

NOW THE GAME IS OVER

Three years ago I stepped fully into the editing task I had begun as editor-designate the year before. I thought I was prepared, thanks to many long telephone conversations with Pru Rice, for the countless unspeakable terrors that crouched half-unseen in the trailside shadows, but I soon found that I still had much to learn. In most tales about such daunting tasks the hero wades into the Swamp of Perpetual Stench with head held high and the song of battle swelling in his bosom—and after numerous fearful adventures in which he barely escapes death, he slays the loathsome beast that has for so long terrorized the countryside. The trouble with an editing task is that lurking behind every loathsome beast dispatched there is another, and yet another, ready to lurch forth onto the battlefield. One learns early on to keep one's supply of trusty pens (here is where that writing device actually is mightier than the sword) ever ready at one's side, in the expectation that the instruments will soon be blunted against the scaly hides of some (mercifully not all) colleagues' verbiage. Despite the pen-blunting, though, my sense of the importance of LAA as a medium of intercontinental archaeological communication has kept the edge of my enthusiasm honed sharp to the end.

Before I took on the LAA work I had wrestled many times with the editor's fundamental dilemma: does one allow manuscripts to make it onto the printed page virtually untouched, and risk seeming unmindful of damage to the English language, or lay hands upon the text in order to minimize the damage, and risk incurring the author's wrath? Over the past three years I have followed the second course, and despite the transformations I have forced upon some writers' prose, it seems that I have managed to dispatch a slew of verbal beasts without being seriously calcined by their fiery breath. Perhaps this indicates, as indeed two or three authors have said to me, that at least some writers view the process of getting a manuscript into publishable form as an experience from which, despite all its trauma, one can actually learn.

None of the work would have been possible without the aid of Julia Murphy, a person of remarkable perspicacity and dedication as well as the endurance required to hector authors and reviewers alike. Julia is a doctoral candidate in social anthropology who, as far as I know, had never been directly exposed to archaeology until she took on the LAA task. Judging by our last discussion before she left for the Yucatan Peninsula, she has survived the exposure to our quirky discipline and its equally quirky practitioners relatively unscathed. I have never worked with a person more responsible or quicker to learn, and our years in this sweatshop have left me certain that Julia will go on from her dissertation fieldwork, in which she is now deeply immersed, to be an outstanding anthropologist. I'm sure all of you who have been linked to her through authorship or reviewing assignments will join me in thanking her for a job excellently done, and in wishing her every success in the future.

Julia's assistance on the home front was paralleled by that of Janet Walker, who succeeded Terry Majewski as overseer of LAA's production when our Washington office came into being. Like Julia, Janet was new on the block, and she soon found that the block is not a simple square but rather a polygonal structure that changes dimensions every time one allows one's confidence to rise or one's focus to soften for even a moment. Janet has made her way around the block with very felicitous effect in the

past two years, and she deserves the thanks of all of us for her continuing herculean efforts that, among other things, have helped greatly to overcome the wrench of editorship transition. The transition is completed with this issue, and I now hand the last few centimeters of the reins to my capable successors, Gary Feinman and Linda Manzanilla, with my heartfelt wishes for good assistants, good authors, and, above all, good luck. In closing I offer my final thanks to all of LAA's readers for their interest, their patience, and their support over these past three years.

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Editor