

Region

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Seeking Shacknasty Jim's Camp

Fire uncovers area Cheewa James scoured Lava Beds to discover

By **LEE JUILLERAT**
H&N Regional Editor

LAVA BEDS — For years Cheewa James scoured Captain Jack's Stronghold, always searching for the place where her ancestors stayed during the months of battles of the 1872-73 Modoc War.

The site, known as Shacknasty Jim's Camp, has added significance because it's probably where her grandfather, Clark James, was born.

James, 71, spent the summers of 1979 and 1980 as a seasonal park ranger at Lava Beds National Monument, leading Stronghold tours three days a week.

"Every time I came here, I wondered where my relatives lived," she said during a recent Stronghold tour, this time as a tourist. "I have no idea where. Every time I go into a cave, I wonder if it's theirs."

Over the years, life's happenings have taken James away from the Lava Beds and the Klamath Basin. She lives in Sacramento, although she made frequent Basin visits while writing her book, "Modoc, The Tribe That Wouldn't Die."

During a visit two weeks ago built around a public talk at the Shaw Historical Library's annual banquet at Oregon Institute of Technology, James also visited the Stronghold. She was part of a tour led by Jacqueline Cheung and Eric Gleason, National Park Service archeologists from Vancouver, Wash.

An August 2008 fire burned 6,000 acres in the park, including the Stronghold. Since then, Gleason and Cheung have periodically spent several weeks or longer investigating the Stronghold for war-related archeological sites.

The lightning-caused

fire burned away vegetation that exposed long-unseen areas. Until 2008, previous investigations had uncovered 200 features. Thanks to Gleason and Cheung, the total now exceeds 870. Some are easily visible, while oth-

ers are subtle. Many were built as part of the Modoc's complex defense system, while others were erected by Army troops who occupied the Stronghold after the Modocs departed. Up to 300

The ghost of Captain Jack?

Cheewa James has special memories of Captain Jack's Cave, where the Modoc leader and his family lived during the fighting at Captain Jack's Stronghold during the 1872-73 Modoc War.

James, who was a seasonal park ranger at Lava Beds National Monument in 1979 and 1980, lived at the park with her family.

During one of her ranger-guided tours, she was telling enraptured visitors about Jack, the cave and the war when loud groaning sounds erupted from the cave.

"And all of a sudden — I'm serious — I was six feet up in the air. The visitors scattered, and two of them we never found," she remembers. "I thought, 'This is ridiculous. I don't believe in ghosts.'"

James went into the cave. What she found wasn't the ghost of Captain Jack. It was her son, Todd.



troops remained in the natural fortress, where they built fortifications and established outposts in case the Modocs attempted to return.

Gleason and Cheung showed James and others rock walls where troops pitched tents, a rock enclosure that may have been used for cooking and outposts within viewing range of each other so soldiers could use signal flags to communicate.

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H&N photos
by Lee Juillerat

Cheewa James rests and thinks about her ancestors at Shack-nasty Jim's Camp, where her grandfather, Clark James, was born. The site was recently found by a pair of National Park Service archeologists.

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The archeologists used historic 3-D photos to verify site's import

"Why didn't the fire start a year earlier?" James wondered aloud while hiking around the lava-strewn Stronghold, seeing war sites she and others had never previously noticed. "I could have had this information in my book."

She also lamented not taking notes during a hike with Erin Waters, a noted geologist who conducted some of the previous Stronghold studies. Waters led James on the escape route the Modocs used to exit the Stronghold.

But Gleason and Cheung, who had been

informed about James' visit, provided her with unexpected new information. Taking a short detour from the Stronghold's long trail, they led her to an open area surrounded by natural rock barriers. The two had discovered the area during their studies and used historic 3-D photos to verify its significance.

Without fanfare, they let James compare the scene in front of her with the matching 3-D image. The area is "Shacknasty Jim's Camp."

"Stunned. I still can't believe it. I thought they were kidding me," James

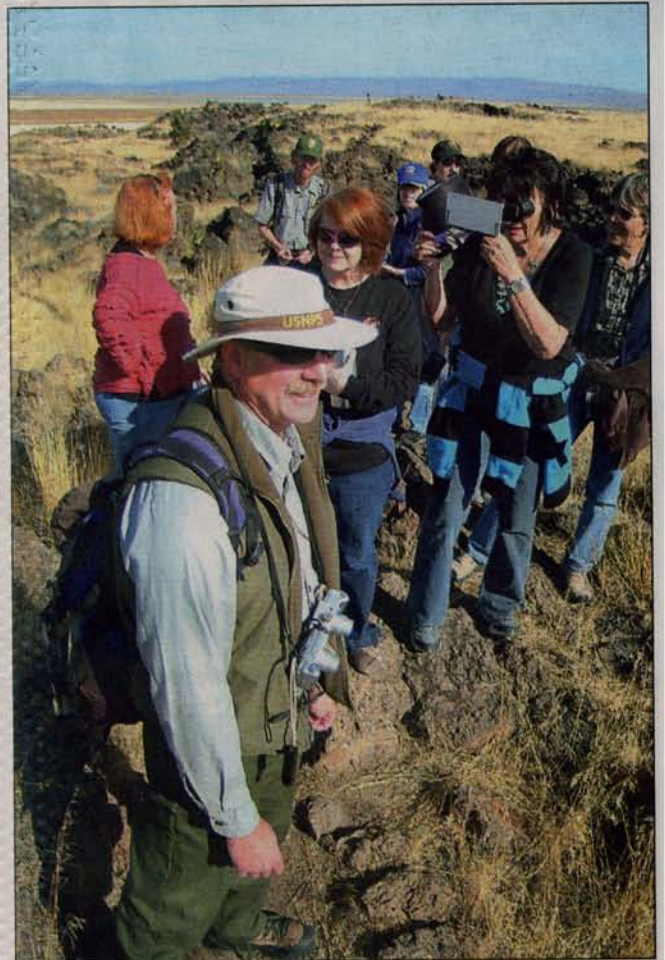
said later. "Then I looked at their faces, and their faces said, 'This is real and this is for you.'"

She's already planning a return visit with her sons

and other family members.

"To look at that and realize that's where they lived," James said. "Well, here's to you folks."

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Cheewa James views a historic 3-D photo while archeologist Eric Gleason explains findings in Captain Jack's Stronghold.