

Memorial
REYNOLD J. RUPPÉ, 1917–1993



Reynold J. Ruppé at the end of a long dive in search of drowned terrestrial sites, Gulf of Mexico, 1975. (Photo by Carol V. Ruppé.)

Reynold J. Ruppé, professor emeritus in the Department of Anthropology at Arizona State University and its founding chair, died on Saturday, 30 October 1993, at his home in Tempe; he was 76 years old. More than any other single individual, Rey Ruppé was responsible for establishing the Department of Anthropology at ASU and for building its graduate program into one of national standing.

The older of two children born to Matilda Anna Onufrey and Reynold J. Ruppé, Rey was born on 15 October 1917 in Hellertown, Pennsylvania, though he was to grow up in New Jersey. He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, originally trained in the ski troops, who saw combat with the infantry in Europe. At the close of hostilities, Ruppé was assigned to the War Crimes Branch (1945–1946), interrogating captured German officers. After the war, he received his formal education at the University of

New Mexico (B.A., 1949) and at Harvard (Ph.D., 1953); both degrees were granted in anthropology (prehistoric archaeology).

After seven years (1953–1960) on the faculty at the University of Iowa, then the State University of Iowa, during which time he was appointed Iowa's first State Archaeologist (1959–1960), Ruppé was hired by ASU as chairman of its Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Arizona State College had just become Arizona State University, as a result of a statewide plebiscite and subsequent act of the state legislature, following years of bitter opposition by the partisans of the University of Arizona. Having left Iowa frustrated by his lack of state support, Ruppé arrived at ASU in 1960 only to find himself the head of a troubled unit, riven by internal disputes and in need of direction.

A condition Ruppé placed on his acceptance of the appointment was that the combined Department would eventually be separated into two autonomous units. After a lapse of two years, the university administration kept its promise and created a Department of Anthropology in 1962. Ruppé chaired the Department from its inception until 1973, guiding it through a period of unprecedented growth in faculty lines and in the development of its graduate programs. Upon the latter he had placed the highest priority, gaining authorization to start a Master of Arts program in 1963, followed by approval of a doctoral program in 1968.

Thanks to Rey's initial efforts, the graduate degree program in anthropology has since become one of ASU's finest. At this writing, 290 M.A.s and 84 Ph.D.s have been awarded by the Department, and ASU anthropology graduates are now employed at some of the most prestigious research institutions in the country. Moreover, in 1993 a Society for American Archaeology survey ranked ASU's 25-year-old archaeology doctoral program fourth in the nation.

Rey Ruppé was particularly successful at program building, and during his tenure as chair the number of full-time anthropology faculty increased from two to 17. Indeed, Ruppé recruited, as freshly-minted assistant professors, most of the cohort of senior faculty on staff today. Once they were hired, and always contingent upon performance, Ruppé felt it incumbent upon a department chair to provide the kind of physical and social environment in which faculty members could develop their intellectual skills to their maximum potentials. Ruppé paid close attention to those important intangibles, building a solid foundation that has been strengthened all the more by subsequent chairs. He also worried about tangible things, like where to house the growing Department.

From 1962 to 1973, the Department occupied a suite of offices in the Social Sciences Building, now home to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. By the late 1960s, however, a lack of space was becoming a major problem and, through a sustained effort of five years' duration, Ruppé convinced the university administration to grant the Department new space. Anthropology thus was allocated to the old Fine Arts Building—a large, three-story, neoclassical structure built in 1914.

Rey's initial reaction to this bequest was one of dismay, since the building was known to be in a poor state of repair. Recognizing its potential, however, he convinced the ASU administration to gut the structure and completely renovate it at a cost of approximately \$1 million. The resulting structure, which the Department has occupied since 1973, is now viewed as one of the most functional physical plants in the country, extensively redesigned—largely by Ruppé himself—with the needs of a growing anthropology program in mind.

Ruppé was equally adept in the conduct of his archaeological research. His career spanned more than four decades, beginning with excavations in Colorado in 1946 and continuing on to field work in New Mexico, Iowa, Arizona, and Florida. He carried out that research, moreover, on both land and sea. In the course of his diverse career, then, Rey Ruppé was able to make significant contributions to North American archaeology in three distinctly different areas.

First, he conducted pioneering field research in several regions of the American Southwest and Midwest that had received little attention by archaeologists prior to the 1940s and 1950s. With his

long-time friend and colleague, A. E. Dittert, Ruppé surveyed, tested, and excavated pithouse villages and pueblo communities on Cebolleta Mesa, west-central New Mexico (1948–1952), which formed the basis for his doctoral dissertation, awarded in 1953 and published in 1990 as a Garland “classic.” The research was significant for its early, innovative use of systematic survey methods and for its perspective on long-term culture change, spanning pre-pottery horizons to the modern Pueblo of Acoma. It was also remarkable for its close collaboration with the Acoma community—a collaboration that Dittert continues today.

During his tenure at Iowa, when he was the only practicing archaeologist in the state, Ruppé conducted ethnoarchaeological field work among the Mesquakie Indians. He also established a successful summer field school program in Midwestern archaeology that investigated sites in western and southeastern Iowa with minimal institutional support. The latter work addressed the regional culture history of Iowa, especially in regard to the diverse range of prehistoric architectural features, ceramic types, and lithic assemblages present. As the first State Archaeologist for Iowa, and one of the first in the country, Ruppé accomplished much despite the limited resources afforded him during his brief tenure of office. He was tireless in advocating archaeology and instrumental in developing early cultural resource management practices in that state.

Second, Ruppé contributed to making the archaeological survey a standard research method in North American field work. In 1966, he published a seminal paper in *American Antiquity*, titled “The Archaeological Survey: A Defense,” in which he justified the importance of survey data to a wide range of research questions. He also argued that survey data not only supplemented excavation data, but provided new kinds of information on regional processes and demographic trends. The essay reflected his experiences doing field work in New Mexico, in Iowa, and in Arizona’s Salt River valley and on its Navajo Reservation.

Ruppé carefully considered different survey types and methods, including subsurface detection procedures, and the potential biases that result from the adoption of different survey strategies. His publication proved to be very timely, as a younger generation of archaeologists was then beginning to rethink the efficacy of traditional field methods in the American Southwest. Encouraged by the compelling defense Ruppé crafted of the problem-oriented survey as more than a simple prelude to excavation, Fred Plog and others developed new survey strategies that specifically addressed “processual” questions on a regional scale and advanced systematically-designed surveys as integral components of archaeological research designs.

Third, and of particular relevance to this journal, Ruppé contributed to the study of coastal archaeology with his research on drowned terrestrial sites and sea level transgressions. The latter years of his long career were devoted to addressing the archaeological implications of post-Pleistocene eustatic rise on prehistoric coastal populations. Arguing for the early and intensive use of coastal habitats by foraging peoples, Ruppé hypothesized that inundated coastal settlements should be common components of the underwater landscape of continental shelves.

Beginning in 1973, and continuing throughout the 1980s, Ruppé initiated an underwater archaeological program in western Florida, where the broad, gently-sloping shelf afforded ideal conditions for the preservation and detection of drowned sites. The 1973–1976 interval was spent excavating the Venice Beach site, a shell midden located at depths of 1–2 m off Florida’s west coastal city of Venice. Subsequent research focused on survey methods for detecting other submerged settlements on the outer shelf. His experiments with mechanical corers, side-scan sonar, and subbottom profilers eventually led to the discovery of 30 drowned sites in the vicinity of Venice Beach. Ruppé subsequently received a major National Science Foundation grant in 1986 to generate a catalog of subbottom profiler “signatures” for the identification of underwater sites off the west Florida coast, depending upon site structure, site constituents, and local marine geomorphology.

As an active field researcher whose broad interests are demonstrated above, Ruppé was a member or a fellow of many learned societies. Among the more prominent professional organizations to which he belonged were the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Anthropological Association, the Society for American Archaeology, the Society for Historical Archaeology, and the International Oceanographic Foundation. A founder of the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology, Rey served as its first chair (1976–1981) and remained an influential member.

From 1979 through 1980, Ruppé was Senior Archeologist for the Bureau of Land Management, Outer Continental Shelf Office, in New Orleans. He also served on the editorial boards of several journals, including a seven-year term (1953–1960) editing the *Journal of the Iowa Archaeological Society*, and was a long-time member of the Board of Trustees of the Heard Museum (1967–1980).

Although Rey Ruppé will be remembered as the architect of ASU's Anthropology Department, and for the various contributions he made to North American archaeology, perhaps his most enduring accomplishment was the guidance, motivation, and friendship he extended to countless students at the University of Iowa and at Arizona State University. Rey's charismatic personality could inspire even the most skeptical graduate student to recognize the importance of regional survey, or excite an undergraduate to register for a course on underwater archaeology in land-locked Arizona! His door was always open to students and colleagues alike. This junior author remembers fondly the late afternoons when students, one by one, would slip into his office. In his Johnny-Carson persona, Rey would ask us to "move down the couch" to make room for the next visitor who had come to seek advice from the "grand old man."

Ruppé retired in 1985 and two years later, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Department, a volume of essays by 25 friends, colleagues, and former students was published to honor him. The *ASU Anthropological Research Paper No. 38, Coasts, Plains and Deserts*, reflects in title and content the three major contexts of Rey's archaeological research career: his longstanding interest in underwater archaeology, his early field work in Iowa, and his southwestern research both before and after his arrival at ASU. The *festschrift* is testimony to the high regard in which he was held by the archaeological profession.

Reynold J. Ruppé is survived by his wife of 49 years, Carol V. Ruppé; also surviving are his daughter, Tricia Ruppé Durden, and son, Larry Ruppé, grandchildren Reynold Ruppé Durden and Georgia Carolyn Durden, and sister Matilda Ann Ruppé. Memorials can be made as contributions to The Ruppé Prize in Archaeology, care of the ASU Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0904.

GEOFFREY A. CLARK
KENT G. LIGHTFOOT

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[While he served as Editor of the *Journal of the Iowa Archaeological Society* (1953–1960), Reynold J. Ruppé wrote a regular column, titled “Archaeological Chats,” and contributed many anonymous incidental pieces not included here. Conference papers include only those presented since 1978. —Memo-rials Editor]