

## Archeologist in nomad's land

# Prof studies ancient Iranians

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Battalion Staff



Dr. Frank Hole

A Rice University archeologist has decided the best way to figure out how people lived in the past is to put yourself in their shoes — in the present.

That has turned out to be arduous, though, since the people he is studying were ancient nomads who lived near the Turkish border of Iran in the Middle East.

Dr. Frank Hole has worked with the Lurs tribe, one of a group of peoples that migrate each year from the hot and dry Deh Luran Plains to nearby mountains in Iran.

Hole lived with the tribe about two years total in several visits dating from 1959, when he was a graduate student.

He did this, he said, to help him research people who lived in the area almost 8,000 years ago.

There were two reasons behind this, he said. One was to help him learn about the nomadic way of life. The other was to help him find ancient nomadic sites.

By learning where nomads camped and why, Hole said he could make educated guesses about possible locations for ancient nomad camps.

And learning how the nomads lived would help him interpret relics left at the campsites.

The Lurs are nomads who live in tents and migrate seasonally because of climate differences between the plains and the mountains. Hole, who is chairman of the anthropology department at Rice, said that it does not rain during the

summer and temperatures reach 120-130 degrees on the Deh Luran plains. Conversely, winter is harsh in the mountains. The Lurs migrate to escape the climactic extremes and live off of foraged food such as acorns, hunt, or use their livestock.

Hole learned that the Lurs' way of life changed very little over the years. He used the standardized layouts they used in their tents as an example. After unearthing an ancient campsite, one of his Lurs workers was able to judge, from one excavated section, where a fireplace, and ash pit were located. Those spots were not unearthed until after the prediction, so Hole said that was evidence the nomads' tent layouts remained the same for thousands of years.

In the same fashion the archeologist was able to interpret another site which consisted of layers of ash and dirt, without any evidence of buildings. The ash layers were a mystery until Hole later observed tribesmen taking advantage of river reeds to make temporary huts.

This was understandable, Hole said, since the animal-skin tents were often flea-infested. When the nomads decamped, they burned their reed huts to the ground, which accounted for both the ash layers and the lack of structural remains.

Living with the Lurs helped Hole unravel another mystery. At several places archeologists had encountered what seemed to be foundations of houses. The problem, Hole said, was that there was none of the pottery fragments or other relics usually found in ruins.

He was told that the "houses" were built as memorials for tribal leaders who died without heirs. That practice explained why no debris was there, Hole said.

The offshoot of all the research was that Hole gathered evidence supporting a new theory that nomadic foraging and animal herding preceeded cultivation of plants.

Hole said this evidence contradicted his earlier opinion that the

nomadic way of life was not old and that nomads used very little equipment.

He referred to amount of time the nomads spent packing camp, and the haphazard way they went about it.

"Whoever came up with nomads slipping away in the dark is wrong," he said.

Hole also said he learned a lot about nomad life.

"Nomads don't sleep," he said. "They stay up most of the night talking and get maybe two hours of sleep."

Inclement weather would leave the tent invaded by animals trying to get inside the tent. That also cut sleep short.

"A goat would come in and step on your head," he explained. Despite their ancient way, the lives of the Lurs is changing.

One example, he said, is that the lowest members of society are becoming the richest. They have nothing to lose by abandoning tradition and indulging in a little modern free enterprise. Hole said they can buy pickup trucks to haul goods to stores and make extra money. But the traditional hereditary leaders must continue giving gifts and sharing with tribe members to maintain their status, he said.

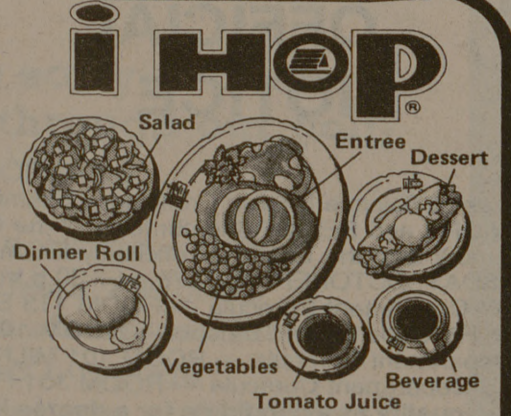
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## Furniture unused in GSA storage

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Each year, more than \$36 million in new furniture pours into Washington's federal office buildings from a crumbling, leaky Maryland warehouse filled with soot-covered cartons of unwanted furnishings.

The Middle River facility near Baltimore, Md., is larger than a football field. It is run by the General Services Administration, the mammoth housekeeping agency which is now under investigation for kickback and bribery scandals.

The GSA operates 17 such furniture warehouses around the country. They "sell" an estimated \$123 million in furniture to the government every year.

What was wrong with the old furniture and how the government can consume so many desks, chairs, tables, bookshelves, lamps and other furnishings year after year is a mystery to the GSA officials who stock and deliver the supplies for the \$5 billion procurement agency.

"You would think there is enough now to give every bureaucrat in the world a desk, but it never ends," said James Cook, a GSA regional official.

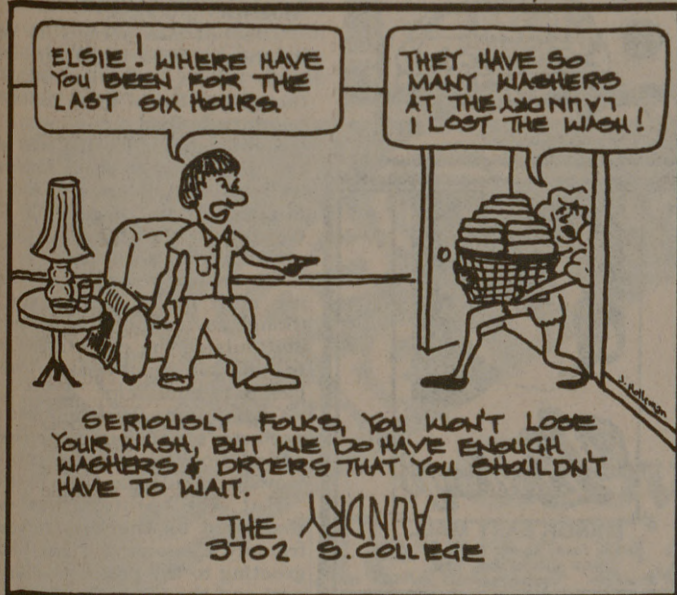
An official of the White House Office of Management and Budget suggested the reason it never ends is that "offices are often refurbished when agencies move to new quarters, are reorganized, or just when a new administration comes in."

UPI's tour indicated much of the Maryland facility's \$8 million to \$11 million inventory consisted of dust-covered cartons of unused furniture GSA cannot unload.

Officials said the unused cartons, identified by a circled "X," have been there three years or more.

"Shipments come in here every day," Cook said. "We've had as many as 60 rail cars waiting to be unloaded in a single day."

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