

Going beyond Professional and Research “Enclaves:” An Appreciation of Michael W. Spence

Christopher Ellis, Neal Ferris, Christine White and Peter Timmins

It is a great pleasure for us to offer this collection of papers from colleagues and former students of Michael Spence, recently retired as Professor of Anthropology from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. It is entirely appropriate that this volume is a joint publication of the London Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society, through its occasional publication series, and of the Ontario Archaeological Society, through its flagship journal, *Ontario Archaeology*. Mike has been a long time supporter of the Ontario Archaeological Society, and was a charter member of the London Chapter, publishing extensively in both *Ontario Archaeology* and the Chapter's newsletter. And just as this volume wears two hats, Mike Spence has never been content to wear only one hat. He has truly been a “Compleat Archaeologist.”

As a glance at his numerous publications (Mike's bibliography is provided at the end of this introduction) and the papers in this volume make obvious, Mike Spence has always been someone who has worked in a diversity of areas using a range of theoretical perspectives, methodologies and data sources. He has contributed substantially to Ontario/Great Lakes Archaeology through work both on the archaeology and bioarchaeology of the Woodland period. Yet, he also has been a major contributor to Mesoamerican archaeology through his years of research at the major Mexican urban centre of Teotihuacan, again researching both the archaeology and the bioarchaeology of this complex civilization. He has not been content to carry out simply ivory tower academic research but has also used his considerable skills in applied research, notably through his long term involvement in forensic investigations assisting the southwestern Ontario law enforcement community. In addition, he has not been wedded to any one theoretical approach. Mike started out using more cultural

historical (e.g. Spence 1964, 1967a) and materialistic (e.g. Spence 1982a) kinds of theoretical frameworks, although he has always foregrounded the pivotal role of social meaning, specifically social relationships, in his work (e.g. Spence 1974c, 1974d, 1982a, 2005; Spence and Gamboa 1999; Spence et al. 2004, 2005). However, in his ever evolving research he has also embraced explanations and theoretical positions that are more eclectic, ranging across contextual to interpretive archaeologies, with emphasis on human agency and the role of factors such as gender in archaeological interpretation (e.g. Spence 1999b, 2005). He has not only been a superb researcher but also an exemplary teacher, having introduced archaeology to a large number of undergraduates who have gone on to graduate school and careers in the field. He has supervised, or involved in his fieldwork and forensic investigations, a large number of graduate students since the University of Western Ontario introduced an MA program in 1996. Finally, Mike is certainly not an armchair archaeologist. While he may be very happy working in the lab and writing papers, he also loves to do fieldwork and especially if his travels also provide him opportunities to sample local food and drink like alligator sausage (or any other kind of sausage), cheeseburgers, maple glazed donuts and of course, dark beer (always outside of the watchful eye of his wife Jean).

Mike Spence: A Not So Compleat History

Michael Wishart Spence was born in 1941 in Toronto, Ontario, the first child and only son of Wishart Flett Spence and Elizabeth Spence (nee Potvin). Mike came from a distinguished family. His grandfather was a Canadian senator and his

father was an esteemed lawyer who had become a judge of the Supreme Court of Ontario, and eventually, a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. Mike's grandfather had also been a lawyer, so Mike's decision in high school to become an archaeologist was a real break with tradition. Because he was the only son in the family, his father may have been disappointed but the gentleman kept such thoughts to himself. To what can we attribute Mike's choice of archaeology as a career? As professional archaeologists we may decry the excesses and downright implausibility of "cult archaeology," but it has attracted many to academic pursuits and Mike is one such example. While escaping from swim class, Mike used to spend his time in the school library (which says something about his predilection for scholarship). He came across a book, the title has long been forgotten, in which Old World dragon boats were related to the Mesoamerican Feathered Serpent, Quetzalcoatl, in a diffusionist argument for an ancient connection between Vikings and Mesoamerican civilizations. It sparked Mike's fascination with Mexican archaeology seriously enough that he took high school Spanish courses to prepare himself for a career of archaeological discovery. It was not just destiny that led him to do the bioarchaeology of the sacrifices at the Feathered Serpent Pyramid (otherwise known as the Temple of Quetzalcoatl) in Teotihuacan, but this kind of serious academic preparation.

There were few places in Canada where one could pursue studies in archaeology at this time, but the University of Toronto was one and Mike started courses there in the fall of 1959, receiving his BA in 1963. He subsequently enrolled in the MA program at Toronto and received that degree in 1964. As an undergraduate he met the archaeologist J. Norman Emerson, who was one of the founders of modern Iroquoian archeology in Ontario. Mike took undergraduate courses from Emerson and through him, directly or indirectly, gained summer fieldwork experience at several sites including the 16th century Huron village of Warminster, Ontario, which was believed by many to be the site of Cahiagué visited by the early French explorer Samuel de Champlain. It was through Emerson's auspices that Mike was

able to get summer experience in 1961 working on some sites in Illinois under the direction of Melvin "Mike" Fowler. The following year (1962) Mike worked in northern Ontario near Blind River at sites that were being excavated under the direction of Emerson's student, Helen Devereux, and at the LeVesconte mound, a Middle Woodland site in the lower Trent River system of eastern Ontario that was being investigated by Walter Kenyon, the Ontario archaeologist at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). In the summer of 1963 he gained additional field experience working on several sites for Parks Canada in Quebec and the Maritimes, including the famous site of Louisburg.

As an undergraduate, Mike was also influenced by James Anderson, an anatomist and the father of Canadian skeletal biology, and the physical anthropologist, Lawrence Oschinsky, the only two academic physical anthropologists in Canada at the time! James Anderson was an MD appointed to both the Anatomy and Anthropology departments at Toronto until 1963 (Jerkic 2001), and Mike was subjected to his brutal lab exams in which the students were required to use only touch to identify individual finger and toe bones through a sock or mitten (which turned out to be very fine training for Mike's future forensic work). Anderson laid the basis for many subsequent studies of skeletal material through his numerous detailed publications on the human remains from a range of Middle and Late Woodland sites in Ontario and adjacent areas. Moreover, he also published analyses of skeletal materials on sites in Nubia, working with Fred Wendorf, and from the Tehuacan Valley of Mexico, working with R. S. MacNeish. Anderson's consuming interest in osteology and paleopathology, and notably, the use of skeletal material to investigate ancient social systems, was readily transferred to an eager-to-learn Mike Spence.

When James Anderson departed to take up an academic position elsewhere in 1963, he was replaced by Lawrence Oschinsky, an osteologist who had been at the National Museum of Canada and is perhaps best known today for his studies of Inuit skeletal biology (Ossenberg 2001). Mike took a senior undergraduate course

from Oschinsky and this class resulted in Mike's first published work, a multi-authored publication in which some widely held ideas about hominid taxonomy and human origins were rebutted (Oschinsky et al. 1964). Amongst these co-authors was fellow student, Sally Weaver (Wilson) who would be the first woman to be granted a PhD in Anthropology (Sociocultural, University of Toronto, 1967) by a Canadian institution (Ellis likes to mention this as he is a proud student of the late Sally Weaver), and who is recognized by the Canadian Anthropology Association (CASCA) for her many contributions to applied anthropology in Canada through their Weaver-Tremblay Award. In many ways Mike was connected directly and indirectly to the founding of what now can be recognized as the modern version of the academic discipline of Anthropology in Canada. We would also argue that he was the first to bridge the schism between archaeology and skeletal biology that existed in Canada in the 1960s and lasted until the early 1990s. He is probably Canada's first seriously practicing bioarchaeologist, never willing to give up either his osteology or archaeology training.

Mike moved on to an MA at the University of Toronto immediately after completion of his BA. For his MA research paper, Mike presented a detailed comparative analysis of Early to Middle Woodland assemblages, examining them for evidence of Hopewellian influences (Spence 1964). In this work, he espoused a central interest in the earlier segment of Woodland archaeology, and the nature and process of long distance cultural interaction, that continues to the present day. Mike often downplays his MA research paper but those of us who have managed to read it recognize it as an insightful work revealing the meticulous attention to detail and comprehensive understanding of the literature that characterizes Mike's work to this day (fittingly, the Museum of Ontario Archaeology has a copy of this rare tome in its library!). Through his contact with Walter Kenyon, who had initially piqued his interest in the Middle Woodland, Mike was able to directly examine material from some important Ontario assemblages held at the ROM in Toronto, including those from a Cameron's Point site burial

mound on Rice Lake, excavated in 1952 under the direction of J. Russell Harper (an affiliate of the ROM) as well as the collections recovered from several burial sites recovered from the St. Lawrence River Valley in the late 1800s. He later published detailed reports on these sites (Spence 1967d; Spence and Harper 1968) and returned to the Cameron's Point skeletal material over 30 years later in the supervision of an MA thesis by Kate Dougherty, whose work with the collections resulted in a presentation that won the Canadian Anthropology Association for Physical Anthropology award for best student paper at their conference in 2002.

During his MA studies Mike came into contact with Dr. Bruce Drewitt who had recently joined the faculty at Toronto. It was Drewitt who enabled Mike to act on his long standing desire to become involved in Mesoamerican archaeology. Drewitt, while studying at the University of California-Berkeley, had become involved in mapping the massive urban centre of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico, under the direction of René Millon, University of Rochester. Mike was hired for the summer survey and René Millon, impressed with his capabilities, ended up hiring him for the whole year to work on this project, with Mike and Bruce Drewitt undertaking survey with Mexican workmen. This experience introduced Mike to Pedro Baños, a local resident from a successful family who was a head workman on the project and who became Mike's compadre, a special relationship that Mike values very much even to this day. It was Pedro who taught Mike how to do field survey and lead field teams in Mexico.

Because there was very little in the way of Canadian archaeology PhD programs in the 1960s, Mike decided to pursue a PhD in the USA at Southern Illinois University (SIU) in Carbondale. The Teotihuacan surveys recovered large amounts of obsidian artifacts and debris. This abundance seemed unusual and greatly piqued Mike's interest to the point of being "desperate" (his word) to work on these assemblages, so when René Millon asked him what he wanted to work on for his PhD research and, not waiting for an answer, said "how about obsidian?", Mike did not hesitate to accept.

One reason Mike went to SIU was because scholars there worked in both the Midwest/Northeast and Mesoamerica. Amongst these was Melvin Fowler with whom Mike had worked with as an undergraduate field crew member but unfortunately, Fowler left SIU soon after Mike's arrival. The late J. Charles Kelly, who had been a founding member of the Anthropology program at SIU, became Mike's supervisor. Although Kelly had begun his archaeology career working in the Southwest and in Texas archaeology, and had even dabbled in Illinois archaeology, he had recently expanded his research to Western Mexico. Mike has described him as a "cool and nice guy" who taught him "never to believe what you first hear". A postmodernist ahead of his time, Kelly had students in his Southwestern Archaeology course take a particular explanation for a cultural phenomenon and deconstruct it. Mike's contact with Kelly also facilitated access to western Mexican collections, enabling him to broaden his knowledge of Mesoamerican obsidian collections. This access led to several publications, often written in collaboration with fellow graduate student Phil Weigand (e.g. Spence 1971; Spence et al. 1980, 1993; Weigand and Spence 1989, 1993).

While it was Mike's intention to do his PhD on the Teotihuacan obsidian industry, he had been involved on the side in the analyses of recovered skeletal material, work that reflected his long standing interest in osteology as a source of social information. When it became clear that the amount of information recovered on the obsidian industry was so extensive that Mike would never be able to cover it adequately in a dissertation, he switched his graduate research focus to the skeletal material. While some may have been initially sceptical of the ability to extract information on social structure from the Teotihuacan skeletal data, J. Charles Kelly was very supportive of this work. Mike persevered and successfully completed his PhD dissertation in 1971. He published two articles on that PhD work in 1974 (Spence 1974c, 1974d) but the thesis itself was not fully published until 1994 (Spence 1994a). In spite of the new direction he took, Mike did not completely neglect the Teotihuacan obsidian during this time, and published some of his obsidian

studies while still a graduate student (Spence 1967a, 1967b, 1967d). These are classic works that continue to be commonly referenced today.

Mike's participation in the Teotihuacan research brought him into contact with many other well-known and influential international archaeologists and physical anthropologists (including George Cowgill, William Sanders, Jeffrey Parsons, Evelyn Rattray, Rebecca Storey, Saburo Sugiyama and Gregory Pereira), many of whom were Mexican (including Ruben Cabrera, Carlos Serrano, Linda Manzanilla and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma). The Spanish he took in high school served him well and he garnered enormous respect from his international colleagues because he was careful to read and acknowledge the Spanish language literature, made sure that his work in Mexico was made available in Spanish and published in Mexican sources, and he always conducted his research with the highest respect for Mexican heritage and to the highest ethical standards.

The late 1960s to early 1970s was a time of major expansion in Canadian universities and in 1970 Mike was asked to join the newly formed Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Ontario in London. Mike brought his young family to London, including his wife Jean whom he had first met at SIU when she was an undergraduate art student there. They were married in 1967, and Jean had spent the early part of their marriage in Mexico looking after their first daughter, Tanya, while Mike intensively studied the materials that would be the focus of his dissertation. By the time they came to London, their family expanded to include a second daughter, Cassandra, and Jean discovered a very active artistic community in London, beginning her long and successful career as an artist. Today, their daughters have pursued their own careers (outside of archaeology [and law!]) and families, and as of 2002 Mike and Jean are doting grandparents to Leona.

When Mike arrived in London, he was only the third member of the department and the first person with a speciality in archaeology and biological anthropology. And while the department gradually grew over the following two decades,

Mike often remained the sole representative of those two anthropological subfields. From time to time there were other archaeological and biological appointments in the department, but these were usually temporary, sometimes part-time. In the early years after his arrival archaeology grew to be a very active local community. In 1977 a regional archaeology office of the Ontario Ministry of Culture opened in London (an institution with which Mike would work closely on human burial investigations over the following decades), and the London Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society was formed (Mike was a charter member and continues to be a frequent contributor to their newsletter *Kewa*). Meanwhile, Ontario archaeology at the university was centred at the affiliated Museum of Ontario Archaeology (founded at the University in the 1930s as the Museum of Indian Archaeology and Pioneer Life under the direction of curator Wilfred Jury). Although initially located on campus, the Museum was moved in 1981 to a modern building off campus under the direction of Dr. William Finlayson, who subsequently became the Lawson Chair of Canadian Archaeology, a position based in that institution. There is some kind of irony involved in the fact that Mike ended his career at Western holding this same position.

Although Mike was able to introduce and inspire many an undergraduate student to pursue studies in archaeology and physical anthropology between the 1970s and 1990, these fields remained a marginal focus in UWO's Anthropology Department, and for graduate studies students needed to go elsewhere. This situation began to change in 1990, when Christine White, a Mesoamerican bioarchaeologist/isotopic anthropologist, and Chris Ellis, an Ontario-Great Lakes archaeologist, were both hired to the department (Notably both worked in his favourite areas!).

At Western Mike continued to pursue his long-term research interests in Ontario and Mesoamerica. He carried out additional fieldwork in Ontario, notably his excavations at the Late Archaic to Early Woodland Bruce Boyd cemetery (Spence et al. 1978), and to explore more broadly the nature of Early to Middle

Woodland society and social relations (e.g. Spence 1986c; Spence and Fryer 2005). Indeed, he is widely recognized as the leading Ontario researcher working in this time period and, not surprisingly, has been asked to write many syntheses of the archaeology from those eras (Ferris and Spence 1995; Spence and Fox 1986; Spence et al. 1979, 1990; Spence and Pihl 1984). With the rise of CRM archaeology, and because of his expertise in skeletal analysis, Mike also began to be called upon to examine and report upon discoveries resulting from work in this field. As such he has carried out numerous osteological analyses of finds from Late Archaic to Historic period Euro-Canadian cemeteries, often working with students (e.g. Cook et al. 1985, 1986; Molto et al. 1986; Spence 1983a; 1994b; 1996b, 1998b).

Mike's expertise in osteology, combined with his meticulous field methods, also led to his long-term work assisting law enforcement agencies and this work also resulted in publications (Spence 1995, 1999a; Spence et al. 1996). He has not only found himself up to his knees in a variety of substances, hanging off of cliffs at all times of day and all seasons of the year, but also teamed up with long-standing colleague and MD pathologist, Dr. Mike Shkrum, in the hospital autopsy room. His expert testimony (or threat of) has led to many convictions, and he has worked on several high profile cases (the latest being the “Banditos”).

Along with helping to put bad guys behind bars, many of Mike's forensic investigations provided formative experiences for graduate students, and some cases were so thorough and innovative that they influenced law enforcement and forensic studies. Mike's 1987 investigation of a rural homicide scene is a good example. In November of that year Mike received a call from the Ontario Provincial Police asking him to investigate some human skeletal remains found in a wooded ravine along a country road. The remains were suspected to be those of a young girl who had disappeared in 1980 while delivering newspapers. The investigation involved the cooperation of the Ontario Provincial Police, the Canadian Armed Forces and an archaeological crew provided by the Museum of Archaeology.

While the military “tented” the site with tarps and brought in propane heaters and additional lighting, the OPP set up an operations centre in a nearby garage. The archaeological crew (including Timmins) established a one metre grid over the site and spent six chilly days carefully excavating and mapping skeletal elements and associated items. Most of the remains were covered by a few cm of soil, but they were deposited on a slight slope and some bones, including the cranium, had eroded downslope from their original locations. Mike was able to reconstruct the original position of the body through the meticulous mapping of skeletal elements, clothing-related material and other personal items. On the strength of this evidence, a local man was charged with murder, confessed, and was given a lengthy sentence. The case became a model for the investigation of “stale” crime scenes. OPP detectives videotaped the entire process, both for evidence and training purposes, while Mike published an account of the investigation as a case study of an anthropological investigation of a rural crime scene (Spence 1999a).

Mike has also worked on the bones of those who were convicted in the past (historical burials of criminals unearthed during construction), and has become the Canadian expert on hanged men and the men who hanged them. He was able to identify the work of specific hangmen because of his affinity for observing meticulous detail in fracture patterning and his enduring interest in the human story motivated him to do so (Spence et al. 1999).

While Mike has done considerable work in Ontario, his continuing research on understanding the social, economic, and political organization of Teotihuacan has received the bulk of his published attention. In the late 1980s he initiated a field project at Teotihuacan excavating in the Zapotec Barrio, Tlailotlacan, in order to understand the role of various ethnic enclaves at the site (e.g. Spence 1989, 1993, 1996c, 2005). He has contributed his expertise in skeletal analysis to many other field projects carried out at Teotihuacan and sites related to it, and, with Martha Sempowski, wrote “The Green Bible” of mortuary practices at Teotihuacan (Sempowski

and Spence 1994). His work at Teotihuacan was greatly enhanced by the arrival of Christine White at Western because through isotopic analyses they could begin to trace the origins of the very diverse individuals that made up the population of this major urban centre. Their fruitful collaboration has resulted in many publications in which they have reconstructed several of the military, economic, ethnic and gender dynamics of the site and the different kinds of control that the state exercised among the city’s neighbourhoods, as well as within its sphere of influence throughout Mesoamerica (e.g. Spence et al. 2004a, 2004b, 2005; White et al. 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2007). Perhaps the most dramatic of all his Teotihuacan work culminated in the analysis of skeletons from the city’s two most spectacular and internationally prominent monuments: the Feathered Serpent Pyramid (remember the book that inspired him in his teenage years) and the Pyramid of the Moon (Pereira and Spence 2004; Spence and Pereira 2007). The t-shirts he sports from these projects are among his favourites.

In 1996 Western began offering a graduate degree (MA) with a focus on archaeology or bioarchaeology, which opened a floodgate of students interested in working with Mike because of his diverse interests. He ended up supervising more students in these fields than any other single faculty member ($n = 13$) between 1997 and 2006. As part of the graduate program Mike was responsible for teaching the core archaeological theory course, one in which he continually stressed his long-term interests in social relationships, including questions of gender, identity and agency. Class discussions exposed him to a broad range of literature in this area — a classic example of teaching feeding back into research. One of the remarkable aspects of Mike’s academic character is his theoretical adaptability (for that matter his general adaptability — Mike even taught himself to type in the early 1990s when it became apparent the university was no longer able to provide secretarial support and of course, there was a need to use e-mail!). He never allowed himself to get stuck in the theoretical time-warp of his training period.

In 2000 Mike was asked to participate in a School of American Research seminar in Santa Fe, New Mexico on “The Archaeology of Colonization in Cross-Cultural Perspective” where he did a presentation on aspects of his Teotihuacan work (later published as Spence 2005). This seminar put him into direct contact with a number of researchers, such as Michael Dietler, who were employing a range of theoretical approaches that Mike has found very useful and inspiring. That “colonial encounter” led him to consider using thinkers such as Bourdieu and Foucault in his work. They became a regular component of Mike’s theoretical lexicon, one he was more than willing to share with his students. Indeed, not long after that seminar Ferris recalls Mike saying that Michael Dietler told him that he had liked his ideas — they were very much in line with Bourdieu’s. So Mike read Bourdieu’s work, and in typical fashion commented “who knew I was channelling Bourdieu?” He happily looked for opportunities to play with those ideas even more overtly, even integrating them with stable isotope data generated by Christine White (e.g. White et al. 2004).

An Enthusiastic, Pragmatic Pluralist: Mike Spence's Contribution to Archaeology

It is not an easy task to define what kind of archaeologist Mike Spence is because he tends to wear more hats than there are maple glazed doughnuts in a Tim Horton’s. As stressed, he is an osteologist and bioarchaeologist, seeking to tell life histories and understand social processes reflected in the osteological and mortuary data he is analysing. He is a Mesoamerican archaeologist who works on Ontario archaeology, bringing a broader perspective to this field by seeking to understand how the ancient peoples of the Great Lakes connected to, shaped, and were shaped by the broader ancient past of eastern North America. He is an Ontario archaeologist working in Mexico, seeking to understand how communities in urban enclaves lived and maintained identities that connected to the broader ancient past of Mexico. He is an academic scholar who inves-

tigates and deals with the hard and harsh realities and consequences of forensic investigations, and always respecting the deceased and the stories they have to tell, regardless of whether they are months or millennia old. And he is an archaeological scientist who has, for decades, been concerned with being able to communicate his findings to wider constituencies, generating plain language versions of detailed osteological reports so that First Nation communities, landowners and clients, law enforcement officers and even government archaeologists can equally appreciate the stories the dead have yielded to him through his detailed analyses.

A distinct aspect of Mike’s work is the close, detailed study he makes in the field and in the lab. Indeed, Mike’s method of field operation with skeletal material often stands in stark contrast to the many commercial archaeology or CRM contexts in which he has been involved. Ferris, in his former guise as a government archaeologist, has been on more than one project with Mike at an excavation under the direction of a CRM firm. When Mike is carefully analyzing, recording and excavating a deposit of skeletal remains in those contexts, he can look like a still life painting entitled “Scholar in Squatted Contemplation,” where he serves as a kind of a fixed focal point while a fast-forwarded film entitled “CRM Crew Efficiently and Expediently Excavates a Site” plays all around him. This slow, meticulous and careful process of data collection is replicated in forensic cases and in the lab, and is the hallmark of his work. This process often includes returning to re-examine individual elements on several occasions to refresh his mind, to double or triple check an observation he had made previously or to scratch a nagging thought that something else was there to note.

Mike has employed a very eclectic mix of orientations. He works through cultural historical constructions of the archaeological record to understand the human history of the past, often relying on detailed science-based studies to get to very non-processual interpretations about social interaction, agency, gender and identity. The common point of his work, though, is to best understand the past by drawing out the deepest

and most meaningful insights he can from the ancestors or materials he is examining. His theoretical leanings make it evident that he has little interest in simply describing the data he observes. Rather, data enter that head of his and nestle into the deep and broad context of knowing the literature and understanding the conceptual tools of reading the past through these materials. Then they are rigorously sorted, ordered, then re-sorted and re-ordered with his added insight. But also very importantly, Mike is no slave to theoretical fads or camps. The data with which he is engaged tend to re-sort and re-order theoretical prisms in his head, sometimes revealing gaps in particular theoretical frameworks he's employing and causing him to reject concepts that don't accommodate the data. Such situations typically send him off to the library to read up on alternatives that will help improve the interpretations he draws from the data (he would have made a simply outstanding lawyer!).

The quality of the work Mike does across a diverse range of topical and theoretical foci is inspiring. However, the real object lesson that many take from their time studying or working with Mike arises from his enjoyment of, and deep and honest enthusiasm for, the practice of archaeology and osteology. Whether interacting with Mike in the field, interacting with him in the lab, writing papers with him, or meeting him at an archaeological conference, the pleasure he exhibits for what he is doing, and for the company around him, is genuinely infectious. It serves as a reminder of why our profession is indeed unique and privileged, and provides us with a distinct way of looking at the world around us. And through Mike's example, we are also reminded of why we should never let doing archaeology drift too far away from being "fun," because then it becomes far more difficult to "do" good archaeology, and something we might need to retire from, rather than into!

Mike's unbridled enthusiasm helps him to advance a kind of pragmatic, theoretical pluralism and flexible, contextual framing of the past that is something archaeologists like Bruce Trigger have suggested is a hallmark of the best that arises from a distinct Canadian archaeological perspec-

tive. Or it may just be that the best forms of archaeological interpretation marry theory with data and a fairness and openness to interpretative construction. Regardless of the distinction, we would argue there is no better case study of this kind of excellence in archaeology than Mike's substantial bibliography. And though he retired in 2006, Mike truly has not "retired", except from those aspects of his former job he never liked doing (marking, committee meetings, administration, committee meetings, marking). He continues to write and publish, handle forensic cases, assist local CRM firms, drink dark beer and wear Teotihuacan t-shirts. The large number of students he has taught, as well as colleagues he has inspired, inspired us to develop a day-long symposium in his honour at the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Archaeological Society in 2006. This volume represents a cross-section of the papers given that day. We hope it provides testament to the broad range of interests this "compleat" archaeologist holds, and the breadth of inspiration he has spread in the community. To reflect these diverse interests we have divided the papers into three sections reflecting substantive and theoretical concerns dear to Mike's heart: Ontario Archaeology, Osteology, and Ethnicity and Identity. It is an honour for all of the participants to honour him in this way.

Students Writing on Mike's "Wall"

In pulling together this introduction, we asked a number of Mike's former students to offer some reminiscences and comments on the influence Mike had on their own career paths and shaping of archaeological practice. We offer just a sampling of these below:

Jeremy Cunningham

Mike was always quick to note in class that Canadian Archaeology was neither processual or postprocessual, but was its own thing. This was the first I'd heard of theory not as something one swore allegiance to, but as a "tool" that could be used where it worked and discarded where it didn't. It was exactly what I needed when I

showed up in London – previously I figured that theory was all important and the data were largely plastic and able to be molded into just about any form. Allison Wylie [a professor of Philosophy at Western at the time] was pretty willing to see me do a thesis without much analysis, but Mike put his foot down and said that there had to be data! I wasn't too sure about it at first, but he was definitely right. Perhaps the most important thing I learned during that project was to respect the ability of data to constrain interpretations. I had a story written for the Van Bree site I was analyzing before I'd even opened the boxes. But I ended up writing a thesis that was completely different from my expectations. Not surprisingly, when I went on to McGill for my PhD, Bruce Trigger basically gave the same advice before I left for Mali - “just figure out what's going on there.” Mike's fascination with discovering the unexpected by paying careful attention to the data was positively infectious for all his students. I find myself often repeating his advice to my own students: “just listen to the data.”

I think it was also Mike who first mentioned the need to defend the rights of science in the face of political pressure. I remember this from his discussions of NAGPRA and the CAA code of ethics in our theory class. On the surface, I thought he was simply defending access to the bones he loved to study, but I think he was actually certain that scientific knowledge could be a force for good in the world (a position not popular in much of the post-modern literature we were often reading). It wasn't that Native concerns should be ignored, but that false interpretations created by purposefully suppressing the data wouldn't help anyone in the long run, so you might as well do the analysis and get it right.

The other thing I remember about Mike's classes was his lack of pretention. He'd have us bring in articles and if he knew them, he'd let us discuss them and then give us his opinion. However, if he didn't know a particular article, he would suddenly become the most interested and engaged person at the table. I still remember being shocked the first time I heard him matter-of-factly state “I've never heard of that, tell me what its all about.” Up until then, I'd expected

academics to either know everything or at least pretend to, but not Mike. As his TA, I saw him do that in most of his classes. He was pretty comfortable knowing what he knew and telling other people when he didn't know something. I have to say that every time I now respond to some question in a class with “I don't know”, I think about Mike doing it in his introduction to archaeology and bioarchaeology course. If can admit he didn't know something, then those of us who really don't know much should be able to do it as well!

Kevin Gibbs

Mike was a great MA thesis supervisor. He was always open to discussing new ideas and sharing his thoughts on pottery, archaeological theory, and working at Teotihuacan. He even let me tag along on one of his frequent trips to Mexico, so I could collect data for my thesis. On our first day at the site he gave me a tour of Teotihuacan's Street of the Dead, which was amazing. But most days during the trip were spent doing analysis in the lab. Mike would wake up in the early morning and work late into the night (although usually with a bottle of Negra Modelo or rum close by). It was hard to keep up. If he wasn't working on examining human remains, he could be found analyzing pottery or obsidian, or giving advice to both local and foreign students on one of his many areas of expertise. Mike's work on the Oaxaca barrio is a must-read for anyone studying the archaeology of identity and ethnicity and it continues to influence my research. His ability to integrate archaeological theory with a methodological rigour is something I strive to emulate in my own work. I am grateful for the advice, guidance and support he gave to me and to all of his students (and, of course, for sharing that bottle of rum).

Linda Howie

At least part of who we are, what we do and what we champion as professional academics can be traced genealogically from the teachers and mentors we met along the way. A few of these individuals stand out in our minds for the unique and lasting impression they made on us, and especially for their example and guidance during

that awkward phase of academic adolescence that lies between undergraduate and postdoctoral pursuits. These “academic parents” are those individuals who were there to offer direction, support and words of encouragement, as we struggled to stand on our own two feet as researchers and achieve complete independence and autonomy in our research endeavors. They gave us a pat on the back or a kick in the pants when we needed it most and they made even the smallest personal victories along the road to project completion seem that much sweeter. These are the people who we respected and admired on both a professional and personal basis and who continue to inspire us to be better academics. Mike Spence is one of these sorts of people, one that I met along the way.

I was Mike’s first graduate student at UWO, joining the first cohort of Bioarchaeology Master’s students in 1996. I share with Mike a keen interest in the archaeology of the Great Lakes Region, and it was our common interest in the Praying Mantis Site, a small Early Iroquoian village in the Byron area of London, Ontario, that led to Mike’s supervision of my Master’s thesis project on the Praying Mantis ceramics. I will always remember Mike for his infectious enthusiasm for all matters archaeological, in the class, in the lab and in the field, and I will always be grateful for his fatherly guidance and advice as I navigated my way through the immensely rich and sometimes perplexing dataset yielded by the Praying Mantis study. Although Mike professed to be no expert on Early Iroquoian pottery, he continually challenged me to push beyond the boundaries of conventional approaches to ceramic analysis and interpretation. He always seemed to see way more than I did in the data. This ability, which sometimes seemed verging on the paranormal, stemmed, in part, from his steadfast belief that no matter what aspect of the archaeological record we choose as our object of study, our methodological approach should always be human-centered and aim to illuminate aspects of the day-to-day life of the people behind the artifacts. Much of my Masters was spent sorting sherds, gluing together pots, collecting various measurements and other data and crunching

numbers, making it easy to get bogged down and distracted by the endless minutia of pottery description. Mike encouraged me to think beyond the description of physical characteristics of the pottery, however, and to contemplate what the physical evidence had to say about the nature of the human activities and interactions that gave rise to the patterns that were emerging in the data. In particular, he suggested that I think about how contextual data, in terms of where ceramic artifacts were recovered from in relation to the village plan, could be integrated with different forms of physical evidence relating to the manufacture and use of pottery – e.g. decorative and morphological attributes, use-wear and depositional and breakage patterns – in order to generate potential insights into day-to-day, mundane tasks such as pot-making and garbage disposal. He encouraged me to think about how the study of these everyday repeated practices or habits (whether conscious or subconscious), could reveal new insight into the kinds of sociological, practical, and functional considerations and influences that had a hand in shaping the ceramic record, as it is encountered by archaeologists.

This stress on the development of methodological approaches that integrate multiple lines of evidence and on a decidedly contextual-based approach to artifact analysis and interpretation derives in a very real way from an acknowledgement of the intrinsic complexity of the past activities and behaviours we seek to reconstruct and understand. Leading by example, Mike’s challenge to me and to all of his students is to cultivate our child-like fascination with our object of study, whilst constantly striving to get to know it a little better than we do today.

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