

Interviewee: Bettis, Allen

Interview Date: June 22, 2009

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Allen Bettis

Interviewed by: Reed Amadon
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Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location:

RA: Okay Allen, nice to see you and I was thinking that maybe we would be talking to two people at the same time which would have been interesting but this will be great. It makes it a little bit more direct. As I say what we are doing, what my job is to interview people who are involved in your case with archeology and I know you are with archeology with the Texas Department of Transportation.

AB: Correct.

RA: Okay. You are Archeologist III is that right?

AB: That is my title.

RA: So that means you are a senior with the department?

AB: That is correct.

RA: So what we are doing, is we are doing all of this so that we can have a record and it is not for interviews or for newspapers necessarily it is basically for, oh that reminds me, it is basically for having a historical record that people can go back and refer to.

AB: Sure.

RA: Because even after all the work that you have done at some point it could get wiped out and we want to be able to have something in archives for people depending on certain topics can come back and find out information that way.

AB: Very good.

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RA: My background is that I have background in anthropology and history and I have done a lot of international work and I have worked a lot with Native American tribes for probably the last thirty years. So I've made them mad, I've made them happy, whatever the usual thing. So let's start with this and I say for the both of you but what got you interested in this and what got you into this field in the first place when you were a child?

AB: Well growing up here in Texas there is archeology all over the place. As a kid I found arrowheads and picked up arrowheads all over my grand dad's ranch in Brown County and just was always curious about that and that's how I got into archeology and specifically into lithic technology.

RA: Well there were a lot of arrowheads out there?

AB: Absolutely.

RA: Did your family support this or was it pretty much?

AB: Yeah my family supported it. They knew I'd probably be poor all my life but they supported me getting into this field.

RA: Right. What is the path that got you to this job?

AB: Well I've worked in what we call contract archeology for many years working as a field tech or some kind of a field assistant or such for years. Finally with getting my degrees in line and getting enough experience I started getting better jobs and I decided with the advent of kids coming along I'd better start getting a career. So I have put my studies to the side and I have started focusing on getting a career going so I could be sure to keep a roof and clothing and food.

RA: Well what is your education? You actually did work before you had education in archeology?

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AB: Well I got into it before I got started. I went to Southwest Texas State on an athletic scholarship in the first class.

RA: Football?

AB: Football and track.

RA: When was that?

AB: This was back in the late 70's.

RA: That's when I was there I was there for a little while. I graduated from there my first degree.

AB: The first archeology class or anthropology class that I ever took was under a guy by the name of Tom Gray at Southwest Texas. As you know Tom Gray is the guy who originally found Lucy, along with Donald Johanson.

RA: No kidding!

AB: So it was real interesting to get to hear the stories about that. I had taken that as an elective class and it kind of got me interested in it. At that same time during that time period Joel Shiner had been doing some of his underwater work at **Aquirina (4.23)** Springs and so I had saw some of that going on so it kind of peaked my interested.

RA: So you were there when they discovered that old 12,000 site that was there?

AB: I had heard about it and I didn't participate in that but it was something that peaked my interest.

RA: Wow! Was Gray there at the school, he discovered Lucy before you went there or afterwards?

AB: He discovered Lucy what was it back in the early 70's, '74 or something like that?

RA: Is he still there?

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AB: No he has left archeology and he is in other endeavors from what I understand.

RA: Interesting.

AB: Anyway that's kind of how I got into that. After I had broken my ankle and couldn't participate in athletics anymore so part of the process of healing it, of getting back in shape and stuff I decided to join the military and I went and did a six year stint in the marine corps and when I got out of that I decided to get back in school and return to Southwest Texas and instead of going back into physical education like I had been originally I started thumbing through the catalog and see what was the quickest degree I could get and came across anthropology and it required the least amount of credits to get a degree so since I had already had an interest in that I thought, "Why not study that?" So I got my BA at Southwest and I got my MA at the University of Texas at Austin and started working on my Ph.D. at Texas A & M and like I said I had to put that on hold because of kids.

RA: Still working on that? What about, what was the program like was it pretty thorough at Southwest Texas?

AB: It was a good program. It has been much better developed by now. They had some good people there at the time. Norm Whalen who was an old world archeologist, he was extremely interesting, quite a wealth of knowledge. I really enjoyed getting to study under him. James Garber he is a real good Texas archeologist and Beligium (6.54) archeologist and I enjoyed studying under him. The program has been developed quite a bit more now that they have a Masters program at what is called Texas State now. It sounds like a good place to go to school.

RA: What about what was your experience at UT?

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AB: Good. Good experience I really enjoyed studying under Tom Hester and a lot of other people there that I learned a lot from, Mike Collins and various other people that are connected with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, a good rounded education from UT Austin.

RA: It's called the Texas Archeology...?

AB: Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, TARL.

RA: Oh Carl?

AB: TARL, T-A-R-L.

RA: Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. It studies just Texas archeology?

AB: Yes.

RA: Okay that is very interesting. I might want to contact them. Anybody there you know that is still there?

AB: Mike Collins I believe is still there. He would be a good person to get in contact with, a wealth of knowledge. Various other people that he could probably direct you to that would be really neat to interview.

RA: Yeah I think so. Most archeology departments don't focus... like I was very interesting in Mayan and Aztec, Mayan history basically, I've got family there and also Southwest. Of course at U of H they don't focus on those areas that much. So you go to different places you get different focus. What was your focus in archeology, what would you say that your emphasis is?

AB: Oh definitely lithic technology. Like I had said earlier, growing up with arrowheads all over the place I wanted to know how to make them or I wanted to know how they were made...

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RA: Can you do that?

AB: I got interested in replicating them and I've been doing that for over 20 years now.

RA: Really? Can you do it as well as this?

AB: Oh yes.

RA: Really? Wow that's fantastic! So you are in lithic now that means just no matter where arrow heads are but I mean are there areas within Texas that you focused on?

AB: Well primarily south and central Texas were my focus, a little bit in the pan handle. Then when I got into contract archeology, mostly the work was in the coal mining areas of east Texas where they are doing lignite coal mining. So that was where a lot of work was going on so we worked out there quite a bit so I picked up some knowledge about east Texas archeology.

RA: Caddo and all this? As you worked in the field have you seen some of the changes, the direction in the philosophy?

AB: I have. From when I started they were trying to develop the multi-disciplinary aspect of anthropology where you had a wide spectrum of specialists coming to work together on a site and since then and over twenty years now I have seen that just blossom tremendously.

RA: Really?

AB: So being able to get in on the initial part of that change in anthropology and seeing it develop and grow has been pretty neat, to see how we now use this multi-disciplinary approach to studying archeological sites.

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RA: When you say that I remember reading about the work that was done in Machu Picchu and how that particular gentleman who went down there and did that had all these different people come down. When you say multi-discipline today what are you meaning by that?

AB: Well the way we use people from different disciplines like general archeologists, lithic technologists, palanologists (11:31), people who study archeo-botney, all these different fields have come together to understand what is going on with the site and what is going on with the economy and the ecology of the site.

RA: You mean like the ecological people that come and things like that?

AB: Exactly.

RA: So they are trying to look at the whole picture right?

AB: Correct.

RA: Interesting. Do you find when you get everybody together that they don't always agree in what they are looking at?

AB: Well in many of the cases where we have had terrestrial archeology and marine archeology going on at the same time there has been very interesting arguments going on. So yeah sometimes you do see that.

RA: So do you find yourself...now when you are at a site are you kind of the point person, are you the guy that everybody works around?

AB: Correct.

RA: How does _____ (12.30).

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AB: When I have a project at Texas DOT I may in more cases than not I will hire a contract crew to go out and do it and they will have a principal investigator and project archeologist. But I am the liaison and basically the person that is managing that contract.

RA: So at this point you are kind of here dealing with them in the field. You are not out in the field?

AB: I go out in the field and check in with them and make sure they are meeting what I have mandated for them to do in the contract. Basically our job here is to manage the projects, not be so much of a field archeologist.

RA: I've always loved archeology but my background is really more, well it's history, historical and also anthropology and looking at the connecting the dots but I love when I got visit some place I am always looking at the archeology but I'm not really familiar with it. It has been a new it's been kind of a real education. What is Texas DOT's involvement in archeology? Why are they involved in archeology?

AB: Well the Texas Department is involved because the state has mandated that we look at this through the antiquities code of the state as well as because many of our projects are involved with the federal highways, they fall under section 106 of the U. S. Code which mandates that environmentally archeology will be assessed and dealt with.

RA: What is that? So Texas Department of Transportation, how does it work? They have a road that goes from here to Houston...

AB: We have a road... for instance a road on new alignment and they want to build this new road and we will go out and we will do an initial inventory of the APE, (the area in potential effect), in other words that encompasses all the proposed right of way, the length of the project and the depth of the project and we will go out there and assess what

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archeology is out there. If there is anything, then if it is eligible or if it is determined to be eligible for listing on the national record or as a state archeological landmark, then we will take it further to do testing and data recovery.

RA: Okay so you will actually clean the site out and remove it?

AB: If need be. If we can avoid and preserve in place then we will do that too.

RA: Okay. Can you actually stop a project from going ahead if they are going to destroy a site?

AB: Well we have in our pro_____ (15:19) agreements and memorandum of understandings between us and the Texas Historical Commission, if a project is ongoing and they encounter burials or archeological material or features or something like that they will stop the project and notify us and give us the opportunity to go in and evaluate it.

RA: Is the work that you do tend to be a long road?

AB: Yes most of our work is linear. Sometimes we have area projects but most of our projects are linear projects along roadways.

RA: What if you have real estate and people are going to build a housing project to sell houses do you have impact, can you impact that too?

AB: Well sometimes we do. For instance we've got a project in Houston that was going to go right through a proposed subdivision so we had to go in and check out the archeology before they build their subdivision.

RA: Was there something?

AB: Luckily no, there was nothing there. That is the way it is with most of our cases. A lot of times there's nothing there.

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RA: Okay that's cool. Tell me something about the sites that you have worked with up to this point?

AB: Well my districts include the Houston District and the **Yoken District (16:44)**. I have also had the Brownwood District and the Beaumont District. So as you can tell most of my projects have included sites from along the coastal planes. I enjoy more the central Texas archeology but coastal planes archeology is a lot of fun too.

RA: What is the difference?

AB: Much more lithics.

RA: Much more arrowheads. Were the people on the coast more hunter gather types or just...?

AB: Yeah they were hunter gathers but just by virtue of being where they are there is very little lithic material so they would have to... what little bit they had in the way of gravels and stuff they had to maximize their use of that and...

RA: They didn't have the **_____ (17.31)**, the flint and all that?

AB: They did have some. There are some areas that have gravels, small gravels that they would use and exploit this small resource to make lithic tools and projectile points and such but they didn't have the sheer wealth of lithic material like central Texas does. So you see a lot more interesting stuff out there.

RA: Tell me something about the sites that you can think of.

AB: Well most of the sites that I have worked on were involved with Texas DOT are sites in east Texas and southeast Texas and they are generally Caddo related or Caddo influenced.

RA: Oh they are Caddo?

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AB: Yes there are a lot of Caddo sites.

RA: Yes I understand. No _____ (18.26) or anything?

AB: Yes absolutely down to the southeast of Houston we have run into a lot of _____ (18.33) and coastal type archeological sites that particular flavor of coastal archeology. A lot of shell _____ (18.42), shell artifacts, very little lithic artifacts.

RA: Crackstone cooking?

AB: Oh yes absolutely a lot of fire cracked rock. Sometimes it is sandstone, sometimes it is other materials.

RA: Whatever is available?

AB: Whatever is available.

RA: So it is a lot of Caddo. Do you ever look at or find any Cherokee stuff up in east Texas area?

AB: I haven't run into that.

RA: They weren't a big presence but they were certainly here.

AB: Probably not they were here for such a little time.

RA: Do you feel it is important to involve Native groups in your work?

AB: Well we have such little opportunity to involve them in our work on a physical aspect. When we have a project that might have some Native American burials or something like that we work very closely with them.

RA: Who do you work with?

AB: We have several groups of federally recognized Native American groups that we work with.

RA: So even if they are not in the state you have to...?

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AB: That is correct. We have a specialist who deals with the Native American groups and will consult with them on behalf of the federal highways. Like I said when we have a project that has a Native American burials we will work with them and bring them out to the site...

RA: So you brought Caddos in?

AB: Yes sir we sure have.

RA: So you feel it is important to do that?

AB: Not only is it important to do that but it is the right thing to do. Even if these archeological sites can't be proved to be related, directly related to these people it is the right thing to do to let them know what is going on.

RA: They know how to deal with it?

AB: Absolutely.

RA: You say you've dealt with, the Native groups you've dealt with are they all hunter gatherer or are there some in a farming community?

AB: Most of them in their time were hunter gathers and some of them became more sedentary and developed in farming. But for the most part these people were pretty much hunter gatherers.

RA: All the way through?

AB: Pretty much all the way through pre history and history.

RA: But also in east Texas and in the coastal planes areas?

AB: Oh yes.

RA: Do you know where more settled communities developed? Did they have to go further west?

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AB: No there's many big village sites that are in southeast Texas and along Galveston Island. You find village sites.

RA: Semi-permanent?

AB: Yeah these were semi-permanent. From what we understand by looking at the archeology we can see that they were there pretty well entrenched for a while. You see some of these sites in the coastal planes areas like to the southeast of the Houston area down along the coast. Then you see more Caddo like villages to the north and the northeast of the Houston.

RA: Caddo was very _____ (22.21) of course I hadn't thought about that. Now on the coastal areas were they kind of set _____ (22.30) or the _____ kind of structures?

AB: Well probably some sort of brush structure. These people were pretty poor, not much out there to use for building structures. They were more concerned with gathering food most of the time than anything else. They had some structures just not as developed or extensive like you would think in the Caddo area.

RA: Of course the Caddo was very formal I had forgotten about that completely. You have dealt with a lot of that?

AB: A little bit.

RA: Now did they have crops or were they hunter gathers too?

AB: In southeast Texas?

RA: Yeah the Caddo. They were more...

AB: They were both. You would see the Caddo growing crops but they would also make excursions into the planes to exploit bison whenever they were there. The large

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deer herds that were reported by Spanish explorers in the 16th century and 17th century they would go into the planes to exploit these. They were as much as hunters and gathers as they were farmers.

RA: What about the population? What do you estimate the population in your area was let's say in the 1500's lets say before the coming of the white man?

AB: Well we do have some estimates of what that is and that is not my field but I would say probably there was in the range of tens of thousands that were living in east Texas and southeast Texas at the time and along the coast.

RA: But not a million, not a huge population, hard to say?

AB: Maybe. At some point state wide maybe there was a million or more but for that little part of southeast Texas probably not.

RA: That's still a fairly good population. How many sites; are there many sites that you have dealt with on the Gulf coast?

AB: Not many I would say. There has been quite a few. We've dealt with some burial sites. We've dealt with some actual (25.05) sites. Along the southeast coast we have dealt more with historic sites than anything else.

RA: You mean the stuff that Europeans?

AB: Sure like the Republic of Texas or later any (25.20) sites.

RA: Did you have anything to do with the, what do they call it McGafee beach?

AB: McFadden beach?

RA: McFadden beach, yeah.

AB: I actually have never had an opportunity to be there.

RA: It's not easy to get there.

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AB: I've looked at the McFadden material. I've talked with some of the people who have dealt with it but I have never myself dealt with it. Boy it's interesting I would have like to have.

RA: Yeah it's hard to get to apparently there is no direct road anymore.

AB: Exactly.

RA: It got kind of wiped out. So all the stuff from way, way out there is coming in it's just amazing. Can you think of some of the ancient peoples that you have studied?

 (26.10) you said.

AB: Well , Caddo, some of the more typical ones that you hear of every day I have studied a little bit of Comanche's sites, (26.25) sites. The people mostly that I studied...

RA: Are they more recent?

AB: They are much more recent. The cultures that I have mostly dealt with are what we call the Paleo-Indian (26.38) and archaic cultures.

RA: They don't have names?

AB: These are people that lived... No, no names. We just call them by their time period, when they lived.

RA: How long ago?

AB: They would have lived from about roughly 2,000 years ago to say 8,000 years ago and then the Paleo-Indians would be from say 8,000 years ago on.

RA: How far back do you take it?

AB: I think it probably goes back anywhere from 15,000 and 12,000 years ago.

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RA: Yeah I know that dam site when they went down; they've gone way down there.

He is thinking that if it ever can be proven that it may go back 30,000 years.

AB: I've heard him say that before.

RA: You have to base it on _____ (27.33).

AB: I'd like to see the evidence first.

RA: What discoveries personally have you made or been involved in?

AB: Well some of the more interesting ones that I have been involved with here at Texas DOT haven't been prehistoric or Native American. They have been more historic.

Republic of Texas sites like I said earlier. One bridge that we were investigating we found the remains of a burned World War I what do they call those things?

RA: A tank?

AB: A troop carrier, a burned World War I troop carrier that had been being manufactured in the Beaumont area and then the war ended.

RA: The ones that were made out of wood?

AB: Made out of wood.

RA: Oh amazing you found one of those!

AB: Old wood ones.

RA: They never got to...

AB: They never got to participate in the war and then they somehow burned or something and sank in the water.

RA: I think they actually got rid of them.

AB: Probably so.

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RA: What about on the Native American sites. Tell me some of the things that really got you salivating?

AB: Well...

RA: Anywhere in Texas.

AB: Well we've got a little site that I am writing up right now in Mills County and it's a pretty neat site that it's pretty typical of what you find in central Texas but the cooking appliances that they are using there are not limestone. They are using sandstone. The lithics that they are exploiting that area, there are all these ledge [redacted] (29.30) and [redacted] but they are not exploiting that. They are exploiting the river gravels.

RA: So they had the [redacted] there but they didn't use it?

AB: They had the [redacted] there but no they weren't using them they were using the river gravels and the [redacted] gravel deposits.

RA: Why do you assume that? I mean not assume why do you think they did that?

AB: We are not sure yet. We are still in the process of analyzing the data and haven't come to a decision yet as to why they were doing that but it was probably related to some kind of resource that they were exploiting that we just can't identify. We are planning on doing some residue analysis on the sandstone. We are going to do some thin slices and send those in and see if we can further identify what resources they were exploiting at the time.

RA: So they wouldn't use the sharper or the more difficult implement, they could use something fairly simple.

AB: They weren't using big materials they were using small material so somehow that fit in with whatever technology they were using to exploit the specific resource.

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RA: So there had to be a relationship, a one on one relationship between what they were using to hunt with and the success of hunting.

AB: Right or what they were gathering. It may have been more gathering than actual hunting. So that to me because of my background in lithic technology that is a more interesting site then finding a site that has all sorts of big arrow heads in it or anything like that.

RA: Well it kind of is a mystery isn't it and you try and fit the mystery together?

AB: Absolutely it is a puzzle.

RA: Do you find yourself getting caught up in the Clovis controversy?

AB: I don't in particular. I'm interested in it. I've studied Clovis quite a bit.

RA: Beautiful work.

AB: Absolutely.

RA: Would you say that was one of the best works that has been done or... some people say it didn't get better after that.

AB: It was a highly specific and technological technology. They did try to put some aesthetics into it but if you look that Folsom which follows the Clovis period, Folsom is much better.

RA: Oh it is?

AB: In my opinion. I like Folsom a lot better then I do Clovis.

RA: What about earlier?

AB: Earlier? That is out of my realm. I have never studied anything earlier. I have never really dealt into that controversy or that area of...

RA: It ends all into that.

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AB: Correct. They have been dealing with the (32.14) site.

RA: I was supposed to be interviewing a guy doing that too. That will be very interesting.

AB: Oh who is that?

RA: He is the director of their Center for First Americans.

AB: Oh Mike Waters.

RA: Mike Waters.

AB: He was one of my professors at A & M.

RA: They have some good folks.

AB: Yeah good person.

RA: How do you choose the sites that you investigate? How does that work?

AB: Well here at Texas DOT it is sometimes pretty easy. If when we get into it during the inventory that we see that it has a high degree of material and that it seems the material that we are coming across suggests that it can contribute more to the knowledge of the regional archeology then we will test it. Through the testing we will make a determination of whether it is eligible or not. That's how we choose which sites.

RA: Okay but it comes to you from somewhere else right? Somebody else is trying to do something and they...

AB: Well yeah one of the districts is trying to put in a road or make some road improvements or something like that.

RA: Oh I see it's in house?

AB: Right so then we'll go out and do the inventory if we don't have the time to do the inventory we will get a consultant to put together a team and do that for us.

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RA: Do you find yourself at odd sometimes with the people trying to build the roads?

AB: Not really we work together as a pretty good team. Sometimes we are seeing it more as a deterrent to get the project done then anything else but everybody understands that there are laws.

RA: So people have kind of settled into the...

AB: That it is for the good of the citizens of the state. So everybody works together to get the project done.

RA: Were there important sites that hurricane Ike just disturbed or destroyed?

AB: Well that is what we are in the middle of finding out. The governor has mandated that Texas DOT be the lead agency in the debris clean up effort and so we are out there...

RA: Oh you are out there...you did all the gulf stuff. I remember Jeff Kester from Texas Parks and Wildlife said that you guys got contracted to do all the cleaning up.

AB: We are doing that right now. Part of that effort is to go out and check to see what archeological sites have been damaged. We are in the process of working with the Texas Historical Commission to go out and check these broad areas of private property where archeological sites are located and see if they have been impacted. You were asking about like (35.08) village sites. One of the properties that we are going to be looking at on Galveston Island has a large village that was recently documented. So we are going to go out and see.

RA: So before the hurricane it was documented?

AB: Correct. So we are going to go out and see how much it has been impacted.

RA: Have you been out there?

AB: I haven't been out there yet.

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RA: The whole top layer of everything.

AB: That's what I understand. But that's more to the northeast of Galveston correct?

RA: Well you go pretty far south. We were down almost to the pass out there and they've done a lot of rebuilding but there's a lot of stuff that's tough. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Park is pretty much totaled.

AB: Really? I'll be darned.

RA: So I think you'll find you might have some issues.

AB: Well we are going down there next week so I am excited to see... or timid to see what is come up.

RA: Well you may find that it has cleared things out that you might be able to see a lot more.

AB: Could be.

RA: So if they are messed up, you'll have to do some restoration?

AB: We'll probably put together some sort of plan as to how to deal with it if the clean up project is going to impact it.

RA: You say that the (36.24) village is there now. First of all how many people were living there at the time do you know, a few hundred?

AB: Probably a few hundred, probably no more than that.

RA: Are the sites preserved? Are they underground, is it something that people can go see or how is it?

AB: It is all buried; there is nothing there to see. We would have to go out an excavate it.

RA: You know where it is?

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AB: We know where it is from previous investigations. There is just... when you go out there to see the site you are just looking at the landscape. It's not the same landscape that it was during the time of occupation.

RA: Really?

AB: Absolutely.

RA: So what was it then?

AB: Well there's been a tremendous amount of deposition in the past... anywhere from 200 to 1,000 years that that site might have been occupied then...

RA: A total change in the ecology.

AB: A lot of change.

RA: Also the coast line was farther out wasn't it?

AB: The coast line was father out during the _____ (37:32) period. By the time that the _____ (37.35) were around it was pretty close to what it was today just it looked different.

RA: How many sites do you have in Texas that are out there but they are not developed for anybody to see? Is that, are most of them are like that?

AB: In Texas I would say millions, millions of sites.

RA: Really?

AB: Lots and lots of sites out there that have not been found yet. They may not be very big. They may just be small little lithic scatters, but I would say there are lots of sites out there that we have yet to find.

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RA: So in every area there as far as you know... like you've got the planes area and you've got the coastal planes, you've got the coastal area, east Texas, the woods....

Everything had Native Americans there?

AB: Everywhere.

RA: Everywhere?

AB: Everywhere. They were wide spread and very prolific.

RA: Did our contact with them, do you know what lead them to leave the area? I mean I'm not naive I know there was a lot of warfare and a lot of disease.

AB: Of course. Every since European people came here they have had a policy of... acculturation where they tried to get these people to change from their ways and adopt our ways and that's not a good way to handle things as we have come to find out.

RA: Do you ever wonder how it might have been if we hadn't acted that way?

AB: Archeologists always wonder that.

RA: Do you think there could have been cooperation?

AB: Maybe so.

RA: I've often wondered if there are any examples where there has been cooperation. You know the one thing in my studies hat has shown me is that the reservation system saved the tribes. They don't necessarily think that but they in other parts of the world like in Mexico, they did away with all the kind of protection that these tribes had and they have just... they were devastated by that.

AB: Right. Once again that is not really my field but I'm sure there are areas out there like in South America or maybe the Philippines or something like that where there are indigenous tribes that have been able to keep a lot of their culture in tact.

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RA: The _____ (40.03) in Kenya they were able and in Tanzania...

AB: That's probably a real good example.

RA: They were tough to deal with if they didn't leave them alone but they were...

AB: Exactly.

RA: Where are the majority of sites that you work with in Texas? You said basically, you said east Texas?

AB: Southeast Texas is my main area; basically from north of Corpus Christi up towards the Houston area.

RA: Cool and as you say, tell me more about any exciting discoveries anything else that you can think of that you came across? In all your history I'm sure you've found some neat stuff.

AB: Sure we've found some pretty neat things. It's hard to pin point any one thing.

RA: Just give me one.

AB: For instance probably one of the neatest things I ever found was one of the first things I came encountered with when I was getting into archeology. I was attending a field school at Southwest Texas State and the project was located just outside the city limits on the north side of San Marcos along a little drainage called Sinkridge Creek.

Along that site we found a small site on a _____ (41.27) deposit and when we excavated the site we found one of the dumping areas in that site we found a pretty much articulated carcass of a juvenile bison.

RA: Oh really?

AB: That was pretty interesting in and of itself.

RA: Did you think that there were bison in that area?

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AB: Actually we knew that there were probably bison in the area but not that they would have brought a small carcass into the camp to butcher. They had to have killed it fairly close by. The site is just a stone's throw from the black land prairies so it is not unfeasible that they wouldn't do that.

RA: But just to see it...

AB: Just to see it was pretty neat. The thing that was the best for me growing up in Texas and being an arrowhead collector as a kid you hear the term bird points and arrow points and dart point and the different nomenclature for projectile points. That terminology bird point has always been kind of troublesome for most people because most people take that literally and think that they were made for killing birds. The neat thing about this carcass is that associated with the carcass we found seven projectile points all very small, little for these projectile points that were used to kill this bison. So it's just one of those instances of where a young student gets that moment of kismet and illumination where they can see actually how this animal was killed and yeah these little tiny things were used to kill a large animal.

RA: They didn't think that it could probably.

AB: Yeah most people who are not, don't have a background or knowledge in this, they wouldn't think that those little tiny projectile points could kill a large animal but they are quite capable of doing that.

RA: You say San Marcos is right next to the black prairie. Right now if you go through San Marcos it is really, it is green and has lots of trees and all that but is that all secondary growth or growth that came from when the Europeans settled the area?

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AB: Sure. Most of that growth out there is from our practices from preventing fire from happening.

RA: It wouldn't be there...

AB: Back in prehistory the landscape would have looked a lot different more of a grassland and less of a forested area.

RA: Okay that is what I was thinking. Because you know you look under the surface of San Marcos because I lived there for a while and it is just sand. You know there is a very limited grip on keeping all that green there. If they had a real severe drought they would probably lose it.

AB: Probably so.

RA: What do you think are things that made the most impact that you have learned in your work?

AB: I think the best thing that I have learned from anthropology is probably the aspect of critical thinking, how to take a problem and think through it and understand how to approach a problem.

RA: And also how you need to be detached about it. Give me an example of using critical thinking in a dig.

AB: Well I said I understood it I didn't say I was the best with it.

RA: Well I think you are using it. You used it when you talked about the site where they had all this available stuff that makes great points but they are using gravel.

AB: Exactly. This site in Mills County is probably a good example of that where we are trying to discern from the archeological data what was going on with these mobile hunter and gatherers. What we can find out about their migration patterns, their

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importation of raw materials or exportation of raw materials. The stuff that they are exploiting all to find out how this relates to their mobility patterns and their economy. By being able to set up research questions and then apply their techniques of data collection and data analysis of that, we are able to objectively look at this stuff and make some good decisions as to how, what is going on and what does it mean.

RA: So in a sense you want to avoid rushing to some kind of conclusions or any half baked.

AB: Absolutely. Rushing to conclusions is not a good way.

RA: It is kind of a history of the field 100 years ago or even a lot more recently. So if you have got the information you have what do you look for next? You know they are using the gravel points. You know they are not using this other stuff and you are going to look at the rocks and you are going to cut the rocks to find out what...

AB: To go from there what we need is some more projects in the area to look at more sites, because we need to look at this more on a regional basis then strictly a site by site.

RA: It may be a phenomenon to that site.

AB: Right, exactly.

RA: Are you going to be able to do more sites?

AB: We are always developing road projects so there is no telling.

RA: It's a funny way...

AB: It is a funny way to do archeology but whenever we work in one are eventually we come back into that area and come back and work it again. Yeah there will be more sites that we are going to work on.

RA: You are still going to A & M?

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AB: Well I have temporarily stopped my studies at A & M for right now because I have four kids and like I said I have to house and feed and clothe them right now. When they get a little bit older I'll probably pick up my studies again. Maybe not at A & M maybe I'll pick someplace closer to finish up.

RA: How much do you have left to do?

AB: Oh I've done quite a bit of work on my dissertation so it is sitting there waiting to be finished up. It would just be a matter of transferring classes, see what other class work I have to retake or what I have to pick up. Finish those and then do my comprehensive exams and finish up the dissertation.

RA: Sounds like it is doable.

AB: Sure.

RA: Would a Ph.D. be a good thing for you in this field?

AB: It would strictly be a personal thing.

RA: Right.

AB: Where I am now a Ph.D. wouldn't mean anything for me. I'm never going to be a teacher. I'm never going to teach in any kind of academic program?

RA: Never?

AB: No I don't have the patience for teaching.

RA: I understand that even though I do it. Where do you see the archeology going in the future here in Texas?

AB: Oh I think it is going to have a rich future. I think 50 years from now, 100 years from now, 1,000 years from now that the people who train in archeology will be much better than what we are. They will have much better techniques for analyzing the data.

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They will be able to understand things in ways that we can't even imagine right now and that is true of how it was say 50 years ago. So I think it is going to continue developing and be quite exciting in the next 1,000 years.

RA: You think in thousand year blocks?

AB: Yeah we just changed from one millennia to another so let's stay with that.

RA: What kind of things, projects would you like to have done? What do you feel like is not done that you really wish you could do or should be done?

AB: One of the things that I keep pushing for here at Texas DOT, since we work in such broad areas across the state is to start putting together a data base on lithic materials that are encountered across the state to make kind of a basic inventory of where we see lithic raw materials.

RA: Have you seen Steve Hoyt's data base of all the ship wrecks?

AB: Yes I have pretty interesting.

RA: Yeah that is very cool.

AB: Very interesting but I think a data base that documents the locations and types of raw materials across the state will eventually be quite useful in that we can then start, when we excavate sites and we look at the raw material we can start pinpointing where these things came from and we can start looking at migration patterns.

RA: Interesting. Are there any maps of anything that I can look at or have that show something about the different sites?

AB: The main maps that we use are actually online through the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas and any archeologist who is working professionally in the field can have access to those maps and that is pretty much what we depend on is these online maps. I

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mean we have cabinets as you can see full of topographic maps that we use but mostly we depend on the Atlas.

RA: What if you are not an archeologist can you get access to these maps?

AB: You can get limited access to it.

RA: They don't want people going out there and digging on sites.

AB: No by state law archeology is a protected resource. So if you are not working professionally you are not allowed access to these maps.

RA: Let me ask you this, give me some ideas if you could of other people that you think I should talk to.

AB: I would definitely go to TARL here in Austin and talk to people like Daryl Creel, Mike Collins.

RA: How do you spell Creel?

AB: C-R-E-E-L, Daryl Creel and from those two they can point you out to many other people who they would have more intimate knowledge as to who is more interesting then the others. There are a lot of extremely intelligent people working over there.

RA: Well very good I really appreciate it.

AB: No problem. I hope I helped you.

RA: You have for sure.

End of Interview.