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PROFESSIONAL AND AVOCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

ALIVE AND WELL IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

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An amateur is a person who engages in an activity for pleasure rather than for financial benefit. The fact that amateur archaeology is a pleasurable activity does not relieve us of the responsibility that accompanies that activity. Archaeology deserves a unique place in the normal list of hobbies. Archaeology is dealing with the story of human development and that story belongs to all of mankind not just to the hobbist. Therefore, we have a great responsibility to everyone when we engage in our pleasurable activity. That we should not forget ... it is time we quit apologizing for being amateurs. It is time we shouldered the accompanying responsibility for being amateur archaeologists (Travis Binion 1969; avocational archaeologist and newsletter editor, Tennessee Archaeological Society).

The bill will mean that we as amateurs, non-professionals or whatever term you wish to be called, will have a much better chance to work with the professional... The key word is WITH. With implies unity, and unity is what this society needs, not just among members, but also between the amateurs and the professionals... The problem may lie in the statement that some of us are 'artifact orientated.' It is one or possibly the most difficult of the problems facing the amateur archaeologist today. The proposed bill will not solve this problem for us. We are the only ones who can solve it... The remedy may lie in the realization that archaeology demands a dedication to certain goals and principles. Archaeology is not only artifacts. He who is only interesting in having nice pretty 'relics' to decorate a wall or display case, has, I believe, missed the meaning of archaeology (Lloyd Chapman 1968; avocational archaeologist and vice president, Tennessee Archaeological Society).

Passionate and dedicated avocational archaeologists have been a mainstay of support for professional archaeology in Tennessee throughout the past five decades. This article seeks to examine the contributions of avocational members of the Southeastern Indian Antiquities Survey (SIAS), now known as the Middle Cumberland Archaeological Society (MCAS), to professional archaeology in Middle Tennessee. We also take this opportunity to acknowledge and highlight the significant role of SIAS/MCAS member John T. Dowd, recipient of the SAA's 2012 Crabtree Award, for his encouragement, promotion, and sponsorship of activities and organizations that furthered the successful interaction of avocational and professional archaeologists across Tennessee. And finally, the authors highlight recent collaborative efforts to provide access to information about Tennessee archaeology.

The urban and suburban expansion of Nashville—Tennessee's capital city—began in earnest in the early 1960s when there was

no National Historic Preservation Act, no state archaeology laws, no state archaeologists, and no university archaeologists interested in local archaeology. The few professional archaeologists in Tennessee at that time were located on the opposing ends of the state at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and Memphis State University. This situation left Middle Tennessee in the hands of collectors, pothunters, and bulldozers. In response to the increasingly frequent destruction of prehistoric Native American sites and cemeteries, several avocational archaeologists banded together in 1963 to create the Southeastern Indian Antiquities Survey (SIAS). That initial group of devoted avocationalists volunteered their time and energy to conduct salvage excavations at dozens of archaeological sites threatened by urban development, and also organized efforts to promote preservation and stewardship of the local archaeological record. From the beginning, the SIAS included members from "all walks of life: professional and amateur archaeologists, blue and white collar workers, housewives, students, and anyone else interested in history

and prehistory” (Dowd and Smith 2008:1). In 1976, the SIAS changed its name to the Middle Cumberland Archaeological Society (MCAS) to reflect changing times. Whatever the name, this organization will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2013.

The driving force behind the early SIAS was Bob Ferguson (1927–2001). Bob was a successful songwriter as well as an executive at Radio Corporation of America (RCA). He later became tribal historian of the Mississippi Choctaws. Bob was interested in promoting prehistory as ancestral to vibrant modern Native American traditions, so the SIAS was also closely involved in partnerships with southeastern tribes. This arrangement was perhaps unusual for an early avocational organization, with major projects including publication of the *Choctaw Times* (*Chahta Anumpa*) newspaper, fundraising for a Native American cultural center in Nashville, and sponsoring several meetings of the United Southeastern Tribes (now United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.).

John T. Dowd, recipient of the SAA’s 2012 Crabtree Award, joined the SIAS in 1968. John’s involvement in surface-collecting began in the early 1960s when he accompanied his father-in-law Lloyd McMahan in the fields of Coffee County, Tennessee. A few years later in 1967, while walking down a creek near his home, John noticed a scattering of potsherds and other artifacts that had been kicked out by a groundhog burrowing in a small rockshelter. Dowd, along with co-worker and SIAS member David Parrish, excavated the Mill Creek Overhang later that year. From that first project, John exhibited what would be a consistent concern for recordkeeping and publication of his discoveries. Soon after completing the Mill Creek Overhang excavation, he wrote to Charles Faulkner (Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee) and A.K. Guthe (Frank H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee) asking for help identifying potsherds from the rockshelter. This collaboration led to publication of the first of many articles along with his initial public presentation (Dowd 1969abc). These early efforts set the high standard by which all subsequent avocational archaeologists in Middle Tennessee have been judged. Other SIAS members exhibited a similar devotion to publication and distribution of results and data from their salvage operations (i.e. Ferguson 1972; SIAS 1972).



Figure 1: John and Lynda Dowd at the Anderson Site, 1981.

Preservation and Professionalization

Passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 prompted development of a bill in the Tennessee legislature in 1969 to create a “Tennessee Antiquities Act” and state division of archaeology. Both the SIAS and the statewide Tennessee Archaeological Society officially endorsed the bill, and their lobbying efforts were instrumental in gaining the necessary votes to pass the bill (Smith 2012). As a result, two of the six positions appointed (by the governor) to the newly created Tennessee Archaeological Advisory Council were reserved for avocational representatives, one from the Tennessee Archaeological Society and one from the SIAS. Avocational interests were well represented and

contributed significantly to defining the mission and goals of the new state Division of Archaeology. A former president of the SIAS, Mack Prichard, was appointed as the first State Archaeologist in 1971. Over the next few years, many of the field responsibilities and investigations performed by the SIAS were assumed by the state Division of Archaeology. Given this change in SIAS roles, along with Bob Ferguson’s retirement and relocation to Mississippi in 1973, Dowd and fellow SIAS member H.C. “Buddy” Brehm (1918–1995) reorganized the SIAS as the

Middle Cumberland Archaeological Society (MCAS) in 1976.

The increasing professionalization of Tennessee archaeology by the late 1960s provided challenges in defining appropriate roles for the avocational archaeologist. This development also widened a growing rift between polarized ends of the statewide Tennessee Archaeological Society (TAS) membership spectrum, with professional archaeologists on one side and avocational members with commercial interests in artifacts on the other. That schism eventually led to abandonment of the TAS in 1976 by a majority of Tennessee’s professional archaeologists and founding of the Tennessee Anthropological Association (Smith 2012). Without an institutional support base, the TAS struggled along until 1985 when it was quietly disbanded. The bitter feelings generated by the failure to define common ground resonate to this day. Both authors entered Tennessee archaeology at this auspicious moment—Smith as an anthropology graduate student at Vanderbilt University, and Moore as an archaeologist with the Tennessee Division of Archaeology. In the absence of a statewide archaeological organization, our attentions soon

turned to the Middle Cumberland Archaeological Society and its leadership for assistance with our research and preservation efforts.

One of the largest field projects ever conducted by MCAS members was initiated in 1980 at the Anderson site, widely recognized as one of the most significant Middle Archaic sites in the interior south (Figure 1). The Anderson site excavations set the stage for a long tradition of collaboration between MCAS members (avocational and professional) that continues to this day. The project has long served as a model of cooperation between avocationalists, graduate students from several universities, and professional archaeologists from many institutions. Eventually, Dowd brought all of this collaborative work together in a publication with contributions from multiple authors (Dowd 1989). MCAS member Buddy Brehm, a printer by trade, began publication of his “Mini

History” series through the Mini-Histories Press at about the same time. Brehm would eventually publish and reprint over 30 volumes, including many hard-to-find antiquarian works, making them widely accessible to citizens of the state.

Rapid expansion of the greater Nashville metropolitan area during the 1980s and 1990s generated a continuous series of threats to major archaeological sites through private developments not subject to either state or federal archaeological statutes. Members of the MCAS have provided countless hours of volunteer labor on dozens of professional projects (both “emergency” salvage and more research-oriented projects) over the past four decades. An example was the 1993 private development of a subdivision just northeast of Nashville that promised to destroy about half of a major late prehistoric mound center known as the Rutherford-Kizer site. With permission from

THE 2012 CRABTREE WINNER: JOHN T. DOWD

When we began our professional careers in Tennessee archaeology in the mid-1980s, the most common answer to *any* of our questions about major archaeological sites in the mid-state region was something to this effect: “You should ask John Dowd. He probably knows more about that site than anybody else.” When “speed dial” became available, John’s home number was among the first entries on both our phones, and for almost 30 years now John (or wife Lynda) always answered. Therein lies the heart of why John Dowd received the Crabtree Award: his consistent, insistent, and passionate belief that we are only stewards of objects from, and knowledge about, past cultures. Such objects and knowledge must be shared to be meaningful. A few quotes from John’s letters of support underline some of his key qualities:



George Heinrich and John Dowd at MCAS meeting, 2007

“The body of work that John has created over a half century is a model for professional and avocational archaeologists alike. He has presented and published his research efforts as a labor of commitment of the highest caliber and has set a benchmark of service that exceeds the label of avocational archaeologist. While John may work locally, he thinks and

writes in a broader context that infuses his work with relevance for current research problems.”

“His sustained involvement in archaeology is quite simply inspirational.”

“John’s professionalism has been manifest in his concern that important collections and objects be preserved and accessible in a public institution. Consequently, we now house several important collections.”

“For nearly fifty years, he has worked to encourage cooperation between avocational and professional archaeologists across the state of Tennessee.”

“Over his entire career as an avocational archaeologist, John has actively promoted positive relationships between the professional and amateur communities.”

John T. Dowd has been an avocational archaeologist for almost half a century. His “resume” includes conducting a dozen major excavations projects of his own (all of which are published); volunteering on an uncountable number of professional projects; publishing more than thirty articles and monographs; and sharing his knowledge through a similarly uncountable number of

the developer, the authors approached the MCAS for assistance in salvaging as much information as possible from this largely uninvestigated site. During late summer and early fall of 1993, over 70 individuals volunteered thousands of hours to the project (Figure 2). This assistance continued through 1994 and 1995 laboratory processing of artifacts and soil samples. The Tennessee Historical Commission awarded a Certificate of Merit to the MCAS in 1994 during National Historic Preservation Week in recognition of their efforts at Rutherford-Kizer. More importantly, perhaps, is that the publicity and media coverage generated by the volunteer project eventually contributed to the developer redesigning his project. The redesigned project set aside four acres of the core archaeological site area, along with an associated cemetery, as greenspaces that were donated to the Native American Indian Association of Tennessee (Moore and Smith 2001).

Beginning in late 1994, another significant volunteer project was conducted under an Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) permit issued jointly to Smith and avocational MCAS member George Heinrich (Figure 3). This project engaged George and a number of MCAS volunteers for a decade, and resulted in recording information on 200+ shoreline archaeological sites (many previously unrecorded). The survey had to be performed during the dead of winter when reservoir pool levels were drawn down. MCAS President Roger Armes noted in the *MCAS Newsletter*: “in the winter of 1994–1995 when the water was down—or as some of the members have noted, the ice was floating low—volunteers recorded information on approximately 70 sites.” Heinrich was recognized in 1996 for his leadership of this unique project with a Tennessee Historical Commission Certificate of Merit during National Historic Preservation Week.

public and professional talks. In the preceding quotes, three consistent points are highlighted: professionalism, stewardship, and partnerships. John set a high standard for himself in all three areas from his first project in 1968. While working without any professional training in archaeology, he kept detailed records and photographs from the very beginning (he presented and published the results of his initial project within a year). In a footnote to his first publication, he noted, “All of the records and materials are at my home [address was included!]... It is open for examination to any interested persons.” John has maintained that professionalism, and an “open door” policy, throughout his half-century of devotion to Tennessee archaeology.

The acknowledgements section of the senior author’s dissertation notes that “every archaeologist of the region owes a debt of gratitude to John Dowd for his insistence in ‘doing the archaeology right,’ and I wish to extend a very special thanks to him for sharing a lifetime of knowledge. Without his contributions, this dissertation would have been a much poorer product.” (Smith 1992). We could list dozens of report and presentation acknowledgements that cite consultation with John and the value of his contributions. On a related note, John has also never been shy (but always polite) about holding professional archaeologists accountable to produce accessible reports about their projects in a timely fashion. Given his lengthy publication record as “just an avocational,” those polite reminders and critiques are difficult to ignore.

John acknowledged that receiving the Crabtree Award was one of the highlights of his life. However, his contributions

to Tennessee archaeology have been previously recognized by others as well. John received the first *Outstanding Member Award* from the Tennessee Archaeological Society in 1971, as well as the *Lifetime Achievement Award for Avocational Archaeology* from the Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology in 1999.

All things considered, we suggest that John’s greatest lifetime contributions are not only his personal commitment to being an avocational archaeologist of the highest caliber, but also his devotion to supporting and promoting organizations that involve both avocational and professionals. John insists that all archaeology organizations in Tennessee should engage both groups. The authors agree that the successful avocational partnerships many professional archaeologists enjoy today would probably not be in place if not for the example set by John.

On a final note, we must acknowledge that John is also an accomplished artisan in a variety of mediums, including plaster artifact casts, woodcarvings (including the locally famous John Dowd Santa Clauses), or replicas of copper plates. It is a rare MCAS meeting when John doesn’t have a recent creation to donate for the traditional door prize drawing.

As John retires from his five decades of avocational pursuits, we can fortunately see his legacy in the many avocationalists who have looked up to and learned from him and will follow in the large footsteps he established. Professionalism, stewardship, and partnerships—the hallmark of John Dowd, avocational archaeologist.



Figure 2: MCAS Volunteers at the Rutherford-Kizer site, 1993.

For public outreach and education, the number of school and civic club presentations on archaeology by MCAS members certainly number in the thousands. These include numerous programs on Native American crafts and heritage by long-time members of Native American descent Lib Roller, Marion Dunn, and James Miller. The MCAS and/or individual members have also donated money toward many projects when funding was short. For example, when Tennessee Archaeology Awareness Week was authorized (but unfunded) by the state legislature in 1995, the MCAS stepped up to donate matching funds for a Historic Preservation Fund grant to print and distribute Tennessee's first Archaeology Week calendar of events and poster in 1996. That poster received First Prize in the 1997 SAA Archaeology Week Poster competition in Nashville (http://www.saa.org/publicFTP/public/archPosters/posterWinnerArchive_1997.html). Other contributions include underwriting publications such as *The Tennessee, Green, and Ohio Rivers Expeditions of Clarence Bloomfield Moore* (University of Alabama Press), the purchase of archaeological sites for preservation (Archaeological Conservancy, Tennessee Parks and Greenway Foundation), and sponsorship of professional meeting receptions.

We would be remiss not to mention the extraordinary contributions of avocational archaeologists in addition to MCAS members toward the Tennessee Paleoindian Projectile Points and Site Survey. John Broster and Mark Norton of the Tennessee Division of Archaeology initiated this survey in 1988, with most of the 4000+ projectile points documented during this survey discovered by interested avocationalists. Several of these individuals later donated significant portions of their collections to the state. The majority of significant Tennessee Paleoindian sites subsequently investigated and published in the archaeological literature were brought to professional attention by those avocational archaeologists.

Interest in creating a new statewide archaeological organization was renewed in 1991 by Charles McNutt of Memphis State University. McNutt initially proposed the creation of a Tennessee Council of Professional Archaeologists. However, input from Dowd and other avocationalists generated discussions that resulted in selection of a more inclusive name, thus mirroring the 1933–34 discussions about what to call the Society for American Archaeology (Poetschat et al. 2012:5). The proposed new organization was formally chartered in 1994 as the Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology (TCPA). In 1998, the TCPA created an awards program to recognize significant contributions of avocationalists, students, and professionals. An avocational was defined as “someone who makes a special contribution to archaeology without deriving primary income as an archaeological practitioner.” MCAS members have frequently been among the recipients both for lifetime achievement and special recognitions, including John Dowd who received the 1999 TCPA Lifetime Achievement Award in Avocational Archaeology. At the first awards ceremony, during which two MCAS members were recognized, then TCPA President Nick Honerkamp of the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga noted the MCAS as “perhaps the finest avocational organization in the country.”



Figure 3: John Dowd (foreground) and George Heinrich volunteering at the Coates-Hines Mastodon Site in 1994. (Photograph courtesy Aubrey Watson.)

The Present and Beyond

Successful partnerships are built upon a foundation of mutual respect and a dedication to common goals and interests. As highlighted in the previous examples, many of our own professional projects have benefitted tremendously from the input and assistance of respected avocationalists. We view this group as markedly distinct from those individuals whose primary interests in artifacts are commercial. Despite the absence of a statewide avocational society, other organizations in addition to the MCAS continue to make important contributions to professional archaeology, including the Jackson Archaeological Society, Old Stone Fort Archaeological Society, and Dickson Archaeological Society.

Over the past three decades, the authors have worked to sponsor and encourage opportunities for the interested public to get involved in Tennessee archaeology. The annual Current Research in Tennessee Archaeology meeting has brought together professional archaeologists, undergraduate and graduate students, avocational archaeologists, and the interested public to showcase recent discoveries and research (<http://capone.mtsu.edu/kesmith/TNARCH/CRITA.html>) (Figure 4). The electronic journal *Tennessee Archaeology* was launched in 2004 under the general sponsorship of the Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology. Each issue of this fully peer-reviewed publication, edited by the authors, is available to view or download at no charge (<http://capone.mtsu.edu/kesmith/TNARCH/tennesseearchaeology.html>). Also, since 1996, the *Tennessee Archaeology Network* web pages have served as a central on-line place to promote and publicize the contributions and significance of archaeological research in the State of Tennessee.



Figure 4: Group gathering for the 2011 Current Research in Tennessee Archaeology meeting. John Dowd and Travis Binion in foreground.

As the two opening quotes suggest, many “amateurs” recognize the responsibility that comes with exploring the archaeological record. From our perspective, one of the responsibilities of the professional archaeologist is to provide opportunities for those who are willing to learn. Our understanding of Tennessee prehistory would be much poorer indeed without the assistance of the MCAS and other avocational groups. In sum, avocational and professional partnerships are alive and well in Tennessee.

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