



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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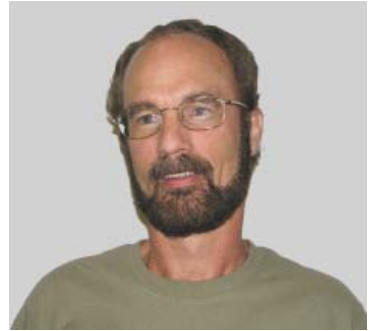
September 2006

President's Message *by Scott Singleton*



I would like to thank those of you who contacted me regarding my last President's message. It's good to know there are many of you out there who care about how things are going in your all-volunteer Society.

I have to say I'm quite impressed with recent happenings around the club. Dave Hawkins is getting our adult education program going quite nicely, and I understand there are a number of new classes being offered. It also appears that the Lapidary Section is starting to get their act together as well. They now have a 2006 Chair-



man, Kathy Konkell, who appears to be doing a wonderful job in getting familiar with her responsibilities. Kathy has been a member for only about a year, and already she

President's Message continued on page 4

August and September General Meeting Programs

*by Matt Dillon
HGMS 1st Vice-President*

August 22: Clear Lake member Ed Tindell has agreed to be our speaker. He will report on his recent field trips out west, including one to the Arizona petrified forest area. There is collecting for a fee on ranches outside the park area, and Ed's program will be of great interest to those of us who love petrified wood with good color.

September 26: Since I have been asked a number of times to present a program on how to find and recognize good agates in the field, I will fill the slot for the September meeting and will bring both good and bad specimens. I will also have some digital photographs of the sites available.

October 24: I had hoped to get a NASA representative as our speaker for the August General Meeting program but was unsuccessful. Efforts are still in the works, however, and hope remains for someone in October. As soon as I hear from NASA, I will have Neal send out a general e-mail to update you on the October program.

Contents

President's Message	1
August and September General Meeting Programs	1
Purpose of HGMS	3
Spicing Up Your Colorado Trip Or Vacation	4
What I Did This Summer	6
Matthew Phillips' Photo Chosen by Wall Street Journal	6
Susan Lenz's War with Cancer	8
Volunteering Rocks!	10
Doris Eileen Kemp--in Memoriam	14
Art Smith Presented July Program	15
In Our Library	15
Lapidary Section 2006 Upcoming Programs	16
2006 Show Stones for Competition	16
Lapidary Section	16
Free Jade Preforms at Lapidary Open Shops	17
Day Light Section	17
Paleontology Section Steering Committee Meeting	18
Mineral Section	18
Pre-Show Activities—So close I can taste it!	19
Swap Area at the Show	19
Volunteer Sign-Up for the Annual HGMS Show	20
The Future of Gem & Mineral Shows	22
Dinosaur World Presents a Prehistoric Journey	23
HGMS Board Meeting	24
HGMS General Meeting	26
Having Fun—AFMS Junior Activities	28
SCFMS President's Message	29
It's Not Too Late To Stop a Bad Bill	29
Safety Report	30
Your Club Needs You!	31
History of the HGMS Annual Show	32
Tech Talk: Types of Saws	68
Plane Rockhounding	69
ShowTime 2006	70
Calendars	71

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Purpose of HGMS

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

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

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

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

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

President's Message continued from page 1

is doing what she can to help out. This is the kind of volunteer spirit that keeps this club functioning. And speaking of volunteering, the Lapidary Section also came up with a volunteer to serve on the nominating committee that was active in July (Jeannie Barna). It's good to see they ended up having representation on that committee.

Not to be outdone, the Show Committee has scheduled a number of events leading up to the show. (And isn't that why you joined this club in the first place—to have fun?) The August 12 postcard labeling party is always an enjoyable, social time for club members, although that event will already be



history by the time this BBG issue comes out. Next on their list is the Pre-Show Pizza Party and Auction to be held Saturday, September 9. That's me cleaning a collection of petrified wood for this auction and for the silent auction to be held at the show.

The collection comes from Dr. Lester Karotkin, a long-time member who is moving to a high rise condo. Apparently he started collecting petrified wood in the early 1980s on some deer leases near Giddings and La Grange. This material was used to make a cactus garden in his back yard. Since the people who bought his house will be tearing it down, the cactus garden and its contents would have been dumped in a landfill. So David Hawkins and I, accompanied by Tom Wright, went over to dig it up. I estimate that we must have at least a half ton of material. You won't want to miss the Pizza Party Auction or the silent auction at the show for a chance to get some of the best specimens. See you there!

Spicing Up Your Colorado Trip Or Vacation

by Arthur E. Smith

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Colorado, particularly southwestern Colorado, has been a trip destination or vacation spot for Texans for many years. Unfortunately for mineral collectors and rock collectors, mining (for which the state has long been famous) has waned starting in the 1980s, and for most mineral collectors, mining is dead. Yes, there is an open pit mine in



Cripple Creek where the famous Cressen mine used to be, and they are still mining molybdenite underground at the Henderson mine near Empire. But these are large-scale operations, and because of the mining methods, they produce few specimens for the mineral collector. The old fashioned tunnel and drift mines were ideal for specimen production because the miners and muckers came in close contact with the mined rock. Specimens could be liberated and taken out of the mine in jacket pockets or lunch buckets. I stopped actively collecting Colorado minerals, except microscopic minerals, in the early 1980s because they became too hard to obtain, and even if they were available (which was seldom), the prices of the choice pieces were out of my economic sight.

Still, many of us have Colorado as an expectant destination, maybe not specifically for collecting, although that is still available if you have the time, put in the effort, and have a good place to dig or hunt for specimens.

For several years now we have been getting for the library a free publication called *Rocktalk* from the Colorado Geological Survey. The latest, spring of 2006, which unfortunately I got at the end of July which is too late for this year, is a well-done 20-page publication with the title: "Colorado's Magnificent POGIs." Just what is that? Well, it is Points of Geological Interest. The Index lists the following categories: Fossil and Dinosaur Activities; Minerals, Mine Tours, and Mining-Related Activities; General Scenic Geologic Activities; Cave Tours; Geology Seminars; Undeveloped POGIs; and POGI Location Map by Category. The latter is the guts of the issue. It is a state map with the different locations plotted on it with references to the page where a short write-up of the POGI gives an idea of what you can expect.

There are 21 locations in the Fossil and Dinosaur Activities which include sites and museums. The Minerals, Mine Tours, and Mining-Related Activities contains 35 sites which include active mines, mine tours, mining, and mineral museums. General Scenic Geological Activities includes 17 locations, and there are two commercial caves that can be visited. All this is set in or near the magnificent Rocky Mountains that make such a nice vacation trip.

Unfortunately, our copy in the library is not available for checkout, but you can put in a bit of effort and copy it for 5¢ a page for a total of \$1.00. The issue itself is nicely colored, and you can get a copy FREE from the Colorado Geological Survey. Ask for Rocktalk, volume 9, no. 1, 2006. Their address is: 1313 Sherman Street, Room 715, Denver, CO 80203. Phone: 303-866-4762, Fax 303-866-2461, E-mail: cgspubs@state.co.us, or it can be downloaded from their Web site: <http://geosurvey.state.co.us>. I suggest that you get one now if you have a fall Colorado destination in mind or for next year. A short detour to something you did not know or expect may be very rewarding. If not in specimens, it may be rewarding in scenery, history, and geological and mining scenes you would ordinarily miss.



What I Did This Summer

by Kathy Konkel

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

A trip to southern Oregon in mid-July was going to be a nice break from the Texas heat. Or so I thought. While visiting family there, the temperature during the day ranged from 103° to 111°. Nighttime in the mountains brought little relief (upper 80s, low 90s). Seeking air conditioning, our planned tour of Fire Mountain Gems and Beads in Grants Pass was a welcome relief. The company, founded in the 1970s, started as an operation out of the owner's garage. It has grown to employ over five hundred people with two additional warehouses planned locally.


The tour took us through all departments, including inventory, shipping, customer service, graphics/design, quality control, and purchasing. They pride themselves on their excellent customer service. The employees are valued as much as their customers, and they are rewarded generously at monthly appreciation meetings. Of course, they also receive a discount on merchandise. That alone makes *me* want to work there. This tour was definitely worth the time.

The Crater Rock Museum was our next stop. It is owned and operated by the Roxy Ann Gem and Mineral Society. Their display collection of petrified wood was extensive and incredible. The highlight of the museum is a rhodochrosite called the "Alma Mater" from the Sweet Home Mine near Alma, Colorado. It is the size of a Rubic's cube and is part of a collection donated to the club a couple of years ago. The Smithsonian offered to buy it, but the club rejected the offer due to their commitment to the donor to keep the collection together. I wanted to facet it, of course. (Don't worry, Mineral Section, it was under lock and key and I couldn't get to it!).

The club has 350 members from the southern Oregon area, but only one faceter. As luck would have it though, it was faceter Don Heckert who was giving us the tour. He also confessed to wanting to facet the Alma Mater. Their clubhouse meeting room is twice the size of ours; however, they have no workshop. In addition to the mineral donation, called the Suomynona Collection (anonymous spelled backwards) they received a donation of \$500,000 for the club to expand from 5400 sq ft. to 15,000 sq ft., which is currently underway.

One last stop was the garage of an eBay seller, Chimingrock. The owner Ken Pearson has a collection of slabs of agate and jasper that extends into and fills the back yard. I know a lot of you can relate. In 111° heat we chatted, looked at his grinders and saws, and rummaged through his well-organized boxes of material. Good times!!

Matthew Phillips' Photo Chosen by Wall Street Journal

ne of Matthew Phillips' photos has been selected by the Wall Street Journal, and it was published in the July 21 issue.

Trudi Smith of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership first notified Matthew in the following e-mail:

Dear Matthew-

Thanks so much for your photos! I have sent these on to *Wall Street Journal*, and they will be writing an article on the lighting to be published in the July 21 issue. This is the International WSJ that is distributed to 100,000 people throughout Europe and the Middle East.

The other publication, LD+A (lighting design and application) will feature the lighting in their October issue - so look for this particular issue. I don't know which photos they will select for the articles, but I do hope that your photo(s) will be published!

I will be including your photos in our August e-newsletter as well as some photos in our printed newsletter. That will be going out in August as well. Thanks again for allowing us to include your photos in our press materials.

Trudi Smith
Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Subsequently Matt received a follow-up e-mail.

Are you sitting down? I have tremendous news. The International Wall Street Journal is interested in using your photo for a story they are doing on the Sabine to Bagby Promenade.

Trudi Smith of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership forwarded our assignment link to the WSJ, and they have contacted her requesting use of your photo.

Matt's photo was included in the online Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Bayou Briefs, August 2006 issue with the following text:

"Within the new waterfront development along Buffalo Bayou, from Sabine to Bagby streets, custom-designed light fixtures create ribbons of blue and white along the bayou's banks. Each fixture's glowing LED orb will change from white to blue and back to white again, following the moon's 29.5-day cycle. On each full moon, all lights will be white,



and then, traveling from east to west, they will progressively change to blue until they are all blue on the new moon. Blue lighting underneath the bayou bridges will also be illuminated in blue for the new moon.”

Susan Lenz's War with Cancer

by Tanya Treece (Susan's daughter) and Norm Lenz

While my mom was in Indiana for Christmas and New Years (December 30, 2005), she had a seizure and had to be taken to the emergency room. About four hours into our emergency room experience, she had another seizure—my first scary experience of the new life that was coming our way. She was in the hospital two nights, and they found that she had three tumors in her brain. At first they thought that they had metastasized from somewhere else in her body. They asked her where she was from; when she said Houston, they told her she needed to get home because one of the best cancer treatment centers in the world (MD Anderson) is in her hometown. I drove home with them so that I could help in doing everything possible.



Susan and Norm on their trip to the Yukon

On January 15 she had a biopsy at MD Anderson of the biggest tumor. The pathology report showed that her cancer is Grade 4 Glioblastoma Multiforme. Recommended treatment was an immediate craniotomy plus radiation and chemotherapy. By this time the tumors had grown. They say that this particular type of cancer doubles itself every 21 days. Her surgery was February 2, and they removed the entire right frontal lobe except the motor skills area but were unable to get all of the cancer. They told us to think about it as a mountain of salt. The neurosurgeon removed the mountain, but there was no possible way to get every little grain, and that is why Susan would also need to have radiation and chemotherapy. The next day in ICU she had a minor setback, a seizure that they called a mini mal, so they kept her in ICU another day. After 10 days of recovery, she began taking the chemotherapy, Temodar, orally every night before bed. The next day she started radiation each weekday. Her last day of radiation was April 4. They took an MRI on 4/24, and Praise God we had good results.

Since then Mom's progress has had its ups and downs as her medications have been increased, decreased, and changed a number of times. Norm's most recent update on Susan's progress was e-mailed August 10:

Dear HGMS friends,

Susan has had another two weeks of slow but steady improvement. She has received physical therapy 2–3 times each week here at home. Her communication is much



Susan and Norm attended the July Faceting Section meeting

more normal, her sense of humor is back, and mobility is improving. We are still not sure what to credit for the improvements, so we believe it's a miracle. Thanks for your prayers. Tanya has moved to Houston to help me care for Susan. We both appreciate her help.

Positives: The latest blood test

on August 9 yielded good results and allows Susan to restart chemotherapy tonight. Her normal schedule is one week on and one week off for rest. Sometimes she needs more than a week of rest for her blood counts to recover from the effects of chemotherapy.

Susan can walk short distances with a walker and a little assistance from me or Tanya to control direction and speed. We finally received a wheelchair from insurance. This gives us the flexibility to move Susan more quickly or over longer distances than she can walk.

Susan is communicating much better, and her voice is stronger. Her sense of humor and short-term memory are quickly improving. She sleeps well and eats well, and is able to feed herself about half of what she eats.

We were able to visit the Hill Country last weekend.

Negatives: Tremors remain a constant bother.

Susan still needs assistance getting up, sitting down, or walking through the house. However, she is stronger and was able to climb the 24 steps to our Hill Country apartment with assistance from Tanya and me. Her strength is good, but her balance is limiting her activities.



Her short-term memory is maybe 50% and long-term memory is maybe 90% of normal. Both are improving.

As always, we thank you for your prayers, cards, e-mails, calls, visits, etc. Norm

Volunteering Rocks!

*By Elsa Kapitan-White, HGMS member
Schlumberger Oilfield Services
from Blueline publication of the
Association of Earth Science Editors (AESE)
Spring 2006 issue*

Doing educational outreach as a “volunteer geologist” was something I’d long wanted to do, so I jumped at the opportunity when I was asked to speak to the second grade at my children’s school.



As part of a unit on natural resources, each second grader brought in rocks for various experiments and activities. In addition to the rocks, my son Joel borrowed from our landscaping. He picked some rocks and minerals out of what I’d collected over numerous college field trips, field work, and vacations. His science teacher said they would use those as a display set and asked if I could talk about them to the students.

Joel’s teacher arranged for me to speak to the morning science classes one day and to repeat it for the afternoon classes the next day—about 130 students in all. But what I would talk about was pretty much left up to me. She suggested that I tell the students about my education in geology and tell what geologists do in addition to discussing the display set.

Planning my Talk

To structure my presentation, I first researched the required earth science curriculum for second graders. The science concepts specified by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum for second graders are to distinguish between living organisms and nonliving objects and to know that the natural world includes rocks, soil, water, and gases of the atmosphere. Students must also identify uses of natural resources.

Instead of a piecemeal discussion of the display set, I decided to start with the big picture—Earth—and work my way down to rocks and minerals. This approach addressed the TEKS natural world concept.

I found numerous teaching resources on the Web, many of them copyright-free for reproducing as handouts. In addition to guidance from members of the AESE e-mail

list, my most useful resource was the Houston Gem and Mineral Society. Through a grant from ConocoPhillips, the HGMS assembles earth science teaching sets for schools. Not only are the sets extensive and well documented, once you've given your presentation with the sets, you leave them behind at the school. I got the basic mineral and hardness set and a spectacular worldwide minerals set. The HGMS also gave me additional small samples to use in a hands-on rock identification exercise.

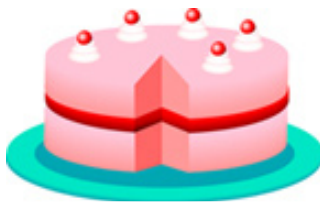
I wanted to include "layer-cake coring" as part of my presentation to teach how core samples are taken to "see" what's under the land surface (see sidebar below), but that wasn't to be. The school district's rules about sugary treats consider cake a "food of minimal nutritional value," meaning that it is not allowed except on a child's birthday or at the two holiday parties each school year. And then the cake has to be store-bought and in the original wrapper instead of homemade (for sanitary reasons and to have an ingredients list to screen for allergens). I thought about using sugar-free Jello®, but I would have had to buy layered Jello cups instead of making them myself, and that would have been expensive for 130 students!

Geology Presentation

I began my talk by introducing myself. Many of the students already knew me as "Joel's mom, who runs the school store," and now they also know that I have BS and MS degrees in geology, have worked as a marine technician, environmental geologist, and regulatory analyst, and am currently a part-time telecommuting technical editor for Schlumberger Oilfield Services.

Next, I gave an overview of the Earth's structure using a hard-boiled egg as a model. I thumped it a few times on a tabletop to crack the shell and outlined the cracks with a Sharpie® marker—these were the plate boundaries. I peeled off a "plate" and slid it around while discussing plate tectonics. Then I cut the egg in half, revealing the core yolk. We discussed how the egg isn't exactly like the

Layer-Cake Coring



This activity showing how geologists sample beneath the Earth's surface by taking cores can be done with a sheet cake for the whole group (<http://www.womeninmining.org/Layercake1.htm>) or a cupcake for each student (<http://www.womeninmining.org/cupcak1.htm>). A similar exercise uses layer cake for demonstrating faulting and folding (http://www.beloit.edu/~SEPM/Earth_Works/Layer_Cake_Geology.html).

The transparent drinking straws called for in the instructions were hard to find, and they didn't work when I experimented at home with both cake and sugar-free Jello models, although my children happily devoured the mangled model leftovers. I tried various diameters of transparent plastic plumbing tubing (up to 3/4-inch inside diameter) from the hardware store, and got the best results in cake with 1/2-inch tubing. Although I made Jello following both the regular recipe and the thicker Jigglers, I never could get the slippery stuff to stick in the tubing as a retained core.

Earth (not round and the core isn't layered).

The Earth overview led to the three major rock types—igneous (tying in with volcanic activity related to the Earth's mobile crust), sedimentary, and metamorphic—and the rock cycle. I also reviewed the difference between rocks and minerals. The students had been introduced to these definitions in class, but to make them more memorable, I held up a Hershey® bar and a chocolate chip cookie. The chocolate bar is essentially one ingredient, like a mineral is one substance. The cookie is a mixture of ingredients (chips, flour, eggs, etc.), like a rock consisting of one or more minerals.

The students had already been describing various physical properties of their rocks and recording measurements and observations in their science notebooks, so they were familiar with the concepts for my hands-on mineral identification exercise. They split into five groups, and each group was given a set of four different minerals that are similar in appearance: clear to white. As we identified each mineral, I told them its name and how it is used as a natural resource:

- Find the mineral so soft you can scratch it with your fingernails: gypsum (used for making sheetrock wallboard).
- Find the mineral that has a salty taste (The kids were instructed to lick a finger, touch the mineral, and then taste their finger—I had washed the rocks before): halite (ground into table salt).
- Find the mineral that produces a doubled image when you look through it: calcite (used as a building stone and for making cement). The second graders had studied refraction and reflection earlier in the school year, so they knew how light rays bend. I had planned to also have them identify calcite by its fizzy chemical reaction with vinegar, but it didn't work at home when I used table vinegar. Apparently you need pickling vinegar at a higher acidity, and I couldn't easily find that because it wasn't canning season yet.
- Find the mineral so hard that it scratches glass (I passed out small jelly jar glasses, which wouldn't easily break and had no sharp edges like a glass scratch plate might have): quartz (used to make glass).

The last part of my presentation touched on the living versus nonliving TEKS concept by discussing hydrocarbons. The "Where is Oil Found?" demonstration from the Society for Sedimentary Geology (SEPM) K-12 Education Web page was an effective model, with marbles in a jar for grains and water and oil poured into the pore spaces. I explained how drilling and logging are used to learn what's underground, showed the students a core sample, and unfurled a long log printout for them to examine.

After my formal talk, we had time for a Q&A session. Most of the questions were about precious gems (one of the students' classroom exercises had been to make a chart of their birthstones). According to the students, the Texas Gulf Coast is a vastly underappreciated source of diamonds, because several swore that they had found diamonds just lying on the ground in their yards! We also discussed geoscience careers and different rocks in my collection and the HGMS sets.

Photographs from my presentation are at http://classroom.springisd.org/webs/smes.campus/scottie_highlights.htm (click “Second graders are learning about rocks.”).

Encore!

Now that I’ve given my first presentations on geology, I’m raring to do it again. I’ve joined the HGMS to participate in the scout and school programs at its annual rock and mineral show in the fall. I can also volunteer with the Houston Geological Society’s program for volunteer geologists in schools, which routinely has more requests for guest speakers than speakers available. And I think I’ll have a steady gig presenting geology at Smith Elementary.

Please join me in spreading our enthusiasm for geology through educational outreach. Being a volunteer geologist is fun, and it doesn’t take much time to prepare or present—just be sure to include lots of models and hands-on activities to keep young audiences engaged. And my one critical piece of advice to you is to test all demonstrations and models at home to make sure they’ll work for you in the classroom.

Resources

- American Association of Petroleum Geoscientists, Youth Education Activities Committee: “K-12 Resources” (<http://www.aapg.org/k12resources/index.cfm>)
- American Geological Institute: “Earth Science Week” (<http://www.earthsciweek.org/>)
- BBC Education: “The Essential Guide to Rocks” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/rocks/index.shtml>)
- Chevron Community Programs: “Best Classroom Practices” (<http://www.chevron.com/products/about/programs/edawards/index.shtml>)
- Democratic Caucus, Committee on Science, US House of Representatives: “USGS Resources for Educators” (<http://sciencedems.house.gov/resources/usgsresources.htm>)
- Franklin Institute Online: Wired @ School: “Rock Hounds” (<http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/oct98/index2.html>)
- Geological Society of America: “K-12 Teacher Resources” (http://www.geosociety.org/educate/lessonplans/i_rocks.htm)
- Houston Gem and Mineral Society: “Educator’s Page” (www.hgms.org and click “K-12 Education”)
- Kentucky Geological Survey: “Geologic and Paleontologic Cook Book” (<http://www.uky.edu/KGS/education/cookbook.htm>)
- Mineral Information Institute (<http://www.mii.org/>)
- NASAexplores: “Express Lessons and Online Resources” (<http://www.nasaexplores.com/>)
- National Park Service: “Caves, Canyons, Cactus & Critters: A Curriculum and Activity Guide for Carlsbad Caverns National Park” (http://www.nps.gov/cave/pdfdocs/geology_ms_continents.pdf)
- ProTeacher: “Geology” (<http://www.proteacher.com/110023.shtml>)
- RocksForKids.com
- “SEPM’s K-12 Earth Science Education Committee’s Home Page” (<http://www.beloit.edu/~SEPM/index.html>)
- The Stupid Page of Rocks (<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Canopy/1080/>)

Doris Eileen Kemp--in Memoriam*June 25, 1922–August 8, 2006**<http://www.cyfairfunerals.com/Obits/obituary.html?id=245395614601>*

DORIS EILEEN KEMP, 84, passed away Tuesday, August 8, 2006 with her family by her side. She was born June 25, 1922 and is survived by her husband, Russell M. Kemp, Jr., three sons, three grandchildren, and extended family.

For nearly 50 years Doris was known for her creative jewelry designs using gems and minerals. In 1990, she was recognized for her artistic skills and was inducted into the National Rockhound and Lapidary Hall of Fame in Murdo, South Dakota. She served in many leadership and volunteer positions for the Chicago Lapidary Club, Chicagoland

Gem and Minerals Associations, West Suburban Lapidary Club, Earth Science Club of Northern Illinois, Houston Gem and Mineral Society, Midwest Federation of Mineralogical and Geological Societies, and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

Doris was a frequent exhibitor of her jewelry and a lecturer at rock shows all over the country. Along with her husband Russ, Doris' greatest joy was volunteering and providing lecture services to the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art in Elmhurst, IL from 1962-2002.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be made in the name of Doris Eileen Kemp to the AFMS (American Federation of Mineralogical Societies) Scholarship Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 302, Glyndon, MD

If you would like to sign the Online Guestbook, share a story, or post an Online Tribute, go to <http://www.cyfairfunerals.com/Obits/obituary.html?id=245395614601>

Please scroll down to CONDOLENCE SERVICES, click on "Read & Add Tributes," and follow the directions. The family appreciates any and all of your kind words of love and support during their time of loss.



Art Smith Presented July Program

by Matt Dillon

HGMS 1st Vice-President

The July 25 General Meeting program was presented by our own mineral expert and club library caretaker, Art Smith. He discussed several of his favorite collecting sites in Texas and showed many photographs of various Texas salt domes and of specimens he and others found in the core dumps on those properties. He also described the nearby Damon Mound reef exposure. His program was very helpful to those of us who are looking for ideas for going on less-expensive field trips.

In Our Library

by Art Smith

Librarian

I have been slowly integrating the new books obtained from Al and Marian Kidwell into what is already on the shelves. However, that came to a screeching halt because someone borrowed our library stamp and has not returned it. I have just ordered a new one so I can resume shelving the books.

I decided to have a summer book sale to give the members first crack at our duplicate books and journals before we offer them to the public at our show. So far we have made over 200 dollars for the library.

Beverly Mace contributed a new dinosaur book that should be on the shelves by the time you read this. I have slowly been going through the cards for the videos, and I figure in most cases the videos or books that were checked out before 2003 may never come back. If you checked any out before then or checked some out at a more recent date, please return them so others can use them. I hope they do not become among the lost. We have lost a few that we cannot replace. Actually in the last two or three years, very few really good ones have been checked out. I will get DVDs of the more recent ones, and you will have to check them out through me. I am not making cards for each, and I want to know who has them.

The library is getting to the point where some areas need some major adjustments to add new publications. Since making space can be a big job, in some cases I have filed books in temporary locations. If you cannot find something in the index or by browsing through the shelves, ask me. Another alternative for excess publications that are seldom used but too valuable to get rid of is to store them in sealed containers in the loft. I have a few up there now.

Don't go into any aspect of the multiple subjects that are part of our society's reason for being without reading about it first. You may find that there is more to the activity than you are willing to commit yourself to. Reading may give you some good ideas on how to get involved in the activity without committing a lot of time or money until you are sure, or it may lead your interests off into an entirely new direction.

2006 Show Stones for Competition

by Margaret Hardman-Muye

If it is your first time to enter a stone, the **Novice** stone is a 30 mm x 40 mm oval of agate (any type) cut to ROLE standards. If you have won a ribbon with a prior stone, you need to enter in one of the advanced categories.

A copy of the ROLE standards is in a notebook at the clubhouse on the table between the two bathrooms.

Advanced Categories: Cut a teardrop of 1 x 2 proportions (twice as long as it is wide) out of any type of jade. Stones must be cut to ROLE standards.

Timed Cutting Competition: There will be a timed cutting competition at the show. You will have one hour to cut your stone using the Genie available at the show. Information about the shape (template), size, and material will be provided to you at the show. You will be given the stone you are to cut at that time too. To give everyone an equal chance at the show, this information is a closely guarded secret.

Lapidary Section 2006 Upcoming Programs

August 21	Doublets and triplets—demonstration
September 18	Using beads to set a cabochon—hands on!
October 16	Wire Wrapping—hands on
October 14 (Saturday)	Lapidary Auction—11 a.m.-1 p.m. Bring in your auction items and view what's already here. 1:00-2:00 Lunch (bring a food item; meat provided) 2:00 Auction begins
November 20	Texturing Metals (rolling mill, flex shaft & hammer)—hands on.

Lapidary Section

by Kathy Konkel

Lapidary Section Chair

Have you ever wondered what to do with all those cabochons you have made? Sure, you can wire wrap or set them using bezels, but perhaps you would like to experiment with a different setting method. Or, maybe you are just starting out and haven't yet learned those techniques. We invite you to join us on Monday, **September 18** at 7:30 p.m. for a hands-on lesson using beads to set a cabochon.

Please bring a cabochon. It can be any shape, but an oval 20 mm x 30 mm is suggested for this project. Seed bead kits will be available for a nominal fee. If you prefer to bring your own supplies, please bring a piece of Lacy's Stiff Stuff, a size 12 needle, and size 11 or 15 seed beads in a color to complement the cabochon. We hope you'll join us!

Margaret Hardman-Muye presented the July 17 meeting of the Section. She demonstrated some techniques useful in making decorative headpins and earring wires. Using the torches, attendees formed a bead of desired size by applying the flame to the bottom end of a vertically held sterling silver wire. After pickling, the headpins were used as is, or the ball of metal at the end of the wire was flattened with a hammer and steel block to form a paddle. The headpins were then shaped into earwires. Thank you, Margaret, for the fun and easy project.

Our August meeting (not yet held at the time of this writing) consists of a demonstration of doublets and triplets by Ed Clay. We look forward to an informative and interesting program.

Free Jade Preforms at Lapidary Open Shops in August and September

by Mary Ann Mitscherling

Anyone wanting to work on a jade teardrop Show Stone will have the opportunity to make one or more stones at the August 21 and September 18 Open Shops from 5:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. Saturday rules apply. Each member who pays for at least one hour of shop time will receive one jade slab piece suitable for any desired size. Ed Clay made a template with three different teardrop sizes. The template should be left in the Template Drawer where it can be used by everyone. See Mary Ann Mitscherling to collect your preforms.

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

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

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

Mineral Section

by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson and Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson

Well, we hope you had a good summer break and are ready to once again join the Mineral Section meetings on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. We will begin our regularly scheduled meetings on the 1st Wednesday in September.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

September 6 – Social / Show & Tell / Show Preparation: Refreshments will be provided. We are going to use this meeting as a catch-up opportunity to hear about all of your summer adventures. It will be a very informal format. We will also be taking care of any last minute show-related items. All help will be appreciated.

September 20 – Show Preparation: Come early and help load the truck. All help is appreciated.

October 4 – Social / Show Review: Refreshments will be provided. This is our opportunity to review the show while it is still fresh in our minds. Bring your comments on what we did right and what we can improve upon. Also bring in your show purchases and let us drool.

October 18 – Minerals of the Silver Trail, Yukon Territory, Canada: Presented by Mark Mauthner (of the Houston Museum of Natural Science). If you were unable to attend the Tucson show this year, you missed a great show. You now have an opportunity to see the talk given by Mark Mauthner during the Tucson Mineralogical Symposium. See *Mineralogical Record*, January-February 2006, v 37, no. 1, page 67 for an abstract of this talk. Refreshments will be provided. *This meeting was rescheduled from earlier this year due to a work conflict.*

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.

Paleontology Section Steering Committee Meeting

by Rick Rexroad

A Steering Committee Meeting for the HGMS Paleontology Section will be convened on Saturday, September 9 at 9 a.m. at the Clubhouse (easy to remember: 9/9 at 9). The purpose of this meeting is to assist the Paleontology Section Nominating Committee in developing a slate of Paleontology Section officers for 2007. Attendance by current Paleontology Section officers and past Paleontology Section chairpersons is requested.

Please contact Rick Rexroad at 713-647-6533 if you are interested in being considered as a candidate for a 2007 Paleontology Section officer position.

Pre-Show Activities—So close I can taste it!*by Sigrid Stewart**HGMS Show Chairperson*

The HGMS Show Committee's pre-show activities should be popping up on your calendar NOW!

Pre-Show Pizza Party and Auction: Saturday September 9, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the clubhouse. This is the largest pre-show event, and it is the kick-off for the Show Season. Pizza and salad will be served beginning at 6:30 courtesy of the Show Committee, and the auction will begin about 7 p.m. You can help this year's Pizza Party be successful by bringing desserts and items for the auction. This a great opportunity to trade your duplicates for new stuff, and maybe you can pick up a little something for that early Christmas shopping! Neal will be sending out a reminder about donations.

Load 'em Up: Wednesday, September 20, 6 p.m.–7:30 p.m., at the clubhouse. On the Wednesday night before the show, we will load-up the U-Haul and volunteer vehicles with items to be transported to the Humble Civic Center.

Setup Day Thursday: September 21, 8 a.m.–12 p.m., at the Humble Civic Center. We will need volunteers beginning at about 8 a.m. to unload the U-Haul truck and cases. Members of each Section must be prepared to set up their own booths. We will also need to drape about half of the dealer tables. At 11 a.m. the dealers start arriving to begin their own setup, but work on the Section booths will continue.

Volunteer and Dealer Appreciation Dinner: Thursday, September 21, 6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m., at the Humble Civic Center. We host this dinner every year to show our appreciation to all of our volunteers and dealers.

Please join us for these events, and plan to attend YOUR show. Cross your fingers and think about doing a no-rain dance. It's going to be great!

Swap Area at the Show*by Steve Blyskal*

There will be a swap area at the show this year. It will be located as usual in the glass wall annex on the east side of the convention center, in the same room as the Youth Section booth and activity area. We plan to have our tables follow the curve of the wall across from where the Youth Section will be set up. There are plenty of floor outlets in this area, so swappers can have lights at their tables.

The swap area will operate on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday this year as it has over the past few years. We expect to have many children at the show on Friday, and many of the swappers have minerals suited for beginning collectors. The swap area will be open from 9–6 on Friday, 9–6 on Saturday, and 10–4 on Sunday.

As in past years, those who have minerals, fossils or polished stones they would like to swap can bring them to the area and attempt to trade them with the swappers who

have set up. Swap dollars will also be available for those who do not have an item to trade. Swap dollars work like this. One of the swappers has a piece of petrified wood that you want. You work out a price of \$15.00. Then you go to the booth where swap dollars are sold, give them the \$15.00 in cash, and get 15 swap dollars. The 15 swap dollars are given to the swapper and you get the petrified wood. So what does the swapper do with the swap dollars, you ask? He has until the end of the show to go around to the dealers and find items that he wants. Then he pays for the items with the swap dollars.

How does this benefit everyone? You, the customer, get a good deal. You might save some money buying in the swap area. The swapper gets rid of the material he has on hand --stuff he has found, or cut, or traded for, for example. The dealer gets the money that might not have been spent otherwise.

The swappers can use up to two tables, if available, at a charge of \$6.00 per table for the show. Material that can be put out at the swap area includes minerals, rocks, fossils, cabachons, faceted stones, and jewelry made by the seller. Swappers are expected to help sell the swap dollars, and other volunteers are requested from the Show Committee.

Swap dollars are valid for merchandise at the show up until 6 p.m. Sunday 9/24/06, at which time they become void. That is why the swap area closes early on Sunday, to allow the sellers time to go spend their money. Dealers redeem their swap dollars at the end of the show for cash.

If you still have any questions about the swap area, want to participate and swap, or just want to help sell swap dollars for an hour or two, call the swap area chairman, Steve Blyskal at 832-252-6533 in the evening.

Volunteer Sign-Up for the Annual HGMS Show

by Shiara Trumble

The Show Committee has planned an exciting show this year. There will be the regular exhibits with which you are already familiar, plus a large exhibit from "Dinosaur George" Blasing. Due to the efforts put in by our great Publicity Committee, this excellent exhibit is sure to bring lots of additional attendees to our show this year.

As many of you already know, it takes a large number of volunteers to have a successful show. In years past, many volunteers worked multiple shifts to staff the Show's needs. We deeply appreciate their help and devotion to the Show.

This year's Show, as always, depends on volunteers to make the show a success. Cheryl Scott and I are asking for four volunteers to help us with telephoning this year. If you are a new member, it's a good way to get to know other club members. For seasoned members, it's a great way to keep in touch with those you may not have seen for a while. This is an easy job, can be done sitting down(!), and you will be calling people who have interests similar to yours. Each volunteer will start out with only 25 names to call—not hard at all!

Listed below is an approximate number of volunteers needed per shift, per day. Please review this list and call me to volunteer your help. You can work one shift or a whole day(s). Any time you can work, we will find a place for you. We have a few volunteer jobs that do not require standing, for those who cannot stand for long periods of time. If you would like additional information about any of these volunteer jobs, just give me a call at 281-463-7954 after 6 p.m. during the week or on weekends, or cell 832 236-5133, or e-mail at s_trumble@ev1.net OR call Cheryl Lucas at 281 257-0047 or e-mail her at pmctexas@sbcglobal.net

The shifts are Friday and Saturday 9–12, 12–3, 3–6, and Sunday: 10–12:30, 12:30–2:30, 2:30–5.

Listed below are the numbers of volunteers needed per shift, per day, per area.

Area	Per Shift	Per Day (3 shifts)	3 Day total
Information Booth	4	12	36
Security	4	12	36
Youth Area	3	9	27
School Daze	3	9	9
(Friday only)			
Scout Program	3	9	18
(Saturday and Sunday only)			
HMNS booth	2	6	18
Dino Dig	2	6	18
Hospitality	2	6	18
Ticket Booth, Sales	2	6	18
Entrance Ticket			
Takers	2	6	18
Swap Area			
Ticket Sales	1	3	9
Floater	3	9	27
Volunteer Totals	31	93	252

We also need volunteers for the following:

Wednesday afternoon/evening:

Loading the truck at the clubhouse

Thursday morning:

Setup of tables and table dressing at the Civic Center

Sunday evening:

Exhibit take down and truck loading at the Civic Center

Unloading at the clubhouse

Those of you who helped load and set up or take down and unload in years past remember a nice dinner for the tired participants, and this year will be no exception. We'll be taking menu suggestions as you volunteer! Hope to hear from you soon!

The Future of Gem & Mineral Shows

by Sigrid Stewart

HGMS Show Chairman

I decided to contact dealers who will be in our show to ask them what they see as interesting trends and new items, and then share the gossip and tidbits from the show circuit with my fellow club members. Two dealers responded in time to place this article in the BBG, and I would like to share their comments with you.

From Bill and Lois Pattillo, the “Rock Food Table,” members of the Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society in Corpus Christi, TX:

bill@rockfoodtable.com

lois@rockfoodtable.com

www.rockfoodtable.com

If you want to come to the Show of Shows, come to the Houston Gem and Mineral Show.

As we travel around the country doing Gem Shows with the Rock Food Table, we see many different aspects of the Rock and Gem trade. We can say that the Houston Show has it all.

You can see fossils, gems, rocks, carvings, small dealers, large dealers, all kinds of people working with the lapidary hobby. If you would like some equipment, this is the place to come. Just walk around the Show, and you will be amazed at the different things that they bring to the area for you to see, do, and purchase. I can say that you might even come upon someone faceting a gemstone, and they just may ask you to sit down and facet a stone. This has happened to many people, and I am one of them.

It is always a rewarding sight to see the Scouts and the information that the Houston Club passes on to them as they work on getting their Merit Badges. This is something that all Gem Clubs should consider doing—even our own Club should be doing this kind of service.

This will be our seventeenth time to do the Houston Show, and we are looking forward to this show as we did not get to make the show last year and neither did others. It was canceled due to a hurricane, and we certainly hope this never happens again.

Come to Humble and join the fun.

From Jim Mangarella, Southwest Rock and Gem Co.

swrg@yahoo.com

www.swrgco.com

There are some disturbing trends on the horizon. Jim Mangarella of Southwest Rock & Gem reports that show sales are in decline. According to Jim the slide began with 9/11 and resulted in business at most shows being down 50–70% from past years, with an additional 30% drop in business so far this year. He feels that some shows may become marginal and some dealers will drop out of the business, and cites the follow-

ing reasons:

- **The Internet** – people can shop and compare prices from home. Interestingly enough, dealers with a strong Internet business say their business is back to or exceeds pre-9/11 levels.
- **Fuel costs** are up, impacting the cost of travel and disposable income.
- **Price of gold** – especially hard on jewelers, of course.
- **Weakness of the dollar** against other currencies – we are becoming a source of bargains for other countries.

However, some shows are still quite strong, including the Houston show, and he expects it to do well for the foreseeable future, probably due to Houston's large and sophisticated market. For the reasons given above, he expects that fewer dealers will want to travel long distances.

Sigrid Stewart again: What does this mean for our show? I think we need to emphasize our strengths, and I believe those lie in our mission to educate the public and especially the youth of the Houston area about our hobby, the lapidary arts, and the collecting of minerals and fossils. After all, an educated consumer can cruise the Internet looking for a great specimen, but where do they go to gain that expertise in the first place? How would they ever even know what they like without your friendly neighborhood Gem & Mineral Show? Let's do right by them!

Dinosaur World Presents a Prehistoric Journey

Press Release

Dinosaur World, Inc. of San Antonio, home of "Dinosaur George" Blasing, announces the Houston premiere of a new exhibit of over seventy-five fossil replicas to be shown September 22 through 24 at the Houston Gem and Mineral Society Show at the Humble Convention Center.

The exhibit, entitled, "A Prehistoric Journey," showcases skeletons, skulls, teeth, bones, spikes, and claws from a variety of prehistoric creatures and spans millions of years across earth's early time periods to include specimens from the Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, and Pleistocene eras.

Encompassing three main sections—"Air and Sea," "Dinosaurs," and "Mammals"—the fossil replica collection features a skull from "Stan," the T. rex (one of the largest ever found) facing off with an equally impressive Triceratops skull, a Pteranodon with a 23-foot wing span, a femur from a rare and monstrous sauropod, a prehistoric sea turtle, ancient killer bird, Smilodon and Cave Bear skulls, swimming reptiles, raptors, and juvenile T-rex skeletons.

Dinosaur George and his team of Dinosaur World paleontology experts will be on hand to provide visitors detailed information about the fossils in the exhibit and to offer them a unique interactive learning experience. The exhibit tent will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day of the show, and admission is included in the show's general admission price.



Dinosaur World is a science and nature company that produces educational DVDs and a series of comic-style "Adventure Books" and provides exhibits and lectures nationwide to schools, universities, and special events.

Dinosaur World, Inc.

4242 Medical Drive, Suite 1200

San Antonio, Texas 78229

P. (210) 798-6224

F. (210) 824-4633

support@dinosaurworld.com

Contact: Deborah Fazackerley

Phone: 10-798-6224

Direct e-mail: dfazack@grandecom.net

HGMS Board Meeting

August 1, 2006

by Margaret Hardman-Muye

HGMS Secretary

X	President	Scott Singleton	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
X	1 st Vice President	Matt Dillon		Lapidary Rep.	Dave Hawkins
X	2 nd 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



Approval of July Minutes: Done via e-mail.

Treasurer's Report: Lowell Stouder Provided a net worth statement and a monthly budget. They are attached to the filed minutes. Lowell stated that we have received a small check from Kroger. He also gave Scott information from Reliant Energy about signing up for a two-year contract for electricity. After a discussion about changing energy companies, Terry Brawner was asked to do some research on the issue and report back to the Board.

Committee and Section Reports

Show: Sigrid Stewart reported that dealer show packets are being prepared and tickets are being printed. They have not yet chosen a t-shirt design or color. The list of people signed up at the Intergem Show to receive show postcards is missing. Sigrid has been going to the various Section meetings to recruit volunteers. The next Show Committee meeting is August 8. A BBG article is being prepared that will list all of the show events. There will be a booth at the August 18, 19 THSC home school convention.

Shop and Clubhouse: Tom Wright had an electrician out to do an estimate for the wiring, but he has lost the contact information. Margaret was asked to get the name and phone number and to call Tom with it. The cleaning issues will be revisited after the show. The painting and replacing of the signs will be done in the fall.

Newsletter/Web site: Phyllis George says there was an error that left a big section of text missing in the last BBG due to a problem in the PageMaker software. She was able to “stop the presses” and get the section re-added. It was moved and seconded that HGMS repay Phyllis the \$160.00 she spent to fix the problem. Motion passed. Phyllis also reminded people to get their articles in by the Wednesday prior to the 2nd Saturday if they want the articles to appear in the September BBG.

Old and New Business:

SCFMS Show: The show is August 19 & 20, in Bossier City, Louisiana. Scott received the packet of information about the show, and he asked for two volunteers to attend. Phyllis George and Matt Dillon tentatively volunteered to go. Sunday Bennett may be able to go also. The Club will pay for their way. HGMS will be receiving a number of awards.

Final Report on Inventory of Club Possessions: Scott handed out a final report. A copy is attached to the minutes. The value of our club possessions is significantly more than our insurance is covering, and we probably will have to increase this coverage. Scott will call the agent to get information regarding what the current riders cover.

Nominating Committee Report: Matt Dillon gave a written report that is filed with the minutes. It was decided that there will not be an Assistant Show Chair for 2006 because nobody agreed to perform this task. It is too late to appoint someone who is not already familiar with the Show. In the fall the Nominating Committee will be making nominations for the 2007 Show Chair, 2007 Assistant Show Chair, and 2007 club officers. Scott stressed that the club's survival depends on people agreeing to step up and be nominated for various positions. He and Matt reminded everyone that the Assistant Show Chair does not automatically become the Show Chair for the following year. All Section representatives were asked to mention the importance of nominations to their Sections. Scott will e-mail procedures to the membership.

2008 HGMS Show Chair: Art Smith moved, seconded by Phyllis George, that Scott Singleton be appointed as the Show Chair for the 2008 National Show. Motion passed.

Report on Building Owners Annual Board meeting: Terry Brawner attended the homeowner association meeting and brought a written report (filed with the minutes). Several issues were discussed. The Maintenance fees are going up about \$20.00 per month. A late fee is being instituted. Roof vents need to be replaced. We need to send a letter to the association showing that we already replaced our roof vents when we had our new roof put on. All buildings will need to be painted in 2008. The association will buy the paint, and the building owners are responsible for the painting. Car stops will be re-pegged. They asked for a club contact person, and the Board decided that that contact should be “President of HGMS.”

Committee on Abuse Prevention: Matt Dillon presented a written report (filed with minutes). The Board reviewed the report and decided to have Phyllis and Matt work on some editing and condensation prior to a final approval of the text. The Board will review these changes in September.

Clarification of Policy Regarding Club Equipment Offsite Usage: A member requested clarification of the motion passed in the July Board meeting regarding use of club equipment—specifically to define more clearly the definitions of “club-owned” versus “section-owned” equipment and what is or is not permitted with these items. This request came in the form of a proposed document that would replace the previous motion. The Board reviewed this request and agreed that the policy passed in the last meeting should be clarified. After much discussion, several of the proposed points were modified. The Board charged Phyllis with making these changes and presenting the modified document to the Board in September. The Board stressed that the motion passed in the July Board meeting is still in effect and that this new document will only clarify the existing motion, not change it in any way.

Equipment Donation: A club member has offered to donate some office mail-handling equipment. After discussion, the Board decided not to accept this equipment because we do not have a need for it or anyplace to store it. Neal Immega will be asked to e-mail the membership to see if anyone else is interested in the equipment.

Mailing Program Renewal: Beverly Mace received an invoice from Dazzle Express to renew the mailing program that prints mailing labels. The invoice will be paid by Treasurer.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

HGMS General Meeting

July 26, 2006

by Margaret Hardman-Muye

HGMS Secretary

Scott Singleton called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Four guests were introduced: Phillip and Emily Cavern, Rob Straus, and Leona Coffin.

Announcements: Sunday Bennett says she will be teaching a Beading 101 class on August 24. The class is filling up fast.

Education Committee: A fabrication class is starting soon, and an enameling class and wire wrapping class are in process.

Daylight: In September, Cheryl Norwood will be presenting “Beaded Cabochons.” In October, they will make a wire wrapped bracelet. Currently, they are still doing Mokume Gane under the instruction of Val Link.

Faceting: Matt Phillips did a program on using a “jam peg” device—an ancient faceting machine design. The Section may build one.

Lapidary Section: The Section elected a Chair Person: Kathy Konkel. Upcoming programs are listed in the BBG.

Mineral: The Section met in July to repair the fluorescent mineral display. They may also meet in August to finish work on show displays. Steve Blyskal will e-mail Section members if they do meet.

Paleontology: Chris Garvie will be giving the next program.

Youth: The youth have been working hard on completing cabochons for the show.

Field Trip: There are no field trips in the works. Neal Immega is waiting to hear back from one place. He found a 6" x 53 mold of the HGMS logo in Sister Clements' estate, and would like some ideas for what to do with it.

Show: Sigrid Stewart gave us several important dates: August 12 is the postcard labeling party at the clubhouse. On September 9 from 5:30–9:30 p.m. there will be a preshow pizza party and auction. The table at the Intergem Show was very successful. They signed up 25 new members and added many names to the show mailing list.

Clubhouse/Shop: There is a new water saw located near the sink.

Membership: In addition to the 25 new members from the Intergem Show, Beverly Mace has received three new applications.

Newsletter/Website: Phyllis George says that nine club members will receive SCFMS recognition for their work published in the BBG. Five of these members have received first, second, or third place in their category and will receive trophies. The five people who will get trophies are Neal Immega, Dean Lagerwall, Art Smith, Youth Section member Donald Elrod, and Phyllis (for the BBG itself). People who will get certificates are James Wark, Sandra Stevens, Maryann Mitscherling, and Matt Dillon.

The five people who have won trophies are automatically entered in the AFMS competition, and they all placed in the top ten within their categories at the AFMS level. The details are not yet known.

If you have articles for the BBG, they are due the Wednesday before the 2nd weekend of each month. If you have concerns or suggestions for the Web site, please contact Phyllis.

Library: There is a book sale going on on tables outside the library. Books are 20% off the marked price.

The annual SCFMS show will be held in Bossier City, LA on August 19–20, 2006. The club usually sends two people. If you are interested in going, please contact Scott Singleton.

Old Business:

The Nominating Committee currently is meeting to nominate a Show Chair and Show Vice-Chair.

Scott received the second HGMS banner. One will be used at club events, and the other will be used at the HMNS for outreach to the community.

MaryAnn Mitscherling has a template for the 1 x 2 (twice as long as it is wide) tear-drop stone which is the competition stone for the show. She will be giving away a piece of jade to people who work on cutting for an hour at the open shop prior to the Lapidary Section meetings.

Show and Tell: Joan Riley showed Lake Superior Agates she collected recently.

James Wark talked about how to identify exotic metals (such as titanium, stainless steel, nickel, cobalt, and other alloys) by the color of the sparks they emit when touched to a grinding wheel. The metals are found in material you can buy cheaply and sell for scrap.

Door Prize: Pat Hildbold won the door prize—stone slabs donated by David Hawkins.

Having Fun—AFMS Junior Activities

Display, Display, Display!

*by Jim Brace-Thompson, Junior Activities Chair
from The AFMS Newsletter 6–7/2006*

The May issue of the AFMS Newsletter contained copies of both competitive and noncompetitive entry forms for displaying in the upcoming SFMS/AFMS Show and Convention taking place this August at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville. An entire convention show packet is also available online via the AFMS Web site (www.amfed.org), which has links that will take you to the Middle Tennessee Gem & Mineral Society show page. The deadline to submit applications for exhibit entries is July 15.

The past couple of years, we've had a real scarcity of junior exhibitors. In fact, two years ago we were unable to award the Lillian Turner Award, and last year we had just one eligible junior display. This award is thanks to the generosity of Lillian Turner of Bethesda, Maryland, who generously donated funds to support an annual \$100 bond, certificate, and mineral specimen to go to the Outstanding Junior who exhibits at the annual AFMS Show.

This year, let's do better! I encourage everyone, especially those in the SFMS who are within reasonable driving distance of this year's show, to make a concerted effort to work with kids and youth in your local clubs to encourage them to enter displays, whether competitive or noncompetitive. In addition to the Lillian Turner Award for the best display, kids entering any sort of display can earn the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America merit badge for Showmanship. But awards and merit badges aside, planning, preparing, and setting up a display and then attending a show and seeing all the other displays and meeting with those who prepared them is a great way to expand a child's horizons and to meet new and interesting people who are actively engaged with our hobby while—as always—having fun.

Editor's note: I think it would be OUTSTANDING if our Youth Section decided to make a concerted effort to enter LOTS of displays in an effort to win the Lillian Turner Award. Yes, it's too late for the 2006 show, but guess what! HGMS will be hosting the 2008 AFMS annual show right here in Houston! We will also be hosting the SCFMS annual show at the same time. You will have plenty of time to develop your displays, and when the time comes, the show will be right in your own backyard. Now what can be more convenient than that?

SCFMS President's Message*"Words from William"**by William Medford**SCFMS President**from SCFMS Newsletter 7-8/2006***It's Convention Time**

Each year as it comes time to have the SCFMS annual convention, many of us who are officers of the Federation begin to wonder what has been accomplished during our term of office. Some of us may say that we don't know of anything bad that happened, so we are lucky. A good year would then be one in which no complaints or major issues surfaced. Maybe they are correct in what they are saying, but it certainly seems that there should be more than that.

This Federation has been around for many years and has achieved many of its goals. There is the scholarship program to be proud of and other such undertakings that have been just as successful. In the early years of the Federation, there were many challenges and goals to achieve. Today it is a well-oiled machine that seems to run well with minimal need for maintenance.

But the question remains as to whether each member of the Federation staff is doing everything he or she can do to provide the best support possible to our member clubs. Also, are the member clubs utilizing the Federation staff to the fullest extent possible? This is especially true with newly organized clubs who are now joining our Federation. In some cases the Federation may have to make the first move to support a club rather than waiting for the club to ask for assistance.

Now it is convention time for the Federation and a great time to be had for those who attend. There will be a great show produced by the local club and a wonderful meeting facility is available for all the convention activities. There is much to see and do at meetings like this, and each attendee will leave the meeting with a feeling of accomplishment. Plan on attending the convention and on being a part of the decision-making process. It is a vital part of the organization.

It's Not Too Late To Stop a Bad Bill*by Ronald M. Slyter**SCFMS Conservation and Legislation**from SCFMS Newsletter 7-8/2006*

The "Paleontological Resources Protection Act" has been Referred to House Committee after being received from the Senate. The number of the bill is [S.263.RFH]. Congress has been kicking this idea around for some time now.

Some bad ideas just keep getting resurrected. It was H.R. 2416 back in September 2003 when George Loud reported on it in the A.F.M.S. Newsletter.

The name is the same, and it is basically an anti-rockhounding bill. Below I have drawn heavily on the things that George gave us in that article. I have read the latest

version of the bill, and the bad parts are all still there.

It still places severe penalties on recreational rock-hounding, permitting only “experts” to disturb public land surfaces. It allows for seizure of private vehicles, camping equipment, and anything else the government wants to grab for even minor violations.

It has a provision that at first glance seems to exempt the amateur, but when you look a little closer you can see what they give with one hand, they take away with the other. Provision 3 of Section 12 specifies that the bill does not apply to amateur collecting of rock, mineral, or invertebrate or plant fossil that is not protected under this act. You can collect invertebrate fossils but not vertebrate fossils. Some of us might have difficulty telling the difference. A small error in judgment can transform an innocent collector into a criminal. Doesn't “vertebrate” mean you could be prosecuted for picking up a shark's tooth? Also you would be prohibited from selling or trading fossils which you legally collect from Federal lands. [Section 7, provision 3].

The whole idea is bad scientifically. History shows us that most great finds originally are made by amateurs. If you stifle the rockhound, you risk never finding things that nature is constantly uncovering and then destroying by erosion. The bill ignores the amateur group's educational motivation for recovering and preserving such finds.

Again I want to give credit to George Loud for his excellent research that exposed the weaknesses of this legislation.

Please encourage your representative to vote against this bill at Your Representative, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.20515

Safety Report

*by George Browne, SCFMS Safety Chair
from SCFMS Newsletter 5-6/2006*

Sunburns and Skin Cancer

Summer is a great time for outdoor activities, but with summer we also get heat and sunshine, which can be both wonderful and dangerous. In our geographical area we get an excess of both. However for this article I want to concentrate on sunshine, or more specially on our exposure or overexposure to this danger.

It may take less time to get sunburn than you realize. Some TV stations report a Sun Intensity Index with the weather. That index is the number of minutes it takes for fair unprotected skin to redden. It is true that fair skin will burn faster than dark skin, but not by much. Usually skin damage occurs within 20 minutes of constant exposure and even a shorter time in higher elevations. Sunburns are miserable, and they can and do lead to skin cancer. Skin cancer is one of the fastest growing forms of cancer encountered today, and some forms are deadly.

How do you avoid this potential killer? By avoiding direct sun exposure to the skin. Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants (not shorts), and a hat. Use sunscreen with an SPF

of at least 15. The SPF is the Skin Protection Factor. How do you use these numbers? You start with the Sun Intensity Index or the time it takes you to burn. If you burn in 20 minutes, then that times the SPF of the sunscreen determines the maximum time the sunscreen will give protection. Example: If you burn in 20 minutes, your SPF 15 sunscreen will protect you for 300 minutes or 5 hours provided the sunscreen is not washed or rubbed off. The best advice is to reapply the sunscreen often.

Let me add something about the proper hat to wear. Skin cancer on the top of the ears is much, much more likely to occur on men than it is on women. Why? Because men often wear baseball or "give me" hats that leave the top of the ears exposed to the sun. Women's ears are more likely to be protected by their hair, or they wear wide-brim hats. So men, lose those billed caps when you are rockhounding. Wear wide-brimmed hats and use sunscreen on your ears, especially on the left ear. Why? Because men often drive with the window down looking for rocks and exposing their left ear to direct sunlight.

Enjoy summer, but protect yourself from excessive heat and exposure to the sun. For more detailed information on these subjects, go to the AFMS Web site: www.amfed.org. Click on the Safety link and look for sun-related articles. Unprotected sun exposure over time can cause cancer, which can result in death.

So be aware, take precautions, and be safe.

Your Club Needs You!

June's Jabberings

by June Harris

SCVGMS Editor

from Breccia 8/2006

(Editor's Note: This was written by June Harris, the Santa Clara Valley (California) Gem and Mineral Society Editor. She is encouraging SCVGMS members to volunteer and make a difference in their club. If you change the names, she is writing about HGMS too.)

Have you ever thought about how much time it takes to make a rock club like ours run fairly smoothly? Do you realize that there are a few people who work diligently for your benefit? There are many jobs within our club that take several hours a month to do and many others that take relatively little time to do. Presently we have just a few people doing most of the jobs, and those of us who are doing them are in desperate need of help.

Marc Mullaney (*HGMS read as Sigrid Stewart*) is currently looking for people to help with the 2007 show. Many of the jobs require no rock knowledge and only a few hours for a couple of months to do. Please step up and volunteer. The show is our main fundraiser, and it helps keep our club dues low and activities high.

Another area where you can help is by taking an officer or committee position. This would be a great time to work into a position for next year. A nominating committee is selected in September and elections are in November. If you started with the August

meeting you might be able to talk to some of the officers and committee members about their jobs and get first-hand information about the positions they hold. Most take only a few hours a month and offer you an opportunity to become more familiar with your club and its members. Burnout is a terrible thing for clubs. Please help your fellow members avoid it.

History of the HGMS Annual Show

by Scott Singleton

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Prolog

This is the final installment in a 5-part series on the show history. My apologies for the length. Despite the fact that I'm only describing five shows, it seems I've written about these events in much detail and have added a significant amount of philosophical digression to go along with the event descriptions.

- Part 1: 1948–1968 – Early Days
- Part 2: 1969–1977 – Rise to Prominence
- Part 3: 1978–1989 – On Top of the World
- Part 4: 1990–2000 – Fall From Grace
- Part 5: 2001–2005 – The Phoenix

Complete statistical information concerning show finances, attendance, and dealer figures for the period 1957–2005 can be found on graphs at the end of this article.

Erratum: In **Part 4**, I mistakenly had a heading for the 2000 show that read: “2000 – Mother’s Day (May 19-21)”. This is the correct date, however I specify in the previous paragraph that it actually represents the week *after* Mother’s Day. That week was actually worse than Mother’s Day because it was graduation week for many schools. In fact, there was a graduation ceremony upstairs in the GRB at the same time as our show on Saturday. We made an attempt to attract these graduates into our show, but they had more important things to attend to. In our post-mortem analysis of the show, our dealers were quick to point out our poor judgment in choosing the dates. These things merely added to our frustration in dealing with the GRB and contributed to the events that followed the conclusion of this show.

Part 5: 2001-2005 – The Phoenix

Introduction: The beginning of Part 5 finds a club that, in many ways, is in search of a new identity. The largest financial obligation in the club’s history—the mortgage note on the clubhouse—was paid off in 1999, thus allowing the club to breathe a little easier. With a first-rate clubhouse that was all theirs, the club now had a chance to focus on something else besides the repayment of the mortgage (and having enough money to pay the bills), which is all they were focused on during the previous decade. One obvious need was to rebuild the annual show, which had been decimated by the combined effects of our venue (who didn’t allow us to settle on a regular date for the show), competition from Intergem (who slowly worked itself into the enviable position of draining every last jewelry-dollar from Houston on an annual basis), and our

own club, which was more concerned with making as much money as possible than maintaining a healthy show in the long run.

Consider the differences in our annual show between the end of Part 3 of this history and the end of Part 4: In 1989, 83 dealers attended to 8,100 attendees (a customer-to-dealer (C/D) ratio of 98). Show profits were \$29,320 on expenses of \$39,584, translating into a profit margin of 74%. At that rate, it's no wonder the club was not worried about the prospect of paying off its horrendous mortgage balloon note in 1995. Fast forward to 2000, the dawn of the new millennium, and we find 50 dealers attending to 1804 attendees (C/D of 36). Show profits were \$7,513 on expenses of \$42,784, for a profit margin of 18%.

However, there was hope on the horizon. As described at the end of Part 4, the Board had accepted a proposal in September of 2000 to move the show from the GRB to the Humble Civic Center (HCC). This move was not without accompanying risk: The HCC was located in far north Houston and would most certainly not draw from the southern portions of the city. It was located in a small suburb and was about a mile off of the freeway, not an easily reachable locality unless one was deliberately trying to find it. It was also substantially smaller than the GRB, certainly a drawback to those still wishing for a large show. However, the Board and Show Committee felt it was plenty large enough to hold the show as it was configured in 2000.

There were also several positives associated with this venue: It was a new construction, having been completed in 1997. It also had a very nice visual presence: The exterior was a commanding white building set amongst the pines. All rooms were carpeted and contained high ceilings with good lighting. There were several rooms off to the side of the main ballroom that could be used for other events. Hallways surrounding the main ballroom on three sides were spacious enough to be used for various activities. But the main advantage of the HCC was that the management appreciated our presence and was more than willing to give us a long-term contract for the same weekend each year. This one fact was worth its weight in gold.

Club Personnel: Probably the greatest loss in the new century was the death of Dalton Prince in July of 2004 from liver cancer. Dalton served as Vice President in 1985 and 1986, President in 1987, and Past President in 1988 and 1989. He was a regular figure in our annual show for more than 20 years as the co-proprietor of Collector's Choice with his wife, Consie. You could always tell where he was, with a crowd surrounding him as he broke geodes, wearing his old, weather-beaten hat that looked like it would disintegrate on his head. Consie stopped do-



ing shows upon his death although she kept their shop adjacent to their house. She recently followed him to the afterlife in June of 2006. She is remembered for her contributions as BBG editor in 1975 and 1976, followed by SCFMS (South-Central Federation) newsletter editor and then AFMS (American Federation) newsletter editor. She also served as an HGMS director from 1984-1986.

As we are now up to the present decade in the history of the show, I feel there are some current club members who deserve special recognition as a result of service to the Society above and beyond the call of duty. These members can still be found around the club, helping out as they have done for decades and serving as an inspiration to us all:

Irene Offeman – Irene and her husband, Richard, joined the fledgling club in 1960. By 1961, Richard was President and Irene was Show Chairman. (In case anybody is counting, that was 45 years ago!) In 1968, wanting to spread knowledge about mineral and fossil ID, she formed the ID Service at our show along with Ed Pedersen. This important service to the public and our club lasted 14 years until 1983 when the responsibility was taken on by the various Sections.

In 1969, Irene and Myrt Yarbrough were instrumental in fostering the idea of special interest sections within the club. When that came to pass, she held the first paleo classes, and thus was born the Paleo Section. She has either led or has been a mentor and guiding force behind the Paleo Section during its entire existence. She still makes Paleo Section meetings when she is able to get a ride from another member.

Art Smith – Art was first tapped by Irene Offeman for mineral ID in the ID Service in 1972. He continues doing this on a yearly basis because it's what he loves doing. He has now performed this service for 34 years.

He decided to join the club after the 1973 show specifically to share his love of minerals and mineral collecting with other enthusiasts in the Mineral Section, capably led by Ed Pedersen. When Ed was transferred to Denver in 1978, others had to step up to run the Section, including Art, Ron Carman, and Steve Blyskal, who all shared terms as Section Chairman.

Soon after we moved into the new clubhouse in 1985, Art agreed to be the Librarian because the post was open. Initially we didn't have many books, and Art started donating portions of his own library to the club. Today, thanks to Art, we have a large, well-stocked and indexed library that is available for our members to use. Art continues to run the library, along with being the de facto historian and providing mentorship of the Mineral Section.

Tom Wright – Tom joined the club in 1977. By 1979 or 1980 he was teaching classes at the old clubhouse, where he had to haul his equipment down to the clubhouse and haul it away again at the conclusion of the class. His classes include chasing and repose, lost wax casting, and mold making.

Tom's involvement with the show began in 1982 when he became the Working

Exhibits Chairman for the National Show. In 1984 while he was Vice President of the club, he agreed to help run the show but found himself Show Chairman when the person who was to perform that task disappeared. He has continued to help out on Show Committees since that time, including stints as Publicity Chairman in the fall of 1996 and in 1997.

His leadership of the club began in 1983 when he resurrected a declining Lapidary Section. He was President in 1985 and 1986, Past President in 1987, President again in 1990 and 1991, and Past President in 1992. He started being Clubhouse Chairman in 1992 and has continued that post throughout most of the 90s and 2000s. You can still find him at the clubhouse on most Saturdays, helping teach others lapidary and faceting arts.

Gary Anderson – Gary joined the club in 1979. He naturally gravitated toward helping out at the shop in the old clubhouse under Tom DeHart. When we moved into the new clubhouse in 1985, Gary became the Shop Foreman. He held this post until the early 2000s when the running of the shop became a committee task. You can still find him there on most Saturdays, polishing his own agates, petrified wood, and dino bone, while helping instruct others on the proper use of the equipment.

Gary's service to the show began in 1985 when he started organizing the rental trucks needed to transport our equipment and supplies from the new clubhouse to the show. He also started laying out the electrical plans for the show and working with the venue electrician to make sure we had power at the show. This became an important task as the show rapidly expanded in the late 80s. His work with the George R. Brown Convention Center electricians in the 1990s was crucial to make sure our power needs were met.

His leadership of the club began in the early 1990s when he led the nominating committee for most of the first half of the decade. But by 1995 his luck ran out, and, finding no other candidates, the committee turned on him and coerced him to take the presidency. He was President in 1996 and 1997, Past President in 1998, President again in 1999, and Past President in 2000.

Charlie Fredregill – Charlie joined in 1985 after going to the 1984 show and seeing Tom Wright perform lost wax casting. This interested Charlie very much, and he wanted to learn how to do it. In the process, Charlie and Tom became good friends because they shared similar interests. Charlie started helping peripherally with the show in the late 1980s.

In 1990 with Tom as President, Charlie became a Board Director, and in 1991 became 1st VP, again under Tom. Also in 1991, Tom convinced Charlie to become Show Chairman, not because Charlie was experienced or had an interest in doing this, but because the Show Committee was in tatters after Ben Noble and R.C. Estes got through with it. This led to Charlie's presidency in 1992 and past presidency in 1993 and 1994. Because Charlie ran a printing business, he printed the BBG for several years, and he also printed publicity material for the show until

his retirement.

But Charlie's real love is in the lapidary arts. He has taught and continues to teach wire wrapping, lost wax casting, soldering, and cabbing. As with Tom Wright, Charlie can still be found at the club on Saturday working on his own material and teaching others.

Beverly Mace – Beverly joined in 1985. She gravitated toward the Youth Section where she helped Janelle Walker for many years until she became Youth Section Chairman in 1991. This led her to be involved in the annual show because the Youth Section has a booth there. They have games for kids, interesting educational exhibits, and the "Rock Village." She has now led the Youth Section, along with running their booth at the show, for 15 years.

In 1994 she also became the 2nd Vice President, who is the person responsible for maintaining the membership roster. Eventually, this led to her being responsible for sending out the BBG since she could make the required labels from her roster database. For many years she would give the labeled BBGs to Robert Evans to sort by zip code, fill out the required forms, and take to the bulk mail window at the Bellaire post office. But with the advent of the computer program Dazzle Express in 2001, the job became easy enough that Beverly takes care of the whole thing herself. She is now in her 12th year as 2nd VP.

Phyllis George – Phyllis joined in 1994, making her a relative "newbie." But she didn't wait long to wade into the thick of it. She volunteered to become Dealer Chairman in late 1994 and held that post through both of the "2-show" years (1995 and 1996), meaning she did four shows. She earned praise from all quarters for her professional handling of the sometimes precarious situation caused by having too many dealers and not enough attendees. She was well respected by dealers and the Show Committee alike for her diligence and honesty.

During her tenure as Dealer Chairman, another sticky situation arose, to which Phyllis, in her typically helpful manner, volunteered to help remedy: Between 1992 and 1995, the BBG had been produced by a total of six people. Sometimes it wasn't produced at all, other times it was only one or two pages. But in December 1995, the BBG was again without an editor and the club was once again desperate. Phyllis volunteered to provisionally produce it for four months while they looked for another editor. Unfortunately for her, she did such a good job at it (and actually liked it!) that everyone insisted she stay on as editor, which she did. This meant that in 1996 she arranged for dealers in two separate shows while compiling and editing 12 BBGs. Tell me that wasn't a busy time!

Under Phyllis' continued editorship, now in her 11th year, the BBG regularly wins awards for excellence in national competition. But recently the club had another desperate need, and in her usual manner, Phyllis stepped up to help. We started our Web site in 2000, but by late 2004 we were without a webmaster for the second time. By then having a Web site was a necessary evil, and it was simply not acceptable to let our Web site go down. So, despite knowing absolutely noth-

ing about Web site functionality and only a little about HTML, Phyllis volunteered to be the new webmaster in January of 2005. She immediately applied herself to learning the things she needed to know in order to accomplish the task at hand.

And guess what? In 2005 HGMS won the award for the best Web site in the SCFMS. I have no doubt that 2006 will bring similar awards. (Note: We *would* do the same thing in the AFMS if there were such a category in national competition, but I guess change comes slowly in some quarters).

These are but a few examples of club members who are doing what they can to make our club what it is today. We owe them and many others our thanks.

Changes in Show Philosophy: Because of the decline in the quality and financial results of our annual show, it was apparent some changes needed to be made. The change in venue was a good start, but there were other structural changes that were necessary in order to revive the flagging show. The list of five recommendations I delivered to the Board in June of 2000 (described at the end of Part 4) along with a discussion of how we achieved these goals is given below:

1) Fall is a better time for retail sales, but above all the date must be consistent.

In the questionnaire sent to the club in the summer of 2000, a clear preference was indicated for having a fall show. This was traditionally the time when we have had our show, stretching back to the Shamrock days. It is also a better time of year because the Christmas shopping season has the highest retail sales of the entire year. This fact becomes painfully apparent if you contact any of the convention centers in the Houston area and ask if they have any available fall dates.

So, prior to signing a contract with the HCC, there were a number of discussions concerning a date for our show. The Board and Show Committee had decided that we should go back to our traditional show date in the month of September. However, September has the additional complication that we did not want to interfere with the Denver show, traditionally the second week of September. It turned out we didn't have to worry about that being a problem—the HCC had three regular shows the first three weekends in September, including the Cat Show and the Stamp Show. So we signed an agreement to be on the 4th weekend in September.

However, this ended up severely irritating the Victoria Gem & Mineral Society which had their show on the last weekend in September, a date that alters every three or four years between the 4th weekend and 5th weekend. Because we were a much bigger show, several of their dealers, who were also our dealers, told the Victoria club that they would have to cancel out of the Victoria show if they didn't move it. This the Victoria club did, but they were not very happy about it. It has taken me several years to make up this rift with them, but I believe I have done that by helping them with the success of their show and by giving presentations at their club meetings.

2) We need quality guidelines for dealer acceptance and need to be governed by the all-important customer-to-dealer ratio. Since my initiation into the Show

Committee was via the Dealer Chairman position, I had first-hand experience with the complaints of our dealers. Thus, during my first year in this position, it was intuitively obvious that some drastic measures had to be taken in order to restore dealer confidence. After all, the first basic tenant of show production is that if your primary exhibitors are not happy, your show will suffer. Thus, my plan was to take some positive measures to deal with dealer dissatisfaction. At first, the only thing this could entail was being responsive to dealer needs and complaints and by being friendly to them. During this period I got to know most of our dealers on a first name basis. This friendship has transcended time, so that these dealers are comfortable with our show and our leadership.

However, warm and fuzzy feelings can be taken only so far, and it was plainly obvious more work needed to be done. My strategy for taking care of our dealers was a simple one: *make the show successful and our dealers would be happy*. This may be an obvious strategy, but my real objective was actually more sinister—to return to the “glory days” where we had a full show with dealers on a waiting list to get in. Why did I want to do this? Because it would make the Dealer Chairman’s job a lot easier. As it stood in 2000, it was impossible to get dealers to sign up because they really had no desire to participate in a lukewarm show. Thus, a very large effort had to be put into calling a large number of dealers just to make our numbers. In addition, at that time dealers were supposed to send half of their payment with their contracts and then the second half about three months prior to the show. This rarely happened, and it was hopeless to try to enforce it when dealers were lackadaisical about being in our show in the first place. As far as I was concerned, this attitude had to change. And it wouldn’t change unless the show itself changed.

Following this chain of logic, presuming the show was made successful once again, and presuming as a result we had plenty of dealers to choose from, then it follows that there needed to be guidelines on what kind and how many dealers we would accept. While this may sound elementary, these things were completely absent in the last half of the 1990s. (Want an example? The Houston Chronicle regularly had a table at our show. When I asked why, I was told that their money was as good as anybody else’s). We have to go back to the 1980s and the Dealer Selection Committee to see these principles in action.

So, taking a cue from our “forefathers” in the 1980s, the new Show Committees in the early 2000s worked on guidelines concerning the number and types of dealers we wanted in our show. These guidelines went through some modification in the first few years at the HCC as we figured out what worked with our new customer base and what didn’t. For instance, the heritage we were left with from the GRB days consisted of a large number of jewelry dealers. After our first show at the HCC in 2001, which as expected wasn’t well attended, the majority of complaints were from jewelry dealers. Thus, our first “structural modification” of the dealer mix was to eliminate some of them and replace them with other types of dealers. Further, we observed that high-end jewelry and “mall store” type jewelry vendors didn’t fit well in our show, and so that class of dealer was eliminated from our mix.

I haven't written much about dealer numbers because we soon realized that we could only fit about 40 dealers into the main ballroom of the HCC, thus muting those still numerous voices that apparently never will stop calling for maximum numbers of dealers at all costs. Make no mistake—those voices were still in the club in the early 2000s. For these people, the results of our shows stretching back to 1992 mattered not; to them dealers equaled money and to have only 40 dealers meant throwing away good money. My only comment is that this is precisely the attitude that got us in this predicament in the first place.

- 3) **We need to attract kids.** Back in the days of Carleton Reid, we used to have busloads of kids come to the show on Friday. Carleton was the club historian and also had an avid interest in educating kids about geology and rocks. He would visit schools, Scouts, and youth clubs of all sorts, giving presentations. He would also pass out fliers to our show and invite the teachers to bring their kids to learn more about rockhounding and the lapidary arts. Not surprisingly, we had a lot of kids attending on Friday in those days, and also not surprisingly, attendance at those shows regularly surpassed 8,000. But with Carleton's passing in the mid-1980s, nobody emerged to replace him and so the number of kids attending our show fell into a long, slow decline. In the 1990s, the job of trying to attract kids fell to Youth Group Chairperson Beverly Mace who would send out a large number of letters to schools inviting them to our show. But she readily admits this was not adequate and that something more needed to be done. This was clearly demonstrated when a total of 121 people attended on Friday of the dismal Graduation Day show in 2000.

The question may legitimately be asked: *Why should we expend effort trying to get kids to our show? After all, they generate almost no ticket income (kids' tickets were 50 cents to a dollar in the 1990s), and they don't spend money with our dealers.* The answer to this question is two-fold.

- a. For those bottom-line type of folks, kids come with parents who do generate ticket income and who do spend money with dealers. (Besides, contrary to this common misconception, in the last few years we have found that kids do have money, and they do spend it with our dealers. Just ask any of our dealers who carry kids' items.) If the kids come on Friday with their schools, many of them go home and tell their parents about the show (i.e. free publicity), and many come back on the weekend. This is particularly true if the show is interesting and has things to attract kids and families.
- b. However, the real reason we should cater to kids lies in the heart of our charter and our mission statement. The HGMS Web site identifies us as "a not-for-profit organization dedicated to study in the areas of earth science and related fields and arts. A major focus of the HGMS is education." Inside the front cover of the BBG it says that "the objectives of this Society are to promote the advancement of the knowledge and practice of the arts and sciences associated with...." and then it goes on to list a large number of things we do. The fact is that any society or club that does not somehow attract new members, particu-

larly younger ones, is most likely in a slow death spiral which will culminate in its own extinction.

Thus, given the acceptance of the two points above by the new Show Committee, it was readily apparent that some drastic changes were needed. One of the things I did during my first two years as Dealer Chairman was to visit the regional shows in this part of the state. These visits told me a great deal about how other clubs construct their shows. Some of these shows were successful, and I borrowed ideas from them. Some were plainly not successful, and thus I tried not to repeat their mistakes.

One of the success stories was the kids' program at the Victoria show. A few of their club members held positions within the Victoria ISD, and thus knew what it took to attract school kids to a show on Friday. I had a long talk with these people at their show and followed this up with e-mail communications where they sent me their schedule for contacting the VISD in the months prior to the show and the letters they sent to the teachers.

Based on this, we formed a new committee within the Show Committee called simply the Show Education Committee. I sought teachers and ex-teachers within our club to staff this committee because I knew we needed some inside knowledge of how teachers operate and what it would take to attract them to our show. Thus, in 2001 the committee consisted of Lexy Bieniek, Holly Smith, and Chris Peek, who were all teachers, Beverly Mace, who was the previous Show Education Committee Chairman, and me. Our first task was to create an earth science program for teachers who visited our show with their students. We called this School Daze. The main component of School Daze was an age-appropriate scavenger hunt that would be drawn from questions submitted by interested dealers (they all were sent a form to return with their questions) and by our demonstrators and Section booths.

To promote School Daze, we developed a flier to be sent out to schools telling them of our program. We obtained the regional databases of schools and targeted 3rd and 5th grades, which have TEKS requirements in earth science. We also attended education conferences where we developed a sign-up list of teachers interested in earth science. And finally, we also reached out to the home school community by getting on their bulletin boards, advertising in their newsletters, and attending their education conferences.

The results have been nothing short of astounding. We built an educational program from scratch, spending our first year wondering if anybody would come and facing resistance from school administrators who said we were nothing but a retail show. This morphed completely by 2004, when our focus shifted to worrying about how we were going to manage the huge crowds of kids that packed the place on Friday.

- 4) **We need to stifle the rotating Show Committee membership problem.** In Part 3 of this history, I recounted the unfortunate episode in 1984 that unceremoniously shoved Tom Wright into his first term as Show Chairman, and the consequent

change in the bylaws dictating that the purpose of the Assistant Show Chairman was to learn the ropes so that he or she could be Show Chairman the following year. There were periods in the next two decades when this worked fine, such as 1991–1993 which smoothly rotated such show chairmen as Charlie Fredregill, Bill Butler, and John Emerson. However in many other years, its legacy was not so bright. Ron Carman ended up as Show Chairman in 1986, 1988, and 1989 because nobody else could be found. Ron Talhelm forged through the spring and fall shows of 1995 and the fall show of 1996 for similar reasons. During many years there were no Assistant Show Chairmen until late in the year, and so the Show Chairmen ended up doing a ton of work.

This is not how things are supposed to go. It creates an endless cycle of over-worked Show Chairmen and a dearth of volunteers to take some of that load off of them because they're afraid that the same calamity will befall them the following year. This leads to the tendency for "relearning the wheel" as new Show Committees take office after previous Show Committees have flown the coop. Anybody with a basic knowledge of business management will readily see that this is a very poor way to do business.

So, as I saw it in 2000, the first thing that had to be done is to undo what had been done in 1985. In my opinion, the Assistant Show Chairman needed to be someone who would help take the load off the Show Chairman without having to feel obligated to be Show Chairman the following year, in the same way that a company Vice President takes the load off of the President. This was accomplished in a bylaw revision effort during Elizabeth Fisher's term as President in 2000. But old habits die hard, and the Board ended up having to further revise the bylaw language in 2005 to specify more clearly how the Show Chairman and Assistant Show Chairman are selected each year.

The next task in this transition will take some time—convincing the club membership that the Assistant Show Chairman is really supposed to do work and not just be a warm body waiting to slide over to the Show Chairman's seat the following year.

- 5) **We need to have an attention-grabbing headliner exhibit for the show.** This is all part of the general philosophy that a show is supposed to be interesting (as was discussed in the epilog of Part 4 of this history). In that epilog, I made the case that shows are made interesting by having activities and attractions other than (and in addition to) retail dealers. It is true that people attend rock shows to see rocks. But I am striving to move beyond that and enable (for instance) families to come and enjoy the show even if only some of the family are rockhounds. The same goes for school groups, or for two friends who get together and decide to come to the show but only one is a rockhound.

But the heading of this section refers to a specific application of this philosophy—the "hook," as advertising people call it. In today's media-saturated world, it is very difficult to get through the background clutter and get your message to your target audience. Thus, advertising people usually rely on a single item or event that

they feel will attract someone's attention for the 3-5 seconds necessary to get the message through. If the "hook" has piqued their interest enough, they will spend more time digesting the rest of the information in the advertisement. If not, they're gone.

I felt strongly that we needed such a hook in our show. Strongly enough that I hoped to go to lengths that most other shows would not go—give my headliner and primary supporting attractions free entry into the show. The reason this was such a sticky point is because some of these demonstrators also had stock they were permitted to sell. Thus, because of this unusual (and some would call very gracious) arrangement, it was apparent that official Board approval of this technique would be required. This was done in August of 2002 after considerable discussion among the Board.

The primary headliner was **Dino World**. I met George Blasing at the Austin show and had some discussions with him about attending our show as a dealer. However his T. rex skull replica ("Stan"), along with his numerous other dino replicas, were very appealing, and I started thinking about creating a full-blown promotion centered on Stan. George is also very promotion-conscious, and he readily agreed to my plan. This has proven to be a very smart move as George and Stan created the "branding" we needed. This branding has become so well-entrenched that we decided to move forward with a major expansion of Dino World's space and attractions in 2005. I'll describe this in more detail in the section dealing with that show year.

Our secondary headliner was **John Fischner's Dreamstar Productions**. John has been a known quantity to our show dating from the late 1980s. He sculpts dino models of varying sizes and works on them at the show. It was a perfect match to compliment Dino World and Stan.

2001, Our First Year at the HCC: Preparations for this show started promptly following the Board's decision to move to the HCC in September of 2000. The Board wanted a Show Chairman to spearhead efforts for the new show. I didn't think I was ready for Show Chairmanship so I turned down their offer. In retrospect I probably was ready, but because I remember my feelings of doubt, I can fully understand when people we now ask turn us down because *they* think *they* are not ready for the position.

In any event, I offered to be Assistant Show Chairman, and John Moffitt volunteered to be Show Chairman. Since John came from outside the Show Committee, he had a lot of fresh and different ideas about things. His main contribution was helping to revamp the publicity effort (described below). Unfortunately, his personality takes some getting used to, and turned out to be too much of a shock for the existing Show Committee, most of whom simply left. So our first task was to repopulate the committee with fresh bodies. We used the questionnaire the Board had sent out that summer for this purpose. One of the questions on that form asked if the respondent was willing to help with the Show Committee, and I called all those answering affirmative. Through that process, I met many club members that I had not known before, creating relationships that survive to this day.

John jumped right into it and started shaking things up immediately. His first move was to call the first Show Committee meeting at the house of a new member named John Lind on Tuesday, September 12, 2000. This was a refreshing change of pace and John certainly didn't disappoint at the meeting when he gave one of his rousing speeches about new beginnings and how we all need to pull together.

We followed that with a budget presentation to the Board on October 3. Many of the items were estimates since this was our first year at the HCC. But we decided to push the envelope with publicity and asked for \$13,000. The Board had no problem with that, but didn't believe our estimate of \$15,000 in ticket income and cut us back to \$13,000. Along with a few other changes, the Board approved our budget. It called for \$31,600 in expenses and \$10,600 in profit, which was a profit margin of 33%. This alone was good news, as it was a drop of about 25% in expenses from the GRB and triple the profit margin.

New Floor Plan: There were many things to be taken care of as soon as possible. Among the top items was to completely revamp the floor plan. For this I solicited the help of the HCC management to supply me with examples of floor plans for other events at their facility. These I supplied to Ron Talhelm who graciously had his draftsman friend at Freeman Decorating work up a rough draft for our use. Over the ensuing several months, we revised this original draft and came to a consensus as to how we wanted to use our available floor space. Part of this effort included a walkthrough at the HCC on Saturday morning, January 13, 2001. Fifteen people attended, and we measured out the hallways and special events rooms, trying to envision how the different section booths would fit.

Our plan basically codified our philosophy on the purpose and practice of the "new" show. The main tenant of this philosophy was that we wanted our show to be an educational show (in contrast with Intergem, which is a dealer show). In line with this philosophy, the retail dealers occupied the main ballroom of the HCC, and our educational activities surrounded the main ballroom in the three hallways as well as in the smaller, auxiliary rooms. Our educational features included our own demo area (staffed by the Lapidary Section and Faceting Section), Mineral Section booth and fluorescent mineral enclosure, Paleo



Figure 1: Dino World's Stan the T. rex. In the foreground is George Blasing, owner of Dino World.

Section booth, Youth Section activities, Swap Area, and case exhibits. Non-HGMS educational features included HMNS, the Archaeological Society, Dino World with Stan the T. rex (Figure 1), and Dreamstar. Rounding out the usage of available floor space was the concession area and our own Hospitality area.

In addition, one meeting room each was used for a video display room and a lecture room. These activities were headed by Terry Proctor. Terry did a lot of work putting together a list of speakers and videos, and he had signs printed and put up at the entrance of the show and in front of the rooms holding these activities. Unfortunately, Terry didn't get his program put together early enough to make use of John Moffitt's publicity, and as a consequence, nobody entering the show knew these events would be taking place. In addition, we discovered that the hallway containing the meeting rooms was not traveled by most people as they circulated through the show. These factors conspired to doom Terry's programs to a slim audience. We cancelled programs altogether in 2002.

Education: Other than the floor plan, the three main show activities that needed to be kicked off ASAP were publicity, dealer contracts, and education. As I mentioned, the Show Education Committee was new in 2001. This committee met in the fall of 2000 with the objective of putting together an educational program that would be taken seriously by teachers looking for field trips. This committee put in a lot of work from the fall of 2000 until the show in September of 2001 to create a valid educational program where none existed previously.

Dealers: The other two critical functions (publicity and dealer contracts) were initiated as soon as the Board approved our budget. Dealer contracts went out in December. I've already described the changes in methodology for dealing with our dealers (no pun intended), and I was fully aware that many would simply not be listening to me or would not believe me when I told them of these changes. But our new venue gave me the perfect opportunity. The new plan consisted of the Show Committee deciding which dealers they wanted in the show and me sending contracts to those dealers. We would have a reserve list to choose from should dealers within the first group not accept our invitation. This first group had three months to accept. If they did not return a contract, they got a warning letter and another month to respond. If they did not respond, they would be eliminated from the dealer mix and a new dealer chosen to replace them.

Now, those of you who have been following my discourse in this series of historical articles will recognize that this was not normal practice during most of the 1990s. And you can bet that our dealers would also know this. However, I was serious, and a few dealers found this out when they returned their contracts sometime during the summer, months past the due date. Their contracts and checks were returned to them along with a letter explaining why they were being returned. Those dealers were then put on the reserve list. In all of this, I was counting on one major truth: Dealers all talk to each other and tend to know exactly what has happened to other dealers. My actions were intended to be a warning, and they definitely achieved the desired effect. Even though results of our first year at the HCC were not that good, dealers all knew that if they wanted to remain in the show, they needed to abide by the rules and help us make our show the best it could possibly be.

Publicity: Publicity issues were a major component of Show Committee meetings all through the year, including a few separate Publicity Committee meetings. This was the primary area in which John Moffitt concentrated his efforts. He led a revamped Publicity Committee that consisted of nine people, and he redesigned all of our show publicity materials. The color of all fliers was changed to canary yellow, and the motif was a bas-relief image of a T. rex skull that John “borrowed” from the Black Hills Institute (Figure 2). New to the mix was a business card for the show, similar to the club’s business card except that it too was canary yellow. For an extra dab of promotion, John had a bunch of refrigerator magnets made from the show business card design so that people wouldn’t forget when the show was.

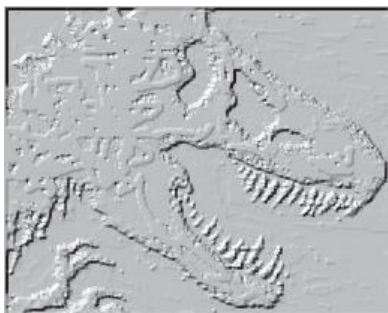


Figure 2: Bas-relief dino head used for 2001 publicity

Perhaps the greatest change was a redesigned postcard. Unlike the other printed fliers, the postcard was kept white with black print. John chose a drawing of a spiny trilobite as the picture on the front (Figure 3). Striking it definitely was, and draw attention it certainly did. Most people were complimentary; however, staunch hobby elements having little interest in paleo-related items registered the most disapproval. We didn’t endear ourselves with the faceting crowd, and the Houston Bead Society refused to send out any of the postcards delivered to them—they didn’t want anything to do with a fossil cockroach.

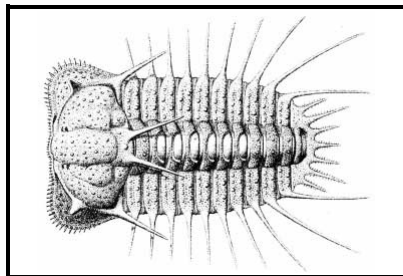


Figure 3: 2001 trilobite postcard

Major expenditures within the publicity budget were limited to the Houston Chronicle, totaling about \$3,300. The total publicity expenditure was about \$7,650, which generated some grumbling because we had been approved for \$13,000 in publicity. The way John looked at it, we were way under budget, which was good.

In 2002, Publicity Chairman Jill Rowlands’ analysis of ticket stub data for the 2001 show found that friends, club members, local papers, fliers, and postcard mail outs had the best returns and were the most economical for their expense. The Chronicle Zest and radio advertising were dismal in their returns, and her recommendation was to scrap them.

Run-up to Show: As an extension of the publicity effort, the Show Committee planned several events designed to elicit participation among the club membership. The first was the postcard labeling event on August 19 where Jill Rowlands cooked spaghetti for the crowd of assembled club members who offered their label-sticking services.

About 40 people attended and, as a result, the labeling only took an hour or so. The spaghetti was enjoyed by all.

The next event was the Pre-Show Pizza Party and Auction on September 8 hosted by our newest committee member, Hospitality Chairperson Paula Rutledge. Paula had joined just a week or two before. A good time was had by about 50 club members and family, and several hundred dollars was raised.

Paula wasted no time tackling our greatest unfilled need—that of Hospitality Chairperson. The HCC had no problem with us setting up a room to serve refreshments to our volunteers and vendors. So, Paula proceeded to do just that, and the results of her efforts earned her tremendous praise by anybody who set foot in her Hospitality room. Over 1000 sodas, 340 bottles of water, 30 dozen donuts, and uncounted pots of coffee were dispensed. In addition, the Rolling Rock meeting on Sunday morning and the KFC Survivor Dinner on Sunday evening at the clubhouse were the jurisdiction of the Hospitality Committee. Her contribution went a long way toward making our volunteers and vendors feel that they were appreciated.

And speaking of appreciation, another component of our new show was the Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Saturday night of the show. The event was hosted by the HGMS Board of Directors, who all hammed it up by dressing in cowboy attire and served a dinner of Luther's BBQ. Paula had opened up all of the meeting rooms and had tables and chairs set up, which was fortunate because this dinner attracted somewhere around 130 people! In the start of what has become an annual tradition, George Blasing of Dino World gave the presentation. For those of you who have heard George talk, you know it was an entertaining time.

Postscript: Since it was our first year at the HCC, nobody expected us to have a stellar bottom line. It's a known fact that changes in venue and date result in a confused customer base, many of whom are not likely to find the show or know the date. Attendance for the 2001 show was 2481, which includes 637 kids, teachers, and chaperones who came for the School Daze earth science program on Friday. We didn't come close to making our ticket budget numbers, but Show Education Chairman Lexy Bieniek was certainly happy that we had a decent turnout of kids.

Profits from this show were actually quite good, but this is entirely because John's stated goal was to come in as far below the expense budget as possible. This he did—expenses were budgeted to be \$31,600 but were actually \$25,514, thus leading to a profit of \$14,972, \$4,000 higher than budget. The Board certainly appreciated this, but the Show Committee was not happy about the lack of publicity.

In actuality, our epitaph for the 2001 show was written by another event completely out of our control—9/11. A mere two weeks before our show, probably the most defining moment in recent memory transformed the American public. In the weeks after this tragic event, it was not realistic to expect the public to be thinking about going out to a gem show to spend money. And those who did found themselves looking upward at the passing of each airliner on its landing approach to George Bush Intercontinental Airport.

But we did what we could with what we were given. Decorations Chairpersons Richard and Wanda Carter came up with the great idea of buying red, white, and blue ribbons and bunting material to wrap the tables with. We kept the normal white coverings with blue drape, but strung the patriotic bunting on the front of the tables. Richard and Wanda also had numerous patriotic bumper stickers and flags that were put everywhere they could. The Information Booth was completely decked out in patriotic symbols.

Many people told us they appreciated our efforts to show solidarity with those our country lost.

2002 – HCC Show #2: While on the one hand a vast majority of club members as well as the attending public were very enthusiastic about the new venue, make no mistake that there were a whole lot of bugs to work out. This was my number one goal as the 2002 Show Chairman. Assisting in this effort was new Publicity Chairman Jill Rowlands along with a Publicity Committee consisting of seven people, most holding over from 2001. Most of the Show Committee were veterans of the 2001 show.

The first task was for all committee heads to submit their reports, including expense numbers and recommendations for changes. We then tabulated these recommendations along with those received from other club members and our vendors.

Property: The laundry list was quite extensive. Our dealers were complimentary but not shy about letting us know how we could improve the show. High on their list were the tables and drapes. We had our property vendor go with 8-foot drapes behind each dealer booth, similar to trade shows, but our vendors were used to a more open floor plan where they could see across the entire show. Thus we killed the 8-foot drapes but kept the 8-foot piping from which the drapes had hung so we could hang dealer signs. We went with a 3-foot drape to separate the back-to-back dealer tables. The property vendor was another problem. He took a long time to set up on Thursday morning and didn't have enough 8-foot tables to satisfy our demand. Without telling us, they completed our table order with 6-foot tables, making us look very bad to our vendors. Needless to say, the 2001 property vendor was axed, and a new one was selected for the 2002 show.

In addition, the table layout was changed to incorporate four wall booths, two on either side of the ballroom, five tables long. This eliminated one row of dealers and meant that we went from 44 dealers to 40 dealers. But this was necessary because our vendors were (rightly) insistent that we configure them with the required 10-foot deep booths

A related subject was traffic flow. We noted in the 2001 show that most people went straight into the main ballroom (where the retail show was held) and rarely went out the side hallways where the case exhibits and entry to the special events room were. This room held the Youth Section and the Swap Area. We needed to direct people into the other parts of the show, so the idea was to make a large number of signs directing traffic to the different activities. Decorations Chairpersons Richard and Wanda Carter had them made using heavy poster board covered with plastic lamination. These signs have served us well through the years and are still in use.

Publicity: Also high on the list of complaints was that we did not have enough publicity about our new show. Several people gave recommendations on ways to diversify our publicity offerings. Publicity Chairman Jill Rowlands undertook a sustained campaign to get show announcements or PSAs (public service announcements)



Figure 4: 2002 Information Booth. Notice the patriotic bunting from the 2001 show. From left to right are Harry and Shirley Dieckman, John Linder, and Elizabeth Sheehy. Woman to right is unidentified.

in a large number of print publications. Meanwhile, others on the committee were charged with community contacts, such as colleges, schools, businesses, and other related organizations such as HMNS and the Houston Geological Society. Yet another concept was to engage in outreach via other shows and conferences. This idea overlapped considerably with the Education Committee which was doing the same thing. Nonetheless, out of this concept came an organized participation in events such as the 4-time-per-year Intergem show, the Clear Lake G&MS show, the one and only occurrence of the Galveston G&MS show, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists conference (which was in the GRB in 2002), the bi-yearly MATS conference (our local science teachers organization), and two different home school conferences.

Printed publicity material was also reviewed by this committee. They decided that the pad fliers and business cards were good ideas and should be kept. Both were redesigned, with the bas-relief dino head being replaced by a photo image of Stan's skull with the background blanked-out (Jill's artwork). John Moffitt's text-based pad front was replaced with the current design of information snippets.

The full page flier and postcard underwent major revision. Jill kept the white postcard idea from 2001 but redesigned the front so that it contained only text and the HGMS emblem. The only picture was on the back, and it was the Stan head that adorned our pad flier. We spent most of the year discussing the page flier. Initial designs were all rejected. Eventually, Elizabeth Sheehy elicited the support of her sister, Jennifer, who worked at a printing company. She used her art layout designer to construct the page flier that still survives today. It uses a picture of John Fischner's T. rex model (with the background stripped away), the map of our show locality that resides on the back of our pad flier, and bulleted show information. Jennifer was even able to print it at her

shop, in color, and using offset printing on high gloss paper. It was a truly outstanding flier, and the best part is that she was able to print batches of a few hundred at a time for free! (We otherwise would never have been able to afford that quality).

For the large expenditures, Jill advertised in the Chronicle Zest section (2" x 4" ads for \$2,352), and the northern coverage area for the Observer Newspapers (3" x 6" ads for \$2,270). In what was one of the greatest achievements of Jill's tenure, she convinced the Observer to run a headliner article on $\frac{3}{4}$ of the front page of their Diversions section (for local happenings) on Wednesday, September 18. They ran a huge image of John Fischner's T. rex model from our flier and a picture of John Moffitt sticking his head in Stan's jaws (from the 2001 show). This single article was worth its weight in gold and resulted in the "local paper" category ranking 4th in the list of primary reasons people attended the show (behind friends, word of mouth, and the postcard).

Against her better instincts, the Publicity Committee also convinced Jill to spend \$2,000 on radio advertising with Paul Wishnow's Sunday morning radio program on KPRC (the "Antique Show"). Paul had been around our show for a few years and had even broadcast outside our show once at the GRB. He had approached us with an offer to do an entire package of paid advertising for the weeks leading up to the show, as well as a guest appearance on his show the week prior to our show. I was chosen as the person to do the live broadcast. Jill prepped me with an appropriate list of questions that we turned over to Paul as a go-by list. He had several spots for me during the program and even invited people to call in with questions. Our interaction went well, and I dutifully recited the necessary interesting facts about our show, but it didn't seem to me that his Sunday morning audience of antique aficionados was too interested in our club or show or rockhounding in general. When the ticket stub data was tabulated, a total of 20 people said they came because of radio advertising. This didn't turn out to be the best usage of our publicity funds, so needless to say, it wasn't repeated.

Dealers: Even though the 2001 show was not well attended, the Show Committee rigorously adhered to its philosophy on dealers. Before sending out any contracts, the 2002 Show Committee reviewed the list of current dealers and the list of dealers on our waiting list (including those who missed the 2001 show). Our first task was to change the dealer mix. There were too many jewelry dealers, a fact that was driven home by the overwhelming concentration of dissatisfied dealers being those who dealt primarily in jewelry. We thus decided not to invite five of them back (although it must be noted that several of them probably weren't coming back anyway). We chose five mineral and fossil dealers to replace them and sent out contracts. We then agreed on the top dealers in the waiting list, so that these dealers could have contracts sent to them as soon as the waiting period passed for the first group of dealers.

Education: This committee matured significantly in 2002. We tabulated the results and recommendations of the first year and tried to overcome the difficulties we faced in developing a program that would be taken seriously by the education community. The maturing of the HGMS Web site (more on that below) allowed us to move the

registration online, and our flier and postcard were altered to announce this fact. We continued attending education conferences, passing out fliers, and signing up teachers who were interested in our program.

We held meetings in the fall of 2001 and in 2002 to work out the details of this growing program. One of the things we promoted was Art Smith's School Sets (described below). We took photos of the rock sets and created a registration flier which included these photos. This flier was sent to the teachers in our database.

Another activity we promoted was the Dino Dig. This was the brainchild of Show Education Chairperson Lexy Bieniek, who had used it in other education activities. The idea was to encase various fossils or plastic dinosaurs in a concrete/sand mix and let the kids chip these items out. Over the years, we've tinkered with the concrete mix (mostly to soften it up) and the items to put into the mix (we found that Cretaceous carbonate fossils just break up rather than extract cleanly from the mix, so we now use plastic dinos exclusively). But the fact remains that this activity has become one of the mainstays of our youth activities. Anybody who has gone out to the Dino Dig when kids are working can attest to the enthusiasm these kids exhibit when given the opportunity to do some real "excavation."

The Dino Dig was actually used in 2001 on a small scale. We didn't envision it being a large draw, so it was put in the wide hallway between the retail show and the Hospitality room on the west side of the HCC. But it turned out to be a big success, and the constant whacking of chisel against concrete sent the Hospitality folks up the wall. So in 2002 we moved it to the east hallway between the retail show and the special events room that held the Youth Section booth and the Swap Area. While this was more successful than having it in the east hallway, it nonetheless continued growing in size so we had to make yet another change of location in 2003.

The "Rock Set" Issue: In the early years of the School Daze program, we realized that we needed attractions that would entice teachers to come with their classes because it was well known that school funding was continually being cut. The scavenger hunts were the centerpiece of the program, and we actively promoted them as fulfilling TEKS requirements. In the end I think this is what has made the program a success, but in 2001 and 2002 we felt we needed every enticement possible to get teachers to come to the show on Friday. I went out and purchased a large number of polished carnelian pebbles to be used as giveaways to each kid attending the program. In addition, we promoted Art Smith's School Sets as being available to teachers who brought their classes. This actually proved to be quite a draw because teachers do not normally have such a resource available to them.

But it turned out that the devil was in the details. We had first discussed this idea with Art in early 2000 and were told of the different kinds of sets that were available and the rules for their use (that they needed to be signed out by teachers). The program as originally constructed envisioned a club member going out to give a talk in a classroom and then leaving a rock set behind. But that was no longer happening very much because this relied on retired club members who had an interest in this area, and those kinds of people were always in short supply. So we offered to be an outlet for these

sets because they really didn't have much exposure to the outside world. This was fine only to a limited degree because Art alone produced these sets.

We had already started off on the wrong foot by giving out 13 sets to teachers in our 2001 School Daze program *and not getting the required teacher sign-out forms completed*. These forms are the primary evidence Art has to demonstrate to Conoco that their grant is being used for the purposes for which it was intended. So we corrected that problem in 2002 but used between 20–30 sets at the show (due to the increased traffic of teachers and students). Combined with that, Show Education Committee Chairman Lexy Bieniek was also promoting these sets when she gave workshops to science teachers. The combined effect produced a substantial increase in demand for these sets that was beyond Art's ability to produce. Thus, we stripped his shelves bare in the fall of 2002, at which point he wisely proclaimed that either the Show Education Committee had to quit using them all up, or he would quit making the sets.

A solution to the problem was worked out in 2003 which consisted of making a separate, smaller set for the show, while continuing to make the normal sets for teachers coming by the club to sign them out. In hindsight, this was a very wise decision because the School Daze program has continued to grow, and our demand for sets has risen accordingly. And in reality, the teachers attending our School Daze program tend not to need the sophisticated sets that Art was making anyway. They just need a simple collection that they can take back and use to further teach their students about rocks and minerals.

Scout Geology Merit Badge Program: Several members of the 2002 Show Education Committee also had some experience with Scout programs (Lexy Bieniek, Ephriam Dickson, and Joan Riley). At the kick-off Show Education Committee organizing meeting in the fall of 2001, the idea was broached to have a Scout Merit Badge program on the weekend to compliment the School Daze program on Friday. The Committee was very enthusiastic about this idea. Thus Ephriam moved to the new Scout Committee, and we elicited the support of David Temple, who worked with Ephriam at the HMNS, Mike Bieniek, who ran the Scout store at Camp Strake in Conroe, and Mike Reves, who ran the Scout program at the Clear Lake



Figure 5: Boy Scouts mobbing the Paleo Booth at the 2002 show. Front to back in booth are George Wolf, Clay Keiffer, and Chris Peek.

G&MS show.

This panel of experts formulated a program that was put into effect for the 2002 show. We decided to pattern the program after the Weeblos requirements, since they were less rigorous than those of the Boy Scouts but nonetheless would satisfy all Scout types while providing partial fulfillment of the Boy Scout requirements. It consisted of nine stations with the committee running three stations and the remaining six being spread throughout the remainder of the show. The three stations we taught were (1) general geology, including rock types, (2) weathering and erosion, and (3) earth processes, including earthquakes and volcanoes.

From its very start this has been a popular program. Despite our initial worries, we have never had any problems eliciting registrants to take the program. Our panel of experts recommended appropriate publicity outlets including the Boy Scout *Scouter* magazine and the Girl Scout *Golden Link* magazine. Ephriam and David created a full-page flier that we printed off by the hundreds to put in Scout shops and distributed at Scout events and meetings. As a result, in 2002 we had over 300 Scouts go through the program. Through the years this number has steadily grown as the program went through the maturing process that the School Daze program was already going through.

Volunteer Coordination: This was an excellent idea whose origin is entirely attributable to Jill Rowlands. As the show grew in sophistication, it was apparent that our volunteer needs were also growing. In the past, there apparently was no efficient or organized method to get volunteers for the show. (I'm sure there was one in the past, but this knowledge and methodology had since passed away by the time I came on the scene). We could no longer afford to let this happen because we had too many staffing needs. So Jill proposed a new Show Committee position called Volunteer Coordination and served as its first chairperson.

The task of this committee was first to tabulate the volunteer needs of the various show functions and then to go out and fill those needs. The methods used were the traditional ones that relied on volunteer sign-ups at club functions, but also on an active phone calling campaign since it's well known that typically only the same few people will willingly volunteer to write their names down on a list that's passed around each year.

While it is true that the first year of anything is usually far from flawless, and this was certainly true here, this new position was instrumental in getting volunteers for places where we had lots of difficulty in the past. It was obvious that we not only needed to keep this as a regular committee on the Show Committee, but we also needed to expand it.

Web site: The Show Committee first started making use of our Web site during the 2001 show, but by 2002 we had a new webmaster (Jeanean Slamen) who significantly expanded the Web site and gave it most of its current functionality. By that time I was already pushing to have an active Show presence on our site and worked closely with Jeanean to make that a reality. I wrote much of the text, and Jeanean assembled it into

a pleasing but informative Web page.

Having a capable webmaster such as Jeanean meant that we could start to think about utilizing the Web to its fullest capability, and thus create an additional source of publicity about our club, its activities, and about the show. We started listing the Web site on all of our show publicity and referring to it for further information. From this point onward, the Web site started being THE place for the public to go in order to find show information.

In addition, the Show Education Committee moved the registration forms for the School Daze program onto the new Education Page and rapidly expanded it under the philosophy that our club was an educational organization and had a lot of resources to share with the community. The idea was to create a Web-based earth science resource for teachers or interested individuals. This enhancement to our Web site went a long way toward convincing the general public that the show's educational programs were to be taken seriously.

It's Showtime: As was becoming custom, the first event of the show run-up was the postcard labeling event on August 18, where about 50 people made quick work of the piles of labels that Grand Label Master Beverly Mace had carefully laid out. For the second year in a row, they were then treated to a scrumptious spaghetti dish made by Jill Rowlands. Following that was the customary Pre-Show Pizza Party on September 7, attended by about 50 people.

New for 2002 was the venue for the September General Meeting. David Temple pushed through the idea to have this meeting at the HCC on the Thursday night of the show, which was two days after it would normally have been held. It was combined with the annual Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and George Blasing's customary presentation. Reviews were mixed about the success of this idea. Many contended that it was an invigorating change for the meeting and was even accompanied by a dinner. Others said it was too far to go for an evening meeting (the regular attendees to the General Meeting apparently all come from the southeast side of town).

The show itself was considered a rousing success by all involved. Attendance jumped by a factor of two from the previous year to 5,485. Paid ticket attendees were about 2,400, thus allowing us to almost exactly match our budgeted ticket income of \$10,000. Making up the bulk of the unpaid remainder were kids who attended the School Daze program, totaling 2,387, a whopping increase from the year previous (667). Obviously, our message got out to the educational community, and we were being taken seriously. As an added benefit, our efforts to reach the home school community paid off with 668 attending, mostly on Friday afternoon. This is not an insignificant feat—Friday afternoon is traditionally one of the deadest periods in a show, and we were able to fill it up with a constant stream of home schooled families, much to the delight of our dealers.

Profits for this show were \$12,222 on expenses of \$26,113, or a profit margin of 47%. Also good news was the fact that the customer-to-dealer ratio was above 100 (actually 141) for the first time since 1990, and the 5,485 attendees was the highest since 1991.

Thus, this year marked the official rise of the show out of the doldrums of the 1990s and heralded the start of a new era.

2003: With the transition-year 2002 show behind us and with a stable and increasingly experienced Show Committee at the helm, transition to the 2003 show year was seamless and immediate. The Show Committee schedule developed during 2002 was followed in 2003 and would be for the foreseeable future. This schedule was laid out as follows:

October – 2002 Show Committee meets for the last time. Recommendations and expense summary for all subcommittees presented. Committee officially dismissed at the conclusion of the meeting.

November – 2003 Show Committee meets for the first time. Budget requests are presented for each subcommittee. Recommendations from the previous meeting were tallied and presented in summary form at this meeting for review.

December – Budget presented to Board for approval. The Show Committee then meets and two committees become active immediately: Publicity and Dealers.

The Publicity Committee uses this meeting and the next two meetings to make any changes needed to the fliers and to get them printed. The target date for printed publicity is the end of February for the Clear Lake show. Following that are the spring and summer Intergems, two home school conferences, the spring MATS conference, and any regional spring shows (such as Corpus Christi and San Antonio).

Other local shows are attended as they come up. For instance, in 2003 the Show Committee in conjunction with HMNS had a table at the Boy Scout Exposition at Reliant Center. This was a very successful event and generated a ton of positive publicity for our club, our show, and our Scout program.

In December the Show Committee reviews existing dealers and decides if any dealer warrants not being invited back to the show. Once this is determined, the initial list of invited dealers is finalized. The Dealer Committee makes any necessary changes to the existing dealer contracts and then prints them. Contracts are mailed by late December or early January. Dealers have until the end of April to return their contracts with a minimum deposit of 50%. Dealers paying 100% receive a 5% discount on their booth fee. Dealers not returning contracts by the beginning of May receive a warning letter and a month grace period. In early June, any remaining space on the retail floor is opened up to the waiting list and contracts are sent out.

There were a few notable changes for the 2003 show. As discussed above in the 2002 show, the problems with the Show Committee's use of Art's School Sets were resolved by making a new set of kits specifically for the show. These sets were smaller and used smaller, less expensive pieces. They were assembled in plastic containers similar to small fishing tackle boxes. A committee was formed in the fall of 2002 specifically to handle the creation of these sets. This committee first decided on the physical characteristics of the sets (as described above) then on the types of sets we would make. We decided to make four sets: Quartz Varieties, the Rock Cycle, Magic

School Bus, and Neal's Fossil Field Trip in a Box (Whiskey Bridge material). The sets were specifically designed so that each had complete information on the specimens as well as follow-up questions for lessons. We decided that fifteen sets of each would handle the anticipated demand. These sets were completed in July.

Also new for 2003 was a Fossil Painting booth headed by Mark Randall of Dallas. We put him in the widened section of the east hallway (near the Dino Dig and the entrance to the Youth Section booth). His booth was tremendously successful and was packed most of the time. Unfortunately, I don't think Mark fully anticipated the number of kids we see at our show, and consequently spent most of the time in a dazed state. I don't think he went back home with much material. He also didn't come back in 2004.

A major change in printed show material was instituted by the Publicity Committee. The committee was looking for another blockbuster promotion to go along with the wonderful page flier and had not been satisfied with the postcards the last two years. So the idea was brought up to have a full color postcard. Rates had been steadily dropping for full color offset printing, and coincidentally, an out-of-town printer had already been found that could do the printing affordably.

So Publicity Chairman Jill Rowlands got together some faceted Brazilian topaz (Texas-star-cut), and Steve Blyskal obtained some Brazilian and Pakistani topaz crystals. The photography was done very professionally by Steve Blyskal, and the text was inserted by Jill (Figure 6). There were, of course, logistical snafus that kept it from being a perfect operation, but the fact that it was even done at all is

remarkable and is a tribute to the 2003 Publicity Committee for pulling it off. The postcard was roundly complimented by all as a major advancement in the appeal and professionalism of the HGMS Show and of the club. It was agreed by all that this needed to be an annual undertaking by the Show Committee.

Associated with this, Publicity Committee members Elizabeth Sheehy and Joan Riley decided we needed a concise packet of publicity materials that could be delivered to various print, radio, and TV outlets. They took it upon themselves to produce such a packet and deliver it to as many media outlets as possible. This was a wonderful idea that had been used in one form or another for decades but had been lacking in the

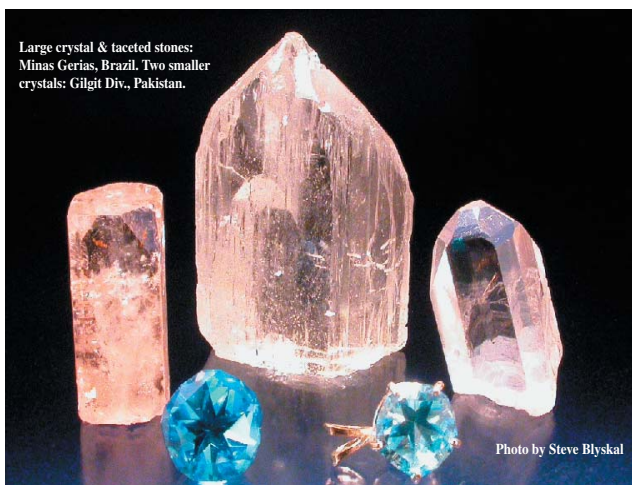


Figure 6: 2003 postcard

recent past. Its success was hard to evaluate because it's difficult to check each media outlet to see if they used the materials. However, intuitively it was such an obvious, basic method of generating public awareness of our show that this idea was kept and used in subsequent years.



Figure 7: One of George's assistants explaining about Stan (left) and the baby T. rex (right) at the 2003 show

Another significant advancement was in the volunteer coordination area. Jill had given up that position to concentrate on publicity, and Cheryl Lucas stepped up to take it. Cheryl had previous experience with event coordination and so was a natural for the job. She developed a spreadsheet listing all of the volunteer areas and indicating how many volunteers were needed for what shifts. Then

once the show began approaching, she dutifully began calling everyone on a version of the HGMS roster that Beverly Mace had already pared down to leave only potential volunteers. In concert with this effort, the Show Committee as a whole utilized the BBG during the entire year to keep the show in the forefront of the membership's consciousness. In the lead-up months of August and September (and even October since that issue came out prior to the show in late September), the BBG was literally filled with articles from various members of the Show Committee.

The result of this devotion by Cheryl and the concerted effort by the Show Committee was nothing short of remarkable. Virtually all of the volunteer slots in the show were filled, although some didn't get filled until at the show when volunteers walked up to the Information Booth to register. Cheryl tallied 10 different areas needing volunteer help, not including the Section booths, and 120 volunteers who helped in those different areas.

Associated with this volunteer effort was an idea of mine to ride this wave of volunteerism by trying to expand the Show Committee beyond the normal list of suspects. Another committee was formed early in the show year whose mission was to call our club membership to ask if they would be willing to help the Show Committee plan our next show. Out of this effort came a lot of dead ends and people who ended

up helping at the show only, but it also turned up several people who are still involved with the Show Committee.

Showtime – the 2003 Show: As was becoming custom, the Postcard Labeling Event and the Pre-Show Pizza Party led the way to the show build-up. The Pre-Show Pizza Party was particularly remarkable this year because of a donation by long-time member Virginia Royce. This material was auctioned off at the Pizza Party along with other material brought to the auction, and it ended up generating \$726 in gross revenue from about 60 attendees.

The next noteworthy event was the Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, which was held on Friday night this year. The theme was dictated by our speaker, George Blasing, who talked about the T. rex and how recent discoveries had shed light on the possibility it was a nurturing animal that had family units and sheltered its young. Of course, the Show Committee couldn't resist but to have a dinner of BBQ to celebrate our carnivorous tendencies, which ended up feeding about 90 people.



Figure 8: 2003 grand door prize, donated by the Houston Museum of Natural Science via David Temple.

The show was its usual successful self. I use the personal connotation because at times it seemed to have a life of its own. Friday saw 2425 kids, about 600 of whom were home school kids who came in the afternoon. Nonetheless, that meant about 1800 kids and about 340 chaperones completely filled the HCC during the morning hours.

In addition to the School Daze attendees, 3286 people came in through the front door. Of these, 2465 were paying attendees, which meant we met our budgeted ticket income (\$10,578 actual versus \$10,000 budget). There were 744

kids under the age of 12 who attended the show separately from the School Daze program. Of these, 338 were Scouts of all flavors who participated in the Scout Geology Merit Badge program accompanied by 150 (paying) adults.

This program was hugely successful. The Scout registrar (Ephriam Dickson of the HMNS) halted registrations in early September because all slots were filled. We then agreed to increase the maximum number of Scouts per session from 35 to 45 and filled the registrations again within a week. In the end, Ephriam turned away almost as many Scouts as we registered. This, in itself, caused its own problems as we realized that this program had reached maturity and that we desperately needed additional Scout counselors to teach the three stations for which the HGMS was responsible. This would be the prime focus of the Scout Committee in the next few years.

The financial results of this show were similarly impressive. Expenses were very close to the budget of \$26,000, but we did manage to shave \$1,500 off of this amount. Income was higher than budget due to two dealers who didn't show and were replaced by new dealers, and by the great pre-show auction. This led to a net profit of \$16,043, or a margin of 65%. The customer-to-dealer ratio was a very healthy 151.

2004 – The SCFMS Show: The Show Committee smoothly transitioned into the 2004 show year with the submission of expenditures and recommendations in October. When the 2004 Show Committee met for the first time in November, the primary personnel changes were Elizabeth Sheehy taking over for Jill Rowlands as the Publicity Chairman and Greg Rutledge taking over for his wife, Paula Rutledge, as Hospitality Chairman. I also insisted in getting some help with the leadership of the Show Committee, so President Norm Lenz convened a nominating committee to find an Assistant Show Chairman. In March 2004 Carol Thompson (who had been Ticket Chairman since 2001) accepted this position. In addition, Lowell Stouder volunteered to take the position of Dealer Chairman which I had held continuously since 1999.

With all other aspects of the show effort smoothly flowing along according to the schedule perfected in previous years, the main issue of interest was preparations for holding a regional federation show. Shiara Trumble graciously accepted the position of SCFMS Liaison and began putting together a plan of action. We obtained the comprehensive convention planning guide written by 2003 SCFMS President Keith Harmon and amended by Dick Rathjen of the Clear Lake G&MS who held the SCFMS show in 2003. The only thing left to do was follow the instructions.

So, Shiara set out to find a host hotel (the Holiday Inn Express), Editor's Breakfast location (a Denny's about two miles from the show), and a daytime meeting location (the Octavia Fields Public Library meeting room, which was adjacent to the HCC). The nighttime meeting location would be the HCC Hospitality room. She then put together the required registration forms and meeting announcements from the documents supplied by Dick Rathjen and sent the whole batch to Paul Good, the Editor of the SCFMS Newsletter. At the same time, all documents were loaded onto the Web site for access and downloading by any interested parties. They were also mailed to all clubs in the SCFMS as well as to AFMS officers.

Publicity: With the advent of a new Publicity Chairman, changes were afoot for that committee. Elizabeth was the type of person who wanted things documented, and so she created a spreadsheet listing all of the media outlets we were pursuing along with details of the contact, who was in charge of pursuing it, and its status. The Publicity Committee met separately from the Show Committee at least once every other month for the duration of the show year since in reality publicity is a year-round activity. Printed fliers had to be ready by the Clear Lake show, some magazines had 6-month lead times, others had 2- or 3-month lead times, and by summer talk of radio, TV, and print media became quite serious. The show postcard was again capably photographed by Steve Blyskal (Figure 9).

This aggressive and organized approach can't help but pay big dividends. For print

media, we got PSAs and paid ads in the *Houston Chronicle Weekend Preview*, Houston Community Newspapers (half-page ad in the northern and western suburbs), *Texas Journey Magazine*, *Southwest Village News*, *HMNS Dashing Diplodocus*, *Houston Geological Society Bulletin* (plus articles!), *Geophysical Society of Houston Bulletin*, *Greensheet* in 1960/Humble area, *The Teaching Pioneer* (a home school bulletin), the *Boy Scout Scouter*, the *Girl Scout Golden Link*, and probably others I haven't mentioned.



Figure 9: 2004 postcard

Radio and TV were saturated with PSA information, and we got mentions on a variety of shows. The ultimate was 90.1 KPFT, which ran promos for the HGMS for a solid week prior to the show and gave away 120 complimentary tickets. All who heard these spots were very impressed and appreciative of KPFT for doing this. I don't think we paid them anything for their efforts, although we certainly should have.

Another publicity coup that was entirely Elizabeth's idea was to run a trailer at the bottom of the screen on the local forecast of the Weather Channel during the four weeks prior to the show. I might add that late August to late September is prime hurricane season and the time when everybody is checking the weather. The results of this advertising were astounding. We heard from a large number of people (including HGMS club members) that said they saw this trailer.

As part of the effort to focus publicity coverage in regional media, Shiara Trumble tallied the 2003 grand door prize entry form zip codes to find out where people lived. The results were quite revealing. Heavy concentrations came from the northern suburbs of Humble, Kingwood, Spring, Woodlands, and Conroe, and the western suburbs of Cypress and Katy. There was also a heavy concentration all along the west side "energy corridor" stretching from downtown all the way to Katy, from I-45 southward to Hwy 90 (South Main). Isolated enclaves existed on the southeastern side (Pasadena, NASA, etc.). Strangely absent were the inner city areas in north, east, and south Houston. This told us very quickly that people coming to our show had disposable income to spend and that this was probably the greatest single factor determining their presence in our show. Publicity coverage was henceforth targeted to these areas.

Changes in the Show: One decision that the 2004 Show Committee made was to create a huge banner that would advertise the show from the exterior of the HCC. Rick

Sheehy headed up this effort and presented possible designs to the Show Committee for approval as well as contacting various printing companies to investigate materials and cost. Eventually a design was approved that had "GEM, JEWELRY, MINERAL, & FOSSIL SHOW" written across the top, "Houston Gem & Mineral Society" in the lower left side, and "www.hgms.org" in the lower right side. The printing was done in black lettering on a white waterproof mesh material, and the size was a considerable 5 feet x 30 feet. The cost was not cheap and ended up being about \$950. But this sign quickly proved its value when we realized you could see it from any road in the vicinity of the HCC.

Adding to the change in the front of the HCC was the addition of two huge petrified logs. One of them was owned by Gary Anderson and was permanently housed on top of a wagon with a sand bed to rest on. It was a Petrified National Forest piece, and so the colors were excellent. The other was owned by Paul McGarry, who picked it up (with the help of a front-end loader) on a Show Committee field trip to a ranch in Giddings where he keeps his horses. Paul had constructed a metal cart that permanently holds this piece (Figure 10). Each of these pieces was probably $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ ton in weight. These pieces proved to be huge attractions, with show attendees posing in front of them to have their pictures taken.



Figure 10: Paul McGarry's log; one of two which resided in front of the 2004 show. Paul is on left and Neal Immega is on right. In background, from left to right, are: Security Chairman Matt Dillon, David Hawkins, and Peter Ragusa (between Paul and Neal).

Another change was the decision to move the Dino Dig outside in a tent. We had been discussing having tents for several years but had not yet done it. The Dino Dig was rapidly becoming the star kid attraction in our show and needed room to grow, which it definitely didn't have in the east hallway. So we rented a 20' x 20' tent and put it outside the northeast corner of the building, adjacent to the east hallway and the special events room that held the Youth Section booth and the Swap Area. This proved to be one of the best decisions we could possibly make, as it gave them plenty of room to grow and isolated the show from the constant noise of kids whacking chunks of concrete (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Kids at 2004 Dino Dig. Note line behind them waiting to get in. Also note people snapping photos.

Moving into the vacated east hallway was the HMNS, who also needed to expand. And since they were another of our demonstrators who were a hit with the kids, we felt this was a good place for them to expand into. Their old location was taken by the Houston Geological Society and the BEG Core Repository, who had displays showing petroleum

exploration and production and professional options in Earth Science that middle and high school kids could be thinking about.

The Show: The show officially began on Thursday night when the club voted to have the General Meeting again at the HCC in conjunction with the Dealer and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. The Paleo Section also decided to get into the action and do likewise. The entertainment for the evening was, as usual, Dino George Blasing who gave us a presentation on the making of his new video, which was going to be shown in his booth during the show. As usual, he gave his presentation to a full house in the Hospitality room.

Next on the hit list was Friday morning, when hordes of school kids descended on the show. A total of 2,694 kids and 933 adults entered through the west door on Friday. It was certainly enough to make your head swim. However, in all good things can be found some bad. Evaluations we received from teachers leaving the show were heavily weighted with complaints of overcrowding. This was also obvious to all those trying to run the show on Friday. Thus, this year proved to be a turning point for the School Daze program—from here on out, we would do something we never dreamed we would have to do—limit access to our show. Educators abhor this thought; it's the prime driver for the national "No Child Left Behind" law that states all kids have to be given a fair and equitable opportunity to learn. But now we would be forced to tell some schools that they cannot come to our show because our time slots have already filled up.

Another program reaching the same threshold was the Scout Geology Merit Badge program. For the second year in a row, registrations filled by early September, and we

were forced to turn away as many Scouts as we registered. A total of 523 Scouts and about 200 adults participated in this program. However, the same problem happened here as with the School Daze program—too many Scouts for the instructors to handle. It was finally obvious that we needed to recruit additional Scout councilors to help with the three stations we were to teach. This would be the first order of business in 2005.

Those who survived Friday's onslaught were treated to an outstanding show. Volunteer Coordinator Cheryl Lucas counted 130 volunteers that signed up to help run the show. (This number represents about 33% of the club—much greater than the typical 5-10% that normally do everything in a volunteer organization). Attendance was phenomenal. On Saturday alone, 2,700 people attended. Sunday was not far behind with 1,797. Total attendance was 5,066 through the front door and 3,627 through the east door (School Daze), for a total of 8,693. Paid attendance was 3,728, meaning that we completely overshot our budgeted ticket income. Profits were \$13,553, or a profit margin over expenses of 43%. This number was lower than the previous year due to some extra expenses (about \$1,000) we agreed to undertake with regard to SCFMS activities plus the unanticipated expense of having to pay for competition judges (this little fact was somehow left out of the instruction documents we received from Keith Harmon and Dick Rathjen). Add to this the extra-budgetary expense of making the show banner (\$950).

However, as an added benefit, our show attracted the attention of an outfit in Dallas called GeoAmerica that produces an educational TV series called North Texas Explorer. They had decided to shoot a film on the rockhound hobby and chose our show as a segment of the film. They came down on Saturday and shot the entire day, capturing the Scout program, Dino George (who also had another segment in the film), the Dino Dig, Karen Burns doing some lapidary demo, an interview with Bill Patillo of the Rock Food Table, and yours truly talking about our wonderful show.

Not a bad way to finish off a stellar Federation show. You can bet we caught the attention of the national Federation. In fact, we earned a very honorable review in the AFMS Newsletter that came out following the show. Not a bad effort for a day's work (or three in this case).

2005: So how do you follow a show like the 2004 SCFMS show? Well, to start with, to ask such a question implies that the questioner feels the 2004 was something extraordinary or one-of-a-kind. Examples are the famous 1971 show which set an attendance record (11,000) that hasn't been matched in 35 years, or our first AFMS show in 1982 which set the record for number of dealers (109) and holds the #2 spot for attendance (10,278).

No, the fact is that the Show Committee recognized this was a fantastic show but certainly not extraordinary or non-repeatable. In fact, they felt we had just begun to scratch the surface. There was still plenty of room for growth of attendance and size, even if we had to move outside of the HCC proper, which is exactly what the Show Committee set about to do.

First on the hit list was growth in size. To achieve this, the Show Committee expanded the Dino Dig from a 20' x 20' tent to a 20' x 30' tent and increased the number of wooden flat holders from 2 to 3, thus increasing the number of kids we could have digging by 50%. A second tent was added outside the east door (between the exit door and the Youth Section booth in the special events room). This tent was to be filled with George Blasing's Dino World Traveling Museum.

Since we were sharing the cost of bringing this museum with George, Show Chairperson Carol Thompson and Publicity Chairperson Elizabeth Sheehy wanted to make sure it carried its own weight (in other words, created an increase in attendance that matched its cost).



Figure 12: 2005 postcard

To do so, the Publicity Committee began a major publicity push that emphasized the presence of George's museum at our show. We hoped to get at least one print media reporter at the show who would write a feature article appearing during the show. We also were negotiating for a morning show on one of the major network stations to do a segment of their show at our show. All other paid and PSA ads were amended to emphasize or at least mention George's museum. Another "collector's edition" postcard was produced by Steve Blyskal and the Publicity Committee (Figure 12).

Changes to the floor plan layout were also in the works. To begin with, we recognized that we had now reached the threshold where we had to open up hallway space to allow crowds of people to move through without creating bottlenecks. Thus, the Houston Geological Society and BEG Core Repository would share booth space with the HMNS in the widened portion of the east hallway, thus freeing up the eastern portion of the front hallway. Concurrently, the western portion of the front hallway was opened up by combining our flint knapper with Cheryl Lucas' PMC demo booth.

Changes were also in store for the center of the front hallway, which is the main show entrance. Dino George was adding a Stegosaurus skull to be faced off with Stan in the semblance of a showdown (Stegosaurus was a primary food of the T. rex). In addition, George had a Pteranodon that was suspended on a metal T-frame. We had the brilliant idea that we could suspend this skeleton from the ceiling of the entry way. The HCC management bought onto our idea, which was a necessity because two wires had to be strung from the back to the front of the entry way to allow the Pteranodon to be hung.

We felt these changes would create an incredible presence that was sure to impress anyone visiting our show.

Our educational programs were also changed in recognition of the fact that they had reached maturity and needed to be managed better. Attendance limits were placed on the School Daze Earth Science program on Friday in an effort to prevent the overcrowding that prevailed in the 2004 show. We hoped that this would enable those kids who did participate a greater chance to absorb the earth science lesson we had prepared for them.

In addition, Mad Science would also assist in our School Daze program. We had negotiated a deal whereby Mad Science would take over the chemistry station in the west hallway. They would bring two "mad scientists" who would conduct continual experiments throughout the morning hours and in the afternoon until the home schoolers tapered off. We felt this was a major enhancement to this program because of the professionalism and reputation of Mad Science.

Similar changes were underway for the Scout Geology Merit Badge program as well. I undertook a major information gathering effort to find out how to get Boy Scout participation in this program (since we were really doing their job for them). We found out that each Scout district has its own advancement coordinator and that we would have to contact each one individually to elicit their support. We did this for the four districts in north Houston, and managed to accumulate a considerable list of potential Scout Geology counselors. These people were all called, and I managed to get about a half dozen who agreed to help teach the program in addition to those who were already teaching it (and being overwhelmed). This represented a major step forward in the maturity of this program and was the first time it had received official recognition from Scout leaders. From here on out, we would be looking to increase the quality of the program, and once that was assured, increase the size of the program so we could accommodate some of the hundreds of additional Scouts whom we routinely turn away each year.

Run-up: The pre-show season in 2005 contained the usual assortment of activities, including the postcard labeling event on August 13. The Pre-Show Pizza Party was held on September 10. About 130 auction items and flats of cutting material were bid on by 45–50 people who munched down 15 pizzas and desserts and generated \$689 in revenue.

On Sunday, September 18, the start of the week of the show, a tropical depression formed north of Haiti, tracking west-northwest. It rapidly strengthened to a tropical storm, and as it approached the Florida Straits on September 20, to a Category 1 hurricane. It was named Rita. The forecast track brought it onto the Texas coast the following weekend (Figure 13), which immediately got everybody's attention. After crossing the Florida Straits, Hurricane Rita passed over some very warm water and strengthened from a Category 1 to a Category 5 hurricane in a day and a half, so that by Thursday, September 22, it had maximum winds of 180 mph (Figure 14).

After passing the Florida Straits, the forecast track had initially pointed it toward Corpus Christi, but quickly veered northward until the forecast track on September 22

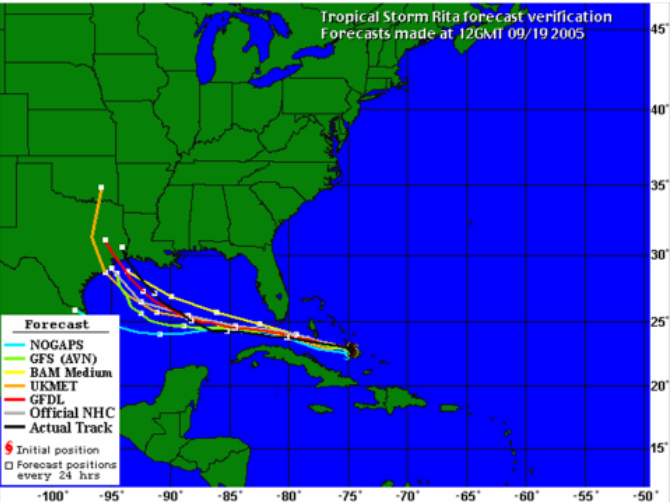
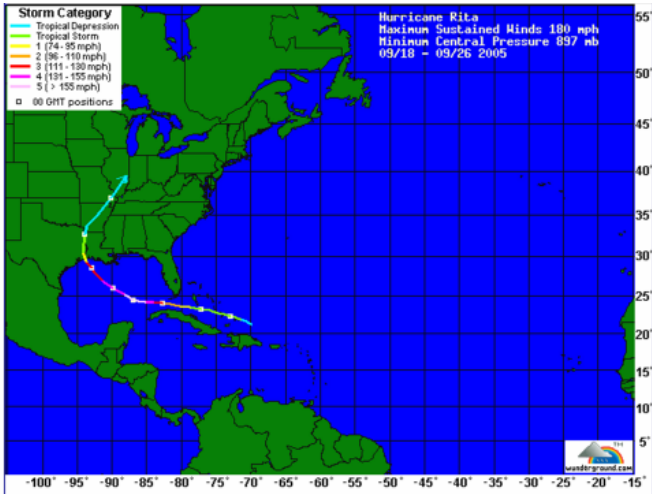


Figure 13: Rita forecast track on September 19

Figure 14: Rita's actual track from September 18 to September 26



had it passing directly over Houston. Mandatory evacuation orders were issued for all low-lying areas along the coast and along Galveston Bay. This set off mad panic among the several million people in the Houston-Galveston metropolitan area, most of whom had been glued to their TVs when Category 5 Hurricane Katrina flattened New Orleans at the end of August, breaking their levee system in three places and flooding a substantial portion of the city. Images of people being rescued by boat and helicopter from their rooftops permeated the collective consciousness of our city.

By Thursday all freeways leading inland from the coast were jam-packed and going nowhere. People simply ran out of gas and were stuck where they sat with no food or water in record heat. Those who did get through the mess told stories of taking 36 hours to get to Austin or Dallas. Houston, which was not in the mandatory evacuation zone, was a ghost town by Friday when Rita was nearing the coast (Figure 15). But by

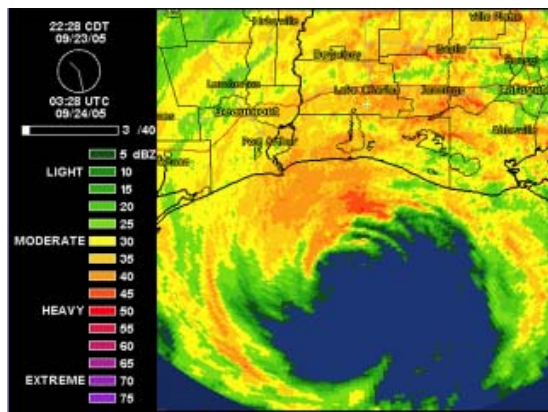


Figure 15: Radar image of Hurricane Rita on September 23 at 10:30 p.m.

then the track had continued veering eastward and it ended up running directly over Sabine and Beaumont. Entire sections of west Louisiana and east Texas were destroyed; the piney woods were in shambles with entire groves of pine trees uprooted or snapped like toothpicks. The coastal Louisiana town of Cameron virtually ceased to exist.

Run-over: In an environment like this, it was obvious that our show was a “goner.” The Show Committee followed Rita’s progress through the early part of the week and hoped it would turn somewhere else. But by Wednesday it was obvious it wasn’t turning somewhere else. Even if it did, people were evacuating and schools were being cancelled. Many workplaces were closed Thursday and Friday.

I kept in close contact with the HCC and with our property vendor all week long. Other people associated with the show were calling and e-mailing Show Chairman Carol Thompson and me. She was being deluged with calls from club members and dealers alike wondering what we were going to do. Monday and Tuesday we had hope. By Wednesday we had lost hope and decided to shut it down because we could not afford to wait any longer. Carol discussed the issue with President Norm Lenz and they came to the same agreement.

Norm wrote a letter stating our decision and our reasons and had webmaster Phyllis George post it on the home page of our Web site immediately. I wrote a similar letter and sent it out to all of our dealers in a mass e-mail (Dealer Chairman Lowell Stouder was in Germany at the time) and followed this up with calls to each one of them (however, many of them were already on the road and had to contact us any way they could). Carol informed the remainder of the Show Committee. Volunteer Co-Chairman Shiara Trumble called all of her volunteers to inform them of the news. Security Chairman Matt Dillon cancelled the security and first aid contract. I called all of the Scout Committee and our volunteer counselors. Ditto with our public/private school registrar Greenevelyn Hawkins and our home school co-registrars Tina Hendryx and Melissa Steck. They had the unenviable job of informing the contact people for 2,500 students who were registered to attend our School Daze program. This massive calling campaign lasted through Wednesday and Thursday.

Epitaph: Because of our good relationship with our various vendors, the fallout was much less than it might have been. The HCC and I worked through a plan of action over the course of the entire week, sometimes with multiple calls each day. We agreed to invoke the “force majeure” clause in the HCC contract. This meant that the contract was null and void due to an act of God and that neither party would consider the other as having any obligation whatsoever. (The HCC ended up being a command center for hurricane emergency personnel and a refuge for some of those stuck on the freeway). Our property vendor, Events Plus, was also continually apprised of our plans and agreed to do likewise. This meant that all of our facility expenses had been cancelled, totaling \$15,050. Of the remaining expenses, publicity and education had already been spent. Hospitality expenses had mostly not been spent. The tally was that \$11,261 out of a budget of \$13,950 was spent, most coming from publicity (\$9,079).

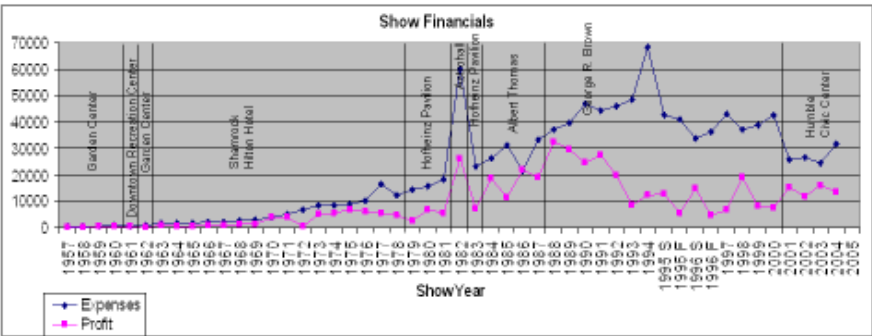
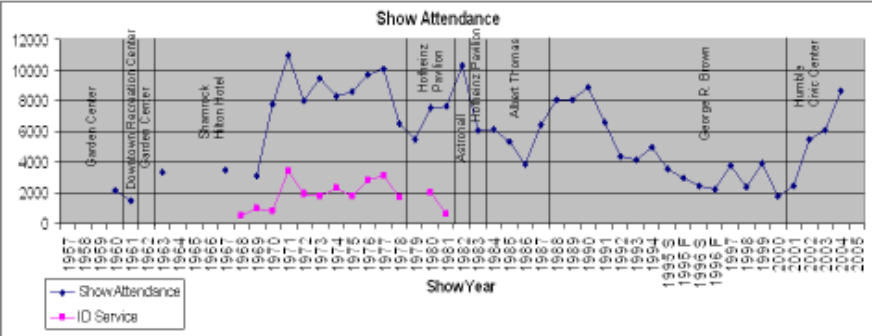
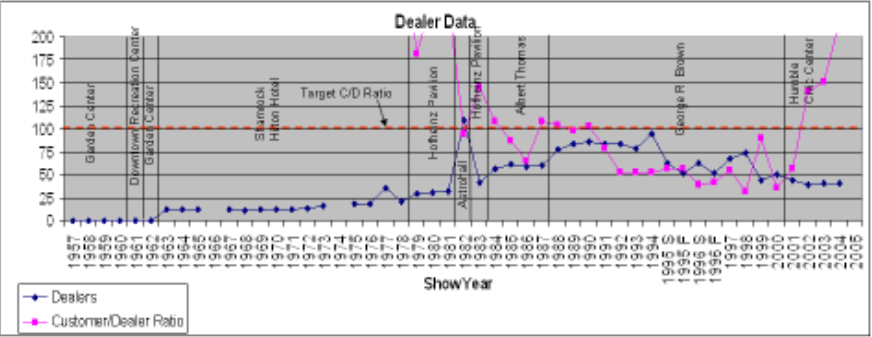
The Board met on October 4 to consider what should be done next. The meeting was attended by about 20 people. It was unanimously decided to refund all dealer fees (\$18,544 received by that point) and give dealers the option of applying these fees to the next show (most did). Those who had sold advance tickets would also be reimbursed (\$256). Further it was decided not to schedule a make-up show because of potential schedule conflicts with our dealers and demonstrators, and because it would be too much work for the Show Committee with the probable result of a lower quality show and lower attendance than the club wanted. All agreed that the best option would be to pick up the pieces and try again next September.

Epilog: So the probabilities caught up with us, and we took a direct hit on the show. But you know what? That’s the risk we take. You know the expression—if you play with the big boys then you take the big risks, but you also take the big payoffs. In this case, we have had four straight years of show profits on the order of \$13,000–\$16,000, and we don’t have a mortgage note to pay on the clubhouse. Our club finances are in excellent shape. I’m confident we’ll barely notice this a few years from now. It’ll be nothing more than a footnote in the historical advance of our club and our show to greater heights.

2006 is shaping up to be a case in point. It’ll be interesting to see the final attendance and financial figures, but I’ll wager that we’ll just pick up where we left off in 2004 and keep moving on. The momentum is there, the proper show fundamentals are there, the continuity and experience is there, the only thing that is not there is a 2005 show. We have a club that has passed its greatest threshold (purchasing and paying for a clubhouse). It provides a real service to the community with our adult and youth education. It has a large membership (400 is the largest in the SCFMS). It exists within a large and diverse metropolitan area and is able to draw considerable energy and resources from that population base. It has a fundamentally close and long-lived relationship with the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and that provides a benefit for both organizations.

And we have a national show in two years—2008. This means national attention. It means national prestige. It means an opportunity to show the country what a club and show should look like.

I’m confident that we’ll have no problem.



Tech Talk: Types of Saws

by Val Carver, MNIC Member

from The Rock Rustler's News 4/05, via Breccia 6/06 and others

There are 3 basic classifications of lapidary saws; these are:

- a. Faceter's Saw
- b. Trim Saw
- c. Slab Saw

Faceter's saws are primarily used to prep small chunks of rocks for faceting. Faceter's saws can sometimes be used for VERY LIGHT trim saw work. Usually they have blade sizes in the 4" to 5" diameter range and are usually manual feed. These types of

saws are tabletop mounted units. Prices for faceter 's saws are normally in the \$200 to \$300 range. Most faceter 's saws are designed to be used with water and water-based lubricants.

Trim saws are used to reduce the size of a chunk of rock. This type of saw is normally used to cut cabochon preforms from materials that have been slabbed. They can also sometimes be used for light slab work or to cut a rock in half. Most trim saws are manual feed; some have vices to chuck up a rock. Trim saws usually come in blade diameters (sizes) of 6", 8", and 10". These saws are tabletop-mounted units. Prices for trim saws range from \$400 for the 6" size to \$975 for a 10" sized unit. Depending on the construction of the saw, they will require either water-based lubricants or oil lubricants. This saw classification also includes ring saws, diamond band saws, and scroll saws.

Slab saws are the big boys of the saw world. They are used to take large chunks of rocks and normally make slabs out of them. A slab is defined as a piece of rock cut with parallel surfaces. Slabs are typically cut from 1/8" thick to several inches thick. Normally slabs are cut 1/4" to 3/8" thick for cabbing. Slab saws come in blade diameter sizes of 10", 12", 14", 16", 18", 20", 24", 30", and 36". The 10" through 14" units are normally tabletop units while the 18" and larger are stand-alone units. Price ranges for new slab saws are from \$900 for a 10" unit to \$15,000 for the 36" size. The function that makes a slab saw a slab saw is that the rock is chucked up in a vice and is fed into the rotating blade by some type of feed drive mechanism. The slab saw also has a transverse table feed so that after you have cut a slab, you can back the rock out, and without unchucking the rock, move it over with a crank on the table and be lined up to cut another slab. ALL slab saws should be used ONLY with oil lubricant.

Plane Rockhounding

by Dan Dooley

from RRC Newsletter 3/95, via The Roadrunner 6/2006

Big Mac and Junior liked to rockhound. Hearing and knowing about the big geodes down south, they went to the wilds of Colorado. Each bagged a bundle—a few sacks full, plus! When the pilot (who took them there) saw the material and said, "I can't fly out of here with you and the gear you got plus the sacks."

"Why not?" Big Mac asked.

"Because the load will be too heavy. The plane won't be able to take off."

They argued for a few minutes then Junior said, "I don't understand. Last year each of us had the same load and the pilot loaded everything."

"Well," said the pilot. "I guess if you did it last year, I can do it too."

So they loaded the plane, but it was too heavy and crashed into the mountainside. No one was hurt, and as they crawled out of the wreckage, Big Mac asked "Where are we?"

Junior surveyed the scene and answered, "Oh, about a mile farther than we got last year."

ShowTime 2006

August 26-27	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Bldg., FM 2799, John D. Nash 409-384-3974, nash@jas.net
September 2-4	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Club Arlington Convention Center 1200 Ballpark Way. Kris Galbraith 817-784-0375, apkris43@aol.com
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 Call Sigrid Stewart 281-239-0377; e-mail sigrid.stewart@chevrontexaco.com
Sept. 30-Oct. 1	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Citizens Ctr, 531 W. Chestnut Rosemary Siems ramblingrosetoo@yahoo.com
Sept. 30-Oct. 1	Farmers Branch, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI, Brookhaven College, 3939 Valley View Don Shurtz, don.shurtz@gmail.com
October 14-15	Orlando, FL	Florida Fossil Hunters Central Florida Fairgrounds 4603 W. Colonial Dr. Valerie First, 407-699-9274, vjfirst@aol.com
October 14-15	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic & Convent'n Cntr, 3303 N. 3rd Leslie O'Connally, 254-939-7015
October 20-22	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center
October 21-22	Glen Rose, TX	Fossilmania--Austin & Dallas Paleo Societies Somervell County Expo Center, Hwy. 67 Bill Morgan, 210-492-9163 morgan@uthscsa.edu , www.dallaspaleo.org
November 4-5	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center, 105 N. Main St. Craig Tellinghuisen 39122 N. County Road 1243 Midland, TX 79707-9712, (432) 697-7668
November 11-12	DeRidder, LA	DeRidder Gem & Mineral Society Exhibit Hall, Beauregard Parish Fair Grounds 610 West Dr.; Adam Valin (337) 585-3693 adam.valin@bellsouth.com

2006		SEPTEMBER					2006
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
					1	2 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open	
3	4 Labor Day	5 7:30 Board Meeting	6 7:30 Mineral Section	7	8	9 11-5 Shop Open 5:30-9:30 p.m. Preshow Pizza party & auction	
10	11 1:00 Day Light Section	12 7:30 Show Comm	13 7:30 Faceting Section	14	15	16 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open	
17	18 5:00-7:15 Shop Open 7:30 Lapidary Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20 7:30 Mineral Section Load Up for Show!	21 Show Setup Day	22 HGMS Show	23 HGMS Show	
24 HGMS Show	25	26 7:30 General Meeting	27	28	29	30 11-5 Shop Open	

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

***The* BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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