

OtherHand

The 2012 Pecos Conference

The Pecos conference is an annual archaeological conference held in August, usually someplace in the US Southwest. Wherever it's at, it's always called The Pecos Conference, just to mess with people's minds, I suppose. It was first held in 1927 at Pecos, New Mexico (hence the name) by A.V. Kidder, a renowned archaeologist of the time who worked at Pecos. That first conference resulted in an agreement as to the labeling and dating of the various puebloan Indian cultures being studied at the time (i.e., Basketmaker I, II, Pueblo I, II, III, etc). While the conference spends most of its time wandering the Southwest, every five years it returns to its birthplace of Pecos. This was one of those years.

This is an unusual gathering. It's open to the public, and really anyone who wants to attend, and is used by archaeologists to network, argue and get up to speed on happenings in their field, specifically Southwest archaeology. It has no formal structure and no permanent leadership. Somewhat like Burning Man, I guess, but less nudity. After seeing the participants, I conclude this is a good thing.

Over my career, I've attended a number of professional conferences, in engineering, aerospace and physics, even presenting occasional papers. One thing these different conferences had in common were fancy venues (usually hotel convention centers), big corporate vendors wanting to sell their wares to the conference attendees, very nice accommodations and a pretty high registration fee.

So I was more than a little intrigued when I saw that the registration fee for the Pecos Conference was only \$40 for three days. Seeing as how that was the same price as a nice lunch for Jeri and I, I was in!

It was clear this was unlike any conference I had previously attended. The "accommodations" were a couple of fields at Pecos National Historical Park where attendees could pitch their tents (Despite how excited archaeologists get about their work, that's not a euphemism), or park their campers, for the more well-heeled crowd. Of course

you could be civilized and get a room in Santa Fe, but that is a ways away, and it was on your dime.



These were the luxury accommodations for the conference (some with ensuite baths and kitchenettes!)



The Motel 6 accommodations for the conference. What, you got a problem with peeing in a bottle?



The registration/first aid tent. It was special 'cause it was green. Usually full of NPS rangers.

Fancy conference halls? Uh, no, but they had several nice large tents. And the floors were,.....uh...organic. The PA system was battery powered, which was a problem on the second day when the batteries went dead. This overall lack of 110 volt power also meant

there was no ability to do anything PowerPoint-wise. A few presenters tried to show exhibits on posters they set up on easels, but it didn't work well for those in the back of the tent.



An overall view of the 2012 Pecos Conference site. Not listed in the dictionary under "lavish"



And of course the presentation tent, where it all happened, good and bad.

Looking around at the crowd, they certainly looked a bit different than other conference attendees I had experienced. Jeri described them as “grizzled”, which I instantly thought appropriate. I wasn’t completely sure I hadn’t seen a couple of them on street corners in Santa Fe holding up battered cardboard signs saying “Hungry, need food!!”



Inside the presentation tent. Note the organic flooring.

Beards were everywhere (men, mostly). Then there were the ones with beards and loooong ponytails. Guys, you might be able to pull off that I-don’t-give-a-shit rebel look when you’re in your twenties, but when you’re past 60 it’s just sad. To me it says you’ve just completely given up on how you look and are one very small step away from quitting bathing and just shitting yourselves. Interesting group of folks, but I digress.....

I was surprised to see the papers were limited to only 15 minutes. It makes some sense as they seem to be intended as more of an update. In most cases there wasn’t any time for questions.



Jason Chuipka talking about use of databases and high technology (Gasp... iPads!!!) in recording and dealing with site data. A good, solid mainstream presentation, even though the word “technology” made some of the older dinosaurs in the audience squirm. What, you want to know about the sheep?

They were serious about the 15 minute limit. On stage with the speakers was a stuffed sheep. Yeah, I said sheep. You think I’m making this up? I have pics!



Ask not for whom the Sheep tolls. It tolls for thee. Now shaddup and sit down.

Around the sheep's neck was a bell, which had a cord tether running over to the person timing the speaker. At 5 minutes remaining, the monitor gave a brief polite yank on the bell cord to let the speaker know time was running out. At 2 minutes left another, louder, less polite pull was made. And for those poor speakers who hit the 15 minute mark, the damn sheep went off like an alarm clock.



A more “colorful” presentation by Charly Gullett trying to convince the audience the Chacoans were using fractal geometry in the layout of their Great Houses. He has some interesting points, but I’m still agnostic. Oh, and don’t let the garb fool you, he’s an accomplished engineer (which explains all).

About that.....I couldn’t figure out the inability for so many speakers to keep to their allotted time. Most were some variety of well-educated professionals, so presenting papers should have been second nature. Yet a great bulk of the presenters were just “readers”. They monotonously read their paper, seldom looking up. They seemed surprised when they ran up against the sheep. Hey, it’s not like someone came up to them the morning of the conference and said, “Would you mind presenting this paper you’ve never seen before today?” These guys not only wrote the damn things, they had months to prepare and should know how long their damn presentation was.

It was beyond me what sort of screening process was used to determine which papers would be presented. There were a few stellar papers and speakers. The bulk were decent, journeyman efforts, some boring some mildly interesting. But there were a couple that suggested if there were a bar, it was set so low it was resting on the ground.

In-between interesting papers, I paid repeated visits to the vendors tent. It was mostly book offerings, but there were a lot of obscure and interesting titles, with good prices. I spent

way too much money here.



The vendor tent, because even at a conference we need a chance to buy crap



Inside of the vendor tent. Mostly books, and some very good ones at reasonable prices. I spent too much time and money here.

The tent with the poster presentations was also a good diversion. A “poster paper” for those who haven’t come across them before, is sort of an entire paper displayed on a piece of foamboard on an easel. The presenter has as much text as desired, as well as exhibits and graphs. Typically, the presenter hangs around the poster and answers any questions passers-by might have.



The poster paper/social tent. Papers were displayed on easels with their authors around to explain what it all meant.

In some ways the poster presentations were more interesting than what was going on in the main tent. Not only could pictures and exhibits be shown, there were direct interactions with the presenters that wasn’t a canned presentation. Also a lot of the poster presentations were by grad students who were very enthused and excited to have anyone show interest in what they were up to. It was hard to pull away sometimes. But better that than readers.



A couple of the poster papers



Another poster paper. This was on identifying Mexico Turquoise by isotopic ratios. Wow! Hard science!

Fridays four sessions included “Field Reports from NW New Mexico”, “Field Reports Across the Southwest”, “Cultural Crossroads – Archaeology of Conflict”, and “Field Reports – Current Research”. The Archaeology of Conflict sessions were quite interesting (“Give war a chance”).

By Saturday, Jeri had had an assfull of archaeology, so she left me on my own. Sessions on Saturday included “Field Reports from New Mexico and Beyond” (snoozefest), “Remembering Dave Breternitz”, “Cultural crossroad – Contact, Change and Exchange” and “Field Reports – Project Reports and Updates”.

In all, it was a real interesting conference to attend. It allowed a good peek into the culture and social structure of the archaeology profession. None of the material presented seemed to be at such a high level that it couldn't be understood by an “enthusiast”. I certainly couldn't say that about some of the physics conferences I've attended.

CASE #392

Playwright Render

SOURCE URL

<https://www.otherhand.org/home-page/area-51-and-other-strange-places/bluefire-main/bluefire/th>

DOMAIN

www.otherhand.org

CASE ID

#392 of 924

CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - 15 May 1989 — Robert Lazar speaks publicly on KLAS-TV in Las Vegas, NV for the first time. Lazar claims he was employed at S-4, a facility near Groom Lake/Area 51 adjacent to Papoose Lake. Lazar claims the site has concealed aircraft hangers in a mountain side and nine flying saucers are stored there, where scientists are working to reverse engineer their antigravity propulsion systems. Lazar claims one saucer was found on an archeological dig, and another is metallic in appearance. Lazar claims the power plants inside the craft are so advanced they defy conventional understanding and do not use circuits or electricity.

Lazar also claims his employer is EG&G, and he is made aware of an alleged Project Galileo, an antigravity and propulsion project and Project Looking Glass, an alleged technological project to see back in time.

-