Becky as a Guatemalan archaeologist. At this point David would say he could always get a job as a motorcycle mechanic. This would infuriate Bill, who would insist he couldn't do two jobs and had to dedicate his life to archaeology.

David learned how to push Bill's buttons, and always managed to mention the motorcycle mechanic option. One time, late at night after the scotch bottle was empty, Bill declared, "If you mention becoming a motorcycle mechanic again I'll bust this bottle over your head." Becky wisely intervened at this point and told everyone call it a day.

During these sojourns in Guatemala City Bill told stories about his early years. We learned about his growing up in the Coe family mansion on Oyster Bay, Long Island. A few times he mentioned his brother, but he never said anything favorable about Mike Coe.



Figure 5. Coe Hall at Oyster Bay, Long Island, NY

On the positive side Bill had a great sense of humor and loved to tell stories on himself. One memorable tale concerned one of Bill's first visits to Mexico. Upon his arrival Bill had changed his travel funds to pesos, the bulk of which resided in a single ten thousand-peso note that he intended to spend in Yucatan after a stop in Palenque. From there he took an early morning train to Merida. En route he checked his billfold and discovered his ten thousand-peso note was gone. Remembering his rush to the train, Bill realized that instead of a one-peso tip, he had given the kid who carried his bag a tip of ten thousand pesos!

Bill also created several new stories about himself during those stays at the Pan American. David was usually the first to the breakfast table. One morning, while he was having a cup of coffee, Bill entered the restaurant and sat down at a table occupied by a complete stranger. We later learned this fellow was a geologist, and on this particular morning, he had several metal sample containers sitting on his table. At this point Bill, mistaking the stranger for David, blurted out, "David, what the hell is all this crap on the table!" The stranger, startled, replied, "I beg your pardon, who the hell are you?" Now completely flustered, Bill looked around and spied David convulsed in laughter at his table across the room. Bill got up, mumbled an apology, came over and sat down at David's table, swearing to himself. At this point I arrived for breakfast, saw both Bill and David laughing, and asked what was going on. David described what had just happened, to which Bill responded by saying, "David, it's all your fault--you never look the same!"

We also relieved some of the boredom with practical jokes. At one point Bill had to return to the States and on the day he was due back, David and I reserved a room at the Pan American for him. In possession of the room key, we had a golden opportunity, and made the best of it by short-sheeting his bed. The next morning we had breakfast together, and I asked Bill if his new room was OK. "No; this hotel is going to hell! The maids don't even know how to make the beds! To get into bed last night I had to put my feet through the damn sheet!" We tried to stifle our laughter as Bill continued, "So this morning I balled out the maid and told her to make my bed right!" By this time David and I were doubled over with laughter, and Bill realized what had happened.

During this time Bill decided that we should learn a new Spanish word every day by selecting a word from signs around the city. The only one I remember is *disponible*, which he spotted on a store for rent. A few days later we took a break to visit archaeological sites on the south coast, and Bill spied *disponible* on a billboard along the Highway. *Disponible* and a telephone number were plastered over an old beer ad featuring a still visible bikini-clad young lady, so that Bill immediately assumed the young lady was advertising her availability!

Bill Coe During the Quirigua Years

A reminiscence of Bill Coe at Quirigua (Mary R. Bullard)

Much of the same awkward feeling I felt arriving at Tikal returned to me when in 1974 I was interviewed to head the lab at the U Penn site of Quirigua. The interview consisted of a long drive out from Guatemala City to see the interesting possibilities of a small dull site far from the city. The trip took all day. There were four of us squashed into a small car: Ben Reina, Bob Sharer, Bill, and me. I hadn't met any of them, except for Bill. It was hot, the men were quarreling with one another, and I was - in my own opinion - totally unsuitable for teamwork with jokers like these.

Now I think I see what Bill Coe perceived in me. A certain purity of purpose marks the work of a good archaeologist. Having a good time is not the purpose of fieldwork. Showing off before visitors is not the purpose of fieldwork. As far as I could see, Bill hated having visitors. He expected nothing less than perfection. This may not please the young student. It certainly will not satisfy students at a field school who expect relaxation over the weekend. Since I didn't always really understand what I was doing, I was concentrating on how to achieve clarity and accuracy for what I did understand. Bill saw that.

Someone told me in later years that Bill Coe once reported: "Mary Bullard is unflappable." That was an enormous compliment! Bill was at his best when he was trying to poke a person into better work. He liked to upset people. As they say, good omelets are not made without breaking eggs. Bill was a wonderful field archaeologist.



Figure 6. Los Amates, Izabal, Guatemala: 1975 staff photo from the first full season of excavations by the Quirigua Project. Standing, left to right, William Coe, Robert Sharer, Robert Hill, Wendy Ashmore, Mel Strieb, David Sedat; seated, left to right, Mary R. Bullard, Rebecca Sedat, Ann Coe (Quirigua Project photo).

Driving to Tikal (Robert Sharer)

Although we eventually secured the authorizations and a contract for the Quirigua Project, the scheduled 1974 start of excavations at Quirigua didn't happen. In January of 1974 Bill and I arrived in Guatemala ready to start digging. The next day we paid our respects to Luis Luján at IDAEH, who predictably told us that a "little problem" had appeared. The Guatemalan funding for site consolidation was delayed. We couldn't start without the Guatemalan funding. But neither of us could stand the prospect of another episode of cooling our heels in Guatemala City. So after David collected us in our project vehicle, Bill suggested we drive to Tikal to pick up some equipment for use at Quirigua. So off we went.

It was a hot, all day drive to the Rio Dulce where we decided to spend the night at the Catamaran hotel. Bill's ears perked up when told it had a swimming pool, but we warned him that there was **no diving** since the pool had no deep end. As soon as we got our rooms, Bill was ready to go swimming to cool off. Agreed, but remember Bill, **no diving!** David and I met at the pool before Bill appeared. The water temperature was the same as the air, about 98 degrees, and dashed any hope for a cooling swim. Suddenly I heard a huge splash behind me, followed by a loud howl of pain. Turning I saw Bill struggling to climb out of the pool, one hand holding his hinny! I asked him what happened and he replied with a grimace, "I didn't dive! You said it was too shallow so did a cannon ball instead...I think I busted my goddamn coccyx!" I looked at David, and we both shook our heads trying to stifle our laughter..."Bill, if the water is too shallow to dive, why would you do a cannon ball?" But Bill was already limping back to his room. We didn't see him until the next morning.

The next morning Bill said his butt was sore, but it was nothing serious. Before we set off for Tikal, Bill wanted some food for the road. He was gone for about five minutes before limping back carrying a big bunch of bananas. "There's nothing like some fresh bananas while traveling," he said. I started to tell him that he had bought plátanos (cooking bananas), but Bill interrupted saying, "Let's go!" I was driving, and David said, with a wink, "I'm sure Bill will enjoy his bananas later!" So off we went. The road to the Petén back then was unpaved, rocky and rough, and clearly Bill was in some discomfort from his imitation of a cannon ball. He was in the back seat with his bananas, shifting his weight from one side to the other.



Figure 7. Plantains (plátanos).

After about 30 minutes of bouncing down the road Bill announced he was going to have a banana, asking if anyone else wanted one too. We declined. I watched in the rear view mirror as Bill struggled to peel his banana then take a bite. He made a face, sputtered, and

quickly leaned out the window to spit out his mouthful. “These are awful bananas! Goddamn it, you can’t even buy good bananas in this country anymore!” I was laughing so hard I had stop. “What’s the matter with you?” “Bill, I tried to tell you those are plátanos, not eating bananas.” “Well, how was I to know that!” he exclaimed, as he rolled down the window and threw the offending bunch out the window.

The Ice Cream Moment (Wendy Ashmore)

The delayed excavations at Quirigua began in January 1975. That season we had an official inauguration for the Quirigua Project, attended by dignitaries from Guatemala City and elsewhere, Bill wore his signature madras pants and a pink shirt. And waxing eloquent en español about the wonderful moment at hand, a moment frozen in time (what I think he meant), he described the occasion as *el momento helado!* Ever since, the Quirigua Project inauguration has been immortalized as the “ice cream moment.”

Inaurugable (Wendy Ashmore)

I remember being in a car running errands with Bill in Guatemala City. Bill remarked that he tried to add at least one word to his Spanish vocabulary with each visit, choosing them from billboards along the road. For whatever reason, the word of choice that time was *inaurugable*. My own Spanish vocabulary had diminished seriously (from whatever levels it ever reached) but that word for “permanent press” has never left, despite its being very seldom used in fieldwork.

Digging at Quirigua (Robert Sharer)

Our very first excavation at Quirigua was an axial trench into the south façade of Str. 1A-3 on the Great Plaza. Bill and I planned this as an exercise for the student members of the project, Wendy Ashmore, Robert Hill, and Mel Strieb, to learn the Quirigua version of the Tikal recording system and prepare them for supervising their own excavations.

Later that first week our work was interrupted by a group of 4 or 5 local caballeros that sauntered up to our excavation and demanded to know who was in charge. Taking a look at these hombres who were armed with pistols, rifles, and ammo belts, everyone quickly pointed to Bill as our fearless leader. Their well-armed leader explained that they were an official delegation sent by the Governor of Izabal, having heard that some gringos were digging at Quirigua. With an uneasy smile Bill explained that we were working under a contract with the Government of Guatemala and with the authorization of the Instituto de Antropología e Historia. The delegation leader then asked to see these documents. There was an awkward pause before Bill explained that our papers were back at our project camp, a few kilometers away. This was greeted with obvious displeasure and the members of the delegation began to talk among themselves. Bill looked to me for advice. My thoughts turned to a scene in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* where Bogart was told by a similar delegation, “Badges? Badges? We don’t need no stinking badges!” So I urged Bill not to challenge these guys, but apologize and promise to bring the papers to the governor’s office that very afternoon. Bill did this, which caused another conference among the delegation. Bill looked at us and asked, “What do you think will happen.” Bob Hill, with a serious expression his face, looked at Bill and said, “Bill, it looks like you’re going to jail!”

Bill didn’t go to jail, but he did go to Morales that afternoon to present the project papers to the Governor of Izabal.

As the project gathered steam Bill was very much involved in both its instructional and research aspects. He taught the students how to map using a plane table and set them to work mapping Str. 1A-3 and the Great Plaza. After Wendy, Bob, and Mel took over the Str. 1A-3 excavation, Bill and I opened the first trenches in the Quirigua Acropolis. Bill supervised the excavation of buildings on the southern and eastern sides of the Acropolis Court, while I excavated a large building on the north side.

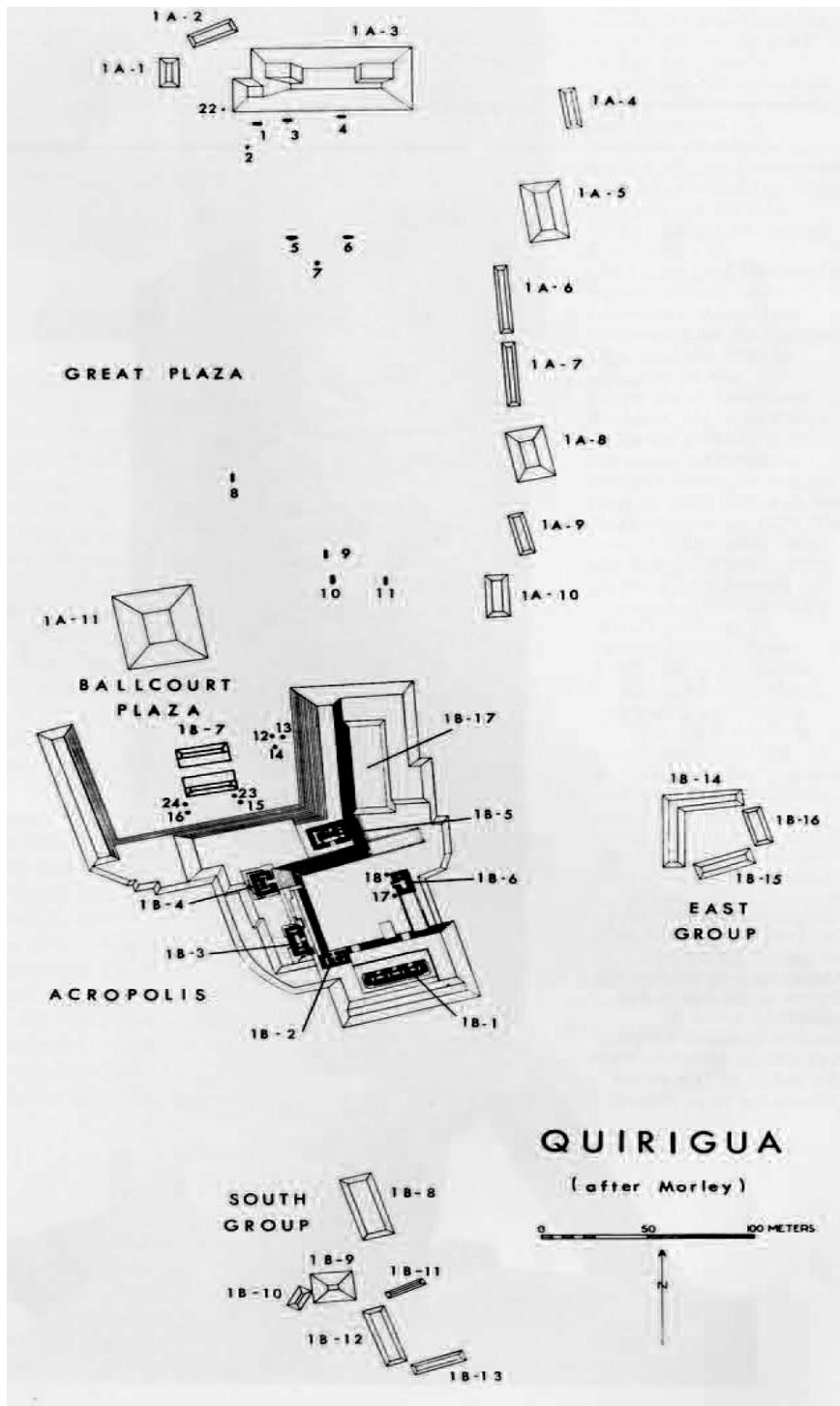


Figure 8. Quirigua site core with the Acropolis to the South and the Great Plaza to the North. Str. 1A-3 is at the top of the plan. (From: Jones, Christopher and Sharer, Robert J. *Archaeological Investigations in the Site Core of Quirigua. Expedition*, v. 23, no. 1: pp 11-19.)

Soon Bill began drawing large 1:20 sections of his trenches, recording every floor, step, and wall, and the constituents of intervening fills, in meticulous detail. He had the project carpenter build him a field-sized drafting table that would fit into his trenches. As his excavations grew larger Bill spent more and more of his time on his sections, along with taking

notes and photographs. Then he announced that to give him more time for recording, Mel would keep track of his lot bags, lot cards, “and other details.” After this Bill spent almost every minute in the field recording his excavations. One day at lunch Bill explained the importance of using a full range of drawing pencils to match the hardness of their lead points to the changes in temperature and humidity throughout each day. At first everyone thought Bill was kidding, until he showed off his assortment of several dozen different drawing pencils.

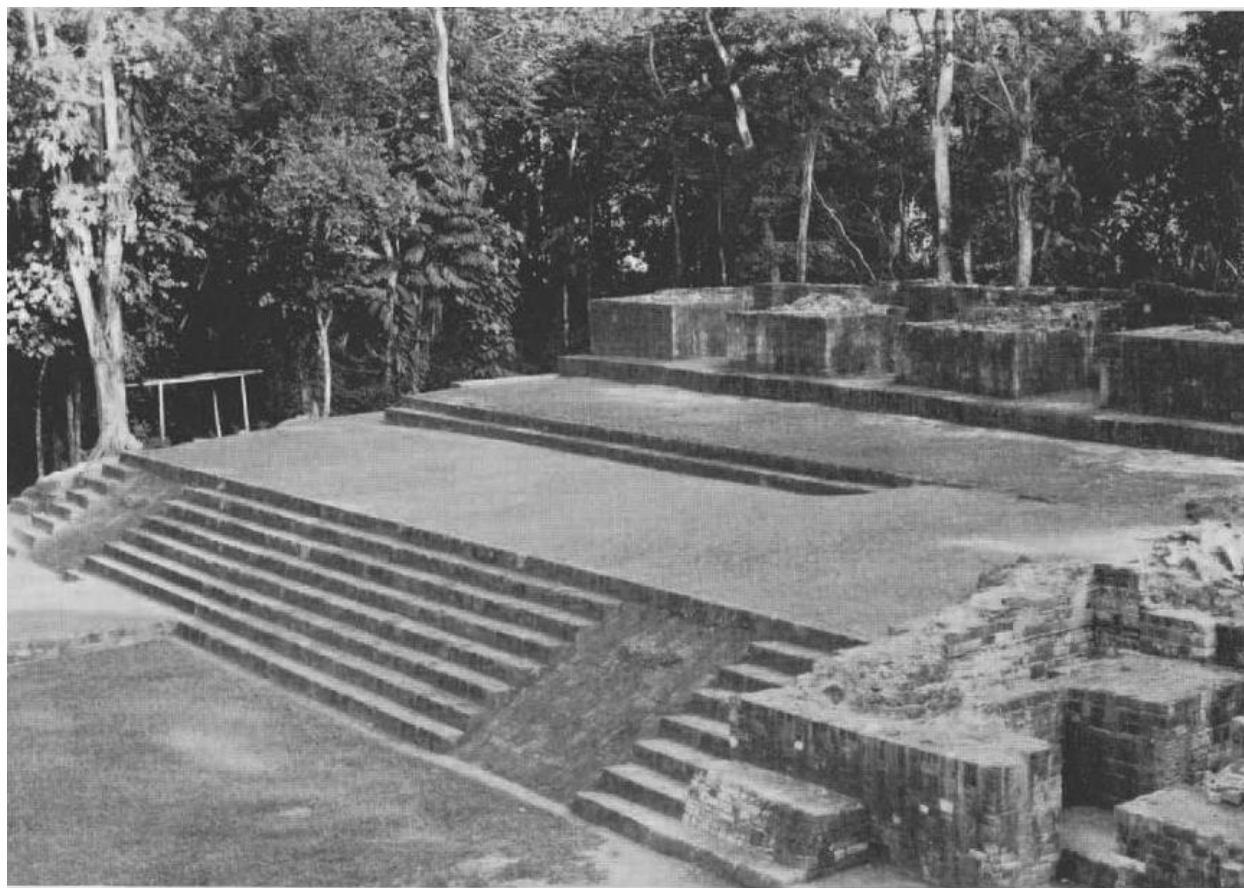


Figure 9. Str. 1B-1, a Construction Stage 1 building at Quirigua dated 9.19.0.0.0 (A.D. 810), restored by the Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala after excavation by the University Museum. It's located in the bottom third of the plan in Figure 7. (From: Jones, Christopher and Sharer, Robert J. *Archaeological Investigations in the Site Core of Quirigua. Expedition*, v. 23, no. 1: pp 11-19.)

Tourists asking questions about the site was one recurrent problem at Quirigua. One fellow, eager to demonstrate his knowledge of the history of Maya archaeology, even asked me if I knew Alfred Maudslay! After this Bill consulted with Luis Luján, and it was decided that we needed a bilingual information brochure to handout to visitors at the park entrance. We would write it, and IDAEH would print and distribute it. Actually it was decided that I would write it, so after I did this I gave it to Bill for his comments and approval. He gave it back a day later saying that it looked good, except for one crossed-out paragraph, which had briefly summarized the Quirigua dynastic sequence David Kelley had proposed in his 1962 *American Antiquity* article. Bill's terse characterization of the offending paragraph says it all, “We don't need that Kelley crap in the brochure!”

Bill was properly all work no play at the site, but after hours, or traveling between the camp and the site, he enjoyed jokes, telling stories, and generally just being one of the guys. He always attended the gathering on the veranda before dinner, with a beer or a scotch in

hand. After dinner Bill often joined us playing poker until 10 or 11 o'clock, using bottle caps as chips. Our project dinners were usually rather raucous affairs with lots of banter and laughter. Our cook was from Morales, and was excellent. One dinner was so wonderful that the compliments afterward escalated until Bill topped everyone by declaring, "That was so good and I'm still hungry, so let's eat the cook!" This caused the biggest laugh of the evening! Furthermore, this comment combined with a number of Bill's previous statements inspired the establishment of a special and unofficial project notebook, entitled "Bill Stories" dedicated to recording many of the incidents related here. Becky Sedat kept the notebook unbeknownst to Bill, and anyone could contribute to its contents. The original has disappeared, but fortunately at the end of the season I recorded abstracts of the best Bill stories.

One evening Bill announced he had word of a donation to the project by the owner of the Gallo Beer Company. He was expecting a cash donation, but a few days later a Gallo Beer truck deposited a large and fully stocked beer cooler in our sala. Bill was disappointed, but everyone else was happy and explained to him how this solved a major logistical problem. Our refrigerator was too small to hold both food and an adequate supply of cold beer, but from now on there would be plenty of cold beer and soft drinks for everyone after a hot day at the site.



Figure 10. Gallo Beer bottle, ca 1960.

I had brought my Honda 350 motorcycle to Quirigua, and one day Bill asked me to teach him how to ride it. So the following Saturday I showed Bill the basics, and in no time he was ready to solo. The entire project gathered to watch as Bill rode away down the road from our camp. We watched him stop at the other end, get off the cycle, and start to turn it around. At this point the cycle began to tip away from him and instead of letting go of the handlebars, he hung on and we watched in amazement as the cycle flipped Bill head over heels onto the other side of the road. Undeterred, he lifted the cycle back up, got aboard, and rode back to us. Although I had taught him how to shift gears, Bill stayed in first gear. So I asked him to go again but this time shift into second gear. He declined, saying he had learned enough for one day. And a minute later, when we were out of earshot of the others, he said to me, "Bob, please never tell Ann about this."



Figure 11. Los Amates, Izabal, Guatemala: Bill Coe learning to ride Sharer's motorcycle during the 1975 season of excavations at Quirigua (Photo by Robert Sharer).

Bill's wife Ann arrived about halfway through the field season. Sadly, Bill's demeanor changed after her arrival. He no longer played poker with the crew. His jokes and storytelling disappeared, and the Bill Coe Stories notebook was retired. He was no longer one of the guys. For the remainder of the season Bill was the Project Director.

BILL COE IN THE CLASSROOM

Practicum In Field Archaeology (Bernard Wailes)

At Bill Coe's suggestion, he and I introduced the course PRACTICUM IN FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY, first offered in the fall 1967, and in alternate years until Bill's retirement. The plan of this course was to identify, discuss, and examine the progress of archaeological excavations from start to finish -- from selecting the locality and obtaining permits through to eventual publication. The syllabus included a review of excavation strategy and tactics, surveying, excavation itself, recording in all its aspects, field conservation, and publication.

Bill's rationale was that budding field archaeologists could learn a great deal from such a course, and so avoid some of the pitfalls of directing an excavation. And he pointed out that the Museum contained archaeologists trained in different parts of the world, on different sites, according to different 'traditions' of excavation that had developed in those areas. He argued that all of those 'traditions' had useful lessons, and that sifting through these different 'traditions' could produce invaluable insights for us all.

Each time the course was given, a couple of colleagues were invited to present a retrospective evaluation of one of their excavations, emphasizing a critical evaluation of what had been done right, what had been done wrong, and how they had modified their plans as the excavation progressed. I certainly learned a great deal, from Bill's accounts of work at Tikal, from having to evaluate my own excavations, and from our guest lecturers.

This course was well attended, and students seemed to enjoy it, but we never really found out just how useful it proved to be for our students when they planned and conducted their own excavations.

I do suspect that all attending this course will remember Bill's superb section drawings; some of them quite enormous, and his discourses on recording, including his catch-phrase which encapsulated the importance of recording -- "OK, Whaddya write on a sherd?" They will also surely remember, toward half-time in each class, B. Wailes waiting for Bill to pause briefly enough to say, "Bill, could we take a quick coffee-break now?"

Practicum In Field Archaeology (Eleanor King)

A vivid memory of Bill was in the famous "Bill and Bernard Show," the Method and Theory class that Bernard Wailes has described. This 500-level class had a mix of undergrads and grads and I was auditing. That year Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle was also part of the practicum. One day the class was discussing the ideal field project--the best way to excavate and, especially, record. Bill volunteered the info that his idea of the perfect excavation was to have one good graduate student who took meticulous notes throughout, then shoot him and throw him in the trench before backfilling. The absolutely delicious part about this was watching the horrified expressions on the faces of the undergrads, all wondering whether he was for real (little did they know that, in fact, yes, probably).



Figure 12. Bernard Wailes, ca 1974;



Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, ca 1978.

Practicum In Field Archaeology (Wendy Bacon)

I also took "the Bill and Bernard Show" and I think perhaps it was the most useful class I ever had. Bill showed us how to read a stadia rod in the museum courtyard, as well as how to distribute the error backwards all around a map. The year I took it, Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle did guest lectures, a couple of times wearing bright yellow stockings. We all thought it was a riot when, during one class, she put her head under the table, then came back up and said,

"Why Bill! Where are your yellow socks?" I also recall Bernard describing how to make a level by filling a hose with water and Bill wanting to know where he was supposed to find that much water at Tikal in the dry season. That was a great class, too.

Mesoamerican Archaeology (Ginny Greene)

I first met Bill Coe when I came to Penn to do graduate work in Maya archaeology. I had had archaeology courses as an undergraduate, which was rare, and so I was able to take his class in Mesoamerican Archaeology the first semester I was at Penn. Bill turned out to be a wonderful teacher, full of enthusiasm, and able to communicate not only information but his deep interest in these (strange to us) people--and his excitement about being able to discover more about them (and we knew a lot less then than we know now).



Figure 13. Ginny Greene at Tikal, 1964.

Mesoamerican Archaeology (Eleanor King)

My very first encounter with Bill was when, as a first-year grad student, I decided to audit his class in Mesoamerican archaeology. We had a curriculum pretty well set in stone at the time and this was to be my one opportunity to delve into things Mesoamerican and get to know who this Bill Coe was, as I had read several of his articles. I only attended one class. It was held in old Classroom 2 on the bottom floor of the Museum, before it got gussied up. It was full of wooden tables and chair-desks at the time, with some piled high in the corners. The class I happened to sit in on was devoted to the early periods of Mesoamerica. I sat there mesmerized as Bill spent a full 10 minutes saying (and you'll just have to imagine his voice here): "I should really tell you about the Archaic...naw, forget about the Archaic. You can READ about the Archaic...well, maybe I should say something...naw..." I was both fascinated by the style of discourse, which included lots of arm flailing (without, I might add, ever getting to any info on the Archaic), and by the fact that as he spoke he was chain-smoking. The entire class watched in fascinated horror as by various gyrations the lit end of the cigarette would sometimes dangerously approach his mouth and at other times the usual end would hove to like a docking spacecraft and he'd take a drag. The suspense was palpable. Would or would not Bill burn himself? Would he ever get to the Archaic? Added to that was the fact that the entire room was full of wood and would go up in smoke in a heartbeat and it was a riveting performance. Wendy Bacon told me later that she'd witnessed the same thing and that sometimes Bill would inadvertently let his cigarette go flying into a corner where it would quietly smolder.



Figure 14. Eleanor King, ca 1983

Mesoamerican Archaeology (Wendy Bacon)

I took Bill Coe's class in Mesoamerican archaeology and, yes, I totally remember it just the way Eleanor told it. It was in Classroom 2. That cigarette was hypnotic. I soon learned not to sit in the front row because I'd get completely covered with ash when he flailed his arms, which he did a lot. And on occasion, a lit cig would go flying. I distinctly remember him lecturing on the Olmec and saying that his brother looked just like one. The only thing I can recall from his lecture on the Maya calendar was that "bars and dots" came out as "dars and bots" and I think of them that way to this day. On the essay question on the final exam, I mismatched the names of the time periods with their dates, so that my chronology was off by a couple of centuries, but he gave me credit anyway. It was a great class.



Figure 15. Wendy Bacon at Santa Rita Corozal, Belize (project directed by Arlen and Diane Chase) in 1979.

Bill Coe at the Museum

Survival Mechanisms (Payson Sheets)

On the Friday of my first week as a graduate student at Penn I met Denny Puleston in the Museum coffee shop. He asked if I was a new graduate student and I said yes. He asked who is my advisor and I said Bill Coe. He asked if I had talked with him and I said not yet, but would be talking with him later that afternoon. He said, "Sit down." I did, and he said, "I am going to install two rheostats." That puzzled me and I said 'what are you talking about?'

He said he would install one behind each ear. So when Bill Coe exclaimed: "*&^%\$\$@@\$%^&*()*&^%\$ Sheets that is the dumbest thing I have ever heard" the rheostats lower the rhetoric a few orders of magnitude to: "Well, Sheets, I am not sure about that, we can talk about it later."

Those two rheostats saved my career at Penn, and allowed me to see Bill's accomplishments and learn from him.

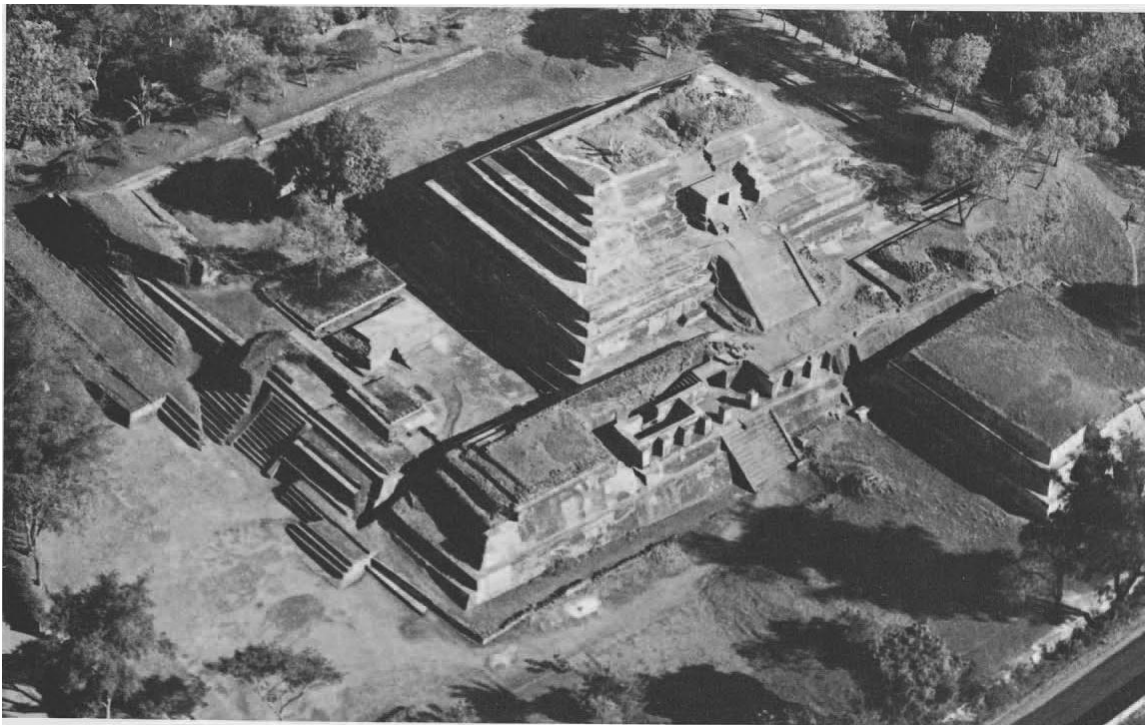


Figure 16. Tazumal, southernmost major structure in the Chalchuapa zone. The Maya evidently had just begun construction here when the volcano erupted in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. All of the oft-remodeled architecture visible in this aerial photograph dates to the Middle or Late Classic to Post-Classic, approximately A D. 400-1200. (From Sheets, Payson, *An Ancient Natural Disaster Expedition*, v. 14, no.1: pp 24-31.)



Figure 17. Payson Sheets, ca 1971

Bill on Drafting (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.

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. 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.

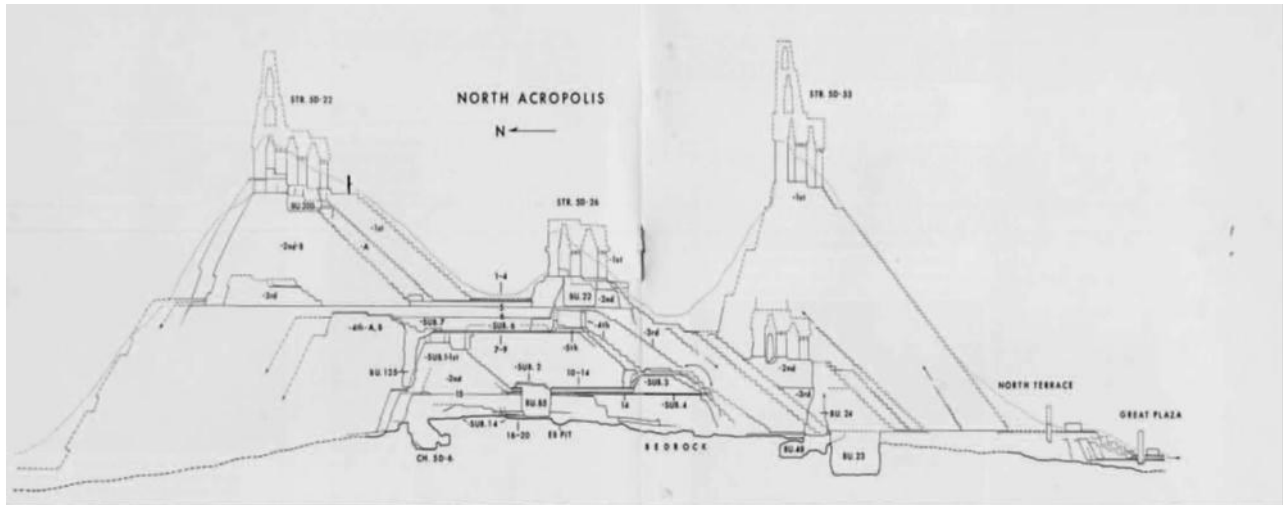


Figure 18. A composite north-south section through the North Acropolis of Tikal covering a distance of about 500 feet. About 1000 years of construction are represented here. (From Coe, William R. *Tikal: Ten years of study of a Maya ruin in the in the lowlands of Guatemala. Expedition, v.8, no.1: pp 4-56.*)

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 half tone 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 drawings (Kohinoor/drawing pens). 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 and Frank Zappa (Robert Sharer)

Bill was sometimes the subject of practical jokes at the Museum. The Rev. Ed O'Flaherty, S.J., then completing his dissertation, was present at an informal meeting in the old American Section offices when Bill amazed everyone by relating how the evening before he had escorted his son, Bill Junior, to a Frank Zappa concert at the Spectrum. Bill commented that he would never allow Billy to attend such a "lousy event" alone, and also noted that many of the kids at the concert were smoking "funny cigarettes!" The image of Bill Coe at a Frank Zappa concert was spellbinding. So much so that as soon as we returned to my office Ed

hammered out the following type-written announcement which he posted on the Anthropology Department bulletin board:

GRADUATE STUDENT SPECIAL COLLOQUIM
DR. WILLIAM R. COE WILL SPEAK ON
FRANK ZAPPA AND HIS MUSIC: AN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S
VIEW OF A CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENON

Friday May 4, 1973, 3 pm; Froelich Rainey Auditorium

Appropriate refreshments will be smoked

Working for Bill (Arlen and Diane Chase)

Arlen met Bill upon his arrival to Penn; within 6 months he heard a favorite declarative phrase of Bill's: "Why don't you do something useful."

Bill had wanted to have a Tikal Catalog of Hieroglyphic Writing, so he put Arlen to work assembling such a treatise. He had access to all of the Tikal monument drawings, something closely guarded in those days, and was allowed to make Xerox copies - from which he then cut and pasted the various texts, main signs, and affixes onto pages, following the model that J. Eric Thompson had used. From this he learned a lot about Maya hieroglyphs, something that he still dabbles in today, but he also learned - after 2 years - that this was not what he wanted to spend his time doing in life. After a discussion about this, Bill found another useful task for him - drafting and inking the 1971 Tayasal archaeological drawings. This became a needed source of income for Arlen and, eventually, his dissertation. Arlen had intended to only examine the Postclassic materials from Tayasal for his Ph.D. thesis, but Bill insisted that all the Tayasal excavations be written up in the dissertation in the form of a proper site report/legal brief. In hindsight, it was the best training that one could have received in archaeological interpretation. For Diane, Bill put her to work looking at the rats and bats of Tikal, ensuring that she would not undertake future faunal analysis, but fostering her interest in skeletal material.



Figure 19. Structure T117 on the Tayasal peninsula. (Photo courtesy of Arlen Chase.)

Drafting and illustration were one of Bill's passions – and he was a perfectionist. In an interesting twist, he always recommended a drink to steady one's hand. Bill critiqued all of Arlen's – and eventually Diane's - early drawings, turning us into exceedingly proficient draftsmen. However, Bill would become upset when he could not find errors in an inked drawing. We learned to purposefully leave out a joining line or to make a rock too square, thus being rewarded with a smile and further instruction. We continue to work with our students and encourage a focus on detailed excavation drawing; we can still be heard echoing one of Bill's phrases when we admonish our own students, "rocks don't look like that."

Working with Bill taught us to pay attention to the smallest details. He was always concerned about archaeological systematics and about context. Units and lots needed to be carefully defined and articulated. We once spent more than an hour engaged in an animated discussion over what constituted a "wall." One of Diane's tutorials with Bill focused on archaeology throughout Mesoamerica; in this course she grew to appreciate Bill as a bibliophile who emphasized the importance of contextualizing researchers as well as finds.

We also learned that there were certain peculiarities about Bill. He was committed to reporting the results of archaeological research in painstaking detail. He worried about driving into Philadelphia in the winter, especially in the snow, in case his car would crash and the Tikal Reports would never be finished. While he was so focused on relationships in Tikal archaeology, this was not the case in other matters. When Arlen asked him for a letter of recommendation to become a dorm master; he scrawled, "I recommend him" on the form and sent it to the Housing Office.

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 below). After the first of Bill's massive editing's 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 of 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!



Figure 20. Marshall Becker, ca 1980.

Bill on Writing (Robert Sharer)

Marshall's experience reminded me of Bill's critique of my dissertation, which occurred a few years later. I had submitted my first draft to him in the summer of 1967 just before leaving for my first academic job in California. That fall he mailed back my draft, the margins of every page filled with penciled comments, including lots of word changes and deleted text, plus a number of additions. These additions ranged from single words to sentences, plus entire paragraphs hand-written on the backs of pages. I responded to all his comments and incorporated all his additions and typed up an entirely new draft, which I mailed back to Bill. A few weeks later back came my draft, which looked just like the first draft, its margins filled with penciled commentary. But this time his critique focused on the changes I had made at

his insistence, and some of the text he now wanted me to delete were passages that Bill had essentially written in editing my first draft! I vividly remember that one of these Bill-inspired passages was a rather extensive discussion, which had been crossed out with “This is crap!” scrawled next to it

This time I wrote a letter to Bill explaining that while I appreciated the time and effort he had invested in reviewing my second draft, I was now in a quandary given that he had either changed or deleted much of the new material addressing his original comments, in addition to deleting several of his own passages he had insisted on including! I ended by suggesting that the best solution to the problem was for me to prepare a third draft for presentation to my full dissertation committee, which he agreed to, without making any further changes.

Bill on Writing (Arlen and Diane Chase)

Our retained image of Bill is from the Tikal Room at Penn, where he was continually hunched over an old Remington typewriter, cigarette to one side and white-out to the other – next to pages of text slathered with white bumps and typed over, again and again, as he searched through his tattered thesaurus for just the right word (and, with his famous yellow socks exposed above his penny loafers).

Early in our careers, Bill taught us to write in what we affectionately called “Coe-ese.” The one paper we remember writing in this manner - with thesaurus and white-out - was entitled “Perspicuity in Ceramic Analysis.” Years later, Gordon Willey commented on our odd prose.

Bill was always very direct. He let you know exactly what he thought and his language was “colorful.” His praise was also always tempered. Upon reading an early draft of “Yucatec Influence in Terminal Classic Northern Belize” (later published in *American Antiquity*), he scrawled on the front: “Hell of an idea, but who would read this crap.”

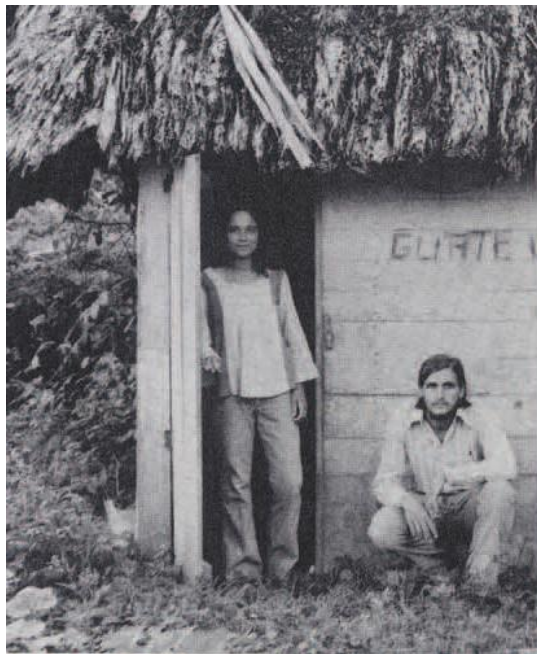


Figure 21. Diane and Arlen Chase, ca 1983.

Bill on Writing (Eleanor King)

I visited the American Section lair on the 2nd floor of the Museum with Bob Sharer and David Sedat shortly after the American Section got its first honest-to-goodness word processing system. This was in the days back before personal computers, of course, and this machine was HUGE. It took up just about all of one room as I recall. Its only function was to word process. Bill was very enthusiastic about this new toy and particularly liked its "search and replace" function. As he waxed lyrical about this, he said: "Just think! It makes reports so much easier--all we have to do now is replace every instance where 'Tikal' shows up with 'Quirigua' and we're done!"

Bill on Writing (Wendy Bacon)

My best memories are of the two years, between undergrad and grad school, that I spent working on the Tikal Project. Bill Coe hired me to type TR 14, and it was before the days of the word-processor. Things were never boring whenever he was in the office. His true love (before the search-and-replace function) was whiteout. He once offered to make me disappear by covering me completely in whiteout. I learned the word "defenestrate" when he offered to do that to me, too. Both those threats were in response to me trying to change his prose to make it more readable. He let me change it, then fired me and paid Barbara Hayden (first user of that huge word-processor) to put it all back the way he had it before I "edited" it. I only went to grad school because he fired me, so I guess I owe him much for that. They don't make archaeologists like him anymore.

Bill on Ceramics (Arlen and Diane Chase)

Bill had a fascination with ceramics. He told us of his experiences at Nohoch Ek, Belize. Here, his brother Mike had left him in a deep excavation trench; while down there, he had examined the walls of the investigation and wondered why each of the sherds in the fill had been purposefully placed in their locations. He noted that this error in judgment led to his fascination with context and what is now referred to as "formation processes." He insisted that plumbate occurred in Terminal Classic contexts at Tikal, citing the Temple 1 trash and insisting that the archaeological context indicated such a date and that ceramic analysis generally did not pay attention to context. He produced a detailed study that he had done on Terminal Classic contexts at Uaxactun to back up his interpretations of this dating (something that he said was prepared for the 1971 SAR Conference on the Maya collapse that he never attended). He fumed over the Princeton Art Museum's exhibit of Maya pottery vases that he considered to be inappropriate because of a lack of archaeological context. The later donation of Tikal archaeological records to Princeton was, thus, doubly hurtful to him.

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 was a period when Tikaleños joined the Coe's 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!

Bill's Favorite Sport Cars

Bill's Jaguar (William Haviland)

Bill had a fascination with precision-engineered cars. He was the proud owner of a "baby blue" Jaguar in which he car-pooled to the museum with Ted Kidder. One afternoon, I was driving home from the museum on 34th St. past the zoo, and happened to look down on the nearby expressway, at the usual rush hour traffic jam. The traffic was at a standstill, and there in the midst of it was a baby blue "jag" that had to be Coe. So I pulled over, stopped, and climbed down onto the expressway. There was Bill, standing outside his car, scratching his head and looking around. When he saw me, he asked: "Have you seen Dr. Kidder? As soon as the traffic stopped, he got out of the car and took off down the road." To appreciate the situation, one should know that not long before, Dr. Kidder had broken his legs in a fall, and was on crutches! Motorists must have done a "double take" as a heavy, late middle-aged man went "tooling" past on crutches. But there was Bill, scratching his head, completely at a loss.



Figure 22. Members of the 1955 University Museum expedition to Bolivia. From left to right: Gregorio Cordero Miranda, William R. Coe, Alfred Kidder II, and Mary B. Kidder. (From Chávez, Karen L. Mohr, *Alfred Kidder II, 1911-1984, Expedition*, v.30, no.3: pp 4-7.)

Bill's Mercedes 450 SL (Robert Sharer)

Working with Bill in the 1970s was generally a pleasant and rewarding experience, with occasional surprises. One Saturday Bill called me at home and asked if he could come over to talk with me. I said sure, and Bill arrived about 30 minutes later. When I opened the door he said, "Bob, I want to show you something." And there, parked at the curb was a brand new shiny black Mercedes 450 SL. Bill explained he had just bought it a few days before. He was like a kid with a new toy. His new 450 SL had a red leather interior and was a convertible with both a soft top and a removable hard top. He even offered to give me a ride! As we tooted around the back roads of Delaware County Bill explained that when he bought his new sports car he had also bought the factory manual, and had spent the first day with his new toy by completely disassembling the engine "to see how it works" and then putting it all back together again! His verdict, "a marvelous machine."



Figure 23. 1972 Mercedes 450SL.

Bill's Stolen Car (Robert Sharer)

Bill occasionally told stories about something he had done that was downright hilarious. One of the most memorable of these tales was Bill's confession that having returned to the Philadelphia airport from a short trip and after taking the shuttle to the remote parking lot, he discovered that his beautiful black Mercedes 450 SL was missing! He explained how he had searched the lot for an hour or so without success before finally realizing his car had been stolen. So he took the shuttle back to the terminal, called Ann to come pick him up, and reported his stolen car to the police. After giving all the necessary information to the police, Bill and Ann drove home, exhausted. Early the next morning the phone rang—it was the Philadelphia police reporting that Bill's stolen car had been found. Bill was sure it would be stripped and seriously damaged, but when he anxiously asked about its condition, he was told it was in great shape. By this time Bill was laughing as he confessed he had searched the wrong section of the lot, and the police had found his car still parked exactly where he had left it!

Door-to Door Service (Joyce Marcus)

I first met Bill Coe in his office when I was a grad student at Harvard. I had traveled from Cambridge to Philadelphia and was staying with Kent Flannery's mother, who lived in Wynnewood; Mrs. Flannery dropped me off at the University Museum at the corner of 33rd and Spruce Streets, saying "Joyce, just call me whenever you are done with your meeting with Professor Coe."

I arrived promptly at 1 pm and during my two-hour chat with Professor Coe, we talked about many things Maya, including Tikal and the North Acropolis. Then we talked at length about Piedras Negras and its caches. Since those caches had been the theme of his dissertation, he then inquired about whether or not I was making any progress on my own dissertation.

After talking for about two hours about the Maya, he offered to drive me back to Wister Road where Mrs. Flannery lived; he not only drove very fast and erratically, weaving through traffic, but he also succeeded in ploughing through a rose bush in Mrs. Flannery's front yard. Coe then drove right over her nicely mowed lawn, stopping just short of making contact with her as she stood on the front porch. Her comment at that moment was, "I guess they are right about professors being eccentric."

As I was gasping for air, Professor Coe calmly said, "Just as promised, I offered door-to-door service and here we are!"

Other than that "lawn-crossing and rosebush-trampling experience," he seemed perfectly nice, gracious, and in complete control!

Some Final Words

Advice from Bill (Arlen and Diane Chase)

Bill was full of advice about life – and one never knew whether he was joking or serious. On several occasions he related how he loved to go to New Jersey to play the horses and how that was a good way to double one's research funds. On another day, Carl Beetz and the two of us were in his office; he offered us advice on Maya archaeology, noting that we should all leave the field because "you needed to have money" in order to be successful in archaeology. He suggested that Arlen go to Wall Street and make the requisite funds; he advised Carl to paint VW vans; he had no advice for Diane.

Bill on Archaeology (Arlen and Diane Chase)

Bill represented one of the last true "gentleman-scholars" of a bygone era of archaeology. When we recognize this, it helps us to understand him and his views on Maya archaeology – and graduate students. While he influenced us greatly and helped to make us what we are today, he did not understand why his graduate students wanted – or even needed – jobs at "Podunk Universities." Maya archaeology was one's life work and was meant to be undertaken for personal enjoyment and edification; it was not a "job." If only this were still true.

Three Decades with Bill at the Penn Museum (Robert Sharer)

I worked with Bill as mentor and colleague for over 30 years. As my mentor he not only supported my dissertation research at Chalchuapa, he actively helped me by handing over all the records of his earlier excavations at the site, and by inking the section drawings from his 1954 excavations in the El Trapiche Group. Bill also created the first drawing of Monument 1, a battered Late Preclassic stela excavated at El Trapiche in 1967. I stayed at Bill and Ann's house in Radnor during the summer of '67 while Bill inked the remaining drawings from his 1954 excavations and I inked my excavation plans and sections, all for use in my dissertation. I recall learning from Bill that summer how to enjoy stippling a drawing, one of the most boring facets of inking a section. Bill's secret was to put a recording of a good fast rhythmic tune on the stereo and start stippling to the music!

Bill visited my Chalchuapa excavations several times, at one point going to Antigua to talk with Ed Shook and ask him to visit Chalchuapa to assist me. A few weeks later Ed rolled into Chalchuapa in his big Chrysler sedan, and after examining my pottery classification, he invited me to study the Kaminaljuyu ceramic collections with him in Guatemala. In the 1970's Bill helped me compile and publish the final Chalchuapa report, providing the subvention from American Section funds to insure its publication by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

In 1968 Bill convinced Fro Rainey, the Penn Museum Director, to sponsor a Museum project at Chalchuapa. That project conducted three seasons of further investigations at the site (1968-1970).



Figure 24. Froelich Rainey, ca 1960

In early 1971 Bill began a new project at Tayasal, Guatemala. In the summer of that year Bill asked me to go to Tayasal and assist the project—the graduate student in charge of the field lab was not doing his job. I got the lab functioning, but in assessing the overall situation, Stan Loten (project Field director) and I agreed that Bill needed to be on the scene to manage the end of the field season. Bill came to Tayasal and together we closed the 1971 project season. Later that year Bill decided to end the Tayasal Project. Bill told me a few years later that he began the Tayasal Project because Fro Rainey wanted him to begin a new dig “to keep the Museum’s flag flying” in the Maya area.



Figure 25. Tayasal, Petén, Guatemala: Bill Coe drawing pottery vessels from the excavations of the Tayasal Project during its single field season in 1971 (Photo by Robert Sharer).

Yet Tayasal seemed to have whetted Bill's appetite for returning to the field, and he began searching for a new lowland Maya site to investigate. In the fall of 1971 I got a call from Fro Rainey, who told me how much he wanted to see the Museum return to the field in Guatemala or Mexico, but that Bill needed help to make this possible. Then he asked me if I would be interested in returning to Penn as a Museum Curator. When I said yes, Fro said I should talk with Bill about the job. When I talked to Bill he told me that with Linton Satterthwaite's retirement the American Section needed to hire a new curator. In addition the Museum planned to start a new Maya field project, so this job involved assisting him in setting up and directing a new project at Cobá, in the northern Maya lowlands of Mexico. Bill had already "scouted out Cobá," met with the Instituto in Mexico City, and had secured initial funding. He was clearly enthusiastic about starting work at Cobá. However, by the time I got the formal job offer in early 1972, Bill's plans for a Cobá Project had fallen through. Bill later told me he had talked to Eric Thompson about choosing another site to excavate, and Eric had suggested Quirigua, Guatemala. Bill liked this option and soon settled on a new project at Quirigua. So when I arrived back at the Penn Museum in the fall of 1972, I spent much of the following year assisting Bill in setting up the Quirigua Project.



Figure 26. Quirigua, Izabal, Guatemala: Sir J. Eric Thompson and Bill Coe reviewing excavation of Quirigua Monument 24 (Altar of Zoomorph P) during the 1975 Quirigua field season (Quirigua Project photo).

The start of the Quirigua Project was delayed one year, but in 1975 Bill and I worked together at Quirigua for over four months. Several months after the field season ended, Fro Rainey asked me to come to his office for a chat. Much to my surprise Fro informed me that he had asked Bill to step aside and not return to Quirigua in 1976. Fro wanted Bill to concentrate on completing the Tikal Reports and wanted me to direct the Quirigua Project. I said I thought Bill should remain as project director, but that I needed to discuss things with Bill before any decision was made. I talked with Bill and he agreed to remain as project director. Over the next five years I directed field operations at Quirigua aided by consultations with Bill back in Philadelphia. Bill and I began publishing the *Quirigua Reports* in 1979, the year the Quirigua fieldwork was completed, facilitated by the fabulous word processing machine Eleanor King has already mentioned.

As faculty colleagues at Penn, Bill and I team-taught graduate seminars, served together on dissertation and other committees, and shared the duties of administering the American Section. Our responsibilities were divided between the Museum and Department of Anthropology—in Bill’s words we had “two bosses.” Although a new office was allocated to Bill on the 4th floor of the Museum’s Academic Wing, next to my office and just one flight up from the Anthropology Department, Bill refused to move from his suite of old American Section offices next to the Tikal Room. My marching orders from Bill were to stay fully involved with the Anthropology Department and keep him informed of all that transpired there. Bill would do likewise in the Museum and keep me informed. Since the Department was in the School of Arts and Sciences, this meant I was also delegated to keep him informed about developments

stemming from College Hall. In other words, Bill wanted to minimize what he called “distractions” beyond the Museum.

Bill always maintained that our primary responsibilities were to the Museum and to the Museum’s research and publications. During the 1970s Bill told me that he wanted to create an endowed fund in the Museum’s American Section, and asked for my opinion on how this fund should be used. I replied that it would be important to support American Section field research and publication. Bill said that this was exactly what he wanted it to do, and soon thereafter he established the American Section Research Fund. Thanks to Bill’s generosity the funds from this endowment continue to support American Section research and publication to this day. At the same time Bill established a smaller endowment in the School of Arts and Sciences, which continues to support graduate student dissertation research in Penn’s Anthropology Department.

In addition to paying research and publication costs, the American Section Research Fund was also used to support people working on the Tikal Reports. Bill saw to it that two former members of the Tikal Project, Rudy Larios and Miguel Orrego came to Penn from Guatemala for a semester so that they could be trained in the preparation of archaeological publications. They also earned Associate Certificates from Penn that helped advance their careers in Guatemala. With the support of the American Section Research Fund Bill was able to hire Chris Jones as a full time Research Associate in the American Section to work on the Tikal Reports, and Barbara Hayden to work part time as the Tikal Report editor.

In the 1980s Bill devoted more and more of his time and energy to completing his massive Tikal Report 14. As a result, he increasingly withdrew from the activities of the American Section and cutback his involvement with students and the Department of Anthropology. By the mid-80s Bill stopped teaching. This was a prelude to his being asked to take early retirement, which he did in 1987. In 1990 Bill published Tikal Report 14, his magnum opus. Most appropriately the Museum presented Bill with the Drexel Medal to mark this achievement. After this Bill cleaned out his office and I, along with most others in the Museum, hardly ever saw him again. He came into the Museum to collect his mail, but usually only on Saturdays when no one else was around. Then in April of 1994 Bill said farewell to the Museum Director, Jerry Sabloff, and left the Museum forever. Before he walked out the door he left a handwritten note addressed to Chris Jones. Chris gave me a photocopy of Bill’s note, which reads as follows:

Chris:

Herewith some old manuscripts plus separate mailing tube of W. Plaza east monuments. File/chuck, I don’t care.

Otherwise shipped off to HMN ca. 100 lbs of TR 27A. She can do what she wants with the stuff.

Otherwise some old stuff shipped off to Haviland.

This winds it up for me re. Tikal and everything past! I’ve lost all interest.

Take care,

Bill Coe



Figure 27. William R. Coe receiving the Lucy Wharton Drexel Medal in 1991 from Robert H. Dyson, The Charles K. Williams II Director of the University Museum, for his outstanding work as Director of the Tikal Project.