

HPCOSC Award Nomination: Dr. George Luer
Category: Archaeological Conservancy

The Warm Mineral Springs/Little Salt Spring Archaeological Society and Sarasota County Historical Resources nominates George Luer for the Archaeological Conservancy Award for his lifelong contributions to Florida archaeology, education, and preservation initiatives.

Nomination

Dr. George Luer has been a practicing avocational and professional archaeologist in southwest Florida for more than 40 years. He received his M.A. (1997) and PH.d (2007) in Anthropology from the University of Florida (UF). His interest in archaeology began as a child growing up on Sarasota Bay at the Old Oak Site, a Weeden Island and Safety Harbor period shell midden.

George began to conduct long-term research in Southwest Florida at the Old Oaks Site in 1973 and his first article was published in 1977 in the Ripley P. Bullen Memorial Issue of the *Florida Anthropologist* titled *Excavation of the Old Oak Site, Sarasota, Florida: A Late Weeden Island-Safety Harbor Period Site*. Over the years, he went on to publish his research as author and co-author on numerous sites along the mainland shore and barrier islands of Roberts Bay, Longboat Key, Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor, and along the rivers and creeks that feed them.

His research interests are extensive, resulting in numerous publications that have contributed to our understanding of southwest Florida prehistory. Most archaeologists choose a single material type to study; George hasn't narrowed down his interests yet, having published on everything from faunal analysis and the symbology on ceremonial tablets, to shell tool manufacturing discussions and helping to refine the typology of ceramics, even helping to define a culture. His research in Sarasota and Manatee Counties helped to define our regional Manasota Period culture in the seminal article with Marion Almy, *Definition of the Manasota Culture* (1982).

He has authored and co-authored articles on all these subjects, many of us cite his publications on a regular basis. The list of sites and resulting publications from his research to date is too numerous to list. He's written and edited five special publications in *The Florida Anthropologist*, the journal of the Florida Anthropological Society (FAS). He served as president of FAS from 1990 - 1992 and held many board and committee positions. He continues to work with FAS editors and authors on their journal articles, inspiring and encouraging student, avocational, and professional archaeologists to publish their research and still working with many to help them do so.

He has worked with local organizations such as Time Sifters Archaeological Society at the Bay Oaks Site and Historic Spanish Point; the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society at the Randell Research Center at the Calusa Pineland site; the Warm Mineral Springs/Little

Salt Spring Archaeological Society on research at Little Salt Spring. One article “Three Middle Archaic Sites in North Port,” led to the public acquisition of five-acres of land adjacent to Little Salt Spring, which contains the Archaic campsites of the people interred in the spring.

Dr. Luer is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Florida Anthropological Society Ripley P. Bullen Memorial Award (2014), designed to recognize professional archaeologists who foster the spirit of Ripley Bullen by furthering good working relationships among avocational and professional archaeologists in Florida; and, the William C. Lazarus Memorial Award (1993), designed to recognize members of FAS who exemplify the spirit and accomplishments of William Lazarus through their contributions to archaeology, historic preservation, and/or education as well as to FAS and the wider community.

2016 Sarasota County Heritage Awards: Archaeological Conservancy

Nominee: Dr. George M. Luer

“From Bradenton to Punta Gorda, Luer is the only doctorate in archaeology devoted to studying the extinct Indian tribes in Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte counties. The 55-year-old’s knowledge of local Indian cultures is unsurpassed and he is considered a statewide authority on Indian pottery and shell tools, but a reticence for publicity makes him one of the region’s least-known scientific experts.”

“Englewood Archaeologists Show Off Their Bones” by Zac Anderson, *Herald Tribune*, 2/8/2011

George Luer published his first journal article in 1977 at age 21 based on excavations he conducted on the Indian mound at his parent’s home on Sarasota Bay. He has continued his research and publications about archaeological sites in Sarasota County and Southwest Florida to this day, with over 50 publications to his name.

In the early 1980s he collaborated with Sarasota archaeologist Marion Almy on a series of articles that redefined the native culture of the region with a new term: The "Manasota" people. Luer and Almy identified 25 archaeological sites around Tampa Bay and between Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor as belonging to the Manasota culture, overturning an earlier understanding of the region and enriching what we know of our pre-historic past.

George has worked with many people (professional and avocational archaeologists, and collectors) to produce new knowledge about many topics, such as canoe canals, shell artifacts, post-contact metal artifacts, ceramics, iconography, mortuary practices, and shell middens and mounds. He has furthered research in coastal geomorphology, radiocarbon dating, and zooarchaeology. All of this has revealed more of our heritage, especially about native people such as the Calusa, Tocobaga, their neighbors, and predecessors who inhabited the environs we now call Sarasota County.

George has been an untiring advocate for preservation of our local archaeological heritage from his consultations with property owners to his advice to governmental bodies. He has worked to identify and document sites across Sarasota County and preserve the information they contain. He helped raise awareness leading to the development of preservation ordinances.

As he has on innumerable occasions over the years for many organizations and at many venues, this past summer at Phillippi Estate Park George donated his time and expertise to contribute to our knowledge of the past peoples of Florida, willingly responding to questions and sharing his knowledge with archaeologists, students, and the public.

“George is totally unique in the archaeological community. He doesn’t work for a university or a management firm. He has, since the 1970s, been devoted to archaeology in his backyard and he is now considered one of the premier archaeologists in Florida.” - Bob Austin, a Tampa Bay archaeologist who works as a private consultant.

These are just a few highlights of how Dr. George M. Luer has made an outstanding effort to preserve and document Sarasota County’s past. He is well deserving of this award.