

Scientist fights for research at Idaho caves

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (AP) — A few miles west of Idaho Falls lie three caves and an archaeological legacy that Suzann Henrikson can't let go.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management archaeologist has dedicated years of her life to convincing others that digging in the caves for clues of the Snake River Plain's earliest inhabitants is worth the money.

"It's too important to ignore," she said. "We need to investigate human history because we keep making the same mistakes over and over again."

Henrikson and her peers say the Wasden caves, named for the first white owner of the land, make up the oldest archaeological site in Idaho. Excavators have found bones from all types of animals in the caves, as small as mice and large as a mammoth, as well as prehistoric spear and

arrow points and fragments of pottery.

Henrikson suspects Native American tribes — the ancestors of today's Shoshone-Bannock Tribes — sometimes used the caves to trap and kill large game such as bison and mammoths as many as 11,000 years ago. As the theory goes, hunters would drive herds of bison from the area north of the caves up a slope and into the gaping holes formed in collapsed lava tubes.

The holes weren't deep enough to kill many of the animals, so they didn't qualify as the kind of buffalo jumps other plains tribes used to harvest game.

But they did trap large numbers of the bison in a confined area where the hunters could easily dispatch them.

Henrikson said bison kills at

the Wasden site could date back as far as 9,000 years. If those kills were the result of intentional drives by hunters, they'd mark the oldest such site in North America, she said.

Of course, that's just theory at this point. No serious excavation has taken place at the Wasden site since the 1970s, and archaeologists need to examine the caves more thoroughly to confirm — or debunk — their theories. To dig, they need money — about \$10,000 per cubic yard, Henrikson said.

She said excavators will need about \$100,000 just to stabilize the Wasden site against erosion.

Henrikson would love nothing more than to develop the dig, to finally unlock its mysteries. But she knows that's an uphill battle in a time when federal, state and local governments are

slashing every budget item they can find.

"Money is, basically, almost nonexistent in universities nowadays," she said.

Henrikson said she's trying to rebuild momentum for developing the Wasden dig, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. She said her most recent push is to encourage the site's listing as a national landmark, a designation that would free up some money to restart excavation.

She knows it won't be easy to attract enough money for a full excavation of the site, but she doesn't plan on giving up.

"What's amazing about out here is I could work until I'm 90 and I would never run out of stuff to research," she said of the Snake River Plain. "There's just too much out here."

HUD grant to S.D. tribe targets job skills

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal grant to a South Dakota Indian tribe is earmarked to help residents of public housing find jobs.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban awarded \$240,000 to Oglala Sioux Tribal Partnership for Housing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Officials said caseworkers will help occupants make the most of their knowledge, skills and abilities

to find work.

HUD said it awarded \$31 million nationally for programs that improve employment prospects or link the elderly and disabled to support services so they can maintain independent living.

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan said in a statement that public housing should offer services that help residents be self-sufficient.

Archives show birth of Code Talkers

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — You can tell a lot about a person by the papers they leave behind.

Case in point: The papers in the Philip Johnston Collection in the Special Collections & Archives at NAU's Cline Library.

Johnston is best known as the man who pushed successfully for the adoption of the Navajo language for secure military communications in the hands of the Navajo Code Talkers during World War II.

The three acid-free, cardboard boxes in the library hold a variety of paper materials, including tissue-thin, hand-typed letters from the 1920s, '30s and '40s, yellowing copies of magazine articles, colorful maps, tickets and brochures from Mexico, transcripts of oral histories, Code Talker reunion programs and thick manuscripts of Johnston's writings, including various articles on the Southwest.

A gap in correspondence from 1942 through '45 may reflect the top-secret nature of the Navajo Code Talkers and their work.

However, some of the more yellowing letters, sent from Los Angeles, are from just after the war and deal with Johnston's efforts to help the Navajo people.

"If you have been on the Navajo reservation you will realize how terribly unprovided for the area is in terms of roads and public services generally," Johnston wrote in a Nov. 4, 1946, letter to William Brophy, the commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.

The Johnston Collection pro-

vides a fascinating view into the mind of a man whose brilliant code concept undoubtedly aided the Allied victory in the war.

"Here is someone with obvious regional and local interest," commented Sean Evans, an archivist at Cline. "When you think historically about anything, there is so much stuff that people just throw away because they don't think it's important."

Online through Cline Library, there are also more than 2,000 black and white photographs that Johnston took, many of them with Native American themes, including scouting trips on the reservation.

There is also a 1940 photo of the old El Pueblo Motor Inn in Flagstaff, which Johnston built in 1937, working with contractor R.E. Goble.

Described in a 1936 Coconino Sun article as an "auto court," the court was described as having "a five-room caretaker's home and three double camp cottages. They will be of Spanish design, stuccoed outside and plastered inside."

Johnston had moved back to northern Arizona with his wife Bernice, and they had decided to make this location their permanent home.

They purchased a site 3 miles east of downtown Flagstaff for the motel.

They also built a private residence behind the motel.

Today, the facility, now called the El Pueblo Motel, still stands on east Route 66 and is the oldest motel remaining along Route 66 outside of the downtown area.

It was from the motel that Johnston engineered the recruitment of Navajos to serve in the Marines as Code Talkers.

The property itself is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a national landmark because it exemplifies the motor court building type and it is associated with an individual who made significant contributions to American and world history.

"The preservation of heritage resources is how we connect to and learn from the past,

and importantly, it's how we implement the Regional Plan and preserve the character of our community," said Karl Eberhard, historic preservation officer for the city of Flagstaff.

The El Pueblo Motor Inn is one of 27 remaining motels, out of 50 in 1960, from Chicago to Los Angeles that contribute to the National Historic District of Route 66.

Johnston was born on Sept. 17, 1892, in Topeka, Kan., and died on Sept. 11, 1978, in San Diego, Calif.

His love of things Native American began in his childhood.

The son of a missionary, Johnston came in 1896 with his family to Flagstaff, from where his father, William Johnston, was to serve Navajos residing on the western part of the Navajo Reservation.

On the reservation, young Philip learned to speak Navajo while playing with Navajo children and was one of perhaps 30 non-natives who understood the complex and subtle Navajo expressions.

In 1902 he traveled with his father to Washington, D.C., with his father and local Navajo leaders when they spoke to the President Theodore Roosevelt to persuade him to add more land to the Navajo Reservation via an Executive Order.

In fact, the youth was translator between the local Navajo leaders and the president.

In the early 1900s, Johnston attended and graduated from the Northern Arizona Normal School, which is now NAU.

In March 1918, he enlisted in the U.S. Army 319th Engineers, where he received a reserve commission, before shipping to France to participate in the Great War.

It was here that he may have learned about Comanches being used as code talkers by U.S. Army units.

As a veteran, Johnston attended the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, where he earned his graduate civil engineering degree in 1925.

Afterward, he took a job with

the city of Los Angeles water department before returning to Flagstaff a dozen years later.

Johnston never forgot the usefulness of Native American languages for secure communications during World War I.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked and America entered the war, Johnston wrote a "Proposed Plan for Recruiting Indian Signal Corps Personnel," which he submitted in February 1942 to Major General Clayton B. Vogel and his staff to convince them of the value of the Navajo language as code.

"Because of the fact that a complete understanding of words and terms comprising the various Indian languages could be had only by those whose ears had been highly trained in them, these dialects would be ideally suited to communication in various branches of our armed forces," he wrote.

Johnston recommended recruitment from the Navajo tribe, because at 49,338 members, it was the largest tribe in the U.S., according to his research in 1942.

In an article in the Cline Library archives by A.E. Mortensen, "A Typical Arizonian at War," Johnston is described as a "human dynamo" and a true patriot.

"Philip Johnston was flying the true colors of a real American," Mortensen wrote. "On October 2nd, 1942, Philip Johnston now 50 years of age, voluntarily gave up all civilian ties and entered the Marine Corps with rank of Staff Sergeant."

The first assignment for Johnston was a recruiting tour through Arizona and New Mexico, based out of the motel, and "then back to Camp Elliott to take over the actual schooling of the Navajos," Mortensen continued.

Not much is known of Johnston after World War II, although letters in the archives show that he remained very active in his work to help Native Americans, including creating a nonprofit organization to raise money to send them to college during the 1950s.

This year, there were seven Navajo Code Talkers, each with a companion, entered in the Armed Forces Day Parade on May 21 in Flagstaff.

Sidney Bedoni, Peter MacDonald, Alfred Peaches, George Willie, Dan Akee, Samuel Sandoval and Samuel Tsosie.

Group wants American Indian casino in Lansing

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A group is moving ahead with its effort to bring an American Indian casino to Lansing.

Ted O'Dell, chairman of Lansing Jobs Coalition, said that he'll ask City Council members to approve his request before trying a ballot issue. He wants to gather enough signatures to get it on the city's November ballot.

O'Dell's group did not submit the number of signatures

needed to put the issue on the August ballot.

In April, a group aiming to build casinos in Lansing and six other Michigan cities launched a process that could put the measure before state voters this fall. "Michigan is Yours" needs more than 300,000 signatures from registered voters across the state.

The effort failed to make the 2010 state ballot.

Flooding costs force Crow tribe to lay off 150

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The costs of dealing with severe flooding on the Crow Indian Reservation have forced the tribe to lay off 150 workers.

Crow personnel director Kayle Howe tells the Billings Gazette that the tribe faced the unexpected costs of paying people to help residents in isolated areas and distributing food.

He says those costs came on top of revenue shortfalls that had already caused the tribe to

cut full-time employees to 32 hours a week.

Howe says the tribe is trying to recover the money it paid for flood-rescue efforts, but it could take a while.

Before Friday's layoffs, the tribe employed approximately 815 people.

Howe says most of those laid off were the most recently hired, and that at least some won't be eligible for unemployment payments.

Alcatraz occupation anniversary

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Last Saturday marked the 40th anniversary of the ending of the occupation of Alcatraz Island by American Indian activists.

The 19-month occupation came to an end on June 11, 1971 when federal officers evicted the remaining 15 protesters.

Activists had seized the island in San Francisco Bay in Novem-

ber 1969 with the hopes of turning it into an Indian university or cultural center.

With as many as 800 activists on the island at the height of the occupation, the protest received massive attention.

After the occupation ended, the university or center was never built, but plans to sell the island to private developers were dropped.

Delay on NY cigarette tax

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — New York state is under another court order preventing it from taxing cigarettes sold by Seneca Indian Nation retailers to the general public at reservation stores.

The western New York tribe is the biggest seller of cigarettes among the state's Indian Nations. The appellate division of state Supreme Court granted its request for a temporary restraining order Thursday.

The order bars collection of the \$4.35-per-pack tax on Seneca Nation-bound cigarettes until June 20.

Grassland office closed temporarily

(AP) — The Crooked River National Grassland office has been temporarily closed in Madras until the federal government can hire another staff worker. There were two people stationed at the district office,

but one of them works afternoons in the field, which would have left the other employee alone.

Federal officials say policy is to have two people at the office for security reasons.

