

# The Dirt, the Dust, and Annie the Antelope

There's nothing quite like a front-row seat to history. Bronco tickets on the 50-yard line at Super Bowl XXXII. Center ice to watch the Avalanche take its third Stanley Cup against the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2022. However, historic moments in Colorado generally conclude with one memorable championship or one decisive moment.

Imagine watching a piece of Colorado history unfold over the course of three consecutive summers.

That's what the two daughters of John "Calvin" Jones experienced on their grandparent's ranch outside Laird in the early 1970s. While they may not have recognized the historical significance of the excavation site while it was taking place, Denise (Jones) Baucke and her sister, Janice (Jones) Stroup, certainly had ringside seats.

"My sister and I had to check cattle on the end of the ranch," Denise remembers, "so we always stopped by to see what the next artifact finds might be."

And Dennis Stanford of the Smithsonian Institution and his young crew of diggers and college students were always willing to accommodate their curiosity, sharing artifacts and information with enthusiasm. Stanford and crew showed them bison bones and tiny teeth and the many tools and projectile points uncovered in their uncle's cornfield. Of course, once the digging began, all farming operations came to a halt and did not resume until Colorado's Centennial State celebration got underway three years later.

"Dennis was always willing to show and explain the latest and greatest artifacts being found," she remembers. And his descriptions changed how Denise, then a teenager, viewed the area. "I remember him telling us how during that time it was a canyon where primitive men stood on the rim above to throw spears at the bison. It was hard to imagine."

But it wasn't all artifacts and tales of ancient hunters. There was also a little orphaned antelope calf named Annie that provided hours of comic relief for almost everyone on the Jones Ranch – for everyone except the diggers who were carefully removing sediment from the fragile grid squares.

"She would come from the ranch house to the dig site and the crew would chase her off because she wanted to be in the middle of everything. I remember several times when Janice and I would chase Annie home for them. You never knew how long she would stay away before wanting to return to check on things."

Repeated attempts by the Jones family to reintroduce Annie to the wild antelope population on the ranch proved unsuccessful. "My cousin, Jerry Jones, remembers her grazing with the local deer. Always close to them but never inside the deer herd."

Although Annie may have been considered an outsider among the local deer population, she had a deep and abiding interest in becoming an insider with Stanford's crew.

Denise also recalls the harsh and sometimes oppressive conditions the crew worked under while on the Jones Ranch. "How the crew worked in the heat, living in tents or a couple of trailers Dad and Uncle Bob brought in. It was truly primitive by today's standards, I'm sure. There were a couple of large tents where they processed finds, catalogued them and prepared

them. Otherwise, the crew sat or laid on the ground as they carefully picked away the hard dirt, and it was some pretty hard stuff, too. And very dusty.”

Thus, Denise’s ring-side seat to all of it came with the dirt and the dust and the mud. And a little impish antelope named Annie.

– *MATT VINCENT*