



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
2009 HGMS President*

If you missed the Houston Fine Mineral Show held May 1–3 at the Embassy Suites Hotel near the Galleria, you missed a really great FREE show. The admission was free, the parking was free, the offer to HGMS of a table near the door to let folks know about our Club was free. Okay, the minerals weren't free. In fact some were breathtaking in both their beauty and their prices. This was a high-end mineral show.



HGMS was given a double table right at the entrance, and I guess some folks wanted to give HGMS credit for this great show. That's okay. We will take all the bows allowed, but Dave Waisman, whom I understand put this Show together, did a wonderful job. I didn't talk with every dealer there, but those I talked with said the Houston Fine Mineral Show was much better than when it was in Dallas last year, and they would be back next year. I understand the Show will be in Houston again next year. Dave told me that he appreciated the help HGMS gave them, and we will have our table location again next year.

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General Meeting Programs

May 26, 2009 Nathalie Brandes—Rock Stars, 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 earned 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

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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

This is a big thank you to all of you who worked the HGMS table for the three-day Show. Sigrid Stewart, our Show Chair, was one who worked the table, and I understand from her that we gained about four or five new members at this Show Great job to all our HGMS Volunteers. We really appreciate the members who volunteer to be at our HGMS display tables at these shows by other groups. That HGMS appearance is very important to keeping our presence out front year round.

This proved to be a very valuable weekend for me personally I met a 25-year old man with his head really screwed on right. He has his own mine in the Lake George area of Colorado, near Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument and the Pike National Forest. This area is noted for the beautiful amazonite, smoky quartz, fluorite, goethite, and other minerals. His name is Adam Sotomayor, and he had one of the most beautiful amazonite and smoky quartz specimens I have ever seen. The amazonite formed a base with the solitary smoky quartz perfect termination point sticking out above. His price was \$18,000, and I understand it will be on the cover of one of our mineral magazines in the next couple of months. Adam invited me to come see his mine which I certainly hope to be able to do. His father is a sculptor in marble, and he has one huge sculpture of a full-size grand piano with a lovely female figure (clothed) sitting on it. The price is in the millions, but it is for sale.

Adam's young lady friend with him at the Show is Naomi Hinds. Naomi manufactures jewelry from gold and silver and gem stones. I understand that she will have items in the Houston Museum of Natural Science Gift Shop and that she will be in Houston from time to time when she brings in the things she creates. A very talented couple.

Sharing the display room with Adam and Naomi was John Hofmann, III, another young man, also 25 years old. John has been a jeweler in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is also in the music business, and he has accomplished a number of other things for his young years. John told me that he had access to something like 10,000 acres in South Dakota where he was invited to come dig. He also invited me to join him. These three young folks were a delight to visit with and left me with a lot of confidence that rockhounding, Earth Science, and jewelry making is not dying out, but is well and alive in the hands of our youth. We certainly wish all these industrious and talented young folks our best in their careers in our field of interest, both vocationally and avocationally.

On another subject: Our new Outreach/Publicity program to bring Earth Science and Jewelry Making to our neighborhoods needs volunteers.

We have a large club, and we have a fairly good number of folks who do a lot of work on the Show, on the Board of Directors, on our Sections as Officers, program presenters, etc. However, HGMS has a great number of talented folks who aren't actively working on any project or group at present. It is to this group that we are reaching out and asking you to become involved. You will enjoy this and will enjoy

being one of those who makes this program work and who provides a valuable service to the Youth and Adults in your part of Harris County .

Please do the following, if you would, for Houston Gem & Mineral Society :

1. Determine in which Constable or Justice of the Peace Precinct you are—there are eight (8). These are our eight (8) Districts of the Outreach Program.
2. Find some other HGMS members who live in that same District, and talk with them about the HGMS Outreach Program.
3. Form a group of from three or four to as many as you like in your District to become the nucleus of your District. Then set up a meeting or meetings, when and where you like, to get or ganized in your HGMS District group.
4. Try to locate a Library , School, Church, Civic Center , Pizza Parlor , or whatever, that will allow HGMS the FREE use of an area where HGMS can put on a FREE program(s). It is good to try to find a centrally located place in your District or one that has a large population around that location, even if not centrally located. This location needs to be able to provide electricity, water, probably a vinyl floor (not carpet) where we can bring out some cutting and grinding equipment for programs. Then your group will invite young folks and adults to come learn how to cut and polish gem stones and possibly have some minerals and fossils identified. I will make videotapes available (I have over 100) so you can put on Earth Science film programs (PBS-type shows of 30 minutes to an hour). You can probably get *Houston Community News* to play up your meetings as a news story and to provide other forms of FREE advertising. Your HGMS District group may want to put on a program like this three or four times a year .
5. Set up your own procedure for programs, or we can help supply you with a suggested format. The format should include a very short introduction to what HGMS is; then one or two HGMS members who can deliver a short presentation about rocks, minerals, fossils, gemstones, etc., then have the program which may be a session to cut and polish stones, OR a videotape film, OR a program of general interest with specimens to show and tell about, or whatever you may come up with on Earth Science and/or Jewelry Making. You should have some HGMS Membership Application forms, so if anyone wants to join HGMS you can sign them up. Be sure to collect a check for the correct membership dues amount with the Application form, and deliver these both to our Membership Vice-President, Beverly Mace.

The purpose in this Outreach/Publicity project is:

- a. to make more people aware of the need, interest, and fun in being involved in Earth Science and Jewelry Making.
- b. make more folks aware of HGMS and show them that they can become members of a group with a lot to offer for very little money.

- c. to publicize HGMS and the HGMS SHOW , November 13–15, 2009, at the Humble Civic Center. A side benefit is that with these District things going on, we have something more to present to corporations and foundations that have grant funds. We can better show that HGMS is worthy of those grant funds for our growth and educational programs.

This District Outreach program will work only if we have HGMS members who read this in the BBG and determine that their involvement in this project is good not only for HGMS but also for themselves. It should not take a great deal of time to perform this educational/publicity outreach activity . You will probably only need to provide some volunteer time three or four times a year in your own part of Harris County to make this work.

Please call me and tell me what you think of this **Outreach Program**, and let me know if you are willing to be a volunteer. I think this program can do wonders for the image, recognition, and growth of HGMS—not to mention the good work in bringing Earth Science and Jewelry Making to our Greater Houston area community .

Contact me: Terrell William “Terry” Proctor, President, **Houston Gem & Mineral Society**

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Program Information *continued from page 1*

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: "The Nature of Diamonds" will be on display at HMNS from May 8, 2009 to September 7, 2009. The display takes visitors through the amazing transformations of these precious gems.

Neal is getting expert help from wife Inda on the mineralogy and from Jill Rowlands on the jewelry aspects. Neal says, "Since I am a paleontologist, you are going to get paleo at the same time (I bet you cannot figure out how I am going to do that). As a door prize, I am going to ask Beverly to give away a vial of 100-mesh synthetic diamond (we use it to recoat wheels in the shop). It looks like really sparkly sugar but in octahedrons.

"Bring your own diamonds, and you will look at them under my excellent binocular scope and check them for fluorescence. "We will also have a cleaning station with sudsy ammonia and a tooth brush. We are going to start BEFORE the meeting doing examinations and continue after it is over as needed."

The Shafter Silver District, Presidio County, Texas

by Arthur Smith, artsmithite@msn.com

In March of 2009, Kelly Nash of Dallas e-mailed me and said there was a new mine shaft in the Shafter district and that the Canadian company , Aurcana, has a Web site. If you are a collector of Texas minerals, you know how difficult it is to obtain specimens from the district. Will this be the big opportunity to get some Shafter mineral specimens if the mine starts production?



Eventually I got my notes out and reviewed the mineralogy and geology to try and see if there is such a possibility . This article is from those notes and is updated with data from the Aurcana Web site. I have been to the area only once, and that was in 1964. The mines are adjacent to the highway that runs southwest for 45 miles from Marfa and then to Presidio. In 1965 there was sort of a junk shop adjacent to the highway that had some rocks, but none were from the mine, so I bought a calcite specimen from Terlingua. There were dumps stretching off into the western horizon, but all were fenced and posted.

The Shafter District is the largest silver producing district in Texas, but with the closure of the Presidio mine, largest mine and main producer in the district in 1942, there has been little production since. Total production for the Presidio mine is listed at 30 million ounces of silver, 5,900 ounces of gold, and more than 8 million pounds of lead. The Presidio mine is on the east side of the district. Ore deposits occur in mantos, veins in steeply dipping faults, and dikes in dolomitic limestone of the Permian Mina Grande Formation, and they may extend into other formations. The closeness to the Cinati Mountain Oligocene age caldera gives a possibly hydrothermal origin to the ores of the district. The ores are rich in lead and locally zinc. Gold has been only secondary to silver production. According to Baker (1935) the deepest workings have ore as rich and as much oxidized as that near the surface. This makes a good possibility for secondary minerals in the new mining. The ore content is very irregular in tenor.

Why are there so few specimens from the early mining in Shafter? None were in the Texas specimens from the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science. It's probably for the same reasons that there are so few specimens available now from early Mexico mining. The areas were and still are very remote, so there were few local markets for specimens. No doubt most of the miners were Mexican, so there may have been a language barrier that also did not help. There were few if any high-grade gold or silver specimens. Perhaps there were few attractive specimens for the miners to save. Hopefully when new mining begins, we will see some of the minerals listed.

In 2008 Aurcana purchased the Presidio mine and surrounding properties. They hope to recover the remaining reserves of 47 million ounces of silver (8–10 ounces/ton of

ore in the downdip portion of the trend extending about three miles to the northeast.) A seven-foot in diameter production shaft serviced by an eighty-ton per hour hoist and 5100 feet of underground workings are ready. An underground crusher is planned, and the ore will be processed in above-ground leach tanks (Kelly Nash in mindat.org).

Tabular History of the Shafter Mining District, Presidio County, Texas

1880: John Spencer discovered the Presidio mine (Ross 1943).

1883: Presidio Mining Company began production with the discovery of the Mina Grande orebody (Ross 1943).

1888: Mining became profitable (Ross 1943).

1890: Ross and Chinati mines opened (Ross 1943).

1913: Cyanide mill built (Ross 1943).

1910: Smelting plant built for Chinati mines. Too much zinc in the ore (McMillan 1949)

1913–1926: Annual output was increased to 84,000 tons of ore (Ross 1943).

1926: American Metals purchased mine (Ross 1943).

1930–1934: Mine shut down because of low silver prices (Ross 1943).

1935: 153 tons of ore shipped by Chinati mine (lead, silver, gold) (McMillan 1949).

1942: Presidio mine shut down because of lower ore grade, depletion of reserves, labor problems, incursion of water (Evans 1974). Equipment salvaged for war effort.

1946: Pillars robbed by M. F. Drunzer Lessee, ore shipped (Price, Henry, & Standen 1983)

1947–1948: U.S. Bureau of Mines explored the Chinati mine (McMillan 1949).

1948–1954: Carr (Sullivan) mine in western part of the district was worked, and 4000 tons of ore shipped (Evans, 1975).

1977–1983: Gold Field Mining Corporation completed exploration with conclusion that the mine could not be operated profitably as an open pit with June 1983 silver prices (Ohl & McBride 1985).

1994: Mine acquired by Rio Grande Mining Company, exploration (Aurcana 2009)

2001: Silver Standard Resources acquired Rio Grande

2003: Three hundred-ton mill moved to the site by Silver Standard.

2008: Aurcana obtained the mine, and everything is in place to begin production except the underground mill (Aurcana 2009).



Shafter and Presidio mine from an early 20th century post card. (AES collection)



New Head frame about 3 miles northeast of Shafter. Kelly Nash photo, 3/2009.

Minerals: Shafter Silver District, Presidio County, Texas

by Art Smith, artsmithite@msn.com

Acanthite is present as fine-grained black aggregates.

Anglesite

Bromargyrite occurs with naumanite and clausthalite, Smithsonian specimen 14113300GM

Calcite occurs as white to pinkish, some masses with crystals (Udden 1904)

Cerussite

Chalcopyrite

Chlorargyrite

Chrysocolla

Clausthalite is present in Smithsonian specimen 141 13300GM with bromargyrite and naumanite

Covellite

Descloizite occurs as chocolate brown tabular microcrystals with vanadinite in specimens recovered during exploration in the late 1970s. It was confirmed by EDS-SEM.

Dolomite observed as white to pink masses.

Galena is the primary ore mineral. It is argenteriferous and occurs as nodules, blebs, and masses.

Goethite forms as an alteration of pyrite and other minerals.

Gold

Hematite was reported by Udden (1904).

Hemimorphite

Lead as native lead was found in the Carr (Sullivan) mine about 1950. A mass 7.5 by 10 cm is in the Harvard museum, and a small specimen is in the Houston Museum of Natural Science. It also occurs as threads and as sheets to 1 cm thick (Lonsdale & Dickson 1952)

Litharge is reported in the Carr mine by Lonsdale & Dickson (1952)

Malachite is reported in the district (Udden 1904).

Naumanite occurs with bromargyrite and clausthalite, Smithsonian specimen 14113300GM

Plumbojarosite forms a yellow orange coating that has vanadinite crystals and descloizite crystals implanted on it in specimens recovered in the late 1977 during exploration. Its identity is confirmed by EDS-SEM

Pyrite: small sparsely disseminated crystals (Ross 1943)

Quartz: most is massive, some drusy quartz

Silver: rare, but some rich pockets found during early mining (Udden 1909).

Smithsonite: mined for zinc at the Montezuma mine (1915-1916) (Price et al. 1983)

Sphalerite: disseminated but some small masses.

Tetrahedrite

Turquoise

Vanadinite variety endlichite is reported by Silver (1999). Pale grayish elongated crystals occur with descloizite and yellow-orange plumbojarosite in specimens collected during exploration in the late 1970s. EDS-SEM showed it was not endlichite.

Willemite: reported by Silver (1999).

Wulfenite: reported by Lonsdale and Dickson (1952) from the Carr mine

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Proposal Placed before the HGMS Board on 5-5-2009

by Wayne Barnett

Topic: Change BBG to Electronic Format only for members with e-mail access.

Reasons: Reduction in costs of printing and mailing the BBG

Member benefits: Better clubhouse facilities from funds spent on maintenance and upgrades.

The Board Of Directors (BOD) would like a straw vote from the membership on a motion presented to them at the May board meeting. If you are in favor of or against this proposal please let one of your HGMS officers or BOD Section Representative know. Each member of the BOD is listed in the front of the BBG. Each Section Representative is being requested to hold a straw vote at their Section meetings this month to get a general opinion from the membership.

The motion presented to the BOD was:

1. The 90% of the membership that has e-mail will be notified via the electronic notification process that the BBG is available from the Web site so they may download a copy.
2. Those households included in item 1 will no longer receive the BBG through the mail.
3. The 10% of the membership who do not have e-mail will continue to receive the BBG via USPS mail.
4. Individuals who have e-mail and wish to continue to receive the BBG via hard copy be charged 25 dollars per year for the service.
5. The number of hard copies being generated is reduced to those needed to send to the 10% non-electronic mail recipients, archival needs, and those paying for a hard copy. (Perhaps 50 copies total)
6. Any junior member whose parent (guardian) is not also a member of HGMS be sent the notification that BBG is available to their parent's (guardian's) e-mail address.
7. Exchange copies with other clubs are via the electronic version only.

In 2008 the HGMS BOD was looking at how it could better make ends meet in the budget.

In a 2008 article in the BBG, it was noted that about **50% of the dues for yearly membership** went to publish and send the BBG to the membership.

Statistic: A survey of the 2007 roster shows that HGMS had about 374 registered adult households. Of those households only 37 did not have e-mail, ten percent or less.

Fact: HGMS produces both a paper and an electronic version of the BBG .

Fact: Most households receive at least one copy of the paper version through the mail.

Fact: The HGMS board agreed to have the BBG available (2005–to the present), without password, from the HGMS Web site at the request of the webmaster . This was done so more points could be received in the SCFMS awards competition for best Web site.

Inference: The BBG is no longer a benefit of being a member of HGMS. Anyone logging onto the HGMS Web site can download a copy of the latest or any other online archived issue of the BBG .

Earlier this year the HGMS treasurer requested that our books be reviewed. One of the significant points that was made by the reviewer was that if the BBG was produced electronically then HGMS could save about \$10,000 a year in production costs. While the total may not be saved, a greater part will be. When these changes are made to the management of the publication of the BBG , it will significantly reduce publication costs. Some of the economy of scale for hard copies that still need to be printed and mailed will be lost, but even if the increase in production costs are 100% for the remaining 10% to be mailed and archived, the savings would be about 80% of what is presently being spent on the BBG . This will also result in:

1. Receiving the BBG significantly earlier for 90% of the membership. Alternatively there could be a later deadline so more timely information can be included with each issue.
2. The remaining 10% of the membership will also receive the BBG faster because it will be sent by first class mail.
3. Significant budgetary reduction for HGMS for the production of the BBG .
4. Significant reduction in labor for production and mailing of BBG .
(*Editor's note: There would be NO reduction in my labor to create the BBG, and that's about 85% of the production labor and time.*)
5. Additional funds will be available for building and shop maintenance and upgrade.
6. Decrease in the amount of paper generated by the publication of the printed version.
7. If a member needs a paper copy then they can print it themselves and it can be in full color instead of black and white.

Many organizations both amateur and professional are publishing their bulletins and newsletters electronically. In many of these organizations those that wish to have a paper version sent to them an extra charge is made for membership for the service.

It was pointed out at the Board meeting that in the last few months some of the income to the General Fund has been changed, and is now designated for other purposes by the donor . Because of these changes, several thousand dollars a year that

would have been available to the General Fund will have to be found elsewhere. The cost reductions resulting from the changing of the publication method of the BBG will offset most if not all these reductions.

**Response to proposal placed before HGMS Board
on May 5, 2009 by Wayne Barnett**
by T.W. "Terry" Proctor
2009 HGMS President

Each month I prepare an Agenda for HGMS Board Members. It is usually sent in advance to Board Members, and another copy is handed out at Board Meetings. In the Agenda is a notation asking any Board member (or other HGMS member) who wants to bring something up during the meeting to please let me know, so it can be put on the Agenda and all Board Members can be notified, usually in advance. This procedure is especially important when the proposal is something that would be considered a change—especially a major change—to the way HGMS is operated. Some HGMS Board members who normally attend every meeting were not present at the last meeting.

Just before the meeting was adjourned, Wayne Barnett said he had something to bring up. He then moved that the HGMS should go to an almost all electronic Backbender's Gazette distributed by e-mail. This proposal represents a major change in how the BBG is distributed to the membership, so the matter should have been put on the Agenda and sent to all HGMS Board members before the meeting so they could plan to attend or could provide some input on the matter in advance.

Wayne's motion wasn't seconded at that time. The idea was discussed even though it was not on the Agenda. Then Wayne said he would withdraw his motion and asked that a straw poll be made. I suggested that the proposal be presented as a fair and balanced proposal with a pro and con side to the proposal. Wayne Barnett asked if I wanted to present a contrary view, but I told him I didn't plan to do that, but thought it should be proposed in a straw vote as an idea with both the pros and cons to the proposal. The Board seemed to believe that a straw vote could be helpful in finding out what the HGMS membership thought about the idea.

Now that I have seen the proposal itself, I feel I need to respond. Therefore, I present the following thoughts to the HGMS membership for them to consider along with Wayne Barnett's proposal.

1. As has always been my policy, any Board member wanting something on the Agenda will have that item put on the Agenda. However, in the future I shall stick with my policy that any Board Member wanting something on the Agenda must notify me in advance so that all Board Members can be notified before the meeting. That way Board Members will know what is going to be discussed and will have time to think about those things before they come to the meeting. I also put things on the Agenda that non-Board Members want brought to the Board's

attention. We have open Board Meetings where any HGMS member may attend on the first Tuesday night of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Club house.

2. Something submitted for the HGMS membership's "Straw Vote" should have a fair and balanced presentation with the pros and cons on both sides of an issue, not just the arguments of the proponent.
3. Wayne Barnett has presented this idea before, and I commend him in looking for the economic interests of HGMS in doing so. However, other things must be considered before doing away with the BBG. For many years it has been a mainstay that most of our active and passive members look forward to receiving each month. I am not intending in this response to be presenting the facts for opposition to this proposal. I am alerting the membership to the need for them to consider several things in responding to the "straw vote."
 - a. This "straw vote" is not a vote for or against Wayne Barnett's proposal. It is an attempt, at his request, to gain some insight from HGMS members in response to his proposal and to learn how they regard the BBG.
 - b. No formal manner has been set up to record or officially tally votes, but rather it's an invitation for HGMS members to let Board Members know your feelings on this matter.
 - c. While switching to delivering the BBG by e-mail would undoubtedly cut the annual expenses of the Club, it would also cut out one facet of the Club on which many members count. For some, the printed copy of the BBG is their only contact with the Club and with knowing what is going on.
 - d. As Wayne Barnett states, if the proposal is adopted, and you still want a mailed BBG, you would then pay extra for that. He proposes \$25.00 per year.
 - e. Is a free BBG on our Web site a drawback—or is it good publicity that entices prospective members to join HGMS?
 - f. The proposed percentages and the suggested savings, as provided by Wayne Barnett in his article, are just that—figures and inferences he has made.
 - g. Not mentioned is the fact that many folks who use a computer aren't going to also want to sit behind a computer to read the BBG. Instead, they prefer taking their copy to their comfortable reading chair to read, perhaps marking some of the articles for future review and saving their BBGs annually as source material for the future.
 - h. HGMS annually has volunteers who go to the functions of other organizations, often with a table furnished, and they hand out leftover copies of past BBGs to prospective members and to officers of other organizations. This helps demonstrate our great club and the publication which HGMS puts out. An online only BBG would end that tool.

Finally, I have responded, not because I don't think this is something the HGMS Board should look at and consider, but because the HGMS membership has a right to expect proposals to come to their Board in an organized manner by being put on the Agenda so your elected Officers and Directors can receive information beforehand of major proposals, have time to think about them, and be ready to discuss and act on them. Straw votes of the membership, if suggested, should be done in an orderly manner with some form of response set up. Then and only then, should the Board act and put the matter to a vote of the HGMS membership to determine the course of such an important matter .

The proposal may be worthy of action, and HGMS members may well think that Wayne Barnett's proposal is good and should be adopted. My response is just to make you aware of how this proposal came to you in this issue of the BBG , and that other than you personally letting your HGMS Officers and Directors know your thinking on this, there is no formal manner of collecting any straw vote results on this question. From past experience, purported Section votes on things often indicate only how one side or the other has encouraged what may be just a few members of a Section to support or oppose. Sections should also have advance notice to allow Section members time to think about and talk about the matter before any vote.

HGMS members have a right to know that there is solid HGMS support for things the Board does, that we are not merely relying on possibly skewed and false results.

So please let HGMS Board members know your feelings on this subject. Then we will review the feedback and determine what course to take on it. Thank you.

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. The June 3 meeting is our last meeting for the summer. We will resume meetings in September.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

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.

HGMS Education Report

by Brian Honsinger

Education Chair

Education is rolling right along. Wednesday May 6, 2009 a new member showed up at the shop at 3:00 p.m. to ask when the next class in anything might be starting. I was able to tell him it would begin in just three hours, and it's called wire wrapping! He signed right up, and by May 20, 2009 Charlie Fredregill will have educated his 21st student in Beginning Wire Wrapping. Way to go Charlie!

Soon Charlie should be ready to begin the Wire Ring and Bracelet Making Class, so everyone, please keep practicing your wire wrapping since an example of your current work is what will qualify you for that class. Only practiced wire wrappers need apply. Mary Ann, the next wire order might be huge!

Patty Scott's May 31 class for Introduction to Enameling is already sold out for the second time in a row. Now that is a fun class, and it only takes one Sunday afternoon. The most recent member to sign up in that class lives in Corpus Christy, and he joined the club just so he could take that one class. Education has always increased this club's membership, but this seems to be a really good year for it. Sign up now if you want a third class.

Wayne Barnett has two signed up for his Chain Making class, and it will make soon if not by the time you read this. That is a one-afternoon class.

Tom Wright has several students signed up for his Ad Hoc Casting Class, so if you are interested, see if you can get in that one. That is a two-Saturday morning class from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Both Wayne and Tom have trained students in various levels of jewelry making, and they will be ready to move those skills up to the next level soon, so look for announcements on intermediate and advanced classes forming.

We had to delay our Glass Bead Making just a bit. Even though there was the great first interest, people signing up did not match that first response. In July you are all going to hear more about this class as this could be a huge thing to get rolling at this club. Glass beads are being displayed and sold at every show, and being able to make an unmatched bead would give you a necklace or bracelet unique in all the world. Now who would not like that?

Tom Wright has generously agreed to help with education while Nell and I run off to the mountains for seven weeks. Now when you sign up for a class and leave your deposit check in the envelope in the shop payment bucket, **also be sure to tell Tom about it so he can tell the teacher of that class of your interest.**

The Fine Mineral Show

by Sigrid Stewart

2009 HGMS Show Chair

When we first heard about the Fine Mineral Show, some of us thought, “Uh oh, more competition!” Here we are, as a club, trying to compete for attention with all the myriad distractions of a city like Houston, and here’s another show! Reality soon took hold; here is a really cool show that we can go to, and we don’t have to work putting it on! But reality shifts on you—soon enough Scott Singleton was talking with Dave Waisman, the Fine Mineral Show organizer, about the possibility of us having a table at the new show, and they worked out a deal. Your HGMS Show Committee would mail Fine Mineral Show flyers to the HGMS membership, and in return we could man a table there. And Show Committee and fellow HGMS members would be working at our table at the Fine Mineral Show, of course.

There were many unknowns going into the show. Would the people of Houston like it, would they hear about it in time, would economic problems affect the show, could swine flu shut it down? Many folks in the Houston area have never been to a hotel show like the famous Tucson and Denver Gem & Mineral Shows. This worked to our advantage! People entering the lobby of the Embassy Suites wandered in and immediately focused on a table with a familiar bright orange banner, covered with rocks. We offered them information on our club and our show as we explained how the Fine Mineral Show worked and where to go, and we invited them to come back and visit with us about HGMS.

And you know what? It was a great show! Lots of fun, many wonderful things to see, and an inspiration to any lover of minerals, jewelry, and lapidary arts. Small rooms with spectacular, museum-quality displays. Items from \$10 to \$175,000! The dealers said they had a good response from the public and were delighted to see so many HGMS members. And for those of you who missed it, you’ll have to wait until next year—they’ll be back. But don’t feel too badly because in November, we’re going to put on the Houston Gem & Mineral Society’s 56th Annual Gem & Mineral Show—the best ever! We just need to remember what we’re good at and to emphasize our strong points: Earth Science and Lapidary education for children and adults, demonstrations and exhibits—and especially, a good strong club with a shop and great folks!

Gail Spann, a collector, has an interesting and fun report on the show posted at www.mineral-forum.com/message-board. Check out “Mineral Shows / Gail Spann’s writeup of the Houston mineral show, May 2009.” She has posted lots of photos.

Thanks to Dave Gardner, Nancy Fischer, Dallas Higgs, Patty Scott, Dave Hawkins, Denise and Tim Bicknell, Al Mowery, Rick Rexroad, Karen Burns, Chris Peek, Matt Dillon, and Steve Blyskal for representing the HGMS so capably!

Report on April 28, 2009 General Membership Meeting

by Terry Proctor

HGMS policy is that regularly scheduled meetings are rarely cancelled for any reason. However, it turns out that there are exceptions. The HGMS General Membership Meeting of April 28, 2009 was such an exception.

Norman Lenz was to appear and present his program on inclusions, good and bad, in gemstones. A GIA appraiser was to assist with this presentation and to answer questions. Norman is a Past President of HGMS, and his program was looked forward to by many. Susan Lenz, who has been slowly recovering from a brain tumor, was looking forward to being at the meeting and to finally getting to visit with friends after a long absence, as were HGMS members looking forward to visiting with her.

However, Houston was again the recipient of unusual amounts of rainfall. Many intersections were flooded; one lady and her car had been washed away and unfortunately she drowned, and the rainfall continued. With such weather problems, Norman Lenz also could not risk taking wife Susan out in the inclement weather.

There was a suggestion from First Vice President Matt Dillon that we move the April 28 meeting to Thursday April 30, as there were no meetings at the HGMS clubhouse that night. Therefore after consultation with some Board Members and others, I cancelled the General Membership meeting for April 28 but left the matter open in case the rain did stop of possibly sending a notice that we would have a meeting on Thursday. However, the forecasts indicated that the rain was going to continue after Tuesday through at least Thursday, so the danger of flooding didn't appear to get much better. That proved to be the case. Thursday still left much of Houston difficult to get around in.

Therefore, there was no April General Membership Meeting, and hence there are no Minutes to provide to you, the members of HGMS, other than this report of why the meeting was cancelled. I'm sure this came as no surprise, but I did appreciate the fact that Neal Immega said he would go to the clubhouse on Tuesday, April 28, 2009, in case anyone did show up, so he could let them know that the meeting was cancelled. Thank you Neal again, for your help.

Norman Lenz's program is rescheduled for October 27, and we look forward to seeing Susan at the meeting also.

WHAT WE CAN'T
DO ALONE
WE CAN DO
TOGETHER



Via
SCRIBE
2009
DVD

HGMS Board of Directors Minutes

May 5, 2009

by Regina Gorman, Secretary

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

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Wayne Barnett
	1 st Vice President	Matt Dillon		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



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

The April 7, 2009, Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting was printed in the Backbender's Gazette (BBG). Denise Bicknell moved that the minutes be approved as published. Regina Gorman seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan had previously e-mailed all members of the Board of Directors a copy of Treasurer's Report for April 2009. Attached were the April financials, bank statements, and bank reconciliations. The report reflected solvency, and there were no questions or comments for discussion.

Section Reports

Beading: Diane Sisson reported that five people attended their last meeting in spite of many members going on the Paleo field trip scheduled for that same weekend. Phyllis George, who was not in attendance, sent an e-mail to the Board of Directors stating that the Beading Section is having two meetings in May. On May 9 there will be a make-up session where members can work on unfinished projects, or they can make the Basic Peyote sampler which was the April project. The regularly scheduled meeting is on May 16, and the project will be making a Pearl Necklace Suitable for the Bride. Jillyann Hailes will be showing how .

Faceting: Wayne Barnett reported that this group is doing fine.

Lapidary: Phyllis George (absent) reported via her e-mail to the Board of Directors that the Lapidary Section meets May 18, and Ed Clay will lead the members through how to make a bezel that is an exact fit for a cabochon.

Mineral: Denise Bicknell reported that the Mineral Section is having an auction at their next meeting on May 20. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Club, and the balance goes to the people who brought the items to be auctioned.

Paleo: Neal Immega will be gone for two weeks from May 4–18. In Neal's absence, Wayne Barnett announced a fieldtrip is scheduled for Memorial Day weekend at Lake Texoma.

Youth: Beverly Mace reported that the young people are working on a lot of good projects and that the last session included a lively discussion of the recent flu scare.

Show Committee: Sigrid Stewart reported that work is progressing on the 2009 HGMS Show scheduled for November. She distributed a report (see attached) on the HGMS Show Committee's table at the Fine Mineral Show held at the Embassy Suites-Galleria on May 1-3. Helping Sigrid were the following HGMS volunteers: Dave Gardner, Nancy Fischer, Dallas Higgins, Patty Scott, Dave Hawkins, Denise and Tim Bicknell, Al Mowery, Steve Byskal, Rick Rexroad, Karen Burns, Chris Peek, and Matt Dillon.

Sigrid suggested that HGMS look at what successful museums and shows provide to the public and try to emulate their strongest points, then emphasize our own strong points such as education for kids and adults, demonstrations, and the allure of a good, strong club. Sigrid, Patty Scott (Publicity Chair), and Rick Rexroad (Dealer Chair), reviewed various issues. The Committee is trying to firm up the dealer lineup for the show, and they are confident that there will be no empty tables. Patty has sent publicity information to several magazines and will be ramping up publicity efforts. Later this month, the Committee will begin a meet-up group with the hope of tying-in to some of Terry Proctor's outreach initiatives.

BBG: Phyllis George reported that items for publication in the Backbender's Gazette are due Wednesday, May 6.

Old Business

AMFS Endowment Fund-Request from Bill Patillo: Terry Proctor brought to the attention of the Board that nothing has been made to donate to the AMFS for their auction. Wayne Barnett moved that a cash donation be made to the AMFS Endowment Fund. It was seconded by Nancy Fischer and passed unanimously.

Clubhouse Maintenance: Wayne Barnett and Matt Dillon stated that painting the stripes on the stop-blocks in the parking lot is not forgotten. Terry Proctor brought his labeling machine to be used to place new labels on the office door mail boxes for the Sections, Editor, Treasurer, and President. Tony Ma repaired the air abrasive machine.

TANO Membership and Grant Station: Terry Proctor will talk to Grant Station. He will use a "Shotgun" approach to find chemical and oil companies and will ask how to apply for a grant.

Electricity Supplier: Terry Proctor started a discussion on progress toward finding a new electric company because Stream Energy will no longer provide electric service to HGMS. A discussion on saving money on electricity involved not leaving lights on in the Club unnecessarily. Wayne Barnett suggested that we purchase motion-detection switches for the Club.

Scholarship Fund: Terry Proctor reported that there was approximately \$2,500 for a scholarship in the fund. He stated that since it was a smaller amount than most

scholarships offered to 4-year college science majors, he will make sure that Paleo's scholarship applicant is from a two-year college. He will approach Nathalie Brandies at Lone Star College, Sharon Cohunes at San Jacinto College, and Sam Houston-Lee College. A discussion followed as to why HGMS should be seeking out students from a two-year College who plan to continue as a science major at a four-year College.

Programs: Terry Proctor is talking to NASA and will make every effort to get a Mars Rock for the show. There was a discussion about the backdrop needing more pizzazz for the NASA Exhibit. Matt rescheduled Norman Lenz and his presentation on Gemstone Inclusions—Good and Bad for a later date because the April General Meeting was cancelled due to high water and widespread flooding in and around Houston.

Educational Outreach & Publicity Program: Neal Immega and Wayne Barnett agreed to take equipment to community locations chosen for this program for use by our Outreach volunteers. Terry stated that Holy Trinity United Methodist Church was lined up for a class and presentation. Terry also said we could show films for free from the HGMS Library without copyright violation. After the June BBG is sent out, responses to the program should be coming in from our districts (which are the same as the constable districts).

New Member Orientation Program: Terry Proctor is drafting a short (two or three minutes) program for new members. Also, he would like the Club to make a brochure and packet for newcomers that includes information on education, shows, and a description of each Section with the monthly schedule. Nancy Fischer reported that several people joined HGMS at the Fine Mineral Show, and she will furnish their names. Also, the tri-fold brochure already printed for the 2009 Show can be used as part of the packet.

New Business

1. The Club received a letter from Paul Heinrich informing us that the city of Mineral Wells has procured a tract of land containing fossil beds. These fossil beds previously were open to the public and were a favorite site for field trips. The city has turned the land into a Fossil Park and is now charging an entrance fee.
2. Nancy Fischer reported that the ceiling was wet in the Jewelry Class meeting room, and insulation is starting to come down. Rodney Linehan, Rick Rexroad, and Wayne Barnett volunteered to check out the damage after the meeting was over.
3. Wayne Barnett said there is a need for support in getting e-mail addresses to Neal Immega so the notices he sends out about coming events, information, and news arrive as quickly as possible to Club Members. He also asked Beverly Mace to get a current accounting of new members in HGMS for 2009. Beverly reported that she will have the new Directory up-to-date by the end of May. Someone asked about the nature of the Facebook Project. Beverly explained that Teresa Peak set up a video about our 2009 Show to reach young people who use Facebook.

Other Business

Wayne Barnett requested that the issue of saving money by publication of the BBG electronically be brought before the Board of Directors for consideration a second time. It was noted as an additional item that was not placed on the Agenda. He also provided the Board Members in attendance with a 2-page analysis reflecting the reasons for this proposed change. Wayne then moved to publish the BBG as stated in the material distributed. The motion was seconded by Nancy Fischer. After a short discussion of some pros and cons to the motion, Terry Proctor moved that the matter be tabled and brought to the attention of the General Membership for their input, discussion, and straw vote on the matter. Terry proposed that an article with both the pros and cons be published in the BBG. Wayne withdrew the motion and will publish his argument for the change in the BBG.

As there was no other business to come before the Board, Terry Procter moved that the meeting be adjourned. Rick Rexroad seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. by a unanimous vote.

Free Online Gemology Course

*from The RockCollector 5/2009, via Rockhound Rambling 7/2007,
Blue Agate News 3/2009, and Stoney Statements 5/2009*

If you're interested in learning about gemology from a scientific (rather than a commercial or artistic) viewpoint, then you might enjoy this Web site: <http://www.bwsmigel.info/>.

Included there is a series of lessons developed by Barbara Smigel, PhD, GG, and Emeritus Professor at the College of Southern Nevada. You don't need to register to use the materials contained on the site; however, you can opt to register and take the full distance learning, online course for college credit. Web lectures include the following lessons:

- Lesson 1: Basic Terms
- Lesson 2: Naming and Measuring Gems
- Lesson 3: Physical Properties of Gems
- Lesson 4: Optical Properties of Gems
- Lesson 5: Magnification and What It Reveals
- Lesson 6: Optical Phenomena in Gemstones
- Lesson 7: Gem Fashioning
- Lesson 9: Synthetics and Simulants
- Lesson 10: Gem Formation

Also included on the site are Web Essays that are one topic, pictorial essays with information on specific rocks and minerals. You can follow a link to "Ask the Teacher" specific questions and actually receive an answer in response. There's also an audio pronunciation guide, and an A-Z Survey of Gemstones downloadable as a PowerPoint presentation, and suggested textbooks and reading assignments if you're interested in learning more. Simply visit <http://www.bwsmigel.info/> and check it out!

In Our Library

by Art Smith, HG&MS Librarian

Nancy and I have continued to work in the library with the basic goal of adding more shelf space for books. I have one more area in which to add some shelves, and that area is small. We used to stash the extra drinks there, but now I keep them in the kitchen so anyone can fill the fridge if things get short. I am trying not to put books and journals in storage in the loft because if they are not used, it is better to get rid of them than to have them slowly disintegrate from the heat of the loft. The *Mineralogy Bibliography* and some of the mineralogy texts are candidates for the new space.

New donations to the library consist of *Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Creatures* by John Malam & Steve Parker donated by Fred Brueckner. Karen Bell donated 3 DVDs from Jewelry Television. They are *Wire Wrap One Step Further* and *Gem Lovers Collection: 2, Exotic & Phenomenal Gemstones*, and 3, *Getting to know Gemstones*. They all should be on the shelves by the time you read this. Checking out DVDs is easy, just sign out for them on the sheet on the desk.

The data for the Shafter Silver District article in this BBG is filed under "Texas – RP – Smith." It does not yet have a number, but it will be in the higher end numbers of the Texas reprints (RP).

AFMS President's Message

A Few Cannot Do Everything!

by Joy Bourne, AFMS President

By the time you read this, our local club show for 2009 will have been and gone for another year, and as always we had a wonderful turnout of show patrons enjoying the displays, and exhibits, and demonstrations, and additions to the good food and excellent dealers. The kids especially like the Mini Mine where they can draw a little mine car full of gravel and special stones out of the mine to add to their stores of treasures. They also like the chance to polish their very own stones on the cabbing machine under the watchful eye of a club member. They feel very important to put on the plastic aprons and goggles, choose their own preformed stone on a stick, and then actually finish a cabochon on the cabbing machine. There is always a long line of kids waiting their turns at that table. And of course the geode-cutting room is another very popular show feature with both kids and adults, as is the spectacular fluorescent room presentation.



It is a lot of work to put on for a two-day event, but well worth it! Each year we draw new people in to the hobby. Unfortunately, it usually the same 30 or so club members (out of 100+) who are always there to work the whole show from setup to tear-down every year. Does that sound familiar?

In our travels to club and federation shows around the country , I have seen the same phenomenon. And now as AFMS President, I am seeing that same sort of thing happening in our Federations—it is the same dedicated people carrying on the work of the local clubs and Federations, year after year . Why? I cannot believe that all the other Rockhounds are lazy hangers-on.

Could it be that those members are just waiting for someone to invite them to take a job? As I read the newsletters in my e-mail, I am really impressed with the new young leadership among the newsletter editors' ranks. It is a whole new world out there, and the spirit is contagious!

Why not try it? Ask some bright new (or older) member to do something—whether to help at the show, or take an office in your organization, or plan a field trip. Tell him/her you will be happy to help if they have questions—and then let him/her show you a new thing or two. You just might be pleasantly surprised!

Until next month, Joy

AFMS: Be Safe—Be Well

Time to Check Your House

Guest article by Don Monroe

SFMS Safety Chair

from the Lodestar (SFMS Newsletter) 2/2009, via AFMS Newsletter 5/2009

For most of us it is early spring and is a time when we may not be teaching or taking extensive field trips, so it should be a very good time to take a critical look at our house and how safe it may be. We all know that many accidents happen in the home, and a little planning might minimize the hazards of everyday living.



Studying our home will not prevent us from being stupid and doing stupid things. On my list of stupid things I include ignoring the obvious: failing to check smoke detectors and other systems, climbing on chairs and stools, and failing to keep our steps, ramps, porches, and walkways clear . To exit our back deck requires going down a ramp that is not a problem unless we have snow , or ice, or rain. When these conditions are present, it can really get exciting. We must also remember that we have an obligation to any visitors who may not recognize just how much fun it is to skid down the ramp on their backside. We have a long ramp at the front of our Birmingham house which has—in addition to the aforementioned hazards—an algae that is slick when wet. Recently dear friends visited, and as usual, she was talking and gesturing rather than holding the hand rail when she “lost it” in grand fashion and hit flat on her somewhat attractive derriere. The result was a long, wide, black streak on her white stylish slacks, and a look of shock on her face. We never saw the total result, but her husband reported that the bruise was “impressive.” Unfortunately as the property owner we are liable, but nothing came of it.

Routine maintenance of your home covers many things, and you may be willing to tolerate conditions that visitors may not. Ask yourself such questions as how is your lighting? Do you have any rickety furniture? Do you have any slick floors or showers or tubs? Do you have any scatter rugs or power cords in walkways?

Are your medications all up to date, and is your makeup old enough to grow bacteria? What is hiding in your pantry or under sinks and lavatories?

When others approach your home, is it a welcome sight and is your drive user-friendly? We tell all new visitors that our drive is all gravel and can be a challenge after rain or snow. The drive is steep and very curvy, and at times requires four-wheel drive. We have even gone down the hill and picked up guests and ferried them up.

The last category to consider is whether you have pets. Our life is enhanced by our Jack Russell Terrorist (Terrier) which loves everybody, but we know that everyone does not love dogs. There are those who have had a bad experience in their past or have an allergic reaction cats or dogs.


For the benefit of your family and all who may visit, study your house and look for any and all potential problems.

A.L.A.A.—Moving On

by Dick Pankey

A.L.A.A. President

from AFMS Newsletter 5/2009

 As I sit at my computer ready to write my first President's Message, the ideas are swirling in my head, and I jump from thought to thought. Where do I start first?

First is to thank Bob Carlson for his years of service to ALAA as a Director and President, and I look forward to his continued service and council.

2008 and early 2009 have not been good to rockhounds and users of the public lands. The **Omnibus Land Management Act of 2009** is one of the worst assaults on our right to access and use our public lands in recent memory. One hundred and fifty-plus bills were combined into one piece of onerous legislation. All of our letters, phone calls, and e-mails were important, but unfortunately our efforts fell a bit short. In the future, we need to be ready and vigilant; we haven't seen the last of this type of legislation. We need to prepare now to participate in the legislative process, not just react to it.

2008 was not a good year for ALAA, either. We did not have an editor for our newsletter and were not able to communicate with the membership. Fewer than half of our members renewed their membership. Our annual meeting at the AFMS/SCFMS in Houston was canceled because of Hurricane Ike. But the good news is that we now have an editor and new webmaster for the ALAA Web site. Jay Valle from Hacienda Heights, CA is our editor, and John and Suzy Martin from Lancaster, CA are our new webmasters.

So what lies ahead for ALAA? Our purpose and need are the same: “promoting and ensuring the right of the amateur hobby collecting, recreational prospecting and mining, and the use of public and private lands for educational and recreational purposes; and to carry the voice of all amateur collectors and hobbyists to our elected officials, government regulators, and public land managers.” But we need to reestablish our voice. We need to inform and reinvigorate the people we serve.

As I see it, at this point in time our biggest challenge is to communicate the need for and the worth of ALAA to the people we were formed to serve—the rockhounds, the users of our public lands, and the societies and members of the AFMS and Regional Federations. To meet this challenge and fulfill the purpose of ALAA, we need their support. To be an effective voice, we need “mass,” i.e. members. To be effective our “mass,” our members, must participate and respond.

My first focus as president is membership. The AFMS has 633 societies with over 49,000 individual members. Currently ALAA has 76 individual members and 21 society members. Our growth potential, our membership potential, our financial support potential is **GREAT**. The potential of our Voice is great. We represent and advocate for over 49,000 AFMS members plus their families. We are significant. However, to represent them adequately we need their support. And how do we calculate or estimate the number of unfiliated rockhounds? And how do we calculate or estimate the number of kids and families, teachers, and people that just like to pick up “pretty rocks” or to participate in some other form of recreation on our public lands? We represent and advocate for these people, too.

At the annual SFMS meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, John Wright spoke about ALAA and membership for societies. He told them “that I planned to get all four clubs in Mississippi to join ALAA and challenged the other states to match us. I don’t know if it will work, but maybe we will get some to join. Let’s extend that challenge, that objective, to all Federations, to all states.

One way to accomplish this goal is to hold ALAA meetings at each regional federation show and meeting. The purpose of these meetings would be to inform about and to promote ALAA, promote membership and support of ALAA, and inform about pending legislation and regulations. I will hold the first of these meetings at the CFMS Show in April 2009 in Santa Clara, CA. I ask the ALAA directors who are members of and who represent a regional federation to take on the task of hosting one of the regional ALAA meetings. As our membership increases, there will be more help in holding these meetings. This will be a discussion item at our annual meeting in Billings. I will also report on the CFMS/ALAA meeting in the June issue of our newsletter.

I am personally inviting every society in every Federation to join The American Land Access Association. The yearly dues for a society are only \$50.00. I invite you not only to join but to get involved and participate in the process of keeping our public lands open to the public. I also invite everyone who believes and supports the purpose and objectives of ALAA to join as individual members and to become involved and active. Individual membership is \$25.00 per year. For more information about ALAA,

go to our Web site <www.amlands.org>.

As ALAA grows, our impact will grow. We continually need to justify our existence and prove our worth. We can't rely on past successes for future justification. We need the financial support and participation of all of you who are concerned and interested.

2009 AFMS Webmaster Contest Is Off And Running

by Phyllis George

Webmaster Contest Chair

from AFMS Newsletter 5/2009

A Webmaster Contest? What is that for? Let me tell you. This contest exists to help webmasters enhance their club Web sites. The goal is to increase the interest of the general public in the gem and mineral hobby, to gain new members, and to serve as a source of current club information for their members. The judges assigned to the seven regional federations—Mike Baldwin, Stephen Douglas, Dan Imel, Wes Lingerfeldt, Al Pennington, and Don Shurtz—are serving as mentors for these various clubs by giving the webmasters encouragement and friendly constructive criticism on what they are doing right and where they need to improve.

The Webmaster Contest also has its own logos! Ron Gibbs, editor and webmaster for the Charlotte Gem & Mineral Club of Charlotte, North Carolina, is also a graphic artiste extraordinaire. Ron donated his time and expertise to design and develop our two logos—one for the AFMS (top) and one for Web site use (lower). He has also generated animated gifs (small images that have a moving part) that will be awarded to the top two winners in each federation and the top three winners at the AFMS level. These are for placement on the winning Web sites to let visitors know the high quality of the site. Thank you to Marty Hart (AFMS Webmaster) for steering me to Ron and his extraordinary skill.

I've received e-mails (before the contest started) telling me that the judging information and guidelines published for the contest have already helped some of the webmasters who want to improve their sites and do well in the contest.

Dan Alfrey, webmaster of Lake George Gem & Mineral Club, Lake George, Colorado wrote: "We've had a lot of fun with our site. This contest truly has motivated our club to update our site and make sure everything is fully functional! We sincerely appreciate the guidelines and scoring references in order to help make the site more informative and complete!"



Bob Loeffler, webmaster of North Jefferson Gem & Mineral Club, Arvada, Colorado wrote: "I think this contest is a great idea because it might help push clubs to create a Web site (if they haven't already done so) or keep their existing Web site updated with fun and relevant info to help educate the public."

Two judges were assigned to each region, but none of the judges is from the regions they judged. Each contestant's combined scores from the two judges were averaged to determine his or her final placement in their region. Judging of the regional federations has just completed as this is being written, and the first place winner in each federation has been forwarded to Bob Keller who is our judge at the AFMS level.

No trophies will be awarded at the regional level. The original plan was to award a trophy to the first place winner in each regional federation. I recently learned that the regional federations have not had an opportunity to vote on whether they support the Webmaster Contest, so no regional first place plaques can be awarded this year. However, we will be awarding certificates for each of the top ten places and for honorable mention. I apologize to everyone who is disappointed about this, but the contest will be running for at least two more years, so maybe the policy can be changed going forward.

There will not be a plaque awarded to the first place regional federation winners, but I think they will receive something far better than a plaque. The first place winners will each have their entries forwarded to Bob Keller, the man who is judging at the AFMS level.

Bob is the first rockhound webmaster to have a presence on the World Wide Web—the Internet. Bob put the first rock shop up on the Internet in March 1995, and he called it Bob's Rock Shop. It began as a home page with eight or so images of rocks from his own collection. It is still called Bob's Rock Shop and is still at www.rockhounds.com, but it is now tremendously more than that.

Bob will give the regional first place winners the benefit of his wisdom, his extensive Web experience, and his knowledge of what works and what doesn't. He will analyze each of the sites forwarded to him, and he will give useful feedback on what is being done well and how each site can be improved. Thank you, Bob, for agreeing to participate in our contest, for giving our first place regional winners the benefit of your hard-won wisdom as the world's premier rockhound webmaster, and for helping us achieve our goal of having rock and gem club Web sites that are as good as they can be.

All the contestants participating at the AFMS level will receive a certificate signifying their rank, and the first place winner will also receive an AFMS first place plaque.

The results of the various regional Webmaster Contests will be announced at the annual meetings of the regional federations during their Bulletin Editors' Breakfast. The results of the AFMS (and NFMS) Webmaster Contest will be announced at the NFMS/AFMS joint Show & Convention in Billings, Montana on August 2 during the Bulletin Editors' Breakfast. Hope to see you all there!

Gem Treatments

by Martin Barstow

from *Gem Cutters News* 4/2009

With demand for rare gemstones at an all-time high and with prices soaring for them, the market is there for enhancements and fraud. Here are a few of the treatments that have been uncovered during the past year. A reputable dealer will disclose these when selling a stone (if he knows of them) and the price should reflect these, but, as always, know your dealer and—buyer beware.

- Sold for years as an expensive red gem, Andesine has turned out to be in fact cheap brown-yellow African labradorite heated and diffused with copper and iron. Many of these were sold on TV on the various gem and jewelry channels, and buyers are now suing these vendors for fraud.
- Bismuth-based glass filler has been found in pink sapphires and rubies by Gem Research Swiss (GRS).
- Lead-glass filling for star rubies has been around for some years, but they are now using a low-heat version (800–1200 degrees C) that is new. This is evidently being done in Thailand.
- GIA has found synthetic rubies in the market that were heated in order to disguise their artificial origin. Dealers are offering them as “natural heated ruby.” The normal gem testing process in a laboratory will easily fail to identify a heated ruby as synthetic.
- The GAAJ (Gemological Association of All Japan) has identified rutilated quartz filled with oil and resin order to improve clarity.
- GEMLAB from Germany has warned of a new type of synthetic quartz that is heated and then passed off as natural ametrine. Ametrine is always heated. Basically this new trick goes along the lines of heating synthetic ruby to sell it as “heated natural.”
- Cobalt-coated tanzanite was found by the GIA. Tanzanite is always heated into permanent color change, but this “color” can be scratched off.
- A new “center-fusion” to color topaz has been developed by Sithy Gems. So far topaz was irradiated into blue, vapor-color coated into “Mystic Topaz,” and diffused into blue and green. The new center-fusion is basically the high-pressure-heat gluing of an artificially colored piece of topaz onto a colorless topaz. The finished stones, when mounted in jewelry, will resemble high-priced natural stones. Only testing by a gemologist reveals the treatment.
- Sithy Gems also offers color coated Tsavorite and moonstones.
- A new type of blue sapphire is being produced by inducing cobalt oxide under high heat into colorless or brown corundum. The new process is called

“Tanusorn” and was developed in Thailand, reports the GAAJ. The resulting sapphires are not very nice, but they are cheap and widely available.

- GIA has found lead-glass filled color change sapphires. Lead-glass filling can essentially be applied on any fractured or fissured gemstone, but is so far mostly used in ruby. In 2008, lead-glass filling started to show up in other varieties, too. As always, buyer beware and be educated before buying! If the price seems too good to be true, the stone has probably been treated.

Gold and Other Minerals of Rock Run, Montgomery Co. MD

by Jack Nelson from the Mineral Mite, July, 1999

via Gem Cutters News 5/2009

Rock Run is a small stream in southern Montgomery County, Maryland, that originates just north of Potomac Village and flows about 9.1 kilometers (about 5.5 miles) in a generally southeasterly direction to the Potomac River at the Naval Surface Warfare Center (the old David Taylor Model Basin) in Carderock. The major country rock in the area of the Rock Run watershed is interlayered mica schist and metamorphosed graywacke.

It is a thick sequence of metasedimentary rock, probably of lower Paleozoic or Precambrian origin, that is exposed in extensive areas of the Piedmont, including stretches of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Most of Rock Run and its three small tributaries flow through private property, although just over four kilometers flows through County-owned parkland called Rock Run Stream Valley Park. It is in a serene and pristine-looking forest valley having generally steep hillsides, large old trees, lovely wildflowers (including wild orchids), and vines, and a wonderful population of deer, fox, squirrel, chipmunks, pileated woodpeckers, and many other birds, turtles, snakes, fish, and crayfish, and a host of aquatic insects. As with most of the other 55 Montgomery County stream locations in which I have panned for microminerals and gold, Rock Run's deep sediments (the alluvium) contain a considerable amount of the heavier minerals, which together are called “black sands.” They are so named because of the very dark color which is imparted by the predominance of iron-rich minerals (mostly magnetite and hematite). These “black sands” usually are of a specific gravity of about 3.0 (3 or more times the weight of an equal volume of water) or more.

These heavy minerals include, in order of their specific gravity: Chlorite (3.0), actinolite (3.0), limonite (3.0- 4.3), micas - several species (about 3.1), tourmaline, (variety schorl) (3.1), epidote (3.4), diopside (3.4), kyanite (3.6), staurolite (3.7), garnet, several populations probably of almandine and spessartine (about 4.0), rutile (4.2), zircon (4.7), ilmenite (4.7), pyrite (5.0), hematite (5.1), magnetite (5.2), monazite (5.5), galena (7.5), gold (19), and a few others that I have not yet identified. There is also some liquid mercury (13.6), which is extremely rare, left over in the deepest sediments, from early gold recovery processes. Most everything else in the stream alluvium is lighter than a specific gravity of 3.0, and so easily washes out of a gold pan in the panning process, leaving the black sand and gold, if any, which is the heaviest mineral in the stream.

Most of the suburban streams also contain the debris of modern society—broken glass, and many other kinds of durable waste such as metal, rubber, plastic, string, etc. In addition to this man-made debris, I have found several other interesting things. In the deeper stream sediments, lead shot, aigun pellets, and even bullets are found—probably from about two to three hundred years of hunting in the area. Some are relatively fresh, but most are much older and are frequently coated with whitish lead oxidation products (anglesite and cerussite).

Other interesting things to be found are numerous, but very tiny, clear glass spheres (much smaller than 1 millimeter, 1/25th of an inch), found in parts of streams that are near paved roads. These originate in the white and yellow traffic lines painted on the roads. After this paint is freshly applied to the road, billions of these spheres are sprayed onto the surface of the paint, where they adhere and then reflect cars' headlights at night, thus illuminating the lines for drivers. Rain and traffic abrasion causes many of these spheres to wash into the streams where they settle down among the natural sands. Other stream localities may have some differences in mineralization, but there is one truism: if you don't find any black sand, you will not find any gold. However, finding black sand is no guarantee that gold is present, either. But we do know that gold is present in Rock Run and many other streams of southern Montgomery County.

Gold Discovered in Maryland

Gold was discovered in southern Montgomery County during the Civil War and the first of many mines and prospects began operating in 1867. The first mine, and the most successful, was the Maryland Mine whose remains are preserved today near the intersection of Falls Road and MacArthur Boulevard.

Gold production was very small and sporadic during the 73 years that mining was carried out here. Only 5,000 ounces of gold are recorded by the U. S. Mint as having come from Maryland (Montgomery County) in that time. (Knowledgeable estimates place the actual amount of gold recovered at about ten times that or more).

There were five gold mines along Rock Run, including a placer mining operation using water under high pressure to wash the stream and flood plain sediments through long California-style sluice boxes. The placer operation, carried out from perhaps 1910 to 1914, reportedly recovered a considerable amount of gold, including many fine nuggets, some up to four ounces. For me, the panning activity has served several beneficial purposes. It gets me out into the seclusion and peace of the wooded stream setting. By going three to four times a month year 'round, I enjoy good exercise, and it seems to strengthen my back muscles. It feeds my intense interest in micromineralogy with the minerals I recover from the black sands. It has earned me about 25 cents worth of gold per hour for my efforts, but best of all has been the fact that I found enough gold to have my wife Leona's and my rings made for our 1994 wedding.

Since September 1991 when I commenced this fascinating hobby, I have panned fifty-five stream locations in Montgomery County, and have found gold in twenty-five of them. During that time I have learned a number of things about finding gold in this area:

1. Most of the richest gold mines were in a few gold-bearing quartz veins that had a higher concentration of gold than most of the others in the area.
2. All of the gold-bearing veins run roughly parallel with the general direction of the Appalachian Mountains, which trend a little east of north in this area. Some veins vary in their strike (direction) by as much as 25 to 30 degrees to the east or to the west of north.
3. Nearly all streams and smaller tributaries have been explored in the past by miners who were quite thorough in their recovery methods, so most stream sediments have been pretty well cleaned of gold.
4. Therefore, I have learned to use a compass to determine the approximate strike of a stream's bedrock, which, in this area, is generally a nearly vertical quartz/mica schist. Then I search for exposures of the bedrock or dig deep enough in the stream's alluvium to reach the upper levels of the bedrock. Most of the upper levels of the bedrock encountered in this fashion are either chemically altered to a soft consistency (saprolite—disintegrated rock that lies in its original place), or nearly so and can be removed and broken up in the gold pan. By exploiting the altered areas of the bedrock, I increase the chances of finding gold. Most of what I find in this fashion is lode gold (freshly broken out of the rock it formed in) rather than placer gold (naturally eroded out of its host rock and then stream worn). Needless to say, finding the gold in the pan is exciting since the finder is the first person to see it since it was first formed here about 200 million years ago through the actions of tremendous tectonic forces.

Finding Cubic Garnet: On each outing, I save most of my black sand to bring home and examine under my stereo microscope using magnifications of from 5X to 50X. This is the source of my real excitement and wonder. By examining my heavy mineral concentrates in this fashion, commencing in late 1991, I began to find occasional strange, cubic crystals that looked like garnet except for the shape. Garnet typically forms in 12- or 24-sided crystals called dodecahedrons and trapezohedrons respectively. But these cubes, which were extremely small at 1 millimeter or less, (one twenty-fifth of an inch or less) were very perplexing and none of my micromineralogist friends could explain them. By 1995, I had found perhaps fifty of these cubes. I gave two of these cubic crystals to a noted mineralogical consultant, Vandall King, who passed them to the late Eugene Foord, a renowned geologist and mineralogist at the U. S. Geological Survey, in Denver, Colorado for examination. His results were announced in a scientific paper he and King presented at the 23rd Rochester Mineralogical Symposium in April of 1996. They were in fact true cubic



crystals of ferroan (iron-rich) spessartine garnet and were “probably the first cubic garnets found in the United States!” So Rock Run can now be known not only as the best gold panning stream in Maryland but also as the locality where the first U. S. cubic garnets were found.

Cubic Garnet, Rock Run, Montgomery Co. MD
Photomicrograph by Jack Nelson

Show Time 2009

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 10777 Greenwell Springs Rd. paul_broussard@msn.com
August 15-16	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier Parish Convention Center 620 Benton Road; Bossier City, LA 71111
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 cessnak@ont.com; www.agemclub.org
September 19-20	Richardson, TX	Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI at Brookhaven College
September 26-27	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Center
October 10-11	Temple, TX	SCFMS/Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic Center, 3303 N. 3rd St.
October 16-18	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Community Center
October 23-25	Austin, TX	Austin Gem & Mineral Society Palmer Events Center
November 07-08	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center
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
November 21-22	Mesquite, TX	Dallas Gem & Mineral Society Resistol Arena Exhibition Hall

2009		June				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 7:30 Board Meeting	3 7:30 Mineral Section	4	5	6 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
7	8 1:00 Day Light Section	9 7:30 Show Committee	10 7:30 Faceting Section	11	12	13 10-5 Shop Open
14 Flag Day	15 7:30 Lapidary Section	16 7:30 Paleo Section	17	18	19	20 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
21 Father's Day	22	23 7:30 General Meeting	24	25	26	27 10-5 Shop Open
28	29	30				

2009		July				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
5	6	7 7:30 Board Meeting	8 7:30 Faceting Section	9	10	11 10-5 Shop Open
12	13 1:00 Day Light Section	14 7:30 Show Committee	15	16	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	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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