



# CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN

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of The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago



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## THE CHICAGO HOUSE SEASON OCTOBER 2002 TO APRIL 2003: A MONTHLY DIARY

By *W. Raymond Johnson, Field Director*

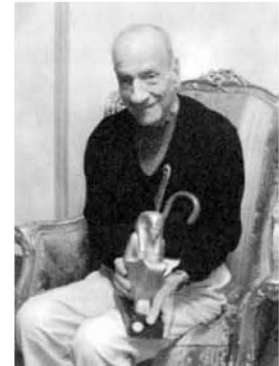
### OCTOBER

Despite events in Iraq, I am pleased to report that the Epigraphic Survey was able to keep to its normal schedule of field work, and on October 15, 2002, Chicago House opened for its seventy-ninth, six-month field season in Luxor. Artist/Egyptologist Tina Di Cerbo came several weeks early to open up and clean the house, as she does each year.

After arriving in Cairo, I met with new Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Secretary General Dr. Zahi Hawass and Sabry Abdel Azziz, General Director of Antiquities in Upper and Lower Egypt, at SCA headquarters in Abbasiya, after which I signed the contract for the 2002/2003 field season. Before I left for Luxor I also met with US Ambassador David Welch at the US Embassy; our friends at the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), including Acting Director Professor Irene Bierman (UCLA), Assistant Director Amira Khat-

tab, and Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) Director Chip Vincent; the President of BP Egypt, our long-time corporate supporter, Hesham Mekawi; and our friends at the Egyptian Museum, Director Dr. Mahmoud Damati and May Trad.

In Cairo I had an excellent visit with Dr. Henri Riad and his family in Heliopolis. Henri is better than he was last season, but sadly he is still too fragile to join us this year. Henri will be honored at the Museum Centennial celebration, scheduled for December, as the oldest living former Director of the Egyptian Museum.



**Dr. Henri Riad with  
Centennial Award**

There have been some unexpected changes. Over the summer the SCA published new guidelines for archaeological work in Egypt, and there are several new rules governing SCA inspectors (the designated SCA representatives who work with us at antiquities sites). Now inspectors are to be paid a "transportation and overtime" fee of LE1,500 a month (about \$300), which means we have an unexpected and hefty addition to our budget to the tune of LE18,000 for a six-month season for inspectors at Medinet Habu and Luxor Temple.

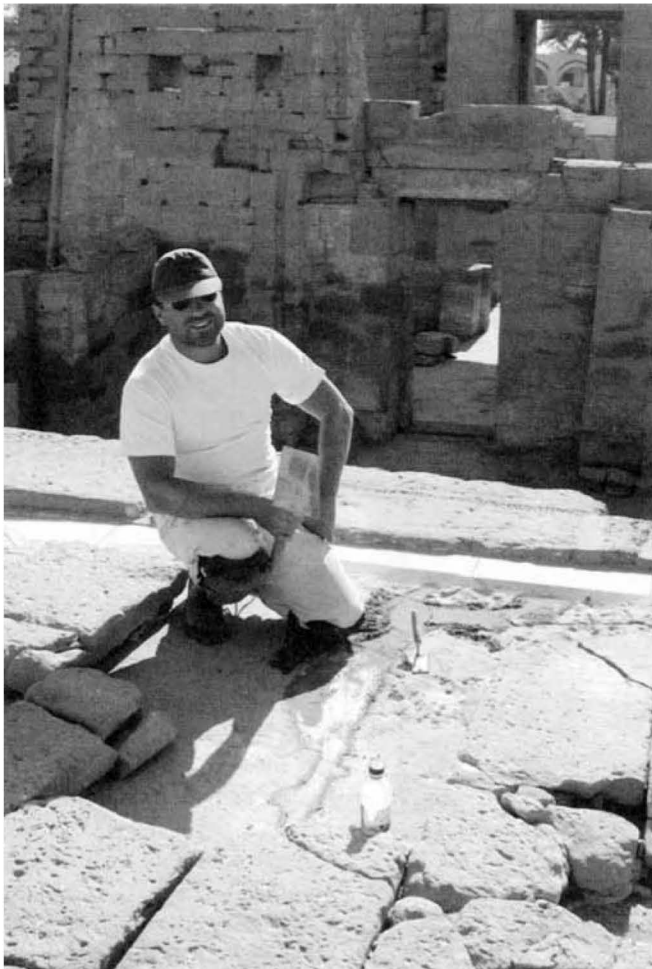
This season marked the seventh year of an EAP/USAID grant approved by the SCA and administered through ARCE for documentation and conservation of the small Amun temple



**2002/2003 Chicago House Staff. Photograph by Yarko Kobylecky and Sue Lezon**

## OCTOBER 2002

at Medinet Habu. We reopened the small Amun temple on October 21 and found it dry as a bone (no scorpions this year) and just the way we left it. Epigraphers Brett McClain and Randy Shonkwiler immediately resumed their collation of the bark sanctuary and ambulatory reliefs, and artists Margaret De Jong and Tina Di Cerbo resumed their drawing and collation checking. Conservators Lotfi Hassan, Adel Azziz, and Nahed Samir have resumed the cleaning of the painted reliefs in the first chamber, and are now working on the east wall around the central doorway. They will be joined by conservator Lamia Hadidi in November, fresh from the ARCE field school in the Fayum. Lamia will work with us until mid-January, and then again in March to speed up the cleaning process. Staff photographer Yarko Kobylecky and photographer/photo archivist Sue Lezon started taking pre-cleaning reference photographs of the back central sanctuary, the next room to be cleaned according to our cleaning schedule. Sue is also supervising the final phase of our Photo Archives large-format negative scanning with the Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak. Stone cutter Dany Roy is putting the finishing touches on the roof restoration work over the bark sanctuary ambulatory, designed to direct rainwater off the roof on the north side. During our first week back at work we hosted on-site briefings for Irene Bierman, accompanied by Chip Vincent, Jarek Dobrolowski, and Michael Jones.



**Dany Roy on the roof of the small Amun temple**

This was the final season of the SCA approved grant from the EAP, administered through ARCE, for the protection and consolidation of deteriorating decorated sandstone wall fragments at Luxor Temple. On October 22 engineer and blockyard assistant Jamie Riley and our workmen resumed moving decorated sandstone wall fragments off the ground onto damp-coursed brick platforms built last year, a project funded by a Robert Wilson Challenge Grant and the World Monuments Fund. We are presently working in the area east



**Adel Azziz cleaning wall reliefs, small Amun temple**

of the Colonnade Hall and south of the Abul Haggag mosque, where thousands of Akhenaten-period *talatat*, Colonnade Hall, Ramesses II, Ptolemaic, and medieval fragments are stacked on the ground. Our routine calls for me to mark each fragment with its platform number, designated by category, after which Jamie and his team of workmen see to its proper placement, with all fragments carefully stacked so that the decorated surface is exposed for study and documentation. During the first few weeks we created enough space for two more long mastaba platforms which we will begin constructing later this month. Yarko took reference photographs of all of the Colonnade Hall column and wall bases, as he does each season, to document the decay, and he expanded his scope this year to include the exterior of the Colonnade Hall and parts of the Ramesses II court which are also showing increased decay.

Due to the changing seasons, we had a freak sandstorm October 27, followed by a light shower that evening, and a heavy rain the next morning. We were pleased to note that we had NO leaks in the Medinet Habu small Amun temple roof, which means that our restoration work was 100% effective. But the moisture has activated a LOT of corrosive salt at Luxor Temple. A single rainstorm can age a monument centuries in a few hours, and is a painful reminder of just how important our preservation work (and all such work) is at this time.

There are LOTS of tourists in town, including Americans, and we have already had several small groups come by for library briefings, kindly given by Emily Napolitano. On October 16 Lanny Bell paid us a visit with our friend Mamdou El-Sebai, and he returned later to arrange the resump-

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tion of documentation work in the Ramesside tombs at D'ra Abu El-Naga in collaboration with Jan Assmann and Karl Siefried -- really excellent news. There are numerous expeditions in town, most of whom joined us on October 31 to celebrate Halloween and the beginning of our field season.

There have been some sad transitions in Luxor. On our return we learned that our well-loved former *safragi* Shafei and dear second cook Abdel Zaher, long retired, had both passed away, Shafei only a few weeks before the beginning of the season and Abdel Zaher a bit earlier. That's a large slice of Epigraphic Survey history now past, as both were venerable institutions unto themselves who had given loyal service to Chicago House for over 30 years, from the time of the directors Hughes and Nims. Shafei will forever be remembered for his calm dignity and deadpan expression which could occasionally be coaxed into a mischievous smile, and Abdel Zaher's spirited and heartfelt benedictions while presenting the turkeys at Thanksgiving and Christmas are the stuff of legend. Now their children and even grandchildren work for us, continuing the long tradition. But no one can ever replace those two. Shafei and Abdel Zaher were two in a million, and will be greatly missed.

### NOVEMBER

During the first week of November Lamia Hadidi joined the Medinet Habu small Amun temple conservation team, and she will be with us until the end of January. Her added expertise has allowed the cleaning and gap-filling of the two central sanctuaries to proceed as scheduled this season, and she has been a most pleasant addition to the house. Last week the conservation crew finished the wall-cleaning in the first chamber, which houses the granodiorite dyad of Thutmosis III and Amun. This achievement marks a major milestone in our project, as this room is the largest in the sanctuary, with the highest ceiling and the largest scenes. The formerly dark, soot-stained walls are now filled with light and color, and the great dyad seems to be suspended in the middle of the room. The artists and epigraphers are now proceeding with the final paint collation of that room, plotting all of the new painted details on the drawings for volume 1 of our small Amun temple series.



**Luxor Temple blockyard crew**

On November 15 Helen and Jean Jacquet returned to Chicago House, and Helen immediately started working with Emily in the office and Tom Urban (via email to the Oriental Institute) on final corrections and refinements for her book *Graffiti from the Khonsu Temple Roof at Karnak: A Manifestation of Personal Piety, Khonsu Temple III*.

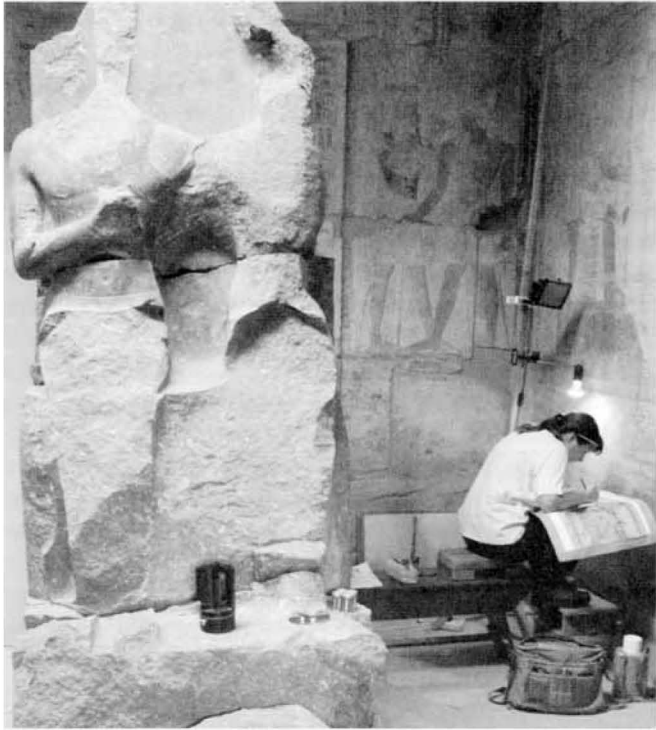
The Islamic holy month of Ramadan began on November 6. Despite the all-day fasting of the majority of our local staff during that month, our remarkable temple crew, at their insistence, continued to work their usual afternoon hours, which allowed us to keep to our normal work schedule of 7:30am until 4:00pm. On November 13 Chicago House hosted a "sunset breakfast" *iftar* for our SCA friends and colleagues and heads of foreign missions in Luxor, which was well attended and very well received. On November 23 we gave our staff an *iftar* by way of thanks for their hard work.

The day before Ramadan began I had the pleasure of briefing Anthony Vance and party, of USAID Egypt, on the activities of the Oriental Institute in Luxor and showing them the Chicago House facility. I also had the opportunity to discuss groundwater issues with the party on-site at Luxor Temple, and to show them firsthand the destructive effects of the high, salt-laden groundwater on the sandstone monuments. The need for USAID to support groundwater lowering measures in the Luxor area is great, and is now under consideration by the Egyptian government and USAID.

### DECEMBER

Brett and Randy have been continuing the collation of the small Amun temple bark sanctuary drawings, and Marg-

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**Tina Di Cerbo copying graffiti, small Amun temple**

aret and Susan are penciling the walls of the inner bark sanctuary and adding collation transfers, all for volume 2 of our small Amun temple series.

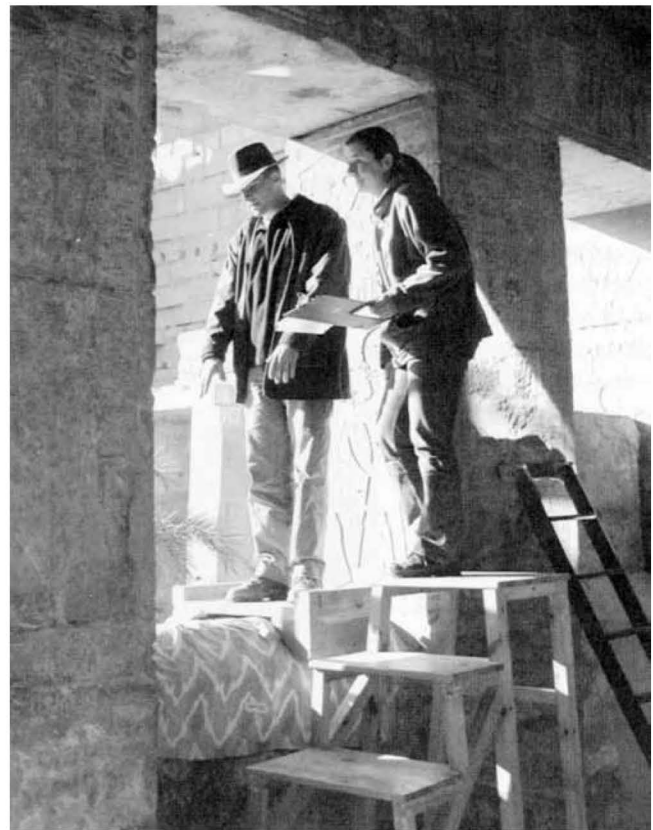
We were joined by new epigrapher and librarian Jen Kimpton the first week of December. Jen is a student at Johns Hopkins University who has worked in Luxor with Betsy Bryan in previous seasons, and it is a great pleasure to have her as part of the team. In addition to her epigraphic recording duties, Jen supervises the Chicago House library Monday through Thursday in the afternoons, and all day on Fridays.

Tina has been compiling a database of all the known graffiti in the Medinet Habu precinct, including over 1,450 individual entries with negative numbers, locations, and descriptions. This was a process begun by the Epigraphic Survey more than seventy years ago but never completed. William Edgerton's publication, *Medinet Habu Graffiti Facsimiles* (OIP 36: Chicago, 1937), and Heinz Thissen's *Die demotischen Graffiti von Medinet Habu: Zeugnisse zu Tempel und Kult im Ptolemäischen Ägypten* (Demotische Studien 10: Sommerhausen, 1989) present a very small sample of this material, although luckily much more was actually photographed in the past than was published. Tina is matching graffiti to photographs, identifying new ones, plotting the locations on key plans, and continuing the facsimile documentation of the material for eventual publication. In addition, Tina is compiling another illustrated database for use as a paleographical reference by the artists and epigraphers based on scanned finished drawings for volumes 1 and 2 of the small Amun temple. The electronic paleography includes hieroglyphic signs (arranged by Gardiner number), examples of cartouches, human and divine figures, and iconographic elements printed out for use by the artists and epigraphers on-site.

On December 11 Peter Dorman joined us for a week to review the wall reliefs and drawings of the sanctuary area and to continue the planning of volume 1. Daughter Margaret Dorman, who spent her formative years growing up at Chicago House while her father was field director, is now with us helping Jen in the library and Sue in the Photo Archives until the end of this month.

Sue continued supervising the scanning of the Photo Archives large and small format negative archive onto CD-ROM at Karnak and adding of same to our new database, despite unfortunately fracturing her foot in December. The cast came off during the holidays, and at the end of December she returned to the US to have her foot checked, and took back fifty more backup CDs (over 2000 images). Sue has also been working with Lotfi on scanning drawings for his Medinet Habu conservation reporting, and with Tina on the scanning necessary for her graffiti and paleography databases. I should also mention that Oriental Institute finance manager Simrit Dhesi spent a very productive week with us over Thanksgiving, setting up the final procedures with Chicago House finance manager Safinaz Ouri for financial reporting directly to the University.

The Medinet Habu conservators have now turned their attention to the back central chamber, but not before Dany stabilized one of the roof blocks with four fiberglass dowels epoxied into place. Dany is also in the final phase of the roof restoration work over the bark sanctuary and ambulatory.



**Brett McClain and Jen Kimpton, small Amun temple**

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The new stone slabs are all in place, and the final grouting is about half complete. Two new rainspouts are presently being manufactured for runoff water on the south and north sides of the complex. Lotfi also started the cleaning of the red-paint Ptolemaic inscription on the facade of the granite *naos* which we will draw and collate for volume 1.

At Luxor Temple, Jamie and I have continued to supervise our workmen in moving the decorated wall-fragment material off the ground. This season we have made excellent progress, and I am pleased to report that we are ahead of schedule, which will allow even more material to be preserved this season. At present two-thirds of the block fragments and Akhenaten *talatat* blocks in the area east of the Colonnade Hall are now off the wet ground and have been re-stacked on our new damp-coursed storage platforms, with two more long platforms planned. So far more than a hundred meters of new platforms have been constructed in the area east and south of the Abul Hag-gag mosque this season, and another hundred meters are being built to the west of the temple by the Roman gates. Additional platforms have been started at the southern end of the precinct on the east side to house large, intact blocks of Amenhotep III quarried by the Romans from the sanctuary area.



**Reconstructed fragments in the Luxor Temple blockyard**

While separating and storing fragments by category this season, I have identified, isolated, and physically joined several large groups of portal fragments dating from the 25th Dynasty and Ptolemaic Periods in our central blockyard, east of the Amenhotep III sun court, for documentation and analysis. Yarko has been photographing these groups during the last few weeks, and we are currently planning the databases which will track each piece from each major grouping. The material is quite tantalizing; in one group from the 25th Dynasty, a lion-headed goddess extends life to the beak of a Horus falcon perched atop a king's erased serekh. Another group reconstructs to form the interior thickness of a very large portal decorated with row upon row of amuletic hieroglyphs, blank cartouches flanked by cobras, and cryptographic figures. Indications are that the portals were all quarried from southern Karnak, like the Akhenaten *talatat* (from the southern pylons), possibly from the vicinity of Mut Temple. Further analysis will undoubtedly shed more light on the exact origins of this exciting new material. Much of the fragmentary wall material in the Luxor Temple blockyard was quar-

ried from Luxor Temple itself, and many groups from all sections of the temple can be reassembled and eventually put back on the temple walls, restoring beautiful, long-vanished wall scenes and architectural details. There is tremendous potential for the material from Karnak eventually to be returned to its original site, once it has been documented, analyzed, and reassembled in the Luxor Temple blockyard. An illustrated article on the Luxor Temple wall fragment project, co-authored by field conservator Hiroko Kariya and me, will appear in the next Egypt Exploration Society *Egyptian Archaeology Bulletin* (no. 22).

During the last three seasons Chicago House has sponsored a study of the structural stability of the Luxor Temple monument in light of changed environmental conditions which

are adversely affecting the ancient monuments all over Egypt. The steady rise of salt-laden groundwater is a particular problem. This study has been generously supported for the last two seasons by our Robert Wilson matching grant and the World Monuments Fund (WMF). From December 3-12, structural engineer Conor Power continued his monitoring of the temple structure. He reported to us that no additional cracks have opened up during the last year, nor has there been any discernible movement in

the pylons recorded in the two crack monitors ("calibrated tell-tales") we placed last season on the south wall of the East Pylon and on its upper west side door opening.

This season Chicago House instituted a recycling program, something I have been wanting to do for a while. Plastic bottles, glass, and aluminum cans are now all saved, cleaned, and kept in marked bins in the back room of the kitchen. To my surprise, not only is it successful (both local and professional staff have been very conscientious), we are making a bit of money as well; we have found local buyers for the material and have made LE354 this season so far! I am trying to convince some of the local hotels to think about implementing a similar program, since their waste is far, far greater than ours.

## JANUARY

On January 2, US Ambassador to Egypt, the Honorable David Welch, and his family paid us their first visit, during which we were able to show them our work at Luxor Temple and Medinet Habu, discuss preservation issues, and host them

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to a dinner and library briefing at Chicago House. Two days before that, on New Year's Eve, the US Consul-General to Egypt, Ann Syrett, and her husband Tony joined us in ushering in the New Year 2003, and Vice-Consul Robert H. Arbuckle and some Embassy colleagues came by earlier that day. While the Ambassador's party was with us their security staff reviewed our security procedures, including our emergency evacuation plan, and found everything in order. They were particularly happy to see us raising the height of our southern enclosure wall, a project in the final stages of construction.

Epigrapher Harold Hays returned in January and resumed his work at Medinet Habu in the bark sanctuary ambulatory, as did artist Will Schenck who resumed his penciling of the 18th Dynasty temple facade. The conservators moved out of the first sanctuary chamber, and the artists and epigraphers moved in for the final paint collation. This has now been completed and I am currently reviewing each drawing enlargement at the wall, checking the new painted details and making sure the overall drawing "reads" properly, with all information accounted for and comprehensible. Once I am finished, Yarko and Sue, assisted by recently returned Ellie Smith, will do the final large-format photography in both color transparency and black and white for the first volume in the small Amun temple series.

The conservation team is now cleaning and infilling the back central sanctuary. Lamia finished her work with us on January 25 and headed south to work with our friend and colleague Vivian Davies in Edfu. Dany laid sandstone patch stones at the base of the north interior wall of the front central sanctuary where the wall had decayed at floor level. He also continued the grouting of the roof blocks and placed two new rainspouts on the south and north sides of the bark sanctuary ambulatory. He and I planned the new skylight in the central sanctuary, and the new door leading into the sanctuary, both of which will be constructed of scratch-proof, one centimeter-thick plexiglass in aluminum and steel framing. Dany has also been preparing a new sandstone base for the granite false door of Thutmosis III now propped against the



**Reconstructed scene fragments**

west interior wall of the Roman court. Originally from Thutmosis III's mortuary temple, this huge slab of red granite was re-used by the Ptolemies as the threshold for their great pylon, and was found there facedown and intact. It was placed in the Roman court on a brick platform, where the porous bricks have acted as a conduit for salt-laden groundwater, which has percolated up into the base of the granite slab and stained it. Our new damp-coursed base will put a



**Conservators Lotfi Hassan and Nahed Samir, Medinet Habu**

stop to that percolation, and we will also clean the slab by poulticing to remove the salts already in the stone.

This month friend and colleague Hourig Sourouzian and her assistant Christian Perzlmeir started an inventory of one of the Medinet Habu main temple storerooms which is under our jurisdiction. This particular storeroom appears to have been utilized by the SCA as a storage magazine for miscellaneous items from excavations all over the West Bank, from at least the 1960s. The bottom layer of the material turned out to be primarily large, hard-stone sculpture fragments (Sekh-mets and miscellaneous deities) excavated at Amenhotep III's mortuary temple by the SCA and the Swiss Institute in 1965 and partly published by the Swiss in BABA 11 (1981). This material is of great interest to Hourig, as she and husband Rainer Stadelmann have recently resumed excavating that great complex, and have built a magazine for the storage and analysis of all of the material excavated at that site, past and present; when I notified her about the material last season she was thrilled. Next season we hope to transfer the Amenhotep III fragments to her magazine, which will free up space and allow us to finish the inventory of remains there.

At Luxor Temple Yarko, now assisted by Ellie, continued the large-format photography of the newly joined Ptolemaic fragment groups. Carpenter Shayib finished the construction of a special reinforced table and sandbox setup for the photography of individual, unjoined blocks. Yarko will utilize the table this month when he begins the photography of

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the Thutmosis III wall and portal fragments we have identified. Jamie and I continued to supervise the moving of wall fragments and blocks off the wet ground east of the Colonnade Hall (mostly Akhenaten *talatat*) and west of the Ramesses II sun court by the Roman gateway. Forty more meters of damp-coursed platforms are presently being built in the west area. I am pleased to report that the mastaba construction of the area east of the Colonnade Hall is now finished. This month all of the material currently on the ground in both areas will be moved up onto the new platforms, with two 7-meter, covered "hospital" mastabas in the east area designated for decaying fragments which require treatment.

There is much activity at Luxor Temple these days as the area east of the precinct is cleaned in preparation for extending the Luxor Temple precinct into the garden area. The narrow road running along the outside of the eastern enclosure wall has been removed and the southern end is currently being excavated by the SCA. The idea is to excavate now before any groundwater lowering measures are implemented in that area. Stone foundations have already been uncovered with reused material that appears to have been quarried from the southern wall of the Luxor Temple sanctuary. Once the foundations have been documented, mapped, and conserved by the SCA, they will be removed, and any reused wall fragments will be turned over to the Epigraphic Survey for proper storage by category in the blockyard.

On January 18 SCA Chairman Zahi Hawass came to Luxor to preside over the first meeting of the Valley of the Kings

Committee, which will meet monthly to discuss archaeological work, dewatering measures, and the like, for the Valley. Most of the mission directors who were in town at that time participated. We discussed future work, flood control, and site management of the KV area. A subcommittee was set up, made up solely of expedition heads working in the Valley, to make further recommendations. The meeting evolved into a round table discussion of plans for all of Luxor, including the Luxor Temple work. There are plans afoot to open a new entrance to Luxor Temple from the north, so that visitors will approach the temple along the sacred sphinx avenue (the stone road will be protected by a wooden walkway). The eastern gate will be the official exit for everyone, and the present Corniche entrance on the west will be closed.

Visitors to Chicago House this past month included two US Congressional Staff Delegations, whom I squirmed around Luxor and showed our work and facility. We also had several visitors from Chicago House past: Beatrice Parker and Clara Semple. Beatrice, daughter of former Epigraphic Survey epigrapher and director Richard Parker, brought her son Tom to Luxor. She is one of those individuals who remembers everything that ever happened to her, and was a delight to talk to (especially keen were her reminiscences of "Doc" Nelson, our first director, who used to entertain the staff children with limericks he made up on the spot). Clara is a former Epigraphic Survey artist, and it was nice to see her again. Oriental Institute Museum's David Nasgowitz and his family also paid us a visit. Meg Dorman finished her month with us on January



**Yarko Kobylecky and Ellie Smith photographing fragments in the Luxor Temple blockyard**

## FEBRUARY 2003

27; it was wonderful having her back with us, and we appreciate very much all the work she did while she was here.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Robert and Linda Braidwood. Along with the rest of the Oriental Institute family, we are greatly diminished by this loss, and send our sincerest condolences to the family. That remarkable couple will be sorely missed, but will continue to be an inspiration to us all.

### FEBRUARY

At Medinet Habu the epigraphic team has been continuing the drawing and collating of the reliefs in the Thutmose III bark sanctuary and ambulatory. Margaret and Sue are working inside the bark sanctuary on the Ptolemaic-renewed Thutmose reliefs. Brett, Harold, and Randy are working on the exterior walls of the bark sanctuary and pillars, while Jen is being trained by Brett in the ambulatory facade. I have finished Director's Checks on the paint collations slated for volume 1 of the first painted chamber with Brett, Sue, and Margaret. I also finished Director's Checks on six of Sue's bark sanctuary pillar drawings, and two of Margaret's, which will be published in volume 2, with more to come. The conservation team has been working in the back central sanctuary with excellent results, and they have finished cleaning and infilling two walls and part of a third. Very shortly the art team will move in to add newly exposed painted details to the drawings of the two finished walls of that chamber.

Tina has just completed the first version of her groundbreaking, digitally scanned paleography and iconography file of the small Amun temple drawings, something that we will constantly be building on and adding to as drawings are cleared for publication. She has also continued work on her

illustrated database of the Medinet Habu graffiti, from both the main temple and the small Amun temple.

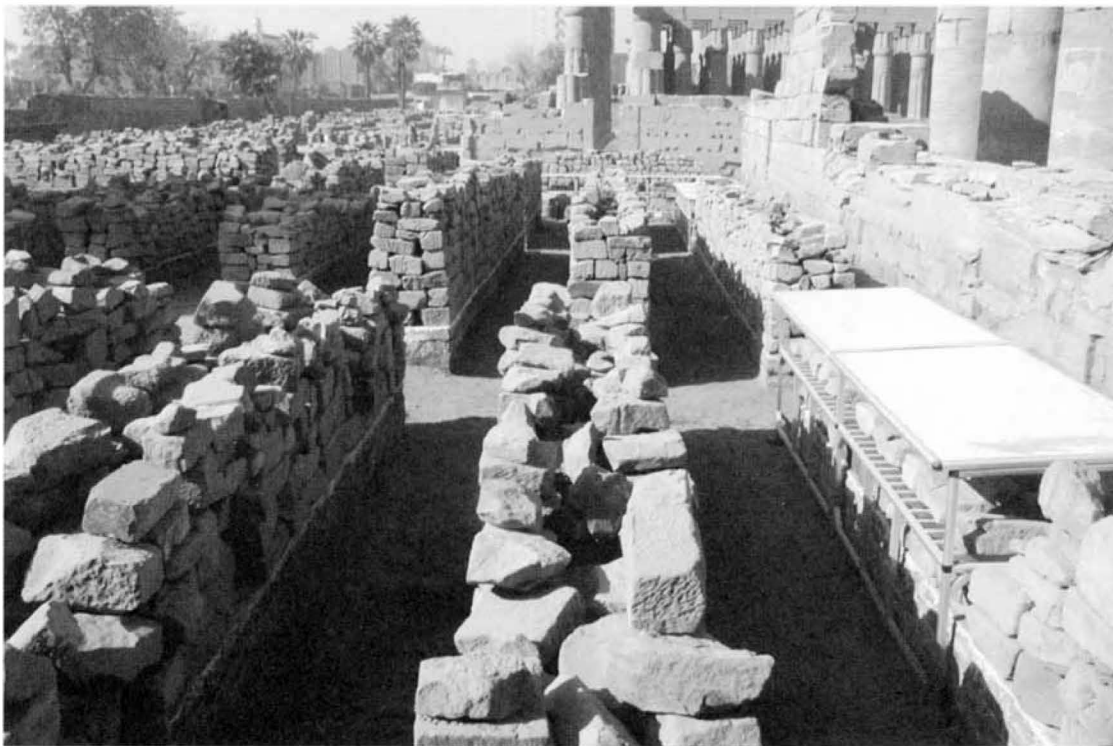
Will, assisted by Emily, has made foil rubbings of a facade pillar partly hidden by a later Ptolemaic wall, and a roof block over the bark sanctuary ambulatory which appears to be a reused architrave from Amenhotep III's mortuary temple. Both areas feature carved decoration partially hidden by stone blocks which can only be recorded by intrepid, thin-wristed individuals who carefully reach into the space available and rub aluminum foil over the relief to get an impression of the carving. This can then be outlined with an indelible marker, traced, reduced, and integrated with the rest of the drawing.

Dany laid the last two sandstone floor slabs in the front central chamber, which now finishes the new flooring in that chamber. Last week we stopped our work on the new, damp-coursed sandstone base for the colossal Thutmose III red-granite false door pending its possible selection as one of the objects for the new Luxor Museum extension. The theme of this extension is "Egyptian Empire and War," and an SCA commission is reviewing the false door as a possible highlight of the exhibition. This move would be excellent, offering a unique monument the added long-term protection of an enclosed environment.

We have made remarkable progress in the Luxor Temple blockyard this season. Thanks to Jamie and our extraordinary workmen we finished the eastern area in February, two months ahead of schedule. But we made a sad discovery when we moved the last Akhenaten *talatat* block row in the east area, piled against the outer east wall of the Colonnade Hall: another lower layer of Akhenaten blocks runs the entire length of the hall (almost 200 feet), all decorated, but completely buried and totally saturated with salt-laden groundwater. Some

of the blocks have already turned into sand, while the rest -- and there are over a hundred and thirty of them -- require eventual placement on treatment platforms.

To augment the protective storage program, I designed and had constructed 80 meters of covered aluminum framing units for the treatment and "hospital" mastabas in the eastern storage area. All of the frames are topped with rainproof fiberglass roofing, and some of the



**Luxor Temple eastern blockyard, with covered "hospital mastabas" on the right**



## FEBRUARY/MARCH 2003



**Margaret De Jong and Harold Hays checking paint collations, Medinet Habu small Amun temple**

units were designed with a second level of shelving which effectively doubles the amount of stored deteriorating wall fragments. To further protect the fragments from the elements canvas screening is being installed on all sides, bolted into place along the top of the frame and tied at the bottom. Slit sides allow for ease of access during treatment but can be tied closed. These will take care of much of the material requiring treatment, but, on the advice of Hiroko, we will photograph the new *talatat* blocks and then rebury them, for the time being, with the original soil which covered them. This will restore the balance of salt in the stone and will stop the movement of that salt, until we have an expanded consolidation program which can handle their treatment. It's frustrating... and sad. But all of the fragmentary wall material would end up this way if we weren't doing what we are doing now. Yarko, Sue, and Ellie will also finish the photography of the newly joined fragment groups this week, and will begin the reference photography of the Thutmosis III wall fragments shortly thereafter.

We had a quiet but busy *Eid Al-Adha/Bairam* holiday February 10-12. On February 13 we had a

WMF review by the Director of Archaeological Conservation Gaetano Palumbo at Luxor Temple, and an ARCE/EAP review at the Medinet Habu small Amun temple on the 27th. On February 21 we hosted a reception and library briefing at Chicago House for a large group made up of several Middle Eastern chapters of the Young Presidents Organization hosted by the Cairo chapter. Emily and I attended a gala dinner hosted by the group in the Amenhotep III sun court at Luxor Temple the next night (drinks reception at 10:00pm, dinner at midnight!), with Zahi Hawass as guest speaker. We sat at his table, along with friend and colleague Betsy Bryan, and were attended by waiters dressed in golden nemes headdresses and kilts. It was an experience!

I also gave an on-site briefing of our Luxor Temple blockyard preservation work to an SCA/Ministry of Culture commission planning the redevelopment of the Luxor Temple precinct. Initial plans called for the wholesale removal of the entire eastern blockyard treatment and storage area, but after my briefing that plan was completely reworked, with more discussions pending.

### MARCH

Despite the ongoing siege of Iraq it remains peaceful here in Luxor, security is excellent, and the overall atmosphere is that of resignation and hope for the best and a swift end to hostilities. Because of Iraq the planned visit of WT-TW's Len Aronson for filming was postponed until next fall, and Conservator Hiroko postponed her visit as well. Other than that, we continued our normal work routine and made great progress on all fronts. The locals have been incredibly supportive of our work, and as helpful as they can be.

At Medinet Habu, the epigraphic and conservation teams are wrapping things up at the small Amun temple, which we will close on April 12 for the summer. This involves moving our equipment out of the temple, cleaning, and closing up the back sanctuaries, the two doors of which are padlocked, sealed by the inspector with SCA lead seals, and blocked up with stones. At the moment the conservators have



**Reconstructed fragments of portal goddesses**

**MARCH/APRIL 2003****Reconstructed fragments of lunar cat**

finished the cleaning of the reliefs in the two central sanctuaries, front and back, and the photographers are taking the final publication photographs (in black and white and color transparency) in the back sanctuary for volume 1. I will be reviewing the paint collations in that chamber with Brett and Margaret. By April 11 everyone will have finished up their work and packed up the equipment and supplies for transport back to Chicago House, along with the ladders and scaffolding, after closing on the 12th. Dany closed his operation on the roof, successfully finishing the roof sealing of the entire 18th Dynasty temple including installation of new conduits and channels for directing rainwater off the roof.

At Luxor Temple I continued to coordinate the stacking of sandstone wall fragments onto damp-coursed mastaba platforms with our workmen after Jamie's departure on March 21. The last of the platforms for this season was finished in March in the area of the northwestern Roman gateway. Nine mastabas totaling 90 meters were constructed and are now filled with material dating from every building period of Luxor Temple, as well as from Karnak, roughly sorted by category, and we will finish the stacking for the season on April 10. Thanks to our workmen and Jamie, we have kept to our ambitious goal of getting the bulk of the wall fragments at Luxor Temple up off the ground onto protected platforms by the end of this season, a major milestone in the preservation of this priceless material.

This past month saw another chapter in the history of Chicago House come to a quiet close with the death of our beloved Chief Engineer, 'Bash Mohandis' Saleh Shahat Soliman, who was 86. Hired full time by Kent Weeks in the

**Saleh Shahat Soliman**

mid-1970s, Saleh was one of those brilliant mechanics which every expedition in the field needs and longs for. He could fix anything and was called upon to do so often in a facility as large and complex as this one. He kept Chicago House maintained and running smoothly for more than 30 years and was a surrogate "papa" to many of us over the years. We will miss him terribly.

**APRIL**

The 2002/2003 season was an extraordinarily productive one, and noteworthy for a number of milestones in our field work. In all, 39 new drawings were penciled at the wall, 17 drawings were paint collated, 11 new drawings were inked, 11 drawings were collated, and Director's Checks were completed on 20 drawings, all for the publication of volume 1 in the small Amun temple series. Also for volume 1, pre- and post-conservation photographs were taken of the sanctuary walls in the two central sanctuaries. The cleaning of the painted reliefs in both these rooms was completed by the conservators. In addition, a small sandstone fragment preserving the king's hand grasping ankh signs was re-affixed to its original position on the west wall of the front sanctuary, and its details added to the facsimile drawing.

The restoration and stabilization of the sanctuary roof was completed. In all, 35 new sandstone slabs were laid over the bark sanctuary this season, and 16 original sandstone blocks were dismantled and reinstalled. Three new stainless steel drainspouts which now direct rainwater off the roof were installed, two new floor blocks were laid, and a sandstone threshold slab for the new entryway to the sanctuary area with an emplacement for the new doorway (to be installed next season) was carved.

At Luxor Temple, 216 meters of damp-coursed storage and treatment mastabas were constructed on the east side, nine new mastaba platforms were constructed on the west side, and 6,311 decorated wall fragments (as well as thousands of uninscribed blocks) were raised from the ground and saved from the destructive action of the salt-laden groundwater. At the south end of the precinct an 11-meter platform was constructed for the large Amenhotep III blocks now on the ground. In addition, 80 meters of fiberglass-covered aluminum framing were installed over selected wall fragment treatment and storage platforms in the eastern blockyard areas for additional protection of deteriorating wall fragments. Almost a thousand decaying fragments are now housed on these protected "hospital" platforms and await future consolidation.

And last but definitely not least, I am very pleased to announce a major milestone in the digital duplication and backup program of the Chicago House Photo Archives. The digital scanning of all of the large format negatives in our Luxor archive (17,099 of them) was finished in April, resulting in 242 CDs which are now back in the US (another set remains in Luxor). These CDs, a digital duplicate of the Chicago House archive, will be transferred to Chicago in batches this summer and permanently housed in the Oriental Institute Museum Archives. In these uncertain times, this new

## APRIL 2003

technology has allowed us the assurance that priceless and unique information formerly accessible only in Luxor is now also available in the US. The scanned images and database will now allow the Oriental Institute Museum Archives to assess exactly what negatives are solely to be found in Luxor, and what are in Chicago. Our long-term, ultimate goal is to make sure that hard copy duplicates of all of the negatives in Luxor are also in Chicago. In addition, 430 CDs of our 35mm archive are also back in the US and will be transferred to Chicago once they have been checked and added to the new Chicago House 35mm database. The scanning of that part of the archive is still incomplete and will continue next season.

The professional staff this season, besides the field director, consisted of J. Brett McClain, Harold Hays, and Randy Shonkwiler as epigraphers; Jen Kimpton as epigrapher and librarian; Christina Di Cerbo, Margaret De Jong, Susan Osgood, and Will Schenck as artists; Yarko Kobylecky as staff photographer; Susan Lezon as photo archivist; Emily Napolitano as assistant to the director and office manager; Jill Carlotta Maher as assistant to the director; Safinaz Ouri as finance manager; Marlin Sarwat Nassim as accountant; Elinor Smith and Margaret Dorman as assistants for the photo archives and library; Jamie Riley as assistant to the blockyard and engineer; and Saleh Shahat Soliman and Girgis Samwell as chief engineers. Lotfi Hassan, Adel Azziz Andraws, Nahed Samir, and Lamia Hadidi worked with us as conservators; Dany

Roy as stone cutter; and Conor Power, P.E., as structural engineer consultant. Special thanks to Dr. Henri Riad and to dear friends Helen and Jean Jacquet. To our partners in preservation, the Supreme Council of Antiquities, we owe a great debt of thanks: especially to Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General; Dr. Sabry Abdel Azziz, General Director of Antiquities in Upper and Lower Egypt; Dr. Holeil Ghaly and Dr. Mohamed El-Bialy, Luxor General Directors, respectively; Dr. Mohamed Assem and Mr. Bakit, Directors of Karnak and Luxor Temples, respectively; Dr. Ali Asfar, General Director of the West Bank of Luxor; and Mme. Nawal, Chief Inspector of Luxor Temple. And special thanks must go to you, our friends. None of this would be possible without you.

Members of the Oriental Institute and Friends of Chicago House are always welcome to stop by and see us during our field season in Luxor. We suggest that you write or call in advance to schedule a meeting that is convenient to all. Chicago House is open from October 15 until April 15, and closed Saturday afternoons and Sundays. To arrange a visit during the season, please call the Oriental Institute Membership Office at (773) 702-9513. We can be reached at the Oriental Institute during the summer months at (773) 702-9524. Please see page 12 for our address and phone numbers in Egypt.

*All photographs, except where otherwise noted, are digital images taken by Ray Johnson.*



**Medinet Habu precinct, with small Amun temple on right**

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