



The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

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President's Message **by Terrell William "Terry" Proctor** *2008 HGMS President*

Can you almost feel winter slipping away? Soon we can safely return to the field trips without fear of frost bite (okay, I won't get too dramatic—let's say just being uncomfortably cold). I know Paleo has a field trip of up to four days planned to dig Pennsylvanian marine fossils in Brownwood, Texas. I know Tom Wright is starting a couple of classes on jewelry making. I know some excellent programs are lined up for all sections in the next few months, as well as the main Club programs.



One of the best things about HGMS is the lifelong friendships we make. My father was President of the Tulsa Gem & Mineral Club at one time, and he and my mother came to HGMS a few times to judge and possibly put on a program. During my folks being rockhounds, they became good friends with Dr. Al Kidwell and his wife Marion. They became such good friends, that when my folks came from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Houston, they spent several days and nights with the Kidwells. Then when they were ready to leave, my folks would call me to tell me that they would spend the last night with me, before leaving early the next morning to return to Tulsa. I learned that some friends are better than children LOL.

I guess I really didn't notice until this year the enormity of what HGMS provides to the members and how so many folks spend so much time working for free for the benefit of HGMS, the other members, and the public. This Club does an enormous

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HGMS Programs and an Auction

March 25, 2008: Tom Wright will demonstrate silver casting and will make broom straw and rock salt castings. Buy some silver, see it cast at the General Membership Meeting this month, then take your unique, one-of-a-kind casting home. Call Tom if you want him to cast some silver for you.

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Every article published in the BBG is edited for grammar and content. No flaming is allowed.

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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 Web site address is <http://www.hgms.org>.

President's Message continued from page 1

amount of education to the public, which boggles the mind. HGMS attends other clubs' shows and will have a booth to distribute our material and in some instances to identify fossils and minerals for the public.

HGMS distributes boxes of minerals and fossils, properly identified, to schools so that children can learn to identify these specimens when they see them. Where do these specimens come from? They come from HGMS members who go into their own collections to share these items with young people to assure their interest in Earth Sciences in the future. At our annual show our sections have identification tables, "How To" classes and exhibitions, and many sections and members also put in wonderful exhibits, with many hours of time and talent expended, for the benefit of the public.

This club has so many experts and so much expertise, talent, and dedication, that it is really awesome to see the various Sections, Groups, and areas working together for the good of the Public, the members, and HGMS as a whole.

It appears that we are now going to divide the Educational Chairmanship into two parts. One is the administrative person who will plan and set up classes and organize this area of our club's activities AND the other is a person who probably lives close to the Clubhouse and can come to the initial meeting of each class, for say half an hour, to introduce the teacher and collect the fees that will be turned over to the HGMS Treasurer for deposit. Won't you consider joining the vast array of workers in this Club and take one of these two jobs, at least for the remainder of this year?

It seems a long time until the HGMS National Show, September 26–28, when we host the Regional and National organizations at our annual Show in Humble. However, we all know how time moves faster than we like when there are things that must be done. The Show Committee is moving along at a good pace; materials are going out to Dealers and are being readied for our members and the public. The Publicity Committee has lost one of its Co-leaders because of illness, but with the help of many on the Show Committee, the material and decisions are moving ahead on schedule. This year instead of a post card, the Show Committee is going to use a tri-fold piece which will allow more information and still be able to be mailed and handed out to great effect. We appreciate the time and effort that goes into getting ready for the greatest Rock Show on Earth this year, in Houston. Houston Rocks!!! with HGMS this year.

This month, I would like you to consider doing something that has worked effectively in other organizations in which I have been involved. I call it "Each one, get one." Consider asking a friend, fellow employee, church member, colleague, family member, or stranger, to come to a meeting with you. I have gotten one new member this year, and I invited several former members to return to the fold. I have set a personal goal this year of getting ten new members for HGMS. Why should we be selfish? We have the greatest hobby in the World and probably one of the top ten Gem, Mineral, and Fossil clubs in the nation, so let's share. Won't you stop right now and think

whom you can ask to your next Section Meeting or General Meeting of HGMS?

HGMS is a bargain! However, you should know that member dues no longer cover HGMS expenses each year. It takes the revenue from the Show and from classes to keep us in the black. Dues have not been increased in many years, yet we all know that each year everything else goes up. HGMS membership is a great bargain at this year's dues. Have you paid your 2008 dues? We really need you to get your membership in so that when our annual Directory comes out, we have your current information (name, address, phone number, and e-mail address) listed correctly.

One other thing. Paraphrasing the old Wolf Brand Chili ads "How long has it been since you were at an HGMS Meeting or Section Meeting?" Well neighbor, that's too long!!!

April Program Information *continued from page 1*

April 12, 2008--Saturday: HGMS Auction: Available material includes Rough Chunks, Slabs, and some cabochons; also faceting rough—both natural and synthetic; some tools and equipment. This material came from the donation by Monty Cole before he died, and it also contains material donated to HGMS by others in the last several months. At present we are planning on a live auction for the material to begin at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, and it will continue until all items are sold. Additional information will be here on the Web site and in e-mail notices.

April 22, 2008--General Meeting: To be announced:

Comments on a Visit to the 54th Tucson Gem and Mineral Show, February 13–16, 2008, and Mineral Collecting

by Art Smith

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Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Since I spent only a small amount of time in Tucson (four days), and only half of that was at the Convention Center during the Tucson Gem & Mineral Society Show, my remarks and impressions are a result of this limited experience and should be read with this in mind. Also this is my first trip to Tucson since the show in 2003, and so after missing four years, my observations may in some cases be overly optimistic. I have really missed not being there and it was good to be back, so I had somewhat of a revival experience and probably was tolerant of some of the minor inconveniences that regulars gripe about.



However, I started Thursday upset because I had parked at my usual spot on the parking lot on the southeast side of the arena. Then I found I could not enter the door I

usually enter but instead was routed north to a ticket office and then around the north side of the building to the west entrance (and past the ticket sales which had no one in line). True, I could go out the entrance near my car, but I was not allowed to enter the lobby from it. Why? I asked, but never found out. Since I had a small dog in my vehicle that needed walking every few hours, it was an unnecessary inconvenience. It could have put me in a bad mood for the rest of the show, but I would not let it.

I had a friend with me who was dazzled by the whole show scene, so Wednesday morning at the Holidome and Electric Park (which usually takes me about four hours) took the whole day, and we did not do justice to all of Electric Park because by 5 p.m. things started shutting down. True, both shows were considerably larger than what I remembered from four years ago, but eventually repetition enabled us to move faster through the seemingly endless tables of beads, cabochons, and dodads that often dominated parts of each venue.

Also time consuming was watching Ariana, an Afghan dealer in gem rough and mineral specimens, unwrapping and putting out a recent shipment—so we stuck around to see what would be revealed. Of interest was a bicolored (pink and green) terminated spodumene crystal (about 6 by 4 cm) with numerous tiny black schorl crystals on the termination. Bicolored red and green elbaite crystals were common, as were some smoky (black) quartz crystals, some with elbaite and schorl—the first I had seen from Afghanistan. A specific locality was not given because the buyer was at another location. I will write him or ask him to find out when he comes to Houston.

Also of interest was a slender terminated 0.3 x 2 x 8 cm transparent pale green spodumene with a small, doubly terminated quartz crystal at its base. It was perfect with no dings, and I found my resistance fading. Yes, I have a small collection of small Afghanistan and Pakistan pieces that I started about 16 years ago, and my main source is the Houston International Gem Show which does Houston 4 or 5 times a year.

The only other specimens I picked up that day were what I call “chop chop” material. It is usually cheap, ugly stuff that I think might have some micromineral potential. There were some half-priced silver ore specimens with no other redeeming value. The six I got were from the Bull Dog Mountain silver mine in Creede, Mineral County, Colorado. This mine and the Commodore No. 5 mine were my collecting favorites in the 1970s, and both have been closed for years, but I have some good memories and some good specimens, microscopic and larger, from each. Here I tried to select specimens with different matrix and appearance but with small cavities in the hope of finding different mineral species—or at least different habits and associations for those I have. For just over \$50 I got almost half a flat of specimens plus one unusual microscopic mimetite from Mapimi and a specimen of quite small wulfenite crystals from the Ford mine in Tiger, Pinal County, Arizona along with the more famous Mammoth and St. Anthony mines. The crystals are not as bright as microspecimens from those mines. They are thick tabular to almost pseudo cubic, looking like tiny wulfenite sandwiches. They should make good micromineral specimens from a famous locality that are different. That was it for my mineral purchases on Wednesday.

However, during the four days of buying I did add 15 carved frogs of different lapidary materials to my collection including wonderstone (banded rhyolite) from Utah, California nephrite, purple jadeite from Turkey, rose quartz from Georgia and Mozambique, silicified wood including palm wood, fossil coral from Alaska, fossil whale bone from California, plus precious opal probably from South Australia.

Thursday was the opening of the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show which I was greatly anticipating because of the special exhibits on classic American mineral localities. It was not disappointing. Although the cases ranged from “knock your socks off” to “so what,” the majority were well done, and they alone were worth the trip to Tucson. In the “knock your socks off” category were Alma, Colorado rhodochrosite, fluorite and associated minerals, and the California and Colorado golds, but the case with the amazing blue-capped California tourmalines beat everything.

Also of interest was the variation in color and mineral diversity shown by the Tiger, Arizona case. This one you had to look at closely to really see and appreciate some outstanding specimens because they did not grab your attention as you walked by like some of the others. Since there is a book and there will be a DVD on these displays, I will not go on. However, I will say that my initial impression of the book (I have read about 25 percent) is very good, and much better than I had anticipated. This is not just a coffee table book because it is much more than wonderful photographs. Most of the locations are authored by people who have an intimate relationship with the location, and the personal comments and stories make what otherwise would be a good book into an outstanding book. Certainly Gloria Staebler, Wendell Wilson, and the many people involved with it did a remarkable job putting this outstanding volume together in less than two years. I think all of us could make a case for some localities that are not in the book and for others that should not be in it. However why not enjoy what is there, and maybe someone will write an article on those locations still needing good exposure that did not make the book. Better yet, why not write an article on your favorite mineral location and enlist a few friends to help?

I could rant on about the extremely high prices of minerals in the Convention Center and motels. However if you look around, you can still find some specimens to fit your budget. You would not expect to pay your price for any of the specimens in your favorite museum that are not for sale, so just consider those specimens beyond your pocket book as museum pieces. However with a little looking, you might find some sleepers that you can afford or try collecting a less known location, area, or mineral.

I bought two specimens that were not extremely expensive, but with a little work on them—mostly cleaning and trimming—I think I can probably upgrade them to at least double what I paid. This is not a major project like the pros do—just basic solution cleaning, scraping, and trimming. That was my challenge, and I can say I was successful with both specimens. Since both specimens are quartz, there was not much danger in ruining them. I generally restrict my buying to the well-known locations that I specialize in. That makes it exciting when I find something to add to or replace what I already have. Generally I do not lust after those other beauties that I cannot afford

though I do appreciate them. I tend to collect more affordable locations, and when I find a “must have” specimen, I try not to completely “break the bank” by buying a good specimen, though at times I have come close.

Two of the specimens I bought at Tucson 10 or 15 years ago seemed extremely expensive at the time, but I did it because they fit into the realm of what I was collecting besides microminerals. Now they are worth several times what I paid for them. The two specimens I refer to are pictured under the Hot Springs quartz section of the new book, *American Mineral Treasures*. They are both significant Arkansas quartz specimens, but if I was just buying pretty rocks at the time, probably none would have made the book or be significant. Specializing in about anything, including location, mineral species, or specific associations, may allow you to get more meaningful and significant specimens instead of just having pretty rocks to add to a case of nice rocks.

What I am saying is, develop a plan for what you are buying, collecting, and where you are going with it, and you may find it more satisfying and more rewarding in the long run. When you do this, you will find that significant mineral specimens are not just pretty colors, fine crystals, and a lot of money, and they are often sold as insignificant. However, the beauty of mineral collecting is that you can collect what you want, spend what you like, and you can do it for yourself. If others like or dislike what you have, so what? There are no rules, just ideas on what to collect and when.

After staying out at the Tucson airport for years, I found that I was priced out of the motels in the area, and my small dog would be a problem in some. So we stayed way east of downtown and north a ways from I-10 and found a nice room in the plus or minus \$100 a day range. Yes, the daily rate varied a little from under to over \$100 a day. Perhaps it was because of dirty sox that were left on the floor or maybe Gunther wet on the floor. Most good motels at the airport wanted \$150 and up. We found not dealing with the interstate a pleasant experience, and there was no problem going or coming to the motel. Plus there were some good eating places in the neighborhood and a fairly good free breakfast at the motel. Well, not quite as good as the Embassy Suite at the airport that cooked the free breakfast to order in the 1980s, and I would invite two other guys to share the room with me, and it was still \$75 per night. To me the whole change of pace in climate, setting, people, and atmosphere still make Tucson a very good winter interlude, and having all those minerals and other stuff to look at just makes it extra special.

Have things in Tucson changed significantly since my last show in 2003? You bet it has. But they are a mixed bag, and some are good and some are not, but most could have been predicted. Gone are most of the small U.S. dealers and rock shops. I assume expenses and slow sales wiped them out. Chinese dealers are still trying, many unsuccessfully. There is more exposure of the larger dealers who often set up in more than one location. So theoretically more specimens are concentrated in fewer dealers' stocks though each year there are new dealers giving it a try and hoping to get rich. Since the loss of the Executive Inn as a main dealer location, things are a bit more fragmented, and it has not been successfully replaced as a central concentration for dealers with mineral specimens. Gone are the guys hawking flats from the trunk of their car or

back of their truck or along the sidewalks. I thought I would take advantage of them my first trip driving out but did not find anything worth buying. Most of the foreign dealers who have inventory reduction sales the last weekend seemed to have had it one weekend earlier so I missed that, but I am glad because my goal this spring is to fit my vehicle in the garage.

Friday, by the time I thought of going to the Quality Inn on Benson Highway, I was told it was mostly shut down already and not to waste my time. So I missed some potential bargains that I was told were there. The rain on Friday made things slow, so I spent time talking about quartz crystals and mining with Don Burrow at the Tucson Show Place. I have been buying quartz crystals and some wavellite from Don for close to 40 years, so there was much to talk about. This year I managed to buy a spectacular quartz crystals group from Collier Creek that was above his desk in the shop plus a collection of Chihuahua, Mexico scepters that were quite intriguing. The Collier Creek quartz specimen was one of those mentioned that needed some additional cleaning, and the result is an outstanding specimen to add to my Arkansas quartz crystal collection.

It was still raining when we left for the Inn Suites and found many of the dealers already closed up, and it was not fun going between rooms in the rain and cold, so we spent some time in the ballrooms and picked up a few things. Aurora Minerals had a temporary building right off the parking lot, and I always enjoy looking at their carvings. I picked up one of a bison in Picasso Marble.

Saturday it was back to the Convention Center, and we decided that it would be our last day in Tucson. I introduced myself to Rodney Moore (Dixie Euhedrals), but he did not remember my buying several packages of crystals from him in 1994 when he was doing all his digging by hand. At that time he was working the J. B. Ivey mine in Warren County, Georgia. I still have a couple of amethysts including one scepter from him plus some small crystals from Jackson's Crossroads. He then was just dreaming of what he could do with the right equipment. Now he has it, and he made an almost instant classical location out of Jackson's Crossroads.

Most of the rest of the day was spent looking at the display cases and talking to old friends. I noticed that Clive Queit had some of the Arkansas galena included crystals in his case. When I asked him about them in 2003, he had completely forgotten about them but they must have turned up somewhere since then. I loaded the car with boxes of stuff others were sending to Houston, met some friends for supper, turned in early, and got an early start for the trek back to Houston on Sunday making over half of the 1050 miles. Once again it was a trip to remember and something to do again, hopefully next year with a couple of extra days before the last weekend.



The Care and Feeding of Diamond Saws

by Wayne S. Barnett©2008

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

On a recent Saturday at the shop, a 20-inch diamond blade was bent and rendered unusable. The problem was caused by a member attempting to cut a round agate nodule that was improperly clamped in the vise. As the cut was being made, pressure was applied to one end of the nodule. The nodule slipped, came out of the vise, and bent the blade. The bend was so severe, the blade is now unusable. See Figure 1. The good news in this episode is that no one was injured, and the blade was already about 80% used. The bad news might have been that an injury occurred or that it was a new blade (or both). Blades such as this cost about \$400. **Injuries might cost much more.**



In another case, a member left a note in the cash can, claiming responsibility for damaging a trim saw blade and offering to pay for its replacement.

How can such incidents be prevented? First make sure that any rock, round or square, is properly secured in the slab saw vise before beginning a cut. If the rock can work loose, it may come out of the vise and damage the saw or blade, rendering either or both unusable. Make sure that the rock is held tightly in the vise by attempting to work it back and forth after the vise is tightened. See Figure 2. If the rock can be moved, use a hammer and tap on the back jaw of the vise to free any binding that may have occurred. See Figure 3. Continue to tighten and to tap on the vise jaw until the rock is held tightly and will not move. If the rock cannot be held firmly in the vise, then do not cut it.

Figure 1. Bent 20-inch blade. This blade is no longer usable.



If you want to cut a round nodule into equal halves, it usually cannot be held properly in the saw vise. The solution is to glue it to a short piece of 2 x 4. To do this, first take a new—not oily—2 x 4 and hollow a shallow basin in one side. The 2 x 4 only needs to be about 3 or 4 inches long. Then mix some sand with white water-soluble glue to make a thick paste. Coat the basin in the 2 x 4, and coat the nodule with a thin coat of glue to create a good bond. Place enough sand and glue mixture into the basin so it fills the gap between the wood and the nodule when the two are pressed together. Press the two together as tightly as possible, squeezing out any excess mixture. Let the assembly dry and cure for several



Figure 2.
Grip the rock
firmly to
make sure
that it will not
move in the
vise.



Figure 3. To
secure the
specimen in
the vise, tap on
the corner of
the back jaw to
release any
binding that
may be
present.

days, depending on the size of the area being bonded and the volume of the glue-sand mixture. The larger the size, the longer it will take to cure.

When the glue mixture on the blocked nodule is cured, it can be clamped safely in the vise for cutting. Again, be sure that the vise has not bound and that the block is properly held by the vise before beginning to cut the specimen. After the nodule is sawn in

half, the side that is attached to the board can be removed by soaking it in water for several days or by splitting it off with a chisel or screw-driver.

If a blocky rock is to be slabbed, the same technique can be used to get the most from the material. If the specimen has a flat surface that is in the proper orientation for cutting, then glue a 2 x 4 to that surface. If it is rough, then use some sand-glue mixture to fill the gaps between the rock and the wood. Let it cure for several



Figure 4. Medium-size piece of obsidian glued to a piece of 2 x 4, ready to be sawed. Notice the thick layer of sand and glue between the rock and the board.



Figure 5. Notice the wood wedge to the right of the rock, helping to stabilize the specimen in the vise.

days or weeks so the bond is strong. When it is mounted in the saw, it can be slabbed completely with minimal waste. If the rock is not slabbed to completion in the first session, then it easily can be put back in the saw in the same orientation as the first time since it is mounted on a square piece of stock. While the first cut from any subsequent cutting session(s) may not be precise, the quality of the slab will be greatly enhanced, thus reducing waste from a piece of quality material. The final cut may be just in the wood so the last slab is freed from the mount with a minimal chance of damage to the last slab.

If a larger piece of material is being cut, and a good grip cannot be obtained on the piece, wood wedges may be the best solution for properly securing the material. If the right size or shape is not available, then a wedge should be cut to fit the need. As the

viser is being tightened, the back jaw needs to be checked and freed of any binding (as in Figure 3) so it can be tightened properly to hold the rock securely. This is done, as shown, by tapping on the back jaw with a hammer.

If there is any question about whether a rock can be safely cut, please seek help from one of the shop supervisors. While an individual will not be held responsible for damage done to a piece of equipment while they are using it, it is best if they do not damage the equipment. And last but not least, using the equipment properly is safer than having things go wrong. When rocks come out of the vise while being cut, or if they bind in a trim saw, not only can this ruin the equipment and the material being cut, but the flying debris may injure someone in the shop—most likely the operator.

A check list of things to note when cutting a specimen with a diamond saw:

1. Make sure the rock/crystal/fossil is held securely.
2. Check for the proper amount of coolant in the saw. **Do not** run any saw without the proper cooling.
3. **Do not** attempt to cut a large specimen on a saw that is too small to handle it safely.
4. Wear safety glasses or a face shield while operating a saw.
5. Keep hands and fingers away from sharp blades and moving parts.
6. Turn equipment off when finished. **Do not** walk away from a trim saw that is running.
7. Clean up the saw and surrounding area when finished. Broken chips and trim scrap can create a safety hazard.
8. **Do not** leave slab saws running unattended. Be available when a slab is finished to reset the vise or to remove the specimen from the saw. Others may be waiting to use the equipment.

No matter how many precautions are taken, things may go wrong. Eliminate as many of the potential hazards as you can to keep bad things from happening. If the equipment is not running properly, **stop using it(!)** and let the shop manager or one of the shop supervisors know. All of the equipment in the lapidary shop and elsewhere in the clubhouse is considered high maintenance. Again, members will not be held accountable for problems with the equipment, including breakdowns that might occur while they are using it.

And remember, there is always enough time to do it safely.



Evolution Understood!

by Neal Immega

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

One of my many hobbies is reading books on evolution, and these are my picks for most informative. They are in the Harris County Library system.

Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The New Science of Evo Devo and the Making of the Animal Kingdom – by Sean B. Carroll – 2005.

The Making of the Fittest: DNA and the Ultimate Forensic Record of Evolution – by Sean B. Carroll – 2006, about 300 pages.

If you want to know what is really going on, then look at the development of life in its earliest stages (the Devo in the first title). Then look at the genes that control it (the Evo). Having the genetic record available for so many animals allows Sean Carroll to make astounding discoveries about how every living animal grows. The genes that control the body plan of everything that is bilaterally symmetrical are the same, whether for fruit flies or mice. If you cut the head bud out of a growing fruit fly and stick that piece in a mouse embryo, you get a growing mouse with two heads. It turns out that the gene that grows ribs in a mouse is the same one that grows ribs in a snake—and another gene is the control switch that determines how many ribs are made. Do you want to make a new species? Then duplicate the number of genes and modify them for new functions. Shrimps are just the sporty version of worms.

There is a surprisingly large amount of nonfunctioning DNA in every creature's genetic record. Huge chunks of it turn out to be abandoned genes that are no longer being maintained. Dogs have a highly developed sense of smell but much poorer eyesight than a human. It turns out that dogs and humans have about the same number of genes for smelling, but in humans most of them are nonfunctional. Apparently humans have deemphasized smelling, and since those genes are not being used, they accumulated random mutations which rendered them nonfunctional. We can even determine when this happened by applying the rate at which random mutations occur.

All the great apes make great use of their ability to see three colors plus black and white, while all other mammals make do with less. Dolphins have their vision shifted toward the blue end because red is strongly absorbed by water. Before you start thinking that humans are the peak of evolution, you should know that birds have four-color vision plus black and white. The best part is that vision can be traced back to the evolution of certain light-sensitive neurons that are (still) part of our circadian rhythm section in the brain. It turns out that the evolution of eyes is just like the evolution of everything else—step-by-step.

These are the books to read that make evolution understandable on a simple level. This article is something of a test to see if anyone has read it. I have had no feedback from things I have written for the BBG in so long that I have largely shifted my writing to other forums. Tell me something—if only to shut up.

Faux Pas, uhh, Rather Palm. “Faux Palm,” that is.*College Station Field Trip Report**March 2, 2008**by Owen Martin with contributions from Steve Blyskal*

A small group headed out to the usual haunts in the College Station area. Members included Steve Blyskal, Sigrid Stewart, Robert Stevens and son Jackson, Owen Martin with kids Cole and Wendy and friend Justin, Mike Dawkins with Adam (girlfriend's son), and Steve and Sharon Menegaz.

There was some interest in visiting White Creek, and although the water was not particularly high, it was still slick and limited the downstream range without commitment to getting really wet. Mike Dawkins did make it down White Creek a way, got wet, and did find one nice “center.” He reported very little activity since last year, since large pieces he had cached then were still undisturbed. Sharon also found a nice “center” (softer, eroded white wood with chalcedony fillings in the shrinkage cracks in the limb centers). Two of the boys, Adam and Jackson, found nice large silicified wood pieces. Everyone got a geology lesson from Steve Blyskal on the Yegua shale and was shown the gypsum crystals that grow in the fractures in the shale. We all agreed it was not worth the time to go farther down the creek, considering the problems getting around the fallen tree and the deep water at the sharp bend of the creek. Someone needs to go out there with a BIG chainsaw and cut through the tree to improve access downstream.

From there we took an exploratory route out toward Highway 21, then wrapped around on 47 back to Villa Marie. On our ramble, we made it past Hwy 21 on 2818 to Sandy Point Rd. and explored it in both directions, ending at OSR (Old Spanish Road), which we took back to Hwy 21 and then down new Hwy 47 to Villa Maria Rd, which is FM 1179 at that intersection. A couple of stops were made, but with the exception of some wood behind some serious barbed wire, the destinations were not particularly productive.

At that point we decided to head up to the “proven” Traditions subdivision area. Some good yard rocks were found by the group, and a couple of small pieces of palm wood were found by Owen (including a small dark red silicified piece—his first one ever in the B/CS area). Mike Dawkins was standing right next to both pieces when they were found, leading to a sense of continuing frustration on Mike's part. It has been more than a year inclusive of six or seven trips to the area since Mike has found any palm wood there. Lots of crystal, but no palm. There was more wood to be had though as highlighted by the oohs and aahs at the selection of LARGE pieces Robert pulled from the upper part of a wash in a relatively short time. They filled his large rolling cart which was the perfect vehicle for getting hundreds of pounds of petrified wood to his truck. He was kind enough to come back twice more to get the pieces Steve and Sigrid and Steve and Sharon had also dug up.

From there we headed for a nice long lunch at Rosas on Highway 60. Owen was very interested in bugging Sigrid about what jasper looks like. It's not a fossil, so he had no

clue and seemed to need repeated reinforcement of what it looked like at the next stop. We headed out to a construction site from Rosas that is near the sports fields off Highway 60 north of Highway 6. A new retention pond has been built, and literally tons of cobbles are in the area. Cobbles of course can mean jasper, and Owen thinks he found about a dozen good pieces. Hopefully Sigrid did, too.

Interestingly we had only been in the pond about two minutes when Steve Blyskal found a nice 2–3 pound piece of the yellow/brown palm that is the most prevalent in the area. Owen earlier was very excited about his red palm wood, but only two or three minutes after Steve's find, Robert found a red palm piece that was easily 5–6 times the size of Owen's. Keep in mind that size does matter.

Mike Dawkins then showed up with a couple of pieces of legume that looked a little like palm but obviously weren't. The frustration continued. Owen found another piece which earned him a couple of choice comments from Mike. A few minutes later Mike came up with the term "faux palm," as it described everything he picked up that might have been palm, but wasn't. He was still muttering it under his breath awhile later when the drought FINALLY ended. As a holler of joy echoed off the walls of the pond, we all discovered that he had indeed found a real, actual, live (dead) piece of palm wood. Not so faux any more.

A note from Steve Blyskal on this area: Information to add about the retention pond area is the large amount of high-quality silicified wood good for tumbling with some pieces good for cutting. The best times to go are after a rain when the cobbles and gravel are washed clean of dust and dirt. The retention pond was built on one of the largest accumulations of gravel and cobbles I have ever seen in the College Station area, and this extends all the way to the ball fields one mile to the west where the berms in the parking lots are littered with cobbles and petrified wood to the point that grass will hardly grow on them.

A good time was had by all, and Robert's son Jackson even found a great clam fossil in the limestone riprap brought in for construction of a bridge over the retention pond. We better get out there again before spring covers everything with lush greenery.

Sunshine Report

If you have information which should appear here, please contact Phyllis George at 281-395-3087 or e-mail her at pgeorge4@comcast.net

Sigrid Stewart's mother, Joanne Franz, died Saturday, February 2 in Midland, TX. The funeral service was on Tuesday, February 5. Burial was on Thursday, February 7 in Topeka, Kansas.

Denise Bicknell's aunt passed away Saturday, March 1. Denise is in Missouri to be with her family.

William "Andy" Anderson had cataract surgery two months ago.

Frances Arrighi had outpatient cataract surgery March 6. She is doing well.

Our warmest wishes go out to those who have lost loved ones and to those who are recuperating from surgery or illness.

In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

The book-magazine sale is finished, and the library has netted \$366.52. This should help pay the binding bill for this year. With a few annual journals complete for the year, there are always new magazines to have bound. Binding makes them easier to store on the shelves; it makes the shelves much neater; and it prevents single issues from vanishing. It does make things harder to copy, but I think the good outweighs the bad.

I have a copy of the new book resulting from the Tucson show on the Classical American mineral localities. It is a gem with wonderful photographs, and in most cases the text is informative and very readable. It was a two-year project and turned out extremely well. I am disappointed in the Arkansas quartz portion even though two of my specimens are illustrated in it. The article fails to capture the diversity of Arkansas quartz with no photos of Jeffrey Quarry quartz haystacks, no tabular crystals, and no phantoms and only one poor photo of a chlorite-included quartz. The rare Japan Law twins are over emphasized.

I am on the annual mission of cleaning up the surplus material that accumulates in the library, and hopefully by the time you read this, you will notice a big difference. I am behind in filing new books and journals, and when boxes accumulate, other things also get mixed into them and the pile gets bigger.

I did purchase a long-wave UV display light in Tucson for the Mineral Section fluorescent display at the show. It is an Ultrabright light and should increase the brightness of the long-wave case considerably.

The January-February, 2008, *Mineralogical Record* either has not come or has disappeared. If you have borrowed it or know where it is, please put it on the library table. It is the regular issue plus a supplement.

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

Thirteen members attended the 11 February 2008 meeting of the Day Light Section. The meeting was devoted to a slide show by Professor Val Link on the work that he and some of his students have done using the hydraulic press. There were several pieces by Bill Butler, our former president. What can be done with the hydraulic press using precious and non-precious metals is both astounding and beautiful.

During the 10 March, 2008 meeting, the members will be using the hydraulic press for their own work. Tom Wright is the instructor since Val Link cannot be with us on that day.

The Day Light Section is ALSO going to meet on 17 March (same time, same place), because Val can be there then. The program will also be on the hydraulic press with members using it.

Bill Cox has donated materials for making opal doublets and triplets and agate doublets. We thank Bill very much for this big donation. It now appears that we will be able to do the opal doublets and triplets as well as the agate doublets. This will be the program for the April and May meetings.

This summer will be devoted to working with patinas. One thing we plan on doing is making some samples using 1 x 3-inch pieces of metal. These can be kept, and they will show how that particular patina looks on that particular metal. At present we plan to use bronze and copper. We may also use some silver and brass.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section

by Stephen Wilkerson
Lapidary Section Chair

The January and February meetings were lightly attended. After some brief begging and arm twisting, Stephen Wilkerson volunteered to take the position of Lapidary Section Chair.

Education: Tom Wright will be teaching a fabrication class starting Sunday March 2, 10 a.m.– 3 p.m. The class will run for five weeks on Sundays. The class will vote whether to meet on Easter Sunday.

Treasury: Phyllis George gave the Treasurer's Report. Expenditures for supplies for upcoming programs were approved. It was noted that the supply of our original template with pie wedge and marquis shapes is getting low, and we will need to order more templates soon.

Announcements: The club will be having an auction on April 12. Terry Proctor received an e-mail from a Texas City couple wishing to sell casting tools and equipment. The Day Light Section will be having a program on doublets and triplets in April.

Show & Tell: Tom Wright brought two slabs of tiger eye to show. One was untreated yellow tiger eye, and the other had been heat treated to red tiger eye. Tom has made several attempts to heat treat the material, but so far has only been able to change the surface color of the slab. Once the surface is ground through, the interior is still yellow.

There was no program this month. Since there were so few of us, we had an open discussion on homemade equipment and its problems. We also discussed problems with pickling solutions and how to resolve them.

In the coming months we will be having a number of hands-on programs. In March we hope to have a program on paste soldering presented by John Zanders. April and May we will be making doublets and triplets (yes, we borrowed this from the Day Light Section). June we will work on spool polishers. Several units will be brought in so everyone can try their hand at it.

I am looking for additional ideas for future programs, so please let me know if you want to do a program or have an idea for a hands-on program.

HGMS Faceting Section Seminar

by Wayne Barnett

The HGMS Faceting Section is sponsoring a seminar on faceting technique. It will be held on Sunday April 27 from 12:00 noon to about 5:00 p.m. Anyone who has a faceting machine is welcome to bring their machine and join the session. The Faceting Section's machines will be available for those who do not have a machine but wish to join the session. If you do not have a machine, contact Wayne Barnett at Wayne.Barnett@comcast.net to reserve a place and a machine. Places for machines will be filled on a first requesting basis with a reserve list if more individuals request a spot than machines are available.

Whether you have been faceting for awhile and want assistance on your stone(s), or you are a rank beginner and want to see what faceting is all about, you will want to attend this event. We will try to answer any questions that anyone may have concerning faceting. As usual normal shop fees apply, so the seminar will cost \$10 dollars per person attending, payable at the beginning of the seminar.

Mineral Section Programs

by Art Smith

The **March 19** meeting: Farrar Stockton and his trip to Canada and the Alberta region plus the Dinosaur museum.

The **April 2** meeting: Art Smith will talk on Arkansas wavellite localities. Most collectors know of Arkansas wavellite from only two or three localities. However, wavellite mineralization may occur wherever the Big Fork chert crops out, though many localities only have a trace of wavellite. Others have the potential for producing good specimens, but digging it is difficult because the beds are often vertical rather than horizontal.

2008 Texas Faceters' Guild Symposium

by Bob Lucas, TFG Editor

The Texas Faceters' Guild (TFG) has scheduled their 2008 Symposium and Annual Meeting for Saturday and Sunday, September 27–28, to be held as a satellite meeting of the 2008 Houston AFMS/SCFMS/HGMS show. The TFG Symposium and Annual Meeting will take place at the Comfort Suites Kingwood, host hotel for the AFMS/SCFMS/HGMS show. All show attendees with an interest in faceting are invited and encouraged to attend. Additional information regarding the show, hotels, and restaurants is available at www.hgms.org.



Several talks and exhibits on faceting subjects will be of interest to both novice and master faceters. As an example, last year's program included a hands-on demonstration of concave faceting equipment, hands-on practice with index of refraction determination equipment, a review of the fabrication and use of a monster faceting machine, an update on current research to determine if there are physical properties which

might uniquely identify Texas topaz, and a review of the techniques used to create an extremely precise replica of the Koh-I-Noor diamond. Two private collections of replicas plus the Guild collection were on display. Also, a number of the TFG members brought items to exhibit and to use for discussion. Details of the 2008 Symposium agenda are not yet finalized but should be available by midsummer.

TFG has a collection of over 50 diamond replicas cut from cubic zirconium. A portion of their collection will be on display at the main show. If you are a faceter and wish to cut one of these gems, TFG has cutting diagrams available for each of the replicas. They are each a work of art to be enjoyed even if you are not interested in cutting one.

Those taking part in the symposium will have ample time to meet other members of the Texas faceting community, discuss common problems, pass on solutions they might have developed, and evaluate whether they would like to join the Guild. Those wanting a reminder when the agenda is finalized, please contact:

Bob Lucas, current newsletter editor
6745 Lendell Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78249
210-558-4547
blucas@world-net.net

HGMS General Meeting

February 26, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

2008 HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by Terry Proctor, President.

Announcements and Introductions:

Welcome to all of our visitors, some of whom are new members attending their first meeting. Visitors included Mike Summers, a geologist; George Payne, an accountant and professional photographer; Pier Laird, a rock collector; David Everton, a fossil collector; and Clint Milby and Jake Fruia, quartz fetishists. New members included Regina Gorman, and Mike Di Benedetto and his children, Harry and Hannah.

Terry Proctor circulated a sign-up sheet so that people could sign up to bring refreshments to the General Meeting. Terry provided the refreshments tonight, Neal Immega will bring refreshments next month, Phyllis George volunteered for April, Sigrid Stewart for May, and Mary Ann Mitscherling for June.

Terry also said that we still don't have a First Vice President whose main duty is to plan programs for the General Meeting. Terry has already lined up five months of programs so far, so there is no urgency in filling the position. Some of the upcoming programs are a presentation by Joel Bartsch, and in August a presentation by Dr. Patrick J. Lewis, a professor at Sam Houston State University who last summer discovered the oldest primates while digging in the Egyptian desert, and he has discov-

ered more species of primates there than anywhere else in the World. Next month, Tom Wright will do broomstraw and salt casting of silver. If you want to have one of the castings Tom makes, notify him that you want him to purchase some silver for you (about \$9.00 which you'll pay Tom at the meeting) and then you can keep the casting he makes from your silver. There will be a story in the BBG letting members know about this.

Phyllis George said that the April BBG deadline is March 5, 2008. She also asked that people let her know if they want something added to the Web site.

John Cooper said that the Beading Group will have a change in schedule for this month only. They will meet this Saturday, March 1, and make rings with silver wire.

Terry Proctor announced that the Southwest Gem and Mineral Society show has been cancelled in San Antonio. The Gem and Mineral Society of Jefferson County has a show in Madras, Oregon.

Terry also announced that the Show Publicity Committee would meet on February 28 at 7:30 P.M.

The Club still needs an Education Chair. The Chairperson is responsible for organizing classes and collecting money. This is an important position for the Club as classes provide income as well as attracting new members and keeping old members.

Committee and Section reports:

- **Show Committee:** Scott Singleton, 2008 Show Chairman, reported that the club was well represented at the Clear Lake Show. We ran out of application forms at the show. The purpose of having a table there is to promote both the show and the Club.
- **Daylight Section:** Mary Ann Mitscherling reported that in February, Val Link discussed techniques and procedures for using a hydraulic press. This will continue in the March meeting.
- **Lapidary Section:** Mary Ann also reported that in March, John Zanders will be demonstrating a paste soldering technique. Phyllis George said that in April and May the group will work on creating doublets. Also, the lapidary stone of the month will be nephrite jade contributed by Wayne Barnett.
- **Mineral Section:** Steve Blyskal reported that on March 5, there will be a discussion of the Clear Lake Show. Dean Lagerwall will bring some of the 50 flats he bought in Tucson. Steve will have photos from Tucson as well. He will talk about Tucson in May.

For the 2nd Mineral Section Meeting of the month, Farris Stockton will talk about mineral finds in the Canadian Rockies, primarily the ice fields between Calgary and Jasper. This will be part travelogue.

- **Paleo Section:** Neal Immega talked about the field trip to Brownwood scheduled for Easter weekend. People can stay at Lexy Bieniek's, eat out of a common pot, and car pool.
- **Faceting Section:** Phyllis George announced that the Texas Faceting Guild will have their symposium in conjunction with our show in September. It will be

held at the host hotel, the Comfort Suites Kingwood in Humble.

Show and Tell:

- Steve Blyskal brought in some “finds” from Tucson including boulder opal, prenite from Pakistan, and stilbite. He had a great time and learned a lot about opals.
- Gary Tober had a piece of petrified wood from Attu Island.
- Beverly Mace brought in treasure in the guise of petrified wood from the Mississippi Gem and Mineral Show.
- Terry Proctor showed a drawing of a Hadrosaurus he will be using for Proctor Museum mugs.
- John Cooper brought in his relic shovel, a great digging tool.
- Will Harmon, who is rejoining the club, showed rubies in matrix as well as other minerals from the Rattlesnake Mountains in Wyoming.

Door Prize: Will Harmon won a large chunk of obsidian provided by Neal Immega.

Program: George Wolf, past chairman of the Paleo Section, gave an informative and entertaining presentation about fossil hunting in Florida. (Terry made the observation that 50 people can trample an area searching for fossils. Then George can walk through and spot a fantastic find that everyone else missed). George Wolf had specimens and corresponding figurines set up. He said the figurines made it much easier to visualize what type of animal the specimens came from. He talked about equipment, methods, and different areas in which to hunt. He also talked about the kinds of things one might find in the different areas, such as shark teeth of different sizes and colors, manatee bones and teeth, etc. He said he usually comes back from a Florida trip with between 3,000–5,000 specimens.

HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

2008 HGMS Secretary

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
	1 st Vice President		X	Lapidary Rep.	Karen Burns
X	2 nd Vice President	Beverly Mace		Mineral Rep.	Denise Bicknell
X	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan	X	Paleontology Rep.	Rick Rexroad
X	Secretary	Nancy Fischer	X	Day Light Rep.	Tom Wright
	Past President	Matt Dillon			

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Terry Proctor, President. He announced that a quorum was present.

February Minutes were distributed via e-mail and accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan presented a Balance Statement and gave the

Treasurer's report. Rick Rexroad had a question about donations. Rodney explained that the report covered February 2008. Tom Lammers, a Life Member, gave the club a \$100 donation.

Terry Proctor drafted and sent a letter and \$2500 check to the 2008 scholarship recipient, Carol Locke. The check was made out to the University of Houston. It will be deposited into an account earmarked to be used only for tuition and fees. Terry asked her about scheduling a presentation to the Club.

Rodney has begun an analysis of Club income and expenses. He distributed a spreadsheet that showed the financial operations since 2000, excluding revenue from the show. This came about as a result of a discussion last month of a dues increase. The original discussion was precipitated by the fact that the Electric contract will be up this year.

The Paleo Section had the idea that dues were being raised to expand or relocate the clubhouse. That misunderstanding has been corrected. The last dues increase was probably in 2001.

There was a brief discussion about sales tax collection. Rick Rexroad talked to Art Smith about how he handles the Silent Auctions. Art said that he could not take the time to account for sales tax. It was determined that this was unnecessary. Karen Burns suggested and all agreed that Rodney could total the revenue from sales of all sorts at the end of the year and back out the sales tax and pay it. The Paleo Section apparently has a sales tax number that would apply to the Club as well. Rick Rexroad will look into how the Paleo Section reports their sales tax.

Karen Burns detailed some of the items for sale that would be taxed such as templates, books, and sales at the Information Booth.

Committee and Section Reports:

- **Day Light:** Phyllis George and Tom Wright reported that Tom would give the program on using the hydraulic press this Monday and that Val Link would continue the following Monday. The Daylight Section will have two meetings this month. Val was originally scheduled to present this Monday but has a previous obligation, so Tom is stepping up and filling in.
- **Faceting:** Phyllis George said that the Texas Faceter's Guild will have their Symposium in conjunction with the HGMS Show in September. It will be held Saturday and Sunday of the Show at the host hotel, Comfort Suites Kingwood.
- **Lapidary:** Phyllis also said that Steve Wilkerson has accepted the position of Lapidary Chair. She has put his program plans on the Web site. John Zanders will talk about paste soldering this month (March). At the April meeting, the group will start making doublets. They will sand the surfaces flat, then glue them together. During the May meeting, they will finish the cabochons.

Wayne Barnett gave the group seven slabs of jade. This will be used for the March stone of the month.

- **Education:** The position of Education Chair is still vacant.
- **Paleo:** Rick Rexroad mentioned the field trip to Brownwood is planned for Easter weekend.

He reported that David Temple gave the presentation at the last Paleo Section Meeting. David talked about the dig in Seymour, TX. They found a dimetridon, a marine reptile with a fin on its back that predates dinosaurs. David also said that the chiggers were fierce during that dig. This reminded Tom Wright of a BBG article last year that said rubbing Bounce® on the skin will keep chiggers away. Beverly Mace added that Preparation H® works well after you've been attacked by chiggers or mosquitoes.

- **Mineral Section:** The group was holding its regular meeting in the main meeting room while the Board was meeting in the Education Room. Dean Lagerwall and Steve Blyskal brought in finds from Tucson.
- **Shop and Clubhouse:** Tom Wright said that basically everything was fine. It was a very busy day today. He also noted that he was deliberately ignoring the repairs needed on the wall. The repairs are no longer urgent now that the wood is drying out following repairs made to the drain line.
- **Show Committee:** There was no report this month.
- **Youth Group:** Beverly Mace reported that 20 kids attended the last session. They were lined up to use the shop equipment.
- **Beading Group:** There were five or six people present. Phyllis George showed a really nice button and wire wrapped ring that she made at the meeting. She said the next project will be a chain mail bracelet made of jump rings. The instructions and material list are on the Web site.
- **Anthropology Group:** Terry Proctor said that the formation of an Anthropology Group was brought up at the last Paleo Section meeting. George Wolf expressed his concern the government would place undue restrictions on collecting artifacts, particularly of American Indians. Terry said that he has his collection displayed on his Web site. Karen Burns said that restrictions depend on whether an item was found at an original site or had "fallen out," i.e., been moved by a flood or other force of nature.

Terry said that a lot of items just weather away if they are not collected before that happens. It was also noted that many finds are stashed away in museum basements and are not looked at for years.

- **BBG:** Phyllis George said she has a strict deadline this month as she is having surgery next week, and her shoulder will be immobile for six weeks. In addition to editing the BBG this weekend, she has just finished judging articles for the Southeast Federation and will finish judging articles for the Rocky Mountain Federation before her surgery.

Rick Rexroad volunteered to help her edit next month's BBG. She said she would send Art Smith's article to him and the other articles as they arrive. It was also suggested that Charlie Fredregill could help create the newsletter since he is familiar with the software.

Review of Action Items from last Board meeting: Many items are covered below. The remaining are included in the Action Items for this month.

Old and New Business:

1. A Dues Review Committee consisting of Rodney Linehan and Karen Burns was formed. They will study the situation without including Show revenue. Phyllis George cautioned that if the Board decides that an increase is needed, it should be made clear to the membership that the increase will not be used for larger quarters for the Club. The increase would be necessary just to pay the normal bills. If a dues increase is deemed necessary, it will be presented to the Club through the BBG. Karen Burns pointed out the difference between a nonprofit organization such as the Red Cross and a not-for-profit organization like HGMS.
2. The Code of Conduct was discussed. Terry Proctor said that Matt Dillon is contacting the person who was going to give a three-hour presentation to ask if it could be cut to an hour or less. It was feared that no one would show up for a long presentation. Terry mentioned that although Scott Singleton expressed a preference for the longer draft of the document, he (Terry) will work on a more terse one-page version for the next meeting.
3. Terry also brought up the possibility of a New Member packet. It could include the Code of Conduct and rules for the shop. Phyllis George remembered reading about such a packet in the old HGMS records that Scott Singleton used in writing his Show History. She will find the article as it had some excellent ideas.
4. Tom Wright reported that Val Link is not interested in the Education Chair position. Nancy Fischer said that she thought Mary Ann Mitscherling expressed interest in taking over the logistics part of the position, but could not be at the club to collect fees, etc. Phyllis George will contact Mary Ann Mitscherling to see if she would take over that part of the position if we can find someone to work with her and handle the other part of the position.
5. Tom Wright said one parking block has the rebar pulled out. He also mentioned that the corner of the parking lot curb is broken off, and it gets dragged into the driveway. He wondered if the contracted maintenance could fix that. Terry Proctor thought that Matt Dillon and Matt Phillips were going to fix the parking lot. He will check up on this.
6. Tom also said that we have to be careful in our wording or be careful in how we execute what we say we are doing. For instance, the notice for the tailgate sale in December said that it was going to be an auction. One member came only to find that items had prices on them and were being sold at that price. He said we need to set rules, then follow them.

7. Terry Proctor said he had talked to Neal Immega about moving the defibrillator. Neal said he would like a good area on which to project slides and movies, so he now just takes it down for presentations, then puts it back up. Tom Wright said he would move it as close to the door as he can. He wants to put up a fire extinguisher in the area as well.
8. It was noted that four people will not attend next month's Board Meeting; Phyllis George, Nancy Fischer, Rodney Linehan and Matt Dillon. There will still be a quorum if every one else attends.

Karen Burns moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom Wright seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.



SCFMS Safety Report
Eye Safety for Our Members
by Owen Martin
SCFMS Safety Coordinator
from SCFMS Newsletter 1-2/2008



A few years ago I was working as a safety consultant for the automotive industry. Primarily I helped maintenance shops at the dealerships set up and maintain their safety programs. To stay in compliance with OSHA rules, the shops had to maintain records on certain types of safety incidents.

Interestingly enough, about five out of six "reportable" safety incidents at these shops were eye injuries. Even more interesting was how most of those eye injuries happened. It wasn't chemicals, welding sparks, or blowback from high-pressure air lines, but something much more simple. During those situations they had procedures in place to make sure that the mechanics were using safety goggles or other eye protection.

When the mechanics were working under a vehicle and everything was turned off, there seemed to be a false sense of security, and safety goggles were rarely used. Consequently, a very large percentage of eye injuries resulted from rust and road grit falling into the mechanics' eyes. Yes, just debris falling in the eye has led to a preponderance of these "reportable" eye injuries, all of which required medical attention and some of which caused permanent damage.

The above commentary is designed to highlight my recommendation that you DO NOT be cavalier with the safety of your eyes.

We should wear eye protection when working in the shops, cracking rocks, or digging out fossils. If you ever think "maybe I should be using eye protection," don't talk yourself out of it. Bad eyes make it hard to find fossils, prospect for gems, or to work on your faceting projects—all those things we enjoy as members of a Gem and Mineral Society.

Be Safe, and Happy New Year!

SCFMS Editor's Message*by Paul W. Good**from SCFMS Newsletter 1-2/2008*

As some of you may know, I fell and broke my shoulder on January 7 and came home from the hospital on the 10th. I have been recuperating at home since that time. I am doing much better, and in about two more weeks I will undergo therapy for the use of my arm. I want to thank those of you who have sent e-mails and notes with regards to my condition.

We want to remember others who also have been ill. Chuck Schuler had a hip replacement on December 10. Bud Trammell will be in Harris Continued Care for another five or six weeks. He fell and broke a hip, and due to some heart problems, surgery has not been done.

Again we want to encourage each club to get their officers/editor form in to Jonathan ASAP in order to include the information in the 2008 Directory. We hope to get it in the mail by March 15, but due to my broken shoulder it is going to take much longer to get it done on time. February 28 is the absolute deadline.

The deadline for the March/April issue of the SCFMS Newsletter will be March 20, 2008.

The Houston Gem and Mineral Society will be hosting the AFMS/SCFMS Convention and Show September 25-28, 2008. Registration forms are available on the AFMS and SCFMS Web sites as well as on the HGMS Web site.

Who and What Get Capital Letters?*Quick Tips for Editors**by Linda Jaeger**AFMS Club Publications Chair**from AFMS Newsletter 3/2008*

Recently I received a request from an editor asking for clarification on capitalizing names of rocks, minerals, and fossils. Generally speaking, rock and mineral names are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence, are given in a list of names, or are written as part of a specific format—such as on a label for a competitive case according to the convention required by AFMS.

Even minerals that are named after a person are not capitalized in general usage. The correct spelling of the person's name would be used, but no spaces and no capital letters at the beginning or in the middle of the name as applied to the official name of a mineral. Some examples are: goethite, mcneairite, joesmithite. Names of rocks are not capitalized (sandstone, quartzite) unless they refer to a proper name (such as Dox Sandstone, Troy Quartzite).

When writing the scientific names of fossils, the genus name is capitalized, the species name is lowercase, and both names are italicized. An example is: *Favosites* sp. If you



use a typewriter and do not have the capability to italicize, you must underline: Favosites sp.

Names of fossil phylums, classes, orders, and families are capitalized but are not italicized (examples: Ammonoidea, Mollusca, Arthropoda). If these are used informally as English nouns or adjectives, they are not capitalized (examples: ammonites, mollusks, arthropods).

Names of geologic eras, periods, epochs, and formations are capitalized: Paleozoic Era, Jurassic Period, Miocene Epoch, Green River Formation. If you need a really quick reference, you can always look up the word in the dictionary!

References:

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If you have a question (or suggestion) about editing or writing, or the bulletin contest or something related, send it to me by e-mail: <LjgrAlg@aol.com> or at home address: 3515 E. 88th St., Tulsa, OK 74137. If I cannot find an answer to your question, we'll publish the question and ask the readers for their answers.

(Clip art on previous page from Discovery Channel School Image Gallery, ©2003. Permission to use for educational, not for sale publications granted.)

Late-Breaking Club News

Are you getting e-mails about HGMS activities? If not, contact n_immega@swbell.net and let him know that you want to be on the list.



AFMS Code of Ethics

from AFMS Newsletter 3/2008

- I will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on privately owned land without the owner's permission.
- I will keep informed on all laws, regulations, and rules governing collecting on public lands and will observe them.
- I will to the best of my ability ascertain the boundary lines of property on which I plan to collect.
- I will use no firearms or blasting material in collecting areas.
- I will cause no willful damage to property of any kind—fences, signs, buildings.
- I will leave all gates as found.
- I will build fires in designated or safe places only and will be certain they are completely extinguished before leaving the area.
- I will discard no burning material—matches, cigarettes, etc.
- I will fill all excavation holes which may be dangerous to livestock.
- I will not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supply.
- I will cause no willful damage to collecting material and will take home only what I can reasonably use.
- I will practice conservation and undertake to utilize fully and well the materials I have collected and will recycle my surplus for the pleasure and benefit of others.
- I will support the rockhound project H.E.L.P. (Help Eliminate Litter Please) and will leave all collecting areas devoid of litter, regardless of how found.
- I will cooperate with field trip leaders and with those in designated authority in all collecting areas.
- I will report to my club or Federation officers, Bureau of Land Management, or to other authorities any deposit of petrified wood or other materials on public lands which should be protected for the enjoyment of future generations for public educational and scientific purposes.
- I will appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.
- I will observe the "Golden Rule," will use "Good Outdoor Manners," and will at all times conduct myself in a manner which will add to the stature and public image of rockhounds everywhere.

Hand-Made Indian Points and Knives

by Tom Shehee

from Rok Tok 2/2008

When I was a young boy, my grandfather had a large ranch outside of San Antonio. I had many wonderful experiences there growing up, but one of the most memorable was the afternoon I found a perfect white Indian Point about 4" long. I can still remember the wonder that ran through me and the questions that came to mind wondering what the history of that point was. Four years ago, I saw a video demonstration of how to make points. That rekindled my interest, and started a hobby that has fascinated me every since.

I'm sure many of you have found points while looking for rock specimens. But have you ever wondered what they were used for, who made them, and how they were made? Let me help with a few answers. First, points were made from material that would knapp (a Danish word meaning "to break"). Many of the ones we actually find were made from a material we call "flint." Actually, flint in this country is not flint at all; it's different types of cherts. Real flint comes from only one place on earth—the White Cliffs of Dover in England. As for who made the points, it is believed that they were roughed out by the men of the tribe, but the finish work in many cases was actually done by the women.

Often the rock from which they were made was too hard to knapp in its raw state. Therefore, the rock was "cooked" by placing it in an open pit, building a VERY HOT FIRE on top, and then letting it cool down over an extended period of time. This annealed the stone. Lastly after being cooked, the rock was rough-shaped and finally made into spear points, knives, or dart points.

Early man did not use a bow. He used a leveraging device called an "Atlatl." This was a throwing stick which added tremendous strength to the shaft as it hit the prey.

Notice I didn't mention arrowheads. Actually, arrowheads didn't appear in this country until about 600 years ago. Real arrowheads are the smallest of all the point styles and usually are no more than 1" in length. If you stop and think about it, imagine a 4-inch hunk of rock attached to a 1/4-inch arrow shaft. Unwieldy. So, when you find a point that is 3-inches long or longer, know that it is probably at least 5000 years old or older (and not an arrowhead).

Knives were for the most part no more than large points with antler, wood, or bone attached as handles. The beauty of the stone knives was that they were very easy to sharpen, and when they became too small to be effective, they were discarded and a new blade attached to the handle.

These are pictures of various points and knives I have made for collections. Let's talk about the knives first. The large knife with the red blade has a blade that measures about 9 inches long, is approximately 1½ inches wide, and is less than 3/16 inches thick! Overall, the knife is over 12 inches long. The material is as rare as the knife. It's made from a very large piece of cornelian agate. It is very seldom that you see a piece



Cornealian Agate Knife



Mookite Jasper Knife

Photos of knives and display case by Donnette Wagner



Example of a pointed tang



Example of a rounded tang



Close-up photos of points by Brad Tanas



this big. But moreover, the blade is long and thin. The importance of this is that the longer and thinner the blade, the more difficult it becomes to successfully complete the blade. This long and thin blade is very prone to snapping in two. This material was heat treated at 700 degrees and is very brittle! The handle is Axis ivory, and although it is hard to see in the picture, there is a cornealian cab custom made to fit the butt end of the knife.

The second knife is smaller. The blade is approximately 6 inches long, 1¼ inches wide, and again less than 3/16 inches thick. The material is Mookaite jasper and comes

from Mooka Station, Australia. It is brought into this country through the black market and is made available in bulk only one time of the year at Quartzite. The stone is quarried in Australia, packed in 55 gallon drums, and sent to China. From there, it makes its way into the US. Mookaite is the holy stone of the aborigine and as such is supposed to stay in the country. The Aussies treat this just like we treat Alibates from the Alibates National Monument in the Texas Panhandle.

What makes this knife so special is the "Yellow" blade. Most Mook is red, purple, or white. Very seldom will you see a blade made from the yellow material due to its scarcity.

The point reproductions in the photographs are all from different tribes, different areas of the country, and of different time periods going back as far as 40,000 years. Much of the stone they are made of you will recognize. There is Mooka Jasper, Brazilian agate, petrified wood, Keokuk chert, obsidian, Montana agate, Polka Dot jasper from Oregon, Rainy Buttes and so on. Again, what makes all this special is that all this stone was "cooked" by me just as the Indians did, and it is all made from semiprecious stone. The only reason I bring up the semiprecious stone is that believe it or not, most ceremonial points made by early man were made from the prettiest stone they could find (agates and jaspers).

Of particular interest is the tang of each point. If you will look closely, you will notice that some are rounded and some are pointed. There was a purpose for that. Those that are rounded were used for hunting game (easy removal so that they could be reused again). However, those that have pointed tangs were for war against enemies. Once they entered the body, it was next to impossible to remove them. Infection would set in, and the victim would die a very painful death!

Nominating Committee on the Prowl

*by Trudy Martin, Editor of Calgary Lapidary Journal
from Calgary Lapidary Journal 3/2008*

Who? Me, run for office? No Thanks!

The President's job, that should be Frank's.

Listen now, I have a few suggestions to make ...

How about a display case ... 'twill only take
a couple of meetings for someone to make.

Program Chairman? I don't see how

I can manage that position just now.

But how about getting good speakers this year,

Have a demonstration on silver work here.

You bet, I'll attend every one, never fear.

Bulletin Editor? Oh, I can't write

a decent article; mine sound so trite.

But can't we have more rock cutting tips,

A column for news, and some humorous quips

...and write something about your rock hunting trips?

Display Table? I like it fine.
 Oh, no, that selenite isn't mine.
 My minerals and gems are all packed away,
 anyway, I was much too tired today.
 Did you ever realize how much rocks weigh?

I'm in good standing, have paid my dues;
 Never fail to give my views.
 Meeting night comes, and there I will be.
 I'm present, please note, for all people to see.
 Gee, don't you wish
 there were more members like ME ?

Members are urged to put their best foot forward and offer their time and talents for the betterment of the club. We each have our own special ability that can be put to good use. I can't haul tables and chairs but I can sure type up a storm when it's time to do the Journal. What can you do to help the club and the show?

Soap Box Sally - AKA Trudy Martin

Scenes from the Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Show
February 23-24 at the Pasadena Convention Center
Photos by John Mitscherling



George Wolf and HGMS President Terry Proctor standing before the HGMS booth

Paleo Section members manning the HGMS booth during the CLGMS show





Scott Singleton



Karen Burns (left) and Dean Lagerwall (right)

MINI MINERS MONTHLY

A Monthly Publication for Young Mineral Collectors

Vol. 2 No. 3 March 2008





Happy Birthday, Mini Miners!
Well, not *you* probably, but Mini Miners Monthly! We are a whole year old this month. Thank you for your subscriptions and your support.

To celebrate our 1st birthday, there are a lot of games and activities in this issue. Word searches, crossword puzzles, and more. There have been a lot of articles lately, but not much in the activity department.

Minerals have many physical properties. These properties are used to help identify a mineral. The properties include hardness, specific gravity, streak, color, luster, cleavage and fracture. This month there is an article, and pictures, of the 10 minerals in the hardness scale. Next month we will talk about *Specific Gravity* and show you how you can make a machine at home that will measure the specific gravity of a mineral.

By the way . . . one of our readers wanted to know why all the mineral pictures are in black and white. There is a simple answer: so you can color them!!

Mystery Mineral
I am a soft, silver-gray mineral. My crystals are six-sided. I form in layers that can be bent. I contain the element called molybdenum. My name is _____.











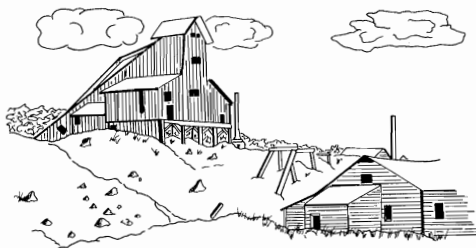

Minerals in the U.S.A.

In this word search are the names of minerals found in the United States of America.
The names can run left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top or diagonally.
When you are done, use the internet and find information and pictures of each mineral.

R	A	R	S	T	A	U	R	O	L	I	T	E	F	T
Q	H	P	E	T	I	R	A	B	A	M	W	T	R	O
U	R	O	C	V	T	O	P	A	Z	U	A	G	A	U
A	F	R	D	G	L	K	T	A	B	S	V	B	N	R
R	F	L	U	O	R	I	T	E	U	C	E	Z	K	M
T	N	A	I	L	C	X	S	L	P	O	L	E	L	A
Z	E	J	E	D	S	H	F	Y	G	V	L	T	I	L
O	P	M	E	R	C	U	R	Y	Y	I	I	I	N	I
S	T	B	V	I	R	I	U	O	P	T	T	O	I	N
K	U	N	Z	I	T	E	T	S	S	E	E	T	T	E
B	N	I	E	E	S	H	I	Z	U	I	K	I	E	T
D	I	A	M	O	N	D	L	B	M	E	T	N	N	R
E	T	I	L	A	H	P	E	C	O	P	P	E	R	O
D	E	T	I	C	L	A	C	V	D	W	R	B	A	N
D	A	T	O	L	I	T	E	A	N	E	L	A	G	A

Mineral names in this word search:

Copper; Fluorite; Galena; Staurolite; Rhodochrosite; Tourmaline; Garnet; Gold; Silver; Pyrite;
Halite; Benitoite; Neptunite; Wavellite; Quartz; Barite; Diamond; Mercury; Sulfur; Gypsum;
Topaz; Kunzite; Rutile; Trona; Muscovite; Datolite; Calcite; Frankinite.



Editor's Note: I subscribe to the Mini Miners Monthly magazine and have received permission to include a few pages each month in the BBG and also on our Web site at www.hgms.org. These pages are from the March 2008 issue.



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When the Heck Did I Become an “Elder Statesman” Guru??

by Jerry Kreussling (CM)

from *High Country Gleamings* 4/2007

Those of us who are blessedly not affected by Alzheimer's know the ins and outs, “The Good and the Bad of Aging—The Golden Years,” learning to call age lines “laugh lines.” Trying to find the softest focus mirrors for bed and bath. I found a great mirror at “Bed, Bath, and Wishful Thinking.” Staring back at me is the same old girl-chasing gymnast I knew in school. The secret is to not look below the neck line. We don't need to see the long earlobes, the neck wattles. I can still see, in my mind's eye, the shoulders, the swelling chest, biceps with veins bulging and flashing legs. John Travolta was nothing. “Nothing, I tell ya!”

Anyhow, a couple of incidents occurred while volunteering at the Museum that served to put me in my place. Last year a lovely and very attractive young lady seemed to find me fascinating. Now, bear in mind that if I am at the Museum, then so is Mary. She was witness to all this. So, this young lady asks me a question or two about a particular showcase. I answer, she says “thanks,” and moves on. Then she comes back a few minutes later with more questions about other cases. I'm thinking to myself: “Yeah! You still got it, Kid!” Mary and the rest of the Museum people were noticing all this, but Mary knows I'm harmless and just shrugs or giggles. The young lady is hanging on my arm; eventually we consulted on every single showcase. We are ending the tour near the sales area when she looks soulfully into my eyes and says: “You remind me SO much of my Grandfather.” Thought I was going to hafta change Mary's diapers.

A couple of weeks ago (March 2007) I'm nodding off while counting attendance by the fluorescent exhibit when I overhear a couple of teenagers talking: “Shhhhhh! See that man sleeping in the chair? Well, he's been here “Forever.” He taught my mom and dad how to cut and polish rocks a lon-n-ng time ago.”

Then, not too long ago, there was the kid who told his mom that the skin on my hands looked like the wall of the Museum. It doesn't help when my buddy Kev tells the geode buyers that I put the crystals inside the geodes. And Loraine tells people my birthstone is Lava. And when we go on field trips, I hire a kid to carry my rocks.

So! You wanna ask for my advice? Just join the hordes of younger folks in their 50s and 60s who line up at the Museum on Saturdays to ask the “Guru.” I can always point you to the proper expert. I, myself, know nothing. It's all gone, but I have friends in high places. People I can trust. People who are OLDER than me. People who find dinosaur nests, not out in the fields of Wyoming or Asia, but in their own closets. Relatives or in-laws, I suspect.

So if I'm not there snoozing in the corner, look for Larry Hauser, Bill Gould, Bill Johnson, Frank Flynn, among others. They all have had rocks in their heads for years. There are still videos in existence showing these guys, and others who have passed, doing hard rock mining at the Herkimer Diamond sites in upstate New York. One of our other cognizant members is not that old but very knowledgeable nonetheless.

Alan Borg is almost a generation behind all the old fogies. He is a mineralogist and a gemologist, and I believe an amateur proctologist and hematologist. All very handy for field work. Also a top grade teacher lecturer. Send him your poor, your huddled masses yearning to have their common quartz specimens upgraded to almost any other crystalline structure. I believe he is responsible, at least in North America, for coming up with uncommon names for common quartz, e.g. angle-plated; dog tooth; Herkimer diamond; Cape May diamond; left-hand; right hand; Blue Nose; rutilated; riverine; leverite; Japan twin; Siamese twin; Brazil twin; Dauphine twin; Eisenkiesel; Ferruginous; Morion—a few examples from his fertile mind. Alan has an extensive collection of minerals. He claims to be missing only two that would complete his world collection: Hermaphrodite and Transvestite. So, there you are.

Please don't bother Jerry as he naps with the attendance counter held loosely in his hand. Look to other grey-haired tottering hulks of men with extensive lore and advice. "And the nascent grain of sand slept on amongst his millions of brothers, dreaming of his glory days as a boulder."

Dinosaur is Dead Ringer for Potter Dragon

by Jack Malvern

Edited from article by Jack Malvern, www.timesonline.co.uk from Gravel Gazette 4/07, via Rock Chips 8/07 and Midland Gem & Mineral Society Newsletter 12/2007

A new species of dinosaur has been named in honor of J.K. Rowling and her Harry Potter books. The 66-million year old dragon-like monster has been given the title *Dracorex Hogwartsia* because it resembles the kind of fantastical creature encountered by the teenage wizard. The nearly complete skull of the previously unknown dinosaur was found by three friends during a fossil-collecting trip in South Dakota. The dinosaur was little more than a box of parts when it was found, and it took two years of painstaking research to piece it together.

The dinosaur's name comes from the Latin words *Draco*, meaning dragon, *Rex*, meaning king, and *Hogwartsia* for the fictional Hogwarts school created by Rowling, who said that the honor had brought her new credibility with her children who are passionate about dinosaurs. "The naming of *Dracorex Hogwartsia* is easily the most unexpected honor to have come my way since the publication of the Harry Potter books." She added that the dinosaur reminded her of one of her own creations, "a slightly less pyromaniac Hungarian Horntail."

Robert Bakker, a well-known paleontologist, agreed that the new beast would not look out of place in a Potter book.

"Honoring an author is rare, but it should 'be done more often,'" he said. "The creature was a plant-eater, about as heavy as a war-horse of a medieval knight. It carried an armor-plated head of almost magical configuration, covered with knobs and spikes, horns and crests. I was staring at the skull last summer and the name just popped into my head, *Hogwartsia*." The name *Dracorex Hogwartsia* will remain as a prominent addition to paleontological records unless scientists prove that it belongs to the same species as a previously identified specimen. The specimen has been donated to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

ShowTime 2008

April 12-13	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene civic Center, N. 6th & Pine Sallie Lightfoot; slightfoot@aol.com (325) 692-4642 www.txol.net/rockclub
April 18-20	Marfa, TX	Chihuahuan Desert Gem & Mineral Club AmVets Bldg., 300 S. Highland (Hwy. 67 S.) Paul Graybeal, (432) 729-4526 e-mail: paulgraybeal@sbcglobal.net
April 26-27	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Club Heart of Texas Fairground
May 3-4	Lubbock, TX	Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society Lubbock Civic Center, 1501 Mac Davis Ln. Archie Scott (806) 894-1584 Ed Ries (806) 799-2722
May 24-25	Fort Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Club Amon Carter Exhibit Bldg Will Rogers Memorial Center 3401 W. Lancaster; fwgmc@embarqmail.com www.fortworthgemandmineralclub.com
August 16-17	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center
August 23-24	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Hall, 7 miles west of Jasper
August 30-31	Fort Worth, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society Will Rogers Memorial Center
September 20-21	Richardson, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI at Brookhaven College
September 26-28	Humble, TX (Houston)	Houston Gem & Mineral Society hosting the 2008 AFMS and SCFMS Shows Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy. 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport 1 mile east of Hwy. 59; Scott Singleton fossilwood@comcast.net; www.hgms.org
October 11-12	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic Center
October 17-19	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center
October 24-26	Austin, TX	Austin Gem & Mineral Society Palmer Events Center

2008		APRIL				2008
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7:30 Board Meeting	2 7:30 Mineral Section	3	4	5 10-12 Youth Section 10-5 Shop Open
6	7	8 7:30 Show Committee	9 7:30 Faceting Section	10	11	12 1 p.m. AUCTION 11 a.m. early viewing of items
13	14 1:00 p.m. Day Light Section	15 7:30 Paleo Section	16 7:30 Mineral Section	17	18	19 10-12 Youth Section 10-5 Shop Open 1:30 Beading Group
20	21 7:30 Lapidary Section	22 7:30 General Meeting	23	24	25	26 10-5 Shop Open
27	28	29	30			

2008		MAY				2008
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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25	26	27 7:30 General Meeting	28	29	30	31 10-5 Shop Open

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

*The Newsletter of the Houston
Gem & Mineral Society*

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