Twentieth Century Florida Encounters the Elusive Calusa

The first and most visible phase of the Year of the Indian Education Program is done for this school year.

On the afternoon of April 27, 1990, by the time the last school bus had transported its last load of children out of the past at Pineland and back into the present world of Lee County, over 3,000 students and their teachers had taken active part in an introduction to prehistory and the disciplines of archaeology.

The introductory unit had made its way through department heads, to school representatives, to in-service teacher workshops, and into the classes themselves, with enthusiastic support and response at all levels.

The classroom presentations included a University of Florida-produced 7½ minute video entitled "Archaeology in the Field," which used footage from the excavation of the Tatham Mound, north of Tampa, to explain field procedure. Not that 7½ minutes is enough, but in this case, bearing in mind the video sophistication of modern children, pictures were worth thousands of words.

The film was followed by interpretation of a selection of cultural materials including artifacts, zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical material, and soil samples, and a carefully controlled "hands-on" examination of these materials for adults and children, followed, in turn, by a series of slides that reviewed and pin-pointed key aspects of the introductory subject matter.

Teachers attended these presentations with notebooks, tape recorders, and sometimes video cameras. They explained that they had searched, in vain, even in college level American History texts, for comprehensive units on prehistory and on the archaeology that unravels prehistory.

Many had had to resort to the misinformation of quasi-archaeologists who portray themselves to the public as experts, but are, in fact, little more than sensationalists, or to the well-intentioned but misguided device of sand-box digs and similar simulated "dig" projects. These efforts are usually more like Easter egg hunts, encouraging children to root around in the dirt until they find something interesting, promoting object rather than context orientation.

The Year of the Indian program generated its information through the control and discipline of the legitimate archaeological community and engaged an entire county school system, rather than one or two eager teachers here or there. In doing so it provided up-to-date information, making it available to the entire community of teachers.

Through the kindness and foresight of Garfield Beckstead of Useeppa Island and Pat and Don Randell, present owners of most of the Pineland site, many students had the special privilege of visiting genuine digs in progress, observing proper

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Twenty-first Century Florida Encounters the Elusive Calusa

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procedures, and discussing the reasons for those procedures.

By the fall of 1990, copies of the video, the slides, a kit of some of the cultural materials, interpretive scripts, an accurate time-line, and a small textbook on prehistoric life in southwest Florida will be available to the public at all levels of interest and ability. These introductory resources will be used in conjunction with a second unit on the local prehistoric environment, and a third unit on prehistoric people in that environment.

Through its special relationship with Lee County, the Southwest Florida Project has made a good start at public outreach and education, and it has learned a great deal in the process. There is, alas, as yet no structure in place to expand its educational programs to other counties, all of which need them badly.

Expansion beyond Lee County does not depend on proposals as elaborate at that of the Year of the Indian, it depends on modest, continuing-education funds and a commitment from each county school board to accept the responsibility for its own ancient heritage.

The Southwest Florida Project can help. We have the experience, now, to review the practical worth of implementation and funding proposals. Please contact us.

The children appear to be one of the last real hopes for any significant preservation of what little is left of the natural environment and the cultural resources preserved within it. Help us to continue what was well begun, but is far, far from done.

CALUSA NEWS

Editor: Dr. William Marquardt, Project Director

Text and Photography: Charles Blanchard and William Marquardt

Designer: Bob Bird

Typography: Claudine Payne

Production: Information and Publications Services University of Florida

For more information, call (904) 392-7188, or write Southwest Florida Project, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.

The school children climbed up the mounds, walked through the plazas, and strolled next to the ancient canal.
Dear Dr. Marguerite,

Thank you for sending Charlie Blanchard to talk to our kids about the Calusa Indians and about archaeology work and what they do. One of my friends said she wanted to be an archaeologist and be good at it. Well, I have to go now. Bye!

Sincerely,
Loren Pugh

---

Fourth and fifth grade students peer into the past as Year of the Indian education coordinator Chuck Blanchard (hat and dark shirt, center) explains the excavation procedures.

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Dear Mrs. Randall,

I really loved your tour on the Calusa Indians. In the fourth grade, I did some research on the Calusa Indians, but you taught me a lot that I didn’t know. I really enjoyed the mounds. It was a real privilege. I would love to come again.

Sincerely,
Meghan Lucas

---

Listen to the Indians cry.
The Spanish reign said they must die.
Forced into slavery
Killed by disease
Only wanting their land and their trees.
They once existed
They once roamed
On the land that I now call home.

Julie Ousley, age 13.
Each morning, a boat provided by Useppa Island brought 10 volunteers from the mainland to help with the Useppa excavations.

Issue #4 of the Calusa News promised that Useppa Island would provide "an exciting prospect for the accumulation of much new knowledge," when the Southwest Florida Project began its new archaeological investigations there in the fall of last year. This has certainly turned out to be true.

From October 15 through December 15, 1989, project director William Marquardt and his field assistant, Corbett Terrence, aided by a daily boatload of ten volunteers from the mainland and a handful of stalwart islanders, peeled back 4,800 years of shell, soil, and sand to reveal some fascinating clues to the island's prehistoric past.

Five thousand years before the present is considered to be a time that lies within the "Archaic" occupational period in southwest Florida. So little is known about coastal formation and early Indian settlements of that time that each screenful of midden material and every ten centimeter level of excavation is packed with new information for scientists.

Flakes of fire-treated chert just under the surface of the underlying dune hint at the possibility of even earlier occupation, perhaps millennia before the bountiful estuary surrounded what is now Useppa Island.

Oyster shell and fishbone in the earliest midden samples give rise to the old questions of just how far the high ground on Useppa really was from the sea in the Middle Archaic period. Were the Indians using the high ground as a hunting site and eating a few fish and oysters brought from the distant coast? Or was the sea already at their feet?

A workshop floor dated to 3,350 years ago shows work stations containing conch and whelk shells, hammers, cutting-edged tools, columnellas, and the debitage, or debris, associated with the manufacture of such tools, in other words, a complete linear sequence of tool making. Such workshops were predicted by Milanich and Chapman as a result of their exploratory work on Useppa in the late 1970s.

What is exciting to archaeologists is the early date for such activity, indicating that elaborate shell tool manufacture was already a fact in the Late Archaic period.

No one was ready for the public attention paid to a human burial which came to light about the same time the workshop was unearthed. Modern folk came from miles around (some by helicopter) to observe a 5' 7" tall aboriginal male who appeared, at first, to have been buried during the Archaic period.

If this had been the case, he would have represented the oldest and best preserved burial on the southwest coast of Florida. As it turned out, Carbon-14 testing of his remains later revealed that he had, in fact, died around A.D. 600. His preservation is still remarkable though his age is not quite so dramatic.

Useppa

He would have been alive during early mound-building episodes at Pineland, only 1 1/2 hours away by canoe, and might well have seen those events at first hand. What questions he might answer for us if only we knew how to ask him.

Carbon testing was also used to determine the age of a large fire pit feature that took up a significant portion of the Useppa hilltop operation. Original speculation was that it was of recent historic origin, perhaps associated with the Collier golf course, but it turned out to date from the mid 1600s. This places it in the time of early Spanish fishing trade on the southwest coast and suggests that it might have served as a beacon.

Some tantalizing information and many, many more questions lie in the material gathered at Useppa. Analysis is what is required, but analysis requires time, a skilled staff, and funding. We have the first two ingredients. The real answers to the riddles of Useppa await the third ingredient. We hope, not in vain.

About 1400 years ago, a man in his thirties died and was buried deep in the shell midden at Useppa Island. His remains were discovered during the 1989 excavations.
Island

A chilly morning in October found Evelyn Uhlinger (Venice) and L. S. Robinson (Fort Myers) hard at work excavating on Useppa Island.

UPDATE

Here is a brief summary of project activities since our last report in Calusa News no. 4 (December, 1989).

November, 1989: Excavation continued at Useppa Island under the direction of Bill Marquardt, assisted by Corbett Torrence. On November 4 Bill entertained members of the Lee County Science Education Association on Useppa with a slide presentation and tour of the excavations. On November 9 papers on our research were presented at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in Tampa by Ann Cordell, Bill Marquardt, Lee Newsom, Mike Russo, Margie Scarry, and Karen Jo Walker. Calusa News no. 4 went to press on November 15. November 24 was a special press day at Useppa.

December, 1989: On December 2 Bill journeyed to Pineland where he spoke to the Princeton Club of Southwest Florida, and on December 6 he appeared with Patti Bartlett on a WINK television program about the project. Excavations continued at Useppa. Visitors included Charlie Wilson, Glen Doran, Steve Hale, Melissa Massaro, and Laura Kozuch. Excavations also continued at Horr’s Island under the direction of Mike Russo, assisted by Ashley Swift, and the architectural survey of John Foley Horr’s tabby house remains was accomplished by Susan Tate and Hershel Shepard (U.F. School of Architecture), with archival research.

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In mid-March, 1990, a week or so after the Year of the Indian dig had begun at Pineland, oral historian Bob Edic and assistant dig director Corbett Torrence were fortunate to record an interview with G.W. Hyatt, previous owner of the land now owned and maintained by Pat and Don Randell. Dr. Hyatt revealed in detail how he had altered the shape of the Pineland site during his tenancy in the 1950s, using parts of standing mounds to fill in low spots and wet areas.

Close study of his testimony, combined with repeated examination of stereoscopic aerial photos from 1944, and careful reading and re-reading of the Frank H. Cushing text from 1897, began to uncover, at last, the original shapes and spatial relationships within this complex, coastal Indian town.

Dig director Karen Walker had already initiated test trenches and excavation operations at several strategic new locations across the site. These not only produced further artifactual and zooarchaeological evidence for a maritime, fishing-oriented Indian culture at Pineland, but also tended to confirm the overall picture suggested by the comments of Cushing and Hyatt.

This exciting information is bound to influence the excavation strategy of future work at Pineland, but no less exciting is a sampling of some of the cultural material unearthed during the two-month-long dig.

Spectacular shell tools were found, including a fishing sinker of unusual length, pointed at one end, a rare, intact Pleurolopa (horse conch) woodworking plane, a razor sharp Pleurolopa gouge, shell net-mesh gauges, the first hafted fighting conch hammer ever excavated at Pineland, and surf clam as well as sunray venus clam knives and fish-scaling tools.

In the damp, organically rich midden deposits nearer the water table, deer bone artifacts, including compound hook elements in remarkable stages of preservation, were recovered.

These damp middens also provided waterlogged wood fragments, raising the fascinating prospect of preserved wooden artifacts from future excavations at Pineland.

Abundant pottery sherds of diverse and distant origin continued to suggest the commercial importance of Pineland to its original inhabitants.

Post molds, which are a clue to the nature of prehistoric structures, were confirmed in four locations, and a linear arrangement of post holes, associated with an apparent living floor, turned up during the last days of the dig.

A suspected Indian cemetery on the site was investigated and revealed evidence of near total disturbance by looters. This is an old, sad story in southwest Florida.

So complicated a site! So much potential new information! Such limited resources, alas, for the recovery of that information through analysis.

The better part of three seasons of dig material from Pineland are undergoing analysis, interpretation, and curation at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. Funding for digging is always more readily forthcoming than funding for analysis, yet it behooves the Southwest Florida Project not to return to Pineland until analysis of present material is complete. A grant proposal for a second phase of the Year of the Indian has been submitted, with analysis, curation, publications, and exhibits as high priorities. We will once again call upon all of you to voice your support for the project's continuation.

Archaeology is Time Travel for all of us. We need your help to maintain a smooth, uninterrupted flight into Florida's marvelous past while we preserve it for our future.
UPDATE
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done by Lucy Wayne. Arlene Fradkin wrote an exhibit script called Pine Island Sound: Past and Present for the Museum of the Islands. Calusa News no. 4 was mailed on December 15. The Useppa dig closed on December 18, and Corbett and Bill returned to Gainesville on December 20. Visitors to the Florida Museum labs included Bud House, Shirley House, and Sylvia Ansay (December 21) and Bill Cyzewski, Mary Sims, and family (December 28). Bob Edic organized an exhibit of artifacts for the Lighthouse Museum Open House and Art Show, Boca Grande, December 29-31.

January, 1990: Bill Marquardt hosted Marilyn Stewart's "Florida Indians" class from Rollins College on January 9 and lectured to Elder Hostel in Gainesville on January 26. Ann Poulos (the Anthropology department's registrar and collections manager) and Arlene Fradkin (the project's liaison with local museums) assisted staff and volunteers of Museum of the Islands in preparation for the grand opening of their museum. On January 17 Mike Russo presented a slide show on recent excavations at Horr's Island for the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society, Naples. Lab work continued on materials excavated at Pineland in 1989. The Horr's Island crew finished excavations and returned to Gainesville. John Hann's book Missions to the Calusa, containing translations of Spanish documents relevant to southwest Florida and the Calusa, was accepted by University Presses of Florida for publication. Bob Edic and Chuck Blanchard conducted an educational program for park rangers at Gasparilla Island State Park, Boca Grande.

February, 1990: The grand opening of Museum of the Islands, Pine Island, was attended by Corbett Torrence and Arlene Fradkin, while Bill Marquardt was kept busy in Gainesville hosting four consultants on museum conservation funded by a grant from the Institute for Museum Services. Mike Russo completed a preliminary report on Horr's Island and submitted it to Ronto Developments Marco. Chuck Blanchard spent February in Fort Myers lecturing to school children about the archaeology and environment of southwest Florida. Preparations were made for the Pineland field season.

March, 1990: Bill, Corbett, and Karen Jo drove to Fort Myers on March 2 to begin the Pineland dig. Work began on March 7, assisted by many volunteers. Visitors to the site in March included Steve Hale, Alan May, Melissa Massaro, and Margie Scarry. On March 15 Jan and Robin Brown of Fort Myers received the Craighead Award from the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society in recognition of their unfailing support of archaeology and paleontology. Bill spoke to the Audubon Society on March 15, appeared on WBBH-TV on March 20, and spoke to the Timesifers Archaeology Society in Sarasota on March 27. Bob Edic continued his oral history research, but found time to set up an artifact exhibit March 24-25 at the Placida seafood festival.

April, 1990: Excavations continued at Pineland, with daily visits by elementary school children, and volunteer field and lab work by approximately 30 persons/day. The work was filmed by Imbe Productions April 4-7. Site visitors included cultural anthropologist Peggy Overby and archaeologists Cheryl Claassen, Jim Petersen, and James Poetzinger. Bill gave a talk to the Sanibel Kiwanis Club on April 4, and he and Bob Edic set up an exhibit for Caloosahatchee River Days at the Nature Center of Lee County April 7-8. Karen Jo gave a talk to the Museum of the Islands, Pine Island, on April 11. Papers were presented April 28 at the annual meeting of the Florida Anthropological Society by Chuck Blanchard, Bob Edic, Corbett Torrence, and Karen Jo Walker, and Bill Marquardt provided the banquet speech. At the banquet Bill was presented the Bullen Award for encouraging interaction between professional and avocational archaeologists and advancing knowledge of Florida history and prehistory. Sunday, April 29 was an "open house" at Pineland, and many F.A.S. members stopped by to view the excavations. Ann Cordell completed her detailed ceramics analysis on materials excavated 1984-1989.

May, 1990: The Pineland crew returned to Gainesville on May 6. Preliminary sorting and analysis began on the Useppa Island artifacts excavated in 1989, and lab work on Pineland-1989 continued under the supervision of Elise LeCompte. Bill was in Port Charlotte May

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12 to give a talk to the Southwest Florida Fossil Club, and Lee Newsom gave a talk in Naples May 16 on archaeological wood and charcoal for the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society. Ken Horne (student intern, Nature Center of Lee County) visited the museum to photograph artifacts for the Nature Center's multi-media slide show. Papers were presented at the International Council for Archaeology meetings in Washington by Irv Quitmeyer (May 22) and Karen Jo Walker (May 23). Karen Jo and Bill did research on southwest Florida collections at the Smithsonian Institution, then in Philadelphia at the University Museum and the Wagner Free Institute of Science May 24-29. The Project's labs were moved temporarily to the third floor of the museum to make room for the installation of movable cabinets and shelving in the Department of Anthropology. Assisted by Arlene Fradkin and work-study student Lisa Dorr, Corbett processed over 1200 clam shells recovered in the Useppa excavations and readied them for seasonality analysis. Work-study student Arlene Rodriguez began work on data entry. Zooarcheologist Susan deFrance was hired to assist Melissa Massaro with the Pineland and Useppa analysis.

June, 1990: The bulk of the artifact analysis for the Horr Island project was completed by June, and attention was turned to data analysis, report writing, and the preparation of many detailed maps. Meanwhile, the Horr's Island zooarcheology (Laura Kozuch, Irv Quitmeyer) and archaeobotany (Lee Newsom) research continued. Margie Scarry (archaeobotany) continued work on the Useppa flotation samples. Bill Marquardt spent the early part of June writing a proposal for continued support for the Year of the Indian project. If funding is granted, the new project will begin in the fall of 1991. Chuck Blanchard, assisted by Bob Edic, conducted a teacher training course June 18-22 in cooperation with the Fort Myers Historical Museum. Dale Hutchinson completed his detailed study of the Useppa Island burial excavated in 1989. Claudine Payne resumed her editorial work on monograph chapters and assisted with the preparation of Calusa News no. 5.

In Appreciation

We list the members of the Calusa Constituency -- those who give at least $10 per year towards the research, preservation, and education work of the Southwest Florida Project -- on pages 9 and 10. Thank you all for your continuing support, and a special welcome to those who sent in a contribution for the first time this year. A separate list of volunteer workers appears on page 11. We often say that volunteers are the backbone of the project; we truly couldn't do any of this without you.

We want to offer a special word of thanks to those without whose special efforts we could not have accomplished what we have in the past few months. Garfield Beckstead provided free boat transportation for our volunteers for the eight-week Useppa excavation season, as well as a laboratory trailer and free lodging for Bill Marquardt and Corbett Torrence. The fine staff of Useppa Island facilitated our research in every possible way. Don and Pat Randell were hospitable hosts at the Pineland site, as their property was turned into a veritable circus of activity (complete with big top) of archaeologists, volunteers, visitors, school children, film makers, and reporters.

Bill Hammond, Rick Tully, and others of the Environmental Education program of the Lee County School System deserve our heartfelt thanks for coordinating the school visits and providing bus transportation. Steve Franklin and his film crew (Imbue Productions, Inc.) worked above and beyond the call of duty (and compensation) to capture The Year of the Indian research and educational experience on film and videotape. Although we enjoyed excellent press coverage throughout the year, Linda Bailou (Pine Island Eagle) and Marilyn Hoekel (Boca Beacon) deserve our special thanks for contributing exceptionally readable and accurate portrayals of all the activities of the project in 1989-1990.

Jan and Robin Brown continued to provide a cozy home away from home -- our project headquarters house at 2108 Broadway, Fort Myers. Paul and Warren Miller's gift of $5,000, matched 3:1 by Hewlett-Packard, enabled us to purchase two computers, a scanner, and a laserjet printer, which are greatly increasing our efficiency in lab analysis and report preparation. The Department of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, provided a truck for the project's use. Sam Proctor, director of the U.F. Oral History Program, agreed to archive and transcribe the interviews conducted by Bob Edic on Charlotte Harbor fisherfolk.

The Florida Museum of Natural History provided its 30' x 30' tent for our use as an outdoor field laboratory at Pineland. Kelly Tractor Company donated the use of a backhoe on two occasions, which greatly helped our work at Pineland. Michael Hunsinger, Barbara Toomey, Reed Toomey, Betty Anholt, Jan Brown, and Jack Gaddy are thanked for helping with local community relations and communication. Kay Young and Jan Brown greatly assisted in our lobbying effort in Tallahassee on behalf of the Year of the Indian project. Countless people wrote and called their legislative representatives in support of the project. We thank you all. Your letters and cards do make a difference!

Ronto Developments Marco, which sponsored the work at Horr's Island, cooperated in every imaginable way with our excavation crews. A pontoon boat was made available to us, backhoe and labor services well beyond our budget were provided free, and Ronto staff, especially Ray Harris, were always willing to work with us to help minimize impact on archaeological resources and maximize knowledge gained from excavations. Special thanks are due Art and Lynn Lee for organizing volunteers and coordinating the volunteer laboratory work at the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society's Craighead Laboratory.

The Nature Center of Lee County admirably handled all the details of administering The Year of the Indian project. U.F.'s Division of Sponsored Research efficiently handled our accounts and sub-contracts with Ronto and the Nature Center. Christy Morris and Paul Seabrook (University of Florida Foundation) managed our accounts smoothly, and Dara Silverberg and Darlene Novak (Florida Museum of Natural History) were particularly helpful in dealing with expenditures on our two main projects. Thank you one and all!
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Dear Friends,

The past year was a very active one for the Southwest Florida Project. The summer was spent in lab analysis and writing, and in preparing for the Year of the Indian and Horr’s Island projects. A volume by John Hann on southwest Florida ethnology (Missions to the Calusa), was completed and will be published by University Presses of Florida in 1991. The volume is an important source book on sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century southwest Florida documents, some never before published in Spanish or English. The third and fourth issues of Calusa News were published in 1989.

The Year of the Indian project is meeting and exceeding our expectations. Volunteer laborers excavated portions of two prehistoric sites — Useppa Island (fall, 1989) and Pineland (spring, 1990). The public was allowed and encouraged to visit the excavations. Over 350 different people worked a total of 10,891 volunteer hours at the two sites!

At Useppa we excavated a 32 square meter area in the oldest known site on the southwest Florida coast, documenting an early shell-tool manufacturing industry, ca. 2500-500 B.C. Pre-shell mound deposits date to a time before the estuary was near the present island. Coupled with our geoarchaeological data, this site allows an unprecedented opportunity to reconstruct mid- to late Holocene climatic changes.

At the Pineland site (ca. A.D. 300 - 1600) we succeeded in excavating and documenting the first prehistoric structural floors ever found in southwest Florida. We also identified late sixteenth century artifacts from Pineland’s burial mound, and tested a never-before-documented mound nearby.

This year our education program directly involved 2,810 students, 180 teachers, and 45 schools and other educational organizations. Thirty-nine classroom lectures were given, and 27 classes of fourth and fifth graders, a total of 950 children, visited the Pineland site.

In the fall (1990) we will continue to work with public school teachers to develop instructive units on southwest Florida’s past for elementary school pupils. A Nature Center summer program (1990) is focused on the Indian heritage of southwest Florida. A multi-media show on the Indian past is being developed for the Nature Center’s planetarium.

We were able to assist the Museum of the Islands Historical Society in establishing a “Calusa Room” in their new museum on Pine Island, which opened in February. Indian artifacts are being duplicated for use in exhibits and the summer program.

Our oral history project continued in 1989-1990 with extensive recorded interviews conducted by Bob Edic with senior fishermen and women in Charlotte Harbor/Pine Island Sound. The Oral History Program at the University of Florida (Sam Proctor, Director) is archiving the tapes and producing typed transcripts. When the interviews are finished, a report will be prepared.

We are very excited about the Horr’s Island project, sponsored by Ronto Developments Marco, which involved excavation of several sites. Three months of excavations ran from October 1, 1989 to January 7, 1990, focused on both the historic site area and the prehistoric shell middens. The Horr’s Island Archaic village site extends over ½ mile in length, including deep shell deposits, fire pits, and posts of structures. Mound A, which contains burials and extensive caps of sand and shell, dates to 2300 B.C., and may be the earliest burial mound in the U.S. Preliminary data suggest year-round occupation on the southwest Florida coast and an unexpected level of complexity for the Late Archaic period, a situation mirrored at Useppa Island.

All of the above excavations and studies will result in publications for lay persons, scientists, and historians; analysis is currently in progress on materials from Useppa, Pineland, and Horr’s Island. Meanwhile, a monograph reporting our first five years’ testing program is nearing completion.

If you have recently contributed, we thank you for your help. Because of your generosity, we are learning about southwest Florida’s past and sharing that information with hundreds and hundreds of adults and children. As they learn more about the Indians, they also learn more about their environment, about how precious it is and how it needs to be protected, today more than ever.

There is much, much more to be done, and we need your continuing support. Proper analysis, curation, artifact conservation, and publication are expensive, but must be done before we can consider beginning major new excavation projects. If you can help with a tax-deductible contribution, please do so now. An envelope for your gift is enclosed with this newsletter. Thanks again.

For the Southwest Florida Project team,

Sincerely,

Bill Marquardt,
Project Director

WILLIAM H. MARQUARDT
The Florida Museum of Natural History
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611 USA