

Tom Jacobsen: Tributes and Remembrances

In 1972 I arrived in Cincinnati to study Aegean prehistory with Mervyn Popham but unbeknownst to me he had departed in the summer for Oxford. I found myself in a world of elbows and ankles of red-figure vases and was warned against taking classes in archaeology in the Anthropology Department. We might be infected by slapdash speculation being peddled by the New Archaeology. What a joy it was for me soon to discover that not so far away, in Bloomington, there was a program where quite different attitudes held sway, presided over by a wise, gentle Minnesotan, who not only offered me support, then friendship, but had produced a bevy of students whom I came to number among my closest friends.

Jack Davis, Cincinnati, Ohio

Tom was marvellous company: we first met at Kephala in 1963, and we were firm friends from then on. He did great things at Franchthi. . . . I had not seen him in later years, but remember him with great fondness.

Colin Renfrew, Cambridge, England

It was the spring of 1972 and I was in the middle of the proverbial gap year, weighing with the earnestness of youth possible future careers (in my case, archaeology or set design). I had worked for a summer (1971) at Franchthi Cave as an artist, where I first met Tom. That spring I was visiting my parents when our house burned down (really!). Fortunately, everyone survived but I was surrounded by burnt debris and waterlogged memorabilia. Much of my tangible history had literally gone up in smoke.

After a few frantic days of talking to firemen, insurance adjusters, and neighbors, I suddenly heard, miraculously, a phone ring. It was Tom, calling to say I had been accepted to CLAR, and that I had a fellowship. Tom knew me well from the summer at Franchthi and was surprised by my low-keyed response. I assured him that I was, in fact delighted, but that I was standing in a pile of rubble at my parents' house. Tom switched gears immediately, putting aside any more discussion about a future at IU (a place that ultimately changed my life). He offered kindness and solace, and no doubt some humor. As I recall, we might have talked about how to properly dig out from the mess. A few days later I set up several impromptu grids and exhorted the family to dig carefully through the detritus, eventually providing a complete report to the insurance company (I resisted including stratigraphic drawings!).

As difficult as that experience was, what shone through for me was Tom's call, his compassion, and humor. I am forever thankful to Tom for the exceptional person he was, all he did for me, the guidance he offered, the high standards he set, and his ability to make us all laugh, even in our darker moments.

Laurie Talalay, Ann Arbor, Michigan

When Tom asked me to take over the study of the chipped stones from Franchthi, I thought the task could be completed in a few years. I had been shown, during a visit to Koilada, what I thought was almost the complete lithic assemblage, and this amounted to a few crates. I certainly had been told that this was what had been recovered directly from the trenches, but with my training in French prehistoric excavations, I expected only a handful of very small artifacts to have escaped notice during the excavations. I had no idea that sieving would expand the size of the sample by more than a factor of 10! Would I have accepted if I had realized that many years later I would still be sitting for endless hours in the Leonardo *apotheke*—those were the good old days when it was open from 7 in the morning to 7 in the evening—with my whole body aching, forcing myself to open yet another bag, and again another bag?

I do not know whether I would have accepted, but what I do know is that I do not regret it! Franchthi has been a fantastic professional opportunity for me, one that allowed me to travel all around the world, from South America to China, talking about this unique site. And this still continues, to my great pleasure. It has also been a fantastic human experience. The beginnings were difficult, to the point that I resigned after one year: I did not know the behavioral codes of the Americans, nor did Tom understand my behavior. I will always remember how shocked Tom appeared when I arrived the first year to work on the material, and asked him, out of sheer French politeness, what he wanted me to do and how. I knew very well what I had to do, but this was a normal request from a young colleague to the director of the excavations. I understood later that he suddenly thought I did not know what I had to do, and, of course, neither did he! Fortunately, he refused my resignation, and we both learned to understand, respect, and like each other. However, misunderstandings were not limited to me. I was once sitting in the *apotheke* by Tom and Sebastian [Payne], when Sebastian asked Tom: “Could you please pass me your rubber?” Tom turned deep red, gaped, and, after a few seconds, said: “Oh, you mean my eraser?”

Thanks to Tom and his natural gift in choosing his colleagues not only for their intellectual but also their human qualities, my best friends have been, and still are, among the Franchthi team.

Catherine Perlès, Paris, France

During one of the early seasons at Franchthi, probably 1969 or '70, I spent most of my time (women were not allowed to excavate at that point) drawing finds, which had included a number of small fragments of clay figurines. One Sunday, a group of us went to the beach, as usual. I suppose I was wondering what a whole figurine would have looked like. So, after a swim, I found and dug some clay, and as we all sat around chatting and sunning, I fashioned a complete figurine, incorporating details from the pieces I'd recently been drawing, and making up the missing parts. I found a chunk of iron oxide among the beach pebbles, ground it up to make a pigment, and painted the *koukla* with a version of the designs I'd been recording from the original fragments. We all agreed that it must be a pretty close approximation of what an intact Neolithic figurine would have looked like. I set it aside to bake in the hot sun.

I think it was Steve Diamant who decided it would be fun to take my figurine out to the cave next day, bury it in a trench, and tell TWJ they were uncovering what looked like an intact

koukla. That's what they did, getting the workmen to take part in the scheme, and actually serving as the ones to inform Tom. Apparently it worked—a bit too well. TWJ got very excited, taking photos in situ, then shooing everyone away so he could do the final excavation and extraction himself. The guys started to get worried and finally told him it was a joke, that KD had made it. Tom didn't believe them until someone grabbed it and threw it against the cave wall. Or so I was later told. All I know firsthand is that when Tom came back to the dig house that evening he was really angry and growled at me, "I sure as hell hope you stay in archaeology, because your forgeries are dangerous!"

Kaddee Vitelli, Dresden, Maine

Tom was an outstanding teacher, as I discovered in my first semester of grad school. He suggested I write a term paper on evidence for Middle Helladic religion. He did warn me that the issue was the LACK of evidence. I produced an earnest, over-the-top, uncritical 40-page mess and he produced red lines and commentary on every page. I'm convinced most of what I've ever learned about archaeological writing happened on that paper. What really strikes me in looking back is the effort he put into it. It was like he turned on a lightbulb in my head.

I've loved reminiscing about Tom with everyone. I feel like I'm on an extended trip back to some of the best moments and favorite people of my life. I've wondered how often people's grad school experiences are so indelibly positive, and I'm convinced there was something special about the Archy House years, with Tom at its core.

Sue Langdon, Columbia, Missouri

It was 1969. I was a sophomore Classics major at Villanova with no background or experience in archaeology. I thought it would be fun to work on a dig. I wrote a letter to Mike Jameson (then at Penn), asking whether I might volunteer at Halieis. He had not planned to be in the field that summer, but he very kindly forwarded my letter to Tom Jacobsen, who responded to me with an invitation to work at Franchthi. I guessed since it was late in the spring, he needed another warm body. I was delighted.

Tom went to Athens one day midway through the summer and returned a few days later with Homer Thompson and Carl Blegen to give them a tour of the site. The three of them came out midmorning and Tom introduced our guests around to all of us "in the trenches," as we professionals say. Before Tom guided Mr. Thompson up the rockfall to see the brackish pool, he asked me to keep Mr. Blegen company (he was then too infirm to make the climb). Mr. Blegen was nice but seemed painfully shy. The two of us stood around under the brow of the cave and smiled awkwardly at each other. I had no idea who he was, but to break the silence I eventually decided to tell him a little about the project.

"This is a Neolithic site," I said.

“Ohh,” Mr. Blegen replied, nodding, clearly pleased to learn something about this magnificent cave.

“The Neolithic, that’s about, oh, 6000 to 3000 BC,” I said.

“Ahh,” he replied, nodding vigorously again and smiling. I could have recited some radiocarbon dates, but that can be too technical for the layman, so I decided not to get into the weeds. We have to lead up to C14 (as we archaeologists refer to it for short).

Since he was attentive, I decided to give him a little seminar on the pottery from B/E Baulk (whose nearly one full meter of strata I was painstakingly removing). Mr. Blegen listened intently. I even let him handle some of the sherds (I figured Tom wouldn’t mind). I had no doubt that I had really connected with him on a personal level with my little “quick-and-dirty” introduction to Aegean prehistory. I found it gratifying to be able to present the esoteric data of original fieldwork to a nonspecialist. Those guys really love it when they can touch things that come out of the ground, unseen by human eyes for thousands of years and so forth.

Shortly thereafter, Tom and Mr. Thompson clambered back down the rockfall. We said our farewells and they got into the boat and headed back to Koilada. I resumed my digging, hoping that Mr. Blegen was filling Mr. Thompson in on what he had learned about the finer points of the important research we were carrying out in the cave.

Karl Petruso, Arlington, Texas

I was astounded when I was in training for the first Argolid Survey that TWJ would regularly clean off sherds we found in the fields by putting them in his mouth!

Priscilla Murray, Needham, Massachusetts

While spending the summer of 1969 as a junior excavation architect at Ancient Corinth, I was informed one day that TWJ had finagled my release for a one-week stint at Franchthi. But to his irritation, vexation, annoyance (or similar adjective of your choice), on my very first leap—literally—into one of those deep trenches, I sprained my ankle. Big time. And so then Tom gave me my first lesson in excavation sympathy with comments like, “Suck it up, Buster. We have an excavation to run here.”

Oddly enough, I ended up at IU anyway.

Tom Boyd, Tacoma, Washington

Working at Franchthi for one summer was my first introduction to Greece. I was specifically sent there by Mike Jameson to start getting adjusted to the local situation prior to starting ethnographic fieldwork. The experience provided a very useful grounding, not least because it

was on a day off that I joined an expedition to Methana. So in a way Franchthi was the springboard for all subsequent ethnographic—as well as archaeological—publications concerning Methana. I shall always remember Tom with affection: when I picture him, it's always with a wide smile on his face!

Hamish Forbes, Nottingham, England

One of my favorite memories of Tom took place during an AIA meeting in New Orleans. Karl Petruso, Don Keller, and I had arranged to meet Tom to go to his place for drinks. I had told him that I had a new guy in my life, Scott, a Minnesotan who had also gone to St. Olaf (Tom's alma mater). Tom said he was delighted, and that he was looking forward to our getting together, but he warned, he had had dental surgery recently.

So Karl, Don, and I are standing on a street corner in downtown New Orleans, waiting for Tom to pick us up, and here he comes, wearing a St. Olaf sweatshirt and a paper bag over his head with holes cut out for his eyes—while driving! He swerved to the curb while traffic parted for him like Moses crossing the Red Sea. Karl remembers that I laughed so hard I almost fell off the curb.

Other memories surface: brown-bag lunches and seminars and laughs in the Archy House; sitting with Tom on the back lawn of the American School in Athens, eating *bougatsas*, talking about paths diverging from what we had expected, and from what others had expected of us; collaborating on Franchthi burials, meeting at a conference in London to deliver a joint paper, standing proud against the skepticism of social anthropologists; and in recent years, Tom poking fun at me for having retired to northern Minnesota, totally disregarding his warning of how bad winter could be (he was right). In 2015, I introduced Tom to Scott over Turkish food in St. Louis—the last time I saw Tom. His breathing was labored, but his warmth and humor were as ever. Life was good, he told us, even with curve balls coming at you.

Tom was my professor, my mentor, and best of all, my friend. I will miss him always.

Tracey Cullen, Grand Marais, Minnesota

The one thing that stands out in my mind about Tom is that he had true charisma. I noticed it the first year that I knew him. I had heard about charisma as a characteristic of famous people in history or contemporary movie stars, but I had never personally experienced it before. When anyone came in contact with Tom they felt a “pull,” an undefined and indescribable positive feeling that made them want to be around him. It certainly helped him be successful as a project director or program head because people who were around him were eager to help. Moving among different projects, I could see how this played out. When I was on Tom's projects, whether Franchthi or study seasons in Nafplio, I noticed how his teams were uncommonly contented, even when there were shortages or inconveniences, and mere suggestions by Tom were enough to get folks to work harder than they would have thought possible. Go to another

project, perhaps one better supplied and organized, and there was almost universal grouching about the director's shortcomings.

It is clear to me that Tom's charisma was something special. I could feel it myself. I might go to his office, even have something I thought I wanted to complain about, and yet the minute I was in his presence it was seemingly impossible to have any negative thoughts. It was usually well after I left his office, having had a good conversation about Aegean prehistory, that I would think "Wait a minute, I went in there to complain, and then forgot all about it."

His charisma was not a talent or skill crafted by conscious thought; it was as natural to Tom as rain on a spring day.

Curtis Runnels, Needham, Massachusetts

In the 1970s, I was a graduate student in botany at IU, involved in some interdisciplinary work related to Franchthi Cave. I spent the summer of 1971 in Greece with Tom and the rest of the Franchthi crew, and Tom later became a member of my doctoral committee. Throughout that decade I saw him frequently at seminars, in meetings, and at social events. Often—maybe even always—when I asked him how he was, he would smile and reply, "Oh, hanging by my thumbs."

I'm sure that expression came from the trademark sign-off of radio entertainers Bob and Ray, which ran "This is Ray Goulding reminding you to write if you get work" and "Bob Elliott reminding you to hang by your thumbs." Their program ran on the local National Public Radio affiliate in those years and I suspect Tom was a listener. He may also have heard Bob and Ray on earlier radio or television programs—their broadcast career began in 1946.

Did Tom invoke Bob and Ray to sidestep personal questions? Or to show a little good-natured contempt for inane small talk? Or did he really see aspects of his academic career as a kind of torture? I don't know. And I'm sad now that I never asked him.

Mark Sheehan, Bloomington, Indiana

It wasn't until after I finished my dissertation and began teaching full-time that I realized how profoundly Tom had shaped (and still shapes) the way I teach. I adopted the way I structure my courses based on the courses I took from him and my TAs with him. Like Tom's, my archaeology course exams begin with brief IDs and end with two or three brief essay questions (always with a choice). I also stole the idea of map quizzes, administered two weeks in, to ensure that all students begin with some common understanding of geography and its importance. Tom gave three equally spaced exams instead of the traditional midterm and final, and required a research paper. Me too. When I introduced a course in the archaeology of Egypt, it naturally fell into the same rhythm. I make marginal comments on exams just as he did (and squiggly lines under questionable or infelicitous statements). I even sum the points on the various components of an exam on the last page of the bluebook. The column is tilted northwest to southeast. I underline the total twice, and write summary remarks at the same angle. It just seems right.

Those features of Tom’s teaching were easy and natural for me to emulate. But more importantly, he influenced the way I think. One time in the middle of a lecture on I cannot remember what subject, he admonished the class to “Beware of glib explanations including this one.” This was *sooooo* TWJ: witty, self-deprecating, spoken as a throwaway line... but, of course, it was not a throwaway line at all. It was his way of encouraging his students to keep their antennas up, to read thoughtfully, to be simultaneously receptive to and skeptical of an argument—all arguments, in fact, not just archaeological ones. I love that line, and admit to having used it myself more than once over the past several decades.

I got a more powerful lesson after I finished my quals and was casting about for a dissertation topic. Tom had been steering me toward a dissertation based on Franchthi material, but after I had researched it for some weeks, I decided against it. I told him I thought the data were too sparse and equivocal to permit the kind of watertight argument I wanted to be able to make in my dissertation—and I wanted my conclusions to be light on speculation and heavy on precision, one that would permit me to say something both substantive and compelling about the past. He leaned way back in that squeaky ca. 1950 banker’s chair in his office and pondered the buzzing fluorescent tubes in the ceiling. After a pause, he responded, “In the end, what do we *really* know about the past?”

This simple question clarified for me something fundamental about the task of research, the messiness of data, and the difficulty of composing a cogent argument. It was a Zen punch in the forehead for me, clearer and more visceral than all the stimulating readings and discussions in Pat Munson’s seminar on the New Archaeology (which in the mid-1970s, was still fairly new). I felt like the guy in that Flammarion engraving that had become such a hackneyed metaphor for discovery in the Age of Aquarius. I do not recall Tom ever speaking about data in the abstract or about theory building. But at that moment in the Archy House, the discipline of archaeology—not to mention history—became far more complex and nuanced for me than it had ever been previously. I am happy to report that the discipline continues to exasperate me after all these years. I mean that in a good way.

Thanks for everything, Tom.

Karl Petruso, Arlington, Texas

I was thinking today while driving home how much TWJ affected my life. One year my work-study job was to be his slave (the endless Perlès volume days). One afternoon Tom asked me to do a library run for him (Ammerman & Cavalli-Sforza’s Neolithic transition book that argues the Wave of Advance theory). I picked it up on my way to my room, read it over the evening, and gave it to him the next day. From that night I figured out my dissertation topic vis-à-vis Crete, which still guides my life in a very positive way. It is haunting to think how even small, unintentional things can so dramatically affect one’s life.

Tom Strasser, Providence, Rhode Island

I was saddened to hear about Dr. J's passing. Although I was not one of his students, he had a presence at Classical Archaeology and I benefited from his wisdom and humor. He was always a gentle, and very witty, person.

Olga Kalentzidou, Bloomington, Indiana

About two weeks ago I was editing something I had written and came across a word that I knew wasn't the precise word I wanted to use. I couldn't come up with the right one, so I simply marked it with a squiggly underline and started editing the next sentence. Then I stopped short & smiled to myself because the squiggly underline was something I learned from Tom.

Mark Rose, Brooklyn, New York

Tom was one of the kindest and warmest people I've known and it was always comfortable and fun to be around him, even when he was wielding his red pen back at the Archy House in Bloomington. Most of my memories of Tom, however, are from days in the field: lunches on the rock out in front of Franchthi Cave and dinners at Giorgio's in Koilada. When I decided on archaeological survey for my dissertation, Tom suggested the Karystos area since he knew it from his own survey work on Euboea. He came to visit me a number of times in Karystos and we walked over some of the same areas he had recorded in his own dissertation. Those were especially memorable times, I asking him how he could have possibly overlooked this or that sherd, Tom assuring me that the hills were much steeper and more overgrown in his day, and so on.

Don Keller, Roslindale, Massachusetts

We always exchanged Christmas cards and this December Tom told me that he had just begun hospice care. Earlier in the year he had finished his third book on New Orleans jazz, his retirement interest. He was a solid scholar and a great guy.

Bob Drews, Nashville, Tennessee

My first paper graded by TWJ received a B-, with the comment "your punctuation is atrocious." I also recall my first meeting with Tom, and after introductions he bluntly said, "How are we going to make you marketable...?"

Stephen Koob, Corning, New York

Tom was very generous. I'll never forget my visit to Franchthi, alone, in the late '70s. I had hired a motorboat to take me across the bay and come back in 4 hours to pick me up. About 30

minutes later, Tom walks into the cave. He had heard that someone had hired a boat to go over and he was curious who it was. I didn't know he was in Hermione at the time. So he gave me his personal tour and later we sat on the slope in front of the cave and talked Neolithic, while waiting for the boat to return.

John Younger, Lawrence, Kansas

Tom's gift to all his students was great mentoring and enforcement of critical thinking. He made us think, *even* those of us studying the classical world instead of prehistory, and he made us write sensibly, too. His sense of humor made it work. Without thinking of it as his goal, he helped make graduate school a home away from home. I think I learned from him in a deep way how silly it was for classical archaeologists to *feel* things about styles or dates and never adequately define what they meant or recognize when they were just making things up. He was a sharp-eyed critic of what we wrote and said, and we heard about it when our conclusions needed to make better sense or be more clearly expressed. This may be what professors are supposed to do for their students, but they rarely make it stick to the degree he was able to. I know he deeply affected my approach to teaching and my museum work and my ways of thinking. I was always a little jealous of the relationship his Franchthi Cave students were able to have with him, because they spent more time in class, on site, and in conversation. I am so so sorry he is gone.

Shelby Brown, Los Angeles, California

We all remember how TWJ was always up-to-date on the latest scholarship, often coming into the Archy House or class with the latest issue of *Science* or some other journal that wasn't directly related to classical archaeology—yet he would find something pertinent to Aegean prehistory. I certainly learned how much outside of Greece or even archaeology could be relevant to Aegean prehistory, how wide-ranging one really needs to be in reading. That's probably why I ended up doing the second PhD in Anthropology. But trying to keep up with TWJ could be a chore. When I was finalizing my dissertation after the defense, a certain colleague whispered to me that she (I won't mention her name) had seen the new *Lithares* publication and checked it out so that TWJ wouldn't find it and make me incorporate that big modern Greek tome into my diss. Lo and behold, that publication appeared on the library shelf a month after I submitted, and a footnote expressed regret that it had appeared too late to be considered in my diss.

Daniel Pullen, Tallahassee, Florida

I arrived in Bloomington, Indiana, from Athens, Greece, on a hot and humid day in August 1986. Brad Ault, a fellow student in the Program in Classical Archaeology (CLAR) who I had just met in the context of the Nemea Valley Archaeological Project, kindly picked me up from the local airport and offered to take me to the Archy House “to meet the Powers.”

Professor Jacobsen was talking on the phone when I timidly entered his office, his legs up on his desk. Jet-lagged from the long transatlantic trip and in deep culture shock, I was instantly taken by Tom's imposing figure, friendly greeting, and warm smile when he waved me into his office

and started asking me about the latest news from Greece. He then asked me to call him by his first name, as is often the practice in American universities. Frankly, I was not able to do so until after I defended my dissertation and only then due to his insistence: “I think you can now start calling me Tom!”

I remember that CLAR students and faculty had organized a potluck BBQ in one of Bloomington’s parks right after the start of my first year. I was living in Eigenman Hall, and therefore I didn’t have a kitchen. In spite of that, I said I’d bring a bowl of tzatziki to the BBQ. My first friend in the US, Margo Stavros, suggested that we use her kitchen. After having desperately looked in Bloomington’s stores for strained yogurt, the main ingredient of a good Greek tzatziki, Margo suggested that we strain the watery plain yogurt we had bought through cheesecloth. We made a pouch, tied it with string, and let it hang from the faucet of the sink. Then, we went out again to look for “real” cucumbers. Believe it or not, it took me two days to prepare my first American tzatziki, but when Tom tasted it at the BBQ he said, “Well, Ada, you are now officially accepted in Classical Archaeology!” I never imagined that a bowl of tzatziki would be my entry ticket to graduate school in the United States!

Tom Jacobsen was part of one of the most exciting periods of my life. As part of the “post-Franchthi” generation of CLAR, I never worked in the field with him. But Franchthi Cave was, in one way or another, the center of lively conversations and debates about Aegean prehistory, either in the *saloni* of the Archy House or at Nick’s English Hut, where we continued our evening seminars over several pitchers of Bud.

The Archy House on the campus of Indiana University was my home away from home for many years. Tom and Kaddee, as well as my fellow students, Brad, Tom, Shoki, Mary, Ayla, Deirdre, Fahed, and later Anna and Olga, were my family.

Ada Kalogirou, Athens, Greece

Heartbreaking news. . . . With Tom’s death, and Karl Butzer’s passing away some months back, I feel a whole generation of important, for me, folks are gone. My last—and lasting—image and memory of Tom is from our wonderful week-long trip in Epirus and then in Thessaloniki, in 1993. That image still, even today, suggests that he would live forever.

We’ll carry on, we promise.

Mihalis Fotiadis, Thessaloniki, Greece

It is indeed heartbreaking, but at least Tom went peacefully and with his mind and humor intact. It is telling that we all remember the same things, the humor, kindness, and advice. It would be good if we could get together sometime to remember him in person, in Greece perhaps, at Franchthi perhaps.

We will carry on.

Jere Wickens, Appleton, Wisconsin