



# *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*

**S**ome things seem to remain on the horizon, others are closing in, and some whizzed by so fast they are now gone. Do some moments in your life seem to zip past you and others seem to take forever to arrive?

In a book I wrote I used a comparison on this. The same moment in time that you are waiting for the light to change green seems to take a long time, but for a young man on a date with his main squeeze (for you younger readers, that means main girlfriend) the whole evening can seem to be over in moments. I can recall great trips I looked forward to in anticipation for months, and then they whizzed by me, leaving only a pleasant memory to look back on for the rest of my life.



For months I looked forward to the week I would spend with famous paleontologist Robert Bakker, PhD digging a dinosaur for the first time in my life, in Como Bluff, Wyoming. (Como Bluff is a famous dig site harking back to the days of the dinosaur bone war between Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh who were com-

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*Continued on page 4*

## **Great Schedule of Upcoming General Membership Programs**

*by Terry Proctor*

**J**une 24, 2008: Art Smith on "Upgrading Mineral Specimens"

**July 22, 2008: Open** due to our scheduled speaker developing venous (problem with leg veins) health problems, his presentation on flint point knapping will be delayed for some months while he recovers. Another outstanding program will be planned shortly as a substitute.

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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>.

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peting to find and name each new species of dinosaur.) The week was over in a flash, but good things remained from it. I was the recipient of almost all of that week's notes by Dr. Bakker, and we stayed in touch. My sister in Lakewood (a large suburb of Denver) dug with his crew for several years, and Dr. Bakker came on board our small museum's Board of Directors several years back. Dr. Bakker loves to work with kids and small museums and has a thing about donating dinosaur bones he finds to local museums for display. This was an experience of a lifetime captured in my writing, in photos, and permanently etched in my memory.

I remember being thrust into the Show Chairman position for the 50th Anniversary of the HGMS Show. Then it flashed by and was over, but gosh what great memories remained. I had no idea what I was doing when I started, but then from all over appeared the great folks of HGMS, all of whom knew their jobs, and I really was more a figurehead than a leader. I recall a performance of Victor Borge who started to direct an orchestra in a concert, then walked off to sit on the steps in front of the orchestra, then spent 10 minutes talking with the audience about why no conductor is actually needed, as the orchestra continued to play a very intricate concert. That is the way I felt as the great HGMS organization swirled around me doing their job flawlessly, without needing my guidance on much of anything. To top it off, the Show actually showed a profit.

This is not unlike this year. I don't really know what a President of HGMS is supposed to do, so I just act like I do, show up for meetings, call them to order, listen, talk when I shouldn't, start trouble, then ask if someone wants to move to adjourn and we do. Then Phyllis reminds me that the main job of the HGMS President is to write a monthly column and encourage the membership to keep up the good work. So you can see how simple being President really is. Now if we only have a First Vice-President next year, I could probably even retire and we wouldn't really need a President at all.

However, since the HGMS Board of Directors has some thorny questions to resolve this year, I guess I will stay on until say, December. Seriously, any input that any HGMS member may have on things about HGMS that you like, do not like, think need to be done, think don't need to be done, or other guidance is welcomed. Some things facing HGMS (like increasing expenses) aren't pleasant, but your Board of Directors is considering all of these matters with thought and consideration, always keeping in mind what is best for the Club. I thank all the HGMS members for their support this year, especially the volunteers for the Greatest Show On Earth (or maybe it's the Greatest Show About the Earth), our fall Show in Humble, September 26–28, 2008. NASA confirmed today that they will provide a Moon Rock for the Show and NASA personnel to answer questions about extraterrestrial material. What an interesting thing to have just now, with the new Martian Lander just starting to send back new data from Mars.

Isn't our avocation the most interesting thing you could be involved in? What a great time we are living in.

## *General Meeting Programs continued from page 1*

**August 26, 2008: Patrick J. Lewis, PhD** of Sam Houston State University, on his dig in South Africa going on just about now, for pre-historic primates and other animals

**September 23, 2008:** NASA will present a program on extra-terrestrial material.

**October 28, 2008: open** at present, but a program will be scheduled. Also at this meeting the Nominating Committee will present their list of nominees for the 2009 officers, and nominations from the floor will be accepted.

**November 25, 2008: open** at present. The Election of 2009 Officers will be held. If there is a contested election, ballots will be mailed out.

**December 13, 2008:** Our Christmas/Holiday Season Party at the clubhouse. The Board of Directors furnishes the meat, and HGMS members bring sides, salads, and desserts.

### **Spring Collecting Trip to the Texas Hill Country**

*by Art Smith*

*artsmithite@msn.com*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

I knew that making a collecting trip to central Texas May 12–18 might be pushing my luck a bit as far as hot weather was concerned, but a break in routine was desperately needed, so why not try it. The weather was cool the first day, so I decided to visit Fredericksburg to see what changes had occurred since my last visit over 10 years ago. It is much more tourist oriented and prosperous looking now. During my first trip there in 1965, there was a German restaurant that had a pretty young waitress with a definite German accent. Assuming she was a student from Germany, I asked what part she was from. “No, I was born at (naming a small nearby community), but we spoke German at home.” Yes, I could believe that, and the German influence is still there but not as strong.



Heading northeast to Llano, I decided to take the Willow City scenic loop and was not disappointed. I was so busy handling the curves and narrow road, that I completely missed the Coal Creek serpentinite and the visible quarry that was just a few hundred feet off the road to the right, though I was close to it. In Llano, I stopped by the Llano Uplift Rockshop and saw that it had a new owner and would reopen the next Thursday. I was anxious to see if the large gadolinite crystal that was in the shop and not for sale had been found by the new owner, but it was only Tuesday.

In Llano there was no motel vacancy for a room through Saturday night, so I continued to Marble Falls—better for meeting Frank Roberts who would be coming out of Austin. However, we had crossed signals. I neglected to put Frank’s number into my

cell phone, and he had no regular phone, so I could not look up his number. It was not until Thursday at the Llano Uplift Rock Shop again when I met the new owner, Frank Rowell, who had Frank Robert's number and gave it to me. No, the gadolinite crystal was not still in the shop when he bought it, but the years of varied accumulation and filth did come with a few treasures. The shop had some schorl crystals in schist from a Sun Rise Beach find at a construction site. It is further to the south and on the west side of Lake LBJ. Contacting Frank, we agreed to meet the next morning at the motel.

However prior to this time, Lake Buchanan was visited. I had heard that the water was extremely low in the fall, but now disappointingly it was extremely high, so there was no possibility of checking the edges for exposed pegmatites like in 1997 (Smith and Stegemoller 1998). So that was out. I did check out some piles of rubble stockpiled in the county park just north of Black Rock State Park, but there was not much of interest though there were numerous pieces of granite and pegmatite mixed in them.

Closer to Llano, about nine miles north on State Route 16, the llanite outcrop was visited, but not for collecting any of the llanite. I hoped to find some of the blue bi-pyramidal quartz weathered out of the rock and loose in the soil, so I collected a bag of it. Llanite is a fine-grained light-colored rhyolite with phenocrysts of 2 to 4 mm of orange feldspar and about 1 to 2 mm pale blue, somewhat chatoyant quartz. The blue quartz looks like chalcedony, but its appearance is caused by included minute acicular rutile. Having washed the soil out of the residue since arriving home, yes, this collecting was somewhat successful. Only about 1 out of 50 pieces of the quartz can be recognized as a bi-pyramidal crystal. No near-perfect ones have been found yet, but I still have a lot of material to go through.

Several years ago I had a microscopic pink mineral checked out for John Lind, now living in the Llano area. It was in magnesite, and John thought it had to be pink tourmaline, but an Excalibur EDS showed it to be what I expected, zoisite. However, I thought it was probably the thulite variety that is usually pink, but it hadn't enough manganese.

John gave the location to me as Far East Road. However, others looking for that road said there was no such road in Llano. Bob Gamble of Arkansas had John take him to the location, and I guess John must be a bit dyslexic because when he turned on Far West Road, Bob told him it was the wrong road. But John just said, "Far East, Far West—all the same thing!"

When I was driving on State Route 23 west of town, there was Far West Road, so I decided to check out the magnesite prospect which was a shallow pit (now mostly filled with trash) and several other small cuts and shallower pits near it. The pure magnesite is a dense white material with a pale bluish cast, and like many such metamorphic rocks, it is tough and difficult to break. I saw no pieces that looked like what John had given me, and I did not see any with obvious pink zoisite microcrystals in it. I chucked a few pieces of magnesite into a bucket to break down later because they had some specks of interest and cavities with small secondary magnesite in them. Hopefully more can be written on that later after microscopic inspection.

On Friday I met Frank and went to one of his pegmatite prospects in Burnet County. Initially he had found some monazite-(Ce) crystals weathered out in the soil. One was a 5-pound mass of intergrown crystals, but that was then. We prospected the pegmatite vein which had been mined to just below ground level for its milky white quartz. We found a few hot spots and dug out some small xenotime crystals, some monazite fragments, and some pale green beryl fragments, but it was obvious that Frank had already recovered most of the good ones with his radiation detectors. The pegmatite itself had little of interest. The garnets were weathered and fragmental. There was some good graphic granite that had the typical cuneiform pattern, but some cuts were more of an Arabic writing pattern. Some of the microcline has a coarsely perthitic (intergrowth with albite) pattern. I found one of interest that is a partial crystal. There was little else of interest, but now I have seen where the monazite-(Ce) and xenotime crystals I got from Frank came from.



1. Graphic granite with cuneiform writing pattern, Frank's Burnet County pegmatite.



2. Petrick quarry showing large blocks of granite and water that limited collecting.

The Petrick (pronounced Pea-trick) pegmatite occurs in a granite quarry just off the west side of Lake Buchanan. It is a mile or two south-southwest of the Baringer Hill pegmatite now under the lake waters. But here instead of one large pegmatite mass, there seem to be numerous small dikes in the granite. However as Frank has noted, the mineralogy seems to be closer to it than any of the other rare-earth pegmatites in Llano or Burnet counties. A partial mineralogy was written up by Smith, Roberts, and Bicknell (1997). Since then we have added several other minerals including powellite and molybdenite, both also occurring at Baringer Hill. The other thing about Baringer Hill is that many of the rare-earth minerals are rich in yttrium, and that seems true of the Petrick pegmatite though the rare-earth minerals are in



much smaller crystals and masses. We worked the area for parts of two days, and I cannot say we came away with a bonanza in specimens, but we did get some fergusonite-(Y) and some gadolinite. I also got some small cavities that will be cleaned and examined, and they might add to the mineralogy of the location.

The water was high from recent rains and from bad thunderstorms and tornados on the previous Wednesday night. One touched down about six miles north of the motel in Marble Falls, but it only got some power lines and a lot of live oak trees in the fields. The resulting high water hindered us from working some of the more choice spots that Frank had delineated, and his compressor was in 10 inches or more of water, so that was not available. A pump lowered the water level where the compressor was, but not low enough to unlock it and pull it out, and we could not have used it because the other good places were also water covered in the main quarry. However with some heavy sledge and some chisel work, we did liberate a few specimens. One thing that Frank has found here that was also noted at Baringer Hill, are masses of a dark purple fluorite that are luminescent in warm temperatures. Yes, it is thermoluminescent; also this material glows a pale yellow white on a warm night without applying any heat or ultraviolet radiation.

Frank wrangled permission for us to visit the Badu Hill pegmatite that is just a short distance further to the south-southwest. Evidently there is some litigation, and the owner has terminated visits to the location. It has been over a year since there has been any feldspar mining, and I was surprised at how quickly much of the deeper material, particularly from the



3. Badu Hill Quarry with acid water pit, It will copper plate iron left in it. The pyrite in the breccia zone contains some copper and there may be some chalcopyrite.

fluorite-pyrite-titanite breccia zone, weathers. Any of the titanite crystals found just crumbled apart. There were still some of the microcline-biotite sandwiches with the microscopic zircon crystals (Smith, Roberts, and Bicknell 2008). The cavities with albite, orthoclase, and quartz crystals have long since been mined out, and so none were found even in the older dumps. We did find some masses of fine-grained muscovite, but most were badly weathered and fell apart, and only one had a small matt of pale yellowish reticulated rutile crystals. I considered the visit more of a historical thing and found nothing significant or new, but I did get some pictures that document the size of the current pit if no more mining ever takes place, and particularly if it gets filled in.



Frank has permission to go to one of the Coal Creek serpentinite quarries in Gillespie County. So we traveled there to have a look at it since I had never been and cannot believe it was missed during my earlier trip on the Willow City Loop. The quarry has high walls and is relatively dangerous if you work them. However, much serpentine is available without working them. The serpen-

tine is a pale greenish yellow with some dark blotches that may form banding, and attractive pieces are easy to find. It should make an excellent carving material. There was also a mostly yellow serpentine with some dark areas.

Chrysotile asbestos occurs in a small area. Someone told me it was tremolite and that would make it the more dangerous amphibolite asbestos, but it is much too soft for that and it is quite compact, making it fairly safe from having fibers becoming airborne. I saw no evidence of chromite though there were pieces of a dense, fine-grained, heavy

black dike rock that might have some chromite in it, but I have not examined it yet. We spent a relatively short time here, and then we went back to the Petrick quarry and worked it until dark and got a few more small masses of fergussonite-(Y) and gadolinite for our efforts. I also got some small black dendrites on a secondary yellowish background. The specimens are very slightly radioactive. I am not sure if they are from the alteration of pyrite or rare-earth minerals or both. This concluded the Hill Country collecting. With temperature highs in the low eighties and rain about every night, a weather bullet was dodged. The week after the trip the temperatures were in the mid-nineties every day.



4. Large specimen of calcite crystals that was purchased. It was collected in the hill country west of Austin where limestone is prevalent.



5. Graphic granite with Arabic writing pattern, also from Burnet County.

Sunday the trip back to Houston was made with a stop at a rock shop in a shopping center just west of Smithville. Here I got the only complete Texas crystal specimen of the trip, a large group of calcite crystals from a hill country location west of Austin. That was the only location data the owner had.

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## Lake Texoma 2008—Ammonites, Urchins, and Oysters on Memorial Weekend

by Neal Immega

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Why did we come? Does the Houston Gem and Mineral Society not already have enough ammonites and oysters to go around? Maybe we were called to visit Lake Texoma by powers we do not understand. Maybe a Lorelei was calling us, and we had to come. Of course, the old story has sailors breaking their ships on the rocks, and we were out to break rocks, but that is a detail. She was sorry for us anyhow.

**Day One—Ammonite Beach:** The Corps of Engineers must have known that I was coming, so they drained the lake to the nominal water level to be ready for Immega-induced rain—but nothing happened! Really. It reminded me of the drought of 1986. No matter—I led the field trip on the annual death march to “Ammonite Beach” in the blazing sun. Did you know that HGMS has a navy and even SEALs? Some of our members arrived in style—by boat—and they were very popular as transport to get the fossils over water to the boat docks. As usual, the park rangers were vastly amused by our collecting activities. One of them pretended to thumb the fishing regulations before stating that there did not seem to be a bag limit on 100 million year old squids.



Lorelei of the Lake



Collecting and cooling on Ammonite Beach



Hairpin ammonite

The biggest guy on the trip decided to extract an ammonite from the 3-foot thick limestone layers. The picture to the left shows him letting his wife have a little fun.

Memo to field trip—don't try to

extract ammonites from the 3-foot layer. It was still sitting there, basking on the beach, when we left.

**Hairpin Ammonite:** One of the more unusual ammonites has the shape of a hairpin (above right). It is still there, too, because there is no way to extract this specimen without a rock saw. I wonder if this ammonite could swim?



Kids carry their own stuff.



Mr. President

**Day Two:** Everyone worked very hard the first day, so I took them to an easier beach on day two. The ammonites were smaller and in softer rock. Some of the parents were

concerned that I was planning a march like the first day and equipped their kids with a pack suitable for crossing the Sahara (previous page bottom left).

I told everyone that this beach is a fee site and that they each had to pick up 100 oysters for the grab bags we sell at our show. It worked—I now have 1,500 of them. In spite of having a solar-powered fan in his helmet, our President, Terry Proctor (previous page bottom right), seems to be bashing a rock without a single fossil in it. Since he is a lawyer, I would not dream of saying things like “crazy with the heat.”

**Day Three: Urchin Beach**—Monday, and we were going to have to drive back 300 long miles to Houston, so I led everyone to the easiest site of the trip—

“Urchin Beach” on the Oklahoma side of the lake. We had easy collecting in the weathered marl of small ammonites and many urchins—no hammers needed at all. In the surf you could see lots of broken fragments of ammonites suitable for school kits, and by now everyone was trained to tithe (at least)! I have marked in the picture above a clump of 6 urchins.



Urchin Beach

It was a good trip in that no one got hurt beyond sunburns, and everyone got to collect as much as they were able. This was our 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Lake Texoma, and the experience showed.

### Day Light Section

*by Frances Arrighi*

**F**ifteen members attended the 12 May, 2008, meeting of the Day Light Section. The program was devoted to making opal doublets and triplets. Since the procedure was essentially the same as for the moss agate which we did in April, I will not repeat it.

We do thank Mary Ann Mitscherling who brought some opal chips to go along with those given us by Bill Cox. We also thank Tom Wright and Brian Honsinger for donating and cutting the jet used for the backs of the triplets.

At the June meeting we will prepare the metal for the patina solutions.

#### Late-Breaking Club News

Are you getting e-mails about HGMS activities? If not, contact [n\\_immega@swbell.net](mailto:n_immega@swbell.net) and let him know that you want to be on the list.



## Lapidary Section

May 19, 2008

by Stephen Wilkerson

I missed the April meeting due to birthday obligations, but I have heard that the program on making doublets went well.

**Board:** The education chair is still vacant. However, Mary Ann Mitscherling has stated that she would be willing to take on part of the responsibilities of the position. The "Code of Conduct" is being formalized and will be sent out to all members soon.

**New Business:** Mary Ann brought us up-to-date on the status of the templates the Section has designed and has available for sale. The Lapidary Section designed four different templates for calibrated stone shapes. We sold an average of three sets of all four templates each month over the last year. There are about 200 of the first template design still on hand. But the other three designs have fewer than twenty each remaining. Ed Clay moved that we order more of the three template designs where our stock is low. Margaret Hardman-Muye seconded the motion. Mary Ann presented the breakdown of cost for ordering different quantities of templates. After some discussion, it was decided to purchase 300 of each template, which should give us a good supply for several years. Some newer members commented that they did not know the Section has templates available for sale to club members and others. We will work on placing an ad in the BBG soon.

The subject of new template designs was brought to the floor. Several pages with potential shapes were passed around, and each member present indicated which shapes they would like to see in a new template. In the end, seven shapes were chosen, to be split into two templates with graduated sizes of each shape. The Section decided to order 100 each of the two new templates after the sample templates are received from the manufacturer and are reviewed and approved by the Section.

The annual Lapidary Section auction will be held on Saturday, October 18. More details will be available as we get closer to the date.

**Shop:** Mary Ann Mitscherling has agreed to open the shop from 5:00–7:15 p.m. on the Mondays the Lapidary Section has its meeting for the months of June, July, and August (third Monday of the month).

**Show & Tell:** Ed Clay brought his competition stone collection so the group could see some of his unique shapes and consider them for the new templates. One of the stones he cut is a shape that will be included on the new template design.

Due to the long discussion over the templates, we didn't get to finish the doublets started in April. Mary Ann suggested that anyone who wanted to finish their doublet could come in before the June meeting.

The program for the June meeting will be working with a spool polisher. If you have one, please bring it in. If you have a stone you want to polish (corundum, jade, opal, etc) bring it to the meeting to work on it.

## I. Ron Ore

*by Gary and Debbie Shute*

*Gary and Debbie are friends of Sunday Bennett, and they live in Newfoundland. They gave her permission to have this story they wrote printed in The Backbender's Gazette. The story is a kid's-eye view about iron ore and its journey from being mined to going through a foundry.*

**H**i, my name is I. Ron Ore, and I'm from the family made up of iron oxides (hematite and magnetite), quartz, iron carbonate, iron silicate, and iron sulfide minerals. Our family tree shows we're Lake Superior type ore. We were formed 1.2 billion and 800 million years ago by volcanic action and water from hot springs. This process is said to have taken 50,000 years to finish. Grandpa says the reason the formation is wrinkled and folded is because of those 50,000 years we spent in a hot tub.

We vary in depth from 30–300 m (100–1000 ft), and our family's territory is 1199 km (745 miles) along the Labrador Trough. There are currently three working mines in this area: IOCC, Wabush, and Mount Wright. There were two other mines in this area at one time; however, Schefferville was closed because the type of ore became uneconomical to mine when Gagnon's Lake Jeannine and Fire Lake mines ran out of minable ore.

In the early 1950s some men started checking the extent of my family tree in this area. They did this rather oddly as they drilled holes into the earth (tickled my ribs doing that) and took samples. This was done, I presume, to check out our genetic code. Then they charted our family tree and decided we were a huge family and if mined, may bring some financial reward to a company brave enough or farsighted enough to invest the money to overcome the problems inherent in this remote area.

A few years later they brought in bigger drills and were making bigger holes. At a family meeting, we decided they were probably still checking out the fine quality of the Ore family. They filled up the holes with what I thought was a slushy, but I quickly learned from the smell that it couldn't possibly be that tasty drink. I deduced this because it smelled like animal droppings (fertilizer) and fuel oil. I have since learned that it is called slurry and is made just down the road from where we live. These humans put a strange rope-like material down into the holes they were filling with this slurry and tied them all together. We were wondering what all this could possibly be leading to... then we heard the bang, and all of my family started shaking and trembling, and some of us flew into the air and landed hundreds of yards away. Thus begins the saga of how my family went from being underground hermits to being welcomed into exotic ports the world over.

As mentioned before, our journey really started with a bang. The family members start getting excited when their turn for this thrilling journey nears. The first indication we receive that our time is near is when the drill tickles our ribs. The final clue that our journey is about to begin is the big bang and a free ride through the air. Of course the landing is sometimes a bit rough, and we can get separated from our imme-



diate family. The lucky ones are the ones that land last as they have a bit of a cushion by landing on the others. It's a fun ride, for sure.

Next, big crawly things start coming toward the piles that have been shaken loose by the bang. We have learned that the humans call these big things shovels, but they don't look anything like the shovels humans use to move snow, so I find it confusing. These crawly things—oops, shovels—scoop up as many of us as will fit in the bucket. Then we go for a short ride as we swing from the pile to above a truck. The bottom falls out of the bucket, and we skydive into the truck. Whee! What an adventure.

We now go for a short ride in the back of the big truck. They take us to a place that has been known locally as the loading pocket. It sure doesn't look like the pocket on mom's apron, but who can figure out these humans anyway? The truck backs up toward a large hole; the dump box raises, and we slide out just like going down a slippery slide. Whoopee, this is fun. From the top of the hole we tumble in a zigzag tunnel until we reach the bottom.

Here a pan feeder takes us on another short ride until we fall off the edge and freefall into what is known in these parts as a gondola. I thought a gondola would be a romantic moonlight ride on a little boat in Italy. Boy, was I wrong. A gondola is just a fancy name for an ore-carrying railroad car.

We then go on a nine-mile ride in what is known as an ATO or automated train operation. I wasn't too sure about riding in a train with no engineer to drive it and no roof on the car to keep the rain and snow out, but it was a fun ride anyway. The next stop is the crusher. It sounds scary, but looking over the edge of the gondola, in fact it looks something like a mortar and pestle except the pestle is dangling from an arched beam.

This thing was huge, but as the far side of the car is lifted and the front side starts to rise, I, like the rest of my friends, jump in. Just like a real amusement park, every ride is a little bit different, exciting and fun. We slide down the sides of a bowl-like structure toward the pestle. We are all acting like humans when they ride a roller coaster. We're bouncing around, waving our arms, and screaming in fun. During this ten-second ride we are reduced to smaller groups that are less than 8" across. We then slide through the opening at the bottom of this ride ready to continue our journey.

We are now on another pan feeder-type ride. We move from the back toward a short drop-off. We land on what is known by the humans as a primary conveyer. This conveyer is about five feet wide and moves very quickly, and travels slightly uphill with the grade getting steeper the further we go. Suddenly, like a kiddie roller coaster at an amusement park, there is a steep dip and we all tumble into a covered building. Although I didn't see any cows or horses, these humans named this building the barn. Here we get to take a little nap while waiting for the next part of our adventure.

Eventually my turn came to enter the line-up for the next ride. The line narrowed until we were single file. We entered a rather narrow space (well, narrow compared to the big barn) known as a feeder. But nobody fed us anything while we were in the feeder, so another goofy human misnomer, I suppose. As we departed the feeder, we were again on another belt-type ride. At the end of the belt we all piled up into a discharge

chute, only to be dropped onto another belt for another short, quick ride. At the end of this belt we entered what is commonly called the main feed chute. Again, I saw no food or anybody eating, but that's its name anyway. The next ride was lots of fun; it was like a Ferris wheel without seats, so we tumbled and giggled and bonked our heads a lot. It was more like being in a clothes dryer as we bounced around the big circular bin. We were bonked around so much that we all lost lots of weight, and when we were done, we were each about the size of small sand. Next time mom complains about being overweight, I'll tell her to go for a ride in the mill and have fun reducing. There were holes in the sides of the mill, and once we lost enough weight, we were able to slip out of the mill and into a holding sump.

On one side of this sump was a piece of equipment creating a suction; I think they called it a pump. After getting pulled into this pump, there was some type of contraption going around with what looked like tiny paddles. These paddles were propelling us down a wide, dark tunnel that eventually leads to another collecting pot—then down another narrower tunnel and onto a noisy, bumpy ride where we were separated into groups. The group classified as *screen oversize* got to go for another ride in the mill. Those like me who were already skinny were classified as *screen undersize*, and we got to go directly to the next area of the amusement park.

The undersize group ended up in another sump with the suction pump attached. This time we got to travel through a longer tunnel, but eventually we made our way to what looked like a huge octopus. There was this collection distributor, and on the bottom there were twenty-four arms. We soon learned that these arms were in fact another one of those tunnel rides, only this one leads from almost the very top of the park to the very bottom. I happened to be unlucky enough to be on the outside, and that friction sure warmed up my behind. Emerging from this tunnel, we again ended up in another one of those pump type thingies with the paddles. Soft pats from the paddles propel us on our way up another long, dark tunnel. Didn't see no kissing in this tunnel like I heard you sometimes see in tunnels of love. Girl germs, yuck. Emerging into the light, we again saw what looked like an octopus, only a lot smaller. From this distributor we rode down another tunnel, this one much narrower, and into the most fun ride of the day—the water park's spiral separators.

This ride is shaped like a corkscrew that has been hollowed out. I'm told it works on gravity, friction, and hydrodynamic forces, whatever all that means. We slide down this corkscrew propelled by water. Here again, we divide into two groups. Because they weigh less, the non-iron members of my family separate and migrate to the outside of the spiral. They eventually are collected in a tails box and go for more rides in the magnetic plant for further upgrading. My group, consisting of a high grade of iron concentrate, is collected toward the inside of the water ride. Unfortunately, this journey through the waterslide is over really quickly. They wouldn't let us go back for a second ride either; although some of my friends who did not quite make the grade got a return ride later. After the spiral water ride, we got to go on a flat, bowl-like ride. As we stepped onto this ride, all the excess water was removed leaving us fairly dry.

The best way to describe this ride would be like a merry-go-round where at the end was a corkscrew that picked us off the merry-go-round and gently dropped us into

another feed chute-type ride. From this chute we were deposited onto another series of belt rides, dropping from one to the other and having a great old time. Eventually we came to an area where we had to make a choice. We could either go to the concentrate load-out, or we could go to the pellet plant. Another human misnomer because we didn't even have time to think, let alone concentrate!

We gave a big wave to the family members who decided they wanted to go to the concentrate load-out. After a long, high-speed belt ride, they gathered in something known as a silo. I wasn't ready for the excitement to end, so I jumped on the moving sidewalk that would take us to the pellet plant area of the amusement park. Eventually we tumbled down into a holding area to await the next segment of our journey. This holding area contained fourteen places to line up for the next ride. We overheard some humans talking and found out these were also called silos. Sliding down the inside of a silo, we landed on what looked like a phonograph record (ancient CDs to you young people). The disc was traveling in a circular direction, and we all were having a difficult time staying on this ride. After traveling just over halfway around this disc, we came to a barricade that directed us to the next belt ride. After traveling to the end of this ride, we were deposited into what looked like a drum. Once inside, we discovered the drum was moving, and we were bounced back and forth until we traveled the length of the drum and emerged at the opposite end. We dropped from the lip of the drum into a large container. Here another suction machine sent us careening wildly through a dark tunnel into another holding area.

This next ride reminded me of a huge washing machine drum complete with agitator, only it didn't fill with water. While we were getting bounced around, a sticky mixture was added to the drum. We discovered this mixture was an integral part in making I. Ron Ore pellets. After we were thoroughly mixed with this additive, we were the consistency of chocolate cake mix. We were giggling and wondering if we could go visit Betty Crocker and see if she could turn us into a birthday cake. After mixing, we were again deposited into a large container where another cyclone pump ride took us through another long, dark tunnel. When that ride was over, we were deposited into another large container with what looked like a dinner plate on its edge sticking up on the other end. This plate was moving around in a circle and as we watched it move, we felt ourselves being drawn toward it. We seemed to defy gravity as the plate lifted us higher and higher until we were lifted out of the holding tank. As the plate continued to turn, most of the moisture we had been mixed with was removed. After getting to the top of the plate, a strong wind, surely caused by a huge wind tunnel, whisked me off the plate. Once free of the plate's hold, we landed on another short moving sidewalk.

The next ride was shaped like a 45-gallon drum on its side, only it was much larger. Getting closer, I saw it was actually more like a gerbil's exercise wheel—only sloped. We all rushed headlong into this ride. As it went around and around, family members started to stick together and roll toward the other end. That sticky mixture added earlier really worked because when we emerged at the other end, numerous members of my family were stuck together in what looked like dog kibbles. At this point, we were referred to as “greenballs;” another one of those human misnomers since we

weren't green at all. After the exercise wheel, we rode a conveyor that felt like an earthquake. As we moved, the vibration spread us out over the width of the belt. Boy did it tickle, and we were all laughing and giggling. My personal opinion at the time was that no other ride would be able to compare with this. Boy, was I wrong.

Craning my neck, I could see what appeared to be an entrance to a cave. Following other members of my family, we started toward the entrance. As we came closer, we could see and feel the heat. This was the star attraction of the amusement park: a ride through the heart of an active volcano. The temperature at the center of this ride was 1,260°C (2,300°F); and as we moved through the volcano, we could feel the hot wind on our faces.

This was by far the longest, most exciting ride in the amusement park, and it lasted about 45 minutes. Emerging from the volcano, we are now classed as acid pellets. Isn't that neat? I'm still one hot dude as my temperature is still between 93–149°C (200–300° F). At this point, some of the groups of families were taken off the belt by humans for testing to make sure no imposters had managed to infiltrate the Ore family.

Our time in the amusement park was growing short because there were only a few rides left. From the volcano, we were transported to another vibrating ride, this one over screens. Some of the smaller family members fell through and got to return to the beginning for more rides. Family members who met the size requirements were deposited on a fast-moving sidewalk. On the last part of this ride there was a steep incline which shot us off the end, and we tumbled down into the pellet stockpile.

Here we got to rest until the engineer yelled "All Aboard," then after the loading gate opened, there was a rush to get on the train. Each train has about 200 ore cars, and each car has a capacity of 95 tonnes. Family members who chose to go to the pellet plant got to ride in the front 100 cars. The family members who went to the concentrator load out got to ride the last 100 cars. After the train was loaded, there was a 350-mile journey to Sept-Isles, Quebec. When we arrived, we were dumped onto a boom stacker (fancy name for another conveyor ride) and fell headfirst onto a pile of other family members with concentrate on one side and pellets on the other. There we all awaited the arrival of an ore carrier (big boat) which would transport us to exotic destinations the world over. Places like Sweden, Japan, USA, Australia, China, Germany, and many other steel-producing nations.

It is rather interesting to note how the family was able to learn about some of the destinations other relatives had visited. On their journey from the mine through the crusher, mill, and pellet plant, they passed equipment fabricated in many countries from steel which had originally been part of the Ore family in Labrador City.

The next time you see a piece of steel, there is a possibility that it is made from family members who traveled all the way from Labrador City on an exciting journey to your neighborhood. Please tell them "Hi" from I. Ron.

Note: No members of the Ore family were injured during the production of these products.

## HGMS General Meeting

May 24, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

2008 HGMS Secretary

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

The minutes of the April General Meeting were approved as published in the May BBG. Karen Burns moved to accept the minutes; Phyllis George seconded the motion. It was accepted unanimously.

Rodney Lineham, HGMS Treasurer, reported that the Club is in the black. Money is coming in from Show dealers.

### Announcements and Introductions:

- Astrea Fatica brought her son Jimmy, a rockhound, who wants to learn to cut rocks.
- Laura Wilber, daughter of David Wilber, our speaker for the evening, was a visitor as well as Barbara Bockland, a friend of Regina Gorman.
- Kevin McArthur, who is not a member, came to the club to get a specimen identified. He found it while hunting 20 miles southeast of Brady, TX and was very excited about his find. When last seen, he was in deep consultation with Neal Immega.
- Terry Proctor announced a full program line-up for upcoming meetings. NASA, in conjunction with its presence at the Show this fall, will have a representative give a presentation in June or July. These programs may shuffle a bit. Also on the schedule are:

**June 24, 2008:** Art Smith, Upgrading Mineral Specimens

**July 22, 2008:** Tom Shehee, Knapping Arrowheads and Spear Points

**August 26, 2008:** Patrick J. Lewis, PhD, from Sam Houston State University will speak about his current dig in south Africa for prehistoric primates and other animals. Dr. Lewis found the oldest primate fossil in Egypt last summer and has found the largest number of prehistoric primates.

**September 23, 2008:** Either NASA, Art Smith, or Tom Shehee depending on the "NASA shuffle"

**October 28, 2008:** Open. There will be the Nominating Committee Report for 2009 officers and nominations from the floor.

**November 25, 2008:** Open. The election of officers will take place.

**December 13, 2008:** HGMS Christmas Party

There was a round of applause for this excellent planning.

## Committee and Section Reports

- **Beading Group:** Karen Burns announced that there was a bead show at the Stafford Center, May 31 and June 1. There is no admission fee and lots of free parking.
- **Mineral Section:** Dean Lagerwall reported that at the next meeting, June 4, there will be a swap and sell open to all club members. Setup will begin at 7 p.m. There is no formal agenda and no charge.
- **BBG:** Phyllis George reminded the group that the June deadline for articles going into the July issue is June 4.

## Old and New Business

- Mary Ann Mitscherling said the signup sheets for volunteers at the Show were ready and encouraged members to sign up for the many opportunities available. She reminded the group that along with what we think are the “regular” tasks, there would be additional help needed in conjunction with hosting the AFMS/SFCMS. She also included pre- and post-show tasks such as setup and take down.
- On a different subject, Mary Ann announced that on the third Monday of each month from June through September, the shop will be open from 5 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. just before the Lapidary Section meeting..
- Inda Immega told the group about the upcoming show at the Museum of Natural Science, called Geopalooza. It will feature items of interest to all Club members. Many volunteers will be needed. The Museum will be holding a series of training sessions. Neal Immega will e-mail the training schedules. Inda said that Club members who volunteer at the Museum are very effective in generating interest in the Club. She mentioned Karen Burns, Stan Perkins, Sam Koster and his grandson in particular.
- Terry Proctor pointed to and read aloud the poster that described the mandatory rules for sales and auctions held by the club. It is also posted on the kitchen bulletin board and has been published in the BBG.

**Door Prize:** Mike De Benadetti won a piece of crazy lace agate donated by John Anderson.

**Show and Tell:** Terry Proctor displayed ammonites and other fossils he found on the field trip to Lake Texoma on May 24-26, 2008. He said that many people found nice specimens, particularly Lexy Bieniek and Sunday Bennett. There were about 20–25 people in eight cars on the trip.

**Program: David Wilber Talks About Geopalooza and his career as a mineral collector**

David Wilber, who brought in the fluorescent minerals for the Houston Museum of Natural Science Geopalooza exhibit, gave a wide-ranging talk from sharing his excitement about the upcoming Geopalooza to interesting tales of acquiring minerals. He also showed slides of some of the extraordinary mineral specimens in the Museum’s collection, and he gave the provenance for each one. For instance, he told how he



acquired one of the specimens for a Rolls Royce and some cash.

David ably filled in for Joel Bartsch, President of HMNS, who had been scheduled to give a presentation but was called out of the country.

David is a renowned mineral collector/dealer who has been in the field for 61 years, 37 of them seriously. He is now semiretired but is working as a consultant for Joel Bartsch and HMNS. He thought he had never talked to the HGMS before, but Art Smith reminded David that he had given a presentation at the HGMS show held at the Shamrock Hotel in 1979.

David said that the mineral collection at HMNS is thought to be the finest public display in the world. Although it may lack some depth, he said the collection is of extremely high quality.

He said that he had made his living selling minerals but sold his collection long ago. He also said that collecting minerals taught him how to collect other things. He mentioned lapidary and antiques. He remarked that the rise in mineral prices has far exceeded what he predicted years ago. He attributed this to the Internet which has completely changed the way business is done and has expanded the market worldwide.

He stressed the importance of proper lighting in the display of any collection.

He also talked at length about the Geopalooza exhibit and the logistics of setting up the show. For instance, there are 25–30 large amethyst geodes in the show, one of which weighs 8300 pounds and took all day to unload and set up. There are meteorites, pieces from Mars, and magnificent fossils. There is a huge fluorescent exhibit with six tons of material from two collections. There will be gold-panning and geode-cracking for the kids.

Mr. Wilber also brought some beautiful pieces of fossil wood from his collection. He said afterwards that he forgot to mention them to the membership. However, he did have it displayed on a front table, and many of the members enjoyed viewing them.

## HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

*June 3, 2008*

*by Nancy Fischer, Secretary*

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Phyllis George
	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President		X	Lapidary Rep.	Karen Burns
X	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	Mineral Rep.	Denise Bicknell
X	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan		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 7:35 p.m. by Terry Proctor, President.  
A quorum was present.

May 2008 Board of Directors Minutes were distributed via e-mail. Karen Burns moved, seconded by Tom Wright, that the May, 2008 minutes be accepted as distributed. The vote was unanimous.

**Treasurer's Report:** Rodney Linehan presented a Balance Statement and gave the Treasurer's report. He had e-mailed the statement to the Board Members. He has received about \$6690 from dealers' fees to date.

**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. Terry Proctor presented a new draft of the HGMS Policy on Children. Changes to wording and some details were discussed by the Board. Phyllis George will make the changes and distribute the amended version by e-mail. Karen Burns moved to adopt the Policy as discussed. Nancy Fischer seconded the motion which passed unanimously. At the May 6 Board meeting the form of The Code of Conduct was approved, and this was to have been published in the June issue of The Backbender's Gazette. However, since the HGMS Policy on Children (which was to be part of the Code of Conduct) had not yet been formulated in final form, the printing of the Code of Conduct was delayed until after the June 3 Board meeting. The Code of Conduct form having already been approved to be printed, with the HGMS Policy on Children now approved, Karen Burns moved to authorize printing the Code of Conduct and the Policy on Children in the August BBG. Denise Bicknell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
2. Tom Wright told the group that Bill Rogers had expressed interest in becoming the Education Chair. Terry Proctor will contact Bill. Mary Ann Mitscherling had expressed interest in doing the computer part of the task.
3. Matt Dillon forwarded information about stop blocks for the parking lot to Terry Proctor. Terry said they were of a durable plastic and came in colors which would not have to be painted every year. Terry said that the price was about \$24 for the plain gray and close to twice that for yellow. He thought we needed about 4 or 5 of these. Tom Wright stated if we were only talking about \$200 or so, that we should go ahead and get them. The consensus was that Terry should go forward with this.
4. Tom Wright said the side door lock is no longer made, and the replacement lock would be about \$600 installed. The door itself is rusting from the inside and is bowing out. Tom said that for \$600 he could have the door replaced and a new lock installed. Key-pad locks were discussed briefly, but the Board decided to go with a traditional key lock. The Board gave Tom approval to proceed with the new door and lock replacement.
5. Phyllis George said that the [www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org) e-mail problem with AOL, ATT, and Comcast has been resolved by Infinology, at least for the moment.

6. Regarding the Committee to review expenses and dues, Rodney Linehan reported that he had looked at 10 years of Club expenditures. He had determined the percentage of revenues received from different Club activities; auctions, dues, show, etc. Karen Burns said that with the exception of three years, the Show has contributed about 35%. Tom Wright remarked that dues don't cover the operation of the Club and that about half of the dues go to pay for publishing the BBG.

Rodney said he anticipates a \$1000 increase in expenditures for next year. It currently costs about \$35,000 to operate the Club. Dues bring in \$10,000–\$13,000, the Show about \$13,000, and auctions about \$10,000. Classes and the shop fees bring in a little more. It had been suggested that we raise the dues by \$10 at each level. Rodney thought it would be better to determine what we actually need; i.e., if the dues share needs to be raised to support 45% of the expenditures, then we should structure the dues accordingly. The Committee will report at the July meeting in order for the Board to determine if and how much the dues need to be adjusted to keep up with the rising operating expenses of HGMS.

7. The electric contract that Terry Brawner arranged expires this year. Phyllis George commented that rates are expected to double. Rodney Linehan will check into options for the Club.
8. Terry Proctor suggested that another potential source of Club revenue is grants from companies. It was noted that the Club receives some grants, but it might be worthwhile to have Terry Proctor give Phyllis George a reminder to go in the July BBG for people to find out if their company has a grant program and what it would take to pursue a grant.
9. Terry is also getting the paperwork ready to reapply for the Kroger program since their procedures have changed from a percentage of what you spend to a percentage of \$1,000,000 based on expenditures. An HGMS member registers one time, then their Kroger card will credit purchases to HGMS. It was mentioned that other stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, and HEB have donation programs.
10. Terry Proctor announced there was a programming problem for the General Meeting because Tom Shehee, the flint knapper who was scheduled, will be unable to present his program for the July meeting. Terry said he has several ideas for a replacement. Art Smith will give the program June 24, and Patrick J. Lewis, PhD is still on the schedule for August 26. NASA will give the program September 23. This should be beneficial since it will tie in to their appearance at the Show. October 28, 2008, is open. The Nominating Committee Report for 2009 officers and nominations from the floor takes place that evening. November 25, 2008, is open, and the election of officers will take place then. The HGMS Christmas Party is scheduled for December 13, 2008.

Terry said that this year's scholarship recipient did not come to the May meeting as planned, and he had not heard from her. He will try to contact her and invite her to the next meeting as it is important to the HGMS membership to hear from the scholarship recipients and learn about their schooling and plans for the future. He also said he thought we should come up with a standard form for application for the HGMS scholarship. Although there might be differences in disciplines, there were still basic things

we would want to know such as need, field of study, grades, background, and professional intention. There is a possibility that the University of Houston might be phasing out parts of its Jewelry and Metal Arts Department. Tom Wright will investigate.

Beverly Mace handed out the new and improved membership form which can also be found on the Web site.

Karen Burns moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom Wright seconded the motion. Acceptance was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

### **Paleo Section**

*by Lexy Bieniek*

*Paleo Chair*

**M**ay was a great month. We had an absolutely fantastic field trip to Lake Texoma and a great cleaning and labeling day after on the Sunday following the trip.

The Paleo Steering Committee met during May. We decided to offer a \$1,000 scholarship to encourage college students to focus on paleontology. To fund the scholarship, the Paleo Section will put together grab bags to sell at the annual show. An application for the scholarship will be posted on the club's Web site soon. Other business included a discussion of methods to increase the sales of our books. We will be applying for ISBN numbers for our books.

Neil Immega was our speaker, and he gave us a preview of the upcoming Leonardo the mummy exhibit at the museum. Leonardo is a mummified dinosaur that is giving the world some astounding new information about dinosaurs.

### **Grandma's Apron**

*Author Unknown*

*from The Calgary Lapidary Journal 6/2007*

**T**he principle use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served as a holder for removing hot pans from the oven; it was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears. From the chicken-coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven. When company came, those old aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids; and when the weather was cold, grandma wrapped it around her arms. Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove. Chips and kindling-wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron. From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls. In the fall, it was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees. When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds. When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out on the porch and waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields for dinner. It will be a long time before anyone invents something that will replace that old-time apron that served so many purposes.

## HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

### MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of the **Houston Gem & Mineral Society (HGMS)** recognize that **HGMS** has existed for many years and that it brings education on Earth Science and on the beauty of the Earth's treasures to members and to the public at large. Any organization, including **HGMS**, should have a stated policy of acceptable and unacceptable member conduct, and **HGMS** members here and now subscribe to the **HGMS CODE OF CONDUCT** listed below. All members also should familiarize themselves with the **AFMS Code of Ethics**, the stated policy of the **American Federation of Mineralogical Societies**, as found on their Web site [www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org) and as printed in the April, 2008 issue of the **HGMS Backbender's Gazette**.

1. Dues are to be paid promptly, and when membership information changes, it is to be provided and updated promptly.
2. All members will obey **HGMS** rules, and any **HGMS** member or guest (if allowed) who wishes to participate in any **HGMS** trip or other activity shall sign an "Assumption of Risk" form prior to participation.
3. When using the **HGMS** shop, taking a class, or using any other **HGMS** facility or service, members shall register as required and pay the hourly fees or any fees assessed for shop use, classes, or services. While using **HGMS** facilities and equipment and knowing that the honor system is used, members shall conduct themselves with integrity to maintain this system for the benefit of all members. Any malfunction of equipment or other problems in the Shop must be promptly reported to the person(s) in charge of the shop.
4. Meetings, trips, events, and classes are run by the person duly elected, appointed, or otherwise in charge. Agendas, schedules, and directions are to be followed to expedite meetings and for safety. Members (and guests) shall not cause or create disruptions of the organized procedure or become abusive toward **HGMS** or toward any individual.
5. **HGMS** members are entitled to express any complaint or grievance to the **HGMS** Board through the procedure stipulated in the **HGMS** Bylaws. This allows every member freedom of expression at the proper time and in the proper manner without disrupting **HGMS** meetings, trips, and other events. Board Meetings of the main club and of Sections are open to membership attendance. Suggestions, complaints, and other matters may be submitted to the Board in writing, and a member's request for an audience should be submitted a reasonable time in advance of such a meeting. Such an appearance is subject to the matters on the agenda for the meeting.
6. Members and guests are expected to be courteous to each other. Disruptive actions, threats, and physical, sexual, or verbal abuse of any member, guest, or of **HGMS** in general shall not be tolerated. Members and guests must also comply with the adopted and posted **HGMS Policy On Children**.
7. Members are expected to work together to provide harmony in the overlap of facility use without disrupting other events or disrupting the use of other **HGMS** facilities.
8. Realizing that **HGMS** is a volunteer organization that offers great benefits to its members and to the public, all members shall offer to assist in projects, events, jobs, and other endeavors of **HGMS** to the best of their ability, time, and skills.
9. **Landowners are the HGMS's greatest asset in field trips.** Members will observe the "Golden Rule" in all contact with property and with property owners or agents. This includes but is not limited to taking only specimens that are lawful and that the member actually needs; leaving no trash; not contaminating any water whether potable or not; covering all excavations properly when leaving; leaving gates as found; using no fire of any kind (tobacco, campfire, or any other kind) unless it is in designated places as provided and then only with extreme caution to prevent the fire escaping.
10. It is the duty of all members to keep themselves informed on the laws governing collecting on public lands. Members will respect both private and public property and will do no collecting on any property without the consent of the owner. Members will not collect anything that they are not authorized to collect.

## HGMS Policy on Children

### **Purpose:**

Houston Gem & Mineral Society, Inc. (HGMS) is committed to providing a safe, enjoyable environment for children while they are at the HGMS Clubhouse, functions, and events. To this end HGMS establishes this HGMS Policy on Children. (Note: Term "parent" includes a legally recognized person or person authorized in writing by the parent.)

### **Policy and Procedures:**

1. A child may belong to HGMS without the child's parent being required to belong to HGMS. However, a child may not participate in HGMS activities without a parent being personally present where and when the child is participating in an HGMS activity. No baby sitters or last minute substitutions may be made.
2. A child and the child's parent must comply with all rules and regulations of HGMS to ensure uniformity in the treatment of all children and of their parents and to ensure the safety of each child while they are participating in an HGMS activity.
3. The parent must sign a form that the parent has read and understands both the HGMS Policy On Children and the HGMS Code of Conduct prior to the child participating in any HGMS activity. This requirement does not apply to children who are attending a General Meeting or a Section meeting, Christmas or Holiday dinners, or other similar special membership or family event with their parent(s).
4. A child's parent shall sign an "Assumption of Risk" form, to be provided by HGMS.
5. Should anyone present observe any form of suspected child abuse, such person shall promptly report the child abuse to the HGMS adult in charge of the activity as soon as possible, preferably with follow-up in written form.
6. The HGMS adult in charge of the activity shall promptly investigate the matter to determine the person perpetrating the alleged child abuse, the nature of the alleged child abuse, and shall document the occurrence as much as possible. If the parent is not present, notice shall be given to the parent of the child as promptly as possible after the incident is reported. Where appropriate, the matter shall be reported promptly to law enforcement authorities.
7. The HGMS adult in charge of the activity shall also report the incident to the HGMS Board of Directors to be handled in a manner consistent with the incident.
8. No abuse or intimidation shall be permitted of a child, parent, Youth Section staff member, nor of any adult in charge of an HGMS activity where the child is participating.
9. HGMS shall exercise all reasonable diligence to ensure that no adult working with any child while participating in any HGMS activity or on HGMS premises is a person who should not be around children because of prior background or who has exhibited questionable behavior toward any child or others.

Approved by the Houston Gem & Mineral Society for submission to the General Membership for approval to adopt as the HGMS Policy On Children. Once adopted, it becomes part of the HGMS Code of Conduct and will be posted at the HGMS Clubhouse as a permanent statement of the HGMS Policy on Children.



## New HGMS Education Coordinator

*by Terry Proctor  
2008 HGMS President*

**A**s many HGMS members have been aware, we have been attempting to get someone to take over the position of the HGMS Coordinator.

The Bylaws of HGMS reads as follows: Education Committee shall be in charge of (a) setting up new classes, (b) setting class schedules, (c) setting class fees, including deposit amounts if these are determined to be necessary to reserve a spot in the class, (d) advertising classes, (e) recruiting students, (f) verifying registrations for classes, (g) authorizing payment for instructors, (h) authorizing purchase of material for classes, (i) collecting money from students. All of these takes a person or persons with the time and willingness to take on these duties.

We now have an HGMS member who has agreed to take on the position of Education Coordinator for HGMS. This is welcome news and means that although our classes have continued to function while awaiting a Coordinator, now they can go forward more effectively with more participants, and we can acquaint HGMS members and patrons at the Houston Museum of Natural Science of our upcoming classes. HGMS member Karen Burns and others invite HMNS visitors to come to HGMS, join our Club, and to participate in our classes.

Bill Rogers, who has been a member of HGMS for between 1 and 2 years and who is already doing a good job of maintenance for HGMS on the Clubhouse, has agreed to become the Education Coordinator. Bill lives in League City, Texas, but he is at the HGMS Clubhouse on weekends and therefore is already here and ready to help the Education Committee be more effective in providing classes.

Welcome, Bill, and we look forward to cranking up our Education Committee's work at HGMS. For people wanting to take classes, call the HGMS office (281) 530-0942 and leave a message, or call Bill at (281) 334-3460. Bill has advised us that he plans to be online with an e-mail address of his own soon, but for the present his friend Nanci Johnson has an e-mail address where you can leave messages for Bill Rogers. That address is [nanci@aol.com](mailto:nanci@aol.com).



Cartoon from  
SCRIBE 2004 CD

Cartoon by Erston Barnhart in Rock Buster News 5/00  
via T-Town Rockhound 6/00

**Giant Rock Sale July 5–13, 2008***July 14–31, 2008 by appointment**by Delbert & Joyce Speed**4680 Wisteria St.**Dallas, TX 75211-8026**Home phone: 214-337-9446; Cells: 214-543-5566 or 214-912-3240***D**ear Clubs:

We will be having a huge Rock Sale **July 5–13, 9 a.m. until dark daily and by appointment only from July 14–31**. We have decided to sell our many years of collecting in order to reclaim our backyard and garage.

We want to invite all interested persons to the sale. There will be more than 100 baskets, buckets, or boxes of good cutting material that will be sold by the container. Prices will range from approximately \$10 to \$50 per container. In addition, there will be many bags of slabs (50+ per bag) for approximately \$10 per bag. We will have a variety of large individual rocks and petrified wood sold by the piece—\$5.00 up. We will have some large rounds of petrified wood 3"+ thick (thick enough for an additional one or two cuts). Some rounds have a polished face. Also included are quartz crystal, large slabs, large coral, some fossils, and much more.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the sale.

*Editor's Note: Joyce and Delbert Speed have been dealers at our shows for many years (Love of Land Images), and they have many friends in the HGMS.*

**Attention All Junior Members***The Lillian Turner Award**adapted from the AFMS Newsletter – June/July, 2006**via SCFMS Newsletter 1–2/2008*

**T**his award is thanks to the generosity of Lillian Turner of Bethesda, Maryland, who generously donated funds to support an annual \$100 bond, certificate, and mineral specimen to go to the Outstanding Junior who enters a case in competition at the annual AFMS Show. The rules are the same as for the adult entries—but the difference is that the minimum point total for the junior trophies is 70, whereas the adults must have a minimum point total at the master level of 90 to qualify for a trophy. Check with Ron Carmen of the AFMS Uniform Rules Committee (also a member of HGMS) if you have questions about the competition itself. The "AFMS Uniform Rules" for competition cases are available for download on the AFMS Web site <<http://www.amfed.org/downloads.htm>>.

This year the AFMS Show will be held in Humble, TX. If you and your parents are planning to attend this show, why not take an exhibit with you?

In addition to the Lillian Turner Award for the best display, kids entering any sort of display can earn the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America merit badge for Showmanship. But awards and merit badges aside, planning, preparing, and setting up a

display, and attending a show, and seeing all the other displays, and meeting with those who prepared them is a great way to expand a child's horizons and to meet new and interesting people who are actively engaged with our hobby while—as always—having fun.

It sure would be nice to see a Junior member from the South Central Federation receive this award this year. Let's encourage our Junior members to attend and exhibit.

***Editor's Note:** This is a great chance for each of our HGMS Youth Section members (and there are over 100 of you!) to create an exhibit to take to our Show. That's right—this is all happening at OUR SHOW September 26–28 at the Humble Civic Center. You're the home team, and it's happening on your turf. It's a wonderful opportunity for you. Learn more about the award at [http://www.amfed.org/a\\_ltaward.htm](http://www.amfed.org/a_ltaward.htm).*

### AFMS President's Message

by Shirley Leeson

<[shirleyleeson@msn.com](mailto:shirleyleeson@msn.com)> and <[beauholland@centurytel.net](mailto:beauholland@centurytel.net)>

(Please note the new e-mail for our Idaho ranch)

from the AFMS Newsletter 6/2008

This month I'd like to mention something important. I have been receiving reports from the *Blue Ribbon Coalition* regarding openings for the BLM RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL in many of the western states. I have forwarded them to many individuals and clubs throughout the western regions hoping someone would step up and offer to make themselves available.

What a wonderful surprise when **Glen R. Miller** of the Shasta Gem & Mineral Society of Redding, CA offered to apply for the Northwest California BLM Resource Advisory Council. Letters were sent on his behalf from myself and John Wright, our AFMS Conservation and Legislation Chair. Then **Norvie Enns** of the Reno Gem & Mineral Society put in an application for the Northeast California BLM Resource Advisory Council, and again John Wright and I sent letters of support for his nomination.

I contacted **Hugh Brady** of Fair Oaks CA, member Roseville Rock Rollers Gem and Mineral Society. Hugh promptly contacted the BLM in Folsom, CA and requested an application for the BLM Resource Advisory Council of Central California. Again, both John Wright, our AFMS Conservation and Legislation Chair, and I wrote letters of support. There were also letters of support sent by Dick Pankey, CFMS Past President, and by others from the CFMS in support of the nominations of the above people from California.

I e-mailed our club in Bitterroot, Montana regarding an opening on the BLM Resource Advisory Committee of Western Montana, and **Wayne Farley** stepped to the plate and



made himself available. Letters from John, myself and Evelyn Cataldo, 2nd VP of Northwest were sent on his behalf. Next, **Evan Day**, member of the Golden Spike Gem and Mineral Society of Ogden, Utah applied for the BLM Utah Resource Advisory Council. Letters of support were sent by John Wright, Joan Day, executive secretary of the Northwest Federation and myself.

Finally, **Michael Nelson** of the Colorado Springs Mineral Society, Colorado Springs, CO put his application in for BLM Colorado Resource Advisory Council. Unfortunately I was on the road and unable to offer a letter of support, but I did contact John Dow of the Canon City office of the BLM on my return from a three week road trip.

Perhaps this doesn't seem much to many of you, BUT until these men stepped forward, the BLM had no idea who we were. Many of us assume "everyone knows who the rockhounds are" but this just isn't true. We may or may not get these people on the various advisory boards for the BLM, but at least the BLM knows who we are now.

All of the nominations above will have to go to the U.S. Secretary of Interior for confirmation later, but at least we got our foot in the door. Please go to the <amfed.org> Web site, click on "Rockhound Information" then click on Bureau of Land Management, then for regional information click on the state. Current information on what the BLM is doing in your state will come up. At this time there are no applications being taken for BLM Resource Advisory Council in any of the states. That closed April 14th, 2008, but keep it in mind and check frequently.

Dee and I have just returned from our sixth year at Eastern Federation's Wildacres Workshop in North Carolina. We have taken the Judges Training class there, sponsored by the AFMS since its inception in 2003. The purpose of the course, taught by Jay Bowman, is to have one person from each regional federation who is currently either on the rules committee or a judge or exhibitor and bring them together so that the AFMS will have everyone on the same page when judging at the AFMS level. The program has been enormously successful, BUT except in the Northwest and California Federations, we aren't getting enough people to compete. I hope this changes....

Have you sent your letter supporting "Birthstone Gemstone Stamps" to the U.S. Postal Service yet? Don't let "someone else" do it. We need all of you to support this effort.

More thoughts next month, Your AFMS President, Shirley

### **AFMS Endowment Drawing - Another Look at The Prizes!**

**(excerpts from the articles)**

*from Joy Bourne*

*AFMS Endowment Fund Chair*

*from AFMS Newsletter 6/2008*

**T**he AFMS Endowment Fund was established so that the Federation would have available funds for special projects. In recent years these projects have included the purchase of patches for the Juniors program, sending representatives from the regional federations to the AFMS Judges Seminar, and most recently converting

the slide programs in the library to DVD. Funds collected are invested, and only the interest from them can be spent.

One successful method of adding to the Endowment Fund principal is to hold an annual drawing. For 2008 the drawing will be held on September 27 during the AFMS Convention in Humble, TX. But, "You've got to play to win."

Here's another look at all the prizes that you could take home if you have the lucky coupon! You can see these in color by visiting the AFMS Web site <[www.amfed.org/endow2008.htm](http://www.amfed.org/endow2008.htm)>.



Prize #1 - Selenite Plate on Amethyst Pipe  
Est. value - \$250-\$300



Prize #2  
Kauri Gum from New Zealand  
Est. value - \$200



#4 - Brazilian Amethyst Cathedral  
Est. value - \$200



Prize #3  
Vial of Virgin Valley Opal  
Est. value - \$500 - \$700



Prize #5  
London Blue CZ Pendant set in 14k  
gold. Faceted by Steve Weinberger.  
Est. value - \$200



Prize #6 - Faceted Topaz  
Est. value - \$400



Prize #9 - Flint Copper and Columet & Hecla Mining Company Share Est. value - \$75



Prize #7 - Digital Scale  
Est. value - \$100



Prize #10  
Charalite Pendant After wrapped in 14k gold  
Est. value - \$125 - \$175



#8 - Hand engraved vase by B. J. Bowman  
scenes engraved all around  
Est. value - \$225

We are still expecting at least four more prizes which will be added to the case to take to Houston in September. Some of the prizes are undergoing final touchups by the craftsmen, all of whom are tops in their fields. As soon as we receive the prizes (or pictures of them) we will be posting them on the AFMS Web site along with all the specifics.

All seven of our Regional Federation representatives are ready and willing to reward your donations to the Endowment Fund with coupons to place in the white Drawing bucket. If you don't know who your rep is, here is the list: CFMS—see Bural Larue; EFMLS—contact your Regional VP; MWF—John Washburn is your man; NFMS—Rocky McCall is the man to see (if he doesn't see you first); RMFMS—Howie Whiting (of course); SCFMS—my good friend, Joyce Speed; SFMS—Ken Anderson or one of his cohorts; or anywhere you see her—Carolyn Weinberger.

If all else fails (you can't contact your rep—or if he/she is all out of coupons) you can always send me your check for \$5.00 for a coupon or \$20.00 for five coupons, plus a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and I will mail your coupons directly to you. Please remember to include your name, address, and telephone number with your request. Checks should be made payable to “AFMS Endowment.”

Joy Bourne

RR #1, Box 159A

Towanda PA 18848.

Questions? Phone (570) 265-6454 or e-mail <cspings@epix.net>

### Tips & Hints

*Cabochon Tips (assembled by “Rocky Ray”)*

*from Beehive Rock & Gem Club 3-5-08*

*via Strata Gem 5/2008 and RockCollector 6/2008*

**D**iamond trim saws of 6 to 10 inches are most commonly used for making cabs. Some tile types use water and have rust-resistant blades while others use oil (if water is used, they must be drained each time used, or they will rust out quickly).

Don't ever—”E v e r”—drain cuttings or water from your equipment down the drain unless you want to buy a new sewer system. This stuff sets up like concrete in your pipes.

Cat litter is a good way to absorb oil out of slabs that have been cut with an oil saw. Some dish soap and water will help finish the cleaning.

The most common thickness for cabs is 3/16 inch. Higher-crowned cabs or double-sided cabs need greater thickness.

Many types of things can be used for dop sticks including nails, flat end bolts, etc.

Salvaging thin cuts and special types of fractured rock by gluing on doublets with epoxy then finishing the cab is intriguing. Changing the color of the base under translucent or thin types of material also can change the appearance and color of the cab.

Using vinegar or other acid-based product with the polish (tin oxide) can quickly bring out a high, glossy finish.

When moving through grit sizes, check cabs when they are dry rather than wet to see the scratches that need to be removed.



## More Tips & Hints via multiple sources

To **tumble soft material that is hard to polish**, start with the second coarsest grit. Fill the tumbler 3/4 or 7/8 full so the stones will roll and not fall. About 1/4 the normal amount of cerium oxide polishes better than the usual polishes. Via Canaveral Moonstone, 6/08

**Get more out of your tumbling** by adding specially shaped stones to your regular stones. Hearts, crosses, and elongated triangles made by cutting a rectangular slab across the diagonal are some of the possibilities. From Owyhee Gem

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. Original source unknown via Breccia 4/98

Try **cementing three pieces of tiger eye together** so that the grain is perpendicular to the next. Cabochons and other stones can then be cut with interesting chatoyancy effects. From Quarry Quips

## AFMS News and Notes

*by Joy Bourne*

*AFMS President-elect*

*from AFMS Newsletter 6/2008*

Can it be that we are halfway through the AFMS Year 2007-2008 already? And the Big Convention at Humble, Texas hosted by the Houston Gem & Mineral Society, is only four months away. That means it is time for me to make a report to all of you of the progress some of our committees have made thus far.

I have been in contact with both Scott Singleton, 2008 Show Chairman and Shiara Trumble, HGMS AFMS/SCFMS liaison, and it looks as if the planning is going smoothly for a busy and well-coordinated event from start to finish. I understand that each and every function will be operated on a strict timetable, so every Convention attendee will be able to be present at each meeting and event.



The complete Convention Schedule of Events was listed in the May AFMS Newsletter. Please take note that the Editors' Award Breakfast is scheduled for Saturday this year, rather than on Sunday as has been our custom. I might also point out that according to Don Shurtz, SCFMS BEAC, the new name for "Editors' Awards Breakfast" is "Breakfast with the Editors." He has planned for a keynote speaker who is limited to

a strict 15-minute time period for the talk. In addition, both Linda Jaeger, our new AFMS Bulletin Editors Committee Chair, and Don are planning on using a projected PowerPoint presentations to expedite the awards distribution. Talk about efficiency!

The Endowment Fund Committee has been super-efficient this year, too. Reports are that despite the discouraging reports of our US Economic Consumer reports, the committee members are experiencing a bang-up distribution of coupons for the Endowment Fund drawing. Pictures and descriptions of the ten prizes already received are posted on the AFMS Web site, with at least four more prizes still to come.

President Shirley and I think we have come up with a solution to the unfortunate situation of two important Regional Federation shows being scheduled for the same weekend of June 20–22. The plan is for President Shirley Leeson to attend the combined AFMS/CFMS 69th Annual Convention & Show in Ventura, California, and I will be attending the combined AFMS/MWF Show in Lincoln, Nebraska. This Show is also the 50th Anniversary Show of the Lincoln Gem and Mineral Club, and is being held in conjunction with the Nebraska Association of Earth Science Clubs. With these arrangements, both conventions will be hosting an AFMS Officer who lives fairly close to the Convention location. I know I am looking forward to seeing lots of good rockhound friends in the heartland, ( I am a native South Dakotan), and I'm sure Shirley feels the same about her many friends in California.

See you next month, *Joy*

### **Does the AFMS Need the A.L.A.A.?**

*by Dr. Robert Carlson*

*President, ALAA*

*from AFMS Newsletter 6/2008*

**N**o, if we don't care about our rights to collect on Public Lands!

The American Lands Access Association (ALAA) was designed to be the lobbying arm of the AFMS. It was established to protect our collecting rights on Public Lands. The ALAA has been declining as an effective organization over the past several years. Bob Cranston and Jon Spunaugle nurtured the organization for a long time. When they could no longer carry the ball for us, the ship became rudderless.

I am your new President. I plan to revive the ALAA or be present at its funeral! As one of the founders of the ALAA, I have a vested interest in making it succeed. I do not have all of the answers, but membership and communication are the keys. We belong to a larger organization: Blue Ribbon Coalition (BRC). They do the research that Bob and Jon did on our behalf. They provide us with alerts on legislation (both National and Local) that could curtail our access. They provide us with the information.

### **My Vision**

What we need now is an active communications network among ALAA members across the nation to get the BRC information to all ALAA members and to their gem and mineral clubs—the local clubs that may be affected. The ALAA members and

their clubs can then mobilize members to attend legislative hearings and do whatever seems appropriate via personal appearances, newsletter, newspapers, etc., to stop the legislation in its tracks.

### The Proposed Process

Alerts from the BRC should come in to three ALAA members who then e-mail it to all ALAA members. Why three hubs? So that if one is out of town, and one has computer trouble, there is still an open channel, which can be important when time is of the essence for some alerts. Any volunteers for the top three channels? (If all three channels are operating, members will receive duplicate messages, but better that than a lost alert.)

A word of caution: The BRC is funded by the makers of ATVs and snowmobiles and such. Hence, to the environmentalists out there, keeping the roads open means keeping them open for these who don't stay on the roads, who make noise, and tear up the turf. We don't get environmentalist support. Somewhere along the line there may have to be categories of openness, as collectors in general are seen as relatively benign, even by the environmentalists. (The above comments are based on some interesting conversations at the ALAA booth and at breakfast in Tucson!)

**So Help!** We need three members who have e-mail and a fire-in-the-belly to catch and send on the information from the BRC, with words to inspire the recipients to take timely action. We also need ALAA recipients who will thereupon take action.

Are you there?? If not, ALAA quietly passes into oblivion and the roads close to dedicated collectors of nature's treasures, closing one by one. The ALAA is currently on life support, and we need your assistance.

#### ***AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS ASSOCIATION, INC.***

##### ***A.L.A.A. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION***

##### ***PROTECTING THE PUBLIC LANDS FOR THE PUBLIC***

Please enroll me as a member of the ALAA! Annual membership fee is \$25.00

Annual membership fee for clubs is \$50.00

New\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_ Email\_\_\_\_\_

Club Affiliations\_\_\_\_\_

Hobby Interest:\_\_\_\_\_

Remit fees to: ALAA

Norman W. Hanschu, Treasurer

6607 Sturbridge Lane, Canton, MI 48187-2638

*The A.L.A.A. is a 501(c4) organization. Its purpose is promoting and ensuring the right of the amateur hobby collecting, recreational prospecting and mining, and the use of public and private lands for educational and recreational purposes; and to carry the voice of all amateur collectors and hobbyists to our elected officials, government regulators and public land managers.*

*Contributions to the A.L.A.A. are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal Tax Purposes.*

**AFMS Safety—Be Safe - Be Well***by Don Monroe**AFMS Safety Chair**From AFMS Newsletter 6/2007***POISON!!!**

**T**he skull and crossbones symbol always intrigued me as a kid. I always thought about pirate ships and other exciting things, and my hero was Errol Flynn. My dad constantly warned me about touching anything that had the skull and crossbones label on it. On the farm we had a large variety of poisons for the mice in the barn as well as pesticides and herbicides, and a set of hazards that you don't see much anymore. These other hazards were in a couple of old trunks that had belonged to my grandfather who was a doctor and the county health officer, and it included medicines, chemicals, and tubes containing the residue of lab work such as dried-up specimens. I realized later that this was some really bad stuff.

The world has become infinitely more complicated, and we are learning that there is much more bad stuff out there. Even our peanut butter is not safe as some of it contains salmonella, and some of the green healthy vegetables may have e-coli. Where will it end?

Do you do lapidary work or metal work making jewelry? Are you familiar with cadmium and the severe health effects resulting from exposure to cadmium and its fumes? Cadmium is found in many solders and many fluxes and really should be avoided. There are fluxes that contain fluoride and are not totally safe to use. Do you use any tools made from beryllium and its alloys? It is not good for you! The jury is still out on the potential health effects of aluminum. There are those who say that there is a connection between using aluminum cookware and the incidence of Alzheimer's. Coated cookware is suspected to be a hazard if it is used after the coating has begun to fail. Copper cookware that is losing the coating of nickel or whatever is used also is under suspicion. Supposedly the bare copper surface will react to some foods. Am I simply perpetuating an urban legend or are the cautions pertaining to cookware well founded? I do not know, but we will still stay with cast iron and stainless steel.

Do you have a Geiger counter or some other instrument for detecting radiation? If you have one, do you use it? Some years ago there was some imported silver scrap and sheet that was "hot." It was radioactive and a point of concern. I cannot verify this story, and it supposedly happened some time ago, and the material is probably no longer on the market. There are, however, some mineral specimens that you should not put under your pillow at night just like the old "bag" cell phones that are no longer on the market.

While we are talking about specimens, are you familiar with the minerals that have an unhealthy level of arsenic? Some minerals will rub a dangerous amount on your hands when you handle them. Since I am not writing a book, I cannot tell you a lot that you need to know about minerals, but I do encourage you to do a little research and be particularly cautious when you are dealing with material that you do not customarily use.

Do you have pets such as cats or dogs? Have you heard about the contaminated pet food? Are you concerned? I, for one, am absolutely furious that anyone would put profit ahead of the wellbeing of our trusting pets who are always glad to see us when we return home and never criticize us or pass judgment unless we forget to do our duty such as feed or walk with them or whatever we are supposed to do. This last thing is something that I just heard about from my proofreader (wife). She heard that some of the pre-moistened, disposable mop pads cause liver problems in animals. It is reported that the pet gets the chemical on their paws and then lick their paws. Check the packaging for a cautionary note regarding children, and extend this warning to pets.

There are so many bad things going on that we all must develop a skeptical attitude about everything and be constantly vigilant. Hazards are everywhere.

### **Tiny Strands Of Silk Tells Tale Of**

*Millions Of Years*

*by Dale Gnidovec*

*from The Rockfinder 1/2008 via The Rockpile 3/2008*

**W**hen I recently renovated a room in our old barn, the hardest part was dealing with the cobwebs. They were everywhere.

Spiders have been making webs for a long time.

There was a report in the June 23 issue of the journal *Science* of the oldest known spider silk with prey trapped in it. Contained in a small amber stalactite from Spain were 26 silk strands produced by a spider that lived 110 million years ago, early in the Cretaceous period. It is not the earliest spider silk known. That honor goes to a single strand with glue droplets found in Lebanese amber from even earlier in the Cretaceous, 130 million years ago. Spiders have been around much longer. A spinneret or silk spigot was found in Middle Devonian rocks near Gilboa, N.Y., indicating that spiders have been making silk for at least 380 million years. What made the new find so interesting was the prey ensnared by the web: a fly, a mite, and a wasp.

The early Cretaceous was a time of great changes in land communities. Most land plants had been things such as ferns and conifers. Then the angiosperms, or flowering plants, took over. Now, angiosperms account for practically all of the plants we use for food.

Insects have been around since the Devonian period, but with the diversification of flowering plants, the insects also underwent a huge expansion.

A paper published on October 27 in *Science* reported the oldest known bee. From early in the Cretaceous, the 100-million year old fossil found in amber from Myanmar, is at least 40 million years older than other bee fossils. It is a wonderful transitional form between pollen-eating bees and their carnivorous wasp ancestors. It is about one-tenth of an inch long. That is in sharp contrast to other fossil insects, which reached nightmarish dimensions. Dale Gnidovec is curator of the Orton Geological Museum at Ohio State University.

**ShowTime 2008**

June 20-22	Houston, TX	Intergem Show Reliant Center--Hall E, One Reliant Park <a href="http://www.reliantpark.com">www.reliantpark.com</a> <a href="http://www.reliantpark.com/en/cms/?132">http://www.reliantpark.com/en/cms/?132</a>
August 16-17	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center 620 Benton Road; Edna House 318-949-9765 <a href="mailto:edna.house@gmail.com">edna.house@gmail.com</a>
August 23-24	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Hall, 7 miles west of Jasper
August 30-31	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society Arlington Convention 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; <a href="http://www.hgms.org">www.hgms.org</a> Scott Singleton, <a href="mailto:fossilwood@comcast.net">fossilwood@comcast.net</a>
September 27-28	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Center
October 9-11	Mount Ida, AK	World Champ. Quartz Crystals Digging Contest; Mount Ida Area Chamber of Commerce Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Fairgrounds Rd.; Maureen Walther, (870) 867-2723 <a href="http://www.mountidachamber.com">www.mountidachamber.com</a> <a href="mailto:director@mountidachamber.com">director@mountidachamber.com</a>
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
November 1-2	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center
November 8-9	Leesville, LA	DeRidder Gem & Mineral Society DeRidder Louisiana Fairgrounds



2008		JULY					2008
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
		1 7:30 Board Meeting	2	3	4 Independence Day	5 10-12 Youth Section 10-5 Shop Open	
6	7	8 7:30 Show Committee	9 7:30 Faceting Section	10	11	12 10-5 Shop Open	
13	14 1:00 p.m. Day Light Section	15 7:30 Paleo Section	16	17	18	19 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 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	31			

2008		AUGUST					2008
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
					1	2 10-12 Youth Section 10-5 Shop Open	
3	4	5 7:30 Board Meeting	6	7	8	9 10-5 Shop Open	
10	11	12 7:30 Show Committee	13 7:30 Faceting Section	14	15	16 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Group	
17	18 1:00 p.m. Day Light Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20	21	22	23 10-5 Shop Open	
24 31	25 7:30 Lapidary Section	26 7:30 General Meeting	27	28	29	30 10-5 Shop Open	

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

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

10805 BROOKLET

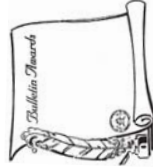
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**TROPHY**

**PUBLICATION**

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