THE HISTORY OF THE MARYLAND GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

By Dick Grier Jr. 1/30/01

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD (SEPT. 1991-DEC. 1992)

It was my brother, Bob Grier who originally conceived the idea for the formation of The Maryland Geological Society (MGS). He discussed this idea with me in June 1991, and I suggested that we postpone any final decision on this until later in the year, since he indicated that he preferred that I take the lead, and initiate the formative procedures.

The American Fossil Federation (AFF) had been formed a year earlier in 1990, and our family had recently become involved in extensive collecting activities, especially at Lee Creek. My brother and I had joined many east coast fossil clubs, as had many people we knew, in order to be able to collect at Lee Creek as often as possible. As a result, we were constantly meeting new and interesting people, and the collecting atmosphere was often electrifying! The Grier family had been involved in collecting minerals, fossils and artifacts for about 30 years prior to this.

During September, 1991, when my enthusiasm for collecting at Lee Creek had peaked, I discussed the situation again with Bob. We both now felt that we might be able to recruit enough interested collectors to form another club in the Baltimore-Washington area. While we supported the efforts of clubs such as the AFF and the CMMFC in principle (I am a charter member of the AFF, and also a Calvert Marine Museum Fossil Club, CMMFC member), we felt that certain by-laws of these organizations might be too limiting for us (AFF: limited membership of 50 & mandatory attendance; CMMFC: members may not sell specimens), and that area collectors might actually endorse a less-regimented program and format. To this end, I finally agreed with Bob in October 1991, and told him that I would "take the lead" for the present, and together we would try to create a new club.

Since we had been mineral collectors prior to having acquired an interest in fossils, we decided that our new club would be open to both disciplines, but not to lapidaries, unless they were also fossil or mineral collectors. Our club would feature unlimited membership, no attendance requirements, and the latitude to buy, sell or exchange specimens. The name of the club was to be The Maryland Geological Society. It was to become a non-sectarian, non-profit organization, hopefully tax-exempt, which was dedicated to the collection, study and preservation of minerals and fossils, as well the dissemination of knowledge concerning developments in the disciplines of paleontology and mineralogy to the public.

We needed to have a formative meeting, so I contacted Larry & Connie Smith, the proprietors of the Matoaka Cottages in St. Leonard, Calvert County, and arranged for the use of their lodge, providing them with a tentative meeting date, Sunday, November 24, 1991, and an estimated attendance, 25. The cost was to be $5.00 per person, to be paid by each individual attendee. Then I contacted 20-30 collectors in the Baltimore-Washington area whom I had met in my travels during the past few years, and discussed with them the plan to attempt to create a new fossil and mineral club. Most of the collectors contacted were overwhelmingly in favor of such an endeavor. So it was agreed to have the meeting as scheduled.

The first regular meeting of the MGS did occur on the specified date at Matoaka Cottages, and 16 members attended. Hereafter these members, and a few others, would be referred to as our "charter members", and they include: Dick Grier Jr., Dick Grier Sr., Bob Grier, Ken Boulier, Russell Cox (now deceased), Bob Farrar, Gerald & Carol O'Neil, George Powell Jr., Eric Beach, Dave Siegert, Ron Ison, Dennis Wright (now deceased), Debbie Burdette, Jim Barman, and Steve Gladhill. At the initial meeting, many important issues were resolved; a statement of the club's intent or purpose was drafted; Officers, Committee Chairpersons and members of the Board of Directors were elected; the club news bulletin name was selected *(The Rostrum, a* "double entendre", won popular support); and club dues ($10.00/yr.) and entrance requirements were established. Dick Grier Jr. was elected President and Editor, Dick Grier Sr. interim Treasurer, Bob Grier Vice-President and Field Trip Chairman, Eric Beach Corresponding Secretary, and 3 of the 5 proposed Board members were selected: Jim Earman, Eric Beach, and Jerry O'Neil. These members are the persons responsible for laying the initial groundwork for the routine operation of the MGS, and we owe them our respect and gratitude. At this meeting, it was also decided to have 6 club meetings annually, and to publish *The Rostrum* quarterly, with volume 1, number 1 being mailed to the membership on or about December 15, 1991. The Executive Officers concurred that membership cards should be printed immediately. Jerry & Carol O'Neil donated a 30-cup coffee brewer to the club, so that we could serve coffee at our meetings. This is the coffee brewer that is still in use today. Early in January, 1992 Debbie Burdette volunteered to be the 4th member of the Board of Directors, so now we only needed to fill one more vacancy in the Board of Directors.

By the time of publication of the first issue of *The Rostrum* that December, the MGS had already attracted 34 members along with 26 prospective members. The majority of the new members had been contacted by me while doubling as Publicity Chairman and Membership Chairman. The number of MGS members grew quickly and steadily over the next few months. I was also charged at the first meeting with quickly finding a low-cost, semi-permanent meeting site for the club, and designing a club logo. This was accomplished before the second meeting of the society on January 19, 1992-we were permitted to meet in the Community Room of the Freestate Mall in Bowie, Maryland gratuitously by the mall management. The free usage of this meeting site was a gift to our infant club that was heaven-sent, as it bought us much-needed time to build our treasury.

The first copies of *The Rostrum* were produced on an "archaic" electric typewriter, with any photos, drawings and charts being Scotch taped to the master copies of the pages. I did not own a computer at that time. The individual copies were then Xeroxed for free at the company where I worked. This resulted in an initial saving for the club, but it would not be long-lived. By the time of the printing of the second issue in March 1992, my company had reneged on its offer to do this (change of branch manager), and we were forced to pay for the printing (Xeroxing) at Staples. The club logo, which is only being redesigned today (by Jim Savia), was incorporated into the rear cover page of the first issue of The Rostrum, and then each subsequent issue. It has, over the years, become symbolic with the MGS, and its activities and productions (which is exactly what was hoped). The lettering in the logo was redone electronically on a computer by Mike Folmer a few years later, the initial logo having been hand-labeled, and therefore somewhat rustic.

Fund-raising events were promoted in order to augment our treasury until we were solvent. These were arranged and handled by the Ways & Means Committee, headed up initially by Dick Grier Jr., and soon thereafter by Dick Grier Sr. It was decided to raffle tickets for door prizes, to hold a silent auction at each meeting, if sufficient numbers of suitable specimens could be obtained through donations by the membership, and to levy a 10% surcharge on all sales by members at our various functions. Also important as means of raising funds were the auctions (silent & general), and the 'Tooth Jar" promoted at our Annual Picnics at Matoaka Cottages. These traditions continue even today. Mr. Grier's efforts in this regard have remained tireless throughout our 10-year history. Fund-raising is the principal means by which the MGS pays its bills; the total monies received by the club from assessment of club dues, while considerable, do not completely pay for the printing and mailing of the 4 annual issues of The Rostrum, or other club functions and necessities, such as the Annual Picnic, the Christmas/Hanukkah Holiday Pizza Party, EFMLS/AFMS membership, group field trip insurance, the meeting hall rental charge, club T-shirts, hats, fanny-packs, decals, Michael boxes (similar to Riker mounts), MGS coffee mugs, meeting refreshments, and the professional publications that we sell (Kent; and Weems & Grimsley). Russell Cox, Barbara Ermler, Charles Shyab and Dick Grier Jr. have also assisted with these activities in the past.

In December 1991 and January 1992, work was initiated on the drafting of our Constitution and By-Laws. Dick Grier Sr. and Jr. were largely responsible for this, using the Constitutions of other clubs as models. The new Constitution and By-Laws were presented to the membership for ratification at the January meeting in 1992. The Constitution and By-Laws were approved with 3 amendments. It was decided that there would be no offer of family membership rates by the MGS, since there was no general agreement among the members concerning the definition of a "family". Also, regular voting membership was to be offered only to persons who were 18 years of age or older. At this meeting, Russell Cox, a CPA, assumed the position of Treasurer, accepting it from Dick Grier Sr, and Dick Sr. became Membership Chairman, relieving Dick Grier Jr. Jerry O'Neil then accepted the Hospitality Chairmanship, and Gary White was installed as the 5th

Director.

Sometime in 1991 (if memory serves), member Fred Plumb (also president of the National Capital Fossil Club) introduced several of our members, including myself, to a new Ypresian marine site in Stafford County, Virginia. It was called "Muddy Creek" ("Meat Creek", according to Fred), and today is known as the Fisher-Sullivan site, on Fisher Branch of Muddy Creek. At first, collecting proceeded by digging in the stream bed using multiple screens. A wide variety of Eocene shark and ray teeth could be found rather easily, which were practically unobtainable elsewhere. The site was located on private property, but the landowners were friendly to collectors, for the most part, and nothing was usually said about the parking and the digging. Within 3 years the stream bed had been effectively "worked out", as others, one at a time were invited to dig at this site. Later, Tom Parks and Steve Cunningham discovered that the source of the teeth was local, and they were in the stream banks above water-level. This started a landslide of digging activity by everyone. MGS members were, for the most part, the only collectors who dug at this site, and as they dug, examined their finds, and compared notes, a new chondrichthian fauna began to emerge. The Ypresian fauna in the Mid-Atlantic region has not been available in any abundance for scientific study prior to the discovery of this site. Drs. Robert Weems and Bretton Kent had an interest in this fauna, including the marine turtles, crocodilians, birds, mammals, etc. Our members worked closely with these professionals, who ultimately had agreed to collaborate in the publication of a paper, characterizing the various faunal elements. Although I was never exposed to this, there had apparently been some minor scuffles between the landowners and certain individuals, and for a while the site was "off limits" to all collectors. The MGS members asked Dr. Weems to intercede for them with the landowners and to negotiate for some of compromise. The compromise was to be forthcoming, and finally it was decided that 15 members were to have "collecting privileges", and their names were placed on a list. Everyone else, unless they were a guest of these 15 people, would be considered guilty of trespassing. Collecting at the site is now permitted on this basis. In 1999, after several years of collaboration with MGS collectors, Dr. Bretton Kent, and several specialists at the NMNH, Dr. Weems and Gary Grimsley published a book describing the fauna: *Early Eocene Vertebrates and Plants from the Fisher-Sullivan Site (Nanjemoy Formation) Stafford County. Virginia.* Upon publication, the book immediately went on sale at our club meetings. The MGS is gratified that a substantial number of its members were involved in the production of this study. These members include Gary Grimsley, Dr. Weems, Chuck Ball, Mark Bennett, Phil Schmitz, Mike Folmer, Dick Grier Jr., Debbie Burdette, Steve Cunningham, Tom Parks, Ron Ison, Ron Harding, Mike McCloskey, and others.

The first official program presentation was made by Dick Grier Jr. (who was also interim Program Chairman) at the May 10th MGS meeting, where the members were able to view the IBS video production 'T. *Rex Exposed".* Dick had brought along his portable TV and VCR equipment for the program. Dick informed the membership that he expected to be able to arrange for more diverse programs than this eventually, but that he simply had not yet had the

time to contact the appropriate people, since he was holding down 6 or 7 club posts. At the July 1992 meeting Dick Grier Sr. gave a slide presentation entitled *"Potpourri"* which dealt with various interesting minerals and fossils in the Grier Collection. The "ball was now rolling", because at this meeting member Jerry O'Neil volunteered to present the program at the September meeting. Soon thereafter, Dick Grier Jr. made a few telephone contacts with professional mineralogists and paleontologists in our area. Many of our guest speakers, over the past decade, have eventually decided to either apply for MGS membership, or were later granted honorary membership! As of this writing, the MGS has 5 *Honorary* members, 4 *Lifetime Achievement* members, and a total of 242 regular and junior members. It was very rewarding for me, personally, to watch the MGS grow in size and potential from its meager beginnings only a year earlier.

Bob Grier implemented the MGS Field Trip Program immediately after the initial meeting. There were to be 2 field trips scheduled per month, except during the month of December. We would attempt to visit as many mineral collecting localities as fossil localities. There would also be, hopefully, 2 trips per year to the Lee Creek Mine, which would require some coordination. The first MGS field trip was held on Saturday, January 25, 1992. Eleven MGS members, led by Bob Grier journeyed to Charles County to collect at the Late Paleocene marine site at Liverpool Point. I remember that day very well because I found 4 partial Myliobatis dixoni dental pavements over 2-inches each, plus a 2-1/2 inch *Otodus obliquus,* which is an exceptionally good day for anyone. Over the years many of our members have assisted with the Field Trip Program. This includes not only Bob, but Dick Grier Jr., Bob Farrar, Charles Noyes, Jerry O'Neil, Debbie Burdette, and others. The Field Trip Program has allowed our members to collect both minerals and fossils in a large number of milieux: in quarries, in mines, in road cuts and construction sites, in streams and creeks, at beaches, out of cliffs, in plowed fields, etc.

Many of our club trips have featured collecting at sites along the Calvert Cliffs, such as Randle Cliff (Brownies Beach), The Willows, Plum Point, Scientists Cliffs, Governor Run, Matoaka Beach, Little Cove Point, Calvert Cliffs State Park, Drum Point, and Chancellor's Point. Various members of the Middle to Late Miocene marine formations of the Chesapeake Group are exposed at these sites along the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay and on the Potomac River.

Other fossil sites that have been favorites are Liverpool Point (Thanetian), Popes Creek (Ypresian & Burdigalian), Stratford Hall & Westmoreland State Park (Burdigalian & Tortonian), the LEE CREEK MINE (Burdigalian, Zanclean, Pleistocene) , the Martin-Marietta Quarries at Belgrade, Rocky Point, New Bern, and Castle Hayne (all Lutetian), Big Brook (Campanian), Capon Bridge (Middle Devonian), Contee (Albian), and Greens Mill Run (Maastrichtian).

Mineral collecting sites that have been visited by our members under MGS auspices include the Medford Quarry (La Farge) in Westminster, MD; the Meckley Quarry in Mandata, PA; Valley

Quarries, Inc. (Teeter Quarry) at Gettysburg, PA; the Morefield Mine in Amelia, VA; the Maryland Materials Quarry at North East, MD; the Susquehanna Quarry at Havre de Grace, MD; the new Cedar Hill Quarry, MD; the Fruitville Pike Limonite Pseudomorph Locality, PA; the Faylor-Middlecreek Quarries at Winfield, PA; and the Greenspring Quarry, MD. One of the more rewarding events of collecting each year was when Bob Grier would arrange for another visit to the NMNH for a "behind the scenes" tour of the Paleobiology department. We would like to thank the following staff professionals for inviting our members to tour the research facilities there, and for the many enjoyable hours spent examining specimens in the vast repositories of the museum: Dr. Nicholas Hotton, Dr. Clayton Ray, Dr. Mark Brett-Surman, Dr. Storrs Olson, Dr. Pamela Rasmussen, Robert Purdy, Dave Bohaska, and Raymond Rye. Today, Dave Bohaska and Robert Purdy are 2 of our 7 elected honorary members.

The First Annual MGS Picnic and Swap/Sell was held on Sunday, June 14th, 1992 at Matoaka Cottages. It had been conceived by Bob Grier and planned and executed by the Bob, Dick Jr., and Dick, Sr. The original MGS Picnic poster in *The Rostrum* was designed by Bob, and later modified each year to fit the circumstances. A total of 38 members attended, and they were treated not only to perfect weather (cool and sunny), but also to ideal swimming and fossil collecting conditions, plus a variety of fossil & mineral sales and auctions, games, prizes, and lots of great food! The event met with so much success, in fact, that a second picnic was contemplated and held later in the year. Important also as fund-raisers, the first two picnics brought an additional $400.00 net to the Treasury, and it was becoming apparent to me that the MGS might actually be solvent by the end of the year. The Annual Picnics, as the name implies, are now a club "institution".

At the conclusion of the July 19th MGS meeting (1992), the Board of Directors met for the first time in joint session with the 4 Executive Officers. Many important issues were discussed. The editor of *The Rostrum* was given permission to use club funds to purchase a word-processing typewriter for use in preparation of the bulletin. Partial phone bill reimbursement was authorized for the transaction of society business by the President, not to exceed $25.00 per month (this was a special accommodation made for the Grier's during the formative period since they held 15 active posts between them, and conducted nearly all of the MGS business using their home telephone). The decision to begin a club library was postponed. It was decided that the society not indulge in field trip equipment rental. The President was empowered to grant payment of nominal travel expenses for the more prestigious or sought-after guest speakers at club functions. Back issues of *The Rostrum* could be reprinted for sale when requested, and the cost to the individual would simply be the cost of recopying ($2.00-3.00 per issue). It was decided that the MGS would award both honorary and complimentary memberships (presently referred to as Lifetime Achievement Awards) to interested professionals, guest speakers and service-oriented individuals. A meeting of the Board of Directors was to be convened by the President when the amount of accumulated business was sufficient to warrant it, but the Board would

meet once per year regardless. The members of the Board could also be consulted individually by telephone concerning a specific issue. Dick Grier Jr. and Bob Grier were asked to investigate the feasibility and cost of designing club T-shirts and hats, and having them printed. Dick was also asked to investigate possible copyright infringements in this regard.

Neil Hoffman volunteered to assist Dick Jr. with the purchase of the T-shirts and hats. For the T-shirts, Dick selected two designs: an Eocene oceanic scene featuring *Basilosaurus* and *Zygorhiza* for the fossil collectors, and a drawing of a large elbaite tourmaline crystal for the mineral collectors. The baseball caps would simply sport a club logo on the front. Neil then submitted the drawings to the manufacturer and had screens made from them. The first T-shirts produced were all lemon-yellow, in various sizes, and printed with The Maryland Geological Society name beneath the drawings. The hats came in a variety of colors. It was promised to the membership that later versions of the T-shirt would feature more color selection, including grey and white, especially, if the first consignment sold well.

At the meeting on November 22, 1992, it was decided to print a roster of the current members, in May of each year, for distribution to the membership. *The Roster* would accompany the June issue of *The Rostrum.* At this meeting, it was announced that the treasury balance had surpassed the $500.00 plateau for the first time. We had conducted business for one year, paid all of our bills, indulged in many interesting activities, and still had a surplus in the club Treasury! We were going to make it! President Dick Grier Jr. thanked all of the members of the MGS for making the club such a success. He told them of the many fine compliments that we had been paid during the first year by members of other clubs, visitors and out-of-state collectors, especially those who had a chance to read our news bulletins. They said, in effect, that it seemed that we were different; while a high-level of expertise was certainly present in our group, we seemed cordial, willing to talk to neophytes and cooperative, rather than intimidating. My brother Bob used to remind me, especially at times when I felt over-burdened with the work and planning attendant to the society, that we established the MGS because we felt that fossil and mineral collecting was fun, educational, and, in general, uplifting; anything that detracted from this "guiding principle" should gain no favor with us!

THE MGS: A FOSSIL & MINERAL PHANTASM (JAN. 1993- PRESENT)

The MGS member is a hearty breed of hobbyist, and for the next 9 years "our hordes" cut a veritable swath through "fossil- and mineraldom!" —*Anonymous*

Early in 1993, Dick, Jr. was asked by Maria Vogt, the EFMLS Bulletin Editor's Contest Chairman, if he would consent to be a BEAC Judge in the 1992 contest. Dick agreed, and gained

valuable insights into the criteria by which news bulletins are evaluated. The club brochure was designed by Dick Grier Jr., in March 1993, and was later printed by Chuck Ball. Dr. Peter Krantz, Maryland dinosaur expert, presented a program entitled *"Dinosaurs of Maryland"* at our March 21st meeting. Dr. Krantz was our first paid guest speaker.

In May 1993, through the efforts of Neil Hoffman and Dick Grier Jr., MGS T-shirts and hats were finally available to the membership. T-shirts sold for $9 and hats for $6. Dick Jr. & Sr. kicked off the publicity program in May 1993 by arranging for the MGS to have a table at The Goucher Mineralogical Show & Swap/Sell at Kraushaar Auditorium, Goucher College, Towson, Maryland. MGS applications and brochures were distributed; photos of club activities were displayed; mineral and fossil specimens were displayed; a non-competitive display case was entered; and T-shirts, hats and fanny packs were sold. The net proceeds to the Treasury for this effort were $251.00. r

George Powell, Jr. and Dr. Bretton Kent co-authored a joint paper which described George's associated *Parotodus benedeni* find at Lee Creek, and an associated *Aetobatus narinari* find, and presented their reconstructed dentitions.

The paper was presented, along with a lecture, at the University of Maryland auditorium at College Park Campus on June 13, 1993. We were all privileged to hear these two experts speak, and to examine fossil finds that were truly "one of a kind". Hundreds of shark teeth aficionados attended. I am informed that George Powell, later, very graciously donated the dentitions to the NMNH in Washington, DC.

At the July 1993 MGS meeting, Eric Beach became the Vice-President, as Bob Grier was forced to back out due to family time considerations. During 1993, various club experts were asked to sponsor "Study Groups" at their places of residence. Dick Grier Jr. hosted the first such group at his home during the late-Spring; the topic: "Shark and Ray Tooth Identification." Problems with the Freestate Mall in September 1993, forced the MGS to quickly find another inexpensive meeting site. The Bowie Community Center was the obvious choice because we knew that the AFF met there with no charge. The Board of Directors proposed a list of 10 professionals (non-members) who might be considered eligible for honorary membership by virtue of having assisted the society in some capacity since its inception. On September 24, 1993, the membership voted on the slate and selected 5 as our first honorary members. They included:

Dave Bohaska, Dr. Robert Weems, Frank & Becky Hyne, and Page Herbert. Gary Grimsley volunteered to head the Nominating Committee which would canvass the membership for potential officers and committee chairpersons, and would then nominate them at election time. At the November 1993 meeting, the membership voted to increase the club dues to $15.00/yr per member beginning January 1, 1994. The new MGS Officers elected for 1994 were President Dick Grier Jr., Vice-President Eric Beach, Corresponding Secretary Barbara Ermler, and Treasurer Russell Cox. The cost of printing and mailing *The Rostrum* was largely responsible for this. By

the close of 1993, the MGS had grown to include 122 paying members, with Treasury balance of around $350.00.

Dick Grier Jr. designed our field trip release form in January 1994. All members who would attend any of the MGS field trips during the year would now be obliged to sign this form, which essentially releases the MGS from any liability for personal injuries that might be sustained during these functions. It was also decided by vote of the membership that all officers and chairpersons, and committee members would be entitled to reserved seats for the trips to Lee Creek, and would then be required to either confirm or cancel on call-in night. Cancellations would release their seats to the general membership. The date of the March meeting was selected as the cut-off date for non-payment of annual club dues. Members not having paid by that time would be dropped from the membership, and could then only be reinstated by a vote of the Board of Directors. Volume 3, number 1 was the first issue of *The Rostrum* to be prepared on a personal computer. Jane Hubbard had agreed to be assistant editor under Dick Grier Jr. and she was an expert at computer printing and design. Dick Jr. did the composing, and Jane the preparation. The membership received the new format with enthusiasm, and I, with pride. During March 1994, Dr. Eric Seifter testified before the Maryland Legislature that the classification of the Maryland State Fossil, *Ecphora quadricostata,* was no longer valid, and needed to be changed to *Ecphora gardnerae gardnerae.* Through the efforts of Dr. Seifter, Dr. Lauck Ward, and others, this problem was eventually remedied

In July 1994 the MGS purchased several dozen copies of Dr. Bretton Kent's book, *"Fossil Sharks of the Chesapeake Bay Region"and* of a Reader's Digest book, *"Sharks"* for future sale to the membership. The November 1994 meeting was designated as the Christmas/Hanukkah Holiday Pizza Party, and this tradition continues today. The same slate of officers was re-elected for 1995 as this meeting. The year 1994 closed with the MGS having acquired a membership of over 22, and with a balance of nearly $4000.00 in the Treasury.

On May 27-28, 1995, the MGS participated in the Aurora Fossil Festival in Aurora, North Carolina by entering a publicity table. The table was manned for the weekend by Dominique & Gabriele Joos de ter Beerst, Herb & Barb Ermler, and Dick Grier Jr. and Sr. Information concerning the club's activities, applications for membership, and club brochures were dispensed to interested passers-by. Also at the club table were mineral and fossil displays, and there were, of course, T-shirts and hats for sale. It is estimated that over 10,000 people visited the Fair during these two days.

At the ceremonies, George Powell presented the Aurora Fossil Museum with casts made of his associated *Parotodus* and *Aetobatus* dentitions.

Dominique Joos de ter Beerst became editor of *The Rostrum"* in the late-Spring of 1996. There are 5 issues of the news bulletin in 1996, instead of 4. Dominique was very talented as an editor, and was possessed of a unique style. The issues which he produced were "a breath of fresh air" to our

readers. In September 1996, it was decided to present deserving authors and service-oriented individuals with awards in 1997—The Journalism Award and The Lifetime Achievement Award. The officers elected to serve in 1997 were as follows: Eric Beach, President; Dick Grier Jr., Vice-President; Secretary, Barbara Ermler; and Russell Cox. By the close of 1996, our Treasury balance was $5000.00.

Dick Grier Jr. resumed his position as editor in January, 1997 after Dominique resigned the post for personal reasons.

The MGS purchased a personal computer system for use by the editor during this month also. In March 1997, Jim Bourdon was awarded First Place in the competition for the new Journalism Award for his articles, *"The Pit and the Pendulum"* and *"Miocene Skates and Rays of Lee Creek"*. There was a virtual tie for Second Place between Steve Cunningham and Fred Plumb, both of whom had contributed excellent articles during the past year. All three members received. certificates and monetary awards. Dick Grier Sr. won the first Lifetime Achievement Award which entitled him to free life membership in the society. Flo Stream volunteered to be club photographer during this year, and Mike Folmer became Treasurer after the passing of Russell Cox, a longtime friend of many.

Dick Grier Sr., during 1997, spear-headed an attempt by the MGS and other related Maryland organizations to block legislation intended to make " Imperial (golden) topaz" the State Gemstone. Later, Dick was to become involved with the selections of the State Mineral, Rock, and Gemstone. At the July, 1997 meeting, Debbie Burdette formed a Website Committee, and later that month, Dick Jr. approached member and new webmaster Sal D'Ambra concerning free web space. Sal very graciously designated sufficient web space on his company server for the MGS to create its own website. At the November, 1997 meeting Mel Kurd became the MGS President; Dr. Eric Seifter, the Vice-President; Barbara Ermler, Secretary; and Mike Former, Treasurer for the year 1998.

Dick Grier Jr. won the 2nd Lifetime Achievement Award which was presented at the July 1998 meeting of the MGS.

It was also at this meeting that Gary Grimsley and Mike Former convinced the membership that the entire cost of the annual picnics at Matoaka Cottage now ought to be paid by the MGS. At this meeting, Steve Cunningham volunteered to become assistant editor and compile the news bulletin on his computer. In September, 1998, The Bowie Community Center decided to charge a rental fee of $10.00/hr. for use of the utility room (Room B). This increased club expenditures by an additional $120.00 per year.

By December 1998, a definite pallor had "wreathed the features of the patrons of game". The PCS Mine at Lee Creek would be closed to collecting indefinitely according to PCS spokesman Jerry Hughes. The trips to Aurora, North Carolina that our members made each year (in some cases 8 or 9 trips per season per individual) were intimately interwoven into the fabric of the

MGS. To collect at Lee Creek was to be "in vogue", and to be part of a collecting "phenomenon". I was forced to admit that these trips constituted a non-negligible part of my social life, and I believe that many others felt the same as well.

In January 1999, George Powell, Jr. won the 3rd MGS Lifetime Achievement Award, and Debbie Burdette established the MGS website at http://www.web2.com/mgs/. During the Spring of 1999, John Redick agreed to become editor of the news bulletin, with Steve Cunningham as his assistant. By December of that year, the MGS had drawn over 250 members, and maintained a balance of over $5000.00 in the Treasury. Dick Grier Jr. pointed out to the membership that to have a bounteous treasury was a blessing, because at a future time, the society might wish to promote its own show. Dick believed that it was necessary to have a financial base of $7000-10,000 in order to safely underwrite the expense of a show. During the summer of this year, many of our fossil-collecting members became involved in the situation at Douglas Point (on the Potomac River) in Nanjemoy, Charles County, Maryland, which is part of the widely-known Liverpool Point collecting area for Late Paleocene marine fossils and teeth. Apparently, a Baltimore-based group, Maryland Rock, had an option to buy the land at Douglas Point, and if they did, they planned to dredge extensively and build a large pier to accommodate barges which would significantly reduce collecting opportunities in the vicinity. Our members agreed to support the efforts of the Nanjemoy Coalition to produce legal testimony concerning the possible misuse of land, ecological disruption, the need for historical preservation, etc. such as would be deleterious to the prospective buyers, and to petition the Charles County government to refuse to issue such a license to Maryland Rock. Members who have contributed to this effort include Mel Hurd, Phil Schmitz, Mark Bennett, Chuck Ball, John Redick, Gary Grimsley, and Mike Folmer. This affair has not yet been resolved, but probably will be in the near future.

In the Spring of 2000, Mike Skipper became the new MGS Website Coordinator. At the November meeting in 2000, Bob Grier was presented with the club's 4th Lifetime Achievement Award. I would like to mention the efforts of a few members, like Rick Smith, Bob Grier George Powell, Terri Cirrincione, Lloyd Gleason and others who have helped the MGS fulfill one of its stated educational objectives. These members have helped educate the public and have given them an awareness of the importance of research in the geological sciences, and of its historical context. This they have done by displaying their collections at regional shows, donating specimens to museums and schools, giving talks and lectures at schools, clubs and universities, and by other means.

The MGS certainly did prosper, and its membership and treasury now burgeon. The collectors who were the neophytes back in 1991 have grown in expertise to the point where they are now regarded as advanced amateurs or near-professionals in their areas of interest; and their accomplishments have grown as well! Many have either written or co-authored books or papers with noted professionals. Others have made numerous and important donations of specimens to museums on the east coast, or they have established businesses and become professional dealers.

They have won awards at shows, created websites and exchange sites, and have been cited for club service or excellence in the area of education in the geologic sciences. And at the same time, their personal collections have grown, and they continue to derive the same delight and wonder from their hobby as in the beginning.

Occasionally, along the way, there has been "an empty chair or two", a testimonial to "fallen comrades", but time inevitably heals our wounds and strengthens our resolve to continue. Dennis Wright and Russell Cox were two personal friends of mine, with whom I collected for many years. Russell Cox was a very amicable collector whose tastes ran to practically everything in the realm of natural history. He was a very qualified Treasurer for the MGS, a great organizer, and had an extremely fine collection. Dennis Wright was an enthusiastic collector who loved traveling to Lee Creek, and North Carolina, more than anything. He never failed to raise my spirits when I was discouraged. Both, in different ways, were inspirations to me, and I will always feel diminished by their passing. They will be greatly missed, but they will always be alive in our hearts and in our memories. With the November, 2000 meeting, the MGS began its 10th year. This history is intended to be part of the 10th anniversary package to be published in the Spring of 2001.