

A Record of Archaeologists Past

By Rachael McGlensey. Published: 7th December 2019

One thing that comes of working in the same field for 50 years is that you meet pretty much everyone. The Paul and Nancy Lapp photographic collection at ACOR reflects this fact. American archaeologists and scholars Paul and Nancy Lapp first excavated in the Middle East in 1957, and remained in the region for the next ten years, using the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) in Jerusalem as their home base (today the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research). Although Paul Lapp tragically died in a swimming accident in 1970, Nancy has continued to be involved with archaeology in the region, and has the pictures to prove it.

This photo essay will highlight the people who feature in the Paul and Nancy Lapp collection. Among them are some of the more well-known figures from the 1950s and 60s. As Nancy's collection develops through time, however, we meet other scholars with perhaps less renown, but just as much expertise. Archaeologists at various stages in their careers, students getting their first taste of excavation, and local technical workers are all subjects of the Lapps' excavation photography. All photos are from the Paul and Nancy Lapp collection at ACOR unless otherwise noted.

Who's Who

Archaeologists may no longer acquire celebrity status the way they once did, but some names are still remembered even outside the field. I would be remiss not to include one of the most well-known names, that of Dame Kathleen Kenyon. Kenyon (below image, top) visited the excavations Paul Lapp (below image, bottom) was leading at Iraq al-Amir in Jordan in 1961, as he visited those she led in Jericho a few years earlier. A pioneer of stratigraphic (layer by layer) excavation, Kenyon is most well-known for her work at Jericho (ancient Tell es-Sultan), although she also excavated in Jerusalem and at several sites in her home country of England.



Iraq al-Amir, 2 May 1961. Square I.1.21. From top to bottom: Kathleen Kenyon, Roland de Vaux, Paul Lapp (NL_J_2_S_35_229)

Also pictured in the above photo is Père (Father) Roland de Vaux (center). De Vaux was a French Dominican priest who was director of the École Biblique school in Jerusalem from 1945–1965. Although he never formally studied archaeology, he learned in the field from experts such as William F. Albright and Kathleen Kenyon. His team excavated the site of Qumran, just northeast of the Dead Sea, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.[\[1\]](#)



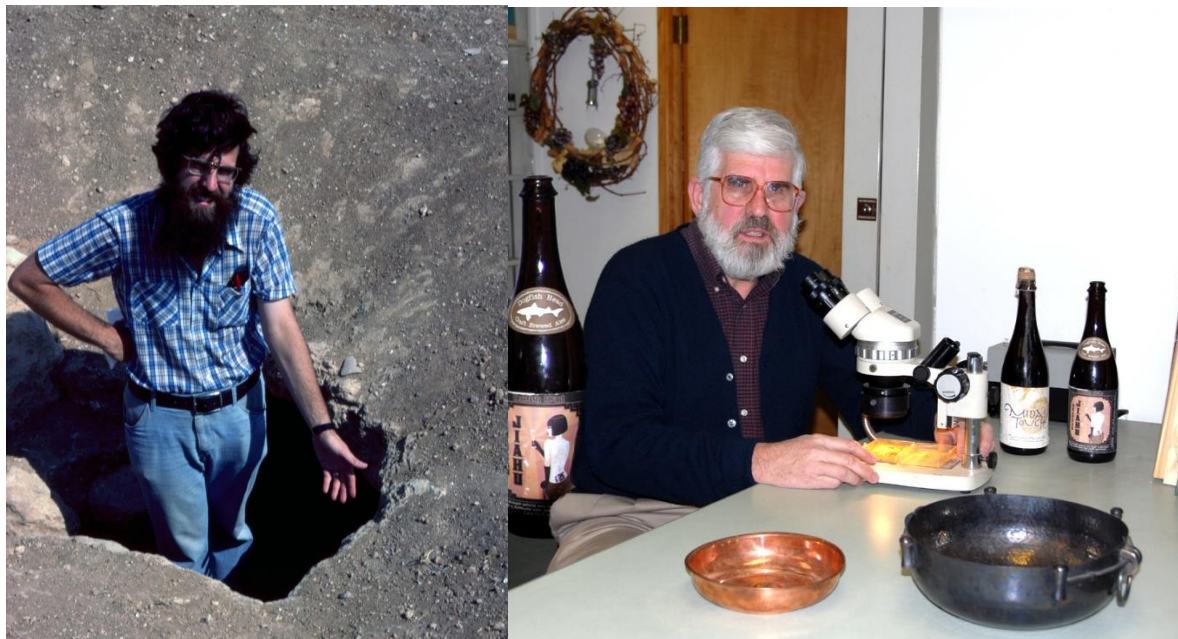
Qumran, 12 March 1958. Roland de Vaux to right of tent pole (Q_5805.18)

Nancy Lapp also took Kenyon (below image, second from right) on her first visit to Bab edh-Dhra', an expansive early Bronze Age site southeast of the Dead Sea which was first excavated by Paul. Along on this tour was Crystal Bennett (below image, third from right), founder of the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History in 1978 (now the British Institute, part of [CBRL](#)). Bennett worked with Kenyon in Jerusalem for many years before becoming interested in the biblical Edomites, and leading excavation and study of several sites in southern Jordan between 1960 and 1982. In addition, she was invited to direct rescue excavations at the Amman Citadel in 1975, in preparation for a proposed addition to the museum onsite.[\[2\]](#)



Bab edh-Dhra', 26 July 1977. Eating lunch with Kathleen Kenyon (right) and Crystal Bennet (left)
(NL_J_7_S_4_707)

Among celebrity archaeologists today, there may be none so well-known as those who have been dubbed “beer archaeologists.” Patrick E. McGovern, pictured below, is popularly called the “Indiana Jones of Ancient Ales, Wines, and Extreme Beverages.” Through his pioneering work in molecular archaeology, he has recreated several ancient fermented beverages by examining the microscopic remains clinging to pottery containers from as many as 9,000 years ago.[\[3\]](#)



Left: Baq'ah Valley, 31 July 1977. Patrick McGovern in tomb he cleared. McGovern was also director of the Baq'ah Valley Project for the University of Pennsylvania Penn Museum (NL_J_2_S_24_002)

Right: January 2008. Patrick McGovern analyzing a sample of beverage residue recovered from a drinking vessel found in the Midas Tumulus tomb at the site of Gordion in Turkey. The recreation of this sample would go on to become the "King Midas" beverage available in markets today. Photo from [Wikipedia](#) by Pam Kosty, January 2008.

Local Celebrities

I came to Jordan without knowing much about the country's archaeology, but thanks to the Lapps' photographs, I could now likely name nearly every archaeological site in Jordan. Nancy Lapp visited many of these sites in the midst of their excavation, which means that she has also met numerous archaeologists and other figures in the cultural heritage scene who have achieved something of a local celebrity.

Through archaeology, Nancy has interacted with some leading figures in Jordan, including several Directors of the Department of Antiquities (DOA). Before undertaking excavations in Jordan, archaeologists must always get the approval of the DOA.

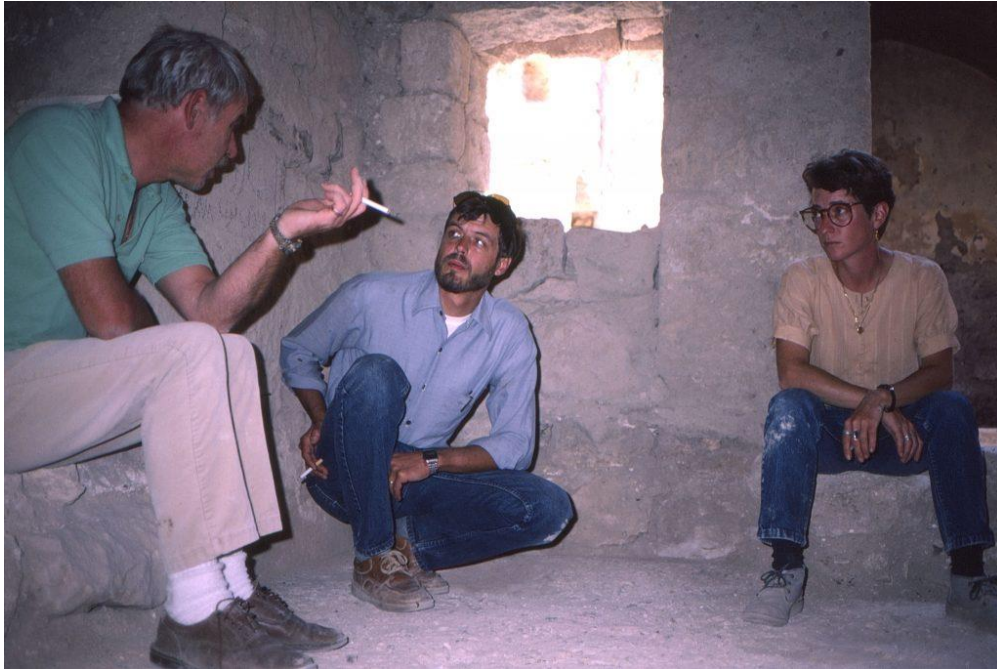


Left: Bab edh-Dhra', 1965. Paul Lapp (right) and Awni al-Dajani (left). Dr. Awni al-Dajani was Director of the DOA from 1959–1968 and was the first Jordanian to earn a Ph.D. in Archaeology.[\[4\]](#) (NL_J_7_S_4_692)

Right: Madaba, 1995. HRH Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid visiting the Madaba Mosaic School (renamed in 2007 the Madaba Institute of Mosaic Art and Restoration). The royal family in Jordan often take an interest in cultural heritage projects, and Prince Ra'ad is currently an ACOR Trustee Emeritus. The prince has been a good friend to people such as Bert de Vries, former ACOR Director and director of the Umm el-Jimal Project. See more of both individuals in the newly digitized [Bert de Vries collection](#). (NL_J_2_S_7_029)

Nancy has also known many of these individuals throughout their careers. David McCreery (below image, center) was first Paul's and then Nancy's student. As an archaeologist specializing in the Near East and Early Bronze Age agriculture, he has worked at several sites in Jordan including Bab edh-Dhra', Numeira, and Tell Nimrin. He served as ACOR Director from 1981–1988 and is currently both a Director Emeritus and a Trustee Emeritus.[\[5\]](#)

Robin Brown (below image, right) first came to ACOR in 1976, working on material from Iraq al-Amir after excavating there with the Lapps more than ten years prior. She then became a key figure in acquiring material for the steadily growing ACOR library, a member of the ACOR Library Committee, and later Assistant Director in ACOR's first U.S. office from 1993–1995.[\[6\]](#)



Karak excavations, 2 July 1987. Colin Booker, David McCreery, and Robin Brown discussing stratification. Smoking and archaeology appear to have been more closely related in the 1980s than today (NL_J_2_S_5_047)



Tell er-Rumeith, April 1967. R. Thomas Schaub (1933–2015) (at tripod) and local workers surveying. Tom Schaub was called to archaeology after Paul Lapp invited him on his expedition to Bab edh-Dhra' in 1967. He then completed his Ph.D. under Paul's mentorship, and Tom and

his wife Marilyn became lifelong friends with Paul and Nancy. Schaub later established the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain project with co-Director Walter Rast (1930–2003), which excavated several early Bronze Age sites and cemeteries southeast of the Dead Sea from 1975–1990.[7] The data collected from this project is still being analyzed and published today. (NL_J_1_S_12_095)

Archaeology and Life Onsite

The Paul and Nancy Lapp collection contains a unique record of life at an excavation. Filled with detailed information and precise context, Nancy's images document not only the digging itself but also the individuals involved, as well as some off-duty activities.



Iraq al-Amir, April 1961. Glenda Zink drawing glass objects. Drawing objects is important to archaeology because it can help to more clearly see details that may not be as visible in photographs (NL_J_2_S_35_188)



Feifa, 8 January 1990. Susanna Rast (1929–2019) excavating. Excavation requires a variety of tools and careful hand in order to unearth objects without damaging them. Every object is recorded and given an identification number, and often organized into tagged plastic bags, as seen above (NL_J_7_S_8_013)



Khanazir, January 1990. Young local workers during excavation. Far left, Abdullah; others unknown (NL_J_7_S_6_087)

As demonstrated by the occasionally limited data, however, not every individual in the collection is identified with a full name, or any name at all. ACOR intends to make efforts to identify these people, so if you recognize any of the unidentified individuals in any of our collections, please contact us at: archives@acorjordan.org.



Left: Khanazir, December 1989. Young women working in A-1 (NL_J_7_S_6_034)

Right: Khanazir, January 1990. Staff photo at D-1. Thomas Schaub (first from left), Walter Rast (fourth from left), Susanna Rast (far right, white bandanna), Marilyn Schaub (first from right, green hat). Others unknown (NL_J_7_S_6_086)

Named or not, it is clear that the individuals in Nancy's photos made valuable contributions to knowledge of Jordan's past.

As evidenced by many of Nancy's images, archaeology is often a family affair. There are plenty of tasks to be done by both young and old, both skilled and non-specialized individuals.

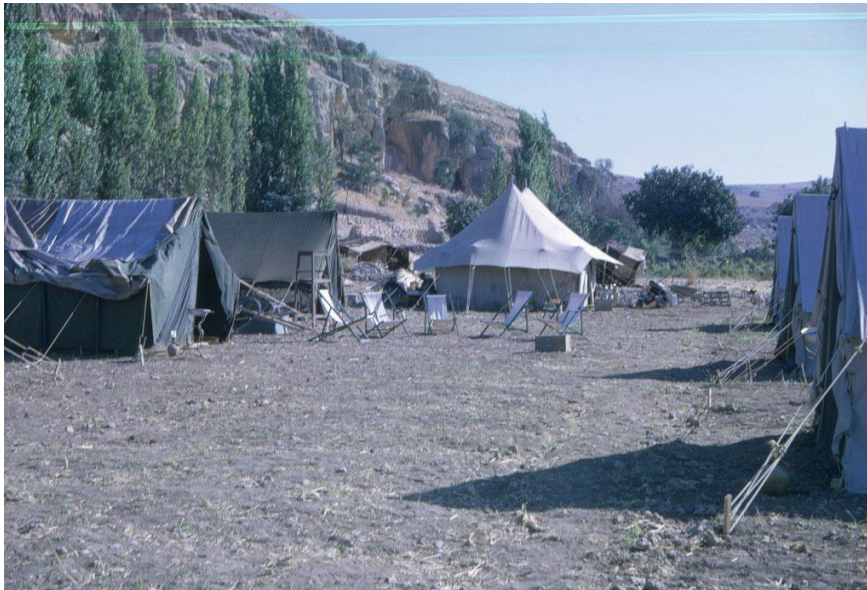


Iraq al-Amir, April 1961. The edh-Dhib family, a local family who worked at the site. Left to right: Ahmed, Falah edh-Dhib, Hamid, Fafidhi, Subhen, Ghalib. Falah and his three older sons worked at the site (NL_J_2_S_35_019)



Karak, April 1979. Becky (surname unknown) cleaning bones at rest house, children assisting (NL_J_2_S_5_020)

Whether or not you arrive onsite with friends or family, you're bound to leave with them.



Iraq al-Amir camp, fall 1962 (NL_J_2_S_35_360)



Tell er-Rumeith, 1962. Workers dancing (NL_J_1_S_12_006)

Rachael McGlensey is from Pennsylvania and recently completed her MA degree in Museum and Artifact Studies at Durham University, UK. Read Rachael's first ACOR blog post about Nancy and the Lapps' photographic collection [here](#). Rachael McGlensey was ACOR's Project Archivist from January - December 2019. Rachael McGlensey's term at ACOR was part of the ACOR Research Library Photographic Archive Project (also known as the ACOR Photo Archive Project) which is supported through a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education (2016–2020).

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Find Dr. al-Dajani's work in the ACOR Library [here](#).

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