

ON FEBRUARY 19, 2008, New Mexico lost one of the people most responsible for bringing to professional archaeological attention the rich record of Paleoindian occupation in the west-central part of the state. Robert (Bob) Weber was a professional geologist, earning a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in 1950 and spending the next 35 years at the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources at New Mexico Tech in Socorro. His varied geological interests included the Quaternary period, and a boyhood love of collecting arrowheads and rocks in his native Ohio led him to look for prehistoric archaeological sites in central New Mexico. Much could be written about Bob and his contributions to many aspects of geology, history, and post-Paleoindian archaeology, but we focus on his Paleoindian work and his generosity to those of us who were privileged to work with him. Those interested in Weber's varied career can consult Alexander (1997) for his biography.

A couple of years ago, in responding to a question about how he got started looking for Paleoindian sites, he said that the close resemblance of much of Socorro and Catron counties to the Plains made him think that those wide-ranging folks ought to have found this country attractive. From 1950 onward, he devoted much of his free time to the search, establishing beyond any doubt that Paleoindians had indeed appreciated what the country had to offer at the close of the Pleistocene and early Holocene.

Bob's understanding of landscapes and the geomorphic processes that had affected them over time gave him the keys to find sites in parts of the Plains of San Agustin, the northern end of the Jornada del Muerto, and the Rio Grande Valley. It is safe to say that he discovered hundreds of Clovis, Folsom, and later Paleoindian sites, not to mention Archaic and younger ones. His collection included not only points but also tools and in some instances debitage; he appreciated the value of all classes of lithic artifacts and developed keen insights into lithic technology. Bob did not merely find

sites—he recorded them meticulously, developing his own numbering system, cataloguing all collected specimens, and precisely locating them on topographic maps. He was also incredibly generous with his collection, freely sharing it with archaeologists and students; contacting Bob to

excavation area locations, from over 20 individual mapping stations. He enlisted his wife, Margaret, and his daughter, Lynn, in the effort; if no one was available he occasionally worked alone, propping up the stadia rod with a tripod, shooting distance and elevation, and then moving the rod to the next shot location. The effort spanned at least 35 years.

see his collections was one of those “must-do” things for archaeologists visiting Socorro. Three of us—Amick, LeTourneau, and Hamilton—were privileged to use portions of the collection in our dissertation research.

Bob was keenly aware of the importance of lithic raw material sources to prehistoric societies, and due to his geological training he was able to locate several lithic material sources in Socorro County. His near-encyclopedic knowledge of raw materials and their geological contexts he also readily shared, helping to flesh out patterns of movement and aspects of lithic technological organization.

Identifying any one of Bob's many contributions as the most significant is difficult, but certainly his discovery of the Mockingbird Gap Clovis site ranks high on the list. This remarkable locale extends over some 800 m along Chupadera Wash, and is a repeatedly occupied camp that consists of more than a dozen localized, high-density artifact concentrations. Some of them are largely surficial while others are shallowly buried. Bob collected some 300 Clovis points and point preforms, as well as hundreds of scrapers, graters, and other flake tools. He also produced one of the most remarkably detailed plane table maps imag-

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In 1966–68, Bob collaborated with George Agogino to excavate a portion of the site with the Eastern New Mexico University summer field school. A few published results are available from that work (Weber and Agogino 1997; Weber 1997). Bob also explored the soil-stratigraphic record of the on-site deposits and that of the adjacent Chupadera Wash floodplain. He documented the incredible depth of accumulation of sediments along the wash, even obtaining a Clovis-age radiocarbon date from sediments several m below the modern floodplain surface. Beginning in 2004, Bob fully supported, and stayed involved with, new geological and archaeological research at the site and along the wash by Holliday and Huckell, including excavations by the University of New Mexico summer archaeological field school in 2007 (Huckell et al. 2006, 2007, in review).

## Remembering Robert H. Weber 1919–2008

course, and it just takes time. As more work is done and as more models fit those inferences I think it comes to be a consensus.”

Schroeder's recently published paper in *Biology Letters* further supports the

BIM. She discusses a mutation that is globally extremely rare but pervasive in the Americas (MT 22-4, “Genetic Discovery Refines Our View of the Peopling of the Americas”). Dr. Malhi explains that Schroeder's findings at locus D9S1120

suggest “a pattern unique to the Americas that was also likely found in the ancestral population of Native Americans.” An isolated ancestral Beringian population would explain the absence of this mutation in northeast Asia.



While many are aware of Bob's work on Clovis, he also developed a robust record of Folsom in the Central Rio Grande Valley and San Agustin Plains. Bob was project geologist during work on the Ake Folsom site (Weber 1980) at the northern end of the San Agustin

ing the original site context. In 2006 Hill began a systematic survey of Paleoindian sites in the northern San Agustin Plains, linking Bob's superb field maps of paleo-lake levels with his carefully documented collections from the area in order to understand Paleoindian adaptations to the rapidly changing landscape in the basin. This project is sadly on hold.

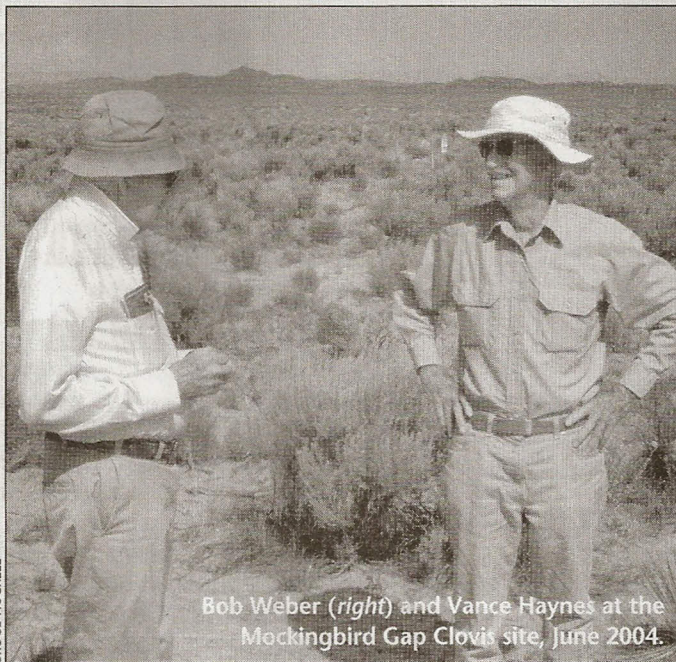
In the summer of 1991, Bob generously shared his central New Mexico data with Amick for his regional studies of Folsom land use and mobility. Those data provided the critical linkage for modeling the Folsom archaeological record throughout the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico. He also shared his knowledge of local lithic resources and was keen to learn what had been

this minuscule flake, which represented basal pressure retouch that removed the lateral ridge of the flute on a Folsom perform.

LeTourneau also utilized Bob's Folsom materials for his dissertation research, beginning in 1995. From 2002 to the time of his death, LeTourneau worked closely with Bob and his collection. This research, primarily concerned with Folsom lithic technology and toolstone use (LeTourneau and Weber 2004a and b), also included Cody and the earliest Archaic.

Bob was an expert in many different areas. But unlike many experts, he was humble, generous, and genuinely enjoyed sharing his extensive experience and knowledge. He once said that he didn't view his collection as his own property, but something that ultimately belonged to the people of New Mexico. With his passing, this unparalleled collection will be donated to the state of New Mexico. Bob's many contributions to Paleoindian research in New Mexico and across the country are only beginning to be realized with his passing; we will sorely miss him but count ourselves fortunate to have come to know and work with such an outstanding man.

—Bruce B. Huckell, Vance T. Holliday,  
Daniel S. Amick, Philippe D. LeTourneau,  
Matthew E. Hill, C. Vance Haynes,  
Marcus J. Hamilton



Bob Weber (right) and Vance Haynes at the Mockingbird Gap Clovis site, June 2004.

BRUCE HUCKELL

Plains, the only Paleoindian excavation conducted in that part of New Mexico. Bob's insights resulted in realizing that the Folsom materials were redeposited in the middle Holocene, and also in identify-

found outside his field research area. The remarkable depth of Bob's understanding of lithic technology was reflected in one of the small waste flakes he collected. Many might have overlooked the significance of

## Suggested Readings

Alexander, L. E. 1997 A Biography of Robert Harrison Weber. In *Layers of Time, Papers in Honor of Robert H. Weber*, edited by M. S. Duran and D. T. Kirkpatrick, pp. 1–12. The Archaeological Society of New Mexico 23, Albuquerque.

Huckell, B. B., V. T. Holliday, R. H. Weber, and J. H. Mayer 2006 Archaeological and Geological Test Investigations at the Mockingbird Gap Clovis Site, Central New Mexico. *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 23:115–16.

Huckell, B. B., V. T. Holliday, and R. H. Weber 2007 Test Investigations at

the Mockingbird Gap Clovis Site: Results of the 2006 Field Season. *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 24: 102–04.


Huckell, B. B., V. T. Holliday, M. Hamilton, C. Sinkovec, C. Merriman, M. S. Shackley, R. H. Weber 2008 (in review) The Mockingbird Gap Clovis Site: 2007 Investigations. *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 25.

LeTourneau, P., and R. H. Weber 2004a Folsom Occupation in Socorro County, New Mexico. Paper presented at the 69th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Montreal.

——— 2004b Distribution of Edwards Chert Folsom Artifacts in Socorro County,

New Mexico. *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 21:60–62.

Weber, R. H. 1980 Geology of the Ake site. In *The Ake Site: Collection and Excavation of LA 13423, Catron County, New Mexico*, edited by P.H. Beckett, pp. 221–38. New Mexico State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Cultural Resources Management Division Report 357, Las Cruces.

——— 1997 Geology of Mockingbird Gap Site in Central New Mexico. In *Layers of Time, Papers in Honor of Robert H. Weber*, edited by M. S. Duran and D. T. Kirkpatrick, pp. 115–22. The Archaeological Society of New Mexico 23, Albuquerque. 

Totally separate fields of expertise all point to the possibility of a relatively recent colonization of the Americas. Kemp is confident anthropology is getting its brain around human prehistory and migrations. Science, however, is cautious.

It will take some time for solidly set ideas regarding the rate of molecular evolution to be reconsidered. Kemp concludes, "Ask me in 20 years if I haven't completely revised this, but I think we pretty much have it down—the major

movements of people and when they occurred. Genetics and archaeology are coming together. Now we are putting fine scale detail on it, like the peopling of the Americas."

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