

A 6-year-old girl goes digging in the dirt at her sister's soccer game -- and finds a 65 million-year-old fossil

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Updated 11:06 AM ET, Wed March 21, 2018



Naomi Vaughan, now 7, found an ammonite fossil at her older sister's soccer game last year.

Naomi was bored. A 6-year-old can stay riveted by her older sister's soccer game for only so long.

So she went over to some sagebrush by the soccer field, poked around in the dirt, and picked up a small rock. Something about its swirls reminded her of the mystical necklace from Disney's "Moana."

That was last October.

Earlier this month, Naomi's family learned what the rock really is: a rare, 65 million-year-old fossil.

Something about the rock ...

On that day last year, Naomi needed something to pass the time. Her sister's JV soccer game in Bend, Oregon, was in full swing. So she went digging.

From the looks of it, her mom could tell there was something special about Naomi's "Moana rock."

"She knew it right away," Naomi's dad, Darin Vaughan, told CNN. "I'm not sure I would've."

What the girl had found was the fossil of an ammonite, a sea creature that went the way of the dinosaurs millions of years ago.

But the confirmation led to another head-scratcher: How did it end up in Oregon?

... and what it means for a girl

Greg Retallack, director of paleontological collections at the University of Oregon's [Museum of Natural and Cultural History](#), told CNN that ammonite fossils are common but not in Bend.

In some cases -- some extremely rare cases --

ammonites can fetch between \$40,000 to \$50,000. But because there's so little known about Naomi's fossil, it's not scientifically significant, Retallack said.



But it's invaluable in another respect: what a find like this can mean to an inquiring young mind.

"This is how we all start," he said.

Retallack's own career as a paleontologist dates back about 60 years. He was 6 years old when he found his first fossil -- a shell on the beach.

"And I never looked back," he said.

There's no telling what the future holds for Naomi, now 7. For now, she's just happy she gets to keep her fossil.

"She's been thrilled to have discovered a fossil," Vaughan, her dad, said. "She's certainly the only person in our family to make that discovery."

Retallack said he hopes to see Naomi someday -- as a student in Oregon's paleontology program.