

PREFACE

"Fortune seems to come to those who climb hills."

Cornelius Osgood
The Chinese

The Putu site is an early camp-site located on a knoll high above the Sagavanirktok River in Alaska's Brooks Range. The following is the initial report on that site.

The Putu site was discovered during archaeological survey of the Alaska Pipeline under contract between the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the University of Alaska. This contract was initiated in the early part of 1970 with John Cook and I co-directors of the project. During the summer of 1970, while Cook was at Healy Lake teaching the University's archaeological field school, I had overall field supervision of our survey crews, one of which, the crew based at the Galbraith Lake camp, was under my direct day-by-day supervision. I chose to direct the crew at this place due to its central location and because I had spent three field seasons surveying and excavating along the Atigun. At the end of the 1970 field season I left the University of Alaska to take up my appointment at Simon Fraser University and was no longer associated with the pipeline work. In 1973 a grant from the Canada Council (S72-2185) provided funds for further work in the Sagavanirktok and Atigun valleys, specifically to continue excavation of the Putu and Atigun sites.

The actual discovery of the Putu site resulted from a long chain of not necessarily linked events. Of the four areas of the pipeline route assigned survey crews, the Galbraith-Sagavanirktok area was

the only section where the pipeline route had not been definitely decided. While all other crews were restricted in their work to the relatively narrow right-of-way, my crew had to survey the whole valley floor of the Sagavanirktok which lay within the mountains. The next event might best be seen from my field diary of June 13. "We began work on the east side of the Sag, starting at the large crescent lake. I found two, possibly three tent rings on the north shore, center of the Lake. Jack [Morry] and Jane [Rice] checked terraces west of there to the river and Danny [Hugo] checked the knolls to the east. We met about one mile north for lunch and when Danny returned he pulled out some large, well made biface fragments. He found them on a pointed knoll about 600-700 feet above the valley floor." Danny Hugo, a Nunamiut from Anaktuvuk Pass had worked with me in 1961 and 1962. After having searched the lower terraces, he climbed a very high knoll which seemed to him an almost certain hunting location. What he discovered there was a typical surface to sub-surface chipping station with not at all typical lanceolate points, the points showed marked similarity to known Paleoindian types. This site was given the field number S-111, catalog designation S-13 and University catalog acquisition number 70-84. I named it the Bedwell Site (Alexander, 1974) in honor of the late Dr. Steve Bedwell whose hope to spend a season with me in the Arctic can now be honored in no other way.

After the survey portion of the contract was completed the Bedwell Site was considered among the more valuable sites, one that should be tested even though it seemed to be

in no direct danger from pipeline construction. The rationale presented to and accepted, somewhat reluctantly, by pipeline personnel was that the site was in such an obvious location that any artifact hunter working on the pipeline would be drawn to the site. We set up camp July 11 on a location which we named Crescent Lake, one mile south of the knoll, and started excavations the next day. Our work at the Bedwell site soon established that the site area covered most of the knoll top but the bare slopes below were devoid of artifacts. A single flake was, however, found while returning to camp on July 28. It had been exposed by a burrowing ground squirrel whose home was on a flat bench some 300 feet south of the knoll top and 100 feet lower in elevation. The day had been long so I placed the flake on top of the burrow for ease of relocating the next day when more realistic time and energy could be devoted to further search. The next day Danny and I returned to the flat bench and there made simultaneous discoveries. As I held up the relocated flake he held up the base of a fluted point. Those two artifacts comprise the only surface discoveries from the Putu site during our two seasons work there. The site was called Putu, Danny's Nunamiut nickname, in that he had made the discovery that drew us to the area, and appropriate for an archaeological site as his name translates as "Hole."

The pressure of time and season, and our rather tentative position at the site clearly outside the pipeline route dictated a strategy of gaining the greatest amount of information possible in the briefest amount of time. The tactic dictated was to lay a series of

adjacent squares touching at corners. This gave a checkerboard pattern which covered more area and provided more profiles than a simple straight trench.

Analysis of the artifact locations from the 1970 test indicated that the main concentration of artifacts was at the western extreme of the test and that the greater part of the site probably lay beyond that. Our work in 1973 confirmed this analysis. Where the original test uncovered slightly less than 500 artifacts the 1973 excavation gave us the proveniences for over 6,000 artifacts.

It is normally a pleasant, though never easy task to compose the proper acknowledgements due the various people and organizations for their contributions to a project. Each has made their particular addition, some more so than others. Writing these acknowledgements, however, has been a particularly lonely task. While editing the final draft of this manuscript I was informed that my chief assistant, Vicky Grafstrom Leveaux and her young son had lost their lives in a tragic accident. My debt due to this brilliant young woman goes much beyond thanks for the three seasons we spent in the Arctic, during the first season she saved my son and I from drowning. We will all miss her.

Much of the credit for the success of that season's work is due my excellent crew. While all of them had one or more seasons excavation experience, only my chief assistant, Victoria Grafstrom, had any previous experience with the demands of Arctic work. One measure of those demands is that in the course of our daily hikes from valley floor camp to the site some 800 feet above, the accumulated

elevation gained just exceeds climbing Mr. Everest, starting at sea level. For their work that summer I would like to thank Neil Alexander, Charles Arnold, Diane Arnold, Victoria Grafstrom, Brian Seymour, Jean Williams, Ian Wilson, Pamela Wilson, and Henning Von Krogh. Thanks are also due Richard McIntyre and Mickey Van Hatten of the Frontier Flying Service in Fairbanks for taking such admirable care of our flying and general logistic needs. For their skill

and tenacity at the often dull laboratory work, whether cataloging, deciphering mosquito stained field notes or piecing together flakes, my thanks go to Susan Irvine, Linda Sears, and Marc Stevenson. Thanks are due Dr. Robert Stuckenrath of the Smithsonian Radiation Biology Laboratory for his help in dating the site.

Finally I would like to express my appreciation and thanks for Canada Council's generous support of this project.