As the twenty-fifth anniversary year of the Calvert Marine Museum draws to a close, we have been reflecting on the history of the museum and its past accomplishments, and also considering the opportunities and challenges of the future. CMM has grown from a small maritime museum into an important regional center that produces exhibits and public programs, and collects and conducts research, in its three areas of interest—maritime history, estuarine biology, and paleontology. This article, the final in a series on each of these three subjects, traces the development of the museum’s paleontology program.

Fossil shells and bones from Calvert Cliffs and the broader Chesapeake region were known to European explorers and early naturalists over three hundred years ago, and there is some evidence that Native Americans made use of fossils as tools (see the fall 1991 Bugeye Times for a brief history of pioneering paleontologists in this region). The extraordinarily rich assemblage of Miocene-age (10-20 million years old) marine life found in our local deposits has drawn the attention of both academic paleontologists and amateur collectors through the years. Prominent paleontologists, including Thomas Say, Charles Lyell, Joseph Leidy, and Edward Cope in the 1800s, Frederick True, Alexander Wetmore, and Remington Kellogg earlier this century, and many who are presently active, have studied various aspects of Miocene fossils from southern Maryland.

In the period prior to the opening of CMM in 1970, a small museum at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory had some fossils, collected at that time by August Selckmann, and later turned over to CMM. In the first museum building on the island, there was a single case displaying some fossils, but these were not emphasized in the early years.

In 1974, however, CMM assumed a significant role in this story when Dr. Ralph Eshelman was hired as the museum’s first director. With his background in paleontology, the museum’s proximity to Calvert Cliffs and other sites, and the long-recognized importance of the fossils, it was natural that CMM’s mission expanded during the 1970s to include regional paleontology. Field work by Ralph and museum registrar David Bohaska, who also had paleontological expertise, resulted in the rapid growth of the size and scope of CMM’s fossil collection during the late 1970s and into the 1980s. Much of this work was carried out with the cooperation of an enthusiastic group of volunteers and amateur fossil collectors, too many to list here individually, whose contributions played a vitally important role in building up the collection. Many specimens discovered during this period formed the basis for research projects on topics ranging from fossil long-snouted dolphins to the formation of the thick shell beds characteristic of the cliffs.

In 1979, an exhibit was opened on Calvert Cliffs fossils—CMM’s third major exhibit in the old schoolhouse—drawing on the expanding number of specimens accumulating in the museum’s collection. The exhibit also included a fossil preparation laboratory that allowed visitors to see first-hand how fossils are cleaned and put back together for research or display. This popular exhibit remained open until 1989, when the new exhibition building was dedicated. In 1981 a popular feature appeared for the first time in the Bugeye Times: "Fossil Facts," written and illustrated by volunteer Sandy Roberts, presenting brief descriptions of the fossils that might be found on the beaches in southern Maryland. Over thirty of these articles have now appeared.

An important part of the paleontology program at CMM has involved our ongoing cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution. Because of its nearby location and long-standing interest in the marine mammals that are a very important part of the local fossil record, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) has traditionally been a leading center for research on Miocene fossils from this region. Many important fossils collected here in the 1970s and 1980s were catalogued into the NMNH collections because CMM did not at that time have a full-time paleontologist or adequate storage capabilities. A good deal of research on cliff fossils has been carried out by NMNH scientists, including such notables as Remington Kellogg, Alexander Wetmore, Frank Whitmore, Clayton Ray, and Storrs Olson. In return, CMM staff (Dr. Eshelman and the current curator of paleontology, Michael Gottfried) have had a formal relationship.
Maritime History Additions

One of the most important collections at the museum is that relating to Maryland's seafood industry. It is pleasing to report, therefore, that this past year has seen some significant additions to this collection — many of the items increasingly scarce as the industry declines. Donated in the name of the children of Alton and JoAnn Kersey were a number of items used in the J. C. Lore & Sons oyster house, including much of the office furniture in place when the company closed in 1979. In another donation, the family of the late Clarence R. Sewell of Broomes Island gave fish boxes, shipping barrels, and other items used in his seafood business. The late Martin W. Poe gave CMM a model of a pound net with associated equipment which he had completed only weeks before he passed away. Linda Crandall donated mesh plates for knitting nets, net gauges, and related items, once used by her uncle, Thomas A. Gourley. Two oyster barrels were given by James F. Smith Jr., and contemporary retail seafood containers were donated by Norman Dorrel, the present operator of the Warren Denton Seafood Company of Broomes Island.

Recreational fishing was also represented by a welcome donation by W. R. Roebling of handsome 1920s Edward Von Hoff split bamboo rods and reels, previously used on the 1927 M. M. Davis-built yacht Bonhomme.

Bugeye Times

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Other contributors to this issue:
Layne Bergin, Richard Dodds, Sybil Cook, Michael Gottfried

The bugeye was the traditional sailing craft of the Bay, and was built in all its glory at Solomons, the "Bugeye Capital of the World." Membership dues are used to fund special museum projects, programs, and printing of this newsletter. Address comments and membership applications to:

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CMM’S COLLECTIONS GROW IN 1995

The library and archives received some important gifts. Doris Woodburn Johnson donated several historic photographs and a program from the closing ceremonies of the Solomons USO in 1947. Glenn Langley gave two photographs and some plans that came from the Davis/Cruise-A-Long Company when it closed in 1972. Grace Abiard donated her husband James's research files on the history of the Chesapeake Ranch Club community — the subject of a book he wrote and published. From nearby Cove Point came a large photomural of the Cove Point Lighthouse, taken in the 1930s, the gift of George Mineur Jr. Sally S. Taylor donated seven portrait photographs of members of the once-prominent de Barrill family that was associated with the Barreda farm on Drum Point. Other archival collections were received from Caroline B. Rusby and James "Pepper" Langley. And, in looking to the future rather than the past, David Tether, president of The Electric Wheel Inc., donated a collection of items detailing this new propulsion system being developed in St. Mary’s County.

Visitors to the library will notice a new ship model, that of USS LCI(L) 502, donated by the USS LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) National Association, along with a 1993 volume providing the history of LCI's and biographies of members of the association. (Richard J. Dodds)

Paleontology Additions

A number of significant fossil finds have been added to CMM’s collections this year. Gayle Wichers, an active CMM volunteer, donated several basking shark vertebral disks, collected along the Potomac River in Virginia; these add significantly to our growing record of these very large but infrequently fossilized sharks. Gayle and her husband Mickey also found and donated the partial skeleton of a gannet, a type of large seabird; associated bones from one wing of a second gannet were discovered along Calvert Cliffs by Cheryl and Skip Snelson, active members of the CMM Fossil Club. Fossil bird bones are not common, and it is especially exciting to add two such specimens to our collection in the same year. Fossil seals are also uncommon in the Chesapeake region, and we were pleased that Crissy Stamey and Janet Tice donated seal limb bones that they found on the Potomac, and Scott Nieman gave a beautiful small seal tooth that he found along Calvert Cliffs.

A group effort, headed by fossil club members Sandy Roberts, Wallace Ashby, and Mike Ellwood, resulted in the collection of a very nice baleen whale ("ceotothere") lower jaw from the cliffs. This became the first specimen worked on in our new exhibit’s fossil prep lab. CMM also acquired its first fossil camel specimen (previously we only had casts of specimens in other museums’ collections) — a toe bone found by Elizabeth Kendall on the beach along the cliffs. Yes, there were camels here in the Miocene!

Finally, a big thanks to all of the generous fossil hunters, too many to list here, who have donated shark teeth to the Discovery Room sandbox. Your donations are greatly appreciated and may serve to spark the interest of some future paleontologist. Please keep the teeth coming! (Michael D. Gottfried)
PATUXENT RIVER APPRECIATION DAYS (PRAD) in 1995

PRAD continued the recognition of Solomons as a World War II community, this year honoring civilian workers. A special exhibit told the story of the contributions of the M. M. Davis & Son shipyard to the war effort.

Volunteer Marilyn Ruark helped youngsters with T-shirt printing under the Drum Point Lighthouse.
CMM photo by Richard Dodds

CMM's boat basin was the scene of much activity during PRAD 1995, with canoes, a replica rail skiff, and model boats.
CMM photo by Richard Dodds

At opening ceremonies, Lt. Jim Tittman (left), chaplain at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, and Capt. Elmer Standridge (center), commanding officer of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, presented recognition awards to World War II veterans now at the Charlotte Hall veterans home.
CMM photo by Richard Dodds

Solomons History Available

The new booklet on Solomons, announced in the fall issue of the Bugeye Times, will be available in mid-January in the museum store. The eighty-eight-page Solomons and Vicinity: An Illustrated History and Walking Tour is priced at an affordable $4.95, with the usual discount for CMM members. Three site maps and forty-six historic photographs make this an indispensable guide for all interested in exploring the history of the area. Visit the store soon to purchase your copy.
There were many activities on October 21 to keep visitors and members busy with the celebration of the museum's opening twenty-five years ago. Although only a few of those attending were on hand when the museum first opened on Solomons Island on October 18, 1970, there were many on hand who had watched CMM grow from the one-room building, to the old schoolhouse, and then advance to the present complex of buildings and activities. All of these developments were only possible through the support of the Calvert County government, the state of Maryland, federal and private grants, and the contributions of many businesses and individuals.

The day opened with an anniversary exhibit, cruises on the Wm. B. Tennison, a continuing concert in the Maritime History Hall by the Calvert Community Band, a formal ceremony in the museum auditorium, and the cutting of a special anniversary cake. Photographs on these two pages document some of the day's activities.

At the formal ceremony in the auditorium, museum director Doug Alves introduced state and county officials and accepted anniversary resolutions on behalf of CMM. Among the state officials, CMM was particularly honored by R. Carlton Mitchell Jr., Speaker of the House of Delegates, who made a special trip from his home in Western Maryland...
Maryland to attend. State senator Roy Dyson and former state senator Bernie Fowler participated, as did local delegates Anthony J. O'Donnell and John F. Slade III. The county commissioners were represented by their president Mary M. Krug, who served on CMM's Board of Governors from 1991 to 1994, and by Hagner R. Mister.

Perhaps the highlight of the program was the first public appearance of the museum "otter" mascot — CMM staffer Lynne Warren as a larger-than-life-sized otter. The otter was joined in a walk through the auditorium by a troop of visiting children decked out in the try-on costumes that are available for their amusement in the Discovery Room. Following the formal ceremony the audience and other visitors adjourned to the Exhibition Building lobby for the cutting of the anniversary cake.

Preparations for the anniversary ceremony were carried out by a committee chaired by CMM board member Carey O. Randall. The work of the committee and many other volunteers and staff provided the Calvert Marine Museum with a most successful twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. Their efforts are much appreciated.
with the Smithsonian as research associates and have been welcome to use NMNH's facilities and extensive resources; former CMM staff member David Bohaska now works at NMNH.

In 1990, CMM hired Dr. Michael Gottfried as its first full-time paleontologist in the new position of curator of paleontology. The most immediate concern at that time was organizing and cataloging the museum's fossil collection. As a result of this effort, and further collecting and donated finds in the last several years, CMM's fossil holdings now number just over 15,000 cataloged specimens, the largest collection in Maryland. Curating these fossils would not have been possible without the contributions of part-time cataloger Helen Fink and dedicated volunteer Wallace Ashby (who also wrote the museum's popular Fossils of Calvert Cliffs booklet). CMM's fossils are now kept in new metal storage units, under carefully maintained environmental conditions, in the lower level of our Administration Building. The collection's records are all entered into a computer database to make it easier to retrieve information. The growing importance of this collection is best demonstrated by the fact that it is being used in a number of research projects by paleontologists at other museums and universities, in studies ranging from describing new species of fossil dolphins, to analyzing rare chemicals in fossil teeth to reconstruct ancient ocean temperatures. Mike Gottfried is also involved in a number of ongoing research projects, including studying the evolution of Great White Sharks, and utilizing CT-scans to study delicate internal structures in fossil dolphins and sharks.

CMM's major emphasis in paleontology the past few years has been planning, designing, and now building the museum's new fossil hall "TREASURE FROM THE CLIFFS: Exploring Marine Fossils." This 3,000-square-foot exhibit, described in the summer 1994 Bugeye Times, is scheduled to open in the Exhibition Building in November 1996. Visitors this year have enjoyed seeing portions of the exhibit, including the new fossil preparation laboratory, a large mural that will serve as a backdrop for the fossil Great White Shark skeleton in the Miocene undersea habitat, a skeletal reconstruction of the giant Miocene bird Pelagornis, and a replicated section of Calvert Cliffs. When the exhibit opens next year, it will signal the completion of the ambitious Master Development Plan that has guided the museum's development to this point. This major accomplishment, and the other successes that the museum has enjoyed, would have been impossible without the help and support of CMM's members, government officials, the business community, granting agencies, and the museum's dedicated staff, both paid and volunteer.

The outlook for paleontology at CMM is very positive as our collections continue to grow, more visitors and researchers make use of our rich paleontological resources, and the fossil exhibit enters its final production phase. We recently received a commitment from a very generous benefactor for a major bequest that will form a substantial endowment for paleontology at the museum; this endowment will allow us to expand our fossil collecting and research efforts in the future. We trust that our members and many other friends and visitors will continue to enjoy our exhibits and other programs that relate to paleontology, and we are confident that there is a very bright future ahead for studying the ancient past at the Calvert Marine Museum.
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR LEAVES CMM

CMM's volunteers and staff will miss Layne Bergin, who resigned on December 30 after nearly thirteen years with the museum. When first appointed to CMM on a part-time basis in 1983, Layne was a summer interpreter in the Drum Point Lighthouse. By 1986 Layne began working year-round as the first paid volunteer/special events coordinator, the position she has held since that time.

During her years as an interpreter Layne assisted in educational programing and helped prepare materials for teachers. She also expanded her interest in the Drum Point Lighthouse into an article entitled “Screwpile Lighthouses: From Britain to the Bay” in the spring 1987 issue of The Keeper's Log, official publication of the United States Lighthouse Society. She also appeared on cable TV programs promoting CMM volunteer recruitment, and there are two video tapes in the CMM archives in which Layne moderated or interviewed several Solomons "old timers" about the lighthouse and other aspects of local history.

Layne Bergin's involvement with the planning and presentation of special events is legendary, but much of her work was hidden "behind the scenes." Much more apparent, however, was her work with the museum's volunteers. In 1987 she organized the first of the annual dinners to honor the work performed by volunteers, enlisting the aid of museum staff to serve and provide desserts. In 1988 she organized a volunteer trip, also now an annual event. Concerned from the first with proper training for volunteers, with communications with volunteers — The Anchor newsletter started in late 1990 — and with maintaining records, Layne embraced the formation of the Volunteer Council in 1990 to provide a more formal relationship among CMM's volunteers and staff.

Perhaps even more important, however, has been Layne's personal "nurture" of the museum's volunteers — her genuine interest in each and in making sure of the suitability of the volunteer and the assignment. Her energetic approach to her position and her warm personality have endeared her to all with whom she has worked.

Museum staff and volunteers gathered at "The Captain's Table" on the evening of December 20 to bid "adieu" to Layne Bergin. Since she and her family will continue to reside in Calvert County, we hope to have many opportunities in the future to welcome Layne back to museum events.

MUSM BOARD IN 1996

There will be two changes on the museum's Board of Governors in 1996. The County Commissioners have appointed John A. Simpson Jr. and George C. Tilghman to replace retiring members C. R. Bailey and L. G. Raley, both of whom have served with distinction for the past six years. Mr. Simpson is a well-known Solomons businessman (Holiday Inn, Solomons Beverage Supply, and Solomons Construction Co.) and past-president of the Solomons Business Association. Mr. Tilghman, a professional architect, returns to the museum board after a year. He served earlier from 1989 to 1994, and was board chairman in 1991. Three present board members were reappointed: Karen H. Abrams, William B. Glascock II, and John C. Smith.

Board members whose service is continuing include: J. Ernest Bell, Donald L. Brown, J. Matthew Gambill, Philip S. Hughes, Jodie Lee Marinelli, Michael J. Moore, Carey O. Randall, Sherry D. Reid, Carmen Nance Sanders, and John W. Williams Jr. County Commissioner Dr. Mark R. Frazer is an ex officio member of the board, as is CMM's director C. Douglass Alves Jr. C. D. Bare serves as board treasurer. Members of the museum's board also serve as directors of the Calvert Marine Museum Society, Inc., the non-profit corporation that raises funds for the museum.

YULETIDE 1995

The holidays were prettier than ever as the museum decked the halls for the annual Solomons Christmas Walk and the CMM's Yule Party, December 8-10. Santa greeted young visitors in the Changing Exhibits area surrounded by the artwork of local children, with this year's theme of "Underwater Holidays." Five decorated trees were up, including the lobby's twelve-foot Fraser fir topped with a gilded horseshoe crab "star." Throughout the weekend, entertainment was provided by the Patuxent Pearls, Kindred Spirits, the Leonardtown Elementary chorus, and the Chopticon High School Madrigal Singers in medieval dress. Evening visitors were led to the museum doors by rows of luminaria, and the Marie Theresa was outlined in lights.

On Sunday, Yule Party-goers enjoyed wagon rides, shopping, storytelling, and candlelit tours of the Drum Point Lighthouse. Congratulations to John and Margaret Fahs of Broomes Island, winners of the door prize of a hand-sculpted tray. Thanks to Josie Lines and other spirited volunteers and staff for assistance with decorating the lighthouse and all the seasonal fun. And — if you missed the eggnog toast by CMM Director Doug Alves — a happy and healthy 1996 to our members, friends, and families!
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT —
Melvin Conant, Volunteer Marine Historian

As expected, Mel Conant’s home is filled with maritime books and nautical accessories. His stunning six-foot creation of the Baltimore clipper Lynx, however, no longer sits in the dining room. The radio-controlled sailing model is kept at the museum so that Mel can easily display it for visitors on Saturday mornings. His most frequently asked question is the one you’d expect: how long did it take to build? Two years, says its captain, with the advice and counsel of “Pepper” Langley.

Mel Conant and his wife Christa have been acquainted with CMM since an article in the Washington Post told of a new maritime museum in Solomons. They made a drive down from Great Falls, Virginia, and at the original museum on the island met Joe Lore, Jim Buys, and “Pepper” Langley. “They welcomed us very warmly,” recalls Mel. His interest in the young museum was natural and maybe nostalgic. In New York, Mel Conant had been chairman of the board of the Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum and a founding trustee of South Street Seaport in New York City — associations he had to sever after moving south.

On their second visit to Solomons, the Conants were invited to the home of Joe Lore, and Mel and Christa’s three children picked fruit off the trees in the back yard. From then on, the relationship was forged, with both the institution and the people supporting it. Mel got to know former CMM director Ralph Eshelman and the issues facing the new museum. In 1979, he was invited to join the Board of Governors.

Mel Conant volunteered his time, talents, and experience to Calvert Marine Museum at a significant juncture in the museum’s history. To start, he helped launch the first fundraising efforts and established the basis for generating financial support for the museum. “Not everyone can contribute money, but everyone can contribute something,” Mel knew. His formula for fundraising success: 100 percent board understanding and involvement; creating a staff position for oversight; continuity; and commitment.

Mel personally committed himself to another goal: the support of the director in the crucial task of acquiring accreditation from the American Association of Museums. In those early days, not everyone understood the importance of the requirements set down by the AAM. Mel organized a special committee of museum curators from the Mariners’ Museum, South Street Seaport, and other institutions to review museum staffing, quality of collecting, and other important aspects of being a museum. Their recommendations allowed CMM to take the necessary steps toward accreditation, achieved in 1981. Says Mel, “under Ralph’s leadership, it was all accomplished, just the way it should be.”

The Conants relocated to Calvert County in 1988, and Mel continued his special friendship with “Pepper” Langley. There were always long talks about the early days in Solomons. Wanting to preserve both the memories and the speech of the native islander, Mel began taping “Pepper”’s stories, and out of this came the material for I Remember, a book of recollections. Christa Conant researched publishing procedures and, in 1990, the Conants made the book a reality. A few copies are still available for purchase at the museum store.

Mel has made other contributions that have enriched CMM’s collections, including maritime art and a large number of cruising books. He currently enjoys meeting visitors to the museum and talking with other CMM members about their importance to the strength of the museum. With volunteer historian Warren Kunz at his side, and the Lynx at the forefront, Mel has created a new involvement with CMM, and, he says, “it’s been a marvelous experience.” (Layne Bergin)