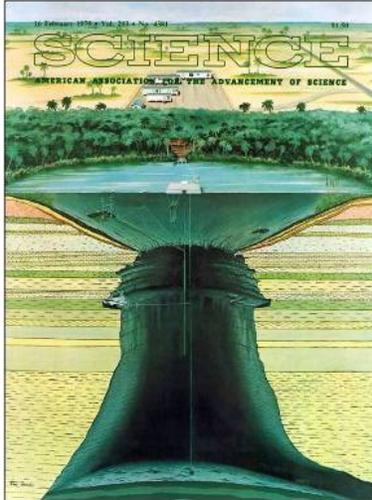


**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA — FALL 2009**



Steve Koski is a Research Associate with University of Miami and serves as an underwater archaeologist and site manager at Little Salt Spring. Steve came to Florida in 1985 as a graduate assistant from Arizona State University on a remote sensing survey with Dr. Rey Ruppe looking for submerged archaeological sites off Venice Beach.

Interview #1

Interview with:	Steve Koski
Date of Interview:	October 26, 2009
Interviewer:	Anna Hamilton
Subject of Interview:	Little Salt Springs
Date of Transcription:	October 27, 2009
Transcriber:	Anna Hamilton

HAMILTON: Would you identify and introduce yourself?

KOSKI: My name is Steve Koski and I'm a research associate at the University of Miami at the Little Salt Spring Research Facility.

HAMILTON: And you work here at Little Salt Springs?

KOSKI: Yes.

HAMILTON: And what do you do here on a daily basis?

KOSKI: I'm site manager, resident archaeologist, and research associate.

HAMILTON: So on a day-today-basis what kind of duties would you have?

KOSKI: On a day-to-day basis I could be diving with students. I could be on the 27 meter ledge with Dr. Gifford and other science divers. I could be in the lab processing specimens, I could be out giving a lecture-presentation to the Kiwanis or the Daughters of the American Revolution, or the North Port Library or Jacaranda Library. I could be doing a tour, a site tour for the central gulf coast archaeological society, the Warm Mineral Springs Archaeological Society, or other civic group. I could be out mowing the lawn, I could be out carving trails, I could be out clearing the creek. I could be out doing anything that needs to be done, as the sole staff here.

HAMILTON: Thank you. And where are you originally from?

KOSKI: Central Massachusetts... Fitchburg, and I moved to Martha's Vineyard when I graduated from high school, and my family is there now.

HAMILTON: And what brought you to Florida and to North Port?

KOSKI: I was brought to Florida in 1985 as a graduate research assistant with my professor at Arizona State University, Dr. Rey Ruppé who got a National Science Foundation grant to do a remote sensing survey off Venice Beach. And at Venice Beach, Skip Wood and “Sonny” Cockrell came for a dive on a ledge system out there, and Ray had worked with Sonny excavating the 10,200-year burial on the 40-foot ledge at Warm Mineral Springs. Sonny also did some graduate work at Arizona State University, where I did my graduate work, and Sonny asked me if I wanted a job when we were out on the boat when I completed my course work and qualifying exams. I moved to Venice and began working at North Port with Sonny at Warm Mineral Springs at the Florida State University Warm Mineral Springs Archaeological Project in 1986.

HAMILTON: But what specifically interested you about the site?

KOSKI: I specialized in drowned terrestrial sites, or underwater habitation sites. And both Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Springs are very intriguing... They’re very interesting, they’re some of the oldest sites in Florida and I was interested in the first arrivals to Florida and the early adaptations and settlement systems, and I like to combine coastal underwater work with archaeological research.

HAMILTON: Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the of the spring?

KOSKI: Specifically Little Salt Spring?

HAMILTON: Mm-hm.

KOSKI: Both Warm Mineral and Little Salt springs were identified as archaeological sites in the late 1950s—1958 or 1959, by the late Colonel William Royal, who started to dive these underwater sites and found stalactites in their cavernous overhang ledges with associated human remains and artifacts and he speculated that those would date to a very early time period and the caverns were once dry and visited by some of the earliest inhabitants in Florida and he speculated that to be 10,000 years old. A lot of the controversy was over the antiquity of the deposits, and he brought early researchers in that didn’t believe they were that old and he didn’t get a lot of credibility until later in the 1970s, when Cockrell and Clausen, the first researchers to take a good look at the sites and confirm that the antiquity did date back to the Pleistocene or around 10,000 or 11,000 years old and there were different components to both sites. Both Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Springs have different morphological, paleontological, archaeological similarities as well as considerable differences that are specific to the site ledges.

HAMILTON: So why is Little Salt Springs of a unique character for this area?

KOSKI: It’s very unique because, number one, it’s a geological feature that has persisted through the millennia, it’s a feature that was recognized, identified as a landmark very early in its history going back at least 11,000 years and up to 12- or 13,000 years ago. It has some of the earliest evidence of human occupation in Florida and in the Southeast. It served as an oasis for early visitors, it served as a known resource where folks could come and procure resources such as water and the animals and plants that came that needed that water to survive.

HAMILTON: And this is a very basic question, but when did people become interested in exploring the sink hole and the cavern?

KOSKI: The earliest explorer was the late Colonel Bill Royal, and he came with folks to explore the spring, to dive the spring to uncover some of the sediments to collect some of the material, and um, it really became known in the '60s. In 1960, he and Eugenie Clark, the founder of Cape Hayes Marine Center and Mote Marine Lab, came and dove and they wrote a paper "Human Brain from Warm Mineral Springs, FL" that was published in *American Antiquity* in 1960. Which didn't really draw terribly much excitement until the late 1960s and early '70s when Cockrell and Clausen started exploring these springs. Sonny at Warm Mineral Springs and Clausen first at Warm Mineral Springs in '71 and then at Little Salt from '71, '72, established a research facility in '75 and lived here from '75 to 1980.

HAMILTON: And right now, what is the status if Little Salt Spring?

KOSKI: Little Salt Springs is currently owned by the University of Miami. It's a 112-acre parcel that was donated to the University of Miami by General Development in 1982 and it's a pretty pristine environment and ecosystem and why we call it an environmental and archaeological preserve.

HAMILTON: And would you give me a description of what the spring looks like?

KOSKI: Well the driveway as you come in the entrance is a farm gate. There's a historic plaque out front. The driveway which I've cleared is a shell dirt driveway that traverses a winding dirt road of approximately 150 to 200 meters and there's an inside compound gate that's about an acre and a half and the entire spring.. there's an 8 foot fence around the circumference of the spring, about 30 meters offset, a circular fence. And within the spring and immediately surrounding it there's about a 21-acre parcel that consists of a pristine mixed bayhead hammock with red bay, sweet bay, dahoon holy, wax myrtle, oaks, cabbage palm, and an understory of up to five terrestrial ground orchids and is pretty much the result of a natural succession of vegetation that goes through the centuries and millennia since the spring formed up to 30,000 years ago.

HAMILTON: And the spring and lake itself... can you walk me through the slopes?

KOSKI: There's approximately 80-meter surface diameter with a 21-degree sloping basin that extends to about 40 feet. There's a central shaft that's a slight oval with a 30-meter diameter orifice that drops below a stalactite rim overhang with small ledges and caverns and expands to a 60-foot ledge around the entire circumference made out of a softer green clay which slightly expands at depth more to 90 feet where another, up to 5-meter cavernous ledge is present that water 12,000 years ago was apparent at that level and during that time, creatures were falling in and crawling up on that ledge and dying. So that ledge at 90 feet has an array of late Pleistocene megafauna and extant faunal remains and in '77 there was a wooden artifact that was found wedged between a plastron and carapace of a giant tortoise, *Geochelone* genus, and that stake dated to 12,030 years old which was surrounded by controversy based on its provenance, the dating between the stake and the carapace of the tortoise that is was found in... Whether it was in fact killed on the 27-meter ledge or perhaps had fallen in and floated to the edges where it

became incorporated into the sediment. Then you drop down to about 120 feet and the cavern opens to a bell shape and to about 250 feet on the edges and the bottom is almost the same diameter as the surface that starts at 198 feet and gradually expands in depth or descended in depth to approximately 248–250 feet.

HAMILTON: And it gets darker as you go down?

KOSKI: There's no ambient light below about 60 feet. You can look up and maybe see a shadow. If you're on the 90-foot ledge it's completely dark but if you get off the overhang and look up, you can sort of see ambient light, but it's pretty dark and pretty spooky.

HAMILTON: So can you tell me about diving, then? Because I know you've done a lot of diving.

KOSKI: I never get bored with diving here, just like I never get bored with walking the property, because you never know what you're going to see. I describe the spring and sort of surrounding spring in terms of vegetation, but there's also the remaining 80-something acres that were once tomato fields... and is large and pretty interesting in itself. The water in the basin has variable clarity and goes from 3 meters to up to 14 meters visibility. You can be on the drop-off at the ledge and look up and see the clouds and the trees, and sometime you can be on the dock and not see the platform at four feet deep. So there's a great amount of variation of visibility. Sometimes you can't see beyond your hand, other times you can see the entire basin quite clear. And you never know what you're gonna encounter. And in the basin it's different than diving the ledge, the ledge if it gets dark... Somebody asked me what it's like to be down there and I say it's like working on the dark side of the moon. It's very rocky, it's muddy... the clay slabs all over the ledge, there's no algae or vegetation, you have to bring your own lights and you're under an overhang. If you're in the back crevice you don't know if your bubbles are going to drop a block on your head because there are giant blocks of limestone and clay on the ledge. It's just a fascinating experience.

HAMILTON: That sounds very terrifying to me. Are there days when you think, "OK, maybe I should..."

KOSKI: I have had apprehensions until I get underwater. And once I get underwater all my apprehensions go away, and no matter where I am. It's like being in your living room watching TV and eating popcorn. I have had spooky moments, both at Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Springs. I guess the most recent visit by the boogeyman was in July of 2008 when I was in the back of the farthest cavern on the ledge, in against the wall, and we were installing a tarp, so when we would work our bubbles would cascade up the tarp and started scrubbing the ceiling above us where a large, cracked block of rock was and we had 4 divers in a row pulling a tarp. The overhang was probably two feet, so you had just enough room for your body and your tank and the visibility went out and something whispered in my ear, "You know you could die under here today." And for one split second I thought, "I gotta get out of here now." But you gather your wits and uh, and you go ahead, I realized I was on a task and if I went there would probably be other people who were with me who could help save me and I didn't want to abandon the mission. That tenth of a second passed and the rest of the dive went fine.

HAMILTON: So it does help to have that anchor of your team with you.

KOSKI: It does. But also, even if there's one or two people with you... I've made many dives with the Director of Research, Dr. Gifford, on the ledge and you just learn to be comfortable. It's the panic that overwhelms you that will kill you, generally not the conditions we're in.

HAMILTON: So your ability to collect your wits.

KOSKI: To maintain your wits is an important factor.

HAMILTON: I can understand. Why are you interested in doing underwater archaeological research as opposed to above water?

KOSKI: It's more difficult, it's more technical. I like the environment, I enjoy being in that environment. And it interests me. It's also the preservation—the preservation of saturated sites and wet site archaeology is unsurpassed in any terrestrial site other than possibly a cave in the Southwest. The anaerobic nature of peat in the water, the saturated nature and consistency and the nature of the material after deposition is what allows for that phenomenal preservation rate. So you have tissue—you have wood, fabric—you have things that are preserved that otherwise wouldn't be preserved. We have 9,200-year-old gourd fragments, um, that still have an exterior color. I've seen green beetle wings in the same context. Wooden stakes. Just the preservation is phenomenal.

HAMILTON: Have you made any big discoveries at Little Salt Springs?

KOSKI: Pretty much, I have made several. And if anyone were here they would laugh because usually when I pick something up in the lab I say, "I found this in..." So people say I've found everything, but I really haven't. I found one of the greenstone pendants, the first greenstone pendant we found here and the second greenstone pendant that had ever been found in the state, that I know of; one of the non-returning... one of the throwing sticks, several of the stakes, several of the wooden artifacts. I probably have the second most frequent dives in the spring, at least the third most frequent dives in the spring, so I've had more opportunity to find things.

HAMILTON: And can you tell me some of the significances? Like how these artifacts figure into a broader picture?

KOSKI: Many of the artifacts are unique and have never before been seen so there's a uniqueness to the artifacts. I talked about preservation. Two of our more significant artifacts are a geometrically-incised deer antler handle with a hole through it, sometimes called an atlatl handle, had the wooden shaft still in it. It dated, let me think, I can remember the calendrical data, the calibrated date of 7,900. We also had a banner stone, a limestone-carved artifact which is thought of as a counterweight for an atlatl—but there's controversy over the use functions of those artifacts—that also had the shaft still in it, a fraction of the wooden shaft that took up the size of the hole that also dated to 7,900 calendrical years. So we've got two rare artifacts, one of which type has never been found, two which I don't believe has ever been found with geometric designs inscribed with wood that was found inside and dated to almost 8,000 years ago, so those are significant. What it means in terms of human behavior, you can look at technology, you can speculate on some of the behaviors that were going on at that period, certainly at 12–15,000 you

have fully *Homo sapien sapiens* groups meandering through Florida on likely some type of migrational range that included this place because it was a predictable location for the acquisition of resources. When they would come here, we're still not fully sure, where they would go from here we're still not fully sure. With the late Pleistocene taking up ice in forms of the glaciers, the coast being up to 150 miles west, there was a lot of range for them to go. They likely accessed the coast to procure coastal resources, and this was just part of a known range that they would visit while they were here.

Interview #2

Interview with: Steve Koski
Date of Interview: October 30, 2009
Interviewer: Anna Hamilton
Subject of Interview: Little Salt Springs
Date of Transcription: November 7, 2009
Transcriber: Anna Hamilton

HAMILTON: Is there just one spring in Little Salt Spring?

KOSKI: No, there are probably several. “Little Salt Springs” is probably more appropriate, but the name of it is Little Salt Spring.

HAMILTON: Do you know why it’s called Little Salt Spring?

KOSKI: Little Salt Spring is probably named because it’s the sister to Warm Mineral Springs and it could be because it’s a little salty. It could also be it was Warm Mineral Springs was initially called Salt Springs, Big Salt, and things like that. So I think that Little Salt Spring came from Big Salt Springs because Warm Mineral Salt Springs came from Big Salt, even though this is a little bit bigger.

HAMILTON: Okay. Well, what I would like to ask you is reworded from our last interview. I would like you to describe the spring to somebody who has never been here or who doesn’t know much about it or necessarily know the anthropological and archaeological terminology.

KOSKI: The spring is a pond, a circular pond about 75–80 meters in diameter. It just looks like a pond from the surface but it’s actually a sinkhole, a cenote, that has a 40-foot basin with a 30-meter diameter central shaft that descends to 198 to 250 feet. Underneath that 40 foot drop-off (we call it) there is an overhang with a stalactite-rimmed ceiling, that goes back anywhere from 1-10 feet, so you can actually swim around the overhead drop off, and there are all little cavernous nooks and crannies and some of the stalactites actually form sheet flow, where it is just one big sheet of stalactite that you can actually get behind and swim around or swim into, The descent expands from 30 meters to about 65 foot where there’s a cavernous ledge that goes around and that could swim about two people side by side on this level of cavern zone. And then going down again deeper it expands more at approximately 90 feet where there’s more ledge. And on that ledge are where the extant and extinct Pleistocene faunal remains are located. And there is evidence of giant ground sloth and giant tortoise remains, *Megalonyx* species in ground sloth and *Geochelone* genus--uh, excuse me, *Megalonyx* genus and *Geochelone* genus. As well as a number of other mammalian remains and reptiles and amphibian bones and things, intermixed with freshwater mussel shells and charcoal and just before you get to the clay surface where the bones are distributed, there’s a thin sandy quartz that’s mixed in and we attribute that to demonstrating that it was once a dry cavern and the sand is blown in from the upper basin. And the charcoal likely got in from wind-driven fires that blew through and got distributed on the ledge as well. Then from 90 feet you descend to about 120 where it expands out again into a bell shape and the bottom diameter is almost as wide as the surface diameter and it’s basically a

wall of limestone and different geological bedding that accumulated over millions of years in Florida.

HAMILTON: Would you explain how water level has risen and how... I mean because people don't expect to find stalactites underwater, and we don't don't associate that with an underwater feature...

KOSKI: After the last high stand of water when water started to descend, when ocean water started to lower because of the last glacial period, you've got more snowfall than snow melt, and glaciers accumulate and don't deposit water back into the ocean, so you get a general lowering of the ocean up to 300 feet in the Pleistocene, a maximum of up to 18,000 years ago, and a lowering of up to 300 feet, and the continental shelf almost completely emerged in Florida, making it just about twice as wide as it is today. But 12,000 years ago, the spring water was 90 feet below present surface, 12,000 to 13,000 years ago, and then there was a relatively rapid rise from 12,000 to 10,500 and by 10,000 years ago it's about at the 40-foot drop off, or a little lower about 10,500 years ago, and so the water level has fluctuated due to the surface water, the surface water has fluctuated due to sea level. There's a correlation between the hydrostatic head, or the water in the spring, the Florida aquifer, the levels of the Floridan aquifer, and sea level.

HAMILTON: But what you're excavating now was formed at a dry period, in a dry atmosphere?

KOSKI: There are both wet and dry deposits. Some of the lowest sloping material, the archaic material that we're finding, the artifacts we're finding appear to be in a disturbed context and if they're six- to eight-thousand years old, the spring was probably formed around then. Water was in the basin near present levels and the creek began to flow at this time and deposits at this age were likely deposited in a wet environment. But the ledge material on the 90-foot ledge, was probably exposed for a time but there also may have been with the fresh water mussel shells, there may have been a foot or two of water, things could've fallen in, floated over to the edge, got caught, semi-submerged or sunk in a shallow environment. So there is probably both submerged and exposed deposits of cultural and paleontological remains.

HAMILTON: And could you paint me a picture of the cultural changes: how humans have used this area over time?

KOSKI: The first artifact, or the oldest artifact on the 90 foot ledge was a 12,030-year-old wood stake stuck between the plaster and carapace of an extinct tortoise that was believed to have been stuck in place and killed on the ledge and there was an early hypothesis that it was actually cooked in place. Today we don't necessarily believe that it was cooked in place, and we're looking at the initial, new 90 foot project that is National Geographic funded, we're investigating the utilization of the 90 foot ledge at 12,000 to 13,000 years ago and whether people were there or not. Most of the evidence comes from the basin. There were wooden stakes that date from 10,500 calibrated or calendrical years before present and there are also deposits and artifacts that date back to that same time period which are considered late Paleo. Then by the Middle Archaic, when water level was higher, people were actually living around the spring and burying their dead in the submerged peat deposits. So Little Salt Spring represents a mortuary pond site, one of five recognized in Florida, and the only place in the world that has underwater burials--

intentional burials—defined as mortuary ponds. And no other time period between the 6,000 and 8,000 or around 5,500 to 8,500 years ago does this occur in Florida or anywhere else in the world. And the northernmost is in Titusville (the Windover site) and that's a similar mortuary pond site as well.

HAMILTON: And I guess this kind of ties in, but Florida is known for its outcropping of springs, specifically in north Florida. Could you talk about how this is distinctly different?

KOSKI: Well, there are more springs in north Florida because of the limestone. The limestone is more surficial in central and northern Florida, so you've got a karstic topography in north Florida. The limestone is almost at the surface and there's a lot more solution activity. Down in south Florida here, there's up to 20 feet of sand, so the sinkholes haven't formed with the frequency as they have in the north. But we do have numerous springs both onshore and offshore, and there are springs that have been forming for thousands of years that just haven't opened up yet, and there's Warm Mineral Springs, there's another sink hole in North Port called the Nona site, there's a sink hole in the Myakka River, there are offshore sink holes, and so there's just less frequency because there's not as much karstic topography exposed near the surface.

HAMILTON: And how about the quality of the water that allows for such a specific preservation?

KOSKI: Archaeological preservation and paleontological preservation primarily due to a couple of factors. One because of the anaerobic, or low dissolved oxygen content, in the water, and two, the encapsulation in peat and sand which facilitates preservation and another—a third—preservation facilitator is the fact that there's a consistency of condition. There're like dry caves that have constant humidity, no sun, constant temperature. There's no wet/dry, sun/shade, or processes that affect the artifacts themselves.

HAMILTON: Is there much community interaction with you and your position and Little Salt Spring?

KOSKI: Right now, being the only staff... no. We have no facilities here for the public. So we have students that arrive from University of Miami. UM is on a million-dollar fundraising campaign to put in the first building, which will be a conservation/research lab, have a classroom for students, and wet lab to accommodate research, but also so we can start developing educational programs for the local school children as well as the public. I've been doing, cutting nature trails, that I'd like to see become interpretive educational trails when certain times of the week/year/month people can visit and look, learn about the natural and cultural resources of the 112-acre property. We also would like to build, at some point, hopefully in the near future, an education center that would have a permanent exhibit that would feature the natural resources including the geology, the hydrology, the biology of the surrounding area and the cultural resources in terms of the archaeology... in terms of the archaeology of Little Salt Spring, but also the archaeology or cultural history of South Florida in general. So we do plan on having the site more accessible, of having more community interaction. I do sort of conduct educational tours now for groups. I've got USF anthropology or history club coming in a couple weeks. I've had the Sarasota classroom on wheels, I've had classes, I've had local Kiwanis Club, so you know, I

do what I can to make it accessible. If people call I'll set up a day and have them come in for a tour.

HAMILTON: But it would still be maintained and owned by the University?

KOSKI: Yes, the University has been exceptional stewards of the property. They haven't put a lot of money into it because there hasn't been a lot of money available for this type of facility, and they put in a lot of money annually to pay the non-advalorem taxes, and other city taxes that we're not exempt from, and they foresee the value as a natural and cultural resource, as a value for the property itself.

HAMILTON: And aside from what you just described, do you have any personal visions or concerns for the future of the spring?

KOSKI: Well many of the concerns involve water quality of the local area, pumping of the local aquifer, pollution of the local aquifer through golf courses and residential neglect in terms of fertilizing, pesticides, runoff, so water quality, wherever the springshed, where we acquire the water from... If folks aren't taking care of where their water comes from it has potential to inhibit flow or affect the water quality through pollution. Visions I would like to see: an upscale research facility here, I'd like to see a public outreach center here that would allow public access, but access that would balance the protection of the resources with the education of the public. So interpretive nature walks, a trail to a boardwalk with an overlook a fifth the diameter of the spring, a nature walk across the field, crossing the creek, along the creek, to the southeast 40 acres where there's a seasonal wetland oak hammock. I'd like to see a Middle Archaic village. I'd like to work on a canoe with kids—burn a canoe out. Something that could possibly be put in the spring sometime. We could potentially find a canoe in the spring. We could find totems in the spring. We're working on the end of a tapered log now that we've dated at 10,000 years and haven't gotten to the top yet. So I'd like to see the facility developed where we have a conservation lab on site, where we have classrooms on site, we have limited access but not exploitation of the resource for profit or...

HAMILTON: Yeah, I understand. Have you noticed any impact from the community habits in your monitoring of the water?

KOSKI: Well, we've just started to collect baseline data on the water now, so we really don't know, um, the level of impacts. We do know in 1972 that when Price Boulevard was built it bisected the slough, which impacted a number of burials during the de-mucking process. And just prior to that there was a large canal that was built just to the northeast of here that bisected the seasonal wetlands and diverted the water at Myakkahatchee Creek. So there've been surficial alterations and modifications that have had adverse affects on the natural landscapes. We don't have seasonal, annual, or biannual fires anymore. That affects the diversity of your natural communities and the ecosystems that are supported by the landscape. So when you have fire suppression, things... changes happen. So I'd like to see more prescribed burning. I'd like to see all of the Brazilian pepper removed, and I've been on a restoration project with volunteers clearing the creek, clearing the driveway, clearing the trails, so people can experience what Florida was like 100, 500, 1,000, 8,000, 12,000 years ago, if possible. Of course we can't

recreate that 12,000-year biological community, but we can recreate the culmination of that biological succession that has occurred over the 10,000 years.

HAMILTON: Do you have any advice for surrounding developers and landholders for the general interest of the land itself and the health of the spring?

KOSKI: Be more conscious of the permeability of your landscape. Be more conscious of the removal of the natural habitat. Try and blend your housing in with that natural habitat so it can be compatible with it so you're not affecting the species that survive off of it. Be conscious of your runoff, of the water that percolates into the ground that supplies our drinking water, that supplies our groundwater that feeds our spring, that supports our biological communities and be a little more conscious of our impacts and our footprints that we have on the planet.

HAMILTON: And would you say that the parcel itself has been relatively unchanged since you started working here?

KOSKI: I would say that since I've been working here there've been considerable improvements, in terms of exotic vegetation, and the creek, the [Brazilian] pepper removal. I... we haven't had any adverse impacts that I can think of. The archaeological work that's being done is with a conservation ethic and we are protecting the natural resources as well as the cultural resources. This is an archaeological site, a paleontological site, a geological site, a hydrological site and an ecological site. And it deserves to be protected, and it's a sacred site, so the past needs to be taken with respect and consideration. So, I think good things have been happening.

HAMILTON: And from a cultural and anthropological point of view, why is the work that you're doing important?

KOSKI: The significance of this site is important on multiple levels. It is a window to our first visitors, to our first inhabitants. To the families who first moved to North Port. It supplies a little window to that lifestyle, to those human life ways and to understand those human life ways gives us sort of a glimpse into our past and an appreciation for those who have preceded us.

HAMILTON: And I would say that it takes quite a bit of intention and drive to be the sole site manager because you are the resident steward and you maintain the site and you are constantly surrounded by it. Why do you personally feel compelled to be doing this?

KOSKI: I think it needs to be done. I'm very fortunate to be in the position that I am, to have some influence on what's been done, and to be making it more aware to the community—the significance of the site—and being here to observe the phenomena that abound at any given moment. It's certainly an interesting place, and for some unknown reason it has become my, I don't know, destiny, or whatever you can say... I sort of fell into it. I come from a group of people who have a great interest in underwater archaeology, and early human studies in Florida, so I'm sort of helping to carry that forward.

HAMILTON: Do you have anything you'd like to add?

KOSKI: Uh, let's see... We were talking about significance and we were talking about early inhabitants and visitation. That the folks were coming here because it was a persistent geological feature that they could acquire or procure predictable resources. So it was probably part of a migratory range... it was like the 'Motel 6' of their range. So where they went from here, where they came from, where they procured their lithic resources, what social mechanism they utilized when interacting with other groups, what did they believe in, what did they feel, how easy was it living here, what was their diet like, those are all things we can examine through archaeology and through osteology, and those are the intriguing things that this place has to offer. There's a lot of mystery here and a lot of intrigue and a lot of things going on. And I think I need that diversity. I think I need that interaction to be happy. So it's a passionate thing as well.

HAMILTON: When is your favorite time to swim in the spring?

KOSKI: Well we dive in the spring in January. Dr. Gifford has his two-week Underwater Archaeology Techniques class here for two weeks—it's a semester class. And classes are here probably two other times a year. And other than during the year for long weekends, Rick Gomez, the dive safety officer, has his Marine Science class here a couple times a year. And I may do training swims in here on a non-recreational basis.

HAMILTON: Do you remember the first time that you saw the spring?

KOSKI: The first time I saw the spring I was working at Warm Mineral Spring with Sonny Cockrell and Skip Wood and we came over to talk to Carl Clausen who was then sort of the person on site... that was in 1986. But I take that back, Carl wasn't here. The first time I saw the spring I believe was in 1986 when I was working at Warm Mineral Springs with Sonny Cockrell and Skip Wood. We came over to the site to look at it. And I can't remember--I believe Carl Clausen was already gone by then... But I didn't dive it at that time. The first dive was in late 1991 or 1992, when Skip Wood and I were hired to remove some of the installations and hazards that were still remaining from the 1970s. Those were my first dives.