



PURPOSE The purpose of the Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD., Inc. is “To increase knowledge and popular interest in earth sciences, geology, mineralogy, paleontology, lapidary arts, and related subjects”.

REGULAR MEETING Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month from September to June. The Society will meet on Monday January 14th in the dining room of the Rockville Senior Center, 1150 Carnation Drive, Rockville. The short business meeting will begin at 7:45 pm but the room is available to us at 7:30 pm so come early and see what you and others have on the Show Table and chat with old friends. The program will be by **Dr. Mark D. Uhen**. His subject: **“Where Do Whales Come From?”** About 50 million years ago, a group of land living mammals began an improbable journey to become fully aquatic whales. He discusses new fossils that shed light on this transition, as well as the origin of echolocation in toothed whales about 35 million years ago. He is Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History.



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS will meet on January 21st at 7:30 pm at the home of David and Nancy Ballard. All Board members are expected to be there. Any member is welcome to attend but please let Nancy know if you plan to attend.

THE ROSTER has been updated for 2008 and is included with this issue for MEMBERS ONLY. Information was verified, however, if you find any errors, please contact Wendell Mohr. *The new list is not to be used for solicitation of business or any purpose not related to Society activities.* PLEASE SAVE THIS ROSTER FOR FUTURE REFERENCE and add the information for new members, or changes for current members, as printed in the *Rockhounder* later during the year. It is not to be used to solicit business, nor will it be distributed outside of the Society. Maybe tuck the roster inside the front cover of you telephone book?

SNOW CONTINGENCY Reminder: If schools in Montgomery County, MD are to be cancelled, or let out early because of weather on the day of a scheduled Society meeting, we will have no meeting. Call the Society President or a Board Member (Numbers on the back of the ROCKHOUNDER) if in doubt. With the unusual weather patterns this year who knows what can happen!

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The EFMLS Convention and Show will take place February 22nd-24th, 2008 in Jackson Mississippi. The Society President may attend in his role as director. An alternate director may be designated if the President does not attend. A delegate may also go to represent us. An alternate delegate may be designated. In any case the Society has two votes at the business meeting. The Society will reimburse \$200 toward expenses for anyone who attends. Representation is needed. Are you willing to attend? See Mark Dahlman if you wish to go.

DEADLINE for the February 2008 Rockhounder **Jan. 28th**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES: About 50 people were in attendance for the Annual Holiday Party. In the absence of the President and Vice President, Immediate past President George Durland called the Dec. 10, 2007 meeting to order at 8:05 pm. The Regular and Board Meeting Minutes for November, as published in the *Rockhounder* were unanimously approved. Wendell Mohr nominated Mark Dahlman for 2008 President, whose election was unanimous. He also recognized the other 2008 elected officers, and the new Show Chairman, Heather Felsen. Patricia Repik-Byrne was noted as Exhibits Chair for the Show.



For Heather, Wendell announced a December 15th training session at 10 am by Paul Vance at his home to instruct on producing preforms. Jeff Cessna, Elmer Lantz, and Heather will be there and one more volunteer could be accommodated. The Cabmate machine has not yet been received from Graves. (Joel Rosen reported that the order placed was overlooked but shipped this week.) Heather also requests some one to slab pieces up to 10” and Elmer Lantz may be able to respond.

Wendell reviewed the Wildacres program and had forms for registration. He noted the passing of Cathy Gaber on Dec.1st. An offer to identify minerals by X-Ray diffraction by a dealer, Attard’s Minerals and the sale of a book “*American Mineral Treasures*” and calendar by Lithographie was noted. (No dealer endorsements inferred.) Upcoming Shows and Events were briefly reviewed. The 2008 *Rock and Gem Magazine’s* Lapidary Article of the Year contest was announced. Non-member Mike Dejournett’s offer to swap lapidary flat lap equipment for DP Genie or Pixie was noted. .

Treasurer Juan Proaño reported that we are solvent, 7 dealers have applied for the 2008 show, and the long awaited Fairgrounds contract is expected this week. Juan requested approval to pay himself \$15.92 for stamps, printing and mailing of the dealer contracts, which was unanimously approved.

Visitors: Amy and Chris Waychoff, with James, Kelly, and Kathryn, and Robert Clemenzi.

A Holiday presentation of specimens for Juniors was made by Joel Rosen and the door prize drawing conducted, See Page 6. Adjourned 8:35 pm. Cynthia Hunter-Shupe, Secretary, edited by Wendell Mohr

(No Board meeting was held in December.)

NOTES OF APPRECIATION: Nancy Ballard did her usual excellent job of providing the punch, hot chocolate, tea, coffee, and paper supplies for the Party, for which we are all grateful. Jane Kuehn and Virginia Vance helped in setting up. Many wonderful goodies brought by members made for a treat for all those not observing a strict diet!



And a great **BIG THANKS** to officers leaving their leadership roles:
 Scott Braley served 2 years as President and Show Chairman.
 Harry Lupuloff served 1 year as Vice President and Program Chairman.
 Cynthia Hunter-Shupe changing volunteer efforts from Secretary to Webmaster.

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday Jan 26, 2008, 2 PM, “Indoor” field trip visit to the Bead Museum to see exhibits, Bead Timeline of History, and Treasures of the Earth. See <<http://www.beadmuseumdc.org>>. **RSVP** Field Trip Chairman Jonathan Harris, Phone 301 545 0808 or <jgharris7@comcast.net> no later than January 15th. The Museum needs a count a week in advance. A donation of \$4 to \$5 to the Bead Society requested. **Location:** Ground Floor, The Jenifer Bldg., 400 7th St. NW, Washington, DC, 2 blocks South of the Gallery Place Metro Stop or 1 block North of the Archives Metro stop. Reminder: Leave your viable phone number and/or E Mail address with Jonathan. As the new Field Trip Chair, Jonathan asks all members to help him to identify locations for interesting field trips. In particular, if you have contacts at local quarries, construction companies, or properties with access to interesting specimens, call or E Mail him at his phone number or E Mail address above.

IT'S EASY TO SET UP A SHOWCASE

by Lee Burleigh, (edited)

Our Show is coming up fast. Club members, new members, face your fears. Preparing a showcase is EASY! There are a few simple rules that anyone can follow:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1) Decide what you have to display. | 4) Keep it simple. |
| 2) Determine what size case will be needed. | 5) Label everything. |
| 3) Decide what lining will best enhance the beauty of your materials. | 6) Relax |



Decide what you have to display. Give it a try. Don't say: (a) I don't have anything good enough. (b) I haven't had time to finish enough items for a show. (c) I haven't anything new that everyone hasn't already seen.

In a non-competitive display the items shown don't have to be our own work. Buy or borrow whatever you need to make up the display. Whatever your interest: rocks, slabs, minerals, fossils, finished jewelry, cabs, etc., you can find these in your home, or those of your friends, relatives, neighbors, or in shops.

Share a case with another club member. As few as 5 or 10 select items can make an attractive and interesting display. Most show cases are 4 feet wide and 2 feet deep. Using a yardstick and a piece of string, mark out a 4x2 foot space on a rug or table. Try out different arrangements of your display items. If you have materials that lie flat, you might want to use your own slant-case. The front of such cases is about four inches high, the back wall about 9 inches. Or you may use any case of your own that you have. If you have a tall item, an upright case is indicated. Such cases are 4'x2' high. Be sure to reserve your case well in advance so both case and table space will be available.

Decide what type of lining best shows off your materials. While your materials are laid out on a table, decide on the type and color of lining. Neutral colors such as cream, beige, eggshell, and light pastels are best. Avoid bold patterns, bright colors, shiny or reflective textures. Low reflective black is OK. Stretch type materials are excellent as they can be pulled tight. When measuring your case, allow about 2 inches on all edges for folding under. Allow enough material for risers and redecorating another year. Be sure the pattern or nap will all run the same way. Keep it simple. Don't overcrowd your display. Allow room for labels and your name plaque. Remember, you are displaying minerals, fossils, lapidary work, jewelry - try not to distract the viewer with unnecessary decorations. EXCEPTION: Educational exhibits occasionally need a variety of materials - models of dinosaurs, a fossil bone, a piece of coprolite, and cabs of petrified dinosaur bone, can all be integral parts of an exhibit.

Label Everything. Use a name tag or plaque to identify your case so your friends and visitors will know whose it is. It is frustrating to see beautiful materials unnamed in a case. Every item or grouping of the same materials should be labeled with the name of the material and its source (town, county, state or nation). Use one of the reference books in the club library or talk to a club member. Labels should be uniform in size and lettering. They should be typed, if possible, for legibility. 3x5" cards make good label material. Labels should lie flat and parallel to the front of the case. Avoid "label maker" or other such tapes, which can curl in the heat.

Relax. Before you dismantle your trial table-top layout, recheck it for all the above suggestions. Is it exactly as you want it? If so, make a rough sketch showing each piece in the layout, or take a close-up snap-



Prepare a kit of things to take with your case: labels, liners, paper towels, display items, glass cleaner, pins/tacks, name plaque, layout/ sketch, scissors, etc. Now really, RELAX! The hard part is done. If you have more questions or need a little help, call upon an experienced club member for help and ideas. From Rocky Review via KGeMS Newsletter July 2000 via Rolling Rock Jan. 2003 Via ARKLATEX G&M Jan. 2007

MEET YOUR NEW OFFICERS

Mark Dahlman, President. As a boy, his parents took his brothers and him to many of the local gem and mineral shows, and they were regular visitors to the local rock shops in Northern Virginia (Those were the days when there were rock shops in the Washington Metropolitan Area!). Over the years they bought a lot of agate - moving up from plastic to rubber tumblers and had quite a few fossils. One of his most memorable vacations, he says, included sitting in a dry stream bed outside of Virginia's Fairy Stone State Park picking out the Staurolite crosses all afternoon in the shade.



He left the rocks behind when he went to college at Virginia Tech, studied Electrical Engineering, and met his wife Becky. They both got jobs as software engineers and moved to Mount Airy, MD. They started bird watching, woodworking, and gardening. They later moved to Germantown to be closer to work. Five years ago their daughter Annie was born. (Annie has started her own rock collection with a little help from dad.) About a year and a half ago they went to the GLMSDC show and that led to the DC and Montgomery club meetings. He says "I really thought I was going to be spending my time and money collecting fossils but I've caught the fluorescent bug in the past year, trekking to Northern NJ every chance I get. I guess there will be time for fossils yet, and I suspect gold fever isn't far behind."

Elmer Lantz, Vice-President, is a native of the Washington DC area born in 1936. He graduated from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. Joining the Air National Guard, he trained in aircraft sheet metal repair and served in the Guard for 9 years. In 1954 he started working for Melpar Electronics in the sheet metal shop. He retired from the trade in 2001 after expanding his abilities to include welding and machine work.



Elmer enjoys wood working and has twice expanded their home. Elmer was married in 1958, and with wife, Jeanne, have one daughter, a grandson and granddaughter. He enjoys target shooting, deer hunting and fishing. Somewhere in the early 60's he went to a rock show in Washington and bought a Mexican opal that was not a standard shape. That was the start of a new hobby of lapidary and jewelry making. He says "I enjoy cabochon cutting, working with silver or gold, casting, and faceting gem stones."

Holly McNeil, Secretary, values her immediate family consisting of husband Steve (a novice rockhouser) and two cats! She and Steve enjoy reading, walking, the theatre and traveling. She is originally from New England, where most of her family still reside. Holly graduated from the University of NH with a degree in business administration, and is currently the business and finance manager for a real estate settlement firm in Gaithersburg. Her first exposure to rock collecting occurred when her grandparents took her to the Gilsum, NH Rock Swap as a five year old. She was immediately "hooked" and from that point forward the Rock Swap was the annual event she looked forward to more than Christmas and birthdays. She says "My modest collection now includes approximately 250 specimens, most acquired at shows, and my goal is to add more self collected stones on field trips and site visits."



Holly's lifelong interest has always been identifying and collecting rocks and minerals, and enjoying expanding her knowledge of related fields. She recently completed a refresher course in geology at the Univ. of MD, and is currently enrolled in the Graduate Gemologist program of GIA. Holly feels that she has learned a great deal from the members and guest speakers of GLMSMC since joining the club last year, and looks forward to becoming more actively involved in "this great organization."



Juan Proaño, Treasurer, although not new to the office, continues his stellar work. Hoja de Vida!: He was born in Peru where he completed his studies in Mining Engineering and later did his graduate work in Economic Geology at a North American University.

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 4) He is married and has three daughters and seven grand children, at least one of which, shows an early interest in rocks, fossils and minerals. Juan grew up in a mining camp, in Peru, where he developed interest in fossils which could be found in the surrounding limestone hills. At that time, in the early 40's, the roads of the Cerro de Pasco mining camp were maintained using gravel from the mine dumps which contain abundant pyrite crystals that was the source of specimens for his first mineral collection!

Juan has been a member of the Society, since 1984, serving as Librarian, Vice President, President, and now, as Treasurer.

MEET YOUR NEW FIELD TRIP CHAIRMAN:

Jonathan Harris has been collecting minerals and rocks since the third grade, when a teacher showed his class her rock collection. His areas of specific interest are photography of minerals, fluorescence and unusual physical properties, minerals of industrial importance, and crystal-line minerals of the Washington, DC area. He also occasionally dabbles in fossils. Jonathan grew up in Silver Spring Maryland, attended Montgomery Blair High School, Obtained his BA at Johns Hopkins and later obtained a PhD in chemistry from the University of Chicago. He lives with his wife, Susan, and sons Jacob and Benjamin in Potomac. He currently works on financial and pricing research for Fannie Mae.



THEY CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

By Laura Dow

There has long been an unknown in the diamond industry – the source of so called “Carbonado” or Black Diamonds. Most diamonds are found in or around eroded kimberlite ores. They were formed in the deep, high pressure zones in the Earth’s lithospheric mantle and brought to the surface by the eruptions of deep rooted (90 miles down or more), volcanoes. The cooled volcanic pipes are a rock called kimberlite. These diamonds are typically 1 to 3.3 billion years old.

Another rare type of diamond is found at the sites of meteorite falls and is formed due to the extreme pressure of impact. These are known as “microdiamonds” or “nanodiamonds.”

Black diamonds, in contrast, are not found in kimberlite, but are in seemingly unrelated geologic locations. Most are found in Central Africa and Brazil. There were many conflicting theories on their formation, none of which accounted for all the properties of the stones. Recently two researchers from Florida International University analyzed the hydrogen found in black diamonds. They theorize that the amount of hydrogen present indicates that these diamonds formed from the interstellar clouds of a supernova explosion. They would have made their way to Earth as smaller parts of meteor bodies falling all over the planet.

So, for an “out of this world” keepsake, consider the Carbonado Diamond ring, if you can find one!

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbonado>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamond>, and http://www.livescience.com/environment/070108_spacey_diamonds.html.

From Austin Gem and Mineral Society Stone Chipper, June 2007

ROCKHOUND

(Larry Rush, With Apologies to Joyce Kilmer)

I think that I have never found, A man as looney as a rockhound.

A nut whose body is often pressed, Against a quarry's muddy breast.

An addict who breaks hard rocks all day, And lifts his sweaty arms to "play".

A fool that may in summer wear, A nest of black flies in his hair.

An idiot who must have lost his brain, To go out smashing rocks in rain.

A medical jerk who stops when this harm, Creates shooting pains to run up his arm.

An obsessive chap who risks divorce, When his mate at last has to threaten force.

Minerals are made by Nature underground, But God really goofed when he made a rockhound.

With permission of author.



SAFETY THOUGHTS SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT

by Ellery Borow, EFMLS President

Yes, the title of this article sounds like an industrial strength safety slogan... but it is also true. Safety requires us to exert a concerted effort to ensure that it happens. Safety does not happen by coincidence.

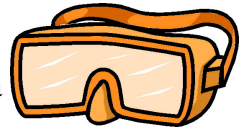
Have you been following past EFMLS Safety Chairman, Bill Klose's - *Safety First* articles up to now? Over the past 7 years or so, Bill has been writing a great, in depth, and very technically detailed series of articles on all manner of safety issues covering most of the aspects of the things we rockhounds routinely do - such as participate in field trips, attend shows, use rock collecting tools and lapidary machines, and work with torches. Hopefully every club safety chairperson has read, implemented and kept on file a copy of all of Bill Klose's articles. Perhaps you noted that Bill's articles were repeated from time to time. Safety issues bear repeating. Repetition makes for a safer membership.

As most safety chairpersons no doubt understand, it's one thing for a club to have access to safety information. It stands as quite another issue to have club members take safety instruction to heart. Some folks listen with an undivided attention to safety issues and some do not.

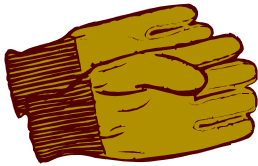
The lessons of being safe are clear - it is common cent\$ to do what we do in as safe a manner as possible. By common cent\$ I'm not referring to the loose change in ones pocket or purse, I'm instead referring to the costs associated with being safe compared with being unsafe.

Let's cover some examples of safety costs -

1. Cost of a pair of goggles - \$2.00 to \$5.00. Cost of eye surgery to repair damage from a flying shard of quartz... well, you don't even want to think about it.
2. Cost of watching where you are walking - \$0.00. Cost of a broken leg (or worse) - Perhaps a thousand or two....but could be more.



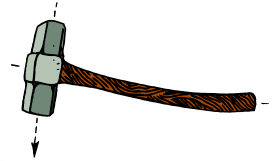
3. Cost of a pair of good, strong gloves - \$5.00 to \$15.00. Cost of cut finger - a bandage... not too much, but think of the effort required to clean up from the cut finger on your specimens.



4. Cost of carefully preparing to go to a new, never-visited quarry - some time to do research - \$0.00. Cost of getting lost or injured from a poorly planned trip - besides the embarrassment, this could be very expensive.

5. Cost of a sledge hammer handle.... well, I think you get the point.

Countless more examples exist to illustrate the effectiveness of planning to be safe. It just makes common cent\$ to be safe. Making safety an economic issue may help some of our members appreciate the value of safety. We all know safety is important, it's just that some folks need more reminders. It's those others who need repetition, repetition, repetition.



JANUARY MEMBER BIRTHDAYS: Joseph Allaire, Chris Barr, Scott Braun, Heather Church, Chris Crosswhite, Joe Dehmer, Gladys Fuller, David Hald, Benjamin Harris, Matthew Hyland, Sara LaVilla, Harry Lupuloff, Robert Meny, Rob Robinson, Ron Suddendorf, Melissa Thompsen, Don Turner. Your Birthstone is Garnet, don't take it for granite.



Publisher's New Books just out for 2008: "Blue Tourmaline!" by Shirley U. Jest, "Aftermath of the Rock Fall" By Doug Graves, and "Fall in the Quarry" by Eileen Dover and Phil Down.



DECEMBER PRIZES: A holiday presentation was made to all 9 Juniors in attendance at the time. (3 guest Juniors had left by then.) Every Junior got a specimen this month, either Crysocolla, a Geode, or Shark's teeth. The Lucky McElravy family, this time Audrey, again won one of the two Door Prizes, a Coral Necklace. The other Door Prize, won by Cynthia Hunter-Shupe was a pair of Lake Superior Agates, courtesy of the November program speaker, Wayne Sukow.



UPCOMING SHOWS AND EVENTS

February 22-24, 49th Annual Gem, Mineral, Jewelry, and Fossil Show and 58th Annual EFMLS Convention hosted by the Mississippi G&M Soc. Trade Mart Building, MS State Fairgrounds, Jackson MS. Info.: 601 914 6747. E Mail <mineeralid@comcast.net>.

March 1-2, 45th Annual Earth Science Gem and Mineral Show sponsored by the Delaware Mineral Society, Delaware Technical and Community College, I-95 at Exit 4B, Churchmans Road, Newark DE. Information <www.delminsociety.net>.

March 15 & 16 at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Sat. 10 am to 6 pm, Sun. 10 am to 5pm. **OUR SHOW!** We are looking for another successful event. Volunteer to help set up, during the show, and take-down by signing up. Be a supporter by exhibiting your "Stuff". We need about 40 cases for an effective display. If you feel you do not have enough for a whole case, consider teaming up with one or more others. Many opportunities exist for helping and we are an **all volunteer** run show. If you have some extra cloth material, Jo Ann Mohr, who sews the Treasure bags, would like donations. Worn clothing which can be cut up is OK.

March 28-30 Atlantic Micromounters Conference hosted by the Micromineralogists of the NCA. MHA Conference Center, Elkridge MD. Info. & registration <central_office@amfed.org>, 410 833 7926.

March 29 Southern MD Rock and Mineral Club's Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show, one day only, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton MD. Admission \$2.00, under 6 Free. Information 301 297 4575.

March 29-30 30th Annual Show, Franklin County Rock & Mineral Club, Quality Inn & Suites, 1095 Wayne Ave. Chambersburg PA, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5, adults \$4, children under 12 free. Information 717 372-2256, Email <chenindesigns@comcast.net>.

☺ **The Egotist Mineral Society** is holding a conference at Lake Superior, Ontario. ☺

CATHY GABER Cathy died on Dec 1. She was a good friend to many, past president of the EFMLS, one of the mainstays of the Wildacres faculty, an incredibly talented author, and talented crafts-person who inspired and influenced many of us. She (And Bruce) presented several programs to our Society. Should you wish, contributions in Cathy's memory should be made to "Michigan Tech. Fund", (Catherine J. Gaber Endowment for Education in Mineralogy) 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton MI 49931.

To say that she will be missed is a vast understatement. At this point, if you want to send Bruce condolences, his address is Dr. Bruce Gaber, 5707 Northfield Road, Bethesda, MD 20817.



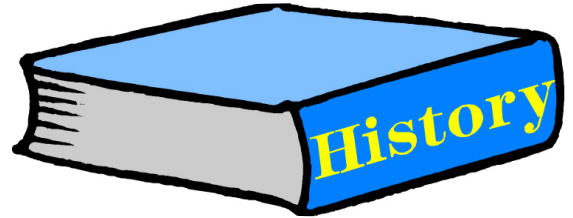
WILDACRES WORKSHOP Registrations are now being accepted for sessions in the Spring, April 18-24, and Fall, September 8-14. Your Editor can supply application forms and information about classes being offered. Tuition remains unchanged at \$330 per person which includes room and board for the week. Some additional charges may be incurred for materials used in classes. Everyone who has attended in the past testifies to the wonderful experience they had.

Our Board offers one scholarship annually to a Society member who has never been to Wildacres, has been a member for at least a year, and has been active in club affairs, especially at our annual show. It may be used for either session. Nominations are to be submitted to the Board. Any member may make a nomination, including for themselves. (First come, First Served.) Payment is made upon successful completion of the workshop.

SOCIETY HISTORY:

1991 Continued.

In the May-June issue of the EFMLS Digest, its Editor announced the selection of new slide programs to add to the Federation's Program Library. The title of one of them is "Our Changing Land" and it described the forces of weathering and erosion. Who prepared it? Our member Jennie Smith! And it was one of only two winning programs in the 1990 AFMS Slide Program Contest. Congratulations Jennie!



At June's meeting Prez Jack Nelson reported that he and VP Louis Williams, accompanied by the area's gold mining specialist, Walter Goetz, visited the home of Jade Kelly and at a nearby stream demonstrated gold panning techniques. Jack said it was "hard work." Even so, imagine living by a stream where one could pan for Au whenever one cared to do so. Perhaps some sharp real estate agent could use that as a selling point.

"Hard work" also was the way Ron Tonucci and Lou and Dave Williams described hunting for amethyst at Washington GA. They did have good results, though, and some of their finds were displayed at the evening's Show Table. Also on that table was faceted opal, done by Paul Vance. Do you still have it, Paul? If so could we see it again?

After a break, Lou showed an EFMLS slide program on "Geology, Minerals, and Fossils of Virginia." The program depicted how the state is divided geologically into the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, the Blue Ridge Province, the Valley and Ridge Province, and the Appalachian Plateau, and the different minerals and fossils that could be found in each. The program inspired Joe Cirrincione (In his role as Field Trip Chair) to investigate the possibility of scheduling trips to some of the locations.

As an aside from Society activities, *Rockhounder* Editor Nancy Ballard announced that on August 2nd, Governor William Donald Schaeffer would officially open Route I-68, and that on the same day the Sideling Hill Exhibit Center rest stop would open. For those of you who may not have been to the latter, the road cut offers a unique view of ancient rock that predates the Dinosaur Age. The following I adapted from an article that appeared in GLMSDC's *Dopstick*: The road cut gives a 3-dimensional view of a downfold layered rock called a syncline. The cross-section shows layers of sandstone, siltstone, shale, coal, and conglomerate in dark gray, green, reddish brown, tan, and white. The then Chief of the Maryland Geological Survey said the site "is the premier road cut in the Northeast," and offers "tremendous opportunity to explain Geology to the layman."

During the summer Anna Marcus moved from her Wheaton home to Leisure World. In the process, she donated many books to the Society's library. Earlier she had held an "open house" to allow all Society members to select some of her mineral and fossil specimens. Another major donation of 26 boxes of mineral specimens was made to the Society by the estate of Ruth Cole Wertz, who had died earlier in the year. Ruth had been very active in all the area's mineral societies, and also in both federations.

After summer break, the normal meeting schedule was resumed in September. First order of business at that month's meeting, following approval of the Secretary and Treasurer reports, was a motion by Wendell Mohr to award up to \$1500 in scholarships. The Scholarship Committee would make recommendations, and the Society's Board of Directors would give final approval. The membership voted to approve the motion.

Wendell then introduced Dawn Kaspro who had been our Montgomery Area Science Fair winner in April when she was a 9th grader at Mother of God school. Dawn spoke about her project, "Factors Affecting the Health of a River." and she had used the Severn River for her study. At each of 8 different places along the 10-12 mile stretch of the river she had taken 3 samples of water to measure oxygen, pH, turbidity, salinity, rate of flow, temperatures of air and water, and depth. Her conclusion was that the river was clean. (Note: After 15+ years, I wonder if the Severn still is, considering the condition of the Bay.) VP Williams followed Dawn's presentation, sharing information he had shared while taking a Biology(?) course at Montgomery College, and from literature he'd obtained from the US Bureau of Mines concerning the use of bacteria to reduce ores to metals. A very interesting program. I will try to complete the year in the next issue. Hope you had a joyous holiday season.

CAN A LAKE BE DRY?

by Member Mary Crosswhite

If you LOVE someone (a Rockhound), take him to the Searles Lake "Gem-O-Rama" in Trona, California. If you HATE someone (NOT a Rockhound), take him to the Searles Lake "Gem-O-Rama" in Trona, California.

My husband, son and I flew into Las Vegas on October 11th, rented an SUV, and headed out on Friday morning for the Mojave Desert of California, to attend the Gem Show and field trips hosted that weekend by the Searles Lake Gem & Mineral Society.

Searles Lake is not like any other rockhound site you are likely to see. The dry lake bed is one of series of "lakes" left over from glacial times, when precipitation and melt runoff filled several vast basins to the East of the Sierra Nevada mountains hundreds of feet deep: Owens Lake (which would still exist, if it had not been diverted to water Los Angeles), China Lake, Searles Lake, Panamint Lake, and the deepest and easternmost -- Glacial Lake Manly --(that's Death Valley to you and me).



The minerals which washed into these valley basins from the mountains were abundant and special. As the basins dried out, deposits of borax, halite, sulfohalite, trona, thenardite, and others, were left behind. A little over a century ago, these deposits were already being exploited to bring us "20 Mule Team Borax". Today the Searles Valley Mineral company produces a number of products from its location at Searles Lake. And once a year, on the second weekend in October, they make access to the lake bed available to rockhounds, in conjunction with the Searles Lake Gem & Mineral club.

There are three field trips which leave from the gem club's parking lot, and collectors arrive as much as three hours early to get a spot at the beginning of the orderly rows of cars, which will be led out on to the salt flats when the field trip begins. None of the field trips takes us more than a couple of miles from the town of Trona, but escorts and guides are needed to drive along the berms established by the mineral company (along with several pipelines and 100+ miles of electrical wires, strung on poles throughout the basin). It is indeed a desolate and desiccated place! In some places the salt has been scraped flat (not far from Searles Lake, the Navy, the Air Force and NASA use similar flat salt plains as landing strips). In other places, the salt brine surface has been left alone to dry and shift, looking like the uneven sections of arctic ice sheets that have shifted and distorted each other, raising cracks and pressure ridges on their surface.



The first field trip must be intended to separate the men (and women) from the boys (and girls)! It's "The Mud Trip". The week before the Show, heavy equipment was used to dig in the layers beneath the salt for the mineral-rich mud, containing huge hanksite crystals. ("Over 99% of hanksite in the world is in Searles Dry Lake. The only other location where it is found is Lake Katwe in Uganda".) Front end loaders having dumped approximately 150 tons of this crystal-laden black goop into hills and rows along one of the flat sites, it's time to think like a pig and dive in for a good wallop! If it doesn't kill you, it will definitely bring out your inner child. And kids of all sizes, including at least one Boy Scout troop, were setting the grownups a good example. The hosts had already suggested folks wear "sacrificial clothes", because this stuff is sticky (AND stinky!) and heavy. But feeling around in the mud with your hands (we wore thin latex gloves), you could feel the smooth surfaces of the hanksite crystals, often several inches long, or in huge clusters of multiple crystals. These you needed to drag out of the mud pile and take to a trough provided, full of hypersaline solution, to rinse them off and take a look at what you'd found. Ordinary water can't be used for this purpose, because the sodium-based minerals would just wash away! There is no way to successfully collect on this trip if you are mud-averse! (On the other hand, there may be expensive Spas which would charge much more than the Searles Lake folks did for such an extensive mud

(Continued on Page 10)

CAN A LAKE BE DRY? (Continued from page 9)

treatment!) With buckets and buckets of partially washed hanksite, and mud on EVERYTHING, we peeled off our clothes, THREW AWAY our shoes, changed into cleaner things, and went back to town to park our car in line for the second trip of the day--"The Blow-Hole Trip". In the week leading up to the Gem-O-Rama weekend, explosives techs from the China Lake Naval Air Station had come out to Searles Lake and drilled about 30 holes in the hard surface to reach a layer of good crystals beneath. Then they dropped charges down these holes to loosen the crystal layer, so it could be pumped out with high pressure water and sprayed all over the "Blow Hole" collecting site. They saved one blow hole pump in place, and fired it up to demonstrate to the attendees what a great show they had missed. No mud wallowing for this trip--it was more like collecting Easter Eggs. The crystals were generally smaller, but there was some more hanksite, some trona, halite, sulfohalite, borax and gypsum, scattered in abundance.



But the third field trip Sunday morning was the "piece de resistance": an expedition onto the salt lake bed where a little of the winter's "lake water" still remained in ever-shrinking salt "Brine Pools". On ledges around the edges of these glorified puddles, where the brine had just recently receded from its previous level, were to be found beautiful collections of halite crystals, some good-sized, many of them colored pink or deep wine color from red halophillic bacteria living in the pools. We were only about the 10th car in line that morning--we didn't want to miss a good chance at finding a choice brine pool! (although we needn't have worried--the search area was huge.) When the field trip guides showed us where to park on the lake bed, my son and I were out of the car like a shot, striding off across the "moonscape" of hard, cracked, uneven salt plates, while my loyal husband brought up the rear, carrying the heavy digging bar, backpacks, and, of course, lots of bottles of drinking water. I was very proud when my son told me he thought this was the strangest place he had even seen!

This was another collecting experience not for the faint of heart, though. The best way to find and collect the halite was to get IN the salt brine pools (usually only about 5-10 inches deep (though in one pool the brine came up over my knees), and feel under the ledges for good crystals. Did I mention that the crystals were often sharp!?! Did I mention that this meant submerging your scratched up hands and arms into salt water!?! But what's a sting or ten to suffer in return for collecting these beautiful crystal formations in this spectacularly otherworldly locale!?! Oh yes, and your arms became coated with a thin layer of salt. And your clothing, soaked in the brine, would become stiff as an ironing board when you were finished, if you didn't give it a good rinsing with tap water before you headed for home! Did I mention "not for the faint of heart"?

And I would go back and do it all again in a heartbeat!!! Even without the pounds and pounds of crystals we had to ship home (Thanks, Scott Braley, for telling us about postal "flat rate" boxes!!), we will never forget the sights, sounds, feels and smells of this fantastic weekend. It was an amazing experience. The people of Trona--especially the Searles Lake Gem & Mineral Society--were as nice as could be. The whole town seems to participate in this once a year extravaganza. Restaurants even opened early, and the Community Church threw a pancake breakfast both mornings.

Enough of vacations where you'll be cool and rested and pampered!!! Some year, consider a trip that will probably take you as close to "walking on the moon" as you will ever get, and in the company of a large group of friendly, "fellow crazy people".



I guarantee you'll have an experience you will never forget!!!

WEB SITES

The Virtual Geology Museum, <<http://skywalker.cochise.edu/wellerr/VGM/intro.htm>>, is sponsored by Cochise County, AZ, (Community) College. It is managed by Roger Weller, curator and is a site for the long winter nights. It doesn't cover everything but darn near it! Halls of Minerals, Gemstones, Rocks, Fossils, and Meteorites provide a wide view of earth science topics and will hold your interest. I won't try to elicit all the topics but noodle around for yourself. The "Virtual Geology Field Trips" are worthwhile. Take the "Bisbee Mine Tour." See Opal's Pals, for some humorous cartoons.



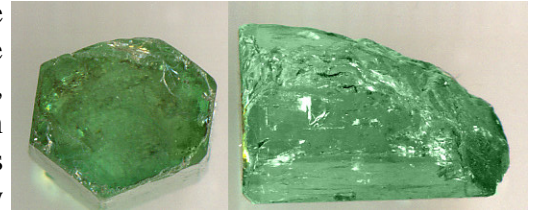
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Exceptional Minerals, <<http://www.exceptionalminerals.com/index.html>> is a sub-set of the Mobile AL Mineral Gallery. WOW! Here are mouth watering photographs of museum quality specimens. Visit a dozen "Rooms" featuring Rhodochrosite, Gold, Silver, Beryl, and Elmwood TN Minerals. There is a Mineral Gallery Auction Room. See specimens from the 2006 and 2007 Denver G&M Show. Per our custom we do not endorse specific dealers but you can behold the beauty of these specimens and also get an idea about the market prices for these top-notch specimens. ● There are only 3 important things to remember when buying specimens. 1. Quality.....I forget the other two. The average cost of these specimens is now \$50,000, or as they call it in Tucson - A deposit. ●

North Carolina Emeralds, <<http://www.northcarolinaemeralds.info/index.htm>> offers information about and photographs of Emeralds and Hiddenite found at several NC locations: Crabtree Mine, NAEM, Old Plantation Mine, and the Adams Mine. The first two offer collecting for a fee. Don't miss "See latest Discoveries" Did you know that North America's 20 largest Emeralds came from NC? A listing spans the period of 1880-2006. You'll soon be green with envy at the specimens and cut gems you see. ● Jamie Hill, premier Emerald collector, has his very best specimens on the shelf in his living room. Yeh, he's really got shelf esteem! A man and his wife owned one of the best producing emerald mines in NC. They divorced. She got the mine and he got the shaft. ●



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Free Online Gemology Course. via Salinas Valley Rock and Gem Club Newsletter, July-August 2007
 If you're interested in learning about gemology from a scientific (rather than a commercial or artistic) viewpoint, then you might enjoy this website. Included there is a series of lessons developed by Barbara Smigel, PhD, GG, and Emeritus Professor at the College of Southern Nevada. You don't need to register to use the materials contained on the site, however you can opt to register and take the full distance learning, online course for college credit. Web Lectures include the following lessons:

- Lesson 1: Basic Terms
- Lesson 2: Naming and Measuring Gems
- Lesson 3: Physical Properties of Gems
- Lesson 4: Optical Properties of Gems
- Lesson 5: Magnification and What it Reveals



- Lesson 6: Optical Phenomena in Gemstones
- Lesson 7: Gem Fashioning
- Lesson 8: Gem Enhancement
- Lesson 9: Synthetics and Simulants
- Lesson 10: Gem Formation

Also included on the site are Web Essays - one-topic, pictorial essays that enrich the web lecture for each lesson and include information on specific rocks and minerals. You can follow a link to "Ask the Teacher" specific questions and actually receive an answer in response. There's also an audio pronunciation guide, an A-Z Survey of Gemstones downloadable as a PowerPoint presentation, and suggested textbooks and reading assignments if you're interested in learning more. Simply visit <http://www.bwsmigel.info/> Check it out!

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