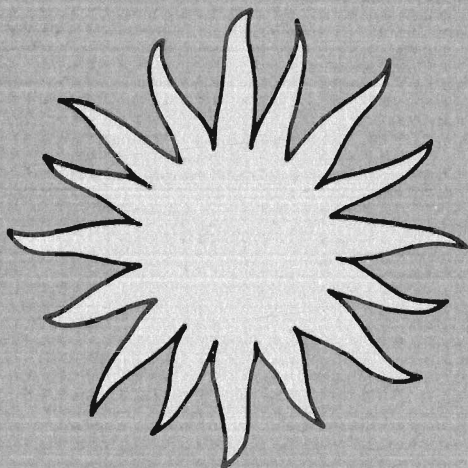
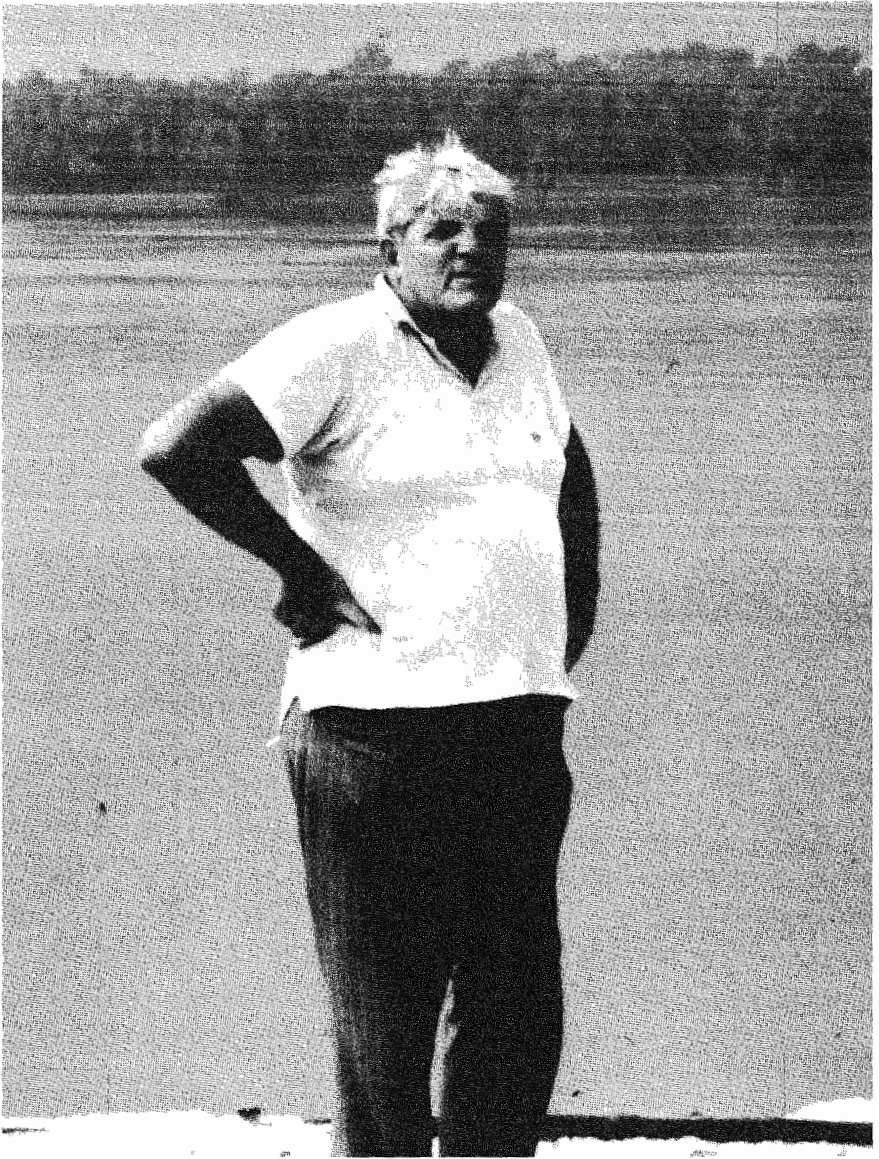


ROBERT S. NEITZEL

The Great Sun





Robert S. Neitzel
1911 - 1980

ROBERT S. NEITZEL
The Great Sun

Edited by
Jeffrey P. Brain and Ian W. Brown

LMS
LOWER MISSISSIPPI SURVEY

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Foreword

In the opening paragraph of my tribute to Stu at the 1980 Southeastern Archaeological Conference in New Orleans, I suggested that “many will want to try to capture the spirit of this remarkable gentleman.” I did not have to wait long for confirmation, and it came from very close at hand from my fellow LMS staff members, Jeff Brain and Ian Brown, who have worked so hard and well to produce this remarkable little volume. As this document abundantly demonstrates, I was also correct in my assumption that many others would wish to include their own favorite Neitzel anecdotes. Surprisingly, the tales have a pretty high degree of coherence. Perhaps this coherence is due to Stu’s own internal consistency.

For example, Stu’s letters from his earliest professional days (1938) are full of the same wild mixture of complex and sometimes purposefully misused vocabulary—some outrageous puns and plays on words with a few succinct one-liners thrown in, too—as are his more recent ones (some good examples are to be found in Brain’s *Tunica Treasure*). Yet other letters are wonderfully direct and forceful documents detailing administrative trials and triumphs that are still a bit too current for forthright publication.

His personal reflections on his own past as set forth in the Webb volume (Neitzel 1980) and in the as-yet-to-be published South volume on historical archaeology (excerpts herein) are Neitzel at his best. The pieces would have been improved with a little tighter editing—his prose was a little verdant at times—but they are so like him, too—onrushing, single-spaced, full of typed-over letters and lots of double dashes. The zest for life comes through seen from a special vantage point.

Perhaps for his younger friends these continuities are satisfying: if you knew him in the 1970s, you knew a Stu who was not markedly different from that vibrant being who tore up the turf in southern

Illinois malarial swamps four decades earlier. We should all age so gracefully.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Williams 1981, p. 9), those who felt that Stu was just a “good ol’boy” missed an essential understanding of this complex individual. The natural man—buoyant and easygoing—was in fact a deeply intuitive yet learned person. For example, his easy way with people—“he got along with everyone”—was a truism but not something that was quite as simple as that. In his letters to me, as one museum administrator to another, he made it quite clear that he knew what he was doing in each personal interaction.

This statement is not to denigrate his wonderful ease with people—he loved the challenge of being in new situations wherein he dealt with locals and with hard-bitten administrative types with apparent casualness. Bob Bailey has delivered that context well (p. 59). Here’s the way Stu put it to me once. “I believe we’ve got this deal about straightened out here. I thought it would take a lot longer, but things are looking very good. Old Radcliffe-Brown and Redfield would have been amazed at my grasp of applied Anthro; I know I was. Just mixed up a little Kluckholm [*sic*], Linton, and Tax, and Eggan and smeared it on at intervals” (Neitzel to Williams, 1959).

Does that make him a calculating SOB, dissembling the carefree blithe spirit to his own advantage? Not at all; that he credited anthropology with part of his personal success in this area only shows that self-awareness was mixed with the clear realization that will and knowledge could be very effective partners. No simple country boy was he.

As a sometime historian of the archaeological profession, I particularly applaud the gathering together of so many visual images of Stu’s career, so that we can both hear about and see what it was like in those dim, dark days before World War II and after. The only thing missing now is a little tumbler of that Georgia “popskull” (Mr. Fowler’s elixir) to have in hand as one makes a journey in remembrance.

Stephen Williams

Editor's Introduction

This volume came together spontaneously. The editors may have conceived the idea, but the response from people who knew Stu Neitzel well was instantaneous. Everyone wanted to contribute. There could be no better testament to the admiration and love that he evoked. We hope that we have done justice to these fond reminiscences, but even more to the man himself and all that he contributed to the practice of archaeology in the Southeastern United States.

Stu would say that this is all foolishness and that we should be doing something important with our time and money. Well, we are doing something important, for he was important, as we shall see. Secretly, we think he would be pleased.

Publication was made possible by a grant from the John and Mila Hendon Fund of the Mobile Community Foundation. All of us thank the Foundation for their generosity, which enabled us to honor Stu in this fashion. We would also like to express our appreciation to Nancy Lambert-Brown for the typesetting and layout, to Elisabeth Jorgensen for the paste-up, and to Lorna Condon for her editorial expertise. Stanley South was kind enough to loan us an article by Stu from the unpublished volume, *Uncovering America's Past: The Rise of Historical Archeology*. Photographic materials were provided by Carl Kuttruff of the Tennessee Department of Conservation, by R. Bruce McMillan and Peter Thornquist of the Illinois State Museum, by Patricia Galloway of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and by the various contributors. Dan Jones of the Peabody Museum contributed some of his expertise in dealing with archival photos. Our special thanks go to Mrs. Robert S. Neitzel (Miss Gwen) for biographical information, pictorial data, and the many delightful years of hospitality and love.

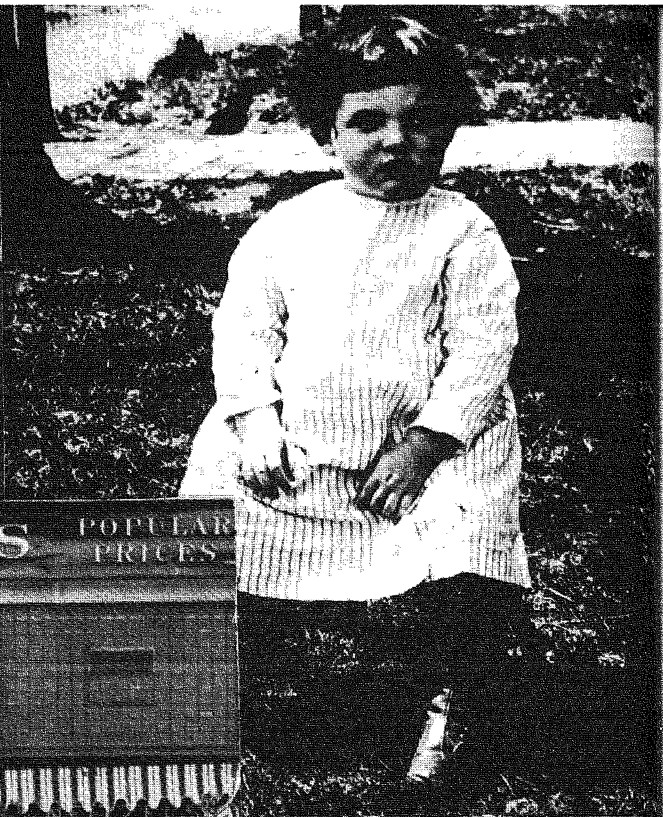
J.P.B. and I.W.B.

The Man

Marksville: to students of North American archaeology it is an early prehistoric culture of the Middle Woodland period; to Southeastern archaeologists, however, it has an additional meaning: it was the home of Stu Neitzel. Over the decades many have made the pilgrimage to this small, peaceful town in central Louisiana. Any excuse to bask in the warm hospitality of Stu Neitzel's home was permissible. Who would have thought that a middle westerner of German descent could have captured the soul of the Louisiana Cajun. But he did, and somehow he transferred the joy of living to all who came in contact with him. Several generations of archaeologists have grown up under the affection and guidance of this man, and he is legend for those who follow.

Robert Stuart Neitzel was born on May 6, 1911, the only child of Hannah Sayre Meker Cain and Robert Allen Neitzel. His mother's folks were Scotch-Irish, the German stock being on his father's side. Falls City, Nebraska, was, in fact, a German town. Stu retained a fluency in this language throughout his life. When Stu was born, his father was county clerk in the courthouse. They lived with his grandmother Cain until 1917. In the year previous, his father had realized the American dream of establishing his own business: he had opened a five-and-dime store. As a young boy, Stu was forced to help out in the shop after school, much to his dismay.

Like most young lads, Stu loved the outdoors. Fishing and hunting were his passions and beagle dogs his joy. Two weeks of each summer were spent fishing in Wisconsin with his family, and several summers during high school were devoted to guiding a wealthy gentleman around the streams of Minnesota. He became a superb swimmer, which served him well in his other summer job as a lifeguard. His early ambitions were diverse, but they all revolved around a life of adventure. He wanted to be either a cowboy or a river pilot, but he would also have settled for a life in the north country. A large



collection of Crow and Blackfoot materials owned by his grandfather appears to have spurred some early interest in Indians.

With college approaching, the ambitions of youth gave way to the realities of life. Medicine was the wish of the family, so Stu left for the University of Nebraska in 1929, with the intention of becoming a doctor. He remained premed through the middle of his second year, serving as an “assistant’s assistant” in a parasitology lab and doing part-time lab-testing in a dermatology-urology clinic. Sophomore year was a major turning point in Stu’s life. Through the teachings of L.C. Wimberly, a Scottish folklore expert (and also Steve Wimberly’s dad), a whole new world of literature was opened up to him. As a boy, Stu had read the works of Jack London, Mark Twain, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Rudyard Kipling, but Wimberly revealed to him the excitement of the classics:

It was with surprise that I learned that all great writers were not necessarily dead (Neitzel n.d.).

Few of Stu’s acquaintances realize that he was an avid reader of Anatole France and Thomas Hardy.

Wimberly organized the *Prairie Schooner*, a literary magazine run by the students. As business manager during his last two years of school, Stu was responsible for “licking stamps to urge renewals” (ibid.). The associate editor of the magazine was a paleontology major named Loren Eiseley. Stu felt a common bond with this intelligent but rather moody individual:

At the same time there were more frequent contacts with Loren Eiseley, though he seemed to have a penchant for disappearing from time to time. One of our bonds was a common interest in unorthodox travel—bumming—and his financial condition was even worse than mine (Neitzel n.d.).

Together Stu and Loren took Earl Bell’s course on sociology. Bell, a student of Ralph Linton’s, was Duncan Strong’s replacement at Nebraska. He and Wimberly were instrumental in breaking the bonds between Stu and medicine, not to mention that Stu was flunking chemistry. He was clearly torn between majoring in English or sociology/anthropology. He finally chose the latter (primarily because

he could use his premed background for physical anthropology), but there always remained something of the poet in Stu. There is no question that he knew his limitations, but one can see in Stu's writings a flair for the artist. The rough-and-ready Stu constantly surprises his reader by throwing in a word that requires intensive research in the Oxford English Dictionary. How many of us, for example, can easily slide "abecedarian" into a sentence (Neitzel 1980, p.5)?

The decision to drop medicine and to adopt anthropology was not made solely on the college campus. It was also an emotional response to an experience of culture shock. In the summer of 1930, Stu accompanied an older hunting companion to northern Canada, where they lived among the Cree. One day while hunting, Stu happened upon a dog dangling from a tree. The sacrifice of a dog, so valuable to the Indian, horrified Stu. He was never able to find an explanation for the incident. The vision haunted Stu, but it also attracted him to the study of culture. Bell's course fulfilled his need:

It was here that I received my first *explicit* dose of human culture, and though my limited perspective denied me comprehension, my options were never really the same again when the semester finished (Neitzel n.d.).

But convincing his parents was a bigger chore:

I just didn't want to be a doctor anymore. But you can't [go back] to a Middle Western background and tell your old man that's running a variety store that you don't want to be a doctor. You're only the first of your family that's going to have a college education and you're going to be a doctor ever since you were in high school; and you've studied and read *Gray's Anatomy* and all that, and then you come home and say, "I don't want to be a doctor. I want to be some kind of anthropologist." "Well, what's that?" (Neitzel 1978).

Stu, in his usual self-defacing manner, felt that being responsible for the life and death of a person was not for him. With a disdain for responsibility, he chose anthropology as a career. In referring to the acclaim Clarence Webb received from the medical profession, Stu wrote:



But I find it impossible to conceal a degree of envy. I cannot forget that as one who might have once joined this elite medical band I have not received the slightest shred of acclaim or measure of credit for performing an equal service to humanity. There has been no humble word of thanks, nor the slightest recognition for the untold lives I have saved. I am left to reflect unlauded upon the seas of pain and distress, the sweep of human agony, not to mention the malpractice suits that have been avoided by my simple resolve of over two-scores years ago (Neitzel 1980, p.6).

With the decision made, Stu set off on his new career. His summer experience led to a paper on Cree Indian ethnology. He wrote another on the Mandan, and, in regard to archaeology, he wrote another paper attacking the moundbuilder problem. He was rather proud of the latter work, despite the fact that he neglected to include works by Squier, Davis, and Thomas in his bibliography. But remember, it is Stu telling this story (Neitzel n.d.). He was always the first to laugh at himself.

When Stu's position in the parasitology lab was lost, he supported himself as a short-order cook at a local restaurant. The job provided daily bread and twenty-five cents an hour for overtime. Earl Bell assigned him his first archaeological job, mending pottery:

I didn't know what a goddam potsherd looked like; never had seen one. Bell put me up there in the lab to clean up some pots they'd restored with plaster. I didn't know which was the pots and which was the plaster (Neitzel 1978).

It was through his association with Bell that Stu met Waldo Wedel, a masters candidate at Nebraska. Stu was astounded by the understanding of Plains Indians exhibited by one so young. With Wedel and Eiseley as examples of the budding anthropological world, Stu certainly had to set his ambitions high. Other archaeological influences at Nebraska were John Champe and A.T. Hill.

Stu's first fieldwork came in the summer of 1933 at the end of his senior year. Bell was excavating a village site on a high bluff overlooking the Missouri River, and Stu's role as physical anthropologist was to study the skeletal remains. Since only one human bone was found during the season, he naturally became more

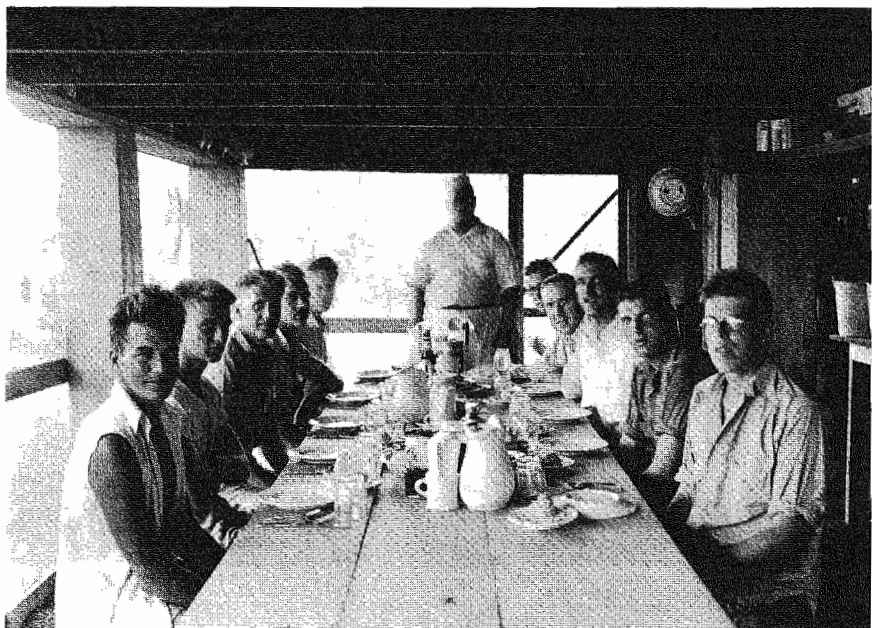
and more involved with the study of artifacts. It was many years before Stu actually got to deal with human skeletons in an archaeological setting.

Following his initial fieldwork, Stu stayed on for an extra year at Nebraska. He was listed as a graduate student, but because he flunked a course in forestry he did not have his bachelors degree in hand. He took a course in psychology in the fall semester to satisfy university requirements and also worked in the Sociology Department. His task was supervising museum laboratory business, or rather, reading test papers and “conning students into washing and cataloguing specimens” (Neitzel n.d.).

It was during this extra year that Stu learned of some fieldwork planned in southern Illinois for the summer of 1934. He applied to Thorne Deuel for membership in the Chicago Kincaid project and was accepted. In Illinois he was to be introduced to new archaeological concepts and to Chicago excavation techniques, so Bell agreed to award him three hours of credit for his labor. It was at Kincaid that he met and became friends with Georg Neumann, J.C. “Pinky” Harrington (the acting field director), and Jesse Jennings, all three Chicago graduate students. Harrington put in a good word for Stu at Chicago and suggested he return with them in the fall.

The field season at Kincaid was a particularly rough one, especially physically. Almost everyone, excepting Neitzel, developed malaria. Stu always attributed his resistance to bourbon. When Jeff Brain and Ian Brown accompanied Stu to Kincaid in the fall of 1976, they were surprised to learn that he knew the whereabouts of every discarded whiskey bottle. But later, it made sense: a good doctor always keeps track of his medicine!

Stu enjoyed certain aspects of Chicago graduate life, but it clearly was also a very tough experience for him. He roomed with Jennings his first year and with John Collier his second. Friends made during these years included Paul Cooper, Maurice Mook, and Horace Miner. He also got to know a young graduate student at Michigan at this time: George Quimby. Favorite professors were Fay-Cooper Cole, Robert

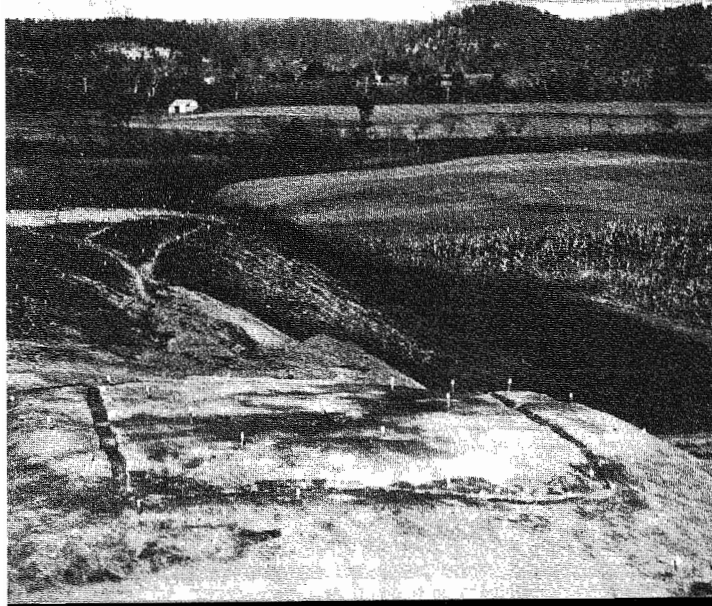
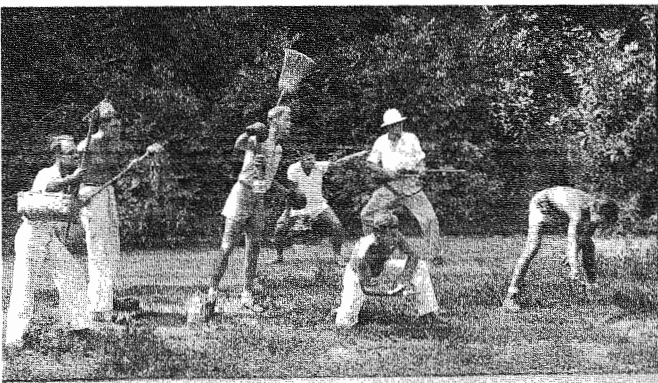


Redfield, and Harry Hoijer, but his nemesis was A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. It is clear that the dean of structural-functional anthropology was the impetus behind Stu's early departure from Chicago.

Stu suffered from a common ailment in the 1930s: lack of money. He barely made it through his first year at Chicago. A scholarship offered by the university paid for his tuition, but sustenance came from a Kincaid pot. The reconstruction of one of the vessels illustrated by Cole (1951) was assigned to Stu, a job that took him nearly the whole year. Every time he thought he had it right, Deuel would take it apart and make him start over. Stu's tales of this pot and of campus life in general are legend. Few realize that Stu also served on the university night police force, a position no doubt equivalent to his role as SEAC Sergeant at Arms (Neitzel 1979c).

After another season at Kincaid in 1935, at which time he served as Jennings's assistant, Stu put in one more semester at Chicago. Poverty and academic problems forced him to leave for Nebraska, a low point in his life. Living at home beneath the burden of "I told you so's" clearly was out of the question, so Stu once again took up residence at the university. He spent most of his time during this recess from archaeology studying the cranial material in the lab at the Paleontology Department. In characteristic fashion, Stu laughed at his energetic labor. Considering himself an expert on the human skeleton, he reported upon a skull from the Sweetwater Complex given to him for analysis by John Champe (Champe 1936, pp. 264-265). He recorded all sorts of measurements and made detailed descriptive notes. However, he failed to observe a small depression in the left temporal region, which a number of local doctors later revealed to be a bullet hole. Stu would recall this experience whenever he started to feel too cocksure about himself.

In the winter of 1936, Stu heard from Georg Neumann, who was working for Tom Lewis in Tennessee, that the TVA was extending work into the Chickamauga Basin and they needed field supervisors. This was the opportunity for which Stu had been waiting. As the months slid by with no further word, he experienced his first taste of government bureaucracy.



In April 1936, Stu finally got the word. He and Paul Cooper were off to Chattanooga. Cooper did not last too long, as he came down with a kidney ailment, so Jennings was lured down from the Peachtree site to replace him as administrator. Jennings had a good deal of experience handling large crews, but Stu did not. Stu's tales of the Chickamauga days, in handling troops of coal miners, are memorable archaeological lore of the 1930s (Neitzel n.d.).

In October 1936, Lewis called Stu away from the Hixon site. Excavations were underway at the Pack site and at Mound Bottom in the Middle Tennessee region, and Stu was needed to replace Chuck Nash, who had just left for Hiwassee Island. The Middle Tennessee excavations were a University of Tennessee project, having nothing to do with the relief programs. The university was planning on developing the sites as a park, and Stu was brought in to prepare and preserve the excavations. For some reason, unbeknown to Stu, he was branded as an exhibit man while at Kincaid. This label remained with him and stood him in good stead in later years, as we shall see.

To most people, Stu's Middle Tennessee days are synonymous with the story of the Dobson-Hester feud. In his telling, the tragedy at the Bloody Bucket Saloon always seemed to lose some of its horror with the image of Stu and others competing for space beneath the stove. Stu wrote about his experiences in Middle Tennessee:

Mainly I froze living in tents with my booze buried in a pile of snow by the door. Luther Dobson used to bring his Walker dogs and a jug of corn and sit on my doorstep running rabbits through the camp. Other times I was getting shot at—accidentally—by exchanges between the Hesters and the Dobsons.

The Feds raided Smoky's still back in a cove off the highway, three days after I went in there and shot a whole 35 mm roll on the operation. I had trouble talking myself out of that one—especially since Smoky was out on parole.

That was fairly wild country then; the only way we got permission to go into Mound Bottom from old man Taylor was to have Mac, the cook, date his daughter. It nearly killed him, and ruined a good cook in the bargain.

Everybody carried a hawleg tucked away somewhere in their over-halls or belts. Mostly big talk though. One Sunday evening Brown Pack and I were under fire for about three hours--every time we'd try to sneak home through the brush, a new sortie ran us out into the open—with hands up. They weren't after us, just any other suspicious movement in the shadows (Neitzel 1974).

Funds and labor soon ran out, so Stu returned to southeast Tennessee in March 1937. With Nash, Chuck Fairbanks, and Paul Maynard, he worked at Hiwassee Island, Dallas Island, Candy Creek, Mouse Creek, and other famous sites.

In the spring of 1938, Stu attended an SAA meeting in Milwaukee, where he met Jim Ford for the first time. He was impressed with this tall man from the Mississippi Valley and was delighted to be offered a job. The chance to learn about a new area coincided well with some personal problems he was having in southeast Tennessee. So, in September he packed his bags and headed for Marksville, Louisiana.

A major WPA project was occurring in and around the Marksville Prairie, and Stu joined the ranks of Ford, Fred Kniffen, Gordon Willey, Bill Mulloy, Ed Doran, Arden King, Carlyle Smith, Preston Holder, and his old friend George Quimby. Although it took him a bit of time to pick up the local patois of his crew, Stu managed to fit in. As his outlook on life conformed closely to that of the Cajuns, he quickly became one of them. Stu ran the excavations at Greenhouse, Marksville, and Baptiste, sites that were instrumental in establishing the chronological sequence for the Lower Mississippi Valley.

It was during these excavations that "Stu" became "Bob." When he began working in Louisiana, he was required to give his full name to the bureaucrats. As a result, all letters were addressed to "Robert S. Neitzel." His official name for the Marksville crew and friends became Bob. Stu never had a problem with names: he'd answer to anything. Some called him "Stutzel." Youths in the field called him "Mom," and jazz friends called him "Rocks." His pride and joy in later years was a letter addressed to the "Reverend R.S. Sneitzel."

In the year following his arrival in Louisiana, Stu made the acquaintance of Gwen Thomas, a young woman who had recently moved to Marksville to teach home economics. Stu was driving a 1934



Ford phaeton at the time, and everyone knew it was he coming down the street because of the clanging whiskey bottles tied to the doors. The car had a canvas top that refused to go up, so it was referred to as "Neitzel's open air taxi." On dates, Miss Gwen would have to sit in the backseat, relinquishing the front seat to a hunting dog who refused to move. It's amazing to think that a man like Stu could be tamed by a gentle lady from Baton Rouge, but tamed he was. Miss Gwen and Stu were married in 1941. They had two children: Sarah Cain in 1943, and Stuart Allen in 1948.

World War II marked the end of archaeology as Stu knew it. The reservoir of labor was suddenly drained in 1941, and Stu was out of a job. A number of camps were planned for Louisiana, and the Corps of Engineers hired Stu as an "expediter." His task was to set up a system for getting supplies (lumber and plumbing primarily, as they were in strong demand everywhere). For three years he worked at Camp Claiborne under Major Harvey, a man he admired and respected. Numerous times Stu tried to enlist. He was rejected by the Navy, the Army, and even by a special corps set up for people with select abilities. The reason: he could not pass a physical. He was turned down for a multitude of ills ranging from a single hernia, to a double hernia, to astigmatism in the the eye, to tuberculosis! Stu's narration of his induction experiences cheered up many a summer evening in the field.

As a result of his short experience with Navy personnel prior to physicals (several hours), Stu acquired a talent that was to last him a lifetime: the ability to view aerial photos stereoscopically.

The process is more like a yoga exercise in which paired aerials are viewed with a relaxed and watery eye or dim stare thus achieving stereoscopic vision with the naked eye. This was a technique prescribed in training manuals, and I became quite proficient in "assuming the attitude". ...I still practice the stereo viewing attitude with and without photo pairs. Usually I just go to sleep or see double. This feat often has been remarked upon by my friends, but they have been in error when inferring cause and effect. It is merely a scientific defense mechanism that I employ while listening to papers delivered at archaeological meetings (Neitzel 1980, p.11).

In 1946, Stu and Miss Gwen began their dairy farm, an enterprise that Stu later described as being, “slightly more confining than the average penitentiary” (ibid., p.10). They lived on the southeastern edge of the Marksville Prairie at the time, adjacent to the Tunica Indian reservation. As related in Gregory’s contribution (on p.40), Stu was very close to the Tunica. When a historic Indian burial turned up, Stu put his expertise to work. The following incident, as related by Stephen Williams, was one of Stu’s favorite tales:

It was in 1949(?) and Phil Phillips and a very confident Harvard grad student were working in the Lower Yazoo. This particular Cantabrigian (who did not stay in the field) had a special competence in firearms. It was with great interest that he read in the Vicksburg paper that spring that there had been an important discovery in Marksville of an historic Tunica burial in a local farmer’s driveway which included a quite well preserved 18th century firearm. The short news spot did not give much detail, but having a weekend free, he decided to take a busman’s holiday and he journeyed over for a first-hand look, and perhaps to help with the identification of the rifle.

Once in Marksville it was not too difficult to discover the location of the driveway, and he went south of town to talk to the landowner. Upon arrival he was met by the farmer who had been “swamping out” his dairy barn. The student spent some time looking over the driveway find-spot and tried to instill some sense of the importance of the exact context of the find which the farmer had laid up in one of his sheds. The farmer, in manure-covered boots, took it all in, listening somewhat wide-eyed as the young student gave him a basic lecture on the nature of archaeology. The local, with typical Louisiana hospitality, finally invited the young man into his house for a cold refreshment. As he sat in the living room awaiting the delivery of the beverage, he was surprised to see some rather familiar large green bound volumes with gold lettering stretching across the crowded book shelves. Nervously he began to suspect that he might be a little in over his head. Stu let him down easy—was glad to have some details on the flint lock, and the young man returned somewhat less confident to Yazoo City (Williams 1981).

Stu was always available for budding youth. He spent many an hour teaching young people about the wonders of archaeology. Smoky Joe Frank remembers his own experience with Stu:



Most archaeologists influence students already in college. Stu influenced a lot of folks not involved in school, ones that never thought of archaeology as a profession. That means more in my mind than the influence a college prof has.

If I hadn't worked for Stu in 1962 I'd still be picking up points and throwing the pottery aside (Frank 1981).

The dairy stayed in the Neitzel family until 1962, but the last eight years of its operation largely fell to Miss Gwen. Stu got back into archaeology in May 1951. Jim Ford and Phil Phillips paid him a visit in Marksville and convinced him to get down off his tractor and join them in Belzoni, Mississippi. His task was to make a contour map and to run bore holes across the Jaketown site, but he also aided in the drawing of the borrow pit profile (see p.29). This experience with Phillips set the stage for three decades of Stu's influence over Harvard students, but for the time being it was back to the farm.

Stu continued to help Ford in local projects. He put in short seasons at Poverty Point in 1952 and 1953 and joined the major expedition at this site in 1955. The reestablishment of an archaeological tie with Ford set gears in motion again. For some time Ford had been thinking about

establishing a museum at Marksville. With the help of Stu and Bill Wells, Assistant Director of the Louisiana State Parks Commission, the idea became a reality. The museum was constructed in 1952, but it was two years before a curator was brought in to install the National Park Service exhibits. And who but Stu was more appropriate to be the exhibit man? With characteristic modesty, Stu laughed at the decision to appoint him:

Bill Wells in his infinite wisdom informed me that I had been chosen to serve as a sort of curator. Naturally Jim objected to this course, but there seemed to be no one else who would touch the job or work for the very modest stipend the appointment carried (Neitzel 1980, p.12).

Stu did an excellent job at the museum in bringing archaeology to the people. When he was replaced by a night watchman in 1957, because of the "Long Machine," the newspapers were buzzing with outrage. Stu greatly appreciated the public support, but realized he was finished at the museum:

Dear Clarence [Webb]:

I hope that the ancestors will not plague you for the efforts you exerted in my behalf...needless to say I'm extremely thankful for the statements you made, and I won't hold you to them, personally.

It is hard to see how opinions of integrity can affect the stream of political manipulation now in effect, but I have solid inside evidence that your protests and activities, combined with an amazing amount of individual, unsolicited protest of like content, apparently disturbed the administration framework no end... the tactical command has been badly shook up over the public reaction. I will say modestly that it is gratifying to know that the public felt as deeply as they did about the whole deal. It makes me feel that any fumbling efforts I had made counted for something.

I have been conciliated from all sorts of oblique approaches... offers of jobs, mostly with nothing to do except draw my pay. The politicians will never understand that a guy doesn't have a price (Neitzel 1959).

By this time, Stu had gone too far back to his chosen profession to stay put, so he readily accepted archaeological work, even if it took him far from home. When the Marksville job fell apart, Phil Phillips hired him on a part-time basis to do a survey of the Ouachita River region for the LMS. This job carried him through the fall and spring of

1957/1958. Also in the spring, he helped Ford at the Menard site on the Arkansas River. In June 1958, Stu joined the LMS crew, which was just beginning operations at the Lake George site in the Yazoo Basin. Steve Williams relates this experience:

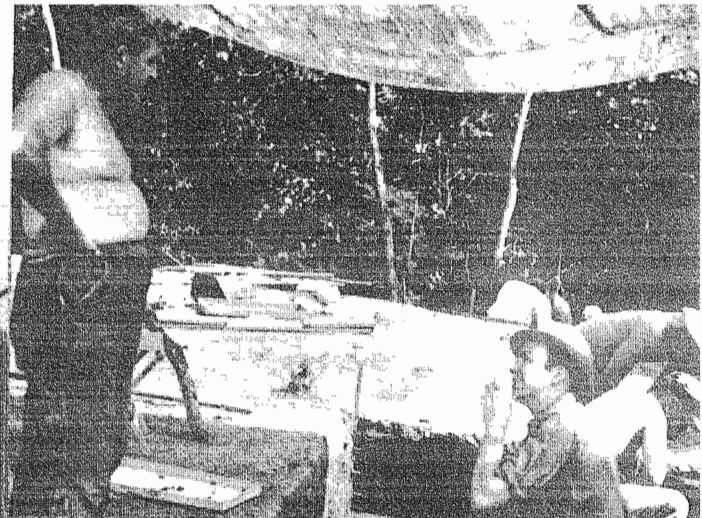
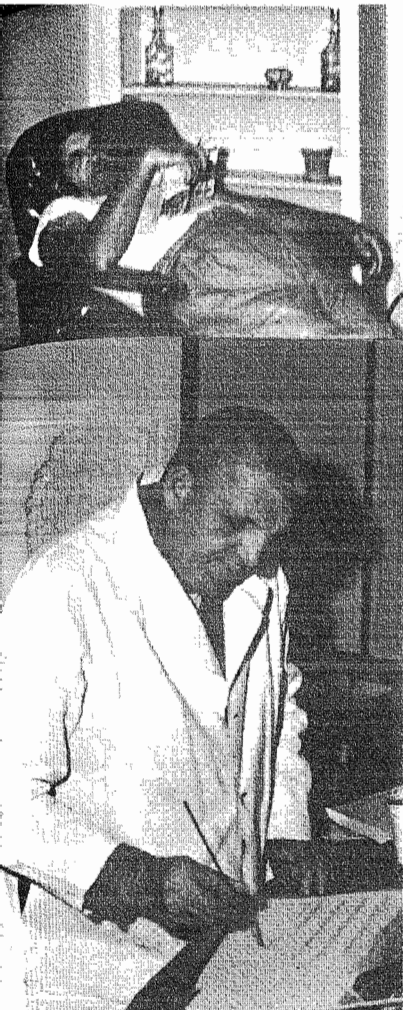
He came over for a few weeks and helped me to get my site grid in place and the first season underway. His practical field knowledge was essential both to me and my students as I undertook my first major excavation. His wise counsel on strategy and even detailed aid in looking at profiles was crucial to the project. What I remember best, however, was as I roused myself at 5:30 to throw some tepid water on my face (with the temperature already 75° and heading for 100°), there was Stu lying in the sagging old cot that we had provided. He was already awake with a paperback novel in hand, despite the fact that he'd been the last to hit the sack the evening before. With a gruff, joking comment and a snag-toothed smile, he was ready for another day. Where he got the energy, I'll never know. He'd make a grocery run to Yazoo City or spend the morning sewing up burlap sunshades. He just knew how to help you with no fuss or frustration (Williams 1981).

After spending two weeks at Lake George, Stu moved on to South Carolina. Art Kelly hired him to dig the historic Chauga site on the Upper Savannah River. Five months later, Stu moved to Cartersville, Georgia, to install the Etowah exhibits, which Lew Larson had designed. He stayed there approximately a year. Finally, in 1960 Stu took his last "official" job: Curator of the State Historical Museum in Jackson, Mississippi. His position fell under the jurisdiction of Miss Charlotte Capers:

He was unique, to say the very least. I might add it was a unique experience to be his boss, which no one ever really was (Capers 1981).

Stu remained at Jackson until 1966. He enjoyed the work, but it was also very hard on his nerves. With the recommendation of his doctor, Stu retired. "Best doctor I ever had," he often said.

The decade prior to his retirement was difficult for Stu, primarily because of the distance between him and his family. Visits were few and far between (Williams 1981). He was deeply affected by the separation, but, in typical Stu fashion, he worked to the best of his ability and brought cheer to all who came in contact with him.



Much of Stu's time in Jackson was spent in making exhibits, organizing collections, and catering to the public, but he also managed to do some excavating. The interest in Poverty Point continued in his work at Teoc Creek with Ford and Webb, but his major operation was at the Fatherland site in Natchez. The historic period always fascinated Stu, and he jumped at the chance to return to the early stumping grounds of Ford and Moreau Chambers. Four months of excavation were conducted at the site in 1962, his principal assistant being Tono Waring. The Fatherland report (Neitzel 1965) was his masterpiece, and it will stand the test of time as a major contribution to historical archaeology in the Southeast. Stu was always unsure of his academic abilities. The "defense" of his "Fatherland thesis," under the scrutiny of Ford and Webb, was a happy memory. He had made the grade (see p. 38).

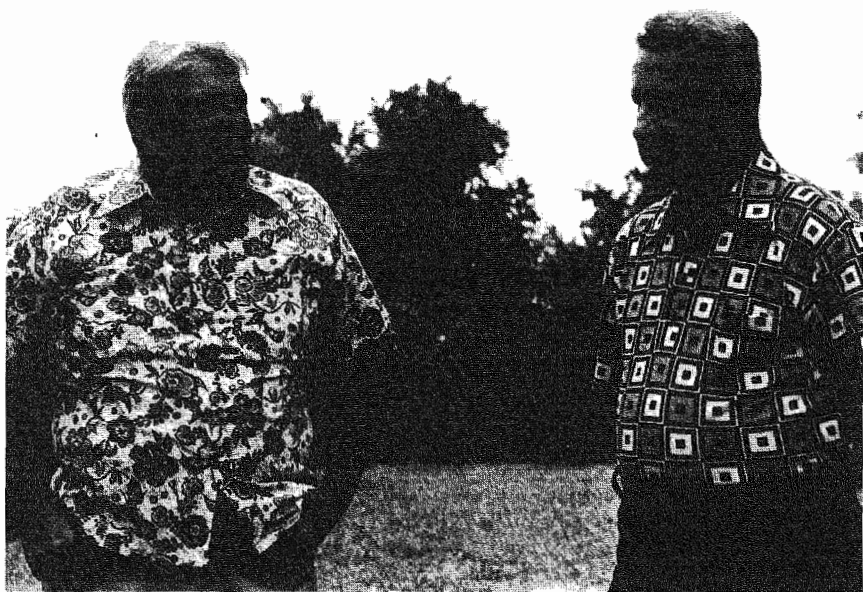
Stu officially retired in 1966, his intention from that point on being to enjoy himself:

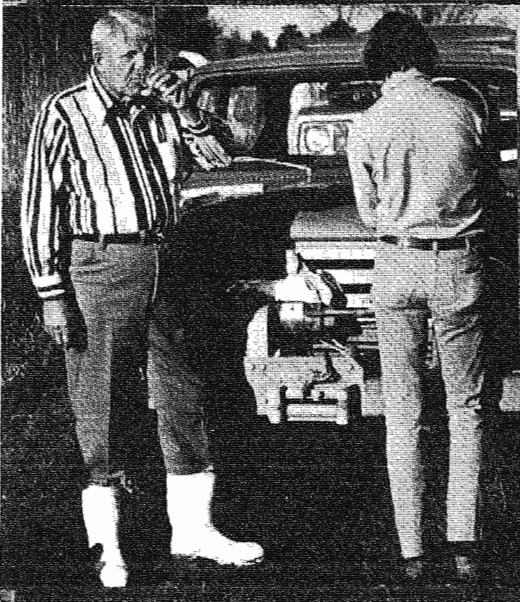
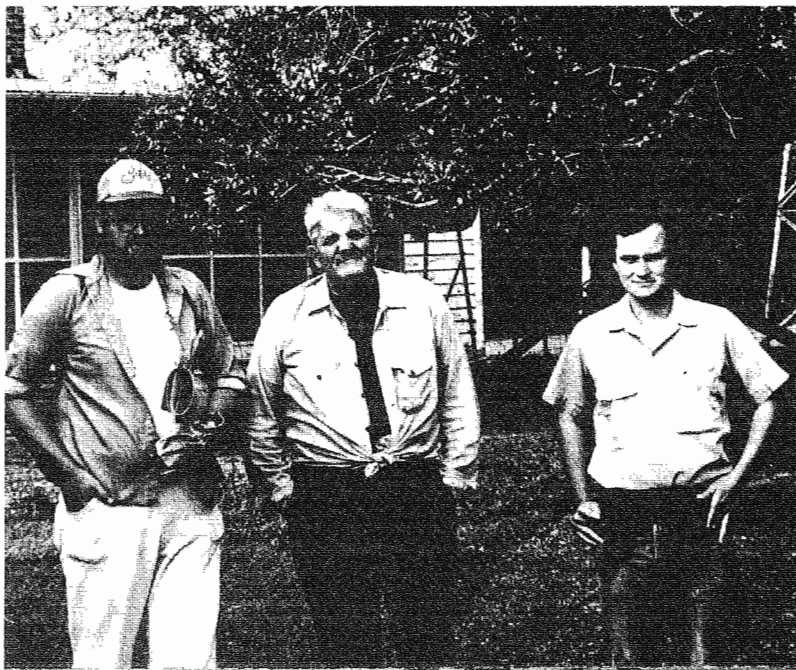
Over the years we [he and Webb] have often joked about how, when we became old and doddering, we would putter around with archaeology and then only with those things that interested us especially. Clarence has been a very poor putterer, while I receive acclaim wherever I turn as a champion piddler (Neitzel 1980, p.17).

And he did enjoy himself, but to think he "piddled" would be a grave error. The late 1960s were tough for him emotionally. Jim Ford's premature death hit him very hard, but he was soon back in the field cheering up the lives of others.

A man named Leonard Charrier contacted the famous Marksville archaeologist late in 1969 and started Stu on an adventure whose completion he never saw. The Tunica Treasure eventually ended up with the LMS, but for more than a decade Stu was instrumental in every aspect of its long and tortuous history. He did indeed share in the fun.

During the fall and winter of 1970/1971, Stu helped Bob Neuman with some work at Weeks Island. The following summer, he returned to Natchez with Jeff Brain and the LMS crew. Fatherland continued to





beckon. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) wanted to find the historic houses associated with the mounds, and Stu was offered the job. With a crew made up of Louisiana State University students and local Natchezans, Stu excavated Fatherland in the spring and summer of 1972. His report on this work, largely completed in 1973/1974 while teaching a course at Florida State, still awaits publication.

Historic archaeology continued to attract him. In 1974, the LMS and the MDAH ran a joint project in the Yazoo Bluffs region. Stu was officially in charge of the excavations at Fort St. Pierre at this time, but, in characteristic Stu fashion, a good deal of responsibility was delegated to those just learning the trade.

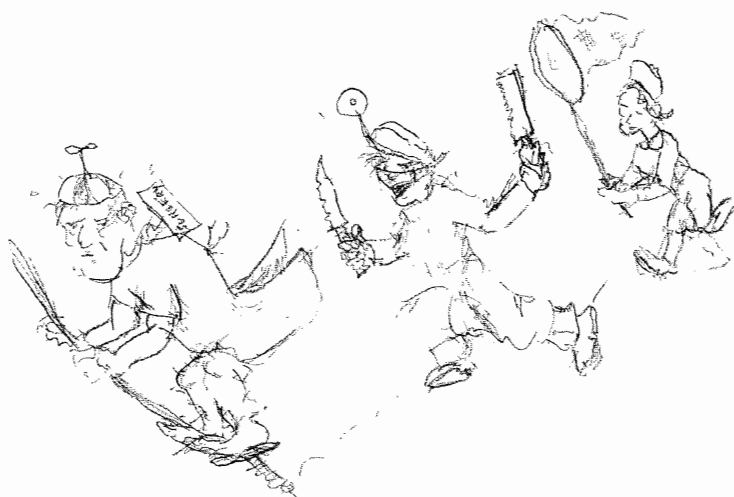
After St. Pierre, Stu became increasingly involved with contract archaeology. He performed dozens of small-scale surveys in Mississippi and Louisiana, always complaining in his good-natured manner but steadfastly doing his job. He continued to do a considerable amount of traveling, to meetings and the like, often accompanied by his old friend Bill Haag. No one could make Stu laugh like Bill, but there were always some drawbacks to the ventures:

I spent a horrible weekend with Haag. We ran out of gas twice between Baton Rouge and somewhere on the Miss. River at dusk in a pouring rain crossing a newly constructed levee (which I cleared for the cats!) we drove 18 miles on empty in the wrong direction to get gas and whiskey (Neitzel 1979a).

Last weekend with Haag nearly killed me. Lookout Mtn. was a cinch! Flat tire, out of gas twice—no jive we drove 18 miles on *empty* after emerging from Blackhawk on lower Red R. in the pouring rain and mud. I made him go to church on Sunday—after he honked back at 18 wheelers on the B.R. 8-lanes, while weaving yet (Neitzel 1979b).

In 1975, Stu joined the LMS for a survey in the Tunica Hills. He returned to the scene in 1977 for the Bloodhound Hills excavation and continued to help LMS personnel in 1978 through 1979 on Avery Island. His last fieldwork was in the spring of 1980 at the Trudeau site, following the trail of the Tunica.

If one can measure emotions through the effects on others, Stu Neitzel had an enormously happy life. He had his share of disappointments and tragedies, but he also had tremendous resilience. He had the key to a successful existence: laugh at life and it will laugh back. Who but Stu could have kept his sense of humor when the end was so near? His drawings say it all.



FUN AND SPORTS AT MARISSA'S GEN'L

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The Friend

Stu had the most amazing variety of friends. Men and women of all ages and social positions claimed him as their own. He was as easy with men of the soil as with men of the people, but he did harbor a general distrust for politicians. Whether these folk were Black, White, or Indian made no difference: he had a quality for relating to those who opened themselves to him. Invariably, he gave more than he received, and for many, his friendship was a valued treasure.

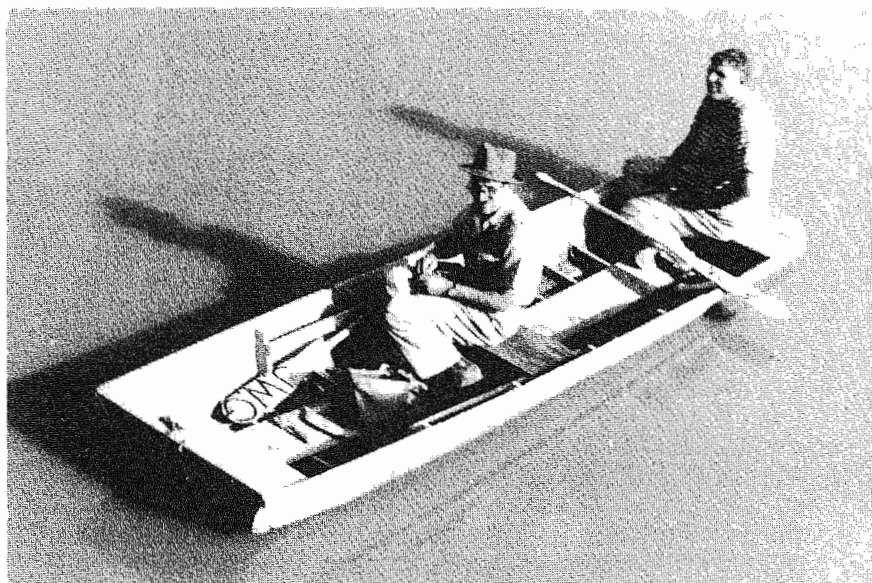
Much of this feeling is evident in the following reminiscences by some of the archaeologists and historians with whom he worked over the years. Although this selection represents but a narrow slice of his friendship sphere, the broad range of people and their fondly recalled thoughts of Stu attest to the general esteem that he enjoyed within his chosen profession.

We begin with a poetic tribute by Phil Phillips, which captures an inner quality that was an essential component of Stu's character. Not many penetrated the forceful facade to these intimate depths, but those who did will recognize immediately the truth of Phil's perception.

I don't remember when I first met Stu. It could have been as early as 1939, more likely 1940—how could one have been working with Jim Ford and not have known Stu? Then the War blotting out everything, and the Peace, which for two or three years is just a blank, as far as I am concerned. I don't remember when I first saw the Mississippi River either. The juxtaposition of these two forgotten events is not facetious. Stu was also a kind of natural phenomenon. It seemed that he was always there, mixed in with the archaeology, and always the same. It is not easy to adjust to the fact that this is no longer so. If you are slightly on the sentimental side and keep a diary, you turn a new page: "Today for the first time ever I saw . . ." I did keep a diary of sorts in those far-off times when everything about the Lower Valley was new and wonderful.

But I am not overly sentimental. The first reference to Stu in that lost document probably went something like this: "A big hunk of man turned up this morning, and after lunch Jim turned him loose with the theodolite in that messy area over on the north side of Mound A, forgetting to mention the mosquitoes and reptiles for which that thicket is locally famous. Stu's vindication of that reputation in well-chosen words was joyously received at the supper table. He seems to be quite a character."

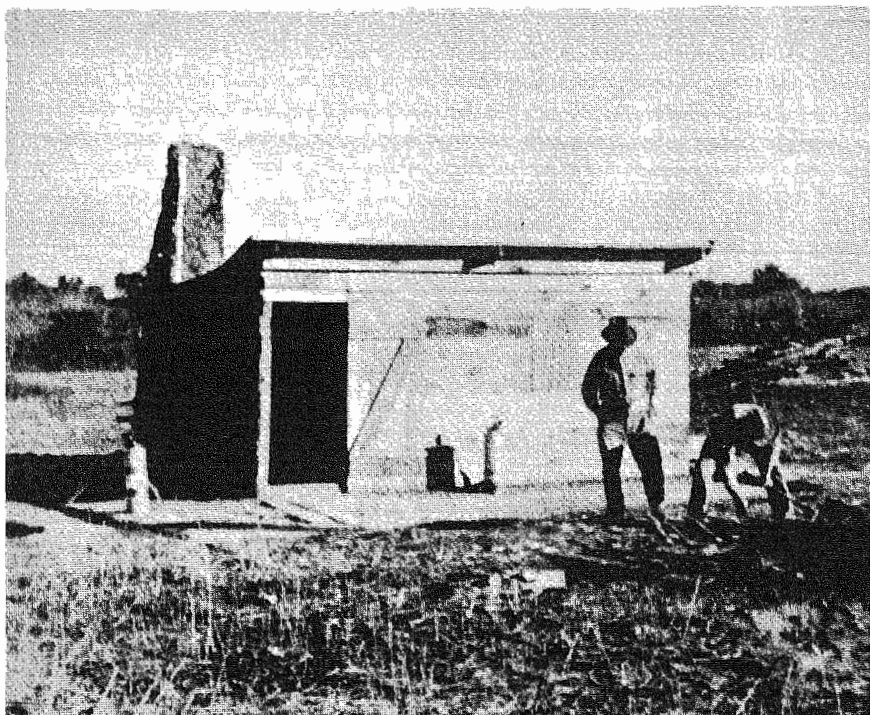
This is not to say that the nasty jobs were always saved for Stu. If he got more than his share, it was because he had more than his share of good nature. This is not the real point, however. He got stuck with other peoples' problems because he knew how to deal with them. Speaking for myself I always had a feeling that things were not so screwed up after all when Stu was around. Perhaps it is inappropriate to speak of such things in this type of publication, but it has just occurred to me to wonder whether Stu ever received any material rewards for such kinds of rescue work. Probably not. According to Jimmy Griffin, who was supposed to be the money manager, the total budget for the two months of survey in the fall of 1940, with two cars on the road and four mouths to feed, was 900 dollars! Perhaps we thought he was sufficiently rewarded by the privilege of taking part in the illuminating discussions that filled in the all too brief intervals between supper and bed.



It wasn't always so arduous for Stu either, as evidenced by the accompanying photograph. The occasion, Jaketown, spring 1951, recording the north wall profile of the highway borrow pit that gutted the heart of the site the year before our excavations there. Overflow from the adjoining Wasp Lake, an old Yazoo channel, had inundated the pit, making it possible to conduct the operation in the delightfully relaxed manner shown here. Of the many photographs of Stu in the LMS files, this is my all-time favorite. Not because I am in it too, though this could be a point, but because it emanates a marvelous serenity, a quality not ordinarily associated with Stu's ebullient personality. My notion about Stu is that he interacted with his immediate environment, be it the deep woods or Bourbon Street, to an extent that he somehow became part of it. Of this unusual propensity, as far as I could see, he was entirely unaware. In other words, the charges he got from the natural world around him were direct and his reactions to them equally so—and silent, no lyricism involved in the experience. The camera seems to have caught him in one of these inexpressible moods. There were no words to go with the picture. The “still center,” so wistfully sought after by many poets. I think he had it.

This same quality of being at one with his environment is apparent in the following description of Stu in the early WPA days by his collaborator, Gordon Willey.

Stu had a remarkable flair for “fitting in,” for accommodating himself to “native” ways. He would have made a good ethnologist, I suppose. In 1939, the town of Marksville was a small French-originated community—a very closed place, one would think, to outsiders. Stu was there only for a few weeks before he became “one of the boys.” The top local hangout was the drugstore, where they served scotch and soda in fountain-sized Coca Cola glasses, for fifteen cents a shot. Across the street was the leading restaurant, which looked like any small-town southern restaurant of the period but where they knew how to cook in the Louisiana French manner. Stu was at home in both places. One would have thought he had lived here all his life. He was the ideal man to introduce an outsider to the place. Big, colorful, friendly, kind—his colleagues and friends all miss him.



George Quimby, another WPA colleague and kindred spirit, adds to the characterization and fondly recalls some favorite anecdotes.

Robert Stuart Neitzel is best described in the words of his friend and colleague Bill Haag. Stu “was truly a great person with many wonderful Rabelaisian, if not Falstaffian, traits, but it all added up to the nearest thing to a Renaissance Man I have known.” I would only add to this that Stu was also a twentieth century “Old Man Coyote.”

I became a colleague of Stu’s in early October of 1939, when I began my job as State Supervisor of the Louisiana State University-WPA Archaeological Project. I had been selected for this position by James A. Ford, whom I had come to know well when we were fellow graduate students at the University of Michigan in 1937/1938, working in Dr. James B. Griffin’s Ceramic Repository. Elsewhere, I have written about the importance of Jim Ford and Jimmy Griffin in WPA archaeology so will not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that my associations with Jim, Jimmy, and Stu were always interesting and often entertaining.

In the WPA days, Stu was a field archaeologist par excellence. It was always a pleasure to visit his excavations in Avoyelles Parish in the French-speaking region of Louisiana. My introduction to Marksville was a pig barbecue held one weekend night at the Greenhouse site. Jim Ford, myself, Stu, and a number of his Marksville friends sat or stood around a large fire pit. A whole pig, suspended on twisted ropes, turned slowly just above the red hot coals of the log fire. To pass the time while the pig was roasting, we talked and drank bourbon, which was in plentiful supply. By the time the pig was cooked, we were a very jovial group. In the course of the evening, I excused myself to go to the outdoor privy, but lost my way in the darkness and fell into the bayou. Stu fished me out. This was a sobering experience, and I dried myself by the fire and ate barbecued pig. In the morning, I told Stu how much I had enjoyed the party and the stories of his friends. He allowed that this was remarkable since most of the time his friends were speaking French, which I did not.

On another occasion I visited Stu in St. Martin Parish. He was negotiating with landowners to dig the Miller Site, a large shell midden at the edge of a bayou whose name I don't recall, but for the sake of this anecdote I will call it Bayou Latrine. In a nearby settlement, I learned that there was a big man, who spoke French with an Avoyelles Parish accent, living on a boat in the bayou. I eventually found Stu and boarded his boat—a shoal draft boat with an enclosed cabin powered by an outboard motor. Stu was suffering a bout of malaria. His treatment was this. He took quinine tablets until there was a ringing in his ears, then he drank whiskey until his ears stopped ringing. He dipped his drinking water from the bayou with his collapsible field cup of tin. Noting my disapproval, he explained that he was so loaded with medication that he was immune to anything in the bayou water.

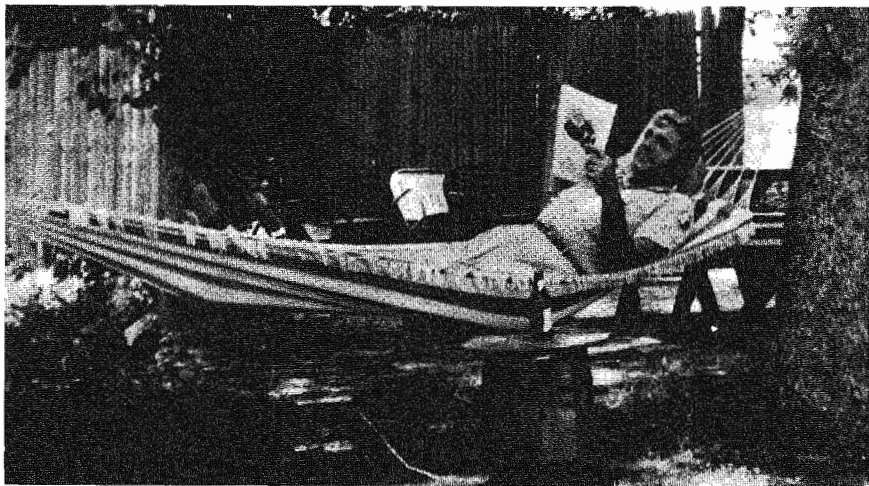
With the termination of the Louisiana State University-WPA Project in July 1941, Stu's French-speaking crew from Marksville was moved to Alexandria to work at landscaping the grounds of the new military establishment there. The crew was habituated to years of digging in five or ten-foot squares and six-inch levels and so continued this method. The Yankee, non-French-speaking officers could not cope with this problem, nor did they know that the crew had encountered archaeological materials and were bringing them to Stu back in Marksville. The military solved the problem by hiring Stu to supervise the crew.

I occasionally saw Stu at archaeological meetings, but there was a hiatus in our correspondence until January 1978, when I wrote the following letter to him:

"I have an idea. The WPA period was important in the history of North American archaeology and not much has been written on it. Documentary sources are scarce to non-existing at this time. I therefore propose an oral history project which would include the memories and reminiscences of WPA archaeologist veterans such as you, myself, Joffre L. Coe, John L. Cotter, David L. DeJarnette, Charles H. Fairbanks, James B. Griffin (WPA and ceramic repository of U. of M.), William G. Haag, Jesse D. Jennings, Arthur R. Kelly, Arden King, Moreau Maxwell, William T. Mulloy, Carlyle Smith, Albert C. Spaulding, Robert Wauchope, and Gordon R. Willey.

Since the very first use of large amounts of relief labor took place at Marksville in 1933 under Setzler and Ford and since this event was the ancestor of WPA archaeology, it seems fitting to hold a meeting of the above named archaeologists, and any others we can think of, at Marksville, in the autumn of 1978 or spring of 1979. Surely by now there must be a motel in Marksville that would hold us. My idea is that we would all sit around a recording machine, drinks in hand, to jog our memories and see what comes out."

We never did have our ideal meeting in Marksville, but we had a nice reunion in Knoxville in the autumn of 1978 at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference. At this meeting, we were able to contribute much of the program we had planned for Marksville. I enjoy my memories of Stu Neitzel.



Fred Kniffen was a close friend of Stu's from his first to last days in Louisiana. Although his interests are broader, Fred has participated in the archaeological world and its camaraderie. He often shared Stu's legendary hospitality.

Of the many virtues possessed by Stu, perhaps the least recognized has been his unfailing kindness and generosity as a host. It was so commonplace as scarcely to register, say a delectable repast prepared by Stu himself or overnight lodging.

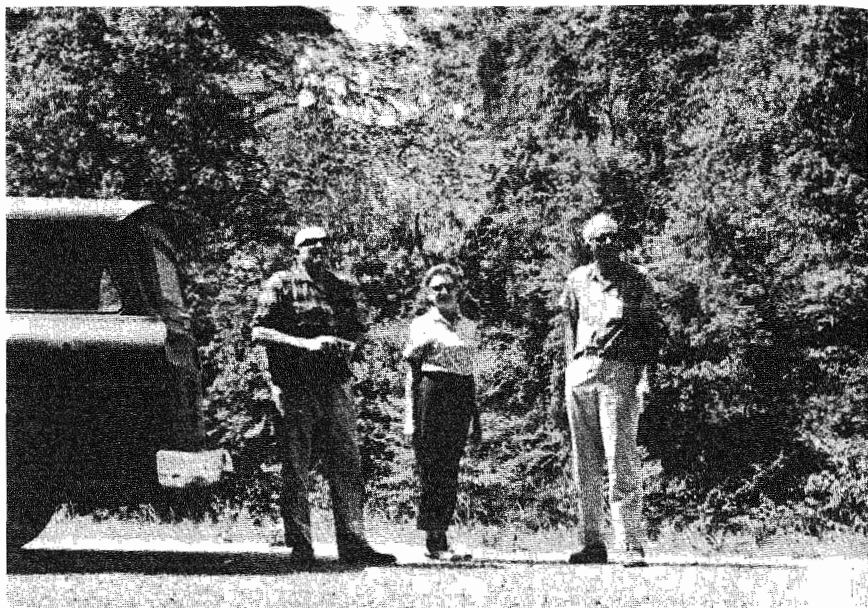
Marksville is so centrally located and of such interest archaeologically as to attract visitors from near and far. Stu never failed them. At times, certain unsavory characters fostered by the Baton Rouge environment took advantage of Stu's hospitality. A number of times Jim Ford, moved by fond memories, called Stu, instructing him to roast a pig for an unspecified number of guests. There followed a night of eating and carousing, with never a dissenting word from Stu.

Just before Stu's last illness, Bill Haag called Stu to tell him of our impending visit. We didn't have to instruct him to mix us drinks before lunch or to serve us catfish fried beyond compare. When Stu partook of neither, we knew he was not right, and indeed he was not.

Stu's unfailing hospitality was one of the attributes of a rounded individual, a first-class scientist with a powerful lust for living.

Stu's closest lifelong friend was the founder of modern Louisiana archaeology, Jim Ford. Jim died more than a decade before Stu, precluding his first-person presence in these pages. Something of the quality of that friendship, however, is recounted for us by Clarence Webb.

They were big men physically, emotionally, and intellectually, which often leads to rivalry, but their relationship was collaborative and supportive, not competitive. They drank and partied well together, they worked well together. If one could compare them with two great bears physically, Stu would be the big black, Ford the grizzly. I never saw them horse around or scuffle with each other—it would be too awful to



contemplate, and I think they both knew it. Stu was somewhat in awe of Jim, and possibly felt psychologically overwhelmed because Jim kept at it until he got his masters and doctorate; Stu did not. Yet, when Jim had a tough and hurried excavation on hand, he called for Stu—at Menard, at Helena, at Poverty Point, at the lesser surveys they did with me. When Stu was out of a regular job or in trouble with one, Jim tried to get him placed elsewhere. When Jim—and, later, Ethel—were ill, Stu was there with support. American archaeology has not had, to my knowledge, two people who were closer and more complementary to each other.

Second only to Ford, perhaps, was Bill Haag. Bill and Stu spent much time together, especially after Jim's death. There was some fieldwork, but mostly they simply enjoyed each other's company and eagerly sought almost any excuse for an excursion across the countryside.



I cannot remember when I met Stu for the first time. I think it must have been the 1938 Birmingham SEAC conference. He became such a good friend that he just seemed to have always been there. Yet Stu was not such a good friend that he countenanced everything that one did. He was particularly irascible if I did something inexcusable, such as running out of whiskey on a trip into dry country.

One of our memorable trips was to Oklahoma, where our good friend Archie Sam was dedicating a new dance ground. The old ground was so desecrated by old fridges and car bodies that Archie thought it was time to move. Stu, Fred Kniffen, Bob Wilson, and I drove up to help with establishing the new grounds. It was a great occasion, in part solemn, such as our visit to the grave of Wat Sam, and in part instructive. The dance leg rattles that once were hollow terrapin shells were now Pet milk cans with gravel, and the drum was a five-gallon crock with a rubber drumhead held in place by a modern adjustable clamp. None the less, the fervor and spiritual commitment was as genuine as ever.

We had a grand day reminiscing about the vicissitudes that had beset the Natchez. Archie told us of some new sources of Natchez language remnants, and, finally, at sunset we departed. Stu assured Archie we had



had a well enjoyed visit, to which Archie replied, "Well, we did laugh a lot!"

Yes, always with Stu we did laugh a lot. He was a great, talented, complex person, but I will always miss the laughs.

Clarence Webb was another long-standing Louisiana acquaintance who developed a close friendship with Stu as the years brought them together. This development is described in their correspondence.

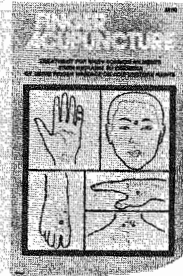
Our correspondence went along over the years in very official "Dear Clarence" form on state stationary when he was at the Marksville Museum and in Jackson, but since then on treasured postcards,

Marksville, La. 71351

Don't fret about your paper seeing the light of day. I have copied it word for word to include into the Second Coming report, of course taking full credit. After all I'm a National Park!

A + N lost 4000 ^{immortal} ~~immortal~~

*wrote about the French Soup
etc. - you think you have problems?*



B. Try Acupuncture by Finger Pressure



scribbled and with the salutation generally "Hey Poppa," "Big Daddy," "Poppa," "Daddy-o," rarely Clarence and once, when I kidded him about the weird radiocarbon dates at Fatherland, "Dear Dr. Weisenheimer"; then three cards headed with the drawing of a red heart pierced with a dart (labeled Gary Stemmed or San Patrice), resultant from my having written him about a nit-picking feud I was having with certain members of the LMV Survey concerning states' rights and shifting type/varieties. He was twisting between two sets of good friends, like the proverbial worm in hot ashes; he was no worm and allowed that there was probably fault on both sides, he hated intramural slugging and "leave you and me stay cool." I did cool off, finally, and, if everybody now feels friendly, Stu had a lot to do with it.

That incident describes the essence of true friendship. Stu cared deeply for his friends and often served as a bridge between them. He also was a bridge between generations: many are the callow youths he befriended and brought to maturity. The wisdom of this tutelage shows forth in the following reminiscences.

Pete Gregory, at Louisiana's Northwestern State University, offers a broad characterization from the younger perspective. Not surprisingly, the picture is a familiar one, as already described in these pages, for Stu did not discriminate his friendships according to age. It is the same old Stu, except perhaps for the added recognition of his role as teacher. Pete also details how Stu was not only a student of the Indian, but their sensitive friend, as well.

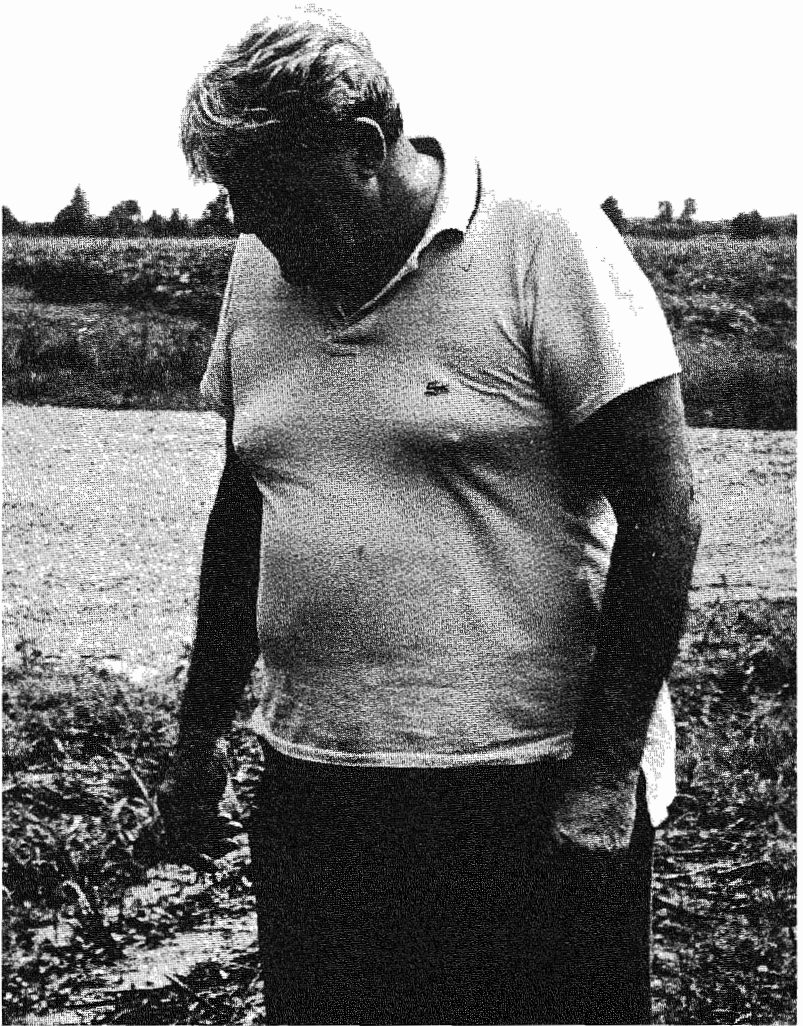
Robert S. Neitzel was what many people dream about. He was his own man. Archaeologist, ethnologist, dairy farmer, fishing guide—it was what he wanted, and he had the strength to do it. He did it all well.

Marksville was an isolated place in the 1930s when he arrived as a young crew chief. He met “Miss Gwen” there. They stayed and loved the French *joie de vivre*. After all, he soon spoke the local dialect like a true Cajun. It was the old story of the convert who out-practiced the natives. “Bob” became one of the solid citizens of the town, and it loved him.

I met him there, while I was a kid, when Frank Setzler came to dedicate the Marksville Prehistoric Museum. I went to meet Setzler, a bona fide archaeologist. I did, but I also met Stu Neitzel. I remember Setzler's laughing about having to have Stu as translator down there. Neitzel belonged—Setzler and others visited!

I met him again at Poverty Point—when Jim Ford was plugging away up there. I had been sent to them by Jim's old friends, the U.B. Evans and Fred Kniffen—they had apparently decided to “save” me from the fate of becoming an archaeologist. Ford was a stolid task master. Stu became my intercessor. He was patient with an eager kid and wise enough to translate Ford's tendency to put me on the most onerous or menial tasks, mapping (I hated math), painting, building tables, screens, mending batteries, etc., into terms I could understand. Actually, I saw Stu consistently hard at the same menial chores and, encouraged, I learned a lot. I still remember Stu teaching me how to dismember chicken with a machete, much to the cook's dismay!

In Selma, Alabama, Woody Gagliano, Clarence Webb, and I were trapped one night by Jim Ford and Stu Neitzel. They needed us to spend the night. That night I saw my first real archaeology: the defense of a thesis—Woody and I read aloud the entire manuscript of the Fatherland site report. Ford and Webb attacked; Stu defended, acquiesced from time to time, but stood his ground. Sometime before dawn that trio declared it good! Woody and I croaked once or twice and staggered off to bed. It was a hell of a learning experience watching those three pitch about everything from grammar to illustrations. I guess I realized that,



too, was serious, but also it was fun! Stu Neitzel was the finest teacher I ever met.

There was yet another Stu Neitzel that the Tunica Indians and I knew. He met them in the 1930s and kept up a running correspondence with Frank Speck about them. The late Joseph Alcide Pierite was his close friend. “Bob” was their model friend among non-Indians. He was helpful (especially during the Depression, when it was hardest to do), one of their closest neighbors for a long time, but he stayed out of their business, honored their elders and traditions. He shared their love of the woods and bayous and knew them as the complicated folks they were, not as stereotypes. The day Chief Joseph Pierite died, I received two phone calls—one from Chief Joe’s daughter, and, shortly, another from Stu Neitzel, “The old man is dead. I knew you’d want to know.” He knew me as well as my family did. He respected people’s friendships. He went to the funeral to mourn his old Tunica friend—he had tanned deerskins, made tools, paddled boats, done most of what the Tunica-Biloxi could teach him. He knew how important that last day was. The last visit he and I had was devoted mainly to conversation about our mutual Tunica friends. He was concerned about some problems they had. Somehow it seems fitting that we spoke of that—mutual trust makes old friends.

Once he excavated a Biloxi burial in his garden. He told me about taking the gunparts and bones to the Tunica-Biloxi chief for reburial! We, the Tunica-Biloxi and I, still talk about that!

As soon as he began work at Natchez, it did not take him long to locate the remaining Natchez contingent among the Cherokee at Gage, Oklahoma. He involved their contemporary square ground leader in his research, and they visited one another. Natchez Indian people were living, and Neitzel, somehow, knew they would want to know more about their past. He made all the proper connections. He was still a true humanist. Indian people, sensing his sincerity and interest, worked easily with him. He left us a legacy of approach and cooperation, not to mention sensitivity, that we will be hard pressed to duplicate.

Stu left us quite a heritage: patience, love for his *patria chica*, a deep respect for everything about him and a unique sense of humor. Archaeology in the Southeast owes him a lot, anthropology in the South may owe him more. Even though it was his adopted land, it is nice to think he really was a Louisiana man.

Jon Gibson, now at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, was introduced to Stu by Pete Gregory. In the following anecdote, Jon describes that first meeting and the impact it had on determining his future course.

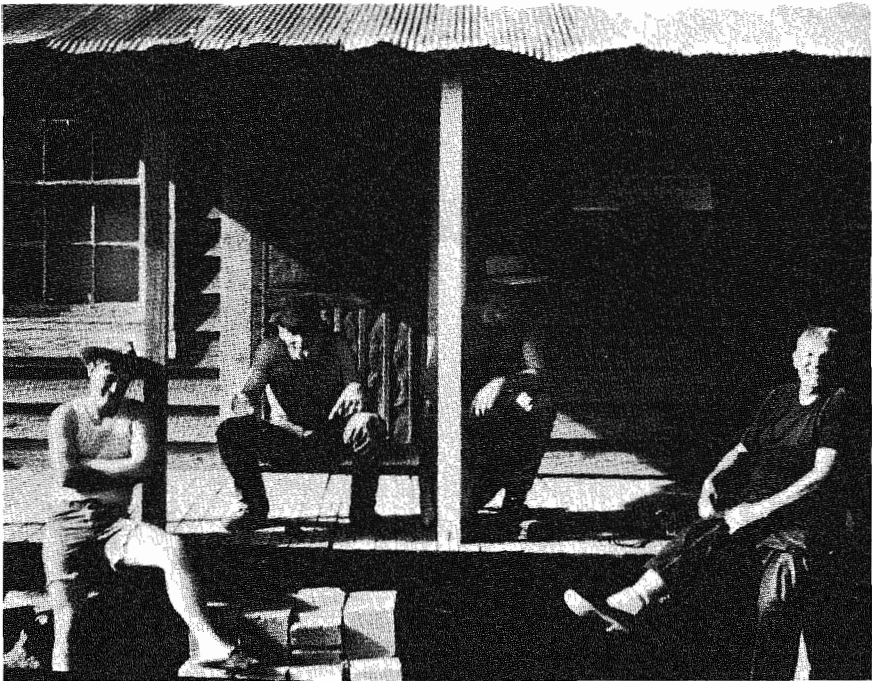
My first encounter with Stu was the most memorable. Not because subsequent ones were not; every time with Stu was memorable. The first time in 1962, though, was special because I met both of them—Stu and Jim [Ford], at the same time. I was a sophomore at Northwestern State College (now University) at Natchitoches, Louisiana, and was a student assistant in the Williamson Museum. Hiram “Pete” Gregory, then teacher and later friend and colleague, invited me along to carry Stu some Natchez pots from the Fatherland site. Stu was then digging at Fatherland, and I have never yet figured out how Pete came by those pots. In any event, we drove to Marksville one Saturday. As we were pulling into the lane leading up to Stu’s old house near the auction barn, I caught my first sight of them.

There was Stu slumped comfortably into a chair on the front porch. Jim was stretched out on his back with his arms folded across his forehead. They shifted only slightly at our approach, and I think Stu blinked. It was obvious that he had already “assumed the attitude,” even though it was still morning. Stu was proud of this self-taught skill, which he later described as the ability to achieve true vision (stereoscopic) via a fixed stare with watery, half-closed eyes. Often he would realize complete stereoscopy but at other times he would only see double, and sometimes he would see nothing at all.

When the two became fully aware of our presence, they became rather animated, sitting up and even talking somewhat. Stretched out between them were paired aerial photos of Marksville. Sure enough on close inspection one could see dozens of little circles around the mounds, the so-called lodge or house sites. The two had designs on these features and though their plans never materialized, Marksville was never far from their minds.

Stu filled us in on the Grand Village excavations, gave us some powerful, chickoried, dark roast, and let us listen. Ford warned me about the life of an archaeologist. Neitzel just grinned. Driving back to Natchitoches, pensive yet excited, I knew my resolve had been strengthened. Now I know what Stu’s grin meant.

Stu’s lighthearted, laughing, joking, story-telling personality livened and lightened every situation. One was immediately struck with his enormous sense of joie de vivre. It was highly contagious.



Bob Neuman, Louisiana State University, adds to the themes of ambiance à la Neitzel and lessons taught.

Stu had a most unpretentious way about him of making everyone in his presence feel good right up to the brim, and he was as consistent at this virtue as the way a horse takes to oats.

I first met Stu in the spring of 1954, the time Bill Haag packed Fred West and me into his station wagon to travel to the SEAC conference at Moundville, Alabama. Stu was dairy farming at that time, and we stopped at his place near Marksville to pick him up. When we pulled into the yard, this big fella came out of the house carrying a small suitcase and a few books. Bill had already told us about his friend Stu Neitzel, so naturally we hopped out of the station wagon and dutifully relieved Stu of his burdens. As luck would have it, I latched onto the suitcase. It immediately crossed my mind that it was unbelievably heavy for its size, and I looked forward with deep anticipation to seeing and hearing about the wondrous artifacts therein.

With Bill driving and telling tales and Stu reading aloud excerpts from some episodes in the life of an unsavory Scottish seaman named Glencannon, along with liberal rations of refreshment passing among us, we arrived at Moundville much sooner than Fred and I had expected. Parenthetically, I have been back there a number of times since that occasion, but somehow the distance from Marksville has lengthened considerably, in spite of the new interstate pavements.

The evening of our arrival many of those attending the conference congregated in one of the bungalows at the Moundville Park, and Fred and I found a seat on the floor and listened attentively as the booze and stories of the making of Southeastern archaeology were proffered around the room. Finally, the moment I had been waiting for arrived, and Stu reached for his suitcase, unsnapped the latches, and much to my surprise there appeared no artifacts, per se. Instead, what did appear, safely cushioned between several pairs of socks and drawers, were four bottles of *Sir Sidney*, a Kentucky sour mash much favored by Stu. The session extended into the early morning hours.

Most all of his friends know that Stu came from a small town in eastern Nebraska, and quite obviously Neitzel is not a name of French origin; but perhaps it is not too widely known that he could speak and understand the Cajun dialect, a kind of fractured French language spoken in south Louisiana. Well, the point is that Stu and I worked and lived together for seven months during the fall and winter of 1970/1971. We were excavating at the Morton Shell Mound in Iberia Parish. For



our crew we had ten local Cajuns between the ages of eighteen and thirty and, of course, on occasion they would prattle among themselves in Cajun French. They were rightly certain that I did not really comprehend their remarks, and they were just as sure that a fella with the name Neitzel could do no better. As sometimes happens at coastal digs, after a period of time the crew got that wondrous lackadaisical feeling that after you have seen one potsherd or one shell midden you have seen them all, and they began to drag their rear ends. Well, Stu's patience began to wear away, and one day after lunch he raised himself up and much to their surprise and discomfort he gave the crew a tongue-lashing in Cajun French. The expression on their faces was one to behold. I never really knew exactly what he had said, but the sermon turned the trick, and from then on they behaved and worked as their mothers had taught them, or perhaps more correctly, as Stu strongly suggested.

Stu had no hesitation in taking on all comers. And when a new, even more callow, generation of outlanders was introduced to the scene under the auspices of his old friends Phil Phillips and Steve Williams of the Lower Mississippi Survey, he eagerly accepted the challenge to indoctrinate them. One such experience is offered by John Belmont.

It was in June 1958, as an eighteen-year-old Harvard student, that I had my first experience of field archaeology, of the South, and of Stu Neitzel. The occasion was the Lower Mississippi Survey's first field season at the Lake George site, in the delta of Mississippi near Holly Bluff. I had made the long drive down with Stephen Williams, the director, and fellow freshman Jeff Brain; I had seen my first mounds and had internalized the first rule of archaeology—if it is flat on both sides, call it a “sherd,” not a rock. One memory still stung: when Steve had told us darkly that Mississippi was dry, I had glibly replied that I didn't mind, I was from California, where rain never fell from May to November.

After unpacking at Holly Bluff, we drove down to Marksville, Louisiana, to pick up some equipment, and to meet Stu. I was at first a little overawed by this hearty, bear-like man, lolling in his yard surrounded by trees full of tent caterpillars, a hammock suspended between two of them. He informed me we were having gumbo for supper: another esoteric word, like sherd. I feigned familiarity with the dish. He asked me if I objected, eyeing me piercingly, and I avowed a fondness for it. He then launched into a pointed tale about a previous young visitor from Harvard who had insisted on being served tomato soup. I expressed disapproval; he laughed. I had passed my first test.

We returned to Holly Bluff, and he soon followed, to help us lay out the grid and get the dig going. My field journal, rigidly restricted to archaeological matters, makes only brief mention of him during his ten-day stay. He showed me how to use a shovel and introduced me to the mysteries of postholes and strata, and he gave us all lessons on the operation of transit and plane table. In my entry for July 2, I allowed myself a laconic personal note: “Stu left at lunch, which saddened all.”

I was to see him several times again in following years. I remember my first encounter, at his hands, with jazz piano, in a little dive in Vicksburg, and with “white lightning,” in Cartersville, Georgia. He put David Hally and me up for the night once in Jackson, spinning long fables of his dealings with “widow-women” in the warm summer evening. He packed so much content into his life, it was always hard for me to know where fact left off and tall tale began. Although he eventually came to respect me and even defer to me as a scholar, around him I always

remained a little the youth in the presence of the worldly-wise elder who would soon—perhaps he had already begun!—initiate me into the varied mysteries of manhood.

I left archaeology for a long while, and I missed out on the intimate association that Jeff Brain and other Harvard people came to enjoy. When in early 1980 I visited his home on Joffrion Street in Marksville, it was after almost a decade away. His old humor and generosity were the same, but there was a new and surprising gentleness. He and Miss Gwen served me a sumptuous dinner (I knew the names of all the dishes now), and we talked of archaeology and former times, and especially his Fatherland project. He touched on contract archaeology, that latter-day phenomenon, summing it up in a sentence: “I charge \$100 if I go into the field; double that if I don’t.” He took me on a tour of the Marksville Prairie, pointing out the sites and special places, the old man passing on the tribal lore. It was the first day I’d ever spent with him alone, the sole focus of his attentions. And it was, irreparably, the last: in a few months he was gone.

I knew Stu personally in his incarnation as the fond bachelor uncle of Southeastern archaeology, but there was a previous incarnation to which through my research I have had privileged access—the young journeyman field-worker of WPA days. For fifteen years, I had

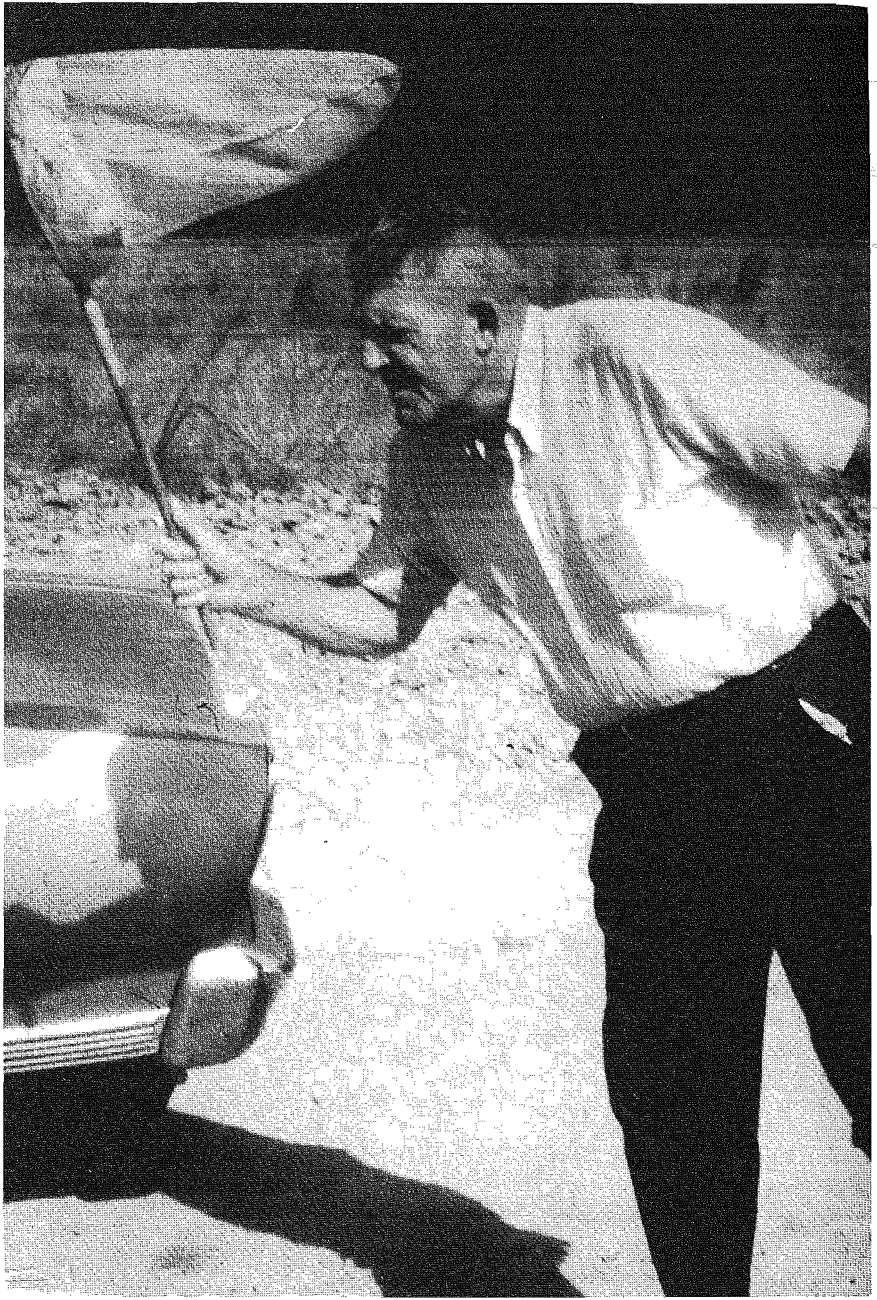


informal custody of the voluminous records of the excavations at the Greenhouse site, near Marksville, in 1938 and 1939. The somewhat sketchy report on this site was published in 1951 by James Ford; it still forms the basis for our ideas of the Troyville and Coles Creek cultures of Louisiana. Ford was the head of WPA archaeology statewide in those days; for most of the period of the excavation Gordon Willey was in charge of the laboratory in New Orleans, overseeing the analysis of the artifacts. The field foreman was Stu Neitzel. Although he was assisted in the earlier part of the dig by Edward Doran, all the extant field records, the profiles and plans, and the stratigraphic analysis are Stu's work. He is given little credit in the publication, but it was he who unraveled the long and complex history of the site. His notes and letters, far more than his later formal writings, are full of the flavor of the man, his easy-going humor and his pretensionless, even humble, relation to his discipline (see p. 65).

Also at Lake George, and then subsequently in many other situations with Stu, was Jeff Brain.

It was something like an auto-da-fé to know Stu. First, there was the inquisition and then, the public announcement: pro or con. He could get along with almost anybody, but to be truly accepted into his world, you had to pass muster. That was not easy. You could not help but be intimidated upon first meeting, for his physical presence and immediate command of any situation were daunting. He would size you up and reserve judgment. Then came the trials by fire. I know that now, and gleefully experienced it as it happened with others: many is the poor lamb I brought to his fold.

But to return to the time when I was young and innocent: Lake George, 1958. He would quickly put you off guard with his easy ways and humor. A paper tiger, or so it seemed. Then, when you thought you knew him, he would do the unexpected; Stu loved to be outrageous and to embarrass the uninitiated. In my case, it occurred when I rushed to the icebox (an old-fashioned icebox with real ice in it, for that is the way it was in Holly Bluff, Mississippi) for a beer after a long, hot day at the site. My thirst for that ice-cold beer was briefly interrupted by the vision of Stu leaning against the icebox *au naturel*, except for the usual glass of bourbon. He was talking to Steve Williams, who was muddled and unshucked, about the progress of the day. The tableau is still etched upon my mind, although I don't think I missed a step and continued



about my original purpose. I even stayed to talk awhile, worked on the beer, and adopted some semblance of nonchalance. I guess I passed that crucial first test.

But then there was a long break in our relationship. Although there were a few very brief encounters during the intervening years, it was not until May 1970, and the Tunica Treasure, that we really came together again. Somehow, it already seemed natural and comfortable. The surprises were over, the fun and intimacy were to begin.

My first of many excursions with Stu was after viewing the Tunica Treasure. I did not know, yet, that I was about to commit a major part of my research energies for the next decade to historic-period archaeology. I had made the trip with the express purpose of killing two birds with one stone: to see the Tunica Treasure, but then, since I was there, to follow up on an earlier and (until then) more important interest. While working at Winterville in 1967/1968, I had developed an interest in the possibility of finding in situ early man sites in the geologically young Yazoo Basin. Previous test excavations by myself and others had failed to establish such archaeological contexts. But the interest remained, and new information about just such a possibility—the Helm site—had brought me back again. When I told Stu of my other purpose for the trip, he insisted that we take his car and go. He handed me the keys and, as was to be the custom from then on, I drove while he talked. I began to absorb him.

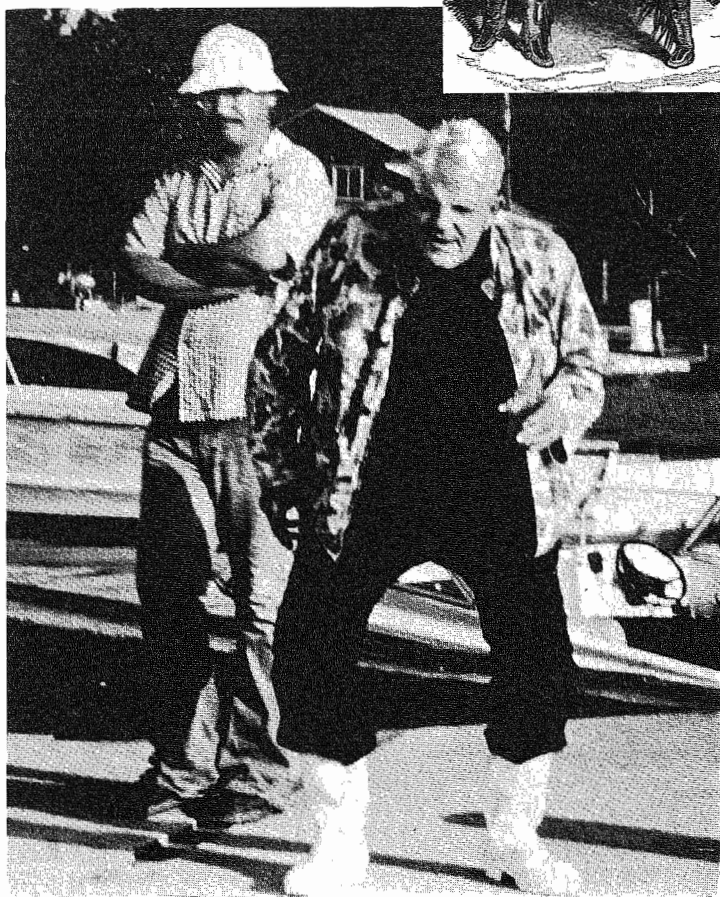
We arrived at Helm and surveyed the situation. I decided on a likely spot, laid out a modest excavation, and set to work. Stu watched my non-results for awhile, then went to the trunk of his car and pulled out what appeared to be a butterfly net. Wryly, I guessed that the next artifact would be a straight jacket for this idiot who toiled so fruitlessly. Instead, he struck a pose and quipped: “Neitzel pursuing an elusive point!” The double entendre was not lost on me, and I gave up soon after. (I have yet to find that elusive in situ early man site.) Stu was ever the gentle teacher, leavening his wise insights with humor.

The public announcement of my acceptance into the fold came at the SEAC conference in Columbia, South Carolina, the following November. After Stu and I gave a joint presentation on the Tunica Treasure, we went up to his room, where a well-advanced party was already in progress. I didn’t know anyone, for they were all Florida State people, and my circle of acquaintances at the time had not yet reached that far. But they were a resourceful bunch, and Stu’s kind of people: they had committed minor felony and moved a piano from a first-floor lounge up to this den. (They gleefully reported that the house dick was so mystified as to how they had fit it into the elevator that in admiration for their exploit he let the piano stay for the duration.) Stu sat down, played



a few chords, and then improvised, singing "The Peabody Blues." I don't remember the words. They were embarrassing at first, but they were complimentary; I dearly wish I had a recording. It really would not preserve that moment, however.

From then on, there are many times to recall, and all too personal (for you had to be there). It was a fine decade. We spent much time together, and shared many experiences. There was the Tunica Treasure, of course; but also Natchez, Haynes Bluff and St. Pierre, Angola Farm, Trudeau, the French Regime Symposia, and SEAC conferences. There were also many other excursions over the countryside, often with the company of such kindred spirits as Bill Haag and Ian Brown. We would talk, and listen, and joke, and just be together. We didn't have to ask what the other wanted, for generally we knew. It was a symbiotic relationship and, for me at least, cathartic. It was a rare friendship.



A half generation later, Jeff introduced Ian Brown and Vin Steponaitis to the glories of historic-period archaeology in the Lower Mississippi Valley and the rock upon which it rested. Ian worked closely with Stu in numerous projects and came to join some of those latter-day hegriras.

My experiences with Stu were all in the last decade of his life, a period when he was “officially” retired. He suffered from arthritis (or Arthuri-tis, as he would say) and an aching back, but even with these ailments Stu couldn’t keep off the job. He loved the camaraderie of field life and always had his bags packed ready to go at a minute’s notice. All we had to do was call, and the Marksville taxi would be there. Jeff would drive, with Stu at shotgun, drinking and regaling us with stories. With his left arm draped over the back of the seat and the seat itself bending under the weight of this enormous man, the adventures of a lifetime would be told. Only Haag could get a word in edgewise when Stu was in the car (because Stu loved his jokes), but few cared. Everyone knew they were experiencing a unique event.



And that's what it was like to survey with Stu. With lunches packed and equipment ready, we'd hit the road—laughing all the way. Jeff would point in different directions, and off we would dash, but Stu would usually stick to the highground in the vicinity of the truck. He carried the finest machete I've ever seen, and as he slowly walked along, he would flip up suspicious clods of earth to see whether they were worth bending over to pick up. After a half hour or so we would return to the vehicle proud of our half dozen sherds, but inevitably Stu would put us to shame with a collection twice the size of ours. "Ain't no way a goddam Indian would live where you went" ; and usually he was right.



My most memorable survey experience with Stu occurred on a hot, humid day when we were surveying the terraces of St. Catherine Creek in Natchez. We were positioned adjacent to the International Paper plant, and the atmosphere was putrid. Moreover, the area to be surveyed was situated in the vicinity of the dump. After two hours of finding nothing, I returned to the truck in a depressed state. Located next to the vehicle was a big pile of waste and sitting on top of the pile in regal fashion was Stu. He had unraveled a large roll of paper, forming a carpet leading up to the top of the mound. The end of the roll was turned over and arranged as an awning over his head. There indeed was the Great Sun.



During the eight hours a day in the field, Stu was a workhorse. Supervisors and crew had better be moving dirt, or they had better have good explanations in order. But when the day was done, that was it. There was a time for work and a time for play, and the evenings and weekends were definitely for play. Stu did not initiate the fine art of loafing, but he developed it to the nth degree. Few people could look so comfortable in a hammock. There he would sit in a near horizontal position with a torn and tattered book (usually borrowed) pitched on his enormous belly, a flyswatter on his left adjacent to a tape recorder spilling out Dixieland, and a lemon juice/vodka concoction on his right. Despite the clear planning of the layout, it was inevitable that his drink would always be just out of reach. This, too, may have been planned as he would let out a string of curses in his frequent attempts for nourishment. Everyone would delight in the moment, as Stu would struggle to put the world right again.

Stu was usually the cook in field operations. He enjoyed the role of mother, and he played it to a "T". Those who were sick could always count on a cup of Mom's chicken gumbo. Few could cook like Stu, but when the meals were over, his mind turned to more important things. At least once a week in the field, a bellowing call would emerge from the kitchen, "Deal the goddam cards!" All of us would go scurrying for our

nickels and dimes, because we knew it was time for poker. We'd all be settled before our neatly arranged stacks of pennies when Stu would enter. He'd toss out a few coins from the most crinkled brown paper bag in existence. He always used the same bag, and though he'd leave the table at the end of the evening with it full to the brim, the next time we'd play, it would inevitably be but a quarter full. What he did with all those coins we never knew, but we rather suspected our games were contributing to his retirement.

Stu's game was five-card stud. I never saw him deal anything different, and he would moan and groan when anyone wanted to play anything else. Wild cards were taboo ("Man, I'm wild!"), and High-Low was a game that mystified him (primarily because he knew how irritating it was for me to continually explain the rules). Stu delighted in bitching at the poker table: "My god, how did I ever get my ass in this game?" was the usual expression, but despite our smiles and snickers, it was usually Stu who walked away with the pot.

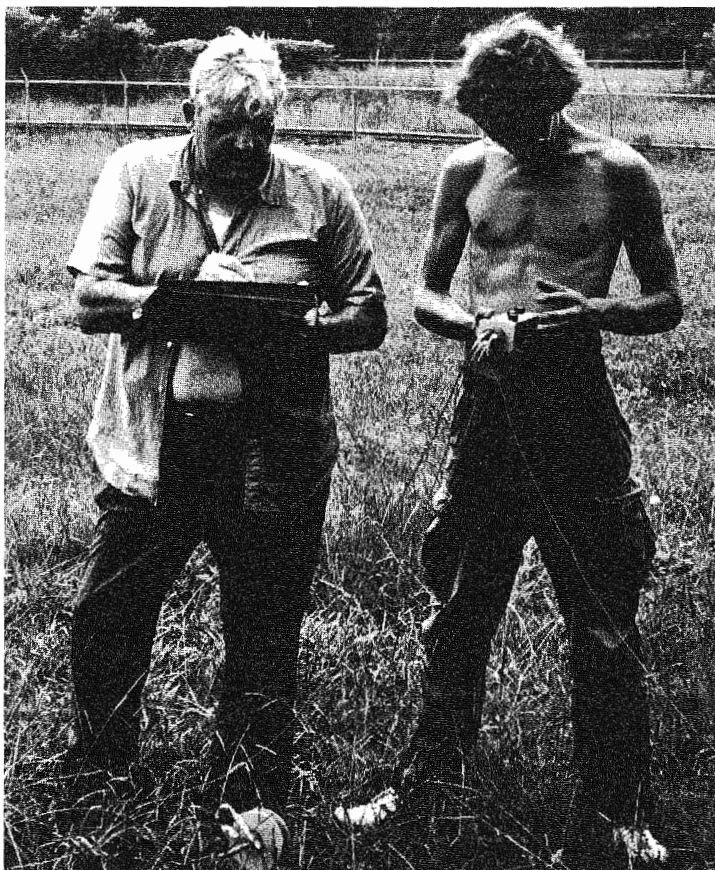
I never saw him bluff, although I constantly suspected him of doing so. Whenever he turned up his cards, we learned that he played them honest, often to our chagrin. If he wasn't dealt the cards, he got out. He knew when to fold, and he knew how to detect the bluffs in others. That's what made him a winner.



Vin Steponaitis was a member of various LMS field projects in Mississippi and Louisiana from 1972 to 1977. Stu was an important presence in all of these expeditions, as usual, but especially so during a difficult summer in 1975.

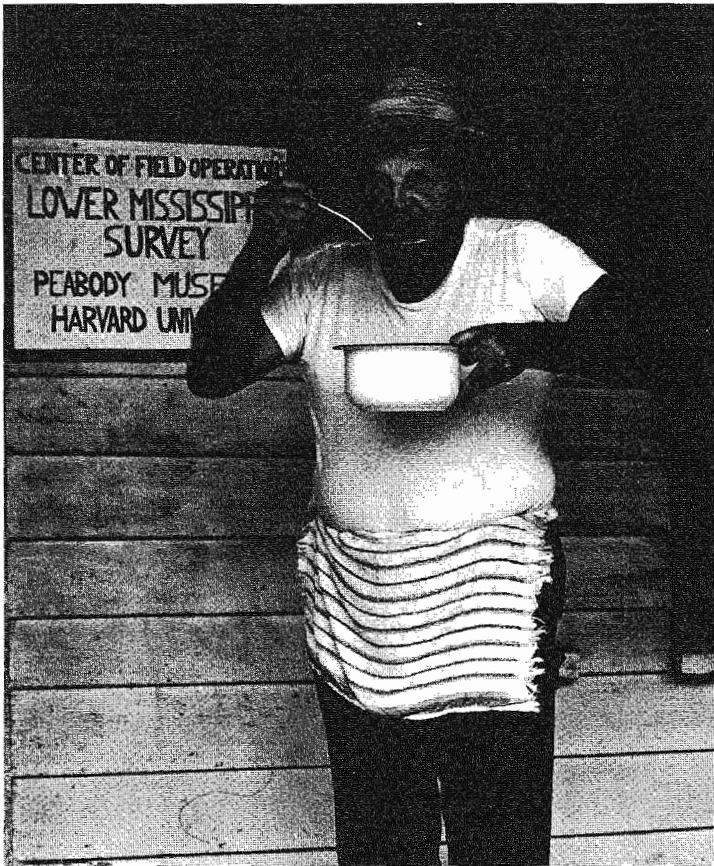
I have so many fond remembrances of Stu that it is difficult to single out any one episode as being particularly memorable. However, an experience does come to mind that bears recounting, for it illustrates the depth of Stu's kindness toward his fellow sufferers in the field.

During the summer of 1975, Jeff Brain organized a survey in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. In addition to Jeff, the crew included Ian Brown, Nancy Lambert, Laurie Cameron (my future wife), me, and needless to say, Stu. We set up field headquarters in an isolated



“hunting camp” and went to work looking for sites. For the first week or so, things went well; but one morning, Laurie and I started feeling a bit peaked, and by the same evening we were bedridden and seriously ill. We joked about our malady, calling it the “Great Sun’s revenge,” but it was really no laughing matter. Each of us had a high fever, severe cramps, and an acute inability to hold in any form of sustenance for more than two minutes. And this lasted for more than a week. In retrospect, I was sicker then than I have ever been in my life.

Stu cared for us throughout this ordeal in a way that few other people could. He continually made us drink water so we wouldn’t dehydrate; he helped us walk—sometimes practically carrying us—when we could hardly stand up; he fed us his chicken gumbo (not soup, mind you) as we started to recover; and best of all, he kept up our spirits with his inimitable jokes and antics.



Once while I was feverish, I remember waking up in my cot just after sunset and hearing what I thought was an owl very close by. The call of this creature, which sounded something like “hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo-oo-oo,” was followed by a brief silence, after which it was answered by a similar call, seemingly from farther away. Again the nearby owl called, and again it was answered—first from one direction, then from another. As this strange conversation wore on, more and more birds got into the act, so that within a few minutes the woods around the house were filled with frenzied owls, hooting away without pause. The effect was eerie, unlike anything I had heard before, and just as I was beginning to wonder whether I was delirious, the hooting was interrupted by raucous foot-stomping and laughter coming from the porch. It turned out that the instigator of this hooting was none other than Stu himself. He was so thrilled with his popularity among the local owls that he continued these chats for several nights thereafter; each time, Stu would begin by giving the sexiest hoot he could muster, stirring up the she-owls (or so we speculated) for miles around. All of which goes to show that Stu could achieve a rapport with just about anyone.

To this day, Laurie and I remain grateful for Stu’s gentle care during that horrible illness. He meant a great deal to us, and we shall never forget him.

A most fitting and eloquent conclusion to this series of reminiscences is written by Bob Bailey. A historian with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Bob never worked with Stu, and he knew him the shortest time of all those who have contributed to these pages. Yet, as all will recognize, he, too, came to know Stu well—for he sensitively evokes the essence of our friend.

I shall never forget the first time I met Robert S. Neitzel and can scarcely imagine that anyone could. It was August 1973, and I was young, green, and frightened, having just assumed the directorship of the Department of Archives and History’s Division of Historic Sites and Archaeology, a rather diverse group of free-spirited souls (only the name of the division has changed in the ensuing years), who were as bright as they were uncontrollable.

Stu Neitzel, who was even more uncontrollable, walked through the door to my office, probably having forgotten that several weeks earlier Elbert R. Hilliard had been promoted from that office to the directorship of the Department. Titles and promotions never meant much to Stu; They were largely folderol or, at best, forgettable occurrences. In any case, he did not appear to be surprised at the office's new incumbent (never having met a stranger), introduced himself, noticed that the junior-executive-type-chair I sat in was the one he had used as curator of the State Historical Museum in the Old Capitol a decade earlier and remarked that it still squeaked as it always had. We then talked for three hours, and Stu told me everything he wanted me to know about himself, including the fact that he lolled around in the bottom of boats a great deal, that he spent an inordinate amount of time talking to groups of people about things he never really understood himself, and that the Department of Archives and History constantly interrupted his sinecure by offering him various odd jobs, which were too good to turn down but were still too much like work. In fact, his disarming candor, smothered as it was under wit and an unconventional brand of charm, made it impossible not to like Stu Neitzel.

Though I already knew Stu through legend tempered with no small amount of infamy, I was brash enough to think that I was a kindred spirit with this most unique man, who shared so much of himself with me on that August morning eight years ago. And, of course, I was. But all people were kindred spirits with Stu Neitzel to some degree, even if they chose not to admit it, for there was and is a little Neitzel in us all, just as perhaps there is a little Thoreau in us all. While we generally fall into line, make a half-step, and catch up with the band, it is equally true that on occasion we hear a different, more distant drum beat. Stu Neitzel heard it more than most. To the elitist or the egalitarian, to the stuffy or the free-spirited, to the conformist or the renegade, to the professional archaeologist or the amateur, to the old-timer or the Johnny-come-lately, there was simply more to like about Stu Neitzel than not. I rather think, aside from that unconventional wit and charm, that it must have been his genuine humility and eagerness to share his knowledge and wisdom, be it about his profession or life in general, that so endeared him to such a large and disparate group of men and women.

In a largely self-oriented world (and I will try not to be maudlin, because he would not approve), Stu Neitzel genuinely cared about people and, as a matter of fact, established true friendships, via telephone and letter, with people whom he never met face to face! Such was the magnetism of the man, who was more paradoxical than most. He espoused no philosophy of life (the overused and largely undefined term existentialism may indeed apply here), yet at the same time he cared

about all of us who came within his realm. He lived for the day and for himself in his own way and gave little quarter to conformity; yet, again, he cared about us all. On second thought, Stu Neitzel was not a paradox but a mystery to be savored.

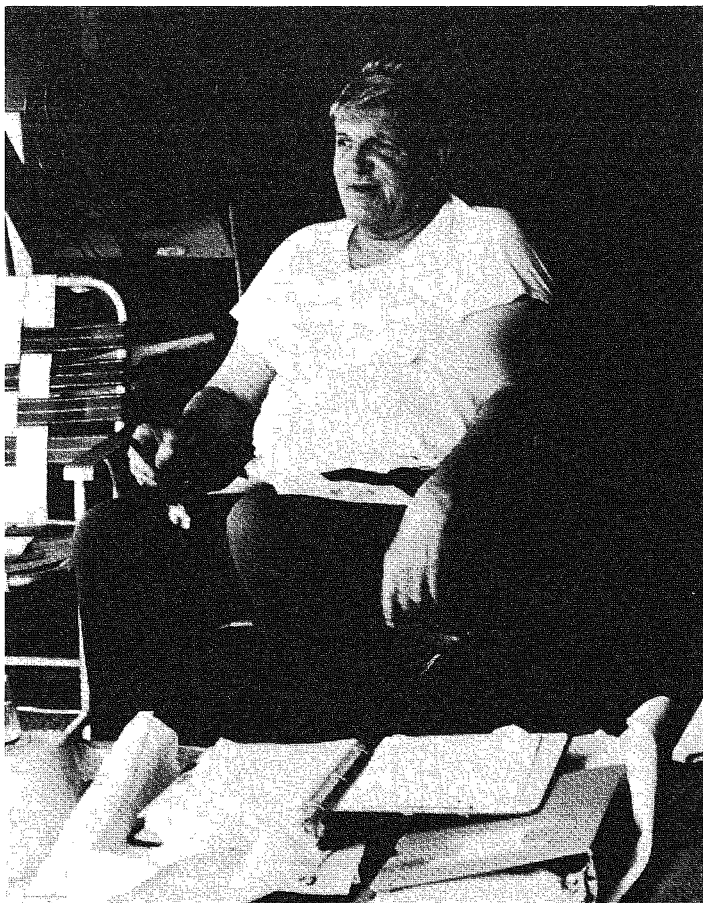
It was for this reason that he was universally described in extremes: Renaissance man, brilliant, a great wit, delightfully eccentric or lazy, devil-may-care, and even crazy. What greater compliment can be paid to this man than to say no other person could pigeonhole him. Stu Neitzel never dwelled in limbo—at least in no other mortal's perception of him.

Anyone who ever knew Stu Neitzel has a thousand and one stories and anecdotes that are vintage Neitzel, and when two or more people who knew him get together, there is an inevitable game of one-upmanship involving the past antics of the man. Such was his wit, that the stories are universally funny even when they involve serious matters. These stories will go on now more than ever, so there is no need to rehash them here. But two rather uncharacteristic (uncharacteristic in that they are not necessarily funny) stories come to mind, which say something to me about Neitzel the man and Neitzel the philosopher, though we have already established that he professed no traditional philosophy.

Once, when I was still young and green but now unfrightened (approximately a year after I met Stu and was frightened), I addressed a group of professional archaeologists working in Mississippi and informed them that they could benefit archaeological preservation by sharing their mysteries (not their site locations) with the layman, by terminating their insistence on making too much of a science out of what is to a large extent an art (or at least use a language we can all understand), and by engaging in some good old-fashioned PR. Needless to say, I was attacked by several of their number, which I expected, but was crestfallen to find that Stu Neitzel was one of the attackers, since I not only considered him a friend but had strongly suspected that he would agree with much of what I had to say. After the meeting adjourned, he cornered me, told me he agreed with most of what I had said, and informed me that his attack resulted from my arrogant and pompous attitude and the fact that I took myself too seriously. It was a good lesson and well learned.

On another occasion, I called Stu at home in Marksville, Louisiana, and asked him what he had been about lately. He responded by saying, not altogether tongue in cheek, that he was making daily trips to downtown Marksville to watch the stoplights change, because “they were the only things you could count on, the only things that were permanent in life, and they were permanent because they were changing.” Stu Neitzel was a philosopher, after all.

While there are those who knew Stu Neitzel longer than I did, I believe I knew him long enough and well enough to pay him tribute and to identify his legacy to all of us: never take too seriously anything, particularly yourself, and never concede that there is anything in life, except death, over which one does not have some degree of control. In any case, one thing is as certain as the Marksville stoplights. Robert S. Neitzel was a magnificent anachronism, who made, until the end of his days, new magic in a dusty old world. We recognize that we are diminished by his passing and bid him fond farewell.



*As they say in Mexico, “Que hombre!” — and in South Louisiana,
“He was a man, him.”*

—Clarence Webb

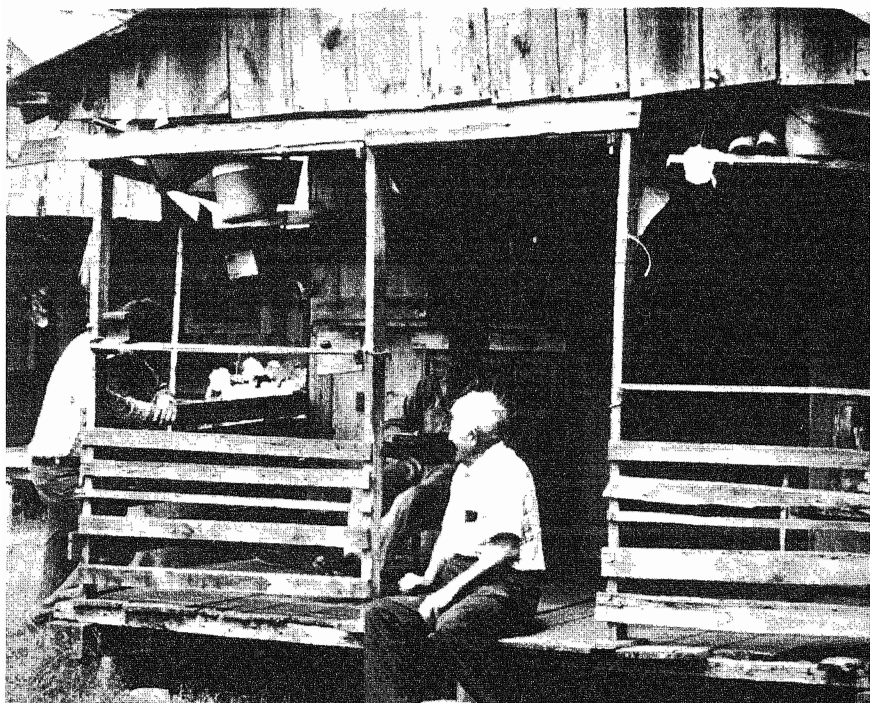
The Archaeologist

The foregoing pages have focused on Stu Neitzel, the man. A unique personality, he was an artful blend of simplicity, yet also complexity, of wit, kindness, and perception. To the uninitiated, he appeared the clown; to those who had the privilege of really knowing him, he was a deeply caring and resourceful friend—the one you would choose to stand by your side during those dark moments in life. He looked for the best in the world, took it, internalized it, and then gave it back; his translation somehow even better.

Stu was also a deeply caring and resourceful archaeologist. He loved his profession (despite the tortuous path by which he entered it, and the fact that it did not always treat him as a friend) and practiced it to the very end. Somehow, he made it, too, even better. It is not easy to describe how, for you had to be there. He did not publish a lot; although his contributions were always solid and often contained a moral. His greatest influence, however, was exerted personally. It was not just the gumbos, the poker, or the joke in the blistering afternoon sun that sparked renewed effort—altogether certainly his brand of archaeology (his axiomatic, and oft repeated dictum was, “if it isn’t fun, it isn’t worth doing”). No, it was also the deeply thoughtful perspective that he always maintained.

For Stu, archaeology was a basically humanistic science. He had a facility for making it relevant to his kindred professional spirits, to the naive student, even to the suspicious farmer who invariably relented and allowed his cotton rows to be invaded by so large a man. He was equally quick to expose irrelevancy, and his disdain for some theoretical trends in the profession was directly, and often profanely, expressed. He was a realist, as well, and his experience had taught him much. In his own special language:

I still live in the dark ages of culture history and cultural reconstruction—and think process is the greatest if there were very much to go on. But I still can find a few dinosaurs lurking in the



backyard patio, though much reduced, and not all scary. I think I would prefer to be such, and expect to repeat the evolutionary cycle again and again. In the beginning there was culture history—and lo it was good! Then there was culture reconstruction, and lo—it wasn't so bad. And then the numbers took over, and it is not as much fun any more. The wheel has turned over methodologically and theoretically several times in my time. I always hid my eyes on the down swoop, and managed to maintain sanity (Neitzel 1979).

His experience, of course, was extensive. From Nebraska, to Illinois, to Tennessee, to Louisiana, to Mississippi, to South Carolina, to Georgia, to West Virginia, to Arkansas, he was the underlying success to untold field operations. He became the field technician par excellence, and there is more of him in many famous published reports

than has ever been properly acknowledged. For example, witness some of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of the WPA excavations at the Greenhouse site, as written in letters to Gordon Willey extracted by John Belmont:

Had a hard rain last night and it sort of messed things up in a way. On the other hand it wet things up so well that I began cutting a profile on that horricity I laughingly refer to as an exploration trench.

The fresh, moist soil has caused me to see a multitude of things that have been denied me before ... I'd rather stay with it until I can finish the sketches and write up. I don't see how I can possibly make it down there Monday. Tuesday or Wednesday is another matter. Perhaps I shall be in such a black mood by then that I will have to leave town.

About 150' of trench caved in on me in the rain, but it was in the east end and I had just finished it so that was all right.

I have to work fast as the darn stuff dries out and becomes practically useless. There are some very intricate possibilities showing up in the fresh faces. For one thing...the heavy midden deposit on the east end of the trench owes some of its personality to the presence of a low mound. Through which one edge of, thereto and herewith I have been ever so blithely hacking. As nearly as I can tell though there is no damage done.

Hence, I must defer my proposed visit in favor of a position on dirt pile with my chin in my hand. Brood, Brood, breed (Neitzel 1938).

The S25 and W235 trenches into Mound F cannot be completed until the mound is dug—we're carrying them down as we dig the mound—however it cannot be finished until the water goes down. It's into most of the mound excavation now. They were not lost by cave-in but are merely lying dormant.

It's difficult for me to make accurate checks right now as I have all my notes and stuff packed. However, I'll do my best. There are about 6 inches of water in the floor of the office and I'm sitting here propped up on a log (Neitzel 1939a).

I think I'd better have a raise in salary to compensate for risks and hazard in line of duty. There's about a nine foot alligator swimming around in my mounds and middens. I think he's figuring on taking the place ... (Neitzel 1939b).



As a result of his extensive experience in mound excavation, Stu had refined his techniques for controlling and reporting the field data. For example, when he tackled the nearby Baptiste site the following year, he used a sophisticated system for correlating the mound stratification with the excavation units. He explains in a report to George Quimby:

After profile was cut natural levels or phases of mound were determinable. Each profile cut determines the number and extent of Zones to be collected from in the ensuing five-foot section to be cut. There are two types of Zones. Description Zones (DZ) which are those marked off in the profile and drawn on coordinate paper and described in notebooks. Excavation Zones (EZ) are major phases of mound development which are assumed to have chronological significance. Thus EZ 1 might incorporate DZ 1, 2, 3 and EZ 2 might continue with DZ 4 and 5 in a particular square. As excavation proceeds into the body of the mound new phases of mound development appear and the incorporation of Description Zones within Excavation Zones is unique and particular for each five-foot section, and for each square within the section.

This may appear veddy veddy to you, but it's like a canoe; it'll scare you to death after you're in it, but it won't dump you. The main advantage seems to be its flexibility in meeting fresh problems in the field (Neitzel 1940).

Even at this period, however, his command of archaeology was more than merely technical, as is clearly evident in this excerpt from a letter to his old friend Waldo Wedel, one of his earliest archaeological acquaintances:

We are getting some mighty neat stratigraphical results in regard to evolution of pottery types and distribution.

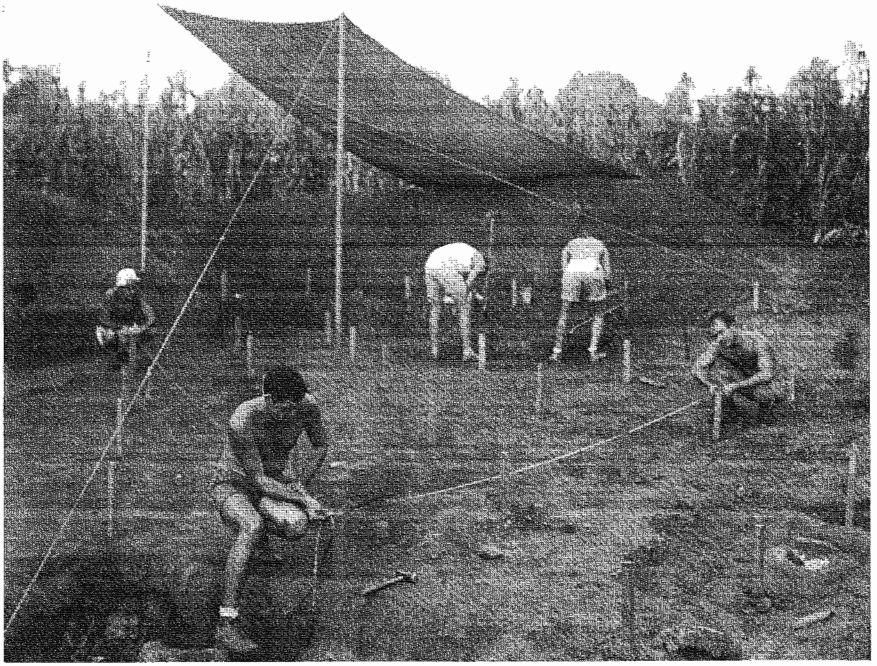
I get about three clear-cut very decadent Marksville horizon pottery types in large percentages at the bottom of say a five-foot deposit. The percentages fade out toward the middle depths. Co-evally the various Coles Creek percentages start out weakly and build up to dominance. Design elements of the Marksville period are readapted in typical Coles Creek motifs in at least two of the Coles Creek types. Later and more divorced Coles Creek types start out in the middle strata and run up to the top. At least two of these types seem to become protohistoric Caddo at several sites. At least some good late Coles Creek stuff is found recurring on known Caddo sites.

Gordon Willey sums it up this way:

Stu was extraordinarily modest about himself as an archaeologist—too much so really. He was very well informed about Southeastern prehistory, as well as other aspects of archaeology and anthropology, and I remember him as an expert field man. Certainly, the AV-2 [Greenhouse] site and what we found out about it were, in large part, due to Stu's diligence and skill.

Gordon left Louisiana for other pastures and missed the sequel to those formative years in Louisiana archaeology. But the thread is maintained by Clarence Webb, one of the reigning deans of Louisiana archaeology, who knew Stu since the WPA excavations at Marksville in 1938:

In the field, Stu was a tremendous technician, largely of the old school; he was no "guess and test" man. He wished to lay things out with bold strokes, look at the soil, with its alterations and nuances, then try to fathom it. He was the best I have seen at deciphering corings, with soil color, texture, feel, even smell. Ford always turned this over to Stu, with



utter reliance in his conclusions; who other than Jim and Stu would have tried to bore all the way down the Poverty Point mound, 70 feet or more, with a hand auger—and they did make 50 feet of it before the dense dry clay defeated their hands and will. Stu liked to trench a plaza or slice a mound edge, see the layers, then peel; he was not averse to using machinery to get this basic approach done, but he could trowel with skill. His photographs show vertical walls (shovel-, not trowel-marked) and wide expanses of clean surfaces. Students under Stu must have learned a lot of field technology, and he supervised hundreds, in a half dozen or more southeastern states. The field was his love and his teachings will live on for a long time.

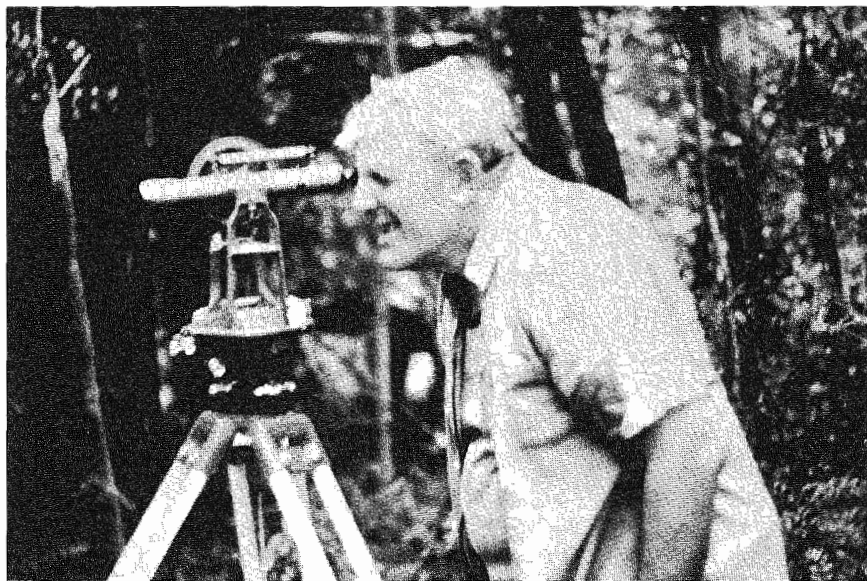
Museums in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia felt the skill of his hands and mind. He was the first curator at Marksville, planned with Wells and Ford, but the displays and legends were Stu's; they attract attention and tell a good story. In essence, he was Louisiana's first State Archaeologist, although without the title. In Mississippi, he was curator and State Archaeologist. He reordered the old State Capitol Museum in Jackson and breathed life into it. He had plans for the entire state, but in both states he was bored by bureaucracy and intolerant of politicians. Both positions were terminated—in Louisiana by the politicians, in Mississippi by Stu's ennui. In Georgia, in essence he was again the state's

first archaeologist, although, I believe, again without title; the details there are vague to me, but he must have done the same kind of efficient, but impatient, job. To my knowledge, no other man has done this kind of job in three different southeastern states.

Had Stu had more of Ford's drive and Willey's writing ability, along with his own qualities, he would have reached a higher pinnacle in Southeastern archaeology. But then he might have been better known but less loved. One cannot have everything.

The perspective of the younger practitioners in Louisiana archaeology is offered by Jon Gibson:

Stu enlivened and, yes, enlightened Louisiana archaeology from the first day he migrated to the state in 1938 from Tennessee. During his 42 years here, Stu was a motive force in Louisiana archaeology. Perhaps not as well appreciated as some others, whose publication records were longer or whose personalities were more stolid or serious, Robert S. Neitzel was one of the cornerstones of modern archaeology in Louisiana. He has often been labeled as master field technician, Ford's right hand. He was this. But Stu was every bit the disciplined thinker; he was a creator, stylist, and philologist; he knew Louisiana archaeology literally from the ground up. Stu would certainly have denied all this, for he was also quite modest.



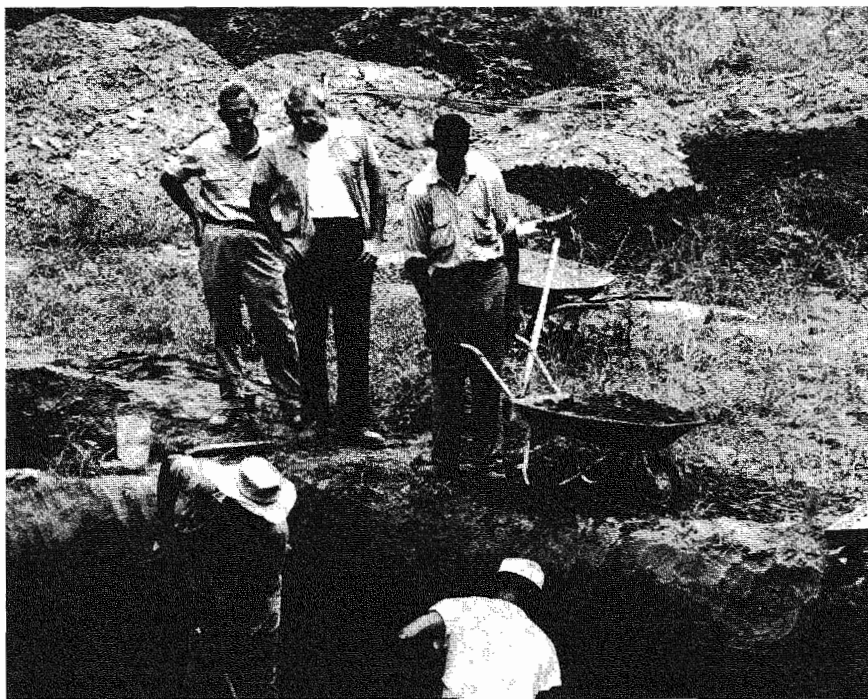
His influences are everywhere, and they are pervasive. Just ask any of his peers, as well as younger generations of archaeologists. Just ask members of the Louisiana Archaeological Society. Just ask members, past and present, of various State Departments and Offices—State Parks, Highways, and Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Ask mayors, legislators, governors, and other public officials. Ask his neighbors and fishing buddies. Stu was a personification of all that was right and good about Louisiana archaeology. Stu Neitzel's impact on Louisiana archaeology will be everlasting.

But Stu's horizons were broader than Louisiana archaeology, as noted by Willey and Webb. And, while he was certainly a master of field methodologies, he was also, in the words of Jon Gibson, "every bit the disciplined thinker, creator, stylist, and philologist." For example, he espoused some basic theoretical positions, which he advanced significantly in the course of his research. Foremost among these is the "direct historical approach," an approach that many of our colleagues might consider an anachronism from a half century ago and evidence that Stu's thought processes remained unchanged from when he first started out. Not so, for once again, it is considered by many to be a viable theoretical framework, realistic in its goals—another one of those cycles that Stu talked about, and one that he played a major role in turning. Like Stu, the intellectual birthplace of the concept was Nebraska, a coincidence that may have influenced his early acceptance of the approach, but had little to do with his steadfastness.

Ever the realist, however, Stu knew that the direct historical approach still was not the long-sought after panacea for archaeological problems that many had hoped. It is a useful approach, but the primary meshing of historical and archaeological data is always far more difficult than the theoreticians anticipate. Stu was aware of the theoretical and methodological difficulties during his original investigations in 1962 at the Fatherland site, the historic Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. He agreed with George Quimby "that ethno-historical data are valuable on a more abstract level and in a more general context, but were not so useful when searching out certain particulars" (Neitzel 1965, p. 91). He concluded:

In the present study we are forced to agree with him when assessing the degree of conformity between history and archaeology. Caution seems to be imperative when major complex archaeological problems revolve around supposedly irreproachable historical data. The usual lament is that both classes of evidence are too meager. One difficulty in the Natchez situation seems to rest with the presence of too many historical cooks. These even fail individually when pressed for particulars (*ibid.*, pp. 91-92).

The problems were again encountered during the excavations in 1972, but they were more successfully dealt with, largely because the archaeological picture had improved during the intervening ten years (Neitzel 1981, in press, p. 290). As a result, he felt confident enough to attempt a full-scale direct historical approach that securely tied Fatherland to the prehistoric past and suggested some important hypotheses for interpreting the prehistory of Natchez society and settlement patterning.



It was during this research that Stu acquired the sobriquet, "The Great Sun," the title of the historic paramount chief of the Natchez. As recalled by Clarence Webb:

His knowledge of the subject and his abilities in the field, laboratory and library were inspirational to many younger archaeologists, especially the groups from L.S.U. and Harvard's Lower Mississippi Valley Survey, who fittingly dubbed him the Great Sun—a title of which he was immensely and justifiably proud. Occasionally he signed his postcards "Soleil."

The problems and successes of the Fatherland investigations, Stu's major individual research, are reviewed in a marvelously candid retrospective published in 1978. In that, and other later publications (1980, n.d.), he discussed his matured theoretical—better say philosophical—position. He saw time as the most important dimension in archaeological research (thus his espousal of the direct historical approach), but he was concerned with generalities, and he left the details to others. He looked askance at those who took stubborn theoretical and methodological stances (somehow overlooked, however, in the case of his dear friend Jim Ford), and he was quick to see the good parts of those theories and methods that seemed to work to his satisfaction. Thus, for example, he saw that the direct historical approach and McKern's Midwestern Taxonomic System complemented each other theoretically at a time when the relative merits of each were being argued at the expense of the other. In this, he foreshadowed the later conjunctive approaches of Taylor, and Willey and Phillips.

Methodologically, he also managed to keep his perspective. Even the sacred potsherd was treated with occasional whimsy. Although Stu accepted evolutions in the classification of this most basic archaeological data, he quietly bemoaned the passing of a simpler era: as pottery had to be "subjected to the kind of scrutiny that could reveal the smaller, or at least more particular meanings" (Neitzel, in press, p. 136). Stu was not a particularistic sort. But he was game; he converted, and then extracted subtle revenge. For example:

The 1974 joint effort of the Department of Archives and History and the Lower Valley Survey at Fort St. Pierre and Haynes Bluff on the lower Yazoo River entailed many hours of evolving classificatory problems. In our field laboratory old types were mutilated, amputated, and discarded and new ones set adrift. One midnight session culminated with the christening of a new, very real, super-punctated lot of sherds as : Owens Punctated, *var. Skilliskallia!* (ibid., p.180).

Stu was confident that if you could not pronounce it, you could not use it. Indeed, this variety (in which he had little faith) did not survive the echoes of his robust amusement. Mind you, this whimsy is not to be regarded as obstructionism. As in everything else he did, there was always an underlying point, a lesson he was gently teaching. Another of his simple axioms: "if it works, it's good." So much in our discipline does not work.

In the end, he was at peace with himself and perfectly content to admit that a "growed man" would commit his life to such arcane pursuits (Neitzel n.d.). He was an honest man.



Above all, Stu was honest. And he appreciated that virtue above all else in others. The lack of it was his scornful definition of a counterfeit. His view of honesty was all-encompassing. So, also, dishonesty: it included the money-oriented charlatans, of course, who flocked to the field when it was raised from destitution by the phenomenon of contract archaeology in the 1960s and 1970s. It included theoretical flimflam, which proposed more than it could deliver. It included pomposity at all levels. But most of all, it included a lack of individual effort: Stu could never bear to see anyone give less than his all, no matter what the rewards. It was the old Puritan ethic, again, which he had so admired in Jim Ford. No matter that he was of German descent, and Cajun conversion: he identified strongly with this ethic, and he demanded honesty from generations of archaeologists in at least one area of our profession. That is his greatest contribution and legacy.

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[Stu also researched, wrote, and submitted at least fifty contract reports to local, state, and federal agencies during the years 1976-1979.]

Photo Captions and Credits

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at the Mississippi River, St. Francisville, Louisiana, 1975
(courtesy LMS)

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Stu's early years, Falls City, Nebraska
(courtesy Mrs. Robert S. Neitzel)

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self portrait, 1934
(courtesy Jeffrey P. Brain)

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Kincaid crew on the Cumberland River, 1934
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(courtesy Illinois State Museum)

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