



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

Volume XLII - No. 3

March 2011



President's Message

by Steve Blyskal

By the time you read this message, we should have a new hanging ceiling in the metal working classroom. Our clubhouse chairman, Neal Immega, was instrumental in getting this done after the Board voted to return to the same type of ceiling as before. Thanks are also due to 1st Vice President Ray Kizer for his efforts in cleaning up the classroom in preparation for the construction work which has restored the classroom to usability.



As you may remember from last month's BBG, there was a decision to replace the damaged ceiling with a hard fire-rated ceiling in order to give us more storage space in the attic. Further examination revealed problems with this concept, specifically the amount of usable storage space we would gain, and wall support problems that would take extra time and resources to overcome. As a result, the Board revisited the issue and changed their previous decision on the ceiling. I would like to thank all the members who came forward with pertinent information to assist in the decision making process.

You have probably already seen or heard about clean-up activity in the attic designed to consolidate existing stored items into smaller areas and to eliminate old, worn, or otherwise unclaimed items in the attic. The idea is to create more storage space and get rid of excess flammable materials. Each Section and the Show Committee have been tasked

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Upcoming Program

February 22, 2011: **Tour of Scotland:** Nathalie Brandes will offer us a photographic tour of the countryside and will feature facts on Scottish Geology, Archeology, and History, along with a colorful tale about Robert the Bruce. It's going to be good--best not miss it!

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

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Copy is due for the April 2011 issue by
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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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with policing the areas they use in the attic. Since items have been accumulating in the attic for a long time, it may well be springtime before appreciable change is seen. This cleanup is necessary in case we get a visit from the Fire Marshall, who could order more drastic alternatives. For example, the School Collections committee will be getting rid of excess material, including the large boxes full of small jewelry boxes. If you have a need for this kind of box, contact me for good rates! All Sections should physically outline the space they need on the floor and walls of the attic and work to fit their items within it. Kudos to Dean Lagerwall and Sam Norwood of the Mineral Section, who have already reorganized and consolidated the Mineral Section's items into a space not formerly used by anyone. When working in the attic, **use a hard hat (!)** since we have many low steel roof support rafters and electrical conduits. Most have been padded, but collisions should be avoided.

The latter part of January was a bittersweet time for me as I visited with my ailing mother, got a chance to reminisce and to say goodbye, then returned the next weekend for her funeral and interment. I bring this up because my mom was one of the earliest supporters of my decision to pursue mineral collecting as a hobby. Many of us, I'm sure, have fond memories of our earliest influences when we started in this hobby. My mom had the collecting gene and encouraged any appearance of the same in her kids. She collected postcards for over 40 years and was active in her local New Jersey society, serving as president three times. She put together a well-respected collection, portions of which were often displayed at shows and later in her retirement community.

When I showed an interest in minerals in my teen years, she was an avid supporter, taking me to club meetings, buying some of my first specimens, and using her librarian skills to find books for me, including the first printing of *Mineralogy for Amateurs*, my bible for the past 40 years. She allowed me to go on field trips and to work for a local mineral dealer, all events that firmed my resolution to remain in the hobby. Even during our last visit, she reminded me and told Sigrid about the time the whole family drove to Franklin, New Jersey to hunt for fluorescent minerals on the Buckwheat dump. Some of my fondest collecting memories are of looking for carnelian in Green Brook, in the Watchung Mountains of eastern New Jersey. My mom would often drive me there in the summer, and one day she did a little looking herself. She found the largest piece of carnelian I have ever seen come from that location!

My mom was a special person for lots of reasons, but her early and constant support of my interest in minerals was possibly the strongest single influence in my career and hobby choices. She will be missed by many of the people who knew her. The carnelian she found has a place of honor in my agate and petrified wood display, so that I think of her whenever I walk past it. If you have had a similar influence in your life, thank them while you can. I invite others to share stories of their early rock-hound influences.

Old Geezer's English Brass Rubbings

by John Emerson

These are photos of life size brass rubbings from the covers of tombs inside various churches and museums throughout England. Many of the tombs are in small churches in villages where the people depicted lived. In most cases the churches or museums sold paper and wax kits for brass rubbings. These rubbings were done by Bobbie with minor help from me. Mostly, I drove her to the churches and museums and stood loyally by.

The original rubbings are in the attic of our house with the names of the people, churches and towns, **but** I cannot find them in all of the junk we collected over the years.



Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

My computer's hard drive died, and it was sent off to specialists who reclaimed all files still on the drive.

I have it back now, but I've not been able to write an article in time for the March BBG.

Mineral Section

by Steve Blyskal, Chairperson & Dean Lagerwall, Assistant Chairperson

The Mineral Section meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the HGMS Clubhouse. All are welcome.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

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.

Lapidary Section Minutes

by Mary Ann Mitscherling

The Lapidary Section met January 17. The Shop opened at 5:00 p.m. for members to work on their projects until 7:20 p.m. The meeting had nine attendees. Phyllis George continues as our Treasurer and BOD representative. Karen Burns brought a nice selection of bracelets, necklaces, and earrings made from jump rings.

We voted to purchase a dedicated ForeDome hand piece for the jump ring maker to help ensure proper and safe use of the machine. We voted to purchase a jump ring pattern book for the HGMS library. A number of those present asked Karen Burns to order an extra book for their personal use. We voted on the programs we would like to see over the next five months or so. We will send out e-mails about a week or two before each Lapidary Section meeting to remind members what the scheduled program should be.

On each third Monday at 5:00 p.m., the Shop will be open for members to use until 7:20 p.m., when we stop to prepare for the formal Lapidary Section meeting at 7:30 p.m.

A demo of the jump ring maker machine for those who want training in its use is available between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. upon request. Subject to change as needed is the schedule through June.

February 21—the planned program is on picking out good rock material for Lapidary work.

March 21—Karen Burns will demo the “flat queen’s link” jump ring chain. Prior reservations on participation will be necessary to ensure that we have enough jump rings prepared before the meeting. We will use copper wire. Web sites to visit include maillartisans.org, and cgmaille.com.

April 18—the planned program is a Precious Metal Clay demo.

May 16—Steve Wilkerson will demo proper use of the spool polisher.

June 20—we will have a hands-on demo of clasp making using copper wire. You should bring various jewelry pliers and copper wire to help ensure that we have enough tools and wire for everyone.

July 18—Ed Clay will demo gem stone carving.

After July, suggested programs include cameo carving and show case preparations.

Bench Tips

by Brad Smith

*for more BenchTips by Brad Smith, go to
groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/ or
facebook.com/BenchTips*

Modify Tools for Prong Setting—When setting stones in a prong mount, avoid slipping by grinding a groove in the face of your prong pusher or in one jaw of your flat-nose pliers.

Easiest way to cut the slot on the pusher is with a file, and the easiest way to cut the slot on your pliers is with a cutoff wheel in the Foredom or Dremel.

Sanding Disks—One of the flex shaft tools that saves a lot of time is the snap-on sanding disk. I mainly use the medium and fine grits, but sometimes I need the very fine ones sold for working with platinum.

Ordinarily, you’d think of placing the disk on the mandrel with the grit side facing away from your hand, but notice that you end up with your elbow up in the air. Instead, try flipping the disk so that the grit side is toward your hand.

It’s a much more comfortable pose because the elbow is down near your side, and that gives me a better view of what I’m sanding.

I use these snap-on disks so frequently that I keep multiple mandrels with different grits already mounted in the bur stand. Some mandrels have the grit facing out and some have the grit facing in.

The Show is Coming, The Show is Coming...

by Theresa and Chris Peek
2011 HGMS Show Co-Chairs

Yes, it is a long way off, but time does fly. Your 2011 Show Committee has been hard at work already. The promotional flyers are done and were at our booth at the January Intergem Show. Dealer contracts have been sent out to the 2010 dealers. From preliminary e-mail correspondence, it sounds like many of them plan to come back for the 2011 show.



Things are going well, but we could use your help. We are looking for volunteers to staff our booth at the upcoming shows—Clear Lake, International Gem Show, and the Fine Mineral Show. We are also looking for Show Committee volunteers. As of now, we are looking for an Assistant Show Chair, a Publicity Chair, at least one Publicity Committee member, a Scouts Committee member, a Security Co-Chair, and a Volunteer Caller.

- Assistant Show Chair—Backup to the Show Chairs and interested in possibly running the 2012 show.
- Publicity Chair—Coordinate publicity and advertising such as the show postcard, billboards, etc.
- Security Co-Chair—Coordinate security inside and outside the Humble Civic Center
- Publicity committee member, Scouts committee member, and Volunteer caller—Assist the chairs of those committees in their specific roles

More information about these positions is available. Send us an e-mail or give us a call if you are interested in learning more about helping YOUR club.

And, if you volunteer, you get invited to the Show Committee field trip and the Show Committee Party. The last field trip was GREAT and we are going to try and do it again for 2011.

Theresa and Chris Peek, HGMS 2011 Show Chairs
Ladyt682@yahoo.com, 281-988-7222

Word Magic by Karen Burns

How many words of three letters or more can you find in MINEROLOGY? Adding S to make a plural or D for past tense doesn't count. Answers on page 15. Answers have been checked with Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary.

General Meeting Minutes

January 25 , 2011

by Sarah Metsa

2011 HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Visitors and New Members: Gina Spicer, LaVon Westfall, and Jose Aguilar are new members. Gina, LaVon, and Jose learned about the club at the January 2011 Intergem show. Gina and LaVon are interested in beading. Jose is a 5th grade science teacher, and Steve Blyskal provided him a mineral specimen display.

Jackie Davis was a first-time visitor with a general interest in rockhounding. Jay and Mary Unsell attended the meeting while visiting Houston from New Mexico. They used to live in Texas, and Jay was one of the founding members of the El Paso Gem and Mineral Society.

Prior Month General Meeting Minutes: There was no official General Meeting in December 2010, instead it was the Christmas party on December 11. The HGMS minutes for the November 23, 2010 meeting were published in the January 2011 BBG. Terry Proctor moved that the minutes be accepted as published. Matt Dillon seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Membership: Dues are now due. Please turn in to the office or Beverly Mace. We currently have about 650 members.

Treasurer Report: Rodney Linehan was not in attendance, but Steve Blyskal reported that the club is solvent and in good condition.

Officer, Committees and Section Reports:

Beading Section: Jillynn Hailes is the new Section Board Rep.

Lapidary Section: Phyllis George is re-elected as the Section Board Representative.

Mineral Section: Paul Brandes is the new Section Vice Chair

Archeology Group: Fifteen people attended the January 6 meeting. The meetings are the first Thursday of each month, and all are welcome. It is shaping up to be a good group. They are hoping to plan a field trip to McFadden Beach in March.

Show Committee: Mary Ann Mitscherling reported that the Show Committee is in need of a Publicity Chair.

Communications Director Report: Phyllis George handed out awards received during the SCFMS Regional Show held December 12, 2010 in DeRidder, Louisiana. The recipients were:

Adult Poetry – Terry Proctor, 1st Place.–Mary Ann Mitscherling 4th Place.

Junior Articles – Noel Skubal, 1st Place.

Adult Articles – Sigrid Stewart, 2nd Place. Lexy Benick, 4th Place. Martha McRay, 6th Place. D.R. “Matt” Dillon, 9th Place. Phyllis George, Honorable Mention. Owen Martin, Honorable Mention.

Advanced Articles – Terry Proctor, 1st Place. Art Smith, 3rd Place. Neal Immega, 5th Place.

Features – John Emerson, Terry Proctor, and Neal Immega tied for 3rd Place. Alice McNulty, Honorable Mention.

Large Bulletins – Backbender Gazette, 1st Place.

Old Business:

Rockhound Stickers and Strips: Rockhound stickers and strips of 10 small rockhound stickers were announced available for \$1.00 at the meeting.

Metal Working Classroom Ceiling: Members were invited to the February 1, 2011 BOD Meeting if they have input about the best way to repair or replace the ceiling.

New Business:

Mineral Specimen Displays for Teachers: We are down to critical levels and will need to create another 50 sets to renew our supply. Steve Blyskal will organize a day for folding display boxes and attaching specimens and labels.

New Coffee Maker: We have a new coffee maker for the clubhouse. The thermos carafe keeps the coffee hot without scalding, and coffee will stay hot and fresh for several hours.

Drawing: New member Jim Kendall won the drawing. The prize was a large piece of tiger iron from Australia.

Show and Tell: Jim Kendall had a large amount of show and tell fossils and minerals, and some really interesting petrified wood.

Program: Nathalie Brandes shared a photographic "Tour of Scotland" featuring facts on Scottish Geology, Archeology, and History along with a colorful talk about Robert the Bruce. It was very informative and well done. As always, Dr. Brandes provided a wonderful program.

Clubhouse Cleanup Day

by Sarah Metsa



Clubhouse Cleanup Day will be held on Sunday, March 6 starting at 1 p.m. This will be a day to clean and organize the kitchen and the attic, and hopefully the shop rooms in general. If you have items stored at the clubhouse, please plan to attend the cleanup day or remove your items prior to the event. Please e-mail quartermaster@hgms.org with questions.

Board of Director's Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2011

by Sarah Metsa

HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. with more than a quorum of seven members present.

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

Previous Month Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the January 4, 2011 Board Meeting were published in the February 2011 BBG. Terry Proctor moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as published. Terry Brawner seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Rodney Linehan could not be present. However, as usual, he sent to each Board member a detailed report of each bank account. The Board was satisfied that HGMS is in good financial condition.

Officer, Committees and Section Reports:

Beading Section: Reminder that meetings are the third Saturday of each month beginning at 1:30 p.m. All are welcome. Also, all 2011 projects are on the HGMS Web site.

Day Light Section: John Zanders will be speaking at the Monday, February 14 meeting, and he will demonstrate carving a jade ring

Faceting Section: The February 9 meeting will be about practice transfers and dopping. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own tools and supplies if available.

Lapidary Section: Phyllis George has been elected as the Section Representative. The programs for the next six months are on the HGMS Web site.

Mineral Section: Dean Lagerwall has been elected Section Chair and Paul Brandes is Section Vice Chair. The January 19 meeting featured Aaron Rever and his collection of fluorescent minerals. It was an incredible program and very much enjoyed by all who attended. The February 2 meeting's program is the second DVD in a series about the 2010 Tucson Show. The February 16 meeting will be a show-and-tell for all who were able to attend the Tucson Show.

Paleo Section: Neal Immega is the Section chair. The January 18 meeting featured David Temple from the Houston Museum of Natural Science. The museum's new Hall of Paleontology will be completed in 2012, and it will be about five times larger than it is now.

Youth Section: There is a lot of excitement among the youth to be back in the shop, and everyone is looking forward to continuing their projects.

Archeology Group: Fifteen people attended the January 6 meeting. The meetings are the first Thursday of each month, and all are welcome. It is shaping up to be a good group.

Communications Director Report: February 9 is the due date for material to be published in the March BBG. As usual, this date is the Wednesday before the second Saturday of each month.

Show Committee: The Co-Show Committee Chairs were not in attendance. But it was reported by Steve Blyskal that the show flyers are printed and were available for the January Intergem show. There was a good turnout at the Intergem show, and it resulted in some new members attending the January General Meeting.

Quartermaster Report: The new supply request system will be implemented this month. Also there will be a clubhouse clean-up day on Sunday March 6 beginning at 1 p.m. This will be a day to clean and organize the kitchen, the attic, and the shop in general.

Old Business:

Stepstools: Terry Proctor moved to have Matt Dillon purchase a stepstool for the library and to reimburse Matt for purchasing the club stepstool and the library stepstool. Phyllis George seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Key Holder instruction and signoff sheet: Terry Proctor will forward the previously created instructions and signoff sheet to Ray Kizer for binding. The bound instructions will be made available for the responsible key holder to review/complete before closing up the clubhouse.

Coffeemaker: The new coffeemaker is in place and ready to use. Steve Blyskal will create and post a brief instruction sheet. The old coffeemaker will be disposed of soon.

Safety Audit: Steve Blyskal will request an official clubhouse safety audit from Owen Martin, SCFMS and AFMS Safety Chair.

Metal Working Classroom Ceiling: After discussing last month's decision to replace the old ceiling with a hard ceiling and the various safety, cost, and feasibility issues surrounding that solution versus other solutions, Terry Proctor moved to have the ceiling put back the way it was prior to the explosion. Jillynn Hailes seconded and it carried unanimously.

Door Lock: After discussion it was decided that we will revisit the necessity of replacing the door lock after all current key holders are shown the door opening "trick."

Awning Light: An awning light has been installed as well as an emergency light inside the clubhouse. After discussion of other recent clubhouse improvements, Terry Proctor moved to have Neal Immega purchase a second emergency light for the shop. Sarah Metsa seconded and it carried unanimously.

General Meeting Upcoming Programs: Ray Kizer has the February General Meeting speaker lined up, and that information has been posted to the HGMS Web site. Ray needs other ideas for this year's meetings. Please contact Ray directly with any recommendations.

New Business:

General Clubhouse: A hook is needed to hang the new fire extinguisher. The acetylene tank check valve needs to be inspected.

Clubhouse Cleanup Day: A Clubhouse Cleanup Day will be held on Sunday March 6th starting at 1 p.m. This will be a day to clean and organize the kitchen and the attic,

Action Items:

Assigned to:	Item:
Sarah	Hang the supply request envelopes and the emergency contact sheet.
Sarah	Refill clubhouse sundry supplies.
Sarah	Bring a drill and metal drilling bit to install new lock on the women's restroom stalls.
Steve	Contact an independent auditor/adjuster to have the roof reviewed and a final recommendation made.
Steve	Contact the business park board and determine what paint color is required to repaint the door.
Steve	Ask Wayne about the status of the kiln repair.
Steve	Contact Matt Dillon about purchasing a stepstool for the library and turning in receipts for reimbursement.
Steve	Create and post a brief instruction sheet about how to use the new coffeemaker.
Terry P.	Send Ray the key holder instruction manual and checklist.
Ray	Bind the key holder instruction manual and checklist and bring to clubhouse.
Steve	Advise Neal that the metal working classroom ceiling should be put back the way it was pre-explosion.
Ray	Check with Neal to ensure the acetylene tank has a check valve. Use the Rio Grande catalog, page 463, as reference.
Steve	Arrange for an emergency push bar to be installed on clubhouse front door.
Steve	Arrange a safety audit review with Owen Martin.
Sarah	Bring a binder to store 2011 meeting minutes.

and hopefully the shop rooms in general.

Adjourn: Terry Proctor moved and Jillynn Hailes seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Word Magic Answers: Elm, gel, gem, germ, gin, gloom, glory, gone, goon, gore, gory, grey, grim, grime, grimy, gyro, igloo, leg, lie, limn, limner, ling, loom, loon, loony, lime, line, liner, log, long, lore, melon, men, mile, miler, mine, miner, ming, mire, money, mono, mongol, mongrel, moon, moor, more, morn, noire, nog, nor, norm, oil, omen, only, rely, rile, rim, rime, ring, roil, room, rye

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

Step by Step Wire Wrapping a Fossil

by Neal Immega

Paleontologist and Wire-Wrapping Advocate

Fossils should be seen more often and not just confined to dusty display cases where collectors frequently store them. Certainly some of them **DESERVE TO BE** made into jewelry. This article will show step by step how I produce high fashion jewelry. I am going to start with the common Texas Cretaceous asymmetrical sea urchin from the genus *Micraster*.

Figure 1 shows our materials: a cleaned sea urchin, hard temper aluminum electric fence wire and jewelry pliers. The use of silver wire might put the cost of this creation beyond many of my elite customers, so I am using aluminum. Aluminum will make dark marks on clothing so I just tell my customers that the piece looks best on dark clothing.

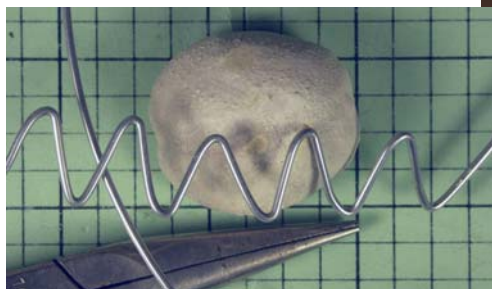


Figure 2 – Make enough zig-zag bends in the wire to go around the fossil with the amplitude about as much as the fossil is thick. A variation for the next version would be to vary the amplitude of the bends to the variable thickness of the fossil.

Figure 3 – Make a shallow bend in the middle of each zig-zag. So that wire will enclose the fossil, bend each zig-zag in the middle a bit, then bend your creation around the fossil.

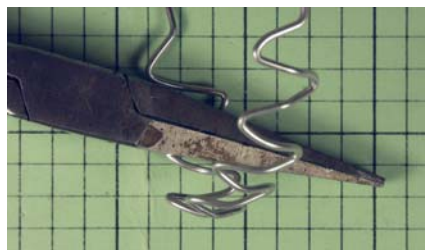


Figure 4 – Bend the wire around the fossil and secure the end with a twist.

Snugly bend the wire around the fossil and twist the ends together. Make the wire fit snugly by tightening up the angle on the zig-zags. Be sure to not scar the soft fos-

sil with your steel tools.

Figure 5 shows the fossil from the side, enclosed by the wire. You will get a chance to adjust the position of the fossil in the bent zig-zags later.



Figure 6 – String brass wire between zig-zags to secure the fossil.



Figure 7 – Enough brass wire is strung across the fossil to keep it secure.

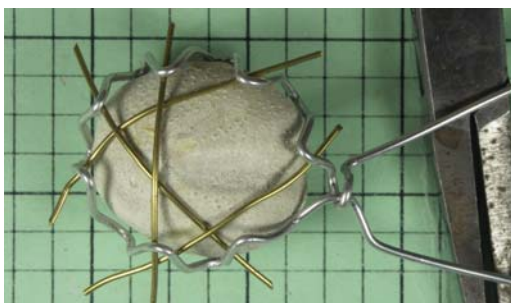


Figure 8 – shows the brass wire used on both sides. A side effect is the alteration of the local electrical potential which will induce a feeling of euphoria in the customer.

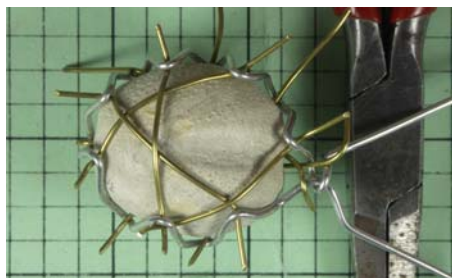


Figure 9 – Begin to secure the brass wire by crimping just one end of it.

To tighten up the wires and center the fossil, first crimp one side as shown in Figure 9.



Crimp the other end of each wire alternately on the front and back of the fossil. Your customers will thank you if you use a cup burr to remove the sharp ends of the brass wire made by your cutter. Alternatively, the ends can be left long as a handy nail-cleaning accessory. The result is shown in Figure 10.

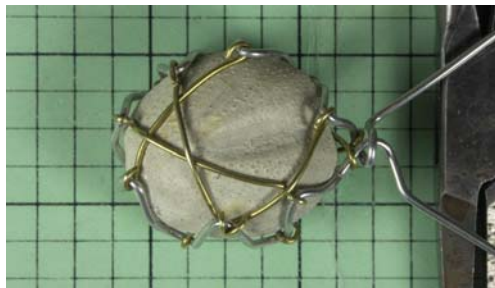


Figure 10 – The fossil fully secured in a delicate nest of brass wires.



Figure 11 – Bend each end of the aluminum wire into a loop and then secure the ends around the base of the loop.

I have enough aluminum wire left so that each end can be made into a loop with the ends wrapped securely around the base of the loop. Cut off the excess and deburr the wire. I now have a fossil securely wrapped in brass and aluminum that anyone will be proud to wear.

Figure 12 The addition of a hook and a feather will make your jewelry into a fishing plug with the added benefit of having the sinker built in.



This fossil jewelry might be too high-fashion for some potential customers. Figure 12 shows a variation that might appeal to sportspersons. By adding a hook and jamming a feather among the brass wires, you can convert this jewelry into a fishing plug with a built in sinker.

Do not worry if you have not quite followed the step by step pictures, the **April 1** General Meeting will provide everyone in attendance the opportunity to make their very own fossil pendant.

Safety: Incident Report: Lab Explosion

by Owen Martin

AFMS/SCFMS Safety Chairman

One of the largest SCFMS clubs recently had an incident that resulted in an explosion inside the club's building.

The explosion occurred on a Saturday morning and was caused when a torch being used in the jewelry room ignited gas that was leaking from a butane recharge canister about the size of a typical spray paint can. Although about a dozen members were in the building, there was only one person in the jewelry shop. The force of the explosion primarily vented upwards through the false ceiling and for the most part destroyed the panels when they rained down into the room. Luckily the individual in the room was not hurt by either the blast or falling debris, and the explosion did not result in a fire.

Subsequent analysis of the incident resulted in the following recommendations:

1. Properly secure all flammable materials used in the building. This includes acetylene bottles and aerosol cans.
2. Verify that all fire extinguishers are periodically inspected or changed out.
3. Review adequacy and effectiveness of emergency exit and egress paths.
4. Define a procedure for the use of open flame equipment.

It was determined that although an explosion had occurred, there was a significantly greater risk of a fire potentially occurring in the building.

My recommendation to all our member organizations is to look at their own facilities, review the recommendations above, and ask for help from their local Fire Marshall if necessary.

The last thing we want at one of our clubs is an explosion or fire that results in injury, death, or destruction of the building.

Thanks!



From Geologem 10/69 via MWF Newsletter 3/01
via T-Town Rockhound 5/01

A Late Happy New Year

by Bob Miller, AFMS President

The holidays have quickly come and gone and I'm sure that by now you've had your fill of roast turkey, turkey sandwiches, turkey casserole and that you're "turkeyed" out by now.

Around our house, February brings the winter "doldrums" as everyday routines seem to be the same this time of the year and with limited outside activities (the lawn doesn't need mowing, outdoor collecting trips aren't scheduled, and I'm not good at skiing... I usually leave three tracks). It is a good time to head for the workshop, dust off the equipment, check the summer collections, and get busy with a project.

What to do? I'm sure that your club or federation display case could use some sprucing up, or better yet, dig out your rule book (available from your regional federation supplies chair or via the AFMS Website) and give a competitive display a try at your next Federation show. Please note—the new 2011 rules are now being used, so be sure to obtain a copy of the new booklet. We could all use a few pointers to help us improve our skills.

Pam Hecht, the Endowment fund chair, would welcome some nice donated items for the drawing to be held at the convention in Syracuse, NY this year. Just send them to her (25393 Oak St; Calumet, MI 49913). Be sure to include a description of your donation, your name and address along with your estimate of the value of the item. All proceeds from ticket sales are invested, and only the INTEREST is used to fund programs that benefit ALL members. The more the fund has invested, the larger the value of the funds that can be used for different AFMS programs.

As I write this it's snowing again, so I'm off to shovel more snow—again. Bob

New AFMS Uniform Rules!

from B. Jay Bowman, Chair

The AFMS Uniform Rules Book has undergone a major revision for 2011. Some rules have been deleted, others added, and some sections revised to make the rules easier to understand and follow. Everyone who displays, whether in competition or not, should obtain a copy of the new book in order for you to help you put in a good display. Copies can be obtained from your regional federation supplies chair, or you can download a copy from the AFMS Web site.

As you prepare your exhibit for either the AFMS / EFMLS Convention in Syracuse this summer, feel free to contact me if you have any questions about any portion of the book. My e-mail is <bjb@wildblue.net>.

I look forward to seeing your exhibit this coming July at the convention and show in Syracuse.



AFMS Conservation & Legislation News

by John Martin, Chair

By now the 112th Congress has been seated and has been in session for about a month. Even though the 111th congress failed to pass the second “Omnibus Land Management Act,” S.303 “America’s Great Outdoors Act of 2010” and as S.2921 “California Desert Protection Act of 2010” died in committee, the battle for public land access is not over.

We did not accomplish any “Wins” this year, rather the legislation restricting the use of public lands was put on the back burner only to be reintroduced under a different title or attached to other legislative actions in this new congressional year. The environmental activist lobby has vowed to start their efforts anew with more vigor and determination than was exerted last year.

If the Rockhound Community just sits by as the environmental lobby takes action, we will eventually discover that all of our collecting sites have been added to more wilderness and our access roads and trails have been closed to travel except by foot traffic.

The restrictive legislation is not only affecting the western states, but it is now being proposed in several legislative acts on the eastern seaboard and some Midwestern states as well. As the new congressional year marches forward, the AFMS Conservation and Legislation Committee will be doing their best to keep on top of the issues and trying to keep the Rockhounding Community advised of the changing conditions.

As the new legislation becomes public and our collecting areas become at risk once again, it will take the combined effort of the Rockhounding Community as a whole to make a difference and to let our voices be heard in Washington and your state capital. This will be the only way to keep our Public Lands and our collecting areas open to all public users now and for future generations of Rockhounds.

We cannot do it alone. We need your help, so when it becomes time to contact your elected officials, please consider taking a little time and send that e-mail, fax, or make that phone call. To find your elected legislator and to see what the latest legislative activities are, the American Lands Access Association (ALAA) Web site is a good starting point (www.amlands.org).

For more information or advice on Conservation and Legislation, please contact the Committee Chair.

My contact information may be found on the AFMS Web site (www.amfed.org).

Having Fun: Junior Activities

by Jim Brace-Thompson
AFMS Junior Activities Chair

Motivating Kids to Exhibit

I'm entering 2011 as President of the California Federation, and my presidential theme for what I hope will prove to be my short, happy reign is "The Year of the Child." I'm sponsoring a special Outstanding Junior Exhibit award at our annual CFMS Show & Convention this May, where I'll select what I perceive to be the best junior exhibit whether entered as a competitive or noncompetitive display. I'll award it with a framed certificate, a \$200 cash prize from my own checkbook, and a specimen from my personal collection. While I've established this award as one concrete action in keeping with my theme for the year, a bigger reason is to encourage more juniors to create displays for our shows in general. I've seen a decline in junior exhibits; for instance, at our last combined AFMS/CFMS show, we didn't have a single junior exhibitor, and we've seen a number of years when we haven't been able to give out the Lillian Turner Award for an outstanding junior display at an AFMS show. It's time we all take action to encourage and motivate our younger members, and one way is by offering rewards and honors, as well as guidance.



Thus, I encourage all local societies to set aside time at one of your monthly meetings to encourage your junior members to participate in your local shows, and I encourage all regional federations to promote exhibiting by juniors at your federation shows. Hold a special workshop for kids to talk about the basics of exhibiting and to give them hands-on lessons in arranging specimens in a display case. Get commitments from kids—and their parents—to enter displays, either individually or a group display put together by several kids. Help them along and stay in touch with them right up through set-up day. To motivate them, consider a contest with prizes for best first-time exhibitor, best mineral display, best fossil display, best lapidary display, best educational display, and so forth. Prizes could be certificates, ribbons, mineral or fossil specimens, coupons to purchase items from dealers at your show, Rockhound pins and patches available through Frank Mullaney of Rocky Five (www.rockyfive.net), educational patches and activity books available through Diamond Dan (www.diamonddanpublications.net) etc. There's also a Showmanship Badge available through the AFMS Future Rockhounds of American Badge Program (http://www.amfed.org/fra/fra_badge.htm).

And for those of you in the Eastern Federation, especially folks within driving distance of Syracuse, New York, don't forget that a combined AFMS/EFMLS show is fast coming your way! July 7-10 is just around the corner, and we'd sure like to see the Lillian Turner Award (a savings bond for the best Jr. exhibit) make its way into a deserving junior exhibitor's hands this year. So please get out there and come up with ways to encourage more kids to make the leap by guiding them along, by making exhibiting rewarding—and by making it fun!

Largest Gem in the World—Tsavorite

One of the Coolest Stones at Tucson in 2007

via Cedar Valley Gems 5/2007 and The Rockpile 7/2007

Green garnet was discovered in 1968 in the Tsavo National Game Park in Kenya. When discovered, miners thought they had discovered a new source for demantoid garnet. High quality tsavorite is rarer than emerald, is cleaner, more brilliant, is not altered with oil or heat. Plus, tsavorite is available for $\frac{1}{4}$ of the price of emerald. Today there are small mines operating in Kenya and Tanzania. As a general rule, tsavorite is found in small sizes, and a three-carat gem tsavorite is rare although occasionally a 10–20 carat is seen.

The 325.13 gem tsavorite was displayed at the AGTA show. An exceptional 925 carat tsavorite was recently found in Karo area in Block D at Merelani, Tanzania at a depth of 450 feet. The depth where this stone is found is really deep in a third world country. You have to remember the miners have no ventilation, and it is extremely dangerous to be at these levels. The rough is believed to be the largest ever discovered. From the rough a 62 carat, a 120 carat, a 307 carat, and the 325.13 were cut. Only the 120 and the 325 are clean. The 325.13 is a vivid gem green color. It measures 42.11 x 36.46 x 28.34. The issue with the stone is the proportions. The culet is cut slightly off center and a small window is evident. The price—a cool \$2.2 million.



*By Erston Barnhart
from Rockbuster News 11/00
via T-Town Rockhound 4/01*

Show Time 2011

February 26-27	Pasadena, TX	Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society Pasadena Convention Center 7902 Fairmont Parkway Al Pennington gapenning@earthlink.net www.clgms.org
March 5-6	Big Spring, TX	Prospectors Club Howard County Fair Barn
March 5-6	Robstown, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Regional Fairground
March 19-20	Live Oak, TX	Southwest Gem & Mineral Society Live Oak Civic Center, 8101 Pat Booker Rd.
April 1-3	Macomb, Illinois	National Fossil Exposition XXXIII Western Hall, Western Illinois University Tom Williams, Paleotom234@dishmail.net Steve Holley, Ifossil@hotmail.com www.midamericapaleo.org
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 marybrogan@rocketmail.com; www.cdgmcc.org
April 9-10	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center, North 6th & Pine
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. cathypatterson@verizon.net; www.gmss.us
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
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

2011		March				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 Daylight Saving Begins	14 1:00 Day Light Section	15 7:30 Paleo Section	16 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	17 St. Patrick's Day	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	29	30 10-5 Shop Open	31		

2011		April				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 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	7 7:30 Archaeology Group	8	9 10-5 Shop Open
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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	25	26 7:30 General Meeting	27 10-5 Shop Open	28	29	30 10-5 Shop Open

***The* BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

10805 BROOKLET

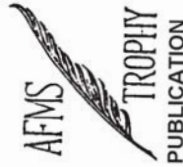
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1998 - 1st (Large)
2000 - 1st (Large)
2003 - 1st (Large)
2005 - 1st (Large)
2006 - 1st (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)
2008 - 1st (Large)
2009 - 1st (Large)
2010 - 1st (Large)



AFMS

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

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