

"MISS EFFIE"
JD-69

By

Teddy Lou Stickney

ABSTRACT

I received a telephone call from the Permain Basin Girl Scout Director, Jody Morrison, in Odessa, asking if I could go to Mitre Peak Camp, that one of the Councilors had found a burial. Arrangements were made to go to the Camp July 21-22, 1974. I received another telephone call several days later expressing her concern that the burial had already been removed by Sheriff McCutcheon, of Jess Davis County, a Deputy Sheriff and a game warden. The skeleton had been taken to the Sheriff's office in Fort Davis; but, he had returned it to the Camp. I decided to go down and investigate the site and see what could be salvaged. Upon arrival, we visited the site, which had a well beaten path to it. We did finish excavating the site, screening all the fill and mapping the shelter.

INTRODUCTION

The Trans-Pecos Texas is an area bounded by the Pecos River and Rio Grande River and south of the New Mexico border. This 30,000 square miles of region offers a variety of environmental situations. The Guadalupe, Davis and Chisos Mountains ranges form a disconnecting mountainous spine through the center of this area.

The vegetation zone of Trans-Pecos divides into a series of zones. The valleys of the river and large tributary creeks have mesquite, willows, cottonwood and luxuriant growth of grasses and shrubs. The lower interior basins are covered with greasewood, ocotillo, prickly pear and other desert plants. In the higher valleys a variety of grasses, yucca and sotol grow. In the high mountains, pine, pinon and oak are found where there is enough rain to support a fairly heavy forest growth.

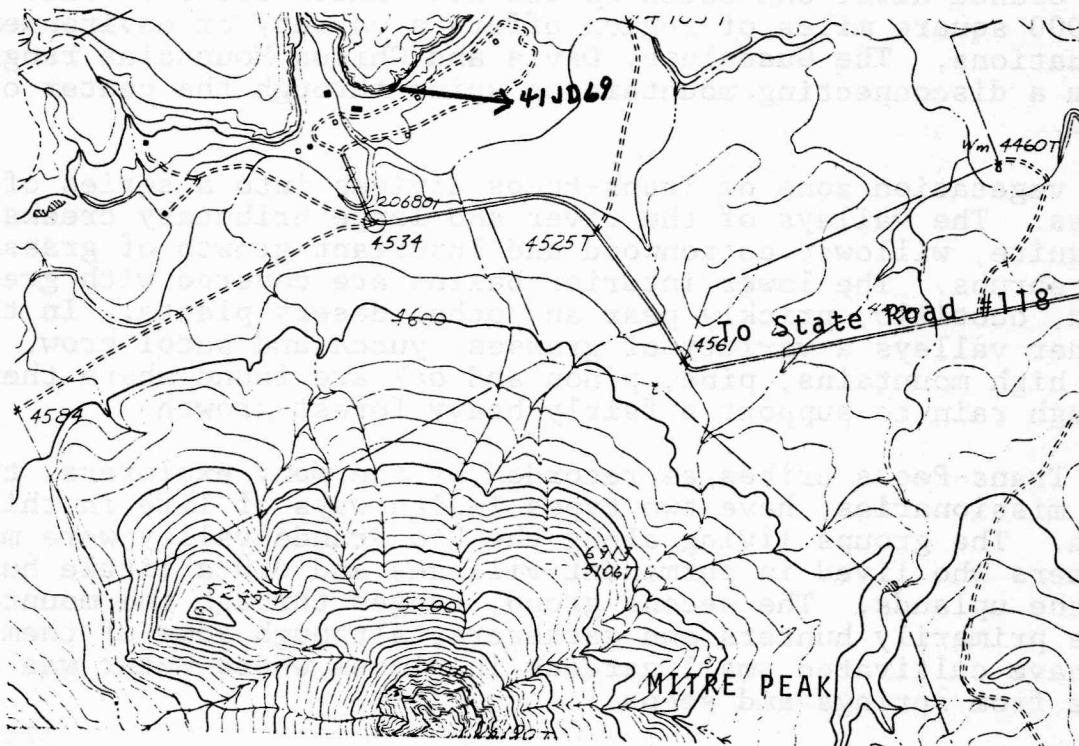
The Trans-Pecos tribes as recorded by the many explorers, traders, and missionaries, have two types Indian ways of life in this area. The groups living along the Rio Grande valley were mainly farmers who lived in permanent villages and did a little hunting in the uplands. The second group, ranged through the mountains, were primarily hunters and gatherers, although some of them seem to have cultivated small gardens in places where water was available from springs and seeps.

The archeological sites of the Trans-Pecos area vary greatly both as to type and artifacts content. However the individual sites

tend to fall into several categories. Categories, which are important both from the point of view of the archeologist's techniques and in reconstruction of the prehistory of the area, are village sites, rock shelter, open camp sites, burial sites and miscellaneous groups of caches, pictographs, petroglyphs, cairns and isolated burials. This burial site falls into the category of the uplands and open camp sites. There are fish ponds which are supplied by springs about two miles west of the burial in the main drainage that runs east and west (Fern Creek). Lipan Apache farming at this site on old farming terraces and the use of these springs for water are recorded in the historic period. At the springs are several camp sites with Archaic points. The Scouts have several frames of points collected in the area of the Scout camp and 90% of these points are Archaic.

LOCATION

"Miss Effie" site is located in the Mitre Peak Girl Scout Camp in the Puertacitas Mountains at the southern end of the Davis Mountains range. The burial was located on the south side of the southeastern end of the Puertacitas at 4685' elevation. The burial site was under the crest of the mountain on the southern extension, under an overhang with the shelter opening to the west.



Location of Shelter and Scout Camp

EXCAVATION

The immediate area around and below the shelter was surveyed. We picked up several pieces of bone belonging to the skeleton. These bones had been out in the open for sometime because they were bleached.

The fill of the shelter was processed through a $\frac{1}{4}$ " screen. Almost the first scrape of the trowel, we recovered a piece of cordage. Several foot bones were found in the back portion of the shelter.

There was a very large amount of reed material in the shelter fill. This material was found on the extreme sides of the shelter, which gave us a good indication that these areas hadn't been disturbed at the time the skeleton had been removed. The piece of cordage that had the knot in it was found in one of these areas.

ARTIFACTS

Three pieces of cordage were recovered approximately one foot in length and one of these pieces contained a square knot. One section of vegetable fiber material that had been intertwined three times with two pieces of cordage, resembled the bound section of a sandal.

We recovered five pieces of cane sections that could have been fire sticks; but, they have no evidence of being used in this manner. In surveying the immediate area, we didn't observe any cane of this type growing nearby.

One point was found in the fill of the shelter several days after the Sheriff had removed the skeleton. There is some doubt about the point's origin and therefore I haven't placed too much emphasis on its association with the burial.

CONCLUSION

This burial is a male, in his late twenties. The burial was placed in the small shelter with some kinds of vegetable fiber material and cordage used in the burial preparation or as personal items placed with the burial.

With regard to the point found in the fill of the shelter, there were many people visiting the site and the possibility of the point coming from some other area was too great.

The camp sites west of the burial and the Lipan Apache being recorded in the historic period farming around these springs, makes the possibility of this male being one of the earlier gatherers and hunters of the upland tribes of Trans-Pecos culture most likely.

The bones show sign of rodent gnawing. There is the possibility the reed material represents a rodent nest in the shelter too. This could explain the portions of the skeleton becoming uncovered and the bigger bones being carried off or chewed up by animals of the area.

This type of experience, of trying to reconstruct a site and gain information from interviews is frustrating. This contact with the Girl Scout Directors and councilors will make the next incident more profitable in the terms of getting someone to investigate that has experience and knowledge to get all the possible information available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to say thank you to my trusted crew. Evelyn Walters of Iraan, Peggy Wehrli of Crane, and Deborah Stickney. They also proved to be good pushers of the car, since we broke the starter of the vehicle at Fort Stockton, the first stop of the trip to Mitre Peak.

The Permian Basin Girl Scout Director, Jody Morrison and the Councilors at the Camp session; are due thanks, for the good meals plus being invited to the homemade ice cream and cake party for the senior councilors, and for the nice quarters (four cots in the infirmary). I wish also to thank Sheriff W. W. McCutcheon of Jeff Davis County, and John C. Alker, reporter for the Van Horn Times, who wrote an article on the burial.

Thanks to Dr. M. E. King and Eileen Johnson, Texas Tech, for examining the skeleton and looking at the cordage and vegetable fiber material.

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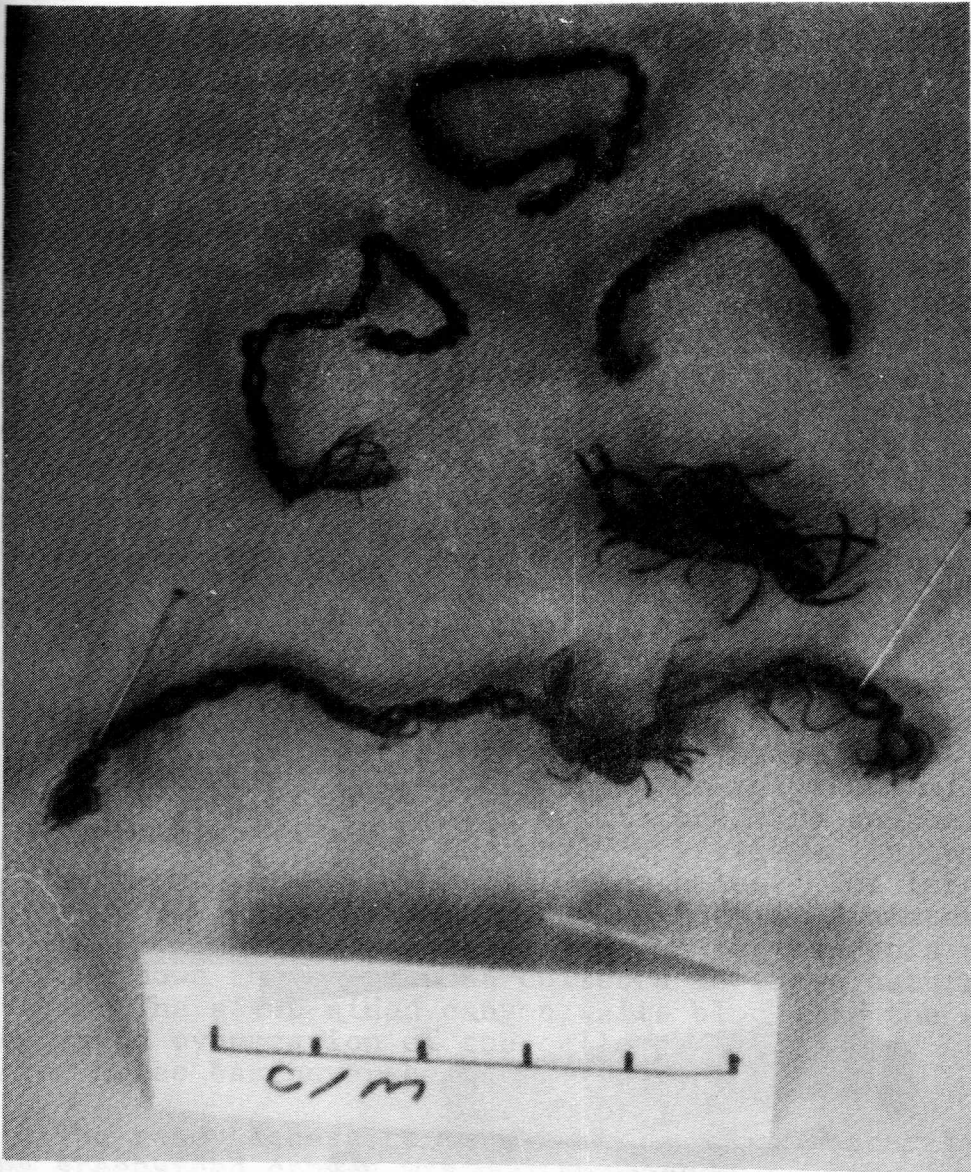
THE SHELTER

The shelter is located on the southern end of the Puertacitas Mountains just under the crest opening to the west. On the north side of the opening there were five large rocks placed in a semi-circle probably to help protect the northwest opening of the shelter, possibly for protection of the burial.

The top photograph shows the shelter as we viewed it on our arrival at the Scout Camp. The bottom photograph shows the bedrock level in the shelter.



ARTIFACTS



Cordage



Projectile found in the fill (scale one inch)

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SKELETON

The skull
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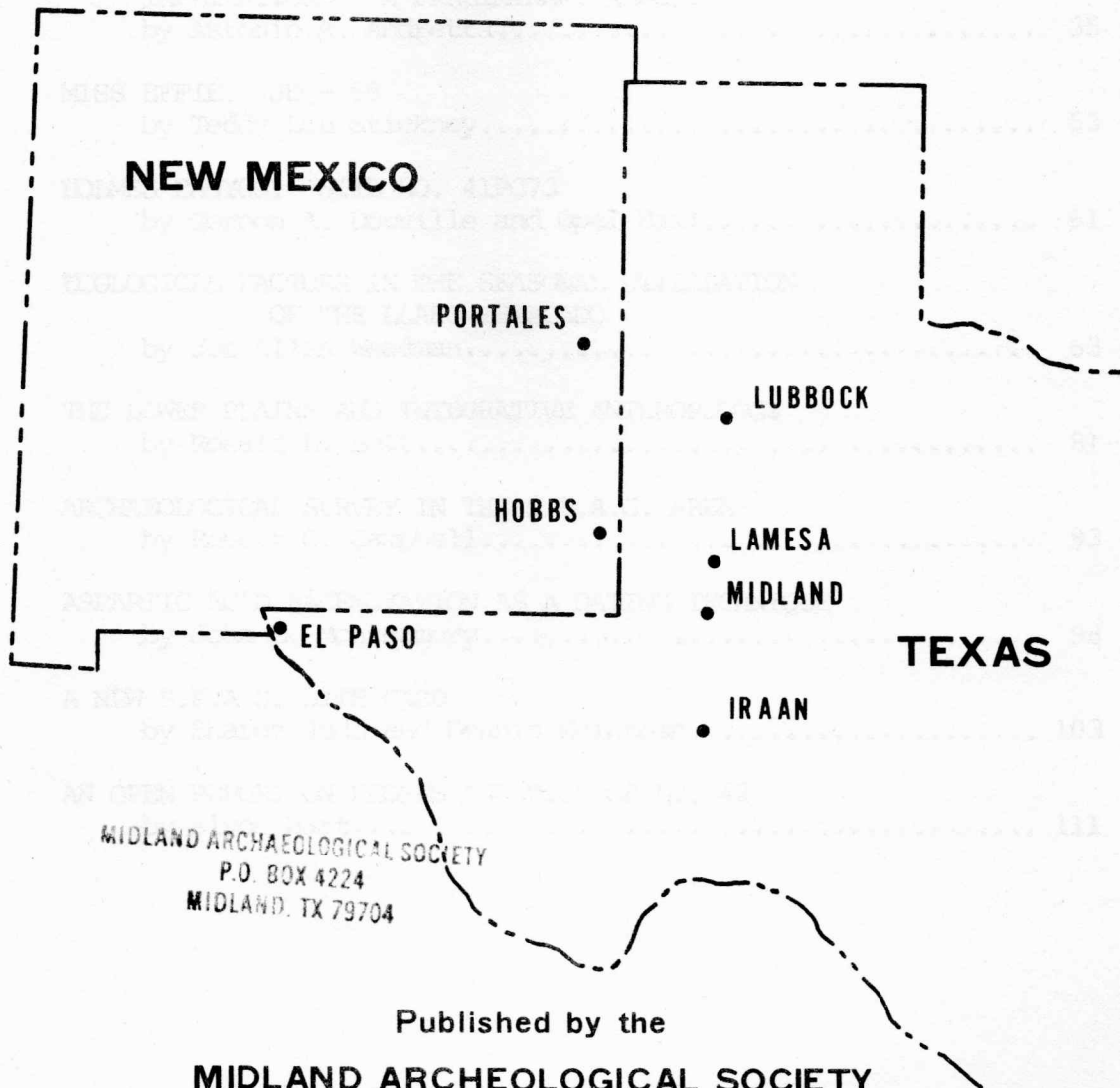


Front and Side View
of the Skull



Remaining Segments of the Skeleton

**TRANSACTIONS
OF THE ELEVENTH
REGIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM
FOR
SOUTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO
AND
WESTERN TEXAS**



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