



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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President's Message *by Terry Proctor* *2008 HGMS President*

Even though this is the October issue of the BBG, due to the efforts of our efficient BBG Editor and Second Vice-President, you should get this issue before the September 26–28 HGMS Show. This year's Show is truly outstanding—the best Grand Prizes ever: NASA bringing a real moon rock display to our Show, HGMS hosting the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies, the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, and the Texas Faceters Guild Symposium at our Show, and over 1,000 students are invited to attend the Show. We'll also have contest case exhibits, special exhibits by members, kids' activities with the Houston Museum of Natural Science, a special Dinosaurs Rock display by Walt Whittington, Brian Carter's Artwork in Nature paintings on rock, and scads of dealers with all kinds of interesting things.



This year is going by swiftly. It seems we were just envisioning our Show a short time back, and now it is about to open. This year, more than in any of the many years I have been a member of HGMS, I am very aware of the many wonderful members of this Club who give untold hours of time—and often their own money—to make the HGMS Show each year be the success it has been for 55 years.

Continued on page 4

General Meeting Programs

September 23, 2008: NASA will present a program on extra-terrestrial material.
October 28, 2008: open at present, but a program will be scheduled. The Nominating Committee will give their list of nominees for the 2009 officers, and there will be nominations from the floor.

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: Christmas/Holiday Season Party at the clubhouse. Meat will be furnished, and HGMS members will bring sides, salads, and desserts.

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

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Purpose of HGMS

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

Membership dues are \$30 for an adult membership, \$40 for a couple, \$50 for a family (including all children aged 5-18), and \$8 for a youth membership (ages 5-18). Advertising rates: \$70 for 2 months, ¼ page; \$150 for 6 months, ¼ page.

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

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

President's Message continued from page 1

In case no one else says THANK YOU for your hard work, talents, and resources, **you really are appreciated.** The thing that has amazed me so much this year is that so many different personalities can come up with various ideas for this project and they can accept changes, rejection, substitution, and probably disappointments, and yet go right on making this one of the best Shows on Earth—little or no rancor and almost total cooperation among everyone. All HGMS Show participants really need an individual pat on the back for being the Great Folks you all are.

I promised to start cutting down on the President's column to help us reduce the cost of getting the BBG out each month, so I will make this my shortest column this year to date. If you didn't see my article in the September, 2008 issue of *Rock and Gem* magazine on the HGMS Show and other Houston rock-related organizations and you want a copy, I may still have a copy or two left. I ordered some extras (*R&G* let me have some for the cover price of \$4.95 + shipping to me) so I will have maybe 8 or 10 copies at the Show or before for my cost of \$5.50 each.

One last request this month. The Nominating Committee has been appointed by the Board. Please consider serving in an elected position for 2009. We need good leadership for next year, and that probably means YOU.



County Judge Ed Emmett presenting Terry Proctor with the Harris County Proclamation for HGMS Week--the week of the show.

New Education Chair

by Terry Proctor

The Board of Directors appointed Brian Honsinger to be the new Education Chairman. The Board appreciates the efforts of Bill Rogers, but because he was having some technical problems getting the HGMS Educations program rolling for the year and he lived quite some distance from the clubhouse, the Board accepted Brian Honsinger's offer to take over the position. Brian lives fairly close to the clubhouse. We now hope that folks who want to take classes in the various subject areas will contact Brian at (281) 498-6521 and discuss classes with him. He can also be reached at texbay@sbcglobal.net.

Mexican Agates

by Nancy Fischer

Member of The Houston Gem & Mineral Society

You're really starting at the top! is what I was told when we got together with our rock hunting comrades in Manuel Benevides, Chihuahua. I told the group I had only been hunting for petrified wood and had never rock hunted before. "Well, you're in for the time of your life," they said. They were right.

A couple of years ago I saw a presentation Matt Dillon gave about one of his trips to San Carlos. I got very excited and talked to him after the presentation. I kept thinking about the trip, but had a lot of travel on my plate. I have been to Russia, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Indonesia in the interim. When I finally got serious and had some time available, I contacted Matt and made arrangements to go last October. The week before we were going to pay for the Bed & Breakfast, my husband Bob found out the he needed emergency surgery. It would take weeks to recover, and the trip was out of the question. We were finally able to make the arrangements to go this April.

We really had very little idea of what to expect. We had seen some photos, and Matt explained how things worked, but that still left lots of questions. Following instructions, I made reservations at the Three Palms Motel in Presidio and got Mexican car insurance.

We are big road trip aficionados and love West Texas and particularly the Big Bend Area. We decided to take two days to get to Presidio where we were to meet some of the group. We took Highway 90 to Marathon where we stayed in the old part of the Gage Hotel and had a fancy dinner in their restaurant. The next morning we headed toward Stude Butte to take one of our favorite drives. The River Road (El Camino del Rio) or Highway 170 between Terlingua and Presidio is a wild ride. It's a favorite of bikers and other thrill seekers. There are 15% grades, sharp "S" curves, and fabulous lookout points. The Rio Grande is really *una rio grande* in this area. It took us two hours to go 49 miles because we had to stop at every lookout and scout each water access. We picnicked at one of the water access parks.

We arrived in Presidio in the early afternoon and found the Three Palms Motel. The arrangements were that Matt and Joan Riley would go ahead to the area to scout some new locations. We were to meet the rest of the group at the Three Palms so we could caravan to San Carlos the next morning. The receptionist knew about our group and was able to put us all in touch. One of the women was an artist living in Ft. Davis. She had been on Matt's trips before, and "knew the drill."

We arranged to meet for dinner at the restaurant next to the motel. We had a good conversation and interesting company. One of the guys was from Utah. He had set up the original Life Flight operations for the City of Houston. He was very entertaining, telling us about some of his adventures.

Through a mixup in communication, there were only three cars going into Mexico the next morning. The rest had already gone into Mexico with Matt and Joan. We all met

for breakfast the next morning, and started out for the border. It was really early, still dark. We had no trouble getting through the border. They have a red light/green light system. Two cars got green lights, so they waved us through. We waited about half a block away for our red-lighted companion who had to answer a couple of questions then was waved through as well.

We turned east a few blocks on the other side of Ojinaga. There was a lot of construction through town, as the Mexican government had been upgrading the infrastructure. The new highway was divided into sections, and each little town or village along the route was responsible for its own section. The government supplied the material, and the towns supplied the labor. We found out that San Carlos has been renamed Manuel Benevides.

About three miles before MB, there was a military checkpoint. They were very professional and polite, but there is something unnerving about an 18-year old with automatic weapons no matter where you are. I had the same feeling in the Metro stations in Paris. We had to get out of our cars. They looked in everything, unzipped, unclashed, unlatched everything, but didn't really go through anything. It was a careful search. We were all cleared. It took about 10 minutes all told.

We headed into town and wound around a corner and up a hill to a well-kept dirt road and went to the nicest building in the town. Matt, Joan, and the others were there having breakfast. There was a two hour time difference, so we thought it was 9 a.m. and they thought it was 7 a.m. We met Gloria, the proprietor of La Gloria Bed & Breakfast and Rita, her helper. They were charming, but busy serving breakfast.

We briefly met the rest of the group, put our bags in our rooms, and got ready to go out on our first foray. The guides were waiting for us in two 1970s vintage pickups outfitted with bench seats in the beds and rebar stock rails to keep us in. We headed out along the paved roads of the town. It's quite a charming town—a lot of building and re-building going on. Gloria told us that a lot of U.S. money is coming in. Almost everyone has a relative on the U.S. side, most of them legal. The town was really clean. Trash and recycling barrels were placed regularly on the side of the roads.

The paved roads gave way to dirt roads which got narrower and rougher as we continued on. We downgraded to arroyos, then headed cross country. What a wild ride. Those guys were consummate



drivers. I have been in 4-wheel drive vehicles that could never have made some of the turns and hills. It took about 45 minutes to get to the Rojas field. We were looking for moss, flame, and flowergarden agate and for sagenite. Almost every site had a nice mixture of many kinds of agates, but each had a concentration of a specific type.

Matt said I could follow him, and he would show me what to look for. I really had no idea—couldn't recognize an agate if my life depended on it. I walked along with him and he would pick something up and show me what to look for. As I became able to spot agates, he cautioned me that we were nowhere near where the good stuff was. I was so excited, I kept picking up anything I recognized and I finally felt confident enough to hunt "on my own." Bob was nearby, and he vetted everything I collected before we put the agates into the bags that would eventually get weighed and paid for. We each got a different color tie wrap, so we could claim our bags at the end.

Guides were available for a daily fee. Having a guide was voluntary. One of the party did without. She knew what she was looking for and made short forays back to the truck with a few rocks at a time. They operated however you wanted. They also had different skill levels. On our first day the guide didn't know much more than I did, and not as much as Bob. The guides would take our filled bags back to the trucks for us. In addition the guides had a horse and a vaquero who would take the bags of rocks back to the truck.

On our way back to the truck, a different guide, Jose, helped us with our bags. He was great. He had a really good eye and was able to spot some spectacular specimens. The guides don't put anything in your bag until you "vetted" it. After all, you are paying for the rocks at the end of the trip by the pound, so it became apparent that we should be

very selective. To me, so many pieces were beautiful. Our guide would tell me if something was not as wonderful as I thought. I am a skilled "leverite" collector. We had Jose as a guide for the rest of the trip. He was so helpful, looking, vetting, teaching, and toting.

The first day at Rojas was our hottest day. I kept looking for shade. For instance one of the others found an overhang that provided shade. We hung out, had an orange and some trail mix, and talked for awhile. It was very interesting. He had been an investi-



gative producer for CBS News in Los Angeles and had lots of incredible stories.

Another one of the gang fashioned some shade by artfully placing one of the collection bags through some ocotillo high on a hill where he was able to catch a breeze or two. Most of the guys were very focused and did not stop. There was always another cache just over the hill, or up the mountain. There were piles of agates that were just piled on the ground. We passed them by in search of that elusive "one." One of the guys told me that any general collector would be happy with what was strewn on the ground, but that these fields were so rich, we could be REALLY choosy.



We headed back to the house about 3 p.m. (5 p.m. CST). It took about 45 minutes or so to get back to the hacienda. I loved the rides, crashing through the cactus and down the arroyos. As we drove through town, the two guides riding in the back of the truck with us were waving and talking to everyone we passed in the village. It seems that everyone knows or is related to everyone else.



We showered and sat on the wide verandah with our drinks of choice in hand. We talked about the wonderful day we just had and about what we were going to do the next day. It was such a relaxed atmosphere. The verandah goes across the full width of the back of the house and wraps the rest of the way. Chairs and tables abound. Gloria called us in for dinner. The aromas had been really teasing us. She had a bountiful buffet of chicken enchiladas verdes, rice, beans, just-made guacamole, fabulous salad, and dessert. There was so much really good food. I got the recipe for her green enchilada sauce and after two tries finally got it right. The first time I made it, Bob's complaint was that I didn't make enough sauce.

After dinner, we adjourned to the patio, talked, and watched the stars. We saw some shooting stars. There is almost no light pollution except for one light at a nearby park.

It was a spectacular show.

Sleep was no problem. The rooms are lovely and the beds comfortable. We woke up the next morning to the smell of fresh-brewed coffee from just-ground coffee beans. The gang gathered for a huge breakfast of eggs, toast, bacon, beans, etc. Fully fortified, we set out for the Tonto field and another day of adventure. One of the party decided to stay at the house and read. The weather was better, not quite as hot. There was also a nice breeze all day. We set off in a different direction.

We had another wild ride out, this time to the Sierra de Tonto field. We found some beautiful botryoidal agates. Bob's favorites were a deep blue. There were some astonishing formations. Some were rounded, some were columnar. One of our party, an artist who lives in Ft. Davis, found a druse on black botryoid. I followed Matt around again for a while. He just stood and as he turned around, kept spotting keepers. He showed me how to recognize the agates under the plants. Once he pointed out what to look for, it became obvious. We also found a cache of mica. The terrain was a little different from the first day. There were rolling hills and a wide valley. We didn't need the horse. There were also fortification agates at this site. Joan Riley found a beauty. The rest of the gang was also very helpful. They knew I was just learning.

I headed back to the truck a little early. There had been a beautiful breeze all day, but it was hot in the sun. I had brought a parasol with me to provide shade. However, the guides took a look at me sitting in the truck under my green umbrella and jerry-rigged shade by putting a blanket over the side rails of the truck.

The food was consistently good. The ingredients were so fresh. We had pork asado one night and spaghetti another. We had pancakes one morning for breakfast. For lunch we were out in the field. We each brought snacks; trail mix, oranges, and the like. One of the guys brought sandwich fixin's and made himself a real lunch. With our huge breakfasts, we really didn't get hungry for another meal, so the snacks worked very well.

We took yet another route on the third day. I had originally planned to stay at the house one day. I had thought that as a really novice collector, I'd burn out quickly. I didn't realize that hunting agates is addicting. I loved the wild rides out and back to the fields. I loved just walking in the mountain desert. The company was entertaining. I went out every day. Each day we looked for a different kind of agate. This day we went to Tenaja de Especion. The trucks were parked next to some natural pools (tenajas). The hike in was the most challenging of the sites. There was an abandoned mine that some of the crew went to explore. One of the crew started a "mining" operation of his own with the help of his guide. He was digging around a large seam of agate.

Bob, Jose, and I took a wonderful trail up the mountain. Jose was concerned about whether I could do some of the climbing, but he didn't realize that I've been hiking for a long time. It was possible to follow the arroyo and not have to do the climbs. There was certainly rich material wherever you looked. We were also finding fantastic stuff. Again, there were piles and piles of agates, many of which would be a prize in a general collection. I was becoming more discriminating. When we got back to the

trucks, a large group was digging in an area across the pools.

The final day we went to the Tapado bouquet beds. There had been a lot of discussion about whether to go since these beds have been hunted for decades, and the thought was that they had been depleted. Several years ago, the guides had turned over a huge section and uncovered more bouquet agates, but that has been pretty much picked over too. We hiked in along the arroyo, then headed up to the mountains.

Once again, Matt showed me what to look for. The bouquet agates looked very different from the other types we had been collecting, and they were not as obvious to me as the others. The style of hunt was also different. It took more digging than we had to do previously. It was a little more challenging, but still a lot of fun and I hope very rewarding. We found enough to make us happy, but much less than we had found in previous days.



After this last day, we went to Chuy's place to weigh out. They had a balance scale hung from a tree from which they weighed our color coded bags (top photo). They loaded all of the bags into the trucks and brought them back to the house where we paid up and loaded our bags into our own trucks.



We had a wonderful spaghetti dinner and talked about our adventures.

We left after breakfast and our final packing in the morning. We caravanned back across the border at Ojinaga/Presidio, stopping at a ceramic shop on the way out of Mexico. We made it back to Houston that night.

Bob and I ended up with 450 pounds of agates. Some of them are spectacular. We have no idea about the others. Bob has been spending his lunch hour on Wednesday cutting agates. Although we probably have a lifetime supply of agates, I would love to go on another trip agate hunting with Matt Dillon in Manuel Benevides. I've got the agate bug.

Herb Bastuscheck*American Master of an Ancient Japanese Art**by Denise Bicknell**25315 Oakhurst**Spring, Texas 77386**Rockmom1@charter.net**Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

Herb Bastuscheck and I first met online at Bob's Rock Shop. At that time he was living in Japan and teaching conversational English to Japanese students ages three to seventy-nine. In July, 2004 we finally met in person in Karnes County, Texas, where we gathered for a collecting outing along with my husband Tim, Larry McAuley from Leander, Texas, and Virgil Richards from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. At the end of our wonderful day collecting fossils, fossil wood, and a few mineral specimens, we met at Larry's home where Elisa, Larry's wife, and Regina, Virgil's wife, had prepared a delicious meal of marinated smoked burgers and other goodies for us to enjoy. After dinner Herb set up his bonseki materials and demonstrated that ancient Japanese art.

Bonseki is the art of creating a landscape on a black rectangular or oval lacquer tray using white sand, pebbles, and small rocks. Bon means "tray" and seki means "rock," so bonseki translates as "tray with rocks." It was developed at the Ryuanji Temple in Kyoto with the samurai Hosokawa family. Bonseki is similar to the tea ceremony, where meditation accompanies a learned pattern of actions. Finished bonseki trays were placed in the little alcoves below the hanging scrolls in family tea ceremony rooms. When the art form was developed 600 to 800 years ago, it was much more stylized than it is today. About 100 years ago, bonseki artists went to Europe to study art, and upon their return to Japan, they influenced the creation of photo-like pictures. Today colored rocks, fossils, and miniature structures such as bridges and temples are sometimes added.

Herb creates these sand paintings using small tools such as swan feathers, small spoons, and sieves that are ceremonially placed about his workspace. The typical boneski landscape contains



Fig. 1 Herb creates these life-like sand paintings using small tools such as swan feathers, small spoons, and sieves ceremonially placed about his workspace. Virgil Richards photo.

features such as Mt Fuji, rivers, lakes, mountains, or waterfalls. A scene may take two hours or more to create, while a quick demonstration takes as little as twenty minutes.

The art form is learned in increments by mastering individual features such as a river or a mountain. When one topic is mastered, the artists move on to another topic. Eventually the artist will begin to combine subjects to create complete landscapes. These artists will then just wipe the sand away, destroying the scene with a brush of the hand. Occasionally powdered glue may be added to the sand and set with steam to create a more permanent display although this generally is not the norm.

Herb's sensei, 92-year-old Masa Saito, has practiced the art for 50 years and has obtained the highest ranking—a gold embroidered crest on a yellow tray scarf. Herb, the only non-Japanese bonseki master, reached



Fig. 2 Dedication, an artist's eye, and a very steady hand are required to become proficient at the ancient Japanese art of bonseki. Jim Flora photo.



Fig. 3 It takes twelve to fifteen years of practice to be considered for sensei status. Jim Flora photo.

his Rank of a gold embroidered crest on a purple tray scarf after 12 years of weekly lessons.

Unfortunately, bonseki is a dying art form. Younger folks are not inclined to commit to the amount of time it takes to learn this ancient art. Most of the active members are over 50, and many are in their 70s or 80s. Less than 10 percent are in their 20s to 40s. Herb considers it an honor to be able to show an art form that so few folks have heard of. He tells me that in all the time he spent in Japan, he only met two Japanese who knew what it was!

Herb and his wife, Sachiko are retired and now reside in Oregon where he is actively involved in collecting rocks, minerals, and fossils, and in teaching earth sciences through a school show and tell program.

In Memoriam*Albert Laws Kidwell**(1919-2008)**by Art Smith**Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

On Saturday, August 16, 2008, the Houston Gem & Mineral Society lost a long-time member and good friend to many, particularly in the Mineral Section. Although Al and Marian (Al's wife and partner since 1943) moved to Scottsdale, Arizona in July 2006, many of us still considered them good friends and members. Al and Marian moved to Houston in the early 1960s from Tulsa, Oklahoma. He had already been a Houston Gem & Mineral Society member for quite a few years when I first met him in 1971 or 1972 at the HGMS show at the Shamrock Hotel where he identified a mineral for me.



Al was a professional economic geologist with a 1940 B.S. in Mining Engineering from the Missouri School of Mines, an M.S. in Geology from Washington University (St. Louis) in 1942, and a PhD in Geology from the University of Chicago in 1949. After that, most of Al's professional career was in research with Exxon or with some of the predecessors that eventually became Exxon. His projects and research subjects were diverse but included copper, uranium, and other minerals that led him to many areas both in the United States and overseas. Through all this time since a boy in Missouri in 1932, he was a mineral collector. His large collection was diverse, rich in mineral species, well-labeled, and most remarkably, most specimens had stories which he would relate. Spending an evening with Al in his "Mineral Room" was always a special treat.

After a collecting trip to Arkansas in the fall of 1972, I returned to Houston with a specimen of eudialyte and aegirine crystals from Magnet Cove on approval with a price tag of \$150 on it. Ed Pederson, then Mineral

Section Chairman, suggested I ask Al's opinion of it. I called him, and within 20 minutes I was on his door step with the specimen. He recommended not buying it because it was too expensive. Though I have never found one as good as that specimen, the advice was good because as a young geologist with a family, I could make better use of the money at that time. While talking that evening, we both realized our mutual love for Arkansas minerals. I also discovered that I had used his articles on Missouri collecting localities in *Rocks and Minerals* written in the 1940s for some successful collecting while in Graduate School in Missouri in the late 1950s.

Al asked me if I was interested in a trip to Arkansas after the first of the year. That was something that could not be missed. So in February we made the trek to Albert Pike in the Ouachita National Forest, met Henry deLinde, and then hiked into the Coon Creek mine area to collect iron phosphate minerals. Al had first collected iron phosphates in other areas of the Ouachita Mountains in the 1940s and found a new mineral, but it was not described and named kidwellite for him until 1977—but that is another story that only Al could relate well. We all had such a great time collecting and conversing and thinking of other places to collect, that we decided to do it again in the fall. That we did, inviting others, and formed a loosely knit organization called the Coon Creek Association. We had no members, leaders, officials, rules, or dues or requirements to belong. As you can guess, all three of us worked for large companies and were tired of such. However, there was a leader—it was Al by his quiet presence and the respect we all had for him. This group ranged each meeting from between 10 to 20 individuals. We met once or twice a year from 1973 through 2002 and shared many wonderful Arkansas collecting adventures, specimens, and programs in the evening. The best parts of these Coon Creek trips for me were with Al driving the 7 to 8 hours to Arkansas. We had others come with us who slept in the back seat, but Al or I always drove, and the other kept him awake by talking rocks, collecting, trading, and relationships with personalities we both had come across in the hobby. Al not only was willing to share his knowledge of mineralogy and advice, but specimens he collected or bought that he knew I would like.

During the Houston Gem & Mineral Society shows, if he was in town, Al worked in the Mineral Section booth. No specimen brought in for him to identify was too trivial or unimportant. A bonus with Al working in the booth was having Marian with him who also helped with sales, particularly to the kids. When the Mineral Section needed a program, Al was always ready to volunteer a talk. They were usually looked forward to with much anticipation, and we were seldom disappointed. I have paper copies of some of these talks, and I plan to edit them and have them printed in *The*

Backbender's Gazette because they give some interesting aspects of Al's collecting experiences and travel that I know can be enjoyed still.

When Al and Marian moved to Scottsdale, the Houston Gem & Mineral Society was given most of Al's mineralogical library. He had been giving our library his *Economic Geology* for years, but then we received much of the rest. Books and journals we already had we sold and bought books that we needed. We got all of the duplicate specimens remaining in Al's garage and some from an inside closet. These we turned into cash for the General Fund through our silent auctions, and many of you not only got some nice things but contributed to the club when you bid and won them.

There is no doubt in my mind that Al gave much more than he received from the club. Yet I am sure that if asked he would say, "No, I got more from knowing the people in the club than I could possibly have given." Certainly all of us who knew him have already missed his presence and his contributions that helped mold our thoughts about minerals, the collecting of them, and the stories from his trips.

Info on Lapidary Section Show Competitions

by Margaret Hardman-Muye

September 26, 2008—Lapidary competition stones and jewelry should be turned in. However, they will still be accepted until 10 a.m. Saturday.

The official Lapidary competition stones:

Novice: 30 mm x 40 mm agate

Advanced / Master: Free-form moonstone. Smallest dimension 12 mm
Largest dimension no more than 30 mm

Saturday, September 27, 2008—Timed Cabochon Cutting Competition: The Lapidary Section Chair (Steve Wilkerson) chooses the competition material and a cut. All stones must be cut to R.O.L.E. standard, i.e., polished back, back bevel, etc. (*To download a copy of the R.O.L.E. standards, scroll down to the Lapidary Section on the home page of the HGMS Web site. Click on the "Lapidary" button, then click on the "R.O.L.E. Program" button.*) Competitors can cut at any time on Saturday and will use the Genie cabochon machine. Usually the competition cutting starts at the beginning of the day after the Lapidary Demo Booth opens (around 9:00). The competition cutting will be done at the Demo Booth, and the stones will be given to the judges toward the end of the day. The first person to show up can cut right then. It is recommended that competitors do not wait until the end of the day to start the cutting competition.

Day Light Section

by John Zanders and Nancy Fischer

Photos by John Zanders and Bob Fischer

The Day Light Section met Monday, September 8. Val Link taught them how to work with prisma color, and they finished their patination projects. The colored circles in the third photo are circles drawn with prisma color. These were applied (drawn) upon copper sheet which had been sandblasted to hold the wax colors. The final step was to spray the copper sheet with liver of sulfur to blacken it.

Note: John Zanders created the semi-ovale green Buddha. It was chased onto copper and then patinated. He also made the circles drawn with prisma color on sandblasted copper, and he then applied liver of sulfur.

The photo with the ruler shows the two prisma-colored pieces made by Nancy Fischer.



Paleontology Section Party and Auction

Come Join the Fun! All Come!

November 18, 2008—6:30 p.m.

by Lexy Bieniek

Paleontology Section Chair

Well, the time is here again! The Paleo Section invites everyone to its annual dinner and auction. As you know, this is one of the best parties of the year. The Section provides the meat, but we ask everyone to bring a side dish, dessert, or salad to make our meal complete.

ATTENTION: Dinner Starts at 6:30 p.m.

The auction follows the meal. Our auctioneers can sell anything, even the kitchen sink. So bring any item—rock, mineral, fossil, or old boot—and add to our fun for the night. Actually, Christmas is just around the corner, so really nice auction items will make even better donations.

Irene Offeman Paleontology Scholarship

by Lexy Bieniek

Paleontology Section Chair

The Paleo Section decided to honor **Irene Offeman** for the work she has done for the HGMS Paleontology Section over the years by offering a Paleontology Scholarship in her name. The first winner of this scholarship is James Burnes. James is a senior at Lamar University studying under Dr. James Westgate.

James grew up in Fred, Texas. As a child he loved the outdoors and reading about people who explored the outdoors. His family fostered his curiosity by encouraging him to find his own answers to the questions he asked. As a child he loved dinosaurs and fossils, but this interest waned as he grew into his teens. At Lamar the love of fossils was rekindled when he went on a research trek to the Uinta Basin with Dr. Westgate. On this trip, he found some teeth that were tentatively identified as belonging to a titanotheres. He was hooked.

According to James, fossils are so interesting because the pieces of fossils found can be pieced together to paint a picture of the past. This picture then gives us an understanding of how our world worked in the past. There is loads of “stuff” out there to study, and all that is needed is to get out, get your hands dirty collecting fossils, put the fossils together and start hypothesizing. Proving or disproving the hypotheses adds to the body of knowledge.

James’ ultimate goal is to become a professor in paleontology or paleoecology and to write a couple of books.

We are extremely proud to award the very first **Irene Offeman Scholarship** to James Burnes.

Bylaws Change Requested

by Terry Proctor

Article III. Section 2 of the HGMS Bylaws states in part “Seven Board members shall constitute a quorum unless there is no serving Immediate Past President, in which case six Board members shall constitute a quorum.” The Board of Directors suggests this section of the Bylaws be changed to read “Seven Board members shall constitute a quorum unless an officer position is unfilled, in which case six Board members shall constitute a quorum.”

The reason for the proposed change is to cover a year when we have an unfilled officer position (like this year), reducing the total Board membership by one member. This makes it more difficult during the vacation season and other times to meet the seven board member quorum. Reducing the quorum to six is already in place, but it applies only when there is no Past President. This change will reduce the quorum requirement whenever we have any officer position that is unfilled for the year. Under the Bylaws, proxies are not allowed.

The Board asks that you vote for this Amendment so we won’t have summer Board

meetings that lack a quorum in those years where we don't have a full Board. The vote on this Amendment will be at the October 28, 2008 meeting.

In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

I have started work on our VHS and DVD libraries. As I mentioned last month, they will both be stored in the racks in the second room. Those with the same title and subject will be together. However to sign them out, the VHS will still use the card but the DVD will be signed out on the desk sheet. Do not take the VHS and DVD at the same time. I will be removing some VHS tapes and selling them and putting others in storage so they will remain on the list, but if you want them, you will have to contact me.

I have obtained the following new DVDs.

Volcano, Eyewitness DVD, 57 minutes. Basic tape on volcanoes, and why and how they happen. Does a lot of skipping around to different areas.

Volcanos of New Mexico, KNME, 14:28 minutes. The last bit seems to have been cut off. A good general overview of the New Mexico volcanic areas. Not much on Capulin volcano where it was purchased.

Perspectives of the Woman Collector, Blue Cap Productions, 1 hr, 18 minutes. Stories from several women on how they became collectors and what they collect.

The Golden Age of Minerals, Blue Cap Productions, 74 minutes, Charlie Key, Peter Bancroft, Ed Swaboda, David Wilbur, Bill Larson, Steve Smale, 2004 Westward Look Mineral Show, Tucson.

What's Hot in Tucson, 2008. Blue Cap Productions, 4 hours, David Wilbur host, 2008 Tucson Mineral Show.

The Eruption of Mount St. Helens. IMAX theater version, 28 minutes. Documenting the events of May 18, 1980 when Mt. St Helens blew up.

The Wonderful World of Agates Symposium, 2008. The Gem Shop. Four DVD Discs cover talks and exhibits with many contributors.

These DVDs and others already copied for us by Eddie Mace should be a good start, and more will be added as time goes on.

Please do not keep these more than two weeks. Some of the VHS tapes have been out for years, and it defeats the purpose of having them for people to view.



Post-Show Field Trip Notification

by Scott Singleton

HGMS Show Chair

Each year following our Annual Show, the Show Committee likes to show its appreciation for the support the club gives the Show effort by hosting a field trip. So, for all of you out there who contributed in some way to the success of our Annual Show, this is for you:

Date: Saturday, October 4 (the weekend following the show)

Location: Timber company land south of Sam Rayburn Reservoir (north of Jasper in East Texas)

What: Petrified wood

Cost: Due to the change in landowners, the cost of maintaining the hunting lease on this property has increased dramatically. The host now charges \$5/person for field trips to offset this cost.

For information about the wood found at this locality, please see the HGMS Web site (www.hgms.org), and scroll down the home page to the Paleo Section. Follow the link to petrified wood articles, and look for the article on wood in Jasper County.

To sign up for this field trip and receive meeting instructions, contact Scott Singleton (fossilwood@comcast.net, 713-664-9033).

Each time we've gone on this field trip, we've always had a blast. Kids are welcome. The trip consists of following a streambed for some distance looking for wood sticking out of the bank. Your shoes and legs will get wet, and there is some climbing required to and from the cars. And there are those who pass out from heat exhaustion because they insist on carrying too much weight back up the hill to the parking area (of course we won't mention names). But most people work within their limits and have a great time.

So, let's have a great show and blow off some steam afterwards.

Two Wonderful Grand Prizes This Year

by Terry Proctor

Thanks to **Amber Way Jewelry** for their donation of a set of amber jewelry worth over \$400 as one of the two Show Grand Prizes this year. This jewelry collection consists of a gorgeous silver and amber necklace, earrings, and bracelet. Each item has amber of various colors worked into the piece. Thanks to Gina and Dennis Giadrosich for this donation. Tell your friends about this year's Grand Prizes.

The other Grand Prize is a huge dinosaur track casting made by Glen Kuban from an actual dinosaur track in a riverbed. This Grand Prize was donated by the **Proctor Museum of Natural Science, Inc.** who purchased the track casting from Glen Kuban.

Susan Lenz Update

by Norm Lenz

8-17-2008

HGMS Friends,

Susan has done well since my last update. She has had one seizure in the last 10 weeks.

We purchased a Polaris Ranger ATV for our retirement property. Susan named it Walker since it is a Ranger and resides in Texas. She likes to ride Walker around our property to see what I've been doing and to feed the long-horns.



Positives:

- Susan's latest MRI indicates that she continues to be in remission from cancer.
- Susan, Heather, and I made a very successful trip to Missouri for my niece Alicia's wedding and for some time with my family. Tanya did not have enough vacation time to travel with us.
- Although Susan tires quickly, fatigue is no longer a big problem. We are able to take her out more frequently for shopping, movies, and to restaurants.
- Susan's knee surgery went well. Her surgeon trimmed up some damage to the meniscus in her right knee. She had a few weeks of therapy at her surgeon's office and is doing therapy at MD Anderson now to see if she can regain her ability to walk.
- Her long term memory is almost normal, and her short term memory is good and improving.
- Her verbal communication has improved further. Her voice is strong, and she is actually visiting again.
- Susan is feeding herself now. We only help in dishing out her food and cutting it into bite-sized pieces.
- Susan has improved sufficiently that I can care for her without help every second weekend while Tanya and Heather take the weekend off to explore Houston and Galveston. Alternating weekends off keeps us all from getting cabin fever.

Negatives:

- Unfortunately, arthritis is a part of the problem with Susan's right knee, and it

cannot be solved by surgery. There is a little bone-on-bone grinding with some knee movements.

- Tremors continue to be a limitation for Susan's activities that require fine motor skills. This is especially true for her left hand. We have tried several medications without success. We will ask for a referral to a movement disorder specialist at the next appointment with her seizure control doctor.
- Susan can only walk with our assistance and only about 30–40 feet. Two years of inactivity have made her hips and knees weak and stiff. Therapy benefits will be slow in coming.

Photo: Susan, Tanya, and Heather (behind Susan) in Walker, our Texas Ranger. The Longhorns range freely across most of the properties in our 1,800 acre development.

Susan is looking forward to the upcoming HGMS show. Maybe we will see you there.

Norman

Nominating Committee Appointed by HGMS Board

by Terry Proctor

Pursuant to the HGMS Bylaws, the following five HGMS members (one from each Section) were selected by the Board of Directors to serve as the Nominating Committee to provide a slate of nominees for 2009 office.

Tom Wright Day Light Section (713) 729-8174
Phyllis George Faceting Section (281) 395-3087
Stephen Wilkerson ... Lapidary Section (713) 721-7366
Steve Blyskal Mineral Section (832) 252-6533
Chris Peek Paleontology Section (281) 685-7610

The positions for which the Nominating Committee will provide a nominee are:

President

First Vice-President (Schedule General Meeting programs and fill in for President)

Second Vice-President (Membership)

Secretary

Treasurer

Show Chair

If you are interested in being nominated to any of these positions by the Nominating Committee for 2009, please contact one or more persons on the Nominating Committee. You will have a lot of help if you want to be nominated, so don't be bashful or afraid of asking to be nominated for a position.

General Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

HGMS Secretary

Terry Proctor called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

The minutes of the July General Meeting were approved as published in the August BBG. Matt Dillon moved to accept the minutes; Neal Immega seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Rodney Linehan, Club Treasurer, reported that the Club's finances are okay.

Visitor Mary Roesner has rocks to polish, and she wanted to check out the Club.

Scott Singleton reminded members that we still need volunteers for the Show. Mary Ann Mitscherling has the volunteer list. Scott said that because we are hosting the AFMS and SCFMS, there are more volunteer opportunities available, particularly since the national and regional organizations start meeting on Wednesday, September 24.

Scott announced that the Show Volunteer field trip will be to the Jasper, TX area this year to collect petrified wood.

Stephen Wilkerson, Lapidary Chair, mentioned that he still needs volunteers for the lapidary Demo Area. Terry Proctor stated that he also needs volunteers for the Dinosaur Track table. Terry purchased Glen Kuban's track casts and will have them on display at the Show.

Terry Proctor displayed the Proclamation he received from Harris County for the Show. Terry also had a picture of County Judge Ed Emmett presenting him with the proclamation. Terry went to NASA to discuss the appearance of NASA personnel at our show and bringing a moon rock.

Terry's article appears in the September 2008 *Rock & Gem* magazine. It is replete with great pictures of the Convention Center, the show poster, a moon rock, and more. Terry has extra copies that members can purchase at cost plus shipping.

Phyllis George announced that the deadline for the October BBG will be September 10. She informed the members that the deadline for the next issue can always be found inside the front cover of the BBG.

Neal Immega reported that "it all spins" in the shop.

Old Business

Matt Dillon moved, seconded by Carolyn Promisel, to adopt the Code of Conduct and its incorporated Policy on Children as published in the July BBG. The motion passed unanimously.

Terry Proctor addressed the subject of the amount of time it takes from the publication

of an action for membership consideration to the actual vote which can be almost two months. No one moved to shorten the time.

Terry also reminded the members that an increase in dues is under consideration as published in the August BBG. He listed the many benefits of being a member of HGMS and compared the increased dues for a year to other forms of entertainment such as one night at the theatre.

New Business

Terry said he would form a nominating committee in September to present a slate of officers in October. Nominations can be made from the floor at the October General Meeting. The election will take place at the November meeting. If anyone is interested in being an officer, please contact Terry. The newly elected officers will be sworn in at the Christmas Party, and they will take office January 1, 2009.

The Christmas Party will be Saturday, December 13. More information will follow.

Neal Immega talked briefly about the upcoming river trip scheduled for September 1.

Mary Ann Mitscherling said the silver order has come in, and she has it available.

Beverly Mace thanked the volunteers who labeled over 6000 flyers last Saturday with only 6 “re-do’s” necessary—best ever. Matt Dillon has placed photos he took of the event on flickr.com.

Neal Immega received notice that the Clements High School group mentored by himself, Steve Blyskal, and Scott Singleton competed in the National Science Olympiad in Washington, D.C. Out of 60 teams, they place 31st overall and within the top ten in three of the 23 events. This was the second time Clements High School advanced to the Nationals.

Show and Tell

Owen Martin displayed Cretaceous fossils he collected on the trip with the Dallas Paleo Society in Denton. Sunday Bennett pointed out an uncoiled ammonite.

Door Prize

This month’s door prize was donated by Terry Proctor. It was a Proctor Museum cup with a chunk of wire silver ore from the San Martin Mine in Batopilas, Chihuahua, Mexico. John Anderson also donated a Montana agate. Sigrid Stewart won the door prize and will bring the door prize for next month.

Presentation

Patrick J. Lewis, PhD, Professor at Sam Houston State University, presented the program, “Of Mice and Men.” Dr. Lewis has made some remarkable finds in Botswana and South Africa this year and in the past several years. The results of this summer’s expeditions have not yet been published, so HGMS members are the first to hear about his finds and exploits.

Dr. Lewis is particularly interested in how changing environments affected our evolutionary history. To that end, he studies fossils of small mammals and is able to interpret what their environment might have been.

He showed some amazing slides and spoke with great humor of the rigors of his research in a previously unexplored cave in Botswana and along a railroad in South Africa. He talked about the logistics of getting to such remote areas as well as the variety of fossils they found and the related animals they trapped for DNA research.

HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

September 2, 2008

by Nancy Fischer

HGMS Secretary

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

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

August 2008 Board of Directors Minutes were distributed via e-mail. The minutes were clarified by e-mail about the freeze on accepting new Life Members being in place from the time of the August BOD meeting until after the dues increase is finalized.

Tom Wright asked about the current dues. Beverly Mace said that they are half-price for the rest of the year. At the show, dues for new members will be collected at the suggested new 2009 rate. If the motion to increase dues does not pass, refunds will be sent. There were several people, who upon hearing about the freeze on Life Memberships, sent in checks based on the old rate to try to beat the freeze. Terry Proctor will write a letter to these people and return their checks. . Beverly Mace moved, seconded by Rick Rexroad, that the August, 2008 minutes be accepted as clarified and distributed. The vote was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan reported that the Club is on a break-even track for the moment. He will show a \$20,000 profit from dealers' fees. Rodney said, in response to a question from Terry Proctor, that the expenditures for publishing were mostly for the Show. He said that \$13,500 was budgeted for Publicity. To date, \$5200 has been spent including the Houston Press advertising.

Terry said that he suggested the Show Committee get mugs to sell. He offered to pay for them since they were not in the budget, and once he was reimbursed, the rest of the proceeds would go to the Club. The Show Committee is getting mugs, but will use

Club funds. Terry was not sure where the money was coming from. Matt Dillon suggested that the Committee could be under budget on other items and perhaps they just transferred funds. At any rate, all thought the mugs were a good idea.

Show: There was a small blurb about the show in the Houston Chronicle's Fairs and Events Section. Terry Proctor will suggest that members write articles about the show and submit them to Houston Community Newspapers in their area. Matt Dillon thought the Show Committee Chair should attend Board meetings, particularly right before the Show since there are usually a lot of questions from the Board. Denise Bicknell suggested that the Board change that to a requirement for next year.

Committee and Section Reports: There were no Committee or Section reports.

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 called for a committee to nominate a 2009 slate of officers and the Show Chair for next year. One member from each Section will be appointed to the committee. The relevant Section Chairs will be consulted for nominees, and their suggestions will be voted on by the Board through e-mail. The resulting Nominating Committee must be in place by Wednesday, September 10. Their charge is to present a slate at the October General Meeting. At that time, nominations can be made from the floor. The election will take place at the November General Meeting with investiture at the Christmas Party in December. The 2009 officer positions to be filled are President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Sections which elect Board Representatives in odd-numbered years (Lapidary and Faceting) will elect a representative to serve a two year term. The Board was in complete agreement that the Nominating Committee should also select a nominee for Show chair as it should not be automatic each year for an assistant Show Chair to move up.
2. A new phone for the office was requested by several members since the old one is not working properly. Matt Dillon will make the purchase.
3. Terry Proctor is ready to order the stop blocks for the parking lot. Matt Dillon will send him the specifications.
4. Terry brought up purchasing a digital lock for the side door. Tom Wright and Beverly Mace said they are totally opposed to a digital lock. Denise Bicknell reminded the group that they had already voted against a digital lock.
5. Terry needs to get the 501(c)3 documentation from the IRS so he can get the Club's Kroger card activated.
6. Terry suggested that the BBG be printed on 16-pound paper rather than on 20-pound paper. This will make it easier to go through the automated process at the Post Office. Beverly Mace will request that the printers make a sharper crease to make the BBG thinner. A few BBG covers are being torn. Phyllis George wanted to keep the 20-pound paper for the cover. There were no objections.
7. Matt Dillon related that he sent an arrow head he had found as a kid and docu-

mentation about it to Italy with John Anderson's granddaughter who will be studying there. She wanted to bring something "Texan" to her hosts. Matt will write an article about this for the BBG.

8. Phyllis George noted that the next BBG deadline is September 10. It will be sent to the printers September 16 and distributed September 19.
9. More classes need to be held, and we are not progressing on that front. Brian Honsinger has volunteered to be the Education Chair. The Board regretfully determined that we need to change the Education Chair, and they accepted Brian Honsinger's offer to take on that office. The Board thanks Bill Rogers for his effort.
10. The Club scholarship was discussed. There are years when the Club did not present a scholarship. The Paleo Section independently came up with an application form and process. The Board will consider Paleo's form and decide on a procedure for use in the future. For the last several years, the scholarship was given to a Metal Arts student studying under Val Link at the University of Houston. The Metal Arts program has been dismantled, and this is serving as the catalyst for a new approach. Under consideration is giving the scholarship to a Community College student who is going into an Earth Science program at a four year school. The money would go directly to the school in the recipient's name. The recipient would have to come to a Club meeting in order to receive the scholarship. Last year's recipient promised she would give a brief presentation about her work, but did not respond to requests to attend a meeting.
11. Terry Proctor addressed the quorum requirement for the Board. Currently there is no First Vice President. The quorum requirement of seven has been a challenge for a couple of meetings. Tom Wright said the Bylaws almost cover this. Article 3 Section 2 says that if there is no Past President, the quorum will be six. Rick Rexroad moved to change the bylaws so that if there is an unassigned officer's position, the quorum will be six. Matt Dillon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.
12. Tom Wright reminded the Board that the wording in the Bylaws is, "the term for elected Directors shall be two years, with terms staggered so that the Directors for the Day Light, Mineral, and Paleontology Sections are elected by those Sections to have their terms start in even-numbered years, and the Directors for the Faceting and Lapidary Sections are elected to have their terms start in odd numbered years..."
13. Phyllis George inquired about the continuously running commode in the women's rest room. Wayne Barnett was contacted, and he took care of it.
14. Terry Proctor will get an American flag, a Texas flag, and flag stands for the Club. The flags were requested by the AFMS for their annual meeting, and it seemed appropriate to have the flags continuously present in the Club.

Tom Wright moved to adjourn the meeting. Matt Dillon seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

AFMS President's Message*by Shirley Leeson**from AFMS Newsletter 9/2008*

We've had some time to rest up from the recent Regional Federation meetings in Northwest and California. But I want to tell you about two events that may interest you.

In the Northwest, Lyle Vogelpohl, NFMS Treasurer, announced that for the first time in many years, the NFMS has increased its membership instead of decreasing it. This is encouraging to say the least. And in my home Regional Federation, the CFMS has successfully achieved a growing trend of competitive exhibits. With over thirty exhibits this year, it tops last year by ten. Last year was a banner year because the CFMS members also scored well at the AFMS show in Roswell, New Mexico taking seven AFMS trophies.

This is not due to sitting back and talking about it. It's been done by a number of prominent current and past officers and chairmen working hard to encourage participation in exhibiting at the Federation level. It's because there are articles of encouragement almost every month in the CFMS Newsletter.

It has taken the CFMS Rules Committee making a pledge to help exhibitors by fielding questions regarding rules, entry forms, Group, Division, and finally class in the division, to achieve this new interest in competing. In addition, the Rules Committee has offered to attend meetings to talk about "the dreaded Rules Book, and how to read it." At the show they lined up clubs who wanted members of the committee to attend their club shows and evaluate club member exhibits with an eye to competing at the Federation level in the near future. Many exhibitors are looking toward the AFMS/CFMS combined show in 2010 in Riverside, with an expectation of entering. I believe this can be duplicated in other Regional Federations..... Could this be a challenge???

I'd like to share something I think will interest many BEADERS throughout the regions. With the help of Phyllis George and the group of beaders from Houston Gem & Mineral Society, Dee and I were given a working plan for putting a beading section in the AFMS Rules. When we arrived at the CFMS show in Ventura in June, we showed the proposal to Cheri George (no relation), and she continued where Phyllis and her group left off. After Cheri got all the suggestions in order, Dee put it in "Rules speak." We hope the Uniform Rules Committee will look favorably on it and pass it at their meeting so we can begin having a Beading Section in the AFMS Rules Book next year, 2009. Watch for developments.

If you haven't made your reservations for the Convention and show in Humble, Texas, do so right away, otherwise you're going to miss something special "Texas-Style." The Houston Gem & Mineral Society puts on an annual show that is something to



behold. They have schools on a waiting list to attend their show on Friday, and this year isn't any different even though it will be a combined AFMS/SCFMS convention and show. For those of you who need some encouragement to have school children at your show, this event will open your eyes! I have been there personally in the past, and it is wondrous to see.

The events planned for the AFMS/SCFMS convention and show are outstanding. Your only problem is choosing which one because some overlap. You just can't pack all the things planned into such a short period, but they have certainly tried. My hat is off to Shiara Trumble who has been a personal go-between for everyone in the AFMS who needed help. And to Scott Singleton, HGMS Show Chair, a sincere thanks.

This year I have sent out "Alerts" from the Blue Ribbon Coalition to various regional federations and individuals and clubs, letting them know about proposed road closures. I would like to offer this service to the clubs. Send me your e-mail address, and I'll alert you to things happening in your area that are Forestry and BLM related. What I have planned is a network of e-mails of clubs so we can keep in contact. Your e-mail is important and a resource. If someone would like to take on a state and build a network within that state, let me know. Here in California we already have a loose network, but I'd like to see every club in California have a representative on the network. Till next month, Your President. *Shirley*

AFMS/SCFMS Show Activities

Excerpts from the article

Join Us for the Convention—September 25–28

by Shiara Trumble, HGMS AFMS/SCFMS Liaison

from AFMS Newsletter 9/2008

Just a note to remind all of you out there that the 2008 HGMS show is coming up really soon, including the AFMS and SCFMS meetings and special exhibits. We appreciate all that Federation membership brings our club, and we host this year's national show proudly. Here's a sneak preview of what you will be experiencing in Humble:

Fun and educational displays from the Rollin' Rock Club, ALAA, AFMS Endowment Fund, AFMS Conservation Committee, and AFMS Junior Activities including Rocks & Minerals; Earth Resources; Fossils; Lapidary Arts; Collecting; Showmanship; Communication; Field Trips; Leadership; Earth Processes; Earth in Space; Gold Panning and Prospecting; Gemstone Lore & Legend; Stone Age Tools and Art; Rocking on the Computer.

Also, the Texas Faceters' Guild will be displaying a large collection of replicas of world-famous diamonds cut by TFG members. Be sure to stop by these displays and learn more about each of the organizations and their activities.

Additional Show Activities: The annual Breakfast with the Editors is being held at the Humble City Café on Saturday morning, September 27 at 8:00 a.m. Join us for a

wonderful breakfast buffet and see your fellow rockhounds rewarded for their writing efforts.

The Awards Banquet is a barbecue this year, and it will be held Saturday night, September 27, at 7:00 p.m. in the Humble Convention Center's Hospitality Room. Scholarships, All-American Education awards, Program Competition awards, Competitive Case awards, and Endowment Fund drawing winners will be announced, and AFMS officers will be installed. CW Smokehouse and Catering will be cooking the barbecue in our parking lot, so come to the banquet and have some of that barbecue you'll be whiffing all day!

In addition to our club's silent auction held at the Information Booth throughout the show, there will be a silent auction to benefit the South Central Federation's Endowment Fund. This fund, similar to the AFMS Endowment Fund, supports various special projects and activities as voted on at the annual SCFMS meeting. Visit their table at the front of the HCC on the west side to see all the goodies they are offering for auction.

There will be a live auction to benefit the American Federation's Scholarship Fund, held in the Scout Room at the HCC on Friday, September 27 at 2:00 p.m. The auction will include items to satisfy many different audiences, so plan to be there at 2:00 to bid on some beautiful articles and support our Scholarship awards program.

The AFMS Endowment Fund representative for the SCFMS, Joyce Speed, will also be taking contributions for the AFMS Endowment Fund at the show. For each \$5 gift, Joyce will issue a ticket for the Endowment Fund Drawing for lovely donated items. The items may be viewed at the AFMS Web site: <www.amfed.org/endow2008.htm>.

There will also be **Field Trips** offered for attendees: First, a trip to **Whiskey Bridge** allows you to hunt for mid-Eocene invertebrate fossils. You can access a description of this field trip on our Web site: <www.hgms.org>, click on "2008 Show Registration" and scroll down to "Whiskey Bridge Locality Description."

On Sunday, September 28 at 10:30 a.m., we have **a trip planned to the Houston Museum of Natural Science** to see the world-renown gem and mineral collections and to view a special exhibit. The cost is usually around \$10 for the special exhibit, and is always a good value. More information will be placed on our Web site as it becomes available. Afterwards, those who wish may take a guided tour of the HGMS clubhouse with light refreshments available. You may also return directly to HCC rather than going to the clubhouse, if you wish.

For those who want to see the clubhouse and prefer a shorter trip that does not go to HMNS, there will be a tour of the clubhouse leaving directly from the HCC at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday.

If you have any questions, please call at 281-463-7954 or e-mail me at <Shiara.trumble@sbcglobal.net>. We're looking forward to seeing all of you in Humble this September.

SCFMS--The Safety Guy gets Busted!

by Owen Martin

SCFMS Safety Coordinator

from the SCFMS Newsletter 7–8/2008

Okay—so I know that I don't know everything there is to know about being safe. And that's not to say that I always practice what I preach, but on a recent field trip I was "caught in the act."

First for a little background: on a recent episode of *Myth Busters*, they looked at the myth about hammer heads exploding when one is banged against the other.

They were unsuccessful at recreating such an explosion, but based on the numerous accounts of such activities occurring, they did not totally discount the possibility of an explosion happening.

So a couple of months later I'm trying to dig an ammonite out of a limestone shelf. I was using one hammer as a chisel (bad!) and the other as the hammer, basically striking the head of one onto the other. That is when someone started hollering at me. Lo and behold, one of our Elder Statesmen walked up while pointing to a nice scar on his arm.

He explained that many years ago one of his college professors was doing exactly what I was doing, and the resulting explosion of one of the hammer heads resulted in the cut that left him the scar. And apparently some of the metal is still in his arm.

Proof in blood that the myth is actually a fact!

Having been duly chastised, I walked the short distance back to my bag and pulled out my chisel (yes, I did have one with me)!

Still never got that ammonite out though.

As the old saying goes, "Common sense is frequently an uncommon trait." And I am guilty as charged! Luckily no one was hurt, and I didn't break any of my gear.

Be Safe and Remember to **keep hydrated** this summer!

Tips and Hints

via *Chats and Chips*, 4/2007 and *The Rockpile* 7/2007

Editor's Note: *None of the following tips and hints have been tried by the editor. Use at your own risk. Always be cautious.*

To get a **good polish on gypsum spheres**, use an old pair of nylon pantyhose doubled up and stretched over the sphere cutter heads. Hold it in place with rubber bands. Polish with cerium oxide. Use the nylons to hand-polish sculptures after sanding with 1000 grit sandpaper. It also works for talc (soapstone) sculptures.

Rubbing alcohol removes most ink marks from slabs, cab blanks, or gem material. If that doesn't work, try denatured alcohol (alcohol lamp fuel). Clean up well afterwards so you and your materials don't catch on fire.



Many Hands Make for a Good Show

August 23, 2008

by Matt Dillon, Photographer

It takes many volunteers to accomplish all the work that goes into a successful gem and mineral show of the club variety. Our club members are among the best when it comes to getting the job done. These photos were taken at one of the volunteer work shops at HGMS on August 23, 2008. Lots of flyers were labeled and put into order for mailing. They also put together the many mineral sets to be given to the schools during the show. A lot of work and preparation had taken place in advance of this effort.

An assembly line makes the job of putting together packets and sets of small items a lot easier and less time-consuming. Mineral sets will be given out to the schools and scout groups along with the "Rock Cycle" information sheets. A grant from ConocoPhillips helps pay for the cost of materials going into the sets.



Pictures from the Pre-Show Party

September 6, 2008

Photos by Steve Blyskal



Left: Scott Singleton displays the badges that can be earned in the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America program

Below: The crowd lines up for dinner before the auction.



Auctioneer Sherman Trumble is assisted by Sigrid Stewart, recorder, and by Lorraine Singleton and friend, runners



Party attendees during the auction

It's Science!

via The Pegmatite, 4/2007 and The Rockpile 6/2007

After having dug to a depth of 1,000 meters last year, Scottish scientists found traces of copper wire dating back 1,000 years and came to the conclusion that their ancestors already had a telephone network more than 1,000 years ago.

Not to be outdone by the Scots in the weeks that followed, English scientists dug to a depth of 2,000 meters and shortly thereafter headlines in the UK newspapers read: "English archaeologists have found traces of 2,000 year old copper wire and have concluded that their ancestors already had an advanced high-tech communications network a thousand years earlier than the Scots."

One week later, Texas newspapers reported the following: "After digging as deep as 5,000 meters in West Texas, Texas A&M scientists have found absolutely nothing. They have therefore concluded that 5,000 years ago, Texas inhabitants were already using wireless technology."

New Safety Equipment Released

from The Rocky Reader, 4-5/2005, via The Rockpile 6/2008 and others

In a joint release today (1 April 2008) Graves, the manufacturer of lapidary equipment, and NASA, the U.S. Space Agency, announced the development of the Quarry Vest. The Quarry Vest is intended for use by both quarry workers and rockhounds and is a 10-pound vest studded with positional sensors. Using sophisticated electronics, the vest senses when the wearer is falling. In falls of greater than 10 meters, the vest deploys a series of air bags that cushion the wearer from impact. In preliminary trials, the air bags prevented serious injury or death in 95% of all cases. Side effects such as bruising, nausea, and religious conversion were uncommon. Graves expects to market the vest for \$350.00. In falls of less than 10 meters, the vest can be programmed to respond with one of several pithy sayings.

(You didn't believe this, did you?)

ShowTime 2008

October 4-5	Jacksonville, AR	Cent. Arkansas Gem, Mineral & Geology Soc. Jacksonville Commun. Center, 5 Municipal Dr. Pat Kissire, pkissire@sbcglobal.net www.centralarrockhound.org
October 9-11	Mount Ida, AR	World Champ. Quartz Crystals Digging Contest; Mount Ida Area Chamber of Commerce Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Fairgrounds Rd.; Maureen Walther, (870) 867-2723 www.mountidachamber.com director@mountidachamber.com
October 11-12	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic Center, 3303 N. 3rd St. Les Connally 254-939-7015; loconn@aol.com
October 17-19	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center, 2905 E. North St. Ken Lemke 361-575-5350; klemke@vctx.org
October 24-26	Austin, TX	Austin Gem & Mineral Society Palmer Events Center; 900 Barton Springs Rd. Susan Postlethwait, 512-458-9546 gemcapers@austin.rr.com
November 1-2	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center
November 7-9	Pascagoula, MS	Mississippi Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Soc. Civic Center Bldg, Jackson County Fairground Short Cut Road; John M. Wright 228-875-9192; osjbw@datasync.com
November 8-9	Round Rock, TX	Paleontological Society of Austin Fossil Fest 2008 at Old Settler's Park Next to the Dell Diamond; 512-422-2322 Linda McCall, www.texaspaleo.com Indmccall02@yahoo.com
November 8-9	Leesville, LA	DeRidder Gem & Mineral Society Beauregard Parish Exhibit Hall, next to Hwy 171 North; Adam Valin (337) 585-3693 and Dan Venazi (337) 463-9567
December 5-7	El Paso, TX	El Paso Mineral & Gem Society El Maida Auditorium, 6331 Alabama Jeanette Carrillo, (915) 533-7153 gemcenter@aol.com

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

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

The BACKBENDER'S

GAZETTE

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

10805 BROOKLET

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099

(281) 530-0942



SCFMS

1998 - 1st (Large)
2000 - 1st (Large)
2003 - 1st (Large)
2005 - 1st (Large)
2006 - 1st (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)



AFMS

1998 - 2nd (Large)
2004 - 3rd (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)



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