Is That a Footprint?
by Lynne Attardi

"Did you see the footprint?" asked volunteer Barbara Harper when I visited Otis's site.
"No," I replied.
She led me to an upside-down pail, placed on the ground to cover something important. Then, with great enthusiasm, she uncovered "the print." It was in the floor of one of the houses revealed at the site by a crew of professionals and avocational archaeologists from Old Pueblo Archaeology Center. They were waiting for Allen Dart, the Center's director, to photograph it and bring plaster of Paris to possibly make a mold.

Now, that is really exciting, I thought; and immediately recalled Laetoli, Tanzania. How terribly exciting that must have been for the archaeologists who found the footprints of early hominids preserved in the earth nearly four million years ago. And now, right here in Tucson, Arizona, we have a volunteer for Old Pueblo who had found what may be another ancient footprint!
"Otis's site" was named by Jeffrey Jones, the project director for this site dig by Old Pueblo. Otis is the old black mongrel dog who, with bent tail and floppy ears that flap backward, ferociously protects and oversees the excavation on what he is sure is his domain, even though it's outside his fenced yard. Specifically, the project is located on the old Vactor Ranch property where the Tack Room Restaurant is situated in northeast Tucson. The archaeological study is being sponsored by ContraVest Properties, Inc.

As of early September, Jeff's crew, consisting of archaeologists and volunteers, had uncovered ten Hohokam house floors, pottery, chipped stone, ground stones, animal bones, and shells, even a turquoise-and-Olivella shell bracelet. The Old Pueblo crew had begun their investigation by excavating and examining 30 backhoe trenches to identify the approximate limits of three archaeological sites found on the property, and to obtain information about the variety and distribution of...
buried archaeological materials at each site. Wherever buried archaeological features were discovered in an initial trench, additional trenches were excavated to determine whether other archaeological features were in the immediate vicinities.

Preliminary examination of ceramic artifacts recovered from Old Pueblo's test trenches indicate these sites were occupied by Hohokam Indians between A.D. 950 and 1150. By the time the work is completed, the research will have included one day of initial surveying, 4 days of testing, and 20 days of intensive data recovery and excavations, and photographing, with months of follow-up laboratory work, analysis, and interpretation.

The prehistoric features found in the excavations were largely undisturbed by historical activities, and preservation in most cases was excellent. Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's investigation of them is seeking information about data on ancient human subsistence, settlement, adaptation to the environment, trade and exchange patterns, and the Hohokam social system.

While I visited the site, I interviewed a few of Old Pueblo's volunteers and discovered some facts I think you might find interesting. For instance, Barbara told me she had taken a footprint class offered at the Saguaro National Park East Unit, and had other training at Pima Community College and the University of Arizona. In her other life, Barbara is a pilot, yet she still finds time to move away the dirt, rocks, and debris to uncover our past.

I asked her: "What effect will your presence have here?"

"I hope my presence inspires everyone so that the job will be successful," she responded.

Hmmm. Let us think about this: "...so the job will be successful."

Checking my ordinary dictionary, I found words describing "successful" as: attainment of wealth or fame. Not quite satisfied, I decided to see how my Official Scrabble Players Dictionary defines it. Then I smiled as I thought that apparently they had Old Pueblo in mind when they stated: "Success: the attainment of something desired or intended."

The intention of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's work at this site is urgent. Tucson is growing, and the associated development is destroying evidence of our past. By surveying, testing, recording, and preserving heritage sites and artifacts, we can study the past according to archaeological principles and practices. That is Old Pueblo's desire and intent. Important to the attainment of this intent -- Old Pueblo's success -- is the contribution of its volunteers.

Another volunteer at Otis's site was Jim Trimbell. Jim is a retired airline captain. He has volunteered for Old Pueblo before and has excavated at Chaco Canyon for the last five years. He brings his experience to the crew and enjoys working with Jeff and the others. Jim recommends volunteering for Old Pueblo and claims "it's scut work" and "very rewarding."

An important part of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's mission is "public archaeology." So on Thursday, September 5th, I returned to the site to join a fifth grade class from Van Horne Elementary School of the Tucson Unified School District. Its 31 students, guided by teacher Ray Curtis, were there to observe the archaeologists "on a real dig." They were met by Austin Lenhart, an Old Pueblo archaeologist, who greeted them with a remarkable orientation. Before long, I was enveloped by the enthusiasm of the discussion, the questions and answers between the students and Austin, and the overwhelming inspiration of being on this site. Austin easily made analogies between history and prehistory so that the
young Tucsonans were able to place the site in the early times of southwestern culture.

“How did they get food and water?” “How can they get shells for bracelets?” “Where did the Hohokam culture go?” These were some of the many questions inspired by Austin’s discussion under the shade of the field canopy. There Allen Dart had displayed a collection of artifacts from this site, and the students were delightfully interested in viewing everything presented.

Following the presentation of about 45 minutes, the class began its tour on the desert sands. Amongst the creosote bushes, cactuses, and cholla, the students were led from one excavated pithouse to another. They were shown the plastered wall of a huge pithouse, its entryway, hearth, and interior roasting pit, its pumpkin-shaped outline, the postholes and actual burned post remains. All of these features were discussed thoroughly, including discoveries of other sites in the Tucson Basin sparked by a question concerning ballcourts.

“How is the house shaped this way?” “How can you tell how old it is?” “What do you do with the pottery you find?” “Have you found words in the walls?” And, not to be missed by the curiosity of a child, “What is that white stuff?” Austin then explained the material remains of a plaster of Paris mold and the presence of what could possibly be a footprint!

While the footprints at Laetoli helped to reconstruct the environment of early man, what would the significance be of a footprint in the floor of a Hohokam house in Tucson, Arizona? Being curious, I thought I’d ask Allen: “Other than the size of someone’s foot, what would a footprint at this location tell you?” Until I do, I will use my imagination to picture a member of the Hohokam laboratory. As an outgrowth of Old Pueblo’s Sabino Canyon Ruin program (an archaeological field school operated cooperatively with the Fenster School of Southern Arizona), Archaeology Opportunities volunteers also work with professional archaeologists who provide hands-on instruction in field, laboratory, and interpretive techniques. Persons who complete a basic three-day Sabino Canyon Ruin field school program automatically become Archaeology Opportunities members for a full year and are given priority to participate as volunteers in Old Pueblo’s archaeological research projects, including excavations, surveys, and laboratory studies. For information and schedules on Sabino Canyon Ruin field school sessions, see page 5.

Existence and activities of past cultures is of interest to many of us. That information is provided by the archaeologists who find the evidence upon which to base their theories. The archaeologists need your help, your time, your enthusiasm, your discoveries. The finding of a footprint at this site might make you wonder if its maker knew Otis’s canine ancestors, and whether Otis’s protection of this site originated at the Hohokam settlement Old Pueblo is now discovering.

Meanwhile, if you must know the answer to the question “Is that a footprint?,” you will have to ask Jeff Jones or Allen Dart when you become a volunteer for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center.
The Silverbell Coachline Site:

Earlier this year Old Pueblo archaeologists Gayle Hartmann and Leon Lorentzen directed excavations at site AZ AA:12:321 (ASM) at Silverbell Road and Coachline Drive in Marana, for Lyons Romo Inc. and the QuikMart Corporation.

During this project three or four Hohokam pithouses were excavated, depending on how you count: one was either enlarged from the original house’s floor plan or built partly over an earlier structure (see photo). If this is an instance of remodeling, there were three houses, but if a later structure was built, there were four.

All of the houses exhibited single- or double-stepped entries and indoor firepits, and one had a large, irregular pit dug into its floor. No outdoor features were found at the site.

Oddly, we also didn’t find a single sherd of pottery with painted designs during the Silverbell Coachline site excavation. A few redware sherds with unevenly colored surfaces were recovered, but most of the ceramics were plainware pieces with tiny flecks of mica that gave the vessel surfaces a sparkly sheen. These mica surface finishes and the shapes of some of the pottery vessels suggest the site was occupied only briefly during the Cañada del Oro or Rillito phase, some time between A.D. 750 and 950.

A Colonial Period Habitation

Silverbell Coachline site pithouse. Feature 3, a Hohokam pithouse at the Silverbell Coachline site, had an unusual semicircular step at the outer end of its entryway, shown at the right in this photo. The house also had been remodeled (or entirely rebuilt) at some time during its history, as indicated by the extra firepit and the outline of a separate front wall, all of which are visible just inside the entryway.

The Whispering Wings Site

This spring Archaeology Opportunities volunteers Robin Rutherford, Jim Trimbell, and Mike Wilson helped Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s Jeff Jones and other archaeologists conduct data recovery excavations for the Tanque Verde Development Corporation at the Whispering Wings site, AZ BB:14:598 (ASM). This site was located just east of the Tucson city limits at Speedway Blvd. and Smoky Springs Road.

The five Hohokam features found and excavated at this site included 2 pithouses, 2 roasting pits, and a blackened-earth midden. (Actually, one of the houses was reused as a roasting pit after nobody lived in it any more, so you could say there were really three roasting pits.)

The midden contained loose, ashy dirt and fire-cracked rocks but hardly any artifacts, indicating it was an accumulation of ashes and rocks that had been cleaned out of the roasting pits.

Specific styles of red-on-brown painted pottery recovered from the Whispering Wings site indicate the houses were occupied by the Hohokam during the Early and Middle Rincon phases (A.D. 950-1100).

However, we also found a few pieces of (Continued on page 6)
Tours Offered Again at the Sabino Canyon Ruin

This fall Old Pueblo Archaeology Center will again offer its popular, family-oriented public tours of the Sabino Canyon Ruin excavations on one Saturday per month on the dates shown below.

The Sabino Canyon Ruin, a Hohokam Indian village site of the A.D. 1100-1350 era, is located in an undeveloped desert setting on the outskirts of Tucson.

Old Pueblo's archaeological excavations at the ruin have exposed massive adobe- and rock-walled housing compounds, pithouses, ancient canals, a dog burial, and thousands of ceramic, stone, bone, and seashell artifacts. Old Pueblo provides opportunities for the public to participate in the excavations by taking archaeological field school sessions or through membership in Archaeology Opportunities.

Archaeology Opportunities members may go on the tours free with advance reservations. The cost for nonmembers is $10.00 for adults ($8.00 of which is a tax-deductible donation), $2.00 for kids age 6-12, free for kids 5 and under.

To make reservations and obtain meeting place directions for the tour, call (520) 798-1201.

Sabino Canyon Ruin Public Tour Dates:

October 5
November 2
December 7
January 18
February 1

All tours are Saturday at 10 a.m.

Feature 29 was a historical structure at Vactor Ranch site AZ BB:9:303. It was partially excavated and recorded during Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's June testing project.

Sabino Canyon Ruin Field Schools and Workshops

Old Pueblo continues to offer one-, two-, and three-day archaeological excavation and laboratory field school sessions at the Sabino Canyon Ruin, mainly on weekends but also on weekdays by special arrangement. The field school sessions are operated cooperatively with the Fenster School of Southern Arizona, owner of the part of the ruin being excavated by Old Pueblo.

Also offered is a special two-day workshop that is designed for school teachers but available to the general public. This workshop has been approved for salary increase credit by several Arizona school districts.

This program provides excavation opportunities and training for volunteers and students.

Call Old Pueblo at 798-1201 for details or to register.

Archaeology Opportunities Membership Program

Archaeology Opportunities is an outgrowth of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's Sabino Canyon Ruin educational program. Membership benefits include opportunities to participate in Old Pueblo's excavations, field surveys, and other research programs; 20% discounts on Old Pueblo's publications and other items; subscription to the Old Pueblo Archaeology bulletin; and invitations and discounts for archaeology field trips and other events.

Persons who complete a three-day Sabino Canyon Ruin field school program automatically become Archaeology Opportunities members for a full year. A yearly fee option for membership is also available.

See page 7 for Archaeology Opportunities membership fees and an enrollment form.
“Mimbres Gods” Message Cards: Education Program Fundraiser

Tucson’s Sanpete Publications has donated a specially printed run of 5 by 7 inch, full-color stationery cards featuring Jacque Day’s painting of the ancient southwestern “Mimbres Gods” pottery bowl to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center. This is the same watercolor illustration that graces the cover of Carolyn O’Bagy Davis’s book Treasured Earth: Hattie Cosgrove’s Mimbres Archaeology in the American Southwest, which was copublished by Sanpete and Old Pueblo.

The “Mimbres Gods” pottery bowl was recovered in excavations at the Treasure Hill site near Silver City, New Mexico, by Mrs. Cosgrove and her husband, Burt.

To raise money for our archaeology education programs, Old Pueblo Archaeology Center is offering these cards to the public for $1.00 apiece or 6 for $5.00. Each card has a blank interior for personal messages and comes with an envelope.

The cards may be purchased at Old Pueblo’s office (1000 E. Fort Lowell Road in Tucson) or by mail (PO Box 40577, Tucson AZ 85717-0577). Please include $1.00 postage for each set of cards requested by mail.

Thanks, Everyone!

Special thanks go out to:

- Dan Vega, for printing this issue of Old Pueblo Archaeology!
- Carol Richardson, for sorting, labeling, and mailing this issue!
- Lynne Attardi for the feature article and editing of this issue!

The Whispering Wings Site (continued from page 4)

red-on-brown pottery dating to the Rillito and Tanque Verde phases (A.D. 850-950 and 1150-1300, respectively).

Pottery from outside the Tucson Basin at the Whispering Wings site included Santa Cruz and Sacaton red-on-buff, two types from the Phoenix area that are not uncommon in Rincon phase sites in the Tucson area. However, we also recovered specimens of San Francisco Red and what may be Mimbres Black-on-white, types common to the Mogollon area east of the Tucson Basin.
Old Pueblo Offers Arizona Archaeological Society Certification Courses in Archaeology

This fall Old Pueblo Archaeology Center is offering more courses for certification credit through the Arizona Archaeological Society. Fees listed here do not include the AAS membership and certification program fees that are required to obtain an AAS certificate.

The AAS certification program is designed with the help of professional archaeologists to give training in various aspects of archaeology outside an academic degree program. Because most of the AAS courses provide field experience in addition to classroom training, students can develop skills to make them qualified and valuable members of archaeological projects.

To enroll in the Certification Program an individual must be an Arizona Archaeological Society member. An AAS Certification Program application form is completed, and the enrollee pays a one-time Certification Program fee of $10.00.

When the application is accepted AAS establishes a file to maintain the enrollee’s permanent qualifications record. As each course is completed, a certificate is issued stating that the individual is certified in the course’s aspect of archaeology.

Old Pueblo’s AAS course classroom sessions are held at our office at 1000 E. Fort Lowell Road in Tucson, with fieldwork at the Sabino Canyon Ruin and other Tucson-area archaeological sites.

To register for courses described here call (520) 798-1201.

CREDIT CARDS OK
Payments for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s course fees and publications can be made with your Visa or Mastercard card, or with check or cash.

Course Offerings this Fall

Prehistory of the Southwest
This classroom course provides a basic overview of Southwestern archaeology. It incorporates discussions of cultural sequences, dating systems, subsistence strategies, urbanization, abandonment, and general characteristics of major Southwestern cultural groups.

20 classroom hours
5-9 p.m. Wednesdays October 2 - 30
Fee: Archaeology Opportunities member $28, nonmember $35

Field Crew Member I
This course prepares the student to become a valuable member of an excavation crew. It covers the basic tools used, collection of samples for pollen, flotation, and dating analyses, and -- most importantly -- site record-keeping.

30 classroom hours
6-9 p.m., Tuesdays November 5 - February 4 (skips some holidays)
40 fieldwork hours: To be arranged after November 5
Classroom hours fee: AO member $42, nonmember $52.50
Fieldwork hours fee: AO member free, nonmember $189.00

Archaeology Opportunities Enrollment/Old Pueblo Archaeology Subscription Form

Name (Mr., Ms. Mrs.)

Address

City, State, Zip

Area Code & Phone:

Enclosed is my payment for:

Archaeology Opportunities membership (Category: ) $
Nonmember Old Pueblo Archaeology bulletin subscription only ($5.00/year)
Additional donation to Old Pueblo Archaeology Center

TOTAL ENCLOSED $

If you are requesting a Household, Contributing, Supporting, or Sponsoring membership, please list the names of all household members who will participate in Archaeology Opportunities programs in the box at right.

Questions? Call Old Pueblo at (520) 798-1201

Old Pueblo Archaeology is the quarterly bulletin of Old Pueblo Archaeology Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Please direct questions, comments, or news items to Lynne Attardi, Editor, by phone at 520-798-1201, by Fax at 520-798-1966, or at Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's post office address shown in this bulletin.
Inside: Volunteers at Otis's Site!

Would you like to subscribe to Old Pueblo Archaeology? If this issue came to you free or with an address label showing a date earlier than the issue’s publication date, you need to subscribe or become an Archaeology Opportunities member in order to receive future issues. See page 7 for subscription and membership information.

Volunteer in action. Steve Stacey brushes off a pithouse floor during Old Pueblo Archaeology Center’s excavation at “Otis’s site,” a Hohokam settlement near the Tack Room Restaurant in Tucson, sponsored by ContraVest Properties, Inc.