

Professor William C. Massey's Anthropological Field Schools in Baja California, 1953 and 1954

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Abstract

The University of Washington, Seattle, Anthropology field schools lead by William C. Massey in 1953 and 1954 are remembered for their pioneering work in archaeology and ethnology for Baja California. They also serve as an historical background to the continued cooperative research programs in Baja California between Mexican and American institutions. William C. Massey was hired by the Anthropology Department of the University of Washington in 1951 as an instructor from graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. He finished his dissertation on the Culture History in the Cape Region of Baja California, Mexico, the same year as he and certain other colleagues, senior members of the University of Washington anthropological faculty, Professors Frederick S. Hulse and Paul Kirchhoff joined him in La Paz, summer of 1953. His dissertation was approved two years later by Theodore D. McCowan, Robert F. Heizer, and Carl O. Sauer. That first year in the field at the North Mexican Center, students learned how to get along with their Mexican hosts, and they learned a great deal from the firsthand instruction from the faculty.

In 1954, there were five students, and only one faculty for the field school. The second season of the North Mexican Center produced two advanced degrees out of the field school: Lucy Steelman's M.A. thesis (1956) on contemporary physical anthropology, and the author's M.A. thesis (1978) on the archaeology of the Comundú area which serves to define the late prehistoric period of the central peninsula. There were also five long articles and one manuscript produced by a 1953 student, Mary Gormly (1953, 1955, 1968, 1971, 1977, and n.d.) on the Spanish exploration of the Northwest Coast.

Abstracto

La universidad de Washington, Seattle, escuelas del campo de la antropología conduce por Guillermo C. Massey en 1953 y 1954 se recuerda para su trabajo pionero en arqueología y etnología para Baja California. También sirven como fondo histórico a los programas de investigación cooperativos continuados en Baja California entre las instituciones mejicanas y americanas. Guillermo C. Massey fue empleado por el departamento de la antropología de la universidad de Washington en 1951 como un instructor de la escuela graduada en la universidad de California, de Berkeley. Él acabó su disertación en la historia de la cultura en la región del cabo de Baja California, Méjico, el mismo año que él y ciertos otros colegas, miembros mayores de la universidad de la facultad antropológica de Washington, profesores Frederick S. Hulse y Paul Kirchhoff lo ensamblaron en la Paz, el verano del año 1953. Su disertación era aprobado dos años más adelante por Theodore D. McCowan, Roberto F. Heizer, y Carl O. Sauer. Ese primer año en el campo en el centro mejicano del norte, los

estudiantes aprendieron cómo conseguir junto con sus ordenadores principal mejicanos, y aprendieron mucho de la instrucción de primera mano de la facultad.

En el año, 1954, había cinco estudiantes, y solamente una facultad para la escuela del campo. La segunda estación del centro mejicano del norte produjo dos grados avanzados fuera de la escuela del campo: la tesis de Lucy Steelman (1956), Licenciatura en Artes sobre la antropología física contemporánea, y la tesis del autor (1978), también Licenciatura en Artes, sobre la arqueología del área de Comundú que sirve para definir el último período prehistórico de la península central. Había también cinco artículos largos y un manuscrito producido por un estudiante, Maria Gormly que se graduó en el año de 1953. (1953, 1955, 1968, 1971, 1977, y uno que no tiene fecha) sobre la exploración española de la costa del noroeste.



Fig. 1. Professor William C. Massey and the author, Donald R. Tuohy, together in Gainesville, Florida, in 1960.

Dr. William C. Massey (Fig. 1) was hired in 1951 as an instructor by the then Chairperson of the Anthropology Department of the University of Washington, Seattle, Dr. Erna Gunther. She had on her staff Dr. Paul Kirchoff, a Mesoamericanist, and Dr. D. S. Davidson, a southeast Asia expert, as well as an Australian ethnologist and archaeologist by training who had just died. She placed her faith in Dr. Kirchoff to replace Davidson. Dr. Gunther had a fondness for University of California, Berkeley Ph.D.'s who were trained by her classmates, Professors A.L. Kroeber and R.L. Lowie, and she had already hired as junior faculty C. A. Burroughs,

Douglas Osborne, and William Elmendorf from Berkeley. W.C. Massey was to be her third choice from Berkeley. He taught in three separate departments, anthropology, history and geography while in his spare time he assisted Dr. Gunther in taking care of Washington State Museum requests to do vertebrate paleontology. This was a period after WWII, when academic growth all over the U.S. was rapidly accelerating and the University of Washington at Seattle was no exception. The year 1952 was the first year the Department of Anthropology was awarded the right to give advanced degrees, Master's and Ph.D.'s.

Imagine, if you will, that you are an Instructor teaching 18 academic units and you propose to teach 18 units in a Latin American summer school. This proposal found favor with senior academicians Dr. Paul Kirchhoff and Dr. Frederick Hulse, a physical anthropologist, both of whom had done field work in Mexico previously. It was finally decided that only Drs. Massey and Hulse would conduct courses and that Professor Kirchhoff would operate as the "consultant" or the "front" man. Dr. Kirchhoff and his Mexican wife would entertain Governor Augustín Olachea Avilés, accompanying him on fishing trips and social events. The governor at that time was a member of the "P.R.I.," the main political party in Mexico that supported and came into power as a result of the 1917 Mexican Revolution. In return, the governor promised to loan Dr. Massey a vehicle—stake-bodied, one-ton truck for his use in the Comondú area. At that time, a dirt road was being built north from La Paz to the agricultural fields around Villa Insurgentes and Ciudad Constitution.

The courses which were offered by the University of Washington and the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia under the North Mexican Center for Anthropology were four in number. The first five-unit course was Dr. Massey's, "A Field Course in Archaeology and Historic Anthropology." It was a study of aboriginal life from prehistoric through colonial times by excavation of caves and middens as well as investigations of the geographic and historic setting of the Spanish Missions within Baja California and elsewhere in Mexico. Professor Hulse offered the second five-unit course, entitled "Field Course in Migration and Population Study." It was a combined anthropometric, genetic, and sociological study of the post-colonial migration from the mainland which formed the largest part of the modern population of Baja California. A third five-unit course called "Colloquium on Arid America" was a seminar and discussion group relating the specific data of both field parties to the broader perspectives of New World developments, particularly of the "Greater Southwest" and to the formation of the people of modern Latin America. Also offered was a two-credit course called "Laboratory Analysis of Field Data" which was handled by each staff person. The students who enrolled paid \$55 for the registration fee at the University of Washington and \$250 fee to Dr. Massey to cover expenses of transportation in the field, food, and housing for the entire period. The summer school started June 21, 1953 and ended August 28, 1953, a period of ten weeks.

Each student was given a list of required travel documents and medical documents. Each was required to carry proof of U.S. birth or citizenship in order to obtain a Tourist Card. A Mexi-

can Tourist Card could be purchased for three dollars from a Mexican Consulate or at a Port of Entry. The medical documents required in 1953 were a recent vaccination against smallpox and the subsequent reaction. This was essential for reentry to the United States. Furthermore, other types of inoculation were highly recommended: these included typhoid, paratyphoid A and B, typhus, and tetanus. These inoculations were provided free of charge at the U.W. Health Center. In addition, each prospective student was given a list of personal equipment to bring. This list included sleeping, clothing, and toilet items, and suggested clothing for both field work and a population study. It was notable that the list excluded electric razors and it stated that there was no pipe tobacco available in La Paz.

There was no paved road, at the time, leading down to La Paz. The students were expected to take a flight, a DC-3, all the way down the full length of the peninsula and meet their professors in La Paz. Dr. Massey had a surplus WWII field ambulance which we drove to Hermosillo, Mexico from Seattle with two guests, another male student from Washington, Prescott Eaton, and I, who also shared in the driving. We stored Dr. Massey's ambulance in the Hermosillo Museum, emptying out most of the field equipment for the taxi ride and the flight from Guaymas to La Paz on June 21, 1953. We met one student there in Hermosillo; he was Robert Drake, a noted north Mexican conchologist who was invited on the ten-week trip on a scholarship.

The purpose of the field school was to provide field training in a foreign linguistic and cultural milieu. The main purpose of the North Mexican Center was to consider the great range of cultural-historical problems for the northern tier of Mexican states and the students were expected to make significant contributions to research on arid America. When we were in La Paz, we lived with families who spoke no English; thus, we quickly learned conversational Spanish.

In my own case, because I had taken Spanish in Junior High School (Woodrow Wilson), Senior High School (Herbert Hoover), and after WWII at San Diego State College, I had a rude-beginning in understanding the complexities of the spoken word in Spanish. I could read and understand the printed word, but I had quite a ways to go to become as fluent as my professors. While going to Mexico between 1946 and 1950 as a San Diego State College student, I had been as far south as San Quintin, but I was afraid to travel any farther south on my Harley Davidson motorcycle for fear of running out of water and gas in the Central Desert. While I was enrolled at San Diego State I remember reading a geological report by Beal (1948) on an exploration for oil possibilities in Baja California and I wondered what the peninsula would be like. I found out that summer of 1953 when I enrolled in Dr. Massey's field class.

While in La Paz those first few days in June, 1953, it was my duty to go to the markets and get the prices per case of the canned goods we were to take into the field. After obtaining the prices, I conferred with Mrs. Ellen Massey as to which cases we would buy. There were no

supermarkets those days in La Paz, just several small markets which received their deliveries from the Mexican mainland.

Also during those first days in La Paz, Dr. Massey and certain of his male students were invited to a luncheon in the mining town of El Triunfo to dedicate a new water pump that Governor Augustín Olachea Avilés had obtained for the town. El Triunfo is located about 31 kilometers (15 miles) due south of the city of La Paz. While the governor was speaking of how this new water pump would revive the city and its miners and metal processors, I was among the crowd when the water pump was turned on. The pump created a minor flood of water which filled a small arroyo. Around a small bend in the arroyo and out-of-sight of the Governor and his party, there gathered what must have been all the señoras of El Triunfo armed with empty containers trying to catch the water before it disappeared into the sandy arroyo bottom. Shortly afterward we sat at the governor's table and were served an out-of-doors lunch. The heat attracted thousands of house flies, so I watched what the Mexicans did to avoid them. I discretely followed suit and avoided the flies, parting them from the edibles. That luncheon sticks in my mind as being a cross-cultural experience. Soon it was time to go into the field.

The Field School in 1953

That first field school of 1953, four of our students were left in La Paz under the tutelage of Dr. Hulse, Dr. Felipe Montemayor, and Juan José Araiza, while the other half of the students, including me, rode in a one-ton truck destined for San José de Comondú. Dr. Massey chose as his first stop El Conejo (BC 68), a huge shell midden site located on the Pacific Ocean from which he had collected chipped stone artifacts on three previous trips during his 1947, 1948, and 1949 trips. He chose two of us to dig a test pit, 20 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 48 inches deep in the shell midden so that Robert Drake could tell him of the changes in shells with time. Robert Drake (Drake 1955) later wrote about this investigation. It was at Arroyo Conejo where we camped overnight when we saw our first peninsular rattlesnake. It was inside a skeleton of a cholla, so we turned it loose, and burned the cholla skeleton.

The next morning we packed up our tarps and tents for the trip to Comondú, but we had to bypass Arroyo Conejo as the road cut was too deep to stay on it. We were stopped by the road construction crews and told that some human remains were coming out of the road cut. We joined the crews where they had seen a phosphorescence glow at night. Several long bones and one cranium of an Indian came out of the ground. It proved to be a long-headed, Archaic skeletal type, prevalent in that part of the southern peninsula. On our return we gave the human bones to Juan José Araiza. He transported them back to Mexico City at the end of the field season.

We traveled straight from Arroyo Conejo to San José de Comondú where we were expected. We set up our quarters in Escuela Federal School No. 25, a primary grade school which was

not used during the summer months, right next to the Comondú Mission. It seems while Porforio Diaz was President he envied the power of the Catholic Church, so he used materials from the missions to construct public schools. Mission San José de Comondú originally had several graceful arches, so with the passage of Ley Lerdo in June 1856, a law that proposed the disamortization of church lands, a grade school was built next to the Comondú Mission which in turn had been built in A.D. 1707. Dr. Massey borrowed the picture of Mission San José de Comondú when it had graceful arches several decades before 1953, but then and now, it is a plain gray stucco building with not an arch in sight. Our stay in the No. 25 school was peaceful except for Sunday morning when the church bells rang loud and clear, echoing off the walls of the narrow canyon, calling all people to church.

The 1953 students who were assigned to study the mountain town of San José de Comondú included Marvelle Burris, Robert Barnard and Willis Heath who quickly made the acquaintance of the town folks. It was thought by Dr. Massey that the richer Mexicans lived closer to the “Ojos de Agua,” the springs, which emanated from the valley floor, and the poorer ones, of Indian ancestry (?) were living on the slopes of the canyon. As it turned out, there were no Indians or persons of Indian ancestry living on the slopes of the canyon.

Later on, Dr. Massey, Prescott Eaton, Robert Drake and I left Comondú on muleback for a couple of weeks to excavate at Metate Cave (Fig. 2). We had as a guide “Ghio” Aguilar who packed the mules, got us water from a nearby tinaja, and, in general, helped us dig the cave. I served as a cook that first day and Dr. Massey told me Señor Aguilar was a superlative cook, but being masculine and Mexican male, to boot, he did not like to cook. He helped dig Metate Cave for it was a common belief of the rural Mexicans that not only pearls were found in Indian caves but that other “treasures” were found in them, too. Señor Aguilar not only proved he could cook, but a friend of his shot a deer so we had venison the length of our stay at Metate Cave, supplemented by the canned goods I had purchased in La Paz.

We packed up the artifacts with provenience slips and packed them out of the Sierra by muleback and by truck. Later on in La Paz, during the laboratory session, we would make out one card for each artifact so we could work from the cards back in the United States. Dr. Massey previously had shipped artifacts out of the country to Berkeley, California via La Paz and Long Beach Harbor, a known black-market route.

A small field group of people who had dug Metate Cave, plus Marvelle Burris, Mrs. Ellen Massey, a female Mexican cook, and a male truck driver, proceeded to drive from Comondú to Loreto, with a side trip to Mission San Francisco Javier. We stayed on the upstairs porch of the municipal building next to the Mission de Loreto. There was no museum or display area then as there were years later.

After a few days in Loreto, we proceeded north, along an old dirt track to the mission town of Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, where we stayed in an empty hospital building. Dr. Massey wanted

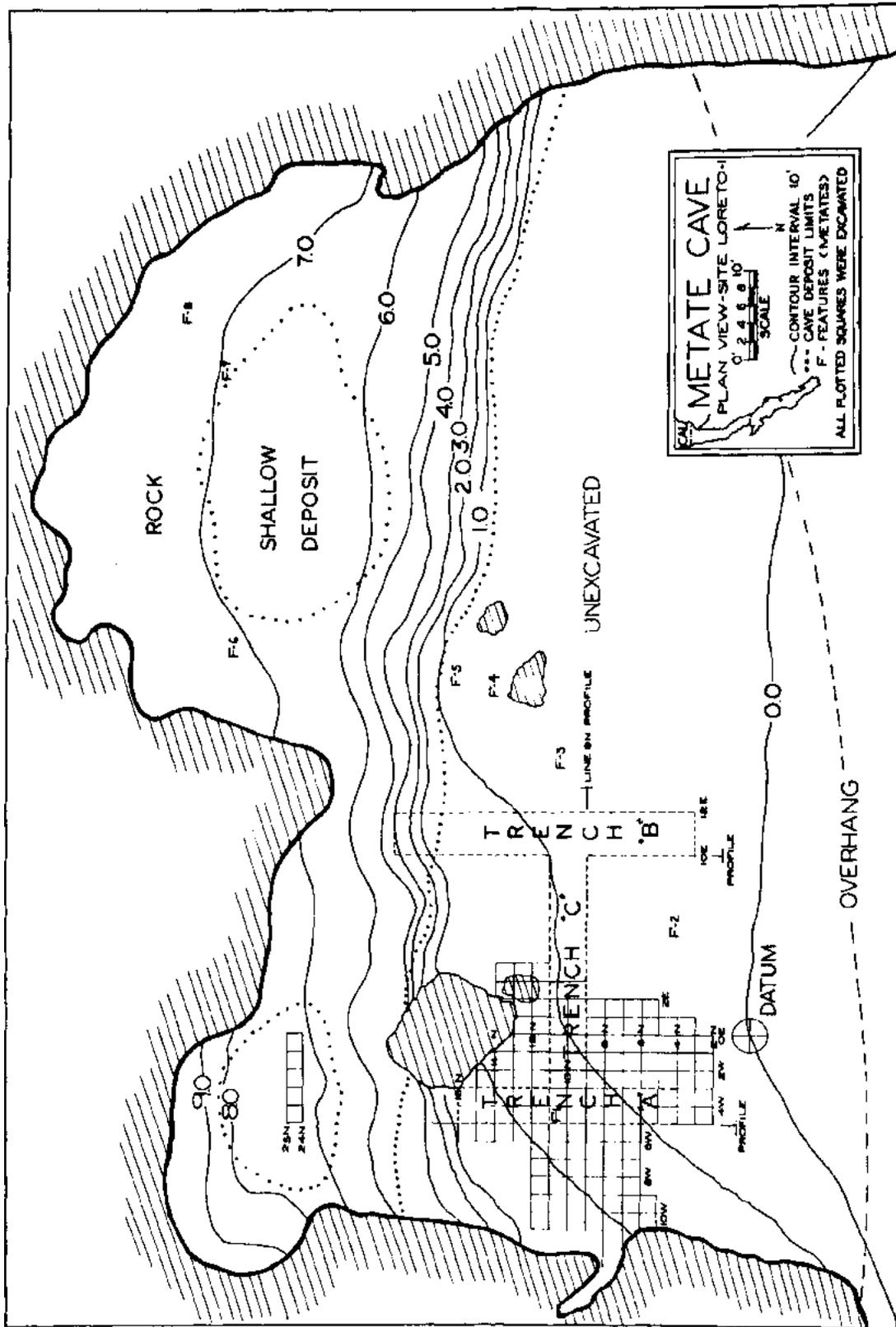


Fig. 2. Plan view of Metate Cave, which helped define the Comundú culture.

to photograph the Castaldí collection which was housed there under the care of Señora Cristina Huñaus. We contacted her and photographed the collection of artifacts gathered from all over the peninsula from 1905 till 1946 by Padre César Castaldí, S.J. We took measurements for the collection and it was reported by Dr. Massey in 1966 (Massey 1966b). Dr. Massey also obtained, from Mission Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, the birth and death records of



Fig. 3. Waiting for the bar to open to record the baptismal records of the Mission Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, Mulegé, Baja California Sur in 1953. Shown from left to right is our guide "Ghio" Aguilar, who found all of the caves we excavated, Prescott Eaton, Robert Drake, and Donald Tuohy. Prescott Eaton had just graduated from the University of Washington in 1953; Robert Drake was a well-known Mexican conchologist who received a scholarship from the North Mexican Center; and I was a graduate student at the University of Washington.

the mission to photograph on 35 mm film. We found out that the only place that had electric lights run by a portable generator was a bar room located on the town square, which opened in the afternoon hours. We borrowed the bar room during the early morning hours to photograph the mission's registry (Fig. 3). Then it became time to return to La Paz to participate in the laboratory and discussion sections, and also to participate in the first season's closure of the North Mexican Center for Anthropology.

The Field School in 1954

The next year, 1954, was the year Bill Massey got six months leave from the University of Washington. He was to operate the field school by himself, because all of the Mexican professors could not make the trip to La Paz. We waited for one student who could be in charge of the study of Comondú. He was Ram Raj Singh who got money from the University to make the trip, but he could not get a visa to visit Mexico for a period of ten weeks. He was slated to carry on the research, an economic study of the village of Comondú, that was started in 1953, but the study was never finished. Dr. Massey got word from Erna Gunther that the students should be responsible for their own research and they should submit their research for an advanced degree. Also, in 1953 due to Joe McCarthy's act passed by Congress, a person who had ever joined the Communist Party was excluded forever from the United States. This excluded Dr. Paul Kirchhoff, who joined the party during WWI, from returning to the U.S. even for the purpose of gathering his books and household equipment. Later, he had a student deliver his possessions at a border town.

The trip from Seattle to La Paz took ten days via Hermosillo, where we again stored Dr. Massey's WWII ambulance; again took a taxi to Guaymas; and again took a DC-3 to La Paz where we were met by Felipe Christina, Dr. Massey's favorite taxi-driver. A total of five students in 1954 included: Janet Gibbs, Helen Dreyer, Don Greaton, and George Wee (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. One of the rare days off in La Paz at the Malecón where we swam in the Gulf of California. The photograph shows four students who participated in the 1954 field school, a Mexican friend of Bill Massey, and Professor Massey. Shown from left to right in the front row are Donald Tuohy, Helen Dreyer, and Professor Massey; in the rear row are Janet Gibbs, Felipe Oristina and Donald Greaton.

We were surprised to see that the museum building was finished, although unfurnished, to house us during daylight working hours.

Field work in archaeology and ethnology started on the 13th of July in Comondú. We again had a one-ton vehicle and a driver, Benito Camacho (Fig. 5), who helped with digging of the two caves, Caguama Cave and Parraguirre Cave. I reported on these two caves in my Master's Thesis (Tuohy 1978). George Wee, Janet Gibbs, Helen Dreyer, and Don Greaton were involved in studying the people of Comondú. Bill Massey, Francisco Aguilar, Benito Camacho,



Fig. 5. The one-ton truck loaned to us by Governor Augustin Aviles, shown with the driver, Benito Camacho, and Donald Tuohy, summer, 1954.

and I spent the remaining weeks in the field excavating these caves (Fig. 6). The ten road workers had just completed the road across the dry lake bed of San Julio, so we had access to the caves in question by truck.

As we had before, in 1953, we returned to La Paz with the artifacts from the excavations and we made 4x5 cards to carry back across the U.S. border. In La Paz we were greeted by headlines in the local newspapers and ended our 1954 season with a closing ceremony attended by the governor (Fig. 7).

Even before we returned to Hermosillo, we were invited to go to Mexico City for four months to work on a book that Harold E. Driver and Bill Massey were writing, titled "Comparative Studies of North American Indians," for the Transactions of the American Philosophical

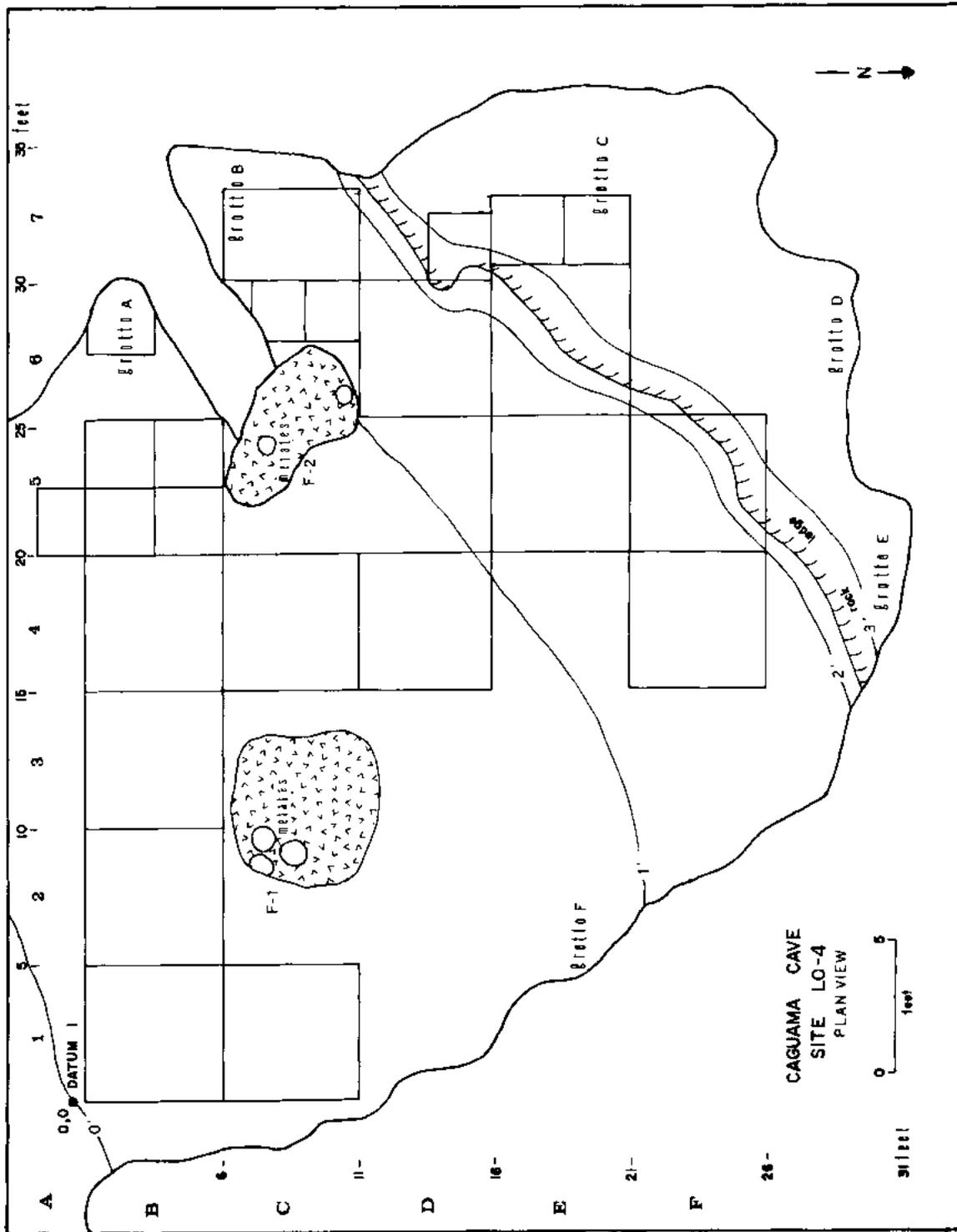


Fig. 6. Plan view of Caguama Cave, which helped define the Comundú culture.



Fig. 7. Part of the student contingent in 1954; left to right Janet Gibbs, Donald Greaton, Mrs. Ellen Massey, Professor William Massey, George Wee, Benito Camacho and Donald Tuohy; in the Escuela Feral School No. 25, where we were celebrating the end of our “digs” in the Comundú area.

Society, XLVII, pp.165-456 (Driver and Massey 1957). Janet Gibbs and I worked every day in Mexico City’s libraries and archives pulling out pertinent information on Mexican Indians’ ethnology following Harold E. Driver’s guidelines. We returned to Seattle in January, 1955 touring Mexico’s central coast via Chihuahua and Nogales.

After we returned to Seattle, I served as Bill Massey’s friend and confidant from 1955 to 1960. His subsequent employment was first by the University of Florida where I saw him and we worked to complete the study of Metate Cave and the other caves we had excavated in Baja California.

Conclusion

As a part of Professor Massey’s team who outlined the Comundú Complex in the south-central peninsula (Massey 1966a:38-58), I am proud to say William C. Massey was first of all a humanist and, secondly, an anthropologist of the first rank. He was a true scholar, although there was no status attached to anything he did, and he treated everyone the same, be they the poorest “peon” in Mexico or the “loftiest” of his professional colleagues. His Ph.D. dissertation at the University of California at Berkeley (Massey 1955) serves as a guide to further work on the southern peninsula, and our work on the south-central peninsula (Massey 1966a

and Tuohy 1978) were the pioneering efforts to put Baja California archaeology on the map. His interest in ethnology of North America (Driver and Massey 1957) also influenced my work because of his (and my) study of ethnological traits in Mexico. I shall be forever in his debt.

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