

Linda Braidwood 1909-2003 by Barbara S. Lesko

Linda Braidwood, archaeologist and prehistorian, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on October 9, 1909 to Rev. Frederic and Mathilda Schreiber. She is best known as the almost life-long colleague and helpmate of the University of Chicago archaeologist, Professor Robert Braidwood and for her informative book on expedition life called *Digging Beyond the Tigris*. However, Mrs. Braidwood produced a number of scholarly articles as well and was, in her daughter Gretel's words: "an incredibly organized and energetic person—kept expedition accounts, did her own taxes...and learned to use a computer well along in her 80's."

Linda Schreiber's higher education began in the State of Michigan at Grand Rapids Junior College from which she went to Wellesley College and then the University of Michigan and the University of Munich. Her B.A. was granted in 1932 by the University of Michigan. Robert Braidwood had also received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from that university. The couple married in 1937 and subsequently had two children, a son and a daughter. Robert Braidwood pursued his doctorate at the University of Chicago (earned in 1942) when James Henry Breasted invited him to do field work near Baghdad in 1930 and subsequently hired him in 1933.

The work in the Amuq Valley in Northern Syria pursued by the University of Chicago was to be the new Mrs. Braidwood's first expedition experience (1937). She would subsequently prepare the earlier Amuq materials for publication from 1938-1947,

as masses of pottery, stone and other artifacts were brought back to Chicago from excavations at Kurdu, Dhahab, Tayinat, and Chatal Huyuk. Linda earned her M.A. from Chicago in 1946.

In 1947, working for the University of Chicago, the Braidwoods established the Prehistoric Project to study the transition from hunting and gathering to farming, and they would be the first archaeologists to find evidence for this transition. Their expedition pioneered by including various natural science specialists to examine the excavated animal bones and plant materials. Also in 1947, the Braidwoods learned of the work that University of Chicago scientist Willard Libby was doing by using radioactive carbon to date organic materials. Material found by the Braidwoods was tested and radiocarbon dating became a tool for dating materials recovered by the Braidwoods at prehistoric sites. They chose to work at the site of Jarmo in northeast Iraq and continued working there until 1955. The children were included in this expedition and the life and work of the camp are described in Linda Braidwood's popular book, *Digging Beyond the Tigris*.

In 1954, the Braidwoods' pioneering work won them a National Science foundation grant, one of the first given for such research, that brought zooarchaeology and archaeobotany into mainstream archaeology. When the Iraq revolution curtailed their work in that country, they switched their attention to Iran (1959-60). Next a Joint Chicago-Istanbul Prehistoric Project would take them to Turkey and Halet Cambel. In 1963 and '64 Linda was a Fulbright Research Fellow in Turkey and she and Robert would return to work in Turkey in 1968, 1970, and 1972. They set the standard for real international collaboration with archaeologists from the Near East. At Cayonu they discovered the oldest known terrazzo floor produced with concrete.

Linda Braidwood was an Oriental Institute Research Associate from 1947 to 1976

and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the journal *Archaeology* from 1952-1967. She organized two courses for the University of Chicago's Home-Study Department (1957-1963), and received the University of Chicago Alumni Service Citation in 1995.

Linda loved to garden, and the couple bought a farm in LaPorte Indiana where they lived during their careers, commuting by signaled train to the south side campus of the University of Chicago. She raised crops, froze and canned vast quantities of fruits and vegetables, and is remembered fondly for baking all sorts of German Christmas cookies. The Braidwoods were known for their warm hospitality to colleagues and students alike and were such a devoted couple-- "True intellectual partners in addition to their deep personal commitment to each other"-- as Director of the Oriental Institute Gil Stein commented when hearing of their demise, that, when they died, within eighteen hours of each other of the flu in their nineties, it seemed particularly, if poignantly, appropriate.

Sources

I am indebted to Gretel Braidwood Tindel of the University of Chicago for her reflections on her mother and to John Larson, Archivist of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, for supplying Mrs. Braidwood's *curriculum vitae*. Also useful was the press release "Linda Braidwood, 1909-2003" issued by the University of Chicago News Office on January 16, 2003.