



The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

Volume XLV - No. 12

December 2014



President's Message

by Ray Kizer

I would like to personally thank all the HGMS members who worked so hard to make our recent show a big success. Michele Marsel, Scott Singleton, Chase Jennings, Beverly Mace, Clyde McMeans, Steve Blyskal, Sigrid Stewart, Chris and Theresa Peak, and the whole Show Committee all did an excellent job. Thanks to all those whom I don't have space to name here for jumping in and helping. I saw many of our new members getting involved, and that makes me really proud.



From all reports that I have gathered, we put on a great show this year. Our dealers were happy and making good daily sales. I know they went home with a whole lot less weight in rocks and minerals than they came with—everyone I looked at seemed to be in the buying mood. I only went away

Continued on page 4

Upcoming Programs

by Paul Brandes

November 25, 2014: Adeene Denton – A Geology Student's Adventure in Nepal. This evening's presentation will be presented by Adeene Denton, the 2014 HGMS Earth Science/Jewelry Arts Scholarship winner. Ms. Denton's presentation will be on her summer field geology class in Nepal and will address three different areas she studied: the metamorphism, general geomorphology, and glacial impacts in the Himalaya Mountains. Over the course of the evening, Ms. Denton will give an overview of the tectonics that formed the Himalayas, and then using the knowledge she gained over the summer, extrapolate that concept to the geology on a regional scale. Ms. Denton will also talk about the unique culture of Nepal and describe her experiences during her trip. Please join us for what will be an exciting and very informative presentation!

Continued on page 4

Contents

President's Message	1
Upcoming Programs	1
Purpose of HGMS	3
Driving to the Denver Coliseum Mineral and Gem Show	5
Philosophies	6
Preserving Pyritized Fossils	7
Geode	8
Beading Section	9
Open Shop Hours of 2015 Day Light Section Meetings	10
General Meeting Minutes	10
HGMS Board of Director's Meeting	12
Holiday SAFETY 2014	15
AFMS Past President's Message	16
AFMS Show—2015	17
Turquoise	17
SCFMS—Newly Elected President	18
Glass Beach—Recycled By the Ocean.	19
Argyle Pink Jubilee	20
Africa Is Literally Splitting In Half	21
Keeping Youth Involved	22
Fun Facts	24
The Story of Montana Agates	25
Show Time 2014 - 2015	26
New Look for the BBG	26
Calendars	27

Permission to use material originating in this newsletter is given freely providing that credit is given to the author and the source.

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

*Editor: Phyllis B. George
22407 Park Point Drive
Katy, TX 77450-5852
Phone: (281) 395-3087*

*Copy is due for the January 2015 issue
by Wednesday, December 10, 2014.*

*E-mail the Editor and Webmaster at
pgeorge4@comcast.net*

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 continued from page 1

with a few treasures, but the profits made several dealers happy. Our Swap Area dealers did a lot better business this year, and they were able to spend their profits on the floor with our dealers.

Setup and Tear Down went quickly and efficiently, thanks to Michele who lined up the moving crew. This new feature saved the backs of all who helped. I think this is worth doing again next year.

I don't have the numbers for total paid attendance yet, but I do have an estimate of our school kids and scouts: On Friday, the public/private schools had about 1,275 students + 160 adults an (8:1 ratio), the Home-schools: 660 students + 220 adults a (3:1 ratio). The public/private school numbers are down from last year (1,762 kids) because we have been a little more restrictive in the numbers of kids we allow per time slot.

The Saturday Scout program brought in approximately 158 Scouts + 40 adults a (4:1 ratio). The difference this year was that we offered a geology patch for the Girl Scouts, and about 20% of the above were girls—which many of us were happy to see. Hopefully, this program will continue to grow among the Girl Scouts next year.

According to Scott Singleton, Dino Dig made 180 flats, and Lexy Bieniek reports that we used all but six of them—which must be a first since in previous years we have run out well before the close of the show. We had lots of kudos from the parents about running such a fun and innovative activity for the kids. This show feature sets us apart from other shows, and it helps ensure that we have lots of people attending. Hopefully, we will have lots of help getting this ready for the kids next year.

Since our founding charter is about education, I feel our show is a great ambassador to the community. The teacher mineral kits and the School Daze program help introduce them to the science and fun involved in our hobby. Thanks to all the instructors and demo staff for getting them excited about HGMS. I hope next year's show is even better. It really can be, if everyone steps up and pitches in again. Thanks again to all who do.

Upcoming Programs continued from page 1

December 13, 2014: Annual Holiday Party: More to be announced.

December 23, 2014: NO MEETING

January 27, 2015: To be announced

Driving to the Denver Coliseum Mineral and Gem Show and Seeing the Beautiful State of Colorado.

by John Anderson, The Miner

Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society

I have never been to the Denver Coliseum Mineral and Gem Show, but I have heard that it is a very big and very good show. This year it was held from September 4–14, 2014. This fit into my plans to drive and visit my daughter Karen and her husband Jan. They recently moved to Denver from Sydney, Australia. This show added frosting to the cake in that I can visit my daughter and her husband and also visit a very large Mineral and Gem show. I was talking to my rock partner D.R. “Matt” Dillon about going to that show, and he was all for it. We thought we might even be able to do a little rock collecting along the way.



I have a lifelong friend, George Birrer, whom we worked with at Shell Development many years ago, and we used to have a small diving business. He now lives in Walsenburg, and I could see him on my way to the show too. George and his wife Monica own an RV Park, and they both are very active in all of Walsenburg’s activities. At George’s RV Park, we met his chief mechanic, Greg Atkins, who is the expert in repairing everything be it an automobile engine, motor home, or a mobile home trailer.

Mr. Atkins’s daughter, Amanda Adkins Anderson, was selling minerals at her booth at the Coliseum Show. Mr. Atkins called her and told her how great we were. (That made us both a little embarrassed.) Amanda is on TV almost weekly, collecting gems and minerals in very remote areas of Colorado. We were interested in meeting her and her husband. Her program was shown on the TV Weather Channel in Colorado. In Houston, most likely her program would be shown on the Discovery Channel. We met Amanda at the Coliseum Gem and Mineral Show on the Coliseum’s ground floor, and we both were impressed with the quality of her mineral specimens, her personality, and also her beauty.

And now back to the Coliseum Mineral and Gem Show, and it is a very big show: They had 250 dealers and 100 tents, so you get the idea. I should say that many of the dealers had multiple tables, extending the normal Mineral and Gem dealer’s footprint two-fold.

The Denver Coliseum Mineral and Gem Show was held in many places. First, it was held inside the Coliseum Center and on the first floor that completely encircled this structure. Outside, each dealer had his very own huge white

tent, but these tents were so large, you would have to increase the advertised 100-tent number two-fold again. All of the tents were white and uniformly constructed, but many were larger than others. The tents were all the same color and that created a very nice effect. They were also a great place to stay during a rainstorm, which happened.

I saw some Houston Gem and Mineral Society members like Al Mowery who was selling some beautiful cut Blue Sapphires from Montana. We also saw Dean Lagerwall and some of the venders who normally sell at our Houston Gem Show.

We saw this all on our first day, then we went back for a quick look-see. We went to the opposite side of the freeway to the wholesale dealers who were in some very, very large buildings. These buildings are so vast in size, that even a mountain climber's legs would become very tired if you walked everywhere. This is more than a two-day show. We were not able to explore dealers at the hotel because we ran out of time. I will have to save the areas I missed for next year.

My friend Matt had other commitments, so I placed him on a plane for San Antonio, TX, and I stayed a couple more days with my daughter before heading back to Spring, TX.

While in Denver, Karen, Jan, and I took a driving tour of Red Rock Canyon—that tour is without comparison. We returned that night to attend the Colorado Sympathy Orchestra playing many great classical selections, like Ravel's Bolero, in the Red Rocks Amphitheater. The sound was without equal. We also viewed the Garden of Gods which was worth the trip there all by itself.

I drove 2,700 miles and I am glad to be home, but my mind still goes back to this great show and the variety of material that any mineral or lapidary hobbyist would salivate over. I sure did, and I am not ashamed to say so.

I can say without reservation that Colorado is a beautiful state, and this Gem and Mineral Show made it even more beautiful. John A. Anderson

Philosophies

from Tips & Chips, 1/1998 via The Show Me Geode, 2/2001; via The Glacial Drifter, 1/2001; via The Tumbler 9/2014

If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.
He who hesitates is probably right.

Two wrongs are only the beginning.

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; to steal from many is research.

Preserving Pyritized Fossils

by Chase Jennings

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Pyritized fossils, such as those from the Del Rio Formation of Waco, Texas, face one common problem—pyrite rot. Pyrite is composed of iron and sulfur, which will rust just like anything else containing iron. There are few fossil horrors worse than collecting an entire frame of beautiful pyritized ammonites and forgetting them in a drawer for a few years, only to rediscover little piles of rust where your prized ammonites used to be.

If you collect pyritized fossils, you have to take some proactive steps to protect your fossils from their two main enemies: oxygen and humidity. There are multiple ways to prevent (or rather slow to an immeasurably small crawl) pyrite rot. But I have been using a method that does not require coatings or alterations to the fossils themselves and that allows you to still display them easily (unlike putting them in jars of mineral oil).

First, dry out your fossils, removing all humidity possible. You can do this by putting your fossils on a cookie sheet or foil in the oven and baking at about 150 degrees F for an hour. Do not preheat your oven, as you want their temperature to rise slowly. Allow your oven to cool for an hour or two before removing so your fossils do not cool too fast.

Next, you need to seal your fossils in their own microenvironment. You can protect your fossils from further humidity and oxygen exposure by creating a barrier and by reducing the oxygen and humidity within this new sealed microenvironment. I've found the best way is to use the materials and methods below:

1. Mylar Ziploc bags with clear front and silver back. I use 2.5"x4" but you can use slightly larger or smaller sizes. (\$0.06 each or less on eBay)
2. Impulse Heat Sealing Machine, 8" recommended (\$20 or less on eBay)
3. 50cc Oxygen Absorbers (\$0.10 or less on eBay)
4. 1 gram packets of Sorb It silica gel desiccant (\$0.10 or less on eBay)

To seal your fossils after drying them, simply take them out of the oven, place them in the small Mylar bags you want them to be displayed in—using nitrile gloves (try not to get your skin oils on them). Put one oxygen absorber and one desiccant bag in each Mylar bag, and close the top of each bag. Try to press out as much air as possible. I've found it easiest to remove most of the air by inserting a small straw into the bag, zipping the bag up to the straw, then sucking out what air I can while simultaneously pulling the straw out of the bag and pressing the last bit of the Ziploc shut.

After you have sealed each Mylar bag with its fossil(s), desiccant, and oxygen absorber, place each bag on the heat sealer as close to the fossil and oxygen/

humidity absorbing packets as is practical so that you can make as small a compartment as possible. Close the lever using the palm of your hand over the center of the lever to apply even pressure to get a good seal instead of just using the small knob/handle at the end. I usually use setting 3 on my heat sealer, but yours may vary. I usually close the handle for 3 seconds, open it and allow the bag to rest for 5 seconds, then pull the bag straight up from the heat element. Otherwise, the heated portion of the bag may separate since it is partially melted in the process.

With your newly sealed bags, you can cut off the top or leave it as-is. Label the back with an address label including all relevant information for the specimen contained. You can store these bags in a Riker frame to display, or catalogue them and put them in a box.

Gemstone Faceting Class 101

Classes will be held on Sunday afternoons

(two four-hour sessions) **1:00–5:00 PM**

January 11 & 18, 2015

at the

Houston Gem & Mineral Society building

10805 Brooklet

Houston, Texas 8899

Seating will be limited to those who **do not** already have their own faceting machines.

To hold a seat—Preregister for the class:

1. Contact Carrie Hart (713) 253-3804
2. Submit a \$20 (nonrefundable) deposit

Class registration fee will be \$80 for both sessions. (Total of 8 class hours)

Geode

by: George "Chic" Chicacak

from the My Grader, Oct. 1983, Via SCFMS Newsletter, Nov.-Dec. 2014

A solid rock I know about,
Its make-up doesn't faze me.
A hollow one is something else,
Its structure does amaze me.
Is it a hole within a rock?
This fact I often ponder.
Or is it a rock around a hole?
I'll never cease to wonder.

Beading Section*October 18, 2014**by Nancy Fischer*

Busy day at the Clubhouse. Diane Sisson is helping two new members of the Beading Section, while at another table Neal Immega, PhD, is tutoring students for the Paleo portion of the Science Olympiad.

This was a “twofer” meeting in that we completed two projects. We made spiders. They will become pins, pendants, or rings. We also made Halloween earrings. Pieces were made by Kathryn Kelly, Nancy Fischer, Diane Sisson, Jillynn Hailes, Teddi Rainwater, Pat Hildbold, and Christine Nilsen.



Open Shop Hours of 2015 Day Light Section Meetings

by Mary Ann Mitscherling

In January 2015, the Day Light Section schedule will include
Open Shop hours: 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Open Shop;
1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Open Shop without use of rock saws;
1:00 to 3:00 p.m. regular Daylight program as announced.

General Meeting Minutes

October 28, 2014

by Nancy English, HGMS Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Ray Kizer at 7:30 p.m.
The President thanked everyone for coming to the October General meeting, and he offered a welcome to our new members and visitors. The meeting was attended by 30 regular members, no new members, and no visitors.

Drawing: Nancy English won the drawing for the geode.

Drawing: Steve Blyskal won the drawing for the tiger-eye slab.

Minutes: Phyllis George moved to approve the minutes of the September General Meetings as published in the BBG. John Mitscherling seconded, and the membership passed the motion.

Nominating Committee: Last month the BOD requested that the Nominating Committee meet and talk with HGMS members to see if they would like to volunteer to become officers on the 2015 HGMS Board.

The 2015 Nominating Committee is composed of Neal Immega, Garth Clark, Steve Wilkerson, Diane Sisson, and Neal Immega. They met and proposed the following slate: President: Ray Kizer, Vice President: Paul Brandes, Second VP: Beverly Mace, Secretary: Nancy English, and Treasurer: Rodney Linehan. Nominations were then opened to the members in attendance—was there anyone they wished to nominate for the various offices?

When there was no response to the question, Jim Kendal moved to accept the slate as reported and that nominations cease. Sigrid Stewart seconded, and the President called for a vote. The membership voted in favor of the motion and approved the slate of officers proposed for 2015. The actual vote for new officers will occur during the November General Meeting, November 25.

Show Committee Report / Preparations: Michelle Marsel: There are sign up

lists on two tables in the meeting room for show volunteers. The Dino Dig slabs will be poured Saturday morning, November 1, 2014.

Beverly Mace: Please have all your displays and supplies labeled and brought down to the garage for loading on Wednesday, November 5, 2014. There are more labels at the top of the stairs.

New Internet Connection: Jim Kendal thanked Phyllis George on the club's behalf for the new Wi-Fi connection. We now have a much faster Internet response.

To allow for tonight's auction, Neal Immega's originally scheduled program for tonight—**The Evils of Mineralogists**—will be rescheduled for another meeting so that we can hold an auction tonight.

Before the auction, Paul Brandes announced the program for the November 25 General meeting: **Adeene Denton – A Geology Student's Adventure in Nepal**. November's program will be presented by Adeene Denton, the 2014 HGMS Earth Science/Jewelry Arts Scholarship winner. Ms. Denton's presentation will be on her summer field geology class in Nepal and will address three different areas she studied: the metamorphism, general geomorphology, and glacial impacts in the Himalaya Mountains. Over the course of the evening, Ms. Denton will give an overview of the tectonics that formed the Himalayas, and then using the knowledge she gained over the summer, extrapolate that concept to the geology on a regional scale. Ms. Denton will also talk about the unique culture of Nepal and describe her experience during her trip.

Old Business

In the interest of time, President Kizer asked the members to follow the progress of Old Business items in the October 7 Board meeting minutes as published in the November edition of the BBG.

The next Board of Directors meeting is Tuesday, November 4. The next General Meeting is Tuesday, November 25.

Adjourn: Jim Kendal moved to adjourn the business meeting, and John Mitscherling seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m. (5 minute break)

Auction: We had an auction of 86 high-quality items (agate and jasper slabs, rough, crystals, and lapidary equipment) generously donated to HGMS by Alice Hamilton, Faye Kendell, and Nancy Bonnette. Neal Immega served as the auctioneer.

Refreshments: Provided by Nancy English.

HGMS Board of Director's Meeting

November 4, 2014

by Nancy English

X	President - Ray Kizer		Archeology Rep - Garth Clark
	1st Vice President - Paul Brandes	X	Beading Rep - Diane Sisson
X	2nd Vice President - Beverly Mace		Daylight Rep - Mary Ann Mitscherling
X	Treasurer - Rodney Linehan	X	Faceting Rep - Gary Tober
X	Secretary - Nancy English	X	Lapidary Rep - Phyllis George
	Past President - John Caldyne		Mineral Rep -
		X	Paleontology Rep - Mike Dawkins

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. with a quorum of seven members present. President Ray Kizer presided over the meeting. Non-voting member Carrie Hart attended the meeting.

Approval of Previous Month Board Minutes: Mike Dawkins moved and Phyllis George seconded that the minutes of the October 2014 Board Meeting be accepted as published in the November 2014 BBG. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Rodney Linehan e-mailed financials to all Board members in advance of the meeting. Carrie Hart reported that since June the Education committee has provided net revenue of \$900.00.

Show Committee: Michele Marsel – Trailer repairs are 100% complete and trailers are loaded and ready to be hauled to the Show. Volunteer sign-up has been slow, and calls are being made to round up more help. The truck will be loaded starting at 4 p.m. on 11/5/2014 at HGMS. Dino Dig flats were poured on Saturday, November 1, and Sections brought their items down from the loft for loading.

Office, Committee, and Section Reports

Archeology Section: No report on the October presentation. The next Archeology Section meeting is Thursday, November 6, 7:30 p.m.

Beading Section: Diane Sisson reported that ten members made Halloween earrings and spiders at the October meeting. The next regular Beading Section meeting will be on Saturday, November 15 at 1:30 p.m. Sabrina will teach Decorating a Christmas Ball. The December meeting will be held on the second Saturday to help with our Christmas party that evening.

Day Light Section: Nancy English reported that five members attended the October meeting. The attendees discussed padding cigar boxes. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 10 at 1:00 p.m. The project will be to make copper pressed bracelets or padding cigar boxes.

Education Committee: Carrie Hart reported on the year's first two quarters

Get last-minute news about club events by sending a note to Jim Kendall at kendal_ja@yahoo.com

revenue from classes (see Treasurer's report) and also on Member Badges (see old business). Carolyn Promisel's Viking Knit class went well. Carrie is working with her on an Intermediate Class. Ray Kizer's second cabochon class was successful. He uses softer stones.

Gemstones & Faceting Section: The next meeting is on Wednesday, November 12 at 7:00 p.m. The main topic for the night will be polishing.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section: The next regular meeting is on Tuesday, November 17, at 7:30 p.m. The October meeting was an Open Shop night for cabochon making. (No large saws were allowed to be run—too noisy for instruction).

Mineral Section: The next two meetings will be held on Wednesday, November 19, and December 3, at 7:30 p.m. The Mineral Section is taking a field trip to Llano November 15 and November 16. They will go to Emerald Ridge and a copper mineral location. As of the Board meeting, there was still room for more rock hounds.

The Ciera Rock Hound group is preparing for the annual Turritella field trip near Waco. They will head to the Waco Gem and Mineral Show afterward.

Paleo Section: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 18, at 7:30. The Paleo Section had beautiful weather for their field trip to Midlothian, Texas. Twenty people found fossils. Some went on to Fossil Mania at Glen Rose, Texas.

Publicity Committee: No report.

Youth Section: Beverly Mace reported that the young people have completed their stones for the Show cases. The next two meetings are on Saturday, November 15 and December 6 from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

BBG Editor and Webmaster: Phyllis George reported that the deadline to receive articles for the December issue is November 8, 2014. Phyllis asked Board members to access the HGMS Web site on their cell phones—to test the speed of our new Internet "Hot Spot" (we now have two functioning). It works much faster than before. The HGMS Web site is up-to-date with all the Show information. Four fossil and mineral kits [quartz, mini fossil, mini paleo, and economic (anything mined for money)] will be available for teachers who bring students to the HGMS Kids Day—the first day of the show. Each teacher can select one box at the show.

Old Business

1. **Club House Repairs / upgrades:** Ray Kizer – Update – The next item is the installation of a pneumatic door-closing system. No Progress.
2. **Security System:** Garth Clark – Garth committed to pick from sales during the Black Friday season in the fall. No report.
3. **Member Badges** – Carrie Hart reported that Recognition Specialties Inc. - Nicebadge.com has the badge template. The original setup fee is \$15.00.

The bulk price for 25 or more is \$12.00 per badge.

4. **Show Trailer Repairs:** - Repairs completed with new tires, new rear ramp/door, axle repaired, two electric winches, and upgraded wiring. The trailers are loaded and ready for show. The ramps turned out great.
5. **2015 Officers:** The nominating committee announced its slate of nominees for 2015 Officers at the October General Meeting. The committee nominated the current 2014 officers. The vote for our 2015 officers will occur during the November General Meeting.
6. **Sign on club front door to direct people to side door:** Tamara Ritchie suggested that a sign be attached to the door facing Brooklet to direct people to the parking lot entry (on Rockley). The BOD agreed it was a good idea. Nancy English agreed to look at Office Depot for premade signs, or she will make a sign for the door.
7. **Auction of donated materials:** On October 28, the live auction of donated materials raised total funds of \$1,657. After reimbursements to donors, the club netted \$1,457.50. The membership wishes to thank our donors: Alice Hamilton, Nancy Bonnette, and Faye Kendall. Ray Kizer is working on Alice's and Nancy's collections for future auctions.
8. **Square account** - The Square credit card processing account approved at the October Board Meeting to help handle Info Booth and ticket sales at the November Show has been set up.

New Business

1. **Change of Insurance Carriers:** With the help of HGMS Member Scott West, and effective November 1, 2014, HGMS has changed our insurance carrier from Cadence Insurance CL, to a new carrier—Hanover Insurance Company. This new carrier is a strong underwriter for non-profits. Hanover was able to duplicate our previous policy deductibles and coverages. But under the new policy, HGMS was able to increase the lost reimbursement coverage on the building to \$726,000 (almost twice as much) and on its physical contents to \$292,000, all for an annual premiums of approximately \$4,062. Our previous annual premiums were roughly \$8,700. By making this change, the club will save approximately \$4,600 next year. Plus—by making the change effective by the end of October, we could save more money on the monthly premiums for November and December 2014.
2. The **HGMS Christmas party** will be held on December 13, 2014. The party starts at 5:00 with a review of the auction items. Food will be served at 6:00 p.m., and the auction starts at 7:00. The Club provides turkeys and briskets. Attendees should bring side dishes or desserts. Beverly Mace agreed to decorate the tables again. Nancy English will write up the request for auction donations and potluck dishes.

Adjourn: Nancy English moved to adjourn the meeting, and Gary Tober seconded. The motion passed.

Holiday SAFETY 2014*by Owen Martin, SCFMS Safety Chair**from SCFMS Newsletter 11–12/2014*

The Holidays are upon us! What are you doing to help keep yourself and your family safe? Here are a few things to consider around the Holidays this year.

Decorations. Especially for those of us who are not quite spring chickens any more, it can be hazardous to do things like crawling in and out of the attic getting decorations or putting up Christmas lights.

Using smaller boxes to store decorations can be very helpful as we maneuver through our attics, garages, and basements. Hernias and slipped disks are NOT the kind of present you want to give yourself this year.

Stepladders are MUCH safer than chairs when putting up decorations inside your home. Considering that you can buy one for \$25 or less at most big box stores, they are a great value for safety.

Hanging decorations outside can pose serious risks. Make sure you have a spotter whenever you are on a ladder. Over the years, I've had several friends who have lost older family members from ladder falls this time of year.

And then there are the electrical issues! How many of us are still using those Christmas lights from 1979??? Frayed wires, lack of fuses, overloaded plugs, all have the potential to cause fires or electrocutions. Consider upgrading your lights or going with a more modest presentation.

There are also 3rd party services that will put lights up for you if you're willing to pay a little more.

Kitchen safety has a variety of elements to it, so without going into too many details—if you can, make extra time to prepare what you will serve. Things will be much less chaotic, and this lessens the chance of things like cuts, burns, and scalds.

Lots of people on the roads. The most dangerous part of Holidays typically revolves around travel. Every day I drive an hour each way in and out of downtown Houston for work. I'm used to it, but during the Holidays, there are A LOT of people on the roads who are not used to the vagaries of heavy traffic. Consequently during Holiday travel, driver confusion and driver fatigue spike. Planning your trips and giving yourself extra time to get where you are going will help you minimize your risks.

Drunk driving: Finally, although we are all aware of it, there will be a lot of folks on the roads who have been drinking alcoholic beverages. The concentration of drunk drivers on our roads peaks after midnight and goes until 4:00 a.m. Avoid driving at these hours.

Be safe out there. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Owen Martin

AFMS Past President's Message*From My Desk to Yours... One Last Time**by Richard Jaeger, AFMS Past President*

I have enjoyed serving as AFMS President this past year and have appreciated all the support I received from the AFMS Committee Chairmen and from the officers of our Regional Federations. So many of you were good about communicating and always helpful when I had questions. I especially want to thank everyone who contributed articles for publication in the AFMS Newsletter. Marion Roberts has an equally qualified group of officers with whom to work, and he will have a successful upcoming year.

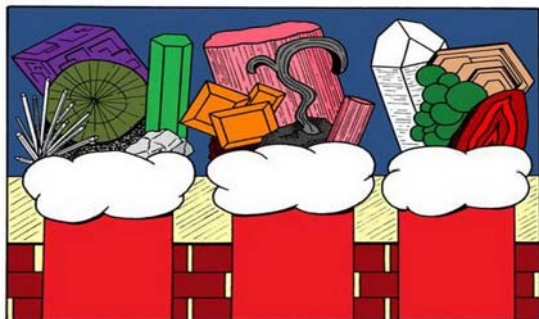


Attending the various Regional Federation shows and being able to renew old friendships and make new ones was perhaps the highlight of the year for me. As I write these words, I still have the Midwest and Southeast Federation Shows to attend, and I am very much looking forward to those. We had an excellent AFMS Convention in Tulsa this July; it was really pleasing to see thirty-two competitive exhibits along with excellent attendance at the Cracker Barrel meeting, Awards Banquet, and Breakfast with the Editors & Webmasters.

The 2015 AFMS Convention and Show will be held in Austin, Texas in conjunction with the South Central Federation Show. They are already hard at work planning for that function and looking forward to extending their hospitality. Make plans to attend.

Here's hoping that you have a successful year of rockhounding and health ahead of you. Work within your clubs to increase membership, to expand opportunities for your members to participate in our hobby, and to reach out to your communities with educational activities.

Thanks again for allowing me to serve as your AFMS President for the 2013-2014 year. Richard



AFMS Show—2015

*At Least Mark Your Calendar!
from AFMS Newsletter 11/2014*

The 2015 AFMS Convention and Show will be hosted by the South Central Federation from October 23–25, 2015 in Austin, Texas. While details are still in the planning stages, why not mark your calendar now and plan on attending?

There is a lot to do in Austin. It's the capital of Texas, the 11th most populous city in the U.S., and has numerous museums—including the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library containing papers and memorabilia from our 36th President.

Featured activities for the convention include meetings of the Uniform Rules Committee, ALAA, SCRIBE, and of course the business meeting of AFMS. In addition, the awards banquet on Saturday evening and Breakfast with the Editors and Webmasters are a wonderful way for all to socialize and congratulate winners in the various competitive programs.

Watch the AFMS Web site... in late spring for details and registration information.

**Turquoise**

*by Luke Hudgins, age 7
via SCFMS Newsletter 11–12/2014*

I think that turquoise is special because it is rare. It displays vivid shades of green/blue. It has a chemical formula of $\text{CuAl}_6(\text{PO}_4)_4(\text{OH})_8 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$.

In New Mexico, mines sadly are vanishing in localities that have been serving turquoise for thousands of years. The places in the United States for it are Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona. It is a white mineral inside. It oxidizes (which is reacting with oxygen in the air).

Turquoise is special because it's rare. It oxidizes from white to blue/green. You can scratch its color off! It is not poisonous. It is a semi-precious mineral. It displays vivid blue/green shades.

If you polish it in the right way it can be valuable, but you can enjoy it raw, too. Turquoise is amazing.

SCFMS—Newly Elected President*SUE'S DIGS**by Sue Dale Miller**SCFMS President**from SCFMS Newsletter 11–12/2014*

My name is Sue Dale Miller. I have been a member of the Arlington Gem and Mineral Club since 1993. The first meeting was the Show Meeting. Wow! I was enthusiastic and signed up for setup on Friday and for every hour of the two-day show. I was told the board meetings were open to members, so I went, and soon I had a job. I have had a job doing something for the club every year since joining. The more you put into a club, the more you get out of the club.

Although I have taken many classes, my favorite is still rocks, field trips to find rocks, sawing rocks, and shaping rocks. 2015 was going to be the first year I did not have a position in the Arlington Club—time to rest. But when I was asked to serve as SCFMS President, I realized I had one more year of work in me.



I believe in the SCFMS. If the clubs in the SCFMS work together, we will all be stronger. The purpose of the SCFMS is to hold the member clubs together and to help them grow. The district VPs are there to help the clubs communicate with the SCFMS. Who is your District VP? (*Editor's note: HGMS is in District II, so our new District VP is Richard Geist—phone: 936-634-6545, e-mail: richgeist@suddenlink.net.*) Call them. Let them know you want a visit. Maybe he or she can give a program to your members. Maybe the District VP and the presidents of the clubs in his or her district can share the expenses to travel to the next SCFMS meeting. There were not many clubs represented at the SCFMS meeting in Baton Rouge. I cut my expenses in half by sharing a room in Baton Rouge. And it was more fun having someone else along going to meetings and meals.

Hope to see you at a field trip or show soon.



Glass Beach—Recycled By the Ocean.

Thanks to Roger Campbell

via The Telephone City Crystal 10/2014

In the early 1900s, Fort Bragg, California, residents threw their household garbage over the cliffs above what is now Glass Beach.

It is hard to imagine this happening today, but back then people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass.

Beginning in 1949, the area around Glass Beach became a public dump, and locals referred to it as The Dumps. Sometimes fires were lit to reduce the size of the trash pile (up to 30 feet high).

However in 1967, the city leaders closed the area. Various cleanup programs were undertaken through the years to try to correct the damage, but without success. Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth.

Tons of polished, broken glass were created by the pounding surf. These smoothed, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and so a magnificent beach was formed.

The name was changed from The Dump to what we currently know as The Glass Beach. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process.

It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass—the name for any piece of glass that finds its way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough to frost and smooth its surface.





Once it makes its way into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges.

Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

In 1998, the private owner of the property determined that Glass Beach should belong to the public, and in 2002 it became part of MacKerricher State Park, open to the public. Within a period of a few years, the Glass Beach won fame, attracting a large number of tourists every year.

Way back in time, people wanted to dump their glass products on this shore; now they will try to get one of these pieces to take home as a souvenir. It is ironic but true that where once it was illegal to dispose of the glass on the shore, it now is a crime to remove it.

Visiting the Glass Beach today is a unique experience. What makes it even more remarkable, are the sounds produced by the glass pebbles as they are being washed away by the gentle waves.

Argyle Pink Jubilee

by Carolyn Weinberger

via Chippers' Chatter, via Moroks 8/2014, and Gritty Greetings 9/2014

The latest buzz in the mining world comes from the Argyle Mine in the remote East Kimberly region of Western Australia. Rio Tinto, the mining company that owns Argyle, recently unearthed a 12.76-carat pink diamond. The gem is the largest pink ever found in Australia and has an estimated value of more than \$10 million. The stone will be cut in Perth. It's estimated that once the faceter begins the process, it will take 10 days to complete. "This rare diamond is generating incredible excitement. A diamond of this caliber is unprecedented—it has taken 26 years of Argyle production to unearth this stone, and we may never see one like this again," said Josephine Johnson from Rio's Argyle Pink Diamonds di-



vision.

An interview on NPR with a representative of Rio Tinto claims that the pink color is not a result of impurities in the stone, but rather a twisting of the crystal lattice which results from pressure exceeding that endured during normal diamond formation.

Other pink stones have been found at Argyle, but none of this size. This stone is similar in color to the 24-carat Tanzanian “Williamson Pink,” received as a wedding gift by Queen Elizabeth II. The Williamson is ranked among the finest pink diamonds in existence. Once cut, the stone will be graded and showcased globally before being sold later this year.

Africa Is Literally Splitting In Half

by Jonathan Feldman

from huffingpost.com (used with permission)

via Bulletin of the NY Mineralogical Club, 11/2014,

via Chippers' Chatter 11/2014

In 10 million years, we might have two Half-ricas, according to a new study by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the University of California at San Diego. But this isn't the doing of some Nikola Tesla-esque mad scientist and a world-splitting super weapon; in fact it's due to a superplume, a massive upwelling of molten rock slowly splitting the African tectonic plate in two.

Plumes of magma have long been thought to move the continents around, at least since 1912 when Alfred Wegener said that Africa and South America looked like they kind of fit together. But in East Africa, scientists have only recently begun to precisely figure out why two massive chunks of land are separating by a few millimeters every year. David Hilton and his team of researchers from Scripps visited volcanoes on both sides of the Great Rift Valley and collected gas samples to investigate. Scientists previously thought that two separate, smaller plumes were responsible for the gradual widening of the valley in East Africa, but Hilton and his team found that the chemistry and physics told another story.



Hilton's team examined the rocks found on the two plateaus bordering the valley, the Ethiopia Dome and the Kenya Dome. To test their theory that

there is in fact only one large plume splitting the African landscape, the researchers looked inside the rocks for helium-3 and neon-22, specific forms of helium and neon gas that could shine light onto how the plateaus were formed.

The Scripps researchers discovered that the ratios of neon-22 gas to helium-3 gas were identical in both sets of rock samples, and confirmed the hypothesis that the two plateaus—and therefore, the rift—are caused by one massive plume of magma in the Earth's mantle.

Luckily, Africans won't have to worry about their land being torn apart, at least not immediately. While Ebola wreaks havoc across West Africa, the residents of East Africa have about 50 million years to plan for the new ocean that the superplume will create.

Keeping Youth Involved
by Dennis English
from The Tumbler 11/2014

In the early 1970s I was in the Air Force and stationed at a base in Taiwan. One evening while looking for something to do, I stumbled into a lapidary shop at the base recreation center. There were several "older" guys there—you know, guys in their late 20s or 30s, and maybe even 40s. They were very excited to show me the ropes and help me get started. They taught me how to cut cabs. The only rough we had at the time was Australian opal. Boy, was it cheap back then. I was introduced to and mentored in a fun new hobby.

When I got out of the service, I started college. To meet my art requirements, I took silversmithing and jewelry making. I thought these would be the natural progression from my stone cutting. I really loved working with the opals and jewelry. Unfortunately when I graduated, I set my tools and equipment aside for work and to raise a family.

Part 2 of this story comes nearly 20 years after I placed my jewelry-making tools in that dark spot in the basement. My 12-year-old daughter found them; she asked me to tell her about the tools and about a few random pieces of jewelry that I had made. After telling her the story above, she said she would really like to cut stones and make jewelry. I told her that was not something we could do on our own as we didn't have the right equipment, so we needed to find a club to join. We searched the Internet for local Seattle clubs that were active and had a shop. We finally found the Boeing club. I thought this could be a good fit as I was a vendor to Boeing at the time, and would be eligible to join.

As soon as we started attending and going to the shop, the "older" folks jumped right in and showed Jillian how to cut cabs. They gave her rough and

lots of hints on how to work with different materials. People like Dick Morgan, Bill Cook, Cheryl Isaacs, and others were so great at working with her and keeping her motivated.

There were people outside the club who offered opportunities and guidance as well. As it happens, a close friend of the family is a miner. Dale Huett allowed our family to accompany him to his mines where he would tell us about what to look for and where and how to dig for the various treasures. He taught us about minerals and their effect on color, geography, geology, chemistry, and mineralogy. He has shared far too much to mention.

With everyone's continuing encouragement, Jillian wanted to tackle something more challenging. Before the shop closed, Jillian and her mom took silversmithing lessons from Carolyn Sealfon. Sadly for everyone, that ended very abruptly. Next, Jillian and I signed up to take faceting lessons from Cliff Frome. Cliff is a patient and generous man who opens up his home and allows others to come in and learn. He is very talented and a great instructor, as well as always offering encouragement to take the next step.

By age 16, Jillian had competed and been awarded a Novice Gem Cutter certificate from the US Faceters Guild. At age 17, she had competed and earned the Pre-masters Certificate. She plans to continue the Certificate Program as time allows.

Another friend we've made along the way is Monte Winchester. He is a very talented jeweler in Cle Elum. He found it very exciting that someone Jillian's age would have already developed such an active interest in learning about working with gems and stones. Monte gave Jillian a private lesson in wire wrapping. He would always have some rough to give her and tell her to bring it back when finished so he could see it. He even gave her his faceting machine with her assurance that she would use it.

Now it was time for Jillian to go off to college and choose a career. Like many of us, the tools and stones were put away. After two years of college and still undecided about exactly how she planned on implementing the Industrial Design degree she'd been working toward, we had a talk. The many great experiences and wonderful people who influenced her over the last eight years are continually coming to mind. She missed the fun of making jewelry and cutting stones. Why couldn't she do something she loves for a career? That's when we talked about the program at Gemological Institute of America (GIA).

Jillian left college, packed up, and headed to Carlsbad, CA. She is currently completing GIA's Graduate Gemology program. She loves it and, despite the rigorous demands, is getting great grades. Her prior knowledge and experiences give her a tremendous advantage in her studies. She brings lots to share as none of her classmates or professors have cut stones or have fac-

eted. She really enjoyed it when an instructor told the class that opals cannot be faceted, and she mentioned that she actually had. The instructor and class were thrilled to see the brilliant Ethiopian trillion that she had faceted. Also, an instructor said that blue chalcedony does not naturally occur, and when you do see it, it is dyed. To that, Jillian said, "What about Ellensburg Blue?" Jillian is scheduled to graduate on November 7 from GIA as a Graduate Gemologist, and she will then be out to find a job in a career she truly loves.

Like many families today, life is too fast-paced, and there are too many short attention span options for the youth. Surely, the kids would rather play a video game, or watch a movie rather than cut a cab or wire wrap a pretty rock. The parents are all wrapped up with commuting, work, soccer practice, TV, etc., to take the family camping and dig up rocks.

What you have read may be just another story, but to me there is an underlying plot. If not for the "older," more experienced airmen in the base hobby shop introducing me to lapidary and keeping me interested, I may not have had the toolbox for Jillian to discover. And, if not for all the wonderful folks who have given her rocks, shown her how to identify them, dig them, and cut them, Jillian might be sitting in a dorm room playing with an X-box. Or maybe studying for a subject that may or may not lead to a job in who-knows-what field. It was you, all of you, and your kindness that shaped one young lady's future. For this, our family thanks you.

Let's not let lapidary be a dying art. Let's get more young people involved, keep them active, and keep them motivated.

Fun Facts

via SCRIBE 7-9/2014

Source unknown, contributed by Betty Cain

There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous;" tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.

There are two words in the English language that have all five vowels in order: "abstemious" and "facetious."

"Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt."

A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.

The words "racecar," "kayak," and "level" are the same whether they are read left-to-right or right-to-left (palindromes).

The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.

The longest word that can be made using only the letters on one row of the keyboard is "Typewriter."

The longest word typed with only the left hand is "stewardesses."

The longest word typed with only the right hand is "lollipop."

The Story of Montana Agates

from the Petrified Digest 5/2001, via Gem Cutters News 10/2014

It's a mystery how the peculiar little scenes got inside a rock as hard as agate. Geologists claim that the spots were caused by infinitely minute seams or fissures in the softer parts of the rock being filled with metallic oxides when the world was young. These oxides make four different colors that form various combinations of color when blended together, or appear in single colors in each rock. The red color is oxide of iron. The black is oxide of manganese. The green is oxide of copper. The blue is oxide of nickel.



This theory has been explored with the help of high-powered microscopes that show the tracings of little canals so fine the naked eye cannot detect it; but the oxides remained, staining the rocks in wonderful designs. The fernlike and branch effects of the trees, grass, and shrubbery come from the fact that the tiny canals branched out in various subdivisions, forming

smaller canals from a common center. In addition to these canals, the rock became flawed through shrinkage while passing through a period of evaporation which, according to scientists, has taken more than three million years to reduce the stone to the hardness of 7 on the Mohs scale.

These canals and flaws have been perfectly healed by soft silicate formations of which the stone is a part, and the evaporation has caused the oxides to take on forms such as are seen on the window after a frosty night.

Technically, Montana agate is known as "dendritic" agate, and the moss spots are called "dendrites."



It is the third-hardest stone in the world, and is cut only with a diamond saw. There can never be two pieces alike, even though cut from the same stone.

Show Time 2014 - 2015

December 5-7	El Paso, TX	El Paso Mineral & Gem Society El Maida Auditorium; 6331 Alabama gemcenter@aol.com; epmgs.com
--------------	-------------	--

Show Time 2015

January 23-25	Tyler, TX	East Texas Gem & Mineral Society Rose Garden Center; 420 S. Rose Park Dr. keithharmon19@yahoo.com
March 27-29	Hickory, NC	Eastern Federation (EFMLS) Show
April 10-12	Ogden, UT	Northwest Federation (NFMS) Show
April 11-12	Abilene, TX	Central Texas Gem & Mineral Society Abilene Civic Center; N. 6th and Pine kmcDaniel23@suddenlink.net rockclub.txol.net
May 2-3	Waco, TX	Waco Gem & Mineral Club Extraco Events Center 4601 Bosque Blvd., Creative Arts Bldg. babydocmac@aol.com www.facebook.com/WacoGemAndMineralClub?ref=hl
May 23-24	Wheaton, IL	Midwest Federation (MWF) Show
June 12-15	Locli, CA	California Federation (CFMS) Show
July 16-18	Cody, WY	Rocky Mountain Federation (RMFMS) Show
October 23-25	Austin, TX	AFMS/South Central Fed. (SCFMS) Shows

New Look for the BBG

You may have noticed--I changed the font throughout this issue of the BBG. Several months ago, Edward Clay suggested that I change from the Times New Roman font (a member of the "serif" family of fonts which has more shaping in its letters) to a different font--a member of the "san serif" family which has a cleaner outline of its letters. I told him that I didn't have the font he suggested, so I would stick with the same font that has been used in the BBG for at least the past 20 years. However, yesterday I decided to try a san serif font which I do have--Calibri. If you have an opinion on this topic--one way or the other--please let me know. Is Calibri easier for you to read?

2014		December					2014
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
	1	2 7:30 Board Meeting	3 7:30 Mineral Section 10-3 Shop open	4 7:30 Archeology Section	5	6 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section	
7 10-4 Shop Open	8 1:00 Day Light Section	9 7:30 Show Committee	10 7:00 Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	11	12	13 10-5 Shop Open 1:30 Beading Section Annual Holiday Party!	
14 10-4 Shop Open	15 NO Lapidary Section	16 7:30 Paleo Section Hanukkah begins	17 NO Mineral Section 10-3 Shop open	18	19	20 10-5 Shop Open NO Youth Section	
21 10-4 Shop Open First day of Winter	22	23 NO General Meeting	24 10-3 Shop open Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26	27 10-5 Shop Open	
28 10-4 Shop Open	29	30	31 Shop CLOSED! New Year's Eve				

2015		January					2015
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1 New Year's Day	2	3 10-5 Shop Open 10-12 Youth Section	
4 10-4 Shop Open	5	6 7:30 Board Meeting	7 7:30 Mineral Section 10-3 Shop Open	8 7:30 Archeology Section	9	10 10-5 Shop Open 1:30 Beading Section	
11 10-4 Shop Open	12 1:00 Day Light Section	13 7:30 Show Committee	14 7:00 Faceting Section 10-3 Shop Open	15	16	17 10-5 Shop Open Youth Section	
18 10-4 Shop Open	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 10-4 Shop Open	26	27 7:30 General Meeting	28 10-3 Shop Open	29	30	31 10-5 Shop Open	

The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

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

10805 BROOKLET

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099

(281) 530-0942



SCFMS

1998 - 1st (Large)
2000 - 1st (Large)
2003 - 1st (Large)
2005 - 1st (Large)
2006 - 2012 - 1st (Large)
2013 - 1st (Large)
2014 - 1st (Large)



AFMS

1998 - 2nd (Large)
2004 - 3rd (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)
2010 - 2nd (Large)
2012 - 3rd (Large)
2013 - 3rd (Large)
2014 - 2nd (Large)



DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DO NOT DELAY !

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BELLAIRE, TX 77401
PERMIT NO. 303