

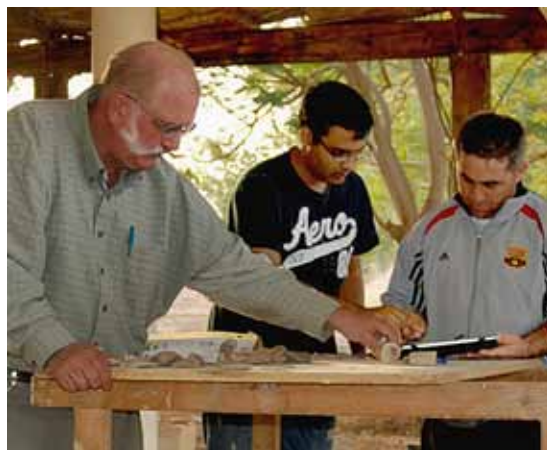
Donald Whitcomb

The summer of 2010 was taken up with **Donald Whitcomb's** second knee replacement, complicated by a large blood clot. Part of the repair of his leg involved *hirudo* therapy (leeches), which reminded him of traditional medicine in the Middle East (and gave a certain nuance to the motto "Forefront of Medicine"). Happily his recovery was sufficient to take up a variety of projects in the fall. The first was a conference at the Art Institute of Chicago in September on Arthur Upham Pope and Archaeology. This gave him the opportunity to delve into the early history of the Oriental Institute in Iran and the career of Erich Schmidt, one of his heroes and a life-long friend of A. U. Pope. Curiously, Don had met Pope in Shiraz and worked briefly for him as a Peace Corps volunteer, about a year before his death in 1969. A couple of weeks later Don joined a colloquium accompanying the Roads of Arabia exhibition at the Louvre. He presented a paper on the "Hijazi Culture in Early Islamic History"; this is an idea he had been developing for many years, that western Arabia developed a distinctive culture in the first centuries after the beginning of Islam. The idea seemed well received and the director of Antiquities in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Ali al-Ghabban, personally thanked him (but of course most of his evidence drew from al-Ghabban's brilliant field research).

By October Don was teaching Coptic and Islamic Archaeology of Egypt, a useful preparation reviving his understanding of the subject before teaching the course with the Study Abroad program in Cairo. This program was to be a series on Islamic civilization, and his course an interesting mix of two separate subjects, a general introduction to Islamic archaeology and a special focus on Egypt. The idea of teaching Fustat (old Cairo) and other sites, even his old haunt of Quseir al-Qadim on the Red Sea, filled him with pleasure.

At the same time, Don gave a paper for the docents' mini-series on Ancient Economies presenting the *suqs* of the Middle East and culminating with a new shopping mall in Jerusalem. His interest in archaeology in Israel and Palestine was renewed by the visit of Toufik Deadle, a doctoral candidate in the Hebrew University. Toufik has participated in the Tel Aviv University excavations at Khirbet Karak (also known as Beit Yarach and originally an Oriental Institute excavation under Pinhas Delougaz in the 1950s). He is responsible for remains of a *qasr* (palace) and bath of the early Islamic period and had come to see the collections in the Oriental Institute storerooms. Don had a delightful time entertaining him in Chicago, never imagining that a few months later he and his family would visit the Oriental Institute excavations at Khirbet al-Mafjar.

The climax of the year would have to be the beginning of the joint Palestinian-Chicago excavations at Khirbet al-Mafjar (Qasr Hisham). These began on December 15, with a short pause for Christmas in Bethlehem with the hospitality of Iman Saca's family. Iman joined us briefly to initiate a community archaeology program in Jericho, meeting with Hassan Saleh Hussein, the mayor, and Muhammad Hawwash, director of education for the Jericho region. The excavation team included Jihad Yasin, field director and an old friend of Don's from the Aqaba excavations



Pottery reading during the excavations at Khirbet al-Mafjar with the author, his son John, and Awni Shawarma. Recording is being done on an iPad

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some fifteen years earlier. Muhammad Ghayyada, Awni Shawamra, and Bassam Helmi participated from the Palestinian side, and Michael Jennings, Enrico Cirelli, and John Whitcomb from Chicago. Details of the season have been sketched in *Oriental Institute News & Notes* (issue 210) and extensive information is now available on our website, www.jerichomafjarproject.org.

Carefully laid plans started to unravel in the spring. First, a conference in Aqaba was canceled, though this had nothing to do with political tensions in Jordan. The turmoil in Cairo prevented the course with the Study Abroad program and the dream of teaching in that country. Rather, Don returned to Chicago in early February and was immediately invited on behalf of the National Geographic Society to participate in a conference at the University of Dhofar in Salalah, southern Oman. Don had done some survey work in Oman in 1975 and wanted to see how this research had fared over the intervening 35+ years; he was pleased and in a way disappointed that this preliminary archaeological study remained key for this region. But this was a first chance to see the great sites along the south coast of Arabia, particularly al-Baleed (now being excavated by Juris Zarins, formerly of the Oriental Institute) and Khor Ruri (an Italian excavation under Alessandra Avanzini, with Alexander Sedov, a wonderful Russian archaeologist whom Don had entertained at the Oriental Institute some years ago). There were stories of civil disturbances in the papers in Salalah, though we were not affected.

In any case, Chicago seemed very quiet and Don settled into working on the results of the Mafjar excavations. He organized a panel for the American Research Center in Egypt in April with papers by Tasha Vorderstrasse, Tanya Treptow, and Choukri Heddouchi, which was well received. This was followed by a panel for the MEHAT (Middle East History and Theory) meeting, also in Chicago, with papers by Tanya, Michael Jennings, and Kristoffer Damgaard. In this latter meeting, Don gave a short presentation on differing perceptions of Khirbet al-Mafjar/Qasr Hisham over the last eighty years. Finally, in June Fred Donner organized a conference on Umayyads in light of his theory of a Believer's movement. Don gave a talk titled "An Archaeology of Mu'awiya," a subject he had long wished to tackle and, happily, it was well received by the historians.
