NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

EDWARD HOLLAND SPICER

1906—1983

A Biographical Memoir by

JAMES E. OFFICER

Biographical Memoir

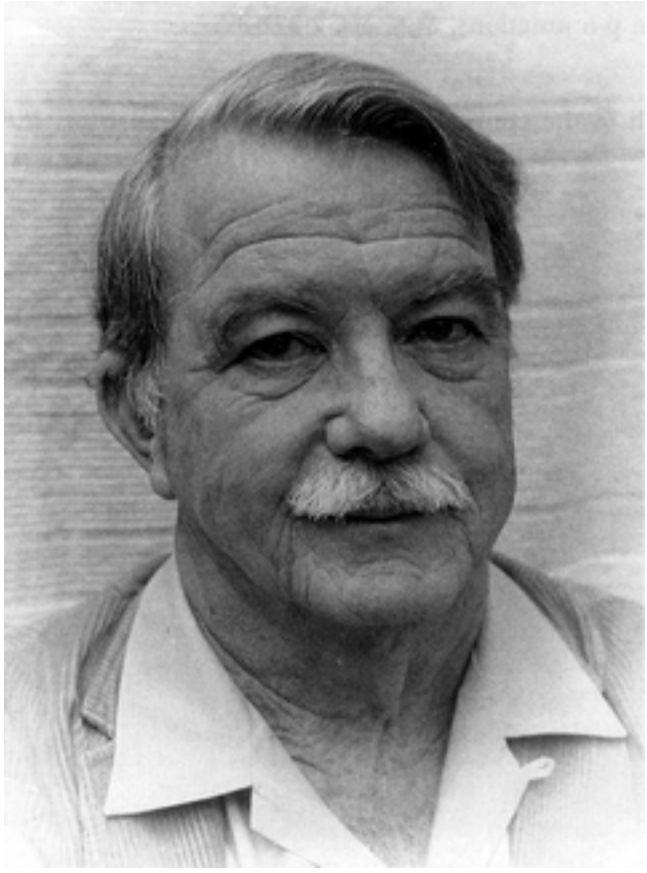

Photo by Rosamond B. Spicer, Tucson, Arizona

Edward H. Spicer

EDWARD HOLLAND SPICER

November 29, 1906–April 5, 1983

BY JAMES E. OFFICER

THE ROBERT BARCLAY SPICER FAMILY of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, had a double cause for celebration on November 29, 1906. Not only was it Thanksgiving Day, but it was also the day Margaret Jones Spicer gave birth to her youngest son, Edward Holland. Her first-born child had died several years earlier, but a second son, Bill, was on hand to greet his new sibling. The elder Spicer was of Quaker persuasion, and in 1908 he took his family to Arden, Delaware, a single-tax community based on the principles of Henry George.

The Spicers fitted nicely into the liberal intellectual atmosphere of Arden, which lay in a setting of fields and woods along Naaman's Creek just north of Wilmington. Here, Ned and Bill were exposed to stimulating discussions of politics and economics. They also took part in the annual Shakespearean plays that provided entertainment for both local residents and summer visitors.

At the time the family moved to Arden, the elder Spicer was editor of a Quaker journal called *The Friends Intelligencer*. His ultraliberal views soon cost him his job, and he turned to truck farming, a vocational choice that introduced his sons to the world of work. Both Ned and Bill spent portions

of each day hoeing and weeding the gardens, filling the woodbox, carrying water from the town pump, and looking after animals such as goats and rabbits.

Until he was thirteen, Ned obtained all his education in Arden. The children went to school in each other's homes, the mothers taking them for a month in turn. Later in life, Ned stated that he could not remember when he learned to read, but it was undoubtedly at the knee of his mother, who instilled in him a love of books and writing. From his father he gained a knowledge of philology and by the age of twelve was copying words and texts of the Algonquin Indian language. On his own he sought and absorbed knowledge about the natural environment. Memorizing the scientific names of plants and animals was a favorite pastime.

Ned's formal education began in 1919 when his parents enrolled him in the Friends School in nearby Wilmington. Traveling by train from his home in Arden, he studied there for three years. In 1922 the family moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where Ned's father began working with the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. Ned graduated from Louisville Male High School in February 1924.

During the two years he lived in Louisville, Ned indulged a long-held interest in sailing. He constructed a canoe, which he outfitted with a sail, and cruised the waters of the Ohio River. After graduating from high school, he left home and enrolled at Commonwealth College, a new progressive school at Newllano, Louisiana, where he remained less than two months. In April 1924 he and a friend went to New Orleans to seek employment as merchant sailors. Ned found a job as an ordinary seaman on a ship called the *Aquarius*, which carried him to Germany. After short stops at the ports of Bremerhaven, Stettin, and Hamburg, the *Aquarius* returned to New Orleans and Ned went home to visit his parents.

There he learned that his father was dying of cancer at the age of fifty-five.

Following his father's death, Ned returned to the Wilmington area where he worked briefly, alongside his mother, at the Greenwood Bookshop. Fascinated though he was with books, Ned found he could not settle down; so he headed again to sea. Early in 1925 he sailed on a banana boat to Puerto Barrios, Guatemala; then, after returning from Central America, he joined the crew of a vessel hauling ore on the Great Lakes. A seamen's strike ended his career as a merchant sailor, and in the fall of 1925 Ned enrolled at the University of Delaware, planning to major in chemistry.

A FIRST TRY AT COLLEGE

Quickly disappointed with a required introductory course in chemistry at Delaware, Spicer turned to literature and drama. He became a member of the Footlights Club and acted in several plays. He also joined the staff of *The Delaware Review* and became its assistant editor. During his sophomore year, he took his first course in economics and decided to transfer to Johns Hopkins University, where he could obtain additional instruction in that subject.

At the time of Spicer's enrollment, Johns Hopkins was experimenting with what its administrators called the "New Plan" under which a student could take graduate courses without first earning a baccalaureate degree. Ned chose some of the more advanced classes, including one for which he wrote a paper titled "Theory of Hours and Production," which he read at a graduate seminar. He also helped to found and served as president of a student club called "The Radicals" whose members felt that socialism provided a better response than capitalism to the world's economic problems.

In 1928 Spicer learned that he had the symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis and entered a sanitorium where he remained for most of the following year. Free from prescribed assignments, he spent his time reading, assisting with work in the laboratory, and pursuing a strong avocational interest in astronomy.

Ned returned to Johns Hopkins in the fall of 1929 but soon dropped out. Economics no longer held his interest; he felt he had to get away from Baltimore and see more of the world. With financial help from his mother, he purchased a bus ticket to Phoenix. The decision to go to Arizona would turn out to be one of the most important of his life.

Greatly stimulated by his new surroundings, Ned resolved to maintain himself and sought employment wherever he could find it. He washed windows at a resort hotel in Phoenix, picked oranges, and worked at an agricultural inspection station. He also spent many weekends exploring southwestern Arizona, where he found prehistoric ruins and traces of precious minerals. Even a bout with smallpox could not diminish his enthusiasm for the desert and mountains.

Spicer saved his money so that he could enroll at the University of Arizona and take whatever classes he might need to qualify him for a bachelor's degree. He hoped then to pursue graduate work in either geology or archeology. He was delayed a year in carrying through on these plans because the advent of the Great Depression led to failure of the bank in which he had deposited his funds. Fortunately, he still had his job with the inspection service and was able to replace the money he had lost.

ARCHEOLOGY TAKES OVER

In the fall of 1931 Spicer went to Tucson, where he shared accommodations with several other students in similar eco-

nomic circumstances and began attending the University of Arizona. One course in advanced economic theory proved enough to earn him a B.A. in economics, as well as senior honors. While completing his degree, he enrolled in a class about southwestern Indians taught by Clara Lee Frapps (Tanner). He also came to know Dean Byron Cummings, who found him an eager volunteer for field trips to nearby Indian ruins. Ned would later comment that at this time he developed an interest in archeology that was "unflagging." In 1933 he completed work for his master's degree in that subject with a thesis on Prescott black-on-gray pottery and the American Indian society that produced it.

During the summer of 1932, when Spicer was working at the Kinishba Indian Ruin with Cummings, he came to know John H. Provinse, recently arrived in Arizona from the University of Chicago, where he was studying with A. R. Radcliffe-Browne and Robert Redfield. It was Provinse who first sparked Ned's interest in social anthropology.

After receiving his master's degree in the spring of 1933, Ned headed for northern Arizona to take part in an archeology project that resulted in the partial excavation of Tuzigoot Ruin, now a national monument. Associated with Spicer at Tuzigoot were Louis R. Caywood and Harry T. Getty. Funding came from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration—forerunner of the Civil Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration. One aim of the project was to provide jobs for unemployed copper miners and smelter workers in the area; and more than 100 men with picks and shovels greeted the archeologists on their first day at the site. After choosing several crews, they set to work, and early in 1934—ten months after starting—they finished both the digging and a report on what they had accomplished.

During the late spring and early summer of 1934, Spicer

did additional archeology work for the Museum of Northern Arizona. He had not to this point considered seeking a higher degree. At the urging of John Provinse, however, he agreed to visit the University of Chicago campus at the beginning of the fall term to speak with the renowned anthropologists whom Provinse had recommended so highly. Impressed with Redfield and Radcliffe-Browne, Ned decided to continue graduate studies leading to a doctorate in social anthropology. Fay-Cooper Cole, department head at Chicago, suggested that Spicer apply for a full scholarship, which he did and which had positive results.

STUDYING SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AT CHICAGO

In return for his scholarship Spicer assumed responsibility for cataloging and taking care of the extensive office library maintained by Redfield. Even with the scholarship, he did not have all the money he needed to pay for his room and food. Aware of this problem, one of his fellow students, Rosamond P. Brown, proposed that she and her roommate, along with Ned and another student, share supper each evening at the apartment rented by the women. This arrangement, plus many study hours spent together, brought Ned and Rosamond into a relationship they would share for the rest of Ned's life.

The long study hours and the cold Lake Michigan winter took their toll on Ned, who, early in the spring, suffered a hemorrhage that required hospitalization. Cole and other members of the department, aware of Ned's precarious financial situation, arranged for payment of his medical bills. They also suggested to Rosamond that she share her class notes with him so that he might obtain credit for certain of the third-quarter courses that he needed for his degree program. While in the hospital, Ned not only studied the notes Roz provided him but also read extensively, being

particularly attracted to the writings of French sociologist Émile Durkheim.

When he was finally able to leave the hospital, Spicer returned to Arizona, where, thanks to further help from his professors at Chicago, he obtained a temporary job at the Arizona State Museum. In June 1936 he married Rosamond in a ceremony conducted by her father, a Swedenborgian minister. They spent their honeymoon at the Yaqui village of Pascua in northwest Tucson, which would be their residence for the next year and where they would conduct a community study. They then returned to Chicago, and Ned worked on his dissertation while Roz finished her master's thesis, both based on the Pascua research.

Ned gained his first teaching experience while a faculty member at Dillard University in New Orleans, where the Spicers lived from 1937 to 1939. During the summers, when school was not in session, they participated in an archeology project at Kincaid, Illinois, sponsored by the University of Chicago. Ned was field director in 1939.

Their affiliation with Dillard University provided the Spicers an unusual opportunity to meet and develop friendships with African-Americans. From these associations they acquired much knowledge about race relations, which Ned later shared with his students at the University of Arizona and which would be important to both Ned and Roz during the many years they worked with the Tucson and Arizona Councils for Civic Unity.

ARIZONA, WASHINGTON, AND ARIZONA AGAIN

The fall of 1939 found the Spicers back in Tucson, where Ned had a two-year appointment as an instructor in the University of Arizona Department of Anthropology. He was replacing Harry T. Getty, who had gone to the University of Chicago to complete work for his doctoral degree. While in

Tucson during the remainder of 1939 and 1940, Ned conducted additional research among the Tucson Yaquis and finished a manuscript called "People of Pascua" to go along with the book based on his dissertation. Roz was pregnant during part of this period and in 1940 gave birth to their first child whom they named Robert Barclay but who soon became "Barry" to one and all.

A Guggenheim Fellowship made it possible for the Spicers to spend the final months of 1941 and the early part of 1942 in southern Sonora, Mexico, studying Yaqui Indian culture on its home grounds. Following America's entry into the war, the Mexican authorities forced the Spicers to leave, and they came back to Arizona earlier than they had planned. Ned began work as a community analyst at the Poston Relocation Center for Japanese-Americans, while Roz did fieldwork on the Tohono O'Odham Indian Reservation. In 1943 Ned became head of the Community Analysis Section of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), and the Spicers moved to Washington, D.C., where they remained until the WRA discontinued operations. Their second child, Margaret Pendleton (Penny), was born in Washington in 1945.

Shortly after going to the east coast, Ned wrote in his diary that he had come to the conclusion that he wanted to spend the remainder of his life in Arizona, which he described as "my land." In the fall of 1945 Emil W. Haury, head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Arizona, invited him to rejoin the faculty there, and he and Roz were delighted to accept the offer.

Ned's responsibilities with the WRA ended on June 30, 1946, and the Spicers went back to Tucson. Sensing they would be in Arizona for many years, they started building a home near the ruins of old Fort Lowell on the outskirts of

town and, except for brief intervals of research and travel, remained in Tucson thereafter.

By the time the Spicers returned to Arizona in 1946, Ned was already well known in anthropology circles. The University of Chicago had published his revised dissertation in 1940 under the title *Pascua: A Yaqui Village in Arizona*, and the book received favorable notice from colleagues throughout the country. He also contributed—along with Fay-Cooper Cole, Fred Eggan, and Henry Hoijer—to the preface for Grenville Goodwin's classic work *Social Organization of the Western Apache*, which became available in 1942. Additionally, he wrote or collaborated in the writing of several articles on the relocation of Japanese-Americans that appeared in social science journals, and he contributed to *The Governing of Men*, a book written by Alexander H. Leighton and published by the Princeton University Press in 1945.

From his base in Tucson, Spicer continued to reflect on his experience with the WRA and to publish articles dealing with various aspects of that experience. He also returned to his research on Yaqui history and culture and wrote many additional articles, books, and chapters of books concerned with these Mexican Indians.

Serving with the WRA convinced Ned that anthropologists had much to contribute to decision making within governmental agencies. It was this conviction that led him to accept office in the Society for Applied Anthropology, which he had helped to found. He became vice-president of the organization in 1947, not long after he contributed his first article to the society's journal. Thirty years later the organization accorded him its highest honor—the Bronislaw Malinowski Award.

THE FRUITFUL FIFTIES

For Ned Spicer the 1950s proved to be one of the busiest

and most satisfying decades of his life. Not only did he carry forward his involvement with applied anthropology, he also pursued an interest in culture change that in the early 1960s yielded significant contributions to acculturation theory. Additionally, he completed research for a major book concerned with the impact of European civilization on the Indian population of northwest Mexico and the southwestern part of the United States. He also expanded his professional relationships through service from 1951 through 1953 on the Board of Directors of the American Anthropological Association.

At the beginning of the decade, Spicer accepted an invitation from Alexander Leighton to work with John J. Adair of Cornell University in organizing and conducting summer seminars for administrators of overseas agricultural and social science programs, as well as Cornell graduate students in anthropology. The seminars exposed students to the cultures of Indian and Hispanic communities in northern Arizona and New Mexico. Funding for the program came from the Carnegie Corporation.

At Leighton's suggestion, Spicer edited a casebook for use by faculty members and students of the seminar. The Russell Sage Foundation sponsored publication of the casebook under the title *Human Problems in Technological Change*. It came out in 1952, the same year the last Spicer child, Lawson Alan, was born. By the mid-1960s *Human Problems* would become a standard text for Peace Corps and Vista volunteers, as well as others working in domestic and international community development programs.

Although Spicer had been interested in culture history and the processes of social and cultural change while doing research in archeology, *Human Problems* was the first publication after his conversion to social anthropology wherein he gave significant attention to such subjects. In 1941 in a

complimentary review of *Pascua: A Yaqui Village in Arizona* prepared for the *American Anthropologist*, Ralph L. Beals chided Ned for not doing more historical and comparative research that might have strengthened the study and spared the author certain errors. Whether Beals's criticism had anything to do with a shift in Spicer's orientation will never be known, but after Ned's return to academic life in 1946 his research always included an important historical dimension.

Well before the beginning of World War II, anthropologists had become interested in learning more about social and cultural change. Ralph Linton's 1940 work titled *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes* gave added stimulus to this research trend. Following a 1953 summer seminar on acculturation, Spicer and several colleagues decided to organize an additional conference on this theme with the aim of designing a research project to explore in greater depth the theoretical and practical aspects of culture change.

The second acculturation seminar, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, took place on the campus of the University of New Mexico in the summer of 1956. Spicer and five colleagues agreed on a format for a joint study that would describe culture change in six Indian tribes, identify periods when particular change factors prevailed, and characterize the strategies employed by the agents of change as well as those used by tribes in responding to change. From this collaboration came the book *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change*, published in 1961.

Spicer provided the introduction to *Perspectives* as well as a section on Yaqui culture and a final chapter titled "Types of Contact and Processes of Change." Harvard anthropologist Evon Z. Vogt—one of Spicer's associates in preparing the book—commented later that Ned made two important contributions to acculturation theory in *Perspectives* and his later writings. One was to sharpen the concepts of directed

and nondirected culture change, and the other was to focus attention on the social structure of the "contact community" as a major acculturation determinant.

While engaged in research for *Perspectives*, Spicer continued to collect material for a book he had started on the comparative effects of Spanish, Mexican, and American rule on the Indian cultures of Arizona, New Mexico, and the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua, a region he referred to as the Southwest. His ideas for this volume, as well as the theoretical aspects of *Perspectives*, provided exciting material for discussion among the graduate students who attended Ned's seminars on culture change, some of which he held in his home.

EDITING AND OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite the heavy load of teaching, research, and service to the profession that kept him busy during the 1950s, Ned, at the end of the decade, yielded to the entreaties of his colleagues and accepted responsibility for editing the *American Anthropologist*. During the three years he was engaged at this work, he somehow managed to finish his writing for *Perspectives* and also to complete the manuscript for a gigantic tome that the University of Arizona Press published in 1962 as *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960*. This volume, running to nearly 600 pages, was highly lauded by both anthropologists and historians and has since attained the status of an ethnohistorical masterpiece. With support from his second Guggenheim award, Ned began work on *Cycles* in 1955 while living in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Following his service as editor of the *American Anthropologist*, Ned took sabbatical leave in the fall of 1963. A National Science Foundation senior fellowship enabled him to do a comparative study of programs for Indian better-

ment in Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador. He returned from Latin America in 1964 and shortly thereafter turned down the opportunity to become a nominee for the presidency of the American Anthropological Association.

Spicer continued to do research and to write after concluding his sabbatical, but in the late 1960s he gave extra attention to teaching, which he always considered one of his most important and beloved responsibilities. He and a colleague from the sociology department expanded a seminar in community development they had organized, and both designed and implemented short training programs for Vista workers and others engaged in similar work. In 1968 Spicer accepted an invitation from William S. King, an official of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and former student of his, to help plan, and take part in, a series of regional community development seminars for BIA personnel.

During his extensive studies of culture contact and change, Spicer became fascinated with the abilities of particular ethnic groups, such as the Yaqui, to retain separate identities within the nation-states of which they formed a part. In 1969 he obtained a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to visit Europe, where he might investigate firsthand such groups as the Basques, Catalans, Irish, and Welsh, who he felt shared with the Yaquis this quality of endurance. In the summer of 1970 he and Roz began their travels and remained away from Tucson for a full year. Not long after they returned, Ned published a short article in *Science* titled "Persistent Cultural Systems." Despite its brevity, the article attracted international attention and helped stimulate a new research interest in the social sciences.

Ned was already past normal retirement age when he returned from Europe, but he had two major writing projects he hoped to finish during the years that remained to him.

One, already begun, was a lengthy manuscript on Yaqui culture that incorporated many of the ideas and research techniques he felt most important. The other was a book on "enduring peoples" throughout the world. He lived to complete the first of these objectives but not the second.

In 1972 Ned returned to the board of the American Anthropological Association as president-elect. Shortly afterward, he learned that he was suffering from cancer of the lower jaw, a condition similar to that which had cost the life of his father. Doctors began radiotherapy treatments and for the next several years would continue their attempts to control the disease in this fashion. Spicer went on working as before and in the fall of 1973 took office as president of the American Anthropological Association. He spent much of the next year assisting the program chairman with arrangements for the group's annual meeting in Mexico City; and he invited his old friend, historian Miguel León-Portilla, to give a major address at that event.

Shortly before Ned stepped down from the presidency of the American Anthropological Association in the fall of 1974, he was honored with membership in the American Philosophical Society and received similar acclaim from the National Academy of Sciences the following year. Despite his cancer, he continued to teach and to advise students, as well as to work on his Yaqui manuscript. He also was deeply committed to several community projects involving the Tucson Yaquis and his beloved Fort Lowell neighborhood.

The Society for Applied Anthropology voted Spicer its coveted Bronislaw Malinowsky Award in 1976. Over the years he seized many opportunities to apply his anthropological knowledge to designing, administering, and assessing government programs for improving the lives of people. In addition to his work with the War Relocation Authority, the Cornell and Indian Affairs seminars, and his evaluations of

Indian programs in Central and South America, Spicer assisted the Stanford Research Institute with preparing an inventory of resources on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, took part in a national study of Indian education, and advised the Yaquis on public housing. He often reminded his students that anthropologists had much to contribute to administration and encouraged them to seek employment outside the academic setting.

In 1978, after completing his Yaqui manuscript, Spicer retired from the University of Arizona, where he enjoyed a joint appointment in anthropology and sociology and at one time also directed the Bureau of Ethnic Research. During his final year on campus, the Arizona chapter of Phi Beta Kappa elected him to membership. He had belonged to Sigma Xi, the national science fraternity, since his Chicago days.

Radiotherapy treatments slowed the development of Ned's cancer but did not cure it, and a year after his retirement surgeons operated on his jaw. During his recuperation, he returned to work on the "enduring people" manuscript, and in the fall of 1979 the American Anthropological Association presented him its Distinguished Service Award. Shortly afterward, the Southwestern Anthropological Association honored Ned with its Outstanding Scholarship Award for his book *The Yaquis: A Cultural History*, which the University of Arizona Press published early in 1980.

Evon Z. Vogt, who worked closely with Ned on the *Perspectives* project, predicted *The Yaquis* would be Ned's most enduring contribution to anthropology. "Here," Vogt remarked, "Spicer used what I would describe as [Clifford] Geertz's method of 'thick description' applied to the analysis of Yaqui cultural history and their processes of change and persistence. The story is masterfully placed in full materialist, structural, and ideological context and provides

an unusually perceptive understanding of this distinctive case. It deserves to become one of the 'great classics' of anthropology."

Ned's cancer reasserted itself in 1982, and he found it too stressful to continue work on the manuscript he so much wanted to finish. He laid it aside and began spending a few minutes each day on the preparation of an autobiography. A second operation proved unsuccessful, and on April 5, 1983, he died at his Fort Lowell home. The memorial service held at the Arizona State Museum a few days later attracted a large audience of people who had known, admired, and loved Ned, among them many Yaqui, O'Odham, and other Indian friends.

Two months after Ned's death the International Astronomical Union approved the naming of one of the minor planets "(2065) Spicer." Recommending this action was Professor Frank K. Edmondson, director of the asteroid project at Indiana University and a member of the original board of the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA). Twenty-eight years earlier, in 1955, Ned had aided astronomers in their efforts to obtain a site for a national observatory atop Kitt Peak on the Tohono O'Odham Indian Reservation.

In the fall of 1985 Spicer's colleagues and students organized an all-day tribute to him at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C. Speaker after speaker extolled the depth and breadth of Ned's interests, his contributions to anthropology and to humankind, his inspirational teaching, and, above all, his remarkable qualities of love and understanding.

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