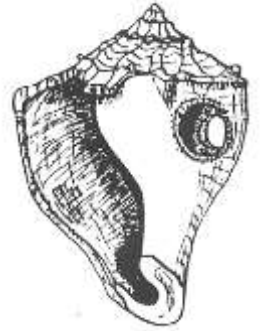


SWFAS

NEWSLETTER

THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



JOHN G. BERIAULT, ACTING EDITOR VOLUME 19, NUMBER 8

AUGUST, 2003



I have to confess I had personal trepidation over staging two back-to-back field trips in lieu of monthly meetings over the summer months. However, I think I'm proving wrong in my concerns. The two field trips have been a good change, have given a surprisingly large number of us a lot of pleasure, and broadened our horizons a bit – gotten us out of the rut we may have

been in. This latest field trip was to two classic archaeological sites on the Pinellas (St. Petersburg) peninsula west of the Tampa/Tampa

Bay area. The first spot we stopped, the Weedon (or Weeden) Island Preserve is the "type" site for a rich, artistic Indian culture living along the central-west coast of Florida northwards into Georgia. This is an impressive site with shell midden elements of varying depths

mantling a natural parabolic dune ridge encircling a small bay called Papyrus Bayou and occupies its own little peninsula attached to the eastern edge of Pinellas Peninsula. Phyllis Kolianos, who many of us know, is the director of the Weedon Island Preserve and acted as our very gracious guide and host. The Preserve has a beautiful facility with an already wonderful museum that is shortly to be remodeled into something even more wonderful. (Continued next page)

This is a scanned portion of the beautiful poster many of us received from the generous people at Weedon Island Preserve. This is one of the famous Weeden Island pottery vessels recovered from the site. Aren't you sorry you didn't come on the fieldtrip...?

ANOTHER GREAT FIELD TRIP - TO WEEDON ISLAND AND NARVAEZ-ANDERSON SITES

Inside this Newsletter

- 1 We have Moved! Florida Gulf Coast University is the new site of our General Meetings
- 2 **Beriault to speak of "Yucatan Memories" August 20th**

THE DATEBOOK

August 13th SWFAS
Board Meeting, Hampton
Inn, Bonita Springs, 7:00
PM

August 20th SWFAS
General Meeting Ben Hill
Griffin Hall, Room 109,
Florida Gulf Coast University
at 7:30 PM

About SWFAS

The directorate: President Tom Franchino, first vice president Corbett Torrence second vice president Theresa Schoeber, membership secretary Charlie Strader, treasurer Charlie Strader, recording secretary Jo Ann Grey, directors Bud House, Sue Long, Liz Clement, Jo Ann Grey, Don Taggart, Jack Thompson, John Beriault, Charlie Strader, John Worth, and Dr Susan Stans.

The committees: Field: Beriault, 434-0624; Hospitality: position open; Membership: Charlie Strader, 941-992-6133; Publicity: Dottie Thompson, 597-2269; Sales: position open; 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.

Field Trip (continued)

After the visit to Weedon Island, we climbed in our cars and headed south and west across the vast urban jungle that is St. Petersburg to the

western side. There we had lunch in a very good and pleasant Caribbean reastaurant called Saffron located in the historic Jungle Prada, a pleasure resort complex constructed in the 1920s and a favorite hangout of Al Capone among others. After lunch, a 50-foot walk took us across the parking lot to the Narvaez Site, a portion of which is on a private residence, where the owners and our hosts, the Andersons, together with Terry Simpson, recent excavator at the site gave us a detailed tour of the jungle paradise which is both an archaeological site and home to the Anderson family for more than forty years. SWFAS would certainly like to thank Phyllis Kolianos, David Burns, the Andersons, Terry Simpson, and our own Jack Thompson for making this field trip possible and so enjoyable!

Craighead Lab Notes

by
Jack Thompson

We are fortunate to have a lab at the Collier County Museum. We would like to be open 6 days a week. Yes, the Museum is now open on Saturdays. Visitors frequently bring in objects for identification and

we are only there on Tuesday and Thursdays.

We still have a backlog of material to be processed. Some of it has been waiting for 20 years. Reports that are prepared and published would be extremely valuable to other archaeologists in Florida.

So, we need volunteers to be trained by us. We would operate with a minimum of 2 in the lab. Here's a chance for those who regretted they could not serve because we were not open on Saturday. Incidentally, the work is interesting and a lot of fun.

JOHN BERIAULT TO SPEAK ON 'YUCATAN MEMORIES'

John Beriault, former SWFAS President and long-time Newsletter editor will speak August 20 at Ben Hill Griffin Hall, Room 109, Florida Gulf Coast University at 7:30 PM on several trips he has taken to the Yucatan area of southern Mexico in the mid-1980s. This area has amazing ruined cities containing temples, ball courts, *cenotes* (sinkholes), and other natural and archaeological structures surrounded by miles of low scrub jungle. Many of the cities were linked together by

an extensive system of roads or *sabes*. Beriault's visits were to the region in the mid-1980's. The Yucatan has since developed into a major tourist destination. Beriault plans a "sentimental" journey" back to the Yucatan in early November of this year, and his talk will center around some of the sites he will revisit.

YUCATAN MEMORIES...

by John G. Beriault

I often ask myself – what is it that compels me every year or two to yearn for a trip through Central or South America. I guess if I was to sum up this urge, it would lie in the *ambience* of things, the sun on mangrove lagoons, the smell of the jungle, the sight of a white ruin off on a distant green hillside, and maybe the taste of *pollo pibil* or *huevos motulenos* in a chikee hut (*palapa*) restaurant, not to mention a cold *cerveza*, at the end of a hot day. I initially traveled down to Mexico the first time as a sort of reluctant participant on a field trip the local Southwest Florida Archaeological Society sponsored in 1984. Hard to believe that was nearly two decades ago! I was approached by an unusual and somewhat messianic fellow named David Washburn, and, rather than appear rude, was

agreeable to a trip he was trying to organize to the Yucatan. In the midst of this agreement, strung out over a year, I found myself booked (along with thirteen other people) on an Aero Mexico flight out of Miami.

It didn't take long to cross the western tip of Cuba (even had what I believe was a MIG off our wing part of the way), then above the Yucatan Passage. My first glimpse of



the Yucatan was the entire peninsula as far south and west as human vision permits outlined in tall white thunderheads.

We landed at the Cancun airport and climbed into VW combi vans. We spent the night at Playa del Carmen, a little resort town on the Caribbean Coast across from the island of Cozumel that was just beginning to grow. There were even ruins on the hotel grounds, and in the growing dark of that first ending day, I got to visit my very first precolumbian Mayan ruin, climbing through a grove of *Thrinax* palms and touching the rough-hewn

masonry walls of a small pyramid grouping. We walked to supper down a limestone path through the jungle to a chikee hut restaurant. I picked up a small pink snake that seemed to be a baby boa constrictor in the trail which the owner of the restaurant

identified as a coral snake and obligingly killed before I could stop him. This taught me that to most of the people living on the land in Mexico and elsewhere, the only good snake (whether correctly or incorrectly identified as

dangerous) is a dead snake. The next morning, wandering the beach south of the hotel, some of us discovered more ruins, part of a minor but important site complex called Xaman-ha that has yielded intact murals.

This was how the first visit began, stretching into a string of experiences: seeing orchids at Xcaret; visiting the karst lagoons of Xelha; Tulum on the edge of the blue Caribbean Sea; seeing the ruined tower at Tancah; a miniature temple on the edge of a lonely inlet at Chakalal; the wonders of Coba with the distant lakes glinting in the sun seen from the top of Nohuchmul, the tallest pyramid. Further south we visited Chunyache and took a dilapidated fishing boat across sapphire-blue Lago Muyil to Cayo Venado and watched what looked like an everglades tree-island site in the sawgrass become by degrees as we approached, the ruins of a Maya custom house next to a constructed canal over a thousand years old. The ruin was capped by a large strangler fig and festooned in *Schomburgia tibiscinis* orchids with six-foot cream-colored sprays of flowers. Then it rained, and through the deluge, the Mayans took us and the boat back across the immense lake to land.



We went south down the Caribbean coast road toward Belize into the Rio Bec area. Ruins such as Cohunlich nestled in groves of cohune palms with a crazy caretaker who talked of brujos and witches and kept a shotgun handy – and Becan

temple at Becan and watched the sun set over the tall triple spires of the ruin of Xpuhil and listened to the tree frogs start up a chorus of thousands as the air cooled and the night approached. Some of us went to Manos Rojas and saw the red handprints of hundreds of years ago left on the stucco



with its fortified moat and dark passageways – were “typical”. We stood on a tall

walls in the jungle. Some went to the old spanish fort at

the head of the lake at Bacalar, built against pirates.

We then headed north, past Yaxuna, crossing the ancient *sacbe* or road that ran eighty miles to Coba. We came to the old town of Valloiddid with its quiet and the big cenote. From there we drove to Chichen Itza, “the Mouth of the Well of the Itza”, and, yes, there were tourists, but climbing the Castillo, visiting the Iglesia with its Chac masks, seeing the Caracol or circular observatory, just like it looked in all the many photographs in books – and, best of all, walking the Causeway to the Cenote of Sacrifice, and gazing into that opaque green water seventy feet below and watching the *mot-mot* birds with their long turquoise tail feathers flying in and out of the crevasses in the walls – that was what made this worth it.

We went to the north coast and across a brooding sea near the *salinas* of Rio Lagartos, we could look to the northeast over 500 miles of intervening Gulf of Mexico in the direction of Naples – and to see the flamingos in flight by the thousands, a cackling pink wall of plumage against the brown mud flats and the brown water reflecting just a little blue of the sky... well, this is what inspired me and

helps to explain why I guess I like the travel “down south”.

And some say, why do it again? (been there, done that) Well, in November, we’re going to see nearly all I’ve described and so much more.. Calakmul! Uxmal, Sayil, and shop in Merida (you don’t go shopping just once and call it quits do you?). Besides, it’s never the same river, and the stars travel in the heavens and reflect differently in the Caribbean, and the cloud shadows play differently across the weathered stones of the ruined cities, different orchids bloom in the jungle, and the beer is still cold, so why not go back...

