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THE JOACHIM DEBRUM PHOTOGRAPH DIGITIZATION PROJECT

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This paper provides background and history regarding the Joachim deBrum photograph digitization project associated with the Marshallese Cultural Center at Kwajalein. What began as a project to create and restore high quality digital copies of glass plate negatives made by deBrum mainly in the early 1900's evolved into a more ambitious effort to document and archive both photographs and background information.

The deBrum Photograph Digitization project has resulted from a unique combination of US Environmental and Strategic Missile Defense Command (SMDC) funding, advocacy on the part of US Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) Environmental and Host Nations personnel, an Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) grant, enthusiasm of Kwajalein volunteers, presence of a professional photographer with glass plate experience, Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Office (HPO) support, and commitment by the deBrum family. This essay is a brief personalized history of the project. It begins by providing an organizational history of the Marshallese Cultural Center, moves on to summarize a history of the deBrum photographs, and then recounts the involvement of the Cultural Center in digitizing and archiving the deBrum images. The paper closes with reflections on the lessons learned, successes and failures of the project, and it touches briefly on the future. The paper does not undertake a full history of the glass plates or of deBrum's photographic efforts,

forts, nor does it present a detailed analysis and critique of the photographs themselves.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MARSHALLESE CULTURAL CENTER AND FIRST EXHIBITS.

The newly constructed Marshallese Cultural Center located at Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands was formally dedicated and opened to the public in 1997. Inside the Cultural Center were exhibits of Micronesian shells, WW II artifacts, Marshallese mats and other crafts. Also featured was a small collection of photographs documenting Marshallese life in the early 1900's. The photographs were copied from pictures that were on display at the Alele Museum in Majuro. Their presence in the exhibit marked the beginning of series of developments resulting in the digitization and cataloging of the Joachim deBrum photograph collection.

USAKA operates Kwajalein and several other islands of the Kwajalein Atoll as a missile range and a base for radars in the Marshall Islands. USAKA funded the building of the

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Marshallese Cultural Center at Kwajalein with allocations set aside for environmental projects. The funding represented the first time that USAKA (a branch of SMDC) had constructed a facility to promote cultural and historical preservation. The USAKA Environmental Department under the direction of Don Ott had been active in developing compliance with US and Army environmental policies. Funds were available for multiple environmental projects and from 1993 through 1997 the Environmental Department initiated many initiatives including formalization of standards, upgrade of recycling activities for solid waste, monitoring and mitigation of environmental contaminants such as lead and asbestos, funding of biodiversity studies, etc. A component of the Army environmental plan was historic and cultural preservation. The Prower Amendments of 1992 provided eligibility for funding through the US National Park Service (NPS) for historical preservation activities. Ott submitted a plan for a building to support Kwajalein historic preservation to NPS in 1993 and funding was granted in 1995.

The building was designed by a USAKA logistics contractor architect Bob Wanslow and built by the US Army 23rd Engineering Company from Alaska. As design was finalized and construction got underway Ott and USAKA Public Affairs Officer Pres Lockridge scheduled meetings to review how the building would be used. Several meetings included representatives of the Kwajalein Yokwe Yuk Women's Club (YYWC). The club was involved because of its many years experience in operating the Micronesian Handicraft Shop at Kwajalein, a shop that sells handicrafts from all over Micronesia to Kwajalein residents/visitors using the proceeds to fund educational grants in Micronesia. As plans and discussions proceeded, USAKA undertook a legal and budgetary review of proposed Center operations. Army funds could not support a museum unless it were a US military history museum and there were concerns regarding USAKA liability for exhibits and artifacts unrelated to the US military presence. The upshot of these meetings was that although USAKA environmental funds supported construction of the center

there were no funds that could be used directly for operating the center. Recommendations from USAKA legal advisors were to create a private organization that would be responsible for displays and programs. USAKA would provide physical space in the Cultural Center building. USAKA would also designate a US government employee, Lockridge, to provide formal liaison with the private organization. A loosely organized Board of Trustees was created in November 1996. With this arrangement there was flexibility in the scope of activities of the center and minimal administrative/budget burdens were placed upon USAKA.

The USAKA Command was intent on dedicating the new cultural center building by October 1997. There was pressure to have something to show the public besides an empty building. Something had to be done soon. One of the authors, Cris Lindborg, was a buyer of Marshallese crafts for the Micronesian Handicraft Shop (Mic Shop) and had developed contacts and friendships within the Marshalls. The core Mic Shop group began looking for items that could go on display. Excessed retail merchandise cases were commandeered as display cases. Kwajalein residents loaned shell collections, WW II artifacts, and Micronesian crafts. Included also were about 10 reproductions of photographs taken by Joachim deBrum. Lockridge had assisted in obtaining the photographs from the Alele Museum in Majuro. The dedication was a success but the exhibits were fairly basic and extemporaneously prepared. There was a consensus from both USAKA and volunteers that planning for Center activities and upgrade of exhibits were needed.

The *ad hoc* Cultural Center Board of Trustees (essentially a group comprised of Ott, Lockridge and Mic Shop volunteers) continued to provide informal support efforts for the Center between 1997 and 1998. USAKA desired a more formal organization without direct linkage to government representatives. Organizational discussions involving Women's Club members, and the USAKA Environmental and Host Nations departments resulted in a plan to create a new organization, the Marshallese Cultural Society (MCS). The group was envisioned as a volunteer group that could undertake Cul-

tural Center work outside of the operational constraints that army regulations imposed on running the center. The MCS was formally chartered as a private organization by USAKA in 1999 with membership and governance a shared undertaking by Americans and Marshallse. The stated purpose of the organization was the preservation and popularization of knowledge about Marshallse culture and history—in great part through permanent and temporary exhibits in the Cultural Center.

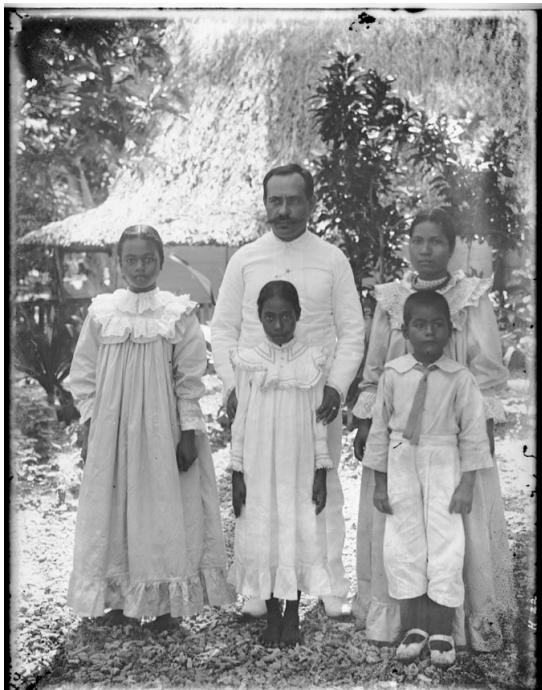


Figure 1. Self portrait of artist and family (Likiep, ca 1908). Wife Lijoan stands to the left of Joachim.

THE JOACHIM DEBRUM PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Joachim DeBrum (Figure 1) was born on Ebon in the Marshall Islands in 1869. He died at his home in Likiep in 1937, the span of his life coinciding with a transformation of Marshallse society from traditional seagoing atoll subsistence to a society strongly influenced by missions and the copra trade. Joachim was the first son of Anton Jose deBrum a whaler harpooner from the Portuguese Azores who was one of the first European traders in the Marshalls. His mother Likimeto was the daughter of a Marshallse chief from Maloelap Atoll. Joachim

continued the development and supervision of the copra plantations and copra trade started by his father on Likiep. He also designed and built ships, was a postmaster, architect, and self-taught physician. He read much and established a large personal library on Likiep. He arbitrated exchanges between the Marshallse and the outside world—economic and cultural. He was also a photographer.

The timeline for the development of his photography avocation is unclear. Most of his photographs are not definitively dated but it would appear that he was taking pictures by the late 1890's and continued into the 1930's. It is reported that Joachim left behind over 30 cameras (Jelks and Jelks, 1978) that he used to create glass plate negatives from which photographs were produced.

His motivations in taking the photographs are not well documented but it would appear they included a desire to record family occasions, personal travel (Figure 2), and visitors (Figure 3). The photographs also include many images of Marshallse in pre-contact attire (Figure 4), sailing craft—traditional and contemporary (Figure 5), and traditional subsistence activities (Figure 6). The format of images is often similar to photographs published in contemporary ethnographic and travel accounts (Figure 7). DeBrum's photographs appeared in several European publications—sometimes without attribution—and there can be no doubt that he had an awareness of a role for his photographs in documenting the Marshallse people and culture. Historians have not explored the subject but Joachim's perspective as a life-long bicultural resident in the Marshalls makes his choice of subjects and subject material unique in the history of photo documentation in the Pacific.

By the time of deBrum's death his photograph collection was the most complete visual record of life in the Marshall Islands during the German and early Japanese colonial periods. It is certain that Joachim printed out many copies. We are unaware, however, of any comprehensive album of photographs that has survived to the present. Joachim's youngest son Leonard (b. 1916) had a few photographs in a personal album. Other photographs can be

found as reproductions in past and current historical/ethnographic books or exhibits but the overwhelming majority of the photos had not been preserved or collected with the goal of systematic public and professional scrutiny until the current project.



Figure 2. Man with pet frigate bird (Gilbert Islands, unknown date). DeBrum took photos in the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) and Nauru as well as the Marshall Islands.

The deBrum family was aware of the glass plates but they were apparently stored away in Joachim's house on Likiep when he died in 1937. DeBrum's son Leonard recounted a favorite story relating to his role in safeguarding the plates during WW II. After the Americans displaced the Japanese on Kwajalein and Majuro American planes would fly sorties over outlying atolls to bomb or strafe Japanese or Japanese facilities. In early 1944 fearful that an attack might be aimed at the large deBrum home and compound on Likiep Leonard took the plates and other valuables from the main island of Likiep to Enearmij, a smaller uninhabited island of the atoll where he buried

them for safekeeping. He relates that it took a week to complete the transfer.

At some time after WW II the plates must have been returned to the deBrum house but we are unaware of any accounts relating to the plates from WW II until 1977. Ed and Judy Jelks were contracted by the Trust Territory to make an inventory of the contents of the deBrum house (placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, the first Micronesian site to be so designated) that had been languishing there since Joachim's death in 1937. Jelks gives the following account (Jelks, 2006):

Leonard deBrum said that his father Joachim had taken many pictures around the Marshall Islands, using cameras that made negatives on glass plates, and he was interested in seeing if some of the negatives had survived. A thorough search of the building and a cursory search of an outbuilding ... failed to locate the negatives, and Leonard reluctantly concluded that they had been discarded. But three or four days before completing our work we came across a large trunk under a heap of junk in the outbuilding that contained an estimated 2600 glass negatives. You can imagine the thrill of finding such a treasure trove of unique photos depicting Marshallese people and documenting many facets of Marshallese culture. Their importance to local history and ethnography could not be overstated.

The Jelks' "discovery" resulted in renewed interest in the photographs. Photographers accompanying the Jelks survey photographed 20-30 of the plates for illustrating their report (Jelks, 1978). Some photographs made from Jelks photos were returned to Leonard and the Alele Museum. Leonard arranged for transfer of the plates to the Alele Museum in Majuro for safekeeping. As part of the Jelks project some of the photographs were copied onto microfilm, finding their way to the University of Hawaii where they appeared as part of the UH Pacific Archives digital image collection in the 1990's.

The next major event in the history of the plates started in 1984. Photo historian Lynn Davis from the Bishop Museum traveled to Majuro to set up a system for categorizing, labeling, and archival storage of the plates.



Figure 3. Spanish priest at Jabor harbor (Jaluit, ca 1914)

She trained Carol Curtis and HPO employee Rose deBrum in needed processes, co-ordinated building a darkroom, and made non-archival resin prints. At the same time background information was sought and recorded from local informants—most notably Leonard DeBrum. Carole guesses that prints were made of 2/3 to 3/4 of the plates but acknowledged technical difficulties in creating the prints. (Curtis, 2001). Some photos were placed on display at the Alele museum at Majuro along with a small exhibit on Joachim and his photographic legacy. Exhibits included some of deBrum's most notable photographs as well as several of his cameras. The exhibits are still in place today. In 1986 Davis returned to Majuro to train Curtis in creating archival "4168" negatives directly from the plates but it is unclear how much if any of this project was completed.

There is a strong impression that descendants and HPO staff representing the deBrum family were reluctant to part with the plates or rights to the plates. There is a telling

anecdote about a visit to the Alele Museum by a group of Japanese visitors who were preparing a documentary on the Marshall Islands. They were ready to film and take photographs of the deBrum photos that were on display but the museum's Marshallese curator firmly refused on the grounds that the photos and rights to reproduction belonged to the deBrum family. The curator remained steadfast in refusing photography despite a plea from an *iroy* (traditional Marshallese leader) to do so. The sense of ownership of specially privileged images/information may partly explain why the full collection of plates and associated materials did not find its way to collections outside the Marshalls. Sometime in the 1980's the deBrum trust was established to oversee conservation of the deBrum house and belongings but the organization does not appear to have been effectively active in preserving or promoting conservation.



Figure 4. Man dressed in traditional attire flanked by two Marshallese in contemporary clothing. (Likiep, unknown date)

THE DEBRUM GLASS PLATES AND KWAJALEIN CULTURAL CENTER.

The history of the photographs summarized above was basically unknown to the USAKA-based group who prepared for the Cultural Center dedication in 1997. After the dedication there was interest in expanding exhibits. On a trip to Majuro Cris Lindborg went to the Alele Museum and noted the photos on exhibit. She learned that the photographs were part of a larger collection and borrowed a few more photographs to copy for the Cultural Center exhibits. She was informed about the presence of glass plate negatives from which the photographs had been developed and was told that the plates belonged to the deBrum family. Use/disposition of the plates was up to Leonard DeBrum, the youngest and only surviving son of Joachim deBrum. In March of 1999 Alele Museum personnel allowed Cris to borrow 40-50 more photos that were taken back to the Kwajalein Photo Lab for reproduction.

Working at the Photo Lab at this time was Sue Rosoff, a professional photographer who had received her MA in Photography from UC Berkeley during the course of which she worked with celebrated photographer Ansel Adams. Copies of the photographs loaned from the Alele were prepared by the Photo Lab. When Rosoff learned about the glass plates she was enthusiastic in proposing new prints from the plates rather than from the photographs, noting that the quality of the reproduction would be much better.

In June 2000 Rosoff traveled to Majuro with Helen Claire Sievers, the first president of the informal Cultural Center Board of Trustees that had been drawn together to support the Cultural Center. Sievers and Rosoff inspected some of the glass plates at the Alele Museum and were told that there might be as many as 2600 plates. Some of the plates were deteriorating and it became clear that not only was there current value in creating high quality copies of the images but that there was a time imperative in proceeding with the project before additional degradation of the plate quality. They obtained a signed agreement from Leonard deBrum and the Alele Museum to transport 40 of the glass plates for trial digitization.

More or less at the same time Rosoff and Sievers learned that AusAID was funding small grants for training and education in the Pacific islands. Rosoff provided technical input and Sievers put together a proposal for digitizing the glass plate images. A key part of the proposal was a plan to digitally restore the images that were damaged by plate deterioration. Meantime Cris Lindborg spoke to traditional leader *Iroij* Michael Kabua about the issue of obtaining deBrum family consent for the project. With Kabua's support she contacted Leonard deBrum (designated as the chairman of the Joachim deBrum Memorial Trust Corporation). The plan was reviewed with him and an agreement for reproducing new digital images was signed in March 2002. An AusAid grant proposal was submitted: it specified purchase of computers and software, scanning equipment, and archival photographic paper. All labor for the project was to be volunteer.



Figure 5. Traditional Marshallese sailing canoe. (Date and location unknown)

Since the Alele Museum was the repository for the plates a separate agreement regarding proposed use of the plates was signed by representatives of the Alele Museum and the Marshall Islands HPO personnel. Included in the AusAID proposal as a response to a deBrum family request was the purchase of a window air conditioner that was to be used for a storage room in the deBrum house at Likeip.

In August 2000 AusAID approved a grant \$18,000. The Cultural Society purchased equipment, software, and supplies. (The air conditioner was also bought and it is interesting to note that the AC was seen for several years in an unopened box at Leonard's home. The final disposition is unknown but it never made it to the deBrum house in Likeip). Arrangements were made to transfer a small number of plates from Majuro to Kwajalein. In October 2000 the inauguration of the digitiza-

tion project was marked by the visit of Leonard deBrum, several close family members, and the secretary of the Marshall Islands Internal Affairs office. By November 2000 Rosoff was beginning to regularly digitize plates. The project included scanning plates at 1600 dpi with additional files saved at 200 and 72 dpi. Rosoff sent a digital copy at 200 dpi to the Alele Museum and forwarded a digital copy with a print of each image to Leonard deBrum.

Rosoff brought the discerning art of the darkroom photographer to the task of scanning. She worked after her regular work hours and took time in adjusting the tonal range to maximize image detail and quality. By June of 2001 only 60 plates had been scanned. It was apparent that depending only on Rosoff's after-hours volunteer effort it would take years to complete the scanning of the estimated 2600 plates. A corollary conclusion was that digital

restoration of the plates was not a reasonable task. Restoration was much too time-intensive and did not add anything to the historical/archival value of the collection. The focus for the project would be on creating high quality copies of the plates without restoration based on the understanding that there would be no future opportunity to create photographs of such quality from the ageing plates. Preservation, not restoration, was what mattered most.

It also became increasingly obvious that obtaining background information to associate with each image was of paramount importance and that informants regarding details were aging. Commentary on the photographs was solicited and recorded from Leonard DeBrum, who was 85 years old when the project began in full swing. Comments were documented in writing or recorded on videotapes and audiotapes. The project matured to include time for reviewing images with Leonard deBrum to get vital information regarding people, locations, and activities portrayed in the photographs. In March 2002 Leonard and the Alele Museum signed a more extended agreement that committed to completion of digitization of the entire collection.

With the understanding that Rosoff's limited volunteer hours would be insufficient to complete the project in a timely and predictable manner the Cultural Society decided in 2002 to fund some labor expenses for the project from the small budget allocated to the Society from USAKA for Cultural Center work. As president of the Cultural Society Eric Lindborg negotiated with USAKA logistics contractor Photo Lab and Environmental personnel to set up a plan to share some of Rosoff's regular work hours with the deBrum project. Rosoff began shuttling from the Photo Lab to work on the deBrum plates up to 2 days per week.

In May 2002 on a trip to Majuro to get information from Leonard and to pick up more plates from the Alele Museum the Kwajalein group was amazed to learn about the files mentioned earlier in this paper that had been compiled by Carole Curtis in the 1980's. Despite multiple trips to the Alele and many conversations with family and Alele personnel there had

been no mention or acknowledgement of the existence of these records. Curtis had made contact prints of the images and recorded information about the photos on 5" X7" note cards. Information had been obtained from surviving children of Joachim deBrum, Leonard and Ellen deBrum, and from Joachim's granddaughter Rosie. It was astounding to discover: 1) that compilation of background information that Rosoff and others had been seeking in interviews with Leonard deBrum had already been at least partially sought and recorded, 2) the existence of the data had not been communicated by deBrum family members, the Alele staff, or through Alele documentation during any earlier visits and interviews; and 3) the files provided corroboration regarding the reproducibility of information being obtained from Leonard deBrum. Information that we had obtained from current interviews matched very well with the data recorded in Curtis's records.



Figure 6. Spear fishing (Likiep, ca. 1906)

A last component of the project thus fell into place: Information about the photographs—in the form of recollections from Leonard deBrum and other sources, supplemented by Curtis's card records—would be added to the digital images as a database. Information was now available for many if not most of the images. The scope of the project solidified: high quality scans were to be com-

pleted and image information would be linked to the scans in digital files. No restoration would take place.

In September 2002 the Army had awarded the new Kwajalein logistics and engineering contract to Kwajalein Range Services (KRS), a limited liability corporation put together by Bechtel, Lockheed-Martin, and Chugach Development Corporation. KRS did not actually assume responsibility for the contract until March 2003. As details of the USAKA contract transition developed it appeared likely that Rosoff would not be able to continue working at the Photo Lab. (Kwajalein functions as an army base and without full employment she would not be able to continue residence on the island.) As of February 2003 only about 400 plates had been scanned. Rosoff's departure would result in major slowing or stoppage in the project. Allies were recruited to lobby for some accommodation in completing the project. The MIT site manager at Kwajalein, traditional leader Mike Kabua and RMI Liaison to USAKA Botlang Loeak wrote letters of support to USAKA and the new KRS leadership. The USAKA Host Nations office endorsed the importance of completing the project. Representing the Cultural Society Eric Lindborg met with the KRS president and USAKA personnel. A deal was concluded wherein the Cultural Society effective March 2003 would funnel \$15K of its funding to fund the project for the remainder of the fiscal year. USAKA Environmental funds would be allocated to cover the balance of project costs. In return KRS would fund Rosoff's position as a "historical preservationist". The project would be able to continue even stronger than in the past with full-time efforts from Rosoff...at least through the end of the fiscal year that ended in September.

With the increased pace of digitizing, Alele personnel and Cultural Center set up regular routines for shipping up to 100 plates at a time back and forth between Majuro and Kwajalein. From March to October approximately 800 additional plates were scanned.

Progress of the project was celebrated at the October 2003 annual *Manit* (Marshallese Custom) Day celebration when Rosoff pre-

sented a collection of the images to large crowd at the outdoor theater in Kwajalein. Although it was still unclear how many plates existed, with 1200 plates now digitized Rosoff estimated that the scanning was halfway completed.



Figure 7. Portrait of Marshallese girl (Date and location unknown)

By May 2004 over 2000 scans had been done and completion of the scanning project could be projected for the next few months. Information had been gathered from Leonard deBrum and the Carole Curtiss information cards as well as supplementary research undertaken by Rosoff, Cris Lindborg, and Mark Stege in Majuro. The next step was to enter the informational data to link electronically with the images. Archiving would include creation of captions and key words to facilitate locating photos by topic, location, persons, etc. Although final support from USAKA was uncertain in June 2004 the Cultural Society decided to fund consultation by digital asset manage-

ment consultants Stan Griffith and Debbie Besnard from Chico State University. They had worked with Rosoff and had put together a database and website for historical photos in the Chico State collection. The Cultural Society sponsored a visit by the couple in July. Griffith and Bresnard provided instruction regarding use of the Extensis Portfolio database application and provided guidance regarding archiving.

As planning for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 came together both KRS and USAKA Environmental departments acknowledged the commitment to continuing the project to completion by providing full funding for Rosoff to work as historical preservationist. The funding was not automatic since the project was not a formal requirement in the USAKA Performance Work Statement that structured contractual requirements for KRS support and operation of the base. But support was consistent from USAKA Host Nations and Environmental offices: even as USAKA budgets grew leaner the Command identified value in continued support. Funding for Rosoff's position ultimately was extended until July 2005.

Leonard deBrum died in December 2004 at the age of 88. He would no longer field questions about the photos. The main tasks were to input information already gathered and build captions and keywords for each photo. As data was posted in the database application Rosoff did attempt to draw on additional resources when available in an attempt to leave the data for each image as complete as possible.

At the time that Rosoff's formal employment ended in July 2005 scanning had been completed for all available glass plates, 2227 in all. Scans of Carol Curtis's cards had been completed as part of the database. Image information, key words, photo captions, etc. had been completed for most images. Rosoff had planned to spend additional time on Kwajalein informally closing out some details of the project. Unfortunately she ran afoul of the USAKA Commander and was obliged to abruptly leave Kwajalein in August 2005 before all tasks had been completed. Her unanticipated departure was soon followed by a crash of the prime computer used for building the

database. A combination of delays in repair of the computer and access to administrator key words resulted in a hiatus in getting work done.

Even at the time of the January 2006 presentation of this paper the archiving project was not completely finished. Anticipated to be completed in the near future is an informational database linked to 72 dpi images that will be available in CD or DVD format from the Marshallese Cultural Society. Also planned is a browser-based program available at the Cultural Center to allow visitors to browse and view the photos.

CLOSING COMMENTS, SUCCESSES, FAILURES, LESSONS, AND THE FUTURE.

Technical challenges continued throughout the project. Failing equipment, fluky performance of software, and lack of expertise with some of programs and archival processes left the project vulnerable to interruptions and inefficiencies that would have been absent if the project had been undertaken under the auspices of a larger more centrally located institution with devoted personnel experienced in digital archiving.

Other challenges have been socio-cultural. The DeBrum family has recognized for many years that the glass plate collection is exceptionally valuable. Since the images were rediscovered in 1977 the family has been quite cautious in allowing reproductions of the photographs. Leonard deBrum's support for the project was essential. Success in gaining this support evolved slowly. Rosoff explained the digital process, producing some examples of digitally restored photographs that she had produced in the past (as well as some digitally restored prints of images that Leonard had given her of family members in her first contacts). We then successfully conveyed the insight that the technology offered the opportunity to preserve and restore the images that would be ultimately lost in the glass plate medium. Finally and most importantly we were able to gain the trust of the deBrum family. We believe this emerged from our enthusiasm for the pictures, our respect and administration for the Marshallese culture, and an unhurried deferential approach to hammering out a final

understanding about the scope and goals of the project. It is interesting to note that although one of the attributes of the digital medium is the opportunity to distribute images widely, the family has been very explicit about limiting copies to those under control of the two Marshall Islands cultural museums. Leonard deBrum's death has left a gap in understanding regarding who in the deBrum family makes decisions regarding use of the photographs. Leonard had agreed to a web-based distribution of the images but some Marshallese have expressed concern regarding such use of the photos without renewed permission from surviving family members. A recurring theme of concern has been that the photo rights belong to the family and that outsiders might unfairly use and take advantage of the resource for personal/institutional gain that is not shared with the family. The authors are continuing dialog with the family and hope to obtain permission to proceed with web access to the photos.

An original goal of the project was to provide a learning opportunity for Marshallese to develop experience in digital imaging technology and foster proficiency in computer skill as well as in scanning and manipulation of digital images. This aspect of the project never really took off and non-Micronesians have managed the technical aspects of the effort.

Counterbalancing this disappointment in involving locals in the technical aspects of the project there has been what we have called an "archival ripple effect". As we began our efforts we showed how photographs as well as negatives could be scanned and how fading or damaged photographs could be reproduced and revitalized through digital reproduction. It became quickly known within several of the island communities that old photographs could be brought to life (and small images could be enlarged for viewing as well as ease of identification). As a consequence we received a steady stream of old photographs for reproduction and enlargement. Photographs that were undergoing a slow degradation in the perpetually warm, humid and saline climate came to us for restoration. Photographs that were hidden away as family treasures came to us for reproduction. In return for processing these old

photographs the Cultural Center has been allowed to keep digital versions and prints of the photographs to add to archive files. A growing central file of pictures from dating from the 1890's to the 1960's has accompanied the development of the DeBrum photograph digital project.

There is still work to be done on the photos. Many of the photos still lack full detail regarding place, persons, and dates. Analysis of the content of the photos and comparison with other contemporary photographers of the Pacific would be worthwhile. Correlation of images with publication and use history would be of interest (In addition to appearing in texts and articles of the early 20th century, some photos have appeared on Marshall Islands postage stamps without crediting deBrum). It is also possible that there are additional photos beyond those available on the glass plate collection that could be credibly identified as deBrum's. These should be added to the database. The database is considered a work in progress and will undoubtedly benefit from addition of new information. There will undoubtedly be room for improvement in keyword lists, and in establishing with greater accuracy some dates, locations, and personages. There is also likely a rich harvest of insights and information to be gleaned from a study and correlation of images with Joachim deBrum's personal papers and documents that are on file at the Alele Museum.

The status of ownership of the plates is uncertain at this time. Ownership had been allocated to the Joachim deBrum Memorial Trust with Leonard as the individual designated to make decisions re use and disposition of items associated with Joachim's estate. Succession has not been clearly established since Leonard's death.

In review, what started as an effort by volunteers to obtain images for exhibit purposes evolved into a comprehensive undertaking in establishing a digital image database of the Joachim deBrum glass plate collection. The project progress has been less than deliberate and deliberated. The improbable confluence of Australian grant monies, US Strategic Missile Defense Command funding, volunteer effort,

personal commitment and professional expertise of Rosoff, collaboration of Marshall Islands HPO personnel, and support/trust from the deBrum family all has resulted in the archiving of an invaluable resource for study of Micronesian history and culture. The digital archive as it now stands is less than perfect. Nonetheless there are now high quality digital images of all the photographs that, with care and conservation should be available without decrement in quality for generations to come. There are low-resolution images that are available for subject searches and research. Reproduction of high-resolution images will remain up to the discretion and direction of the heirs to the deBrum trust until updated agreements are settled. A unique resource for understanding and illustrating Micronesian cultural history has been rescued, preserved, and should continue to be available to researchers and the public for future wide distribution.

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The initiation and completion of this project is in great part due to the passion and expertise of digitizer/photographer Sue Rosoff. It is uncommon to pair an archiving project with the expertise of a photographer whose focus has been on creating pre-eminently high quality images.

A special debt is acknowledged to Leonard deBrum without whose support this project would never have been undertaken and completed.

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