



The Maya Society of Minnesota Dennis Puleston Memorial Award for Excellence in Mesoamerican Studies

In 2001, the Maya Society of Minnesota established an award to honor outstanding scholarship in Mesoamerican studies by a Minnesota undergraduate student. By offering this award, the Maya Society seeks to encourage study of the Maya and other Mesoamerican cultures and to honor the memory of an outstanding teacher, researcher, mentor, and friend, Dennis Edward Puleston. The award will be offered annually, beginning in fall 2002.

The Award: The award includes \$250 cash; a Maya society membership with two years of paid dues, a framed certificate, and recognition of the awardee and his/her professor/nominator at the opening fall Maya Society meeting.

Eligibility: Junior or senior students enrolled at any college or university in the five-state area (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota or South Dakota) who have shown outstanding proficiency – performance, independent thought, and achievement – in independent or collaborative study or research in Mesoamerican studies. Proficiency may be demonstrated by a paper, a public presentation, or other evidence of scholarly study or research. The student must be nominated by his/her professor. Graduating seniors whose work is completed after the spring deadline may be nominated in the following year.

Deadline: The completed nominator and nominee forms plus supporting materials must be submitted by **June 1** to:

**Maya Society of Minnesota
Attn: Scholarship Committee
P.O. Box 40313
Saint Paul, MN 55104**

For more information, contact **Members of the Scholarship Committee: Al Holler** (3201 Wendhurst NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418-1427, telephone: 612-781-8403) or **Skip Messenger** (18710 Highland Avenue, Deephaven, MN 55391, telephone: 952-475-9149, email: smessenger@gw.hamline.edu).

Dennis Edward Puleston (1940-1978): Dennis Puleston, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota at the time of his death, carried out fieldwork in Guatemala, southern Mexico, and Belize. His archaeological fieldwork at Tikal, Guatemala led to his M.A. thesis work on the breadnut or *ramón* as an alternate food source for the Maya (1968). His Ph.D. dissertation (1973) integrated this with his settlement research at that site, forever changing our views of ancient Maya population density and how they sustained their civilization. His archaeological work on the ancient Maya, ranging in topic from wetland raised-field crop production and ancient Maya epistemology, to art and ecology, can be found in his 27 published research papers.



Denny Puleston was known for being an innovative thinker and researcher and for encouraging his students to ask questions no one else was asking. In summer 1978 he was preparing for a new season of fieldwork in Belize. Following the presentation of a seminal work on caves and the Maya underworld at the Palenque *Mesa Redonda* conference, on the morning of June 29, 1978, Dr. Puleston was struck by a bolt of lightning and killed while on the pyramid of El Castillo at Chichén Itzá. In a single second the world lost one of its greatest and most innovative Maya scholars.