IS Avery Island a cradle of civilization?
A salt-mining complex in the coastal marshes of south-central Louisiana, Avery Island has a diameter of approximately 2 miles. Its hilly terrain is created by an assortment of gullies, slopes and ponds. But below that surface lurks mysteries of time in the form of objects the ages of which are beyond guesswork.
Thus in January, 1962, the Coastal Studies Institute of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, with assistance from Avery Island, Inc., embarked on the task of determining the ages and significance of these objects. Excavations and further research confirmed earlier reports of the fossil nature of some objects, with CSI noting that man may have inhabited the island for "at least 10,000 years." Operations of the International Salt Company suggested a need for more research, and CSI followed up with its report, "Occupation Sequence at Avery Island," stressing significance of fossils and artifacts found there.

Excavations from early 1968 through mid-1970 turned up teeth from the extinct mastodon, a gigantic elephant-like creature, and the prehistoric horse. These indicated that horses

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avery island...
key to yesterday?

by Ronald Bossier

Pictured directly above is a pottery specimen put back together by the Coastal Studies Institute of Louisiana State University. In right photo, Dr. Sherwood Gagliano, LSU archaeologist, points out possible specimen. Aide Monty Walden looks on.
behind. The real replacement is being in the noise and dust of a pack of riders; handle bar to handle bar and fighting for position."

Local riders admit that they are no match for the Motocross racers of Europe. Factory teams sponsored by motorcycle manufacturers in Italy, Germany, and France frequently make tours of American racing centers and win easily. "We're still at the point of trying to master the sport," says advertising salesman Rodney Logan, who races at tracks throughout the States. For Europeans, Motocross is a national pastime and kids start training at an early age. Races occur every day, just like football games. Because there is so much noise, you have to be in top physical shape to make it. Locally, we are trying to build up to a 30 minute race, but at the moment we average only about 7 minutes. Races in Europe last as long as 30 minutes and that requires incredible stamina.

RACING at the Bridge City track takes place only once a week and those few riders who travel to other states to keep in practice, are sure to find a steady supply of practice in Europe competition, such as the kind held at Chipola in St. Helena Parish. Several hundred miles of motorcycle trails have been roughly gouged out of the timber and red clay country around Chipola and riders camp overnight in order to spend weekends slaughtering and bawling over the muddy, rocky woodland courses. As many as 200 cyclists ride in the Enduro, leaving the starting line in pairs at two-second intervals, competing with the terrain rather than each other.

Because European riders are lower paced than Motocross racers, they have begun to attract some participants, causing occasional embarrassment for some self-styled "race junkies."

The dust that was invisible with the Chipola natural track is more noticeable on the track I've ever seen," he growled in astonishment.

The other rider pulled off a crash helmet, leaving a trace of blood, but not much more to think about. "Oh," he gaped the mirror. "I'm sorry I said that." "Don't be," she reassured him. "I agree with every word you said.

WHILE local Motocross riders are trying to build up their endurance for a 90-minute race, the Bridge City track is being roughed up each week. A bulldozer works at deepening ruts, sand has been added to make the course treacherous, and the riders have been unseated.

"It's a continuing process of unreasoning," grinds one rider.

Some weeks they breach dust and chew grit, some weeks they play through mud. And someday, they hope that American Motocross racers will be a match for the best of Europe.

Dr. Gagliano feels the island's rugged terrain is so unique that ancient artifacts should be found there. "Streams cut across the valley about 12,000 years ago," he says, "carrying erodable materials," says Gagliano. "Streams put into the ground, striking salt deposits near a stream."

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