



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

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July 2011



President's Message

by Steve Blyskal

Summer has arrived early and with a vengeance. I saw a note today that the beginning of June had the highest average temperatures ever recorded for that time period. Our string of recent hot, dry days was broken briefly by two days of thunderstorms, but now the prediction is for more record-breaking heat. We were lucky here in "south" Katy, getting 5/8" and filling the rain barrels. I hope you were in the path of one of the storms also. I hope your A/C is in good shape to handle the heat. Ours went out today and it's still hot and humid after a capacitor replacement. Speaking of heat, we try to keep the clubhouse cool when it's open for meetings and shop days and to adjust the thermostat up to 78-80 when no one is there. Since we all pay the bills through our dues and show earnings, it's important to follow procedures. If you are one of the people opening or closing the clubhouse, you need to know how to adjust the main thermostat, how the auxiliary A/C unit works, and where its thermostat is located. If you are not sure, ask one of the senior members of the club.



We have had visitors from Japan for the last two weeks, so you haven't seen me around the clubhouse much. Sigrid's daughter and her fiancée are here for a break and to plan

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Upcoming Programs

June 21, 2011: **Upcoming HMNS Exhibit.** Neal Immega will discuss the Ancient Ukraine - a crossroads of jewelry design. The treasures include jewelry in the style of the Greeks, Romans, and the east. You will see fantastic gold pieces showing the most intricate designs, and these are 2500 years old. Inda Immega will show images from the exhibit at the Houston Museum of Natura.

July 19, 2011: Jade Stone of Heaven: Ray Kizer will give a brief description of the

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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, 1/4 page; \$150 for 6 months, 1/4 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

their wedding next January, so we've been busy with them. After months of aftershocks and continued bad news about the nuclear situation and the general recovery effort, they are glad to just kick back and drink Shiner beer and eat Mexican food.

At the last General Meeting I tried a modified change to the agenda, moving Dean Lagerwall's well-received talk up so it started by 8:00 p.m. This change was greeted by vocal support from many of the members present. As expected, there were fewer people at the business meeting than at the talk, but everyone present was interested in the business discussed. Board member Nancy Fischer got a number of responses to her survey, most in favor of making the change to having the talk earlier in the meeting. Right now the board is researching the by-laws to see if a vote is necessary to make this change permanent.

Our Board meeting in June was full of productive ideas, and I urge you to read Secretary Sarah Metsa's minutes in this BBG or ask your Section Board member for a recap.

One of the big things coming up is the auction at the August General Meeting, with the proceeds going to the Art Smith fund in our savings account. This will be used to fund our annual donation to *Rocks and Minerals* magazine in September. This donation to the Color Fund of the Connoisseurs Choice column is acknowledged in every issue of the magazine, and we are one of the few local clubs to be mentioned in the magazine. Until his passing, Art Smith donated \$1000 a year to *Rocks and Minerals* for the Color Fund, and the Mineral Section continued this last year. The Board's intention is to expand the donation to include the whole club, since that is how we are now listed in the acknowledgement. We are counting on member donations of nice minerals, fossils, cabs, slabs, jewelry, beads, and artifacts to make this an auction that will generate enough funds to cover the donation for 2012. Sigrid and I will be running the auction which will feature a display and silent auction bidding in August, followed by a live final auction before the August General Meeting. The items will be photographed and available online, and we will have proxy bidding for those unable to be at the clubhouse that night. We would like to start collecting donations in July and will announce where they can be left in the clubhouse once we establish a secure spot. Sigrid and I plan to donate some mineral and lapidary specimens including prehnite, snakewood, shrinkwood, and bouquet agates among other items. I urge you to be generous so we can make this an auction to remember.

I'd like to talk a little about our library. We have not had a librarian since Art Smith passed away, and the library committee that was formed afterwards has not been able to function well due to business and personal commitments of its members. We really need someone in the club to take on the responsibility of our library—not to do all the work themselves, but to direct the work that is needed to keep it one of the best research libraries of any rock and mineral club in the USA. Sigrid has been talking to some of the corporate librarians at Chevron, to see if she can interest them in helping us reorganize the library to make it more useful to the members. One of the issues the Board dealt with at the last meeting was subscriptions to publications useful to our

hobby. In the past Art Smith kept all the subscriptions going with profits from the soda sales and his personal contributions. The Mineral Section now pays for the subscription to the *Mineralogical Record*, but we don't have the resources to continue the subscriptions for many of the magazines Art thought were important. The Board has decided the club will pay for a subscription to *Rock & Gem* magazine, which has articles and ads useful to all club members. They also decided that each Section will be allowed to subscribe to one publication that will be funded by the club up to \$25 per year or \$75 over three years. That way the Beading Section can get a magazine appropriate to their members, and so can the other Sections. Your Section Board member should be discussing this with you at your next meeting.

Upcoming Programs--Continued from page 1

two types of "Jade" with some examples. You will see a Power Point slide show of a private jade collection he toured during a recent visit to Quebec City, Quebec. The 250-piece collection spans primitive Neolithic artifacts from British Columbia and New Zealand through intricate carvings of the Hongshan Culture (5000-3000 BC) and Ming dynasties to modern day examples. Come and be awestruck.

BenchTips

by Brad Smith

*groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/
or facebook.com/BenchTips*

Toothpicks: The round, stronger toothpicks have a multitude of uses on the jewelry bench. I use them for mixing epoxy resin, for applying paste solder, with Zam for polishing in tight spots, and with a bit of beeswax for picking up and positioning small stones. They're particularly good for testing the fit of a small faceted stone in a prong or tube set finding.

Pumice Wheels

Pumice wheels are good for touching up a bezel after you've set the stone. The hardness is about 6 on the Moh's scale, less hard than quartz, so it shouldn't scratch any of your jaspers. However, I'd avoid or be real careful of using pumice near the softer stones like turquoise, amber, howelite, etc. If you're unsure that a wheel is pumice, test it with a piece of glass. Glass is about 5½ on the Moh's scale. If it doesn't scratch glass, it shouldn't scratch quartz.

Magnetic Pin Finisher

There is a good article about making your own magnetic tumbler at <http://www.rchristopher.com/tech/tumbler.html>

The person reporting this on the YahooGroups Jewelry Casting list says he's made two units from these plans, and they work very well. In addition to the primary job of burnishing and polishing finished pieces, he also uses the units for cleaning investment

from castings. The stainless steel pins are available from either Gesswein or Rio Grande.

Old Geezer In Norway

by John Emerson

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

BECHTEL report on the Gullfax "A" project:

Project information from Bechtel Great Britain Ltd



BECHTEL IN THE NORTH SEA



Murchison field development

CONOCO



"The Gullfaks field is located about 200 km north west of Bergen and 15km east of the Statfjord field in the Norwegian sector. Water depths vary between 140 m and 220 m. The Gullfaks field produces mainly oil with some associated gas and will be designed to

produce 245,000 barrels per day (bpd) with facilities for gas re-injection and sea water injection.

The installation includes a concrete gravity base structure, and a steel jacket weighing 43,000 tonnes (47,300 tons) with facilities for production, drilling, living quarters, and processing.

The structure selected will provide storage for two million barrels of crude which will not be piped ashore but will be loaded directly into tankers from an SPM a few miles from the platform. Future offtake of gas will be through the Statpipe system.

The Bechtel role for Statoil is providing management services for the entire project. The services include preparation of project budgets, technical audit of all activities, co-ordination of engineering contractors, engineering support, planning and cost control, equipment/material procurement and monitoring of construction.

The project office is in Stavanger, Norway rather than in London, and Bechtel is doing the work in joint venture with Norwegian Petroleum Consultants.”

In Norway in 1982/84, I was Bechtel's Assistant Project Manager for a concrete platform for drilling, production, and storage with a tanker-loading buoy in the North Sea for Statoil, the Norwegian national oil company. It was set in 540 feet of water, had an eight-story hotel for the crews, and two million barrel oil storage in its base.

Construction was started in a dry dock alongside a deep fiord. After the base and part of the two million barrel oil storage was poured (all concrete), the top of that part was prepared with lots of re-bar set in the concrete sticking up to mesh with the next pour. The dry dock was flooded, and the structure was towed out into the fiord. Construction was continued, and the structure was sunk into the fiord as the rest of the storage and the legs were poured. Remember that it would be placed in 540 feet of water. The pouring had to be continuous so that there was no weak spot that might occur if the pour was interrupted for any length of time. If that happened, the structure had to be destroyed or towed to deep water and sunk.

Since operation of pouring machines could break down, it was timed during the summer so that school boys could use wheelbarrows 24 hours per day for the pour while the machines were repaired. If the concrete pouring machines broke down, it would be a disaster, but to lose a boy or two would not interrupt the pour! None were lost on this project.

Upon the completion of the concrete gravity base structure, the water inside was pumped out to raise the structure so it could be towed out to the site. In Norway the law forbade overtime wages without prior written consent of the National Labor Office for each person by name, which took quite a long time to obtain.

This was a problem for me—not because I was not covered, but because the Norwegian people in the office all showed up at exactly 8:00 a.m. and left at exactly 4:00 p.m. It was quite a jam to get all personnel into the office at the same time to start engineering and procurement work, and it was dangerous to be near the exit door at 4:00 p.m! This included the Norwegian Project Manager, although he was virtually worthless to

the project. This personnel problem “drove me up the wall.” Sometimes I would go home to our apartment, get a drink, go outside, sit in a chair and contemplate. Bobbie recognized this, so she would leave me alone until I unwound.

In the winter, the sun came up at about 10:00 a.m. and went down about 3:00 p.m. In summer it came up about 3:00 a.m. and went down about 10:00 p.m. All bedrooms in the homes had heavy drapes on the windows so the people could sleep normally during summer. The Americans (Bechtel employees) said that summer was the entire second week in July.

When we attended parties where alcohol was served, it was mandatory that at least one person per car be a designated driver and did not drink—not drop! Norwegian law was very strict about drunken driving. As I recall, it meant six months in jail and loss of their driver’s license for a year. No exceptions. Not a bad idea for the “Mothers Against Drunk Drivers” (MADD) to consider advocating here in the US.

Norwegian Income Tax was as high as 80%. For me to receive \$60,000 net per year, my US income tax report was about \$250,000.00 gross. This was covered by the Statoil contract.

HGMS Has Seven Entries That Ranked in the Top 10 in Their Categories at the AFMS Contest

by Phyllis George

Editor of the BBG Newsletter and Webmaster

I just received a postcard from Linda Jaeger, Chair of the AFMS Bulletin Editors’ Contest. Six HGMS members plus the BBG have all placed in the top ten in their individual categories. The awards will be presented in Syracuse, NY, during the Sunday, July 10 Breakfast with the Editors and Webmasters. CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Bulletin: BBG

Articles: Karen Burns and Neal Immega

Adult Poetry: ... Mary Ann Mitscherling

Junior Poetry: . Noell Skubal

Features: Steve Blyskal, Sarah Metsa

Drop of Water Test for Topaz

from Rock Chipper, via The Rockcollector 10/2010 and

The Calgary Lapidary Journal 6/2011

Quartz and topaz are not easy to separate by eye, and sometimes it is impossible when the quartz is a true topaz color. There is a big difference in price between the two, and anyone describing quartz as “topaz,” however innocently, may well be in trouble.

Topaz is quite a different mineral and is harder than quartz. Because of this, a drop of water will not spread on topaz but will spread on quartz.

Clean the stone as effectively as possible with a cloth or handkerchief to remove all traces of grease. It must be dry before the test. Then place a spot of clean water on it with a thin glass or metal rod. On stones with a hardness of less than 7 on the Mohs scale, the water is dispersed. On harder stones it will remain a globule. The harder the stone, the more rounded will be the globule.

Archeology Group Minutes

by Terry Proctor

The Archeology Group met on June 2, 2011 for their eighth monthly meeting. Dr. Garth Clark called the meeting to order.

Terry Proctor moved to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2011 meeting as published in the BBG, it was seconded by Deidre Prince and approved by unanimous vote.

There was some discussion of the prior field trip to McFaddin Beach in which 10 HGMS members attended. The next field trip proposed is for June 11, 2011, also for McFaddin Beach. The members supported this date, so it is set. Garth Clark had a data sheet showing the concentration of Clovis points and artifacts found in the past by four persons. He will make this available by e-mail to Terry Proctor, who will send it out to the Archeology members by e-mail.

Laddy Sanderson attended for the first time and joined HGMS. This makes three new members of HGMS coming in through the Archeology Group in the May and June meetings. Requesting to be made a Section of HGMS was briefly discussed. The Archeology Group has very interesting meetings, many people have attended the eight monthly meetings, and something like six or eight new members of HGMS have joined by attending an Archeology Group meeting.

Terry Proctor brought the June issue of *National Geographic* magazine and discussed the article "The Birth of Religion" which appeared in that issue. This had to do with an area in Turkey called Gobekli Tepe, which is very near the border with Syria. The site played into the discussion about agriculture and religion (like which came first the chicken or the egg). Until now it was believed that religion arose from sites where small towns were created from those involved in agriculture. However, the religious nature of this site has caused some to believe that human interest in spiritual life and therefore religion may have created the gathering together, and this caused the need for agriculture.

Interestingly, Dr. Garth Clark has been to Gobekli Tepe, and he had some pictures on his computer to show things in addition to those in the *National Geographic* magazine. This was a great addition to the discussion.

The main event of the evening was that Dr. Clark brought his 1817 1/2 Real coin minted from copper by the Mexican government in San Antonio. The reason these were minted is because the official silver 1/2 Real coins were not avail-



Obverse of 1/2 Mexican Real minted in 1817

able in what became Texas, and hence there was a need. Dr. Clark's coin is extremely valuable as there are only a few of these known to exist. His 1/2 copper Real is in excellent condition.



Reverse of 1/2 Mexican Real minted in 1817 with the lone star on it

This 1/2 Real was minted at the Alamo before Texas became a nation and before Mexico finally became independent of Spain (that war was from 1810 to 1821). This coin minted in Texas is believed to be the first coin that carried the Lone Star on it. It very well may be why Texas became the Lone Star State when it joined the U.S. many years later.

There was a discussion about getting notices of meetings out earlier so that until members become acclimated to the regular meeting day and time each month, as with the other seven Sections, Archeology members may receive a timely reminder of the meetings. Each Archeology meeting results in lively discussion and contributions by those attending. This is turning out to be a most interesting addition to Houston Gem & Mineral Society.

Terry Proctor moved to adjourn about 9:30 p.m. seconded by Laddy Sanderson, and voted by unanimous vote.

Archeology Group Field Trip to Mcfaddin Beach Great Success

by Terry Proctor

On June 11, 2011, the Archeology Group of HGMS made their second field trip with 17 HGMS members showing up for the dig. This trip was again to McFaddin Beach. The trip started as a problem trip shortly after arriving—but that didn't last long. Three of the six or seven vehicles, having only two-wheel drive, wound up stuck in the soft sand or bottomed out and stranded on high on the soft sand. No one in the group had a tow cable or tow rope. The Archeo Vice-Chairman Terry Proctor (me) is an Eagle Scout. Basically however, I was unprepared with no proper towing means (that won't happen again) I did have some very light nylon rope, but when the length of the rope was doubled to six times, and hooked onto the trailer hitch of my Yukon with a point of contact under the front end of each vehicle in turn, all three stranded vehicle were able to be pulled to safety. Interestingly, I learned from pulling the vehicles with the nylon rope that stress causes the nylon to melt into itself each time. Therefore it took time to pull the melted nylon apart each time in order to get ready for the next vehicle. One of the stranded vehicles elected to leave after being stuck. They will now learn what a big mistake that was.

All the other vehicles followed me down McFaddin Beach on wet sand rather than on dry loose sand, and there was little problem except for the portions of washboard road that jarred your teeth and bones. After stopping several time to dig, James Burrell, wife Kristi, and daughter Amelia, met up with us as they had gone further down the beach earlier and returned to meet us.

Those who showed up for the dig, in addition to the Burrells and me, were (in alphabetical order): Douglas E. Dodds, Regina Gorman, James Kwolek, Tony Ma, M.D., Robert Muise, Vanessa, Scott, and Austin Parker, Duanne and Sherry Peterson, Dianne Sisson, and Franklin Wu.

Other than James Burrell getting bogged down one time but freeing himself, there were few other problems other than the jarring ride on the road at times and a little soft sand from time to time. However, most of the Archeo Group stayed on the wet sand of the Beach and hence had no problem getting bogged down. There were also both male and female nudists out for a couple of miles, which is embarrassing if you have small children or are not particularly turned on by seeing rather unattractive people (mostly males) in their birthday suits. However, that was but a brief distraction.

About that time, this trip turned into a wonderful trip that will go down in our records as probably the best McFaddin Beach trip taken by HGMS members, at least in a very long time. Since some of the folks who were on the trip were either new members or folks not known to your Vice-Chairman Terry Proctor, I apologize for not being able to present all counts of fossils and photos of same in this initial report.

On our first stop when I stepped out of my Yukon, within about five feet I found a long Pleistocene horse tooth in very good condition. It seemed to inspire others in the group, as all wanted to see this first find of the day. After that, one member found some bone, and as he continued to dig with the help of others, a part of a jaw bone with a number of Pleistocene bison teeth was dug up, along with many bison bones. One young man who is an HGMS member found a Pleistocene horse tooth also.

After several stops and various finds by Archeo Members (which we will try to report on later), I advised that I was driving my 4-wheel drive Yukon on toward the second of the locations that Archeo Chairman Garth Clark, M.D. gave to all of us, showing Clovis Point finds of four people who had found about 15 Clovis artifacts. We did not find any artifacts, but the next thing was awesome, and I don't use that word very much.

Regina Gorman and Dianne Sisson were riding with me, so the three of us drove to a point that appeared to be close to the second Clovis artifacts location on the map. I could see a concentration of the Beaumont clay (the sticky icky dark mud that constitutes the final resting place of many Pleistocene fossils and the very upper Pleistocene where Clovis and other Native American artifacts are found—but extremely rarely). Dianne had also talked with a couple on an ATV earlier, and they said they saw a couple of bones but they couldn't recall where.

So I stopped the Yukon announcing that we were close to the 2nd Clovis location and there was a lot of Beaumont Clay showing. Then the most amazing thing happened. Regina got out of the passenger door and in do-



ing so accidentally kicked a bison fossil bone a few inches. Dianne Sisson was getting out of the passenger side second row seat, and announced as she stepped out that there were bones lying right under her feet. Yes, I had stopped the Yukon dead center on fossil bison bones immediately at the door of the Yukon's passenger seat and second seat. Therefore I had Regina put the bone she had knocked a few inches back where



it showed it had lain as she was stepping out and I photographed these bones with Regina and Dianne right where they found the bones.

Once those bones were secured, we commenced digging around that area. Bones were everywhere. Before we finished digging, the three of us had dug up 16 bison teeth (ten jaw and intermediate teeth and six incisor front teeth). There were so many leg bones,

sockets, and other pieces of bone that we dug for several hours, putting each little dig area into a separate aluminum foil packet, including putting the teeth (which all came from the same site) in with the bones from that area. Most are covered with the sticky icky Beaumont Clay and will have to be washed off and otherwise carefully cleaned with fragments kept together so that they can be properly prepped as one bone each.



It was also Dianne Sisson's birthday, so we told her we had a big present for her. We would not sign Happy Birthday to her. That brought a laugh. In the many trips I have made to McFaddin Beach, I have found a very few teeth and none in the last 3 or 4 trips or more. To find a couple of bones is considered a great dig day. On this trip, I have three Sam's berry flats full of various bones and the plastic bag of 13 bison teeth and my one very large horse tooth. I have



kept hoping to find a Clovis Point some day, but have never yet found a Native American artifact on McFaddin Beach. I know they exist as I know people personally who have found them, and I have seen them. Not Clovis Points, but Native American Points, nonetheless.

One final note. All of us enjoyed seeing dinosaurs flying over us all day. There were hundreds of Brown Pelicans flying in their very interesting formations of flying one behind the other and dipping down and up like a chain. I photographed them over and over and will include a photo or so of the pelicans; a photo of the three Sam's Club berry flats of fossils; and of Regina and Dianne with the bones they found just outside the Yukon. I want to express my appreciation to Dianne Sisson who insisted on giving me the fossils she dug up on this trip. I will clean the ones from Dianne and hopefully put together some photos later of the bones and teeth all three of us found. It was a wonderful trip, and a wonderful group. I don't think anyone who continued to dig was disappointed in this trip. The temperature was a little warm, but with the Gulf breeze it was not too hot, and one could always walk into the surf and throw Gulf water on their hair, head, and neck and cool off a bit. *Photos by Terry Proctor.*

If you haven't visited the Archeology Group, we meet the First Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the HGMS Clubhouse. Come visit us and bring your Archeological interests, articles, and artifacts and share with the rest of us. This is a very interesting new Group to tie in with as an HGMS member.

The University of Texas has a great Web site on McFaddin Beach called "**Texas Before History**" which you can access at <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/mcfaddin/index.html>. On that site you can also see a photo of a bison leg bone (*the photo was provided by me at the request of Texas Beyond History after they saw it on the Proctor Museum of Natural Science, Inc.'s Web site page on McFaddin Beach* <http://www.proctormuseum.us/Texas/McFaddin-Beach/mcfaddinbeach.htm>).

May Lapidary Meeting

by Stephen Wilkerson

A small group came together for the Lapidary Section meeting this month. The only business to be discussed concerned new grinding wheels for the Section's Genie. Several of the wheels have become worn down. We talked over whether to order new wheels or allow Neal Immega to recoat the wheels. Since the equipment is used for competition stone cutting, it was decided that we



would ask Margaret Hardeman-Muye to determine which specific wheels need to be replaced, and the Section would order new wheels.

New club members Ben and Patricia Puariea came to the meeting. Ben does woodworking and was very interested in the spool polisher.

Stephen Wilkerson gave the program on using the spool polisher for stones. His polisher is an older model with a wooden spool of Rock Maple with valleys cut in to the wood that are charged with diamond abrasive paste. New spool polishers are made with a frenolic resin. He brought several finished stones to show how well the equipment works for corundum, jade, and moonstone. Several members were interested in creating their own custom-made spools and asked about the types of wood they could use, and motor horsepower, and rpm's needed to turn the spool. Stephen explained how to charge the surface of the spool and keep it lubricated during use. Other members were offered the chance to try working a stone on the spool.



Photo sby Mary Ann Mitscherling.

Mineral Section

by Paul Brandes

At the May 17 Mineral Section meeting, the group decided to have a couple meetings during the summer months. We will be meeting once a month in July and August, then back to the regular 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month after that. Below is the schedule through the end of September, 2011.

July 20: Care and Maintenance of High Pressure Water Guns. Many of you know how useful a high pressure water gun is in cleaning minerals. The pressure can be adjusted to remove dirt and coatings without damaging the specimen. Unfortunately, when they stop working your cleaning plans come to a screeching halt. We will bring in several of these water guns and explain/show how to remedy the most common ailments of these guns. We will also discuss the general operation and control of these useful tools. If you have one that has ceased to function, bring it in and we will take a look at it. Refreshments will be available.

August 17: John Fender of Fender Natural Resources in Richardson, Texas has offered to give the HGMS Mineral Section a talk on mineral cleaning. John is one of the best mineral cleaners around, and this would be an excellent opportunity to hear him talk and to pick his brain. If you have specimens that you would like cleaned but just aren't sure what to use or how to do it, bring them to this presentation. Refreshments will be available.



Jonathon W,
Cephus H, and
Dean
Lagerwall (left
and below)



Steve Blyskal in a quartz vein

Photos by Steve Blyskal

September 7: Typically our first meeting after the summer hiatus, this evening's presentation will be more of a synopsis of each member's summer mineral collecting adventures with plenty of time for short presentations, show and tell, and socializing with other members. Attendees are encouraged to bring in their summer finds (clean or not) to display. Refreshments will be available.

September 21: Quartz Cleaning. Members familiar with quartz cleaning will discuss the methods/equipment they use. While we won't be mixing chemicals, we will show the tools used and discuss the many aspects of this skill. Members with experience cleaning quartz are encouraged to explain how they clean quartz and bring in some before and after specimens. Refreshments will be available.

General Meeting Minutes

May 24, 2011

by Sarah Metsa

HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Visitors and New Members:

Lee Koehl is a volunteer at the HMNS and is interested in learning lapidary and membership. Frank Dolan found an interesting rock and came to the meeting to get more information about it.

Prior Month General Meeting Minutes: Terry Proctor moved that the April General Meeting minutes be accepted as published. Matt Dillon seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report: Rodney Linehan was not in attendance, but Steve Blyskal reported that the club is solvent and in good condition. Also a donation was received from Chevron due to Sigrid Stewart's participation in the club.

Program: Dean Lagerwall will discuss the formation and uses of synthetic quartz. Our culture relies heavily on the optical and electronic properties of pure quartz which necessitates the production of large amounts of synthetic quartz. Examples of large synthetic quartz crystals will be shown. Come learn how and why synthetic quartz influences your life.

Officer, Committees and Section Reports

Daylight Section: Val Link will be teaching part one of three small courses during the meeting. The June meeting will be about riveting.

Paleo Section: They are working on organizing another field trip soon.

Lapidary Section: Shop will open at 3 p.m. the day of the June Lapidary Section meeting. The meeting program will be about clasp making.

Mineral Section: The Section will have summer meetings this year. One will be held in July and one in August; both will be on the third Wednesday. The meetings will be

about cleaning minerals with pressure guns.

Archeology Group: A field trip is planned to McFadden Beach on Saturday June 11.

Education Committee: Nancy Fisher advised that volunteers are still needed for the "School Daze" program on Friday. The SETHSA convention is June 3-4 at Houston Baptist University. Volunteers are needed for the morning and afternoon shifts for both Friday and Saturday.

Show Committee: Still in need of a ticket booth coordinator.

Shop Report: The broken saw has been welded and is working fine again.

New Business

Outreach Program: Terry Proctor held a program at Harvard Elementary. Twenty-two children that attended the program sent thank you notes.

Format Change of General Meetings: The Board is trying to determine if the format for the General Meetings should be changed or at least be flexible depending on the business to be conducted. This meeting was done with the program at the beginning of the evening. Feedback about format change should be directed to Nancy Fischer.

Drawing: Terry Proctor won a quartz seed crystal.

Show and Tell: Steve Blyskal had several new acquisitions to share. One of the items he was very fortunate to obtain since typically a German retailer buys every specimen a particular dealer has available. Mike Dawkins recently went to the Choke Canyon Reservoir and shared that due to the low water table, there were petrified palm wood logs accessible.

Adjourn: Terry Proctor moved and John Mitscherling seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

SCFMS Plaques and Certificates Awarded During April General Meeting

Photos by Mary Ann Mitscherling



John Emerson receiving his plaque and certificate for his Features article



Above: Neal Immega and Mary Ann Mitscherling receiving their certificates and plaques from President Steve Blyscal

Left: Terry Proctor receiving his certificate.

Photos by Mary Ann Mitscherling



General Meeting Minutes

May 24, 2011

by Sarah Metsa

HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Visitors and New Members: Lee Koehl is a volunteer at the HMNS and is interested in learning lapidary and membership. Frank Dolan found an interesting rock and came to the meeting to get more information about it.

Prior Month General Meeting Minutes: Terry Proctor moved that the April General Meeting minutes be accepted as published. Matt Dillon seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report: Rodney Linehan was not in attendance, but Steve Blyskal reported that the club is solvent and in good condition. Also a donation was received from Chevron due to Sigrid Stewart's participation in the club.

Program: Dean Lagerwall will discuss the formation and uses of synthetic quartz. Our culture relies heavily on the optical and electronic properties of pure quartz which necessitates the production of large amounts of synthetic quartz. Examples of large synthetic quartz crystals will be shown. Come learn how and why synthetic quartz influences your life.

Officer, Committees and Section Reports

Daylight Section: Val Link will be teaching part one of three small courses during the meeting. The June meeting will be about riveting.

Paleo Section: They are working on organizing another field trip soon.

Lapidary Section: Shop will open at 3 p.m. the day of the June Lapidary Section meeting. The meeting program will be about clasp making.

Mineral Section: The Section will have summer meetings this year. One will be held in July and one in August; both will be on the third Wednesday. The meetings will be about cleaning minerals with pressure guns.

Archeology Group: A field trip is planned to McFadden Beach on Saturday June 11.

Education Committee: Nancy Fisher advised that volunteers are still needed for the "School Daze" program on Friday. The SETHSA convention is June 3-4 at Houston Baptist University. Volunteers are needed for the morning and afternoon shifts for both Friday and Saturday.

Show Committee: Still in need of a ticket booth coordinator.

Shop Report: The broken saw has been welded and is working fine again.

New Business

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Format Change of General Meetings: The Board is trying to determine if the format for the General Meetings should be changed or at least be flexible depending on the business to be conducted. This meeting was done with the program at the beginning of the evening. Feedback about format change should be directed to Nancy Fischer.

Drawing: Terry Proctor won a quartz seed crystal.

Show and Tell: Steve Blyskal had several new acquisitions to share. One of the items

Get last-minute news about club events by sending a note to Neal Immega at
n_immune@swbell.net.

he was very fortunate to obtain since typically a German retailer buys every specimen a particular dealer has available. Mike Dawkins recently went to the Choke Canyon Reservoir and shared that due to the low water table, there were petrified palm wood logs accessible.

Adjourn: Terry Proctor moved and John Mitscherling seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Board of Director's Meeting Minutes

June 7, 2011

by Sarah Metsa

HGMS Secretary

X	President – Steve Blyskal	X	Beading Rep – Jillynn Hailes
	1 st Vice President – Ray Kizer		Faceting Rep – Gary Tober
X	2 nd Vice President – Beverly Mace		Lapidary Rep – Phyllis George
X	Treasurer – Rodney Linehan		Mineral Rep – Sigrid Stewart
X	Secretary – Sarah Metsa	X	Paleontology Rep – Terry Brawner
X	Past President – Terry Proctor	X	Day Light Rep – Nancy Fischer

The meeting was called to order at 7:48 p.m. with a quorum of seven members present.

Previous Month Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the May 3, 2011 Board Meeting were published in the June 2011 BBG. Terry Proctor moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as published. Jillynn Hailes seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Rodney Linehan was present. He advised that dealer checks for the show have started coming in. He provided an update on each bank account, and he reported that HGMS is in good financial condition.

Officer, Committees and Section Reports

Beading Section: There was nothing new to report for the Beading Section.

Daylight Section: There was nothing new to report for the Daylight Section.

Faceting Section: The June meeting will show how to preform a stone in preparation for cutting.

Lapidary Section: There was no representative available for the Lapidary Section, but it was reported at the May General Meeting that the June meeting would be about clasp making.

Mineral Section: The Section will have summer meetings this year. One will be held in July and one in August, both will be on the third Wednesday. The meetings will be about cleaning minerals with pressure guns. John Fender of Fender Natural Resources will be presenting cleaning techniques in August. The first September meeting will be

about cleaning quartz.

Paleo Section: The May meeting was about Paleo 101 and ammonites. Also a May field trip was made to the Blue Lagoon.

Archaeology Group: Terry Proctor moved that a vote be taken at the General Meeting in August to make the Archeology Group an official section and add it to the by-laws. They have had 8 months of meetings with consistent attendance as well as a few field trips. Terry Brawner seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Also another field trip is planned to McFadden Beach on Saturday June 11.

Education Committee: Teachers and suppliers would like to be reimbursed more promptly. After a very busy couple of weeks, Treasurer Rodney Linehan is getting reimbursements completed. Also, Nancy Fischer advised that the School Daze program at the SETHSA event went quite well. Nancy wants to commend Neal Immega, Jim Kendal, and Deidre Prince for the incredible amount of time and work they put into helping out during the event.

Show Committee: Show chairs were not present but they did advise Steve Blyskal that the Show Committee meeting is Tuesday, June 14, and it is very important that all committee members plan to attend.

Quartermaster Report: The paper towels, in order to make room for toilet paper, have been moved from their old storage location to a new storage location. They are now stored under the counters in the kitchen, and the cabinet door is labeled as "Paper Towels." Also, the Supplies Needed box is not being utilized, and Sarah Metsa will ask Neal Immega to send an e-mail out reminding everyone of its location and purpose.

Old Business

Format Change of General Meetings: Terry Proctor will double check the Bylaws to determine if they specifically state a business format for the General Meetings. The general consensus seems to be that having the program at the beginning of the meeting is a preferable format.

School Collections Progress: The new sets need labels on the front of the boxes. Steve Blyskal will contact Neal Immega to have an e-mail sent out about labeling volunteers assisting on an upcoming Saturday.

Librarian Replacement: Sigrid has been traveling and unable to follow up with the Chevron librarians about assisting us with our library.

Art Smith Fund: Sarah Metsa will contact Neal Immega about sending an e-mail to request donations by the end of July for a first annual fundraising auction. Proceeds will be used to pay for the annual donation to colorize the *Rocks & Minerals Magazine*. The Connoisseur's Choice column and the donation will be dedicated as "HGMS in memory of Art Smith." Also, Terry Brawner advised that any extra funds in the soda can this year will be used toward the same donation.

Building Supervisor Checklist: Terry Proctor reported that the checklist is not being

utilized properly. When he recently opened the building, all the lights in the shop had been left on by the last supervisor. It is critical that all parts of the checklist be completed when opening and closing the club. This is for safety and cost issues.

New Business

Former Member Collection: Steve Blyskal was contacted by the daughter of two former members. She is interested in either donating or auctioning her parents' various cabs, findings, etc. Steve will follow up with her to determine what she would like to do.

Nonmember request for assistance: Steve Blyskal was contacted by a nonmember who would like assistance cutting an amethyst geode. Steve will get the dimensions of the geode from the person, and if our saws can handle the size we can cut it for him with regular shop costs applied.

Ad Placement on Web site: Phyllis George was contacted by a firm interested in purchasing advertisement space on our Web site. Terry Proctor moved that we do not allow this. Terry Brawner seconded and it passed unanimously.

Grants: Sarah Metsa would like to get information about specific large-scale projects the club would like to undertake. Specifics of a project allow for proper grant writing, and there are several foundations in Houston that Sarah would like to contact with grant requests. Sarah will write an article for the BBG requesting member input, ideas, and assistance.

Section Subscriptions: Jillynn Hailes brought up the topic of Sections getting subscriptions to various magazines or Web sites and asked if the club would pay for them. Terry Brawner moved that each Section be allowed up to \$75 for a 3-year subscription to the media of choice, not to exceed \$25 a year. Jillynn Hailes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Section reps will bring up the topic to their Sections in order to determine what subscription they may want, and then the reps will report back to the Board for ordering. Also, Terry Brawner moved that a *Rock & Gem* magazine subscription be purchased by the club because it has so much information in it that pertains to all Sections. Terry Proctor seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Steve Blyskal will arrange for the subscription.

Adjourn: Terry Proctor moved and Jillynn Hailes seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

AFMS President's Message

*by Bob Miller, President
from AFMS Newsletter 6/2011*

From The Top! Summer's coming.

Mother nature has been unkind so far this year with late snow storms, tornados, and cool weather, but as I see wildflowers starting to come up (and the morel mushrooms, yum!) there must be better days ahead.

This brings thoughts of being able to plan for collecting trips again and bring home the can't leave "leaver-ites." While checking on last year's tools, don't forget to look for your safety glasses. A little scratched? New ones are really inexpensive and available at many discount stores. A couple of dollars brings a real investment. An erroneous chip could make your life miserable for some time—or worse, permanently.

I would like to urge all of the clubs to send a delegate to the AFMS/EFMLS convention in Syracuse, NY this year. This is a good way for the clubs to learn what actually goes on "behind the scenes" instead of hearing the results second-hand or in small portions in the newsletters. While you are at it, why not purchase a couple of tickets for the endowment fund drawing. There are a lot of donated prizes to be given away this year. Clubs could purchase some and if won, the prizes could be used for door or other special prizes at a club meeting.

Meanwhile I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the convention. Have a safe summer collecting, and I hope you find the "special one" you are looking for. Cheerz, Bob

AFMS Safety Report

by Elery Borow, EFMLS Safety Chair

from EFMLS News, May 2011, via AFMS Newsletter 6/2011

Chocolate, Coffee, and Eggs

Chocolate, coffee, and eggs all used to be "bad" for us. Then, they were "good" for us. Next, they went back to being bad. Fortunately, the last time I checked, they are now on and hopefully will stay on the good list (assuming moderate consumption). Safety rules are another matter. Safety rules do not waffle forth and back as to whether they are good for us. It has always been and always will be good and proper for us to wear our safety goggles when hammering rocks. It has always been and always will be good for us to let others know our whereabouts when we go collecting; to bring a first-aid kit with us; to keep our tools in good shape; to wear proper attire for the task at hand; to handle acids with the utmost caution; and—well, I could go on but I think you have the general idea.

It is indeed true that things change. For example, hammer metallurgy will improve, but it will never be wise to use a nail-driving hammer for hammering rocks. Different types of hammers are designed to do different things. Nail hammer metallurgy will improve, but the hammer will still only be designed to hit nails, not rocks. The steel in hammers used to drive nails is not hardened the way the steel in rock hammers is hardened. To use the wrong hammer is to risk certain damage to the hammer, but more importantly, risk injury to ourselves.

Glove material will improve, goggles will improve, chisels will improve, and diamond drills will improve. Our hands however will always need protection and so will our eyes, toes, bare arms, and so on. The technology will change, but for the foreseeable future there will be a continuing need to protect ourselves.

We sometimes think of risks as not applying to us. Here in Maine we may think of rattle snakes, scorpions, and old mine shafts as dangers for those folks who do their collecting way out West. Well, let me set the record straight. While the only scorpions we see in this state are usually encased in clear glass or plastic display domes, we should be mindful of the fact that the New England states do indeed have their share of dangerous snakes, including rattlers.

One can also find extremely dangerous mine shafts, adits, and loose talus slopes as well as shear rock walls and cliffs. Mine shafts and adits are never wise to explore. If you have ever seen any of those Discovery Channel or National Geographic programs about old mine, cave, or similar underground exploration, you will have, no doubt, noted the most elaborate and extensive preparations needed for those explorations. Such explorations are best left to the professionals. The dangers are very real and the rules for working with, in, and around them do indeed apply to us. Your safety should be of the utmost concern. Your safety matters.

For this month's safety refresher please see the September 2006 issue of the EFMLS News for Bill Klose's fine article on hammer safety and maintenance.

Stay well and be safe—your safety matters.

Gem Cutters News President's Message

by Jerri Heer, President

from Gem Cutters News 6-7/2011

It's Finally Summertime!

This month, I want to talk to you about connections. Anyone who has spent any time in the business world knows how valuable networking can be. You go to a seminar, convention, or workshop, talk to your fellow attendees and find things in common. You have similar interests, similar problems and concerns, and often through discussion find new ideas and ways to deal with situations and circumstances. It is no different in the rockhound business. You find a fellow rockhound and start talking rock, and you find new ways to cut or process, new places to dig etc.

One of the best things I have found about this hobby is that I rarely find a fellow rockhound that is unwilling to share. That was the case this past weekend when I spent Friday, Saturday, and Sunday demonstrating for our neighboring club, the Midwest Michigan Lapidary Society.

I met June Downing who is the Field trip Chair of the Kalamazoo Club. She is taking on the Dealer Chair position of their Show and asked for my help with dealer contracts, rules etc. We talked marketing strategies, display opportunities, and more. Then we talked about field trips and I learned that she has connections to get into Duff Quarry, the Grand Rapids Gypsum Mine, and much more. I was more than willing to share what I could, and she was willing to share what she knew. I also met E Z Manos, President of the Detroit Salt Company and his Public Relations Manager, George Davis.

Through them I may have a source for an evening program on salt mining, as well as a source for kid's kit specimens of salt.

I have two points to make. First, that talking to each other and to fellow rockhounds from other clubs and parts of the country is a great way to network resources. Second, that we should all be willing to share information and ideas. "No club is an island," and we will benefit in so many ways from coordinating and sharing resources responsibly.

This club has several purposes: education, hobby, and socializing being the primary ones. So don't be afraid to talk to one another and to people from other clubs as well. We can do so much for each other and reap great benefits for our club as well!

Hints and Tips

*from Ed Wengerd's Notebook, 1975 and other sources as noted
by Ted Robles*

via Calgary Lapidary Journal. 5/2011 and Gem Cutters News 6-7/2011

Another use for Elmer's Glue

Make a 50/50 solution of Elmer's Glue and water to help you maintain that "wet look" on all types of materials, including shells and slabs. Just brush it on and let it dry. If the specimen becomes dusty or dull, just immerse in warm water to remove the coating and then reapply. (Note: Do NOT use this for water soluble materials!)

Ivory is one substance that needs light and therefore should never be stored in the dark. If it has started to yellow, take 1/2 a lemon and rub it in some salt, then rub it all over the ivory. The lemon will work on the yellow discoloration. After the piece has dried, dampen a soft cloth with lukewarm water and rub the ivory to give it a bright finish.

Stabilizing porous stones

Stones that are porous are difficult to cut or carve. Here's a method of stabilizing them that you may want to try. Be sure to do this out-of-doors or in a very well ventilated area. Please note that acetone is a highly flammable substance.

Take a jar with a lid and add one pint of acetone. To this, add the complete contents of both the resin and hardener tubes of epoxy glue. Mix well and add the well-dried stones that you want to stabilize. Cover the jar, and let it sit for at least four days. Remove the stones and allow them to dry for a week. Your stones should now be ready to work.

Using an aluminum scribe to tell hardness

An aluminum scribe is often used with a template to outline stones. This same scribe can also give you an idea as to the hardness of a stone. If you can see the mark, but have to look carefully, the stone is about 7 on the Moh's scale. If the mark is very bold, the stone is about 5, and if the mark cannot be seen, then the stone is above 7 on the scale.

Show Time 2011

July 7-10	Syracuse, NY	AFMS/EFMLS Federation Show Gem & Mineral Society of Syracuse New York State Fairgrounds Center of Progress Bldg. cathypatterson@verizon.net; www.gmss.us
August 13-14	Baton Rouge, LA	Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society Fraternal Order of Police
August 20-21	Bossier City, LA	Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society Bossier City Civic Center
August 27-28	Jasper, TX	Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society Events Center
September 3-4	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Society Arlington Convention Center
September 3-4	Denison, TX	Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Center
October 8-9	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic Center
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; www.mountidachamber.com director@mountidachamber.com
October 14-16	Victoria, TX	Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Community Center, 2905 E. North St.
October 21-23	Austin, TX	Austin Gem & Mineral Society Palmer Event Center
October 29-30	Glen Rose, TX	Paleo Society of Austin Somervell Expo Center, Hwy. 67
November 5-6	Amarillo, TX	Golden Spread Gem & Mineral Society Amarillo Civic Center, Exhibition Hall
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; www.hgms.org Chris&Theresa Peek; ladyt682@hotmail.com
November 19-20	Mesquite, TX	Dallas Gem & Mineral Society Resistol Arena

2011		July				2011
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
3	4	5 7:30 Board Meeting	6 NO Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	7 7:30 Archaeology Group	8	9 10-5 Shop Open
10	11 1:00 Day Light Section	12 7:30 Show Committee	13 7:30 Faceting Section 10-5 Shop Open	14	15	16 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
17	18 7:30 Lapidary Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	21	22	23 10-5 Shop Open
24 31	25	26 7:30 General Meeting	27 10-5 Shop Open	28	29	30 10-5 Shop Open

2011		August				2011
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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21	22	23 7:30 General Meeting	24 10-5 Shop Open	25	26	27 10-5 Shop Open
28	29	30	31 10-5 Shop Open			10-5 Shop Open

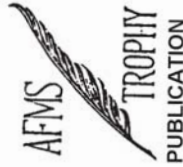
***The Newsletter of the
Houston Gem & Mineral Society***

(281) 530-0942



1998 - 1st (Large)
2000 - 1st (Large)
2003 - 1st (Large)
2005 - 1st (Large)
2006 - 1st (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)
2008 - 1st (Large)
2009 - 1st (Large)
2010 - 1st (Large)

1998 - 2nd (Large)
2004 - 3rd (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)
2010 - 2nd (Large)



DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DO NOT DELAY!