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It's time for a new look at old finds

By Jim Gibb

We are about to witness the birth of a new interpretation of North American prehistory, the first significant change in two generations. The old model for the settlement of the New World has been failing for years as new finds and old unanswered questions pile up. And the changes will not be confined to the Paleoindian period and dating. They will ramify throughout generally accepted interpretations of the Paleoindian and Archaic periods.

When I took my first courses in archeology at Stony Brook University in 1975, instructors and texts acknowledged some differences of opinion, but told basically the same story: bands of Paleoindians traversed the Bering Land Bridge, exposed by lowered sea levels during the Wisconsin glaciation (about 12,000 years ago), and wandered southward through ice-free corridors, following large game animals and rapidly occupying much of the New World from the Bering Straits to the Straits of Magellan.

Glacial recession, starting some 15,000 years ago, led to the development of increasingly temperate environments with rich, heterogeneous flora and fauna. Archaic period peoples, descendants of the Paleoindians, adapted to these new environments, becoming increasingly insular and territorial and developing distinct cultures and, presumably, languages.

Troublesome questions have always dogged this model. "How," the physical anthropologists asked, "could Native American populations develop so many physical differences in the course of 10,000 years if they are descended from a few small groups that arrived during three short-lived migrations from Asia?" Linguists asked, "How could so many language groups and individual languages have developed in so short a time?"

And archeologists have not explained the appearance of fluted point technologies in the absence of any evidence of fluted points in Asia, nor have they explained why Clovis sites are most commonly found in the Southeastern United States rather than near the point of entry in the Northwest. How did small groups of people traveling in small bands of several dozen individuals manage to traverse and populate much of the Western Hemisphere roughly between 11,000 and 10,000 BC, a mere 1,000 years?

Recent research has explored additional ambiguities. If Paleoindians ranged across the landscape without defining territories, why are there so many varieties of fluted points? (As many as nine have been classified for the Northeastern and Upper Midwestern United States and Canada.) If they were territorial, how could they have settled two continents in a millennium?

Reanalysis of the well-known Bull Brook site in Ipswich, Mass., supports the conclusions drawn by

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Upcoming events

June 12 – 20: Barton field session.

October 16: Fall meeting.

October 28 – 31: ESAF meeting, Williamsburg, Va.

Volunteer opportunities

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT program participants and other ASM members:

Montgomery County is offering opportunities for lab and field work Wednesdays, 9:30 to 2:30. Call 301-840-5848 or contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org. CAT opportunity.

ASM field session collection: Volunteers have finished upgrading the ASM field school collection. They are working on the Rosenstock (Frederick County) material. The lab in Crownsville will be open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. Contact Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall chall@mdp.state.md.us.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County welcomes volunteers for its prolific Pig Point prehistoric site. Fridays. Call Jessie Grow at 410-222-1318.

Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301-627-1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact Ed Chaney at echaney@mdp.state.md.us or 410-586-8554.

The Archaeological Institute of America provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide, Call up www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/ to get started. Remember to add the extra A in archaeological.

CAT corner

For updates and information on other CAT activities check the ASM website.

A website is available to candidates and graduates: http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MDcat/ . To join the group email MDcat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Barton field school to test palisade area

By Robert Wall

This year at the Barton site we will be testing some of the palisade and feature patterns that showed up in Tim Horsley's comprehensive magnetometer survey last fall. The survey revealed what appeared to be three more palisade enclosures in addition to the Keyser palisade which now seems to be a double palisade.

There will also be ongoing work on the deep test unit on selected weekends throughout the summer.

One of the principal purposes of the excavations is to delineate the various occupations represented on the site from Paleoindian through Contact period as well as to investigate specific research questions pertaining to each component.

Excavations conducted since 2006 have focused primarily on three areas:

1) delineating house patterns and associated activity areas in the Keyser village,

2) defining the boundaries of the Susquehannock settlement and trying to expose house patterns associated with the occupation,

3) focusing on the pre-ceramic components of the site through deep testing.

Volunteers from any ASM chapters and interested visitors are welcome to join in. Those who may be interested in course credits can take the class through Towson University. The planned dates for the archeological field school are from June 12 to 20. There are dormitory facilities available at Frostburg State University for ASM volunteers as well as students.

For information, contact me at rdwall@towson.edu

The female stone ring (left) and the female wedding ring found at Legg's Dependency

Kent Island screening reveals four rings

Over the weekend of April 24 and 25, the Anne Arundel Chapter of ASM returned to the Legg's Dependence site (18QU996) on Kent Island. Soils removed in December during renovations to the historic home were screened and many additional artifacts were recovered.

Among the finds were four pieces of jewelry: two female gold rings and two male rings of indeterminate metal (perhaps silver). The male rings are plain wedding type bands. One of the female rings appears to be an ornate wedding band and the other is a ring which held a stone.

Now that all the displaced soils have been screened, additional lab processing is required. The Anne Arundel Chapter will complete sorting and cataloging but volunteers are needed: We have 10 file boxes of washed artifacts! Please contact Mechelle Kerns of the Anne Arundel Chapter (AAChapASM@hotmail.com) if you would like to participate in lab work (CAT People welcome!). We will have a cataloging "Happy Hour" at Galway Bay in Annapolis on Wednesday, June 2.

How will global warming effect sites?

By Stephanie Taleff Sperling

Condensed from Letters from Lost Towns, Winter 2010

Earlier this year the Lost Towns Project and the Anne Arundel County Department of Planning and Zoning received a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and NOAA to study the potential effects of sea-level rise and climate change on archeological and historical sites.

A recent scientific and technical analysis of sea-level rise over the next century conducted by the Maryland Commission on Climate Change projects that coastal communities may experience between 2.7 and 3.4 feet of additional rise by the year 2100. Anne Arundel County is particularly susceptible to sea-level rise given its 530 miles of tidal and nontidal shoreline. We estimate that nearly half of the more that 1,400 recorded archeological sites in the county are located in or near coastal areas.

In an effort to plan for the future of these resources, we are developing a vulnerability assessment to identify potential areas of sea-level rise and storm-surge inundation, assess trends and predict impacts of shoreline erosion and develop complete inventories of resources at risk.

This innovative project will be undertaken in partnership with various county agencies and will lead to the introduction of concrete guidelines to the planning and zoning director addressing how we can proactively protect and monitor threatened cultural resources.

This study is one of the first of its kind on this side of the Atlantic. In the words of archeologist Michael J. Kimball, who is with the University of Northern Colorado and organized a panel discussion at the 2008 World Archeological Congress about the impacts of climate change, we are "helping to mark the emergence of a new paradigm for archeology."

Profiles in Maryland archeology

An interview with … Laura Cripps

Laura Cripps is an officer of UPAG and teaches archeology at Howard Community College.

Q. How did you get started in archeology?

A. I was always interested in archeology. I used to take long hikes with my dad when I was young, around Iron Age and Roman sites in Oxford, in England. That's where I was born and where I grew up. My dad was kind of into history and I was the first one to go to university from our family. But I definitely got my passion for history and archeology from him. I joined the archeology society at Oxford University as one of the two non-university people they were allowed to have in the club, when I was 15. And I went on a Roman site when I was 15 or 16 at that university, and then I went to university.

Q. Did you study archeology at the university?

A. Yes, I did archeology and prehistory at Sheffield University and a research master's in archeology and anthropology at Durham and then I did my PhD in Iron Age studies at Leicester University and a bit at Oxford University.

Q. How did you end up in Maryland?

A. When I was doing my master's I had a scholarship for my master's and my thesis, but I was working on a site in Scotland that my PhD supervisor was overseeing. And I was one of the site supervisors, along with another PhD student, and we had Durham University students, undergrads, and we were training them and we had Dickinson College students from America, who were coming over to train. My now-husband got an opportunity to go and join Dickinson from HCC (Howard Community College), because he was a Rouse scholar, and he came to dig in the UK and that's how we met. So, beware of going on archeological digs in England. It's what gets told to other Rouse students. And I now run a dig for HCC students in France, along with Durham University, because the chap I was supervising with is now also a professor and we bring students from America and Durham together, but in France, not in Scotland.

Q. Where is this in France?

A. It's a site called Bibracte, also called Mont Beuvary. It was the capital of the Aedui tribe,

which was an Iron Age Gallic tribe that they think kind of merged quite late in a response to Rome. But it's where Julius Caesar conquered the Aedui and finished writing "The Gallic Wars." It's the site of a big international excavation – there's 10 universities from Europe digging there, all funded and supported by the French government, because it was President (Francois) Mitterrand's project when he stepped down as president, because you get to put money into a project. So he built like an archeologists' village and a lab and a big library at this site that Caesar associated with. He and Napoleon affiliated with Caesar a lot in their reigns, so if you to find out whether this was really the site where Caesar finished writing "The Gallic Wars" – and it was a big Iron Age site what we call an oppidum, a big Iron Age fortified town. In the early 1980s or mid 1980s the government put money into this village for archeologists at the base of the town, a big museum and a big research center. They wanted to find out more about the Iron Age/Roman period, the Caesarean period in France. And so now the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, Leipzig and Mainz in Germany, the University of Budapest, Hungary, Bologna in Italy, Durham, the Sorbonne in Paris. And HCC is the first and only American group to be invited, because the French government pays for your room and board while you're there. So we go for a month a year now in summer. And go and dig, and they're all PhD students and master's students and then there's my 18-year-olds from HCC.

Q. They seem to enjoy it though?

A. They had a great time. They get a lot out of it. We work with the Mainz team and the Durham team, it's an Anglo-American-German team collaborative. And they really got a huge amount out of it.

Q. Is this the most interesting project you've worked on?

A. Right now it is the one that is really quite exciting, for the students and in terms of research interests. It obviously supports my research interests which are Iron Age/Roman transition period, particularly with relation to settlements, that's what my thesis was on, looking at settlement and identity, so it's definitely one of the most interesting research projects. But there's potentially a Maryland site where the school may be looking to start excavation. And the other big, exciting thing I guess to me right now is that we are trying to build the archeology and anthropology department at Howard Community College to really be a good place for a lot of students to start. And we've had good numbers, numbers increasing for the classes and there's a new Anth and Arch Society that's student-led. We've got a guest-lecture series that the students bring in people from American, UMBC, who come and talk to the students. The students invite them, the committee invites them, and then they speak and then we take them out for dinner afterwards on the budget of the society and they get to network and start to think about doing those things you get opportunities to do in a four-year, but actually in a two-year school. The Anth and Arch Soc is up. We've been looking at one of the sites on campus for honors projects, we've got this potential dig that's going to come up, we've got this French trip, so we're starting to build, which is exciting.

Q. Do you have a favorite discovery?

A. I've excavated a few burials and each one of those is quite amazing. I worked for about a year and a half working for an archeological unit, doing development archeology, you know, sites that are going to be developed, roadways and things like that, and digging sites with an Oxford archeological unit between my master's and PhD. That was about six days working, one day off, a group of 10 men and me – you know, very male dominated in the U.K. Those trips were always good fun and I remember digging a Roman infant grave in the middle of Cirencester cattle market. It was all concreted over and they had taken up some of the concrete because they were looking to develop part of the cattle market. Cirencester cattle market is on the site of the Roman graveyard, just outside of the original Roman town. So there are cattle trucks rolling in and farmers coming in from the local area and me in a little hat and a little trench and an infant burial. And that was quite special. I think in the sense of the community being in that place for so many years. It was almost like a continuously utilized area. It was kind of a weird feeling to be digging something so old with everything still going on around. The earliest thing I've excavated is a Neolithic site in Bara in the Outer Hebrides, which was quite cool. Not huge amounts of things, but pottery and what we call cordoned ware (cord-impressed pottery), But really, I think archeology is about more the here-and-now sometimes, so the latest thing you're working on is often the most exciting.

Q. What interesting projects have you worked on here in this country?

A. Very few so far. This is where I really want to start building now. Somethings in American archeology and quite similar, somethings are quite different. But what I love is the hands-on nature of archeology and I love the fact that it is a science and an actual discipline and its got skills, but it's also community-based. I like the fact that when you are working on an archeological project you've also got an opportunity to work with volunteers and with students and, you know, people are often very, very interested because it is in their local region and you're working with the past and current identity. I love the relationship between archeology and people's perceptions of their own past. That's something that really, really interests me. I definitely want to get more involved in Maryland. I'm looking to working with UPAG and anywhere I can go to volunteer locally.

Q. Is archeology as practiced in the States different than in European countries where you've worked?

A. The longer I'm here the more I realize the similarities. The language is a bit different, the terminology can be a little different, which can make you nervous about whether you are seeing things in the same way. But the more I actually look at excavations, undertake excavations and talk about archeology, it's very similar. We don't sieve in the U.K. We tend to metal-detect the loose because there's potentially so much. You know, we

do open-air excavation on quite a large scale in the U.K. so you're relying on trowel and then metal-detecting so make sure you haven't missed anything great. So it's a little bit of a more refined process in the U.S. There are some differences. WHS trowels are, in my opinion, a finer implement than Marshalltown. They're a single piece of forged metal, so they're more sturdy. I think it's fairly similar. And I think it's getting to know the time periods and getting to know the characteristics of the local archeology, which is something that is going to take me a lot of time to learn. That's what I like about archeology as well: There's never an end story, it's constantly evolving. Slowly – there's not enough time in the day – but slowly I feel like I am learning a little bit more about the local history.

Q. Burials seem to be treated differently in Europe than here.

A. Yes. It really depends in Europe on whether you are doing a research-led dig or whether you're doing a time-sensitive, developer-funded project. In the U.K. the laws governing the developer-funded projects is called Planning Policy Guidance 16, PPG16. It's got its quirks. Some parts of it are quite good but you only technically have to excavate only 2 percent of an area and so it can be kind of hit-and-miss. If you're working on a site that's being developed for buildings, then there can often be some stress between the builders who want you to keep going quickly, because they're relying on getting their wages on finishing a certain area, and things like that. So it really depends. Burials here, because of the nature, I think, of the archeology over here as well – you're either dealing with Indian remains, which have a huge political sensitivity to them, or you're dealing with more recent burials. I think in the U.K. you may be a little bit more blasé about burials.

Book review: Four old bodies, four new stories

Every Bone Tells a Story, Jill Rubalcaba and Peter Robertshaw, Charlesbridge, 185 pages, $19

This short, very readable book takes a look at four major archeological chance discoveries that presented special mysteries which, when resolved, expanded our knowledge of the past.

Each story is divided into three sections: an account of the discovery of the remains and what happened afterward, the deductions that followed the discovery and the debate that followed the deductions.

The stories revolve around Turkana Boy, a 1.6 million-year-old skeleton found in Kenya; Lapedo Child, a 24,500-year-old found in a Portuguese rock shelter; Kennewick Man, the 9,000-year-old body found eroding out of the Columbia River in Washington State, and the Iceman, the 5,300-year-old remains found sticking out of an Alpine glacier on the Italian-Austrian border.

Each find caused a flurry of speculation over what exactly had been discovered. How old were the bones? Was Turkana Boy a human, meaning man had evolved that long ago, or something further down the tree of evolution? Where did Kennewick Man come from since his looks were so singular? The deduction and debate segments move the reader through the search for answers.

Take the Iceman. Found by hikers high in the Alps, the body wasn't immediately recognized as being so old. But when that was established and from the artifacts recovered with it, a wealth of information was revealed about life 5,300 years ago. The more the body was examined, the more surprises were uncovered. Using modern DNA techniques, researchers even discovered that a descendant of Oetzi was among those working in a lab helping examine the remains.

Or take Turkana Boy. How can you tell if it was a human or a pre-human? The answer is more than the technology he used, it also involves the location of his larynx, because that plays a key role in speech and because speech plays a key role in the development of technology.

These four colorful, well-illustrated accounts take you through the process of chance discovery to scientific advancement. It is a journey worth taking.

-- Myron Beckenstein

Volunteers wanted for Frederick slavery site

The Monocacy National Battlefield has begun a two-year study of a Frederick County slave village discovered in 2003.

The village is part of L'Hermitage, a plantation established in 1794 by the Vincendieres family, which had moved to the area from Haiti the year before.

"The Vincendieres were among the largest slaveholders in Frederick County and primary research documents suggest that they instituted a particularly harsh slave system at L'Hermitage," said Joy Beasley, the battlefield's cultural resources program manager.

She said work at the site, which has been only minimally tested until now, is aimed at shedding light on the lives of the slaves who lived there.

"Information gained from the project will be used to develop interpretive programs and exhibits about slavery and the African-American experience at Monocacy National Battlefield," Beasley said.

Volunteers age 18 and over are welcome to join in the dig, which will be from Mondays through Thursdays from 8 to 3. For more information or to sign up, contact Beasley at joy_beasley@nps.gov or 301-662-6980.

Toast: It's not just for breakfast anymore

Condensed from the Wisconsin State Journal, April 28, 2010

Burning your toast in the morning may not seem like the best way to start your day, but it just might prove interesting to posterity.

In 2002, while excavating a site called Alden's Corners in Dane County, archeologists uncovered several pieces of what appeared to be the oldest toast in Wisconsin. They unearthed the fragments of bread, which are at least 130 years old, during an excavation of the town post office, dating them somewhere between 1850 and 1880.

The toast has apparently survived this long, escaping both scavengers and deterioration, largely due to the fact that it was burned. Not only did this prevent the ancient bread from being eaten, but it also quickly carbonized the carbohydrates, allowing them to endure for an usually long period of time.

In addition, archeologists concluded that soon after being charred, it was covered with ash. Perhaps a disappointed postmaster threw his ruined breakfast into the remains of his fire. This covering of ash helped discourage animals from foraging and making a meal of it themselves.

FRANK AND ERNEST BY THAVES

It's time for a new look at old finds

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avocational archeologists who excavated the site in the 1950s: There appear to be 36 household-sized activity areas forming a five-acre oval, which the investigators hypothesize was a temporary gathering of microbands for a seasonal caribou hunt. How could peripatetic peoples coordinate such a massive communal hunt?

The most direct assault on the old model comes from a small group of sites that have yielded deposits several thousand years earlier than the earliest dated fluted point finds and that lack fluted points. Meadowcroft Rockshelter near Pittsburgh, excavated by James Adovasio in the 1970s, has produced such results and has fostered much energetic—and occasionally vitriolic—debate. It has been joined in recent years by the Cactus Hill site in Virginia, the Topper site in South Carolina and Monte Verde in South America. The search for pre-Clovis sites continues to intensify.

If the old model is failing, what will the new model look like? What ramifications will it have for our understanding of the Archaic periods, the subject of ASM's 2010 Spring Symposium? I think the new model will include a number of new characterizations.

Paleoindians with fluted point technologies will be seen as descendants of the initial colonizers, already well-adapted to the existing environments and regularly sharing ideas, objects and DNA with **others** near and far. While some developed highly specialized adaptations, such as communal hunts of ancient bison and caribou, most developed more generalized settlement and subsistence patterns, exploiting a wide variety of plants and animals. Social and political systems extended far beyond free-ranging microbands and some groups were relatively sedentary.

If such a model can be developed and supported, it will have significant ramifications for our understanding of Archaic peoples. Instead of groups awakening to the possibilities of newly formed environments, we will be thinking in terms of diverse peoples descended from already well-established Paleoindians. Their distinctiveness, then, grows not out of new adaptive strategies in newly formed environments, but as a direct result of individual and group decisions about the communities with which they will interact and how.

Similarly, the continuity of certain projectile point styles and adaptive strategies over large areas will be seen as the sharing of ideas with distant peoples. Why, after all, do we find Brewerton points from New York to Alabama? Independent invention or chain of communication? Cultural change will be seen as the result of history—the anticipated and unconsidered products of decisions—and not as responses to the external forces of a changing environment. We will see Archaic-period Indians as a people with a history that we try to learn about and not as nonsentient animals, resistant to change, altering their ways only when confronted by profound environmental shifts.

Replacing one model with another—paradigm shift—is a sign of a vigorous, mature science. Along with the new model come new concepts, new methods and, generally, new ways of thinking. We can expect to develop new questions and new ways of collecting and analyzing data to answer those questions. I can see greater attention to accuracy and precision, abandoning general surface collecting in favor of point-proveniencing of all finds. I see greater attention to accurate mapping of units and features and less reliance on gridding.

Greater focus on excavation is a given, and the dismissal of low-density "lithic scatters" (whatever they are) will have to stop. Every day we may be stumbling over pre-Clovis sites and Early and Middle Archaic sites without recognizing them because limited collecting or testing reveals few or no temporally diagnostic artifacts.

Likewise, we will not be able to dismiss the potential importance of a site because limited testing has failed to identify features, especially if we are not clear on what constitutes a feature for a particular time and place. And investigators will have to promote their interpretations on the basis of supportability and not public relations value.

There will be changes and the ASM membership can and should demand a role in these developments, both in terms of research participation and in determining what kinds of sites are worth preserving in place or carefully excavating and recording.

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

Meeting five times a year in February, April, June, September and November, the chapter meets at the Severna Park Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library, 45 McKinsey Road. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns-Nocerito at AAChapASM@hotmail.com or visit the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

September 10: London Town's Rod Cofield will talk on ways by which women, as patrons and laborers, participated in Colonial-era public houses.

Central

Central Chapter has no formal meetings planned, but it does engage in field work and related activities. Contact chapter President Stephen Israel, 410-945-5514 or ssisrael@verizon.net

Charles County

Meetings are held 7:30 on the second Tuesday (September–May). Contact President Carol Cowherd at cowherdcl@gmail.com or 301-375-9489.

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Agricultural History Farm Park Activity Center in Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant is at 6. Contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: www.asmmidpotomac.wordpress.com and www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-Potomac-Archaeology/182856471768

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Contact Jeremy Lazelle at 301-845-9855 orjlazelle@msn.com or Nancy Geasey at 301-378-0212.

June 8: Justin Bedard of the URS Corporation will present "The Adoption of Native American Ceramic Technology in the Chesapeake Bay Region."

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Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Wednesday of the month. Members and guests assemble at 6:30 p.m. for light refreshments. A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Ann Persson at 410-272-3425 or aspst20@yahoo.com Website: http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of every other month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida, near the courthouse in Ellicott City. Contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Chapter email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm

June 4: Robert Wall on "The Barton Site 2009 and 2010."

June 12 – 20: The Barton Site.

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The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc.is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.

ASM. Inc members receive the monthly newsletter ASM Ink, the biannual journal MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10% discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Belinda Urquiza for membership rates. For publication sales, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net.

Submissions welcome. Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD 20782, 301-864-5289 or myronbeck@verizon.net