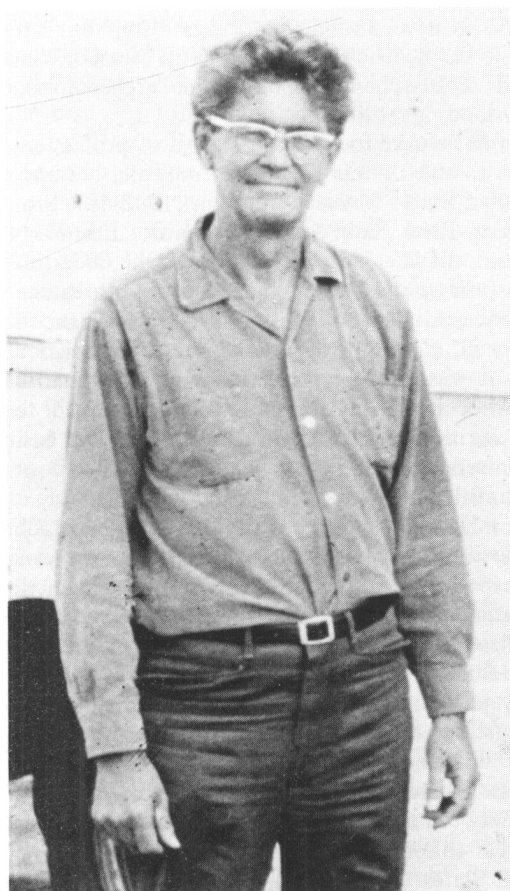


JOSEPH RALSTON CALDWELL, 1916-1973



ON DECEMBER 23, 1973, Joseph Ralston Caldwell died of a massive coronary in Athens, Georgia. From his early archaeological experiences in the southeastern United States, through his final days as professor of anthropology at the University of Georgia, he was always immersed in the humanistic approach to prehistoric anthropology. Although most widely known among American archaeologists for his theoretical and substantive contributions to the archaeology of eastern North America, he also made important contributions in Near East prehistory.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Joe spent his formative years of training in Kenmore, New York, as well as in Nice, Biarritz, and Paris, France. He entered the University of Chicago where he bypassed his Bachelor of Arts degree and was advanced to the Master's program. He conducted excavations on the Georgia coast and received his Master of Arts in 1943. Following a period of service with the Smithsonian Institution, the United States National Museum, the National Park Service, and an expedition to the Near East, he returned to the University of Chicago and was awarded his Ph.D. in 1957.

Joseph Caldwell's archaeological field exposure began during the late Depression years in Georgia. As assistant archaeologist and subsequently supervisor of W.P.A. excavations near

Savannah (1938-41), his eye and mind were sharpened through excavation as well as association with such peers as Antonio ("Tono") Waring, Preston Holder, and Frederick Hulse. Gradually, the fragments of coastal southeastern United States prehistory assumed regularity and resulted in several extremely perceptive publications as well as Joe's Master's thesis (1943).

It was in the tradition of "great books," however, that the roots of Joe's anthropological conceptions were founded. Although he had no objections to the use of the hypothetico-deductive method, formidable statistics or computers ("Indeed," he once concluded, "there is much to be said for scientific rigor . . . archeology could do with a bit more of the ways of thought so often recommended and so seldom employed. . . ." [Caldwell 1971:412]), his preoccupation with the humanistic approach is understandable when one recalls his eclectic educational background. Upon re-entering the University of Chicago in 1942, Joe Caldwell and Richard "Scottie" MacNeish as roommates became engrossed in discussions of the "Buzzard Cult." It was at this time that the "Chicago School" of anthropology was in full swing. New ideas were in the mixing pot as W.P.A. veterans returned from the field seasoned with months of excavations and field crews which sometimes numbered in the thousands. Not only were these young anthropologists armed with considerable field knowledge, but they were thinking "culture-and-continuity" rather than "migration-invasion-extinction." This became an explanatory framework around which the temporal evolution of localities, regions, and areas were studied. Functionalism was in the vogue;

Joe, along with others, was exposed to what might be thought of as the forerunner of systems theory in prehistory. With the notion that one cultural system could have led to another, Joe inspired (or perhaps instigated as "Scottie" recently intimated) his roommate to visit Mexico and dig to see if the "Buzzard Cult" was there. MacNeish never found the "Buzzardists," but later found agriculture. Thus, in part, Joe was responsible for Scottie's early interest in Mexico. While these ideas and concepts were probably viewed as blasphemy among some archaeologists, retrospection reveals that a new dimension of understanding resulted.

Having received his Master's and begun his doctoral work, Joe entered a term of professional employment. He prepared exhibits under contract to the Illinois State Museum, and became a scientific aide in the Division of Archaeology, United States National Museum (1943-45). From there, he transferred to the position of archaeologist, River Basin Survey, Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution. Under the general supervision of Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., he undertook surveys and excavations in the areas of the southeastern United States where sites were threatened by construction of hydroelectric dams. His experiences in Georgia were of special importance in the intellectual and personal growth of Joe Caldwell. Not only did his work and associations provide the basis for "Trend and Tradition," but it was in Georgia where he met and married Sheila, herself an archaeologist and daughter of A. R. Kelly. In 1953, Joe transferred from the Smithsonian Institution to the National Park Service as archaeologist and continued river basin surveys until he resigned in 1955 to return to the University of Chicago.

In the early 1950s, Joe wrote a short article entitled "On the Rim of the Oikumenne . . ." (n.d.). It was in this article that he first elaborated on Kroeber's notion of the Oikumenne, or as he later termed it, the interaction sphere. The seeds for this concept, however, had been sown early in his career. In particular, the 12 years separating his periods of formal training were filled with experiences which stimulated his drive to understand the processes of human cultures. These experiences combined with the fertile Chicago scholasticism to yield what many have viewed to be Joe's *magnum opus*: "Trend and Tradition in the Prehistory of the Eastern United States" (1958). Appearing first as his dissertation and subsequently published jointly in 1958 by the Illinois State Museum and the American Anthropological Association, the monograph was a milestone in the understanding of eastern United States prehistory. Joe reasoned that cultures should be viewed through time as unified wholes. This being the case, there must be basic identifiable factors of tradition and innovative trends arising within and between cultures which would be evident in the archaeological data. Reasoning in this fashion he was able to propose in a diagrammatic manner the ebb and flow of cultures in the eastern United States. Although subject to challenge and in need of revision, the monograph stands as a major theoretical contribution to archaeology.

Joe Caldwell's interest in the prehistory of the Near East and his training at the University of Chicago were not without causal connection. In 1948, he had been a member of the University of Chicago-University of Pennsylvania expedition to Nippur, Iraq, and Tall-i-Ghazir, Iran. There, under the direction of Donald McCown, his New World interest in cultural processes found an Old World testing ground: the rise of civilization and the development of agriculture and animal husbandry. His return to the University of Chicago thus set the stage for his continuing studies of cultural processes in both world hemispheres. Of particular significance while at Chicago was his association with the Iraq-Jarmo Project, headed by Robert Braidwood. Joe prepared portions of numerous manuscripts and a paper on ceramics from two sites of the post-Jarmo/pre-Hassuna time range. In addition, he accepted responsibility for the publication of the results of McCown's expeditions to Tall-i-Ghazir, Iran, a site he had visited in 1948.

Having completed his studies at the University of Chicago, he joined the Illinois State Museum as Head Curator of Anthropology. During his ten-year stay in Illinois, Joe organized scores of exhibits on the Indians of midwestern North America. Here, he reached new audiences and influenced many people associated with the Museum and the University of Chicago. His deep, resonant voice, his mild manner, and his ability to convey his vast knowledge of prehistory made his lectures and slide talks command performances. Notable among his many excavations were Dickson Mound and Twenhofel. He was the prime mover in persuading Illinois to acquire an additional 90 acres of the Cahokia Site, a critical area with which he and his father-in-law, A. R.

Kelly, were intimately familiar. Joe also expended considerable energy assessing the State of Illinois' nonrenewable archaeological resources and pressed for an adequate antiquities law. He participated in and chaired many local, regional, national, and international symposia and meetings. A master of grantsmanship, he was awarded numerous contracts to continue his archaeological research interests in the United States and the Near East.

In the years 1963-64, Joe Caldwell returned to Iran as Fulbright Professor of Archaeology at the University of Tehran and as professor of anthropology at the Medical School of the National University of Iran. During a reconnaissance of the "internal hilly flanks" of southern Iran, he and his wife-colleague-interpreter Sheila investigated Tall-i-Iblis, a site with a long prehistoric sequence. Sensing the import that this site might bear on the rise of civilization, he returned and excavated Tall-i-Iblis in 1966. From this research, Joe was able to demonstrate the smelting of copper ore prior to 4000 B.C. Equally important was his documentation of the well-preserved remains of a town which preceded Mesopotamian cities. His published research on Tall-i-Iblis reveals his new insights into the nature of early urbanization, domestication of plants and animals, metalurgical development, and rare contacts with Mesopotamian centers. Although his wish to return to Iran was thwarted by physical illness, he continued to publish his research on Iran until his death.

His formal teaching career began at the University of Georgia in 1967. As a thoroughly seasoned and dedicated professor of anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, he assumed teaching duties as well as directorship of the Laboratory of Archaeology. The State of Georgia, his early "stamping ground," provided a unique and nostalgic environment in which he set out to fulfill what he was unable to accomplish earlier. Joe wished to combine his vast knowledge and research interests with teaching in the hopes of equipping a younger generation with the tools sufficient to contribute to the field of professional archaeology in his own style. As an instructor, Joe provoked the minds of undergraduate and graduate students alike. Even as he opened new research frontiers in Georgia, he was able to combine his personal research and writing with his teaching. During his six years as professor of anthropology at the University of Georgia, he completed more than 24 survey, research, and excavation projects throughout the state, and had graduated three Master and two Ph.D. students.

There is a related dimension to Joseph Ralston Caldwell which we, his two Ph.D. graduates, feel charged to write about. His tenure at the University of Georgia coincided with ours, thereby providing an opportunity to view his unique personal quality which was the true measure of the man. His philosophy of living acknowledged his many debts to those who had helped him over the rough spots in his career. Joe repaid them by doing for others, a credo shared by his wife Sheila and five children. The Caldwell home was never his private castle; rather, he and Sheila shared their family life generously with students in need of shelter and refuge from the pressures of academic life.

Not once, however, did he sacrifice his professional commitments in developing student competency. For us, his expectations were at times difficult to live with. These expectations often created stimulating intellectual engagements which occurred whenever the spirit was about—and the spirit was always about. Joe did not live vicariously with the projects which we contrived, but actually became immersed in the mechanics of operation. He did these things and more in the face of intense personal frustration and sacrifice: he had suffered through seven years of heart attacks and medical complications, but continued expressing expectation, little fear, and no complaint.

Joe once stated with regard to students, "I'm piling up little grains of sand for the future." It is in this kind of statement that the profound quality of his being leaves a still visible trail of impacts upon people and events. His students, colleagues, and friends are keenly aware of his absence.

KENT A. SCHNEIDER

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