Notes from the Combined WSMC meeting in Ellensburg 03/31/07

Mike opened the meeting at 9:30 AM.
Kathy gave the Treasurers report.

Old Business

- Officers for 2007
- We had a volunteerfor the 2nd Vice President position.
- Discussion of the schedule of regular meetings for this year was held and we approve the tentative schedule that has been published in the Council Reporter.

New Business

- Ed's proposal of a DVD has been put on hold for a while, as he will be moving this summer.
- The Kalama land sale is still in process and will be monitored.
- A suggestion was made to send both Ed and Glenn pictures of our field trips so they can be posted on the WSMC web page.
- A new book will be coming out soon, called "Gem Trails of Washington".
- Suggest for the content of this year's meetings:

  March - Results of field trip meetings and election of officers and set stage for future activities for the year.
  June - Make assignment and status current activities, update on field trips
  September - Speaker
  November - Set up field trips for next year, develop a slate of officers for next year.

Election of 2007 officers

- President- Diane Rose
- VP – Stu Earnst
- 2nd VP- Ed Brandstoettner
- Secretary – Mike Messenger
- Treasurer – Kathy Earnst
- West Side Trustees—Bill Moser and Ed Lehman

Meeting adjourned;
Notes submitted by Bob Pattie

A Birthday cake for Jackie Pattie and Stu Earnst (both with a birthday on 3/31) was served.

Notes from the Westside WSMC meeting 04/17/07

There were no officers present at the meeting so no business could be conducted.The members present held an open discussion on the following topics:

- Ed Lehman displayed some nice material from Utah.The material is travertine and looks like Mexican Crazy lace except the colors are yellows, browns, and black.It takes a good polish and cuts very quickly.Ed knows the fellow in Granite Falls that owns the claim and can put interested parties in contact with him.
- Ed also reported that there is a new lock on the gate at Walker Valley. It seems that people keep taking the locks and they have to be continually replaced.
- Mike Messenger sent an email to the board about changes at the diatom pits near Vantage.He said, " I was out there last week and they seem to be reclaiming the area. All the pits except the first one as you drive in were filled in and leveled. There was still plenty of material on the surface but eventually this may get picked over unless they open more pits. We were going to drive over to the pits that are further down the main road to see if they were still active but ran out of time."If anyone else has more information please pass it along.

Kalama/Green Mountain area closed
The Kalama Green Mountain area is closed to all. Longview Fibre is doing road and forestry work. They will let us know when we can get back in.They are asking us to stay out for our own safety.
For more information please contact the Bellevue Rock Club at bellevuerockclub@comcast.net

Bob Pattie's email address has changed.The new address is: bobpattie@comcast.net

Submitted by Glenn Morita
Secretary Pro-Tem

Paleontological Resources Act Reintroduced in the House

by John Spunaugle, American Lands Access Association
Executive Vice President for Legislation.

On January 18, 2007 a fossil collecting Bill HR 554 “Paleontological Resources Preservation Act” introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressional Representatives McGovern of Massachusetts and Renzi of Arizona. It was sent to the Committees on Natural Resources and Agriculture for a period of time to be determined by the Speaker of the House. [This means that regardless of what the Committee /Chair people do, the Bill can be brought to the floor of the U.S. House for a vote at any time with or without amendment of Committee recommendation].

Preliminary examination of the actual Bill language suggests that it is very similar to the Bills introduced and passed by the U.S. Senate in past years. Casual collecting would be allowed as seen appropriate by the government land managers. Provisions for civil and criminal penalties remain in the Bill as does a rewards section for information on possible violators and other property confiscation including all paleontology resources.

The bill has also been introduced in the U.S. Senate, as Bill S-320.

You can read the full text of HR 554 or S-320 at http://thomas.loc.gov/ and then entering the bill number. If you choose to write your Representatives and Senators, please also send a copy to Speaker Pelosi.

Copies of the Bills are found on the internet at http://thomas.loc.gov using the Bill numbers.

Via BEMS Tumbler, 04/07, via Rock Rollers, 2/07; from AFMS Newsletter, 3/07

Laws of the Natural Universe

1. Law of Mechanical Repair: After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch.
2. Law of the Workshop: Any tool, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible corner.
3. Law of the Telephone: When you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal.
4. Law of the Alibi: If you tell the boss you were late for work because you had a flat tire, the very next morning you will have a flat tire.
5. Variation Law: If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will start to move faster than the one you are in now. (Works every time.)
6. Bath Theorem: When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone rings.
7. Law of Close Encounters: The probability of meeting someone you know increases when you are with someone you don’t want to be seen with.
8. Law of the Result: When you try to prove to someone that a machine won’t work, it will.
9. Law of Biomechanics: The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

Via BEMS Tumbler, 04/07, via Quarry Quips, 3/06; from T-Town Rockhound, 2/06

Diamond Mines Aren't Forever

When two Dutch brothers, Johannes and Diederik De Beer, bought land in 1871 on the bleak North Karroo plateau, they soon gave up farming after they found a handful of diamonds. Word spread and within a few years, 50,000 prospectors and their families descended on the area, creating a tent settlement that grew into the town of Kimberley. Prospectors dug with picks and shovels, creating the Big Hold, a gigantic crater some 750 feet deep which remained the world’s largest man-made hole for the next century.

On March 27, 2006, DeBeers announced that it had concluded the closure process of its underground operations in Kimberley. After negotiations with the mineworkers union, DeBeers agreed to retrain almost 700 workers and to create non-mining jobs. Production will continue above ground, reprocessing the dumps with new technology to find missed gems, resulting in the recovery of an estimated 2 million carats per year.

summarized from articles in 222.telegraph.co.uk/news and www.miningweekly.co.za/min

Via Stone Age News , 03/07, from The Pegmatite, 4/06, and The Rockcollector 05/06

From eTumbler 02/07, via Breccia, 3/06; via Grindings, 9/04; from Rockin’ Around, 3/02

You Might Be a Geologist If...

1. You own more pieces of quartz than underwear.
2. Your rock collection weighs more than you do.
3. Your rock garden is located inside your house
4. You can pronounce the word "molybdenite" correctly on the firsttry.
5. You don't think of "cleavage" the same way everyone else does.
6. You have ever uttered the phrase "have you tried licking it" with no sexual connotations involved
7. You think the primary function of road cuts is tourist attractions.
8. You find yourself compelled to examine individual rocks in driveway gravel.
9. You're planning on using a pick and shovel while you're on vacation.
10. Your internet home page has pictures of your rocks.
11. You will walk across eight lanes of freeway traffic to see if the outcrop on the other side ofthe highway is the same type of rock as the side you're parked on.
12. You can point out where Tsumeb is on a world globe.
13. The baggage handlers at the airport know you by name and refuse to help with your luggage.
14. You have ever found yourself trying to explain to airport security that a rock hammer isn't really a weapon .
15. You have ever taken a 22-passenger van over "roads" that were really intended only for cattle
16. You consider a "recent event" to be anything that has happened in the last hundred thousand years
17. You have ever had to respond "yes" to the question, "What have you got in here, rocks?"

From Teddy Adkins, Geologist, Unit Petroleum Company

Tyrannosaurus rex fossil gives up precious protein

Adapted from an article in the 04/12/07 New Scientist

Tyrannosaurus rex is no longer just dry bones. For the first time, we have a bit of its flesh.

Researchers recently recovered protein from inside a massive T. rex leg bone buried for 68 million years, and have identified it as collagen, the most abundant protein in bone.

Protein sequences are a long ways off from creating a Jurassic Park-like version of a genetic blueprint for dinosaurs, because they do not contain all of the genetic information. However, they do provide an important tool for studying extinct species. Since proteins are more durable than DNA, they can survive much longer stretches of time.

Claims of fossil DNA finds have not yet been verified; the record for the oldest DNA yet recovered is about 50,000 years and comes from Neanderthals.

Until the recent find, the oldest recognized protein was collagen from a mastodon that died about 600,000 years ago. The dinosaur protein is more than a hundred times older, but is far less complete than the mastodon protein, says John Asara, the scientist who sequenced both.

The sample comes from the same T. rex femur that two years ago Mary Schweitzer of North Carolina State University, discovered it contained soft tissue.Though she interpreted the tissue as blood vessels, Schweitzer stopped short of claiming the bone contained protein. Now, she and Asara report two lines of evidence for protein.

In the lab, the bone samples reacted to an antibody to chicken collagen. Since birds are considered the closest living relatives of T. rex, this result was an significant finding.

Asara nailed the case when he was able to reconstruct the amino acid sequences of seven collagen fragments. Collagen evolves very slowly, and all the fragment sequences matched those of living species, including chickens, newts and frogs.

The protein discovery is exciting, but paleontologists will have to work harder to uncover fossils that preserve it better, says Jack Horner of Montana State University in the US, who was involved in the analysis. Most fossils have been found near the surface where degradation is more likely, he explains.

The protein was garnered from a bone buried nearly 20 meters down. "If we can get as deep as possible into sediment where there has been little contamination, I think we'll find many specimens like this," Horner said. Eager for the quest, this summer he will send more than 100 people to field sites to dig for protein-rich fossils

How tiny crystals decorate iris agates

Agate, a type of quartz whose iridescent patterns sparkle with color, has long been valued as a semiprecious stone. Now, scientists can explain how its elegant swirls form.

Peter J. Heaney, a geologist at Princeton University, and Andrew M. Davis, a geological chemist at the University of Chicago, show that concentric shells of fine and coarse crystals alternate to create agate's light-diffracting "iris" bands.

Agate, formed when mineral-rich water flows through volcanic rock, consists of millions of micrometer-sized crystals. Those crystals, the researchers observe in the Sept. 15 SCIENCE, come in different sizes and contain varying degrees of impurities, caused by changes in the water's mineral concentrations.

Observing agate slices with transmission electron microscopy and ion mass spectroscopy, the two scientists found that the size of the tiny crystals and the degree of impurities change cyclically, forming the iris band's crystal pattern. When scrutinized, agate slices reveal a self-similar pattern, which repeats itself at various levels of magnification: on the micrometer scale, on the millimeter scale, and on the centimeter scale.

"Agates show us one way that nature makes repetitive patterns," Heaney says. "Self-similarity is fascinating because it's largely unexplained.

"Understanding this process may shed light on how materials scientists can mimic those textures in new materials."

— R. Lipkin
from 09/16/95 Science News Service