

Alexander Hollaender, Sunday hikes in the Cumberland Mountains and Jim Young – part 2

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on February 15, 2011)

Last week we introduced Alexander Hollaender and his Biology Division of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory located at Y-12. There is a lot that could be said about Hollaender, and that could be the subject of other *Historically Speaking* articles, but this series written by Jim Young, features one of the activities for which Hollaender was well known, the epic Sunday hikes.

Jim was just a young boy at the time. Let's now continue the saga of Sunday Hikes in the Cumberland Mountains as he recalls more of his experiences accompanying these scientists on their hikes.

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Jim continues his story:

One of the best places to find fossils was the abandoned coal mines above Oliver Springs but fossils and wildlife weren't the only things we would find. While hiking we would find old tracks and rusty mine cars, tipples and other coal processing equipment and other abandoned items. As I was an amateur photographer I would occasionally bring my camera along and document things like what was left of the old incline railway up Windrock Mountain. I enjoy photographing old rusty buildings and equipment to this day, trying to imagine what they must have looked like while in use.

Windrock Mountain had a lot of history and back in those days you could still see relics of the earlier mining equipment including the abandoned incline railway used to take miners up the mountain and bring coal down. The lady who cleaned for my family would talk about growing up in Oliver Springs where her dad was a miner. She said on Sundays the miners family members got to ride the incline up to the top of the mountain for a picnic.

We hiked above Petros to Big Fodder Stack Mountain. We also hiked in what was called back then the Morgan State Forest and is now called Frozen Head State park. Other areas we explored including rural parts of Anderson County along Frost Bottom Road and Dutch Valley Road. Spring was always time to look for wildflowers including trillium and lady slippers, the beautiful native wild orchids.

Often we would hike along the shelf cuts of old abandoned strip mines. Close to the wall you would often find sheets of slate with carbonized plant and leaf imprints as well as the typical Pennsylvanian fossils of calamites and sigillaria, the stems and roots of prehistoric plants. One Sunday on a trip to Windrock near where a deep mine was operating we ran across a very large rock that was actually the giant stump of an old Pennsylvanian tree. As I recall it was many feet across and it is the largest fossil I ever had a hand in finding.

Dr. Hollaender contacted the University of Tennessee Geology Department and they made arrangements to pick up the fossil with a large brick truck with a lift on it and it was to be put on display in the lobby of the Geology building. The only problem was the giant fossil turned out to be too heavy for the floor there and it ended up in a fenced storage area under Neyland Stadium. I saw it there once on my way into a football game a few years later but I have no idea if it is still there or not.

We found other interesting things as well. I vividly recall one June when it was quite warm as we hiked to a strip mine shelf we'd never been to before. It was a pretty good climb and once we got to the shelf there was a lot of vegetation there. As we walked along somebody spotted some strawberries. It turned out there were quite a lot of strawberries growing there and each person along staked out an area and we all stretched out and began to enjoy some of the best strawberries we'd ever had!

Prior to this I was not a big fan of strawberries but after this particular treat I have enjoyed strawberries at every opportunity.

Driving to many of the places we hiked included travel down unpaved and gravel roads often seeing houses with folks sitting on the porch enjoying the Sunday morning if the weather was nice. One of the things you learn quickly is people wave because there is not a lot of traffic on some of these roads and we would always wave back. If we were going on private property the group would always make sure to

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secure permission if at all possible. The members of the group always had respect for the residents and people who lived in the country and on the back roads.

Another interesting and prominent Oak Ridger I met on the fossil hikes was Waldo Cohn. Dr. Cohn was a very interesting gentleman and another well respected scientist who drove a Checker sedan and played the cello. A Checker sedan was basically one of the old large taxi cabs sold as a personal vehicle. It had the fold down jump seats and a tremendous back seat area that Cohn used to haul his cello around.

The Checker was a lot of fun to ride in and Waldo was quite proud of it, explaining about its unique features and why he enjoyed driving it.

Then there was the Sunday morning in 1973 that started like most of the other Sundays. In the earlier morning hours an event had occurred but at the time I didn't know anything about it.

The hike went on as usual and as we returned to the Hilltop Market. Because we never knew exactly when we would return usually someone would just drop me off along West Outer below Peach Orchard where I lived.

As I started walking up the hill to our house that day, my dad was in the carport and said that the high school had been trying to reach me all morning about taking some pictures. I was the chief photographer for the Oak Leaf student newspaper at the time and the unusual event that happened early that morning was the bombing of Oak Ridge High School that took out administrative offices along with lots of windows and ceiling tiles.

I grabbed my camera and headed down the hill to the high school thinking I was probably too late to do much news photography since the bombing had happened many hours ago. As it turned out my timing was actually pretty good.

As I was shooting pictures of the damage Dean of Students Billy Williams and Vice-Principal Don Bordinger were touring their shattered offices. I got a shot of Mr. Williams and Mr. Bordinger framed through the broken glass of an office window.

That picture became my first front page photo for the Oak Ridger when editor Dick Smyser saw it the next day. And since it was such a big news story, the picture ran halfway across the top of the front page.

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Thank you Jim!

That concludes Jim Young's story recalling his memories of the famous Hollaender Sunday Hikes. I would welcome additional insights by anyone who was a part of these hikes. As I mentioned in the opening of the first article, I am pleased to be able to announce a newly completed short video focusing on the early years of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Biology Division located at Y-12.

I have included a photograph of one of the fossils brought back from one of these hikes. I hope to write more fully about that fossil in an upcoming *Historically Speaking* article. I wish I had a photograph of the fossil Jim mentions that was given to the University of Tennessee. I am trying to see if that fossil remains at UT and if so where it is today.

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Young Jim Young's proud photo of the Oak Ridge High School bomb damage that made the front page of *The Oak Ridger*

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A fossil found by Hollaender that stood in the lobby of the Biology Division's Building 9207 at Y-12 for years, now located at the UT Arboretum