

"Field and Lab Techniques in Archeology" Class, My Enlightening Experience

By: Marvin Gohlke, Jr. (1-26-15)

I can still remember, as a child, that "Eureka" moment when I found my first ancient artifact, an arrow point, left by a Native American, who lived and hunted here many years before this nation, we call the United States of America, existed. In terms of history, this nation is in its infancy compared to what took place here thousands of years before it. This fascination led to further studies when I went to college, and a lifelong interest in the "pre-history" of our country.

In the past several years, I have joined the Hill Country Archeological Association to further that understanding, and join with other people who share in that passion for knowledge and understanding of these prehistoric Native American people. My wife and I have archeological sites on land we own, so when a session in "Field and Lab Techniques in Archeology" class came up, I jumped on the opportunity to learn more about archeology and how to preserve it, thru valuable instruction, and "hands on" training.

Steve Stoutamire is a wealth of information when it comes to archeology, and being a retired geologist, his knowledge in that field adds another dimension of understanding one normally wouldn't get by just taking an archeology class. He educated us as to where the flint (chert) actually came from that these "Indians" used to make many of their tools, and why they chose the geographical locations where they lived and cooked.

We also learned that there is so much more to archeology than just studying tools and points, that the debitage, or by- products from the manufacturing, cooking, and everyday activities that these people had to go through for survival, can teach us so much more about how they lived. Other instructors in this class series were Bryant Saner, John Benedict and Kay and Woody Woodward.

After very enlightening instruction, and question and answer sessions, we got to go out into the field to an actual archeological site, to get some "hands on" experience in mapping, setting up, and digging a unit, along with the proper documentation techniques, to record what we found, before taking artifacts and debitage to a lab. Applying what we had learned in class was the most rewarding part of the experience.

This "class" (actually 5 separate sessions, 4-6 hours each) was very enlightening to me personally, and I would recommend it to anyone who has a passion to get involved with learning more about the archeology of our region, and the desire to help preserve it.