

# SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER -

Travis F. Doering, Editor

- Vol. II, No. 8

DECEMBER, 1986

- THE DECEMBER MONTHLY MEETING of the SWFAS will be held at the First Federal Savings and Loan of Ft. Myers, (Community Room), 3201 No. Tamiami Trail, Naples, FL at 7:30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, December 10th. Please note that this is a special day for this month only.

- Our guest speaker will be Mr. Randall Crawford and he will discuss his trip to the Great Rift Valley in East Africa and the Richard Leakey Dig. Mr. Crawford will also exhibit copies of three ancient skulls. This should prove to be another exciting and informative talk. For a little background on what is presently going on in the search for early man, see the article entitled "Link to Man and Primates" later in this Newsletter.

- CHOKOLOSKEE ISLAND DIG - Saturday, Dec. 6th at 12:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 7th at 7:30 a.m. Meet at the Hammock Restaurant. Drive to Chokoloskee Island for further investigation of sites. For more information, call John Beriault, 261-0295.

- SITE FORM MEETING - Tuesday, December 9th at 6:30 p.m. at the Strader residence, 27564 Woodridge, Bonita Springs, FL. (992-6133) Documentation of sites.

- NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING - John Beriault has given us another fine slide presentation, this time on the excavation at the Beachwalk Site and the on-going Chokoloskee Island Site investigation. The amount of work accomplished at these sites was tremendous and again thank you to all of those who helped.

- Also we would like to thank and congratulate SWFAS member, Isabelle Waterhouse, on her fine article and photos that appeared as the cover story in the October 19th edition of the Marco Island Eagle detailing our dig at Chokoloskee.

- LINK TO MAN AND PRIMATES - Fossils from two previously unknown types of apes that may be ancestors of humans have been found along the western shore of Lake Turkana in Kenya, anthropologist Richard Leakey has announced. He said that the fossils probably dated from the early Miocene era, about 16 to 18 million years ago.

- The new primates may fill a crucial gap in the fossil records that would link the earliest known primates to humans. Anthropologists have long believed that an ancestor of man lived in Africa during the early Miocene, but they have not been able to find fossils of such a primate until now.

- Scientists have been particularly eager to obtain primate fossils from the Miocene era in Africa because only one genus, called Proconsul, had been found previously. For many years, scientists believed that this baboonlike hominoid was an ancestor of man simply because no better candidate existed.

- But by 1984, most scientists had concluded, according to anthro-

pologist David Pilbeam of Harvard University that the form was too specialized for it to be an ancestor of any living hominoid. In short, Proconsul was an evolutionary dead end that eventually disappeared completely.

- The discrediting of Proconsul as a human ancestor left a large gap in the fossil record. The only available candidate to fill the gap was an orangutanlike primate called Sivapithecus, which also dated from the Miocene era.

- Sivapithecus has been found only in Asia, however, and most paleontological evidence indicates that the ancestor of humans must have lived in Africa.

- Then in 1983, Leakey found a skull fragment at Buluk, on the eastern shore of Lake Turkana, that he and anatomist Alan Walker of Johns Hopkins Univ. identified as Sivapithecus. The discovery of Sivapithecus in Africa would have made it a better candidate for a human ancestor. But that identification has been very controversial, and many scientists have refused to accept it.

- Leakey said that he now believes the Buluk primate to be identical to one of the new specimens he found at Kalodirr. Either of the new genera could be an ancestor of man.

News-Press, Nov. 1986

- DINOSAURS FADED OUT OF EXISTENCE - Scientists presented evidence during a national meeting that they say refutes the popular theory that dinosaurs were wiped out when a giant asteroid hit Earth 65 million years ago.

- Robert E. Sloan, a professor at the Univ. of Minnesota and J. Keith Rigby Jr. have found evidence in southern China and in Montana's McCone County of dinosaurs that lived up to 750,000 years after the asteroid crashed into Earth. They said the evidence is more recent than any other found.

- The two presented their findings at the annual meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. "The implications of our findings are monumental" said Rigby, a professor at Notre Dame Univ.

- The professors said they believe the creatures gradually died out for a number of reasons over a 7 million-year period. The scientists do not dispute the claim that an asteroid hit the planet, raising clouds of dust that enveloped Earth and disrupted climate patterns. But they do dispute the claim that the asteroid abruptly ended the dinosaur's 160 million-year reign on Earth.

- They said the Montana excavations showed that half the plants in the region died off over a 3 million-year period, drastically reducing the dinosaurs' food supply. Also, changes in the sea floor caused the global sea level to drop 1,000 feet during the same period, creating land bridges between Asia and North America. That caused more animals to migrate into the dinosaurs' habitat, increasing competition for food.

\*\*\*FLORIDA NEWS\*\*\*

The Associated Press

- NEW LAW MAY DIG GRAVE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES - Florida has dozens of ancient gravesites like one in Titusville where 8,000 year old skeletons are being found, but a loop-hole in the new wetlands law puts them at risk of being destroyed by developers.

- The way the wetlands law is written, a dredge and fill permit, once issued, doesn't necessarily prevent a site's destruction. The Windover site was important because archaeologists discovered skulls and brain tissue that had been preserved in the peat bog for thousands of years.

- The 1984 Wetlands Protection Act requires the Dept. of Environmental Regulation to consider archaeological resources as one of seven factors used in determining whether to grant a dredge and fill permit.

- Because it's almost impossible to identify artifacts below the water table before work is underway, the DER may unknowingly go ahead and issue a permit even though artifacts lie hidden below the ground.

- The Wetlands Protection Act provides a number of safeguards for protecting historical and prehistorical resources. A site's archeological significance must be considered in deciding whether to grant a permit, and all applications are sent to the Fl. Div. of Archives and History for review to make sure known archaeological sites are not disturbed.

- The DER considered adding a standard clause to each permit that would require anyone finding artifacts to stop work and contact an appropriate state representative. But issuing such a standard special condition may be counterproductive.

- If a developer thinks that finding bones or dugout canoes is going to stall or block further development, there would be a temptation to keep digging and not tell anyone. It is crucial that the public and state government recognize the value of ancient wetland sites.

The Associated Press

- DEERING SITE UPDATE - Archaeologists who uncovered 10,000 year old human teeth and bones at a dig near here have received at least a brief reprieve on orders from the property owners to pack up. The concession coincided with the discovery of a human skull that may be a significant find.

- The remains of four people were discovered three feet beneath the surface of the site. The bones buried about 9,700 years ago could signify one of the oldest human cultures known in the Eastern United States. The skull indicates the presence of a formal Indian burial ground and as such, may be the oldest ever found.

- The previous finds of teeth and bones had pushed back the date Asian nomads are believed to have crossed the Bering Strait to settle in North America, making that settlement one of the earliest known.

- Several members of the Deering family, which owns the Old Cutler Fossil Site southwest of Miami, had insisted it be closed. But Bob Carr, Dade Co. Arch., contended that closing the site was the owners' tactic to avoid a historical designation under consideration by the county Historic Preservation Board. It would require the owners to get county permission before altering the 30-acre site.

- An attorney for the Deerings defends their decision to close the site. "We feel that we're being ramrodded by the county," said John Fletcher. "The owners have been extremely generous with their time and their money on this."

- Concern that the site, left unprotected, might be vandalized had persuaded the owners to allow the dig to continue until Nov. 19th when the preservation board will hear more evidence on the matter.

- Meanwhile, discoveries made at the site continue to draw national attention. George Armelagos of the Univ. of Mass. at Amherst plans to visit the site and inspect some of the 15,000 fossils and bone fragments from more than 70 extinct animals.

News-Press, Nov. 1986

- EVERYDAY CITIZENS HELP AT SEMINOLE INDIAN DIG - Excavation of the last camp and hide-out of famed Indian warrior Osceola here is a shining example of how everyday citizens can work with archaeologists to preserve Florida's history.

- Private citizens in Citrus County have joined in to learn about and preserve a site that otherwise may never have been found.

- Archeological evidence gathered in the last few years almost conclusively fixes a site near the Withlacoochee River as the once-secret campground of Osceola, a charismatic Seminole warrior.

- Brent Weisman, a UF graduate student using an 1937 diary as his

guide, began combing the banks of the Withlacoochee River for the camp in 1983. His funding ran out before he found the exact site, but Weisman stayed on, captivated by the 146-year-old secret.

- When Weisman put on a slide show at the invitation of the Inverness Rotary Club, members voted unanimously to give him \$1,000 so the search could go on. That gave him six more weeks. At that point he sat down with a map that was in the diary and some aerial photos and came up with a new area to search.

- A Boy Scout employee helping Weisman found a piece of Seminole pottery on a hog trail in an oak hammock. Subsequent excavation has yielded a cast iron pot dating from Osceola's era, hundreds of pieces of Seminole pottery, musket balls, broken glass and a good idea of how the camp was laid out.

- In 1835, Osceola and a group of braves murdered the U.S. Indian agent at Ft. King near Ocala. Pursued by federal troops, Osceola retreated to a camp in the remotest part of a swamp called the Cove of the Withlacoochee.

- Legend has it that no white man who entered this camp came out alive. In fact, the site was so well-hidden that its location remained a secret from 1837 until 1983.

- Weisman believes the camp was built around a square ground -- a sacred place that served as both a place for religious ceremonies and counsel meetings. Evidence from the dig suggests cabins were built on the four sides of the square.

- ANNUAL DUES NOTICE - In accordance with our by-laws, annual dues are receivable January 1, 1987. Those who joined us after September 1, 1986 are excused until January 1, 1988.

Jack Thompson, Treasurer

- HOLIDAY GREETINGS - Here's wishing everyone a happy and joyous holiday season and New Year! Thanks to everyone who has sent in articles for our Newsletter. If there is anything you think might be of interest to SWFAS members, please send it to, SWFAS, P.O.Box 9965, Naples, FL 33941.



Happy Holidays  
from SWFAS



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mail to: SWFAS, P. O. Box 9965, Naples, FL 33941

Individual--\$10.00 Family--\$15.00 Student--\$7.50 Contributing--\$25.00

YES! I want to support the SWFAS in their work of preserving and interpreting the prehistoric heritage of Southwest Florida.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

INTERESTS & HOBBIES \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to abide by the rules and bylaws of the Southwest Florida Archeological Society. I further release from any and all liability due to accident and injury to myself, dependents, and property, the SWFAS, its officers, members, and any property owners cooperating with the Society.

NOTE: All dues and contributions are tax deductible.