

#### FROM THE DIRECTOR

1997 was a great year and you all have something to be proud of. Not only has the project collected a great deal of valuable data on the ancient Maya but we have left a lasting legacy behind. The new *El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna* owes much to the efforts of hundreds of volunteers, students, local villagers, government supporters from Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico and others too numerous to mention. And the work is not over, we must continue to support local organizations who want to have a say in the new reserve and continue the work beyond the bounds of the project. Much more can be learned from El Pilar and our work can help educate others.

Once again, congratulations and thanks for all of your support. We hope that all of you will visit the new El Pilar Reserve in the future and see the results!

#### !!!!IT'S OFFICIAL!!!!

The highlight of this year's fourth annual Fiesta El Pilar was the keynote speech by the Honorable Henry Young, Minister of Tourism and Environment for the Government of Belize. Minister Young officially announced the signing of the Statutory Instrument designating the *El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna* as Belize's newest national reserve!

Despite a brief visit from the Chacs—it wouldn't be the fiesta without some rain!—Minister Young's statement was received enthusiastically by a crowd including members of the Belizean and Guatemalan governments, the diplomatic corps and both Belizean and Guatemalan citizens not to mention regional archaeological projects. After the speech the crowd enjoyed music and dancing, of course the hogshead dance, and food supplied by a number of local restaurants and groups.

The new archaeological reserve status will mean changes at the site. **Teo Williams** will have to turn in his trademark pink pants (reportedly visible in satellite images) for a government caretakers uniform! Teo has been avidly following the developments and attended a seminar for all the caretakers in March which included visits to Xunantunich and Cahal Pech, neither of which he'd ever seen! **Marcos Garcia**, President of Amigos de El Pilar (AdEP) has come on board as a caretaker as well. Marcos and Teo are on the staff of Belize's Department of Archaeology, while **Carmen Cruz** is part of the BRASS/El Pilar staff at the site, maintaining the Maya forest-garden among other

things.

#### MULTINATIONAL MEETING IN MEXICO A HUGE SUCCESS

During the week of January 20-25 a group of 28 experts from Belize, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States met in Mexico City to help map out the future of the El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna. Underwritten by the Ford Foundation, the meeting included representatives of the local villagers, archaeologists, government representatives, biologists, ecologists, community development planners, attorneys and conservators.



Participants visit the Plaza Mayor, Mexico

The result of this round table was a declaration of support for the multidisciplinary project as well as the establishment of working groups for future projects and goals. The meeting drew a lot of press in Mexico and offers of more concrete support, especially from the countries that surround El Pilar. If you are interested in the official statement of the meeting, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to our UCSB office for a copy of the bilingual "Declaration de La Mesa Redonda El Pilar".

#### THE 1997 SEASON

##### The Cast of Characters:

An amazing group gathered here for the fifth season of work at El Pilar. **Anabel Ford** was here, there and everywhere, as usual, in pursuit of greater project objectives, managing the regional aspects of the project as she kept in touch with the events at BRASS Base. **Clark Wernecke** was once again managed the day-to-day activities at El Pilar as field director assisted by his wife **Melissa Grzybowski**, back for her 3rd year at El Pilar. **Peter Madden** came all the way from Wagga Wagga (it is a real place) Australia. Another alum, **Vanessa Bunton**, of New Zealand and Great Britain, returned to keep an eye on the Aussie, set up the mapping procedures with the new total station, and help with tracking the soggy end of the season. **Brett**

**Bradford**, an unsuspecting UCSB accounting student, was shanghaied to act as our live-in accountant and business manager. Set adrift with the most complex bookkeeping task we can imagine, Brett maintained order and got the payroll out on time.



The 1997 Crew at the Caretaker House

Super-lab-woman **Beth Bitter** returned to us from the Pacific Northwest to head up lab operations and manage BRASS Base. She was able to train both **Laura Sierra** and **Johnny Sierra** (Maria Sierra, our cook's oldest two children) in the lab operations, setting the stage for the future. **Sophie Kohn**, an anthro. student from Washington U. in St. Louis also gave us a try as well. Her excellent Spanish was an asset and got the crew repeating *trabalenguas* (tongue twisters) in español — tres tristes tigres ..... Alum **Carlin Moyer** was in Belize for a month doing some incredible botanical drawings and now is working on an educational project developing a CD tour of El Pilar. **Sylvia Abualy** down for the better part of a month (from Sta Barbara via New York) photographed everything and interviewed the crew in preparation for PR work in the States.



Juan Carlos and Laura present their results

**Juan Carlos Fernandez** and **Laura Hernandez Pinto**, landscape architects from Mexico, joined the crew to work with the Amigos de El Pilar, the Bullet Tree

Village Council and the local schools on a master plan to link Bullet Tree Falls with El Pilar. **Rudy Larios**, the project's building conservation director with long time experience at Copan and Tikal, along with his lovely wife **Letty** joined us this season to work on the consolidation at Tzunu'un, Plaza Jobo and the Xamanaj Temple of Plaza Lec. Rudy also brought along his good friend and associate **Enrique Monterroso**, a highly-skilled conservator who worked in our first training program. **Bob Hibschan** was with us for two weeks (for the third year) to get his hands dirty in excavation. **Luis Alberto Martos** and **Vincente Camacho**, from the Mexican archaeological authority INAH, worked on the investigations on the acropolis in Plaza Jobo.

We also had a lot of visitors/consultants join us; **Miguel Orrego** of EP7 tunnel fame, **José Antonio Montes** project attorney from Guatemala, **Carol Miller** and her son Fausto came for the Fiesta, **David Campbell** (an ecologist from Grinnell College working with the botany of El Pilar) came to visit. The end of the season brought the project architect, **Paul Bailly** who spend the few moments of dry weather photographing at Tzunu'un for the development of the reconstructions at that site. Our next concept drawing of El Pilar and the rendering of the house site of Tzunu'un will greatly benefit from this visit. Another landscape architect **Ken McMurray** spent the very last weeks with the project working with his assistant Johnny Sierra building the first model of El Pilar. The main platform was completed by the close of the project and Ken will return in '98 to finalize the model and install it at the AdEP cultural center in Bullet tree Falls.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the invaluable help of our Belizean staff, both household and field. Certainly all of us appreciated Maria Sierra's cooking and Toribia Manzanero's same-day laundry service and Leticia Smith sweeping up after us and changing the beds. We had a lot of new faces in the field this year but also many that you would remember from years past; Teo and Carmen at the caretakers house, Abel Manzanero, Black (Arcelito) Manzanero was back and brought his brother Emilio, Jerry Waight and Marcos Garcia were also working. Don Heriberto Cocom tried his hand at excavation this year and was incredibly good! Arturo kept everyone laughing and Ricardo Cocom (remember when he was the forest ranger at the gate on the way to the Rio On?) was back as well. This was a big year for our field crew - we had 31 Belizeans on it!

Our thanks to the fun group from Telluride High School ("the Jeff Jones 8") who stopped by to give us a hand (and a welcome donation) this year. We only

wish they could have stayed longer.

### The Archaeology

We had a number of interesting things going on at once but we'll try to give you the archaeological work first. We concentrated at three locations of El Pilar this year: 1) the residential plaza group on the Lakin Trail known as Tzunu'un (hummingbird), 2) the acropolis buildings around Plaza Jobo, and 3) the temple structure Xamanaj (once carrying the appellation of the cute little temple) in Plaza Lec.

Melissa headed up the excavations in Tzunu'un last year as well as this and will be using the data for her dissertation. Despite the deafening roar of the cicadas which required ear plugs, we have so far excavated substantial portions of four out of the five main mounds around the plaza. There is one large stone-walled house multi-rooms that is the most imposing structure of this residential group. The preservation is not bad and one of Rudy's consolidation teams will be working on the walls next season so we can leave them open for visitors.

One of the big surprises this year was that the three other structures are each entirely different from the others — we expected different artifact assemblages that would suggest different functions but not necessarily different architecture. One of the smaller house platforms also yielded the first whole vessel found at El Pilar, a small jar, discovered as part of a burial. The burial may be that of a woman and also contained spindle whorls and hundreds of small shell beads. To add to our ongoing Maya forest-garden project, we would like to construct a new stick-and-thatch building atop the foundations we have exposed around the plaza to show visitors what Maya dwellings may have looked like.



Rudy and Anabel at El Pilar

Last season Daniel Reynolds headed the excavation of a labyrinth of rooms at Plaza Jobo on the H'mena, the highest area of the site. We didn't expect this building, we thought that there would be a stair there! This area around Plaza Jobo proved to be in an excellent state of preservation with all but the roof intact. Rudy and a host of Belizean assistants have painstakingly dismantled parts of walls and



Consolidation at Plaza Jobo

reconstituted them, scratched the old mortar out of the joints to be replaced with new lime mortar, and will

finally open up the doors we could not excavate without jeopardizing the ancient construction (sorry Daniel). One of these remarkable arched doorways was opened to a press fanfare, the first time someone had entered that doorway in one thousand years! Rudy is also training some of the El Pilar crew to do consolidation starting with Tzunu'un and Plaza Lec. Luis and Vincente, our INAH compatriots, excavated a trench in Plaza Jobo to assess the condition (not bad) and in the process discovered that the facade of the building was carved with a wonderful mosaic of designs some of which survived under the collapse. We hope to find more of these sculpted limestone blocks as we clear the facade.



Heriberto at the Xamanaj temple

Heriberto Cocom and newcomer Marcel Lamb had Xamanaj all to themselves for much of the season. They did a great and very fast job of cleaning out the looters' trench and also cleaned the dirt off the top of the structure to prepare it for the consolidation crew. In their excavations in front of the pyramid they found the plaster plaza floor and the original steps of the temple. The structure turned out to have three rooms with multiple doorways.

The consolidators then moved in and began to carefully remove and remortar the blocks in the back room's standing corbel-arched roof, one that was in peril of collapse. When you next visit (you know you will!) you will be able to walk right up the steps and into a beautifully preserved Maya corbel arch structure.



Enrique directs operations at EP25

#### Artifacts

Once again, outside of the beautiful intact architecture we did not find anything earthshaking but what we did find was exciting for everyone involved. The Tzunu'un crew is rightly proud of a small jar, three spindle whorls and a large quantity of small olive shells (they had been strung or sewn onto something) found in associated with the burial assemblage of Str. 5.



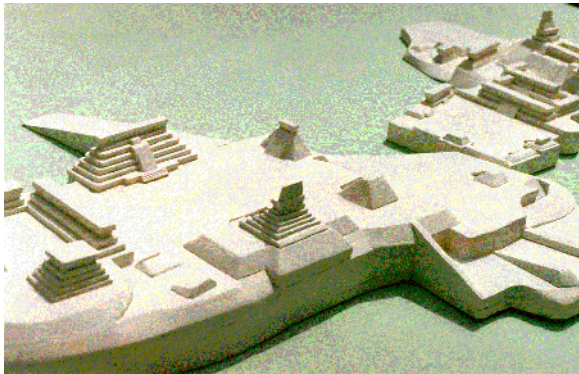
Artifacts from the Burial at Str. 5

The remains of the sculpted mosaic facade at EP53 of Plaza Jobo included a twin of the H'mena Cabeza and some other intriguing carvings. Since everyone knows that two heads are better than one we hope that this is a portent of good things. Rudy has held out the hope

that if we find enough pieces next year it may be possible to reconstruct what the facade design looked like!

### Community Development

Juan Carlos and Laura worked with the Bullet Tree Falls village council, the local schools, and the Amigos de El Pilar. One of their larger projects is to develop a master plan for Bullet Tree. This has involved a lot of talking to villagers to determine what they would like Bullet Tree Falls to be like in the future. They even had the school children draw pictures of their homes and village to get a good idea of the popular perception! They also have been working with the Amigos de El Pilar on ways to cash in on the creation of a new park in their backyard. The Amigos had a very successful booth (selling food and crafts) at the Fiesta El Pilar in large part due to the help of Juan Carlos and Laura's unflinching efforts. Together with AdEP they worked on new ideas for their village building at the *Be Pukte* (or the Road to Bullet Tree). One idea is to have the model of El Pilar that Ken is working on located at the *Be Pukte* and be open for park visitors to see on their way to El Pilar. Once stopped, then visitors could buy food and crafts from the village. This architectural model was begun this season and should be finished by 1998! It is a wonderful scale model that will help all of us better envision the site as it was in the Classic Period.



Ken's Model of El Pilar

### The Homefront

We can never forget, nor thank sufficiently, the work of those working with the project back in the States.

**Christian Anderson** (congrats on your acceptance to grad school!) is our link to the office when Anabel is the field - without him and for that matter **Sydney Ciener** we would be lost. Who keeps track of the mail, responds to email emergencies, finds slides and mails out responses? They do! As is true for most of the world, money makes the program work and **Lew Ciener** has spent countless hours in establishing and maintaining our accounting system (and fixing our mistakes). Brett Bradford did not realize what he volunteered for but he is still putting in time on the

1997 field accounting. Sydney's work in the lab has included the development of a very good scheme for analyzing the BRASS ceramics and has nearly completed the tunnel strata for EP7. Among other things, she has also managed to impart order to the slides from the last season. Let's not forget **Eric White** who has put in the time to make our website an award-winner and is currently working on the Spanish version. If you want to check our website out, the URL is:

<http://alishaw.sscf.ucsb.edu/~ford/index.html>

### EL PILAR IN THE NEWS

Did you know that El Pilar is listed on the World Monument Fund's list of the 100 Most Endangered Sites in the World? We're in pretty good company too - the Taj Mahal, Pompeii and Ankor Wat to just name a few. This season we had a BBC film crew at El Pilar headed by **Nick Gell-Man** with his camera man **Vince Riggio**. They were compiling footage for a half hour show called *Earth Reports*. While working on the film project, they stayed at Parrot's Nest in Bullet Tree Falls. The show is all about El Pilar and the project and will be shown on the BBC and eventually in the US, probably on the Discovery or Learning Channels. While the film crew was on-site, we managed to coordinate a helicopter flight over El Pilar courtesy of the UK Flight 25 training mission in Belize, as well as interviews with a number of the major players working with the El Pilar plan. We'll keep you posted when we learn of dates/times this great show will air.



El Pilar Archaeological Reserve from the Air

We were also visited by Rob Criswell, the editor of the new Archaeological Conservancy magazine *American Archaeology*. He was in Belize to write on Xunantunich and included a generous sidebar on El Pilar. The article is now out in the Fall 1997 copy of the magazine.

Besides a number of publications in the works, Anabel once again made an appearance at the Society for American Archaeology conference in April and

presented two papers (on obsidian production and households) and Carol wrote up a wonderful article for the Mexico City Times. Our website has grown, won several online awards and was featured in the Jan/Feb issue of *Archaeology*. News on El Pilar has been on TV in Guatemala, Belize and CNN International. We hope to have a lot more to show for 1998!

The proceedings of the Mexico City Round Table will be published by the US State Department, Man and the Biosphere Program this Fall. The proceedings include contributions from many of the participants and lay out the ground plan of the vision for El Pilar. The page proofs in English and Spanish have just been prepared by **Kristin Sechler** of World Monument Fund, her sterling efforts are greatly appreciated. Anabel and José Antonio have done the final edits. This hefty tome will include position papers and plans from each of the working committees at the meeting: archaeology, community development, ecology, management, legal, environmental, and conservation. The results are designed to get the national and international development community involved and to generate the funding needed to bring the vision to fruition.

#### **BRASS BASH 1997**

The annual BRASS bash scheduled for Saturday October 4th and we hope it is a chance for all of us to get together. This event is always a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, meet some new friends, and learn of progress we have made over the season. There's always lots of good food and we usually enjoy a beautiful Pacific sunset. The invitations went out in the mail in August if the office had your current address - if not let us know so we can keep track of you!

#### **BRASS/EL PILAR HAS GONE ELECTRONIC**

Besides our wonderful website we have also tried to come up with a way to keep interested folks, including the alumni, better informed of project happenings. This year we started the El Pilar electronic newsletter via email. We will be trying to send this out three times a year — once just before the season, once from the field and once after our Fall deliberations for the next season. We received enthusiastic responses from those who enjoyed our tales from the field this year! One aspect of this newsletter is an alumni section where we try to keep you up to date as to the known wanderings and accomplishments of your fellow alums.

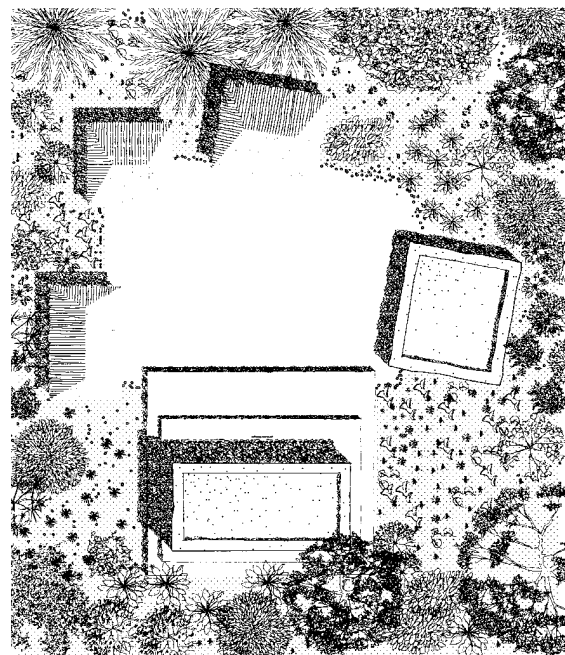
If you wish to receive this newsletter we can add you to the mailing list by sending your email address via email to Clark at 102402.2332@compuserve.com and let

him know you want a copy.

#### **THE 1998 SEASON**

It's still early to be able to give you all the exact details (we meet in October to determine those) but here is a brief outline of our plans for 1998. First, it will be a long season beginning in February (when it's COOL) and continuing to July. We have a lot to get done and, with the help of a Ford Foundation grant for 1998, we hope to make some serious headway.

We want to finish up at Tzunu'un by excavating the rest of Str. 1 and all of Str. 2 as well as soundings of Str. 3, 4, and 5. The consolidation staff will stabilize the exposed structures so they can remain open to the public. Time permitting we will survey and begin excavation on 272-032, a smaller residential group located south of Axcanan.



SITE PLAN SCALE: 1 TO 200 03-16-97  
TZUNU'UN GROUP ELITE HOUSE AT EL PILAR  
BELIZE RIVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTLEMENT SURVEY, CAYO, BELIZE

A lot of new excavation is required in Plaza Jobo on the acropolis. We would like to clear the perimeter of the plaza, including the rest of the facade of EP53. The remaining parts of Structure EP53 and a section along the face of EP20 should be excavated to remove the danger of erosion and to better understand the complex architecture we have uncovered. The consolidators will finish stabilizing this area for public viewing.

At Plaza Lec, there is still much unfinished in order to make that area more accessible to the public. The entire face of Xamanaj, Temple EP25, needs to be systematically cleared and stabilized. This is not a

small task. Further, the walls of the front rooms should be attended to. We are not sure what we might be able to contemplate on that task.

Plans are also being considered for the completion of the EP7 tunnel and a possible new tunnel under EP20 (that would be exciting). As Miguel said ¡Este va a ser un gran cebolla! This will be a big onion!

We certainly are expecting both Rudy Larios and Miguel Orrego back again next year to accomplish these tasks in the short amount of time allowed us by the annual rains.

Vanessa plans to continue the survey of the El Pilar Archaeological Reserve in Belize and may do some preliminary survey on the Guatemalan side as well (the villagers of La Zarca, Guatemala say we are not looking at the "big stuff").

The electronic newsletter will keep you better informed as to the final disposition of resources for the coming season.

#### **ALUMNI NEWS**

This is but a short summary to bring you up-to-date: Melissa and Clark were married on November 9th with some El Pilar friends in attendance and now live in Austin, TX where they are both finishing PhD's. It seems to be catching as Eric White married Jeanne Bracker and Adolfo Aguirre married Stephanie Freys. Congratulations all!!!

Vanessa Bunton was back from England this year and is spending the Fall in indentured servitude in our Santa Barbara office until she can get to Belize in 1998. Beth Bitter was back in the lab this year and is thinking about returning again (another glutton for punishment). Constanza & Cory Conover are in the San Francisco area now while she is going to grad school at Stanford. They might bump into Nick Rab (Sierra Club web guru) and John Zack who are also in the Bay area. Congrats to Dr. Lisa Lucero who is now an Asst. Professor at New Mexico State University! Krista Schilmoeller finished her M.A. at U. Chicago (Congrats!) and taught at a field school in New Mexico this summer. Cam Griffith was once again in Belize as Jamie Awe's field director and has been busy working at Baking Pot.

If you have any news or would like to say hello to your El Pilar friends let us know..... We would love to include your activities in the next update.

#### **THE EL PILAR BOOKSTORE**

As a memento of your stay in Belize, a gift for an

interested friend or family member, or as preparation for an upcoming visit the office has some BRASS/El Pilar materials for sale.

*The Ancient Maya of Belize* by Anabel Ford

This excellent 41 page, spiral-bound book has background on the Maya of Belize, info on travel in Belize and descriptions and maps for 18 major Maya destinations in the country. \$10.00

*Teo's Way* by Anabel Ford and Teo Williams.

Sometimes you just can't get enough of Teo's unique stories. Now you can take them home with you! The stories are in Belizean Creole and should be read aloud to be enjoyed properly \$10.00

*El Pilar Video.* A compilation of short video reports on El Pilar. You get the sights and sounds of El Pilar, views of the Fiesta '95, the binational meetings of '96, and the Mesa Redonda of '97 in your home !\$25.00

Order these now from the office and send a check made payable to Anabel Ford (postage is included in the price) to:

*Maya Sites of Belize* , \$14.00

*Teo's Way* , \$10.00

BRASS/El Pilar Publicity, \$25.00

*Fiesta/CCAD* video, \$25.00

Dr. Anabel Ford

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#### **Donations**

All of the planned work at El Pilar costs money (Belizean payroll, govt. charges, fuel, supplies, equipment and more) and, although the staff spends a great deal of time applying for grants from public and private sources, the project could always use your help. Donations to the project, no matter how small, are appreciated. If made out to the Regents of the University of California your contribution is tax-deductible.

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