



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

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

**Volume XXXVII - No. 7**

**July 2006**

## **President's Message—Not This Month**

*by Phyllis George, Editor*

**S**cott Singleton just didn't have time to write a President's Message for this month while working on his third installment of the HGMS Show History. As I'm sure most of you are aware, Scott has been working extremely hard the past three months on creating the History of the HGMS Show. His goal is to have it completed and published before our 2006 Show September 22–24. He is creating his narrative from the HGMS archives and from the memories of members, and he has spent hours and hours reading, writing, and interviewing, all the while working his full time job. He gave me part three just before leaving on a well-earned two-week vacation (see page 20).

I think we all owe Scott a huge debt of gratitude. He made volumes of club minutes and statistics come alive. Many of us find it fascinating because we know the major players from the past, but I'm sure that Scott's writing is interesting to new members

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*President's Message continued on page 4*

## **June and July Programs and a Review of the May Program**

*by Matt Dillon*

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

**T**he program at our May General Meeting was provided by Inda Immega. She gave a very detailed description of the metal and stone art of the ancient city of Ur. Mrs. Immega, a docent of the HMNS, and her program were very well received and provided our club-members with good information on the history of metal and stone art of that period.

June's program will be delivered by club member Matt Phillips. He will provide us with a slide show and will give his unique perspective on traveling in Mexico to San Carlos, Chihuahua, participating in a group adventure, and collecting agates in that area. Come see what great things some of our members are doing on their vacations.

The July program is still in the works, and I am waiting to hear back from the NASA Speakers Bureau regarding our request for a program on the geology and rocks of Mars. As soon as they respond, I will give a more detailed description of that program

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*Program Information continued on page 4*

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## 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*

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as well. Scott has shown that he not only can write learned technical documents, he can write interesting narrative too. Not all writers can make such a leap.

This history he is writing will become part of the archives, and future members will appreciate that it is available to them. It is also being put on the HGMS Web site ([www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org)) so others can learn what we are all about. Thank you, Scott!

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*General Meeting Program continued from page 1*

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and some background on the speaker.

Please offer your own suggestions for future programs; help make our meetings more interesting and informative. Call or e-mail me if you have an idea for a program or would like to invite a specific speaker.

## **My Views of the Gems and Minerals from the Royal Tombs of Ur**

*by Arthur Smith*

*Member of The Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

*artsmithite@msn.com*

**D**uring the early part of May 2006, my wife and I decided to go to the Houston Museum of Natural Science and view their special exhibit of the Royal Tombs of Ur.

Ur (pronounced: ore) was an ancient city on the southwest bank of the Euphrates river in what is now Iraq and extended west into Syria. The objects from the Royal Tombs make it obvious that it had a well developed civilization at the time and are dated at about 2500 BC. That date is several hundred years before the main period of pyramid building in Egypt. The patriarch Abraham was native to Ur about 2000 BC before God told him to move further north and then to Canaan. The religion of Ur was dominated by worship of the moon god Nannar and his consort Nungal with many religious buildings including the ziggurat (Unger 1957)

The art and jewelry from the tombs are of interest because the materials used are still used today. The metals included gold with some silver and a mixture of gold with silver called electrum. The silver and other impurities in the gold tend to give it slightly different colors and add to its toughness. Silver and copper by themselves tend to get altered or completely removed, but fortunately gold is more durable. This was a bronze age culture, so there was no iron. In much of the jewelry the gold and silver are merely highlights, but in some pieces the gold dominates. The stones were mostly lapis lazuli and what we call today, carnelian. Minor stones were local limestone of varying colors particularly white and red. Agate which is common in the Euphrates river gravel is mostly black, gray, and white but was seldom used. Shell, what we call mother of pearl (MOP) is used in some pieces.

Lapis lazuli, the blue stone that is still treasured by many, is common in the jewelry and art pieces. It comes from a place today called Sar-E-Sang, Badakhshan in north-

eastern Afghanistan. The mines are located in the mountain high above the village, and the miners climb up to them every day. It is most certainly the same source for the Ur lapis lazuli over 4500 years ago (Bowersox and Chamberlin 1995). It is hard to tell the over all quality of the lapis lazuli in the exhibit. Most of it is quite dark and does not show the electrifying brightness of the good material today. This may be the result of being in the tombs so long, or may be the way it was worked, or may be the way it was preferred in the culture of those times. Lapis Lazuli is not a homogenous stone and is composed of the grains of several minerals, so it can be quite difficult to work. Some of the dealers today prefer this same dark blue color over the lighter bright blue. Another possibility is that its deep color was enhanced by dying. Today when lapis lazuli is dyed a dark blue to hide the non-blue minerals, it becomes "lifeless" and loses its brightness.

I found the carnelian very interesting. Carnelian (for flesh colored) or cornelian (for genus of dogwood with a red berry ) are now both used for chalcedony that varies in color from yellow to red orange. Although this is true of much of the Ur carnelian, some of it in the exhibits is a bright orange red unlike any of the material we see today. Much gray chalcedony contains finely disseminated minute particles of iron. When it is heated by the sun, or better yet in an oven, the iron oxidizes and the chalcedony becomes yellow or orange or even red orange. The carnelian from Ur had three possible sources, local gravels, Egypt-Arabian peninsula, and India. The Egypt-Arabian peninsula and local material has probably never been important commercially since it consists mostly of only small stones and some cobbles.

Much carnelian today comes from Brazil where it is gray until heated and dyed and then becomes a yellowish orange or orange, but rarely reddish. Now, most of the carnelian that can definitely be attributed to India are stones we see in cheap necklaces like "beegar beads." They undoubtedly are not the best material from there in either form or color and are usually not reddish. The heating process is said to have made the carnelian softer, but I have never checked this. In recent years most carnelian comes from the Rajpipla Hills at Ratanpur on the lower Narbada River. In that mine the chalcedony occurs in any color but red. The stones of an olive green hue have an especially fine red color when heated (Bauer and Spencer 1962). However, there are other locations of carnelian in India and what is now Pakistan, but which locations might have specifically shipped most of the Ur carnelian is not known.

Actually the name, carnelian, originates from the middle ages, and the material from Ur was possibly labeled and called sardine, sarion, or sardis. It was eventually called just sard because it came from Sardis, a river port town in Lydia which is now part of Turkey. It consisted of deep red to red brown chalcedony (Fronde1 1962). Today the term, sard, is restricted to the brownish red stones. Sardis was not considered the origin of the material but merely the shipping point for the Mediterranean trade and it may have originally come from India where it was mined and processed. There is evidence that carnelian was being produced in India in 500 BC and even possibly much earlier. So perhaps this orange red carnelian came from India from a deposit now depleted or from the same deposits producing today but made red by a process no longer used or forgotten. Bauer and Spencer (1962) report that yellow stones can be

made red with further heating that can drive off the water of the hydrous iron and converting it to hematite, thus making the carnelian more red. This is true; unless there is not enough included iron in the stone to begin with.

It is probably Ur and this era that lapis lazuli and carnelian seals became a tradition that was carried on through the later Greek and Roman empires. These seals were cylinders that had designs and objects in relief on them that identified their owner and could be transferred to wax. Though metal beads are often round, stone or mineral beads are usually cylindrical with many having tapered ends. There is evidence that some of the beads were fashioned elsewhere, possibly at their source, but Ur did have its own facilities for making jewelry and other art objects.

The other mineral that was very conspicuous in the objects from the Royal Tombs is calcite. It was made into bowls, pitchers, and jugs of many sizes. Much of it was thin enough to be translucent, and some of the calcite had patterns and designs in it and so could be called calcite onyx. Gypsum was also used in some but was not particularly attractive. The long burial of these objects was evidently hard on many, but their original beauty is not hard to imagine. The people of Ur made clay bricks and they had pottery, but none was shown in the displays or pictures. Obviously the carved calcite bowls, pitchers and jugs were very special to royalty, but gypsum was used for less important objects probably because it was easier to carve and so mass produce. Other mineral used for these and other objects were lapis lazuli in a poor grade and soapstone a soft material that is often composed of talc or soft clay minerals. The soapstone was probably easier to fashion than the calcite and certainly easier than the lapis lazuli but was not as decorative though is surprisingly tough, is inert, and can take heat.

The whole exhibit was small and took less than an hour to view, but it was an eye opening experience to see how significant some minerals were to the people of Ur and the obviously high regard of the contrasting colors of lapis lazuli and carnelian were in their jewelry and art objects. Gold, although no doubt rare and expensive, was used in many royal objects.. The exhibit runs through August 13, 2006. If you have any questions on Ur, I would suggest you ask fellow club member and museum volunteer, India Immega, who is very knowledgeable on the jewelry, metal working, and the Ur culture of the period.

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Unger, M. F. 1957. *Unger's bible dictionary*. Chicago: Moody.

## Field Collectors

*To my fellow Collectors all over the Earth*  
© 2006 TERRELL WILLIAM PROCTOR, J.D.  
28 May 2006 4:30 P.M.  
Houston, Texas

**S**ome folks spend a life to make money  
really working for nothing. Funny...  
Some spend a lifetime watching players,  
throwing balls and running in layers.

Some folks simply dance the hours away,  
and others chase balls on the fairway.  
Some folks sit for hours playing cards,  
other folks walk about, in fenced-in yards.

Some folks sit with glazed-over eyes,  
watching the tube that will lobotomize.  
Some folks will gamble their money away,  
others waste time in some cabaret.

You and I walk to a different beat,  
Whether it be cold or out in the heat.  
We know that there are secrets galore,  
minerals and fossils, Earth's reservoir.

Things never seen by a human before,  
things just waiting for us to explore.  
Wonderful things found, by some explorers,  
the public will see, after the restorers.

Collectors go out into the field,  
making the Earth give up its yield.  
Providing the wonders of this Earth,  
truly an avocation, of great worth.

## Day Light Section

*by Frances Arrighi*

**N**ine members attended the April 2006 meeting of the Day Light Section. Mr. Gene Rooney gave a program on bead stringing including knotting. Mr. Rooney has taken many of the GIA courses and had a jewelry business on the East Coast before moving to Houston. This was a very informative program, and we thank Mr. Rooney very much for his time and effort.

In May our program was the showing of a video by Steve Midget on mokume gane. This technique will be used for our programs this summer. Mr. Midget has been a proponent of this technique for many years and has made improvements. Our summer programs will be under the direction of Professor Val Link. We look forward to a very productive summer.

## In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

The library floor is empty and looking good with the last of the rocks and surplus books out. Hopefully we can keep it that way for a while. The next few club auctions will be material from Al and Marion Kidwell. They are long-time club members (from the early 1960s) but have not been very active the last four or five years. Before that they were regulars at our section meetings and helped a lot with the Mineral Section booth. They will be moving to Phoenix in July and will be greatly missed, particularly by me and other members of the Mineral Section. The Library has benefited by receiving some of their books and maps, and now the rest of the club can benefit by the auctioning of their rock and mineral specimen duplicates that was Al's trading stock. Al used to do a lot of trading world wide, but in recent years there has not been as much of that as in the 1960s through 1980s. The high cost of shipping minerals plus the great increase in the value of mineral specimens has made swapping by mail not as attractive. A small package used to contain less than a hundred dollars worth of minerals, but now that same package and minerals would be well over \$200 in value. If it is lost, damaged, or return specimens are not received, it was easily written off. Now a package lost or an equal return of good minerals that are not received is a more serious loss.

The latest new book for the library has been purchased and donated by the Mineral Section. It is the English translation of the Russian book entitled, *Khibiny*. It may not mean anything to most of you, but the Khibiny massif is the most important group of igneous rocks that make up the Kola Peninsula in Russia, and it has been well known for its rare and unusual minerals for many years. It is a large book containing 466 pages with many pictures, and it will help identify any of the many minerals found within its borders. It will be in the Russian section.

A number of new magazines are being published on lapidary, beads, and metal work. If any of these should be in our library, please let me know. I have subscribed to some, but it is hard for me to judge which ones are best for us. Your input as users is appreciated.

## Getting Stoned in Chihuahua, Mexico

by Matthew Phillips

Uh, I mean getting agate in Mexico, (Am I in trouble, Mr. Matt and Scott?) At the next General Meeting for HGMS, I will present my impressions of what it is like to travel to Mexico and collect agate. It really is not that big a deal, and most of all you get to travel with and meet friends who also are having a great time. It is not all walking long distances and digging in desert soil. (If that is what you want to do you can, but it is not that necessary). Traveling with friends and making more is a great travel experience; you get to see people not packaged by some travel agency and to meet more down-to-earth, wonderful people. The outdoors is great—you see areas not spoiled by advertising, signs, or trash (at least very little).



During the meeting I will present hardcopy pictures, maps, and later some projected photos of my last two trips to Mexico to the same place. I will also display some actual collected material, both rough and finished—the kind a novice like me finds. Of course Matt Dillon will show some of his material and give us the benefit of his insight from many trips to the San Carlos area in Mexico.

### **Lapidary Section Gem Stone Carving Program**

*by Mary Ann Mitscherling*

**T**he May Lapidary Section program presented members with the opportunity to experience gem stone carving with all the tools and instruction usually reserved for formal classes. After a brief talk by Ed Clay on carving with examples of gem stone carvings brought by Mary Ann Mitscherling, the meeting moved to the middle classroom. Sunday Bennett, Stephen Wilkerson, and Mary Ann helped Ed set up the carving boxes, water pumps, Foredom flexible shafts, special chucks for use with water, drill bits, agate slices, and other tools needed to carve gem stones. The five students each claimed a carving box, selected the nicest agate slabs, heard a short introduction on proper carving procedures, and began active gem stone carving. Since new students frequently get wet as they learn to hold the grinding wheels to minimize water spray, there were many wet students grinding away. However, being wet did not slow them down. Everyone seemed to have an enjoyable time.

The Lapidary Section has hands-on programs after brief meetings at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month. The Shop is open for use on that day from 5:00 p.m. until fifteen minutes before the meeting begins. Saturday Shop use rules apply.

### **Anne Frank Elected to Lifetime Membership**

*by Phyllis George*

**T**he HGMS Board of Directors voted unanimously on June 6, 2006 to award Anne Frank a lifetime membership to the HGMS. Over the years she served 16 years in elected positions to the HGMS. The positions she held are as follows: Secretary, 1964; Treasurer, 1968–1977; President, 1978; Director, 1979; Treasurer, 1980–1981; Treasurer for the National Show, 1982.

Thank you, Anne, for your many years of dedication and service to The Houston Gem & Mineral Society.

### **Petrified Wood Created in the Lab**

*from BBC Online via The Matrix 5/2006, via Breccia 5/2006*

**A** team of U.S. scientists claims to have created petrified wood in just a few days, mimicking a natural process that normally takes millions of years. Researchers from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory turned wood into mineral by soaking poplar and pine in a solution and then cooking them. The process could provide new ways of filtering pollutants, soaking up contaminants, and separating chemicals. Details of the research appear in the journal *Advanced Materials*.

Petrified forests can form when trees are buried without oxygen, leaching out their

woody compounds and sponging up the soil's minerals over millions of years. To mimic this process in the lab, the team led by Yongsoon Shin bought pine and poplar boards. A one-centimeter cube cut from these boards is placed in acid for two days before being soaked in a silica solution for two more.

Next, the cube is air-dried, placed in a furnace filled with argon gas which is gradually raised to 1,400°C, and left to cook for two hours. Finally, the cube is left to cool in argon to room temperature. Silica takes up permanent residence with the carbon left in the wood's cellulose to form silicon carbide, a ceramic.

### Moissanite

*Excerpt from Brinton Brown, in Lapidarian 9/04, via Petrograph 5/2005  
and Breccia 5/2006*

**M**oissanite is the mineral SiC, first discovered in fragments of the meteor that crashed 50,000 years ago in Meteor Crater in Arizona. It was named in 1905 in honor of Henri Moissan (1852-1907) who discovered Carborundum (a natural silicon carbide) that occurred as shimmering new mineral crystals in the fragments of the meteorite. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1906. The optical properties of diamond produce great luster and fire best seen in daylight, curiously, whereas the Moissanite's structure produces more sparkle, and its fiery brilliance is visible in low light, say candlelight.

Natural sources are rare, but the semiconductor industry has been growing single crystal silicon carbide for use in the high performance semiconductor devices. A North Carolinian diamond cutter noticed these crystals. Moissanite is now the trade name for the synthetic SiC gemstones. As a diamond stimulant, synthetic Moissanite is hard to differentiate from diamond as it has a hardness of 9.25 compared to 10 for diamond. Its index of refraction is slightly higher than diamond, but because of the difficulty growing crystals, it is only slightly less expensive.

### HGMS General Meeting Minutes

*May 23, 2006*

*by Margaret Hardman-Muye, HGMS Secretary*

**T**he meeting was called to order by Scott Singleton at 7:33 p.m. New members Robert Hall and Larry Tischler were introduced and welcomed.

There were several **announcements**: Sunday Bennett says there is a Gem and Bead Show at the Stafford Community Center on June 3.

People who want to attend the Ur Gold exhibit will meet at 9:00 a.m. on June 3 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

A DVD, Rockhounds! was donated to the library.

The **Education Committee** reported that there will be a stone setting class coming up in the fall. New member Gene Rooney will teach it. See the BBG for more details.

**Day Light Section**: According to Sunday Bennett, they will be making makume gane

at the next several meetings, taught by Val Link.

Steve Blyskal reported that the **Mineral Section** will have a swap and sell meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of June. The next program is on macro photography, presented by Sam Norwood. The Section does not meet in July or August.

**Faceting.** The next program will be the Thompson brothers teaching the Section how to select rough.

**Lapidary:** Maryann Mitscherling said the Section had a carving demonstration, and five members practiced on a piece of agate.

**Paleo:** The last program was on Triassic clams. The next will be Dr. Clark on Mammoths.

**Show:** Sigrid needs volunteers for the SETHS home schooling conference, June 2 and 3, and later for the Intergem Show on July 14, 15, & 16.

**Clubhouse/Shop.** Tom Wright and Neal Immega have been working. A saw is being repaired. There is a new cabinet in the jewelry shop which has been mounted on the wall. The mist ventilator has been installed in the rock shop. There are three new lights in the garage, and the partition in the men's bathroom has been completed. The outside HGMS letters will be painted burnt orange in the near future.

Scott announced that the two new club banners are being made.

**Newsletter/Web site:** Phyllis George would like any problems with the Web site reported to her. She also wants Section program information and short write-ups on the programs for the BBG.

**Library:** The copier is broken. It was approved for Art Smith to get someone out to repair it.

**Club Inventories:** Each Section is making a list of items owned by that Section and their replacement cost. Matt Phillips is taking photos. Please get your inventories done and to Scott.

**Bylaw Revision:** The current Bylaw revisions regarding selection of the Show Chair and Assistant Chair are in the BBG. Voting on these changes will be at the July meeting.

**Show and Tell:** Maryann Mitscherling showed a fish she is carving. Beverly Mace showed rocks (sharks teeth, barium crosses, botryoidal hematite, and quartz) collected on her recent field trip to Georgia and South Carolina.

**Inda Immega** gave a great program on ancient Ur.

## HGMS Board Meeting

June 6, 2006

*by Margaret Hardman-Muye, Board Secretary*

X	President	Scott Singleton	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
X	1 <sup>st</sup> . Vice President	Matt Dillon	X	Lapidary Rep.	Dave Hawkins
X	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	Mineral Rep.	Art Smith
X	Treasurer	Paul McGarry	X	Paleontology Rep.	Terry Brawner
	Treasurer Assistant	Lowell Stouder	X	Day Light Rep.	Sunday Bennett
X	Secretary	Margaret Hardman-Muye		Past President	Norm Lenz

**Call to order, 7:30,** by Scott Singleton

Approval of April Minutes Done via e-mail. Margaret Hardman-Muye announced that she will be in New Mexico in July and unavailable to take minutes.

### Treasurer's Report:

1. Balance statement was not available as Lowell Stouder is out of the country.
2. Paul McGarry reported that all HGMS treasury documents have been downloaded to Lowell's computer. Lowell has the checkbook, as well. Paul still needs to get the second CD to Lowell.

### Committee and Section Reports

- **Program:** Matt Dillon has been in contact with Sir Paul Howard, author of Fossiliking for Queensland Agate. Sir Howard has agreed to do a program for HGMS when he is in the U.S. after the Tucson shows in 2007. The date he is available is February 14, 2007, a Mineral Section meeting night. Art Smith will ask the Mineral Section if they would be willing to host this club-wide event.
- **Show:** Sigrid Stewart gave Board members a copy of a letter she has developed. It will go to vendors, letting them know that they have a spot in this year's show, based on their payment from last year's cancelled show. She also passed out copies of the last Show Committee meeting minutes. The SETHSA Conference booth went well. The next event where volunteers are needed is for the Intergem Show July 14, 15, 16. The Show Committee party is June 25 at Scott Singleton's house, 6:00 p.m.
- **Shop and Clubhouse:** Art reported that the copier is still at the repair shop. He will also put up a sign and a can for members to place their money in for copies (\$0.05 per copy).
- **Education:** Dave Hawkins has printed materials regarding classes which he has placed in local shops. A fabricating class started tonight, and the enameling class started June 4. There is a stone setting class planned for the fall. It was suggested that we put a booth at the "Bead Market Show" next year. Karen Burns has contact information.

- **Newsletter:** Phyllis George says the next BBG may be over 50 pages long. Scott is continuing his article on HGMS Club history.
- **History:** Art Smith is planning a send off event on June 17 for the Kidwells, long-time club members who are moving to Arizona.

### Old Business:

1. **Budget review:** The Board reviewed the budget and made a few changes. Terry Brawner moved, seconded by Sunday Bennett, that the amended budget be approved. Motion passed. Scott will make copies of the amended budget and forward to all Board members.
2. **Status report on inventory of club possessions**
  - a. **Lapidary:** Margaret Hardman-Muye was asked to inventory the Lapidary supplies and equipment.
  - b. **Faceting:** Rusty Bennett is about 75% done with the faceting inventory.
  - c. **Mineral:** Scott received a copy of their inventory.
  - d. **Paleo:** Terry Brawner is about half way done.
  - e. **Youth:** Beverly Mace gave us an estimate of the youth inventory.
  - f. **Library:** Art Smith has completed the inventory, and gave a copy to Scott.
  - g. **Clubhouse :** There was a discussion about what needs to be covered in this inventory, and it was decided that it includes all furniture, appliances, etc that are not covered elsewhere.
  - h. **Shop:** Neal Immega sent a written inventory to Scott.
  - i. **Education:** Dave Hawkins gave a verbal estimate of education material and tools.
3. **Clubhouse:**
  - a. Tom Wright is getting an estimate for replacing three outdoor lights. He will also repair the Venetian blinds in the office.
  - b. Scott will paint the HGMS sign in front and the two walls near the stairs, but will not be able to complete it until the fall. Dave Hawkins will paint the jewelry workshop.
4. **Committee on abuse prevention:** Matt Dillon reported that this committee was established to develop some policy to keep children safe from abuse while at the clubhouse or attending club events. The committee had their first meeting May 13, and set an agenda for future meetings. They will develop a general statement about the subject, develop rules regarding children participating in club events, and then will develop an implementation strategy.
5. **HGMS banner** Scott has the first banner hanging on the front wall of the clubhouse. After discussion, it was decided that the second banner should have five grommets on the top and bottom instead of three. We will add the additional grommets to this finished banner ourselves. These additional grommets will help the banner hang better.

6. **Fantastic Carpet Services and monthly cleaning service:** Nothing yet.
7. **Scholarship update:** Scott sent the Board a copy of an e-mail received from the Geology Department at San Jacinto College. We reviewed this e-mail. Sunday will contact Val Link to obtain information regarding the process the University of Houston Jewelry Department. uses to choose students for scholarships. She will also find out if there will be a new contact person at the U of H when Val retires.
8. **Shop purchase request:** Neal Immega wants to purchase a Cryogenic air dryer for the shop. He will be advised that he can buy it from his Shop budget.

### **New Business:**

**Honorary Lifetime Membership:** Anne Frank served HGMS for 16 years, including 15 years of continuous service from 1968–1982, serving as Secretary, Treasurer, and Club President. She now lives in Tennessee. Art Smith moved, seconded by Beverly Mace, that we give an Honorary Lifetime Membership to Anne Frank. Motion Passed. Sunday Bennett will make her a certificate, and Beverly Mace will send her the last two issues of the BBG. An announcement will be put in the BBG by Phyllis George, as well.

**Nominating Committee:** Bylaw changes will be voted on at the next General Meeting. Once they are passed, a Nominating Committee will be formed. Scott asked that each Section Representative bring the name of a person from their section to serve on the Nominating Committee to the next Board meeting (July). There will also be a member from the Board selected for this committee. This committee will convene immediately after the By laws are passed, and they will seek nominations for the following positions:

- Assistant Show Chair (for this year's show)
- National Show Chair for 2008
- Assistant National Show Chair for 2008.

The Nominating Committee will have one month (July) to bring names (people must have already agreed to serve) to the Board, who will confirm the nominees at the August Board meeting

Adjourn: 9:15 p.m.

### **Primitive Casting**

*Article by Peter Rowe on Ganoksin Online - [www.ganoksin.com](http://www.ganoksin.com)  
via Stoney Statements 5/2006*

**A** low-tech casting method that would amaze you with its simplicity and the sophistication of its results is a method used in West Africa for casting gold, bronze, etc. The models are often just beeswax collected directly from the bees. Rolled into very thin wires and tiny balls, these things are coiled into the most delicate and beautiful forms.

After the models are made and sprued, they get “invested” in a mix of plain old clay and organic matter like dried grass, etc. (*The initial coat over the model is fine clay, no straw.*) Then it is coated with successive layers to form a mold, and the end of the sprue is built up with additional beeswax into a crucible shape as well. After the clay has thoroughly dried, this thing is placed into a fire (*charcoal*), and the wax is burned out. Next, the thing is cooled slowly. Casting metal is placed in the open crucible shape, and more clay is built up over it to close the cavity.

You end up with a dumbbell shape—one end is a hollow cavity with the casting metal enclosed in it, and the other end contains the model cavity. The two are connected by a sprue.

Sounds complicated, but do keep in mind that so far all the casting materials are either dug out of a beehive or out of the ground, except perhaps for the metal, and that was too, I guess. Anyway this thing, after again drying the clay, is now placed back in the fire, but this time with the metal-containing end down. The straw/organic content of the clay makes the mold porous enough to allow fumes to exit as well as providing a nice reducing atmosphere for the melting metal.

When the metal is melted, as judged by the color of the fumes and flames surrounding the mold, the whole dumbbell is simply inverted. The molten metal runs down into the mold area by gravity alone. A look though any text showing how the historical Ashante cast gold and bronze will demonstrate just how well this technique works. The reducing nature of the mold keeps metal cleaner than our normal investing procedures, and the high metal and mold temperatures allow a complete fill—even fine sprues and very delicate filigree models.

### **ARK-LA-TEX Hosting SCFMS Annual Show in August**

*by Edna House*

*President, Ark-La-Tex Gem and Mineral Society*

*from SCFMS Newsletter 5–6/2006*

**G**reetings, Fellow Rockhounds!

On behalf of the Ark-La-Tex Gem and Mineral Society, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the delegates, officers, fellow club members, and guests of the South Central Federation of Gem and Mineral Societies to Bossier City/Shreveport and our annual show. We hope that your stay will be a pleasant one and that you will enjoy the modern facilities of the Bossier Convention Center. The other meeting rooms in the Center have been reserved for our use, so there will be no need to visit multiple venues for the various functions. The Editor's Breakfast and Awards Banquet are being catered by our culinary school, so it is important that you make reservations as soon as possible. The food is always outstanding, so don't miss out!

Be sure to get your reservations for the Editor's Breakfast, Banquet, and Two-Day Pass in early. All reservations must be sent in by July 15, 2006. In order to get a discount, hotel reservations for the Holiday Inn, Bossier City, must be made by July 15, 2006. Reservations for the Hampton Inn, Bossier City, must be made by July 18,

2006, for the discount.

Hopefully you will have time to visit some of the other attractions in our area, such as the outstanding Louisiana Boardwalk, an open air shopping center adjacent to the Red River with lovely landscaping, and views of the city. Often there are top name entertainers that visit the area. Check <http://www.shreveport.net/fun/> for some ideas.

For plant lovers, the Barnwell Center and the American Rose Center are close by. The R W Norton art gallery is the home of the largest collection of Remington paintings in the United States. And of course, the cuisine is legendary. There's just so much to do here, you may want to extend your stay either before or after the show to enjoy.

Our club is not a large one, but our members are always glad to help. If you have questions or need assistance, we're only a phone call away. Feel free to contact Bill Hart, our show chairman (3187468735), or me, Edna House (3189499765), or any member of our club in the SCFMS Directory. If we don't know the answer to your question, we'll do our best to find out. To find more about our club, please visit our Web page at: [www.larockclub.com](http://www.larockclub.com). Once again, welcome!

### **Rockin' in Music City--AFMS Annual Show**

*by Lewis Elrod, General Convention Chair*

*from AFMS Newsletter 5/2006*



**W**elcome to "Rockin' In Music City," the 2006 Convention and Show for the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. and the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc., both sponsored by the Middle Tennessee Gem & Mineral Society. The convention will be held in Nashville "Music City," Tennessee in August of 2006.

Much more information is provided on the Nashville area on the AFMS Web site [www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org) and the MTG&MS Web site at [www.mtgms.org](http://www.mtgms.org).

#### **Host Hotel**

The host hotel is the Hotel Preston. Most convention activities, including the convention banquet, will take place there. ***You must state that you are with the AFMS to get the convention special rates of \$82.00.*** Be sure to make your reservations at the earliest possible date as this is a heavy tourist time in Nashville, and many hotels are already booked. Reservations at the Preston must be made by July 15 as this is the end date for our block of rooms.

The hotel may be reached at their toll-free number 1-877-361-5500. More informa-



tion concerning the hotel, including a map, may be found at the AFMS Web site ([www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org)), the MTG&MS site ([www.mtgms.org](http://www.mtgms.org)), or the hotel Web site ([www.hotelpreston.com](http://www.hotelpreston.com)).

Several MTG&MS members have visited the hotel without any announcement of who they were and have enjoyed the meals they ordered.

### **Camping**

Many of you will want to come in various motor homes, and we are pleased to tell you that you can camp at the show site on the Tennessee State Fairgrounds. There are 250 spots, so no reservations are needed. All have full hookups with electric (most are 30 amp but some are 50 amp, all with standard plugs so no adapters are needed), water, and sewer connections. Find your spot and pull in. Fairgrounds Security will come by, collect your payment for the stay, and provide a notice to place in your window so no other security person will come by and try to collect again. Cost is \$30 a night. They will take cash or check, and there is an ATM onsite if needed.

For other camping locations, check the AFMS Web site show link where you can find a lot of information about the Nashville area including camping.

### **Convention & Show Pins**

We have very attractive show/convention pins. They are shaped in a rock form with "Rockin' In Music City 2006" on them. They are numbered from 1 to 2006. The cost is only \$2.00 each. Should you order by mail, please include \$1.00 per order to cover extra postage cost of mailing the pins. They will also be available at the registration tables at the show and at the host hotel. Please purchase one or more to assist us with the cost of promoting the show and convention.

### **"Bring a Rock"**

The MTG&MS is working with the Middle Tennessee State University's Mineral, Gem, & Fossil Museum. We would like you to bring two rocks (minerals, slabs, rough, cabs, faceted stones, fossils, etc.) One will be given to the museum, and one will be used at our silent auction at the show to assist in paying the expenses of the convention and show.

As you will arrive from many locations in the U.S., this is a chance for us to obtain a number of new items for display at the museum. Those items displayed will be credited with your name as the donor. Please provide us with the identity of the material, location of its origin, and your name in writing along with the donation.

A complete schedule of activities, meal menus, and registration forms are included in the May issue of the AFMS Newsletter beginning on page 7. We hope to see you in Nashville, "Music City," this August.

## Be Safe—Be Well

*A Message from Your Safety Committee*

*by Don Monroe, AFMS Safety Chair*

*from the AFMS Newsletter 5/2006*

### Calculated Risk

We often use the term “calculated risk,” but I wonder if we always think about what we are saying.

The term “calculated risk” should be clearly defined in our mind. In order to do this for myself, I reverted to the training I received in elementary school which involves “breaking down” anything we are not clear about. The risk part we probably understand, but what about the “calculated”? Do we think through the issue or just use the term to justify things that did not go well but obviously could not be our fault. Surprisingly enough, I think we really do consider potential outcomes more often than we think we do.

I think we often look at a situation in terms of risk vs. reward. Some examples I would suggest include:

- The situation that may arise when we are cutting a cabochon from a stone. One of my mentors, the one and only E.T. Pike, always said “don’t cut any garbage.” He meant if a stone shows evidence of a crack or a fissure, don’t use it. Now if it is the only stone you have of a particular color or pattern, you may want to take that “calculated risk.”
- You have assembled your torch outfit and are preparing to solder or heat something. You smell the faintest whiff of acetylene and think that you will not take time to soap test all of the joints. This is NOT a good calculated risk. Don’t shortcut safety procedures.

Another tool we might employ is probability. What are the odds that something unplanned and undesirable will happen? Think about the following situations:

- You are on a fieldtrip, and the weather conditions indicate that we might experience a small storm with lightning. Do you really want to tempt fate, or do you follow the safer route and take cover. You are thinking this is a “no-brainer” and all of us will take cover, but you are wrong. Many people do not follow the recommended guidelines and become statistics.
- You are rock hunting in a dry wash in a desert area and notice that it is raining in the nearby mountains. Do you head for higher ground or decide that a flash flood is so unlikely that you will just continue digging?
- You are soldering, and you are using flux that you found at a garage sale. You know that some fluxes are not user friendly, but this one looks a little like something you have used before. Are you willing to gamble that the fumes are not dangerous?
- You do not have the proper tool to cut, pry, or shape something in your shop, or even

worse, you do not have at hand the appropriate eye protection. Is this a chance you are willing to take? Have we not all heard that we should use the right tool for the job?

• We all know that some rocks can be hazardous because of the chemical composition of the rock. (We are not talking about those we find at our favorite rock shop that can be hazardous to our wealth!) There are so many beautiful specimens that contain some bad stuff like arsenic; we all need to learn more. I am in the process of gathering some of this sort of information because I KNOW that there is so much that I do not know.

There is an old country expression that says that we have “not touched the hem of the garment,” and I have only begun to touch the issue of calculated risk. My closing admonition is that we must THINK and try to avoid doing stupid things that will hurt us.

TAKE ONE LAST LOOK AT THE REST OF THE PRIZES.... descriptions are on the web at <[www.afms.org](http://www.afms.org)>

## Photos of 2006 AFMS Show Prizes



#1 - great Horned Owl painting



#2 - 58 Marlin "Diamonds" in matrix



#3 - Inez's Pendant



#5 - Fossilized dove shell with Calcite, Raccoon, FL



#6 - Pottery Bowl



#8 - Tenebris Pendant



#7 - Agate Calcite



#9 - White stone beads



#11 - Lady's blue topaz ring



#13 - Rhynchosaurus B. savings



#4 - Calcite Sphere



#5 - Amethyst Geode



#12 - Frog carving

## History of the HGMS Annual Show—Part 3

by Scott Singleton

Member of The Houston Gem & Mineral Society

### Prolog

The following is Part 3 in a 5-part series on the history of the HGMS Show.

PART 1: **1948-1968** – Early Days (*Published in the May 2006 BBG*)

PART 2: **1969-1977** – Rise to Prominence (*Published in the June 2006 BBG*)

PART 3: **1978-1989** – On Top of the World (*Published in the July 2006 BBG*)

PART 4: **1990-2000** – Fall From Grace

PART 5: **2001-Present** – The Phoenix

### PART 3: 1978–1989 – On Top of the World

**I**ntroduction: There were no major changes that distinguished the start of this era from the end of the previous era with the exception, of course, that we had just completed our very first Federation show and were already thinking about our next. This in itself was enough to separate the two eras because it essentially changed the collective psychological outlook of the club from a “small club” mentality to a “large club” mentality. This is demonstrated by the fact was that despite having an uninterrupted string of eight incredibly successful shows, the club in the 1970s still thought “small.” It preferred to have shows in a small place like the Shamrock (which Bill Cox calls “the garage hotel show”) with 16–19 dealers, despite the fact that we were attracting between 8,000–10,000 people to each show (I commented on this imbalance in the Epilog of Part 2). We will see that the club rectified this imbalance during the 1980s.

An overprint on events in the late 1970s was the inevitable changeover of key personnel. In April and May of 1979, Gene and Anita Shier and Jim Knight, respectively, moved to Austin to retire. In June of that same year, Ed Pedersen was transferred to Denver. At the time of his transfer, Ed was the sitting Vice President and Cochairman of the ID Service with Irene Offeman. Each of these people was very active in the club, and their leadership was missed.

At the same time, several others were entering into the club’s leadership circles. Ron Carman, John and Ruth Hammett, Sister Clement Johnson, Yvonne Dobson, Frances Harris, and Janelle Walker had all been in the club for at least a little while but started helping out in a big way between 1978 and 1982. Of course, many people who had already held leadership positions were still around, including Bill Cox, Tom DeHart, Anne Frank, Irene Offeman, and Gus and Frances Lindveit.

The new Dealer Selection Procedure rules were modified in 1978, 1979, and 1980 as the club sought to make this overly-stringent process more workable (see Appendix 2 in Part 2 for a full description of the original regulations). In 1978, a representative of the new Faceting Section was added to the committee. In 1979 the rules were modified to take the Board Secretary out of the loop and to allow dealer contracts to be sent directly to the Dealer Chairman and to be kept on file by that person. 1980 saw several

significant changes: The position of Assistant Dealer Chairman was created, and it was specified that this person would automatically become Dealer Chairman the following year. The provision prohibiting more than 12% local dealers in the show was abolished, and text was added granting the Dealer Chairman authority to replace cancelled dealers without Board approval if the cancellation happened within 60 days of the show.

But perhaps the largest single factor affecting the club and the show in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s was that we had to share the Houston market with a second major show, in large part due to our own failure to recognize what the market was telling us. The relationship with Herb Duke started out in 1977 very dubiously, in my opinion, with Herb wooing the HGMS Board with phone calls, letters, gifts to the club (for instance, equipment provided by Herb at the first two Intergem shows in 1977 and 1978 were then donated to the club following the show), and assurances that he would NOT interfere with our show in any way. This “mating dance” continued for several years.

However, the relationship started to sour in early 1980 when the club declined Herb's offer to participate in his show. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but the supposition of those I talked to is that it began to be apparent Herb Duke was sweet-talking us while at the same time trying to take over the Houston show market. For instance, there had apparently been assurances from Herb that he would not hold a show prior to our National Show in 1982. However, by late in 1980 Herb's true designs on our city were becoming clear as he wrote and said that he would, after all, be having a show in 1982. Needless to say, we didn't participate in his 1981 show either.

However, to show he was a nice guy and held no grudges (!), Herb invited us to have a table in his show in March, 1982. We accepted because we wanted to promote our own National Show in June of that year. At that show, Bill Cox and Herb met. I would have loved to have heard that conversation. (From the very start, Bill had been emphatically against the HGMS having any sort of relationship with Herb Duke because he knew what Herb was trying to do.) At any rate, Herb was apparently nonplussed by this meeting and the rest, as they say, is history. Intergem soon went to two shows, then three shows in the late 1980s, then four shows in the 1990s. The effect was, to say the least, quite dramatic on our bottom line. We have suffered hugely from the loss of identity because most people did not (and still do not) realize that there were (and are) two separate organizations having gem shows in the city.

The Intergem show now boasts being in 30 cities nationwide and having 80 shows per year, as well as producing their own magazine (Gems and Jewelry). If it's any consolation to the club, it is my guess that most, if not all, of these 30 cities have gone through exactly the same difficulties that we have. But that is what America's free enterprise system is based on and is the same reason why Wal-Mart is reviled in every small town across America. The fact is that it is difficult for a small business (or, in our case a nonprofit organization) to match wits with a dynamic, rapidly growing business, usually led by a similarly aggressive and visionary businessman.

**1978:** As it turned out, this was our last show in the Shamrock Hilton (thankfully).

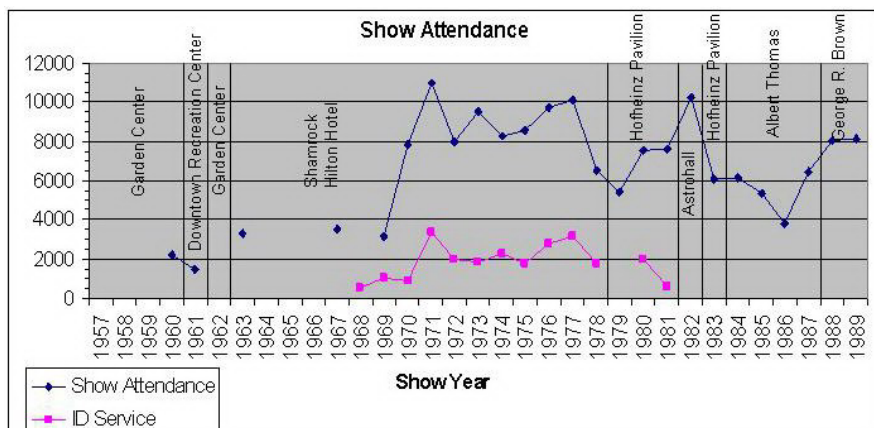
Anne Frank was President, and she asked Bill Cox to come back into the leadership circle to take on the roll of Show Chairman. Bill had continued to be a member and attend club meetings, but he was starting his ascent into the AFMS (the nationwide American Federation) leadership circles because, in his mind, that was the last remaining mountain to climb.

Gene Shier was again the Dealer Chairman (this would be his last year with the club). He abided by the new Dealer Selection Policy regulations and submitted a list of dealers to the Board for approval in February. However, there had not really been time to set up the necessary processes required by these new rules, so Gene had just made up a list. In the meantime, the Board secretary (Frances Harris) had duly begun receiving and tabulating requests for dealer space. This list would be used for the next show in 1979, using the full "dealer committee" as specified in the policy.

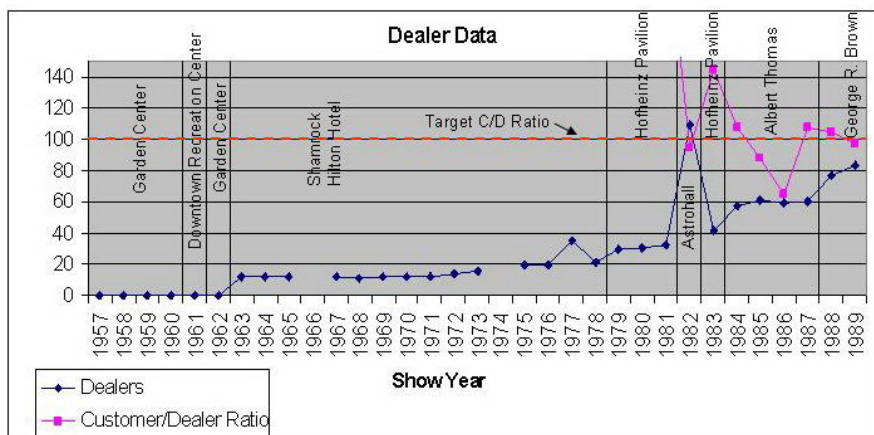
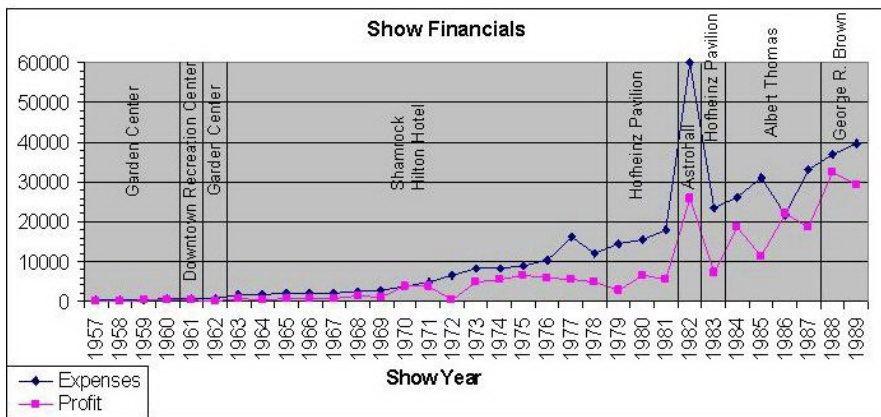
In my view, this show was remarkable because it was unremarkable. By that I mean that it was the first show since 1969 to attract less than 7,000 people (it had an attendance of only 6,540). Bill Cox reported it actually was a good show but that really bad thunderstorms during all three days were to blame for the low attendance. However, I have a different suggestion: perhaps the Intergem show, now having completed its second year in Houston, was already having an adverse impact on our attendance.

I am supported in this hypothesis by the show's statistical data (see attached tables). The shows in the 1970s only fell below 8,000 in attendance once, and that was in 1970 when we barely missed that mark. On the other hand, after the beginning of the Intergem shows in Houston, the club has gone *above* 8,000 only in 1982 (the National show), and in 1988, 1989, and 1990. The average attendance from 1970–1977 was 9,115, whereas from 1978–1989 (excluding the National Show) it was 6,469. I believe this was due in large part to the presence of Intergem.

The other notable item from this year was that the club had decided to start looking for land on which to build a clubhouse. Bill Cox, Tom DeHart, and Mitchell Peters were on this committee. There were a few possibilities, but nothing the club was seriously







considering. In association with this idea, Bill suggested the club think about a museum as a contribution to the community. The Board liked the idea and promptly assigned Bill to be chairman of a committee to look into this, with Sister Clement Johnson (who was a Board member at the time) volunteering to be the museum's curator. However, this idea apparently went nowhere.

**1979:** This year was an interesting one for the show. It was Ron Carman's first year within the leadership structure of the club (although he was the Mineral Section's chairman the previous year). It was the beginning of a long career with the club, culminating in Show Chairman for our second National Show in 1994, after which he went on to become AFMS President in 2003.

The year started out inauspiciously enough, with Ron duly making the requisite reservation at the Shamrock before the end of 1978. He had tried to get the Grand Ballroom, as had Bill Cox before him, and had a similar result (failure). Nonetheless, the Board voted to have a total of 30 full dealers at the show and five half-space dealers, for a total of 35 (similar to the number in 1977, except that they had the Grand Ballroom that year for the Federation show). I'm not exactly sure where they thought they

were going to fit all these dealers, but that's what they voted to allocate. Of note is that Sister Clement Johnson was the Dealer Chairman this year, representing the first year since 1973 when someone other than Bill Cox or Gene Shier was Dealer Chairman.

Things proceeded well through the spring with Herb Duke offering to let us sell GemBrite at the Intergem show (we politely declined), and Bill Cox being nominated to be the Show Chairman for the 1982 National Show. He accepted and immediately started working on initial preparations. By September he had the Astrohall reserved for June of 1982, and in October he convened a planning meeting for the preliminary 1982 National Show Committee.

However, come summer things started to unravel for young Ron. He already had a rather rocky relationship with the Shamrock because he felt they treated the club like second-rate citizens. Then, in June he received a letter from them saying that the Shamrock would not be available for the weekend he reserved. Apparently, we hadn't signed a contract for that year's reservation, and they didn't have a deposit from us (oops!). So, because of one reason or another, they had double-booked the weekend we wanted. To compound the problem, it was too late to change our show dates. Things were definitely looking bad for the 1979 Show Committee.

But blessings come in many disguises. The Shamrock, by kicking us out of their hotel, actually did us a favor by forcing a reluctant club to do what it should have done at least eight years before—find another location to hold the show. Somebody had mentioned to Dealer Chairman Sister Clement that the University of Houston (U of H) Hofheinz Pavilion might be a place to look into. Thus, she and Ron Carman immediately went to look it over and have a meeting with the facilities manager. They were suitably impressed and went back to the Board to report their findings. The Board promptly voted to approve the Hofheinz as a show locality for 1979.

Now, to understand the oddness of having a show in the Hofheinz Pavilion, you have to first understand that it is an arena for the men's and women's U of H Cougar basketball teams. Thus, it has a wooden floor, 8,000 seats ringing it in theater fashion, and an upper court with refreshment stands, luxury suites, and offices. We used the entire upper concourse for the main part of the show and tried various plans to make use of the lower floor.

Thus, in 1979 the dealers, ID service, and working exhibits were upstairs on the main concourse. The case exhibits were downstairs on the basketball court. Of course, the first year everyone was finding out what works and what doesn't work. It turned out that there were a lot of complaints about having to walk up and down the stairs to get from the exhibits to the dealers. Plus, running electricity to the exhibits was a real pain. In fact the whole setup strained the capabilities of the facility electricians. This arrangement would be changed for the next show.

The show went off as well as could be hoped considering the location was changed three months prior to the show. Of course, attendance was not great (5,450), nor would anyone expect it to be. You can imagine the fretting publicity chairman Earl Nelson did over having to completely revamp all the publicity materials and submit them on



such short notice. Property Cochairmen Tom DeHart and Jerry Grimes had to redesign the floor plan from scratch and get a handle on the electrical arrangements, and Dealer Chairman Sister Clement Johnson had to notify all the dealers of the change in venue and give them directions.

**1980:** This year started out with quite a bang. Literally. An auto shop that was adjacent to the clubhouse on Alder blew up in January, causing the common wall to collapse and the roof to cave in. Then fire swept through both. Clubhouse chairman Tom DeHart worked overtime through the entire episode and for months afterwards. Many club members came quickly to help save all our equipment and move it to a hastily-rented storage shed. In fact, due to the quick action of so many club members, we apparently didn't lose any equipment whatsoever. This is a real testament to the devotion of our club members.

The Board had to move quickly. Several club members fanned out over the area to find potential clubhouse locations. At the Board meeting in February (held in the Garden Center), President Sister Clement Johnson, Kris Wittlinger, and Tom DeHart presented details of a warehouse near Bissonnet and Hillcroft. It was a building in the Ashcroft Industrial Park on 7329 Ashcroft. It was a bit more expensive than the Alder clubhouse (\$425/month versus \$250/month), but it was the best option they could find on short notice. And it wasn't a bad place either—it had a room for the shop and another for meetings. It was approved by the Board and by the club at the February General Meeting.

The Ashcroft quarters would become our clubhouse for the next five years. At the March Board meeting, Tom DeHart was given authorization to spend as much or all of the preliminary insurance disbursement (\$1,500) on whatever he needed at the new building. By April, he had the new clubhouse livable and the Board started meeting there. The remainder of the insurance claim money would come later.

This calamity reinforced a growing perception that we needed to find our own clubhouse. In May, a building fund was created as a separate bank account. Any donation could be earmarked for the building fund if desired. As a result, this fund was continuously increased over the next few years.

Despite these distractions, show preparations proceeded as normal. Numerous discussions were held with Herb Duke by various people (Kris Wittlinger, Al Police, Sister Clement). The details are not reported, but they most certainly were concerning his delicate balance between keeping us mollified and taking over the Houston show market. We were obviously beginning to see this because we declined the invitation to participate in his show this year.

But several changes were occurring. Ruth Hammett was starting up a new Youth Section with help from Consie and Dalton Prince. Steve Blyskal got the idea to have a Swap Area from the Clear Lake show, and he convinced the Show Committee to begin one. And this year saw Yvonne Dobson start on the Show Publicity Committee as Cochairperson with Earl Nelson. This event is notable for the simple reason that Yvonne would end up being involved in publicity much of the decade. Her contribu-

tion to the show was immense, since several of our best shows in this period can be correlated to her involvement on the publicity committee.

Ron Carman was Show Chairman for a second year and applied his experiences from the first year to make this year better. All case exhibits were put on the upper floor with the dealers and exhibitors so people wouldn't have to walk up and down the stairs to see them. Steve Blyskal's Swap Area was the only thing on the basketball court, which gave them plenty of space. Dealer chairperson Ruth Hammett had about the same number of dealers as in 1979, and program chairman Dr. Al Kidwell had an array of interesting talks lined up for the show.

This, by the way, was becoming a regular feature of the show—a full program schedule so people could attend talks as well as see exhibits and visit dealers. Dr. Kidwell was responsible for the programs during the Federation show in 1977. However, upon our move to the Hofheinz in 1979, he expanded it considerably because he had the use of rooms in which to hold these lectures. Dr. Kidwell continued supervising the annual show programs for several years, including for the National Show in 1982.

The improvements mentioned above were all evident in the bottom line. Attendance increased to 7,558 (highest in three years) and profits climbed to \$6,659, which just barely edged out 1975 as the most profitable show ever held to that point. I'm sure everyone was quite happy to be having a successful, stable show once again.

**1981:** The two main preoccupations during 1981 were Herb Duke (again) and the National Show in 1982. Bill Cox had suggested in late 1980 that the 1981 and 1982 Show Committees be combined for more efficient planning. The Board agreed to this, so the 1981 Show Committee regularly met in combination with the 1982 committee. The 1982 Dealer Chairman (Art Smith) presented a list of dealers for the National Show as early as April for Board approval. It was decided that in addition to Art's dealers, all the 1981 dealers would automatically get invitations. This began adding up to a large number of dealers—exactly what Bill Cox's plans were for the National Show.

Show and Board positions were similar to those in 1980. Ron Carman went from Vice President and Show Chairman to President, Ruth Hammett continued being Dealer Chairperson, and Yvonne Dobson added Vice Presidency and Show Chairpersonship to her Publicity Chairpersonship. So the 1981 show benefited from having Ron's experience at making the Hofheinz work for us the previous two years and from Bill Cox putting his energies into our first-ever National Show the following year.

The result was a show very similar to the previous show—and with the successful results of that show as well. Steve Blyskal reported that his Swap Area, now in its second year, was very successful. Dr. Kidwell's programs also went well. There were 65 case exhibits for this show, 34 of which were competitive.

**Farewell to the ID Service:** In Part 3 of this history, the ID Service is in the twilight of its long and productive life. In 1977, the service celebrated 10 years of existence in conjunction with the Federation show that year. However, the departure of Ed Pedersen

in 1979 was a significant loss. He essentially helped run the mineral side of the ID service so Irene could concentrate on the fossil side. (Gemstone ID was abandoned due to the difficulty of finding qualified gemologists, and the unfortunate reality was that people would buy gemstones from dealers and immediately take them to the gemologist to verify their ID and value.) So in 1978 Linda Northcote agreed to help run the mineral side of the ID Service. She would also perform that task in 1979 with Gus and Frances Lindveit assisting on fossils. Things went smoothly because there was a core of experts that had been in the Service for many years, such as Dr. Charles Riley, Theo Miller, Dr. Al Kidwell, Dr. Russell Jeffords, (all from Esso Production Research), Dr. Dick Zingula (Humble Oil), Dr. Elbert King (U of H Geology Dept. Chairman), as well as our own members, Art Smith and Linda Northcote.

By 1980, Irene was again running the ID Service with the help of Jim and Terry Weedon. They were very busy at the show but complained (as had Linda two years earlier) of kids bringing grab bags over for identification so they could use them in their rock kits. This was not supposed to be the idea behind the ID Service. Concurrent to this, the Mineral and Fossil Sections were mature enough to handle identifications on their own (especially since people from those Sections were also doing duty in the ID Service booth). Too, these Sections had their booths relatively close to the ID Service (especially at the Shamrock where they were cramped for space) and thus the distinction became even more muddled. Over time, this issue grew into a minor skirmish.

By 1981, things were definitely winding down. Only 582 identifications were tabulated, which is suspicious because this booth had averaged over 2,000 for many years. I'm not sure whether the advertising was not sufficient, the experts were not tabulating their identifications, or the Sections were starting to provide this service. Perhaps all three were happening at the same time. But regardless, the 1982 National Show Committee discussed the issue and decided that they would not have a separate ID booth. Instead, the Sections would officially be responsible for this service. And it has been that way ever since.

It was a good run, lasting for 14 years. During this time, the ID Service made a valuable contribution to the appeal of our show and club. It helped put us on the map and demonstrated that we do provide worthwhile benefit to the community. And it all grew out of a desire by Irene Offeman to identify the kinds of minerals and fossils we normally collect, and to pass that information on to our club and the general public. It was a wonderful idea, and for this we all owe her our thanks.

**The 1982 AFMS National Show:** Bill Cox had been working on plans for this show since he was appointed 1982 Show Chairman back in March of 1979. By September of that year he already had reserved the Astorhall for this show. As discussed above, the 1981 and 1982 Show Committees met in combined fashion so that following the 1981 show (in September) they already had a plan for the National Show and were in the middle of implementing it.

One of Bill Cox's fundamental philosophical tenets was that we had the capability to be a larger and more prominent club. He lived this philosophy in his personal life as he climbed through the regional Federation (SCFMS Vice President, President: 1976,

1977) and then through the national Federation (AFMS officer, culminating with President: 1978-1984). Thus, he was chosen to be Show Chairman for the National Show because it fit perfectly with his abundant experience and his vision. In addition he was a CPA with his own business, so his budgets were always fiscally sound.

So, logically, the "Bill Cox National Show Plan" was simply to have the biggest and best show the HGMS and AFMS had ever seen. His first mark was dealers, since he had been Dealer Chairman numerous times in the 1970s. Thus, his plan required that we have over 100 dealers at the show, a number that included about two dozen wholesale dealers (which was new to the club at this time). Everyone told him that it couldn't be done, because this was a club

that was accustomed to having 16–19 dealers at the Shamrock and was just now starting to have 30–32 dealers at the Hofheinz. But Bill was having none of that. In March of 1981, Dealer Chairman Art Smith presented 90 dealers to the Board for approval. In November he mailed out contracts to 101 dealers. In the end, 60 full-space, 21 half-space, 11 demo, and 27 wholesale dealers were at the show, a total of 109 dealers.

Now an aggressive plan such as this is extremely dependent on attracting a sufficient number of people to the show so that the customer-to-dealer ratio doesn't plummet (see my discussion on this in the Epilog of Part 2). So Yvonne Dobson, in her third year as Publicity Chairman (and, by the way, was also President of the club this year!), stepped up to the plate and showed that she had learned well from her accumulated experience as well as her mentorship with Irene Offeman. The statistics tell the story: 33,000 fliers mailed (a list of 12,000 names came from Herb Duke to supplement our own show list), info sent out to 93 newspapers, 26 magazines, 40 radio stations, six TV stations, and 57 libraries. Total expenditure for this effort was \$9,700, \$4,000 of which was for newspaper advertisements. This was a very large sum for those days, where the typical publicity budget was on the order of \$2,000. However, in this case the end justified the means, because 10,278 people attended the show, up from about 7,600 the previous two years. To this day, the 1982 show stands second in the list of top show attendances, edging out the 1977 Federation show by about 200 and only being beaten by the infamous 1971 show.

Another crucial component of any Federation show is the Federation activities. For this, Bill relied on Ruth Hammett, who had been Dealer Chairman in 1980 and 1981, was Vice President this year, and soon to be President for two straight years following this show. Ruth, assisted by Janelle Walker, had the unenviable task of coordinating



Figure 1: Patch Commemorating the 1982 National Show



Figure 2: Ribbon cutting at the opening ceremonies. From left to right in front are: Bill Cox (Show Chairman and AFMS Board member), Emerson Tucker (SCFMS President, from Lubbock G&MS), Barbara Gross (AFMS President), Yvonne Dobson (HGMS President, Assistant Show Chairperson, Publicity Committee Chairperson). The scissors in Bill Cox's hand are the same as was used in the clubhouse opening.



Figure 3: Yvonne Dobson (left) and Bill Cox (right) at the welcoming ceremony in one of the meeting rooms. Dr. Dick Zingula is visible in the back (with grey beard).





Figure 4: Editor's breakfast. From left to right in the front half of the table are: Dr. Harold Dobson (Yvonne's husband), Dalton Prince (holding up his ham slice), Ron Carman in front, Yvonne's empty chair (she's taking the picture), Linda Northcote.

eight meetings that required breakfast or lunch and seven more that required coffee and donuts. In those days a National Federation Show lasted a full week. Registrations were conducted continuously from Monday to Thursday, the first three days of which were Federation meetings. The show itself was a four-day show, starting on Thursday with hours of 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. except on Sunday when it closed at 6 p.m.. The official hotel was the Astro Village Hotel, where we had 250 rooms reserved and had arranged for a bus to ferry people between the hotel and the Astrohall.

Competitive and noncompetitive exhibits were handled by Ron Carman. He had a total of 84 competitive and 41 noncompetitive exhibits, totaling 125 cases. This required the services of 46 judges (each was paid \$50 for their services and given glazed, ceramic armadillos made by the club). The large number of cases caused a minor "case panic." Thus, we had 20 extra cases made and sent out appeals to various regional clubs asking to borrow extra cases.

Programs were again handled by Dr. Al Kidwell. They were presented in three separate rooms; one for general lectures, one for the Faceter's Guild lectures, and the third was his own creation, the "Rocksey Theater." The Theater showed 25 movies, most averaging about 30 minutes long. Twenty-six program lectures were conducted, including an Arkansas Minerals Symposium on Saturday afternoon.

Special exhibits, handled by Sister Clement Johnson, included gem clocks from

Cartier's, oriental malachite and lapis lazuli carvings from the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art, and (of all people) Herb Duke showing gems and artifacts from India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Working exhibits, handled by Tom Wright, included "singing rocks" (chimes made from slabs), faceting demos, silversmithing demos, and turquoise and opal carving demos.

Steve Blyskal reported that his Swap Area, now in its third year, was very successful. He had 22 tables and did almost \$2,000 worth of business. He was not so thrilled with his out-of-the-way location, but there wasn't much that could be done due to the scope of the other parts of the show.

No mention of credits for putting on this show would be complete without recognizing the important task Tom DeHart had as Properties Chairman (in addition to his position as Clubhouse Chairman). Tom had to lay out the floor plan, determine how many tables we could put in the space we had available, and how to allocate those tables to participants. He then had to supervise the property company (Freeman) during set-up and try to get enough electricity into the areas that needed it. This ended up being a real pain because our requirements were greater than what was available in the Astrohall.

The end goal of Bill Cox's plan was to make enough profit to move us as far as possible towards our goal of acquiring our own clubhouse. Having over 100 dealers was a bold move, but he backed it up with over 10,000 attendees. The resulting customer-to-dealer ratio was 94, which is just about as picture-perfect as one could possibly hope. He also spent just over \$60,000 putting on this show, about four times as much as normal in those days. But the bottom line was that his show produced about \$26,000 in profit and a respectable profit margin of 43%. Not bad. The club would be very thankful for his success in another two years.

**1983-1985—Show Hangover and a New Venue:** Ruth Hammett took the Presidency in 1983 with the statement in her banquet speech and in her January President's Message: "We have reached the top of the mountain. Now what?" She answers her own question by saying: "I have set for myself two mountains....The first is to start earnestly looking for a new clubhouse of our very own.....My next mountain ... is one with the youth of Houston." She will see both mountains climbed in the next few years.

In January the club realized they would have to buy an existing building rather than vacant land in which to build a clubhouse. In February a Building Committee was established composed of Bill Cox, Harold and Yvonne Dobson, and Sid and Billie Wald. They were given a three-year term and the commission to find a clubhouse. It was tough going, but in mid-1985 they would have success. I will discuss their success in conjunction with the other events of 1985.

Also in February, Ruth started pursuing the establishment of a Youth Section in the club. For this she gained the active support of Peg Wright and Consie Prince. On May 28, 12 youth gathered for a Saturday morning meeting at the clubhouse. They decided to meet twice a month and learn cabbaging and other techniques, and to call themselves

"The Pebble People." And thus our newest Section became a reality. Ruth continued to set up meetings and presentations through the year, but Janelle Walker officially led this Section in 1984, Lexy Bieniek in 1985 and 1986, then the leadership returned to Janelle for the remainder of the decade.

So, with a club that was looking to capitalize on "reaching the summit" and yet having no choice but to put on a show similar to what they had before "reaching the summit," Show Chairman Stan Madsen gave it his best shot. Dealer Chairman Sam Koster got the requisite number of dealers, which this year was increased to 42 with the official inclusion of 8 wholesale dealers. These dealers were put on the basketball court, sharing it with the Swap Area, so they could be well separated from the retail dealers. Publicity Chairperson Yvonne Dobson churned out her usual superb publicity, including a program that featured a closeup of a cerussite crystal from the Sams Collection (this poster still hangs in our clubhouse to this day). Ron Carman continued to supervise the competitive and noncompetitive exhibits, but complained that the number of exhibits was dropping substantially. He noted that this is a nationwide trend. Compounding this, show attendance was again down to the 6,000 level as was seen several years earlier.

In addition, the Hofheinz management was slowly taking away rooms that had previously been available for our programs, leaving us with a net smaller space at a time when the club was definitely thinking bigger. An investigation committee led by Ruth Hammett and Yvonne Dobson visited various facilities, including the Astrohall and the downtown Albert Thomas Convention Center. The Albert Thomas was accepted as the next show venue. The Board then agreed to have 55 dealers, 12 of whom would be wholesale.

The selection of the Albert Thomas was a wonderful choice because it was a professional convention facility. The shows immediately started being set up in our now familiar configuration, with separate booths for each of the sections (including the new Youth Section), Swap Area, exhibit cases, food court, and an info booth at the front door. However, the steady increase in number of dealers meant that the old style of having a reserve list and then selecting which dealers to accept into the show was now out the window. The Dealer Selection Committee now was only a formality, adhered to because it was written into the policies of the club. In actual fact, the Dealer Chairman and Assistant Dealer Chairman were in an all-out search to find enough dealers to satisfy our dealer numbers. This was not a problem as long as we could attract 6,000 or more people to the show, because the target customer-to-dealer ratio of 100 means that we could have 60 dealers and still provide them with enough income to make our show worthwhile.

However, storm clouds were gathering on the horizon. The local economy was in a steady decline mimicking the fortunes of the oil industry. In addition, Herb Duke announced a second show in 1983, to be held in November. While this was not in direct conflict with our show, it represented a steady sapping of the dollars available for gem and mineral purchases. And on another front, Ron Carman had arranged for



another of Dick Zingula's Uniform Rules Seminars to be held in July. This seminar had to be cancelled because not enough people had signed up. Thus ended an unbroken string of seminars that had acted to progressively educate our members on the fine art of competitive exhibiting.

There was also disturbing news on the leadership front. Jim Botsford had just finished a two-year term as Director when he accepted a nomination as Secretary in 1983. It didn't appear he did a very good job, because at the end of the year President Ruth Hammett (who was a professional secretary as was Frances Harris before her) had to reconstruct many of the minutes from her own personal notes. Apparently ignoring this warning sign, the club allowed him to be Show Chairman for 1984 because he had been Assistant Show Chairman in 1983, where presumably he did a better job than he did as Secretary. He served in this capacity until somewhere around February, when he just disappeared. This left Assistant Show Chairman Tom Wright to pick up the pieces and put on the best show he could. Then, when it came time to choose a Chairman for the 1985 show, the Board made it official policy that an Assistant Show Chairman would be chosen at the same time as the Show Chairman, and that this position was a training ground for the Assistant to take the Show Chairman position the following year. In 1985, Ron Carman went through the official procedure of adding this language to the HGMS by-laws.

The 1984 show went off well, with the new hall receiving good reviews. Attendance was at a similar level as the previous year (just above 6,000), but this in itself was not bad news since it was the first year at a new locality. The increase in dealers to 55 meant that profit increased substantially to \$18,464 while the customer-to-dealer ratio was still a healthy 108.

**1985—Houston, we have a clubhouse:** All other events of 1985 were overshadowed by the purchase of a building at 10805 Brooklet. The building was found by Yvonne Dobson and presented to the Board in July. A special Board meeting was convened on July 23 to consider its purchase. It looked like a good clubhouse, having 4750 sq. ft. and only requiring \$40,000 down, but it would need considerable modification for use as a clubhouse, and it was located quite some distance out of town (by the standards of that time). However, the Board approved and gave Bill Cox authority to negotiate with the owner. Bill did so, and in August agreed to purchase terms of \$138,000 with \$35,000 down and a mortgage of \$103,000 for 15 years at 10%. (Note: At some point this agreement was changed to 10 years with a balloon payment).

Starting on September 28 and lasting through the fall, the club came together to help renovate the new clubhouse. Electricity and air conditioning had to be modified, walls torn down and new ones framed, plumbing run, sheetrock hung and plastered. It was a tremendous amount of work, but this was OUR clubhouse, and by God, we were going to make sure it got done. A large number of volunteers donated their time and talent to pull this off, and my compliments go out to each and every one who helped to make our clubhouse what it is today.

Although the new clubhouse took center stage, we actually did have a show that year, although it was held in late August because the Albert Thomas management bumped



Figure 5: Clubhouse renovation. In the picture are Stan Madsen (left) and Ruth Hammett (center). The person on the ladder is unknown. John Hammett is in the rear of the picture. He is largely responsible for the design and construction of our kitchen.

Figure 6: Stan Madsen plastering the wall in the men's bathroom.



Figure 7: Art Smith (front) and Dalton Prince laying carpet



Figure 8: Our new shop!



Figure 9: Open house dinner in October



Figure 10: Ribbon cutting at the first clubhouse Christmas dinner, 1985. Left to right are: Bill Cox (Building Committee Chairman), Tom Wright (HGMS President), Yvonne Dobson (Building Committee member and the person responsible for finding the clubhouse). The scissors in Tom's hands say: "It's hard to be humble when you're #1." These are the same scissors that were used in the ribbon cutting at the 1982 National Show.



Figure 11: John Hammett (left) and Richard Offeman (right) in front of the Christmas tree at the Christmas party, 1985. These two club members put a huge amount of their time and effort into the clubhouse renovation.



us off of our normal date in early September. Interestingly, Bob Cross was the Show Chairman with Jerry Foster as his assistant. Attendance was a bit less than the previous year, but profit was way down. This was due to rapidly increasing publicity costs and also an unexpectedly high electricity bill (\$3,000 higher than the previous year). This understandably caused much concern among the Board, who went back to the electrical contractor to find out if the bill was correct. It was. Because of this problem, the Board voted to add restrictions on electrical usage to the dealer contracts. (These restrictions exist to this day). This change to dealer contracts succeeded in bringing electricity usage down to a reasonable level in 1986.

**1986-1989—Change in Mindset:** With a new clubhouse came a new attitude. This attitude did not just materialize out of thin air, but was the result of realities on the ground. Namely, we now had a clubhouse that needed funds for survival. We had a note to pay, utility bills, insurance, and clubhouse modifications that continued for many years.

So what was this new mindset? Simply to “maximize profit.” While today we might not think this was such a big deal, remember that this was a club that previously had almost no expenses to cover and no goals to work for. They simply existed to have fun, learn new lapidary techniques, broaden their existing knowledge of minerals, fossils, and jewelry making, and to exhibit their work. Bill Cox expended a lot of effort trying to change this lack of foresight. Now it was a reality.

Of course, the clubhouse attracted the lion’s share of attention in this period. In January, President Tom Wright gave the club the choice of meeting at the new clubhouse (for the General meeting) or the Garden Center, and they chose to continue meeting at the Garden Center (the Sections by then were all meeting at the clubhouse). The General Meeting began meeting at the clubhouse in early 1987.

Also on their minds was the fact that the mortgage agreement called for a balloon payment at the end of the 10-year note. Several were concerned about this, including long-time treasurer Derry Gartig and Director (and assistant Dealer Chairman) Doug Troeder. These two proposed starting a building endowment fund that would be tax exempt. The fund would be used in 1995 to pay off the balloon payment.

The show was run by Ron Carman and Stan Madsen in both 1986 and 1987. Ed Raines and Doug Troeder were the Dealer Chairmen, with Doug being the Dealer Chairman in 1987. The primary difference with this show from the 1985 show was the issue of expenses. The concern over high electricity and publicity expenses in 1985 caused Ron to slash expenses anywhere he could. The primary victim of this slashing was publicity. Debbie Cox (Director and BBG Editor) handled publicity with the assistance of Ben Noble. Ron gave her a budget of \$5,500 (substantially less than in 1985), but she only spent \$2,700. Part of the problem was that all the ticket stubs from 1985 were accidentally thrown into the trash, so our mail-out database was a bit scant.

The result was a show that slashed expenses by about \$9,400 over 1985 levels. This reduction in expenses went straight to the bottom line: Profit increased by about \$10,400 (helped substantially by an increase in dealer fees). Unfortunately, the public did not

cooperate—attendance dropped by 1500 over 1985, which had already dropped from 1984. The reasons for this are many-fold: Publicity was scant, the weather was bad with lots of rain, and oil prices crashed to \$12/barrel in March from a high of \$33/barrel in September of 1985, resulting in the loss of 175,000 oil-related jobs in Texas. This event is known among the oil industry as “the crash of 1986.” Layoffs were in the thousands, even tens of thousands in the larger oil companies, throughout the spring and summer. I hardly think a substantial portion of our core audience was thinking about spending money on minerals, fossils, or jewelry in early September.

**1987:** The primary item of business in 1987 was to find a new show location. The Albert Thomas Convention Center was slated to close as a show venue because the near-by George R. Brown Convention Center was nearing completion. The Board searched for alternate venues, eliminated the Astrohall once again due to price, and finally settled on the George R. Brown in the summer. President Dalton Prince handled the negotiations with the City of Houston, and arrived at a very favorable rate due to the fact that we are a nonprofit organization.

Also important was the fact that Yvonne Dobson once again became the publicity chairman and proceeded to arrange a large amount of exposure for the club. She and Show Chairman Stan Madsen went before the Board in June requesting an additional \$3,000 to spend on a series of spots with Channel 13 (ABC affiliate). The Board agreed, and Yvonne received a total of 21 spots for her efforts. In addition, she got spots on Channel 2 (NBC affiliate), radio station KPRC, Houston Home and Garden magazine, and several public libraries. Total cost for her publicity: \$12,600, almost \$10,000 more than the year previous and \$4,000 more than 1985.

**The result of this fantastic publicity effort:** An attendance that was almost double that of the previous year (6,458), which in turn resulted in a profit figure that was only \$3,000 less than the artificially high 1985 level. This is actually more critical than it might first appear because not only does the club need to make an adequate amount of profit, but each of the 60 dealers in our show also needs to be kept happy. And they will be kept happy as long as the customer-to-dealer ratio is at an acceptable level (100+), which it was due to the increase in attendance (108).

**1988-1989—New Venue (again):** As the year started out, the club was continuing to think of ways to make money because it had its eye on the 1995 balloon payment for the clubhouse. The Building Endowment Fund was being promoted as a way to build up a reserve cash supply. In addition, the club decided that what it really needed was another National Show just like its last one. Thus, the Board voted in January to make a bid for the next one (one was being hosted this year by the SCFMS in Shreveport, LA). So Bill Cox was approached to talk to the AFMS and see if we could put in a bid. The AFMS agreed, and the bid was accepted at the SCFMS show in August. And the year was convenient also: 1994 was just one year prior to the due date of our balloon payment.

As an added benefit, our move to the George R Brown enabled us to add even more dealers to the show (read: make more money). Dealer Chairman Ruth Hammett had 77 dealers in 1988 and 83 dealers in 1989. But as I have discussed before, basic

economic principles dictate that a rise in number of dealers necessarily means that more attendees are required in order to keep the customer-to-dealer ratio at optimal levels. Thus, Publicity Chairman Yvonne Dobson needed to work her usual wonders. The Board approved giving her \$13,000, slightly more than she used in 1987, with which to work these wonders. She did not disappoint either: Show attendance was increased by 1,600 over 1987, totaling 8,061. These attendance figures were back to the great numbers seen in the 1970s. The difference was that with 77 dealers, the customer-to-dealer ratio was at an optimal 105, unlike in the 1970s when it was 300–600.

The other major show-related event of 1988 was the reinstatement of the Swap Area. It had been killed by the Board, over the protests of the Mineral Section, in late 1986 because of a variety of complaints from dealers as well as club members. But in February Tim Smith presented the Board with a revised set of rules governing Swap Area use and volunteered to be the Swap Area Chairman. All the usual complaints were aired at this meeting and were rebutted by Tim using a document prepared by the Mineral Section. Complaints were centered on a perceived competition with dealers, perceived exclusive use by the Mineral Section, the location within the show interfering with dealers, and a lack of effective leadership to run the booth.

Tim's rebuttal stated that the Swap Area is in competition with dealers, but the money gets recycled back to the dealers' pockets because all purchases must be made in swap dollars which, in turn, can only be spent with dealers. Exclusive use by the Mineral Section stems from the prohibition of selling *finished* jewelry. (The reason given had something to do with tax liability, which I am still unclear about). But regardless, faceted or rough stones, polished or unpolished cut material, and fossils can all be sold in the Swap Area. Location was a problem at various times in the past, but became a non-issue because the George R. Brown had so much space that it could be located in the back well away from dealers. With Tim's assurances of effective leadership by himself, the Board somewhat reluctantly agreed to reinstate the Swap Area for the 1988 show.

The other potential issue beginning to surface was that the show was now becoming so complex and such a large effort that nobody wanted to take leadership positions on the Show Committee. (Sound familiar? It should because the situation has not changed to this day.) Ron Carman was the only person who would volunteer, as he had for the past two years (along with Stan Madsen), and thus he got stuck with the job in both 1988 and 1989. And he did it by himself—nobody would even volunteer to be Co-chairman (sound familiar?), although they managed to get Ben Noble to volunteer to help with the Assistant position in 1989 with the proviso that he would not be required to take the Chairman position the following year (again, sound familiar?).

So, the 1989 show was almost a carbon copy of the 1988 show, which is not a bad thing: Attendance of 8,100 with 83 dealers, producing a customer-to-dealer ratio of a picture-perfect 98, profit of \$30,000 and a profit margin of 74%. There's not an organization in the world that would hesitate even a second before proclaiming this an enviously successful show.

But the issues facing our club needed to be addressed because they would not simply vanish into thin air: Attendance was not very good at the General Meetings which were being held at the new clubhouse in 1987 after 24 years at the Garden Center. Ron Carman was not the "Show Committee Chairman for life," so other volunteer leaders would need to step forward. There was still a balloon payment due in 1995 that the club was not making much progress toward meeting despite their much touted Building Endowment Fund. In addition, Yvonne Dobson's valuable experience in the publicity field was effectively lost following the 1989 show because of disagreements on how to handle the show mailing list (in those days computers were still a novelty, and Microsoft database managers were not as ubiquitous as they are now).

And to cap it all off, Herb Duke brought a third Intergem show into the Houston market in 1989. His shows were now in January, May, and November. While this was still not directly interfering with the run-up to our show, it nevertheless was definitely taking a progressively larger share of the dollars available for jewelry sales. Plus it was becoming even more difficult for the public to tell the two shows apart; a problem that would only grow worse in the coming decade.

**Epilog:** In looking at this decade, it is an undisputable fact that the two most important events in the life of our club, even to this day, occurred. First, we held our first National Show in 1982. Because of the vision and financial wisdom of Bill Cox, this show was outrageously successful and earned us national accolades. It didn't hurt that Bill was then a sitting officer on the AFMS (the nationwide American Federation) Board. Conversely, I'm sure the success of that show didn't hurt his reputation, which would culminate as AFMS President in 1984. The success of that show was such that it produced a profit that was about four times our normal show profit. In addition, this profit would represent a little less than half of the total financial holdings of the club at the time we purchased our clubhouse.

Which brings us to the second most important event in the life of our club—the purchase of a clubhouse in 1985. To this day, there are only three clubs in Texas that have their own clubhouse (Arlington, Austin, and us), so I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this. It allows us to have a building of our own that houses a meeting room, shop, classroom, library, kitchen, offices, and storage. Imagine how difficult our job would be as a club if we didn't have our clubhouse. Only after you fully visualize *not* having a clubhouse can you appreciate how much we can, and are, doing *because* we have a clubhouse.

Despite the various problems and headaches involved in putting on a large and complex show such as had evolved by that time (by a *volunteer* club, I might add), the shows produced during this era were "by the book" as far as show economics were concerned. The entire goal in producing a show is to put on the best show the organization is capable of, so as to attract the maximum number of attendees, and then stock the show with however many retail vendors that can be kept happy by the number of attendees. That dealer number is easy to calculate—the target customer-to-dealer ratio is approximately 100. This approximate C/D ratio was held throughout most of the decade.



In general, the club at this time did the best it could with the resources it had available to it, and the results were quite impressive.

**Acknowledgements:** Numerous current and former club members contributed to this article. I thank the following individuals for their extensive help: Art Smith, Ron Carman, Yvonne Dobson, Bill Cox, Derry Gartig, Tom Wright, Steve Blyskal, Irene Offeman, Tom DeHart, Anne Frank, and Tim Smith. Even though I did not speak to them personally, I am indebted to the contributions of JoAnn Gartig for her compilation of attendance records through the 1980s and Frances Harris for her immaculate minutes of Board meetings from 1977–1980 and 1982, and her similarly immaculate records of all National Show Committee meetings in 1981 and 1982.

### Hints and Tips

**Save trim saw scraps:** from *The Pegmatite* January 2003, via *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

Most tumblers produce better results if there are small bits and pieces of rock of the same hardness in with the bigger ones you are trying to polish.

**Never use a felt-tipped pen to mark good cutting materials** from *T-Town Rockhound* 6/2000; via *Osage Hills Gems* April 2003 and *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

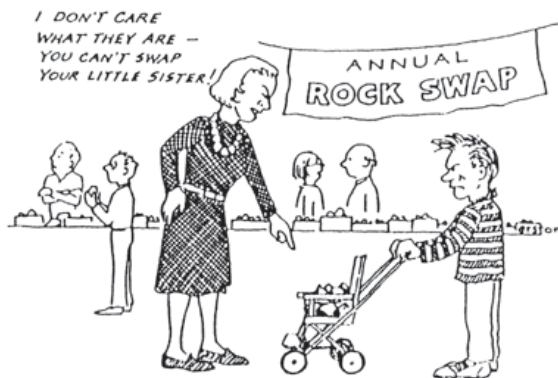
The ink can penetrate the stone, and it is impossible to wash off. So use a china marker since is a wax pencil and the marks can be removed easily by using a cleaning fluid.

**To mark specimens:** from *The Petrified Digest* 6/1999 via *Quarry Quips* 7/2003 and *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

Apply a spot of white correction fluid to an inconspicuous place. Let dry thoroughly, then write an identification with a ballpoint pen. It's impervious to water and most acids. If you use numbers, make a few copies of the mineral list.

**Have a big, sturdy rock?** From *Dusty Rocks* via *BRECCIA* 5/98 and *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

Take it to a carwash! The hard snrav will clean out all the nooks and crannies.



Cartoon from *Rockbuster News* 6/89  
via *T-Town Rockhound* 9/97  
via *The Burro Express* 10/97

**ShowTime 2006**

July 14-16	Houston, TX	International Gem & Jewelry Show, Inc. Reliant Center at Reliant Park info@intergem.net; www.intergem.com
August 12-13	Arlington, TX	Texas School of Earth Sciences Arlington Convention Center, Kris Galbraith (817) 277-2286, <a href="http://www.tses.org">www.tses.org</a>
August 12-13	Baton Rouge, LA	Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society Frat. Order of Police, Baton Rouge Lodge #1 10777 Greenwell Springs 225-687-3864 <a href="mailto:paul_broussard@msn.com">paul_broussard@msn.com</a>
August 14-20	Nashville, TN	AFMS, SFMS, & Middle Tennessee G & M Tenn. State Fair Grounds., Creative Arts Bldg. <a href="mailto:lfelrod@yahoo.com">lfelrod@yahoo.com</a> , <a href="http://www.amfed.org">www.amfed.org</a>
August 19-20	Bossier City, LA	SCFMS & Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Soc. Bossier Civic Center, 620 Benton Rd. Bill Hart (318) 746-8735
September 2-3	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Bldg., FM 2799, John D. Nash 409-384-3974, <a href="mailto:nash@jas.net">nash@jas.net</a>
September 2-4	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society 1200 Ballpark Way. Kris Galbraith 817-784-0375, <a href="mailto:apkris43@aol.com">apkris43@aol.com</a>
September 22-24	Humble, TX	Houston Gem & Mineral Society Humble Civic Center 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport 1 mile east of Hwy. 59
Sept. 30-Oct. 1	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Citizens Ctr, 531 W. Chestnut Rosemary Siems <a href="mailto:ramblingrosetoo@yahoo.com">ramblingrosetoo@yahoo.com</a>
Sept. 30-Oct. 1	Farmers Branch, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI, Brookhaven College, 3939 Valley View Don Shurtz, <a href="mailto:don.shurtz@gmail.com">don.shurtz@gmail.com</a>
October 14-15	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic & Convent'n Cntr, 3303 N. 3rd Leslie O'Connally, 254-939-7015
October 20-22	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center

2006 JULY 2006						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open
2	3	4 7:30 Board Meeting	5	6	7	8 11-5 Shop Open
9	10 1:00 Day Light Section	11 7:30 Show Comm	12 7:30 Faceting Section	13	14	15 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open
16	17 5:00-7:15 Shop Open 7:30 Lapidary Section	18 7:30 Paleo Section	19	20	21	22 11-5 Shop Open
23 30	24 31	25 7:30 General Meeting	26	27	28	29 11-5 Shop Open

2006 AUGUST 2006						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7:30 Board Meeting	2	3	4	5 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open
6	7	8 7:30 Show Comm	9	10	11	12 11-5 Shop Open
13	14 1:00 Day Light Section	15 7:30 Paleo Section	16 7:30 Faceting Section	17	18	19 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open
20	21 5:00-7:15 Shop Open 7:30 Lapidary Section	22 7:30 General Meeting	23	24	25	26 11-5 Shop Open
27	28	29	30	31		

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

***The Newsletter of the Houston  
Gem & Mineral Society***

10805 BROOKLET

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099

(281) 530-0942



## **SCFMS**

1998 - 1st (Large)  
2000 - 1st (Large)  
2003 - 1st (Large)  
2005 - 1st (Large)



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## **AFMS**

1998 - 2nd (Large)  
2004 - 3rd (Large)

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