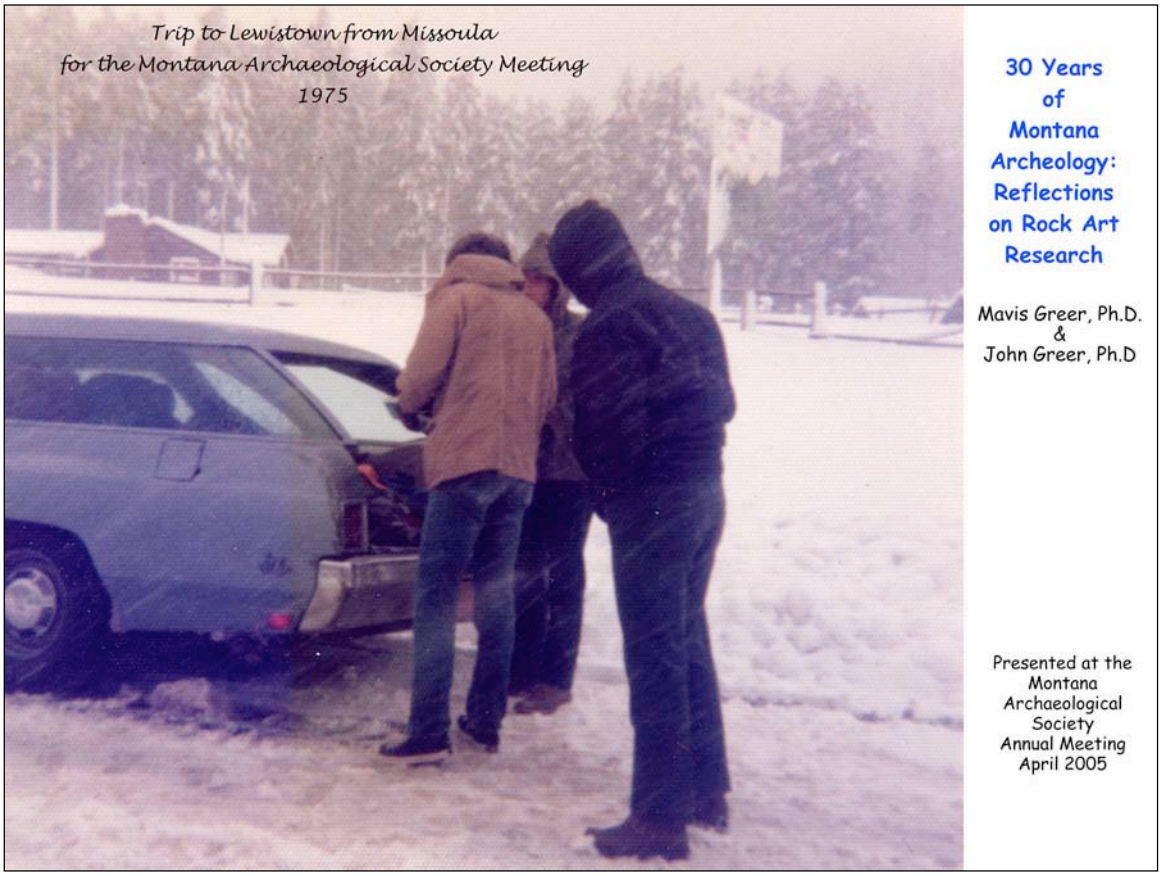
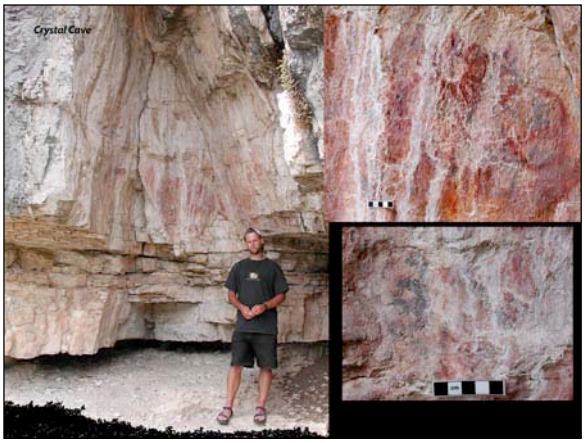


This meeting marks the 30-year anniversary of my first MAS presentation. The 1975 meeting of the Montana Archaeological Society was held at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown. I was a graduate student at the University of Montana at that time, and we were encouraged to present papers at local and regional archeological meetings. Although I remember well the dark room where I presented the paper, I remember little else about the meeting. However, I am sure that I had no realization of the changes that were occurring in archeology at that time and how they would affect the careers and research interests of so many of us in the next thirty years.

In the seventies jobs were opening up for archeologists in government and in the private sector. While at the University of Montana during the early part of that decade, the only private contractor I ever heard of was Larry Lahren, and I really had no idea what he did or for whom. It certainly never crossed my mind that he was blazing a path in the Montana and Wyoming energy business that so many of us were about to follow. I was more aware of government job openings. By 1976 I was working as the first archeologist on the Lewis and Clark National

Forest out of Great Falls. This was a classic example of on-the-job training. Although people today question the preparation of students for their positions, at least they are entering organizations that have a history of archeologists, so others in their agency, if not them, know what to expect from them. Looking back on my two years with the Forest Service, I am amazed at how naïve I was, and I do not take much comfort in the knowledge that no one in other agencies within the state at that time was much better. My job was part of a huge boom in site discovery and recording, which resulted in a wave of change affecting everything from site definition to form changes to storage of information. It was also a job that introduced me to the rock art of central Montana (as exemplified by the above photo), an area John and I would focus on in coming years.



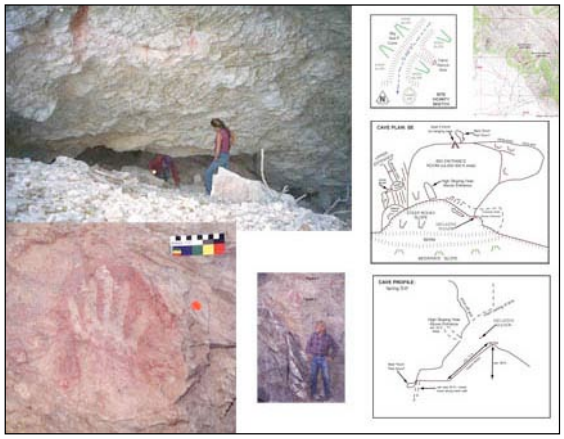
In 1977, following in the footsteps of other University of Montana graduates such as Ann Johnson and Larry Loendorf, I arrived at the University of Missouri in Columbia to pursue a Ph.D. where John and I met. As with many graduate students, lack of money was a problem, so when the opportunity to do contracting in Wyoming arose, we left academia to become full-time archeological consultants, and 13 years would pass before we returned to finish those degrees. However, we were part of a growing number of people turning to private consulting to meet the high demand for archeologists in the late seventies generated by an oil and gas boom. By the fall of 1978 we were working primarily on the northwestern Plains of Montana, Wyoming, and North Dakota. Those of you who have started consulting firms know the importance of your first job, and we have a Montana Archaeological Society member to thank for starting us on our way because our first

northwestern Plains job came from Ken Feyhl, who was working for Cenex, and drilling wells in the Bighorn Basin of northern Wyoming. His help will never be forgotten. One job lead to another, and even though the demise of contract work is constantly predicted, we are all still here still doing archeology, although ways of interacting with federal agencies and companies have changed as have field and reporting methods, and the overall increased sophistication has resulted in better surveys and better reports. Today we want to focus on archeological changes through the years as viewed from rock art research, which although narrow in scope reflects the overall growth of the discipline, which began to increase in pace in the seventies.

As most of you know, we are particularly interested in finding and doing the initial recording of new rock art sites, and although our work is mainly in Montana and Wyoming, rock art has taken us to many states and countries as well as every continent except Antarctica. Rock art is an aspect of archeology I knew almost nothing about 30 years ago when at that MAS meeting. That was a time when Stu Conner and a few others in Montana and elsewhere were laying the ground work for what was to become a major research focus for many people of varied disciplines by the 90s.

Most rock art studies in America have been under the guise of archeology and accomplished by a number of people in different fields, with different interests, orientations, experience, knowledge, abilities, resources, and agendas. In recent years artists, particularly, have become more involved in recording, and chemists have become invaluable contributors to analysis. Although the theoretical goal of most recorders is the attempted complete documentation of sites, this cannot occur through the efforts of any single discipline. Just as with other aspects of archeology, the integration of specialists from several fields — including those such as anthropology, art history, art, chemistry, photography, computer science, linguistics, and Native American Indians familiar with traditional information on rock art — results in a more

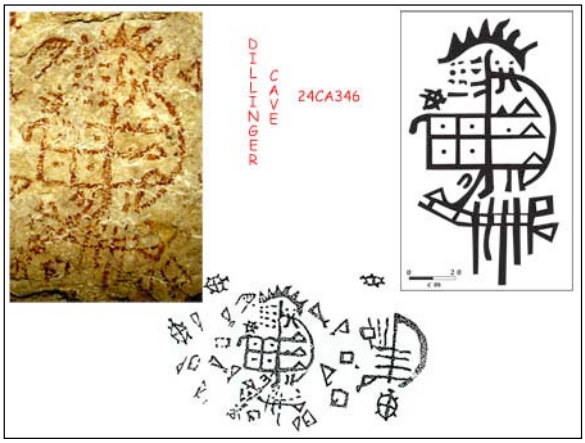
complete picture of the past. The collaboration of these disciplines is no where more evident that at international rock art meetings, such as the recent one in India, where this photo was taken on a field trip last December. However, there are still some rock art recorders and site managers who contend that once someone has been to a rock art site and conducted their kind of recording the site does not have to receive any further field attention.



We believe a rock art site never reaches the point of having all information recorded, and it is not only possible but advantageous to reobserve, rerecord, and reanalyze all rock art sites. This is especially a useful and worthwhile endeavor when these examinations are conducted from the perspective of different disciplines. However, whatever attention is given to a site, no minimal recording is acceptable until an archeological site form has been completed as this kind of rock art recording is not replaced by another discipline and should not come after but instead precede the recording done by others because it places the site in the archeological record which makes the legal location and contextual and content information available for management and preservation concerns as well as research.

Archeologists have long recognized that multi-disciplinary attention enhances traditional archeological recording and analysis, and this was a major focus of archeological theory proponents of the late 60s and early 70s. Since that time rock art studies have incorporated several theoretical views to reach beyond standard locational, descriptive, and evaluative data. These have been employed to varying degrees with different levels of success. Drawing of figures has been the standard of many site forms, though the quality often does not approach that of an artist. However, the kinds of

drawings an archeologist produces are not replaced by the kinds of drawings an artist produces, as they tend to address a site from different perspectives. Site mapping is not usually an artistic contribution, and initial figure recording by the archeologist has a different purpose from the meticulous life size artistic renditions of many artists. Photography is a standard of rock art recording, and though the quality is not always that of a professional photographer, the photos provide a record and are at least adequate to document the site and monitor changes. With the development of commercial computer programs, which came on the market by the early 90s and are now more mainstream, for photograph manipulation, drawings, and data bases archeologists have used what computer scientists have developed to enhance their recordings. Certainly Plains archeologists, most trained as anthropologists, have made use of ethnography in their analysis of rock art, and the use of statistics and linguistics has also been employed by northern Plains researchers.



Artists bring a talent to rock art recording in their ability not just to copy the figures but also to place those figures in their environmental setting in a realistic rendition. Through some artistic portrayals of panels, we are able to see the figures as they occur on the wall in a 3D perspective. Today, many feel a drawing of a figure for accuracy sake is unnecessary because a computer enhancement is a less subjective means of reproducing it. However, those of us who have looked at thousands of rock art figures know that cameras and eyes must work together to produce the most accurate portrayal, and the combined use of drawings and computer

enhancement produces the best results. Artistic theories can bring a unique perspective to rock art analysis by providing information on painter application techniques. For example, this kind of analysis can suggest where the painter stood to place a figure on the wall based on how the figure attributes are portrayed.

In recent years art historians have become more interested in rock art of the New World and other areas where rock art provides the only graphic record of the culture. To view rock art from the perspective of an art historian is a departure for some archeologists, who generally analyze rock art as an artifact or site that can provide information on a culture in terms of function, changes through time in the use of an area by one or more cultures, insights into how cultures interacted, and similarities or differences in cultures. An art historian's perspective of rock art is to view it as art and to examine how the art relates to the environment or how it relates to other kinds of art. Art historians appear to find rock art best suited to their line of inquiry when it is part of what is referred to as "high-art styles," such as the Maya or Aztec. Andrea Stone, an art historian who currently teaches in Wisconsin, states that rock art that does not fall into one of these high-art styles has a weak art historical context. Since the high-art style does not define most rock art on the northern Plains, it is easy to see why it has not been studied by many art historians, although this is changing. Archeologists have often frowned on the art history approach because of questions regarding the application of the western art concept to rock art, but they

have borrowed analytical avenues from art historians when comparing figures among panels, sites, and regions.

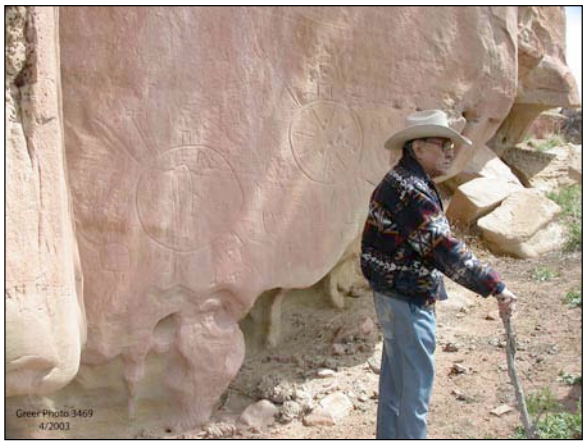
Linguists are interested in the idea that rock art represents early means of communication. This kind of analysis is often argued against in archeological circles because it attempts to determine the meaning of the depictions, which is felt to be beyond our reach unlike the search for site function. Linguists have attempted to find whether rock art figures represent words, ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or complete stories. This research direction is well founded in historical sources on the northern Plains where biographic rock art was drawn to record an event, and Jim Keyser's work on developing a lexicon for interpreting biographic rock art has helped change the attitude of archeologists toward the use of linguistics in rock art analysis.

On the northern Plains linguists also have attempted to link rock art figures to hand signs of the regional sign language widely used at the time of first white contact. Although there has not been a convincing argument presented for this function to date, it may have promise for Protohistoric or early historic rock art in light of the large number of biographical panels in this region that date to that time period.

Chemists and geologists have been important to rock art studies during the past two decades for their work in dating analysis. This work has revolutionized rock art chronology in the same way that radiocarbon dating did for excavated sites in the 1950s. This is one area where rock art researchers are not reluctant to bring specialists into their projects, and it is reflected across the northern Plains, in chronology advancements, such as at the extensive Whoopup Canyon site (shown in the photo on the top of the next page). Additionally, chemists and conservators have helped in the conservation effort by the development and evaluation of

different compounds for use in cleaning and preserving rock art panels, which is becoming an active rock art discipline.

The use of Native Americans to interpret rock art is on the rise and corresponds with archeology as a whole, which is striving to involve Indians in their studies. This association promotes better relationships between Indians and rock art researchers, which is critical since rock art is considered sacred by most modern tribes regardless of its past function. In some cases this also results in rock art researchers learning about traditional beliefs relative to the site and whether or not the site is considered to be made by the tribe now using it as part of their culture. However, the background of the informant is important to the relevance of their statements regarding the rock art, and often there is little background checking done and even less published along with the interpretations.



All rock art researchers, regardless of their discipline, need to be informed of the importance of and procedures for placing their information in the permanent archeological records of the state, which those of you who know us realize is a soap-box issue for us. Thirty years ago researchers, regardless of their association, were more likely to have their information placed in a central repository. Today, with different institutions, museums, and even agencies retaining control of their information it is getting harder to know the history of recording at any given site. A central location for sharing information enhances the quality of the site information by making it more complete. However, shared information is of little use if it is not accurate, and within the past ten years or so there has been a trend in cave records that may extend to rock art

records if it is not circumvented because of the close association of caves and rock art in some areas. In an effort to keep caves secret not only from the public but from researchers who are not in the local click, names of caves are changed so publications or professional paper presentations cannot be traced to the cave legal location, and thus the records on the contents, which in many cases includes rock art. This kind of protection appears good on the surface, but it has some unredeeming aspects, such as duplication of site information because people not in personal contact at all times did not realize they were recording the same site, or the omission of important data in synthesis reports which makes them inaccurate and diminishes their usefulness. Distributional studies are not possible if not even the county is released for the site. Additionally, unless the site is placed under lock and key, as many caves are, keeping the name and location secret from others does not prevent people from finding the site or from vandalizing it.

Unlike excavation data, rock art data are not completely removed and stored in a different context once recording and analysis have been conducted by any one person. Therefore, it is possible to test new and old hypotheses with the same data base, which makes it an important kind of site for checking the viability of theories from many different disciplines, which is one of the biggest draws to this research topic, and we expect it will continue to increase the popularity of rock art studies as the ability to obtain permission to excavate sites becomes more difficult.

Over the past 30 years it has become more and more apparent that different kinds and levels of recording are appropriate for different sites, and this is reflected in the kinds of recording rock art has experienced. For example, this photo shows what computers can do to help rock art recording today that could not be done in the 70s. It needs to be recognized that even though there can be no *complete* end to the study of any site, since it cannot be predicted which future knowledge and new techniques will contribute additional useful data, any recording should be as thorough as time and money allow, but it should also be recognized that it is not all that can

ever be done with the site. The necessity for multiple site visits for different kinds of observations and recordings should become accepted as standard policy for site managers.

One of the most valuable lessons we have learned in the past 30 years and would like to pass on to the younger MAS members is to find a specialty within archeology and pursue it. Then make an effort to get to know as many people with an interest in archeology as possible because they will enrich your archeological experience. Let the archeological community know what your research interest is because this will bring people to you to share their knowledge, and it is impossible to find all those people without your personal public outreach. To feel part of a group, such as MAS, it is essential to get involved. You cannot wait for an organization to come to you, you must go to it by at least volunteering to give a paper. If you pursue your interest, after 30 years you will be amazed at how your archeological circles have expanded, and take photographs to preserve this history. I wish we had photos of all our experiences, but instead we must end with only a few that show some MAS members through the years.

Horseshoe Cave
1976

R to L: Dale Rominger, Milo McLeod, Debbie Beck, Lucy Capehart, Gary McLean.

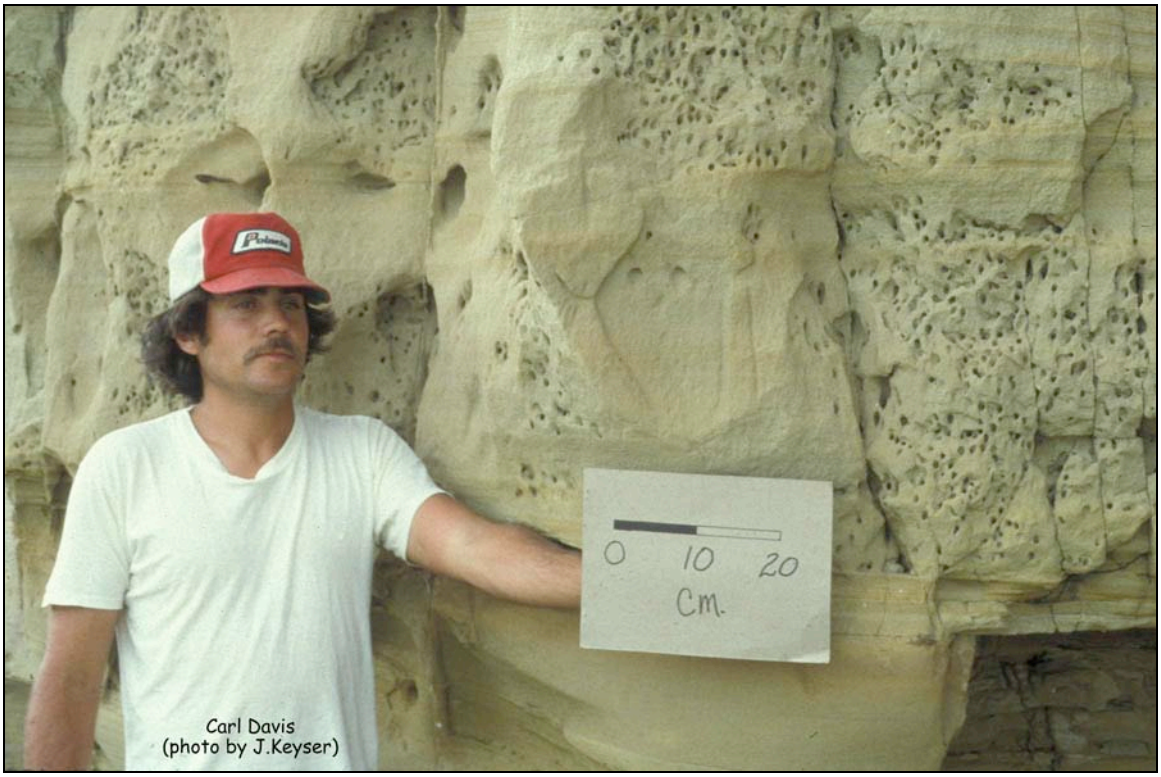
Mavis Greer and Stu Conner.

R to L: Macie Ahlgren, Mike Sylvester, Shirley Sylvester, John Greer.

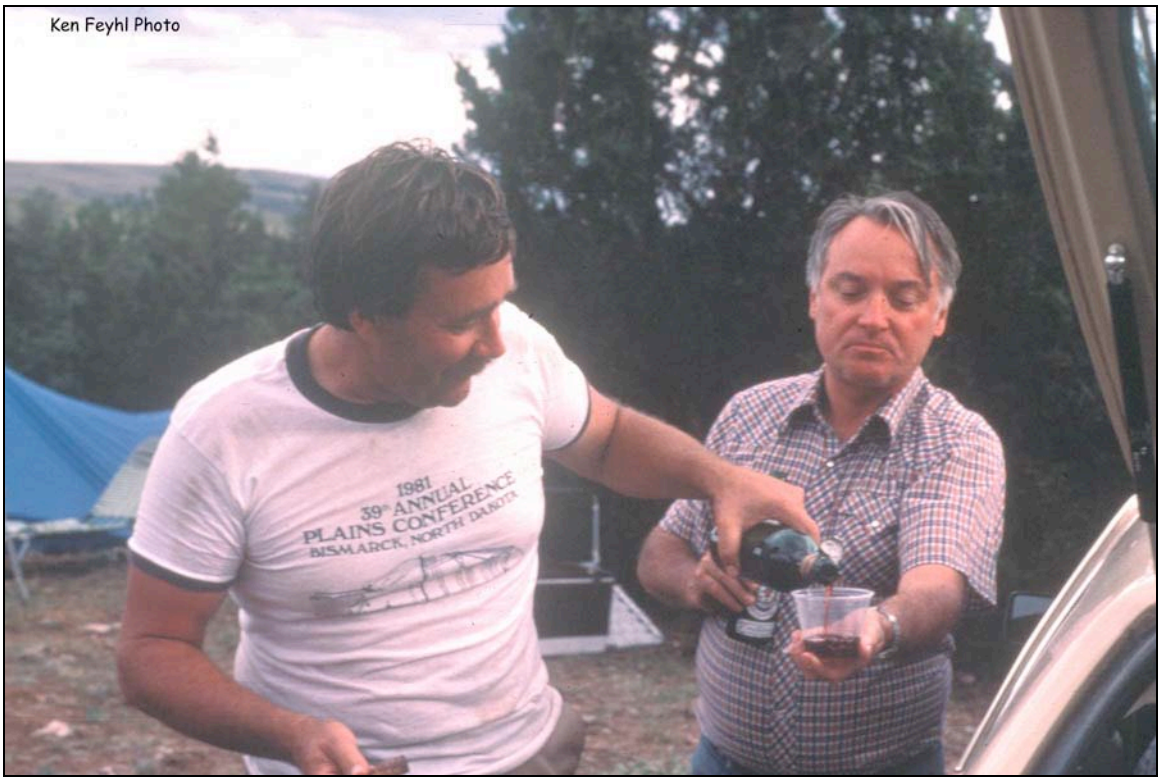
Tim Urbaniak.

Mark Baumler and Stan Wilmoth.

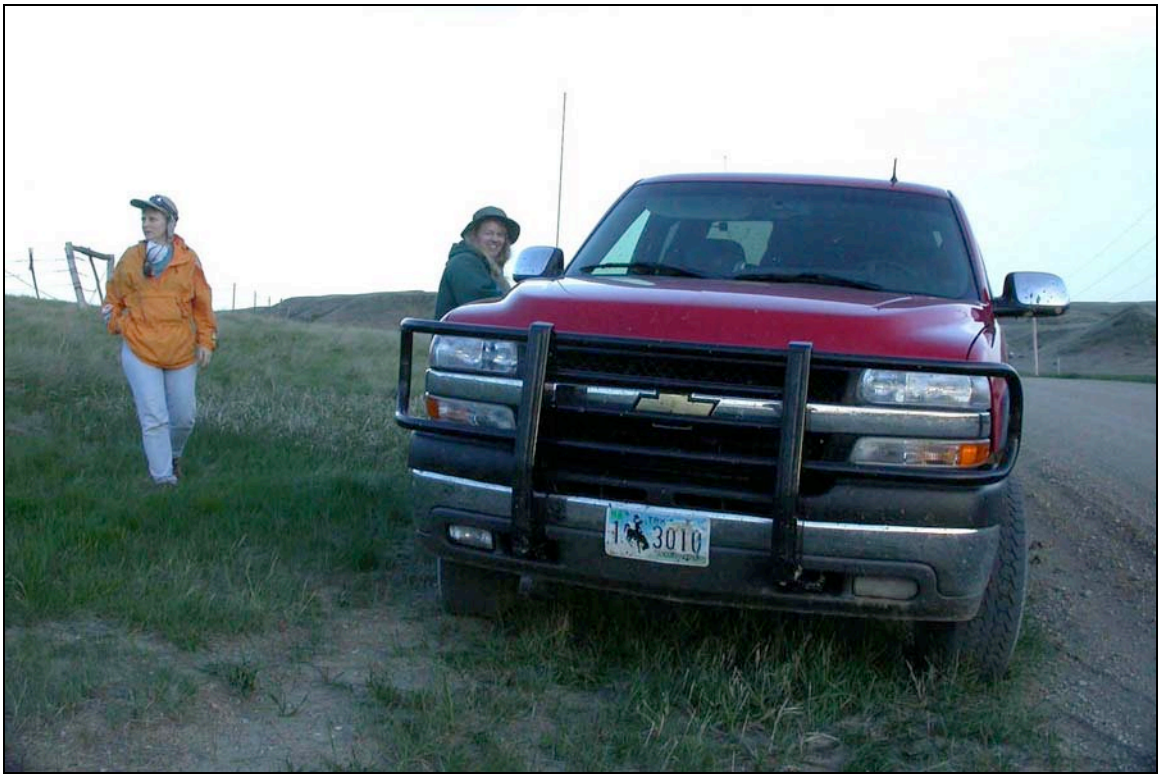
L to R: Scott Burgen, man from mine, Elaine Hale, Unknown, Kerry Lippincott, Christine Lippincott.



Carl Davis.



Larry Loendorf and Stu Conner.

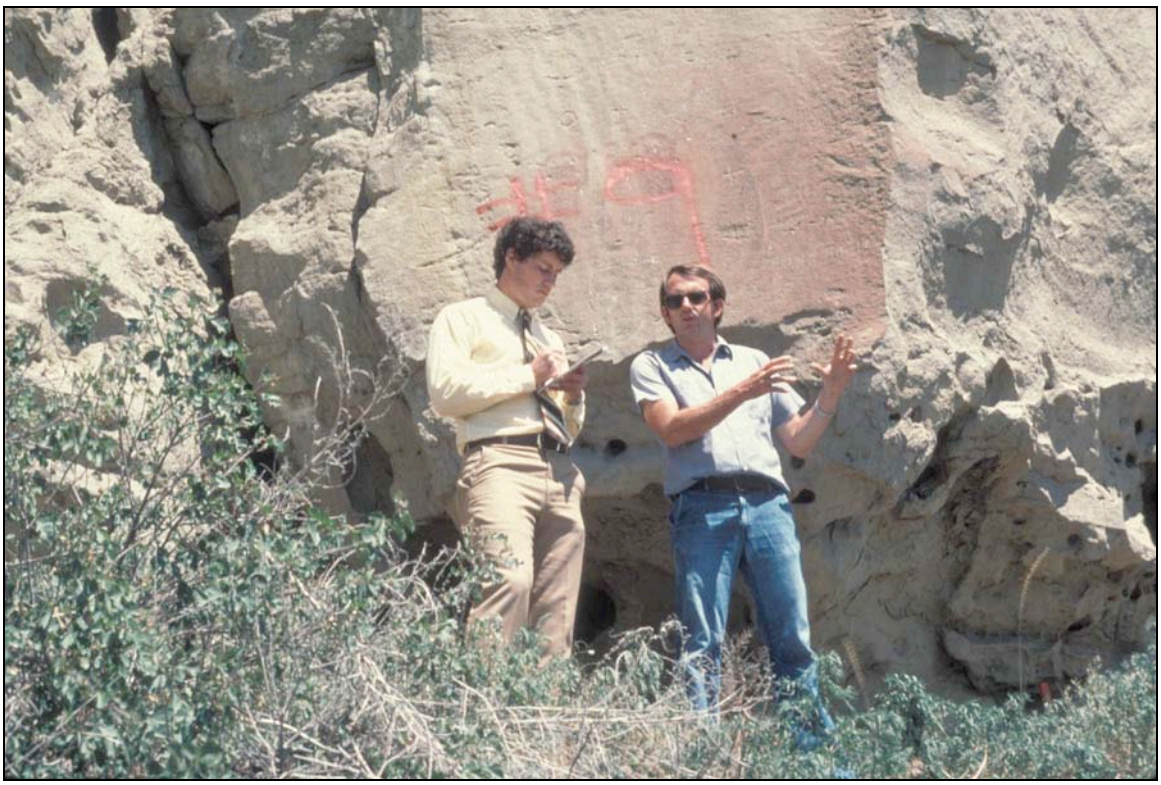


Becky Kallevig and Mavis Greer.

R to L: Halcyon LaPoint, Glen Fredlund, Mike Bergstrom, and Tim Urbaniak.

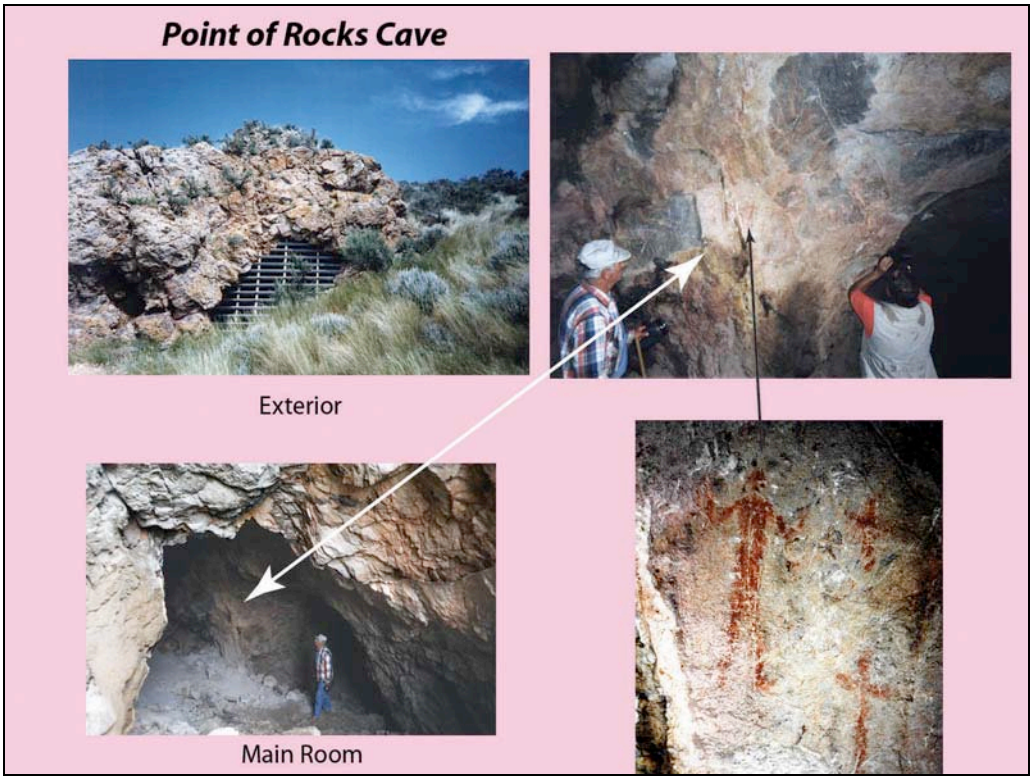
University of Montana, Department of Anthropology, soft ball team, 1976.

Kelley Keim and Sandy Morris.



Unknown reporter and Jim Keyser.

Ken Feyhl.



Lower Left: Jewell Werner; Upper Right: Jewell Werner and John Greer.