



## Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award: William B. Lees

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The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) announced its creation of the Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award in 1990, and Carol herself, in recognition of her long service as bookroom coordinator, was the first recipient. The award is intended to honor SHA members who have given sustained and outstanding service to the society, and it was initially conceived as something to be conferred only on rare occasions. In fact, in its first 20 years, the Ruppé Award was given to only four more individuals—all of them having served in their respective office or editorial position for more than 20 years. Since 2010, however, the Ruppé has become a more regular feature of the awards ceremony, presented in almost every subsequent year. William B. Lees became the most recent Ruppé recipient on the occasion of the 2022 conference in Philadelphia, owing to his truly remarkable service to the society (Fig. 1).

Bill's first field experience with the University of Tulsa was at the Honey Springs Civil War Battlefield, Oklahoma, in the summer of 1972. He joined SHA in the mid-1970s, around the time he completed his B.Sc. (1975) at Tulsa. After graduation, Bill went on to do additional fieldwork in historical archaeology at Fort Towson under the auspices of the Oklahoma Historical Society. Those two excavations sparked an interest in



**Fig. 1** William B. Lees, recipient of the 2022 Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award. (Photo by Morgan Givens, University of West Florida, 2021.)

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the discipline that would grow to a passion with time, and he would attend his first of many SHA conferences in 1976 at Philadelphia, as did I. We did not chance to meet on that occasion, but we later would become close friends.

In the fall of 1976 Bill began graduate study at Michigan State University (MSU) under Charles E. Cleland. Bill took a gap year from graduate school when he was selected for a prestigious internship at the University of South Carolina's Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology in May 1977. There he would be assigned to work on the Limerick Plantation Project. Moreover, at the institute he came under the influence of Stanley South, who doubtless helped cement Bill's commitment to historical archaeology. After completing his internship, Bill returned to campus and continued his studies, ultimately earning his M.A. (1982) and Ph.D. (1988) at MSU.

Chuck Cleland was among the founders of SHA and a past president (1973). Not only was he able to provide exceptional guidance, he also encouraged his grad students to get involved with professional service (something Chuck liked to call "archaeo-politics"). Following his example, a large number of Chuck's former students went into service to SHA and other organizations. Bill was certainly no exception.

After completing his coursework at MSU, Bill took a series of jobs with various institutions, agencies, and cultural resource management (CRM) firms in Oklahoma and Kansas. Ultimately, Bill obtained a staff position at the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), Topeka, in 1985. While there he would begin his long service to SHA. His first volunteer position, in 1988, was as coordinator of Great Plains Current Research for the *SHA Newsletter*. By virtue of that position, Bill also served on editor Norman Barka's advisory committee. He thus participated in deliberations on content and policy, which would prove advantageous when he later succeeded Norm.

After settling in at KSHS, in the early 1990s, Bill convinced its director that the historical society should host an SHA conference out of state at Kansas City, Missouri. He would soon submit a proposal to the SHA Board, which was approved, and then served as general chair of a very successful meeting in 1993. (Bill continued to share his experience with the conference committee through 1995.) In due course, Bill would leave

KSHS, in 1993, to take key administrative positions with the Oklahoma Historical Society (1993–2003) and Cultural Resource Analysts (2003–2005), a major CRM firm in Lexington, Kentucky.

The mere fact of committing to the hard job of organizing the conference significantly raised Bill's visibility in the society, and he won a seat on the board of directors in the 1991 election. During his term as a director (1992–1994), Bill gained the reputation of being a thoughtful and active participant in decision making. Accordingly, he was appointed to chair the important SHA Long-Range Planning Committee (1993–1996).

In concurrent and ensuing years, Bill devoted himself to long service on SHA committees, such as budget (2002–2011), academic and professional training (1995–2001), and intersociety relations (1997–2001). He also did a stint as continuing education coordinator (1996–2001) and was program chair for the 2001 Long Beach meeting. Journal editor Ronald Michael also appointed Bill to serve as memorials editor (2000–2007), and during that assignment he served on Ronn's advisory committee.

In 2001, Norm Barka, after some 20 years as newsletter editor, announced that he would not seek another term, and the board quickly determined that Bill should follow Norm in that critical position. This would allow Bill a year to "apprentice" before taking over in 2002. He proficiently maintained Norm's high standards and eventually placed his own stamp on the newsletter by adding new content and enlarging the use of images. Bill ultimately served two three-year terms as newsletter editor (2002–2007).

Back then, both appointed editors automatically had a seat on the board. As it happens, 2002 was also the year I took office as president (ironically, Bill had been my opponent in the 2000 election). While serving together, I was able to witness Bill's fine performance. To no one's surprise, he participated fully in discussions and showed the qualities of a capable leader. This was never more evident than in the deliberations that would result in firing SHA's association management firm at the 2004 conference in St. Louis. Bill's compelling arguments for dismissal were persuasive, and what initially seemed a difficult decision turned out to be unanimous.

In early 2003, Ronn Michael declared his intention to step down after more than two decades as journal editor.

A formal search was undertaken immediately to recommend a successor. Bill served ably on that committee, helping assure its work was completed in timely fashion.

It was in 2005 that Bill landed his dream job as the first (and so far only) executive director of the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), which is headquartered at the University of West Florida in Pensacola and has regional offices located in cities across the state. While at FPAN he continued to edit SHA's newsletter, though he would soon decide to step down with completion of his second term at the end of 2007. Consequently, in early 2007, another search committee was seated with Bill as a member. Again, he proved essential to its success.

In that same year, Bill would again be nominated for president-elect, and this time he won in the fall elections—continuing service on the board in that capacity (2008–2009) and as president (2010–2011). He did not disappoint, maintaining a firm hand in guiding SHA with his keen administrative skills and calm demeanor. Thanks to his competency and good judgment, Bill's presidency saw little controversy or conflict.

At the end of his term in office, and after 10 straight years on the board, Bill deservedly stepped back from volunteering. But, like all presidents, per SHA procedures, he still had two official duties to perform: as chair of the nominations and elections committee (2012–2013) and as member of the awards committee (2012–2018). Although helping to select the society's honorees was no doubt a rewarding experience, that service also effectively precluded Bill's consideration for a major award during and immediately after his tenure.

Throughout his three decades of faithful and exemplary service to SHA, Bill somehow found time to amass an enviable record of scholarship, presenting numerous papers, symposia, etc., and publishing widely

in the discipline. He also served on committees and in leadership positions with other national, regional, and state organizations. This would include election as president of the Plains Anthropological Society (1997–1999). Further, he served as secretary-treasurer (1993–1995) of the Society of Professional Archeologists (SOPA), and, after a term as president-elect of SOPA (1995–1997), he went on to serve as its president (1997–1999). As it turned out, Bill was the last SOPA president, assuming a lead role in its reformation as the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA) with sponsorship from several major scholarly societies, including SHA. Accordingly, Bill became the first RPA president (1998–1999) and led the founding board through the complex and sometimes difficult SOPA–RPA transition. In light of his crucial work, he would receive RPA's McGimsey-Davis Distinguished Service Award in 2015.

I have known and worked with Bill as friend and colleague for some 45 years. Over that time, my respect for his professionalism, administrative acumen, scholarship, and particularly his exceptional service to SHA has grown with each passing year. Further, I can say with some confidence that all who know him, either personally or by reputation, share that same high regard. Throughout his career, William B. Lees has given much of his professional life to the Society for Historical Archaeology, making meaningful contributions along the way. With bestowal of the 2022 Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award, SHA's official recognition of those efforts is indeed well earned.

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