

Jennifer's Letter

BY KAY LEE

As treasurer of the Site Watch Foundation, I collect mail from our post office box weekly. The mail usually consists of invoices, and hopefully memberships and contributions. One day, a box arrived from Jennifer, in California, with no last name or return address. I opened the box; a framed paint-by-numbers horse painting showed through a layer of bubble wrap. I thought, "What a strange auction donation." When I turned the painting over, I was surprised to find several pottery sherds glued to the back. Under the packing material I found an envelope with a \$100 bill and this letter:

Dear Ms. Lee,

Many years ago I collected these pottery sherds from the Paa-ko Pueblo ruin. I was told it was okay because archeologists had already been through there, and that these surface sherds were dug up by animals so all placement information was lost anyway. These pieces have been a source of inspiration for me, but they have also been a source of guilt. I have always loved them, but I knew I should not have taken them. I am sorry, that was very disrespectful of me.

I have wondered for years what to do with them, and have finally decided to return them to your organization. Perhaps it is possible to return them to the ruin, or maybe display them as a warning to others. I will leave it you to decide.

Please accept this small donation. It does not make up for what I did, but I want to support your good work. Many thanks to you and all of the good people in your organization.

My most sincere apologies,



Cultural repatriation is the technical term for Jennifer's act of returning the sherds. Although she initially made a mistake, she finally did do the right thing. There is a lesson here for all of us who have been tempted to pick up an artifact and put it in our pocket: Do the right thing. Leave it in place. UNM, SAR, and the Museum of New Mexico each has an undivided interest in the Paa-Ko Pueblo site. The artifacts now reside at the Center for New Mexico Archaeology in Santa Fe. ■

Editor's note: Read more on cultural repatriation in "Guilty Boxes," by Dody Fugate, *El Palacio* 118, 3 (fall 2013), elpalacio.org/articles/fall13/guilty.pdf.

The mission of the Site Steward Foundation is to generate and manage resources to support conservation, preservation, monitoring, education, and research in connection with archaeological, historical, and cultural resources in New Mexico. The foundation maintains relationships with organizations, including the Santa Fe National Forest Site Steward Program, the New Mexico Site Watch Program, and other organizations with similar goals and interests. For more information, visit sitestewardfoundation.org.



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LEGENDS AND THE LATEST TALENT STILL THRIVE IN TAOS

The wild landscape and undeniable free spirit of Taos have inspired and transformed some of America's most artistic minds for over a century. Georgia O'Keeffe, D.H. Lawrence and Ansel Adams are just a few of the artistic luminaries who found inspiration here. Today, those same factors continue to inspire.

The art, music and literary communities thrive in Taos and with events and performances happening nearly every day spring through fall, the Taos arts calendar offers endless options to suit every interest and style.

SPRING –

Experience the new traveling exhibition, **Mabel Dodge Luhan & Company: American Moderns and the West**. The exhibit will feature over 150 works of art from Georgia O'Keeffe, Paul Strand and more. Join in the **Taos Poetry Festival** this June, with workshops and StorySLAM hosted at Taos Mesa Brewing.

SUMMER –

July 8-10th marks the return of the **Taos Pueblo Pow Wow**. The 31st annual gathering of Indian Nations at the Pueblo will feature traditional dance competition and other tribal events.

Later in July, embrace the rich, Spanish traditions of Taos at the annual **Las Fiestas de Taos**.

In August, the annual self-guided Taos **Home and Garden Tour** hosted by the Los Jardineros Garden Club coincides with an event honoring legendary southwestern writer Frank Waters as well as the **"Visionaries in Clay"** exhibit, an exhibition of Taos Pueblo pottery both past and present.

FALL –

Say goodbye to summer by joining us for one of the town's and region's most engaging events: **The Paseo**. Starting September 23, the festival will feature installation, projection and performance arts on the streets of Taos. The Paseo has quickly become a favorite event for locals and visitors alike.

And as the weather cools, come experience the **Taos Wool Festival**, an annual regional wool market and demonstration event featuring wool, fiber, yarn and other creations. Plus, the **Taos Mountain Balloon Rally** is a not-to-miss event.

taos.org

