



# An Archaeologist's Sketchbook

By ALFRED BENDINER

*When Fro Rainey and his staff asked my wife and me to go to Tikal and make an architectural survey of the Acropolis, they didn't specify that we work solid from six A.M. to nine P.M. like regular archaeologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, grave diggers, and sherd polishers.*

*So I found some spare time on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to doodle.*

*Here are a few drawings of what goes on in and around and about the great archaeologists' Paradise in the Peten.*

*You too can be an archaeologist or even an interested spectator, bird, flora, and fauna fancier, herpatologist, botanist, camera fiend, or just plain snooper.*

*The plane comes in from Guatemala City on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, and you can stay over as long as you behave like a tourist. Take along some aralen, entero vioformo,*

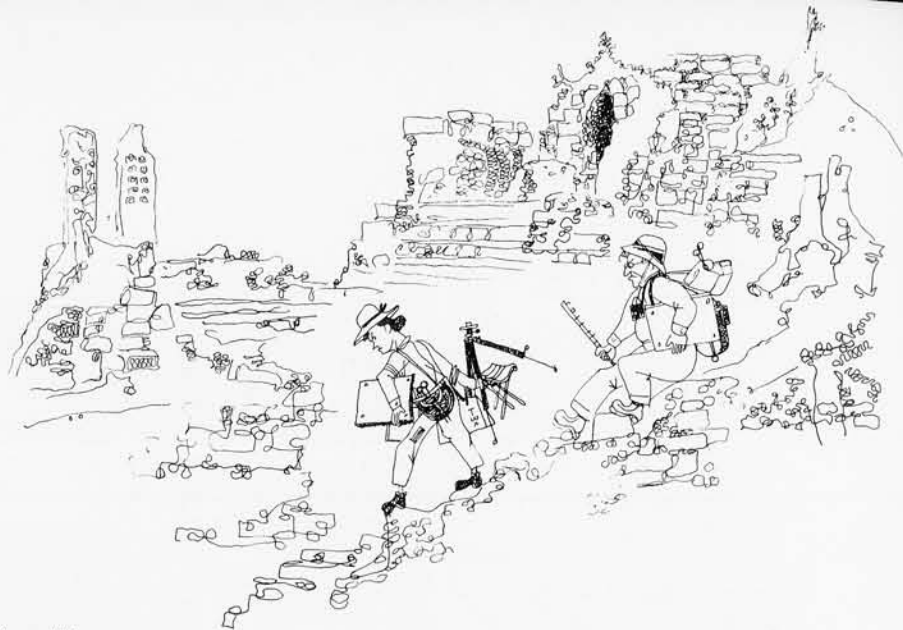
*bird-watching glasses, cameras and film, whiskey against the cold nights.*

*The whole rain forest is endlessly fascinating and you may acquire a sunburn, pick wild orchids, spot a quetzal or at least a toucan, watch the monkeys and try and figure out what the stelae are saying.*

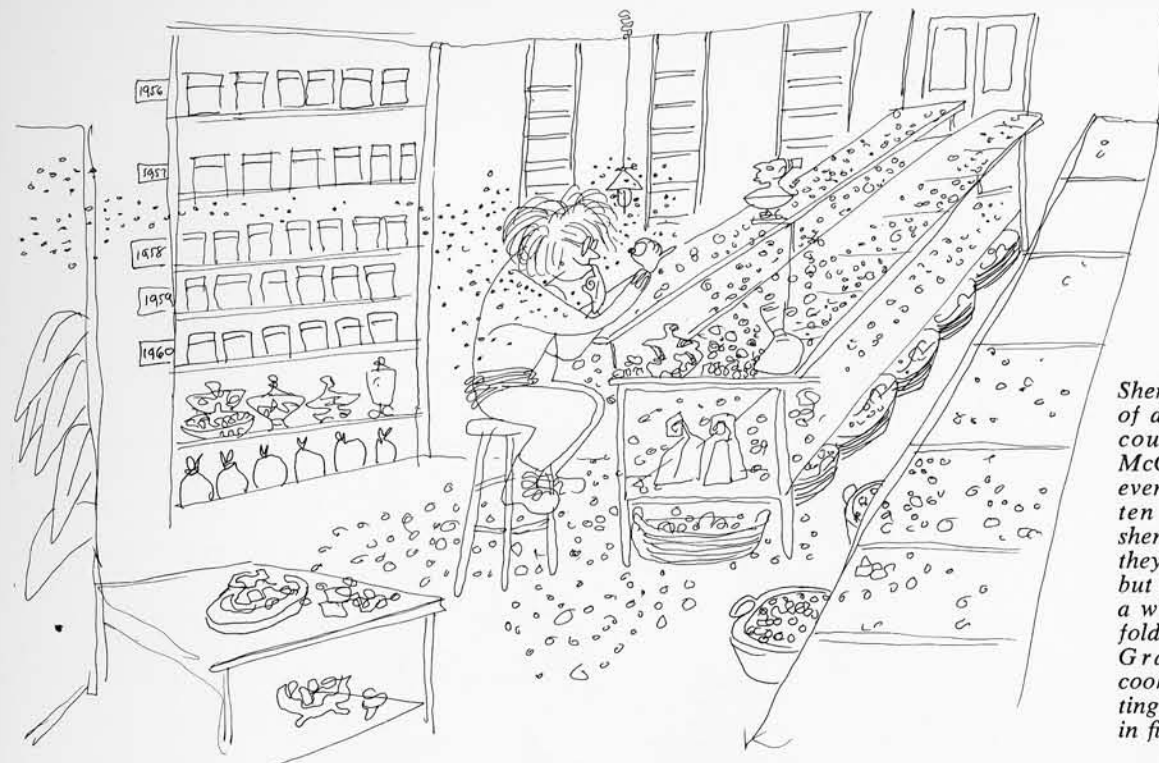
*Don't feed or annoy the archaeologists, who are deep, serious M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s developing a frown trying to figure out what made a bunch of midget Indians act civilized or maybe better. It's all still a wide open problem lacking a wordy solution and if you can learn the Morse code you can date a monument as quickly as the "beards." So come, oh come, to Tikal and take home a genuine old obsidian carving tool recently faked in Guatemala City. But keep your hands off the real museum objects. They search baggage at the border. Except maybe you can sneak out an old bone, if it doesn't crumble.*

*Alfred Bendiner .v.*

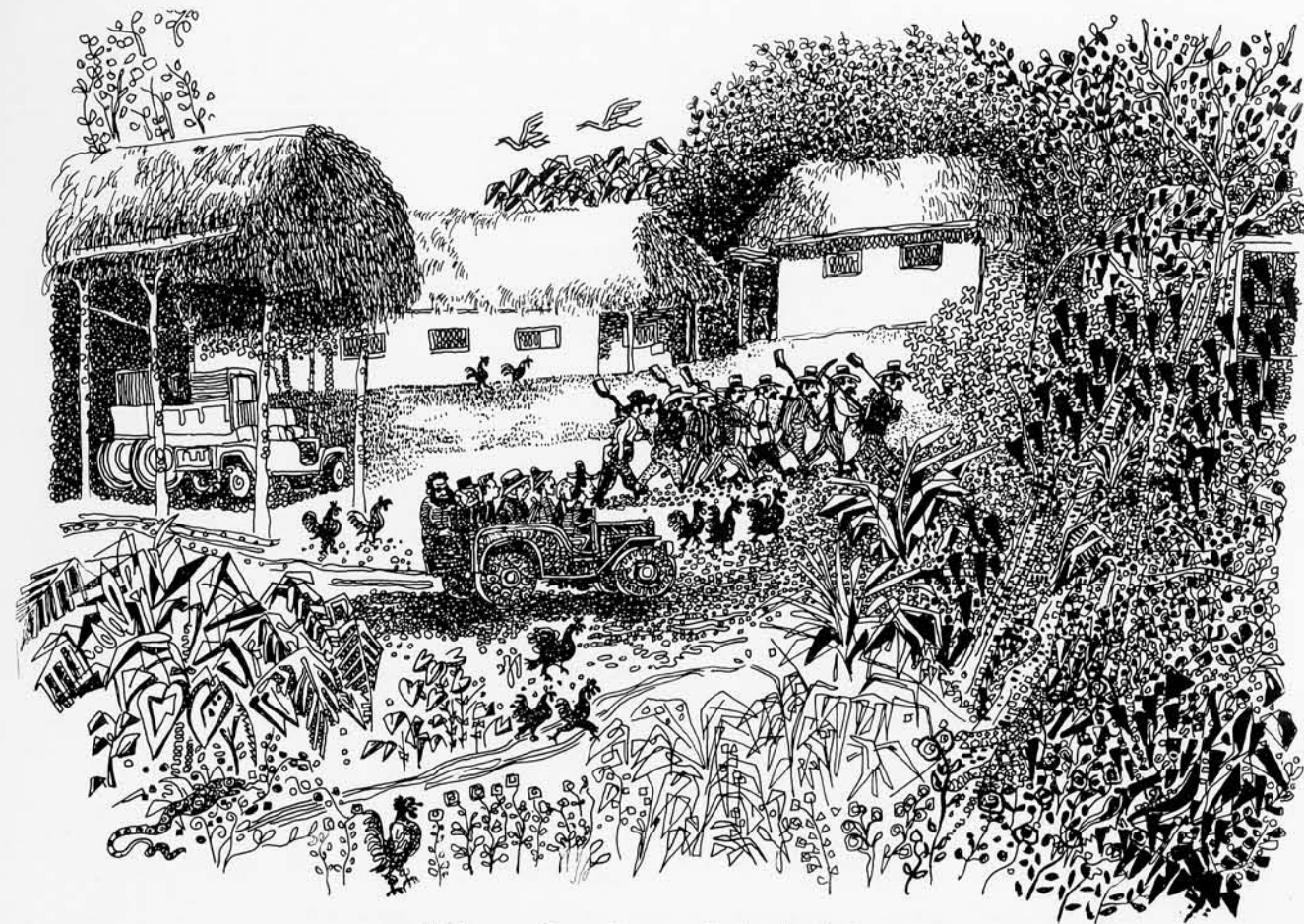
As we ascended and descended the forty feet of Temple I four times daily, loaded with a drafting room of gear, and perspiring in the burning sun, I could hear just everybody at home saying, "Lucky you. And wasn't it all the greatest!"



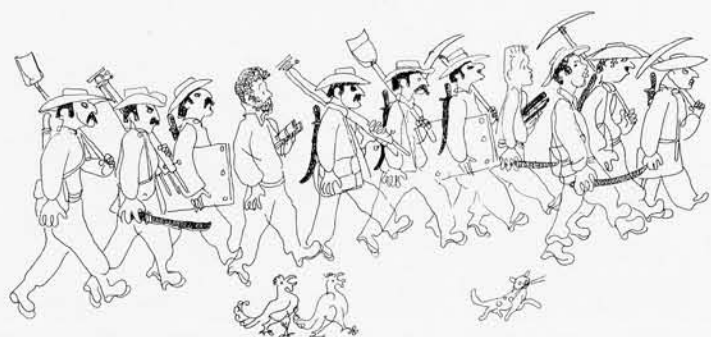
Rudy, our personal stake pounder and rod man, takes his leave of home and family to go to his daily task.



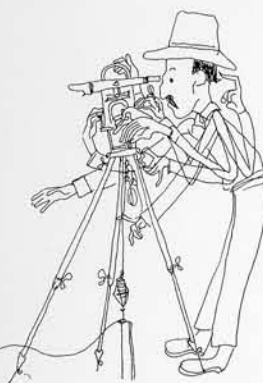
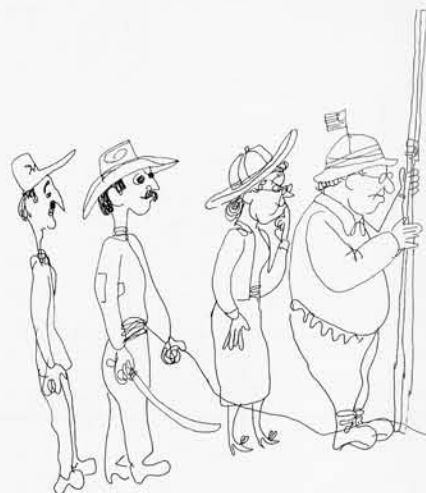
Sherds are the backbone of archaeology, next of course to the real McCoy bones . . . For every skeleton there are ten thousand busted sherds (or is it shards?); they're hell to match up but when they do join, a whole civilization unfolds . . . all add up to Grandmama Maya cooking goulash or patting frijoles way back in five-o-five A.D.



Chicleros with machetes and a jeepload of archaeologists going to work at 7:00 a.m.



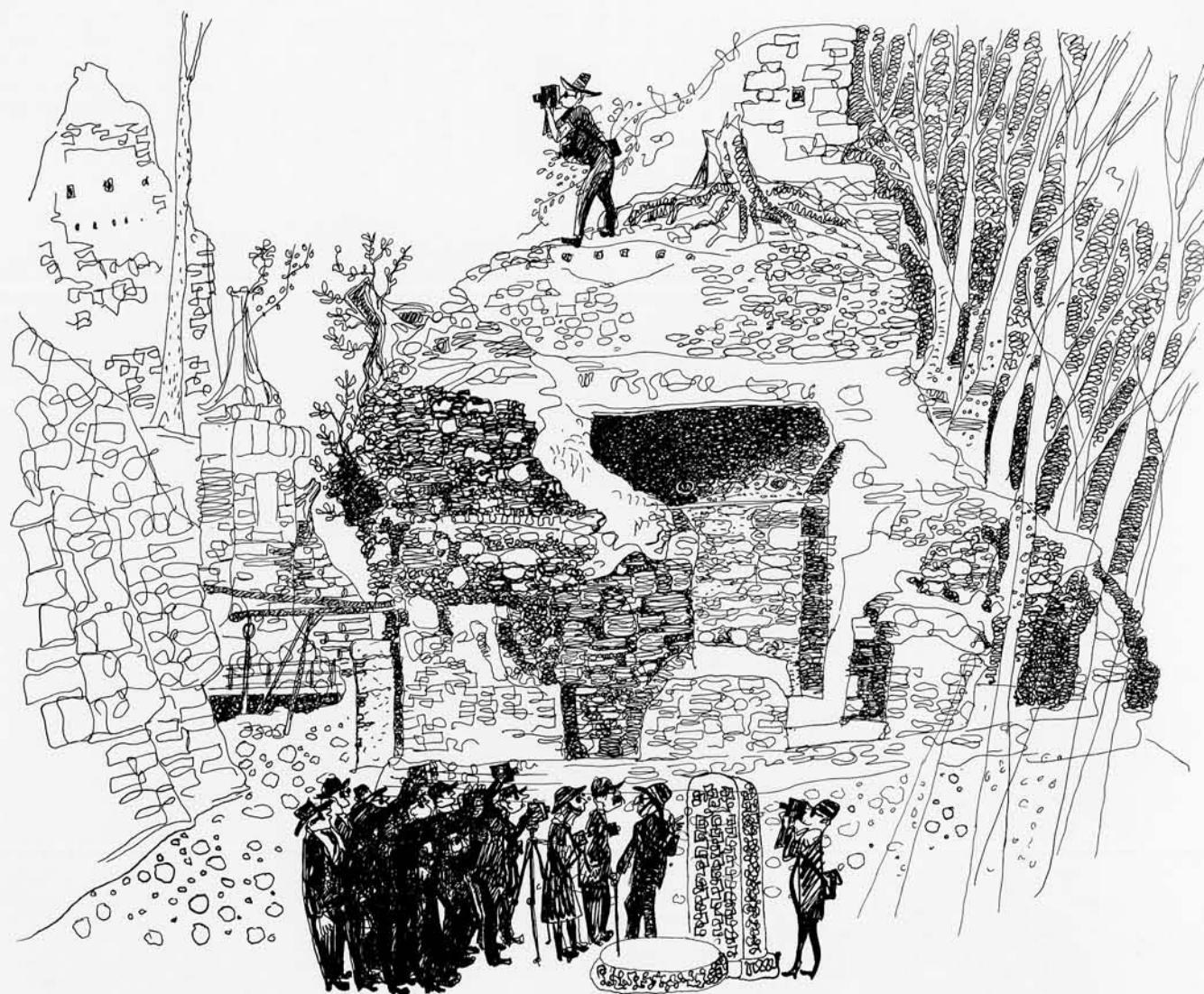
*These are the surveyors going out to work in the jungle, each with four husky chicleros to carry the gear and do the work.*



*The greatest invention of mankind to aid the field man is the transit. It is a seeing-eye which can look straight ahead for a mile and up and down three hundred and sixty degrees at "true north"—if you can master the delicate twists and turns.*



*Home, sweet home*



*No true scholar archaeologist would dare name an old wreck of a monument "The shrine of Nedjma, the starry eyed virgin of November twelfth Long Count." They just number them; so, here is 20 with 26 beyond. It's not a very clear drawing but then neither are the ruins.*



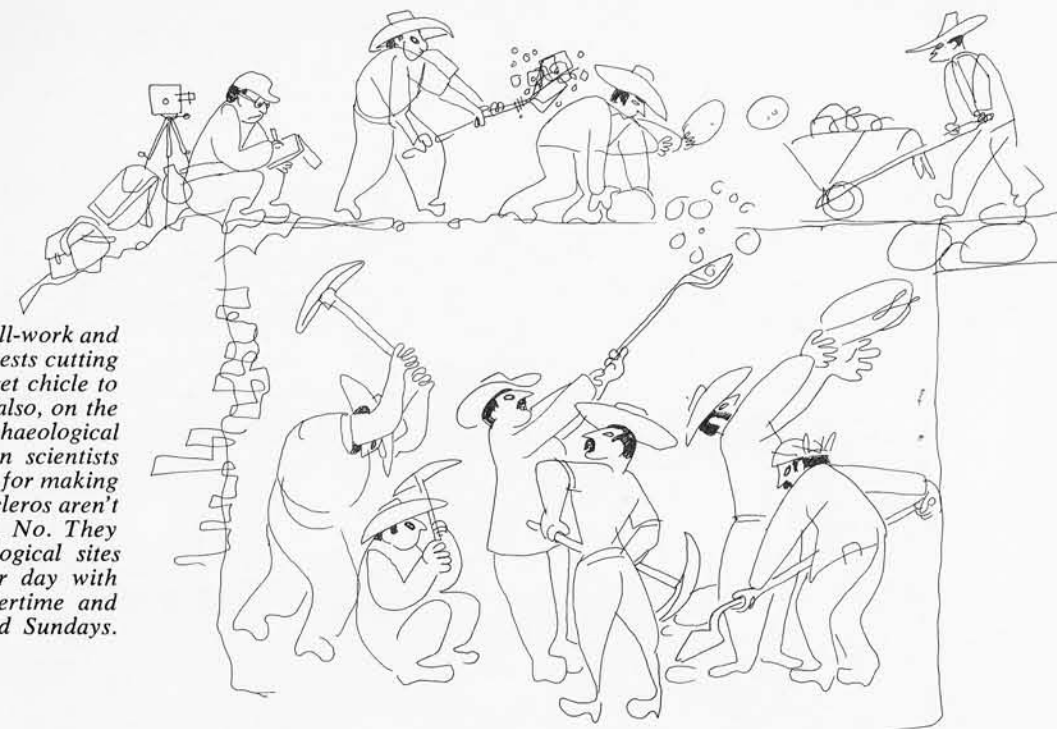
*Six-o-five and the morning routine*



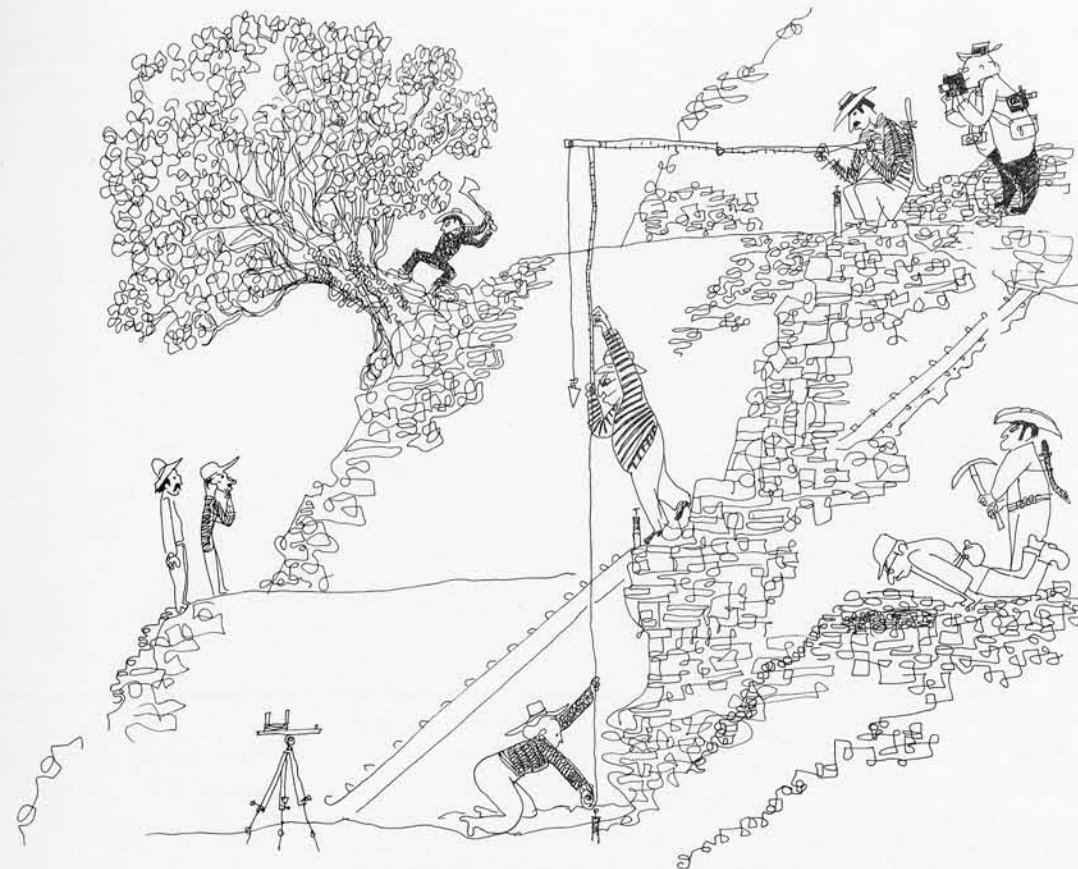
Here is a fine pattern of chicleros knocking down an ancient wall. It is only about a hundred and ten in the sun, but these boys are dressed buttoned up solid and oozing.



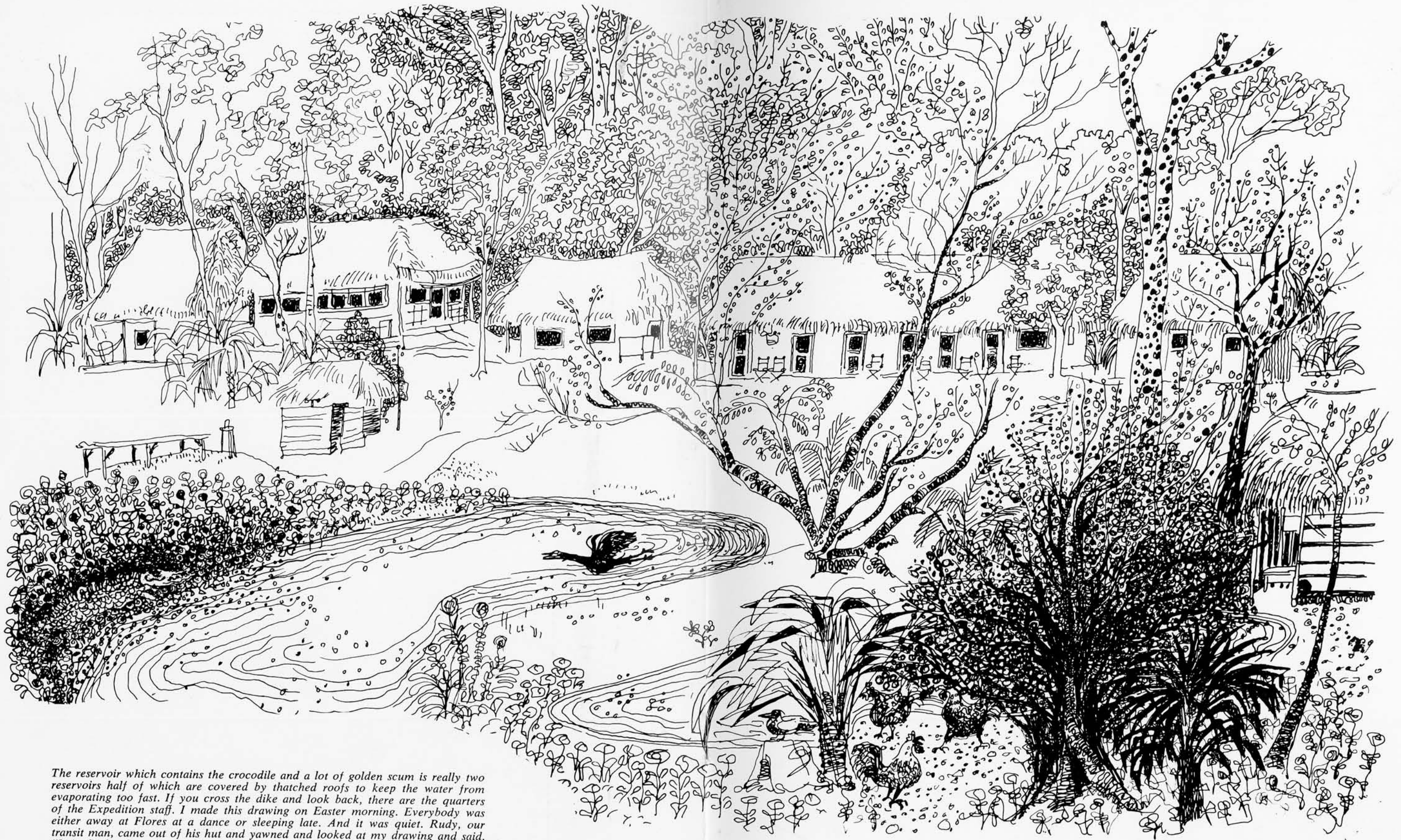
Adam and Eve never had it so good, and all screened too.



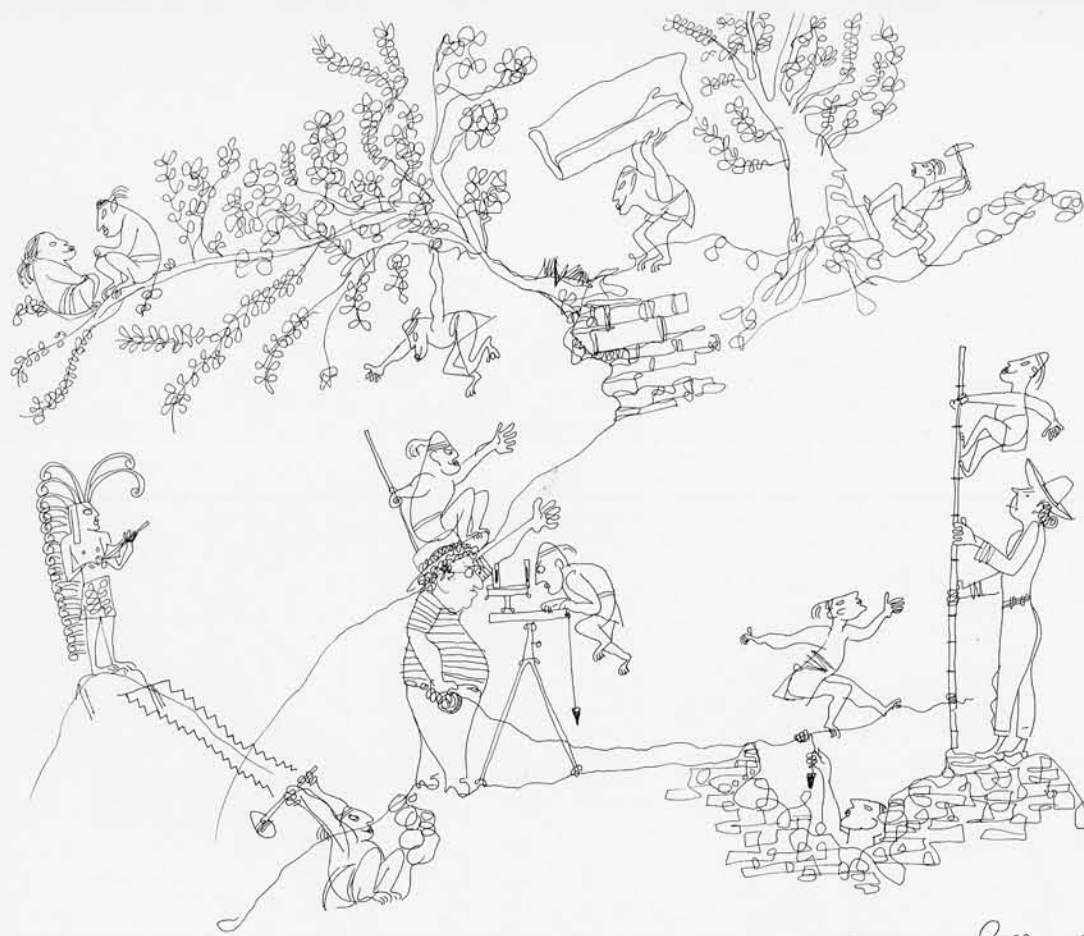
"Chicleros" are men-of-all-work and originally lived in the forests cutting the bark of the trees to get chicle to make chewing gum and also, on the side, they located archaeological sites. Now the American scientists have discovered a plastic for making chewing gum, so the chicleros aren't chicleros any more. No. No. They are diggers at archaeological sites and work an eight hour day with time and a half for overtime and double on Saturdays and Sundays.



For any other middle-aged hopeful who thinks archaeology is just a-settin' with a gin and tonic and yelling at a workman to dig or measure, this is an accurate delineation of what to do until the doctor (of philosophy) comes.



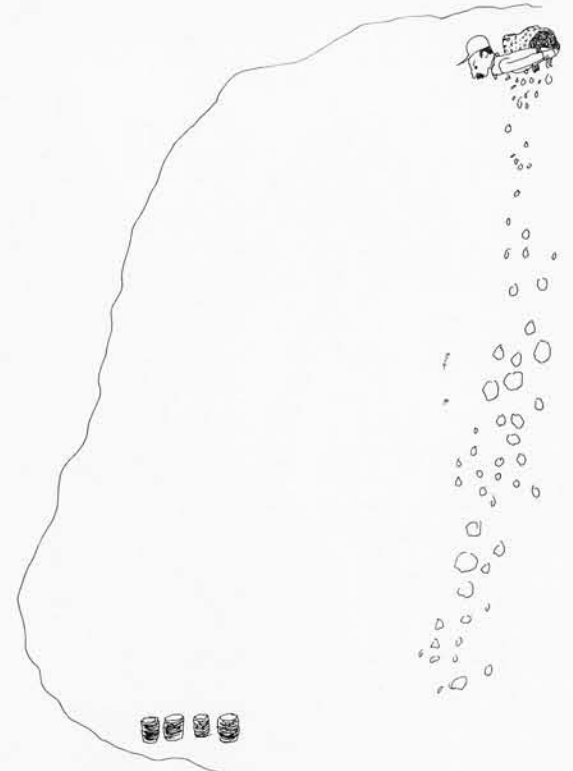
*The reservoir which contains the crocodile and a lot of golden scum is really two reservoirs half of which are covered by thatched roofs to keep the water from evaporating too fast. If you cross the dike and look back, there are the quarters of the Expedition staff. I made this drawing on Easter morning. Everybody was either away at Flores at a dance or sleeping late. And it was quiet. Rudy, our transit man, came out of his hut and yawned and looked at my drawing and said, "It is the headquarters of the staff." Then I knew it was all right, so I quit and went back for tinned Easter eggs.*



After a couple of months it gets you, like a good jungle should. The little people fog your scopes and the tapes stretch. And Betty says plaintively, "It's only a joke, Al, a poor, tired, worn, little joke."



Artist at work on reconstruction drawing of sculptured stone while wife takes detailed measurements to satisfy the director's demands.



Dom Pedro, the Indian pick man, has just hit nothing . . . and opened a big hole doing it, which turned out to be a richly stocked tomb of an important personage—the highlight of the season!



Bird watching tourists



It used to be traditional that when you uncovered a tomb of some ancient, the gods would drop you dead in your tracks or curse you so hard that your arm would wither or something equally awful and serious would happen. But, nowadays, you couldn't possibly collapse in a heap without falling over six tourists, a visiting scientist and his wife, two photographers from "Life" and all the members of your staff who are waiting for the "big moment." This is a true picture of the discovery of Stela X.



Temple I is the pin-up of Tikal and is being restored—gradually. It is high and wide and handsome and is the cynosure of all eyes and cameras. On Saturday nights, the boys climb up and put an F.M. phonograph in the upper temple and the place resounds to Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms.