

## Odessa Wood on “John Wolf” Memorial Trip by Dave Lines



We met at the “Park and Ride” lot in Middletown, Delaware at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday March 17th, 2018. It was the John Wolf Memorial Trip --- held twice a year to commemorate a beloved deceased member of the Calvert Marine Museum Fossil club. About 50 people participated from Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia and Washington, D.C. We had 8 of our members ---- Katie and her parents Steve and Cynthia, Tim S., John B., Cindy, Gary and Dave --- from the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club.

After a briefing from our host and leader Bob Ertman, we caravanned to a farm field southeast of Odessa. The weather was a chilly 43 degrees and windy. The field was a very large corn field --- over a mile across---- which had been harvested last fall. As soon as we arrived, people began to spread out into the fields in search of petrified wood. But the challenge for everyone was the corn stalk stubble which, together with weeds, literally covered the ground --- 10% (or less) of the ground was visible.

Despite the challenges, we immediately began finding bits and pieces of petrified wood --- cypress which most of the local clubs believe is from the Cretaceous epoch (66 to 150 million years ago), but some folks counter that it is from the Miocene (5 to 23 million years ago). Most seem to agree that it was eroded from its original location and redeposited during the Pleistocene epoch (from 12,000 years to 2.6 million years ago). At any rate, it seems to be spread over an area about 2 or 3 miles long. According to local rockhounds, recent construction sites have found this same petrified wood as deep as ten (10) feet below the surface. It seems to be plentiful enough that everyone can find some with persistence.

John, Tim and I searched an area of the cornfield basically about 300 yards from where our vehicles were parked along the farm lane. Finding the specimens of petrified wood is fun and certainly rewarding. Most of the pieces were square or rectangular in shape, and, although similar in color to the cornstalks, were fairly easy to spot. Even if a small portion of a specimen was visible, it was entirely possible for the specimen to be a much larger piece. We found several which were mostly buried under the dirt. We spent about 3 hours searching over much of the field area and probably found a hundred pieces between us.

A funny story: During my search for petrified wood, I picked up a piece of REAL wood about 10 inches long and about 3 inches in diameter. It looked very much like petrified wood --- same coloration, similar grain --- so when John (and later Tim) asked to see what I had found, I simply let them look into my bucket where this chunk of real wood was laying across the rest of my finds. Both John and Tim were totally fooled by the "fake" chunk. So I left the chunk of fake petrified wood "decoy" on the hood of Tim's truck to see if anyone else fell for it.

Later in the afternoon, we crossed the highway and looked for specimens on the surface of a grass-covered field. Again, we were successful in locating many interesting and attractive specimens. We talked with Gary and Cindy later in the day and their experience was similar. In fact, Cindy found a nice arrowhead made of yellow jasper and Gary reported that he saw another person who found a "fluted" jasper point (which meant it was much older).

Oh --- that chunk of wood we left on the hood of the truck? It was GONE when we returned. I wish I had had a trail camera to record the events when someone took it. ☐

Overall, it was another fun trip and certainly a productive one for us.