

The Dixie Archeological Society was thoroughly entertained by long time member, Mary Manning. Mary is an artist and a long-time student of archaeology, focusing on the study of petroglyphs and pictographs all over the Southwest. She did Ph.D work in environmental sciences at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, focusing on prehistorical sites in Tule Springs in the Upper Las Vegas Wash, Sloan Canyon, Spirit Mountain, Grape Vine, and Red Rock Canyon.

A 34-year veteran journalist at the Las Vegas Sun newspaper, she wrote about The Big Dig at Tule Springs in 1962-63 and began graduate research. She has studied with Steve Rowland, Josh Bonde, and Kristina Stave at UNLV.

As a graduate student, she visited sites from Southern Nevada to Zion Canyon, and the Big Island of Hawaii.

A student of archeologist, Boma Johnson, Mary learned about the variety of petroglyphs and pictographs, the latest finds in archaeological research, and a special site a mile from her Bloomington home. She continues to conduct independent research, as well as enjoying a career as a fine artist, showing in Arrowhead Gallery on Tabernacle, Gallery 35 on Main Street, and in her new studio at Arte on Dixie Drive.

“I am thrilled to continue studies in both archaeology and art, and I am proud to be a member of the Dixie Archaeological Society, the Protectors of Tule Springs, and Gold Butte, “ Mary says.

Mary Manning rode horseback to Tule Springs as a teenager, before freeways sliced the Las Vegas Valley. As a 34-year veteran journalist, she learned about archaeological research that took place there from 1900 throughout the 20th Century. In 2002, she wrote about The Big Dig of 1962-63 and the first field use of Carbon-14 dating by Willard Libby. She did this after her research on prehistorical use of the site as a Ph.D. graduate student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

In ancient times, Tule Springs was a wet environment. Huge floods created a wash where ancient mammoths, American lions, Sabertooth cats, the American Longhorn Bison, the American camel and many other animals lived. Early archaeological finds indicate that inhabitants left Tule Springs and Nevada by the thousands.

In the 1950's, evidence of cooking fires were found. The discovery showed a human presence of 12,000 years. Petroglyphs proved to be 10,500 to 14,800 years old. Many of the treasures found there were taken to far away museums. An effort is being made to recover these artifacts.

The Big Dig was an excavation that took place in Tule Springs in 1962-1963. 200,000 tons of sediment was removed, uncovering ice age mammal remains along with other skeletons.

Finally, in 2003 and 2004, Eric Scott and Kathleen Springer hit the fossil jackpot. They fought to prevent urban development from swamping the rich fossil beds of Tule Springs. "Tule Springs offered water to humans and animals for eons," Mary says. "Development of the Las Vegas Valley threatened the buried treasures at Tule Springs." Mary fought alongside others to protect Tule Springs.

Finally, in December 2014, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid persuaded President Barack Obama to declare Tule Springs a national monument, covering 23,000 acres of land north of the City of North Las Vegas in the Upper Las Vegas Wash.

Protectors of Tule Springs continue to raise money for signs, cleanups, and the return of thousands of fossils taken away after each excavation.