

Donald Whitcomb

While his Persian expedition did not leave in June, **Donald Whitcomb** did manage to send his son John off to Japan, hopefully for better experiences than singing karaoke with his father and Japanese archaeologists. In July Whitcomb went to more exotic Notre Dame University, where he participated in the Umayyad Legacies roundtable, a project organized by Paul Cobb — who took his doctorate from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations — and Antoine Borrut, a young French scholar and familiar face in the Oriental Institute archives. The

final party brought both French and Chicago colleagues to Hindijan, Whitcomb's farm in Indiana, where 102° F temperatures gave a new meaning to “French toast.”

In November, Whitcomb traveled to Dubai (where he visited Hussein Qandil and the Islamic site of Jumeirah, as recounted in *News & Notes* No. 189). This was en route to Bushehr (Bushire) on the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf for the Siraf Congress. This international congress was very well organized and resulted in important papers on Siraf, the early Islamic port farther down the coast. The site is now engulfed in a new town and the old dig house is now the Siraf museum. This visit had special meaning for Whitcomb as he excavated at Siraf with the British excavators in 1972. His return to Bushehr was memorable in that he met students he had taught English to almost forty years ago when he was in the American Peace Corps. He also visited Bishapur where



CSI Syria: Paul Cobb and Don check out al-Bakhra

he met several students who had worked with Abbas Alizadeh and were ready to come to the excavations at Istakhr.

Teaching this year began with “Egypt after the Pharaohs,” with a large number of students of Egyptian Archaeology exposed to the later periods. A number of other students requested a course on archaeological ceramics, particularly learning to examine and draw pottery. As Nubia was all the rage in the Oriental Institute, he asked Raymond D. Tindel if he had some pretty glazed sherds from the Nubian collection that he could use for the class. The happy result was boxes of sherds from Serra East, from the village that occupied the Ramesside fort and was very carefully excavated. In the winter he taught a seminar on the Islamic City, which seemed exciting for the new information, which is being generated in this subject (see Archaeology of Islamic Cities project report). Meanwhile the students of Islamic Archaeology took charge of a new University workshop. Asa Eger, Katie L. Johnson, and Persis Berlekamp from the Art History Department organized a fine series of workshops under the general subject of Islamic art and artifact to explore the different approaches to Islamic material culture.

Finally, spring brought Whitcomb and Jan Johnson to Granada, Spain, for a conference on densification in the Islamic City. Under the inspiration of reports from Katherine Strange Burke, who was pursuing her dissertation in Cairo for most of this year, he returned to the Fustat reports and attempted to apply Tony Wilkinson’s principles of landscape archaeology to this urban landscape. This proved a useful exercise and prompted a return to the subject for a final round of the Umayyad Legacies (recounted in *News & Notes* No. 191) held in Damascus. One of the diversions for this group was a trip into the desert to al-Bakhra, the scene of the assassination of the Caliph Walid II in the eighth century and the sad end for a great patron of Islamic art and architecture.
