

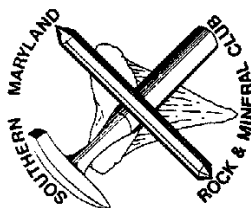
December 2008



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



Message from the President

Christmas is coming!!! It is a time of year when the sun begins to shine longer with the promise of new beginnings. As we close this year as a Club, we are looking forward to new beginnings also.

We have elected a new slate of officers for the coming year so this is my last article to you as president. So let us move forward and find ways to support these officers and volunteer to help keep the Club vital with everyone's inputs. You hear these words over and over and are probably tired of hearing them, but they are a simple reminder of the truth. I have truly appreciated the support you've given in the past and hope that you continue this support during the coming year.

On that note, I wish to give a great big THANK YOU to the staff who have enabled the Club to function this year:

Polly: Program and Refreshment Coordinator

Dave: Trips

Bob: Trips and website

Ralph: Membership and activities announcements

Sandy: Secretary

Jessica: Newsletter (Without your timely reminders, the time would get away from me and I would be too late for these articles.)

Michael: Nature Center liaison

So once more, THANK YOU.

It is with regret, that we acknowledge this is the last time Sandy will be a regular member of the Club. She and her husband are moving to the hinterlands. May they enjoy this period in their lives and have every expectation met. May God richly bless and protect you.

May this season bless everyone and may this next year be the best that you have ever experienced.

Lorna

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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 Michael at (301) 297-4575.

December's Birthstone: Blue Zircon

By Lorna Larson



When I first became interested in birthstones, I was instructed that the blue zircon was the birthstone for December. It was not until sometimes later that I learned that the birthstone for any specific month could be changed by the National Association of Jewelers depending upon availability and market trends. Since the cubic zirconium has been marketed I have not heard much about the blue zircon and the medium to dark blue topaz has been used as a substitute. I think that there are two major reasons for this. As zirconium is the basic mineral for the synthetic cubic zirconium as well as the zircon, they did not want confusion between the mined and the synthetic due to the major price differential between the two. The other reason is that the mined zircon has to be heat treated to turn it blue; but if it is exposed to extensive ultraviolet light, it can lose its color. So why did they not market a blue cubic zirconium as an alternative?

Well that begs another question. How many blue zirconiums have you seen? I have seen all sorts of other colors, even color change, but you don't see that stone. I have seen two. My distributor told me that they would not be cutting them again as it was too difficult. I do not even see it advertised in the rough. So this stone has fallen out of favor as a birthstone. There was one other negative for the stone as it was very brittle and chipped readily. This meant that it was not a good stone for a bracelet or ring. So why was this stone considered for a birthstone, and I have to think that part of the reason was that as a cut stone, if well cut, it is probably comparable to a blue diamond and less expensive.

The dispersion of the zircon and the diamond are very similar; 0.039 & 0.044 respectively. The refractive index is 1.777-1.987 and is doubly refractive except for the green color. It's hardness ranges from 6.5-7.5 on Mohs' scale of hardness. The formula $ZrSiO_4 + Fe, U, Th, Hf$ is basically uncomplicated, but the U and Hf traces leave the stone slightly radioactive and over thousands of years degrade the crystal structure. Heating helps to re-crystallize partially degraded crystals.

Schuman states that the stone has been known since antiquity and that the origin or the word is uncertain. Arem states that the name comes from zar-gun, an Arabic word which was based on two Persian words (zar for gold and gun for color). Schuman also stated that the term hyacinth, an ancient term, referred to the yellow-red to red-brown zircon; and that the term "Starlite" referred to the heat treated blue zircon. So if you peruse old magazines and come across the term "Starlite" in advertisements, you now know that refers to the blue, heat treated zircon.

Arem, Joel E. Color encyclopedia of gemstones. Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York, 1977.

Schumann, Walter. Gemstones of the world. Sterling Publishing Co., New York, 1977.

SMRMC OFFICERS

CO-PRESIDENTS:

Lorna Larson
(301) 567-9116
lormelar@verizon.net

Carole Raucheisen
(301) 932-2148
caroleal@verizon.net

VICE PRESIDENT (membership):

Ralph Gamba

VICE PRESIDENT (Programs):

Polly Zimmerman
pollyzimmerman@comcast.net

Co-VICE PRESIDENTS

(Field Trips):

Dave Lines
(301) 934-9396

Bob Davidson

Diane Porter

SECRETARY:

Sandy Lyon

LIAISON/Youth Coordinator:

Michael Patterson
(301) 297-4575
michael.patterson
@pgparks.com

EDITOR

Jessica Thomson
rocktalkeditor@yahoo.com

WEBMASTER

Bob Davidson

EFMLS Representative

Dee Tinsley
flydeetin@gmail.com

***If corrections or additions are needed, please contact Rocktalk Editor

Minutes...

Sandy Lyon

Carole presided at the meeting.

Guests were Anne Lines and Ed Haack. October minutes were approved.

Flo Streen is home and out hunting for fossils again!

Treasury has \$180.00

Membership – no report

Programs – Jessica announced that Polly wanted to remind the new programs person to be ready for January since it comes quickly!

Field Trips

Dave announced that many samples of calcite, stilbite and other minerals were found at the Vulcan Quarry in Manassas, VA during the last field trip.

There will be a December 13 trip to Morefield Mine for VA clubs and our club. Email with details has been sent to interested members. This may be one of the last opportunities to visit.

It there is a strong NW wind, it will be good for fossil hunting.

Editor

Jessica said to keep the articles coming – there are great.

Web Master

Bob has made no major changes, but some minor ones like updating of dues information. Starting this year, all members will automatically be members of the Clearwater Nature Center Associates. Reports from Mt. Ida and Vulcan quarry trip are needed.

Elections

The motion to put all of the nominees in office was accepted and seconded. The vote was UNANIMOUS!

Clearwater Report

Michael Patterson is working on the Spring show to be held at Watkins. Dues can now be mailed in. A new flier for the Rock and Mineral Club was passed out.

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Minutes...continued

Thanks to the Holden's for the refreshments.

The meeting was adjourned.

Program

Dave and Sandy presented slides, samples and tools used in the trip to MT Ida, AR on October 9-11, 2008 in search of great quartz crystals. Others were encouraged to attend in future years.

Carole said we did a nice job! Thanks.

Upcoming Shows and Events

By Ralph Gamba

January 31 – February 14 –

Arizona Mineral and Fossil Show. Tucson, Arizona

March 21

Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club Show Watkins Regional Park, Nature Center - Largo, Maryland

10:00 to 4:00 Admission

\$2.00, under 6 free.

For directions, see <http://www.freewebs.com/smrmc/2009rockmineralshow.htm>.

March 21 (10-6) March 22 (10-5)

45th Annual Gem-Mineral-Fossil Show.

Sponsored by the Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD.

Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 16 Chestnut St. Gaithersburg, MD.

Adults:\$6, Under Age 12 - Free

“Newcomers and the Old Friends”

By Dave Lines

When we arrived at the mine about 9:15 a.m., the gate was locked and 10 cars were already waiting. Since I had lead the way driving down to Amelia, Virginia for our newest Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral club members --- the Williams family --- Chris, Nancy, Jaret (9) and Ryan (6) --- I introduced them to Harry and Tina who were parked just two cars ahead of us. This was also the first visit to the Morefield Mine for Harry and Tina as they had joined our club just this past summer.

During the trip, I had loaned the Williams family a “sample flat” of Morefield minerals for the kids to study in the car, so they were now familiar with what to look for. We loaned the “sample box” to Harry and Tina and then walked over to the entrance sign to take a few pictures. “For Sale” signs were still prominent. I noticed a few bits of amazonite on the ground and soon we were all picking up little blue-green pieces. The kids loved it.



Soon the gate opened and the cars began to stream in. While everyone made their way to the shop to pay the entry fees, I looked down from the parking area and spotted Sam Dunaway (mine owner) emptying a huge (probably a 100 gallon) steel bucket of water from the mine. When I called to Sam, he explained that the mine was flooded because the pumps had died and he was trying to bail out the mine. He had been working almost nonstop since the day before to fix the pumps and lower the water level --- without success --- in fact, the water level was still rising. Further explaining, he had had trouble with the dynamite failing to explode properly and then had encountered a dike of country rock (60 foot level) which he did not break through until mid week. He finally did get into good pegmatite again on Thursday, but the material he had mined was now under four feet of water with almost no chance to bring it to the surface for today’s crowd. Yet, incredibly, Sam was still smiling. What a positive attitude!

This mid-December Saturday field trip was a rare opportunity for us as the mine had not opened to the public since closing last June. Sam and his wife, Sharon, had invited several local clubs as well as their nearby friends for a special end-of-the-year open house at the mine and we were delighted to be included.

By the time I reached the office, the others had gone down to the mine dumps. After signing in, I visited with Sharon for a few minutes and bought two nice chunks of amazonite. Then I headed downhill toward the mine, stopping several times to chat with friends from both the Richmond and Lynchburg clubs. Eventually reaching the area where the first “dump” of the mined material usually occurred, I joined the Williams family busily picking up amazonite bits. Since the area had received nearly three inches of rain just the day before, the rocks were well washed out and easy to see.

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“Newcomers and the Old Friends”

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In addition to mica books and amazonite, I started spotting amethyst, small slender quartz crystals, clear and white calcite rhombs and pink rhodonite --- all non-native to the Morefield, but fun for the kids, so they received all that I found. When the kids seemed to tire of picking up amazonite, I gave them a little pep talk and told them to think of amazonite like “free money”. I suggested that picking up the small pieces of brightly-colored blue-green was like picking up nickels and dimes. They quickly understood this concept and redoubled their efforts --- showing me one hand full after another while exclaiming loudly “I just found another dollar!”

Then I began showing them how to find the unusual Morefield minerals like cleavelandite, tantalite, magnesium dendrites, spessartine garnets and brown zinnwaldite mica. Bottom line --- I was having just as much fun introducing the Williams family to the Morefield Mine as they did enjoying the experience!



Before long, three other Southern Maryland club members arrived --- Ralph Gamba, Mary Cramer and Gary Lohman --- and all began to scour the dumps with us. By noon, about 100 or so people were looking, so Sam opened the second section of the dumps and everyone shifted their search area. We all found some amazonite scattered around, but Jaret told me that he had found a lot of it along the sloped banks of old red clay dump hills. I followed his advice and, sure enough, there was a great deal of amazonite that had been washed out by the recent rain.

About 12:30, I headed back to the car for a sandwich and encountered Rudy Bland of the Richmond club. After greeting Rudy, he smiled and said he had someone with him. Puzzled by seeing no one else, I asked --- and he said he had brought along his Mom --- Ruth Bland --- a recently deceased and beloved friend to all who had known her. Then he produced a small container of her ashes. His plan was to quietly spread them in the many places that his Mom had loved and the Morefield had been her favorite. That was special.

A few minutes before 1:00, word quickly spread that Sam was going to dump some of the previously mined material for everyone to gather. At the sound of the bulldozer starting up, everyone headed to the dump area. I found the Williams family again and told them what to expect. Then I instructed Jaret and Ryan to wait until the dozer dumped a nice piece of amazonite and, while never taking their eyes off it, to *run* and pick it up. And if it was too big to pick up, just sit on it until we could help. Sam explained to everyone that he was going to make three dumps of material and that we could start picking up rocks as soon as each load was spread.

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“Newcomers and the Old Friends”

CONTINUED

Wow --- the excitement level was sky high. While about 150 folks watched, Sam drove the dozer right through the mud and water, scooped up a load of stockpiled material, turned around and drove out into a lane surrounded by the crowd. When the dozer started spreading the material, everyone rushed out to snag a piece of good rock. The frenzy of so many people picking up rocks at once was incredible. Jaret just missed a big piece that was grabbed by an older kid, but both kids returned with a small piece or two.

At the second dumping, Jaret was definitely ready. About halfway through the evolution, he darted out and picked up a beautiful chunk of amazonite that weighed several pounds. He was estatic! He declared that he had “found the Mother Lode“! The whole Williams family was beaming. Success.

The third load was similar as everyone seemed to find something. I had picked up a large book of mica and a few decent pieces of amazonite. Checking with our other club members, Ralph had found a huge chunk of yard rock that had smoky quartz, cleavelandite, mica and amazonite --- and was debating whether he would keep it. It probably weighed 80 pounds or more. Mary also had a good assortment. Gary had picked up several nice pieces. Harry and Tina found “lots of goodies” as they put it --- amazonite, amethyst, topaz, mica, clear and smoky quartz and others. Harry and Tina also took the underground mine tour of the 45 foot level, made some great photos and declared it ...“SO COOL“.

At the end of the day, we were happy and satisfied ... and all looked forward to some day in the future when we might return to our dear, old friend ... the Morefield Mine.





ROCKTALK

Clearwater Nature Center
 Maryland-National Capital Park &
 Planning Commission
 11000 Thrift Road



We're on the web:
www.freewebs.com/smrmc/

Message from the Editor

Happy Holidays everyone!!!

It's the end of another wonderful year and we have had an exciting year. I know I have been busy with the newsletter and it has been great reading all of the articles and reports that come in. Thank you to all of you who submit pieces for the rest of us to read. Without you, my job would be so much more difficult.

I am planning ahead for the next year already and have gotten a couple of people to commit to regular articles. If anyone is interested in submitting a piece for the newsletter, please feel free. I am in the process of doing some research for a small article for the January issue. I have yet to contribute my own writing, so I want to try to do that. It's actually quite interesting and I've gathered some good information. If you want to learn about something, do some research

and present it in a 1-2 page piece that the rest of us can read. If you have more to share, do a program! Like Lorna kept telling us this year and I agree: Teaching IS the best way to learn.

I would also love to see some different things in the coming year for the newsletter. If you hear a funny rock joke or read or write a poem that is rock/mineral related, send it my way. We'd all LOVE to hear it.

The only other request I have is to get your help for Larry O'C and myself. The Program/Refreshment chart needs to be filled in. I hate seeing empty space and would love to have Larry give me an updated schedule. I know I'm looking forward to hearing from Bob. And I am also looking forward to seeing some new names on that list!

Happy Holidays and Happy Hunting!

PROGRAMS/ REFRESHMENTS

January	<u>Program:</u>	Bob Davidson
	<u>Refreshments:</u>	Tom and Cobb Allison
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		