

Fellow Archeologist: Greetings,

We need your advice in formulating our proposal for an extensive research program in the Mojave Desert. This is an all-out, interdisciplinary effort in Geoaicheology and Anthropology. It examines PaleoIndian adaptations to environmental changes in a California lake valley of the Great Basin (Intermontane aridlands of the Western United States). In this small space is a unique opportunity to examine a number of anthropological and natural relationships having broad public appeal as well as sound scientific value.

This letter seeks your counsel--suggestions, criticism, advice in funding. No work of this scope and catholic interests has ever been undertaken in the Western Deserts. It requires talent and organization (which we supply) and money. It will pursue a funding campaign for the forthcoming proposals.

About three years of time and \$1,500,000 will flow through the Panamint Project before it produces a series (and Summary) of reports which will add to the field of useful human knowledge a wealth of information about relationships that have so far been overlooked. These are: correlation of stratified Paleo sites; climatic cycles; geomorphology, and human responses. Cognitive anthropology of the adaptations is inscribed in groups of huge rock alignments. When studied by remote sensing those geoscripts may prove to be a Rosetta stone. Application of cryptography and ethnographic information indicates paths for their decoding.

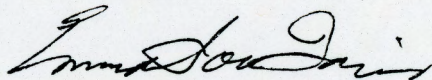
I hope to visit with you soon to discuss the proposal. Perhaps you can help me to meet with other interested parties at the same time.

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Since the Bureau of Land Management is releasing California Deserts for destruction by ORV's and strip miners, this work is urgent.

Please become involved and join us by thinking and replying.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "E. L. Davis".

E. L. Davis, Ph.D.
President
Great Basin Foundation

ELD:ik

GEOARCHEOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE ANTHROPOLOGY
OF A PALEOINDIAN AREA

(This outline for grant proposals needs your comments)

Studies of human prehistory in the Americas lag far behind the massive studies of the Old World. Our knowledge of the Libya Desert is extensive yet information on Great Basin Deserts in the Western U.S. is meager. For the first time we are presented with an opportunity to fill in these gaps.

The history of archeological and environmental investigations in the Great Basin has been one of isolated events, limited work scope, and uncorrelated application of results. The work we propose will provide a regional model widely applicable to desert geoarcheological investigations (see attached figure). We have, therefore, outlined a program that will create a framework within which to assess past, current and future studies in the Great Basin, thereby developing a theoretical base for desert research.

The program we have designed has two fundamental requirements. The first is to find an area that is representative of the Great Basin, rich in content, yet practical in scope. We have worked and published for 15 years in the California Desert and find that a unique area for modeling is the north basin of Panamint Valley (see attached figure). This basin contains two known PaleoIndian sites adjacent to a Pleistocene lake (playa) (see figure). One of these sites, Iny-19, is interstratified with carbonaceous bog sediments containing three organic mats. A radiocarbon date of $10,020 \pm 120$ years B.P., on the middle organic mat, has been obtained from U.C.L.A. [1989].

The choice of the North Panamint Basin was also conditioned by its inclusion within the California Desert Conservation Area, soon to be opened for multi-purpose use by the Secretary of the Interior.

The second requirement is to assemble a team of investigators composed of specialists in earth, biological and anthropological sciences, plus associated technical/support personnel. It is only through interdisciplinary study that we can relate human responses with the environmental problems which engendered them. Since working in the desert southwest presents its own brand of difficulties we have selected persons whose experience complements the special characteristics of our project and project area. One of the attached figures outlines the scope of work.

The context of the project offers a rare opportunity to study two aspects of PaleoIndian life: adaptive and cognitive.

This is the first research program in the California Desert that will excavate two (dated) stratified Paleo Indian sites and relate them to a series of drastic environmental changes at the Pleistocene/Holocene boundary.

Aerial photography and mapping will record a series of nearby ground figures, providing a unique information base for cognitive studies of hunting/gathering peoples. Some of these ground figures appear to relate archaeologically to one of the PaleoIndian sites.

The program itself will consist of subsurface excavation of the area of interface between lake shore, lake marsh environments. Trenches will be emplaced for the use of specialists who will sample and report on: molluscs, pollen, plant macrofossils, geomorphology, clay lithology, lacustrine sediments, terrestrial soils and faunal remains. These lines of investigation will provide different but

coalescing views of the fluctuating environment: source, amount, seasonality and quality of water; temperature; plant communities; presence of waterfowl; presence/absence of terrestrial fauna. A sample of Iny-19 will be excavated to recover material representing the articulation of man with his environment.

Concurrently, aerial photography and ground reconnaissance will explore the catchment area for the Iny-19 and Iny-20 sites to establish the connection between these sites and the rich inventory of stone alignments and ground figures known from the area (see attached figure). Groups occupying the Great Basin were subjected to catastrophic changes as lakes and supporting marshes dried. Aboriginal groups subject to such stress, over which they have no control, will turn toward the supernatural or mythical realm to gain such control, e.g., the Ghost Dance of the Plains Indians, the Cargo Cults of the New Hebrides, and the Rain Dance (with serpents) of the Hopi Indians. We therefore are in a unique position to address the cognitive response of Pleistocene man in the Great Basin through an interpretation of his iconography within an environmental context.

In sum, this project studies the anthropology of two interweaving kinds of human adaptations--economic and symbolic. Each system was essential to PaleoAmerican populations who were under stress from environmental cycles of change that were both rapid and catastrophic.

The lake sediments contain the delicate record of the environmental change, the campsites contain the record of the economic adaptations, and the fans contain the record of the symbolic response.

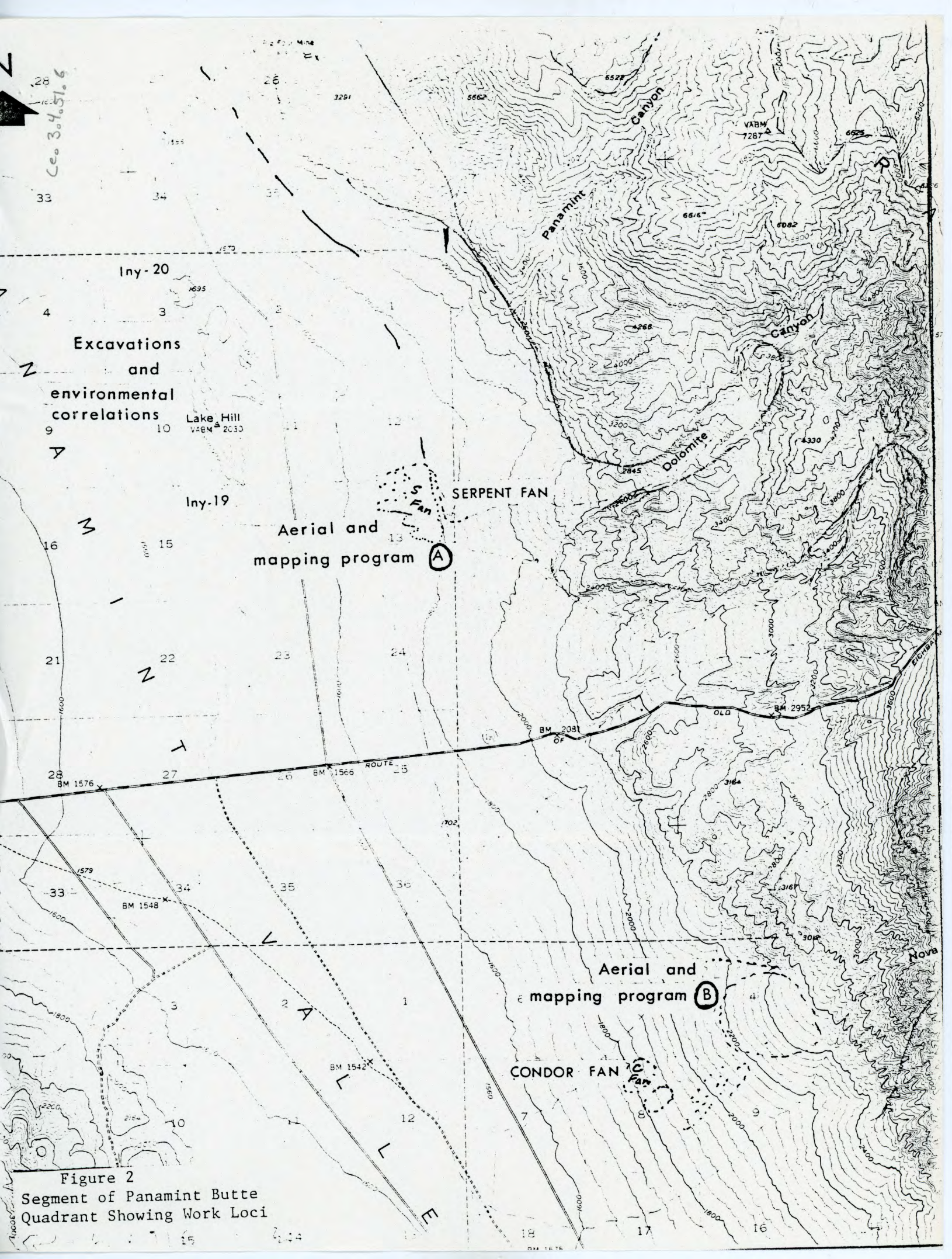


Figure 2
 Segment of Panamint Butte
 Quadrant Showing Work Loci

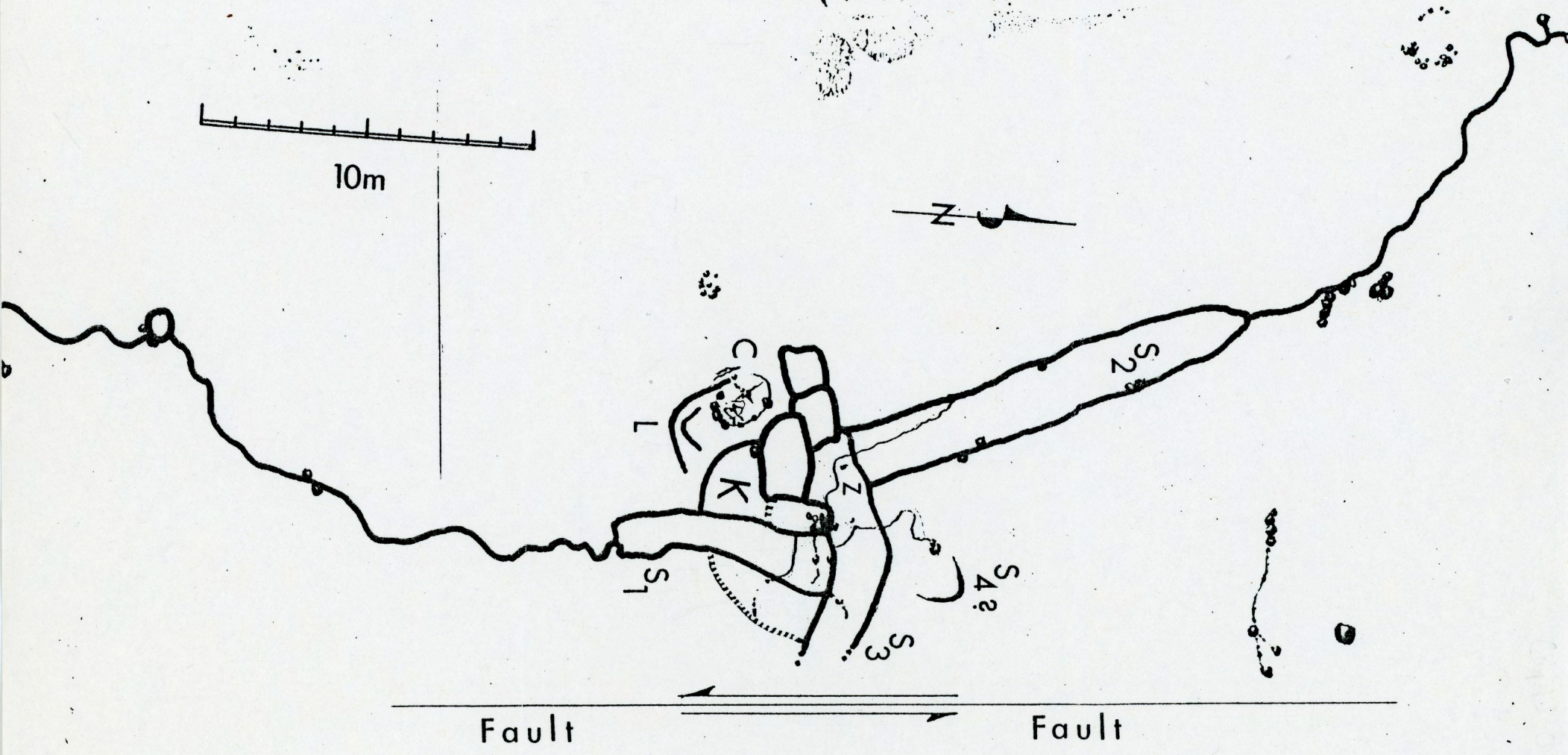


Figure 3
 Panamint ground inscriptions: Three Serpents group,
 a study in cognitive anthropology

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