

Inside this issue

- 02 Officers and board members • President's corner • July MAGS field trip
- 03 July displays • 2005 dates to remember • July programs • Rock swap set for July 9
- 04 All in the MAGS family: Chinasaurus are coming • Long Hunter State Park • Sunshine and caring • July birthdays • Website stats • Like the hot days of summer . . .
- 05 MAGS roadcut • William Holland Report
- 06 Southeast Federation news: DMC field trip—Rose Creek, NC SFMS shows
- 07 Creeking down south (con't)
- 08 May 05 in review: Board meeting notes Membership meeting notes Welcome new members
- 09 Creeking down south (con't)
- 10 Creeking down south (con't)

Creeking:

How a Rockhound enjoys a hot summer's day down south



Collection of petrified wood from Site One, located in Mississippi. Photo by WC McDaniel.

BY WC McDANIEL: Summer months pose a dilemma for southern rockhounds. How do you fulfill your yearning and need to go rock hunting without sacrificing your life to the heat and humidity of the days of July and August? One option is to stay home, do nothing, hold down the recliner, and enjoy the wonders of one the most important inventions of the 20th century, air conditioning. A second option is to go rock hunting at your home by checking out your displays, cleaning, and rearranging to find a place for your next acquisition. The third and

last option (saved the best for the last) is to go creeking. I'm not sure if the word creeking has been anointed by the Oxford English Dictionary. However, Bill Gates gave me the power to add it to my spell check, I did, and now it's the title of this article. Creeking simply means to go rock hunting in a creek.

The primary components of creeking include a hot day, a creek suitable for wading, shade and eager rockhounds. Two of these four criteria were easily met on a hot day in August of 2004. Three rockhounds loaded up the Subaru Outback, packed a cooler with plenty of drinks and headed south to check out some creeks, find some shade and hopefully some petrified wood. On that day and subsequent days we successfully located two creeking sites and collected an estimated 800-1,000 pounds of petrified wood. Both sites are located in Mississippi.

SITE ONE:

Our first destination was selected based on an earlier tip and a quick roadside look during the winter months. The site, about 160 miles from Memphis, is located >> see *Creeking down south* on page seven

July MAGS events

- 30 6:30p MAGS Board Meeting • Blue Plate Café, 5469 Poplar Avenue
- 08 7:30p MAGS Membership Meeting • Shady Grove Presbyterian Church
5535 Shady Grove Road • Bring refreshments and displays
- 09 6:00p MAGS Rock Swap at David and Beth Day's [see page 3]
- 16 8:00a MAGS Field Trip to Eupora, Mississippi [see page 2]
- 23 10:00a DMC Field Trip to Rose Creek Mine, Clay Co., NC [see page 6]

Our July program will be presented by Dr. Daniel Swann, Anthropologist with Chucalissa. The MAGS Youth will be learning about "collecting safety" and Allen Helt will share his knowledge of wirewrapping.

2005-2006

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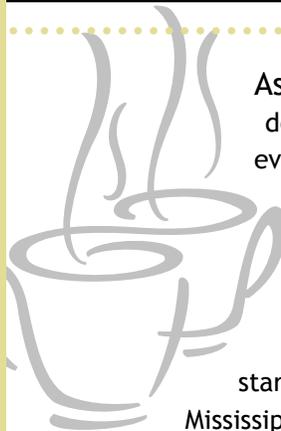
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President's corner: WC McDANIEL



As the hot days of the summer descend upon us, MAGS' activities and events include field trips to the creeks of Mississippi, an indoor rock swap and picnic, and a behind scene tour of the Pink Palace. Some pretty cool stuff.

June's field trip to 20-Mile Creek started our summer tour of creeks in Mississippi. Reports are that about 12-14 MAGS' members experienced a good day of fossil collecting. Our July trip will be to collect petrified wood and our August trip will be to Turkey Creek near Starkville to collect marcasite/pyrite. Both trips will have certain collecting conditions, so be sure to come to the membership meetings for info.

The weekend of August 12-14 will be busy. First, on Friday night, MAGS will present its 4th annual indoor rock swap and picnic. This will be held during the regular membership meeting. On Saturday and Sunday MAGS' members will get a behind the scene tour of the Pink Palace. Sign up sheets will be available at the July meeting. Limited space so be sure to sign up.

Our membership meeting on Friday, July 9 will feature a silent auction and our theme display will be Lake Superior Agates. So bring your checkbook or cash to bid/buy and Lakers to show off.

Our first Friday night rock swap on June 18 was a big success. Nice weather, good food, rocks and camaraderie of fellow rockhounds made the evening an enjoyable time. Thanks to the Thomases for being our hosts.

WC

July MAGS field trip

LOU WHITE: The MAGS July field trip will be on Saturday, July 16, to Eupora, Mississippi., which is located 157 miles from Memphis. We will be collecting petrified wood (check out the feature article in this issue of the MAGS Rockhound News). Specific field trip meeting times and locations will be available at the July 8 membership meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you can contact Lou White at 901-937 8522 or WC McDaniel at 901-274-7706. You can also email WC at w.c.mcd@worldnet.att.net for details. So mark your calendar for June 18, and don't miss the fun.

July displays

Display theme for July

The July membership meeting display theme is "Lake Superior Agates". You don't have to bring your entire collection for a themed display. Just bring your favorite Lake Superior Agates. Everyone's entry will be placed on the same table. Themed displays are not for competition. They are for information and the enjoyment of everyone at the meeting.

Competitive displays

Bring your favorite collection in July for the display competition—maybe some of your favorite vacation finds. A vote will be taken at the end of the membership meeting to determine who will be the adult winner and the youth winner. Winners receive special gifts at the end of the year.

2005 dates to remember

	Board Meeting	Membership Meeting	Due Date for Newsletter Articles
Jul	Jun 30	10	—
Aug	4	12	July 24
Sep	1	9	August 21
Oct	6	14	September 25
Nov	3	11	October 23
Dec	1	9	November 20

July programs

IDAJEAN JORDAN, VP-PROGRAMS: The July adult program will be presented by Chucalissa Cultural Anthropologist, Dr. Daniel Swann. The July youth program will be "Collection Safety" and an introduction to "Wirewrapping" with Allen Helt.

Rock swap set for Saturday, July 9 from 10:00am until 2:00pm

SHERRI BALDWIN, MAGS DIRECTOR-HISTORIAN: Our July Rock Swap will be hosted by Beth and David Day at 5974 Ivanhoe Road in Bartlett (387-2347). From I-40 take Sycamore View north, cross Summer (Hwy. 70), Pleasant View, Raleigh LaGrange and Elmore Road. Ivanhoe is a right turn across from Bartlett Park, after the white picket fence and before you get to Stage Road (Hwy. 64). The Day house is the fifth one on the left. As the house sits back from the road, perhaps you should park on the street, after unloading people, chairs, rocks, etc. You should turn around in the drive and not back into the sometimes surprisingly busy hilly street. This rock swap will be an opportunity to check out some of the hand and power tools used to carve sculpture for those people who have considered trying it themselves as most are unavailable locally



and have to be ordered from catalogs or the Internet. If you plan to bring rocks to swap or sell, don't forget to bring a folding table [card table works great] for your wares. Whether you plan to set up shop or not, you will still need to bring folding chairs and drinks enough for your crew and a pot luck dish large enough to share with everyone. Your dish can be anything from a salad, to a side dish, to chips and dip to dessert. MAGS will provide the main dish, paper plates, napkins and cutlery. Stay tuned to **MAGS Rockhound News** for a future rock swap in a neighborhood near you. *Map courtesy of Mapquest.com*

The Chinasaurus are coming

SHERIDA HELMS: ASSISTANT YOUTH DIRECTOR:

An exciting new exhibit is coming to the Pink Palace, beginning July 2, 2005. The Chinasaurus are coming!

Dinosaurs in the Jurassic Period were vary large and varied in the area now known as China. Don't miss this new exhibit and children's activities.

Long Hunter State Park

SHERIDA HELMS, ASSISTANT YOUTH DIRECTOR:

Long Hunter State Park is located at 2910 Hobson Pike, Hermitage, TN, along the shore of the shore of J. Percy Priest Lake, near Nashville. Take I-40 east to exit 226-A, then south 6.2 miles to the park entrance.

On July 30, **Stories of the Ancient Ones**, an event at the Sellars Farm Archaeological Site - Mississippian Period, will take place at the park. Call 615-885-2422 for info.

Sunshine and caring

MELBA COLE, MAGS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR:

What a month June was in the lives of our MAGS family. Our heart-felt condolences are extended to Cornelia and WC McDaniel following the loss of Cornelia's brother, Ricky, at the beginning of June.

Best wishes to George Fulghum and David McAlister's mother, as they continue to improve; to Sherri Baldwin's father (Glen Garrett) as he recovers from major surgery; to Roger Van Cleef as he remains in the hospital following major surgery; to Jean Helt as she continues to nurse a broken leg; to Allen Helt as he continues to strengthen following a battle with pneumonia; and to Allen and Jean Helt's daughter, as she endures physical therapy following a major automobile accident.

If you have news about MAGS members, please send them to me at JMelCole@aol.com or give me a call at 382-0344.

July Birthdays

MELBA COLE: Birthstone for July is Ruby.

- 3 - Kathryn Van Cleef
- 3 - Wayne Williams
- 5 - Clay Crumpton
- 9 - Ali Harrell
- 14 - Sandy Ward
- 17 - Melinda Warren
- 18 - Kristina Worrell
- 19 - Bill Scheffer**
- 19 - Susan Thomas
- 21 - Steve Huber
- 21 - Susan Vaughn
- 21 - Lisa Walker
- 22 - John Givens
- 23 - Karen Loud
- 23 - Myrna Muir
- 23 - Doris Parsons
- 24 - Robert Enzerink
- 24 - Serena Enzerink
- 24 - Susan Prodanovich
- 25 - Jenny Vaughn
- 30 - Maria Wood
- 31 - Greg Britt

Bold type indicates lifetime members.

Website statistics for June

MIKE BALDWIN, MAGS WEB COORDINATOR:

Here's a brief look at our website [www.memphisgeology.org] from 01.21.02 through 06.28.05:

Visits	115,416
Hits	507,245
Avg visits/day past month	255
Top pages in the past 30 days:	
Home page.....	546 hits
Explorer0203.pdf	373 hits
Explorer0703.pdf	367 hits
rocknews0605.pdf	281 hits
rocknews1002.pdf	210 hits

A visit is every time someone comes to our website. A hit is every page viewed once a user enters our website.

Like the hot days of summer, MAGS editor seeks relief!

MIKE BALDWIN, MAGS EDITOR: My term as the current MAGS Rockhound News Editor will not end until January 2007, but I would like to solicit your help early. If you are interested in becoming the next MAGS editor, now is the time to start preparing. Putting together a 10-page newsletter every month is challenging, but it is also rewarding. If you are fluent in the language of page layout software (I use Adobe InDesign) and other tools such as PhotoShop and Illustrator . . . and . . . if you are interested in taking on the duties of editor, contact me and let's talk. The position of editor is a President-appointed board position, so you can also contact WC McDaniel if you are interested. Give it some serious thought . . . I know the next editor is out there, just waiting for this opportunity. [MIKE: <rockclub@earthlink.net> 901-853-3603; WC: <w.c.mcd@worldnet.att.net> 901-274-7706]

WC McDANIEL: The Roadcut focuses on the theme display for the July membership, Lake Superior Agates:

- Lake Superior Agates were formed over one billion years ago, making it the oldest agate in the world. The next oldest agate is the Montana Moss Agate, about 365 million years,
- The Lake Superior Agate is the state gemstone of Minnesota. One of Minnesota's state parks, Moose Lake State Park, primary attraction/focus is the Lake Superior Agate
- The Lake Superior Agate's primary color scheme of red, orange and yellow is the result of oxidation of iron. The concentration of iron and the amount of oxidation determine the color within or between an agate's bands. (Brzyz).
- The most common type of Lake Superior Agate is the fortification agate with its eye-catching banding patterns. Each band, when traced around an exposed pattern or "face," connects with itself like the walls of a fort, hence the name fortification agate (Brzyz).
- The "eye agate" is one of the rarest of Lake Superior Agates. It has an almost perfectly round/circular band.
- Books: "The Lake Superior Agate" by Scott Wolter; "Understanding and Finding Agates" by Karen Brzyz; "The Beauty of Banded Agates—An Exploration of Eight Major Worldwide Sites" by Michael R. Carlson
- Web sites: www.agate-nodule.com; www.agatelady.com; www.agates-r-us.com; www.lakesuperioragates.net; www.lakesuperioragates.com; <http://www.superagates.com>

IDAJEAN JORDAN: After collecting rocks, minerals and fossils since 1946, I finally decided to enroll at the SFMS' William Holland School of Lapidary Arts. I was not interested in cutting and polishing rocks then, but that is about to change.

Nancy Folden, Jerry Seamans and I enrolled at the school for the June 12th-18th session. Nancy and I enrolled in the beginning silver smith class of Dan Haga and Jerry in channel work with Don Monroe. Other classes offered this session were: cabochons, chain making, fused glass, opals, stained glass and two beginning silver smithing.

Classes begin at 9 a.m. (after a buffet breakfast every morning) then break for lunch at noon; begin again at 1 p.m. to 5 or 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m., three meals a day, buffet style.

There are no televisions in the rooms, although TV and tapes are available in the dining room. Rooms are air-conditioned with private bath. The quietness on the mountain is wonderful. There are card games in the dining room, books and magazines along with plenty of visiting and talking - what else - gems and minerals. You may drive to town of Young Harris or Helen to eat and visit shops.

Your class workshop provides a work desk, and in Nancy and my case, lab equipment, pliers, solder, etc. for making silver jewelry. Our class project for the week was four articles; silver earrings, an Indian turquoise silver ring, an amber pendant and silver bracelet. Lab fees are separate from the \$280.00 fee. My personal lab fee was \$100.00. If you wish to make more items you purchase silver and stones from the instructor. Nancy made two rings - one turquoise and one Australian boulder opal and a labradorite pendant.

There is an auction on Tuesday night to raise money for the school and we raised \$1,000.00. Items are donated by the members.

Friday night we had "show and tell" in the dining room. All the items made by the different classes were displayed.

On Saturday, the 18th, all good things came to an end. We had to make way for the next class coming to the June 19th session.

Will I go again? You Betcha!

NOTE FROM NANCY FOLDEN: William Holland still has some openings for the October 9-15 SMFS class, so I signed up to return for wire wrapping. The William Holland school is marvelous for people that share our hobby and our club needs to promote attendance at every opportunity.



DMC program of the SFMS field trip committee **An official field trip of the Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin, NC** **8am - 5pm • July 23, 2005 • Rose Creek Mine, Clay Co., NC**

COLLECTING: A special offering of native dirt, Rubies, Sapphires, Garnets, small Quartz, Feldspar and possibly Emeralds.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: A covered flume, restrooms, picnic area, screens provided at the flume. A special price of \$4.00 includes the first bucket of native or enriched dirt. \$ 3.00 for re-fills. Children and pets on a leash are welcome.

BRING: Bring your own food and drinks.

DIRECTIONS AND WHERE TO MEET: We will meet at the Franklin Gem & Mineral Museum located at 25 Phillips St. in the " old Jail " in downtown Franklin at 7am and caravan to the site by 8am. The museum will be open for tours prior to leaving. (Remember - everyone must meet and proceed to the collecting site together! - DMC)

The Rose Creek Campground is located next door to the mine. E-mail: manager@rosecreekcamp.com or phone 828 524 3225. There are also many motels in the area.

Contact: William (Wally) Smith, Field Trip Chairman, The Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin NC • 828-369-7695 <wallyanddoris5@juno.com>

Field trips are open to all members of associated clubs of the DMC program of the SFMS Field Trip Committee and to all members of SFMS member clubs who have provided their membership with SFMS liability insurance. Because of insurance requirements, members of the GENERAL PUBLIC are NOT invited on this or any DMC program field trips!

Upcoming SFMS shows

JULY 27-31, 2005 • Franklin, NC • The Gem and Mineral Society of Franklin, North Carolina • Annual Gem and Mineral Show • Macon County Community Building on 441 South • Hours: 27th-30th, 10:00 A.M.-6:00 P.M.; 31st, Noon-5:00 P.M. • Contact: Fred Plesner at 828.349.4224

SEPT 2-5, 2005 • Hendersonville, NC • Henderson County Gem and Mineral Society • 24th Annual Gem and Mineral Spectacular and Sale • Whitmore Activity Building, Lily Pond Road • Hours: 2nd-4th, 10:00 A.M.-6:00 P.M.; 5th, 10:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. • Contact: Margaret L. Johnson, P.O. Box 6391, Hendersonville, NC 28739-6391, 828.692.1249 or email mgt.j.ed@brinet.com

SEPT 3, 2005 • Hendersonville, NC • Henderson County Gem and Mineral Society • 16th Annual Micro-mount Symposium • Salvation Army Building, Grove Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues • Hours: 8:30 A.M.-4:00 P.M. • Contact: Emily Adams, 355 Pelham Road, Greenville, SC 29615, 864.271.3877

SEPT 9-11, 2005 • Winston-Salem, NC • Forsyth Gem and Mineral Club • 34th Annual Gem, Mineral, Jewelry Show and Sale • Educational Building, Dixie Classic Fairgrounds • Hours: 9th-10th, 10:00 A.M.-7:00 P.M.; 11th, Noon-6:00 P.M. • Contact www.forsythgemclub.com

SEPT 24-25, 2005 • Hiddenite, NC • Western Piedmont Mineral and Gem Society • 17th Annual Hiddenite Gem and Mineral Show • Hiddenite Educational Complex, Sulphur Springs Road • Hours: 24th, 9:00 A.M.-6:00 P.M.; 25th, Noon-6:00 P.M. • Contact Patty Arnold, 828.465.2769

off a main highway and accessed via a gravel road. About one mile from the turn off we passed over a bridge, stopped and checked both sides of the creek. Downstream from the bridge the creek appeared to be fairly accessible with a sloping bank and little vegetation. Upstream the creek looked more difficult. High clay and sandy banks, heavy growth of vegetation including several large trees with exposed root systems, and right in the middle, stretching from bank to bank, was a large pool of water, later to be measured at about 6-7 feet deep. So we took the easy route and headed downstream.



Cornelia McDaniel and Don Blalock at Site One. Note yellow pole in background, marking site of the "Big One". Photo by WC McDaniel.

We began our search by looking in the creek bed and along its banks. The water was clear, depth was about a foot and the width of the creek bed was about 25 feet. For several hundred yards we picked up a large number of small pieces of petrified wood, majority measured about 1 to 3 inches long. The largest piece was about 10 inches long. As we continued our journey and finds, lingering questions emerged. What is the source of the wood? Where are the big pieces? Looking back over our shoulders we concluded that we had to go up the creek, past the pool of water and down the high banks and cascading tree roots. So we headed that way.

Our quest for a route down to the creek bed began by checking out our options on both sides of the creek. High sheer clay banks, heavy vegetation with thorns, multiple types of vines, and several tall trees dominated this section. One of those large trees' root system had been exposed due to years of erosion and we decided to use that route to the creek. The journey through the tree's root system was slow and tedious but we all made it safely down.

We began our walk up the creek. Water depth ranged from a few inches to a couple of feet. The first couple of hundred yards did not produce any wood and we began to wonder if someone else had collected before us. However, it did produce a couple of long, large and gorgeous snakes that swam up the creek, as if to tell us to follow them to the wood. We followed

and they soon disappeared near an area where a large amount of rock and gravel type material had accumulated. We immediately found our first large piece, about 3 feet long, weighing about 25 pounds. That was the tip of the iceberg. Over the next half mile we found numerous pieces, several weighing between 25-50 pounds. The majority of wood was found in the middle of the creek, some in a couple feet of water. A few were almost jet black due to years of organic deposits. We continued up the creek and located a piece of wood extending about 12 inches out from the sand and at the water surface, essentially in situ. A quick and tentative exploration revealed the piece was fairly large and we lacked the means to haul it out that day. One thing was certain, breaking up this large piece would have been a crime against geology and disrespectful of the petrification process. So we covered it back up, camouflaged it with some bushes, crossed our fingers and hoped it would still be there on our next return trip. It would take two more trips to get the "Big One" safely out and home. On our journey back to the car we searched and located another access/exit point, a high sheer bank with some toeholds formed by erosion and tree roots. This would make our additional trips a little easier.

Over the next few weeks our trips to this creek continued to be productive. On our second trip we extracted more of the "Big One" and discovered it was bigger than we had estimated, weighing about 400 pounds. We faced a dilemma: the wood was long, wide and heavy, about mile from the bridge and with steep banks, slippery rocks, small waterfalls and a couple of large downed trees that had fallen across the creek bed to traverse on our journey back. So we covered it back up and came home (with some other wood though) to contemplate our dilemma. How to get the "Big One" out in one piece while keeping our backs intact?

Our solution was to recruit a couple of other rockhounds, an old green army stretcher and a large two-wheeler and come back for our third visit to this site. Upon our arrival we discovered the creek was muddy and the banks slippery from rain a couple days earlier. This made the journey up the creek to the "Big One" a little more precarious. But we were determined and successfully made our way to the location of the "Big One." It was still in hiding and ready for its journey. The first step was to completely extract the wood from the sandy soil and root system from which it was located. It came out in one piece. The intact wood was placed on the green army stretcher and with a loud grunt from the four stretcher bearers it was lifted and carried to an area where we would attempt to haul it up on a sloping bank that was not quite as steep as our original access point. This was a struggle and a daunting task.

The "Big One" was beginning to feel like "The Much Bigger One." Once at the top, the wood was secured to a heavy duty two-wheeler and we set off toward the direction of the vehicles. At least that was our plan. Over the next couple of hours we battled underbrush, saplings, winding and misdirected paths, and the "Big One's" struggles to stay on

>> see *Creeking down south* on page nine

May 2005 board meeting notes

Susan Thom, MAGS Secretary

The MAGS board of directors meeting met on May 5, 2005 at the Blue Plate Cafe, 5469 Poplar Avenue, presided by President W.C. McDaniel who opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. The minutes from the Board and Membership meetings were presented, seconded, and approved with the following corrections: at Membership meeting Ron Brister asked if there was an interest in forming an archeological group involving education and training and certification would be given for the archeological field study. In attendance were: Mike and Sherri Baldwin, James Butchko, Melba Cole, Nancy Folden, Sherida Helms, Idajeane Jordan, W.C. McDaniel, Park Noyes, Raynee Randolph, Susan Thom, Roger Van Cleef and Lou White. Reports given: (2) Field Trips-May 21 - Sugar Creek, Millington, TN area collecting in a creek bed June or July - 20 mile Creek or Magnet Cove (2) Program-Dr. Swann from Chucalissa. June-Jimmy McNeal (3) Youth-Communications Badge. June-state rock and gem stones. (4) Library-Some members are not returning books that are checked out. Need books in memory of Leslie Garth and John Jones. (5) Membership-5 new membership applications accepted: Rosemary Crawford, Ruth Aults Carr and Donald Carr, Don Grubbs, Jon and Adrea Scilken, Peter and Mathilda Doorley. (6) Sunshine Report-Dr. Prather broke his hip. Maxine and George Fulghum are getting better at Methodist Rehabilitation. (7) Rock Swap-at Lou White's home, May 14th, 10am-2pm, June-Randy and Susan Thomas's home in Collierville, July-open (8) Show-Pretty good show, expenses were higher, lots of new volunteers, feedback good from dealers. Complete report at June Membership meeting. Show Chairman 2006: James Butchko approved. 2 youths had displays at MAGS Gem Show - Karen Schaeffer and Rhena South. Southeast Federation meeting had a lower attendance than normal probably due to location in region. Feedback on our hospitality was very good--they felt welcome, comfortable, enjoyed their Bookmarks, and the great food Cornelia provided. (9) New Business-Lodestar Newsletters available to read are to enjoy at meeting. Please return before leaving the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

May 2005 membership meeting notes

Susan Thom

The MAGS membership meeting was held at Shady Grove Presbyterian Church on May 13, 2005, presided by W.C. McDaniel There were 61 members and 5 visitors- Ivon Clark, Kenneth Labon Heste, Camden and Stanton Smallwood, and Byron A. Stetzer. Lou White announced Rock Swap at his house Saturday May 14 and Field Trip May 21 to Sugar Creek, Millington, TN area. Fossil section- at Roger Van Cleef's home May 19; Library-book donated by Marvin Nutt--An Introduction to the Tri-State Mineral Museum published by Missouri Southern State College; Youth Program- working on Communication Badge. Badges awarded tonight are: Field Trips to Rachel Griffin, Field Trips and Fossils to Zack and Taylor Faddis, Fossils to Kris Helms, FRA Badge and Field Trips to Madison Horowitz, and Field Trips to Danielle, Karen, and Lauren Schaeffer; Archeological site dig- in DeSoto County near Walls, MS, controlled surface collecting, for about 3 weeks/5 days a week starting early June; Show- report will be a June meeting, appears to be a very successful show; Program- tonight, Fireside chat with Roger Van Cleef on prehistoric life; in June-David McAlister program on slicing and flat lap polishing; July-Dr. Swann from Chucalissa; November-Marvin Berwin, geologist of State of Tennessee. Activity Demonstration- MAGS photos; Theme Displays- Arkansas Crystals. Meeting adjourned @ 8:45 p.m.

Welcome new members to MAGS

MELBA COLE, MAGS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR: Please join me in welcoming our newest MAGS members.

[01] Ivon Clark • 486 Hazelwood Road, Memphis, TN 38109 • IvonClark@prodigy.net

[02] Megan and Mark Oldfield • 8843 Bazemore Road, Cordova, TN 38018 • meganfudesign@yahoo.com • 901-737-0477

the two-wheeler. While our route was not the perceived short cut we had envisioned and desired, the journey was finally and successfully concluded, the wood was loaded in the truck, and readied for its trip to its new home. "The Big One" did not leave Mississippi as it now resides on the front porch of a rockhound living in Mississippi.



The "Big One" in situ. Photo by Cornelia McDaniel.

SITE TWO

Site Two was located about 50 miles west of Site One and was an easy access off a main highway. Direct access to the creek was obtained by walking through a grassy field and down an embankment of limestone rocks placed there for bridge support and erosion control. This creek was wider, deeper, clearer, swifter, prettier, and had less shade/ vegetation and debris than our first creek. The creek was so pretty it was worth visiting even without searching for wood. But petrified wood was our mission and up the creek we went. We walked about quarter of a mile and began to find wood. Most of it was in the creek bed or on gravel bars. The amount was small and the biggest piece weighed about 25 pounds. We continued our search. We began probing at the waters edge and eventually discovered a large piece buried in the sand. It was removed and appeared to weigh about 80-90 pounds. Once again we faced the dilemma of getting it back to the car. We noticed an old cooler nearby and came up with the idea of floating the wood out. Unfortunately this cooler had seen better days and would not hold the wood. So we hauled this piece and another smaller piece up to the bank and camouflaged them for our return trip.

The following week we returned to the site and discovered both pieces were still as we had left them. This time we brought a large cooler, old but still in working order, and loaded the larger piece into the cooler. Guiding the cooler with a rope and using the gentle flowing water we floated the wood down the creek for about a mile to our access point. This floating solution was a remarkably easy and simple method to get the wood back. It was hauled up the limestone bank and placed on a two-wheeler for its journey to the car. This piece of wood now resides in the backyard of a rockhound in Tennessee.

ABOUT THE WOOD

The majority of petrified wood in Mississippi, including these two sites, originates back to the Eocene. At both sites most of the wood was found in or near the creek bed. Wood found in situ was in the sandy portion of the banks, usually located at or near the surface level of the creek. No wood was located in the clay. The wood from Site One had a very uniform and consistent creamy/whitish color with a smooth texture. Noticeably absent were any significant stains or iron colors. This created some very beautiful pieces. A few pieces had eroded to where you see some smoky crystallization.

The one exception, some of the wood found in the creek bed had accumulated a jet black color due to years of decaying organic material. This was easily removed by soaking the wood in a weak solution of water and oxalic acid for about 30 minutes. The wood from Site Two was brownish/whitish and contained more iron stains and color. Also the surface was not as uniform and the texture was a little rougher. However, it appears to be more durable and resistant to flaking.

PREPARATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

Our summer days of creeking in Mississippi were a successful adventure with an abundant amount of good petrified wood, good scenery and an appetite for more. Equally important was to recognize that creeks are an integral part of a natural environment and with that come some basic preparations and precautions in order to insure you have a successful and safe day:

Preparations:

1. Check the weather the day of and the previous days for the area you are going. Creeks can significantly change during periods of rain. The Internet is a good source to check current and specific local information.
2. The majority of the creeks are located in rural and woody areas. Check to make sure there are no active hunting seasons underway. If there are, delay your trip until the seasons are completed.
3. Bring along bucket(s), digging tools, change of clothes, especially shoes and socks, insect repellent, and something to snack and drink. Leave your valuables at home or in a safe place. If you must take your keys and/or wallet place them in a water tight container. Remotes usually don't work after a good soaking.
4. A walking stick is a good multiple use tool. It can steady you, serve as a probe and if necessary fend off wild creatures of the creek and woods. On the second trip to Site One I replaced my wood stick with one that had metal on the end. I also carved "PWD" on the handle, which stood for Petrified Wood Detector. The metal end makes a distinct clinking sound when hitting hard rock. At Site One many clay formations would first appear wood like and a quick poke with the PWD made that task of checking the formations much easier.

>> see *Creeking down south* on page ten

Precautions:

1. Creek beds can be slippery especially rocky bottoms that have organic material accumulating on them. This was very apparent at both sites. Take your time and use a walking stick. Good sturdy shoes are a big plus.
2. Watch out for the vegetation. The common enemies are poison ivy and oak. Also be on the outlook for thorns and root systems that may trip you. This was abundant at Site One and moderate at Site Two.
3. Watch out for the wildlife and critters that abound in and around creeks. Snakes, spiders, mosquitoes, bees and

4. Don't go by yourself. Make sure someone knows where you are going and they know your expected return time.

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CALENDAR**

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June 30

Membership Meeting
July 8

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July 9

MAGS Field Trip
July 16

DMC Field Trip
July 23

