



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

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

**Volume XLIII - No. 11**

**November 2012**



## **President's Message** *by Charlie Fredregill*

**B**y the time you read this, the Annual Show will almost be here. Our “garage” area will be crammed with all the big and little things needed to make the show work. There will be a number of frazzled (and maybe testy) people who have spent too many hours in the upstairs storage area. People who are going to be in our Section booths will be wondering what we’ve forgotten.



Putting on our show is hard work. But this is what keeps our club going—our annual show brings in most of the money used for utilities and other expenses. And despite the hard work, it is a lot of fun. We see club members that we haven’t seen since last year. We get to show off our skills and knowledge. Our dealers bring us wondrous things that we can spend our money on. We attract new members and make friends with the general public.

To change the subject: Due to a mix-up, our nominees for 2013 club officers did not get published in the October BBG. However, if you get Neal’s e-mail, you will have the proposed nominees for our club officers for 2013. If you haven’t gotten that information, here is a repeat of it:

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*Continued on page 4*

## **General Meeting Programs** *by Bill Moore*

**O**ctober 23, 2012: To be announced

**N**ovember 27, 2012: To be announced

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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***Proposed 2013 Slate of Officers****President:** John Caldyne**1st Vice President:** Bill Moore**2nd Vice President:** Beverly Mace**Secretary:** Michele Marcel**Treasurer:** Rodney Linehan

Other members of the Board of Directors are selected by our different Sections. If you want a voice in how the club is run, here's your chance to be heard. Vote for our officers. Attend the Section of your choice and propose your representative. Oh, and please volunteer to help the individuals who guide and direct our HGMS.

**The Miner***by John A. Anderson**Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society*

**M**y family has always had an interest in digging in the ground, usually in a gold mining claim in California. As far back as I can remember, we always had a mining claim within 150 miles of the City of Los Angeles, California. We never made any money, but we just loved the venture of looking and digging in the earth, so it was only natural that I picked up the desire to be a geologist. Over my 81 years of life, my mind always goes back to the three different mining companies where I have worked.

I would like to tell you a few stories that happened to me after I was discharged from the US Navy.

While attending college where I had already had taken Physical Geology, Physical Mineralogy, and Chemical Mineralogy and was majoring in geology, in 1956 I received an invitation to work at the Sunshine Mining Company. The mine, located between the towns of Wallace and Kellogg in the State of Idaho, had job openings. Being it was summer vacation at college, two of my Geology classmates and I drove to the Sunshine Mining Company.

At that time the Sunshine Mining Company was the biggest silver producer in the United States. Its mining history incorporated a complex ore of minerals that included tetrahedrite and galena with siderite and quartz as the principal gangue minerals. The silver content of the tetrahedrite varies, and the silver to copper ratio in the ore ranges from 40:1 (opt Ag:%Cu) to over 100:1. Tetrahedrite occurs as blebs, fracture fillings, or in veinlets. Other minerals include pyrite and arsenopyrite with minor to trace amounts of chalcopyrite, sphalerite, boulangerite, bourmonite, pyrargyrite, and magnetite. This means it has a complex ore of silver, galena, and copper, with a trace of iron. I also know that there was some gold present because I set up a small chemical lab in my bedroom, running tests on ore samples after a day's work.



When arriving, we found that the available positions were Mucker, Miner, and Timber man. The Timber man required the most experience of the lot, so I asked for the job as a Mucker because I had never worked in a professional mine before—only on my family's claims. The Mucker assists the miner or Timber man in all the physical help, shoveling ore, etc.

The first day I did not have the foggiest idea what it would be like to work over 2,700 feet underground. I knew that I needed to take a salt tablet, but I remember that I thought I would do that when I surfaced at the end of the day. That was the worst thing I could have done—the temperature in the mine shaft was in the upper 90 degrees Fahrenheit with high humidity. The humidity was due to the water used in the drilling operation. Many times there would be inches of water on the floor of the mine shaft.

I was a mess trying to drag myself down the shaft of the mine while trying to help the Timber Man. We were using the mining procedure “stope.” This is the procedure where you build a stage above the floor of the shaft out of very heavy wood timbers, then drill holes in the ceiling to plant dynamite explosives. When the explosives go off, the broken ore materials fall onto the stope stage. The rubble is then directed by the mucker into the ore car. This was usually done the next day to let the dust settle after the explosion.

After two days, the mine foreman who had been watching me asked if I wanted to be a miner which paid about \$5 more per day. I said sure. I had picked up the mining procedure quickly due to the my experience with my family's mining venture.

One day we entered the stope area to begin drilling with a large 90-pound pneumatic drill. The pneumatic drill uses air to turn a 6-foot drill and water to cool the drill and cut down on the dust (which is hazardous to your health). The next day you would reenter the area where you had blasted, expecting to find that most of the dust created by the blasting had settled. The first thing that you did that day was look for any unexploded dynamite or dynamite caps that might be laying around and then try to pull down from the ceiling any loose material with a long shaft from the day before shot.

I did this and started to drill, but it did not feel safe. I repeated this procedure more than four times—pulling down any loose ceiling material—and again began to drill, but I still did not feel safe. This nagging feeling is what saved my life. The final time I tried to pry down the loose ceiling material, a section about the size of a VW car landed about three inches from my feet. I mention this because in our quest to pick up minerals in an old mine shaft or in the mine dump, you must be especially careful when digging in the mine's dump. You may cause the material to fall on you and bury you, or in your quest in digging, you may hit an unexploded dynamite cap.

A necessary precaution is to use a safety helmet to protect you from falling materials, whether in the mine or the mine dump. I mention this because I have had both of these dangers happen to me many times during my life, but that is another story.

## Frances Arrighi—In Memoriam

*Editor's Note: Last month several members shared their fond memories of Frances with us. I received one more such account, and it is from Brian Honsinger.*

### Memories of Frances Arrighi

*by Brian Honsinger*

**I**n 2006 Nell and I were on a rock hunting trip, and I could not believe that I had driven off into such a barren place to find rock. We never saw another soul the whole trip—really lonesome. Our roadside geology book said drive 18 miles. It had a picture of the hill with the intersection diagrammed, and it pointed to the hill. There we were, on a rock road 18 measured miles north of a small highway in far northwest Colorado. We were so isolated that the only radio station on my whole dial had a trade show on so locals could sell their snow tires and such in June to listeners who might need them later in the year. We had just gotten out of the truck and climbed a steep hill that our book showed had agate on the slope. The wind was blowing about 35 miles per hour, and it was tough just to stay upright when my cell phone rang.

Nell said, “Who could that be?” Without looking I said, “It has to be Frances Arrighi. She has trouble with her club key and asks me to be sure and be there early so she won’t have to use her key to open the club door for Day Light Section meetings.”

So there I was, hanging on a hill in Colorado, explaining to Frances that I was still headed north for three more weeks before we would start back to Texas. I could not imagine that we had cell phone service that far off any major highway, much less on the two-lane highway we had used to get where we were.

On another occasion—it had to be about the first Christmas party and auction, and our new bid paddles were in use. We ended up sitting on different sides of the table, and a very pretty rock came out for bids. Nell had the paddle and started bidding against two people seated behind her, who turned out to be Francis and another member. I told her to stop bidding, and I haven’t ever said that to her in almost 48 years of marriage. She demanded to know why she could not own that pretty rock! I quickly and quietly informed her that she was bidding against Frances



and another member, and there was no way we could afford the rock at the price it was headed to. Nell understood instantly!

Okay, once I got started remembering lots about Frances, I wandered all over the place and just could not shut up. I remember Frances so fondly. I don't know how I could have forgotten this.

Frances always supplied the meat for the Day Light Section lunch the second Monday in November. She provided one spiral-sliced ham. Tom Wright had the job of "official ham slicer" first, but when he became ill, I jumped at the opportunity to assume his responsibilities—and the pay that went with it—a ham bone. I really think she went to two hams when Tom Wright was able to come back so she could give him the second bone. Now these were not the 10-pound spiral-cut Walmart specials but the top of the line Honey Baked hams, and the paycheck Frances gave for spiral-cutting the hams was to give you the ham bone to take home. She did require that the job be done properly by someone who had some meat carving knowledge and who could get the three sections of ham meat properly on a plate.

Well, I come equipped with my own knife set, and since age 10 I could clean and butcher anything that needed that service on a 2800-acre working ranch. I have also made enough pots of 15-bean soup to know the most important part of the recipe is a Honey Baked ham soup bone—and Frances supplied that gift for years.

Francis was the heart and soul of the Day Light Section. Not many members ever knew, but lots of those hands-on lessons that were taught to so many of us by professionals were paid for by Frances out of her own pocket. She would wring my neck for telling that, but it just needs to get out now!

OH, and I cleaned her cabinet for her "ONCE"—it was such a mess that things would fall on you when you opened the doors, and that just was not safe. I was so proud of the fine job I did, but when she opened the cabinet the next week, it was clear that I had made the biggest mistake I could ever make at the club! I really think Tom and probably Neal Immega came to my aid promising her I would never mess with her cabinet again!

Brian

***Editor's Note:** Normally an article by John Emerson would be included in this issue of the BBG. However, the article he planned is multiple paged reference material which should be printed at one time instead of spread over two or three BBGs two pages at a time. John has graciously consented to my putting his article into the January 2013 issue where it will receive less competition for space. He also thinks this will be his final article. Thank you, John, for three years of great articles!*

## **Markings and Hallmarks: How to Decipher the Code**

*by Mark Villanueva G.G., C.S.P., A.J.P.*

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

**T**he use of hallmarks has a long history dating back to the 4th century AD. Hall marking is as necessary today as it was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Gold, silver, and other precious metals are not used in their pure form for jewelry and tableware. Gold and silver in their pure form are malleable and soft. Gold, silver, palladium, and platinum are always alloyed with other metals to create an alloy that is more suitable to the requirements of the jeweler. The alloy needs to be strong, workable, and still attractive. There are significant profits to be gained by reducing the precious metal content of an alloy at the manufacturing stage.

Base metal articles are plated with a thin coat of gold or silver to look like the articles are made wholly of the precious metal, at least until the plating wears. Having a piece of jewelry, tableware, or flatware that has been hallmarked ensures that the consumer is getting exactly what they are paying for.

The hallmarks on a piece of jewelry or commissioned piece of work help identify:

- who (made it),
- where (office certifying purity of the metal)
- when (letter date year tested)
- and the how ( how much of the precious metal is in the piece?) of the article in question.

Assay offices are institutions set up to test the purity of precious metals to protect consumers. Assay offices are worldwide, located in the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, and many other countries. Assay offices do not exist in the United States for manufactures.

The US assay offices are affiliated with the government's coinage mints and serve only the government's purposes in that field. The US assay offices are not involved in hallmarking, as there is no hallmarking scheme in the United States. In the U.S. in 1906, the National Gold and Silver Stamping Act set standards of precious metal purity. This act also discussed the guidelines for stamping quality and for maker's trademarks on jewelry items sold in the U.S. Most gold and silver jewelry sold in the United States will have two marks. U.S. law requires that when a quality mark is used, a trade mark must also be present on the article.

I asked a reputable Silversmith, Hester Robinson-Spoon who manufactures jewelry,





Photo Courtesy of Hester Robinson-Spoon

flatware, and tableware in the UK for permission to use a picture of a sterling silver bowl she manufactured. The bowl was sent to the Goldsmith's Company Assay Office (GCAO) in London for hallmarking. The GCAO tests and guarantees that Silver-smiths conform to the correct metallurgical content that is represented. After tests, the piece receives five hallmarks from the GCOA.

From left to right -

- 1: **“HR” The makers mark**—original maker's marks were pictograms. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it became common practice to use the maker's initials. “HR” is Hester Robinson-Spoon.
- 2: **The Lion Passant** is used to represent sterling silver.
3. **925** - Sterling Silver articles listed as 925 Silver indicate that the silver item is almost pure silver, and 925 is considered to the standard for quality sterling silver. By definition and international agreement, “sterling” silver is 92.5% pure silver and 7.5% some other material—usually copper. The 92.5% is why items are often stamped with the numbers 925 or .925.
4. **The Leopard's Head** is a hallmark used by the London Assay office—the most important British Assay Office for the high quality testing of the purity of precious metals passing through its doors.
5. **“e”** The date mark - The letter “e” represents 2004, the year the piece was tested.

**Web Resources:** If you are searching for the meaning behind the symbols on your jewelry, try these Web sites as reference:

[www.hrsilverspoon.com](http://www.hrsilverspoon.com)  
[www.hallmarkingconvention.org](http://www.hallmarkingconvention.org)  
[www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk](http://www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk)  
[www.theassayoffice.co.uk/date\\_letters.html](http://www.theassayoffice.co.uk/date_letters.html)  
[www.ftc.gov/bcp/guides/jewel-gd.shtm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/guides/jewel-gd.shtm)

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

## HGMS 2013 Officer Nominations

The proposed slate of officers for 2013 HGMS is as follows:

**President:** John Caldyne

**1st Vice President:** Bill Moore

**2nd Vice President:** Beverly Mace

**Secretary:** Michele Marcel

**Treasurer:** Rodney Linehan

**T**he proposed list of 2013 officers will be announced formally during the October 23 General meeting. If you wish to suggest someone's name for a position, it must be done during the October meeting--and that person must have agreed that he or she is willing to run for the office. The voting for the officers will be during the November 27 meeting, but no other names can be proposed at that time. Please BE SURE to attend both the October and the November meetings! This is YOUR CLUB, and you need to help make the decisions on who should run it.

## Lapidary Section Auction a Major Success

*by Ed Clay, Chairman*

**T**he Lapidary Section sponsored a luncheon and auction on Saturday, September 8, 2012. A tremendous quantity of outstanding material had been donated to the Section by the descendants of a past member. Much of it was being sold at the auction, and as a result, the auction was extremely successful.

An important component of the great success was the tireless volunteers who organized the auction and the luncheon and also the many members who attended and purchased the auction items. But a major portion of the success was due to the donation by Vicky Boston, daughter of Joe Skarzynski—an avid rock collector for over 30 years. Joe was a faceted gem cutter of exemplary skill, and his wife Lillian was very creative in the lapidary and art jewelry fields. The HGMS Lapidary Section greatly appreciates this donation.

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## Day Light Section Annual Lunch in November

*by Mary Ann Mitscherling*

**T**he Daylight Section will meet for lunch at Los Gallitos Mexican Grill, 12030 Murphy Road, at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 12. This will be the first annual lunch without our leader Frances Arrighi. We will discuss possible future Day Light program topics. Bring your suggestions so we can discuss them. E-mail [maryann@hal-pc.org](mailto:maryann@hal-pc.org) to let us know if you plan to attend. We have tentative reservations for 20.

## Day Light Section—Making a Copper Bracelet

*October Project*

*by Nancy Fischer*

**I**'m sending a series of 7 photos showing our project from last Monday. We used run-of-the-mill copper tubing and made a bracelet in less than an hour.

1: Take 6" of run-of-the-mill copper tubing. -->



2. Gently tap with a hammer to flatten the tubing.



4. Anneal it.



5. Take off the rough edges and corners.

3. Really flatten it.

6. Polish, shape, and wear it proudly.



## Beware the Tommyknockers

by Burton Dworsky

*Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

So there we were in the Old Hundred Mine just outside Silverton, Colorado taking the tour when something the guide said piqued my interest. While showing us various mining apparatus, he warned us to beware of Tommyknockers.

"Tommyknockers," I thought, "the movie?" Surely not.

Well, let's see, they did call WWII British soldiers Tommies; could it be when one of them knocks on your door, I wondered, but what would that have to do with a mine? Maybe it's a door knocker on a British soldier's house?

Perplexed, I was about to ask "What is a Tommyknocker?" when quite casually our guide informed us that Tommyknockers are mythical creatures or possibly even spirits that inhabit mines and play tricks on the miners like blowing out their lights or stealing things like their lunches or tools.

Once back above ground, I was determined to find more out about them. Tommyknockers have probably been around as long as men have been venturing underground to extract the wealth contained there. Through the years and across nations, they have been known by many names. While "Tommyknocker" is what they are called by miners from Cornwall in the U.S., they are known as Bergeister—"mountain ghosts," or Bergmännlein—"little miners" in Germany, and the "Knocker" or "Knacker" to the Welsh.

But where did they get their name? The name Tommyknocker comes from the knocking sounds they produce. Disbelievers will say the knocking sounds are just timbers creaking or the rock expanding or contracting, but for believers, it is the Tommyknockers.

As to exactly what they are remains a debate. Most agree that they are "little people" like Irish Leprechauns, but whether they are gnomes or more spirit-like is not clear. Some even believe they are the spirits of deceased miners killed in mining accidents. One thing that all seem to agree on is that when they are seen, they are about two feet tall and look like a grizzled old miner. Most seem to believe that they are mischievous pranksters, hiding tools and lunch kits, causing tools to break, knocking off hard hats, and extinguishing the miner's light source, but they do no real harm. Often they do good by warning the miners of impending cave-ins with their knocking. But there are others who believe they are malevolent, and their knocking is actually causing the cave-ins.

Belief in Tommyknockers continues to today. As recently as 1956 a group of miners petitioned the owners of a mine that had been closed and sealed up to unseal it and allow the Tommyknockers to escape.

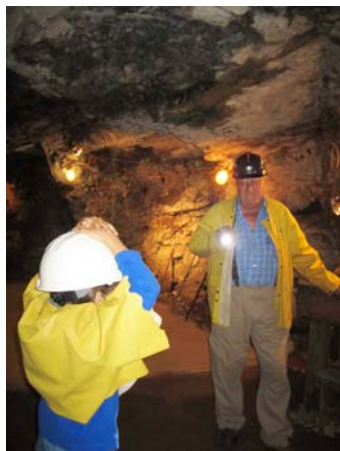
Fortunately while we were in the mine we saw and heard no evidence of Tommyknockers, but once we reviewed our pictures, lo and behold, we captured what we believe to be a Tommyknocker family.



Photo of Tommyknocker family?

So next time you find yourself in a mine looking for that stunner mineral specimen, don't forget to beware of the Tommyknockers, for they will be watching you.

If you happen to find yourself in Silverton, visit the Old Hundred Mine for an interesting tour to learn about the hard rock gold mining history of the Silverton, Colorado area and see what life was like underground.



Member of our tour, a minor miner, holding on to his hardhat after being warned about Tommyknockers.

### **Stardust Minerals<sup>®</sup>**

*by Terrell William Proctor, J.D.  
17 September 2012 7:45 P.M.  
Houston, Texas*

Want to see minerals from outer space?  
Go to your mirror—look at your face.  
The Universe when created, was just gas,  
billions of years, in time would then pass.

Slowly gases, did accumulate.  
Gaseous clouds, did reformulate.  
From the gases, elements arose.  
Elements today, on charts in rows.

Elements attracted one another,  
in large masses, they came together.  
Forming huge galaxies of the stars,  
from which came the Sun, Earth and Mars.

Today as you go out, on a dig  
just keep one thing under your wig.  
Stardust is in everything you see  
Quartz, gold, and silver....and you and me.

### Vic Helm--In Memoriam

**W**e were very saddened to hear that long-time club member Vic Helm passed away September 22, 2012.

Vic was a professional photographer before he retired, and he took many wonderful photos of mineral specimens for our show in years past. He was a very active member of the Lapidary Section, attending regularly until a few years ago. Vic was quite proud of a belt buckle he made depicting a camera on a tripod. The camera and tripod were formed from pieces of abalone and were set on a silver background.

Memorial services were held September 27, 2012 at Servants of Christ United Methodist Parish, 3827 Broadway, Houston, TX. Vic had many friends at HGMS, and he will be missed.

### McFaddin Beach—Revisited by the Archeology Section

*by Terry Proctor*

*Photos by Terry Proctor*

**T**he Archeology Section of HGMS had their second Field Trip of the year, and again we went to McFaddin Beach. Two more Field Trips are already planned, with one coming up October 13 to the Chrisner's Ranch to dig for AmerIndian points and another on November 17 to Whiskey Bridge for Middle Eocene marine fossils. This trip to the Bryan-area Brazos River bank culminates in a short trip to Terry Stiles' Ranch for a chicken barbecue.

On September 22, 2012, about seven carloads of HGMS members traveled to McFaddin Beach in Jefferson County. Included in this trip were new HGMS members Tess Weaver and Sondie White from San Antonio, Texas. Everyone found some things to take home including beach glass, shells, bones and teeth of Pleistocene Epoch animals, and photographs of the many water birds always at McFaddin Beach. One vehicle was stuck for a short time, but it was able to get out without me having to pull it out this time. Fortunately the weather was perfect and there were no mosquitoes or other insects to harass us.

The brown pelicans provided good entertainment as usual. Some performed dive bombing for fish, while other occupied almost every post top. (See photo on page 15.) There were lots of sea gulls, sandpipers, stilt legged sandpipers, and skimmers. Interestingly as the seagulls sat on the beach and in or near the surf, they faced the incoming surf. The skimmers sat with their bodies sideways to the surf and facing to the east, sometimes rows of them lined up like soldiers in formation.

Early on David Kennedy found signs of bone and commenced digging. He was joined





Basket of bones found by  
David Kennedy

by a number of other HGMS members, and he wound up with a basket full of bones including leg, rib, and other bones from what appeared to be a Pleistocene *Bison bison*. However, the real treasure that David Kennedy found was a huge *Bison antiquus* jaw tooth. This is the first *Bison Antiquus* tooth I have seen from McFaddin Beach. *Bison Antiquus* was an ancestor to the modern *Bison bison*. *Bison bison* has been around for some thousands of years also, but existed in the Pleistocene Epoch. This animal's teeth and bones are probably the most commonly found fossil bones and teeth at McFaddin Beach. *Bison antiquus* is a rare find.

Chase Jennings also found a number of bones and at least one very good *Bison bison* tooth. He air blasted that tooth, so now it is very attractive.

The Archeology Section enjoys going to McFaddin Beach, and our field trips there always have a good turnout of both Archeology Section and Paleontology Section members along with others from HGMS.



*Bison antiquus* tooth found by  
David Kennedy



*Bison bison* tooth found by Chase Jennings  
and cleaned with air abrasive



## Archaeology Section Meeting

*October 4, 2012*

*by Burton Dworsky*

**T**he Archaeology Section held its monthly meeting on October 4, 2012 at the HGMS clubhouse with 10 present. We had one new attendee, Marlyse Kusnik. The meeting was called to order by Garth Clark at 7:45 p.m.

### Old Business

The meeting minutes as published in the BBG were approved by acclamation.

### New Business

Peter Ragusa brought several books to be donated to the Section and auctioned off to raise money for the Section. Members were encouraged to consider bringing donations for an auction to benefit the Section.

Members were reminded of the trip to the Whiskey Bridge site on November 17.

**Archaeology News:** Dr. Clark presented a news article on findings at the 4,200-year-old La Bastida site in Spain. They are finding that the site is much larger—4 hectares—than previously believed.

**Presentation:** Terry Proctor gave a presentation on democracies and their lifespans.

**Show and Tell:** Jon Hart brought an impressive display of artifacts, starting with a Southern Cross of Honor medal from around 1900 presented by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. He also had a case of arrowheads plus a selection of other finds from his digs that include things like pre-forms, essentially the blanks for arrowheads. He also brought a Caddoan pot with a “military road” pattern on it.

David Kennedy had several finds from the McFaddin beach trip. These included an impressive, both in quality and size, bison antiquus tooth. He also had a pair of what appeared to be rib bones, one possibly from a bison along with numerous smaller finds.

Terry Proctor brought a display of Native American points mostly from the Harris County area.

Peter Ragusa had an excellent example of a Native American point he found years back in the Spring, Texas area.

In attendance at the meeting were Garth Clark, Burton Dworsky, Jon Hart, David Kennedy, Marlyse Kusnik, Miss Deidre Prince, Terry Proctor, Peter Ragusa, Lisa Schwartz, and Tom Schwartz.

Finally, a reminder that the Archaeology Section meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the HGMS Clubhouse, and the next meeting will be November 1, 2012. So, if you have an interest in archaeology, would like to give a presentation, or have some artifacts to show, please come out, join us, and have some fun.



## General Meeting Minutes

*September 25, 2012*

*by Sarah Metsa*

*HGMS Secretary*

**T**he meeting was called to order at 7:28 p.m.

President Charlie Fredregill was unable to be at the meeting, but he appointed Neal Immega to run the meeting in his place.

**Visitors and New Members:** Tina Woods was a visitor who attended with Terry Proctor. Tina went on the Archeology Section's recent field trip to McFaddin Beach. A new member, Nicole, was also at the meeting, and she is interested in lapidary and jewelry-making arts as well as geodes.

**Prior Month General Meeting Minutes:** Terry Proctor moved that the August General Meeting minutes be accepted as published. Karen Burns seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Show & Tell:** John Anderson brought in a large amount of dinosaur bone found by Matt Dillon during a recent collecting trip. John also brought some kunzite, tourmaline, and pegmatite that he found on a trip he took to California, visiting the Oceanview Mine, the Stewart Mine, and the Pala Mountains.

Garth Clark brought in some bison bones he found on the Archeology Section's trip to McFaddin Beach.

**Drawing:** Terry Proctor won the door prize, an amethyst specimen.

**Program:** Dr. Garth Clark, M.D. and BSCE specializing in Metallurgy, gave a program entitled "Co-Evolution of Earth's Abundance of Minerals and Life," an overview of how life has acted as a catalyst to accelerate the growing diversity of minerals on earth.

**Show Update:** There will not be an official show volunteer coordinator this year. Each subcommittee and area will need to organize their own volunteers. If you would like to be a volunteer at the show this year and are not sure what area needs the most help, contact Sigrid Stewart or Steve Blyskal, and they will be able to get you placed in an area.

A Hospitality Chair has been found, Clyde McMeans, and so we will have a hospitality room with refreshments and lunch for volunteers and dealers.

Steve Blyskal is creating show posters for the years 2011 and 2012, and he is having more posters printed that will be available for sale at the show's Info Booth. These will cover the past five years worth of shows.

Sigrid Stewart reminded everyone of the upcoming Labeling Party on September 29 and the Show Auction and Pizza Party on October 20. All members are encouraged to

come and help out with labeling the postcards sent out for the show. Everyone is always welcome to attend the Show Auction and Pizza Party. Finally, a reminder to all Sections that everything you want to have taken to the show must be in the club's garage before Wednesday, November 7. This means that the weekend of November 3–4 the garage will be used as a staging area for everything the Sections bring down from attic storage. Be aware and plan accordingly.

**Adjourn:** Terry Proctor moved and Sarah Metsa seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

### Board of Director's Meeting Minutes

*October 2, 2012*

*by Sarah Metsa*

*HGMS Secretary*

X	President – Charlie Fredregill	X	Beading Rep – Jillynn Hailes
X	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President – Bill Moore		Faceting Rep – Gary Tober
X	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Beverly Mace	X	Lapidary Rep – Phyllis George
	Treasurer – Rodney Linehan	X	Mineral Rep – Sigrid Stewart
X	Secretary – Sarah Metsa	X	Paleontology Rep – Mike Dawkins
X	Past President – Steve Blyskal	X	Day Light Rep – Nancy Fischer
		X	Archeology Rep – Terry Proctor

**The meeting was called to order** at 7:37 p.m. with a quorum of seven members present.

**Previous Month Board of Directors Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the September 2012 Board Meeting were published in the October 2012 BBG. Terry Proctor moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as published. Phyllis George seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Rodney Linehan was not present. He did e-mail all the board members an update on each bank account, and HGMS is in good financial condition.

### Officer, Committee, and Section Reports

**Mineral Section:** Steve Blyskal reported that the Mineral Section's October meetings will be dedicated to prepping for the show.

**Day Light Section:** Nancy Fischer reported that the Section is working on making chain maille bracelets.

**Paleo Section:** Mike Dawkins is setting up a fieldtrip to TXI Midlothian on October 20; contact Mike if you plan to attend.

**Lapidary Section:** Phyllis George reported that the September 8 lunch and auction

was very successful.

**Archaeology Section:** Terry Proctor reported that the Section had a field trip to McFaddin Beach on September 24, and there were several attendees. They are also planning a trip on October 13 to hunt points on Chrisner's Ranch. And the annual Whiskey Bridge trip is slated for November 18 in conjunction with the Paleo Section.

**BBG Editor and Web site:** Phyllis George continuously updates the site so that all information is current. The Show page has been updated with all 2012 show information.

### New Business

**Refreshments at General Meetings:** Phyllis George brought up the fact that we haven't had refreshments at the General Meetings for a few months. The board discussed finding volunteers who would be willing to sign up for bringing the refreshments for three months' worth of meetings. Terry Proctor said that he would bring the refreshments for the October and November meetings. The Christmas party will be a good time to recruit other members to sign up for bringing refreshments each quarter in 2013.

**2013 Board of Directors Nominations:** Charlie Fredregill, Terry Proctor, and Phyllis George are working as the nominating committee for the 2013 officers positions. Barring any other members wishing to be nominated for the positions, Bill Moore said that he would be 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President again, Beverly Mace said that she would be 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President again, and Rodney Linehan agreed to remain on as Treasurer. The President's position and the Secretary's position both need to be filled. The proposed slate of 2013 officers will be announced during the October General Meeting, and voting on the positions will occur during the November General Meeting.

**Shade Cloth over Windows:** Terry Proctor brought up the idea of getting shade cloth on the outside windows in order to block some of the sun's rays and hopefully keep the building cooler in the summer. The windows are currently painted black and not only do not insulate against the heat, they tend to absorb heat. Another idea brought up during discussion is the idea of building an insulated, false wall next to the windows on the inside of the room. This would block a lot of heat and could potentially provide extra display space. Charlie Fredregill said that he would speak with Neal Immega about the ideas and see if Neal thinks that either idea has merit.

**Rockhound Items:** Terry Proctor brought in a drawstring cloth bag with the Rockhound emblem on it. The club already has stickers and lapel pins with the emblem, and Terry wondered if we might want to add the bags to our offerings available to the club and at the show. The Board decided that the bags are a good idea, so Terry will be purchasing an initial lot of 100 for selling.

**Show Committee:** Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart reported on the status of the show's planning.

Pat Johnson will be coordinating Boy Scouts this year. Pat and Sigrid Stewart met with Scott Singleton to discuss how to handle Scouts' Day at the show. Scott will contact his volunteers from last year and see if any of them are available to assist Pat with that day's events.

Clyde McMeans has agreed to be Hospitality Chair. He is getting menus together and working on contracts for lunch vendors. Regina Gorman will be coming to help with Hospitality as well as will Pat Gannon-Hildbold, who has worked in hospitality with her sons for a few of the past shows.

Beverly Mace reported that the Labeling Party was the best one yet. Everything ran very smoothly, all the cards were in order, labels were in the proper place, and Beverly was very happy with the day.

MaryAnn Mitscherling will not be coordinating volunteers this year, so each Section is responsible for recruiting its own volunteers. Michele Marsel will call people as she is able, in order to bring in some volunteers. She is also contacting teachers and professors to see if they can recruit some of their students to volunteer.

Lexy Bieniek needs volunteers to help pour the dino dig slabs and to bring them out to the show.

Beverly Mace is still working on reaching Paul McGarry in order to get the dimensions of the trailers which are holding the florescent displays. Temporarily the trailers will be storable at Bill Moore's home. Bill will be able to get the trailers up to the show, and Beverly advised that Carole McGarry's oldest son may be available to help set up the display itself.

Steve Blyskal is working on creating show posters for the years 2011 and 2012, and he is having more posters printed and available for sale at the show's Info Booth. These will cover the past five years' worth of shows.

The layout of the dealer tables has been finalized. The Fine Minerals Show, which gives HGMS a table at the annual Fine Minerals Show, would like to have a table at the HGMS show. Dealer Chair Rick Rexroad and Steve Blyskal are working to determine a location for their table.

Phyllis George will be contacting Bill and Lois Pattillo to see whether the Rock Food Table display will be at the show. *Editor's Note: They and the Rock Food Table are already committed elsewhere for the weekend of our show, but they will be at our 2013 show.*

Nancy Fischer reported that the organization for the Info Booth is in good shape.

Sigrid Stewart reminded everyone that donations are needed for the Show Auction & Pizza Party being held on October 20.

**Adjourn:** Terry Proctor moved and Jillynn Hailes seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

## BenchTips

by Brad Smith

*More BenchTips by Brad Smith can be found at  
facebook.com/BenchTips, OR groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/*

**T**emplates: Whenever I have to make more than 2–3 exact copies of anything, I think of making a template. A template lets me easily draw the shape of an item.

Art stores sell templates for common shapes like circles, ovals, hearts, etc, but if you need other shapes, it's easy to make your own. Simply cut the shape out of sheet plastic, copper, or brass.

The brass template lets me quickly trace the design of these ginkgo leaf earrings onto silver sheet, and the nickel template makes it easy to drill the pin inlay pattern into the ironwood.

After finding a poor selection of stock templates for ovals at my local art store, I was pleased with the wide selection on Cool Tools at <http://www.cooltools.us/> If you order, be sure to look for the 10% off code each month on their Home page.

Kingsley North also has some nice templates at <http://www.kingsleynorth.com/>

*Editor's Note: Check our <http://www.hgms.org> Web site too for templates. Scroll down the home page to the Lapidary Section area and click on the Lapidary Templates button.*

**Dental Tools:** A ready source of free tools is your local dentist. Dental picks can be reworked into wax tools or straightened and sharpened to make a stylus for marking and layout. The steel in these tools is high quality, and the handles are designed for comfort. A special note however—don't try to bend one of the tips to a different shape. The steel will snap. To change the shape, heat the tip to red hot, and bend it with pliers while it's hot.



And don't forget to ask your dentist for some of the cutting burs they throw out. These are useful for a variety of things. It's best to call a week or two before your visit and ask the dentist to put some of these tools aside for you. It's good practice also to ask that they run them through the sterilizer for you.

In addition, here's an interesting Web site that might be of interest to your readers.

**Fakes & Frauds:** Unfortunately, there's a growing amount of deception and outright fraud these days at gem and mineral shows and in some of the online venues that sell these items. Often "genuine turquoise beads" turn out to be dyed magnesite, and I've



been told that the majority of colored stones being sold typically have had some “enhancement” done to them.

If you’re interested in what kind of fakes and frauds have been uncovered, there’s a well-done page at <http://www.the-vug.com/vug/vugfakes.htm>.

## More Bench Tips

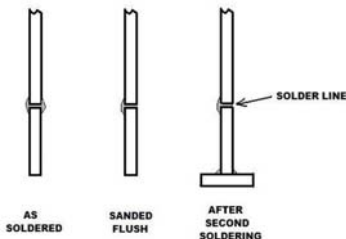
by Brad Smith

*More BenchTips by Brad Smith can be found at*  
*facebook.com/BenchTips OR groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/*

**L**oose Heads: Flying off the handle is never good, particularly if it’s a hammer head. The traditional way to tighten a loose hammer head is a bit of work, but there’s a fast and easy solution available for about 50 cents—superglue. Simply put a couple drops in from the handle side, let it set up, and then a few drops from the top side. Be sure to get the thin superglue, not gel. It penetrates better. Packages of two superglues are usually available at the 99 cent store.



**Avoiding Solder Lines:** After finishing a soldered joint on say a bezel, have you ever seen it reappear when you solder the bezel to a base plate? What’s happening is that every time you heat a soldered piece to the temperature that solder flows, the liquid solder dissolves a little bit more into the base metal. This leaves a small furrow where solder was sanded off flush at the joint. To get rid of the furrow, re-sand the joint area down to the bottom of the furrow.

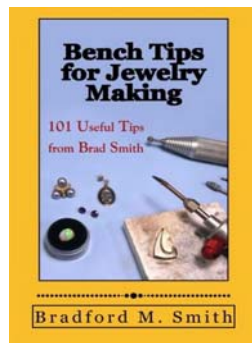


To avoid this when I have another soldering operation to follow, I try to leave a little extra solder on my joints. For instance, when trimming off excess base plate from around a bezel, I leave a couple paper thicknesses of excess plate material whenever possible until I’m done with all soldering. Of course, this isn’t always possible when a soldering operation would prevent you from gaining access for the final sanding and polishing of an area.

**Announcing “Bench Tips for Better Jewelry Making,”** a new book for beginning and intermediate jewelers by Bradford Smith. It contains 101 useful Bench Tips to help improve skills and increase quality at the bench. The 96 page book is filled with close-up photos to help explain the techniques and makes a great gift for the holidays. For more details, see:

<http://CreateSpace.com/3976439>

**OR** <http://Amazon.com/dp/0988285800/>



## A Safety Note: Of Hurricanes and Hazard Recognition

*by Owen Martin*

*AFMS, SCFMS Safety Chairman*

*from the SCFMS Newsletter 9–10/2012*

**T**his is a summary of the Safety presentation provided at the 2012 SCFMS Editor's Breakfast in Jasper, TX.

My presentation to the group started with a "safety moment." Hurricane Isaac was moving into the Gulf of Mexico and we did not know at that time where it would hit or what kind of damage it might cause.

As a group we discussed "gassing up," evacuation plans, evacuation lists, "stay" lists, and the potential impact on phones, water, electricity, etc.

<http://www.ready.gov/> is a valuable resource to help people address preparing for a hurricane.

My follow-up discussion was on Hazard Recognition. As a safety professional, I work every day with my staff and our field managers on how they and their field personnel identify hazards in our work environment. The goal is to help them identify hazards and then eliminate or control them. In my company we use a document called an FLRA or Field Level Risk Assessment.

The FLRA is designed to improve our behaviors and capability to recognize potential dangers. It does so by using this process when something is new or something changes in our work environment:

**STOP – OBSERVE – IDENTIFY – CORRECT – RESUME.**

This is not designed to be a paperwork drill, but is designed to be a tool that helps us improve our hazard recognition skills.

SOOOO, back to a practical example of this from my personal lessons learned.

A couple of weekends ago I was out at our cabin doing some cleanup work. Part of my efforts involved a small burn pile. Another was mowing the grass. I had identified a lot of the risks and was wearing leather gloves, boots, jeans, safety glasses, and ear plugs. I had walked the area that I intended to mow, identified a couple of wasp nests to avoid, and then started up the mower.

Well, mowing in the summer Texas heat can be both physically and mentally exhausting, and when I got close to the fire with the mower, I made sure that I was not blowing dead grass and leaves into it because I thought that could blow something away from the pit that could start an unplanned fire.

At this point it should all sound like things were going along smoothly and safely. The reality however is that I did not think through the process enough to realize that mowing near the fire could cause another hazard. At some point a few burning embers had popped out of the pit and were smoldering in the grass. When I ran over



them, they got sucked into the blades, ejected at high-speed, and thrown into the air. The result was that a burning ember landed squarely on the crown of my head. I didn't of course realize this fact until the burning and stinging started [pat pat pat panic panic panic]! Luckily it was small, and I got it off my head quickly. It only led to a very minor blister on my head. Hopefully the hair will grow back—I do not need to lose any more!

The moral of the story is two-fold. First, although I did stop to consider the hazards and thought I had them covered, I did miss something—my hat! Secondly, with a little mental exhaustion going on, I missed the fact that it just was NOT a good idea to mow near a live fire. Seems pretty obvious now, though.

Please take the time to address hazards in places like your kitchens (under the sink), garages, bathrooms, laundry rooms, workshops, and club houses. And when you identify a hazard, please try to correct the problem or notify those around you to be alert. We're all in this together, so let's stay safe.

To wrap things up, I wanted to provide some additional information on Hurricane Isaac. By all accounts, this hurricane looked to be a small one with low winds that should have lost its punch shortly after making landfall. In reality, the storm moved ashore slowly and ended up dropping as much as 24 inches or more in many areas in its direct path. Hurricane Isaac led to extensive flooding and loss of utilities, and tens of thousands of people were affected. Many of these people had good plans in place and weathered the storm well. The others who did not, we unfortunately saw them interviewed on the NEWS way too many times.

### Coffee Filters--Who Knew?

*via Rock n' Rose, 8/2012, via Gem Cutters News 10/2012*

**W**ho knew! Coffee filters do more than just filter coffee. And you can buy 1,000 at the Dollar Tree for \$1.00, even the large ones.

1. Cover bowls or dishes when cooking in the microwave. Coffee filters make excellent covers.
2. Clean windows, mirrors, and chrome. Coffee filters are lint-free, so they'll leave windows sparkling.
3. Protect china by separating your good dishes with a coffee filter between each dish.
4. Filter broken cork from wine. If you break the cork when opening a wine bottle, filter the wine through a coffee filter.
5. Protect a cast-iron skillet. Place a coffee filter in the skillet to absorb moisture and prevent rust.
6. Apply shoe polish. Ball up a lint-free coffee filter.
7. Recycle frying oil. After frying, strain oil through a sieve lined with a coffee filter.



8. Weigh chopped foods. Place chopped ingredients in a coffee filter on a kitchen scale.
9. Hold tacos. Coffee filters make convenient wrappers for messy foods.
10. Stop the soil from leaking out of a plant pot. Line a plant pot with a coffee filter to prevent the soil from going through the drainage holes.
11. Prevent a Popsicle from dripping. Poke one or two holes as needed in a coffee filter.
12. Do you think we used expensive strips to wax eyebrows? Use strips of coffee filters.
13. Put a few in a plate and put your fried bacon, French fries, chicken fingers, etc. on them. It soaks out all the grease.
14. Keep in the bathroom. They make great “razor nick fixers.”
15. As a sewing backing. Use a filter as an easy-to-tear backing for embroidering or appliquéing on soft fabrics.
16. Put baking soda into a coffee filter and insert into shoes or a closet to absorb or prevent odors.
17. Use them to strain soup stock and to tie fresh herbs in to put in soups and stews.
18. Use a coffee filter to prevent spilling when you add fluids to your car.
19. Use them as a spoon rest while cooking and to clean up small counter spills.
20. Use to hold dry ingredients when baking or when cutting a piece of fruit or veggies. No extra bowls to wash.
21. Use them to wrap Christmas ornaments for storage.
22. Use them to remove fingernail polish when out of cotton balls.
23. Use them to sprout seeds. Simply dampen the coffee filter, place seeds inside, fold it, and place it into a zip-lock plastic bag until they sprout.
24. Use coffee filters as blotting paper for pressed flowers. Place the flowers between two coffee filters and put the coffee filters in a phone book.
25. Use as a disposable “snack bowl” for popcorn, chips, etc.
26. Great in the tool room when separating nails and screws, then use in the bottom of containers to remove moisture and prevent rust.
27. Take them with you to wrap small specimens in the field. They don’t take up nearly the space needed for a paper towel roll.
28. Oh yeah—they are great to use in your coffee maker too!

## Show Time 2012 - 2013

October 26-28	Glen Rose, TX	Paleo Society of Austin Fossilmania Somervell County Expo Center, N. side of Hwy 67 at Gibbs Blvd.
November 3-4	Amarillo, TX	Golden Spread Gem & Mineral Society Amarillo Civic Center, Exhibition Hall Wanda Finley; finfran@midplains.coop
November 3-4	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center; show@midlandgemandmineral.org www.midlandgemandmineral.org
November 9-11	Humble, TX	Houston Gem & Mineral Society Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Pkwy. 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport 1 mile east of Hwy. 59; www.hgms.org sigrid.stewart@gmail.com
Nov. 30-Dec. 2	El Paso, TX	El Paso Mineral & Gem Society El Maida Shrine Auditorium, 6331 Alabama Jeannette Carrillo, gemcenter@aol.com
November 17-18	Mesquite, TX	Dallas Gem & Mineral Society Rodeo Center & Exhibition Hall 1800 Rodeo Drive; Darrell Harrison bravo1bravo@sbcglobal.net
December 1-2	Round Rock, TX	Paleo Society of Austin Old Settlers Park, Highway 79 3 miles east of IH-35, next to Dell Diamond http://www.austinpaleo.org
December 8-9	DeRidder, TX	DeRidder Gem & Mineral Society Beauregard Fair Grounds Bldg., 610 West Dr.; Adam Valin, 337-585-3693
January 1- 31	Quartzsite, AZ	Wholesale and retail shows, one of many Desert Gardens RV Park info@desertgardensrvpark.net www.desertgardensrvpark.net
January 19-20	Fredericksburg, TX	Fredericksburg Rockhounds Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park www.fredericksburgrockhounds.org

2012		November				2012
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7:30 Archaeology Group	2	3 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section
4	5	6 7:30 Board Meeting	7 7:30 Mineral Section	8	9	10 10-5 Shop Open
11	12 1:00 Day Light Section	13 7:30 Show Committee	14 6:30 Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	15	16	17 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
18	19 7:30 Lapidary Section	20 7:30 Paleo Section	21 7:30 Mineral Section 10-3 Shop Open	22	23	24 10-5 Shop Open
25	26	27 7:30 General Meeting	28 10-3 Shop Open	29 Thanksgiving Day	30	

2012		December				2012
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	6 7:30 Archaeology Group	7	8 10-5 Shop Open Holiday Party
9	10 NO Day Light Section	11 NO Show Committee	12 NO Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	13	14	15 10-5 Shop Open NO Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
16	17 NO Lapidary Section	18 NO Paleo Section	19 NO Mineral Section 10-3 Shop Open	20	21	22 10-5 Shop Open
23 30	24 31	25 NO General Meeting Christmas Day	26 10-3 Shop CLOSED	27	28	29 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

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2000 - 1st (Large)  
2003 - 1st (Large)  
2005 - 1st (Large)  
2006 - 1st (Large)  
2007 - 1st (Large)  
2008 - 1st (Large)  
2009 - 1st (Large)  
2010 - 1st (Large)  
2011 - 1st (Large)  
2012 - 1st (Large)



## AFMS

1998 - 2nd (Large)  
2004 - 3rd (Large)  
2007 - 1st (Large)  
2010 - 2nd (Large)  
2012 - 3rd (Large)



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