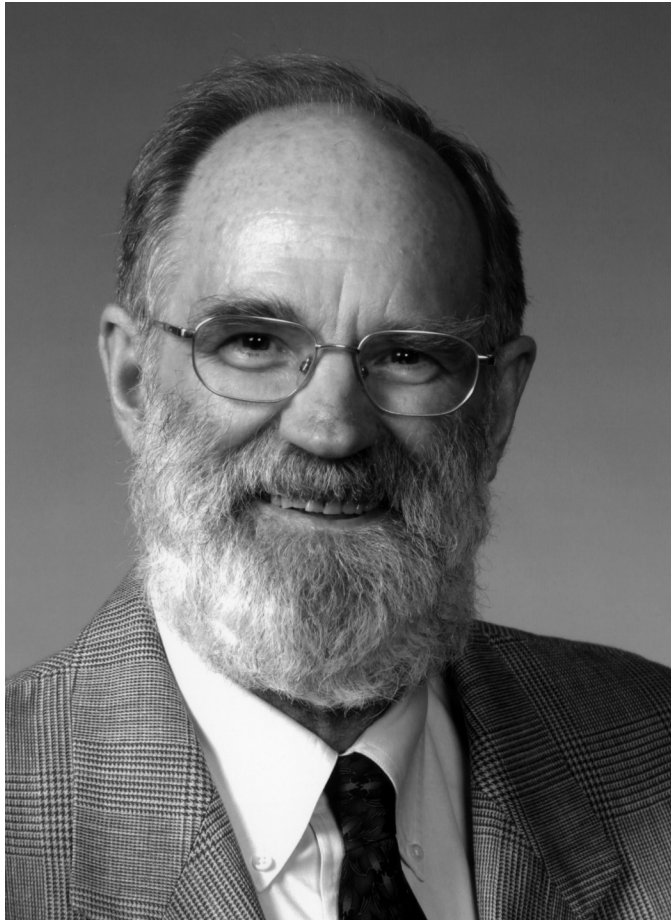


## J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology



Donald L. Hardesty 2006

Donald Lynn Hardesty was born 2 September 1941 in Terra Alta, West Virginia, to Ezra J. and Mary Aidren Jenkins Hardesty. Don's father clerked in the local store and worked as a coal miner. From 1943 through 1945 the family lived part of the time in Baltimore, Maryland, while Ezra Hardesty was employed in a defense plant. Before leaving for Maryland, the family bought a small farm in Bear Wallow, 2-1/2 miles from Terra Alta and lived there until 1959. After World War II, Don's father went to work for the Uptegraf Manufacturing Company, which built industrial

electrical transformers. When the plant moved to Somerset, Pennsylvania, in 1959, so did the Hardesty family.

After Don graduated from Terra Alta High School in 1959, he moved to Washington, DC, at first living with an uncle. He got a job at the National Bureau of Standards and then located to the District of Columbia near Chevy Chase, Maryland. Don worked at the bureau for three years, taking night classes in electrical engineering at George Washington University. He learned about archaeology by visiting the Smithsonian Institution on

weekends, particularly the National Museum of Natural History, and by reading. He decided archaeology was more interesting than electrical engineering and applied to the universities of New Mexico, Arizona, and Kentucky. He was accepted at all three but chose the University of Kentucky where he encountered Douglas K. Schwartz, then a young associate professor who was developing a local archaeological program, running a small museum, and serving concurrently as an associate dean.

Schwartz, who had done his dissertation research on the archaeology of the Grand Canyon, had begun a project to excavate archaeological sites on the Unkar Delta in the bottom of Grand Canyon, an epic undertaking in southwestern archaeology since the crew and all supplies had to be shuttled from the South Rim to the canyon bottom and back by helicopter. Don took classes from Schwartz with fellow students Robert Dunnell (also a refugee from West Virginia) and Lee Hanson. (Dunnell went on to get a PhD at Yale and had a long and eminent career in southeastern archaeology and teaching at the University of Washington; Hanson became a prominent National Park Service archaeologist.)

From 1962 through mid-1964, Hardesty and Dunnell did archaeological fieldwork in southwestern and eastern Kentucky, initially under Schwartz's direction until Schwartz left to become director (later president, now president-emeritus) of the School of American Research (SAR) in Santa Fe. After moving to SAR, Schwartz continued the Grand Canyon project, and Hardesty was a crew chief during the major excavations in 1967.

Hardesty graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1964 and entered the anthropology graduate program at the University of Oregon (U of O), taking his first archaeology seminar under Albert Spaulding. Later, the inimitable Don Dumond became his dissertation advisor. In 1967, Dumond sent Hardesty off to Mexico to help U of O architect George Andrews record the Classic-period Maya site of Comalcalco in the State of Tabasco. Hardesty continued to pursue Mesoamerican archaeology in graduate school and as late as 1974 worked at the post-Classic Maya site of Uatlan in the western highlands of Guatemala with a team from SUNY-Albany.

Meanwhile, Hardesty had become interested in physical anthropology. He attended the International Seminar on Methods in Human Biology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, right after the riots of 1967–1968, an interesting and dicey time to be in Motown, but he still needed a dissertation topic. Hardesty had finished his course work, received an MA in 1967, taken his doctoral comprehensive exams, and was ABD by spring 1968. Ecological anthropology was just becoming a major focus in American anthropology, growing out of the earlier cultural ecology of Julian Steward. Hardesty did his dissertation on that topic, completed in 1972, which was the basis for his *Ecological Anthropology* (1977). In spring 1968, a phone call led him to Nevada.

Warren d'Azevedo had been brought to the University of Nevada (after 1968 the University of Nevada, Reno, or UNR) in 1963 to start an anthropology program. By 1967–1968, the nascent department was moving toward splitting off from sociology and broadening its curriculum. Someone was needed who could teach physical anthropology. D'Azevedo called Verne Dorjahn at U of O, who recommended Hardesty. He was hired on a one-year appointment for the 1968–1969 academic year.

The appointment was made permanent in May 1969 (contingent on his finishing a dissertation), and Don had found a fiancée. On 29 August 1969, Donald Lynn Hardesty married Susan Bennett, of Reno, Nevada, the daughter of Henry (Chick) and Maria Zimbalist Golet Bennett. Susan was a horsewoman, an artist, and an avid bridge player, considerably talented and skilled at all three. She gave up the horses but remains an artist, an avid Giants baseball fan, and a gracious spouse and helpmate to Don, nearly 37 years (and counting) as of this writing.

By 1971 Hardesty was turning his interests from Mesoamerica to the Great Basin. He had undertaken an archaeology project in the Lava Beds area of southern Oregon, including some of the redoubts built by the Indians during the so-called Modoc War of 1872–1873. It was his first foray into Great Basin historical archaeology. Don Hardesty and his UNR colleagues have made the Great Basin the central focus for their researches in prehistoric and historical archaeology, ethnography, linguistics,

ethnohistory, and ecological anthropology of the various ethnic populations who have lived therein at various times. These populations include Native Americans as well as Chinese, Basques, Mexicans, and members of the numerous ethnic groups from northern and western Europe who came to the region after about 1820. When the department initiated a doctoral program in 1988, the focus was expanded to the American West, including Mexico, to better reflect the range of faculty and student research. A major part of that program has been Hardesty's historical archaeology track, which continues to attract students from across the country.

In 1973, Don ran his first archaeological field school in Little Valley, a high mountain valley on the east side of the Sierra Nevada between Reno and Carson City. The area had been logged during the Comstock boom times, and he focused on a sawmill and a logging camp. In January 1974, he gave his first paper at a professional meeting on the Little Valley work at the annual meeting of The Society for Historical Archaeology in Oakland, California. Paul Schumacher of the National Park Service heard the paper and encouraged Don to continue to develop historical archaeology in the Great Basin. As SHA members know, Schumacher had a long-standing interest in historical archaeology and was aware that cultural resource management (CRM) was then aborning. After the now-legendary meeting on conservation archaeology in Denver, Colorado, in December 1974, CRM quickly came to dominate American archaeology, particularly in the West. Hardesty soon found no lack of contracts available to support various historical archaeology projects. He completed work in Little Valley and began excavation of two Pony Express stations, Cold Springs and Sand Springs, as well as the Rock Spring Overland Stage and Telegraph station in west-central Nevada in 1976–1978.

In the meantime, he finished his justly famed *Ecological Anthropology*, first published in 1977 and widely used for many years as a textbook. In 1979 it was translated and published in Spanish and, later, in Chinese (2003). In a long series of important papers published between 1972 and the present, Hardesty has expanded and enriched his theoretical approach to ecological anthropology and its salient applications to general anthropology,

demography, environmental change, and historical archaeology. These publications led to his appointment from 1977 to 1987 to the prestigious international directorate for arid lands ecosystems of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program.

He did not really commit himself fully to historical archaeology until fall 1978, which he spent with Stan South, Ken Lewis, and others at the University of South Carolina, working at Middleton Place Plantation near Charleston. Hardesty began to put together the methods he had learned in prehistoric archaeology with those of South and his colleagues and applied them in the Great Basin. Increasingly, his ecological anthropology theoretical orientation led him to think about the American western frontier, particularly the mining frontier, in new and fruitful ways. Since 1980, he and his graduate students have applied historical archaeological and ecological anthropology methods and theories to investigate the industrial, social, and cultural histories of mines, mining districts, and mining towns in the Great Basin at (among other sites) Cortez, Candelaria, Shermantown, Island Mountain, Treasure City, Unionville, and especially Virginia City as well as in the Mojave Desert at Fort Irwin and Joshua Tree National Park. More recently, he and his students have invaded Alaska to investigate Klondike era Gold Rush sites and early military communications systems.

In 1993, in cooperation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Hardesty and his students initiated an ongoing program of public archaeology in Virginia City involving dozens, indeed hundreds, of volunteers ranging from school children to well-trained avocational archaeologists. Thousands of tourists who came to Virginia City seeking the mythical Bonanza of television fame eagerly watched, instead, the meticulous excavation of 19th-century saloons and other cultural features. By 1990, Hardesty and his students also began investigating 1930s homesteads and sites at which various gender and ethnic issues could be defined through the excavation and documentation of various sites from Lake Tahoe to eastern Nevada and on to Colorado and Montana. All of this has been fodder for a long series of thoughtful and groundbreaking papers in which Hardesty has fruitfully ruminated about mining frontiers and

mining history, not only in the American West but also in Europe and elsewhere.

Then there is the Donner Party. As all those who teach anthropology 101 know, nothing grabs the attention of college students and the general public like incest and cannibalism. In 1987, Hardesty began excavations at Donner Party sites in the Sierra Nevada. There is no record of incest (so far), but the legends are plentiful of anthropophagy during the terrible winter of 1846–1847 that the Donners and their compatriots spent snowbound in the mountains. In 1997 Hardesty published *The Archaeology of the Donner Party* with contributions by colleagues (University of Nevada Press, Reno), the first summary of the archaeological evidence relating to the tragedy.

Don Hardesty's entire academic career from 1968 to the present has been at the University of Nevada-Reno, beginning as a temporary instructor and becoming a full professor in 1980. In 2005 he was named the Mamie Kleberg Professor of Historic Preservation and Anthropology. He has been department chair three times: 1973–75, 1984–86, and 2004 to the present. He also served as acting dean of the Graduate School in 1989–1990. The university has, quite appropriately, honored him with its two most prestigious awards for active faculty—a UNR Foundation Professorship, 1994–1996, and the UNR Outstanding Researcher of the Year Award, 2001. External awards include the Rodman Paul Award from the Mining History Association for outstanding scholarship in mining history in 2000.

In addition to his regular teaching, Hardesty was a major lecturer/seminar leader in the University of Nevada-Reno Continuing Education Program in Heritage Resources Management from its inception in 1987 until 2004. As the program's founding director, I appreciated not only Don's skills as an instructor but his advice about the development and management of the program. His and Barbara Little's 2000 *Assessing the Archaeological Significance of Historic Sites* (Altamira Press, Walnut Creek) is one of several significant publications that grew out of that program and is widely used across the country in both academic and CRM contexts.

Hardesty has served on innumerable university committees. His statewide service includes the Editorial Board of the Nevada Historical Society

*Quarterly*, 1979–1986; the University of Nevada Press Advisory Board, 1993–1997; the State of Nevada Advisory Board for Historic Preservation and Archaeology, 1977–1993; and the State Board of Museums and History, 1993–present.

Hardesty's national and international service has been exemplary. In addition to his contributions to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program, he also served as archaeology theme editor for UNESCO's *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*. Since 1980 he has been a consulting archaeologist for the National Park Service and the Historic American Engineering Record on a series of projects. He has served The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) well, as president in 1987 and as a member of the Board of Directors in 1981–1983 and again in 1986–1988. He also has served on the Editorial Board of *Historical Archaeology* since 1986 and as an associate editor from 1988 to 2004.

On a personal note, I particularly appreciated his being president of SHA in 1987, since I was then president of the Society for American Archaeology, and we could talk archaeo-politics in the hallway between our offices. We talked mostly about the historic shipwrecks legislation which all of us were working on at that time. In addition to his SHA duties, Hardesty served the Society of Professional Archaeologist (SOPA) on the Executive Board, 1986–1988; the Nominations Committee, 1990–1992; and the Standards Board, 1993–1994. He was president of the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA) in the critical period when SOPA was metamorphosing into RPA, 2000–2001. As if this were not enough, he also served on the Mining History Association Executive Council, 1990–1992, and was the association's president in 1999.

Finally, and most importantly in Don's eyes, there are his students. He has taught hundreds of undergraduates over the years in courses reputed to be "hard, but boy it's interesting," as one undergrad opined. As of December 2005, Don has graduated 26 master's and 5 doctoral students. He has found monies for assistantships and field research for nearly all of them. They have been privileged to have him as a mentor and as a role model of what a scholar should be. His UNR compatriots are privileged to have Don Hardesty as a colleague and friend.

The professions of historical archaeology and anthropology, as well as the general and scholarly publics, are privileged to have a wise and innovative scholar who has helped us know more about the lives and times of those who lived in the American West and beyond.

DON D. FOWLER