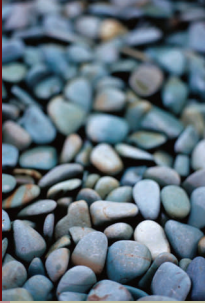


NOVEMBER

2013



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



Message from the President

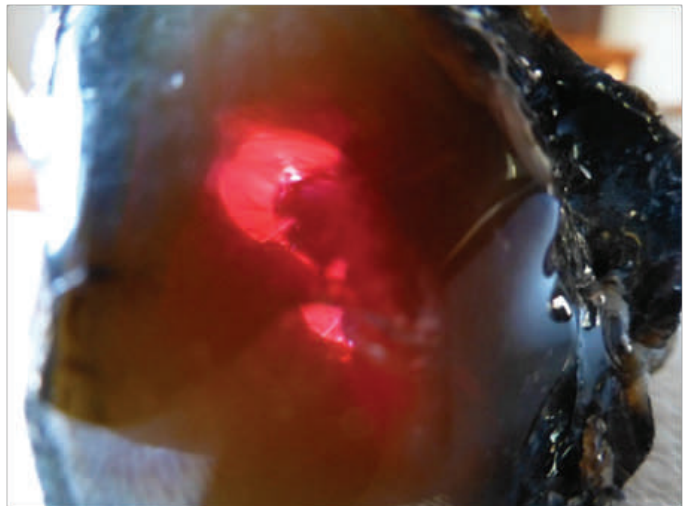
Rich Simcsak

Our 24th Annual Rock and Mineral Show date is now official—Club Liaison Michael Patterson signed a contract to hold our show on March 8 at The Show Place Arena on the main floor. My travel plans to Taiwan have changed and I will be at the November meeting. We need to jump into the planning and coming up with an advertising strategy. Also on December 5, we have our Pot Luck and Gift Swap. We will need to spend time then for further Show discussions.

The winter season is usually not the best time for rockhounding but we can overcome this by doing trips closer to home that will have less of a chance to find snow. In Janu-

ary we will visit James Madison once again. The time to get there is worth the trip. For those that have not attended this trip before, I most strongly recommend the day to see the collection of Virginia minerals that James Madison has collected over the years. I truly appreciate all the support I've had over the past year as the president. But it's the members that make the club what it is. Many good friends that have a love of Rocks, Minerals, Fossils, and what can be done with them. I am proud to be part of this club! See everyone in December!

Black Opal



Australia is the home to 97% of the opals found in the world. The other 3% can be found in Mexico, Brazil, China, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Japan, and the United States. See the field trip report on page 4 to find out where to find black opals in the United States.

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Meetings

..are held the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Clearwater Nature Center 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, MD

**For more information, call:
(301) 297-4575.**

EFMLS/AFMS News

Submitted by Michael Patterson



The EFMLS Newsletter this month has a note from President Hazel Remaley, renewal time information, Eastern Foundation Fund news, Wildacres Spring classes, Safety Matters, Syracuse Club's Rockhound of the Year, a Genesis story, and the Mineral Lyceum for juniors/students. For more information on any of these articles, visit www.amfed.org/efmls



This month in AFMS news, you will find the President's *From My Desk to Yours*, junior activities, the Endowment Drawing Kickoff, conservation and legislation, club Rockhounds of the Year, and club tax status. For more information, visit www.amfed.org

Upcoming Shows and Events

November 23-24: Fairfax, VA, 22nd Annual Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Mineral Club - www.novamineralclub.org & and the GMU Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences.

George Mason University, Fairfax Virginia at The Hub (former Student Union Bldg II) Saturday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Sunday 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Adults \$5, Seniors \$3, Teens (13-17) \$3. FREE - Children (12 & under), Scouts in uniform, GMU Students w/valid ID. Parking: On campus use GMU's parking Lot A (for Handicap Parking follow our van back from Lot A) Enter Lot A from Nottaway River Lane off Braddock Road Courtesy shuttle.



March 8, 2014: Upper Marlboro, MD: 24th Annual show; Southern Maryland Rock & Mineral Club; The Show Place Arena; 14900 Pennsylvania Ave.; Sat. 10-5; adults \$3, children (12 and under) and Scouts in uniform free; fossil, mineral and geode displays, exhibitors, dealers, minerals, fossils, gems, jewelry, crystals, meteorites, jewelry findings, tools, free demonstrations, bead stringing, wire wrapping, gold panning, fluorescent rock display, kids' mini-mine, Scout geology achievement, door prizes; contact Michael Patterson, 11000 Thrift Rd., Clinton, MD 20735, (301) 297-4575; e-mail: michael.patterson@pgparks.com; website: www.smrnc.org



If anyone has information on any other local shows or rock events, contact Ralph Gamba at rgamba@verizon.net.

SMRMC OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:
Richard Simcsak

VICE PRESIDENT (membership):
Polly Zimmerman

VICE PRESIDENT (Programs):
Penny Masuoka

VICE PRESIDENT (Field Trips):
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SECRETARY:
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EDITOR
Michael Patterson

WEBMASTER
Bob Davidson

EFMLS Representative
Carl Miller

***If corrections or additions are needed, please contact *Rock Talk* Editor

Cover Photo Courtesy of Microsoft Office

October Minutes

By Cheryl Reese

DATE: October 22, 2013

MEETING: Meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. Guests were welcomed and introduced.

SECRETARY: Minutes approved.

TREASURER: Receipt of proceeds from the August auction were given to treasury from Bob Davidson.

MEMBERSHIP: No report.

PROGRAMS: Gary Lohman presented tonight's program. November's meeting is being held one week earlier on November 19th due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

FIELD TRIPS: Saturday, November 16: Enterprise Manganese Mine near Lynchburg. January 18, 2014: James Madison University trip to see Dr. Lance Kearns.

EDITOR: More field trip reports and photos are needed.

WEBMASTER: Website has gone through a major change in an attempt to make it easier for a visitor to the site to go directly to either the Rock Club or the Lapidary Club. We have a shortage of field trip reports.

OLD BUSINESS: Rich emphasized the need to get moving on advertising for the Rock Show which is being held on only 1 day, March 8, 2014.

NEW BUSINESS: November 19th, Denise Nelson, African Diamond Mines. Denise will also bring some items to purchase (gemstones and pearl strands).

AJOURNED: Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM followed by refreshments provided by Tim Foard and the program by Gary about how our forests came to be and evolved. He brought a lot of great specimens.

2014 EFMLS Club Information and Dues

It's time to nominate club officers for next year. The EFMLS web site will list the name, address, and meeting location of each club as well as club contacts and the date of our annual show. The EFMLS also publishes a directory listing each club with a full list of officers. Here's a sample listing of our club from the EFMLS web site:

Southern Maryland Rock & Mineral Club

Club website: www.SMRMC.org

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of month at 7:00 P.M.

Location: Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Rd.; Clinton, MD

Show: March 8, 2014. The Show Place Arena, Upper Marlboro, MD

Liaison: Michael Patterson, 301-297-4575

Editor: Michael Patterson

Bulletin: RockTalk

Webmaster: Bob Davidson

We will need to hold nominations at the November meeting and vote at the December meeting so new officers can be ready to take over in January. Club dues should be submitted in January along with a list of officers for 2014.

Have You Joined?

courtesy EFMLS newsletter

The American Lands Access Association (ALAA) was founded to promote and ensure the rights of amateur fossil, mineral, and rock collectors on public and private lands. ALAA is a 501(c)(4) entity that enables it to carry the voice of amateur collectors to elected officials, government regulators, and public land managers without penalty from the IRS or local tax entities. ALAA needs your help in furthering its mission. Letters written by individuals to various legislators, managers, etc. do help, but by becoming a member, you help ALAA financially and by adding your voice to the crowd. There is power and credibility in numbers—legislators sit up and pay attention to groups representing many as opposed to those representing just a few! Dues in ALAA are \$25 per individual per year. Clubs may join for \$50 per club per year. That's not a lot to spend for an organization that has your collecting interests in mind. Visit the ALAA web site www.amlands.org for an application and more information.

Opal Collecting in the Virgin Valley, Nevada

By Carole Raucheisen

Several years ago while visiting Mt. St. Helens in Washington state, a conversation with a park ranger, as it often does with rock hounds, turned to rock collecting. She took us to her car and showed us two quart jars filled with beautiful turquoise blue opals and said she had collected them from the Virgin Valley in Nevada.

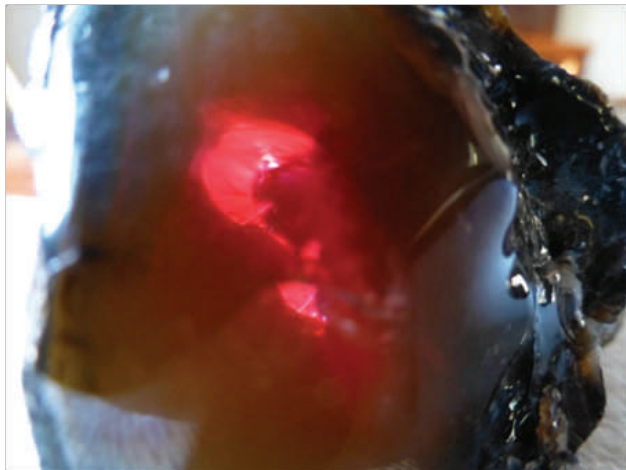
A previous Club trip to the Valley had been disappointing for everyone. But, here was proof that it was possible to find some great specimens, and I longed from that time on to return.

So, as Harry and Tina planned the 2013 Club trip to Utah, I called the opal mine recommended by the park ranger. The fee was a hefty \$500.

So, I asked the owner what I could expect to find for that amount of money. "Nothing," he shouted in my ear. Stammering at my poor choice of words, I said "Let me rephrase that. What do a lot of people find?" He said "Anything from nothing to Oh My God." So, as I remembered that life is short, and with the ever-present bucket list tugging at my purse strings, I decided to go. Since the Club was not going that far north, Al and I made our plans to immediately follow the Club trip.

Virgin Valley in northern Ne-

vada, named for the river, was formed 16 million years ago followed by millions of years of alternating lakes and forests subsequently buried by volcanic eruptions of ash. Over time, hot springs of silica-rich waters seeped through the layers of ash, and replaced buried wood with hydrated silica. Many of these opalized wood



Precious Black Opal found by author

and limb casts very slowly turned into precious opal.

Most American precious opal is found in the western United States and Mexico. The Virgin Valley is a renowned collecting area and is only one of two places in the world to collect black opal, the other being Australia. However, opals of all colors are found here.

Precious opal is that opal that has a "play of color." This opalescence forms when internal spheres align themselves in formation, creating reflection and refraction. A precious

opal can be transparent or translucent, and unlike common opal, will flash a rainbow of brilliant reds, blues, greens and purples. It can be worth more per carat than diamonds.

At the mine, the owner delivered a loader full of moist clay derived from ancient volcanic ash. To find opal, clay clods were reduced into orange-sized clumps by stabbing them with large and small clod-breaking tools, T-bars with pointed ends. We looked and listened for glassy areas in the clay. Since we had less than eight hours to search the whole pile, we didn't take time to examine each specimen carefully, just plunked them into water-filled buckets.

All opals contain a large amount of water and are prone to cracking. But, Nevada opals contain more water than Australian ones and



Opal-bearing clay

are, therefore, often kept in water to preserve them.

(Continued on page 5)

Success at the Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine

(Continued from page 4)

The pile of moist clay clumps and loose dirt didn't seem too overwhelming at first, but as the hot sun of the high desert (5-6,000 ft.) beat down all day, the pile seemed to grow bigger and bigger. Each opal find was as thrilling as the first. And, as the soil dried out from exposure, the opals fell out of the clay, making it a little easier to collect. But, don't get the impression that it was ever easy.

Fifteen minutes before closing time, we were completely spent. We had achieved our goal of searching the whole pile at least once. We took no breaks except those that could not be ignored. So, we said goodbye to our neighbor collector who was still furiously attacking clods with both hands, presumably for the umpteenth time. We said goodbye to the wild burros who stood and watched us from the far side of the tailings piles, and took our three buckets to the office for show and tell.

We proudly showed off our best specimen, an egg-sized black opal with bright red flashes of color. As other collectors, all repeaters and regulars on this last day before winter closing, assembled at the office to show their best specimens, Al and I headed back to



Large clod-breaking tool



Al using small clod-breaking tool



Holding clod with opal

the campground.

Our free campground 5 miles from the mine turned out to be a real bonus. It was built by the Civilian Corps of Engineers many years ago on a geothermal hot spot, the same one that now fuels Yellowstone National Park. So, without electricity, running water, or sewer for our camper, we could at least take a warm

shower (83 degrees) and swim in the hot-spring-fed pool.

Nothing can compare to jumping into that hot spring pool and enjoying the warmth of the shower and the smell of the soap after a day at the mine, although sitting under the clear starry skies came close. The campground, located in the Sheldon National

(Continued on page 6)

Opals and Hot Springs in Virgin Valley, Nevada

(Continued from page 5)

Wildlife Refuge, just south of the Oregon border, was surrounded by multiple small mining camps. Every night, a woman walked down from an upper camp, took a shower, and was picked up by a man on a motorcycle. On Saturday night, four high-school-aged youth drove up, frolicked in the pool, and left. I guess that was date-night-in-the-desert.

We'd like to thank Glen of Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine for an exciting experience, and for cleaning one of our specimens, and globing it up. And, thanks to our collecting neighbor, Mike. Watching him attack two piles was both inspirational and motivational. And, also thanks to the brothers, Art and Don, who helped us to "keep it light." They teased (probably more truth than we'd like to think) us about rattlesnakes, gave us tips about other collecting in the area, and help us with our pile.

As we prepared to leave the mine, Art and Don gave us two opals they had found in our pile after we abandoned it. We thanked them profusely for giving the opals to us. But, they just said, "Well, it was your pile." And then added with a laugh, "but, we kept the good ones."

As we pulled away, one of the brothers, still teasing, rocked our truck and laughed. We laughed, too, because even though our opals will never rival the park ranger's, we were just so happy to not be leaving with "nothing."



Al enjoying the hot springs

Rainbow Ridge 2013 Season Information (2014 information not available at this time):

Opening Date: Friday, May 24th through

Last Digging Day: Sunday, September 15th.

Please note: mine **closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays.**

Reservations for the virgin ground loads will be accepted by phone only (NO EMAIL RESERVATIONS) beginning April 15th through the last day of the season.

Please call: (775) 941-0270 (Summer) or (541) 312-2679 (Winter) to make a reservation.

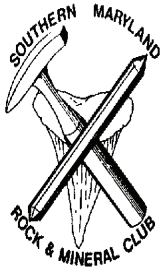
Virgin Ground Load Fee this season is \$500.00, and will admit either one or two adults.

Tailing Fee is \$70.00 per person per day, and children 10-15 are still half price.

SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BRING WITH YOU:

- Small pick (sharp, single hand)
- Small garden rake
- Small shovel or trowel
- Spray bottle with water for cleaning off dirt
- Buckets (5 gal.) for collecting specimens, plus an extra one for a seat
- Sun block, hat, and gloves

Come visit our rock shop; we have lots of beautiful opals for sale, as well as fossils, minerals, and jewelry. We have digging tools and buckets for sale, too. We look forward to seeing you at Rainbow Ridge.



ROCKTALK

Clearwater Nature Center
Maryland-National Capital Park &
Planning Commission
11000 Thrift Road
Clinton, MD 20735
301-297-4575

We're on the web:
SMRMC.org

**Next Meeting:
November 19,
2013
7:00 PM**

**November
Refreshments/
Programs**

Refreshments:

Penny Masuoka

Program

Denise Nelson will give a presentation entitled, "African Diamond Mines." Denise will also bring some items to purchase (gemstones and pearl strands).