

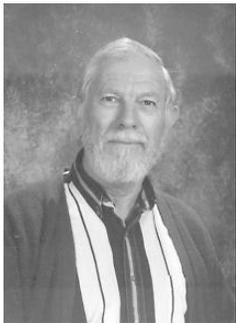
TCAS BENCHMARK



MARCH 2006

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



In looking back at our newsletters from the last couple of years, I see little or no article contributions from our membership. Although article submissions have always been few, it seems to me that when I was editor of this newsletter in the mid-late 90s, there were three or four articles each year that were written by members. An article doesn't have to be about an archeology project, it can be about something read (such as a

book review) or seen that others might be interested in. Let's have some submissions.

Someone asked me not long ago about what the officers of the society do. Since we will be voting in the fall for a new slate of officers for 2007-2008, and some of you may be interested in positions, let me outline some of the duties. The Vice President is primarily responsible for procuring our guest speakers. The VP for Projects is responsible for scheduling and coordinating society activities such as excavations and surveys. The Secretary maintains our membership roster, does labels for mailings, etc. The Treasurer receives and pays out of our funds and keeps our financial records. The Newsletter Editor prepares this newsletter. This board meets on the Thursday night preceding our monthly meeting where we discuss society business and fold, address and stamp the newsletter.

The Archaeology Channel, www.archaeologychannel.org offers streaming media of sites from around the world. This month they are offering a preview of videos that will be at "The world's best films and videos on archaeology and indigenous peoples are showcased at The Archaeology Channel International Film and Video Festival, to be held 7-11 March 2006 at the McDonald Theatre in Eugene, Oregon, USA. This preview video includes a short clip from each of the 17 productions that will compete on the big screen. Film-makers from 15 countries submitted a total of 56 entries for this event, which is one of the world's few contests in the genre of heritage film." The preview is 22 minutes long and can be downloaded (if you have broadband) from the website. Check it out.

—Glynn Osburn

Calendar of Activities

MARCH

- 2 Board Meeting, 7pm
- 9 TCAS Meeting 7:30 P.M. UNT-HSC-see map p. 7
Dr. Reid Ferring, Presenter
- 31-April 2 Rock Art, Del Rio/Comstock. No space available.
If projects occur you will be notified

APRIL

- 4-7 Texas Association of Museum, Beaumont. Contact: Brenda Jackson brendajacks1@yahoo.com
- 8 Prehistory on the Pecos: Daily Bread/Healing Balm; Shumla School, Comstock, TX. Information: <http://www.shumla.org/calendar.htm>.
- 15 Southern Texas Archaeological Association (STAA) Quarterly Meeting. <http://www.staa.org/> for details and location.
- 20-22 Annual Preservation Conference, Texas Historical Commission, Galveston, Tremont House, 512-463-6255
- 22 TAS Board Meeting, Waco/Temple
- 26-30 Society for American Archeology Annual Meeting, Puerto Rico. Information: <http://www.saa.org>.

TAS Lithics Academy Great Success!

TCAS and Tarrant County College Northeast hosted the first academy of 2006 during the weekend of February 11-12. Fifty-five TAS members gathered to better understand and identify stone artifacts with the instruction of Dr. Harry Shafer and his assistant John Dockall. Groups enjoyed the opportunity for hands-on experience in recognizing and sorting flake types, examining use wear, and documenting artifact collections. Flintknapper Cary Voss demonstrated many of the techniques and flake types included in the presentations

Linda Ott Lang wants to extend her thanks to the many TCAS members who attended the academy. In addition, Marvin Glasgow, Paula Vastine Norman, Laurel Wilson, Jim Blanton, Katrina Nuncio, and Wendy Lockwood deserve special recognition for their time and efforts in making this academy happen. Your support made this academy a great success!

Linda Ott Lang

Refreshments provided by the Society

GET WELL SOON!

We wish Jim Blanton a speedy recovery from his second knee operation--he is now a bionic man!

TCAS Board Members

Glynn Osburn

President
817.571.2727
gosburn@comcast.net

Bryan Jameson

Vice President
817.249.5242
bryan.e.jameson@lmco.com
bryanjameson@sbcglobal.net

Jay Hornsby

Vice President for Projects
817-496-5475
jhornsbys@sihometheater.com

Linda Ott Lang

Treasurer
817.781.8236
ottl2001@yahoo.com

Laurel Wilson

Secretary
817.465.1467
noslim@sbcglobal.net

Wendy Lockwood

Immediate Past President
817.295.0266
wendy1247@yahoo.com

Paula Vastine

Editor
817.457.7428
pvastine@flash.net
paula.vastine@tccd.edu

Gen Freix

Librarian
817.581.1645
gen_freix@birdville.k12
gendigs@yahoo.com

Historian

TBA

Hospitality Chair

Sandy Osburn
817.571.2727

Editorial Committee

Glynn Osburn
Paula Vastine
Jim Blanton

Out of Africa: Perspectives from Dmanisi, a 1.8 Million Year Old Site in the Georgian Caucasus”

Speaker

Dr. Reid Ferring

Biography:

Reid Ferring is Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of North Texas. He has PhD's in Archaeology (SMU) and Geology (UT Dallas), and has conducted archaeological and geological research over the past 30 years in the Southern Plains, Portugal, Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia. He discovered and excavated the Aubrey Clovis Site, near Denton, and since 1995 has been studying the geology and archaeology of Dmanisi, in the Republic of Georgia. Dmanisi is dated to about 1.8 million years ago, and is considered to be the oldest archaeological site outside of Africa. In addition to a rich archaeological record, Dmanisi has yielded over 60 human fossils of *Homo erectus*, which are now famous for their remarkable preservation. His talk will describe the work being done at Dmanisi, and how fossils and artifacts from the site are challenging ideas concerning the adaptations of early humans to the temperate environments of Eurasia.

Join us for an interesting and educational meeting.

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Around The State

An Ethnobotany gallery has been added to *Texas Beyond History*, the virtual museum of Texas' cultural heritage

This **Ethnobotany gallery** is intended as a teaching and research tool for those who seek to understand how ancient peoples used the plants typical of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. Many of these plants grow and were utilized by native groups across much of the Edwards Plateau, Trans-Pecos, and the Rio Grande Plains. The gallery entries may be a bit technical, but scientific details and references are necessary for serious students of ethnobotany (as well as botany, archeology, and natural history). Additional illustrated discussions of plants typically used by prehistoric peoples in the Plateaus and Canyonlands region can be found in the [Nature's Harvest Plant Gallery](#) elsewhere on this website.

Sponsored by the **Amistad National Recreation Area** of the **National Park Service** (ANRA-NPS), the ethnobotany gallery is based on the results of two research projects: (1) an ongoing complete inventory of the NPS artifact collections from archeological sites studied within the Amistad Reservoir area (see [Before Amistad](#)); and (2) an inventory of the plant life now present in the Amistad area.

Ethnobotany is the study and description of the traditional knowledge and use of plants by native peoples. Such studies often are carried out by a botanist (plant scientist) who has worked with and learned from native plant experts such as traditional healers. Unfortunately, the native groups whose ancestors lived in the Lower Pecos area for thousands of years, generation upon generation, did not survive the tumultuous period of European exploration and colonization. Yet, the dry rockshelters and caves of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands contain abundant and often fascinating evidence of plant use by the prehistoric peoples who frequented the region.

Understanding how ancient peoples made use of the diverse plants that grow in the Lower Pecos canyonlands requires knowledge of both natural and cultural history and an interdisciplinary approach called **paleoethnobotany**. This scientific subdiscipline investigates the botanical record from archeological sites. Its typical practitioner is a professional archeologist who has strong training in both botany and ecology, a rare and challenging combined field of expertise.

The paleoethnobotanist seeks to identify and interpret plant remains found in archeological sites and explore the complex interrelations among people and plants. This includes studying how native people used plants for food, shelter, clothing, medicine, ceremony, and religious ritual. It also can include how people manipulated or managed undomesticated plants in the landscape, and, in some regions, how native groups domesticated and cultivated plants (agriculture). The interdisciplinary nature of paleoethnobotany forces its practitioners to draw on many sources and to investigate both natural resource collections as well as cultural resource collections. The present study has tapped into both, using the information gained from these collections to guide the direction and course of the research and point the way toward future research needs.

The plant-by-plant presentation format used in this gallery is similar to that of the classic ethnobotanical studies, *People of the Desert and Sea: Ethnobotany of the Seri Indians* and *Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert*. There is, however a distinct difference. Whereas these studies rely heavily on ethnographic accounts of how native peoples use plants today and in the recent past, the Ethnobotany gallery also tries to explain how the prehistoric groups in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands used plants. The ancient history of plant use is being reconstructed by analyses of the plant remains found in the archeological collections housed in various institutions in Texas and throughout the United States. The largest and most important Lower Pecos research collection is that of the Amistad National Recreation Area (NPS) housed at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory.

The archeological record is sometimes even richer than that of the ethnographic record because ancient peoples made use of a greater variety of plants than do native peoples in the modern world. A paleoethnobotany informed by both historic and prehistoric sources is indeed rich and deep. Perhaps this gallery will help inspire students of both natural history and cultural history to conduct their field work to with a greater appreciation for the wealth of plant knowledge held by the foragers who lived in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands for thousands of years. There is much more that can be learned.

Author **J. Philip (Phil) Dering** is an archeologist and paleoethnobotanist who studies plant remains from archeological sites. He lives in the Lower Pecos area and closely watches its plants wax and wane (bloom and die off) with the seasons and prevailing climate. He also carries out experimental archeological and ethnobotanical research aimed at understanding how native peoples used plants. See [Credits and Sources](#) to learn more about his research interests and background.

TCAS BENCHMARK



Around The World

Neanderthals in Europe Killed Off Earlier

By DAVID STRINGER, Associated Press Writer *Thu Feb 23, 9:56 AM ET*

LONDON - Neanderthals in Europe were killed off by the advance of modern humans thousands of years earlier than previously believed, losing a competition for food and shelter, according to a scientific study published Wednesday.

The research uses advances in radiocarbon dating to revise understanding of early humans, suggesting they colonized Europe more rapidly and coexisted for a much shorter period with genetic ancestors.

Paul Mellars, professor of prehistory and human evolution at the University of Cambridge and author of the study, said Neanderthals — the species of the Homo genus that lived in Europe and western Asia from around 230,000 years ago to around 29,000 years ago — succumbed much more readily to competition.

"The two sides were competing for the same territories, the same animals and fuel supplies and occupying the same cave spaces. With that kind of competition, the Neanderthals were always going to come out as the losers," said Mellars, whose paper was published in the journal Nature.

Modern humans — those anatomically the same as people today — were also better equipped to deal with a 6 degree Celsius (11 Fahrenheit) fall in temperatures around 40,000 years ago.

"Because they had better clothing, better technology and a better mastery of fire, the humans were equipped to deal with it," Mellars said.

Mellars used the results of two recent studies of radiocarbon dating — a process of assessing age by counting radioactive decay of carbon in materials — to refine dates determined from fossils, bone fragments and other physical evidence that relates to the spread of humans.

Humans and Neanderthals, thought to have coexisted for 10,000 years across the whole of Europe, are more likely to have lived at the same time for only 6,000 years, the new study suggests.

Scientists believe the two species could have lived side by side at specific sites for periods of only about 2,000 years, but Mellars claims they would have lived in competition at each site for only 1,000 years.

Chris Stringer, human origins researcher at London's Museum of Natural History and not connected to the study, said the paper was an important step in the quest to reliably map the spread of human populations.

"This study suggests that the period of potential interaction was short, and also favors the idea that the impact of the newcomers was indeed a significant factor in the demise of the Neanderthals, something which has been disputed recently," said Stringer.

Two new studies of stratified radiocarbon in the Cariaco Basin, near Venezuela, and of radiocarbon on fossilized coral formations in the tropical Atlantic and Pacific have given scientists a better idea of the amount of carbon in the atmosphere over the last 50,000 years.

In turn, that work allows researchers to more accurately convert carbon years into calendar years, by taking into account variations in atmospheric carbon.

Mellars claims the first modern humans arrived in the Balkans from [Israel](#) around 46,000 years ago, about 3,000 years earlier than thought.

His study claims they were able to spread west to the Atlantic coast in around 2,500 to 3,000 years, about 1,000 years quicker than believed.

"What it has revealed is the interaction between modern humans and Neanderthals was much shorter, 6,000 years instead of 10,000," said William Davies, of the Center for Human Origins, at the University of Southampton, who was not connected to the study.

"There is more work being done on the Neanderthals in Europe and I think the dates we have relating to interaction will keep getting shorter."

Around The Nation

Cahokia Mounds gets \$837,800 to buy land for historic preservation

BY NICKLAUS LOVELADY

NEWS - DEMOCRAT

COLLINSVILLE - The Cahokia Mounds State Historical Site says it is inching closer to its goal of preserving one of the world's most precious archeological gardens.

On Thursday, the site was awarded \$837,800 by the state to purchase some of the remaining privately owned properties that lie within the 4,000 acres of original prehistoric city.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which owns the site, has about 2,200 acres of the original city protected. The new state funding will go toward buying three or four key pieces of land and other properties around historic site, agency director Bob Coomer said.

"It could possibly cost tens of millions of dollars to buy all the remaining land, but this is definitely a step in the right direction," he said.

Coomer would not reveal which properties the agency would focus on, but said they are "in-hold properties," which are entirely surrounded or nearly surrounded by protected portions of the site.

"We are interested in dealing with those willing to sell their land at, or close to, the appraised value," site manager Mark Esarey said.

Pam McCanless, owner of Johnson's Floor Coverings at 1810 Collinsville Road in Collinsville, said she is willing to sell some of her land for the right price.

"I've got an empty lot and I've got a business that's been in the family for 38 years," McCanless said. "I would be willing to sell the empty lot, but I don't think I'm going to sell out the business unless they're talking some money."

The state began to buy back privately owned land in 1925. A surge in development in the area has caused it move more aggressively to preserve the site.

In the mid-1980s, the state committed \$5 million for land acquisition that included buying back about 70 house lots from a Collinsville subdivision, Esarey said.

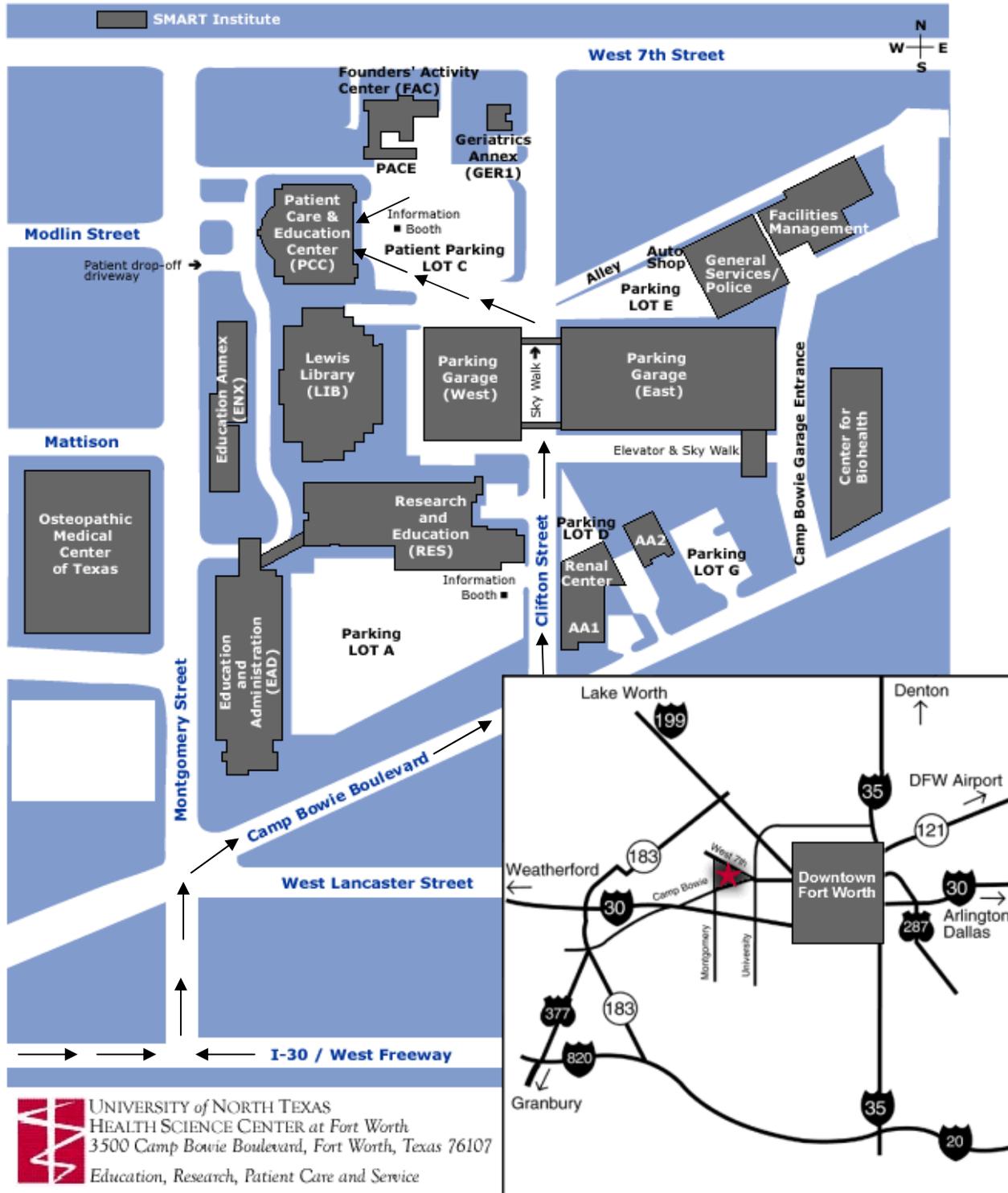
Since then, the only other major acquisition effort came last year when former state Sen. Evelyn Bowles of Edwardsville awarded the Cahokia Mounds Museum Society with a \$250,000 grant. That grant led to the purchase of 44 house lots and portions of 3 mounds.

"The land was being gobbled up by farmers, subdivisions, supermarkets and shopping centers," said assistant manager Bill Iseminger, who has worked at the site since 1971. "A lot of the original site has been impacted. We're trying to save it from future development."

The Cahokia Mounds was the largest prehistoric American Indian city, with between 10,000 and 20,000 living there. Of the 120 mounds that once existed, about 80 remain and about 70 are owned by the state.

TCAS BENCHMARK

TCAS meets at 7:30PM, the 2nd Thursday of each month at the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC), 3500 Camp Bowie Blvd., in Fort Worth. The location is centrally located in Tarrant County near the intersection of Camp Bowie and Montgomery Street about two miles west of downtown. Take Clifton Street off of Camp Bowie (one block east of the Montgomery intersection) to Parking Lot "C" on your left (west). Park in the patient spaces (after 5PM) and go past the information booth into the underground parking garage. Turn left down the corridor at the double doors in the center. Proceed down the hallway until you come to room 110.



TARRANT COUNTY ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Membership / Renewal Form

Name(s) _____

Type of Membership:

Renewal___ New Member___

Address_____

___ Individual ___ \$20.00

City/State/Zip_____

___ Family ___ \$25.00

Home Phone_____

___ Student (H.S., active univ. degree candidate through age 25)

Employer_____

___ \$10.00

___ Contributing ___ \$30.00+

Email_____

___ Lifetime ___ \$250.00

CODE OF ETHICS (Signature required)

I pledge that I will not intentionally violate the terms and conditions of any federal, state, or local antiquities statutes concerning cultural resources, or engage in the practice of buying or selling artifacts for commercial purposes, or engage in the willful destruction or distortion of archeological data, or disregard proper archeological field techniques. I understand that failure to follow these guidelines will provide ground for expulsion from the Society.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

TARRANT COUNTY ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 24679

FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76124