DAN CORDIER: GEOLOGIST

Interview by CINDY TULLY

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Q. When and why did you decide to choose your particular career path?

A. In 1990, I was a vice president of a computer network company in charge of a division for sales and installations of cable systems. My hobby in the evenings and weekends was the study of sinkholes and paleontology. I decided to go back to college for a degree in geology and to make it a career.

Dan Cordier working with Allan McCollum excavating a fulgurite from the PVC tube in which it was created.

Q. Were there experiences in your childhood that helped you make that decision?

A. When I was young, I used to watch mining operators work in a limestone quarry. When their shifts were over, I would check out the stockpiles looking for fossils and minerals. I also used to split shale from road cuts and hillsides looking for fossils. Gravels on the beach were always full of fascinating rock types and fossils that I couldn't identify and this made me want to learn more about their origins.

Q. How do you view the marriage of art and science as in McCollum's fulgurite project?

A. The mix of art and science in the McCollum fulgurite project was such an unseeming partnership that it was inevitable for something amazing to come out of it. Creative art concepts and methodologies of science produced a very unique work of imagination. The information wealth about earth sciences and electrical research on lightning should be very interesting as conveyed through this project on fulgurites.

Q. What was your part in the McCollum project?

Dan Cordier discussing screenwashing techniques with field crew members Annette Cannon, and Suzanne Jaffell, both from Orlando, during a highly successful dig at the famous middle Miocene (18 million-year-old) Thomas Farm site in Gilchrest County, Florida.

A. As the consulting geologist on this project, I was asked to design a system for the electrical engineers to route lightning through in order to make a fulgurite. Allan also wanted to use some of the minerals from the native sands in Florida that would be suitable to make a fulgurite with an interesting shape that would be sturdy enough for him to use in his art processes. I selected six representative minerals to test and put them in various receptacles that would make it easy to recover a fulgurite after being struck by lightning.

Q. What satisfaction did you receive from working with the project?

A. One of the most satisfying parts of this project was to see that artists who are used to air conditioning and comfortable art studios would sacrifice their traditional way of life to get out in the 103 degree hot sun for 14 hours, swatting mosquitoes and horseflies to try and make a fulgurite.

Q. What are some of the other aspects of your job?

A. Some other aspects of a geology career are: analyzing rocks and sands which may be used as building materials of raw products, exploration for industrial minerals, gems and fossils and environmental assessments.

Q. What most satisfies you about your work?

A. The main satisfaction of being a geologist is having the opportunity to discover things that no one else has ever uncovered and to travel to distant places in the world and work with many different types of people.

THE EVENT

PETRIFIED LIGHTNING FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA

A PROJECT BY ALLAN MCCOLLUM

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM
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