



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
2010 HGMS President*

If you haven't been to the HGMS Clubhouse in a few days, you may not recognize it. If you have been there, you may have passed it up, thinking you were at the wrong place. Badly needed improvements have been made, as you will immediately notice.

At the General Meeting on January 26, 2009, HGMS membership voted for the Board of Directors (BOD)-supported electrical updating of the HGMS clubhouse with only one dissenting vote (basically not against the modernization of lighting, but to do it in two stages instead of all at one time (which would have run a little more to do it that way, but was a reasonable suggestion—but did not have support).



If you have come to night meetings, I need say no more. It was often almost totally dark in our parking lot and on the front of the HGMS clubhouse. Prior to the installation of the new stop blocks, we had broken concrete stop blocks with rebars sticking out ready to grab you. Now we have nice black-and-yellow striped stop blocks, and the

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Upcoming Programs for the General Meetings

*by First Vice-President James Wark,
in charge of HGMS General Meeting programs*

February 23—Samuel E. "Sam" Stubbs, an attorney and partner with the Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP international law firm will present a program entitled "Amazing prep work which elevates trilobites to art." Sam reputedly has the best trilobite collection in Houston. The work he has done and his acquisitions of trilobites, many of which have been photographed by Neal Immega, are nothing short of amazing. Surely these are ancient, natural works of art in the fine details of these extinct, pre-historic creatures from the Cambrian forward until their extinction. Come prepared to be fascinated with the many species of trilobites.

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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>.

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parking area is lighted to a dazzling degree. And as mentioned, there is new lighting on the front of the HGMS Clubhouse as well.

When you give a new member directions to our Clubhouse and tell them to look for the HGMS letters on the side of the building, now they can actually see it on a dark night.

Clearly the danger of someone lurking in the dark—a danger to our members—is now drastically reduced (and we have had occasions where a car not belonging to an HGMS member pulled into our lot and questioned a member in a strange way). *The newly installed lights are sealed and long-lasting lighting, eliminating the necessity of changing bulbs and tubes regularly as in the past.*

I hope every member of HGMS is pleased and proud that we now have a well-lit Clubhouse without dangerous broken concrete and rebars. HGMS member James Burrell was given the contract for the lighting, and the entire job was carried out promptly within days after the January 26 General Membership meeting which granted approval for the job. The job was completed February 10 and included some additional wiring that was requested and approved by the Board—some long-needed outlets and a new four-foot, four-tube, fluorescent light in the General Membership Library.

Dream with Me for a Moment: Imagine a Shop with twice as much room as the present Shop, twice as many classrooms, a meeting room twice as big as our present meeting room (at the last Christmas Party, some HGMS members had to eat their turkey dinner in the oil-smelling shop). This building program can happen if we all latch onto the idea that it can. Imagine a lot more people knowing about our Show, our programs, our mineral and fossil kits to schools, and the many other things that HGMS does for the community:

Here are a few things that can make this happen.

Outreach Program: (see more below) How? Through education and public programs that educate the public and that give the HGMS Publicity Committee photos and stories as ammunition to work with the Grants Committee in our attempt to reach out to oil, chemical, and other Earth Science-related companies and individuals who then support us with donations to our Building Fund.

Bequests and Gifts: How? If you belong to any of the wildlife and other organizations, you know that they regularly ask members who believe in them to remember them in their Will and/or to make gifts to go into some type of fund to sustain and cause the organization to grow. This month, Dr. Frances Arrighi made a cash donation to memorialize Art Smith. The Board accepted the gift and made note of it. We hope this will be the first of many to come. If you need a clause for a will or help from me to work with your Estate Planning attorney, just let me know. I have been writing wills for 45 years and will certainly assist your attorney in proper language to leave a gift to HGMS.

Grants: How? HGMS has renewed its membership in TANO (Texas Association of

Non-Profit Organization) which provides us free access to grant program information. Members of HGMS have already applied for—and HGMS has received—grants. Chevron and Conoco have both assisted us in the past. Please check with your company and see if they have donation-matching programs and/or if you can apply for a grant based upon your time and/or monetary donation to HGMS. These can be fairly considerable donations.

Houston Community News Articles: How? When you do anything that relates to HGMS, write up a story, preferably with some photo(s) that go with the story, and play up HGMS in the story. Then get that article to me, so we can have our Grant Committee use those stories and photos in contacting potential donors to show how active and educational HGMS really is.

Donations for Auctions: How? HGMS has a number of auctions each year—General Meeting Silent Auction, Section Auctions, Christmas/Holiday Season Party Auction, Show Hourly Auctions, and others.

Educational Classes: How? Get friends and family to join the many classes we have. The revenue to HGMS rose both last year and this year because of the good job Brian Honsinger and his teachers are doing by putting on many more classes than before.

Members Using Shop Facilities: How? The income from Shop Use is increasing. Encourage HGMS members to use the Shop and to faithfully pay the fees for its use. We have set up Shop Supervisors and are getting each of them a badge. A sign will be mounted to let you know who the Supervisors are. Only HGMS members are authorized to use the Shop, and the honor system is in place on payment of fees. We expect members to pay for their use at the time of use—we don't run a tab. The shop fees pay for maintenance (except for maintenance supplied by our Supervisors, and especially by Neal Immega who saves us thousands of dollars a year by doing the things we otherwise would have to pay for).

You Fill in Other Things: This list is not expected to be complete. You add the other things that you think will funnel money into our Building Fund quickly so we will have cash to purchase expanded facilities for our growing club.

We hope you enjoy the improvements made last year and this year to YOUR Clubhouse.

While the recipient of the 2009 Art and Elizabeth Scholarship is still being determined by the Board, action was taken to commence work on the 2010 Bob Cross Scholarship. It was discussed that Bob Cross, now deceased, was a former HGMS member and professor at San Jacinto College during his life. On behalf of Bob's Estate, his daughter has donated fossils and minerals to HGMS. Also, for years Bob's fossils had been used at touch fossils at the Paleo Table at the HGMS Shows. Therefore, since Prof. Cross's donations have resulted in a considerable amount of money coming in from auctions of his minerals and fossils, Terry Brawner moved that the 2010 HGMS Scholarship be called the Bob Cross Scholarship. This motion was seconded by Phyllis George and passed unanimously.

Do you know of a student who will be graduating from a two-year junior college or equivalent and plans to go on to a four-year University and obtain a degree in Earth Science or Lapidary Art? The HGMS Annual Scholarship is looking for a student who has a good scholarship record, who currently is attending a college in Harris County or a college that has a campus located in the first tier of counties surrounding Harris County, and who has need of a scholarship to be able to attend a University to obtain a four year degree. Please contact me, Terry Proctor, HGMS President at my law office (713) 453-8338 or contact any of the other Board Members located in your HGMS Roster, and let us know so we can provide an application for an HGMS Scholarship to any applicant who qualifies for the HGMS Scholarship under the HGMS guidelines.

Outreach Program: At the February 2 Board Meeting, I brought up the Outreach Program and that I believed we needed to do more on it in 2010. The entire Board confirmed their belief that this was a good program in concept. They said they saw and approved the goals, i.e. to fulfill more of our education obligations under our Corporate Charter and IRS 501(c)3; to get HGMS better known county-wide and beyond; and to use these actions to seek grants and other donations. However, most members of the Board professed that they do not know their J.P. Precinct number and doubted that most HGMS members did. They also felt that having to pull out your voter ID card to see what the number is was something most HGMS members aren't going to do.

Therefore, the suggestion was made that instead of asking HGMS members to check their JP Pct. number themselves to determine their HGMS District, that a zip code overlay be placed over a map of the JP Precincts. This can easily show the districts in which our members live. Efforts are underway to be able to identify your HGMS District by using your zip code as the key. Hopefully we will have much more activity throughout Harris County in 2010. We did well in three HGMS Districts last year, but this year we need action in all eight, and more programs and more trips for Neal Immega to bring Genie machines out for youth and adults to learn how to grind and polish agate. Great things can come from this.

New Member Orientation Program: HGMS is planning another New Member Orientation Program, probably for late March. An e-mail will be sent out through Neal Immega to all on the e-mail list. If you are not on the e-mail list and want to attend, let me know and I will notify you of the date and time.

HGMS also plans to have a **Shop Orientation Program** shortly after the second New Member Orientation. This is to familiarize new members with the Shop and to give some detailed information on the use of Shop equipment, safety, Supervisors, fees, and a number of other details. It will be shorter than the Orientation Program. Again, notices will be e-mailed out, and anyone who does not have e-mail should contact me.

Thanks for reading the details of this March Message. I hope we can work together to enjoy a larger Clubhouse in the foreseeable future. Economically, now is the time to acquire more property, but we don't have the funds. We want to move to that end as soon as we can, so we will have the funds to acquire larger facilities without burdening the club with annual mortgage payments, including a lot for interest.

Upcoming Programs for General Meeting continued from page 1

March 23—Former HGMS President Norman Lenz will provide a fascinating program on “Gemstone Inclusions.” Inclusions in gemstones are fascinating and can add to the value of the gem as well as detract from it. This should prove to be an interesting program. Susan Lenz plans to come with Norman, so this will be a welcome home for her. Susan has been recovering slowly from a brain tumor that occurred many months ago, and HGMS will certainly look forward to her attendance again at this General Membership Meeting.

April 27—Neal Immega will present a program on a subject not yet provided. Neal always has good programs, and as a paleontologist, you can count on what he presents as being learned and correct.

Other upcoming programs planned later in the year include Charlie Fredregill doing the annual silver casting program. However, Charlie will do it outdoors to avoid noxious fumes from the closed-in room, and he will wait till the weather warms a bit. This should be coming up possibly in May or June.

Nathalie Brandes, Professor at Lone Star College has put on such interesting programs for the past two years that many members would like to have her come back in this summer and again put on an Earth Science program for us.

Patrick Lewis, PhD has also been a well-received speaker at our meetings for about three years. This summer he is returning to South Africa to dig again, and he is willing to come put on a program and tell us about his finds this year. He may be scheduled for about September.

Be assured that a variety of programs are in the offing for this year, and we hope you will attend all General Meetings. Remember that the Silent Auction is active early in the evening before the meeting, and Neal Immega will announce about 7:00 p.m. that the auction is winding down so you can get in your last-minute bids before the evening's meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.



"Remember, we agreed. I'd carry the canned goods in if you'd carry the rocks out."

by Ebners from Dust & Grit 2/00
via Golden Spike News 3/00
Via SCRIBE 2002-2008 DVD

Old Geezer—Even More On Old Days:

by John Emerson

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

I started to work in the oil fields when I was 11 years old (I had a Social Security card starting in 1939) and worked summers on an oil lease painting “Christmas Trees,” painting tanks, and digging ditches for 2" flow lines. I lived with a Lease Gauger and his wife in a company lease house as a favor to my dad. Pay was a great \$0.25 per hour. No overtime. No child labor laws—at least, not enforced. I was happy to get the money, and I was not mistreated in any way. Actually, I thought it was fun!

Starting in summer of 1942 (13 years old and a junior in high school), I started work on a “pulling machine” based in Sullivan City (in the Valley). Pulling machines pulled the rods (if a pumping well) and tubing out of the wells to repair the bottom hole pumps. We worked from “kin to kant.” That is, from when you can see until you can’t. As I recall, the Mexicans working with us were paid \$0.35 an hour, and us “white guys” got \$0.50. I don’t remember any time and a half overtime. It was straight time pay.

Remember, this was wartime, and full-grown men were scarce. As a courtesy to my Dad, I was allowed to room in the HOMCO (Houston Oilfield Material Company) supply house in Sullivan City at no cost—as long as Dad bought material from them. The supply house had a second story with one big open room with cots and a bath room for oil company visitors since there were no hotels or motels in Sullivan City.

The early morning after I graduated from high school (May, 1944), Dad got me up and drove me to Rio Grande City, TX (in the Valley on the Mexican border). He gave me \$5 and dropped me off in front of the only Hotel in town. I got a \$5 **per week** room with a “hot bed.” A “hot bed” room had three occupants—one roughneck that worked “days” (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.), one that worked “evenings” (4 p.m. to Midnight) and one that worked “mornings” (Midnight to 8 a.m.). You were lucky if your “roommates” bathed **before** they went to bed! The Hotel changed the sheets every week without fail!

They held my bags for me until I got a job so I could pay and know what hours I would work. I went across the street to the H&H café where all of the crews gathered to carpool to the drilling rigs. I started to apply for work and was picked up by a “morning” crew. I went out with them at midnight that first night in town. Again, remember this was still wartime—1944. As I remember, this job paid Mexicans \$0.75 and started us white “weevils” at \$0.85 per hour. After a few weeks I was raised to \$1.00. That was full scale for a roughneck. Also remember I was 15 years old. I did not find out until much later that Dad had told all of the oil field people in Rio Grande City to watch out for me. Not to help me, not to tell me what they were doing, just to be sure I did not get into trouble or get seriously hurt.

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.

In those days, liquor control was not very strict, and I was able to buy beer (Lone Star or Pearl at \$0.15 per bottle) at nearly any café.

When I started attending Texas A&M in the fall of 1944 (still 15 years old), tuition was \$25 per semester. Room and board (in mess halls) was \$30 per month. (At that time, state universities and colleges were mostly supported by the oil royalties from state land in the Panhandle.) Uniforms were furnished by the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps.). We had to buy our own books, but several book stores sold used books so it was not too expensive, and we could sell them back at the end of the course. Dad gave me \$25 per month spending money from which I had to buy the books and snacks at the “North Gate”—a shopping area just off the campus.

Before the war, there were about 15,000 students at A&M. But in 1944 there were about 7,000 students, and of those about 3,500 were “Frogs” the first semester and “Fish” the second; all were men, and all were white. ROTC was required if you were physically fit. The draft for WWII depleted the student body! One inconvenience was that we had to move to a different dormitory every semester because, as we were told, if the dorms were empty too long, the insurance lapsed. Last I heard, there are about 43,000 now, including girls and blacks, and ROTC is voluntary.

A note: There were more Generals in the Army in WWII from A&M than from West Point.

Freshmen (Frogs or Fish) were required to wear a ½” white stripe on the cuff of their left sleeves to tell the difference between them and the Sophomores (“P” Heads—if you don’t know what the “P” means, ask me). Juniors and Seniors had other distinctive uniforms.

Freshmen were required to walk in the streets and to say “howdy” to anybody they met. If they met an upperclassman, they must call the upperclassman by name. If they didn’t know the upperclassman, they had to greet them with “Fish Jones is my name,” then ask the upperclassman’s name, what course he was taking, and where he came from. The only time a Fish could walk on the sidewalk and not go through this routine was when he had a date walking with him.

The main drawback was that there were no girls. (This was before I met Bobbie.) But Highway 6 ran both ways to Houston and Dallas. Hitchhiking was the way to go. Cars were not allowed on the campus. At that time, there were designated corners in every town where the Aggies gathered, put their bags in line, and stepped back from the road in order to not intimidate the car drivers. No Aggie ever “up streamed” ahead of the line for fear of just retribution. The first in line stuck his thumb out and if a car stopped, he would ask how far and how many they could take. If the driver wanted company or was sleepy, it was the Aggie’s duty to keep conversation going. Once more, it was war time, and people helped each other without fear of being robbed. Our uniforms helped get more rides.

Some general notes on my family: Mom and Dad married in December 1927. I was born in September 1928.

Dad teased Mom that I was born nine months and 15 minutes after the ceremony. Actually nine months and two weeks, but who's counting?

My Mom was paralyzed in 1938 by the misplacement of the new Spinal Anesthesia when she had a "minor female operation" at a hospital in San Antonio. I was only 9, so "female problem" was the only description I ever heard. The hospital claimed it was Infantile Paralysis in order not to be sued. Several doctors agreed that it was the Spinal Anesthesia. We moved from Benavides to Alice to be near a hospital. She eventually was able to walk with leg braces and a walker until her death in 1974.

My widowed, paternal grandmother moved in with Dad and me in Alice to take care of me, cook, and run the household since Mom was bedridden. Grandmaw was the one who lived across the road from the school at Freer. See some of my earlier ramblings to explain this.

As mentioned earlier, my Dad was quite a marksman. One day just as he drove up to a drilling rig, some white wing doves flew by. The only firearm he had with him was a 22 caliber pistol. In desperation, he took a shot and hit one in flight! The rig crew shut down and rushed out to tell him how amazed they were at the shot he had made. Truth be told, he was as amazed as they were, but being my Dad, he just smiled and said that he did it all the time. Yeah, sure!

Another display of Dad's humor came the day he was visiting a steam-operated drilling rig and saw a salesman drive up. He rushed out to the steam pipe that ran from the boilers to the rig, got a small board, used it to sit on the pipe, and started to whittle on a piece of wood. The salesman came out to "sell" (Dad was superintendent). As the salesman was starting his pitch, Dad just kept looking down at his whittling. The salesman did not see the piece of wood Dad was sitting on, and wanting to get his attention, he sat down beside him on the bare pipe! Ouch!!

Yet another time, Dad and I were at a large outdoor political rally in Alice (about 1943+/-) when a Yankee (by his accent) sailor from the base in Corpus Christi ran up and asked Dad what was going on. Dad told him that it was a lynching and they were about to hang the guy. The sailor started trying to get to the front so he could watch this southern custom.

At the time Bobbie and I met (1945), her phone number was 430 and mine was 863. There was no dial or pushbuttons, only a handset. You picked up the phone and waited for the operator's "number, please" to tell her the number you wanted to call. If you wanted long distance, you asked the local operator for the long distance operator. In those days, telephones were very personal—not like today when you don't hear anything but buzzes. Of course the operators could tune in, so they knew all of the juicy gossip in town!

Now instead of three numbers you must dial at least ten—222-333-4444, or eleven 1-222-333-4444, or fourteen 1-800-222-333-4444. Even more if there is an extension or overseas call.

Old Geezer Hijacked into Bagdad

October 10, 1970

This is a direct quote from the Bechtel News published in London.

Submitted by John Emerson

John Emerson was aboard the 6:00 a.m. Iran Air Flight No. 813 (Tehran - Kuwait via Abadan) that was hijacked to Bagdad on Saturday, October 10, 1970. It was to have been a routine trip from the Tehran office to one of the Job 7001 job sites in the Persian Gulf. Ten minutes before touchdown in Abadan, three young Iranian men, brandishing two pistols and sticks of dynamite, caused the pilot to divert the airliner to Bagdad. During the takeover, Iran Air's Purser was wounded. The hijackers demanded that the Shahanshah of Iran release 21 prisoners or the plane with its passengers and crew would be blown up. Of the 52 passengers and crew aboard, Emerson was one of three Americans.

After the initial seizure of the aircraft, the passengers and crew were very calm. A distraught Iranian mother with three young children asked Emerson to care for her two older children, aged three and five. The hijackers were extremely emotional and nervous. One of the hijackers amused himself by walking up and down the aisle waving the dynamite in one hand while at the same time lighting and re lighting a cigarette lighter with the other hand. At one point Emerson accidentally touched one of the hijackers and the man whirled to confront Emerson with a pistol. Raised hands and a smile prevented further action. Later the hijacker demanded to see Emerson's identity papers, and upon discovery that Emerson was an American, he became even more agitated. However, the fact that Emerson lived and worked in Iran seemed to mollify the hijacker somewhat. (The pilot experienced the same reaction when he informed the hijackers that he was an American.)

Bagdad International Airport, after first refusing permission to land, granted the plane landing rights. Iraqi officials entered into lengthy negotiations with the hijackers and ultimately obtained first the release of the women and children from the aircraft and finally the release of the men. Since the negotiations were carried out in Farsi (official language of Iran) and Arabic, Emerson could not follow the discussions. However it was apparent that the crew and officials handled the situation splendidly.

The hostages were held on the airliner from 6:50 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Upon the passengers' entry to the International Section of the Bagdad Airport, the Iraqi officials extended every courtesy and served lunch to the passengers. Negotiations continued; the airliner was searched for the bomb allegedly placed on board by the hijackers; the hijackers (identity still unknown at this date) were taken into custody by the Iraqi Security Police; and at 3:00 p.m. the crew and passengers enplaned once more to continue their journey. The Purser was left in Bagdad for medical treatment. Iran Air Flight 813 ended its journey at 4:00 p.m. in Abadan. No pre-flight searches had been carried out on this flight.

Notes to the above: The pilot was American because Boeing insisted on it until the Iranian government paid for the planes! (Continued on next page.)

When the women were allowed off, the hijackers demanded that their passports or identity papers be given to them. One elderly British woman, carrying a small basket with a bible in obvious view, marched up to the hijacker collecting the identity papers. She drew herself up and said, "Don't you touch me, you filthy Arab" and didn't give him anything but a dirty look! He just stood there with his mouth open as she left the plane. I thought I could hear "Hail Britannia, Britannia Rule The Waves" as she marched out.

It is remarkable that the Iranian mother asked me to care for her children when there were so many Iranians on board. Both men and women.

Bobbie was told of the hijacking by our office in Tehran just minutes before I called her from Abadan to say that I was OK.

On Ardi's Outing

by Mary Ann Mitscherling

01-23-10

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Again I hear the call of ages past
And feel the kinship of a prior self.
What wonders looking back from first to last
Reveal their details through a visage melt?

A creature that stares from four million years
Could easily lose the fragile linkage.
To grasp her past to mingle with her peers,
She stands on ground in a world without age.

We are at once different and alike.
Once more we share the path from distant shores.
The world that gave her life gives me my life,
And beckons me through discovery's chores.

Like runners pass the baton in a race
Ardipithecus ramidus sets the pace.

An Ode to Back Benders*by Noelle Skubal, 10 years old**Homeschooled 5th Grade**Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

There is a paradise far, far, away,
Where trees with Gold and Silver sway;

Where Ruby flowers sprout high and tall-
Where Emerald grasses sway and fall,

Where Jade moss soon will grow,
Agate leaves the fall will blow.

Fire works soon will pop, pop, pop!
The Rockhound's WonderLand will never stop!

Amethyst owls signal the night;
Sleep will come without a fight.

Lady Amber removes her splendor
And her diamond ring ever so tender.

Lord Tourmaline saunters through his woods

Then pauses at the Crystal stream,
As Moonstone rises and sheds her beam.

The Opal stars soon will rise-
A wondrous night for little eyes!

As Back Benders flock from all around
To pick up Sapphires from the ground.

Walk right up to Topaz deer:
Unflinching, without fear.

Petite noses smell Pearl flowers;
Malachite trees sway and tower.

Now that all is said and done
Meet me at Rockhound's WonderLand for Karats of fun!



Noelle Skubal



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

March 3: Clear Lake Show & Tell. Bring in your recent acquisitions from the Clear Lake Show (February 27–28). 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.

March 17: To be announced

April 7: To be announced

April 21: To be announced

May 5: Mineral Section Auction (details to follow)

June 2: Annual Mineral Section "Swap & Sell" (details to follow)

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.



Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi



Since the Day Light Section did not meet in December, there was no report for the January issue of BBG.

Five members attended the 11 January, 2010 meeting of the Day Light Section. This is the lowest attendance at a meeting except for one other time when three members came—Calvin Coplin, Hank McCleary, and I think Vic Helms. We just had a gossip session.

For our January meeting, Nancy Fischer gave an excellent and interesting talk on their camping trip to Wyoming. To me, the most fascinating things were the pictures of the black bear that came to visit camp and the road Nancy and her husband had to travel to reach camp. It was filled with small boulders, some of which were four to five inches in diameter, but others were much larger—12 to 14 inches in diameter. We thank Nancy very much for the program.

This is one of the years where the second Monday comes before the second Saturday; therefore we can write the February report.

Eleven members attended the 8 February, 2010 meeting of the Day Light Section. We started by sawing out a cabochon(s) for mounting via the Dave Hawkins method (no solder). At the eighth of March meeting, we hope to have these cabochons polished

and ready to begin the mounting process.

Professor Link is going to give us our summer programs starting in June. One month we may have to meet on a different Monday. We will decide this later. We are going to do anaclastic forming. There will be a few things you need to purchase if you do not have them.

The April meeting will be on ring sizing and will be given by Professor Link. If anyone needs a ring sized, please bring it to the meeting. If it is karat gold, you will have to pay for the gold and gold solder. There probably will be no charge for sizing a silver ring. If anyone does have a gold ring for sizing, please call me as soon as possible. The material needed will be available.

I recently purchased a new book by Paul B. Downing, entitled, *Opal and Gemstone Jewelry, Cutting, Designing, and Setting*. I highly recommend it for persons just learning to cut cabochons.

We thank Gary Anderson and Charlie Fredregill for helping us at the February meeting.

HGMS General Meeting

January 27, 2009

by Pier Laird

HGMS Secretary

Call to Order: 7:35 p.m.

Speaker: Wayne Barnett on "Faceting"

New Members: Matthew Ganshow, Bruce and Brenda Gillan, Odell Casey, Denise Bargas

Treasurer's Report: HGMS's financial situation is good.

Show Committee: Rick Rexroad, Show Chair, announced the names of people who volunteered at the International Gem and Jewelry Show: Neal and Inda Immega, Michele Marsel, Jillynn Hailes, David Gardner, Tom Lammers, Beverly Mace, Karen Burns, Rick Rexroad, David Hawkins, Sigrid Stewart, and Steve Blyskal. Volunteers at the Museum Education Open House were Nancy Fisher and Mike Reves.

Mineral Section: Saw video on "What Is Hot in Tucson."

Day Light Section: Solderless cabochons

Old Business:

- a. Outreach Program: District Signup Sheet. This will help HGMS grow.
- b. Electrical improvements to illuminate the clubhouse, parking lot, and HGMS sign: The exterior of the clubhouse on the parking lot side and on the front badly need additional illumination, and the large "HGMS" letters located at the top of the wall facing the parking lot also need to be lit as they cannot be seen at night. HGMS requested a proposal from James Burrell of Texas State Electric, Inc. He is a Houston electrician and a member of HGMS. His proposal for doing the work

came to a total of \$4440. After much discussion, Karen Burns moved that the work be done, and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business: Rockhound Stickers

Show and Tell:

- Matthew Ganshow shows his different rock that he has collected.
- Karen Burns shows her dainty jump ring earrings.
- John Mitscherling showed his masculine jump ring bracelets.

Board of Directors Meeting

February 2, 2010

by Terry Proctor

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Beading Rep.	Diane Sisson
X	1 st Vice President	James Wark	X	Faceting Rep.	Sunday Bennett
X	2 nd Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	Lapidary Rep.	Phyllis George
X	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan	X	Mineral Rep.	Sigrid Stewart
X	Secretary	Pier Laird	X	Paleontology Rep.	Terry Brawner
	Past President	N/A	X	Day Light Rep.	Nancy Fischer

The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Terry Proctor.

The minutes were unanimously approved as printed in the February BBG upon a motion by Terry Brawner that was seconded by Diane Sisson.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan, Treasurer, e-mailed out financial records to the Board before the meeting. He announced that last month had a deficit, but that was due to a one-time payment of a Show Committee bill that was late coming in. The Silent Auction at the January 26, 2009 General Membership meeting brought in \$2,655. Half of this will go into the Building Fund and half into the General Operating Fund. Finances are in good shape for the club.

Show Report: Rick Rexroad, 2010 Show Chair, made an extensive report to the Board and presented his Show Budget for approval. Ticket prices are to remain the same for 2010. Terry Brawner moved that the 2010 Show Budget (which projects a profit of \$22,000) be approved, and the motion was seconded by James Wark. It passed unanimously. Phyllis George moved that Show ticket prices remain at the same level as 2009. The motion was seconded by James Wark, and it passed unanimously.

Rick asked that requests be made of the entire membership, including new members, to volunteer for various Show Committees. It was also discussed that working at HGMS tables at other Shows should be a club-wide function, not just a function of the Show Committee. Both the Show and the Club as a whole benefit from HGMS being at events held by other organizations. Additional work will be done on this.

Terry mentioned that the **Outreach Program** has three goals: education, publicity for HGMS, and the seeking of grants and other funding for HGMS. Therefore, Publicity was discussed as being something that needs to be a Club Committee, not just part of the Show Committee. The Board will work on this.

Rick discussed various publicity measures for 2010 including a billboard near the Humble Civic Center on Highway 59 and ads on movie theater screens during the previews before the films start. The Board spent a good deal of time talking with Rick about various things that would assist the Show Committee and volunteering suggestions and ideas. Terry will write an article for the March BBG encouraging new members to become members of the Show Committee. Board members pointed out how much fun it is to work at the functions of other organizations. The benefits include free parking, free admission to the other organization's Show, a chance to see the various dealers there, and an opportunity to make valuable contacts for your interest in the hobby.

Show Venue Fee: Terry Proctor reported that the fee for having our 2010 show at the Humble Civic Center (HCC) is the same as last year, except the HCC lost money on the electrical setup last year. Therefore they raised the electrical fee from last year's \$1,000 to this year's \$2,500. Terry tried to get this reduced, but HCC provided a copy of the 2009 bill showing what they paid the electrician for labor; it consumed most of the \$2,500. The remainder was for electricity. Phyllis George moved and James Wark seconded to have Terry sign the contract for 2010 at the same rate as last year plus the \$2,500 electrical charge. The vote in favor was unanimous.

HGMS Electric Bill: The rates HGMS is being charged for electricity were discussed. Terry Brawner will research available rates using information from both Phyllis George and Rodney Linehan on some companies they mentioned as well as other companies which Terry will contact. Terry Brawner is the HGMS member who found our present carrier several years back. Terry had arm surgery in January and was unable to do much research last month, but he will be able to work on it in February.

New Exterior Lighting: The new lighting contract approved during the January General Meeting is already partially installed, and the Board members were impressed with how much additional illumination the parking lot area has.

Roof Leak: The clubhouse has an apparent roof leak. Sunday Bennett was on the Board when the roof was last repaired, and she remembered that in 2005 some additional work was done for a payment of \$7,900. Norman Lenz was HGMS President that year, and Paul McGarry was Treasurer. Terry Proctor will contact both of them and also will talk with the insurance company. Rodney Linehan will talk with the contractor. The Board will attempt to address the roof problem as soon as possible to prevent further damage to the ceiling.

HGMS Scholarship: The HGMS Scholarship form is on the Web site. It can be reached through the green "Current Info" button and then by scrolling to the bottom of the page. The Board reviewed the 2009 Art and Elizabeth Smith Scholarship. The awarding of the 2009 Art and Elizabeth Smith Scholarship will be further discussed at the March 2, 2009 Board Meeting.

Bob Cross, now deceased, was a former HGMS member and professor at San Jacinto College. During his lifetime he donated fossils and minerals to HGMS, and for years his fossils were used as touch fossils at the Paleo Table at the HGMS Shows. His daughter donated a generous portion of his estate collection to the HGMS. Therefore since his donations resulted in a considerable amount of money coming in from auctions, Terry Brawner moved that the 2010 Scholarship be called the **2010 Bob Cross Scholarship**. This motion was seconded by Phyllis George, and it passed unanimously.

Frances Arrighi made a donation to HGMS in memorial for Art Smith. It was suggested that HGMS start sending thank-you notes to donors for their donations and sending a card announcing the donation to the donee or donee's family. This will be done.

TANO, the Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations' renewal dues are now owed. After some discussion, Diane Sisson moved and Pier Laird seconded that HGMS pay the renewal membership to TANO. The motion passed unanimously.

HGMS Brochure: The club's gold tri-fold brochure came under discussion. It was generally agreed that a new HGMS brochure needs to be designed that is updated and more appealing.

Fire-resistant 4-drawer file cabinet: The search for a used fire-resistant 4-drawer file cabinet continues. It will be used in the office for storing important Club documents.

General Meeting Programs: James Wark has lined up programs for upcoming months, including Sam Stubbs, J.D. on trilobites for February and Norman Lenz on inclusions in faceted gems for March.

Outreach Programs: Terry Proctor again emphasized the need for more Outreach programs. Many Board members said they did not know their JP Precinct number. Therefore, a ZIP code map will be overlaid on a JP Precinct number map in an effort to determine who is in each of the eight JP areas of Harris County. Nancy Fischer will look into getting a ZIP code overlay for the county.

Nancy Fischer moved and James Wark seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously.



Geode "Hollowness" Estimation Method*from the 2007 Keokuk Geode Fest via The Glacial Drifter 1/2010 and Gem Cutter's News 2/2010*

Volume of sphere = diameter (cubed) x .5236

Weight = (Volume of Sphere) x (Density of quartz)

Density of Quartz = 1.5277 oz/cu. in

Example: 1 lb 6 oz = 3" x 3" x 3" x 0.5236 x 1.5277 oz/cu in

Diameter of Geode (inches)	Volume of Geode (cu. in)	Solid		1/4 Hollow		1/2 Hollow		3/4 Hollow	
1	0.52		0.8		0.6		0.4		0.2
1.25	1.02		1/6		1/2		0/8		0.4
1.5	1.77		2.7		2.0		1.3		0.7
1.75	2.81		4/3		3/2		2/1		1/1
2	4.19		6.4		4.8		3.2		1.6
2.25	5.96		9.1		6.8		4.6		2.3
2.5	8.18		12.5		9.4		6.2		3.1
2.75	10.89	1	0.6		12.5		8.3		4.2
3	14.14	1	5.6	1	0.2		10.8		5.4
3.25	17.97	1	11.5	1	4.6		13.7		6.9
3.5	22.45	2	2.3	1	9.7	1	1.1		8.6
3.75	27.61	2	10.2	1	15.6	1	5.1		10.5
4	33.51	3	3.2	2	6.4	1	9.6		12.8
4.25	40.19	3	13.4	2	14.1	1	14.7		15.4
4.5	47.71	4	8.9	3	6.7	2	4.4	1	2.2
4.75	56.12	5	5.7	4	0.3	2	10.9	1	5.4
5	65.45	6	4.0	4	11.0	3	2.0	1	9.0
5.25	75.77	7	3.7	5	6.8	3	9.9	1	12.9
5.5	87.11	8	5.1	6	3.8	4	2.5	2	1.3
5.75	99.54	9	8.1	7	2.1	4	12.0	2	6.0
6	113.10	10	12.8	8	1.6	5	6.4	2	11.2
6.25	127.83	12	3.3	9	2.5	6	1.6	3	0.8
6.5	143.79	13	11.7	10	4.8	6	13.8	3	6.9
6.75	161.03	15	6.0	11	8.5	7	11.0	3	13.5
7	179.59	17	2.4	12	13.8	8	9.2	4	4.6
7.25	199.53	10	0.8	14	4.6	9	8.4	4	12.2
7.5	220.89	21	1.5	15	13.1	10	8.7	5	4.4
7.75	243.73	23	4.3	17	7.3	11	10.2	5	13.1
8	268.08	25	9.6	19	3.2	12	12.8	6	6.4
8.25	294.01	28	1.2	21	0.9	14	0.6	7	0.3
8.5	321.56	30	11.2	23	0.4	15	5.6	7	10.8
8.75	350.77	33	7.9	25	1.9	16	11.9	8	6.0
9	381.70	36	7.1	27	5.3	18	3.6	9	1.8
9.25	414.40	39	9.1	29	10.8	10	12.5	9	14.3
9.5	448.92	42	13.8	32	2.4	21	6.9	10	11.5
9.75	485.30	46	5.4	34	12.0	23	2.7	11	9.3
10	523.60	49	15.9	37	7.9	24	16.0	12	8.0

Safety Note: Snake Bite 101

by Owen Martin

AFMS/SCFMS Safety Chair

from SCFMS Newsletter 1–2/2010

While researching details for this month's note, I came across a great blog note from a gentleman named Steve Beyer who writes a blog for a Web site called Singing for Plants.

Much of one of his blog notes is contained below. With that being said, we can break it down to three main points: stabilization, transportation, and treatment. Of note at the bottom of the blog is mention of a "Pressure Wrap" which is a technique I've discussed in previous Safety Articles. Since most of us are more likely to encounter snakes in the field, this method should be seriously considered in situations where emergency care is not immediately available.

Be safe, and now on to an excerpt from Steve's blog:

As professional handlers of venomous snakes say, "The best equipment for treating a venomous snakebite is a set of car keys."

However, the first step in treatment is to avoid panic. Death is rare. Even without evacuation, most cases result in several days of serious misery and then full recovery. Remember that the fatality rate even for untreated pit viper bites is extremely low. The treatment steps are:

- Use the Sawyer Extractor. If you are in snake country, the Extractor should always be within easy reach in your pack. The Extractor can remove as much as 30 percent of Crotalid venom proteins if applied within three minutes. Use the Extractor as quickly as possible and then keep it on the bite for about thirty minutes. Because of the great suction it creates, no cutting is necessary. This should always be the first thing you do, even when evacuation is in progress. [Keep in mind that certain areas of the south and southwest USA have snakes that have bites too wide for a single extractor, so plan accordingly ~ Owen]
- Remove rings, bracelets, or any other constricting jewelry on the affected limb, which may swell to as much as twice its normal size.
- Immobilize the bitten extremity with a splint, just as you would a fracture.
- Have the patient rest, and keep activity to a minimum.
- Have the patient drink as much fluid as possible, in frequent small amounts, in order to maintain fluid volume and kidney flow.
- Remember that a snakebite is a contaminated puncture wound, and treat it as such.
- Get to definitive care as quickly as you can. Otherwise, have the patient rest and drink fluids, keep the wound clean, and give lots of encouragement and support.

The following **are not recommended** for pit viper envenomations:

- **Do not make incisions or try to suck out the venom.** In jungle conditions, cutting into an already compromised limb is asking for an infection. You absolutely **do not want** pit viper venom in your mouth. Conversely, your mouth is full

of all kinds of bacteria. And you can't suck as hard as the Extractor can, anyway.

- **Do not use a tourniquet.** Tourniquets can result in loss of the limb due to decreased blood flow. In addition, you are just keeping the venom localized where it does the most tissue damage.
- **Do not use electric shock.** It can be dangerous, and has no proven value in managing pit viper bites. It is the great urban legend of wilderness first aid.
- **Do not use ice.** There is no evidence that snake venom enzyme activity diminishes with cold. Freezing already compromised tissue can lead to frostbite, which can damage the limb more than the original bite. Packing in ice has probably resulted in more lost limbs than snakebite itself. This is particularly tragic when limbs have been lost to frostbite because of a non-venomated bite.
- **Do not give alcohol.** It causes vessels to dilate and may speed venom absorption.

The use of an elastic bandage pressure wrap—recommended for use with bites from Elapidae or coral snakes—has been recommended for use in some cases of Crotalid envenomation as well. The argument against its use is that the pressure may actually increase the risk of disfiguring local tissue damage, which may then require skin grafts and extensive repair and treatment; and that removal of the pressure may result in sudden massive swelling and discoloration. The argument in favor of its use is that the spread of venom to vital organs can be life-threatening — in fact, some Crotalid bites can cause serious damage to limbs even when the bites were to a finger or foot — and the use of a pressure bandage can prevent this spread, even at the risk of greater localized damage.

The problem is that there is no way of knowing how serious the envenomation is at the outset, when the decision must be made. There is a tradeoff between averting more serious life-threatening damage and increasing the risk of painful and disfiguring local damage. Such a decision should be considered a serious one, to be decided in full consultation with the patient.

More can be found on Steve's blog site:

<http://www.singingtotheplants.com/2009/03/jungle-survival-tips-snakebite-i/>

AFMS—Having Fun: Junior Activities

by Jim Brace-Thompson

Junior Activities Chair

Help Spread the Word about the FRA Program

from AFMS Newsletter 3/2010

With the new year upon us, I'd like to issue a plea to AFMS representatives from all our regional Federations (not limited to, but especially regional newsletter editors and junior activities chairs) to actively promote the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America program. Activity seems to be down a bit lately, and I receive the occasional e-mail asking about the program from junior leaders of local clubs who says they just happened to "stumble across" the program on the Web. Rather than having folks stumble their way in, let's guide them to us! Alert folks in your Federation and within your club to <http://www.amfed.org/kids.htm>.

Any AFMS-affiliated club with even a single junior member can sign that child into FRA at no cost whatsoever, and that child will be sent a free FRA Membership patch, and your club will receive an AFMS/FRA Certificate. From that initial step, kids can then work (either through formal, structured club activities or via home self-study) toward earning 15 free activity badges that span the full range of our hobby, as well as a “Rockhound” badge for kids earning six or more activity badges. Again, all free to the child and to the club, thanks to generous funding by the AFMS. Please help to continue spreading the word with brief write-ups in your regional and local newsletters and announcements at your Federation and club meetings. Ninety-seven clubs have used the program at various times and in various ways, but that’s out of a total of 640 clubs within AFMS. Let’s not rest until we’ve reached out to every child in every club.



Finally, I’m also seeking ideas for new badges we might consider adding to the program in coming years. My goal has always been to re-examine the program every four years or so. Last time was two years ago, when I revised elements of the original nine badge units and added another six. I’ve already, in fact, received some great unsolicited ideas such as adding units on fluorescent minerals, on thumbnails and micromounts, on map reading, on fundraising, and more. Toward the end of this year or early next year, my plan is to compile a list of potential topics and send them out for comments and votes from participating clubs, so please send me your ideas today. Here’s thanking you in advance for your suggestions to make a fun program even more fun!

Dispensing The Collection: What To Do When You Inherit A Collection

by Bruce Siegfried for The Mountain Gem

from The Mountain Gem 7/2009

Often people contact our club members or the museum we sponsor, wondering just what to do with a collection they have inherited. How can they dispose of a collection about which they know little, if anything?

They are concerned with knowing:

- How does one *identify* “boxes of rocks,” perhaps even a profusion of them dumped together?
- How do you assign *monetary value* to rocks, minerals, and gems?
- Who would *buy* this collection, and how do I *find* that person?

Even a surviving spouse who belongs to a club and has been left with lots of stones wonders: “What will I do now?”

For sure, these issues are not easily addressed. Here is what we can say; these are some

suggestions to help you find that elusive place to start. Adjust the plan to your situation—make it a plan that best fits you.

When a long-time collector dies with an extensive collection, it presents a difficult problem for the family. At first just dealing with the loss of the loved one is enough. Eventually though, the time comes to “do something” with the collection. Now as a collector myself, I realize that most collectors have the same goal. They reason: “Having put much time, effort, thought, and money into my collection, (not to mention love), I would like to leave it ALL to ONE close family member, good friend, or worthy organization—someone who not only appreciates it, but will keep it intact.”

If you find someone like that, good. Case closed. End of matter. Often, however, this proves to be a fantasy. Ideally we all would like to have that child who loves the hobby as much as we do, and would be happy to receive the collection. Seldom is the situation so ideal. As you know by now, the real and the ideal usually are not the same thing.

Let's face reality. Most who inherit a collection view the collection as someone else's hobby. It is not their hobby. Their interest in it may be minimal at best. Thus, their feelings toward the collection are rarely the same as the feelings of the person who with much care and effort put it together over many years. Hence, they are not prepared to give it the room in their lives it would demand. (Not to mention the space it would claim in their homes.)

Two easy choices first present themselves. And they come about from lack of action, from procrastination, more so than any conscious thought and decision-making effort.

Choice #1. Don't do anything! Let the collection languish in storage. Maybe out in the garage, or down in the basement, or worse—in some rental storage unit, possibly for many years. This usually results in losing the labels. As the boxes fall apart, leaves, dirt, and dead bugs pile up until you end up with one big mess—a mess that someone eventually dumps outside, or throws away, or gives away. I have seen several of these fates for nice collections. Some are put into a dumpster.

Choice #2. This one also takes place naturally enough. Dispense the collection among family and friends and their children. Let them take what they want. They might want to keep a few as reminders of him or her; it may have been the collector's favorite, or they may have dug the specimens themselves, or they cut and polished the stone. You can do this over some several months until the collection just naturally wanders off. Somehow, somewhere, it is gone, and that takes care of that. Would a grandchild be able to handle the collection and appreciate it?

Perhaps you will be satisfied with choice #1 or choice #2. But I feel there is a viable choice #3. Far better is the idea to dispose of the collection in an *orderly manner*. But HOW?

Soon after making that decision, the challenge of finding an orderly manner becomes evident. How will you do it? Some ideas follow—pick and choose from your options, adjusting the ideas to your circumstances. Ultimately you must decide what is best for

you and for the collection.

The problem so often starts with the fact that the collection and hobby was known by just that one person. The collection proved to be his or hers alone. This person knew all the details—what it is, where it came from, and the value as well. **But all too often, the person doesn't record all these important details!**

In my personal collection, I list all the names and locations of each stone in triplicate. **Great**, you say. On the other hand, I abhor values. To me, if it is pretty and I like it, I don't care whether it is worth fifty cents or twenty dollars. So no one knows the value of my thousands of specimens.

Others do the same, omitting details—whether carelessly or on purpose—they often leave scant information behind. As a consequence, surviving family members are left in the dark while trying to understand the collection. It is hard for them to relate to the fact that one “pretty rock” is worth only \$1, while another not nearly as nice is worth perhaps \$50. Plain, dirty rocks may be very beautiful inside and quite valuable.

My first recommendation, (if you don't want to sell it all quickly and cheaply), is to divide it into three easy and practical parts. Simply put, they are:

- Keep some to remember the person by
- Sell the best
- Dispose of the rest. Give it away to interested persons or to children, or throw it in the woods, or line the driveway.

What follows is a more detailed explanation of this plan.

1. **Keep some**—for yourself and other family members. You can do this in connection with having “something to remember him (her) by.” To remind you of him and his treasured hobby.
 - A. One mineral that a person views as their favorite.
 - B. Something that the collector was especially fond of.
 - C. Something he or she personally collected on a favorite field trip or vacation.
 - D. Something that person thought of as their favorite or special piece.
2. **Sell the best**—those items having exceptional value or beauty. I will discuss several options for this in the rest of the article.
3. **Dispose of the rest**, the leftovers. Following are some good possibilities.
 - A. Sell it cheap and quick.

OR

 - B. Even better, and my personal favorite: donate it to your local club or museum. It's a tax deduction. They will be happy to get it and gladly will put it to good use. Perhaps they will put a few specimens on display or in the gift shop to raise funds, or they will use it as door prizes at the club meetings. At times they give some to young ones who are “pebble pups,” leading them into a lifelong hobby—all from the gift of a few nice specimens. Also, they occasionally auction items off to raise funds for their club.

At times, generous souls donate an entire collection to a club or museum.

But let's now assume that **you want to sell the entire collection yourself**. You will have two problems.

How do you find a buyer?

Just as important, **how do you attach a dollar figure to the collection?**

I have seen people selling such a collection at the local flea market or at a gem and mineral show. However, a problem arises when the prices of many of the specimens are either too low or too high. "Good stuff" that is priced too low disappears rapidly. The best part is now gone without much money in return. The rest may be hard to sell.

To avert such a disastrous outcome, you could invite one or two longtime club members or experienced collectors to help out—a neutral third party to aid in pricing. Remember though, prices for rocks and minerals are arbitrary. They are not set at fixed rates or standardized prices. Proof of this is soon seen at shows. You often see a mineral or gem for sale at one price, but a few tables later you will see the same stone for a much different price. The price a mineral brings today often is not the price it will sell for tomorrow. Ten different collectors could value a stone at ten different prices. Values are subjective.

To make matters more complex, it is likely that twenty different varieties of amethyst from twenty different countries and in twenty different grades will fetch twenty different prices. So get those suggested prices from someone who is knowledgeable to begin with. Then you can adjust the prices up or down according to what you think. Selling at a show may not be your ideal or practical solution. Here are some alternatives, along with their strong and weak points for consideration:

A dealer—he has an idea about the current pricing of specimens. However because he deals in minerals and gems to make a profit, he may offer you only a fraction of their worth. To cover his expenses and make a profit, at most he might offer you a third of their worth—probably less.

A collector—he might not know the exact worth of rocks, but he will usually pay a bit more because he normally buys at the retail level, and he wants the collection for his own enjoyment. You probably know several collectors in your area.

The Internet—sell it on eBay® if you want, if you can do all the work. You must measure, describe, and photograph each item, and then post it. It's good to tell what it is and where it is from, and you should have an ideal of its value. You must know exactly what you have and post it properly. You should get good prices for the really good specimens. The more common material may be harder to sell. You can sell miscellaneous boxes, but the Internet is probably not practical for large collections.

Ads placed in one of our hobby magazines or club bulletins—here you will find people interested in the very thing you have. You must prepare mailing information describing the material you have and list it in accurate detail. You will deal with distant people over a period of many weeks to several months.

Estate Sale—try inviting hobbyists through several clubs, those within a few hours' travel distance from your home. Invite them to come over for a "special day." You must be ready for them. Price the material and put it out in the open. Select a day when the weather might be nice and there are no local shows or field trips in progress. It must be advertised sufficiently, so let the clubs announce it at a couple of their meetings and put it in their newsletters. Give good descriptions and accurate directions to your place. The material must be clearly labeled and presented in an orderly fashion.

An auction—invite clubs and collectors in your area and get a decent auctioneer. You must live in an area that has favorable numbers in the hobby. You must reach them with the news. Flyers sent to clubs for their meetings and at regional shows work well for this purpose.

One man put his entire collection on a huge set of tables and said that people could have their choice for \$8 for any specimen. He sold all the specimens worth that much and more very quickly. What he did with the rest, I never heard.

Another person put an ad for a Yard Rock Sale by appointment in the club bulletin of a large club.

I am thinking of making up a series of Riker Mount Boxes that are several inches high. While still alive, I can choose attractive specimens as gifts for my close friends and relatives.

Any way you choose, be sure to properly promote what you have. Specimens and equipment need clear and complete descriptions, or at least as much as you know, so buyers can be confident in what they are buying. Let people know way ahead of the planned event.

I know of an older couple from Canada that sells minerals every year in Quartzite and a few other shows. They are steadily disposing of their huge Canadian collection. The children did not want it. To empty their backyard will take awhile; they have already been selling for more than twelve years. They figured it would take twenty years to sell out their entire collection.

My wish is for shows to allow collections to be sold on a "Consignment Table." Maybe even a rock shop or dealer would be willing to do this, splitting the revenue with the collector's family.

Remember, it is good to team up with someone who knows rocks and minerals and the hobby. Make sure specimens are clean and orderly and are displayed in boxes or trays. If only there were a book to look up how many were made, in what year, and the value as in so many other hobbies.

So, whether you are disposing of a collection due to old age, ill health, financial need, quitting of the hobby, or inheriting it through the death of a family member, HOW are you going to do it? For many, the best course will be one of those mentioned or a mixture of these approaches. Remember that old rock hounds are sharp and limit their spending.

Remember the simple plan: keep a few, give family members a few, sell the best, donate some, and get rid of the rest cheaply and quickly. Parts of this formula should work well for you.

My wife always says that she'll have jewelry made out of her favorite gemstones when she inherits my collection. I personally hope my two daughters will take something that is special to them. I brought them up around rocks, and they know a good deal about them. Maybe one will want the amethyst crystals, and the other will take the azurite and malachite specimens she has always admired.

May you live long and keep your collection for many more years. At this moment you at least have the beginning of a plan as I have endeavored to answer the question, How to dispense of a collection?

Carborundum®, Moissanite, Silicon Carbide

by Zeb William Rike III

from The Pineywoods Rooter 11/2009

Whatever you call it, silicon carbide was an amazing discovery, and it has revolutionized the world. It was the first man-made abrasive and has made possible our present way of life and the lapidary hobby.

“The Man Who Didn’t Know When He Had Failed” (1)

Our story begins with Dr. Edward Goodrich Acheson who in 1891, in a tiny shop and laboratory in Monongahela City, PA, filled a small iron bowl with a mixture of clay and coke, stuck a carbon arc electrode in the middle, and wrapped one wire around the bowl and the other around the electrode. These were connected to un-insulated wires that went through holes in the floor to a generator in the basement. He then closed the switch and waited a few hours, then turned off the current and examined his results.

When the material had cooled, he was painfully disappointed as he had only a dull gray mass of fused material. He removed the carbon electrode and examined it, and his trained eye detected a few tiny sparkling crystals, which he scraped off into the palm of his hand, sensing their extreme hardness and sharpness. He collected them on the end of a lead pencil and drew them across a piece of broken window glass and found they scratched it as easily as would a diamond.

He repeated his experiment and produced enough to try as an abrasive. He sprinkled a few crystals into grease on an iron plate in a lathe and ground a facet on the diamond in his ring. Chemical analysis showed the material was silicon carbide, SiC, a hitherto unknown compound. He scaled up the furnace and soon was making ounces per day, and he demonstrated it to gem cutters in New York who saw it as a substitute for diamond dust. They ordered several ounces of the new abrasive at \$0.40 per carat (\$880 per pound), whereas diamond dust sold for \$0.70 per carat.

He trade-named the material Carborundum® (from his mistaken initial belief that it was a compound of carbon and corundum), formed a company with stockholders, and enlarged his capacity until he was making 45 tons per year. Initial large-scale uses were as

grinding compound for grinding-in or seating of steam valves, and as tiny grinding wheels used by dentists on teeth.

They had a vision of *really large* uses, so moved to Niagara Falls, NY (for cheap electrical power) and set up to produce it in furnaces 50 feet long, where a mixture of coke (carbon), sand, salt (as a flux), and sawdust (to bum out to leave porosity) was heated to 4000°F by passage of an electric current. Carbon and silicon (from the sand) react to give silicon carbide vapor which crystallizes in cooler parts of the furnace.

$$\text{SiO}_2 + 3 \text{C} \rightarrow \text{SiC} + 2\text{CO}$$

Thus the abrasive became cheap enough to produce grinding wheels (bonded with clay and fired) for grinding and finishing of castings and precision grinding and shaping of metals too hard to be shaped in a lathe; up till this time, grinding wheels made from emery were used **only** for tool sharpening.

Other Uses of Silicon Carbide (1, 2, 3)

Silicon carbide (along with fused aluminum oxide) is used for not only grinding wheels but as loose abrasives to finish and polish monument stones, as “sandpaper” and “sand cloth” for the finishing and polishing of wood and metal objects of all kinds—from car bodies to pen points.

Porous vitrified silicon carbide is used as a filter medium in water purification, in filtration of hot gases, and many like areas.

Silicon carbide is chemically inert and very heat resistant while at the same time being an excellent heat conductor. So it can be used as furnace walls to separate the flame from the material to be heated. It will not melt at any temperature or pressure but sublimates directly to a vapor. It can conduct electric current and is used in the form of heating elements for glass melting furnaces, etc. It also can be used as a semiconductor to make high power, high temperature electronic devices. Early in the 20th century, it was used to make rectifiers for some of the first radio sets and was made into light-emitting diodes.

Mechanical Uses

Silicon carbide is used in high-temperature bearings, disc brakes in high-performance cars (some of the Ferrari, Porsche, Audi, Bugatti, Bentley, and Lamborghini models), as diesel particulate filters and in composite (Chobham armor) and as ceramic plates in bullet-proof vests (“Dragon Skin”).

Optical Uses

Silicon carbide is very strong, dimensionally stable with heat and a good heat conductor and has been used in parabolic reflecting mirrors in a number of space telescopes. These are made by chemical vapor deposition and ground and polished to the right curvature. The Herschel space telescope, launched in 2007, has a primary mirror 3.5 meters (11.5 feet) in diameter and was ground to a thickness of 2.5 mm (ca. 1/10 inch) and polished to within 3/100,000th of a millimeter of the calculated shape.

Uses as a Gem

Silicon carbide is rare on earth, being found in traces only in some kimberlite and corundum deposits and in some meteorites, but it is common in space, being a major constituent of “star dust.” It was named Moissanite after the discoverer Dr. Ferdinand Henri Moissan. Colorless SiC is called “Synthetic Moissanite” or simply “Moissanite” and is faceted as a gem. It is not quite as hard as diamond (9-9.5 vs. 10 for diamond) but has a higher refractive index (2.65–2.69 vs. 2.42), hence more brilliance and more fire than a diamond. It is also more heat resistant than a diamond, so it can be “set” in the wax preform used in “lost wax” casting, and molten gold can be poured around it without damage. It must be cut at the proper angle from the crystal to minimize birefringent effects.

Footnotes

1. The Romance of “Carborundum”®, The Carborundum® Company, Niagara Falls, New York, NY, 1945
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silicon_carbide
http://www.esa.int/esaSC/SEMC7W1PGQD_index_0.html

Talc - The Mineral That Won the War

by Walt Margerum

*from the Mineralogical Society of So. California 7/2002,
via Gem Cutters News 6/2009*

If your only contact with talc is the powder that comes from cans, the above statement may seem absurd, but it is not far from the truth. Ben M. Page in California Division of Mines Special Report 8 “Talc Deposits of Steatite Grade, Inyo County California,” states Steatite is exceptionally pure talc suitable for the manufacture of high-frequency radio insulators and for other exacting uses. It was a critical mineral during World War II. At the beginning of the war there was a single major domestic source, the Talc City mine, Inyo County California. During WWII the government decreed that all the steatite was to be used in high-frequency radios.

There are two definitions of steatite, the mineralogical definition of massive talc, and the commercial one. The commercial definition of steatite is that it is talc having less than 1.5% lime (CaO), 1.5% ferric oxide (Fe₂O₃), and 4% alumina (Al₂O₃) as impurities.

It was used in two forms. Blocks of “Lava” talc were machined into the desired shape and then fired to make ceramic insulators. The second and more common method was to grind the talc, and mix it with a binder. This mixture was then molded into the desired shape and fired.

During and after WWII, the Southern Inyo Mountains were extensively prospected, and 18 talc mines were put into operation. All have since closed, and most have been abandoned. The most extensive deposits were at the Talc City Hills located north of

Darwin. The talc is a dull gray, and makes for uninteresting specimens at best. But if you do not have any in your collection, you do not have the mineral that won the war. If you still wonder why I call it that, the most important high-frequency radio it was used in was called RADAR!

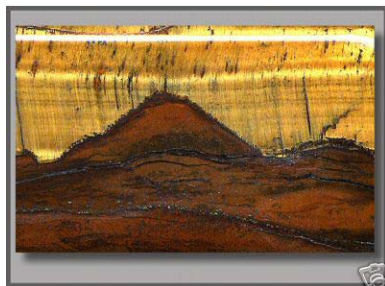


Talc
Hunting Hill Quarry, Rockville, MD

Here are some handy TALC TIPS:

- In icy weather, rub talc on your automobile door seals to prevent the doors from frosting up.
- If you have problems with rabbits getting into your garden, spread a band of scented talcum powder around the garden border to keep them out. Rabbits don't like the smell, and will not cross the powder. It really works!
- Grease on upholstered furniture can be removed by sprinkling talcum powder over the mark. Let stand for 15 minutes or until grease is absorbed. Brush off the powder. Repeat if necessary.
- For squeaky clean crystal glasses, wash them in a mixture of water and talc and dry with a tea towel.
- If your automobile engine is leaking oil and you can't find the source, try dusting the clean engine surfaces with talcum powder. The powder will absorb the oil and you'll be able to follow the oil's trail in the talc.
- Stop floor boards from squeaking by sprinkling liberal amounts of talcum powder over the area and cover with a cloth. Walk over the area repeatedly to work the powder into the cracks. Add more powder and repeat. This should silence the squeak.
- Talcum powder can help frustrated golfers to practice putting indoors during the winter months! Dip the golf ball in talcum powder and position the ball so that the club at impact hits the back of the powdered ball. After the putt, examine the clubface and you will see the point where you contacted the ball.
- If you wet the pages of a book accidentally, sprinkle each page with talc and spread it with a soft cloth. Leave the book under a weight for a few days and then brush off the excess talc. The pages of your book will be like new again.
- To keep your scissors from getting sticky when you are cutting a sticky surface, dust the blades with talcum powder before cutting.

Picture Tigereye from
SCRIBE 2002-2008 DVD



Show Time 2010

February 27-28	Pasadena, TX	Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society Pasadena Convention Center
March 6-7	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring Prospectors Club Howard County Fair Barn, Jerald Wilson (432) 263-4662 or (432) 263-3340
March 6-7	Robstown, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Regional Fairground
March 20-21	Live Oak, TX (San Antonio)	Southwest Gem & Mineral Society Live Oak Civic Center, 8101 Pat Booker Rd. Robert Bowie e-mail: krbotx@gvtc.com Web site: swgemandmineral.org
April 10-11	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center; North 6th & Pine
April 17-18	Alpine, TX	Chihuahuah Gem & Mineral Society Highland Events Center; Hwy. 90 East
April 24-25	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Society Texas State Technical College ITC Building; I-35 N
May 1-2	Lubbock, TX	Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society Lubbock Civic Center
May 29-30	Fort Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Society Will Rogers Memorial Center
June 18-20	La Habra, CA	AFMS/CFMS/NOCGMS Convention & Show So. California University of Health Sciences 16200 E. Amber Valley Rd.; Mike Beaumont (714) 510-6037; diamond.crest@yahoo.com www.networkingwave.com/afms2010/index.html
August 21-22	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center
August 28-29	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society Events Center
November 12-14	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 Rick Rexroad, rrexroad@brwnclad.com
December 11-12	DeRidder, LA	SCFMS/DGMFC Convention & Show Richard Borchard Fairgrounds

2010		March				2010
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 7:30 Board Meeting	3 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	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 10-5 Shop Open	11	12	13 10-5 Shop Open
14 Daylight Saving begins	15 7:30 Lapidary Section	16 7:30 Paleo Section	17 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	18	19	20 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
21	22	23 7:30 General Meeting	24 10-5 Shop Open	25	26	27 10-5 Shop Open
28 Palm Sunday	29	30 Passover begins at sundown	31 10-5 Shop Open			

2010		April				2010
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
4 Easter Sunday	5	6 7:30 Board Meeting	7 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	8	9	10 10-5 Shop Open
11	12 1:00 Day Light Section	13 7:30 Show Committee	14 7:30 Faceting Section 10-5 Shop Open	15 Federal Income Taxes Due	16	17 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
18	19 7:30 Lapidary Section	20 7:30 Paleo Section	21 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	22	23	24 10-5 Shop Open
25	26	27 7:30 General Meeting	28 10-5 Shop Open	29	30	

The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

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