

Foards share fond memories of hikes and Hollaender

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on February 22, 2011)

It is my pleasure to continue the telling of the Alexander Hollaender saga and his famous Sunday hikes in the Cumberland Mountains. It was stated in the 20th anniversary edition of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's booklet describing the history of the Biology Division that, "Dr. Hollaender's Sunday morning hikes into the Cumberland Mountains have become known all over the world because scientists from dozens of countries have taken one of them while visiting here."

The booklet continued, "Fossil hunting is often mentioned as the objective of these hikes, but the camaraderie of other hikers and the chance to enjoy the scenery of the beautiful Cumberland Mountains are perhaps as important."

This installment comes from my coworker, Ellen Boatner, whose brother, Ben, was a protégé of Dr. Hollaender.

Ellen says, "My memories of the Sunday hikes in the Cumberland Mountains are few. As the youngest of the three Foard children, I was the last to join my siblings following my father and his co-workers from the Biology Division up coal mining roads and out along the bluffs on Windrock Mountain. I also will admit my number of hikes was limited, especially after my brother Brian sent a chilling fear through me when he told me the mountains were 'covered in snakes,' and they loved to eat small children.

"It was my **older** brother, Ben, and my father, Don, who were the diehard hikers—waiting every Sunday morning at Anderson's Hilltop Market in our old Ford Falcon (and later a new Ford station wagon) for the others. Recently, both of them recalled their hiking experiences for a historic preservation video. [These interviews will be included in coming segments of "Our Hidden Past" Y-12 history series featuring, among other historical subjects, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Biology Division located at Y-12. – Ray]

"The hikes began in the early 1950's, although Dr. Hollaender had taken his old high-wheeled Ford into the mountains alone many times upon his arrival in Tennessee in the late 1940s. The car's District of Columbia license plates had caused some residents to mistake him for some type of 'revenueur' coming to exact some tax on the people of Windrock, but after questioning him and hearing the thick German accent, their fears were allayed—this was just one of those 'fellas' from Oak Ridge.

"In 1963, when my father took a permanent position in the Biology Division, he often drove while Hollaender and [Richard] Setlow discussed their plans for the growing organization that Hollaender was building in the old processing buildings at Y-12. Many business decisions were discussed and made during the Sunday rides and hikes.

"It was Setlow who often chose the hike for the day with one of the key drivers to his choices often being to seek out freshly exposed earth from the coal mining activities, which revealed the treasure they desired: fossils.

"One other requirement to every hike was to visit with the people of the area, especially the two brothers who lived in a valley named after their family—Hoskins. Hollaender and the Hoskins boys insisted on a visit every Sunday before leaving the mountains. Hollaender made it clear that while the

Foards share fond memories of hikes and Hollaender

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on February 22, 2011)

botanical, biological and geological discoveries made in the mountains were significant, the relationships he and the others built with the people of the area were equally important.

“Hollaender, an East German Jew, was sent alone to America by his parents in 1921 to avoid the wrath of the pogroms, a type of ethnic cleansing. Upon arriving in New York, the teenager boarded a train headed to Alabama, where he had relatives who ran a haberdashery. The aspect of the trip Hollaender remarked on was the kindness of the Southern conductor who gave the hungry young immigrant a sandwich.

While he attended school in St. Louis and Wisconsin and did a large part of his research work at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland, my father has often wondered if it wasn't his fond memory of the South that led him to take a seemingly impossible position building a biological research group in remote East Tennessee.

“He told my father, an undergraduate and graduate student of the University of Virginia and a doctorate student of North Carolina State University, that he was chosen as a member of the Biology Division because he represented the ‘common man’ who was not of the Ivy League ilk and could more easily bridge the gap between the intelligentsia of the lab and the people of East Tennessee.

“In fact, Hollaender chose my father as the escort for famed American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead when she came to discuss the dichotomy of cultures between the scientific population of Oak Ridge and the rural people of East Tennessee. My father's task was to take Mead on the hike and introduce her to the Hoskins brothers, whom she immediately accused Hollaender of ‘planting’ for her benefit.

“It was my brother Ben, however, whom Hollaender saw as a potential recruit for the next generation of the Biology Division. Always fascinated by the trips into the mountains and thrilled by the hunt for the elusive fossils, Ben constantly ran ahead looking for stones with ancient plant impressions. Hollaender, Setlow and my father often remarked that Ben was such a good fossil hunter because he was lower to the ground than they were. Ben and my father gathered so many fossils that our house became cluttered with them, and even our front walk was lined with the preservations of past life.

“We all began hiking with our father as soon as we were old enough to abide by his rules—don't get in the way and don't ask to be carried. Born in 1955, Ben began hiking in the mid 1960's with the group, and his dedication and interest grew steadily as he approached his high school years.

“While Hollaender did not have any children of his own, he interacted with all the young people who came on the hikes. He would ask us our perspectives on a number of subjects, and he always encouraged us to think and investigate.

“In his teenage years, Ben stopped running ahead of the group and began to follow the scientists as they identified the local flora and fauna. As he put it, ‘these were the experts—you aren't going to learn from anyone better,’ so he not only collected fossils from the mountains, but he also began to bring home a collection of plants that he put into a garden in our yard.

Foards share fond memories of hikes and Hollaender

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on February 22, 2011)

"After exhausting the Oak Ridge High School's inventory of biology courses, Ben decided upon a degree in Biology at the University of Tennessee, where Hollaender, who had retired from leading the Biology Division, had taken an administrative position. Occasionally, he would call upon my brother while he was at UT and check on the progress of his studies.

"Ben ended up getting a degree in chemical engineering, his garden is long gone, and a fair portion of his fossils were donated to the Children's Museum, but he still remembers with fondness the Sunday hikes. While being interviewed for the historic preservation video, he pulled out a pocket knife that Hollaender had given him one Sunday.

My brother has an immense amount of respect for all those who participated in the hikes, but when you listen to him speak about Hollaender, there is no doubt he has a great fondness for the German man with the big ideas and intense vision, and my father echoes those sentiments.

"Me, I remember the Hoskins brothers best because they almost always gave me a grape or orange soda pop when we stopped by to see them. Hey, when you're seven, diplomatic relations can often be based on the simplest of things, but I really don't think I was that far off from what Hollaender was trying to achieve.

Now, wasn't that a joy to read! Ellen, you done good! We have yet another excellent snapshot of one of Oak Ridge's pioneers and were privileged to be given unique insight into a kind, caring and very special person - Alexander Hollaender.

One final note, evidently when Alexander Hollaender fled Germany to Holland, he changed his name to help hide his Jewish origins. Ellen told me that he said as much to her father, but never breathed a word as to his real family name. It was a time when people did what they had to do to escape tyranny.



Left to right: Clair Berg, Don Foard, Marjarie Goddard, Sandra Bell, Ellen Mattingly, Brian Foard (child), Ben Foard (child), R. B. Setlow, Ann Oaks, Burke Zimmerman, Sue Goddard, and Alexander Hollaender, as they prepare to start one of the famous Sunday hikes in the Cumberland Mountains

Foards share fond memories of hikes and Hollaender

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on February 22, 2011)



Don Foard standing next to the UT Arboretum's fossil that he helped locate on one of the fossil hunts that were a large part of his regular hikes with Dr. Hollaender