

The Fusion Crust

Covering Meteorites and their Collection

Newsletter of the International Meteorite Collectors Association

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Editor's Slice:

Honesty Is Our Foundation

by Martin Horejsi

With the collection of meteorite comes the intense responsibility of complete honesty. We have all made the leap of faith to trust the science telling us that our treasures came from space. But woven into this faith is the belief that the material we actually hold in our hands is really what we are told. Just as the magnification necessary to see detail in micromount specimens increases inversely with specimen size, so too is there a proportionate increase in our faith that the micromount really is what the card says it is. If this honesty is questioned, the very foundation of our collecting is shaken.

IMCA membership surpassed 100 people joining from 14 countries. Although that number might not seem impressive, in reality, it shows there is a cohesive element between meteorite collectors. Few of us live near other meteorite aficionados so we long for the chance to "talk meteorites" with someone just as passionate about them as we are.

While this newsletter is not a substitute for face-to-face meetings, hopefully it will shorten the distance between all of us, and lessen the time between issues of MAPS, Meteorite Magazine, and The Meteorite Times.



Blaine's No-Brainers

by Martin Horejsi

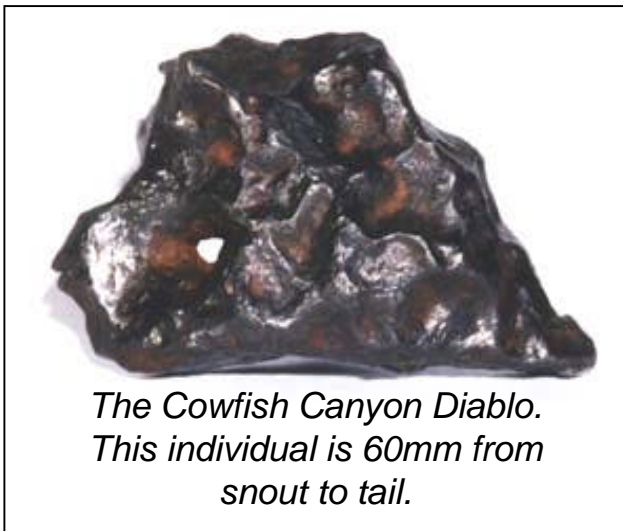
Occasionally, maybe once a year, I stumble across a specimen for sale that even sight-unseen, sounds less like a dealer's hype and more like a specimen that is really too good to pass up. In essence, its purchase should be a no-brainer. This has happened to me more than once when on the phone with the Colorado meteorite dealer Blaine Reed. In his mild-mannered tone, Blaine describes what might be one the most impressive specimens of that particular locality ever! The kind of specimen that justifies a second mortgage on your home.

One time this happened was with a slice of Bison, a low TKW LL6 from Kansas. Bison is a colorful brecciated meteorite unlike almost all other breccias. To see Bison is to see what a meteorite might look like if a child painted it with subdued pastel colors. As if that were not enough, this piece also had some large metal blebs, one over a centimeter in diameter. Finally, this was no small piece, weighing in at 171 grams. It was a striking example of Bison, and coming from Blaine, the price was right.

A second no-brainer was Felt (b), an L3.5 impact melt. Again, the description was almost unbelievable. The saucer-sized slice was two-thirds the chondrule-packed L3

material, then a distinct dividing line right across the face of the slice with the remaining third a melted, less descript chondritic material. It looks more like a textbook drawing of an impact melt than it does a meteorite. Actually, it looks more like of a cartoon drawing of how a perfect dual-lithography would appear if such did exist. Again, even at 169 grams, it was at a price too good to pass up.

Then there was the Canyon Diablo individual. Canyon Diablo prices vary wildly depending on size, quality and features, but his piece had it all, and was competitively priced. While not large, it looked less like a meteorite and more like an animal, a cowfish to be exact.



It has plenty of thumbprints, odd extensions here and their mimicking a tail, horns, a mouth and fins, and if that were not enough, it has a cleanly formed hole through were the eyes might be if it were alive!

Finally, there is the oriented Millbillillie. Blaine started by saying it was a little more expensive, but worth it (those words alone make the actual description unnecessary). Blaine described the flow lines, the perfection in it crust, the stair-step character as the leading edge tapers out into a conical tail forming a beautiful black eucritic

raindrop of 15 grams. When price finally came up, it was still less than many other Millbillillie individuals.

Of course there have been those specimens I let get away, only to hear about them later. Oh well, if I got every one of them, where would I put them all?



Tafassasset: Take 2

by Anne Black

Anyone who has read the report published by the Musee National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris about this brand new Carbonaceous Chondrite, saw the following line: "26 stones totaling around 110 kilos were found in 2000 and 2001...."

This is no longer true. The largest piece, weighing about 30 kilos, has finally been cut, and it is not a Tafassasset! Although it is a meteorite.



*A 186 gram end section of the
carbonaceous chondrite called
Tafassasset.*

The anonymous finder was amazed to learn that he had been hunting on overlapping strewn fields. How many of the remaining pieces will turn out to be pieces of the Tafassasset meteorite is unknown at this time. In fact we are absolutely sure of only 2 pieces.



The cut face of the end section showing much metal and the unusual texture of Tafassasset.

One piece of roughly 2.5 kilos is now in Alain Carion's private collection; the other, about 4 kilos, was analyzed by Brigitte Zanda's team in Paris, and is presently being sold by Alain Carion and myself.

Of course, I will let you know when I find out what this new Niger meteorite really is. And when the true Total Known Weight of Tafassasset is finally known.



The Anatomy of a Trade Gibeon for Johnstown at 1:1?

by Martin Horejsi

Part of the fun of trading meteorites is the surprise that awaits you when opening the package containing your new specimen. Since meteorites are really their own commodities containing any value one decides to place on them, strange things can happen when trading meteorites. And so goes the story here.

I was working as a middleman in a large institutional meteorite trade. As is often the case when rare or large specimens are traded, smaller ones enter the arena to "grease the wheels" so to speak. Part of

this particular institution's reason for holding a meteorite collection was for teaching purposes. Therefore, I saw an opening to toss in a nice little slice of Gibeon to supplement the teaching portion of the collection. The 78-gram Gibeon was etched, and had a bit of crust, but it was no prize, just a good solid representative of a fine octahedrite.

Following a successful trade, one of the parties offered to replace my Gibeon since it was such a small expense given the nature of what was traded. But since a replacement Gibeon would be a while in coming, a piece of Udei Station would be sent to "hold me over" till a suitable Gibeon was found. The 200g Udei Station was interesting, but it was more what was left over after all the good pieces were cut from an odd shaped mass.

The blocky piece resembled a wedge of cheese with loads of interior, but little quality exterior, and just a sliver of crust.

I knew how much Udei Station was selling for in the US, but was surprised when I noticed some for sale in Europe; for a price 4-5 times as high! When opportunity knocks, open the door. So that is exactly what I did. I studied European meteorite dealers' inventories on the Net in hopes of finding a suitable target for a trade. I also knew time was money, because a 10kg mass of Udei Station was in the process of being cut and distributed. To maximize the trade value of my piece, I had to act before the other Udei Station hit the open market.

At this same time, a European dealer was offering Johnstown at the amazing price of \$25/gram! The dealer listed only one large piece of about 75 grams, with all the other pieces much smaller and more expensive. The 75-gram Johnstown did not have the greatest of surface-to-weight ratio and it had only a bit of crust, but it was still a rarity. I calculated the necessary value of my Udei Station compared to the Johnstown, composed an email outlining my proposal, crossed my fingers, and clicked the send button.

In the meantime, a nice shoe-shaped complete slice of Gibeon arrived. It was more than double the weight of the one I had traded, and this one contained a large troilite nodule while my old one had none.

Several days after launching my trade proposal into the European ethernet, I received a favorable reply accepting my offer. I quickly shipped off the Udei Station still wondering if I missed anything. Maybe I overlooked a comma or period. Did I just trade my Udei Station for a 7.5 gram piece of Johnstown instead of a 75 gram one?

Then came another email. The piece of Johnstown I had traded for was sold earlier at a mineral show, and there had been a mix-up in communication. Now the prospect of a 7.5 gram piece looked like a good one.



Another email appeared. My Udei Station arrived in Europe and, to my surprise was perceived as being even better than I described. Therefore, an even better piece of Johnstown would be sent.

About a week later, a small box arrived tied shut with string. As soon as I saw the box, I figured that I was now the proud owner of 75 grams of Johnstown dust and

crumbs. Nothing could have survived intact in such a little box let alone a specimen as fragile as a diogenite. And worse, the specimen I was hoping for would be about the same size as the box.

The box and I went out to lunch. After ordering some food, I sat at a table and carefully cut the strings. No tape secured the lid, just frail cotton threads. I lifted the lid and peered inside. Between two thin layers of cotton batting sat a perfectly shaped quarter slice of Johnstown, the curved edge of the triangle completely covered in crust. The tiny understated specimen card read simply: Johnstown, diogenite, 81 grams. My food never tasted so good!



Meteorite Dealer Profile: **Steve Arnold** of the International Meteorite Brokerage (I.M.B.) www.meteoritebroker.com

The Fusion Crust: How long have you been in the business of selling meteorites?

Steve Arnold: I am into my 11th year of being full time in the meteorite business.

TFC: What got you interested in meteorites in the first place? Did you begin by collecting them? Or do you even collect meteorites?

SA: I do not collect meteorites. Well, I have a half a dozen that are probably worth \$100 total that I wouldn't part with; a few of the ones that I have personally found.

It is a very long story on how I got involved in meteorites. The Short version: I read a book on "Treasure Hunting" using metal detectors. The book was strong on doing research to find places where treasures might be found. I started doing research and ran across a newspaper story from the 1890s about Mrs. Kimberly selling a Brenham meteorite to the Chancellor of what is now

the University of Kansas in Lawrence. I said, "Humm, I wonder if meteorites could be located with a metal detector?" I also had an instant flash back of seeing Bob Haag on TV buying the Esquel for \$200K, so I figured they were valuable.

I went to the library and read some books on Meteorites. One, written by Nininger, listed all the known meteorites in the U.S. I noticed that there was a tremendous amount of information on where the meteorites had been found, who found them, how big, how many, strewnfield map etc. Translation: Treasure Maps!

I hooked up on the phone with Blaine Reed and he helped me out a whole lot. I learned real fast that hunting with a metal detector was not the way to do it, but instead to do it Nininger-style.

So I dove in and started doing fieldwork. For the first 5 years or so, I basically did field work wholesaling everything I found to Blaine. Several years back I shifted my focus from buying and selling out of the field to brokering. Over the last two years or so, I have spent more time focusing on building my retail base, and still working with a few dealer friends in doing wholesale deals.

TFC: What are some of your more memorable moments selling or auctioning meteorites?

SA: Wow, I thought telling my history would be hard to condense, but this one is tough, there are so many. Most of my more memorable moments have been more in the relationships I have built with friends here in the business.

But events that have been memorable have been my 3 trips to Chile hunting Vaca Muerta, Imilac and Monturaqui (the one trip to Chile with Notkin and Ho was immortalized in an early issue of Meteorite Magazine). Getting to go to London and

Paris the first time to do exchanges is memorable. Having bought some 30 meteorites out of the field provides some great moments of walking in and seeing some great specimens for the first time.

I remember my first meteorite acquisition, where a farmer gave me a 121g fragment of Admire, for FREE! I sent it to Blaine and a few days later he sent me a check for \$121. That was the "A-Ha" experience that made me realize that this business could really pay off. Especially when I realized that the mass my 121gram fragment came off of was something like a 60kg rock! In that case I was just a little too late, as it was sold about 20 years before.

Tucson and Denver Show are always full of memories. Probably the most exciting single event was being involved in the Monahans saga, since it involved some real drama.

TFC: What do you want people to know about your business selling meteorites?

SA: I am in the business on a full time basis, so it is more than a part time hobby for me, more than a way for me to fund the building of my personal collection. This is the way I feed my family. Not that there is anything wrong with being a part-time dealer, many of them are some of my best customers. I love them. I wish there were more. Even though my inventory is usually pretty thin (since I am not building up a private collection) I really try to acquire a good variety of rare specimens for my customers. And since I don't need to hold onto anything, I can pass them all on to my customers. With collecting meteorites, there is often a small window of opportunity to acquire certain specimens. A particular meteorite may have never been on the market before and a few grams of it might show up and sell out in a matter of a few hours, only to not show up on the market again for a long time and maybe never again.

Helping the serious collector get a meteorite he has been hunting for a long time brings me a lot of fulfillment. I also have the brokering side of my business that has become far less important in this new meteorite economy we are evolving through. The business is far different now than it was 10 years ago and even 3 years ago. It is going to continue to change, and be very different in the future.

TFC: Lastly, what do you think you offer meteorite collectors that makes you stand out from the other meteorite dealers?

SA: Sometimes I see some dealers who will acquire a new specimen and then try to push that on their customers as if it was the best thing since the last thing they offered a month earlier. Don't get me wrong, I think it is important as a dealer to romance things the best one can; it is called "marketing." But I prefer to try to listen to my customers and find out what their needs and wants are and then I try to adjust my acquisitions to meet their goals. Also, having my college degree in Business Administration and Marketing, I have seen the meteorite business from quite a different perspective that I enjoy sharing my thoughts about what I see as the future of meteorite collecting with my customers who care enough to inquire. Helping collectors build a world-class collection on any budget is my main objective.



Share your collecting tales:
Write for **The Fusion Crust**
See www.meteoritecollectors.org
For submission guidelines.

Stories, Adventures, Trades, ebay,
Shows, Finds, Thin Sections, Displays,
Opinions Favorite Specimens, News,
Observations, Hunting, Fiction....

"My Favorite Specimen"

Submitted by Martin Horejsi

Tabor, Jihocesky, Czechoslovakia.
Chondrite, Ordinary, H5, brecciated.
Fell: 1753, July 3, 2000 hours.
Total known weight: >6 kg.

"Before my great grandparents immigrated to the US more than a century ago, they lived in the Czech town of Tabor. I can only hope and imagine that my distant ancestors watched in awe as the Tabor meteorite fell to earth."



My Tabor: 4.7 gram polished partial slice

The **Fusion Crust** is published electronically for the reading enjoyment of the **International Meteorite Collectors Association**
www.meteoritecollectors.org

Unsolicited articles, stories, adventures, personal tales and meteorite news are welcome. Please email your contributions to:
martinh@isu.edu

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