



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

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

Volume XXXVI - No. 10

October 2005

## **President's Message**

*September, 2005*

*Norman Lenz*

*HGMS President, 2004-2005*



**F**ellow HGMS Members,

We have been very fortunate in recent years to receive many donations of books, minerals, gemstones, equipment, and jewelry. These have not only added to our libraries, shop, display specimens, and school collections, but they have contributed financially to the society's treasury while giving our members an opportunity to add to their collections. Donations free and clear to the Club are generally no problem for us to accept. However if the donor wants a receipt for income tax purposes, there are certain rules that we must follow. If the understanding is that the material is to be auctioned, then the value of the donation is



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*President's Message continued on page 4*

## **September and October General Meeting Programs**

*by Scott Singleton*

*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

**S**eptember's General Meeting will occur at its normally scheduled time and date (Tuesday, September 27) **in the clubhouse**. I say this because for the past few years we have held a joint General Meeting / Paleo Section Meeting at the show in conjunction with the Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner held Thursday night of the show. The HGMS Board voted at its August meeting not to hold the General Meeting at the show, so the General Meeting will be held at its



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*Copy is due for the November issue by Saturday, October 8, 2005. (When the 8th falls on Saturday, I create the BBG that same weekend. When the 8th fall on Sunday, I create the BBG the following 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 months, ¼ page; \$150 for 6 months, 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>.

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*President's Message continued from page 1*

determined by the amount the Club receives from the auction. If the donation is to be evaluated before the auction or sale, then a value must be estimated as the donor's gift to the Club. The material cannot be sold or auctioned for at least two years and the sale or auction value should approximate the donation's estimated value.

We generally do not get involved as a Club in estate sales unless the Club is to receive a portion of the sales. The Club generally receives at least 50 percent of the sale, but in special cases other arrangements may be made with approval of the Board of Directors. If any evaluation of donated material is required, we need to have someone knowledgeable about that material make the evaluation. It is particularly useful if the person making the evaluation is a dealer or someone who makes evaluations as part of his or her business. If the total donation is over \$4000, additional rules apply. If the material is under \$4000, the donor can evaluate it himself, and we should encourage them to do that.

If the situation of a donation comes up or a potential sale of material is planned, I would suggest that the Board be made aware of the details. We are a nonprofit organization and do not want to cross the line into commercialism and possibly lose our 501(c)(3) status. There will be no tax deduction value to the donor if we lose our current tax status.

Please discourage vendors from coming to the Clubhouse for the sole purpose of selling merchandise. We want to avoid the appearance of commercialization. However, they are encouraged to come for the purpose of classes, lectures, and discussions that are of educational value to our membership. It can be helpful if they bring show and tell items or inventory items to help make their discussion more interesting and educational. The distinction is that pure commercialization is discouraged while educational items are encouraged.

Government rules can change, and at times they can be contradictory. We need to be cautious so we can continue to enjoy the auctions and sales that have been so beneficial to the Club and the membership.

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

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*Program Information continued from page 1*

normal time and place. Apologies to everyone for the misinformation in last month's Bulletin, but these plans were not yet firmed up by the due date of the Bulletin.

The **September General Meeting program** is on the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art. This museum is located in Elmhurst, Illinois and was opened to the general public in 1962. The museum defines lapidary art as "a combination of miracles of nature, the mysteries of science, and the creative genius of man in the medium of stone, which endures forever." The Lizzadro Museum presents this beauty in the form of art objects, mineral specimens, gems, and gem materials.

The speaker for this meeting is Russ Kemp. Russ became an HGMS member after he

and his wife Doris retired here several years ago. Russ has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Lizzadro Museum since its opening, and he became its Chairman in 1972. Russ also has been active in his native Midwestern Federation of Mineralogical Societies for many decades (including President) and served as AFMS president in 1979.

The **October General Meeting program** will be on the Bureau of Economic Geology's Houston Core Repository, officially known as the Houston Research Center. It is a state-of-the-art climate-controlled facility and is equipped to permanently store and curate over 500,000 boxes of geologic core and cuttings. The Houston, Austin, and Midland BEG core facilities have combined holdings of nearly 2 million boxes of geologic material. After curating, the material is entered into an integrated log and core database for use by the scientific community.

The speaker is Beverly DeJarnett, a geologist and research associate with BEG and manager for the Houston Research Center.

### **Making Tracks on the Paluxy River**

*by Neal Immega*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

*Photos by Neal Immega*

We had our first joint field trip with the Houston Geological Society and the Houston Gem and Mineral Society, and it was a complete success. We have always had a mixing between societies and I wanted to show the HGS folks that HGMS has lots to offer. Our leader for this activity was Glen Kuban, who has been publishing on trackways in general and on the Paluxy River dinosaur tracks in particular. Even after the pillaging of the Glen Rose trackways by New Yorkers in the 1930s, Dinosaur Valley State Park and environs are still among the best places in the world to see theropod and sauropod trackways.

All the guidebooks have been telling you this for years—"you need a native guide to see the sights," and Glen was ours. I bet you have been to the park and thought that most of the tracks had been collected 70 years ago. Not true. Glen took us to trackways that run for more than 30 steps down the



river. He showed us tracks where the fillings are harder than the tracks and so the tracks stand in relief! He even showed us the real story behind the disputed "Paluxy Man Tracks." Glen has worked with the Parks people for so long that we were given extraordinary access and taken through back gates and across fields to reach prime areas.



We got many strange looks from other visitors when we descended to the river level and started to clean the riverbed with our brooms. The negative relief trackways collect sediment and frequently are covered by luxurious blooms of algae. Though it looks like King Canute sweeping back the sea, this process



really works to make the tracks visible. The river flow quickly clears the area of stirred up sediment.



One of the great benefits of doing the field trip literally *in* the river is that the children had a great time playing in the water and providing small feet for scale in the pictures. The tracks look ever so much bigger with a kid-sized foot for scale.

We got to see a string of tracks where some are so eroded that they look like they were made by a really huge human foot. In the same string are some uneroded tracks where you can see that the elongation of the track is from the dinosaur heel (metatarsal). Theropods normally walk on their toes, but sometimes their heel comes in contact





with the ground (bad posture? flat feet? tired?). In this case, the sediment was so soft that it filled in the claw marks, which become “toes” on an eroded track.

The Houston Gem and Mineral Society and the Houston Geological Society have many members in common and have similar interests in seeing geology in the field. I became a geologist because I enjoyed rockhounding as a child.

### **From Dream to Reality**

*by D. R. “Matt” Dillon*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**A**s a child growing up in Houston, I often thought of nothing more than getting outside and wandering the edges of my world to see what new things I could find. Of course as I grew older, my world grew larger and I wandered greater distances (despite my mother’s constant warnings) to find even more interesting things and places filled with new sights, smells, and sounds.

By the time I was 10 years old, I knew where the biggest ditches, closest ponds (mostly puddles), and the best-tasting dewberries could be found and explored. I had already been exposed to searching for arrowheads and small rocks in a variety of places my parents traveled to, and one day I happened to wander far enough to find a path leading to the nearby set of railroad tracks. Once I set foot on those tracks, my life was changed forever.

The glistening rails appeared to go on forever, and I had never seen so many different looking rocks in one place. I am not certain whether it was the first time I walked a few feet down those tracks, but eventually I had to see what was inside one of the rocks I found. It occurred to me it might be possible to break one open by slamming it down against the steel rail. It may have taken several attempts, but once I managed to break a rock on one of the rails and see what it had hidden inside, I was definitely hooked.

About that same time my parents decided to take a trip out west to expose me to the several national parks in the western states and eventually to the brand new “Disney Land” and other wonderful places in California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. Along the highways we found (mostly I noticed them) many rock shops and other curio shops. Although I was only eleven years old, I quickly developed an interest in agates and other polished rocks.

It did not take long for me to realize there had to be a relationship between the beautiful polished rocks in the shops and the rocks I found on the railroad tracks. I wasn’t sure what it meant, but it spurred me on to spending even more time on those tracks, breaking rocks, and learning what could be inside them.

Over the next five or six years I began to learn about rock shops in Houston and as soon as I could drive, I spent as much time as I could visiting them and spending as much money as I could afford on rocks and mineral specimens. I quickly established my favorites as agates from Mexico and West Texas with the beautiful banding and plumes. Wanting to learn more about them, I also began buying issues of the *Lapidary*

*Journal* and other similar publications and reading about the exotic-sounding places the agates and minerals came from.

I often daydreamed of taking trips to west Texas and to Mexico to find agates of my own. I read every account I could find that described the efforts already made by older collectors. As I grew older and got a job, I was able to make a few trips out west and did experience first hand the pleasure of exploring the foothills of mountains and the expanses of deserts and finding my own agates. I also began buying the equipment necessary to cut and polish rocks, which only served to wet my appetite for more collecting.

During those early trips as I explored numerous collecting sites and visited many rock shops, I learned about the beautiful varieties of agates that could be found in West Texas and Mexico. I often asked the rock shop owners for any additional information they had on locations to collect and how I could get to the more famous areas I had read about. Most of the time I was told, "You cannot go there," or "The location is worked out or off limits," during the times of the year when I could go there. As you can imagine, I was disappointed.

I also learned from some of the places where I purchased agates that some Mexican collectors bring their finds to the border and sell them to dealers and other collectors who gather there at the appropriate time. As I learned more about what they were selling and where it came from, I began to think of ways to get across the border and to go to the different areas where they had been collecting. I often told those living in the area in Texas that I wanted to do this, and I watched how they reacted to learn whether they had ever gone across the border to collect.

Meanwhile, I continued to dream of getting across the border and of finding a "glory hole" of an agate deposit that would justify my efforts. It took about six or seven years of frequent inquiries before I learned about some day-trips being operated out of Lajitas, Texas. I was told those wanting to go on these trips would have to find a way across the border and if enough people showed an interest, the guide would meet us there and provide transportation to the collecting sites in Mexico.

This was around 1990 and I eventually went on one of those trips, but I was greatly disappointed when I found out the actual rock collecting time was to last only a couple of hours and that most of the trip consisted of driving around the San Carlos area on dusty roads and having lunch in San Carlos. We did visit two sites, and I managed to pick up about twenty pounds of agate of several varieties. However, I never felt I spent enough time looking at the rocks to become familiar with them and to understand the potential of the area.

After we returned to Texas, I approached the contact person and asked him if it would be possible to arrange a trip that would last two or three days for several of the more serious collectors. I explained we would be willing to camp out and even to hire a local person to come to our campsite and cook our meals. I realized this would probably involve getting permission from some landowner, so I asked him if he could check into this idea. He was not very enthusiastic about my idea, but did agree to ask around and



find out if it could be done.

I never did hear back from that person and ended up making other similar inquiries of people who lived or worked in that general area. Around the 1995–1996 time period, I found out about a bed and breakfast being built in San Carlos, Chihuahua, Mexico and was introduced to the owner who lived in Lajitas, Texas. During my meeting with Ms. Gloria Rodriguez, I learned that she was related to the guide who took us to the collecting sites on the day trips. I also learned that Mr. Fidencio Villa was one of the men who collected agate and mineral specimens and sold them to the dealers who came from time to time to the border to buy.

With the help of a friend and through Ms. Rodriguez, I took a trip over to spend the night at the bed and breakfast and went to see the collecting sites where the guide had permission to take us. I found the agate beds—the guide took us to an agate-collecting paradise. It contained several varieties of agate, and I immediately began making plans to return with a larger group as soon as I could make the arraignments.

Since 1996 I have made more than a dozen trips to San Carlos and have taken more than fifty different collectors on trips lasting anywhere from three to five days. On one of the earlier trips, I discovered a deposit of bouquet agate that had not previously been identified or written about. That same area produces beautiful fortification and tube agate.

My experiences with the bed and breakfast (called “La Gloria”) and the guides in Mexico have certainly been the fulfillment of a life-long dream. The accommodations and food are excellent, and the agate collecting has been all I hoped for.

Anyone wanting more information on trips to San Carlos can reach me through the Houston Gem & Mineral Society or by e-mail at [dillon8043@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dillon8043@sbcglobal.net).



The photos here and on the following page were taken by Matthew Phillips and Matt Dillon. HGMS club members around the truck are Matthew Phillips, John Anderson, Bob Rosenkranz, and Blanca Lopez. Marjie Erkkila, Bob Rosenkranz, and Matt Dillon examine agates around a table.



The agates on the table are some found by Preston Adcox near San Carlos in 2004. The agate cabochons were polished by Preston (member of the Austin club), and he and his wife Janet fashioned the bouquet agate pendant. Gloria Rodriguez, owner of the bed and breakfast, admires the pendant and hints she would like to have one like it.



## My Mineral Activities in New England—2005 continued

by Art Smith

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

With less than two weeks left of my stay in New Hampshire, I will relate what has happened during the last half of my stay here. So far the highlight of my stay was a quick trip to the East Coast Show in Springfield, Massachusetts on August 12, but backtracking a bit I will mention my three day stay in Vermejo Park, New Mexico during the first three days of the month. There were lots of rocks, plenty of trout to catch, and almost perfect weather. However, I did not find any collectable minerals. I did bring a few rocks back for other purposes, but not as much as when I was handling our School Collections.

To get to the East Coast show, I got up early on Friday and made it from the New Hampshire cottage to the show by using the easy scenic back route in three hours and 15 minutes. I then spent 30 minutes in line waiting for the show to open. The trip was so successful that I made the mistake of taking the same route back. However going back took over four hours, and I know I could have taken Interstates most of the way in three hours or less.

The show has grown since my last trip there, and I was amazed to see and feel a Tucson-like atmosphere among several of the dealers. There were close to 200 of them in retail and wholesale. I had a limited amount of time so I took care of business first, and that was to buy some rock and mineral carvings for consignment. I was rather disappointed in the offerings in the wholesale area. Many more carvings were in retail,

but since it was the first day of the show, I figured I would be wasting my time trying to talk wholesale with retail dealers. Even so I bought several—nothing super outstanding, and probably not enough to make the trip economically viable.

Then it was time to look at minerals, and I did it rather quickly. I knew the chances of finding New Hampshire minerals were slim and none, so I concentrated on finding something that was unusual and would clang my chimes. There was much available that was good and expensive, but after doing a complete round I found nothing compelling. I picked up amber, Peruvian gypsum, and an Alberta, Canada gypsum in wholesale from Midwest Minerals, and I got some carvings so I would not be skunked. I decided to try another round of the wholesale area. I had some close calls with hematite and quartz crystals and garnet and quartz crystals from China, but I have seen better and they have been on the market for several years so did not seem so exciting.

Then as I passed Mike New's booth, I noticed some quartz crystals studded with green epidote fans. They were interesting but not cheap, even wholesale. The quartz crystals were grayish or slightly purplish due to inclusions, and what he had was not that striking. Then I picked up a closed flat that contained a 6 by 6 inch plate of rather flat, gray, fairly large quartz terminations with several protruding green epidote fans along one edge. These were attractive but not outstanding, except there were numerous half-inch diameter white spheres plus a couple of smaller white quartz inclusions octahedral in shape. There were no labels on the box except epidote and quartz. Where were they from? What are the included white spheres? I waited until Mike was done with his customer and asked. His reply was disappointing when he said China. However, he continued by saying they were from Sichwan or Sichuan Province, but he had no information on the exact location. I later found the location of Jinkoue assigned to similar specimens. However, the specimens are so distinctive that it will be easy to eventually assign them to a specific location if the information I have is incorrect.

I asked if he had any ideas about the identification of the white inclusions. He thought possibly cristobalite which is a higher temperature form of silicon dioxide and pointed to one of the octahedrons. The possibility made sense to me. I went back through the boxes and found an under-priced specimen of about the same size but slightly different. It was under priced because it had an ugly damaged area of broken quartz on one side. I examined it carefully and decided it could be trimmed easily and made into a first class specimen. So I spent more than I intended, then headed for the parking lot and the long drive back to the cottage. The specimens are fairly attractive, but the inclusions are what really grabbed me. It will be a challenge to confirm or re-identify the inclusions and to track down the specific locality from which they came.

My collecting activities consisted of a trip to Moat Mountain with Gene Bearss, my two brothers, and myself. We decided to concentrate our collecting activities at what is called the Brook Locality. It is outside the National Forest Collecting area, and a few diggers have been warned and chastised by the Forest Service for digging up the roots of trees. Our efforts were directed at the small cavities already available in the brook (that was dry) and in the talus piles of previous diggers. We had hoped to find some of the rare minerals that Bob Janules has collected and written up in the *News*

*Letter of the Micromounters of New England.* We worked the area for about three hours and obtained quite a bit of material, most of which has to be trimmed, cleaned, and then examined to see if we have had any luck. The initial results are disappointing, but I have about 15 to 20 specimens to examine later at home in Houston. Hopefully I will have more of interest than the two red danalites that I am sure are there.

Today I stopped by the old Madison lead mine for an hour of walking the dumps. There has been some recent digging by collectors, and it is always worth the time to check their tailings piles because many of the rocks come out completely dirt covered and rain can always reveal some things of interest not seen by the original digger. I found some green fragments in one pile which here indicate possible pyromorphite, but the coatings were all very thin and so probably nothing much was found. I did get some hydrozincite which is easy to spot as thin white coatings and can be confirmed by the blue-white fluorescence under short wave ultraviolet radiation. Unfortunately when I tested them tonight, only one has enough to make a nice specimen of interest. Another specimen has microscopic hemimorphite crystals and so is being cleaned. The crystals are pale gray and in rosettes, and they are thicker than the usual hemimorphites from this location. They may be barite crystals.

I may have to have them tested if I cannot be sure which it is after they are cleaned. I broke up the rest after they dried from an initial washing, but there was nothing of interest in them.

So that may be it for this year unless I get to make a quick trip out with my UV light some night.

### Speaking Out!!!

*by Terrell Wm. "Terry" Proctor, J.D.*



publication is what really makes an organization. Have you ever belonged to a group which seemed like a good idea, but it did not go over like it should? Did it have a publication?

I have worked with a large number of organizations over the years. My experience has been that when an organization has a great publication that keeps the membership advised of events and allows the members to have their say in print, the group really thrives. When there is no publication or it is curtailed, the organization suffers.

As most Houston Gem & Mineral Society members know, the Backbender's Gazette has been winning awards year after year. This is because it continues to publish articles by members who want to write. Many of those articles also win awards year after year, thanks to the diligence of our Editor, Phyllis George, in seeing that they are entered into the annual competition.

From time to time there are some who want to curtail the size of the BBG. This curtails the ability of everyone who wants to write articles, poems etc. to do so. It also curtails the ability of the HGMS membership to read interesting articles and news.

We have a really great club that is the envy of many others because we remain strong, interesting, and *published*. This article is to thank all those who contribute to the suc-

cess of the BBG. I especially want to thank our Editor who has done such a great job for so many years, making sure everyone has a fair chance to Speak Out and to be heard. To those who have yet to write their first article, please think about doing so. The club and its members all benefit from the variety of articles written by new writers and by the established writers who contribute regularly.

### It's SHOWTIME!

*by Carol Thompson*

*HGMS Show Chairman*

**I**t's time to gear up for our 2005 Gem, Jewelry, Mineral & Fossil Show. I hope all club members have signed up to work a shift—or three—at the show, because we need YOU to make it a success.

The following is a list of this year's show events—hope to see you there.

**Wednesday, September 21, 6–7:30 p.m.: Loading the show material.** We need 10–15 volunteers to help get all materials, supplies, and equipment from the clubhouse onto a truck. Representatives from each Section must ensure that their “stuff” is loaded in an organized manner so it can be unpacked and set up Thursday in Humble. Please make sure someone from your Section is on hand for this important activity.

**Thursday, September 22, 8 a.m.: Unloading the show material and setting up Section booths** at the Humble Civic Center. **Each section** is responsible for setting up its booth. We also need volunteers to help set up cases and to dress about half of the dealer tables.

**Thursday, September 22, 11 a.m.:** Dealers begin arriving to set up their booths.

**Thursday, September 22, 6:30 p.m.: Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.** This casual meal will allow dealers to relax and visit with club members—or they can grab a quick bite and get back to setting up their booths. All HGMS members and volunteers are invited to attend.

**Thursday, September 22, 7:30 p.m.: Paleo Section Meeting.** George Blasing will talk about Dinosaur World's traveling museum exhibit featured at this year's show. The exhibit, “A Prehistoric Journey,” showcases fossil replicas of skeletons, skulls, teeth, bones, spikes, and claws from a variety of prehistoric creatures. The exhibit spans millions of years across earth's early time periods to include specimens from the Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, and Pleistocene eras. All club members are invited to attend what promises to be a great presentation.

**Friday, September 23, 9 a.m.:** The show kicks off with **School Daze**, our Earth Science program. This part of the show is an important community service that impacts thousands of students who attend each year. Remember, these kids represent the future. **PLEASE VOLUNTEER TO HELP**—it takes a lot of club members to ensure that this program runs smoothly.

**Sunday, September 25, 9 a.m.: Rolling Rock Club** meeting, dealer/volunteer hos-

pitality room.

**Sunday, September 25, 5 p.m.: Show closes**, and it's time to tear down the booths and to pack everything up in the truck. Each Section will handle its own booth. Even though everyone is usually pretty exhausted by this time, club members need to pull together for one last push to get everything back to the clubhouse.

**Sunday, September 25, 7 p.m.: Unloading the U-Haul truck** at the clubhouse followed by a **tasty chicken dinner** for our hard-working volunteers. PLEASE HELP WITH THIS IF YOU CAN. It's the last big task to accomplish before we all go home and collapse.

**Haven't volunteered yet?** It's never too late to **sign up to help at this year's show**. Volunteer Coordinator Shiara Trumble would love to hear from you. Just give her a call at **281-463-7954** or e-mail her at **Shiara\_Trumble@Ipsos-NPD.com**. With help from our club members, this year's show can be the best show ever!

### School Demonstration Paleontology Kits

*by Neal Immega*

**H**GMS members who give talks at schools are invited to sign out Rock, Mineral, and Paleontology kits from the shelves in the garage area of the clubhouse. You can leave two kits at the school after your talk. Thank you for taking the time to help educate the students.

### Rocks Wanted

*by Neal Immega*

**P**lease e-mail [n\\_immegaATswbell.net](mailto:n_immegaATswbell.net) (substitute @ for AT) if you have material or localities to share.

**Flint:** We have enough for the show but could use another gallon for school kits.

**Alabaster:** We have enough for the mummies exhibit, but could use five gallons for school kits.

**Red chert pebbles:** Yes, if you go to a river, collect a gallon of red pebbles for our school kits.

**Conglomerate:** Do you have a source for sandstone made of coarse sand or small pebbles? We could use a 5-gallon bucket full.

**Gabbro countertop fragments:** Our rock cycle sets need some ultrabasic rocks like the ones used in black or nearly black countertops. Fragments are fine—don't break up your kitchen for us.

**Rams horn oysters:** The little (1.5 inch) coiled oysters that are found in the hill country, particularly near DelRio. If you are driving on Hwy 90 to Big Bend, I will supply a locality for you.



**Muscovite:** Cleavage fragments wanted  
**Black limestone**  
**Oil shale**

## **Your Help Urgently Needed—Baucus Lives!**

*by Terry Brawner*

Once again, your letters are urgently needed. The Baucus Bill was introduced as **S.263 Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2005**. The Senate passed S.263 on July 26, and it was forwarded to the House of Representatives on July 27.

You can view the entire bill at [www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=s109-263](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=s109-263).

The Paleontology Section has had several programs on the Baucus Bill over the past decade. Our letters and efforts have helped to keep this bill from getting out of committee in the past. Now it is in the House. Please write your Congressman with your comments. Write him or her at:

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

The following article by Marion Zenker identifies the problems with S.263.

### **The Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2005**

*Status of S.263 as of 15 August 2005*

*by Marion Zenker*

*Black Hills Institute of Geological Research*

The Senate passed S.263 on July 26. It was forwarded to the House on July 27 and referred to the House Resources Committee and the House Agriculture Committee.

**Call, fax, and write** your representative today and ask that he or she help to defeat this legislation. Find out if your U.S. Representative sits on either the House Resource or House Agriculture Committee. If so, your letter needs to reflect your Representative's involvement if possible. However, do not put off writing, calling, and faxing even if you do not know. You may call Marion Zenker at 605-574-4289 or e-mail her at [marionz@bhigr.com](mailto:marionz@bhigr.com) for that information if you wish. Marion is still the legislative liaison for the American Lands Access Association and for the Association of Applied Paleontological Sciences (formerly the American Association of Paleontological Suppliers).

You may wish to share this information with all the amateurs since S.263 in my opinion is simply a bill that should be defeated. I do not believe that it can be fixed without a complete rewrite regarding the question of whether casual collecting is allowed. Here is how I see it—the congressional budget office interpreted that the bill would prohibit casual collecting. There are a lot of amateurs as well as academics who were under the assumption that the bill allows casual collecting. Here is the way the bill

itself reads: It does allow “casual collecting” with “minimal surface disturbance.” Both are as “Defined by the Secretary.” As you can see, the danger here is that much is left to interpretation. The reality is that depending on who you are and who the “Secretary of the Interior” may be, the definition of “casual collecting” and “minimal surface disturbance” can and will change dramatically. Therefore this bill in no way guarantees that casual collecting or even surface collecting will be allowed on any acre of the public lands governed by this law, and **it could very well stop any and all casual collecting by anyone at any time.**

## **The East Coast Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show: an Overview**

*by Karen M. Burns*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**A**nyone visiting New England in August should plan a visit to the East Coast Gem, Mineral, and Fossil show held in mid-August in West Springfield, MA. This show is considered the largest on the east coast, and it lived up to its reputation.

This was my first visit to the show and my first to a professionally staged show, and I was really impressed by this Marty Zinn production.

It came close to rivalling Houston’s Intergem show in size with 128 retail vendors and sixty wholesale vendors.

Unlike Intergem with its emphasis on finished jewelry and beads, here the emphasis was on fossils and minerals.

I spent two days at the show and twice visited the Harvard collection of gold and minerals which was gorgeous—especially the horn gold specimen from Gilman, Colorado. Mineral specimens from each of the New England states were also part of the exhibit. Needless to say, except for the New Hampshire beryls and tourmalines, New England minerals are not as eye-catching as those of some states.

Among the highlights of the show were some impressive fossils, but she who can barely tell a hadrosaur from a diplodocus cannot identify them by name. Nevertheless there was table after table of fossils, from a bear head larger than a basketball to tiny shark’s teeth.

Meteorites from Russia were for sale at several booths and minerals. Micromounts too big for me to lift were available for the serious collector. That is not to say there was nothing for the young collector or for the person simply looking for a decorative piece.

New Era Gems had a large variety of faceting rough, and Morion Created Gems had a good variety of boules for faceting. Opals from Australia in the rough, as cut stones, and as finished jewelry were available at several vendors.

The show had some of the biggest names in minerals and fossils exhibiting their wares including John Betts of New York City and Kristalle of Laguna Beach, CA. And photographer Jeff Scovill was on hand. Bob Jones of *Rock and Gem* Magazine was a

speaker all three days of the show, and I had the privilege of speaking with him before his talk on "Famous Beryls of the World."

Nancy Millard of Earthwerks in Rhode Island, who spurred my interest in wirework, spoke on "The Geology of Geodes." She also took home the bucket of Texas silicified wood I brought for the geology class she teaches.

Mexico, India, Russia, and Canada were represented as were several vendors from Texas including Houston's Jemco. The Midwest and West Coast were represented, but naturally the shops of New England dominated.

The Springfield Science Museum had wonderful project and learning kits for children as well as free specimens for the twelve and under crowd. A water flume provided a chance for children to get wet while panning for minerals and fossils at a modest cost.

I took my daughter and grandsons the first day, Friday, and we wore ourselves out visiting and buying. Usually two hours is sufficient to see and buy, but we spent three and a half hours and at that rushed through the last three aisles. This is definitely a show to see if you are in the area.

### **Water! Do You Know Everything You Should About It?**

*Information derived from the  
Los Angeles City Fire Department Earthquake Preparedness Handbook.  
via Breccia 8/05*

*Editor's Note: While we here in Houston are not in much danger from an earthquake, the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina bring home the realization that we are extremely at risk during a hurricane. This article has information we all should know.*

**W**ater is the most important item to store in the event of a natural disaster. Loss of safe drinking water can be deadly. Most people, with few exceptions, will start feeling the effects if they do without water for more than 36 hours. Dehydration occurs much quicker than starvation. Our bodies can tolerate loss of food much better. With an ample water supply, starvation is delayed many days, even weeks.

The city water supply is vulnerable to the effects of a large earthquake. Contaminants can get into the drinking water supply through ruptures in the pipes, the mixing up of supply sediments, the adulteration of filtering systems, etc. Do not take our water for granted. Plan ahead and store a sufficient supply for your family.

### **How Much Should I Store?**

A good rule of thumb is one gallon per person per day for seven days (minimum). A three-week supply of water is ideal.

### **Easy Water Sources?**

Bottled water from the store—one- and two-gallon sealed containers. Note: The one- and two-gallon containers that you purchase in your local store are not designed for long term storage and will begin to leak after about six months.

One and five gallon sealable containers—from camping or survival stores. Be sure to sanitize and treat the water that you are storing. Old bleach bottles clearly marked make good containers for water storage.

Five-gallon sealed containers from private water companies—water companies claim their containers are good forever if still factory sealed. Store all plastic water containers on a wooden pallet or shelf. Keep water containers in a location where container failure will not destroy your other supplies. Keep all water and supplies in a cool dark place. Do not store any plastic water container directly on concrete. The concrete will leech chemicals into the water, contaminating it. Concrete will also degrade the plastic bottle, causing failure.

### **Purifying Your Tap Water**

Any water that you make up yourself needs to be treated. If left untreated over time, it becomes contaminated with bacteria and algae. Eight drops of pure unscented liquid bleach per gallon of water will reduce the contaminants in the water. Add the bleach when you first store the water away. Rotate your water every six months. This means any stored water—commercially bottled or self stored.

### **Other Sources of Water**

Your water heater is an excellent source for water in an emergency. Every water heater has a drain valve near the bottom of the tank. Use extreme caution and let the water cool. Turn off the cold water supply to the tank. Turn off the gas or electric heater for the tank. Open the drain valve at the bottom and remember that some sediment at the bottom of the tank may at first make the water flowing out look murky. Continue to drain water until it becomes clear. Filter the water with coffee filters, cheesecloth or paper toweling after draining the water heater. This will separate the water from the mineral deposits that collect in the bottom of the tank.

The toilet water storage tank is another place to find potable water. Do not use water from the bowl, only from the tank. Also do not use if you color the water or add chemicals to the water.

Melted ice cubes are another source of water. Also canned goods usually contain water. Even syrups are mostly made of water.

Water trapped in house plumbing can be collected by locating and shutting off the main valve. Open the valve at the highest point of your property (like a second story faucet) and then open the valve at the lowest point of your property. Gravity will force the water from the pipes.

### **If the Purity of Your Water Source Is Questionable, Use the Following Methods To Make the Water Safe To Drink:**

**Best:** Add liquid chlorine bleach to the water. Eight drops per gallon of water. Double the dose if the water is cloudy.

**Good:** Add 2% tincture of iodine to the water. (12 drops per gallon of water). Double this dose if water is cloudy.

**Acceptable:** Boil the water vigorously for ten minutes.

Do not forget to clean and sanitize your food containers before using them. Wash with soap and warm water, then fill with a 10% bleach solution. After five minutes empty the bleach solution and let dry. Water that is dirty should first be strained through a coffee filter, cheese cloth, or a paper towel to remove suspended matter.

All you ever wanted to know about water and more. Hopefully we will never have the occasion to need this information, but if you do, you have it now.



## Mineral Section



*by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson and Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson*

**W**ell, we hope you had a good summer break and are ready to once again join the Mineral Section. Meetings are on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Due to the closeness of Labor Day to the first Wednesday in September, we will begin our regularly scheduled meetings on the third Wednesday in September.

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

**September 21: Social / Show & Tell / Show Preparation:** Refreshments will be provided. We are going to use this meeting as a catch-up opportunity to hear about all of your summer adventures, and it will be a very informal format. We will also be taking care of any last minute show-related items. All help will be appreciated.

**October 5: Social / Show Review:** Refreshments will be provided. This is our opportunity to review events of the show while they are still fresh in our minds. Bring your comments on what we did right and what we can improve upon. Also bring in your show purchases and let us drool.

**October 19: Azurite & Malachite:** Refreshments will be provided. Sam Norwood will give a presentation on azurite and malachite. These closely related minerals are often found together with malachite as a pseudomorph after azurite. Primary malachite crystals can also be found at many locations. Formation and crystalline structure of azurite and malachite will be discussed. Specimens from classic locations as well as those from the newer finds in China will be presented.

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



## Day Light Section

*by Frances Arrighi*



**S**eventeen members attended the 8 August, 2005, meeting of the Day Light Section. This was Professor Link's last meeting with our Section for 2005. During the previous two weeks, Professor Val Link and Tom Wright melted the Shakudo

alloy. This is the alloy that is 96% copper and 4% gold (fine gold). This potential alloy is very hard to melt, but Tom and Val managed. Then Professor Link flattened the pellets on an automatic rolling mill to a gauge of 20. The rolled alloy was cut into pieces approximately 2 x 2 inches. We will save these pieces in sealed plastic until next summer when we will use them for Mokume Gane. The next issue of the BBG will probably have the final write up of our summer's work.

If anyone knows where the Day Light Section can have the use of a pneumatic hammer or a hydraulic press with a high tonnage rating, please let us know.

At the September meeting, we will make a cross of sterling or gold filled wire using the wire wrapping technique.

We want to thank Professor Link again for having such wonderful programs for our summer meetings



**Faceting Section**  
*by Paula Rutledge*  
*Faceting Board Representative*



**T**he October meeting of the Faceting Section will be October 12 (the second Wednesday). The program is "The Value of Color in Gemstones: Is it Natural? Is it Enhanced? Does it add Value?" and will be presented by Norm Lenz.

The meeting begins at 7:30 pm. This meeting will be chaired by Norm Lenz. Everyone is invited to come learn more about gemstones and faceting!

**Enameling Class Results**  
*by Patty Scott*  
*Photos by Phyllis George*

**T**hese photos are of the items made in this summer's enameling classes. Enameling is the art of fusing glass to metal. These lovely items were made by applying a very fine glass powder to either copper or fine silver and then firing the pieces







in a kiln.

Two sessions of enameling were offered this summer, and the following students participated: Lloyd Ernestes, Gladys Escalona, Kim Fox, Phyllis George, David Hawkins and Joel Washington. The class was taught by Patty Scott with the assistance of Tom Wright.

The two photos on the previous page are an assortment of small panels, nutdishes and jewelry pieces showing the artistry of Joel Washington, Kim Fox, Dave Hawkins, Phyllis George, Tom Wright, and Gladys Escalona.

The photo above is a closer view of some of the jewelry pieces created during the cloisonné class. They are ready to be set as pendants or brooches.

## HGMS General Meeting

*June 2005*

*by Sunday Bennett*

*HGMS Secretary*

**V**olunteer to supply **refreshments for July meeting:** Sunday Bennett  
**Guests:**

Casey Conkel, a new member, visited. Her interests include jewelry fabrication.

### Section Reports:

*Daylight Section:* Tom Wright

Val Link will be continuing with metal reticulation. This on-hands class will continue through August. The September meeting will feature a demonstration of wire wrapping a gold cross

*Faceting Section:* Paula Rutledge

The next meeting will be a swap session. August will feature a hot dog supper and hands-on learning of faceting.

*Paleo Section:* Rick Rexroad

Scott Singleton will speak at the next meeting. His topic will be on the fossilization of wood and colors found fossilized wood.

*Treasurers Report:* Paul McGarry

We are under budget for this year. Our 2004 Tax Filing has been extended. All looks well for now.

*Membership:* Beverly Mace

Several membership badges that were on order have been received. If you wish to pick up your badge, please see Beverly Mace when you are next at the clubhouse

*Education Committee Report: Mary Ann Mitscherling*

New classes are listed on and beside the door to the garage area in the clubhouse. Also check out the Web site for classes, course descriptions, and dates.

On a side note, Mary Ann is going to take a bulk order for metals. Anyone wishing to get metal wire, plate, etc. for a lower price should contact Mary Ann before June 30.

*Backbender's Gazette: Phyllis George*

The October issue of the BBG will have a deadline of August 30. Phyllis will be putting the issue together September 3-4. That way people should receive their BBG the week before the show.

Also, the Web site has been remodeled with new buttons. We now have photos taken from events in and outside of the clubhouse.

*Show Committee: Carol Thompson*

This year the show is going to have a huge display by Dinosaur George. There will be much publicity surrounding this feature, and we are working on getting television stations interested.

We still need an Assistant Show Chair and a Hospitality person. If you think you might be interested in either of these, please contact Carolyn Thompson ASAP. The show works only with the help of our members.

*Program for next month: Scott Singleton*

Leslie Wood will speak to the HGMS on the geomorphology being done on Mars, namely, "is there water on the red planet?"

**Show 'n Tell:**

Dean Lagerwall brought in a large, clear, synthetic crystal from Ohio. The crystal was flawless as could be expected from any grown crystal; still, the clarity was astounding. Dean feels he might give a talk at a future Mineral Section meeting on how such a crystal is produced.

Mary Ann Mitscherling showed off her reticulated ingot that she made during the Day Lighter meeting. She also had a mold of various shapes.

**New Business:**

Scott Singleton is searching the records kept by the club on past shows. He wishes to compile the records and turn them into a book—a tribute to shows past and to the people who worked so hard to bring them together. If you have any information, snap shots, old programs, etc., please pass them along to Scott.

**Door Prize:** The door prize, an afghan, was won by Sunday Bennett.

**Program Introduction:**

Scott Singleton introduced the evening's speaker, John Fishner of Dreamstar Productions. Mr. Fishner spoke on the changes, some good and some bad, in various paleontology displays throughout the nation. Fisher is an artist and dinosaur modeler and has exhibited his dinosaur creations at many of our shows.

## HGMS General Meeting

July 2005

by Sunday Bennett

HGMS Secretary

**R**efreshments were provided by: Sunday and Rusty Bennett  
Volunteer for **next month's refreshments**: Segrid Stewart

### Section Reports:

**Day Light:** July and August are the last months for reticulation. In September we will be doing wire wrapping with Karen Burns. We will be working on a cross either in silver or gold wire. Wire will be available for purchase if you don't have any. This is a hands-on session, as are most of the Day Light Section events.

**Lapidary:** In July we purchased and charged our new spool polisher. Of course as soon as we purchased a new polisher, the old one—that could not be found—turned up.

**Education:** There are two spots left open in the enameling class. All classes and a roster of those signed up are posted on doors throughout the clubhouse. You are invited to read all course descriptions and to sign up with Mary Ann Mitscherling. Also, look on the Web site for class details, [www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org).

**Field Trips:** There will be a field trip going down the Brazos River on August 27. If you are interested, please sign up as soon as possible. We are expecting the river to cooperate.

**Membership:** We have approximately 400 members and we are growing.

**Newsletter:** The due date for the October issue is changed. August 30 is the deadline.

The AFMS identified four people from HGMS as being among the top ten finalists in their respective contest categories and identified The Backbender's Gazette as being in the top ten of its particular category—Large Bulletin. The individuals are Art Smith (Adult Advanced Article), Ed Clay (Adult Poetry), Neal Immega (Adult Advanced Article), and Terry Proctor (Adult Poetry).

A little word to the wise from Phyllis: when you receive a notice to renew a magazine subscription, verify when it actually runs out. Recently she found that she had paid, repaid, and triple paid for a subscription to *Rock & Gem*. She kept getting notices and kept paying, never noticing that by the time of the most recent notice that she was already paid up to March 2011. She did not send in another renewal check.

**Program for August:** David Temple, HGMS Past President, will be giving a talk on what he learned at a symposium on all things concerning T-Rex. Find out the latest news and discover the newest theories on this Tyrant King.

### Show Committee:

August 13 there will be a post card labeling party beginning at 10 a.m. at the Club-

house.

September 10, we will be having our Show Auction. All proceeds will go to help fund the Show. We will begin at 5:30 p.m. for socializing. At 6:30 we will have pizza. At 7:30, when you are too full to move, we will begin the auction.

There was no New or Old Business to announce.

### **Show and Tell:**

Tom Wright brought examples of the reticulation metal work done at the Day Light meeting. He also showed off a man-made star ruby that he had cut and polished in the shop.

Karen Burns, who had recently taken a trip to Virgin Valley, went hunting for opals. She found a large fire opal that was full of sparkle. She said that only about 1/32 of the gem originally was showing. Her guide helped her to see the stone, and she said that most of us would easily have overlooked it.

James Wark held up a gold nugget ring. The gold was reclaimed from computer mother boards. He said it took 7 lbs. of boards to make 1 oz. of gold. The ring he wore was cast at the shop. Way to recycle, James!

**Door Prize:** Won by David Gardner

**Program Introduction:** Dr. Leslie Wood spoke on the topic of "Water on Mars." We learned there was water on the Red Planet, and it is almost a certainty that there still is water present.

## **HGMS General Meeting**

*August 23, 2005*

*by Sunday Bennett*

*HGMS Secretary*

**R**efreshments were provided by: Segrid Stewart

Volunteer for **next month's refreshments:** Norm Lenz

**Guests:** Zach Carter came with his grandmother, Joan.

**General Announcement:** George and Ella Plunket, long-time collectors of minerals, are having a silent auction at their home. Most of the collection consists of minerals from throughout the USA. An announcement will be posted on the bulletin board in the kitchen. The auction will take place on August 27 and 28. The proceeds of this auction **do not** go to the club. This is a private sale that is being offered first to HGMS members.

**October 16: Tail gate swap** is scheduled. Please contact Matt Dillon for information.

The **General Meeting for September** will be held at its usual date, time, and place. This decision was made by the Board at their last meeting. The meeting will be held at the clubhouse as usual for several reasons. Principal among these is the need to intro-

duce new members who joined at the show to the club and to give them a good feel for what they have to look forward to.

**Day Light:** September's program will feature our wire-wrapping goddess, Karen Burns, showing members how to wire wrap a cross. Wire, in gold or silver, will be available for purchase. This will be a hands-on class. Come and learn how to get started wrapping. Caution: Wire wrapping is considered addictive, and no cure is known to prevent those addicted from wire wrapping all sorts of assorted gifts for their friends and family members.

**Lapidary:** Self-taught chasing and repoussé artist, Gerald Tobola, will be the guest speaker and demonstrator at the September 19 meeting. Gerald, a maverick among the chasing and repoussé community, has made many new discoveries. All his technique was developed not by what people told him to do, but by what he found worked best. In short, he blazed new trails with unorthodox tools and techniques. Be a part of this unique opportunity to learn from and watch this talented artist on September 19, at 7:30 p.m.

**Education:** Classes in Jewelry Fabrication, Gemstone Cutting, and Mold Making are set to begin in September. Please check the Web site, [www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org), for more information.

**Field Trips:** A field trip has been announced for October 22 going to Bangs, TX. What is in Bangs? A mammoth died and is inconveniently sticking out of the ground where road work was to commence. This will be an opportunity for those who have never seen a real paleo dig to find out what it is like. Hint: Digging is dirty work.

**Membership:** "Five new members in one day," said Beverly "Mad Dog" Mace. "I think that will tell you how well we are doing. Keep up the good work."

**Newsletter:** August 30 is the deadline for the October issue.

**Paleo:** A double header is scheduled for the September meeting. The Paleo Section meeting will be held at the show following the Dealer Appreciation Dinner on Thursday night, September 22. Our speakers will be Dino George, always a favorite with the ladies and dino enthusiasts everywhere, and Todd Kent, the intrepid film maker of *Rockhounds: The Movie*, starring members of HGMS. This will be a spectacular night of food and information.

**Program:** Rus Kemp will be the speaker.

#### **Show Committee:**

September 10: beginning at 5:30 p.m., social hour; 6:30 pizza eating; 7:30 auction.

Help is needed on load-up night, Wednesday, September 21. We could use strong backs and willing minds to pitch in for the loading up of all the things needed for the show.

Perhaps our biggest announcement of the year, we have found a Show Chair for 2006—Segrid Stewart. Segrid comes to us by way of another rock club and has some basic

knowledge of the show. She will, however, need everyone's help and support. There is much to be done, and she will be learning as she goes since she was not our Assistant Show Chair this year.

Our Assistant Show Chair for 2006 will be Cheryl Lucas. Cheryl was the Assistant Show Chair for 2005, but for personal reasons she could not accept the helm for 2006. Please give both these women your help and cooperation. The Show is run by volunteers and staffed by the same. It should be one of our proudest moments to give everyone a taste of who we are and what we do.

#### **Show 'n Tell:**

Norman Lenz, President of the HGMS, brought in a mystery rock from the Canadian Rockies. He also presented Neal Immega with flint for the show and school collections.

Fred, who recently attended a jewelry fabrication class out of state, showed off his newest collection of jewelry that he made as an antidote to work-related stress. Of all the creations, Fred seemed most proud of the display box (and the jewelry in it, of course).

Brian tempted all the women at the meeting with several sets of matched earrings he had crafted at the shop.

**Door Prize:** The door prize, an Indiana quartz geode brought by David Gardner, was won by James Wark.

**Program:** David Temple, HGMS Past President and all-around "Nice Guy," gave a speech on the newest discoveries on T-Rex. David attended a symposium where the highlight of the event was the announcement that soft tissue had been recovered from fossilized bone. The ramifications of such a discovery have turned old ideas on their head, and the possibilities are not yet fully explored. There was no discovery of intact DNA, so don't look for Jurassic Park just yet.

### **How to Find the Fire in Fire Agate**

*Author unknown*

*from The Tumbler, 1/03*

*via Breccia 6/05, The Rockcollector 9/05*

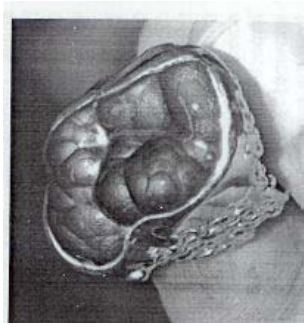
**F**ire agate is a quartz-based rock with layers of iron oxide in chalcedony, which results in iridescence. It occurs in nodules of milky or grayish translucent chalcedony. Sometimes it is found in botryoidal growths in geodes and in chalcedony roses.

Fire agate appears as a dull reddish brown layer, but when the surface layers are removed, the rainbow colors or iridescence are exposed. The fire is brought out by tumbling, trimming, and grinding off the outer layers to expose the iridescence. Polishing magnifies the fire.

To find the fire, remove the matrix, then tumble polish the stones. Tumbling removes



the excess chalcedony. When tumble polished, remove the remaining excess stone around the edges, then polish and set. Allow the stone to retain its irregular shape and **polish slowly** so you don't go through the fire layers. The graceful natural shapes are superior to those cut to calibrated sizes, as the best fire doesn't always fit a mold. To set it off, mount the fire agate in a custom made gold or silver setting. Fire agate are most often found in Arizona, California, Idaho, and Mexico among other locales.



### **Joel Bartsch, New President of the HMNS**

*by Pam Gibbens*

*Greater Houston Weekly*

*Photo by Robert Hunt*

*(Permission to reprint granted by Greater Houston Weekly)*

*Editor's Historical Note: the Houston Gem & Mineral Society began in 1948. The Houston Museum of Natural Science opened in 1969. HGMS members worked hard in the intervening years in support of such a museum opening in Houston. HGMS and its members made many donations to the museum both before and after its opening.*

**D**reams really do come true. Just ask Joel Bartsch, President of the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

A native Texan and longtime Houstonian, Bartsch, 43, has settled into his high profile "dream" job as president of the fourth most-attended museum in the country. When his name was announced as the new president, the museum staff cheered wildly. One of their own had ascended through the ranks to take the reins of the world-class museum.

After working as the museum's curator of gems and minerals for 15 years, Bartsch was tapped by museum trustees who recognized that his experience, coupled with his passion for the job, would serve the museum well.

With boyish enthusiasm, Bartsch explained that he literally grew up at the museum. "I remember coming to the museum with my parents when I was seven or eight years old," said Bartsch. "Every Friday night there would be some kind of lecture with some expert speaking. My brother and I were bored stiff, so we slipped away to play hide and seek. We were found by Sgt. Carter and thrown out of the museum."

As a youngster, Bartsch developed a strong affinity for rocks and gems. After graduating from Lamar High School and Concordia University in Austin, he worked as a Lutheran youth minister. He received a History of Science Master's Degree from Rice University and is currently a PhD. candidate at Rice working in the same field.

A resident of The Woodlands, Bartsch met his wife Suzanne in California where he was employed by the California State Mining & Mineral Museum. "She worked for

the Natural History Museum in Laguna Beach. She loved rocks too. I guess it was a match made in heaven.” The couple have three children, all of whom love rocks and visiting the museum.

Before assuming the position of president, Bartsch held museum positions including at the Colorado School of Mines, the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin, and the Lyman Museum in Hilo, Hawaii. In addition, he also served as director of California State Mining & Mineral Museum in Mariposa, California.

“When the museum in California ran out of money, they asked me if I was going to stay. I said ‘Yes, I love this stuff.’” But, his heart was back home in Houston. “I grew up in Bellaire,” he said. “I played golf in Hermann Park and went to the museum regularly.”



To achieve his goal of working at the beloved museum where he and his brother played hide and seek (and were escorted out of), Bartsch took an entry level job in 1986. “I was a security guard here,” said Bartsch proudly. “I was making \$5 an hour.” In 1991, an important telephone call came for Bartsch.

“It was the curator of the museum who was looking for a curator for the gem collection. It’s always been my dream to work here. I interviewed for the position. I was determined I wasn’t leaving without the job.”

His determination paid off. After landing the plum position, Bartsch began working as the curator of the Cullen Hall of Gems and Minerals. In his 15 years of service to the museum, Bartsch has also played a key role as project manager for several of the museum’s temporary exhibits and permanent exhibit halls, including the Wiess Energy Hall.

Now Bartsch oversees not only the museum and the extraordinary exhibits but manages 315 employees and hundreds of volunteers. “Our volunteers work thousands of hours each year,” Bartsch explained. “We have a number of retired geologists and scientists who volunteer their time. They are very valuable to us.”

More than two million visitors tour the museum each year, including 600,000 school children. Over the summer, 5,000 children enjoyed attending a variety of educational camps at the museum. "This year we had 70,000 more school children come to the museum than the year before," he said. "Since I was one of those kids, I see the museum through their eyes. It would probably make my CFO crazy, but if I could let them in for a dime, I would."

When asked if he ever felt apprehensive about being alone in the museum after hours, Bartsch replied, "The only thing that bothers me is the mummy. We do sleepovers here, and kids are a little freaked out by that guy in the boat in the Lord of the Rings exhibit."

Being at the helm of such a successful organization can be challenging, said Bartsch. "The people who work here are my friends. But because I'm the boss now, it's a little different. Until you are on the other side of the desk, you don't know how you'll react. I would say managing people is my greatest challenge. Sometimes I'd like to close the door and hide. But I came into this job with my eyes wide open. I try not to micromanage. But if the light goes out in the parking garage, it's my responsibility."

Like a child at Christmastime, Bartsch's eyes light up when he talks about the museum's latest acquisition. "Next spring we will showcase a new emerald," he said. "We acquired it last year. Last year these miners in North Carolina were moving overburden away, not even looking for anything. In one of the pockets or cavities lined with calcite crystals they found an emerald crystal." But the buried treasure is no ordinary gem, said Bartsch.

"The emerald is 1,862 carats, five inches long, and two and a half inches wide. When they pulled it out of the box, I was stunned. It blew my mind. It is staggering. It might be the finest specimen in the world." The rare gem will debut this spring in the Smith Gem Vault.

Clearly, the boy who loved rocks grew up to be a man who found the perfect job. "I'm getting paid to do what I love," he said. "I'd do it for free—and I have."

### **Rock Hunting in an Iraqi Combat Zone**

*(Rockhounding at its Extreme)*

*Part 3 of ??? – June 2005*

*by Yonis E. Lone Eagle*

*from the Midland Gem & Mineral Society Newsletter 8/05*

**H**owdy fellow Rockhounds. I hope everyone is doing all hunky-dory and finding lots of good stuff on y'all's local field trips. I'm now reporting to y'all from FOB (Forward Operation Base) diamondback up in Mosul, Iraq. I've been transferred up here to help them out with their workload with all the medical equipment. Between working my job, pulling guard duty, surviving the extreme heat, and working with all my rocks, life around here keeps me pretty busy. Lately the temps around here have been around 125 degrees during the day and in the 90s at night. Over the next couple of months, the temps will be getting over 135 degrees with the nights

in the 100s. Y'all folks are missing so much fun.

As for the War on Terrorism, all the casualties are keeping everyone else very busy. Currently with all the wounded soldiers coming through our hospital doors, about 80% are wounded Iraqis—local civilians, Iraqi National Guard troops (INGs), or Enemy Prisoners of War (EPWs). The other 20% of the wounded are U.S. troops. It is very unfortunate that all the Terrorist Insurgents who come into Iraq to disrupt, destroy, and kill don't give a damn about human life. Besides trying to kill U.S. and coalition forces, they end up killing a lot more innocent civilians. Local men, women, and children are being maimed or killed at an increasing rate.

Working in the medical field for over 25 years now, I've seen more than my share of life, of death, and of bloodshed. During the Gulf War, I saw enough death, destruction, and carnage for two lifetimes. This War on Terrorism is a war of more of the same, but much worse.

Awhile back, we had a U.S. female soldier flown to our ER severely wounded from an accident. Our trauma team worked vigorously for over half an hour trying to save her life, but her injuries were too severe. As her spirit left her body to be with the Great Spirit, the entire ER staff bowed their heads as our chaplain prayed for her departing spirit. You could hear a pin drop. As the staff exited the ER, there was not a dry eye in the room. We have seen several severely wounded male soldiers who did not make it, but this was the first female soldier who died. It hit very close to home for everyone.

And then a couple of months ago there were two U.S. soldiers in town handing out candy to a group of young Iraqi children. You may have read or heard about it in the news. There was a group of at least fifty children between the ages of five and fifteen. They were so happy to be getting a sweet treat for a change. Candy is something that has been very scarce, especially during the Saddam regime. A suicide bomber drove up and killed the two soldiers, but in doing so, he killed over twenty of the children and wounded over thirty others. When all those wounded children came into our hospital with missing hands, arms, feet, legs, and burns, the staff went into action and did their jobs to the highest standards of the Army Medical Corps. But you could still see the pain and sadness in their eyes as the staff worked so feverishly to save and comfort as many of these innocent young lives as possible. When you look into the eyes of these innocent young children so badly burned and/or missing a limb, they looked up at you with their trembling bodies and their scared eyes asking "Why." Your heart sank and went out to them. When you work in the medical field and deal with death on a daily basis, you have to have some sort of wall between you and death. If not, death can and will tear out your heart and soul. The saddest part of all this is the innocent lives that are taken away for no reason, especially the children.

While there is a lot of bad news and negativism about this war in the media with all the daily murders and killing and destruction, there are a lot of good and positive things that have come out of the ouster of Saddam and the fall of his regime. In my next report, I will be telling y'all of the positive news you won't hear in the media.

And now for the "Rock News." First, I want to thank the Alamo Rock Shop of Boerne,

Texas, for sending me a **twin 6 lb. barrel rock tumbler**. When I moved up here to Mosul, I brought with me about fifty pounds of the best rocks I had found. (I had to leave at least another thirty pounds behind). And I've put it straight into operation tumbling the great pickin's from Tikrit. The rocks I collected down at FOB Speicher were great, with less than 20% limestone. There wasn't a day go by that I didn't pick up one or two dozen rocks. But up here in Mosul, the pickin's have been very, very slim. I've been up here for over six weeks now and collected only about a dozen rocks. The rocks here are over 90% limestone.

I recently found on the Internet a very good and more detailed map of Turkey, northern Iraq, and their rivers. This has led me to another conclusion, and it gives me a more accurate source for the origin of the rocks. There is a major lake and two dams northwest of Mosul. Therefore with all this manmade stuff in their way, not many rocks come from that direction. South of Mosul there are two major rivers that flow into the Tigris between here and Tikrit: the Great Zab and the Little Zab rivers. The Little Zab has at least two dams and another lake. The Great Zab flows into the Tigris further north, and the Little Zab flows freely all the way from the extreme southwestern tip of Turkey. Therefore, I would say the majority of all those wonders I found down south evidently came down the Great Zab River.

Now to wrap up some old news from my last report. A few months back I got to go down to the Middle East country of Qatar. I flew down in a C-130 into Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. We then took a thirty-minute ride over to Camp As Sayliyah, which would be home for the next few days. While down there for two weeks, I got to do some more rock hunting. The majority of the rocks I found around the camp were tumbled limestone beach rock from the Persian Gulf. However, I did run across some unique lavas, a quartz/mystery rock conglomerate, a piece of petrified wood, a piece of granite, and a very nice three-inch fossilized coral stem.

So what are Astronomy Rocks, diseased Rocks and Finger Rocks? Astronomy rocks, the name I gave them for what they look like, are black igneous rocks with small white spherical dots and swirls in the matrix that look like stars in the nighttime skies. Diseased rocks, again the name I gave them for what they look like, are different colored rocks with spots or feldspar crystals that look like blotches or rashes or a disease on the surface. And Finger rocks, same naming, are long skinny rocks about one-half inch in diameter and three to five inches long, about the size of your finger! What's amazing about these rocks is that they tumbled and traveled such a long distance without breaking.

Folks around here really have their curiosity up when they walk into my shop and see this thing with two barrels rolling over and over. "What is that," I'm asked a couple of times a day. And once I explain what a rock tumbler is and what it does, a dozen more questions pop up. What kind of rocks do you tumble? Where do you find the rocks to tumble? When will the rocks be ready to see? How do you tell a good rock from a bad rock? Why would anybody want to tumble rocks? I got a lot of folks very, very curious and anxious to see the final results of the tumbler. I tell them one of the things you have to learn about being a Rockhound is "patience."

The good news is that coming in my fourth report sometime in early September will be "Pictures, Pictures, Pictures." I will be including several colored photographs of all the unique wonders that I have found over here. They will include photos of the Astronomy rocks, the diseased rocks, the Spotted rocks, the Banded rocks, the Abstract Art rocks, and my new "Pet Rock" I found that I call Cyclops.

And now something for any jadeite and nephrite experts reading this. Does anyone know of any jade that comes from southeast Turkey or northern Iraq??? I found some green rocks I strongly suspect are a type of jade. All the research that I have done on the Internet tells me that the closest jade found in the area comes from the region far to the northeast of Turkey toward China. Too far for these rocks to travel. If anyone has any information, please e-mail me at [rockymountainrockhounds@yahoo.com](mailto:rockymountainrockhounds@yahoo.com).

Well folks, six months down and six months to go. Everyone please take care and practice safe and happy rock hunting. – Yonis "Rock Pockets" Lone Eagle

### SCFMS President's Message

*by William Medford*

*SCFMS President*

*from SCFMS Newsletter 7-8/05*

This is the time of the year that we can get out and enjoy field trips and seek out new places to explore. With the heat in Texas this summer, it has not been the best time to get outside. Those of you who have communicated to me your most recent field trips have said it was difficult to just stay safe. This year it is more difficult to ensure that your fluid intake is enough than it is to protect your self from biting bugs.

Plans continue for both the American Federation meeting during the month of August in St. Louis, Missouri and our own South Central Federation meeting to be held the first weekend in December in conjunction with the Austin Gem and Mineral Show. These are outstanding shows and well worth your time and effort to attend. Of course we want you to also attend the Federation business and social events so that you can become more aware of their activities.

Some of our organizations still have not paid their annual dues for this year while others have not paid for their insurance. If your organization is delinquent in either of these areas, please take time to send us your dues. The Federation does not spend large amounts of money conducting its business; however, it does need your support in helping to keep several mainly educational programs on a sound financial footing.

Membership and recruiting are still very much on the minds of each of us who is an officer in the Federation and of many of our organization officers. Our membership is continuing to grow older and therefore to become less active. We must continue to get new blood into our organization. The desire to learn about the earth and what it has produced is still strong with young people. Since the earth sciences are no longer taught in the schools, it is up to us to assume the teaching process. If you get to the



children, you can make a difference—and you will gain new members for your respective organizations.

A special thanks to each of the organizations who have made contributions to the Scholarship Fund unrestricted account. As a whole our Federation has done very well in trying to meet the Keith Harmon Challenge of one dollar per member. If your organization still has not made a contribution, please do it now so that your organization and our Federation can be recognized during the AFMS annual meeting.

### **AFMS President's Message**

*by Bill Smith*

*from AFMS Newsletter 9/05*

I am sure many of you are wondering why I would write an article about a club endowment fund. After attending five regional shows and conventions, talking to many of you, and reading the numerous newsletters I receive, the increasing cost of doing club business almost always came up in the conversation.

At the top of the list was the cost of insurance for field trips, shows, and other functions. Officer and committee travel was mentioned many times, especially the cost for sending personnel to regional meetings. Advertising your show and club is an ever-increasing expense. Show costs such as building rent, storage, case repair, skirting, etc. are on the increase. It was even mentioned that club members are getting older and it is harder to set up and break down. Check with the local football coach or scout master to see if they might have some young people that would be willing to help for a fee. How about the increasing cost of printing and delivering the newsletter?

I have mentioned starting a club endowment fund to several of you, and you thought it a good idea. Some did say they had plenty of money in the checking account. That would mean there is no better time to divest some of that money to the future. Talk to your club about putting any extra money into an endowment fund to help with those ever-increasing expenses.

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**ShowTime 2005**

September 17-18	Farmers Branch, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club Ellison Miles Geotechnology Institute 3939 Valley View Lane
September 23-25	Humble, TX	Houston Gem & Mineral Society Humble Civic Center 8233 Will Clayton Parkway e-mail: show@hgms.org
September 24-25	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Center, 531 Chestnut St. Lewellyn Lee: (903) 893-6420
October 1-2	Farmers Branch, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club Ellison Miles Geotechnology Institute 3939 Valley View Lane
October 1-2	Jacksonville, AK	Central Arkansas Gem, Mineral & Geology Soc Jacksonville Community Center Main Street, Hwy. 67/167 Exit 9 Ms.PatKissire (501) 821-2346
October 6-8	Mount Ida, AR	World Championship Quartz Crystal Digging Montgomery County Fairgrounds director@mtidachamber.com www.mtidachamber.com
October 8-9	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic & Convention Center 3303 N. 3rd St.; Robert Coufal (254)773-9624
October 15-16	Amarillo, TX	Goldenspread Gem & Mineral Society Amarillo Civic Center; Dee Hawkins 806-372-3949; dhawks@nts-online.net
October 8-9	Austin, TX	Texas Faceters' Guild Symposium 6719 Burnet Lane; dopsticks@sbcglobal.net
October 21-23	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center
October 28-30	Glen Rose, TX	Fossilmania Dallas and Austin Paleontological Societies Somervell County Expo Center, Hwy. 67 210-492-9163; morgan@uthscsa.edu
December 2-4	Austin, TX	SCFMS Conv. and Austin G&M Society Show Palmer Events Center

2005		OCTOBER				2005
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open
2	3	4 7:30 Board Meeting	5 7:30 Mineral Section	6	7	8  11-3 Shop Open
9	10 7:30 Day Light Section	11 7:30 Show Comm	12 7:30 Faceting Section	13	14	15 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open
16	17 7:30 Lapidary Section	18 7:30 Paleo Section	19 7:30 Mineral Section	20	21	22  11-3 Shop Open
23 30	24 Halloween 31	25 7:30 General Meeting	26	27	28	29  11-3 Shop Open

2005		NOVEMBER				2005
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7:30 Board Meeting	2 7:30 Mineral Section	3	4	5 10-12 Youth Section 11-3 Shop Open
6	7	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	21 7:30 Lapidary Section	22 7:30 General Meeting	23	24 Thanks- giving Day	25	26  11-3 Shop Open
27	28	29	30			

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

***The Newsletter of the Houston  
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