



ROBERT LLOYD STEPHENSON¹
1919–1992

On January 14, 1992, at the age of 72, Robert L. Stephenson died at his home in Columbia, South Carolina, after a lengthy battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife, Faith Goetz Stephenson, and two stepsons. Previous to his marriage to Faith Stephenson, he was married to the late Georgie Boydston Stephenson and the late Patricia Ewer Stephenson. Bob, as he was known by nearly everyone, was, at the time of his death, research professor emeritus at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), University of South Carolina. Prior to his retirement in 1984, he had been the director of the SCIAA and state archaeologist of South Carolina.

Bob was born in Portland, Oregon, on February 18, 1919, and grew up in the eastern Oregon town of Lakeview. It was as a youth making surface collections of artifacts that he began a lifelong interest in archaeology, anthropology, and history. He used the collections and the interest they fueled to establish a small museum in the local high school.

He studied anthropology at the University of Oregon under the tutelage of Luther S. Cressman, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1940. During his undergraduate years he participated in several cave and open-site excavations in the desert of southeastern Oregon under Cressman's direction. Together with Alex Krieger he spent several months in 1939 conducting surveys and excavations along the Columbia River behind the Grand Coulee Dam in eastern Washington. After graduation, he was employed by the University of Texas in the University of Texas–Works Progress Administration Program as laboratory supervisor in San Antonio. In 1941 he went to New Mexico where he and Joseph Toulouse excavated the ruins of Pueblo Pardo. That fall he returned to the University of Oregon where he earned a Master of Arts degree in 1942.

World War II interrupted his career, and he served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps, seeing duty in South America. In 1945 he married Georgie E. Boydston of Lakeview, Oregon. After the war, he returned to Texas where the Smithsonian Institution planned to open an office of the Bureau

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of American Ethnology's (BAE) River Basin Survey (RBS). This did not materialize immediately, and he and Georgie bought and operated a grocery store for a year. In 1947 they sold the grocery and he became director of the Texas Project of the RBS under the direction of Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr.

After five years he took a leave of absence to pursue a Ph.D. degree at the University of Michigan, but was recalled the next year to supervise the Missouri Basin Project of the RBS at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He received his Ph.D. from Michigan in 1956, with a dissertation on the Accokeek Creek site in Maryland. He continued as director of the Missouri Basin Project until Frank Robert's retirement in 1963, when he was asked to come to Washington, D.C., as acting director of the River Basin Surveys for the entire United States.

When the BAE was abolished in 1966, he asked for and received the first sabbatical ever awarded by the Smithsonian Institution. He then joined the University of Nevada to establish the Nevada Archeological Survey, where he served as statewide coordinator for two years.

In August 1968, after retiring from the Smithsonian Institution and already experiencing one full career, he came to the University of South Carolina as director of the SCIAA and state archaeologist and began to help shape the destiny of South Carolina archaeology. He served in this capacity until his retirement in June of 1984. His wife of nearly 40 years, Georgie, died in 1983, and in 1984 he married Patricia Ewer of Gold Hill, Oregon. Patricia died in 1988. He married Faith Goetz Smith, who cared for him during his final illness, in 1991.

During his 16-year tenure, the SCIAA grew from a two-person staff to over 25 full-time employees including professional archaeologists and support staff. He founded and edited the *Notebook* to report research and activities of the Institute, and initiated the Research Manuscript Series to report on small projects and the Anthropological Studies series to publish the major monographs of the Institute. He brought to the Institute the same purpose that characterized the Smithsonian Institution: to promote "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

From the time he became director until his retirement, Bob maintained a very inclusive view of archaeology. Drawing on his considerable experience with federal archaeology programs in the Plains, he was predisposed to see the value of historical archaeology, not only of Indian populations but American, European, as well as African. Furthermore, archaeology was not just something to be done on dry land but underwater as well. Under his leadership and through his administrative expertise, the Institute experienced great growth in the pursuit of prehistoric, historical, and underwater archaeology, each of which at different occasions was recognized nationally for its achievements. The way much of this archaeology was accomplished was through cultural-resource-management studies. Bob had made a commitment early in his career to the study of endangered archaeological resources, first with the BAE's River Basin Surveys and for the last 16 of his working years as the state archaeologist of South Carolina. In his view, the Institute was not only a full-time research facility with its own research objectives, but was also a center that could and should help other organizations and individuals pursue their archaeological research. Upon arriving in the state in 1968, he immediately met with James L. Michie, and together they founded the Archeological Society of South Carolina (ASSC) under the sponsorship of the Institute. At the twentieth-anniversary conference of the ASSC in 1988, Bob was recognized along with Michie as a cofounder of the organization.

Even though retired and frequently ill, Bob continued to show the SCIAA his unwavering support. Just after his retirement in 1984, he donated his entire professional library to the Institute, a collection of several thousand books, reports, and articles he had acquired over a 50-year period. His collection, especially the rare and out-of-print federal publications from the BAE, forms a major core of the Institute's Research Library. To recognize Bob, the Robert L. Stephenson Library Trust Fund was established in 1988 at the University of South Carolina. Seventy of his friends and colleagues personally contributed enough to endow the fund in the first year, the interest of which is used to support the Institute's Research Library. In 1989, he generously donated the sum of \$50,000 to endow a fund appropriately named the Robert L. Stephenson Archaeological Research Fund. And, through his will, he once again continued his commitment to the SCIAA by designating that \$100,000 be left to that organization.

In 1990, a festschrift entitled *Studies in South Carolina Archaeology, Essays in Honor of Robert*

L. Stephenson (Anthropological Studies No. 9, Occasional Papers of the SCIAA) was presented to Bob at a reception given in his honor by the director of the Institute, Bruce Rippeteau, and many of the 24 authors who wrote contributions for the book. This volume represented research that had been accomplished primarily during his tenure as director.

In 1991, at the Fifty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, he was given the Seiberling Award for archaeological conservation by the Society of Professional Archeologists in recognition of his service at the national level.

Bob Stephenson was a compassionate man, and at times almost tolerant to a fault. In reviewing his 50 some odd years in the profession of archaeology, it seems clear that he was a builder, whether a small museum in his high school or a research institute in a state that had scarcely seen much professional archaeology prior to his coming. Wherever he went he gathered resources together, built, and gave of himself unselfishly. He was a Christian and a member of the Episcopal church.

ALBERT C. GOODYEAR

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NOTES

¹ I am deeply grateful to Robert L. Stephenson himself who supplied me with specific biographic details of his life in conjunction with preparing his festschrift in 1989. The lead photograph of Robert L. Stephenson was taken in June 1990, in the Pryor Mountains, southern Montana (courtesy Wil Husted, photographer).

² Complete bibliographic information on several of Stephenson's lesser-known publications could not be obtained; therefore, they are not included here. For information on Stephenson's unpublished River Basin Survey reports, also not listed here, consult the National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. W. Raymond Wood provided information on many details concerning Stephenson's career and publications, particularly during the RBS years, and Arthur F. DeFazio and Paul R. Picha clarified many bibliographic queries.