

## Florida Fossil Horse Newsletter

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### Fossils? They can dig it

*Amateurs are working alongside scientists--and making their share of finds, too*

*(The following article is reprinted, with slight modifications and with the publisher's permission, from the "NEWS YOU CAN USE®" section of the June 17, 1996 issue of U. S. News & World Report). Steve Budiansky was one of our diggers in Session I of the 1996 Thomas Farm Fossil Digs)*

by Stephen Budiansky, *U. S. News & World Report*

Admittedly, crouching in a 3-foot square hole for eight hours a day digging at the dirt with a flat screwdriver blade may sound more like the scene in *Cool Hand Luke* where the prison guard takes

his revenge ("Luke, what's all this dirt doing in my hole?") than it does most people's idea of a relaxing vacation.

But this was no ordinary hole in the ground. And in fact, 17 of us had actually paid \$150 a piece for the privilege of filling buckets with dirt while roughing it for three days in the middle of nowhere in northern Florida in the company of scorpions, snakes and mosquitoes.

It was one of two sessions a year at which amateurs--rank amateurs in my case--are allowed to try their hand at serious paleontological fieldwork at the Thomas Farm site. Paleontologist Bruce MacFadden, who runs the program, had given us his "personal guarantee" that we would each find interesting and important fossils.

Thomas Farm contains one of the richest concentrations of fossil horse bones in North America, and MacFadden's promise was not an idle one. After I had spent less than an hour scratching gingerly away, only mildly terrified at the thought that millions of years of fossil history was being entrusted to someone who had no idea what he was doing, my screwdriver blade suddenly flipped out a chocolate-brown, half-dollar-size rock that graduate student Bruce Shockey quickly identified as the patella, or knee-cap, of *Parahippus*-- a three-toed fossil horse that weighed about 125 pounds and lived 20 million years ago.

Teeth, toe bones, leg bones and hoofs quickly followed. And over the three days some of my fellow diggers made some truly spectacular finds, including three jaws of the tiny and much rarer horse *Archaeohippus*, two jaws of an ancient camel and a number of ribs of rhinoceroses, which, like horses, originated in the New World and later lumbered into Asia and Africa across ancient land bridges.

**Serious work.** In this day of ever increasing specialization in science, multibillion-dollar particle accelerators and research projects staffed by hundreds of Ph.D.'s, few are the niches that remain for the amateur scientist of old. But paleontology and archaeology remain notable exceptions, where important discoveries continue to be made by enthusiastic amateurs.

*U.S. News & World Report senior writer Stephen Budiansky, at the 1996 Thomas Farm Dig. (Photo by Charlie Archambault, U.S. News & World Report.)*



Most of my fellow members of the screwdriver brigade were not just glorified dirt movers, though--they were committed and often extremely knowledgeable amateur fossil hunters. Our group included schoolteachers, a retired chemist, an artist, an engineer, a water-treatment-plant operator, a lawn-maintenance man and a Navy noncommissioned officer, among others. Some had large personal collections of fossils (which can be legally collected on private land and, with a permit, in some parks) and were at Thomas Farm to learn techniques that they could use when hunting on their own. Others were more interested in the science behind the bones and in learning what life was like on the planet millions of years ago. And others just seemed to like the thrill of discovery and had no particular interest in amassing collections for themselves. "I don't have a single bone in

my home unless it's on the way to the museum," says Bill Lee, who owns a loan company in Baton Rouge, La., and who was at Thomas Farm for his fifth year.

Jeffrey Yaun, a senior chief petty officer stationed at the Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Fla., also comes every year to Thomas Farm and probably holds the record for remarkable finds from the site. "I've always been interested in looking for old things," he says, ever since his father took him digging for Civil War relics when he was growing up in Baton Rouge.

**All the luck.** Yaun is a dogged relic and fossil hunter who at times also seems incredibly lucky. He once found a cannon from an 18th-century ship while walking along the beach in Florida. Last year Yaun found the first *Archaeohippus* skull ever collected at Thomas Farm. It was the one piece the Florida Museum of Natural History had been missing; the museum now has the only complete *Archaeohippus* skeleton in existence. "When I uncovered it, it was upside down and the teeth were exposed, which was lucky--if it had been right side up, I might have dug right through it," Yaun recalls. This year he dug up two of the rare *Archaeohippus* jaws.

"This is what makes me want to keep doing this, too," says MacFadden, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Florida Museum of Natural History and professor of geology, Latin American studies and zoology at the University of Florida, which owns the site. MacFadden divides his time between studying fossil horses in North America--he's known in paleontology circles as the "horse man"--and pursuing fossils of other large prehistoric mammals in Bolivia. One of his graduate students is working on a thesis project that will require 100 *Archaeohippus* jaws as part of an effort to reconstruct the climate of the area 18 million years ago. "So every time someone like Jeff finds another one, we're a little bit closer," says MacFadden.

Brian Ahern, 15, of Temple Terrace, Fla., is one who finds the science the clear appeal--that and the chance to be a player in a major-league scientific project. He found a camel jaw and an *Archaeohippus* jaw during the weekend and, unlike me, was so up on his paleontology that he didn't have to call one of the grad students or technicians to help him figure out what he had. While professionals sometimes have difficulties with amateurs--especially those who collect specimens to sell commercially--"they gain more than they lose by having amateurs out there" says Ahern. "Occasionally you lose some, but many more bring their stuff to experts and are happy to turn over their important finds"--as Ahern did with a rare anklebone of a Miocene Epoch antelope that he discovered while digging in a shell pit near Tampa.

Paleontology fieldwork is often of an intrepid nature; Thomas Farm, happily, is only semi-intrepid. Because the site is so incredibly rich in fossils, it has been worked year after year since its discovery in 1931, and a rudimentary infrastructure is in place. The pit has been covered with a metal roof, which made working under the hot Florida sun considerably more bearable. And although we had to bring our own tents, an open-air pole barn offered electricity, a kitchen and a usually hot shower (shared by the occasional scorpion). MacFadden worked his way through college as a chef at a country club, and he prepared some terrific hot meals for us. ("On some digs you're lucky to get food," observes Bill Lee. "A can of sardines and packet of crackers is the usual thing.")

Our first morning, fortified with MacFadden's strawberry and walnut pancakes, we trooped down to the pit to receive orders from our pit boss (or "pit bull," as she preferred to style herself), Erika Simons. We were issued screwdrivers, dental picks, trowels, pieces of old carpet to sit on and buckets for the dirt.

**Pay dirt.** Formed in an ancient sinkhole that trapped the remains of the animals, the pit itself covers an area of only 20 feet by 30 feet. Because excavating a dig is a meticulous business, all the years of scraping have removed just 10 feet of dirt. Surveyor's ribbon marked off meter-square grids, and we were invited to pick a square and dig in. The technique is to slide the screwdriver parallel to the surface, removing maybe half an inch of dirt at a time until you hit something hard, and hope you don't break it to smithereens. Then comes painstaking work with dental picks and paintbrushes until the entire piece is uncovered.

Larger and more fragile pieces, like jaws and ribs, have to be removed by digging a trench several inches deep around them and then encasing the fossil first with what was waggishly termed "paleo-tissue"--i.e., toilet paper--followed by wet plaster bandages. I kept casting a covetous eye on adjacent squares where this process was under way. Getting to apply a plaster jacket seemed to be the real initiation into big-league paleontology. Back in the lab, experts will spend hours carefully completing the process of removing the plaster casing, treating the bones with chemical hardeners and gluing together any broken bits.

My most amazing experience of the weekend was holding a tiny *Parahippus* hoof I dug up. They're not particularly rare, at least not at Thomas Farm, but I was struck by the exquisite detail, down to the two tiny holes in the back of the hoof where the tendons had been attached. It was beautiful, and hauntingly evocative. Horses evolved in North America, where they became extinct at the end of the Ice Age about 15,000 years ago. Here in my hand was something instantly recognizable as "horse" yet so distant from the modern animal.

Because of the popularity of the digs, MacFadden may offer four sessions next year. Core drillings have found fossils at 90 feet at Thomas Farm, which means at least another 100 years of good digging--and plenty of chances to find the next *Archaeohippus* skull.

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## Goodbye to Linda Chandler



Linda Chandler, who has been the Editor of the *Pony Express* since its inception in 1992 and at various times Business Manager too, moved away from Gainesville in July. Linda was largely responsible for the high-quality production of the newsletter. In addition to editing the news items, Linda also wrote several of the articles and did all of the custom artwork as required for each issue of the *Pony Express*. She also handled all of the business with the printer and getting the newsletters mailed out in a timely fashion. Linda, who has Bachelors and Masters degrees in Wildlife and Herpetology, is the mother of two boys, Dane and Brett, and together with her husband Bob, they have

relocated in Milledgeville, Georgia where Bob has taken a faculty position at Georgia College. We thank Linda for her outstanding work through the first 13 issues of the *Pony Express* and wish her the best in her future endeavors.

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## MacFadden's Reflections on the 1996 Thomas Farm Dig

The 5th Annual Thomas Farm Fossil Horse Dig was, as has also been the case in past years, a highly successful and rewarding event. In addition to our goals of having a fun adventure in a rustic, retreat-like atmosphere, our paleontological objective was to collect jaws and upper teeth of the rare, dwarf horse *Archaeohippus* for a new Ph.D. research project recently begun by one of my graduate students, Jay O'Sullivan. Our paleontological objective was fulfilled with the discovery and excavation of four beautifully preserved jaws of *Archaeohippus* as well as many "spare parts" of the skeleton of this fascinating horse. A total of about 500 cataloguable, scientifically important fossil specimens were collected by the 28 diggers over the 2 weekends, including, many specimens of the larger three-toed horse *Parahippus*, as well as those of bear-dogs, other dog-like animals, deer, rhino and lots of other assorted critters. Digging was made more bearable, particularly in the hot afternoons, by the addition of a metal enclosure over the site (see photo), thanks to the support from the Department of Natural Sciences and Office of the Director at the FLMNH.

Diggers under the newly erected shelter over the Thomas Farm site (Photo by Erika H. Simons)



The scientific and educational programs included two evening lectures touring 50 million years of fossil horse localities throughout North America and a late afternoon nature walk, led by Bob Simons, around the Thomas Farm Fossil Preserve. There are many "non-paleontological" things that will be remembered from the 1996 dig, including several nocturnal visits by the local animal life (possums and armadillos), Gus (some members of Session II wanted to invite him to dinner), the crayfish etoufée prepared during Session I by Bill Lee and Jeff Yaun (thanks, and sorry you missed it in Session II), Erika ("pit-boss") serving snorkels (in joke, you will need to attend next year to find out what they are), the shrieks of delight from the entire field crew upon making a new discovery at the site, the addition of the hammock, and last but not least, the fascinating storytelling in the evening, wonderful camaraderie, and lasting friendships developed during these digs.

## 1996 Thomas Farm Participants (a.k.a "Diggers) and Fossils Discovered

Due to the limited space in this issue and the volume of fossils collected, only the best finds are listed

### Session I--April 18-21:

Person Name	Sci Name	Material
Brian Ahern (Temple Terrace)	<i>Camelidae</i>	dentary frag. w/2 teeth
	<i>Archaeohippus blackbergi</i>	dentary & metatarsal III
Tom Ahern (Temple Terrace)	<i>Parahippus leonensis</i>	complete mandible, femur
	<i>Amphicyon longiramus</i>	metatarsal
Leah Blythe (Orlando)	<i>Canidae</i>	associated upper teeth
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	distal tibia
	<i>Parahippus</i>	calcaneum
Stephen Budiansky (Washington, D. C.)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	vertebra, tibia, carpals & tarsals
	<i>Parahippus</i>	vertebra, humerus, hoof
Audrey Carter (Winter Garden)	<i>Parahippus</i>	articulated metatarsal III & IV

	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	teeth
	<b>Mustelidae</b>	femur
Wiley V. Dykes, Jr. (Orlando)	<i>Geochelone tedwhitei</i>	neural
	<i>Blastomeryx floridanus</i>	distal humerus
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	ulna, rib
David Karlen (Brandon)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	dentary
	<i>Amphicyon</i>	premolar, rib
	<i>Blastomeryx</i>	distal radius, astragalus
Carol Lahy (Winter Springs)	<b>Rhinocerotidae</b>	articulated rib and vertebra
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	tooth, tibia
	<b>Canidae</b>	astragalus
Bill Lee (Baton Rouge, LA)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	thoracic vertebra, tibia
	<i>Parahippus</i>	hoof, carpals, tarsals
	<b>Moschidae</b>	distal radius
Jewel Pozefsky (Altamonte Springs)	<i>Parahippus</i>	2 dentaries, complete, radius
	<b>Carnivora</b>	2 canines
	<i>Alligator olseni</i>	osteoderm
Paulette Stone (Clermont)	<b>Canidae</b>	vertebra
	<i>Parahippus</i>	innominate, hoof
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	canine, vertebra
	<i>Alligator</i>	tooth
Larry Ward (Orlando)	<b>Carnivora</b>	premolar
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	teeth
	<i>Parahippus</i>	teeth
	<b>Artiodactyla</b>	distal radius
Patricia Ward (Orlando)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	distal humerus, distal femur, calcaneum
	<i>Alligator</i>	vertebra, osteoderm
Marcia Wright (Winter Park)	<b>Rhinocerotidae</b>	patella
	<i>Geochelone</i>	partial plastron
	<i>Parahippus</i>	femur, calcaneum
Jeff Yaun (Mayport)	<i>Parahippus</i>	skull, dentaries, innominate
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	dentaries
	<b>Rhinocerotidae</b>	tooth
	<b>Canidae</b>	tibia

- **Museum staff in residence:**

- Bruce J. MacFadden, Erika Simons, Dennis Ruez, Jr., Bruce J. Shockey

- **Visitors:**

- Russ McCarty (Gainesville), Carol and Jason Pooser (Gainesville), Charlie Archambault

(Washington, D. C).

**Session II--April 25-28:**

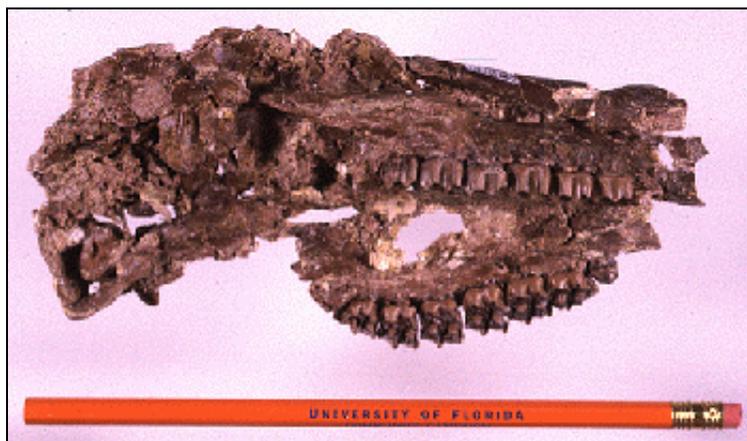
<b>Person Name</b>	<b>Sci Name</b>	<b>Material</b>
Janet Burton (Havana)	<i>Archaeohippus blackbergi</i>	vertebra, calcaneum
	<b>Camelidae</b>	dentary
	<b>Canidae</b>	metatarsal
	<i>Alligator olseni</i>	vertebra
Catherine Carr (Deland)	<b>Rhinocerotidae</b>	complete left metatarsal II
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	prox. metacarpal III
	<i>Alligator</i>	complete rib
Joel Carr (Deland)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	maxilla w/all teeth
	<i>Parahippus leonensis</i>	dentary, cervical vertebra
	<b>Camelidae</b>	tooth
Betsy Carlson (Gainesville)	<i>Parahippus</i>	prox. metacarpal III
	<b>Camelidae ?</b>	complete metacarpal, tooth;
	<b>Canidae</b>	complete radius
Glyniss Hudson (Altamonte Springs)	<i>Parahippus</i>	complete mandible
	<b>Canidae</b>	distal humerus
	<i>Geochelone tedwhitei</i>	partial plastron
Joyce Jackson (Ponte Vedra)	<i>Parahippus</i>	vertebra, distal femur, hoof
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	phalanx
	<b>Carnivora</b>	prox. tibia, distal femur
Bill Killingsworth (Leeds, AL)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	dentaries
	<i>Parahippus</i>	dentary
	<i>Blastomeryx floridanus</i>	scapula
Bob Mueller (Gainesville)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	distal femur, tibia, calcaneum
	<i>Parahippus</i>	astragalus
	<b>Camelidae</b>	maxilla w/teeth
Cathy Rogers (Winter Park)	<b>Rhinocerotidae</b>	?- sternal rib or hyoid
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	calcaneum
	<b>Canidae</b>	metatarsal V
Wandi Savage (Apopka)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	tooth, calcaneum, prox. ulna
	<i>Parahippus</i>	premaxilla, hoof
	<i>Alligator</i>	proximal tibia
Jackie Day-Stuart (Orlando)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	lateral phalanx, distal metapodial

	<i>Pseudemys sp.</i>	marginal
Scott Stuart (Orlando)	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	navicular, ectocuneiform
	<i>Parahippus</i>	distal metapodial III
Barbara Toomey (Sanibel)	<i>Parahippus</i>	humerus, radius, metacarpal III, femur
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	tooth
	<i>Geochelone</i>	marginal
Derk Kuyper (Orlando)	<i>Parahippus</i>	mandible, tibia
	<i>Archaeohippus</i>	calcaneum
	Camelidae	partial maxilla w/teeth
	Anura	tibia

- **Museum staff in residence:**
- Bruce J. MacFadden, Erika Simons, Dennis Ruez, Jr., Bruce J. Shockey
  
- **Visiting Naturalist:**
- Bob Simons (Gainesville) led evening nature walk around Thomas Farm Fossil Preserve
  
- **Visitors:**
- Doug Jones (Gainesville), Marc Frank (Gainesville), Heather and Mike McIlvaine-Newsad (Gainesville), Carol Pooser (Gainesville); Dorothy Lanning (Spencerville, MD); Reed Toomey (Sanibel); Gus (we actually went to visit him).

## New Skull of Thomas Farm Archaeohippus

As readers of the *Pony Express* have come to learn, the dwarf horse *Archaeohippus* is very rare at the Thomas Farm. Prior to last year, while this tiny fossil horse has been represented in our collections by hundreds of teeth and limb bones, we had precious few skulls or parts thereof. In 1995 a beautifully preserved skull of *Archaeohippus* was collected by Jeff Yaun and this fantastic discovery attracted much attention in the media (see *Pony Express*, vol. 5, no. 1, pages 1, 3).



*Skull of Archaeohippus collected in May 1996 by Mike Toomey (Photo by Erika H. Simons)*

We are pleased to report that another beautiful skull of *Archaeohippus* was collected from Thomas Farm in May by Mike Toomey of Ocala, while he was assisting UF graduate student, Jay O'Sullivan, on his excavations after the Pony Express digs were finished. This new specimen (see photo) is, like the one collected in 1995, in excellent condition and preserves in pristine detail the upper tooth row as well as the side of the face and the braincase in the rear of the skull. The new specimens of *Archaeohippus* collected over the past two years will provide great insight into the

anatomical details of skull as well as serve as a focal point for a proposed skeletal reconstruction of this dwarf horse to be exhibited in our new museum, which is currently under construction at the western edge of campus along 34th Street.

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## **Kids of all ages enjoy digging at Thomas Farm**

The Thomas Farm digs are normally open to anyone over the age of 15. Sylvan O'Sullivan, pictured here eating breakfast, is an exception to this rule. Sylvan's dad, UF zoology graduate student Jay O'Sullivan is doing his Ph.D. research on the dwarf horse *Archaeohippus* from Thomas Farm. His family and friends spent weekends during May collecting at Thomas Farm. Sylvan, almost 3 years old, enjoyed collecting in the site and looking over spoil piles.



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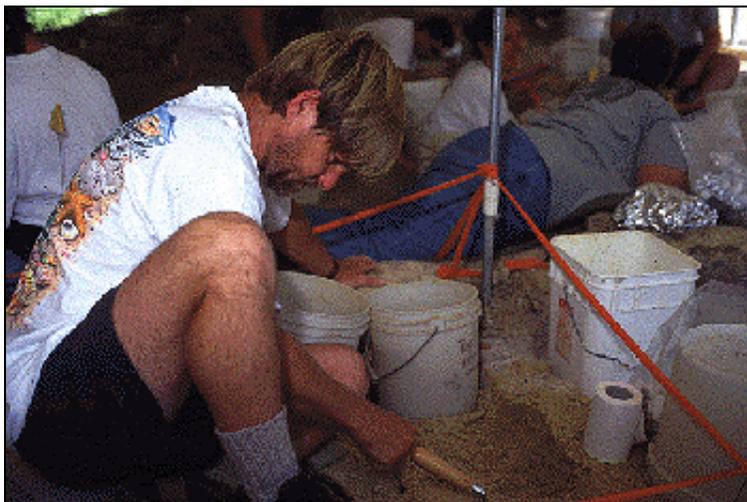
## **The Thomas Farm Dig, 1996, by Wiley Dykes, Jr.**

*(Reprinted from the Florida Fossil Hunters, Florida Prehistorical News, vol. 6, no. 5, p. 3, May 1996)*

Jewel Pozefsky and I enjoyed a wonderful trip to the Thomas Farm. The first session was April 18-21, 1996. The staff for session 1 was Bruce MacFadden (leader and cook), Erika Simons (pit boss), Bruce Shockey (pit assistant) and Russ McCarty (preparator). There were 15 people who helped dig. There is a fee of \$150, part of which is a donation to the state museum, and the remainder to cover expenses. Four school teachers from Orange County schools attend each year as guests of the county. There were also two people from out of state: Bill Lee from Baton Rouge, Louisiana (his fifth year), and a reporter (Steve Budiansky) from US News and World Report who also dug. The reporter's photo journalist was also there all day Saturday. Jeff Yaun, who is stationed at Mayport, Florida, was also attending his fifth dig. Everyone else was from one of the fossil clubs of Florida. The group arrived over the course of Thursday afternoon, and there was an introduction and brief site visit that evening.

On Friday, we were up early to enjoy pancakes with pecans and strawberries. By 8:30, we had our dig site square (3 x 3 ft.). We got to pick the square we wanted out of the 28 available squares. I proceeded to sit down and dig for two days. I dug empty dirt (about 3 ft. x 3 ft. x 10 in. deep). Everything I found would fit in one of my hands. So on Sunday I moved to another square. There I found two ribs, a Carnivora (complete, but broken in nine places). I put a plaster jacket on it to get it out of the hole. The second rib was from a horse, about 3/4 long and broken. With time running out and the plaster cast drying on top of it, I had to leave it.

*Wiley Dykes, Jr. Digging at the 1996 Thomas Farm Dig. (Photo by Erika H. Simons)*



While I was busy digging my empty dirt, Jewel was digging up two horse jaws and a 3/4 length metapodial. She put a plaster jacket on all of them and also dug many small bones. Carol Lahey dug a rhino rib with vertebra, both whole. Pat and Larry Ward dug a 3/4 length rhino rib and many small bones. Jeff Yaun dug one horse jaw and a complete horse pelvis. I saw a piece of land tortoise 6 in. x 10 in.; a quarter of pond turtle shell bottom was also cast. Jeff also dug about a third of the top and bottom of a pond turtle and cast it. Other finds were a complete lower rear horse leg (both bones), and alligator osteoderm and teeth, and two llama jaws. This was by no means everything.

On Friday, Bill Lee (the guest from Baton Rouge) made a wonderful Cajun crayfish dish. Sunday was walnut and banana pancakes. Everyday water, soda, tea and coffee were available all day. The stars gave a spectacular closing show every night, being as far from the city lights as we were. In short, it was a great trip, and I recommend it.

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### **Short Notes from 1996 Thomas Farm Diggers--**

"I have a new interest that will spread into my classroom. The last three weeks of the school has been rearranged due to your workshop. Many thanks to Erika, Brucito, Dennis, and of course you, for the fantastic hospitality." (Leah Blythe, Orlando)

"Once again you had a successful dig and I was so very pleased to have been a part of it. Next year is too long to wait but wait I must." (Jewel Pozefsky, Altamonte Springs)

"Thoroughly enjoyed...the gang--it was a good trip--much thanks...bless you for the snorkeled liquid refreshments." (Derk Kuyper, Orlando)

"What a fabulous time we had. I just want to thank you for the opportunity to be involved with such warm, fun, professional people....it was an experience of a lifetime I will never forget. Thank you." (Joyce Jackson, Ponte Vedra)

"Thanks so much for your kindly guidance this last weekend. It was a very special event that Joel and I will long remember." (Catherine and Joel Carr, Deland)

"I thoroughly enjoyed the dig...I always have so much fun, and I learn so much." (Marcia Wright, Winter Park)

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## Wandi Savage Receives 1st Mitchell Hope Scholarship

Wandi Savage received the Mitchell Hope Scholarship to attend the 5th Annual Thomas Farm Dig. This scholarship, named in honor of Mitchell Hope who passed away this January (see *Pony Express*, vol. 5, no. 1), was given by the Southwest Florida Fossil Club to a Florida teacher to encourage understanding of Florida paleontology.

Wandi is a Florida native from Winter Garden. She has been married for 34 years to Fred, also a teacher, and they have 2 children and 3 grandchildren. In her leisure time, Wandi enjoys country dancing. Wandi has taught for 21 years in the Orlando area schools including grades K-3, 1-5, gifted, underprivileged minorities, and has taught many elementary subjects including science. She enjoys the Thomas Farm experience because it is a thrill to "touch parts of animals that no-one has seen before," and because it is exciting to "meet new people and make ongoing friendships." To her it is a "marvellous learning experience." Last but not least, "it is great R & R and great to be the student for a change." Wandi takes her experience back to the classroom and teaches about extinct life of Florida illustrating this learning activity with pictures of extinct life and photos from the Thomas Farm digs. She says that the students find this subject fascinating. Wandi also has hidden modern animal bones in a sand pile at school to have her students simulate what it is like to be on a fossil dig.



Contributions to the Mitchell Hope Scholarship can be made payable to the "SouthWest Florida Fossil Club" and sent to: Ken Erickson, SWFFC Treasurer: 221 Flamingo Drive RR 10, Ft. Myers, FL 33908-3837

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### "Rooney Bones"

*(Editor's note: Dr. Jim Rooney, retired professor of veterinary pathology [also see Pony Express, vol. 4, no. 1, page 5], has visited our collection on several occasions to study the presence of ancient bone disease in fossil horses. As a result of his interest, our curatorial staff is now on the lookout for additional fossil horse specimens with various bone diseases. Erika Simons, Pony Express Program Assistant, has been vigilant in her search for these fascinating relicts, has called them "Roony bones", and has written the following poem in their honor.)*

A ROONEY BONE IS JUST A BONE  
WITH EXTRA BONEY GROWTHS  
IT'S "LESIONS" THEY'RE CALLED PROPERLY  
AND SOMETIMES THEY'RE QUITE GROSS

A ROONEY BONE IS NOT, YOU SEE  
JUST ANY OLE SICKLY BONE  
IT HAS TO COME FROM HORSES  
OR IT'S NOT A ROONEY BONE

JIM ROONEY, HORSE PATHOLOGIST  
IS WHOM THE BONES ARE NAMED FOR  
AND IF HE HEARD ME SPEAK THUS  
HIS ALTER EGO WOULD GIVE ME "WHAT FOR"

FOR THOUGH HIS LOVE'S PATHOLOGY  
HE'S AN ENGLISH PROF IN DISGUISE  
AND IF YOU CALL LESIONS PATHOLOGIES  
YOU MUST APOLOGIZE

## Visits to the Brayfield Lab

For almost 40 years Bill and Lelia Brayfield of El Jobean have spent an immense amount of their leisure time with a consuming love for collecting, curating, and studying Florida fossils. The Brayfields have received many accolades for their hard work and devotion, including the Howard Converse Award presented in 1990 by the FLMNH for "outstanding contributions made to Florida paleontology." Since I came to UF in 1977, I have had the opportunity to visit Bill and Lelia in their paleo lab several times, and each of these has been a wonderful and memorable occasion.



*Bruce (with a Thomas Farm Parahippus skull), (Lelia with a fossil Equus tooth row), and Bill Brayfield, discussing things of an "equine nature", at the Brayfield Lab, El Jobean, Feb. 1996. Part of the extensive Brayfield collection is displayed in background. (Photo by Jeannette MacFadden)*

Earlier this year I was fortunate to visit the Brayfield lab twice (see photo). Both times we reminisced about Florida paleontology, talked about mutual friends like the Skinners, and discussed fossil horses. The Brayfield collection contains many scientifically important Florida fossils. Bill and Lelia have always been forthcoming and open to anyone wanting to look at or study their collection. This spirit of cooperation is what makes being a Florida paleontologist so rewarding. The Brayfields should also be recognized for donating a wonderful modern Equus (donkey) skeleton to our collection.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Paleofest96**--A Festival Celebrating Florida Paleontology Gainesville, FL, Friday evening 8 November and Saturday 9 November See enclosed announcement or access information on-line at: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/admin/calendar.htm>
- **Paleofest96--Auction needs donations!** See insert
- **The 1997 Thomas Farm Fossil Horse Dig**  
The 6th Annual Thomas Farm Fossil Horse Dig is scheduled for three weekends in the Spring of 1997. You are hereby invited to attend this relaxing, rustic, and educational retreat at the famous 20-million-year-old fossil horse site located in rural northern Florida. Although it seems like a long time off, each session is limited to 15 participants, and places on both sessions fill up early. If you are interested in participating in this adventure, return the enclosed pre- registration form. (If you are a newcomer, additional information about the dig

will also be available at *Paleofest96*.) Returning the enclosed preregistration form is a non-binding statement of intent so that we can plan for the three sessions. We will contact you in early 1997 so that you may exercise your option to participate and at that time send in a deposit to reserve your place on the dig. Each session is identical in format and activities, and they are scheduled as follows:

- **Session I.** Thursday evening April 17 to Sunday mid-day April 20
- **Session II.** Thursday evening April 24 to Sunday mid-day April 27
- **Session III.** Thursday evening May 1 to Sunday mid-day May 4

## ***Pony Express***

Florida Fossil Horse Newsletter  
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### **Editorial Staff:**

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- Erika H. Simons, Editorial Assistant

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***1st time Readers:*** You can receive future issues of the Pony Express with a one-time new-member fee of \$20 made payable to the Fossil Horse Fund

New-member fee and other contributions should be made payable to:

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***Contributions and Support:*** All supporters receive Pony Express and invitations to related activities that promote the research, exhibition, and education about Florida fossil horses.

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**Editor's email address:** bmacfadd@flmnh.ufl.edu

### ***Pony Express--Statement of Purpose:***

The purpose of this newsletter is to communicate news and information and disseminate knowledge about fossil horses, particularly in Florida, and to develop a state-wide constituency that will support and enhance the research, exhibition, and educational programs offered at the FLMNH that pertain to fossil horses. Contributions to the Fossil Horse Fund are deposited into an account at the University of Florida Foundation, Inc., a tax-exempt entity, and will be used for the purposes stated

here.

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