

Donald Whitcomb

Donald Whitcomb devoted the summer of 1996 to Arabian studies and focused on the presentation of papers and attendance at conferences in Oxford, London, and Bamberg, Germany. The conferences in England were sponsored by ARAM, where a paper on the Darb al-Zubayda was presented and the Seminar for Arabian Studies, where a special session of the ceramics of Yemen in all periods was organized. During this visit, Don consulted with architects on the archaeological setting of a new hotel in Aqaba (see separate report). He gave a paper on the early Arabian mosque in Bamberg at the second Seminar für frühislamischer Kunst. It was during this time that his article, "Urbanism in Arabia," appeared. In the autumn, it was back to England again, first to give a paper for the Eastern Mediterranean Seminar at the University of Manchester on archaeological evidence for Islamic bath houses, and second to attend the Late Antiquity/Early Islam workshop on trade in London at the

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School of Oriental and African Studies. This was a synthetic archaeological study on "The Red Sea and the 'Commercial Crescent.'"

Back in Chicago, Don returned to his first interest in Iranian archaeology and had the great pleasure to submit an article for the *Neghaban Festschrift* on problems of Sasanian/early Islamic architecture. In February, study of Aqaba resulted in a paper to the College Art Association on "Nabataean Continuities in Early Islamic Aqaba: Art or Archaeology?"

After a long-standing engagement, the exhibit in the Oriental Institute Museum on "Ayla, Art and Industry in the Islamic Port of Aqaba" finally closed. The entire exhibit with its mounts was then packed and sent to the Department of Antiquities in Jordan. There it will be displayed in Amman and eventually will be added to the museum in Aqaba; this museum has grown both popular and full of objects; a new, larger museum is planned for the city. Don carried a number of more valuable Aqaba artifacts to the Amman museum in March. He then went to Aqaba and planned the 1997 season of excavations with Sausan al-Fakhri, meeting with Muhammad Balqar of the Royal Yacht Club and Muzahim Muheisen, director of the Aqaba Region Authority (see separate report). This excavation was left in Sausan's capable hands while Don spent the next 18 days leading the Oriental Institute tour of lower Egypt, Sinai, and Jordan, having the strange experience of visiting his own excavations in progress. After the tour, the excavations were brought to a very successful conclusion.

Don returned to Chicago just in time to travel to Ann Arbor for the American Research Center in Egypt meetings, where he presented a paper on the Ottoman fort at Quseir on the Red Sea. Then in April he gave the closing address to the symposium celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Archaeological Institute of America society in St. Louis. During this year, Don taught courses on the Introduction to Islamic Archaeology and Egypt after the Pharaohs, and the archaeology of Coptic and Islamic Egypt.
