

## Waldbaum Scholarship Recipient Report



Above: Me, in the field

At the end of June, I travelled to Cinigiano to participate in the Marzuolo Archaeological Project (MAP) excavating Podere Marzuolo, a Roman-period site in rural Tuscany. During the third season, we built upon the discoveries of the previous summers and continued to investigate ancient pottery production. I began my studies of Ancient Rome when I was 14 years old, in my first high

school Latin class, and back then I had no idea the path it would lead me on. Ten years later, I felt that I was missing an important part of my Classics education. I had focused very heavily in the languages, literature, and history of the ancient Mediterranean, and when I graduated with my degree in Classical Studies and German, I thought I the opportunity to engage with archaeology and fieldwork had passed me by. I was no longer a student at the University of Arkansas and after a year off of school, I would begin a graduate program in Library Science. I thought my time in Classical Studies was over.

Luckily, the Classical Studies department at Arkansas is very close-knit, and I had gotten to know Dr. Rhodora Vennarucci very well during my time there. Dr. Vennarucci is one of the directors of MAP and when I asked her about field school opportunities, she encouraged me to apply for her project.



Above: Early days, taking off the cleaning layer

MAP is an international collaboration between the University of Arkansas, the University of Melbourne, and Cornell University. It is not a



Above: A short nap before heading back to the trench

formal field school, but rather an active investigative project lasting four weeks. As a first time digger, this meant a very steep learning curve. I was not only immersed in a discipline, which I had had only tangential knowledge of previously, but I also had a very short time to learn it. We began by uncovering the very top of the site to

expose the walls and decide where we would like to explore further. We then dropped smaller trenches to be excavated by teams of two to four people. A typical day began at six in the morning, when we loaded up the vans and drove from our living quarters in Cinigiano to the site. We would excavate for eight hours, with a light breakfast break halfway through and then it was time to return to the *casa* for lunch. Except for on the weekends, all of our meals were catered and eaten as a group, which allowed us to get to know everyone we were working with and form strong bonds. The afternoons were then spent cleaning any ceramics, metals, and bones found that day. There is a wonderful sense of satisfaction that comes from finding an ancient artifact in the ground, something that was used thousands of years ago by people you have only ever read about in books, and then having the opportunity to handle and care for that object as you remove layers of dirt and time. It was just one of the many intensely rewarding experiences I took part in during the project.

The funds granted to me by the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship went towards my room and board. We were housed in shared rooms in a building that was lovingly referred to as the *casa*. The *casa* was located close to the center of Cinigiano, a small Tuscan town, and we were encouraged to interact with the



Above: Cleaning off the day's finds

townspeople as much as possible. There was no Wi-Fi in the *casa*, and so to do any work that required an Internet connection, we had to go to a local café. The owners and the locals were so hospitable that we spent most of our time there even when we did not need to use their Internet. Our weekends were free for travelling, and we all took the opportunity to explore the region. On the first weekend, I visited Siena and wasted no time in exploring the beautiful churches and winding streets. Towards the end of the project, a smaller group of us travelled to a nearby beach to relax in the sea after three weeks spent in the sun.

This project was so rewarding for me in so many ways. I strengthened my critical thinking, reasoning, and some computer skills. I was able to work with brilliant professors like Dr. Vennarucci, Dr. Astrid von Oyen, and Dr. Gijs Tol while seeing for myself how we have learned as much as we have about the ancient world. On a more personal note, I was able to share a fantastic experience with friends I would not see for a while. One week before I arrived in Cinigiano, I packed all of my belongings and my two cats and moved a thousand miles away from a state I had called home for fourteen years to begin my master's degree in Library Science. I was able to spend time with friends and colleagues from the University of Arkansas Classical

Studies department before setting out into a new field in a new state. This project taught me many things. It taught me that I am physically stronger than I thought I was, that I can adapt to new situations, and that I want to use my future master's in Library Science to continue to add to the field of Classics. And, of course, it taught me how to swing a pickaxe.



Above: The students from the University of Arkansas with Dr. Vennarucci