

## Field Trip Report James Madison University Jan 9, 2016 by Dave Lines



Our annual trek to Harrisonburg, Virginia to visit the Geology Department was another successful and enjoyable field trip and a great way to start the new year. When we (11 folks from the Southern Maryland Club and 8 from the Montgomery County Club) arrived between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m., Dr. Lance Kearns had fresh hot coffee and pastries ready for us. Wow --- what a great host!

Traditionally, Dr. Kearns (or Lance as he prefers to be called) has a large number of mineral specimens as well as other hobby related items such as books and rock magazines “for sale”. Some are offered at any price you chose to donate and some are priced for a specific amount --- but all are excellent bargains. We try to be generous in our donation amounts since the proceeds go to fund purchase of specimens for the JMU Mineral Museum as well as to fund field trips for his students. This trip was no exception as Lance had 50 or more flats ready for us --- all were covered until 9:00 sharp when he removed the cardboard. The next 30 minutes was a frenzy of activity akin to a Macy’s sale. And everyone found some great specimens. I did not get any pictures of that activity since I was part of it --- hey --- that is one of the best parts of this trip and I wasn’t going to miss it!

Next, Dr. Kearns invited all of us down the hall to visit the Mineral Museum. Spectacular is an overused word --- but the specimens in this room truly were. There were many new ones since my last visit. I especially noticed the several ounces of gold nuggets from Contrary Creek (Mineral, VA). And a baseball sized spessartine garnet from the Rutherford Mine (Amelia, VA) along with several faceted spessartines were fabulous --- and super valuable! There was a goose-egg size topaz crystal from the Morefield Mine (Amelia, VA) that Sam Dunaway told me about --- wow --- it was water clear!

I took lots of pictures of the museum --- every cabinet had fine examples of the very best. It is well worth our support of this special place year after year.

Dr. Kearns also identified several specimens that others had brought in.

Unfortunately, we learned that Dr. Kearns plans to retire in July 2017 --- so next year's trip will be the last that he will host. A nationwide search for his replacement had already begun – he is the only Mineralogist on staff and they want the best. His will be a difficult act to follow.

Thinking ahead --- if you can possibly attend next year's JMU Field Trip, you better do so, for it is truly worth the effort.

