

DR. THOMAS H. CHARLTON
1938 – 2010

A memorial by Meredith C. Anderson

Dr. Thomas H. Charlton built his professional life around a pursuit he truly loved, archaeology. Although his untimely passing interrupted a number of important and ongoing projects, some described here, his legacy as a prominent Mesoamerican archaeologist and influential local archaeologist should not be forgotten, as his contributions have made an indelible mark on the profession itself.

Dr. Charlton's career encompassed a rich variety of interests and objectives, including teaching, mentoring, community involvement, academic research, preservation, and public outreach. His archaeological research ranged from local history, as evidenced by his directorship and involvement in the Plum Grove archaeological field school and research, to broader international prehistory, as evidenced by his work in Belize, Ontario, and, above all, Mexico. His field work and lab research in Mexico are perhaps some of his more widely-recognized and crowning professional achievements. He earned his doctorate in 1966 from Tulane University. His doctorate was based on surface survey and excavations with William Sanders's seminal Teotihuacan Valley Project, which Dr. Charlton participated in from June 1963 to September 1964. The Teotihuacan Valley Project provided an imperative body of research and data which has since shaped and guided further research in the valley and throughout Mesoamerica.

After publishing his dissertation research (1973), Dr. Charlton's work in Mexico continued with a number of survey and data recovery projects in the Basin of Mexico, including surface survey

of trade routes throughout central Mexico (1975-1976), excavation and surface survey of Pre-Conquest canal systems (1977-1978), surface surveys and excavations at Otumba (1987-1989), and a number of continuing projects which have gathered prominent funding and notoriety over the years. Two of these projects, continuing direction and analyses of data recovered in Otumba and excavations and material analysis at five rural Teotihuacan sites throughout the Valley (1989-2010 and 1998-2010), in collaboration with Cynthia Otis Charlton, were conceived in part by Dr. Charlton's recognition that invaluable archaeological resources in the basin of Mexico were being destroyed by urban development, without the benefit of professional mitigation. His rigorous research emphasis on salvage archaeology earned him emergency research funding through the University of Iowa's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as a number of travel grants, a UI Arts and Humanities Initiative Award, a National Science Foundation grant, and a research grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, among others. He also directed other ongoing projects in Mexico focusing on analysis of pre-hispanic and Colonial materials from the Templo Mayor (1992-2010), and pre-hispanic and Colonial materials from Tlatelolco (1993-2010).

Locally, Dr. Charlton directed excavations and research at Plum Grove, an historical farm built in 1844 and located in Iowa City. He spearheaded a field school through the University of Iowa at this important historical archaeological site; the field school started in 1974 and ran from 1978-1980, and again from 1995-2010. His involvement at Plum Grove did not begin and end with the field school season, however. He was also actively involved in Plum Grove public outreach, education, designing interpretive displays and interpretive research, which he often

presented at conferences. He was also working to secure funding for analysis on Plum Grove materials before he passed away.

Beyond the field and lab, Dr. Charlton worked tirelessly as a community and academic leader. He served as a member of the Plum Grove Advisory Committee from 1992-2010 and also served on numerous committees at the University of Iowa, including search committees, the University Libraries Committee, the Humanities Task Force Committee, and the Graduate Admissions Committee, to name a few. Within the University, he played a substantial role as not only tenured professor (from 1980-2010), but also Anthropology Undergraduate Advisor (1996-2010), DEO (1985-1988), and chair to a number of PhD and MA committees. He also directed over 11 BA honors theses.

In addition to teaching introductory Anthropology courses, such as the Department's bread-and-butter Introduction to Prehistory and Human Origins courses, Dr. Charlton also introduced a number of new classes to the Department's course offerings, such as "Historical Archaeology: the Archaeology of US" and "Reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic: Mesoamerican Literature and Mathematical Systems." He also taught a number of region-specific classes, such as "The Maya" and "The Aztecs, Their Predecessors and Contemporaries," as well as broader curricula, such as "Comparative Prehistory" and "Seminar in Archaeological Method and Theory."

The academic community greatly benefited from Dr. Charlton's insight and dedication to meticulous research and ethical archaeological practices. He sat on several editorial boards, contributing to publications such as *Cuicuilco* (ENAH, Mexico) from 2004-2010, *Ancient*

Mesoamerica (University of Cambridge Press) from 2001-2012, and *Monografias Mesoamericanas* (Universidad de las Americas, Puebla) from 1992-2010. He served as a general grant reviewer for funding institutions such as NSF, NEH, National Geographic, and Wenner-Gren, and provided general manuscript review for the University of Utah Press, Allyn and Bacon, Oxford University Press, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, *Latin American Antiquity*, *American Antiquity*, *Journal and Anthropological Archaeology*, *Current Anthropology*, and *Journal of Archaeological Sciences*. As an active and thorough scholar, he received a large number of grants and scholarships, including National Endowment for the Humanities research grants (1975-1976; 1981-1983; 1988-1989; and 1992-1993), NSF research grants (1968-1972; 1988-1990; and 1997-2001), and a grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (1998-1999). These supported not only his recurrent travels to Mexico for research, conferences, field work, and seminars, but also supported the writing and research that went into his various book chapters (7 in press, 38 published), articles (1 in press, 39 published), book reviews (2 in press, 25 published), and over 70 annual research reports. He also co-edited 3 books, including The Archaeology of City-States: Cross-Cultural Approaches (1997), organized numerous symposia and workshops, and presented papers frequently at local, regional, and international conferences and seminars.