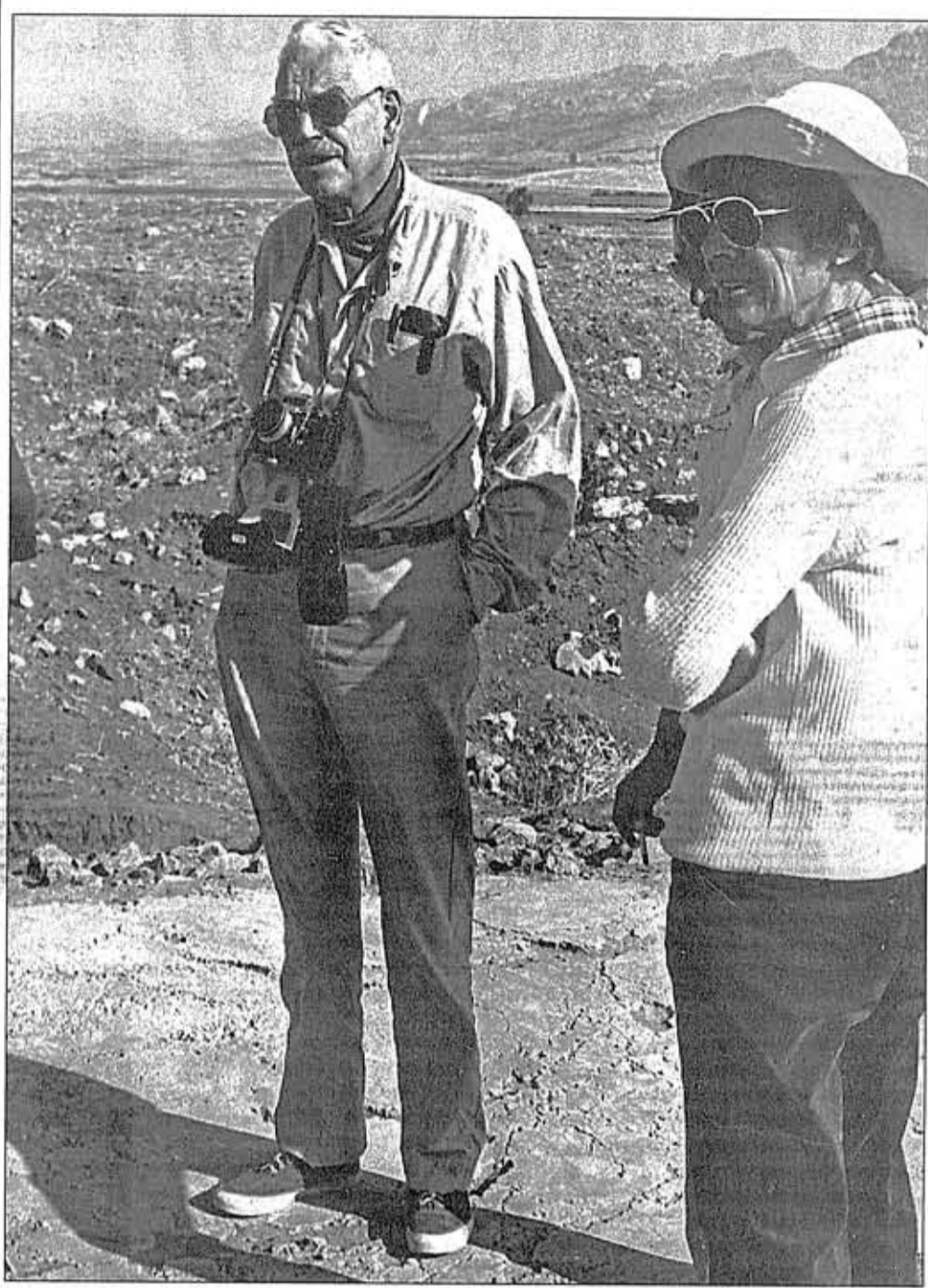


LETTER HOME FROM TURKEY



UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO NEWS OFFICE

Robert Braidwood, in the field on a site in Turkey in 1980, was a pioneer in archeology and, according to some, the inspiration for Steven Spielberg's Indiana Jones character.

Following in giant footsteps



JENNIFER GREEN
IN TEL TAYINAT

Tel Tayinat was first unearthed in the 1930s by one of the titans of archeology, Robert Braidwood.

Tim Harrison, the project director at the University of Toronto's current dig here, studied with Braidwood at the University of Chicago, where the dashing professor, easily 6-5, held court at university lunches, with his diminutive wife Linda, an archeologist in her own right.

The two were inseparable, and even brought their two children on some of their digs. Some say the tweedy-yet-glamorous Braidwood was an inspiration for Steven Spielberg's Indiana Jones.

'We thought, "We're the young guys, the hot guys, we're going to do something better than what they did in the 1930s." But we have not been able to improve on it.'

STEVE BATIUK
Ottawa archeologist,
on Robert Braidwood's
early work in Turkey

Harrison said Braidwood was one of the earliest professors to put archeology on a more scientific footing, bringing in botanists and other specialists to form a nuanced report on the site.

He embraced new technology. When his University of Chicago colleague Willard Libby was developing a means of dating material by measuring the slow deterioration of carbon atoms in it, Braidwood gave him a piece of wood from Tel Tayinat to work on. Libby won a Nobel Prize for his work.

Steve Batiuk, the Ottawa archeologist, says Braidwood had an almost preternatural gift for knowing just where to dig.

When the Canadian team first arrived, they thought they would improve Braidwood's work on determining the order of the settlements and uses on the Tel Tayinat mound, which spanned millennia. After all, it was done with rudimentary equipment almost 80 years ago.

"One of the things we set out to do was to disprove Braidwood's sequence and redo it," said Batiuk. "We thought, 'We're the young guys, the hot guys, we're going to do something better than what they did in the 1930s.' But we have not been able to improve on it. The man was a genius."

When Braidwood died in 2003, at 95, his wife died a few hours later in the same hospital.

Around the world, newspapers devoted lengthy obituaries to the two, saying that the couple had discovered some of the earliest known buildings and copper tools as well as the oldest known piece of cloth.

They also helped transform archeology from a field primarily devoted to providing museums with recognizable and intact artifacts to a discipline that studies the processes of change.

The Braidwoods also uncovered what they described

as the earliest known village at the time, a settlement at Jarmo, on the border of Iraq and Iran, that dated to 6800 B.C. They also discovered evidence of animal domestication and crop cultivation. In Turkey, they found an even older village, a farming community, dating from 7250 to 6750 B.C. The village also contained what they described as the earliest known building — a stone structure with a smoothed flagstone floor that apparently served a community function.

One obituary recalled Braidwood's romantic and philosophical outlook on his work. As he set out on his expedition to Turkey in 1963, he said: "Somewhere in one of perhaps a dozen places in the Middle East about 12,000 years ago, some man made a remarkable observation: he observed that a common weed which he had doubtless collected for eating was growing where he had previously spilled seeds.

"Once man was able to remain in one spot, he was able to start thinking about matters other than gathering food. He was able to begin thinking about his new relationships to other men, new relationships to his immediate surroundings and to those forces in nature which played such a large part in his existence."

Citizen reporter Jennifer Green is in Tel Tayinat on the Amuq Plain in Turkey, where Ottawa's Stephen Batiuk is part of a group of 30 archeologists uncovering and sifting through 3,000-year-old artifacts. The team is hoping to piece together the mystery of how this once-powerful kingdom, possibly tied to the Biblical Philistines, rose and inexplicably collapsed.