

Dear Jane C. Waldbaum, Deanna Baker, and the American Institute of Archaeology,

We had been at it for hours. The sun was beating down on the backs of our necks and sweat was stinging our eyes as we carefully leveled the sandy soil, centimetres at a time, watching for a change in colour or texture. We knew that beneath our shovels, there were the remains of a story, of a life. Beneath our shovels were bones that had never seen the light of day, and we'd be the first to lay eyes on them. Once exhumed, we knew we would be responsible for cleaning and cataloging these bones, studying their condition, and inferring what this person's life- and death- may have been like.

That was the thrill of every day I spent at Slavia Field School in Mortuary Archaeology in Drawsko, Poland. The 4-week course was a primer in physical anthropology, with equal emphasis on field and lab techniques, run by an international team of staff who were as welcoming as they were knowledgeable. Prior to this course, I had studied human anatomy, human osteology, and forensic osteology. I was comfortable with the theory surrounding human remains but had never been exposed to their actual recovery or processing. The Slavia Field School program taught us everything: surveying, mapping, recording, excavating, cleaning, cataloging, and even some relevant pathology. We observed several different burial styles (with/without coffin, normal and "deviant", etc.) and even uncovered a few bronze age artifacts in the time that we were there.

Our small class of about 25 people started each day at 6:30am, and we were often in the field or lab from 8:00am to 3:00pm or 4:00pm. In the evening there were often lectures or tests, and every day had to be carefully recorded in a field journal that noted where we worked, what we worked on, who we worked with, etc. These had to be several pages long per day, and were handed in for marking. As such, our days were full to the brim and we normally went to bed around 10:00pm or 11:00pm each night, depending on the workload and chores that needed to be done. The next day, work and school began all over again.

That said, there was time for leisure, too. Our weekends were largely our own and I spent mine catching up on sleep or studying, exploring the town of Drawsko, or taking small weekend trips. I had the opportunity to bathe in the Baltic Sea, to go river kayaking through a summer rainstorm, and to visit the beautiful and historic cities of Poznan and Warsaw. I took a train for the very first time and confronted my fear of flying. I even learned enough Polish to communicate (very basically) with the locals!

None of this would have been possible without the Archaeological Institute of America's Jane C. Waldbaum scholarship. After I learned that I had secured a spot at field school, I feared I wouldn't be able to attend for lack of funds. I was working three jobs at the time (two serving jobs and one as an English tutor) in order to support myself, pay the interest on my student loans, and afford the upcoming flight to Poland. I was not sure that I'd be able to earn enough money in time to be able to go. Learning that I had been chosen as a recipient of the scholarship meant knowing without a doubt

that I wouldn't have to give up my seat. I am incredibly grateful to Jane C. Waldbaum and the AIA for giving me this amazing, life-changing opportunity and I offer my sincerest thanks for helping make this past summer's experience possible.

All the best,
Patricia Caddy
November, 2012.