

How I Met Dave Fredrickson¹

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I was just sitting here in the late night, thinking about how I met Dave Fredrickson, and it caused me to laugh out loud. Here, in an admittedly stream of consciousness retelling, is the account of our first meeting.

It was back in April, 1975, and I was a grad student in archaeology at CSU-Hayward. At the time, I was working on some site preservation issues with the Society for American Indians in the East Bay's Tri-Valley area. The group consisted mostly of Native Americans who were originally from outside of California, several of whom had become concerned about a burial site in Danville that was being actively destroyed by pothunters (untrained individuals conducting unauthorized excavations in search of artifacts to collect or sell).

This was the archaeological site CA-CCO-352, also known as the "Diablo Road Site." The pothunters had been excavating square units at CCO-352 for quite some time and telling passersby that they were archaeologists from U.C. Berkeley. They weren't, of course, but it turned out that one of them had in fact taken an archaeological fieldclass and, as a result of that limited training, had learned the importance of excavating square units. The pothunters had even brought a backhoe in to dig some deep trenches through the site, in their misdirected quest for Native American burials and the grave goods they often contain.

Anyway, a few of us from Hayward teamed up with the Native Americans and decided to try and put a stop to the pothunting. Whenever any of us were in the area, we'd swing by the site hoping to encounter the diggers. One day, Sally Dean (one of my colleagues at Hayward and, later, an archaeologist with the NPS) and I drove by the site in order to check on it. To our surprise, we observed several heads bobbing up and down in what looked to be excavation units. It seemed to us that we had finally caught the pothunters in the act! Sally took off like an angry bee headed straight toward the nearest of the diggers. She and I had seen plenty of human bones in the pothunters' backdirt that spring and so we were good and ready to encounter them. Sally lived in the neighborhood, and took great exception to what had been occurring at the site. She had been a high school English teacher earlier in life and so she could be stern when it was necessary. I ran to keep up with her, assuming that there'd be trouble.

Arriving at the pit where the first digger was busy at work, we somehow knew that he was the leader. This guy was middle-aged and bearded, was wearing a colorful kerchief on his head, and – get this – he was sporting an earring! At that point, I don't believe I

¹ This is the text version of a presentation I made at the Society for California Archaeology Northern Data-Sharing Meeting, Point Reyes National Seashore, October 6, 2012.

had ever seen a man with an earring before. Sally and I were certain that this was the head pothunter, even though it was quite obvious to me that he was digging the best looking unit I had ever seen. This fellow definitely put my own excavation skills to shame. Sally's, too. I just assumed that he had a lot of digging experience. After all, that's what pothunters do. They dig! Man was I right. And that's about the only thing I was right about that day.

It turned out that the man Sally and I had assumed to be the head pothunter was actually the head archaeologist, Dr. David A. Fredrickson of Sonoma State University. Unknown to Sally and me at the time, Dave had been hired by the county to test CCO-352, due to a planned road-widening project that threatened to impact the site. This was the first day of a week-long project for Dave and his three assistants. Assisting in the dig were Dave's wife, the anthropologist, Vera Mae Fredrickson, the Hopi/Miwok poet and anthropologist, Wendy Rose, and one of Dave's students, the archaeologist, Tom Origer.

After Sally had lectured Dave about the evils of pothunting, with me standing beside her trying to look as menacing as I could, and after Dave had let us go on and on before politely stopping us so that he could introduce himself, much to our chagrin, and after Sally and I had somehow managed to extract our feet from our big mouths, Dave thanked us for our concerns and asked if we'd be willing to assist him with the dig. That's the kind of person he was. I answered enthusiastically, "Yes," and spent the next week on the site.

Dave had me work with Vera Mae and, together, she and I spent the week excavating a 2x1 meter unit down to well over a meter in depth. CCO-352 proved to be one of the richest archaeological sites I had ever worked on, but what was really enriching was the experience of working with Dave and Vera Mae. Dave was quiet and serious and scholarly and Vera Mae was something else. Those who knew Vera Mae will understand when I say that the week I spent in the pit with her was one of the highlights of my education. I admit that I was quite naive at the beginning of the week. By week's end, though, I was a good bit wiser. Vera Mae became one of the brightest stars in my sky, as did Dave.

In 1997, the year that I was President of the Society for California Archaeology (SCA), I was truly honored to present the two of them with awards; Vera Mae, the Lifetime Achievement Award for all that she had done on behalf of cultural resources, and Dave, a special Certificate of Commendation for the wonderful music that he brought into our lives.

Returning to spring, 1975, some of us from Hayward had already contacted the SCA about the damage that was being done to CCO-352 by the real pothunters, so the SCA worked with the landowner (the property was about to be developed) to have an archaeological study conducted of the site area. Given his recent experience with the site, Dave was hired to do the work, which commenced later that summer (Figs. 1-3). This time around, Dave hired a much larger crew, half of which consisted of Sonoma State students, with the other half coming from Hayward. Dave hired me to be the crew chief of the Hayward contingent. This excavation was one of the early projects of the newly formed Anthropological Studies Center. Dave's work that summer helped identify the

nature and extent of CCO-352, which facilitated the site's protection when the parcel was developed the following year.

I enjoyed working with Dave at CCO-352 and, from that time on, I considered him to be one of my teachers, even though I never actually took a class from him. Over the years, Dave was always there for me, whether I needed a professional opinion, an expert contractor, or just some sage advice. Dave was certainly an amazing archaeologist, but he was so much more than that, as his many friends and former students know. With his passing, there is now a void. I can't imagine anyone ever filling that space quite like Dave did.

Oh, yeah, not that it matters, but a few years after working with Dave at CCO-352, I got my ear pierced.



Figure 1. Dave Fredrickson (Middle, with back to camera) at CA-CCO-352, June, 1975 (Photo by the Author). In this Photo, the Archaeologists are Using a Two-Person Gas-Powered Auger to Test the Boundaries of the Midden Deposit.

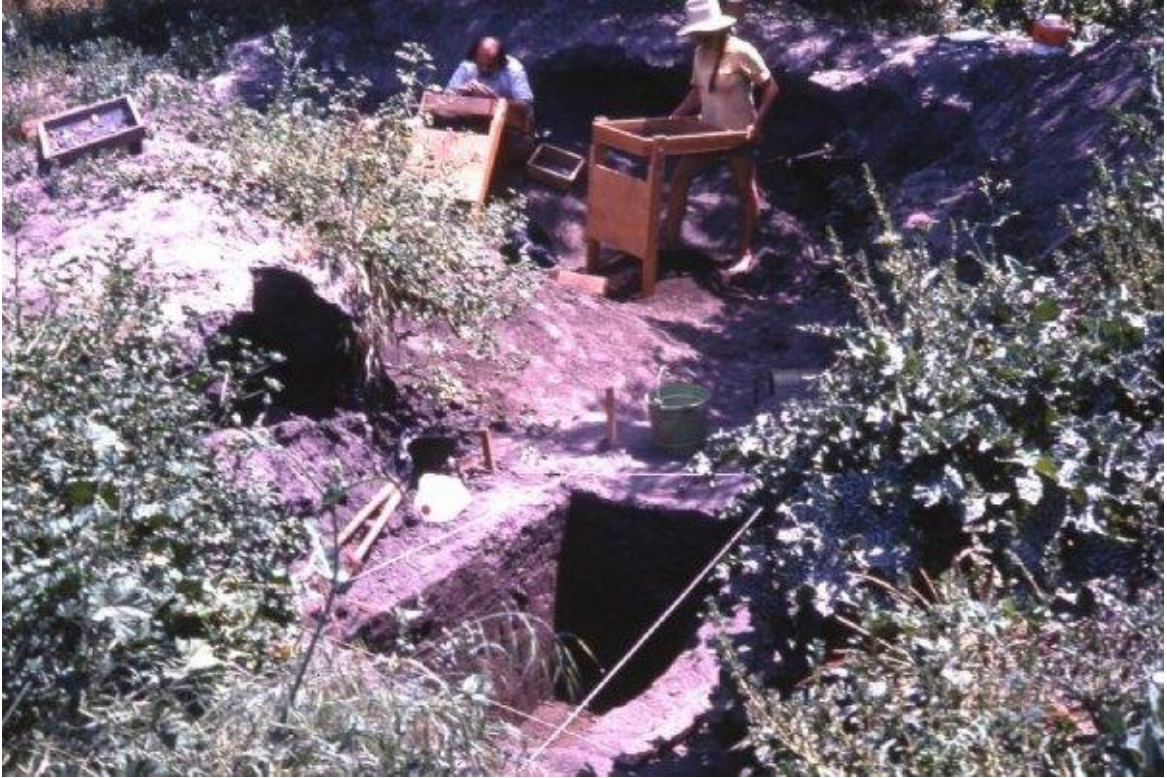


Figure 2. Excavation of CA-CCO-352, June, 1975 (Photo by the Author). The Archaeologists are Excavating a 2x1 Meter Test Unit within the Pothunters' Backhoe Trench.



Figure 3. Excavation of CA-CCO-352, June, 1975 (Photo by the Author). Diablo Road is Visible in the Background. Today, this is a Heavily Developed Area.