



The **BACKBENDER'S** **GAZETTE**

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

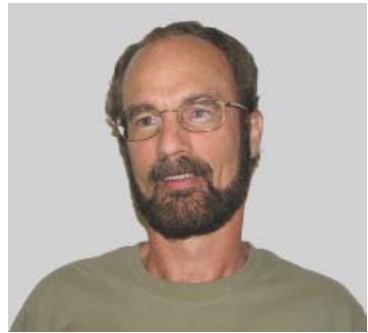
Volume XXXVII - No. 8

August 2006

President's Message *by Scott Singleton*



I am concerned about something. That something is called the *psychology of loss*. This is a well developed and researched concept in psychology, mainly because the world is a tough place to live and there is a continual recycling of life. We all have been touched by loss, whether it is a relative or a family pet (loss of life), your livelihood (loss of job), or some possession (for instance, a watch or camera or wallet). The particular loss I am concerned with at this moment is the loss of our annual show in 2005. Many, if not most, club members probably just said something like: "Wow, our show got cancelled because of the hurricane. What a bummer!" It probably went no further than that because it is only of peripheral interest to your life.



President's Message continued on page 4

July and August General Meeting Programs

by Matt Dillon
HGMS 1st Vice President

The program at our July general meeting will be presented by our own noted author, Art Smith. It will be about some of his favorite mineral collecting sites in Texas, and should be very helpful to those of us trying to cut down on our collecting expenses. Staying close to home is becoming more of a necessity as gas prices have been on the rise.

I am still working to get a representative from NASA to come speak to us about Mars geology. The request was moved to the August General Meeting date. However, I still have not had any response to this request, and Ed Tindell has agreed to present a program on his latest collecting trips, one of which was to Holbrook, Arizona. If I do not hear from NASA soon, by the time you receive this issue of the BBG, I will have moved my request to the September date and asked Ed to present the August program.

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 Wednesday, August 9, 2006.*

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Purpose of HGMS

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

Membership dues are \$30 for an adult membership, \$40 for a couple, \$50 for a family (including all children aged 5-18), and \$8 for a youth membership (ages 5-18). Contact Beverly Mace (281) 347-3646 for additional information. Advertising rates: \$70 for 2 months, ¼ page; \$150 for 6 months, ¼ page.

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

HGMS Officers

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| President | Scott Singleton | (713) 664-9033 |
| First Vice-President | D.R. "Matt" Dillon | (713) 682-8043 |
| Second Vice-President | Beverly Mace | (281) 347-3646 |
| Secretary | Margaret Hardman-Muye | (281) 583-8274 |
| Treasurer | Paul McGarry | (713) 932-0584 |
| Past President | Norman Lenz | (713) 880-9708 |
| DayLight Section Board Member | Sunday Bennett | (281) 433-7391 |
| Faceting Section Board Member | Phyllis George | (281) 395-3087 |
| Lapidary Section Board Member | David Hawkins | (281) 879-5717 |
| Mineral Section Board Member | Arthur Smith | (713) 774-1689 |
| Paleo Section Board Member | Terry Brawner | (281) 980-4204 |

HGMS Section Chairs

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Day Light Section Chair | Frances Arrighi | (713) 668-2576 |
| Faceting Section Chair | Robert Bennett | (281) 433-7391 |
| Lapidary Section Chair | Unfilled | |
| Mineral Section Chair | Steve Blyskal | (832) 252-6533 |
| Paleo Section Chair | Richard Rexroad | (713) 647-6533 |
| Youth Section Chair | Beverly Mace | (281) 347-3646 |

HGMS Appointed Positions

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Show Chairman | Sigrid Stewart | (281) 239-0377 |
| Backbender's Gazette Editor | Phyllis George | (281) 395-3087 |
| HGMS Webmaster | Phyllis George | (281) 395-3087 |
| Treasurer in Training | Lowell Stouder | (281) 639-0152 |
| Youth Section Assistant | Elizabeth Guynn | (281) 476-5325 |

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

President's Message continued from page 1

However in any particular year there is a core group of club members who devote a lot of time and effort to putting on the show (last year this was about 20–30 people). Further, a large number of devoted volunteers spend a lot of time at the show helping to run it (somewhere around 100). Those most affected by this psychology of loss were the people heavily involved in producing the show AND who had a direct role in shutting the show down.

Our 1995 Show Chairman, Carol Thompson, completely left the club. She and I had the unenviable task of calling or e-mailing each of the Show Committee members as well as each of our dealers to inform them of the shut down. Speaking for myself, I did not want to think or talk about the show for the remainder of the year (even though it cycled through my mind plenty!).

Our youth education program (School Daze) was in its final preparations, with about 2100 public and private school kids and about 600 homeschool kids registered. There were three people in charge of these registrations, and they had the unenviable task of contacting all the teachers and parents to cancel everything. These three individuals are no longer in the club, and I am still trying to replace them.

I have noticed a lack of participation in the Show Committee this year, and I think the setback last year played a role in this. It seems difficult to get people to take show preparations seriously, and the consequence is that we risk getting behind in our schedule. It might be my imagination, but I think there also seems to be less willingness in the club to think about or prepare for the upcoming show. But none of this is unexpected; it is all a natural consequence of the loss we suffered.

Those I have spoken to in the club tell me that I am making a big deal out of nothing. If so, it's because I was in the middle of those events last year, and I saw how it affected people, including myself. I also have been told that people will shake this off and approach the upcoming show as if this were nothing but a normal year. I hope they are right.

To All Stone Carvers—Competition for 2008 Show

by Ed Clay

Make plans to enter your carving in the Carving Competition that will be part of the 2008 show. In 2008, HGMS will be hosting not only our own show but the AFMS and SCFMS annual shows as well. You can compete with carvers from all over the country!

We are very fortunate to have Warren Reese of Corpus Christi as judge. The competition has four main categories, and all entries will be accepted. Ribbons will be awarded in each category. The categories are as follows:

- Flute carving
- Pierced carving
- Relief (or intaglio) carving
- In-the-round carving

If you have any questions, please contact Ed Clay. Out-of-area entries **must be received** at least a week before the show and must be accompanied by return postage.

LAPIDARY SECTION 2006 UPCOMING PROGRAMS

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| July 17 | Make your own decorative headpins or earring wires. Tools and silver wire will be supplied. |
| August 21 | Doublets and triplets—demonstration |
| September 18 | Using beads to set a cabochon—hands on! |
| October 16 | Wire Wrapping—hands on |
| November 20 | Texturing Metals (rolling mill, flex shaft & hammer)—hands on. |

Day Light Section

by Frances Arrighi

Twenty members and guests attended the 12 June, 2006 meeting of the Day Light Section. We started our work using the mokume gane techniques. Pieces of metal a little smaller than 2 x 2 inches were used. These included fine silver, shakudo, and copper and were 20 gauge. The pieces need to be scrupulously clean and flat. They were hammered on a steel plate with a rawhide mallet. After this treatment the pieces were sanded with 400 grit sandpaper, rinsed, and then scrubbed using soda. We dried them with paper towels showing no lint. Following the soda treatment and until after firing, the metal must be handled only while wearing rubber gloves with no powder on the outside of the glove.

Two steel plates were prepared next. The underside of each plate was covered with either White Out or a slurry of yellow ochre. These coatings protect the plates from high temperature damage. Thirteen pieces of metal were placed in the center of the bottom steel plate in the following order: silver, copper, shakudo, and ending with fine silver. The pieces of metal must be aligned perfectly, and the edges need to be flush with one another. This pile of metal is known as a billet.

Hide glue was painted on all sides of the billet. This reduced the amount of oxides being formed on the surface of the metal when it was fired.

The bolts were added to each steel plate corner. The top plate was slipped over the bolts and the nuts added. A high temperature grease was applied to the nuts and bolts. This facilitated removal of the nuts after firing.

The temperature used to adhere the metal pieces to each other was 1490°F. The billet was watched to determine when to remove it from the kiln. It took about 10 minutes once it reached the set temperature. Everyone who viewed the billet while it was being fired had a different description of how it looked.

Val Link, Tom Wright, Sam Altman, and Neal Ambigu took the finished billet to Tim Bailey's workshop. Tim has a forging hammer, and he forged the billet to ¼ inch or less. Tom rolled it down to about 3/16 inch on the rolling mill. *To be continued.*

We thank many people for helping us. Among those not previously mentioned, we thank Stanley Perkins and John Mitcherling for rolling down a piece of schibuichi to gauge 20. We also especially thank Professor Link for helping us with our summer programs.

Members, please do not forget that for the September and October programs, we need a polished cabochon size 20 x 30 mm.

Consuel G. Prince—In Memoriam

1928–2006

Eulogy delivered June 30, 2006

by Art Smith

When I became active in the Houston Gem & Mineral Society in the very early 1970s, I had no idea that I would be forging many long-lasting friendships like those with Consie and Dalton Prince. I still find it difficult to mention one name without the other because they were usually together and were partners in what they did, particularly with minerals. Although Collector's Choice was Consie's company, they both ran it and enjoyed its success. It was an opportunity to travel across the country to do shows on both coasts and at places in between.

Consie easily made friends because she was usually smiling, outgoing, and very friendly with a lot of energy. I am sure that most people will remember her that way.

She enjoyed selling minerals, but not necessarily to make money. What she enjoyed most was having someone pick out a specimen and buy one that she also really liked. She had a fascination for the unique designs and natural beauty of minerals. She and Dalton bought many of their minerals in Mexico and supplemented them with selected specimens from worldwide locations. The shop was a joy to be in for a novice collector or mineralogist.

I don't really know if Consie was shy or very modest—perhaps it was a bit of both—but she had a lot of talent that became apparent only after you came to know her. She was very genuine, and you knew pretty quickly if she liked and trusted you.

It took me awhile to learn how intelligent and talented she really was. She

often sought information, but never the same thing twice. When you told her something, she either got it or asked questions until she did.

She was an artist. It showed in her choice of specimens and their arrangements. She could sing and had a beautiful voice, though it was mostly kept

for self and family. She loved to tell stories of their trips and adventures but never wrote much down except in cards and letters. Her biggest joys were her children Darrell and Dee Dee... Oops, sorry Deidre, but there I go again. Things they did she reveled in, and likewise with her three grandchildren.

Other passions were her shop and the cases she took to shows. She knew what those center cases in her booth would look like before she left home, and they were always professionally and artfully done.

Consie grew up with only brothers and no sisters. She always told me that she was a tomboy and loved to climb trees and play sports in her youth. I don't doubt that because when we used to have Mineral Section picnics in Memorial Park, she would be the first one to start throwing a football around or be unhappy if a ball was not available.

Yet in sports, her passion was fishing. Shangri-La on Lake Ouachita in

Continued on page 8



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Arkansas became a regular stop on their way to the Detroit show in the fall or the Cincinnati show in the spring where for a day or two she got to fish from a boat. Deidre took her back there again last year, and she could not stop talking about it when she got home.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Elizabeth and I spent many a happy but quiet holiday evening with Consie and Dalton at a Chinese and later a Vietnamese Restaurant. Her favorites were cold shrimp spring rolls and stir fried vegetables with shrimp. She never failed to comment how good it was.

Was Consie stubborn or hard to fathom at times, like all of us? Just ask the kids. For some unknown reason, she seemed to do most of her specimen labeling between 1:30 and 4:30 in the morning.

One time I made a mineral trade with her. It took more than five years to be consummated. She had all the specimens, mine and hers, but I owed cash, and everything I bought during that period was added to the stash of specimens she held, thus increasing the money total that I owed. Eventually in desperation, I told Dalton that with inflation she was losing value on the cash every year. Quickly the deal was completed.

As many of you know, Consie felt very alone without Dalton though she was managing things better with each month that went by. Still, her wish was to be with him again. She always told me she wanted God to give her two more years on earth to complete what she needed to get done, and then she could be with Dalton.

For her, that wish has been fulfilled in a bit less time than she asked for, and although we have much sadness because we have lost Consie, we do have the satisfaction of knowing that she is now truly happy.

Art Smith

In Our Library
by Art Smith, Librarian

I have most of the junk off the floor of the library, but I am still straightening things up and trying to make it more functional. The first item is to update the library list of videos, and I am going to remove from the list videos that have been checked out and not been returned since before 2003. Many of these people are not even in the Houston phone book anymore and have not been members for many years. Unfortunately, a few videos that we cannot replace are missing. The favorite videos for not being returned are the teaching videos, and they are the most expensive. I think we probably need to place these videos into a separate category and require a deposit or

some other system to keep them from disappearing. We have not bought a lot of them because they are expensive, and many members say they are not particularly good. Any suggestions for fixing this situation will be considered.

New to the library are two books from Fred Brueckner: Two copies of *Gold of the Pharaoh*, on jewelry of ancient Egypt. This is a spectacular book with many color photos. Not only is it of historical value, but it also contains many time-proven designs and ideas for jewelry making.

The other book is *Minerals from Earth and Sky*. It is a 1930s book that was part of a Smithsonian series. The first part is on meteorites, and the last is on minerals. It has few color pictures, but it gives a good idea of the popular state of mineralogy during that period. It is interesting because people are starting to question the popular present trend in mineral collecting—collecting trophy mineral specimens.

Instead of having a collection of many specimens, the collector has just a few super specimens. So your collection does represent how much money you make, how much you spend on minerals, and probably how long you have been collecting. In my opinion, that is a narrow view of mineral collecting, but it does help support the hobby. It allows the rest of us to pursue what we want and how we want to collect, but probably in most cases it eliminates the chances of buying a top-quality specimen because the prices are way out of sight.

Al and Marion Kidwell who have been members since the 1960s have moved to Phoenix. Their address is c/o Highland Hills, 515 E Carefree Hwy #679, Phoenix, AZ 085085. E-mail is kidwell@highlandhills.com. Much of Al's library has been donated to us, and we appreciate that along with the mineral specimens that will be in the silent auctions for the next few months. The Kidwells have been an important part of the Mineral Section. We always enjoyed Al's talks. They both worked in the Section booth during shows. They contributed specimens to our auctions. But best of all they were our friends, and we always enjoyed our Christmas parties at their house where we got to peruse through their mineral collection.

Tell Our Story Every 90 Minutes for a Week

by Elizabeth Sheehy

HGMS 2006 Show Publicity Chair

Do you have a way with words? Can you say something special that will encourage Houstonians to attend this year's show? Will you help us reach out to the people who looked forward to our 2005 show and were disappointed by our Hurricane Rita cancellation?

Yes? Then we need your help. Write your message in 280 characters (including spaces) or less for this year's HGMS Weather Channel crawl. Your message could be chosen to run once every 90 minutes for a week during the month before our show in September. You could be an "HGMS ambassador" to hundreds of thousands of Time Warner subscribers in the Houston area.

The Weather Channel crawl will run during the local weather segment and will reach many potential club members. Please help us get their attention and entice them to attend this year's show.

Send your suggestions to ecsheelhy@gmail.com. Microsoft Word documents preferred; use Tools/Word Count—maximum 280 characters. Your crawl should include the show dates (September 22–24), the location (Humble Civic Center), and our club Web site www.hgms.org. The rest is up to you.

Put your writer's cap on and send your entry before August 1. The winner will be announced in next month's BBG.

Let the Show Begin!

by Sigrid Stewart

HGMS Show Chairman

The HGMS Show Committee has been planning preshow activities, and they will be starting before you know it.

Annual Postcard Labeling Party: Saturday, August 12, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the clubhouse. We are hoping for many volunteers to sort and label postcards for the mass mailing. Many hands make for light work. We will have lunch and maybe a tailgate swap after the labeling is finished.

This year's glossy postcard by Steve Blyskal features some really gorgeous tourmaline crystals! A collectible poster is also being planned to be sold at the Information Desk.

Educator's Open House: Date to be announced, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. We will have a booth at the Museum of Natural Science during the Educator's Open House. The open house is an exhibition by the entire Museum District promoting the resources available to teachers in our community. This is the greatest justification for our tax-exempt status, so it is vitally important for the Houston Gem and Mineral Society to be represented.

Preshow Pizza Party and Auction: Saturday, September 9, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the clubhouse. This is the largest preshow event and a great way to kick off the show season. Pizza and salad (provided by the Show Committee) will be served beginning at 6:30 p.m., and the auction will begin about 7 p.m. You can help this year's Pizza Party be successful by bringing desserts and items for the auction—what a great opportunity to get rid of duplicates, help your club, **and** get great new stuff! Your donations of specimens, fossils, jewelry, and lapidary rough will find eager buyers, and you can show off your prize apple pie or chocolate chip cookies. You know how Neal likes apple pie.

Load 'Em Up: Wednesday, September 20, 6 p.m.–7:30 p.m. at the clubhouse. On the Wednesday night before the show, we will load-up the U-Haul and volunteer vehicles with items to be transported to the Humble Civic Center.

Set Up Day: Thursday, September 21, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. at the Humble Civic Center. We will need volunteers beginning at about 8 a.m. to unload the U-Haul truck and cases. Members of each Section must be prepared to set up their own booths. We will also need to drape about half of the dealer tables. At 11 a.m. the dealers start arriving to begin their own setup, but work on the Section booths will continue.

Volunteer and Dealer Appreciation Dinner: Thursday, September 21, 6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m. at the Humble Civic Center. We host this dinner every year to show our appreciation of all our volunteers and dealers. I hope we can get George Blasing to speak again.

Please join us for these events and plan to attend the show. After the show—cancelling hurricane of 2005, we need and deserve to have an exciting and successful show—one that all club members can be proud of and most of all, enjoy!

Nine HGMS Members Are AFMS and SCFMS Contest Winners

by Phyllis George

Editor of The Backbender's Gazette

I received a postcard the first week in July from Ike House who is Bulletin Aids Chair for the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies (SCFMS). Ike oversees the annual SCFMS Bulletin Editors' Contest, and he was writing to let me know that five HGMS members have won trophies (places 1, 2, and 3) in their respective categories, and four members have won certificates (places 4 through 10) in their categories in the 2006 contest. The winners will be announced at the Editor's Breakfast August 19 in Bossier City, Louisiana.

Trophy winners are Art Smith, Neal Immega, Dean Lagerwall, Donald Elrod, and Phyllis George. Certificate winners are James Wark, Sandra Stevens, D.R. "Matt" Dillon, and Mary Ann Mitscherling.

The SCFMS trophy winners are entered automatically into the AFMS Bulletin Editors' Contest. So the entries of Art Smith, Neal Immega, Dean Lagerwall, Donald Elrod, and Phyllis George were forwarded to the AFMS contest. Today, while I'm putting the BBG together, I received five postcards from Kitty Starbuck, AFMS Club Publications Chair. ALL FIVE of our SCFMS trophy winners scored in the top ten in their respective categories at the national level.

The AFMS annual show is being held at the same time as the SCFMS show, and their winners will also be announced at the Editor's Breakfast August 19—but in Nashville, Tennessee. The AFMS show runs from August 14 to August 20.

The final ranking of the winners in both contests will be announced in the October BBG (which will be sent to the printer in early September).

Needed: Committee Members for HGMS Show Youth Education

by *Scott Singleton*
HGMS Show Education Chairman
fossilwood@houston.rr.com

Due to a turnover in committee members from last year, we need help with the youth education program at our annual show. This program is called *School Daze*, and it consists of an age-appropriate scavenger hunt where the student has to find answers to various earth science questions. Public, private, and home schools register their students for this event, which is the only way to get in since it has become very popular. In fact, it is one of the hallmarks of our show. However, this program doesn't run by itself. It needs lots of TLC. This essential quality is provided by your volunteer support, as you provide your support to every other facet of our club.

Most gem clubs can only dream of having an education program for both youth and adults such as the one run by the HGMS. It is proof that we are fulfilling our charter as a nonprofit, educational organization serving the community in which we live.

I need your help. I am currently shy a volunteer to take registrations for home school families (I already have someone taking registrations for public and private schools). I also need people on Kids' Day (Friday, September 22) to staff our check-in table, check-out table, and to help guide school groups in their predefined path through the show.

With your generous support, we can once again make our show the example against which all other shows are compared.

Matthew Phillips Presented June General Meeting Program

by *Matt Dillon*
1st Vice President

At our June General Meeting, our own Matt Phillips presented a PowerPoint program on two trips he made to San Carlos, Chihuahua, Mexico to collect agates and travel with friends.

Matt's presentation was well received and included many wonderful photographs depicting the various aspects of the two trips. He selected those particular photos to show the club why these trips can be a lot of fun and very relaxing. In addition to the photographs, Matt brought some of his favorite agates collected at the various sites around San Carlos.

Matt pointed out that one of the things he liked best about those trips was the opportunity to spend time with friends in the Chihuahuan desert—away from the big city and in a modestly exotic setting.

HGMS General Meeting

June 27, 2006

by Margaret Hardman-Muye

HGMS Secretary

Meeting called to order at 7:30 by President Scott Singleton. New member Steve Jacki and visitors Larry and Patty Heydel were introduced.

Announcements:

- Phyllis George has a jeweler's bench for sale.
- Art Smith says that Consie Prince died earlier this week. There will be a memorial service.
- Terry Brawner reminded club members that both Kroger and Randall's will give a 1% donation to the club if you show the appropriate card when you purchase groceries. Kroger cards are available at the clubhouse. Our Randall's number is 5013, and you can give them a form that will add HGMS to your card. Use of these cards can produce significant income for the club!
- Long time club member, Anne Frank, has been given an Honorary Lifetime Membership. See BBG for details.

Reports:

- **Education:** Dave Hawkins has scheduled a PMC (precious metal clay) class, a wire wrapping class, and an earring class for July. In August there will be a class in "Beginning Beading."
- **Faceting:** Rusty Bennett is their representative to the nominating committee. Matt Phillips will demonstrate an old fashioned jam peg machine for the next faceting program.
- **Lapidary:** The next program will be on making fancy head pins and earring wires. The new Genie is available in the shop. Anyone who wants to use it will have to be checked out on its use prior to being allowed to use it.
- **Mineral:** Dean Lagerwall says that there will be an extra meeting held in the summer. It is July 19th, and they will be going over the fluorescent display for the show.
- **Paleontology:** Dr. Clark reported on a documentary made by high school students about a dinosaur dig.
- **Youth:** Beverly Mace says there are six new youth, and the section is getting huge.
- **Membership:** Beverly reports that there are 409 Adult members and 55 youth members.
- **Field Trip:** Neal Immega is arranging a trip to Jewett for collecting petrified wood. He will send e-mail when arrangements are completed.

- **Clubhouse/shop:** Neal says there is a new water trim saw in the shop. Wayne Barnett reports that the sand blasting machine is being completely overhauled and should be ready for use in several weeks.
- **BBG:** Phyllis wants all copy to be submitted to her by the Wednesday before the second Saturday of each month.
- **Show:** Sigrid Stewart reported that the committee met on June 13. Volunteers are needed for the upcoming Intergem show on July 14, 15, 16. The Show Committee party was held on June 25. They have selected a design for a post card and a poster. The poster will be sold at the show.
- **Banner:** Scott showed the members present the new banner. A second identical banner will be ready in July. This first banner will be hung at the HGMS demo area at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.
- **Club Inventory:** This inventory was necessary as we are severely underinsured for our library and shop contents. The inventory is nearly done.
- **Bylaw Revision:** The suggested revisions were printed in the June BBG. The revisions passed unanimously.

HGMS Board Meeting

July 5, 2006

by Phyllis George

Stand-in for Margaret Hardman-Muye, HGMS Secretary

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------|----------------|
| X | President | Scott Singleton | X | Faceting Rep. | Phyllis George |
| X | 1 st Vice President | Matt Dillon | X | Lapidary Rep. | Dave Hawkins |
| X | 2 nd Vice President | Beverly Mace | X | Mineral Rep. | Art Smith |
| | Treasurer | Paul McGarry | X | Paleontology Rep. | Terry Brawner |
| | Treasurer Assistant | Lowell Stouder | X | Day Light Rep. | Sunday Bennett |
| | Secretary | Margaret Hardman-Muye | | Past President | Norm Lenz |

Call to order, 7:31, by Scott Singleton

Approval of June Minutes: Done via e-mail.

Treasurer’s Report: Lowell Stouder forwarded the Net Monthly Budget vs. Actual spreadsheet and the Net Worth Report to Scott.

Committee and Section Reports

- **Show:** Sigrid Stewart has set the dates for the postcard labeling party, the preshow party, and other show-related occasions. These will be announced in the August BBG.
- **Nominating Committee:** The HGMS 2008 show will host both the AFMS and SCFMS annual shows. Planning for that show must begin soon, so the Board wants to have both the Show Chairman and Assistant Show Chairman for 2008 in place as soon as possible. A committee will nominate candidates for

the 2008 Show Chairman and Assistant Show Chairman and will be made up of one member of the HGMS Board and a member of each Section. The members in place so far:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Faceting: Rusty Bennett | Paleo: Terry Proctor |
| Mineral: Steve Blyskal | Board Rep: Matt Dillon |
| Lapidary: ... None selected | Day Light: None selected |

The committee's work must be completed by the end of July.

Old Business:

1. **Status report on inventory of club possessions**
 - a. **Faceting:** Rusty Bennett has completed the faceting inventory, and Sunday Bennett turned that information in to Scott.
 - b. **Paleo:** Terry Brawner turned in the completed inventory.
2. **Clubhouse:**
 - a. The effort to find a someone to clean the clubhouse on a monthly basis is ongoing.
 - b. David Hawkins is talking to an electrician about putting in better lighting in the loft.
3. **Committee on abuse prevention:** Matt Dillon reported that this committee plans to meet Saturday, July 8 at 10 a.m. They are working on a statement.
4. **HGMS banner:** Scott announced that the second banner should be ready by July 10. If it is not, he may need to retrieve the one currently in place with the Houston Museum of Natural History for use at the International Gem & Jewelry Show July 14–16.
5. **Scholarship update:** Sunday Bennett talked with Val Link and learned that he will be teaching for one more year. He also gave her a very detailed plan on the process he uses to select qualified scholarship recipients.

New Business:

- **Board Policy on Off-Site Use of Club-Owned Equipment:** Both Wayne Barnett and Neal Immega requested a review of the Club's policy regarding club-owned faceting machines being allowed off the club premises. Following a discussion, Terry Brawner proposed the following wording: "**Club-owned equipment can be used offsite for promotional purposes and club functions. The HGMS Shop Foreman must approve the removal and use of such equipment.**" The Board voted to accept the policy as worded.

Art Smith pointed out that this policy does not apply to Section-owned equipment. Section-owned equipment is under the control of the individual Sections.

- **Keys to the Clubhouse:** Keys will be given to Rusty Bennett as Faceting Chair and to Kathy Konkel who will be filling in for Mary Ann Mitscherling in opening the shop for use prior to Lapidary Section meetings.

- **Copy Machine:** Art Smith volunteered to keep track of the expenses and income from the copy machine in an effort to determine if we are losing money on its operation. He will purchase all supplies and monitor the amount earned from people using the machine for personal purposes. The cost to use the copy machine is 5¢ per sheet, and the money is to be placed in the can nearby.

Adjourn: 9:00 p.m.

Having Fun—Junior Activities

Fundraising

by Jim Brace-Thompson, Junior Activities Chair

from the AFMS Newsletter 04/2006

In my continuing effort to try developing new activities for possible future FRA merit badges, this month my thoughts turn to money... Kids should learn where money comes from and the effort it takes to earn it, how to manage it wisely, and how to save for things of value. The following activities are intended to help in this effort.

Activity 1: Deciding how to spend your money. The first step in a fund-raising project is determining what you need or want, then finding out how much it will cost. If your club holds a local show, you might take the kids around to the various dealers to see what sorts of things are out there before meeting as a group to decide what to buy. Kids should think of what sorts of things will benefit the most club members while remaining within a reasonable budget. Is there a particular piece of lapidary equipment that would prove of value to your club's kids, for instance, a rock tumbler that could be filled with stones provided by each child? Or perhaps they'd like to start a club library and have some specific books in mind to buy. With everyone gathered around a white board or flip chart, toss around and list ideas and take a vote.

Activity 2: Setting fund-raising goals. Once you know what your kids want, you'll be able to come up with a specific target dollar amount to raise. Given the price of most things these days, raising the necessary amount will likely be a long-term project, with various fund-raising activities over the course of a year. Teach the kids to keep track of their fund via simple, basic accounting. Make one of those large thermometers on poster board calibrated with dollar amounts leading up to their goal, and use it to motivate the kids by keeping their goal—and their progress in reaching toward it—literally in sight.

Activity 3: Seeking out fund-raising possibilities. In addition to involving the kids in the decision about what to buy, involve them in decisions about how to buy it. After holding a brainstorming session and a vote on what to buy, hold another session on fund-raising activities that everyone can participate in, from running a Kids' Activities booth at your local club show, to making and selling lapidary crafts to sell as gifts, to holding garage sales. To motivate potential customers, the kids might make a poster showing what they're planning to purchase with their money and asking customers for their help in reaching their goal, showing folks how the money is going to a good cause.

Activity 4: Helping “give back” to the AFMS. Our merit badge program is provided free of charge to participating clubs with an AFMS affiliation, but it's not without costs. There's the cost of mailing manuals and badges to the nearly 60 clubs now using the program (with postage going up all the time) and—most significantly—the cost of manufacturing badges. We might consider a certificate for the club in each regional federation that contributes the most to the merit badge program via local youth group fund-raising activities by keeping the program growing and by instilling a sense among youth members of belonging and an obligation to the Federation.

Hopefully teaching the value of money and teaching the long-term vision and patience to save for something worthwhile will help kids learn lessons that will benefit them all their lives while—as always—having fun!

*Be Safe—Be Well
What's in The Bottle?
by Don Monroe, AFMS Safety Chair
from AFMS Newsletter 6–7, 2006*

In your shop, studio, garage, or barn have you ever asked yourself this question? Well, I have and one situation sticks in my mind. I was putting the finishing touches on a home-built trailer that I needed to transport our basic household necessities to my first duty station when I entered the Army. A close friend came by to bid us farewell and brought with him his two-year old son and his wife. While we admired the trailer, the little boy spotted a Coke bottle sitting on one of lower beams in the garage and walked over and took a swig. The little kid choked and sputtered and cried because he wanted Coke. The father then asked the question “what is in the bottle.” I really wasn't sure other than I thought it was a mixture of penetrating oil of some sort. My first thought was “stupid kid” and my second thought was that I was the stupid kid for having an unknown, unmarked, substance in the wrong container. The best part of the story was that the kid was fine, and his mother eventually spoke to me again. It really did not have to turn out that way and I felt so fortunate. Now, I always try to label things.

During a recent “clean up campaign” in the silver studio where we teach, I discovered several unknown solutions that I promptly threw away. Metalsmiths are notorious for trying new and different fluxes, pickle solutions, or cleaners or most anything else that promises improved performance. It is absolutely imperative that we do not tolerate any unknown or unmarked material. We are always positive that we will remember exactly what we mixed up or repackaged and put up on the shelf.

In the last class we taught, I saw that a student was having a terrible time setting a cabochon in a simple piece of jewelry. After asking a few questions I learned that the student was using a strip of silver that he brought to class and assumed it was fine silver bezel material. It wasn't! It was sterling which we all know is more rigid and more difficult to set around a stone, particularly for a beginning student. The converse of this situation has also occurred when a student made prongs for a setting from fine silver when the project called for sterling silver. The setting was too flexible and

would not hold the stone properly. Gremlins are always among us, and mismarked material can jump up when we least expect it.

Other prime areas for surprise include:

- Mixing or using the wrong solder
- Confusing permanent markers with dry-erase markers
- Mixing jewelry saw blades – coarse and fine

Well, what can we do to avoid the type of problems we have been discussing? I really do not have a fool-proof solution except for attention to detail and constant alertness. What ideas do you have?

SCFMS President's Message

"Words from William"

by William Medford

SCFMS President

from SCFMS Newsletter 5-6/2006

For many of you it is too far back to remember when our annual club shows were mostly Show 'n Tell and not much Buy 'n Sell. The early day shows were conducted so that the public could see and develop an interest in the Earth Sciences. There were exhibits, displays, demonstrations, and activities for the children. In those days there was no admission charge, and many shows were held outside.

Club shows have come a long way from those early days, and now the shows are held in community centers or event centers with thousands of people attending the event. People must now pay to see the show, and the primary purpose is now buying and selling. The number of individual exhibits and demonstrators has been declining for several years. Yet in previous years all the Federations have strongly pressed for the main theme of the show to be one of showing the public about Earth Sciences. We even went so far as to create competition in exhibiting so as to keep up the interest in exhibiting at the shows. For the average collector there continued to be space at the shows for them to show their items without the pressure of being competitive.

It is the competition part of exhibiting at shows that clubs are now having to deal with. Why is it a problem? Because someone must judge the items, and these persons must be qualified to be a judge. The American Federation of Mineral Societies has gone to great lengths to develop guidelines, criteria, rules, and even a school to train judges. Our Federation can send one person each year to a one-week school on judging with room and board paid by the AFMS. Sounds so good that every one should want to go. Not so—we could not find anyone who wanted to attend the summer session this year.

Maybe our approach to finding and training more judges is not the way to go. This in part comes from us wanting to send people to the week-long AFMS Wild Acres training school and our not offering any short-term alternatives. Maybe we should be using our Wild Acres graduates as teachers for our Federation and do our training in weekend sessions throughout the state. In this way we can rapidly increase our list of trained

and qualified judges.

To this end, I am asking that each club find members who would be interested in taking the training and becoming a judge. For those clubs that have members who are interested in taking the training, please send their names to Bill Pattillo, Chairperson of the Uniform Rules Committee. Once we develop a list, we can determine the best method of training. In the meantime, our Federation will seek to determine if other Federations are having the same problems and how they are solving them.

Keith Harmon, former SCFMS president, once wrote "Volunteerism is what made this Federation what it is today and is what will continue to make it greater." So to get this Federation's judging staff to an acceptable level, we need people to volunteer for the training needed to become a judge. This may seem like a small part of club shows and not worth the effort, but let me assure you that we cannot allow our club shows to become "sales only" events where the club becomes only a sponsor.

Remember, our forthcoming annual Federation show will be in August, and this year the convention will be held in Bossier City, LA. It is not too early to start making your plans to attend. The convention packets will soon be arriving at each club, and they need to be completed and returned as soon as possible. The show is well planned, and there is plenty to see and do. You will not want to miss this event.

Stone Trails Welcomes You to Our Rockhound's Tools List

*<http://www.stonetrails.com/index.htm>
via *The Rockhounder* 5/2006 and *Breccia* 6/2006*

Stone Trails has put together this short list of tools which can be used at the locations we list on our Web site. Pick the type of mining you wish to do, and there is your list of recommended tools. **BBG Editor's note:** *I could not get their Web site to display, but you may have better luck than I did.*

Golden Rules:

1. Always, always, always bring plenty of fresh drinking water.
2. Bring an appropriately stocked first aid kit.
3. Allergic reaction to bites/stings? Bring emergency medication. Make sure someone knows how to help you, should you require it.

Light Tools: Can include items from "Specialized Light and Fossil Tools" below.

1. Small gardening shovel
2. Collection/ carrying container
3. Rock hammer
4. Prospectors pick/shovel
5. Labels and marker pens
6. Screwdriver
7. 10x or 20x loupe
8. Ziploc® bags

Specialized Light and Fossil Tools: Can include items from “Light Tools” above, plus:

1. Dental picks
2. Whisk broom
3. Tarps
4. Trowel
5. Center punch
6. Small chisels
7. 1" paint brush
8. Butter knife
9. Steel scratch awl
10. Fingernail polish or shellac
11. Outdoor spatula
12. Masking tape

Medium tools: Includes tools listed in “light tools” above, plus:

1. Small sledge hammer
2. Center punch
3. Rock hammer
4. Medium chisels
5. Midsized shovel

Heavy tools: Includes tools listed in “medium tools” above, plus:

1. Yard shovel
2. Large sledge hammer
3. Heavy center punch
4. Heavy chisels
5. Spike, chisel, and pry bars

Tips and Hints

via Breccia 7/2006 and others

Candle your Montana agate just as you would eggs. Punch a small hole in the bottom of a two-pound coffee can, turn it upside down and place a light inside. It is surprising how the light will show the dendrites.

Dendrites are perhaps the most common geological oddity. They usually resemble a tiny fern frond. The term “dendritic” refers to a branching figure. They are usually formed in thin hard-bedded shale and limestone. Concentrations of black manganese oxide percolate into the cracks leaving behind dendrites.”

Wanda’s Wandering—Concho Pearl

by Wanda Fitzgerald

Pleasant Oaks G&MC

from Chips and Chatter 6/2006

Have you ever seen one of the beautiful Concho Pearls? The waterways in West Texas have yielded these coveted pink to purple colored Concho Pearls for about 400 years—or at least there were stories and legends about them. In

1968 two men decided to check it out. The rest is history, so to speak. They found the Concho Pearls in the shells of the mussels that live in the area lakes and rivers.

A pearl is formed when a foreign object enters the mussel shell. The mussel coats the foreign object time and time again trying to smooth out the irritation. After a period of time, the pearl is formed and is big enough to be useful. West Texas is one of the few places in the world that produces natural pearls with so many colors. While diamonds are measured in carats, pearls are simply measured by their diameter in millimeters. Most of the pearls are between 2 and 3 millimeters in diameter



Concho Pearls

Picture from Concho Pearls of West Texas, <http://www.puretexan.com/>

I remember in 1949 while going to school in San Angelo, I heard a couple of men talking about gems or something in the lake. In 1968, two men waded out up to their thighs before they found the first mussel. For months they scrounged in the lake collecting the mussels and opening them for the pearls. They stored the pearls in fruit jars in their garage until they met a goldsmith. With the goldsmith's help, they set about designing their own jewels—it resulted in a lively business.

Last year Robert and I went to a funeral in San Angelo. We had one morning off, so we went to Bart Mann Jewelers to see all these pearls. It was our luck that they were not busy and were glad to show us all the pearls in their collection. I asked the owner if he was the one that dove for the pearls, and he just grinned. Today there about a dozen pearl hunters that scour the river and lakes.

Legend has it that several items from the Spanish Crown jewels contain some of the earliest known examples of the beautifully colored Concho pears. There could be an element of truth to this legend. Spanish explorers Hernan Martin and Diego del Castillo were exploring the Concho River near San Angelo during 1650, and they were looking explicitly for Tampico Mussels which are the source of fresh water pearls. The pearls that they found were sent to Sante Fe. In 1654 Diego de Guadalajara was sent back to the area to gather more pearls. The number of pearls that they found apparently did not warrant further trips to the area, but it is reasonable to assume that some of the pearls did find their way back to Spain and then into jewelry. Pearls did play an important part of the Spanish Crown Jewels, two of the most famous being the Huerfana Pearl and La Peregrina Pearl.

Did you know?

via Breccia 7/2006 and others

Jewelers recognize four organic substances as gemstones: ivory, pearl, amber and coral. Other precious and semiprecious gems are considered minerals.

Sphere Making Tips

by Dan Imel

from *The Rock Collector* 4/2006, via *Stoney Statements* 6/2006

First Tip: From a recent trip to another club show, I picked up the following tip: One of their club members had told a member to use a ball chain in a loop long enough to reach into the cup of slurry below with a little sitting on the bottom. It sits on the sphere at the front of one of the cups. As the cups rotate, so does the chain. It drags the slurry back up to the cups. Seemed to work really well, but I suspect



you have to wait until you have a slurry actually started. This has an advantage over machines with an automatic grit feed because it uses the grit over—not so much waste.

Second Tip: They had accidentally allowed grit to run back along the motor shaft. It ruined a motor when it got into the gears. I was thinking about the problem and came up with the following solution.

I love laundry detergent bottles, especially the 300 ounce size because they have a fairly large flat area you can use. Either by hand with a utility knife or using a hole saw like you'd use to install a door lock (it can be much smaller), cut three circles of plastic from the detergent bottles, one for each shaft on a three-motor sphere machine, with a center hole slightly smaller than the shaft on the motors. Remove the cups from the sphere machine.

Take an O-ring that's tight on the shaft and push it on ahead of the plastic washer you've made. Leave a slight gap in front of the motor. Place the washer on, then another O-ring to lock it in place and help seal things. No glue necessary. If the shaft is inclined so the grit runs down the shaft, the washer and O-rings will block it from getting to the motor, much like a collar on a bird feeder helps stop squirrels from climbing up to the food. The spin of the motor will prevent the grit from getting back to the shaft on the other side of the washer. This solution shouldn't affect cooling of the motor either, and since the washer spins with the shaft, it shouldn't wear at all. The detergent bottle plastic doesn't readily degrade with use and is very durable. If you use a hole saw to cut your washers, use a block of wood as a backer for the saw to cut through to.

History of the HGMS Annual Show

by Scott Singleton

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

Prolog

The following is Part 4 in a 5-part series on the HGMS show history.

- Part 1: 1948-1968: Early Days
- Part 2: 1969-1977: Rise to Prominence
- Part 3: 1978-1989: On Top of the World
- Part 4: 1990-2000: Fall From Grace
- Part 5: 2001-Present: The Phoenix

Graphs representing attendance, dealer, and financial data can be found on page 49.

Note: My apologies for the length of this installment of the show history. The period covered includes 13 shows over 11 years, making for a huge amount of material.

Part 4: 1990–2000: Fall From Grace

Introduction: We left Part 3 of this history with the club feeling really good about itself. It had a clubhouse that it was continuing to populate with equipment. In 1992 they would build a new classroom for jewelry and lapidary classes. This classroom was ready by summer of that year and was immediately put to good use.

The annual show was also seeing a resurgence. Attendance in 1988 and 1989 had risen to 1970s levels, breaking 8,000. Profit from Ron Carman's 1988 show broke all previous records (\$32,479), and his 1989 profit was not far behind (\$29,320). However, this was primarily because we had increased the number of dealers to 77 in 1988 and 83 in 1989. The target dealer number would be 85 from 1989 until the mid-1990s.

We were able to increase the number of dealers due to our move from the Albert Thomas Convention Center to the nearby, very spacious George R. Brown (GRB) Convention Center. (This move was made because the Albert Thomas was closed when the GRB was completed). The GRB appeared to be perfect for our club because of the unlimited space in which to add more dealers while still accommodating our club Section tables, other special exhibits, demonstrators, and nonprofit club tables. On top of that, the GRB gave us a special rate (50% off) due to our status as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization. That made it very affordable to hold shows there.

Losses of key Show Committee personnel were minimal and more than made up by many new additions. John Hammett retired in the early '90s, and he and Ruth left for retirement in sunny Arizona in 1992. Despite the strong personalities of both of them, the contributions each made to the club were huge. John was President in 1979, a Director in 1980, and he is largely responsible for the construction of the kitchen at the clubhouse. He and Ruth were involved in just about every show during the 1980s and were always available to help with various club tasks as needed. Ruth had an even more impressive record: Lapidary Section Chairman in 1978 and 1979, Dealer Chair-

man in 1980 and 1981, Vice President in 1982, President in 1983 and 1984, Past President in 1985, Dealer Chairman (again) in 1984, 1985, 1988, and 1989, and the Backbender's Gazette (BBG) Editor in 1990 and 1991. During all of this, she formed the Youth Section in 1983 and was its first Chairman.

Derry Gartig (Treasurer from 1983 to 1990) retired in 1990, and he and JoAnn (Ticket Chairman throughout most of the 1980s) retired to Nacogdoches in 1991. Stan Madsen (Assistant Show Chairman in 1986, Show Chairman 1987, President 1988 and 1989, and dedicated helper at the clubhouse and show) continued on the Board as Past President in 1990 and 1991 but held no more positions on the Board or show except to assist Ron Carman in 1994. Ben Noble, a continual presence at the show and Show Chairman in 1990, died in February, 1993. Janelle Walker, Youth Section Chairman for most of its existence as well as dedicated helper at the show, died of cancer in January, 1994.

New faces in the early '90s were:

- Norm Lenz as a Board member starting in 1989 and continuing throughout the decade
- Charlie Fredregill as a Director in 1990, Show Chairman and 1st VP in 1991, President in 1992, and Past President in 1993 and 1994
- Bill Butler as Lapidary Section Chairman in 1990 and 1991, Show Chairman and 1st VP in 1992, President in 1993 and 1994, and Past President in 1995
- John Emerson as Assistant Show Chairman in 1992, Show Chairman in 1993, Secretary in 1994, President in 1995, Past President in 1996 and 1997
- Ron Talhelm as Assistant Dealer Chairman in 1991 and 1993, Dealer Chairman in 1992 and 1994, Show Chairman for multiple years (spring 1995, fall 1995, fall 1996 and 1999), and Assistant Show Chairman in spring 1996 and 1998. He also was on the Board as 2nd VP in 1992 and completed the remainder of Dudley Rainey's term as Treasurer in 1993.
- Gary Anderson as Shop Foreman during the latter part of the 1980s and all of the 1990s while also taking care of the show's electrical planning. His Board tenure began as President in 1996 and 1997, Past President in 1998, President again in 1999, and Past President again in 2000.

1990: We left off in 1989 with Ron Carman pulling two hitches as Show Chairman in 1988 and 1989 (and this was after he and Stan Madsen ran the show while swapping as Show Chairman and Assistant Show Chairman in 1986 and 1987). There was concern that the show had grown to be a major undertaking and that nobody would willingly volunteer to take on such a large task.

Into this scenario stepped Ben Noble. Ben had been involved with the show for a number of years, and in the fall of 1989 he volunteered to be Show Chairman. Ben was a jeweler and had been in business for a number of years. He had extensive contacts among the city's "elite" and was involved with the Houston Rodeo. When he became Show Chairman, he used these contacts to his advantage. He came up with four special exhibits that were so pricey that insurance needed to be taken out before they were allowed into the show. He also came up with a number of people willing to give presentations, so the lecture schedule was filled during the show. He pressed all

the publicity buttons he could, and as a result got favorable exposure in a large number of media outlets.

Because of the great effort he put into the show and the contacts he had, the show was highly successful from a statistical standpoint. Attendance was even higher than the previous two years that were guided by Yvonne Dobson's publicity (8,900 vs. 8,100). Profits were very good (\$24,561) but were down from previous years due to the additional insurance and publicity. Ben's expenses were \$7,000 more than in Ron Carman's previous two years.

But this is not the end of the story. It is my firm opinion that most activities within a volunteer organization are team efforts because it is usually too much for an individual to take on (remembering that people have normal lives to lead as well). My observation has been that those who do well in a team environment tend to do well in volunteer organizations. From what I've read and those I've talked to, Ben Noble was not a team player. In its place appeared to be a well-developed Napoleonic complex.

One of the first things he did was to move Show Committee meetings to the courthouse of a judge friend of his. That way he could pretend to be in control of everything. However, there was the pesky matter of the Dealer Chairman who by policy reported to the Board to get approval for the dealers he and his committee wanted to invite to the show. This forced Ben to attend Board meetings to make sure he got his way. By April 1990, Board meetings resembled a war zone.

The first attack was on Dealer Chairman Tim Smith. It was simply not acceptable that Tim was going to the Board for approval of his dealer list. Ben insisted that Tim report to him. Tim said that was not policy. Ben said that this policy was not in the bylaws. Stalemate. The Board then authorized bylaw expert Ron Carman to review the Dealer Selection Policy and recommend Bylaw revisions necessary to bring the two into harmony with each other. (This would be completed in the fall and accepted by the club membership).

The next counter-thrust was on the leadership of the club. Ben, being a smart individual, realized that he needed to be President to achieve his goals. Now, as I have previously described, in those days there was not a plethora of club members lining up to be Show Chairman or Board President. Under normal circumstances, he would be a shoo-in. However, there's something to be said about how people band together under adverse conditions. This the club did, and a succession of individuals stepped forward to lead the club—first as Show Chairman and then as President the subsequent year (this list includes Charlie Fredregill, Bill Butler, and John Emerson). However to pull this off, President Tom Wright would have to serve a second straight year as President in 1991 (his 4th as President) while Charlie Fredregill and Bill Butler "learned the ropes."

1991: In the fall of 1990, new and inexperienced Show Chairman Charlie Fredregill had the unenviable task of trying to resurrect a decimated Show Committee. As you can well imagine, this was not an easy task. His most crucial problem was that he could not find anybody willing to help on the Publicity Committee. But because he

was in the printing business, Charlie had some ideas on how to run publicity. He hired an outside publicity firm called Show Dynamics to come up with a marketing plan for which we paid \$2,000. Because of the part of town the show was in, the company decided we should market to the Latino population. Nice idea, except that a final analysis following the show proved it didn't work.*

***Footnote:** We have done the same analysis in recent years and have found that the main qualifier for the appeal of our show is not race or section of town but instead the amount of disposable income.

Nonetheless with the publicity angle being handled, Charlie concentrated on other things such as encouraging people to volunteer for various positions on the Show Committee. This took a lot of effort, mostly directed at creating a positive, fun, and friendly atmosphere.

Another growing problem on Charlie's plate was the George R. Brown management. The GRB is owned by the City of Houston and run by the Convention and Entertainment Facilities Department. They were growing more difficult to deal with, primarily because we were considered a small show and didn't help fill hotel rooms, which was the primary objective for the convention center as far as the city was concerned. Despite the fact that the GRB was only in its fourth year as a convention center, the city was doing a good job at filling the available slots. These other shows had precedence over our show for available dates and space. They would not sign a contract for our show more than six months prior to the show, which of course made life very difficult for us. Charlie, Tom Wright, and Ron Carman, who were the people negotiating with the GRB at that time, were all finding out that we could never be sure what date our show would be on. September was a popular month for retail events (with the resurgent Denver show sitting in the middle of the month), and they could see us getting bumped from it sooner or later. October was not a possibility either as that month was always full.

Charlie's idea to deal with this was to move the show to the spring when there was less demand and when we could not be wiped out by a hurricane (yes, this was a continual concern). Thus, the theory went, we could settle on a date and not be worried that the GRB would bump us. He proposed this to the Board in June, and they voted in August to have the 1993 show and all subsequent shows in the spring. Originally they were going to leave the 1992 show in the fall because people were already planning on it, but by October they decided to move it to the spring too.

I'm sure this plan seemed like the best thing, or perhaps the only thing, that could be done given the difficulties with the GRB. However, it carried significant risk as well. A show lives and dies by the public knowing (or not knowing) when and where it will be held and identifying it as distinct from any other local show. Until this time, the show had spent two decades at the same time of year. In addition, at that time there were three Intergem shows each year, two of which were in the spring. They were already a force to be reckoned with (significant confusion already existed as to what show was what, even in the early '90s), and to ignore them in establishing dates for our show was asking for a disaster. There was also the risk that even by moving to the spring, the GRB might not allow us to settle on a particular date to call our own.

Of course, it is true that I'm writing this history in 2006 and I have the advantage of knowing that each of these things, in fact, did come true almost immediately. But I'm confident these risks were known and discussed at that time, and the decision was made to accept the risk.

So, with that as a prelude, our show in 1991 was put on quite professionally, as was our custom, because we had (and still have) quite a number of knowledgeable and devoted club members who know how a show is supposed to be run. But, in a common refrain that will be used often during the remainder of the decade, the public did not show up in the numbers we would have liked. Attendance was 6,752, which was not bad by any stretch and was certainly not a reason to go changing things. But we must realize that attendance had surpassed 8,000 each of the previous three years, so I'm sure the smaller numbers caused some concern among the club as well as the dealers, all 84 of them.

1992: The rotation had now officially begun, with Charlie Fredregill as President, Bill Butler as 1st VP and Show Chairman, John Emerson as Assistant Show Chairman, Ron Talhelm as 2nd VP and Dealer Chairman, and Tim Smith as Assistant Dealer Chairman.

Also new on the scene was a June show date (5th–7th). This date was less than a month after the second Intergem show of the year (in May). The Board and Show Committee knew this wouldn't be an easy sell. As soon as the Board approved this as a date in October of 1991, Charlie Fredregill, 1992 Show Publicity Chairman, announced that he would have 25,000 postcards printed up to announce the new show date. In addition, they convinced Joel Bartsch to be the Special Exhibits Chairman, and he used



Figure 1: Postcard for 1992 show.

his contacts as the Curator of Minerals at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) to get exhibits from both the Smithsonian and Harvard.

Despite an unknown response from the public to a change of dates, Show Chairman Bill Butler was organized and full of optimism. His stated goal for 1992 was simply to increase net revenue while keeping dealer and member satisfaction high. To do this, he wanted to increase attendance and to increase either the booth cost or number of dealers. The Board wisely didn't allow an increase in the number of dealers because

there were already too many for the decreased attendance of the previous year. Instead, they agreed to increase the booth cost 10% but to give the dealers a 10% discount if they paid in full at least two months prior to the show.

They also agreed to boost the publicity budget from \$16,000 (in 1991) to \$18,000 in order to achieve Bill's goal of increasing attendance. Charlie Fredregill's publicity plan was to use \$6,000 of that money on billboards. He contracted with Patrick Media Group for a package deal of 12 billboards throughout the city, but the proviso was that the sign company got to pick the locations. This was a great publicity idea, but Charlie's analysis following the show was that many (if not all) of these signs were in out-of-the-way places or were hardly visible from the street. They did not contribute to any additional attendance at the show.

In the end, despite an organized and well-run Show Committee and show, attendance was in the doldrums. A total of 4,365 people attended. Split between 83 dealers, the customer-to-dealer (C/D) ratio was sitting at 53. Those of you following my discourse on C/D ratios (in Parts 2 and 3 of this history) will recognize that a ratio of 50 spells trouble. At this figure, some dealers will be doing well and some won't. Many will be just doing fair. But one thing for certain is they will be starting to get restless. Complaints will be rising precipitously (for instance, "why did you move the show date?"). Some will just figure that it is no longer worth it to travel a long distance to come to the show, making it increasingly more difficult to maintain the stated dealer target of 85.

Post-mortem analysis of the low attendance of this show concluded that a June date was not good because schools were not in session, thus only a minimal number of kids showed up, and of course no teachers and school groups. Parking at the GRB was also a problem, partly exacerbated by the fact that the Democratic National Convention was being held adjacent to the show.

With this analysis, we went back to the GRB management to get a date for the 1993 show and found out that the only date available was on Mother's Day (May 7-9). Not only was this a "family" holiday weekend, but the spring Intergem was the very next week. At this point, our frustration with the GRB was reaching new heights. Nobody in their right mind felt a Mother's Day show would be successful. Grumbling on the Board resulted in a committee consisting of Tom Wright and Charlie Fredregill looking for another venue for our show. This effort would not be successful.

So, the Board turned their attention to the size of the show. It was becoming obvious that our dealers were not happy with the low attendance and date changes. The possibility was broached to have a smaller show consisting of only 50 dealers and to scale back other expenses. The suggestion was that we could make as much money as we could with a larger show that didn't succeed in attracting enough people to keep 85 dealers happy. In the end, no changes were made because, after all, we had a huge balloon note to pay off in less than three years and we needed the money.

1993: So, the club approached the 1993 show the best way they knew how. John Emerson became Show Chairman and Bill Butler moved to President. Both of these

individuals were very organized and were positive thinkers. The first thing they did, on Charlie Fredregill's recommendation, was cut the billboard expense out of the publicity budget, reducing it to \$12,000. However, the Board still approved a budget that called for \$26,000 in ticket income, or a paid attendance of 5200 adults (not including \$1 coupons). They also kept 85 dealers as the target number, despite growing disenchantment among the dealer ranks for the continual date changes and poor attendances.

The result? Similar to the previous year, with an attendance of 4,172 spread among 79 dealers (C/D ratio of 53). Profits took a dive due to increased expenses and decreased attendance, including 281 moms who got in for free on Sunday. The "free Mom" idea was a successful spin the Committee put on the problem of holding the show on a family holiday.

But our once healthy bank account was now starting to look a bit ragged around the edges. It became apparent to even the most casual observer that it was unlikely we would be able to pay off the \$87,000 balloon payment due on our clubhouse mortgage note in 1995. The issue was officially broached following the 1992 show, but nothing was done at that time. Now it could not be ignored. In July, Bill Cox was appointed chairman of a committee to investigate refinancing the mortgage note. His committee consisted of Vic Helm, Tom Wright, Ron Talhelm, Gary Anderson, and Charlie Fredregill. Bill Butler also was involved due to his being President at the time.

In August, we received the good news that the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) had approved our claim of nonprofit, charitable status, meaning that we would owe no more property taxes henceforth. This was good news since we had been denied this status in 1987 in a protest to HCAD, with John Hammett representing us in the protest. This action would save us approximately \$5,000 per year.

Also in August the refinance committee met twice, and Charlie Fredregill and Bill Butler visited their first bank to seek a loan. It was decided that we should seek a loan that did not have a prepayment penalty and had simple interest due only on remaining principal. For the entire fall, the committee tried to find a bank that would carry our loan with these conditions. They had lots of problems, mainly because banks didn't know exactly how to categorize us. (A 501(c)(3) nonprofit rock club that has significant property holdings is not a common commodity.) Finally, after much perseverance and legwork by Treasurer Ron Talhelm, Heritage Bank convinced a bank to give us a loan.

At this point I should backtrack and explain a little about the original mortgage note. This note was signed to the original owner of the clubhouse in 1980 for a total of \$106,000. The interest rate was 10%, typical for that time, but there was apparently a prepayment penalty of 2% (which was charged to us when we retired the original note). In 1985 we assumed this note from the original owner. By that time, only \$3,000 had been paid from the principle. We put \$35,000 down for the clubhouse, but that was entirely profit for the original owner. By 1990 we still owed \$98,000 and would owe \$87,000 in 1995 in the form of a balloon payment. And this is after paying \$1,320/month on this loan for a total of 15 years. My personal opinion is that this is one of the

worst loans I have ever seen, but admittedly I'm not a banker.

In December, Bill Cox made a presentation to the Board of four options for refinancing through Heritage Bank, which also held our checking and savings account. The Board selected option #1, which called for a refinancing of \$60,000 at 8% with \$35,000 down. It was a 6-year note, and prepayment was allowed with no penalty. At the Christmas party, the general membership approved this option. The refinanced loan closed on April 5, 1994.

Keep in mind that the club bank account had a total of \$50,000 in December of 1993, and by Richard Offeman's rough calculations, the club had average annual expenses of about \$42,000. Following the closing, we would be cutting it pretty close and would be highly dependent on our annual show for income to survive.

1994 – Our 2nd National Show: The year started out conspicuously since we were without a BBG Editor. The bulletin went to a single-page calendar format. In February we supposedly got an editor, but that person only produced two bulletins (March and May). It would be July before Janet Welch and Sharon Weimer would agree to co-edit the BBG, but by then it would be too late to be used to promote the show.

Regardless, the club knew how to put on a show and went about its business doing just that. Ron Carman had been asked to prepare a plan for the National Show back in July of 1990. In April of 1991 he was appointed as "Interim" Show Chairman for the National Show, asked to investigate both the GRB and Astrohall for potential show localities, and given a selection of dates in June and August to select from. In July of 1991 he presented a proposal to have the show in the Astro Arena, although at that time he was thinking of holding it at the end of August, similar to the 1982 National Show. The Astro Arena was selected over the GRB primarily because this is where we had our successful 1982 National Show and also because Ben Noble and Ron Carman were able to get a commitment out of the Astro complex management two years in advance (something that was unheard of at the GRB).

In March of 1992 the Astro Arena was confirmed, and the date was set at June 23—26. The only issue with having a show in the Astro Arena was the fact that they did not give us any discount for being a nonprofit, thus the price was \$5,000/day versus the GRB's \$2,500/day after a 50% discount was applied. In February of 1993, the Board voted to recognize reality and make Ron Carman the "official" Show Chairman for the National Show, whereupon Ron started assembling his Show Committee.

In June of 1993, a special meeting with the Board was convened to decide on targets for the '94 show. A dealer goal of 95 was set, and it was agreed (although not unanimously) to raise booth fees. This clearly reflected the prevailing perception that a National Show was somehow immune from the prevailing economic forces. After all, Bill Cox had taken a Hofheinz Pavilion show that had 30-32 dealers and turned it into a monster Astro Hall show that had 109 dealers and had attracted more than 10,000 attendees. The Society desperately wanted and needed a return to those glory days.

In September, Ron's budget was amended to reflect the reality that expenses were climbing beyond what was originally envisioned. The Astro Arena was a known cost

of \$20,000 but property expenses were now sitting at \$9,000, which included electricity. Publicity was left at the previous year's figure of \$12,000. The end result was that budgeted profit had now slid to a mere \$17,300.

Meanwhile, others in the club were busy making the party favors required for such a National Show. Our intrepid club collectors had gathered a quantity of llanite boulders that were slabbed and then cut into Texas-shaped emblems. The Show Committee determined that we needed 215 of these favors, which our talented lapidaries provided. Beverly Mace's Youth Section even got into the act by making 200 bluebonnet trees as favors. The Mineral Section was putting the final touches on a welded, metal-framed enclosure that would house their fluorescent display. (This is the same structure that holds the fluorescent display at our show today). On the Federation liaison front, the Radisson Hotel was chosen as the host hotel, and a large quantity of rooms were reserved for our use.

Ron Talhelm accepted the job of Special Exhibits Chair, and he arranged for a company called Burning Tree Casting Company to bring a mastodon skeleton (the Burning Tree Mastodon) as well as dino replicas. Also confirmed was the Harvard gold collection, an area where attendees could pan for gold, and artifacts from the collection of treasure hunter Albert Van Fossen.

So the club put on a great show that won praise from those who attended. Unfortunately, the common refrain was heard again: "Not enough people attended." The total attendance was 4,959, but paid attendance was much lower due to 1355 freebee tickets turned in by guests of dealers (each of whom were sent 100 free tickets). The first day of the show (Thursday) was almost a total waste for dealers since only 486 people showed up that day.

Possible explanations were not in short supply, however. For one, this was the third year in a row that we held the show on a different date (early June, early May, late June). Our customers were having a tough time figuring out when we were going to have the show, and to add to that, this year we held it in a different location. Another possible reason is that Intergem was about one month prior, and held in exactly the same location as our show this year. To compound the issue, the slogans of each were very similar ("Treasures of our Earth" versus "Treasures of the Earth at bargain prices"). No wonder people were having a tough time telling the two shows apart!

There also were a lot of complaints about the attitude of the Federation representatives attending the show. Some, like Ron Carman who had dealt with them for many years, had no problems. However, others said they felt our efforts were not appreciated (for instance, the llanite Texas-cuts "weren't good enough," or the quantity and quality of the case exhibits and judges "weren't good enough"). Regardless of the truth or the reasons for anybody's attitude, this perception would have a negative impact in our dealings with the Federation in the very near future.

To add to our woes, it is clear that the 95 dealers that Dealer Chairman Tim Smith signed-up required more than 4,959 people attending over a 4-day interval to make them happy. This show represented the third straight year with a customer-to-dealer

ratio at about 50 and was the final straw for a number of dealers. I have eyewitness accounts who say that several dealers who were stuck in the back simply packed up and left on Saturday night, never to return.

The Consequences: When the club refinanced its mortgage in early 1994, the critical factor in making the entire plan work was having a successful show so that we had enough operating capital to last the year. The poor return on the 1993 show meant that our treasury coffers were already low, and the down payment of \$35,000 on the refinancing meant that we did not have enough funds to make it through 1994 without sufficient income from our annual show. The net income on the 1994 show was \$12,236 on \$68,217 in expenses, or a profit margin of 18%. This was simply not enough to enable us to make it until our next show. In July a mature CD was cashed for operating income, and in August the same was done on another CD.

The Board started circulating requests for ideas to handle this shortfall in funds. In October the Lapidary, Mineral, and Paleo Sections all made plans to hold auctions and donate the proceeds to the club treasury. The Paleo Section donated funds out of their treasury (from selling books) to pay for two months of mortgage payments. Richard Offeman drew up a detailed analysis of the club's income and expenses and suggested a number of changes. The Board immediately approved many of these recommendations and started the wheels in motion to achieve several others, including a significant increase in membership dues.

In November, President Bill Butler received approval from the Board to ask members for outright tax-free donations to the club. In December this letter was mailed to the membership after editing by Richard Offeman. Before the end of the year \$3,705 was collected, and another \$4,450 was collected in January of 1995. By about midyear the total was \$8,840—\$5,540 of which was from individuals and \$3,300 was from the Lapidary and Paleo Sections (the Lapidary Section donated two months of mortgage note payments, and the Paleo Section donated one month over what they had already donated in 1994, and Paleo would add another \$1000 in October of 1996).

Spring 1995 – The Start of the Two-Show Years: In August of 1994, the Board managed to arm-twist an agreement from Ron Talhelm to be Show Chairman for the 1995 show. Ron immediately proposed holding a two-day show in June with 80–90 dealers. This was approved in September with a dealer target of 85 and booth fees reduced 10% due to the two-day show. However, in November a combination of available dates at the GRB and the spring Intergem show caused him to finalize a date of May 13 and 14 for the show (which was Mother's Day). Intergem conflicts were a common problem for our spring shows, but it became much worse in 1995 because Intergem went to four shows per year in Houston—two in the spring, one in the summer and one in the fall. This schedule continues to this day.

As the year started, there was much discussion on possible belt-tightening measures. A number were implemented such as lock boxes over the thermostats and a new mail slot. But the key item of interest was the idea that we might have to go to two shows per year. This idea was actively promoted by Board and Show Committee member Richard Offeman, but it quickly found many other adherents, such as President John

Emerson and Show Committee Chair Ron Talhelm. The logic was that we had already decided to move back to a fall show, slated to be in 1996 because we already had a show scheduled for the spring of 1995, and that an 18-month span was too great, especially considering our precarious financial situation.

So in February the Board voted to authorize two shows for 1995, and this was brought before the membership at the March General Meeting. They likewise thought it was a great idea as did the Show Committee at their March meeting. Reports were that we had much better fall shows than we had recently had in the spring (which was true, but this was many years previous) and that a fall show was preferred by our dealers. This show would have to be in October because there were no September dates available at the GRB.

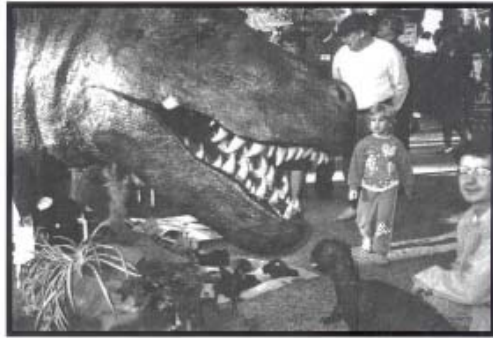
The spring show in 1995, therefore, had an advantage that the next three shows didn't have: a full year in which to prepare. Dealer Chairman Phyllis George, with the assistance of prior Dealer Chairman Tim Smith, had an initial contract mailing in the fall and a second mailing of contracts in January because only 30 had signed up so far (which was not surprising given the results of the previous show). This second mailing (which was a novel idea at the time) produced positive results, with Phyllis having 50 dealers under contract by March. But Phyllis was reaching the end of her dealer list and needed more names. These began to come in and by show time she would contact at least 200 dealers.

Thus officially ended an era when we could pick and choose our dealers from an existing list of approved dealers, and of the concept of a waiting list to get in the show. By this time I don't think many people even remembered what a Dealer Selection Committee was and the process (codified into the bylaws in late 1990) by which we were supposed to select these dealers and then receive approval from the Board for their acceptance into the show. May "The Committee" rest in peace.

Publicity was moving forward as well. We received permission from the GRB to hang a banner on the outside of the GRB with the proviso that our property vendor (Freeman) do the hanging. This essentially meant that it would cost money to have it made and more to have it hung. But by April the 52 x 202 banner was ready and would be hung on the Hwy 59 side to attract motorists driving by on the freeway. Charlie Fredregill printed up 23,000 page-sized fliers that were tri-folded and mailed. Publicity Chairperson Laura Moore also had radio and *Houston Chronicle* advertising, as well as magazine advertising (HGS Bulletin, Current Events, Leisure Learning, and the Rice University Thresher) and a few billboards.

For special exhibits, Ron Talhelm arranged for the Burning Tree Mastodon exhibit to once again come to the show and bring their dinosaur replicas. We also had one of the art cars from the annual Houston Art Car Parade on the main showroom floor.

Irene Offeman was in charge of programs and scheduled a complete list of speakers by December including Joel Bartsch, Ephriam Dickson, and Dr. Chris Cunningham (all of the HMNS), Anna Miller (gemologist and responsible for some of the outstanding publicity for our show in the early 1970s), and Dr. Kamlesh Lulla (Chief of



One of the most popular attractions of the HGMS Gem and Mineral Show is the dinosaur exhibit. This life-size Tyrannosaurus Rex greets visitors to the exhibition hall and is always surrounded by a large crowd of spectators.

Figure 2: Postcard for spring 1995 show. The T-rex model belongs to the headliner special exhibit from Burning Tree Mastodon.

Astronaut Training at JSC). She also suggested we emphasize the outdoor and nature aspects of our hobby by inviting clubs related to those activities. Before the end of 1994, she lined up 13 clubs or individuals to provide diversification to our show. This list included the Canoe Club, Sierra Club, Underwater Club, Conchology Society, Astronomical Society, Audobon Society, Bead Society, and University of Houston (U of H). To top it off, she created a special booth called “Meet the Authors” where several of the speakers who had publications, as well as Paleo Section book authors, held signing sessions. And, as she used to do in the days of the ID Service, she wrote and submitted articles on these speakers to area newspapers.

The result of these efforts was a very professionally produced show, a fact that was commented on by attendees and dealers alike. Phyllis George had 63 dealers by show time which were shared by 3,523 attendees, or a customer-to-dealer ratio of 56. Even though \$11,600 was spent for publicity (out of a budgeted \$13,000), costs for other items were held to a minimum, partially because it was a two-day show, meaning that they held to their budgeted expenses. With the high number of dealers and a low cost structure, profits were \$12,500. This was very welcome by the club because they needed the income badly, but nevertheless it was about half what was budgeted. The shortfall was primarily because 80-90 dealers were anticipated. Everybody seemed to be so preoccupied with show profits that nobody appeared to notice that a C/D of 50 (their average since 1992) was not good enough to attract a large number of dealers, especially if they had to travel to get here.

Fall 1995 – the first fall show in four years: Show Chairman Ron Talhelm wasted no time getting started on the next show, slated for October 27–29. The June Show Committee meeting was a wrap-up of the spring show and a kick-off for the fall show. The budget for the fall show recognized that we couldn’t attract 80 dealers, so it was

set at 70 dealers and the ticket income likewise adjusted to that of the spring show. To save money, it was decided not to invite the Burning Tree Mastodon and their cast dinosaurs, saving \$3,000. By July, Ron had produced another version of the "Show Committee schedule of events" for the fall show. This schedule had been around for some time, but Ron made good use of it since the timetable was so condensed.

In their analysis of the spring show, the first item to jump out was that dealers did not like a two-day show because it caused their schedule to be compressed too much and was exhausting. So we went back to the three-day format. Also, Richard Offeman analyzed the

ticket stub data and publicity cost data and found that the *Houston Chronicle* ads and tri-fold fliers were the most cost effective advertising methods. Radio, billboards, and magazine ads were not cost effective. Free publicity, such as PSAs, was always effective because it doesn't cost anything. The tri-folds were expensive because 20,000 of them were being mailed, and they had to be folded and labeled, so methods of reducing this cost were sought. And, in a truism that lasts to this day, word of mouth ranked #1 as a method of getting people to the show.

Irene Offeman continued her amazing ability to line up speakers for the programs as well as nature and outdoor clubs. Most of the same speakers were back, with the exception of Dr. Kamlesh Lulla (Chief of Astronaut Training at JSC) who was replaced with John Stark (guitarist and President of Red Wolf Productions). Seven nature and outdoor clubs were present. She also arranged to have HMNS, in addition to their regular club booth, bring specimens from the Zuhl Collection of Petrified Wood which was then being displayed at the museum. This display required a 202 x 402 booth in the front of the show, and thus acted as the headliner special exhibit.



Figure 3: Dalton Prince doing what he was known for—breaking geodes. Picture was a publicity shot for one of the 1995 shows, probably by Irene Offeman. Location may be in the Collector's Choice shop.

Publicity Chairperson Laura Moore was also trying to reduce expenses, but still had a budget of \$13,000 to work with. Gone were most of the magazine ads. The paid radio ads were reduced from \$3,500 to \$2,000, and about \$700 was saved on the tri-fold flier mail-outs by reducing the distribution list. In their place *Houston Chronicle* advertisement was increased, and ads were also sent to other local newspapers.

Dealer Chairperson Phyllis George got about 30 dealers to sign up with her first mailing, but followed that up in August with another mailing. Simultaneously, a mailing went out to 230 dealers for the spring 1996 show. By October, she had 52 dealers signed up for the fall 2005 show and 20 for the spring 2006 show.

This crew, in pulling off their second show within six months, succeeded in producing another very professional event. Most clubs can only dream about producing shows of this caliber. But this was the first fall show we had held in four years, and it came after a spring HGMS show and three of the four Intergem shows to be held that year. Was the public burned out on gem shows? Did they even know we had switched back to a fall show? The answers were not forthcoming and neither were show attendees, only 2,952 of which showed up, nor were profits, which amounted to only \$5,600. To say the Show Committee was disappointed was probably an understatement. But they had to keep moving because another show was slated for six months hence.

Withdrawal from the AFMS: The issue of our relationship with the AFMS didn't wait long before rearing its ugly head. John Emerson, who was Assistant Show Chairman in 1992, Show Chairman in 1993, and Board Secretary in 1994, accepted the nomination and was elected President in the fall of 1994 with the cloud of our recently concluded National Show still hanging over our heads. The realization among the Board that we didn't have enough money to pay for our expenses in 1995 didn't help matters. He took office in January while club members were contributing significant amounts of money to ensure we wouldn't go bankrupt.

Understanding that John Emerson was a graduate of the Aggie Corps of Cadets will go a long ways toward understanding what he was like. He looked around and saw a club going down the tubes and not doing much about it. Volunteerism was very low (not much different than it is today). So his natural idea of how to enact change was to shock the club out of its apathy. This he proceeded to do. He first proposed a name change for the club in February, something having "earth arts and sciences" in the name. This idea went nowhere.

He then turned his attention to the Federation. He appointed himself as our delegate to attend the SCFMS show in Waco in April. He returned and wrote a letter asking what the Federation does for us (but, interestingly enough, not what we can do for the Federation). The answer was "not much," and it was costing us about \$900 per year. In June, Bill Cox was invited to the Board meeting to answer questions about this. In July, John wrote a letter to the Board outlining his reasons for proposing that we do not renew our membership. The Board agreed to let the membership decide this question. He published this letter in the August BBG and said that we would wait until after the show (in November) to bring it up for a vote at the General Meeting. There

was then no further (printed) discussion of this in the Board, at the General Meeting, or in the BBG. This was surprising to me because one would guess that an issue of this magnitude would require a healthy debate of the pros and cons of our status and of any change.

However, that apparently wasn't in John's plans. After all, in the military you are told to do things and you obey. You don't have "healthy debates." So, true to his word, at the November General Meeting he opened the meeting with the pronouncement that we were to vote on staying in the Federation or withdrawing. Apparently, there were not many people paying attention because only 20 people were in attendance. Nevertheless, there was a "vigorous debate," because a few of the people in attendance were "pro-Federation" people who didn't like what was being proposed. But the vote was taken and 13 people voted to withdraw, 3 voted to stay, and 4 abstained. In this same meeting, we voted unanimously to scale back the dues increase enacted at the beginning of the year and to pay down the mortgage note by \$10,000. Obviously, a lack of money was no longer the issue at hand.

1996 – Repercussions: The year started off with Bill Cox writing a letter to the Board announcing his resignation from the club and stating that they would need to find someone else to do their taxes (he had been doing them for free since 1980). In his letter, he says that he repeatedly tried to get successive Boards to pay down the mortgage note but was ignored. Thus, discussion about our withdrawal from the Federation dominated the first several months of President Gary Anderson's first term. The Mineral and Lapidary Sections weighed in with their disapproval that the actions of "a few" were the basis for such a far-ranging decision. A second letter was received by the Board announcing a resignation. And so it went on...

Gary Anderson's goal for the year was preordained for him: to hold the club together. He instituted his self-titled "Anderson moments" at Board meetings to lighten things up. He also instituted "testimonials" at General Meetings so that members could find out why other long-time members joined and what they found interesting about our club and hobby. These actions by Gary went a long way toward achieving his goal.

In January, to deflect mounting pressure, Gary stated that he would call a vote later in the year on whether we wanted to be a member of the Federation. In June, John Emerson reprinted his 1995 BBG article stating the reasons why he felt we should not be members of the Federation. At the June General Meeting, the membership voted to hold a vote on AFMS membership at the September General Meeting, with absentee ballots printed in the August BBG for those who could not make the meeting.

In July, the BBG printed three letters as rebuttal to John Emerson's article in June. These were from Bill Cox, John Pate, and Richard Offeman. John Emerson printed a reply to the three rebuttal letters in September. By this time, everybody's position was pretty clearly laid out, and it was apparent that we had proceeded with all due course to hold a "healthy debate" on the subject. At the September General Meeting, a vote was taken. The total was 24 members voting to rejoin and 2 voting not to rejoin. The mail-in ballots tallied to a vote of 32 for rejoining and four against. The total was 56 for rejoining and six against.

As an epilog to this whole episode, I believe it is appropriate to note that in John Emerson's September reply he stated that he did what he thought was best for the club based on the information available to him, and that if the only thing he achieved was waking the club out of its apathetic slumber, then he achieved his goal. Amen.

1996 Spring Show: Yes, while all of this was going on we actually did have two more shows in 1996. The first was scheduled for May 10–12 (another Mother's Day show). Al Tarr had volunteered to be Show Chairman after assisting Ron Talhelm in the fall of 1995. Ron Talhelm was the Assistant Show Chairman. Dealer Chairperson Phyllis George sent out the original set of dealer contracts in June of 1995 and a second set in December of 1995. By January she had 38 dealers, and in February she had 43 dealers out of 275 letters sent out. This was causing some concern because the budgeted income was not met in the previous two shows (in 1995) because we could not find enough dealers, and the budget for this show called for 70 dealers. (Note that there was absolutely no concern given to the fact that we were not drawing enough people to the show to keep these dealers happy).

Also of concern was the fact that we were without a Publicity Chairperson until February when Wayne Barnett volunteered. The first Publicity Committee meeting was held in February, when the committee heard results from Richard Offeman showing that friends and members were the greatest source of attendees, followed by *Houston Chronicle* ads and the tri-fold mail-outs (these are similar to the results presented previously). The committee decided to change the emphasis to be one of "gems and jewelry," similar to Intergem. This could be called the "if you can't beat them, join them" philosophy, meaning that since Intergem was so successful, perhaps we could reap some of that success by being like them.

Unfortunately, since the Publicity Committee had only about 5–6 weeks until the show, there wouldn't be much time to achieve anything. The *Houston Chronicle* ads were run with the "Gems and Jewelry Show" theme, and several committee members fanned out to get PSAs from radio and magazines. However paid radio, TV, or magazine coverage was eliminated from the budget. Ron Talhelm admitted after the show that the tri-fold mail-outs weren't delivered early enough to be effective.

However, the Zuhl Collection of Petrified Wood was again the star special exhibit at the show. And Ron instituted the concept of a raffle for added income. Members donated an amethyst cathedral and a Moroccan orthoceras and ammonite plate, and the information booth sold tickets for the drawing. They raised about \$1,000 on this raffle.

But despite these attractions and the usual professional show, attendance was disappointing. The downward crawl of attendance figures continued, with 2,454 people spread among 63 dealers, for a customer-to-dealer ratio of 39. You can bet dealers were not happy with the situation. But profits were high (\$14,900) because of the emphasis on reduced expenses, including only \$5,257 spent out of a \$12,000 publicity budget and a reasonably high number of dealers at the show. However, the low attendances were wearing on the Show Committee, as was the concentrated effort required to put on two shows per year.

Richard Offeman polled visitor impressions upon leaving the show and found that people were impressed by the quality of the show. His analysis of ticket stub info found the same as in 1995; namely, that most people found out about the show from word of mouth or the tri-fold mail-out. The *Chronicle* also had many responses and came in third.

Tom Wright also weighed in with his thoughts, which were not very positive. But his letter is interesting because he brings up almost exactly the same points as I have been making. He lambastes the Board and the Show Committee for putting on a show that had a customer-to-dealer ratio of 39, and he points out that a ratio of 100 is necessary to keep our dealers happy. After all, he says, without dealers we wouldn't have most of our income, but nobody seems to remember this. He claims we all have a money obsession which is preventing us from being able to put on a really good show. He brings up as problems the four Intergem shows per year and our predisposition to accept Mother's Day as a show date. He says that all we are achieving is burnout of the Show Committee (I'm getting exhausted just writing about all of this!) and that we should go to a single show per year that is of higher quality. He states that the publicity effort is unsatisfactory and that Intergem spends a lot of money on radio, TV, and newspaper ads. And finally, he notes that we need to get out of the GRB. He suggests the Shriner's Hall on North Braeswood and notes that Intergem has occasionally moved there for the same reason.

Fall 1996 – Fourth show in two years: Tom's comments were not lost on the Board and the Show Committee. The Board discussed the issue at their June meeting and voted to go to one show per year starting with 1997. The date was not resolved, however. Terry Proctor wanted to have it on Mother's Day and moved to have this be the case. This was accepted, but flexibility was given to future Boards and Show Committees to determine the date. The Show Committee then voted at their May meeting to hold one annual show and to have it in the fall. This waffling would prove very costly during the remainder of the decade.

The first to jump on the bandwagon in preparation for the October 25–27 show was the revamped Publicity Committee headed by Tom Wright, who was of the opinion that responsible individuals back their words (i.e. his letter in May) with actions. The committee was in favor of a large publicity effort backed by radio, TV, and newspaper advertising. One of Tom's opinions was that many of the people at our show came from outside of Houston proper and that we needed to advertise in out-of-town newspapers. The Publicity Committee thus requested and received a budget of \$13,000.

The Shriner's Hall was visited and the results discussed at the June Show Committee meeting. They decided to stay with the GRB because we would need the entire Shriner's hall, rather than just the ballroom, due to the size of our show. Intergem had the same issue when they used the facility. Even using the entire building, dealer booths would have to be reduced as would the size of the remainder of the show. Plus there was only limited parking onsite, and we would have to use a shuttle bus for additional parking. It is apparent that we had been spoiled by the spacious halls in the GRB as well as the nonprofit discount we were receiving. Unfortunately, the price paid for that benefit

was the slow strangulation of our show.

By September, the Publicity Committee was ready to run four *Houston Chronicle* ads, and Tom Wright was to send out material to up to 40 out-of-town newspapers. In October, Charlie Fredregill had 16,000 postcards ready to mail. These postcards were a change from the previous tri-fold flier. The Publicity Committee felt that the color postcards Intergem was sending out were much more appealing than our page-sized tri-folded flier. Thus they resurrected the color postcard first used for the 1993 show, which was an assemblage of minerals, beads, and fossils, but this time added an inset of Phyllis George's gemstone replicas. This postcard looked much like the Intergem postcards, which was the goal since the theme was still "Gems and Jewelry."

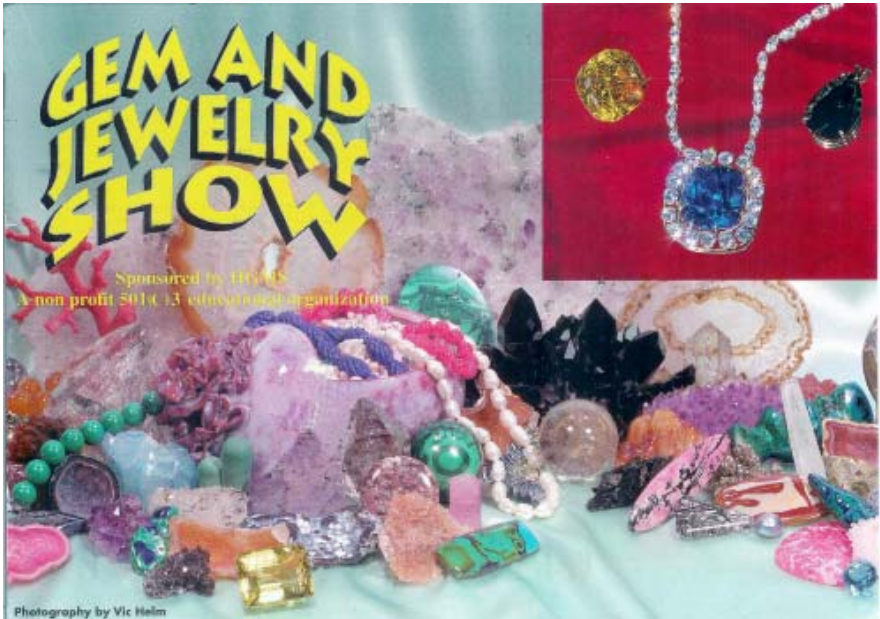


Figure 4: Postcard for the fall 1996 show. This postcard was originally produced for the 1993 show, with the inset of faceted gems added for the fall 1996 show. This same postcard was used for the next few years. In 1997 a dino head inset was added next to the faceted gems. The inset gems are cubic zirconia faceted by Merl Burgin of the Baton Rouge club (Phyllis George's father). They are replicas of the Hope Diamond necklace (center blue gem), the Dresden Green Diamond (right gem), and the Tiffany (left yellow gem).

Dealer sign-ups were much slower for this show than the previous half-year shows, even though Dealer Chairperson Phyllis George was using the same technique as previous shows, consisting of an early mailing (at the beginning of the year) followed by a later mailing after the previous show (June). But by September, Phyllis only had 44 registrations. This concerned but did not surprise the Show Committee, who had experienced similar results the previous three shows. It did, however, spell trouble for

the show budget which was counting on 60 dealers. It also meant that the wholesale area finally was eliminated as there were not enough dealers to warrant its existence.

The poor customer-to-dealer ratios of the previous shows, including a miserable C/D of 39 for the spring 1996 show, was finally catching up with the club.

Nevertheless, special offerings were still planned. Several nature clubs signed up to participate, including the University of Houston, the Astronomical Society, and the Diving Club. The new special exhibit for the show was John Fischner's Dreamstar Productions. John's expertise is in sculpting dinosaur replicas. He demonstrates his sculpting onsite while the audience watches. John is featured in our show to this day.

A new innovation of Show Chairman Ron Talhelm (his third chairmanship in two years) was to have a preshow party and auction to raise awareness (and money) for the show. This successful event was held in early October and was attended by 47 club members. It has since become a regular event in our annual show preparations.

So, despite the well-run publicity effort and the professional show production, by now nobody should be surprised when I report that attendance for this show was a dismal 2,200. Split between 52 dealers, this resulted in an unsatisfactory customer-to-dealer ratio of 42. Show profit was \$4,661, or a profit margin of 13%.

Post-show debriefing and analysis at the November Show Committee meeting led to a decision to revamp the publicity effort once again, as it was apparent the public was either not hearing about our show, could not distinguish our show from Intergem, or was overwhelmed with six gem and jewelry shows per year. Perhaps it was a combination of all the above. But the changes agreed upon were (1) to go back to the original moniker of "Gem, Jewelry, Mineral, and Fossil Show," (2) to do away with the glossy postcard because it looked too much like Intergem's (however, this did not happen), (3) to let kids in for free on Friday because of a huge drop in attendance on that day, and (4) to use paid newspaper ads in local papers only if they would also run a feature story on our club or show (this did not happen, either).

1997 – September 19–22: Preparations for the 1997 show began well before the fall 1996 show had even come to pass. The Show Committee and Board both wanted a September date, and so in August, a 1997 show date of September 19–22 was chosen. However the GRB rates had increased from \$2,500 to \$3,500 per day, and electric costs rose similarly. Thus, the Show Committee, with Board blessing, agreed to a 10% increase in booth fees in order to offset the increase in expenses.

The Show Committee was not the only one to increase fees. In November, the Board voted to increase membership dues because there would be only one show in 1997, and the returns on the fall 1996 show were not enough to last the club until the show in 1997. This dues increase would be finalized in early 1997.

Similarly, potential leadership voids were avoided when Terry Proctor agreed to be Show Chairman in the early fall of 1996. Following the fall 1996 show, Elizabeth Fisher agreed to take the Dealer Chairperson position. This was necessary because Phyllis George had decided she would concentrate on producing the BBG (a position

she took in January of 1996) and was giving up the Dealer Chairperson position. The Publicity Chairman position was open until March when Tom Wright was persuaded to step in once again.

Thus, a full-scale publicity effort began with Tom Wright, Terry Proctor, Charlie Fredregill, and Al Tarr. Terry adopted the moniker of “Golden Anniversary Show” for 1997 because the club was formed in 1948, and so this was a celebration of 50 years of existence for the HGMS. Ignoring for the moment that this was only the 44th annual show (and even this number was inflated by four years; see Appendix 2 of Part 1), this was a great marketing theme. It allowed the Publicity Committee to generate some excitement about the show, which they exploited to the fullest of their ability.

Soon they lined up John Fischner’s Dreamstar Productions to be the centerpiece special exhibit. Also slated was a replica of the Hope Diamond necklace (the creation of Phyllis George’s father), Bill Patillo’s Food Table, U of H, and HMNS. Terry got County Judge Robert Eckels to approve a proclamation stating that the week of our show was “Gem and Mineral Week.” Similarly, *Rock & Gem* magazine labeled our show “the Show of the Month.”

Another of Terry’s publicity ideas was to make up 50 notebooks containing photos of our club and show, John Fischner’s creations, press releases, and then giving those out to radio, TV, and newspapers. Tom Wright arranged for paid ads on KQUE and KTRH radio. Newspapers included several ads in the *Houston Chronicle* and in the Zest section, as well as in the Sun papers and The Village News. Charlie Fredregill printed and mailed 20,000 color postcards.

Meanwhile, new Dealer Chairman Elizabeth Fisher had some aggressive ideas of her own. She continued Phyllis George’s practice of dual contract mail-outs, totaling about 300 per mailing (which is amazing in itself). But her greatest contribution was the establishment of direct dealer contact. Instead of relying on mailings alone, she initiated a phone campaign to contact dealers who had not replied to ask if they wanted to be in the show, and if not, why not. To do this, she recruited Assistant Dealer Chairman Eileen Singleton. Between the two of them, phone calls were made to hundreds of dealers in the dealer database which by now had grown to a monstrous list. As might be expected, many of the contacts were no longer valid and those dealers were scratched off the database. They also heard an earful, which amounted to a litany of reasons why the HGMS show had become a poor show for dealers and why these dealers no longer had any interest in participating.

But this aggressive phone campaign reaped handsome benefits. The Board had been (and continued to be) obsessively self-absorbed trying to figure out how to attract more dealers to the show (although the idea that increased attendance would achieve that by itself didn’t appear to occur to anyone). So it was a great relief that Elizabeth’s methods would solve their problem for them. Through Elizabeth and Eileen’s persistent efforts, contracts continued to trickle in throughout the year, so that by show time we had 68 dealers under contract (and three were turned away at the door on set-up day!). (The target was 60 dealers, but Show Chairman Terry Proctor as well as the rest

of the Board continued pressing Elizabeth to sign up as many dealers as possible). This was an incredible number considering the previous shows in 1995 and 1996 attracted only 52–63 dealers, and our last two shows had dismal C/Ds of 39 and 42.

Other changes were in store for the show. We would no longer have presentations given by speakers because there was too much interference with PA announcements from the information booth, and because it was a lot of effort for (what some people considered) a minimal return. In addition, there would no longer be nature and outdoor clubs at the show because they had too much difficulty recruiting volunteers to staff their tables.

But there was a concentrated effort to improve attendance on Friday, which had been rather low in recent years. To do this, the Show Committee decided to let all kids in free for that day. This would allow Youth Chairman Beverly Mace to elicit the support of HISD, which had previously refused to come to our show because of discrimination against those kids who could not afford the ticket cost. These efforts were rewarded—as many people (which included kids) attended on Friday in 1997 (over 1300) as attended on each of the other days. This was quite an achievement since Friday attendance had dwindled off to about 500–600 by 1996.

Final attendance was 3,752, producing a customer-to-dealer ratio of 55. Profits were low (\$6,885) because of the high publicity expenses (\$16,128). But the show had once again generated a reasonable amount of attendance (comparatively speaking), which made the club feel good about their effort.

1998 – October 16–18: The year began on a worrisome note for two reasons: First, the lack of sufficient revenue from the 1997 show meant that we likely didn't have enough cash to make it until the fall show in 1998. President Al Tarr maintained a cash flow analysis throughout the year so that he could stay on top of our precarious fiscal situation. Belt-tightening moves were made wherever possible. As we had done in the past, the club organized benefit dinners, auctions, and sales to raise needed cash. The Paleo Section again paid for a month of the mortgage note. Due to all of these efforts, we succeeded in making financial ends meet until the show.

Secondly, we were without a Show Chairman and Assistant Show Chairman throughout the end of 1997 and beginning of 1998. Despite this, the Show Committee somehow continued to function. Gary Anderson confirmed our show date of October 16–18 with the required deposit to the GRB in October. (We had wanted a late September date but were bumped by an education conference). Elizabeth Fisher agreed to continue as Dealer Chairman and mailed out 325 dealer contracts in late December. Throughout 1998, she and Eileen Singleton continued their successful phone campaign to ensure that we had enough dealers under contract. At the January Show Committee meeting called by President Al Tarr, Ron Talhelm reported that the fall Intergem date coincided with our show date. Ron contacted Intergem and negotiated a date change whereby the fall Intergem would be held in late October.

In February, Tom Wright completed his analysis of ticket stubs from the 1997 show and reported the same results that we had seen for several years: Most people found

out about the show through friends or members, followed by mailed fliers (2nd) and the *Houston Chronicle* (3rd). Paid radio and TV ads resulted in a very small return. Most of the discount coupons came in via the *Chronicle*; only a very small number were returned from the smaller *Sun* and *Village News* newspapers.

Also in February, Pat Kreuzberger agreed to be Show Chairman. He did not particularly want to take this position, but it increasingly was looking like the show would drift along indefinitely without one, so he volunteered. Pat's self-described management technique was an interesting one: His idea of successful management was to stand back and let those who knew what they were doing take care of business. So, true to his word, he did just that. The Show Committee after he joined it looked and behaved much as it had done before he joined it. Fortunately for the club, all the key positions were in place from Terry Proctor's Show Committee, so preparations continued to drift along as committee members went about their business.

Ron Talhelm prepared a budget that called for 60 dealers and 3,000 tickets being sold, resulting in an anticipated profit of \$11,320. The same special exhibits from 1997 were confirmed for 1998—the Rock Food Table, John Fishner's Dreamstar dinosaur sculptures, and HMNS.

Tom Wright continued to handle publicity despite the fact that his new job meant he no longer had enough time to devote to it. But there were no other takers, so he did the best he could. The postcard mailing list was whittled down to just over 5,000 names by Wayne Barnett, so costs could be reduced in the production and mail-out. The same postcard from the fall of 1996 was used (this postcard was also used in 1997). Tom got three ads in the *Houston Chronicle* that used red text to stand out from the background. He rounded out his effort with several radio and TV spots.

Dealer Chairman Elizabeth Fisher and Assistant Dealer Chairman Eileen Singleton sent out another huge mailing to dealers in July. As in the previous year, their phone campaign generated positive results. By August they had the 60 dealers that were budgeted. However, as in 1997, the Board, led by Al Tarr, was sufficiently paranoid about our skimpy cash reserves that they ordered Elizabeth to continue signing up as many dealers as possible. This she did, and the total was 74 by show time.

But things don't always work out as planned. A cold front stalled over Houston the weekend of the show, producing torrential downpours on Saturday and Sunday. Flooding was a potential problem, and weathermen were advising that people stay home if they didn't have to go out. As you might imagine, attendance was slashed as people heeded this advice. Only 2,400 people attended the show, completely disappointing everybody involved.

Everybody except, of course, the Board of Directors, who immediately pronounced this a hugely successful show. Dealer Chairman Elizabeth Fisher was a hero because, due to the persistent efforts of her and Assistant Dealer Chairman Eileen Singleton, the show generated an amazing profit of \$19,159. This not only got us out of our fiscal dilemma, but it allowed us to pay off the remainder of our mortgage note, which amounted to \$4,570 in November of 1998. The champagne was flowing freely (figu-

ratively speaking, of course) as the club was out from under the cloud of a mortgage note for the first time in 13 years. It was truly a threshold moment in the history of the HGMS.

Unfortunately, not everyone was as overjoyed. An attendance of 2,400 people spread among 74 dealers produced a record low customer-to-dealer ratio of 32. At no previous time in our history did we have a C/D so low. Elizabeth Fisher had gone out on a limb in many cases, promising a great show to a number of hesitant dealers. She succeeded in 1997 when attendance was relatively high, but the cards did not fall in her favor this time. We can all rationalize and say we cannot control the weather, but that only placates us—checkbooks do not pay attention to such excuses. It is a certain fact that a majority of the dealers at this show lost their shirts (figuratively speaking), although Elizabeth reported that dealers realized the poor attendance wasn't our doing. Nevertheless, with a clear sense of *déjà vu*, the situation regarding dealer relations in 1994 was about to repeat itself all over again.

1999 – Labor Day Weekend: Immediately following the 1998 show, Ron Talhelm announced that since he was the Assistant Show Chairman for that year, he automatically became Show Chairman for 1999. As far as he was concerned, it wouldn't come a moment too soon since his and Pat Kreuzberger's personalities were at opposite ends of the spectrum.

First on the list was the location of the show. Tom Wright had investigated the International Trade Center (ITC) near the Astrodome and found that it could be a possible location for our show. In November of 1998, a group led by Tom and another group led by Ron both independently visited the site. Both found that it was a large facility that was cheaper than the GRB and had lots of free parking, but it was old and some items, such as the bathrooms and electricity, would need upgrading for us to be able to use it. Tom Wright's group came to a neutral conclusion about its suitability but Ron's group rejected it. Since Ron was the 1999 Show Chairman, his conclusion was final.

The second issue was the show date. In August of 1998 Tom Wright convinced the Board to accept a Mother's Day show for 1999, since his analysis showed that spring shows were more profitable than fall shows. This is certainly true if we only look at shows from 1993 onward—that was the year we moved to the Mother's Day date, and three of the four fall shows after that had poor profits (fall 1995, fall 1996, and 1997). But my comment would be that **all** of the shows from that year onward were mere hollow shells of the shows we had prior to 1993, all of which were in September. The club should have been concentrating on the reason for this decline. Instead, it chose to waffle between various show date possibilities, further confusing an already confused and gem show-saturated general public.

So, Show Chairman Ron Talhelm announced in December that he would not accept the ITC as a show venue because he felt it would be a step downward for the club, and that he would try to secure Labor Day weekend in 1999 for our next show. He felt that the club would be too exhausted to get everything ready for a show in five months. He also took matters into his own hands and secured an Assistant Show Chairman (Robin

Pascal) and a Publicity Chairman (Jo Fendley). Elizabeth Fisher found a replacement for herself (Scott Singleton), because she felt two years of intense effort in getting dealers was enough.

Jo Fendley and Robin Pascal did a great job with publicity for this show. Jo had recently graduated with a B.A. in marketing from U of H and thus knew the ropes. Plus she had lots of energy. Robin was also new and had lots of ideas. Together they proposed a number of publicity avenues to pursue, including small yard signs to advertise the show (Robin's idea), putting collections in libraries (which we used to do but hadn't for quite a number of years), producing posters for the show, and to concentrate on one TV station for a saturation ad campaign. They felt Channel 13 (KTRK) would be the best station, and arranged for a total of 11 spots to run during the show. These spots were during the 6 a.m. news, the Debra Duncan show, and the 11:30 p.m. news. Ron Talhelm even got into the act by having a 602 x 302 sign made that was put up on the front of the GRB during the show. And in the "coup de grace," they managed to get a *Chronicle* reporter and photographer out to the show on Saturday, resulting in a very favorable article that appeared the next day in the Metro Section of the Sunday paper. This is the kind of exposure that Show Committees dream about. It resulted in a Sunday attendance of 1,725—a number not seen since the early 1990s.

If only the Dealer Committee had had the same success, the show would have been a financial gangbuster. However, the reality of the situation was that dealers were staying away in droves. The Dealer Committee consisted of your author (Scott Singleton) and Shirley Nowlin. We continued the practices of the previous dealer administration (Elizabeth Fisher and Eileen Singleton) by sending out hundreds of contracts toward the end of the year and following up with a second batch in the late spring/early summer. We also continued the phone campaign. My goal was to talk to each dealer in the dealer database. Shirley and I achieved much (but not all) of this, eliminating many dealers from the database in the process. Most of them told us they wanted to be in our database, but they were not interested in doing our show this year. "Maybe in some future year," we were told countless times. We also heard an earful about how our club was only interested in profits and could not care less about producing good shows that would allow dealers to make a profit.

Despite our best efforts, we could only attract 45 dealers to the show. Show Chairman Ron Talhelm revised the budget in July to reflect this reality, thus reducing the anticipated profit to \$7,600.

But, despite dealer reluctance to be part of a Labor Day show, the public did show up. This was an interesting twist to which the club was not accustomed. A total of 3,955 people attended the show, thanks in part to the great publicity effort of Jo Fendley and Robin Pascal, and in part to the great *Chronicle* article on Sunday. (We understood later from the *Chronicle* that we got such good coverage because they were looking for family activities that they could promote on the holiday weekend).

This result surprised everyone so much that the Show Committee wanted to rethink the predominant club opinion that spring shows were more profitable than fall shows. However, this fell on deaf ears in the Board. They had already voted in August to

accept an available date of the week after Mother's Day (May 19–21). They reconfirmed that vote when 2000 Show Chairman Robin Pascal went before them in October to present a budget for their approval.

2000 – Mother's Day (May 19–21): Show Chairman Robin Pascal did the best she knew how with only one year's experience on the Show Committee. But that was the way the bylaws were written (the Assistant Show Chair automatically becomes the Show Chair the next year). She still had Publicity Chairperson Jo Fendley, and the two of them cooperated on publicity. The moniker "Texas Treasures for the Millennium" was adopted, and the show description was shortened to "Annual Jewelry and Rock Show." She obtained a quantity of tektites which the Show Committee agreed to give free to the first 200 children on each day. An interesting poster was created--white with black lettering with the HGMS symbol in grey in the background.

Robin and Jo Fendley decided to switch TV stations to Channel 11 (KHOU) for their saturation ad campaign. The slots ran from Tuesday through Saturday of the show, with times ranging from overnight to prime time. The prices for these slots obviously varied considerably, and they chose a few prime time slots but couldn't afford very many. Analysis following the show showed that most of these ads were useless and did not contribute to our show attendance. This is in contrast to the previous year when the saturation ads on Channel 13 (exclusively during the day) were much more effective.

Meanwhile, I continued as Dealer Chairman and continued all of the same "best practices" that I had been taught by Elizabeth Fisher. This included two mailings and lots and lots of phone calls. Dealers were much more willing to give us a chance this year because of the great show in 1999. I still heard plenty of grumbling about our choice of dates (after schools let out) and the continual change of dates. (Can't we ever make up our mind?) But I managed to get 50 dealers to sign contracts within the condensed cycle time between the 1999 and 2000 shows.

But there were persistent problems in getting the necessary volunteers. Robin was not an "insider" like Ron Talhelm and didn't know enough club members to gather her own Show Committee members. She was working without an Assistant Show Chairman, and I was working without an Assistant Dealer Chairman. Publicity Chairperson Jo Fendley had two other people on her Publicity Committee, but she ended up doing all of the legwork and preparation herself.

So it was a skimpily-run effort, and the results were equally as skimpy. Only 1,804 people saw fit to come to the show. This put the customer-to-dealer ratio back into the thirties (36) which meant big trouble with our dealers, many of whom abandoned us once again.

The Beginning of the End for the GRB: The repercussions started as soon as the show was packed up, and the trucks had unloaded back at the clubhouse. The Board questioned whether we had enough volunteers to run a large show as we had done in the past. Some club members thought we should go to a smaller show that would

require less effort and expense, which might be feasible since we no longer had a mortgage note to worry about. Others questioned our choice of dates, or perhaps the constant changing of dates from year to year.

President Elizabeth Fisher and her Board decided that this was an important enough issue to put before the membership in the form of a questionnaire. A committee was formed consisting of Norm Lenz, Gary Anderson, Phyllis George, Tom Wright, and Wayne Barnett, whose task it was to create this questionnaire.

In the meantime, I was putting together my own analysis of show results and tabulating the comments I heard from our dealers. I was particularly incensed because I was the person these dealers came to when they wanted to vent their frustrations, and it was my reputation that was on the line when I managed to convince these guys to pay money to be in our show.

My poll results showed that two-thirds of the dealers (33) felt our show was not good enough to warrant their coming back, and 20 of them told me outright that their receipts either weren't enough or were just barely enough to cover their booth fee. My two pages of recommendations can be boiled down concisely:

- 1) Fall is a better time for retail sales, but above all the date must be consistent.
- 2) We need quality guidelines for dealer acceptance and need to be governed by the all-important customer-to-dealer ratio.
- 3) We need to attract kids.
- 4) We need to stifle the rotating Show Committee membership problem.
- 5) We need to have an attention-grabbing headliner exhibit for the show.

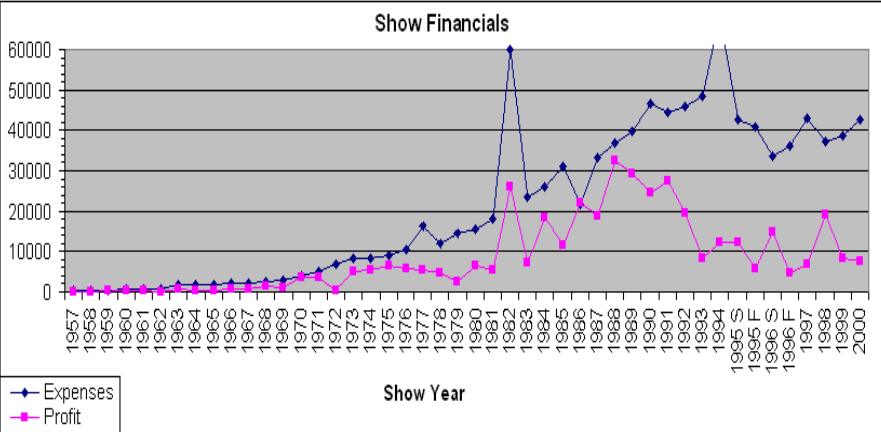
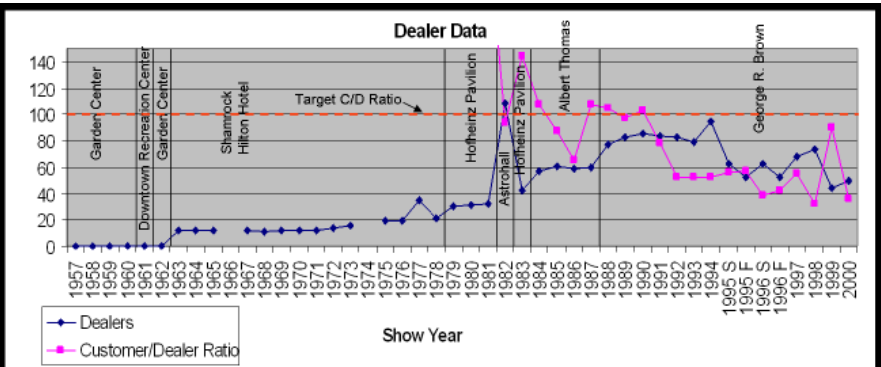
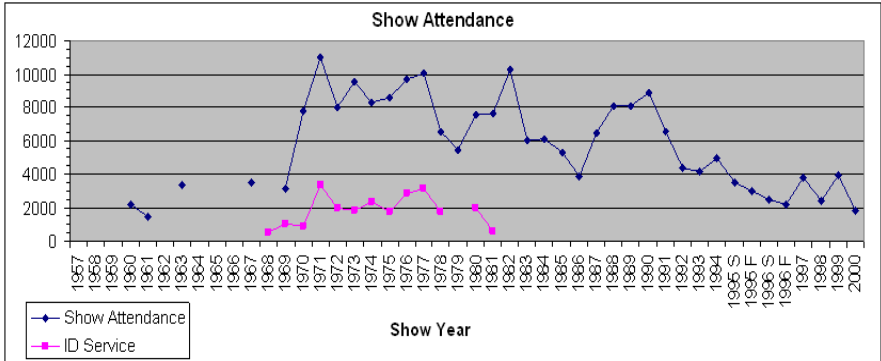
I presented my results to the Board in June. They completed their questionnaire in July and mailed it to the membership. Results were tallied in August. Concisely, the results were: The primary purpose of a show should be to fund club expenses with the secondary purposes of promoting ourselves, building membership, and educating the public. It was split as to whether we were achieving our objectives. We should continue having an annual show. This show should be the type we are currently having, between 30-60 dealers, at the GRB, and in the fall, but there was a split between those wanting a two-day or a three-day show, with three-day having somewhat more votes.

It appeared to me that given the questionnaire results, our membership didn't want any changes (except to stay in the fall). However, the recently concluded show also told me they would prefer someone else do all the work. So, abiding by their wishes, I took it upon myself to start looking for another place to hold the show. I found out that we had an available slot at the GRB for September 20-23 (perfect date) but that it was in Hall B and it was just one week prior to the Grand Prix, meaning that we wouldn't have much parking due to the presence of bleachers. But I also investigated the Sam Houston Raceway and the Humble Civic Center (HCC). I reported these results to the Board for their September meeting, and then with their approval convened a special search committee consisting of Tom Wright, Ron Talhelm, John Moffitt, and me.

We visited the two facilities in early September. I submitted our results to President

Elizabeth Fisher who forwarded them to the remainder of the Board. She then immediately convened a special Board meeting for Saturday morning, September 9, to review our conclusions. I presented our results and conclusions, which were that the HCC would be able to satisfy our needs while also offering us a long-term contract for the same date each year. The Board accepted these results and voted to authorize a contract to be signed with the HCC.

Thus ended one era and began another.



Epilog—“Show Economics 101”: I wish to say from the outset that the circumstances we found ourselves in during the decade of the 290s were not entirely of our own doing. There were two external influences that adversely affected our show:

1. **The GRB:** In my view and the view of just about everyone else I talked to, the GRB is single-handedly responsible for the slow strangulation of our show. By not treating us as though we were worth having around, they effectively told us that we were second-rate citizens (as the Shamrock Hotel did in the late 1970s) and that our show was not worth their attention. They would reluctantly consent to having us in their facility, but only if nothing better came along. In other words, we were filler material. This resulted in us having no choice but to violate the number 2 rule in basic show economics (discussed below).
2. **Intergem:** This show went to three occurrences per year in 1989 and four in 1995. I wonder how many other cities are lucky enough to have an Intergem show four times per year. I think this must be saying something good about our metropolitan area—that it is good enough to warrant this kind of attention. Unfortunately for us, this kind of attention meant the International Gem and Jewelry Show Inc. was sucking as many jewelry-dollars out of Houston as the market would bear. It left scant room for a relatively small nonprofit such as us to carve out a little bit of that market for ourselves.

However, there were a number of things we did to shoot ourselves in the foot when faced with the adversities already described. These missteps are all violations of “Show Economics 101.” The basic principles may be summarized by the following:

1. DO NOT change show venues unless it is unavoidable. This certainly happens sometimes for reasons beyond our control, but should be avoided. The reason is simple: for annual events, the buying public gets accustomed to seeing and doing things at the same time and place, year after year. Publicity doesn't have to be repeated for existing clientele.
2. DO NOT change show dates. This is a cardinal sin. Settle on a date and stick with it. The reasons are given in #1 above.
3. Abide by sensible financial plans. (Subtitled: Never bite the hand that feeds you). In our case, this means abiding by the general principle that show dealers pay for the production of the show. They do not supply our profit. Profit comes from ticket income. If this principle is upheld, both parties lose when the show does not attract customers, and both parties then have an interest in making it better.

An alternate (or additional) method of achieving principle #3 is to use the concept of a customer-to-dealer ratio. This principle keeps dealer numbers in line with the number of attendees and ensures that the show hosts give their benefactors (the dealers) ample opportunity to make a profit. This is the only way to maintain a quality show in the long run.

4. The general public is much more inclined to come to a show if it is interesting. I'm sorry, but in my opinion just having tons of dealers does not make a show interesting. Yes, this means I do not find Intergem shows interesting, with their 200 dealers packed into Reliant Center. True, Intergem continues to draw large numbers of attendees, but Intergem has seen a steady drop in attendance for many years, and I do not believe they will be able to turn it around with their current format.

Instead, the public wants something that is attention-grabbing. Being educational doesn't hurt either. Attention-grabbing means it is essential to have a headliner special exhibit that can be promoted in the publicity effort. Educational means that people learn something, which is always appreciated. Being interesting AND educational is a winning combination, and it means that kids and families are now thrown into the mix as potential attendees.

It is interesting to note through Part 4 of this history that these principles were slowly forgotten as the years passed. The Show Committees and Boards of the 1980s knew these principles and abided by them. They also had really good shows. But as the impending balloon payment on our mortgage started looming ever closer, attention became obsessively focused exclusively on making enough money, and we forgot that proper show fundamentals are essential for keeping a show healthy in the long run. We kept this obsession after we refinanced the mortgage and the 1994 National Show failed to live up to expectations. By the time we exhaustively finished our two-show years, the number of voices espousing proper show fundamentals were dying out.

There were exceptions. Both Tom Wright and Wayne Barnett wrote letters in the mid-1990s warning that we were deviating dangerously from proper show fundamentals, but the much louder voices demanding maximum profit at any cost won each time.

Yes, we paid off our mortgage, and we even paid it off a year early. But we paid the price. That price was the complete dismantling of one of the most successful shows in the country. I, for one, hope to God we never have to go through this again.

Acknowledgements: Since the events of the last decade are relatively recent, most of the participants are still in the club today. I hope that I treated everybody fairly and presented a balanced recounting of events. As I hope everybody knows by now, it is not my intent to criticize, demean, or pass on rumor or innuendo as fact. Because of this, I have deliberately left most of the discussion of personalities and their associated conflicts out of this history because to recount them serves no end.

I wish to thank the following individuals for their extensive help: Tom Wright, Tim Smith, Charlie Fredregill, Ron Carman, Bill Cox, Art Smith, Phyllis George, Gary Anderson, Ron Talhelm, Elizabeth Fisher, and Eileen Singleton.

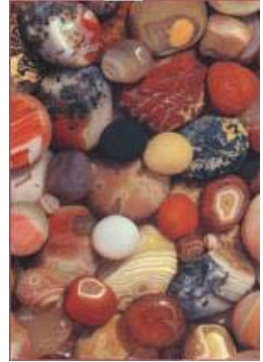
I would also like to acknowledge the extensive notes taken by Richard Offeman from 1995 until his death in 1999. Those who knew Richard are familiar with his detailed handwritten minutes of Board meetings, General Meetings, and Show Committee meetings. He completely reproduced (by hand) tables and statistics and also attached any relevant auxiliary documents provided at those meetings. He then mailed out cop-

ies of these minutes to all officers and Show Committee members. In addition to Richard's own records, he preserved Susan Lenz's minutes of Board meetings and General Meetings in 1992 and 1993. Apparently these minutes were not preserved anywhere else, including in our own official historical records.

Agates

From The Agate Licker, 02/2005; via Breccia 7/2006 and others

Agate is a banded, multicolored, variety of chalcedony. It occurs in an infinite amount of colors and patterns, and no two agates are alike. The extraordinary beauty and uniqueness of agate is responsible for its great popularity. Agate must be polished to bring out its full charm; unpolished specimens are dull and ugly. It usually forms in rounded nodules or knobs which must be sliced open to bring out the internal pattern hidden in the stone. Some varieties have two names that are equally used. Don't be surprised when you see the same definition for two different variety names. You will notice by some varieties that the word *chalcedony* is used in the definition, instead of agate (as is in the case in dendritic agate). This is **not** a mistake. These "varieties" are not really agates as they lack banding, and although they have the word agate in their name, they are only a variety of chalcedony. The list below cites only the well known and commonly used variety names.



- **Blue lace agate:** Agate with light blue bands in a lacy or wavy pattern.
- **Botswana agate:** Agate from Botswana banded with fine, parallel lines, often with a preponderance of pink blending into white.
- **Brecciated agate:** Agate with broken fragments naturally cemented together
- **Cloud agate:** Grayish agate with blurry, foggy patches of inclusions.
- **Crazy lace agate:** Agate composed of twisting and turning bands of various colors.
- **Dendritic agate:** Chalcedony with tree-like or fernlike inclusions.
- **Enhydro agate:** Agate nodule partly filled with water. The water can be seen from the outside of the nodule when held up to the light. Also known as *Enhydritic agate*.
- **Eye agate:** Agate with banded, concentric rings.
- **Fairburn agate:** Beautiful, unique, and rare; fortification agate from Fairburn, South Dakota.
- **Fire agate:** Agate with goethite or limonite inclusions which cause the stone to be iridescent.

- **Fortification agate:** Agate with a pattern resembling a medieval fortress (i.e. imaginary moat and castle walls can be perceived).
- **Fossil agate:** Agate as a replacement of organic material.
- **Iris agate:** Iridescent agate exhibiting all colors of the spectrum when sliced in thin slabs.
- **Laguna agate:** Beautiful and colorful type of agate from Ojo Laguna, Chihuahua, Mexico.
- **Landscape agate:** Chalcedony with tree-like designs closely resembling scenery.
- **Mexican lace agate:** Agate consisting of thin bands in a lacy or wavy pattern.
- **Moss agate:** Chalcedony with dense inclusions of green hornblende.
- **Nipomo agate:** Agate with marcasite inclusions found in Nipomo, California.
- **Onyx:** Agate where the banding lines are straight and parallel, and are consistent in band size.
- **Oregon snakeskin agate:** White to cream chalcedony with a wrinkled or cracked “skin,” found in Oregon.
- **Plume agate:** Agate with inclusions in feather-like patterns.
- **Pom-pom agate:** Agate with yellow inclusions resembling pom-poms.
- **Pseudo agate:** Agate as a replacement of organic material.
- **Rainbow agate:** Iridescent agate exhibiting all colors of the spectrum when sliced in thin slabs.
- **Sardonyx: agate:** Agate with straight parallel bands of brownish to red alternating with white or black bands.
- **Sagenite agate:** Clear chalcedony containing inclusions of other materials
- **Scenic agate:** Chalcedony with tree-like designs closely resembling scenery.
- **Snakeskin agate:** Reddish brown agate with black concentric bands.
- **Star agate:** Agate with banding lines in the formation of a star.
- **Sweetwater agate:** Chalcedony with star-shaped patterns of manganese oxide inclusions, found in Sweetwater River, Wyoming.
- **Thunder egg:** Nodule filled with agate in the center.
- **Tube agate:** Agate with tube-like formations that are sometimes hollow.

ShowTime 2006

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| August 12-13 | Baton Rouge, LA | Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society Frat. Order of Police, Baton Rouge Lodge #1 10777 Greenwell Springs 225-687-3864 paul_broussard@msn.com |
| August 14-20 | Nashville, TN | AFMS, SFMS, & Middle Tennessee G & M Tenn. State Fair Grounds., Creative Arts Bldg. lfelrod@yahoo.com , www.amfed.org |
| August 19-20 | Bossier City, LA | SCFMS & Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Soc. Bossier Civic Center, 620 Benton Rd. Bill Hart (318) 746-8735 |
| August 26-27 | Jasper, TX | Pine Country Gem & Mineral Society VFW Bldg., FM 2799, John D. Nash 409-384-3974, nash@jas.net |
| September 2-4 | Arlington, TX | Arlington Gem & Mineral Society 1200 Ballpark Way. Kris Galbraith 817-784-0375, apkris43@aol.com |
| September 22-24 | Humble, TX | Houston Gem & Mineral Society Humble Civic Center 5 miles east of Bush Intercontinental Airport 1 mile east of Hwy. 59 sigrid.stewart@chevrontexaco.com |
| Sept. 30-Oct. 1 | Denison, TX | Texoma Rockhounds Denison Senior Citizens Ctr, 531 W. Chestnut Rosemary Siems ramblingrosetoo@yahoo.com |
| Sept. 30-Oct. 1 | Farmers Branch, TX | Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club EMGI, Brookhaven College, 3939 Valley View Don Shurtz, don.shurtz@gmail.com |
| October 14-15 | Temple, TX | Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Mayborn Civic & Convent'n Cntr, 3303 N. 3rd Leslie O'Connally, 254-939-7015 |
| October 20-22 | Victoria, TX | Victoria Gem & Mineral Society Victoria Community Center |
| October 21-22 | Glen Rose, TX | Fossilmania--Austin & Dallas Paleo Societies Somervell County Expo Center, Hwy. 67 Bill Morgan, 210-492-9163 morgan@uthscsa.edu , www.dallaspaleo.org |
| November 11-12 | DeRidder, LA | De Ridder Gem & Mineral Society Exhibit Hall, Beauregard Parish Fair Grounds 610 West Dr.; adam.valin@bellsouth.com |

| 2006 | | AUGUST | | | | | 2006 |
|------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|---|------|
| Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | |
| | | 1 7:30 Board Meeting | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 7:30 Show Comm | 9 7:30 Faceting Section | 10 | 11 | 12 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 13 | 14 1:00 Day Light Section | 15 7:30 Paleo Section | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 20 | 21 5:00-7:15 Shop Open 7:30 Lapidary Section | 22 7:30 General Meeting | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

| 2006 | | SEPTEMBER | | | | | 2006 |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------|---|------|
| Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 3 | 4 Labor Day | 5 7:30 Board Meeting | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 10 | 11 1:00 Day Light Section | 12 7:30 Show Comm | 13 7:30 Faceting Section | 14 | 15 | 16 10-12 Youth Section 11-5 Shop Open | |
| 17 | 18 5:00-7:15 Shop Open 7:30 Lapidary Section | 19 7:30 Paleo Section | 20 | 21 | 22 HGMS Show | 23 HGMS Show | |
| 24 HGMS Show | 25 | 26 7:30 General Meeting | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 11-5 Shop Open | |

The BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

The Newsletter of the Houston
Gem & Mineral Society

10805 BROOKLET

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77099

(281) 530-0942



SCFMS

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2000 - 1st (Large)
2003 - 1st (Large)
2005 - 1st (Large)



AFMS

1998 - 2nd (Large)
2004 - 3rd (Large)

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