

THE EARLY YEARS, ANCHORAGE AND BEFORE

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William Bates Workman was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin, and all of his degrees are from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, in anthropology. He was Phi Beta Kappa, held two graduate National Science Foundation Fellowships and, upon completion of his doctoral dissertation, was elected to Sigma Xi. After leaving Madison he taught at two universities in Anchorage that were so close together that, living in the same house since 1970, he could walk to either one in about 15 minutes. From the beginning of his teaching career he felt he could live in Anchorage for the rest of his life, and he frequently stated that he had the best job in the world.

Bill's area of specialization is the Subarctic, with fieldwork primarily in southern Alaska and the neighboring parts of Canada. His advisor at the University of Wisconsin referred to him and other student archaeologists as "northern campers," and he has, in fact, spent altogether more than two years tent camping in sometimes abysmal weather, especially in May and September. Not only do workers in the Subarctic claim deeper soils in their sites, they also claim worse weather than their more northern colleagues, in part, of course, because of longer field seasons. Camping is one of the many firsts that he experienced in Alaska. Fieldwork on Kodiak and Afognak islands, in Kachemak Bay, on the Kenai Peninsula, along the Copper River, in the southern interior of Alaska, and in the adjacent Yukon Territory over the past 45 years has for him involved tent camping almost exclusively.

Large National Science Foundation grants to William S. Laughlin, and the multidisciplinary field work that resulted, included Bill for the first time in 1962 while a student in Madison. While many others went to the major excavation in Nikolski in the Aleutian Islands, Bill went on to Kodiak Island where he met Donald W. Clark. In 1963, he went with Clark for a week to survey Chirikof Island off the southeast coast of the Alaska Peninsula where they surface-collected 28 deflated sites whose stone

artifacts alone remained after winds removed the sands of this arctic desert. Laboratory analysis back at Madison greatly exceeded field time. A preliminary report came out three years later, but his MA thesis based on these surface collections was not completed until 1969 and contained over 1,000 pages of text and photographs. His major professor, Chester S. Chard, had connections with Japan and the USSR, and these influenced Bill's life-long friendships with Japanese archaeologists and created a familiarity with written Russian, leading to translations for the journal *Arctic Anthropology*. One of his first publications described the Port Moller collections that came from Chard's participation in the joint University of Wisconsin-Meiji University fieldwork on the Alaska Peninsula in 1960.

Bill's formative years on Kodiak with Don Clark yielded not only a life-long friendship but an unparalleled deep mutual admiration. An idea of the fieldwork they shared in the early 1960s can be gleaned from Clark's many early publications. In 1964, their summer survey checked known sites for earthquake damage, and in 1971 they returned to the mouth of the Afognak River to excavate two early, eroding sites with a joint crew from the National Museums of Canada (NMC), under Don's direction, and Alaska Methodist University (AMU), under Bill's direction. The Canadians were Knut Fladmark, Will Peacock, and John Nobleman. The Alaskans were Greg Dixon, Chris Rabich (Campbell), Willy Johnson, and Jim Houston, three of whom were reunited in 2006 when the Alaska Anthropological Association met in Kodiak, in part to honor the two old men of the island and in part to reminisce about the horrors of the weather during that very cold spring of 1971.

In 1966, Bill journeyed to another part of the North with John Cook. They surveyed in the southwestern Yukon Territory of Canada with Anne Shinkwin and Peter Ramsden under the auspices of the NMC, and they spent time with Catharine McClellan in her ethnographic

research area. In 1967, Bill went again with John Cook, this time to an excavation at Healy Lake in the interior of Alaska. However, this season was cut short by a life-threatening car accident that involved Bill's parents, so he returned to a bedside watch in Madison. In December he married me—Karen Wood—a fellow graduate student who shared a strong dislike of morning and who for a year had met him daily before 8 a.m. over the departmental coffee pot. Early summer saw us headed to the Yukon Territory with visiting Japanese scholar, Kensaku Hayashi. The other crew members, George Wenzel and Jeff Mauger, flew to Whitehorse. This excavation of the Chimi site near Aishihik formed the basis for Bill's 1974 Ph.D. dissertation, published in 1978 in the Mercury Series of the NMC, the sponsor of the work.

In the spring of 1969, Bill took preliminary exams and I took comprehensive exams. We purchased an International Scout, loaded it with personal effects, and drove the Alcan Highway in the late summer so that Bill could take a job at Alaska Methodist University (AMU) in Anchorage. There he joined Frederick Hadleigh West in the Archaeology Department. At that time, they and John Cook at the University of Alaska (hereafter, UAF to distinguish it from Anchorage institutions) were the only archaeologists employed in the entire state. Our fears that Anchorage was too far away from the center of the continent were needless because Anchorage was the hub for subarctic research. Our former professor, Bill Laughlin, had moved to the newly formed Anthropology Department at the University of Connecticut with his NSF research teams and visited with us often as he continued work in the Aleutians with students from there. Other early visitors to our campus home included Jack Campbell and crews from the University of New Mexico, and Joan Townsend from the University of Manitoba.

Anchorage had few tourist attractions other than the Chugach Mountains in the 1960s. The main building on AMU campus, designed by Edward Durrell Stone, was a stop on all city tours. We lived in it, in an apartment next to the Student Union, and we dealt with tourists at all hours of the day and night as they wandered happily over the rolling lawns, admired the magnificent flowers in hanging planters, and explored the shining white central attraction which was our home. After one summer in the spotlight, we looked for a house within walking distance and found one just as the fall semester began.

The next six years were bittersweet. The more we grew to like AMU, the weaker it became in the face of

dwindling support from the Methodist Church and oil monies pouring into the educational coffers of the state. We witnessed the deforestation and then construction of adjacent Anchorage Community College (ACC). For forty years we have been neighbors to continuous construction at Providence Hospital and the University of Alaska Anchorage, and most of Anchorage south of the old city limits has been constructed since 1970. We have had an interesting life here with massive change occurring around us.

In the mid-1970s construction began on the Trans Alaska Pipeline. Fred West and John Cook had divided the pipeline archaeology between themselves, with the University of Alaska handling the northernmost three-quarters and AMU that portion from Hogan's Hill near Paxson south to the terminal at Valdez. Because of delays to the pipeline, Bill was in place to help with survey of the line when Fred departed for a job on the U.S. East Coast. The Arctic Institute of North America provided experts to oversee the archaeology conducted along the Alyeska Pipeline Corridor and this group included Jack Campbell, Elmer Harp, Robert McKennan, William Taylor, and James VanStone. Bill's excavations focused on an area of the Gulkana River where ancestral Ahtna camped, manufactured copper implements, and stored their fish about six hundred years ago.

Overlapping with this work in the Copper River country, we followed up on a survey that Douglas Reger conducted and began excavations in Kachemak Bay in the early 1970s. Both the pipeline and the Kachemak Bay work involved not only students from Alaska Methodist University but also students and faculty (Jack Lobdell) from Anchorage Community College. Lists of field crews from those years are a who's who of early archaeology students in Anchorage.

Alaska Methodist University closed its doors in the spring of 1976, and Keith Brady spent the summer with us, packing collections and mailing them to UAF and to the Museum of Man, then part of the NMC. We spent that autumn travelling the northern world and staying with Bill's parents in Madison, Wisconsin, between trips. Kerry Feldman and students at the newly activated University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) prevailed upon Chancellor Lindauer to hire Bill in the Anthropology Department beginning in January of 1977, much to the relief of Bill's wife and parents. Feldman also convinced the university that an archaeologist could not exist without a laboratory, and when the new Science Building was completed, the

Archaeology Laboratory was located there. Before the spruce trees were planted, the lab had an exquisite view of both the Chugach Range and the Talkeetna Mountains.

Excavations in Kachemak Bay over five seasons filled the Archaeology Laboratory to capacity, in large part because of the wonderful bone preservation in the shell middens there. Working jointly with Jack Lobdell at ACC, Bill held field schools at Cottonwood Creek in 1974, at the Chugachik Island sites in 1977 and 1981, and at two sites on Yukon Island in 1978 and 1979. Gretchen Bersch, a colleague at ACC, was building a house on Yukon Island and thought perhaps an archaeologist should be involved. Jack and Bill jumped at the chance and began bringing large crews to the island. Gretchen's hospitality and cooking greatly enhanced field schools over the next few years. The 1981 field school was supported by a National Science Foundation grant that allowed student laboratory time immediately following the field work, so that summer the lab buzzed with projects that were reported to the archaeological community in Anchorage, which had become quite large.

With high hopes for writing up this massive amount of material, our sabbatical year in 1982-83 was spent at the Museum of Man. Canadian hospitality was at an all-time high for visiting scholars. We did get a lot of work accomplished, but we could not approach the productivity of these museum-based archaeologists, who turned out book after book on research spanning all of Canada.

An earlier museum experience was in the fall of 1979 when we spent four months in Japan, living on the Osaka University campus, but working at the National Museum of Ethnology in Senri. For two months we helped Yoshinobu Kotani edit a book, the results of one of the early Senri Seminars organized in 1978 by Kotani and Bill. The third month we travelled north while waiting for the publisher to furnish the proofs.

In the lab when we arrived home from Ottawa in 1983 were new Osborne computers which Feldman had provided the department. This was a critical point in Bill's career. In his forties now, Bill had to take on a new technology and give up the typists and secretaries of old. In retrospect, of course, it was a good move and life did become much less dependent upon other people.

The 1970s witnessed massive growth of the Alaskan anthropological community. The university and the community college were adding human resources as were state and federal governmental agencies. By the mid-1970s there were about fifty archaeologists in Anchorage

alone. Douglas W. Veltre came from the University of Connecticut to begin teaching in the Anthropology Department at ACC in 1974, replacing Linda Ellanna, who followed Laughlin back to Connecticut to finish her Ph.D. degree there. David R. Yesner, from Connecticut as well, also appeared at ACC during the 1970s, disappeared, then reappeared in the mid-1980s. Veltre and Yesner joined Robert Mack, who had been at ACC since the early 1970s and had done a year's post-graduate work at Connecticut, on the anthropology faculty, so that at one time nearly the entire Anthropology Department at ACC hailed from the University of Connecticut.

It was also the Anchorage Community College Anthropology Department that hosted in 1974 the first meeting of what was to become the Alaska Anthropological Association (AAA). Bill and I were surprised that so many people showed up to listen to all of the papers in plenary session. I remember eating from vending machines and sitting on the floor because there was not enough seating in the lobby of Building K prior to William Laughlin's evening presentation. Richard Scott of UAF was elected interim president and bore the brunt of organizational formation. The AAA met every year from then on, generally alternating meetings between Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Bill served as president of the AAA for several years and was on the board of directors intermittently until 1995. He found ultimate satisfaction in this organization and took pride in the high quality of presentations. It was an opportunity to get together with researchers past and present, old and young from all corners of the state and beyond. In the early years we designated honorary, lifetime memberships that went primarily to people whose careers in the north began in the 1920s and 1930s, and many were still actively involved in fieldwork. They were invited to speak to the association over the next few years. It may be that we learned as much from these, our intellectual forefathers and mothers, in person as we did from their numerous publications, and among the things we learned was to enjoy life and the research we were doing.

Our guests convinced us (as if we needed it) that we were in the most interesting field, with people who were leading the most adventurous lives and whose fieldwork took them all over Alaska. One of these was Don Dumond, whom we had met while still students at UW, Madison in the rebellious 1960s. He stopped by after the Milwaukee meetings of the Society of American Archaeology to look at collections and was, or was nearly, tear-gassed in an anti-war riot. Don departed for his supposedly more

peaceful campus at the University of Oregon only to be greeted by rioting there. Twenty years later, we spent a peaceful sabbatical year in Eugene enjoying the company of Don and Carol Dumond.

Our early fear of Anchorage as the end of the world affected our use of local libraries to our detriment. We bought lots of books, subscribed to a large number of journals, and belonged to a number of professional organizations. The floors at home were always littered with newsletters and thick volumes of the most recent research on the North. From this came an impressive northern bibliography indexed to provide topical bibliographies based on his needs of the moment. Bill's wide ranging interests allowed him to write topical overviews such as Holocene peopling of the New World, the effects of volcanism on human and animal populations, Norton culture, sea mammal hunting and even cultural resources management. Legally required repatriation of human remains spurred him on to studies

of northern practices with the dead, particularly relative to the Kachemak culture.

The move from AMU (now Alaska Pacific University) to UAA brought security, both financially and professionally, and a much heavier workload. Bill has estimated that he taught over 3,500 students just in his years as a full professor, and for each one there were three essay exams, each of which he read. In 2005, UAA began claiming 50 years of existence but the institution known as the University of Alaska Anchorage only took on that name in late 1976 or 1977 after a difficult identity struggle. The curious may look at the photo gallery of institutional leadership on the third floor of the Consortium Library. In my view, UAA began in 1977, and in January of that year Bill came to work at this remarkable institution. We have watched it grow from its inception, as have many of the other anthropology faculty who remain in Anchorage. It is time to craft the history of the Anthropology Department at UAA, but that is another job.