



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

Volume XXXIX - No. 12

December 2008



President's Message

*by Terrell William "Terry" Proctor
2008 HGMS President*

The year 2008 has come, and soon it will be gone. One relief is that it may be a few weeks before we start having to listen to campaign ads for the 2010 elections. All in favor of a National Law allowing campaigning for only six weeks before an election raise your hands. Ah—a clear majority, I see. Okay, write your state and national representatives and senators.



On the subject of writing your elected officials, I again urge all of you to contact your national Representative and Senators and urge them to vote against H.R.554.

By now you should recognize this designation as the bill which is expected to be brought up by the Democrat majority and voted on during the short session before Christmas recess. It is onerous in its general language and lack of objectivity and the great amount of subjectivity in the means of carrying out this law, if passed. If you go to the Internet and read this proposed legislation, which you can do at <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-554&tab=summary> (a summary of the Bill), or <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-554> (the full text).

H.R. 554 is sponsored by six Democrats and two Republicans: Rep. James McGovern [D-MA] and cosponsored by: Rep. Rick Renzi [R-AZ]; Rep. Todd Tiahrt [R-KS]; Rep. Barbara Lee [D-CA]; Rep. Maurice Hinchey [D-NY]; Rep. James Moran [D-VA]; Rep.

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General Meeting Programs

November 24: Nathalie Brandes of Lone Star College will speak on Geologic Events and Human History. We will also have the election of 2009 HGMS officers.

December 13: HGMS Christmas Party. There will be no General Meeting--the party takes its place. Social hour starts at 5:30 p.m., and the dinner begins at 6:30. The HGMS Board is hosting the dinner and providing the meat and standard beverages. Members

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

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by Wednesday, December 10, 2008.*

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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 \$40 for an adult membership, \$60 for a couple, \$75 for a family (including all children aged 5-18), \$25 for a youth membership (ages 5-18), and \$500 for an adult life membership. 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 which is 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

Henry Waxman [D-CA]; and Rep. Peter DeFazio [D-OR]. Possibly the vote on this legislation has now been set off until early January.

The Legislation allows the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary's underlings, such as National Park Superintendents and BLM Managers, to determine who to give permits to, if any, and what they can collect, and where they can collect on all Federal lands. If you happen to have something you picked up on Federal land and you thought was a piece of mineral but it turns out to be some part of a vertebrate, you could have your vehicle and all other equipment confiscated, have to pay what can be a huge fine, and be imprisoned. Furthermore, if some members of the scientific community have their way, you will have to have a PhD to even be considered for a permit.

In short, if you want a big chunk of your rights as a rockhound to pursue your hobby taken away and you placed in serious jeopardy if you happen to be in the wrong place with the wrong thing in your possession, and if the person delegated to make a decision decides to throw the book at you, you could be in a world of hurt. Okay, enough said on this subject. If you like big government, remain silent and like other things our Uncle does to us, it will come to pass. If you don't like more authoritarian control of you and your hobby, then get on the phone, FAX, e-mail, snail mail, and contact your representative, senator, and anyone else whom you can get to do the same, and tell them we do not want this Bill passed.

You might be interested in knowing that Rep. Culbertson [R-Houston] has been on a paleo field trip with HGMS and is fighting to keep this legislation from passing. Let him know that you appreciate his support against this overreaching legislation.

Well the end was supposed to be nigh. I have had a great year serving as your President, and I looked forward to being the Past President on the Board in 2009. With over 600 members, the Nominating Committee worked diligently to get new, experienced folks as nominees for our 2009 Officers. Just before the deadline, I was advised that there were no takers for the office of 2009 President. Therefore, I reluctantly agreed to be nominated for President next year. At the November General Meeting I tried to get someone else nominated, but no one volunteered.

Don't misunderstand. I have really enjoyed working with a great Board of Directors this year, but it has taken more time than I anticipated, and I have to give my law office clients credit for being so understanding of my deadlines for HGMS. This meant that on occasion I had to work late and run late getting law work done.

The number of folks who have written me showing interest in our avocation has been heartening. I have steered them to the proper Section heads and to experienced older hands who can provide better advice than I in the person's areas of interest. This is partly how HGMS grows—by providing prompt response to inquiries and encouraging folks to join. Our phone system of responding to call-ins is being reviewed so new folks can hear from us more promptly.

Next year's lineup of nominees indicates that your HGMS Club will be in experienced hands, and that we will be off to a prompt start.

One thing more. We are no longer having our show during the Hurricane Season. The HGMS Show for next year will not be in September. A new contract is being signed with the Humble Civic Center for the weekend of November 13–15, 2009. Start getting the word out now, and PLEASE VOLUNTEER to help the Show Committee in this new season. We think being closer to Christmas, being out of imminent danger of yet another hurricane during our Show, and with so many folks who have experience in putting on a Show, the 2009 Show will be more profitable than ever. But your help is needed, so call someone on the Board and let him or her know now that you are interested in being part of the 2009 Show.

General Meeting Programs Continued from page 1

are invited to bring dessert or vegetable dishes. Let Terry Proctor know whether you want an auction or some other after-dinner entertainment by calling him at (713) 453-8338 or on his cell phone (713) 453-1300

Recollections of an Unrepentant Rockhound, Part 2

by Albert L. Kidwell

With comments by Arthur Smith

Part 2 of Al's recollections were written for people not particularly interested in Arkansas minerals, and it has more of his world-wide travels than part 1. Al briefly mentions his trip to China for the International Mineralogical Association. He attended field trips before and after the convention. Fortunately I have his notes from that which I hope to edit and write up later.

For some time now I have been considering pulling together some of the things I have been able to do and some of the places I have been privileged to visit during my lifetime. They say that anyone over 70 is entitled to reminisce about the way things used to be. I have reached that point.

My first mineral specimens were collected at the age of about 14 years on our farm in central Missouri. These were Lake Superior agates and other pretty pebbles that had been brought down by the ice sheets. A cousin at the University of Missouri supplied me with some books about rocks and minerals, and I was on my way. I also heard about *Rocks & Minerals Magazine* and began subscribing in 1932. It cost a dollar a year, but Peter Zodack raised the price to \$1.50 beginning in 1935 since this was during the depression. There was some question as to whether I could continue taking it, but by 1935 we had moved to southeastern Missouri and even had enough money to take a short vacation to Hot Springs and Magnet Cove in Arkansas.

Five years later I was a senior in mining geology at the Missouri School of Mines, and the last thing we had was our senior trip which consisted of visiting a number of mines in the Western United States. These included the Homestake gold mine in Lead, South

Dakota, the Sunrise iron mine in eastern Wyoming, New Jersey Zinc's mine at Gilman Colorado, the Cresson gold mine at Cripple Creek, and the Climax molybdenum mine near Leadville. We were studying geology and mining methods, but there was some opportunity to grab a few specimens. At Cripple Creek, the ore that I put in my bag later produced some fine micros of calaverite.

The mine that really intrigued me was Climax at 11,000 feet, and as soon as we returned to Missouri, I wrote a letter applying for a summer job. After about two weeks I had not heard anything, so I hitchhiked back out to Colorado, went to the mine, and called the manager. The conversation: "Yes, we received your application and wrote back that we didn't have any openings." Answer: "I left before receiving your letter, and here I am. Pause. "Okay, come on in and we will talk to you."

I ended up with a job as blaster's helper on the grizzly level and had a great time on days off prospecting the surrounding area. During the summer I saw thousands of tons of molybdenum ore, but not so much as a single crystal. From time to time spectacular fluorites have been found there. This job underground convinced me I wanted to be a geologist and not a mining engineer.

The next two years I was at Washington University in St. Louis working on an M.S. in geology. After Pearl Harbor, I finished up as soon as possible and went with the Coast and Geodetic Survey in Tampa, Florida as a Photogrammetric Engineer making coastal charts from aerial photographs. There wasn't much time for minerals, but I did pick up some chalcedony after coral from the well-known Balast Point location in Tampa.

It was during this period that I collected the finest specimen of one particular species that I have ever encountered, and I still have her after more than 50 years. We spent our first year in Tampa. Soon after our first son was born, I was called up for my Army physical but was turned down because of chronic allergies and asthma. About that time I heard that the Missouri Geological Survey was looking for geologists, and it was here that I got my first geological job. During the next three years, I had a variety of assignments mostly connected with critical war minerals. On the side I wrote several articles for *Rocks & Minerals Magazine* on Missouri localities. A few years later (*actually about 10 years*) mineral collector Arthur Smith arrived at the University of Missouri to work on his M.A. degree. Having been a *Rocks and Minerals* subscriber, he used their articles for field trips. However, we did not meet until 1972 in Houston.

I got a Job with Carter Oil Company in their research lab. In 1960 Stanvac was formed, and they decided to try one more oil exploration program in South Africa. I was the liason between the field and the research lab. While in Johannesburg I visited the Mineral Museum and met the lady who was the curator. She mentioned that she and her husband had assembled a collection of about 500 specimens from Tsumeb for the Museum, but the Museum felt that they could not afford them. Did I know of any American who might be interested. How much for the collection? Five hundred dollars packed and delivered to New Orleans. Yes, I just happened to know an American. When we finally received them in Tulsa, I held a sale and sold enough to recover my \$500. After all, it had left quite a hole in our budget.

Another fortunate thing in South Africa was meeting Arnold Waters who had been a classmate of my boss. At the time Arnold was Chief Geologist for Anglo American Mining Company and its affiliate De Beers, Ltd. He wanted to help us because he felt that an oil field would help the South African economy. One thing we were trying to do was collect samples for analysis from as great a thickness as possible of the sedimentary rock section that could contain oil. He suggested that De Beers had a diamond mine in the Karroo basin where they had cut inclines from the surface down to 1500 feet depth adjacent to the diamond bearing pipe. We could walk down, taking whatever samples we wanted and also sample 1500 feet of core that had just been cut from a diamond drill set up at the bottom of the mine. This gave us samples for 3000 feet vertically. Later Arnold took me on a tour of the Premier mine near Pretoria which is a very large operation and very difficult to access. This is the mine that produced the world's largest diamond, the Cullinan from which the British Crown jewels were cut. In another discussion with Arnold, I mentioned that I still had a week of vacation left and would like to visit another one of the African Mining districts. He countered with, "Where do you want to go?" I suggested the copper belt in what was then Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). He picked up the phone, and in five minutes it was arranged. On my way out of Africa, I stopped at Ndola and was the guest of Anglo American for three days with guided tours of the local mines.

In 1961 the company began looking at possible avenues of diversification including fertilizers and other minerals. That year on a trip to look at a phosphate deposit, the Creole Company plane was used to take a group of us to Cerro Bolivar, the huge iron deposit in southeast Venezuela. After the visit was completed, the Exploration Manager of Creole asked if there was anyone who did not want to fly back by way of Angel Falls. Since nobody answered, we flew over Angel Falls (one of the highest in the world, made famous by Jimmy Angel whose plane crashed landed above the falls in the early 1930s; he managed to walk out).

In 1966 I was approached by Daly Travel Service to see if we would be willing to lead a group of gem and mineral collectors on a South American Tour during my vacation. We ended up with ten people including Marian and me. We had moved to Houston, but I could get no one there to join us. Our biggest adventure was a trip from Bogota to the Chivor emerald mine during the rainy season. They were not working the day we were visited, and so they said we could keep anything we found. Marian and I found a vein with small emeralds.

After an overnight in Lima, we flew across to Brazil where we spent most of the time in Minas Gerais and Rio. Our host in Tiofilo Otoni was Petronio (Pete) Miglio who was a faceter and dealt in cut aquamarine, amethyst, etc. In his office he opened a safe and took out one of the largest aquamarine crystals ever found there. It was valued at that time at about half a million dollars. Since then it has all been cut. We also visited the Miglio Fayenda (ranch) and visited a gem pegmatite—highly weathered.

It wasn't long after this that Esso decided to look into fertilizer producing as a new business adventure. Some of us at the research center convinced them that they should also consider mining their own phosphate and potash deposits as raw materials. I went

to Spain to look at underground potash deposits that didn't produce much of mineralogical interest. However while there, I contacted one of the early minerals dealers, Juan Montal, with whom I had done some trading. We sat at a table, and he instructed one of his sons to bring some minerals. We would sip some wine. I would buy a mineral, and he would give me one. Needless to say I spent a very pleasant day, and I got some fine specimens. During the same trip I was able to make arrangements to visit the mercury mines at Almaden. Three days before the field trip, guess what? I got a cable from New York to come home immediately. So much for that.

Things were pretty quiet until 1979 when I went back to South Africa nineteen years after the first trip to look at uranium deposits the company was prospecting. From South Africa back to Houston, one of the options was by way of Brazil across the South Atlantic. An acquaintance from our previous trip agreed to meet me at Gobernador Valadares, which he did, and we visited all of the mineral dealers there and in Teófilo Otoni.

In 1983 Exxon Minerals Company wanted to take a group of exploration people to the Yukon to see some of the classic base metal deposits known to occur there. Ron Schmermund and I were given the job of setting it up. The center of the activity was near Macmillan Pass, near the boundary between the Yukon and Northwest Territories. We had made contact with a geologist of the Canadian Geological Survey who was very helpful. He even suggested that we go with them in their helicopter to check out a reported occurrence of barium silicate minerals that formed where a thick continuous bed had been intruded by a large igneous intrusion: gillespite, sanbornite, celsian, etc. that showed zinc moss—a good Zn indicator.

In 1990, long-time friend Bernie Murowchick and I attended the International Mine Mineralogical Association meeting in Beijing, China. We took two nine-day field trips, one before and one after the meeting, and had some tremendous experiences. One of particular interest was the visit to a large, newly opened diamond mine in Leining Province. There are about 100 kimberlite pipes in the area of which only the largest is in commercial production. At the time it had been in production only about two years and was producing about 100,000 ct/year, and 80% were gem quality. When asked if we could buy some industrial diamonds, after a moment's hesitation they said we could.

I hope this has not sounded too much like an ego trip because that was not the intent. I firmly believe that everyone is at the right place, at the right time many times during their life span, and that it is important to take full advantage of it.



Image from 2006
SCRIBE CD

Out, Out, OUT Reach Program

by Neal Immega

It is nice to know that we are noticed for our school programs. As you may know, one of the crown jewels of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society is our earth science kits for schools. We distribute about 50 each of Rock/Mineral/Paleo and pure Paleo collections each year. About 2/3 of the material comes from club members

(Next page, please)

QSI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ATYRAU



163, Mamokuly St., Atyrau
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8 712 232-1751 / 52 / 53
Director: Mr. William Dentry atyrau@qsi.org
Web page: http://www.qsi.org/atyr_home/atyr_home.htm

Nov. 6, 2008

Dr. Neal Immega, Ph.D.
Paleontologist
3918 Case Street
Houston
Tx 77005

Dear Dr Immega,

The school was delighted to receive the rock/mineral/fossil kits you so kindly donated.

The pupils will be able utilize these items to further their science education, and they will remain a very useful resource in the school for a long time to come.

Your kind gesture is very much appreciated, and we would like to take this opportunity to say thank you and to send you our best regards for the future.

Once again, thank you very much.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'William Dentry'.

William Dentry
Director

with the rest covered by a grant from Conoco/Phillips. Both parties think that this is a great leverage of the work/dollars involved. Nothing in the agreement says that these collections are for the Houston area. My previous record was to Maine where the teacher said that although she had an abundance of igneous material, her classroom was totally lacking in sedimentary rocks. Gee, sedimentary rocks are about all we have in Texas, so this was an easy deal.

In October, I received a query from Agip Petroleum. It seems that they are helping out in their local schools and wanted some earth science material to use in Kazakhstan. We agreed that they would provide transportation, and I shipped off materials to their offices in Dallas. Rocks and minerals are universal, but I wonder what they will make of a topographic map exercise using map sheets from Texas? No matter, contours are universal also. I get a warm and fuzzy feeling knowing that our materials are being used in a classroom just about as far from Houston as you can get and still be on the planet. The thank-you letter they sent me is on page 9.

Letter sent to a Knight in Shining Armor

*by Tom Wright
4706 Sanford Rd.
Houston. TX 77035
Phone: 713/729-8174
Email: bfiction@aol.com*

I'm sure you will recall helping out the Houston Gem and Mineral Society by getting our electric power back shortly after Ike. Some of our members would like to give you a few items that they made in appreciation of your assistance.

The items are:

Agate and sterling silver solderless jewelry made by David Hawkins.
Agate bolo and agate sun catcher made by Brian Honsinger.
Agate and sterling silver earrings made by Nell and Brian Honsinger
Sterling silver chain donated by Margo Bedman.
Turquoise and sterling silver pendant made by Mary Ann Mitcherling.
Montana agate with sterling silver and sterling silver chain by Rose Cleveland.
Malachite carving, carved by Debbie Kirkpatrick.
Alexander the Great coin made of sterling silver by Tom Wright.

I truly hope you and your wife enjoy these items as much as we do in giving them in appreciation of your going out of your way to help us out in the wake of the hurricane, Ike. I have always believed that good deeds are returned in some form.

Again, Thank you.

Regards,

Tom Wright

enclosure

The Shop Fix-it Crew Takes Over the Kitchen

by Neal Immega

You would not believe it until you saw it. The shop fix-it crew decided to replace our partially kaput ovens with working ones even though the machinery does not spin, use water sprays, or diamond grit! It must have been an excess of holiday cheer.

The replacement ovens have been installed, thanks to the donation by Diane and LJ Sisson. Our old ovens have served their time and are now released. The Sissons were forced to rebuild part of their house after the dual hit of an icemaker leak followed by an Ike-created hole in their roof. It's an ill wind..., and so we got their old dual ovens just in time to replace ours which had gone half-bad. Anyway, the shop fix-it crew took on the task, and we now have working ovens in time for the holidays.

"No good deed goes unpunished," and Gary Anderson found that out. Twenty (?) years ago he helped wire in the old ovens, so naturally the crew "let" him spelunk under the cabinet to repeat the task. He confessed that it was a good deal more awkward this time than the last, and he has no intention of doing it twenty years from now for the next upgrade.

Stan Perkins was crucial to discovering the wiring schematic for the oven and figuring out whether the red wire **SHOULD** be connected to the blue one—a non-trivial question. Success! The system passed the smoke test on power-up.

Since the kitchen is now an outpost of the shop, we suggest that one of the Section holiday parties consider deep frying a turkey in used shop oil for that flavor with true grit. Our dual ovens could easily be used to heat dop wax and dry the shark tooth matrix from Marlin. The possibilities are endless. The freezer gets continuous use for dop stick/cabochon separation, but there must be other industrial uses. Please help us make the kitchen an extension of the shop and turn all the kitchen drudges into revered shop foremen!

In Our Library

by Art Smith

HGMS Librarian

We split almost \$300 with the Mineral Section from sales at their booth during our show. I am mostly caught up with the binding but will have new volumes bound once the complete set of each periodical comes.

New books for the library are some new volumes on pegmatites. Pegmatites not only produce many rare minerals but also produce many gem minerals such as elbaite (tourmaline), spodumene (kunzite), beryl (aquamarine and morganite), garnets, microcline (amazonite) and a lot of others that are pretty rare as gemstones. Although these books are mostly on the geology of pegmatites, the minerals are frequently mentioned and are a valuable resource. One is from the Canadian Association of Mineralogists and is written by David London of Oklahoma University. The other is a bit older and is written by Skip Simmons and his crew at the University of New Orleans. It was writ-

ten before Katrina, and many of the new copies were destroyed by flooding during that storm. Pegmatites are actually rocks, but since they are so important to mineral and gem collectors, I will shelve them under MINERALOGY - PEGMATITES and then alphabetically by author.

Another new book on order is a New Mineralogy of Great Britain which is long overdue and should be a good reference and source for English minerals. Good books on Scottish and Welch mineralogy are fairly recent but not so any books on English mineralogy.

The big project for next year will be making DVDs from selected VHS tapes in our library. Many people no longer have VHS machines, and the use of those tapes in the library has diminished to almost zero in the last few years. So hopefully we can increase usage by making them DVDs. If anyone has the capability to help in this regard, I would appreciate their assistance in this conversion.



Now we know how many members it takes to change a light bulb, complete with a photograph to prove it. The light is working again thanks to Brian Honsinger, David Hawkins, and Tom Wright.

Sigrid Stewart and Rick Rexroad Heading Up 2009 Show Committee

by Terry Proctor

HGMs members—here is some good news for you about the 2009 Show. Sigrid Stewart has agreed to be the Show Chair, and Rick Rexroad has agreed to be the Assistant Show Chair for our 2009 Show being held November 13–15 at the Humble Civic Center.

They will be contacting our 2008 dealers and others to let them know of our Show date change that moves the show away from the Hurricane season. If you have worked on our Shows before, Sigrid and Rick will be counting your help again in this new time slot. For those of you who joined in recent years and haven't yet participated, your help will be valuable and appreciated. And now you know whom to contact so you too can be on the 2009 Show Committee.

Grants and Matching Donations

by Terry Proctor

Although we have a new dues schedule, HGMS needs to bring in more funds than our dues and Show income can provide in order to pay the annual expenses of operating your Club. To clarify, none of your dues increase or Show funds presently go into any expansion of the Clubhouse or any possible new facilities in the future. We are just trying to ensure that our income matches our outgo for next year.

This year your Board of Directors set up a Building Fund. By some future date we will have the funds necessary for any needed major repairs, expansion, or relocation. This fund will not be large enough for some years, but the building fund we once had was closed when we paid off the present clubhouse, and it needs to be regenerated. If HGMS continues to grow, sooner or later we will need to add to our facilities, and from time to time we will have a need for major items like a new roof, new air conditioning, etc.

Therefore, we are looking into grants from foundations and other sources of funding. We are also looking into more employee matching funds. Many companies match donations by employees. This year we received a check from the United Way Fund. A member who worked for a company with a matching fund program donated to United Way and spelled out HGMS as the recipient, so the company paid United Way, and United Way in turn sent HGMS a check. If we have additional members whose companies do this and they participate, more checks will come in. Also we are again setting up the programs where certain grocery stores pay a percentage to HGMS when members purchase groceries at those stores.

Please check to see if your employer has a program that will match your donation of money or time with a donation to be made to HGMS. Thanks for supporting your Club in this way.

Tell Us the Kind of Christmas/Holiday Season Party You Want

by Terry Proctor

Yes, HGMS will furnish the meat and standard beverages for the Christmas/Holiday Season Party on December 6, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse. HGMS members are to bring side dishes, desserts, salads, breads, etc.

So, what would you like to have happen following dinner? The suggestion has been made that we have an auction as we did in years past. We need to know what you think. Also we could have some entertainment. What do you want? Music? Sing-alongs? A magic show*? The Rockettes? (Well we checked and they are already booked, so forget that one).

Call me, Terry Proctor, at my law office (713) 453-8338 or on my cell phone if you can't reach me at the office (713) 453-1300, and let me know. We really want some prompt feedback so we will know what our membership wants besides food for this annual December meeting. Thank you for calling me ASAP.

**Editor's Note: Terry is a master at prestidigitation (sleight of hand) and has performed for many years. Bet you didn't know that, did you?*

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

September 8: Fifteen members attended the 8 September meeting of the Day Light Section.

The program was on learning to use Prisma Colors on metal (copper). In brief the technique is as follows: the metal is cleaned very well. The surface is subjected to the action of an abrasive machine to increase the surface area. Then the Prisma colors are used, but they need to be used singularly. When this is completed, the surface is sprayed with a weak solution of liver of sulfur, turning the untreated surface black. The liver of sulfur is then washed off, and the piece is allowed to dry for two or three days. The surface is then treated with a coating of paste wax.

Examples of some pieces made by Nancy Fischer and John Zanders are or soon will be on the Day Light Section page on the HGMS Web site. The pieces seen in a previous BBG were black and white and do not do justice to the technique. (The PDF version of the BBG on the Web site is in color.)

October 13: Ten members attended the meeting of the Day Light Section on 13 October, 2008. The program consisted of videos of the Russian jewels and the crystal cave.

The programs for the first several meetings of 2009 are being worked on. If anyone has any special requests, please let me know.

In **January 2009** Nancy Fischer will give a travelogue program of her trip to the far East.

For our **February 2009** meeting, Karen Burns is scheduled to give a program on

making ear rings and necklaces using silver and beads of semi-precious stones. At the moment, Karen says to keep it on the schedule.

In **March 2009** we plan to start on the concha belt. This is going to be a rather expensive project, so ask Santa Claus to bring you some 24-gauge sterling silver. At present I figure it will take three 6 x 12-inch sheets. If you have a large waist measurement, it may take more. This project will take more than one meeting.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas. We do not meet in December.

What Classes Do You Want?

by Terry Proctor

Our new Education Director, Brian Honsinger, has gone to work building HGMS an outstanding Education Program. The next thing is to determine the kinds of classes HGMS members want.

Please contact Brian on his cell phone # (281) 777-0552. Brian will be setting up classes where there is sufficient interest to start a class. So far interest is present for the following areas: Cutting and polishing cabochons, faceting, beading, wire wrap, silversmithing and goldsmithing, wax molding, and other jewelry and lapidary art areas. Classes in paleontology also will be set up as interest is identified. Neal Immega is the contact person for Paleo classes (713) 772-5312.

Mineral Section

by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson & Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson

The Mineral Section meets in the clubhouse at 7:30 on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. All are welcome.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

December 3: Minerals from the Shangbao Pyrite Mine, China—Program presented by Sam Norwood. Refreshments will be served.

December 20: Mineral Section Christmas Party: Farrar Stockton is kindly hosting this year's Mineral Section Christmas party. The party will begin Saturday evening around 4:30. Bring a dish/snack and a white-elephant gift exchange (mineral-related with a \$5–\$15 value), and be prepared to have an enjoyable time. The Christmas party takes the place of the second December meeting. Directions and more exact details will be distributed at the December 3 Mineral Section meeting, or contact Steve Blyskal (832-264-1278) for more information. Refreshments will be served.

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.

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.

General Meeting Minutes

October 28, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

HGMS Secretary

Terry Proctor called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Rodney Linehan, Club Treasurer, reported to the Board that there is \$14,000 in the Club's checking account. He projects less profit from the show. The accounting is yet to be reconciled.

Jonathan and Kathleen Wooley attended the meeting. They joined two years ago, but have been working in Canada.

Section Reports

Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart will talk about their trip to St Marie aux Mines and environs at the next Mineral Section meeting, November 5.

Terry Brawner reported that the annual Paleo party will be at 6:00 p.m. November 18. All are welcome. Bring a side dish and an auction item.

The Day Light Section holiday party starts at 12 noon on November 10. All are welcome. Bring the same thing you brought last year. If you didn't come last year or forgot what you brought, please give Frances Arrighi a call..

Mary Ann Mitscherling announced that the Lapidary Section meeting will be November 20. The stone of the month will be picture Jasper. The shop will open at 5:00 p.m. She will be ordering-gold filled wire and silver. Interested members please contact Mary Ann.

Wayne Barnett said that the shop was fine. The Chicago pneumatic is back. He also asked that if something in the shop is broken or needs attention, to let him, Tom Wright, or Neal Immega know.

Phyllis George said the Beading Section met in September and worked on a successful chain maille bracelet project. The group is now an official Section due to a vote by the Board, and the Bylaws will be updated to accommodate the change.

Old Business

The Board approved buying stop blocks for the parking lot. Matt Dillon found some locally and brought in a sample. It is black with yellow hash marks, and they cost \$40 each.

Rodney Linehan was notified by the management company that the outside lights are out and need replacement. Tom Wright will take care of this.

The Christmas/Holiday Party will be held on December 13, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. The Club will provide the meat. Members are asked to bring side dishes. More information to follow.

New Business

The nominating committee presented the slate of Officers for 2009. They are:

President Terry Proctor
1st Vice President Matt Dillon
2nd Vice President Beverly Mace
Treasurer Rodney Linehan
Secretary Regina Gorman
Show Chair No nomination
Assistant Show Chair . No nomination

There were no nominations from the floor. The election will be at the November General Meeting, and installation of the new officers will take place during the Christmas Party, December 13. The nominating Committee consisted of Phyllis George, Tom Wright, Steve Blyskal, Steve Wilkerson, and Chris Peek.

Art Smith said that the cases in the back of the meeting room will be for sale at the next Silent Auction.

Matt Dillon obtained a new phone as authorized by the Board of Directors and announced that there is now a new telephone in the office.

Phyllis George laminated the telephone voice mail instructions that Scott Singleton e-mailed to all the Board members, and she placed it in the office. When asked, she said she would also e-mail a copy of the instructions to all Section Chairs.

Phyllis brought in and presented the three plaques that AFMS President Shirley Leeson planned to present to Shiara Trumble, AFMS/SCFMS Liaison; Scott Singleton, Show Chair; and to the entire HGMS Show Committee and HGMS Club Membership in recognition of the hard work put in by everyone in the face of great obstacles caused by Hurricane Ike. Shiara was not present, but Steve



Scott Singleton and Terry Proctor and the plaques presented by the AFMS

Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart said they could get her plaque to her. Scott Singleton was present to receive his plaque, and President Terry Proctor accepted the third plaque on behalf of the Show Committee and the HGMS Membership. That plaque will be placed prominently on the wall in the meeting room.

Matt Dillon said there were two or three openings in his Mexican agate trip that will be leaving November 22 and returning on or before Thanksgiving. This is one of the last trips he leads for awhile as his mother is ill. The cost of the trip can vary, but it is

roughly about \$700 per person. The group may rent a van and drive down together.

Show and Tell

Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart attended a sale of petrified wood in Paige, Texas, west of Giddings. There was 200 tons of material. Steve will have pictures on his FLICKR page. He brought in several samples of his purchases. He said the sale will be ongoing. The wood is mostly Wilcox and Yegua.

Matt Dillon brought specimens from some of his collecting trips throughout South Texas. There were agates from George West that had fortification patterns showing that they had been moved and were formed at different times. He had rare palmwood from George West and "painted" wood from Live Oak County. He also had some palmwood with color from near Beeville. He said that the area is an interesting place to get wood.

Wayne Barnett showed a piece of faceted amber.

John Mitscherling had a piece of agate from the Lapidary auction that he cabbed in one hour.

Door Prize

The door prize of Oregon obsidian was donated by Dallas Higgs and Neal Immega. Sigrid Stewart won the prize.

Presentation

Amber Way, the scheduled presenter, was unable to attend the meeting. Terry announced that Gina and Dennis Giadrosich, of Amber Way, who were to put on our program for the evening, had a show and could not make this meeting. Amber Way donated one of the \$400+ Grand Prizes for our Show which HGMS greatly appreciated. Scott Singleton consented to fill in for the evening program with a very interesting presentation about fossil woods of the Lower Cretaceous of Central Texas.

Scott's presentation was on two of his recent papers. One paper was given to a symposium hosted by the Dallas Paleo Society last fall in McKinney. The subject was early Cretaceous and Pennsylvanian petrified wood of north-central Texas. He showed his research on an early conifer from the Pennsylvanian of Eastland County that grew into large trees and is preserved as a petrified forest on top of a plateau. In the Cretaceous he discussed cycadoidea fossils (an extinct relative of cycads) and showed us a specimen from Stephenville.

The second part of his presentation was on a paper he published and presented at the recent Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies (GCAGS) conference. It was on the stratigraphy of the occurrence of fossil wood in the Jasper area of East Texas, the same area where the club regularly goes on field trips. The wood occurs as lag in the lower portion of Miocene Fleming Formation, directly on top of the Oligocene Catahoula Formation. Above the Fleming Formation lies the Pliocene Willis Formation, which has abraded pieces of Fleming Formation wood occurring among pebbles and coarse-grained sands.

HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2008

by Nancy Fischer, Secretary

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
	1 st Vice President			Lapidary Rep.	Karen Burns
X	2 nd Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	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 Beverly Mace, 2nd Vice President.

A quorum was present. President Terry Proctor was tied up in traffic and arrived a few minutes late during the Treasurer's Report.

October 2008 Board of Directors Minutes were distributed via e-mail. Rick Rexroad moved to accept the minutes as distributed. Phyllis George seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan e-mailed the October Financials to the Board prior to the meeting. He reported that the Show earned about \$9400, but he is still waiting for a final accounting from Scott Singleton and the Show Committee. There was considerable discussion about the manner of reporting expenses within the Show Committee and the need for someone from the Show Committee to be present at Board Meetings to explain questions about the Show and Show Committee.

Items sold at the Show but originally bought for AFMS delegate packets were discussed: i.e., jotters (specialized note pads) and rock candy and the determination of into which account the expense should go. Accounting for the mugs was also discussed. Terry Proctor suggested that the Club purchase the mugs from the Show Committee and sell them throughout the year. They can also be sold in future shows and used for promoting the Club.

Shiara Trumble sent an e-mail requesting that the Board approve refunds for AFMS attendees. The Board had several questions about the accounting procedures, but did decide to give a refund to the four AFMS delegates who came to the Show and had paid for the cancelled Officer's Luncheon. This amounts to \$48. Phyllis George moved to give this refund. Rick Rexroad seconded the motion. The Board decided to hold off on authorizing additional refunds until the reasoning behind them can be clarified.

Rodney said he would set up an "other income" account for the 2009 Show, and its purpose would be for handling "in kind" events. For instance, Matt Dillon rented the truck to transport items to the show, but he did not want to be compensated for it. Truck Rental needs to be a line item in next year's show budget. Currently there is no way to record that people declined to be reimbursed for their show expense.

Rick Rexroad asked about Publicity line items that have been paid from the budgets of other committees such as the Dealer Committee. He suggested that next year a Show expense form be created that lists a code for each Committee. The form requests reimbursement for show-related expenses, and the Chairperson of the committee being assigned the expense must sign it.

Rodney had forms for officers to sign in order to open the new checking account approved at the September Board meeting.

Farris Stockton will do the 2007 and 2008 audits. He plans to do them both at the beginning of 2009, and it is understood that there is no charge to HGMS for the audits.

Rodney is still working on getting information on Director's Insurance.

Old and New Business

1. Terry Proctor negotiated the contract for the Humble Civic Center for November 13–15, 2009. The HCC manager and our representative at the Humble Civic Center said they could book us in for the same weekend in November each year as we have had them do for our September Shows in past years. Tom Wright moved to change the date of the Show to always be the November 12–15, 2009 slot which Humble Civic Center has now offered to make available to us. Rick Rexroad seconded the motion, noting that the date would be roughly a week and a half before Thanksgiving. The motion carried with all Board Members present voting for the move, except for Denise Bicknell who voted the way the Mineral Section directed her to vote. Hers was the only vote against the motion.

2. Tom Wright announced that the Education Committee is starting a Wednesday jewelry fabrication class. The first class is full, but there will be others. The Web site has been updated with contact information for Brian Honsinger, the Education Chair. Terry Proctor will write an article for the BBG asking members for input about classes they would like to have.

3. The parking lot's light bulbs have been replaced. (*See photo on page 12.*)

4. Terry mentioned that although the Board approved the purchase of some stop blocks for the parking lot, the shipping cost was about the same as the price of the block and therefore he did not order them. Matt Dillon brought to the October 28 General Membership meeting a stop block which he borrowed and could purchase without having to have them shipped. The price is higher, but without shipping they are cheaper. The local blocks are black rubber with some yellow hash stripes on the sides. The concern was that being black, they may not show up well and someone could trip on them in the dark. There was discussion about getting blocks and painting them, possibly with Codit, a 3M reflective paint so that they could be seen better.

5. The Christmas/Holiday party will be December 13. Terry suggested an auction or some kind of entertainment. He will ask Neal Immega to send out an e-mail requesting member input about having an auction. The Club will provide the meat. Members are asked to bring side dishes.

6. The Board will look at the Paleo Section's scholarship guidelines, possibly for use as a basis for the Club's scholarship.

7. Terry Proctor will ask Terry Brawner to research for a low-cost electric provider since our current contract is coming to an end. If Terry Brawner cannot do this, then Rodney Linehan will look into it.

8. Terry Proctor (the only nominee for 2009 President) said that in January 2009 he will set up a Grants and Donations Committee that will promptly start setting up procedures and contacts in an attempt to secure additional funding for HGMS next year.

9. Tom Wright prepared a page of what he believes are the changes to the HGMS Bylaws to accommodate the Beading Section and the dues change. Terry will also review the entire Bylaws to determine if these suggestions take care of the changes made this year, so that a new set of Bylaws can be made and filed with the Secretary, reflecting all changes to the Bylaws.

10. The purchase of a new copy machine was discussed. It was decided that there is no reason to get a new one at this time since the old one is functioning.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Tips & Hints

by Ed Wengerd

from Gem Cutters News 11/2008

The best thread for beads depends on what the beads are. Use strong, not-abrasive resistant silk on nonabrasive beads such as pearls, turquoise, mother-of-pearl, and lapis. Use abrasive-resistant nylon on beads such as onyx, metals, and quartzes. Before using nylon, prestretch overnight with a weight.

Renovate brittle dop wax by adding a piece of bees wax the size of a pea to 1/4 pound of dop wax. Try cementing three pieces of tiger eye together so that the grain of one piece is perpendicular to the next. Cabochons and other stones can then be cut with interesting chatoyancy effects.

Removing Lacquer: by Mary Jane Dunn, via the Breccia 4/2008, Arrowhead News 4/2008, and others

Ever want to remove a lacquer coating from an otherwise nice piece of lapidary material? Want to avoid using harsh chemicals? Here is a tip for you. Obtain some apple cider vinegar, the brown colored kind. Submerge the lacquered object in it, leave for a week, then remove and scrape off the lacquer with your thumbnail or other appropriate blunt tool. Repeat if necessary.



Image from 2006
SCRIBE CD

AFMS—Having Fun: Junior Activities Making our Shows “Kid Friendly”

by Jim Brace-Thompson

AFMS Juniors Chair

from AFMS Newsletter 11/2008

At this year's show in Humble, Texas, the Houston Gem & Mineral Society's Show Committee planned out a large earth science education program for public, private, and home-schooled kids on Friday and a Scout geology merit badge program for the weekend. These were both planned as special events in addition to still more fun things, including crafts and activities, for kids to do all during the show. I'm hoping to have further details about their kids' activities to share in a future article.



Here in my home state of California, June Harris of the Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society has pursued similar avenues for their annual spring show, and she'll be running Kids' Activities for the next California Federation show in April 2009. Like the Houston club, she's focused attention on getting the word out to local schools for field trips on the Friday of the show and on gearing activities to help Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts earn badges. (One suggestion from June: Get to know and curry favor with the person in your area in charge of selling badges to the local scout troops and dens, let them know what you're doing, and they can prove invaluable in helping get the word out about your show to the local scout leaders. It's in their direct interest, after all, to sell more badges!) The result? Two years ago, they had 500 kids come through their Kids' Area. Last year, 2,000! (I'm exhausted—though excited—just trying to picture it!)

Making our shows “kid friendly” like the Houston and Santa Clara clubs are doing helps in several ways. We cultivate interest in our hobby at a young age. We attract not just a child but a whole family when we offer fun things for the kids to do. And we attract still more families when kids show other kids in the neighborhood the neat rock or fossil they got at the show. We attract the attention of schools and youth groups such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. And we stand a better chance of attracting local press attention (and free publicity along with it) if we stress that a big part of our shows will be educational and family-oriented. And the educational orientation helps fulfill our mission as nonprofit organizations operating in the public interest.

Be sure to focus on carefully planning for kids' activities at your very next show for the sake of educating while having fun!



Ted's Safety Corner

by Theodore J. Reith

AFMS Safety Chair

from AFMS Newsletter 11/2008

What Have I Just Collected?

I have been a rock and mineral collector for more than three decades now. Being a Chemical Engineer, I've typically been more interested in a specimen's chemistry than its geology, though I plan to grow my knowledge of the latter. This is a most wonderful hobby, though all of us must be aware of the potential hazards that some minerals can represent.



This was most apparent to me with an acquisition made when I was still relatively new to the hobby. A vendor offered a very nice specimen of a rather gemmy, yellow and red crystal matrix from Utah, which I had not seen previously at several dozen Shows. What a great new collection addition! The card identified the specimen as Orpiment and Realgar. As the vendor was quite busy at that time, I did not inquire as to the chemical composition of these minerals.

At home, my research quickly identified this specimen as two arsenic sulfides, chemically As₂S₃ and As₂S₂. Arsenic is an obvious hazard word for most of us. A bit more checking of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)* showed it to have:

- A Health rating of 4 (defined specifically as "Life threatening, major or permanent damage may result from single or repeated overexposures.")
- To be listed by DOT as a Class B poison ("presumed to present a serious threat to health during transportation")
- To produce Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S) when contacted with water, a known respiratory hazard with its own Health rating of 4.

If a sample has a Health rating of 3 or 4 on the MSDS (or 2, if you're extra cautious), then you need to do some homework on safe handling.

The lesson to learn—know what you're collecting in order to include necessary safety considerations for the specific material. The first step would be to discuss the specimen with the vendor (I've found many to be well informed), or a knowledgeable person at the collection site. Certainly use all available reference materials.

If you have Internet access, there are a multitude of safety information sources if you know the chemical composition of your specimen. Google can certainly be your friend in this search. The MSDS, noted above, is a fine information source even though designed for industrial users of chemicals.

So, what did I do with my colorful but hazardous specimen? It's clearly marked as to the arsenic content. Handlers, including myself, will use non-cloth gloves or wash

hands thoroughly after admiring the crystals, especially prior to eating. Younger children may look, but not touch. And, from that point on, this writer knows what is being added to his collection!

* A material safety data sheet (MSDS) is a form containing data regarding the properties of a particular substance. An important component of workplace safety, it is intended to provide workers and emergency personnel with correct procedures for handling or working with that substance in a safe manner.

Letter to the Editor Cabbing for the Rest of Us

by Ken Perales

My wife came across this article when looking for cabs: http://www.rockhounds.com/rockshop/oplc_cab.shtml. I do not know if you can use it, perhaps reprinting it with the appropriate credit. It is nicely done and is a good primer for new cabbers or old mineral collectors. I like the first paragraph as I get the same feeling around our club—that same elitist attitude toward us non-purists.

I got a good dose of it when I went down to the minerals identification booth to find out what kind of rock one of the silent auction items was. They saw my member's badge, and the expression was "why did I not know what I was holding in my hand." The second time I went back, I got an even frostier response. While I admire their knowledge and appreciate the time and effort it took to get where they are, not all of us have that wealth of knowledge. Short of our going back to college, they are our best resource. A year ago, what I knew about rocks was that the bigger the rock, the bigger the splash it made when you dropped it off really high cliffs in Wyoming.

Anyway, the article is nice with good pictures and if we can use it, it would be a nice resource for those who do not know what a cab is.

Ken Perales

*Editor's Note: I thought Ken's suggestion to reprint this was a good one, so the article **Cabochon Making 101, Parts I and II** is reproduced on the following pages (with permission from Bob Keller). At the Lapidary Section meeting shortly after that, I mentioned Ken's request, and the members thought they would like to have this type of information available for people who are new to lapidary.*



Biggs jasper
Image from 2006
SCRIBE CD

Cabochon Making 101, Parts I and II
Cabbing with Tucson's Old Pueblo Lapidary Club
Article and Images by Bob Keller
www.rockhounds.com

Editor's Note: I think HGMS members will relate very strongly to this article—it sounds like OPLC and HGMS have much in common.

While I have been involved with mineral collecting for some time, I've just recently begun to explore the world of lapidary and its attractions as a hobby. I hate to admit it, but somewhere along the line I had picked up a bit of an elitist "attitude" toward lapidary and the poor, misguided, rock grinding, "grunt" rockhounds, who had weird and peculiar ideas about improving rocks by cutting them up and grinding and polishing on them. I was a *mineral collector*, not a rock butcher! I guess I figured if God had wanted man to mess with his rocks we'd have been given a lot harder fingernails...

However, it would seem that God gave us carbon in various forms and the brains with which to develop technology. I guess it was inevitable that brains + diamonds = lapidary tools. Well, I've finally seen the light and been converted through my involvement with Tucson's venerable Old Pueblo Lapidary Club. In addition to their ongoing faceting, lapidary and smithing classes, OPLC conducts open shop sessions, giving the members access to and use of the outstanding club workshops and equipment. I've been having so much fun making cabochons there that I thought I'd bring some of my fellow mineral collectors along for a session and share a little of what I'm learning and enjoying.



Here's some views of one of our shops. This room houses OPLC's lapidary shop and contains equipment and tools used in cabochon making such as diamonds saws, diamond grinders, carbide belted sanders, and polishers. Other rooms in this club-owned building house our metal smithing and jewelry shop, the faceting shop, and a saw room.

I've decided I need a couple of bola ties as accouterments to my wardrobe. Of course, since my conversion to a rock grinding grunt rockhound, I had to make the cabs for these myself. As you can see, OPLC is very facilitating for members with such inclinations and aspirations.

After finally accepting that a 200 carat faceted gemstone was likely to be regarded by many as a bit too gaudy for a tasteful bola, I selected this slab of chalcedony as a



promising piece of rough for this project. I'm saving the 200 carat gemstone idea for a future one. ;o) I'd like to say I field-collected this rough as I was told by another club member that it was a slab of a Brazilian agate, but the fact of the matter is I found it in a box of scrap—discarded and donated material under one of the workbenches in the lapidary shop. There's enough material in that box to make many dozens of cabs. You don't even need to bring your own rough to get started cabbing with OPLC!

Here's a few of the templates available in the lapidary shop for marking out cabochons with various standard and not so standard shapes. If you're going to marry the cab to a commercial finding designed to hold a standard sized stone, it's important to accurately cut it to a specific outline so it will fit. I'm not planning to use a finding to mount this cab, or if I do use one it will be custom made, which allows me to use a free form design for the outline. After studying the rough for a bit, I decided the shape of another freeform cab I had done was suitable and simply traced around it to establish the outline. The rough was just a little short in one corner, so it gets rounded a little more. It's an art, you know...



The next step is cutting the slab close to the desired outline with a diamond trim saw. On the saw table are both oil- and water-lubricated trim saws, the water saw being reserved for softer and porous materials which could be stained or discolored by oil. The slab is about a quarter of an inch thick. I would have preferred it to be just a wee bit thicker for a cab this size, but hey, the price was right.

I cut away the material surrounding the outline with a series of cuts on the oil lubed saw. This is messy business and relatively slow going with a feed rate of about an inch a minute. The metal blade that the diamond abrasive is bonded to is soft and easy to dork up if you're too aggressive with the feed rate or try to cut curves with it. However, it's still much faster and more economical to remove material with the saw than with a diamond grinder, and I've learned that a little extra time and attention spent

here carefully cutting close to the outline with successive and progressive cuts is handsomely rewarded during the subsequent outline grinding operation.

After sawing, the cab and hands are both cleaned in a tub of oil-absorbent media (commonly known as kitty litter), and then the cab is scrubbed clean of oil with an old tooth brush, soap and water.



The next step in the process is to establish a smooth and accurate outline with the grinder, removing any margins or small corners of material left over from the sawing operation. An 8-inch water-cooled grinder with 100 grit diamond wheels is used for this as well as the subsequent basic shaping processes of doming and rounding the cab. Note the plumbing to supply the cooling water and the drain pipe to carry away the runoff. An ultimate embellishment would be a water heater inline to warm the incoming water so it wouldn't be as cold on the pinkies...

Because this cab has straight sides and a relatively large area to hold on to, I elected to shape the outline on the grinder prior to dopping it to a dop stick. A dop stick is used to hold and manipulate the cab during grinding, sanding, and polishing operations. They're pretty handy to have mounted at this stage when you're making a round or oval shaped cab, especially if it's of a small size.

A tapered outline, narrower on the face side than the back side, can be established at this point if the cab is to be prong- or bezel-mounted in a finding. It's also a quick matter to apply a slight bevel with the diamond wheel to the edge on the back side of the cab to help prevent chipping if the edges are going to be exposed.



Once a smooth outline and any desired bevels are applied with the diamond grinder, a reference mark is established around the perimeter of the cab. I marked this line at about two thirds of the slab's thickness and closest to the back side of the cab. This line is used to help judge the progress and facilitate uniform removal of material during the shaping process.

Prior to dopping the cab, it is placed on top of a wax heater to warm so the dopping wax will bond to it readily. It's important that the stone be clean and up to heat to get



a secure bond. If this bond breaks while a cab is being worked, it's possible for it to be thrown by a rotary device and possibly broken or irreparably marred. It's also possible that you or someone else could get struck by a flying rock. Needless to say, the prudent lapidary wears eye protection while working with these tools.

The wax heaters are simply metal boxes with a light bulb inside for the heat source. These would be an easy home brew. Believe me, they get plenty hot. After the stone has heated up, a glob of dop wax is picked up and swirled on the dop stick, which is just a section of dowel about 6 inches long. It's then plunked down on the backside of the cab, and a finger can be employed to work the wax into a nice fillet.



The cab and dop stick are left on the heater for a few more minutes, giving the wax time to flow and bond. Then the assembly is removed and allowed to cool. The bond is then tested to make sure the cab is securely bonded to the stick. Once satisfied that all is properly prepared, the next step is grinding the face of the cab to a dome shape and generally rounding and smoothing it.

Sometimes there's rockhound traffic jams on frequently used equipment like the diamond grinders in the lapidary shop during busy sessions, but the congestion normally clears after several minutes as members move on to subsequent stages on their projects. I've learned to bring the material for several projects so that if a particular station that I need to use is crowded or full, I have something else to work on. That way I can stay as productive as I want.



I think one of the things that's appealing about cabochons is they're quick to make. I can often start and finish two complete cabochons, slab to polished cab, in the course of a three hour open shop session at the club. It feels like I got something accomplished when I leave the club at the end of a session with a couple of new cabs in my pocket. That is quite a contrast to my project

progress in a weekly faceting class that I also take through OPLC, where I have literally spent months to produce a single gemstone.



While cabbing is definitely “hands on” work, here’s where that dop stick comes into play. It gives you something to grasp and manipulate the cab with, and saves a lot of wear and tear on the fingernails. If you know what you’re doing and have the physical strength to press hard continuously, (*Editor’s note: I think Neal would get on you about this—a lighter touch is usually better.*) you can really hog off material fast on one of these heavy duty 8-inch grinders spinning a 100 grit diamond wheel. Of course, if you don’t know what you’re doing, that means you can also ruin a cab in pretty short order too. :-(

As the cab is rotated with the dop stick, a sweeping, oscillating motion is used to keep the contact point moving on both the cab and the wheel, the object being to produce a smooth and properly domed surface on the face of the cab (and uniform wear on the wheel). For me, this motion was the most difficult part of cabbing to learn. There’s a certain feel to things when you get this motion and the pressure correct that’s hard to describe, but you soon come to know it when you’re doing things right. It’s a skill that’s refined with experience, although I only had to destroy a couple of rocks before I got the basics down on ovals and felt ready to try my hand at some free forms.

I just use light to moderate pressure and inspect the progress and results of various motions frequently. Once you’re started it’s a closed loop process and you quickly learn what works for you and what doesn’t. Since I’ve been using inexpensive materials and the time involved is relatively low, I consider them expendable and it’s not a heart breaking ordeal to screw one up as part of the learning process. The experience of only half a dozen or so cabbing sessions has changed the grinding operation from feeling awkward, clumsy and vexing to relaxing and therapeutic. I like to think of cabochons as faceted stones with infinitely many meet points...

It took about half an hour on the diamond grinder to grind the dome on this cab. I worked the stone progressively from the edges towards the center of the face. There’s a tendency to grind down the corners on a freeform like this too much and that’s where the reference line helps to give a reality check.

If you’re having trouble seeing what’s going on, one technique which can be employed is to black out the problematic area with a magic marker and look to see after some



passes on the grinder if you're taking off material only where you intended to. The grinding operation is complete when the stone is fully shaped.



The next step is sanding with a 220 grit carbide belt on a water cooled sander with expandable rubber drums. The 220 grit belt is used to remove the scratches left in the surface of the cab by the 100 grit diamond wheel. The 220 grit belt is also abrasive enough that it can be used to do some of the fine shaping and smoothing, especially with softer materials. The rubber drum compresses and conforms to the face of the cab as pressure is applied against it, which also helps with the smoothing chores. The same sweeping, oscillating motion that's employed during grinding is also used on the sanders.

Dry the cab frequently by wiping it with a paper towel or rag during sanding to reveal the remaining scratches. When only 220 grit sized scratches remain, the work is moved to another sanding station equipped with 320 grit belts and the process is repeated to remove the 220 grit sized scratches. This process is repeated yet again at another station with 600 grit belts. When all of the 320 grit scratches have been removed and the cab is dried, it has a smooth sheen and a hazy, semi-polished appearance.



The cab is almost finished at this stage, and the next operation is polishing. A rotary polisher with pads to hold the polishing compound is employed for this task. The pad is wetted with a spray bottle, and then a paste of some well recycled cerium oxide is applied to both the cab and the pad. The face of the cab and the edges are then simply pressed into the pad and polished all around. As the pad dries out, the cab starts to get draggy on the surface and it is at this point that the best polishing action seems to occur. Heat from friction can build up quickly during polishing, and it's important to let the stone cool frequently so that so much heat is not built up that the dop wax softens and loses its bond to the cab.

The pad on the other side of this polisher is used with tin oxide, which gives a better polish on some materials than cerium oxide. The polishing paste tends to build up in

any fine cracks or pits in the cab's surface, and it can be removed by a final scrubbing with a toothbrush and soap and water.



Finished! Ain't it pretty? All that's left to do now is to stick it in a freezer—this causes the dop wax to become brittle and lose its bond to the cab, which often falls off under its own weight after a few minutes of cooling. Any remaining wax on the back side is then cleaned up by scraping with the blade of a pocket knife. Not too bad for a free stone cabled by a mineral collector, huh?



There are many clubs and societies oriented toward lapidary, and they offer unparalleled opportunities for newcomers to the hobby to learn and acquire lapidary skills and knowledge. One of the greatest things about the rockhounding hobby is that there never seems to be a shortage of teachers and mentors who are willing to spend the time to help, teach, and advise those with less experience.

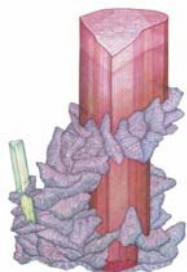
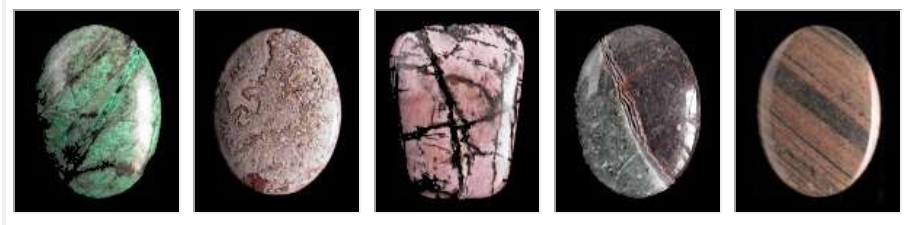
Another not insignificant advantage to exploring lapidary through a club is that they often possess and make available to their members many thousands of dollars worth of equipment, the purchase of which is a major obstacle and deterrent to many beginners.

I already owe a deep debt of gratitude to OPLC and some of its members for the opportunities to learn about and enjoy lapidary that they have made available to me. If you're interested in lapidary but haven't got your hands wet yet, I can't encourage you too strongly to seek out and join a local club if one is available to you.

If you're a Tucson area resident or snowbird, you're welcome to join us! The Old Pueblo Lapidary Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the maintenance, development, and improvement of lapidary and related arts, including the earth sciences.

In retrospect, if I'd just thought it through, I'd probably have gotten involved in lapidary as a suitable hobby years ago. I've always enjoyed creating things with my hands and using tools to do precision work. I've come to appreciate that one can do some pretty amazing and fun stuff to rocks with lapidary tools, and dare I say it—even

improve them over their natural state. I've decided that if I like a rock better after working on it, that's all that matters! And if I don't—hey, what the heck—At What Price Art?



The Night Before Christmas

(A Computer Visit from St. Niccolite)
(With apologies to Clement C. Moore)
by Larry Rush

<http://www.connroxminerals.com/>

Permission to reprint granted by Larry Rush
(larryrush@worldnet.att.net)

Twas the night before Christmas, when through the Rockhound's list,

Not a subscriber was posting, neither mister nor miss;

The e-mail was stored on the server with care,

In hopes that spammers would not visit there.

The rockhounds were nestled all snug in their beds,

While visions of emeralds danced in their heads.

And I, clutching my Estwing and old collecting pack,

Had just settled down for a long winters nap,

When down in the computer room there arose such a clatter,

I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the hallway, and crossing the floor,

I tore down the stairs and threw open the door.

The light from the Gateway monitor below,

Gave the luster of midday to objects aglow,

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,

But an Internet graphic; a pick-up sleigh and eight rockhounds there.



With a little old webmaster, so lively and bright,

I knew in a moment it must be St. Niccolite.

More rapid than Microsoft his posters they came,

And he whistled and shouted, and called them by name.



Now Kreigh, now Axel, now Pete and Lanny,
On Keith, on John, on Margaret and Kitty!
To the top of the screen, to the top of the list,
Now mail away, mail away, mail away quick!

And, as subscribers to AOL often cry,
When they meet with a virus, the tempers they fly,
So on to Bett's home page the collectors they flew,
With the screen full of slabs, and St. Niccolite, too.

And then in a twinkling, I saw on John's site,
Beautiful images of fossils and rhodochrosite.
As I clicked more on my mouse to surf around,
Back onto my screen came St. Nick with a bound.

He was dressed all in demin, from his feet to his shirt,
And his clothes were all stained with limonite dirt.
A bundle of crystals he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a miner with a full collecting pack.



His eyes twinkled like zircons, his dimples how merry!
His cheeks like rose quartz, his nose like agate of cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up with an apatite,
And the beard of his chin was as white as calcite.

The stump of a pipe he held firm with his bite,
And the smoke encircled his head like hemimorphite.
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed like a bowl of opal (jelly).

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old rockhound,
And I laughed when I saw him, right out of the Red Cloud.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know he had galena and lead!

He spoke not a word but went straight to his right,
And filled all the Perkies with beryl and wulfenite.
And laying his hammer aside of the frame,
And giving a nod, to the Escape key he came.



He sprang to his pickup, to his pals gave a whistle,
And away they all browsed like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he faded from sight,
Good collecting to all, (and for the fluorescents, a
Good Light!).

Merry Christmas to the Rockhound Group. May all
your presents be crystallized!



ShowTime 2008

December 5-7 El Paso, TX El Paso Mineral & Gem Society
 El Maida Auditorium, 6331 Alabama
 Jeanette Carrillo, (915) 533-7153
 gemcenter@aol.com

ShowTime 2009

January 17-18 Fredericksburg, TX Fredericksburg Rockhounds
 Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park

January 24-25 Tyler, TX East Texas Gem & Mineral Society
 Rose Garden Center

Jan. 31-Feb. 1 Panama City, FL Panama City Gem & Mineral Society
 Bay Cnty Fairgrds, US 98 & Sherman Ave
 Al Zar, 850 784-0740; aquezpie@aol.com

Jan. 24-Feb. 16 Tucson, AZ Tucson--over 40 shows during the event
 More information is available at
http://www.jewelrysthowsite.com/content/tucson_show_guide_2009.html

February 21-22 Pasadena, TX Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society
 Pasadena Convention Center

February 21-22 Georgetown, TX Williamson Co. Gem & Mineral Society
 Ollie Liner Center

February 21-22 Plainview, TX Hi Plains Gem & Mineral Society; Ollie
 Liner Center, South I-27; Mildred Matlock
 806 293-3476; jmmlatlock@suddenlink.net

March 21-22 San Antonio, TX Southwest Gem & Mineral Society
 Live Oak Civic center, 8101 Pat Booker Rd.
www.swgemandmineral.org

July 30-August 2 Billings, MT AFMS/NFMS show; Billings G & M Club
 Montana Trade Center, Holliday Inn
 Grand Montana, 5500 Midland R.
 Doug True, dtruefossils@yahoo.com

November 13-15 Humble, TX Houston Gem & Mineral Society
 Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy.
 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport
 1 mile east of Hwy. 59; www.hgms.org

2008		December				2008
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 7:30 Board Meeting	3 7:30 Mineral Section	4	5	6 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
7	8 NO Day Light Section	9 7:30 Show Committee	10 7:30 Faceting Section	11	12	13 10-2 Shop Open 5:30 Christmas Party
14	15 NO Lapidary Section	16 NO Paleo Section	17 NO Mineral Section	18	19	20 10-5 Shop Open NO Youth Section
21 Hanukkah	22	23 NO General Meeting	24	25 Christmas Day	26	27 10-5 Shop Open
28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			

2009		January				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 New Year's Day	2	3 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
4	5	6 7:30 Board Meeting	7 7:30 Mineral Section	8	9	10 10-5 Shop Open
11	12 7:30 Day Light Section	13 7:30 Show Committee	14 7:30 Faceting Section	15	16	17 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
18	19 7:30 Lapidary Section	20 7:30 Paleo Section	21 7:30 Mineral Section	22	23	24 10-5 Shop Open
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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