

May 18, 1966

AIRMAIL

Dr. Richard C. Allison
Museum of Paleontology
University of California
Berkeley 4, California

Dear Dr. Allison:

Thank you for your kind letter of May 9, I was pleased to hear from you that you found the "Type Invertebrate Fossils of North America" helpful. This catalogue contains a lot of stratigraphic checking of localities that is not apparent on inspection. Disheartening few people have ever taken notice of this work.

As to Mesalia sayi and relatives, I have never collected it, but then I have never done any serious collecting in the Midway Group or the Lower Wilcox. As long as Plummer was alive, I left the Midway strictly alone to avoid conflicts. Plummer was very jealous, frustrated, and possessive. He "owned" the Midway Group.

As to the stratigraphic data of northeastern Mexico on which Miss Gardner determined the type locality of Mesalia sayi as Lower Wilcox Group, they are suspect. They are based on ancient field mapping by various oil company geologists done during those primitive times when facies changes were not recognized.

The Midway-Wilcox boundary was mapped on the basis of marine fossils versus lignite nonmarine beds. However, in that area the Lower Wilcox, equivalent of the Nanafalia Formation, is marine and most of it was erroneously included in the Upper Midway for that reason. You will notice that Miss Gardner has "Ostrea" thirsae Gabb [Odontogryphaea thirsae] in the Upper Midway in northeastern Mexico. This oyster is a reliable guide for the Nanafalia and so far no ancestors or relatives have been found in the Gulf Coast Midway. Miss Gardner was forced to do too much, to cover too much territory, and Gulf Coast stratigraphy escaped her ken at many occasions.

Mesalia sayi may be exactly the same species as M. hardemanensis (Gabb). One ought to go back to Safford's original locality and get a good

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long series of variants and age groups there. The stratigraphic level should also be redetermined. Those ancient collectors did some good by collecting alongside old stagecoach roads, but they left us saddled with a lot of corrective work. No wonder paleontology is in the dumps.

Sincerely,

H. B. Stenzel

HBS:ej

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