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Thursday, July 22, 2004

SINCE 1900 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON EUGENE, OREGON

Volume 106, Issue 10

UO researches Donner cannibalism

Artifacts at the suspected Donner party site are studied for evidence of cannibalism

BEN BROWN
NEWS REPORTER

The story of the Donner party is infamous and widely known. Eighty-one men, women and children pinned down by snow on the far side of the Sierra Nevada mountains starved and eventually resorted to cannibalism before the 40 survivors were rescued.

However, State Museum of Anthropology Research Associate Julie Schablitsky and osteologist Guy Tasa both part-time University instructors, have found artifacts that might tell a different tale of that tragic winter in 1846.

"It's a big story because of the cannibalism, which has been sensationalized," said Schablitsky. "The real story is about survival."

Earlier this summer, Schablitsky and a team of researchers from the University of Oregon and the University of Montana found a cooking hearth, bone fragments, broken china, jewelry and musket balls at the site at Alder Creek Camp in California's Tahoe National Forest.

Schablitsky said these artifacts provide long-sought-after definitive proof that Alder Creek is where the Donner party spent the winter of 1846-47. The hearth is specifically important, she said, because it is evidence of long-term residence and not just an overnight stay by other

pioneers or miners.

The bone fragments will allow researchers to finally prove whether the pioneers resorted to cannibalism to stay alive during those long hungry months, Schablitsky said.

Tasa said cursory examination of the bones reveals that they all come from large mammals, but at present he can not say what animals — oxen, deer or humans — they came from.

"If we identify non-human bone, we can say they were hunting resources not considered before," Tasa said.

Diaries from the camp have never revealed whether the trapped pioneers hunted, but Schablitsky says new evidence indicates they did. More than 50 musket balls were found near the hearth. Schablitsky said

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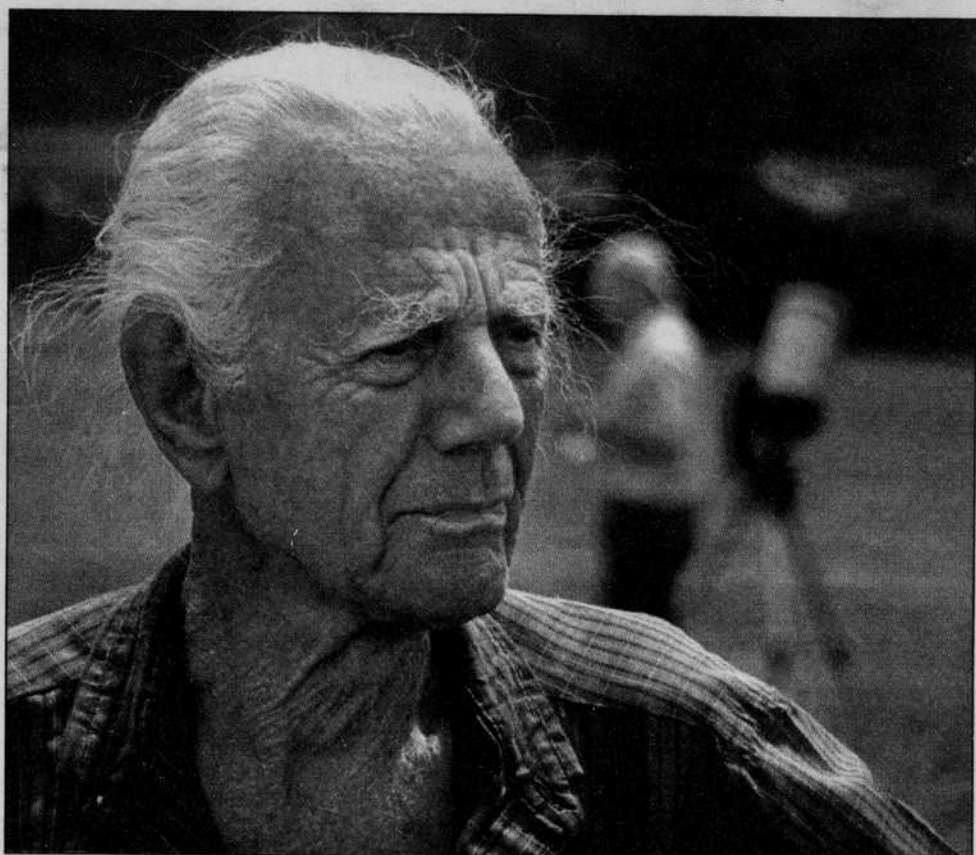


Erik R. Bishoff Online & Photo Editor

Research Associate Julie Schablitsky displays a piece of lead shot found near the recently discovered Donner party hearth. Osteologist and archeologist Guy Tasa (background) will assist in the investigation of bone fragments found at the excavation site.

STAR GAZERS

Innovative telescope builder John Dobson, celebrated for helping popularize amateur astronomy, teaches on campus this summer



Erik R. Bishoff Online & Photo Editor

John Dobson, world-renowned astronomer and creator of the Dobsonian telescope mount, teaches summer classes on cosmology and telescope construction at the University.

OMIE DRAWHORN

NEWS REPORTER

On Friday night John Dobson was out on the town, living it up in a way only John Dobson could. He stood outside of Prince Puckler's Ice Cream on the corner of East 19th Street and Agate Street with a 12-inch-diameter telescope set up on the sidewalk, urging passersby to take a look, to see the universe they live in and to understand it.

"It's not enough just to see it, you need to understand what the hell you see," Dobson said.

Dobson — a world-renowned astronomer, co-founder of Sidewalk Astronomers and inventor of the Dobsonian telescope mount, which is used worldwide — has made it his mission to share his love and knowledge of astronomy with the rest of the world.

Now he's brought this vision to the University. Dobson travels around the world, but is currently living in Eugene teaching classes on telescope-making and cosmology.

Dobson currently teaches a 20-student, twice-weekly class in telescope making. Under his instruction, students are building cardboard Newtonian telescopes, which are shaped like cannons. Most of the telescope lenses are between eight and 12 inches.

Garth Eliassen, Dobson's host when he lived in Monmouth, said the telescopes are made out of "junk." The students use plywood for the base, cardboard for the tube and a binocular part for the telescope's eyepiece.

The telescopes will be on display at the Science Factory Children's Museum and Planetarium at

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Senators question committee authority

The ASUO Student Senate summer session debates issue resolutions and documentation of minutes

MEGHANN M. CUNIFF
FREELANCE REPORTER

The ASUO Student Senate debated July 15 whether it could assume the full senate's authority to pass resolutions, revealing divisions among summer-session senators over the role of the summer committee.

The debate stemmed from an issue resolution some senators wanted to refer to the Rules Committee and sparked a deeper discussion about problems in the way the Senate has operated this summer, including the Senate's failure to provide the mandated documentation of meeting minutes to University officials.

Summer-session Senate President Rodrigo Moreno-Villamar supported the proposed resolution that criticized a Multicultural Center employee's job evaluation that resulted in a "substandard" contract.

However, summer-session Senate Vice President James George and Senator Kevin Day both heavily criticized the resolution, arguing that the Green Tape Notebook prohibits the summer-session Senate from passing resolutions.

"We cannot pass this resolution because we're not the full Senate; we're a committee of the Senate," Day said, referring to Senate rule 10.2, which explicitly states "The proposed resolution shall be presented to the full Senate at a regularly scheduled meeting." Rule 8.5 of the Green Tape Notebook calls for the Senate to make a summer committee, which Day said he interprets to mean that the summer Senate is not, and cannot, act as the full Senate.

If Day's interpretation is correct, the Senate violated its rules June 24 when it passed an issue resolution in support of the

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Trade commission urged to censor Fox News

The Federal Trade Commission will give 'little consideration' to claims Fox News is misleading

MICHAEL A. BOOTH
FREELANCE REPORTER

Political-action committee MoveOn.org has blasted Fox News' slogan "Fair and Balanced" as "false and deceptive advertising," calling on the Federal Trade Commission to censor the news outlet under its authority to regulate commercial speech.

MoveOn.org, which has more than two million members, according to its Web site, recently promoted the documentary "Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism," and followed

the promotion with a petition that challenges Fox News' slogan as false advertising.

The Web site claims Fox News is intentionally misleading the public by promoting a biased conservative message. The organization says the proof is in the documentary, in which former Fox News employees allege that channel executives hand down a politically conservative agenda and decide how to work it into a seemingly objective news piece.

Cable television news channels are loosely regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, not the FTC, but are only censored by the FCC in cases of defamation and obscenity. The FTC has a responsibility to regulate commercial speech but it is unprecedented to consider censorship of any news organization.

Kyu Ho Youm, University School of Journalism and Communication professor and Jonathan Marshall First Amendment Chair, said the petition has little legal merit and is likely "politically and ideologically motivated."

"I don't think the FTC will address this issue," Youm said. "Most likely, they will dismiss it out of hand."

In a statement to the Associated Press, Fox news spokeswoman Irena Briganti said, "While this is clearly a transparent publicity stunt, we recognize all forms of free speech and wish them well."

The FTC investigates all complaints by the public, but the commission will give the petition little serious consideration, according to a statement

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