

The Journal of Vermont Archaeology

The Vermont Archaeological Society

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Victor R. Rolando, Editor

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The Vermont Archaeological Society, Inc

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We are happy to dedicate this issue of *The Journal* to Founding Member and Honorary Life Member of The Vermont Archaeological Society - Joseph Popecki.

To know about the early years of the VAS is to know about Joe's involvement with a small group of foresighted people - Bill Haviland, Nick Muller, Sue and Durwood Smith, Louise Basa, Ken Varney and others. And in the midst of them were Joe and Jeanne Popecki. Joe served as Vice-Chair of the initial Steering Committee. But let us digress a bit, back to before Joe's VAS years.

Born in 1924 at Saginaw, Michigan, Joe graduated from Sacred Heart Seminary and earned his MA in Library Science from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He eventually became Acting CUA Director of Libraries and taught at the CUA Department of Education and the US Department of Libraries. In 1949 Joe married Jeanne Gillespie, also a CUA Library Science student and employee of the library.

While at CUA, Joe led in the development of the first NASA library, which had millions of uncataloged books and periodicals. Joe and his small staff took six years to catalog it all. Soon after, in 1967, he and Jeanne moved to Burlington, Vt., where Jeanne became librarian at Champlain College; and Joe at St. Michael's College, eventually Director of Libraries until he retired in 1995.

Along the way, Joe became a member of the Burlington College Board. He is also Board Member of COVE (Council of



Joseph T. Popecki

Vermont Elders), is Ward Clerk for Ward 4 in Burlington ("one of the largest and best-run Wards in the city" according to Jeanne), and publishes the quarterly *The NER Coupler* for over 1,200 model railroaders in the Northeast.

One day back in 1968, just after arriving in Vermont, an item appeared in the *Burlington Free Press* announcing an organizational meeting for an archaeological society. Joe had been interested in archaeology and, through Jeanne's prompting, they both attended. The small group met at UVM on May 14, and met again many times after, usually in the shade of a tree at the rear of Williams Science Hall. When Steering Committee Chair Ralph Roberts left for grad school, Joe 'bumped up' to Committee Chair. With that experience behind him, Joe was a natural choice for first VAS President, and was so elected at the Society's first Annual Meeting on October 18, 1968, at the Sugarbush Inn in Warren. It was about this time that Joe was also part of the archaeology crew at one of the Pine Island digs.

Formation of the VAS caught the attention of *Vermont Life* magazine and "The Start of VAS" written by Charles Morrissey, appeared in the Winter 1969 issue. That same winter, Joe Popecki and Ken Varney appeared on Vermont ETV to further increase the visibility of the fledgling organization.

Joe was reelected two more terms, to 1971, the maximum allowed. Then at the 1974 Annual Meeting, he was appointed Treasurer, and has been reappointed every year since, marking 30 consecutive years this fall - which has to be a record for any archaeological society in New England, if not the entire Northeast.

We are not sure that the VAS would have survived into the 21st century had it not been for Joe Popecki's dedication to the ideals for which the VAS was founded. Board members come and go, yet Joe remains on-station and on-duty, balancing the society accounts, reminding us to pay our dues, maintaining the membership list, providing mailing labels that send Newsletters and Journals on their way, and being there with the cash box at the start of most of VAS meetings. But most important, as our senior member, mentor, and advisor, he guides the VAS on a steady course, and it is his behind-the-scenes work that makes it so easy for the rest of us to enjoy being VAS members.

Thank you, Joe.

Victor R. Rolando
(with Jeanne's assistance)

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Front cover photo: *Excavating a small test pit on a hill overlooking East Creek, in Orwell, Vermont., during the VTDHP's 1977 East Creek Archeological Survey Project: Davis Koier at left wielding a shovel, William Bayreuther at right of the screen. (James B. Petersen photo; courtesy of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.)*

