



MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 6, 2012
TO: FILE
FROM: Don Southworth
SUBJ: National Geographic Channel: "Diggers"

Last week, I spent by time with the film crew from Half Yard Productions, who were filming episodes of the television show "Diggers" for the National Geographic Channel. I arrived late Monday afternoon in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, and met Cory Adcock-Camp, the Associate Producer. We spoke for a while and then went to dinner with the crew before going to the field for night shoot.

During the night shoot, I got to speak with Kate Culpepper, Archaeology Associate Producer. This was her first week with the crew. She told me that she has an undergraduate degree in archaeology. As part of this evening filming, I was able to observe the procedures followed when an artifact was found and uncovered.

As this project is a TV show about metal detectors, the two "Diggers", Tim Saylor and George Wyant, would make a find and then, using hand shovels, uncover the object. This activity was of course film, usually with sever takes and re-takes. If Kate was not immediately available to record the find, it was flagged with a red pin flag. After the segment was complete, Kate would lay a white piece of cloth on the ground, generally over the hole on which the artifact was laid along with a photo scale. In addition, she would prepare a pre-numbered card with information about the artifact and lay it next to the artifact. A photograph was then taken with a camera that records the GPS data. The GPS location, along with the time and date, were printed on the digital photo record. After placing the numbered card and artifact in a plastic bag, she would record the depth at which the artifact was found. Later, usually at night, Kate would weigh and measure the artifact. All of the information was placed on a computer catalogue. One copy will be kept by the Production company and a copy sent to the institution or museum receiving the artifact. Thus, I far as I could tell all standard archaeological procedures were followed in the same manner that our profession would require.

While the show is about the excitement of discovery, it did not place any emphasis on the monetary value of the artifacts. Instead the emphasis was on the "historic value" and "museum quality" of the artifacts discovered by the detectors, as well as having permission for detecting on

private property. The producers also emphasized cooperation between the land owner, the museum, and the Diggers. The crew showed the detectors working with the land owner, museum, or institution to find objects that would help them interpret the site for the public. Thus, education and the information that the artifact could impart was the focus of the show.

Generally, I believe that Half Yard Productions, the National Geographic Channel, as well as Mr. Saylor and Mr. Wyant, are trying to show a side of metal detecting that can be fun while doing little damage to the archaeology. The public has an obvious interest in this type of show and in metal detecting specifically. The show attempts to keep it within the legal bounds and at the same time work with the archaeological community. Other shows have shown us the dark side of this issue. As archaeologists, it is our job to recover the past and educate the present. I believe that the efforts of Half Yard Productions and the National Geographic Channel deserve the cooperation and support of the professional community and organizations.