

State and Local

Fire A&M students discover selves in ruins at dig site

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Staff Writer

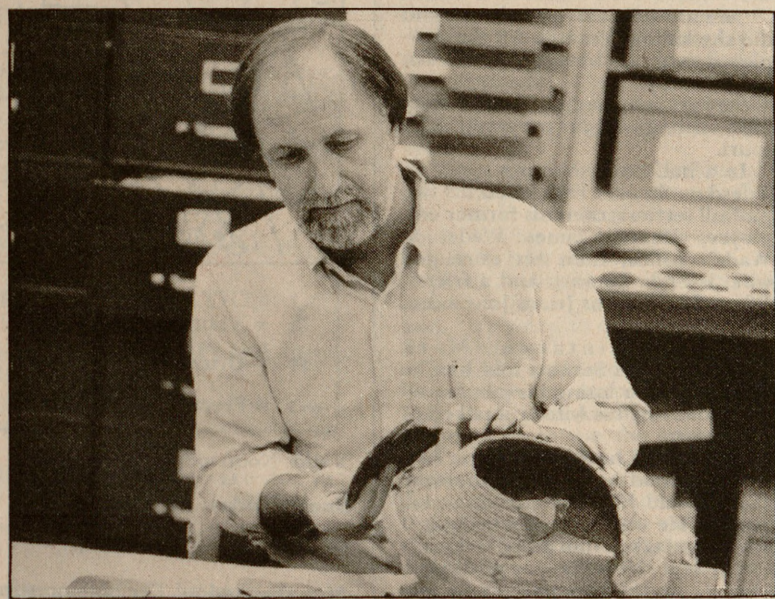


Photo by Samuel Myers

Dr. Harry Shafer, director of the Mimbres Indian field-school project, examines one of the pots reclaimed from the site this summer in New Mexico. The pottery is famous for its ornate designs.

Along the Mimbres River in southwestern New Mexico, a prehistoric pueblo ruin abandoned in 1150 is gradually being uncovered and understood.

Every summer for the past 10 years, Texas A&M students have come to the site for archeological field school, and, in learning about archeology and the Mimbres Indians, the students also have learned about themselves.

"It taught me a whole new opinion of archeology and of life," junior anthropology major Rob Barros says. "I think it was the best experience I've ever had."

What began as an invitation to inspect some archeological materials developed into an extensive 10-year project.

"In the beginning, we were a little naive about what we wanted to do," says Dr. Harry Shafer, A&M professor of anthropology and director of the Mimbres field-school project.

"But now, after 10 years, we've amassed so much knowledge that we're at the point where it's time to stop that and start writing," he says.

"We've got to have some time to process the information because the amount of material we've brought in each season is considerable," he says.

Houses, tools and skeletons have been recovered, as well as the "hallmark" of the Mimbres culture, detailed painted pottery, he says.

"It's a reference library of archeological materials and it takes time to process all that stuff — to see that everything gets cataloged and properly inventoried," he says.

"We want to try to reconstruct past life ways and learn as much about the people as we can," he says.

"Once we begin to see a pattern of change through time, we will try to understand and explain why those changes are taking place."

The Mimbres project has been funded by National Geographic, Earthwatch and contributing volunteers interested in the excavation, Shafer says. He estimates the project

has received about \$80,000 in grants.

Each student who attends the field school pays six hours of tuition and a \$400 lab fee that covers food and transportation costs.

There are no prerequisites for joining the field school — the student doesn't have to be an anthropology major or have taken any anthropology courses.

But at the end of the six-week course, each student has learned proper field excavation techniques, Shafer says.

"It's designed to take them from the very beginning," he says. "We work them in very quickly. From day one, we have them participating in field work."

Each day in the field begins with a 6:30 a.m. wake-up call, work lasts from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and lectures are given in the evening, he says.

"With that kind of exposure, it doesn't take people long to catch on to what the basic techniques are," he says.

Students ease into the program slowly, so they can learn basic procedures, Shafer says. But from that point, he says, the students are fully involved in the excavation, working in groups of five or six and supervised by either Shafer, a graduate student or an assistant instructor.

Constant supervision and guidance is necessary to protect the artifacts from accidental damage, Shafer says.

"Since archeology is such a fragile resource, in order to study it you have to destroy it," he says. "If you're not aware of what the significance of something is, you're liable to dig through it and not even record it."

"You might have dug through something highly significant that helps you fill in the pieces to make sense of a much broader area, so ex-

perienced people always have to be out there."

But experience is quickly gained, he says.

"In three or four weeks, all of them are very good at what tasks have to be done," he says.

Students serve three-day job rotations, he says, learning field excavation techniques, cataloging and laboratory procedures and helping to cook meals and clean up the camp and kitchen area.

"Everybody has a responsibility and everybody has to carry a certain weight," Shafer says. "So when they come home, they realize that it wasn't just going out and having fun at the field school and having someone wait on you all the time."

For many of the students, the field school requires them to take more responsibility for themselves than they are accustomed to.

Doing laundry and cleaning up after themselves is sometimes as much of a learning experience as the field work, Shafer says.

He describes the field-school experience as a maturing process.

"It's structured in such a way that they start where they feel comfortable and we feel comfortable assigning them certain responsibilities," he says.

"The responsibility load is increased through the season at the pace at which that particular person was developing," he says.

"That's one of the true tests of the field school — to see who's going to be a natural leader, who can take responsibility and handle the group effectively, and who are always going to have some leadership provided for them," Shafer says.

At the field school, some students discover that archeology isn't what they expect, Shafer says. For some, the physical demands of field work are too intense. Others find they simply don't enjoy the excavation process. But in 10 years, no student ever left the field school early, he says.

"It is a weeding-out process," he says. "Some of them get out there and realize that 'This is not what I want to do at all.' Others are just at-

tracted to it — they really enjoy that aspect of it. They're very responsible and they develop into really good leaders."

"Those are the people we're looking for in terms of encouraging them to go on in the profession."

Shafer believes the impression he and his assistants make on the students greatly affects what they learn from the field school.

"It has a lot to do with the tone," he says. "If you set a professional tone and let the students know that you're serious about what you're doing, but you're not a fuddy-duddy — you do have a sense of humor about it — there are some light moments, yes. But in terms of the work itself, you've got to be out there doing it yourself."

"If you sit back and order somebody to do something and if you sit back and watch them, their morale is going to be destroyed."

Shafer is always in the field, working early in the morning and late at night. His example shows the students what is expected of them, he says.

"A lot of it has to do with peer opinion," he says. "They don't want to be seen as someone slacking off, so they'll go do their task. In the end, they'll see the importance of being a team member — if one person slacks off, someone else is going to have to pick up the slack."

Junior anthropology major Phil Harrison says there is more than academics in what field school taught him.

"I learned more than just how to excavate a site," he says. "I also learned a lot about myself and other people. It was a cumulative learning experience — not just about archeology itself or the Mimbres Indians, but a lot about different aspects of life."

Shafer says his goal as a teacher is to provide opportunities and learning experiences, and that his reward is watching students mature and benefit from his guidance.

"It's not just the discoveries that make it exciting," he says. "That, too, is exciting, but what makes it more exciting for me is to see the

transformation in these students who are for the first time in their lives discovering the outdoors, discovering the lessons that can be learned from field work and from being a team member, learning to handle responsibility. We give them responsibility and see them grow up."

"Even though it's only six weeks, you can see an enormous change in people. And over and over through the years, that has been the real reward."

Correction

An article and accompanying headline published in Tuesday's *Battalion* incorrectly reported that the Texas A&M Student Counseling Service had been discontinued.

The Student Counseling Service provides academic and personal counseling, both emergency and non-emergency, every weekday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Student Counseling Service's after-hours and weekend emergency services were discontinued in 1986 when the A.P. Beutal Health Center's 24-hour and weekend medical services were closed.

The health center's 24-hour and weekend services were restored this semester and the University is considering reimplementing the 24-hour emergency and weekend counseling service as well. But any student in a medical or psychological crisis after hours or on weekends still can receive care at the health center.

It also was reported in the article that the Student Senate passed a resolution urging the University to reopen the after-hours and weekend counseling service. The Graduate Student Council, not the Student Senate, passed the resolution.

Also, Wade Birch, director of counseling and testing at the Student Counseling Service, incorrectly was identified as the director of student services.

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2.03	9700	1550	795	1.04	4200
2.02	15,000	1275	650	.60	2300
2.01	12,000	1300	650	.55	1600
1.83	9800	1300	695	.55	1700
1.55	4500	1350	660	.52	1700
1.26	6100	985	470	.51	1300
1.17	4800	985	540	.45	1400
1.16	2700	890	395	.37	675
1.10	2600	750	375	.31	500
1.08	4400	890	335		
1.08	5600	750	165		
1.06	3800	325	110		
1.02	4500	220	63		
1.02	5100	140	38		
1.00	6500	75	35		
1.00	3800	70	14.95		
1.00	2700	30	10.95		
.96	3900	.02			
.87	1750	.02			
.84	2600	.02			
.80	1950	1200			
.80	2300	995			
.78	1475	1095			
.78	2200	725			
.75	1475	750			
.75	1550	1095			
.75	2075	950			
.73	1750	1145			
.72	2500	1175			
.72	2200	1045			
.71	2500	1175			
.71	2050	1055			
.71	2300	895	2.78	\$27,500	
.71	2100	1195	2.14	9800	
.71	1700	1175	1.23	4500	
.71	2300	895	1.20	2750	
.71	2300	795	1.10	3900	
.70	2850	775	1.01	2300	
.70	1800	775	1.01	4300	
.69	1700	760	.93	4950	
.69	1700	815	.91	3700	
.67	1450	975	.90	3200	
.65	1600	715	.81	1800	
.63	1700	775	.74	5800	
.62	1400	480	.71	1900	
.61	1400	895	.57	1900	
.61	1400	695	.57	1900	
.60	1700	930	.55	1850	
.59	1200	930	.54	1300	
.59	1800	695	.47	1300	
.57	1800	895	.47	1300	
.55	1400	865	.47	890	
.55	1700	695	.47	875	
.55	9500	1175	.35		
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1300	650	.55	1600
1300	695	.55	1700
1350	660	.52	1700
985	470	.51	1300
985	540	.45	1400
890	395	.37	675
750	375	.31	500
890	335		
750	165		
325	110		
220	63		
140	38		
75	35		
70	14.95		
30	10.95		
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22			

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2375	2085	1.36	7200
1195	1195	.74	2500
695	695	.42	1500
695	695	.38	1000
665	665		
695	695		
325	325		
350	350		
245	245		

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2800	2800	1.14	4900
675	675	1.04	4200
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2900	2900	.55	1600
1575	1575	.55	1700
995	995	.52	1700
2900	2900	.51	1300
895	895	.45	1400
895	895	.37	675
895	895	.31	500
795	795		
695	695		
695	695		
626	626		
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