

Connley Caves Field School Experience

By

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With the support of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the University of Oregon, I participated in the Connley Caves field school directed by Dr. Dennis Jenkins. The funds provided by AIA, via the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship, paid for a portion of my field school fees.

The field school re-visited an important archaeological site previously excavated by Dr. Stephen Bedwell during the late 1960s, Connley Caves #4 and #5. The Connley Caves site is located in Oregon's Northern Great Basin, where sites such as the Paisley Caves have produced some of the earliest evidence for the peopling of the Americas. Since Dr. Bedwell had previously reported a radiocarbon date of 13,000 years, we were especially interested in understanding the earliest occupations at the site. Entering the field school I knew we were conducting field work at an important yet heavily disturbed site. Previous field schools in Connley Caves #5 had recovered preserved basketry and human and animal coprolites; therefore, we were prepared to recover similar materials. Of importance to me was the small size of the field school, with eight students under the supervision of Dr. Jenkins and two supervisors. I felt fortunate to learn directly from Dr. Jenkins.

For recording and cataloging, the field school implemented a new system that has only been used once previously at the Coopers Ferry site in Idaho under the direction of Dr. Loren Davis. This data entry program named "Archie" allowed the excavator to record field data on

tablets. Additionally, we learned paper-pencil data recording methods. I found the new system worked well and I believe I will utilize digital data recording in future excavations.

In the field I learned to establish a datum, set up an excavation unit, properly record artifacts *in situ* and *ex-situ*, excavate following both arbitrary 5 centimeter level floors and the natural stratigraphic method, recognize and record krotovina's, recover human and animal coprolites without contaminating them with modern DNA, a lot about site formation processes, as well as the history of archaeology within the Northern Great Basin. In addition, I had the privilege to learn from visiting guest lecturers and by field trips to important sites in the region.

To summarize my research this summer, I excavated 2 meters below the surface and 40 cm below Mt. Mazama tephra dated to 7,600 years ago. I learned traditional datum and line level excavation methods as well as digital data recording and on-site digital cataloging. With this experience I believe I am ready to enter the professional realm of archaeology. I plan on using this field school experience in the future as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley where I plan on working within Central California's Coast as a coastal archaeologist using community based collaborative research methods, providing an alternative perspectives in the field of archaeology.

I want to thank AIA and the scholarship committee for the financial assistance provided to conduct field work this summer. I would also like to thank Dr. Jane C. Waldbaum for providing the funds that supported my field work. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Dennis Jenkins for his support and encouragement this summer.