



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

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

Volume XXXVII - No. 6

June 2006

## President's Message *by Scott Singleton*



**H**arrison County G&MS (Mississippi Gulf Coast): This month the BBG will run the two documents submitted by this organization to the Southern Federation documenting their losses. (Pages 42 and 44.) These were omitted last month due to a lack of space.



**Proper Field Trip Behavior:** I am very impressed with an article written by Susan Postlethwait of the Austin G&MS and have asked that it be reproduced here. It was published in the April 2006 issue of *The Stone Chipper* and is about the AFMS (American Federation) Code of Ethics. As members of the SCFMS (South Central Federation) and AFMS, we all adhere to it. We have an abbreviated version that is written into our own Bylaws (Article IX, Section 2). You may view these Bylaws on our Web site ([www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org)). I implore everyone to review these ethical standards and abide

*President's Message continued on page 4*

## May General Meeting Program *by Matt Dillon* HGMS 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

**M**ay General Meeting: Inda Immega is a Master Docent at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and she will speak on the lapidary and metal working of ancient Ur. Her talk will be based on the current exhibit at the HMNS, "The Royal Tombs of Ur," a series of stunning artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia. The photo is of Karen Burns and Stan Perkins doing jewelry-making demonstrations at the



*May Program Information continued on page 6*

## Contents

President's Message .....	1
May General Meeting Program .....	1
Purpose of HGMS .....	3
HGMS Officers .....	3
Field Trip Behavior .....	4
The International Show—April 14, 2006 .....	6
The Mineral Gods Must Be Laughing! .....	8
Lignite, Petrified Wood, and Cactus Flowers .....	9
Juniors Write About Their Alcoa Field Trip .....	10
Lignite Mine Fieldtrip .....	10
Nature Rocks! .....	11
Field Trip to Coal Mine .....	11
Brownwood Fossiling .....	11
North Side Section .....	14
The "Big Find" .....	15
Stone Setting Class .....	16
New Members! .....	16
Show Committee Party June 25 .....	17
Potential Program for Next Year .....	17
Australia's National Gem, Mineral, and Fossil show 2006. ....	17
HGMS Board Meeting .....	19
Tips and Hints .....	21
Helpful Hints .....	21
AFMS President's Message .....	22
Mineral Section .....	23
SCFMS Safety Report .....	24
In Our Library .....	24
Proposed Bylaws Changes .....	25
History of the HGMS Annual Show, Part 2 .....	27
Hurricane Katrina Losses .....	42
SFMS Executive Board Meeting .....	44
Baking Soda in the Field; Hints & Tips .....	45
ShowTime 2006 .....	46
Calendars .....	47

*Permission to use material originating in this newsletter is given freely, providing credit is given to the author and the source. Articles without a byline are considered to have been written by the editor.*

*Editor: Phyllis B. George  
22407 Park Point Drive  
Katy, TX 77450-5852  
Phone: (281) 395-3087  
Copy is due for the July issue by  
Wednesday, June 7, 2006.*

*E-mail the Editor and Webmaster at  
pgeorge4@houston.rr.com*

## 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>.

*President's Message continued from page 1*

by them on all our field trips. We do not want to be shut out of field trip localities because we have been inconsiderate in any way. This includes removing trash, filling holes, and respecting property owners and other guests who may be at the same location. I also remind everyone that Article XII of our own Bylaws allows for the removal of persons from the HGMS who do not behave in a proper manner. Please be smart and considerate. "Field Trip Behavior" follows:

**Field Trip Behavior***by Susan Postlethwait**from The Stone Chipper 04/2006*

**F**ield Trips: We all love them. We carefully plan where to go, when to go. What tools we will need. Even what packing materials we will need to get our precious finds home. But there is one more thing we should consider—respect for the land. Whether it is private or public lands, we should all adhere to the "Code of Ethics"\* developed by the American Federation of Mineral Societies.

The "Code of Ethics" was developed to remind us that we are all stewards of the land. That we are all ambassadors of the AFMS. What other people see us do and hear us say is what they will think about all rockhounds. Below is the "Code of Ethics." I have added explanation for some of our younger members to help them understand. As we get ready to "Take to the Field" this year, let us all remember the "Code of Ethics."

"Code of Ethics" as revised July 7, 1999 at the AFMS Annual Meeting:

**I will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on privately owned land without permission from the owner.** *This is simple. Always, always ask permission.*

**I will keep informed on all laws, regulations, or rules governing collecting on public lands and will observe them.** *There are rules, and you need to be aware of them. And especially if you are collecting someplace, you need to know what they are.*

**I will, to the best of my ability, ascertain the boundary lines of the property on which I plan to collect.** *Look at maps. Respect fence lines. Ask questions.*

**I will use no firearms or blasting material in collecting areas.** *Do I really need to explain this one? The answer is Never.*

**I will cause no willful damage to property of any kind such as fences, signs, buildings, etc.** *This means that you will not tear down fences so you can drive through or that you will not tear down a building and use it as firewood.*

**I will leave all gates as found.** *If closed leave closed. The closed gate may be keeping livestock from getting on the roads. If open leave open. The open gate maybe the only way livestock can get to water.*

**I will build fires only in designated or safe places and will be certain they are**

**completely extinguished before leaving the area.** *If you have questions about this one, visit Smokey the Bear at [www.smokeybear.com](http://www.smokeybear.com).*

**I will discard no burning material - matches, cigarettes, etc.** *Common sense. Again, visit [www.smokeybear.com](http://www.smokeybear.com)*

**I will fill all excavation holes which may be dangerous to livestock.** *If you leave a hole unfilled, even if you think it is not big, it could erode into a bigger hole and hurt livestock or wildlife.*

**I will not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supplies.** *Do not throw your trash or even the extra dirt from your rockhounding into the water. This will only make the water undrinkable for livestock and wildlife.*

**I will cause no willful damage to collecting material and will take home only what I can reasonably use.** *This is harder. The first part means that you will not damage specimens that you are not taking home. Leave nice specimens for others. The second part means that you should not fill up a whole truck load to take home and then sell to other people. Take what you can use and/or trade.*

**I will practice conservation and undertake to utilize fully and well the materials I have collected and will recycle my surplus for the pleasure and benefit of others.** *This is a continuation of the rule above—take only what you can use and/or trade.*

**I will support the rockhound project H.E.L.P. (Help Eliminate Litter Please) and will leave all collecting areas devoid of litter, regardless of how found.** *Pack out your trash. Even pick up other people's trash.*

**I will cooperate with fieldtrip leaders and with those in designated authority in all collecting areas.** *Our fieldtrip leaders have checked on all the details for the fieldtrip. The rules. The property lines. What we can and cannot do. Please respect the time they have spent.*

**I will report to my club or federation officers, Bureau of Land Management or other authorities, any deposit of petrified wood or other materials on public lands which should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations for public educational and scientific purposes.** *So there you are out in the field and you discover the greatest find since the invention of video games. What do you do? Stop and think of everyone. Everyone in the whole wide world. You will need to contact someone who can save the place for all to see, like Dinosaur National Monument or Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. It is just too great a place to use for rockhounding.*

**I will appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.** *Read the last comment.*

**I will observe the "Golden Rule," will use Good Outdoor Manners, and will at all times conduct myself in a manner which will add to the stature and Public Image**

**of Rockhounds everywhere.** *In case you forgot, the “Golden Rule” is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Apply this to the land and to people. This ties back to being the best Rockhound Ambassador you can be.*

I know it is a lot to take in. A lot of rules. A lot of new words and concepts. But if you really look at this, you see it is common sense. Apply the “Golden Rule,” and you will have no problem abiding by the AFMS “Code of Ethics”!

---

*May General Meeting Program Information continued from page 1*

"Royal Tombs of Ur" exhibit at HMNS. This will be a PowerPoint presentation, and she will bring some “show and tell” items from the exhibit.

The Museum will be exhibiting the grave furnishings of Queen Puabi (2500 BC), from the only intact tomb ever discovered from this point in history. If there is sufficient interest, in the near future Inda and others will arrange a special day at the Museum for the HGMS members to see this exhibit (as was done for the “Dinosaurs”).

### **The International Show—April 14, 2006**

*by Art Smith*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**Y**es, this spring’s show was on Easter weekend. Knowing how bad Mother’s Day or Graduation weekends are, I kind of felt sorry for the dealers. I do not know how they did overall, but Friday was busier than normal—probably because that was the best day for people who were going to be tied up for the rest of the weekend. Karen Burns and Stan Perkins were holding down the HGMS booth when we passed by. The retail section was a bit smaller, but the wholesale section seemed normal and full with no empty booths. As usual the biggest crowds in retail and wholesale were around the dealers selling the bright, flashy, cheap, finished jewelry. I do not know if this material would be considered costume jewelry, but if not, it may be the modern day equivalent.

Again there were bead dealers in great numbers. I do not know if the market is reaching super-saturation, but there seemed to be fewer people at the bead dealers—but that may have been just while we were there. As usual there are always new things, but as I have written before, much sold as quartz is actually man-made glass—particularly raspberry, cherry, or strawberry quartz. With many people jumping into the importation of beads from China, India, or Taiwan, prices are relatively cheap for the common bead materials. Some were selling selected beads at \$5 a strand with additional discounts possible if you bought in bulk.

You could find cheap prices in both wholesale and retail. The general idea seems to be to sell what you can, and who cares about what it actually is. I inquired about some white beads and was told that they were white jade. A quick scratch test with a key showed me that they were probably marble, hardness 3, and not white jade which has a hardness of over 5. Still the dealer insisted they were jade. Another common answer is “stone.” Well from what I saw, stone could be anything from various rock types to jasper or other types of quartz.

Another common name given is “fossil,” which usually stands for a limestone—with

fossils or not. I found a pair of carved ducks labeled “fossil.” They seemed to be a brown and grey breccia with some fillings of pale gray quartz. So I assumed the whole thing was quartz because a limestone breccia of that form and color is not common in the lapidary world. By the way, a breccia is a rock composed of angular pieces of rock that have been cemented together. The pieces can be any size or composed of any material. Well, I liked the ducks and they were cheap, so I bought them. Yes, they were a limestone which has some appearances of a breccia—but probably is not—but even the pale gray “quartz” was actually calcite. The patterns probably represent some replacement of possibly fossil fragments on other materials by calcite from the limestone but retaining some of the shape and color or the original material. Now I know why they were inexpensive.

Limestone is much softer than many of the other lapidary materials. It is quicker and easier to work, plus it is not as hard on the equipment. I found carvings and some beads of limestone that were gray, brown, pale greenish, yellow-brown, and tan. Years ago we bought some that was called riverstone, a pleasing soft pale yellow and brown limestone. When I asked about the name, I was told it was found along a river. An acid test with hardness told me it was limestone. When the bead industry imports from the Orient got underway in the early 1980s, “fossil beads” (mostly dyed) were the first big cheap import item. The limestone was not as attractive as that being used today, so that probably was the reason for the dyed colors. Prior to that time, most of the import beads were from Germany. The quality was superb but so were the prices.

This time last year at the International show I bought a spurrite frog from a New Mexico dealer. He also had some spurrite beads which I have seen in other dealer's stocks. Spurrite is an uncommon mineral from Durango, Mexico. It has a somewhat muted purple color similar to sugilite but seldom as bright. However, before a year was up the spurrite frog sported a powdery white coat of a secondary mineral, probably resulting from the deterioration of some mineral. I first thought it was possibly from marcasite or pyrite, but I cannot see any under the microscope.

Spurrite is composed of calcium, silicate, and carbonate, so by itself the mineral should be fairly stable. However, there probably is some other mineral in small amounts that is not stable and is converting to the white powdery material. The dealer who sold it to me was not there this trip, but hopefully he will be there for the next show. If you have spurrite beads or cabochons, you might want to observe them for awhile before using them in jewelry or selling them.

There were quite a few minerals scattered around in the retail section. Carvings were there too, but unless there is a discount for wholesale, they are usually too expensive for resale. In the far northeast corner of the retail section is the dealer called, *Gemstone Materials* from Tucson. They have been doing the International Show for at least a couple of years. Usually I find their stock well picked over because they usually sell by the pound, and the best goes first. This time they had about six flats of the smoky quartz from Brazil.

Looking it over, I found a couple of pieces that interested me. Most of the quartz, though crystalline, occurs in distorted crystals. The quartz is often black but varies

from opaque to transparent. So I kept two interesting pieces in my mind and kept looking. To really appreciate what might be there you have to handle each piece and turn it to actually see what is good and what is not. The last piece I examined showed little promise until I picked it up. Looking at the front, I realized it is a scepter of smoky quartz with a pale gray quartz stem. The side that was up did not look good because it was composed of white albite with a crude black schorl crystal. However, all this is hidden when you look at it from the good side. So I bought all three. The price was \$100 a pound which sounds expensive, and it is, but believe me the three specimens I bought were real bargains, particularly the scepter.

I did pick up a few small carvings from them and elsewhere in the show. I had planned to go back and look more closely at some other dealers who had carvings or minerals, but we were completely loaded. Getting back to the car (which seemed to be parked somewhere in east Oshkosh) would be a struggle with what we already had. So we made the trek back to the car and then decided we had had enough, so we left for home. It had been a pleasant afternoon, and as usual we spent more than we wanted. However, I could easily have spent another hour or two snooping around, particularly after talking to others who told me I missed at least three other dealers that had minerals—including our own members, Tim and Holly Smith.

### **The Mineral Gods Must Be Laughing!**

*by Roy D. Lee*

*Book Review by Denise Bicknell*

**A**re you a want-to-be adventurer? Do you enjoy action flicks? Have you ever longed to collect fine mineral specimens? Do you have rocks in your head? Have you ever wondered what it takes to put those gorgeous mineral specimens on the tables at our club shows or on the numerous Web pages of the Internet? If so, then Roy D. Lee's new book, *The Mineral Gods Must Be Laughing! The Modern Day Adventures of a Real Life "Indiana Jones,"* is just the ticket. This new book chronicles the mineral collecting adventures of Roy and his friends.

He successfully entertains the reader with side-splitting and hold-your-breath tales that span the continent from San Felipe, Mexico, to Prince of Wales Island, Alaska! Roy's easy style will have you feeling like you've known him all your life.

You will be transported to an enchanted place where adventure meets reality! You will feel your aching muscles, the sweat pouring from your body, and the dirt and grime caking your face and clinging to your clothes. You will lose all sense of time and forget that you need to eat, drink, and rest. Most importantly, you will be right there opening pockets lined with colorful, perfectly formed crystals. Your eyes will be the first that ever gaze upon treasures worthy of the Smithsonian Museum!

If you own a hard hat, put it on and hang on to the edge of your seat, you are in for the adventure of your life!

*The Mineral Gods Must Be Laughing* is available in our HGMS library (Arizona section) thanks to our diligent Librarian, Art Smith.

## Lignite, Petrified Wood, and Cactus Flowers

by Sigrid Stewart

2006 Show Committee Chair

Rolling plains dotted with oak trees and ponds is not what you usually visualize in connection with strip mining, but Alcoa is out to change that at their Rockdale Lignite Mine near Elgin, Texas. On April 22, twenty-six Society members traveled to the facility not far from Austin for a tour of the pits, an overview of operations, and a chance to hunt for petrified wood from the Wilcox formation on the company's acreage. Coal mining in the past has often had disastrous effects on the environment, but corporations now desire to be good citizens, and of course federal legislation has led to reclamation efforts that restore usefulness and ecological diversity to the landscape while satisfying the nation's appetite for energy. Geologist Frank Witzel of Alcoa Rockdale Operations took HGMS members on a bus tour of the mining operations, first showing the reclaimed areas that had already been strip mined, then the open pit area where the overburden is first stripped away before the lignite itself is mined.

Power generated onsite is used in the area and in



Alcoa's aluminum smelting operation, located in Rockdale due to Cold War strategic directives, away from the vulnerable coastline. No, no aluminum ore is found locally—it's shipped in! Although we were not allowed to leave the bus while in the pits, everyone was impressed with the size of the pits and the huge scoops used to mine the coal. After a video highlighting Alcoa's operations, everyone headed for an area nearby where the geologist said petrified wood could be found. It was a beautiful day out, and prickly pear was blooming all around us. Everyone found a least a few pieces of the reddish-brown wood Scott identified as cypress, and many filled up their buckets. I believe Adrianna Weathers found the prize piece—a branch with several distinct knots. Most of the group headed back to Houston or to rockhound at other favorite sites after that, but some opted for a late lunch at the historic City Café on Main Street in Elgin. I would definitely do it again! Many thanks to Joan Riley for her perseverance in setting this trip up for us with Alcoa.



For more information, check out [http://www.alcoa.com/locations/usa\\_rockdale/en/home.asp](http://www.alcoa.com/locations/usa_rockdale/en/home.asp)

### **Juniors Write About Their Alcoa Field Trip**

*by Phyllis George, Editor*

**T**his issue of the BBG is the first one to have so many juniors turn in articles. Three juniors wrote about their Alcoa field trip experience. My thanks to Anna Campbell and Scott Singleton for their encouragement. These three articles will be entered in the 2007 Bulletin Editors' Contest next year in the Junior category.

#### **Lignite Mine Fieldtrip**

*by Jerdahn Campbell  
Age 6 (birthdate 6/1/99)*

**I** really enjoyed riding on the bus and finding many rocks with pretty crystals in them. I was expecting to see caves with coal in them, but instead it was exciting to see the large machines digging huge holes into the ground.

I loved sitting with my friends and touching the coal. I felt the most boring time during the field trip was watching the movie at the very beginning.

I learned that all kinds of rocks can have crystals, and it was neat in the movie when

they told us about the huge cranes and how much dirt the scoop could hold. I really liked seeing all the dirt and coal come pouring out of the scoop in person.

### Nature Rocks!

by *Samantha Roquemore, age 7*

I didn't know what a mine was. I learned that coal is used for electricity. I learned that lots of machines work at a mine to make electricity with the coal. I got lignite coal and found lots of petrified wood.

Petrified wood can be sparkly and lots of sizes. I like rocks.

I also saw lots of interesting bugs like a big rusty red ant and cows. It was my most favorite field trip I ever had.

### Field Trip to Coal Mine

by *Lorraine Singleton, age 7*

Samantha and I went on a trip to a coal mine and we found petrified wood and coal.

First we saw cows in the distance and went a little towards them. They stayed there. Then Dad left to find more rocks. While he was gone we found some barbed wire and saw people in it. We walked a little and found a big hole with branches in it. Then Samantha and I begged Mom to let us go in the barbed wire. We walked past some mud and found the people and then a big hole and went in it. Then we went out of the barbed wire and went on the bus to cool off.

Then we went to the coal mine. We were in a big ditch. A man went out and got us a piece of coal. We went out of the ditch and saw where they were digging up the coal and where the real coal was. Then he brought us back and congratulated us for coming on the trip. Then we went home. The end.

### Brownwood Fossiling

by *Lexy Bieniek*

*Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society*

*Photos by Neal Immega*

Ummm! The smells of coffee, bacon and pancakes roamed through the house as fossil hunter began to stir on Saturday, March 4. Sleepy heads began wandering into the kitchen for their favorite breakfast drink as Brian Honsiger cooked pancakes and bacon for the group. We feasted, cleaned up, and headed for the spillway at Lake Brownwood.

**Can you see more than two adults here?**



George Wolfe and his boys were there to explain how to find the *Archeocidaris* fossils that are the paleontological prize of the spillway. Some of us began to mine for the prize, others walked off down Pecan Bayou, while still others just chose to sit and glean fossils from the surrounding rock. It didn't matter what method we followed—we were successful. The mining group found at least a couple of the *Archeocidaris* each. The walking group brought back a couple of *Petalodotus* teeth that were pretty impressive. Those of us sitting down found some coal, pieces of brachs, and other pieces. We lunched in the parking lot then headed for the mammoth dig in Bangs.



Lexy in the mammoth pit.

Since Neal was coming to the Brownwood area, it rained—the first measurable rain since October—and it made the mammoth pit too muddy for more than one person to dig. Thank goodness that one person was Scott Clark who is the person in charge of the mammoth. Scott talked at length about the mammoth bones that had been uncovered and what bones a previous rain had carried into oblivion. Scott will give a more detailed account of the mammoth and some other diggings he has going to the club in June. We said goodbye to Scott and headed for Park Road 15. We decided to change the itinerary a bit due to the abundance of fossils at Wilson's versus the new road improvements on Park Road 15. The improvements were good for travelers but al-



Diane collecting at the spine outcrop



Spines

most totally buried the fossils.

Park Road 15 had a large amount of horn coral for the gathering. We brought buckets of horn coral back. Along with the horn coral we found a few brachs and some crinoid stems but not much else. In their professional effort of trying to make PkRd 15 safe, the DOT has ruined a great fossil collecting site. One person recalled a spot down FM 2559 where he had once collected other fossils. So we took the short jaunt back down PkRd 15 and around the corner to the new location. There we found some different bivalves and lots of bristly vicious sea urchin spines. As a group we filled several bags and at least one footlocker with the spines. Neal sent a sample off to be identified. The sun was setting, so we headed back to Brownwood.

Waiting on the kitchen cabinet was a crock pot of beans and a tray of cornbread. We cooked some rice and sat around the table sharing paleo tales.

Sunday morning, we set off for Wilson's Clay pit (**photo at right**). Fossil hunting at Wilson's is very much like Halloween—



Spillway



Spillway urchins



there are lots and lots of treats, but you have to knock on lots of doors—or in this case walk around doing lots of looking. We filled bags with conglomerate and crinoid stems. The real treats this trip were a fern leaf impression and a beautiful crusher tooth. There were a couple of crinoid calyxes found, one of them even having the vestiges of arms.



Above: Strange Permian/Penn age crusher tooth

After a magnificent morning of fossil hunting, the group returned to the house, packed their bags, and left leaving behind the wonderful breakfast smells and the sounds of happy people—something the old house hadn't experienced in many years. I can't wait to have ya'll come back.

Below: Brownwood group



### North Side Section

by *Wayne Barnett*

*waynesb@sbcglobal.net*

If you are interested in getting a North Side Section going, please let me know.

I have a place where we can meet that can be used on a regular monthly schedule. It is the clubhouse of my neighborhood. Civic organizations can use it free of charge. It is just across the street from North Harris College on WWThorne Rd. (1960 and I-45 area).

I propose that we meet on the third Thursday of each month. According to the BBG calendar, no regularly scheduled events occur on that night.

Also, what sort of meeting do we want to have? A mini-General type meeting? A round-robin of the different Sections that meet at the regular clubhouse? What do you

propose?

If you are interested, let me know. If I get enough response, I shall go to the Board and ask for their approval.

### The “Big Find”

by Stanley Perkins

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

I guess we all dream of finding that mammoth or T-Rex while field tripping. I was working the upper ledges of a quarry not too far from Lubbock. We were working in pairs for safety purposes. The ledge had narrowed, and only one person could pass at a time. I moved past the obstruction and was about to climb out of the pit when a streak of white in the reddish soil caught my attention.

Pulling out my trowel, I began to pick at the white material. It wasn't clay! My partner came around the ledge and began to help. In a few minutes we exposed about a foot of the middle section of a mammoth tusk. Both sections seemed to continue back into the slope. We stopped digging and clambered out of the quarry and went for the scientist in charge of the trip. We rushed back with more equipment. He warned us that only partial finds of large animals had been found in the quarry. Six of us dug overburden while he carefully exposed more and more of the tusk. Finally he reached the skull and stopped.

Very animated and excited, he told us to stop digging. He explained that the skull was in good shape. He was even able to see parts of the lower mandible. Time was running out on this trip, and there was no way to get such a huge find out in a single afternoon. He told us that we had to prep the find to protect it from the weather.

We applied burlap and plaster casts on all of the exposed surfaces which had been carefully covered with aluminum foil. A large plastic tarp was then placed over the site and nailed or covered with rock to hold it in place. A tired group piled into the vans and headed back to Lubbock that evening. It had been a great day. Not only had we found a mammoth, but two of the small rodent jaws that I had found turned out to be a new species. Not bad for a “best day.”

The skull was later recovered. It was 85% complete and in good condition. Tusks, the lower mandibles and teeth, and a few vertebrae were found. No other bones were discovered in the immediate area.

The story illustrates some key factors to recovering large finds. Number one is to **Know when to back off and get help!** Few of us have the skills or equipment to remove a large find properly. Removing that skull took six diggers, a back hoe, and a crane to remove the final product. The block weighed more than a ton and was 6'x 6'x 8' in size.

I can hear the board now when we moved that into the shop for prepping!!!

**Know when to Stop!** Don't keep digging and digging. If you expose the specimen, it will have to be protected or it will fall apart. This is especially true of material found

in this area of Texas. Cover the material with foil or plastic, and then cover it with soil. Most of us won't have plaster and burlap available. **Do not** mark the location if you expect it to be there when you return! Make your markings away from the site, and keep good notes and GPS readings. If a GPS isn't available, take compass readings on three different permanent landmarks.

Report the find to a local museum curator or society. At this time, plans can be made to do a preliminary examination of the site. Depending on the size and location of the find, special equipment may be necessary to remove overburden and to lift the find out of the excavation. The preliminary exam will determine if it is even possible to remove the find. Don't be discouraged if a decision is made that recovery is not possible. It happens to the best paleontologists. No every specimen can be saved.

Good luck and happy hunting! I hope you have your "big day" in the near future and that I'm somewhere nearby to congratulate you!!

### Stone Setting Class

*by David Hawkins*

**A**fter years of looking, we finally found someone to teach stone setting. Eugene Rooney got his GG in 1973 and took the GIA classes in the 1980s. He has over 30 years in the trade.

We are looking at a four-week class that meets twice a week for three hours each night.

The first week we will do a round setting with four and six prongs. The second week we will set an oval and an emerald cut stone. The third week we will set a pear and a marquise. The last week we will do channel sets on both flat and round rings.

The class should start around August or September. We would like to have at least eight students. We are trying to target the cost at \$250. If you are interested in stone setting, e-mail me at [class@hgms.org](mailto:class@hgms.org) and mail \$25 to the Clubhouse to hold your place in the class. If you do not have access to e-mail, mailing the check to the Clubhouse will hold your place. Mark the envelope Stone Setting Class.

### New Members!

**B**e sure to send your e-mail address to Neal Immega. Periodically he sends out e-mail notices of HGMS meetings and activities. Don't miss out on things you want to do just because you didn't know it was scheduled. Also, be sure to check the HGMS Web site for up-to-date information on club activities.

<http://www.hgms.org>



## Show Committee Party June 25

*by Sigrid Stewart*

*2006 Show Committee Chair*

**B**arbecue, potluck dishes, and sunshine around the pool—that's the setting for a great summer party! But not just any party—this is the one to reward the efforts of dedicated Show Committee members and to get them ready for all the hard work to come between now and Show Time. HGMS members who wish to volunteer with the Show Committee and to work at the Show are also most welcome, but you may be greeted with a signup list!

Please bring a covered dish or dessert, but check with Sigrid Stewart by e-mail or phone so we don't get 20 kinds of potato salad and no apple pie. Here's a chance to show off your baking skills or your sterling ability to anticipate the need for nacho chips!

The Show Committee Party starts at 5:00 p.m. Sunday, June 25, and will be held at Scott Singleton's house (3631 Grennoch Ln., Houston). His house is between Stella Link and Buffalo Speedway and is just north of North Braeswood Blvd. We will have door prizes (including a Grand Door Prize), and maybe Scott's wife Eileen will show you around back in the hopes that you'll help reduce Scott's piles of petrified wood. See you at the party!

## Potential Program for Next Year

*by Matt Dillon*

*HGMS 1st Vice President*

**S**ir Paul Howard is an expert on Australian minerals and agates and has tentatively agreed to come to Houston (if we are willing to provide him with lodging) after the Tucson show next year. He has presented programs to clubs in the U. S. in the past and has been well-received. Should he come here, he will bring specimens and slides to augment his presentation. I will provide you with a date for his presentation as soon as that determination can be made. An article that he wrote on Australia's National Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show follows:

### **Australia's National Gem, Mineral, and Fossil show 2006.**

*by Sir Paul Howard*

**T**he annual National show called the "Gemboree" was held in Hobart, the Capital city of the Island state of Tasmania over the Easter weekend. Hobart is the most southerly city you can drive to and still be in Australia. The end of the last road in Australia heading south is not much further.

Each year the "Gemboree" is held in a different state of Australia. Tasmania in relation to its size and proximity to Antarctica is not as populated as the mainland. To get there, you either have to fly or take your vehicle across Bass Strait on the vehicular ferry from Sydney or Melbourne. The extra cost of this travel (Approximately \$1000),

or the huge increase in fuel costs lately up to \$1.40 per litre or US\$5.40 per gallon for diesel) reduced the numbers attending the show. In spite of this, the very successful show was host to over 5000 day visitors as well as to the rockhounds from 133 campsites at the venue.

The huge hall was filled with over 40 traders and dealers as well as with demonstrations of faceting, cabochon making, enameling, wire wrapped jewelry, cleaning of jewelry, and a new glue product. The weather was cold and windy for the weekend. On Good Friday it rained in the afternoon which was the start of the show and spoiled trading for the 40-odd tailgaters, (car boot sellers). Every day seemed to be very busy, especially on the Easter Sunday when a trash and treasure and a farmers market were held at the same venue.

There were some magnificent displays of “Manfern,” a petrified tree fern wood found only at Lune River, just South of Hobart. Also the beautiful red crystals of crocoite from the Dundas mine in Western Tasmania (one of only two places in the world where this lead mineral is found) were copiously displayed and were for sale. There were field trips to different fossil locations every day.

One of the nice things about this Gemboree was the good food that was available “upstairs” and the live band that played music for dancing after the prize giving and crowning of the Gemboree “Princess.”

There were 1163 entries in the Lapidary Competitions from all over the world, beautifully displayed in showcases along the full length of the huge hall. There were many showcases with specialty items from individuals that were a delight to see. The workmanship was superb.

This year was the first time in the history of the Gemboree that included a separate section for wire wrapped jewelry. Because of this fact, none of the entries of wire wrapped jewelry that I placed in other sections (as I did last year) were judged.

However, for the two sections that were judged, I received first and second prize for both of them. In the “Open” section I received 99.5 and 97.5 points, and in the Novice section I received 98.25 and 97.00 points. I consider these very good marks. For next year’s Gemboree,, I have donated a big perpetual trophy to be awarded to the person who achieves the highest number of points for any one piece of wire wrapped jewelry. It will be known as the Gold Coast School of Wirecraft Trophy. I will not enter the competitions.

I encourage all wire wrappers to “Have a go” next year to see if they can beat my points.

I feel I can join the crowd to compliment the committee and all the willing priceless volunteers who made the 2006 Gemboree such a successful and rewarding show.

**HGMS Board Meeting**  
*May 2, 2006*  
 by *Margaret Hardman-Muye*  
 HGMS Secretary

X	President	Scott Singleton	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Matt Dillon		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
X	Treasurer Assistant	Lowell Stouder	X	Day Light Rep.	Sunday Bennett
X	Secretary	Margaret Hardman-Muye		Past President	Norm Lenz

Meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m.

**M Secretary's Report:** Approval of March Minutes was done via e-mail. The secretary was given a letter from the IRS regarding our 501(c)(3) status, another thank you note from the Sisters, and a copy of the insurance invoice. All are to be filed in the Board notebook.

**Treasurer's Report:** Lowell Stouder reported on the checking account balance and the value of our two CD Certificates.

Lowell was instructed to pay the contractor for building the partition in the men's bathroom. He is also to provide the Board with a printed balance sheet at each Board meeting.

Lowell reminded us that we will get donations from Randall's and Kroger if members who shop at these stores use the swipe cards. Phyllis George will put that announcement in the BBG. There is a box of the Kroger cards available at the clubhouse.

**Committee and Section Report:**

**Mineral Section:** The Auction will be held on May 3, 2006.

**Day Light Section:** The next program, May 8, 1:00 pm, will be a video on Mokume gane.

**Show:** Sigrid Stewart provided a written report. Subcommittees are meeting. Only five dealers haven't been heard from, and they are all dealers who left their money with us. They will be called to make sure they still plan to attend the show. 18 new members were signed up at the Intergem Show. 29 people attended the successful field trip to the Alcoa mine.

**Clubhouse:** Renovation of men's bathroom has been completed. There is a new partition. Tom Wright submitted a voucher for payment. Three new florescent fixtures have been installed in the garage area. Tom purchased a gallon of white and a gallon

of orange paint to do the sign and the painting of the garage area. He also requested written proposals for cleaning the floors and for the ongoing cleaning of the clubhouse.

Scott found the original deed to the clubhouse and the paperwork showing that the lien is paid off. They are filed in the office in one of the file drawers.

Art has begun developing an inventory list for clubhouse supplies. Beverly will add her input as well.

**Newsletter:** Phyllis George reported that the last BBG was very large. She likes to publish all articles turned in, and there were many written.

**Web Site:** Phyllis turned in a receipt for \$99.00 for an upgrade to Adobe Acrobat 7. Payment approved by the Board.

**Library:** Art Smith says the most recent auction is completed. A check for \$414.00 was sent to the Christo's, and the same amount came to us.

### Old and New Business:

**Inventory:** The Mineral section's inventory is mostly done. The Library inventory also is finished. Terry Brawner asked about the Paleo Library and was told that we are estimating replacement value of the books. The Education Committee needs to inventory the supplies for classes; lapidary is responsible for the jewelry classroom and lapidary equipment in the middle classroom, and the shop will inventory the shop items. Paleo owns the air compressor and related equipment and will include that on their inventory list.

**Bylaw Revisions:** Scott presented the Board with revisions regarding the Show Committee and the Education Committee that were suggested at the last meeting. Several changes were made. Terry Brawner moved, seconded by Margaret Hardman-Muye that these revisions be approved. Motion passed. Phyllis George will edit the changes, and the revisions will be presented to the general membership.

**501(c)(3) compliance:** A letter received from the IRS states that we currently are in full compliance with 501(C)3 and 509a2 rules. The letter is filed in the Board notebook for 2006.

**Banner:** Scott brought a color sample for the HGMS banner. The Board approved the color, a burnt orange, and Scott will give the go-ahead to the maker.

**Air filtration system** is currently being installed in the shop.

**Genie machine:** the Lapidary Section has accepted the Genie and will replace the motor.

**Scholarship request:** Scott contacted the woman who inquired about a scholarship, and she did not want to provide the requested information. This will be dropped.

There was more discussion regarding scholarships in general, and it was agreed that

Scott will check with the geology departments at San Jacinto College and the University of Houston regarding their programs and needs.

**Budget:** The rest of the Board meeting was spent developing a budget for the year. After discussion on various items, amounts were established. Paul McGarry will bring a formal budget to be presented to the General Membership.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15 PM.

### Tips and Hints

*From Brad Smith on LA-Rocks via the Agatizer 05/03,  
via The Tektite 05/04 and Breccia 3/2006*

These are untested by the editor of this newsletter.

**Drilling holes** If you have a drill press, you can drill holes by using a nail or piece of tubing as a bit and some abrasive grit as the cutting media. It's worked fine for the author, even better than diamond bits for small holes. Here is the sequence.

1. Fix a piece to a scrap of wood with wax or glue.
2. Clamp the wood to a drill press so the bit is properly positioned to drill the hole.
3. Build a dam around the hole with modeling clay so you can keep water in the hole at all times.
4. Sprinkle a little 100-200 grit in the hole.
5. Drill with light pressure.
6. Raise the drill out of the hole every twenty seconds or so to let water and grit reach the bottom of the hole.
7. Add more abrasive grit as needed.
8. As you reach the bottom of the hole, be careful to ease up on the pressure or you will chip the surface near the exit hole.

### Helpful Hints

*Cleaning Pyrite*

*(from The Tumbler, Rock Buster News via Hound's Howl 5/2002, and High Country Gleamings 4/2005)*

Pyrite can be cleaned using radiator cleaner (DuPont #7). About two commercial tablespoons of cleaner in an aluminum pan with about two quarts of water is adequate. Action to remove tarnish is relatively rapid. To rinse, use a dilute ammonia solution to neutralize the residual action on the specimen. Follow this with clean water. (As with all chemicals, be sure to use in a well-ventilated area and wear adequate hand and face protection.)

### Gemstone Weight

*(from Rock Rustler's News/The Mirror, 1/93, Stoney Statements, 11/98, via Hound's Howl 5/2002, and High Country Gleamings 4/2005)*

Have you wished you could tell the weight of a stone easily? Well, Ray Kopman gives us such a ready reference. U.S. coins weight approximately as follows: Dime – 11 carats; Penny – 15 carats; Nickel – 25 carats; Quarter – 28 carats; Half-dollar – 56

carats; Silver dollar – 133 carats.

### **Pearls In Trees**

*(from The Pegmatite, no date, Footprints, 9/95, via Hound's Howl 5/2002, and High Country Gleamings 4/2005)*

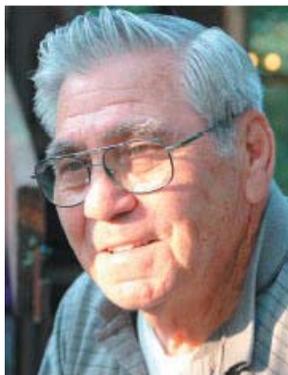
Pearl formed by oysters or other mollusks are made of aragonite, a form of calcite (calcium carbonate). These are well known, but the most surprising pearls are those that grow on trees – Cocoa palms. A coconut pearl occurs inside the nut when the three holes, including the one that opens, are lacking. The embryo, unable to escape, forms a valuable and highly esteemed pearl of the same carbonate of calcium.

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

*by Jim Robinson, AFMS President  
from the AFMS Newsletter 5/2006*

**T**his month's message concerns the way our annual meeting is being scheduled. I've no doubt there will be some who disagree, but I feel we are making it difficult for our younger members with families to attend.

Currently we are scheduling the Uniform Rules meetings on Tuesday, the AFMS meeting on Wednesday—the middle of the week, and the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening. The show itself is scheduled for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with Thursday left for field trips. In my view, this schedule does not justify a full week away from home just to attend two meetings in the middle of the week.



The ever-increasing cost of transportation and lodging is making it difficult if not impossible for many people who are still working or those with families to participate in our activities, especially for those who have to travel across country. Many people are not comfortable flying anymore (I'm one of them) and choose to drive their cars instead. Doing so adds another two to five days to the trip. For myself, it's not a problem. I just look at it as a vacation and enjoy it, but too many people I have talked with tell me they would not consider serving as an officer or on a committee that required them to attend our meeting because of the time they would lose from their job or businesses, to say nothing of the expense involved.

When there is a three-day show, as there is this year, there is no logical reason to schedule the meetings the way they are being done. I wanted the Uniform Rules meeting on Wednesday and the AFMS Annual Meeting on Thursday this year. That would have left Friday for those of us who are judges to be available for the judging. All my attempts to accomplish this were ignored by the individual who is working on the AFMS Convention portion of the week. The reason given was that there would be no

time for field trips. I felt, and I am sure many will agree, that our primary reason to attend these meetings is to conduct the business of the AFMS. The field trips are a side luxury, and those who attend for that purpose would be free to arrive and depart as they please. The trips also could easily have been scheduled for the Tuesday before the meetings begin so only those who wanted to participate would have to spend that extra day away from home.

With more and more Regional Federation shows now being three- instead of four-day shows, we need to consider the difficulties and expenses encountered when we ask those coming to the Convention to spend that extra day—and the extra night in the hotel or campground.

How do you feel? I would like to hear from you.

### Mineral Section

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

**M**ineral Section meetings occur on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of each month from September (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday only) through June (1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday only). **Note:** A special meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 21 for a SWAP NIGHT.

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

**June 7: Macro and Micro Photography:** Sam Norwood will present various techniques for macro and micro photography. The discussion will include techniques for taking close-up photographs: close-up lenses, telephoto lenses, macro lenses, reversing normal lenses, bellows, extension tubes, microscope systems, and CCD cameras. Processing of photographs will also be covered—cropping, clean-up, and merging photos with Helicon Focus to increase depth of field. This meeting was rescheduled from March 15 due to a work conflict. Refreshments will be provided.

**June 21: SWAP-NIGHT:** As our final meeting before our summer hiatus, we will have a Swap-Night where excess material from our collections can be bought/sold/swapped. This will be an informal event and will be held inside. All are invited to participate and swap/sell. Set-up is from 7:00 to 7:30, and the formal meeting will be kept to a minimum to allow ample time for specimen exchange. Refreshments will be provided.

The Mineral Section will be taking its hiatus during the summer months, and no regular meetings will be held. Several informal summer “work-meetings” may occur. Our next scheduled meetings will be September 6 and 20.

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

## In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

Once again I hope to have the library cleaned out shortly after you read this. The materials littering the floor are mostly for the silent auction. Not having a show the past year makes the silent auction plus classes, fees, and other sources of revenue for the Society important. Not that we are going broke, but the cushion we had in the bank has dwindled some. So we need any source of revenue we can get to help build it back.

I discovered that ten issues of *Bead and Button* are missing from the shelves. I probably sent it to the former binders and they lost it, and now they are completely closed down. I managed to order six of the 10 issues from the publisher. The set will not be complete until we get the rest.

I mentioned last month how much value is tied up in the library, but actually many of the books are irreplaceable no matter what value you put on them. Some lose value as they get older, but many gain in value as the demand goes up. So the library represents an irreplaceable treasure. You never realize how important many of the publications are until you use them. Last week I needed to look up some data in some 1950s *Rocks and Minerals* for an article I was reviewing. It was a quick trip, and there it was. We may have the only complete set in Texas. The University of Texas, Austin, probably the largest library in Texas, does not even have a complete set. This may be true of other journals and publications. I am on the American Mineralogist-Economic Geology group e-mail list that is composed mostly of professional mineralogists and geologists. There was a plea for someone to look up an odd-ball mineral reported from Guanajuato in the 1987 *Minerals of Mexico* to see if it was still recognized in 1987 as that mineral. The book is long out of print, and obviously his school's library does not have it. Unless someone looks it up for him, there is not a lot he can do because he needs to search through the whole book to be sure it is not there as some other mineral. So these books, which seem like they will be around forever and are abundant when published, become scarce and more valuable as time passes.

When using the library, I have books filed by state and country so you can take a quick look on the shelves to see what is generally available. However, many good and important articles are not filed by state or country, so use the library index to see everything that is available in journals and magazines regarding that state and location.

The library is a valuable resource, but its value is realized only when it is used.

## SCFMS Safety Report

by George Browne

SCFMS Safety Chair

from the SCFMS Newsletter 3-4/2006

Do you realize that you are more likely to be injured or killed in your motor vehicle than you are in any other aspect of our hobby? That's right—the most dangerous thing we do is travel in our vehicles. Look at the statistics. Every year more people die in vehicle accidents than all of the membership of all of our

clubs combined. Can you imagine every member of every club in our federations being killed every year? Horrifying, isn't it?

Just as horrifying is the fact that for every person killed in a vehicle crash, there are perhaps 10 people seriously and perhaps permanently injured. I bet each of you know someone who has been killed or injured in a car crash, but you probably don't know anyone who has been killed or permanently injured in any other "rockhounding" activity. There is no doubt that driving is dangerous.

I think most of our members **know** how to drive safely, but they need to be constantly **reminded** to drive safely. Be alert, be aware, be cautious, be prepared, and be safe. Follow the rules and don't take chances. Remember—traveling in your vehicle is the most dangerous thing that you do.

This is the time of the year when we take the longer trips, so be sure that your vehicle is in good condition. Check your tires, brake fluid, and lights. I know you have your vehicle inspected every year, but check it yourself anyway. Repair or replace anything that is not safe. Drive safely—we enjoy having you around. George Browne

### **Proposed Bylaws Changes**

**T**hese proposed changes will be voted on at the July General Meeting to be held Tuesday, July 25, 2006.

## **ARTICLE II: OFFICERS**

### **Section 2**

The Nominating Committee shall consist of five senior members selected by the Board of Directors to represent all Sections of the club. Members of this Committee shall be introduced at the September General Meeting so they may have time to receive recommendations from club members. At the October General Meeting, the Committee shall present a slate of nominees for the offices of President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

If at this time either the Show Chairman position or Assistant Show Chairman position is empty, the Nominating Committee shall include those positions in their search. They shall present their nominees to the Board for approval as per Article V, Section 2.

## **ARTICLE V: COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1**

The President shall appoint Chairs of all Standing Committees except the Show Committee. The President shall also appoint Special Committees as needed and shall designate their duties.

## Section 2

Each “show year” (as defined by Article V, Section 4, item 10) the existing Show Chair and Assistant Show Chair must be reconfirmed by majority vote of the Board, should they wish to continue to serve in the same capacity. There shall be no limit to the number of terms they may serve.

Should the Show Chair or the Assistant Show Chair choose to relinquish their position(s) following the end of the show year or should the Board choose not to reconfirm one or both Chairs, or if for any reason the Show Chair or Assistant Show Chair is unable to fulfill his or her duties during their terms, the President either shall nominate suitable replacement(s) within one month of the position(s) becoming vacant or shall assemble and empower a nominating committee within one month of being notified that the position(s) are vacant. If a nominating committee is chosen, that committee has one month from its inception to present one or more nominees who have agreed to fill the position(s) to the Board. These replacement(s) become official when confirmed by majority vote of the Board.

## Section 3

The Standing Committees shall be as follows:

- |                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Clubhouse Committee  | 7. Nominating Committee        |
| 2. Field Trip Committee | 8. Program Committee           |
| 3. History Committee    | 9. Refreshments Committee      |
| 4. Library Committee    | 10. Show Committee             |
| 5. Membership Committee | 11. <u>Education Committee</u> |
| 6. Newsletter Committee |                                |

## Section 4

The duties of the Standing Committees shall be as follows:

11. **Education Committee** shall be in charge of (a) setting up new classes, (b) setting class schedules, (c) setting class fees, including deposit amounts if these are determined to be necessary to reserve a spot in the class, (d) advertising classes, (e) recruiting students, (f) verifying registrations for classes, (g) authorizing payment for instructors, (h) authorizing purchase of material for classes, (i) collecting money from students.



**"Remember, we agreed. I'd carry the canned goods in if you'd carry the rocks out."**

by Ebners from Dust & Grit 2/00  
via Golden Spike News 3/00

## History of the HGMS Annual Show

by Scott Singleton  
2006 HGMS President

### Prolog

The following is Part 2 in a five-part series on the history of the HGMS Show.

Part 1: 1948–1968 – Early Days (in May 2006 BBG)

Part 2: 1969–1977 – Rise to Prominence (in June 2006 BBG)

Part 3: 1978–1989 – On Top of the World (in July 2006 BBG)

Part 4: 1990–2000 – Fall from Grace (in August 2006 BBG)

Part 5: 2001–Present – The Phoenix (in September 2006 BG)

### Part 2: 1969–1977 – Rise to Prominence

**C**hanges in the club: As Part 2 in our history begins, the club was undergoing considerable maturation. There were about 145 members, and it was time to start a newsletter. They played around with this starting in 1966 when they produced meeting announcements along with a summary of the previous meeting and called it a bulletin. However this was highly dependent on the secretary and whether she cared to go through the effort to do it, which wasn't always the case in some of the years following 1966. But in 1969 they officially began a bulletin, and called it *The Backbender's Gazette*. It was edited and produced by Vi (Viola) Hazzard, one of the active members of the club at this time.

The first year is interesting to read. It is abundantly interspersed with the editor's drawings. She was quite a capable artist, and her drawings of people on field trips, maps to these field trips, etc., are quite interesting and not something I'm used to seeing in a bulletin. It lightens it up quite a bit and makes it fun to read—all three pages of legal-sized paper folded in half. But getting back to the show, it took the Show Committee two years to figure out that the *Backbender* was a communication resource they should be using. In 1971 many of the subcommittees printed descriptions of their activities and responsibilities and pleas for volunteers. Then following the show, they printed summaries of their activities and thanks to the club members who volunteered their time for the successful show they just had. This represents the first use of the bulletin for these purposes.

At the same time as the newsletter formation, the club started forming SIGs (special interest groups). This was probably an idea that was forming in several people's minds, but it was Myrt Yarbrough and Irene Offeman who started putting this into action. Thus, Irene Offeman suggested to the Board in October, 1968, that they allow the formation of "working groups" to study specialized aspects of their hobby. The club was already having various classes (minerals, fossils, lapidary, and faceting). So in the beginning, these merely continued to be called "classes" and met wherever they could, usually in individual's homes. The instructors were experts who continued to offer these classes repeatedly in the coming years (**mineral**: Dr. Al Kidwell, **fossil**: Dr. Richard Zingula, **lapidary**: Myrt Yarbrough, **faceting**: Robert Hilty).

By the end of 1969, the groups holding "classes" started referring to themselves as "Sections." Mona Miller led the Mineral Section (to be taken over by Ed Pedersen in 1972), and Irene Offeman led the Paleo Section. These individuals were instrumental in leading their sections through the next decade. (Irene and Ed also co-chaired the Identification Service at the show for many years). Their classes were serious affairs because of the specialized nature of the subject material. Because of this focus, their two sections grew and started becoming semiautonomous entities that had their own meetings and field trips. This separation became particularly noticeable with the Paleo Section because of Irene's increasingly close association with the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS).

The Lapidary Section was not really an official entity for some time because the remainder of the club (those not closely affiliated with the Mineral or Paleo Sections) effectively constituted the Lapidary Section. After all, most rock clubs consist only of a "Lapidary Section." (Do you remember the original name of the HGMS?) Myrt Yarbrough and Chief Pomorski held informal classes using their own equipment, although by 1971 the wear and tear caused them to start charging a fee for its use.

The Faceting Section, however, was dealt a low blow when its leader and instructor, Bob Hilty, died in August of 1970. This was doubly tragic because he was also the Show Chairman in 1970. Jimmy Kachinski, the Show "Co-Chairman," stepped in to cover as did Bob Hilty's wife, so the show was in capable hands, but the Faceting Section did not recover for some time. (Interestingly, Jimmy Kachinski did the same thing in 1969 when the Show Chairman, Rick Ferrel, was transferred away from Houston before the Show opened).

In 1970 there was interest in archaeology, and Beth Shoemaker, a new member at that time, formed a group to hold classes in this subject. But this apparently only lasted that year because I could not find record of this having continued in subsequent years.

**1969 and 1970 Shows:** The 1969 show was similar to the 1968 show and represented a continuation of the format in the late 1960s. This was the second year of Irene's Identification Service. She was doing her own publicity, and it showed: she tallied just over 1000 specimens identified, double from the previous year. Her list of experts doing shifts at the show was impressive: three gemologists (Bill Lathrop, Jimmy Kachinski, and Joe Holberg), and 12 geologists. Three geologists were profes-



Dr. Al Kidwell at the Mineral ID booth in 1969

sors at the University of Houston (U of H) and at Rice University, and five were from Esso Production Research Co. Her list included Dr. Charles Riley, Dr. Al Kidwell, and Ed Pedersen on mineral ID and Dr. Russell Jeffords, Dr. Richard Zingula, and Theo Miller on fossil ID.

The attendance at this show was in the same range as in previous years (3120) because of bad weather on Friday and Saturday; otherwise it would have been greater, thus reflecting the increasing attraction of the show and publicity surrounding it. New to the show was a setup “party” on Thursday night because the show had gone to a full day on Friday. The hours were now 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday (!!!), and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. The setup night went well with lots of club members turning out to help and plenty of refreshments being provided.



Theo Miller and Irene Offeman  
at the Paleo ID Booth

Following the show, the club offered to take orders from individual club members for cases. They would have them built by one company and would cost less if a number of them were built in one order. Thirty cases were ordered and delivered to members early in 1970. Members kept these at their own homes so they could use them for their own displays. This apparently was a big focus during this period—club members creating their own case displays and showing them not only at our show but at other shows, which were proliferating at a fast pace. Butch Coleman was running the Angleton show, and there was an active Galveston show as well as a Texas City show. In addition, a number of club members would regularly go to regional and Federation shows to represent our club. Competitive exhibits were promoted heavily, and usually constituted about half of the exhibits entered in the show. (See comments below on the Judges Seminar in 1971. A similar class was held in 1970, organized by Myrt Yarbrough and Irene Offeman, with Dick Zingula providing the judging).

In 1970, the club’s show efforts came to fruition. It’s as if Bill Lathrop’s constant admonition for our club to strive to be the best and for our show to be the biggest finally was starting to be realized (Bill was in the second year of his presidency in

1970). In 1969, the Show Committee tried to get a “moon rock” from NASA for the show, but apparently was unable because it still was “hot” property and needed an official White House authorization to display. A waiting list of about 50 museums was ahead of the HGMS. However, in 1970 they were able to pull it off, not only getting a specimen from NASA but also getting Dr. Elbert King, curator of the Lunar and Earth Sciences Division of NASA (soon to be chairman of the geology department at U of H).

The results were nothing short of astounding. Attendance was 7,800. On Sunday, lines were reported to be around the outside of the Shamrock in both directions. Jimmy Kachinski organized a crew to go out and sell tickets to people standing in line in an effort to get them in quicker. Because of the stream of people on Sunday, a decision was made on the spot (and supported by the dealers) to extend the closing time of the show two hours (to 8 p.m.). Due to the increase in attendance, profit margin for the show was a record 96% with net profits of \$3,678, three times the amount from previous years.

Vi Hazzard devoted the entire front page of the *Backbender's* to a dialog about the show, using a series of drawings of a dog that gets progressively more tired as the weekend progresses (the dog is passed out by Sunday). She will have the opportunity to use this analogy several more times in subsequent years. The General Meeting program for September was merely “braggin’ about the show.”

The club had every right to feel good about this show. It blew away many previous records and created a modicum of national notoriety for the Houston club. They wasted no time in moving to capitalize on this success, organizing the Show Committee for the next year soon after the ending of this one.

**The Great Show of 1971:** Due in large part to the increasing success of the show, the club roster had hit 230 by the time it came out in August, 1971, thus increasing almost 40% in two years. General meetings had between 80-120 people in attendance. The club was actively supporting the Houston Museum of Natural Science, where we had an exhibit after they built a new wing in 1969. We were supporting them with monetary and specimen donations as well. The University of Houston Geology Department was also a recipient of our support—we had an exhibit there continuously during the same time period. They returned the favor by supplying experts for the ID service, giving presentations at meetings, and advertising our show.

In an atmosphere such as this, you’d think the club would welcome the opportunity to have a Federation show in Houston. However, the Board rejected a bid by the regional federation (which changed their name in 1970 from The Texas Federation to The South Central Mineral Society and was affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies) to host a show in the next few years. The reason was not given in the Board minutes, and no further mention was made of this decision.

In any event, the Show Committee was busy lining up special exhibits for the show. The headliner was the “Inauguration Necklace” loaned by the Linde Division of Union Carbide Corp. (The necklace was worn at the inaugural balls of John F. Kennedy and

Lyndon B. Johnson). It contained 50 Linde Stars\* totaling 129 carats, with colors from white to cornflower blue and claret red. It also had 6.76 carats of baguette and full-faceted diamonds, all set in platinum.

\* *Footnote: Linde star sapphire (“Linde stars”) are synthetic star sapphires that were first made by the Linde Air Products Company in 1947 (they also developed star rubies that year). The Linde company later became a division of Union Carbide.*

In addition, The Ultra-Violet Products Corp. furnished a large exhibit of florescent minerals, and U of H and HMNS also provided exhibits. The HMNS exhibit included a dinosaur egg of a 40 ft-long herbivore *Hypselosaurus priscum*. Dr. Benjamin Powell with Rice University showed thin sections of lunar rocks under a microscope (he was a Principle Investigator for research into the composition of the lunar samples). Last, but certainly not least, the Smithsonian Institution loaned a display of world-class gemstones for use in the show. These gemstones came along with Dr. Paul Desautels, Curator of Gems and Minerals with the Smithsonian Institution. This was a great coup by Irene Offeman to secure Dr. Desautels for this show, and was a direct result of her contacts with the other experts in her ID Service.

All successful shows rely on an effective publicity effort. The 1971 Show Committee had 19 people who helped out in publicity in one way or another. Two had contacts at TV stations which opened the doors for allowing five others to appear on various programs; two created PSAs for radio stations and got those on the air; and several more handled print media. All in all, Irene (one of the committee members) tabulated 25 mentions in print media, four TV spots, an unknown number of radio PSAs, and three displays in prominent store windows (one downtown, one on Main St., and one in the Galleria). In looking over these newspaper articles, I can assure you that nothing similar to this level of publicity had ever been generated by our club previously. Oh, and one more tidbit—not one of the articles I looked at was a paid ad. Every single one was an article or a mention in some sort of “happenings” column or a “society events” column. The total publicity expenditures for the show were \$227.48.

Not to be outdone by the preparations of the Show Committee, club members were on the move as well. The “case” course taught in 1970 apparently was successful and led to more serious discussions on instruction for case competition. Thus, the HGMS, under the auspices of the South Central Federation, sponsored a 2-day judge’s training school that was held on August 7-8, 1971, at the Rice University Geology Department. Of course, it was taught by none other than Dr. Dick Zingula with the able assistance of seven trained specialists in the various competition categories. Attendees were grouped into one of five divisions they wished to study, and all were required to bring a complete copy of the AFMS Uniform Rules. It apparently went off quite well. Thirty-seven attendees went through the course, and 55 attended the banquet at the end.

With such a well-planned effort by the Show Committee and a cooperative effort among the club, one might expect that the show went off great. But that would be a tremendous understatement. The show not only went off great, it set an attendance record (approximately 11,000) that has not been equaled in 35 years since that show.

Irene's ID Service also set a record of 3,380 identifications performed, which was more than triple the totals of previous years. She thinks there were probably more since they ran out of labels the last day of the show. To cap it off, for the second year in a row the show had to stay open on Sunday past the normal closing time to accommodate a steady flow of traffic. The difference was that they stayed open only one extra hour (to 7 p.m.) instead of two hours as they did in 1970. (For those keeping track, this means that the show consisted of two 12-hour days and one 9-hour day!)

**1972 – The Afterglow (?):** Based on my past experience, I presume that two truths existed regarding the show in 1972—(1) the club fully expected that the results seen in 1971 were now the norm, and (2) a number of members who had helped in that monumental effort were suffering from the dreaded “show burn-out.” While it is true that the 1972 show was not a failure by any means, we have to remember that it was being compared to the incredible 1971 show, and anything short of another attendance record would be considered a setback.

Myrt Yarbrough graciously volunteered to head this show effort. Myrt was one of the “Johnny-on-the-spot” club members at that time and had been co-leading the Lapidary Section with Chief Pomorski. Her Show Committee had many of the same personnel as it had the year before, with the exception that the Publicity Committee was back to its normal size again (consisting of only a few individuals). Irene Offeman was again doing her own publicity for the Identification Service which she and Ed Pedersen (head of the Mineral Section) were co-chairing. Bill Lathrop was still the Dealer Chairman, although I'm wondering how active he was in the club since he had already retired, sold Lathrop's to Jimmy and John Kachinski, and had retired to his ranch in Sabinal (between San Antonio and Del Rio).

Perhaps sensing that there was a need to “capture” the success of 1971, Irene again compiled a listing of responsibilities of each show subcommittee following that show (she did this originally in 1961 when she was Show Chairman for the Downtown Recreation Center show). As it turned out, this was a very timely observation on her part.

Anyway, the 1972 Show Committee essentially continued the same philosophy and methodology as the previous year. Emphasis was put on the special exhibits they could get for the show, which consisted of the Bart Mann golden goblet collection (shown at the Smithsonian), thin sections of moon rock shown by Dr John Adams of Rice University, a Nature's Art Gallery by Mr. & Mrs. George Frank of San Antonio, and a 65 lb uncut topaz owned by Sarah Dowell of Edinburg, TX. The Grand Door Prize was a pendant containing an ounce of 18 carat yellow gold and a 79.8 carat Australian opal surrounded by 21 small diamonds. It was appraised at \$2,500.

Attendance at this show was *only* 8,000. Now, any self-respecting club would not think twice about proclaiming this an outrageously successful show. However, *this* club had just held a show a year earlier that had attracted 11,000 attendees. This is somewhat akin to the adage that you never follow the star attraction in a performance. You always end up being compared to the star no matter how good you actually are. Nevertheless, they did acknowledge that the show was a huge success; just not as

much as in the previous year.

Compounding the problem is that expenses climbed significantly. They had added two dealers to the show (making a total of 14), but the loss of 3000 attendees meant that their total income was about the same as it was in 1970 while expenses had doubled. Expenses were even \$1,800 over 1971, which represented an increase of over one third. Most of the increase was due to higher rent for the Shamrock, but some came from the materials for the grand door prize (they spent about \$850). As a result, the net for the show was \$483. After they paid a \$500 deposit for the next year's show they were in the hole.

**1973-1975 – Under New Management:** Bill Lathrop officially retired after the 1972 show thus leaving a void in leadership in the Show Committee. This void was immediately filled by Bill Cox and Gene Shier. With this change in management came a change in philosophy. Bill Cox was a CPA and had joined in 1971 (along with Gene). He volunteered to be Show Chairman that year, with Gene as his assistant and as Dealer Chairman. He made several immediate changes. The first of which was to squeeze more dealers into the show (two were added in 1973 and three more in either 1974 or 1975, making a total of 19). The second was to impose some financial order on the Show Committee. He instituted the concept of an annual “show budget.” (Show budgets were also prepared in 1966 and 1967, but I find no record that they continued or were a regular feature of the Show Committee's planning.) His meetings were organized with printed agendas and were roundly applauded by those associated with the show.

He was, however, hamstrung in one aspect: He was stuck with the Shamrock as a show location. The 1972 Board had already investigated the possibility of moving the show but could find no location that was economically feasible. (Due to the huge success of the show but the limited space in which to accommodate more dealers and attendees, this would eventually prove to be one of the worst decisions the club could make. This will become apparent by 1977 and is discussed in the Epilog.)

Dr. John Pike, President in 1973, was able to get part of the Barron Collection from UT for the show. This collection included among other things, an eight-pound uncut Texas blue topaz and a cut 1,778 carat cut Brazilian topaz. Fittingly, the door prize that year was a 23 carat blue topaz.

Under Bill's leadership, the show again returned to profitability. Net proceeds were just shy of \$5,000, a typical figure for the next several years. The publicity budget expanded considerably, now being over \$1,000 and resulting in a large amount of media coverage. It also helped considerably that the publicity chairman was Anna Miller, a convert from the Houston Lapidary Society who was very experienced in media relations. (She was presented an award for her media coverage in January 1974.) As a result, show attendance was around 9,500.

**1974:** In 1974, Bill and Gene swapped places, with Gene being the Show Chairman and Bill being Dealer Chairman as well as Club President. Gene continued all of Bill's practices, the result of which was another very successful show. However, the focus

in 1974 was not the show but the changes Bill Cox brought to the club. He initiated the practice of printing the Board minutes in the club newsletter (BBG) so that everyone could follow what was happening at the Board meetings. Burnt orange club vests were created for the men and smocks were created for the women. In late spring, he set up a long range planning committee to find a clubhouse. Dr. Pike and Al Police assisted in this effort. Their first choice was shown to be unsuitable. However, the second choice was acceptable and was rented. It was located at 7204 Alder St. in Bellaire.

This clubhouse was small and needed lots of work in order to be made useful and operational, but it was a great learning experience for the club and prepared us for the eventual purchase of our own clubhouse. The club struggled for several years to properly outfit it with equipment, keep it clean and maintain the equipment, and to keep out unauthorized persons while at the same time encouraging member use.

The club membership had grown to over 300 by midyear, an increase in a hundred in just over a year. This is a great testament to the effect that a string of several successful shows can have on the club. In the meantime, Bill Cox realized we were not making full use of our status as a growing, active club. We had won the AFMS All-American Club award in both 1972 and 1973, and it was time for the club to make the next move, which it seemed reluctant to do. I am referring to hosting a regional Federation show and eventually a national Federation show. Thus, after getting himself and Gene Shier appointed as delegates to the regional Federation meeting in Corpus Christi, Bill Cox stood up during the annual meeting and volunteered HGMS to be the host club for the next available Federation show in 1977. This wasn't an official offer (it needs to be made in writing), but the gauntlet was essentially thrown down. It also didn't sit easily with several on the Board, who were wondering what authority he had to make this offer. He says he gained a consensus from the Board, but this is not noted in any minutes, and so must have consisted of private conversations between him and Board members (not exactly an approved method).

So, after the sparks settled back home, the club officially submitted a bid to host the Federation show in 1977. It was accepted by the SCFMS in April of 1975. This started the club thinking on the next level, something Bill recognized as several years overdue.

**1975:** Gene Shier followed Bill Cox into the Presidency of the club this year while Dick Campbell took the Show Chairmanship (Dick and his wife Doris were the Publicity Chairpersons in 1974 and the Competitive Case Chairpersons in 1973). Bill Cox stayed Dealer Chairman while also pursuing what he considered the next step up the ladder—SCFMS officership. He was to obtain this midyear with his election as Vice President in the regional Federation.

The Publicity Chairpeople were Bob and Kris Wittlinger. These two were becoming very active in the club and will play important roles in the near future. They had very large shoes to fill, since as Publicity Chairpersons they were following Anna Miller (1973) and Dick and Doris Campbell (1974), both of whom had tremendously successful publicity campaigns. The number of articles generated from those two years is

simply astounding. I counted at least 30 articles and ads for the 1973 show, and that doesn't include brief notices. Similarly, there were at least 27 for the 1974 show. Of course, it didn't hurt that in most years Irene Offeman was doing her own publicity for the ID Service.

In fact, the ID Service was regularly doing about 2,000 identifications per year through this period. It was co-chaired by both Irene and Ed Pedersen (Mineral Section Chairman through the 70s). It continued to be staffed heavily by Exxon experts (seven in 1975, including Dr. Charles Riley, Dr. Al Kidwell,

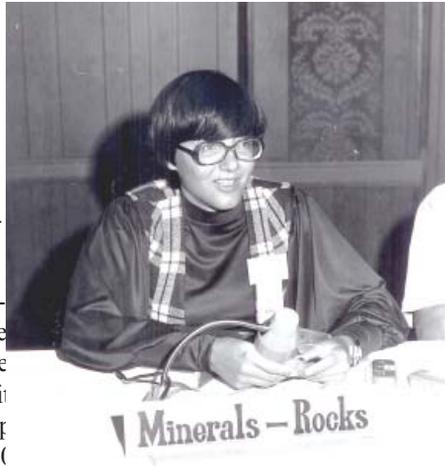
Theo Miller, Dr. Russell Jeffords, and Dr. Richard Zingula), but also included several from Amoco (four in 1975, including Wally Knapp and Ed Pedersen), as well as individuals from other companies, U of H, and Rice U including John Jenkins and Art Smith. Unfortunately, there were problems securing the services of reliable gemologists since Bill Lathrop left after the 1972 show, and Jimmy and John Kachinski were busy running Lathrop's. Thus, there was no gem ID from 1974 onward except on a sporadic basis.

The show was another success. Attendance was 8,600, and net profits were \$6,600 (the rise being due to the increase in number of dealers to 19), making a profit margin of 73%. As a result, membership continued its upward march, breaking 400 by the end of the year.

**1976-1977—Further Changes:** As we come to the end of the era of innocence, there were further personnel changes as new members started becoming active in the running of the club. During this two-year span, the leaders were Jim Knight and Bob Wittlinger who rotated as President and



Dick Zingula and Theo Miller discuss an identification.



Linda Northcote at the 1976 show

Show Chairman. Bill Cox and Gene Shier were still Dealer Chairmen in 1976, but Bill left it with Gene in 1977 because Bill had moved from Vice President of the SCFMS in 1976 to President in 1977.

Several very important events transpired in this two-year span. These will be covered in the following text as well as in the Appendices.

**1976:** Early in the year, the club was intensely thinking about the regional Federation show to be held in 1977, specifically about the Chairman for that show and the location. Bill Cox and Gene Shier had looked for other show locations as early as 1974 and had found none. Ron Carman was becoming vocal about this problem in 1975. In 1976 Bill and Gene held discussions with the Shamrock about the 1977 show, specifying to them that they needed more space for this regional Federation show. They relented, giving us a room for lectures and the Grand Ballroom to hold more dealers. However, I note that we were not successful in getting the Grand Ballroom either in 1976 or in 1978 (see my comments on this in the Epilog).

Dick Zingula had returned from his two-year stint in Calgary and was once again holding competitive case judging seminars at Rice University. The seminar in April, 1976, was smaller than the one held at the end of April, 1977, which attracted 43 students. (The 1977 seminar was co-hosted by Jim Knight).

The AFMS National Federation Show was held in Austin in June, 1976. At that show, the HGMS was awarded yet another All-American Federation Club award for 1975, as well as taking five first-place case awards! This is no small feat, and congratulations go out to the entire club for this outstanding effort. As a consequence of the 1976 Austin show and knowing that we were going to hold the SCFMS show in 1977, many were heeding Bill Cox's admonition to start thinking bigger. Thus, at the May Board meeting, Anne Frank moved that we submit a bid for the next SCFMS-hosted National Show (to be held in 1982). The vote carried. At the May General Meeting, President Jim Knight opened discussion on this issue after reporting the Board's vote and the results from the three most recent National Shows. The vote carried. A letter was sent to the SCFMS Board advising of our bid. This was presented to the AFMS and accepted. In July, Anne Frank moved that we form a committee to start planning for the National Show (it was still five years away!). The vote carried. The committee would consist of the five most recent Show Chairmen and the sitting President, updating on an annual basis. Further, this committee was directed to start looking into the Astrohall as a potential show venue for August of 1982.

**1977:** The regional Federation show came off very nicely, thanks in part to the extra space provided by the Grand Ballroom. Thirty-five dealers were in the show, lectures were held in the Walnut Room, SCFMS President Bill Cox convened the annual Federation meeting, and 10,061 attendees enjoyed all the activities as well as upwards to 50 competitive and noncompetitive case exhibits. Expenses however, were very high—rising in all categories due to the nature of the show. These increases were almost exactly compensated by the increased income from 16 extra dealers so that the total profit did not substantially differ from previous years.

Preshow publicity was effective, being handled by Dalton and Consie Prince (Consie was the BBG Editor in 1975 and 1976, and Dalton was a Board Director in 1976 and 1977). They had at least nine people on the Publicity Committee and split tasks by media category.

Irene Offeman and Ed Pedersen's ID Service celebrated 10 years of existence. The only difference in 1977 is that they had to open earlier than normal (about mid-day on Friday) because of an increasingly hostile crowd of people holding specimens to be identified. (Normally they do not open during the day on Friday because the experts are all working then and there isn't much demand). Disappointingly, Paul Desautels, curator of minerals at the Smithsonian, was supposed to help as he had done several years earlier, but he was a no-show. However, there were some new experts on hand, such as Neal Immega on fossils, and Dr. Inda Immega and Linda Northcote on minerals.



Art Smith tries his hand at impressing a youth at the 1977 show.

There were three major topics being addressed in the club during 1977. The first was the tax status of the club. Gene Shier, during his presidency in 1975, asked Bill Cox to investigate our status and attempt to get us exempted from tax liability. This effort culminated in 1977 when we achieved 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. The details of this effort as well as the provisions of this status are discussed in Appendix 1.

The second major issue was to conduct a review and propose changes to the bylaws which hadn't been significantly altered since 1960. Ron Carman headed this effort. His committee consisted of Francis Harris (Board Secretary), Joe Helber (Vice President), Ruth Landry (Board Secretary in 1976), and Irene Offeman. In April they presented their results to both the Board and the General Meeting, and the changes were accepted. Then in August, Irene suggested to the Board that policies be formulated to exert more control over the Show Committee which was showing signs of being too autonomous. A committee was formed, met during the fall, and presented its results to the Board in November. These results were printed in the December BBG and adopted. This policy is detailed in Appendix 2.

Finally, the third major issue was Herb Duke and the International Gem and Jewelry Show. Herb announced that his show would be coming to Houston in May and invited HGMS to participate with a booth for demos and cases. A representative of Intergem

visited the Board in February and discussed this new show. In essence, Herb was going to come to Houston, and he wanted to make sure we wouldn't consider him a competitor. He assured the Board that he would not interfere with our show. Following the presentation by Herb's representative, she was thanked and dismissed so the Board could discuss their proposal. The Board discussed this at some length and ended up voting to accept the offer. However, the vote was not unanimous. Some, including Bill Cox, were adamantly opposed to any cooperation with the Intergem show (has anybody heard the story of the Trojan horse?). However, these individuals were outnumbered and we participated in the Intergem show for the first time in 1977. To make the offer more palatable, Herb offered in April to give us a 1/3 discount on tickets to the show and offered to supply two lapidary machines to use for demos in our booth, and then to donate those machines to our club following the show. He even called President Bill Wittlinger during the General Meeting to further discuss the issue and provide assurances. It seems to me that there was a heavy-duty PR campaign going on to win the hearts and minds of the HGMS.

**Epilog:** There are two ways to view the progress of the club during the 1970s. The first is from the perspective of a volunteer-run gem and mineral society. From this viewpoint, we evolved from a small club in the late 1960s to a powerhouse in the late 1970s by quadrupling our membership in about five years, winning three All-American Federation Club awards and a very large number of regional and national Federation case trophies, hosting a Regional Federation Show and preparing for a National Federation Show, obtaining a clubhouse and tax-exempt status, and being a recognized as a valuable community resource. It doesn't hurt that we had an uninterrupted string of incredibly successful shows from 1970 through 1977. It is undeniable that our club should hold this era in high esteem and congratulate those who made us one of the most successful shows (and clubs) in the country.

I realize the HGMS is a volunteer organization and not a business, and, as such, follows a different set of rules. However, if we were to look at this era from a strictly business point of view we would come to a different conclusion. It is true that our profits and profit margins were admirable, and nobody would have any complaints about those. The problem comes when we look at potential and at market forces. A concept that is as universally applicable today as it was in the 1970s is the customer-to-dealer ratio (C/D). Today's standards specify that a C/D of around 100 is sufficient to keep dealers happy while generating revenue for the host organization. It may have been somewhat different 40 years ago, but not by that much. This ratio was in the 300–600 range during the 70s, and was a ridiculous 900 during the very successful 1971 show. When the C/D ratio gets too high, as it was in this period, two things happen: (1) The club does not realize its potential revenue (business people call that "leaving money on the table"), and (2) there is a large imbalance between the dealer "haves" and "have nots," with those who are in the show essentially printing their own money and those not in the show getting increasingly angry and frustrated.

Both situations are bad for the club. The first delayed our being able to purchase our own clubhouse. The second led to two very unfortunate events: The imbalanced and out-of-control situation gave rise to the need to establish a Dealer Selection Policy

(described in Appendix 2) and the entry of a second show into the Houston scene to accommodate this increased dealer demand. In fact, I understand that Herb Duke set his sights on Houston after he received requests from dealers who were shut out of the HGMS show. I'm not saying that Herb would not have entered Houston had we been more accommodating to dealer needs, but I am saying that we should not have given him a free ticket to come in and within a short period of time to completely dominate the Houston jewelry show market. Since I have the benefit of knowing what transpired in the next 25 years with regards to the HGMS show and Intergem show, I am particularly irritated that we gave him a carte blanche invitation, either explicitly or implicitly, to come in and take over. But he runs a for-profit business and understands these principles much better than does a volunteer club.

But we can always look at the bright side: To this day he still honors his pledge to give us a booth at each of his Houston shows.

**Acknowledgments:** As I move forward with this history, I encounter more and more people who were participants during the particular era of which I am writing. For this installment of show history, I am particularly indebted to the recollections of Bill Cox, Irene Offeman, and Ron Carman. Also contributing were Anne Frank, Tom DeHart, Gene Shier, Art Smith, and Tom Wright.

Of course, I would be unable to write this history at all were it not for the diligent efforts of Carleton Reid who became Club Historian in 1976 and assimilated and preserved these club records, and to Art Smith, current Club Historian, who organized the existing data into the club library.

### **APPENDIX 1: Designation by IRS of 501(c)(3) Status**

In 1975, Bill Cox was asked by then-President Gene Shier to look into obtaining IRS tax exemption for the club. He started doing this in 1976. It involved accumulating a large amount of paperwork including income tax statements for the last four years, annual financial records of income and expense for the last four years (including show receipts and membership income), articles of incorporation, club bylaws and constitution, club brochures, and other data. He received most of this information from the Club Treasurer, Anne Frank.

Bill submitted this information to the IRS and received a reply on April 5, 1977, stating that we had met the requirements for a tax-exempt organization. This meant we did not have to pay federal income tax or social security (FICA). It also meant that donors may deduct contributions to HGMS on their federal income tax returns.

This was followed immediately by an effort to receive the same treatment from the State of Texas. On June 29, 1978, Anne Frank received a letter from the State of Texas stating that we had met their requirements and that as of May 1, 1978, the HGMS was not required to pay state franchise taxes or to file franchise tax reports.

Efforts to receive similar treatment from the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) were considerably more difficult and would not be pursued until the 1980s.

The requirements for tax exemption of a gem and mineral organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS tax code state that the club must:

- Hold monthly lectures that discuss this subject
- Sponsor field trips to collect this kind of material
- Issue a bulletin containing educational material pertaining to this subject
- Maintain a library of reference materials on the subject
- Assist the local museum with displays
- Conduct an annual show for the general public. Retail dealers, competition exhibits, and a “swapping room” are allowed activities. Entry fees to the show are permitted.

The general public should be invited to the club’s activities. The club’s income should consist of membership dues and receipts from the show. The club should exist for educational purposes and the net earnings should not “inure to the benefit of any private individual,” meaning that nobody can profit from the activities of the club.

## **APPENDIX 2: Dealer Selection Policy**

In August of 1977, the Board agreed to form a committee to formulate a policy for dealer selection. As part of that effort Steve Behling developed a dealer questionnaire that was given to dealers during the 1977 Federation Show. These results were tabulated, and the committee met on November 1. Gus Lindveit was chosen by the Board to be Chairman since he had been the club’s AFMS Uniform Rules Chairman for many years and had won a number of national awards for his work. Also on the committee were Steve Behling, Tom DeHart, Irene Offeman, Gene Shier, and Bob Wittlinger.

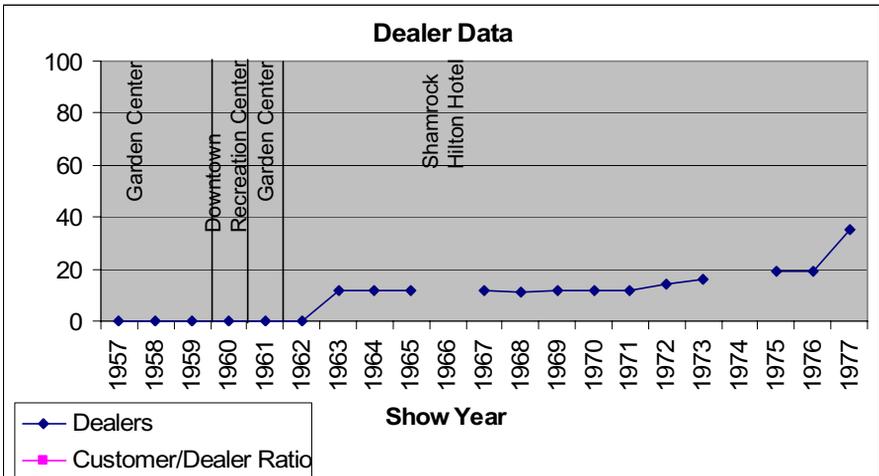
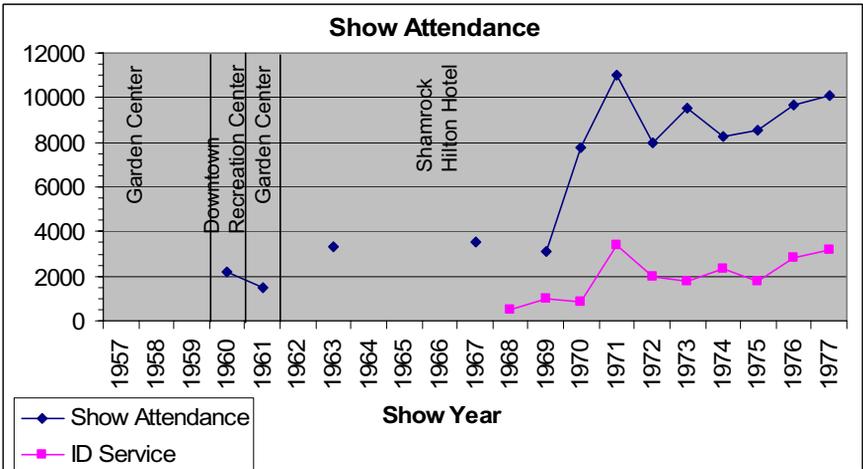
At this first meeting they reviewed the results of the dealer questionnaire and formulated a list of recommendations. These recommendations were soon put into a document that was presented to the Board at their meeting on November 27, 1977. The document mainly addressed dealer selection procedure, but also addressed the budgeting procedure for Show Committees and the composition of the National Show Committee for the 1982 show. This policy was approved by the Board and by the general membership. The policy stipulated that:

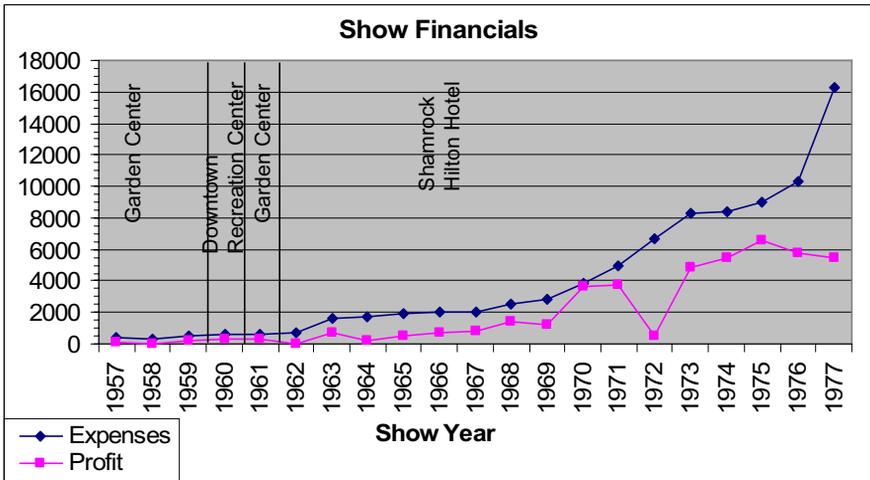
- Dealer requests for retail space at our annual show should be sent to the HGMS Secretary.
- The Secretary will then send the dealer a questionnaire and explain the dealer selection policy.
- The Dealer Selection Committee will consist of the current and former Dealer Chairmen and one representative each from the Mineral, Lapidary, and Paleo Sections.
- The committee members will consult with their respective sections and select dealers in their respective areas of expertise.
- The list will be compiled by the committee and presented to the Board for approval.
- After approval, the Dealer Chairman will send out contracts to the approved dealers.

Interestingly, a provision requiring that local dealers have a slot in the show on a rotating basis, but that the percentage of local dealers should not exceed 12%, was removed in August 1980. I would also add that approval of this policy was not unanimous. There are those who recognized what it was meant to achieve and believed that far less drastic measures would have sufficed.

As should be plainly apparent, this policy, in effect, took all authority out of the hands of the Dealer Chairman, and by association also the Show Committee, and placed it in the hands of the Board of Directors. My personal feelings are that it was indeed an overreaction to the existing circumstances and that the goals of the club could have been met with more oversight but at a lower level than the Board of Directors. Nonetheless, this is what they agreed to and it was the policy the club followed for the next decade and a half.

**Graphs Showing Show Data from 1957 through 1977 (see next page)**





**Hurricane Katrina Losses**

*Mississippi Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society  
Jackson County, Mississippi*

*March 4, 2006*

*by Billie Wright, President*

*Mississippi Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society*

**E**leven members had homes totally destroyed with complete loss of contents and personal possessions.

17 members' homes were so severely damaged they cannot be occupied, and the members are as of March 2006 still living in FEMA trailers, with family, or in temporary shelters. Most of these members had total or near total loss of the contents of their homes and personal possessions.

6 members had major damage to their homes and substantial loss of personal possessions and the contents of their homes. These homes with temporary repairs are being occupied or partially occupied although some do require FEMA trailers or other arrangements. A few are having repairs made or have contracts for repairs scheduled.

13 members had moderate damage to their homes with minimal loss of content and possessions. A lot of these homes still have "blue roofs" (tarps over holes in the roof), chipboard patches, no carpeting, plastic coverings on windows and doors, and a lot of other innovated temporary repairs.

8 members had only minor or no damage to their homes. Most of these members live inland and wind damage caused the loss of roofing shingles, siding, or downed trees and tree limbs. They had little or no loss of personal property. Some of these homes still have "blue roofs" and temporary repairs.

Many of the homes were damaged or destroyed by tidal surge and were not covered by flood insurance as they were not located in what was considered flood-prone areas. All of the destroyed homes and most of the severely damaged ones are still awaiting a decision by the U.S. Corp of Engineers before they can begin to rebuild or repair their dwellings. Several members lost their jobs or businesses. Almost all members lost perishable and frozen foods. At least half of the members lost or had substantial damage to their personal vehicles, and several members lost their trucks, campers, trailers, or boats.

Three monthly meetings in 2005 were cancelled, one due to Katrina and two others because of the threat of hurricanes. One of the meetings was the Society's annual picnic and white elephant sale resulting in a loss of approximately \$250.00 normally made at this event. The annual "Magnolia State Gem, Mineral, and Jewelry Show" scheduled in November 2005 had to be cancelled with a net loss of approximately \$3500.00. The storage unit where the society's display cases and other show materials are kept was damaged, and it was necessary to move to another storage unit. Storage fees are paid by the "show fund" and are included in the net loss for the November 2005 show.

The Society's cabbing machine was lost when the home of the member who was keeping it was flooded, but the newly acquired faceting machine was at another location and was not damaged. Unfortunately, most of the equipment used for our workshops was privately owned and was lost with the exception of that owned by Billie Kelley, Buddy Shotts, and John Wright. John lost part of the roof on his shop and had a trim saw and sphere grinding and polishing machine damaged beyond repair. Most of his other equipment was badly drenched, but it probably can be repaired with a good cleaning and the replacement of several electric motors.

The Ocean Springs Library received only minor damage, and the Society's meetings have continued to be held there. An invitation has been extended to the Harrison County Gem & Mineral Society to hold their meeting at this facility. Workshops had to be suspended as Billie Kelley's daughter lost her home, and her family is now living in Billie's house. Billie is staying with her son in Georgia and does not know when she will be able to return. John Wright's home and shop had major damage, but are being repaired and hopefully will be available for workshops in a month or two.

On the bright side, the Society did receive an invitation from the Mobile Rock & Gem Society to use their facilities for meetings and a gift of \$100.00, both of which were very generous and greatly appreciated.



**SFMS Executive Board Meeting***Franklin, North Carolina**March 25, 2006**by John M. Wright**Acting SFMS Mississippi State Director**MSGCG&M Soc.*

**A**ttendance is still very low at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society's meetings. Final tabulation of this society's losses due to hurricane Katrina was received too late for the annual SFMS meeting and is included as an attachment to this report.

The Harrison County Gem and Mineral Society's attendance is also down as several members have relocated, and they do not have a permanent facility available for their meetings. Monthly workshops have resumed and are temporarily being held at a church in west Harrison County.

Attendance at the Pearl River Rock Club meetings and workshops have resumed at a somewhat normal level even though some members lost their homes, and others suffered varying degrees of damage to their homes and loss of personal property. They held their monthly meeting during a field trip to the Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society's annual show and are planning a field trip to Arkansas this spring.

The Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society held their annual show February 26 & 27, 2006. Unfortunately, I could not attend, but according to Betty James, it was very successful with everyone, visitors and dealers alike, saying "it was the best one yet." She said that they will know more when the final accounting is made. The Society's booth sold items for the benefit of their school fund. Betty is co-chairman of the building committee for the society's new school, and she indicated that it is progressing well. It is anticipated that a building will be in place by the time of the SFMS meeting in Franklin, NC, but more will need to be done to complete the interior and parking area. Betty also said "that every club in Mississippi was represented at the show." The Northeast Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society sold tickets for a raffle at the show to benefit their society's education committee. The Pearl River Rock Club and Harrison County Gem & Mineral Society both held their monthly meeting at the show. The Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society has donated ten display cases to the Harrison County Gem & Mineral Society.

The following information was received from George Everett, President of the North Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society. "The North Mississippi Gem & Mineral Society had a great year. We gained several new members and had many interesting and educational programs. We had fun fellowship, especially at our 5th birthday party, our picnic, and our Christmas party. Many of us enjoyed field trips where we found puddingstone, pyrite, crinoids and other fossils. Some of our members have been leading beading and wire wrapping classes for local residents. So we are doing what we ought to be doing and having fun in the process! What more could one want?"

## Baking Soda in the Field

from *The RockCollector* 11/2005 via *Quarry Quips* 5/2005,  
via *Strata Gem* 9/2005, and via *Stoney Statements* 5/2006

Here are some reasons you will be glad you took a box of natural soda along on your field trip.

1. Insect bites, minor burns, poison oak—add water to make a paste and apply to affected area.
2. Sunburn, wind burn, and prickly heat—add ¼ cup to a basin of water and bathe or sponge on.
3. Acid indigestion—add ¼ teaspoon to ½ glass of water and drink slowly.
4. Tired feet—add three tablespoons to a basin of warm water and soak.
5. Tooth cleanser and breath freshener—use as much as needed on moist toothbrush.
6. Hand and fingernail cleaner—Rub dry on moistened hands to remove pine pitch, odors, or grease.
7. Fire extinguisher—for grease fire, throw a box full at the base of the fire.
8. Freshening camp coolers and thermos jugs—add 2 teaspoons and partly fill with water. Shake and rinse.
9. Deodorant—sprinkle some inside your boots or hiking shoes.
10. Safe, natural cleaner for camp dishes and pans. Add 3 tablespoons to a pan of warm water and soak.
11. Cleaning a dirty, bug-spattered windshield, chrome, and camper frames—rub damp sponge sprinkled with baking soda.
12. Freshening RV water tanks—flush with a solution of ¼ cup of soda and 1 gallon of water. Rinse with clear water.

## Hints and Tips

**Adding Padding:** from *The RockCollector* 4/2001, via *The Rockhounder* 11/2002 and *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

By using small pieces of Styrofoam plastic instead of the hard round plastic beads, your polishing agent will do a better and quicker job. Those hundreds of polish-impregnated little Styrofoam pieces will really put a shine on everything in the tumbler and will disappear from sight by the end of the polish cycle.

**How to burp a tumbler:** from *Canaveral Moonstone* 4/2000, via *The Rockhounder* 11/2002 and *The Mountain Gem* 3/2005

If you're running a tumbler and it keeps burping out gas and making a mess in your shop, here's a tip that I discovered several years ago. I even got it published. The burping is due to gas generated by acids and metals. A common example is the iron in a stone (say, bloodstone) reacting with the weak acids formed by grinding other rocks. Simply drop a couple of antacids in the tumbler and the problem will be reduced or go away. Tums for the tumbler, so to speak!

**ShowTime 2006**

May 27-28	Ft. Worth, TX	Ft. Worth Gem & Mineral Club Show Will Rodgers Memorial Center, Amon Carter Exhibit Hall, 3401 West Lancaster elsiegeorge@aol.com; Elsie K. 817-648-9416
June 9-11	Angels Camp, CA	California Federation
June 9-11	Stillwater, OK	Rocky Mountain Federation
July 14-16	Longview, WA	Northwest Federation
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
August 12-13	Baton Rouge, LA	Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society
August 15-20	Nashville, TN	AFMS, SFMS, & Middle Tennessee G & M Tenn. State Fair Grounds., Creative Arts Bldg.
August 19-20	Bossier City, LA	SCFMS & Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Soc. Bossier Civic Center
September 2-3	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society
September 2-4	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society
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
October 14-15	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society
October 20-22	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center
October 21-22	Glen Rose, TX	Austin Paleontology Society
November 10-11	Leesville, LA	De Ridder Gem & Mineral Society Beauregard Parish Exhibit Hall, 610 West Dr.
November 18-19	Dallas, TX	Dallas Gem & Mineral Society
December 1-3	Austin, TX	Austin Gem & Mineral Society

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

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	24	25 7:30 General Meeting	26	27	28	29 11-5 Shop Open	
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)



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

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
BELLAIRE, TX 77401  
PERMIT NO. 303

DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DO NOT DELAY !