



## SUMMERTIME COLLECTING FUN

On July 5, my wife Jill and I visited the road cut on Highway 21 that had been the subject of a St. Louis Mineral and Gem Society field trip last year. On this visit, Jill found an impressive calcite crystal, and rocks with a small amount of marcasite on the surface. I did not have much luck until I saw a small boulder embedded in the dirt at the north end of the cut adjacent to the southbound lanes of Highway 21. It appeared to be covered with small pyrite "dollars," much different in appearance than the marcasite found on the surface of other rocks. I attempted to shift it, but the rock was too large, (Photo below) and I left it for another day.



We returned a week later on July 12, with the objective of collecting that rock. A hammer and chisel allowed me to remove much grey, uninteresting rock along one side, and a shovel allowed me to wedge it out of the dirt. For a relatively small boulder it seemed to be very heavy, and it was a struggle to transport it to the car. After bringing it home, cleaning it and examining it more closely, I was surprised at what I had found. The rock measures 16"x11"x9", with the "dollars" the ends of rods of marcasite which continue fully through the rock along the 11" depth, where each rod itself is about 4mm in diameter.



The large amount of marcasite explains the weight - 107.5 pounds, as measured by a bathroom scale. John Dolde identified what I had found as stalactitic marcasite that had been enclosed by calcite, an apparently unusual find.



Although I didn't see an obvious place in the rock cut itself that this boulder may have come from, we'll have to go back and see if more like it can be found.

-Charles Calkins

## **REMINDER**

**The next meeting of the St. Louis Mineral and Gem Society will be held September 5, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. ,in Room 203 of the Earth & Planetary Science Building on Hoyt Drive, Washington University campus, St. Louis.**