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Norman Schwartz is retiring as Full Professor of Anthropology at the University of Delaware after 36 years of service which include 2 years as Acting Chair and 3 years as Chair of the Anthropology Department. His many grants and yearly research trips to the Peten in Guatemala--interspersed by other trips to Panama, Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Morocco and Spain--are testimony not only to his love of his work and the Peten, but also of his internationally recognized expertise in conservation and natural resources management. He has served many years as consultant to the World Bank/Global Conservation Fund and US AID/Conservation International among others.

In 1999, Dr. Schwartz and I founded the Delaware Review of Latin American Studies under the auspices of the Latin American Program of the University of Delaware, serving as its first co-editors. I have felt privileged to work with Norman these past few years, not only because of his great sense of humor and excellent advice, but also because our working meetings always included retellings of his experiences in the Peten. My own students of Latinamerican literature and culture have much to thank him--unbeknownst to him or them--as I've incorporated his life lessons into my classes.

What first interested you in Anthropology as a field of study/research?

In my senior year in college, Dr. Abraham Edel, whose wife, May Edel, was an anthropologist, suggested that I consider going to grad school in anthropology because the field was a wide one, ranging from human physical evolution to highly symbolic matters. Since my own interests were somewhat broad, it seemed a natural sort of choice. Dr. Edel also suggested I read Edward Sapir's book *Language*, and Sapir simply swept me off my feet. Also, I had worked for a physical anthropologist, Dr. Stanley Garn, who made human evolution endlessly fascinating and was a mentor in more ways than one. So, all in all, it seemed a good choice.

How did you first become involved with Latin America and/or the Peten?

I spent part of my childhood in Arizona and became interested in Mexico. Then, when I was in grad school, Dr. Ruben Reina invited me to work with him in Peten. At first, I was reluctant because I wanted to go to Sonora, Mexico, just south of Tucson, Arizona, but Ben, that is, Ruben, said the people of Peten were descended from Mexican groups, more or less, and so I went off with him. And it was at the right time, because in 1960 the Guatemalan government was just opening what was then a sparsely populated lowland forest region to colonization and development, a process I've been able to observe over the years. Ben is a very fine ethnographer, and I learned a great deal about what anthropologists call "participant observation" from him.

You sometimes mention that your type of anthropology deals with the living. Explain.

It's a sort of silly joke. I'm not too interested in antiquity as such, although I think one has to know the history of a process or region to understand it fully, but I enjoy the social give-and-take of ethnography, of observing and listening to people who, at the same time, are observing and listening to you, the observer. That makes for all sorts of complexities that are interesting to unravel, insofar as one can.

What brought you to UD?

Much as I enjoyed and benefited from teaching at Middlebury College in Vermont, I couldn't take the weather and couldn't live on the salary (\$5,000). For personal and professional reasons, Delaware is an ideal location, and the salary offer was double what Middlebury was paying, and UD was planning to create a separate department of anthropology, so there was a chance to contribute to shaping a program from scratch.

How did you become interested in environmental issues?

Beginning in 1959, the Guatemalan government opened Peten to colonization and development, and by the mid-1960s there was a great deal of spontaneous migration from other parts of Guatemala to the northern lowland tropical forests of Peten. By the 1970s it was clear that spontaneous colonization of Peten, even more than government-sponsored colonization, was leading to forest conversion on a vast scale. In fact, in 1975 I wrote a letter to the U.S. AID (Agency for International Development) mission in Guatemala City expressing some concern that Peten might be heading down the road the Classic Period Maya had taken. I was invited to the mission to meet with two of the staff who said that although they shared my concern, population in Peten was still low and the mission had more pressing priorities elsewhere in Guatemala. By the late 1980s conservationists in Guatemala, international conservation groups, the Guatemalan government and several foreign governments became alarmed at the pace of deforestation in Peten (and elsewhere in Central America), and they initiated programs to do

something about the situation, and I was given an opportunity to become involved. I did want to do something, because of a concern for social justice, curiosity about whether it was possible to find the right balance between conservation of natural resources and economic development, and also, to tell the truth, because of my children. You know how children raise their parents as much as parents raise them, and I wanted my children to know that I shared their concerns about the environment and was trying to make some small contribution to deal with those concerns in a region I knew something about.

Tell us about your involvement with international organizations like the World Bank.

Under Title XII and other auspices, I did some applied anthropology in Panama between 1980 and 1984. Trying to use anthropological concepts and methods to implement development projects and solve real-world problems is challenging, and in Panama I was lucky enough to work with some fine fresh-water-fish biologists and agricultural economists. I think I learned a lot from them, especially Dr. Len Lovshin from Auburn. In some ways, he reminds me of Ben Reina--one of those people who sets the standard for fieldwork. Then, in 1990 I published a lengthy book on the social history of Peten, and, as luck would have it, at about that time, as I mentioned before, the Guatemalan government, our government and a host of international conservation groups began to mount so-called "integrated development-and-conservation programs" in places like Peten, where there was a threat of deforestation and all that implies. Because of the internal conflict in Guatemala during the 1980s, there weren't many other ethnographers working in Peten, as I had been doing. That, and the timing of the book, gave me some credibility, and I became a consultant for Conservation International's program in Peten. It was supposed to be a six month consultancy, when a dear friend, the late Carlos Soza, became head of the program, and he asked me to continue working with him. So, the consultancy went on for more than two years, and the University was generous enough to let me remain off campus for some time. In one way or another, the work with CI and Carlos led to other consultancies, with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, NASA, and so on. All very challenging, sometimes frustrating, but always interesting both in terms of the people with whom one works and the problems to be solved, if they can be solved.

Obviously a lot of this has to do with the question you asked before about the environment. When Conservation International's Guatemalan project, called ProPeten, became an independent NGO, Carlos Soza asked me to serve as vice president of the board, so my direct involvement with the conservation and development in Peten is on-going. In many ways it's more satisfying to work with a local NGO than with big international organizations. This isn't the place to go into it, but I think that an independent group of Peteneros concerned about the welfare of their own region and their own people (and that includes environmental sanity) has a better chance to achieve socially just development and conservation goals than a group of outsiders who tend to want to dictate to them how to get the job done. Of course, there are no guarantees that local people will succeed, and outsiders can help, but only if they're willing to take the lead from the people who have to live with the results of project activities day by day.

You said that in the 1980s, because of the internal conflict, there weren't many ethnographers working in Peten. How were you able to go back so often during that period? And why did you do that?

There was a good deal of violence in Peten in the early 1980s, though not as much as in the western highlands of Guatemala. The scariest time for me was when I was called into military intelligence in Guatemala City and asked why I was so interested in land tenure and related matters in Peten. I tried to explain that ethnographers need to know about daily life and most people in Peten were farmers, so I was interested in land, and so on. I was told I could go to Peten but had to report to G2 down there -- as I recall that was the name of the branch of the military I had to see -- and couldn't travel anywhere in the region without the OK of the G2 office. When I got to Peten I spoke with the G2 officer and, to my relief, he said something to the effect that "those guys up in the City worry too much; do whatever you want; it's hard enough to travel around this region, so you can go wherever you can." Although I was stopped by military patrols once or twice and saw some of the violence, by and large some knowledge of the region and a lot of dumb luck kept me out of serious trouble.

You also ask about why I keep going back. Part of it has to do with the friendships I've made with Peteneros over the years. So, the visits to Peten are always social. But also it is intellectual interest. No matter how much I learn about things like tropical ecology, traditional ways of gardening and so on, there's always some surprise, something new to learn. In addition, by continuing to return to Peten -- and it is now going on forty-four years of travel there -- I've been able to observe a good many of the complex processes that go into so-called frontier development -- the politics, economics, ecology, sociology and culture of that development, as well as how the world at large intrudes on the processes. And every time I think I've reached a conclusion about one of another of these processes, something happens to let me know that there's more to learn.

There's something else, too. Since about 1990s an increasing number of graduate students, not to mention seasoned professionals, from a wide range of countries -- the US, France, Germany, Spain and, of course,

Guatemala itself -- have been doing research on an equally wide range of topics in Peten. There is a lot to learn from them, especially the graduate students who are up on the latest theories and have a lot of fresh observations to make. Because the students' interests are so diverse, there's a lot of opportunity for cross-disciplinary learning and research.

What did you have in mind when you founded DeRLAS?

As I implied, I've had a chance to work with some very talented and dedicated people, including very fine scholars in Peten, Guatemala and Veraguas, Panama. But in both places, students and scholars don't always have access to the library and journal material they'd like to have, but they do have access to the "net". So, an academically sound, peer-refereed electronic journal helps give them broader access than they would otherwise have. And the cost is a lot less than paper journals. In addition, since the journal publishes in Spanish and Portuguese as well as English, it encourages submissions from Latin American scholars who might not otherwise think of publishing their material in a USA-based journal. For example, as the first editor of DeRLAS, you'll recall that in our first issue, Licenciado Amilcar Corzo published an impressive essay on the fate of one community in Peten.

What do you feel is your greatest achievement?

At my age, probably surviving is OK. I'm not too good at looking back at things I've done or, more often, left undone. I think I've played a small part in helping a few young people become what they had it in them to become, and that's a big achievement, even if one's own contribution was small. As luck would have it, I've also been able to work with graduate as well as undergraduate students. But, it's easier to think of what's ahead.

Do you have any special advice for scholars who want to concentrate on Latin America?

I suppose one would have to know exactly what particular topics or themes and what particular geo-cultural areas catch their interest. Aside from the obvious -- like reading as much history, geography, anthropology and so on that then can, that is, learning as much as they can about their area -- I think young people ought to be sure that they really enjoy their concentration -- simply enjoy and be truly interested and curious about the area. The external rewards finally don't mean much, but the intrinsic ones do. Of course, that sometimes entails frustration and even pain, but the sense that there's always something more to learn has its own rewards.

In your dealings with local or native populations and the international agencies in the Peten, what changes would you deem necessary for the situation to improve?

I think that local groups have to learn to negotiate more with international agencies and not simply go along with an this or that agenda because it brings in money and because they feel powerless to negotiate. I know that's easier to say than do, but local groups have to avoid accepting funding and development or conservation programs that do not fit their own ideas of how to solve problems in their own region. It takes a lot of self-confidence to negotiate and even reject the scheme that a powerful, wealthy international agency would like to impose (I can't think of another word than "impose" at this moment) on the people of a given region, but somehow local groups have got to find the strength to do that. Corzo's essay shows what happens when local groups feel powerless, but just the fact that he wrote what he did demonstrates that there are people who are not passive in the face of powerful outside groups, and that essay is simply one example of the hopeful changes going on in Peten.

On the other side, international organizations have to learn to listen to local groups and not be so quick to think and feel they have the answers, even answers to technical matters like bio-diversity conservation. All too often international donors, their experts and consultants appear to be arrogant over-bearing know-it-alls who impose their will on others. Some donor agency staff, and in particular high-ranking officers of this or that organization, tend to think that compliance, especially courteous compliance is agreement, even though field staff may know better. For all the talk about "participatory processes," there often is a lack of genuine willingness to co-manage conservation, development or other projects, and that usually means the projects, which local people may have accepted rather than helped create, are not durable and tend to collapse shortly after a donor agency departs -- and they do depart, to follow the funding trails and fads wherever they lead. So, insofar as the international agencies really want to realize their stated goals, rather than merely enhance their own roles and coffers, they have to be willing to share decision-making authority with local groups, and local groups have to find the confidence to negotiate rather than simply comply.

I know I'm oversimplifying because it is extremely complicated hard work, and there are all sorts of pitfalls that attend managerial parity. Just to mention one example, even when everyone agrees to sharing authority, there may be radically different meanings attached to concepts of "sharing" and "authority." That is, what anthropologists call "culture" really does count. At the same time, as Saul Alinsky taught, there is a shared human capacity for laughter, and if by some magical stroke of luck all the parties involved can appreciate the comic side as well as the serious side of what they are doing, there's a chance things will work out. As I said, I know I'm leaving a lot out, but words

like co-management and shared authority catch at the direction in which I think things should go.

What are your plans for the future?

I have some writing obligations to wrap up. I will continue to travel to Peten since it seems that there's always some new development, some new puzzle that catches my attention. My wife and I also will continue to visit Israel, where my daughter lives, but we'd also like to see more of this country, and spend time with our children who are scattered across the country. I may do some teaching in Peten and also in Nicaragua, but without having to hand out grades and all that uncomfortable administrative stuff. I'll be able to mentor students without forever having to judge their performance. There'll also be time to learn a little about subjects I've neglected, probably out of laziness more than lack of time. But now I can be lazy and still study them: things like Hebrew, plant biology, more Spanish-American literature -- things like that. It's sort of like putting out the sign that says "Gone fishing."

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