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BERT SALWEN—A RECOLLECTION

John L. Cotter

Anyone who knew Bert Salwen was fully aware that he possessed protean qualities and the physical and mental stamina and drive to pursue all avenues of a chosen field.

To begin with, he was a man of principle and a fighter for human rights in an era when rights were denied those who espoused politically unpopular causes. And that was long before the student activists and civil rights champions got going. Looking beyond the totalitarian crushing of socialism, Bert found the pursuit of archaeological evidence and its conservation and interpretation a retrospective compensation for the inequities of the present in the re-evocation and understanding of the past. In short, Bert discovered archaeology and its historical components, and a new career that continued his meticulous engineering and analytical skills in a field that became his passion, together with the power to inspire new ideas and questions through teaching.

I contracted with Bert for a 1960 report of his work done with Charles W. Ward on "Test Excavations of Two Sites in the Tocks Island Reservoir area, New Jersey" when I was Regional Archaeologist for the old Northeast Region of the National Park Service. So I had a foretaste of Bert's abilities in archaeological field work while he was still a graduate student at Columbia.

But I really knew little about Bert when I contracted with him and his as-

sociate organization, the New Jersey State Museum. The agreement called for an archaeological investigation of the Van Campen House site in Tocks Island National Recreational Area. What I did know about Bert was that he finished the jobs he started and produced a report on time.

He did the investigation, with the cooperation of New Jersey State archaeologist Lorraine Williams, and the two of them produced in 1975 the "Preliminary Report: 1974 Archaeological Investigations at the Isaac Van Campen House, Sussex County, New Jersey." This was followed in 1976, the year before I retired from the NPS, by the "Final Report: 1974 Archaeological Investigations," produced by Lorraine Williams and Bruce Eberle in association with the New Jersey State Museum for the National Park Service. There it was, on time, the completed report; no stalling, no excuses, not a day's delay. That was the way Bert worked, as did those who worked with him. We found out all there was worth knowing about the Van Campen site.

When I got up a symposium on the theme, "The Crisis of Urban Archaeology," for the 35th Annual Meeting for the Society for American Archaeology at Mexico City, which was presented April 30th, 1970, Bert was one of the nine participants with a paper on "Archaeology in Megalopolis." Others in the symposium included William J. Mayer-Oakes who gave a "Brief Overview of Urban Archaeology,"

Edward E. Calnek on "The Use of Ethnological Source Materials in the Study of Settlement Pattern and Demography at Tenochtitlan," Jose L. Lorenzo on "Theory and Practice of Salvage Archaeology in Urban Zones," Jiordi Gussynier on "A System of Archaeological Excavation Under a Great City, Mexico," William T. Sanders on "Salvage Archaeology at Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala," Vincent P. Foley on "Problems in Progress of Urban Archaeology in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania," and James E. Ayres who spoke on "Problem-Oriented Historical Archaeology in the Service of the Concept of Culture and the Urban Self-Image." I was proud to have both Bert and Gene Weltfish on board. Both had been persecuted for their political principles; both had picked up their careers and gone on. Both were seminal anthropological thinkers.

After being turned down by a couple of U.S. publishers, I sent the original manuscript with illustrations to Ignacio Bernal in Mexico City to see if it could be published in Mexico. But the manuscript never arrived, and disappeared, never to surface. Giving up publication, I notified the authors, but Bert succeeded in publishing his paper in Charles L. Redman's edited volume, *Research and Theory in Current Archaeology*, in 1973. Happily some of the others didn't give up either, and worked their articles into print.

So, here we have some tributes to Bert's interest in all kinds of archaeology, which was keen and questing. (For example, Bert regarded supermarkets in ethnic neighborhoods as culturally significant reflectors of preference in the material culture of their patrons, and studied the shelves accordingly.) I cannot but regret greatly that Bert left before so many of us had a chance to consult him on so many of the projects

and publications we have since undertaken. The articles in this book testify by implication how much the authors would have enjoyed discussing what they wrote with Bert, so as to extend insights and gain another idea or two.

Since Bert was particularly interested in work that DID SOMETHING about the archaeological evidence in the metropolis, he would have enjoyed sharing in the increasing archaeological activity in New York City, especially the wrap-up of *New York Neighborhoods* with Nan Rothschild, as it neared publication. He particularly appreciated an anthropological view of history in the ground—and no better place than the Manhattan of his daily endeavors.

I regret that I—and my co-authors Dan Roberts and Michael Parrington—could not have shown Bert our final draft of *The Buried Past, an Archaeological History of Philadelphia*, which came out at the end of 1992. There are so many comparative insights into the whole archaeology of any East Coast city that relate to other metropolises—New York City, Boston, Baltimore, and the interurban links between! Here is being revealed more and more evidence of the previously undocumented record of archaeology as each urban center marshals its evidence from a corpus of published and unpublished reports to be coordinated into a focused account.

But we shall try to continue the obligation that Bert undertook: namely, to review, analyze, and interpret the historical archaeology of city and environs, so as to gain a fresh insight into the whole urban and related landscape and the people therein. It is a challenge we can't ignore.

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