

Awards and Citations

Response by Joseph Koniecki for the presentation of the 2022 Strimple Award of the Paleontological Society

Joseph Koniecki



First and foremost, I would like to thank the Paleontological Society for this award. Receiving the Strimple Award is the highest honor that an amateur fossil collector can achieve. For that I am extremely grateful. I would like to thank Jennifer Bauer for the nomination, and for believing that I am worthy of this award. I would like to thank Matt Friedman, Amy Harris, Michael Lask, William Ausich, Selina Cole, David Wright, Dan Blake, and of course Forest Gahn for writing letters in support of her nomination for this award.

I started my fossil collecting career thanks to a couple of nuns at my high school. Barbara Kleeberger was my Earth

science instructor as well as my chemistry instructor. Chemistry was her specialty and she guided me in that direction. Barbara Palicki was another science instructor who was scheduled to attend a field trip to the fossil-bearing strata at Arkona, Ontario but was unable to attend, so she sent me in her place. I found my first complete trilobite on that trip and I was hooked. After that trip, they sent me to quarries near their Mother House in Sylvania, Ohio. Collecting the Silica Shale was the clincher for what turned out to be a lifelong passion. I thank them for their early guidance and an education in the sciences.

Many years later, I met a Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan. Forest Gahn and I would become good friends and lifelong fossil collecting buddies. I remember that the first

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comment out of his mouth was ‘can we go collect crinoids at Arkona?’ I had to break the bad news that quarrying operations at Arkona had ceased and that crinoids were no longer easily accessible. I told him that I had another place where I had been collecting crinoids that I thought that he would like even better than Arkona. And so, I introduced him to the quarries around Brechin, Ontario, Canada. For the next three to four years, we would go nearly every weekend to collect echinoderms at these quarries. Forest, you have been a great friend, mentor, and colleague. I look forward to finishing our work on *Cleioocrinus*.

Over the many years that I collected the Brechin quarries, I amassed a very extensive echinoderm collection. There was very little literature regarding these sites, and I knew that I had a lot of new material. I searched for someone to work on my crinoid collection from Brechin and that eventually led me to Bill Ausich. I can never thank Bill enough for taking on this project. I am eternally grateful to Bill and Lena Cole and Davey Wright for their work on my Brechin crinoid collection. They have given life to my ‘rocks’ and I truly appreciate their efforts. I also would like to publicly thank them for *Konieckicrinus josephi*. Along with the Strimple Award, it is one of the highest honors that a fossil collector can receive.

Another great collaborator regarding my Brechin echinoderm collection is Dan Blake. He took on a couple of asteroid projects for which I am grateful. I have learned a lot from him and appreciate that he made me a coauthor even though he did all of the technical work.

I would like to thank all of the staff of the University of Michigan Museum of Paleontology, current and past, for support of amateur paleontologists. These days, when there is a lack of cooperation or even competition or outright animosity between professionals and amateurs, they are shining examples of what can be achieved when we work together. We should recognize the late Robert Kesling, who started the Friends of the University of Michigan Museum of Paleontology (FUMMP) for his insight into amateur/professional cooperation. I offer a thank you to Dan Fisher for continuing to support FUMMP after Kesling passed on the reins. Matt Friedman and Jennifer Bauer, thank you for continuing their legacy.

And finally, I would like to thank my wife Steffanie Sunday for putting up with my hobby these past 30+ years. I know you have put up with a lot: the collecting trips and the rocks all over the house. You have been very patient with all that came with me.

Thank you.