



THE GOLDEN NUGGET

April 2007
Number 07 - 04



The Official Voice of the Montgomery, Alabama Gem & Mineral Society

April Program

When: Thursday, April 12th, 7:00 p.m.
Where: Mureal Crump Community Center
1735 Highland Ave.
Montgomery, AL
What: Trip to Quartzsite, AZ. Presented by
Steve Adams of the Alabama Mineral
and Lapidary Society, Birmingham, AL.



Refreshments



David Echols will provide the drinks and Randy Hirst will provide the snacks for the April meeting.

Next month's refreshments will be provided by the Mike Berkman, drinks, and Linda Griebel, snacks.

Please remember to bring paper plates, napkins and cups. Ice is available at the community center.

Happy Birthday!



Jim Gaines - 6th
Vijaya Chava - 15th
David Echols - 19th
Henry Mann - 29th

April Field Trip



A field trip is tentatively scheduled for April 29th. We plan on going to the Anniston Museum of Natural History in Anniston, AL. The museum is approximately 160 miles from Montgomery. Admission will be around \$3.50 per person. More details will be provided at the meeting.

Flexible Sandstone – Can you help?

Before moving to Montgomery, one of my last jobs at the National Museum Wales, Cardiff was to curate a collection of flexible sandstones (also known as itacolumite). This collection contains specimens from each of the classic localities: Brazil, India and the U.S.A. However, as they were collected some time ago (1920's for the U.S.A. specimens), the locality details are very vague. I have a number of references for itacolumite and I know that flexible sandstone or 'limber grit' can be found in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, but I would be interested to hear from members who know of any more detailed localities, specimens in collections, or if it is still collected today.

Helen Kerbey - helenkerbey@bellsouth.net

“Say It Ain’t So Moh!”

Now the Moh’s scale as we have come to know it is currently in the midst of undergoing some dramatic changes as secretly revealed by an insider source recently. Legal briefs have been filed in the 11th Circuit Court in Eclectic, Alabama as of February 29th, 2007.

The Moh’s Scale was initially created to separate and identify differing groups of stone with each group number sharing a very important factor—hardness from the lowest denominator being a soft stone (such as talc) one, to the opposite end of the spectrum with a rating of ten to distinguish the diamond’s high-end rating.

In 1922, Friedrich Leroy Moh, a German mineralogist devised a crude but practical method of comparing hardness or scratch resistance of minerals. It has become universally known as Moh's scale or Mohs scale as the grammatically challenged would call it. Throughout his lapidary life he longed for a set of standards by which the hardness of all stones could be reasonably classified on a scale of one through ten. Mohs, born in Gernrode, Germany, studied chemistry, mathematics and physics at the University of Halle and also studied at the Mining Academy in Freiberg, Saxony. After assuming the position of a foreman at a mine in 1901, Mohs moved in 1902 to Alabaster Alabama, where he was employed in trying to identify the minerals in a private collection of a banker.

His mother, Sophronia Betsy Moh was originally married to a hard working “carnie” that bit the heads off chickens while working as a carnival geek for P.T. Barnum. To say she was the matriarch of a totally dysfunctional extended family is an understatement of major proportions. Money they made; common sense they did not. Sophronia (Mrs. Moh) had an eccentric third cousin, twice removed, by her former father-in-law’s aunt who by chance, had inherited several million dollars from her great grandfather. Turns out, this cousin was named Larry. Larry, who was a loafer; preferred not to waste his valuable time working for a living. Throughout his life he had piddled away the days helping Leroy establish criteria for Leroy’s to-become famous hardness scale.

Not long after Leroy’s eventual death due to an overdose of milk duds, Larry decided he wanted a piece of the action with regard to royalties earned through the implementation of the Moh’s scale. Larry wanted to be remembered and wanted his share of the monies that have accumulated over the years.

Now as if this wasn’t embarrassing enough, consider the following. Mrs. Sophronia Moh’s maiden name was Kurlie. Upon her son’s early and unexpected passing, she too decided she was due some of the financial rewards due her son as a result of his life’s work on the scale of hardness, with which all we rockhounds are now familiar.

Thereon, legal battles of unprecedented enormity have begun in the courts at Eclectic, AL. The chief justices have heard arguments from both sides. No decision could be made at the 11th Circuit Court hearings. So on March 17th, the chief justices moved the hearings to Washington D. C., to be heard by the Federal Courts. Their decision would be final.

This story does have an end, which we are now approaching. In addition to financial rewards being sought by Mrs. Moh as well as the cousin, both are demanding their names be included in the hardness scale formerly known as the Moh’s scale. The sad news, on April 1st, we must report that a liberal judge in Washington, D.C. has agreed to change the name of our beloved scale to include the names of the two claimants seeking notoriety and presumably a name for themselves in the history books.

Therefore, with much trepidation, we deliver the unsettling news to you that as of January 1, 2008 at 12:01 a.m. the Moh’s scale shall no longer be known by its name we had so fondly recognized it by. In the future, mention of the rockhound’s reference to scale of hardness shall be known as the Kurlie, Moh and Larry scale.

Please remember in the future to address this scale accordingly. April Fool’s

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Editors of the Rockhounds Flimflam Journal

Upcoming Shows

April 28-29, 2007, Memphis, TN - Memphis Archaeological and Geological Society. 28th Annual Mid-America Mineral, Fossil, Jewelry Show. Pipkin Building Midsouth Fairgrounds (corner of East Parkway and Central Avenue. Hours: 28th, 9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.; 29th, 10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. Contact: James Butcko, 901.743.0058 or email at rockclub@earthlink.net. Website: www.memphisgeology.org.

May 11-13, 2007, Marietta, GA - Georgia Mineral Society. 39th Annual Mothers Day Weekend Gem and Mineral Show. Cobb County Civic Center, 548 Marietta Parkway (at the intersection with Fairgrounds Road). Hours: 11th and 12th, 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.; 13th, Noon - 5:00 P.M. Jay Gorday @ 770.986.0822 or mayshow@gaminal.org. Website: www.gaminal.org.

June 2-3, 2006, Birmingham, AL - Alabama Mineral and Lapidary Society. 34th Annual Tannehill Gem, Mineral, Fossil and Jewelry Show, Tannehill Historical State Park. From Birmingham: Take I-20/59S to Exit 100. From I-450: Take Exit 1 and follow the signs. Hours: Both days, 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M. Contact: Rick Kittinger at rick.kittinger@bellsouth.com.



Quartz Discredited

by Lilac A. Rugg

(*Mineral Information Network*)



In an announcement that continues to send shock waves through the international mineralogical community, researchers at Pine Ridge National Laboratory have discredited quartz as a mineral species. The news, which was delivered to a stunned audience of mineralogists, crystallographers, and geoscientists, was the result of two years of work by Drs. Philip and Rhoda Zirkle, a husband and wife team who perform cryocrystallographic research at the lab. Cryocrystallography deals with the study of low temperature crystal formation.

The researchers, who made their discovery while studying the crystalline phase transitions that occur in ice when it is subjected to varying pressure and extreme low temperature, were initially puzzled by the presence of a gritty residue found in the growth chamber of their experimental apparatus. When the residue was identified as quartz, the Zirkles began an investigation to determine how it got there. After a two-year series of experiments, they conclusively determined that quartz is an ultrastable crystalline form of water in which the individual atoms are locked in place so tightly that the compound survives the transition to normal and high temperatures.

As part of the crystallographers' research, Dr. Rhoda Zirkle examined the scientific record of the early analysis of quartz and discovered that, due to a calibration error in the original experiment, the two atoms of hydrogen in quartz were misidentified as oxygen, and the one atom of oxygen was misidentified as silicon. Thus, instead of SiO₂, quartz should have been OH₂ or, written in conventional notation, H₂O. She explained that apparently no one had ever thought to confirm the original analysis. The error persisted until the Zirkles' research.

Scientists at Bell Laboratories, where quartz crystals are grown for use in the electronics industry, said the recent discovery explained a longstanding mystery. At the lab, quartz crystals are grown by "cooking" scrap quartz fragments in a hydrothermal solution under high pressure. The scientists observed that even though the

process produced large, high-quality quartz crystals, the size and number of the scrap quartz pieces did not diminish. "Clearly, something was going on that we just did not understand," said a Bell Labs spokesperson. He added that the Zirkles' results "explained everything." The synthetic quartz is formed from the water in the hydrothermal solution while the scrap quartz acts as a catalyst.

In response to the announcement from Pine Ridge, the International Mineral Names Organization immediately discredited "quartz" as a distinct mineral species. Museum curators around the world have already begun the process of relabelling the quartz specimens in their collections as "Ice, variety Quartz" and have advised serious amateur mineral collectors to do the same.

"Ironically," said Dr. Philip Zirkle in an interview after the public announcement, "the ancient Greeks believed that quartz was water that had frozen so solidly that it wouldn't thaw. It looks like the ancient Greeks were right all along."

[*Ed. Note:* In case you haven't already figured it out for yourself, *Quartz Discredited* is a hoax. The article was written as a April Fool's prank by Richard Busch, the Editor of *Lithosphere*, for the April 1994 issue of the bulletin. Unfortunately, when the article was originally published not everyone recognized as it a hoax. The editors of several other amateur gem and mineral bulletins reprinted the article as fact in their own publications. It was apparently (temporarily) believed by more than one mineral collector of serious stature, and the "merits" of the article were reportedly debated in the offices of several state geological surveys. (Yikes!)

It took two years of phone calls and letters; and printed retractions in the *AFMS Newsletter*, *Rock and Gem* magazine, and *The Mineralogical Record* to get the article under control. By the time it was stopped, *Quartz Discredited* had been published in at least four continents. But to everyone's credit, and to the real author's relief, those who were "taken-in" by the article were ultimate good sports about it.]

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General Information

The purpose of the Golden Nugget is to inform members of news about gems and minerals along with news about club, state, and regional activities of interest to our members. Most important, the Golden Nugget provides a way for each of us to share information about projects and to pass on tips that will help others enjoy our hobby. Unless members are willing to contribute, the *Golden Nugget* cannot meet this latter purpose.

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Meetings of the Montgomery Gem & Mineral Society are held every 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Mureal Crump Adult Center, 1735 Highland Avenue, Montgomery, AL. The annual gem show replaces the December meeting. Anyone interested in gems and minerals is invited to attend. Field trips, workshops, and classes are held at various locations. These are announced at monthly meetings. Membership dues are \$12.00 for individuals and \$18.00 for families residing in the same household.

The Montgomery Gem & Mineral Society is a member of the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc.

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MONTGOMERY GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY MINUTES

March 12th, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President Frank Rowell. It was announced that Vijaya Chada, a former member, was present to give away tickets to the Shakespeare Festival. After a drawing Bill Heath was declared the winner.

The minutes were read by Secretary Mary Lou McHugh.

The Treasurer's report was read by Iris McGehee, which was approved and filed with the secretary.

David Sherrod, Field Trip Chairman displayed samples from Hogg Mountain. He announced a field trip to Dothan, March 10. He said you should bring a bucket and you will be charged 20 cents a pound for any material you collect. Directions to site will be on the table.

Tour of the Anniston Museum has a tentative date for April.

Fair sponsorship was approved in the amount \$50.00.

A beginner's wire wrapping class will be March 24 at 9:00 am at the Coliseum Boulevard Library. Jane Mobley will be the instructor. A list of supplies needed is available. For further instructions, contact Drucilla Hornsby.

Refreshments were furnished by Iris McGehee and Mary Lou McHugh

Randy Hirst provided a video on the history of the Hope diamond, after which the meeting was adjourned.

Mary Lou McHugh
Secretary



Club Officers



President:	Frank Rowell - 277-7023
1st V. President:	Laura Hirst - 590-6946
2nd V. President:	David Sherrod - 285-5537
Secretary:	Mary Lou M ^c Hugh - 272-1817
Treasurer:	Iris M ^c Gehee - 262-7275
Directors:	Harold Glover - 285-3501
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