

RICHARD H. JORDAN  
(1946-1991)

In 1974 a slightly bow-legged young male arctic archaeologist, nearing completion of his Ph.D., nervously stood before a Bryn Mawr College introductory archaeology class. Approximately 35 eager undergraduate women sat quietly and expectantly in their seats. The undergraduates had to lean forward when their new professor began to speak, for his lecture was delivered through a cloud of cigarette smoke and at a whisper that barely reached beyond his beard.

Thus began Richard H. Jordan's career as an archaeology and anthropology professor. His productive career ended prematurely on 19 January 1991, when he died of a heart attack at the age of 44. He is survived by his wife, Colleen Lazenby, and children, Richard, Lucas, and Celeste.

Dick was born in Alaska in 1946 and spent the first four years of his life in Seldovia, Alaska, before his family moved east, first to New Hampshire and then to Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he grew up. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1969, having been introduced to northern archaeology by Robert McKenna and Elmer Harp.

Dick's first fieldwork experience occurred in 1969 under the direction of Barry Kent near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1970 he worked at Healy Lake, Alaska, as a crew member on McKenna and John Cook's excavation, and he participated in the Aleyeska Pipeline Survey. He then entered the anthropology Ph.D. program at the University of Minnesota, where he studied under the direction of Elden Johnson. Also, he worked with Herbert Wright and developed a great interest in ecological and paleoenvironmental studies.

Dick was awarded a Marshall Fellowship and lived in Copenhagen during 1971-72. There he further formulated an interdisciplinary approach to the study of prehistory, working at the Danish National Museum and the Danish Geological Survey. He studied archaeology and ethnology under Helge Larsen, Birket Smith, and Jorgen Meldgaard and underwent an intensive tutorial in palynology under Bent Fredskild. In addition, he learned about dating techniques, faunal analysis, and Inuit art and formed lasting friendships with members of the Danish scholarly community.

In 1972 Dick and William Fitzhugh, of the Smithsonian Institution, began a long and fruitful collaborative relationship when Dick joined Fitzhugh's Labrador, Canada, archaeology project. He excavated at Rattler's Bight, a Maritime Archaic site, and collected paleoecological data and analyzed a series of lake cores for his doctoral dissertation, *Pollen Studies at Hamilton Inlet, Labrador, and Their Implications for Environmental Prehistory* (1975). In this work Dick reconstructed the post-glacial vegetation history of the region and examined 8000 years of Indian and Inuit culture change against that environmental backdrop. This interdisciplinary study excited both the archaeology and paleoecology communities and continues to contribute to our understanding of Labrador-Quebec prehistory.

When Dick joined the Bryn Mawr faculty arctic archaeologists were feeling heady, for they were moving beyond culture histories and were examining exciting correlations between climate change and prehistoric cultural developments. Dick's college office was strewn with piles of Meddelelser om Grønland volumes, and a worn copy of Julian Steward's *Theory of Culture Change* was never far from his desk.

In 1973 Dick began investigations of a series of Inuit semi-subterranean sod house sites in Hamilton Inlet. In 1975 he conducted an archaeology field school for Bryn Mawr undergraduates at those sites. He had worked on the excavations expecting that his detailed knowledge of toggling harpoon head sequences and traditional Thule technology would be of use. However, the har-



poon heads he recovered fit no sequence he had ever studied, for they were fashioned from European spikes. Soapstone pots and lamps, whalebone sled runners, and some harpoon socket pieces were among the few bits of Inuit material culture unearthed — everything else was European made. In typical energetic fashion, and complaining vociferously about "all this European stuff" as he toiled, Dick learned about square cut nails, kaolin pipe bore diameters, frison shapes, coins, and earthenware. He also conducted excavations at historic sites in Pennsylvania, involving students in that work as well.

Soon Dick's laboratory was full of undergraduates. One hard-working, grade-conscious group was counting and categorizing thousands of trade beads recovered from a Hamilton Inlet sod house. Their professor, trying to create an impression of being fierce and uncompromising, declared that he would vacuum the lab each day, count the number of beads in the vacuum cleaner bag, and deduct grade points accordingly. Despite his gruff manner, his lab was always filled with students infected with his enthusiasm for and commitment to archaeology.

Throughout this period Dick remained interested in paleoecological research. However, he never let this interest limit his analyses. Indeed, this committed environmental archaeologist developed economic and social models to explain the Labrador Inuit communal house when he could have embraced climatic explanations. He recognized the value of archival records and encouraged his students to use them and ethnography to complement their archaeological work. Before turning away from Labrador Inuit research problems, he wrote about the development of the "big man" in Labrador Inuit culture, challenging stereotypes of egalitarian eastern Inuit societies.

In 1977-78 Dick and William Fitzhugh co-directed the Smithsonian Institution-Bryn Mawr College Torngat Archaeological Project, a major effort that involved surveying the Labrador coast from Okak to Cape Chidley. Dick focused his attention on Dorset cultural remains and the excavation of a frozen midden on Avayalik Island, which produced Labrador's first well-preserved Dorset wood and bone artifacts. While cultural ecology and environmental archaeology were major themes of this work, he delved into symbolic art studies to understand and interpret the Dorset material. Throughout this time he trained graduate students, studied Alaskan collections at the University Museum in Philadelphia, and in collaboration with his wife continued to be involved in Pennsylvania archaeology.

Dick's exuberant participation in the Torngat Project epitomizes the passion the man had for archaeological fieldwork and analysis. He charged into unsurveyed geographic areas with enthusiasm and eagerness, often so excited about the archaeological work ahead that he seemed to resent having to care for boats and equipment or deal with minor things like camping and eating. Indeed, his graduate students soon learned to carry all the equipment and food (and a spare pack of cigarettes), to ensure that they would be available when needed. Thus, Dick roamed the coast in relative freedom, locating and testing sites and formulating hypotheses at a rapid-fire rate. As he progressed along the rocky shores and over the tundra-covered passes, he often resembled a large and awkward flying bird, for his open jacket and turned-down waders flapped around him as he walked.

In 1980 Dick travelled to Kodiak Island, Alaska, to assess the impact of a proposed hydroelectric dam on archaeology sites. Dick left the state impressed with the archaeological potential of the region. The following year he accompanied Thomas McGovern, of Hunter College, on a survey of Godhaab Fiord, West Greenland. Dick was fascinated by Greenland prehistory; however, he had little patience for the politics or bureaucracy he thought he would have to work through in order to secure excavation permits. He wrote two important syntheses of Greenland prehistory for Allen P. McCartney's volume *Thule Eskimo Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (1979) and the arctic volume of the *Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians* (1984), and he shifted his attention to Kodiak Island, where issues of culture contact, ethnic identity, and the rise of complex societies became central points of investigation. The Labrador paleoenvironmental and culture contact work prepared him well for this major research endeavor.

Dick never forgot his debt to the generation of archaeologists that came before him. He worked with them in Denmark, Pennsylvania, Canada, and Alaska. In particular, he turned to Frederica de Laguna, of Bryn Mawr College, for advice and support as he became increasingly involved in Alaskan research. And he continued the tradition of sharing information and providing support, noting that he had benefitted from the kindness of others. His home was always filled with visiting anthropologists, archaeologists, and students. One always left the Jordan household well fed, but never rested, for talk about archaeology and the North went on long into the night.

Dick became the chair of the Anthropology Department at Bryn Mawr in 1987, at a point when the college's highly successful but small graduate program was scheduled for termination by the administration. Dick was as committed to education as he was to archaeology and he fought hard for the survival of the department's graduate program. Canadian and American graduate students were working with him, he had sent well-prepared students to graduate schools across the country, and his offices were full of hard-working young people. Besides being infected with his enthusiasm, the students survived his demands that they work as intensely and as long as he did, and that they argue as vociferously as he did. His students also learned to appreciate his editorial pen — he read

their work immediately and critically, and his comments were extremely constructive, if not always easy to take.

Kodiak Island artifacts now filled the Bryn Mawr laboratories and Dick's long-term involvement in the region was clear. While trying to save Bryn Mawr's graduate anthropology program, Dick clashed with the administration. With the close of the Ph.D. program, he happily accepted the position of chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, where a graduate program was being inaugurated. In Fairbanks he found new energy, developing close ties with the University of Alaska Museum and state and federal archaeology agencies and, predictably, sparring with the administration. He became involved with indigenous peoples in the state; particularly he was supportive of Kodiak Islanders' efforts to build a museum and establish ongoing cultural heritage programs on the island.

During the last few months of his life Dick became involved in a Smithsonian exhibition program and, having stepped down as department chair, he started planning a cooperative research project with colleagues in Magadan, U.S.S.R. His introduction to the region was typically Jordanesque — he arrived in the Soviet Union without a visa, challenging bureaucracy at its highest level.

Dick's career went through various theoretical stages and took on a circumpolar aspect as he became involved in work in Siberia, Alaska, Canada, Denmark, and Greenland. He always saw arctic archaeology in the context of anthropology and insisted that his students have an excellent anthropological grounding. Overall, he was interested in unraveling the prehistory of arctic cultures and understanding human adaptations to cold regions, climate change, and culture contact. He recognized that international cooperation and exchange among academics is essential to the success of scholarly endeavors and was impatient with those who hampered such efforts. On the national level he lobbied for increased funding of northern research and expressed his concern about the United States' underdeveloped arctic social science policies. The voice that began as a nervous whisper in a Pennsylvania classroom was now that of an emerging leader in the field of northern research.

Dick's students and colleagues will notice less animation and a lower noise level at academic meetings and increasingly will realize how silent their phone lines have become. The northern anthropological community has lost an invaluable colleague, teacher, and friend. Our challenge is to go about our academic lives productively and creatively without the benefit of Richard Jordan's argumentative, sometimes exasperating, and always insightful presence.

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