

Memorial to Clark W. Brott

(1934 - 1993)



Clark Brott at the Riverside Chinatown in 1985.

*Life is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime,
the flash of a firefly in the night, the little shadow
which runs across the grass and loses itself in the
sunset.*

Crowfoot, Blackfoot chief
(ca. 1880 in Monture 1960)

CLARK W. BROTT died on July 26, 1993, of complications from AIDS. With his passing, California archaeology lost a creative scholar who, through his commitment to a holistic approach, made significant contributions in the areas of PaleoIndian and Overseas Chinese archaeology in California.

Born in Willoughby, Ohio, on February 8, 1934, at a young age Clark moved with his mother to the home of his grandparents in Anaheim. He grew up roaming the chaparral-

covered hills of this southern California farm community, often stopping to partake of the jams produced in the kitchen of his later-to-become-renowned neighbor, Carmelina Knott.

After he married, Clark went to Alaska, where he enrolled at the University of Alaska, working for two years as a technician at the University Museum, and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in 1956. Intending to become a linguist, he studied at the University of Bonn, Germany, for a year before the responsibilities of fatherhood led him to join the U. S. Air Force. He served as an officer in the Medical Service Corps for two years at Travis Air Force Base.

Upon leaving the Air Force, Clark took the position of Curator-Director of the State Capitol Historical Museum in Olympia, Washington, a post he held from 1960 until early 1962. With responsibility for collections in anthropology, history, natural history, and art, Clark had both the vision and the opportunity to begin exploring interdisciplinary approaches to the study of anthropology. While in this position, Clark resumed his formal education, studying linguistics, ethnology, and museology at the University of Washington in Seattle. His training in archaeological field methods was acquired during a summer session at the University of New Mexico. He also participated in the Summer Institute in Anthropology for Museum Curators at the University of Arizona, Tucson, during this time. Clark moved directly from his museum post in Washington to the position of Chief Curator at the San Diego Museum of Man in 1962, a position he held for seven years. Thus began his career in California archaeology.

In 1966, *Ancient Hunters of the Far West*, by Malcolm J. Rogers with Marie Wormington, Emma Lou Davis, and Clark, was published. This volume is still considered the primary synthesis of the San Dieguito Complex. Clark's

contribution was a description of over 160 San Dieguito sites recorded by Rogers and of the San Dieguito type collection which had been informally laid out by Rogers shortly before his death. Based on Rogers' notes, Clark correlated artifact types with phases and regional aspects of the San Dieguito manifestation, providing a valuable reference tool for future researchers of PaleoIndian culture. It should be noted that 1966 also witnessed the birth of the Society for California Archaeology, with Clark as a founding member.

Clark's focus on PaleoIndian archaeology and collaboration with his mentor, friend, and colleague, Emma Lou "Davey" Davis, continued with the publication in 1969 of *The Western Lithic Co-Tradition*. Continuing his interest in classification, Clark developed a taxonomic system for categorizing archaeological assemblages. This provided the framework for Davis to categorize PaleoIndian sites in the western United States and to argue the existence of a Western Lithic Co-Tradition.

Clark changed direction, both personally and professionally, in 1968, leaving his position at the Museum of Man to become partner (with Charles Brown) and general manager of Charlie Brown's Good Earth. Many of us who spent our early twenties in the San Diego area remember the lively, upbeat music, decor, and light shows of this popular Ocean Beach restaurant-nightclub. I believe this period was the major turning point in Clark's life, as he shifted from an essentially academic and research-oriented direction to a focus on humanistic studies, including Eastern philosophy and human potentiality.

Clark returned to California archaeology in 1975, spending five years as a government archaeologist, the first year for the Forest Service at Six Rivers National Forest and then as Bureau of Land Management District Archaeologist in Redding. He left government employment in 1981 to form ARK II, an archaeological con-

sulting firm based in Redding, with friend James Dotta. Together they took on the excavation of a portion of Weaverville's Chinatown. With Jim's unexpected death in the summer of 1982, Clark analyzed the excavation results alone and wrote *Moon Lee One, Life in Old Chinatown, Weaverville, California* (1983), a lasting contribution to the literature of American Overseas Chinese archaeology. One sees in this work a holistic approach to the archaeological record, as Clark blended archaeology, ethnohistory, history, Eastern philosophy, and iconography to breathe life into our understanding of the long-gone Chinese community of Weaverville.

In 1982, Emma Lou Davis suffered a series of strokes and asked Clark to take over as Director of the Great Basin Foundation (GBF). Under Clark's leadership, the GBF expanded its work in advocacy, research, and public archaeology, and ultimately entered the domain of cultural anthropology. As an advocate, GBF worked successfully with the Sierra Club to halt the proposed Bureau of Land Management opening of the Panamint Dunes to off-road vehicles. GBF performed and supported major interdisciplinary research best exemplified by the Riverside Chinatown Project (1984-1985). This work, directed by Clark, culminated in the carefully researched, thoughtfully edited, and beautifully illustrated two-volume publication: *Wong Ho Leun, An American Chinatown* (1987).

The GBF became a leader in California public archaeology, coordinating over two hundred volunteer excavators at Riverside Chinatown and co-sponsoring, with Earthwatch, "Balloons Over Panamint," a project to map and photograph the geoglyphs of Panamint Valley. Both the Riverside and Panamint projects, with their focus on bringing archaeology to the public, had strong film production components to them. This exposure to video-documentation, combined with Clark's enduring interest in

making anthropology accessible to the public, took GBF in the direction of anthropological video productions.

When Clark discovered that he had AIDS, a film studio had been set up. He was training himself in film and beginning to put together proposals with scholars and video artists. His major projects at the time were a video-biography entitled "Davey," and a video-documentary on the prehistory, history, and ecology of Panamint Valley. Simultaneously, he was developing hypotheses relating to how cultures change as a result of cataclysmic events, including the end of an Ice Age, the arrival of a technologically dominant society, or the death by AIDS of large numbers of a subculture's population. It was Clark's belief that by studying in-action cultural change in the gay community, light could be shed on how culture changed in the prehistoric and protohistoric past in response to cataclysms. To this end, he was also involved in the production of "Friends and Neighbors," a film which would explore the impact of AIDS on gay culture.

Sadly, as Clark enthusiastically pursued these new areas of research, his health began to deteriorate, and progress on all projects was slowed. As he struggled to regain strength between episodes of illness, his mother and youngest child, Tamara, died within a month of each other. These personal tragedies took a major toll on Clark's health, and he was unable to recover.

The Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki (1970:21) noted that, "in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's there are few." Throughout Clark's life, he maintained a beginner's mind, making him an energetic, optimistic, open-minded, and creative scholar. As an individual, Clark was all these things, as well as humanistic, generous, and ingenuous.

In thinking of Clark, it is not difficult to envision a lanky young boy, with a berry-smear and impishly grinning face, making his

way through the chaparral, his mind spinning tales of magic, adventure, and good deeds. Clark maintained this idealism and good nature throughout his life, and these will be missed, even as we continue to enjoy his professional contributions.

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