Pioneers is a new and regular section of the Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology. Compiled by Steven R. Simms, Pioneers will feature personal reflections by students and colleagues on major figures in the study of the indigenous cultures of the region. These are not obituaries or memorials, but candid recollections that convey insight into the personalities of the pioneers as well as the cultural context of anthropology during their lives. This inaugural collection of essays features Jesse D. Jennings. Future issues will remember other leading figures in the anthropology of the West.

MEMORIES OF
JESSE D. JENNINGS (1909–1997)

Steven R. Simms
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Jesse D. Jennings was a major figure in a generation of archaeologists who shaped modern, scientific North American archaeology. His career spanned over six decades, and while he is best known for his long career at the University of Utah (1948–1986) focusing on the archaeology of Utah, his experience ranged from Mesoamerica, to the American Midwest, to Polynesia. His excavations at Danger Cave and during the Glen Canyon
Project are widely known, but perhaps his most enduring accomplishment was his two-decade effort, culminating in 1973, that led to the founding of what is now the Natural History Museum of Utah. Jennings’ memoir, *Accidental Archaeologist* (1994) is must reading. C. Melvin Aikens (1997, 1999) has produced outstanding syntheses of Dr. Jennings’ career. The selection of essays presented here highlight memories of students and colleagues that span Jennings’ career and reflect a diversity of career paths and accomplishments. My own tutelage with the Master began in 1972 as an anonymous undergraduate at the University of Utah. After a summer on the Utah 95 Highway Project, Jennings approached me and a more senior undergraduate in the hallway. Without looking at me, Dr. Jennings barked, “Sargent, put a bug in Simms ear about going to field school,” and then walked off. Ned looked at me and shrugged, “I guess that was your invitation to field school.” Dr. Jennings was direct, demanding, and utterly invested in archaeology and his students. I only tell all of the good stories around campfires. The realization of my good fortune to have learned stratigraphic excavation and the “Feature System” from him and his graduate students only unfolded over many years. Jennings was right. Archaeology is the endless management of “mistakes” as we learn about the past. As you will find in these essays, this larger-than-life figure spawned great tales. His last words to me were in 1994, when I submitted *Accidental Archaeologist* to him for signing at the Great Basin Anthropological Conference. “Well, Simms, I’m glad to see you finally grew up.”

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**SOME MEMORIES OF THE DARK LORD**

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As with all larger than life personalities, numerous tales—some accurate, some hyperbolic, some apocryphal—have been told (or embellished!) about the late Jesse D. Jennings. Of the many I have heard and/or directly witnessed, these are among my favorites.

During my second (and last) year as a graduate student at the University of Utah, several of us, including Jennings, attended an American Anthropological Association meeting in Seattle. Jennings had secured a suite, within which on one evening there was to be a “Utah” get-together. This event became rather raucous, and our presumably unknown next-door neighbor called hotel security. Soon, a phone call to our room informed us that we should “tone it down” so as not to disturb our neighbors. Jennings was profoundly irritated by this intrusion into our revelry and asked me to go out into the hallway and find and personally “deal” with whomever had the “effrontery” (or bad judgment) to “turn us in.” Because of the configuration of the hallway, there was only one room near our suite—in fact, right next door. I dutifully knocked on the door and a very irate older gentleman in pajamas and a bathrobe opened the door. Clearly quite irritated, he asked what I wanted and I told him that one of his “neighbors” did not appreciate his summoning the “law.” The individual became even more agitated and identified himself as Marvin Harris! Somehow he must have believed this identification would be sufficient—especially with a mere graduate student. I responded that I would return to the party and inform the “host” that we must keep quiet, whereupon Dr. Harris asked sarcastically, who was the host? I responded “Jesse Jennings,” and Harris perceptibly blanched. He then said, “Tell him I did not mean to interrupt his festivities. I will not do it again.” I returned and related the tale to Jennings, who grunted his somewhat begrudging approval. The party elicited no more complaints. Case closed.

At another professional gathering, the 1970 Society for American Archaeology meeting in Mexico City, I found myself one evening in Jennings’ hotel room. I was accompanied by John P. (Jack) Marwitt, who at the time was one of Jennings’ favorite students. Jack was always circumspect around Jennings so when he asked us (to my intense surprise!), “I understand that some of you call me the Dark Lord. Is this true?” To my chagrin, the normally taciturn and always circumspect Jack said simply, “Yes.” Jennings, visibly distressed, then said, “Does that mean some people think I am black and evil?” To my utter astonishment, Jack again said simply, “Yes.” Almost apoplectic with rage, Jennings then threw us both out of his room and avoided us for the rest of the conference.

My status, or more accurately lack thereof, was not substantially enhanced but rather further degraded during the course of my dissertation research. As is well known to most readers of this journal, my thesis topic was the prehistoric basketry of the Great Basin and selected
contiguous areas. Not only had I (with the assistance of C. Melvin Aikens, yet another Jennings “thrall,” as we called ourselves) selected a topic which Jennings found only marginally useful in potentially illuminating the past, but its completion necessitated a prolonged absence from Salt Lake City. For some reason, the thought of me “running loose” in the country disturbed him greatly.

During my hegira, I visited museums and artifact repositories across the length and breadth of the country. Jennings advised me in advance that I should not tell my host at any but a small subset of institutions that I was a student of (or, indeed, connected in any way to) him. He implied that my reception at most of the places would be negatively impacted by any identification with him. I suspect his real motive in warning me was to distance himself from me and not the other way around, but I never questioned his admonitions.

In the course of one of my visits, to the Heye Foundation in New York City, I had the opportunity to examine the Ozark Bluff perishables from Arkansas. As none of them had ever been directly dated at that time, I surreptitiously removed a fragment of a piece of coiling from one of the storage cabinets. Subsequently, I had the specimen radiocarbon assayed and the resultant date was published in my dissertation (Adovasio 1970).

Upon discovering that a specimen from the Heye Collection had been dated “without proper permission,” a rightfully-indignant Frederick Dockstader called Jennings and roundly berated him for my ill-considered “theft.” Jennings, in turn, summoned me to his office and thundered “Adovasio, do you suppose the world is a great oyster for you to pluck? I assure you, it is not!” I was then summarily dismissed.

While I could continue in this vein, I prefer instead to provide only one more tale. Upon graduation in the spring of 1970, I took a summer position with Don Fowler, another of what Keith Anderson drily referred to as the Dark Lord’s “things.” After my summer stint with Fowler was complete, I departed southern Nevada for St. George, Utah, coincidentally the site of Jennings’ summer archaeology field school. I, of course, tracked down the Dark Lord to tell him I was leaving the eastern Great Basin to assume an associate professorship at Youngstown State University in my natal community of Youngstown, Ohio. Jennings thereupon offered to personally take me to the St. George airport to catch my commuter flight. Surprised, and in a way secretly pleased with the unexpected solicitude, I commented that there was no need to go out of his way to escort me to the airport. He firmly disagreed, and said with finality, “I am going to do this so I can see you leave the state with my own eyes…” It was the last time I would speak to him face-to-face for many years.

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UNDERGRADUATE MEMORIES BEFORE A CAREER IN JOURNALISM

Joe Bauman, Salt Lake City

He was a legend, famous for innumerable archaeological discoveries. I was a freshman at the University of Utah that spring of 1966. Dreaming of becoming an archaeologist, I started at the top, taking his course. Most of the other students were upper division and I felt a little out of place.

Dr. Jesse D. Jennings dominated the classroom, pacing around, stopping to light a pipe, throwing out ideas and explanations. In the first session he asked us to name ways to date excavated sites. Students mentioned carbon-14, dendrochronology, stratigraphy, potassium-argon decay rates. Timidly, I raised my hand and said “glass layering.” “What?” from an irritated Dr. Jennings. Glass found in some ancient sites can be dated by its layers of weathering, I said. “What?” I said yearly weather cycles can cause ancient glass to develop a glass scum, a patina, which forms in layers. If you slice through it and examine the cross-section by microscope, you can count the layers and know how long it’s been underground.

Where had I come up with a damn fool idea like that? It’s a recognized method to date ancient glass, I replied. (All through high school I subscribed to Archaeology Magazine; now, stressed out, my brain flashed on the date of an article I’d read five years before.) I said the technique was described in the Spring 1961 issue of Archaeology.

I can see him glaring through his near-rimless glasses, his salt-and-pepper mustache bristling, his creased and tanned face. He said I’d better produce the article at our next class or he never wanted to hear another peep out of me. I could check it out of the library.
What did I do? What would any student in the 1960s do? Nothing. There were parties to attend, a war to stop, girls…. I forgot about the edict. At the next session I was happily ready to take notes.

“Well?” from Dr. Jennings. The article! Jolts of terror flashed through me. I said I’d forgotten to get it. “Hurrumph,” and he went on to another subject. My career had fizzled before it could begin. I felt sick.

Across the classroom, a student, Gary Fry, stood with a bound magazine in his hands. He said he had gone to the library and checked out the volume. It was all there, in Archaeology’s Spring 1961 edition, descriptions and photographs of the technique—sliced ancient glass and its layers.

This was an unheard-of slip by our professor. Suddenly I had won his respect. He became my kindly mentor, a great guy to talk with; he looked out for me. He showed me the incredible collection of artifacts stashed on shelves and in drawers in the aging wooden World War II barracks that were the headquarters of the Anthropology Department.

Wanting to kick-start my career, he lined up a summer dig for me without my asking for it—in fact, without my knowledge. He just took over and set it up. I’d arrived at the university from my home on Kwajalein, Marshall Islands, a U.S. missile base in the central Pacific. Dr. Jennings found a place for me on a dig somewhere in that ocean. But I no longer wanted a career in archaeology. Journalism had seduced me away. Dr. Jennings was disappointed but remained friendly to me.

He was brilliant, challenging, intimidating, but if you stood your ground and had your facts straight, you were okay. And you learned an astonishing amount. For an obituary I wrote for the Salt Lake Deseret News (Aug. 27, 1997), I interviewed Kevin T. Jones, then the Utah state archaeologist. He had studied under Dr. Jennings in the later 1970s and early 1980s. He recalled him as a teacher who demanded much from himself and from his students. “If you didn’t follow instructions or didn’t complete an assignment, you were made painfully aware of that inadequacy. He had just an amazing mind; a very, very quick thinker; had a tremendous grasp of the anthropological literature…. He always told us that we as archaeologists were trained observers,” Dr. Jones said.

He remembered Dr. Jennings’ adamant commitment to publish the findings of his excavations. “He thought that was the only reason we did it. If we didn’t publish we shouldn’t even be doing it,” Jones said. This is borne out by a story of a colleague who asked not to be named. At a staff meeting during an important dig, Dr. Jennings approached one of the archaeologists and asked if he had a pencil. “Yeah, sure,” the man said, starting to hand him one.

“Then why didn’t you finish writing that report?”

Dr. Jones remembered seminars that Dr. Jennings held in his office. He’d sit at a large table where pipe, pipe tobacco, a pack of cigarettes, rolling paper, and cigarette tobacco were laid out. He would shift from one to another, tamping a pipe, lighting up, rolling cigarettes, meanwhile paying close attention to the discussion and keeping it headed in the right direction.

Students who achieved in his class and understood the course respected him highly. However, Dr. Jones said, “I think there were a lot of people who were terrified of him, and they were the ones who couldn’t quite cut it, couldn’t perform to his standards. I always thought he was fair. But he could be merciless—but fair.”

Another archaeologist, the late Dr. George J. Armelagos, contributed stories for the obituary. “He was able to organize archaeological projects in a regional context, which was unique in his day. I think everybody thought small and he always saw the big pictures and thought big, and was able to think things out.”

“He was a brilliant scientist. He was endearing, even in his most irascible mood. At times he could be so frustrating, but you could always call him on it, you could kid him about it...and he would relax a little bit,” Dr. Armelagos said.

The Jennings irascibility could pose an inviting target. The two once helicoptered to a famous site Dr. Jennings had excavated, Danger Cave, near Wendover on the Utah-Nevada border. Also aboard was a new university department head who was getting a look at the cave.

Dr. Jennings was becoming bothered by the way the new official addressed him. “This guy kept calling him Jesse and he hated it. He said, ‘Would you tell him to call me Jess?’” So the next time Dr. Armelagos talked to him, he called him Jesse.

“He also could be kind,” he said. He mentored a sophomore, making him a dig’s official photographer; later the young man became a well-known archaeologist. When he found someone with talent, “no matter how
young, he was willing to invest in individuals like that. … He was just a delightful person.”

Then, realizing Dr. Jennings would prefer anecdotes that showed his tough, demanding side, he added, “He’s going to turn over in his grave when he hears these stories I’m telling about him.”

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A COMPLICATED AND CONTRADICTORY ARRAY OF TRAITS

Carol Condie
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Steve Simms asked me to write up a few memories of Jess Jennings because, he said, “You are the only one on my slate of contributors who goes back to the Danger Cave days.” Unfortunately, although I visited a couple of times, I was not part of the Danger Cave crew because by that time Jess had commandeered me to become the departmental secretary. (I was later impressed, though not quite so abruptly, into multi-year service as assistant editor of the University of Utah Anthropological Papers, which meant that a faculty member’s name ranked first on the cover but I did the work.)

Thus, I can’t talk about Danger Cave, but I can talk about Jess. He was a complicated and often contradictory array of traits. He was brilliant, enthusiastic, intense, and magnetic, but he was also impatient, demanding, macho, sexist (as were most men of his generation), and often tactless. Had he become the Baptist minister his mother had intended him to be, he would have been a hell-fire and brimstone preacher. Instead, he became a hell-fire and brimstone archaeologist. I had worked for the meanest man on Salt Lake’s Film Row, so Jess didn’t scare me much, but for the entire length of time I knew him, I alternated, as I suspect many others did, between adoring him and wanting to strangle him.

He saw his responsibility to his students’ education as perpetual, both on the campus and in the field. I remember Sunday field trips to antelope traps north of Garrison, Utah and to the evaporating and harvesting ponds at the Great Salt Lake salt works near Wendover, Utah. When he learned, many years after I was his student, that we (my contract firm, Quivira Research Center/Associates) were conducting survey and excavation projects on the Pecos River road, he took time at an SAA meeting to recount details of mining life during his time working at the Pecos Mine in the summer of 1926. He was 17 and his family had moved to Montezuma, a few miles northwest of Las Vegas, New Mexico, so he could attend Montezuma Baptist College. His mother had planned that a degree from Montezuma would prepare him for life in the church.

Nor did he restrict his educational responsibilities to students. He took a group of University of Utah administrators on a junket to see archaeology first-hand during the Glen Canyon Project (although I’m certain the purpose was not solely for education). As the party made its way through the southeastern Utah desert, they were stranded between two floods, and it was apparent they wouldn’t be able to move for hours. As it happened, Jess had thoughtfully stocked the grub boxes with a good supply of liquor and, even though several of the administrators were practicing Mormons, there were no complaints about the enforced layover.

His view of the educational parameters for which he was responsible extended far beyond textbooks and classrooms. Much of his approach to education was of the “Seize the moment!” variety. Certainly he never sat us down and said, “Now, dear children…” Instead, his educational philosophy was exemplified by a response he made to another guest at a faculty dinner party when she leaned across the table and said, “Oh, Dr. Jennings, do tell us some of your adventures,” to which he snorted “We don’t have adventures! Only fools have adventures!” In response to this approach, as students we learned to get our ducks in a row before we spoke to him about anything beyond trivia, lest we be blown away by a rapid-fire string of questions that we should have—but were not—prepared for. We also learned to try to anticipate all foreseeable contingencies. I was present one day as he sneaked out onto the loading dock during a lull in a Glen Canyon crew’s loading of supplies and equipment into one of their trucks. He grabbed a bunch of shovels and hid them in a nearby shed. When the crew chief announced a half hour later that they were ready to go, Jess strolled over to the shed, pulled the shovels out and said “What about these?” If looks could have killed, the exhausted and exasperated crew chief would have spent the rest of his life in prison, but that taught them (and me) to make a final complete check on the totality
of their field supplies a few minutes before departure. I thought of this incident, ruefully, when I, too, once failed to run a final check of field gear (the only time in my 30-year contract career, I might add).

Closely related to his standard of one’s obligations to education was his insistence that no excavated site go unreported. His over-arching byword was that a site that goes unreported is a looted site—and in his view there could be few worse sins. For any non-archaeologist who might read this, excavating an archaeological site destroys it. Theoretically, it should be possible to reconstruct a site from the field documents—the maps, drawings, photographs, and the exhaustive notes made ad infinitum during excavation. I would be surprised if any student of his had ever, short of death’s intervening, failed to report a site he or she had excavated. I even remember his mentioning offhand to a faculty member whose site report had never materialized that he had just learned from the university attorney that it was possible to bring a lawsuit against someone who had accepted university money for a project that was never reported. This person must have been a short-term appointment because I can’t remember who it was, but the site report appeared soon after this conversation.

Finally, I have heard him referred to as “The Dark Lord.” Not so. He was sometimes rude and sarcastic and sometimes chose the wrong time to give someone hell—but he was not malevolent or vindictive or mean. He was generally willing to be pleased and for the entire time I knew him he was enthusiastic about life and scholarship and human beings. Would that we could all leave such a legacy!

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CLOACA OUCHII AND OTHER TALES

Kevin T. Jones
Ancient Places Consulting, Salt Lake City

Jesse D. Jennings had a powerful presence. He seemed to enjoy dominating a conversation, taking control of a classroom, and asserting his dominance over students, faculty, and passers-by. He wrote proudly of his many accomplishments, and posed as a triumphant warrior for a heroic portrait. His humanity, however suppressed, did fleetingly peer through his chain mail of bravado on rare occasions, revealing a tiny bit of self-deprecating humor and even grace. Two instances are illustrative. First, the story of how his most visual legacy was created came to me through our mutual friend, Eldon Dorman.

The frontispiece of his book Accidental Archaeologist is a photo of the near life-sized portrait of a stern-faced Jesse D. Jennings that dominates the fourth-floor landing of the Natural History Museum of Utah. The painting, by renowned Utah portraitist Alvin Gittins, can be unnerving to former students as they emerge from the elevators, as it captures Jennings’ intensity with remarkable clarity, and his ferocious gaze seems to peer directly into the viewer’s soul, a capability the Professor seemed at times to possess.

The portrait is indeed an incredible likeness, a testament to the artistry of Mr. Gittins, but there is a lighter side to that frightening countenance, a side that harkens back to a lasting relationship Jennings cultivated and maintained for over thirty years with a man of similar background and motivation, Dr. J. Eldon Dorman.

Dorman and Jennings were born in the same year, and both were possessed from an early age with incredible drive and curiosity. Dorman earned a medical degree and found himself at a young age in the eastern Utah town of Price working as a coal-camp doctor to repay his student loans. He took a great interest in the abundant archaeology and paleontology of the area, and became a knowledgeable devotee, writing several guides to the resources of the region, and leading legendary “Jeep Safaris” to visit the incredible sites of the area. Jennings and Dorman became friends in the early 1960s when Dorman sought Jennings’ help in starting a museum in Carbon County. The two quickly found common ground, and proclaimed themselves the official “Curmudgeous of Carbon County,” cementing their relationship by sharing their love for lively conversation, tobacco in its many forms, and Jack Daniels whiskey. Jennings served as Dorman’s archaeological mentor, and they shared many professional and personal moments, including the marriage ceremonies of their eldest sons.

When Jennings was slated to pose for the portrait, a prestigious event as Gittins was the official portraitist of the University of Utah, he sought the advice of his friend. He would have to sit for the artist several times, and mentioned to Dorman that he often had trouble getting the exact expression the artist wanted. He wanted to be
able to affect the proper demeanor for a distinguished academician and archaeologist.

Dorman responded, as only a medical doctor could, with a prescription. He told Jennings that he must remember that life was not all a bed of roses, that it contains some pain and sorrow. In a beautiful leather presentation box, on a bed of red velvet, Dorman placed six large cockleburs of the kind sometimes called “porcupine eggs.” The instructions: Insert one as necessary. They appear to have worked spectacularly, as upon completion of the portrait, Jennings sent Dorman a photograph of the painting with the following note: “Eldon—Here is the result of the ‘sitting.’ Evidently the ova Cloaca you furnished were of the proper quality; these Cloaca ouchii were in correct quantity as well.”

Dorman wrote that following prior discussions concerning the cocklebur suppositories, Jennings had decided that the term “cloaca” was less vulgar than the word “asshole.” When I wrote Dorman thanking him for the insight, I told him that I sincerely hoped that Jennings did not actually have a cloaca, as if he did there would have been no need for cockleburs to achieve a stern expression.

When I pass by that portrait, I am still struck, even after seeing it many times, by how the man’s soul seems to be peering out from it, although since hearing the story of the Cloaca ouchii, I no longer feel pangs of fear, but instead chuckle at the thought of the grouchy Dark Lord posing with cockleburs up his ass.

A few years later, Distinguished Professor Emeritus Jennings enjoyed promoting his status as an anthropological icon. In the lead-up to the 1994 Great Basin Anthropological Conference, at which I was serving as Program Chair, he gave me a call. “Who’s your banquet speaker?” the gruff voice boomed over the phone. “Well, I haven’t arranged for one yet,” I replied. “All right then, I’ll do it,” he said. “But you must tell everyone you had to strong-arm me.” “Um, OK then, thank you,” I replied. “You’ll be perfect. Thank you, Dr. Jennings, thank you very much.” “Happy to do it,” he replied. “And, you can call me, uh, well, uh, you can call me Dr. Jennings.”

I suspected that he was almost about to tell me I could call him Jess, but he thought better of it.

“The conference was to be held in Elko, Nevada. I was delighted to have him volunteer to be the banquet speaker, and even more delighted to tell people I had to work hard to get him to agree to it. Jennings’ autobiography Accidental Archaeologist was to be released at the meeting, and a book-signing reception would be a highlight of the convention. Jeff Grathwohl of the University of Utah Press and I coordinated in arranging the reception (with catered hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar). One of our primary concerns was the health of our featured guest. Jennings, eighty-five and a lifelong smoker, was not a paragon of wellness.

On the day of the reception, Professor Jennings arrived at the Elko Convention Center in mid-morning, escorted by Don and Kay Fowler and Jennings’ wife, Jane. I greeted him and showed him the rooms where the reception and banquet would take place. As we made our way around the facility, Jennings, perhaps the most well-known person at the conference, was greeted by dozens of anthropologists. By my recollection, he found some way to insult nearly every one of them.

After seeing what he needed to see and asserting his dominance over the assembled scholars and hangers-on, the Professor and his small entourage headed for the door. “We’ll be back around four,” Jennings said, and he started to cough. And cough. The man had a cough that seemed to start somewhere south of Sonora and rumble up through sloppily arranged and loosely attached organs, catching and bringing along with it gobs of splashing phlegm and rattling lung parts. He lurched forward, leaning on his cane, and Don and I reached to each take an arm and steady him. His face turned a deep purple as spasm after spasm erupted through his still large but bent torso.

“Please, God, please, do not let him collapse. Please, God, take care of this dear man,” I prayed. Actually, I was not praying for Professor Jennings. I was praying for myself. I was praying that I would not be forced to give this unpleasantly composed man mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. “Please, God,” I said again to myself.

And as I did, the Professor ended his coughing jag, stood more upright, and headed out the door. As he hit the clean Nevada air, he stopped, pulled a pack of Chesterfields from his pocket, lit one, inhaled deeply, nodded to Jane and the Fowlers, and headed for the parking lot.
The book signing and banquet speech went very well. The Professor was witty, charming, and acerbic, and the conference was a success.

A few weeks after the conference, I was pleased to receive a nice hand-written note from Professor Jennings. He thanked me for my work on the conference, and complimented me on my selection of a banquet speaker. He wrote, “I am happy to see that you have become a competent professional, and are no longer the sullen and aloof graduate student you once were.”

That note was my last contact with Professor Jennings, who passed away less than three years later. I cherish the back-handed compliment he gave me, for if I ever knew a person who was sullen and aloof it was Professor Jennings, and perhaps rather than a slap, it was indeed an accidental compliment from the accidental archaeologist.

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**SOME MEMORIES OF JESSE JENNINGS**

Bill Lipe  
Washington State University

In 1957, I was a “summer assistant” at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. In addition to meeting June Finley, another summer assistant who later became my wife, I attended the Pecos Archaeological Conference and heard Robert Lister describe his surveys in remote tributaries of the Colorado River, documenting sites that would be flooded by the massive reservoir to be formed behind the newly authorized Glen Canyon Dam. Lister told of plans to launch a mammoth archaeological “salvage project” to do further survey and to excavate sites throughout the 186-mile-long reservoir (later named Lake Powell). Climbing into previously unrecorded cliff dwellings seemed like just the kind of archaeology I needed to be involved in, so I resolved to try for a job on the Glen Canyon Project the following summer.

I entered grad school at Yale that fall, and in December several fellow students and I loaded into my 1949 Chevy and drove over to Chicago to attend the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. My Yale mentor, Ben Rouse, introduced me to Dr. Jesse D. Jennings of the University of Utah, who was hiring crew members for the Glen Canyon Project’s upcoming 1958 field season. Jennings heard me out, and I thought reacted positively when I mentioned that I had also studied with Robert Bell at the University of Oklahoma, who Jennings knew from grad school days at the University of Chicago. (In those days, job recruitment at all levels was almost entirely through “the old boy’s network”). I followed up with a letter, and by spring got one back offering me a field crew job on the U. of Utah portion of the “GCP”

So in early June, 1958, having just turned 23, I headed west. My Chevy broke down in Vaughn, New Mexico, so I hitchhiked the rest of the way, spending one full night standing by the side of Highway 66 in Grants, New Mexico. When I checked in with Jennings, I found that I was to be crew chief for a team charged with survey and excavations in Glen Canyon proper. Crew members were Don Fowler, Lynn Robbins, Joe Jorgenson, Keith Anderson, and Peter Bodenheimer. A talented group—we all eventually received PhDs in anthropology, except for Peter, who got his in astrophysics. Jennings evidently made me crew chief because I had two field seasons under my belt (one with Haury and Thompson at Point of Pines, and one with Breternitz at MNA), while none of the others had more than one. Dave Dibble, another future PhD, joined us for part of the 1958 season.

I worked full time on the GCP until the end of the 1960 field season, running a crew in the summer and writing reports the rest of the year. I returned to grad school in the fall of 1960, but came back as a crew member for the 1961 season. GCP data eventually became the basis for my dissertation, completed in 1966. The experience gave me a running start on a career in Southwestern archaeology.

Jennings was an imposing presence, someone who didn’t have to announce that he was in charge of whatever was at hand. He was not easy to work for, because he did not hesitate to point out, often publicly, perceived deficiencies in an employee’s work. And once you got in his doghouse, you might stay there for quite awhile. Years later, when I had field projects of my own, he told me (in a rare moment of camaraderie), “Bill, you ought to get mad at your people at least once a week, whether you want to or not.” That wouldn’t have worked for me, and I am not sure that it worked all that well for him. Whatever his approach to personnel management,
he was overall the most effective research administrator that I've ever run into. And over the years, he remained tremendously loyal to past employees and colleagues he judged to have measured up to his expectations. See Don Fowler’s (2011) excellent book on Glen Canyon for a more extensive assessment of Jennings, as well as Jennings’ own autobiography (1994).

Jennings sometimes let it be known that he thought academia was plagued with methodological fads, unnecessary circumlocutions, and (often) hypocritical collegiality. The public image he favored for himself was that of a straight talker who had come up the hard way and expected to be recognized on the merits of his accomplishments, no more, no less. He thought that a good archaeologist had to be a good fieldworker first, and that did not mean just sending out orders from the shade of a tent. Ostentatiously rolling a cigarette in one massive hand while sitting on a log sent the message that he would be just as—or more comfortable—associating with common laborers as he would with the kind of professors who made sure you were aware of how important they were.

He liked archaeological “salvage” projects, because they allocated a certain amount of money toward achieving specific results within a specific amount of time. In his terms, they were “a job o’ work” just like any other project in the real world. In a recent retrospective on the Glen Canyon Project (Lipe 2012), I tried to capture Jennings’ ideas about how to do salvage archaeology (and by extension, any project):

(1) “Use the coarsest tool which will do the work—i.e., recover the data” (Jennings 1966:7).

(2) “My preference is to get 95% of the data from ten sites instead of 99% from one” Jennings 1963b:263).

(3) Troweling and screening have their place, but “the slow brushing away of a site with trowels and the plotting of each scrap” guarantees a low information return for the effort expended (Jennings 1966:6).

(4) A well-coordinated team of full-time workers is better than a single individual working the same total number of hours (Jennings 1963b:284).

(5) Maintaining data quality is essential, but at an appropriate level. Perfection is not achievable.

(6) The field record is preeminent. A researcher can always reclassify artifact collections, but can’t go back and re-excavate a site that has already been dug.

(7) Achieving data comparability among multiple research teams on a multi-year project requires explicit, detailed steps (Jennings 1959b:687–707).

(8) Fieldwork unreported is equivalent to fieldwork never done. It destroys a site with no information gain.

(9) Report deadlines are essential. It “…puts the burden of completion in sharp focus from the very beginning of the project” (Jennings 1963b:284).

(10) The principal product of a salvage project will be descriptive reports of basic data. “…Extensive comparisons, synthesis or interpretation must be deferred…” (Jennings 1959a:9).

(11) Artifacts and records from a project don’t belong to the archaeologist. Both must be properly curated and remain available for future use.

The weaknesses of this approach lie in the notion that “data” are pretty much self-evident or already widely agreed upon, so that the links don’t have to be spelled out between particular field and lab observations and particular kinds of inference. And of course “basic descriptive reports” are actually loaded with inferences about chronology, site functions, assemblage formation, etc. On the GCP, the notion that “comparisons, synthesis or interpretation” could be deferred sometimes led to de facto interpretations that were based more on unexamined assumptions than on appeals to evidence (Lipe 2012). But those critiques could be made about most of the archaeological reports of the day. That’s why in the 1960s, the “new archaeology” gained traction so rapidly.

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**JESSE JENNINGS WAS A FORCE OF NATURE**

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I first met him in the mid-1970s when I was working on an MA in English literature at the University of Utah. One day a man whom I had never seen before
tracked me down on campus and said, “Dr. Jennings wants to see you.” He showed me to an office in the anthropology building. When I went in, there was this rather intimidating man sitting at a big oak conference table, chain-smoking cigarettes. He said, “Dick Ford says you used to be their editor at the anthro museum at Michigan.” I replied, “Yes, I…” After that the conversation, if that’s what you’d call it, went like this:

Jennings: “Says you do real good work.”
Me: “Well, that’s very nice of him, he…”
Jennings: “I really need an editor around here. Got manuscripts stacked up; NSF is on my back.”
Me: “Oh, well, sir, I can’t really take a job right now. I’m going to school full time and…”
Jennings: “When can you start?”
Me: “No, really, sir, I can’t…”
Jennings (herding me toward the door): “How about Monday?”
Me: “But…”
Jennings (while shutting the door behind me): “Nine o’clock.”
Me (standing outside the door): “???”

So Monday morning at nine o’clock, there I was outside his door. I was afraid to not show up. Although Jennings swore that this story was not true, that’s exactly what happened, and thus began one of the more… colorful chapters in my life. My entire reason for being, from Jennings’s perspective, was to edit the manuscripts that his current and former students were turning out on the excavation of dry caves and shelters in Utah, and subsequently to edit two of his textbooks as well. I’m happy to report that I did manage to finish my MA, but I know Jennings felt that this unreasonably interfered with my higher calling.

A year or two into my tenure as Jennings’s editor, Jeremy Sabloff was hired by the U. of U. Anthropology Department, and he asked me if I would serve as the copy editor for his term as editor of *American Antiquity*. A combination of those marvelous caves and rockshelters and the theoretical ferment of the “New Archaeology,” as represented in the *American Antiquity* manuscripts that I was reading, reawakened a desire to be an archaeologist that I had set aside a decade before.

So I trotted into Jennings’s office one day and told him of my marvelous plan to go back to school and become an archaeologist. I don’t know what I thought his reaction was going to be. But I didn’t expect him to look at me, say that I wasn’t serious, that I was just a bored housewife looking for something new to do, and that he would flunk me out of the program if I attempted it. If he thought this would discourage me from making the attempt, he had, for once, misjudged his audience. I proceeded to take every 400-level cultural anthropology and archaeology course that I could get into, and when he found that not only could I do the work but I could turn out straight As in his classes, nobody could have been more genuinely supportive of my desire to go on and pursue a Ph.D.

Because, you see, that was the thing about Jennings. He gave new depths of meaning to the word “irascible.” He could be harsh and devastatingly cutting if you screwed something up or he thought you weren’t being appropriately serious about something important. But if you proved him wrong, showed that you could do whatever it was and do it right, then he would go to bat for you and get you whatever help, resources, introductions to other researchers, etc., that you needed. Even if what you wanted to do was reconstruct prehistoric social and political organization—my New Archaeology goal that he considered to be a bunch of, well, you know—the organic deposits left in the pasture by male bovines.

Jennings was a man of his time, a time that my husband calls the Era of the Great Warlords of American Archaeology. He could be arrogant, profane, sexist, and bad-tempered. He was a master culture historian, a breed whose domination of the field of archaeology was waning when I knew him. His command of Great Basin archaeology, and indeed of much of New World archaeology, was encyclopedic. He had experienced many of the seminal events and programs and people in the history of our discipline, and he could tell tales that brought that history alive for us when the mood was upon him. He was no theoretician, but he was the best dirt archaeologist I ever knew. And he made sure that his graduate students (at least the male ones) developed excellent field skills and had the experience, supervisory opportunities, and specialized training to build solid careers in archaeology.

Jennings had an enduring influence on my career as an archaeologist. His emphasis on rigorous standards of excavation, recording, and analysis, and his insistence on the obligation to publish your results in a timely fashion
(assuming that you could impress a suitable, unsuspecting young editor into servitude) formed core values in all of us. For years, every time I made what turned out to be a less than brilliant excavation strategy decision, I heard the Old Man’s voice in my head, roundly cursing me out for being such a dumb SOB. His disdain for those who dared to pronounce on an archaeological subject without first commanding the relevant literature has led to a truly monumental number of books that need to be accommodated in our house (the net number of books being directly proportional to the number of ex-Jennings students living under your roof, apparently).

For all the challenges of working for The Dark Lord (as we sometimes called him when we were certain he wasn’t within earshot), my life would have been less colorful without him and my career less rich. In spite of our various run-ins, I had an enduring (though possibly inexplicable) fondness for the man. One of the disappointments of my life was that Jennings didn’t live long enough to see me elected President of the Society for American Archaeology, a position that he had held 44 years earlier. He would have been (secretly) tickled and pleased by the whole thing—although he would never have said so out loud to me. And right there in the SAA business meeting with him sitting in the audience, I would have told that darned story about him saying that I was just a bored housewife and he was going to flunk me out of the archaeology program. And he would have waved off the irony and implied that he knew it all along.

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