

ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES

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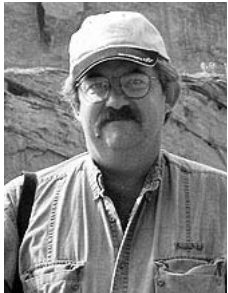
October, November, December, 2009

SWAT HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER AND MEETING

December 3, 2009, Dinner: 6 p.m., Speaker: 7 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Ronald H. Towner

**Theater of the Arizona Museum of Natural History,
53 N. Macdonald St., Mesa, AZ (enter on First Street)**



Dr. Ronald H. Towner from the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona, will be making a presentation about his investigations of the Navajo people. By using dendroarchaeological, dendroclimatological, material culture, settlement pattern, ethnographic, and historical data, as well as Navajo oral traditions, Towner has addressed questions concerning the Athapaskan entry into the Southwest, the development of the Navajo people as a distinct cultural group, the nature of intergroup relations in the northern Southwest during the Protohistoric and early Historic periods, the early Navajo responses to environmental fluctuations, and the social and environmental pushes and pulls responsible for the Navajo abandonment of their homeland.

Along with working in the tree ring laboratory, Towner has also taught classes at the University of Arizona and has published many articles about his research. You can read more about his projects at trowner@ltrr.arizona.edu.

Please bring your favorite dish to share and enjoy an interesting evening with friends. Drinks will be furnished along with all tableware. Contact Donna Bengel with any questions 480-969-0578 or email dbengel@cox.net.

Membership Renewal Time

It is that time of the year when we start asking our current members to renew their membership. We depend heavily on our membership dues to help fund our projects. We have had a good response since the October meeting, but many still need to send in their checks (see back page for renewal form). The members who have paid for 2010 are listed below.

Al Arpad
Cate Cotier
Lauren Dunn
Evelyn Dye
Barbara Gronemann

Paul Hill
Alice & Fred Jung
Amy Kolakowsky
Richard
& Rosalind Myers
Roy & Ella Pierpoint

Ernie & Karen Rolston
Luke & Billie Snell
Ruth Teller
Steve Titus
John Weaver



**Verdugo Site Is
Completed**

Editor, Marie Britton (480) 827-8070, email: mbrit@cox.net

www.southwestarchaeologyteam.org

Chair Chatter

Donna Bengé
Chairperson

All SWAT members are invited to an Open House at the Verdugo Homestead, a National Historic Landmark site, to see the adobe stage stop and schoolhouse recently stabilized by a team of crew members. The Open House will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 21.



Our annual potluck in December is always fun, and it's great to see and visit with one another. You won't want to miss it. The program about a tree-ring dating project should be quite interesting also.



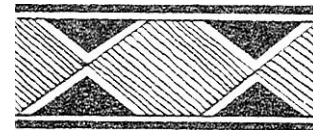
New Project Underway! A Small Parcel of Land Near the Mesa Cemetery

By Dr. Jerry Howard

When asked to examine a small, three acre parcel of land along the edge of the Mesa Terrace, Jerry Howard told city staff that the area was probably badly disturbed and many areas along the edge of the terrace had undergone significant grading and leveling operations in the historic era. So, you can imagine their surprise when Jerry Howard and Walter "Dutch" Duering went to the project area and found an untouched, pristine piece of the Mesa Grande site! They even found an intact trash mound on the property, something almost never found intact in the city these days.

The property in question is private land and with the permission of the landowners, we have started a small testing project there. The city hopes to buy the property for future use as part of the Mesa Cemetery if the archaeology does not get too complex (and expensive). To date, we have done some mapping of the site and established a grid.

The area appears to be a perfect location for a Classic Period compound and there could be a wide range of other prehistoric Hohokam features there. We will soon have the project up and running (projected start date is in the second week of November and we will be using SWAT volunteers in the work on Saturdays. A small crew may also be working on the site on a Tuesday to Saturday schedule, so there may be additional opportunities to get involved during the week. Watch the SWAT website for starting times. This could be a very exciting project!



AzMNH Exhibits Crew Works On Many Projects

The Monday crew is always busy working on multiple projects. During the last few months, we have helped install an exhibit on antelopes and another on the Therizinosaur. Now we are installing the "Light! Color! Action!" display where we removed the Hohokam exhibit.

"Therizinosaur, Mystery of the Sickle-Claw Dinosaur" is a display from the Museum of Northern Arizona. We also added our own AzMNH dinosaur displays to this exhibit. As you enter the show, you find yourself in a sea with ancient fish and turtles swimming around you. Then you travel along a timeline to discover the large sickle-claw dinosaur found in southern

Utah by David Gillette, the MNA paleontologist. This is a super show worth seeing!

Currently we are working to complete a hands-on show about light and color. We have created all of the activities and are still working on more. They will be installed as finished. This should be very popular.

In addition to working on new shows, we continue to maintain present exhibitions. For example, Jim Britton recently created rocks to cover the metal plates under the stegosaurus on Dinosaur Mountain. These rocks replace the old camouflage netting that has been used since the mountain was constructed. Dusting is always a chore as is maintaining all the hands-on activities such as floor puzzles.

Good News on Mesa Grande Improvement Project

By Dr. Jerry Howard

The Mesa Grande Project is moving ahead at light speed! Or, at least that is the way it feels.

On the funding front, Tom Wilson and Jerry Howard submitted a grant proposal for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) implementation grant. This request, for over \$200,000 is to build additional infrastructure and to do further stabilization work at the site. Tom and Arts and Cultural Director, Johann Zietsman, have submitted detailed justifications to receive \$190,000 in city cultural impact fees. Finally, our Arizona Heritage Fund Grant was recently reinstated by the Arizona Parks Board. Fearing that the Arizona State Legislature may again restrict access to these funds, we are moving ahead quickly to use this money and finish our grant. While the grant is scheduled for 18 months, we hope to finish it in two and a half months!

The major task funded by the Heritage Fund Grant is the interpretive trail. Architects Ron Peters and Mary Ann Modzelewski of WHPacific, Inc., have worked like mad to design the trail and to get the bid for the construction open. This was all done under the guidance of the City of Mesa Engineering Department. If it were not for the knowledge and hard work of Gordon Haws, Fred Rustum, Steve Stettler and others, this would not have happened! They pushed the process through as quickly as possible (literally within days) and the bid is “now on the street” as they say. The unbelievable schedule they have laid out has the contractor finishing the trail by December 31, 2009! The city engineering staff has also contributed some very valuable ideas to the project and we thank them and our architects for making this happen.

The interpretation is also moving forward. Tom Wilson and Jerry Howard’s trip to San Francisco to work with the staff at the Exploratorium was very helpful. We have also been working with members of the Salt and Gila Communities to have them write the Native American Voice for the site and interpret the site using the traditional knowledge of the O’odham. This is one of the most exciting aspects of the project!

At this point we are also exploring the possibility of building a small structure near the entrance to the site on 10th Street. This structure would contain a small



Mesa Grande, seen from the air, is about to be transformed.

men and women’s restroom, a greeting area for volunteers to greet visitors, a small display area and a small storage area. How quickly we move forward with this aspect of the project will depend on funding, but it may happen sooner than we might think.

Finally, we have set a date of March 27, 2010 for the next Mesa Grande Open House. Donna Bengé, Jim Britton and Jerry Howard will be meeting later this month with members of the Mesa Grande Community Alliance to work out the details.

Lights! Color! Action!

The AzMNH’s next exhibit that is currently being built and installed is, LIGHTS! COLOR! ACTION! — a full-sensory experience which will explore the relationships of color and light. You will discover the relationship of color and light and its effect on physical and natural history in this full sensory presentation. You will be able to investigate the science of color mixing, make a magical drawing with a laser, experience movement with colored shadows and create colors from white to black.

Many of our SWAT volunteers have been very active in “creating” the interactives for this “in-house” exhibition. The opening date isn’t firm but look for it opening the end of December or early January.

Verdugo Stage Stop And Schoolhouse Project

All Spruced Up For The Nov. 21 Open House

By Jim Britton

Back in January 2001, two buildings stood in the middle of the desert, miles from nowhere in total disrepair; one building without a roof and the other about to lose its roof. We wondered how these structures could still be standing with their adobe walls so badly eroded. Now, eight years later, both buildings have "new life." The roofs have been replaced, the walls repaired and replastered, and the concrete floors swept clean.

But we're not done yet. We plan to put window screen in the schoolhouse windows. It is hoped that the screens will cause the rain to flow down the outside of the building and avoid damaging the interior mud plaster.



Window screens will complete the renovation of the Verdugo schoolhouse.

In October, we concentrated on the stage stop building. A lime/cement mix was used to replaster areas on the exterior wall face of the south wall. We also began replastering the parapet above the corrugated metal roofing. The front porch roof joist had been cracked so bolts were used to stabilize it. One side of the front door frame had come loose and was out of alignment. It was removed, dirt behind it cleaned away and the board was then replaced. We also did some roof repair. During the September work day while it was raining, three leaks were noted in the small room. One of these leaks was doing damage to the interior wall face. We hope that the problem has now been corrected. We'll know after the next big rain storm.

On November 21, we are having an open house so everyone can come, see and enjoy what has been accomplished over the past eight years. This historic landmark is a very interesting place to visit with its two adobe buildings, old water pump, and its large mesquite rail corral. Bring a lunch and a chair and set under the front porch of the old stage stop and who knows; if you lean back, close your eyes and let your mind wander a little, maybe the old stagecoach might stop and give you a ride.



Dick Myers repairs a porch beam at the stage stop.

Photos by
Jim Britton

Therizinosaur! Mystery of the Sickle-Claw Dinosaur

One of the newest and strangest dinosaur fossils from North America is the subject of a stunning new major exhibit. "Therizinosaur — Mystery of the Sickle-Claw Dinosaur" is our newest exhibit at the AzMNH!

Paleontologists from the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff made a once-in-a-lifetime find in 2000 with discovery of a single toe bone during an excavation in southern Utah. The discovery led to the recovery of the most complete Therizinosaur skeleton ever found.

While all dinosaurs lived on land, the Therizinosaur was found in a location that was the bottom of the Cretaceous Western Interior Seaway, an ancient sea that covered the middle of North America. But how did the whole animal, 93 million years ago, get buried in a seafloor, 60 miles from shore? Come visit the exhibit to find the answer.

The exhibit includes fossil beds and a life-size Therizinosaur that is a free-standing skeleton, cast from the original bones of the 13-foot tall, one-ton sickle-clawed and feathered dinosaur. It is the first mounted interpretation of the animal's stance and posture.

Of course many of our SWAT volunteers were an important part of the work that went into building this exhibit.



SWAT Lab Is Busy

By Donna Bengé

We have begun to work on rebagging all of our artifacts into plastic archival bags. This is quite a project that will be lasting a long time. Presently, we are doing the artifacts from the Rowley site, our first excavation project. We are looking forward to completing the bags of sherds, putting them in boxes, and storing them in numerical order. Then we will move on to other Rowley artifacts. The reboxed artifacts will be placed in a storage area in the basement of the federal building. But first, this area needs to be painted so we'll soon be asking for help with this project.



Paleontologist David Gillett from Museum of Northern Arizona with the Therizinosaur.

Photo by Donna Bengé

Pueblo Grande Stabilization

By Jim Britton

After a three month summer vacation, the PGM Mudslingers are back in action. The summer monsoons were extremely kind to the adobe architectures at Pueblo Grande. A rain storm is a welcome and positive event when you live in a desert, but for prehistoric structures it is a very negative event. During the summer very little rain, less than 2 inches, fell at the site. So over all the site was in relatively good condition when we returned in September.

The September work day was spent working on the north wall of the mound. Squirrels had done some major damage near the mound top along this wall. Yes, I said squirrels. These are NOT the little ground squirrels or chipmunks that we normally see in the desert. These are BIG squirrels like you would see in the pine trees of Prescott or Payson. They do a tremendous amount of damage, digging their big holes into the mound and room walls. Not only do they dig away the mound and room material, the holes make a perfect opening for eroding water to enter into the mound and wall structures. However, there is some good news concerning the squirrels. A museum staff member has spotted coyotes on the property. Perhaps their next meal will save the Mudslingers some future repair work.

If you would like to help the PGM Mudslingers, call Jim Britton (480)827-8070 for more information.

Please Become A Part Of SWAT!
Join Or Renew Today!

If you have not joined the Southwest Archaeology Team yet,
we invite you to do so now.

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