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Writing as a volunteer member of the South Park Archaeology Project, I can definitely say that it has been an uplifting experience and we have up-lifted quite a lot!

As a resident of Park County and one who has more than a passing interest in Native cultures of the area, it has been, and will continue to be, more than I expected. No, I did not expect the ground to be paved in Clovis points- but I also knew we would not find a stone proclaiming "No Clovis allowed!" The land is just too wonderful for that to be so.



The Project has taken us from flat, hot, dusty "buffalo ground", to rolling hills and pine tree vistas. I have always thought that the "Old Ones" picked their camp sites with beauty in mind, along with the practicalities of wood, quarry stone, water etc. They were a far-seeing people in so many ways.

It has been so wonder-full for all of us who do the field work to experience the craziness of South Park weather from Spring to Fall, and to know that these are the same conditions others before us knew as well. We have so many questions as to what the people were doing. How did they deal with the heavy rain, drying wind, and the oh-so-bright sun? Where and how did the children play? What did the women talk about while the guys were off hunting? (What were the guys doing???)

I am sure there was a great deal of laughter in these camps, as well as music and prayer. I am also sure tears were shed for those who were beyond all help. These things the ground can not preserve. These things we honor in our search for the hard reality.



We volunteers are lucky. We get to look at the ground from a Kokopelli-bent- back position. We get to see the glint of stone that has not been seen for thousands of years. Sometimes in our concentration of walking there will be a shout of discovery at a find of importance. We all share in that thrill and congratulate the finder as the

hero of the day. [Sometimes even our wonderful archaeologists find something, but their composure defies description!] We volunteers, on the other hand, have even be caught kissing our most wonderful artifact and eliciting the comment "That is the most bizarre behavior I have ever seen on a dig!" Of course the over enthusiastic "kisser" was having an especially good day. [I remember it well!]

There is a lot of hard science in what we experience, and we are treated with patience, respect, and always gratitude as we learn the measurements and terms that define our sites and the endless paperwork to follow. I was told that every hour spent in the field can require about five in the lab; I know it is a fact.

The Project has some of the most qualified and respected archaeologists going. We are so fortunate to have Ed Friedman, Tom Lincoln, Lori Tigner, and Susan Bender. Their combined experience must reach back into prehistory, and they have more degrees than a thermometer. They are also very nice people and their enthusiasm is never dimmed.

Our volunteers are such a varied group. Ages range from teens to elders and from professional people versed in the sciences to those who are just passionate about "Indian Things". Each person brings a different set of eyes and experience to this ever shifting project. Some travel great distances to be in South Park early in the morning to participate. Others are lucky enough to call it home ground.

All of us do it to honor the past and what it can teach us who live in this turbulent present. We often wonder who had the better life.

Then it came to what we would do with the treasures we found. Would they be consigned to some dusty cabinet in a remote part of Colorado? Would they be far from the view of the residents of Park County, who know them as part of their pride and history?

Through a series of "coincidences" (is there ever such a thing?) and a lot of wonderful good will on the part of our current mayor Tammy Quinn, and the Fairplay Town Board, and the town lawyer Charles Pisano we succeeded in finding the artifacts and records a good home. The project and its gleanings were more than welcomed by the town. They were to be given the best of homes in Fairplay itself. The County Seat gave up part of its throne for them!

Ed Friedman helped to secure the top floor of our Town Hall building for a curation facility that would stand us in stead for years to come. Meetings with governmental agencies, curators and others ascertained that the space would be safe, secure and very workable. We were even given an entire wall of the public meeting room for display and interpretation of our finds. Diane Spomer, Count Clerk , gave us her time and help in clearing the space needed for our use. The citizens of Park County have lots to be proud of in its chosen leaders as well as its history.

As the project continues residents of the area have come forth with their old collections and priceless information. These collections have been photographed and documented by grad student Joanne DellaSalla. Almost every day new information is forth coming to put our giant stone-leafed book back into readable form. Many pages may be missing and some destroyed but what we learn is more than we had before.

Our goals are also ambitious; public education, more Native American involvement, field schools for grad students, and much more research- and wouldn't it be magnificent to find a mammoth -with a pre-Clovis point jutting from its ribs! What a joy to be part of something both unearthing and naturally – up lifting!