



The **BACKBENDER'S** **GAZETTE**

The Newsletter of the
Houston Gem & Mineral Society
Houston, TX

Volume XXXVI - No. 3

March 2005

President's Message

February, 2005

by Norman Lenz

HGMS President, 2004-2005



Fellow HGMS Club Members,

Finally I can report that the HGMS roof replacement is completed. There seem to be no leaks from the past few days of heavy rains. The next step is to replace the water-stained ceiling tiles, and the clubhouse should look the way it did before the leaks began. See photos on pages 22 and 23.

I would like to thank Tom Wright and Dave Hawkins who have taken on the task to do some cleanup in the storage area of the Clubhouse. It is much appreciated since we do not have a janitor or a designated cleanup committee. Beverly Mace has started working on the loft storage area and will be notifying individuals and Sections that she has rediscovered lost "treasures."

Scott Singleton has firmed up plans for us to visit the Houston Museum of Natural

Continued on page 4



February General Meeting Program

by Scott Singleton

1st Vice President

Our February General Meeting program follows naturally from the January program presented by Norm and Susan Lenz on "Gold, Glaciers, and Grizzlies" (see article on page 15). This month the presentation is by the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) and is entitled "Gold! Natural Treasure, Cultural Obsession." This presentation dovetails with a special exhibition of the same name opening February 18 at HMNS and running through August 7. The exhibition will explore the role of gold through history, art, culture, science, and myth.



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Copy is due for the April issue by Tuesday, March 8, 2005. (When the 8th falls on Saturday, I create the BBG that same weekend.)

Purpose of HGMS

The objectives of this Society are to promote the advancement of the knowledge and practice of the arts and sciences associated with the collecting of rocks, minerals, fossils, artifacts, and their identification and classification; the general lapidary art; the collecting and identification of gemstones; the designing and execution of jewelry or metalcraft; and to provide the opportunity to obtain, exchange, and exhibit specimens and rough or finished materials.

Membership dues are \$30 for an adult membership, \$40 for a couple, \$50 for a family (including all children aged 5-18), and \$8 for a youth membership (ages 5-18).

Advertising rates: \$70 for 2 mo, ¼ page; \$150 for 6 mo, ¼ page.

MEMBER: American Federation of Mineralogical Societies & South Central Federation of Mineral Societies.

All meetings are held at the Clubhouse located at 10805 Brooklet near the intersection of Highway 59 (Southwest Freeway) and Sam Houston Parkway (Beltway 8). See the calendar inside the back page for when the different Sections meet. The General Meeting is the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30. The HGMS Internet address is <http://www.hgms.org>.

President's Message continued from page 1

Science Special Gold Exhibit on March 1. Cost, time, and other details will be announced at the General Meeting on February 22. At the next General Meeting, there will be a program on this exhibit presented by a Museum Staff Member. Be sure to put this meeting on your schedule.

Please remember that Scott Singleton's By-Laws Review Committee is at work. Feel free to make recommendations to Scott for any changes you feel are needed.

On behalf of our Web Site Review Committee, Paula Rutledge recommended Phyllis George as our new webmaster. Phyllis was approved by the HGMS Board for this new position. This is a huge job, and we need to help Phyllis in any way possible. There is great interest in our Web site, and we hope eventually to make it an award winning site with timely and up to date information. It is truly our face to the world.

I have appointed an Assistant Show Chair Search Committee consisting of Art Smith, Tom Wright, and Matt Dillon. Let them know if you have someone in mind that you feel would make a good fit with our current Show Chair, Carol Thompson. This is another position with BIG responsibilities. Carol deserves a really good Assistant Show Chair.

The Clubhouse is a busy place on Saturdays with much activity. Remember that during Youth Section time, 10 a.m. to noon, the youth have priority in the Shop when they meet during the first and third Saturdays of each month. At noon on Saturdays there is always a group going from the Clubhouse to eat lunch at Luby's, or at a barbeque, or elsewhere. You are always welcome to come along.

If you have a question, ask it! If you have a suggestion, make it! If you have a talent, share it!

February General Meeting Program continued from page 1

HGMS club members attending the General Meeting on February 22 will be given a special preview of this exhibition and will learn some of the behind the scenes details about putting together a high-profile exhibit such as this. If you haven't been to a general meeting in awhile, this would be a good opportunity to give it a try!

The Gold! exhibit is special because unlike many traveling exhibits that come to Houston as one of many stops, this one is originating at HMNS. The curators are Mark Mauthier, who has spoken at HGMS on phosphate minerals, and David Temple, our recent past president. One of these two individuals, or Inda Immega (HMNS Master Docent), will be giving our meeting presentation.

Because of HGMS's special relationship with the museum, we have been given another one-of-a-kind opportunity. The museum has offered a special night where HGMS members can tour the Gold! exhibit for a much reduced cost and unencumbered by large crowds. This night has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 1. Our speaker will update everyone at the February meeting on the details of this special opportunity. Be sure not to miss it!

Trimmers and Trimming Mineral Specimens: Part I

by Art Smith

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Several members of the Mineral Section have shown an interest in trimming and cleaning techniques. Unfortunately by the time many of you read this, the first half of the program will have already been given. I am not trying to write the ultimate paper on trimming and cleaning techniques because I myself am still learning as I obtain new material that presents a challenge. Fortunately we have several good books and papers in the library on cleaning, but trimming is more a self-taught technique. Most of my experience is micromineral trimming, and I have little experience in trimming larger specimens.

If you are against buying and using a trimmer—and I know some people are—I suggest you get an old piece of railroad tie, or better yet a small anvil. They go for \$40 to \$75 in antique stores if you can find them. They are much safer for breaking rocks on, and you generally avoid the danger of flying shards of metal while hammering the rocks. For the same reason you should always use a rock hammer or small sledge. Carpenter's hammers are usually too soft and also can produce flying metal shards. Always use eye protectors and do not feel silly using some stout gloves to protect your hands.

Trimmers of various sizes and makes have been available for purchase through the years. They are somewhat expensive but fairly simple in design and construction, so the temptation is to construct your own. Unless you already have a lot of experience trimming, I highly recommend that you do not attempt constructing your own trimmer. Even if you copy an already existing design, the keys to a good trimmer are the materials they are made from. I have seen more poor trimmers constructed by individuals than good usable ones. Back in the 1960s and '70s, the two best trimmers available were the Yost and Meister trimmers. They were both screw-type trimmers, came in different sizes, and were durable and relatively easy to use. If you found one of these in good condition today it might be a good investment, but remember that trimmer parts wear out and can break so you will have no source for replacement parts unless you have them made. From my own experience the thing that makes trimmers break or wear out the quickest is trying to break rocks that are too big or tough for the trimmer size.

Let me start off by telling you what trimmers you may want to avoid. In the 1990s an aluminum model of the Yost trimmer in two or three different sizes was sold. The basic design of these trimmers is good. However, making them from an aluminum alloy instead of iron like the original trimmers was a mistake. True they were fairly light weight, but not only do they turn your hands black when you use them, they are not very durable and the threads that hold their frames together will snap easily if you get a real tough rock to break.

There was a trimmer available in the 1970s that used a hydraulic car jack to break rocks and geodes, but besides being cumbersome, it could not do precise trimming

and it did not do a good job cracking geodes.

The Zuber trimmer became popular in the 1980s. It is a hydraulic trimmer, very well made, and can really pop tough rocks in half. Notice I said rocks. It does not work well with mineral specimens because it has a safety shield and you cannot hold the specimen. So when the matrix breaks, specimen and pieces go helter-skelter inside the safety shield, usually damaging any delicate and possibly even stout crystals on them. However, this type of trimmer does have a use for breaking sturdy, very tough rocks or minerals. David Shannon Minerals, 6649 E. Rustic Drive, Mesa, Arizona 85215 (408/985-0557) is the only dealer I know who still carries them. They are around \$600. Dennis Beals has some Zuber “knockoff” China-made hydraulic trimmers that look very similar. He had them modified to make them more effective and safe, and they still cost much less than the Zuber trimmers (www.xtal-dbeal.com).

A series of screw-type trimmers are available for purchase from Absolute Clarity (www.absoluteclarity.com) ranging in price from under \$100 for a Mini Trimmer to over \$800 for a Giant Splitter. I have one that is an intermediate size that I purchased 5 or 6 years ago. It is well designed and very well made. I consider it a little better to use than my old Yost trimmer. I used a small Yost trimmer over a period of close to 30 years with just minor replacements of the teeth and the teeth supports. It was Yost's smallest trimmer, and I probably did have it break many rocks too big for its size.

Wydar trimmers are carried by Attard Minerals (www.attmainerls.com) and their portable micro trimmer also by Simkev Minerals (www.simkevmicromounts.com). I have one of the portable micro trimmers but have never used it. I bought it to replace my old Yost trimmer that is now at the cottage in New Hampshire, but the Yost is working so well that I brought the new trimmer back home and now take it on field trips—but I've never had to use it yet.

So whatever trimmer you buy, get one that best suits your needs. Large trimmers for large rocks and mini or micro trimmers for specimens less than two inches thick are best.

Tips for Using Trimmers mostly depend on common sense and experience.

1. All trimmers should be used with caution and with proper protection against flying rock pieces. This is particularly true with hydraulic trimmers that break rocks with great force. Do not allow children to use them, and always have the shields covering the specimen. Do not put your hands under the shield of hydraulic trimmers. They can bite! Other trimmers should be used in protective areas or in a stout box. Goggles are probably a good idea in most cases.
2. Note any cracks and layering in the matrix that may cause it to break that way no matter where you are trying to break it. In some cases, these may indicate that the only way to trim the specimen is to saw it. In other cases it may work to your advantage when trimming.
3. Many times it is better to trim in several small bites rather than to get one large piece at one try.

4. It is always best to have the chisel teeth of the trimmer on the sides of a specimen rather than on the top and bottom. The teeth may leave a scar or damaged area on the top where you do not want it.
5. Know what your matrix is and how it will break. In some cases the rather soft, somewhat granular matrix is the most unpredictable and most difficult to trim. A classic example is the granular dolomite matrix of the Lengenbach quarry, Binntal, Wallis, Switzerland.
6. Contact metamorphic and similar rocks are very tough and difficult to crack. These are rocks with wollastonite, miserite, epidote, vesuvianite, and some jade minerals. They tend to have interlocking crystals. It may be best to saw the specimen.
7. If you are not sure about trimming an expensive specimen, show the specimen to those more experienced in trimming and ask their advice or ask them to trim it. There are several companies that will clean and trim specimens. Of course there is a fee. Better yet have the dealer you buy it trim it before you pay for it.
8. Most copper specimens cannot be trimmed with any one of these trimmers. They are even difficult to trim with a diamond saw unless they are in a lot of matrix.

There are other things that can help in trimming. I have already mentioned a diamond saw. However, remember that many collectors do not like the flat surface of a sawed specimen showing, even in the matrix—but it can make a nice base for the specimens to stand or sit on. A small pair of pliers or nippers may be useful when trimming small specimens with a soft matrix. At certain times a file (even a nail file) may be useful. There are no set rules. Learn to use what works best for you. A trimmer is a very useful piece of equipment for most collectors, but it is an absolute must for micromineral or thumbnail collectors, particularly if you are preparing and mounting your own specimens.



Day Light Section *by Tom Wright*



Frances Arrighi is still recovering from the flu and asked if I would help her with some of the Daylight items.

The January 10, 2005 meeting was a travel log of a trip that former member Beverly Fininis made to Greece in July 2004. (Incidentally, Beverly was editor of the BBG in 1989.)

Beverly had slides of many of the historical sites such as the Acropolis, the Parthenon, treasures in the Athens Archeological Museum, Delphi, Marathon, Patras, and Nafpaktos as well as some family photos and some leisurely moments on the beach of the Aegean Sea. The picture shows Beverly at the Acropolis with the Parthenon in the background.

The February 14 and March 14 Day Light meeting will be a hands-on demo and instruction in inlay work, and Tom Wright will have silver available at cost for those members who would like to learn how to do this type of fabrication.



Mineral Section



by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson and Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson

Upcoming Meeting Topics

March 2 *Clear Lake Review*: We will use this meeting to discuss the Clear Lake Show (Pasadena Convention Center, February 26–27). Bring in your recent acquisitions and let us drool. We will also use this meeting to continue the Tucson 2005 review. Specimens purchased during the show that didn't make it to the February 16 meeting will be available for Show & Tell. Refreshments will be provided.

March 16: *Minerals from the Illinois-Kentucky Fluorspar District*: Presented by Art Smith and Sam Koster. The Illinois portion of this Fluorspar district (where mining ceased in 1995) has produced many fine specimens of fluorite, barite, celestine, calcite and some rare minerals. Which localities produced which specimens? The presenters will show where they came from so you can better understand the origins of these popular specimens. Refreshments will be provided.

April 6: *Opals—Show & Tell*: Sam Norwood will host this program dedicated to the beautiful and intriguing hydrated form of silica. Come learn about the variety and uses of this mineral. Bring in some pieces from your own collection and let us drool. This meeting was rescheduled from January 19. Refreshments will be provided.

If you have any ideas for topics to be presented or would be willing to present at our Mineral Section meetings, please contact Dean at dean_lagerwall@yahoo.com or call him at (979) 480-9373.

Education Classes at HGMS Clubhouse

by Mary Ann Mitscherling

Fifteen students enjoyed two classes in January 2005. The Wire Wrap class was held on three Sundays from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., and the Precious Metal Clay class was held on one day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 16.

The middle classroom was used for all three classes. The front meeting room was used for the clay forming work in the PMC class. The clay drying, torch work, and kiln work phases were done in the corner classroom.

Everyone had a good time and hopefully took away the knowledge of techniques and skills needed to proceed with further work on their own.

Working in a group such as a class builds confidence. This concentrated formal class work produces products that illustrate what can be achieved in the learning process. At the end of the day, some of the students wore home the jewelry they had just made in the PMC class. Some purchased extra clay or PMC paper to work at home. They can produce jewelry or other items at home, bring the pieces to the clubhouse when Margaret is there, and get the silver pieces finished for a nominal kiln fee.

I found the PMC class enjoyable and instructive. My favorite part was forming the

clay over and over again. The PMC paper also was interesting to work with. However, the PMC silver is expensive compared with casting silver.

Later in the week I purchased some relatively inexpensive polymer clay to practice forming jewelry items. It was fun working with the cheaper clay. However, baking polymer clay does not produce the results you expect the first time. But it does provide a medium to work with that can be easily discarded as practice material. And the items produced are better than sketches for saving ideas.

Editor's note: Mary Ann submitted six photos to accompany this article, and for some reason PageMaker decided the photos all contained invalid data. They displayed just fine in every other viewing situation, and I have no idea what the problem is. My apologies, Mary Ann.

Lost E-mails

by Neal Immega n_immega@swbell.net

Have you suddenly stopped receiving club notices? Are you missing out on field trips? Do you have the feeling that everyone knows something you don't? Well, it's true. The following club members are not getting e-mail from me. Just e-mail me your correct address, and I will put you back on the list. Likewise, if you never want to hear from me again, then just tell me.

Addresses rejected by the Web:

'James Abbott' <jabbott@falconbarcode.com>;
 'Marsha Greene' <greenemf@yahoo.com>;
 'Ken and Kippy Havis' <khavis@aol.com>;
 'Phil and Janet Heppard' <ben.jess.john@aol.com>;
 'Kevin Keys' <KKCM69@aol.com>;
 'Bridget Langdale' <blangdale@silverfox.org>;
 'Pat McCall' <seamantaz@aol.com>;
 'Bruce and Annie Neill' <bneill@pdq.net>;
 'Jerry Pote' <jerrypote@hotmail.com>;
 'Lisa and Abejet Purkayastha' <plan@houston.rr.com>;
 'Bob Quitzau' <quitzau@Flex.net>;
 'Robert Rosenkranz' <robrose69@aol.com>;
 'Terry and Ken Sanders' <ksanders@r.r.hot.com>;
 'Karl Schleicher' <karl_schleicher@bigfoot.com>;
 'Patty Scott' <nigels-mom@sbcglobal.net>;
 'Williams and Nancy Tate' <luthytate@worldnet.att.net>;
 'Doug Vanderford' <wormwood43@aol.com>;
 'Mary Rose Veggeberg' <mvggbrg@hal-pc.com>;
 'Mark Villanueva' <markvillanueva@sbcglobal.net>;
 'Richard Zimpfer' <rzipfer@riyadbank-americas.com>;

Some people always have a full mailbox. Something probably is wrong.

'John & Pat Goyen' <johng99@concentric.net>;
 'M.J. Robinson' <chinapjet@earthlink.net>

Coming Attractions: Lapidary Programs

March 21	Polish your February piece!
April 18	Demo: Drilling holes in stone.
May 16	Demo: Making Doublets
June 20	Practice Riveting and other cold attachments

In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

Finally the library index is complete. It was completed on January 10. It now has almost 25,700 entries. I expect to be adding between 20 and 30 new entries each month as we receive new books and publication. If you want your own copy of the index to use at home, just bring a blank disc to the library and copy it. If you need help to do this, I will be glad to help.

The Lapidary Section would like to obtain a complete set of *Wire Artist* for the library. It ceased publication in January 2005. I checked on it and best I can tell, all the back issues are available. However, if a complete set were ordered it would be about \$500 and probably another \$100 for binding which is beyond our budget at this time. However, if an individual who has issues of the magazine would donate them to the library, we could then fill in with some back issues and maybe could afford a complete set. Remember, such donations are tax deductible. Individual issues are valued at about \$5 each and double issues at about \$12.

Last month I gave the financial report for the library, but I failed to mention that details are kept in the library. Several people have asked me through the years if the library is indeed making money on the soda because some people do not contribute when they take a soda. Well, my answer to that is that some people put in more than enough ahead of time, then they take sodas as needed until they even it up. Other people throw in extra, and still others contribute their own soda plus leftover soda from club functions. Since the soda is donated, I always try to buy it for 25 cents a can or less, which is getting harder to do when you add in the tax. This allows us a 25 cent profit on each can. Sam's or other places that would allow me to buy it tax free are usually not the cheapest and do not have the varieties in diet drinks that we use. Coke and Diet Coke are by far the largest sellers—more than twice as much as all others combined. Next in popularity are any other diet drinks, and last is everything else. Pepsi and diet Pepsi are particularly slow moving. So I tend to emphasize the faster moving drinks. In my record keeping, sometimes soda and book sales get combined. This year I tried to keep them separate. This year we made about \$1200 on soda sales, and I spent \$431 purchasing it. So that means there was \$769 made above the amount I purchased. These are rough numbers but significant enough to show that we are doing well with the system and if there are some cheaters, it is probably insignificant. So I thank all of you who have made this system work well for the benefit of the HGMS Library.

Paleontology Library Report

by Paula Rutledge, Paleo Librarian

While I was adding new acquisitions to the Paleo Library in January, I took time to browse the cards of books currently checked out. I'm pleased to report that 22 different people currently have 47 books checked out.

For 2005, I plan to acquire the newest volumes of *Treatise of Invertebrate Paleontology*, and I hope to complete our collection of the *Journal of Paleontology* magazine. We need various issues from 1990 forward.

I am continually adding new acquisitions thanks to the generosity of many members. Please stop in and check out some books.

Rockhounds, The Movie

by Scott Singleton

1st Vice President

Several of you may be aware, possibly from the March *Rock & Gem* magazine, that a movie on our hobby is in the final stages of production and will soon be ready for release. This movie is called *Rockhounds, The Movie*. It is directed by Todd Kent and produced by Devin Dennie of Explorer Multimedia Inc, both from the Dallas area. Our show, being the premier gem and mineral show in this part of the country, was one of their shooting locations. Other shoots were digging dino bone with George Blasing at the Championship Quartz Crystal Dig in Mt. Ida, finding bar-rite roses in Oklahoma, and at the geology labs at the University of Oklahoma.

This is the same outfit that produces a television series called "GeoAmerica." They describe GeoAmerica as "a television program dedicated to the science and history of the American landscape." You can find information about this series and Explorer Multimedia on their Web site (<http://64.224.32.17/index.htm>).

Rockhounds, The Movie also has a Web site:

www.savvycenter.com/explorer/rockhounds. Several portions of the Web site are still under construction as they have not finished the movie yet. However, they do have a scan of the *Rock & Gem* article that you can download:

<http://www.savvycenter.com/explorer/rockhounds/pressgandrmag.htm>. The photo in the article shows a movie star at our show last September.

Our club is on tap to get Todd Kent as a speaker at a General Meeting in the next few months. He will be telling us stories from the shooting and production of the movie, plus we will get to see the movie. I'll be sending out more details as I get them.



General Meeting Minutes

January 25, 2005

by Sunday Bennet, HGMS Secretary

Volunteer to supply refreshments for next month's meeting:

Segrid Stewart volunteered to bring refreshments for the next meeting.

Guests:

Two guests were present, both first time attending members of the HGMS.

Cathy Prieto-Smith, a brand new member, found HGMS through attendance at our annual show and by visiting our Web site. Cathy is interested in fossil hunting and in learning to fabricate jewelry.

Ralph Neal is a member who joined several months ago but who had not yet attended a General Meeting. Ralph is a geologist and physicist who enjoys rock collecting and is interested in lapidary work, mostly agates.

Announcements:

- The clubhouse now has a new refrigerator selected by Tom Wright and Charlie Fredregill. After a small debate at the General Meeting, it was decided that the already installed ice-maker in the new machine should be connected and utilized.
- Neal Immega now is officially the new HGMS Shop "Elf," AKA the person who attends to all machine problems within the clubhouse.
- Tom Wright has accepted the position of Shop Steward, AKA keeper of shop safety, sanity, and instruction.

Reports:

Youth Section: Beverly Mace

The Youth Section is doing wonderfully, so much so that there is a rotation of children through the workshop as we have too many cutters and not enough space. Quality workmanship is at an all-time high.

Education Committee Report: Mary Ann Mitscherling

- Wire Wrapping and PMC classes held early in January were full.
- The Mold Making class is moved to April.
- The February 9 Ad Hoc Casting class needs four more students to keep it from being cancelled and moved.
- A Fabrication class set for February 8 has met the minimum requirement but still has room for more.

Backbender's Gazette: Phyllis George

Requests that people have their material submitted by the cutoff date, the 8th of every month.

Shop and Clubhouse: Neal Immega

- Two wheels—the 3,000 and 8,000—are recoated with 25 cts. of diamond. Both wheels are working very well; however, going from 1,200 grit to cerium oxide produces a better polish when working with agate.
- The 18" rock saw is back. A thank you is extended to Tony Lucci for fixing the rock clamp and painting the outside of the saw. Gary Anderson worked on the worm drive and got it to go the right way. Stewart Murphy fixed a multitude of oil leaks. Thank you one and all for your help.

Programs for next month: Scott Singleton

Next month's program, February 22, will be a special collaboration with the Houston Museum of Natural Science to highlight the museum's newest exhibit, "Gold." A representative from the museum will give the presentation.

The standing committees reports (if any):

- **Clubhouse Committee** Dave Hawkins
All is well. Clean up of the clubhouse will commence soon.
- **Field Trip Committee** Neal Immega
No field trips are planned at the present time.
- **Library Committee** Art Smith
The indexing of the library has been accomplished. There are now 26,606 items in our library.
- **Membership Committee** Beverly Mace
Now is the time for dues. Do not delay.
- **Program Committee** Scott Singleton
 - ◆ As noted earlier we will have a special program in February to highlight the HMNS new exhibit, "Gold."
 - ◆ Also, in the interest of interclub relations, please note that the Texas Faceters Guild will host a special presentation titled "True Adventures of an American in Afghanistan" to be given by Gary Bowersocks. This program will be held in Austin at the Austin Clubhouse on Saturday, February 19 1–5 PM. There is a \$10 admission.

Special Committee Reports:

- **By-law Review Committee:** Scott Singleton/ John Moffitt
This committee is set up to research and gather information on defects and/or changes in the HGMS by-laws. Suggestions, opinions, and general feedback are needed and are requested from the membership at large. Information will be brought before the Board and then given over to the members to a final decision. The Board *will not* be making changes. The overall membership of the HGMS decides what in the by-laws are to be kept and what will be modified.
- **HGMS Internet Site Review Committee:** Paula Rutledge
January 27, 7:00 PM will be the first meeting of the Internet review committee to

discuss updating the HGMS Web site. Topics of discussion will include forming a volunteer group to become webmasters or should there be a paid professional to handle this task. All who are interested are welcome to come and help. The goal is to have a top Web-pick homepage.

Show and Tell:

- Dave Hawkins brought a prepared example of a trilobite in soft limestone. It was a very well done piece that he said was worked out with a dental pick and a Dremel™ tool.
- David Ables presented an example from his collection, a large specimen of Bixite. Bixite is a rare gemstone often called “Red Emerald.” This stone was believed to have come from a mine in Utah.
- Sunday and Rusty Bennett showed some of their fossil finds from Stewart County, Georgia. Among the fossils were oysters, clams, and a Bolimnite. They also brought back samples of iron ore and Georgia granite.
- Tam and Buz Shelby asked for identification of a few new fossils they inherited. The Shelby family also graciously donated several boxes of fossils to go to auction.

Old Business:

Roof repairs are complete! A payment will be made to the roofing company, and Paul McGarry has agreed to meet with the roofer as soon as possible to turn over the check.

New Business:

- Karen Burns asks for fellow stone cutters, faceters, wire wrappers, and anyone who wants to aid in showing off some talent to join her on Sundays at the Houston Museum of Natural Science beginning February 20. Karen and Stan Perkins were pleased with the response they received during their demonstrations over the Christmas holiday. They encourage anyone who wants to participate to come to the museum and let people see what HGMS members can do.
- February 26 and 27 are the dates of the Clear Lake Jewelry, Gem, and Mineral Show to be held at the Pasadena Convention Center. The Clear Lake group is seeking volunteers to help with their show. The HGMS is also asking for volunteers to represent our group at the show. Come and man the table and help the Clear Lake Group out. They are a great organization, and a little good will could go a long way.
- A special night tour of the new HMNS exhibit, “Gold,” will be coordinated by Scott Singleton and Inda Immega. A tentative date of Tuesday March 1 has been chosen. The tour will be given at a greatly reduced price to all HGMS members, and the tour will include docents who will help guide us through and explain the many wonders of this precious metal.

Door Prize brought by: Charlie Fredregill

The door prize, three silver rings donated by Charlie Fredregill, was won by Dean Lagerwall.

Program Introduction:

“Glaciers, Gold and Grizzlies,” a program highlighting Susan and Norm Lenz’s trip to Alaska, began with a slide show. The presentation ended with applause and a greater appreciation for the natural abundance of our fiftieth state. (An interesting factoid from the presentation: A grizzly bear eats well over 100,000 blue berries in one day. If you want to know more details ask Susan or Norm.)

Glaciers, Grizzlies, and Gold

Presentation by Norm and Susan Lenz

January 2005 General Meeting

by Scott Singleton

The Lenzes gave us an entertaining tour of Alaska at the January General Meeting. They showed 310 slides from their trip, which sounds like a lot until Norm informs us that they took over 7,000! Their trip lasted 16 days during late August and early September and covered a large portion of south central Alaska, from Anchorage to Fairbanks and a host of points between. Most of their lodging was at local bed and breakfasts (B&Bs), which they tell us was an “interesting” experience.

The first stop on their journey was Exit Glacier (partway between Seward and Anchorage), where our intrepid duo got to stare into the frigid blue depths of glacier ice. At Seward, they took a boat tour of Kenai Fjords National Park where glaciers were calving into the water and sea life was plentiful. Their next stop was Homer, the “artsy” capital of Alaska. Here they took the requisite hike out onto the tidal flats at low tide to turn over rocks and identify sea critters—more starfish and sea urchins than you can shake a stick at.

Next stop: Whittier, to take a nature boat tour of Prince William Sound called “The 26 Glacier Cruise.” Glaciers by the boatload, and orcas singing the “Free Willie” theme song in the background!

They then traveled back to Anchorage and on to Wasilla where they met up with relatives (contrary to popular rumor, the relatives were not Eskimos) and then to a reindeer farm and a muskox farm (big with the locals).

Finally, no Alaska trip would be complete without a visit to the Iditarod Headquarters and a sample sled run led by a dozen huskies that seem to be permanently stuck on 78 RPM.

Driving north from Wasilla, the Lenzes passed over Hatcher Pass and visited the first of two (ghost) gold mines, the Independence Mine.

The interesting item at this shuttered mine was hillsides covered with low shrubs of blueberries, where people and grizzlies alike could spend countless hours eating their fill of berries. On arrival at Talkeetna, they took an airplane tour of the rugged, glacier-capped mountains, hoping to see Mt. McKinley, but alas, it was fogged-in. However,

the consolation prize was merely range after range of jagged, high-mountain peaks interspersed with flowing rivers of ice.

From Talkeetna north to Fairbanks, the Lenzes took the Alaska Railroad through beautiful countryside. In Fairbanks they saw their second (ghost) gold mine (actually a sluice operation), called Gold Dredge #8, and actually got to try their hand at panning for gold. Susan has a very pretty necklace made with the gold they recovered. Norm has a river cobble painted with gold-colored paint.....

Fairbanks was also where the Lenzes were treated to three nights of exceptional Northern Lights viewing, and they have the pictures to prove it!

The trip was capped off with two days in the Denali area, including a full-day bus tour through the park. Grizzlies by the bucket-full!

Remember—don't feed the bears! They bite! And included on the ticket was one of the rare moments when Mt. McKinley wasn't shrouded in clouds. The result was an impressive portrait of the highest mountain in North America and a trip worth remembering for a long time to come.

Notice of Bylaws Review

by Scott Singleton

1st Vice President



As one of the Board initiatives for 2005, Norm Lenz has created a committee whose task is to review the HGMS bylaws. He has assigned me to head that committee.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the bylaws accurately define the roles, responsibilities, functions of the club, its sections, and its officers. Our scope is to conduct this review, and if we find any issues that need to be addressed, to approach the Board of Directors, and if approved, approach the club with suggested revisions. These revisions must be approved by majority vote at a General Meeting before they can take effect. They also must be posted in the BBG at least one month prior to the General Meeting vote so that everybody can have a chance to review them.

I am currently conducting this review. I would like to solicit any comments or suggestions from any club member concerning the bylaws. I realize that most people would probably rather watch paint dry than discuss a topic as exciting as the bylaws, but nevertheless, if you have any thoughts on the issue, please let me know.

I will be finishing my initial review and proposing further actions to the Board of Directors at their next meeting on March 7 (the date is being moved to accommodate the special HGMS night at the HMNS Gold! exhibit), so please have any comments to me by that time.

Web Site Committee News

*by Paula Rutledge
Web Site Committee Chair
PaulaTx1@aol.com*

The new Web Site Committee held an open meeting on Thursday, January 27 at the HGMS clubhouse. It was an extremely informative meeting. Ten people came who actually want to be hands-on with the Web site.

I would like to thank Jeanean Slamen, our outgoing webmaster, for her two excellent PowerPoint presentations concerning our Web site and how it works, how it could work, suggestions, etc. Our Web site has 377 pictures on it, 538 linked files, and 1288 hyperlinks. Jeanean also showed the history of our Web site, how it was created, and how it has been managed. She had suggestions for changing the look of the site and also how to improve our listing rank when brought up by Web search engines. My goal is to have our Web site pop up among the first ten when someone puts Rock & Mineral Society into the Google search engine—not somewhere else in the first 96,000 Web sites!

It is obvious that our Web site has grown as our club has grown. (And we're not exactly picking on the Show Committee for hogging all the space, but that's only because we haven't yet begun to run out of space.) Our site now is large enough that it cannot be handled by one person. Input from various Sections indicates that most of the Sections want Web content produced and changed monthly. Some groups, classes, and field trips for example, will actually benefit from more frequent updating—possibly weekly. The really exciting part is that ten people showed up for the meeting, and all either know a little about building Web pages or are willing to learn. Ten people should just about be able to divide up the work and keep the Web site covered if we act as a team.

I presented the Mission Statement and our Statement of Structure and Operation to the HGMS Board of Directors at the February Board meeting, February 8. The Board unanimously approved our statements.

Our Web Site Mission Statement: The primary mission of the HGMS Web site is to provide information about the Houston Gem & Mineral Society to HGMS members and to the general public.

Our Structure and Operation Statement can be found in its entirety in the February HGMS Board of Directors Minutes (in the notebook on top of the stove in the kitchen) and also in this issue of the BBG.

The Web Site Committee shall maintain an open door policy, and we encourage participation by any club member. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to participate.

To Jeanean Slamen: Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

by Paula Rutledge

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to Jeanean Slamen who took on the huge task of maintaining our Web site during some truly horrific times in her personal life. She has been so kind and accommodating when I asked her to help teach me what I needed to know to approach the HGMS Board of Directors, and she has been kind enough to help us transition from a one-person site to a Web Committee Site.

Jeanean, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your hard work in these recent years will not be forgotten. And we will make you proud of what we end up creating. Thank you!

HGMS Board Minutes

February 1, 2005

by Sunday Bennett, Secretary

Board members present: Norm Lenz, President; Scott Singleton, 1st Vice President; Beverly Mace, 2nd Vice President; Paul McGarry, Treasurer; Sunday Bennett, Secretary; Paula Rutledge, Faceting Representative; David Hawkins, Lapidary Representative; Art Smith, Mineral Representative, and Tom Wright, Day Light Representative.

Reports

Backbender's Gazette: Phyllis George (not in attendance)

Shop and Clubhouse: David Hawkins and Tom Wright

- Cleanup of the garage area is continuing.
- A dry erase board has been put up in the first classroom.
- HGMS member Al Mowery offered to buy the gold dredge machine. It was moved and passed to allow Mowery to purchase the gold dredge.

Treasurer's Report: Paul McGarry

- The bank account is currently balanced and on budget.
- A copy of the "Comparison of Actual to Budget" report for January 2005 was handed out to the Board.
- A more precise budget review will be forthcoming after a side-by-side comparison is made of the actual and proposed budgets for 2004 and 2005.

Library: Art Smith

- Historical books donated by J. Walker are now in the library.
- Wire wrapping magazines requested by many lapidary members are no longer in publication, but all back issues are available for purchase. The cost of purchase is more than the library can afford. The sheer number of back issues dictates that the magazines be bound. The library agrees to bind them but cannot afford the purchase of back issues.
- Lapidary Representative David Hawkins and member Tom Wright will suggest

to the Lapidary Section at their next meeting that the Section pay for purchasing the magazines.

Show Committee: Carol Thompson (not in attendance)

Education Committee Report: Mary Ann Mitscherling

Mary Ann Mitscherling was not in attendance. President Norm Lenz speaking on her behalf stated that Mary Ann was preparing an updated schedule of classes to be posted to the HGMS Web site.

Special Committee Reports

Nominating Committee: Art Smith, Tom Wright, Matt Dillon

- Tom Wright is appointed head of the nominating committee.
- The search for an assistant show chair continues.
- Several nominee lists are ready, and names are to be put in priority order. Carolyn Thompson may be consulted on names.

HGMS Web Site Committee: Paula Rutledge, Web Site Committee Chair

- Paula reported on the progress made at the open meeting Thursday, January 27. The ten people present agreed to become part of our Web Site Committee team. A Mission Statement and Operating Structure were crafted in the days following the meeting, and Paula presented the finished statement to the Board.
- The Board unanimously approved both the Statement and the Structure. The Board also unanimously accepted Phyllis George as our official new webmaster.
- Scott Singleton proposed, and the Board unanimously agreed, to publish the Mission Statement and the Operating Structure statement in the February HGMS Board meeting minutes so there is an official record of the information. The Mission Statement will be published on the home page of the Web site.

Bylaw Committee: Scott Singleton, John Moffitt

Scott Singleton presented a preliminary report of bylaw changes. Several Sections were highlighted as needing change. It was agreed that Scott should edit the sections discussed and bring the rewrites to the Board for a more formal discussion.

Section Representative Reports

Faceting: Paula Rutledge

The faceting section still has no official Section chair.

Day Light:

Vic Helm is approved by the Board for honorary membership in the HGMS.

Programs for next month: Scott Singleton

February's program will be feature a presentation on "Gold," the Houston Museum of Natural Science's newest exhibit. One of several museum representatives will give the presentation.

Old Business

- The roof repair is complete. The roofing contractor has been paid. The roofing

contractor requests an extra payment for added materials. Due to a national shortage of 1.5" iso board, two layers of 1" iso board were used to ensure proper roof coverage. Board members agreed to pay half of the requested amount for materials.

- The insurance payment, based on membership, has been given to the SCFMS. As of January 15, 2005, we had 465 adults and 65 youth members.

New Business

- Scott Singleton received approval for the March 1 special tour of the "Gold" exhibit at the HMNS. This date means moving the March Board meeting from Tuesday, March 1 to Monday, March 7. The HMNS requests a count of tour attendees so they can schedule an appropriate number of docents. A final announcement will be made in the BBG. The question of a tour fee is still being decided. The fee, if any, will be announced at the March General Meeting.
- Ivan Perez of the HMNS requested a list of the HGMS guest show list. The HGMS will approach the HMNS with an offer of exchanging our show list of approximately 3,000 names for a list of HMNS members (about 35,000) who live within a five-mile radius of the Humble Civic Center.

The standing committees shall be as follows:

- Clubhouse Committee David Hawkins, Tom Wright
- Field Trip Committee Neal Immega
- History Committee Art Smith
- Library Committee Art Smith
- Membership Committee Beverly Mace
- Newsletter Committee Phyllis George
- Program Committee Scott Singleton
- Refreshments Committee By volunteers

Special committees:

- Nominating Committee Art Smith, Tom Wright, Matt Dillon
- Show Committee Carol Thompson
- By-law Committee Scott Singleton, John Moffitt
- Web Site Committee Paula Rutledge

Phyllis George Announced as New Webmaster

*by Paula Rutledge
Web Site Committee Chair*

I am pleased to announce that Phyllis George has graciously agreed to be our webmaster. Welcome to the Web site, Phyllis.

HGMS Web Site Mission Statement

The primary mission of the HGMS Web site is to provide information about the Houston Gem & Mineral Society to HGMS members and to the general public.

Structure and Operation

To achieve this goal, the HGMS shall maintain an active Web site on the World Wide Web. The site will be populated with up-to-date information relevant to club members and to others seeking information about our club and hobby. Because the HGMS has several special interest Sections (Faceting, Lapidary, Mineral, Paleo, Youth, and Day Light) and activities (youth education, adult education, field trips, publications, and the annual Show), each of these shall be adequately represented in an informative manner on the Web site.

Maintenance of the HGMS Web site shall be the responsibility of the Web Site Committee. This committee shall be composed of a Committee Chair, a webmaster with backup webmasters as needed, and content providers responsible for specific sections of the Web site.

The Committee Chair functions as Representative to the Board for the Committee.

The Webmaster will have overall technical control of Web content. This includes the overall appearance and structure of the Web site as well as interfacing with the service provider. The Webmaster shall have absolute control of password distribution. All content must first be approved by the webmaster before being published on the Web site.

Content providers will come from the Sections they represent. Work assignments for content providers shall be made by the webmaster in accordance with the skills of the providers and their abilities to meet schedule requirements. Content providers will assemble, create, and format material for their respective Web site Sections and will present materials in Web-ready form to the webmaster or assistant webmaster. ("Web-ready" means in HTML format.)

Requests for Web site content changes should be made directly to the content provider responsible for the Section in question.

The Web Site Committee shall maintain an open door policy that encourages participation by any club member.

February 1, 2005

Paula Rutledge,

Website Committee Chair

Photos of the roof repair--all taken by Tom Wright



Matt Dillon inspecting the finished roofing job



Tips & Hints

From Oregon Coast Agate Club 11-12/02, via Snoopy Gems 10/04

7-Up® can be used to clean sliver and gold findings. Just dip, shake, and rinse well. Rub with a soft cloth. Make certain that different solutions are used for gold and silver.

Polish on Turquoise: If you are running into trouble getting a good polish on turquoise, use a piece of organdy on the wheel. It seems to be more effective than felt.

Keep Tools Rust Free: Toss a piece of charcoal into your toolbox to keep your tools rust free.

Heat to Polish Quickly: *From T-Town Rockhound 7/03, Via Quarry Quips 4/04 and Snoopy Gems 4/04*

After lapping flat stones such as cut thunder eggs with 600 grit, wash them and leave them under a heat lamp or 100 watt bulb for about 15 minutes. When the stones are warm, polish them on a flat wheel with tin oxide. By preheating, the polishing is almost instantaneous. Otherwise the felt wheel has to heat the stone before polishing begins.

To Finish Soapstone As the Chinese Did: *From The Tumbler 5/01, via The Sooner Rockologist 4-5/01*

Heat the finished carving in the oven for an hour at 200 degrees. Remove from the oven, apply a coat of paste wax, and polish. A jade effect results from this method.

Safety First—Eye Safety

by Bill Klose

AFMS Safety Chairperson

from AFMS Newsletter 2/05

Eyes require protection at all times of the year, whether it is protection from the sun on the way to a collecting site, protection from flying particles at a collecting site, or protection from chemicals, dust, or particles while processing our finds back home in the shop.

Eye hazards include particles, dusts, mists, vapors, fumes, gases, and ultraviolet light. Many of these hazards are encountered by rock hounds in pursuit of their passion.

Safety glasses or spectacles are designed to provide impact protection from flying particles and have heavier frames than normal spectacles with impact-resistant lenses, usually of polycarbonate. These lenses can be tinted to protect the eyes from laser or ultraviolet light and the sun's rays. As most particles enter the eyes at an angle, it is recommended that the frames accommodate and be worn with side shields or have them built in. Safety glasses are available with corrective lenses, even bifocal and multifocal lenses. Do not use spectacles intended for protection from radiation and glare from the sun indoors where your vision may be impaired by the tinted lenses. Spectacles should be fitted to your eye, bridge size, and temple length and should fit comfortably over the eyes. The frame should be close to the face and supported by the bridge of the nose. Keep spectacles clean and clear of scratches. Store spectacles in a dry clean place where they will not fall or be stepped on. Scratched or damaged spectacles should be discarded as they interfere with vision and do not provide protection for the eyes from fumes, vapors, liquids, and large particles.

Safety goggles provide a secure shield around the entire eye area to protect against hazards coming from many different directions and spread the force of impact over a larger area around the eyes than spectacles. Goggles are most effective when worn with safety spectacles and are also provided with impact-resistant lenses that can be tinted if required. Goggles that are unvented or indirectly vented will provide protection from splash hazards. Goggles may be provided with fog free coatings.

Face shields are required when poring hot liquids, using acids to clean rocks or fossils, breaking rocks with hand or mechanical equipment, and while dressing grinding wheels. Face shields should never be used without goggles and safety spectacles and are available with protective head gear and chemical hoods.

Select the proper level of eye protection prior to starting any activity and remember that the risk of bypassing a level because "it will only take a second and I will be careful" could cost you one of your most precious possessions, your sight.

Another word of caution:

Incidents of house fires are cropping up again because of the use of those electric plug-in air fresheners. In some instances, the plastic housing of the unit is being melted from the electrical current flowing through it and causing fires. Use caution if you use these products—or better yet, switch to one of the nonelectric types.

2005 SCFMS Show Scheduled

The 2005 South Central Federation Show will be held in Austin, TX December 2-4 and hosted by Austin Gem & Mineral Society.

Welcome to 2005--AFMS President's Message

*by Bill Smith, AFMS President
from AFMS Newsletter 2/05*

I have asked clubs for ways they share the hobby with the public and add new members. I am very impressed with what the Southern Washington Mineralogical Society, Longview, Washington has done. They put together an educational case of identified minerals, fossils, and rocks, and informed the local schools that the school having the most school children who attended the local show **with their parents** would have the educational case donated to that school. It was a major success.



I want to thank all the editors who send me their club newsletter or who let me know it is online.

There are many very interesting articles, and I hope you are making sure they get to your Regional Federation for recognition.

I also want to thank those who have sent me e-mails, especially with questions about the AFMS. Shirley Metts, Secretary of the Magic Valley Gem Club in Twin Falls, Idaho, asked where the club could obtain more AFMS membership cards. I will have to be honest and say I didn't even know we had such an item. I have found out they are about the size of a business card when folded, have the AFMS logo on the front, a list of the Regional Federations on the back, and you can circle the regional federation you belong to. Inside is the AFMS code of ethics. These are very nice cards and can be handed to members of the public to give them a better idea of what we are all about. Your club can order them through your Regional Supply person.

Linda Lanning, Secretary of the Siuslaw Gem and Mineral Club in Florence, Oregon said they are a growing club (that's great), are concerned about liability insurance, and asked if the AFMS had an insurance program. Sorry to say, the AFMS does not have such a program. However, several of the Regional Federations do. If your club needs liability insurance, first check with your Regional Federation to see if they have a policy that would cover your club.

John "SpeedyJake" Kramer, webmaster for the St. Lawrence County Rock and Mineral Club, sent me an e-mail noting that he has installed updated hyperlinks to their Web site. What made this e-mail so unique was that he did this from Mosul, Iraq. Jake, to you from all of us here in the states, we wish you and your comrades a safe journey while in Iraq and on your trip home. You make us proud to be Americans.

ShowTime 2005

February 26-27	Pasadena, TX	Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society Pasadena Convention Center 7902 Fairmont Parkway, 281-481-1591 www.ghg.net/gpenning/annual.htm
March 5-6	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring Prospectors Club Howard County Fair Barn Jerald Wilson (432) 263-4662
March 11-13	Augusta, GA	Aiken and Augusta Gem & Mineral Societies Julian Smith Casino, 2205 Broad St. Constance Barrow (706) 547-0178
March 12-13	Corpus Christi, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Bayfront Plaza Convention Center 1902 Shoreline Drive Jerrold Simpson 361-851-8788
March 26-27	Odessa, TX	West Texas Gem & Mineral Society 3555 W. 16th St. Robert Thompson (432) 337-3662
April 1-3	New Orleans, LA	Gem & Mineral Society of Louisiana Alario Center, 2000 Segnette Blvd. Sylvia Dabdoub (504) 469-5994
April 1-3	San Antonio, TX	Southwest Gem & Mineral Society Morris Activity Center, Freeman Coliseum SBC Center parkway, Gate E Bobby Schultz, 210-337-8908
April 9-10	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center, N. 6th & Pine St. Sallie Lightfoot (325) 692-4642
April 15-17	Fort Davis, TX	Big Bend Gem & Mineral Show CDRI Facility, Hwy. 118 Donna Trammell (432) 426-2924
April 15-17	Gulfport, MS	Harrison County Gem & Mineral Society Rice Pavilion, Hwy. 49 & Hwy. 90 Billy E. Wood (228) 863-6312
April 23-24	Memphis, TN	Memphis Archaeological & Geological Soc. Pipkin Building Midsouth Fairgrounds W.C. McDaniel (901) 274-7706

2005		MARCH					2005
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	
		1 HMNS tour on Gold!	2 7:30 Mineral Section	3	4	5 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open	
6	7 7:30 Board Meeting	8 7:30 Show Comm.	9 7:30 Faceting Section	10	11	12 11-3 Shop Open	
13	14 1:00 Day Light Section	15 7:30 Paleo Section	16 7:30 Mineral Section	17	18	19 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open	
20 Palm Sunday	21 7:30 Lapidary Section	22 7:30 General Meeting	23	24	25 Good Friday	26 11-3 Shop Open	
27 Easter	28	29	30	31			

2005		APRIL					2005
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	
					1	2 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open	
3	4	5 7:30 Board Meeting	6 7:30 Mineral Section	7	8	9 11-3 Shop Open	
10	11 1:00 Day Light Section	12 7:30 Show Comm	13 7:30 Faceting Section	14	15	16 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open	
17	18 7:30 Lapidary Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20 7:30 Mineral Section	21	22	23 11-3 Shop Open	
24	25	26 7:30 General Meeting	27	28	29	30 11-3 Shop Open	

The **BACKBENDER'S** **GAZETTE**

*The Newsletter of the Houston
Gem & Mineral Society*

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HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099
(281) 530-0942



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