

THE ROCKHOUNDER



JANUARY 2010

REGULAR MEETING: Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month from September to June. The Society will meet on **Monday January 11th** 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 chat with old friends and see what you and others have on the Show Table.

The program speaker will be **Dr. Peter Kranz** talking about the “**Dinosaurs in the Washington DC Area**” and the new “**Dinosaur Park**”, 41 acres of land south of Laurel and overseen by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning commission. He was the power behind the establishment of the Dinosaur Park, recently opened. There were articles in the media but it should be interesting to hear his viewpoint. Dr. Kranz is a geologist and President of the Dinosaur Fund, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that supports dinosaur fossil research and preservation in the region.



Photo: W. Mohr

See <<http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~gdouglas/index.html>>.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS will meet on January 18 at the home of Andy Muir at 7:30 pm.



MEMBERSHIP CHAIR PERSON We are in need of someone to serve as Membership Chair for 2010. Please consider this opportunity to contribute to our Society. Our Membership Chair greets visitors, accepts applications from prospective members, collects dues, issues membership cards, and keeps a record of our Society's enrollment. Many of the record keeping functions are handled by the Editor. The person automatically becomes a member of the Board of Directors.

Talk with the President, Eric Kindahl, or any of the board members if you can help the Society in the role of Membership Chair.

ROSTER UPDATE An updated roster is being sent out in January. It is for the convenience of members and will be mailed or E mailed to members only. It is not to be used to solicit business, nor will it be distributed outside of the Society. If any data in your listing has changed, (Address, phone number, E Mail, children added or deleted) and you have not told Wendell Mohr about it, please do it NOW.

WEATHER ALERT

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.



DEADLINE for the February 2010 Rockhounder: January 24

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE:

Happy 2010 to one and all! As we look forward to a new year, I would first like to look back and thank Mark Dahlman for his service to our club as its president for the past two years. Mark provided us with steady leadership and an ever-present smile to welcome new members and old. Since joining the club, I have always looked forward to sharing in Mark’s excitement about our hobby, his eagerness to learn from others, and his willingness to share his knowledge and experiences. You have given me a fine example to emulate, Mark, and I look forward to working with you and the rest of the club in the coming year. I am pleased to report that Mark Dahlman will continue in an important leadership role in our club as our new Show Chairman. I am confident he will continue the dedicated work our retiring show chairman, Heather Felsen, has done for the past several years. Thank you, Mark, for taking on this important task!



Photo by W. Mohr

It’s never too early to be thinking about our club’s annual Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show! This year’s show will be held March 20-21 at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds in Gaithersburg. For those of you who are new to the club and have not experienced our show, we welcome you to visit the exhibits and dealers and participate in the many hands-on activities. More importantly, we would like you to become part of the show by volunteering to help out and or putting together an exhibit. Our show is one of the most talked about in the region, and we will host approximately 1500 visitors over the two days of the show. This major undertaking is supported by the volunteer efforts of our membership, and we need your help to make this a success.

At our upcoming club meetings, we will be calling for volunteers to sign up for shifts to help with set-up, operation, and clean-up. There are a wide variety of tasks, so all members will be able to find something to fit their schedules and interests. Since joining the club four years ago, I have helped with set-up and clean-up for the shows. I have found this to be a wonderful time to get to know other club members and to listen to great tales of rockhounding adventures.

I would also encourage you to put together an exhibit for the show. We have many cases to fill, and this is a great chance to show off your collection or make connections to fellow collectors who share your particular passion. Exhibitor forms will be available at our meetings, along with a room full of club members eager to help you with your exhibit.

Looking forward to seeing you at our January meeting, Eric.



Photo by W. Mohr

SHOW TABLE: There was no Show Table at the December meeting.

DOOR PRIZE

The General Door Prize, A nice Prehnite from Prospect Park NJ was won by Beth Campanella.

SILENT AUCTION Two Lortone tumblers and several fluorescent mineral specimens were sold at the December meeting. One tumbler was a gift from Gil Bowen, the other a gift from Jed Brown.



A story about a woman at a rock shop with fly swatters:
She had swatted two male flies and two female flies.

How did she know what sex they were?

Two females were on the phone and two males were on a beer can. June 2009 Shin-Skiner News



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES The December 14, 2009 meeting was called to order by President Mark Dahlman at 7:44 pm, with approximately 49 people attending. It was M/S/P that the minutes of the November 9, 2009 regular meeting and the November 16, 2009 board meeting be approved.

Visitor, Matt Charsky, past-president of the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies, announced the upcoming 60th annual convention of the EFMLS, held in conjunction with the 50th annual show of the Delaware Mineralogical Society, on 6-7 March 2010 in Wilmington, DE. Matt also thanked the club for its many generous donations to the EFMLS and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.



Photo by W. Mohr

President: Mark announced the silent auction of four lots of fluorescent materials and two Lortone tumblers. The end of the auction would be called by Wendell, with all items being sold. The society is in need of a Membership Chair.

There was a moment of silence in remembrance of the club members who passed away in November, Michael Tihomirov and Nancy Ballard.



Photo by W. Mohr

Several awards were presented from the EFMLS and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (see the Dec. Rockhoulder for list). Congratulations to all for their well-deserved awards. Regarding the Each One Teach One award presented to Holly for her FRA efforts, Jack Busch noted that the club began as a club for juniors and today's juniors are the future of the club.

Treasurer: Andy reported that the checks from show dealers have begun arriving.

Field Trips: Jonathan discussed possibilities for field trips in January, such as indoor trips to University of Richmond or the Smithsonian Naturalist Center, or outdoor trip to Delaware or Calvert Cliffs fossil localities.

Editor: Wendell suggested an upper limit for tumbler bids based on local tumbler prices. He reported on upcoming rock related events and classes.

Show: Mark stepped into the Show Chair position. Thank you, Mark. Pat Repik-Byrne announced we have 45 cases to fill (6 are fluorescents). There will be a limit of 2 per person to start. Bob Irby asked for help finding demonstrators, particularly a sculptor. George has show flyers.

Guest Tom Dunne asked for information on the Wissahickon Formation and the formation of the Appalachians to both enlighten his grandkids and prepare a flyer for the Croydon Creek Nature Center.

A good time was had by all at the holiday party, a great opportunity to swap, sell, and get better acquainted with other members. The refreshments were guaranteed not to have any calories.

Joel Rosen administered the door prize give-away. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Jeff Cessna, Secretary

BOARD MEETING MINUTES A brief impromptu Board meeting was held on December 14, 2009. Board members present: Jeff Cessna, Mark Dahlman, George Durland, Heather Felsen, Jonathan Harris, Elmer Lantz, Wendell Mohr, Andy Muir, Pat Repik-Byrne, Joel Rosen. Future board member present: Owen Powers. President Mark Dahlman called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm to discuss club participation in the U.S. Science Festival to be held in October 2010 on the National Mall. It was decided to postpone a decision until more information was gathered by Mark. Subsequent to the meeting it was M/S/P that the club decline to participate this year. The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 PM. Jeff Cessna, Secretary



Holiday Party Pictures by W. Mohr



The Newlyweds!



January 16, 2010, 1:30 PM, University of Richmond Lora Robins Gallery of Design From Nature. Meet just inside the Gallery entrance. This museum combines the University of Richmond's Natural Sciences and Decorative Arts Collection. The museum displays include a special exhibit featuring fossils and a permanent exhibit of fluorescent minerals. Directions below are from the website. For a description of the current fossil exhibit and links to other information on the museum see:

<http://museums.richmond.edu/lrgexhibitions/traces_in_time.html>



RSVP 1 week in advance to <jgharris7@gmail.com> (preferred) or call 301-545-0808. Please include "Lora Robins" in the subject so I can quickly identify the message.

Directions (editing from the University of Richmond's website). Take I-95 South to I-64 (West). The exit at Exit 183/Glenside Drive South (SR. 356) take Glenside Drive [note this might become Horsepan Rd before hitting Three Chopt Rd.] to Three Chopt Rd. Turn left onto Three Chopt (still SR. 356) and follow it for approximately one mile then turn right onto Boatwright Drive. Take Boatwright to the main entrance then turn left onto Campus Drive. After about 1/4 of a mile turn right onto Gateway Road and make an immediate right onto Richmond Way. Follow Richmond Way down the hill towards Westhampton Lake and the Gallery is the last building on the left before the lakefront turn (across from Thomas Hall). There are a limited number of visitor parking places along Richmond Way.

Parking: The reserved visitor parking for the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature, is severely limited. There are a limited number of visitor parking places along Richmond Way. If these visitor spaces are full, please stop by the museum to receive a temporary parking pass. If you know when you want to visit the Lora Robins Gallery you may register in advance with Parking Services and have a parking pass mailed to you. This pass will allow our patrons to park in parking spaces for students, faculty, and staff. We (Lora Robins Gallery) apologize for the inconvenience.

2009 AFMS SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

Adapted from Dee Holland, Foundation President

Through the generosity of your contributions, the AFMS Scholarship Foundation was able to award twelve scholarships (2 in each of the 6 regional Federations) to graduate earth science students throughout the United States. These students will receive a \$2,000 stipend for each of the next two years.

Eastern Federation: Honorary Award Recipient – Dr. Michael Brown, Univ. of Maryland. Professor Brown holds both a BA in Geography and Geology and a Ph.D. from the University of Keele, UK. Since 1995, Dr. Brown has been Chairman of the Department of Geology, College of Computer, Mathematical and Physical Sciences at the University of Maryland at College Park, MD. Before coming to the University of Maryland, Dr. Brown was Professor of Geology and Head of the Department at Kingston University, UK; Acting head of Department and Principal lecturer in the Department of Geology and Physical Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, UK; and Teaching assistant in Geology laboratory classes at the University of Keele (UK) Department of Geology. In addition to his impressive professional positions, he has published numerous articles in many publications and articles.

He selected Students: Miriam Galenas –Univ. of Maryland, College Park, Doctoral track towards Ph.D. and John-Luke Henriquez – Univ. of Maryland, College Park. Doctoral track towards Ph.D. who receive the stipends.

It is the contributions made by you and your club (GLMSMC donated \$800 to this fund in 2009) that fund the AFMS Scholarship Foundation grants. Each contribution is carefully invested and the interest from these investments funds the grants. Neither the AFMS nor the AFMS Scholarship Foundation selects the students. Students are selected by the Honorary Awardee. Your contributions fund this worthy educational endeavor. You can contribute, either individually or as a club, by sending contributions to the AFMS Scholarship Coordinator, Bob Livingston, 59 Ely Drive, Fayetteville, NY 13066.

Checks should be made payable to "AFMS Scholarship Foundation."



SAFETY Some Notes and Safety Tips on Using Oxalic Acid by Duane Leavitt from Rocky Road

One often reads about and sees reference to oxalic acid (wood bleach) in publications such as our newsletter when the topic of cleaning minerals is discussed. Oxalic is used to dissolve the iron oxide (brown) stain on all minerals. This chemical, while an excellent cleaner for some types of minerals, poses some serious health risks which are not widely understood and can be confusing when considered in light of other acids that are sometimes used for cleaning purposes.

Oxalic acid, chemically $H_2C_2O_4$, is an organic acid, which means that it contains, among other things, the element carbon. At room temperature it is a white, crystalline, odorless, solid looking a lot like granular sugar in physical appearance.

When we look at oxalic acid we find that, as acids go, it is quite weak. Acid strength is measured by how much hydrogen acids give up in water solutions. It is obvious that oxalic acid is no where near as strong or as soluble in water as hydrochloric acid or nitric acid. These two acids, are also used in mineral cleaning. There is NO correlation between acid strength and how poisonous it is, its toxicity.

As an organic acid, oxalic acid, and/or its water solutions, can be absorbed directly through the skin into the bloodstream, powders from the dry acid and vapors from solutions can be absorbed into the body through the lungs this has serious implications for those who like to clean specimens in a crock pot of simmering oxalic acid solution in their basement; residues from improperly neutralized and rinsed specimens may be absorbed through later handling. Dust from the solid acid can damage the cornea of the eyes.

In the body, oxalic acid removes calcium from the blood, forming insoluble crystalline masses of calcium oxalate that eventually wind up in the kidneys where they will obstruct and abrade the kidney tubules causing the kidneys to bleed. They may block the kidneys and have to be removed surgically - kidney stones. In respiratory passages the material will cause severe irritation, possible hemorrhaging of these tissues and burns. When the material gets into the digestive tract it causes severe gastroenteritis and vomiting, shock and convulsions, cardiovascular collapse and/or kidney failure can lead to death. A lethal dose of oxalic acid is somewhere between 5-15 grams. Severe health problems occur at much smaller levels of exposure. OSHA recommends a threshold limit value (TLV) for airborne concentration of no more than 1 mg (that is one thousandth of a gram)/ cubic meter. For comparison, 1 restaurant packet of sugar contains about 1 gram of material or 1000 times the recommended exposure value!

Unlike neutralized hydrochloric, muriatic and nitric acids, the products of "neutralized" oxalic acid are STILL poisonous - they just are no longer acidic. Oxalate compounds of any nature are still a threat to your health. People wishing to use oxalic acid can do so successfully and safely provided they incorporate the following procedures into their mineral cleaning:

1. Always use long sleeved rubber gloves, a splash proof apron, and full eye/nose protection when handling either dry oxalic acid crystals or oxalic acid solutions.
2. Avoid heating solutions of oxalic acid.... it will work cold, it just takes longer.
3. Keep containers of soaking specimens covered so that acid vapors stay inside the container. Lids should NOT be airtight.
4. Rinse any specimens cleaned with oxalic acid with copious amounts of water and test with pH paper to ensure that all acid is gone. A post treatment bath in dilute (household) ammonia or sodium bicarbonate solution is a good idea.
5. In the event of a spill removed affected clothing immediately, rinse affected areas with copious amounts of water, rinse and wash affected clothing. If there is any doubt as to the severity of the exposure seek medical help immediately.
6. Small amounts of used solutions of oxalic acid can be disposed of by the following method:
 - A. Neutralize the solution with sodium bicarbonate or sodium hydroxide; TEST with pH paper to make sure it is neutral (or slightly basic).
 - B. Dilute the solution from step A above, 20 fold with water (example, to 1 pint of neutralized acid solution add 20 pints of water.
 - C. Pour solution B down the drain with plenty of cold water. This disposal technique is identical to Flynn Scientific disposal technique 24A (Flynn,2006).
7. Read up on cleaning techniques (*Cleaning and Preserving Minerals* by Richard Pearl is a good place to start) and educate yourself about techniques, materials and alternatives.

Adapted from Gem Cutter's News Dec. 2008

**SAFETY
FIRST!**

Summary: POISON! DANGER! MAY BE FATAL IF SWALLOWED. CORROSIVE. CAUSES SEVERE IRRITATION AND BURNS TO SKIN, EYES, AND RESPIRATORY TRACT. HARMFUL IF INHALED OR ABSORBED THROUGH SKIN. MAY CAUSE KIDNEY DAMAGE.

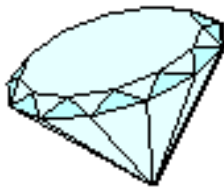


EXHIBIT APPLICATION FORM

The Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society
of Montgomery County, Maryland, Inc.
P.O. Box 444, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20884-0444



Request for Exhibit Space in the 46th Annual Gem and Mineral Show to be held at
The Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 16 Chestnut Street, Gaithersburg, Maryland.
Saturday, March 20th, 2010 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM
Sunday, March 21st, 2010 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Name: _____ (Please Print or Type)

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

My Exhibit will be: (Please enter the display title and type of display on the following lines)

Title: _____

Type of display: _____

If a fluorescent display is desired, enter: Fluorescent display and the UV wave length(s) desired such as SW, MW, LW, or SW/LW. Example for a fluorescent display might be:

Title: "Worldwide Fluorites," Type: fluorescent minerals LW.

() I will furnish my own case. Type and size: _____

() I would like a case furnished. Upright cases only. Cases are 2' deep X 2' high X 4' wide, exterior dimensions. Bottom liners should be no more than 23" X 47" and allowance should also be made for reduced side liners.

Set up of cases is Friday, March 19th, 2010 from 3:00 PM until 9:00 PM. Cases are to remain on display on Saturday, March 20th and Sunday March 21st. Cases may be taken down starting no sooner than 5:00 PM on Sunday, March 21st and should be removed as quickly as possible for timely take down.

In consideration of the opportunity to exhibit afforded me by the Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD, Inc., I agree that the Society is neither responsible nor liable for any loss or damage sustained by me or by anyone else as a result of my exhibit. I further agree to save said Society harmless from any claims arising from my participation in the show to be held March 20th and 21st 2010. I understand that all risks are my own and that the Society has no insurance which applies to my exhibit or to me. The Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD will provide security during the show.

(Signature of Exhibitor)

(Date)

Please return this form ASAP, but **no later than March 1st** to:
Pat Repik-Byrne, 9 Starlight Ct., Potomac, MD, 20854,
Phone (301) 279-5962, e-mail <Kevin_Byrne@comcast.net>



Note: If you are Demonstrating, you must fill out a separate DEMONSTRATOR APPLICATION FORM

**GARNET:
A CLASSIC GEM
STONE**

The January birthstone is Garnet. One glance at the deep red seeds nestled inside of a pomegranate fruit explains why the word "garnet" comes from the Latin word "granatus," meaning "grain"



or "seed." This name was given to the garnet because of its close resemblance to the succulent pomegranate seed.

But don't bite into a garnet, because at Moh's hardness 6.5 to 7.5, it will definitely damage the teeth!

There are many myths and legends surrounding the garnet. One Biblical legend is that Noah hung this gem on the ark to light his way through the dark and stormy nights of God's wrath. A Greek myth linked to the garnet is the story of the young goddess of sunshine, Persephone, who was abducted by Hades, god of the underworld. Hades eventually released Persephone, but not before he offered her some pomegranate seeds, which guaranteed her return to him.

First mined in Sri Lanka over 2,500 years ago, the garnet is also found in Africa, Australia, India, Russia, South America; and in the United States, in Arizona and Idaho.

Almandine garnet is the state gem of New York. The world's largest garnet mine is in New York, but it produces exclusively for the abrasives market.

Archaeologist findings of primitive style garnet jewelry among the graves of lake dwellers dates the early use of this gemstone to the Bronze age. But not all garnet is of gem quality. It is also a very effective abrasive and is used commercially for grinding and polishing. Garnet coated sand-paper is one such industrial use. The garnet continues to be the protective gem of journeyers.

A gift of garnet is thought to be symbolic of love and the desire for a loved one's safe travel and speedy homecoming. It is January's birthstone, but far from being only a winter gem, the garnet, with its brilliance and multitude of colors, is truly one for any season.

Red garnets are the most common, but in fact, garnet comes in a wide variety of colors ranging from black, green, clear and numerous shades of red. The variety of colors is due to metal impurities such as iron, aluminum and manganese.



A few garnets look as if they have a star in their center. This look is produced when tiny fibers of the mineral inclusions form within the piece of garnet.

Emerald Green garnets are the most rare and therefore highly prized. Colorless garnet are next rarest, followed by pure red garnets.

From Rockhound Ramblings Jan 2010, The Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc

HAPPY JANUARY BIRTHDAYS TO MEMBERS:

Chris Barr, Jonathan Baum, Boe Brosius, Chris Crosswhite, Jimmy Cummins, Joe Dehmer, Gladys Fuller, Dave Hald, Benjamin Harris, Sarah Hochuli, Matthew Hyland, Gabriella McDonald, Robert Meny, Rob Robinson, Melissa Thompson, Don Turner.



JUNIORS FUTURE ROCKHOUNDS OF AMERICA “The MOCKS”

By Holly McNeil

December 14th We held the first annual MOCKS holiday party, sharing good food and sparkling cider (which also doubled as a prop to demonstrate the properties of carbon dioxide). We talked about and voted on program topics for 2010 and everyone went home with a new specimen from our Yankee swap.

January 11th We will be covering the geological time chart in detail and making a fossil. We also will start a new segment called “Mineral of the Month” whereby we discuss one mineral in great detail for approximately 10 minutes at the start of each meeting. In 2010 we are going to focus on the birthstones – therefore Garnet (January) will be our inaugural mineral.

The 2010 MOCKS Program will include:

- Igneous, Sedimentary & Metamorphic Rocks
- The Rock Cycle
- The Solar System
- Meteorites
- Gemstone Lore
- Plate Tectonics
- Stone Tools & Art



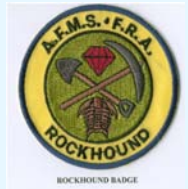
Photo: H. McNeil ▶



◀ Photo: W. Mohr

For more information on the Future Rockhounds of America program, please contact Holly McNeil at:

<fra_advisor@glmsmc.com> or 301-605-7179.



SHOWS

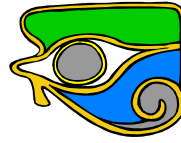
Saturday February 20, 2010 Annual show of the Southern Maryland Rock & Mineral Club. One day only 10 am to 4 pm. Admission \$3.00 (6 and under free). New location: The Show Place Arena, Upper Marlboro MD. Off MD 4.

March 6 & 7, 2010: 47th Annual Gem & Mineral Show and 60th Annual EFMLS Convention hosted by the Delaware Mineralogical Society. Sat. 10 to 6, Sun. 11 to 5. 19 dealers. Delaware Technical College, Routes 58 & 7, Stanton DE, near Wilmington. EFMLS Annual Meeting Friday, March 5. Convention hotel is the Hilton, a few minutes from the show. To see pictures of past shows visit <www.delminsociety.net>.

March 20 & 21 OUR show. Start preparations now!



See These



WEB SITES



ocean seafloor.

Deepest Under Sea Erupting Volcanoes, a National Science Foundation site, at http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=116098 reveals the very newest geology. View a couple of intriguing videos of live action 4000 feet below the surface of the sea plus some still photos. Scientists found a type of lava never before seen erupting from an active volcano, and for the first time observed molten lava flowing across the deep-

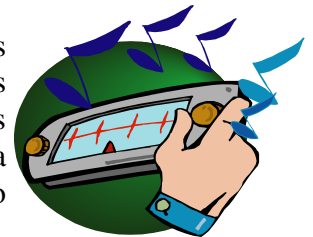
●Vulcanologist's mother's comment: Not so close to the fire, Icarus!●

Micromount Section of the Georgia Mineral Society, by Dr. Dave Babulski who is the Section Chair maintains this web site: www.gamineral.org/Micromount_Section.htm. Scroll down for articles by members which cover nearly all aspects of micromounting. Even you may be prompted to pursue this phase of mineral collecting. There are a few pictures and a link to a separate web site on mineral art by the Section Chair. ●Mineral collections expand so as to fill every available space for storage. Micromounting is the answer.● ●So easy even a Caveman can do it!●



US Topographic Maps, <http://nationalmap.gov/ustopo>, has USGS Topo maps available free for download. File size for each digital 7.5-minute quadrangle is about 15-20 megabytes. You can view maps or print them out. Zoom in and click on the "My Topo" button. This is a work in progress with but 17 states listed but will be a good one to bookmark for future reference. ●Q. What do you get when you cross a cowboy with a mapmaker? A. A cow-tographer. ●

Maryland Mining, <http://wamu.org/programs/mc/09/12/11.php#30831> is an audio program of Andrew Hiller who conducts the Metro Connection series on WAMU, 88.5 FM. This is a 6 1/2 minute program featuring our members Jeff Nagy and Fred Parker (and Al DeMilo of the GLMSDC as well.) Give it a listen. You will need Real Player or Windows Media Player or equivalent to hear this one.



●These fellows come from a long tradition started by the hunters and gatherers●

The National Museum of Natural History announced The Hall of Human Origins, tracing a 6 million-year history to open on March 17, 2010. Exhibitions will include 75 cast reproductions of skulls from the past 6 million years. One of the hall's highlights will be a display of original fossil skulls from the Cro-Magnon period and France's La Ferrassie cave, plus major discoveries from the 19th century. The materials are being lent by the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. There is also to be an original Neanderthal skeleton excavated from the Shanidar Cave in Iraq.

One of the world's most extraordinary gemstones, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond, will be on display at the NMNH Jan. 28th through Aug. 1st. A diamond of rare deep-blue color and weighing 31.06 carats, the Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond has long been rumored to have originated from the same diamond mine in India as the Hope Diamond. Smithsonian scientists will explore this mystery while the diamond is in their care.

WELCOME TO WILDACRES 2010

by Jane Kuehn, WA Workshop Committee Member



Coming to Wildacres is like a warm embrace by an old friend. After the windy, scenic climb up the Blue Ridge Parkway, the gravel and dirt road twists its way to the pinnacle of the Wildacres Retreat at 3300 feet. When you step from your car, the fresh aroma of deep woods welcomes you into this majestic silence and the beautiful lodge beckons entrance. Crisp wooden porches are clothed in welcoming rocking chairs and a flagstone patio unfolds below you with yet more rockers and a breathtaking panorama of the Smokies.

The registration area is in the great room of the north lodge, a glass-enclosed lounge worthy of the finest ski lodge. Leather sofas and huge armchairs are arranged in three conversation areas with a gigantic fireplace dominating one wall. Handcrafted artwork is skillfully displayed and oriental carpets soften the polished hardwood floors.

Guest rooms are clean and spacious, lacking only a TV and telephone. The dining hall is a large, simple room that serves large, simple meals three times a day. There's a library, auditorium, and meeting room, as well as a canteen. Hiking trails crisscross the mountaintop and are rated on difficulty and duration. Workshops are all in outlying buildings, well equipped and expertly staffed.

The Eastern Federation has volunteers available 'round the clock to ensure smooth function and maximum enjoyment both in the classroom sessions and after hours. Class sizes are kept small so each student receives personal instruction every step of the way, and teachers are fully equipped with all the materials necessary to complete your project.

The keynote speaker gives six general interest talks during the week to the full assembly, but is available on campus for informal discussions. Mealtimes make excellent opportunities for in depth conversations and personal queries, but the evening porch sessions bring out the lively best of all participants.

Classes range from beadwork to bezels, from judging to geology, from photography to pewter work, depending upon the needs of the Federation and the availability of instructors. Metalworking classes often employ the use of torches and metal forming tools, while capping and faceting delve into perfecting a single stone. Intricate designs are produced in a never-ending variety and students are given an opportunity to show off their work at the end of the week. Other classes offered include wire wrapping, geology, photographing minerals and gems, beading, chain making, mineral ID and scrimshaw.

Mid-week, there's a free day where students are encouraged to explore local attractions. Perennial favorites include gold mining, collecting trips to near-by quarries, road trips to Biltmore Mansion or Grandfather Mountain, hiking, and leisurely relaxation in the wonderful rockers. An afternoon tailgate session encourages participants to exchange, sell, or barter goods and there's an opportunity for some of the participants to give short programs which spotlight other interests the presenters enjoy.

As the week winds down and projects near completion, an evening session is dedicated to a "good stuff" fundraising auction. This is an opportunity to invest in the future of Wildacres since proceeds are often used to purchase items used in future workshops while you acquire lovely items in the process. Many of the instructors donate finished pieces, fabricated specifically for the auction. Individuals donate rough, specimens, memorabilia, books, or craft supplies relating to gem and lapidary work, and often, items purchased on free-day excursions.

The week culminates the following evening with a talent show. By this time, you've all become friends, so talent is optional. Songs, skits, jokes and recitations bring many to tears of delight while peals of laughter rock the room. Corny or clever, every act is applauded, every offering is appreciated. The spirit of mirth carries over to the canteen where everyone congregates to polish off the last of our snacks and drinks. Rocking chairs grind far into the night as folks realize our week is at an end. Memories are molded and friendships are solidified.

From EFMLS News, Jan 2010
(Ed. We are proud that Jane is one of our own Society members. Spring session will be April 23 -29. See <<http://www.amfed.org/efmls/efjan10.pdf>> for registration forms [and classes] or get them from Wendell at the meeting.)



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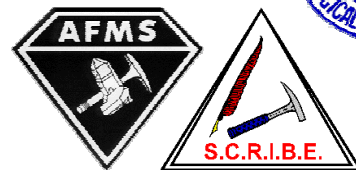
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