



# The Tidewater Prospector



Newsletter for the Tidewater Gem and Mineral Society, June 2017, Virginia Beach, VA

## **PRESIDENT**

Robin Stoughton  
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## **1st VICE PRESIDENT**

### **(Membership)**

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(757) 855-1207

## **2nd VICE PRESIDENT**

### **(Program/Entertainment)**

VACANT

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VACANT

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Robin Stoughton  
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## **PRESIDENT EMERITUS**

John "Mac" Davis  
1927 - 2014



## **Notes from the President**

by Robin Stoughton

I am continuing to search for another place to have our meetings but having no luck as usual. I am looking for a place to have our meetings, storage and workshops all in the same place. Several members do not like our current location but it is all we have for right now.

We will be showing a video for this months program (hopefully) It is on gemstones, from finding the stone all the way up until it is sold. I need program ideas or a member who is willing to do a program on something. I cannot do everything myself and would appreciate some help for our programs. Thanks to Martin Salyers for the video this month.

Our annual picnic/rock sale is on Saturday, June 17th from 10:00-3:00. I will be there at the church at 9am. I have only heard from 7 members who are coming. I need to know by the 14th if anyone else is coming as I need to get burgers and hotdogs and I do not want to buy too much. Call or message me at 757-822-9631.



Our next show is July 14th-16th with setup on the 13th after 12:00. There will not be a meeting before the show so I need to know, at this month's meeting, who

will be going to storage and setting up the club tables. I will not be available to help. Also if any members want to do a display, I need to know how many. Call me at 757-822-9631. All members who volunteer will be entered in a drawing in August.

Congratulations to Sandee Barton for winning the drawing last month for a subscription to Rock and Gem.

REMINDER: Newsletter input needs to be to Brooks by the 3rd of each month.

Thanks, Robin

## **Treasurer's Two Cents**

by Lloyd Schifflerbian

May was an average month for the club's treasury. This month we had a surge in members (14) who renewed their club membership for 2017. For those who haven't yet paid your \$15 dues, please settle up soon so you will continue to receive our wonderful newsletter by email.



At the meeting, the club raised \$200 from membership renewals, \$48 from slab sales, and \$34 from raffle sales. Members voted to spend \$500 to purchase 95 pounds of slabs (about 1000 slabs) from Bill Stoughton. These slabs will be sold by the club at the July and October shows, as well as be available for sale to club members. We also paid \$110 for a beautiful druzy septarian sculpture for the July show raffle, and \$38 for 600 jasper arrowheads for sale at the July and October shows, as well as for children grab bags. Robin purchased these items for the club while she attended the Spruce Pine Gem Show in North Carolina in May. Other expenses were routine and the treasury balance is about \$4,227.

## The Ellensburg Blue Agate

by Ray Killian



Found only in the northwest corner of lower Kittitas Valley, near Ellensburg, is the unique stone known throughout

America as the "Ellensburg Blue". This Agate is only found in a 20 to 25 miles radius from the town of Ellensburg. It is believed to have been deposited from the last glacial age. This is why one looks for the agate on the surface. Best time to look for the Agate is after the spring thaw or when farmers get their fields plowed, as both bring the Agates up to the surface.

What makes it unique and much sought after? The answers to this question can be summed up in several words, Scarcity, color range and variety, hardness and adaptability to variety of settings.

The scarcity of the stone is such that one to two ounces of cutting material in eight hour search of the rugged hills and fields where it occurs, is considered



a good day's find. Occasionally one finds a stone of up to four ounces and over. Almost all of the land where Ellensburg Blues are found is posted private, or leased land and as such is closed to rock hunters except by special permission of the local rancher.

Color of the Ellensburg Blue ranges from the light, sky blue through a cornflower blue to almost purple royal blue. Clouds, streaks, or bands may occur in stones and graduates from nearly opaque to transparent.

The hardness of any stone is measured on Mohs scale of 1 to 10. One being talc and ten being diamond. Using this measurement, the Ellensburg Blue will test out at from 7.5 to 8.3 or harder on

the scale.

Because of its singular qualities and limited quantity, Ellensburg Blue has been re-classified by many gemologists to be a precious gem. Therefore, should you decide to purchase an Ellensburg Blue, you will not only have a truly unique piece of jewelry, but also an investment that will no doubt increase in value quickly.



I wish to thank all the people of the Ellensburg Agate shop for all the information on this one-of-a-kind agate. They were very helpful in explaining all about this Blue Agate, color, where found and even gave a map as to where would be the best place to go for a first timer. I shall share all these with you.

If you are in the Ellensburg area and have some time stop by the shop. They have a large display of Ellensburg Blue, some very fine one of kind jewelry and unmounted stones. The shop also has jewelry findings and lots of other agates and jasper and many other types of stones.

From The Nisqually Rockhouser, 4/01  
Via RockCollector 10/01



## Annual Picnic

by Robin Stoughton

Our annual picnic/rock sale is on Saturday, June 17th from 10:00-3:00. I will be there at the church at 9am. I have only heard from 7 members who are coming. I need to know by the 14th if anyone else is coming as I need to get burgers and hot-dogs and I do not want to buy too much. Call or message me at 757-822-9631.



## May Meeting Minutes

by Cheri Jackson

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by President Robin Stoughton.

Visitors and guests were welcomed.

Minutes were approved as written in the newsletter.

Lloyd gave the Treasurer's report.

Robin said that there would be no workshop the next day.

She went over details about our second annual rock swap to be held on June 18th at our meeting place. The Peninsula club has also been asked to attend.

The club will be providing hamburgers and drinks and participants are asked to bring side dishes to share.

Several totes of slabs were brought in to see if the club would be interested in purchasing for the TOTE show, it was voted a unanimous yes.

We then had our raffle and door prize drawings.

The meeting was then turned over to members whom brought things in to sell or trade.

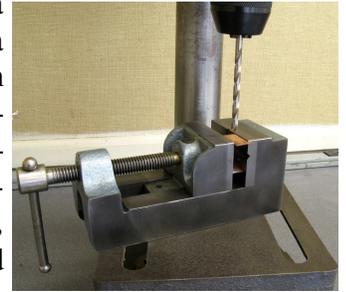
The meeting was adjourned at 9pm.

## Brad's Bench Tips for June

by Brad Smith

### DRILL PRESS VISE

A drill press vise is a versatile tool to hold a workpiece securely and in precise alignment. It reduces the risks of working with high power motors, use of larger drill bits, and higher heat generated in the operation. The vise can be clamped to the drill press table if needed and is quite handy for use at the bench to hold things for sawing or riveting.



You can find them at stores that carry machine tool supplies. My feeling is that the best ones are made from steel. In particular, I like the ones with V grooves cut into the jaw plates. That lets me hold a punch straight upright or hold a rod horizontal. To find a supplier, search on "drill press vise" at sites like micromark.com, msdirect.com, enco, small-parts.com, grizzly.com, sears.com

### DENTAL GOLD



You might think that a couple pieces of dental gold would be valuable, but if you only have a small amount, it can be a problem. Sending it to a refiner is expensive for small amounts of metal.

I made the mistake of thinking I could melt it and roll out my own sheet. However, the trace metals that dental gold contains to make it a good material in your mouth cause it to crack if you try to forge it or roll it out as a sheet. It ruined my whole ingot.

So what to do with a couple gold crowns? A reasonable alternative is to try incorporating the metal into your jewelry. If you have enough material to do a casting, that's probably the best use for dental gold. If you're not into casting, try melting it on a solder pad and while molten, divide it into small pieces with your solder pick. Then re-flow each piece to make little gold balls for use as accents on your designs. The balls can also be planished a bit to make small discs or struck with a design stamp to add texture.

See all Brad's jewelry books at Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

## Ways and Means

by Roger Tiangco

“AMOR CON AMOR SI PAGA”. LOVE IS PAID WITH LOVE! Yes sireeeeeee – TGMS, you are loved! Another wonderful evening was shared by all members and officers present at our May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. I am elated to report to everybody, the enthusiastic support to our “PAID” raffles. Below were the gems and minerals that enhances our generous and playful spirits:

**MOONSTONE/SELENITE:** A well-polished oval shaped cabochon, was so successful to draw a wide smile to the very excited winner, when her ticket number was called. The gem, measured up at 51 x 37 mm and weighs over 38 grams. As we are already aware of, this gem came from the ranks of rock-forming feldspars. It does possess a mystical phenomena of “adularescence”, a term derived from the locality of Adula (Rheinwaldhorn) in Switzerland. Former classic place of origin. MOONSTONE, as birthstone for June born, was believed to bring happiness and good fortune to its wearer. Transparent and opalescent, it is made up of minute fine lamellae of potash orthoclase and sodium albite. Back in the days of Marco Polo (1254 – 1324) – Sri Lanka, which he then called “Zeilan” (Ceylon) in Weeragoda Region, yield the most exquisite Moonstone. The altar steps of Dagoba or Temple of Anuradhapura, was paved with mosaics of this awesome gems. Feldspars mineral, from where this Moonstone came from, to some degree have industrial uses too. They are widely used in ceramic industries, in the manufacture of glazes, flux and as binders – due to its coherent quality. It was in 1970, when it was designated as the State rock of Florida. Other best collecting areas – California, Colorado, New Mexico and the Silica Mines of Virginia.



Moon Stone Gemstone

**GALENA SPECIMEN:** Another happy winner was so enthralled, when his ticket number was called to claim this gem mineral. This prized specimen was also naturally douzed with minute sparkling Pyrites. It measured roughly at 55 x 45 mm and weighs over 100 grams. It is



heavy mineral, usually occurring in lead-gray crystals and cleavable masses. It is the principal ore of Lead. The isometric cubic crystal system of Galena is a sight to behold – perfect cubic cleavage, the three axes are of equal length and all at right angles to one another. It is hard to believe they are natural. Galena is found in veins, pockets and replacement deposits in carbonate rocks. It occurs with zinc, copper and silver. Galena is the State mineral of Missouri and Wisconsin. Other best collecting areas: Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma and Utah.

**DESERT ROSE/GYPSUM:** Three white “bouquets” of Desert Rose, most popular name for the unusual crystal formation of gypsum mineral, draw another wide smile from the winner. Each of the mineral stone, measured at over 27 x 22 mm and weighs over 42 grams. This white-opaque crystal formation is commonly associated with Gypsum sulfate. Some of the denser granular variety of this mineral is called “Alabaster” and finds its use in art stone carvings. The other variety of which were used in cements and plasters. Principally, gypsum sulfate, develops in sedimentary rocks. It can also occur associated with Dolomite and Barite in hydrothermal replacement deposits. Gypsum is of Greek origin “Gypsos” – meaning plaster. Some very, very rare circumstance – when “gem quality” Gypsum exhibits “opalescence” and translucency, they are called “Selenites”. Best collecting areas: Ohio, Oklahoma, New York and Utah.



**QUARTZ CRYSTAL:** The twin-point of terminations from the water clear and hexagonal gem quartz crystal, was able to incite a contagious smile to the other winner. It measured at 45 x 40 mm and weighs over 79 grams. As we are already aware of –



(Ways and Means, continued on page 5)

(Ways and Means, see page 4)

although Quartz crystallizes in the hexagonal system, its prisms are commonly terminated in manners which seem to make the entire crystal look anything but symmetrical in about any axis. The euphonious name “krystallos” – was from the Golden Age of ancient Greece. The water-clear crystals from the mountain, were believed to be – ice turned to rocks from which the Gods have built earthly dwellings, impervious to the heat of the Sun. In Delphi, the classical Greek sanctuary of Sun God Apollo, the drawing of rock crystals and other stones, were used by Thribi for oracle/divination. Quartz, a very important rock forming mineral that develop in various environments, principally a constituent of contact metamorphic rocks. It is most present in hydrothermal replacement deposits. In addition to being valued as gemstone, the Quartz crystal when cut at an angle to its axis, pressure on it generates minute electrical charge. This phenomenon, make Quartz of great industrial component in radio, TV, radar and so many other uses. Best collecting areas: Arkansas, North Carolina, New York and Virginia.

**KAOLIN CLAY PLATE:** Made from a fine white clay – used in the manufacture of porcelain. Kaolin clay was first discovered in the year 1720 in Gaoling mountain of Jiangxi Province, China. Kaolin clay is a chemical composition of hydrous aluminum silicate. It is used in ceramics, formed by the alteration of other minerals, especially Feldspar. The winner of this Kaolin clay plate – will now provide a new home to this exquisite art work. It is a very special plate – that has a painted picture of Mother and Daughter, sharing precious moments – entitled “After the Party”. It was a painting by Mr. Norman Rockwell. The ceramic plate is over 8” and weighs over 330 grams. It bears plate # 12018G , first limited edition – certified by the Rockwell Society of America and was permanently closed on May 8, 1981. Kaolin clay, together with feldspars and mullites, were also of industrial importance. Best collecting areas: California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, North Carolina, Virginia and Texas.



## Agate Creek Agate

by Paul Howard

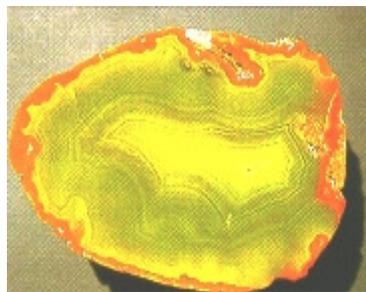
Agate, a translucent cryptocrystalline variety of quartz, is one of Nature’s most beautiful gemstones. For thousands of years man has prized agate for personal adornment, for this variegated chalcedony is characterized by oft-contrasting colors that may be arranged in either strongly contrasting bands, irregular swathes of color, or moss-like inclusions<sup>1</sup>.



Some 3,000 years ago the ancient Egyptians sought colorful agates and other chalcedonies from the Aghates River (now called the Drillo River) in Sicily. As a consequence, many agate artifacts and jewelry have been found in the tombs of long dead Kings and Queens of ancient Egypt.

Today, agate is still very much in demand, for it is a uniquely patterned gem material that offers its owner the desirable attributes of beauty and durability.

Agate Creek in far North Queensland is the acknowledged Australian source for attractively patterned agates that occur in and are weathered from amygdaloidal basalt of Carboniferous age. Agate Creek agates are renowned both for the beauty and diversity of their attractive color patterns. It is a pity that agate from Agate Creek in North Queensland is little appreciated outside of Australia, for this agate displays nearly every conceivable colour and pattern that is possible to observe in agate.



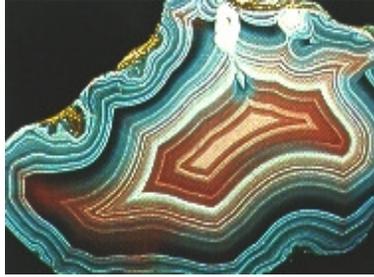
### HISTORY

About a century ago, early prospectors searching for gold in the Gilberton area to the south of Georgetown, found an abundance of amygdule-derived nodules of agate that had accumulated in one of the creeks that flowed into the Robertson River. These agates had weathered and eroded from basalts of Carboniferous age that were overlain by a thick sedi-

(Agate Creek Agate. See page 6)

(Agate Creek Agate. Continued from page 5)

mentary deposit of Hampstead Sandstone This 235 million year old sandstone has a surface area of approximately 80 km<sup>2</sup>. The creek in which the agate nodules were discovered soon became known as Agate Creek. The occurrence of agate at Agate Creek was first reported, as an observation, by W.E. Cameron in his G.S.Q. Report No. 151, dated 1900.



At the time of discovery of this large deposit, no significant value seems to have been attached to its agate, for the world's supply of rough agate came from either the ancient mines surrounding Idar Oberstein, in Germany, or from newly discovered deposits in Brazil. These agates were processed and sold by the traditional lapidaries of Idar Oberstein.

After World War 2, an attempt was made to use heavy machinery to mine the Agate Creek deposits



for commercial purposes. The limited success of these operations was tempered by that fact that at that time the hobby of lapidary was becoming increasingly popular in

Australia. As a consequence, the Agate Creek deposit became a target by enthusiastic fossickers, who appreciated the low cost of self-dug agate. In retrospect it is indeed unfortunate that the oft-unbridled enthusiasm of these early fossickers led to the development of animosity between miners of the agate and those who soon were to be known as 'rockhounds'. As a direct consequence, subsequent amendments to mining regulations effectively prohibited the use of any type of machinery to mine agates at Agate Creek. Today, both professionals and amateurs are free to fossick this deposit - only with hand tools - for the total cost of the purchase of a Fossicking License from the Queensland Department of Minerals & Energy offices in Brisbane, Georgetown, or the goldfield town of Forsayth. It is an indication of the size of the Agate Creek deposit that significant quantities of good quality, well col-

ored agate are still being recovered, sawn, polished, and exhibited.

### THE DEPOSIT

The Agate Creek agate deposit lies at the head of three creeks - Blacksoil Creek, Spring Creek, and Agate Creek. Geological features and fossils found in the area drained by this three creek system indicate that the agates have an age of less than 300 million years.

The amygdaloidal (gas cavity containing) basalt, that flowed over the countryside to an estimated depth of 50-100 m, crystallized many millions of years before a large inland sea covered the area to subsequently form the thick sandstone that now covers the original basalt flows. It was the subsequent leaching of silica from this sandstone that filled the amygdules within this basalt and set the stage for the formation of the Agate Creek agates.

The three creek system, that drains this lightly timbered savanna country, has a length of approximately 26 km and generally runs in a north westerly direction to join the Robertson River about 40 km south-south-west of Forsayth. The Robertson River ultimately drains into the Gulf of Carpentaria once it joins the Gilbert River.

Today, a graded gravel road and tracks lead the intrepid fossicker to the Agate Creek agate field. These roads and tracks are quite suitable for conventional vehicles during the drier May to September winter months in Australia.

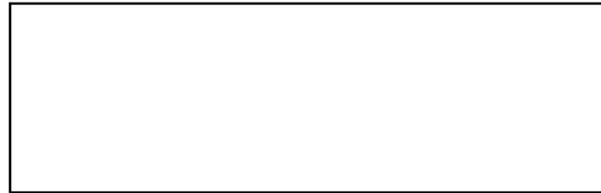
A Mining Guide, presently available from the Queensland Department of Minerals & Energy office in Georgetown, indicates that within the 11 x 3 km boundaries of the present field there are several well known localities at which agates can be mined from either their primary basaltic source, or alluvial deposits derived from these rocks. Recently, the area has been gazetted the Agate Creek Fossicking Area.

Adapted from *Australian Gemmologist* (1996) 19, 215-220





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### About This Publication

*The Tidewater Prospector* is the monthly newsletter of the Tidewater Gem and Mineral Society, Virginia Beach, Virginia, associated with the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Permission to copy freely granted when proper credit given to both the publication and the author.

*The Tidewater Gem and Mineral Society* is a non-profit organization devoted to the collecting and study of minerals, gemstones, geology, paleontology and the lapidary arts as well as the love and deep appreciation of the great outdoors.

**Meetings** are the third Friday of each month at 7:30 PM at Princess Anne Plaza United Methodist Church located at 208 South Plaza Trail, Virginia Beach, VA. Our monthly meetings are open to everyone, no admission is charged.

Website <http://tgms.weebly.com/>

Our meeting in June is on Friday the 16th at 7:30 pm at Princess Anne Plaza United Methodist Church located at 208 South Plaza Trail, Virginia Beach, VA

This month's program we will be showing a video (hopefully). It is on gemstones, from finding the stone all the way up until it is sold.

