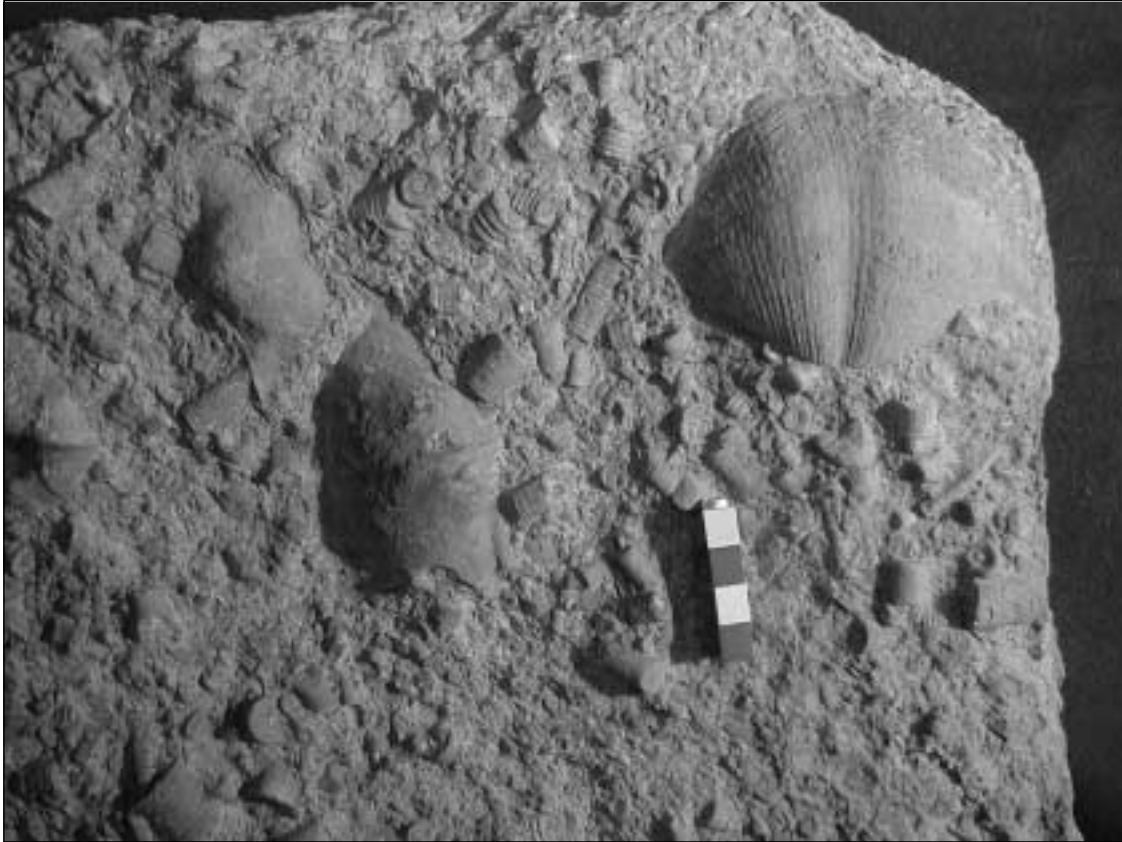


Gallery of Geology

Giant Mississippian brachiopod



This slab of Mississippian limestone (scale in cm) comes from the Osagean Doña Ana Member of the Lake Valley Formation. Dennis Tyler and Spencer Lucas collected it in May 1994 near Marble Canyon in the Sacramento Mountains just east of Alamogordo. The rock matrix is a very coarse conglomerate of crinoid columnals. Two kinds of brachiopods are present. The smaller (shell widths ~ 70 mm) are *Spirifer rowleyi* Weller, until now the largest spiriferid brachiopod reported from the Lake Valley Formation (Kues, 1986). The giant brachiopod in the photograph (estimated width ~ 115 mm, length ~ 80 mm) probably is a new species of *Spirifer*. In size, it is matched only by *S. grimesi* Hall, which Laudon and Bowsher (1941) reported from the Doña Ana Member in the Sacramento Mountains, but the sulcus of the giant brachiopod illustrated here is much narrower and shallower than that of *S.*

grimesi. This giant Mississippian brachiopod thus demonstrates the potential to make new discoveries in fossil assemblages as long known and well studied as those of the Lake Valley Formation.

References

- Kues, B. S., 1986, Paleontology of the Caballero and Lake Valley Formations (Lower Mississippian) west of the Rio Grande, south-central New Mexico; in Clemons, R. E., King, W. E., Mack, G. H., and Zidek, J. (eds.), Truth or Consequences Region: New Mexico Geological Society, Guidebook 37, pp. 203–214.
- Laudon, L. R., and Bowsher, A. L., 1941, Mississippian formations of Sacramento Mountains, New Mexico: American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Bulletin, v. 25, pp. 2107–2160.

—Spencer G. Lucas
Barry S. Kues