

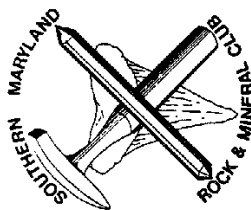
October 2010



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



# Message from the President

On a recent trip to the DiscoverSea Shipwreck Museum in Fenwick Island, Delaware I discovered that emeralds had more practical uses than just jewelry for Spanish sailing ships of yesteryear. These early sailing vessels needed weight aboard the ship to keep it on an even keel. The weights are called ballasts and usually consisted of river rocks, bricks or cargo. When their cargo was gemstones, they got creative and used duel purpose ballasts. The emerald ballast contained rough-cut Columbian emeralds- the most sought after in the world.

Underwater explorers found a Spanish aviso (courier ship) which sank in 1757 in very deep water off the coast of Florida

that contained “a whole mountain” of rough emeralds from the jungles of Columbia. They were going to sort it all out when they arrived in Spain. The ship sunk after burning to the waterline and it’s ballast contained clumps of emeralds, jewels and exquisite personal belongings of the passengers. The largest worked emerald is a six-sided gem that weighs 964 carats. It’s identified as the “Isabella Emerald” - a stone that was wanted by Queen Isabella, the Portuguese wife of Charles V. The deep-green oblong stone is so large that if overlaps the palm of a hand.

They found thousands of emeralds while cleaning a large conglomerate and found a rare and valu-

able gem-quality stone that was translucent, 42 carats, and when cut and polished it radiated a rare natural brilliance and deep-green fire.

Gold, silver, Aztec crystal skulls and countless gemstones were all used for this purpose. It got me to thinking about our rock hunting trips when we drive home in our truck laden with “tons” of rocks and minerals. Maybe, just maybe we’ll get caught in a snow storm and need that extra “ballast” weight in the back to give us more grip on the icy roads...maybe... anyway, when Harry asks me why I put all of that “stuff” in the back of his truck... that’s my story and I’m sticking to it.

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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.

# EFMLS News

Submitted by Jessica Thomson



Betsy Oberheim, the new EFMLS President introduces herself in this month's newsletter. Take the time to get to know her.

Carolyn Weinberger is the AFMS 4th Regional Vice President, which makes her the liason between us and AFMS. Be sure to contact her if you need her help with anything regarding AFMS.



This month we are reminded to help continue the push for the production of gems on stamps through USPS. AFMS has more information on their website for everyone to help in this endeavor.

The AFMS Code of Ethics is included.

For those interested in attending the 2011 Convention in Syracuse, New York, there is a list of things-to-do to assist in your planning.

For more information, go to [www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org)

## Upcoming Shows and Events

Submitted by Ralph Gamba

**October 29-31** Martinsville, VA 3re annual Fall Martinsville Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show Martinsville National Guard Armory 315 Commonwealth Blvd. W. Fri. and Sat. 10 to 6, Sun. 11-5

**October 30** Fairless Hills, PA 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Fluorescent Mineral Show First United Methodist Church 840 Trenton Rd.

**November 13** Richmond, Virginia: 19th annual fall rock swap; Richmond Gem & Mineral Society; Ridge Baptist Church Meeting Hall, 1515 East Ridge Rd.; Sat. 9-3; free admission; swap and purchase mineral specimens, fossils, shells, gems, lapidary specimens; contact Carl Miller, (804) 310-8762; e-mail: [kobold1@erols.com](mailto:kobold1@erols.com)

**November 20-21** Fairfax, Virginia: 19th annual show; Northern Virginia Mineral Club; George Mason University, Student Union Bldg. II, Rte. 123 and Braddock Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5, seniors \$3, teens (13-17) \$3, children (12 and under) and Scouts in uniform free, contact Tom Taaffe, (703) 281-3767; e-mail: [rockcllctr@aol.com](mailto:rockcllctr@aol.com); Web site: [www.novamineralclub.org/](http://www.novamineralclub.org/)

If anyone has information on any other local shows or rock events, contact Ralph Gamba at [rgamba@verizon.net](mailto:rgamba@verizon.net), so they can be included in this list.

## SMRMC OFFICERS

### PRESIDENT:

Tina League

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Tina League

### VICE PRESIDENT (Programs):

Larry O'Callaghan

### VICE PRESIDENT (Field Trips):

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

# September Minutes

By Polly Zimmerman

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Minutes – September 28, 2010

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

Visitors were introduced and said they found our club by the internet web site. Welcome Mandy and Troy

**Minutes** – Minutes approved after correction was noted.

**Treasurer** - Balance is an even \$400.

**Membership** – 77 present members. Roster needs to be updated for next month.

**Programs** - Polly will give the program.

**Field Trips** – Dave announced “lots” of great trips. Check your email for a complete list and times.

Sept 26--Oct 1 Herkimer for Herkimer diamonds

Oct 2 --National Limestone Quarry

Oct 9--10 Trona Ca. Oct 9—Have de Grace Quarry Md.

Oct 16--Morefield Mine

Oct 23 --Willis Mt. and East Ridge mine

Oct 30-- VA Tec open house all day. Good Shopping. On your own.

Nov 13--Richmond Swap

Nov 20-- Possible trip TBD

Dec 4 -- Fossil trip

**Newsletter** – Send in articles. Please send all reports to Jessica.

**Webmaster** – Bob is in Herkimer. No report.

**Old Business** – Rock Show. Need 2 people to do displays in libraries.

**New Business** – Harry needs papers signed for the Rock Show at the Show Place Arena. Tina went over the details for the Rock Show for the new members and guests.

Bob needs to update the street address of the club on the website.

Oct 10 / 8-11pm National Geographic program on Caves on TV.

**Meeting adjourned** – 7:40

# Morefield Mine — Trip #20

By Dave Lines



We always look forward to another opportunity to go to the Morefield in Amelia, VA. Our recent visit on Saturday October 16, 2010 was no exception as 23 (\*) from the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club participated in a field trip to the world famous 81 year old gem mine. (\* Dave - trip leader, Anna and her son Drew, Bob and Jan, Joe and Paula, Mike B. and his daughter and granddaughter, Gary and Cindy, Ralph and Mary, Steve and his son Christopher, Mike S. and his son Patrick, Polly, Ramon and Ann, and Robert and Stephanie)

Anticipation was high when we arrived at the locked gate at the front entrance to the property. Within a minute (literally!) of arrival, new member Christopher (age 8) began to find small pieces of amazonite in the gravel road and in no time he filled the bottom of a plastic bag with his finds. At 9:30 a.m., Sharon opened the gate for us and we headed to the Shop to purchase our admission tickets and begin searching the dumps. A few of us (Joe, Paula, Robert and Stephanie) even elected to take the underground tour of the mine as well.

We took a group picture, then went to the mine dump area to orient the new folks and to find possible leftovers from previous days since the mine had been open 6 days a week since late September. Those searching the dumps found some interesting specimens including amazonite, tantalite and some mica crystals that others had missed. The second part of the dump area opened at 11:30 a.m. and results were similar.

One of the best things at the Morefield Mine is what has been termed as “feeding the pigeons”. Imagine going to a city park and throwing out bird feed --- you are immediately surrounded by a multitude of pigeons which descend and pick up every piece of grain within seconds. It is much like this at the Morefield, when Sam (the owner) scoops up a front end loader full of material that he and his helpers have blasted, mucked out and hoisted to the surface. Sam then spreads it for all the customers to pick up. It is a frenzy.

And to make it more exciting for everyone --- from beginner to seasoned rockhound --- virtually any of the 80 minerals from the Morefield’s complex pegmatite can be in that scoop. For example, last year, a little kid found a huge egg-sized perfect topaz crystal that came from the new 60 foot level. And later Sam’s wife, Sharon, found an even larger one that is now in one of the display cabinets in the Shop --- it probably weighs a pound! It is gorgeous!

So at 12:30, Sam started up the dozer --- the signal for everyone to get ready. Then his helper moved the crowd back well into the first area of the dumps. Sam then spread the mine material for the patiently waiting rock hounds and gave the signal that it was okay to jump in. And “jump in” is exactly what happens --- everyone leaps in to grab a pretty rock or two and within a few minutes the entire scoop disappears. In about 10 minutes, the scene is repeated in the second half of the dump area. The results at first seems to indicate that the beautiful, abundant, deep blue-green amazonite that we found last Spring was gone --- we found very little. We did find lots of pale green massive cleavelandite. And new member, Steve, found two huge mica crystals that weighed several

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# Morefield Mine...

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pounds each. As we eventually screened some of the material at the sluice, we recovered some of the more interesting and rarer minerals such as tantalite. And, of course, the sluicers found some non-native garnets, amethyst, unakite, gray flash moonstone, small clear quartz crystals and mustard colored jasper (or common opal).

At 1 p.m. or so, I took a break and ate lunch, then visited the Shop --- and did some serious purchasing. The rocks I bought were old stock from Bill Baltzley's days as owner of the Morefield --- some nice pink and yellow rhodonite (28 pounds) from Bill's Fluvanna County, VA, property and a great 20 pound chunk of bladed cleavelandite from the Rutherford Mine in Amelia when Bill owned that, too. I also bought a 15 pound chunk of galena (Sam said it could be massive sphalerite) which was interspersed with tiny pyrite crystals. This very heavy specimen came recently from the Cofer Mine near Contrary Creek in Mineral, VA.

Those that took the underground tour were very pleased and took lots of pictures. Maybe they will share some of these with us later.

The final series of spreading of the mine material occurred about 3:30 p.m. and contained more and better amazonite as well as several large pieces of pale green cleavelandite. I was able to grab one of these that weighed 17 pounds, then I re-positioned myself to get into the second spreading area when it was opened.



After the 3:30 spreading, I used a 5 gallon bucket of sluice water in the second dump area to carefully dip and scrub off with a brush, all the dirt covered rocks. After cleaning it, I was very pleased to see that the large chunk of cleavelandite was really spectacular. In addition to being a translucent pale green, it had beautifully formed bladed cleavelandite crystals that were separated by air gaps. About then, Ralph showed me a smaller piece of massive cleavelandite that was covered with small dark metallic crystals. Gary arrived with a small portable Geiger counter and it ticked very rapidly when he moved it over Ralph's specimen. The dark crystals were "monazite" --- a rare earth phosphate mineral containing the elements thorium, lanthanum and cerium. Thorium is radioactive. I then asked Gary to check my large chunk of pale green cleavelandite because the back side was also spotted with the same small dark, metallic crystals. Again, the Geiger counter ticked madly. I had more monazite --- lots of it. Now, that specimen is *really special* --- but --- according to Wikipedia --- it should be kept away from other mineral specimens.

Under the ownership of Sam and Sharon Dunaway, the Morefield has never failed to please. We have always found something there that is *special* --- whether it is our very first -- or our 20<sup>th</sup> trip.

# Meet the Member

Submitted by Carole Raucheisen

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**Name:** Tina League

**Area live in:** Brandywine

**Place of birth:** Prince Georges Hospital

**Occupation:** Gardener for  
Park and Planning; "It's a great job."

**Marital status/spouse's name:** Harry

**Number and ages of children:** Robin 27, Sharon 23

**How became interested in rocks/minerals/fossils:**

Tina has always collected rocks, but nothing organized. The guys she worked with used to tease her because she would always go down to the creek during lunch to collect rocks. Then, Tina and Harry saw a show on the Travel Channel about mineral collecting, and thought that sounded like a new idea for vacation. They went to Hiddinite, N. C. and other sites and loved it.

**How long a collector:** All her life.

**What you like to collect:** Everything.

**Favorite find and how found:**

Red beryl. Before Utah, she would have said Herkimer Diamonds, but getting Herkimers was too easy. Climbing that mountain to get red beryl was real work.

**Favorite Rock Club experience:**

Field trips. Each one is different and there are fun things about all of them. Tina especially liked Utah.

**Funniest Rock Club experience:**

Returning from her trip to New Mexico, the next day checking her emails, and finding out that she was the new Club president.

**Most memorable field trip:**

Rockville Quarry because it was her first trip, and her first time in a quarry, and "it was awesome."

# 'Tis the Season for Sharing-Message from the Editor

By Jessica Dixon

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It's starting to get cold outside. With the arrival of cold weather, we get busier and trips slow down. With that slow down in field trip activity, it is the perfect time to learn something new.

Is there something that you've always wanted to have the answer to? Is there something that you know a little bit about and you want to know more? Do some research and share with the rest of the club!

With the internet, information is at our fingertips. Take this opportunity to look at that information and write a piece for the newsletter, or sign up to do a program next year, or both!

Remember a few things when you are writing:

Watch out for plagiarism! Just when you thought you'd never use what you learned in school—Remember if you are using any source of information, you need to cite your source. Write down the website or book information. If you need help on the correct way to cite sources, let me know.

Stay on topic. If you are doing an informative piece, don't stray into personal stories too often. Throwing your opinion into your writing every now and again is fine, but too much of it can confuse the reader.

Write about something that interests you! If you're bored, your reader will be too!

## Vulcan Quarry Field Trip-Havre de Grace, Maryland

By Jim White

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On Saturday myself and 9 other members of SMRMC met in Havre de Grace at the Vulcan Quarry. We had nice weather for the trip, clear skies, not too hot, not too cold. This was a combined trip with the Baltimore Mineral Society.

After a safety briefing which lasted about 25 30 minutes we followed the quarry rep into the pit. He took us to a spot on the highest ledge and left us to collect. In other quarries where I have collected there are usually rocks which have been blasted loose and then either left where they fell or moved away from the walls. In this place and time there were no rocks other than the berms which had been piled up to prevent people from going too close to the walls.

We spread out and started hunting. We found some specimens of massive Pyrite and a few micros of Epidote. After spending a couple of hours on this ledge we began to migrate to the next ledge down. Here we found a few micros. The list of minerals that we could potentially expect to find had included Pyrite, Chalcopyrite, Rutile and several others, but we had not found anything but Pyrite, some interesting Epidote and some small Calcite crystals. People who I spoke to from the Baltimore club said they had found more micros the last time they had been there.

We stayed a little beyond the time we were originally scheduled to leave (noon), but by 12:30 we had gone through all the available rocks and so decided to call it a day. We went back to the quarry office and signed out, thanked the quarry rep and went on our separate ways.



# ROCKTALK

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

**Next Meeting**  
**October 26, 2010**  
**7:00 PM**

We're on the web:

[SMRMC.org](http://SMRMC.org)

October's  
Refreshments/  
Programs

**Refreshments:**

Larry O'Callaghan

**Program:** Polly Zimmerman

Do you have a favorite rock? It may not be worth anything to anyone else, but you'll never get rid of it? **Bring your favorite rock** to this month's meeting for a one-of-a-kind program.