



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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

HGMs has turned 60. On December 7, 1948, the HGMS Letter of Formation was sent to the then regional organization which was the predecessor of the AFMS and SCFMS. That was the formal birth of HGMS. Therefore as of December 7, 2008 we have turned 60. Congratulations to HGMS, and we look forward to the next 40 years—until 2048—when we will reach 100. It would be interesting to know how many of the members who were with the club in 1948 are still with us. Please let us know. Thank you. Also, thanks to Scott Singleton who in 2006 wrote the history of our club and had it placed on our Web site.



If you are like me, this past year you may have heard all you wanted to hear about change, from all sides, for a very long time. We also know that 2008 brought a lot of change to all of our lives. Gasoline at \$2 something then at \$4 something and now less than \$1.50/gallon. Your savings and retirement bit the dust, at least on paper, and it may take a good bit of time for it to get up off the canvas before the referee counts to 10. But wise persons know that if you weren't in the stock market on margins, you can simply ignore the daily DOW and ride it out, and chances are in the end you will have lost little or nothing and may even see a good profit for your patience.

Those who supported the new President can be elated that you got your wish, and those who didn't are finding that perhaps the future isn't as dark as predicted.

One thing we must all concentrate on seriously is encouraging our elected representatives not to decide that rockhounds are somehow a threat to the nation and therefore only PhDs should be allowed to collect vertebrate fossils. The folks who are truly enlightened know that amateurs—rockhounds who are beginners and those with years of experience—find most of the things that wind up in museums for the public to enjoy and experts to study. Far more fossils erode away each year than are ever "looted." We just have to make sure our Representatives and Senators understand the importance of our Earth Science avocation and how "we" benefit the public.

Contents

President’s Message 1

Purpose of HGMS 3

HGMS Officers 3

Other Texas Minerals Obtained from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural
Sciences 6

Day Light Section 8

Mineral Section 9

In Memoriam—Elizabeth Smith 10

In Memoriam—Hank McCleary 11

General Meeting Programs 13

Do You Want Classes? 13

Joan Riley Surgery 13

In Our Library 14

Scholarship Fund Update 14

Legal Info That May Be of Importance To You 15

Need for Immediate Action By You!!! 16

Dead Man Conducts Auction..... 17

HGMS Board Meeting Minutes 18

Shop Hints & Tips 20

AFMS Inter-Regional Rockhound Rendezvous 21

AFMS Safety—Reposing Easily 22

Want to Write an Article? 22

How to Write an Article for Your Club’s Bulletin In Twelve Steps 23

Write Like a Pro 24

SCFMS—House Special 26

The SCFMS—Sixty-Five Years—Growing and Going Strong 27

Interesting Internet Web Sites with Collecting Information 27

Facetor’s Corner 28

Seven Photos Taken By Steve Blyskal at the Christmas Party 29

Agates—Some Classifications 32

Show Time 2009 34

Calendars 35

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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*

For some time I have thought about the good things that HGMS does for students, for education, for the public, and for our members, and how we can be more effective. While I prefer the word “expansion” instead of “change,” I came up with a new concept which I initially bounced off the HGMS Board by e-mail and then presented to them directly at our January 6, 2009 BOD Meeting. I didn’t ask for a vote on any specifics but presented a new concept for HGMS, and I asked if I could present it to you this month for you to think about and perhaps give me some feedback. The overwhelming consensus was to “run it up the flagpole and see who salutes” as one Board member put it.

I present the following idea to our over 700 members of HGMS, and I hope you will let the Board and me know if you think this concept and ideas are good for HGMS, the public, students and our members. There are several basic things which I emphasized. This concept: 1. won’t raise dues; 2. furthers HGMS’ charter provisions where we are dedicated to education (see page 3 of any issue of the Backbender’s Gazette; 3. is designed to make HGMS more visible for purposes of education, membership, Show participation and attendance, and to entice young people to consider Earth Science occupations; and 4. offers the chance for a larger, more advanced physical facility with more space, equipment, classes, and other facilities to our membership.

There are three major areas:

1. Financing: Under the HGMS Bylaws, I would set up a subcommittee to seek foundation and governmental grants and employee matching funds and other avenues of revenue to HGMS from outside. We would look into advertising revenues (we have already provided that advertising can be purchased in the BBG—we just so far have not had any requests). HGMS would have additional auctions, sales, swap days, and other activities to generate more fun and funds. We would expand our educational programs to have more classes and more students, making this a more profitable part of the HGMS program, but as importantly, providing more education for HGMS members who want to learn about Earth Science and Jewelry Making at HGMS.

2. Education: HGMS, in addition to handing out mineral and fossil identification kits to schools, would keep updated records and work with the schools to provide additional educational programs and contact with such schools, as we may have HGMS volunteers to participate and schools who are interested.

We would divide Harris County into something like 6 or 8 divisions and then find a central location in each division with a school, pizza parlor, or some other facility that would allow us—for FREE—to show Earth Science and jewelry making movies on a Saturday morning perhaps, every so often. Students would be invited to come for FREE (or if at a Pizza Parlor or such place, the students could purchase their own snacks at no cost to HGMS). They would watch the movies, discuss things, and have HGMS volunteers answer questions and invite them and their parents to become members of HGMS.

We could invite commercial interests who have a vested interest in wanting to see students and others become more interested in Earth Science—oil and chemical companies who need future engineers, geologists etc.—to come up with some funding and to participate in this undertaking. Some HGMS members would need to be involved, but surely in our 700+ members there are those who would find participation in this fun and exciting.

We will set up a Public Relations subcommittee to work on having programs and speakers to speak to groups and to the media (on slow news days, there may be FREE time for HGMS to gain publicity and get out our message on the educational aspects of HGMS. We could have the writers in our club write columns for the Houston Community Newspapers in the various areas of the Houston Metropolitan Area where they put out papers (at least 12 to 15 or more areas I believe at last count).

We would encourage our State either to retain or to add Earth Science to the school curriculums and to ensure that we have good, factually correct text books on Earth Science so that we turn out students who know real science and can use it for production of the energy this Earth will need in the future as our nonrenewable resources run out.

3. Facilities: In 2008 your Board of Directors established a Building Fund to start the accumulation of funds to either enlarge and update our physical facilities as we grow OR to obtain a new location if and when we outgrow the present facility and cannot expand here AND to have funds for major repairs when needed, such as leaking roof, air conditioning etc. This would make us ready to take care of our facilities when needed without a sudden drain on our operating budget in a given year. If you attended our 2008 Christmas/Holiday Season Party, you saw between 70 and 80 people in attendance. That was wonderful. Unfortunately, we could not have made room for many more people in our present meeting room. The buffet line was in a class room, and we carried our filled plates through the shop on our way back into the meeting room to eat. We are growing, and we will continue to grow as Houston grows and we are more visible to Houstonians.

From my experience in having been President or Board Member of a number of Houston organizations, I have learned that organizations either grow or disappear. There is no status quo. It is often comfortable to say we want to stay just as we are, but it just doesn't happen. You are either a growing organization or you start the descent.

The HGMS BOD has not voted on or authorized any changes at this time other than voting to set up the Building Fund in 2008, and it already has some funds in it. Dues were raised last year, and we don't anticipate a dues increase in 2009. We do need to raise additional funds to keep operating at the same level, and we are working to take care of that without any dues increase.

Please let me or other HGMS Board members know your thinking, your ideas, and your input on this expansion concept I have outlined. Undoubtedly our membership will have many more ideas and suggestions. Often folks talk amongst themselves and eventually things drift back to me and other Board members. What we really need is

swifter feedback and some concrete expressions from you on what you think of this concept for HGMS growth and expansion. Put it into a letter, e-mail, or at least give us a phone call. My address is: Terry Proctor, 630 Uvalde Road, Houston, Texas 77015-3766. My law office phone is (713) 453-8338 (call any time and if you don't reach me around the clock there, my cell phone is 713 453-1300). My FAX is 713 453-3232, and my e-mail is auraman@swbell.net. Other Board members are listed each month in your BBG, and their addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail are in your annual directory.

Please let us know what you think. Our goal is not to change your enjoyment in being a member of HGMS. It is to expand our charter requirements as an educational organizations, to give some of you a chance to become involved with students and adults by talking about what you do in HGMS and what you have learned here and can do, to encourage others to join us or at least to become interested. In time we hope this will provide you a better place to enjoy your avocation at HGMS—better facilities, training, and comradeship with more folks of like interest with you—and without raising the dues.

Other Texas Minerals Obtained from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences

by Arthur E. Smith

artsmithite@msn.com

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Last year in the article about Baringer Hill in Llano County, Texas (Smith 2008), I described and discussed specimens from that locality that were obtained from Collector's Edge at the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. Although those might be considered the most significant specimens from Texas, the remaining specimens from Texas had some interesting items worth mentioning.



Chalcocite occurs in the Permian red beds of west Texas and Oklahoma as well as in states further to the west. It was mined at Creta, Jackson County, Oklahoma by Eagle-Picher from 1965 to 1975. Smaller amounts were mined sporadically from Foard County, Texas from 1877 through 1970 though apparently none of these operations were very successful. Four specimens from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science are all labeled as being from along the Little Wichita River in Archer County, Texas and are solid chalcocite. Specimen 6329 is a smooth-surfaced, broken nodule, 11 x 6 x 4.5 cm. It was obtained by the Academy from the Franklin Institute for \$2, but no date is given. A smaller nodule is not smooth but is colloform and was donated by G. M. Hartman. The other two specimens are all after petrified wood and were donated by Charles M. Wheatley or were purchased from the Franklin Institute for \$1.50. The largest is 8.5 x 6.5 x 3.8 cm. and is typical of other specimens from the area though larger than many.

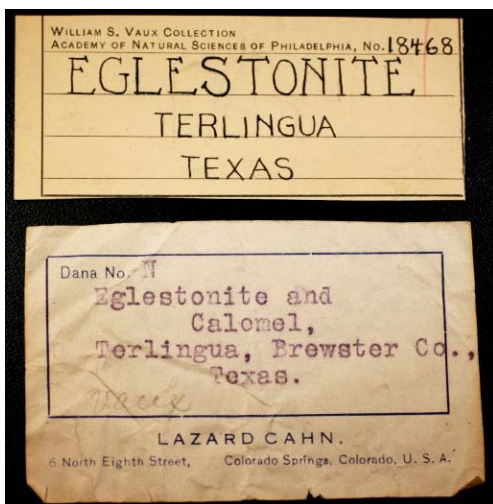


Chalcocite as petrified wood, 8 cm tall. Broken chalcocite concretion that weighs 24.5 ounces. Both are from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences collection and from Archer County, Texas.

Five specimens are from the Terlingua mercury district in Brewster County. Three are calcite specimens and are just labeled, "Terlingua district." The largest is 16.5x10x9.5 cm., and like the others is composed of coarsely crystallized white calcite with pinkish areas. It is strongly fluorescent blue white and has phosphorescence under short wave radiation that is typical of

these specimens. Although an early article by C.L Brock (1934) reports that this calcite comes from the Chisos Mountains in the Big Bend area, it is in error, and as far as I know, the only locality for this material was the dump of the Little 38 mercury mine in the Terlingua district west of the Big Bend National Park, Brewster County. Unfortunately this dump was removed for road fill in about 2006, so the calcite is no longer available to collectors.

The other two specimens were obtained from Lazard Cahn and were in the W.S. Vaux Collection according to the label, possibly because Vaux money was used to purchase them from Cahn. A small specimen labeled as just "eglestoneite from Terlingua" is probably from the Mari-posita mine that is the source of most of the rare mercury minerals. The eglestoneite is an oxidized brown color instead of yellow and is associated with white calomel. A larger specimen (4 x 2.3 x 2 cm) has a small cavity that contains well-crystallized 2 to 3 mm yellow hexagonal prismatic kleinite with minor calcite. It was originally from the Seeboek collection and probably was sold to the Academy by Cahn and again listed as being in the Vaux Collection be-



Labels from a Terlingua, Brewster Count, Texas specimen that gives the source of the specimen from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. It was obtained from Lazard Cahn, a noted professor and dealer in western mineral specimens during the late 1800s to 1940.

cause it possibly was purchased using Vaux money. It is just labeled as being from Terlingua. The Terlingua post office was originally located at the Mariposa mine before being moved to the Chisos mine when the Mariposa mine closed in 1910 (Ragsdale 1976). There is no record of any of the rare oxy-chloride minerals coming from the Chisos mine, though later ore from the Mariposa Perry Pit was processed at the Chisos mine.

A large specimen of a doubly terminated purplish black calcite doubly terminated scalenohedron associated with later white equant 1 cm calcite crystals with 571 on it (probably not an Academy number) is not from Texas. It is most likely from the Santa Eulalia mining district of Chihuahua, Mexico. Its strong and almost solid orange fluorescence under short wave radiation is its only major redeeming feature.

The last group of specimens consists of some well-crystallized, intergrown, colorless, gypsum crystals that could come from any black shale outcrop in Texas. Yes, there is a label, but it says just "Elm Creek, Texas." Unfortunately there are many Elm Creeks in Texas and also communities named Elm Creek. So far I have run across two in the Texas Hill Country since I got the specimens, and that is without particularly looking for them. No, I have not even checked them out because there are probably gypsum crystals in the area of quite a few of Texas' Elm Creeks, and since these specimens are not particularly noteworthy, why bother? It would be difficult to prove their location anyway.

References:

Brock, C. L. 1934. Rose-pink calcite in Texas. *Rocks & Minerals* 9:135.

Ragsdale, K. B. 1976. *Quicksilver: the Terlingua and Chisos mining Company*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.

Smith, A. E. 2008. The Baringer Hill pegmatite, Llano County, Texas. *Mineral News* 24(10)1, 3, 4-9.

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

The Day Light Section did not meet in December.

On 12 January, 2009, we will have a travelogue by Nancy Fischer about her trip to the Far East about a year ago.

On 9 February, 2009, we think Karen Burns will be well enough to give the program. She will show us how to make earrings and a necklace. The earrings and necklace are made by joining links together. The earrings are only one link so there is nothing to join. Each link needs four and one-half inches of 21-gauge fine or sterling silver square wire, soft. You will also need 1 semi-precious stone bead, 8 mm diameter, per link. For the earrings, you will need a total of two.

For earrings:

1. You will need at least 12 inches of 21 gauge, square, soft fine or sterling silver wire.

I prefer fine silver because of cleaning problems with sterling silver and the bead.

2. At least two precious or semi-precious beads, 8 mm diameter, one for each earring.

3. Usual tools.

For necklace:

The necklace is made of multiple links, the same type of link used for the earrings.

1. Decide on the length of necklace you wish to make. The length of the link is going to vary somewhat. If the length of the link is 0.5 inches long and you want a 22-inch necklace, then $22 / 0.5 = 44$. Forty-four half-inch links are needed for a 22 inch necklace. If your link is $3/4$ inch (0.75 inches long) then you need $22 / 0.75 = 29.3$ or 30 links for a 22-inch necklace. A 44-link necklace is 33 inches in length. $44 \times 0.75 = 33$

Necklaces are usually 16 inches or longer in length.

Summary:

Every link will need an eight mm diameter semi-precious or precious bead, and your necklace will need a clasp. You will also need either sterling or fine silver square wire, 21 ga. If you buy sterling, buy the soft.

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

January 21: To be announced. Refreshments will be provided.

February 4: DVD of attendees' choice. Due to the participation of many Mineral Section members in Tucson, those not able to attend will view a DVD chosen from the Library.

February 18: Tucson Show & Tell. For those lucky enough to attend the most famous mineral gathering in the world, bring in your recent acquisitions from the many Tucson Shows and give us your impressions of "Tucson 2009." Regale us with your experiences. For those who could not make it, come and see what you are missing. Refreshments will be provided.

Wednesday, March 4: Clear Lake Show & Tell. Bring in your recent acquisitions from the Clear Lake Show (February 28–March 1). Let us drool over your acquisitions. Specimens that did not make it back from Tucson for the previous meeting will also be discussed. 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.

In Memoriam—Elizabeth Smith
by Stephen Blyskal and Ann Koster

Elizabeth Jean Smith, wife of HGMS member Art Smith, passed away on 11/11/08. She was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but lived in Houston since 1965.

She was a nurse by profession with a specialty in pediatrics and later geriatrics. She was also an educator, holding the position of assistant professor of Nursing at the University of Texas Medical School from 1973 to 1986. Her career was cut short in 1986 by a tragic accident caused by a drunk driver.

Afterwards she and Art started a beading business, and she was well known in the HGMS community for her necklaces and other creations. She designed simple yet elegant pieces using the best stone beads available. “Betty Jean” was a regular at Mineral Section meetings and at the annual HGMS show where she could be found assisting Art in the Mineral Section booth.

In her later years she struggled with Alzheimer’s but still frequently came to meetings. She will be remembered and missed by all the members of HGMS who have known her over the last 35 years.”



Hank McCleary in foreground. Susan Lenz and Tom Wright in next row. ??? and ??? behind Tom. Side view of Art Smith in back row. Beverly Mace standing by back wall.

Photo taken 3/23/2004 by Phyllis George



In Memoriam—Hank McCleary

by Frances Arrighi

Henry (Hank) McCleary was born in Casper, Wyoming on 4 June, 1922. He grew up in this area and spent two years at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado. Then he joined the armed services and spent some time in the Pacific arena on the ship Ticonderoga. After his tour of duty on the Ticonderoga, he returned to the Colorado School of Mines and graduated with an M.S. degree in geology/geophysics in 1948. This is when he started his eventful career in the oil industry. He married Beryl Nowlin in 1950.

Hank and family (Beryl and four children) lived on four continents: North America, South America, Europe, and Africa. While in Africa (Egypt), Hank worked for Amoco and told the drillers where to drill in the Red Sea. The well came in. Also, in Egypt they lived in a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and they had a stable with several horses. When they had to leave Egypt because of the political situation, Hank said they gave the horses to the French ambassador. Before retirement from the oil industry, they settled in Houston.

Hank joined HGMS and attended the Day Light Section as well as other section meetings. He gave several programs to the Day Light Section. These were travelogues of trips he and Beryl had taken as well as descriptions of the area where they had lived. Hank had considerable artistic ability. At one of his programs he brought a picture he had painted of horses.

Hank developed Alzheimer's disease from which he died on 29 November, 2008. We offer our condolences to Beryl and to children Gail, Glenn, Neil, and Paul and to the grandchildren.

HGMS Entries for SCFMS 2009 Bulletin Editors' Contest

On January 10, 2009, the following entries were submitted to the 2009 SCFMS Bulletin Editors' Contest. The results of the contest will be announced at the Bulletin Editors' Breakfast to be held during the SCFMS Annual Show hosted by Temple, Texas on October 10, 2009.

Name	Category	Title	Month
Phyllis George	Large Bulletin	The Backbender's Gazette	April & October
Neal and Inda Immega	Advanced Adult Article	Cavansite—An Easy Mineral Name to Remember	May
Terry Proctor	Advanced Adult Article	So You Think You and Your Right to Collect Fossils and Minerals Are Safe?	November
Albert J. Robb III and George Wolf, Sr.	Advanced Adult Article	Neogene Sharks Teeth from Along the Texas Gulf Coast	August
Art Smith	Advanced Adult Article	Spring Collecting Trip to the Texas Hill Country	July
Mark Villaneuva	Advanced Adult Article	Ask Your Gemologist—The Perfect Diamond	January
Wayne Barnett	Adult Article	The Care and Feeding of Diamond Saws	April
Denise Bicknell	Adult Article	Herb Bastuscheck	October
D.R. "Matt" Dillon	Adult Article	Quartzite	March
Nancy Fischer	Adult Article	Mexican Agates	October
Phyllis George	Adult Article	Visit to the Black Hills Institute—Home of Stan and HMNS's Wyrex	August
Terry Proctor	Adult Poetry	A Rock Is a Rock Is a Rock	November
Neal Immega	Features	Lake Texoma 2008—Ammonites, Urchins, and Oysters on Memorial Weekend	July
Owen Martin	Features	Faux Pas, uhh, Rather Palm. "Faux Palm," that is.	April
Scott Singleton	Features	Post-Show Field Trip	November
Sigrid Stewart	Features	Show Committee After-Show Field Trip	January

General Meeting Programs

by Matt Dillon

1st Vice President

January 27, 2009—Rocks from Needle Peak, a Texas Geological Wonderland: For the program at our upcoming January General Meeting, I will be showing photographs and bringing specimens from our January 12 field trip to Needle Peak. I will also show some from previous trips that date back to the mid-1970s. I will present some historical background about the area in general, and Neal Immega plans to discuss the pertinent paleo information. That area can be described as a geological wonderland.

February 24—Wonders of San Carlos and Tecolote: I do not know for sure if I can get their assistance, but I will be talking with both Dean Lagerwall and Dallas Higgs about helping out with the February program. They went with me in December 2008 on a trip to Mexico to the San Carlos area and the new site, Tecolote. Both Dean and Dallas brought back some interesting stuff, and they can present their own unique perspectives about that trip and the collecting at that site. Information about this potential program will be updated on our Web site and through Neal Immega's e-mail system later. I will also post a notice on the bulletin board in the kitchen area in an effort to inform those who do not own or use computers.

Do You Want Classes?

by Terry Proctor

Did you make a New Year's Resolution to learn how to _____?
(You fill in the blank).

Brian Honsinger is the HGMS Educational Chairman. He sets up classes as people request them. In the January, 2009 BBG, we listed some of those classes. If you are interested in learning how to make jewelry, how to wire wrap, how to cast, and how to do other things in which a number of our HGMS members have become very proficient—including making your own tools to do your work—contact Brian Honsinger at (281) 777-0552. Tell him what you want to learn, and Brian will see if there are enough others interested in the same class for him to line up a teacher. We have more classes started now since Brian took over as Educational Chairman, and we hope to have many more students and classes in 2009. If you don't tell Brian what you want, he won't know what classes to schedule. Let's all resolve in 2009 to learn something new in our hobby.

Joan Riley Surgery

Joan Riley had knee replacement surgery on January 14. She would welcome visitors after she returns home. We wish her a very successful surgery and an uneventful and swift recovery.

In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

The library finances for 2008 are as follows:

Income:	from soda sales:	\$1058.41
	from books, show: .	\$ 704.16
	TOTAL	\$1762.57
Expenses:	deficit from 2007 .. (\$	243.65)
	Binding	(\$1355.00)
	Books, Videos	(\$ 583.45)
	TOTAL	(\$2182.10)

That leaves us with a total deficit of -\$414.53 for 2008. Much is donated to the library including books, videos, subscriptions. \$474.70 was donated for soda, and this does not include the amount donated by the club that was left over from the show. I think the amount spent on binding for next year will be about half of 2008, so that will help make up the deficit.

On the negative side, between \$500 and \$600 has been spent converting our library VHS videos to DVD. The task is nearing completion, and the expenses will be submitted for 2009. The plan is to sell the surplus videos at the clubhouse for \$2.00 each on a first come basis starting Saturday, January 24 at 10 a.m. All VHS that can be converted will be, and those that cannot, we will keep. Some other VHS tapes will also be kept. This conversion will reduce our videos to less than two racks. This allows lots of room for expansion. DVDs and VHS tapes of the same program will have the same number, and both can be signed out at the library desk. DVDs that are not working should not be returned to the rack but should be left on the desk with a note telling of the problem.

I hope to have a complete list of the videos available by number by the first part of January. In many cases the numbers will be the same, but many disks have more than one VHS tape on them, so there will be some changes.

No definite plans have been made for the sale of videos of mineral specimens. They may contain some good historical data, particularly concerning prices. Any good ideas will be considered.

Scholarship Fund Update

by Terry Proctor

Art Smith has long been our General Membership Librarian, and he runs our silent auctions at the General Membership Meetings each month. You may not know that Art has donated many of his own mineral collection specimens to HGMS in the past for inclusion in these silent auctions. Art has requested, and the HGMS Board has unanimously approved, that all future proceeds from the personal items that Art puts into the Silent Auction will go into the Scholarship Fund that is kept separate in our Club Treasury. Funds earmarked for the Scholarship Fund

aren't spent for HGMS club operation but are reserved for the awarding of scholarships by the Club. We have long appreciated Art's dedication and generosity to HGMS, and we are happy to see the funds from his donated specimens going into such a worthy part of our Club's activities in the future.

Last year a \$2,500.00 scholarship was awarded to a University of Houston student for her final semester at the U of H in jewelry making. She plans eventually to open her own store. Thank you again, Art, for your donated specimens.

Legal Info That May Be of Importance To You

by Terry Proctor

Many HGMS members (like myself) are up a bit in years, and as an attorney who does a good deal of probate of estates, I find that many clients do not know things that they really do need to be aware of. So I am providing a few ideas for you to consider.

1. Probating an Estate without a Will is considerably more expensive than probating an Estate with a Will. This means having a Will is cheap after all.
2. There is a Statute of Limitation on the probate of a Will. A Will is only good for FOUR YEARS after a person dies (not four years from date written, but four years from the date of death). After that, a Will cannot be probated in Court. The Will essentially becomes invalid, and the Estate has to be probated under the Texas laws of Descent and Distribution (the Estate goes by Texas Law thereafter, not by the Will.). So if you have a Will of a deceased person, don't wait more than four years to probate it, or it is no longer valid. If you have a Will, make sure the persons named in your Will know this fact, so your Estate is handled in the way you want it to be handled, instead of in the way the State law provides. I mention this as many folks are unaware of this and have come to me only after the Will's validity has passed. This is a vital fact to know.
3. A husband and wife each should have their own Will. Do not use joint Wills as they complicate things.
4. When you have a Will drawn, also create four other documents which are very important while you live.
 - a. Directive to Physician (pull the plug and let me die a natural death without eating up my Estate by keeping me alive artificially)
 - b. Designation of Guardian (who you want and who you don't want to be your Guardian)
 - c. Durable Power of Attorney for Business Decisions
 - d. Durable Power of Attorney for Medical Decisions. A regular power of attorney ceases to be valid if the person becomes mentally incompetent. A Durable Power of Attorney, by law, remains effective even if the person become mentally incompetent.

There are many other things about Wills and Probate, but these points were important enough and come up so often in my practice that I wanted to provide this information to our HGMS members.

Need for Immediate Action By You!!!

by Terry Proctor, J.D.

2009 HGMS President

An Internet headline on Sunday, January 11, 2009 included this news: "Senate boosts wilderness protection across US." That may sound great, but there is one little hitch. Included in this legislation, called S. 22, is Sec. 6304 Collection of Paleontological Resources. This is essentially the ghost of the old Baucus Bill, resurrected, and made even more onerous than before. I have printed out all 156 pages of this Bill from the Web site of Thomas (Library of Congress). It is available to you if you search on Google for Thomas (Library of Congress) and then S.22.

S. 22 could have the effect of shutting down a large part of the field trips and private digging by HGMS Members. S.22/Sec. 6304 contains vague ambiguous provisions wherein some local U.S. governmental person could confiscate your vehicle and everything in and about it, could have you fined in large sums, and could have you headed off to a Federal Penitentiary. It not only provides that you better not have any vertebrate fossils collected on Government lands, but it also makes it YOUR duty to prove that what you do have didn't come from U.S. Property. It provides essentially the same type of penalties if you have misidentified vertebrate fossils. What professional, I ask you, hasn't on occasions misidentified a vertebrate fossil, only to learn more about the fossil later and re-identify it. But you as an amateur or semiprofessional better not make the same mistake as the great paleontologists in our nation do, because you will get a new outfit to wear.

This Bill must be stopped, and YOU are the ones who can do it.

You can contact our Texas Senators **at once** to tell them to get Sec. 6304 out of this Bill.

Contact Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison at her Web site: Hutchison.senate.gov/contact.cfm—or call her office at (202) 224-5922—or write her at 284 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

OR

Contact Sen. John Cornyn at his Web site of cornyn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.Con, or call him at his office at (202) 224-2934, or write him at 517 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510.

Go to Google or elsewhere on the Internet and find your U.S. Representative, and contact that person also. Ask all of your elected representatives to vote to get Sec. 6304 out of S. 22. We must prevail if we are to continue to have places to dig without facing prison, fines, and/or confiscation in our avocation. Please stop and do this TODAY. It really is important.

Dead Man Conducts Auction.....

by Terry Proctor

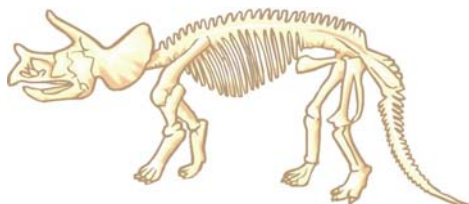
Some weeks before our December 13 Christmas/Holiday Season Party, President Terry Proctor called HGMS member James Wark, a licensed auctioneer, to ask him if he would conduct the Auction at the Party. During the conversation, Terry learned that James had died nine times shortly before this phone call, and each time the doctors brought him back to life. James suffered a heart attack and stroke several times; his heart stopped each time and was shocked back to life. Terry offered James his best wishes for a speedy recovery since James was still undergoing therapy, and explained that he had called to ask James to be the auctioneer, but obviously James wouldn't be up to that. On the contrary, said James, he was reasonably sure he could conduct the auction.



James Wark, Auctioneer at the
HGMS Christmas Party
Photo by Steve Blyskal

And conduct it he did. James ran the auction for the HGMS Christmas/Holiday Party and raised over \$1,500, half of which went into the HGMS operating fund and half into the new Building Fund. Near the end of the auction James seemed tired, so Terry called him after Christmas and learned that James had two arteries that were 100% blocked and one artery that was 50% blocked. He was scheduled for a quadruple bypass.

James has now had his quadruple bypass and says he feels much better than before the surgery. HGMS should be amazed at this indefatigable, "never say die" HGMS member who literally rose from death's door to do our Party auction. We are happy that James is much better, and we look forward to seeing him at our meetings again with new vigor after his surgery. Prayers were said for you, James, and we are very happy that you and modern science have kept you with us.



HGMS Board Meeting Minutes

January 6, 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
	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan	X	Paleontology Rep.	Rick Rexroad
X	Secretary	Regina Gorman	X	Day Light Rep.	Nancy Fischer
X	Webmaster	Phyllis George		Beading Rep.	Diane Sisson

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

The December 2008 Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting was printed in the Backbender's Gazette (BBG). Wayne Barnett moved that the minutes be accepted as published. The motion was seconded by Matt Dillon and passed by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan was not present.

Day Light: Nancy Fischer reported that she will give a talk about her trip to the Far East at the next Section meeting Monday, January 12, 2009.

BBG: Phyllis George reported that the deadline to submit items for publication in the February 2009 BBG is Wednesday, January 7, 2009.

Shop: Wayne Barnett reported that the broken shop equipment is repaired, and now it is in good shape and in good running condition. Wayne also stated that the damaged blade reported last month was immediately brought to his attention by the user. The blade was found to be faulty and is now replaced.

Old Business

2009 Show Chairs: Assistant Show Chairman Rick Rexroad reported that notices need to be mailed announcing the Show date change to November. Nancy Fischer stated that as a member of the Show committee, she was already preparing to send out flyers printed with messages such as "Save the Date" and similar sayings to alert the membership, dealers, and past show attendees. She is including positive statements about the Show being close to the Holiday Season and not being in danger of another Gulf hurricane. Beverly Mace reported that the SCFMS DeRidder Show also is re-scheduled.

Rick Rexroad discovered only after plans for changing the 2009 show date were finalized that the Houston Beading Society received none of the e-mails he had sent to all the dealers to get their input. The Houston Beading Society Show is scheduled for the same days as the HGMS Annual Show. Their contact person was concerned whether the Houston Beading Society would have the same number of tables at their booth as last year, and Rick assured her that would be the case.

Education Committee: Terry Proctor reported that he spoke with the New Education Chairman, Brian Honsinger. Brian has new classes lined up, and all is progressing

well. It was suggested that Brian communicate this progress by e-mailing the membership about upcoming classes.

Club House:

1. Matt Dillon delivered the new **stop blocks** to the Club, and they need to be installed in the parking lot. Matt also mentioned the necessity of having stop blocks for vehicle and pedestrian safety. They also prevent traffic driving through the Club's parking lot from nearby buildings.
2. Rick Rexroad reported that the new **lock set** for the front door was scheduled to be installed, but the contractor hired for the job did not show up.

HGMS-Scholarship Policy and Application: Terry Proctor stated that Art Smith requested that 100% of his donations go to the Scholarships. Wayne moved that all money donated to HGMS by Art Smith be used for scholarships and be marked in memory of his wife, Elizabeth Smith. The motion was seconded by Nancy Fischer, and it passed by unanimous vote.

Computer Software Purchase: Phyllis George reported on her follow-up for purchase of new software: She said that TechSoup, the company that sells computer software applications and hardware to registered non-profit organizations, will sell the equipment she needs to HGMS at their discounted prices. Rodney Linehan confirmed that HGMS has been registered with the Texas Secretary of State as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization since 1960. The total price for the computer software Phyllis is ordering is \$136.00. If purchased separately at the regular retail price, the software carries a value of approximately \$3,000. Rick Rexroad moved that HGMS pay \$136.00 to purchase the software from TechSoup. The motion was seconded by Matt Dillon and passed by unanimous vote.

New Business

1. Terry Proctor reported that HGMS has a one-year contract with the Humble Civic Center for the same cost as 2008. He further stated that the HCC does not negotiate on future events, but that there had been a small increase from 2007 to 2008.
2. Rick Rexroad passed out the 2009 Show Budget to the Board. He said the dealer fees for tables remains the same for 2009 as it was in 2008. After a lengthy discussion by the Board on line-item issues, necessary adjustments were made to the budget, including an increase in ticket prices. Phyllis George moved to approve the 2009 HGMS Show budget as amended; Nancy Fischer seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote. A copy of the amended 2009 HGMS Show Budget is attached.
3. Terry Proctor passed out the **Certificates of Merit** to those who did not attend the Christmas/Holiday Season Party.
4. **HGMS Mission:** Terry Proctor presented a written outline of his New Concept for HGMS Mission which was discussed by the Board. Many good suggestions were made and will be considered. Please see details in the President's Message on the front page of the February 2008 BBG.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Shop Hints & Tips

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

from sources as noted via Gem Cutters News 6/2008

via News & Views 12/1998: Freshen pyrite and marcasite by soaking them overnight in a solution of oxalic acid. Use two ounces of dry acid to a quart of water.

Plain steel blades or blades that have had the diamonds worn off can be used to saw softer materials such as malachite, turquoise, azurite, and others.

To remove stain from quartz and agate, try this: dissolve 2 teaspoons potassium permanganate in a pint of water. Strain the mixture through cheesecloth. Let the specimen soak in the solution overnight. The purple color that forms on the specimen will be removed by the cleaning solution.

Garden Hint? *from Shawnee Slate 11/1996*

Walt Brundage of the Shawnee G&MS gets the sludge left in the water tray of his Genie into suspension, then dumps it into his chrysanthemums. He gets all kinds of different colors in the flowers from the mineral content of the sludge.

Stabilizing Porous Stones: *via the Rocky Reader, 9/2000*

If you would like to try your luck at stabilizing a porous stone such as turquoise so it can be cut and polished, then Silvery Colorado River Club offers these instructions: Take a jar with a lid; add 1 pint acetone (do this outdoors!), add the contents of both the resin and the hardener tubes of epoxy glue, mixing well (suggest 330 water clear epoxy); add well-dried stones; cover and let remain at least 4 days. Remove stones, allow a week to dry. They should now be stabilized and ready for working.

Silver Working Hints: *from Gulfport Gems, 4/1994*

Solder in dim light if possible, for then you can watch the color of your work as it is being heated. The first visible red shows the work is about 900 degrees F. When the work is dull red, the temperature is around 1200 degrees F. A cherry red indicates 1400 degrees F., and silver is molten at 1641 degrees F. So, avoid overheating the work. Many a bezel has been burned right through.

Hand lotion cleans grease! *via Chats and Chips, 4/2007 and The Rockpile 7/2007*

A hobbyist says when sawing rocks or other greasy things, he must wash his hands a lot. Soap requires several washings—even lava soap. One day he accidentally squeezed his wife's lotion instead of the soap dispenser, and found that the oil washed off in one application and his hands smelled like lotion instead of ALMAG! He used Jergens® extra dry lotion and rinsed in plain water.

Late-Breaking Club News

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

AFMS Inter-Regional Rockhound Rendezvous

by Richard Pankey

AFMS Inter-Regional Field Trip Chair

from AFMS Newsletter 12/2008–1/2009

Our next Inter-Regional Rockhound Rendezvous is scheduled for May 20–25, 2009 (Memorial Day Weekend) to Davis Creek/Lassen Creek for **OBSID- IAN!!!** The Rendezvous is hosted by the Northwest Federation of Mineral Societies (NFMS) and the California Federation of Mineral Societies (CFMS).



Davis Creek/Lassen Creek is the prime obsidian collecting in California with an abundance of a great variety of beautiful obsidian. This area is noted for sheen obsidian: multi-colored rainbow, electric blue, green, mahogany-gold, silver, gold, and pink sheen. Also to be found is mahogany, lace, double flow, and needle obsidian. This area is located on Buck Mountain in the heart of the Modoc National Forest. The altitude ranges from 5000 to 7000 feet. A free permit is required for collecting, and it will be available at camp. In addition to the collecting trips, we will have potluck dinners, happy hours, speakers, evening campfires, knapping demonstrations, tailgate displays, map exchange, and a great rockhound get-together.

Davis Creek/Lassen Creek is in the extreme northeastern corner of California on Highway 395 between Alturas, CA, and Lakeview, OR. The collecting area is in the mountains behind the little town of Davis Creek which is 22 miles north of Alturas. Some supplies and gasoline are available at the general store, also ice cream on a hot afternoon. The people at the store are very helpful, and prices are reasonable. They can give advice on the road conditions and other local information.

There are two established campgrounds convenient to the collecting areas, although you can camp in many locations throughout the mountains. The Plum Valley Campground has many trees and a stream, but the interior roads are somewhat rough and narrow. Large trailers and motor homes may have difficulty.

A much larger campground that can handle any size rig is the Lassen Creek Campground. This is the campground we will use for our rendezvous. This is a beautiful, spacious campground with enough room for our group and all of our planned activities. There is a stream and big tall pine trees. No facilities are available at any of the campgrounds except for well-maintained pit toilets. All trash must be carried back out. Motels and full hook-up campgrounds are available in Alturas and Lakeview.

There are a lot of other rockhounding opportunities within 100 miles of our Rendezvous site: sunstones, opal, petrified wood, other obsidian sites, geodes, and more. The Rendezvous is a good way to start your summer collecting tour. So mark your calendar—**May 20 to 25, 2009**, watch for the trip flier for all the details, and start making your plans to join us for another great Inter-Regional Rockhound Rendezvous. The trip flier and other information for the Rendezvous will be posted on the CFMS Web site, <www.cfmsinc.org> in December and on other federation Web sites.

AFMS Safety—Reposing Easily*by Mel Albright**AFMS Safety Chair**AFMS Newsletter 2/1995*

Whenever we rockhounds go on a field trip, we are likely to be around a creek bed, a road cut, a quarry, a steep bank, or a spoils pile. If so, we should all remember that there is something called the “angle of repose.”

No, I’m not talking about how flat you should be when you lie down to rest.

The angle of repose is a civil engineering term. It is a fact that a pile of anything—sand, rocks, marbles, hay, or whatever—has the property that the slope of the side of the pile determines whether the pile slides down or not.

If the slope is over the angle of repose, it will slide, sooner or later. If it is less than the angle of repose, it will sit there forever without sliding. The angle depends on the materials in the pile and on their sizes, so there is no general rule as to what angle is safe. Therefore, most road cuts and fills are slightly less steep than the angle of repose.

If you stand below or try to climb a slope that is too steep for the material it is made of, there is a very good chance that the top will come down on you. And it gets more complicated.

Consider what happens when you step into the side of a slope. Your foot forms a hollow. This means the material just above and just below your footprint is at too steep an angle. So, it slides down. As it goes, it continuously forms a slope that is too steep, so the material slides and slides and forms a major slump. If you are trying to ride it or if you are below it, that is not good.

When you dig or extract a sample from a pile or a cliff or a quarry wall, the same thing happens. If you dig a tunnel, you have definitely formed a highly unstable slope, and the slightest jar may bring it all down on you. That’s why mines have shoring. Several children are killed each year because of this. I’m sure you have heard of it.

So when hunting rocks, test the slope on or below for stability before getting into a position where you might get hurt or buried. And, always keep an eye on any rockhounds who are above you. They might start something that hurts YOU!

Want to Write an Article?

The January, February, and March BBG issues are usually the leanest issues of the year. Members haven't yet begun thinking about writing articles for the BBG, and they frequently begin sending articles at the same time. When that happens, there may not be enough space in the BBG for all the articles received that month. So plan early. Don't let your article get bumped! What should you write about? How do you write an article? See the next two articles. They address the HOW and the WHAT very well.

How to Write an Article for Your Club's Bulletin In Twelve Steps

by Terry Yoschak, Roseville Rock Rollers Bulletin Editor

Via the CFMS Newsletter 9/2005 and The Pineywoods Rooter 5/2008

Based on "Getting Your Club to Write," by Dennis Westman, Minnesota Mineral Club in S.C.R.I.B.E. Newsletter, Oct-Dec 2004 and On Writing, by Stephen King, Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Step 1. Pick a subject that interests you. It could be a story about something you've done (collecting agates, panning for gold), or it could be research about something you've never done (digging up dinosaur fossils in Antarctica).

Step 2. Map it out. Planning is everything. You have to figure out how to get from A to Z in your story. Outline with pencil and paper the bare bones of your story. Jot down important things you "must have" in the article (where the collecting took place, how many gold nuggets you found). Keep in mind the five W's of journalism: Who, What, Where, When, Why. Your outline should include all of them.

Step 3. Start writing. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or punctuation. That's what editors are for. *Editor's Note: Remember, however, that we're not superhuman. Use words that say exactly what you mean. If we don't understand what you're trying to say, we can't clarify your meaning for your readers.*

Refer back to your outline, use your own voice, and let the story flow naturally, as you would tell it to a friend. With your outline, you won't forget all those exciting tidbits you might have left out if you were just spouting off to your friends.

Step 4. Plot, characters, scenery, and dialogue. If you were submitting a movie script, you'd be kicked out of the producer's office for leaving any of these items out. A story can't be a story without them; it won't "sell" to the audience. Let's cover those four items in the next few steps.

Step 5. Plot. Writing is not rambling. The ideas of Beginning, Middle and End are universal to all stories. Usually a normal timeline is followed where "what happened next" is the rule. The most common exception to this rule is a flashback ("The saber-toothed cat plunged into the sticky tar pit, unaware that his fossilized bones would be left for us to find 20,000 years later.")

Step 6. Characters. The people who are in the story: it's your job to describe them, from height, age, hair color and clothing, to habits and attitude. Simply writing that "Jake drove us as far as Mesquite," is not the same as writing, "With Jake's spiky green hair and his crazy attitude toward other drivers on the road, we feared we'd never make it to Mesquite." Strictly, only people can be characters, but no one will complain if animals, plants, and rocks have personalities in your story as well.

Step 7. Scenery. This is the setting of the story, and it includes the natural landscape and the man-made objects in it (roads, tools, vehicles, buildings, etc.) You can really get imaginative with descriptions since no two people see the same object in the same way. If you want to describe a yellow crystal as "lemony" or an empty desert as "filled

with the promise of geological secrets,” it’s up to you.

Step 8. Dialogue. What the characters say in the story. Though many stories are written without dialogue, it’s usually more interesting if you include some. Writing that “Julie was excited about her fossil find” is less interesting than writing, “We all heard Julie yell, ‘I think I found a complete tooth!’” Internal dialogue—describing your thoughts and emotions—also adds to a story, making it more compelling than a “just the facts, ma’am” report.

Step 9. Go back and revise. You’ve written your story by now, following Steps 1 through 8. But it’s pretty rough; it could be better. Go back over it, maybe read it out loud to a friend, add a few things you forgot, or cut out some unnecessary sentences. Substitute a better word or phrase for the ones you wrote originally. Polish it. Rockhounds all know that most everything looks better with a good polish on it.

Step 10. Give your story a title. A catchy title is always a plus and will draw readers to your story. “Titanic” is a better title than “An Interrupted Ocean Voyage.” But don’t go overboard! A simple, appropriate title is still better than a contrived, overly cute one.

Step 11. Space is a consideration. Everyone who writes for publication in print (bulletins, newspapers, magazines) must deal with space limitations. Cutting your work is often necessary. Writer Stephen King says that you should always cut out or condense at least one-third of everything you’ve written. It’s like over packing for a trip: when you return home, you realize that you didn’t need to cart around all that extra baggage. In the real world, an editor will have to cut your story if you don’t do it yourself.

Step 12. Prepare for next time. If you weren’t entirely happy with your first story, think about future possibilities. Carry a small notebook with you and jot down observations about people, scenery, conversations, etc. You’ll be surprised how easily this will guide you in completing Steps 1 through 8.

Write Like a Pro

by *Barbara Florio Graham*

www.SimonTeakettle.com

from SCRIBE 4–6/2008

What type of writing makes you most anxious? Can you identify the major problem you face when you sit down to write? Chances are it isn’t content. Most of you have plenty of expertise to share and lots of interesting experiences to relate, so finding something to write about is seldom the problem.

When I taught writing workshops for federal government departments, the problem also wasn’t content. At the beginning of each session I’d ask participants to raise their hands to volunteer their most pressing concerns. After listing all their replies on a flip chart, I realized that the most common problems fell into just a few categories.

The last writing workshop I gave was a difficult assignment. I was asked to address a conference of administrative professionals, providing writing tips in a forty-minute

session. Forty minutes? To cover the entire spectrum of the writing process? I finally decided to boil the most serious problems down to three succinct pieces of advice.

The first is to define the subject. This depends on the audience. Managers need to see the big picture, the overview. Technical people need details. Sales and consumers need the focus to be on benefits. What is the purpose of this piece of writing? Some common purposes are to inform, to persuade, to dispute, or to clarify. Putting the purpose in the first sentence is an good way to start any piece of writing. It saves the reader having to figure out what this letter/e-mail/ article is all about.

My second tip is to let format help the reader understand quickly. This means using bullets, numbers, charts, and diagrams where appropriate. Color graphics, video clips, and blurry photos don't communicate effectively. But a bulleted or numbered list, a chart, or a diagram can convey your meaning quickly and accurately.

Keep paragraphs short. If you're preparing a formal document, don't get hung up on outline form. This can be cumbersome. Instead, follow short paragraphs with bulleted or numbered items.

There are three errors you need to avoid at all cost. One is the "almost-right" word. If you aren't sure about the difference between appraise/apprise, affect/effect, substantial/substantive, or alienate/annihilate, consult a dictionary. The only way to ensure you never make an embarrassing mistake is to check every key verb and noun.

A second thing that drives readers crazy is what I call, "Who's that again?" This occurs when you identify someone at the beginning of the article and then use just the name later in the document. The reader often thinks, "Hansen? Is he the seller or the buyer?"

This is easy to correct if you just remember to remind the reader of who the person is, so that instead of writing: "Hansen agreed that this was the best choice," write, "Hansen, as head of the division, agreed..."

The third problem I call, "So what?" This is usually a problem with sentence structure, where the purpose you should have identified at the beginning is lost along the way. This can create confusion as you slip off onto a tangent or provide too much description and too little action. At some point, the reader wonders, "What's the point?"

Solve this easily by finding a strong verb to carry each sentence. The verb is every sentence's engine. It tells us what is happening now, what happened in the past, or is planned for the future.

A noun at the beginning of the sentence identifies who is responsible (the individual doing the action), and a noun following the verb gives the reader the outcome or goal, but the verb provides the action, the process. A verb can always stand alone as a command, and can form, all by itself, a complete sentence with "you" as the implied subject.

Effective sentence construction starts with an action verb. Then you add a subject: the

person (or group) who performs this action. If you put that main information in the main clause, you can then build the rest of your sentence by adding phrases and clauses as modifiers. This method often eliminates weak subjects that require adjectives to describe them.

Here's an example I used in my workshop. Start with a clear subject and an active verb: "The company plans to complete an evaluation of the new method," and then add qualifying phrases and clauses beginning with prepositions or subordinate conjunctions like: when, if, unless, before, because, assisted by, under the direction of, etc. Build better sentences, then put them together and you'll have a better article.

Barbara Florio Graham is the author of three books, including *Five Fast Steps to Better Writing* and *Five Fast Steps to Low-Cost Publicity*. There's lots of helpful information on her Web site: www.SimonTeakettle.com.

SCFMS—House Special

by Ike House

Executive Vice President

from SCFMS Newsletter 9–10/2008

Had a wonderful time! Wish you were here! Well there was no place like Texas for a really big show and a really big Editor's Breakfast, SCFMS Meeting, Awards Banquet, and HGMS Show. Kudos to the members of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society for rolling out the red carpet and making everyone feel welcome especially in light of the difficulty with a recent hurricane (that shall remain unnamed).

I talked to quite a few members who were manning (and womanning) the show who still did not have electricity at their homes. However, all were pleasant and cheerful in spite of their personal trials. I guess it is just as the old saying goes: "the show must go on." And on it went!

I don't know what the final numbers were, but I don't think I have ever been to a show with so many BUYERS on Sunday! If there is an economic recession in Houston, you couldn't tell it by the number of cars on the road, customers in the store, and attendees at the show. My wife and I had a great time, and it was great to see all the familiar faces again.

Congratulations to all the winners in the SCFMS and AFMS Editor/Author Contest. Don Shurtz and Linda Jaeger did a fantastic job, and I especially appreciated them getting all the entries on a CD for everyone. We had quite a few inducted into the Editors Hall of Fame, proving once again, that the SCFMS is a mighty tenacious bunch! It was too bad we had no entries in the junior poetry. Winning a writing award on a regional and national level sure looks nice on a college student's application. Keep that in mind for your junior club members and see if you can get them to write an article or poem this year. The cafe really put on the dog with eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, grits, three kinds of pancakes, breakfast burritos, all manner of drinks, cere-

als, etc. I rolled out of the Editors Breakfast,

The SCFMS meeting went well, and our financial footing looks better than ever. I was happy to see so many delegates in spite of the hotel uncertainty. At the awards banquet there were quite a few entrants of competitive cases, and the winners were quite pleased. Many yelps and squeals of delight were noted, and of course we enjoyed the hot fried catfish and shrimp (yum)!

It was great to meet one of the professors who helped our Scholarship Award winner select a scholarship recipient. Both of the students selected were class A grad students. Thanks, Bridget, the SCFMS should be proud! I also won a door prize, the biggest diamond I've ever seen—it must've been 200 carats! Wow, you just wouldn't believe the generosity of the HGMS! J

Everyone must really make an effort to get to Temple for next year's SCFMS show. I am already looking forward to it!

The SCFMS—Sixty-Five Years—Growing and Going Strong

by Paul W. Good

SCFMS Editor

from SCFMS Newsletter 11-12/2008

The South Central Federation had its beginning in December 1943, sixty-five years ago, in San Angelo, TX. The organization was first named "The State Mineral Society of TX." Later the name was changed to "TX Regional Federation of Mineral Societies."

In 1954 the Federation joined the American Federation, and the name was changed to "Southwest Federation of Mineral Societies." For some reason in 1955 the name was changed to "TX Federation of Mineral Societies." By this time nine clubs had joined the Federation.

Finally in 1970, the name was changed to the "South Central Federation of Mineral Societies."

Today, sixty-five years later, the SCFMS has forty-one clubs with a membership of 3254 adults and 257 juniors for a total of 3511.

Interesting Internet Web Sites with Collecting Information

from Central Michigan Lapidary and Mineral Society online newsletter

12/08 via Rocky Reader 1/2009

One good way to imagine spring and summer fieldtrips is to get prepared for actually going on one! It really is not enough to just throw on your jacket and go. It is also a good idea to get home again—with you and your specimens in good condition. Here are a few Web sites with useful information on rockhounding and how to look like you have experience, even when you don't.

From the Rockpick Legend Co in Utah: <http://www.rocks4u.com/rockhounding.htm>.

This site has very practical information on what to take with you to make rockhounding a rewarding and survivable experience. Their list of what to take includes First Aid kit, spare tire and tools to change a flat, gas, water, toilet paper, garbage bags, hand lens, identification guide, maps and guide books, notebook and pencil, rock hammer and sheath, chisels, safety goggles, garden trowel, round point shovel and hoe, specimen containers, a buddy, food, medications, hat and sunscreen, camping gear, and patience and common sense. You can't get much more practical than that.

Excerpts from Introduction to Fossil Collection © 1994, by Glen J. Kuban: <http://paleo.cc/kpaleo/equip.htm>. This site prepares you for rockhounding in temperate climates, and has some advice for serious collectors.

From Rockhounding Arkansas: <http://www.rockhoundingar.com>: This site has lots of information, including a List of links to other sites (add to the address above: /linklist.html)

Collecting Tools and how to use them (add to the address above: /pebblepups/tools.html)
Managing a Collection (add to the address above: /collection.html)

- o Getting serious with your collection
- o Importance of labels
- o Sizes of collectable minerals
- o Trimming specimens
- o Cleaning minerals
- o Displaying your minerals
- o Since you can't take it with you.

If you are beginning to feel that the rocks are taking over the house, the garage, the barn, and the yard, this last Web site could be very helpful. At least you'll know you are not alone!

Facetor's Corner

by Steve Weinberger

from Gem Cutters News 1/2009

One of my former students recently asked me a question about polishing a stone he had been faceting. It seems that he had done a great job cutting the pavilion of the stone (an amethyst) with all the facets meeting properly. Then he started polishing, and that's where his problems began.

It seems that some of his facets polished wonderfully, but others mysteriously developed what he described as "scratches from hell." He was using a cerium oxide-coated DynaDisk, and his first stab at correcting the problem was to wash off the lap. When the scratches continued to get worse, he switched to a film lap coated with cerium. He used very light pressure as he'd been taught. That too didn't work, and the scratches became so deep that he had to recut the pavilion in order to remove them.



His next try was with a brand new film Spectra lap, figuring that the different polishing compound might solve his problem. Alas, scratches appeared again, and he was forced to go back and slightly recut the pavilion again to remove them.

When he finally contacted me, I asked him a simple question. "What kind of water are you using?" "Huh?" was his response. "Are you using ordinary tap water or filtered water," I asked. His response was that he used ordinary tap water. I suggested that he buy a bottle of distilled or filtered water, or run his tap water through a coffee filter before using it in his faceting setup.



A few days later he called me again, this time to brag about his now finished and well polished stone. He had used a coffee filter on his tap water and was amazed at how many tiny grains of sand were trapped by the filter. It was those grains of sand that were causing the scratches on his stone. He had forgotten that many cities use sand filters to help purify their drinking water and that sometimes tiny particles escape into the water. Sometimes foreign particles enter the water pipes after repairs have been made somewhere down the line, too. They usually aren't harmful to us to drink, but they sure can wreak havoc on polished surfaces.

So, a word to the wise. If you're polishing quartz or another softer stone, getting scratches during the polishing stage, and using water as the lubricant, use either distilled water or run your tap water through a filter before using it.

Seven Photos Taken By Steve Blyskal at the Christmas Party *(When he wasn't entertaining us by playing the guitar and singing)*







Agates—Some Classifications

by Ron Gibbs

from *Goldrush Ledger*, November 2007

Cryptocrystalline means that the structure of agate comes from many small crystals cemented together with more silica. The process of making agate is most likely a solution or gaseous process and not a simple melt cooling.

Molten magmas grow large crystals if cooled slowly, or random, small, crystals if cooled rapidly. The patterns found in most agates don't fit either scheme of mineral formation from a melt.

The bulk material that cements the agate together is silica and is called chalcedony. Sometimes pure chalcedonies are formed and collected for gemstone use. Green chalcedony containing nickel is also known as chrysoprase. A red variety has the name of carnelian, brown is called sard, and there are also purple and bluish colors. These materials are usually found in seams or narrow lens-like openings.

Agates form in rounded nodules or in seams. This lends itself to the theory of liquid or gas crystallization. Flowing magmas (lava) often trap gases in bubbles as they cool, thus providing an ideal nursery for agate growth. Many high-silica lavas with entrapped gas sphericals can be leached by rain water dissolving some of their silica content and flowing through the porous lava, filling the sphericals.

Over time a repeating cycle of wetting and drying of the spherical chambers might produce a pattern of periodic precipitation. If the silica changes chemistry from time to time, it might well carry differing amounts of dissolved metals (colorants) into the growing agate, providing bands of color.

There are many varieties of agate, and it is not likely that one growth method can be found which can produce all of the various types. Many nodules contain "fortifications," or concentric bands of alternating or repeating colors. These may follow the general shape of the nodule or might form straight parallel bands across the nodule. Sometimes they do both in the same agate. The photos on this page show



Laguna Agate Nodules (Mexico) - fortification agates



Piranha Agate (Brazil) - fortification agate

some fortification agates. In nodules, the banding often makes concentric rings that resemble ancient fortification and hence the name.

In seam agate, the banding usually follows the edges of the seam or crack and forms roughly parallel lines along the length of the agate.

In some nodules the lines form parallel stripes that are aligned with the bottom of the nodule. These may be called “water-level” agates and may contain both fortification and level banding. This phenomena is also known as Uruguay bands. (see photos)

Another popular agate type is the “moss” agate. The moss agate gets its name from the mass of vegetable like strands trapped in the silica matrix. (see lower photos)

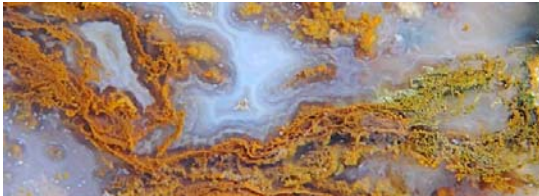
The moss can be of nearly any color, and many moss agates have more than one type of moss. This type of structure does not lend itself well to periodic precipitation as its



Brazilian Agate (Brazil) - (water level)



Rainbow Agate (Indonesia) - (seam agate)



Needle Peak Moss Agate (Texas)



Maury Mountain Moss Agate (Oregon)

origin. More likely the cementing mass has already begun to form a gel, and color channels are created by precipitating metal hydroxides and oxides along grain boundaries or flow channels.

The color of the moss is related to the metal hydroxide/oxide that is present. Most yellow, orange, and red mosses come from iron and black moss from manganese minerals. They are mostly made up of mixed metal oxides, much of it with amorphous structure. White mosses tend to form in the chalcedony as a phase change in the silica. The white material tends to be one or more forms of common opal.



Moss Agate (SW Texas)

Show Time 2009

January 24-25	Tyler, TX	East Texas Gem & Mineral Society Rose Garden Center
February 21-22	Pasadena, TX	Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society Pasadena Convention Center 7902 Fairmont Parkway
February 21-22	Georgetown, TX	Williamson Co. Gem & Mineral Society Ollie Liner Center
February 21-22	Plainview, TX	Hi Plains Gem & Mineral Society; Ollie Liner Center, South I-27; Mildred Matlock 806 293-3476; jmmatlock@suddenlink.net
March 7-8	Robstown, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Regional Fairgrnds, 1213 Terry Shamsie Blvd.
March 7-8	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring Prospectors Club Howard County Fair Barn
March 21-22	San Antonio, TX	Southwest Gem & Mineral Society Live Oak Civic center, 8101 Pat Booker Rd. www.swgemandmineral.org
April 11-12	Abilene	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center
April 25-26	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Society Heart O' Texas Fair Grounds
May 16-17	Lubbock, TX	Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society Lubbock Civic Center
May 24-25	Ft. Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Club Will Rogers Memorial Center
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
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		February				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 7:30 Board Meeting	4 7:30 Mineral Section	5	6	7 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
8	9 1:00 Day Light Section	10 7:30 Show Committee	11 7:30 Faceting Section	12	13	14 10-5 Shop Open Valentine's Day
15	16 7:30 Lapidary Section	17 7:30 Paleo Section	18 7:30 Mineral Section	19	20	21 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
22	23	24 7:30 General Meeting	25	26	27	28 10-5 Shop Open

2009		March				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 7:30 Board Meeting	4 7:30 Mineral Section	5	6	7 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
8	9 1:00 Day Light Section	10 7:30 Show Committee	11 7:30 Faceting Section	12	13	14 10-5 Shop Open
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29	30	31				

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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