

Award Nomination Form
SOCIETY FOR CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY
DAVID A. FREDRICKSON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Please complete and return by e-mail to:
SCA Business Office
E-mail: office@scahome.org
Phone: (530) 342-3537
Deadline January 1st

Lifetime Achievement Award Nominee: Thomas M. Origer, M.A., RPA

M.A. Anthropology, San Francisco State University 1983

B.A. Anthropology, Sonoma State University 1974

The Lifetime Achievement Award is given for cumulative contributions to California Archaeology that have spanned a lifetime and are therefore reserved for the elder members of our profession. Describe the individual's career accomplishments, personal and professional highlights, scope of influence, and other achievements:



Tom Origer and Santa Rosa Junior College field class, Sonoma Coast 2003. Photo courtesy of Breck Parkman

We are pleased to nominate Thomas M. Origer for the SCA David A. Fredrickson Lifetime Achievement Award for his cumulative contributions to California archaeology as a researcher, teacher, mentor, and steadfast supporter of the practice of archaeology in California. Tom's many contributions span several decades, and cannot all be covered here, so we focus this nomination on three key areas: obsidian studies, support and development of archaeology students, and a devoted commitment to the mission and success of the SCA.

Tom grew up in Sonoma County and his exposure to archaeology began around 1965 when he was a teenager identifying Native American artifacts on the family farm. He took his first course in archaeology at Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) in 1969 and soon transferred to Sonoma State College (now University) and obtained his B.A. in Anthropology in 1972. He received his M.A. from San Francisco State in 1983. His 1982 thesis, *Temporal Control in the Southern North Coast Ranges of California: the Application of Obsidian Hydration Analysis* is foundational for anyone studying obsidian dating in California.

Tom began teaching at SRJC as an adjunct faculty member in 1979 and proceeded to teach the very class that got his profession started a decade earlier. He partnered with others to establish the obsidian hydration lab at Sonoma State in

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1977, started his own CRM firm in 1983, served on the SCA Board as President from 1997 to 2000 and started Origer's Obsidian Laboratory in 2002. After 30 years at SRJC and numerous collaborations with CA State Parks Tom retired from teaching in 2009.

In addition to his continuous support of the SCA, Tom is affiliated with the International Association for Obsidian Studies (charter member and President from 1990-1992), the Archaeological Institute of America (President of the North Coast Society from 1985 to 1987), the Society for American Archaeology, the Society for Historical Archaeology, and the Register of Professional Archaeologists.

Obsidian Studies

Tom established the obsidian hydration laboratory at Sonoma State University (SSU) with David Fredrickson in 1977, with the first official hydration projects starting in 1979. The lab remained in operation under Tom's direction as a part of the Anthropological Studies Center until 2002, when it moved off campus and became Origer's Obsidian Laboratory. From 1979 to 2002, the lab completed over 2000 projects comprising more than 105,000 slides. While most of the projects were from sites in California, covering 54 of the 58 counties many were from other areas, including Alaska, Arizona, Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Since moving from the SSU campus, Tom has completed an additional 1354 projects comprising over 60,000 specimens (as of October 2022). These have included projects from Argentina, and Eastern Europe, as well as additional areas in the US.

During Tom's tenure a program of induced hydration studies was developed and implemented by Kim Tremaine (Tremaine and Fredrickson 1988). That research has continued, developing hydration rates for obsidian sources. Tom's research with induced hydration has also helped to tease out intra-source hydration differences, and sub-source variability based on microscopic characteristics.

Tom was a charter member and President (1990-1992) of the International Association of Obsidian Studies which is dedicated to exploring and sharing information related to obsidian characterization studies and obsidian hydration methods.

Student Support, Mentorship, and Development

During his 30 years teaching archaeology at the Santa Rosa Junior College, Tom and his classes participated in twenty-one collaborations (surveys and excavations) with State Parks between 1984 and 2007. Notably, every single collaboration with State Parks was aimed at identifying, protecting, and/or mitigating harm to archaeological sites that were at risk or threatened:

Sugarloaf Ridge State Park	1984, 1986, 1996
Annadel State Park	1987
Salt Point State Park	1989, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005
Fort Ross State Historic Park	1989, 1991, 1997, 2001
Bothe-Napa Valley State Park	2006, 2007
Sonoma Coast State Park	2003, 2004, 2005

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Tom was likewise a contributor to nine field and lab projects conducted by Dave Fredrickson and SSU in collaboration with CA State Parks between 1985 and 1992:

Sonoma Coast State Park	1985, 1988
Sinkyone Wilderness State Park	1987
Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park	1987
Tomales Bay State Park	1988
Annadel State Park	1988
Fort Ross State Historic Park	1988, 1989
Salt Point State Park	1988, 1992

After Dave Fredrickson’s retirement, Tom continued contributing to SSU collaborations within CA State Parks including those directed by Adrian Praetzellis, Margie Purser, and others.

Highlights of Tom’s research within State Parks include his research using data from Salt Point to study the regional and temporal distribution of the crescent tool tradition, (Dowdall and Origer 1997; Origer et al i.p.); again, using data from Salt Point Tom studied post-fire archaeology and effects on obsidian hydration rates; (Anderson, Origer and Parkman 1994). Tom also contributed hundreds of obsidian hydration readings from the Sonoma Coast to a study of Late Holocene cultural complexity (Dowdall 2003). In Sugarloaf Ridge State Park Tom and his team studied stream erosion. He also contributed to several archaeological efforts in northern state parks (Parkman, Stillman and Makar, 1993; Parkman and Stillman 1994). His obsidian hydration and visual sourcing contributions for field school and professional research projects at Salt Point, Fort Ross, and Sonoma Coast State Park, helped shape our understanding of thousands of years of inter-tribal exchange and social complexity on the Sonoma Coast. For many of Tom’s estimated 300 students making their stay at “Arky Camp” for over a decade (Parkman and Foster 2017), these field school projects were their first field experience, laboratory analysis, and produced their first papers.

While Tom’s SRJC collaborations with State Parks and SSU were instrumental in contributing to our understanding of North Coast Ranges archaeology, Tom’s legacy is in equal measure reflected in his influence on his archaeology students. His support and commitment to rigorous archaeological inquiry, intellectual curiosity, and collegial inclusivity, created a big tent that fostered both inspiration and dedication among his innumerable students. It is also notable that Tom included tribal representatives in his SRJC archaeological excavations who taught his students first-hand how to take their cultural needs into account while contributing to their heritage and deep ancestry. Many theses, SCA data sharing presentations, annual meeting papers, Proceedings, and other professional presentations and publications were generated by students through Tom’s dedicated mentorship. Tom’s commitment to student research also extended to his participation on several thesis committees, and by supporting research topics that could benefit from obsidian hydration and visual sourcing. For over 30 years, Tom has contributed obsidian hydration and visual sourcing analyses for master’s and doctoral research studies at significantly reduced rates or for free. Further, since its inception, he has contributed obsidian hydration readings to James A. Bennyhoff Memorial Fund Award recipients.

Tom’s 30+ years of field schools and projects gave his students a foundation in archaeological research design, field and laboratory methods, field logistics, and professional ethics that for many, was the cornerstone of their careers. His students were also exposed to cultural resource management and working with professional archaeologists and other agency personnel. These relationships gave students the opportunity to develop their own collaborations and professional networks, and quite often gain internships, volunteer opportunities, or even

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employment. Networking with professors and agency professionals was probably the most helpful thing Tom did to encourage relationships, mentorship and opportunities for any student interested in California CRM. Taking on roles with real-world projects, while also working on coursework, set his students up for success and presented opportunities for research projects and theses.

Tom encouraged students at every level to follow through with research and contribute papers and posters at SCA annual and data sharing meetings. Students from all walks of life took Tom's SRJC classes. For some, it was their first time in college right after high school, for others, it was a second career after retirement. For still others it was re-entry to the school and work worlds put on pause while raising children. One of Tom's superpowers is finding the qualities in people and putting them together into a team that can do some great archaeology.

SCA Support and Commitment

As members of the SCA Executive Board well know, the SCA does not successfully function without that key subset of our membership that consistently steps up to dedicate their time, funds, and expertise to support the various aspects of our non-profit organization. As a Lifetime Member of the SCA, Tom's dedication to his students dovetails with his steadfast support of the SCA.

Tom served as SCA President in 1999-2000 over the usual three-year term from 1998-2001. In addition to his own service, he has supported and encouraged his associates at Tom Origer and Associates serving on the SCA board (Janine Origer 2004-2006, Vicki Beard 2002-2004 and Ted Jones 2005-2007).

In one of his SCA Newsletter President's messages, Tom mentioned working on the SCA's Strategic Plan that would "guide the Executive Board in its dealing with SCA business." It would "outline our goals/activities, set deadlines, etc." He saw the document as "quite ambitious" (SCA Newsletter, Volume 33:3, September 1999). He also oversaw the formation of the Nominations Committee, "responsible for seeking qualified SCA members to run as candidates" (ibid).

During his time on the SCA Executive Board, he initiated two-year terms for Vice-President and Secretary (rather than one-year). He also started the Committee for Advanced Annual Meeting Planning (CAAMP) which has been instrumental in managing annual meeting budgets and contracts as the SCA grows into a much larger organization. He served as the lead for this committee for many years.

Tom was one of the first to set up a table at the annual Silent Auction and he has had one every year. He continues to donate student memberships for drawings at the data sharing meetings so that attending students can win memberships. Others are now doing the same. He leads commitment to students by example.

In his continued support for SCA students, Tom has been offering obsidian hydration readings on 100 obsidian samples to the winner of the Bennyhoff award since its inception in 1996. He has been a member of that committee since around 2005. As a committee member, he is always very responsive, sending thoughtful comments on all submittals, attending meetings, and taking on tasks.

Dave Fredrickson was an enthusiastic and talented quilt maker and had boxes and boxes of carefully organized material. Shortly after Dave passed away in 2012, Tom gathered up and stored all the boxes of material. He came up with the brilliant idea of having different companies/groups make a yearly quilt and auction it off to get funds for the Bennyhoff Award. His company created the first quilt in 2015. Tom has reached out and found quilt makers for every year since, usually delivering the material boxes personally.

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The quilt table is a gathering place at every SCA meeting and has been hugely successful, with Tom helping at the table every year. The committee will continue this tradition as long as the material lasts. SCA members support this effort by buying abundant raffle tickets, providing financial assistance to the society's student members who are conducting important research that follows in the steps of James Bennyhoff.

In conclusion, we believe that Tom Origer's cumulative contributions to California Archaeology, obsidian studies, mentoring and support of student archaeologists, and steadfast service to the SCA, make him a most worthy nominee for the David A. Fredrickson Lifetime Achievement Award. Thank you for your consideration.

References

Anderson, Jessica, Tom Origer, and Breck Parkman

1994 A Preliminary Study of Fire Effects on the Northern Sonoma County Coastal Archeological Resources at Salt Point State Park. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for California Archaeology, March 25-27, Ventura, California. [Note: Presentation reporting results of research initiated by one of Tom's students at Sugarloaf Ridge].

Dowdall, Katherine M.

2003 "Late Holocene Cultural Diversity on the Sonoma Coast". In *Archaeology of the California Coast During the Late Holocene*. Edited by John Erlandson and Terry Jones. UCLA.

Dowdall, Katherine M., and Thomas Origer

1997 "At the Continent's Edge: A View of Crescents from Sonoma County, California". Presented at the Society for California Archaeology Meetings

Origer, Thomas M.

1982 Temporal Control in the Southern North Coast Ranges of California: the Application of Obsidian Hydration Analysis. Master's thesis, San Francisco State University.

1999 President's Message. SCA Newsletter, Vol. 33:3, September 1999

Origer, Thomas M., Katherine M. Dowdall, and Evan B. Tudor Elliott.

i.p. "At the Continent's Edge: A View of Crescents from Sonoma County, California". To be submitted.

Parkman, Breck, William Stillman and David Makar

1993 Archaeological Investigations in the Northern State Parks. Paper presented at the Annual Northern Data-Sharing Meeting, Society for California Archaeology, October 23, Sacramento, California. [Note: Presentation reporting the results of research initiated by two of Tom's former students at Sugarloaf Ridge and Salt Point]

Parkman, E. Breck and William Stillman

1994 Archaeological Investigations in the Northern State Parks. Paper presented at the Annual Northern Data-Sharing Meeting, Society for California Archaeology, October 23, Sacramento, California. [Note: Presentation reporting the results of research initiated by two of Tom's former students at Sugarloaf Ridge and Salt Point.]

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Parkman, E. Breck and John W. Foster

2017 Perceiving the Sacred: Arky Camp in Myth, Legend, and Reality. SCA Proceedings, Volume 31, pp. 34-46 [Note: Table 1 was compiled by Tom Origer to document use of Arky Camp by SRJC students working at Fort Ross and Salt Point]

Tremaine, Kim J. and David A. Fredrickson

1988 Induced Obsidian Hydration Experiments: An Investigations in Relative Dating. Materials Research Society Proceedings, Vol. 125, p.401

We the undersigned do hereby support the nomination of:

Thomas M. Origer, M.A., RPA

To receive the Society for California Archaeology David A. Fredrickson Lifetime Achievement Award:

Signed: Jennifer Darcangelo

Print: Jennifer Darcangelo

Title: Tribal and Cultural Resource Land Consultant, PG&E

Signed: 

Print: Janine Origer

Title: General Manager, TO&A

Signed: E. Breck Parkman

Print: E. Breck Parkman

Title: Sr. State Archaeologist, retired

Signed: Patricia Mikkelsen

Print: Patricia Mikkelsen

Title: Long-time colleague in CRM, obsidian hydration, and the Bennyhoff Committee

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Katherine M. Dowdall

Signed: _____

Print: Katherine Dowdall

Title: Senior Caltrans Archaeologist

Please Note: Lifetime ACHIEVEMENT Award for Conservation Archaeology nominations do not require petitions, and a nomination may be filed by a single signator. Similarly, the relative strengths of candidates are not measured by the number or qualifications of signators to this nomination. All decisions related to the conference of this and other awards of the Society for California Archaeology are solely the province of the Executive Board of the Society for California.