

HERB BEALS

a life of archaeology and scholarship

By Harvey Steele



Barbara and Herb Beals

One of the many legacies of Herbert K. Beals to the Oregon Archaeological Society is the illustration for the *Screenings* masthead, which has been mailed to members for over 25 years. After 32 years of membership, he was finally voted a life member in 2001, recognition for his service to the organization.

Born in Portland in 1934, Beals was introduced to history at an early date. His father, an admirer of Lewis and Clark, would occasionally speak of Sergeant Floyd (whose gravesite was near his father's childhood home in Sioux City, Iowa) and in his youth was briefly acquainted with the Montana artist Charlie Russell. His mother, born on a ranch 20 miles east of Great Falls, Montana, was a descendant of John Sevier, of French Huguenot ancestry, who fought in the battle of Kings Mountain during the American Revolution. Sevier has the additional distinction of being elected to serve

as the first governor of Tennessee.

Beals graduated from Jefferson High School in 1951 and went to Reed College as a political science major despite a strong interest in the physical sciences. Among those, his first love was geology, but he also studied anthropology. He was active in the Mazamas mountain climbing club and the Geological Society of the Oregon Country.

When he came out of the army, Beals went to Portland State College (now University), graduating in 1958 with a B.A. in social science. He delayed graduate studies to go work for the Clackamas County planning department. In 1965 he was offered and accepted a planning position with the University of Oregon's Bureau of Governmental Research and Service. Five years later, he went to work as a planner with the Columbia Region Association of Governments. There he worked on various planning projects, many of which required considerable cartographic skills.

Beals joined the OAS in 1970, in time for the last year of the Trojan project. He was an active participant in the excavation and also began to do drawings and artifact analysis for the OAS publication *Trojan III*, by Irene and George Warner. Barbara served as a typist for the OAS during those years, typing that report and *Duck Lake* in addition to several years of *Screenings*. After only two years of membership, Beals was elected OAS president in 1972. He became *Screenings* editor briefly in 1973 and continued to be active in site work and publications through the 1970's, serving again as president in 1978.

In 1960 Beals made the momentous decision to quit his planning job and take a leave of absence, enrolling in the then-new public history M.A. program at Portland State University. He completed the program in 1983. During the 1970's he began research on a

variety of subjects including the study of Chinese coinage, which had begun with his analysis of coins recovered at the Trojan site. His research culminated in a definitive article in the publication *Historical Archaeology*, the highest standing in the field. During this time he published many other articles on coinage, including a series on Roman coins, for which he contributed an article a week over the course of a year, reviewing each of the Roman emperors and their respective coinages.

In 1981 Beals worked with me on a report published by the University of Oregon, *Chinese Porcelains from site 35-TI, Netarts Sand Spit, Tillamook County, Oregon*. The report analyzed over 100 porcelain fragments found by Thomas Newman in 1958 at the Netarts site. That work was followed by further research on trans-Pacific contacts with the Pacific Northwest in his 1983 master's thesis, *The Introduction of European and Asian Cultural Materials on the Alaskan and Northwest Coasts before 1800*.

In between the porcelain study and the thesis, he helped the U. S. Forest Service produce a book, *On the Mountain's Brink*, a study of the 1980 Mt. St. Helens volcanic emergency.

At this point, Beals began a major scholarly research series. *For Honor and Country: The Diary of Bruno de Hezeta* (1985) and *Juan Perez on the Northwest Coast: Six Documents of his Expedition in 1774* (1989) were annotated translations with new maps that were acclaimed by other scholars in the field. In 1990

the Perez book received the John Lyman Award for Documents and Reference Works by the North American Society of Oceanic History. Both volumes were published by the Oregon Historical Society Press as part of its North Pacific studies series. A third work, *The 1775 Journal of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra*, is currently being prepared for publication in England.

In 1990 Beals produced an annotated map, *The Last Temperate Coast: Maritime Explorations of Northwest America, 1542-1792*, for the OHS North Pacific Studies Center.

During this period he was also beginning to prepare for publication *Seeking Western Waters: The Lewis and Clark Trail from the Rockies to the Pacific*, by Emory and Ruth Strong. Beals edited the book and contributed valuable location maps. Its publication in 1995 by the OHS Press was made possible by a grant from the late Will and Helen Townes, long-time OAS members.

Over the 32 years of my activity in the OAS, its reputation in the professional community has often suffered because of the absence of project publications and, in some cases, the quality of the publication. This is unfortunate because the quality of the actual field work has usually been very good. The scholarship, artwork, and cartography of Herb Beals has served to correct this misapprehension and benefit our reputation. His contribution to OAS history has been, I believe, significant and unparalleled.