

BLACK LUNG BASH AT LAGUNA 011004

At dawn our picks and assorted hand tools broke the wall at the Laguna dig site, and strained choking erupted almost in unison as fellow diggers Mike Walkden, Marc Walkden, Bill Thompson and I inhaled our first breaths of dust. Dust masks and goggles were the way to go to mitigate the effects of the fine dust and ash from campfires long ago. One problem – in the cold Texas morning, breathing into a dust mask fogged my glasses. So while the smarter guys wore masks, I choked my way through the day.

We got to hand dig for an hour or so before the backhoe dig began. Mike and Marc had thought ahead and constructed framed screens for hand digging. As they picked and clawed at the excavated walls, chunks of burned midden rock, soil, and flint simply fell onto their screens supported by their knees. An occasional shake sifted all the dirt through, leaving rocks, flint flakes, and occasional artifacts. These guys each pulled 2-3 good pieces this way, and Bill did as well, even without the benefit of a screen. Marc landed a nice Gower point, with eloquently long base barbs. I, on the other hand, demonstrated how dodge paydirt.

Around 8:30, Bob McWilliams fired up the backhoe, and soon we were in business, or at least Mike was. The boy was hot! I think he scored 6-8 perfect or nearly perfect points before any of the rest of us had much of anything. Because of his uncanny good luck, the rest of us imposed a rotation drill, moving clockwise to the next corner position at the screen table after each load of dirt. The points followed Mike, and at one point he pulled a nice Marco and another point from the same swipe of dirt within 20 seconds. This nonsense continued until lunchtime. Mike picked up a few more later in the day, and finished out with the most points in our group.



FIGURES 1 AND 2 : Mike Walkden and his Points

It was Bill's first time out with the TAAA, and he had set himself the ridiculously optimistic goal of 12 perfect points. This was all tongue-in-cheek, of course, but he came reasonably close to his goal. Throughout the afternoon, he yanked 7 or 8 good ones from the dirt, including a very nice Angostura 6000+ years old and valued at around \$250. Not a bad start!



FIGURE 3 : Bill Thompson's Better Points, Including a Coveted Angostura (lower left)

Bob was taking care of business at lunchtime, and while others made this a time of respite, I capitalized on this opportunity in a big way. I hand dug through lunch, and spotted a large, flat rock in the wall that looked out of place. Removing dirt gingerly with my digging tool, I was able to extricate the rock within a few minutes. Flipping it over, one of my dreams was instantly fulfilled. I had finally laid hands on a large *metate*, or grinding stone, with a large concave depression in the middle. This thing is about 16 inches long and not all that common. Much more common are the *manos*, or hand held, rounded stones used in conjunction with the *metate*. Our group laid hands on a number of *manos* as well as spherical game stones throughout the day. See photo below for a look at this coveted *metate*.



FIGURE 4 : Dan's Mano and Metate



FIGURE 5 : Dan's Drill, Travis Point (tan, left of center, bottom row), 2 Unidentified Points, and Intact Tools



FIGURE 6 : Dan's Broken Bases and Tips

Although Marc had found a number of points while hand digging, he wasn't quite satisfied with his luck at the screen table. As a matter of fact, things got a little quiet from his end as the other guys kept yanking museum pieces from the dirt. Finally Marc got a nice point, then I found a couple keepers, including one that had broken at the base, then been renotched. Dusk approached and Bob had already given us 8 hours on the screens, but he still gave us the magnanimous gift of 2 more loads of dirt and ½ hour of sifting time "on the house". On the last screen as it was getting dark, I lifted a very nice drill and got a little too giddy showing it off. In the accompanying photo, I think my dirty face and white teeth say it all.



FIGURE 7: "Coal Miner" Hits Paydirt with this Nice Drill

In essence I ignored my station at the screen, which Marc dutifully looked over, lifting a delicately flaked, perfect 3 inch point from right next to my drill. Lesson learned! I could have had a double header! When I suggested that the point would be a great addition to my collection, especially since it came from my spot, Marc's face said it all. He'd rather cut my throat with that point than give it up! His finds are shown in the ensuing photos.



FIGURES 8, 9, and 10 : Marc Walkden, his Points, and the one that got away from Dan!

I couldn't have asked for a better crew to spend time with afield. Artifacts were pretty abundant by day's end, Bob and Ike set a

positive tone for the day, offbeat humor was exchanged, and a manly good time was had by all.