

The Journal of Vermont Archaeology

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Victor R. Rolando, Editor

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Thirty Years “at the Helm” in Montpelier

This year marks 30 years that Giovanna Peebles has been the Vermont State Archaeologist, and the VAS takes note of this significant milestone in Vermont archeology by dedicating this year’s issue of the Journal to her. Fresh out of college the summer of 1976, Giovanna beat out many other highly qualified contenders for a position that was created by the Vermont Historic Preservation Act of 1975, which called for an archaeologist to be part of the Division for Historic Preservation.

“One would expect a state archaeologist to be distinguished, definitely bookish, and perhaps with a pith helmet” was how the *Burlington Free Press* opened an interview with her in November 29, 1976 - four months after being ‘on-station.’ And then continued “But Vermont’s state archaeologist...is an attractive 25-year-old with long blond hair and blue eyes. She could fit the description of another, chauvinistic stereotype if conversation with her didn’t send all preconceptions out her fourth-floor window in the Pavilion Building.” During the course of that interview, Giovanna said “I’ll never quit this job.” And true to her word she



Giovanna M. Peebles
Vermont State Archeologist

hasn’t - witness her still on the job 30 years later.

One of Giovanna’s favorite ‘road shows’ is a slide program, variously titled ‘great discoveries in Vermont archaeology’ in which she describes artifacts, archeology sites, how they were found, and why they’re so important to our understanding Vermont’s rich and ancient heritage. The title and content of her program shifts and changes with time and focus, but we have to wonder if one of the great discoveries in Vermont archaeology isn’t Giovanna herself, running an office that is always too small, and dealing with challenges that always seem (at least to us) too expansive.

Mother of four, wife, and very involved in family, “Gio” (as we have come to know her) is still 110% the state’s standard bearer for archeology. Never one to shy from controversy, in 1980 she published *Vermont’s Stone Chambers*, but remains accessible to all sides of any issue

She just recently succeeded in creating the Vermont Archeology Heritage Center, which provides long-term storage space for the

return of all of the state’s valuable artifacts. Yet she is still nowhere near retiring, so what’s next for this little ball of pure energy?

Some of her peers and friends recently had this to say of her 30th anniversary:

David Lacy, U.S. Forest Service archeologist: “It is the rare initiative, event, policy, or system in Vermont archaeology that does not bear the mark of Giovanna’s energy, vision and commitment in some way. From DHP regulations and policy, inter-agency collaboration, and Abenaki advocacy, to outreach activities, development of data management systems, peer support, and commitment to responsible curation, she has always been there. And from Lake Champlain to across the peaks of the Green Mountains and into the wide Connecticut River valley, and from the Northeast Kingdom to Pownal, significant sites representing Vermont’s rich heritage have been discovered, evaluated and protected as a result of her 30 years of stewardship.”

Congratulations, Gio!

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Front cover photo: *The final day of digging at the main excavation block at The Arbor Gardens Site in Colchester, Vermont (see article, pages on 1-19). Shown is the main excavation block at Activity Area 1 where a majority of the excavation took place, and where several tools were found. The archeologists were also able to map several different smaller activity areas that are seen in the photo with all the different lithic distributions (photo by: ??????????????).*