



ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES

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SWAT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Guest Speaker Outlined The History Of The Arizona Museum Of Natural History

On May 6, Dr. Jerry Howard, collaborating with Dr. Tom Wilson, presented a program about the history of the museum. The original building was the old Mesa city building containing the police, courts, library and city hall. When it was outgrown and the city moved out, a small “museum” room continued to enlarge until it took over the entire building. The hardy group of people who came next (who put the museum together) were members of the Mesa Historical and Archaeological Society. From there with the help of the City and lots of volunteers the museum gained fame with the opening presentation of the adobe school house by Frist Lady, Betty Ford. With the established museum, the formation of associated groups began (Guild, SWAT and SPS). As the museum became more popular an expansion was needed. The Theater and Exhibit rooms were added on the north end of the museum. With the expansion of 2000 came new directors and new directions. An overwhelming response from the public and school groups show that it is a very exciting place to visit.

Plan Now To Attend In October:

Archaeology In The Path Of The Light Rail

In October, SWAT’s program will be by Wally Punzmann. He will detail the archaeology program that resulted when the light rail system to Phoenix was installed. The final report has been written so this should be an interesting insight about the past.

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Chair Chatter

Donna Benge
Chairperson



Even though we didn't have the Archaeology Expo this year due to a cut in state funds, we kept busy with various other projects including the Mesa Grande Open House featuring the new trail around and up on the mound. We had at least 700 visitors who enjoyed the walk and information posted at various places along the trail. SWAT members were in a number of locations to answer questions. Besides that our members helped out at the greeting table and six centers where visitors were involved in hands-on activities. The Mesa Grande Neighborhood Alliance members served 550 breakfasts!

We've worked at the Verdugo site repairing the edges of the roof at the stage stop and adding screens to the windows at the schoolhouse. Recently two dozen SWAT



Dick Myers leads a tour of Toltec School

members enjoyed a potluck barbecue at the Myer's home south of Casa Grande. We also looked at a possible stabilization project at two schoolhouses in Toltec.

We will also be looking at a future project at the "Milk Barn" at the Park of the Canals. This is in addition to the continuing maintenance of the Pueblo Grande and Mesa Grande mound sites. So you can see that we will have plenty to do after the weather is a little cooler this fall. In the meantime, we can relax a bit this summer. However, the lab crew will continue to work throughout the summer in the cool basement lab.



Mesa Grande Update Work Is Moving Ahead On Projects

By Dr. Jerry Howard

The excitement has died down a bit at Mesa Grande, following our grand opening of the trail. However, things are still moving forward. Or, maybe it is two steps forward, one step back.

Tom Wilson and Jerry Howard submitted a substantial grant request to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The grant received some very good reviews. However, with only 17 out of 131 grant requests (13% in terms of dollars requested) being funded, we were not successful in getting the grant. The comments from the review panel were very good and they have pointed us toward what we have to do to be successful if we resubmit the grant.

There are two needs that we have identified for the project. They are a small building at the site and interpretive material. The amount of money we currently have left from our existing grants may be enough to cover the construction of the small building. We recognize that in moving forward it will be much easier to raise funds for the interpretive part of the project. Raising money for the building, particularly through grants, would be very difficult. Therefore, we are currently moving forward with the plans for the building and we will resubmit the NEH grant for interpretive material in the next grant cycle.

Ron Peters and Mary Ann Modzelewski and their architectural team have been working on preliminary designs that include a long, tapering rammed earth wall that will blend into the environment of the site. The building will have a ticket or greeting counter, small bathrooms, a small space for displays and a small storage area. The current plans envision the front of the building opening up into a larger, covered area where groups can gather before and after walking the interpretive trail. This is a big step for the project and one that we hope will come to fruition in the near future.

Keep watching the museum website, AzMNH.com for more information. We should receive new concept drawings very soon and we will be posting them on the website.

SWAT Lab Update

By Donna Benge

The lab participants are making great progress in repackaging the artifacts from the Rowley site archaeology project that ended in the 90's. We are looking forward to moving these into the new storage facility in the basement of the Federal Building. If you would like to assist call Donna Benge at 480-969-0578.

Mesa Cemetery Project Spectacular Find In Trash Mound

By Dr. Jerry Howard

Yep, people are dying to get in ... and the Mesa Cemetery is filling up. Soon, the Mesa Cemetery will run out of room. To provide extra space, the City of Mesa recently considered purchasing an additional 3 acre area along the edge of the Mesa Terrace and along the north edge of the current Mesa Cemetery. The edge of the terrace is a prime location for Hohokam sites, as demonstrated by several previous SWAT and AzMNH projects including the excavations at the Rowley Site, Country Club Road and the Pueblo Terrado Project.

Prior to the city purchasing the property we launched an archaeological investigation to see if archaeological remains were present and if archaeological work would be prohibitively expensive. The initial survey of the project by Jerry Howard and Dutch Duering identified an undisturbed trash mound on the site – a rare thing to find in today's urban environment. The city arranged for us to conduct a testing project at the site.

The project staff included SWAT members Dutch Duering, Bert Strobl, Carla Booker, Brian Medchill and Alexandra Howard, joined by one of our favorite local historians (and trained archaeologist) Jared Smith. A new face around the museum, Kristen Uurtamo, who has a degree in anthropology from ASU, joined the field crew and worked in the lab.

The project, relying on the cemetery crew for backhoe



Dog burial, cranial area.



Classic Period Hohokam structure.

work, went slowly given the number of services the guys had to work on. But after a slow start covering many weeks' things started to jump! We found and excavated two very interesting features, an unusual Classic Period house with a dual-wall (an inside and outside wall with posts sandwiched between them) and a rare dog burial.

The house was quite large (approximately 8 X 5 meters or 24 X 15 feet) and impressive, despite a great deal of disturbance.

The dog burial was originally identified as a pit containing rock (some of the rocks being artifacts) in the bottom. As Bert was carefully removing and recording the rock he uncovered the dog skeleton below the rock. We are thinking about the possibility of running DNA samples for this dog and another that we have from Mesa Grande to see what it tells us of the origins and evolution of dogs in the American Southwest.

One spectacular artifact was recovered from an excavation unit in the trash mound. This is a small carved bird made out of steatite (also known as soapstone or geologically, talc schist). The bird has great detail to it and is very well crafted. It has a hole through the breast, indicating that it was a bead worn on a string or a decorative element sown to a piece of clothing. Brian was awarded a traditional reward as the artifact finder of the month. This is one of the nicest examples of Hohokam art that I have ever seen and I hope to get together with Tim Walters and crew as soon as possible to get it on display in the museum.

The Cemetery Project provides us with further information on the site of Mesa Grande and the context of the great mound. Hopefully, in the near future we can get the report prepared.



Bird Bead carved out of steatite.

Federal Building Update New Storage Areas Planned

By Dr. Jerry Howard

The Mesa Federal Building, located across the street from the museum, was transferred to the Arizona Museum of Natural History by the Federal government several years ago. To acquire the building, the museum staff went through a long and competitive bidding process against many other non-profit organizations. While the city could not allocate funds to run the utilities, the museum staff moved forward with planning, working with architects and engineers drawing up a formal plan for the use of the building. At the beginning of the year we took a major step in the restoration of the structure with the completion of the asbestos abatement process.

Since the end of the last fiscal year Donna Benge and I have been working with Tom Wilson (Museum Director), Margaret Barton (Archaeological Collections Specialist) and Tim Walters (Exhibits Director, museum gadget master and builder of all things) to construct a new archaeological collections area in the Federal Building. These plans have been somewhat delayed by the Cemetery project and a new archaeological survey the city has requested.



The Federal Building

Great progress is being made by Donna and the lab crew to put the collections in new plastic bags and new boxes adorned with spiffy new labels. Margaret was able to get new materials, labels and procedures for us and the collections will look really good when the lab crew is done.

While the plans to use the basement are going forward, a new planning effort is underway to develop a new “programming” plan for the building as a whole. The major change in the plan is that part of the space on the first floor may become exhibit space for the Mesa Historical Museum. The museum, located in Lehi, has always suffered from one major problem; location, location, location. The idea, still in its infancy, is for it to relocate into the downtown museum district. The ultimate outcome of the planning and the ultimate use of the building is still unknown. However, we hope to move forward with the archaeological storage area this summer.

Verdugo Stage Stop And Schoolhouse Project Is Officially Finished

By Jim Britton

In the last issue of “Ancient Echoes” it was mentioned that we still had to install window screens in the schoolhouse and do some exterior plastering on the stage stop roof parapet. These tasks were completed during the April 3 and May 1 workdays. So, we can now declare the project is finished. That’s right, let me say it again, **THE PROJECT IS FINISHED!**

It had been 9 years, 2 months, and 25 days since Bill and Ellie Strader, site stewards from Tucson, gave five SWAT members a tour of the site. They were looking for a group to stabilize and help preserve the old stage stop and schoolhouse. SWAT decided to answer their call for help. Since then we have made 81 trips to the site.

Even though we have completed the proposed work, we are not going to abandon the site. We will now begin monitoring the structures for any erosion or structural problems. We will be making three or four trips each year to check on the buildings. If we find there is a small problem, we will be able to correct it at that time. If there is a problem that we can not resolve on that trip, we will schedule another workday. If there are no problems, we will sit under the front porch, admire our work, and listen to the wind blow through the big old tree.



Ed Mack, Wilson Allen, and Jerry Howard install screens on the Verdugo schoolhouse building.

Pueblo Grande Stabilization

As the ole saying goes "history repeats itself." The headlines below did not appear in the Tribune or the Arizona Republic, but were reflected in the journal of the Mudslingers' fearless leader. The following article was taken from the January, 2001 "Ancient Echoes" newsletter written 9 years ago. I thought you might enjoy reading about that historic battle. The enemy has attacked several times since then with the most recent encounter in January, 2010 when 2.75 inches of rain fell at this prehistoric site and a similar battle took place.

HEADLINES: November 18, 2000

PGM MUDSLINGERS DEFEND MOUND AGAINST AGGRESSIVE ENEMY

Reported by Jim Britton

The journal goes on to say: "the mound had been exposed to a devastating attack from the enemy called "Rain". With little warning, the enemy had mounted the attack from above in the form of 2.5 inches of rainfall. The mound was wounded but it survived. Heavy damage was inflicted to all sides of the mounds' perimeter. Nearly all drop-boxes were filled, and the erosion cuts along the walls seemed to cry out for help."

Thirteen brave Mudslingers, determined to rescue the wounded mound, marched into action to preserve this prehistoric Hohokam site for visitation by their grandchildren and the general public. Base camp was setup next to the south wall of the Museum as the place to mix mud. It served as our distribution point for supply lines that would be needed for this battle. Two or three of the strongest warriors remained at base camp mixing the mud. Their job was tough, hard work, but without them the warriors would have no ammunition with which to defend and save the mound. The Mudslinger warriors would need a large supply of mud to repair the damage inflicted by our old enemy, "Rain".

One by one, the Mudslinger warriors carried their full mud buckets to the mound. Here the mud was used to repoint the damaged wall faces, replacing the eroded mortar between the stones. Two other brave warriors left the safety of their fellow warriors to search out and empty all 46 drop-boxes which make up the runoff drainage system for the mound.

After battling for 48 man-hours, the damage had been repaired and the tired Mudslingers returned to their homes for some well deserved R and R. The mound



Stabilizing the wall of "Miller's Room"

appeared to be in good shape again, ready for the next attack which might come at anytime with little or no warning."



Museum Exhibitions

By Donna Bengé

Volunteers are working on various projects including improving present exhibits, making new hands-on activities, and installing a paleontology dig site in the north patio. A new doorway has been put in where there is a large opening to the workshop. This will help keep out the winter cold and summer heat as well as the noise when people are working on metal projects outside. Ed Mack cleverly decorated the exterior with used city road signs.



E.B. Mack

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