



GARLAND F. GRABERT
1923–1987

The Pacific Northwest lost one of its famed regional archaeologists, and anthropology lost a gifted scholar with the death of Garland F. Grabert from a sudden heart attack at the age of 64 on October 27, 1987. In May 1988, Garland Grabert posthumously received the Captain Robert Gray Award in recognition of his major contributions to the prehistory of north-central and northeastern Washington which, together with his historical-archaeological research, constituted distinguished service to the cause of Northwest history.

Garland (“Gar”) Grabert’s career was the success story of a boy from rural Indiana who worked his way up through hard work and brilliance to become first an electronics expert and then an archaeologist. From the age of 12, Gar built working radio sets out of spare parts given him by the owner of a radio repair store. After dropping out of high school to help on the family farm, he continued teaching himself electronics and became a “ham” radio operator. Gar served in the Army Air Corps during World War II and attended ordinance school in Lansing, Michigan, where he served as an aircraft armorer who both worked on the ground and flew missions. He received the American Theater Ribbon, Good Conduct Ribbon, and Victory Medal. After the War, Gar worked as an oil-well rigger and roustabout in Indiana, then moved to Seattle, Washington, where he was a self-taught electronics technician at Boeing Aircraft Corporation, and where he married his wife Jane in 1954.

Gar entered the University of Washington as a physics major, but became fascinated by anthropology and changed majors in his junior year. He earned a B.A. in 1962, his M.A. in 1965, and his Ph.D. in 1970. From his first archaeological assistantship in 1963 until the day he died, Gar was an active archaeologist who brought valuable technical and mechanical skills as well as years of extensive reading and deep thought to bear on the field. He had a sophisticated knowledge of the

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natural environment, and a great love for it. His extensive work in the Okanogan region, at the Wells Dam Reservoir sites, and in the eastern coast region on the Gulf of Georgia opened new horizons in Pacific Northwest archaeology and brought him international recognition.

Gar pursued most of his archaeological work at Western Washington University, where he became assistant professor in 1967, associate professor in 1972, and professor in 1978. He was chairman of the sociology–anthropology department from 1972 to 1974, and during the time that the two departments were separating, Gar was vice chairman for anthropology from 1974 to 1976. He served on six major academic committees and was graduate program advisor in anthropology from 1974 until his death. He taught nine different undergraduate courses and four graduate seminars.

Gar organized and chaired the Thirty-Third Northwest Anthropological Conference, held at Western Washington University in March 1980; he also chaired sessions at other meetings and presented numerous papers. From 1979 until his death, Gar chaired the Scientific Advisory Committee, Washington Archaeological Research Center, and he was instrumental in the survey, excavation, and protection of cultural resources in the Lake Pateros Archaeological District. Gar served as vice president of Sigma Xi in 1973 and 1974, as chairman of the Washington State Archaeological Council from 1968 to 1971, and as consultant to the Pacific Science Center. He was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and was active in the community, giving numerous talks to public groups and organizing and setting up various archaeological displays for the public.

Gar used his 27 contract archaeological projects as training grounds for his students, several of whom are active archaeologists in various parts of North America today. Students say that once the day's work was done at a site, Gar would wander out beneath the stars, listen to the sounds and gaze at the sky, as had the vanished people he studied.

Garland Grabert's writings include 14 major articles, coeditorship (with H. C. Taylor [1983]) of *Papers in the Honor of Angelo Anastasio*, and 27 contract archaeology reports. Along with M. Schwartz (1973) and with C. E. Larsen (1979), he made significant contributions to a new understanding of maritime coastal processes in the Pacific Northwest Coast region and their interrelation with cultures in the area; and on his own to the use of pebble tools as time indicators (1979); to broader concerns of archaeology as a discipline (1983); and to the human factor of life in the prehistoric Pacific Northwest (1968, 1971).

A thoughtful colleague, a man of wit and wisdom who once presented a paper titled "Clams, Clypsedras and Geotomfoolery," in many ways a Renaissance man in the late twentieth century, Gar Grabert was always lively, whether conversing, lecturing, or sending code as "The Desert Rat" via ham radio to the far corners of the earth.

At the time of his death, Gar was working on three major projects. His textbook, *Dirt Archaeology for the Beginner* (1976), distilled his decades of field experience. His monograph on the prehistory of Cherry Point, being completed by some of his students, summarizes 20 years of work on the prehistory of a hitherto poorly known area in the eastern coast of the Gulf of Georgia region. Gar's extensive travels to archaeological sites and museums in England and northern Europe during 1985 provided valuable data for his planned monograph on parallels and contrasts between the Pacific Northwest and Mesolithic Europe. His research pointed out that in both regions the coastal and riverine areas, which had a stable marine food base, were strikingly parallel in their economic patterns, permanent settlement, and stratified societies. In both regions these societies showed a marked contrast to the inland ones lacking a stable food base, yet these inland societies also showed interesting parallelisms in the two regions. Gar was in the process of developing significant theory from this analysis.

"Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for Thee" (John Donne). We are the poorer for Garland F. Grabert's passing, and the richer for having had him among us.

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