

# Lawrence T. Geraty

MA '63, BD '65 (Interviewed at the Horn Archaeological Museum at Andrews University)

**Does the object you're standing by have any particular significance?**

Yes, it is a replica of an Assyrian monument known as the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, and it depicts the only known contemporary picture of a Hebrew king: Jehu. Of interest to me is the fact that he has a beard!

**Was digging in the dirt a particular interest when you were young?**

It began when, as an 11-year-old, my family moved from Hong Kong to Beirut, Lebanon. There, as we traveled about the Holy Land, I became fascinated with sites of biblical and historical interest—sometimes having the opportunity to watch archaeologists at work in the field. A couple of summers in the '50s I was fortunate enough to tag along with Dr. Siegfried Horn as he led his earliest Bible Lands tours.

**You have had a beard for all, or most, of your professional life. Was having a beard ever an issue while teaching at the Seminary?**

Yes, I began a beard while in college because it was so painful to shave my face pockmarked with acne. Only three times in my life was I forced to shave: Once, by my mother when I returned home from college in Europe. A second time, by the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, when I arrived in Amman to begin the 1968 Heshbon excavation (Andrews' first); the reason: During the months following the Six Day War Arabs, watching TV, noticed that many Israeli men wore beards and the Embassy was afraid that Americans wearing beards might draw unwanted attention from Arabs.

The third time was in 1972 when I arrived from Harvard to teach at Andrews' Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary which had a rule against anyone wearing a beard; this was enforced by the dean who sent me to the president who sent me to the president of the GC who sent me to the president of the Lake Union who was Vice Chair of the Andrews Board. He patted my head and said, "You'll get over the acne when you grow up." (I was 32-years-old at that time.) Other than those times, I've worn a beard virtually continuously for 50 years.

**The life of an archaeologist is not quite the adventure ride portrayed by Indiana Jones, but do you recall an archaeological adventure?**

At the end of the 1974 dig, as I recall, a helicopter landed on one of our dumps and out jumped the pilot: Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan. After a surprise tour of what we had accomplished, he asked: "Is there anything I can do for you?" I responded that for many months we had been trying to get a permit from the military to take some aerial shots of our work. He said, "Do you have your camera?" "Yes," I responded. "Well then, jump in," the Prince said! And that's how we got our first aerial photos of Tall Hisban and Tall Jalul—the two digs sponsored by Andrews University.

**Other than the founding work by Dr. Horn and yourself, is there a reason why archaeology flourished at Andrews University?**

Yes, it was definitely the support of a series of Seminary deans and the AU administration led by each president from Hammill to Andreasen (including Smoot and Leshner in between). Beyond that, many professors and their students supported this interdisciplinary effort which allowed us to try some techniques

that became trend-setting and brought us to the attention of our peers in the archaeological world.

**The archaeological digs provide employment for local Jordanians; have you been able to follow the careers of any of the dig workers?**

Yes, many have become successful business people and even leaders in Jordan's archaeological scene. Just to mention one name: Mustafa al-Barari, whose father worked for me on our first dig in 1968. He died unexpectedly one night during our season. The village fathers asked us to hire his only son who would then be responsible for his mother and sisters' finances. When I found out the son, Mustafa, was only 8-years-old, I said we could not use someone so young.

The village fathers and Mustafa's family pleaded so I agreed to try him out. He worked harder than any three teenagers on the dig! Each summer he worked for us, earning money for his family. After doing well in the village school, he walked to Madaba each day to attend high school and then was accepted to the University of Jordan in Amman where he studied accounting. He graduated as valedictorian of his class and was given a gold watch by King Hussein. His last year of college he decided to take a course in Islam. The Islamic majors laughed at an accounting major taking a course in Islam, but when the course was finished Mustafa had the highest grade! The professor was so impressed, he asked Mustafa what he could do to help him. Mustafa replied, "Give me your daughter's hand in marriage." And that is what happened!

Mustafa went on to get his CPA at one sitting after buying self-taught books on a visit to the U.S. He brought a lot of business to one of the large accounting firms in the capital, then got a lucrative job in Saudi Arabia. Finally he was called back to Jordan by the Prime Minister who hired him to be the financial officer for Jordan's duty-free port on the Red Sea: Aqaba. Wanting further education, I made it possible for him to get his MBA at La Sierra University. Though he wanted to pursue his doctorate, the Prime Minister insisted that his country needed him as Chief of Jordan's Audit Bureau—a cabinet level job. He has done an outstanding job in that regard—so much so that he is now being considered to be Finance Minister of the Kingdom in an upcoming government. Still involved in the village of Hisban where Andrews did its first dig, he is now president of the "Friends of Heshbon," an organization that supports Øystein LaBianca's current work there.

**What is the oldest object you've personally uncovered at an archaeological site?**

A hand ax from the Middle Palaeolithic Period that I found at an unexcavated and previously undiscovered site in the Sinai Peninsula. I've excavated in several third millennium B.C. sites in both Israel and Jordan.

**In retrospect, was teaching your favorite occupation or were the challenges of administration more fulfilling?**

Each has had its rewards. Teaching has more immediate rewards where you see lives "turned on" to scholarship and faith and where most of your efforts are rewarded in positive ways. Administration is fulfilling in the sense that you are able to create an environment where others (faculty and students) can succeed in their work, but much of one's time is spent in problem solving and activities that have little immediate rewards! ■



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