CIRCLE
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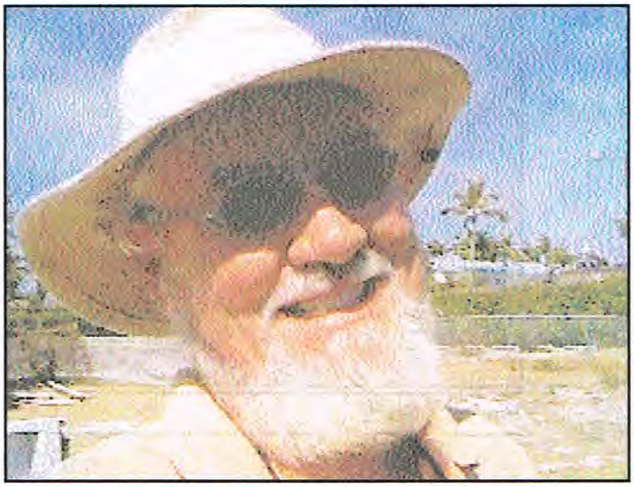
few feet away from our test pits, with the Jamaican bridge tender on the Brickell Point Bridge frantically yelling over the loudspeakers at the office people crossing the bridge on foot, "Comonnow, Comeonnnn, hurry up! Yes, that's you, lady, comeonnn, or I'ma gonna start opening this bridge, that boat ain't gonna stop for you…" A giant bronze Tequesta Indian and his family created by an Italian sculptor occupied a pier of the bridge. The Indian had his drawn bow and arrow raised toward the heavens, and sometimes one of the resident ospreys would perch on the shaft of the arrow looking down for fish in the river below.

One of the people volunteering time had come up with a theory, not necessarily supported by data we were finding, that the Circle was created by the Mayas and that it was a South Florida Stonehenge, oriented to the Sun and Planets, Solstice, and Equinox. The effect on the public was as if one of us had stood up in the test pit and started yelling to the multitudes crossing the Bridge, "We've found Gold!!!" There was a media frenzy and then there was a "people" frenzy. We were on the news nightly; a tall chain link fence was erected around the site to protect it; hundreds of people started a carnival just outside the site, waving signs, chanting, performing cleansing ceremonies, and leaving offerings at the fence. Some of the offerings were commonplace, amulets, photographs, requests to the spirits of the site for help or enlightenment, some – like the pair of red satin woman's underpants filled with a "certain substance" — simply unspeakable. Other theorists arrived telling us (and the media) extraterrestrials built the site and that it was a portal to new universes or that it was a hurricane generator, or, simply (á la Steven King) we would be sorry we uncovered it…

This was the only time in my life I felt like a "rock star" with "five minutes of fame" every time the security guard would recognize me and let me in past the throngs clambering to be let in to worship or commune with the spirits in the "holy place." Media frenzies tend to subside, become "history," and so did this, but there was always a certain "Dread" present while I worked at the Miami Circle.

Yes, his name was Dread, probably for his long dreadlocks. He was from the British Virgin Islands and had soft lilting English – a "Hey, Mon, well-met" sort of guy. He also had a humorous, expressive face, looked a little scruffy, and because he was homeless, slept in the vestibule of the entrance to the space under the bridge where we kept the equipment.

At the start of each day we would step over Dread sleeping in the doorway to get our tools. We always made some appropriate greeting noise as Dread slept clutching razor blades to defend himself. Dread's grocery cart piled high with his stuff reposed next to him. Dread watched life pass him by with amusement and was the informal guardian of the Circle. Dread came and went, had a dog for a few days, struck a bonanza of discarded computers which he found he couldn't operate without electric power. He read the Bible, and, as far as I could tell, lived by its tenets. He caught blue crabs in the river, sometimes making upwards of a hundred dollars a day selling them to a local restaurant. He hunted and gathered, got wet when it rained and lived the life of a prehistoric Indian on the banks of the Miami River.



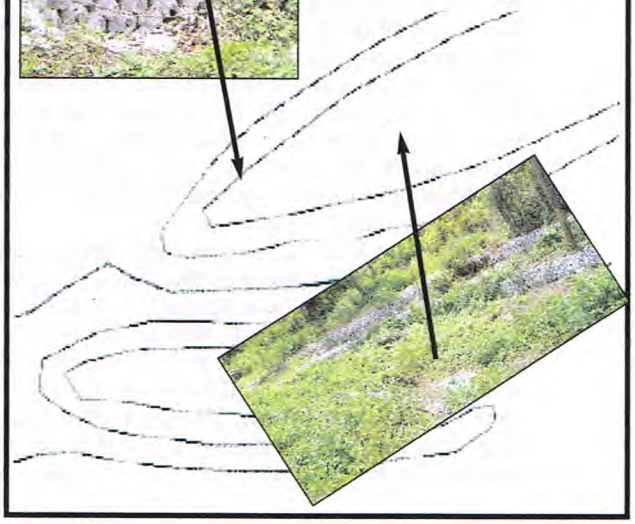
John Beriault, the reluctant "rock star."

We find the sites that were once holy, places of awe, places of power. Significance comes and goes, waxes and wanes. But we make the significance by living lives of simplicity or complexity – and by the chance that comes with living. Archaeology is interconnection, past and present, and the carnival arrives and goes, as we do ourselves, by, as in my case, traveling from site to site and from one fellow human to the next…

Otter Mound

...Continuing my fascination with the whelk-lined terraces at Otter Mound, I've hijacked a section of the Craighead Lab report on the project to relate the August photos to the map.

- KN



Geology Rules: Alligator Bowling Alley

By Jack Harvey

Indian Hill Road

South Florida is a land of superlatives: Enchanting weather, snow-white beaches, glorious sunshine, fascinating animals, abundant fishing, lush forests, spectacular beauty, world-class sports, terrible storms and soaring real estate prices. Aboriginals found it, built the Calusa Empire and the rest is historic.

All these gorgeous features of South Florida are loudly trumpeted far and wide, but there is one superlative thing about this land that is practically inaudible – its extreme flatness. No one seems to notice that just about every bit of high ground is man-made. In between the Calusa shell mounds and Interstate highway overpasses, the land is so flat that water hardly flows. It's so flat that some roads are deliberately graded into long saw teeth to get drainage.

Compared to South Florida, the Great Plains of Kansas and Nebraska are positively hilly. Our flat land produces *sheet flow* where rainwater travels to the ocean in thin sheets many miles wide instead of in gullies, streams and rivers. Marjory Stoneman Douglas explained this in her book, *The Everglades, River of Grass.* It is one of the defining superlatives of South Florida.

Canoes easily navigated gentle flatland streams such as Fisheating Creek, the Cocohatchee, Imperial River and Henderson Creek. Portages were few and slight so lightweight bark or hide canoes weren't required and heavy long-lasting dugouts were best. These may have become cargo barges and war boats, powering empires.

Hills force canals to follow contour lines resulting in devious serpentine routes. But flat land made canals easy and practical in many places in South Florida. The Ortona canals could be engineered in efficient straight lines simply because the land is so flat.

And why is the land flat? *Because nothing pushed it up above sea level.* That sounds trite, but the most common causes of land elevated above sea level are volcanoes and tectonic plate upheaval, and these never happened in South Florida. It is a largely limestone slab that precipitated entirely under seawater. Carbonate rock can't form in air.

Flat limestone layers are forming now on the shallow sea floor west of Florida and more new limestone layers will form on Alligator Alley when the icecaps melt, once again plunging South Florida beneath seawater.

So for the same reason we have no accessible hard stone capable of taking a sharp edge in South Florida, we have flat ground. Every bit of the surface between perhaps Lakeland near Orlando and Cape Sable at the south end formed under water and was once a sandy beach. (And will be again, one day.) This is because South Florida is a "passive margin", meaning there was never volcanic or tectonic activity involved in its creation.

There are exceptions to the beach-flat rule. A minor one is the marsh hammock, easily seen on either side as you drive from Fort Lauderdale to Naples. These are created by vegetation piling up into a tiny low island for various reasons. The islet becomes a haven for botanical species needing dryer roots than the surrounding marsh permits. During dry times, wind-blown dust and leaf debris collects around the plants, raising the soil level further. These hammocks seldom grow more than a meter or two high and might last only a few hundred years before being destroyed by unusual weather or fire.

A more significant exception is the dune. We usually think of desert dunes, but snowdrifts are also dunes. Dunes can form anywhere there is wind and loose material such as fine sand or soil that the wind will pick up. Air turbulence around a small obstruction such as a bush causes the airborne sediment to settle in its wind shadow, starting a dune. The growing dune itself then becomes the obstruction that can pile up many meters high. Vegetation may anchor the dune or stop its growth.

Seashores are common places for dunes to form and South Florida shorelines often have them. They are transient highpoints, lasting only hundreds or thousands of years, depending on conditions. Extreme weather, waves, changing conditions, moving shorelines or bulldoz-

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ers destroy dunes. Many coastal dunes have been leveled for developments.

Good dune forming conditions have prevailed along the south shore of Marco Island below Naples. Dunes formed around Barfield Bay and are now expensive real estate. You can drive to the 17-meter (55 ft) top of a classic dune on Indian Hill Road in that area. This is the highest point in much of South Florida, but don't get excited. Calusa boys probably tried to impress girls by climbing trees that were higher.

Dunes are fragile tricks of Aeolus, god of winds. When sea levels rise around a dune, it contains no rock or heavy gravel ballast and waves quickly disperse it. When sea levels fall and the coastline retreats, the fostering beach and vigorous shore winds vanish and then thousands of years of rain slowly flatten the dune. Precision relief maps show a few stumps (1-2 meters high) of old dunes elsewhere on Marco Island and farther inland. A few dozen dune stumps are in Broward County along the east coast.

The generally flat Alligator Bowling Alley region of South Florida no doubt had many overland trails between the coasts. For people without wheels or horses, overland routes are of limited usefulness for long distance travel since small children, the infirm and cargo must be backpacked. Walkers have to stop to rest but one crew can paddle the canoe while the other sleeps for speedier travel. Thus waterways were probably the preferred routes when available.

However, no stream *crosses* the peninsula and it was too far for a canal. Since several South Florida streams radiate outward from a major water feature at its center, it seems likely that most travel and freight moved via those radiating waterways. To understand how this

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Board meetings are the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Hampton Inn in Bonita Springs. All welcome. Member meetings are the third Wednesday at 7:30 (coffee served at 7) at the Bonita Springs Community Hall on Old 41 (by the banyan tree).

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