



A TRIBUTE TO DAVID SOREN



DAVID SOREN

Photograph by Noelle Soren.

This *JA EI* Festschrift is actually a tribute to a number of people—all tremendously talented and highly successful in widely different areas—and all of whom comprise David Soren. Although Dr. Soren is primarily known as a leading archaeologist who has excavated extensively in Cyprus, Portugal, Tunisia and Italy, he is also, among other things, a prolific author in multiple fields of knowledge, a former musician, television and vaudeville performer, a documentary film maker, and a much-loved professor. This tribute celebrates all of these aspects of Professor Soren's career, though it focuses primarily on his now fifty years of work in the field of archaeology.

Howard David Soren was born on October 7, 1946, and grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Fascinated by dance and entertainment at an early age, he began a career in the entertainment business at the age of eight and a year later was the youngest cast member of CBS television's *The Horn and Hardart Children's Hour*. Subsequently he performed in vaudeville and road shows with members of the Philadelphia Eagles football team and others, and, regularly, with children's program hosts Sally Starr and Chief Halftown. As a result of this vaudeville background, he is included in the definitive *Encyclopedia of Vaudeville* (Routledge, 2007).

But David also became interested in the ancient past at a relatively early age. After school David often used to go to the neighborhood movie theater which showed a steady stream of popular archaeology-inspired movies such as *The Golden Mask* (1953), *The Mole People* (1956) and *Journey to the Lost City* (1960). Such films and a popular TV show called *What in the World* in which archaeologists and art historians identified mysterious pieces provided by museums inspired a fascination with the ancient world, and when David chose an educational path, it was one in that direction. He received a B.A. in Greek and Roman Studies from Dartmouth College (1968), then an M.A. in Fine Arts (1972) and a Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology (1973) from Harvard University.

It was while David was in his senior year at Dartmouth that he met his wife-to-be, Noelle—a fellow archaeology student and talented artist and photographer—on a summer project excavating Roman remains under Winchester Cathedral in Winchester, England. For both David and Noelle it was “love at first sight,” and on December 22, 1967, they were married. David had found a kindred spirit in Noelle who shared his love of archaeology—and who even sang with him in the rock band, Sphinx, that he had formed.

Sphinx was yet another expression of David's talent and flexibility, and by the time of his graduation he had to decide between becoming a rock singer or a classical archaeologist! Those of us who are his colleagues in archaeology are more than glad that he opted to concentrate on our field, though he still writes and teaches on film (especially Hollywood cinema of the 1930s), music, and vaudeville. He has founded and developed a museum of vaudeville at the University of Arizona and was also recently given a substantial grant to create an online history of vaudeville for the University.

David's contributions to archaeology have been equally wide-ranging. While still at Harvard he directed archaeological investigations for the Smithsonian Institution at Utica, Thuburbo Majus, and El Djem in Tunisia. From 1973 he taught at the University of Missouri in Columbia for ten years (becoming department head in the Art History Department), during which time he directed excavations at Miróbriga, Portugal. There he co-designed a section of the Santiago do Cacem Museum with *Star Wars* production designer Harry Lange. He also served as a Guest Curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, where he staged exhibitions from 1980 to 1988.

In 1983 David moved to the University of Arizona as department head in Classical Studies, and it has been in his 33 years in Arizona that his most important work has been accomplished. As his biographies show,

Soren is best known in archaeology for three particularly compelling discoveries:

First, his archaeological excavations at Kourion, Cyprus, demonstrated that the epicenter of the famous Mediterranean earthquake of July 21, 365 CE, had been offshore approximately 25 miles southwest of the town of Kourion. The celebrated archaeologist Brian Fagan described the pinning down of the locus for this huge tectonic event as one of the 50 most significant findings in world archaeology.

Soren's second especially significant discovery was the identification of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria as a likely significant contributor to the downfall of the Roman Empire. This conclusion was reached through the careful analysis of DNA extracted from infant bones recovered from a cemetery he excavated at Lugnano in Italy between 1987 and 1991. This important advance was based on the first use of DNA evidence on an archaeological site, worldwide.

The third major discovery that we must attribute to David Soren is that of the site of the famous Roman *fontes Clusini* or Springs of Chiusi. This important healing sanctuary built around a cold-water spring was said by the poet Horace to have even cured the emperor Augustus from severe stomach pains in 23 BCE. Soren discovered this ancient sanctuary and its spring—with its water still flowing—in the Tuscan town of Chianciano Terme in Italy.

Not surprisingly, as a result of work of this caliber, in 1997 David Soren was appointed Regents' Professor of Classics and Anthropology at the University of Arizona—a signal honor which reflects his work in Roman and Etruscan archaeology, his field excavation in Tuscany, as well as his writing on Roman architecture and Greek and Roman sculpture. Although not an Egyptologist, Soren's interdisciplinary and international work has frequently touched on matters of significance to Egyptian interactions with the wider ancient world, and his writings contain many instances of this. The author of over ten books and 70 articles, David Soren has had a substantial effect on a number of fields of knowledge. In 2005 Regents' Professor Soren was honored with the Excellence in International Service Award.

He has also served as a creative consultant for NBC's *Lost Civilizations* and History International's *Where Did It Come From?* and directed portions of Arts and Entertainment's *Human Sacrifice*, hosted by Leonard Nimoy. For his cinematic work he won a Cine Golden Eagle Award along with director David McAllister.

Throughout this richly productive archaeological career, Noelle has continued to work with David on archaeological digs and tours, in illustration and photography and other important field-related work. Today, David and Noelle continue the honeymoon they began over 48 years ago. Their friends know that nothing much has changed with them, and they seem to still exhibit the glow of togetherness they first experienced those many summers ago in Winchester, or when they appeared briefly in the movie *Love Story*—in a scene where they appear with other students walking across a snowy Harvard yard. Since then, their travels together have taken them through Africa, India, Europe, the Middle East and all around the Mediterranean, as well as many other destinations. Now, when they are not traveling, they enjoy their home in the desert Southwest, along with their beautiful cocker spaniel Lana.

Professor Soren continues to teach large classes and to write prolifically as well as to serve on important University committees and to participate in planning developments. He continues to direct Arizona's Orvieto International Institute for Classical Studies in Italy (now the University's largest study abroad program), which he founded in 2001, and is active in many other ways. In fact, his scholarly energy and productivity seem to increase each year. He was just recently awarded a substantial grant and invited by the Italian government to return to Italy and do further excavation in the infant cemetery at Lugnano in Teverina, where he will be joined by scholars from Yale and his past student David Pickel from Stanford. And his latest publication on Roman archaeology, co-authored with distinguished scholar Archer Martin, was just adopted by the University of California, Berkeley, for their Roman archaeology class.

The many honors and distinctions Professor Soren has garnered are too numerous to list here, and we note only a few. He was made an Honorary Greek—awarded the Philhellene Medal of the Greek Orthodox Church for Contributions to Greek Culture (1986)—and an Honorary Italian Citizen—by the town of Lugnano in Teverina, Italy (1990). He is a Fellow (an honor awarded to only 25 people, worldwide, each year) of the British Royal Institute of International Affairs (1985 to present), a Fellow of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (1985 to present), and a Resident for Classical Archaeology,

American Academy in Rome (conferred 2002). The breadth of his impact is seen in the fact that in 1985 (the same year that Bruce Springsteen and Cyndi Lauper won for entertainment), he was chosen as one of ten national winners from all categories of the sciences for the *Esquire Magazine* Outstanding Young American Award for Science.

Beyond his superlative scholarship and ongoing achievements in archaeology, David Soren has made a mark on our field by the kind of person he is. He is the type of colleague it is always a pleasure to meet and who is always interested in the other person. Although he is unfailingly self-deprecating, David is an engaging conversationalist and can speak knowledgeably, with a sparkle in his eye, on virtually any imaginable topic—ranging from serious matters such as disease-carrying mosquitos in ancient Rome to more whimsical things such as the hydration habits of hippopotami.

His personal warmth and kindness are legendary on our campus. Of course, one usually has to be quite old to be legendary, but David seems to have always been known for these qualities. Over the years he has mentored and helped many colleagues (of whom the present writer is grateful to have been one) to become established and to progress in our field.

In short, but from a wealth of personal encounters, I can easily say that in the 40 years of my own academic experience I have met no one so widely respected among colleagues or so loved by students as Regents' Professor David Soren, and it is a great privilege to have the opportunity to dedicate this tribute Festschrift to him. I hope that David will enjoy this small *liber amicorum* and that he will be encouraged to know what a pleasure it is for his friends to present it to him.

RICHARD H. WILKINSON