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30 Years at Heshbon

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Andrews' day in the sun

Spending a summer at the Heshbon archaeological excavation site in Jordan has been one of my goals as long as I've been associated with Andrews. So, early in June when my friend Sten LaBianca from the behavioral sciences department said I should join the crew this summer to cover the 30th anniversary of Andrews work at Heshbon, I jumped at the chance. So we take our FOCUS readers on location in this issue.

Although I didn't spend the entire summer—I was there only a week—I had the time of my life. I assisted at Heshbon by writing news releases for the local media about the celebration ceremony and by writing text for the various signs placed along the self-guided tour trails. And on the morning of the ceremony, I helped out on the *guffa* line (a dusty Heshbon version of the bucket brigade!) when last-minute preparations required rebuilding one last stone wall for the Heshbon reconstruction project. Check out the photo of me and Andrews student Lisa Good lugging *guffa*-loads of sand and gravel!

But it wasn't all work at Heshbon. I enjoyed seeing the sights around the Madaba Plains with Niels-Erik Andreassen and Larry Geraty, president of La Sierra University (and old pro at getting around in Jordan). Larry's familiarity with Arabic and the lay of the land in Jordan provided an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with this exotic and intriguing country. I'll always remember our full-day trip down to Petra, where ancient stone-cutters chiseled fabulous facades into the rose-red-colored rock canyon walls and where the Children of Israel undoubtedly trekked about so many centuries ago. On our day at Petra, Larry took us off the beaten track of tourist walkways and into the sun-baked wilderness. I came away from my day at Petra with new understanding of "wandering in the wilderness." And it was in Petra where I took the picture of the two camels on the cover.

On Friday, July 31, I listened and watched with pride as various speakers at the 30th-anniversary ceremony spoke of the strong commitment Andrews University has made to the archaeological work in Jordan. It was especially gratifying to hear Jordan's Prince Raad (first cousin to King Hussein) relive his own adventures working at the Heshbon site *incognito*. As we sat on the dust-blown summit of the tell, in the ruins of an ancient Christian chapel, under a very hot sun, I was proud to see the profound

impact Andrews has had on the local community and on the state of archaeology in Jordan. Professor Seigfried Horn would have been proud too.



photo by Sharon Prest

I was proud to see the impact Andrews has had on the local community and on the state of archaeology in Jordan.

Our other features focus on life closer to campus. For a few years now I've been somewhat nonplussed by several friends' decision to home-school their children. This trend has caught on nationally—even *Newsweek* has featured the phenomenon. Veteran writer Chris Carey takes a careful look at home-schooling and its unique effect in the Andrews community.

President Andreassen's address at this fall's convocation service struck a special chord with the students and faculty. He explores the connection between scholarship and redemption, a tension that informs our daily lives in Christian academia.

On a much different note, Jack Stenger chronicles the adventures of two intrepid undergrads who dared to kayak across Lake Michigan. Storm-tossed and bug-bitten, Olen Netteburg and Krystian Zygowiec paddled their way—a bit off-course—to the Sunset Coast (after sunset, however) of Berrien County. You'll find their exploits interesting.

We're also happy to feature a high school student in "At Random." I met Amber Mihm at the Leadership Outing for Lake Union academy students in October when I made a presentation on school newspapers. Amber is the editor of the student newspaper at Great Lakes Adventist Academy; she offers her reactions to this quarter's College Days for high school seniors.

I want to note, in addition, how much I appreciate the volunteer efforts of Professor Emerita

Leona Running to proofread each issue of Focus before it goes to press. Her sharp eye and command of usage and mechanics—to say nothing of her working knowledge of the institution—combine to keep us looking good in print. (But if you do find a typo, you can bet we made it after Dr. Running checked our copy!)

—Douglas A. Jones (MA '80)
Focus editor

30



YEARS at

HESHBON

In 1968, Andrews professor of archaeology Siegfried Horn selected the Jordanian village of Hesban as the site of the university's archaeological attention. FOCUS visits Jordan for the 30th anniversary celebration and takes you on location.

by Douglas A. Jones

Cool, night desert air envelopes the Amman Training Center campus where approximately 130 students and faculty from Andrews and around the world stir to the plaintive sounds of a four-in-the-morning call to prayer at the nearby mosque in Amman, Jordan. You rise from your bunk and shiver into your dusty clothes. No need to shower; the water's cold anyway. You shuffle to breakfast in the dining hall and then onto a small yellow minibus in the parking lot for the 25-minute ride to the tell.

Heshbon. Tall Hisban. Hesban, to the locals. The tell rises before you, and soon you're hiking the mound of earth and stones that—after centuries—they still call Heshbon.

The sun begins to crown the eastern horizon. And to the west, Mt. Nebo is bathed in pink-amber radiance. A flock of sheep jostles

down the incline, bells around their necks tinkling in the early morning air.

You stretch and survey the twine outlining your plot on the mound and peer into the excavated trench you've called "home" for more than a month. The trowel in your hand feels familiar, its handle fits your hand that's already silky with dust. You pull your head scarf around your mouth and nose and climb into the hole, ready for another morning of scraping and sifting. Layer upon layer of Jordanian dirt and history.

The sun rises overhead and beats down on your back. Local Palestinian boys, ranging in age from ten to sixteen, joke and tease as they haul *guffas*—buckets made from rubber tires—filled with sand and pebbles. Clouds of dust obscure the sifting screens at the



photo by Michelle Spangler

The Mamluk palace on the summit of Heshbon includes living and bathing spaces.

edge of the excavation site. Pottery shards, bones and small stones emerge on the metal grid. Occasionally, you hear a “Hey, check this out!” You reach for your water bottle and take a swig. You keep your head low, concentrating on your work.

By eight-thirty you’ve been on the tell for three hours. Your nasal passages are coated with dust. Your knees ache. You’ve scraped away five guffas full of dirt, and you’ve only found small animal bones and charcoal. That data goes into your written report. And you keep scraping and worrying the excavation walls with your trowel.

At nine, Abanour, Heshbon’s closest neighbor and casual caretaker, calls the archaeological crew to “second breakfast” on the terrace of his home. He’s prepared eggs, flat bread, a hearty tomato-vegetable *coulis*, watermelon and hot tea. Students and staff relax in his family’s sitting room and under the tent awning on the deck. The family’s dog looks up expectantly as you fill your plate.

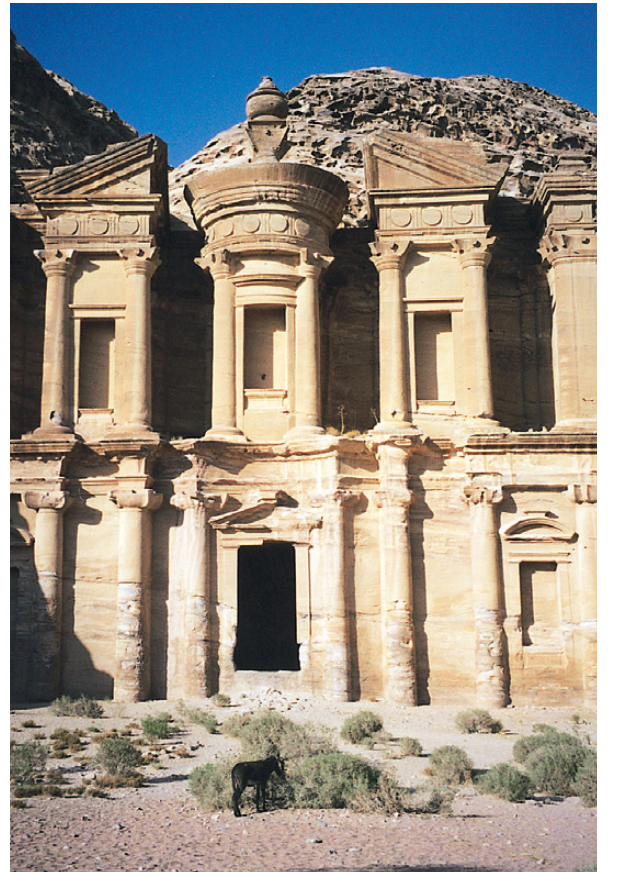
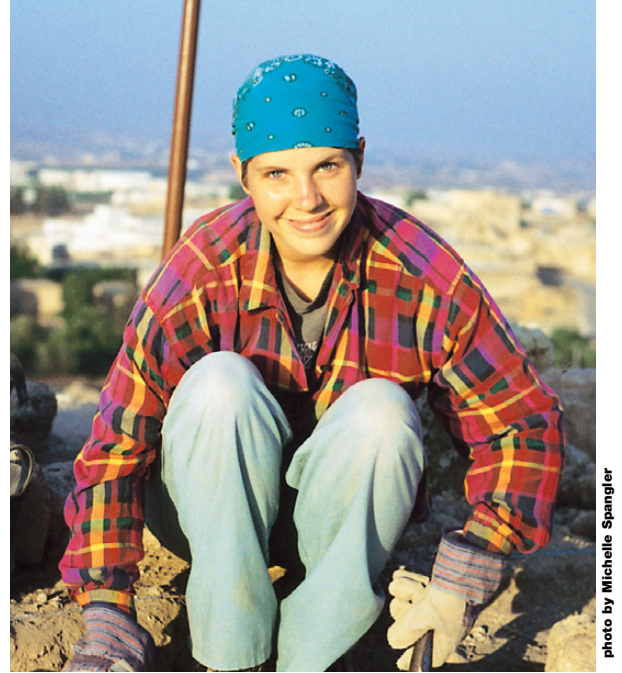
Within 45 minutes you’re back at the dig. Up on the summit of the tell—at the Mamluk palace, a medieval structure that once housed a governor and his staff, now a jumble of stones—the student excavators under the direction of Bethany Walker, a recent graduate of the University of Toronto, unearth two or three pottery storage vessels. Just a few feet away from the late 19th-century human bones and skulls protruding from the wall of layered soil, sand and ash. Walker summons Paul Ray, current chief archaeologist of the Hesban dig, from his excavation area in the southwest quadrant of the site to examine the latest find.

Ray then calls over to Øystein LaBianca, the general director of Hesban, who’s conferring with archaeologist Roger Boraas of Upsala College in Sweden and representatives of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in preparation for the 30-year anniversary celebration. The pottery vessels are in tact, excellent examples of the Mamluk period.

Everyone on the site crowds around the open excavation trench to see the latest find still nestled into the sand. Then Dana Langlois, a senior photography major from Andrews, climbs down into the hole with a digital camera to record the pottery’s position in relation to the rest of the Mamluk excavation.

The sun beats down from its late morning position in the Jordanian sky. Your back and knees ache. You hear the persistent clink of a pick axe against stone. You’re ready to go back to the campus and eat lunch.

LaBianca and Terje Ostigaard from the University of Bergen in Norway clamber out of the Hardy People Cave and dust themselves off. Below the stone-strewn surface of Hesban you’ll find a labyrinth of caves once inhabited by “hardy people,” says LaBianca. Just inside the main entrance used by the archaeologists, you brush by a stone olive press (roughly the size of a compact refrigerator) on your



This page: Andrews student Dana Langlois on location at Heshbon. The stone facades of Petra near the Dead Sea met Madaba Plains Project crew members on one of several weekend outings. **Next page, left column from top:** Rhonda Root “reads” pottery in the afternoon across from David Hopkins, editor of *Biblical Archaeology* and on the faculty of the University of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Dia Tawalbeh of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Heshbon director Øystein LaBianca, and assistant director Paul Ray confer on the summit; the town of Heshban is in the background. **Second breakfast on Abanour’s veranda.** **Right column from top:** Pottery vessels unearthed at this summer’s dig. Andrews religion professor Lael Caesar, President Niels-Erik Andreasen, La Sierra University president Larry Geraty and a free-lance writer from the *Wall Street Journal* survey the Heshbon dig.



photo by Michelle Spangler



photo by Michelle Spangler



photo by Sharon Prest

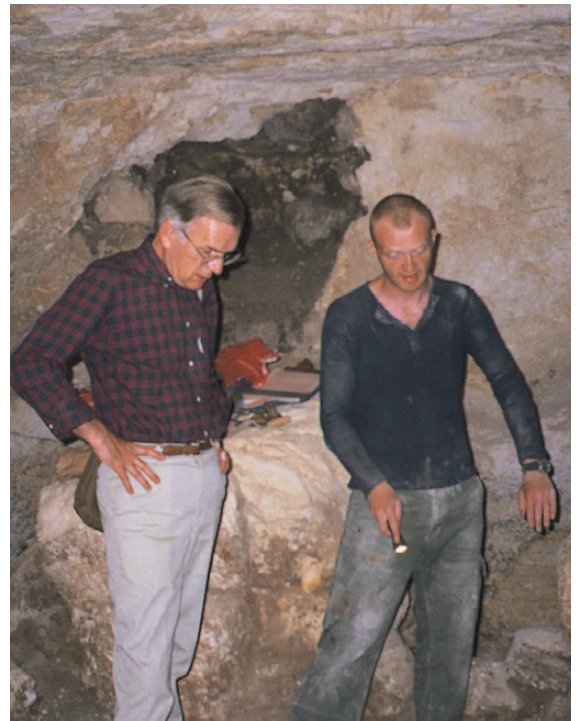


photo by Michelle Spangler



photo by Michelle Spangler



Left column from top: Amman's sook is a maze of vendors and shops. Erika Hacko and Rachel Holmes proudly show off the pottery they uncovered in the Mamluk palace. Right column from top: Erik LaBianca, Tony Zappia, Lisa Goode and Kristen Schilke relax over lunch after a morning on site. The toppled columns of the early Christian chapel at Heshbon. Next page: Tall Hisban is the site of a new archaeological education program for the local schools.

slow descent into the larger part of the cave. You stoop, but your head grazes the porous stone ceiling. You'll remember to duck lower on your return.

Earthquakes have altered the interior terrain, but tall stone columns at the end of the cleared area make a striking tableau in the filtered light beaming down from a well opening. The Hardy People Cave crew has spent most of the summer extracting animal bones and crumbling debris from the well pit to reveal the soaring columns.

Outside the cave, students and staff pile onto the minibuses, another day's work at the Heshbon site finished. The bus jostles along the back roads to the Amman Training Center, bicyclists and goats crowding the shoulder of the road. No one speaks; you're tired, hot and dusty. Ready for lunch.

Back at the campus you quickly dust yourself off and wash. In the dining room, Joan Hacko, a senior history major at Andrews who's been engaged to cook the meals for the archaeology crews, oversees the lunch table heaped with platters of Middle East food, rice and vegetables, grapes and figs, yogurt and flat bread.

After lunch you shower—the water's not as cold in the after-

noon—and enjoy the two-hour rest period that’s “strictly enforced,” according to Najeeb Nakhle, director of international student services at Andrews and camp director for the summer. The archaeologists “read” their pottery fragments and write up their field reports. You’d like to get onto e-mail, but the line in the computer room is seven people deep. You’ll come back later.

After dozing on your bunk (so much for finishing that second book you brought), you join a group going into Amman to buy postcards and souvenirs—to the *sook*, the maze of shops and streets, teeming with people, cars, donkeys and camels. Six of you cram into a taxi, and the ride of your life begins.

Once the driver enters the downtown area, your senses are assaulted by automobile horns blaring, rumbling mufflers and clouds of exhaust, the heavy smell of spices and over-ripe fruit. The taxi window is open and the late afternoon sun warms your arm—but you were already too warm, crowded into the back seat, wearing long trousers since bare legs are inappropriate in a Muslim setting.

Inside the shops you find garish postcards to send back home, even though it will cost 300 fils (about 50 cents) to send each card air mail. You look at the shop wares—silver and brass, blue and white pottery, Middle East textiles—and decide to wait until later to stock up on souvenirs. You meet the rest of your group at the McDonald’s, where it’s air-conditioned and there’s ice in the soft drinks. And there’s a toilet that flushes.

Back at the campus after dinner, you and your friends sit out on the basketball courts in the twilight and chat. The evening call to prayer from the mosque echoes against the white stucco buildings. By nine the campus has quieted down. Some have adjusted the mosquito netting around their bunks, and others have hauled their blankets and pillows onto the roof to sleep where it’s cooler.

Around the campus, the city of Amman buzzes sleepily in the desert air. Out at Heshbon, goat bells tinkle and a light breeze stirs the dust.

On Friday, July 31, 1998, in the ruins of the early Christian church on the summit of the Heshbon mound, over 300 people gathered under the hot late-afternoon sun to celebrate 30 years of Andrews-led archaeology in Jordan. The ceremony also looked to future archaeological projects in the region sponsored by the Madaba Plains Project.

Since 1968, archaeologists from Andrews have maintained an ongoing research interest at the ancient mound known now as Tall Hisban, a working archaeological excavation located on the outskirts of Amman. This commitment to archaeological research and the local community’s enthusiastic acceptance of the project were noted in numerous speeches delivered by assembled dignitaries at the late afternoon ceremony.

Andrews president Niels-Erik Andreasen; Lawrence T. Geraty, president of La Sierra University in California and director of the Heshbon Expedition from 1974 to 1976; and 1998 project director Øystein LaBianca of Andrews joined His Royal Highness Prince Raad Ibn Said, who represented the Hashemite Royal Palace of King Hussein.

Other dignitaries present at the ceremony included His Excellency Mr. Aqal Biltagi, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan; Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan; and Dr. Pierre Kikai, director of the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman.

In his comments to the assembled group, Andreasen stated that Andrews is interested in archaeology at Hesban for a variety of



photo by Sharon Prest

From top: Several cities' walls and structures are superimposed on the Tall Al-Umayri site. Visiting royalty and dignitaries meet with Madaba Plains Project directors at Tall Al-Umayri—from left: Ghazi Besheh, director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan; His Excellency Akel Baltaji, Minister of Tourism; Øystein S. LaBianca, project director at Heshbon; Paul J. Ray, Jr., chief archaeologist at Heshbon; HRH Princess Sumaya bint al-Hassan, daughter of Crown Prince; HRH Crown Prince El Hassan, brother of King Hussein; Larry G. Herr, director of the Al-Umayri excavations; Douglas R. Clark, MPP consortium director; and Lawrence T. Geraty, MPP senior project director. At Tell Jalul, the pavement in the foreground is 9th- or 8th-century B.C. while the higher pavement in the background is from the 7th century B.C.

photo courtesy of Seigfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum



photo courtesy of Seigfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum



photo courtesy of Seigfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum



reasons. First, he said, “People at Andrews have a passion about the history of the human family, and that history began in this part of the world.” He added that Andrews is focused on Heshbon because of the region’s ties to three great world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and because Heshbon provides a training ground for archaeologists. Finally, Dr. Andreasen noted that the Heshbon dig provides opportunities for local participation and educational opportunities.

Speakers also underscored the contribution the Heshbon site has made over the last 30 years to Middle East archaeology. According to the *Jordan Times*, the Tall Hisban project early on “set national and regional standards . . . in such areas as pottery chronologies and multidisciplinary approaches” to archaeological study.

In looking toward the next 30 years, the celebration introduced Tall Hisban as an open-air classroom for Jordanian schoolchildren to study Jordan’s cultural heritage. Throughout the summer’s project LaBianca, his wife Asta LaBianca, and Mafous Abdul Hafiz, a local school teacher in Hesban, developed a school curriculum associated with the site.

And this summer’s crew worked hard to prepare the site for its expected visitors. LaBianca coordinated student and staff efforts to blaze paths around the tell, to reconstruct a stone wall as a foundation for an observation platform, and to prepare explanatory signs—all as a means of sharing the Heshbon site with Jordanian students and tourists.

In addition, the crew developed an “education area” complete with open-air tool shed where school groups can participate in hands-on activities that show how archaeologists investigate large multi-period mounds like Tall Hisban.

The Heshbon site provides an array of ancient structures interesting to the Biblical scholar. Perhaps most notable is the plastered wall of a huge reservoir, built around 1000 B.C. and believed by many to be the remains of one of the “pools of Heshbon” mentioned in the Song of Solomon.

Heshbon is not the only archaeological site in Jordan where Andrews is active. Tall Al-Umayri and Tall Jalul—both excavations within a few miles of Hesban—provide ongoing

The Madaba Plains Project conducts archaeological digs in Jordan and invites wide participation. The next field season at Heshbon is planned for the spring of 2000, from early May to mid-June. Work at Tall Jalul is set for the summer of 1999, and work at Tall Al-Umayri is set again for the summer of 2000. For more information, contact Andrews University’s Institute of Archaeology, Berrien Springs, MI 49104. Or e-mail <oliver@andrews.edu> or <clardo@wwc.edu>.

Can't make it to Jordan for a dig? You can still get in on the adventure by visiting the Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum on the Andrews campus.

The Horn Museum houses over 8000 artifacts. Pottery, coins, jewelry, tablets and other pieces from archaeological excavations in the Middle East span over 5000 years of history.

By preserving and displaying these ancient artifacts, the Horn Museum provides an eyepiece through which to glimpse the past, bringing today into sharper focus, and defining the outline of tomorrow.

The museum seeks not only to illuminate the cultural background of ancient peoples, but to spark a vision of the God whose role is evident through history.

The museum's main display includes a typology of pottery forms, murals which depict biblical life from around 3000 B.C. to A.D. 640 and artifacts with descriptive text.

The Writing Room exhibits a cuneiform tablet collection, an Egyptian necropolis display and a presentation of Writing Through the Ages, as well as full-sized replicas of the Moabite and Rosetta stones.

"In-the-round" displays include a model of Jerusalem and a full-sized replica of the Black Obelisk which depicts Jehu, king of Israel.

The Horn Museum collection began in 1938 when Lynn H. Wood acquired 27 pieces of pottery from the University of Chicago. In the early 1950s, Siegfried H. Horn's energetic temperament led to the rapid acquisition of artifacts, and finally, to the initiation of field archaeology in Jordan.

In 1970, the Andrews University Archaeological Museum was established with Horn as its curator. In 1976, Lawrence T. Geraty became curator and two years later, the museum was renamed in Horn's honor. In 1986, David Merling, associate

professor of archaeology and history of antiquity, became curator. He continues to supervise the growth of the museum's collection through purchases, gifts and excavations.



Robert Little ('45) repairs the "in-the-round" scale model of Jerusalem in the Horn Museum.

The Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum is open and free to the public M-Th 9-noon/2-5, F 9-noon, Sa 2-5. Guided tours may be arranged by appointment. Call 616-471-3273.

ing archaeological opportunities under the auspices of the Madaba Plains Project, a consortium of colleges and universities dedicated to active archaeological research.

Andrews collaborates with La Sierra University, Walla Walla College and Canadian University College to make the Madaba Plains Project a leading archaeological effort in Jordan.

While the Tall Jalul dig, headed by Dr. Randall Younker and Dr. David Merling of the SDA Theological Seminary, was dormant this summer, the work at Tall Al-Umayri flourished under the direction of Dr. Larry Herr from Canadian University College in Lacombe, Alberta, and Dr. Douglas Clark of Walla Walla College in College Place, Wash.

Begun in 1984, excavations at Tall Al-Umayri have uncovered nearly 20 superimposed cities at the site, according to Herr. This summer the Al-Umayri site saw over 100 people at work, and future plans include even more expansive study at this site adjacent to the Amman National Park on the Airport Highway, south of Amman.

Herr, a 1970 graduate of Andrews, explains that "Tall Al-Umayri is somewhat unique in Jordan because its most important and best preserved remains date to the Bronze and Iron Ages instead of the more normal Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras."

At a recent conference in Copenhagen, Jordan's director of the Department of Antiquities called the Madaba Plains Project the exemplary archaeological excavation in Jordan. And Al-Umayri was the site chosen for visits by Crown Prince Hassan, the brother of King Hussein; and his daughter Princess Sumaya.

The Al-Umayri site is significant in that it allows a glimpse of how the Reubenites of ancient Israel may have lived. The site is notable

for its deep, dry moat and an artificial hill or rampart, several stone houses and thousands of pieces of pottery that are currently being restored at Walla Walla College under the direction of Professor Douglas Clark (MDiv '74).

In addition, this summer's efforts unearthed several seals and seal impressions, bringing the total found at the site to over 80. Another impressive find was fragmented pieces of ceramic statuary.

Rhonda Root, assistant professor of architecture at Andrews, has served as Madaba Plains Project staff artist for four seasons. "Umayri is an exciting place," she says. "Its connections between history and culture and biblical research are more and more intriguing."

Connections are what Heshbon, Umayri, Jalul and the Madaba Plains Project are all about. For 30 years, Andrews University has been committed to the archaeological endeavors begun by Siegfried Horn in 1968. And Andrews looks forward to the next 30 years—as Prince Raad said at the anniversary ceremonies—as strong ties between the local communities and the academic community represented by the Madaba Plains Project.

Douglas Jones is editor of Focus. Photographs by the author, unless indicated.