



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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On The Horizon:

- Summer and Fall Lecture Series every Tuesday in Palenque, Chiapas
- August 2004 Tour—August 30 to September 4, 2004
- Thanksgiving in the Ruins of Chiapas Tour—November 20 to 27, 2004

Spaces are still available for anyone who would like to join either of these tours. For more information visit the "Tours" page of our website.

Maya Exploration Center Announces Longhorn Award

Maya Exploration Center has established its first grant program, the MEC Longhorn Award. Designed to assist master's degree candidates complete their thesis, the one thousand dollar award will be presented to a University of Texas at Austin student this fall.

"We needed to start relatively small" says Dr. Ed Barnhart, Director of MEC, "but we wanted to do something as soon as possible." So, MEC established the Longhorn Award. "I got my degree from UT. Steve (MEC VP Stephen Siemer) is a UT grad. MEC is based in Austin. It just made sense to start with Texas."

Dr. Barnhart's relationship with departments and professors at The University of Texas will help to get the word out to potential candidates.

Candidates should be graduate students who are studying the ancient Maya and need assistance with the costs of doing research for their master's thesis. MEC is not limiting the award to any particular field of study or discipline. Students from any department can apply as long as their research touches on the ancient Maya. Candidates will be judged on their academic achievement, recommendations from their professors, and thesis topic. Topics that apply innovative approaches or ideas to the study of the ancient Maya will be given higher priority.

"We are very excited. This is one of the reasons that we started MEC, to support research," says Barnhart. "In the future, we hope to expand the program both at UT and other schools."

May 2004 Study Abroad, Best Yet



Continuing a trend toward ever larger, more ambitious Study Abroad Programs, MEC hosted ten students and two professors from Missouri Southern State University in early May. The five day program, based in Palenque, mixed intensive instruction with large doses of good fun.

On day one, Christopher Powell led the students through Palenque. The next day, led by Dr. Ed Barnhart and Christopher Powell, we visited the ruins of Bonampak and went to the Lacandon village of Lacanja

for a traditional Maya lunch and a swim under waterfalls.

At dawn the following morning, we set off on a river boat trip to the site of Yaxchilan where Powell and Barnhart lead the group through the tree covered plaza, explaining its art, architecture and hieroglyphic texts.

On the last day, Alonso Mendez brought the group on a jungle walk through Palenque's hidden ruins and then down into the tomb of Pakal. That final evening we shared a traditional Maya meal cooked by Susan M. Prins (Alonso's wife) and a party hosted at Dr. Barnhart's home in El Panchan.

The students were pleased, their accompanying professors were impressed and the MEC staff once again showed their ability to be a diverse and accessible faculty for our study abroad programs.



Letter from the Director

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Wow! It's been a wonderfully productive last few months for MEC.

Shortly after sending out our Spring newsletter, Steve Siemer and I made

the road trip back to Texas. On April 9th (at 7am!) I spoke to the Northwest Austin Rotary Club about MEC and our mission. The very next week I drove down to San Antonio where the Alamo Pre-Columbian Society had invited me to speak. About 100 people assembled at Trinity University to hear about MEC's most current research. It was well received and hopefully the start of a mutually beneficial relationship between APS and MEC.

The next few weeks I was buried in emails and logistics planning for three different travel courses in May and June. Meanwhile, Steve was up in Dallas, hard at work improving the website's flow and adding resources. Alonso Mendez and other MEC team members held the fort back in Palenque and continued to present public lectures every Tuesday.

Come mid-May it was time to make the long drive back to Palenque. With two cars full of books, network equipment and building supplies, Steve and I made the journey. A brief stop at the beach in Veracruz made the trip more relaxed than others.

We arrived in Palenque two days before the May 20-25 study abroad, just enough time to check all the course reservations were in place. Of course, they weren't. We quickly adjusted, reserving different rooms before the group arrived. Adaptability is the key to success in Mexico! The course went great. The students were thrilled and I was proud

of the teamwork exhibited by MEC's faculty. Dr.'s Claussen and Gubera, the leaders of the Missouri-based student group, vowed to return with more students next year.

I saw the May students off in the wee hours of the morning, got a few more hours of sleep and then packed my bags for the Yucatan. On May 27th I met 36 professors sent down by National Science Foundation to learn about ancient Maya mathematics. You can read about the specifics of what they learned in this newsletter.

June 17-23 I taught a second NSF course, this one about archaeoastronomy and culture in Oaxaca. For six days I led 21 professors through ruins, brought them to traditional craft villages and met them every morning on the roof of our hotel to watch Venus rise as Morningstar.

Now I've returned to Palenque and found that Steve has finally succeeded in getting internet wired back to our office. Way to go Steve! As the rainy season begins, we'll hunker down and get to some writing. In addition, we'll continue the search for the right piece of land upon which to build our permanent research and education center.

The year 2004 can already be called a success but 2005, with five study abroad courses already booked for the first three months, looks to be when MEC's education program is really going to take flight. Thanks to everyone for your support during MEC's first full year and enjoy this latest newsletter.

Regards,

Ed Barnhart

Barnhart Teaches NSF/Chautauqua Program for Third Year

For the third consecutive year, Dr. Ed Barnhart was chosen as an instructor for the National Science Foundation Chautauqua program. The program's name, Chautauqua, refers to a group of scholars who traveled the United States in the 1800's, bringing news of the latest scientific advancements and changes in world politics to pioneer communities. Today, Chautauqua courses are an annual series of forums in which scholars at the frontiers of various sciences meet intensively for several days with undergraduate college teachers of science. The series is held at colleges and universities throughout the United States as well as at selected special sites. In Dr. Barnhart's case, his courses take place in Mexico and Central America.

Dr. Barnhart's association with Chautauqua began in



2001 when Dr. James Barufaldi, Director of the program's University of Texas field office, invited him to submit a course proposal. It was accepted during the annual NSF meeting in Washington DC and the following summer Barnhart taught "Archaeoastronomy in the Maya Ruins of Chiapas". The next year he expanded his offerings to two courses, one in Copan, Honduras on archaeoastronomy and another on ancient Maya mathematics in Chiapas. This summer he taught those same topics again, but in different locations.

"Ancient Maya Mathematics in the Yucatan" took place May 27—June 1 and had thirty six professors in attendance. The Hotel Caribe in downtown Merida was the course's home base. The first two days of the course were spent in Merida, getting participants acquainted with the city's colonial charm and presenting seminars on Maya math as shown through calendars, hieroglyphic texts, and architectural proportions. The rest of the course's days were spent visiting the ruins of the area. At Uxmal and Kabah they measured temples for themselves to learn about Maya geometry. At Chichen Itza, they visited the Caracol, the most famous of ancient Maya observatories,

and the Castillo with its 365 steps leading to its upper temple. One of the course's highlights was a visit to the church at Mani, the infamous spot where pyres of Maya books were burned by zealous Spanish priests.

Dr. Barnhart's second course this summer,



"Archaeoastronomy and Culture in The Ancient Ruins of Oaxaca, Mexico", ran June 17—23. This course's twenty one professors enjoyed a full week of lectures, observation experiments, museums, ruins and indigenous craft villages. Visits to ruins and modern villages brought them through 2500 years of Zapotec history and an afternoon seminar taught them how to read one of seven remaining ancient books, or "codices" written by the Mixtecs. On the astronomy side, they learned about horizon based astronomy in the mountains and how certain ancient temples doubled as observatories. On the morning of June 20th, the entire group was on the roof of their hotel watching Venus rise as Morningstar just ahead of the Summer Solstice sunrise.

Not only are these NSF programs an honor for Dr. Barnhart, but they are also great opportunities to make the participating professors aware of Maya Exploration Center's education programs. "One of the main goals of Maya Exploration Center is provide these same sorts of programs to college students," says Barnhart. Three former participants in Dr. Barnhart's Chautauqua courses have already brought groups of students down to learn from MEC and more are on the way. It's precisely relationships like these, between MEC and professors from US universities, that strengthen MEC's identity as an international education center. For more information on Chautauqua courses or MEC's study abroads after which they are modeled, visit our website or www.engrng.pitt.edu/chautauqua/

MEC Interview with Merle Greene-Robertson

In this issue of Archeo-Maya is a conversation between Merle Greene-Robertson and Dr. Ed Barnhart. An alumnus of The University of California at Berkeley, Greene-Robertson has been studying the ancient Maya for more than half a century. A tireless researcher, she is the founder and director of the Precolumbian Art Research Institute (PARI), the Mesa Redonda, a semi-annual meeting of Mayanist from around the world, and the creator of more than four thousand rubbings of carved Maya monuments.



Ed Barnhart (right) Interviews Merle Greene-Robertson

The interview took place in mid-November of last year at Greene-Robertson's home in Palenque. Located mid-way down the street which bears her name, her home is the site where the Maya code was broken in 1973.

Excerpts from the interview with Merle Greene-Robertson are below. To read the full interview visit our website at: <http://www.mayaexploration.org/interviews.aspx>

EB: *As an artist and art historian, what is art to you?*

MGR: This is a hard question. When I was getting my MFA at the University of California at Berkeley I took a course called the Aesthetics of Art. from a professor from Oxford. It was the best course I ever took in college. We argued this point every time we met. I'd say that art evokes a response that aesthetically is more meaningful than what you would ordinarily feel, whether you're looking at Renaissance art or Northwest Coast Indian art or the art on the piers at Palenque. I always look at architecture, and that's what struck me first at Palenque. The impact of the portraits of the people on the piers is overwhelming.

EB: *Who is your favorite artist?*

MGR: Of course I appreciate all kinds of art, modern

art, Renaissance art, primitive art, or whatever you want to call it. I don't think anything is really primitive art; I don't go for that title. I like Miró, Leger, Matisse. But I have a special liking for Bruegel. I'll go out of my way, to another country, to see a Bruegel. There's just something about the life that he captures, and the history of that particular time, early Flemish before the Inquisition, that intrigues me.

Unless you know the back-

ground, why, you'd look at his paintings and think they're like Hieronymous Bosch. A lot of people think they're weird, but they really intrigue me.

EB: *How did you become interested in Maya art?*

MGR: That's a little easier question. I became interested in the study of Maya art all of a sudden. I had been going to the art institute in San Miguel de Allende, and one weekend a friend of mine and I decided to go to Tikal because we had never been there. So we packed a small suitcase and off we went for the weekend. Well, this other girl got off the plane, saw a snake, and got right back on the plane. That was the end of it. She didn't even see Tikal. But a little snake wasn't going to bother me. I fell in love with Tikal immediately. I fell in love with the jungle. It just so happened that they needed an artist there. School could wait. I stayed. I only had a few tee shirts and shorts, but I did bring my watercolors and oils.

I loved the jungle. It never frightened me, never intimidated me. There were no trails or anything back in 1961.

I'd go off on my own up a trail made by ants. Some of those ant trails were two feet wide, so you didn't know if it was a real trail or the ants. When I'd come to a fork in the trail I'd turn around, make a sketch of what I saw, and then go on. I'd keep making sketches so that when I turned around to go back, I'd just look at my sketches and see which way to go. I never got lost. But what made it so special was that the art seemed to be growing right out of the environment. It was just exploding out of the jungle. It wasn't something that had been put there. It seemed to belong.

EB: *Some of your most recent work involves documenting the recently discovered murals in old Chichen Itza. Can you talk about that a little bit?*

MGR: Yes. It's the Temple of the Falos and still not open to the public. The Temple of the Falos is big, it's long, and the whole length of the building is painted. All along, in sections of about a meter, there are vines that move like frets, across and up, across and down. And there are underwater plants and underwater flowers and little humming birds diving into the flowers. And then, about every three meters, there is a human figure. These figures have the head of a bird or the head of an owl and they are holding onto the vines that twine from the roots at the base. The whole mural shows rebirth, repeating over and over again.

On the front of the building, up in the second register, are figures dressed in all of the paraphernalia used as tribute. This is telling us something that we suspected, but had no evidence for. We knew that Chichen Itza was the most prominent site in the Yucatán Peninsula and that people came there from other areas, but now we know it was for political more than religious reasons. The murals show all the different trade items people were bringing: fancy pectorals, jade wristlets, jade anklets, jade headdresses, quetzal feathers.

EB: *Would you discuss your role in the first Mesa Redonda?*

MGR: Well, we were sitting out here on the back porch having a beer one night—Linda Schele, Gillette Griffin, David Jorelmon—and we said, “Wouldn't it be a great idea if we could get everybody who is interested in Palenque to come here and just exchange ideas? And so we made up a list of all the people we could think of whom we thought would be interested: George Kubler, Bob Rands, Floyd Lowinsbury, Donald Robertson, my mentor at Tulane, and so on. When I arrived home in September, the telephone was ringing before I could even get my jacket off. It was Mike Coe and he said, “Merle, let's have it this Christmas.” This was September! Okay, I called everyone up, nothing formal about it, and I told them what we were going to do. Some people stayed in little hotels across the street. Mike Coe and his three kids and Don Robertson and his two kids stayed in hammocks upstairs. I took the stuff off the wall in the kitchen so we could show slides in there. And we kept a pot of coffee on the stove so people could help themselves. There were no fees, everybody just paid for their own expenses. So that's how it got started. That was in 1973.

The first year we had thirty-five people, but then Mexico City and the University of the Americas heard

about it. Students started coming down and pretty soon we had to move the meeting. Then everybody decided they wanted to be home at Christmas, so we started holding it in June. Then we had it every other year. It was a lot of work. It would take all year to put something like this together. I had to have committees for getting this, that, and the other. Bob Laughlin came down from San Cristóbal several times and brought the Indian theater group to perform. The people of Palenque had dances. The town was really proud of having this thing here. That went on for twenty years until I decided, “I've done it enough now, it's a lot of work.” So I turned it over to Mexico.

EB: *Why did you settle in Palenque?*

MGR: Well, because I was down here so much. Although I was teaching in the States, I would get away whenever I could. And then I got involved in so many projects that required financial help that we decided to go through the rig-a-ma-roll of setting up a non-profit here, the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute. Eventually my husband and I built a house, and when Bob retired, we moved our stuff down here. We expected to be here forever. But it didn't turn out that way. When Bob died, we buried his ashes here in the cemetery.

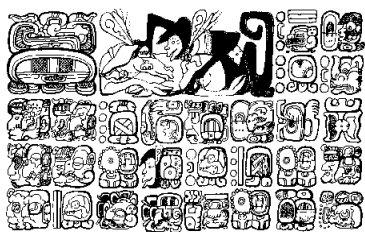
Then there was the eruption of El Chichón volcano. Everybody in Palenque, even the mayor, left town, except for me and Moises Morales. I was in the middle of writing all these books, so I couldn't just leave my research here. And so I stayed. The ash was all over everything in the house. We only had one tank of water. We just used it for drinking. We had nothing to wash with. I got so much ash in my ears and in my lungs that I knew I had to get out and find a place where I could finish my work. My son David said, “Why don't you come to San Francisco?” So I moved there and that's where I've been ever since. *When I'm there.*

EB: *Because of all of your work preserving ancient art, the Mexican Government gave you a very high honor. Could you tell us about that?*

MGR: That was the Award of the Aztec Eagle, which is the highest award given by Mexico to a non-Mexican. The ceremony was at the Palace in Mexico City and attended by all of the officials from INAH [the National Institute of Art and History]. It was really wonderful. They had a big reception afterwards and then another reception and dinner at Silvia Treva's house. All my family came down, my children and the grandkids, and everybody from Merida and Chichen Itza came too. I was overwhelmed to tell you the truth.

News from Palenque

Moises Morales Celebrates Fifth Katun— Moises Morales Marquez celebrated his 79th birthday on June 7th, 2004. However, because the Maya Long



Celebrando el Quinto Katun de Moises y el Eclipse de Venus y el Sol
Junio 7 de 2004, Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico

Drawn by Alonso Mendez

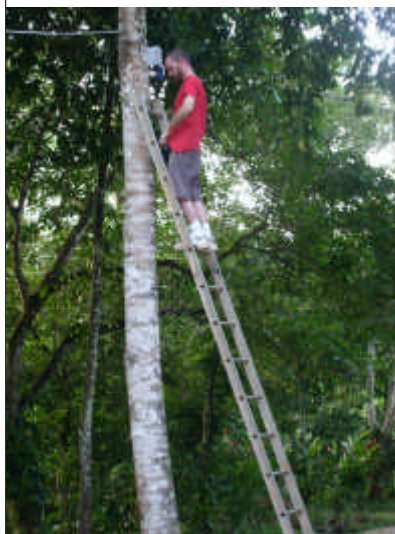
Count calendar's year contains only 360 (not 365) days, he had turned 80 *tuns* on April 13th, 2004. To the ancient Maya, this was an honored event called entering one's fifth *katun*, or twenty year period, of life. Moises, the owner of El Panchan and the original guide at the site of Palenque, is a great friend and mentor to MEC. MEC commemorated his birthday creating a hieroglyphic text noting his birthday in 1925 and naming him "The Five Katun Lord of Panchan".

Museum Exhibit, Rostros Mayas — Opened June 2nd, *Rostros Mayas* in Palenque's Alberto Ruz Museum is perhaps the finest exhibit ever to come through Palenque. Rarely has such an extensive collection of jade funerary masks been displayed in one exhibit. Of special interest were three different reproductions of Pakal's funerary mask. Together, they demonstrate that the process of reconstruct

(News Continued page 7)

The MEC Tech Report : Networking the Jungle

Sitting in a tin-roof and screen bungalow in the jungle, near the back limit of El Panchan in Palenque, I am working at my computer. I am working on this newsletter. I will have to go about a thousand feet to the restaurant, Don Mucho's, at



Siemer climbs a ladder in an effort to network the jungle.

the front of El Panchan, to post it to the internet. In the recent past, I had to go all the way into town to use the internet, so it is wonderful that the internet is now only a thousand feet away. But I want more.

It is amazing the toll that the jungle takes on everything from sandals to photographs to electronics. Photographs disintegrate here in a matter of months. Soles of shoes pull away from uppers. Brand new VCRs just stop working. Most of this, of course, can be explained scientifically— heat and humidity, mold and rust.

But I think there are other forces at work, the same forces that draw thousands of visitors to the ruins only a few miles down the road, the mystical forces of the ancients.

Perhaps even the old gods. Sometimes I feel as though they

don't want me to have internet in my tin-roof and screen bungalow.

Briefly, for the tech heads out there, here is what I started with: a D-Link access point, two Hawking high gain directional antennas, a Linksys wireless bridge and a wireless router. The plan is to create a subnet back here in what we like to call the "neighborhood" and wirelessly bridge it up to the existing network at the restaurant. I set up and tested everything in the States only a week or so before I arrived here at El Panchan. It all worked.

I did tests here to make sure that everything was working before I started climbing trees to install the equipment in the TWPS (pronounced "twips" and short for "Tupperware Weather Protection System.") It all worked.

But the gods have a good sense of humor and I suspect that they get a kick out of watching me climb trees.

Up and down and up again. It doesn't work. Currently, it is down and I am testing, again. I am thinking about using different trees, my working theory being that some of the other tin roofs are interfering with the signal. But I can't discount the science. I suspect that the Linksys bridge is no longer functioning. Heat and humidity, rust and mold.

I like to think that the gods smile down upon us here at El Panchan, and mostly they do. I am sure that once they tire of watching me climb up into trees, I will get this working. We are tantalizingly close. But for now, I hope they are having a good laugh at my expense.

Stephen Siemer is VP of Operations/Technology for Maya Exploration Center. If you have any ideas or wish to help support MEC's possibly misguided "technology in the jungle" experiments in any way, please email stevesiemer@mayaexploration.org

News from Palenque Con't.

ing these beautiful jade mosaics is a matter of interpretation, not clear fact.

Dr. Robert M. Laughlin given Gregory Kolovakov Award—Dr. Robert M. Laughlin, Curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, recently received PEN's Gregory Kolovakov Award for Translation of Latin American Literature into English. This prestigious literary award caps Dr. Laughlin's long career as a cultural anthropologist, ethnobotanist, and linguist dedicated to preserving the oral traditions of the Tzotzil Maya of Zinacantán, a small community in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. His two-volume monograph, *The Flowering of Man*, is a major ethnobotanical source on plants of the highlands. His translation of a sixteenth century Tzotzil dictionary is of immeasurable help to ep-

igraphers and ethnographers, as is *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of San Lorenzo Zinacantán*, which took sixteen years to complete. Laughlin's rare sensibility and wit make his most academic labors delightfully entertaining. Two magical books have crossed over into the popular realm: *Mayan Tales from Zinacantán: Dreams and Stories from the People of the Bat*, edited by Carol Karasik; and *The Book of Hearts*, a beautifully illustrated collection of Maya metaphors for love, fear, passion. Bob Laughlin started out as a poet who then took on the painstaking task of recording an exotic foreign language. It perfumes our hearts that PEN has recognized the literary merits of Dr. Laughlin's work, as well as the richness and vitality of Maya oral literature.

Why Donate to MEC ?

If you're interested in the search for the lost knowledge of the ancients, you should support Maya Exploration Center. MEC is at the forefront of research that is making a real difference in our understanding of the ancient Maya. In addition, our education programs encourage students to step away from classrooms and into the ruins to see for themselves. We have an innovative approach to sustainability in which our education programs are enriched by current research. In turn ongoing research is supported through the funds raised through the education programs. Support MEC's non-profit organization today and help us carve new paths between the ancient Maya and modern public awareness.

Thanks to everyone who has donated to MEC

• **The Siemer Family Foundation** • **Linda and Martin Barber** • **Linda Milliman**
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