

## Fossiltastic by MGS Junior Member David

After I finished my homework on March 3rd, 2015, my mom showed me an email she had received from Maryland Geological Society (MGS) President Gary Lohman. The email was about House Bill 713, the Natural Resources - Trade In Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn Prohibition . . . . If you are wondering what I had to do with this bill, what it was about, and whether it would be a felony to disobey it, read on!!!

First I have to tell you how I became a member of MGS. I was at a Natural History Society of Maryland fossil and mineral event and I was going about my business, which at the time was looking through a bucket of sand with all kinds of fossilized teeth in it. There may have been a few shards of fossilized bone in it too, I don't remember. Hey I was only six at the time. I'm now nine. Anyway, I was looking through the bucket and a man came up to my mom and me. If you're wondering who he was, you will just have to keep reading! Okay, I'll give you this, he was from MGS. Ah I see a hand up. Yes? President Gary Lohman? No, I'll give it to you. It was Mr. Rick Smith, president of MGS at the time.

So Mr. Smith comes over and asks, "Would you like to be a member of MGS?" Of course my mom and I knew nothing about MGS or any geological societies, but we were from Maryland and I like anything geological to this day and we told him that. "Okay," he said, "I will let you come to a meeting and after that you can decide whether you want to be a member." I liked the meeting. In fact, I was so enthusiastic I decided to become a member.

In short, being a member of MGS is fossiltastic! I have not missed more than one meeting the whole time I have been a member. If you are not a member, I recommend that you become one, or do what I did and come to a meeting and then decide if you want to become a member. If you like fossils you will like MGS. And if you like raffles and auctions you will like MGS. And if you like talks about fossils and minerals you will like MGS. Dr. Seifter always brings a museum of fossils — and not just any museum, it's hands on! Have you ever held a four-foot mammoth tusk? I have. Well, the truth is I didn't hold it by myself. I held it with a few other kids who also happen to be rockhounds. Oh I haven't told you about rockhounds yet . . . .

My friends Adrian, Brooke, and I are future rockhounds. When we are not listening to a lecture or learning about the mineral of the month, we have meetings of the Future Rockhounds of America. We earn badges when we work on projects that Mr. Smith asks us to do before our meetings. He showed us how to display hundred million year old fossilized teeth to make them look even cooler. We now know a lot more about fossils and have had a lot of fun. The badge presentations are in front of the entire MGS meetings. And sometimes, the MGS members listen to us present our findings. They always answer our questions and give us lots of information and even fossils to take home. Do you want to join yet?

Getting back to House Bill 713! Well, as I said, I did have something to do with House Bill 713. Can you guess what? Alright, alright, I'll tell you. I testified against the bill! If you are still wondering what the bill was about and whether it would be a felony to disobey it, you will just have to keep reading! First, I have to tell you what the bill was about. It would have made the trade of any animal teeth illegal — a felony! — because it considered them to be ivory. And that includes fossilized teeth! Now this bill was trying to control the ivory trade so that people wouldn't kill animals such as rhinos and elephants for their tusks. I agree that live animals, especially such great animals as these, should not be killed. But really, they're going to tell us to stop selling the teeth of things that died or even went extinct hundreds of millions of years ago? One of my buddies at MGS, Mark the Fossil Man, had two jobs. One of them was selling fossils, which included a lot of fossilized teeth, and he was thinking of making his fossil job a full time job. The bill would have stopped his livelihood. And it would have stopped other traders from selling or buying fossilized teeth too. Testifying was fun, except that I had to wait six and a half hours for House Bill 713 to be presented in the Judiciary Committee. The Committee listened to many opponents and supporters of the bill. Fortunately, it did not pass. But the bill is only tabled, so keep your eyes peeled!!

*(Editor's note: Photos of David and Mark Bennett at the hearing on House Bill 713 in Annapolis were published in the March 2015 edition of The Rostrum - V24/N2.)*