

GREETINGS, FOLLOWERS OF BRASS

Welcome to the 1996 edition of the eagerly anticipated BRASS Newsletter! This year was productive. We excavated stuff, found stuff, planted stuff, and conserved stuff, all in the name of the

El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna

You want to know the specifics?

Read on . . .

JUST GETTING THERE

It was February 21, it was Santa Barbara, and it was raining when Anabel Ford and Andrew Kinkella began the 1996 Journey to Belize. Our truck, affectionately known as Big Blue, was running in rare form, and within three and a half days, we were at the Texas - Mexican border. Since this was obviously too much good fortune for the BRASS/El Pilar project, we were denied entry into Mexico because our truck was apparently full of the "unknown." We remedied the situation by merely going to another border station, but we lost an entire day of travel time. Mostly undaunted, we continued on through Mexico, tossing back many a margarita at day's end and stopping at great Mesoamerican sites such as El Tajin, Zempoala, Palenque, and Becan. Finally, on the afternoon of March 1, Big Blue rolled into the Santa Familia Monastery in Belize with three and a half thousand more miles on it than it had before. The rest of the crew, having heard of a great new invention known as the airplane, joined us at BRASS Base within the week.

TOILING IN THE FIELD

Things began a little slowly this time around, as various dig permits were in the works, so the new BRASS crew began its

mission by sorting the ceramics from the previous year. This focused on the tunnel excavations of XikNa (EP7) where we penetrated 28 meters and 2500 years into prehistory.



The road to El Pilar

But even archaeological permits do get signed after a time, and we were soon off to work at the site that dares to straddle the border, El Pilar. We were once again guided in our endeavors by field director **D. Clark Wernecke**, who was assisted this year both in the field and at BRASS Base by assistant field director **Mel Grzybowski**. Clark must have been feeling a little nostalgic, because the first unit he had us open was . . .

THE BAT CAVE, A K A ZOTZ NA

Yes, friends, the BRASS/El Pilar crew went back to Zotz Na yet again to expose some more Maya architecture and find some artifacts along the way. **Andrew Kinkella** led the way, assisted by **Ken Mitchell**. The small shaft in front of the Zotz Na entrance became a large opening, and the precarious pathway down into Zotz Na

was transformed into the “Andrew/Ken Memorial Stairway.” While enlarging the Zotz Na excavation, Ken and Andrew ran up against a wall - literally! They exposed a wall that had been missed by previous crews by less than ten centimeters of dirt. The wall, which runs perpendicular to the Zotz Na entrance, was uncovered and makes the unit very picturesque (tourists love it).



Fr. Mark explores Zotz Na

Besides Zotz Na, we also spent lots of archaeological time at . . .

PLAZA JOB OF THE H'MENA

Some archaeological units are small and precise. This is not one of them. EP22W (which stands for El Pilar temple 22, West) was an immense unit that was open for the entire field season. **Daniel Reynolds** kept things together here, along with **Bob Hibshman, Connie Kelly, Cory Conover** and **Shari Clair**. The crew was disappointed at the lack of artifacts, but rewarded with lots of amazing architectural features. Among their discoveries: El Pilar's first cord-holder at a doorway, two rooms with very well-preserved plaster benches, and a section of

wall with some of the original red paint left on it. These were spectacular in themselves, but more striking is the changes they wrought on the evolving map of the H'Mena plaza clusters. There is no central stairway up to the top of the highest pyramid of El Pilar! The labyrinth we exposed in front may hold internal stairs, but for now we don't know.

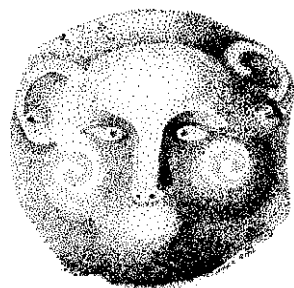


Daniel sets up EP22W photos

The EP22W crew also contributed to the environmental movement; their freshly exposed walls became a new home to a local Motmot bird.

COOL ARTIFACTS

No archaeological dig would be complete without artifacts, and we got some good ones this time around. Laura Sierra, our cook's daughter, found the most impressive object of the year while working with us as part of a career week at her school, Sacred Heart College. She unearthed a ceramic mask portraying a human/jaguar hybrid. Not only did this find excite the rest of the crew, it also gave **Carlin Moyer** something to draw besides plants.



Jaguar Head by Carlin Moyer

Ken found a nice jade ear spool, while Andrew and **Ian Lindsay** satisfied the explorer-within discovering finely shaped spear points.

TZUNU'UN, THE MAYA HOUSE

As the rest of the crew slaved away in the main center of El Pilar, Mel was busy at her very own elite residential compound along the Lakin Trail across from the main site. Since Mel was starting from scratch, she had to begin with post-hole and test pits. Helping her out were Ian, **Erica Mohar**, **Erica Gardener**, **Hanna Sanders**, and **Kate Piva**. Test pits are hard work, and when the tired crew was finally finished and began with the structures, they were treated to a symphony, courtesy of your friendly neighborhood cicadas.



Plan of Tzunu'un, by Paul Bailly
Actually, Tzunu'un became a rather large

undertaking, with the foundation walls of the largest houses being exposed near the end of the season. It is destined to become an example of a **MAYA HOUSE**, which will display how the Maya lived from day to day, featuring a variety of household activities based on interpretations from the archaeology. It will also be closely associated with the . . .

FOREST GARDEN

Maya pyramids are impressive to look at, but they aren't the only thing in the Maya universe. What about food, medicine, oils, timber, resin, fuel, and tools? Work began this year on the **MAYA FOREST GARDEN**, a veritable smorgasbord of the most important of Maya plants, all living and growing right before your eyes on the Lakin trail. **Constanza Ocampo-Conover** oversaw this venture, with **Sharon Watson** helping out interviewing the traditional farmers — "consejeros." Our work with the consejeros has revealed that the Mayan language holds some of the secrets to stewardship of the forest. We are anxious to explore these links. The Forest-Garden of El Pilar is strategically situated around the **MAYA HOUSE**, which should give the humble visitor to El Pilar a sense of the relationship between inhabitants and food source.



Consejeros— Don Beto, Don

Cocom, Don Lut and Feliz Tzul at El Pilar

AMIGOS DE EL PILAR



BE PUKTE

The development of the community based organization of Amigos de El Pilar moved forward with the establishment of the Be Pukte, or Bullet Tree Road in Mayan. There is now a building and nascent garden at the small Maya mound site in Bullet Tree Falls. This is a focal point for the Amigos meetings and sponsored events.

BURN, BABY, BURN

While Constanza and crew were busy conserving the forest, **Ernie Bury** was busy burning it down. He did some experiments on the intensity of the flame that a Corozo palm produces. The wood was weighed, placed in a "calera" or lime kiln (a crib-like structure) and burned. Limestone was placed on top, which would turn into quicklime with the addition of flame. The experiments proved conclusively that Corozo does indeed burn, and buckets of quicklime are very heavy.

FIESTA '96

We came. We saw. We got rained on. So what if it rained? So what if the All Star Steel Band had to cancel because the bass drum player was sick? Some two thousand of our closest friends from Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico joined us this year, and were entertained by the primary and secondary winners of the Cayo Arts Festival. Praise was bestowed upon us by various speakers from the

community, and near the end of the day, the rain let up long enough to let the Hog's Head dancers of Bullet Tree Falls do their thing. The generator even ran when needed, providing hot Belizean tunes courtesy of Radio Rhythm.

MEXICAN CONSERVATORS TO THE RESCUE

El Pilar has lots of things, but one thing it doesn't have is building consolidation - until now. A contingent of conservators from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) in Mexico spearheaded the first ever consolidation at our site, and the results were very fine indeed. They chose the slowly crumbling doorway of Zotz Na as their target, and Zotz Na crumbles no more! The conservators painstakingly took out every stone in the doorway facade, and re-cemented them back in using new mortar. They also filled in some of the looter's holes inside the Zotz Na tunnel. The Maya would be proud.

FROM THE DESK OF ANABEL FORD

While the rest of the crew was busy finding neat stuff at the site, Anabel was busy slogging through Central-American amounts of red tape at the Belizean capital of Belmopan, and in Guatemala as well. Was her trowel sharp enough to cut through it all? Here's what Anabel has to say: "If the ancient Maya are mysterious, there is nothing more mysterious than the creation of the El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna, and the alphabet soup that has surrounded the El Pilar vision like a magnet." In some order of appearance: GOB, DOA, BTIA, NARMAP, UNDP, USAID, UQROO, INAH, ADEP, IDAEH, CCAD, INGUAT,

SAA, RAF, UK, EU, MERGE, BCB, BTF, BEST, BCES, RUPEL, CEM, UNAM, SI, CUDEP, UCSB, CORI . . .

But progress is evident. The Amigos de El Pilar have a solid constituency, the caretakers are involved in maintaining El Pilar, Belize tourism is now including the site as a feature destination, the Belize Prime Minister personally visited El Pilar, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia provided technical assistance, CCAD sponsored a binational workshop for the promotion of the reserve, the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation gave seed money for the project, and supporters from all quarters have surfaced.



CCAD at El Pilar with Anabel

El Pilar is now a reality, but the structure base is still just Anabel. We hope that this multidisciplinary and international cast of characters can form up into a real program. For that, we are planning a Mesa Redonda in Mexico City with the support of **Carol Miller** in January, 1997, bringing the major players together for the first time. Wish us

luck.

AT THE HOME OFFICE

While some get to have adventures deep in the heart of Mayaland, others keep the BRASS/El Pilar Program afloat with their dedicated work in Santa Barbara. **Sydney Ciener**, our Lab Director at UCSB, assiduously tackles the unanalyzed ceramics which would otherwise grow to unimaginable proportions. But that is not all. Syd has applied her unique artistic talents towards El Pilar. The HEAD of our letterhead is the result of her expert hand and major artistic contributions in our new trail guide are of her design. **Eric White** is our resident computer expert, and any kudos we get from our web page are his to share. He has mastered the arcane language of HTML while bringing valuable new information on El Pilar to the computer viewing public. Our web site is: <http://alishaw.sscf.ucsb.edu/~ford/index.html> give us your feedback. Without the help of **Hanna Kahra**, we would have more great disasters in spelling and punctuation. Many a draft report, proposal (successful and otherwise), and paper had to undergo her scrutiny. **Christian Andersen's** perserverance has brought order to the office and he has a good friend in the xerox machine. **Coast Blue Print** has provided all our printing and given good advice for poster layouts. Many others have contributed time to the project over the course of the year and are very much appreciated. There are so many facets of the project and help has come from every quarter.

Thanks to everyone!

BUY OUR STUFF

You want to own some books about El Pilar and the local Belizean scene? Go no

further. *Maya Sites of Belize* by Anabel Ford is a great book to have for archaeological travel in Belize, and you'll only be \$14 poorer if you want it. *Teo's Way* will only lighten your wallet by \$10, and includes unique stories about Belizean life as told by Teo, one of our site caretakers. It's written in phonetic Creole, and a great way to learn about Belizean folklore and the Creole language. A publicity packet of publications and news articles can be had for \$25. We also have a short video (15 minutes) containing *Fiesta El Pilar '95* and *CCAD Meeting '96* for \$25. Order now!

Maya Sites of Belize , \$14.00

Teo's Way , \$10.00

BRASS/El Pilar Publicity, \$25.00

Fiesta/CCAD video, \$25.00

I am enclosing \$_____ made payable to Anabel Ford for my books and/or video (postage is already included).

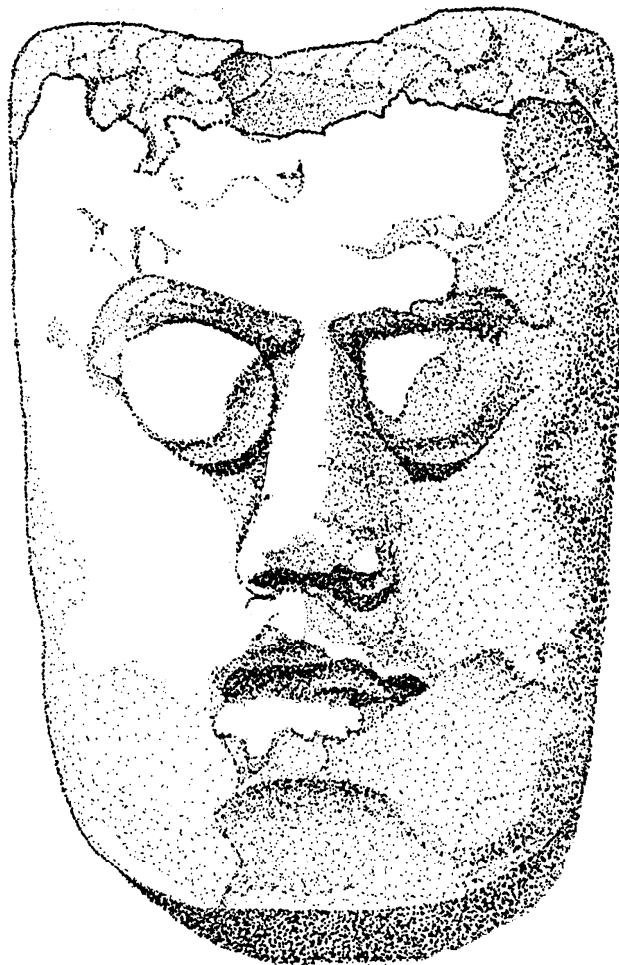
CASH FLOW, OR LACK THEREOF

To become a Close Personal Friend of BRASS/El Pilar (and keep getting this informative newsletter), send a tax-deductible contribution of \$40 or more made out to the Regents of the Univ. of California, and fill out the enclosed form. For the truly adventurous, a \$2,100 contribution will get you all the tortillas you can eat and a two week stint on the '97 team. Write for details.

INFINITY AND BEYOND

Boundaries for the Guatemalan side of the Binational Park? Maybe. A rock concert at Pilar? It's possible. Andrew

finally finishing the El Pilar videos?
Don't push it.



The H'Mena Cabeza
by Sydney Ciener