

THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY



FEATURED MEMBER:
MARGARET HARDMAN-MUYE

[see more on page 7](#)

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BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Articles are due on the 15th day of the month before the date on the BBG issue.

Copy is due for the next issue by the 15th of this month. Email content to editor@hgms.org



The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE



The Newsletter of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Sigrid Stewart

May the Fourth Be With You!

Yes, it is almost Star Wars Day, and lots of fans celebrate the Jedi and the Force that unites all things. According to Dictionary.com, although the phrase "May the Force be with you" is usually attributed to Obi-Wan Kenobi, the Jedi Master at the heart of the original Star Wars movie in 1977, it is actually said by a minor character, General Dodonna, as he dismisses Rebel troops before their siege of the Death Star. Lucasfilm and now-parent company Disney did not originate the saying but I am sure they are capitalizing on it.

Apparently, the British Conservative Party placed a congratulatory advertisement in the London Evening News upon Margaret Thatcher's becoming Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on May 4th, 1979, reading "May the Fourth be with you, Maggie. Congratulations." Facebook groups began celebrating Luke Skywalker Day with the saying in 2008. How did we ever get along without Facebook? (Or movies, for that matter?)

At any rate, did you know that Jedis are rockhounds? Yes, it's true! Those iconic light sabers are powered by kyber crystals, living Force-attuned crystals found on scattered planets in that galaxy far, far away. Young padawans went to the Crystal Cave on the planet Irum to mine kyber crystals to construct their own light sabers. The would-be Jedi was attracted to the appropriate stone and it would assume a color that reflected the nature of the person working with it, often blue for good and red for evil with many variations. The crystals thus serve to illustrate the age-old battle between good and evil as well as human longing for adventure and a good cause. And to collect crystals!

Just watch out for Revenge of the Fifth, the celebration of the Dark Side as represented by the Sith, fallen Jedi such as Darth Vader. Always two there are.

Now, back to Earth! For 2021, President Sigrid Stewart is bringing back monthly auctions. We will have 5-6 items for auction at each General Meeting. We will send out a preview of auction items in the Sunday E-Blast right before each General Meeting. And Door Prizes are back too! Hope you can join us.

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Steve Blyskal

The talk for the May General Meeting is "The Kokernot 06 Ranch, a historic ranch in Brewster County, Texas, and a new agate hunting destination for rockhounds" Steve Blyskal will give the presentation. In March, 2021 Steve and Sigrid Stewart went

on two guided rock hunts on the Kokernot 06 ranch and collected more than 300 lbs of agate from two locations. Steve will detail the history of this ranch from its founding to the present day, and how it became the newest location to collect agate in the Alpine/Marfa/Fort Davis area. A brief geological survey of the Davis Mountains will lead into photos of the varied terrain on the ranch and the agates found there in 12 different sites available for rock hunts.



Fortification agate

The Alpine area is beautiful and rugged but very dry; they are currently experiencing an exceptional drought.

Agate with sagenite

You will be packing your tools for the upcoming fall hunts once you see the variety of agates found on this location!



SHOWS

Warning: Shows may be cancelled unexpectedly.

May 22-23—TYLER, TEXAS: Show and sale located at East Texas Fair Grounds, Building E, 2112 West Front Street; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5

Adults \$5, children \$1, free admission for scouts in uniform; Many dealers offering jewelry, gemstones, minerals, fossils, rock, and more. Enjoy the famous Rock Food Table display Presented by the East Texas Gem & Mineral Society.

Contact Keith Harmon, (903) 316-2967; Email: keithharmon19@yahoo.com

May 21-23—DENVER, COLORADO: Annual show;

The Colorado Mineral and Fossil Spring Show at The Crowne Plaza Denver International Airport Convention Center & Expo, 15500 E 40th Ave, Denver, CO 80239

Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5

Free admission featuring retail and wholesale dealers selling minerals, gemstones, meteorites, jewelry (wholesale retail sale tax license requires for wholesale purchase), Demonstrations and displays

Contact Sandra Gonzales, Denver, CO; Email: info@rockygems.com

Website: www.rmgmpromotions.com

SECTION REPORTS

MINERAL SECTION

The Mineral Section held a Zoom meeting on April 21, 2021, hosted by Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart. Members shared stories about what they had been up to and showed recent acquisitions. They discussed the upcoming Texas Mineral and Fossil Show in Conroe, Texas and their plans for attending it.

Steve Blyskal is doing a series of talks on Fluorite localities with collectible specimens from around the world and he presented the first in the series – Fluorite localities in Spain, a PowerPoint that focused on the many fluorite localities in Asturias Province and other areas of Spain.

They made plans to have another Zoom meeting on May 19, 2021. The talk will be on Fluorite localities in France.

As always, please see the [Upcoming Programs](#) section on the HGMS website to learn more about planned future meetings. Several good programs are lined up. All mineral lovers are welcome!



Copyright Steve Blyskal 2020

Fluorite, La Viesca Mine Asturias, Spain

BEADING SECTION

The Beading Group met on Saturday, April 17th at 1:30 PM via Zoom. Ann Money led the group in making a tassel from thread or cord. Tassels can be used to make earrings, pendants, and decorative tassels for curtain tie-backs, pillow accents and for many other

decorative purposes. For more information, see:
<https://www.beadshop.com/collections/boho-tassel>

All interested persons are welcome to join future calls.

RSVP: Maggiem2@windstream.net and she will send you the Zoom link and project photos.

TEXAS MINERAL AND FOSSIL SHOW – CONROE

by Steve Blyskal

The Texas Mineral and Fossil Show was held on April 23-25, 2021, at the Lone Star Convention and Expo Center in Conroe, Texas. This show was put on by rmgmpromotions.com, a promoter of mineral shows who also does shows in Denver twice a year. The show featured mineral dealers, fossil dealers and jewelry dealers, as well as dealers who specialized in natural home décor. Several the dealers were local to the Houston area, and some of them also do the HGMS Annual Show.



Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart spent a delightful day at the show and managed to only make it to half the dealers that were there! The Katy Rock Shop, which has a store on Pin Oak Rd in Katy, was there showing their large decorative minerals from Brazil including schorl, amethyst and elbaite. Rocksaholics, LLC, one of the 8 high end dealers at the show, had just returned from a long stay in Pakistan and had many wonderful new finds, including aquamarine, elbaite and emerald specimens.

Katy Rock Shop's Booth

Mineral Search had a small selection of native gold specimens, some of them found by proprietor Doug Wallace, and five elbaite specimens from the Himalaya Mine in California that Doug found in 1990. HGMS dealers Fender Minerals, Bitterroot Minerals and Nature's Reflection all had nice selections of minerals and decorative specimens as well. GeoDecor had a large booth with spectacular large fossil specimens that could be used to decorate a home or office. Barrios Amethysts had a large selection of amethyst from

Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil in cathedrals and hand specimens and a selection of other minerals from Brazil. Costigan's Minerals West had a large booth with a good selection of quality agate specimens in addition to minerals, including Colorado minerals.

Focal Crystal, a Houston dealer specializing in high end consignment minerals, had many wonderful specimens to tempt buyers. Indus Minerals, specializing in minerals of India, had many wonderful cavansite and pentagonite specimens from the now closed Wagholi Quarry in Pune, Maharashtra.

Overall, the show was well laid out with large aisles and plenty of space for customers. Attendance on Saturday was good, and it looked like dealers were selling. There was a good selection at various price points from beginning rockhound to high end collector, so the show offered something for everyone. The facility is large and offers a lot of space in the main ballroom with extra rooms available for wholesale dealers in the future. Getting there from the west side of Houston took an hour and was straightforward. We are looking forward to this being a regular show in the Houston area now that the Fine Mineral Show has ceased coming.



*A huge and beautiful Elbaite
Nuristan, Afghanistan
presented by the Focal Crystal*

FEATURED MEMBER: MARGARET HARDMAN-MUYE

Margaret has had many different jobs in her life and pursued many and varied interests. Her parents and her background provided the basis, but the grit, determination and creativity is all hers.

Her parents would never have met if not for World War II. He was in the Navy, and she was in the USO. A box of old letters led to research into the war and her parent's lives and background. Her mother was a super-secretary, who could type 100 words per minute and take shorthand. When she wrote to her future father, she typed her letters with carbon copies. Margaret went through the whole first year of the letters and scanned the carbons and read in her father's letters using Dragon Naturally Speaking. Later she shared the letters she had reproduced with her family which also led to an interest in genealogy

and history. Her mother's family came from Germany in 1751 and were farmers in Pennsylvania, and later pioneered in other states. She is a member of DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution). Seven ancestors, one of whom was a woman, were patriots who fought in the Revolutionary War, making her eligible. Her father's father was a cowboy who drove cattle from Abilene to Kansas City.

Her father was in one of the Navy's special warfare units, the Beach Jumpers, so his letters were censored, leaving holes in them. Psychological warfare was conducted to distract the Germans and Italians so that the invasion of Normandy could proceed successfully. He was based in the Mediterranean but when spring came his allergies kicked in, leaving him too sick to fight, so they sent him to Argentia, Newfoundland, where Margaret was born.

The family lived in Kansas for a while, then moved to the town of Shiprock, New Mexico, named for a nearby mountain, when she was 5. Her father was a rockhound, and they investigated many sites around New Mexico. She still has some of the garnets and peridots they collected in the area. Her father became friends with many of the Navaho silversmiths in the area and learned silversmithing from them. He used a torch with a long cylinder and carried it on his shoulder. One of the group had a lapidary grinder and cut stones, so that was early exposure to the lapidary arts for Margaret.



Shiprock, a volcanic plug rock formation
From Wikipedia

Some of the Navahos told Margaret's father and his friends about some ruins nearby, which due to Navaho taboos they could not enter. She and her father and some of his friends went to explore the ruins and she climbed up to them and fastened a rope to a tree so the others could climb up.

They moved to Farmington, where she attended Junior High and High School. While in high school, she built her own telescope, leading to a life-long interest in astronomy. She received a chemistry scholarship to attend New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, but after a struggle with Quantitative Analysis, she switched to English and got her bachelor's degree in English with a minor in chemistry. Clyde Tombaugh, discover of Pluto, was her astronomy professor. He was famous but a very cool and humble man. He of course had access to all the big telescopes, and had the students mapping Mars. Later she had her own telescope and did a lot of star-gazing. She is following the news of the latest Mars rover Perseverance closely.

She also met her first husband there, and they moved to El Paso, where she worked for the welfare department. He was working on a Master's in Geology and she would go out and do field work with him. After one child, the marriage ended and she moved to Houston where a friend was living in a commune, with a group of friends to hang out with. She entered an Animal Technology program and then worked as a vet technician for a couple of years.

After that, she was able to get a job with Child Protective Services but found out it was

difficult to get promoted without a Master's, so she went back to school to get a Master's in Social Work. That first day in graduate school she met Jerry Muye, and it was love at first sight. They are still married. After graduate school she went to work as a framing carpenter for a year and reports that she really enjoyed beating on things. Kind of along the same lines, she started playing rugby and continued that for a few years.

Next she worked in a halfway house for mentally ill people. After a year of that, she became a supervisor for the Houston Police Department's Crisis Intervention Team, meeting officers on the scene and working with domestic violence and sexual assault victims. She is very proud of writing an HPD policy which became the basis for Texas' current laws about battered women.

She then moved to Adult Protective Services where she worked until retirement. When they first got computers, she was one of the people they trained to put together computers and move them around, and she learned a lot of computer programs. She notes that it is hard to gain comprehensive knowledge about a subject – for computers, you can learn a lot about programs but may not know the essentials file management. That's a lot like lapidary work, in a way – you may have many skills but be stumped by making bails or the proper way to close jump rings.

She discovered that there was a law that protected children from being neglected to death, but not adults, and she was able to funnel information to attorneys that resulted in that law being changed, so Margaret has had some lasting impact on Texas law and the agencies she worked for. She retired from APS 7 years ago, with a total of about 40 years of working for various departments of the State of Texas. Jerry was working as a carpenter at the University of Houston and retired a month after she did. Retirement is great, she says!

Margaret started making beaded jewelry at age 20, so she always had an interest in jewelry. Then one day in 1996 or 1997 she went to a Gem & Mineral show, where she met Jill Moffitt. Jill told her about the club, which she joined, and then took Jill's cabochon-making class to see if she would like it. Once she got her hands on slabs and saws she loved it! Within a year she was teaching the class. She was Section Chair of the



Beaded and Chain Maille by Margaret

& Silversmithing Section a couple of times, and also really enjoyed Day Light Section. Many club members look forward to attending in-person meetings of both the Day Light and Lapidary & Silversmithing Sections again.



Druzy Quartz Pendant

Her mentors were Ed Clay and Ron Talhelm, and she cut many stones for Ron to sell in Tucson, including lots of druzy stones which Ron then sent off to be titanium- and gold-coated. She highly recommends learning to cut standard stones, which are ideal for replacing lost or broken stones, a necessary skill for any jeweler. Ed knew someone whose late father had tons of lapidary material. She helped haul it all to the club and learned a lot about lapidary materials. She took a couple of 12-week-long jewelry fabrication classes with Ed Clay focusing on a variety of fundamental skills like soldering and using the rolling mill. He also gave her great advice on how to select the best rough for cutting. Ed worked for years as a bench jeweler, and still does jewelry

repair and creates custom pieces.

Other classes she took were from Precious Metal Clay (PMC) instructors, which she enjoyed so much she earned her certifications to teach PMC. Tim McCreight was her instructor for her Rio Rewards PMC certification. She was also certified by the PMC Connection. She has drawn inspiration from Tim McCreight's book "The Complete Metalsmith"—a book that has always provided knowledge of the basics as well as lots of tips and tricks.



PMC Pendant with Stone

Over the years, Margaret and Karen Burns became friends and she took Karen's Chain Maille classes. She has always found the members of the club to be very friendly and easy to talk to. Dichroic glass was a project for a time, and she produced some great pieces, but admits that she tends to get bored easily and then move on to something new.

She went on field trips to places like Tessman Ranch and Jasper, Texas for petrified wood, and to Arkansas to mine quartz, where the operators bring up mine run material

mixed with clay for customers to search.

Gradually she set up her own shop equipment at home. Jerry built her a nice jewelry bench out of oak which she still uses. Then she was in a car accident and received a settlement that she used to buy a Titan unit, and all the great jewelry tools and other equipment a gal could want.

Her shop was set up in the garage, but when they moved to a new house, they reserved a room for shop use, and hung up peg boards so that all her equipment could be within easy reach. Everything is organized. Like a lot of women, she didn't grow up fixing mechanical things, but she has learned a lot maintaining her lapidary equipment. She is a certified Shop Foreman but since she has her own equipment, she usually doesn't use most of the club's shop equipment except occasionally the big saws.

Every once in a while, people ask her to cut specific stones for them. Custom work is always a matter of taste. One woman brought her 2 large rocks of Chrysoprase she had collected in Australia, and only wanted tiny stones cut for a bracelet, leaving lots of left-over stones.



Chrysoprase Bracelet

Lots of her lapidary stash is in the back yard, except for some better stuff in the garage and some even better stuff kept close to hand. Her favorite stone is turquoise. She



Montana agate cabochons

highly recommends the Turquoise Museum in Albuquerque, on the outskirts of the Old Town. Montana agate, the speckled kind, and opals are also favorites. She has so many rocks now that she may never be able to carve them all up, and says the club is likely to benefit someday.

Being a highly competitive person, she promotes the ROLE (Recognition of Lapidary Excellence) Program which allows people to compete against high standards of cutting and advance through several levels. Details of this excellent program can be found on the HGMS web site on the Lapidary and Silversmithing

Section page. Of course, she holds the highest rank in the club, but Ed Clay and Steve Wilkerson are right behind and just as good!



Margaret and Sunny

Demonstrating at the HGMS Show



Having grown up in the desert, Margaret appreciates Houston for its climate, which is so much kinder to the skin. She loves the outdoors and especially enjoys spending time with her horse, Sunny. Out at the barn no one wears masks, plus up on a horse, you are sitting above everyone.

Zoom meetings have been a blessing during the pandemic, allowing us to keep in touch with friends, colleagues, and loved ones. Margaret Zooms with her sister to keep in touch, but in-person is better! Her book club met in person recently for the first time after a year of Zoom meetings. Books - ask her what science fiction she likes.

When she moved into the new house, she had Asimov and Analog Magazine collections, but decided to part with them, donating over 900 hundred magazines along with hundreds of books to a school. She was that kid who



Silver Pendant by Margaret



read all the books in her school library and then had the library order more. And read cereal boxes at the breakfast table.



Rings by Margaret. The spiky ring is a design she dreamed about

She reads history as well as science fiction - King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, Napoleon, Tzar Nicholas and his family. As members of the former aristocracy die, their papers have been released, opening up new fields of research, and a richer understanding of the past.

Margaret is looking forward to attending our Annual Show this fall, and loves demonstrating. There is always at least one wide-eyed child who is totally captivated by the process of cutting cabs and making jewelry, who hangs around asking questions. Sharing her knowledge with children is very satisfying and truly exemplifies the HGMS commitment to education. And Margaret is still learning, cutting stones and making jewelry.

BENCH TIPS FOR MAY

By Brad SMith

SMART SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR JEWELRY MAKING PROBLEMS:

[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

If your club is having monthly online meetings, and they would like a list of speakers that have presented some interesting topics at my club, please get in touch. We have had some great talks:

- A tour through a modern diamond mine
- Rockhounding in the Sonoran Desert
- Opal mining in the Australian outback
- Low cost sand casting for the home shop
- Field trip to Davis Creek for Obsidian Hunting for meteorites

SEPARATING DISCS

Separating Discs (also called Cutoff Wheels) are inexpensive and do a great job cutting or shaping steel. You can use them to sharpen tool points, cut piano wire to length, make slots, and sharpen worn drills. Other uses include modifying pliers and making your own design stamps.



My preference is the one inch diameter size. Be sure to hold the wheel firmly so nothing moves to break the disc, and definitely wear your safety glasses. Those are little flakes of steel coming off the disk.

BTW - Separating Discs are rather poor at soft metals like copper, silver, and gold. Soft metals clog up the cutting edges.

DEBURRING JUMP RINGS

When cutting jump rings from large gauge wire for chain making, you'll notice the saw leaves a small burr. An easy way to remove these is to tumble the rings with some fine-cut pyramids. It's best not to tumble for a long period with the pyramids, because it removes the polished finish from the wire.

No tumbler, no problem. You don't actually need a tumbler. I just put a handful of pyramids in a wide mouth plastic jar and shake for a bit. You can find these pyramids in the tumble finishing section of most jewelry supply catalogs.



CAN ALSO SEE

by Edward Clay, Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society

Come young one and you will learn
of beauty beneath weathered surfaces
in the very rocks we walk on,
of bands and patterns placed inside
by He who made us.

Who also gave some of us the ability
to see, to learn to shape, sand, and polish
so others see the gift of beauty.
Other materials we use—
crystal structure and cutting orientation—
make the resulting stones
reel, until they almost seem alive
in how they sparkle.

A third type we use—
crystal orientation and structure—
to show plays of shimmer
or rainbow color, or even
what might seem living eyes
looking back at us.

All this is in the solid stones of our world,
placed there—but most important
is the gift given us to be able to see,
find, and bring out so others can see.

All this—yes—come one younger than me,
let me guide you in learning.
how to see with eyes open and heart awake,
the beauty that is there and how
you can bring it out so the unskilled
also can see.

RED BERYL FROM THE WAH WAH MOUNTAINS OF SOUTHERN UTAH

*By Ken Rock, Newsletter Editor of the
Mineralogical Society of the District of Columbia*

Historical information was used, with permission, from Gem-Hub: [<https://gem-a.com/gemhub>], Gemmological Association of Great Britain. From “American Gemstones: Red Beryl from Utah,” July 2020.

The exceedingly rare red beryl found in the Wah Wah Mountains of southern Utah came about due to unique geological circumstances. Other examples of unique geologic environments associated with minerals include the volcanic fluids in the Andes Mountains that reacted with thick layers of black shale to create the unique and vivid emeralds of Columbia, and the barium- and titanium-rich fluids that led to the formation of benitoite, California’s state gemstone.

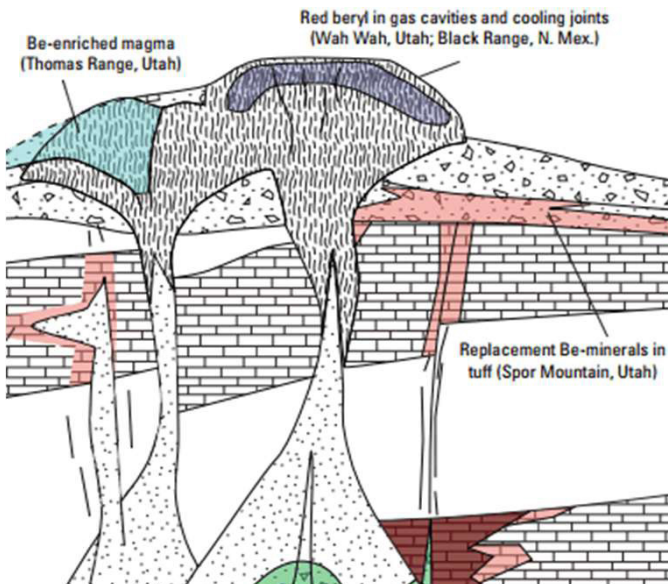


Emerald, Columbia



Benitoite, California

Mineral Deposit Models for Beryllium



GEOLOGY

Red beryl formation began with the eruption of a rhyolite lava from volcanic vents about 18 to 20 million years ago. As the lava began to cool, shrinkage cracks formed, creating pathways for high temperature gases rich in beryllium to escape. Surface water also began to seep into these cracks and mixed with the rising beryllium gases from the magma chamber below. The superheated water and gases from below reacted with the cooler surface water containing silica, aluminum, and iron and manganese oxides leached from the lava to form red beryl crystals within the fractures and cavities of the rhyolite. The bright red hue comes from manganese that is typically not present in most beryl crystals.

DISCOVERY

Many mineral discoveries in the US were made by those in search of the ‘mother lode,’ but instead miners found themselves looking at something totally new and unexpected. Red beryl fit that description! Like many other gemstone species, red beryl was discovered mostly by chance. Maynard Bixby was a bookkeeper turned prospector who traveled to Utah after trying his hand at mining in Colorado and Arizona. To look for topaz, he staked several claims in a remote part of the Thomas Range of Utah, but at one of his claims, he found the first red beryl crystals in 1904. He sent a sample to the National Museum in Washington, DC where it was formally identified as a new variety of beryl.



Various specimens of red beryl from the Wah Wah Mountains in matrix

In 1958, a second occurrence of red beryl was discovered by Lamar Hodges in the Wah Wah Mountains in Utah, about 90 miles south of the original find. He was unsuccessfully prospecting for uranium ore when he unearthed gem quality red beryl crystals. He staked the Violet claim and, as a hobby, worked the claims with his family for 18 years. The rights to mine the property were purchased by the Harris family in 1978. They staked 12 claims called Ruby 1-4 and Violet 1-8. These claims became the Ruby Violet Mine.
Source: 11 May 2021 – The Mineral Minutes

In 1994, the Kennecott Exploration Company (KEC) signed a three- year lease with the Harris family with an option to buy the mine. The company wanted to see if larger-scale mining of red beryl was feasible. KEC took numerous core samples and tunneled into the deposits, removing 11,000 tons of rock. The company estimated the yield of the ore deposits at 1.2 carats of red beryl per ton of ore with only a 10% yield during faceting. This means that the mine was estimated to produce .125 carats of faceted red beryl per ton of ore. Even though its explorations were considered a success, the company downsized in 1996 and decided to let the mine go back to the Harris family.

IMPORTANT LOCALITIES FOR RED BERYL

Red beryl has been produced by only seven locations, the majority in Utah. The only other country to produce red beryl besides the US is Mexico. Other beryl varieties are quite common around the world and typically form in granitic pegmatites and some metamorphic rocks. Red beryl is different. All the known occurrences of red beryl have been found in one unlikely host rock: rhyolite. Most geological studies on red beryl have been conducted at the Ruby Violet Mine in the Wah Wah Mountains because it is the only location that has produced facet grade material in any kind of quantity.

GEMSTONE INFO

Red beryl is a beautiful and truly unique gemstone produced in the U.S. It also is difficult to mine due to its small geographic distribution and low yield. Cut gemstones are mostly small (<1 carat) and, depending on color, can be quite costly. For example, check out these gemstones on eBay (if not already sold): 1.58 ct faceted stone; and a 0.55 ct faceted stone.

Like its beryl cousin, emerald, red beryl is often found with inclusions and fractures. When used in jewelry, these stones are often impregnated with resin to fill fractures, stabilize the gem, and improve durability and appearance. Similar treatments are regularly done to emerald and are acceptable if disclosed to buyers.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many years ago, during my move from California to Washington, DC, I stopped at a restaurant in southern Utah and met a fascinating character who had quite an interesting story to share. The meeting came about because while waiting to be seated, I noticed near the cash register several magazine clips that grabbed my attention. The articles described a red beryl deposit in the nearby mountains. Needless to say, I asked about it and was told that the red beryl is mined nearby and that the owner of the mine comes in nearly every day for breakfast.

As luck would have it, Rex Harris came in as I was finishing my meal. I don't know if the waitress had told him that there was a rock collector in the place, but Rex told me that he was the owner of the mine. He seemed pleased to have the opportunity to tell me more about this unusual mineral and the fact that it is mined only in one place – the nearby Ruby-Violet claims. I asked about the amazing crystals on a ring and in a necklace he was wearing and Rex said that these items show off some of the finest crystals he has found. He mentioned that he often sells the items directly from his attire to a customer who “just has to have it.”

I visited Rex's shop and purchased a small red beryl crystal in matrix as a memento of my visit. I subsequently ran into Rex a couple of times at the Tucson gem & mineral shows over the years and learned that he had sold the mine to a Japanese entity and was trying to liquidate some of his remaining inventory. Red beryl remains a beautiful and truly unique gemstone that will always be associated with Rex Harris. Rex has now passed away, but his legacy lives on.



This cluster of crystals is one of the finest examples of red beryl. It measures 6x2.7x2.6 cm and was collected from the Harris Claim.

Specimen and photo by Arkenstone.

www.iRocks.com

HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 6, 2021

by Nancy English

X	President—Sigrid Stewart	X	Beading—Maggie Manley
X	1st Vice President—Steve Blyskal	X	Day Light—Fred Brueckner
X	2nd Vice President—Beverly Mace	X	Gemstones & Faceting—Randy Carlson
X	Treasurer—Michele Marsel	X	Lapidary & Silversmithing—Phyllis George
X	Secretary—Nancy Englis	X	Mineral—Tricia Rittaler
	Archaeology—Vacant	X	Paleontology—Mike Dawkins

President Sigrid Stewart called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. A quorum was present. She introduced the new Mineral Section representative, Tricia Rittaler. Tricia has been a member of HGMS for nineteen years. Sigrid forwarded Tricia an agenda for this meeting and Secretary Nancy English added Tricia to the Board emailing list. The Directors welcomed Tricia to the Board.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The HGMS clubhouse remains closed for member use in order to minimize the danger of Coronavirus spread. The Board of Directors will determine when it is safe to reopen. Some Sections are scheduling virtual meetings. The April and May General Meeting programs can be experienced virtually. In-person classes will not be scheduled until the Club reopens.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the March 2, 2021 Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes were emailed to the BOD on April 5, 2021 and published in the April BBG. Maggie Manley moved to approve the minutes as recorded in the April 2021 BBG. Steve Blyskal seconded the motion and it passed. President Stewart suggested that the Board approve the minutes via email consensus before publishing them in the BBG. The BOD will try that with these minutes.

TREASURER REPORT

Treasurer Michele Marsel sent the financial reports to members on April 6, 2021.

- She commented on two budget items. The Membership Dues tally is 54% of the expected annual amount, which is encouraging for this time of year, considering Covid-19 restrictions. In the Donations category, an unplanned expense reflects the purchase of a long-time member's collection. Some of the equipment will replace an older cabbing machine in the Shop. Many of the tools and lapidary materials will be included in an upcoming Public Auction which will offset the expense.

- The Chase Bank CD, paying 0.1%, was redeemed on March 30, 2021 and the money was moved to the Chase High-Yield Savings Account, paying 0.02%, in preparation for a new money market savings account to be opened at Goldman Sachs, paying 0.5%. Treasurer Marsel could not open the money market savings account at Goldman Sachs because it is not available to businesses. She found another FDIC insured finan-

cial institution that offers more interest(0.6%) on money market savings accounts for businesses. Live Oak Bank is a \$6.4 billion dollar institution established in 2008. Live Oak specializes in online accounts for small businesses. Transfers to our Chase operating account can be made without penalties. Nancy English moved to approve the transfer of funds from the Chase high yield savings account to a new account with Live Oak Bank within the next week. Steve Blyskal seconded the motion, and it passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

BBG Editor: Beverly Mace notified members on April 5, 2021 that the online version of the April BBG is available on the HGMS website. Printing of the paper copy of the BBG begins this week.

Donations and Auction Committee: Michele Marsel said the Committee is hard at work preparing for the HGMS Online Auction scheduled for May 15, 2021. Jeanean Slamen joined the committee, and she is helping clean up equipment and photograph all auction items. The Committee expects to wrap up auction item prep (photos, descriptions, set minimum bids) this month. Check the porch on the Brooklet side of the building for the giveaways.

E-blast news: Jim Kendall is retiring from publishing the HGMS Weekly E-blast. The April 18, 2021 E-blast will be his last one. Jim has done a stellar job of informing members of the coming weeks' events. During the pandemic he researched and offered numerous online programs for members' education and entertainment. The Board thanks him for his generous donation of his time and expertise over the last eight years. Sarah Metsa, member of the Publicity Committee, will start sending the E-blast on Sunday April 25, 2021. The sender address will be Houston Gem and Mineral Society (publicity @hgms.org). Send information for the E- blast to news@hgms.org by 9:00 p.m. on the Saturday before publication.

Scholarship Committee: Elizabeth Jean Smith Scholarship fund.

- As reported in the March 3, 2021 minutes, royalties from the book Mineralogy of Texas by Art Smith Jr., have been deposited automatically from Lulu Press to the HGMS operating account for a scholarship since 2016. Nancy English's research of minutes from 2016 revealed that Art's son Brett Smith asked for the scholarship to be named after his mother Elizabeth Jean Smith. During the June 8, 2016 BOD meeting the Board decided that a scholarship of \$2500 will be awarded in the year after \$2500 has been accumulated.
- Via email, Mike Sommers, Scholarship Chairman, recommended the Board follow that plan. He further suggested that the criteria for the award be made clear.
- Mike Sommers informed the Board that Clear Lake GMS is offering three \$500 grants to local schools to support Earth Science education. He would like for HGMS to do something similar.
- President Stewart will ask Mike for a more informative proposal on the idea of donating to local schools. And she will also ask him for ideas for scholarship criteria.
- Our new member of the Board, Tricia Rittaler, volunteered to help Mike with the Scholarship Committee responsibilities and research during this year. She will contact Mike Sommers.

Show Committee: Scott Singleton and Steve Blyskal created a questionnaire to send to the HGMS Show dealers to determine if dealers are still interested and available to

participate in the 2021 HGMS Annual Show. As of this meeting, thirty-two dealers have responded and twenty-two have not. Generally, the active and inactive dealers want to be in the HGMS Show. All the large dealers said yes. Steve will send out contracts next week. Some dealers want to reconfigure their space to exclude the use of “back-of-booth” display tables.

Web Site Committee: No new report.

SECTION REPORTS

All In-Person Section Meetings are canceled until further notice.

Some Sections conduct virtual meetings.

Beading Section: third Saturday, 1:30 p.m., April 17, 2021. Maggie Manley said the Beading Section has had successful meetings on Zoom. This month Ann Money will lead the attendees in making a tassel from thread or cord.

Day Light Section: first Wednesday, 1:00 p.m., April 7, 2021. No program planned.

Gemstones and Faceting Section: second Wednesday, Webex meeting begins at 7:00 p.m., April 14, 2021. Randy Carlson said the long awaited program about North Carolina rubies and emeralds will happen this month. Gold was discovered in North Carolina in the early 1800's and was the largest producing gold state, until 1848. The world's largest Star Ruby was found in North Carolina and North Carolina's largest emerald crystal (6" tall and over 1800 carats) is on display at the Houston Museum of Natural Science! **The May program will be ONE DAY earlier on Tuesday, May 11 at 7 p.m.** For the May program Randy will share information on California benitoite.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section: third Monday, 7:30 p.m., April 19, 2021. No program planned.

Mineral Section: third Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., April 21, 2021. Steve Blyskal announced that he will talk about the European localities of fluorite: Spain, France, Germany, and Austria.

Paleo Section: third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., April 20, 2021. No program planned. Mike Dawkins is contemplating a field trip to Whiskey Bridge.

Youth Section: first and third Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to Noon., April 17 and May 1, 2021. No programs planned.

Archaeology Section: dormant.

OLD BUSINESS

Archaeology Section: The Board will determine when and if to vote to disband this Section later this year in July. If disbanded, the bylaws and HGMS printed material will be changed. The printed documentation will be changed as needed before the Show for distribution.

Theft of Trailer and Display Cases: President Stewart has not received a report from the insurance company. The online access to the insurance claim site shows the claim is still open. Fred Brueckner found three files of designs for display cases. President Stewart is asking for a committee to investigate how to replace the stolen display cases. Rekey the building: Michele Marsel received a referral from Maggie Manley. Michele and Fred Brueckner have been too busy preparing donations for the upcoming online auction to follow up on the referral. No further update on the rekeying at this time.

Education Committee: Members can find links to online projects in the HGMS Sunday E-blasts. Maggie Manley has received ninety-two names of people who are interested in taking classes for the following skills: chasing and repousse, PMC, beading, silversmithing, cabbing, wire wrapping, welding, lost wax casting, and faceting. Maggie offered to sort the list by category and send it to the Section Chairs to see if they can solicit people to teach the classes. She needs to start now in finding teachers and planning classes possibly for fall classes.

NEW BUSINESS

The next Board of Directors' meeting will be the first Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. May 4, 2021. The next General Meeting will be the fourth Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. April 27, 2021. Peter McGaw, the Exhibits Chairman for the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society and a noted collector of Mexican minerals, will give a talk on Daylight Fluorescent Hyalite Opal from Mexico. It fluoresces brilliantly in the shade. Lapidaries make jewelry out of it. Adjourn: Nancy English moved to adjourn. Phyllis George seconded the motion, and it passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY APRIL 27, 2021 GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

by Nancy English

President Sigrid Stewart called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. She welcomed ten attendees.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President Sigrid Stewart said, "Our guest speaker will be joining us at 8:00, so we will try to complete business meeting by that time. Show and Tell and Silent Auction will be postponed until after the talk." She made two important announcements.

- HGMS will host an ~ ONLINE ~ Silent Auction on Saturday, May 15, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. More detailed information will be coming soon. The auction will include tools, equipment, lapidary materials and minerals.

Note: The full preview (pictures of all items) will be available on May 10 ; everything pictured in the April 26, 2021 "Save the Date notice" is in the auction.

- On April 18, 2021, the BOD voted via email to hold the 68th Annual HGMS Gem, Mineral, Jewelry, and Fossil Show IN PERSON on November 12-14, 2021.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of March 23, 2021 meeting were published in the April 2021 BBG. Steve Blyskal moved to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2021 General Meeting. Tricia Rittlar seconded the motion and it passed.

COMMITTEE/SECTION REPORTS

In the interest of time, President Stewart said to look for reports of future Section meetings and presentations in the BBG, on the Web site <https://hgms.org>, or by reading the weekly e-blast from Houston Gem and Mineral Society (publicity@hgms.org). Jim Kendall retired from publishing the weekly Sunday E-blast. The Publicity Committee took over April 25. Send notifications to post in the Sunday E-blast to news@hgms.org by 9:00 p.m. on the Saturday before the E-blast. The new format is more robust and flexible. President Stewart invited other Section Chairs and Standing Committee Chairs to make any additional announcements.

Nominating Committee: Replacements for the President and 1st Vice President are necessary for 2022. A Nominations Committee needs to be organized now so that candidates can be found so they can begin to see how the Board works. President Stewart asked members to volunteer for the committee or for a position.

Shop News: The clubhouse is still closed to classes and in-person meetings, but four shop foremen are making the lapidary shop available to the first four people that reserve a spot on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

- Tuesday and Thursday— Neal Immega opens the Shop ONLY by appointment on Tuesday and Thursday. Make your appointment by calling or emailing Neal: n_immega@swbell.net.
- Friday—Sharon Halton opens the Shop on Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the first four people who call or text her at 504-352-0666. She can help people with cabochon making or other special projects. If you cannot make it on Friday, give her a call and she may be able to set up something else for you.
- Saturday—Michele Marsel and Steve Blyskal will open the Shop on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the first 5 people who email SaturdayShop@hgms.org. to make an appointment.

Website Committee: The committee is working on a new flyer and Show Page for the website.

Show Committee: Steve Blyskal announced that dealer contracts will be sent out this week.

OLD BUSINESS

President Stewart asked members to look for the progress of Old Business items in the BOD Meeting Minutes in the latest BBG.

Display Cases Replacement: President Stewart reported that the Hanover agent said they have evaluated the trailer and will send a payment, less the deductible, of course. They have estimated the payment available on the display cases but will require quotes for producing new cases. President Stewart will talk to some woodworkers to reproduce the design we have for insurance quotes, but the final design may not end up exactly the same. President Stewart would like to speak with any members who do woodworking.

NEW BUSINESS

The next Board of Directors meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. May 4, 2021.

The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. May 25, 2021. Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart will present a talk on "Agates from the Kokernot 06 Ranch: a new collecting locality in Brewster County". This is a historical old ranch featured in the Texas Monthly magazine in the 1990s. It has recently opened up to collectors. Steve will have pictures and information about the spectacular agates and views of the ranch.

Door Prize Drawing: Tricia Rittaler won the malachite and chrysocolla specimen from the Congo. Steve Blyskal purchased it at the Texas Mineral and Fossil Show in Conroe and donated it on behalf of Truscon Minerals.

Adjourn: Nancy English moved to adjourn. Tricia Rittlar seconded it and it passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Vice President Blyskal introduced the Program: Peter McGaw, our guest speaker, is an exploration geologist who has prospected for and developed mineral deposits across Mexico for the last thirty-five years. In addition, he is a collector of Mexican minerals and has established one of the premier Mexican mineral collections in the U.S. He has been a member of the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society for many years and is active in the Tucson Annual Gem and Mineral Show — the most prestigious show in the world — as the Exhibits Chairman. Peter added that he is a former Texan, graduated from Stephen F. Austin High School, and has a couple of degrees from the University of Texas, Austin. Big Bend is the reason he became a geologist. Peter then proceeded with his presentation: Electric Opal, a Unique Daylight Luminescing Hyalite Opal from Zacatecas, Mexico.

Show and Tell: Steve Blyskal shared many of his acquisitions from the Texas Mineral and Fossil Show in Conroe.

- Datalite, pale green from The Boron Pit in Dal'negorsk, bought from Mineral Search.
- Elbaite from the Himalayan Mine collected by Doug Wallace in 1990.
- Prehnite on amethyst from Erongo region of Namibia.
- Green fluorite that fluoresces blue from Madagascar
- Agate from Australia with parallax lines
- Laguna agate
- Caracas calcite poker chips
- Water opals from Ethiopia. The dealer said let them dry out slowly, for months.
- A Colorado specimen from Silverton Mining of chalcopryite, sphalerite, and quartz.
- Golden quartz with galena, chalcopryite, sphalerite, from the Sunnyside mine in San Juan county.

Silent Auction: Steve displayed available pieces.

- Sigrid Stewart won the bid for the large, pound and a half chunk of rough labradorite.
- No other bids were made on the other items.

He also commented that business was steady, if a little slow. Not all dealers could attend due to a competing show in Tucson which had been rescheduled to the same date.

2020 HGMS OFFICERS

President	Sigrid Stewart	President @HGMS.org
First Vice President	Steve Blyskal	Programs@HGMS.org
Second Vice President	Beverly Mace	Membership@HGMS.org
Secretary	Nancy English	Secretary@HGMS.org
Treasurer	Michele Marsel	Treasurer@HGMS.org
Archaeology Section Board Member		Archaeology@HGMS.org
Beading Section Board Member	Maggie Manley	Beading@HGMS.org
Daylight Section Board Member	Fred Brueckner	
Faceting Section Board Member	Randy Carlson	Faceting@HGMS.org
Lapidary Section Board Member	Phyllis George	
Mineral Section Board Member	Steve Blyskal	Mineral@HGMS.org
Paleo Section Board Member	Mike Dawkins	Field_trips@HGMS.org

HGMS SECTION CHAIRS

Archaeology Section Chair	Vacant	Archaeology@HGMS.org
Beading Section Chair	Kim Fuselier	Beading@HGMS.org
Day Light Section Chair	Nancy Searle	Daylight@HGMS.org
Gemstone & Faceting Section Chair	Randy Carlson	Faceting@HGMS.org
Lapidary & Silversmith Section Chair	Anthony Lucci	Lapidary@HGMS.org
Mineral Section Chair	Stephen Blyskal	Mineral@HGMS.org
Paleo Section Chair	Neal Immega	Paleo@HGMS.org
Youth Section Chair	Beverly Mace	Youth@HGMS.org

HGMS APPOINTED POSITIONS

Assistant Show Chair	Clyde McMeans	
Assistant Show Chair	Sigrid Stewart	
Backbender's Gazette Editor	Sigrid Stewart	Editor@HGMS.org
Clubhouse Chair	Neal Immega	ClubhouseChair@HGMS.org
Day Light Contact Person	Nancy Searle	Daylight@HGMS.org
Donations	Neal Immega	Donations@HGMS.org
HGMS Education Chair	Maggie Manley	Classes@HGMS.org
Lapidary Templates	Mary Ann Mitscherling	Templates@HGMS.org
Librarian for Main Library	Neal Immega	Librarian@HGMS.org
Publicity Chair	Sarah Metsa	Publicity@HGMS.org
Scholarships	Mike Sommers	Scholarship@HGMS.org
Show Chair	Scott Singleton	ShowChair@HGMS.org
Trade Show	Scott Singleton	Tradeshow@HGMS.org
Trade Show	Sigrid Stewart	Tradeshow@HGMS.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Nancy English	VolunteerCoordinator@HGMS.org
Webmaster	Lauren Blyskal	Webmaster@HGMS.org
Youth Section Assistant	Elizabeth Guynn	Youth2@HGMS.org

MAY 2021

2 ● 10am Shop by appt.	3	4 ● 11am Shop	5 Cinco de Mayo ● 11am Shop	6 ● 10am Shop	7	8 ● 10am Shop
9 Mother's Day ● 10am Shop	10	11 ● 11am Shop	12 ● 11am Shop ● 6:30pm Faceting	13 ● 10am Shop	14	15 ● 10am Shop ● 1:30pm Beading
16 ● 10am Shop	17 Tax Day	18 ● 11am Shop	19 ● 11am Shop ● 7:30pm Mineral	20 ● 10am Shop	21	22 ● 10am Shop
23 ● 10am Shop	24	25 ● 11am Shop ● 7:30pm General Mtg	26 ● 11am Shop	27 ● 10am Shop	28	29 ● 10am Shop
30 ● 10am Shop	31 Memorial Day	Jun 1 ● 11am Shop	2 ● 11am Shop	3 ● 10am Shop	4	5 ● 10am Shop

JUNE 2021

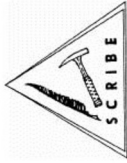
SUN 30 ● 10am Shop	MON 31 Memorial Day	TUE Jun 1 ● 11am Shop	WED 2 ● 11am Shop	THU 3 ● 10am Shop	FRI 4	SAT 5 ● 10am Shop
6 ● 10am Shop	7	8 ● 11am Shop	9 ● 11am Shop ● 6:30pm Faceting	10 ● 10am Shop	11	12 ● 10am Shop
13 ● 10am Shop	14	15 ● 11am Shop	16 ● 11am Shop ● 7:30pm Mineral	17 ● 10am Shop	18	19 Juneteenth ● 10am Shop ● 1:30pm Beading
20 Father's Day ● 10am Shop	21	22 ● 11am Shop ● 7:30pm General Mtg	23 ● 11am Shop	24 ● 10am Shop	25	26 ● 10am Shop
27 ● 10am Shop	28	29 ● 11am Shop	30 ● 11am Shop	Jul 1 ● 10am Shop	2	3 ● 10am Shop

THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE

HGMS | 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)
2006-2016- 1st (Large)
2017 - 1st (Large)
2018-1st Large
2019-1st Large

AFMS



AFMS

1998 - 2nd (Large)
2004 - 3rd (Large)
2007 - 1st (Large)
2010 - 2nd (Large)
2012 - 3rd (Large)
2013 - 3rd (Large)
2014 - 2nd (Large)
2017 - 3rd (Large)
2019-2nd (Large)

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