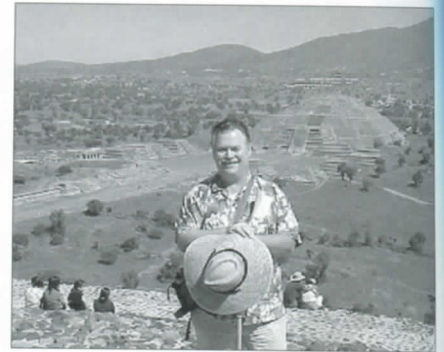


He Dreams of an Ancient People



▲ Konstantin poses on top of Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan, Mexico. In the background is the pyramid of the moon.

He dreamed of trekking through the thick jungle of a rainforest and riding narrow water buses down snake-infested rivers. The local animal life wouldn't worry him, and the mosquitoes—only slightly. He wouldn't be squeamish about where he laid his head at night, and nary a thought would be spent on sustenance. If only he could reach that dream.

Then, after hundreds of hours of research for a book he was creating, Officer Phil Konstantin (11643), Border Division Communications Center, realized that dreams could come true—especially if one worked hard enough.

Konstantin was born in Houston, Texas. He carries his Cherokee heritage with pride. He received his Cherokee ancestry from his mother, Lila Beatrice Adair Konstantin. His father, Morris Benjamin Konstantin, Jr., although not of Indian descent, was raised in Cherokee country. Konstantin, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, has a vested interest in American Indian history, so he wrote a book, "This Day in American Indian History," which is due to be released in September.

Konstantin became a CHP officer for a variety of reasons. His father had been in law enforcement in Texas for 26 years. He recognized the stability of that career, and he wanted to make a difference. There wasn't anything specific that Konstantin wanted to effect, but he desired to be of service to a community. The CHP with its solid reputation, was a logical choice.

Prior to joining the department, Konstantin held a myriad of unusual jobs. He worked in Mission Control for NASA during the Apollo and Skylab missions. He also worked in television and radio as a talk show host-inter-



▲ A view of some ruins in Palenque. This picture was taken from atop another site in 2001.

viewer. Konstantin interviewed people from astronauts to presidential candidates, and even famous writers such as Isaac Asimov and Stephen King.

Finally Konstantin found his niche. He currently works in the Border Division Communications Center as the media information officer. He handles media

inquiries, traffic reporting and any other situations that would warrant media attention. Upon graduation from the academy in 1985 he was assigned to the Santa Fe Springs Area, where he earned his first 10851 pin (auto theft recovery award). He remained for 18 months and then transferred to the San Diego Area and earned six additional 10851 pins.

Konstantin expounded, "I really enjoyed catching drunks (drivers), but my

favorite stops were for tinted windows and no front plates. One way to catch a stolen is to pay attention to the front plates."

As a child, Konstantin was close to, but not immersed in, his Indian heritage. His maternal grandfather disappeared when his mother was very young, and his mother wasn't adequately versed in the traditions to pass them down through the family. In order to become more knowledgeable about his heritage, Konstantin began another project. A voracious reader, he had always wanted to write and publish a book; he realized that there were no chronological history books on American Indians.

The book doesn't contain regurgitated encyclopedia facts, rather 10 years of carefully compiled data and a couple of years of organization. It sounded like a daunting task, especially since many tribes didn't maintain calendars. However, some of the Southwestern and Mexican tribes did have calendars, so that's where his early travels focused. Konstantin explained, "It was hard work; therefore, the book only reflects information on the American Indians from Panama to Canada. But it was a project born of love."

Konstantin had already traveled in Southwestern U.S. and portions of Mexico. He set his sights on visiting the grand pyramids in Mexico. The first



▲ During his second visit to Mexico in 2001, Konstantin visited the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa where he found many Toltec heads on exhibit.

expedition was in September 2000, to Mayan ruins in Yucatan, Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Chiapas in Mexico. His second trip, which occurred in the fall of 2001, encompassed a much larger territory. It included a variety of sites, museums, cultures, and states: Mexico, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Campeche and Veracruz. It also included Tikal in Guatemala.

Most of the ancient sites he visited were regularly accessed by tourists. On these occasions he didn't pay for a tour, but merely roamed around to his heart's content. However, Konstantin wanted to visit Yaxchilan, on the Usumacinta River. This Mayan village was not



▲ This is a reconstruction of a panel in one of the small buildings near the Temple of the Sun in Palenque, Mexico. The Mayans used the panels to depict significant events.

frequented by tourists. The tour included armed guards, a meal, a night's stay in the remote village, a variety of animal sightings, and a lot of personal satisfaction. While most of the sites he visited were accessible by bus, this village was accessed only by a small jungle river "bus."

In addition to his three children, Sarah, 20, Heidi, 22, and Ron, 29; his career and his book, Konstantin manages to occupy his "spare" time. He reads, enjoys photography, has engaged in amateur astronomy and spends a great deal of time maintaining his website (<http://americanindian.net/>). He has recently begun to work with the science museum in San Diego on an American Indian exhibit. Meanwhile, he says that he has plenty on his plate and isn't looking at any new projects. Always busy, I wonder what his next adventure will be.



► Konstantin visited a portion of a Mayan ruin in Labna, Mexico during his trip in 2000.