



# CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN



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## THE CHICAGO HOUSE SEASON OCTOBER 2006 TO APRIL 2007: A SEASON DIARY

*By W. Raymond Johnson, Field Director*

### OCTOBER

The Epigraphic Survey's 2006/2007 field season is well underway, and it feels like we never left. We arrived back in Luxor on October 15th to find the Chicago House facility ready for action, thanks to the hard work of Tina DiCerbo and our workmen. We found some surprises waiting for us: a brand new concrete driveway in the back area, which was prepared over the summer and finished just before we arrived; and a new wireless Internet system (which took a while to work the bugs out of, but which is working quite well now, thanks to Tina and Safi). Before heading to Luxor I spent a few days in Cairo, where I signed the government contract for the season at Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) headquarters in Zamalek, touched base with our friends at the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), and saw a number of our colleagues. Cairo was pleasant weather-wise, but the 95-degree temperature in Luxor took a bit of getting used to! It's great to be back; Luxor is cooler now, and Chicago House has never looked more beautiful.

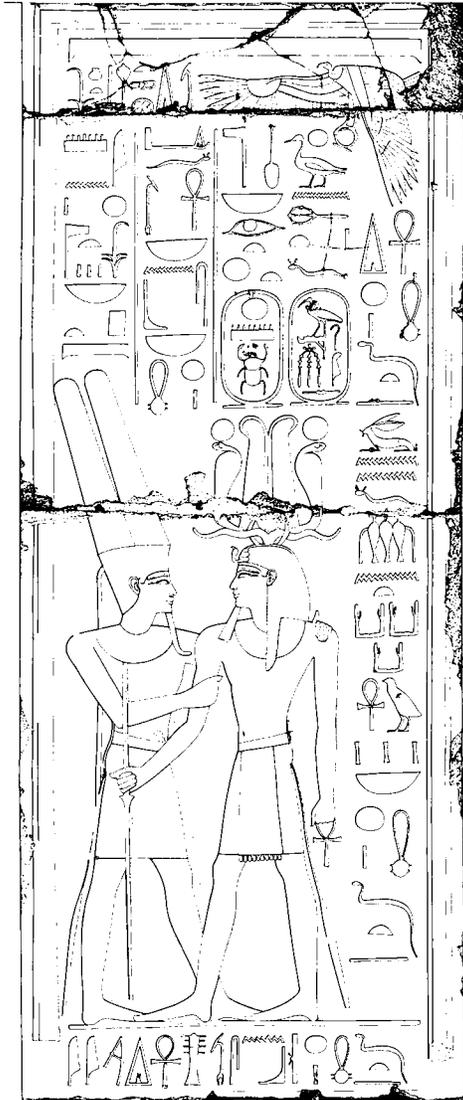
But we have lost some friends. After dinner on our first night back, six of us traveled across the river to the funeral of our old friend Mustafa Suleiman, father of our driver Omar, who passed away unexpectedly after a long illness a few days before we returned. He was a dear man, loved by everyone, and was one of the first friends I made in Egypt when I started work here. And I only learned yesterday that Dr. Mohamed El-Saghir, former SCA director in Luxor and later SCA Director of Upper and Lower Egypt, had passed away in late July. He was a lovely, kind, patient man and was a pleasure to work with

here over the years. His son Mustapha is following in his father's footsteps, and is working in Luxor today as a vital member of the SCA. We will miss Dr. Mohamed very, very much.

On October 16th I met with our Luxor SCA friends, handed over the paperwork for the season to Luxor Director Dr. Mansour Boraik, set up our work schedule for both temple sites, and was briefed on the goings on about town. There is a LOT of construction happening all over; Luxor is already quite transformed, but more on that anon. This season we are pleased to have one new epigrapher, Ginger Emery from the Oriental Institute; one new artist, Christian Greco from Leiden; a new stone mason, Frank Helmholtz, replacing Dany (who is starting his own business in Cairo but worked with us for a couple of weeks in November); Frank's wife Anait, who is assisting Marie



*Margaret DeJong drawing at small Amun temple facade, Medinet Habu*



MHB118; Thutmose III greeted by Amun. Drawing by Will Schenck and Sue Osgood

Bryan in the library; and architect Louis Elia Louis, who is assisting in the library and photo archives. We re-opened the small Amun temple at Medinet Habu on October 17th, transferred our equipment to the site, and took down the stacked stone walls which we had built against the two locked wooden doors (sealed with wire and lead “UofC” seals) of the sanctuary. Opening is always exciting because it’s like opening a tomb! Inside it was as dry as a bone — a very good thing, and the result of our restoration work on the roof — and there were no snake trails — even better. Senior epigrapher Brett McClain, epigrapher Jen Kimpton, and artist Krisztián Vértés immediately resumed epigraphic work in the small Amun temple bark sanctuary and ambulatory, while senior artist Margaret DeJong inaugurated Ginger and Christian into the mysteries of the Epigraphic Survey drawing conventions. Conservators Lotfi Hassan and Adel Azziz began preparations for continuing the conservation of the decaying lower wall courses around

the outside of the 18th Dynasty temple proper, which involve photographer Yarko Kobylecky taking “before” shots of everything. On October 18th we resumed our operation at Luxor Temple. At 6:30 a.m. we loaded a truck with our ladders and scaffolding from the magazines at Chicago House, unloaded everything at the temple, and built four levels of steel scaffolding against the southern wall of the Roman Vestibule, eastern side, for the ARCE conservators slated to resume cleaning the Roman frescoes after Ramadan. We got everything ready well in advance, since most of the following week was the post-Ramadan Eid El-Fitr holiday.

We re-opened the Chicago House library for the season on October 27 and have extended the hours from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the beginning of the season, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Fridays. At the beginning of the new year we will extend the library hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, since we now have a full library staff. We have started inventorying Henri Riad’s library, which was kindly donated to Chicago House by his family last April. Tina transferred the boxes into the front office, and we moved in several sets of shelves. This past week Anait and Louis started opening boxes and sorting the books by category and language. Anait will catalog all the foreign language books, and Louis — who has been working for the Franco-Egyptian Center and with the ARCE site management training program — will catalog all the Arabic books. There are unexpected treasures, including a photo album which must have belonged to Labib Habachi, which will go into the Chicago House Photo Archives as part of Labib’s archives.

One of the happy changes in the city of Luxor is the newly completed Luxor Heritage Center and Mubarak Library on Karnak Street behind Chicago House. I was given a tour of the new facility by the governor of Luxor, Dr. Samir Farag, on October 28th, and it is quite beautiful: neo-Egyptian modern on the outside, and all chrome, glass, and stainless steel on the inside, very well built. The upper floor is dedicated to a children’s library and popular adult section, Susanne Mubarak’s specialty, and the lower floor will be a visitor’s orientation and Egyptian heritage center complete with auditorium. The first floor will house a new Egyptological library, and the governor and SCA chairman Zahi Hawass have asked Chicago House to assist the SCA and the city of Luxor in putting it together. We do so happily, as such a facility will greatly benefit the scientific community in Luxor, particularly when we are away in the summer and the Chicago House library is closed.

Among some of the sadder changes in Luxor is the street widening program throughout the city, which is resulting in the demolition of many fine examples of Luxor’s older residential and public buildings. Station Street was widened last April at the expense of its entire southern side, which included several turn-of-the-last-century art-deco apartment complexes, all gone now. I learned last week that two beautiful beaux-arts apartment buildings immediately to the south of the train station are slated for demolition

OCTOBER 2006

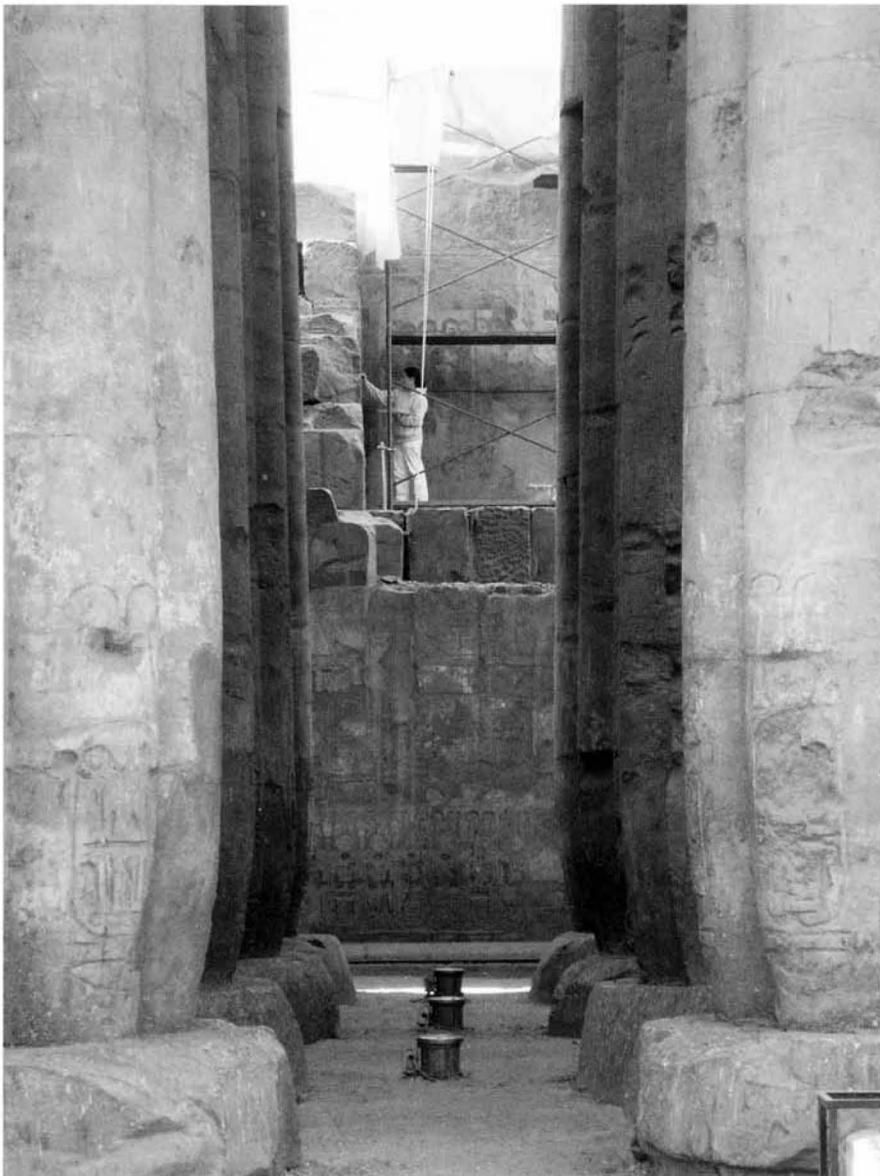


*Epigraphic Survey Professional Staff (left to right). Top row: Brett McClain (senior epigrapher), Jen Kimpton (epigrapher), Lorelei Corcoran (former epigrapher), Christian Greco (draftsman), Krisztián Vértés (draftsman). Second row: Samir Guindy (administrator), Tina DiCerbo (draftsman/epigrapher), Safi Ouri (finance manager), Frank Helmholtz (master mason), Anait Helmholtz (library assistant), Margaret DeJong (senior draftsman), Adel Azziz San (conservator). Third row: Girgis Samwell (contractor), Louis Elia Louis (architect/library assistant), Helen Jacquet (Egyptologist consultant), Jean Jacquet (architect consultant). Fourth row: Alain Arnaudies (database designer), Emmanuelle Arnaudies (Egyptologist database consultant), Nehal Mahmoud Yassin (conservator), Hala Aly Handaka (conservator), Hiroko Kariya (Luxor Temple conservation supervisor), Marie Bryan (librarian). Fifth row: Karim Hassan (conservator apprentice), Lotfi Hassan (Medinet Habu conservation supervisor), Dina Hassan (conservator), Ted Brock (blockyard supervisor), Ray Johnson (Chicago House director), Carlotta Maher (assistant to the director for development), Mohamed Abou El-Makarem (conservator), Yarko Kobylecky (photographer). Bottom step: Nahed Azziz San (conservator) and daughter Joia. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky*

soon in another road-widening effort, so I sent photographer Yarko Kobylecky and artist/photographer Krisztián Vértés to do some reference photography of the buildings before that happens. It is sad but increasingly clear that despite our recommendations to preserve Luxor's post-pharaonic heritage, the local authorities feel that the sacrifice is necessary for the present — and future — population of the city. The primary role of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor has always been the systematic documentation of Luxor's pharaonic heritage; now it seems that the rapidly changing

situation here requires us to document its post-pharaonic heritage as well.

But the news is not all grim. I have just returned from visiting our USAID friends at their headquarters in Maadi, where I learned that USAID Egypt has signed off on a dewatering project for the west bank of Luxor and is arranging for the contractors now. The official announcement will be made in a month or so. This is tremendously good news, and a great relief, since the salt damage due to high groundwater has increased alarmingly



*Roman fresco cleaning, Luxor Temple*

of late, even in the desert sites of the west bank. We are seeing its terrible effects in every structure at Medinet Habu. USAID Egypt is also finalizing a three-year, post-groundwater-lowering conservation fund for Karnak and Luxor Temples which will be administered by ARCE, more excellent news.

The Italian conservators (eight of them!) started work this week at Luxor Temple, resuming the cleaning of the imperial Roman wall frescoes from the late third century A.D. in the Roman vestibule/king's chamber of Luxor Temple, a joint project of ARCE and Chicago House. Their setup is wonderful; Tina and engineer Nashet did a fantastic job with the cloth-covered scaffolding, and the conservators are very happily working away, screened from public view. Chicago House conservator Hiroko Kariya is due to arrive this week to resume her Luxor Temple blockyard conservation work. During the last few days the SCA has started removing the

old eastern enclosure wall which runs by our conservation lab; they are extending the lovely mudbrick wall started by Dr. Holeil last year which is topped with stone. It will be lower, allowing a better view of the temple from the east, but will still demarcate (and protect) the eastern blockyard. The SCA is giving us the additional space between the new park enclosure wall and the new mudbrick wall for work and storage. Eventually we will be obliged to move our conservation lab (for aesthetic reasons); we are studying the possibility of that area as a site for a future conservation facility.

And so it goes. The weather is beautiful, cool at night, warm during the day. Winter is coming! It's hard to believe we've been back only three weeks; it feels far longer. This promises to be one of the most challenging, interesting, and busy seasons ever.

#### **NOVEMBER**

Hiroko arrived to resume the Luxor Temple blockyard conservation work on November 7th and immediately did an extensive condition survey of the entire blockyard holdings. She and I have been looking at a group of inscribed Ptolemaic column drums about 80 cm in diameter which exhibit great potential for future reconstruction, and Hiroko started consolidating several that showed signs of decay from being on the ground too long (they are now all stored on protected, damp-coursed platforms). Alain and Emmanuelle Arnaudies had an excellent several weeks with us working on an exciting new Photo

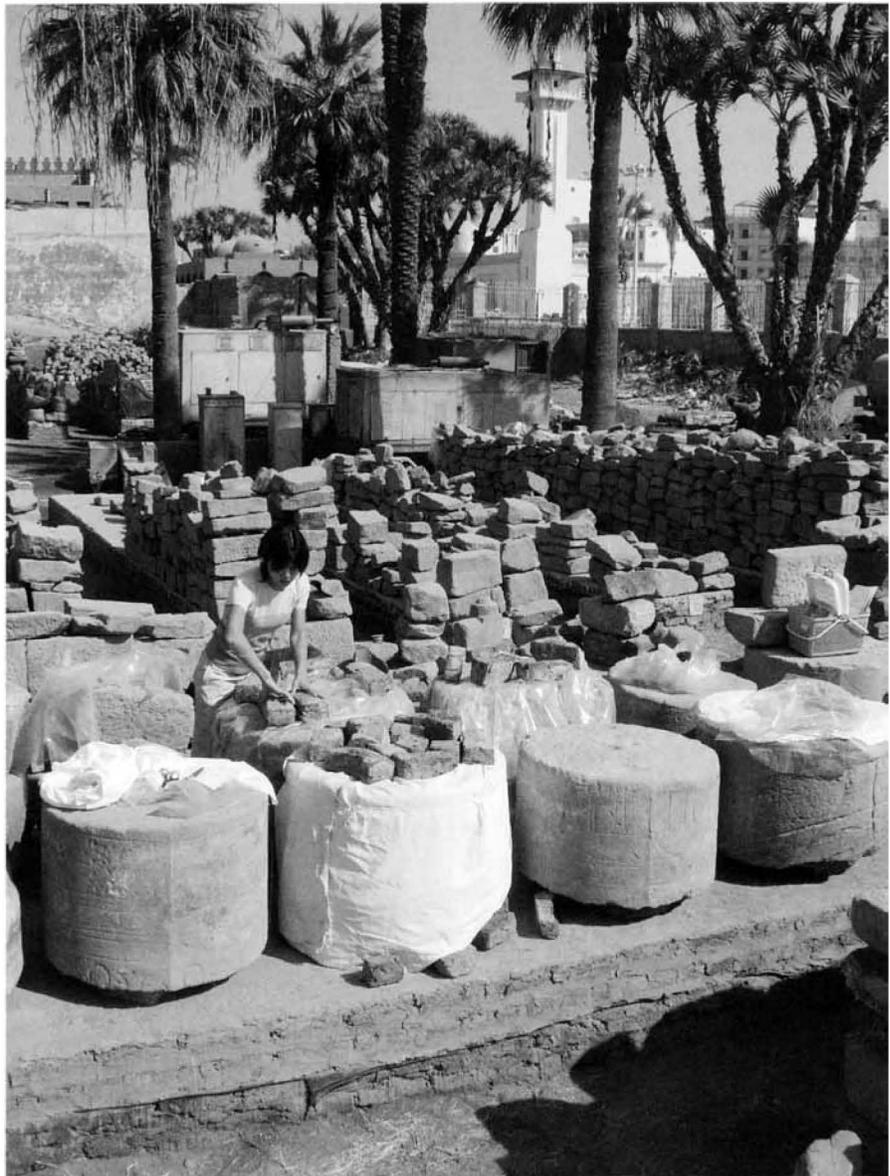
Archives database which Alain is basing on a similar database he designed for the Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak. Emmanuelle, who is an Egyptologist, has begun the process of plugging in the data. They will both be back in March to continue the process. New staff member Louis has been re-drawing all the Nelson key plans using AUTOCAD into the vector system for the new database. These plans will form the structure around which the database is organized, site by site, according to the Nelson numbering system. Louis has also proved to be a real asset in the library, especially with the inventorying of Henri's library with its extensive collection of Arabic titles.

We have had tremendous numbers of visitors already this fall, including Oriental Institute Museum benefactors Sharukin and Beth Yelda, who visited Chicago House on November 10th. On November 17th we celebrated the 82nd year of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor and launched

our 83rd! It was primarily an in-house event, with all staff present for a special dinner, but we were also pleased to host four very distinguished guests: the present Lord and Lady Carnarvon, Audrey Carter (a relative of Howard Carter), and our colleague Bob Partridge, who is escorting them through Egypt, following in the footsteps of the illustrious 5th Earl (they are writing a biography of him). That evening also marked the completion of Dany Roy's work with Chicago House, another major milestone. We toasted him at dinner, extolling his numerous accomplishments in the decade he has worked with us (sealing the Medinet Habu small Amun temple roof against rainwater; replacing the sandstone floor, reconstructing the dyad of Thutmosis and Amun, and installing the new skylight in the central sanctuary; restoring and moving the granite naos inscribed for Ptolemy IX and laying new flooring in the naos room; stabilizing the eastern wall of the Colonnade Hall at Luxor Temple and restoring to it the Khonsu barge fragment group, among the most memorable of his tasks). To Dany goes credit for helping us take the Oriental Institute's operation in Luxor to yet another level of excellence that we will endeavor to maintain, and we wish him all success in his new career in Cairo. Dany's successor, Master Mason Frank Helmholz

is being put through his paces with the completion of the stone-floor restoration in the naos room in preparation for moving the naos back to its original position (and floor level), and wall patching on the northern side of the small Amun temple, but he is taking everything in stride. Chicago House is fortunate to have him, and particularly fortunate that the transition has been so smooth, with no interruption of the work whatsoever.

Our Thanksgiving was an especially festive event this year, with over fifty guests, mostly friends and archaeological mission members working in Luxor, but also a number of Oriental Institute family: Steve Harvey and his team from Abydos, and Oriental Institute professor Matt Stolper, his wife Gwenda, and her brother and sister-in-law who were touring Egypt for the first time. The last week of November, Salam Al-Kuntar, Syrian co-director (with Clemens Reichel) of the Oriental Institute expedition



*Hiroko Kariya consolidating column drums, Luxor Temple*

to Hamoukar visited with us for two very pleasant days, and Susanna McFadden (University of Pennsylvania) spent some time with us researching the history of the late third-century A.D. Roman frescoes which the Italians are cleaning so beautifully at Luxor Temple. That same week — a momentous one — the USAID-funded Luxor/Karnak dewatering project was finished and activated, and Luxor hosted a World Heritage Cities conference to celebrate the inauguration of Luxor's urban renewal program. Milestones all around!

## **DECEMBER**

Things have been extraordinarily busy here, as usual. Our normal epigraphic and conservation work goes well, but we've been obliged to expand our documentation program even further in response to the Luxor development program, now in high gear. On December 5th I sent Yarko out to



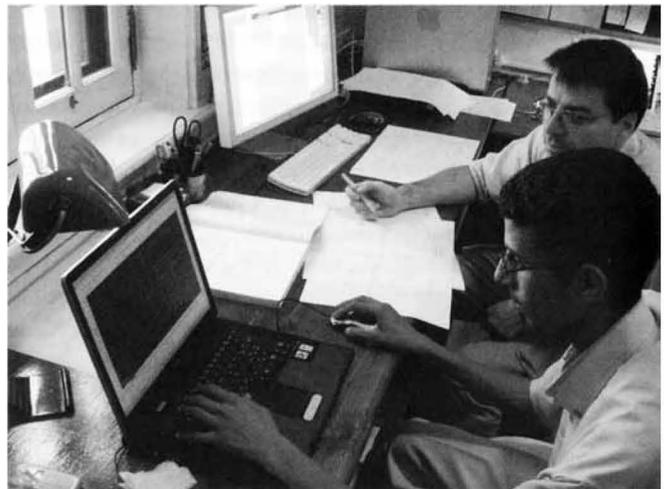
*Dany Roy and workmen splitting stone at Medinet Habu for restoration work*

start photographing (in digital and 35mm b&w) Dra Abu El Naga, Gurna, and Gurnet Murai before they tear down any more houses. The city started demolition during the World Heritage Cities conference, but has stopped for now, which gives us some time, but we hear that the demolition of the modern west bank settlements over the Nobles' tombs area will begin again — in earnest — very soon. There will be much more to do on the eastern bank, too; the city continues to widen streets at the expense of many turn-of-the-last-century apartment buildings. Many other old buildings (including a medieval mosque, two churches, and a number of nineteenth-century public buildings) will be demolished during a project designed to expose the entire Sphinx Road between Karnak and Luxor temples. Even the Government Store east of the Luxor Temple precinct is coming down! Local government officials tell me that the Marhaba shopping center is also slated for demolition, and the road past the southern end of Luxor Temple is to

be extended where the Marhaba is now, giving Luxor Temple more land. Rumor has it that the New Winter Palace hotel is coming down as well, although that has yet to be determined. (As of this printing, it is now official.) Among the improvements and innovations for Luxor is a bowling alley that has appeared in the riverfront terrace in front of the Old Winter Palace! Development is taking many forms, indeed.

As much as we hate to see the character of the old city change, we must remember that the Luxor development program is an honest response to radically changing conditions in the city (and elsewhere in Egypt); accelerating population pressures and the tremendous increase in tourism require expansion of the city's infrastructure and tourist facilities. That is simply the reality of the matter. Since we can't physically save old Luxor, we have decided to do what we do best and document the rapidly changing city as thoroughly as we can, dedicating a new section of our Chicago House Photo Archive to post-pharaonic Luxor.

The dewatering project for Luxor and Karnak was completed and the first of several stages activated at the end of November; we are told that the effects will be tangible within the next two months. I was surprised to see that the Roman gate area east of Luxor Temple is already noticeably dry, and this only three weeks after the activation of the pumps; until recently it was quite wet.



*Louis Elia Louis and Alain Arnaudies working on the new database in the photo archives*

## DECEMBER 2006

It was decided this month to dismantle a series of retaining walls in this area which were constructed in the 1930s — at the time the gate was excavated — and made entirely of reused blocks. The SCA will rebuild the retaining wall using fresh stone; our part of the program will be to dismantle the old retaining walls and move the inscribed pieces into our blockyard for protected storage, documentation, and conservation. Our colleague Ted Brock is now working with us in the Luxor Temple blockyard and will help supervise the retaining wall dismantling with our workmen. He was part of the SCA team last year which did the archaeological monitoring and recovery for the dewatering project at Luxor and Karnak temples, and he will also be finishing the numbering of the blocks recovered from the dewatering trenching outside the Luxor Temple precinct. We are very happy to have him join our team for this important work.

On December 15th the Italian conservators finished their fresco-cleaning work for the season, and the results are simply amazing. Diocletians' court officials once again gaze serenely from the walls, vibrant with the cleaned color. Frank and our workmen dismantled the scaffolding and erected a small scaffold section a bit farther away from the wall so the conservators could take photos before they left, and Yarko later, since he is responsible for the final publication photographs (our part of the collaboration with ARCE). They will be back next November to continue the southern wall, including the apse with its figures of five deified Roman emperors and Roman eagle above. On December 17th at Medinet Habu, Frank and our workmen winched the eight-ton granite naos up and moved it back into its original position against the western wall, at its original height, bringing to a brilliant conclusion the naos moving of the sanctuary. Mabrucs and bravos to them all for achieving yet another milestone in our restoration program.

Yarko is almost finished photographing Dra Abu El Naga, Gurna, and Gurnet Murai before any more demolition takes place; his photos are phenomenal. He was actually present when one of our workmen's houses was demolished. Yarko also photographed the area around the eastern Roman gate this week before the block moving, and the Government Store and covered suq area beyond it, which is going to be torn down shortly as well. We will review his digital and black-and-white shots and select some areas for large-format photography next. By the way, the old foun-

tains in town have all been replaced; the cat fountain by the house, the scarab fountain down by the old Novotel Hotel and the medieval/Gothic kiosk by the Mena Palace Hotel are all little gardens now, and exotic ones at that. With their spiky plants, fully grown palm trees, miniature umbrella-shaped pagodas, and lights at night, they look for all the world like large, lit-up tropical fruit drinks! The garden east of Luxor Temple was removed last spring and has been replaced with a granite-paved plaza with rows of palm trees, recently finished, and there is now a wooden triumphal arch which fronts Suq Street.

Our Christmas dinner was quite intimate this year (only thirty guests, including Chicago House finance manager Safi Ouri's mother, Nabila, and conservators Adel and Nahed, who brought new baby Joia), and with turkey, goose, duck, and all the trimmings was quite festive and fun; cook Tayib and our kitchen crew are absolute miracle workers. The weather was absolutely, stunningly beautiful for the holiday,



*Christian Greco (right) and the Stolper family at Medinet Habu*

## DECEMBER 2006–JANUARY 2007



*Frank Heimholz and team inserting patch stones,  
small Amun temple, Medinet Habu*



*Lotfi Hassan and team consolidating north wall  
of small Amun temple*

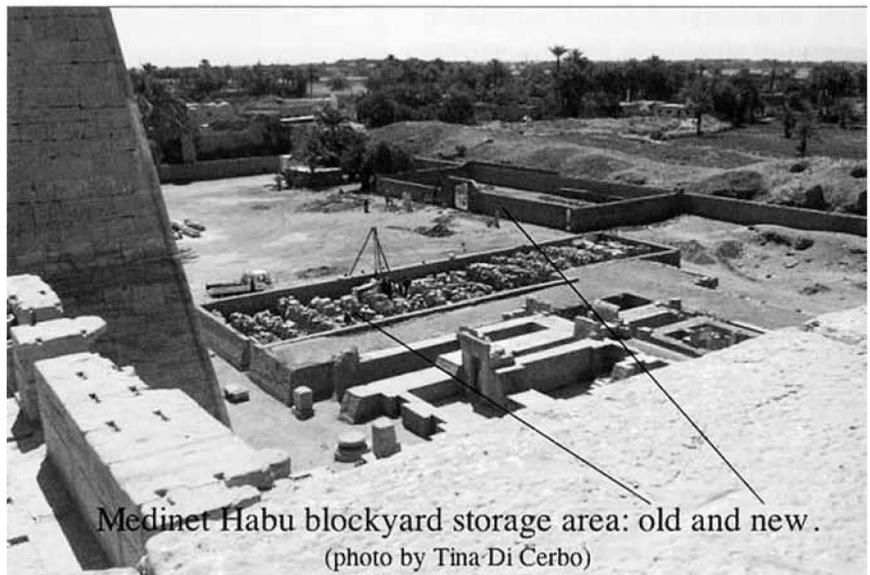
with golden light, and cool, sweet air. We had a visit on the 27th by the son of former Oriental Institute Director/Chicago House Director John Wilson, Thomas Wilson and his family; three generations actually (twelve people total) in Egypt for a family reunion. Thomas' daughter lives with her husband in Cairo, and I was quite surprised to see that — unlike John Wilson, whose photos show him quite dark-haired — the whole family is blond! (They explained that they take after John's wife Mary, who was quite fair.) We gave them tea, a tour of the facility, including the portrait gallery — with the group shots that included John, and I got out his memoir *Thousands of Years* — for them to see. A few days later, Oriental Institute Executive Director Steve Camp and his family (wife Heidi and daughters Lindsay and Naomi) spent a very pleasant few days with us over New Year's. Steve was able to meet with Chicago House finance manager Safi and review our sterling financial management system (which USAID helped us set up in its own image a decade ago), and it was fun to show him and the family our epigraphic and conservation projects at Luxor Temple and Medinet Habu, work that much of Steve's administrative efforts back home supports.

## **JANUARY**

After the New Year's Eve celebration, Bairam holiday, and Coptic Christmas (on January 7), now that we have a full library staff (thank you, Anait!), we have returned to full-day library hours, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday with a one-hour break for lunch at noon. It's been an eventful new year already. On January 13th President Mubarak arrived in town to review the development program in Luxor

and open the new Mubarak Egyptian Heritage Center in the Mubarak Library complex; you can imagine the frenzy of anticipation and preparation for that. As if that was not excitement enough, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was scheduled to arrive around noon that same day for meetings with President Mubarak and a very quick peek at Luxor Temple beforehand (fifteen minutes!). SCA director Mansour Boraik and I were all set to brief her on the activities of the SCA, Oriental Institute, and USAID there, and I had already sent ahead written material on Luxor Temple and the activities of Chicago House in Luxor through our U.S. Embassy contacts.

But, as often happens, the Secretary of State's schedule changed several times. Finally, because she was delayed leaving Israel, the State Department scrapped her Luxor Temple visit altogether! But they asked that I still take



*Medinet Habu blockyard storage area: old and new.  
(photo by Tina Di Cerbo)*

**FEBRUARY**

*Ted Brock, Tina DiCerbo, and Hiroko Kariya  
recovering reused wall fragments, Luxor Temple, Roman east gate*

her press corps through the temple, which I did in the afternoon. We had an hour and a quarter site briefing (history and significance of the temple, preservation issues, USAID funding, history of Chicago House), and they were a most receptive audience; there was even a reporter from the Chicago Tribune. Just before I met with the corps at the temple, I received a call that Secretary Rice wanted to meet with me and Mansour Boraik to give us her apologies for missing Luxor Temple. So at 5:00 we gathered in the foyer of the Old Winter Palace Hotel, she breezed in with her entourage for another meeting, and a bit later Mansour and I were escorted down the hall, where she met us and chatted for a few minutes. She was warm and enthusiastic, and Mansour and I extended an open invitation to return and see the temple sites and Chicago House.

ing this period. I will come back during the summer to participate in planning and monitoring meetings.

On February 16th I spent part of the morning at Medinet Habu with artist Sue Osgood at the small Amun temple doing a Director's Check of one of her drawings at the wall, the final stage of the Chicago House collation process. It was the annual Luxor Marathon Day on the west bank, so en route to the temple we saw lots of happy runners (the weather was perfect — cool and sunny). Traffic was diverted around Gurna to accommodate the race, so we were detoured to the north to the area of Dra Abu El Naga, where I was stunned to see that almost all the houses have been torn down during the past month; the village is now just brown smears on the cliffside. It is hard to imagine that such a total change could occur in such a short period of time (I have been so preoccupied with our temple work of late I had not been in this part of town for awhile). After a



*Demolition of old garden wall to expose east gate bastions, Luxor Temple*

hundred years of talking about purging all modern buildings from the ancient necropolis, it is finally happening, and it is a sobering sight. The residents are being relocated to new homes in a vast new suburb to the north, a wonder in itself. It is truly the beginning of a whole new era in Thebes.

On a happier note, I am pleased to announce that Chicago House photographer Yarko Kobylecky and fiancée Pia Nicolai were married in Cairo on February 19th, and Chicago House hosted a wedding reception for the happy couple and their kin on February 24th, perhaps the first such occasion in the history of the house. We wish them both every good and perfect thing, and millions of years of joy and happiness!

### **MARCH**

After two days of reviewing USAID-supported projects in Middle Egypt (including Matt Adams' work with the Second Dynasty enclosure at Abydos and ARCE's cleaning project at the Red Monastery in Sohag), U.S. Ambassador Frank Ricciardone, his wife Dr. Marie Ricciardone, and the whole embassy and USAID contingent (nine vans!) arrived at Chicago House at 6:15 p.m. on March 1st for a reception and dinner. At 7:30 the Ambassador was interviewed in the Chicago House library by local and national press where he talked about the USAID-supported Luxor dewatering and conservation projects, Egypt-American cooperation, and cultural heritage preservation issues. The official courtyard reception began at 8:45 p.m., dinner was served at 9:20 (!), and everyone was gone by 11:00 for their midnight flight back to Cairo. Our kitchen staff outdid themselves yet again, and while the whole affair was a bit later in the evening than we are used to, it was a great success. The director

of ARCE Gerry Scott and the SCA Luxor directors Mansour Boraik and Ali Asfar also attended, as well as Matt Adams from Abydos, and some of the conservators working in the Red Monastery. Counting the Chicago House team, there must have been about eighty total.

The dewatering program for Luxor and Karnak, which was activated in late November, is now fully operational. I have been informed that the goal of lowering the groundwater level three meters at both sites has been achieved and that level will be maintained for the foreseeable future. We can already see a marked difference at Luxor Temple, where there is much less damp everywhere, and our Karnak friends tell me that excavation is already much easier there with the lower water table. While this is a very good thing, one has to keep in mind that the

dewatering program, while it buys us valuable time, is only a short-term "band-aid" solution which does not address the source of the groundwater: the kilometers of sugar-cane fields adjacent to the antiquities sites. The long-term solution is the replacement of sugar cane with crops that require far less irrigation water, such as vegetables and flowers, a process which will take much longer to effect. This month USAID signed a historic agreement with ARCE to manage a 50-million-Egyptian Pound, three-year grant for east bank post-dewatering follow-up monitoring and conservation, in which Chicago House will also participate. And Ambassador Ricciardone has announced a new dewatering initiative — also funded by USAID — for the west bank. It's not a moment too soon. The situation is increasingly severe on the west bank, and just this month we have been obliged — at the request of the SCA — to add to our Medinet Habu program the dismantling and restoration of the southern inscribed well of Ramesses III, which is collapsing in on itself because of groundwater decay. At this moment, conservator Lotfi and his team are consolidating the crumbling interior reliefs prior to moving, and Frank and his team are assembling scaffolding now for the dismantling process. We are also assisting the SCA in moving the Medinet Habu blockyard to drier ground for the same reason; the new blockyard is being built now and we will transfer the material onto new damp-coursed platforms, sorted by category, starting next season.

This month also marks the completion of the restoration work in the Medinet Habu small Amun temple naos room, the culmination of almost a decade of cleaning and restoration in that enigmatic chamber. Frank and our trusty workmen relaid the last of the paving stones in

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*Medinet Habu epigraphic, conservation, and restoration teams*

front of the naos at its original height, and reinserted the last piece of the red-granite naos itself, found during the cleaning of the chamber, back into its base. The chamber and naos are now fully cleaned, documented in drawing and photograph form, and restored to their original state. Bravo to the extraordinary teams of specialists and workmen (and funding agencies — USAID and ARCE) who have made this achievement possible, and who have taken us to new levels of excellence in our preservation program.

Earlier in March, the SCA received permission from the governor of Luxor, Dr. Samir Farag, to extend the enclosure wall in front of the eastern Roman gate in the new eastern plaza of Luxor Temple a few meters to the east. This will allow the clearance and restoration of the two brick bastions in front of the Roman stone gate, the southern of which was partly exposed during the groundwater-lowering trenching the year before. We found that the northern bastion was completely enclosed in a massive medieval wall made completely of reused pharaonic blocks. Most are broken-up sphinxes of Nectanebo I which appear to be from the Sphinx Road, and the rest are blocks of an unknown gate of Nectanebo II. Hiroko, Tina, and Ted are tirelessly assisting with the clearing and consolidation of the reused material in the extension area and are coordinating the moving of

the material into the Luxor Temple blockyard for storage, documentation, treatment, and *insha'allah*, eventual reconstruction, while the SCA puts the finishing touches on the new retaining wall around the precinct.

Assistant to the Director Carlotta Maher arrived at Chicago House on March 9th to help brief the many visitors and tour groups who pass through our doors. She was put through her paces this year! While I was in Cairo, Carlotta represented Chicago House at a special event in Luxor sponsored by Coca-Cola and helped us host the Oriental Institute tour led by Robert Ritner with site visits and a reception at Chicago House. While she was with us, Barbara Breasted Whitesides — granddaughter of Oriental Institute founder James Henry Breasted — and her family joined us for a library briefing and lively dinner. Later in the month we had the pleasure of hosting the family of archaeologist Uvo Hölscher, who had excavated large sections of the Medinet Habu complex for the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. (Those present included Uvo Hölscher the 13th and 14th!)

#### **APRIL**

On April 3rd I taught a class for the Archaeology Department of the Southern Valley University in Qena, an

APRIL 2007



*Moving reused material from the east, Luxor Temple*

hour north of Luxor. A number of their students use our library, and two of the faculty members wrote their Ph.D. dissertations here, so I know them well, and they have been wanting me to speak for awhile. There were about a hundred undergraduate students in the fourth-year class, and I talked to them for about an hour and a half about our documentation and preservation work in Luxor. I took our new PowerPoint projector (my first time using it), and everything worked very well (115 slides!). I will give the same lecture here on April 15th, at the Mummification Museum lecture series.

But now it's back to work; we are in the final two weeks of our field season and are finishing up our epigraphic, conservation, and restoration projects and preparing to close down. It has been an extraordinary season, one of the most challenging in the history of the Epigraphic Survey. But as Luxor reinvents itself, Chicago House is learning how to adjust — and supplement — its programs accordingly. That is the challenge. This summer I will return to Egypt several times, for our annual audit in June, meetings in July with the SCA and ARCE to discuss the new conservation and monitoring programs for Luxor and Karnak temples, and then again in late August to help lay the groundwork for the archaeological work at the Sphinx Road in front of Luxor Temple. This while writing more reports on our past season's activities, preparing for the season to come (our 83rd!), and coordinating the production of our next publication, *Medinet Habu IX, The Small Amun Temple, Part 1: The Sanctuary*. It will be a full summer!



*Marie Bryan accessioning books in the Chicago House library*

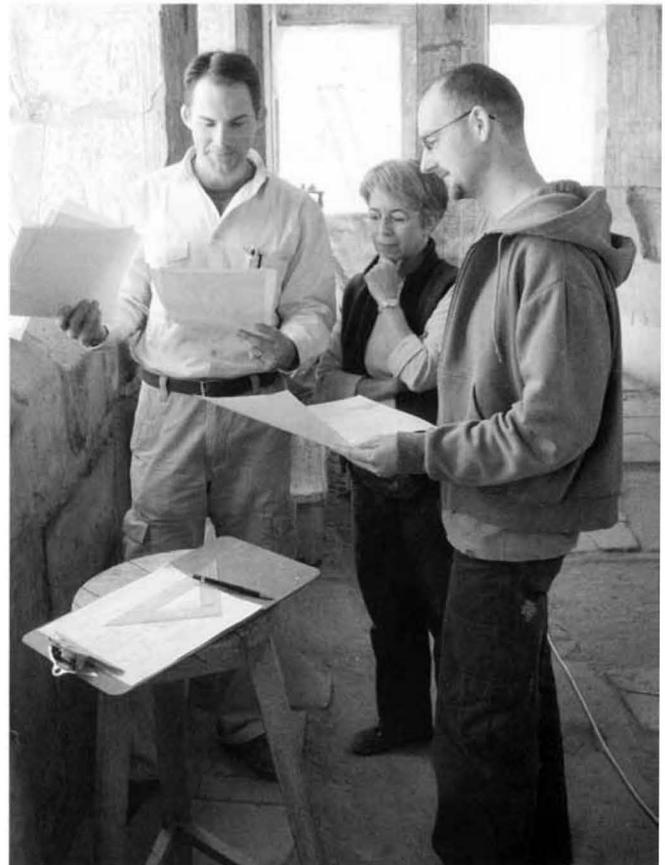
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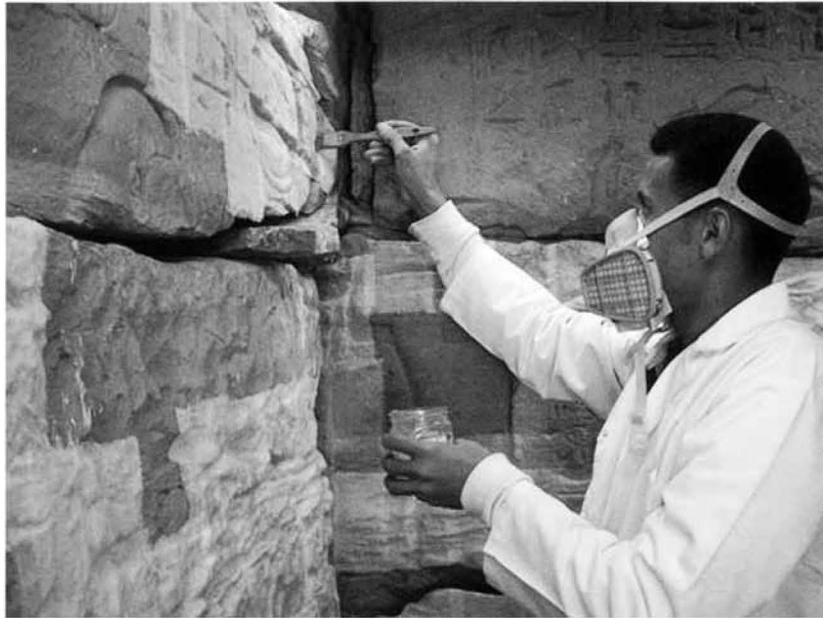
*Southern well consultation, Medinet Habu*

Once again, let me extend my heartfelt thanks to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities and to Chairman Dr. Zahi Hawass for another productive collaboration this season. Sincerest thanks as well to those of you who have faithfully and generously supported our preservation work in Luxor; bless you all. If you find yourselves in Luxor and would like to stop by and see our work and facility, please contact us in advance to determine the best time for a meeting. Chicago House is open from October 15th until April 15th each year, and is closed Saturday afternoons and Sundays. To arrange a visit during the season, please contact the Oriental Institute Membership Office at (773) 834-9777, or contact Epigraphic Survey Director Ray Johnson directly at: [wr-johnson@uchicago.edu](mailto:wr-johnson@uchicago.edu). Please see on page 16 of this bulletin for our contact information in Egypt and Chicago. Best wishes and thanks to you all.

*All photographs, except where otherwise noted, are digital images taken by Ray Johnson.*



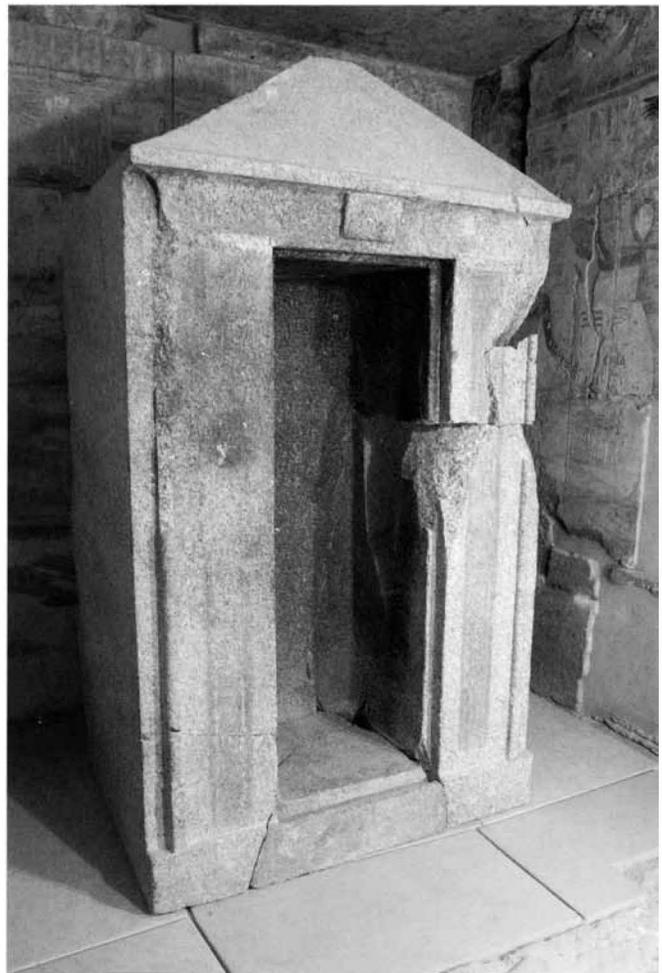
*Brett McClain, Sue Osgood, and Krisztián Vértés consulting at the wall, small Amun temple, Medinet Habu*



*Conservator Mohamed Abou El-Makarem consolidating the interior of the southern well at Medinet Habu*



*Moving the naos, small Amun temple, Medinet Habu*



*Restored naos on restored floor. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky*



*Erecting scaffolding over the southern well in preparation for dismantling*



*Hiroko Kariya consolidating fragments before moving, Luxor Temple Roman east gate*



*Luxor Temple east Roman gate, from above*

#### ADDRESSES OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

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<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/epi/>