

## A Second Visit to Contrary Creek near Mineral, VA by Dave Lines

When Rich, Jill and I arrived at 8:40 am, Renee and her granddaughter, Haven, were already waiting for us. I showed them some of the “sample specimens” so they would know what to look for. We were scheduled to meet at 9:00 am, but folks straggled in at different times until after 9:30 am. (Note: Unfortunately, when this happens, the trip leader has a difficult time giving a safety brief to everyone. In fact, it becomes impossible.) The last to arrive made the error of not adding “Mineral, VA” to the street address I had provided. This person drove to the exact same highway address in “Culpeper” --- many miles in the wrong direction. Lots of unnecessary extra miles. Fortunately, the trip leader was able to turn them around and guide them back to the correct location --- all by cell phone. Such are the challenges of a Trip Leader. I gave up trying to give the safety briefing to everyone. Everyone finally made it to the meeting location and down the steep path to the creek. Our group had 13 people --- Rich, Dave, Jill, Renee, Haven, Diane and her 2 grandsons Kolton and Kyler, Kurt and Sue, Alton and Teresa, and Katie.

At about 9:45 am, I finally took my gear down to the creek and held an impromptu training session with a “magnet” --- showing several of our people how a magnet could definitively identify magnetite which is plentiful at this location. Then I showed them pyrite --- “fool’s gold” --- also abundant here.



Rich had dug a shallow hole and found gray clay – usually a good indicator (in this location) of gold and loose garnets. I put some in a gold pan and panned it out – but no gold and no garnets. I think the clay was too sandy --- needs to be primarily sticky, gray clay.



I checked on the rest of our attendees. All were busy having fun finding rocks. I then went to the spot on the gravel bar where I had found gold two weeks before. I dug down about 18 inches until I found a layer of black or dark colored gravel that was tightly compressed – because it had never been disturbed in a very long

time. I showed others what I was doing and then I filled a 5-gallon bucket full of the gravel. Then I took it over to the sluice I had previously set-up in the stream where there was a good amount of fast running water. My sluice was light weight aluminum about 3-1/2 feet long and one foot wide with green felt on the bottom covered with a sheet of expanded metal. I had positioned the sluice box with a 10 degree drop and placed a few rocks near the entrance of the sluice box to create a funnel which increased the water flow through the sluice. I spent about 30 minutes feeding the gravel material into the sluice.

Then I took a break and snapped some pictures of everyone. They were spread out about 100 yards along the creek. Most of them were finding garnets and pyrite. I found a near-perfect pyrite cube and gave it to Kolton. Katie had found some nice garnets by digging down into the creek.

After my break, I dug another bucket of gravel and ran it through the sluice. At about noon, I began a clean-up of the sluice in two stages – first, I panned the gravel that had collected at the entry of the sluice box. Eureka !! I found four specs of gold – and some small garnets and a small, but perfect, crystal of magnetite – which was shaped like 2 back-to-back pyramids. Then I removed the expanded metal and felt and rinsed it all into my gold pan. I then panned out this material and found a few more specs of gold. It was a long process, but definitely faster than individually panning the 2 buckets full of gravel a single pan at a time.



I did not have a chance toward the end of the trip to see what everyone found this time. The two young members seemed quite happy panning for garnets and collecting rocks that looked like houses. Rich had found zero garnets until almost noon, when he shifted to a new location out in the stream and found an area full of nice garnets. Katie's discovery of garnets attracted about six of our group to join her.

Alton seemed happy just observing all the activity. The weather certainly cooperated as we had a very pleasant day for panning in the creek.

