



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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April 2009



President's Message *by Terrell William "Terry" Proctor* *2009 HGMS President*

In the March 2009 President's Message, I was advised that I called the pending Legislation I discussed an "ominous" bill when I should have called it the "omnibus" bill. When I again mention what the Bill contained, you can determine whether I was indeed correct when I first called it the "ominous" bill.



On March 11 as I was writing this, my April President's Message, I sat at my computer awaiting word on the 111th Congress House of Representatives' vote on **S.22** which came up for a vote at 11:30 a.m. on that date.

Since the Speaker of the U.S. House wasn't allowing any amendments to the Bill, it took a 2/3rd vote to pass. **S.22 failed to pass.**

So fellow rockhounds, breathe a sigh of relief, but only for the moment as they will be back. To remind you, this Legislation would:

1. have required you to have a permit to collect on Federal Land;
2. if you intentionally or accidentally had a vertebrate fossil in your possession (*if you*

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General Meeting Programs

April 28, 2009 **Gemstone Inclusions—Good and Bad: Norman Lenz** will give a presentation on inclusions that sometimes can be found in faceted gems. He will be bringing an appraiser and a certified GIA member to answer more technical questions about some of the inclusions in precious gemstones to be viewed and described during the presentation.

For many years Norm and his wife Susan both were very active members in the club, but two years ago Susan was diagnosed with a brain tumor. They have been battling the situation and are now winning. This will be Norman (and Susan's) first return to a General Meeting during that time, and many of their good friends will want to see them.

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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 \$40 for an adult membership, \$60 for a couple, \$75 for a family (including all children aged 5-18), \$25 for a youth membership (ages 5-18), and \$500 for an adult life membership. Advertising rates: \$70 for 2 months, ¼ page; \$150 for 6 months, ¼ page.

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

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

President's Message continued from page 1

brought it in from elsewhere, YOU have to prove that it came from elsewhere; the Government does not have to prove you picked it up on Federal Land), that subjects you to the Government Land Officials who could:

- a. confiscate your vehicle and everything else you had there;
- b. levy against you a large fine; and
- c. send you to the Federal Penitentiary.

Furthermore, if you misidentified a vertebrate fossil (and what expert paleontologist hasn't done so as some time), you could be prosecuted and punished the same as if you were collecting on Federal lands. S.22 provided that if you possessed a vertebrate fossil, then you had the burden to show when and where you collected that fossil and to prove your innocence. The Federal Government didn't have the burden to prove you guilty, you had to prove your innocence. A terrible piece of legislation. (Didn't they ever hear of the Constitution?)

Our thanks go to Houston U.S. Congressman John Culberson and his staff for working so hard on our side to defeat this Bill. Thanks to any and all of you who took the time and effort to contact your Senators and U.S. Representative to ask them to vote against the Bill. Both Texas Senators voted against the S.22 but it passed the Senate. The House has now stopped it, but undoubtedly it will raise its ugly head again and try to restrict you from safely being a Rockhound. Please stay tuned, and be ready to again go to your elected officials when this measure comes up again. Thank you ALL.

Speaking of going on field trips, HGMS had an amazing field trip to the Lake Rayburn Dam/Jasper, Texas area for a Oligocene fossil wood trip February 28. Thanks to our friend and Jasper Gem & Mineral Club member , Ron Ducote, who made this restricted timber land location available to us for only \$5.00 per person. We had an amazing 61 HGMS members and guides show up for this dig. Unbelievable. This may take the prize for the largest turnout for one field trip in HGMS history. There was certainly enough great fossil wood to go around. Several of our members went at it heavy duty with dollies, tarps, ropes *et al*, and they took out sizeable logs or stumps. We will probably need to increase our budget for diamond saw blades to cut up all that wood (I know the Paleo Section people are shuddering at the thought of cutting up wonderful fossil specimens).

At the March 3 Board of Directors Meeting, I presented a map of the Harris County area cut into seven districts. You may recall that the Board has gone along with the concept of expanding the educational and public awareness program for HGMS. I proposed that we ask you, our over 700 members, to volunteer to start having programs for youth and adults in various parts of Harris County several times a year , maybe monthly, every two months, or quarterly. At these meetings which we could hold perhaps in Libraries, Schools, Pizza Parlors, or whatever , we would put on programs about Earth Science and perhaps show films or have HGMS members do some Show and Tell with real dinosaur bones, jewelry made by members, and on and on.

I have contacted my church with the idea of providing a room where HGMS could come set up a saw, grinders etc. a couple of times a year and let kids learn how to use our equipment. Subject to the Church's Trustees approval, the United Methodist Men have given me their approval to go forward with this.

Now give us your ideas, your availability, your interest, and your suggestions. We need about 35 to 70 HGMS members (5 to 10 in each of the 7 Districts) to help with this project. Some on the Board suggested this might be the start of satellite HGMS groups around the County who could have other meetings regularly, but being HGMS members, they would still be part of HGMS and have access to HGMS facilities as HGMS members. We need to take to many outlying areas of Harris County and into Greater Houston areas our information about Earth Science and geological knowledge, information about HGMS and what we are, what we do, and what we are wanting to accomplish. The more folks who know about us and the good work we do, the more people will want to be HGMS members and help us with our Charter goals and education.

The HGMS Board has agreed to put together an Orientation Program for new members. It will be held on one or two days once or twice a year. We will have a handout on what HGMS is and has available; we will make our goals and our rules and regulations known; we will tell about the great Educational program we have going on; and we will describe the facilities we have available for members and what we expect of members in looking out for our clubs assets and reputation and many other things. Each Section will have a chance to briefly address the new members about what each Section offers, along with information on the Backbender's Gazette, contests, the Show, and many other things. Each Section is asked to prepare a brief presentation and submit it so we can keep the time frame such that we can cover everything needed without any one segment taking too much time and cutting others out. Also we need a submission from each Section that goes into the printed material to be handed out to new members and probably into a brochure for prospective members as well.

One thing more: HGMS now belongs to TANO (Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations). As a member we have available to us information on grant writing and many other benefits. We will be putting together a team to start writing grants for HGMS. If you know of an organi-

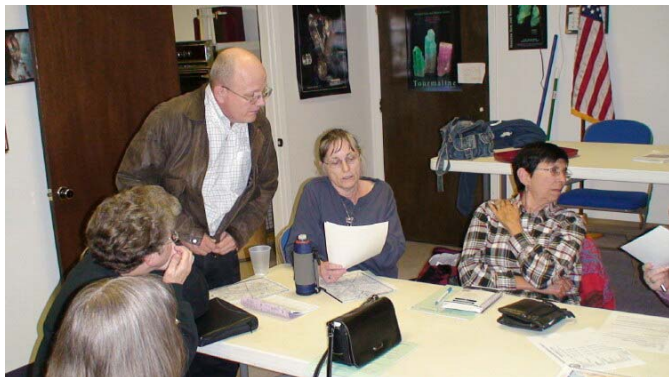


Photo: Some HGMS Board members working on HGMS business for the membership at the March 3, 2009 Board Meeting.

zation with funds to give as grants, please let me know so we can write a proposal to them.

On all of the things set out in this column you may contact me, Terry Proctor, by e-mail at auraman@swbell.net or by phone to my law office (713) 453-8338 or by FAX (713) 453-3232 or write me at my law firm, T. W. Proctor & Associates, 630 Uvalde Road, Houston, Texas 77015-3766. We need a lot of volunteers, and I believe you will find that these things are fun and rewarding and make you even prouder to be a member of The Houston Gem & Mineral Society.

Program Information *continued from page 1*

May 26, 2009 Nathalie Brandes—Rock Sars, Pioneers of Earth Science: Nathalie will discuss the lives of notable people who studied geology, from ancient Greece to Victorian times, and show how their thoughts influence our modern understanding of the earth. She says there are some REAL characters in geology!

Nathalie Nicole Brandes bio : She earned her B.S. and M.S. in geology from New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, also earning minors in history and biology. She did her Ph.D. work at Michigan Technological University. She taught at Michigan Tech, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, University of Nevada Las Vegas, and currently is a professor of geoscience at Montgomery College. She's also lectured at Oxford University and worked as an advisor for the National Science Foundation. She says she can't seem to find a research focus because she finds all sorts of geology interesting. At various times she has worked on volcanoes, rift system geology, regional geology of the Colorado Plateau, economic geology and currently finds herself looking at geoarchaeology and climate change. She is a professional member of the Geological Society of America; Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration; Institute on Lake Superior Geology; and the New Mexico Geological Society.

June 23, 2009 Neal Immega on Diamonds at HMNS?

Education is Alive and Well at HGMS

by Brian Honsinger

During the month of March we had three jewelry-making classes on two skill levels going on for a total of 16 students at one time. There has been a bumper crop of learning going on at HGMS, and ten new wire wrap students have trained already this year. By the end of March, we will have 12 new graduates from Beginning Jewelry Making. Hopefully some of those will want to progress on to the intermediate level as four have already done this March.

We are about to offer a wire ring and bracelet course to qualified wire wrappers. I have two persons wanting a third wire wrapping class so they might qualify for the ring class. I am looking for a few more students to fill that class at present. Cost is only \$135.00 for three Sunday afternoons of three hours each.

March 22 from Noon to 6:00 p.m. we had the new course in Beginning Enameling. Because of the interest expressed, we are planning another very soon. It is only one day and \$90.00 for a real bargain.

Rikki Mitman is teaching a completely new HGMS course—glass bead making. Yes, that is right, bead people. You will be able to make your own glass beads in the color, shape, texture, and size you want. This is an introductory course, and Rikki will be teaching it three hours a night for three consecutive Thursday nights. The tentative time is 6:30–9:30 p.m., and the instructor can handle up to six students. This class needs to be scheduled very soon—before the weather gets hot—since six torches going at that heat level in our jewelry room may generate more heat than our AC can handle during the summer. To see some of the beads that will be made in the class, go to <http://www.hgms.org> and click on the Class Descriptions button. Scroll down to NEW COURSE—Introductory Glass Bead Making, and click on the “Click here” link.

The cost is slightly higher because of the unique nature of the class, so a pair of safety tinted glasses is required essential equipment, and they cost \$45.00 each. That is the entire budgeted cost of material for a class of that length, so a surcharge of \$20.00 covers the additional required materials.

This glass bead-making process requires that our small torches be turned up to the point where they produce a UV-level light that WILL burn and damage your eyes. Our members must be made aware of the danger, so they will not look at this ongoing process while working in the same room on other projects. People will be safe if they do not look directly at the process, and we ask that members trained in this process caution anyone around not to watch them work.

The course cost is \$135.00 plus the \$20.00 surcharge for a total of \$155 covering both the course and the kits each student will use during the class. You will own your glasses and a few tools after the course.

Tom Wright and I are both ready for a mold-making course and then a casting class. Molten metal is where the action is!

Let's get educated! Put down a \$25.00 check to reserve a spot in a class. Use the Shop payment bucket; I will put an envelope and signup sheet in there. The shop is open every Wednesday and Saturday 10:00–5:00, so you can drop by then to get your check in. Check out the color picture of the beads on our Web site.

If you have any questions or need any information, please contact me at texbay@sbcglobal.net.

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

Fourteen members attended the 9 March, 2009 Day Light Section meeting.

I have some great news to announce. Professor Val Link will direct our summer program during the months of July, August, and September. We will be making stamps out of steel bit stock rods.

We will use 3/8 and 1/4 inch rods. There will be more about the supplies later.

At our March meeting we started on the concha belt project, and we are practicing on 24-gauge copper before starting on the silver. We will work on this project probably for the next two months.

Mineral Section

by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson & Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson

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

Upcoming Meeting Topics

April 1: Tucson Mineral Oddities and Miscellaneous Tucson 2009 pictures. Dean Lagerwall will show pictures from the Mineral Oddities exhibits at the recent Tucson Gem & Mineral Gem Show. Refreshments will be provided.

April 15: American Corundum. Will Heierman will talk on the various corundum localities in America. The earliest commercial corundum mining was almost entirely for abrasives. Later gems were discovered in North Carolina and Montana, resulting in expansion into the instrument bearing and jewelry markets. Mineral collecting was not a big deal, but a few "lunch pail" specimens were saved and have found their way into institutional or private collections. Although many of these classic localities are now extinct, there are these old rocks to remember them by. Others are still producing, and new discoveries are being made all the time. Historical remarks, images of specimens, and the current state of affairs will be the central themes. More details to follow. Refreshments will be provided.

May 6: Auction: Specimens from HGMS members will be auctioned, and a portion of the proceeds goes to the Mineral Section. This is the same auction format used during the past few years; please read the accompanying announcement for further details. Refreshments will be provided.

May 20: Houston Fine Minerals Show Review. Bring in your recent acquisitions from the Houston Fine Mineral Show (May 1–May 3). Let us drool over your acquisitions. Refreshments will be provided.

June 3: Swap Night: Back by popular demand, we will have a Swap Night where excess material from our collections can be bought/sold/swapped. This is an informal event and will be held inside. All Sections are invited to participate and swap. Setup is from 7:00 to 7:30, and the formal meeting will be kept to a minimum to allow ample time for specimen exchange and socializing. Refreshments will be provided.

If you have any topics or ideas you wish to have presented or would be willing to present at our Mineral Section meetings, please contact Dean at dean_lagerwall@yahoo.com or (979) 480-9373.

Auction Format

by Dean Lagerwall

On Wednesday, May 6 at 7:30 p.m., the Mineral Section will be having its annual auction to help raise money for the Section. Once again, we are inviting ALL HGMS members to bring specimens to the auction, and they will be able to keep a portion of the proceeds. The proceeds of at least one of the specimens (your choice) must be donated to the Section. Five additional specimens are allowed for each person with a portion of each specimen (10%) going to the Section and the rest going

to the donator.

This is a great way for HGMS members to thin out their duplicate specimens and to benefit both yourself and the Mineral Section. You can put a minimum bid on the more expensive pieces if you desire. Since this event will draw from all Sections, expect a variety of items to be auctioned and a very interesting and entertaining event. Set-up and viewing is from 7:00 to 7:30 with bidding beginning at 7:45.

If you have any questions, call Dean at (979) 480-9373.

April Paleo Meeting

Come One! Come All! Paleo Geography of the Paleozoic

by Lexy Bieniek

Do you happen to remember a guy named John Mofitt? Well, he served as our Paleo Chair on four separate occasions. Normally John just tells us all about trilobites, but on April 21 he will speak about the Paleo Geography of the Paleozoic. The meeting format will be adjusted to allow John to speak early in the meeting. We will begin the meeting at 7:30 with a short show and tell. John will start his talk at 7:45.

Don't forget the Paleo Steering committee meeting 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 26, at the clubhouse.

Huge Turn Out for February 28, 2009 Jasper Area Fossil Wood Trip

by Terry Proctor

On February 28 the HGMS Paleo Section sponsored a trip to the Lake Rayburn Dam/Jasper, Texas area to dig Oligocene fossil wood. This was made available by our friend and Jasper Gem & Mineral Club member, Ron Ducote. Ron formerly worked for the Timber Company which currently owns this property and also for its predecessors. The fee for this trip was \$5.00 per person, and the collecting was done from about 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. along a stream that runs through the property.

The turnout for this trip may have set a record for an out-of-town field trip since there were 61 folks who showed up to collect the lovely hard fossil wood at this location. Several of our HGMS members didn't settle for just small pieces of fossil wood but went after stumps and logs with heavy-duty equipment such as dollies, tarps, ropes etc. Also on this trip, besides the great fossil wood, I found some huge pine cones that I understand came from Long Needle Pines. On the trail down to the stream, I saw red spots on the ground which looked like blood. I didn't stop at the time to try to find out what they were, but later I was told by a lady who is an HGMS member that they were carnivorous plants, which Neal Immega confirmed. They have a red surface, and I was advised that they have a sticky substance on top that catches small critters (maybe ants). So I also brought back some to see if I can get them to grow in Houston.

I predict that there will be an increase in the use of our Shop in the near future by the many folks who picked up such good petrified wood with the intent to cut and polish same (in spite of the acid indigestion this may give many of the Paleo people, who

think it is a sin to cut into a fossil). Many of us stopped at the Stump restaurant before leaving the area and partook of the buf fet fare which included absolutely sumptuous barbecued brisket and ribs.

Anyone who thinks rock-hounding is going out of fashion should have been on this great trip and seen the enthusiasm of such a lar ge turnout to a location some distance from Houston. Keep paying attention to announcements of future field trips by our various HGMS Sections. Join the fun.

Jasper Area Fossil Wood Trip Photos

Photos by Steve Blyskal



Above: Mike Dawkins and
Scott Singleton



Above: Sunday Bennett
Below: John Cooper



Left: Bob Fischer



The Entire Jasper Fossil Wood Trip Group!

Earth Science Week's High Island Field Trip for Mammoths!

by Martha McRae

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

On February 22, 2009, members of Houston Geological Society (HGS) and Houston Gem and Mineral Society (HGMS) finally were able to go on the Earth Science Week's free, public High Island field trip that was cancelled last October due to Hurricane Ike. Over 50 people attended including HGS members, HGMS members, professors, instructors, students, and interested families. We had a large participation from three local universities: College of the Mainland, Lamar University, and St. Thomas University. Everyone learned about the local salt domes, hydrocarbon production in the area, beach and storm processes, the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, and the big activity of the day—collecting Pleistocene fossils from the Beaumont Formation. Hurricane Ike cleaned most of the sand dunes of the beach, exposing large expanses of the Beaumont Shale.

With the north wind blowing the water out and low tide, the conditions were perfect for finding the 2–10 million year old bison and mammoth bones exposed near the beach front.

We set up base camp on the beach where Hwy 87 and Hwy 124 intersect just south of the small town of High Island, and we had group discussions about the salt dome and hydrocarbon production in the area. Several subsurface maps and cross-sections described the hydrocarbon traps and structure. Neal Immega brought a sample piece of core from the High Island field showing the cap rock with sulfur deposits. We could look across the highway and see the ring of pump jacks surrounding the small town of High Island which sits atop the salt dome. High Island is the highest point on the upper Texas gulf coast, and it is a little over 40 feet above sea level. We all agreed that it still was not a place where we would want to be during a storm.



Beaumont Formation pump jacks

Dr. Donald Owen of Lamar University brought a composite air photo of a large section of Bolivar Peninsula showing Hurricane Ike's affect on the shoreline. We discussed the obvious wash-over channels cut into the landscape and talked about the channel fan



Group Presentation

deposits on the beach side. These were created when the water from the storm surge started returning to the sea. We couldn't help but also notice the destruction of homes and property done by the storm. We looked at the USGS Web site aerial photos from before

and after the storm, and they showed dune material being eroded from the beach and deposited in the lagoon.

With most of the sand dunes gone, it was easy to drive along the beach and see the exposed Beaumont Formation. The salt dome has pushed up the underlying layers of rock and exposed the Pleistocene Beaumont shale for several miles along this beach. This dark brown mud is very distinctive from the typical beach sand seen on Galveston and Bolivar. This mud contains well-preserved bison and mammoth teeth and bones.

After a brief introduction of what to look for, everyone headed out with buckets and shovels and went fossil hunting along the beach. Some of the early arrivals that morning began looking for fossils before we got there, and they found a whole bison leg bone.



Joe Coker's 8-lb. Mammoth Tooth

That of course got everyone excited. Not nearly as exciting, in fact very common but still worthwhile, were the fossilized worm burrows and iron oxide concretions that everyone was able to find, so everyone found something. After about three hours, the die-hard collectors came wandering back to base camp with some real prizes to share and identify. Several bison leg bone fragments were found plus a 4-inch horse tooth and a well-intact bison tooth. Joe Coker had the big find of the day—a mammoth tooth weighing around 8 lbs—found right at the shoreline about two miles down the beach from base camp.



Horse tooth,
Bison bone

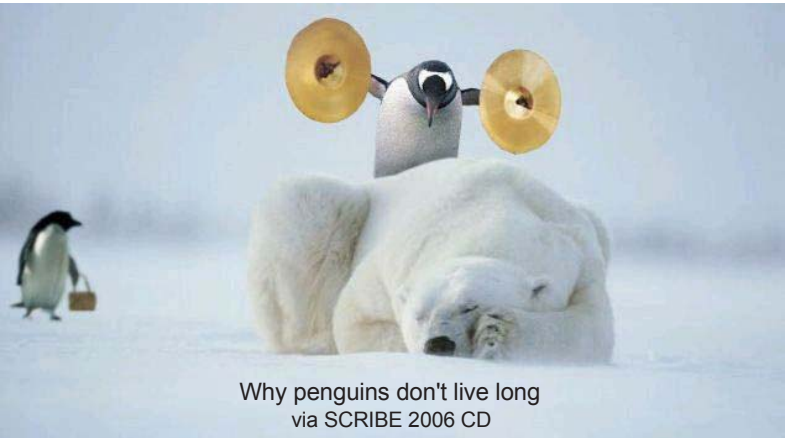
Bison tooth

Worm Burrows

As in most successful and fun geology field trips, the day was filled with many impromptu discussions ranging from possible causes for the massive destruction of property behind the geotube to the best way to tell what is a fossilized worm burrow and not recent dog poop without picking it up. We couldn't have asked for better weather: calm north wind, clear blue skies, and temperatures reaching the low 70s. All in all, this was a wonderful trip filled with great hands-on geology and some pretty fantastic fossil finds. And just think, all of this is right in our own back yard.



Mammoth tooth up close



Why penguins don't live long
via SCRIBE 2006 CD

2009 AFMS National Show Update

by Will Heierman

Special Exhibits Coordinator

Many of you know I live just a few miles from our HGMS clubhouse, but I escape to spend a month or so each summer digging for gold and sapphires in Montana. This means I am uniquely fortunate when it comes to big rock events. The sequel to the National Show (which we hosted last year) is in Billings, Montana this year, and I am the show's "Special Exhibits Coordinator" for 2009.

The show runs from July 30 through August 2, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Trade Center in Billings. There is a showWeb page at URL<http://www.amfed.org/nfms/nfmsshow.htm> where we will be publishing developments as they take shape, and you may contact me at williamh@wcjc.edu or wheierman@corunduminum.com for up-to-the-minute details.

We will have some really interesting special exhibits, including not one but two Moon rocks (one is from NASA, and the other you will have to see to believe). Already committed are killer Montana sapphire and agate showcases, fossils, gold, and numerous other fine special displays, with more to come I am sure. I will be exhibiting the best of our World-wide corundum collection, including the suite of specimens that appeared in the recent Supplement to the Mineralogical Record magazine.

Bill and Lois Patillo graciously accepted our invitation to display their Rock Food table once I told them about the amygdaloidal potatoes, golden crunchies, and Missouri River raisins they could add to their other "incredible inedibles"!

In addition, many collectors and dealers will be putting in their own showcases. The show will provide a great chance to see some of the finest mineral specimens and to acquire a few from our international cadre of dealers. Many of them are from the Northwest (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, Alaska, and Montana), and do not make it to Texas—and did I mention there is no sales tax in Montana?

There will be a speaker program, but it is just in its infancy so let me report on that later. A really outstanding feature will be a series of field trips following the show (August 3-10), including sapphire jigging at Gem Mountain, agate hunting along the Yellowstone River, one to the secretive "Sillwater Complex" platinum/palladium mine smelter, fossil, and petrified wood hunting here and there, and maybe even a gold mining and sluicing "forty-niner for a day" gambit (if this happens, it will be restricted to about ten participants, so please let me know right away if you are interested).

I will be driving my full-size Tundra pickup to Montana, departing around July 14, so if you have anything to contribute to our displays, auctions, or other activities, you have a willing assistant and free freight back and forth (but please, no apatasaurus skeleta).

If you can come and join the party that would be even better! I hope to see many of you there—drop by my "Earth Treasures" booth and say "Howdy!"

General Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2009

by Regina Gorman, Secretary

Home: 281-829-6116; r4regina@gmail.com

Terry proctor called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

Matt Dillon moved to approve the Minutes of the January General Meeting. Karen Burns seconded the motion, and they were approved by unanimous vote.

Terry Proctor recognized visitors Ric and Mirtha Marohn and also Mr. John Rowland who presented the Program

Membership: Beverly Mace reported that Membership Renewal letters were sent out.

There was no Treasurer's Report as Rodney Linehan was not in attendance.

Programs: Matt Dillon reported that he has lined up programs for March, April, and May. March 24 Sam Stubbs will present a program on handling inherited collections. April 28 Norman Lentz has agreed to enlighten us with a program on faceted gems and gemstone inclusions. Also, in May Natalie Brandes, a geologist who presented a very spirited program last year, will appear. She will let us know the topic later.

Show: Steve Blyskal reported that Conoco-Phillips denied our request for the annual \$2,500 for school collections. Kathy Ferris, Conoco-Phillips employee, is working on getting the money through an alternate division of Conoco.

Shop: Neal Immega reported that the shop now had two new 18" diamond blades.

Clubhouse: Matt Dillon announced that on Sunday, March 15, a Swap Meet will be held in the Club parking lot from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. There is no conflict with members bringing items to the Swap. It's on a "first-come-first-serve" basis. People bring items and equipment to swap that they think would be of value or interest to others in attendance. A saw will be there. People from the Austin Club are also invited. HGMS receives no proceeds from the Swap Meet. The people sponsoring the meet rent the Club's parking lot.

Clearlake Show: Sigrid Stewart reported that the Clearlake Show at the Pasadena Convention Center was a success, and HGMS had a good turnout of volunteers working at our table. Also, a good number of HGMS members were spotted enjoying the show. Our 2009 Show Flyers were ready and set out at our table, on the Clearlake table, and a supply was given to each of the Dealers. Sigrid received very good feedback about our Show date change to November. The Dealers really liked it. Sigrid is now asking for volunteers for our 2009 Show. Terry Proctor expressed appreciation to the HGMS members who attended the Clearlake Show.

Section Reports

Lapidary Section: Mary Ann Mitscherling reminded the membership that the Lapidary Section meets on the 3rd Monday of each month. Karen Burns is bringing her

earring designs to the next meeting, and attendees will make a set of earrings.

Scott Singleton heard via the Internet from people who recently returned from Peru and collected many interesting rocks and other things.

Library: Art Smith may bring any remaining VHS tapes to our show and get rid of them there. Terry Proctor will bring some back to be copied. Sigrid Stewart added that home schoolers may want some of the videos, also.

BBG: Copy for the next BBG is due, as always, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month. This month that would be March 11.

Paleontology Section: Neal Immega reminded the group that the Brownwood Field Trip will be held March 19–22. He will e-mail the details very soon. Scott Singleton announced that people who are planning to go on the Jasper Field Trip on Saturday, February 28 to collect fossil wood specimens should meet at 9 a.m. Saturday at The Stump Store and Restaurant near the Dam on Sam Rayburn Reservoir.

Old Business

Terry Proctor opened a discussion on finding sites in Harris County and surrounding areas to present educational programs. Sunday Bennett reported that a Chick Fil-A on Hwy. 99 close to her residence has been hosting informal educational programs and displays in the restaurant, and the response is very positive. She mentioned they had been “swamped” with customers. Terry asked Sunday to write an article about it to be published in the BBG

Mary Ann Mitscherling announced that the Show ‘n Tell specimen that went missing during last month’s meeting was found.

New Business

Show and Tell: Nancy and Bob Fischer brought a Brazilian glass pendant and a beautiful stained glass window created from agates.

John Mitscherling brought specimens from his beautiful collection of polished “Wiped Hearts.”

Sunday Bennett showed off her find from the recent High Island/Boliver Field Trip. It was 1/3 of a bison (mammoth) tooth she found in the Beaumont Clay.

Door Prize: Beverly Mace conducted the drawing for the door prize—four specimens of agate and crazy lace were donated by John Anderson. Mary Ann Mitscherling won the door prize and will bring next month’s Door Prize.

Beverly Mace asked for volunteers to please sign-up to bring snacks for attendees to enjoy at meeting breaks.

Program: Spheres and Sphere Making presented by John Rowland

John Rowland has been making spheres for a good number of years. His presentation included all aspects of turning rocks into beautiful polished spheres. He started with

where to find and how to spot the best raw material. He gave us detailed information, showing how to recognize an individual rock's potential. By passing around samples of rocks, we could see each step in the process that converts a rock into a sphere. He also spoke about the equipment he designs, produces, and sells and the equipment he recommends for each application.

HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2009

by Regina Gorman, Secretary

Home: 281-829-6116; r4regina@gmail.com

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Wayne Barnett
X	1 st Vice President	Matt Dillon	X	Lapidary Rep.	Phyllis George
X	2 nd Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	Mineral Rep.	Denise Bicknell
X	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan	X	Paleontology Rep.	Rick Rexroad
X	Secretary	Regina Gorman	X	Day Light Rep.	Nancy Fischer
X	Beading Rep.	Diane Sisson	X	2009 Show Chair	Sigrid Stewart



Iso in attendance were Seve Blyskal, Mineral Section Chair and Sigrid Stewart, 2009 Show Chair

A quorum was present, and President Terry Proctor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Barnett moved that the February 6, 2009 Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting be accepted as printed in the Backbender's Gazette (BBG). Phyllis George seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan introduced Farrar Stockton who has been an HGMS member for many years and is active in the Mineral Section. Mr. Stockton had been asked to review the Club's bank statements and financial reports for the previous three years: 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Review: Mr. Stockton expressed his thanks to Rodney for doing such a fine job as Treasurer and remarked that HGMS was lucky to have someone as diligent and knowledgeable as Rodney to handle the financial duties of Treasurer. Mr. Stockton did a three-year recap on the balances in each category for 2008 bank statements and reviewed all signatures for late 2007 and all of 2008. The Paleo Section's Certificate of Deposit had rolled-over upon maturity but no documentation was found. He reviewed the Deposits with recaps of revenue and verified codes and deposits where split. He reviewed all checks and the recap of expenses. He found no problems or discrepancies in his review, and stated that all bank statements and recaps and financial reports and summaries reflected excellent documentation.

Suggestions: in the future, the expenses requested should be well documented in more detail before checks are written. Also, the year-end statement balance should reflect a break-out on the deposits.

The following is a list of needs and hot topics that should be addressed:

1. Director's Liability
2. Building Liability
3. E-mail BBG instead of printing hardcopies
4. Reduce the number of Categories (Training period for other HGMS Treasurer candidates could become a problem.)

Beading: Diane Sisson reported that the Section was doing fine—no concerns to report.

Day Light: Nancy Fischer reported their current project is making Concha belts, and everything is going very well.

Faceting: Wayne Barnett announced that a Faceting Seminar is scheduled for Sunday March 22 from 12 noon to 5 p.m.

Mineral: Denise Bicknell reported that all is fine for the Section.

Paleontology: Rick Rexroad reminded the Board that the Brownwood Field Trip is scheduled for March 19–22. Terry Proctor, Sigrid Stewart, and Steve Blyskal discussed their finds and experiences from the Jasper Field Trip held the previous Saturday. Steve also reported that Art Smith is doing very well after his recent surgery. Phyllis George asked him to write an article for the BBG reporting Art's progress. Terry reported that Tom Wright is also doing well.

BBG: Articles and items to appear in the April 2009 BBG are due March 11, 2009.

Web site: Phyllis George reported that Infinology, host for the HGMS Web site shows that we are using only one-quarter of the total amount of space available to us. (Sigrid should have no worries about space needed to update Show information.) The Web site has around 3600 pages. Phyllis reported that she is currently building a Web site for Cornerstone Place Homeowners Association since she is on their board. For now, she is building it on the HGMS account space since there is so much additional room. As soon as the Cornerstone site needs more than one page, the Homeowners Association will purchase their own account from Infinology and the Cornerstone site will be moved to the new account. Phyllis asked the Board if they had a problem with the situation, and Terry and Wayne agreed that it was not a problem. Phyllis is learning to use Dreamweaver, software used to maintain Web sites. It was one of the ten software titles bundled in the Adobe Creative Suite CS3 recently purchased for her by HGMS.

Shop: Wayne Barnett reported that all is well in the shop.

Show Committee: Sigrid Stewart passed out an Amended Budget Spreadsheet and suggested that more flyers be printed. She reported that Patty Scott suggested we market the show for Christmas with emphasis on decorations, jewelry, etc. She mentioned that the HGMS made a very good appearance at the Clear Lake Show. Southwest Gem and Mineral invited us to bring our flyers to their March 27 Show where they would be handed out.

Sigrid is checking advertising rates at the Chronicle. They've been prohibitively expensive in the past, but in today's economic situation, their prices now might be much more reasonable. Nancy Fischer reported that the 2009 demographic questions are printed on the grand prize drawing forms. Wayne Barnett moved that the 2009 Show Budget be approved as amended and as submitted. The motion was seconded by Beverly Mace and was passed by unanimous vote.

Education: Wayne Barnett talked to Brian Honsinger, Education Chair, and he was pleased with the number of students attending the various classes, especially the Jewelry Class.

Clubhouse Maintenance: Terry Proctor reported that batteries have been replaced in the clock on the meeting room wall, so it now works. Matt Dillon reported that the stop blocks are still in progress. Also, Terry Proctor placed a sign on the outside of the refrigerator door reminding the membership that all drinks are \$.50 each—even during parties. The small sign inside is not adequate.

Building Fund: Terry Proctor inquired about the cost of opening a new account for the Building Fund and reported that HGMS was considered a commercial customer and would get no discounted rate. He suggested that Credit Unions might charge less than banks.

Scholarship Fund: Terry Proctor reported that funds were moved to the Scholarship Fund, including the Christmas Dinner Auction proceeds of \$1,496.

TANO Membership: Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations has the information we need on how to write and apply for a grant. A check has been mailed to TANO for the HGMS membership fee.

Door Boxes: Project completed.

Programs: Matt Dillon announced that Sam Stubbs will speak during our March 24 General Meeting on legal options for disposing of inherited collections. Sam will speak on trilobites in a later program. Norman Lenz will speak on Gemstone Inclusions—Good and Bad for the April 28 meeting, and Nathalie Brandeis, the Geology Professor from last year, has agreed to do another program for our May 26 meeting. Matt plans to approach NASA for commitment to a presentation. Nancy Fischer suggested that Sharon Choens might be an interesting speaker as there is a very good basic geology program at San Jacinto College.

Outreach and Expansion Project: Terry Proctor presented a map of Harris County and surrounding areas divided into the seven areas that would each be targeted for the presentation of educational programs, films and discs from our library, or demonstrations and/or displays in local libraries and local restaurants where families go. Sigrid Stewart suggested taking a laptop that would download the new member orientation that is being created and using the opportunity to solicit new members. She also suggested outfitting a van with a portable shop. A brainstorming discussion ensued with ideas about the pros and cons of conducting meetings and presentations in outlying

neighborhoods versus using the one large clubhouse with equipment, a library, and many other amenities.

Beverly Mace announced that Gayle Bowie in Bandera had about 11,000 tons of rock to sell. The Austin and Fredericksburg Clubs along with HGMS might like to schedule a weekend for interested members to see Gayle's collection.

As there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned by the President at 9:10 p.m.

AFMS President's Message

It's Showtime!

by Joy Bourne, AFMS President

from AFMS Newsletter 03/2009

After our horrendous Winter this year with altogether too much ice and snow I am not sure if we should follow the admonition given to Julius Caesar to "Beware the Ides of March"—but I do know for sure that March marks the opening of the Rock & Mineral Club Show Season in the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania and Southern Tier of New York. And we are all looking forward to our own Che-Hanna Rock & Mineral Club Show which traditionally is the first in our area. The dealers are all signed up; geodes have been obtained for the Che-Hanna Cut-ups to set up their saws, and the members of our workshop classes are already at work making cab preforms and dopping them up for the Juniors' hands-on booth at the show.

Shows have always been an important part of Rock & Mineral club activities. Rockhounds like to show off their finds, and before long, rather than just bringing their finds to the meetings to show off, someone had the great idea of having a special "Show" to which the public could be invited just for the purpose. (I think they really wanted to have time for the club business meetings and program). Of course, the swapping of rocks was soon augmented by the dealer trade, and before we knew it we were in the era of draped tables, wholesale sections in the sales floor, and Uniform Rules judging of competitive exhibits.

We met so many interesting rockhounds at shows in those early days; everyone had a bigger and better place to hunt for rocks—and all locations were freely shared. I recall we were directed to the fabulous green apatite in orange calcite location at Otter Lake, Quebec by a rockhound we met tailgating outside a show in the Auto Auction barn in Nedrow, NY in about 1969. His specimens were absolutely beautiful, and we decided to find the place for ourselves. So we got the directions, packed up the camper and our five kids plus one nephew, and started out. What a wonderful week we had! Years later, we learned that we had been collecting in the now-infamous Yates Uranium Mine. We still have several magnificent specimens on our shelves and boxes of specimens in the cabin on the hill.

We still meet warm, friendly, and sharing people at shows, and it does not matter whether we meet them on a dig, at a club meeting, a local, regional, or Federation show—if they are rockhounds, they are a special breed!

Hope to see you at one or more of the Regional Federation Shows this summer—CFMS: San Jose, CA, in April; MWF: Parma, OH in May; NFMS/AFMS: Billings, MT in July-August, EFMLS: Bristol, CT in October, SCFMS: Temple, TX in October, and RMFMS: Roswell, NM in October (*Editor's Note: SCFMS and RMFMS were not listed in the original article because at that time they had not been scheduled.*) I'll be looking forward to meeting you! Joy

Stonehenge Geology Resolved

by Alan Goldstein

via Rockhounds@drizzle.com and *Gem Cutters News* 2/2009

There is an interesting article in the current issue of *Earth* magazine (Dec. 2008) (formerly *GeoTimes*) about the geology of Stonehenge. It answers the question about the source of the rocks, focusing primarily on the massive bluestones.

It turns out that while it is true that the bluestone's source is 400 km WNW, they were carried **by glaciers** to the Salisbury Plain. Prehistoric people did not magically drag them all that distance. It also turns out the Neolithic structure is made from 20 different types of rock from multiple locations, something to be expected when selecting glacial erratics over a large area.

The article gives strong evidence showing the boulders were "trained" by glacier movement; that is, the motion of glacial lobes kept the bluestone from being fanned out all over the place. They give an example of a similar glacial deposit in Alberta in front of the Rockies. There are erratics ten times larger than those at Stonehenge out in the middle of nowhere. They are found in a linear pattern stretching for dozens to hundreds of kilometers from the source.



The bluestone was not a particularly "sacred" stone, contrary to what has been written about it for so many years. It was a favorite rock of the Neolithic people because it was readily carvable. Many stone axes and stone celts made of the same rock

have been found. Smaller bluestone rocks have been found in archaeological sites in the region that are even older than Stonehenge.

As to why the Salisbury Plain is devoid of glacial erratics today, the answer is pretty simple. After 5,000 years of habitation, almost all of them have been picked up!



Mineral Oddities—Theme of the 2009 Tucson Club Show

by Carolyn & Steve Weinberger

from *Gem Cutters News* 3/2009

We just returned from eleven days in Tucson visiting several of the show venues. We had a wonderful time visiting with friends and looking at fantastic minerals, jewelry, and cutting rough. We also were able to add a few mineral specimens to our collection and obtained some new faceting rough to “play” with and to use for teaching.

Trying to explain the Tucson experience to anyone who has never attended is almost like trying to describe Earth to an alien who has never come here. There are about 45 officially-listed shows in town and who knows how many others that just spring up on street corners and empty parking lots. Many of the shows are centered on themes such as minerals, fossils, beads, or jewelry; but there are shows which feature every aspect of the hobby. The strip along I-10 runs for about a mile-and-a-half, and each hotel or lot has a show where you can find all of the above-mentioned items. These satellite shows are put on by promoters who rent entire motels or erect huge tents and then sublet space to individual dealers.

Some, like that sponsored by the American Gem Trade Association (AGTA) and the Gem & Jewelry Exchange (GJX) are not open to the general public and require registration for admission. Most others are open to the public. Rio Grande is also present at Tucson, hosting their “Catalog In Motion” show where various vendors demonstrate their tools, gizmos, metals, and services.

For the first week, we visited six or seven of the satellite shows going from room to room in the motels that host them. Some, like the one held at the Westward Look Resort, feature ultra high-end mineral specimens. We looked, noted the numerous zeroes in the prices, and took lots of photographs. Other venues have a mix of dealers; some featuring ultra high end, others midrange, and still others lower -end items—something for every collector and for every price range. We also noted a good supply of excellent (and not outrageously priced) slabs, chunks, and boulders.

We did notice that attendance at these shows was lower than usual. Although some dealers always were willing to make deals if asked, this year many had large signs declaring “50% off.” We made a modest purchase from a dealer at 2 p.m. one afternoon and were told that we were his first sale of the day. Considering that many spend between \$5,000 and \$15,000 just coming to Tucson and renting their space for two weeks, (plus the funds tied up in inventory) we wonder how many will be able to return next year. Sales at the upper and lower ends of the scale appeared strong, but the fellows in the mid-range appeared to be hurting the most.

The highlight of the Tucson experience is “main” show and is sponsored by the Tucson Gem & Mineral Society. It’s always held during the second full weekend in February and runs from Thursday through Sunday. There are about 250 dealers on the floor of the Convention Center selling everything you could possibly imagine for the hobby (except for equipment, and that can be found at Electric Park.) The top mineral dealers

bring their finest specimens from micros to large museum pieces, and jewelry and fossil vendors wow the public with their wares.

The highlights of the show, however, are the displays brought by museums, clubs, and individuals. This year's theme was mineral oddities which includes pseudomorphs, unusual combinations, and the just plain weird examples. Two examples of the latter were a mineral-encrusted tennis shoe and a pseudomorph of calcite after banana.

The club show also features symposia, a micromineral conference, and banquet. Since the dates are fixed, the printed schedule runs through the year 2020. Next year's main show will be February 11–14, and the theme will be Gems and Gem Materials. In subsequent years, the theme will be Minerals of California and Minerals of Arizona. Those attending are in for a treat! If you plan on going next year, make your hotel reservations early because reasonably priced rooms tend to go fast. You can always cancel if your plans change. Airline schedules are usually posted in late summer or early fall, and you can easily fly into either Tucson or Phoenix (2 hours away).



Mineral encrusted tennis shoe



Calcite pseudomorph after Banana from the San Francisco, CA earthquake of 1906



"Mickey Mouse"
Quartz Sandstone,
Chartre, France

Late-Breaking Club News

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

Dopping Methods

by Roger K. Pabian, MWF Lapidary Chair
from MWF News 2/2009, via Rocky Reader 3/2009

Dopping is that first problem area. Why doesn't the stone stick to the stick?

The Stick:

Hardwood sticks work best. They don't absorb water quickly. If you use a pine dowel, paint it to slow down water absorption. If the stone comes off of a stick, go to a new, dry stick as the old one will still have some water in it, and it will pick up some water when the stone pops off. The stick should be no longer than the width of the palm of your hand. Think of the stick as an extension of the stone. Hold the stick so that your fingers come in contact with the stone. That minimizes vibrations and bouncing by the stone, and the stone is less likely to fall off the stick.

The dop stick doesn't have to be round. If you are shaping a stone that has a large length-to-width ratio (greater than about 2:1, such as in a marquise), cut a stick from a lath or a rectangular slat of wood such that the stick extends almost to the tips of the stone. There will be no great pressure on the ends of the stone, and that helps prevent the stone from coming off the stick.

The Wax:

Most lapidary wax is now the 140 degree wax; that is, it melts at 140 degrees, and it is usually dark green. You have to get the wax hot enough that it flows readily but does not run. Heat the stone as well as the wax and the stick. There are fancy dop pots available from lapidary supply houses, but I use an old slow cooker base that I picked up at a Goodwill store for \$1.00. I heat the stone on the cooker base. I usually start the wax beforehand to give it time to melt. Heat the stone slowly dip the end of the stick in the wax, apply the stick to the stone, lift off, and form the wax around the stick with moistened fingers (to prevent the wax from sticking to you and burning you). If you use the 170 degree wax, you have to heat it up to 170 degrees otherwise it will not stick any better than the cooler 140 degree wax. Keep in mind that wax for dopping cabochons does not work for dopping stones that are to be faceted.

Super Glue and Roofing Nails:

If you are dopping small stones, an easier method than using wax is to use super glue and roofing nails. Set the stone in a base of modeling clay, and get it level. Put a drop of super glue on the back of the stone and then attach a roofing nail to it. Hold the stone in a pin vise. To remove the stone, heat the nail with your alcohol lamp. It will drop off in a couple of minutes.

Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.

V Prong Setting—To V or Not to V

©Bradney W. Simon, 2003. Used with permission of the author.

Via Gem Cutters News 3/2009

Brad Simon is a JA Certified Master Bench Jeweler, and is founder and president of Bench Media. Providing Affordable Educational Materials to Bench Jewelers, Bench Media LLC produces a variety of video and print training materials as well as seminars and conferences. For more information log onto www.BWSimon.com

To V or not to V? That is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the minds of thou customers to place upon their marquise a prong in the shape of aV, or dost thou leavest it exposed to the concerns of the world.

Okay, William Shakespeare I'm not. However, for the bench jeweler, the question remains. What do you do with this prong in the shape of aV? Several shapes of stones have pointed ends, including marquise, pear, heart, and princess. Because these points are often thin and fragile, it is important to protect them with a prong. This is particularly important on rings where the stone may be subject to more abuse than in pendants, earrings, or brooches. Although a standard prong will usually suffice, a V shaped prong is preferable. A V-prong provides additional protection and will hold the point of the stone more securely.

Special care is necessary when setting these stones to keep from chipping or breaking the point. Extensive preparation is necessary and work must be executed with precision to properly set them. Nothing short of true craftsmanship can be exercised while attempting to set a stone with pointed ends.

The seat in the V-prong may be cut with a variety of burs, gravers, drill bits, or files. There is no one best method. The method used will depend on the situation and one's own preference of tools. The following is the basic procedure I most often follow.

Using a small hart bur, cut a line on the inside of the prong at the height you want the girdle of the stone. Check and double-check that this line is at the proper height and is straight and level. In addition to beginning to form the seat, this line will serve as a guide to base all future cutting on. If this line is off it will be near impossible to set the stone straight. This line does not have to be very deep at this point (it can be cut deeper later); however, do not cut into the prong more than 1/3 the thickness of the prong.

Next turn the bur 90° and cut a line down the center of the prong. This cut, along with the first cut, will form a cross-shaped pattern in the prong. This second cut will allow clearance for the pavilion of the stone. It is particularly important on the heavier cast V-prongs.

Using a bud bur, cut a hole in the center of the cross. Cut no further than 1/2 the way into the prong. (*Editor's note: even the online document had the "1/2."* If someone needs to know the fraction, please let me know and I'll contact the author.) This hole creates the void surrounding the tip of the stone. Make certain there is a cavity below AND above the tip of the stone. Putting pressure on the tip of the stone from above with no support

underneath will cause the point to break off.

Finally, trim away any excess metal and smooth the seat using a polished flat graver.

How you cut the seat is not nearly as important as what you accomplish. The seat you cut in a V-prong must accomplish three items:

1. A smooth even seat that will support the sides of the point on the stone.
2. A void to surround the very tip of the stone.
3. Enough metal must be removed to safely push the top of the prong over the stone, while leaving enough metal to securely hold and protect the stone.

Once the seat is cut completely examine it for these items with a loupe or microscope. First examine the seat, then lay the stone in the setting and re-examine it. One small bur of metal or ripple in the seat is all it takes to break the point of a stone. ALWAYS check the stone with a loupe or microscope before you begin to push the prongs over the stone. Then check AGAIN once the prongs are part way down and the stone no longer rocks. The small amount of extra time taken to check the seats can save a lot of heartbreak (or point break) later.

With pear or heart shaped stones, bend the V-prong over the stone first. Then push the remaining prongs over the stone tightening it in the setting. Setting the stone in this manner allows the stone to move slightly as you bend the V-prong, limiting the amount of pressure applied to the fragile tip of the stone.

On marquise shaped stones, bend the side prongs over the stone first, securing it into the setting. Then the V-prongs are adjusted down over the points. The V-prong is seen as protection to the fragile points rather than as something to hold the stone. Setting the stone in this manner limits the amount of pressure applied to the fragile tips of the stone.

You can use several methods to push the prong down onto the stone. You can use a prong pusher to gently roll the metal over the stone in the same manner you would push a bezel down. First, push on one side of the V, then the other. Alternate sides until the prong is tight against the crown of the stone.

Chain nose pliers with polished jaws can also be used. Place one jaw at the top of one side of the V, and the other jaw at the base of the opposite side of the prong. Gently squeeze one side down a little, then reverse the position of the pliers and move the opposite side. Work back and forth until the prong is down on the crown of the stone.

Another method using chain nose pliers is to place both jaws at the top of the outside edges of the V. Make certain the jaws are at the top of the prong well above the girdle of the stone. Angle the pliers to match the angle of the crown facets. Then gently squeeze the pliers together. As the pliers come together at the point of the V, the jaws will burnish the metal down onto the stone. Keep repeating the procedure until the metal is tight against the stone. As you work, excess metal will form between the pliers' jaws, making a line at the point of the V. You should remove this excess metal with a file. This method works better on the thinner die struck V-prongs.

Some jewelers cut a V in the top of the prong leaving two tabs to push over the stone. Then once the tabs are down the seam is soldered closed. This method works fine on diamonds, but cannot be used on most color stones. There is one danger in using this method on diamonds. If excess solder is used, it can flow into the void providing clearance at the tip of the point. As the solder solidifies, it contracts. This can cause the point to chip or break off.

Once the stone is set, trim and shape the outside of the prongs using a #6 needle file. Be certain the file has a polished safety edge to avoid the possibility of chipping or abrading the stone. Trim and clean up the inside edge of the V with a polished flat graver. Remove the file marks with an abrasive rubber wheel and polish.

Remember: Caution Is The Better Part Of Valor. If you feel uncertain while setting, STOP, take a deep breath, check all your steps, examine the setting with your loupe, then proceed. If you still feel uneasy take a break, get a drink of water relax a bit. Then re-examine the setting and proceed to finish the setting.

Follow these steps, and you will not suffer a fate such as Juliet and her Romeo. "Parting is such sweet sorrow, Farewell, Farewell, I bid you Farewell...."

Household Products That Can Be Used as Rock Cleansers

by Betsy Martin

Adapted from The Rock Collector 12/2008, The Franklin County Rockhounder, The Calgary Lapidary Journal, Stoney Statements 1/2009 via Gritty Greetings-2/2009

Safety: Always use plastic containers, rubber or nitrile gloves, eye protection, good ventilation, and great care when handling these products.

Zud or Barkeeper's Friend cleansers—(contain oxalic acid) . Warm or hot solutions will remove iron stains and are helpful with clay deposits. These cleansers can be used with a toothbrush on sturdy surfaces.

Toilet cleaner (the hydrochloric acid type): dissolves calcite rapidly. After treating anything with acid, rinse very carefully and soak in ample fresh or distilled water for awhile to leach out any acid remaining in crystal seams and fractures. You can then follow up with a final soak in diluted Windex to neutralize remaining traces of acid.

Lime Away (diluted hydrochloric acid): dissolves calcite slowly. Rinse as you would for other acid treatments (see above).

Calgon: dissolve this powdered water softener in water. Use for clay removal. Vinegar (acetic acid), soda water, and colas (carbonic and phosphoric acids) will slowly etch out very delicate fossils in limestone. Rinse as you would for other acids (see above).

Iron Out (iron stain and clay remover): Mix with warm water and use with good ventilation. It will lose strength if stored. Rinse with plain water.

Bleach: Dilute solutions of bleach can remove organic deposits and disinfect minerals

collected in areas used by livestock. Rinse with plain water.

Hydrogen peroxide: Use to remove manganese stains. Rinse as above for acids.

Citric acid: Use like hydrogen peroxide.

Windex (with ammonia) : a good clay deposit remover and final surface cleanup. Works well in ultrasonic cleaners. Rinse with plain water.

Distilled water: use to clean sensitive species and as a final soak after acid treatment

Removing thin coatings: On moderately hard minerals, use toothpaste and a toothbrush. On hard minerals, use toothbrush with pumice powder and water. On calcite (including bruised places), quickly dip in vinegar or LimeAway and rinse thoroughly. Repeat. Soak in plain water afterwards to leach any acid from cracks.

Cleaning tools: Toothpicks, seam rippers, bamboo sticks, sewing needles in a pin vise, old dental tools, old toothbrushes, periodontal brushes, canned air, Exacto knives, single-edge razor blades, cheap small stiff-bristle brushes.

Shop Tips from Brad Simon

<http://www.benchmedia.typepad.com/jewelrymaking/>

Sawing Precious Metal

February 10, 2009

When using a jeweler's saw, lubricate the blade with bees wax or other wax-based lubricant such as "bur life." This allows the blade to slide through the metal easier and makes cutting more accurate. Re-lubricate the blade before each cut and after every inch or so on long cuts.

Saw Blades

February 17, 2009

Saw blades are available in a variety of sizes. A size 14 is the coarsest, and an 8/0 is the finest. A good size for general work on gold is a 2/0 blade. You need to use finer blades for thin sheets of metal. Greater care is needed while sawing with finer blades as they break easily. As a general guide, two teeth of the blade should be in contact with the metal at all times when sawing.



Show Time 2009

April 11-12	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center, North 6th & Pine Sallie Lightfoot, slightfoot@aol.com Web site: www.txol.net/rockclub
April 17-19	Alpine, TX	Chihuahua Desert Gem & Mineral Club Highland Events Center, Kwy. 90 East Donna Trammel: rocklady2002@sbcglobal.net
April 25-26	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Society Heart O' Texas Fair Grounds Kay Coleman: rkcole8@peoplepc.com
May 16-17	Lubbock, TX	Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society Lubbock Civic Center Archie Scott: asscott3@windstream.net
May 23-24	Ft. Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Society Will Rogers Memorial Center Steve Hilliard: fwgmc@embarqmail.com www.fortworthgemandmineralclub.com
July 30-August 2	Billings, MT	AFMS/NFMS show; Billings G&M Club Montana Trade Center, Holliday Inn Grand Montana, 5500 Midland R. Doug True, dtruefossils@yahoo.com
August 8-9	Baton Rouge, LA	Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society Fraternal Order of Police
August 15-16	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center
August 22-23	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Hall, 7 miles W of Jasper FM 2799 & 1747
September 5-6	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society Arlington Convention Center
September 19-20	Richardson, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI at Brookhaven College
November 13-15	Humble, TX	Houston Gem & Mineral Society Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy. 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport 1 mile east of Hwy. 59; www.hgms.org

2009		April				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 7:30 Mineral Section	2	3	4 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
5 Palm Sunday	6	7 7:30 Board Meeting	8 7:30 Faceting Section	9 1 st day of Passover	10 Good Friday	11 10-5 Shop Open
12 Easter Sunday	13 1:00 Day Light Section	14 7:30 Show Committee	15 7:30 Mineral Section	16 Last day of Passover	17	18 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
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		

2009		May				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
3	4	5 7:30 Board Meeting	6 7:30 Mineral Section	7	8	9 10-5 Shop Open
10 Mother's Day	11 1:00 Day Light Section	12 7:30 Show Committee	13 7:30 Faceting Section	14	15	16 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
17	18 7:30 Lapidary Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20 7:30 Mineral Section	21	22	23 10-5 Shop Open
24 31	25 Memorial Day	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

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)
2008 - 1st (Large)



AFMS

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



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