

# And Finally ... Into the Mystic

Perhaps the least understood yet most compelling component of the Jones-Miller Bison Kill Site near Wray was what archeologist Margaret (Pegi) Jodry described as the spiritual element. During the three-year excavation work conducted by her late husband, Dr. Dennis Stanford, several unexplained phenomena surfaced.

One was a post hole in the middle of the “surround” that Stanford theorized may have been the location of “medicine post.” The other items included a miniature Hell Gap projectile, purely ceremonial in design, and what some archeologists believe were pieces of a sacred flute and a bead.

The possible religious connotations were undeniable but never proven.

“You almost never get an opportunity to see a spiritual component of a hunt like this,” Jodry said. “There was just something different about Jones-Miller, something intrinsically special about it.”

In an abstract written in 1999, Stanford described the possible ceremonial instrument as a “drilled bone that is believed to have been used as a flute. The object has a hole drilled completely through the long axis, with at least one intersection hole drilled from the top.”

Also found near the medicine post were “the tiny projectile point, flute, drilled bead, and butchered dog bones may be evidence that the Jones-Miller hunters practiced similar hunting rituals as recorded for historic tribes on the Northern Plains.” In other words, sacred ceremonial rites seen with the Assiniboine, Sioux and Cree who Stanford studied and whose descendants he consulted with as part of his research.

Stanford later described the discovery of the medicine post and its possible significance in an article published in *National Geographic Magazine*, describing the last big discovery near the Arikaree in 1975: “Clearing away the last bones, Jim [Rancier, a student from the University of New Mexico,] noted a large round soil discoloration. A trench cut through the side of the spot revealed, unequivocally, the earth cast of a large post from the time of the bison kill. Had it been a medicine post? And were the tiny point, whistle, and butchered remains ritual offerings?”

“Had we really found proof of a medicine post and ritual that existed 10,000 years ago? Probably we shall never know, but the evidence makes this conclusion tempting and, in my view, likely.”

– MATT VINCENT