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So what if *Forbes* rates
Maine last on its list of
“Best States
for Business”?

At least we have our Moon Rocks

BY JARRETT MELENDEZ & MIKE SMISEK

Don't worry, we have our moon rocks on display," David Work, chief curator of geology at Maine State Museum, says. "They're safe and sound in our Cabinet of Curiosities exhibit."

Just to clear the record: "We have had no accountability issues whatsoever."

Not to brag, but of the 135 nations and 50 states who received samples of moon dust and rocks as gifts from the Apollo 11 and Apollo 17 missions, more than half of these displays are unaccounted for.

According to Joseph Gutheinz, a former special agent for NASA, Delaware's sample of moon dust has been "missing since 1976," when an aggressive collector plucked the state's gift from its plaque. "Yanking the Lucite ball off is not that uncommon," says Gutheinz. "The same thing happened in Malta in 2004."

Apparently it's an international trend.

Romania's rock was auctioned among Nicolae Ceausescu's personal possessions after his execution on Christmas Day in 1989. Gutheinz wasn't surprised when he heard the news: "When you

give a moon rock to a dictator, don't be surprised when it doesn't end up in a museum."

Sweden's was stolen in 2002.

"Ireland's was thrown out after a fire in the Meridian Room in the Dunsink Observatory in Dublin in 1977," says Gutheinz. "The gift is most likely in the Finglas landfill with the rest of the rubble."

Honduras' moon rock was stolen and smuggled out of the country in 1995. In 1998, Gutheinz recovered it in the sting operation called Operation Lunar Eclipse, when Alan H. Rosen tried to sell it to undercover NASA agents (including Gutheinz) for \$5 million. "The rock has since been returned to Honduras and is displayed in Centro Interactivo de Enseñanza Chiminike," he says.

"Cyprus was never given theirs because there was a political coup," he says. "Instead, it stayed at the US embassy in Nicosia. In 2003, it turned out a diplomat's son had it."

The rock is now in NASA's custody. "The diplomat and son's names," Gutheinz says, "were not disclosed." ■

ARKANSAS'S LOST MOON ROCK: Discovered among President Bill Clinton's gubernatorial files in 2011.

NEBRASKA'S: Discovered by former Gov. Ben Nelson's wife during renovations to their Lincoln mansion.

WEST VIRGINIA'S: Gov. Arch A. Moore, Jr. gave their rock to lawyer Troy Conner over a decade ago, "to observe."

ALASKA'S: *Deadliest Catch* star Arthur Anderson extracted the moon rock from burned-down museum rubble as a "neat souvenir." Lawsuit pending.

Source: Robert Pearlman, collectspace.com