



The Rostrum

The Newsletter of the Maryland Geological Society
Baltimore, Maryland
Established 1991

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July 2006

President's Message

It's summertime and the collecting isn't easy.
Ticks are biting and the temperature is high.

Well, summer comes upon us! I would like to remind everyone to take the necessary precautionary measures against ticks and the harmful effects of heat. While collecting this summer, be sure to tuck your pant legs into your socks and your shirt into your pants to keep ticks off you, regularly examine your clothing and body for ticks, use an insect repellent, drink plenty of fluids, make sure you are taking in more fluid than you are losing, and schedule your collecting for the cooler parts of the day.

Your Fearless Leader, **Brady E. Hamilton**

Dates to Remember

Sunday, July 16th - next MGS Meeting

Meeting Time & Location: 12 Noon to 4 PM

South Bowie Community Center, 1717 Pittsfield Lane, Bowie, MD 20716

Mineral of the Meeting: Diopside. Bring a few choice specimens to the meeting.

**The 4th Annual MGS Auction will be held at the Sept. 17th meeting.
(details on page 11)**

Please submit material for the next issue of The Rostrum by August 10th



*"Science is a wonderful thing if one does not have to
earn one's living at it".....Albert Einstein*



The Rostrum V15 (4) Index

President's Message.....	1
Dates to Remember.....	1
MGS Information.....	2
Meeting Dates & Programs.....	2
Donations & Thanks.....	3
Mineral of the Meeting: Diopside	3
One Cold Stone.....	3
MGS Field Trips.....	6
Findings by MGS Members.....	6
Iron Meteorites.....	7
May 21 st Meeting Minutes.....	8
May Program Report.....	8
eBay & "Caveat emptor".....	9
MGS Picnic Recap.....	11
Odds & Ends.....	11
The Dinosaur Hunter.....	12
AFMS Code of Ethics.....	12
Club Items for Sale.....	13
Upcoming Events.....	13

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Maryland Geological Society

Founded in 1991, MGS is comprised of both amateur and professional mineral and fossil collectors. MGS emphasizes collecting, identification, study and display aspects of the geological sciences. MGS is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) and the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies (EFMLS).

Dues

Dues are \$15.00 per individual adult member. Applications for membership may be obtained from the MGS website or by contacting Dick Grier, Sr., Membership Chairman, 8052 Kavanagh Road, Baltimore, MD 21222, (410) 285-5554. Dues are payable on January 1st of each year.

Meetings

Meetings are held bimonthly, beginning in January at the South Bowie Community Center, located at 1717 Pittsfield Lane, Bowie, MD. The doors open at 12 noon and the meetings are completed by 4:00 PM. Club meetings will be held as scheduled so long as the South Bowie Community Center is open. Call 301-249-1622 after 11:00 AM to find out if the Center is open.

Meeting Dates & Programs for 2006

January 15: General meeting - no program

March 19: Four Stories by Eric Seifter

May 21: Joint MGS & AFF Meeting.

July 16: Program TBA

Sept 17: Annual Auction. Program TBA

Nov 19: Elections & Pizza Party.

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The Rostrum

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Website

(<http://ecphora.net/mgs/>)
Material for the website should be sent to Daryl Serafin at dkjjserafin@verizon.net.

Donations & Thanks

submitted by Dick Grier, Sr., Ways & Means Chairman

MGS would like to thank the following members for their donations to the silent auctions and raffles:

Flo Streat: donated \$100.00 to the MGS along with several specimen boxes.

Marge & Steve Noel: donated two boxed collector's fossil kits.

Mark Bennett: donated a new rotary tumbler. It has a 3 lb capacity, steel base with a rubber molded tumbler, made in Beijing China. The tumbler will be an MGS item in the Annual Auction on September 17, 2006.

Les Heinzl: donated casts of trilobites *Phacops rana* & *Calymene*.

Mineral of the Meeting: Diopside

submitted by Bob Farrar

The mineral theme of the May meeting of MGS was diopside, which I mentioned at the time should not be confused with diopside. For the July meeting, then, we will cover diopside and what distinguishes it. While diopside may not be as spectacular as are some specimens of diopside, it is still an interesting mineral deserved of the attention of collectors, particularly those who live in Maryland

Diopside is unrelated to diopside. It is one of the pyroxene minerals, a group characterized by a chainlike atomic structure and the absence of water in the crystals. Amphiboles are a similar group, but contain water. Diopside consists of calcium magnesium silicate, $\text{CaMgSi}_2\text{O}_6$. It forms a series with hedenbergite, which contains iron instead of magnesium. Iron-rich specimens tend to be darker in color. Diopside is most commonly some shade of green, but can also be white or brown. It has perfect prismatic cleavage with angles of 87 and 93 degrees. Other physical properties include a hardness of 5 to 6, glassy luster, and a specific gravity of 3.3 to 3.5. Lighter colored specimens may fluoresce blue. Diopside occurs in metamorphic rocks, such as marble and rodingite, and in pegmatites. Pyroxenes in general are difficult to distinguish, but the color, cleavage, and occurrence are usually sufficient to distinguish diopside. Diopside is not of great economic importance, but it is a minor gemstone mineral. Transparent green material ("chrome diopside") can be faceted, while some material will make cat's eye stones.

Diopside is common at many localities around the world. Important localities include Minas Gerais, Brazil, the Alps of Europe, Russia, and Pakistan. It is common in association with calcite and apatite in Quebec. Large light green crystals occur in Lawrence Co., New York. Several localities in Maryland have produced interesting specimens of diopside. Whitish crystals that fluoresce blue were found embedded in marble in a building excavation in Cockeysville. Dark greenish crystals several inches long have been found in pegmatite at the Fanny Frost Quarry near Woodstock, just west of Baltimore. At the Hunting Hill Quarry in Rockville, bright green diopside crystals occur in a matrix of massive, pinkish grossular garnet as the major components of rodingite. This material can be cut and polished into interesting cabochons. So, while perhaps not always as attractive as is diopside, diopside is also beautiful mineral that many collectors enjoy owning.

One Cold Stone: A Rock of the Ages Story

submitted by Glenn D. Roché

I think it's accurate to say that readers of this text in *The Rostrum* run the gamut from casual hobbyists to serious collectors to even a few professionals who have made the acts of "finding" and "learning" their

life's work. I'm also fairly certain in saying that the latter group can often be an object of envy for many members of the former classes. It's natural for those of us making our way in disciplines other than

the sciences to admire those pros, much like your average weekend warrior marvels at the athletes he sees making the big plays each morning on ESPN. For even though our view of the action is more from the bleachers than on the field, we too find discovery and the knowledge it reveals to be no less of a supreme source of excitement and fascination. In my quiet moments, I can easily slip into daydreaming about being part of an elite team of paleontologists working to unearth the remains of a previously unknown creature, or about turning up an artifact untouched for centuries in an exotic long-forgotten location. I've often tried to imagine how the mind must rush upon such a discovery! Questions and potential answers must spawn even more questions, theories and challenges. The senses must flood with scenarios and possibilities. What could be more of a thrill? And the crowd goes wild! But, come on, really. That's a realm reserved for the expert...right? Or, is it. Maybe, just maybe, with a stretch of the imagination, a bit of luck, and a dose of perseverance, we too could peg the needles on the Wow Meters of discovery and understanding. Maybe, within each of us lies a power to actually determine just what we allow our finds to give up in return. May I lead you on what I hope you will find to be an entertaining story?

I'm fortunate enough to not only make my home in a beautiful woodland area of Northern Baltimore County, but also maintain a summer cottage in an idyllic historic community not far away known to locals as The Grove. The Grove has been in my family for generations and some of my earliest recollections in life are of scampering through the woods and splashing around in the creeks that run through the property with my buddies. At any given moment we might be found as explorers, Indians, soldiers, or pioneers. The parameters of our imaginations were limitless. It was the most awesome playground a kid could have, and because I've probably had my foot on just about every square inch of its almost sixty acres, I can say that I know it better than any other place on the planet.

A couple of winters ago, I found myself in a quandary brought on by a serious bout of cabin fever. I guess my own "finding" and "learning" flames were suffering from a lack of fresh air. My problem was that packing up and mobilizing my girls in the dead of winter, for the almost two and a half hour trip to the nearest iced-over, great in May but foreboding in February, fossil hunting shoreline along the cliffs in Calvert County promised to be a task at least as daunting as the 101st Airborne Division faced upon learning they were up for deployment to Iraq. Still, I

desperately needed a viable outlet. I found an intriguing alternative in a discount bin one day as I frittered away a lunch hour sneaking reads at the bookstore next to my office.

The gem I had quarried in the bookstore that day was a slightly out of date edition of Overstreet's Indian Arrowhead Identification Guide. I have to admit, I had a hard time wrapping my mind around the fact that the Native Americans who crafted the artifacts illustrated within Overstreet's pages did so not over just the past centuries, but past millenniums. The book, which I immediately regarded as a virtual treasure map, contended that these artifacts might turn up just about anywhere, and offered a wealth of "how to" info on collecting. One method, called "creek walking", was based on the premise that any item deposited in a given watershed would eventually find its way into the associated streambed over time. My mind immediately darted back to my youth at The Grove. I recalled a summer in the early 1970s when the community's Board of Directors allowed a gentleman, rumor had it he was working under a grant of some sort, to poke around in our creeks looking for just this type of artifact. A poll of my older neighbors resulted in no recollection of whether or not he found anything of interest, although it was recalled that he seemed to concentrate his efforts to the stream just down a hill from my family's cottage. I wondered if there was something in particular about that area that had caught his attention and prompted him to search there. A creek walking adventure seemed to be in the cards!

That very weekend, I insulated up from my L.L. Bean boots to my knit ski cap on a crystal clear twenty-degree mid-February morning, and trudged out through the snow past the cottages, past the road, and into the woods above my targeted spot in the creek. Objects all so familiar to me, but serving to veil just how much different the landscape must have appeared to the first inhabitants of the area, whomever they were. The Grove's historic summertime community was established in 1868, just after the end of the Civil War, and my perspective of "the ancients" had always been of some individuals peering out from a few yellowing hundred-year-old photographs of the place that I had once come across. If Overstreet wasn't jerking my chain, those old timers dwelled at The Grove "just the other day" compared to the True Ancients. Within a few minutes, I was planted in about six inches of icy cold rippling creek water between the frozen margins of the steep banks to each side. Rocks, stones, and pebbles of every imaginable size and shape chocked

the bed, most submersed, making it somewhat difficult to get a clear view at the nature of any single object. I stripped off a glove and set about focusing on any pointy-type shape. What did I know? I don't remember anyone showing me how to zero in on a shark tooth hidden among the mix of shell fragments and debris on the beach. My guess is that I sort of just grew into knowing what to look for, and that was usually in a location known for producing shark teeth. At this point I was trying to make the leap from illustrations in a book to the real thing. For all I knew, I could have been barking up the wrong creek.

I dipped in my hand and stabbed at a potential candidate just under the surface. "Nah, just a rock" I thought as I sent it skipping down the flow behind me. There was something strangely satisfying in hearing its clackety echo interrupt the ethereal stillness of the setting. Majestic oaks towered above the little valley against the backdrop of that bluebird sky, and the vibrancy somehow served to negate the frigid nature of the morning. Another. Nope, just a surprisingly slimy for that time of year small chunk of whitish stone I thought, within a second tossed up into the leaves on the adjacent slope. By now, I figured, I probably would have picked up a dozen small shark teeth had I instead elected to spend my morning at Brownie's Beach, but there was no way I could have possibly traded such a vivid moment. A third contestant with a curved edge visible under the rippling water caught my eye. Splash. Quickly in and out again. I consoled myself with "Oh well, I've only just begun" as I targeted a knot on the side of an oak perhaps twenty yards away and cocked my arm again. Then...I froze, contradicting a sudden jolt of adrenalin that I felt ricochet through my body. Without breaking my gaze still transfixed on the knot, I slowly lowered my arm and very deliberately began to gently rub the stone still grasped in my right hand on the thigh of my jeans. First on one side, then the other. My knees seemed to lose their ability to keep me stable as I brought my eyes to the object a second time, and I was compelled to squat down to a point where my hip pockets hovered just a couple of inches above the water as I studied it once again. Could...it...be? On just the third dip?! Its edge was not random. Its shape was not natural. Holy \$#@%! True Ancients DID walk right HERE!

The stone was surprisingly weighty for its roughly 1-1/2" by 2" size, and at first glance it didn't look at all much like anything in the pages of Overstreet. The long sides were virtually parallel, and one end was perfectly arced as if engineered with a compass. The

opposite end was clearly and cleanly broken almost square to the longer sides, suggesting that there was quite a bit more to the original implement than the two-inch remainder I held in my hand. I suspected that it might have been sheared at a juncture where a now missing tip once protruded from a weapon's wooden shaft. I suddenly no longer felt alone under the bright blue sky, and amidst the rush of excitement and emotion I simultaneously felt small and humbled. For in my hand I held not just a small cold stone, but also a tangible link to someone who previously had existed only in my vague imagination. Was he in some way like me? Did he have a family? Was The Grove his home too?

My first instinct after launching out of my crouch, was to throw down a grid like the big fellas do on the Discovery channel, and mine the entire creek bed for more artifacts. But to tell you the truth, within a few minutes the amateur in me was bolting back through the woods towards civilization. I had to share my find with somebody ASAP, partly because even though I was certain about what I had discovered, I think I still needed confirmation. The Grove was all but abandoned, shut down tight for the winter. I could hardly contain myself when I finally caught up with my wife a short while later at home. Her laissez faire, "yeah right" response was somewhat expected, after all, what did her husband know. He's just an accountant. Her tune changed on the following Monday. While I was at work, she made a trip to the Nature Center at Oregon Ridge in Hunt Valley, Maryland to show my find to the guides schooled in the local archaeology demonstrated at the center. I've never determined if it was her own curiosity, or just a sanity check on her spouse that prompted her to go, but I received an excited call from her at the office. The guides were going bonkers because according to them other similar artifacts found in the area over the years had been dated to over two thousand years old.

Well this changed everything. Had I come away from the woods that day empty handed, I still would have been better for it because I had discovered a cool new source of interest. But finding something snapped my perspective on the world as I had known it one hundred and eighty degrees. New Math Rule: One is Exponentially Greater than None. Later that spring, my stone and I were a big hit at Oregon Ridge's Primitive Technology Weekend. The rockhounds in attendance were unanimous in identifying the material as metarhyolite, specifically distinctive metarhyolite found in similar points quarried from a Southern York County, Pennsylvania

outcropping. I wondered by what route did the stone travel to reach its resting place in the creek bed at The Grove? And better yet, what marvelous adventures had it encountered along the way? Experienced flintknappers at the event pointed out that it was "bifacial". Or, in plain terms, it had been shaped on both sides by an ancient craftsman aiming to maximize his weapon's killing power with an obviously un-primitive understanding of aerodynamics. I tried to think of the game he sought after with his unique design. Often, I was told, that points broken in action were reworked into tools called "scrapers" used to clean and prepare animal hides. Metarhyolite, a valuable commodity to The Ancients not to be wasted, was often recycled in this manner. Also, judging from its still sharp edge and well-defined shaping, some surmised that the stone was only recently washed out of the bank and had avoided prolonged exposure and wear. Could the site have been used as a hunting camp? Questions and potential answers spawned even more questions, theories and challenges. My senses were flooded with scenarios and possibilities. Hmm, sound familiar? I guess I had found a key that allowed the artifact to allow me to live the dream. Or, without realizing it, the dream had found me.

My wife is fond of making the case that this event was the absolute definition of a Billion To One Shot. As a result, her husband now has no chance of ever

achieving any other Billion-to-One Shot such as winning the lottery, or discovering that Hugh Hefner is a long lost uncle because my finite allotment of luckiness has been used up. Sadly, according to her, never again do I have the right to practically hope for either a million dollar jackpot, or an invitation to hang out at Uncle Hef's house. I found The Great Grove Stone, and that's that. I like to counter that careful thought, preparation, planning, and information gathering can generate optimal results, but I'll concede that the old adage "90% of success comes from just showin' up" is probably largely applicable too. Several trips back to that magic spot in the woods at The Grove have produced nothing more than a wonderful day enjoying nature. Presumably, the missing section of the point remains out there, somewhere. I wonder if Mr. Archaeologist from the summer back in the seventies, the guy who concentrated his efforts to that section of the creek, ever reminisces about that huge point he discovered way back when that might have been museum quality if only it's tail end hadn't been lost to the ages. If he does, I wish for him to also remember the rush of excitement at the moment he first laid his hand on it down in the little valley. And, I hope he too found the way to allow the artifact, his curiosity, and his imagination to power him on a great ride across the ages.

MGS Field Trips

submitted by Mark Bennett, Field Trip Chairman

The Maryland Geological Society is an advocate of responsible collecting. The society has permission to collect in all of the sites listed below that require such permission. Some sites allow only organizations to attend, while at others individuals are welcome to go on their own. Most trips are weather dependent and some require at least an average level of physical fitness. Check each individual listing.

Please check the MGS web site at <http://ecphora.net/mgs/> to get the latest field trip updates

No field trips to report at this time.

Finds by MGS Members

submitted by Phil Schmitz, Contributing Editor

This section is open to all MGS members. If you would like the fossils that you have found listed in The Rostrum, please e-mail Paschmitz@hotmail.com or send a postcard briefly identifying the specimen(s) to: **Phil Schmitz**, 2708 Gibbons Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21214-2128.

The following are finds by MGS members that were on display at the May 21, 2006 meeting:

Dave Siegert brought a 4" *C. angustidens* from Lee Creek that he found ten years ago; a Gomphotherium tooth and a 6" incomplete *C. megalodon*, both from South Carolina; a 4" *C. megalodon* from Bone Valley, Florida; and a 5 ¼" *C. megalodon* he found at Calvert Cliffs some ten years ago.

Daryl Serafin found a gannet bird bone from Brownies during the Spring of 2006. In addition, he found a finger bone (porpoise?), some small *C. megalodon* teeth, makos, a partial fish jaw, and a turtle snout.

Jason Osborne (a new member) found a 4 1/16" *C. megalodon* at Scientist Cliffs in 2005. He also had six large 5 3/8" to 6" *C. megalodons*; Eocene micro teeth from an undisclosed location in Maryland last fall (2005); and a 2 ½" projectile point from Dares Beach. He had *Mosasaur* and *Spinosaurus* teeth and a *Mosasaur* jaw in matrix all from Morocco.

Dave Anderson found a *Cylindracan thusrectus* (billfish rostral) at Popes Creek (see photo below).

Gary Grimsley found four *Paleocharcarodon* teeth from Liverpool Pt in April 2006 and a 2" *Otodus* in Feb 2006.

Tom Newquist had some close-up photos of Muddy Creek micro teeth and jaw sections as well as the fossils.

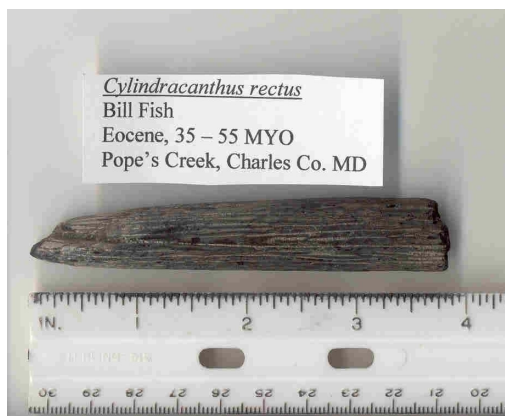
Brady Hamilton found at Randel's, a nice *Otodus* and a weasel like mammal skull with a horse tooth associated (attached) with it, from the Miocene of China.

Jim Savia found a 1 ¾" *Otodus* from Liverpool in May 2006.

Eric Woody found at Randel's; a whale humerus bone, a mako tooth, a *C. megalodon*, a bird bone, two shark vertebrae, a dugong rib, and a porpoise ear bone, during May 2006.

Chris Hurd found eight gastropod shells including four *Epitonium sp.* from the Pliocene of Pacific Beach, San Diego, CA.

Rick Smith brought a Riker mount of micro-teeth found several years ago at the late Cretaceous site in Bowie, MD.



Part Two: The Iron Meteorites Submitted by Phil Schmitz

Iron meteorites make up about six percent of the total of all meteorites. Iron meteorites come from the core of the meteorites' parent body. They are mostly an alloy, or an association of iron (Fe) and nickel (Ni), mixed with small amounts of other minerals (troilite, graphite and schreibersite among others). Iron meteorites are now classified into seventeen categories based on the concentration of gallium, iridium, nickel and germanium. This classification is rather useless to the average collector, so I will use the more conventional method of classification

by structure. Octahedrites (eight-sided crystal), hexahedrites (six-sided crystal) and ataxites (without structure). There are also silicated and anomalous irons (also know as ungrouped).

The octahedrites are the most eye appealing of all the iron meteorites in that they show a crystalline structure known as the Widmanstatten pattern (when cut, polished and etched). This pattern consists of the minerals kamacite sandwiched between ribbons of taenite, two minerals that are not found naturally on Earth (They probably exist deep beneath the surface of the Earth, some 2,000 miles down.). The octahedrites are subclassified into five additional subclasses; coarsest, coarse, medium, fine and finest. These subclasses are based on the bandwidth of the Widmanstatten pattern. This pattern is created as a result of the parent bodies (asteroids), cooling between 1 degree to 100 degrees Centigrade every million years at low pressure. This process cannot be duplicated in the laboratory. The pattern is drawn out by the etching process with nitric acid or by heating the meteorite. Overheating the meteorite will destroy the pattern completely and cannot be restored by re-etching, so be careful if you try the heating method! Some octahedrite meteorites are Sikhote-Alin, Russia (coarsest), Canyon Diablo, Arizona (coarse), Cape York, Greenland (medium), Gibeon, Namibia, Africa (fine) and Follinge, Sweden (finest).

The hexahedrites consist of, for the most part, large cubic (hexahedron) crystals of kamacite. Hexahedrites display Neumann lines when the meteorite is cut, polished and etched. The Neumann lines are fine, parallel lines running along the plane of the crystal. These meteorites contain about 93% iron and about 5% nickel, along with some trace elements. Some examples of hexahedrites are the Antofogasta, North Chile meteorite and the Coahuila, Mexico meteorite.

The third group of iron meteorites are the ataxites. These are the rarest of the iron meteorites. These meteorites have no visible (naked eye) structure when etched, so they can be mistaken for (Earth) iron slag. The nickel test is essential for their identification. A microscopic examination is necessary to see the tiny Widmanstattan pattern to confirm that the specimen is indeed a meteorite. An example of an ataxite is the Chinga, Russia meteorite. Ironically the largest known meteorite in the world is an ataxite, the rarest type of iron meteorite. The Hoba meteorite still lies where it fell in Namibia, Africa. Its estimated weight is 60 tons.

The silicated irons contain, besides iron, minerals found in ordinary chondrites. An example of a silicated iron is Miles, Australia. The anomalous irons are ones that don't fit easily into the other categories. An example of this type of meteorite is Mundrabilla, Australia.

Next article: Some famous, well known iron meteorites.

Minutes of the May 21st Meeting

Minutes of the May meeting will be published in the next edition of The Rostrum.

May Program submitted by Phil Schmitz, Contributing Editor

Jim Patzer talked on the Petrified Forest and the Tuscon Fossil & Mineral Show. He showed his and **Mark Bennett's** photos of both places, including petroglyphs in the Petrified Forest. Jim noted that other fossils have been found in the Petrified Forest.

Tuscon photos included modern day shark jaws, various fish in matrix, agatized coral and trilobites in matrix as well as shark teeth. Besides gems and fossils, there was a lot of jewelry, such as large and small vases being sold. Also, you could buy all kinds of equipment for cutting stones. Also shown in the photos were huge amethyst geodes, saber tooth cat skulls, and huge ammonites (opalized). You could even buy a complete triceratops skeleton as well as a cave bear skeleton.

eBay & "Caveat emptor" submitted by Daryl Serafin

I started collecting fossil shark teeth back in early 1997. During that same year I bought my first home computer and signed up for internet service so I could surf the net and check out this online auction place called eBay. I registered with eBay right away and got my eBay username "cowsharks". I had to try a few different combinations of that username before it gave me the one I have since others were already taken. I quickly learned the ropes of bidding on stuff and was amazed at the variety of fossil shark teeth along with modern shark teeth and shark jaws there were up for auction. What was especially neat was the fact that you could buy teeth from some far away exotic places that you would probably never have a chance to visit like Morocco in Africa, or even private collecting areas like the one in Bakersfield, CA, also known as "Shark Tooth Hill". You can now routinely find fossil shark teeth and other fossilized vertebrate material from these and many other locations up for sale on eBay. Loving cowsharks so much I actually bought the head from a cowshark from someone in California that had inherited a whole estate of various fish and sharks that had been taxidermied.

Over the years my own collection of fossil shark teeth has grown quite large, and I now have thousands and thousands of teeth, some as large as 5 inches, and some as small as a few millimeters. The quality ranges from perfect to nasty and everything in between. The benefit to finding a lot of specimens is that after a while you're bound to find a really awesome or perfect specimen. When you do, you clearly know what perfect really means. That brings me to the main theme of this article. Over the years of collecting and looking at thousands of "shark tooth" related eBay auctions, I'm amazed at the titles or short descriptions folks use to describe their item up for sale. It probably pertains to most everything on eBay, but I'll focus on shark tooth auctions.

When I first started collecting I was a bit more eager or desperate to have a variety of shark teeth, especially cowshark teeth. As mentioned earlier, I even bought the head of a cowshark, "cooked" it in boiling water until the teeth fell out, and placed the teeth in a riker mount. I started buying almost every cowshark tooth I could off of eBay. Being new to the hobby I really wasn't aware of the real "value" of these teeth, but I used other auctions of similar teeth for comparison. I also tried to shop around

whatever internet sites I could find that sold fossil shark teeth. What I started to learn though was that everyone seems to have a different definition or perspective on "perfect", or better yet, "Museum Quality". The term "museum quality" is used so much it means almost nothing these days. I see some eBay auction titles with the words, "Perfect", "Museum Quality", "Mint", and

Then there are the real "cheesy" descriptions that have ratings such as "Collector Grade", or even things like "Grade A, AA, or AAA". Last I checked these weren't eggs, and what exactly does "Collector Grade" mean? Well, I'm sure it means something different to almost everyone. Take for example the kid who goes collecting and occasionally finds a dinged-up tooth like a slightly worn 2 inch Megalodon, missing a few serrations and others are worn. Maybe the bourlette is missing and the root has "expansion cracks". Well, to this young lad, it might be a gem in his eyes. After all, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". To him it might be "perfect", compared to what he has in his collection. Well, I've seen worn, ugly, nasty looking Megalodon teeth for sale on eBay with item descriptions that read "Perfect". So you need to be careful when considering bidding on a tooth. Of course, study the pictures. I'm always a bit leery of the folks who only post one picture of the tooth. With shark teeth, you need to see both sides so you can judge for yourself the condition and quality, and then bid accordingly. In case your wondering, my definition of a perfect tooth is simple - it has to look like it just fell out of the shark's mouth! This means, no scratches, no cracks in the enamel, a complete bourlette, solid root without any cracks, sharp serrations including the infamous "tip serration". Yeah yeah I know, some of you experienced folks are saying right now, what about the chipped teeth that sharks usually have. Of course my definition doesn't include the chipped teeth. It's a darn shame sharks had to eat things like whales with big bones that damaged their teeth. Why couldn't they have fed on something softer like jellyfish!

Recently a friend of mine brought to my attention a tooth being sold on eBay. Being from Maryland and frequent visitors of Calvert Cliffs, we were interested in the rare offering of a "Calvert" Chubutensis up for sale. My friend said the tooth was under 2 inches and already going for over

\$150.00. However, he pointed out that even though he had looked at the pictures of the tooth off and on for a few days, watching to see how high the bidding was going, he suddenly noticed that there seem to be more damage to the tooth than the "4 nicked serrations" the seller pointed out in their description. The description went on to boast how rare it is that such a quality specimen from Calvert Cliffs is put up for sale on eBay (which I can confirm is true), and that the only thing wrong with the tooth was four nicked serrations from one of the cusps. Well, as my friend pointed out, the serrations weren't just nicked, but a whole chunk of the cusp was actually missing. What was a bit suspicious was the fact that although there were several pictures of the tooth from various angles, the angle that was shown least or poorly shown close-up was of that damaged cusp! This may have been unintentionally, but I can't help but think about the reaction of the buyer when they got this thing in the mail and saw the extent of the damage. Perhaps they noticed like my friend did, but I had to look real hard, and only because he had pointed it out to me I knew where to look. Personally I wouldn't have paid more than \$25 for the tooth, but that's me. I have tons of teeth like this one, so I don't really need one for my collection. Someone else though who's a bit more eager may end up paying more for something than they probably should, but as the seller pointed out, "Calvert" teeth are rarely offered up for sale.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with the Latin phrase "Caveat Emptor", which means "let the buyer beware". I believe that phrase is quite appropriate when considering bidding on an eBay auction. It's not to say that all sellers are looking to pull one over on you, frankly, most appear to be quite honest in their item descriptions of the teeth. Occasionally I email one of them if I happen to see that they have misidentified a tooth. For example, I saw someone selling a "Serratolamna aschershoni" (small type mackerel) tooth from Morocco recently but had it labeled as an *Otodus obliquus* (Giant Mackerel). It was probably unintentional, but again, "let the buyer beware".

Something else I learned early on about buying shark teeth on eBay, check out other internet sites first, as well as contact other folks who know more about this stuff than you do. If you're not sure what something is worth, contact one of the many reputable dealers or fossil clubs you can find on the internet. There's a vast resource of folks out there who can help identify teeth and give lots of other helpful information.

The Rostrum 15 (4) July 2006

I love eBay. Almost daily I check out various shark tooth and shark jaw auctions, mostly out of curiosity these days. I still buy something occasionally, but not as much as I did years ago. I've even sold shark teeth on eBay, not as many as my wife would like though. Occasionally I bring home a really nice tooth and show it to her. The first thing she usually says is "how much can we sell it for?". She just doesn't understand I guess. She doesn't know how rare it really is to find the "perfect" teeth.

Lastly, I'll offer up some advice regarding bidding on eBay auctions. As you will learn each seller has a username and a corresponding feedback score which appears in parenthesis just to the right of the username. For example, mine currently reads "cowsharks(132)". The feedback score indicates how many times that person has bought or sold on eBay. Just below this will be the Positive Feedback percentage. A highly reputable person will have a feedback percentage above 90 to 95%. Before I seriously consider bidding, I first look to see if that person has a high Feedback score, something above 100 or more. Then I look at the Positive Feedback percentage. I feel comfortable when that value is above 95%. I'm willing to give a little on this value if the feedback score is something really large, like in the thousands. This is because the more someone sells, the higher the probability that they are going to encounter someone who is not 100% satisfied with every facet of the transaction. All it takes is a few anxious folks who don't get their package exactly within the 2 to 3 day Priority Mail to leave you with some negative feedback which draws down that Positive Feedback score. You can and should click on the "Read Feedbacks" link they provide as well so you can read the feedback left by other buyers who dealt with this seller. It's quite interesting reading sometimes.

Another important factor when deciding whether or not to bid, is how high you are willing to bid based on the person's feedback score and positive feedback rating. For example, I'm more willing to trust someone with my \$100 who has a feedback score of over 1,000, than I am with someone who's is selling some really valuable tooth and they only have a feedback score of under 10. But, that's where the next item up for discussion comes in, PayPal. I love PayPal. eBay purchased PayPal a year ago or more, and it's such a simple and convenient method for paying for your auction. Almost every seller on eBay accepts PayPal as a form of payment, and PayPal even offers "Free PayPal Buyer Protection". In the event you get stiffed by someone, your purchase is covered.

Lastly, be sure to check on how much folks charge for shipping. Lots of seller's appear to "hide" the shipping costs, or make you contact them before the auction ends if you want them to calculate the shipping and handling charges. This is especially important if you're planning on bidding on a tooth being shipped from over sea's somewhere. Most sellers don't appear greedy and usually only charge a

few dollars to cover their own expenses, and sometimes offer different forms of shipping such as USPS Priority Mail or UPS. However, occasionally I see someone who charges upwards of \$10 just to mail a tiny little tooth. I could go on and on about bidding, buying, and selling, but if you've never tried it, get your feet wet and buy yourself a shark tooth! Just remember, Caveat Emptor!

MGS Picnic Recap **Submitted by Dick Grier, Sr.**

On a beautiful Saturday (6/17), cloudless with a very nice breeze, 40 MGS members attended the 3rd Annual Picnic at the Flag Ponds Recreation Area in Calvert County. We had six junior members and 2 guests in attendance. Mark Bennett coordinated the picnic and brought a lot of food and drinks donated by the MGS. Chef Joe Cirrincione cooked the hot dogs, hamburgers, and corn (unshucked), and kept it coming! No one went hungry. Everyone contributed all kinds of food, cobbler, brownies, cake, watermelon, and all the other necessities to make for a wonderful picnic. A slight haze in the afternoon kept the temperature with the breeze, easy to handle.

The MGS Tooth Jar, "The Big Guess", was set out with 3 guesses for \$1.00 not to go over with the closest number winning. Junior member Jordan Serafin won with his guess of 2000. The jar contained 2111 teeth. Poor Mark would have won had he not listened to some dumb information from an unnamed source and changed a number. C'est la guerre! A good time was had by all. Join us next year--try it, you'll like it!

Odds & Ends **Compiled by Rick Smith - Editor**

Start Your Preparation for the September Meeting:

4th Annual regular Auction to be held Sunday, Sept. 17th.

- 1-Members can bring up to ten specimens of mineral, fossils or artifacts.
- 2-Proper identification and localities on numbered tags
- 3-Two forms listing the specimens, one for the auctioneer and 1 for the cashier, will be available at the July meeting. Minimum bids can be placed on the item and will not be undersold.
- 4-MGS raises money through auctions and door prizes that finance all projects that we promote.
- 5-MGS will assess 10% on each specimen sold.
- 6-MGS will also have specimens to be auctioned from our members' donated material.

Our regular auctions are a lot of fun and raise money for the MGS treasury. Bring your specimens and cash or checks and join the fun! (submitted by **Dick Grier, Sr.**)

History of the Maryland Geological Society:

If you haven't yet looked at the history link on the homepage of the MGS website, do yourself a favor and take a look. Dick Grier, Jr. has written a detailed description of the development and maturation of MGS. The history is broken into two parts. The first portion is titled "The Formative Period" and covers the years from 1991-1992 when the MGS was created. The second portion is a record of the years from 1993-2001. (submitted by **Rick Smith**)

Congratulations to Mel Hurd:

Mel recently authored a book in the Postcard History Series about Milford, Connecticut. Mel used postcards from his own collection and wrote the accompanied text. Milford is located on Long Island Sound and contains miles of beach area. The postcards provide images of Milford as it looked in the early 1900's and later. The book was published by Arcadia Publishing (ISBN 0738544639). (submitted by **Rick Smith**)

The Dinosaur Hunter by Rick Smith

The eyes.
Everything starts with the eyes.
Scanning the horizon,
His eyes strain to penetrate
Beneath the surface soils,
To strip away the trees and plants,
To look into the past.
But it is only where erosion
Or man's hand has laid the earth bare,
That his eyes can reach the Potomac clays.

The clay.
An earthen vault surrounding ancient treasures.
Shades of orange, purple, and red,
Produce a rich mosaic of color,
And represent time on Earth
One hundred million years ago.
From within this kaleidoscope
Of color and time,
It is a pale, blue-gray clay,
In which the hunter seeks his prey.

The tools.
Silently, the hunter goes about his work.
He is armed with a trio of tools:
Eyes for searching,
Hands for grasping,
And most importantly, the mind.
The great repository
Of all stored knowledge.
Carried across its synaptic junctions
Is the memory of every hunt that came before.

The search.
An exploration in solitude.
His is a lonely pursuit,
Since few others are willing
To prospect in a vein
Where success can be so elusive.
Blue-gray clay, lignite, and ironstone
Are the clues that guide him,
To let him know he walks
Where dinosaurs once walked.

The drive.
Patience, persistence, and desire.
Hours turn into days,
Days become weeks,
The thirst for discovery fueled
By an occasional small fragment of bone.
He searches the same areas
Over and over, again and again,
In hopes that each new rainfall
Will uncover something new.

The find.
A moment beyond imagination.
Encased within ironstone,
As timeless as the rock itself,
Lies the leg bone of a sauropod dinosaur.
As his hand touches the bone,
The hunter is suddenly connected
With one of the most magnificent creations
To have ever walked upon this Earth,
The two forever linked across an eternity of time.

News from the Federations AFMS Code of Ethics

Below is a code of ethics created by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. It was mentioned at the May MGS meeting and is reproduced here for the benefit of all MGS members.

I will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on privately owned land without the owner's permission.
I will keep informed of all laws, regulations of rules governing collecting on public lands, and will observe them.
I will to the best of my ability, ascertain the boundary lines of property on which I plan to collect.
I will use no firearms or blasting material in collecting areas.
I will cause no willful damage to property of any kind - fences, signs, or buildings.

I will leave all gates as found.

I will build fires in designated or safe places only and will be certain they are completely extinguished before leaving the area.

I will discard no burning material - matches, cigarettes, etc.

I will fill all excavation holes which may be dangerous to livestock.

I will not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supply.

I will cause no willful damage to collecting material and will take home only what I can reasonably use.

I will practice conservation and undertake to utilize fully and well the materials I have collected and will recycle my surplus for the pleasure and benefit of others.

I will support the rockhound project H.E.L.P. (Help Eliminate Litter Please) and will leave all collecting areas devoid of litter, regardless of how found.

I will cooperate with field trip leaders and those in designated authority in all collecting areas.

I will report to my club or Federation officers, Bureau of Land Management, or other authorities, any deposit of petrified wood or other materials on public lands which should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations for public educational and scientific purposes.

I will appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.

I will observe the "Golden Rule", will use "Good Outdoor Manners", and will at all times conduct myself in a manner which will add to the stature and public "image" of rockhounds everywhere.

The EFMLS website is: <http://www.amfed.org/efmls/>

The AFMS website is: <http://www.amfed.org/>

MGS Club Items for Sale

MGS has decals, coffee mugs, hats and t-shirts with the club logo for sale at very reasonable prices.

See **Chris Hurd** at the next meeting!

Upcoming Shows & Events - 2006

Extracted from the EFMLS June/July06 newsletter

July 15-16: 37th Annual Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by the **Gem City Rock and Mineral Club**, Perry Hi-way Hose Co., 8270 Peach St, Erie, PA.

August 5-6: 57th Annual Gem Show sponsored by **The Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Washington, D.C.**, NEW LOCATION: Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, 9101 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD, corner of Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane.

September 16-17: 41st Annual Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by the **Central Pennsylvania Rock and Mineral Club**, NEW LOCATION: Central Dauphin Middle School, Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA.

September 23-24: 42nd Annual Atlantic Coast Gem, Mineral, & Jewelry Show hosted by the **Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore**, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD, Md Route 32 at I-70.

October 07: Fall Mineralfest hosted by the **Pennsylvania Earth Sciences Association**, Macungie Memorial Park (8 miles southwest of Allentown, PA).

November 18-19: Annual Gem & Mineral Show and 56th EFMLS Convention sponsored by the **Gem and Mineral Society of the Palm Beaches**, South Florida Fairgrounds, West Palm Beach, FL, EFMLS Annual Meeting on November 17.

Dates to Remember

Sunday, July 16th - MGS Meeting

Meeting Time & Location:

12 Noon to 4 PM

South Bowie Community Center

1717 Pittsfield Lane, Bowie, MD 20716

301-249-1622

Right (west) on Mitchellville Road to Pittsfield Lane (one block)

2.7 miles south of US 50 on US 301/3

Detailed directions are available on the MGS website.

Mineral of the Meeting: Diopside. Bring a few choice specimens to the meeting.

The 4th Annual MGS Auction will be held at the Sept. 17th meeting.
(details inside)

The Rostrum

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First Class Mail

