



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

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

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**January 2011**



## **President's Message** *by Steve Blyskal* *2011 HGMS President*

**T**his is my first message to the members of HGMS as the incoming President for 2011. Many of you know me from my work with the Mineral Section, School Collections, and Show Committee. I've been a member of the HGMS since 1977, when I first arrived in Houston, and a member of the Mineral Section ever since. I have served as Chairman of the Mineral Section several times, and have also run the Swap Area for most of the years it has been a part of the annual show. When Art Smith relinquished control of the School Collections project, I took over and have supervised school set construction and distribution for the last eight years.



2010 is drawing to a close, and we can look back on a year of accomplishment for the club which you, the club members, made possible through all your hard work and efforts. Our outgoing President, Terry Proctor, was very active this year and instrumental in bringing a number of projects to completion. We owe him sincere thanks for what he achieved this year including needed improvements to the clubhouse and continuing expansion of the Outreach Program.

But by far, the largest club project of the year was the annual show. The final results aren't in as of the date I'm writing this, but everyone I have talked to feels it was successful on many levels: attendance, school children and scouts, swap area sales, displays, poster, grand door prize, and even our red show shirts, which really made us

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*Continued on page 4*

## **Upcoming General Meeting Programs**

**January 25:** To be announced

**February 22:** Diane Eames, trained Gemologist and Facetor, will present a program called "Mason County Topaz." She will have a lot of Show & Tell with some examples of topaz rough and faceted Texas stars. Read about Texas Topaz Day on her Web site <http://www.texas-topaz.com>. It will be held on March 26.

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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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*President's Message continued from page 1*

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stand out among all the attendees. There was effective leadership on all levels starting with Rick Rexroad, the show chairman, and extending to the major committees. We had innovative publicity efforts with billboards, movie ads, a meet-up group, and an oversized postcard. All of the efforts—publicity, security, hospitality, exhibits, dealers, info booth, tickets, and more were implemented by a dedicated group of Show Committee members and volunteers, each doing their part to bring the show to life. Then there were the many volunteers who came to help set up, take tickets, work the info booth auctions, sell swap dollars, walk the show in a security vest, assist in the hospitality room, and many more functions too numerous to mention. All of your efforts made the show successful—for the dealers, the public, and ultimately your club which depends on the show earnings to keep the clubhouse functioning and to give scholarships to worthy students.

Our dedicated group of instructors, organized by Brian Honsinger, kept the classrooms busy, and the shop foremen kept the grinding wheels rolling and the saws humming. We got bright new lights and ballasts installed in our overhead lights, making it easier for everyone to work. We can thank Robert Stevens for his efforts on this project. The School Collections committee built 50 new Basic Mineral and Rock sets for teachers and 100 new show school sets. Our new member who is an electrician got our outdoor lights installed for the parking lot and the sign, and even added outlets for the newly donated computer and monitor in the library. We also have a new awning over the back door to protect people from our Houston thunderstorms through the efforts of our Board members and 2010 President Terry Proctor.

With all these accomplishments you might think everything is done and all our challenges met, but you would be wrong. There are still many projects that need to be tackled, and ongoing efforts to carry forward. Many dedicated club members are still at their tasks on completed and ongoing projects, but we have some new members also stepping up in a big way after only a few years of membership. These include Sarah Metsa who is taking the Secretary position and Ray Kizer, who will be our 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President responsible for programs. In the Mineral Section I've seen younger members stepping in to help fill the void left by the loss of Art Smith who passed away a year ago. I'm sure the same thing is happening in other Sections also.

So what can you do to help your club and enhance your experience belonging to this great organization? Look around for projects where your interests and past experience can make a difference. The Show Committee always needs volunteers on its subcommittees, and there are many niches to fill. Our dedicated Editor and Webmaster, who has built the BBG and [www.hgms.org](http://www.hgms.org) into award winning publications, needs an understudy with an interest in computers, writing, and in managing Web sites. The School Collections Committee is always looking for people who want to learn more about rocks, minerals, or fossils by handling them rather than reading about them. Your help is needed to keep the shelves stocked with the sets needed by teachers of various grade levels who instruct kids in Earth Science. The possibilities are endless and limited only

by your imagination, skills, and available time. Remember, those who give the most to their organizations also get the most out of them, not the least of which is in new friendships and skills.

The HGMS has been my home away from home for almost 34 years now, and I've gotten back more from my membership than all the work I've put in as a Section Chair, presenter, Show Committee Member, Swap Area Chair, and School Collections Chair. The friendships alone are of immeasurable value, and my growth as a knowledgeable mineral collector has been constantly enhanced by my participation.

I hope to meet more club members this year and to get to know as many of you as possible while we work to make this club the best place to be for all the rockhounds in Houston.

### **Erica Howland Wins HGMS 2010 Show's Grand Prize**

*by Terry Proctor*

**T**he winner of the Grand Prize for the HGMS 2010 Show is Erica Howland. Erica is the perfect person to have won the Grand Prize.

She is a Senior Geology major at the University of Houston. Twenty-two year old Erica will graduate at the end of the 2011 fall semester at the U of H. She lives with her parents in Houston. Ms. Howland was accompanied to pick up her Grand Prize by fellow geology major, Chad Liggon, who also is a senior at the U of H. Both have shown interest in joining HGMS at some time and visiting us soon.

Erica Howland attended Jersey Village High School in the Houston area. She has a younger sister, Tina Terry Howland, who is attending college at CyFair Community College. She too plans to switch to the U of H later.



## Old Geezer Further Adventures in Freer and North Africa

by John Emerson

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

In about 1932 at our home in Freer, Texas, my Dad shot me in the hand! It was a BB gun, but a very powerful one. As I have mentioned in earlier columns, I had received a Benjamin Pump BB gun for my 6<sup>th</sup> birthday. It had a tube with a rod inside running along parallel under the barrel. The rod could be pulled out and pushed back against the ground to raise the air pressure. This could be repeated until the pressure was so high that I could not push the rod back in. It was a bolt action repeater with a safety switch. If you had cocked the gun with the bolt action, put the safety "on" and pulled the trigger, it would click, but not shoot. The tricky part was you then had to work the bolt action again. At which time a BB would roll out the end of the barrel, and another would be ready to fire. If you didn't work the bolt and just released the safety, it would shoot immediately without using the trigger. I had this figured out but Dad didn't know about it. He was with me "hunting" with just the BB gun. He cocked the gun, put on the safety, and clicked it. I told him to use the bolt action and I put my hand under the barrel to catch the BB. He wasn't listening and released the safety. Ouch!! The BB penetrated deeply into my right hand and under a bone. He rushed me into town to the doctor, who surgically removed the BB. I still have the 3/4 inch long scar in my right palm. In school, I had to learn to write with my left hand for several weeks. That was not easy! P.S.: Dad learned to listen to me!

While we lived in Algiers, Algeria, in 1965–67, I was Project Engineer for the construction of two 30 inch gas pipelines from the gas fields near Ghardaia in the Sahara Desert to Arzew and from Ghardaia to Skikda (known as Philippeville when the French ran Algeria). Both are on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. At both Arzew and Skikda we (Bechtel) built liquefied natural gas plants, storage tanks, and tanker loading facilities. One day I flew from Ghardaia to Skikda in a small single engine plane (much like a Piper Cub). The weather was overcast, and the ground was totally covered with clouds, including the mountains along the coast. I noticed the Algerian pilot kept looking at his map, his compass, his air speed, his altimeter, and his watch. He put it all away and dove into the clouds. I panicked!! We came out of the clouds over the coast in sight of the airfield! It took a few minutes for my heart to slow down so I could complement the pilot on his skills and to decide I would drive next time!

When we lived in Milan, Italy, (1974–77), I was Engineering and Procurement Manager for Bechtel overseeing the Italian engineering and construction company, Snamprogetti S.p.A. Snamprogetti was Bechtel's subcontractor building a 30-inch oil pipeline in Egypt from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean including tanker unloading, storage and pumping facilities on the Red Sea, and storage and tanker loading facilities on the Mediterranean. The pipeline was necessary because the Suez Canal was damaged and closed politically between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula which was controlled by Israel. The oil came by tanker from Saudi Arabia across the Red Sea instead of having to go around Africa to get to Europe. My work included many trips to Egypt including taking Bobbie to the Bechtel Christmas party in Cairo. It was after that party

that I received the “Your six white shirts are ready” phone call. *Editor’s note: This story was told in the June 2010 issue of the BBG.*

The oil pipeline in Egypt crossed some land owned by a Coptic Monastery. Bobbie and I visited with the monks who all spoke English and were very friendly. We even had a very nice lunch with them in their “mess hall.” When we returned to Milan, we gathered several copies of the National Geographic magazine, to which we subscribed, and I took them back to the monks on my next trip to Egypt. They were almost in tears in gratitude! I wonder what they would have done if I had taken some Playboy magazines? We didn’t subscribe to Playboy—just a thought.

The pipeline also crossed near the pyramids and close to several active excavations. The archeologists were very obliging and gave Bobbie and me brief guided tours of their work—which was not open to the general public. While digging the trench for the pipeline, the ditching machine encountered several areas with some buried artifacts. We had to divert the line in each case so the archeologists could check to see if they warranted formal excavation.

### Rice School Rocks

by Neal Immega

Three HGMS members conducted another outreach program on November 18 for the annual *Math, Science and Technology Extravaganza* at Rice School. Participants got a sample of petrified wood, had a close-up view of snakewood through a microscope, and looked at a variety of hand specimens. The children (and adults, too) moved on to polish a corner on a piece of a lapidary material to take home. You would think we were giving them gold, but the lapidary materials are actually cutoffs from the trim saws in our shop. Wow, we are so “green” that we turn throw-away scrap into a prized learning experience! Our visitors said it all—“I remember you from last year when I got to polish a rock,” and “This is so cool!” One young man spent most of the session cycling through our queue. When we asked if he was going to do it next year, he wailed: “I will be gone!”





## Our Topaz Mining Adventure

*by Noelle Skubal, 11 years old*

Last summer we went on a mission to find topaz in the heart of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, about an hour outside Colorado Springs. We were looking an adventure in the eye!

We met up with another family from Texas to dig for topaz. There were six of them all-together. My family has five in it: me, my Mama and Daddy, my little sister, and my little brother. Our group then totaled eleven rock hounds.

When we got there, Chuck Borland (the man in charge) gave us an introduction talk of how to find the topaz. He said, "You can use your rake to turn over the dirt, to bring the topaz to the surface. You want to look for rocks that look like glass, but they are heavier. Some of these piles have already been gone through by the sifter, but most are all yours. This pile right here (and he pointed to the pile nearest to him) has quite a few topaz in it because other people have found lots of topaz in it. You can use a rake, a sifter, or just look for it on top of the ground. In all the years that I've been here, there has only been a few things found that are not topaz, quartz, or dirt. A bottle cap, some pieces of beer bottle, and a paper clip. So go out there and find some topaz!"

The dig site was a bunch of piles of red, brown, and black-grayish dirt. It was in a little valley with boulders, aspens, and a very good view of the mountains across the valley. There was a parking area (not a paved one) a little ways down from the diggings. After we parked the truck, we walked up to the mine, about 50 yards. At the diggings, the people who owned the mine had a very big sifting machine. It was a noisy machine—two men ran it. There were also a few ground

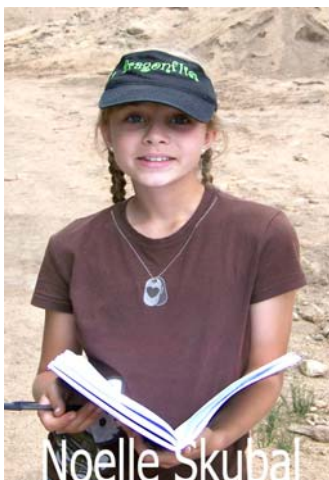
bushes around.

Next to the sifting machine was a

port-a-potty. Throughout the day more and more diggers came; probably between twenty and thirty. One guy was eating his lunch (there were chipmunks around), and he fed a bit of his sandwich to a chipmunk! It was really cute.

When we arrived, the temperature was a perfect 58 degrees, but as we started to get into the day, the weather was just a little on the warm side. The sky was partly cloudy, and the clouds kept moving in and out of the way of the sun.

Each group had to pay \$35 for a bag of tailings. We couldn't dig at the mine unless we bought the bag of





dirt. We didn't have to pay to dig, but we had to buy the bag. Each bag had topaz planted in it, in case you didn't find any that day at the mine, I must admit we haven't opened the bag of dirt yet. For equipment we brought some hammers, homemade 1/4-inch sifters, a hoe, and a few rakes. And we brought a big thermos of water and lots of snacks. The other family with us also brought a large pry bar but neither of our families used it because the ground, though it had a few rocks in it, was mostly dirt.

By the end of the day, everyone in our group had found topaz or smoky quartz except for me and the little girls. We were obligated to turn everything over to the mine. Then Chuck Borland and the mine owner's son took what we found. They washed each rock with water to get the dirt off, and put it on a scale and weighed it. Chuck examined every specimen through his eye loupe to see if there were any bubbles or cracks in them. Daddy said he was estimating what each topaz would be worth as a cut gemstone. Then he estimated how much each one would cost. If we wanted to keep our rocks, we had to pay \$10 per "faceted" carat. The second-oldest girl who was part of our group had a topaz that Chuck thought would be worth forty dollars! Another one that she had found was only worth about five dollars because there were a lot of bubbles in it.



Our family paid roughly \$80 for the bag of dirt and the topaz. Our digger-buddies paid around \$50 for their day of rock-hounding because of a special discount I'll write about in another article.

After all the fun of the mine, all eleven of us went to Woodland Park and stopped to eat an early supper at a Mexican restaurant. There we quenched our thirst with Shirley Temples and filled up on chips and queso. Then Daddy brought out his own eye loupe, and we all got a chance to look at everybody's findings and propose a toast to the dad of the other family for his amazing find. I leave you with a rock-hound cliffhanger!

To start planning YOUR trip, look them up at <http://www.pinnacle5minerals.com/GlacierPeakWeb/Visits/topazVisits.htm>.

Get last-minute news about club events by sending a note to Neal Immega at [n\\_immune@swbell.net](mailto:n_immune@swbell.net).

## 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 p.m. in the HGMS Clubhouse. All are welcome.

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

**January 5: What's Hot in Tucson, 2010.** Come get in the mood for the Tucson shows by viewing the DVD summary of last year's show. Narrated by Dave Wilber and Bob Jones, this DVD brings you the Tucson experience without the travel or expenses. For those who saw last year's DVD, you know the quality of this program is quite impressive. Refreshments will be provided.

Due to our Mineral Section Chairman being "promoted" to President of HGMS, we will move our election of Section Officers up to this meeting.

**January 19: Fluorescent Minerals—Some How's and Why's.** This presentation will focus on all aspects of fluorescent minerals, including the science of why minerals fluoresce, the history of collecting fluorescent minerals, and several of the worldwide locations historically famous for their collecting sites. Such locations include Franklin and Sterling Hill, New Jersey, Mt. St. Hilaire, Quebec, as well as Langesundsfjord, Norway, Langban Sweden, and the Kola Peninsula, Russia. A short lesson on the chemistry and physics of fluorescence will be discussed, including activators and quenchers of fluorescence in minerals, as well as the intrinsic fluorescence present in some minerals. Following the presentation, our host Aaron Rever will have a Show and Tell session of various specimens from his personal collection. (Note: for those of you who noted the increased quality of the Fluorescent specimens in the Fluorescent Booth this year, they were from Aaron's personal collection.) Refreshments will be provided.

**February 2: DVD of attendees' choice.** Due to the participation of many Mineral Section members in Tucson, those not able to attend will chose a DVD from the Library to view. The tentative choice is to continue with another part of the 2010 "What's Hot in Tucson."

**February 16: Tucson Show & Tell.** For those who were lucky enough to attend the most famous mineral gathering in the world, bring in your recent acquisitions from the many Tucson Shows. Give us your impressions of "Tucson 2010," and regale us with your experiences. For those who could not make it, come and see what you are missing. Refreshments will be provided.

**March 2: Clear Lake Show & Tell.** Bring in your recent acquisitions from the Clear Lake Show (February 26–February 27). Let us drool over your acquisitions. Specimens that did not make it back from Tucson for the previous meeting will also be discussed. Refreshments will be provided.

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

## Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

Nineteen members and three guests attended the Section's annual birthday party on November 8, 2010. We had delicious food, and everyone seemed to have a good time. Someone brought a pineapple pie which was very good. We had fewer people this year. This was due to illness and members being out of town.

Nancy Fischer is going to give a travelogue on their trips to Central America and Spain. Nancy always gives good talks, so I am sure it will be enjoyable.

On February 14, 2010 John Zander is going to demonstrate his jade ring making.

## Bench Tips

by Brad Smith

*More BenchTips by Brad Smith:  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/) or  
[facebook.com/BenchTips](https://www.facebook.com/BenchTips)*

## Jump Rings

It's better to use a round jump ring on the end of a chain instead of an oval one.

Oval rings will wear faster because tension on the chain concentrates wear on the smaller ends of the jump ring. Wear is distributed evenly on a round jump ring because it can rotate through the last link of the chain and the clasp. This gives the ring a longer useful life.

## Organizing Small Parts

With all the little components we use for our projects, it makes sense to have a good way to keep them organized and prevent them from getting lost.

A great small container to use is available in numbers and for free at your local drug-store. Ask at the photo processing area for some of the 35 mm plastic film cans. They have a tight-fitting lid and are great for carrying beads, findings, jump rings, and silver scraps. *Editor's note: Cut an X in the lid, and they are great for saving small stones that catch your eye you walk "off the beaten path." Just push the stone through the X. No muss, no fuss, no need to open the lid.*

## Word Magic

by Karen Burns

How many words of three letters or more can you dig out of ARCHEOLOGY? Adding S to make a plural or D for past tense doesn't count. Answers on page 19. Answers have been checked with Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary.

## General Membership Meeting Minutes

*November 23, 2010*

*by Terry Proctor*

**T**he Meeting was called to order by President Terry Proctor at 7:30 p.m. There was no auction at this meeting.

Visitors and New Members recognized tonight were Jim Kendall—a new member who joined during the 2010 Show, and Dwaine Abraham—a visitor who is considering joining. Welcome to you both.

**Minutes:** The Minutes of the October 26, 2010 General Membership Meeting was published online. A motion to approve the minutes as printed was made by Matt Dillon, seconded by Mike Dawkins, and passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Rodney Linehan, CPA presented detailed financial information to the Board at their monthly meeting. HGMS finances are in very good condition.

**Show Committee:** The Show Chair and Assistant Show Chair were not present, but Terry Proctor reported that he had been advised that the Show attendance was up, that the amount of tickets sold was up, and the dealers reported that sales were good and they were happy with this year's Show.

Sunday Bennett reported that there were a number of favorable comments on the Show Hospitality Room and Committee. Especially favorable comments were made about the food which was under the directions of Tim and Colleen Taylor. Later in the meeting, Sunday Bennett related that one Show attendee had purchased a fossil jaw with Mosasaur teeth. The teeth were real, but the jaw bone was fake—created from matrix to hold the teeth. The man learned about the fake at the Paleo identification table. The good news is that the dealer refunded the money, but it gives concern about dealers who aren't presenting things accurately to purchasers. This is a gray area as some fossils are enhanced where portions are gone and portions from another fossil are added to complete the first one. This is different than just creating something to look like the real thing, when it isn't. The Show Committee will be made aware of this situation in the future, and perhaps guidelines will be presented to dealers that lay out what HGMS expects in the way of authenticity or announcing of a fossil's true condition.

Steve Blyskal reported that the Mineral Section sold three times as much as in prior years. Also the Swap area sales were huge, and over \$11,000 in swap bucks was turned over to our dealers. Both Steve Blyskal and Mary Ann Mitcherling reported that they had purchased a good number of items from Ron Talhelm and Angela Fowler's dealership at the Show. Ron had a bargain area, and Mary Ann said she had high graded some of Ron's Bruno jasper.

**Section Reports:** Lapidary Section—Karen Burns reported that the jump ring machine has been returned to the clubhouse. Mike Dawkins reported that the Paleo Section is taking a trip to Brownwood in March, 2011. Terry Proctor announced that the

new Archeology Group held its first organizational meeting on November 4, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. at the clubhouse with ten HGMS members in attendance. The next meeting will be held Thursday, December 2, 2010. There is an invitation to bring some show and tell items, and refreshments will be served.

**Education Committee:** Brian Honsinger was not present, but there have been many classes recently, and several more are ongoing and starting. Education has been great this year and is expected to be in 2011 as well.

**Communications Director Report:** Phyllis George was back with us at this meeting, albeit in a leg brace to limit the amount of bend after surgery. The October, November, and December BBGs got out in spite of her being laid up with several surgeries. Thank you, Phyllis.

### Old Business

As announced in the BBG, Terry Proctor requested a motion from the membership to ratify actions by the Board which operated with a proxy substitute for a Board member at the October and November, 2010 Board meetings. Due to illness and other matters preventing the quorum of seven to be present at those Board meetings, the seventh person to be present was Steve Blyskal, husband of Board member, Sigrid Stewart. Steve appeared in Sigrid's place as the Mineral Section Board Representative in order for the Board to conduct necessary business. Such business included the appointment of the Nominating Committee, matters involving the Show, and other important matters which the Board of Directors needed to act upon at the time. This matter therefore was presented to the General Meeting attendees to have an official ratification of the Board's actions as reported in the minutes. Matt Dillon moved to ratify the Board of Directors' actions with six members and Steve Blyskal as the seventh member by proxy for Sigrid Stewart. The motion was seconded by James Wark, and after some discussion on the matter, it passed unanimously. Therefore for the record, the General Membership has now officially ratified the actions of your Board at those meetings.

**Election of Officers:** Pursuant to the HGMS Bylaws, the 2010 Nominating Committee presented to the October 26, 2010 General Membership Meeting the slate of proposed 2011 Officers as:

President .....	Stephen "Steve" Blyskal
First Vice-President (and Program Chairman) .....	Ray Kizer
Second Vice-President (and Membership Chairman) ..	Beverly Mace
Secretary .....	Sarah Metsa
Treasurer .....	Rodney Linehan, CPA

The President invited nominations from the floor separately for each office. There were none, and hence the nominations ceased at the close of the October 26, 2010 meeting. That slate of officers was then presented to the General Membership at this meeting by the motion of Phyllis George and seconded by Pier Laird. The slate was elected by unanimous vote. These new officers will be sworn in at the December 11 Christmas Party, and they will take office January 1, 2011.

**Maintenance:** Terry Proctor called to the membership's attention the new canopy over the side parking lot door. Terry said it is also the Board's intention to change the lock before the year is out. There have been many complaints about the lock for several years. Steve Blyskal stated that he believed installation of a light inside the canopy would help in being able to better see the lock when trying to insert a key.

### New Business

Terry Proctor reminded members that Rockhound stickers for their vehicles are available during the break for \$1.00 and strips of 10 small stickers for \$1.00.

First Vice-President, James Wark reported on the upcoming annual HGMS Christmas/Holiday Season Party which will be held Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. HGMS will provide turkey and brisket. HGMS members are asked to bring side dishes, desserts, salads, and other items. Members are also asked to bring items for the annual auction. Those bringing food are asked to arrive a little early to get the food on the serving table. Those bringing items for the auction should bring them even earlier in order for numbers to be put on them and placed on display for HGMS members to view before the auction. Members are also asked to put item information on the item, such as what they are and where they were found. This adds value to the items. Mary Ann Mitcherling has made up the numbers to go on the items, and appreciation was expressed to her for doing so.

Steve Blyskal reported that an Austin man named Franklin Roberts, who is a pyrotechnician and rock hound, had an accident while mixing explosives for a Veteran's Day gathering and reenactment. He suffered a lost left hand and other injuries when an explosion occurred. (Fortunately he is right-handed.) He was a friend of Art Smith's and is a friend of Denise Bicknell, and Franklin collaborated with them on several articles about mineral locations in the Hill Country. Franklin also leads field trips to areas he has access to in the Hill Country. There is a thread about him and his injury in the Rockhounds section of the Message board on Mindat ([www.mindat.org](http://www.mindat.org)).

**Drawing:** The winner of the drawing tonight was Robert "Rusty" Bennett.

**Show & Tell:** Steve Blyskal displayed two emerald specimens he bought from a young man who purchased them in Columbia last summer on a trip with his mom. This is in addition to the Brazilian emerald specimen that Sigrid brought him from her trip to Brazil. Steve also showed some of the specimens he picked up at the show, including some polished Baker agates that came from Ron Talhelm's "Garage Sale" area at the Angela Fowler-Ron Talhelm booth.

Karen Burns said she would be here on Wednesday, November 24, 2010 to have the Shop open as Neal Immega is out of town.

**Program:** After the refreshment break, a program was presented by Tim Campbell, a PhD student at Texas A&M University. His program title was "Rats, Rain, and Reconstructing Past Environments." Dr. Patrick Lewis who was to have appeared has developed such problems with his arms from crawling around on his arms in caves in Africa that he could not drive, so he asked Tim Campbell to fill in for him.



Tim had a really good program going through his study of various rodents in South Africa, the differences in the species, and how they filled niches. He also said when one could not tell about a prehistoric rodent, you could compare what you found in the droppings and other debris by modern rodents, to determine essentially the same things about the prehistoric animal remains. He talked about barn owls being common all over the Earth, except for a few places like the poles. HGMS members had a number of questions for Tim, who presented his program projected for the membership in a series of very good photos, charts, and graphs. Thanks, Tim, and we hope you will return after your trip to South Africa this next summer.

**Adjourn:** Tim Campbell was thanked for coming, and the meeting was declared adjourned until the Christmas/Holiday Season Party on Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

### HGMS Board of Director's Meeting

*Minutes of December 7, 2010*

*by Terry Proctor*

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. with a quorum of seven members present. Also in attendance were new officers President-elect Steve Blyskal, First Vice-President elect Ray Kizer, and Secretary-elect Sarah Metsa.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the November 1 Board Meeting were published in the December BBG. Terry Brawner moved to approve the Minutes of the previous meeting as published. Beverly Mace seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Rodney Linehan was at a training session in Dallas, Texas and the financials for November will be a little late this month.

### Section and Officer Reports:

**Beading Section** reported that some beading ladies attended the meeting as a result of our HGMS Show.

**Daylight Section** is having their meeting on Wednesday, December 8.

The **Lapidary Section** reported that the missing jump ring machine has been returned and secured.

The **Mineral Section** is having their party on Sunday, December 12, the day after the General Membership meeting Christmas/Holiday Season Party. It is only open to the

Mineral Section and a few others, and invitations were sent out. The location is not being given out except to those in the Mineral Section who were sent invitations. It will not be at the home of Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart as earlier announced. Also the Mineral Section has paid the HGMS donation to the Mineralogical Record magazine which Art Smith used to donate each year himself to support color pictures of a mineral in each issue. The Mineral Section has agreed to do this for three additional years.

The **Youth Section** had their Christmas Party on Saturday, December 4. There will be no Youth meeting on January 1, and the next Youth Meeting will be on Saturday, January 15.

The **Paleo Section** had their Christmas Party on Tuesday, November 23, with a dinner and successful auction.

The new **Archeology Group** had their second meeting on December 2 with seven HGMS members present. Because Peter Ragusa had surgery on his arm and was unable to drive and pick up the speaker he intended to provide, the planned program was put on hold for a month or two. However, this was a very spirited meeting with those present very enthusiastic about this new group, and names of a number of other interested HGMS members were brought up. The next meeting will be January 6, 2011 at the Clubhouse. A program will be provided and refreshments.

**Show Committee:** Rick Rexroad reported that the Show did well, but the figures are not yet available on just how well the Show did financially this year. Rick thanked everyone for doing a good job. Terry Proctor mentioned that he had talked with both Rick and Theresa Peek prior to the Board Meeting, as the Board was to name the 2011 Show Chair around the time the officers were elected. He said that Rick was offered the Show Chairmanship again, but because of the time required, he would be unable to accept. Theresa Peek advised that she and husband Chris Peek had agreed to act as Co-Chairmen of the 2011 Show. A motion was therefore invited, made by Nancy Fischer, seconded by Phyllis George, and the vote was unanimous to name Chris and Theresa Peek as 2011 Show Co-Chairmen. Chris and Theresa will determine whether they wish to appoint an Assistant Show Chairman to assist them.

**Communications Director:** Phyllis George reported that news, articles, and reports had to be delivered to her by Wednesday, December 8 to be in the January, 2011 issue of the BBG.

There were no reports on the shop or education. Sigrid Stewart reported that she had requested a grant from Chevron for funds for the Library, and Terry Proctor stated he had received the letter from Chevron, signed off on it, and forwarded it back to Chevron. He expressed appreciation for Sigrid's efforts several times for doing this.

### Old Business

**Maintenance: Roof Maintenance:** There was some discussion about the very modest and the extremely expensive two bids to do roof repairs. There was a motion to accept the modest bid, but then Sunday Bennett said she wanted the Board to view the photos taken by the other bidder showing the problems with the roof. This was delayed until

later in the evening, but Board Members then did go to the computer in the Library and look at the photos while Sunday discussed what each showed. There was no action taken, but it was determined that an independent appraiser would be contacted—one who wasn't bidding on the job—to report on what he/she thought the problems were and suggest a reasonable cost for the repair work for presentation to the January 4, 2011 Board Meeting.

The **Awning** over the side door has been installed and paid for. Everyone liked the awning. However, there was a discussion about putting a light under the awning in order to provide light for members to be able to see their key and the keyhole, especially at night. It was determined that a solar powered type of light could be obtained and would not need to be wired in. Furthermore the cost is minimal, so someone will get the light and file with Rodney Linehan for a refund for same.

**Door and Door Lock:** Terry Proctor purchased and brought two versions of new locks for the side door which would allow either key pad or key. The Board members voted that they liked the one with a handle, but after the vote as to which lock, Board member Terry Brawner took the locks to the door and reported back after the meeting that he did not believe that the lock could be installed. Terry Proctor believed that the lock could be installed, even if it required some minor modifications to the door as is sometimes necessary. There was some discussion about just changing the tumblers in the lock. Terry Proctor felt that after years of hearing that the lock didn't work properly, a new lock should be installed, not just changing the tumblers. However, he will take the locks back and let the new 2011 Board again pick up the problem with the side door and not try to change it this year. This is a matter which the Board has voted on several times, and then revised their opinion and although it has been a problem for three years or more, there still does not seem to be a definite final consensus on what to do about the lock.

**Coffee Maker:** The Board has previously discussed the danger of having a coffee maker left on at all times so that coffee is ready when any Section or group shows up. This must stop, so the Board decided that instead of buying an expensive larger coffee maker, they would purchase a less expensive coffee maker that would cost less than \$200 maximum (and preferably a good bit less). Sunday Bennett moved to throw out the old coffee maker and to purchase a new one, with a maximum expenditure of \$200.00. The motion was seconded by James Wark, and it passed unanimously. Incoming Secretary-elect Sarah Metsa will search for and locate one with assistance from anyone who wants to advise her.

## New Business

**Scholarship:** Terry suggested authorizing an HGMS \$2,500.00 Scholarship now, so that scholarship announcement could be made right after the first of the year. The Board determined to wait until 2011 to determine the Scholarship so it is tabled for now, until the new Board can take it up after the first of the year. This year the Board awarded two \$2,500.00 Scholarships, the Art & Elizabeth Smith Scholarship and the Robert Cross Scholarship.

**Programs:** Terry Proctor will provide incoming First Vice-President Ray Kizer with a list of potential speakers and programs for 2011, so that he can hit the deck running with some people and subjects to look into for programs

**Christmas/Holiday Season Party** will be on Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. Cooks will be Patricia Hildbold and helper(s) to cook the turkeys. Diane Sisson will cook one turkey herself and bring it to the Clubhouse on Saturday morning. Terry Proctor will purchase and thaw two turkeys so that they can be cooked on Saturday at the Clubhouse. Neal Immega will be asked to send out an e-mail announcing the party, asking for volunteers for various duties, and advising everyone coming to watch their items before, during, and after bidding, to protect them from walking off. Beverly Mace will get the brisket as HGMS is furnishing the meat, and HGMS members are to bring a side-dish, dessert, salad, or other item.

Terry Proctor suggested that both libraries and the office be opened for additional seating at the Party to eliminate anyone having to sit in the shop as had to be done last year. The classroom will be the serving room, and the main library, Paleo library, and Office all be opened with a table and chairs in each so that we can seat more members. Last year the Shop was used, but the odor of oil was strong. Some machines in the Shop are not using oil now, and therefore the Shop may also have seating for the party. HGMS members will be encouraged to come early with their food and also to bring items to auction, so that the items can be numbered and displayed before the dinner.

There will be an auction, and we will have two auctioneers to provide variety and avoid monotony plus giving the auctioneers a break. Everything seems to be moving along well. Mary Ann Mitcherling has run off the numbers for the auction items, and HGMS members will be encouraged to put location and designation of items if possible on the items given for auction. Spotters will be set up to assist the auctioneers and also to watch as security to try to ensure that no items are moved after purchase by anyone except the bid winner.

**Clubhouse Quartermaster:** There was a discussion regarding the fact that keeping up with the quantity of towels, toilet paper, and kitchen paper goods and dinnerware is somewhat haphazard as no one is designated to do so. It was suggested that the Board appoint a Clubhouse Quartermaster. Neal Immega was called to see what his understanding of his function as Clubhouse Chairman was. Neal stated that he understood his duties pertained to the Shop. Therefore, his job is not to take care of the paper goods, kitchen, bathrooms etc. James Wark moved to establish the position of Clubhouse Quartermaster; the motion was seconded by Phyllis George. It carried unanimously. Incoming Secretary Sarah Metsa indicated she would be willing to undertake this position. She was appointed by unanimous consensus; no election was necessary.

**Refreshments:** President Terry Proctor expressed his appreciation to the Board for their cooperation during the year, and he provided refreshments for the meeting.

**Adjourn:** The motion to adjourn was made by James Wark, seconded by Terry Brawner and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. Board members checked

all doors, turned off all lights, checked the thermostats, and waited for all members to be loaded into their respective vehicles before leaving together—for protection.

## Minutes of the Archeology Group

*December 2, 2010*

*by Terry Proctor*

**T**he Archeology Group held its second meeting on December 2, 2010 at the HGMS Clubhouse at 7:30 p.m. There were six HGMS members present. Peter Ragusa was out with surgery and unable to bring the speaker whom he planned to bring to the meeting. Sunday Bennett moved to approve the minutes of the first meeting as published in the BBG, and Terry Brawner seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The group had agreed to elect a temporary Chairman and Secretary for the rest of the year. Terry Proctor nominated Dr. Garth Clark for temporary Chairman and Sunday Bennett as temporary Secretary. These nominations were seconded by Margaret Hardman-Muye, and the vote was unanimous.

Terry Proctor volunteered to get a program for our January 6, 2011 meeting. Sunday Bennett volunteered to bring the refreshments to the January 6, 2011 meeting including popcorn. She will also have a backup program on the Time Team to present if no speaker is able to be obtained that time of year.

There is a lot of enthusiasm about the future of this Archeology Group. Terry reported on his contact with two members of the Houston Archeology Society as referred to him by Peter Ragusa. One was out of town and the other had the flu. He also contacted the President of the Houston Geology Society to see if they had anyone involved in archeology with their group, but the President knew of none.

There was a discussion that one of the first things that the Archeo Group needs to do is to review laws involving archeology finds on both private and public lands, and to learn what the law requires in reporting, keeping, turning over, and notifying any authorities etc.

The members had a number of discussions about archeological finds, such as shipwrecks, pirate locations, kidnapping, and Native American artifacts and locations. All members are eager to meet again January 6, 2011 and to invite any other HGMS members who have an interest in archeology to come and join the Group. The goal is to show that a year from now the group is a permanent group and can seek to become a Section of HGMS.

## Word Magic Answers

ace , ache, agar, age, agora, ahoy, ale, arc, arch, are, argo, aye, cage, care, cargo, cay, clay, char, chore, clear, cog, cola, cole, cool, core, coy, crag,gal, gale, gar, gay, gear, glace, glare, gley, glory, goal, gore, gory, hag, hale, hare, hay, hear, hey, hoar, hoary, hole, lace, lacey, lag, lager, larch, large, lay, lea, leach, leg, loch, log, loge. lore, lye, race, racy, rag, rage, rale, ray, reach, real, rely, roach, role, rye, yea, year, yore.

## Fascinating Faceting

by Allan Livingstone

*Livingstone Art & Gems*

*Box 694, Cold Lake AB*

*from The Calgary Lapidary Journal 12/2010*

Let me think now. How was it that it began? It was down in Larry Kidner's basement so long ago. I was just nosing around in lapidary at the time. I remember him, the seasoned faceter, showing my new bride and me his faceting machine and his dizzying array of cut gems. The astonishing precision and the in-depth knowledge that would have to be achieved was so intimidating that I couldn't imagine even beginning to be interested in actually setting out to learn it. I was enthralled by his stones, but I left his house that day without an inkling that someday I would be faceting as well.

But real life is so much stranger than fiction. As I think back, the images come floating by like dandelion seeds on the wind. I see the first little piece of amethyst I bought from Stan Pierson at Western Gem and Mineral and remember saying to him, "I've been thinking lately I'd like to get into faceting," and him saying, "You should!" and now I see him showing me a large free-form topaz he had just cut. At that time I had never seen it done and could not fathom how it could be. That kind of repeatable precision, for me, was like the dark side of the moon and it scared me. It seemed that to be able to achieve it must be extraordinarily taxing. I can see that big box sitting there holding my brand new faceting machine. Day after day for a year it sat there before I finally got the courage to take it out of the box.

The light goes on. The diamond lap begins to turn. There is a piece of clear quartz descending for its first kiss from the surface of the spinning disc, and I am feeling like an astronaut on my first lift-off. I guess the first surprise was that the silly thing began grinding just like the book said it would instead of shattering as I imagined it would. Nerves are funny things.

While sitting in that office chair, I began a flight through a dimension I had never encountered before; a journey through the microcosm that could be tedious and fascinating at the same time. It was a realm where one struggled like a miser gone mad to save precious material, where concerns were measured by tenths of a millimeter, and the yield from those long hours were shown and fawned over again and again.

Today I have a Tanga garnet I'm working on. I started it when I began this article. I've never seen or cut a Tanga garnet before, so I'm very much interested in the result. It was very exciting when I got it as a rounded river-worn pebble, a rosy warmth glowing deep within. I'll be reporting on it as we go along. Perhaps one day I'll be able to show it to you.

It was like breaking free of the Earth's gravitational pull when we found a good supplier. His price lists were actual color photos of his goods taken in full sunlight, and it



wasn't just pale amethyst, washed out topaz, and small dark garnets. It was glorious flashing hues of red and pink tourmalines, lifesaver orange Mandarin garnets and aquamarine of practically unheard of deep blue. The lush jungle greens of Zambian emeralds, diopsides, or Tavorite garnets. For purples there were dark amethysts from Zambia and lately Nigeria so deep you could taste the Concord grapes. Sapphires from the Umba Mountains in yellow and padparadshah, peach, and orange, purple, pink, green and blue, many from there and from Songea having that rare ability to change color with the lighting. Tanzanites would often be available, and with these I learned about heat-treating to change them from their often-drab natural state to that beautiful royal violet blue. They would go into the sand-filled pottery jar and then into the burnout oven looking sometimes like oddball high-grade smoky quartz and come out the next day an astonishing blue.

Yield is what I'm after with this Tanga garnet—yield and plenty of it. Vargas tells me that 25% is acceptable recovery, but I like to average quite a bit higher than that, say high 30% to 45%. My best was almost 53% but that only happened once. The “pavilion” (the pointy part) has gone beautifully. Not a hitch and polished perfectly. I had hoped to get a perfect 14 x 10 oval, but it came in slightly smaller than that. No matter. It will still go into a 14 x 10 mounting. That is a bonus because if it is a nonstandard size and shape, then I have to go to the gold bench and make a new setting or modify an existing commercial setting. All do-able, but if I can save myself the bench-time, I will.

And what a feeding frenzy there seemed to be when his lists went out, especially when the Mandarin garnets were up for grabs. I had just gotten a list, and the photos were liberally sprinkled with the bright orange gems. I was hearing busy signals but I just kept hitting the redial button. “Hello!” “Well hello there! You must be busy!” “Yes Allan, we sure are!” “Do you have any Mandarins left?” “Only three!” “Well I'll take them!” And that was how it was. I never knew when I called if there would be anything worthwhile left. I would choose the numbers I wanted, but I always had a few backup choices ready. If I got each one I had chosen, I would consider myself fortunate indeed. It happened that way once. When I called, I was told I was the first to call from North America. I had beaten the Western Hemisphere! Cool!

The Tanga garnet has been transferred to another stick now so that I can begin work on the “crown.” The color is probably going to be a fuchsia from what I can see so far. Even now with the top still in the rough grind, it is close to breathtaking. All of the facets are laid onto the top except for the table facet. I was a little concerned about a shiny line in the upper portion of the stone in case it should be a crack, but I was able to cut below it as I was laying in the star facets—those just around the table. I have been asked why I didn't go to these countries myself to get rough gems. Well, one reason is simply that I couldn't afford it but for another, even if I did have the money for such a venture, when I got there what would I be? I would be just another inexperienced tourist unable to speak the language of the country or the local dialect. I would have to make contacts with the right people and establish a trust with them and then, should such a miracle happen, I would have to do a volume of business with them which would

persuade them to show me their best etc. etc. I believe it would be just as profitable for me to appear before the locals with a sign round my neck—written in their dialect of course—saying, “Hi, I am incredibly naïve. Bring me to your chief for I would make “speak speak” with him, and he has probably never seen anyone in such need of a good fleecing as I. Run along now, there’s a good chap, and be quick about it. Opportunity like this does not come every day.”

No thanks! My supplier has been doing this for over forty years, and I consider it just good business to pay for his expertise. The stones come from the miner to him to me. Only one middleman. That’s not bad.

The Tanga garnet is finished now. I have a rose in my garden called a “Winnipeg Parks.” It is an excellent hot pink, which is about the color of the Tanga. The cut is an easy one called a Lazy Oval, and it appears to be superlative for light return. The stone looks flawless to me. My recovery was over 43% coming in at 5.99 carats. I don’t know what it is worth. I’m no gemologist; I just like to cut stones!

## Lapidary Corner

*via Stoney Statements 12/2010*

### Is It Hard or Tough?

from The RockCollector 9/2005, The Mineral Mite & Ore-bits 06/2000, The Rollin’ Rock 9/2005

**T**he terms “hardness” and “toughness” are sometimes confused when comparing qualities of gemstones, and there is a great deal of difference.

Diamond is by far and away the hardest, for it will scratch, cut, or polish any other. But for toughness (resistance to chipping and breaking), jade has it beat by a country mile.

A diamond will easily cut and scratch jade but a jade hammer can crush diamond to powder. It is the crossmatted structure of jade that makes it almost impossible to break. Never fear if you accidentally drop a solid jade cabochon on cement. If it breaks, better check it, it’s probably not jade.

The Chinese used jade as an anvil just as we use steel; sometimes the same anvil was used for several generations. Jade, used for axes and hammer-like tools centuries ago, was a practical, useful, and highly valued material.

### Old Miner’s Rule

from the Geode Strata Data 9/2005

While a miner’s tools, equipment, and personal belongings remain in or next to a digging, that is his until he relinquishes it either by removing said property or announcing that he is finished digging in that area. Furthermore, specimens or rocks cached on or near said personal property are also the property of the miner and shall not be touched or removed without his express permission. Every Rockhound should obey this rule.

## Shop Tips

### Is “Permanently Bonded” Really Forever?

by Rita O’Neal

from The Post Rock 6/2001

Recently I purchased a beautiful Brazilian agate which was glued to a bola slide. When I asked the dealer how I could remove the agate, so I could display it rather than wear it, he replied that he glued it with epoxy, and it was on to stay. Later I happened to ask another dealer if he knew of a way I could remove the agate from the tie slide.

He said they do it all the time. Just put it in the freezer overnight. The next morning use a knife with a thin blade and gently push or pry the blade under the edge of the fastener. The tie slide will just pop off. I followed his instructions, and sure enough, it popped right off. I cleaned off the remaining glue with nail polish remover, which was the dealer’s second suggestion if the freezer method didn’t work.

## Re-Polish Cabs

from The Post Rock via The Thumblicker via The Ammonite 2/2001

Did you know that you can repolish cabs that have become dull from wear without removing them from their mountings? Cut ¼-inch diameter soft leather discs and put three of them on a Dremel or screw type mandrel. Use this tool with Linde A or diamond paste, and you can work carefully close to the bezel and around prongs.

## Is There Gold in Your Backyard?

by Michael Bowker

*Excerpts from an article in Chert Chatter, Vol. 29, No 8, 2003, via Arrowhead News 2/05 and others.*

**O**n a crisp November afternoon in 1991 Bill Boye, who operates a small Atlanta exterminating company, climbed out of the mountain stream in Georgia where he had been engaged in his favorite weekend pursuit: panning for gold. He was ready to strip off his waders when he decided to run his metal detector over a hole he had bypassed many times before. Splashing back into the water, he took a few steps—and the device began buzzing wildly. At first, Boye thought a tin can was setting off the detector, but when he dug around, his shovel hit something hard.

Reaching into the water, Boye fished out a muddy hunk of quartz, the size of a football, weighing 18 pounds. He was about to toss it back, when his hand wiped away some of the mud. Boye was stunned — the entire bottom of the rock was solid gold! “I kept staring at it, because I was afraid if I blinked, it would disappear,” he recalls. The nugget, one of the largest found in the eastern United States in over 100 years, may be worth tens of thousands of dollars.

“Most people figure gold panning went out with horse-drawn buggies, and that the only gold left is in California,” Boye says. “But I proved them wrong. Now, they just want to know where I found it.”

Jule Kendrick, who owns a custom-home-finishing company, made her lucky strike after ten years of searching. Walking a dry stream bed in the desert coast of Los Angeles, she came across a boulder the size of a Volkswagen Bug. "For some reason, I felt I should move it," she says. It took most of the morning, but she finally toppled the rock with a six-foot pry bar. In the hole were four hefty nuggets worth a total of about \$1,500. "I was so excited I almost screamed. I'll never forget that day as long as I live."

Mike Stafford, a Camino, California businessman involved in submarine construction, made his big strike on the north fork of the Yuba River. Using diving equipment, he was cleaning out a submerged crevice in the bedrock with a water hose, when suddenly the water turned gold. "Nuggets and gold dust started shooting out" he says. With a suction dredge, Stafford vacuumed the stream bottom to capture the swirling treasure. "We pulled out eight ounces of gold in less than 15 minutes. It was wild." The hoard was worth \$3,000.

### **An Old Idea for "Quarrying"**

*by Rock Currier*

*From "Splitting Boulders," a posting by <rockcurrier@cs.com> on  
rockhounds@lists.drizzle.com, 12/13/2004  
via Arrowhead News 1/05*

**S**plitting boulders always seemed difficult to me until I saw the way the locals near Banglor, India split granite boulders into building blocks, telephone polls, 7-ft fence posts etc. The local quarry workers went to work each day with a little cloth sack that had a three- or four-pound, short-handled steel hammer with a bamboo handle that they would insert into the hammer head when they needed to hammer their little chisels. The chisels were made from three-quarter inch rebar that a blacksmith had hammered to a chisel point on one end and tempered the tip to make it harder.

The rebar chisels were used to make little holes in the granite. The chisels were only about six inches long, and after they had a little hole started they would just leave it wedged in the hole. They would then place the next one the same way about a foot to 18 inches distant. They would make a line of these little holes with chisels in them all the way across the top of the boulder, and then just start hammering on them in succession until the boulder split. The split was usually quite clean and fairly straight, for they understood the "grain" of the granite.

I saw house-size boulders that were cleanly split down the middle. They just kept making more lines of holes until they got the granite down to whatever size they wanted. At the time, a seven-foot granite fence post about four to five inches in diameter cost \$1.25. Probably cheaper than an equivalent size fence post, and it would last ten to twenty times longer. I thought about importing some, but figured the cost of putting them on a boat would double the cost of the posts. Oh well, another million dollar idea down the drain.

## More on This Idea

by Gene Hartstein, Newark, DE

From a posting by <FOSSILNUT@aol.com> on  
rockhounds@lists.drizzle.com, 12/22/2004, via Arrowhead News 1/05

**I** use the same method when quarrying fossils. The idea is to bring up as large a slab as possible to expose as complete a fossil as possible. In most but not all fossil localities we have the advantage of working a bedding plane which will tend to split along the plane anyway. However in most cases, the bedding plane is interrupted by numerous weak areas and so splitting a large slab is essential. Of course we use sledges and real chisels, usually flat chisels.

In one Illinois quarry, we were getting large numbers of Mississippian shark teeth. If we tried to get small pieces, the teeth usually shattered since they had lots of micro cracks in them already.

If we took up a slab that was obviously loaded, we would take it home without further digging to find better teeth. That work was better left to the prep lab where we could ensure that the best teeth did not get broken by our recovery efforts. To ensure that the slabs did not damage each other in the trunk or back of the truck, we brought lots of old cardboard boxes broken down. You can get these at places like K-mart and Wal-Mart by dumpster diving or by asking them if you know someone. Just be sure to remove the staples. Two or three layers of cardboard between the layers of rock provide pretty good protection. You can also bend one around the edges of a slab and place some around the edges of the bed to protect the edges and the bed liner. By the way, the biggest slab we pulled up at the Illinois location was about 5 feet square and about 5 inches thick. Took a few of us to load and unload that one.



## Show Time 2011

Jan. 1--Feb. 28	Quartzsite, AZ	Desert Gardens International G&M Show Desert Gardens RV Park; 1064 Kuehn St. (I-10 Exit 17, south side) <a href="http://www.desertgardensrvpark.net">www.desertgardensrvpark.net</a>
January 15-16	Fredericksburg, TX	Fredericksburg Rockhounds Pioneer Pavilion, Lady Bird Johnson Muni. Park <a href="http://www.fredericksburgrockhounds.org">www.fredericksburgrockhounds.org</a>
March 5-6	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring Prospectors Club Howard County Fair Barn Jerald Wilson (432) 263-4662 Lola Lamb (432) 263-3340
April 1-3	Macomb, Illinois	National Fossil Exposition XXXIII Western Hall, Western Illinois University Tom Williams, <a href="mailto:Paleotom234@dishmail.net">Paleotom234@dishmail.net</a> Steve Holley, <a href="mailto:Ilfossil@hotmail.com">Ilfossil@hotmail.com</a> <a href="http://www.midamericapaleo.org">www.midamericapaleo.org</a>
April 15-17	Alpine, TX	SCFMS/Chihuahuan Desert Gem & Min. Club Alpine Civic Center, Hwy. 90 W & 13th St. N Mary Brogan, (432) 386-2340 <a href="mailto:marybrogan@rocketmail.com">marybrogan@rocketmail.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.cdgmcc.org">www.cdgmcc.org</a>
April 16-17	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Club Texas State Technical College Industrial Tech. Bldg., Crest Dr., off I-35 North of Waco
July 7-10	Syracuse, NY	AFMS/EFMLS Federation Show Gem & Mineral Society of Syracuse New York State Fairgrounds Center of Progress Bldg. <a href="mailto:cathypatterson@verizon.net">cathypatterson@verizon.net</a> ; <a href="http://www.gmss.us">www.gmss.us</a>
October 13-15	Mount Ida, AR	25th Annual Quartz Crystal Digging Contest Montgomery County Fairgrounds Maureen Walther, Mt. Ida Ch. of Commerce 870 867-2723; <a href="http://www.mountidachamber.com">www.mountidachamber.com</a> <a href="mailto:director@mountidachamber.com">director@mountidachamber.com</a>
November 11-13	Humble, TX	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> Chris & Theresa Peek; <a href="mailto:cpeek@houstonisd.org">cpeek@houstonisd.org</a>



2011		January					2011
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1 New Year's Day NO Youth Section	
2	3	4 7:30 Board Meeting	5 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	6 7:30 Archaeology Group	7	8 10-5 Shop Open	
9	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	24	25 7:30 General Meeting	26 10-5 Shop Open	27	28	29 10-5 Shop Open	
30	31						

2011		February					2011
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
		1 7:30 Board Meeting	2 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	3 7:30 Archaeology Group	4	5 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section	
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 Valentine's Day	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	21 7:30 Lapidary Section	22 7:30 General Meeting	23 10-5 Shop Open	24	25	26 10-5 Shop Open	
27	28						

# **The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

*The Newsletter of the  
Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
BELLAIRE, TX 77401  
PERMIT NO. 303

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)
- 2010 - 2nd (Large)



**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED<sup>2</sup>**

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