



# *The* **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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**May 2010**



## **President's Message**

*by Terrell William Proctor  
2010 HGMS President*

Isn't it nice to have shed the long cold winter days and nights to arrive at Spring in Southeast Texas. Some hardy HGMS members have already taken field trips in spite of rain, storm, and cold weather. There are many things to be pleased about this year with HGMS. Our finances are looking very good, due to several factors:

1. Dues are coming in at least at the normal renewal rate or better;
2. We have had a number of new members join;
3. Several grants have been awarded to HGMS this year (and with our Outreach Program moving along, we hope to have other corporations, companies and individual provide even more grants);
4. HGMS classes are booming with more classes and students than before; and
5. Neal Immega has been doing a good job of auctioning off collections left to HGMS by former members and their estates. This has produced about \$2,000 per month



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## **Upcoming Programs for the General Meetings**

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

**A**pril 27—Neal Immega will present a program on Darwin's Theory of Evolution. 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. So this will be coming up June 22.

Nathalie Brandes, Professor at Lone Star College has put on such interesting programs

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

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## Purpose of HGMS

The objectives of this Society are to promote the advancement of the knowledge and practice of the arts and sciences associated with the collecting of rocks, minerals, fossils, artifacts, and their identification and classification; the general lapidary art; the collecting and identification of gemstones; the designing and execution of jewelry or metalcraft; and to provide the opportunity to obtain, exchange, and exhibit specimens and rough or finished materials.

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

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

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

*President's Message continued from page 1*

the last few months. Thanks to all who have worked to make our financial Ship of State sail smoothly.

One of the best things I have learned during my 2+ years as President is how many wonderful people there are in this organization who donate time, talent, money, and other benefits upon all of us. I have found out some things donated and done by some members, that most of the membership never knew about, because the donors chose to make their donations anonymous. It is amazing how much gets done in an organization when the folks who are providing these contributions of time, money, and talent don't care about being recognized. They just derive pleasure out of knowing that they are helping their club be better than it could be without that special touch. I have belonged to and been an officer in many organizations, but I know of none where the donations are made by so many—most of them quietly and just to help HGMS. SO PUBLICLY I SAY, "THANK YOU FROM ALL HGMS MEMBERS TO THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE GONE THE EXTRA MILE TO MAKE HGMS THE GREAT ORGANIZATION THAT IT IS."

I have learned that an organization either goes forward and grows, or it regresses. It is never static. I remember in my days in Business School at Tulsa University, that Prof. Blanchard related a story of Mr. Wrigley of Wrigley Gum boarding an airplane with someone who recognized him. After they were flying at the set altitude, the man asked him, "Mr. Wrigley, why do you continue to advertise, when everyone already buys Wrigley gum?" Mr. Wrigley responded by saying "Why does the pilot continue to have the engines on this plane run, when we are already at the altitude he set and headed toward the end of our flight?" The Professor was explaining the need for continued advertising, but I have always thought it applied to most everything in life. We don't get a job and say, "Okay I have the job, so I don't need to do anything more." We don't become a member of a religion and say "Okay, I'm a member so I don't need to do anything else."

Someone also said "Life is a journey, it isn't a destination." Being a member of HGMS isn't the end of things with HGMS; it is the beginning. That is why we have members who go to other Earth Science and Lapidary Arts Shows and sit at the HGMS tables to let folks know about HGMS. That is why some HGMS members become officers in HGMS and donate their time, talents, and skills and act as mentors, instructors, and educators in our organization. That is why they help newcomers learn as they learned about the richness of this Earth and the great gift all of us have received from the beautiful things we dig up and create from those minerals, metals, and fossils. We have great classes at



"Super-Spiny" Lichid  
ceratarges Devonian Trilobite  
from the Hamar L'Aghdad  
Limestone of Djebel Issimour,  
Anti-Atlas Mountains in  
Morocco.

HGMS where you can learn from experts in many areas. However, I dare say that there is more education provided free of charge by older members who show newer members things in the field and in the shop. Both are valuable and both are available to YOU as a member of HGMS.

If you would like to see a bigger, better equipped Club house and Shop, please give serious thought to helping with the HGMS **Outreach Program**. Get together with a few other people in your part of Harris County (or those out of the County, with the area inside Harris County near you); then find a place to have several programs during the year. Put on programs of various kinds related to Earth Science and Lapidary Art (Genie machines can temporarily be loaned from HGMS with agate supplied by HGMS, to teach others how to grind and polish a gemstone); take photos of these programs, and do a brief writeup. Try to get the local Community News newspaper to accept a story from you on HGMS's connection in the community, and get the photos and articles to me. We then provide this information to grant donors to demonstrate the educational program of HGMS and to request their consideration of a grant to HGMS.

Many national science groups and other organizations publish notices in their publication, asking their members to consider leaving the group or organization a legacy in their will. We have had a number of members who left collections of minerals and fossils to HGMS when they died. Neal Immega is now auctioning off one of these collections, and others have donated their collections in the past. Half of the funds raised from these auctions goes into our Building Fund, and half goes into the Operating Fund. Recently we had a personal donation made to HGMS. We will provide a thank you card if you wish, to the donor for this gift.

Please give these ideas some thought. If you need help in including a clause in your Will to leave anything to HGMS, contact me, and as an Estate and Probate attorney, I can help you provide the proper language.

In my writeup of the February 23 General Membership meeting, I failed to add any photos of the **magnificent trilobite specimens that Attorney Samuel Stubbs, J.D. presented** to the membership in his presentation on trilobites. Therefore in my Message this month, I'm belatedly adding photos of three of the many specimens Sam showed us in his program. Sam's collection is outstanding, and I doubt there is a better collection in the State of Texas. Again, we appreciate him providing us with a most interesting program.



Walliserops trifurcatus  
Devonian Trilobite from the  
AM Limestone in Morocco.



Koneprusia brutoni (Type A)  
Devonian Trilobite from the  
AM Limestone in Morocco.

Now get out there and go with an HGMS group, or on your own, to dig somewhere in this wonderful Springtime season, before it gets too hot. (But first be sure to read Owen Martin's safety article on page 23 about taking along allergy medication with all that pollen and the other allergens out there!)

### *Upcoming Programs for General Meeting* continued from page 1

for the past two years that many members would like to have her come back this summer and again put on an Earth Science program for us. Her topic will be on "Geological Climate Changes."

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 is scheduled for November 23.

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.

## **2010 HGMS Free Summer Orientation Classes**

*by Terry Proctor*

**A**fter last year's very successful Orientation Class (over 60 attended, including over 40 new members), the HGMS Board has set up a Summer Orientation Class for Saturday, **June 5**, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the HGMS Clubhouse. There is no charge for this orientation session, and new members will be given information about the Houston Gem & Mineral Society plus information about the various Sections and about other opportunities available to new members for their use and benefit as members of HGMS. Also you will be given information on procedures, rules, and general information.

This will be followed up with two or three hands-on Shop Orientation sessions:

1. at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, July 10, 2010
2. 1:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, July 11, 2010
3. and if a third class is needed, 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning, July 14, 2010.

For purposes of planning for the number of people who will attend, please send an RSVP, preferably by e-mail, to President Terry Proctor, J.D. at [auraman@swbell.net](mailto:auraman@swbell.net); or by mail to his law office, T.W. Proctor & Associates, 630 Uvalde Road, Houston, TX 77015-3766; or by phone to (713) 453-8338.

## Old Geezer Argentine “Ostrich”

by John Emerson

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Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

While living in Argentina, we saw these birds several times grazing with sheep. The first time we saw them, we thought they were ostriches and we were stunned! For some reason they seemed to like being with sheep. Later we found out they were Rheas.

Animal life in Argentina is varied. Llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas are found in the Northern Andes. Big cats such as jaguars and pumas, and other animals including monkeys and wild boars, are found in the central north and northeastern areas, while deer, rheas, and foxes inhabit the Pampas and the Patagonian region. Among Argentina's numerous bird species is the condor, and fish species include abundant trout and salmon in the inland lakes in the southern part of Argentina.



### The following is from Google:

“The rheas are *ratites* (flightless birds, with unkeeled sterna) in the genus *Rhea*, native to South America. There are two existing species: the Greater or American Rhea and the Lesser or Darwin's Rhea. The genus name was given in 1752 by Paul Möhring and adopted as the English common name. Möhring's reason for choosing this name, from the Rhea of classical mythology, is not known.

“Rheas are large, flightless birds with gray-brown plumage, long legs, and long necks, similar to an ostrich. These birds can reach 5.6 feet (1.7 m), and weigh up to 88 pounds (40 kg). Their wings are large for a flightless bird and are spread while running, to act like sails. Unlike most birds, rheas have only three toes. Their tarsus has horizontal plates on the front of it. They also store urine separately in an expansion of the cloaca.

“Rheas tend to be silent birds with the exception being when they are chicks or when the male is seeking a mate. During the non-breeding season, they may form flocks of between 10 and 100 birds, although the lesser rhea forms smaller flocks than this. When in danger they flee in a zig-zag course, utilizing first one wing then the other, similar to a rudder. During breeding season the flocks break up.

“They are omnivorous and prefer to eat broad-leafed plants, but they also eat seeds, roots, fruit, lizards, beetles, grasshoppers, and carrion.

“Rheas are polygamous, with males courting between two and twelve females. After mating, the male builds a nest, in which each female lays her eggs in turn. The nest consists of a simple scrape in the ground, lined with grass and leaves. The male incu-



bates from ten to sixty eggs. The male will utilize a decoy system and place some eggs outside the nest and sacrifice these to predators, so that they won't attempt to get inside the nest. The male may utilize another subordinate male to incubate his eggs, while he finds another harem to start a second nest. The chicks hatch within 36 hours of each other. The females, meanwhile, may move on and mate with other males. While caring for the young, the males will charge at any perceived threats that approach the chicks including female rheas and humans. The young reach full adult size in about six months but do not breed until they reach two years of age.



“Rheas have many uses in South America. Feathers are used for feather dusters, skins are used for cloaks or leather, and their meat is a staple to many people.”

At 5.6 (5'7") feet tall, they could stand flatfooted and look me in the eye (5' 10")!

We first thought they might be Emus, but Google says that Emus are only in Australia, Rheas are only in Argentina, and Ostriches only in Africa. Emus and Rheas have three toes while Ostriches have only two.

### Old Geezer Patagonian Hares

by John Emerson

*jab77077@yahoo.com*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

When we lived in Argentina, we saw these “things” on our trips to the south toward Patagonia. They looked like giant rabbits—size of small- to medium-sized dogs. We had not heard of them before and were amazed at these huge “jack rabbits.” The following is from Google.

“The Patagonian Mara, *Dolichotis patagonum*, is a relatively large rodent in the mara genus (*Dolichotis*). It is also known as the “Patagonian cavy” or “Patagonian hare.”

“The Patagonian Mara lives in Cen-





tral and Southern Argentina. Maras inhabit arid grasslands and scrub desert. Maras like to live in burrows and will occasionally inhabit burrows that were made by other animals. Mara social structure is defined mostly by the fact that they are monogamous, mating for life. Beavers, also rodents, mate for life. Mara couples inhabit a territory of approximately 40 hectares. The male always follows the female—on guard for rival males and predators. Very little territoriality is evident, though males appear to have a dominance hierarchy.

“Maras spend most of their time with their mate, traveling as a pair. However, they will occasionally move in large groups of 70 to lakes where food is plentiful. Patagonian Maras are active during the day, which is called diurnal. The Cavies/Maras are the closest relative to the guinea pig.

“Patagonian Mara young, called pups, are kept in a communal burrow called a creche. As many as 15 pairs of Maras may deposit their young in one creche. Mara pups are well developed and can start grazing within 24 hours of birth. However, they remain in the creche for up to four months where Mothers return several times a day to nurse their young. Maras usually produce two young per litter and produce three to four litters per year.

“In captivity, Maras normally live 5–7 years and have been known to live for up to 10 years.

“The Patagonian Mara is from the family Caviidae, which includes cavies, such as their larger relative the capybara, and guinea pigs. Patagonian Maras are closely related to the other member of the Dolichotis Genus, the Chacoan Mara. Patagonian Maras are the fourth largest type of rodent in the world after the capybara, beaver, and certain porcupines. Though the Mara may look like a rabbit, the rabbit is not actually a rodent and therefore not as closely related to the Mara as one might expect.

“Patagonian Maras are often kept in zoos, or as pets. Maras that were raised from birth among humans are very social with humans, though if they are not used to humans they may shift to being active at night in order to avoid interaction. Maras breed well in captivity.”

## **Old Geezerette: Cars and Lots of Good Remembrances**

*by Bobbie Emerson*

### **1949: Texas. Virginia. Black Chevrolet:**

**T**he day after our wedding (1951), we packed John's trusty (?) 1949 black Chevrolet (replacement for his 1941 Chevrolet). From Alice, Texas, we headed for Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Only to have a flat tire before we got to Edna, Texas! Of course, the tire was at the bottom of a cram-packed trunk and useless. Carrying the tire (hot and not at all pleased), John started walking toward Edna. Before too long a good Samaritan stopped and offered him a ride to Edna. No other problems delayed our drive to New Orleans and our honeymoon.

Little did I know that my gypsy-like way of life was just beginning and the tourist just

emerging! Driving through the Great Smokey Mountains followed by the Blue Ridge Mountains was enchanting. Pictures in History and geography books didn't do them justice. I just stood in a parking lot in South Carolina savoring my first snowfall.

That ever trusty(?) 1949 Chevy did it to us once more outside DeFuniak Springs, Florida. The timing gear failed. It was Sunday morning, and John had to report to Belvoir in two days. We shall always be indebted to the kind Chevrolet garage personnel in DeFuniak that towed our car, called in repair personnel, and got us on the road that afternoon. Being military during the Korean war brought out the "best" in many people. I don't believe we were charged for any of the help and repairs!

#### **1951. Texas. Tan/Brown Chevrolet:**

Before leaving me in Alice and reporting for a tour of duty in Korea, John purchased a new, 1951, beautiful, two-tone brown Chevrolet for me. He had leave, and we drove from Alice to his port of departure (Treasure Island) in California. Along the way we toured the Grand Canyon and rode mules along the Bright Angel Trail to spend the night at Phantom Ranch on the Canyon floor. I remember exquisite scenery and very sore muscles! Los Angeles was next and a short ferry trip to Avalon, Catalina Island. For some reason what I remember most about Catalina was the exotic birds in a zoo. California Hwy 1 through the Big Sur was just beautiful trees. However, the best trip I made in that 1951 Chevy was the drive from Alice to Austin, Texas, Airport to collect my husband back from Korea!

#### **1954. Texas. Green Cadillac. Blue/White Pontiac:**

While waiting to get back to A&M, John did two things: worked for Lane Wells Service Co. and purchased a used two-tone green Cadillac, probably three years old. We drove that car through three semesters, a summer session, and eleven months in Sweetwater, Texas. On to Corpus Christi! John bought a new pale blue and white Pontiac Station Wagon with gorgeous red and white leather upholstery. BUT the greatest event ever in our lives was the arrival of Robert Damon and John Lee.

#### **1960. Texas. Blue Thunderbird. Tan Jeep Wagoneer. White Chrysler:**

In San Antonio, probably 1961 or 1962, neither John nor I could resist buying a new, two-tone, blue Thunderbird. Later that was replaced by a maroon Lincoln. No long trips at this time—only occasional short visits to Alice. John had a tan Jeep Wagoneer for a company car while working for Glen Martin to develop and install a new gas supply for San Antonio. Later when that company was bought by Coastal States, his company car was a white Chrysler. I received my first and only USA driving ticket for speeding five miles over the limit on a freeway exit ramp. The boys had played with the contents of my purse and my billfold ended up on the garage floor, therefore completely unavailable to the Officer asking to see my Driver's License.

#### **1965. Texas. Maroon Lincoln. Tan Mustang:**

John joined Bechtel in the Summer of 1965, and he traded our Lincoln for a new Mustang (tan). Little did I know that it would be the last USA car for a very long time.

True to the tourist in me, we drove to see the geysers north of Corte Madera, California, and of course, many of the vineyards in the area. Bolivar Peninsula was a favorite place to visit and to enjoy its tidal pools and beach. Muir Woods was on my “must see” list also. The bridges overwhelmed me: the Golden Gate and the Oakland Bay Bridge. The Richmond Bridge frightened me. I would ride over it only if John drove; I refused to do the driving over it.

The boys and I particularly enjoyed the baseball trips: over to Oakland A’s to see Vida Blue pitch and, of course, to Candlestick Park to enjoy Willie Mays and Barry Bonds.

#### **1966. Algeria. Puegot 404. Deux Cheveau:**

John’s company car, a Puegot 404, came with translator/driver. After work it became the unofficial “family” vehicle. My car, a Deux Cheveau, was interesting—the gear shift came out from the dash board, and the car in general was so loosely put together that the slightest bump or shifted heavy load caused it to spring up and down—the children loved it! Driving any slightly overweight passenger caused the car to sag on that side. The most annoying feature of my car was that it absolutely would not start in the damp early morning hours. I simply had to wait for the weather to warm up and dry the atmosphere, BUT it was transportation.

(Insert by John- “Deux Cheveau” translates to “Two Horsepower”! For desert use they built a special version with two engines. The one in front as usual plus one in back for emergency use. They both had separate starters, transmissions and gear shifts. If one failed, the other could be started, or if stuck in the sand, both could be used as 4-wheel drives!)

#### **1967. The Netherlands. Used Mercedes. Used Jaguar:**

The Mercedes was a joy to drive after the Deux Cheveau. John did not have a company car in Den Hague and soon bought a used Jaguar. Another car that was a joy to drive. Traffic “hazzards” I feared most in The Netherlands were hundreds of bicycles and motor scooters with specially marked lanes. But parallel parking on streets that were next to canals topped it all. I feared I would truly goof and back right into a canal—not a totally unusual occurrence in Amsterdam. The luxury of having two such great automobiles did not last long; we were transferred to Teheran.

#### **1968. Iran. Black Mercedes. Turquoise Volkswagen:**

John’s company car in Teheran was a black Mercedes, and he bought a used Volkswagen, turquoise in color, for me—crowned Our Persian Jewel. Traffic was so hazardous, parking spaces almost unheard of, and Farsi necessary that John had a driver/translator. I was “restricted” to driving north of Takti Jamshid, a main street with a grocery(?) store that had a parking lot so I would not get into “trouble.” I will admit I drove to the main Bazaar area once or twice so I could visit Naseeb’s, the jeweler us farangies (foreigners) liked to visit. When John didn’t require his car, the driver, Ibriheem, could come to get me and we would visit food bazaars and lots of “antique” stores. Perhaps one of the reasons I always had diarrhea was drinking the mandatory glass of hot tea with the proprietor.

**1971. California. Used Chevrolet Station Wagon:**

The boys and I returned to the States a few months ahead of John, and the first big problem was buying a car. John arranged to buy a Bechtel VP's car, which was fine and dandy, but it would not be released until I had a drivers license. My USA license was long out of date, and I needed a car to take a driving test. An old friend drove me to the test, watched the boys, and let me use her automobile. Fortunately I passed on the first try.

**1972. Argentina. Ford Company car:**

Argentina is a beautiful country, and using the car available to us, we saw a great deal of it. The boys probably remember the Sunday mornings John would take them to an abandoned air field outside of Buenos Aires to teach them how to drive. I really remember Patagonia; John "borrowed" a crew car so we could visit an estancia—during sheep shearing time—drive through the magnificent fossil trees in a National Park, but most of all visit the Straits of Magellan to see the penguin rookery.

**1973. California. Pontiac:**

It was comforting to have an American car again. We settled into a rather normal life—the boys walked to school, and John commuted via bus or ferry to San Francisco.

**1974. Milano, Italy. Fiat. Mercedes:**

I was not really ready to "so soon take on the world again," so John used bribery. He ordered a Mercedes to be picked up at the factory in Sindelfingen near Stuttgart, Germany. A movie about the Blue Maxmilian Medal was popular at the this time. This was my Blue Max. Attached garages or even private garages were not usual in Milano. We were fortunate to rent space in a commercial parking garage only a block and a half from the apartment. Italians liked to drive fast and faster, but were actually very good drivers as a whole—but pushy. A motto for them is "to occupy the space." This aggressive attitude got me some angry response when first driving in London. John used his Fiat (one of the large Fiats, not a Cinque Cento) for the many trips he made to Fano, and we used Max for week-end outings. Because of unsettled tax laws, we shipped Max to the USA where it stayed in Brownsville until our return to the USA.

(This is as far as she got before she became ill.)

**Day Light Section**

*by Frances Arrighi*

**T**welve members attended the 8 March, 2010 meeting of the Day Light Section. We worked on mounting a cabochon without using the standard bezel or solder. The method used is to cut an outward flap at various places in the mounting metal. The flap is pushed up against the cabochon and holds the stone securely in place.

In April Val Link is presenting the program on ring sizing. We have one member's silver ring that needs to be made smaller and another member's gold ring that needs to be made larger.

## Mineral Section

*by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson & Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson*

**T**he Mineral Section meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 in the HGMS Clubhouse. All are welcome.

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

**May 5: AUCTION:** Specimens from HGMS members will be auctioned with a portion of the proceeds going to the Mineral Section. This is the same auction format practiced the past few years. Please read the accompanying announcement (*Page* ) for further details. Refreshments will be provided. Also, on May 5, The Houston Fine Minerals Show (April 30–May 2) will be discussed. Bring in your recent acquisitions and let us drool over them.

**May 19: To be Announced.**

**June 2: SWAP-NIGHT:** Back by popular demand, we will have a Swap Night where excess material from our collections can be bought/sold/swapped. This will be an informal event and will be held inside. All Sections are invited to participate and swap. Setup is from 7:00 to 7:30, and the formal meeting will be kept to a minimum to allow ample time for specimen exchange and socializing. Refreshments will be provided.

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

### May 5 Mineral Section Auction Format

*by Dean Lagerwall*

**O**n Wednesday May 5 at 7:30 p.m., the Mineral Section will be having its annual auction to help raise money for the Section. Once again, we are allowing ALL HGMS members to bring specimens to the auction and to keep a portion of the proceeds. The proceeds of at least one of the specimens (your choice) must be donated to the Section. Five additional specimens are allowed for each person, with a portion of each specimen (10%) going to the Section and the rest going to the donator.

This is a great way for ALL HGMS members to thin out their duplicate specimens and benefit both yourself and the Mineral Section. You can put a minimum bid on the more expensive pieces if you desire. Since this event will draw from all Sections, expect a variety of items to be auctioned and a very interesting and entertaining event. Setup and viewing is from 7:00 to 7:30 with bidding beginning at 7:45. If you have any questions, call Dean at (979) 480-9373.

### Late-Breaking Club News

Are you getting e-mails about HGMS activities? If not, contact [n\\_immega@swbell.net](mailto:n_immega@swbell.net) and let him know that you want to be on the list.

## Fossil Frenzy

*Members of Houston group make annual field trip to Brown County  
by Gene Deason, Editor*

*Permission was granted to reprint this article that appeared in the March 28, 2010 Brownwood Bulletin. All photos by Gene Deason.*

Enduring chilly days while walking across muddy terrain looking for fossils is not the way most people envision spending their spring break. But that's exactly what a dedicated group from the Houston Gem and Mineral Society (HGMS) chose to do last weekend on what has become an annual spring break trek to Brown County.

It's a trip that a dozen or more—usually, it's many more—members make during a portion of spring break at the University of Houston where some of them work. One member,



Tully Hair and Neal Immega discuss a foot-tall nautiloid.

Neal Immega, Ph.D., Field Trip Chair of the Paleo Section of the HGMS and a master docent of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, said it's a trip he's been making periodically for four decades.

For them, Brown County is a special place. "Fossils found in Brown County are representative of all three major ages," Alexia "Lexy" Hueske Bieniek, a science consultant and adjunct natural science faculty member at the University of Houston, said at the end of a long day looking at local sites. "It's very rare to have all those periods represented in such a small area—such a small geographic area. This is usually our March



Tully Hair, Neal Immega, Mike Dawkins, and Mike Bieniek discuss Tully's drawings of the fossils as they looked when they were alive.



field trip.”

Bieniek said various areas of Brown County will yield fossils from the pre-dinosaur period, the dinosaur period, and the more recent period which includes mammoths.

These members are part of the HGMS's Paleontology Section, one of six specialty fields within the organization. The members who come to Brown County have a standing offer of lodging at Bieniek's Brownwood home.

And again this year, fossil hound Tully Hair served as their local host. At the end of the day last Saturday, Hair treated the Houston visitors to a private showing of many of his finds. A few of the larger items are on display at Hair's office at Citizens National Bank.

“This area they talk about, the **Pennsylvanian**, extends from around Brownwood northward,” Hair said. “It's a rather narrow area. Brown County is about as far south as it goes, and it's closest for people living in Houston.”

Brown and Coleman counties are popular destinations for fossil collectors, and the area around Lake Brownwood—and especially the spillway—is particularly interesting.

Hair's items brought appreciative comments from the Houston group, but Hair downplayed that. “We all enjoy looking at each others' collections,” Hair said.

Equally well-received were the drawings that Hair, an accomplished artist, had made of how the creatures that were entombed as fossils once looked. Of particular interest was a nautiloid that's almost a foot tall that Hair had found mostly intact. Another was put together from the various small pieces he found.

The society members said they typically look for fossils around Lake Brownwood, but that



Tully Hair with his foot-tall nautiloid found almost intact.



Sunday Bennett, Diane Sisson, and Joan Ochoa are examining fossils. In the foreground is a nautiloid Tully is reconstructing from its many small pieces.

fertile places for fossil hunting are becoming more difficult to find. They focus on public lands, including highway rights-of-way, but permission must be obtained to venture onto private property.

Hair said he has been interested in finding fossils since his youth, and he often takes the Boy Scout troop for which he is Scoutmaster on outings.



Tully explains some of the intricacies of the fossil Neal's holding to him and to Mike.

"Most of the fossils are found right on top of the ground," Hair said. "They can be in gullies or on hillsides. You might have to dig out around them to get all of the fossil out of the ground, but usually something is exposed. I rarely, if ever, have to dig for anything, although I do dig around it."

Good places to look are becoming more scarce. Often, fossils can be found amid gravel along the side of a highway. "We're really running out of places to hunt," Bieniek said.

"But Texas is better than a lot of states for fossil hunters," Hair said. State property rights allow owners to control their land. Brown County Water District has begun efforts to limit fossil hunting in the spillway to university groups, professional geologists, and to groups like the HGMS Paleo Section in hopes of having only people who understand the natural dangers of large sheets of rocks possibly falling while they are collecting in the spillway.

These regulations are also designed to reduce the possibility of treasure-hunters who have harvested large amounts of fossils then selling them for profit. A new clause has been added to the traditional entrance permit, and it threatens legal action against those collectors planning to sell the fossils.

"Maybe they should limit the sale of it," Hair said. "As often happens, a few people are out to take advantage of things."



Some of Hair's many fossils on display.

"Eighty percent of the important finds are made by amateurs or semi-serious collectors," Hair said.

Fossil finds in Brown County have included at least one unique creature—so unique that its name is taken from the county seat. It's *archeocydaris brownwoodensis*, a sea urchin from the Pennsylvanian Period at least 300 million years ago found only in the spillway at Lake Brownwood. "It's very special to have a fossil named after an area," Bieniek said.

### Who Knew

*by Karen Burns*

*Copyright 2010*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

It was a funny little rock,  
Different from those around.  
Just the size of a walnut,  
The only pretty bit I found.

Matte white, perhaps limestone,  
Bits of red like a rocket.  
I asked my friends, no one knew.  
I put it in my pocket.

I asked again, no one knew,  
Not the geologist nor  
The paleontologist.  
My curiosity did soar.

There was only one thing left,  
I couldn't tell from the outside.  
I took it to the trim saw,  
I would have to look inside.

There was red jasper beneath  
the ordinary matte white.  
Just like little red curls that  
were almost hidden from sight.

Those little fragments of red,  
They might have been a clue  
To the curling gastropods  
That are what I find, who knew?

## The Care and Feeding of Gemstone and Gold and Silver Jewelry

by Karen M. Burns

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**Y**ou spend good money to buy gemstone and precious metal jewelry, and it deserves the best of care to keep it looking as nice as it did when it was new. How do you do that?

There are three steps to caring for good jewelry.

Wear it with pleasure and savor the compliments you get when you do so, but don't wear it swimming, in the bath or shower, and when using cleaning chemicals. Salt water and chlorine can damage the surface of your metals; residues from bathing soaps and salts and lotions can discolor it, and chemicals can erode the surface. Don't wear it to bed where it can get caught in your hair, bedclothes, and bed linens.

Certain stones, especially turquoise, pearls, and similar porous stones can absorb oils, perfumes, lotions, and other chemicals which can degrade the surface and even change its color. If in doubt, don't.

Clean your jewelry after each wearing with a soft cloth and warm water. Dry carefully and allow it to sit overnight so dampness in crevices and damp stringing material can dry thoroughly. This is not a substitute for tarnish removal, but it may help to retard tarnish formation.

There are many ways to clean tarnished jewelry. There are chemical cloths such as the Sunshine cloth, liquids such as JewelBrite and Connoisseur, and sonic and ultrasonic cleaners. Be sure to read the labels and instructions before you use any of these to clean fine gemstone and metal jewelry. Keep in mind that mechanical and chemical cleaning will remove minute traces of metal, and some chemicals cannot be used on porous gemstones, so try to reduce the need to clean with more than water by storing your pieces properly.

Those beautiful jewelry armoires with drawers and doors are pretty but not air tight, and air tight is what you need. Also, the little hooks for hanging bracelets and necklaces can allow the thread or wire to stretch. The metal you ask? Stretching is how the wire is made. But as it stretches from hanging it can change the shape of the piece and you can lose the beauty that attracted you to it.

The best way to store jewelry is in airtight bags, either zipper bags, Pacific cloth bags, or densely woven cloth bags; little velvet bags are pretty and fairly airtight. Anti-tarnish paper strips that will reduce tarnish can be purchased from suppliers such as Rio Grande and Fire Mountain. The little packets of desiccants that come in electronics and some medications can help reduce moisture in your jewelry box or in the drawers of an armoire. Even solid karat gold will tarnish over time as the metals alloyed with the gold are eventually affected by contaminants in the air.

With just this little bit of attention, you will be able to enjoy your gemstone and precious metal jewelry for decades, as will your daughters and granddaughters, sons, and grandsons.

## HGMS General Meeting

March 23, 2010

*by HGMS Secretary Pier Laird and Board Member Nancy Fischer*

**Call to Order:** 7:53 p.m.

**Visitors:** Visitors were Kay Henton, Ana Mercado and family, and Heather Koenier, Susan Lenz's caretaker

**Minutes:** Karen Burns moved and Phyllis George seconded that the February General Meeting minutes be approved as published in the BBG. The motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** The financial report for HGMS is good.

**Show Committee:** Rick Rexroad reported that the International Gem & Jewelry Show is April 16–19. HGMS will have a booth, and we need volunteers. Parking will be paid. This will help promote HGMS.

The Fine mineral Show is on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. HGMS will also have a booth there, and we need volunteers.

### Section Reports:

The **Beading Section** is meeting on both the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday for the month of March only. All other meeting are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday.

The **Lapidary Section** meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Mary Ann Mitscherling will be opening the shop at 5 p.m. She will also demonstrate how to use a jump ring machine at the meeting.

The **Paleo Section** meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Mike Dawson reported on the Paleo Section fieldtrip to Brownwood. Everybody on the fieldtrip had fun in spite of the snow and freezing temperatures.

### Education:

Charlie Fredregill will teach a wire wrapping class that meets March 28, April 4, April 11, and April 18. The cost is \$135.00 (plus \$40.00 for a membership if the student isn't already a member of HGMS).

Val Link is teaching Beginning Jewelry Making. The cost is \$375.00 and is from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on April 24 and May 1, 8, 15, and 22.

### Old Business:

**Outreach Program:** Neal Immega is presenting a program at the Longfellows School on Thursday night.

Terry Proctor brought in several 99% silver coins with an Alaskan design. The coins contain a full ounce of silver and sell for \$25.00.

### New Business:

Rock Hound Stickers are still for sale.

Rick Sceppan won the door prize that was brought by John Anderson. Gary Tober forgot to bring in the March door prize, so he will bring the prize for April.

**April Speaker:** Neal Immega will speak on Modern Genetics and Darwin.

**Show and Tell:**

- John Emerson brought in a beautiful, large desert rose from the Middle East where he was working on a construction project. Believe it or not, his company had to import sand from Britain to their construction site in the Sahara Desert because the desert sand at the site wasn't hard enough.
- Kay Henton brought in a very large chunk of volcanic glass hoping to find a buyer. She did sell it to a member.
- Joan Ochoa showed four boxes full of fossils that she found on the Brownwood field trip.
- Mary Ann Mitscherling displayed an agate that she cabbed earlier that day in the clubhouse shop.
- Carolyn Promisel displayed necklaces and bracelets made of a Viking knit chain that was knit from wire. If anyone's interested, she would like to teach a class on the technique.
- Wayne Barnett displayed a beautiful 18k aquamarine that he faceted from a 100k block of rough. The scraps will be faceted into smaller stones.
- Kathy Konkell displayed a beautiful opal from Ethiopia that she had faceted. It had lost all of its color and fire while soaking in a solvent to separate it from the dop. Devastated, Kathy put it in a plastic bag and placed it in her purse. Many days later, she pulled out the bag and looked at the stone. All of its color and fire had returned. Mystifying!

**Program Speaker: Norman Lenz on Inclusions in Gem Stone**

Norm Lenz gave the presentation "Inclusions in Gem Stones, Good or Bad" at the General Meeting. It was really good to see Norm and Susan at the meeting. They were very active in the club until Susan contracted brain cancer several years ago. She is now in remission. Norm has been an HGMS treasurer, vice president, show chair, and president with a couple of years in each position. Susan was the Faceting Section Board Representative for several years until her illness forced her resignation.

Norm pointed out that studying inclusions can't be an exact science because they are inside the stone, and there is no way to actually measure or test them.

Some inclusions add value to the stone, like star sapphires or so-called cat's eye stones. The makeup and orientation of the inclusion determines what pattern and what value it gives to each stone. For instance, rutile in sapphire causes the star pattern, and hematite can cause the cat's eye. Norm presented interesting slides that demonstrated the points he was making. He ended with a series of diamonds with diamond inclusions. Some give character to the stone. Some can make it less valuable.



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

*April 6, 2010*

*by Nancy Fischer*

*HGMS Board Member*

X	President	Terry Proctor	X	Faceting Rep.	Sunday Bennett
	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	James Wark	X	Lapidary Rep.	Phyllis George
X	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Beverly Mace	X	Mineral Rep.	Sigrid Stewart
	Treasurer	Rodney Linehan	X	Paleontology Rep.	Terry Brawner
	Secretary	Pier Laird	X	Day Light Rep.	Nancy Fischer
	Beading Rep.	Diane Sisson	X	2010 Show Chair	Rick Rexroad

The meeting was called to order by Terry Proctor at 7:25 p.m.

**March Minutes:** Sunday Bennett moved to accept last month's Board minutes as printed in the April BBG. Terry Brawner seconded the motion which was accepted unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** There was no Treasurer's Report presented this month, however Terry Proctor said that the Club was in good financial shape partly due to the auctions that Neal Immega has been holding that have brought in over \$2000 a month for the past three months. Enough auction material is left for one more auction during the April General Meeting.

### **There were no Officer or Section Reports.**

**Show Committee Report:** Rick Rexroad, 2010 Show Committee Chair, reported that he still needed a few more volunteers to represent HGMS at the International Gem Show, April 16–18. He is also starting to look for volunteers to work the HGMS table at the Fine Mineral Show to be held the last weekend in April (4/30/2010–5/2/2010).

Rick said that he was making arrangements with David Wolf to provide the centerpiece exhibit at the show. This will be a dinosaur or perhaps a Permian reptile. David is working with a doctor in Lufkin who is starting a paleo museum there. Rick said the relationships will be mutually beneficial.

Phyllis George said that she is continuing to update the Web site, particularly with regard to the show information. She still needs the .pdf of the new show flyer.

**Library Concerns:** Sigrid Stewart reported that the lighting is improved in the Library. There will be continual upgrades. Margo and Bill Bedman are contributing a computer, and Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart are donating a flat-screen monitor to go with it.

Art Smith used to purchase soft drinks for the HGMS kitchen refrigerator with the profits benefitting the Library. The club now needs a volunteer to oversee this function. If you are willing to take on this much-appreciated task, please let someone on the Board know.

**Club Electricity Rate:** Terry Brawner arranged for Amigo/Tara Energy to be the Club's electricity provider at a very good fixed rate of 7.6 cents per kWh for the next four years. He personally sent Amigo a \$300 deposit since HGMS doesn't have credit references—it pays cash and doesn't use credit in its dealings. The club will reimburse Terry for his outlay. The Board thanked Terry for a job well done.

**Outreach Program:** Nancy Fischer presented two maps she made, one of the JP/Constable Precincts and one of the Zip Codes in Harris County. She gave both to Terry Proctor to create an overlay of these two maps as previously discussed. This will help HGMS members know the JP District they are in by using their Zip Code. This will be used in going forward with the Club's Outreach Program.

**Roof Damage:** Terry Proctor reported that his letter to the roofing contractor who did the HGMS roof had been returned, indicating that they are no longer in business. He will try to check this out through the State Agency which had supervision over contractors. He will also contact the HGMS insurance carrier to check our coverage. James Wark was in Hawaii, so he could not report on any contact with the insurance carrier for a meeting at the clubhouse to determine the damage and our coverage.

**Seeking Grants:** Terry Proctor reported that HGMS membership in TANO (Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations) for 2010 is completed. He will begin sending Grant information to other Board members for review in an effort to determine which grants HGMS may be entitled to apply for. Also, Shiara Trumble is looking into a possible grant to our club from the American Marketing Association.

**Selling Member's Work On Web Site Considered:** The Club discussed having a section of the HGMS Web site dedicated to selling the art/craft products made by members. There was a discussion of the tax implications and of the time necessary to design that part of the Web site. The discussion also addressed the upkeep of the site, access to the site, and the technical and financial administration of that part of the HGMS Web site. It was the consensus of the Board that there could be problems with HGMS's sales tax status or as a 501(c)3 organization if HGMS were handling such matters directly. Also this would require a considerable amount of HGMS members' time to run such an activity.

Sigrid Stewart moved that the Club not undertake any sales Web site or create any part of our HGMS Web site for sales. The HGMS Web site would be very happy to include a link to any site(s) that club members develop for their sales. Phyllis George seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

**2009–2010 Scholarships:** The Board discussed the 2009 Art & Elizabeth Smith Scholarship and the 2010 Robert Cross Scholarship. It was determined that more contact is needed with the persons who deal with scholarships in our area's various Junior Colleges in order to make them aware of the availability of these two HGMS Scholarships. The original guidelines published in the BBG were reaffirmed at this time.

**Adjourn:** Phyllis George moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Terry Brawner seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

## Safety Note for Spring: Take your Benadryl with you!

by Owen Martin

AFMS/SCFMS Safety Chairman

from SCFMS Newsletter 3-4/2010

**W**ell it was a hard winter by most standards in the central and south US. It even snowed three times at our house in Houston and froze hard enough to break pipes in several houses in our neighborhood. Not that I'm complaining—after all we get PLENTY of summer for 6+ months every year. With that being said, the cold weather really backed up the spring bloom, and as a result EVERYTHING started blooming last week!

So my Bradford pears, dogwood, peach, and red buds are in full bloom. Weeds are taking over the hibernating grass and have tons of little flowers, my pine is pollinating, and so are some oaks and maples across the street. AND to top it all off, cedar keeps blowing in from Hill Country.

Now the weather was just perfect this weekend, so I figured it was time to get out and at least do some yard work—about eight hours worth. This was after a land clearing project in Hill Country from the previous weekend. As a result of proximity and increased respiratory activity, I did myself in. All those allergens caught up with me and just about knocked me out. It wasn't exactly an asthma attack, but my eyes were swollen, my nasal passages were swollen up so that I couldn't breathe except out of my mouth, and I kept coughing up crud!

Okay—so the moral of the story is that I should have taken Benadryl™ prior to engaging in such activities. Not to say that I wouldn't have had some impact from all that pollen anyway, but at least I could have mitigated the violent response my body had to it all. Luckily I was able to lay on the couch nursing my bloated head while watching conference basketball tournaments.

However if I was in the field and had such a problem, especially one that could have led to an asthma attack, then I would have been in trouble. Keep that in mind as you head out on your first hunt of this spring!

Prepare, be safe, and breathe easy!!!

## Nifty Rockhound Bumper Sticker Slogans

from Strata Gem 11/2005 via News and Views Bulletin 4/2010

- **Love a Geologist** – Feel your earthquake.
- **Love a Faceter** – They're a cut above the rest.
- **Love a Mineralogist** – but don't take them for Granite.
- **Love a Paleontologist** – but be aware, they collect old, dead things.
- **I collect rocks too!** – Diamonds, rubies, topaz, emeralds...
- **Amateur Paleontologist** – Professional Rock Collector
- **Amateur Mineralogist** – Professional Rock Collector

## Quick Tips for Editors

by Linda Jaeger, AFMS Bulletin Editors Advisory Chair  
from AFMS Newsletter 4/2010

If you have a question (or suggestion) about editing or writing or the bulletin contest or something related, send it to me by e-mail: <ljgrAlg@aol.com> or at home address: 3515 E. 88th St., Tulsa, OK 74137. If I cannot find an answer to your question, we'll publish the question and ask the readers for their answers.



**When you read this**, AFMS judges will be in full swing, reading and judging entries for the 2010 AFMS Bulletin Editor's Contest. When I have received the results, I will send postcards to the top 10 winners in each category. See you at the CFMS/AFMS Show and Convention in California in June!



Abbreviations – Have I found a shortcut to a can of worms?

My husband recently asked me a question about an abbreviation he wanted to use in an article he was writing. I thought, "Gee, abbreviations would be a good topic to research and write about for 'Quick Tips.'" The best thing I can say is: decide on a reasonable style and stick with it. There are a mountain of different styles to choose from—some for essays, some

for technical writing, some for specific subject areas, some for casual writing. The can of worms I discovered is that none of these styles seem to agree on much of anything.

The most helpful information came from an online site for home schoolers. It gave these basic rules for abbreviation use:

- if you're unsure about using an abbreviation, spell it out every time you use it (for numbers, I'd stick with full spellings for any number under 10 and use numerals for anything with two or more digits)
- check the dictionary – it's always worth a try
- be consistent with the style you have chosen
- use an abbreviation instead of a contraction (as in "cont." instead of "cont'd." for continued)
- if the abbreviation is only a couple of letters shorter than the actual word you might as well use the whole word!
- within a reference, use periods with the abbreviations (Vol., 5th ed., p. 41)

The articles we write for our bulletins sometimes need **units of measure**. The numerical part is written with numerals, there is a space between the numeric part and the units, and there is no period after the abbreviation for the units, except when it is in. for inches (to distinguish from the preposition, "in"). Samples: 35 in., 18 g, 79 km 2

Numbers that should always be **written with numerals**, not words are: dates, addresses, percentages, fractions and decimals, scores, exact amounts of money, and time of day.

There are some words that **we should NOT abbreviate** as we are writing: short forms of words (thru, nite – too casual), days of the week, months of the year, people's names (use Charles, not Chas.), and states' names (use Oklahoma, not OK or Okla.). 2

Then there are the acronyms. A true acronym is formed by taking the first letter of each word in a phrase and using those initials to form a word that can be pronounced.

If the acronym forms a proper noun (NASA, NAFTA, AIDS) the letters are all capitalized, and there are no periods. If initials form a phrase (a.k.a., e.g., i.e.) they are written in small case letters and include the periods. It helps the reader to see the nouns or phrases spelled out the first time they are used, with acronyms each time they are mentioned afterwards.

I repeat – be consistent! Now, about that can of worms – fishing anyone?

### References:

1 Emms, Karrie. "How to Use Abbreviations: Five Basic Rules of Abbreviation Use for Homeschoolers." 26 May 2008. 24 February 2010. <[http://homeschool-curricula.suite101.com/article.cfm/when\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_use\\_abbreviations](http://homeschool-curricula.suite101.com/article.cfm/when_and_how_to_use_abbreviations)>

2 "Abbreviations." 24 February 2010.

<<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/abbreviations.htm>>

3 Roach, John. "What's up, shorty? – Acronyms and Abbreviation." 4 August 2008. 24 February 2010.

<<http://prowritingtips.com/2008/08/whatsup-shorty-acronyms-and-abbreviations/>>

(Clip art from Discovery Channel School Image Gallery, ©2003. Permission to use for educational, not for sale publications granted.)

### **AFMS—ALAA Call to Action**

*by Dick Pankey, President, ALAA  
from AFMS Newsletter 4/2010*

**J**ust about every day I get e-mails about legislations and regulations that affect rockhounding and access to public lands. Most of the legislation deals with establishment of new, proposed Wilderness creation and new, proposed National Monuments.

The Bureau of Land Management and the National Forest Service are constantly changing and updating their management plans. Generally the last thing mentioned in these e-mails is a request to write letters or e-mails to your Representatives or Senators for legislation or the affected BLM or FS office.



Right now here in California there are several issues that need our attention and involvement. First is one piece of legislation—the California Desert Conservation Act. This is a proposal for several National Monuments, new Wilderness areas, and more that will affect access and collecting in a number of historic and prime collecting areas. The BLM office in Hollister, CA is developing a new management plan for the Clear Creek Management Area. And all Forest Service Districts are beginning the process of revising their regulations that govern how the agency prepares Forest Plans. Known as the “Planning Rule,” these regulations will be the driving force behind how the agency develops, amends, and revises their Land Use Plans. This affects all National Forests in the US. The Hard Rock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2009 was introduced in the House and Senate last July. This bill affects the Land Claims process. The Forest Service has announced its plans to eliminate the 50% discount at National Forest campgrounds that has traditionally been available to holders of lifetime Senior and Access (permanent disability) passes. These are just examples, the tip of the iceberg, of what the future hold for rockhounds and people that use and recreate on public lands.

I tell you this not to be a bearer of “doom and gloom” but to let you know the challenges we face and what could happen if **YOU** don’t pay attention and if **YOU** don’t or won’t get involved and participate in the legislative and regulatory process. And how can you get involved? Read the alerts and articles from ALAA, BRC, AFMS and CFMS to get informed. Then take action. Write letters to your Congressmen and to the Regulators. If you want to go above and beyond, attend meetings, share what you know with others, and get them involved.

My objective is simple: to inform you of what is happening and to get you to write a letter or e-mail expressing your feelings or your position on legislation or regulation. Letters and e-mails are effective and have an impact, especially with the BLM and FS. It is easy to get started. Sign up for the ALAA or Blue Ribbon Coalition Alert list to learn what is happening. Read articles about pending legislation and regulations in newsletters and newspapers or go on-line and read the proposed legislation and regulations (get informed). Discuss what you learn with friends and other rockhounds and decide how the legislation and regulations will affect you (get involved).

Then write a letter or e-mail. They don’t have to be eloquent or a legal/scientific presentation, or long. Just send a short, one page letter about how you felt about or will be affected by the legislation and regulations (participate).

Rockhounds have a great tool to use when writing to our elected officials: the **little Rockhound Sticker™**. (For information on obtaining these stickers, contact me.) (*Editor’s note: contact President Terry Proctor—he has them on hand to sell.*) The use of this bright yellow sticker with a rock hammer on our correspondences attracts attention and immediately identifies it as being from an interested rockhound. The more that it is used, the more it will be recognized and remembered, and the more impact it will have. Widespread use of the little Rockhound Sticker will add continuity to our message and will show that we are a coordinated force—not just random individuals.

Your letters and e-mails are important to the future of rockhounding and our access to our public land. Get informed, get involved, and participate.



## Today's Planet

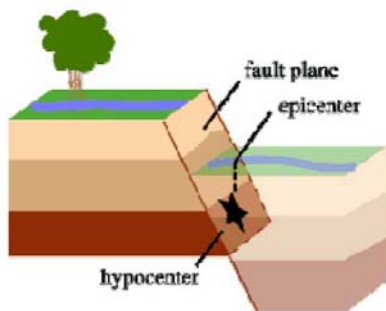
by Al Pennington

from *Stoney Statements* 4/2010

The Earth continues to be active in the wake of the great Chilean Earthquake last February, so it's time to learn a bit. We shall start with terminology. **Aftershocks:** Large earthquakes hardly ever occur alone. When one earthquake happens, we usually see another at a nearby location. To talk about this phenomenon, seismologists coined three terms: "foreshock," "mainshock," and "aftershock." In any cluster of earthquakes, the one with the largest magnitude is called the mainshock; anything before it is called a foreshock, and anything after it is called an aftershock.

The fault that moves in the mainshock experiences a great redistribution of the stress on it during the mainshock, and it is that disrupted surface that produces most of the aftershocks. Sometimes the change in stress in the mainshock is great enough to trigger aftershocks on nearby faults. However, the stress change dies off quickly with distance from the fault, so we rarely see aftershocks more than a few kilometers from the main fault. As a rule of thumb, we say that aftershocks are other earthquakes triggered at a distance from the mainshock fault no greater than the length of that fault.

The length of the fault scales with the magnitude of the mainshock, and so do the aftershocks. The aftershock zone of a magnitude 5 mainshock will be under 5 miles across; that of a magnitude 6.5 will be about 20 miles across, while that of magnitude 8 mainshock might be over 200 miles long. Bigger earthquakes have more and larger aftershocks.



As the magnitude of the mainshock increases, the magnitude of the largest aftershock, on average, increases as well.

The question is often asked, How many aftershocks will there be? On average, for each magnitude 5 aftershock in a sequence, we will see 10 magnitude 4 aftershocks, 100 magnitude 3 aftershocks, 1000 magnitude 2 aftershocks, etc. The relative number of small to large aftershocks does not appear to change with time. In general, an earthquake large enough to cause damage will produce several felt aftershocks within the first hour. The rate of aftershocks dies off quickly with time, so even the second day will have many less aftershocks than the first.

We call an earthquake an aftershock as long as the rate at which earthquakes are occurring in that region is greater than the rate we saw before the mainshock. How long that will be depends on the size of the mainshock (bigger earthquakes have a higher rate of aftershocks so it stays above background longer) and how active the region was before the mainshock (if it was quiet, aftershocks stay noticeable longer.)

## Significant Earthquake and News Headlines

- Magnitude 7.2 BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO April 04, 2010
- Magnitude 4.4 GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA, CALIFORNIA March 16, 2010
- Magnitude 6.7 OFFSHORE BIO-BIO, CHILE March 16, 2010
- Magnitude 6.5 NEAR THE EAST COAST OF HONSHU, JAPAN March 14, 2010
- Magnitude 6.9 LIBERTADOR O HIGGINS, CHILE March 11, 2010
- Magnitude 6.1 EASTERN TURKEY March 08, 2010
- Magnitude 6.8 SOUTHERN SUMATRA, INDONESIA March 05, 2010
- Magnitude 8.8 OFFSHORE MAULE, CHILE February 27, 2010

*Ref: Material derived from in part: <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/>*

## What Is An “Old Mine Cut” Diamond?

*by Jana Barzinski*

*from Gem Cutters News 3/2010*

**M**any people are fascinated by the PBS program “Antiques Roadshow.” I understand that only the most interesting and/or valuable items brought to the show make it to the televised version, and that hundreds of people line up before taping with what they hope are unique treasures but in reality are just more dust collectors or attic junk.

Among the wonderful treasures that have been shown over the years are pieces of antique jewelry. Often the appraiser refers to the diamonds in jewelry as “old mine cuts.” Being a faceter, I know what an old mine cut is, but do you? Old Mine Cut diamonds are stones that have a high crown and a very small table. The culet (bottom point) is usually flattened rather than pointed as in a modern cut stone.



These stones are often square in shape, and the corners are a bit rounded off to give the stone a very unique look. Light is able to pass through

the stone in such a way as to create a brilliant appearance. Old Mine Cuts were developed between 1800 and 1900 using what was then state of the art equipment. Basically what they did was lop off the top and bottom of the crystal that they had and then applied facets to the sides that remained. The result was a squarish-looking diamond.

Old European



Crown



Pavilion



3/4 View



## **Tips & Hints—Coffee Filters**

*via The Calgary Lapidary Journal 4/2010*

### **Better than Paper Towels and a Lot Less Expensive**

1. Cover bowls or dishes when cooking in the microwave.
2. Clean windows, mirrors, eye glasses and chrome. Coffee filters are lint free, so they'll leave glass sparkling.
3. Protect china by separating your good dishes with a coffee filter between each dish.
4. Protect small specimens when collecting in the field.
5. Filter broken cork from wine.
6. Protect a cast iron skillet. The filter will absorb moisture and prevent rust.
7. Apply shoe polish with a ball of lint-free coffee filter.
8. Recycle frying oil. After frying, strain oil through a sieve lined with a coffee filter.
9. Weigh chopped food. Place chopped ingredients in a coffee filter on a kitchen scale.
10. Stop the soil from leaking out of a plant pot. Line a plant pot with a coffee filter to prevent the soil from going through the drainage holes.
11. Use a cone filter to prevent spilling when adding fluids to your car.
12. and of course—**TO MAKE COFFEE !!!**

### **Wit And Wisdom**

- In these days of uncertainty, the only thing you can count on is your fingers.
- The end really never justifies the meanness.
- No vice is so bad as advice.



Fluorite from Blanchard,  
New Mexico

Photo from SCRIBE  
2002-2008 DVD

## Show Time 2010

April 24-25	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Society Texas State Technical College ITC Building; I-35 N Kay Coleman, (903) 389-8311
April 30-May 2	Houston, TX	Houston Fine Mineral Show Embassy Suites Hotel, near The Galleria <a href="http://www.finemineralshow.com">www.finemineralshow.com</a>
May 1-2	Lubbock, TX	Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society Lubbock Civic Center, 1501 Mac Davis Ln. <a href="mailto:archie.scott73@yahoo.com">archie.scott73@yahoo.com</a> ; <a href="http://lgmstx.org">http://lgmstx.org</a>
May 29-30	Fort Worth, TX	Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Society Will Rogers Memorial Center, Amon G. Carter Exhibit Bldg., 3401 W. Lancaster <a href="http://www.fortworthgemandmineralclub.org">www.fortworthgemandmineralclub.org</a>
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; <a href="mailto:diamond.crest@yahoo.com">diamond.crest@yahoo.com</a> <a href="http://www.networkingwave.com/afms2010/index.html">www.networkingwave.com/afms2010/index.html</a>
August 21-22	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center; Charlie Johns (318)687-4929; <a href="mailto:cwsejohns@bellsouth.net">cwsejohns@bellsouth.net</a> <a href="http://www.larockclub.com">www.larockclub.com</a>
August 28-29	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society Events Center, 6258 Hwy. 190 W 5 miles west of Jasper; Contact Jonetta Nash (409)384-3974; <a href="mailto:jonetta.nash@yahoo.com">jonetta.nash@yahoo.com</a>
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; <a href="http://www.hgms.org">www.hgms.org</a> Rick Rexroad, <a href="mailto:rrexroad@brwnclad.com">rrexroad@brwnclad.com</a>
December 3-5	El Paso, TX	El Paso Mineral & Gem Society El Maida Auditorium, 6331 Alabama <a href="mailto:gemcenter@aol.com">gemcenter@aol.com</a>
December 6-7	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring ProspeXctors Club Howard County Fair Barn, (432) 263-4662
December 11-12	DeRidder, LA	SCFMS/DGMFC Convention & Show Richard Borchard Fairgrounds

2010		May				2010
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
2 Easter Sunday	3	4 7:30 Board Meeting	5 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	6	7	8 10-5 Shop Open
9 Mother's Day	10 1:00 Day Light Section	11 7:30 Show Committee	12 7:30 Faceting Section 10-5 Shop Open	13	14	15 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
16	17 7:30 Lapidary Section	18 7:30 Paleo Section	19 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	20	21	22 10-5 Shop Open
23 30	24 Memorial Day 31	25 7:30 General Meeting	26 10-5 Shop Open	27	28	29

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

# **The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

*The Newsletter of the  
Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

10805 BROOKLET

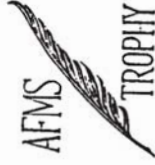
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099

(281) 530-0942



## **SCFMS**

1998 - 1st (Large)  
2000 - 1st (Large)  
2003 - 1st (Large)  
2005 - 1st (Large)  
2006 - 1st (Large)  
2007 - 1st (Large)  
2008 - 1st (Large)  
2009 - 1st (Large)



## **AFMS**

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

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**DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DO NOT DELAY !**