In 1972, a group of shell collectors saw the need for a national organization devoted to the interests of shell collectors; to the beauty of shells, to their scientific aspects, and to the collecting and preservation of mollusks. This was the start of COA. Our membership includes novices, advanced collectors, scientists, and shell dealers from around the world. In 1995, COA adopted a conservation resolution: Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 species of living mollusks, many of great economic, ecological, and cultural importance to humans and whereas habitat destruction and commercial fisheries have had serious effects on mollusk populations worldwide, and whereas modern conchology continues the tradition of amateur naturalists exploring and documenting the natural world, be it resolved that the Conchologists of America endorses responsible scientific collecting as a means of monitoring the status of mollusk species and populations and promoting informed decision making in regulatory processes intended to safeguard mollusks and their habitats.

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AMERICAN CONCHOLOGIST, the official publication of the Conchologists of America, Inc., and issued as part of membership dues, is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December, printed by JOHNSON PRESS OF AMERICA, INC. (JPA), 800 N. Court St., P.O. Box 592, Pontiac, IL 61764. All correspondence should go to the Editor. ISSN 1072-2440.  

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Editor’s comments: First an apology for the incorrect
identification of last issue’s cover. The wonderful photo-
ograph of Pteropurpura trialata (G.B. Sowerby II, 1834)
was mistakenly labeled as Ceratostoma foliatum (Gme-
lin, 1791). While both occur off the west coast of the
US, they are really quite distinct. See further mea culpa
details on page 23.

Now that I have that out of the way I can leave room in
my inbox for corrections to the Cuban landsnails illus-
trated in this issue. There are certain to be some problems
there. This issue has the second part of the McGinty Cu-
ban collecting article (part three will be in the next issue).
I have followed the article with some color plates of Cu-
ban landsnails; more to come in the next issue. Then we
have a short piece about cone venom. A complex topic
few of us really understand, but interesting none-the-less.
Harry Lee then presents an insight into a non-molluscan
shell (constructed by caddisfly larva - yes, it is spelled
as a single word) that I recently found for sale on an on-
line auction site - as an unidentified mollusk. Then Ed-
ward, Gayle, and Braden Nieburger provide us with some
memories of Barbara Elliot. Stepping up the pace, we
have some more memories, this time of 56 years of shell
collecting by Warren Graff. His shell room is the stuff of
conchologists’ dreams. We then have the Astronaut Trail
and Sarasota Shell Club Shell Show results - especially
the COA Award results. Congrats to Gene Emerson and
Vicky Wall. Gene also won for the Melbourne Show, but
I ran out of room.

That leaves just two pages to cover the 2015 COA con-
vention at the Bonaventure Resort & Spa in Weston,
Florida. The Broward Club has really pulled out the
stops and it seems like this will be a very special event.

See you next issue...

Tom Eichhorst

Front Cover: Harpa cabriti Fischer, 1860, photo-
ographed at night on a reef off of Mauritius by Charles
Rawlings, 2012. This is one of the larger members of
this very popular genus.

Back Cover: Chondropometes magnum elizabethae
Torre & Bartsch, 1938. This Cuban landsnail has the
intriguing habit of suspending itself from a branch on
a thread-like strand of mucus during the dry months
while it estivates. Photo by Simon Aiken (featured in
the December 2008 American Conchologist), courtesy
Shell Collecting in Cuba
November 1930 - part 2
Paul L. McGinty

*edited by Emilio F. García and Emily H. Vokes*

This is part two of the three part historical account of a collecting trip to Cuba in 1930. This account was discovered unpublished in a museum archive by Richard (Dick) Petit, who was quite interested in the many adventures by Paul McGinty. Dick Petit obtained a photo-copy of this manuscript and re-typed it for possible publication. Dick’s untimely death would have halted any possible publication except for the intervention of Emilio F. García and Emily H. Vokes. They edited the MS, which had been transferred to electronic form by Dick Petit, and provided necessary annotation. The result is an exciting and timely historical account of shell collecting in Cuba, 85 years ago. The editors noted in part one:

“As this is a historical account not a scientific paper, no attempt has been made to modernize the taxonomy or the rendition of “scientific” names, which have been left as the author wrote them. There has been a minimum of editorial corrections, principally typographical errors and misspellings, the latter primarily correcting the orthography of Spanish names. Minor additions by the editors are given in brackets. Those of the author are in parentheses, except those which are numbers referring to a few explanatory notes to be found at the end of the paper.”

It was almost dark by now and since we had made no arrangements as to where we were to spend the night it was decided to hasten back to Viñales. The one and only, that famous hostelry, “El Central Inn,” in Viñales had not looked too inviting. To tell the truth that was the main reason we tried to get into the San Vicente place but now was no time to be choosy so once more we hunted up Dr. Valle. He kindly offered to take us over to the hotel and introduce us to the proprietor and to explain in Spanish what accommodations we desired. Since he had not eaten dinner himself, we invited him to be our guest at the hotel. He accepted, and shortly after we were all seated about the one dining table at the inn. The dining room was a small square cement-floored patio at the back of the hotel. We asked the Doctor to order something for us, which he did, and we were soon feasting upon a typically Cuban concoction of stewed chicken and a yellowish looking rice, which tasted rather of iron.

Opening into the dining patio we could see the doors and iron-barred windows of the hotel bedrooms. From one of the rooms, it was to be ours, a small pipe emptied the water disposal from the washbasin thru the stone wall and poured a soapy stream of dirty water upon the patio floor. This one washbasin in our bedroom was the only one in the hotel and everyone took the liberty to enter our room and make use of it. It was very strange to awaken in the morning and discover some strange man in the room calmly shaving himself. Fortunately there were few guests at the time, however, after an extensive period of general ablutions the drain water had a habit of finding its way over the pavement and under our dining table! A small building to the rear contained a shower-bath. The soapy water rinsed from one’s body passed thru a drain in the floor and was pumped back to a tank overhead to be ready for the next bather. We did not try its effectiveness but have been told that its principal advantage lies in the fact that after the system has been in use for some time, it is not necessary to use any soap to bring up a lather! Many chickens were about the patio at meal time looking for dropped crumbs. Often the diner would be conscious of something under the table about his feet but it was only a chicken, one learns to ignore such abstractions.

The Cubans allowed us but little privacy. At almost every meal we were to find a group of them on hand to watch what we did and judging by the interest they showed, and the persistency with which some of them returned meal after meal, we were most amusing creatures. Whether the town policeman, a pleasant looking young chap in a neat blue uniform of light cotton, was always on hand to keep the crowd in order or just out of his own curiosity we never learned. He was one of our most regular spectators, however. Another “regular” was an old man we nicknamed “Grandpa.” He seemed to be employed about the Inn to grind the coffee, which he did with a terrible noise each day. He seldom smiled and we felt that he rather mistrusted us for his eyes were on us constantly and a familiar figure he became to us. “Grandpa” favored that Cuban custom of allowing his shirt tails to hang out over his trousers and was never seen without his straw hat.
Now to get back to our story. While the food was not cooked as Americans would wish it, we were very hungry and made out quite well. Since nobody else in town could speak any English, Dr. Valle thought it advisable for us to have him order breakfast for the next morning. We all thought the idea very good and suggested that if he did not mind we would appreciate it if he would also order the meal for the next evening as well. Alas, what an error, for the kind Dr. Valle left town in the morning and was away for the greater part of our stay and try as we would we could not get the proprietor to make any changes in any of our succeeding meals. Each one was just like all those before, a regular Doctor's prescription as far as we were concerned.

The coffee cream had been heavily salted (Cubans no doubt, do this to preserve it and actually prefer this to unsalted cream or milk) and we had asked the Doctor if some other drink could not be had. He had ordered hot chocolate. It was at least half sugar and so sweet that we couldn’t continue day after day to drink it. It was impossible to have them understand that we wished it with less sugar so at last we were obliged to content ourselves with plain water at the meals. Mentioning water brings to mind the strange manner in which the proprietor managed this item. Over in one corner was a large rickety receptacle which resembled a much battered and very ancient Victrola. It was always kept under lock and key and only by hunting up the proprietor, who carried the key, could one get a drink outside of meal times. Inside the contraption was a large stone basin thru which the water filtered down into a lower receptacle from which it could be scooped out for use. It was not the world’s most wholesome looking filtering system but then none of us seemed to be affected by drinking from it.

Our bedrooms were roomy affairs with high ceilings but even here we found little privacy. Inquisitive children were constantly slipping into the rooms to see what we were doing. Chickens were also frequent visitors and had to be shooshed off our beds. A few less bold children managed to poke their heads thru the bars of our windows to gaze most unselfconsciously in upon us. At first we gently pushed the protruding head back thru the bars but it proved quite useless for almost immediately the same head would pop up thru another window.

Another convenience was our washbasin. The stream of water flowing from the one faucet was no larger in diameter than a pencil and after one’s face was well soaped it was most difficult to get sufficient water to rinse it off!

The day following our arrival at Viñales was to be devoted to collecting. An early start was made for the Puerta del Ancón and we had hardly arrived and started to look over
McGinty’s Pleurodonte guanensis, now Zachryisia guanensis guanensis (Poey, 1857). This is a large 45mm+ shell. Photo by Simon Aiken (featured in the December 2008 American Conchologist), courtesy of www.simons-specimen-shells.com.

Nearby we found our first specimens of Pleurodonte guanensis, a large brown shell with a very slimy blackish snail inside which caused one’s collecting sack to become terribly messy in short order. As we searched further, progress was made westward on the north side of the mountain towards that beautiful cove which was so appropriately named by Henderson’s party more than a decade before, the large cave on the west side of the road when two young Cuban men approached us thru the field. They were driving a delivery truck loaded with provisions for the little town of La Esperanza and had stopped to learn what we were doing. One of them had lived in the United States for a time and was very proud of his ability to speak English. The other chap was rather embarrassed because he couldn’t enter into the conversation but waited patiently while his friend did the talking. He told us an interesting story about the cave we were visiting. It seems that during the Cuban Revolution, General Gomez and a band of his followers had been forced to take refuge in the cave and had successfully withstood the attacks of the Spanish forces stationed just the other side of the present road thru the pass. It is now an historical shrine of the Cuban people and is known as the “Gomez Cave.” Our newly formed friend pointed out to us the many fissures in the rock at the rear of the cave. They form a veritable maze of tunnels into the side of the mountain and it is said that it is possible to follow a course that will eventually cause one to emerge from the other side……. We would like to have explored further into these natural tunnels but deemed it too dangerous because being lost in such a labyrinth in the very heart of a great mountain would have been unpleasant, to say the very least! Our Cuban friend left us with an invitation to visit him at his home in Pinar del Rio.

“The Cove of Delight.” It proved to be all that the name implied and very rich in molluscan life. Tom and Bud stayed in the Cove to do further collecting while Maxwell and the writer continued on thru the fields bordering the mountainside to a spot about three quarters of a mile beyond. Starting to collect at the base of the mountain we worked gradually higher and higher up the steep sides, always finding something of interest awaiting us. At one time the writer found himself within 25 feet of the summit but further progress became very perilous here for the face of the mogote rose like a great stone wall almost perpendicular overhead and afforded little or no opportunity for climbing holds. We were fortunate in finding during our collecting a few specimens of the rare Chondropoma vignalensis among other interesting things and took numbers of specimens of that large lusty shell, Cepolis subtasulcata, strangely always found dead.

It was well after noon when Maxwell and the writer stopped collecting and returned to the automobile. The others had beaten us out and had been killing time by collecting on the east side of the road, Mogote La Chorrera. They too had found the collecting good. At the cove they had taken Chondrothyrta egregium Gund., Tostum tosum Gund. Torre, Chondrothyrta shuttleworthi retulatum T & B, and Chondrothyrta incrassatum Wr. & Pf. On the east side of the entrance to the Cove of Delight they had found specimens of a very interesting Urocoptis. We thought the molluscan life to be very bountiful but were told that the real time to collect is in the warm, rainy summer season when vastly greater numbers are visible. This is one of the richest spots, as far as molluscan life goes, to be found anywhere in the entire world!!

Returning to the hotel at about 2 PM we partook of liquid refreshments, for the day was warm, and spent most of the rest of the time cleaning some of the specimens which we had already collected. Unfortunately, in such an expedition, about as much time is involved in the “cleaning” of specimens as is devoted to the collecting, for “woe be it” once one gets too far behind!

In fact, we were beginning to fall a little behind on our cleaning side of the ledger and some of the mollusca were becoming quite well “ripened.” At the rear of the hotel building we were soon busy pulling drowned Liguus from their shells with the aid of strangely bent bits of wire resembling corkscrews. An ugly looking vulture soon discovered our presence and enjoyed the choice morsels which we tossed to him, quite unafraid to come nearby.

While working we evolved a plan to make an excursion the next day to El Abra which is a gateway thru the northern sierra some distance to the west and where we had been told the collecting was extremely fine. Upon inquiry we learned that a car could be driven to within a mile or so of the pass but that the road was very bad. We feared to risk our own car upon anything which the natives considered
(Left) - Viñales valley as it would have appeared to Paul McGinty and party in 1930: scattered farms and small settlements. The mogotes (immense rounded hills) are 200 million-year-old limestone remnants (Jurassic) left after erosion has lowered the area around them. In 1930 they were interesting geological features, of interest to only a few - including conchologists.

(Right) - The town of Viñales today is a thriving community and there is a booming tourist trade. There are hotels, inns, and casitas available for foreign visitors.

A single mogote and the rich red soil that surrounds it. This modern view is very much as described by McGinty.

One of the caverns under a mogote, now a restaurant that caters to foreign tourists.

The base of of a mogote that has been given a park-like aspect for the tourist trade.

A tour bus sits under a mogote while the passengers explore the region.
“very bad” and wisely made arrangements with a local man to drive us out the next morning in his car, the town taxi.

We were off at six AM in his little Ford touring-car. Since the party pretty well filled up the small auto and the collecting would be quite strenuous, mostly climbing, Dad thought it wiser to remain at the Inn for the day. It seemed rather good to be bouncing over the road at a good clip and to lose that peculiar sense of responsibility and despair ever present to one driving his own car over these roads. As the car rattled thru Puerta del Ancón the sun was barely up, the shadows in the valley were very long and weird. The driver made it a practice to shut off his motor at the top of each hill and to coast as far as possible without power, no doubt believing that this saved much gasoline. About two or three miles north of the Hotel of the Baths (San Vicente) the Esperanza road made a rather abrupt turn to the west and followed for more than a mile very close to the foot of the northern range, Costanera de San Vicente. Here, we were rounding the eastern part of this long mogote. At its far western extremity, about five miles distant, was located El Abra which separated the Costanera de San Vicente from the continuation of the mountain range to the west. Leaving the main road which leads to the little coastal town of La Esperanza we continued westward. The mountain range with its organ like peaks was silhouetted against a very dark and forbidding looking sky. A storm was threatening as we paused on our way thru a typical little Cuban country village (see maps) to allow our guide to inquire about the road leading to the pass. The rest of us strolled thru the town and Maxwell took a number of pictures of the quaint thatched houses built in a row upon the summit of a rather steep hill. Most of the inhabitants, their dogs and cats as well, came out to see us. They seemed quite friendly and their curiosity was readily pardoned for it is most unlikely that any of them had ever seen an American before.

At last our guide returned and we were on our way again. We had thought the roads just passed over very bad but they were nothing compared to what lay ahead. They were really only wagon trails thru a rolling country but how they twisted that little car! It seemed impossible time and again that the frame of the car would not be broken for the front axle would lean far to one side while the rear axle twisted just as far to the opposite side and the little car seemed to quiver as if in great pain. We called it the “rubber” car and not without reason for no matter how much it was stretched in any one direction it always seemed to return to its natural shape quite unharmed. The country we traveled thru was rather barren with a coarse grass and here and there a few scrubby pines but little else. At times the guide would ease the car down into a valley between two of the rounding hills or “lomas” to find a veritable maze of trails winding every which way. Fortunately they all led to the same place and were probably made during the rainy season in attempts to find less muddy passages. From time to time we paused to open a gate across the trail, passed thru, closed the gate behind us, and were on our way again. It was really a very strange and most interesting experience and caused us to form an entirely new conception of how bad a road can be and still be “passable.”

Finally the pass, El Abra, which was our destination hove into sight. Within about a mile of it the guide stopped the car and made it known to us that the rest of the way must be done on foot. The trail leading down thru the pass was quite steep and the guide feared that the impending rain-storm might make the surface too muddy for the climb back up again. Each fellow carried what he could down the hill. There was our collecting paraphernalia, including boxes, cloth sacks, etc., bananas and oranges, a loaf of bread and a gallon of water in a thermos jug.

Upon closer approach the pass seemed quite like the Puerta del Ancón near Viñales except perhaps it is not quite as narrow nor the mogotes forming its sides quite as high. The little Morales River looked very cool and green as it gently flowed westward skirting the northern slope of the Sierra Galeras, the western part of the gateway. Nearby was a small sawmill where we were given permission to leave some of our baggage for safe keeping while we continued down the river to do some collecting. It was near here that another Cuban joined the party, altho we did not hire him to do so.

A footpath thru high luxuriant grass led us along the edge of the riverbank. It was very pleasant walking with the cool river on one hand and the high wall of the mountain on the other. At its base and for some distance higher up was a maze of green vegetation as luxuriant as any growth we had ever seen. Pausing to collect upon the rocky wall from time to time we found some fine specimens. Among them were Eutrochatella sublaevigata Torres and Chondrothyra shuttleworthi abraensis T. & B., a very pretty shell with variable colors. It had rained lightly as we walked along but by now the heavy clouds had passed and the sun was shining adding cheer to our hearts. After we had followed the river for about a half-mile it turned suddenly towards the south and headed straight towards the towering wall of the mogote where it entered a cave and disappeared under the mountain. It was near this cave that Henderson’s party had discovered that most unusual shell now named Chondrothrya hendersoni in his honor.

An examination of the cave, which is known as the “Cave of the Hendersoni,” revealed no specimens of this unusual shell but uncovered a specimen or so of Megalomastoma superboolum [sic, superbum Torre & Bartsch], an interesting form which we had taken before near Viñales. Just to the east of the entrance a careful search upon the ground disclosed numerous dead specimens of the rare shell which we sought but try as we would no living specimens could be...
found. The great cliff towered high above our heads and was so steep that it was not possible to climb but a short distance upwards.

Somewhere high above on the cliff lived a populous colony of these unique shells, yet no one has been able to discover exactly where they live. The many dead specimens which have been washed down, most likely by heavy rains, are to be found only at this one little spot near the cave. A short distance beyond we made a search and could not find a single dead specimen while a careful search upon the ground and upon the slope of the mogote across the river on the other side of the cave revealed no specimens. What pretty shells they were with a very fine striping effect rather suggesting the colored markings upon the old fashioned “hard” candy and with a delicate shading of purple, pink, and white. Luckily some of the dead specimens which we found had but recently made the several hundred-foot descent and were still possessed of nice bright colors and were quite perfect even after the terrific drop. It is interesting to note at this point that all forms of Chondropoma and Chondrothrya seem to make a practice of breaking off the tips of their shells by falling upon the rocks, seldom is a perfect specimen found still retaining the tip! Thus, specimens with tips broken off are natural and are considered to be perfect by collectors. Besides a number of well-preserved dead specimens of the “hendersoni” we had taken some nice Urocoptis, Eutochatella, and Chondropoma and since we wished to do some collecting in other places we at last had to leave the interesting “Cave of the Hendersoni.”

Back by the sawmill we paused to eat our lunch and after finishing decided to divide the party into two sections in order to cover more territory. Maxwell, Bud, and the driver of the car were to explore the south side of Costanera, east of the pass, while Tom, our newly acquired helper, and the writer were to collect along the south side of the Sierra Galeras. The vegetation was extremely dense and the writer, intent upon the collecting, allowed Tom and the Cuban to work on ahead at a faster rate until they were beyond hailing distance. He had kept on, expecting that I would catch up with him at any time, while I, not knowing whether he was ahead or behind, decided not to attempt to locate him but to give my undivided attention to the collecting which was excellent. Later, Tom explained that they had passed beyond the place where the Morales River reappeared upon this side of the mountain and still further beyond had come to a stream which was a tributary of the same river and flowing back under the mountain again! He and his Cuban friend had made much better time by working from point to point thru the tobacco-fields while I had kept in close to the wall of the mogote where the going was hardest on account of the dense vegetation. After reaching the spot where the Morales River flowed out from underneath the mogote I decided that since it was getting rather late it would be best to return to the little sawmill to meet the others as per agreement. Tom and the Cuban were already there and waiting for me. He had taken a beautiful pure white shell Chondrothrya egregium lacteum Torre. Strange to say, but Dr. Torre informed us later that these were the first taken from this locality, all previously having been found on the eastern side of the pass. Tom had had time to do some collecting on the mogote to the east of the pass and reported the collecting very good with shells of an entirely different character. This is doubly strange when one considers that the only separation between these two localities is the narrow level floor of the pass! The Liguus had been very scarce. Tom had taken about five or six specimens altogether from both localities. They seemed a bit different than Viñales Liguus in general.

The other branch of our party had not returned yet so Tom and I decided to return once more to the “Cave of the Hendersoni” and make one last effort to find a living specimen of this exceptional shell. We were alone now for the Cuban helper had been “paid off” and had departed quite delighted. This time a half hour of diligent searching upon the ground turned up about three living specimens of this rare shell. Most likely the rain of the morning had washed these fellows down from their rocky perches high above on the cliff. Later we learned that very few collectors have ever seen this shell with the living animal!

Upon returning to the sawmill again we found the rest of the party waiting for us. They had found the collecting very fine also and had discovered some forms that were different even than those which Tom had found on the north side of the same mountain. They made us very envious by telling of a refreshing bath they had taken in a little river just south of the Costanera, discovered while they were collecting on some small detached mogotes nearby.

The return trip to Viñales was without any particular event for by now we fully knew what to expect of these Cuban trails. We found Dad at the hotel looking very rested and cool. It had been a great day for him for from every quarter of the town and from all over the countryside in general the natives had paraded into the hotel to see the great American Naturalista. They had brought everything from live toads and snakes to evil smelling dead snail shells; they had even brought rabbits and owls to offer for sale. At first he had bought a few shells from the boys but finally learned that there was a limit to every good thing for more and more appeared thru out the day with additional specimens and seemed offended when he tried to explain that he had “mu- cha caracoles” already. We had an opportunity to witness one of these attempted transactions after we returned and it was very amusing. Dad attempted to explain that dead shells were undesirable. It was “Muerte, no muerte, must be viva caracoles. Already very mucha caracoles.” If this did not convince the would be seller Dad started to “talk with his hands.” It was lots of fun and Dad thoroughly enjoyed the
The next day was Sunday and we decided to visit the Mogotes de Dos Hermanos (Two Brothers) two mogotes just west of the mogote El Queque and only two or three miles from the town. It was a beautiful day so we took our own car and the entire party made the trip. Leaving the car not far from the mogotes we decided to hike on foot the rest of the distance. Tom and Bud started off for the western mogote of Dos Hermanos while Dad, Maxwell and the writer struck out for the southwestern edge of the Mogote El Queque. Here along the edge of the mogote which was bordered by a rather neglected looking tobacco-field we discovered *Liguus*. They were scarce and mostly found fastened to the rocks either well concealed by vines or just visible within some crevice along the rocky side of the mogote. These *Liguus* were mostly slate colored with striations across the body whirl, typical *Liguus flamellus*. The three of us continued up the western side of Mogote El Queque to a point somewhat short of its northern extremity and collected as we progressed. The best collecting seemed to be right at the foot of the mogote and upon the detached pieces of mogote nearby. Near the base we found a beautiful large lacy thin shell, *Chondrothyra gundlachi affinis* Torre. *Chondrothyra reticulata fraterna* Torre & Bart. was quite abundant as was *Eutrochatella (Viana) regina lirata* Torre, a very pretty shell, yellowish to pink and with a rough surface. We discovered one ideal appearing locality, a sort of “bay” supporting an extremely lush growth of vegetation but were disappointed to find few shells here. The collecting upon this mogote had been not quite as good as upon most of the mogotes we had tried before. Nevertheless, we had spent a pleasant morning and had some nice things to show for our efforts, especially the nice *Liguus*.

Upon returning to the car we found that Tom and Bud were still collecting but did not have long to wait before they appeared upon the scene once more. They had started collecting at the southeast corner of the second of the Dos Hermanos mogotes and here had found a few specimens of a beautiful white *Liguus* with deep green lines, one shell in particular was an extremely fine specimen. They had found them very well concealed and living only upon the rock (*Liguus* generally are found clinging to plants) at the edge of the mogote which was reached by crawling under the bushes which bordered the base. This was *Liguus fasciatus crenatus* Clench. Working their way around the western side they collected upon some small detached pieces of mogote (SW corner of main mogote, western one) they found *Urocoptis vigilanensis*. It was on this western side that Tom succeeded in finding one of those very rare black *Liguus* as well as several specimens of the tobacco-colored *Liguus flamellus cervus* Clench. This splendid find had given them heart and they had worked their way completely around the northern end of the mogote and here had decided to cross the valley between the two mogotes (Dos Hermanos) and return by walking along the eastern side of the eastern mogote, thus they had completely encircled the two “Dos Hermanos” mogotes when they finally arrived back at the car. They reported the collecting not as good as they had seen but were well pleased with what material they had found. Besides the *Liguus* and the typical Viñales *Urocoptis* previously mentioned they had found a few fine specimens of *Jeanneretia parraina* d’Orb., one almost black form. Dead specimens of *Cepolis subtasulcata* were reported as having been seen on the western mogote, none living. We were not disappointed in the collecting for the day because it was not expected that we would find a great variety of small things. It seems that the Henderson Expedition had also collected here a number of years before and had reported the collecting rather slim at that time. What *Liguus* we had taken were greatly appreciated, however, and it had given us a very pleasant half-day.

Returning early in the bright sunny afternoon we were obliged to stop several times upon the narrow road to let large wagons drawn by slow moving oxen go around us. We passed one ox cart filled with a family of Cubans who were evidently just returning from church in the town.

The women in the party were neatly dressed in clean looking clothes and looked very quaint sitting in the cumbersome oxcart over which a rude canopy had been built to shade them from the hot sun. Maxwell succeeded in obtaining a number of photographs of the entire party. Apparently they felt quite complimented by having us wish for their picture.

The rest of the day was spent in cleaning shells and in leisure about the town. In the morning Tom and Dad decided to stay at the hotel and clean some more of the specimens while Maxwell, Bud and I made a trip to collect near the San Vicente baths. Leaving our car parked near the “Hotel of the Baths” we struck in at a point just south of the Hotel to reach the large Mogote La Chorrera. Keeping close to the mogote we followed along its base to a spot not far away where a little river flowed from within a cave in the mountainside. Bud and I posed for pictures here but the high wall of the mogote and the extremely lush vegetation which surrounded this damp spot made the scene too shady for good photography. How cool it was here by the river cave. The air was heavy with the smell of well watered plants and damp earth and with the half-light which filtered thru one could almost believe that it was all just a strange fancy of the imagination. There is something mysterious about these river caves, something most appealing, but just exactly what that strange attraction is I am unable to say in so many words.

The collecting near the cave was excellent. We took a very beautiful form of *Chondropoma* with a delicate white shell banded with brown. Also, a specimen or two of that very rare and beautiful white *Chondropoma vigilanensis clappi* but none living. Besides these, many smaller but interesting forms of *Urocoptis*, etc., were found. Finding a spot not far above the cave where a tree had fallen into the river we made the crossing but not without considerable
jollity for after Bud and I had crossed the stream, over the

tree, and reached the other side, Maxwell cautiously started
to work his way out upon the log. After reaching the mid-
point he seemed to falter and for some time he paused there
desperately endeavoring to retain his balance. In some way
he succeeded in making the crossing without falling into the
river but his chances certainly did not look any too good for
a time.

Striking back once more to the edge of the mogote
we followed its outline northward around the end and worked
our way for perhaps a mile southward upon the eastern side.
It was very beautiful country to work in with fields of fine
looking tobacco planted in many places almost up to the face
of the mogote. We uncovered many fine small things all thru
this area and were constantly on the lookout for any signs of
Wright’s “lost species” (*Blaeospira echinus*). While we had
no luck in finding any of these strange shells we were able
to find a few specimens of *Liguus* from time to time. They
were *Liguus flamellus organensis* Clench and this mogote
La Chorrera is the type locality for this form.

Upon the way out we noticed a rather crude rustic
ladder leaning against the sheer surface of the mogote. From
the top of the ladder one would have been able to reach a
sort of pass on the side of the mountain thru which it would,
no doubt, have been possible to reach the top. The writer
stepped upon the first rung of the ladder which immediately
gave away. Needless to say, we did not attempt to reach the
summit of the mogote that day! The camera in Maxwell’s
able hands was busy snapping pictures as we worked our
way out to the car once more.

It was still quite early so we decided to try col-
lecting upon Mogote Capón which was off the east side of
the road on the way back to town and not far south of the
Puerta del Ancón. We struck in near the southern end of
the mogote, walked around the rear, rounded the northern
end and from thence back to the road. There were numer-
ous smaller mogotes nearby which we examined as we pro-
gressed around Mogote Capón. We took the usual haul of
smaller things and were very pleased to discover that *Liguus*
lived here, too. Well pleased with the mornings work we
returned to the car and reached town at about 2 PM.

That afternoon while walking back from a visit
with Dr. Valle who had just returned from Havana we were
surprised to have a small Cuban boy rush across the street
and point desperately towards a man who was standing on
the opposite curb some distance away. At first we did not
realize what the boy wanted but finally concluded that the
man wished to speak with us. He proved to be the local
schoolmaster and invited us into the schoolroom to view a
collection of shells of the region which had been gathered
by his pupils. It was really a very nice collection of Viñales
shells! Upon entering the school room the entire class arose
and stood at attention and when we left a short time later
the schoolmaster had the entire class form into two columns
between which we were obliged to walk, assuming our most
dignified bearings. The schoolmaster was most gracious and
insisted upon presenting to us some of the forms which we
had not been able to collect ourselves.

That evening at the dinner table at the hotel we were
accosted by a group of Señoritas who wished to sell us tick-
ets to some dance or social function to be held the following
evening. They had quite a time trying to make us under-
stand what it was they had to sell and when we gave them a
half dollar they were quite offended seemingly and nothing
would suffice until we had all “chipped in” enough to buy
one dollar ticket. This we later presented to the hotel propri-
eter who was delighted.

Dr. Valle located a young man for us that evening who
was to act as a guide to take us up to the summit of the large
mogote known as El Queque. He was on hand bright and
early the following morning and shortly after sunrise we
were on our way to the mogote. A walk of a mile or so (see
map) brought us up to the base of the mogote and at a point
where it was possible to get a foothold on the steep side of
the great mound of rock. Our guide hurried ahead and we
did our best to stay with him. At times the going would be
fairly easy and again at other times it would be necessary
to climb up the face of a cliff with very scant footholds and
handholds. Dad had stayed at the hotel for the morning be-
cause we had figured that the going would be a bit strenuous

McGinty searched in vain for what he called “Wright’s
lost species,” *Blaeospira echinus*. This is *Blaeospira echinus infernalis* (Torre & Bartsch, 1941), an exquisitly
sculptured shell that rarely exceeds 10mm in size. Note
the operculum. Photo by Simon Aiken (featured as the
December 2008 American Conchologist cover), courtesy
and it was not long before we were quite fully convinced that this was the truth. The vegetation upon the mogote was very thick with many varieties of plants represented. Among the most beautiful and unusual of all the forms was a large tree fern which seemed quite common. To make this climb up the mogote one follows an apparently little used trail which leads by a very indirect route to the top of the mogote. At times the climbing is so steep that one is obliged to exercise great caution. Parts of the trail led one along narrow rock ledges upon the almost perpendicular surface of the mountain. A slip at any of many points upon the way up would have in all probability spelled “finis” for any one of us. Fortunately the vegetation even upon the steeper parts of the climb was quite thick and one could consistently maintain some sort of a hold upon some small tree or shrub. At other times this lush growth of plant life proved to be a “devil in disguise” for it completely shielded from a climber’s view the sheer cliff which might lay just below. Thus one was rather inclined to acquire a feeling of false security when surrounded by green leaves in such plenty but at rather frequent intervals one would be warned to use care by catching a glimpse of the valley far below. From time to time we paused upon some rocky projection to rest and enjoy an uninterrupted view of the valley which gracefully unfolded before us. It was still quite early and a thin haze floated over everything making distances seem vague and unreal. About us, and growing from the steepest parts of the slope we could see the beautiful tree ferns unfolding their great fronds to the climbing sun. There were wisps of clouds upon the tops of some of the higher mogotes which we could discern in the distance. At times the going would become easier and we would follow the guide over an almost imperceptible trail leading thru a narrow pass flanked on either side by great walls of rock. Perhaps the pass would lead to a large natural amphitheater with a level floor and quite large trees. At such places we paused to hunt Liguus and were fortunate enough to find a number of them altho they proved to be scarce upon the trees. Maxwell, our official photographer, was constantly snapping pictures or pausing to gather minute shells which he found upon the rocks. With difficulty we convinced him that we must climb on to the summit before sunset shells which he found upon the rocks. With difficulty we convinced him that we must climb on to the summit before sunset. Here we would be surprised to learn that our judgment had erred for still beyond us would be seen another higher “peak.” Time and again this happened but we kept on climbing. When at last the summit was reached we could hardly believe our eyes for there was nothing beyond and above us. The view from the top was superb for the sun had risen sufficiently by this time to have completely cleared away all the mist and we could see in every direction for miles about us. A rather makeshift flagpole had been erected at the very summit and the writer climbed as high as possible upon it to photograph the valley looking towards the tiny town of Viñales! The pictures when developed had no foreground of shrubbery and for all the world were like scenes taken from an aeroplane! On the north side of the summit was a sheer drop for hundreds of feet. We approached the edge as near as we dared and amused ourselves by heaving large boulders out into space. We could not see where the rocks fell but after a time which seemed to be measured in minutes would hear them boom-booming as they struck the side of the mogote and continued their crazy courses down to the valley below. Beyond the chain of mogotes to the north we could clearly see the shining blue of the sea. The climb had been most worthwhile and was indeed a splendid climax, the crowning glory of our stay in Viñales! Return to town we must, however, for time was flying and after a pause to do some collecting we started down. Near the summit upon the way up we had gathered a small box full of a most beautiful orange colored shell, *Chondrothyra aurantium*. They had been quite a scarce form and were consequently valued very highly but alas, we could not find the box which held them when we started down. A careful search of our trail failed to disclose the presence of the box so we were obliged to pause again to hunt for a few of these pretty shells before continuing down again. A few were found so that the form might be represented in the two collections.

We made one other good find near the summit in the form of a very rare Chondropoma. To the casual observer it appeared to be quite similar to the *Chondropoma vignalensis*. Only one specimen was taken alive but several dead ones were found. Of course we took numbers of the commoner small shells as we went along.

The trip down from the summit was quite uneventful altho we were all convinced several times that our guide was lost himself. He had foolishly worn white clothes, which were torn to shreds by the brush, and he appeared to be very tired when we all reached the valley once more.

Back at the hotel we found Dad busy packing specimens into boxes and labeling them for we were to leave Viñales in the morning. After a bit of lunch all concentrated upon the task and before dinner things were in shape for our departure. This trip to Viñales had been a wonderful experience which I am sure we shall all remember with great pleasure to the end of our days.

Piling all of our baggage into the car the next morning we started the long climb up the hill on our way back to Havana. Our friend Dr. Valle had told us of another road which would detour us around much of the very bad road we had passed over on our way into the valley. We followed his directions without great difficulty and were very much pleased to find that via this new route the road, or trail as it might better be called, was ever so much better going and consequently we found ourselves back upon the Carretera Central at a point somewhat east of where the regular Vi-
náles road strikes it long before we expected.

As we continued eastward over the smooth new highway plans were made to stop at Rangel Hill once more and make one last attempt to find specimens of the beautiful *Liguus blainianus* which we knew lived there. We reached the Hill at about eleven o’clock and started to search at a spot somewhat east of where we had made our previous unsuccessful hunt. At first no one was able to find any living specimens but after some time Tom discovered our first living specimen concealed under a jagged piece of rock. This, of course, gave us renewed enthusiasm and it was not long before Maxwell shouted that he too had found *Liguus blainianus* living. He had discovered a colony of them living in the rotted part of a tree. Soon some other member of the party shouted that he too had found a colony of them in a rotted cavity in a living tree. It was not long before we were searching for this one variety of tree and upon finding one which had any cavities where the wood had started to become soft we would almost invariably find living *Liguus* concealed very carefully within. Collecting in this matter we were able to gather a nice supply of the shells in a couple of hours time but strange to say one rarely if ever could find one of the shells living upon the limbs of the trees or in exposed places upon the trunks as we had found other forms of *Liguus* in the past.

While turning over large stones to search for smaller things such as *Megalomostoma*, etc., the writer exposed a spider as large as a man’s fist and covered with a sort of shaggy hair. We watched him for some time and since he made no attempt to bite us we finally left him undisturbed.

It had been extremely warm work climbing upon the steep side of the great hill and consequently upon our return to the car we all hung our shirts up in the sun so that they could dry out a bit. The blazing sun soon did its work and once more we were rolling along towards Havana.

On the way we stopped for a few minutes at a spot just a little west of Las Mangas to collect some more of the *Liguus* found there. We were back in Havana in time for dinner that evening and to discard our khaki clothes which had been our only wearing apparel for a week. It certainly seemed good to get back to the fine food of the Maison Royale and the conveniences of the city once again.

Thursday, the day following, Maxwell, Dad and Tom spent the morning at the Museo Poey7 (University of Havana) where they met Dr. Torre’s young assistant Dr. Pedro J. Bermúdez.8 Bud and I spent the morning in more sightseeing.

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7) Felipe Poey (1799-1891) was Cuba’s most eminent naturalist of the 19th Century and the first professor of Zoology at Havana University. Among his many publications, his two volumes on Historia natural de la Isla de Cuba (1960) stand out.
8) Born in Las Villas Province, Cuba, in 1905, Dr. Bermúdez later became Cuba’s best known geologist, specializing in Foraminifera.
Tried to locate a museum described in our guidebook but apparently the book was in error for no such building seemed to exist in the stated locality. Everyone returned to our hotel for dinner and Drs. Aguayo and Bermúdez ate with us as our guests. In the afternoon we all returned to the Museo Poey to see the shell collection. Among other interesting exhibits in the museum was a two headed baby mounted in a glass jar full of alcohol. It certainly was a queer freak!

The next day was also spent at the Museo Poey by Maxwell, Tom and Dad. They were very happy receiving gifts of specimens which were duplicates in the museum collection. In the afternoon they repaired to the residence of Dr. Aguayo who showed his own private collection and presented the collectors with further specimens.

Bud and the writer spent the day in more sightseeing. At noon we tried a meal at a typical Cuban restaurant and were served something quite resembling our American Chop Suey. It tasted quite good after all the tramping about that we had done. In the afternoon we decided to visit a section of the city in the older part which according to our guidebook was famed for the tough character of its people. We walked up and down the designated streets and were quite disappointment because nothing seemed to happen. I don’t know just what we expected but then perhaps the “wild folks” only come out at night.

It was planned by Dr. Torre that Bermúdez should take us to Camoa to collect shells the next day. Dad had some shopping which he wished to do, especially to purchase one of Dr. Torre’s School Geography Books of Cuba to take home as a souvenir with him, so did not come with us on this trip. We met Dr. Bermúdez at his home bright and early in the morning and started at once to drive eastward on the Central Highway out of Havana. We had plenty of amusement trying to make Bermúdez understand our attempts at conversation which were mostly made via the sign language for he spoke no English and we likewise spoke no Spanish! It was really surprising how well we made ourselves understood, tho, of course, most of the conversation concerned shells or localities where certain kinds could be found. Bermúdez certainly turned out to be a great scout and a most excellent companion. He was most cheerful and in his most happy moments would amuse us by singing Cuban songs as we drove along. He also had a stunt of singing the same tune in the varied tempos of Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, etc. When we tried to speak any Spanish we always endeavored to stress the rolling of the “r’s”, very much to his amusement. He came right back at us with a comic recitation of a bit of doggerel every word of which started with “r.” My but how he could roll those “r’s”.

Our first collecting stop was at a culvert just before we entered the village of San Francisco de Paula. We discovered a few specimens of Pleurodonte sagemon arangiana Poey. They were hidden on rocks, etc., alongside the road. (This was our station #39 a) We tried to find some of them in the village just beyond but had no success. Bermúdez pointed a side road out to us and directed us to a farm called “El Diezmero.” One might call it a farm but in truth it was more like a country estate for the grounds about the house (a well built frame building in no way resembling a farmer’s dwelling) were very well maintained. Bermúdez introduced us to the owner of the farm who proved to be a real Cuban gentleman. He spoke perfect English and had the gracious manners of a European aristocrat. His appearance was quite in keeping with his character for he wore a short dark beard that was very becoming to him. Permission to collect upon his grounds was very kindly given and an invitation to return to his home after the completion of our work was courteously extended. A drizzling rain was falling at the time and it was chilly so when he mentioned that he would have something prepared to “warm us” on our return we anticipated meeting him again.

Soon we had reached the habitat of the Pleurodonte which lived on his farm. It was raining harder by this time and needless to say we were beginning to become quite wet. The snails lived in clusters at the bases of the trees in cavities or hollows formed by the buttressed roots and so busy were we in gathering them that we hardly minded the rain. This form was Pleurodonte (Caracolus) sagemon arangiana Poey and its native habitat was Cabo Cruz, Oriente Province, having been introduced here by Dr. Nicolas T. Gutiérrez, President of the Academy of Sciences in about 1850-1853. This is the so-called “button shell.”

Upon our return to the farmhouse after the collecting we found our friend the owner eagerly awaiting us and also that his invitation to enjoy a bit of refreshment with him was still in effect. We declined to enter his home because our feet were so muddy and our clothes were so wet. A maid soon brought out to the veranda our drinks. Each glass had a narrow band of white sugar crystals on the inside of the rim which made it very inviting in appearance. As we sipped our drinks we chatted pleasantly with our host who seemed reluctant to see us leave. We thanked him as best we could for his kindness and hospitality and as we drove on could see him standing bareheaded before his door, and in the rain, until we finally passed from sight. We Americans could profit by learning the manners of some of these Latin gentlemen. (This was our station #39 b)

Returning to the Central Highway we continued towards Matanzas. Our next collecting station, #38, was alongside the road, Finca La Luisa, and from there we collected at a spot just west of Loma Camoa where some very large trees border the road on both sides. I do not know the variety of the trees but they were very attractive in appearance with their gnarled and very old looking trunks of great diameter. Overhead their branches formed a tunnel of green. This was station #53 from which we took Cepolis
and large *Liguus crenatus*. Loma Camoa was just a short way beyond. It is really a rather large hill quite similar to one of the mogotes of Western Cuba except that its sides are not so steep and there is not the same preponderance of limestone cliffs so noticeable in the Viñales region. It is a heavily wooded mound which rises rather abruptly at the right side of the main highway after one has driven about 18 miles east of Havana. It is just to the west of the little village called Jamaica. On the other side of the road from the Loma Camoa is another hill somewhat smaller and called Somorrostro.

We decided to try our hands at collecting on Loma Camoa (#40) first and then to try our luck on Somorrostro. A light rain was falling as we approached Camoa from its western side and it was necessary to have a handhold upon a bush or tree where the going was steepest for the slope had become very slippery. The moisture had done us one good turn, however, for everywhere we saw swarms of snails literally covering the ground. While we took a number of small shells including *Chondropoma, Urocoptis philippiana* Pfr., etc., by far the most plentiful species was the large *Urocoptis humboldtiana* Pfr., which seemed to be everywhere in abundance. We could even hear them crunching under our feet as we made our way up the hillside. After gathering what we thought to be a good representation of the species to be found we climbed down, crossed the Central Highway, and headed towards Somorrostro. (#41)

Passing a low stone-piled fence on the way in we proceeded to remove some of the top stones to search for *Urocoptis*. Bermúdez at once became quite excited and vainly endeavored to tell us something in Spanish. Of course we could not understand why we should not collect from the stones of this fence as we had done so often in the past from similar appearing fences. Finally Bermúdez laughingly took a pencil and a scrap of paper and drew a rough sketch of the fences. He then explained to us the various utensils found at the dinner table and slowly proceeded to remove some of the top stones to search for the shells including *Chondropoma, Urocoptis philippiana* Pfr., *Cepolis* Cl. & Ar.)

The question arose in our minds as to how we would manage to find the rest of our party in the dark. There seemed to be no one along the road and we were just wondering if possibly we had not passed by them and failed to notice them the best of luck we left them busily engaged in poking shells off the trees with long bendy sticks.

We stopped a short way beyond at Loma de Candela (#44) to gather a very peculiar *Urocoptis* which lived alongside the road. It was *Urocoptis strangulata* Poey and most peculiar because in it the lamella is almost closed. Near here the road had been cut thru limestone hills leaving stratified walls of rock of quite some height upon either side. Güines was not far and we soon had passed thru this interesting town and were on the road to San Nicolás. It was only a few minutes ride from Güines to reach the habitat of the yellow *Liguus* (station #45). It was raining rather hard by this time but no one seemed to mind it very much. A search upon the trees and bushes which bordered the road soon disclosed a few specimens of this unusual *Liguus*. (It is now called *L. xanthius* Cl. & Ar.)

We did not find the shells very plentiful, however, and I fear that in our enthusiasm for collecting them that we quite forgot about poor Tom and Bud back on the muddy road “somewhere near Carmen.” It was still raining lightly and our clothes were well soaked by the time we reluctantly turned our car around and headed back towards Güines. Dusk was beginning to fall as we passed thru the town and darkness was upon us before we had gone far beyond. The question arose in our minds as to how we would manage to find the rest of our party in the dark. There seemed to be no sign of them along the road and we were just wondering if possibly we had not passed by them and failed to notice in the darkness when a lusty shout was heard and we saw thru the darkness two very disheveled figures sitting upon a boulder at the side of the road. They were our “lost souls” sure enough and here they were having walked clear thru the town of Carmen and for some distance beyond. They had had very good results in the collecting and the rain had not dampened their spirits in the least. Hunger was beginning to grip us all by this time so we made a hurried drive back to Havana. Upon our arrival at the Maison Royale it was quite late and the dining room was almost ready to close. We had to eat in our damp collecting clothes or go without. My! How good the food tasted that night. Dr. Bermúdez stayed as our guest for dinner and during the course of the meal he intimated that he wished to learn to speak English. We at once gave him a lesson which consisted of pointing out to him the various utensils found at the dinner table and slowly
repeating their names to him. He astonished us by being able to repeat to us some time later the name of each article in English. He tried giving us a similar lesson in Spanish but I fear that our own success was quite limited. At any rate we all enjoyed ourselves very much thru out the meal.

The following morning was spent in our hotel rooms where we busied ourselves over the preparation of specimens that had been taken in the last few days and making entries into our records of each habitat visited. The conchological branch of our party spent the afternoon with Dr. Torre at his home while Bud and I took the car and made a vain attempt to find the Tropical Gardens. After driving up this street and down that and stopping countless times to inquire the way we finally became disgusted and returned to the hotel unsuccessful.

The day following was Monday and Bermúdez had arranged to take us upon a trip to collect shells at Sitio Perdido. Maxwell had just received word from home that he was expected back before Thanksgiving. That meant that he would be obliged to take the steamer the next day and since there was some shopping he wished to do before leaving it was planned that he and Dad would spend the day in Havana. They planned to do the shopping in the morning and to spend the afternoon visiting with Dr. Torre at his home.

Tom, Bud and I picked up Dr. Bermúdez at his home bright and early in the morning and soon we were speeding eastward over the Carretera Central again. Remaining on the main highway until we reached the little town of San José de las Lajas (located just south of Jamaica) we turned to the left taking the country road leading to Tapaste. Before reaching Tapaste we paused at various points along the road to gather Ligus (crenatus & fasciatus) (#46). Just beyond Tapaste and from there almost to Mendoza we made similar stops to collect Ligus fasciatus and a few Cepolis (#47).

Just outside of Mendoza and upon the road to Jaruco we stopped at a place called Finca El Aljibe to collect upon the irregular stones of a rock fence. We succeeded in taking a few Chondropoma, Eutodora and Urocoptis. Near here Bermúdez directed us to take a narrow trail which led to the left and after a few minutes ride we reached a settlement of a few houses called Pozo Bonilla.

Bermúdez obtained permission at one of the houses to leave our car parked in the yard while we continued on foot. The narrow trail which we followed towards our collecting grounds was certainly never designed for an automobile. After walking a few yards Bermúdez spied some shells living upon the stones of a fence. A general search began and a number of Urocoptis, Chondropoma, Eutodora, etc., were found. Also Eutodora jimenoi Ar., Megalomas-toma apertum Poey, and Pleurodonte aricoma aricoma were found living here. (Station #49)

As we hiked along over the rocky road we paused frequently to gather specimens but found practically the same things as had been taken at our station #49. It must have been a hike of five or six miles over a rocky and very rough terrain before we found ourselves in the heart of the Sierras. (Sierra de Jaruo) It was a very ragged section with countless mountains all about us. They somewhat resembled the mogotes of western Cuba but were perhaps not generally quite as large or so well isolated from each other. It was a very lonesome place I must say, however, for nowhere was there any sign of a human being or a human habitation.

Dr. Bermúdez suddenly sat down upon the ground and uttered a prolonged sigh. We had noticed that he had been limping slightly for some time but had thought nothing more serious than a blister on his foot was the probable cause. Now he seemed very tired and quite unlike himself and all of our attempts to question him concerning his condition brought no results. He had previously told us that four different Urocoptis, each having separate and definite habitats, lived upon the hills surrounding us. Since he had been here several times before we knew that he already had all of the forms represented in his own collection and suggested that he save himself from the unnecessary effort which visiting each of these separate habitats would involve. Couldn’t he draw us a sketch map of the region showing where the forms could be found and allow us to hunt for them by ourselves? We supposed that after a bit of rest that he would do some leisurely collecting nearby while we were making the long hikes from Urocoptis habitat to habitat. Perhaps the collecting would not produce as many shells for him but then he might find some lizards or bugs which seemed to please him almost as much when he could get them. At first he insisted that he accompany us himself but finally we convinced him that it was quite unnecessary and that it would be better for him to remain and rest his foot. At last he agreed and proceeded to draw a sketch of each of the shells that we were to search for and a map showing where to find them. Before he would let us go he took us over to a thicket which was growing at the foot of a high hill and pointed out to us a species of plant which a few moments search disclosed. It had very large leaves, quite innocent appearing to the casual observer but if one very carefully turned one of these leaves over he could see countless spines of various sizes, each curved like a cats claw and all leaning the same way. Some of the cat-claws were half an inch long and very strong and it was easy to imagine what damage they could inflict to a careless collector especially because Bermúdez assured us that they were quite poisonous. We gladly added this to our list of plants to be avoided. Another plant called “guao” (Comocladia dentata) we already knew about. “Guao” has shiny small leaves quite like our Christmas holly but has an action upon some people quite like our northern poison ivy.

We thanked Bermúdez for his timely warning and started towards the search for the Urocoptis living upon the distant hills. By carefully following Bermúdez’ sketch-map
we collected upon the various hillsides and rocky cliffs and succeeded in obtaining practically all of the forms which we sought. It had been cool all day and most excellent for collecting so I fear that we stayed a bit longer than we realized or had intended to stay. We must have been away from Bermúdez for two or three hours when it suddenly occurred to us that perhaps he would tire of waiting. (This typifies the shell-collector quite adequately.)

Upon our return to our meeting place we found poor Bermúdez stretched out upon the cold damp ground (the sun was no longer shining) and quite unable to get up upon his feet. His hands were as cold as ice when we went to him and we were plenty worried about his condition. He was surely a game one, however, and his only comment was, “no, no mucha mal!” (No, not very ill.) Bud and I helped him to his feet and carried him for some way over the trail leading back to the car while Tom returned post-haste to the auto with the intention of driving it just as far as he possibly could to approach us. Bud and I found poor Bermúdez no featherweight and soon discovered that we did not have sufficient strength to carry him further. You must remember that we had about six miles to take him and that he was absolutely unable to walk by himself. The best we could do for him was to have him put his arms over our shoulders and we two walk beside him and support him as much of his weight as a tight grip upon his arms would allow. Of course this was far from comfortable for him and it was necessary to pause every few minutes and let him rest his arms a bit. The poor chap was in great pain and as near as we could make out the trouble was in his legs and back. At times we could feel him quiver violently as he endeavored to bear the intense pain in silence and then great beads of perspiration would form upon his forehead altho it was now quite late and rather chilly. It was certainly a wonderful demonstration of real pluck for he never once complained and his one answer to all our questions was still “No mucha mal.” Here was a true-born naturalist if there ever was one for even thru the agony and suffering of that trip he utilized his “rest-periods” in gathering specimens along the side of the trail!

Bud and I thought we would never get the poor fellow out of the terrible predicament but finally when it was quite dark we reached the car. Tom had been able to progress but a short way over the rocky trail with the car. We bundled Bermúdez up in our coats and sweaters and put him in the front seat of the car where he would not be in the cold wind. At the first town we got a cup of strong coffee for him. He apparently didn’t want us to bother about him at all but we insisted upon his taking the hot coffee. (All attempts to have him take an alcoholic stimulant were unavailing.) He intimated that he felt better after the warm drink, however.

Tom was driving the car on the way back towards Havana and perhaps he was traveling a bit faster than he should have been in his anxiety to reach the city and get Dr. Bermúdez under the care of a physician. Just after passing an approaching car with blinding headlights our own lights showed us two motorcycle policemen ahead and no time to spare. They were heading in opposite directions and had paused to talk across the road. All their lights were out as is the custom here for all parked vehicles! Tom saw them just in time to swerve to one side and avoid striking the man on the right side of the road but that was not to be the conclusion of the incident for one of the men had come in rapid pursuit and ordered us to stop. We didn’t know what to do for we couldn’t understand a word that he was saying and he likewise could get nothing that we said. Bermúdez came to our rescue and carried the conversation and saved us from trouble. Unfortunately we had left our papers given by the Cuban Army back at the hotel in Havana and the most impressive looking document that we could produce was our “Certificate of Title of Motor Vehicle.” We showed this to the officer who carefully examined it for some time. Of course he couldn’t read a word upon it and had no idea as to what it was but then it had the seal of the State of Michigan upon it and perhaps that alone saved us from spending time in a county jail. The officer finally returned our certificate, said a polite “adiós” and with a wave of his hand was off in the other direction upon his machine. I don’t know just what Bermúdez told him to this day but whatever it was it caused the policeman’s attitude towards us to change very suddenly for the better. We later learned that the thing that most baffled the officer was the statement given him by Bermúdez that he spoke no English and that we all spoke no Spanish. He simply couldn’t believe that such could be possible!

It seemed that we had been traveling hours but it was really not long before we were back in Havana and had taken Bermúdez to his home and seen to it that he would have a doctor to attend him. Back at the hotel we found Dad and Maxwell anxiously awaiting our return. They were of course very sorry to hear about Bermúdez’ sickness. I guess that we were all a bit blue that night thinking of poor Bermúdez and knowing that in the morning at ten o’clock Maxwell was to take the steamer for Key West. We certainly hated like the mischief to see him leaving us for we had had one glorious time together.

(This completes part two of the three part article on collecting in Cuba in 1930 by Paul McGinty. The series will end with part three in the next issue. Following this article are several plates of Cuban land snails to give the reader some idea of what McGinty and party were collecting. There are probably more than 1,400 species of land snails in Cuba, so this presentation just scratches the surface. The more well-known Liguus and Polymita will be illustrated following part three in the next issue.)
Some Camaenidae (1-4), Helminthoglyptidae (5), Pleurodontidae (6), & Urocoptidae (7-16) of Cuba

Some Cerionidae of Cuba

Some Helicinidae of Cuba

1a-c *Emoda crassa* (d’Orbigny, 1841) (13mm) Cuba. 2a-c *Emoda sagraiana* (d’Orbigny, 1842) (25mm) Cuba. 3a-c *Emoda sagraiana percrassa* Aguayo & Jaume, 1954 (24mm) Cuba (Rich Goldberg photo). 4a-b *Emoda submarginata* (Gray, 1824) (15mm) Cuba. 5a-b *Eutrochatella acuminata* (Poey, 1851) (16mm) Cuba. 6a-c *Eutrochatella costellata* (Pfeiffer, 1850) (13mm) Cuba. 7a-d *Eutrochella fuscula* (Pfeiffer, 1863) (4mm) Cuba. 8a-b *Eutrochatella jugulata* (Poey, 1858) (12mm) Cuba. 9a-b *Eutrochella petitianna* (d’Orbigny, 1842) (12mm) Cuba (Guido & Philippe Poppe photo). 10 *Eutrochatella remotula* (Poey, 1858) (11mm) Cuba. 11a-d *Eutrochatella scopulorum* (Morelet, 1849) (6mm) Cuba. 12a-b *Helicina adspersa* Pfeiffer, 1839, (10mm) Cuba. 13a-b *Helicina columellaris* Gundlach, 1857 (15mm) Cuba. 14a-b *Priotrochatella torrei* (Clapp, 1918) (12mm) Cuba. 15a-c *Proserpina depressa* (d’Orbigny, 1842) (5mm) Cuba.
Some Helicinidae of Cuba (cont’d)

1a-c Viana regina laevigata Pfeiffer, 1865 (23mm) Cuba. 2a-c Viana regina marmorata (Torre, 1950) (24mm) Cuba. 3a-c Viana regina multistriata (Pfeiffer, 1865) (24mm) Cuba. 4a-b Viana regina subunguiculata (Poey, 1859) (24mm) Cuba. 5a-c Viana regina regina (Morelet, 1849) (21mm) Cuba. Males have the notch in the outer lip.
Mistaken identity

The cover of the last issue featured a well-known murex from the west coast of the US, *Pteropurpura trialata* (G.B. Sowerby II, 1834). The shell was beautifully photographed by Charles Rawlings, but then misidentified as *Ceratostoma foliatum* (Gmelin, 1791) when I placed it on the front cover. I apologize for the mix up, which was caught by quite a few readers. Below are properly identified specimens of both west coast species. While the most common color pattern of the species is as shown, both can appear with brown spiral bands or with a solid white shell.

Tom Eichhorst

*Ceratostoma foliatum* (Gmelin, 1791) 60mm, California, USA (range in blue).

*Pteropurpura trialata* (G.B. Sowerby II, 1834) 62mm, California, USA (range in green).
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American Conchologist
Vol. 43, No. 1

Gala in the Glades
July 14 to 18, 2015 -- Weston, Florida
Some cone snails have insulin infused venom

as reported by David Shultz
19 Jan 2015
in *Biology, Plants, & Animals*

We all know that Conidae are venomous, with complex venoms that in some cases have proven fatal to man. To the hundreds of peptides that have been found in cone venom can now be added a new ingredient, insulin. As reported by David Shultz in *Biology, Plants, & Animals*, the fish-eating cones, that envelope their prey in a net-like fashion (rather than a quick stab with a harpoon-like radula), use what has been termed Con-Ins G1 as part of their venom complex, termed a nirvana cabal. The hormone with Con-Ins G1 is thought to lull or partially sedate a cone’s prey while it is being enveloped. It is hoped that study of this insulin and how it is produced by the different cones will lead to a better understanding of human insulin and how it is regulated (often-times not as well as it ought to be) by the human body. Cones thought likely to produce insulin include *Conus geographus* (above) known as potentially deadly to humans.
An ersatz *Valvata* from Bernheim Forest, Kentucky

by Harry G. Lee

The intersection of mollusk shells and productions of creatures assigned to other phyla was imprinted in my mind early on. As a college freshman, I found several specimens of an unfamiliar ~5 mm snail living on rocks at the bottom of a brook tributary of the Hoosic River in Williamstown, MA. Only after a few days had passed, when I viewed them under the stereoscope in the biology lab, did I see that these shells were composed of cemented mineral grains and that each contained a bristly worm-like critter. The “conchological” resemblance to certain species of the genus *Valvata*, e.g., <http://www.jaxshells.org/p10034.htm>, however, was nonetheless still quite uncanny.

I regret that I promptly lost track of these MA “shells,” but in 1976 I placed some similar specimens collected by a botanist friend from a creek near Piha Beach, Watakaries, North Is., New Zealand, in my collection. A third encounter occurred on October 19, 2014, when I found another bunch of these oddities living on small near-shore rocks at the confluence of Wilson and Harrison Creeks in the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest, Nelson-Bullitt Cos., KY [Fig. 1]. The habitat was eerily reminiscent of my first encounter over a half-century before, and the find launched a “cold case” investigation into this mystery.

Over a century before the first of the above events, Philadelphian Isaac Lea, who with some regret I must admit is neither an ancestor or even a close relative of mine, had a similar encounter. Lack of kinship notwithstanding, Dr. Lea shared my initial read on such “shells,” and dubbed them *Valvata arenifera* [Latin: sand-bearing] (I. Lea, 1831: 104-105, pl. 15, figs. 36a-b); see Figs. 3 (next page) and 5 (end of article). Although depicted as opposite (counterclockwise) in direction of growth, these objects are quite reminiscent of my MA material. The Quaker’s specimens came from Nashville, TN, where they were taken from the Cumberland River. Lea convinced himself he saw opercula in his specimens, and he believed the agglutinated mineral matter was simply a reinforcement of the snails’ shells.

The following year Constantine Rafinesque (1832: 122; fig. on p. 121 <http://tinyurl.com/qzqayzn>) named a “new tubular fresh water shell of the Alleghany [sic] Mts.” *Psephides paradoxa* n. gen., n. sp. Not certain it was the production of a mollusk, he did write: “This strange shell has something mysterious in it. It appears a mass of gravel; strongly cemented ...” The figure depicts a tubular structure of the same fabric seen in my and Lea’s shells. Although “conchologically” quite distinct, I think neither Lea nor Rafinesque, would find the eventual taxonomic proximity, not to mention placement, of their respective species anything short of incredible. Nearly as incredible is the fact that no further mention of the Rafinesque genus (or species) except Neave <http://tinyurl.com/n6hs493> could be found in the literature.

Not much later Thomas Swainson (1840) treated a shell looking even more like my MA specimens, his *Thelidomus braziliensis*, as a gastropod mollusk. The nomenclatorial context of this action was almost as bizarre as the animal involved and would benefit from a short
explanation. The author actually proposed the genus-group *Thelidomus* twice - and in the same work (1840: 191-192, 330; and 228, 353)! The first usage appears without mention of any constituent species on p. 191-192. That taxon was made available on p. 330, where its monotype is given as *Helix striolata* Guilding [now known to be a synonym of the camaenid *H. incerta* Férussac, 1821]. The second usage of this generic epithet initially pops up on p. 228 next to text figure 41, which depicts a “shell” very much like mine, but with no associated species group name. On p. 353 the name *Thelidomus* reappears again with the same text figure (now no. 113), however, this time “*Braziliensis* Sw[ainson],” the monotype, appears in the text block [Figure 5].* Years later, the Fist Reviser, Henry Pilsbry (1894: 96) remedied this shocking example of Swainsonian homonymy. He gave the land snail seniority based on “position priority” (page number 330 vs. 353), an attribute which no longer mandates such preference, and indicated *Thelidomus* Swainson, 1840: 353 made *Thelidomus* Swainson, 1840: 353 non Swainson 1840: 330 permanently invalid.

Sensing that nobody had put a generic name on such shells, but possibly quite ignorant of the *Thelidomus* fiasco, Carl Theodor Ernst von Siebold named the group *Helicopsyche*. The German zoologist, well-grounded in entomology, was a bit more savvy and thoroughness than his predecessors cited above. Not only did he realize these shells were the product of caddisfly larvae rather than gastropods, he mentioned the likelihood that Lea’s *Valvata arenifera* was a congener. He even lifted and republished its type figure in support of his assertion!

A taxonomic recap of these snail impersonators is provided by the Entomology Dept., Swedish Museum of Natural History at: [http://www2.nrm.se/en/helicolist.html.en]:

- Phylum: Arthropoda
- Class: Insecta
- Order: Trichoptera (caddisflies)
- Family: Helicopsychidae Ulmer, 1906 [four genera]
- Genus: *Helicopsyche* von Siebold, 1856 [~ 230 named species in five subgenera].
- Type species: *Helicopsyche shuttleworthi* von Siebold, 1856 [subsequent designation Flint, 1964].

*Helicopsychidae* is worldwide in distribution. Interestingly, in the above system *Valvata arenifera* Lea, 1834 [sic; error pro 1831] is treated as an invalid synonym of the later name, *Helicopsyche* (*Feropsyche*) *borealis* (Hagen, 1861). Perhaps a worker somewhere along the way overturned the priority of the Lea name by invoking the *nomen oblitum* option (translation: “forgotten name” ICZN 1999, Article 23.9).

Whether von Siebold was the first to recognize the caddisfly as the perpetrator of this inter-phylum imposture is not clear, but his taxonomic initiative struck the path for proper understanding of the players involved. This
geographically far-flung conchological masquerade is a stunning instance of evolutionary convergence in the geometry of an animal production - approached, but not exceeded only by certain tubicolous polychaete annelids and symbiotic arthropod-anthozoan (final plate of Abbott and Dance, 1982), and arthropod-bryozoan <http://www.jaxshells.org/jdawley.htm> species.

* Note the entry that follows in Swainson’s work states that pleurotomarians are known only as fossils. The first living species, dubbed *Pleurotomaria quoyana* by Paul Fischer and A.C. Bernardi the same year as von Siebold named *Helicopsyche* <http://www.jaxshells.org/quoyana.htm>, was discovered in 1855, 15 years later (Dance, 1969: 47).


Swainson, W. 1840. *A treatise on malacology; or the natural classification of shells and shellfish*. London. vii + 419, figs. <https://archive.org/details/treatiseonmalaco00swai1>


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**Barbara Jean Elliott**

**May 9, 1936 – December 31, 2014**

“Some body’s been to Sanibel,” I said out loud, looking at the glass jar of shells on a desk in the new office where I would be working in Andover, Massachusetts. “How did you know that?” she said from behind me. It was Barbara Elliott. Thus began a thirty-one year friendship. Barbara and I shared a mutual boss at the Internal Revenue Service Center. With our other mutual interest in shells, we began having lunches together and quickly included our respective spouses in the friendship, my Gayle and her John. Barbara Jean had worked for a trucking company as a secretary and dispatcher. Talking on the radio with the drivers in and around Colorado is how she came to know her future husband, John. Although they had no children together, John had two daughters by a previous marriage. After their marriage, Barbara took on the role of step-mother.

By the time Gayle and I met them, John had switched careers from driving a truck to that of brokering insurance contracts with large trucking companies and rental car companies, including Avis. His new employer was Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, which was located in Boston. Barbara was surprised to learn that there were other shell collectors out there, and especially as close as Cambridge - The Boston Malacological Club. She quickly took a turn as secretary of the club in the early 1980s and then took over as editor of the fledgling club newsletter in the mid-1980s, renaming it *The Epitonium*, after her favorite genus of shells, a name that remains today.

When John had a great career opportunity with Progressive Insurance Company to move to Cleveland, Ohio, Barbara reluctantly said good-bye to her Boston area friends. Gayle and Barbara were already, and continued to be, best friends, for the next three decades, and talked nightly by phone.

We attended several conventions with Barbara. The first was the COA in 1984 at the Don CeSar Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida. It was a glorious time, when we all satisfied our greatest conchological wishes with pleasures far beyond our expectations. Then there was the COA convention in Philadelphia in 1985. We were just finishing our dessert at the banquet when the doors burst open, and from
every exit, in marched a band. We looked at each other and Barbara, and said: "This sounds like the Mummers... This REALLY sounds like the Mummers. Wait a minute. This is Philadelphia, where the Mummers come from. 'This IS the Mummers!'" It seems that one of the Philadelphia shell club members had a son in the band and they came to perform in thanks for what his mother had done for them. What an experience!

We attended the 1987 COA convention in St. Louis, "at The Arch," where we met Alan Gettleman and the other fine local shell people, and where we became shell dealers for the first time. Although Gayle and I did not attend another convention for a number of years, while our son, Braden, was still very young, Barbara did attend most conventions and usually roomed with her dear friend from the Cleveland Shell Club, Sherlee Palladino.

Barbara returned to the Boston area several times after moving away and during most of those visits, she would stay at our cottage in North Andover, where she would enjoy spoiling our son, Braden, just like a grandmother would do. At an early age, before Braden could say "Barbara," his closest approximation would come out “Beanbop," a name that stuck for the rest of Barbara’s corresponding years. We never knew if it was the difficulty he had saying Barbara or if it had to do with the jelly beans that she frequently gave him. Even Gayle and I began calling her “Beanbop,” and she would sign her cards and gifts: “from Beanbop.” To us, Barbara was not just a friend - she was part of our family, Braden’s adoptive grandmother, and words cannot describe how much she will be missed by the three of us.

Barbara attended the 100th anniversary of the Boston Malacological Club in April of 2010 at the prestigious Harvard Club of Boston, and then returned a second time that year in August with Sherlee Palladino for the COA convention at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in downtown Boston.

Although Barb’s collection was mostly marine, she also had a world-class collection of Florida Liguus, probably one of the top five collections in private hands anywhere. She obtained these either directly from Archie Jones, or from a very high grade collection owned by Bashie Kurawski, a former member of the Boston Malacological Club who decided to sell that collection to Barbara. She also purchased a large collection of Liguus and Cuban snails from a collector named Butch in the Cleveland Shell Club.

Barbara also had a very extensive collection of Eptoniidae, her favorite family. The Marginellidae were her second favorites, and were collected through decades of work with Bob and Betty Lipe of St. Petersburg. Her third favorites were the Cypraeidae, and we were able to supply her with some wonderful Zolia cowries. The Muricidae were her fourth favorites. Not one to limit herself, her favorite murex was Chicoreus palmarosae, and she had a number of them in all sizes and colors. She had interesting and wonderful specimens in minor genera like Astraea (including a world record sized A. longispina. She also had some very rare Morum species. She thoroughly enjoyed the COA bourses and the auctions. She kept extensive data on all her shells and had many specially built cabinets to house her collections, some made by Les Esaland and Horatio Buck.

Barbara also did self-collecting. In addition to her early collecting of beach shells on Sanibel, she collected in Massachusetts, where she collected common species on the North Shore of Boston, near the Gloucester and Plum Island areas. She and John spent every New Year’s Day walking the beaches of Plum Island, both for shells and birds. Although they often invited us, we were not brave enough to experience winter on the beach in New England. She participated in group shelling events in Florida, and while attending her first COA convention at the Don CeSar, she made a remarkable discovery on that field trip to Tampa Bay: a golden olive! It was the very first shell she picked up that day. Upon seeing it, all alone in Barb’s bucket, I kidded her by telling her that she should show that to Tucker Abbott, who was collecting just twenty yards away. I told her to tell him that Nieburger says that it is the wrong color and that Nieburger would throw it away for her. Tucker, of course, set her straight and congratulated her for her very special discovery. For the next thirty years Barb kept this golden shell in a ring box to protect it from the sunlight.

As Barbara visited Iowa during several summers, and as she learned about the old shell button industry there, she made trips to Muscatine, Iowa, and other button factory sites to gather artifacts and old literature about this long-gone industry. A nephew of John’s married a woman whose family lived near the button factory and who may have worked there. She supplied Barb with many items of interest.

Barbara was moved from her home in Punta Gorda, Florida, to a medium care health facility in Port Charlotte in 2011. Sherlee Palladino, Gayle, Braden, and I were able to get Barbara to her last COA convention in Sarasota in 2012, where she bought her last new shell from the Deynzers at the Bourse. Sherlee did a remarkable job as Barbara was really in need of full time assistance.

In 2014, Barbara was moved to a facility in California, where her younger stepdaughter, and that stepdaughter’s grown children and grandchildren were living. Barbara continued to talk periodically via phone with Gayle, and also with her long-time Ohio friend Sherlee Palladino.

Many shell friends in the Boston, MA, area, the Cleveland, OH, area, and the Punta Gorda, FL, area, as well as many COA members mourn the loss of a dear friend. We shall forever cherish the memories of Barbara and all the good times that we were fortunate enough to have had with her. She certainly will not be forgotten.

by Edward, Gayle, and Braden Nieburger
56 years of shell collecting

Warren Graff

Like many, my shell collection started in a cigar box. In 1957, when I was twelve, we lived on Ramey Air Force Base in Puerto Rico, where my father was a pilot. We spent three wonderful years on the base near Aguadilla in the northwest corner of the island. I started with beachcombing, which was very productive after storms, but I soon graduated to snorkeling and eventually tank diving. By 1959 we learned that the best collecting spots were on the living reefs off Mayaguez, and Cabo Rojo and Parguera in the south. In those days there were no highways, so it took five to six hours to reach Cabo Rojo and Parguera. In my last year there I met Germaine Warmke at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez, who was putting the finishing touches on her book *Caribbean Seashells*. I still have the *Cassis tuberosa* shown below in a photograph from that time.

We left in 1960 and moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, where I finished high school and college. I did no collecting during those years and missed it terribly. In 1971 I spent a year in New York City and did my collecting at Veronica Parker Johns shell shop and Jerry Eisenberg’s Collectors Cabinet. I also met Bill Old at the New York Museum of Natural History and joined the New York Shell Club. This was the first time acquiring world-wide shells; prior to that my collecting was primarily Caribbean. In 1973 I made a trip back to Puerto Rico where I met Chet and Carmen Painter in Parguera. Chet was retired Navy and ran a dive shop and boat-rental business. I rented a boat and went to the reefs off shore all day and returned with an awful sunburn, but it was worth it. I had never seen such beautiful reefs, teeming with fish and gardens of staghorn coral everywhere. Chet showed me his own shell collection and a friendship started that lasted until his passing last year. Carmen is still there, however, and runs a shell shop.

(Left to right): Stacy Robichaud, Dick Bailey, Warren, Carmen Painter, & Scott Robichaud at the shell shop and dive trip shop in Paguera.

Helmets and a triton, in situ, off Paguera, Puerto Rico.
and dive trip business of her own. Carmen has taken us out diving and collecting many times over the years and I have numerous fine specimens to show for it. The Parguera reefs off shore are great for finding beautiful Caribbean Cassis, Strombus, Cymatium, Murex, star shells, and bivalves. Even though these species are plentiful, we leave most and take only a few.

Although I still relish self-collecting, I also attend shell shows with fellow enthusiasts Scott Robichaud and Don Robak several times a year, the Philadelphia, Space Coast (Melbourne, Florida), and COA convention shows in particular. The dealers always offer great shells and we look forward to these events every year with much anticipation. It also provides a chance to reconnect with other collectors we have met over the years, as well as our favorite dealers. In addition to self-collecting and attending shell shows, during the past ten years I started searching the online shell websites and auctions. These are addictive and great fun, especially if you are fortunate enough to win a prize shell. The auctions are quite competitive and I have lost more often than won. Collectors from the world over are bidding and many have deep pockets and are difficult to outbid. Even so, it is a relatively small group of bidders and I have become very familiar with their ‘handles.’ Since I don’t care that most of my shells are not self-collected, I have probably saved a lot by using the shows and auctions instead of flying to distant locales to find my own specimens.

At the suggestion of a fellow collector and friend, I recently decided to house my larger specimens in glass cabinets. Up to then, my shells were all in drawers or boxes and could not be readily seen. The cases are set up by family – Cassidae, Ranellidae, Strombidae, Conidae, Muricidae, etc. I now have a mini-museum in my basement, and invited fellow club members (Boston Malacological Club) over to view them in 2011. This presentation is what I always hoped to see in natural history museums, but unfortunately don’t. The only place one sees comprehensive displays, usually of a particular family, is at shell shows.

In general, I don’t collect very small specimens and I am not interested in collecting every species. Like most other collectors, though, I am constantly trying to improve the individual specimens I already have.

I have learned that this hobby is not just about collecting shells. It can be just as fulfilling to be doing anything shell-related. Our club recently hosted two outreach events, one with a Cub Scout troop and another with a middle school; it was as enjoyable for us as it was for the youngsters. Like other shell clubs, at our monthly meetings we include shell-of-the-month and conchological report segments that are always interesting. And recently, our club received a donation of a large collection from a former member, now deceased; the collection is to benefit our club. I was one of several members who spent hours cleaning up specimens and resetting operculums and labels in preparation for our annual auction in May. It was very rewarding work and I felt thankful for the opportunity.

Yes, as I look back I feel so fortunate to have experienced the love for shells and wish my enjoyment can be passed on to younger folks. If only we can get them to look away from those hand-held devices for a few moments and see the natural world around them – they don’t know what they are missing!
Kristina Joyce views Warren's collection.

Display of Spondylidae and Pectinidae.

Display of Muricidae.

Display of Cassidae.

Warren at home in his shell room.
The 35th Astronaut Trail Shell Club Festival Show was held January 10-11, 2015, with scientific judges, John Slapcinsky of the Florida Museum in Gainesville and Charlotte Thorpe of Jacksonville, Florida. Artistic judges were Betty Lipe of St. Pete Beach and Phyllis Gray of Orlando, Florida.

The Conchologists of American (COA) Award was won by Gene Everson of Louisville, Kentucky, for “Turrid Appreciation.” The duPont Trophy was won by Dr. Ron Bopp of Bradenton, Florida, for “Fossil Mollusks of the Pinecrest Member (Beds) of the Tamiami Formation, SMR Aggregate Quarries and APAC Sarasota Mines.” The Master’s Award was won by Gene Everson for “Limpet Like Mollusks.”

The Club’s R. Tucker Abbott Award for best self-collected was won by Jim Cordy of Merritt Island, Florida, for “Guaymas déjà vu.” The Fossil Award was won by Dr. Harry Lee for “Neptune’s buried (for 3,000,000 years) treasures: selected marine micro-gastropods from the Lower Pinecrest Beds, Upper Tamiami Formation, N. Sarasota County, Florida” for an impressive array of more than 1,500 fossils. The Shell of the Show was won by Gene Everson for Bartschia (Agassitula) pertae Haraseych, 2014; Shell of the Show Florida self-collected was won by Dr. Ron Bopp for fossil Turbinella streami Petuch, 1991, and Worldwide Best Self Collected Shell of the Show was won by Gene Everson for Drillia idalina (Duclos, 1840) from Sao Tome.

In Artistic, The Astronaut Trail Shell Club Premium Arts and Craft Trophy (entries only for winners of major awards in this or other shows) was Wendy Marshall of Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts, for “My Little Valentine” a small gem made of self-collected shells. The Astronaut Trail Shell Club Arts and Crafts Trophy was won by Linda Powers of Englewood, Florida, for “Kitten Paw Jack-O-Lantern,” and The Astronaut Trail Shell Club Collectible or Antique Trophy was for “Carved Mother of Pearl from the Holy Land” by Sue Hobbs.

Early morning risers on the opening day of the show were treated to a rocket launch headed for the International Space Station.

Alan Gettleman
Merritt Island, FL
Sarasota Shell Club Annual Shell Show
13-15 February 2015

The annual Sarasota Shell Club Shell Show was held on 13-15 February 2015 at the Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto, Florida. This is a perfect venue for our show and display - enjoyed by over 850 paid attendess. The 2015 winner of the Conchologists of America (COA) Award was Harry Berryman for his display titled “Etymology of Cone Shells.” Harry had 17 cases of cones on a display of over 35 feet.

Some of the other winners this year were: DuPont Trophy to Vicky Wall for “Marvelling at Mollusks,” Mote Gold Trophy to Martin Tremor and Conrad Forler for “Meet Mr. and Mrs. Cockle & Family,” Best Self-Collect- ed to Duane Kauffmann for “Siesta Key Sampler,” Hert- weck Fossil Award to Ron Bopp for “Fossil Mollusks of the Pinecrest Member of the Tamiami Formation - SMR Aggregate Quarry and APAC Sarasota Mines,” Sarasota Shell Club Member’s Award to Lynn Gaulin for “Dredged off Siesta Key,” The Bob Morrison Young Scientist Award to David Irvin for “Florida Seashells Now and Then,” and Fossil Shell of the Show to Ron Bopp for *Pleioptygma carolinensis*. 

Harry Berryman with a blue ribbon and the COA Award.

Vicky Wall with a blue ribbon and the Du Pont Trophy.

Martin Tremor with a couple of ribbons and the Mote Gold Award.

Duane Kauffmann with a couple of ribbons and the Best Self-Collected shell.
Ron Bopp with a couple of ribbons, and the Hertweck Fossil Award.

Lynn Gaulin with a blue ribbon and the Sarasota Shell Club Member’s Award.

David Irvin with a blue ribbon and the The Bob Morrison Young Scientist Award.

(Below): The Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto, Florida - home to this year’s shell show.

Ron Bopp’s Fossil of the Show: *Pleioptygma carolinensis*. 
The Broward Shell Club cordially invites you to the exciting 2015 worldwide gathering of amateur and professional shell enthusiasts!

The Broward Shell Club offers you a full range of exciting activities at the 2015 COA, including: interesting and varied educational programs, a fabulous oral auction, and our silent auctions that will be second to none. The Bourse will be held in Bonaventure’s 10,400 sq. ft. Global Ballroom! An Everglades Welcome Party, a Gala in the Glades banquet, exciting raffle items featuring a huge Florida horse conch/Busycon duo, door prizes, and exciting field trips will complete the week. Please look for our special sale of Florida shells as well as beautiful art & craft work by our Broward Shell Club artists at the Broward Shell Club morning sales tables.

Bonaventure Resort & Spa, 250 Racquet Club Road, Weston, FL 33326
Phone: 954-389-3300 or 1-800-327-8090
The convention hotel is the beautiful Bonaventure Resort and Spa in Weston, Florida, located on the edge of the Florida Everglades. Four rooming options are offered: standard room rates are $129, executive double is $159, a one-bedroom suite is $179, and a two-bedroom suite is $209 (plus 11% tax per accommodation). All rooms, except king bedrooms, have a refrigerator. Complimentary self-parking, internet access, as well as free use of the 24-hour fitness center are included. Rates are valid three days before and after the convention.

http://www.bonaventureresortandspa.com/ Reservation Code: COA / Conchologists
FOR INTERNATIONAL RESERVATIONS, PLEASE CALL: 1-954-389-3300
DEADLINE: THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2015 - Regular resort rates apply after this date.

Airport and Ground Transportation to the resort is detailed on our websites:
PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONVENTION OR IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE BOOKING YOUR ROOM - 2015COA@gmail.com

We look forward to seeing you this summer at the 2015 COA Convention!!
Pre-Conference Field Trips - July 12 & 13, 2015
Please check our websites for full trip details about what’s included, what to wear, etc.

Sunday, July 12 - Everglades Eco Tour (pending permit), on-site fossil dig, Flamingo Botanical Gardens & Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary tour, airboats and alligators, Junge Queen dinner cruise.

Monday, July 13 - Everglades Eco Tour (Pending Permit), Day Dive of Palm Beach County, Snorkeling and Collecting at Peanut Island, On-Site Fossil Dig, NOVA Oceanographic Institute Tour, Sea Turtle Release

Everglades Welcome Party
The Broward Shell Club invites you to the Florida Everglades, one of the largest wetlands in the world and home to both the American alligator and American crocodile. South Florida is also the only place in North America where you will find Liguus fasciatus. Pack your bags with your “Everglades/safari wear”: lightweight khakis, hiking shoes, and a sun hat. Relax and enjoy our Tuesday night Everglades Adventure, and let’s have a memorable Glades Experience! Attendance at the welcome party is included with your registration. Special prizes will be given for the most memorable hat. An exciting selection of appetizers will be served, including Everglades-themed gator bites, fish tartlets, and conch ceviche. Cash bar.

Programs
We have an outstanding lineup of programs and speakers planned for the COA. We plan on presenting a wide variety of topics with something for everyone. We are planning programs on Florida natural history, archeology, & fossils, as well as tips to fabulous shelling locations and molluscan family specific presentations. Hopefully these presentations will be generally entertaining as well as educational. Look for a complete listing of programs on our website.

Auctions
Oral - A fabulous oral auction is planned for Wednesday night and will feature an Entemmnotrochus adasonianus from Honduras and a Liguus collection containing 49 color forms. Each of these items is valued at over $1,000. There will be a beautiful selection of specimen shells, including Nodispecten magnificus, Voluta riosi, an 11 1/2" Fusinus meyeri, and a Murresul zylmanae, plus books and other items. Please see our website to view auction items, www.2015COAConvention.com. We are currently accepting donations for the oral auction and silent auctions for the convention. Please send your 2015 COA oral and silent auction donations to John Chesler, 7401 SW 7th Street, Plantation, FL 33317, (954) 791-5909, email murex2@aol.com. Cash donations may be sent to Linda Sunderland, payable to 2015 COA Convention, POBox 19505, Plantation, FL 33318. Thanks in advance to all COA members and dealers for your donations for this summer’s COA.

Silent - There will be six silent auction sessions. The quality and variety of material received so far promises something for everyone.

Gala in the Glades banquet
The Thursday night Gala in the Glades banquet is included in your registration fee and we anticipate a full house. Four entrée choices include chicken breast, “flat iron” filet of beef, mahi (fish), and vegetarian. There will be a cash bar. An entertaining program speaker is planned for after-dinner and raffle prizes will be awarded. Dress is nice casual. Please join us for this festive evening of food and fellowship. Questions: contact Alice Pace, (305) 386-3442, alicepace90@att.net

On Your Own
There are many activities you can explore on your own in South Florida, including various concert arenas, nearby shopping and dining malls, as well as two Seminole Indian casinos. The Fort Lauderdale beach is a 30-minute drive away. One particularly exciting destination is the Sawgrass Mills Mall! Located five miles from the Bonaventure Resort, Sawgrass Mills is the largest outlet and value-retail shopping destination in the United States, with more than 350 stores. Please check our website for links to many of the other interesting destinations in the South Florida area.