



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

Volume XL - No. 3

March 2009



President's Message

*by Terrell William "Terry" Proctor
2008 HGMS President*

Well it appears that our Global warming winter has been pretty chilly in the lovely City of Houston and Harris County, Texas. Could our experts be wrong? To tell the truth, I have been a firm subscriber that we did need to take steps to slow global warming to preserve our home planet. But this winter has given me pause. Would it not be wonderful if all the prognosis that the U.S. is coming to an end also proves not to be as the hysteria has warned us if we didn't mortgage our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren's future by creating a huge deficit now to get our Country running again?



And while we are talking about doom and gloom, you may recall that I have several times sent out e-mail and BBG notices to contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives to protect US, i.e. rockhounds and amateur paleontologists from Uncle Sam doing great harm to us, if we dared to collect on National lands (that means lands that belong to you and me as citizens). Well, the U.S. Senate passed S. 22 which is a HUGE bill covering many, many things as an ominous bill, including the paleontological protection provisions. It is soon to be voted on by the U.S. House.

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General Meeting Programs

February 24, 2009--Spheres and Sphere Making: John Rowland, flint knapper and spear maker of Leander, Texas, will present a program on spheres and sphere making.

March 24, 2009--Sam Stubbs: Sam is an estate attorney and the managing partner of the Pillsbury Law firm's Houston office. His extensive experience in dealing with the rock, mineral, and fossil collections left to family members after their spouse or parents have died will be a subject of great interest to many of our members. Sam is also an avid collector of trilobites, and he will have much to say about his large collection.

April 28, 2009--Norman Lenz--Gemstone Inclusions: Good and Bad : Norman Lenz

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

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*Copy is due for the April 2009 issue by
Wednesday, March 11, 2008.*

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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

The trouble with ominous bills is that they are so large that no one reads them; they have some pork thrown in for everyone, so no one dares vote against it lest the opposition in the elected official's district can say "aha, he (or she) voted against the interests of their own constituents, now elect me so I can bring home the bacon which they voted against." That is what this bill before the House does—doles out some pork to many or almost all, and sticks it to a Bill which seizes more land than any prior bill, as I understand, and makes it where YOU, ME and anyone else who hunts on any federal land (BLM, Forest Service, and on and on) and accidentally or on purpose possesses some vertebrate fossil, is potentially liable to have their vehicle, their equipment and other things seized and forfeited plus large fines plus prison time.

To make matters worse, even if you didn't get the fossil on federal land, but you have it, the burden is on you to prove that what you have didn't come from federal land. Due process goes out the window and the burden of proving you not guilty shifts to you, to prove you are innocent. Now try and prove a negative—get the idea?

In a time when the government is already running huge deficits, why would any elected representative vote to take land off of State and local tax rolls and put it on the exempt rolls of the U.S. Government instead? Why, when amateurs find much of the valuable fossils which wind up in our museums, would the U.S. Government forbid collecting so that most of these will be destroyed by erosion and other degradation of the fossils. If you have hunted dinosaur fossils and other ancient vertebrate fossils as I have on private land, you know how many bones and other vertebrate fossils you find that aren't worth digging because they are already so degraded that they are virtually lost.

The Paleontological portion of this Bill (and much of the rest of it) makes no sense whatsoever, and it is just more federal government getting bigger and bigger, with no benefit, and a lot more restrictions on our freedoms and rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of enjoyment.

The Show Committee is hard at work and has already come up pretty much with a flyer to start getting out to promote this year's show. Articles are being written, a new, more convenient ticket system is being ironed out, better displays for the public are being planned, and the great group of volunteers, without whom the Show would not go on, are being organized—and we hope you are ONE of those who have volunteered.

Brian Honsinger, the Chair of our Education Committee, is churning out more and more classes, so this year will be a banner year for great classes and programs. If you have something you want to learn to do, call or contact Brian by e-mail at texbay@sbcglobal.net or on his cell phone (281) 777-0552. Several classes are starting soon, and others can be set up if enough folks are interested in a given class.

This past couple of months we have lost several of our long-time members who gave so much to HGMS, and we note their passing in sadness. Memorials are published, so I won't expound further other than to ask all HGMS members to remember the families of our former members in their prayers and let them know how much we appreci-

ated the dedication and contribution of their lost family member. Thank you, HGMS.

April Program Information *continued from page 1*

will give a presentation on inclusions that sometimes can be found in faceted gems. He will be bringing a friend who is an appraiser and a certified GIA member to answer more technical questions about some of the inclusions in precious gemstones to be viewed and described during the presentation. Additional information can be found on the club Web site: www.hgms.org

Editor's note: Art Smith is scheduled for an operation February 26, and he will be in the hospital 5 to 10 days. We all wish him a swift recovery and look forward to seeing him back at HGMS soon.

Art has submitted an article to the BBG **every month** since I became the HGMS Editor in January 1996. He is a major contributor to this newsletter and is a tremendous factor in its success. Thank you, Art!

The Houston International Show

Saturday, January 17, 2008

by Arthur & Nancy Smith

artsmithite@msn.com

Getting an early start to the show that started at 10 a.m. confirmed that this first show of the year would probably be smaller than usual because of the upcoming Quartzite and Tucson shows at the end of January and into the first half of February. However, not having to buck the crowds was a treat in both wholesale and retail. We anticipated little to nothing in the way of mineral specimens, and that was as expected. The Afghanistan minerals were not even worth looking at probably because the latest shipment had not come in.



A few mineral and rock carvings were available in wholesale and retail. Shoba in the wholesale area has several types of small Chinese animal carvings; the most interesting were some small India ruby frog and lizard carvings. They are opaque with a good polish and are a slightly purplish red color. We purchased about a 4-cm ruby frog that is quite nice but not inexpensive. In the retail area, Feng's Gifts had some new carvings. We were most attracted to a pair of rose-brown jasper bulls about 12 by 4 cm. They were nicely carved with a good lustrous polish. The dealer's selling point was that the Chinese New Year was about to happen, and it will be the year of the ox. Anatomical



cally, they are not oxen but bulls. We liked them so purchased the pair.

There were several other interesting carvings, also well done, but with many carvings the material was not attractive. One was a small family group of chicks, a chicken, and a rooster, but the rock was a dark material and there was little contrast between the matrix and the individual



birds. If a better material had been used, it would not have been a wasted piece. Several other carvings also had poor contrast or unattractive material, but their prices were fairly reasonable, so it is worth looking at what they have available because we usually find something of interest to buy.

We ran into Dean Lagerwall and then Cheryl and Sam Norwood in the wholesale area. Sam was looking at some of the polished and faceted gemstones, many with interesting inclusions that showed well on the slabbed and polished surface. However, it was pretty much a question of trying to establish their source or provenance—essential information for many mineral collectors when selecting a specimen. In some cases it was impossible to tell if there had been any treatment to enhance color or to give the quartz a smoky color.

The dealers of faceted or polished stones can be unreliable for establishing the stone's source. Because many dealers are not interested in a stone's source, they fail to obtain that data. Identification of the included minerals, if they are rare, may also be a problem. Not interested in broadening our collecting and collection, we passed on them.

There were still plenty of bead dealers, and as usual you are on your own trying to determine if they were natural rock or mineral, ceramic, or glass. Some dealers had mostly glass with few or possibly no natural material. In the last few years there have been a lot of small faceted beads of various gemstones on short strands, but I think a lot of glass and cubic zirconium has probably crept into this material because some are very inexpensive. Few are labeled. When buying these you will have to guess at what they are or trust what the dealer says they are. I am sure you could probably verify what is possibly natural by looking at their inclusions, but that would be time consuming and in the case of many of the small beads, impossible without a microscope.

We did find four bead materials that we liked that seemed mostly natural, so we purchased a few strands. The dealers could not give us with any certainty the source of any of them, except being manufactured in China. In some cases the name did not correctly fit the material being offered, but that is not unusual in beads. We liked the colors of what was called **fancy striped jasper** that showed best on 2 by 1 by 0.3 cm tabular

beads with rounded edges. It definitely is not a jasper and is composed of bluish chrysocolla and greenish malachite-impregnated matrix. The matrix seems to be a mixture of brown goethite that may be mixed with brown-stained quartz. *Gems and Gemology* 44(4):379 describes and illustrates a similar material consisting of irregular patches of green that they say is actually dyed chalcedony. However, having striped colors of both green and blue, this material seemed natural. They went for about \$9 a strand and were present in several dealers' stocks. Individually, in this size they come to about 50 cents per stone. That is not cheap, but it's reasonable for the material.

Rain forest jasper is similar to the Australian stone called rhyolite. This should not be confused with the igneous rock rhyolite. The jasper is a pale grayish green with lighter markings that could almost make it be called orbicular. Its hardness confirms that it is a jasper. The price ranges from \$5 to \$15 a strand for 1 cm to 3 cm flat beads. The rhyolite beads I have seen before do not have such interesting patterns.

Aqua Terra beads are very attractive combinations of greenish to dull pale blue mixed with some brown and cut by yellowish-brown veins and breccia fillings. The beads that best showed these attractive patterns were 1 cm discoid or tabular beads. I have no idea of the composition of these beads except to say they were easily scratched by a knife, so you might not want to mix them with harder quartz or jasper beads. The blue to greenish areas may be a common opal and is somewhat similar to material from Peru. They sold for about \$10 a strand. The final lot of beads we purchased are labeled "quarsite." It may be a misspelling of quartz because they are all quartz and may come from Brazil. The beads are of discs or rectangular flat 2 cm beads. Each bead piece is composed of separate areas of white quartz and black quartz with each color making up 1/3 to 2/3 of each piece. The white is slightly milky and seems to be a vein-quartz while the black is like a typical lustrous black onyx. There are a few thin continuous white or black onyx or agate bands on some of the pieces that add further interest.

Most people do not realize that much of the black onyx on the market today is a well polished, gray chalcedony that has been dyed black and originates in Brazil. For some unexplained reason it has been given the name black onyx, but it is quartz and has no internal patterns.

Straight parallel lines in the chalcedony are called onyx banding while the similar but curved lines are considered to be agate banding even though they are opaque. Confusing? Yes, because most onyx is calcite and not quartz that may or may not be banded. So we have quartz onyx that may or may not have parallel straight lines and then there is calcite onyx, also called Mexican onyx. It usually has some banding that may be parallel and straight or curved in many directions. Lapidary names are seldom an exact science, so be sure you know what you are looking at.

Last year at Tucson we bought a beautiful Chinese vase of rose (calcite) onyx from near Tibet. When we put flowers in and added the preserving salts with water, osmosis took over and beads of moisture collected on the outside of the vase, and when they evaporated a white residual salt accumulated. Also, the reaction of the salt with the calcite made a basic solution that prematurely wilted and killed the flowers.

The most fun was digging through some of the piles of beads heaped up on the tables that were sold for a dollar a strand or 25 strands for \$20. Needless to say there was a lot of artificial junk in these piles, but if you patiently went through the pile, you could easily pull out 25 strands of decent beads in sizes from 6 to 10 mm.

We spent between two and three hours at the show and left ready to do something else, but we had a good time of doing the show and not spending a lot of money. What could be better than spending time inside on a chilly winter morning?

Hard Time, Deep Time, Real Time

by Neal Immega

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

How do you go about teaching people just how long geological time is? One common way is by an analogy with the length of a football field. If you spread 570 million years (radioactive age date for the beginning of animals with hard parts during the Cambrian) over 100 yards, trilobites appear at 5 yards, mammals at 88 yards, and historic times (10,000 years) in the last 1/3 of an inch. Just how well does the public grasp this analogy? HGMS volunteers decided to find out. We made this analogy **real** during the celebration of Darwin Day (February 7, 2009) at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

The Grand Hall of the museum is perfect for this activity because it is more than 100 yards long. We laid out duct tape, stretching from the Butterfly Center to the ticket counters, and marked off the geological periods. We made about 200 stick-on labels—each with a picture of an organism and its dates—for visitors to stick on the floor next to the timeline. They loved it, particularly the parentally suppressed young decorators. We had numerous visitors, including numerous geoscientists, walking the time line to see when various animals appeared and how things go from simple to complex. People frequently commented on just how many things were crammed into the last foot (Pleistocene to Recent).

I think that visitors can better visualize time from this real model than



The timeline runs from the present to

from the verbal one. If you want to try this at your place, I have placed all the computer files for the labels on the publicly accessible Houston Gem and Mineral Society Web site (www.hgms.org) on the K-12 Education page (click on the blue K-12 Education button. Scroll down to the "Make a Cambrian to Recent timeline.")

You might get a better reception from the custodial staff if the labels have removable glue.

All the geo-volunteers involved thought we should bring in a pavement saw and make the display permanent. Geology profs from Blinn and San Jacinto Colleges were thinking hard about nice long sidewalks on their campuses where this kind of time line could be made out of brick and tiles.



Volunteer helping a visitor to make his mark.

Lifting Up History with David Freeman

by Noelle Skubal, age 9

Do you like fish fossils? Then Rock Springs, Wyoming is the place to go! All you have to do is call Mr. David Freeman and let him lead you on the trip of a lifetime. Let me tell you about our trip. Ahem.....

We met Mr. David Freeman at our first campsite. Mr. Freeman made his living by digging vertebrate fossils and selling them mostly on eBay. He got to live at the KOA for free just for giving a nature talk a couple times a week to campers. We had already booked a day at a public quarry in Kemmerer, Wyoming, but Mr. Freeman offered to take us to his own privately leased quarry. It's called the Curren Creek Ranch Fossil Fish Quarry. Daddy thought about it and signed us up to dig the next day. It cost \$150 for a four hour dig, 60 dollars for the grownups for the quarry, and the rest for my brother and sister and I for bug fossils at the Reservoir.



We woke up before sunrise the next morning and drove to the quarry, following Mr. Freeman. The drive was very scenic and it lasted about forty-five minutes. On our way we stopped and Mr. Freeman pointed out some bluffs that surrounded Flaming Gorge

Reservoir. The bluffs were very pretty with brown and black and dark red horizontal layers. He pointed out some of the local greenery , including a plant called rabbits brush. Then we continued on our way.

When we reached the quarry , I took a good note of it. It was like a not-steep cliff . Halfway up was a pathway across the cliff. On the right side was a digging spot where Daddy and Mr. Freeman lifted up plates (a plate is a slab of rock you look for fossil fish under). A little way down was a wooden out-house.

Lifting the plates was a little tricky at first, but then we got better and better at it. The tools we used were a mason's hammer, chisel and small crow bar; and, lots of iced water (it was pretty hot and dry...and, it got hotter and hotter as the morning moved on). First, we slid the pry bars in between the layers of rocks, and hammered on them gently but firmly. We would separate the layers in as big of plates as we could until they would crack and break. Then it was time for the exciting part: lifting up the plates to see what was underneath. It was always a good idea to have as many people lifting the plate at the same time so that the weight of the plate was spread out evenly . I held my breath every time we lifted; and, it was always exciting to see what we uncovered.



Noelle Skubal and Mr. Freeman
prepare to lift a plate



Noelle's sister Aeowynn cleans an
Asineops on a plate



Four-fish cluster on a plate

We got LOADED with fish fossils, about two five gallon buckets full. Most of them were pieces, but we were allowed to keep three whole skeletons. After we dug up fish fossils, we went to Flaming Gorge Reservoir to find insect fossils for my little brother. You chip open a rock and see what's inside. They looked like little tiny centipedes, actually. Daddy even found a feather! But it broke. I thought the feather was the best find of the day. I wondered how it got there.

When we were still at the dig site, Mr. Freeman explained how the fish got there. He said debris and ash fell down on the fish from a volcano eruption, and it covered the fish so that they couldn't breathe. Then they froze in that position and here they are, millions of years later, for us to dig up. The catfish were in the top layer, but the layer we worked at was called asineops.

So now, I hope this will encourage you to go to Wyoming yourself and have an adventure!

The End

The Top Five Reasons You Should Go To Rock Springs, Wyoming

- 1 You can go to a FANTASTIC dinosaur museum! It is the Natural History Museum at the Western Wyoming Community College and it's FREE. (It also has an art gallery, a fossil man, and the Remington statue, which is on the Wyoming license plate). My favorite exhibit was the Plesiosaur.
- 2 One of the nearby attractions is 91-mile Flaming Gorge Reservoir. It is a beautiful blue lake, where we saw many huge fish graze, next to the shore.
- 3 There is a wonderful KOA campground, complete with pool and game room.
- 4 You can go look for calcite crystals in petrified palm trees. We filled a film canister full of them after an afternoon of looking.
- 5 If you don't like trees, people, or houses; and, if you like the wind blowing 100-miles an hour, this is the place to go!

About the Author:

Hi, I'm Noelle Skubal, and I am in the fourth grade. I am writing this article for a writing assignment. I am in the club because my daddy signed us up at the Mineral Show. So far the club's been great! The auctions are my favorite part of the club. I love to buy a thing or two with my allowance. I hope you enjoy the article!

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In Memoriam—Barbara Lee (Priest) “Bobbie” Emerson

by Terrell William “Terry” Proctor

Barbara Lee (Priest) “Bobbie” Emerson, a long-time Life Member of HGMS, died in her sleep on January 14, 2009 in a hospice after 2½ years of fighting cancer. Bobbie is survived by her husband, John Emerson, HGMS Life member and former President of HGMS, and their two sons. The older son is Robert Damon Emerson who lives in Stafford, Texas with his wife Nancy and their son John Damon. The Emerson’s younger son is John Lee Emerson who lives in Katy, Texas with his wife, Linda. Bobbie was born in San Antonio in September, 1928 to Robert Lee Priest and wife, Ora Lee Priest..



Bobbie and John co-wrote a book entitled “Middle Eocene Claiborne Group Invertebrate Fossils from Stone City Bluff, Burleson County, Texas” which was published in 2001. The HGMS Paleo Section has been receiving a royalty on each book sold. The Emersons have written and co-written other books for HGMS. They have been dedicated members of HGMS for many years. Bobbie’s death is a great loss to our club as well as to her family.

Bobbie and John first met on a blind date on June 1, 1945 when both were 16 years of age. Bobbie had just graduated from high school, and John had just returned from his first year at Texas A & M. They were married fifty-seven years ago, on October 6, 1951 while John was serving in the U.S. Army with active duty in Korea.

They raised their two boys and were world and U.S. travelers, hav-

ing lived in Texas, California, Algiers, The Hague, Teheran, Buenos Aires, Milan, twice in London, Oslo and Mexico City—nine countries on five continents. With two boys, a dog, and two cats, Bobbie was able to stay busy.

Between the time they met and were married, Bobbie graduated from Texas A&I with a B.A. Degree in Education, and she played the French Horn in a quartet while she attended A&I. Bobbie also attended UT where she received a B.S. and M.A. in History. For two years Bobbie had a scholarship to UT and was the featured twirler with the UT Band, where she was the only girl in the band of 100 boys. Bobbie also played the piano.

Bobbie taught school for five years until the birth of her sons. For one hobby, Bobbie did water color paintings. The Emersons' main hobby was paleo, and they were working on their third book together covering Texas Cretaceous Oysters at the time Bobbie became ill with cancer. The Emersons agreed to forward that book to Mr. Charles Newson to finish for them as Bobbie undertook to fight her illness.

Many HGMS members will miss this gracious and generous lady who spent so much time and talent, with her husband John, jointly working to make HGMS a better place for all of us.

Educating Our State Board of Education

by Lexy Bieniek

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Well, our State Board of Education (SBOE) is still at it. For 20 years our Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS) guidelines have contained the phrase “student is expected to analyze... scientific explanations, including hypotheses and theories, as to their strength and weaknesses...” The writing teams selected by the SBOE this year replaced the “strengths and weakness” phrase with “analyze and evaluate.” The fundamentalist 7



have spent an incredible amount of time arguing this change in wording. The “strengths and weakness” phrase has been used almost exclusively on the theory of evolution. According to the “fundamentalist 7,” the term “analyze and evaluate” would deny academic freedom to the students of Texas while the phrase “strengths and weaknesses” would guarantee those freedoms. Other members of the SBOE kept passing around dictionaries and introducing the definitions of “analyze” and “evaluate” into the record. In order to understand how the scientific community denies “academic freedom” to scientists that don’t “regurgitate” the theory of evolution, take time to watch Ben Stein’s “Expelled, No Intelligence Needed.” That dictionary was on Cynthia Dunbar’s desk. Mrs. Dunbar is a licensed attorney, teaching anatomy and physiology to high school juniors and seniors.

The “fundamentalist 7” use Darwin’s own statements about the weaknesses of the theory of evolution ignoring 150 years of research. One of the most often used statements is the lack of transitional fossils that would support the theory. Fundamentalists deny that fossils such as *Archaeopteryx* are the transitional fossils—they simply are just another fossil.

During the November 19 meeting, Ken Mercer from San Antonio cited Piltdown Man as an example of how the scientific community was vulnerable to hoaxes. He drew out how the scientific community jumped on Piltdown Man as an early human and held on to the hoax for many years. Piltdown Man was a modern skull coupled with an orangutan jaw that was found in a gravel pit near Piltdown England in 1912. Actually, the claim was debunked in 1915, but the scientific community did not acquiesce until 1953. Mr. Mercer also alluded to that primitive bird found in Texas, but all he could remember was that *National Geographic* had to print an apology for printing an article about it.

Gail Lowe from Lampasas introduced an unfamiliar term, polystrate fossils. Polystrate fossils are upright fossils such as a tree trunk that runs through more than one layer of rock. She sprung this term on Richard Neavel as he was testifying in November. Ms. Lowe referred to a “polystrate” fossil whale from the Miocene Lompoc Formation that, according to Ms. Lowe, fossilized on its nose upright through the strata. Mr. Neavel returned in January with a poster showing how the whale actually fossilized within the strata and the strata tilted making it conformable with its surrounding strata. The “polystrate whale fossil” is a common Creationist argument along with fossilized forests having standing tree trunks. The “fundamentalist 7” use the term polystrate fossil to show the weakness of law of superposition which states that the older rocks are generally found on the bottom and the youngest rocks are on the top of the sequence.

Mrs. Lowe continued to expose her need for additional education in January when she asked just what type of an organism was a trilobite. She asked if it was a sponge or just what is a trilobite? Mrs. Lowe’s district includes Lampasas County. Remembering my fossil hunting days, there was this little bend in the Colorado River called Bend, Texas, and trilobites were commonly found there until the owner bought a double barrel shotgun. Straddling the Colorado as it does, half of Bend is in Lampasas County, and half

is in San Saba County. Maybe -she never crossed the river—after all, there are some very large rattlers inhabiting the Colorado in that area.

In January, Barbara Cargill of the Woodlands surprised members of the board with amendments to the new Earth and Space Science course. The writing team for the Earth and Space Science course is unique. This team was composed of professional geoscientists, professors and high school teachers. To her credit, Mrs. Car gill appointed some of the professional geoscientists to this writing team. With this composition, the Earth and Space Science course is unique. The amendments that she was successful in getting approved included the following concerning fossils:

(8) The student knows that fossils are used as evidence for geological and biological evolution.

(8)(A) evaluate a variety of fossil types, proposed transitional fossils, fossil lineages, and significant fossil deposits, and assess the arguments for and against universal common descent in light of this fossil evidence;

She included rocks also. The entire set of amendments will be posted to the HGMS site.

In January, expert witnesses testified to the SBOE. These men were invited by various members of the Board. These experts were;

Dr. Stephen Meyer from the Discovery Institute in Washington state

Dr. Ralph Seelke from University of Wisconsin (don't remember what city)

Dr. Charles Garner of Baylor

Dr. Ron Wetherington of SMU

Dr. Gerald Skoog, Texas Tech

Dr. David Hillis, UT Austin

Drs. Meyer, Seelke, and Garner were invited by one of the “fundamentalist 7.” Drs. Seelke and Garner both claimed that they had been denied some level of their academic freedom by their universities. Dr Garner teaches chemistry at BaylorStrangely, now the chemistry department has a position statement on evolution which they didn't have before Dr. Garner's testimony. Drs. Wetherington, Skoog, and Hillis represented the other side. Dr . Hillis asked the board why did they invite out-of-state entities when Texas has so many outstanding scientists.

Here's how we rock hunters and collectors need to educate our SBOE:

- Send multiple letters to our SBOE members Don McLeroy , Cynthia Noland Dunbar, Ken Mercer, Terri Leo, David Bradley, Barbara Cargill, and Gail Lowe supporting the Science TEKS as they were written by the writing teams and without any of the amendments.
- Send duplicate letters to Bob Craig, Mavis Knight, Geraldine Miller, Lawrence Allen, Patricia Hardy, Rick Agosto, Mary Helen Berlanga, and Rene Nunez, but also thank them for supporting the TEKS as written.
- These letters can be sent to each SBOE rep via e-mail at

sboesupport@tea.state.tx.us

- Send Mrs. Lowe hundreds of pictures of trilobites and tell her where she can find them in Texas. Her address is Gail Lowe, 11 Chris Avenue, Lampasas, TX 76550.
- Mrs. Dunbar might need some new dictionaries.

Specific addresses for each member can be found at

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/members.html>

To view the complete set of revised Science TEKS and the ESS TEKS, go to the following site: **<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/teks/scienceTEKS>**

The ESS TEKS are in the high school sciences.

Dr. Steven Schafersman runs a Web site called Texas Citizens for Science. This site has links to hear the audio for each SBOE meeting. He has a blog on the site and has no qualms about sharing his opinion of the SBOE. The URL for that site is

<http://www.texscience.org>

Another site is the Texas Freedom Network:

<http://www.tfn.org> E-mail is **tfn@tfn.org**, and their phone is 512-322-0525.

As I was leaving the meeting, a woman walked across the floor to inform one of the “fundamentalist 7” that 6500 emails had just been received supporting the fundamentalist position. In addition the lady also carried word that about half of the members of various writing teams reported that they had been denied their “academic freedoms” during the writing of the TEKS. As citizens of this state, we need to let our SBOE reps know that this pile of unpetrified Holocene coprolitic matter needs to stop Texas needs to raise our level of education, and that will never happen with our SBOE spending so much time playing word games.

School Collections Committee Solicits Help!

by Stephen Blyskal

Mineral Section Chair

School Collections Committee Chair

How would you like to learn more about rocks, minerals, and fossils, and get real hands-on experience with them—not to mention the chance to work with real geologists and experts in minerals and fossils. Between us, Neal Immega and I have almost 100 years of experience in the hobby.

The School Collections Committee is looking for a few eager rockhounds to join us in the task of producing kits of minerals, rocks, and fossils for presentation to teachers in public, private, and home schools. We’re looking for people who are not afraid to get their hands dirty or to break a few rocks, who can learn to identify minerals and rocks and can help organize and prepare the large stock we have on the metal shelves in the workshop warehouse. How much time is required? As much as you can spare for this worthwhile task. When would you need to work? On Saturdays most often, and occasionally at your home with boxes you have taken from the warehouse. We need help with the following:

- A. Inventory:** We need to know how much we have of the different rocks and minerals so we can plan out our sets and design new sets using our existing resources.
- B. Trimming:** Many of the rocks need to be broken up to fit the standard boxes we use. You will learn to safely use a rock trimmer, and you may even get to break some rocks with a sledge or small hammer.
- C. Organization:** We need to continue to move the flats around so that all the rocks of similar type (igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic) are together, and minerals for the standard and special kits are placed where they can be found easily.
- D. Re-boxing:** Many of the boxes on the shelves are old and have suffered wear and tear from the rocks and minerals they hold. The boxes need to be replaced with new ones that will be stapled for strength.
- E. Numbering the Specimens:** One of the things we need to do every year is separate out 50 or so of each of the specimens going in the basic mineral rock hardness sets. These specimens all need to have the appropriate numbers attached, and that is best done a box at a time at home.
- F. Putting together the exterior and interior boxes for the sets:** The white cardboard boxes we use for the sets have to be assembled and stapled, and then 30+ small white boxes must be folded and put inside. Folding boxes is something easily done while watching TV or listening to music.
- G. Assembling:** Once or twice a year we bring together as many people as we can and assemble kits using the boxes previously put together and the numbered specimens in their boxes from Item E.

What I want to establish is a working list of people interested in helping the School Collections Committee and to learn their areas of interest. Then I will have people to call on if I needed rock breakers, assemblers, etc. I would also welcome people with initiative who would like to take over part of the work from me. Please e-mail me at Steve.Blyskal@gmail.com and let me know your interest(s). I'll call or e-mail you as I need work done on minerals, rocks, and sets. Let me hear from you!

Susan Lenz Update

by Norman Lenz

HGMS Members,

Susan continues to do well since my last update. She set another record for number of days between seizures—110 days.

Susan's movement disorder specialist has prescribed a new drug to counter tremors. So far we haven't noticed any adverse side effects or any improvements in the tremors. At least we will be able to say we did our best to solve the problem.

We visited my family last Thanksgiving and Susan's family at Christmas. Both trips went well.

Our good friends, Frank and Evander McClenny, invited us to the Petroleum Club of Houston for dinner and dancing last night to celebrate our un-anniversary. The Petroleum Club is on the 43rd floor of the Exxon Building in downtown Houston. Years ago, Susan moved the date we celebrate our anniversary from November to February because we were often traveling or hunting on the official date, November 25th. Our dancing at the Club was



Susan at the Petroleum Club of Houston

limited to standing Susan up on the dance floor from her wheelchair so she could wiggle while holding onto me. It wasn't very graceful, but it made her happy. The view of downtown from the 43rd floor is spectacular, and the food is great.

Positives:

- Susan's latest MRI indicated that she continues to be in remission
- Her memory is almost normal again
- Her verbal communication continues to improve
- Susan is feeding herself

Negatives:

- Susan has recently developed some wild swings in alertness. She describes the "up" times as feeling wired. I have had some success controlling these with Melatonin. The lows are so low that she becomes unresponsive. We actually took her to the ER during one of these low events. We have discussed these swings with three of her doctors without coming to any conclusions about the cause or possible solution.
- Susan has both e-mail and a Facebook account but cannot stay focused long enough to communicate with anyone. She cannot resist clicking any link presented to her and will follow rabbit trails until she has completely forgotten her original intent.
- Susan can only walk with our assistance and only about 30-40 feet. She was evaluated by a water therapist who decided not to take the risk of putting her in the pool. I plan to try another facility soon. We will probably continue to do some therapy at MD Anderson during the year as well.
- Susan cannot coordinate her left arm and right arm to propel and steer her wheelchair. She tends to use only her right arm. I hope this improves over the next few months. It would be nice if she could move through the house without assistance.
- Tremors continue to be a problem. We are still hoping that her movement disorder specialist can do something to help.

Have a great year in 2009!

Education Highlights

by Brian Honsinger
texbay@sbcglobal.net
 281-777-0552

We got January off to a good start with a full class of Wire Wrappers and will start the second class on February 8, 2009. If that is your thing and you have your deposit in, please advise me if you can attend for three Sunday afternoons in February. The first meeting we ask that you come at 1:00 p.m. to complete the paperwork and payment. All the other meetings are usually 2:00–5:00 p.m. All materials and tools are supplied.

I guess then we need to think about a Wire Wrapping Bracelet or Ring Class. So much to learn, so little time!

Four students just finished Beginning Jewelry Making in December. In late January or early February, we will start our Intermediate class in Jewelry Making on Wednesdays. It will begin at 10:00 a.m.–12:00 Noon with an hour lunch break, and then 1:00–4:00 p.m. The cost is \$375.00, and again all the tools and materials are furnished. I have high hopes that we can soon get a Sunday Beginning Jewelry Making class going as well.

Interest exists for Wax Modeling and Casting, Ad Hoc Casting, Enameling, Mold Making, Precious Metal Clay, Stone Setting, and Stone Carving or Fluting.

Please respond by simply replying to this e-mail with the class you would like to start IF you have a deposit check in. If you have not made a deposit, please do so and then respond quickly so we can get other classes started right away.

Many people have scheduled times for the Saturday afternoon hands-on cab cutting class for free rather than the \$ 20.00 posted fee. This has been possible because of the generosity of our very active and helpful member Gary Anderson. I was lucky enough to find him my first Saturday in the cutting room. He will probably tell you I have been bothering him ever since.

Let me hear from you. If I left of a class, it is my mistake—we haven't dropped it. Just point it out, and I will get it back on my list.

Please use this address as I check it the most: *texbay@sbcglobal.net*.

AFMS Endowment Fund Raffle

by Terry Proctor

Our good friend, Bill Patillo (think Rock Food Table at our Show for years) is this year's American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) Endowment Fund Chair. Bill has asked that members of HGMS who have an item worth \$50.00 or more and who would like to donate it to the AFMS for their annual auction to please get it to me. This year's Show is in Billings, Montana July 30 through August 2, and hence anyone who will donate for this great purpose is encouraged to

contact me at once so we can see that your donation is sent to Bill Pattillo in a timely fashion.

It may be jewelry you created, or wonderful fossils, or a mineral or lapidary item, or some beading. They ask that the item be worth at least \$50.00 in order to make handling the items worthwhile as they have to be mailed to the location where they will be accumulated for the auction. Please give me a call if we can count on you for a donation. It can be things other than those created or collected in connection with HGMS. Terry Proctor, at my law office, (713) 453-8338 or by e-mail to auraman@swbell.net. Thank you.

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

Thirteen members and one guest attended the 12 January , 2009, meeting of the Day Light Section. Nancy Fischer gave the program which was a travelogue of her trip to the far East. She and her brother and sister-in-law went to a wedding of Nancy's nephew held in Indonesia. Before the wedding, they visited Viet Nam and Cambodia. The program was very interesting, especially the telling about the wedding customs.

Thirteen members also attended the 9 February, 2009, meeting of the Day Light Section. Karen Burns gave the program which was making earrings using 21 gauge dead soft sterling silver , argentium silver, gold-filled or fine silver , and one or two 8mm beads. If you did not want earrings, you could begin a necklace. The basic link for the earring is also the basic link for the necklace. Most finished a set of earrings, and some wore them home.

We thank both Karen and Nancy for presenting wonderful meetings.

For our March meeting, we hope to begin the working on the concha belts.

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

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.

Wednesday, March 18: To be announced. Refreshments will be provided.

In Our Library

by Art Smith, Librarian

Finally got the tapes onto DVDs, and the sale of the VHS tapes is going on. We have sold about \$100 worth to date, but there are plenty of good ones left to be picked. I expect to pull them up in early March and then dispose of them somewhere, so have at it now. I expect to report on the cost of materials and the dubbing machine but estimate it was about \$500. It was quite easy to do, and eventually I may make the machine available for members to use.

New books include a *Mineralogy of Great Britain* that is being sold by the Mineralogical Record. This Month the magazine has a supplement on Texas Collectors. Although I just glanced through it, I did not see a single Texas specimen illustrated in it. HGMS members in it are Tim & Holly Smith, Will Heierman, Robert S tacker, and former members Marty Zinn and Mark Mauthner.

There are some new videos being released during the Tucson Show. So keep reading this column to see which ones I am able to obtain for the library.

Grants and Donations Needed!

by Terry Proctor

Does your company or organization make matching donations or have funds in the form of grants? HGMS is undertaking a new program of seeking additional funding by checking to see if members are eligible to have a sum given to HGMS as a grant or as a matching donation. Some companies match your dollar donation, and other companies donate on a basis of the amount of time an HGMS member donates to HGMS. Presently we have one sizeable donation being reviewed by an oil company whose employee has donated a large amount of time, and that counts as a matching item for a large cash donation by their employer.

Please contact me if your firm or organization makes grants or matching donations, Terry Proctor, at my law office, (713) 453-8338 or by e-mail to auraman@swbell.net. Thank you.

Orientation Class Being Set Up

by Terry Proctor

If you are new to HGMS, or if you are a guest and want to join HGMS, your BOD is in favor of starting a **free** orientation class soon. This probably will be two or three hours on a Saturday. You will be given information by folks from various Sections about what their Section does (when you belong to HGMS, you automatically belong to ALL Sections in which you are interested), information about the Shop, about trips, about policies and rules and regulations in being a member, and about our Show and your chance to be on a committee and help put on the Show. We think this is a great new innovation which will help new folks learn about HGMS and allow the Sections and Show committee to know more about our new members. Second Vice-

President Beverly Mace is the keeper of information on our new members, so you, as a new member, will be contacted to let you know when this orientation program will occur. We hope you will be enthusiastic about being there when it is held.

HGMS General Meeting Minutes

January 27, 2009

by Nancy Fischer for Regina Gorman, Secretary

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

There were several visitors/new members. Charlotte Donner joined in July. Her husband Ed Fusillier and daughter have gone on several field trips. Chris and Rachel Dingfield joined recently. Their primary interest is fossils.

Karen Burns moved and Phyllis George seconded to accept the December minutes as published in the BBG.

There was an addendum to the published January Board of Directors Minutes. The Board voted to increase adult show tickets to \$7.00 with \$1.00 off for dealers and members. The teacher/student/senior tickets remain at \$4.00. This information was inadvertently omitted from the January Board of Directors minutes.

The Treasurer reported to the Board of Directors that the club is solvent.

Show: Sigrid Stewart, the 2009 Show Committee Chair reported that there was a Show Committee meeting January 17. Patty Scott is the Show Publicity Chair. The publicity committee is just getting started, and they will put out at least two mailings due to the change in our show date. They are preparing a flyer for distribution at the Clear Lake Show, February 21–22. Rick Rexroad, Assistant Show Chair, said there is a need for volunteers to cover the HGMS booth at the Clear Lake Show February 21 and 22.

Terry Proctor reminded members of the change of the HGMS Show date to November 13–15, 2009. He said that only one or two of the regular dealers couldn't make the show because of the change. Two advantages to the date change are the little likelihood that there will be a hurricane and the show will be closer to Christmas for gift giving.

Show Education: Scott Singleton said the Show Committee's booth, manned by Mike Reeves and himself, attracted a lot of attention from teachers at the meeting of Science Educators at the Museum of Natural Science.

Section Reports

Beading Section: The next meeting will be February 22. The date was changed to Sunday because many members of the Beading Section will be going to the Clear Lake Show on Saturday, the usual meeting date. The project description will be on the Web

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.

site, and Neal will be informed so he can send out an announcement.

Faceting Section: Wayne Barnett advised that there will be a faceting seminar sometime in March.

Lapidary and Daylight Sections: Karen Burns will be teaching a wire wrap class at the next meeting of each Section. The project will be making earrings, and the same procedure can be used to make a necklace. She will have the materials for sale for \$3.00 at the meetings.

Paleo Section: Scott Singleton said the next meeting will ponder a mystery. 300 million year old conifers had different leaves, but the same trunks. How can you figure out which is which? It is not the bark.

Library: Art Smith copied all the VHS tapes to DVDs. The VHS tapes are for sale for \$1.00 each.

BBG: Copy for the next BBG is due, as always, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month. That would be February 11 this month.

She noted that Henry (Hank) McCleary had passed away and Frances Arrighi wrote the memorium article. Phyllis took a good picture of Hank in 2004 during a General Meeting. She used that photo with the In Memoriam article and also mailed a copy to Beryl McCleary. She greatly appreciated it and wrote a lovely letter to that effect.

Shop: Neal Immega said that everything spins. Wayne Barnett reminded members to check their arithmetic when filling out the book and figuring how much they owe. Matt Dillon suggested that members sign in before they use the equipment. That way they might remember to fill in the amount they owed for grinder use and slab saw use in the book before they leave.

Old Business

Terry Proctor introduced a plan to bring more revenue to the Club. He asked the members to look it over and comment. He asks members who work for larger companies to find out about possible grants. Sigrid Stewart, for instance, applied to Chevron for a grant for expenditures at the Show. Terry said we should let the companies know that we are expanding our education outreach. He suggested dividing the area up into districts and giving presentations at local area restaurants with free party rooms.

He is applying for the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor program.

Steve Blyskal uses funds from a Conoco grant to provide earth science kits for schools.

The Building Fund has been started with \$750 from a part of the proceeds from the Christmas Party auction.

Phyllis George informed the members that she had joined a nonprofit organization called TechSoup and was able to get \$1500 worth of Adobe software for \$136.

Terry Proctor reminded members that cold drinks in the refrigerator are always

50 cents apiece regardless of the situation--including for meetings and all parties.

New Business

Terry mentioned that the Club Members are glad to have Karen Burns back with us.

Joan Riley mentioned that the Houston Museum of Fine Arts is having a symposium about lapis lazuli February 21, 2009 from 1:00–6:00 p.m.

Education: Brian Honsinger reported that the Education Committee is in full swing. The first wire wrapping class of 2009 ended Sunday, January 25.

The second Wire Wrapping class starts Sunday February 8. The cost for this class is \$135.00. \$25.00 must be paid up front to hold your spot in the class. The wire wrappers are looking at doing a Ring or Bracelet class next.

The Beginning Jewelry Making Sunday afternoon class begins February 15th and continues for 5 weeks. The cost of that class is the same as last time: \$375.00. You make five projects using sterling silver. Get those deposits in if you have not.

Patty Scott will be giving an Introduction to Enameling one Sunday afternoon for six hours. The cost will be \$90. This is a \$180.00 savings over the old class price.

The Wednesday Intermediate Jewelry Making class starts February 18. Its cost is \$375.00. You will make some great-looking projects and have a good understanding of torch control when you finish that class.

Door Prize: Matt Dillon donated a piece of Needle Peak Agate which was won by John Anderson who will bring next month's Door Prize. The Show Committee may provide the Door Prize in the future.

Show and Tell: Art Smith brought in a beautiful lathe-turned mesquite vase. The bright yellow color was natural.

Dean Lagerwall had some of the agates he collected on his recent trip to San Carlos, Mexico. Unfortunately, at the end of the meeting, one agate turned up missing. See article on page 21.

Bob Fischer showed some of the "finds" he and Nancy brought back from their road trip to Quartzite, AZ including crazy lace agate, a moss agate bowl, Sonoran sunrise, chrysoprase, and carnelian agate.

Presentation: Matt Dillon aided by Ed Tindell gave a multimedia presentation about collecting Needle Peak agate. He talked about how to get to Needle Peak, the difficult terrain, and what to look for. They had several maps as well as interesting pictures of the rather forbidding area.

Matt gave a brief history lesson as that part of Texas not only was prone to Apache/Comanche raids, but was also "visited" by Pancho Villa. He also talked about the attempted development of Lajitas by Walter Mitscher and others. There are three mountains named Needle Peak, but he has been exploring one site since 1975. He talked

about some of the people he met while hunting agates and some of the things you had to watch for--situations as well as critters. Pom pom, thistle, and green moss are some of the types of agate that can be found.

The general area runs from the Woodward Agate Ranch south through the Big Bend area to San Carlos, Mexico.

While hunting in the region, Matt advised having a guide who can take care of necessary fees. He hired Terry Smith for his most recent trip.

Several club members brought in agate from the area, including Joan RileyArt Smith, and Sigrid Stewart.

It was another great presentation. Thanks, Matt.

HGMS Board of Directors Minutes

February 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
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

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

The January 6, 2009, Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting was printed in the Backbender's Gazette (BBG). Terry Proctor advised that the January Minutes failed to show that the Board discussed and voted upon the Show Committee's Budget which included a vote to set the ticket price for adults at \$7.00, the price for HGMS members and coupon discounts at \$1.00 of f, and the price for students, teachers, and seniors remaining at \$4.00. All Board Members agreed that was the vote in January and therefore that is what the correction to the Minutes should reflect. Matt Dillon moved that the January 2009 minutes be accepted with this correction. Wayne Barnett seconded the motion, and it was passed by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report: Terry Proctor tabled discussion on the Treasurer's Report until after the 2009 Show Committee Chair's report.

Old Business

2009 Show Committee: Show Chairperson Sigrid Stewart reported that grants are still available to help fund the HGMS 2009 Show education programs. She mentioned

grants such as Chevron's Human Kind Matching Dollars Grants. Sigrid stated that about \$2,500 would be needed to purchase materials. Phyllis George said that an annual grant from Conoco is used for mineral sets. Club members give a talk on the mineral sets at area schools, and the sets are then given to the teachers for class use.

Show Publicity Chair, Patty Scott, e-mailed newly designed flyers to the Show Committee for discussion and feedback. Phyllis George and Nancy Fischer had both worked on an earlier version of the flyer. The publicity effort for the Show is well underway. Wayne Barnett asked about the price of the flyers and wanted to know if it was possible to solicit free publicity as in past years. Sigrid is already working on that. Terry Proctor suggested that some flyers also be printed for general use promoting HGMS, other than just the Show, such as for use in requesting grants, for new HGMS members, etc. Sigrid will present ideas from the Board concerning the flyers at the Show Committee meeting next Tuesday.

Sigrid also reported that contracts and invitations were sent out to the dealers already lined up for the 2009 Show. A discussion ensued concerning dealer contracts and the deposits dealers make to secure their booths.

Treasurer's Report Discussion: Rodney Linehan said that a summary of the 2007 and 2008 audits will be presented at the meeting next month by Mr. J. Stockton, the person auditing the Club finances. Terry Proctor stated that he sent a list of the 2009 HGMS elected officers to the Texas Secretary of State's office, and this year it was submitted without the fee paid last year. He said unless the Secretary of State requested a fee, none will be sent.

Phyllis George presented more information on the issue of procuring software from TechSoup, also previously discussed by the Board in the January 2009 meeting. Terry Proctor said that Phyllis sent him information from TechSoup regarding obtaining Grants. A one-day window existed that allowed HGMS to sign up for \$99 when the regular price was \$300. When he checked this online, he learned that if an organization belonged to TANO (Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations), that organization should not apply as that same information on grants is part of TANO's package. In fact, he found that we could belong to TANO for \$150.00, only \$51.00 more than the reduced price of grant help, and membership in TANO includes the same grant information plus many other benefits. Wayne Barnett moved that HGMS join TANO, and Regina Gorman seconded the motion. Discussion was held before the vote, and the motion to join TANO was passed by unanimous vote.

Building Fund: Rodney Linehan prepared a resolution to open the building fund account which to date will amount to \$1,295. This amount reflects the sum of \$500 originally funded by the Board, \$780.50 which is half of the proceeds from the Christmas Auction, and a \$15.00 donation from Frances Arrighi. The resolution was signed by the Treasurer and notarized by the Secretary.

Education: Terry said Brian Honsinger is doing a great job, and he reported that classes held so far this year have brought in more than \$1,200.00. Several other classes, including wire-wrapping are already set up and ready to go.

Clubhouse: Tom Wright is unable to replace the back door at this time as he is having a health procedure done that will delay his completing the replacement. The door will be installed professionally.

Matt Dillon and Wayne Barnett agreed to work on getting the stop blocks installed in the parking lot shortly.

Also, the club needs additional in-out holders on the office door. At least three more holders need to be added so all the sections and officers who need it will have one there.

Beading: Diane Sisson reported that the Beading Section has been meeting for two years. The past year they had over 10 people in attendance each month, and each month they create a beaded project. The February meeting is moved from Saturday to Sunday, February 22 since some of the members wish to attend the Texas Faceting Guild Symposium at the Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Show on Saturday.

Youth: Beverly Mace reported that the Youth Section will not have a meeting this month, but instead the individual members will take a self-guided tour with their parents of the Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Show Saturday February 21. It is being held in the Pasadena Convention Center on 7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX.

Lapidary: Phyllis George reported that Karen Burns will lead the members in making earrings from dead soft square 21 gauge sterling silver wire and 8 mm beads at the next meeting. Bring your own wire cutters and round nose pliers.

Faceting: Wayne Barnett informed the Board that the Faceting Section will be conducting a faceting seminar on Sunday March 15. This seminar will be for intermediate and advanced faceters only.

Terry Proctor stated that he found in the club office 12–15 instructional video tapes filmed some years back by David George of Ed Clay making cabochons. HGMS at one time was selling these tapes, and these tapes still need to be sold to make space and to provide revenue for HGMS. It was suggested that the tapes could be sold at auction. Matt Dillon suggested that it would be good to transfer the tapes to CDs if possible, or they could be used as teaching tapes. There also are some voice cassette tapes, and Terry will take one home to see what is on it.

BBG: The date for submissions for articles and items to appear in the March 2009 BBG is February 11, 2009.

New Business

AFMS Endowment Fund Chairman: Bill Patillo (of rock food table fame). Bill sent an e-mail announcing that AMFS will hold an annual raffle at their July 2009 Show to be held in Billings, Montana. Terry Proctor suggested that HGMS members donate something for the raffle. Wayne Barnett would like a notice to be placed in the BBG and one on the HGMS Web site. Terry asked if the Board would put up \$50 for HGMS to provide a raffle item to be submitted to the AMFS for auction. Since time is of the

essence to get this announcement about the raf fle published in the BBG, he will also ask Neal Immega to send an e-mail out to the sections asking for items to be donated to the raffle. Terry said he would be happy to donate one of his unframed eArt Scans, if it was deemed that would be of any interest to AFMS as an auction item. Items donated are to have a value of \$50.00 or over.

Program for General Meetings: Matt Dillon reported that Amber-Way is considering doing the March 2009 program. He will also contact Ron Gibbs by e-mail as a possible candidate for a program. Ron has photographed outstanding jasper and agate specimens and produced a book on them. This month John Roland, flint knapper and spear maker, has been asked to do the program, and it's very likely he will be able to do so. There was an informal discussion by the Board about possible speakers for the General Meetings. Several possible speakers were discussed: Norman Lenz, Roger Pateor from the University of Nebraska, David Wilbur, and Patrick Houston.

Other Business

Insurance: Rodney Linehan reported that the insurance on the clubhouse building is up for renewal. It's presently insured with Liability limits set at \$1,000,000, Fire \$100,000, Medical \$10,000, Property \$384,000, Personal Property \$270,000. The policy premium will be \$6,789 for one year, and it does not include flood insurance. Rodney Linehan will look into how much flood insurance will cost and report back at the March Board meeting.

Electric Service Provider: Rodney also reported that Texas Power Choice was sold, and the buyer does not provide electric service to commercial customers. Several providers were mentioned and discussed. Rodney will research and compare rates of possible providers and report on the options available. The buyer is allowing HGMS a reasonable amount of time to make a decision, so there is no imminent danger of the electricity being shut off.

Book Publication by the Paleontology Section: Terry Proctor opened a discussion on the idea of publishing a book. He mentioned that the Paleo Section had made a good bit of money on books over the years and that the main club might consider doing a book. He suggested perhaps a beginner's book on collecting. He also mentioned that the Emersons had their book set up to print a copy as it was sold, thereby eliminating the need to invest a large sum and to store a lot of books. Wayne Barnett and others discussed the fact that some of the Paleo Books were out of date and had errors. Phyllis said Neal Immega has put out books on CDs, and he makes a new CD copy of the book whenever one is sold. Scott Singleton is presently working on a book. Terry said that he had started a beginners book on "Rock-hounding, and he might be able to work that into an HGMS book.

Missing Items: Rick Rexroad reported that when Dean Lagerwall was showing his small pastel agates that he brought for Show and Tell last month, one of them came up missing. It was requested that a notice listing the missing agates be placed in the BBG.

The Lost is Found: The large HGMS banner used on the front of the Humble Civic

Center during shows has finally been located. It could not be found for use during the 2008 Show. Wayne Barnett moved a tall stack of boxes that had been pushed into a corner of the Paleo Library, and there it was, completely hidden by the boxes. Thank you, Wayne.

As there was no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned by the President at 9:05 p.m.

Missing Agate!

by Terry Proctor

Show 'n Tell is an important part of Section Meetings and of our General Meetings. At the General Meeting program on January 27, Dean Lagerwall was showing some lovely small pastel agates. As is often done, the items are put out on the front table for folks to look at during the break. After the break, one of Dean's small agates was missing. It is assumed that it may have been knocked off or accidentally picked up and put down in a different place, but it has not been located. If you have any knowledge of this agate, we need to help Dean recover the agate which he generously shared with us. If you know where it might be, please contact me, Terry Proctor, at my law office, (713) 453-8338 or by e-mail to auraman@swbell.net. It will be returned to Dean by me without questions, but we just need to assure our members and visitors that they can safely bring things for others to see and enjoy without them being misplaced. Thanks for your help.

SCFMS Safety--Silent Killer

by Owen Martin

SCFMS Safety Coordinator

from SCFMS Newsletter 1-2/2009

I sincerely hope everyone had a safe, bountiful and Happy Holidays!

Personally I had two of the best fossil hunts I've ever had in the Dallas-FortWorth area. My friend Barry got a great picture of me trying to dig an ammonite out from under a boulder heavily covered in icicles. It was a little colder that day than we expected when we planned it. We were properly dressed for the elements and it warmed up later, though not much past 50 degrees. Either way, hypothermia was avoided!

When I finally got back to the in-laws' house, it was time to go upstairs, shower of f, and warm up. I cranked up the heater a little bit to that end.

That particular heater jogged my memory and inspired a non-geo related safety article, one on carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is known as a silent killer. The following information is taken from Wikipedia.com:

Carbon monoxide poisoning occurs after the inhalation of carbon monoxide gas. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a product of the combustion of organic matter under conditions of restricted oxygen supply, which prevents complete oxidation to carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and non-irritating, making it difficult for people to detect.

Carbon monoxide is a significantly toxic gas, and CO poisoning is the most common type of fatal poisoning in many countries. Symptoms of mild poisoning include headaches, vertigo, and flu-like effects; larger exposures can lead to significant toxicity of the central nervous system, heart, and even death.

Here is the inspiration for the story:

It has been 10 years since we had a serious near miss at my in-laws' house. On Christmas Eve 1998, we had about 20 family members at the house and everyone departed about 11:30 p.m. We lived in Dallas at the time, so we headed back to our apartment. My wife had seen a show on TV earlier in the year that discussed the household risks of CO poisoning. Since we had two kids under the age of three at the time, we were pretty safety conscious. My wife had encouraged her mother to buy CO detectors several months prior, but when "granna" didn't do anything, my wife took it upon herself to install a couple in her mom's house, one upstairs and one down. Her initiative proved to be quite valuable to the family.

About 45 minutes after we left, one of the CO detectors in the house went off. My in-laws fiddled with it for a few minutes trying to figure out what was going on with it. Finally they decided it was malfunctioning, so they unplugged it and went back to bed. Two minutes later the other one went off. As the old saying goes, "fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me."

The second alarm got their attention. They grabbed a couple of coats and their dog, and headed outside where they called 911. The fire department showed up a few minutes later. They explained that the CO detectors had both gone off so a fireman with a CO detector suited up and entered the house. They were shocked and dismayed to discover that the fireman had measured CO levels that were seven times the lethal limit. Upon further inspection, it was determined that the firewall on the furnace had cracked and was pouring CO into the house. Maybe it was a Christmas miracle that it happened after everyone left or maybe just a good amount of "horse sense" from my wife, but either way, the CO detectors worked and no one was hurt.

The Fire Captain told them later that if they had fallen asleep, they would have been dead in less than two hours.

Since this is the time of year when we are using our furnaces a lot, especially in Texas where we like to use the furnace at night and then the air conditioner during the same day, I have two strong recommendations:

1. Get your furnace serviced annually each fall.
2. Buy CO detectors for your home and for those of your loved ones if they don't have them.

Staying alive is very important if we want to keep up with our geo- and gem-related hobbies! Happy New Year, and be SAFE!

Rock & Gem now our “Official” Magazine!

by Shirley Leeson

AFMS Past President

from AFMS Newsletter 12/2008-1/2009

I'm delighted to share some exciting news with all of you. The AFMS Officers and Directors have selected *Rock & Gem* magazine as the official magazine of the American Federation!

Rock & Gem is published by Miller Magazines, and our own International Relations Chair, Bob Jones, is its Senior Editor. He and his “boss” Lynne Varon, Managing Editor of the magazine, have been actively promoting the AFMS and several of its activities for the past year, and they plan to continue doing so in years to come.

Rock & Gem is the last of the true “rockhound” magazines now that *Lapidary Journal* has morphed into *Jewelry Arts/Lapidary Journal*. *Mineralogical Record* and *Rocks & Minerals* of course continue as outstanding publications, but their focus is on minerals, not on rockhounds. Each issue of R & G contains articles on field trips, minerals, projects, and a series of kids activities.

The November issue includes an editorial by Lynne Varon entitled “Find Your Voice” touting the AFMS Conservation & Legislation program, information about our efforts to get the U.S. Postal Service to produce a series of commemorative stamps featuring birthstones, and an early plug by Bob Jones for the AFMS 2009 Convention in Billings, Montana.

If you're not already a subscriber and thus a supporter of the magazine, you can easily get information by visiting their Web site <www.rockngem.com> or by calling them at 760-291-1549.

Not yet had the opportunity of meeting our International Relations Chair Bob Jones? He's always at the club show in Tucson each February, the Denver Show each September, the Springfield show each August in W. Springfield, MA, and at many many local club shows. He's also scheduled to be the speaker at the EFMLS Wildacres Workshop in 2010.

Our association with *Rock & Gem* can truly be a symbiotic relationship—we subscribe, and the magazine supports the efforts of the American Federation and our local clubs.



Take Care of Your Collection

by Ed Mattson

from SCRIBE 1–3, 2009

Being a mineral collector, I visit the dealers and shows in our area. I also go to tag sales, flea markets, consignment and antique stores, which occasionally can have mineral specimens for sale. Tag sales will tend to have mineral specimens the most often, but you have to visit many and do so regularly.

What I find mostly is only one or two specimens that were bought as a souvenirs, gifts, or an Object De Art for its decorative value. I once saw some very nice large specimens being sold as accessory decorations in a large lighting store.

Rarely I have found an estate sale where the deceased person was a collector or a lapidary enthusiast. One sale had sizable rocks of assorted fancy pegmatites, lepidolite, and others as a rock garden. Another was into slabbing. The house was full of various agates, jade nodules, and nice looking cobbles of various types along with cutting and polishing equipment.

Our club has been given materials and collections from various past and deceased members. Others were ones who had to move and did not have room to store their collection. Past club boards have been using this material for selling at our monthly auctions and other venues. I knew many of the members from whom this material came.

What saddens me is the state these collections are in. While the original collector started a very good labeling and record keeping system and fully intended to keep it up, with the demands of everyday life, time, and health, many collections ultimately degrade into a mass of confusion.

Some of the material I have sorted through in the club stock came from an early member who passed on some years ago. I visited him a few times when he was alive and saw his collection. Even then it was in a disorganized state. While he had started to properly have code numbers on each specimen and had a corresponding card file, he was unable to keep it up.

When the remnants of his collection came to me via auction and sales, I found utter chaos. There were specimens without numbers, numbered specimens without cards, missing specimens or missing cards. I filled three tall kitchen can trash bags full of crumbling paper, mildewed cardboard trays, and an assortment of grubby plastic containers that I sorted from the minerals.

I knew that he, like other collectors, prized each piece he bought or collected. Each had its own story to him. I knew that many pieces came from local sites now closed. I knew I was tossing out items with possibly some monetary or historical value. I tried to identify as much as I could, but ultimately, about 1/3 of what was there went into the “use as pretty rocks” buckets. Many hobbyist collections I see are potentially doomed to this fate.

You are asking (or should be asking) now how can I avoid this happening to my collection? First, be very selective of what you take home if you self collect. Just because you work hard to get a 5 gallon bucket of material does not mean you have to keep it all. Ask yourself; is this the best that this site can offer? Do I really need this much? Can I trade or sell the excess? Be picky. Don't break your back hauling junk home.

The other way is simple. At least once a month, devote some time to keep it in order. No "I can do that tomorrow" or "I'll do it next week" excuses. Mount everything firmly on a base of some type. It could be anything—Styrofoam, wood, stiff cardboard, or clear plastic blocks so long as you keep a uniform look.

Have a short, simple label ON EACH ITEM with a corresponding hardcopy list. You can do a list on the computer, but computers crash. If you self collect and have multiples, mount a few and store the rest in a sturdy container with a label in or on it.

Your next question should be "What can I use in preserving my collection?" NO cheap folding, paperboard boxes you get from a dealer NO shoeboxes or other cheap boxes. NO zipper lock type bags or other plastic or paper bags. Both will degrade chemically and become mildew food or mouse nesting material quickly. NO plastic display cases scavenged from the dumpster behind Kohl's or Wall-Mart.

NO, NO, NO deli or other food containers of any kind! Besides that fact that they will degrade too, it is a poor way to show your collection. If you have any pride in your collection, show it properly. This all goes double if you store your collection in a basement or garage. And why are you storing your collection in such a dark, damp, moldy, bug- and rodent-infested and inaccessible place anyway?

With the Internet, one can find all sorts of good looking and sturdy boxes, drawers, glass front display unit kits, and so on. There are many more makers and dealers of container systems just for our hobby now than in decades past. In the city of White Plains in Westchester County is The Container Store. It sells nothing but containers of all types, shapes and sizes. I saw for sale some small metal file-like cases that have the shallow drawers that are perfect for most mineral specimens. They also sell "bug boxes" of various sizes.

What does your Will say about your collection? You can designate in your Will how to dispose of your collection, or depending on the individual State laws, you can pass it on outside a formal Will. Your attorney can check this for you.

Yes, I know you are going to worry about the time and cost, so let me ask you this.

Do you want your collection, which you have spent much money, time, and effort on, and have fond many memories of, to be passed on as a worthwhile and educational collection to a young collector?

Or do you want it to become just some fancy rocks in a rock garden or buried in a concrete patio—or wind up like the collection leftovers I deal with?

Show Time 2009

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 7-8	Robstown, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Regional Fairgrounds
March 21-22	San Antonio, TX (Live Oak, TX)	Southwest Gem & Mineral Society Live Oak Civic center, 8101 Pat Booker Rd. www.swgemandmineral.org
April 11-12	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center, North 6th & Pine
April 17-19	Alpine, TX	Chihuahua Desert Gem & Mineral Club Highland Events Center, Kwy. 90 East
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 23-24	Ft. Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Society 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
August 15-16	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center
August 22-23	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Hall, 7 miles W of Jasper FM 2799 & 1747
September 5-6	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society Arlington Convention Center
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		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 Daylight Saving begins	9 1:00 Day Light Section	10 7:30 Show Committee	11 7:30 Faceting Section	12	13	14 10-5 Shop Open
15	16 7:30 Lapidary Section	17 7:30 Paleo Section	18 7:30 Mineral Section	19	20 1 st day of Spring	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
29	30	31				

2009		April				2009
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 7:30 Mineral Section	2	3	4 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
5 Palm Sunday	6	7 7:30 Board Meeting	8 7:30 Faceting Section	9 1 st day of Passover	10 Good Friday	11 10-5 Shop Open
12 Easter Sunday	13 1:00 Day Light Section	14 7:30 Show Committee	15 7:30 Mineral Section	16 Last day of Passover	17	18 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
19	20 7:30 Lapidary Section	21 7:30 Paleo Section	22	23	24	25 10-5 Shop Open
26	27	28 7:30 General Meeting	29	30		

The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

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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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