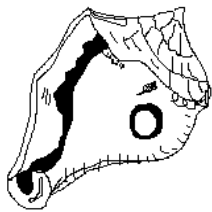


NEWSLETTER

SWFAS



**SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

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We need it for the Newsletter!.

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3 Ambiance of Shell

Mounds: Part Seven What's in the Shell Mounds? Can you believe... Shell?

Travis Doering Explains the Olmecs to SWFAS at the January Meeting

Travis Doering, renowned local expert on Meso-American archaeology gave us one of his incisive and insightful lectures on the mysterious Olmecs, the parent civilization to most of the pre-Columbian cultures of Central America. Travis has just returned from an ambitious and adventuresome solo trip by truck to this region of Mexico. In his talk, he showed slides of some recently discovered artifacts from the Olmec region that have probably never before been viewed even by Olmec and Maya experts here in the States. Travis related that the period of Olmec civilization lasted roughly a thousand years, from 1300 BC to about 300 BC in an area called the “Olmec Heartland” in the present-day state of Vera Cruz, a steamy, swampy low-lying region cut through by many large rivers. There were three phases or periods of this culture

which are named for and correspond with the fluorescence of three main Olmec sites, San Lorenzo, La Venta, and Tres Zapotes. The name “Olmec” in Nahuatl (the Aztec language) means “People of Rubber” from the important main product of the region that was made into game balls and other things. One interesting fact related by Travis was that in much later times, the Aztecs required 18,000 balls a year of this substance be sent from this region to their capital as tribute! As always (as we have come to expect from past lectures), Travis showed beautiful slides taken on the scene of sites and artifacts which included Olmec jade masks and figurines of phenomenal artistry. The people that were fortunate enough to attend this lecture will be queuing up for the next one by Travis Doering which we all hope will be soon!



How A Dig Should Be Done: Andrea Parsons excavates a superlative unit. This archaeologist from England is shown working on part of the Brickell Circle in Miami.

THE DATEBOOK

**February 10th - SWFAS
Board of Directors Meeting,
Hampton Inn, Bonita Springs,**

7:30 PM

February 17th - General Meeting Bonita Springs Community Center, 7:30 PM

About SWFAS

The directorate: President Wayne ("Bud") House, first vice president Don Taggart, second vice president Betsy Perdichizzi, membership secretary Brenda Hamilton, treasurer Jack Thompson, recording secretary Jo Ann Grey, directors Valerie Flanigan, Sue Long, Dottie Thompson, Jo Ann Grey, Charles Dugan, Annette Snapp, Tom Franchino, John Beriault and Charlie Strader.

The committees: Field: Beriault, 434-0624; Hospitality: position open; Membership: Brenda Hamilton; Publicity: Dottie Thompson, 597-2269; Sales: Valerie Flanigan, 262-8394; Finances: Jack Thompson 597-2269, 774-8517; Lab: (774-8517), Art Lee, 261-4939, Walt Buschelman, 775-9734, Jack Thompson, 597-2269.

To Join: Address your check to the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 9965, Naples, FL 34101. Dues are: Individual \$20, Individual Sustaining \$50.00, Family \$35, Student \$15.

Any questions, comments, contributions to the Newsletter: John G. Beriault, acting editor, P.O. Box 9074, Naples, FL 34101-9074 or Email to: JGBeriault@aol.com.

appeal for articles (preferably written by YOU) and photos you might have taken at SWFAS events of the people and things that make up our Society. Remember, if you can, to Email these to me in the body of your Email message. I'm lazy and a two-fingered typist. I don't have much time, talent, or inclination to retype. I should have learned typing and known in advance the coming popularity and increasing necessity of the personal computer in our daily lives. But when I was in high school our typing teacher was a real BEAR! She'd scream and yell at the poor fools taking typing across from my study hall, which made me thankful I wasn't learning typing... oh, well... Send your contributions, written, scanned or photographic to: **JGBeriault@aol.com** - or to: **John G. Beriault, P.O. Box 9074, Naples, FL 34101-9074**. Remember to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you want your photos returned. Anybody who complains or criticizes me better have sent in lots of contributing material if they want me to listen to them!

A Bowl by Any Other Color Will Look As Sweet...

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Are You There? Can You Read Me?

Hi, it's me, your old friend the acting editor again with the usual plea for "stuff" for the Newsletter. I type this appeal for every issue for two reasons: One, to take up the space that a nice contribution from YOU would take up - and, to continue this

Some of you may have wondered what you were looking at an issue or two ago in the Newsletter. Here was a black, bowl-shaped "blob" purporting to be a representation of a Sanibel Incised bowl. This was due (I was told) to the difficulty of successfully reproducing scanned images. Frankly, I think we should shop around for someone to offer better reproduction, but I've lightened the image several degrees and here

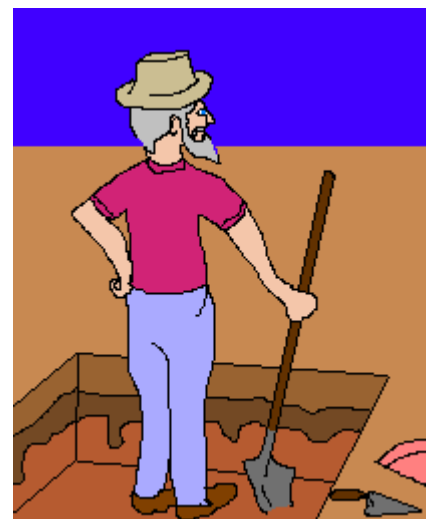
goes... again...



SANIBEL INCISED: A design from Glades Ila times (1250 BP to 1100 BP)

A LITTLE LATE-BREAKING NEWS...

Rumor has it that there may be another opportunity to do some work at the Marco Lodge (part of the famous Key Marco Site). Sources close to the project indicate that volunteers may be immediately called on to help. The time, place, and even the activities have not yet been decided, but these will be happening very soon and quickly. Those people interested are urged to come to the February 17th SWFAS Meeting or call John Beriault at 434-0624.



ARCHAEOLOGY AS I

SEE IT

by John G. Beriault

AMBIANCE OF SHELL MOUNDS: PART SEVEN: OF WHAT IS A SHELL MOUND MADE?

In the last issue we talked about a creative way to determine accretion of shell mound material. We also gave a modern parable for *how* cultural material can accrete. What was accreting on shell mounds? The obvious answer is: shell, and lots of it. Volumetrically, shell is the largest (most important?) element comprising these large sites. Take the shell away, and at least 95% of the site would disappear. You would be left with something resembling a deep Everglades “black dirt” midden. We have already mentioned that the shellfish found in the large coastal sites did not provide the majority source for the calories needed by the ancient Indian inhabitants to sustain life. The afore-mentioned small fish were one of the chief sources, and shellfish merely supplemented this all-important dietary item. Plants, reptiles, mammals also provided important nutrients. All these sources have left remains in shell mounds, though shells are the most visible element, and are what we will talk about first.

The early Indians had vast and largely unspoiled coastal and estuarine ecosystems from which to gather shellfish. There were

literally hundreds of species of shellfish found in many dozens of environmental zones or niches in southern Florida. Research by the University of Florida and others have shown certain shellfish to be very habitat specific, and this distribution would determine the makeup or “complexion” of the mix of species found in any particular shell mound. In other words, the makeup of species in a particular site was determined by the habitats harvested, so shell mounds in locations close to those sources reflected the availability of species near the site as well as the seasonal fluctuations of species availability in those harvesting locations.

One of the chief determinants of a specific habitat is degree of salinity - how salty is the water? In southwest Florida this is determined to a great extent by proximity to the Gulf of Mexico.

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On rivers flowing into the Gulf, this salinity is governed by the influence (or lack of) tidal fluctuation, which in turn is governed by time of year. The summer sees abundant rain and resulting freshwater run-off flowing down rivers to the Gulf. Salinity is usually a lot less on the upper reaches of most rivers at that time. Water temperatures, breeding cycles, tropical storms, outbreaks of red tide, and other disturbances are other important factors in the availability of

shellfish in any particular habitat during a certain time of the year. Much careful research has been devoted to these considerations and centers around a lot of careful quantifying in laboratories, and in minute measuring and puzzling over of differences in shellfish quantity, size, and condition.

The three broad categories of shell middens for southern Florida based on location/habitat would be: Freshwater/interior, brackish/riverine, saline/coastal/estuarine. Freshwater/interior *shell* middens would seem to be rare to non-existent. Shellfish or terrestrial/aquatic snails routinely observed on interior middens would include apple snails (*Pomacea caliginosa*), *Helisoma* sp. or sun snails, and terrestrials such as *Polygyra* spp., *Euglandina* sp., and *Liguus* sp. These species may have been eaten, but if they were it was not in a wholesale, systematic gathering attempt such as the marine species from coastal sites. Further north in the St. Johns River drainage area there are extensive freshwater shell middens. Brackish water shell middens are rare in southwest Florida, but there are examples such as the Hancock Creek Site on the Caloosahatchee River across from “downtown” Ft. Myers. There is very little diversity of species in these sites. *Polymesoda carolinana* (Carolina marsh clam) and *Neritina relictata* (Olive nerite) are two species that predominate in the brackish water

shell middens to the exclusion of nearly everything else besides some oyster shell which may in turn have been brought in from more saline areas downstream.

It is the saline/coastal/estuarine sites where species diversity is really outstanding with over a hundred species of shellfish routinely found as commonly used sources of food.

in our next installment we should probably begin discussing some of the most commonly found shell species in coastal (saline) sites , their description and characteristics.



A Friend, Coiled and Ready To Strike: Someone the Editor met in the Big Cypress Swamp on a recent surveying project...

CRAIGHEAD LAB REPORT by Ella May Ablahat

Chokoloskee is still with us but coming along nonetheless. With the season's crew back from the Norethern Hemisphere and working hard most of the washing has been done.

More material has been screened

and floated. Column sample 3 & 11 are ready for analyzing and we are looking forward to beginning the report on the site.



Cartoon compliments of Sue Morrow Long

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TIM LEWIS TO SPEAK AT FEBRUARY MEETING

Tim Lewis will speak on Wednesday, February 17 at the SWFAS monthly meeting. He will discuss his research concerning pioneer settlements in Rookery Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands. Lewis received his MA in Archaeology from the University of South Florida in Tampa.

The Society will meet at the Bonita Springs Community Center on Old Highway 41.

"Empires of Mystery" Exhibit in St. Pete

by Linda Ballou

If you think you're ready for a face-off with the terrifying god known as "Decapitator," there's still time to get your tickets for a virtual adventure to ancient Peru. "Empires of Mystery: The Incas, the Andes and the Lost

Civilizations," which opened in late October, is scheduled to run through May 16 at Florida International Museum in St. Petersburg.

The exhibit is designed to create the illusion that visitors are actually taking a journey through time and participating in discoveries of lost cultures. From a simulated rainforest section of the Inca Trail to a tomb-like encounter with a mummy priestess, museum goers are guided through the largest exhibition of Peruvian artifacts ever to travel to the United States.

Over thirty civilizations and several thousand years of history are represented in the museum's galleries, which have been refurbished to give you the impression that you are witnessing first hand the Nazca Lines or the adobe city of Chan Chan. If this all sounds a little too much like a cross between cyberspace and Indiana Jones, keep in mind that the hundreds of exquisite artifacts are very much the real thing.

One gallery, designed to look like a U.S. Customs warehouse, is devoted to a display of smuggled artifacts which were in fact seized by U.S. Customs inspectors at Miami International Airport in 1995. A crate labeled "Peruvian handicrafts" turned out to contain 208 looted archeological treasures. The collection was officially repatriated last year. In gratitude the Peruvian government agreed to

loan 40 of the most exceptional pieces to the St. Petersburg museum for the exhibit. They will be returned to Peru when the exhibit closes. This may be your last chance to see the gold-filled copper fox head with shell inlaid eyes, its tongue sticking out and pendants dangling from its ears. Florida International Museum is located just a few blocks off the interstate in downtown St. Petersburg at 200 Second Street North. Admission is \$13.95 for adults and \$5.95 for students. For detailed directions and information on museum hours call 1-800-777-9882 or see their web site at www.floridamuseum.org.

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