As I sit at my computer to write my November letter I have come to the conclusion that in three short years I have officially become a "rock hoarder".

It's getting harder and harder these days to find my desk in my small home office. I have to push aside topaz clusters, quartz crystals, amethyst, Herkimer diamonds and an odd assortment of minerals that are waiting to be cleaned and labeled just to get to the keyboard. There are boxes and piles of rocks on the floor and shelves. Harry has even accused me of compromising the integrity of the floor beams- fearing that my office will soon be in the basement if I don't remove some of the weight in here.

I looked over my shoulder, scanning the room and thought to myself, "how did this happen?" Then it dawned on me—we've been on a lot of field trips this year. I looked back through the years trips and found that we had been to Chestnut Ridge, National Limestone Quarry, Herkimer, Morefield Mine, Simpson Farm Amethyst (2x), Utah, Mount Ida, and just last weekend to the Richmond Rock Swap. (By the way, I was very proud of my self restraint at the swap, I only came home with one new rock). Oh and there are two more trips this year that we are signed up for.

Oh my, what to do....well, I guess with winter coming on, I need to spend some time in here cleaning and labeling rocks for the SMRMC show on February 18, 2012. That's one of the nice things about the show. I get to meet other rock hoarders who are in the same dilemma as myself and swap stories about our diminishing household space. I hope we have a good turnout at the show so that we can "adopt new homes" for some of these rocks. And guess what everyone on my list is getting for Christmas.........
EFMLS/AFMS News
Submitted by Jessica Dixon

This month, EFMLS announced their 2012 Wildacres scholarships. This year marks the 40th anniversary and EFMLS will be giving two scholarships to attend. If you are interested in applying, visit the EFMLS website and check out the December issue of the newsletter! This is a great opportunity for those who have never attended before. There is a full list of classes being offered in 2012 for both the spring and fall sessions. Check it out and apply!

For more information on any of these articles, visit www.amfed.org/efmls

In the November issue of AFMS, the new president introduces himself. Take a moment to learn a little about Lauren Williams.

Also included are the 2011 inductees to the National Rockhound and Lapidary Hall of Fame.

For more information, visit www.amfed.org

Upcoming Shows and Events
Submitted by Ralph Gamba

**February 18th:** Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club The 22nd Annual Mineral, Jewelry, & Fossil Show, 10 am - 5 pm. The Show Place Arena, Upper Marlboro, Maryland
http://www.smrmc.org/2012-rock-show.html

**March 17 - 18th:** The Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County 48th Annual GLMSMC Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 11am-5pm - Montgomery Co Fairgrounds, 16 Chestnut Street Gaithersburg, Maryland
http://www.glmsmc.com/show.shtml

If anyone has information on any other local shows or rock events, contact Ralph Gamba at rgamba@verizon.net, so they can be included in this list.
DATE: NOVEMBER 15TH, 2011
MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:15 P.M., NO GUESTS WERE PRESENT

TREASURER: No changes

MEMBERSHIP: No changes, 96 paid in full members

PROGRAMS: Tonight’s program is another installment of OPAL FEVER
December’s meeting will be held on THURSDAY DECEMBER 15TH at 6:00 p.m. at the Nature Center. This will be a potluck, so bring a dish to share and a rock related gift for the Chinese gift exchange. Election of officers will also take place.

FIELD TRIPS: Harry and Tina attended the Richmond swap and 4 of our members participated in the Morefield Mine trip. Both events were successful.

   November 19th  Vulcan Manassas Quarry 7:30-noon. Dave sent fliers and Harry is the trip leader.

   December 10th  Purse State Park Fossil Hunt at one of the years lowest tides.

EDITOR: Jessica will send fliers for Christmas Party, needs fresh ideas for newsletter

WEBMASTER: No change, everything up to date

LIAISON: Mike is working on getting our insurance policy up to date, Dave gave $320.00 to Mike to expedite this so we can go on our trip to the quarry.

OLD BUSINESS: The Rock show is scheduled for Feb 18th, fliers will be available soon to post, Dave will do gold panning demo and Polly and Jessica volunteered to man the front desk.

Nominations for next years officers are:

   President- Tina League
   Secretary- Christine Proctor
   Treasurer- Dave Lines
   Membership- Polly Zimmerman
   Editor- Jessica Dixon
   Webmaster- Bob Davidson
   Programs- Lorna Larson and Jim White
   Field Trips- Ralph Gamba / Dave Lines
Harry, Tina and Dave from the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club plus Bill Gilbert (former Southern Maryland and Richmond club member) and Jeff Taylor, (Richmond Gem and Mineral Society member) all rendezvoused in Mt Ida for the World Championship Dig from October 13-15, 2011. They joined about 50 other rock hounds from as far away as Alberta, Canada for the 25th Annual contest. We were all vying for $1,500 total prize money as well as beautiful trophies. The top 5 winners in each category (best single crystal and best cluster of crystals) received cash and the top 3 in each category also received handsome trophy plaques.

After visiting the Bear Mountain Mine the previous day and after comparing notes with other diggers, we chose to dig at Bear Mountain Mine about 8 miles south of Mt Ida. The rules this year emphasized safety above all with no digging in any walls.

At Bear Mountain, because there is basically only one long deep trench with 50 foot high walls, we were limited as to where we could dig. The owners solved this problem by predigging about 20 dump truck loads of material right from the bottom of the mine. The piles contained great singles and super clusters of beautiful quartz crystals. It was just a matter of carefully and thoroughly digging through the piles.

The results of the contest proved that Bear Mountain was the best choice because virtually all of the top winners came from Bear Mountain. The overall winning cluster score for 3 days of Bear Mountain quartz clusters by one person was 224 points --- or $224 of retail value --- an amount determined by a panel of three expert judges. The winning singles from Bear Mountain were valued at $146 --- those are really nice singles to average nearly $50 each.

The top winner in the “single crystal” category was Dale Almond. And the winner of the “cluster” category was David Walker. Interestingly, both of these gents have participated in the Dig just about every year for the past 25 years and each has placed in the top 3 winners many times. I have dug along side them for several years and they are really very good.

Now for the GREAT NEWS --- our very own Harry and Tina each placed in the Top 10 overall. That is super and they deserve our congratulations. Think about it ---Harry and Tina are each officially ranked as one of the 10 Best Quartz Crystal Diggers in the WORLD!!!! --- (at least in 2011). Now that’s something to tell the grandchildren about!!
Neither rain nor snow nor dark of morning could keep four members of the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club from making the 140 mile plus trip to the Morefield Mine. The four people who braved the storm of October 29 were Lorna, Mike, Rich, and Ralph.

Collecting in the rain at Morefield does have some benefits. One, it washes the dirt off the rocks and makes specimens, especially the amazonite, easier to spot. Two, it keeps the crowd down. Three, if you find something unusual, Sam Dunaway, the mine owner, is readily available to identify your find.

When leaving Southern Maryland, the rain was moderate. During the visit to the Mine, the rain was light to nonexistent. Around 3:30 PM, the sun paid us a visit.

For the first couple of hours the four were the only ones collecting. Around eleven, another collector, Perry, joined us. In the early afternoon, about the time Sam did a small dump for us, a woman and her son joined us.

The rain exposed plentiful amazonite on the ground. Lorna, Figure 2, exclaimed that this was the most plentiful amazonite she had ever collected. Rich, who made his first trip to Morefield, was gathering sample of the different minerals, such as tantalite and green fluorite. Mike found a chunk of cleavelandite which had tantalite, monazite, and spessartine with its telltale ring of mica, Figure 3. Mike also found a chunk of white topaz. While chatting with Perry, Ralph reached down and found a piece of beryl in the mud. Ralph also found a piece of North Carolina dunite, an igneous rock consisting mostly of olivine. Ralph, Mike, and Rich also took chunks of cleavelandite to examine for micros.

Although it was a cold and wet day, the four who went to Morefield had a wonderful time. Lorna, Mike, and Ralph made purchases in their gift shop. The four headed home after a successful trip.
For an avid rock collector, it is always an honor to collect at a location of an important mineral discovery. In this case, the locality is the Barrus Ledge in Goshen Massachusetts, the place where the colorless type of beryl, goshenite, was first discovered. Goshenite got its name from the town of Goshen, Massachusetts. Although goshenite is no longer considered a recognized mineral name, the name “goshenite” is still used in the gemstone market.

Since learning about the locality in the book “Western Massachusetts Mineral Localities” by Allan Plante, attempts to gain permission to collect proved fruitless. The owner, Alvyn Barrus, had passed in the late 1990s, the ledges had become overgrown, and the current owner, Tim Barrus, did not allow collecting because of liability issues.

It did not stop us from trying. Mary and I would occasionally drive by the Barrus Farm and look for specimens by the road on public property. It was on one of these trips in May 2007 that we met a lady getting the mail from her mailbox. We rolled the window down and asked if we could collect. Much to our shock and amazement, she said yes!

We drove up the driveway, got out our tools and with map in hand, we headed along the path. We didn’t get too far when a man, Jonathan, came running after us asking us where we were going. He seemed angry and we thought that was the end of our chance to collect. We told him about the discussion with the lady at the mailbox. He said that we were on the wrong path, but if we can wait a little while for him to have breakfast, he would take us to the ledges. He was leery of people coming on the property treasure hunting without obtaining permission.

Jonathan led us on a half-mile trek through the forest and brush to the ledge, where we collected. He said he hadn’t even been down to the ledge since last year. The ledge was as described by Tim Barrus – overgrown with vegetation. There were scattered piles of rocks that collectors from years ago had left. While we collected, Jonathan told stories about the Farm and the surrounding town. His stories would make an interesting book.

Barrus ledges are a lithium rich pegmatite in the Williamsburg granodiorite from the Acadian Orogeny, forming approximately 365 million years ago. It was once prospected for lithium, but nothing ever came from the attempt. The locals call the area west of Goshen “Lithia”.

The collecting site consisted of boulders that appeared to be dislodged from their origin, possibly carried by ice from the glaciers. The exact origin of the pegmatite is unknown. There are other pegmatite outcrops nearby, most notably Clark Ledge in Chesterfield, Massachusetts, with is the type locality for the mineral microlite.

After a few hours of collecting, Jonathan led us back to the house where he showed us various minerals. He had and lamented over some missing Connecticut prehnite. We remembered a small piece of Virginia prehnite in my car so we gave it to him, with the promise that we would bring him
more samples when we return next year.

Upon returning to Maryland, we examined our finds. The finds included beryl (but no Goshenite), blue and green elbaite (tourmaline) and shorl (tourmaline). It was a wonderful experience and although the finds were not spectacular, just being able to collect at the historic site was an honor. We sent Jonathan a thank you note and included an Indiana geode.

We now fast forward to September 2009. We contacted Jonathan and arranged a collecting trip for Sunday, 13 September. We arrived at our arranged time of 12:30. Two women were having a picnic lunch outside the home. One of them was Ann, who commented about the almandine garnet we gave Jonathan. She was surprised how garnets naturally looked. We presented Jonathan with a few mineral samples from Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. He grabbed his tools and we headed to the ledges.

Things were a little different. Jonathan blazed a new path to the ledge, circumventing some small hills. We joined a group of collectors from the Connecticut Valley Mineral Club.

We collected into late afternoon. Members of the Connecticut Valley club were extremely helpful in identifying and pointing out good places to collect. One collector found some actinolite and identified some that I had found a little later in the day. Jonathan provided me with a sample of spodumene, a lithium mineral. I later found a rock with numerous spodumene blades. Around 3:30, we gathered our specimens and headed back.

Jonathan had a number of his finds spread out on the picnic table. Members of the Connecticut club helped identify his finds. We mentioned the importance of labeling. Jonathan remarked that his uncle, Alvyn Barrus, never labeled his samples. Jonathan provided Mary with a nice Goshenite sample. I remarked about how Ann liked the garnet and got her address to send her one.

Back in Maryland, we began examining our finds. One sample showed promise of having some Goshenite. Another appears to have what looks like a light green spodumene. We also found some spessartine (garnet) in a piece of pegmatite and actinolite. Again, it was an honor to collect at the Barrus ledge. We sent Jonathan a thank you note and Ann an almandine garnet.

1. Wikipedia - Beryl
3. Mindat
You Might be a Rockhound If...
Submitted by Jessica Dixon

- The sign on the side of the road says "Falling Rock" and you pull over to wait.
- The severe sunburn acquired on your last vacation was a one inch wide strip of skin at the gap between the tail of your shirt and the top of your pants.
- When you lick a dirty rock to show off the wonderful colors, without stopping to realize that you are the only rockhound in the group.
- Watching the movie Armageddon while New York is being destroyed, all you can think about is all the great specimens there would be if that really happened.
- Your kids bring you a "pretty stone" they've found, and you contrive to steal it. And you know you've done it. Don't lie.
- You are convinced that buried deep in some secret government archive is a document that will conclusively prove that the entire US Apollo space program was conceived and developed for the sole purpose of getting a moon rock for a certain Presidential rock collection... The truth is out there!
- You care more about what happened to the diamond in the movie "Titanic" than the people.
- You sob uncontrollably watching "How the West was Won" at the part where the farmers are clearing rocks and casting them off.
- You bring a catcher's mitt and a hand lens to a rock fight.
- Someone talks about cleavage and you don't think about women.
- The USGS calls to tell you they've discovered a gravitational anomaly centered on your house and to ask if you might know the reason why.
- Your family puts the birthday candles on a slab of amethyst instead of cake.
- A truck throws a rock into your windshield and you examine the rock first.
- Considering the purchase of a spectacular specimen at a mineral show, you wonder if all three of your kids really need to attend college.
- The rock pile in your garage is taller than you are.
- You begin fussing because the light strips you installed on your bookshelves aren't full spectrum.
- You've ever purchased an individual, unfaceted rock, regardless of the price.
- You've ever spent more than ten dollars for a book about rocks.
- You shouted "Obsidian!" to a theater full of movie-goers while watching "The Shawshank Redemption".

Source: http://dirtyrockhounds.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=general&action=print&thread=1515

November Minutes
CONTINUED

NEW BUSINESS: Money brought in from the auction was used to buy new equipment for the lapidary workshop.
Motion made and approved to permanently hold future November meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of the month so it does not interfere with Thanksgiving.

ADJOURNED: Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m followed by refreshments provided by Fotini and the program provided by Bob Davidson.
The Holidays are here! It’s hard to believe another year is drawing to a close. There have been many adventures shared this year and the promise of many more in the year to come.

With the new year approaching, I’d like to do a couple of things.

1. I’d like to personally thank Tina League, Cheryl Reese, Dave Lines, and Ralph Gamba for contributing regularly to our club’s newsletter. Without you, we would have practically nothing to put into the RockTalk each month! Thank you so much!

2. Thank you to all of the other members who have contributed your time, photos, and words for the RockTalk at various times throughout the year.

3. I would like to put out a plea for help. Just like with our programs, our newsletter is a product of our club. We need members to contribute to the newsletter to keep it filled with fresh ideas. Please consider contributing your ideas to our club’s newsletter. If you have an idea, I can certainly help you turn that idea into a piece for other’s to read!

Please take the time to sign up for a program and refreshments for the coming year. A sign-up chart was started at the November meeting and needs to be completed. Just like our newsletter, it takes clubmembers contributing to programs to make our meetings interesting. If you can’t personally present, consider finding someone outside of the club who can. The sign-up list will be available at the holiday party for more volunteers.

Australian Opals
Submitted by Jessica Dixon

During our November meeting, we finished a video series about Opal mining in Australia. Only a couple days later, I was excited to find an article online on the same topic.

This amazing piece was uncovered by Stuart Hughes of Liverpool along with his partners in the Opal Fields of South Australia. It is the world’s largest Opal matrix.
The stone weighs in at an amazing 55,000 carats!

Just goes to show that you never know when you’ll find “the big one!”

It is about 30cm long, 15-20cm high and 4cm thick.
It is set to go to auction in the UK valued at just over $1 million.


Photo: http://glasspoppy.tumblr.com/
SMRMC’s Annual Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange.

When: Thursday, December 15th; 6:00pm

Where: Clearwater Nature Center

What: Bring a dish to pass. Bring a wrapped gift for “Chinese auction,” around $10.00 value. Gift should be rock/mineral related!

***Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, the November meeting was moved to November 15th, prior to the publishing of this issue of RockTalk.***