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Author

Basgall, Mark E.

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in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (Davis and Winslow 1965); her ethnography of the Mono Lake Paiute, published in the *University of Utah Anthropological Papers* (Davis 1965); “The Western Lithic Co-Tradition,” published in the *San Diego Museum Papers* (Davis et al. 1969); and “Associations of People and a Rancholabrean Fauna at China Lake, California” in *Early Man in North America from a Circum-Pacific Perspective* (Davis 1978a). She continued to write into the early 1980s, and most of her later material is in the cultural resource management literature on the Mojave Desert (see the Digital Archaeological Record, www.tdar.org).

Dr. Davis was curator of the Museum of Man in San Diego, California from 1966 to 1971. In 1975, she founded the Great Basin Foundation to further research into the temporally-deep record of the Mojave Desert, and to advocate for preservation of archaeological resources. Her interests were many, and her advocacy and support ranged from the San Diego Zoo, to Greenpeace, and to Amnesty International. “Never mean spirited, Emma Lou Davis was forever a frank and forthright individual who minced no words in pursuing truth” (Turnmire 1989:2), and she remained a fiercely independent woman whose career reflected the fact that she had been a feminist all of her life.

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THE LEGACY OF EMMA LOU DAVIS: A VIEW FROM THE BLEACHERS

Mark E. Basgall
California State University, Sacramento

I must first confess that I never really knew Emma Lou Davis personally. I met her at several archaeological conferences during my formative years, and surely heard about some of her social eccentricities and wild parties (though I was never able to attend one), but I got to know and appreciate her through her research. When first engaging the prehistory of the western Great Basin in the early 1980s, it was essential to read her writings about Mono Lake ethnohistory, her papers on the archaeology of the Mono County uplands, Panamint Valley, the central Mojave Desert, and (of course) her multi-year and many-faceted studies of the Paleoindian occupations at China Lake. These latter investigations had resulted in a recent monograph, *The Ancient Californians: Rancholabrean*

Hunters of the Mojave Lakes Country (Davis 1978b), published by the Los Angeles County Museum. Based on extensive surface reconnaissance and some subsurface excavations in a number of locations along the Pleistocene Lake China shoreline, Davis offered a rich, robust, and often creative assessment of early prehistory in the Desert West. Many of the conclusions were quite speculative, sometimes downright outrageous, and this important study was widely ignored by the scientific establishment.

China Lake even today gets only “dutifully” mentioned as one of (by now) many Mojave Desert localities that have produced cultural remains attributable to the late Pleistocene/early Holocene interval, but few details are offered regarding the specifics of the assemblages themselves, and even fewer attempts are made to compare data from China Lake with those from other key early sites. There are probably many reasons for this oversight, not the least of which are related to the often controversial claims Emma Lou Davis made regarding the sites and artifacts—that at least some of the deposits were on the order of 40,000 years old, that the Clovis culture had first emerged in Indian Wells Valley, and that she had established a direct association between people and Pleistocene megafauna. Archaeologists of the day were largely skeptical of such assertions, believing that most or all of the accumulations represented lag deposits of uncertain but mixed temporal affinity that developed over the course of an extended erosional process. The China Lake monograph was also overlooked because of the idiosyncratic way Davis provided much of the information, making it difficult to compare it directly with studies presented in a more traditional manner.

That Davis and much of the mainstream archaeological community had a “failure to communicate” is exemplified by a personal exchange she had with C. Vance Haynes, one of the premier geoarchaeologists of the day, while she was in the midst of her fieldwork. Responding to an earlier correspondence, Haynes wrote:

Dear Davey:

Your letter of November 6 is fabulous, but it’s obvious that our philosophical approaches are different. As I recall the situation, we called you over to see what I considered to be the midsection of a severely weathered Lake Mojave point of obsidian. Upon seeing it you said something on the order of, “Oh! That’s late.” Whereupon I said, “Well it may be nearly as old as the fluted points on China Lake.” When you

said they were young, too, I realized you meant in relation to your pre- and proto-Clovis assemblages. That's when I asked how you were going to convince me (I meant scientists as a whole) of a sequence without stratigraphic context. ... Well, Davey, I guess what I meant to ask was not how you were going to convince anyone, but what is the evidence for your preferred model? In the six years since I first visited your sites, I have heard your interpretation of “very early” pre-Clovis man, proto-Clovis, Western Fluted Co-Tradition, Lake China origin for Clovis, and now, that Clovis points are knives, not points. So I was expecting to see the evidence for these things. I did not. [Letter from C. Vance Haynes, University of Arizona, December 9, 1976].

Her response was as follows:

Dearest Vance:

You are my favorite Kumquat, spinner of a scientific fairy tale: The Clovis Conquest. Now, while we're playing Scientific Cops and Robbers (Stuffshirts and Freaks), I agree that our philosophies are different. You'll only accept a classic security—and “believe” the results. *I work with degrees of probability*—and don't “believe” anything. My Game is the fun of the search. Our difference is THAT OUR HEADS & PYSCHES ARE IN DIFFERENT PLACES. Let's say that you are a good Euclidean while I'm a non-Euclidean. My spaces are warped and my *parallel lines meet on the horizon so they have to curve*.... Let's keep it that way. Do you realize how valuable to free thought oppositions are? They help keep the field alive and healthy. There are no proofs for such opposites, only degrees of resolution. Like Voltaire, “I disagree with everything you say and would defend with my life your right to say it.” I need you Vance. You need me, too, I'm the cat I know of who learned how to crack the code of erosional archaeology—*recognize the clues to culture-bearing soils and trace them back underground*. Wow! [Letter from Emma Lou Davis, San Diego, December 21, 1976; emphasis in original].

But this only illustrates part of the story. For if Emma Lou Davis was sometimes prone to making less than demonstrable or scientifically verifiable claims about the meaning of what she found, her methods were more than “sound.” She was no Kurtz. I discovered this firsthand when given an opportunity to revisit her work and collections from the so-called “Stake Areas” at China Lake (Basgall 2005). Although the many maps published in *The Ancient Californians* are somewhat stylized simplifications and do not allow one to track the location of particular artifacts or fossil exposures, when we found the original plane-table drawings in the

Maturango Museum archives it was possible to do just that. The corners of her stake areas were marked with rebar datums, making it possible to re-inspect specific surfaces for cultural remains that were only recently exposed. All collected tools were given unique numbers that were carried through the mapping, cataloging, and curation phases. This allows today's archaeologist to reassess detailed spatial relationships among and between different artifact classes, or to characterize the nuances of lithic material profiles and technological patterns. Beyond that, reanalysis of the spatial arrangements makes it manifestly clear that many of her artifact clusters represent intact activity areas with associational integrity. These were not the jumbled lag accumulations assumed by many researchers on the basis of data in the published record. Emma Lou Davis had, in fact, achieved much of what she intended to do—describe and document variability in Paleoindian assemblages in the China Lake basin. Such careful attention to understanding relationships between archaeology, landscape, and erosional surfaces was also to characterize her work in Panamint Valley and other places. She was even to pioneer the use of balloons to provide effective high-altitude overviews of sites, features, and landforms. And remember that these close controls were achieved without the laser-assisted total mapping stations and camera-mounted drones we have today.

Emma Lou Davis may not be remembered for her ideas about the antiquity and lifeways of early Americans, and most of the claimed associations between humans and megafauna at China Lake were not supported by later work (there are still a handful of possibilities), but she will surely be heralded for the sophistication brought to documenting archaeological remains in fragile, complex surface deposits throughout much of the desert. The extensive collections she made at China Lake and elsewhere will continue to have important research value into the distant future—archaeologists should pay more attention to them.

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