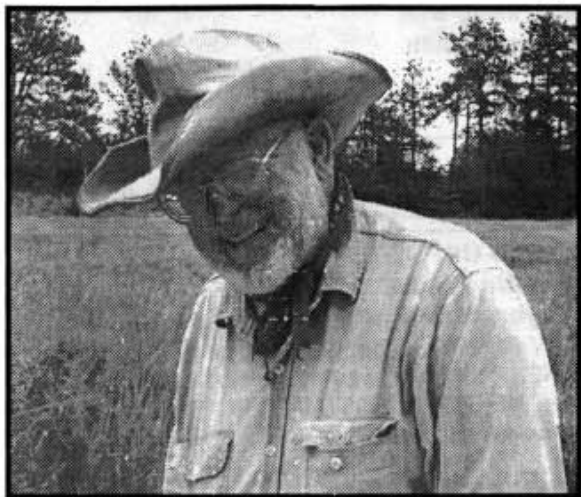


Prospectors Or Paleontologists? Working Keya Paha County Hwy 7 Site



An 'ole' prospector and his crew? . . . or a world renowned paleontologist working the most diverse *carnivor fauna species* site of its age in North America - located in Keya Paha County? See story inside.

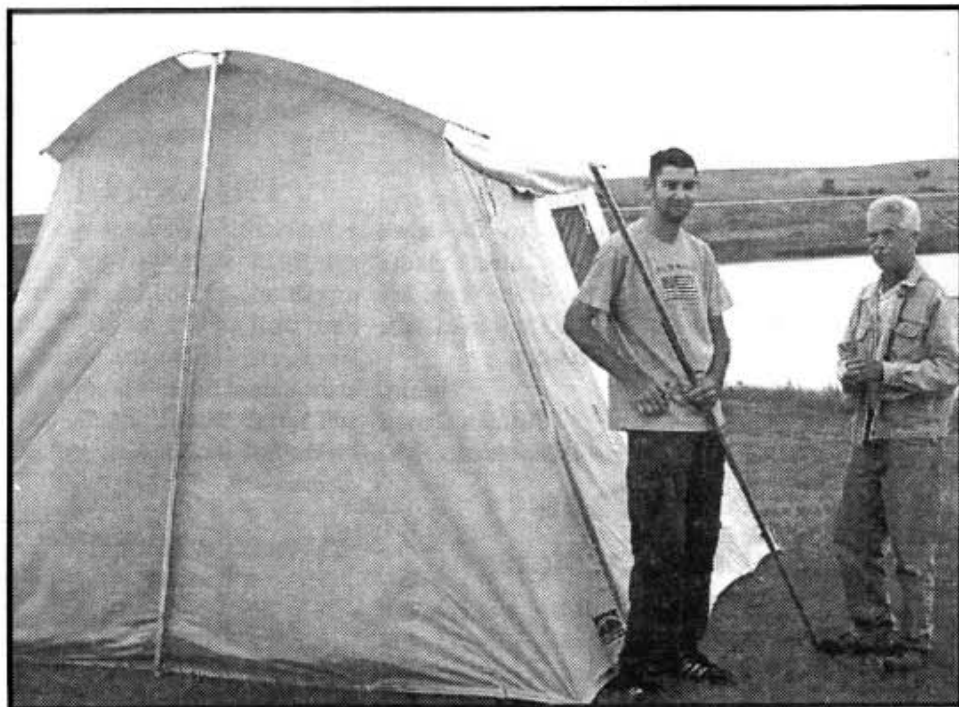


Work site south of Springview on Highway 7.

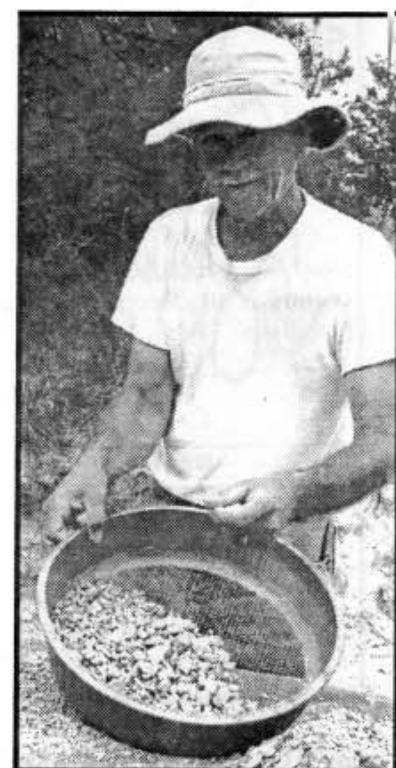
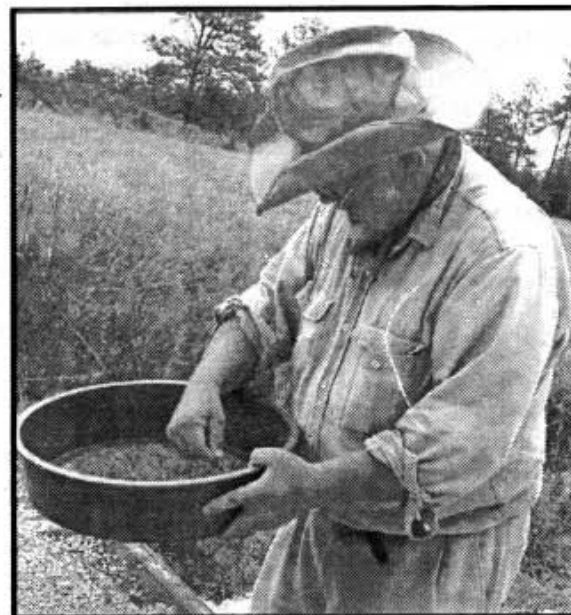
Reprinted with permission from the **Springview Herald** Springview, Nebraska Wed, July 21, 2004 Vol. 118, No. 29

SPRINGVIEW (NE) HERALD July 21, 2004 Page 4

Voorhies And Others Work Significant Site



Pictured above: Tucker and Bailey at their campsite on Cub Creek; Top Center: Tucker and Adler discover a complete tooth fossil; Bottom Center: Mike Voorhies, the master at work; Top Right: Bruce Bailey, Highway Salvage Paleontologist working the site; and Bottom Right : Mrs. Voorhies sorting her finds.



By Betty Hermsmeyer

Prospectors and paleontologists just might be soul mates (they sure have a lot in common). Each spend a lot of time in remote areas sifting and sorting through the earth's raw materials in all kinds of weather - without complaining. Both haul their finds away in burlap bags to more civilized places where further examination of their finds takes place. Prospectors and paleontologist also have the same enthusiasm, determination and undying perseverance. Oh yeah, they look alike too.

But it was paleontologists and geologists who were in the Keya Paha

County area last week and they weren't looking for gold (although they acted as if they were finding it). No, these guys were working the site discovered by Nebraska state road employees located just off Highway 7 south of Big Canyon Inn in Keya Paha County.

On board were Mike Voorhies, professor in the department of geosciences at the University of Nebraska, world renowned paleontologist and founder of the Ash Fall site located north of Neligh; Shane Tucker, Highway Salvage Preparator with the University of Nebraska State Museum, Bruce Bailey, Highway Salvage Paleontologist and head

of the highway salvage program and volunteers Jerry Adler of Hastings and Mrs. Voorhies, a lifetime enthusiast and devoted volunteer.

According to Dr. Voorhies, the site is a 6 million year old river bed. (As a comparison, the Niobrara River is about 20,000 years old).

The site was discovered in the 1990s when the highway department realigned highway 7 between Springview and Bassett. Rick Irwin noticed bones sticking out of a road bed and informed the highway salvage department.

"This is a good example of how two groups, the state roads department and the University of Nebraska work together," Voorhies said.

The first year of major work began on the site in 1998. Since then, paleontologist come up every year and check to see what is weathering out of the river bed. When it's dry the group does periodic screening.

According to Shane Tucker, "the great significance of this site is that it is the only site of its age in the entire central portion of the Niobrara

River Valley. Prior to this we had a gap from 4.5 million to 9 million years. Thus the key significance of this site is that it fills in a gap in the rock and fossil records and therefore is considered a scientifically important site at the museum.

"About 4.5 million years ago a major extinction took place where many species, such as rhinos, went extinct. There was a lot of important change going on then, climatic changes, vegetation and species changes including different grasses and vegetation appearing. This six million year layer is filling in a lot of information for us. So far we have found 17 carnivore species which makes this site the most diverse carnivore fauna species site of its age in North America. And we haven't come across a bear species that we know existed then, so there is the potential to increase that number."

Mrs. Voorhies has been involved with her husband "since 1968 when we were married," and enjoys fieldwork as much as her husband. In her very small pile of fossils she had a snake vertebra, catfish spine, a beaver tooth, bird bones, miscellaneous carnivore teeth and lots of three toed horse fossils.



Above: Shane Tucker, Highway Salvage Preparator and Jerry Adler, volunteer, remove a whole fossil tooth from the Keya Paha County site just off Highway 7 south of Springview. Far right corner of picture: an entire fossilized bone, 6 million years old, prepared in plaster to be transported to the museum in Lincoln.

Work site south of Springview on Highway 7.