

1994 BRASS NEWS-LETTER

Da Fu We Team

New Goals for BRASS

As we move into our second decade, BRASS has undergone a metamorphosis into the BRASS/El Pilar. No longer merely an archaeological research project simply resolving the mysteries of the Maya, the new project is an international, interdisciplinary, and multifaceted endeavor dedicated to the newly created *El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna*.

Once we realized that working at a major Maya center must include the site protection, a vast and daunting world opened up. This new world is one where the government bureaucracies of Belize and Guatemala are part of the project; where the villagers in Bullet Tree are included in decisions; where there are plans of infrastructure supporting research and visitors; where trails through the site highlighting the ancient Maya monuments, the plants, and animals. This bold view that integrates the relationship of humans and the environment, both past and present.

This vision comes with a price — both figuratively and tangibly. They include time working within the national and international political systems, articulating with the Belizean community, promoting the grand idea at all levels, and translating it to action. It also means a new struggle for funding with the long-term goals with the larger programs in mind. Thrust so into the resource management arena, advancing an innovative way of saving the rain-forest, we are appealing to everyone for help! There is an awesome future out there, and you can be a part of it!

Off o the Field '94

The trip down started inauspiciously with major vehicle problems. Almost a week late,

we got the caravan on the road. It was Big Blue in the lead (naturally), followed by the Happy Hippo (guided by Gumby) with the Obsidiana pulling up the rear. Our first hop took us from Santa Barbara all the way to Riverside, where **Scott Fedick** loaned us the critical GPS equipment that helped us in our far flung mapping enterprises. Driving in Mexico always presents its challenges, but **Nancy Daniels'** prowess at the wheel got us to Xipujil in time. Our archaeological stops included Zempoala (watch for falling coconuts) and featured an unique visit to Palenque, where Fanny López and Gaby Ceja arranged for us all to stay late in the park. This was an unusual treat, but was even more so for witnessing the soccer match in front of the Temple of Inscription! The spirit of old Pacal was overseeing the park rangers with **Matt Davies** running interference and **Cameron Griffith** scoring goals for the team. The Mirador Maya of Xipujil was all it ever could be, a truck stop on the road. There, we met **Carol Miller**, **Tomás Gonzalez** (and friend) for our traditional Río Bec tours with **Ricardo Bueno**. Dinners were always dynamic events, and **Russ Helms'** wry wit was well appreciated. A week-and-a-half after we waved good-bye in California, we found ourselves unpacking at the Santa Familia Monastery in Cayo.

BRASS/El Pilar 1994

El Pilar was welcoming, but the plazas were in desperate need of clearing to reveal the majestic architecture. We started on Plaza Copal, where **Scott Wennergren** (Thorin Nightshade) began his long-term relationship with the plants of Pilar. Working side-by-side with the Bullet Tree crew, Scott had the Green Stick mercilessly eliminated from the

plaza area as he gained vital knowledge of flora. By the time all major plazas were cleared, the whole crew —US and Belizeans alike— had achieved a new conservation ethic to protect the important plants of the area.

While the sweaty clearing at Pilar was underway, Russ and **Ed Hanna** (aka Ollie and Stan) were efficiently involved with set-up at BRASS Base. We are indebted to them for the excellent job of hanging the chalk-board in the lab. They had us all in stitches with the story of hammers, drills, bits, and so forth not serving their intended purpose, but the results certainly prove them wrong!

The Varied Tasks

The main crew descended upon us the 28th of March and the project moved into full swing.

Robin Taylor didn't waste any time getting back to the mapping, starting on *Plaza Axcanan*. In catering to this map-a-holic, advance crews scouted out different unknown areas, like **Bob Vitolo's** and **Alison Davies'** de-mystification of the west side of EP 10 (although the network of trails and day glow flagging tape down there baffled all us!) Robin could not have completed her job without **John** (Juan del Diablo) **Zac's** able help on the next fiddy meters. The finale of the mapping project came when **Anabel Ford** negotiated a permit to map in Guatemala and we were joined by **Miguel Orrego** and **Chepe Sanchez** who diligently completed the core map of Pilar Poniente.

David Brennan, a veteran of BRASS fully anticipating more field work like veteran Bob, found out he could sweat equally well at BRASS Base. There, he worked with Anabel writing and re-writing proposals for the development of the reserve, meeting with villagers over land issues and spending time in government offices advancing the cause and promoting the EP word. This marathon effort proved successful in landing a major USAID grant with Godman Ellis and the Belize Tourism Industry Association. But not

before **John Yust** provided our first drawings of the caretaker's house that was included in the final version — a created the right impression of our astute planning.

Getting into *Ztotz Na* was not easy, and visitors of **Wildlife Conservation Internationalsal** reminded us "Bats are cool." It was not until we were working at Ztotz Na and **Reb Creemen** collected her JIBS for the Ztotz Na Field Museum, that **French Samper** had to do more than just manage than her liaison with Novelos. After taming the BDF patrol with her "*I WORK IN THE JUNGLE AND CARRY A BIG KNIFE*" attitude, **Dina Rachal** was grateful to the Ztotz Na field museum stop. This stop on her tours was guaranteed to enhance the contribution to **Clark Wernecke's** evening beer —or was it morning coke?— money.

Relief Activities

Everyone of BRASS/El Pilar was grateful to **Joe Scaduski** and his incredible find — Mike's *Snooty Fox*. Free evenings found pool sharks **Nick Rab** (Yourg) and David playing for drinks at the Snooty Fox's, while others just sat sipping there's on the patio, looking at the lights of Cayo across the river.

Beer features as a prominently topic, and some will go to extremes to acquire it. Smuggling in Gallo 40s from Guate turned into a regular sport. Nick lost his, but John Yust didn't! He used the innocence of youth. **Anna Yust** had the 40s in her pack when they came back from Tikal.

Media Coverage

Documentation of the '94 season went from the idiotic to the sublime. We had video, mostly under the command of Scott who will not be forgotten for the "INSTANT SANDRA REPLAY." **Tom Carver's** *Danger Video* was a nighttime feature as cheesy clips of ridiculous antics in orange accosted the unwary watcher. Taped recordings of the wonderful stories of El Pilar's first caretaker —Teo Williams— was carried out by Alison. These

tales of imagery are a window into local life, philosophy, and folklore and an edited version, called *Teo's Way*, will be published by Belize's Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

The Bullet Tree community became more important in our lives. While their traditional dancers were appreciated at the Fiesta El Pilar, the later village fair was most memorable for the Hog's Head dance when John Zac played a star role as the hog's owner. *Amigos de El Pilar* has taken off and promises to be working in tandem to make El Pilar part of Mundo Maya. Angel Teck did a lot to galvanize this process, but he will mainly be recalled for his incredible performance after the Victory at El Pilar. There were many shuttle runs over the El Pilar super-dirt-highway between the village and Pilar. Clark recognized the ominous sign of a blow-out. No problem, just time. NOT! He and Cam couldn't remove the flayed steel-belted tire. Its a bird, its a plane, ITS ANGEL! Nothing beats brute strength.

Establishing and International Park

Creating a new national reserve has its pluses and minuses. There are few templates to follow, but one thing we figured out was that we needed visible boundaries. Who you gonna call? BRECHEROS! Cam started the job, **Kirsten Olson** flew down to guarantee it was finished. And the last thing to be packed up at BRASS Base were the transits.

So where to now? Infrastructure for the park is one thing and **Paul Bailey** helped us get a picture of the master plan. Yikes! We have a sketch of the Pilar Camp (anyone want to rename the camp for a 290K contribution, will throw in a authentic replica of the H'mena Cabeza!). The plans looks monumental to me, but doesn't even cover all the area of *Plaza Copal*! We have an idea for the visitor's center up on a knoll with a view (we can name that building for 251K and you can have a cabeza, a fantastick guig book for the archaeology of Belize that normally seels

for \$10, and will throw in a post card, too). We are beginning the botanical garden with the help of **Rosita Arvigo** and **Mike Balick**.

The 1995 Season and Beyond

Plans for '95 are wide ranging. Anabel and Clark will be coordinating construction, archaeology, tourism, and promotion. We want to see the EP word everywhere. At Pilar, **Mike Mortara** will be part of the construction implementation team that will begin building the caretaker's house with USAID funding. Miguel Orrego will bring in his wealth of knowledge from the Petén to El Pilar for the central trenching that will the archaeology focus. And **Rudi Larios** has promised to help with the conservation planning that will put El Pilar in a class by itself.

We are gradually sorting out the assembly of enlightened talents on bord and working out what we are going to need to bring off the grand scheme that is evolving. What we are planning is to establish a veritable village at El Pilar that will be open for local visitors and international tourist. The park would be staffed with rangers and experts of all walks who will be involved in research and education. We want the *El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna* to be a superlative model, meeting all the challenges and achieving all the potential. You can see that we are going to need a lot of help from our friends!

Become a True Friend

To become a Friend of BRASS/El Pilar (and to continue to recieve this stimulating newlester) make your tax-deductable comtribution of \$40 or more to the Regents of the University of California and fill out the enclosed form!