

Awards and Citations

Response by Samuel J. Cieurca, Jr. for the presentation of the 2016 Harrell L. Strimple Award of the Paleontological Society



Samuel J. Cieurca, Jr.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Council of the Paleontological Society for presenting me with the Strimple Award and to Professor Carlton E. Brett for the nomination.

After finding my first eurypterid fossil (I didn't know what it was at the time), I got encouragement from the interest shown and the kindnesses of eurypterid specialist Erik N. Kjellesvig-Waering (K-W) and from former NY State Paleontologist, D.W. Fisher. That first eurypterid fossil changed my entire future—I began a diligent search for the horizons in which these peculiar aquatic arthropods were found and began to trace eurypterid-bearing units across New York State with ever-increasing interest in the peculiar 'waterlime' lithology associated with the horizons. I soon found new horizons and described my findings in New York State Geological Association Field Trip guidebooks (starting in 1973), taking students and others into the field to see first-hand the peculiar late Silurian stratigraphy I was encountering.

I got further enjoyment, related to my eurypterid studies, by getting involved with other scientists at universities and museums; especially the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History where most of my collection resides—thank you Drs. Derek E. G. Briggs and Susan H. Butts for all your interest and thoughtful communications.

I am also delighted that I was able, in my youth, to attend two wonderful high schools, Aquinas Institute and Edison Tech in Rochester, New York where my interest in science developed. And my first full-time job at Eastman Kodak Company (in organic chemistry) provided the paychecks that allowed me to explore the Silurian rocks on the weekends. Also, it was at Aquinas where I learned to enjoy Latin, even though I failed second year—I love Latin and the whole world should probably speak it (so much for the Roman Empire).

I don't believe in reincarnation, and no, I wouldn't wish to come back as a eurypterid. My point is that for many of us, it takes more than one lifetime to accomplish what we wish (Carl, you don't need another one). That said, there is still so much to investigate (new localities, new horizons, new faunas, and even new stratigraphy)—that is how peculiar the Silurian rocks of the northeast are. Certain kinds of individuals will come along who will foolishly spend their time trudging into deep ravines, excavating strata under water, turning over hornet's nests, all to study rocks that often rarely yield a single fossil in a day's collecting. Sign up now and I'll show you where to start your eurypterid search.

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