



the **SAA** Archaeological record

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# the SAArchaeological record

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## SPECIAL FORUM

### LIFE IN RUINS: WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN ARCHAEOLOGY

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SPONSORED BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN ARCHAEOLOGY

GUEST EDITOR: SARAH BARBER

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## EDITOR'S CORNER

Jane Eva Baxter

This month features a wealth of content from the SAA. The Committee on the Status of Women in Archaeology (COSWA) sponsored this month's special forum, which was guest-edited by Sarah Barber. This forum, "Life in Ruins?" features articles on work-life balance in archaeology. In 2005, I wrote an article for *The SAA Archaeological Record* that reported on the COSWA-sponsored questions in the 2003 Member Needs Assessment Survey (5(4):7-9). Responses revealed that over two-thirds of the male members of the SAA and over half of the women in the SAA believed that work-life balance was the most important issue facing women in archaeology at that time. As the authorship and content of these current articles suggest, engaged parenting by both parents and active careers for both partners means that balancing careers and lives beyond careers is a relevant issue for many SAA members regardless of their gender.

Work-life balance also is not an issue exclusive to those who are in a partnership or who made the choice to have children. If anyone would like to write about issues of work-life balance that are not related to partnerships or parenting, I'd be happy to include such an article in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

Content beyond this forum comes from different corners of the SAA as well. The Public Education Committee offers its latest installment in the occasional Careers Column, a feature that will appear regularly over the next several issues. Our Volunteer Profile this month features Gwynn Henderson who is half of the dynamic team (along with Nicholas Laracuento) behind these continuing columns that build on the March 2011 issue of *The SAA Archaeological Record* on Careers in Archaeology. This issue also reports the launch of the new SAA Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarship Fund, and details the rationale and process behind this important new initiative by the SAA and its individual members. And, if you are not already excited about going to Honolulu for the Annual Meeting, the venue and program reports are certainly enticing.

Finally, the new guidelines for *The SAA Archaeological Record* are available here in print, and are also available on the SAA website. These guidelines were approved by the Publications Committee at the Annual Meeting in Memphis and are consistent with SAA policies. Authors wishing to publish in the magazine should consult the guidelines in preparing their manuscripts, and work with the editor as necessary. Future editors may wish to change the guidelines and/or SAA policy changes may require amendments to the document, and authors should always consult the electronic version for the most up to date guidelines for publishing in *The SAA Archaeological Record*.

# A LIFE IN RUINS?

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN ARCHAEOLOGY

**Caryn M. Berg**

*Caryn M. Berg is an acquisitions editor with Left Coast Press, Inc., and an adjunct instructor at Colorado State University.*

**F**or its practitioners, archaeology can be a profession, a passion, a pastime, and a problem. At work, archaeologists may have professional responsibilities that can complicate their personal lives. And at home, archaeologists may have personal responsibilities that can complicate their work lives. In 2011, the Committee on the Status of Women in Archaeology (COSWA) sponsored a forum titled “A Life in Ruins? Work-Life Balance in Archaeology.” We brought together archaeologists from across the spectrum of the profession and examined the question: how do archaeologists juggle the sometimes unusual demands placed on them by their profession with the realities of everyday life? There were numerous challenges identified in this session: how to maintain a family while working far from home, how to balance raising growing children and taking care of aging parents while still retaining identity as an archaeologist, how to stay financially afloat while trying to succeed in school, how to balance life with a non-archaeologist spouse, as well as sustaining a dual-career household.

We asked our participants to address what work-life balance means, what aspects of their career create the greatest tension with their personal lives and how they mitigate some of this tension, what practices are most effective in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and what pitfalls might be on the

road ahead? A lively discussion ensued during the forum. We realized that times have changed dramatically and there is no longer one “right way” to be an archaeologist—if indeed there ever was. It is possible to be an archaeologist and a mother, a father, a devoted child, and a spouse. In this issue, we present several of the challenges of balancing life as an archaeologist. Contributors address the challenges of sustaining two archaeology careers in the same family (Brown and Yaeger), advancing an archaeological career while raising children and supporting the career of a non-archaeologist spouse (Roberts), maintaining a marriage and parenting with an active international research agenda (Barber), balancing the demands of family life with a career in museums (Nash), and having success in personal life and on the tenure track (Rodning). In my own life, I am balancing raising four children with a spouse who is a pilot, while working part-time as an adjunct instructor and part-time in publishing. We are all archaeologists. We are all passionate about this career we have chosen. We all have to find a way to juggle our careers with the world that lies beyond the ruins.

Some archaeologists are still walking traditional paths, while others are creating their own niches for themselves. As the papers in this special forum demonstrate, we can do it all if we are willing to be creative in finding our balance.

# YOU WANT TO GO *WHERE* FOR SIX MONTHS?

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND INTERNATIONAL FIELD RESEARCH

Sarah “Stacy” B. Barber

*Stacy Barber is an Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida.*

From the very beginning, travel to exotic locations was part of archaeology’s appeal for me. Having grown up in several (decidedly *not* exotic) places, leaving the confines of small-town America for adventure abroad was high on my list of life goals. While a career in archaeology has literally exposed me to a world of amazing experiences—a fact for which I am perennially grateful—it has also created a number of unexpected challenges in my personal life.

For 13 of the last 17 years I have spent at least a week, and more often several months, engaged in archaeological research in Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador (Figure 1). Those years have been full of important personal milestones: college, graduate school, moves, marriage, parenthood, and a tenure-track position in academia. As my responsibilities and commitments have changed, so have my tactics for balancing my archaeological career and my personal life. Work-life balance, thus, has been an ongoing process for me, often with a very steep learning curve. I make no claims to being an expert at the juggling act required to maintain personal relationships and meet obligations while shuttling off to foreign shores, but I can speak to my own experiences of the challenges and joys of a life spent in ruins far from home.

### Communication and Compromise

For anyone who travels for extended periods of time, communication with family and friends takes on heightened importance. Personal relationships must be maintained without the benefit of daily face-to-face interactions. One of the most important work-life balance questions that I have been forced to consider, and reconsider, is: how long can I go

without communicating with someone before our relationship begins to deteriorate? The answer varies significantly from person to person and highlights the kinds of compromises that must be made in balancing international fieldwork with a personal life.

Before becoming a parent, I was generally undaunted by extended periods without direct communication home. Certainly there were moments when I, or someone back home needed a hug, but I found that a phone call could function as an imperfect substitute. All of that has changed now that I am a mother. A phone call is not a good substitute for a hug to a four-year-old. Fortunately, the expansion of the Internet into even remote areas of Latin America over the past five years has greatly simplified contact with the people important to me. While an internet-based video call still doesn’t have the same value to my son as a real hug, we both prefer Skype to the telephone. Internet-based technologies are no panacea, however. Slow connection speeds and irregular hours for Internet cafes in rural Mexico can turn a video call into an exercise in futility. I cannot recount how many of my video call conversations consisted mostly of the word, “What?” Five minutes of that is usually enough for even the most devoted mother and wife to admit defeat—I do not lay claim to being either. Sometimes a phone call has to be good enough.

But communication home from the field is actually less important than clear communication prior to departure. Tolerance for research, particularly very long field seasons away from home, is essential for anyone who shares his or her life with a field archaeologist. Some people understandably don’t want a vanishing partner, and I have seen long-term relationships fail because the realities of fieldwork were not dis-



*Figure 1. Stacy Barber at the site of Río Viejo, Oaxaca, Mexico, in 2009.*

cussed clearly and up front. Part of the reason that my own relationship has survived the inevitable disruptions in our lives caused by my field research is an open flow of communication that enables both my spouse and I to express tolerance levels and limits. My husband understood from the beginning how important my career was to me, and I have sought to keep him well informed of my research plans. I don't "spring" a long international field season on him. In return, he has been clear on how much of my traveling he can handle. I am incredibly fortunate that he is supportive of my career and accepting of a partner who disappears for months every few years. We have found, in fact, that periods of separation remind us of the many things we appreciate about each other.

### Uncertainty and Flexibility

As we approach 10 years of marriage and the beginning of formal schooling for our son, my husband and I have both had to redefine our positions in regard to my field research. It was one thing when my husband was responsible for the rent and the dog. It is another matter when he is single-parenting our child. Indeed, to reduce the childcare burden created by my absence, I have attempted to take our son with me whenever possible. My efforts have met with mixed results, emphasizing that it is essential to accept uncertainty and to keep plans flexible. I planned a 10-week summer field season in 2009 when my son was still a toddler. We purchased his plane ticket, withdrew him from childcare, and began looking for a caregiver in Mexico. Then the H1N1 flu outbreak began. With only a few weeks to go before my departure, all of our well-laid plans had to change. My son needed new childcare close to my husband's office, my husband needed to modify his work schedule, and I needed to develop long-distance parenting tools. It turns out that video calls with toddlers are a lot of fun because they don't realize that you can't really pass objects like toys and drinks through the monitor. My son enjoyed our video calls and I learned to accept that I must be flexible enough to handle extraordinary circumstances.

My second attempt at international parenting was more successful. This year my son joined me for three months of a six-month field season in Mexico, even attending the local public school (Figure 2). He made a few friends and was an object of fascination to local children. Despite his young age, however, he found both the language barrier and the change in living conditions stressful. My visions of an amazing cultural experience

for my child had to be modified to meet the realities of his desires and expectations. Again, flexibility was fundamental. I adjusted how and where we spent our time on weekends and at the end of the workday. The bounce house and trampoline in the town park became our evening hang-out. Using old-fashioned parenting tricks like play dates and creating consistent meal and sleep schedules, I was able to attain a level of stability that reduced behavior problems and allowed my son to more fully enjoy his time in Mexico. My solutions weren't perfect, and there were lots of calls home to Daddy for help (communication was critical), but I found that bringing my child with me on international fieldwork was an effective means of balancing my career with my personal responsibilities. It is something I will definitely do again.



Figure 2. The author's son (Liam, aged 4) getting ready to visit excavations at Río Viejo, Oaxaca, Mexico, in 2012.

### Lessons Learned

My life in far-away ruins has undoubtedly placed unusual demands on my personal life, but I have no plans to stop traveling for my career. Rather, I try to learn from my many mistakes in the perpetual balancing act required of archaeologists who conduct lengthy field season abroad. Among my most important experiences:

- Define boundaries: Clarify to yourself and communicate with others regarding what aspects of your personal life you are willing to compromise on to facilitate international field research. Know what your family members and friends can tolerate in terms of limits to daily interaction and your absence from important life events like weddings, funerals, and graduations.
- Be flexible: With well-defined boundaries, it is much easier to adjust to the inevitable uncertainties of everyday life. If you, your family, and your friends all understand what kinds of events will and won't affect your research plans, then taking the next step in the face of the unexpected becomes much easier.
- Appreciate opportunities: Accept that your choices have created these conundrums in work-life balance. Be thankful to have a career that not only allows, but encourages, you to see the world.

My early fascination with exotic locations has not been diminished by repeat exposure. I get as excited about international field research today as I did 17 years ago. While balancing archaeology and personal life unquestionably causes stress, at least I'm not an accountant. Instead I am able to do what I love, making me a more contented person and thus hopefully a better spouse, mother, daughter, sister, and friend.

# YOU WANT ME TO MOVE WHERE?

## LIVING WITH AN “ALPHA” AND MAKING YOUR CAREER WORK

**Heidi Roberts**

*Heidi Roberts is the owner of HRA Inc., Conservation Archaeology.*

**L**ike many young and inexperienced primates my selection criteria for a perfect mate ignored logic and went something like this: handsome-check, smart-check, alpha-check, pheromone compatibility-check. My husband has always been supportive of my plans to pursue an archaeology career, but not to the extent that he would put his career on hold for mine. I discovered this when I landed a permanent government archaeology job, and he refused to move. Since the job was in rural Utah, and there were no employment opportunities for my husband in the area, his career would have languished, and so too would our relationship.

In our 33 years of marriage, we relocated five times for my husband's jobs and each move took my career down new paths. One of those paths led me twice to motherhood, which is my proudest achievement. My decision to support my husband's career was a good one and today he works as a senior scientist at Sandia National Lab. Because my husband's career was stable and secure, I was able to take bigger risks and start my own contract firm. My children are both grown (Figures 1 and 2), and as an empty nester I have returned full time to the field. Currently I'm directing a large data recovery project in southern Utah, which for me is a dream come true. I'm not going to say any of this was easy, sometimes my career path felt like a Mobius Strip, but balancing a personal life with an archaeology career is possible, and definitely worth the effort.

The purpose of this article is to encourage those of you who are struggling with these issues, not to get discouraged; stay the course and you will find a way to make it work. I'd also like to offer some tips that I discovered—often the hard way—for balancing career and family life. My first word of advice is that family takes priority, what is good for them is also good for your career. I have found that it is difficult to focus on your work if your personal life is not in order. In my experience, working for an understanding employer who empathizes with the complications that fieldwork imposes on your private life is a key to success. When my children

were very young, I sometimes did my best report writing after they were tucked into bed at night. Fortunately, my employer didn't mind if I worked at nights as long as I met my deadlines. During these early childrearing years, my bosses also allowed me to limit out-of-town travel to 10 days a month since longer stints did not work well with my family. Figure out what type of schedule works best for you and then negotiate a plan with your employer.

My next word of advice is to be flexible with your career path. Sometimes the path not taken is a blessing in disguise. The five relocations that I made for my husband's career all benefited my career too, even though at times it seemed like I had veered quite far off my main path. For example, when my husband was offered a graduate scholarship at M.I.T I needed to find a job in Boston to support us. Because the telecommunications industry was booming, I was hired as a customer service representative installing telephone business systems in hospitals and corporations. While this position had absolutely nothing to do with archaeology, I did find that my anthropology background helped me understand corporate cultures and more readily interpret their phone system needs. More importantly, I honed my business skills and took a few courses in management, which proved useful later in my career. I also learned quite a bit about myself, namely that career success comes easier when you are doing what you love; I'd found telephones to be duller than dirt.

Some of you may be wondering how I was able to shift from one profession to another and obtain jobs whenever I moved. I did it by following these steps: I researched potential employers, figured out what skills I could offer them, and I knocked on their doors and marketed myself. My first word of advice is to skip the emailed resume and find a way to talk face to face to prospective employers. Network, meet them at professional meetings, and market your skills. In my 15 years as owner of HRA only one person has ever knocked on my door and introduced themselves as an archaeologist looking for work. I hired that person on the spot because I





Figure 1. My son Keith (26), who is pursuing a music career, working on the Jackson Flat Reservoir Project in a Basketmaker II pithouse.



Figure 2. My daughter Fern (21), who is studying to be a pharmacist, working this summer at the Jackson Flat project.

admired their gumption, and they caught my attention with their enthusiasm. Most undergraduates don't have the knowledge and experience yet to be a field archaeologist. Key skills such as reading a map, safely driving on bad roads in remote areas, finding archaeological sites, evaluating a site's significance, or writing a survey report aren't usually taught in school. The best way to obtain these skills is to offer to work as a low-paid intern.

All of my five moves for my husband's career opened up new job opportunities for me in archaeology, and I benefited from working for employers in unique prehistoric culture areas. I choose jobs that would fill gaps in my skill sets, and I also took classes when possible. When my oldest child was an infant, I attended graduate school and earned my M.A. soon after my second child turned one. Looking back at my various career moves, I doubt that I would have made any of them if I hadn't been forced to relocate for my husband's jobs. Because I put my young family first, I think I took my own career less seriously and as a result I was able to relax, enjoy my work, and learn from my co-workers.

Figure out what skills you excel at and make those the centerpiece of your career. Ask your professors, employers, or family members where they think your career strengths lie and set your goals accordingly. Do you like working with artifact collections, but can't seem to locate archaeological site during surveys if your life depended on it? Are pithouse floors as elusive to you as differential equations? Would you rather sit in a meeting than drive on dirt roads in the middle of nowhere? If you are sociable, and like to network, you would probably find marketing or government work rewarding. If you like to work outdoors and enjoy hiking and exca-

vating, then contract archaeology might be just the ticket. Once you identify your strengths, hone the complimentary skills. If you have never gotten the knack of finding archaeological sites, but you enjoy lab work, then focus on being an artifact analyst. If contract archaeology is your goal, then learn how to write descriptive and clear reports. Don't be afraid to volunteer or work for free to obtain these skill sets, and then ask for feedback on how you are doing.

Lastly, one of the most important tools I discovered to help me navigate the complex and mysterious roles of spouse and parent was what I came to call the "Mom culture." Stay-at-home Moms have a culture all their own, which can be an important source of information, support, and comfort. I don't know how I would have survived parenting without my best friend Bonnie, and her network of friends, who educated me on the ways of motherhood and stood by me through good times and bad. They took turns taking care of my infant daughter when I wrote my thesis, they taught me what to expect at parent-teacher conferences, they referred me to the best doctors, and they knew remedies for everything from removing stains to treating chicken pox. They also taught me mysterious things like when kids should learn to swim and how to entertain children on long summer days. We shared babysitting responsibilities, driving duties, and even, yes, recipes.

The knowledge of people and cultures that you gained in anthropology will find hidden benefits. Sometimes we stray from our personal goals to accommodate the needs of others. Life is often a wild roller coaster ride, with hidden twists and unexpected turns. So fasten your seat belt, relax, and enjoy the ride, sometimes a career can pick its own course, even if it is not necessarily the route that you would have chosen.



# LIFE ON THE PARENTING TRACK AND THE TENURE TRACK

Christopher B. Rodning

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**M**y life on the parenting track began when I started life on the tenure track. Both tracks are challenging, and both are worthwhile. Archaeology can be family-friendly, and family can be archaeology-friendly. I was recently awarded tenure at a research university, in a department with a doctoral program. My wife (Hope) is a lawyer. Our sons are seven years, five years, and six months old, and I am on paternity leave this term after the birth of our third son. Here are some of my perspectives on the method and theory of work-life balance as an academic archaeologist with young kids, and some of the challenges of balancing archaeology, family, and life in a dual-career household.<sup>1</sup> Important elements of work-life balance are control in scheduling, positive attitudes about lives in ruins, and support from others.

## Schedules in Ruins

Schedules of dual-career households are tricky, as are schedules of parents with children. Scheduling conflicts arise between schools and jobs, children get sick when parents have deadlines to keep and classes to teach, and it is hard enough trying to get everything done on “normal” days. Helpful strategies include doing what we can to control our schedules, being disciplined about following our schedules, and making the most of brief intervals of time that we have to get work done—or to take a nap, to go for a run, or to help with homework.

Anybody in academia works hard, and expectations are high, but academic jobs often afford some degree of scheduling flexibility and freedom. I try to schedule classes and office hours for days and times that fit our daily rhythms of getting kids to and from school and other activities. I would prefer not to bring work home, but I get a lot done in the evenings after bedtime and during afternoon naps. Although I try to make myself available as much as I can on campus, I sometimes ask to schedule events around family commitments—and, sometimes, it is possible to do so.

Schedules of parents are often fragmented and unpredictable. During grad school, I sometimes had long periods during which I could focus on my dissertation (and distractions from it, for better and worse). As a faculty member and a parent, my schedule is more fragmented, but when I write a little bit here and type in some references there, and read a couple articles while kids are napping (and, sometimes, read them aloud to Leif, my six-month-old ... poor kid), it adds up, in the long run.

I strive to set “personal” deadlines ahead of “real” deadlines, although I am still perfecting that skill. It wreaks havoc on schedules when kids get sick, or when kids have days off from school. It is stressful to lose an afternoon set aside for preparing syllabi or revising a manuscript when somebody has to stay home from school. If lesson plans and slides are prepared in advance, if papers are drafted or proofread ahead of schedule, if proposals are submitted before grant deadlines, then unpredictable instances when parents need to or want to concentrate on kids or on each other create less stress. My wife and I typically “trade off” on cases when we have to leave work unexpectedly, and we try to determine whose schedule would be made less complicated by taking a day off or working at home for a day.

As a parent of young children, I have found it difficult if not impossible to control much of anything, and it is best just to let go, to go with the flow, and to accept some amount of chaos and imperfection. That said, the more we do to create stability in our routines, the better we can balance work with family life, and the better we can absorb the instability and unpredictability inherent in life with young kids.

Lastly, with respect to scheduling, when should one have kids? Some people choose not to, or cannot make it work for a number of reasons, but for people who want to have children, there is never a “good” time and never a “better” time. By that, I mean that we will always feel busy with something, whether finishing school, getting a book done, getting



Figure 1. Erik Rodning (left) and Henry Rodning (right) jumping off a backdirt pile at the Berry site (31BK22), North Carolina, June 2012 (photograph by Chris Rodning).

tenure, or doing a field project. Finding the right person with whom to start a family takes time, but it is not worth waiting too long to reach predetermined career milestones before starting a family. There will always be more milestones on the horizon. Conversations about when to have kids are worthwhile, and the answers will vary from one case to another. But, then, just do it, and make it fit.

My discussion here has focused on how parents might manage schedules. From another perspective, it is helpful if employers can give parents some freedom in scheduling—periods of family leave, flexible hours, good day care and schools near workplaces. With support, parents are better at the jobs they have at work and at home.

### Kids in Ruins

Scheduling challenges aside, having kids can be compatible with archaeology, and several aspects of archaeology can actually have positive impacts on children. We travel to interesting places, whether to attend conferences, or to conduct fieldwork, or to visit museums. We get to dig, and we find interesting stuff on the ground and in the ground. We solve puzzles, and we get to read and write. We explore a world and a time different from ours. Kids benefit from these kinds of activities and perspectives, when we can include them, bring them along, or share our experiences with them. I like having our sons in the field (Figure 1), and I think that is a positive experience for them. That said, the logistics can become difficult, and one of my current challenges is fitting fieldwork into our family schedule.

### Balance

Nobody does archaeology around the clock. Many of us love what we do—and we are privileged in that respect—but we

all have more than archaeology in our lives, and we all have commitments to family and friends. I am sure I did more digging, reading, writing, and teaching prep before having kids. That said, family life puts career pursuits in perspective, and I still find time to get work done. It is worth it to me to coach youth soccer teams, to participate in life at my kids' schools, and to play at the park now and then. I once dashed off to a graduate seminar immediately after doing a kindergarten workshop about archaeology, and both were enriching in different ways.

Balance is hard to find and to maintain. It is not something anybody "gets," but something for which we must constantly strive, and we are better off with help along the way; my wife and I try to support our respective career pursuits while dividing household tasks as evenly as we can. What "balance" means to any of us changes during our lives—and as archaeologists, we know that the only constant is change. None of us will figure out how to balance everything perfectly, but if we reflect upon what we want and need, and if we talk about what is going well and what is missing in our lives, everybody benefits. For some of us, "family" means spouses and children; for others it includes siblings, aging parents, other relatives, and friends. For all of us, happiness and balance will make us better friends and family members.

Doing archaeology is an adventure, sometimes puzzling and vexing, but always stimulating; so also is life with kids. It is worth smiling and laughing about what goes right, what surprises us, and what at first glance seems to have gone wrong. Most of us got into archaeology because we find it fun and fascinating, and because we decided that studying the past is worthwhile. As my friend Chris Glew once pointed out, doing something that excites and energizes us makes us happy, which makes us better spouses and better parents, and it sets a good example for our children. I cannot imagine life without my wife and our kids, and family life puts my involvement in archaeology in perspective while also making it more meaningful for me. I feel fortunate to have the career that I have, and I am glad my family and friends support my life in ruins.

### Notes

1. Of course, I write from the experience of one man and father. For sage commentary from a woman and a mother on the challenges that women (and men) face in balancing careers and family, see the essay by Anne-Marie Slaughter in the July/August 2012 issue of *The Atlantic* (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-can-8217-t-have-it-all/9020/>). Recent discussions about Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's decision to take a short maternity leave and to "work through it" are also relevant.

# WILL YOU PLEASE MOVE WITH ME TO...?

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN A MUSEUM SETTING

Stephen E. Nash

*Stephen E. Nash is a Curator of Archaeology at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.*

I grew up within a half-mile of the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) in Chicago, a world-class museum that was ahead of its time with respect to the interactive exhibitions. I worked at MSI as a tour guide, making minimum wage, from the beginning of my junior year of high school in 1980 to the time I entered graduate school at the University of Arizona in the fall of 1988. As a result I grew up, and indeed came of age, uncritically thinking and believing that everyone, everywhere, enjoyed access to such a remarkable institution. How wrong I was, and how widely my eyes have since been opened. Put simply, if you are lucky enough to be located near a great museum, take advantage of it as often as you can. That said, working as a tour guide was not glamorous, and it was at MSI that I learned how to deal with boredom. My first day's assignment was to an art gallery that almost no one visited, but I dutifully and faithfully guarded my post. If one can learn to deal with boredom, one can learn to deal with almost anything. Looking back, I never thought about making a career in museums. Fate didn't work so deliberately, at least in my experience.

Fast forward through graduate school, to 1997. My first job after successfully defending my dissertation at the University of Arizona in Tucson was loading cactuses into a container that was being shipped to the Netherlands. During June and July, I repeatedly traveled 14-hours by car to and from Montrose, Colorado, for ten-hour days of contract archaeology, eight days on; six days off. In August, at the ripe old age of 32, I received an offer for my first full-time, fully benefitted job—as an assistant field crew chief in the cultural resource management division of the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC). That job, which I could've had with just a bachelor's degree, required an 80-mile commute each way from Tucson for meager pay. I had to ask myself: was nine years of graduate school and the Ph.D. really worth it? As luck (or was it fate?) would have it, however, before I worked even a single day at the GRIC, The Field Museum offered me a post-doctoral research fellowship in my hometown of Chicago.

I vividly remember standing with my wife at a payphone in Ridgeway State Park in Ridgeway, Colorado, and asking her

“Will you please move with me to Chicago?” She and I had long discussed the possibility (indeed probability) that we would have to leave her hometown of Tucson, but for the first time, reality sank in. Because Carmen works in health care, and because people get sick everywhere, we knew that her geographical options were not restricted, as mine clearly were. Six weeks later we loaded our belongings into a U-Haul truck and drove to Chicago. While at the Field, I catalogued Paul Sidney Martin's wonderful archaeological collections from the American Southwest for about \$14.00 per hour, a wage rate set by the National Science Foundation for post-docs regardless of where they worked. Necessity being the mother of invention, I took second jobs in catering to make ends meet. Carmen soon got a good job at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, so things began to stabilize.

After the post-doc position ended in 1999, I was promoted to serve as head of collections in the Department of Anthropology at the Field. Even as a native Chicagoan, I had no idea of the epic scope and depth of that institution's fine anthropology holdings, which are undeniably world-class. I enjoyed the privilege of meeting top scholars from around the world, many of whom made Chicago and the museum a destination of choice to analyze collections that simply cannot be duplicated in this day and age. That said, working at the Field Museum made me realize just how important it is to properly catalog and curate our research collections. Suffice it to say that a great deal of the research potential in archaeology worldwide has been permanently lost because collections have not been properly cataloged and curated. This is particularly galling when the justification for new fieldwork is often that “we can only answer these questions through more fieldwork,” which then exacerbates a nefarious feedback loop.

Just over halfway through my time at the Field, Carmen and I welcomed the birth of our first son, Benjamin, in June 2003. I took a month of paternity leave; it was by far the fastest month of my life. I quickly asked for another month off, and then went back to the daily grind, for the first time balancing work and children. It made me realize how hard parents work, and especially how hard Moms work. I learned





Figure 1. Steve Nash and sons Ben (age 9), Thomas (age 4) and Charlie (age 4) "surveying" the Great Kiva at the Sawmill Site near Reserve, New Mexico, July 2012. Photo by Rick Wicker, Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

to back off a bit on my expectations across the board. One simply cannot do, or have, it all. But it sure is fun to play with one's children.

When we moved to the Denver Museum of Nature & Science in late 2006, we sought to simplify our lives. We were lucky enough to purchase a home six blocks from the Museum, so I can walk to work, thereby adding up to two hours of productive work or family time over what I had in Chicago, where my (relatively) easy commute on the "L" train took an hour each way. In spite of our best efforts at simplification, however, our lives got more complicated in April 2008, when Carmen gave birth to our twin sons, Charles and Thomas. Since then, our collective struggle to find balance between work and family life has become that much more challenging. But the dudes are hilarious.

Curators at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science are responsible for making contributions in five arenas, or "buckets": research, collections, outreach, service, and administration. We are expected to conduct and publish original research, and to publish at least one senior-authored, peer-reviewed article per year. If the research requires fieldwork, the work-life challenges we face are similar to those identified by Stacy Barber (this issue). With respect to collections, we are expected to continuously improve the intellectual and physical control of the collections we hold in the public trust, and we work hard to make sure that our collections are legally and ethically held. With respect to outreach, the Museum's primary audience is "stroller moms" and their children, and curators are expected to possess a range of public speaking skills such that we can easily present to everyone from professional colleagues to preschoolers and elderly volunteers. This often presents a challenge to new hires, but we all ultimately feel better about ourselves when we garner such diverse skills and reach out to disparate audiences, particularly while using new distance learning technologies. Finally, we are expected to provide service to the

Museum and to our disciplines, and have various levels of administrative duties.

How, then, does one maintain work-life balance in a museum setting? Recognizing full well that I represent a sample of one, and that my life-long experience with world-class museums was not a foregone conclusion and is not the norm, I offer a few thoughts. Looking back over the last several decades, whenever I have told people that I am an archaeologist, or that I work in a museum, I have never heard "Oh, how boring." Instead, I have heard "Oh, I always wanted to do that, but couldn't figure out how to make a living in it." What this tells me is that many, many people have pursued careers in order to satisfy their wallets, not their minds, hearts, or souls. I find this tragic and disappointing, particularly in a society as wealthy as ours. The quest for money is at once intoxicating and addictive.

I will never get rich working in a museum, and indeed have learned to live on salaries that would make other working professionals cringe in despair. Maintaining a work-life balance in museums requires that one take advantage of the special opportunities that an archaeologist and museum curator can enjoy. I include as much of my family as possible in my fieldwork and other business trips, such that my sons have enjoyed life in rural New Mexico while I searched for the sites that Martin excavated but failed to properly record between 1939 and 1955 (Figure 1). As long as the children remain at least tacitly interested in archaeology and fieldwork, they are welcome to join me. Carmen and I went to Pompeii together as I conducted background research to prepare to host the exhibition *A Day in Pompeii* this fall. As she so often does, Carmen served as my foil when I started going too deep into the archaeological weeds, reminding me that not everyone is so well versed, nor wants to be, in the minutiae of our discipline.

Working in museums, I often feel as though I am a child in a candy store. In that context, it seems comparatively easy to maintain a work-life balance when your children's friends, not to mention their teachers, are so interested in your life and work. That said, one has to maintain a sense of perspective. Although I may want to live, sleep, eat, and breathe archaeology, I cannot expect others, particularly my spouse and children, to do the same. One approach is to marry another archaeologist. Or one can marry outside the discipline, as I did, and hopefully find someone whose work may be practiced anywhere and who is willing to tolerate life that lies a bit outside the mainstream. But as many of our friends pointed out when we went to Pompeii, lots of people pay top dollar to do on vacation what we do under the guise of "work." When all is said and done, we as archaeologists are exceedingly lucky to have the opportunities we enjoy, particularly when our children are able to experience the wonders of our cultural and natural worlds up close, and in person.

# DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

## A VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

**M. Kathryn (Kat) Brown and Jason Yaeger**

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**D**ual-career couples have a long history in archaeology. In 1937, Oliver and Edith Ricketson published *Uaxactun, Guatemala, Group E, 1926–1931*, a description of the results of fieldwork that they conducted together at Uaxactun. Following the gendered division of labor common at the time, Oliver Ricketson directed the excavations and Edith Ricketson ran the field lab, a common role for female archaeologists at the time, whether they were married to an archaeologist or not. Dual-career couples have become more common, perhaps in part because professional opportunities for women in archaeology have grown. We would like to offer some of our own observations and experiences about the benefits and pleasures of being married to a fellow archaeologist, and some of the challenges as well. Our reflections derive from our experience in academia, but we think some of our observations apply equally to archaeologists working in CRM and other non-academic settings.

Most of the dual-career couples we know met in graduate school, and a few began dating as undergraduates. That was not our path. For years, we followed parallel trajectories first majoring in Anthropology—Kat at Texas State University, Jason at the University of Michigan—and then pursuing Ph.D.s with an emphasis in Maya archaeology—Kat at Southern Methodist University, Jason at the University of Pennsylvania. Life is full of ironies, and perhaps the greatest irony in our history is that—by all accounts—we *should* have met long before we actually did.

For most of the 1990s, we both went to Belize every year to conduct our dissertation fieldwork, excavating sites only 25 km apart. We had bad timing, however: Kat would arrive in June for a summer field season, just around the time that Jason was leaving after a spring field season. Working in Belize, we knew of each other's research, had many friends in common, and probably rubbed shoulders at the bar at the SAA annual meetings more than once, but we never met.

That changed when Jason began conducting fieldwork in the summer. By that point, we both had tenure-track positions,

Jason at the University of Wisconsin, Kat at the University of Texas at Arlington. Another irony: we both were very happy in our jobs and imagined that we would spend our whole careers at those institutions. As our relationship grew stronger, however, and we began a commuting relationship, it became clear that one or both of us would have to leave his or her job.

For us, being married to an archaeologist has been professionally very fulfilling. Some dual-career couples co-direct a project and co-author many of their publications; others work on different continents and never collaborate formally. We fall somewhere in between. Our research projects in Belize are close enough that we can share a field camp, but our distinct interests lead us to excavate at different sites, and we each hold our own research permit from Belize's Institute of Archaeology. Consequently, we can share the logistical challenges of running a big field program and be together as a family in the field, while maintaining our own research agendas. We read and comment on each other's work, and we share ideas and insights about archaeology and the ancient Maya, but we rarely publish together. Indeed, this is only our second co-authored article.

Despite the positive aspects of a dual-career relationship, the challenges are difficult to understate, particularly when it is a commuting relationship. Being away from your significant other is a constant strain, and communication can be challenging. No amount of email, phone calls, Facebook, or Face-time can replace face-to-face interaction. For us, finding ways to be together was a top priority, and like many dual-career commuting couples, we expended a lot of energy finding creative ways to achieve that.

Commuting is also time-consuming and expensive. While we found that long flights and lay-overs provided opportunities to catch up on emails, grade papers, and take the occasional cat-nap, we both logged many travel hours that we would rather have invested in other professional or personal endeavors. Because we had both established homes, we

faced the added stress and expense of maintaining two households. When we finally found jobs together, we briefly found ourselves in the unenviable position of owning three houses—and holding three mortgages!

When you layer these challenges and stresses on top of the demands of the workplace and the anxieties of being a junior faculty member, it's surprising to us that dual-career relationships last at all. We chalk their strength up to the passion for archaeology and the intimate knowledge of the job and its demands that dual-career partners share. Could a non-archaeologist really understand why you cannot come home for the weekend because you are analyzing eroded body sherds? Or why you stayed on campus until midnight writing letters of reference for your graduate students?

Despite being happy in our jobs, we set our sights on the holy grail of many dual-career couples: tenured/tenure-track positions in anthropology—whether at the same university or at universities within easy driving distance—that would be professionally fulfilling AND allow us to live together as a family. We knew that might not be possible. The job market is challenging; academic positions are few-and-far-between.

Given this, we knew that we might have to compromise, and we were ready to do so if necessary. It's not uncommon for one or both partners in a dual-career couple to accept a position that may not have been their ideal choice. Historically, such compromises have fallen more often on women, but happily, this seems less so today.

We established a time-line for how long we were willing to endure the commute, and we embarked on the well-trodden path made by other dual-career couples, returning to the job market. There are many reasons that dual-career couples find themselves job-hunting. Many universities don't have the resources for a new hire; others will only entertain a spousal hire within the context of a retention offer.

Even in cases where a spousal hire is possible, many faculty members have reservations about having two partners in the same department. Some fear that a couple will lead to factionalization and create tensions around decisions that impact one of the two partners. While we know this can occur, we find that couples are more likely to go out of their way to avoid influencing decisions about their partner. We also think fears of spousal voting blocks are overblown—as often as not, we find ourselves on opposite sides of an issue, an experience that will resonate with anybody who has a partner!

Of course, some universities and departments take a more positive view of dual-career couples. They understand that when you take away the stress and time-sink of commuting, the productivity of partners in dual-career couples usually increases substantially. That has certainly been our experience. Furthermore, they will be less likely to seek another job, out of loyalty and because of the challenges of finding new jobs together. A few of the most progressive departments further recognize that not all dual-career couples are married, nor are all of them in heterosexual relationships.

Returning to our story, we commuted for six years. Our quest took on added urgency when our son, J.C., was born at the end of our second year of commuting. Like many couples in our position, we found ways to mitigate the commute. Kat received a research leave one year, and Jason took a sabbatical another year, which allowed us to commute every other year. When we were not living together, childcare fell more heavily on Kat's shoulders, who essentially functioned as a single parent during the week. The stress of juggling our careers, parenting, and a long commute was at times overwhelming, but we never lost sight of our goal to be together and to have fulfilling careers. While jobs together in an academic department was our hope, we realized that might not be possible, and we were ready to consider a wide variety of alternatives.



Jason Yaeger, J.C. Yaeger, and Kat Brown at Tikal, June 2012.

We were thrilled that the University of Texas at San Antonio offered us both positions in the Department of Anthropology. It felt like we had won the archaeology lottery! Kat began at UTSA in Fall 2009, and Jason followed in Fall 2010, after giving the University of Wisconsin a year of service he owed following his sabbatical. We consider ourselves very fortunate: we found jobs together at a rapidly growing university that emphasizes research. The Department of Anthropology is an exciting place, with an established MA program and a new Ph.D. program. We are privileged to have supportive and collegial colleagues that include another dual-career couple and many faculty members with young children. For Kat, a native Texan, UTSA has the added bonus of being in the Lone Star State and only 2 hours from her family.

Our story is a success story, and we hope that it provides a glimmer of hope for other dual-career couples that are in search of the "holy grail." At the same time, a realistic appraisal of the academic job market should encourage dual-career couples to be open to creative alternatives. Looking to the future, we are optimistic that our experience will come to be the new normal as our discipline and academia increasingly appreciate the benefits of supporting dual career couples.