



ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES ANCIENT ECHOES

Volume No. 20 Issue No. 1

January, February, March, 2010

SWAT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

February 4, 2010, 7 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Jerry Howard

Theater of the Arizona Museum of Natural History,
53 N. Macdonald St., Mesa, AZ (enter on First Street)

Topic: Hidden Treasures in the Museum Vaults.

Dr. Jerry Howard, Curator of Anthropology and Margaret Barton, Collections Department Director, will discuss the various vaults within the Museum that house the many artifacts and treasures accumulated by the Arizona Museum of Natural History. Dr. Howard will discuss the importance of temperature and humidity control within the vaults as well as other curation requirements. The artifacts are hidden away most of the time because museums can display only a few of their many collections at a time. They will be giving tours of the vaults after the presentation. You won't want to miss this rare opportunity so mark your calendar to attend the meeting.

Mesa Grande Open House — Saturday, March 27
Plan To Volunteer! Plan To Attend! Check the Website For Details!



Verdugo Open House
Celebrating completion of the project 3

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Chair Chatter



**Donna Benge
Chairperson**

It's already 2010, and I was just getting used to writing 2009. How time flies.

2009 was a good year for SWAT! We completed the stabilization of the schoolhouse at the Verdugo Homestead site and had a very successful Open House. We also sent in our final reimbursement request and other required documentation for the Heritage Grant and have received the full funding for which we applied. Work continued at Pueblo Grande; there will always be stabilization to do there! In March, during Archaeology and Heritage Awareness Month SWAT participated at the Arizona Archaeology Expo which was held at Pueblo Grande Museum. In March, we also helped with a very successful Open House at Mesa Grande. From time to time we also did clean-up and stabilization at the site. Some of our members assisted with a MCC field methods class being taught there.

With Heritage Grant monies requested by the Arizona Museum of Natural History, a new trail was put around and on the Mesa Grande mound. The City hired KLASS Services of Goodyear to construct the trail.

Speakers at our membership meetings included the following: In February, Alex Howard told us about her summer excavations in Tulska, Ireland and Argilos, Greece. In May Dr. David Abbott revealed "New and Stunning Results from Hohokam Ceramic Research!" Then in October Hoski Schaafsma discussed "A Landscape Perspective on the Perry Mesa Tradition." Our speaker for December, Dr. Ronald H. Towner, told us how tree ring dating helped to determine when the Athapaskins entered the southwest.

SWAT crews continued to work in the archaeology lab each Wednesday evening and a team helped in the AzMNH exhibits department. SWAT Study Group met every month as they have for over ten years. Besides that, quarterly newsletters were published, and our website was continually maintained and updated.

2010 promises to be a good one too with more projects added to our agenda. I hope you will resolve to be an active member, and you can begin by making sure you have renewed your membership.



Dick Myers, left, accepts the Volunteer of the Year award from Jim Britton at the Verdugo site,

SWAT Volunteer of the Year Dick Meyers

The 2009 Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Dick Myers at the Verdugo Open House. Dick joined SWAT in February 2008. He had learned about our Verdugo preservation project from Bert Strobl while attending an Arizona Site Steward meeting. Dick lives in the county just southeast of Casa Grande and grew up in the Eloy area which is near the Verdugo Homestead Site. He currently is the President of the Santa Cruz Valley Historic Museum Board and is coordinating their project to restore the two Toltec historic schoolhouses. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Sunland Visitor Center and is their tour guide for the cotton farm tours, CAP Picacho Pump Station Tour and the desert Eco-Tour around Mount Newman.

Dick attended every Verdugo work day since he joined. His handyman abilities and the use of his large flatbed trailer were extremely valuable in completing the stabilization work at Verdugo. Congratulations Dick!

SWAT Lab Update

By Donna Benge

Every Wednesday evening at 7 pm, a group quietly huddles by the back gate of the Arizona Museum of Natural History waiting until everyone arrives for lab night. Then we descend the steep steps (which become even steeper before the evening is over) to the lab where we are presently transferring artifacts from the Rowley site into archival bags. The next step will be to put them into archival boxes in numerical order and shelve them in the new storage area in the basement of the Federal Building. The basement will soon be remodeled for this purpose. We can use some extra help in all aspects of this transfer so if you would like to assist call Donna Benge at 480-969-0578.



Verdugo Stage Stop and Schoolhouse Project

By Jim Britton

The November 17, 2009 Open House was a tremendous success. We were blessed with good weather and a large crowd of enthusiastic visitors who were excited to see what the SWAT volunteers had accomplished over the last eight years. Donna arranged to have newspaper coverage of the event. Tri-Valley Dispatch which “serves over 14,000 families in the Casa Grande, Gila and Santa Cruz Valleys, published an article about the site and the event in their December 2nd and 3rd issue which was included in the Casa Grande Dispatch, Coolidge Examiner, Florence Reminder and Blade-Tribune, and Eloy Enterprise. The article was front page news and included five large colored photos. The article was extensive and informative. It discussed the history of the site



Among those attending the open house were Mary Estes (left), SWAT Chair Donna Bengé (back to camera), and Stephen Ross, Arizona State Land archaeologist.

as being a stage stop and schoolhouse and told how SWAT became involved in stabilization work there. Bill Strader was there to give them information on how he and his wife Ellie had researched the site and had it put on the National Register of Historic Places as the Verdugo Ranch Homestead. In February, 2001, it was Bill and Ellie who had requested SWAT get involved to save the structures.

The article discussed how the buildings had deteriorated over the years and what SWAT had done to stabilize them. For example, over 200 adobes bricks

were made and the roofs were replaced on both buildings. The article also listed all the past stabilization and preservation projects SWAT had been involved in. These included: Hohokam platform mound sites at Mesa Grande, and Pueblo Grande, the Spanish missions at Tumacacori, Guevavi, and Calabazas, the Pennington Cabin near Nogales, and the historic Sistine House in Mesa. The article had quotes by the following SWAT members: Donna Bengé, Bill Strader, Dick Myers, and Jim Britton.

The event was attended by Stephen Ross, Arizona State Land archaeologist. Since the structures are on



Bill Strader, original site steward who contacted SWAT to help stabilize the stagestop.

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Mesa Grande Interpretive Trail is a Reality!

By Dr. Jerry Howard

In December we began the construction of the new interpretive trail at Mesa Grande. The contractor, Klass Services, completed the project in early January! SWAT members Walter (Dutch) Duering and Bert Strobl were on-site to monitor the construction and prevent any damage to any archaeological remains.

The trail is comprised of crushed granite, providing a natural look that blends well into the environment of the site. The granite was treated with a product known as Soil-Tac, a mixture of an extract of the husk of the Jojoba bean and polymers that essentially “glue” the material together. After treatment, the trail surface was compacted to create a hard surface. Two electrical conduit pipes were installed under the trail to meet any future needs for power, computer or other cables that may need to be run at the site.

During the course of the work two archaeological features were found in the shallow trench (maximum of 6” deep) for the conduit. One is a wall, one that we previously identified using ground penetrating radar that extends from the eastern compound wall to the eastern side of the mound. This wall was approximately one meter thick, a substantial wall that appears to have been used to wall off the area in the southwest corner of the mound that contains a series of rooms. The second feature that we found is more difficult to interpret. It is a caliche surface laying only a few centimeters under the current surface just east of our excavation area on the

Completed trail on the south side of the mound, above, and the work in progress, below. Electrical conduits were installed under the trail to provide for any future electrical needs at the site.



northeast corner of the mound. This feature appeared to be too extensive to be a wall and it would have been raised above surface of the eastern plaza. Our initial guess is that it may be a small raised platform but further work is required to determine its nature and extent.

We are moving forward with the interpretive program at the site. It is our hope that we can have some of the interpretive material installed and to have at least portions of an audio tour prepared by March 27. On March 27th we will have our Annual Open House. This year the Open House will also be a Grand Opening for the interpretive trail.

Things are moving forward quickly. It is my hope to have the SWAT volunteers working on the site on Saturdays in February. Keep watching the SWAT website (southwestarchaeologyteam.org) for calendar updates.

Pueblo Grande Stabilization

By **Jim Britton**

During the November, December and January work days we repointed the west wall of the platform mound. Well, what does this mean and how important is this work? The Pueblo Grande platform mound perimeter walls were constructed using indurated caliche stones (calcium carbonate in hardened rock form) and a few granite stones. This material was laid using mud mortar. The Hohokam understood that if the mud they used included soft caliche or caliche in a powder form the mortar would better withstand the negative impact of wind and rain. Even with this material, you can bet they had to do constant maintenance to keep the walls in good condition.

So here we are, the Mudslingers, 800 years later doing similar maintenance once a month. Where we work is determined by the condition of the various room and mound walls. The west mound wall was starting to show eroded mortar joints. That is, the mortar between the stones was slowly being eroded by rain hitting the walls. In the past, we had constructed a diversion berm at the top of the mound wall to divert runoff from the

Cemetery Project Requires More Study

By **Dr. Jerry Howard**

Several months ago what appeared to be an undisturbed area related to the site of Mesa Grande, was discovered along the edge of the Mesa Terrace just west of Center Street and just north of the Mesa Cemetery. This included what appeared to be a small trash mound. One area of the site appeared to be slightly raised, somewhat rectangular and contained a moderate to high density of artifacts. We felt that this area of the property may contain a compound.

Trenching quickly revealed that the raised area was local soil that had been moved from a nearby area, perhaps the cemetery. While we have found a moderate density of artifacts, including Classic Period to Colonial Period ceramics, no walls or features have been encountered. Pleistocene gravels and cobbles have been found in several areas, occurring just below the current surface of the ground.

At this time, it does not appear that we will find intact, buried features at the site. We are also going to reevaluate the "trash mound" feature through excavation procedures. Given what we have seen, it is possible that this too is redeposited material from the local area. However, it is still possible that our interpretation of the feature as a trash mound is correct. Archaeological testing should allow us to discover how this mound formed and when.

slopes to specific drain openings. This stops slope runoff from the mound top impacting the wall faces unless the runoff overwhelms the berm as it did during July and August of 2008. During those months, 6.48 inches of rain fell. Drop boxes became filled with dirt and the water cascaded over a couple of areas along this west wall. So in September 2008 we replaced the eroded mortar (repointed the stones) at the points of damage. Prior to that we had not worked on this wall since April 2005 when we repaired or repointed the entire wall length. So, except for the couple of emergency repairs in Sept. 2008, this wall has remained in relatively good condition for nearly 5 years. It was starting to show some erosion but the stones were in no danger of falling out of the wall. The Mudslinger work during the last three months is preventative maintenance to preserve this important cultural resource. It took 15 volunteers 114 hours to complete repairing this one long wall.

The next work days are February 20 and March 20. If you would like to join the Mudslingers, contact Jim Britton at (480)827-8070.

Verdugo Open House

Continued from Page 3

State Trust land, Stephen is our contact person to get permits to work at the site. Stephen and his guests were very impressed by the work we had completed.

Lunch was the time for speeches and the presentation of the SWAT volunteer of the year award. Jim Britton presented Dick Myers the Volunteer of the Year plaque.

Each building had photo displays showing the "before" condition of the building so that our guests could appreciate the improvement. There were also handouts that provided the historic background of both buildings. It was a great Open House!

We will be putting screens on window openings and do some exterior plastering on the stage stop roof parapet. Swat members will continue to monitor the site and do maintenance as needed.

Exploration Station

By **Karen Sherman**

The classroom has a new look and focus thanks to a grant from the Mead Foundation. There are five interactive carts filled with hands-on learning that relate to the exhibits found in the museum. Explore through six hands-on centers, art, math, light and color, geology, dinosaurs, puzzles and books. The classroom will be open and staffed by volunteers who have been trained to provide the visitors with insight and the ability to touch and draw conclusions or ask more questions about what they see throughout the museum.

Explore The World Of Light And Color!

By Karen Sherman

Don't miss the Arizona Museum of Natural History's newest exhibit **Lights! Color! Action!** Discover the relationship of color and light and its effect on physical and natural history in this full sensory presentation. Investigate the science of color mixing. Make a magical drawing with a laser, experience movement with colored shadows and create colors from white to black. Explore prisms and how they reflect rainbows on the walls and ceiling. Do you know how to make the color white, come and find out? This interactive exhibit was built by our exhibition department, which includes many SWAT volunteers and is multigenerational to foster hands-on, mind-on learning.



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Southwest Archaeology Team

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Ancient Echoes is the newsletter of the Southwest Archaeology Team, which is in a cooperative agreement with the Arizona Museum of Natural History



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