The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

Volume XLIV - No. 11 November 2013

President's Message

by John Caldyne

Hi, all you Rockhounds. I'm back at you, and here is the news at HGMS.

First, let's thank Phyllis George for sending our insurance information request to the proper person at SCFMS. Clyde has been very active keeping up with the insurance since he's been 1st Vice President. He has also been keeping up with SCFMS insurance documents if and when needed for field trips and shows. If the land owner requires evidence of liability, Beverly Uzzell is our insurance agent at One Agent LC.

On September 24, 2013 we had a great presentation at the General Meeting by Dr. Nathalie Brandes, Professor of Geology. Her talk was on Mesothermal and Epithermal, the difference, and why Carbonatite can produce a landscape. It was a great show and tell.

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General Meeting Dates

by Clyde McMeans

November 26, 2013: **Dr. Patrick Lewis--**Driefontein is about 240 million years old and is a freshwater lake deposit. It holds fossils of a variety of early reptiles called Archosaurs, as well as many varieties of large amphibians. It is one of the few sites in the world to record the terrestrial fauna of the early Triassic, a period that follows the biggest extinction event in history -- the Permian extinction. My students and I have been working at Driefontein for 4 years now, and we are beginning to get a better understanding of the types of animals that survived the extinction in South Africa.

December 14, 2013: HGMS Annual Holiday Party. Details to be announced.

Contents

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Purpose of HGMS

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

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

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

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

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Get ready Rockhounds, the 2013 show is coming up. On September 29, a number of members were at the club house getting the post cards ready, and everything turned out great. The October 19 pasta party is going to be fantastic, so everyone be there.

The Show Committee has asked everyone to join in and promote the show and to pass out show flyers.

Clyde sent me an e-mail saying that the patch on one of the trailers is repaired and ready. We also have a spare tire for it.

I'm sure you Rockhounds remember that at the first of the year, I said I would be going out speaking to schools and the community. Well on September 7, 2013 I went to College Station and took Dr. Neal Immega with me. We had a great time at The Larry Ringer Library, and the people loved the educational lecture plus Show & Tell. We have pictures that Dr. Neal will put in the Backbender's. I'm now getting ready for my next trip. I'll keep you up to date.

Later, Rockhounds! And keep on Rockin' 'n Rollin'.

Jewelry Cleaner—Make Your Own

via MOROKS 9/2013 and Rocky Mountain Federation News 9/2013

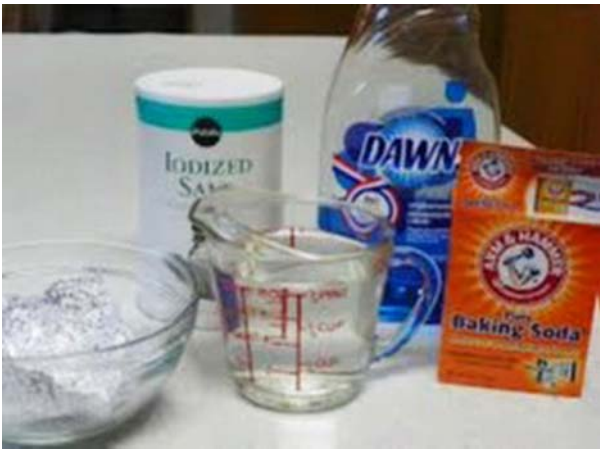
Ingredients: 1 tablespoon salt, 1tablespoon baking soda, 1 table-spoon dish detergent, 1 cup water, 1 piece aluminum foil

Directions:

1. Heat water in the microwave for 2 minutes.

2. Cut a piece of aluminum foil that covers the bottom of a small bowl.

3. Pour hot water into bowl. Place salt, soda, and dish-washing liquid into bowl. Place jewelry on top of foil and let it sit for 10 minutes. Rinse jewelry in cool water and dry jewelry completely with soft cloth. Discard solution after use, and make a new batch next time.



The Miner—Memorable Dive

by John Anderson
Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

For years my wife Lee and I kept hearing stories about a diving Mecca that was called Bahia San Carlos in the Mexican State of Sonora. San Carlos was said to have lots of fish with clear warm water and with very few visitors or divers. We noticed on the map that it was 1,000 miles from our home in Los Angeles, California, so we had to put off making such a long trip for a while. We also heard from people who had made that trip that the last 18 miles to San Carlos was on a bad dirt road that took hours to navigate—you could get stuck in the sandy areas.

In 1956 my wife Lee and I with friend Johnny Barnes decided that we must make the trip, but we only had a three-day vacation window. So we decided we would drive nonstop to get there. We would have only a little more than one day to dive at San Carlos. We were young so we headed towards San Carlos only stopping for gasoline, and we hoped we did not have any flat tires or any major auto breakdowns.

We arrived at San Carlos about four o'clock in the afternoon. The area looked like all of the other desert country we had been traveling through—cactus and all of the things that make up a desert landscape—as long as you faced the desert, but when you faced the sea, it was like nothing that we three had ever witnessed before. Beautiful, clear blue water and volcanic lava making up the surrounding area made a beautiful contrast with the white sand and no surf. There were huge tide pools everywhere with beautiful colorful fish of different colors—different types of Damsels-type fishes. There were bright red crabs scurrying over and around the tide pools that held sea anemones, and orange bat starfish completed this beautiful picture. There was only one lone camper there with a small tent and a small boat to match. The first time we saw the Lone Camper, he was a very upset man for he was throwing rocks at a coyote that was trying to steal a fish he had just caught.

It was only natural that the farther you swam from shore, the bigger fish would become, so I took my pole spear and did my spear fishing no more than 100 yards from shore. The fish were abundant in the 5–15 pound range, which was great for our meal that day. I only had a pole spear because that was what I had been using in the Southern California waters, but this place was different—which I found out the next day. I brought with me a single 72-cubic-foot steel oxygen tank which I used

sparingly by mostly free diving with the tank on my back, and only when I felt I must do something special would I then put the mouthpiece in my mouth. At about midday of our last day of diving, I still had about half a tank of air, so I asked our friend the Lone Camper if he was going out in his boat that day because I sure would like to go with him to get a nice fish to take back to our home in LA. After about one hour, the Lone Camper came over to our camp area and said, "Let's go get some fish." We pushed his 14-foot boat into the sea which was no big deal because the surf was less than six inches. With his small motor we puttered his boat out into the bay opening for about 400 yards from shore. I have never had an experience like what happened then. I jumped over the side of the boat with my pole spear, but the fish were too large for my spear. The fish were all of the bass family "Pinta" or "Cabrilla," and were so large (being 40 pounds or more) that my pole spear was quite inadequate. As I finished my tank, I was almost crying when I reached the surface because the fish were too large to spear. After that experience, I said next time I come here, I will have a spear gun.

Lee and I went back to San Carlos in about 1960 for a great week of diving which was even greater because we were the only .persons there for the whole week. Nothing had changed since our last trip except a painted sign saying that there was going to be a camp ground there the following year.

In 1963 we made another trip to San Carlos, but by now our family had grown for we now had three children: Donna, Kenneth, and Karen. We also had purchased a pickup with a camper that would help us deal with our expanded family. Two months before we left, Lee and I purchased an old 16-foot boat with a 35 hp motor. That boat was a great utility trailer, and it carried all of the items needed to care for our young family plus all of our dive gear that now included four 72-cu foot tanks. San Carlos now had a camp ground, but it was still a great place. There were just a few people camping, so we did not feel like our San Carlos was lost.

I had made underwater housings for my Kodak 8 mm movie camera and my 35 mm Argus C3 camera out of plastic. Needless to say, with these interim cameras my picture quality was not great, but I thought at the time they were good because the pictures were of an area most people had only dreamed about. Right from the start my children adapted to this environment, especially to the tide pools that had so many of the little creatures that make up tide pools. Every day we would take our boat to a different cove and play in the warm water or dive, and then all of us would take a midday nap. It was a little cramped in our small boat for our midday naps, but we managed. Everyone loved this exposure to the elements that faced us each day, such as a storm or a lightning show that we often had at night.

One night a great electrical storm hit, so my wife Lee and I sat glued to the camper window watching the light show. We watched as the lightning kept striking the ocean in front of us, then we noticed a lone person out there swimming, trying to re-anchor their boat because it appeared that it had broken free. The next day I approached the man I thought I saw swimming in the ocean and introduced myself. He said his name was Fred Brooks, and he had the same love for this area that we did. So for the next 14 years, our families tried to arrange our vacation to San Carlos for the same time. Fred

was a great free diver who loved to spear fish for our evening meals. Fred knew of a super dive spot about 18 miles out to sea at an island called San Pedro. There were grouper there in the 1000-pound range—the Southern Jew fish "Promicrops Alias Guasa Mero." In my more than 60 years of diving and with 3,000 logged dives, I have not seen grouper that size except in 1954 while I was in Vietnam. At this island, the big grouper and the sharks liked a certain thermocline (where the different temperature waters meet) so if you wanted to film these giants, you had to dive to that thermocline—about 80 to 90 feet deep.

Memorable Dive One

I was at San Pedro Island taking underwater 8 mm movies one day when I saw a smooth hammerhead, "Sphyma Zygaena Alias Cornuda," that was what I call a "Sport." A Sport is an animal that does not grow to its normal dimension in length or girth. I have seen many hammerhead sharks that grow up to 12 feet long and weigh up to 1,300 pounds. This hammerhead shark was definitely a "Sport." I know its length was longer than my 14-foot boat because when it finally came to the surface, it was slightly larger than my boat. The girth was the thing that made this shark so much different than any large hammerhead should be. The girth was almost twice that of a normal hammerhead and more than a very, very, big, big Great White shark. The hammerhead had just eaten because there were at least six or more California Yellow Tail Jack fish picking up the scraps of food around the shark. What really made my mouth almost drop my mouthpiece out was not only its size, but also it was moving without motion—the shark looked like it was riding the thermocline by just coasting in a horizontal position. At that time I was about 80 feet deep with the shark about seven feet away. I thought at the time that he could have eaten me if he wanted to, for the only thing I had with me was my super 8 movie camera in my homemade plastic housing. Oh, I have had to use my movie camera housing more than once in those waters to bang sharks away, but this monster was something else.

Memorable Dive Two

While in the US Navy, I was stationed aboard the ship USS Calvert APA 32 in 1952 during the Korean Peacekeeping Operation, hundreds of miles from shore somewhere in the China Sea. We had to hang around the area for a day before we were to go to another area the next day. The Ship's Captain called a "Swim Call." Anyone who wanted to jump or climb down a cargo net to get into the ocean and get wet was allowed to do so. At our ship's railing we had Gunners Mates with rifles watching the sea for any of the big oceanic sharks that used to like following us, but none showed up that day. I was always blessed in those days to be able to hold my breath for up to three minutes when diving, but I could not free dive to great depths because of difficulty in clearing my ears—except for this day. I jumped into the sea from my ship's main deck with my fins and mask. Someone had thrown a deck of playing cards into the sea, and I would dive down and retrieve one of the cards. The visibility was unlike anything I had ever witnessed before—it was limitless. I had been doing this for at least 10 minutes when one of the cards seemed to flutter and go deeper than the rest, so I dove to retrieve it. Everything worked perfectly. The water temperature was perfect, and my ears cleared

so easily, so I just kept going deeper and deeper to retrieve the playing card. When I finally reached the playing card depth and turned my head upward for my assent to the surface, at that moment I was scared. I had dived to over 80 feet deep. In all my years since, I have never been able to even come close to free diving to that depth again. When I started this dive it was sort of a lazy descent, but my ability to hold my breath allowed me to go farther than I had ever done in my life. I should also add that my ascent to the surface was very fast. I wish I could have had that experience again in my life, but I guess it was not to be.

Memorable Dive Three

While diving off San Pedro Island in 1970, I was solo diving. In those days that is what everyone did since there usually were not that many divers to team up with. I had my Super 8 camera and was taking pictures of the big groupers that were, as I said before, in the 1000-pound range. As I settled down about seven or eight feet from these monsters next to a huge boulder, I thought (because of a somewhat subdued lighting) that the huge boulder started to swim away. And then I realized that this rock was the granddaddy of all groupers. I followed the Granddaddy Grouper just to see where it was heading when I heard a whistling sound possibly coming from my regulator, but it sounded just like when my mother used to whistle for me to come home when I was a kid. Her whistle had a certain structure and tone to it, and this sounded to me just like she was whistling for me to come home. With that, I turned around and headed toward my boat and my dive buddy, Fred Brooks, who had finished his dive and was waiting in our boat for our trip back to San Carlos. I have had other happenings like this before, but that is another story.

John Anderson "The Old Salt"

Mineral Section Programs

by Paul Brandes

November 6, 2013

No Meeting (Show load-up day)

November 20, 2013

Gem and Mineral Show Wrap-up: This is our opportunity to review the show while it is still somewhat fresh in our minds. Bring your comments on what we did right and where we can improve. Also, bring in your show purchases and be prepared to talk about why you purchased what you did. We will also discuss any specific topics that members would like to have presented for 2014. Refreshments will be provided.

December 4, 2013: To be announced

December 18, 2013: No "official" meeting
The Mineral Section Christmas Party will take the place of this meeting; details TBD.

AFMS 2013 Bulletin Editors' Contest

by Phyllis George
HGMS Newsletter Editor

The AFMS Annual Show was held in Jacksonville, Florida September 18–22, 2013. I wasn't able to attend, and I'm not aware of any other HGMS members who might have attended, so no one picked up any trophies and certificates HGMS members won. About a week ago I received a box from Linda Jaeger, Chair of the 2013 AFMS Bulletin Editors' Contest, and it contained certificates and plaques won by HGMS members.

Keep in mind that the rankings below are the result of competing **NATIONALLY**. HGMS has extremely talented members. I will be handing out the AFMS certificates and plaques during the October 22, 2013 General Meeting.

2013 AFMS Bulletin Editors' Contest—HGMS Results

Name	Title	Rank
Advanced Adult Article		
Mark Villanueva	Markings and Hallmarks: How to Decipher the Code	5
Neal Immega	The Seymour Blob	10
Steve Blyskal	Houston Fine Mineral Show	HM
Adult Article		
Karen Burns	What is HGMS	4
Adult Poetry		
Terrell William Proctor	Stardust Minerals	1
Owen Martin	Ode to My Rock Brothers	7
Junior Article Under 12		
Jackson Skubal (10 years old)	The Tourists of Today Meet the Mine of Yesterday	1
Feature		
Mark Villanueva	Surviving in Afghanistan	3
Large Bulletin		
Phyllis George	The Backbender's Gazette	3

2014 AFMS and Regional Show Dates

	Eastern Federation	Midwest Federation	Northwest Federation	Rocky Mountain Federation	South Central Federation	Southeast Federation
2014	March 29 - 30 Plymouth Mtg. PA.	Oct. 18 - 19 Des Moines, IA	August 15 - 17 Hermiston, OR	AFMS July 9 - 13 Tulsa, OK	August 9 - 10 ** Baton Rouge, LA	
2015		May 23 - 24 Wheaton, IL (Chicago area)			AFMS Austin, TX	
2016						

** Tentative

General Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2013
by Michele Marsel, HGMS Secretary

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

Visitors and New Members:

- Tim Windmiller attended the meeting. Tim said he has been doing some lapidary work over the past year and also does wire wrapping.
- Anna Breuggen also joined the meeting. She attended the Minerals Section meeting the previous week as well.

Prior Month General Meeting Minutes: Karen Burns moved and Michele Marsel seconded that the August 2013 General Meeting minutes be approved as published in the September 2013 BBG. The motion passed unanimously.

Drawing: Sigrid Stewart drew the winning name, and it turned out to be her husband Steve Blyskal. Sigrid promised it was not rigged! Steve won a gold jewelers loupe and a nice piece of polished quartz.

Show & Tell:

- Karen Burns passed around an embossed copper bracelet sample. This project will be demonstrated at the October 8 Day Light meeting. It involves use of the rolling mill and annealing with a torch.
- Dean Lagerwall brought some dyed quartz crystals he had purchased at the Denver Gem & Mineral Show. Even though they are not their natural color, the dye phosphoresced—glowed yellow-green—and looked quite cool.

Announcements:

- Mary Ann Mitscherling reminded everyone that this is the last night to add orders to the Hagstoz group order of metals as she is placing the order on September 25. Mary Ann also talked about demonstration volunteers at this year's Show and had a signup sheet available.
- Steve Blyskal, Show Dealer Chair, announced that one of our mineral dealers needs assistance at his show booth and is willing to pay an assistant. Mineral experience is not required. Contact Steve if you are interested.

Business: No business items were presented during the meeting.

Program: Dr. Nathalie Brandes presented a very informative program on the origin of mineral deposits. Dr. Nat is a Professor of Geology at Lone Star College in Houston. While she started off by saying that there were too many mineral formation processes to present, she still managed to cover ten types including Pegmatite, Mesothermal, Volcanogenic, Skarns, and more. Each type was described with charts and diagrams as

well as photographs of mineral specimens formed by the origination type.

Refreshments: Everyone was reminded to feed the Sabre Tooth Kitty with donations, and they thanked John Caldyne for providing the evening's snacks.

Adjourn: Clyde McMeans moved and Phyllis George seconded that the meeting be concluded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Board of Director's Meeting Minutes

October 1, 2013
by Michele Marsel

✓	President – John Caldyne	✓	Beading Rep – Jillynn Hailes
✓	1st Vice President – Clyde McMeans		Faceting Rep – Gary Tober
✓	2nd Vice President – Beverly Mace	✓	Lapidary Rep – Phyllis George
✓	Treasurer – Rodney Linehan	✓	Mineral Rep – Pete Stassi
✓	Secretary – Michele Marsel	✓	Paleontology Rep – Mike Dawkins
✓	Past President – Charlie Fredregill	✓	Day Light Rep – Mary Ann Mitscherling
			Archeology Rep – Garth Clark

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. with more than a quorum present.

Previous Month Board Minutes: Pete Stassi moved and Clyde McMeans seconded that the minutes of the September 2013 Board Meeting be accepted as published in the October 2013 BBG. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan sent financial reports to all Board members in advance of the meeting. The Board reviewed actual costs against the 2013 budget and identified probable shortfalls in membership dues and education revenue.

Office, Committee, and Section Reports

Archeology Section: No report.

Beading Section: The last meeting was very successful. The project for October 19 is a Hugs and Kisses Pearl Bracelet that is described on the club Web site. The Section is planning their Show display. An outing to the Stafford Bead show on Sunday, October 6 is also planned.

Day Light Section: The new tube wringer was demonstrated using copper foil.

Education Committee: John Caldyne reported that two members have expressed interest in chairing this committee. Mary Ann Mitscherling offered to assist by putting together a tentative schedule of classes for November 2014 through December 2014 to advertise at the Show demo booth. Please contact Mary Ann if you want to teach a class.

Faceting Section: No report.

Lapidary Section: Mary Ann Mitscherling reported there was good open shop participation in the hours before the last meeting. Cold Connections—joining metal without solder—will be discussed at the October 21 meeting.

Mineral Section: Members prepared materials for the Show from the Art Smith collection.

Outreach Committee: John Caldyne and Neal Immega have trips planned to several junior high and high schools.

Paleo Section: Neal Immega brought fossils collected by Mike Dawkins from Northern Kentucky to the last meeting. About 20 people participated in the recent field trip to Waco and collected small fossils (micromounts). The October 26 field trip to Midlothian currently is full. Contact Mike Dawkins to be added to the trip waiting list. Mike noted that the Dallas Paleontology Society's Fossilmania show is on the same weekend as the Midlothian trip (http://www.dallaspaleo.org/fossilmania.htm).

Publicity Committee: No report.

Show Committee: Show postcards were labeled by a small and efficient group of members on October 19. Everyone enjoyed pizza and salad after the work was done. The bulk mailing of Show postcards is scheduled to be mailed on October 15 along with member presale tickets. Thank you to all who helped. The Show Auction and pasta dinner will be on Saturday, October 19. Check your club e-mail blasts for more information.

Chris and Theresa Peek have notified John Caldyne they are relinquishing the Show Chair position for 2014. Michele Marsel had previously expressed interest in chairing the Show for 2014. Mary Ann Mitscherling moved to nominate Michele as Assistant Show Chair for 2013 so she can automatically succeed the Peeks when they step down at the end of the current show year. Clyde McMeans seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Youth Section: Neither Beverly Mace nor Libby Guynn were able to attend the last meeting. Neal Immega stepped in to manage the meeting, and members worked on their cabochons for the Show.

BBG Editor and Webmaster: The Website is up to date. Final results from the AFMS Bulletin Editors Contest will be published in the November BBG. Due date for the BBG is October 9.

Old Business

- **2014 Dues:** Mary Ann Mitscherling handed out an analysis of dues spanning the last few years. The Board discussed a small dues increase for 2014 for all categories except Youth. The amount of revenue this would generate was not

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

significant, so the Board chose to focus on increasing the number of members in 2014 instead of raising dues for existing members.

- **Club Renovations:** No update. John Caldyne will check with James Burrell for recommendations of club members with the appropriate skills to create a display wall over the back windows or the names of reasonably-priced contractors whom we can contact for estimates.
- **Safety:** Mike Dawkins is still pursuing advice on the type of video monitoring equipment needed for internal security in the clubhouse.

New Business

- Phyllis George requested reimbursement for some of the expenses for her and Clyde McMeans to attend the SCFMS Annual Meeting and represent HGMS. Michele Marsel moved and Charlie Fredregill seconded to reimburse Phyllis for hotel and fuel charges, and to reimburse Clyde McMeans for hotel charges. These charges total approximately $500. The motion passed unanimously.
- Rodney Linehan received an expected Dunn SW special assessment bill for $2000 for concrete repairs throughout the business park. Dunn SW offered the option to pay in quarterly installments or in lump sum. Mary Ann Mitscherling moved to pay in full this year. Clyde McMeans seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.
- John Caldyne talked about the importance of backing up club data including financials, membership, and library inventory, and also recommended having backup people available for key positions (secretary, treasurer, webmaster, etc.). Rodney Linehan reported that club financial data is already included in his business backup. The Board will consider cloud services, physical external drives, and other options to allow each key position to back up its own data to a central location. More detailed information on different options including costs will be reviewed at the November Board Meeting. Jim Kendall will be asked for advice.

Adjourn: Clyde McMeans moved to adjourn the meeting, and Charlie Fredregill seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Refreshments Scheduled for the HGMS General Meetings in 2013

We have a donation jar—the "Sabre Tooth Kitty"—where members may make a contribution to help defray the cost of refreshments. So please remember to feed the "Kitty" while helping yourself to some sweet or savory snacks.

Name	Refreshment Months
Clyde McMeans	November 2013
Holiday Party	December 14, 2013

Bench Tips

by Brad Smith

More Bench Tips are at facebook.com/BenchTips/ or see the book "Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" on Amazon.com

Foredom Maintenance

If you have a Foredom flexshaft, it makes sense to check it over every so often to be sure it's running properly. But how to do that? You've probably lost the little booklet that came with the unit. Well, being the good company it is, Foredom has put together an extensive set of videos on how to do it.

The series covers set-up, lubrication, replacing a sheath, motor maintenance, and handpiece maintenance. Few if any special tools are needed. You can watch the videos at http://www.foredom.net/videolibrary.aspx, and repair parts are available from most jewelry supply catalogs.

Just a Drop

Hobby shops and model airplane stores carry small plastic dispenser bottles that are handy bench items for putting a drop of oil or glue just where you want it.

The small metal tubing lets you squeeze out very small drops and reach into tight places.

I use the small one on the left for oil when I'm sawing or drilling harder metals like steel. And I use the bottle on the right from a plastics store for the fast-drying glues used to join pieces of acrylic.

Layout Tools

Dimensions on some features of a design can be fluid while others must be accurate for the design to work. When precision on a piece is important, good layout techniques are essential.

These are the tools that I rely upon to get holes in the right place, to achieve correct angles, and to cut pieces the correct length.

I like crisp sharp lines to follow, so I often coat surfaces with a dark marker and scribe my layout lines onto the metal. A square makes quick work of checking right angles or marking where to cut, and the thin center-punch helps me mark a place to drill holes exactly where I want them.

Finally, a good set of dividers is probably my favorite layout tool. They let me quickly mark a strip for cutting, swing an arc, and divide a line or curve into as many equal segments as I need. I keep at least one set of dividers in every toolbox.

Inventory Record

In an ideal world, each of us has a complete pictorial record of all pieces of jewelry in our inventory. We use it for insurance. We use it as a record of what was sent out on consignment. We use it to remember which items we are taking to a show. And eventually, we use it as a record of what we have sold.

Unfortunately, we don't always have time to take good pictures for an inventory. In situations like this, I've been able to make a quick record with the help of a color copier. Simply place a number of pieces face down on the glass and make a copy. The quality is more than sufficient for an accurate record.

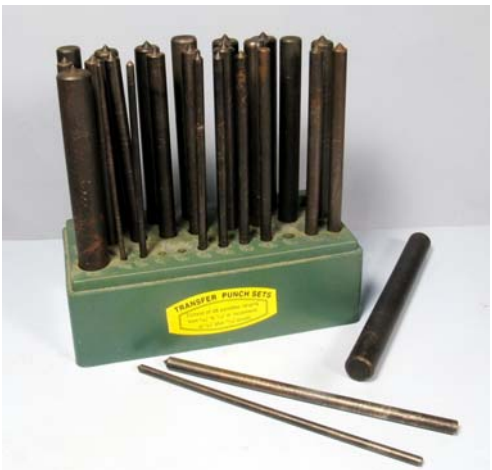
Just Say "No" to Optivisors

During his annual vision-check, a jeweler friend of mine wondered why not have his reading glasses made with bifocals that would magnify the same as the Optivisors? So he asked the ophthalmologist if he could add around +2.00 diopters into bifocals.

The doctor checked with his supervisor and came back all excited. They all agreed that it was a great idea, and they even gave him a special device to measure how far he holds a jewelry piece from his eye to get the focal distance exactly right. So if all goes well, no more sweaty, bulky optivisors! Anyone else tried this?

Mandrels

Straight-rod mandrels have a multitude of uses in helping to bend sheet and wire. Frequently we choose a round rod for winding jump rings. Common sources for different-sized rods are knitting needles, wooden dowels, and clothes hangers. Metal rods can also be found in hardware stores and hobby shops.



But to get the right "look" in chain maille designs, you must have just the right-sized mandrel, and often they are not easy to find. Jewelry catalogs sell selections of straight-rod man-

drels for $50 or more, but my choice is from Harbor Freight. They have a set of 28 sizes, from 3/32 inch to 1/2 inch, for under ten bucks. It's called a Transfer Punch Set. The catalog number is #3577, and the price is $9.95. Plus, look for the 20% off coupon on any one item in their advertising circular. That cuts your cost to around eight bucks. I've bought four of these over the last couple years. www.harborfreight.com

A Simple Pineapple

by Jan Baumeister
via RMFMS Newsletter 3/2013

The pineapple is a member of the bromeliad family. It is extremely rare that bromeliads produce edible fruit. The pineapple is the only available edible bromeliad today.

It is a multiple fruit. One pineapple is actually made up of dozens of individual flowerets that grow together to form the entire fruit.

Each scale on a pineapple is evidence of a separate flower.

Pineapples stop ripening the minute they are picked. No special way of storing them will help ripen them further. Color is relatively unimportant in determining ripeness. Choose your pineapple by smell. If it smells fresh, tropical, and sweet, it will be a good fruit. The more scales on the pineapple, the sweeter and juicier the taste.

After you cut off the top, you can plant it. It should grow much like a sweet potato will.

This delicious fruit is not only sweet and tropical; it also offers many benefits to our health. Pineapple is a remarkable fruit. We find it enjoyable because of its lush, sweet, and exotic flavor, but it may also be one of the most healthful foods available today. If we take a more detailed look at it, we will find that pineapple is valuable for easing indigestion, arthritis, or sinusitis. The juice has an anthelmintic effect; it helps get rid of intestinal worms.

Let's look at how pineapple affects other conditions.

- Pineapple is high in manganese, a mineral that is critical to development of strong bones and connective tissue. A cup of fresh pineapple will give you nearly 75% of the recommended daily amount. It is particularly helpful to older adults, whose bones tend to become brittle with age.
- Bromelain, a proteolytic enzyme, is the key to pineapple's value. Proteolytic means "breaks down protein," which is why pineapple is known to be a digestive aid. It helps the body digest proteins more efficiently.
- Bromelain is also considered an effective anti-inflammatory. Regular ingestion of at least one half cup of fresh pineapple daily is purported to relieve painful joints common to osteoarthritis.
- It also produces mild pain relief.

- In Germany, Bromelain is approved as a post-injury medication because it is thought to reduce inflammation and swelling.
- Orange juice is a popular liquid for those suffering from a cold because it is high in Vitamin C. Fresh pineapple is not only high in this vitamin, but because of the Bromelain, it has the ability to reduce mucous in the throat.
- If you have a cold with a productive cough, add pineapple to your diet. It is used in Europe as a post-operative measure to cut mucous after certain sinus and throat operations. Those individuals who eat fresh pineapple daily report fewer sinus problems related to allergies. In and of itself, pineapple has a very low risk for allergies.
- Pineapple is also known to discourage blood clot development. This makes it a valuable dietary addition for frequent fliers and others who may be at risk for blood clots.
- An old folk remedy for morning sickness is fresh pineapple juice. It really works! Fresh juice and some nuts first thing in the morning often make a difference.
- It's also good for a healthier mouth. The fresh juice discourages plaque growth.

Agate Cleaning

by Ron Whealdon

from Rock Rustler's News, 11/2012, via Gem Cutters News 12/2012

I have been asked a couple of times to submit this information for the newsletter after explaining to people the steps that I take to clean the agates, quartz, and jaspers that I find.

Cleaning

Supplies:

- Wash basin with hot, soapy water
- Additional wash basin with warm, clean water
- Stiff-bristle scrub brush
- Dishwashing gloves
- Lint-free towel(s)

Thoroughly scrub specimens with hot, soapy water until you can no longer remove any material and stains. Then rinse in the clean water and dry.

Oxalic Acid Bath

This process can be used to remove rust-staining from your specimens.

Supplies:

- Old crock pot (may be found at garage sales or the Goodwill store)

- Oxalic acid
- 1-gallon jug (clean)
- 1 gallon hot water.
- Funnel
- Slotted plastic long-handled spoon
- Chemical-resistant gloves
- Safety glasses or goggles
- Baking soda
- 5-gallon bucket of clean water

This process should be done outdoors and while wearing the safety gear (gloves and glasses). **DO NOT do this indoors!**

Measure out 4 ounces of oxalic acid onto a piece of paper, and using the funnel, carefully pour into the 1-gallon jug that has been filled half-way with hot water. Using the same funnel, slowly pour in the remaining hot water (careful not to allow the jug to overflow).

Replace the cap tightly and then gently rock the jug back and forth to mix thoroughly. Feel free to hum a soft lullaby if you're inclined to do so. Carefully pour acid from the bottle into the crock pot, filling it no more than 2/3 full.

One at a time, place a specimen in the slotted spoon and carefully lower into the crock pot. DO NOT allow specimens to just plop into the crock pot! When all of the specimens have been added to the crock pot, put the spoon into the bucket of clean water.

Plug in the crock pot and turn on to its "low" setting (mine has "off," "low," and "high"). Allow the specimens to bathe for about 12 hours, then turn the crock pot off and unplug. Let the specimens continue to soak in the crock pot for another 12 hours. I will start the process when I get home from work, turning off the crock pot before leaving for work the next morning.

After the 24-hour bath, use the slotted spoon to carefully transfer the specimens from the crock pot to the bucket of clean water. Soak the specimens in clean water for 72 hours (changing the water at least once every 24 hours). Repeat the "Cleaning" processes above to remove any material that may have been loosened by the acid bath.

If a specimen still exhibits staining, you can repeat this process as necessary. I'd think that after a week of cooking and soaking in oxalic acid though, either the stains are there for good, or they require a more drastic approach.

Disposing of Oxalic Acid

Supplies:

- 5-gallon bucket of clean water, about 2/3 full
- Large box of baking soda
- Chemical-resistant gloves

- Safety glasses or goggles
- Hose attached to a water source

When oxalic acid yellows, it has outlived its usefulness and it is time to dispose of it, but safely. Again, this process should be done outdoors while wearing gloves and glasses.

Carefully pour the contents of the crock pot into the bucket of clean water. Carefully pour in the baking soda, a little at a time, stopping in between pours to allow the fizzing to stop. Once you reach the point when fizzing no longer occurs, then the acid has been neutralized enough for disposal. Carefully pour the contents of the bucket onto the driveway and rinse down with the hose.

Oiling

This process can be used to give your specimens that "wet" look without keeping them in water and without needing to polish them.

Supplies:

- Old crock pot (not the same one used for the acid bath above)
- Mineral oil (can be purchased from some drug stores and is located in the laxative isle)
- Slotted plastic spoon
- Paper towels
- Lint-free towels

This process can be performed indoors. Fill the crock pot about 2/3 full with mineral oil. One at a time, place a specimen in the slotted spoon and carefully lower into the crock pot. You could just let the specimens plop into the crock pot, but then you end up with a mess to clean and risk chipping the bottom of the crock pot. Plug in the crock pot and turn on to its "low" setting (mine has "off," "low," and "high"). Allow the specimens to bathe for about 3 hours, then turn the crock pot off and unplug.

Let the specimens continue to soak in the crock pot until cool. Lay out a couple layers of paper towels on a counter or other flat surface. Using the slotted spoon, transfer the specimens from the crock pot to the paper towels. Using a lint-free towel, wipe off any excess oil (being careful as the specimens may still be warm if you didn't let them cool enough). Enjoy that "wet" look while displaying your specimens for public awe.

*Note, the oil will keep for a long time. It may start to look milky after sitting idle for a while, but it clears up again once heated, and I've yet to have the oil stain my specimens.

I hope that you've found this information useful. If you have any tips for the care and treatment of rocks, minerals, and stones; feel free to submit them for publication in the newsletter.

I Have A Passion For…

Don Shurtz, Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club
from Chips and Chatter 10/2013

I have a passion for agates. Agates are a microcrystalline form of silica and have the chemical formula of SiO_2. Although agates are often found in or associated with igneous and metamorphic rocks, agates are properly classified as a sedimentary rock. Agates may form in the gas cavities of lava (igneous) or in cracks in igneous or metamorphic rocks. The silica is dissolved in hot water and enters the gas bubble or crack where it is deposited. As the agate forms, trace minerals may add color to the dissolved mixture resulting in banding, often with clear quartz separating the different bands.

Another theory has it that the silica remains molten in the gas cavity or crack, and as it cools, at a certain point the silica gel almost instantaneously forms a solid with different layers forming over a very short period of time. In any case, the agate forms a banded or transparent solid.

Oops—my passion also includes non-transparent forms of silica. So I guess that would be Jasper. Jaspers are a microcrystalline form of silica and have the chemical formula of SiO_2. (Does that sound familiar?) Jasper is also associated with igneous rocks—generally volcanic—but again, like agate, is considered a sedimentary rock. Jasper forms in the veins and cracks of the volcanic rocks, but it does not seem to form in the gas bubbles. Jasper can be all one color, or it can be a mix of colors and often a mix of textures.

Some jasper is found in areas that are subject to seismic activity which causes the jasper to break apart and then reform. This can lead to islands of the original jasper surrounded by a different color, or multiple colored islands surrounded by still a different color, depending upon the number of times the jasper is broken apart and reformed.

Some jaspers exhibit patterning or swirling type patterns. This jasper probably formed in a vein and was never subjected to seismic activity. The patterning and swirling were associated with silica with different densities and cooling (due to generally high concentrations of impurities) and different flows of the silica gel which ultimately formed the jasper. Jasper is generally opaque, but in very thin slivers can appear translucent. The same thin sliver of agate would be transparent.

Oops again—my passion also includes opaque forms of silica that formed in gas bubbles or other voids. This would be Flint. Flints are a microcrystalline form of silica and have the chemical formula of SiO_2 (now this is becoming redundant). If you were British, you would say that flint only forms in the voids of limestone. Flint is (again) a sedimentary rock. It is opaque (it may be translucent in very thin slices) and is generally white or gray but often has other colors mixed in with the base color, and sometimes is entirely lacking a white or grey color. The coloring is caused by impurities in the crystal structure, and as with some jaspers, forms patterns or swirls due to the different density and cooling rates of the various mixtures of silica and its impurities.

Oops yet again—my passion also includes opaque forms of silica that formed in veins and voids in other than limestone. This would be Chert. Cherts are a microcrystalline form of silica and have the chemical formula of SiO_2 (now this is getting seriously redundant). Some people refer to this as flint, but if you believe the British, it is chert. Chert is (yet again) a sedimentary rock formed in voids and veins, generally in greensand, limestone, chalk, and dolostone. Chert is generally gray or brown, but there are a wide range of shades of the base color that appear in the rock. As with flint and jasper, chert can exhibit patterning and swirling, again due to differing densities and cooling rates as the stone forms. Some would say that chert has a slightly coarser grain than flint, but that is subject to question. What is commonly accepted is that flint is a form of chert that forms in certain chalk and marly limestone formations. Just be careful that you don't tell this to the people from Flint Ridge, they might just toss some of their flint (from flint ridges that form near there) at you.

So how am I supposed to solve the quandary—what is my passion? Perhaps it would be best to say that my passion is for the microcrystalline forms of quartz and leave it at that. By the way—did I mention Obsidian? It is also SiO_2 (more redundancy), but is an igneous (instead of sedimentary) rock and has no crystal structure. However, it needs be added to my passion list.

BBQ Rules

via Rockytier 7/07 and The Roadrunner 10/2013

Routine….

The woman buys the food.

The woman makes the salad, prepares the vegetables, and makes dessert.

The woman prepares the meat for cooking, places it on a tray along with the necessary cooking utensils and sauces, and takes it to the man who is lounging beside the grill—beer in hand. Here comes the important part….

THE MAN PLACES THE MEAT.ON THE GRILL

The woman goes inside to organize the plates and cutlery.

The woman comes out to tell the man that the meat is burning.

He thanks her and asks if she will bring another beer while he deals with the situation.

THE MAN TAKES THE MEAT OFF THE GRILL AND HANDS IT TO THE WOMAN.

The woman prepares the plates, salad, bread, utensils, napkins, sauces, and brings them to the table.

After eating, the woman clears the table and does the dishes.

EVERYONE PRAISES THE MAN AND THANKS HIM FOR HIS COOKING EFFORTS.

The man asks the woman how she enjoyed· "her night off." And upon seeing her annoyed reaction, concludes that there's just no pleasing some women.....

Show Time 2013 & 2014

November 2-3	Midland, TX	Midland Gem & Mineral Society Midland Center; 105 N. Main St E-mail: show@midlandgemandmineral.org Web site: www.midlandgemandmineral.org
November 8-10	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; ladyt682@yahoo.com
December 6-8	El Paso, TX	El Pasdo Mineral & Gem Society El Maida Auditorium; 6331 Alabama Jeannette Carrillo, (877) 533-7153 gemcenter@aol.com

Show Time 2014

January 11	Arlington, TX	Arlington Gem & Mineral Club Annual Faceting Swap Meet AGMC Clubhouse, 1408 Gibbons Rd. Jack Spinks (214) 335-9452 e-mail: jlspinks@sbcglobal.net
January 18-19	Fredericksburg, TX	Fredericksburg Rockhounds Pioneer Pavilion, Lady Bird Johnson Park Hwy. 16S; gedeonjim1@gmail.com
March 1-2	Robstown, TX	Gulf Coast Gem & Mineral Society Richard M. Borchard Regional Fairgrounds 1213 Terry Shamsie Blvd. www.gcgms.org
March 8-9	Pasadena, TX	Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society' Pasadena Convention Center 7902 Fairmont Pkwy sara_chelette@sbcglobalnet.com www.clgms.org
April 25-27	Houston, TX	Fine Mineral Shows--Annual Show Embassy Suites Hotel, 2911 Sage Rd. Near The Galleria-Houston. e-mail: dave@finemineralshow.com www.FineMineralShow.com

2013		November				2013
Sun	**Mon**	**Tue**	**Wed**	**Thu**	**Fri**	**Sat**
					1	2 10–5 Shop Open 10–12 Youth Section
3 10–4 Shop Open Daylight Saving Time Ends	4	5 7:30 Board Meeting Election Day	6 No Meeting Mineral Section Show Load up Day 10-3 Shop Open	7 Show Set Up Day	8 Show Opens	9 2nd Day of Show
10 Final Day of Show	11 1:00 Day Light Section Veteran's Day	12 7:30 Show Committee	13 7:00 Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	14	15	16 10–5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
17 10–4 Shop Open	18 7:30 Lapidary Section	19 7:30 Paleo Section	20 7:30 Mineral Section 10-3 Shop open	21	22	23 10–5 Shop Open
24 10–4 Shop Open	25	26 7:30 General Meeting	27 10-3 Shop open Hanukkah Begins	28 Thanksgiving	29	30

2013		December				2013
Sun	**Mon**	**Tue**	**Wed**	**Thu**	**Fri**	**Sat**
1 10–4 Shop Open	2	3 7:30 Board Meeting	4 7:30 Mineral Section	5 7:30 Archeology Section Hanukkah Ends	6	7 10–5 Shop Open 10–12 Youth Section
8 10–4 Shop Open	9 1:00 Day Light Section	10 7:30 Show Committee	11 7:00 Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	12	13	14 10–5 Shop Open HGMS Holiday Party
15 10–4 Shop Open	16 NO Lapidary Section	17 NO Paleo Section	18 NO Mineral Section Party to be announced 10-3 Shop open	19	20	21 10–5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section 1:30 Beading Section
22 10–4 Shop Open	23	24 NO General Meeting	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28 10–5 Shop Open
29 10–4 Shop Open	30	31 New Year's Eve				

The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

The Newsletter of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

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