

I. Editorial

The Editor continues to receive correspondence in regard to the necessity of establishing some system for the collection of oral histories of archaeologists who are central to the origins and development of archaeology. The Editor is keenly aware of the urgency to organize such a system so that practitioner recollections and assessments of the development of archaeology can be recorded before they are lost forever. The Editor solicits correspondence from all who have concrete suggestions as to the content of such an effort to organize an oral history collection program. The Editor also solicits correspondence from all who would suggest that an oral history session should be conducted with a specific archaeologist (please provide name, address, and short description of the person's importance to archaeological practice).

Please send correspondence to the Editor at the BHA's editorial office noted above.

Douglas R. Givens, Editor
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II. Discourse on the History of Archaeology

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With Cressman at Catlow Cave, 1935 and 1937: A Personal Note

by

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I transferred from Reed College to the University of Oregon in 1934 because of a growing interest in man's distant past. That interest had been awakened in a civics class in Washington Highschool (Portland) when I confronted a skeletal portrait of Neanderthal Man accompanied by a brief sketch of his cave life and association with cave bears. At Reed College I took a reading course in religious origins from the famous anthropologist, Alexander Goldenweiser; but a commitment to man's distant past and to anthropology as a discipline had to wait until a romantic attachment for the origins and history of the ancient Egyptians had run its course.

In Eugene [Oregon] I was fortunate to obtain room-lodging for \$10.00 a month and a stipend of \$30.00 furnished through the National Recovery Act. I owed this economic security to Dr. [Luther] Cressman, who selected me as his classroom assistant. I succeeded Howard Stafford, who, I believe, was the first to hold the position. Those were the days when one lunched on nickel hamburgers washed down with a ten cent milkshake.

In 1934, Dr. Cressman had just succeeded in establishing anthropology as a discipline separate from sociology. He still was smarting from collegial questioning that sounded like, "Just what is anthropology anyway?" He also entered the list against legislators who intended to prevent Caucasoid Oregonians from marrying Negroes, Asiatics, and North American Indians. Beyond that Oregon voters had provoked a power struggle between the university at Eugene and the agricultural college at Corvallis by combing them administratively, selecting the head from the Corvallis campus, and projecting an educational division of labor which pitted a humanistic university against a scientific agricultural college.

Dr. Cressman relied heavily on visual images in his teaching of physical anthropology, and I ran an epidiascope; a kind of magic lantern which projected pictures from books or sketches. An evolutionary and comparative physical anthropology was central to instruction of majors in the field, and Cressman used Hooton's *Up From the Ape* as his text. Hooton spiced his text with some clever rhyming, which today would be considered racial doggerel. His most fetching piece lampooned the "steatopygous" bushmen.

The evolutionary approach followed by Cressman united both human biology and culture. Knowledge of the human skeleton was an integral to passage of the course as the appearance of evolutionary types and culture sequences. We

all devoted many hours to Mr. Skeleton, identifying his many bony parts, points of measurement, comparative cranial capacities, and skeletal changes in the apparent evolution from *Pithecanthropus erectus* (later *Homo sapiens erectus*) to Cro-Magnon Man (true *sapiens*). All this attention to Mr. Skeleton got me past the first question of my doctoral oral: "Name the bones of the human skull."

One could not help liking Dr. Cressman as a teacher. He was sensitive to the needs of students and encouraged diversification to meet requirements essential to those who would become anthropologists. He urged courses in statistics. Formal in his relations, Cressman could laugh at himself, hold the attention of students, and generally keep them in a relaxed mode. His most famous slip of the tongue, which he laughingly repeated with a touch of embarrassment, occurred when he substituted two brassieres for two braziers in the drying of skeletal remains of Peking Man. There were invitations to coffee at the College Side for a one-on-one discussion of a reading assignment or of one's special interests. At invitations to his home, Cecilia, his British wife, graciously served tea and goodies. Socializing generally was more important than topical conversation. These social gatherings were small and friendly, for anthropology majors and minors were a sparse commodity at that time. Cressman's red English setter was omnipresent at our teas, greeting us as friends and then sitting dutifully close by.

A modest beginning of a natural history museum had been made; but most of the anthropological collections were displayed in cases located in the halls of different buildings. Indian basketry from California and the Pacific Northwest and fantastic iron work from the African Congo were two core collections. The care of the basketry materials with fumigants and the comparative identification of basketry types for possible tribal affiliations, where missing, [which] introduced me to basic [the] anthropological tasks of identification, record keeping, and maintenance.

Near Desert Realities and Archeology

In 1935 Dr. Cressman carried out a field reconnaissance in Harney County [Oregon] as a preliminary to selection of Catlow Cave to test his theory that eastern Oregon had served as an alternate route and settlement area for the most ancient migrants to North America. The area was a crazy quilt of faulted valleys, which in all probability during Pleistocene pluvial times were filled with lakes. Stone knives found under a pumice blanket thrown out with the blowup of Mount Mazama, now represented by Crater Lake, gave some hope to Cressman's thesis. However, a stop at the Wickiup Dam produced no new evidence that would extend the antiquity of the knives beyond the three to five thousand year estimate for the Mazama eruption.

We raised clouds of dust as we drove around Catlow Valley and spilled over into adjacent faulted valleys. The eastern face of Steen's Mountain, rising sheer almost a mile, proved an awe-inspiring and never to be forgotten sight. The stark grandeur of the semi-desert landscape was equally striking and unforgettable, especially to one born and raised in the green Willamette Valley. Broken silhouettes of flat-topped mesas suddenly descending to the valley floor edged the horizon from the early light of dawn to darkening dusk. In the distance, winding ribbons of green betrayed the willow and juniper growth that clung to creeks and rivulets. During our summer stay, dark thunderheads in the late afternoon often released lightning darts which danced sportively about the distant mesa flats. As we drove back to camp, we could smell the cool fragrance of the rain carried by the wind surging toward us. But we never had the pleasure of a shower. There were a few drops that spotted the dust and muddied our traction. That was all.

Distant ranches loomed as oases rising from the shimmering sagebrush valley floor. We relished a stop at these oases for quaking aspens and poplars offered a cool shade for the downing of our bag lunches. Friendly ranchers sometimes treated us to a lunch [...]. "Dr. Cressman requited such courtesy by offering our services to the kitchen staff." We could find ourselves working overtime at the kitchen sink if our attractive teenage supervisor found our company a hearty antidote to the routine of loneliness. Ranches also were integral providers of fresh water for our canteens, road directions, leads for archeological sites, and local history, if you had time to ask about it.

In 1935 the Blitzen Hotel served as our base when working Catlow Cave. The abandoned hotel was little more than a two-story shack; but it did have a workable water system and room space. We bedded down with army cots and

breakfasted with army mess kits. Dr. Cressman reports in *A Golden Journey* that we all shared the cooking, and he took over breakfast. Dr. Cressman, as I recall, was a specialist in pancakes, with a few eggs thrown in when you could get them at the Blitzen general store. I'm sure that my menu never went beyond frankfurters and beans. Major Back [Cressman's paid surveyor], as Cressman reported, engineered a "bathtub jello" with a flow of cold water through the bathtub upstairs. The hot jello was made in our only cooking pot, and the only way to cool it for our dinner was to engineer a flow of water through the unused bathtub upstairs.

Blitzen was a dot in the road; and when the postman arrived on a Wednesday, its population soared by one to a total of nine or ten. The general store was little more than a one-room affair with an underground "cooler," which during the twenties and thirties could still be found in Portland. Blitzen never landed a Pastime Bar, which everywhere in southeastern Oregon advertised roadside "towns" and directed lonesome cowboys and sheepherders to the coolest and most relaxing spot in town. Blitzen had thrived for a time when ranchers gathered at the hotel for cattle sales. World War I also raised the area population as "dry farmers" moved in to realize their American dreams by producing more food for the war effort. Good, they were told, would win the war. The dreams of those war years soon collapsed and winds now tossed tumbleweeds nervously in and about the lonely, crumbling walls of forlorn hopes long abandoned.

Our days at Catlow Cave were laid out by Dr. Cressman and Major Back. The Major was a hearty good-natured military retiree at the University of Oregon who was in charge of triangulation points and land surveys that would put Catlow Cave on a map. I spent several days as a "rodman" walking ahead on the single track road, stopping at rises and dips so the Major could read the levels on the measuring rod. The Major also established a benchmark on the cave wall from which the cave surface and all artifacts uncovered could be charted as to depth and location within a floor grid.

There was never any discussion of objectives by either Major Back or Dr. Cressman but it all became clear when the basemark was planed on the cave wall and measurements with transit and plumb bob were taken of the locations of arrowhead, tule matting, and sagebrush sandals. As we tackled the digging and sifting of the cave deposits, one could appreciate the precision and exactitude by which our teacher was carrying out his research. This procedure was the answer to the relatively unstratified nature of the cave deposits.

Catlow Cave was more of a shelter than a cave, and French archeologists would have designated it as an abris. Overhead a large colony of bats circled and accompanied our noisy sifting for artifacts with shrill screechings that should have sent us scurrying on our way. But archeologists and their apprentices are fearless and persistent romantics, and we simply ignored the bat protesters and even retrieved a helpless infant, who dropped not far from our feet. Perhaps he had lost his grip on his mother's middle or collided with another trainee. We were equally nonchalant in our approach to the menace of rattlesnakes and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever ticks. We did have an anti-venom kit and learned that a match applied to the rear of a tick was the easiest way to get him to back off and out. Trousers tucked into heavy leather boots and a thick coating of sweat-grimed gray dust served as our basic "armor." Dr. Cressman covered the other chunk in our armor. He packed a forty-ought-six bolt action rifle of World War I vintage to take care of rabid coyotes or rabbits making a direct charge on us. When we stopped to take in a scenic view of the valley ahead, the Old West suddenly jumped alive with the crack of the rifle, and we easily followed Cressman's bullet trail reaching for a coyote on a deadrun through the sagebrush.

Every morning as we headed for the cave, our gang of 1937 popped away at sagebrush and moving targets with P-38s, and occasionally someone claimed a rattlesnake. We could always count on arousing a rattler in rabbitbrush shade around the watering trough where we filled out canteens. Our most thrilling sight, however, was an antelope mother and calf rounding the edge of a terrace and coming down the road straight at us with a coyote in hot pursuit. Our arrival scared the coyote off his quarry, and he headed up the terrace out of sight. The antelope mother and calf trotted cautiously to the edge of the lake bed, halted, panting in great heaves for breath and with ear ever on the alert. We had to push on in the hope that the Coyote had abandoned his quarry; but we also knew that coyotes along the path of pursuit joined a chase and ultimately wore the quarry down. We had another striking encounter with antelope

as we drove one morning to the cave. We caught up with some half-dozen antelope and startled them on a run. They ran beside us for a short distance and then the buck leader of the pack drew ahead, and with disdainful glance, took his pack across our path as I throttled the truck to a speed of forty-five miles per hour. At a later time we joined up with the Order of the Antelope conventioners atop Hart Mountain and had the opportunity to see a herd of several hundred antelope. Our Hart Mountain revelers treated us to hearty bonfires, good eats, and songs of cowboys and of the Old West. We left convinced that at Hart Mountain there "never was heard a discouraging word, and the sky was sunny all day."

Field Notes. Digging. and Camping Out

Memory traces can never do the work of a good diary that records day-top day routines and special events that add new experience, knowledge, and excitement to life. Archaeological notes are equally faulty in catching the essence of life in the field, since they were filled with descriptions of grid figures, strata, and artifacts. This is certainly true of my field notes for 1937, although I did record that on June 22nd we didn't get away from Eugene until 7:40 a.m. because of a delay in picking up tent poles at the McCracken Truck Lines. We arrived about 12:30 p.m. in Bend, where we picked up Walt Perry, a forest ranger, and Howard Smith, an ex-marine destined to be our cook. After "taking a little grub at Allen's Cafe," we headed for Burns with Lloyd Ruff at the wheel of the new V-8 truck. Normally hot and dry Burns greeted us with a "deluge" of rain, and we spent a "rather miserable night within the hallowed walls of the condemned Burns Hotel." This was the night Braddock lost his heavyweight crown to Joe Louis, and we "almost lost Robin at the Squaw Butte C.C.C. Camp. On the 23rd, "After loading with grub and securing a pickup, set out for Blitzen at 10:50 a.m." We also picked up a mean staple in Burns which "gave us a nice flat about forty miles out."

We arrived in Blitzen around three o'clock of the afternoon and by four-thirty were at camp on Three Mile Creek. Pitching camp was put off until the next day, and so we had to take our sleep in the brush. The night was "hellishly cold," but our Cookie made coffee for us that was "black as night and provided with plenty of dynamite." On the 24th we set up camp and began reveille at 6:00 a.m. After breakfasting, we were on the road around 7:30 in order to arrive at the cave by eight o'clock. Time for keeping up appearances with a shave was hard to find, and besides, the creek water was icy cold. Before long, some of us were sporting beards of assorted shapes and sizes.

Any one riding in the open truckbed as we sped toward Catlow Cave could expect to be enveloped and drenched with alkali dust by the time the ten to fifteen mile stretch was covered. That's why, when it came to a haircut, it always paid to accept a barber's invitation to have a hair wash. Without a prewash, a look in the mirror after a trim could be devastating, for our hair had carefully filtered a month's supply of dust to protect our scalps!

By June 25th we had cleared the loose rocks from the surface, located trenches and pits dating from the 1935 exploratory digging, built a dump area for the sifters, and laid out a surface grid pattern with coordinates. Lloyd Ruff worked out the grid pattern with the assistance of Dr. Carl Huffaker, and Chuck Reed. By June 25th, Ruff had knotted his pistol with a rattler kill, taken at the watering trough; and he would add a second notch in a few days.

Two of us usually worked a coordinate section together, and we all put in stints at the shakers. An informal division of labor emerged, with Ruff, Huffaker, and Cressman taking readings on pieces of basketry, obsidian points, and other artifacts turned up. I kept notes on the "readings" of artifacts excavated according to section and depth, and tried to unravel the ambiguities of stratification with rough sketches. Photographs of stratification and artifacts in situ supported note descriptions, and provided a second look for possible revisions. In-between note-taking I wielded a trowel along with the rest, armed with a mouth mask to filter the dust of many backgrounds and ages. Others must have taken notes, and Cressman established a master record of the coordinate readings.

Cressman enjoyed the excitement of discovery, and on June 26th uncovered a different type of sandal. The preferred style had a flap into which toes slipped, but Cressman's sandal was without this flap and relied on a cord lacing. It was made of sagebrush bark, twisted counter-clockwise and woven in a plain twine. The sandal was found at a depth of fourteen inches underneath a bed of ash.

We changed digging partners from time to time according to the coordinate numbers. On June 29th, Reed and Greenup in their excavation of sections 105-40 to 105-44 and 110-40 to 110-44 turned up a small conical firepit with a large basketry fragment, which was plain twined and also wrapped in a technique commonly designated as imbrication. All of us, of course, were uncovering fragments of sandals, arrowpoints, and cordage; and occasionally whole pieces in a "loose rubble of weathered general debris and loose dust intermingled with sage and twigs." The "strata" were of variable thickness, sometimes five to six inches, and might include a compacted earth and ash produced by fire. Occasionally Cressman would dictate a note to clarify the nature and extent of a stratified layer.

On July 5th we found our sifters overturned, and Cressman, noting some strange footprints, thought vandals had been at work. On this day he determined to focus our full attention on the west wall of the old pit and Trenches 1 and 3. By July 19th, Perry and Drews recovered a portion of a sagebrush skirt, followed on July 20th by skeletal fragments, which undoubtedly were human. More human bones, including fragments of an ulna, pelvis, and skull, were found within a mixture of earth and pebbly gravel. Finding the fragmented human skeleton was a high point in our excavation, but nothing was found with the bones. There was nothing to indicate that an ancient migrant had been found.

We were hot, weary, and begrimed at the end of our workdays and the cool waters of Three Mile Creek were a welcome and inviting sight. We usually had an hour before Cookie called us to dinner. On occasion we had a chance to observe the local animal, bird, and moth inhabitants as they awakened with a touch of coolness stirred by the sun on descending beyond the distant table rock. On one occasion we intercepted a rattler in our camp which had swallowed a field mouse. We decided to see how long it would take for the rattler to die if kept in the hot sun. We slipped a noose around the snake's head and used a stake held firmly on the ground to tighten the noose and hold the snake in place. Ground temperature was better than ninety degrees, and the snake registered a degree of body rigidity by seven or eight minutes and was dead at eleven. Rattlesnake meat was served up to gourmet appetites that evening.

After dinner we usually were back at work clarifying, cataloguing, preserving, filing, and recording our daily finds and their locations. Such tasks often kept us busy until eleven o'clock and midnight.

We needed to get a good sample of arrowpoints in order to determine standard types and local variants within the area. The wind cooperated by uncovering many a small campsite on the dusty floor of the lake. This allowed us to collect quite a number of points both whole and broken. We also drew upon personal collections from Lakeview, lower Klamath Lake, and Warner Valley. Florence Howe furnished collections from Silver Lake and Warner Valley. Small triangular side-knotched points were preferred by these unknown hunters, and the vast majority of points were made of obsidian. We used a typology for comparison but recently introduced by Professors Gifford and Schenck.

The cave entrance some 4,700 feet in elevation and 130 feet across gave a panoramic view of a broad valley outlined by terraces which marked the levels of what must have been a huge lake during Pleistocene times. It was easy from the top terrace to imagine a lake that must have been fifty or more feet deep at one time. The terraces recorded the gradual retreat of the lake to the present valley floor, now filled with sage and rabbit brush. Our minds could only play with the obvious: Were any people living in Catlow Cave when the lake was at its greatest depth? If so, what did they look like? Did they possess dugout boats for fishing? Did they hunt birds like the Klamath Indians? Did they have bows or atlatls? What was the climate like? Were there any ancient bison or mammoths for these ancient migrants to hunt? Such musings could go on forever.

Dr. Cressman drew upon the experienced judgment of his colleague, Dr. W.D. Smith and his assistant, Lloyd Ruff, for initial geological and chronological interpretations of the area. Ruff thought the Catlow Valley lake was self-contained or may have had an outlet. Cressman also brought a leading Swedish glacial and lacustrine geologist, Dr. Ernst Antevs, who was working on a formula for dating the withering of the Great Basin lakes based on estimates of evaporation rates and precipitation linked to climatic changes.

As student archeologists, our heads and conversations on a day-to-day basis were filled with our finds for that day and what we had learned from our classification and recording procedures. We could have used some “skull sessions” to update and broaden our perspectives on what had been achieved with regard to objectives, problems that had arisen, and steps essential for their resolution. We also could have benefited from the opportunity to engage our professors and special consultants like Antevs in friendly discourse. However, at this time Cressman was not ready for organized discourse about Catlow Cave. He did not know what lay ahead for his theory of early migrants in south-central and southeastern Oregon. Despite parts of a human skeleton found in the dirt and pebble gravels formed by lake waters rolling into the cave, it must have been evident that Catlow Cave would not produce the proof required for his thesis. There was no evidence of a people who had developed a lacustrine culture. The many layered sagebrush “strata” had produced a cultural inventory that corresponded with that of Paiute peoples who lived in this semi-arid environment at the time of historic contact.

From *A Golden Journey*, it is evident that Dr. Antevs renewed Dr. Cressman’s confidence in his theory by pointing out the general potentiality of south-central and southeastern Oregon for the discovery of ancient Pleistocene migrants and cultural continuities. He also identified special locations where proof might be found.

I do not have an exact day for our abandonment of the Catlow Cave diggings, but my last note is dated July 24th. A week or ten days before we shut down the digging, Dr. Cressman must have discovered that Cookie was either dining gourmet-fashion on the best of our provisions, or he was adding to his income with trade-ins at the Blitzen general store. At all events Cookie was given his walking papers; and, from the time of his departure, we found ourselves on short rations. Breakfast was usually pancakes, lunch a pink salmon pancake turnover, and dinner was little different. With stomachs groaning, we could only rejoice when Dr. Cressman started us for home.

Catlow Cave Epilogue

The shutting down of the diggings at Catlow Cave ended the search for ancient migrants to Oregon there. Dr. Cressman had to look elsewhere; and at Fort Rock Cave in 1938 he recovered sandals, whose dating forced acceptance of his thesis by those who had staunchly considered Oregon an improbable migration route.

In the search for ancient migrants, the Mount Mazama eruption remained critical in dating until the Carbon-14 process was perfected. Volcanologist Howell Williams dated the Mazama eruption between four and ten thousand years ago, with four or five thousand a more probable figure. The Fort Rock sandals in Howell’s view would be “somewhat later” (Cressman 1988: 379). From a geological perspective, the Fort Rock sandals could range between four and six thousand years before present time. The sandal makers of Fort Rock, according to geological estimates, could not be claimed as ancient migrants. Carbon-14 was to revolutionize archeological dating.

By 1949 carbon-14 dating was beginning to move the antiquity of numerous archeological sites a respectable distance back in time. The eruption of Mount Mazama was given a more precise date of 6,200 to 6,600 years ago. The Fort Rock sandals had begun to deteriorate on contact with air, and had been treated with a preservative. Unfortunately the preservative altered the condition of the sandals and they could not be used for a carbon-14 test. At this critical moment friends in Bend put Cressman in touch with a man who had a portion of a sandal in his possession which came from Fort Rock cave. He was a business man with a penchant for collecting Indian artifacts which he dug up when traveling in eastern Oregon. He willingly surrendered his sandal fragment for carbon-14 testing. The sandal amazingly confirmed Cressman’s thesis with a date of “9053±350, then the oldest, directly dated artifact in North American prehistory” (Cressman 1988:424).

Reflections

Reminiscences always provoke reflections on the meaning of former experiences. Our experiences at Catlow Cave undoubtedly followed us during our individual careers, enriching and giving positive direction to our lives. I came to appreciate more fully the integrity and consistency with which Dr. Cressman projected the scientific image. One

could not help but admire the objectivity, thoroughness, and painstaking procedures he demonstrated in the collection and analysis of factual evidence. There was no heady jumping to conclusions before the facts were in.

There was another quality of Dr. Cressman's character that I came to admire. He did not give up easily in the face of negative criticism by his peers. On the contrary, he expanded the base of his own experience and perceptions by contacting specialists, such as Dr. Antevs. The novel experience and outlook of Antevs brought a more objective and perceptive orientation to a problem that local theorists had settled very much to their own satisfaction.

Memories of student days confirm what one sensed then. Cressman was a teacher, but he also was a staunch friend who wanted to see you succeed.

Reflecting on his own career, I am sure that Dr. Cressman would advise all of us to expect that, at some point in our careers, serendipity would have a part to play.

Reference

Cressman, Luther S.
1988, *A Golden Journey*, University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City.

*Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Kay Voget. Professor Fred W. Voget died 8 May 1997.
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Editor's Note: Fred Voget's anthropological career saw him become an expert in the ethnohistory of the Mountain and River Crow. Fred took his Ph.D., from Yale in 1948 and continued with this interest in the ethnography of the North American Indian. Aside from Fred's career in ethnology, he wrote extensively on the history of anthropology which culminated in this magnum opus *A History of Ethnology* (Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1968). Fred's academic tenure at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, spawned interest in anthropology at the undergraduate level of a number of students, including the Editor. The Editor remembers quite vividly the gatherings at the Voget household which included such luminaries as George Peter Murdock and Ward Goodenough. Most of Fred's students knew nothing of his interest in Americanist archaeology as a student. Fred was never one to boast about his background and experiences. If you happened to be with Fred at the right time, gems of his days as a student would come flowing out. If you were interested in the history of anthropology and were lucky to be around when Fred talked about his background, you'd better have your pencil and paper ready!