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Daniel Edward Shea (November 5, 1941-June 19, 2012)

Mario A. Rivera
Universidad de Magallanes/Mineduc, marivera41@gmail.com

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Daniel Edward Shea died of a heart attack at the age of seventy, in Pozo Almonte, near the city of Iquique, while leading the Beloit College Field School in the Atacama Desert in Northern Chile, with Mario A. Rivera. Dan was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He earned his bachelor’s (1963), master’s (1968), and doctorate (1969) degrees in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I met Dan in 1965 at the anthropology department of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, when I came to the United States as a foreign student to pursue graduate work there. He was an accomplished and brilliant student. In 1965, at a time when financial resources were seldom available to students, Dan had one of the most important grants to do field-work in Peru under the supervision of an outstanding

team of Andean researchers that included his advisor, Donald Thompson, and John Victor Murra, director of “A Study of Inca Provincial Life”, centered on the large Inca site of Huánuco Pampa, also known as Huánuco Viejo. Other participants in the project were museum professional Gordon D. Hadden; archaeologist John L. Cotter; archaeologist E. Craig Morris and archaeobotanist Robert McKelvy Bird, the latter two graduate students at the time; Peruvian archaeologists Manuel Chávez Ballon, Luis Barreda Murillo, Ramiro Matos Mendieta, and Rogger Ravines Sánchez; Peruvian ethnologists César Fonseca Martel and Emilio Mendizábal Losack; historian Juan M. Ossio A.; and Freda Yancy Wolf de Romero, who went on to a life in Peru as a psychotherapist and editor-translator. Other project staff members who worked with Dan were Delfín Zúñiga Díaz who assisted Craig Morris for many years; and Peace Corps volunteers Peter S. Jenson, who became the proprietor of Explorama Lodges; James Stanton, a civil engineer; and Mahlon Barash, a rural development specialist and published photographer.

Dan’s incursion in Peruvian archaeology provided him with the subject for his master’s thesis, *The Plaza Complex of Huánuco Viejo*. Later, he continued field-work in Peru for his dissertation *Wari Wilka: A Central Andean Oracle Site*, which he presented in 1969. This latter work contains interesting material for a subject that is just beginning to gain attention among Andeanists. However, Shea had envisioned its great research potential more than four decades ago. In his dissertation Shea provides excellent insights on the connections between Pachacamac, the great oracle on Peru’s central coast, Catequilla in the Huamachuco area of northern Peru, and Wari-Wilka in Huancayo, in Peru’s Junin region. He emphasizes his own interpretation that a league or confederation of tribes may have used an oracle as its center, as was the case with the renowned Greek oracle of Delphi.

Dan and I both took William Denevan’s courses on cultural geography as a minor for our graduate work. It was his close association with Denevan that helped Dan develop his interest in issues related to statistics and demographics, beginning with his 1976 paper, “A Defense of Small Population Estimates for the Central Andes in 1520” (Shea 1976).

Dan was not only a friend and a guide for someone who was just beginning to walk in a completely new world, but most importantly, an inspiration to me, and for the work I was beginning in Wisconsin. We became good friends, working together on many occasions. He was so close to my family that he was around when each of our three children was born, our son in Madison, and our two daughters in Chile. Dan directed occasional field-work in Arizona, Wisconsin, and Costa Rica, but his center of interest and his obsession was Andean archaeology, especially that of Peru and Chile.

Dan began his archaeological research in Chile in 1968. He spent several sabbaticals there as we worked at many archaeological sites during the past forty-five years. Together we did archaeological survey in northern and central Chile.

Starting in 1978, Dan Shea was in Chile almost every year, working on projects such as: “Caravans, Mobility, and Adaptability of Prehistoric Populations in the Atacama Desert”, studies related to the Formative, to climatic conditions in past times, and to tree ring research based on *tamarugo* (*Prosopis tamarugo*)
trees. He was also quite concerned with chrono-
logical and paleoamerican studies in northern
Chile. In the 1980s he collaborated with Wil-
liam Denevan on the project “Cultural Ecology,
Archaeology, and History of Terracing and
Terrace Abandonment in the Colca Valley,
Arequipa, in Southern Peru”. As a result of his
Colca experience, Dan edited the volume Ach-
oma Archaeology: A Study of Terrace Irrigation in
Peru and published several articles related to the

In 1992 we designed and co-directed the
first Atacama Field School. Thereafter, and for
the next twenty years, the field school received
over a hundred students, many of them today’s
professionals. The field school took place at
different times and sites, including some on the
coast, such as Pisagua, Taltal, and Camarones,
and some inland in the desert at Guatacondo,
and Ramaditas, in the upper Loa River Valley.
It also included paleoamerican sites in Chile’s
IV Region. Much of this research has been
published, mainly in co-authorship with Mario
A. Rivera (Rivera and Shea 1980; Rivera et al.

Dan joined the Beloit College faculty in the
Department of Anthropology and the Logan
Museum as soon as he graduated from the
University of Wisconsin, and he kept working at
Beloit for his entire professional life, becoming
a well known figure among his peers.

Dan was an avid reader, interested in many
and diverse subjects from classical archaeology
to philosophy, and in authors ranging from
Émile Durkheim to Karl Polanyi, including
Louis Pasteur, Marcel Mauss, and the notable
Greek philosophers, as well as Karl Popper and
Charles Darwin, but undoubtedly, Jean-Paul
Sartre and Bertrand Russell were his favorites.
Since his high school years, Dan was impressed
by philosophy, and I deduce that it was from this
interest that he became attracted to the study of
anthropology. He was also obsessed with the
concept of time, based on his readings of Ste-
phen Hawking’s work. Dan’s other favorite
authors were the Indo-Trinidadian 2001 Nobel
Prize winner V. S. Naipaul and Nigerian writer
Chinua Achebe. It is for this reason that his
departmental colleague Rob LaFleur tells his
students, “Dan Shea is the history of anthropol-
ogy. It has nothing to do with age. He has read
everything and is interested in everything.”
Complementing this description, English profes-
sor and Dan’s comrade, Tom McBride said, “No
one blended Dan’s ferocious, if quiet, brilliance
with such a droll sense of humor and pervasive,
gentle kindness. He was a real character: intelle-
tual, hunter, digger, student of popular cul-
ture, raconteur, and all around laconic good
guy” (Green et al. 2012). Professor William
Green, director of the Logan Museum added,
“Dan got students excited about anthropology
through field-work and engagement with mu-
seum objects, as well as through a rich array of
anecdotes and an encyclopedic knowledge base”
(Anonymous 2012). Another of his multiple
facets was his interest in art and archaeology.
His experimental course “The Object vs. the
Word: Archaeology and History Compared”, co-
taught with Egyptologist Gene Miller, was very
popular among Beloit students. Dan was also an
advocate for historic preservation, and served
for many years on the Beloit Landmarks Com-
mision.

Because of his involvement with Chile, Dan
acquired almost everything that had been writ-
ten in recent decades about Chilean politics,
especially during the regime of the dictator
Augusto Pinochet. He understood Chilean
domestic issues quite well, as he used to discuss
them with local people.

Being this close, many anecdotes have
spiced our lives. But above all, I want to high-
light Dan’s tremendous capacity for capturing
the essence of life through his quiet, thoughtful, and at the same time, passionate personality. Dan knew how to gain the confidence of young people. Teaching from the heart, he could spend long hours instructing students in the field, never complaining because of the hot weather, the adverse environment, or the long work hours. He was a good man, a first class friend, an ardent worker, and an excellent teacher about life.

The editors of Andean Past are proud to have published one of his last reports, based on his early field-work at Huánuco Pampa. This is “A Colonial Human Burial Excavated in 1965 between Portals 5 and 6 at Huánuco Pampa”, co-written with Monica Barnes, Catherine Gaither, and Robert A. Benfer, Jr. It appeared in Andean Past 10 (Barnes et al. 2012).

Dan is survived by his wife, Jennifer, his son, James Shea, his daughter, Genevieve Shea, his granddaughter, Lucy Carney, two sisters, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Beloit College President Scott Bierman, when learning about Dan’s death said, “I admit to finding some comfort in the knowledge that when he passed, Dan was in a place that he loves, doing what he does best—introducing students to the archaeological wonders of Latin America” (Anonymous 2012). Projecting his attachment to Chile, a great deal of Dan’s personal library is being shipped to Chile, where it will represent an important contribution to the Research Center and Site Museum at Ramaditas.

SELECTED WORKS BY AND ABOUT DANIEL E. SHEA


Barnes, Monica, Catherine Gaither, Robert A. Benfer, Jr., and Daniel E. Shea

Rivera, Mario A., Jorge Moya, and Daniel E. Shea

Rivera, Mario A. and Daniel E. Shea
1980 Cronología absoluta y desarrollo cultural pre-hispanico en el norte árido de Chile: Un método numérico para construir periodos arqueológicos, in Temas antropológicos del norte de Chile, by Mario A. Rivera, pp. 146-165. Antofagasta: Universidad de Chile.

Rivera, Mario A., Daniel E. Shea, Alvaro Carevic R., and Gray Graffam
1995 En torno a los orígenes de las sociedades complejas andinas: Excavaciones en Ramaditas, una aldea formativa del desierto de Atacama, Chile. Diálogo Andino 14/15:205-240.

Shea, Daniel E.
1968 The Plaza Complex of Huánuco Viejo, Master’s Thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison.


Daniel E. Shea, Editor


Shea, Daniel E. and Mario A. Rivera


2005a Ramaditas: Caravanas del Período Formativo. In Arqueología del desierto de Atacama: La etapa formativa en el área de Ramaditas/Guatacondo edited by Mario A. Rivera, pp.103-116. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Bolivariana, LOM.

Reports for EPA and Contract Archaeology

Daniel E. Shea

1990 Archaeological Survey for Janesville Township, Township Park access proposal, Janesville, [Wisconsin] SHSW # 90-0609, permit number DNR # 3-SD-89-3180.

1992 Archaeological Survey for Portland and Eclipse Avenues, State Highway 81, and Portland Avenue Bridge, Beloit, SHSW #92-0982/Ro., I.D. #5340-03-00.


Obituary of Daniel E. Shea

Anonymous


Green, William, Mario Rivera, and Henry Moy with William Gartner and Shannon Fie

Beloit College Field School in Northern Chile, 2008. Left to right (back row): Rachel McTavish, Erin Martin, Dan Shea, David Simpson, Mario Rivera, Jorge Moya (dendrochronologist, Universidad Austral de Chile), James Shea; (seated on ground) Éric Koenig, and Eric Vane.

Photo courtesy of Mario A. Rivera.