

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER -

Travis F. Doering, Editor

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- THE MARCH MONTHLY MEETING of the SWFAS will be held on Thursday, March 19th, at 7:30 p.m. at the First Federal Savings and Loan of Ft. Myers, (Community Room), 3201 Tamiami Trail North, Naples, Florida.

- Our guest speaker will be SWFAS member, Al Felsberg and his topic will be "Island-Arawak Indians and Their Archaeology". Al's talk will take us from 3100 B.C. to Spanish contact. The Island Arawaks, whose ancestors migrated to the Antilles from northeast Venezuela by way of the Orinoco River, may be responsible for the earliest pottery in this hemisphere.

- The Arawaks also show influence of Central and Meso-American cultures including a rubber gall game, certain burial practices and ritual tobacco use. Island Arawaks were threatened by the Carib, but ultimately their fate was decided by the diseases brought by the Spanish. Mr. Felsberg will compare and contrast the archaeology of this tribe to that of the natives of South Florida. Be sure you don't miss this interesting and informative talk.

- SITE FORM AND COMMITTEE MEETING - Tuesday, March 10th at 6:30 p.m. at the Strader residence, 27564 Woodridge, Bonita Springs.

- SORTING SESSION - Thursday, March 12th at 5:30 p.m. at the Beriault residence, 3550 Bolero Way, Naples, FL. Sort dig materials.

- CANOE TRIP TO MOUND KEY - Sunday, March 29th. Meet at the boat launching area in the Koreshan State Park in Estero at 9:00 a.m. For more information, call John Beriault at 261-0082.

- ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSERVANCY MEETING - Sunday, March 15th, Florida Keys. Contact John Beriault at 261-0082 for more details.

- FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY - will have their annual meeting in Clearwater on April 8, 9, & 10th. SWFAS members, Gina Understahl - Chokoloskee Island and John Beriault - Beachwalk Site, will be giving papers at this meeting. More information will be available at the March monthly meeting.

- FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING - A special joint meeting of the SWFAS and The Historical Society was held at the annex of St. Ann's Church in Naples. Dade County Archaeologist Robert Carr was the guest speaker and he discussed the Dade County efforts to preserve its archaeological heritage. Robert also brought us up to date on the latest events and findings from the Cutler Ridge Rossil Site in Dade.

- LECTURES TO BE GIVEN AT THE CONSERVANCY - All of the following lectures will be held at The Conservancy Auditorium, 1450 Merrihue Dr.

in Naples.

1. - Kissimmee River Restoration - The Remaking of a River, presented by Mr. Lou Toth and Mr. Kent Loftin, South FL Water Management District.

- Mr. Toth of the District's Division of Environmental Sciences and Mr. Loftin of the District's Division of Water Use will present an overview of the Kissimmee River restoration demonstration project. This project, started in July 1984, was designed to test the ecological and hydrological feasibility of restoring the Kissimmee River. The transformation in the 1960's of this originally meandering 98 mile river into a 52 mile, 200 foot wide canal resulted in the significant lowering of groundwater levels and the drainage of 200,000 acres of wetlands. (Wednesday, March 11, at 7:30 p.m.)

2. - Southwest Florida Water Resources Symposium - This day-long conference consisting of afternoon informational sessions and an evening panel discussion will address the current status of Southwest Florida's water resources as well as water resource permitting, watershed planning, and water conservation practices. The conference will feature local, regional, and state water resource scientists, regulators, and planners along with representatives from private interest groups and elected officials. (Wednesday, March 25, at 1:00 p.m.)

3. - Keeping Corkscrew Swamp Natural - Presented by Dr. Michael J. Duever, National Audubon Society.

- Dr. Duever will present an introduction to the Corkscrew Swamp ecosystem, including its major plant and animal communities and the ecological processes that have shaped it and now control it. He will also discuss past and present threats to the ecological integrity of the swamp, how the National Audubon Society has dealt with them in the past, and how they are currently dealing with them. (Wednesday, April 8, at 7:30 p.m.)

- Any questions on the above, call 263-0223.

- THE FAMOUS WINDOVER SITE IN TITUSVILLE - has now been closed and the following two articles show what has transpired so far and what can be expected in the future:

A. The Windover Archeological Research Project has become a treasure trove of information in part because of cooperation between developers and researchers. The site near Titusville was discovered in 1982 by construction workers building a road for a residential community. Instead of simply bulldozing on to completion, the developers set aside about 12 acres for the dig. The owner has expressed an interest in preserving the site.

- The payoff could be clues to cell structure changes and how cancer is related to heredity. Archeologists found human brains preserved for about 8,000 years, providing the basis for the research. Many other discoveries at the site will tell us about life in Florida that long ago. But many clues will remain in the dig site, which is being restored to its previous condition as a pond. Researchers have removed enough skeletons and artifacts to keep them busy with research for a decade.

- The Windover site is a good example of why commercial progress sometimes must be slowed for scientific progress. The benefits of cooperation, although gained over the long run, could be great.

(News-Press, 1/27/87)

B. After three years of digging, archaeologists who have unearthed human brain tissue and bones 7,000 years old are flooding the site-- even though most of its clues to the past are still in the ground. The Windover Archeological Research Project will move to the laboratory

and the pond that hid an Indian burial ground from the last ice age until 1984 will be re-created.

- It's standard archaeological practice to leave the field for the lab after two or three months. The Windover dig has been in operation for five months each of the past three years, and diggers have done more than ~~than~~ scratch the surface. No one has any idea how long it will take to re-create a 7,500 sq. yd. pond after the start of the refilling process scheduled for this weekend.

- But scientists do estimate the raw data collected until Wednesday, when brain tissue from seven individuals were excavated, will keep them busy for at least a decade.

- At least 62 skulls with well-preserved brain tissue, the skeletons of 164 people, some 9,000 bone fragments, as well as fabric, tools, and jewelry will be studied by eight universities and scientists from 12 disciplines.

- Radiocarbon dating has enabled the scientists to date usage of the burial ground from 6,990 years ago to 8,150 years ago, plus or minus 150 years. The Indians buried their dead in a mucky forest floor. The pond came later, with a rising water level caused by the retreat of glaciers in the last ice age.

- Scientists credit the submerged claylike peat that surrounds the bones and the low acidity of the water with preserving the remains. The peat blocked oxygen from reaching the materials and the low acidity of the water prevented degeneration.

- Thanks to these conditions, Windover has yielded the oldest remains of children in the New World as well as the greatest range of age in individuals, stretching from neonatal to 70 years old.

- Scientists from around the world who have been supplied with samples of the cloned DNA may be able to trace changes in human cell structures and learn how diseases such as cancer are related to heredity.
(News-Press, (1/24/87))

- TOOLS HINT OF MAN'S PRESENCE IN FLORIDA 27,000 YEARS AGO- Stone tools unearthed in North Florida suggest human beings lived in Florida 27,000 years ago -- more than 15,000 years earlier than is generally believed.

- Univ. of Florida archaeologist Barbara Purdy cautioned that the dating method used to estimate when the tools were made is controversial and unproven. The hand axes, hide scrapers, hammers and wood-working implements were recovered at various depths in a three-meter square site in Marion County.

- As stone tools age, iron slowly leaches out from the interior and forms an outside white coating. By measuring the coating--a dating method known as weathering--Purdy and her colleagues estimated when the tools were buried.

- The most widely accepted date for the earliest appearance of human beings in the New World is 12,000 years ago. But artifacts recovered at other New World sites also suggest humans inhabited the Americas much earlier than previously believed, coming from Asia to North America across the Bering Strait.

- Man's first appearance in So. Florida was 10,000 years ago, according to findings at The Old Cutler Ridge Fossil Site in So. Dade.

- The stone tools were found nearly a meter deeper in the earth than a stone spearhead and other artifacts known to be 8,500 years old. Ordinarily, that would indicate the deeper artifacts were about 1,000 years older.

- "When we dated these implements, we considered the type of stone they were made from and the environment they were buried in," Purdy said. "... The evidence shows that people were in Florida before the last glacial maximum, which was 18,000 years ago. The glacial maximum took

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perhaps 4,000 years to develop, so I'm sure people were here probably before 22,000 years ago."

(Miami Herald, 2/24/87)

- REPORT FROM EGYPT - Scores of ancient Egyptian temples, monuments and villages that have survived thousands of years, despite wars, earthquakes and wind erosion, are now threatened by an unusual newcomer to this desert nation -- ground water. "This is a very dangerous phenomenon," said Dr. Chawki Nakhla, head of the restoration and conservation dept. at the government's Egyptian Antiquities Organization.

- Nakhla dismissed some archaeologists' warnings that the ground water will destroy every important site in southern Egypt within 40 years as "exaggerated." But he acknowledged that some 50 pharaonic, Moslem and Coptic Christian sites are now in "urgent need of protection."

- At the root of the problem is the High Aswan Dam built across the Nile River in 1971 to generate power, control the river's annual floods and irrigate the narrow strip of land along its shores, which hold 95% of Egypt's 52 million people.

- But 5 years ago problems began cropping up. Increased farm irrigation raised the level of the ground water throughout the valley. Cairo, with 14 million people and virtually no drainage system, began floating on an underground mountain of water. If the Nile no longer floods, it also no longer has dry periods during which the ground water recedes. The ground water gets sucked up into building foundations, carrying with it salts that dissolve the various types of cement used in ancient times. It then turns up on the face of first-story walls, destroying any murals, peeling off any paint and leaving the building's stones and bricks brittle and ready to crumble.

- A wall of red bricks covering the left hind leg of the sphinx, Egypt's best known monument after the pyramid of Cheops, collapsed in 1982 after water lying only three feet beneath the desert floor dissolved the gypsum that bound the covering to the monument's stone center.

- Workers at the temple of the ram-headed god Khnum in Esna last year had to use hammers and chisels to chip away a one-inch crust of salt covering its entire base. Nakhla said his department has developed a silt-and-sand paste that absorbs the salts from affected walls and chemical "fixers" that protect the paint and murals. A row of luxury hotels built recently near the sphinx on the outskirts of Cairo have installed modern sewage systems and helped to lower the water table around the monument. The worst problems are in southern Egypt along the 160-mile stretch of Nile Valley between the High Aswan Dam and the temple of the love god Hathor at Dendera. Each morning the grounds around the 2,200 year old temples started by Rhamses II are found soggy as though a gardener had been watering them with a hose.

(Miami Herald, 1987)

- PARTING NOTE FROM EDITOR - For the past two years, it has been my pleasure to be the editor of the SWFAS Newsletter. Now, however, I will be turning this responsibility over to the very capable Arthur Lee.

- Please continue to give Art the same support that I have received in the past. The more you as individuals contribute, the better our Newsletter will be.

- I would like to thank you all for your many kind comments about the newsletter. Special thanks go to Isabelle Felsberg for her continual support and contributions, Gail Strader for her assistance with the mailings, and most importantly to my wife Joyce Doering, for all her help in typing, folding, sealing, and infinite patience in meeting the Newsletter deadlines each and every month.

- Thank you all very much!

- MEMBERSHIP - If you would like to become a member of SWFAS, please write to P.O. Box 9965, Naples, FL 33941 and we will be glad to send you an application.