Pottery in the Southwest in October

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A Report by Marian-Ortolf Bagley and Allan Brockway, concerning a visit to archaeological sites of the Hohokam (Arizona), Mimbres (New Mexico), and Paquimé (Chihuahua) peoples with specific focus on Southwest potters and pottery. Both authors contributed digital images to the report. The itinerary (11-22 October 2007) was organized for the Archaeological Conservancy by James Walker.

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Introduction

Marian-Ortolf Bagley and Allan R. Brockway began collaborating on travel reports following a trip to Syria and Jordan in April 2007. Their report on that trip—"Marian in the Levant in April"—may be found on Allan's website, http://www.abrock.com.

During the course of preparation of the present report, it occurred to them that readers might be interested in how a traveller who lives in Minnesota (Marian) and one who lives in Florida (Allan) came to cooperate in the way they have. Although retired (Marian prefers to say she stepped down), their backgrounds have little else in common.

Marian's long career as Professor of Design at the University of Minnesota, where she became an expert in color design, was combined with her successful independent career as an artist. The list of her exhibitions is pages long. In no way has she "stepped down" from that! Most recently, she is in the process of completing a watercolor study of sunflowers in every stage of life. A list of her travels is pages long, as well. In more recent years she has traveled frequently to Mexico and Central America, not to mention more distant destinations such as Algeria, Turkey and Central Asia, and to visit family in Germany!s Black Forest.

During his professional life, Allan, educated to be a Methodist clergyman, has in actuality been a journalist and editor for denominational and ecumenical organizations and a "specialist" in Jewish-Christian relations. In brief, an ecclesiastical bureaucrat. During the years when he lived in Washington (DC), Geneva, Heidelberg, and Birmingham (UK) he travelled the world—mostly to attend conferences, some of which he was responsible for organizing. Later, he continued traveling, focusing on ancient cultures of the American Southwest and pharaonic Egypt. He calls himself an "archaeological tourist."

The genesis of their cooperation in the production of travel reports was Allan's notice that, while he was rushing around taking photographs of the Roman ruins in Syria, one of the others in the group, Marian, was making pencil sketches in her notebook of those same ruins. He was—and is—impressed. They began to talk. Upon returning to their respective homes at opposite sides of the United States, Marian began, as was her custom, to write a report on the trip and made the mistake of sending an early email version to Allan. The result was the report on Syria and Jordan, complete with pictures in full color that Allan fitted into the text.

The report you are about to read has had the advantage of the shared screen technology of Apple's OS X 10.5. Though separated by 1600 miles, they were able to work on the same document at the same time, changing words and sentences, placing pictures, and discussing the next steps more easily than if they were in the same room. Scroll down now to “Pottery in the Southwest in October,” which begins with Marian's pre-tour visit to long-ago friends in Phoenix.#  #  #

Marian-Ortolf Bagley  Allan R. Brockway  Christmas 2007
The Archaeological Conservancy is a nonprofit organization devoted to the preservation of archaeological sites in the United States. As part of its effort to educate the public about the importance of historic preservation, the Conservancy conducts tours to places of historic and archaeological interest. We—Marian-Ortolf Bagley and Allan Brockway—signed on for one such tour, entitled “Master Potters of the Southern Deserts,” upon which we report in these pages. Before the tour, though, Marian visited friends in Phoenix.

Prelude: A View of Phoenix

For me—Marian—there was a vivid and unexpectedly exciting prelude. The trip was to start in Phoenix. I flew there a day early, October 11, on the only Northwest Airlines Frequent Flyer (and therefore virtually free) flight available. Since the group would not gather until evening I would have a free day in Phoenix. So I wrote my high school friend, Bob Peters, and his wife, Barbara, who live in Scottsdale, about my travel plans. Bob responded with: “We will call for you at nine o’clock the morning after your arrival!”

A conscientious young man “pusher” at the airport helped with baggage and catching the shuttle, which took longer than expected. I was settled into my room in the Fiesta Inn in Phoenix just before 9 p.m., however, just in time to phone Bob and Barbara to tell them I had arrived. I was pleased with my quiet room, which faced an inner courtyard garden filled with tall palm trees. The next morning Bob and Barbara appeared, at 9:00 AM as promised, to show me their Phoenix. By the end of a long and exciting day, Bob had driven us 120 miles in and around Phoenix, giving me a thorough introduction to the town he and Barbara had chosen for their retirement home.

Bob and Barbara knew that, since I had visited Phoenix several times before to attend conferences, I had already visited the museums. So we were free to see their favorite destinations.

Bob drove us to the outskirts of Phoenix proper, to Arcosanti, Paolo Soleri’s experimental community that hunkers way out in the desert. Here we wandered around the outdoor displays of bold metal wind bells that line the walks and fill the shop. We came across the foundry where the wind chimes are cast, amidst some of the experimental buildings. The sale of wind chimes helps support this futuristic enterprise, which might become as innovative and monu-
ment as Gaudi’s great cathedral of the Holy Family in Barcelona, which is also
eternally “in progress.” But will it ever come to fruition?

Soleri, an Italian architect who studied with Frank Lloyd Wright, spent the last
half century testing bold new ways of community living in the desert. During our
stroll through the grounds we peered into windows of some of the buildings, some
that looked as though they had just grown there, like
mushrooms, barely above ground. The Cosanti
Foundation explores Solari’s gospel of "arcology"
here in the desert, a term that he coined “to de-
scribe an architecture shaped by ecology, one that
produces a lean and keen urbanism that is effi-
cient.”

Bob and Barbara wanted to show me some of the
fabulous world class resorts around Phoenix. They
chose the Hyatt where Barbara walked me through
the immense central hall that is open to the sky on
both sides. This understated but luxurious western
room frames immense vistas of desert and moun-
tains.

A visit to the AJ Grocery store was one of the most exciting destinations of the
day. Bob had no idea that I love visiting food markets anywhere in the world. AJs
is palatial, each specialized area an elegant stage set. This was edible theater in-
deed. In the delicatessen one could sample their tempting offerings. I’ve added AJ
Grocery to my list that includes Harrod’s Foodhalls in London, KDW in Berlin,
and Fouchon in Paris. After wandering along every aisles, enjoying the colors and
textures, the labels, the beautiful arrangements, we returned to the car. Here I no-
ticed that it was parked under graceful fabric sails stretched above the cars, like the
sails on a ship. We were to see such sails later on at El Pedragal Mall. Even creat-
ing shade is an art here.

We drove on to Taliesin West for a general look around. We enjoyed the gift
shop, which is designed like a Wright dwelling with his trademark low ceilings. To
visit the entire Taliesin compound one must book ahead and be a captive during the
long tour, which we resisted. There was so much more to see elsewhere! After col-
clecting many beautiful objects in our imaginations, all designed in the FLW sty-
le—stained glass windows, pots, fabrics—we continued on our way, after pausing
for photos of ourselves near the shop.

At lunchtime we stopped at another luxurious resort, the Four Seasons, at Troon
North. Here we nibbled on a “salad” that consisted of four narrow romaine lettuce
leaves placed parallel to each other on the plate, accompanied by a few transparent
thin shavings of cheese and a few croutons. The dressing, so imaginatively de-
scribed on the menu, was missing from our plates, so we had to ask for some. This sparse but costly “spa” lunch inspired Bob to write to the management later on, to comment on the poor quality of this skimpy meal; no reply was forthcoming. Nonetheless, we enjoyed walking around the grounds, where we admired the beautiful casitas and the surrounding rust-colored mountain formations and the beautifully landscaped grounds.

We drove past several shopping complexes and strolled around one, called El Pedregal, that was remarkable for the strong use of color that glowed in the strong Arizona sun. Parts of the buildings were painted with lively geometric patterns in turquoise, pink, orange, and more. The central garden patio was shaded by sails suspended high above, like a horizontal wind wheel.

We passed many galleries and craft shops, and paused at some to window shop. We drove along many streets in the area aptly called Paradise Valley, where the houses in every conceivable architectural style look as though they belong in the pages of Architectural Digest. In perfect contrast to this luxury we visited a place—a restaurant, bar, and outdoor eatery—called Greasewood Flats that would be a perfect movie set for a film about motor-bikers tooling around in the West.

We also spent some time at the Via Linda Senior Center back in Scottsdale, peering into computer labs and class rooms in a handsome building. Many locals enjoy the fine facilities and impressive programs. I would happily take Tai Chi and digital photography here.

Our last stop at Royal Palms, a beautiful Spanish mansion, was a fine ending to our tour. Barbara and I peered into the handsome rooms of this perfectly scaled complex, which may be the most elegant resort in the country. The atmosphere was old world and old money.

On the way back to the hotel Bob headed down onto a freeway for a few miles so that I could see the interesting and varied designs that embellish the viaducts
that we passed by as slowly as we could. After driving all day we returned to the Fiesta Inn where Allan Brockway, having flown to Phoenix from Tampa, joined us in the bar. Soon Bob and Allan were busy comparing notes on their favorite roads and valleys in the West, one a recent convert to life in the Southwest, the other a Arkansas-raised archaeology enthusiast. Soon we bade farewell to Bob and Barbara, my wonderful guides to their beloved Phoenix, ready to begin the Archaeological Conservancy tour.

Archaeological Conservancy Trip

**Day One.** The evening of Marian’s eventful “prelude” day, the tour group gathered, in one of the meeting rooms of Phoenix’s Fiesta Inn, for the first Archaeological Conservancy lecture by Jim Walker, the Conservancy’s Southwest Regional Director and the tour’s leader. As we were to discover, each evening before dinner we would have a lecture on the archaeology and material culture of the Southwest. During his introduction Jim told us about how the Archaeological Conservancy acquires land, often through what he called “bargain sale to charity.” He also courts prospective donors. He told us that donor Mary Faul might meet us when we visit Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, a few miles south of Phoenix in Coolidge, where Jim is putting together and preserving an 80-acre site with her help.

The Archaeological Conservancy tour provided a hearty lunch and drinks during the evening lecture before dinner. The drinks were “bribes” to get us to attend the evening pre-dinner lecture. Breakfast and dinner were on our own. Jim Walker organized the schedule carefully, to the smallest detail, freeing us to enjoy the experience to the fullest.

Meals at the Fiesta Inn proved to be a trial because the dining room was severely understaffed. Later on someone in our group commented that “this place is run by children!” The scarcity of hotel workers became more noticeable during our stay, even at other hotels, not just at this beautiful resort. The pleasant dining room featured low ceilings that reflect the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, as one might expect here, so near Taliesin West. The second evening we chose to have dinner at a nearby Denny’s restaurant, where the staff quickly brought our orders, a welcome change.
The Heard Museum  

*Day Two.* A stop at the Heard Museum is obligatory for those visiting Phoenix who are interested in Southwest culture; our group was no exception. This time the museum struck Marian and Allan as much smaller than it had during earlier visits. Perhaps the presence of many school groups had something to do with that. Whatever the reason, the collections didn’t excite us very much this time. Allan wanted to see the permanent exhibit about the Indian School experience so we walked through that, as well as through the ethnographic exhibits on the various tribes that still make their home in the Southwest.

Particularly interesting was the collection of more than 500 Hopi katsinas donated to the Heard by Barry Goldwater and the Harvey Company.

Some of the sculptures outside of the building also caught our eye. Finally, everybody paused for refreshments in the pleasant shady courtyard or patio of this converted hacienda.

Pueblo Grande Museum and Archaeological Park

The city of Phoenix is built on top of a whole collection of important Hohokam culture sites (100-1450 CE). We visited one of them, Pueblo Grande, that has been excavated, stabilized, and made available to the public. Though Pueblo Grande lies
within the city limits, it is almost invisible to local residents, (even someone as observant as Bob Peters!) who perhaps pass by daily without noticing.

Developed and maintained by the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, Pueblo Grande was what we might call a “capital city” of the Hohokam people, the excavated part of which is known to archaeologists as a “platform mound.”

From that mound today the modern city stretches as far as the eye can see. From that mound in the year 1200 its residents could see farms watered by an extensive system of canals. Much of the water running in the canals of modern Phoenix follows those ancient courses.

While most of the others were still in the museum, Marian quietly went outside to the platform mound. There, she looked where the ancients had gazed and was pleased to see a fine freeway viaduct design in the distance, one that she could zoom in to photograph with ease. The animal design offered a graceful transition from Bob and Barbara’s modern Phoenix to the world of the “Master Potters of the Southern Deserts.” This particular desert creature offers an icon for Pueblo Grande that we had found again and again, on buildings and on the pavement.

Before going out onto the platform mound as a group, we studied the exhibits in the museum, which include a wealth of
knowledge about the Hohokam people, especially in an exhibit entitled “The Hohokam: The Land and the People.” We learned that the platform mound we were about to visit covers 3.3 acres and is twenty feet high, that the village flourished between 1150 and 1450, and that it was one of the principal centers, if not the “capital” itself, of the entire region that today is focused on the city of Phoenix.

The hotel courtesy car that had delivered tour participants to the Fiesta Inn drove over a bridge above a dry gully. “That’s the Salt River,” the driver said. The Salt River, which provided water to the Hohokam and their canals, today is usually dry below the Granite Reef Diversion Dam, built early in the 20th century to help provide water for Phoenix. The map above—on the museum wall—points to the locations of Hohokam villages (red blots), as well as the network of canals (blue lines), that have been identified by archaeologists.

Something needs to be said here about platform mounds just to help understand them ourselves. Platform mounds, though not unique to the Hohokam, are nevertheless Hohokam signatures. Built of dirt and rubble with surrounding walls of poured adobe (not bricks) heavy in caliche, their purpose is not fully understood, though clearly they had a ceremonial function that may have included residences for
priests and other leaders. The amount of labor involved in construction was immense. Platform mounds were what we would call “public structures.”

When the group left the museum and approached the mound we discovered that the City of Phoenix had built paved walks that brought visitors to the most important portions of the site, thus reducing the temptation to climb all over the walls. It is also one of the few such sites that is accessible by wheelchair.

We gathered on the walk (right) to listen to our guide explain that we were standing between the wall of the platform and the wall of the compound. The diagram in the photograph on the preceding page clearly shows what the guide was talking about.

Even though the picture below is too small clearly to show details, perhaps it is sufficient to demonstrate the way rubble was included with the caliche to form the wall of the platform mound.

Up on the mound itself, we looked again at the city stretching beyond this time our attention was on the pattern of prehistoric construction. The signage accompanying this view calls attention to the maze-like feature of rooms down in the compound. Archaeologists found large cooking pots, caches of shell and stone beads, piles of stone axes, quartz crystals, and even pottery from the Hopi area that is 200 miles north. Something important must have been going on here.

As we followed the paved path around we came upon some pit houses that had been constructed upon the foundations of originals. Pit houses were standard “daub and wattle” houses with floors dug into the ground. In some
Southwest societies the pit was deep, maybe 3-4 feet. But in the case of the ones at Pueblo Grande, they were shallow, not more than six inches. Allan wondered what the point was if they were so shallow. Our guide didn’t know, either.

Marian was more interested in the roof. The beautifully woven ceiling reminded her of a little room she stayed in at a camp deep in the Sahara in Algeria, which has the same climate and incorporated the same primitive building materials.

Just past the pit houses is a ball court. Ball courts are common in contemporary Mexican societies, where they were used for a variety of rituals, some of which involved the sacrifice of ball game losers. It is not clear, however, that the Hohokam ball courts had the same function or even if they could be called “ball courts. The one at Pueblo Grande has been reconstructed several times; what we saw there may no longer be anything like the original!

Along the trail around Pueblo Grande was a fine collection of desert plants. The ocotilla, or living fence, is an example of a plant that has adapted to the desert climate well and also adapts to human demands placed on it.

On the Pueblo Grande Museum grounds we found other noble species of desert survivors, including a beckoning saguaro that was beautifully side-lighted. As an artist, Marian is fascinated by
the use of white outlines in the beautiful full page Sonoran Desert U.S. postage
stamp that she keeps in her studio. When she brought home the stamp image of the
Sonoran Desert, she says she had no idea that she would actually SEE the luminous
cacti herself someday. She just liked the white outlines in the stamp composition.

The white linear treatment frees the artist from using deadly black outlines around
forms, black outlines that actually destroy the illusion of roundness of forms in space.
As Matisse probably said, nothing in nature is outlined in black. When observing desert
plants in certain lighting conditions, one can actually see their glowing light haloes. When
the sun is behind or at the side, especially early in the morning or in the late afternoon,
one can watch the plants create silvery sil-
houettes, the work of the sun—as in this performance by a great saguaro. Soon we sought out these side-lighted plants throughout the desert.

Before leaving Pueblo Grande, we returned to the museum to look at some pots (this was, after all, a pottery tour!).

Finally, the group shared a hearty bag lunch outdoors, in the museum patio. While the Archaeological Conservancy provided lunches only, we found them to be nutritious and filling, more like portable dinners. Marian, whose metabolism has problems with wheat, soon learned to travel with a package of corn tortillas that she got from each hotel dining room.

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument

Day Three. We left Phoenix and drove through the countryside to Casa Grande Ruins National Monument and the nearby Grewe Site, a Conservancy preserve. This time we were in the middle of the desert, about an hour south of Phoenix near the town of Coolidge. We could see a small building under a roof, surrounded by partial walls of other buildings scattered around. The park ranger invited us to gather in a roofed shelter for his introduction. His welcome included a solo musical performance, which also charmed Archaeological Conservancy patron Mary Faul, who had come to greet us.

While we were listening to the ranger we could observe the monument in front of us. Marian chose to “see away” the overbearing roof, the better to concentrate on the Casa Grande (Big House) itself. This beautiful structure looks like a rectangular coil pot, one layer atop the next. It seemed to be slanted slightly inward. In the distance, beyond this main building, tall ancient saguaros offer a dramatic contrast to the ancient walls that are slowly melting away into the sand.
Casa Grande Ruins is the first archaeological site to be preserved by the federal government and the fifth oldest unit in the National Park Service. It was set aside as a Federal Land Reserve in 1892 and became a National Monument in 1918.

Built of poured, or “puddled” caliche adobe—4.5 feet thick at the base—rather than the familiar adobe bricks, the Casa Grande is the sole remaining of what archaeologists believe were numbers of such Hohokam Big Houses. Their purpose, like so much in the archaeological record of the Southwest, is uncertain, though there is evidence that Casa Grande may have had an astrological function.

The Big House is surrounded by the ruins of lesser buildings. Unlike the appearance the casual visitor sees today, it was not isolated but was the center of a large and probably very important community. For example, outside the area the Park Service provides for the Casa Grande, about a football field away, a viewing stand provides a glimpse of an unexcavated ball court.

We’ve mentioned Mary Faul a couple of times already. Mrs. Faul, who, with her late husband, has been an active supporter of the Archaeological Conservancy for many years, has provided a legacy to the Conservancy of land adjacent to the National Monument. We were honored to be graced by her presence. When Allan engaged her in conversation she proudly showed him a tiny Hohokam artifact found at Casa Grande that she wears on a necklace.

Leaving Casa Grande, we climbed back on the bus. Marian has a custom of taking photographs of license plates (this one is an Arizona plate) and of buses. They are part of the trip story! In this case, the bus driver is an important part of the trip story, too. He presided over the bus, and sometimes regaled us with tales of his adventures as a country
sheriff, adding to our store of western lore.

On the bus, we drove past by the Grewe site, part of which is on Mary Faul’s legacy to the Archaeological Conservancy. Jim had the bus stop so we could try to figure out what we were seeing. To people who aren’t archaeologists, the field looked like any other field. Many in our group got out to look but Marian took pictures through the bus window from where she saw Jim and Allan talking about what Jim said was a Hohokam ball court.

Leaving Casa Grande, we drove on to Tucson, to the Hilton Tucson East hotel, where we found ourselves in a 1970’s building that reminded Marian of an airport terminal with its 3-story tall wall of glass. Again, the restaurant was understaffed, but we were far from the town center and other restaurants, so we had to be patient. So did everyone else, including the hotel staff, for the building was undergoing its first extensive renovation since construction thirty years ago.

**The Sonoran Desert Museum**

*Day Four.* Early the next morning we visited the Sonoran Desert Museum outside Tucson. Marian and Allan had visited the Desert Museum before and therefore knew to walk on the longest trails in order to photograph as much of the museum exhibit as possible. Here is part of what there was to see:

A docent proudly showed us his lovely owl, which posed too.

In the little museum: a display of minerals.
Outdoors we photographed wonderful desert inhabitants, including:

- a luminous cholla
- fishhook barrel cactus
- and more saguaros.

We visited the resident mountain lion who was holding court behind a glass panel,

saw a deer on his way for a morning drink of water,

and nearly missed a quick little desert chipmunk.
Arizona State Museum

That afternoon we visited the Arizona State Museum pottery research collection, which is on the campus of the University of Arizona, the state’s flagship educational institution. We were permitted to enter the Museum workrooms. A floor-to-ceiling display housed examples that convey the entire history of South-Western pottery. An illustrated chart of pottery styles throughout the Southwest covered the wall opposite the display case. We were told that—perhaps by the next time we came to visit—the chart would be available for sale as a poster.

Slowly learning to see the different forms and decorations in this complex painted world, we noticed that some of the pots were completely decorated on the inside. The one on the right, for instance, is one of the famous “Mimbres pots,” more examples of which we were to see later in the trip.

Within the main museum we found a fine basket collection, Tohono O’Odham baskets among them. They are of special interest to Marian, who treasures ten of them in her home, some inherited, some found in thrift shops.

After enjoying the pots and baskets, we paused at the Museum Shop on the way out, where Marian was tempted by a handsome bracelet, probably “old pawn.” Such older pieces are more appealing to her than the newer ones. However, Marian said she already had a nice
collection of “old pawn” so the bracelet was carried away only as a digital image.

In the evening, back at the Hilton, we listened to a lecture by Allen Dart, a local archaeologist, who brought along several Hohokam pots for us to examine at close quarters, as well as books that he recommended. Among them:


In two lectures, Allen Dart told us more about who the Hohokam people were, with examples from the major Hohokam site, excavated in the early 1960s, called Snaketown. He also pointed out how to distinguish the various phases of pottery, many of which are illustrated in the book all participants received from the Archaeological Conversancy before leaving home: *Southwestern Pottery, Anasazi to Zuni* by Allan Hayes and John Blom, Northland Publishing, Flagstaff, 1996.

Silver City, New Mexico

*Day Five*. We drove from Tucson, Arizona, to Silver City, New Mexico, rushing to reach Western New Mexico University Museum before it closed for the day. We were welcomed there by Dr. Cynthia Ann Bettison, archaeologist and director of the museum. She explained that the collection had just recently been moved into this old school building, where it filled ceiling-to-floor display cases, which, in turn, were lined with an over-abundance of printed information in heavy black type.

We followed Dr. Bettison around as she told us about the Mimbres pots, and made some comments on the collectors and looters who had donated or returned them, explaining that, for the most part, their provenance is missing. We saw the pots in the museum area as well as in the study collection on the lower level, where we were allowed to handle some small pieces to get a feel for the texture and thinness of the walls. We also had a look around the Museum Bookshop, where one could buy some reproduction Mimbres pots.

After being confined inside the University Museum building during the lecture tour, we were finally free to go outdoors, into the fresh air, where we discovered
prickly pear cacti growing immediately outside the museum entrance. Photography was forbidden inside, so we had no record of the museum collection, but we could not resist the beautifully side-lighted cacti growing at our very feet. The silvery spines of the cholla glowed in the side-light of the setting sun, while the arms of the prickly pear were outlined in purest silver.

After staying in two understaffed rather ostentatious hotels, it was a relief to settle into the moderate and efficiently-run Holiday Inn Express in Silver City. Dr. Bettison returned both evenings during our stay there to give well-prepared presentations in an energetic style, somewhat reminiscent of Paula Poundstone at times. One could tell that she was used to having to keep the interest of college undergraduates.

In all of the lectures by the guest archaeologists, the idea was to prepare us for what we would see the next day. In this case, she discussed the Gila Cliff Dwellings. Dr. Bettison surmised that the Mimbres people went back to Mexico after the collapse of their culture here, suggesting that they are the Tarahumara people in Mexico’s Copper Canyon.

After the lecture, some in the group chose to go off to a local restaurant in this college town, shepherded by our bus driver. Instead, Marian and Allan decided to have dinner in a nearby fast-food place where we found ourselves lined up behind an entire basketball team consisting of rather short and excitable girls, with Latino coloring, all chattering away in Spanish. They walked the short block back to the Holiday Inn Express in the dark, leaning into a chill wind. The others returned much later. The second night they returned to the same restaurant, to find that it quite empty and peaceful.
Gila Cliff Dwellings

*Day Six.* The next morning we drove to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, forty-four miles north of Silver City in south-central New Mexico. The steep and winding road provided spectacular views of the mountainous Gila National Forrest.

When the bus stopped about half way up, we noticed a monumental alligator juniper tree that had survived numerous fires over the years and, even, a wire that had girdled it during younger days.

We drove through the dramatic Mimbres River Valley to reach the National Monument where we began our walk to the cliff dwellings.

Designated a National Monument by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, Gila Cliff Dwellings is one of the oldest segments of the National Park Service (now administered by National Forrest Service). It preserves a site occupied for a short time in the late 13th century by a culture archaeologists know as Mogollon, a sub-group of the Mimbres. But, like similar sites in the Southwest, earlier people also passed through and left evidence of their passing, as did later Apaches and seekers after gold (little found) and the copper that is abundant in the region.

A one-mile-long trail leads from the Visitors’ Center across the west
fork of the Gila River to the cliff dwellings (which are in caves about 150 feet above the canyon floor) and passes mountain mahogany trees along the way.

Marian, who had been a little apprehensive, had no trouble on the trail, which was gently sloping most of the way.

When we rounded a curve in the trail the ruins came into view. The Mogollon people built walls in front of six caves in the limestone cliff to enclose their living spaces. Dr. Cynthia Bettison had explained how the various caves were laid out so we knew what to expect.
After a chilly start, everyone began to shed layers and by the time we reached the caves jackets were superfluous.

From the trail we could see one of the most fascinating features of the Gila Cliff Dwellings: a large T-shaped door. The only one in the caves, it is positioned to be visible even from the canyon floor if trees do not block the sight. This door is one of the archaeological reasons for thinking that the Mogollon people were influenced by the Anasazi from farther north in New Mexico and Colorado, where T-shaped doors are abundant.

Access to the caves was by a footpath that led from Cave 1 to Cave 5 (Cave 6, not open to the public, is not accessible directly from the other five).

The stairs into Cave 3 are convenient for visitors today but weren’t there for the original inhabitants. Neither was the breach in the wall.

The large interior
of Cave 3 (above right) has little natural light and is dark with smoke from fires.

The Mogollon people, who lived in the cliffs for only 20 to 30 years at the end of the 13th century, nevertheless had time to build structures inside the caves with their own walls and roofs. The remains of beams, known as vigas, that were the main support for roofs (right, above) are still visible.

By scrambling through the door (above right) and through Cave 4 we were able to see a few pictographs on the wall of Cave 5. There weren’t many but they probably were representative of more that have not survived time’s and scaven-
bers’ predations.

Many of us would pay a premium today for the view the Mogollon cliff dwellers had from the “window” of their mountain retreat. But the probable fact is that these ancient people retreated to the cliffs, not to enjoy the view but for protection from their neighbors.

Deming: Museum of the Luna County Historical Society

Day Seven. The next day we drove to Deming to see the pottery collection at the Luna County Historical Museum, which is housed in a brick turn-of-the-century former armory.

The pottery collection at Deming contains a very large selection of Mimbres pots, a style that is unique to the Mimbres region in southern New Mexico. Painted on the inside with animal and sometimes bizarre human depictions, the pots were often utilized by their makers to cover the faces of their dead, who were buried under the floors of dwelling units. In the pictures we took of these pots in Deming, the “kill hole” is plainly visible. Before use in a burial, the pot would be
“killed” by punching a hole into it, an action that not only made the vessel unusable for anything domestic, but, primarily, allowed the spirit of the deceased to escape.

Overwhelmed by the vast collection, after she photographed a large rug for sheer pleasure, noting its perceptually color-balanced turquoise-red/orange center, Marian decided to concentrate on pots with animal motifs, while Allan did a more comprehensive photo survey.

Marian liked this figure of a bird so much that when she saw work by a potter in Mata Ortiz—a Mexican village the tour was to visit a few days later—working in a similar tradition, she added it to her collection. (That potter is Andres Villalba, who works in the Ramos polychrome style, which was first uncovered in Casas Grande in the late 1950’s.)
There is more to Mimbres pottery than pots with kill holes—the Minbres people also decorated their every-day utensils, such as ladles and canteens.

The Luna County Museum is not only an archaeological museum but one that tries to display life in the region in more recent times as well. Allan couldn’t resist the collection of early 20th-century vehicles, including fire engines.

This case shows a collection of Mimbres pottery reproductions that are available in the gift shop.

It is to be hoped that people would buy reproductions like these rather than robbing graves of the Mimbres people to get originals. Many of the pots in this and other museums have come from excavations that were—let’s be charitable—not strictly scientific.
Pancho Villa State Park

From Deming we travelled directly south toward Chihuahua, Mexico. At Columbus, still in New Mexico, we stopped briefly at the Pancho Villa State Park, which memorializes the only ground invasion of the continental United States since 1812. Except, of course, 11 September 2001. But that invasion was by air, not ground. It might, however, be instructive to note in passing that the responses to these “invasions” had some similarities.

On 9 March 1916 the Mexican revolutionary, General Francisco “Pancho” Villa, attacked the United States military camp at Columbus. Eighteen Americans were killed. The park is located on the site of Camp Furlong from whence US General John J. “Black Jack” Perishing took 10,000 troops, during eleven months, 500 miles around Mexico on a futile search for Pancho Villa.

We divided up photographic responsibilities here, Marian focused on desert plants around the museum building while Allan tried to capture some historical exhibits.
Nuevo Casas Grandes

Crossing into Mexico was painless and, after lunch at a tourist trap called The Pink Store in Palomas, we continued on to Nuevo Casas Grandes, a town in the northwestern part of Chihuahua, close to the Casas Grandes, or San Miguel, river, on the 4,000-foot-high Plateau of Mexico. Near there the group was to visit the most important archaeological site in northern Mexico, Casas Grandes or Paquimé, and the pottery village of Mata Ortiz.

During the long bus drive from Deming through Chihuahua, we watched a video about the Mennonites who migrated from Canada near the end of the 19th century. We learned that their Elders scouted northern Mexico throughly until they found and bought the fertile land they developed in Chihuahua, where Mennonite and Mormon communities still flourish. We drove along streets in their prosperous neighborhoods, past substantial brick houses, some Victorian, with well tended yards. We learned that the region is famous in all of Mexico for its apples. On the way we passed fine apple, peach, and pear orchards plus pecan groves. These communities also produce cheese that is available in the US, where it is called simply, Chihuahua cheese.

In Nuevo Casas Grandes we settled into the pleasant Motel Hacienda. Our second-floor rooms overlooked a large courtyard with a spacious grassy patio with towering palm trees. Marian was pleased to have a heater she could turn on to take the evening chill out of her room.

In the evening everyone made their way across the patio to the restaurant. The dining room, with its rustic Spanish colonial furniture and blue table cloths, was filled with many visitors making their pilgrimage to ancient Casas Grandes. The menu was classic Mexican, not Tex-Mex. Breakfast there each day as well as dinner, finding seating wherever available in the crowded room. The few waiters scurried around carrying colorful platters.

Casas Grandes (Paquimé)

*Day Eight.* Prof. Paul Minnis of the University of Oklahoma, an archaeologist who has studied Casas Grandes and the surrounding region for many years, had joined us at Deming. Now that we were on the site itself he proved to be a gold mine of information, not to mention a traveling companion par excellence. From Paul we learned that Casas
Grandes was a very large city that was already in ruins when the Spanish came through in the 16th century and that, though it has features that connect it with Meso-America, it has other affinities with the Mimbres, Mogollon, and Hohokam cultures we had just glimpsed. Its florescence, however, was almost a century later than theirs.

Cases Grandes, or Paquimé, was excavated by a team led by Charles de Peso of the Amerind Foundation during 1958-61. It is huge. More than 2000 rooms, many unexcavated. The construction is of adobe, but not adobe blocks. Instead its walls are made of poured adobe that, once exposed to the elements, would wash away quickly were it not periodically covered for preservation by additional layers of caliche mud.

Less than a single day was spent at this incredible ruin, enough to be amazed, to wonder—and to know we want to know more. We must return! All we can do now is record some photographs.

Oven for cooking maguey—a large party!

T-shaped door, unusually rounded at top

Pens for Macaws, grown for ceremonies
Pens for turkeys

Serpent Effigy Mound

I-Shaped Ball Court

Walls make their own design

Museum with ramp to the roof
**Mata Ortiz**

*Day Nine.* En route to the pottery village of Mata Ortiz we paused at the Hacienda de San Diego, an estate of Luis Terrazaz, the governor of the state of Chihuahua in the 1860s. By 1910, the beginning of the Mexican revolution, he owned half of all Chihuahua, the wealthiest man in Mexico. Pancho Villa changed that, exiling him to the United States and confiscating his lands.

His elaborate hacienda today is occupied by descendants of the campesinos who were living in it at the end of the revolution. We hoped we would be allowed to view inside, but the occupant was not ready to receive visitors.

Then it was on to Mata Ortiz, which has become a village of potters who benefit from the pioneering work and leadership of Juan Quezada. While a young man, Juan Quezada was inspired, by ancient pots he found at and around Paquimé, to create pottery of his own. But it was the intervention of the American anthropologist Spencer MacCallum, who had discovered Juan Quezada’s work, that eventually changed the fortunes of the entire village.

During our first evening in the Motel Hacienda, Spencer MacCallum told about how he found some of Juan Quezada’s unsigned pots in a thrift shop in Deming, pots that related to traditional ancient Paquimé pottery, yet were innovative. Dr. MacCallum located the maker, and supported his study of pottery and his efforts to create pots of the highest quality. Juan Quezada in turn trained other potters in his village to create their own styles. Dr. MacCallum held our attention in the palm of his hand while he told us this moving story, later on showing us slides of how Juan Quezada’s work progressed. After this fine presentation we were well prepared to visit the village the following day.
Once we reached the village, and parked the bus, villagers came out to meet us and to show us their wares. Esther bought a pot right off, here offered by the potter or possibly by a member of the potter’s family.

We divided into two groups, accompanied by archaeologist Paul Minnis and by guide Jim Walker. We leisurely wandered around the dusty village streets, from house to house. In each house pots were for sale in virtually every room.
As we climbed on the bus to leave we were surrounded by people who were eager to sell their pots to us before we drove away. Marian bought a pot from this woman for $10 because she liked the leafy surface and the potter’s friendliness.

Other people surrounded the bus to offer pots to us before we drove away.

Tourist traffic to Mata Ortiz is down these days, unlike more prosperous years. The women with unsold pots asked the bus driver to offer—literally to auction—their wares, which our driver did with gusto. Thus many people in our group acquired still more wonderful pots for very modest prices indeed. Mata Ortiz pots bring high prices in galleries in the north. Marian was content with the small pots she bought earlier, which just filled her small backpack, but the stunning large pots were most tempting.

1. Before leaving Mata Ortiz we were presented with a demonstration of how the pots are created by hand, without the use of the potters wheel. Several people in our group offered to try their hand at the Mata Ortiz technique. The work is done using a curved bowl as a temporary base. First a pancake of clay is patted into the bowl. Then coils of clay are added. Walls grow upward as more coils are added. Hands and paddle shape the walls, which must be thin.
Later on we were invited to view a dramatic hour-long demonstration of how a greenware pot was fired to completion. This is done in one firing (like raku), in contrast to the more typical two-step firing process.

While the pot was firing we turned our attention to watching an accomplished village woman painting on a trial pot on which we, too, were permitted to paint. She approved of the little checkerboard Marian painted with the brush made of a single hair.

Back in Cases Grandes (not Nuevo Cases
Grandes, where the hotel was located, but the “old” town), Dr. Spencer MacCallum invited us to visit some other of his projects. He took us to a 19th-century building he had renovated into a study center for visiting scholars. Down the street from this study center he and his wife had renovated an entire group of little colonial houses, really a little village within a village. They restored the buildings and filled the rooms with charming vintage furnishings. They hope that this will be-

come a colony for visitors or re-
searchers. This is a typical patio out-
side one of the restored houses.

Later on there was free time to ex-
plor some of the streets and shops.
Marian was fascinated by the hand-
painted store fronts, evidence that
sign painters can still find work here.

When we walked or drove through the streets of this typical Mexican market town, one could still enjoy seeing beautiful hand-painted lettering on buildings, instead of the neon or plastic advertising signs that dominates in the north.

Return

Day Ten. The bus left the Motel Hacienda early on our last morning in Mex-
ico, heading north, returning to Palomas, which was the same entry point we had passed through four days earlier after leaving Deming. At that time, we had had to stand in a long line on the Mexican side to have our passports inspected and stamped. Then we walked to The Pink Store, the restaurant where we had lunch.
The building houses a store or gallery as well, with ceilings and walls covered with a wild array of Mexican folk art and crafts. On the first visit we were served a “typico” meal with samples of popular local dishes. Marian managed at that time to get chicken tortillas in green sauce substituted for the generous servings of spicy meat everyone else seemed to enjoy. Dr. Minnis passed around a bottle of a local spirit for us to sample.

Now, four days later, on the last day of the tour we did the same thing in reverse order. We reached The Pink Store early, before our lunch was ready, so there was some free time to stroll around. A part of The Pink Store is a kind of mall with various businesses that were deserted or closed. It was Sunday! Marian photographed her and Allan’s reflection in the glass wall of the Pink Store restaurant, with the closed modern mall behind, the figures silhouetted in a fairly abstract composition. After lunch indoors we all prepared to enter the United States.

This time we had to run the gauntlet of U.S. customs officers. The bus had been driven off, with all of our baggage and possessions, to be inspected elsewhere. After passing by an official, who warned us sternly not to make any comments, we were told to wait in line in a long corridor. We passed under large framed photographs of the current occupant and the vice-president of the United States. The experience and the setting reminded Marian of passing through Check Point Charlie in Berlin before the wall came down. We stood for a long while, in silence, waiting for some process somewhere to be finished. Some Mexicans were waiting, too.
We were lined up along a wall with many windows, so we could see the wind gusting up. It was cold and windy outdoors so once we were free to wait outside for the bus, some of us chose to return to the corridor.

At one point Marian wanted to visit the rest room so she walked way back to where we had started our exit process, and was politely directed to a well-heated office by a friendly officer, where she found a spotless ladies room. The traveler’s edict continues to be “never pass one by.” Eventually we boarded the bus again, after around an hour’s wait.

The drive to El Paso was uneventful. Our guide told us that re-entering at Palomas was easier than at El Paso. Jim had thought of every detail to make this a smooth trip. He knew that many pots acquired in Mata Ortiz needed to be shipped to our homes. So, as promised, our first stop in El Paso was at an Office Depot store where people could buy bubble wrap and cardboard boxes to ship their treasures via the Federal Express office there. Marian’s small pots fit into her back pack, but she was happy to accept left-over bubble wrap that another traveler passed on. Allan, to his regret, didn’t buy a single pot!

We drove on to the Wyndam El Paso Airport Hotel, across the road from the airport, to claim our rooms. Marian’s spacious room turned out to be a suite on the second floor, facing a quiet patio, so she was quite pleased. Allan didn’t seem to mind that his first floor room opened out onto the parking lot.

Soon we all gathered in the hotel bar for our last “happy hour.” We were allowed to order any drink, so we chose a nice Riesling to sip while Jim offered some apt closing remarks, thanking us for being so cooperative, and thanking the bus driver for his fine work. This would have been easier had he been able to ob-
tain a meeting room, instead he had to address us scattered at tables in a long narrow space around the bar. Several people stood up to give heartfelt testimonials. Then we moved onto the restaurant for dinner.

Marian and Allan watched a film, *Lone Star*, until it was time to finish packing to be ready to catch the van at 6:00 AM.

**Day Eleven.** The next morning coffee made in the rooms held us for a while. Allan got his and Marian’s bags down to the hotel van for transfer to the terminal. After checking through our bags we had more coffee, then said our good-byes, pleased that our trip turned out so well, and headed to our respective gates to board planes that would take us to opposite corners of the United States. Marian remembers peering out the plane window while waiting for take off, to see and count twenty other planes in line on the tarmac. And later she photographed the rugged desert terrain from high above.

Our experience continues as we write our report, handing it back and forth, while Allan fits the photos into the text. In a Peanuts column, Charlie Brown once said after a little trip “the anticipation exceeds the event.” In many ways, gathering and organizing our thoughts and photos extends the anticipation *beyond* the event.