



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

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

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## President's Message

*by Steve Blyskal*

**M**any of you were there in August for the special auction. We gave out over 50 paddles and ran out of chairs for everyone. Thank you all for coming and for bidding—loud and long. Those of you who stuck it out until the very end heard the astounding total. We now have enough funds to send a donation to *Rocks and Minerals* magazine for the next six years. This important donation to the color fund of the “Connoisseur’s Choice” column in memory of Art Smith will put our club’s name in the magazine six times a year at a minimum. This is wonderful publicity for our club since the magazine has a large circulation and goes worldwide. Several new members in the Mineral Section said they knew about us by seeing the acknowledgement in the magazine, before they got to Houston. Thanks also go to the many generous donations from members. Gail Spann, Paul Chapman, Tim and Holly Smith, Sam and Ann Koster, Karen Burns, Maryanne Mitscherling, and John Mitcherling are to be especially thanked for their major donations of minerals, jewelry, and lapidary materials. Many other members gave nice and unusual items, and our thanks go out to them also. Sigrid and I catalogued all the donations, and I photographed many of them so those of you who couldn’t get to the clubhouse in August could see many of the donations on your computers. Wayne Barnett and Kathy Konkel gave major assistance



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*Continued on page 4*

## Upcoming Programs

**October 25--Farrar Stockton:** He will take HG&MS to New Zealand for our October program. Farrar visited these far away islands in December 2009. As a country settled first by Polynesians and then by people from all over the world, New Zealand has many stories to tell. It has different landscapes, environments, and ecosystems which give visitors unique opportunities for photography. Farrar will take us from Auckland on the north island to Wellington and Christchurch

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

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## Purpose of HGMS

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

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

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

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

*President's Message continued from page 1*

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at the auction. They kept track of all the bidders and their winnings and collected the money afterwards. Wayne also assisted me in the auctioneering, which helped keep the meeting from going too late in the evening.

The Franz family had a reunion at Rock Acres, their family cabins outside Idaho Springs, Colorado, over Labor Day, so we took a week off to go there and join Sigrid's family. Cooler weather helped dim some of the recent memories of the brutal August heat we have all endured, and we even had two days of rain, fortunately after everyone had left the cabins. I've never enjoyed rain on a vacation, but seeing and feeling it was great this time. So what do two geologists do on vacation in the Rocky Mountains? Look at rocks and minerals of course! We visited the Geology Museum at Colorado School of Mines in Golden (look for a talk on the museum at a Mineral Section meeting later this year) and enjoyed looking at and photographing the many beautiful and unusual specimens on display. Former HGMS member Ed Raines works at the museum and has some of his rare Colorado minerals on display, so there is a Houston connection. This museum is highly recommended if you are visiting Colorado, and Golden is a neat town to explore. In addition to the museum we walked the famous hogback outcrop on I-70, which is cut through the first ridge of hills in front of the Front Range. Then Sigrid took me to Red Rocks. The park and amphitheatre contain spectacular outcrops of red Pennsylvanian age sandstone and conglomerate, and there are concerts there all summer. Sigrid used to go to see rock groups there in the 70s and 80s and has some tales to tell about the concerts, including the times she snuck in to see the concerts for free by climbing around Creation Rock for a highly placed seat. What really turned me on was the bronze plaque showing the unconformity between the 370 million yr. Old Fountain Fm and the 1.7 billion year old PreCambrian gneiss at the core of the Front Range. That's some dramatic geology!

We saw more red rocks to the north of the ski town of Vail on a drive up a gravel road in a light rain. Vail is over 50 miles and 2 passes west of Red Rocks, so it made sense that these rocks were deposited on the western slopes of the ancestral Rockies. We found a few minerals for ourselves in a little rock shop in Idaho Springs – specimens of smoky quartz, pyrite, calcite, and gold in quartz, all from well-known Colorado localities. I also collected and shipped home a box of specimens for the school collections – white milky quartz from the many quartz veins that criss-cross the gold country where the cabins are located.

This has been a year of calamities for the country, and Texas has not had an exemption from this. Many people have been displaced or lost their homes due to the 180+ fires across the state. HGMS members who live near Bastrop have so far been spared losses, and the Rock Shop near Smithville was just outside the burn zone, but many have been forced to evacuate and haven't gotten back to their homes yet. Meanwhile Vermont and New Jersey, two states I know well and just visited, have had to deal with too much water, not once but twice with Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in the same month. It's now much harder to get around Vermont since 200 major and minor roads were washed out. Who knows when our drought will break or the East Coast will dry

out. What a year.

Despite the drought, some rockhounds are rejoicing. Lower water levels on many lakes are exposing rocks and deposits usually buried under water and sediment. Pegmatite minerals in Lake Buchanan, agates in Falcon Reservoir and petrified palm wood in Choke Canyon are just a few of the areas rockhounds are checking out. Plus there has been some rain in the Big Bend area of West Texas, which improves the agate hunting out that way. Hope you were able to make it to the Walker Ranch in September. We all look forward to fall and the resumption of rockhound and fossil field trips across the state of Texas. Keep an eye peeled for fires though. I'll report on the north country next month, as I'm off to Calgary to join Sigrid shortly.

### *Upcoming Programs--Continued from page 1*

to Queenstown on the South Island pointing out waterfalls and other spectacular sights including Mt. Cook and Milford Sound.

**N**ovember 22: To be announced

### **The Arrow Point**

*by Kemp Maer*

*Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society*

**T**he old man broke the heavy stone,  
And broke it further still.  
He chose a piece most suitable,  
And shaped it with his skill.  
A strip of hide, a slender branch,  
Prepared it for the kill.

Lost, discarded, who can say?  
Three hundred years or more it lay.  
Until a gopher, in his toil,  
Brought it up mixed with soil.  
Then a rain shower washed it free,  
And left it waiting there for me.

## Old Geezer in Arizona Plus Other History

by John Emerson

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**O**n a tourist trip in our RV after I retired from Bechtel in 1986, Bobbie and I stopped at a rock shop in Tucson, Arizona. There were several people in the shop when I suddenly dropped my trousers down to the floor! There were gasps, giggles, and exclamations. My problem was a scorpion crawling up my leg! I brushed it off before it could sting me. In retrospect, I probably should have let it sting me and then sued the shop.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Great Depression was still causing much trouble, and meat was expensive. Dad was general superintendent for an independent oil company and earned the fabulous salary of \$250 per month and a company car! Dad and I made sure that we both got our limits in wild game. Especially the two buck deer each—sometimes he “helped” me get one of mine. In those days it was against the law to kill a doe or buck with less than 3 points. Also in those days, few people (if any) had a home freezer, except for the ice cube maker in the refrigerator. To cover this, there was a large “freezer store” in our hometown of Alice, Texas. It was across the street from the REX Theater on Main Street. They rented large locked drawers in a freezer room - sort of like a bank’s safety deposit boxes. They also had a butcher service for wild game and cattle. They would cut up and package deer or calves and put them in your box in the freezer room for a reasonable price. Along with an occasional javelina hog, doves, and quail, we did well for meat. I would ride my bicycle downtown to the freezer to get meat for our meals.

Dad and I hunted on ranches owned by Dad’s friends and “game leases” operated by oil field supply houses where Dad bought supplies. Our only cost was for our camping gear and food. We used the company car with the company owner’s permission. He and Dad were friends since before I was born, and Dad worked for him until he retired.

**To repeat parts of previous stories:** After I finally graduated from A&M in 1955 (I started in 1944) with a degree in Petroleum Engineering, I went to work for Seaboard Oil Company as a field engineer in Sweetwater in West Texas. In 1956, TEXACO bought Seaboard, but I refused to work for them. At that time TEXACO had a bad reputation concerning treatment of their employees. We moved back to Alice briefly, and I went to work for a small independent company named Gas Gathering Company in Corpus Christi. We bought natural gas at the wellhead for \$0.10 per thousand cubic feet (mcf) and sold it for \$0.12 per mcf to major pipeline systems. Now, gas is \$4.10/mcf! I was in charge of the design and building of separation, metering, gathering lines, and pipelines to major pipelines for sale of the gas.

In late 1956, Gas Gathering Company was bought (along with me) by Coastal States Gas Producing Company. Please check out this company on Google - lots of data on it. To those who don’t know or remember, Coastal was mostly owned and operated by Oscar Wyatt before he sold out to El Paso Energy.

I have to say that he was a good man as a boss. If you were loyal to him, he would do

anything to help you on a personal basis. I started as assistant to the Chief Engineer until he got into an argument with Oscar at one of our regular Monday morning staff meetings. To end the argument, Oscar said, "You are fired!" The Chief Engineer said, "You can't do without me. You will miss me." Oscar said "Yeah, I'll miss you like the hole it leaves when you pull your hand out of a bucket of water. John, you are Chief Engineer."

My only problem with Oscar was that he often wanted me to "stretch the truth" about gas reserves when I was testifying at Federal Power Commission in Washington and when he was applying for company financing in New York. I refused and, fortunately for me, he was impressed with my honesty, forgave me, and did the testifying about reserves himself. He had no problems doing that.

Few people know that Oscar was a "Sargent pilot" and as a Sargent, served as a pilot in the Air Force in the Pacific during WWII. A rare breed. He used his GI Bill from WWII to get a degree in engineering from Texas A&M. I did the same with my GI Bill from the Korean War.

Another note on Oscar - he kept a tape recorder by his bed and sometimes he would wake up during the night with an idea and start recording it. He would often go back to sleep before he finished the recording, and then he would bring it to me at the office to try to figure out what he meant by his mumbling.

While we were in Corpus Christie, both of our boys were born. Rob in August, 1958, and Lee in July, 1960.

In late 1960 I was offered a position as General Manager and Chief Engineer for the newly organized Alamo Gas Supply Co. in San Antonio. At a salary of \$1200 per month! It was an offer I could not refuse, and we moved to San Antonio. We (Alamo) built a 30" gas pipeline from South Texas to San Antonio with connections to existing gas gathering systems along the way--some of which I designed and built when I worked for Gas Gathering Co. and Coastal States. The system was to supply the City of San Antonio with gas for the electricity generating plants and the business and home gas distribution systems. Alamo had outbid the existing gas supply company when their contract expired.

I don't remember exactly when, but while with Alamo (1960-1965), I read about the early building of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants. The gas coming in from our main pipeline was "rich" and had a BTU (British Thermal Units) content of about 1200 BTU per cubic foot. Our contract with San Antonio called for delivery of 1000 BTUs minimum. I thought that if we built an LNG plant on our line at San Antonio we could recover the excess BTUs as a liquid at a profit. I finally convinced Glen Martin (president of Alamo) that it would make money, which got his attention. He always said that if you ever get a million dollars, more was just a way of keeping score. The plant paid for itself in six months. Plus, because the gas to the city was "leaner," they had to buy more mcf for their systems. They were "ticked," but could not do anything about it.

In 1965 I went to work for Bechtel in San Francisco—the rest is history!

I had not thought about it before now, but it may be they hired me because of the LNG plant experience with Alamo, since my first project for Bechtel was Project Engineer for two LNG plants in Algeria.

As a side note, my older son, Rob (53 years old now), has worked on three Regassification Terminals for LNG in recent years--two in the US and one overseas. I liquified the gas in Algeria, and he turned the liquid back into gas in the US and Italy. One of his plants was in the Adriatic Sea located offshore of Italy. It was a Gravity Base Structure made of concrete to be engineered, constructed, and operated offshore. Some of the LNG came by ship from the plants that I worked on as Project Engineer in Algeria in 1965/67. Another note: In 1982/84 I was Assistant Project Manager for a Gravity Based Structure for an offshore oil platform for Norway.

And to think when we lived overseas, Rob swore that he would never do work for an engineering, construction company or work overseas.

My younger son, Lee (51 now), swore the same as well—now he works for an engineering company in the natural gas business. He has not lived overseas, but has worked briefly in Brazil and Korea. Of course, I spent some time in Korea 1952–53, during the unpleasantness there.

### School Display Time

*by Margaret Good*

*Austin Gem & Mineral Society member  
from The Stone Chipper 9/201*

**T**he students are back in school  
Where they learn the golden rule  
Also math, science, and engineers;  
Keeps them busy many years.

Students ask before we're there  
Where are the rocks those people share?  
We want to see them! We can't wait.  
Wow, we sure like to see them. They are great!

Yes. Time for gems and minerals to be displayed,  
So geology and hobby can be arrayed.  
Eleven schools here in the county of Hays  
Are happy to see these 'most every day.

## HGMS Archeology Group Celebrates Becoming a Section at Their September 4, 2011 Meeting

by *Burton Dworsky*

The Archeology Section held its September 1, 2011 meeting at the HGMS clubhouse with 18 members present. The first meeting of the Section was called to order by Chairman Dr. Garth Clark at 7:35 p.m. Vice-Chairman Terry Proctor moved that the Minutes for the August 4, 2011 meeting be approved as printed in *The Backbender's Gazette*. The motion was seconded by Bob Moore, and the vote of approval was unanimous.

The meeting was opened with congratulations on becoming a Section followed by further discussion of legalities surrounding archeology and just picking up artifacts off the ground. Also everyone was reminded that there was an upcoming field trip to McFaddin Beach on September 17. Also there was discussion of a trip to the Brazos River on September 11 if enough people were interested. Terry Proctor brought up that since we are now a Section, someone would have to be selected to represent us on the Board. After some discussion, it was decided to address the question of who during the October meeting.

With the conclusion of business, the meeting moved on to a talk by Terry Proctor on the Gobekli Tepe site in Turkey that dates back 11,000 years ago. The site is believed to be the world's first temple complex and was built by hunter/gathers. Armed with handouts, Terry led a lively discussion on the significance of this site to archeologists and anthropologists and how it is rewriting what we know about hunter/gathers and religion.

Everyone was eager for Show and Tell since many things were brought. Tom Schwartz started things off with three arrowheads and the book *Authenticating Ancient Indian Artifacts* by Jim Bennette. Jon Hart wowed everyone again with several cases of points and a delicate Caddo Indian pot he had pieced back together. He also had some bison teeth from the Barksdale site that were unearthed in the same level with early paleo artifacts. Bob Moore and his wife Nancy showed a 300,000 year-old hand ax from Egypt and a Ecuadorian ocarina whistle. Robert Hoover came with two artifacts from farm fields in Illinois. One was a late archaic (3000–5000 years old) ax head and the other an ax head from the woodlands period. Rod Underwood showed a bison tooth and elk tooth necklace along with two arrowheads. Lastly, Mike Dawkins had some rock chips believed to be from the making of stone tools or projectiles.

At 9:10 Dr. Garth Clark moved and it was seconded by Burton Dworsky to close the first meeting of the Archeology Section.

In attendance at the meeting were Troy Bell, Brian Carr, Garth Clark, Mike Dawkins, Burton Dworsky, Jon Hart, Robert Hoover, Bob Moore, Nancy Engelhardt-Moore, Scott Parker, Deidre Prince, Terry Proctor, Peter Ragusa, Tom Schwartz, Lisa Schwartz, Charles Tibbits, and Rod Underwood.

**A reminder:** the Archeology Section meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the HGMS Clubhouse, and the next meeting will be October 6, 2011. So, if you have an interest in archeology or have some artifacts to show, please come join us and have some fun.

## Mineral Section Programs

*by Paul Brandes*

**B**elow is the schedule of events for the Mineral Section.

**October 5:** Work night to begin preparations for the Gem and Mineral Show

**October 19:** Quincy Mining Company Past and Present, by Paul Brandes

**November 2:** Final preparations for the Show

**November 16:** "Newfoundland's Geologic Paradise – Minerals, Rocks, Fossils, Icebergs, Whales, and Vikings, oh my," to be presented by Tricia Rittaler

**December 2:** To be announced

**December 16:** No meeting. See you next year!

## Archeology Section Birth Announcement

*by Terry Proctor*

**A** new Section has been born to Houston Gem & Mineral Society. It is the Archeology Section. The Board approved the formation of an Archeology Group in late 2008 at the request of then President, Terry Proctor. Because duties as President took priority, the Archeo Group didn't have its first meeting until November, 2010.

At the August 23, 2011 General Membership meeting, HGMS membership unanimously approved the Archeo Group to become the eighth Section of Houston Gem & Mineral Society. Eighteen Archeology Section members attended the first Archeology Section membership meeting on Thursday September 1, 2011. The Archeo Section is already responsible for a number of new members having joined HGMS. The Section has already had several field trips with more planned for this year.

For the first time the Archeo Section will be present as a Section at the Houston Gem & Mineral Society Show at the Humble Civic Center, November 11, 12 and 13, 2011.

If you haven't yet attended this new Section's meetings in the past, they meet on the

**first Thursday** of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the HGMS clubhouse. There have always been Show and Tell items present to fascinate Archeo members. Discussions are lively, and several Archeo members have had extensive background in Archeological digs, collecting, and study which they share with others. It is anticipated that the Archeo Section is on its way to being one of the largest Sections of HGMS in the future. If you belong to HGMS, then you already belong to the Archeo Section if you wish to attend.

For more information you can contact me, Terry Proctor, J.D., Vice-Chairman of the Archeological Section at my law office (713) 453-8338 or my e-mail address: [auraman@swbell.net](mailto:auraman@swbell.net).



Seventeen of the 18 members present at the September 1, 2011 first meeting of the Archeology Section (18th person, a new visitor, kindly took the photo)

FYI: On left are: Terrell William “Terry” Proctor, J.D.—Vice Chairman; Garth Clark, M.D.—Chairman; Burton Dworsky—Secretary.

### **Mistaken Identities = Shattered Illusions, So Very Appropriate!**

*Author anonymous by request*

*via The Petrified Digest 4/2010, via The Stone Chipper 9/2011*

*(Note: Full appreciation of the following story requires one to be both cat lover and rockhound.)*

**A**s she hands him the object, she is thinking it is one of the most beautiful rocks she has EVER found. She says to him, “See, here is something I found when I was four or five years old, and I have kept it all of my life.” He replies, “Oh, a melted marble.”

After they went rocking at Bettas Road, he says to her, “Look what I found when I

cleaned out my pockets! Have you ever seen a prettier piece of Ellensburg Blue? True, it's small, but look how it glows. I think I can make a ring set or something out of it." As he places the little Blue in their tiny, but growing, E.B. display, she thinks enviously that he ALWAYS finds the best rocks.

She keeps thinking that until the day she rearranges their display and picks up the little Blue – and a piece of it falls off. A closer look and a pinch reveals the true identity of the "rock." It is a piece of silica crystal cat litter.

## General Meeting Minutes

*August 23, 2011*

*by Sarah Metsa*

*HGMS Secretary*

**T**he meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

**Visitors:** We had a number of visitors this meeting. Albert Morone who is a collector of stone points and petrified wood from the Colorado River, Moni and Gary Harwell of Pearland also visited, Gary is in the mineralogy business. Janine Weber is a geologist. Merle & Billie Hauschel and Ron Rogers also visited. Annette & Philip Kinslow joined as new members. Annette is a multi-media artist with many years of experience in beading and wire wrapping.

**Prior Month General Meeting Minutes:** Terry Proctor moved that the July General Meeting minutes be accepted as published in the BBG. The motion was seconded, and it passed unanimously.

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

**Program:** There was no program this meeting due to the Art Smith Fund Auction.

## Officer, Committee, and Section Reports

**Show Committee:** Reminder of important dates: Show Auction – October 15; Labeling & Volunteer Calling Party – September 24. We still need many volunteers for the show itself. Please contact Theresa or Chris Peek or Mary Ann Mitscherling to see where you can help.

**Outreach News:** Scott Singleton and Inda Immega will have an HGMS table at the Houston Geological Society's Annual Family Earth Sciences Festival at HMNS on Saturday, October 8 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Scott will have a table for petrified wood, and we are also trying to arrange to have a lapidary table setup.

**Education Committee:** Brian Honsinger has had to discontinue his duties as Education Chair. Wayne Barnett will be taking over for him. Wayne pointed out what a tremendous job Brian did as the Education Chair and asked us all to thank Brian for all the work he put into the program over the past few years. Next Wayne announced a cabochon making class and a PMC Intro class on August 28, a faceting class on September 11, and advisement that more classes would be forthcoming and posted on

the HGMS Web site. Wayne also brought up the issue of students reserving seats in classes and then not showing up on the day class starts. This is unacceptable for many reasons; therefore Wayne will be making a non-refundable deposit mandatory for all upcoming classes.

**Clubhouse Info E-mails:** Neal Immega is out of town for a few weeks. Wayne Barnett will be taking over for him in sending the club e-mail notices.

**Archeology Group:** Terry Proctor moved to amend the club Bylaws in order to accept the Archeology Group as a new Archeology Section. Garth Clark seconded the motion. Discussion period included concerns that the Section could be indiscriminate in their judgment about Section members potentially collecting scientifically important items. The response was that the Section will follow the same code of conduct rules as the Paleo Section follows and will respect valid scientific sites. The vote to create the Archeology Section passed unanimously. Terry Proctor then moved to add an Archeology Section Board Representative to the Board of Directors. Garth Clark seconded. No discussion was merited, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business:** None discussed in order to start auction in a timely manner.

**New Business:** None discussed in order to start auction in a timely manner.

**Door Prize Drawing:** Sarah Metsa won a piece of petrified wood.

**Show and Tell:** Jon Hart brought a case of stone points from a site called the "Blue Hole" on the Sabinal River, located in Uvalde County. Most of the points he purchased from another digger, but he did have two keepers he found himself.

**Adjourn:** Nancy Fischer moved that the meeting adjourn and the auction commence. The motion was seconded and it passed unanimously.

### Board of Director's Meeting Minutes

*September 9, 2011*

*by Sarah Metsa*

*HGMS Secretary*

	President – Steve Blyskal	X	Beading Rep – Jillynn Hailes
X	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President – Ray Kizer		Faceting Rep – Gary Tober
	2 <sup>nd</sup> 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
			Archeology Rep - TBD

**T**he meeting was called to order at 7:43 p.m. with a quorum of seven members present.

**Previous Month Board of Directors Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the August 2, 2011 Board Meeting were published in the September 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 the HGMS 2011 Scholarship check for \$2,500 was sent to Chase Jennings on August 12, and it was confirmed received. Rodney also provided an update on the bank accounts, and he reported that HGMS is in good financial condition.

### **Officer, Committees and Section Reports:**

**Beading Section:** Jillynn Hailes is teaching September's project. The supply list is posted on the Web site.

**Daylight Section:** Val Link finished his series on riveting in August. In September, Andy Anderson will be giving a travelogue about his trip out west.

**Faceting Section:** The August meeting was given by Wayne Barnett and Margo Bedman, and it was about orienting a stone in order to achieve the best cut and internal light.

**Lapidary Section:** There was no representative available for the Lapidary Section.

**Mineral Section:** The first September meeting will be a chance for members to discuss their summer vacations and to show any new acquisitions. The second September meeting will be a review of mineral cleaning methods as covered in a summer meeting.

**Paleo Section:** The August meeting was given by Neal Immega, and it was about the evolution of birds. Neal will also be giving the September program although the topic isn't settled yet.

**Archeology Section:** The Archeology Group was approved by a vote of the members attending the August 23 General Meeting and given full Section status. They will have a representative on the HGMS Board of Directors and one vote for the Section at the Board meetings. Terry Proctor reported that there will be a fieldtrip to McFadden Beach in September, and that the September meeting had 19 attendees.

**Education Committee:** Wayne Barnett has assumed the role and responsibilities of the Education Chair. Brian Honsinger is unable to continue this role due to health issues. Wayne has already scheduled several classes. They are posted on the HGMS Web site under the Class Schedules link.

### **Old Business:**

**Air Conditioning Issues in Library:** Gary Tober contacted John Mitscherling to inspect the air conditioner and ducts. There is nothing wrong with them, and air is flowing to the library. Members may be changing the temperature on the thermostats incorrectly, and that could be part of the problem. It was determined that as one enters the General Meeting room from the garage area, the thermostat on the left-hand wall

(by the library) should remain at 83 and the thermostat on the right-hand wall (by the bathrooms) should remain at 78 degrees. This is because the thermostat control by the library controls the General Meeting room, and the thermostat control by the bathrooms controls the perimeter rooms and the library. If the General Meeting room thermostat is set lower than or very close to the thermostat for the perimeter rooms, then the air conditioner for the perimeter rooms will never turn on. Sarah Metsa will make labels with this information and put them on each thermostat, and she will also update the sign-in sheet to contain instructions for each thermostat individually.

**Giveaways for General Meetings:** Ray Kizer located some items for door prizes and has put them in the office to be used during the meeting. Donations are welcome. Please give them to any of the Board members for storing.

**HMGS Earth Science/Jewelry Arts Scholarship:** The 2011 scholarship was awarded to Chase Jennings by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors during the August 2, 2011 meeting. A check for \$2,500 was mailed to Chase on August 12, 2011.

**New Member Orientation on September 10, 2011:** Terry Proctor received no responses about the event, so he has decided to postpone it for a later date when there may be more interest.

**Roof Repair:** The original roof repair estimate made by Jorge Soriano was for approximately \$550 and was approved by the Board in 2010. Terry Proctor contacted Mr. Soriano to determine if the contractor has business insurance. He does not have such insurance which was a concern to the Board. Terry Proctor moved and Jillynn Hailes seconded a motion that Mr. Soriano sign our Assumption of Risk Form in order to mitigate our liability due to Mr. Soriano's lack of insurance. The motion was discussed, and it passed unanimously. Terry will contact Mr. Soriano in order to arrange for the work to be completed.

### **New Business:**

**Nominating Committee:** A Nominating Committee must be selected so that their recommendations and nominations for the 2012 Board of Directors can be presented to the club at the October General Meeting and voted on during the November General Meeting. Ray Kizer and Steve Blyskal will be contacting the recommended members of the Nominating Committee so that they can begin making nominations.

**Adjourn:** Terry Proctor moved and Jillynn Hailes seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.



## AFMS Annual Show—Gems Along The Erie Canal

*A Rousing Success!!!*

*by Bob Miller*

*AFMS President*

**B**y all accounts, the 2011 AFMS Convention hosted by the Gem & Mineral Society of Syracuse this past July was a rousing success. Those assembled were greeted by a cadre of eager and friendly club members, treated to warm hospitality, enjoyed comfortable accommodations and good meeting facilities.

Both the annual Uniform Rules Committee meeting and AFMS meeting went smoothly and quickly. The URC committee made a few changes that will take effect this coming January. Details of these will be forthcoming next month, and revised pages for the Rules Book will be available in late December from your Regional Supplies Chair.

There were no major issues to be discussed at the AFMS meeting, and most officers and committee chairs had submitted reports in advance of the meeting. New officers for 2011-12 were elected, and the budget was approved. A new format for the popular Judges Training Seminars was approved with the new scheme beginning in spring 2012. Training sessions will be held in a different region each year, usually in conjunction with a club or federation show in the region. Participants - one from each regional federation - will be invited to attend and will receive a stipend to offset a portion of their expenses for attending.

Both the AFMS and EFMLS (host federation) normally hold a Cracker Barrel during their conventions. This year, following the theme "Gems Along the Erie Canal," the Syracuse club invited everyone to a gathering along a portion of the historic Erie Canal which runs through the region. Those attending enjoyed a canal boat ride along the canal, delicious snacks, and an opportunity to view an aqueduct built to carry the canal over a local stream, restored canal store, and other exhibits. Everyone attending had a fantastic time.

The banquet and Editor/Webmaster breakfasts also proceeded well with numerous awards...presented to appreciative exhibitors, editors, and webmasters. Keynote speaker for the banquet was none other than Bob Jones, Sr. Editor of *Rock & Gem Magazine*, the official magazine of the AFMS. Bob regaled the group with humorous stories about some of the important early lapidaries in the U.S....along with some of their exploits.

And then there was the show itself! Sixty-six retail and wholesale dealers offered their wares for sale. In addition, the club had a variety of demonstrations in jewelry and cab making; held a variety of mini-jewelry classes that the public could attend for a modest fee; an active kids area, UV demo and display and had a wonderful roster of talks--including one featuring the AFMS Juniors Chair, Jim Brace-Thompson and local artist, Darryl Powell of "Diamond Dan" fame.

Numerous displays graced the hall - a dozen entered in competition. One earned a coveted "100" score—and it was a display entered by a junior exhibitor who chose to

enter in the adult master category!...Non-competitive displays were also excellent and included a display of two of the large gems cut by John Sinkankas from the Smithsonian and a collection of unusual gems from the Lilian Turner collection as well as fossils, minerals, jewelry, and the local favorite, “Herkimer” Diamonds.

We certainly thank the members of the Gem & Mineral Society of Syracuse and the Eastern Federation for hosting a wonderful convention and week-long event. The club, its members, and especially those who did the major organizing have something to be proud of.

### **Bench Tips**

*by Brad Smith*

*More BenchTips by Brad Smith are at  
groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/Ball Burs or  
facebook.com/BenchTips  
Ball Burs*

**I** use ball burs quite a bit for carving and for cleaning up bits of solder that need to be removed. Ball burs seem to be more controllable than other cutting burs. They're less apt to grab and walk over your piece leaving nasty scars. And I've found that size matters. The large 8–10 millimeter size is a useful size for carving off bulk material while the small half-millimeter or less size can be used at high speed for signing your name on the back of the piece.

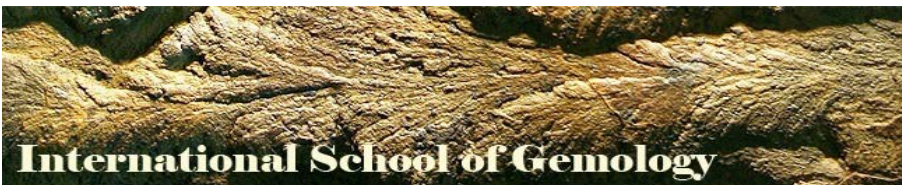
### **Cleaning Steel Shot**

Steel shot in a vibratory or rotary tumbler works great to burnish up your finished silver pieces. Surfaces are shined and hardened by the shot impinging on it. Carbon steel shot can get rusty, and even stainless steel can develop a blackish coating that's hard to remove. My solution of choice to clean the shot is Classic Coke. Just pour an ounce or two over the shot and let the tumbler run for an hour or so. A bad case might require a second cleaning. I'm no chemist, but I've heard that it's the phosphoric acid in Coke that does the trick.

While you're waiting for the shot to clean up, just settle back and enjoy the rest of the Coke.

### **Deburring a Hole**

When you drill a hole, there's usually a burr produced on the underside of the metal. Typically you would then file or sand this smooth, but doing so will put scratches on your piece that will take time to polish off. A quick way to remove the burr is to grab a drill that's about three times as large as your hole. Simply twist it in the hole to cut off the burr. I usually do this by hand, but if you have many holes to do, put the drill into a holder like a pin vice.



a publication of the International School of Gemology...14.September.2011....

## ISG: The Ultimate Road Cut Trip

*by Robert James*

*President, International School of Gemology*

*Submitted by Steve Blyskal*

I admit it—I love to stop at road cuts and study the geology—to the point that I have purchased the whole set of geology textbooks from the University of Texas San Antonio student book store. Due to lack of time I cannot actually start their



program, but I am very much enjoying the study anyway.

One of the things I have had reinforced by this study is that every day we pass by some of the most interesting geology simply by driving to our daily life events. In my case, the drive from San Antonio to Bowie, Texas takes me through about 300 million years of geology from the Cretaceous period just outside my back door at the Balcones Fault, and back 300 million years to the Pennsylvanian period close to my mother's house in Bowie. The drive up US 281 virtually follows a time machine with road cuts exposing the formations created by the geological events.

There is one in particular that has always interested me. It is a tilted formation of sandstone layers from the Pennsylvanian period just outside of—well, I am not going to tell you that. In a minute you will see why.

If you look at the images above that my wife took while waiting patiently during one

visit to this road cut, you will see that there are huge sandstone boulders that also have layers of fairly thin sandstone rock. These layers represent what is now the Permian Basin that is so rich in oil. This basin was on the west side of a huge mountain range back when what would become the Republic of Texas was spooning the future nation of France during the days of the Pangaea super continent. Having married a French girl, I can attest that Texas must have been a very happy place back then. But I digress.

### **Central Texas circa 300 million years ago...**

The mountains were known as the Ouachita Mountains and were larger than the current Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Although now worn down over eons of time, the original uplifting of the Ouachita Mountain range caused a shallow sea basin to form on its west side in what is now West Texas. That was due to the terrain to the west lowering as the mountains were pushed upward. The result was a shallow sea that eventually filled in with sediments and sea creatures, animals and plants, and other stuff from the time. Eventually the area filled in completely forming the oil- and coal-rich Permian Basin of West Texas.

### **Fast Forward to 2011**

Over time the layers of sediment were pressed into sandstone rock and were tilted upward in one direction. Eventually these were exposed in a road cut just north of....oops, almost did it again. Let's just say somewhere north of San Antonio. At any rate, these boulders and strata of sandstone formed a time machine of sorts with the sediments of the shallow sea being lowest, a mud flat formation next upward, and then trees, ferns, and grasses in higher elevations.

That is what I wanted to find here. I wanted to climb around the rocks and see if I could find specimens of all three epochs of time in this location when it was part of Pangaea.

Here is what I found.....

I climbed up under the large boulders with a crow bar and leveraged out layers of sandstone from the formation. Layer by layer I got specimens ranging from a half kilo in weight to over 20 kilos.

### **The Shallow Sea Specimens**

The lowest level yielded sandstone sheets that demonstrated wave action of the ancient shallow sea. I had seen these before around the Bowie area but not so graphically demonstrated and perfectly formed and preserved. This was stage one of my quest, and I was not disappointed. At the top of the next page you see the sediment bottom of this ancient shallow sea perfectly preserved. It looks very much like a modern day lake shore with the exception that these specimens are over 300 million years old and represent a shallow sea in what is now a very high and dry location.

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



### The Mud Flat Specimen

Higher up in the formation I found what you see above, the preserved remains of the mud flats as the sea basin slowly filled up over millions of years of sediments being deposited. As the shallow sea basin filled in with sediment, the place turned into a huge mud flat where all manner of life flourished. This was during the Carboniferous period when the earth's atmosphere was slightly higher in oxygen than our current atmosphere which allowed things like insects, spiders, trees, and ferns to become very large. It was during this time that most of the coal deposits of North America and Europe were laid down as vast forests covered these areas. The image gives you a 300 million year old look at the floor of this mud flat as the shallow sea gave way to becoming a mud flat with lots of little mud creatures embedded in the mud surface.

The highest layer (right) was, at first, a bit of a disappointment. When I retrieved a layer of sandstone from the higher elevation of the formation, I noticed what appeared to be fern leaves, but it was just not very easy to see anything in the bright 106 F degree Texas summer sun. So we piled all of the sandstone rocks into the back of the car and returned to San Antonio.

**Word of caution:** When stopping at road cuts to look at the formations, you should take the two-



step approach of looking. Look once for snakes, look twice for rocks. Please remember this. It's important.



As you can see at left, upon returning home I thought I saw something that looked like ancient fern leaves on the big specimen I collected. I had noticed this when I broke this specimen out of the host formation, but I really could not be sure. Finally, after studying the group all I could for the night I turned out the lights and decided to call it a day.

That is when it happened. Just like gemstones, sometimes fossils tell their best story in variable light sources. And in this case, this specimen was formed such that a bright overhead light actually served to mask off the true nature of the story it could tell. So just like gemstones, sometimes you have to look at the specimen in different light sources to be able to see the complete detail that it offers. As I

turned out the big overhead light in my office it left on one small desk lamp just to the side of the chair where the main specimen was sitting.

To the right is what I saw as the lights went out, and these are untouched photographs with nothing but the light source different in the two images....



### The Carboniferous Forest

Yikes! It was like turning out the overhead light actually turned on this fossil. The detail of the specimen just jumped out at me when the overhead light went off. I immediately got this rock adjusted in the chair so I could get the light on it correctly. On the next page is what I saw when I turned out the lights and used a flashlight to side light the entire specimen....a virtual forest of extinct Pennsylvanian fern vegetation that would one day become the richest oil patch in the world.

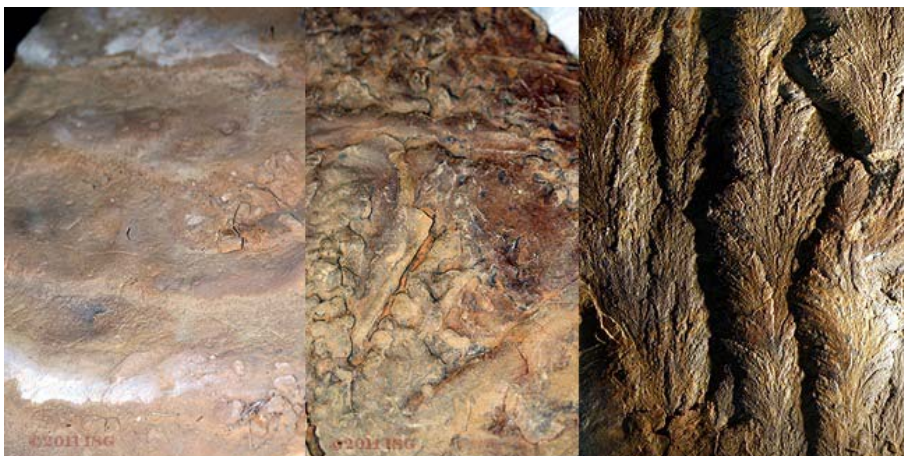
This is also the actual Pennsylvanian period vegetation that formed the rich coal deposits that exist across North America, preserved in this road-cut sandstone rock that is 300 million years old.



Above is what I saw when I turned out the lights and used a flashlight to side light the entire specimen...a virtual forest of extinct Pennsylvanian fern vegetation that would one day become the richest oil patch in the world.

This is also the actual Pennsylvanian period vegetation that formed the rich coal deposits that exist across North America, preserved in this road-cut sandstone rock that is 300 million years old.

The end result is that I found the historical record I was looking for in this one formation. The shallow sea bed that filled in to become mud flats and finally turned into forest. All within a single 10-foot tall outcrop formation of sandstone right here alongside US 281. A comparison of all three is seen below.



You can go find your own cool road cut and study the geology and history that it provides. It's a great place to take kids...just keep them out of the road and remember to look first for snakes. We have a ton of fossils that we have collected around the San Antonio area. Rare and unusual mineral specimens too like Ilanite, the granite with blue

quartz crystals only found in a road cut just outside of Llano Texas. Road cuts are public property, so you can go collect there as long as you don't tear stuff up and don't leave trash.



Go. Have fun. Keep an eye on the road, but anytime you see a place where the road cuts through...slow down. You never know what you may be missing.

Just maybe, you are on a trip 300 million years back in time.

## ISG

### Lechuguilla Cave

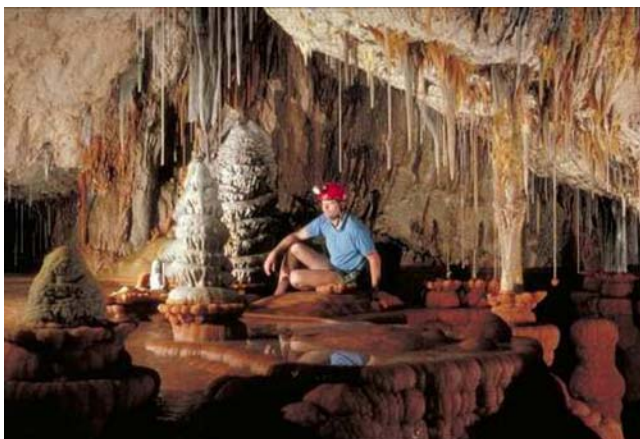
by Don Shurtz

from *Chips and Chatter*, 01/98,

via *Show me Rockhounds Newsletter* 03/1998,

via *the Glacial Drifter*, 04/1998.

What do spe-  
lunking,  
NASA, the  
National Park Service,  
mineralogists, and mi-  
crobiologists have in  
common? Lechuguilla  
Cave. The Dallas  
Morning News,  
December 21, 1997  
edition, had an article  
by Marilyn Hadrill.  
Lechuguilla Cave was  
discovered in 1914 and  
was thought to be no  
more than 400 ft. long.



Lechuguilla Cave is located in a wilderness area of Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Back in 1914 it was mined for bat guano. In 1968 spelunkers found a small hole that led to a maze of caves and caverns. To date they have explored more than 92 miles of caves branching out from that 400 ft. entrance, with more cave still to be explored.

Lechuguilla Cave is described as having formations ranging from delicate structures

that vibrate when blown on up to massive, cathedral-like formations. One formation is described as the world's largest gypsum formation.

So what does all this have to do with NASA and microbiologists? The cave is estimated to have formed about 7 million years ago. In the dark, undisturbed chambers they have discovered over 1200 types of microbes. Because of the closed ecological system, the cave's life forms are dominated by the microbes rather than the more highly evolved organisms such as fungi, plants, and animals. The microbes live on the sulfur, methane, and hot water in the cave. NASA is interested in the cave because it may be representative of similar conditions that existed on Mars in the distant past. They believe that the cave may help them understand the underground conditions that could be encountered in future explorations of the Red Planet.

The article also indicates that NASA has studied at least two other caves, in Romania and Italy, where the ground environment is wetter and much more active than that in Lechuguilla Cave. The microbiologists are studying the microbes and testing them as antibiotics, anti-fungal, and cancer fighting agents. There are some indications that microbes, collected primarily at Lechuguilla Cave, are effective in destroying breast cancer cells in test tube tests. The microbiologists are also investigating if any of the microbes are archaea, a new type of life form first found in 1977. A possible strain of archaea, unique to Lechuguilla Cave, has tentatively been identified, but investigations continue.

### **The Southern African Gem Cutting Challenge 2011**

*via The Stone Chipper 9/2011*

*Competition entries to be in by **Saturday 19, November, 2011.***

**C**ompetition to be open to – “Anyone who wishes to contribute to raising the standards of gem cutting in the region” Note: Southern Africa includes all countries bordering South Africa as well as Zambia/Malawi/Tanzania.

*(Stone Chipper Editor's note: I have been receiving this club's newsletters for a while now. When I asked if our club members from the USA could enter this if they liked, here is the response I received “What a wonderful surprise! Yes you certainly may enter this competition—we would love to see your contribution.”)*

#### **Purpose:**

The idea behind this challenge is firstly for everyone to have fun. We want to encourage participation with a view to improve the standards of excellence in stone cutting in our region.

Everyone is invited to enter, as indicated above, regardless of skill levels. As the saying goes—unless you are challenged, you will not necessarily improve.

The judging panel will consist of veteran cutters from various backgrounds to ensure that the entries are judged fairly. The last Competition was indicative of this impartiality as neither the faceted and cabochon winners were from Pretoria.

So, now that you know it's happening, prepare to start cutting. We look forward to your entries.

From the panel's chair- Fay Pieri



**Photos from the  
General Meeting  
Auction**

Taken by Mary Ann  
Mitscherling



## Shop Photos

by Nancy Fischer



**Above:**

From left (front):  
Brian Honsinger,  
Margo Bedman,  
Neal Immega,  
Tom Wright.

In back:  
Charlie Fredregill  
between two  
unidentified ladies



**Right:**

Neal Immega and  
unidentified lady

General Meeting Auction Photos  
by Terry Proctor



General Meeting Auction Photos  
by Terry Proctor



## General Meeting Auction Photos

by Mary Ann Mitscherling



## Show Time 2011

October 8-9	Temple, TX	Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Convention Center 3303 N. 3rd St. Chip Burnette, (254) 630-3573 burnette@aceweb.com
October 8-9	Fort Worth, TX	LMRA Stone Steppers Lockheed Martin Recreation Association 3400 Bryant Irvin Rd. Steve Shearin, (817) 733-5368 steve.l.shearin@lmco.com
October 13-15	Mount Ida, AR	25th Annual Quartz Crystal Digging Contest Montgomery County Fairgrounds Maureen Walther, Mt. Ida Ch. of Commerce 870 867-2723; <a href="http://www.mountidachamber.com">www.mountidachamber.com</a> 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 Events Center 900 Barton Springs Rd. Susan Postlethwait, <a href="http://www.gemcapers.com">www.gemcapers.com</a> showchariman@austingemandmineral.org
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; <a href="http://www.hgms.org">www.hgms.org</a> Chris&Theresa Peek; <a href="mailto:ladyt682@hotmail.com">ladyt682@hotmail.com</a>
November 19-20	Mesquite, TX	Dallas Gem & Mineral Society Resistol Arena
December 3-4	Round Rock, TX	Paleo Society of Austin Old Settlers Park Next to Dell Diamond
Decemnber 10-11	De Ridder, LA	De Ridder Gem & Mineral Society Beauregard Parish Fairgrouds

2011		October				2011	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section	
2	3	4 7:30 Board Meeting	5 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	6 7:30 Archaeology Group	7	8 10-5 Shop Open	
9	10 1:00 Day Light Section	11 7:30 Show Committee	12 7:30 Faceting Section 10-5 Shop Open	13	14	15 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section	
16	17 7:30 Lapidary Section	18 7:30 Paleo Section	19 7:30 Mineral Section 10-5 Shop Open	20	21	22 10-5 Shop Open	
23 30	24 31	25 7:30 General Meeting	26 10-5 Shop Open	27	28	29	

2011		November				2011
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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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			

# **The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**

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

10805 Brooklet

Houston, Texas 77099

(281) 530-0942



## **SCFMS**

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



## **AFMS**

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



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