



The Red Stick Rockhound

News

Message From the President Ray Duplechain- President



Hi All
Christmas is here! It's time for me to get my wish list together. I could always wish for world peace and all that good stuff. People like to read about that sort of thing. It is expected, in public forums, that a generic wish list is sufficient. But I want more! I would love to take a trip to the northwestern states in search of some of those beautiful jaspers that are found around the Washington/Oregon border. I would also stop by the turquoise mines in Nevada. And a trip to that area would not be complete without stopping at the opal mines in northern Nevada. Oregon also has plenty obsidian and thunder eggs. There is a place in Wyoming that has some really nice terratella. I think I will pick up a few of them also. Maybe I should pull a trailer. Montana agates are highly sought after but sapphires interest me more! I think I will get some rose quartz in the Dakotas before heading to Colorado just because I like Colorado. Then before heading home I might as well stop off at the Tucson & Quartzite shows.

Maybe I should rethink my wish list. I have only 4 days off for Christmas. I know Santa can make all his stops in one night but I drive a Chevy. It doesn't hurt to dream. I will have to save all those things till retirement.

A more realistic wish would be for good health, a happy family and great friends. That, I do have! And more. I am blessed. Enjoy your holidays and may God bless you and your family.

Ray

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WHAT WE CAN'T
DO ALONE
WE CAN DO
TOGETHER



Minutes to November 2012 Meeting

Called to order by Ray Duplechain.

Katherine Rouchon presented exhibit and class on mineral Identification

Minutes of last meeting read by Norma Travis. Approved Diana Martin, Seconded by Glenn Gawarecki.

Treasurers' report by Glenn Gawarecki.

New member, Karen Chapman. Members from a few years ago Gilbert & Ester Stampley.

Mrs. Stampley asked members to present a program for Project HOPE. Volunteers; Claire Coco Norma Travis, Timmy Lapham, Anna Smither and Marguerite

Committee reports:

Publicity- Amanda Clark

Newsletter will be accepting ads from members to buy and sale items.

1213-14 Show Diana Martin looking ahead for organization.

Hospitality- no report

Field Trips- Ray Duplechain- Around March in Jasper, Texas

Norma Travis passed out forms for signing up special committee members

Old Business: Honorary Member Plaque given to Mr. Joe Samrow, Paul Broussard, Herb & Rita Taft.

Ray D. asked about the purchase of quality computer printer for Club use.

Motion by Diana Martin Seconded by Warren Travis. Limit of \$1000.00.

Timmy Ledford to shop for item.

William Holland drawing held; 1 Marie Ray, 2 Warren Travis Alternates 1 Bill Smith 2 Charles Ray.

Ann Smither has someone to teach Silversmithing in February-March 2013. Call her for details.

Ray announced Shows for December; DeRidder, La. 12/8&9. Jackson, Miss 12/8&9.

Meeting adjourned.

Cherie Schofield recently contacted employees of the sand and gravel company Southern Aggregates to ask if members of the BRG&MS could be allowed access to their property for digs. They were incredibly receptive, so last Friday, Dec. 14, Claire, Norma, Cherie and three friends met with an employee of Southern Aggregates on Hwy. 16 in St. Helena Parish to learn about what it will require for our members search for rocks at their sand and gravel operations in the area. Though some of the information is incomplete, this is what I (Cherie) understand to be the situation:

Everyone (each individual) will be required to attend a one time, short safety meeting before being allowed to participate. There are papers to sign which include a waiver stating he/she will be there at his/her own risk. Kevin Black, Vice President/General Manager, is the person to call to set up an appointment for this safety meeting. His number is (225)270-6182. (It would be a good idea to go as a group of several members so that their time is not taken up with too many individuals.)

They are in operation Mondays through Friday and some Saturdays. When we want to go on a dig, we will need to call ahead to make sure there is someone there to take us to a safe area that day. We will be taken in and out of the area.

The information regarding the participation of children under 18 will need to be clarified. If you intend to bring minors, please ask Kevin about the restrictions and requirements as I have gotten mixed responses to my questions. Children are allowed, but with more specific conditions.

This is an opportunity I truly had not expected, as there are real safety issues involved. It never hurts to ask, though. I consider us very fortunate to have been met with such an open and positive attitude.

Happy hunting, all.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Noah Gawarecki - 8th
Sharon Rouchon - 15th
Scott McMickens - 22nd
Charles Ray - 24th
Mari Moore - 28th
Ray Duplechain - 29th

December birthstone is the
Turquoise.

Turquoise's light and delighted color must give self-confidence to subdued personalities, and it's extremely known as a symbol of friendship, because Turquoise is known to be the reason for faithfulness and trustworthy relationships

Membership dues are now due:
Please get with Glenn Gawarecki. If you can't make the meeting, you can mail your dues to:

Glenn Gawarecki
BRGMS
5191 Hwy. 19
Ethel, La. 70730

\$15.00 - Single
\$25.00 - Family



"How Sweet... My Birthstone!"

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Custom cut stones, cabochons, rings,
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Terry Brousseau
Patsy Brousseau
Francis Brousseau
Anne Laure Brousseau

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

The Christmas Goodie Box
Was won by Sharon Rouchon
Congratulations!!!!
She had some great things in that box...



I want to spotlight our club; the Baton Rouge Gem & Mineral Society. What this club does it bring people together that want to share their love of rocks, rock digging, cabbing, faceting, jewelry making...etc.

It brings together people of diverse backgrounds from all of the surrounding areas.

It brings together families that we otherwise may never know.

We have gotten to know each others families and in return they have become our families. We begin to care about each other and form ties with each other. We find that we have other things in common other than rocks. Friendships are formed.


At our Christmas party at the Rays, it was evident that this club is not completely about the love of rocks. Rocks have brought us together, but there is more there and I guess that is what a "club" is supposed to do. Ray and I are thankful for each of you. We have forged friendships for life with you.

We want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and hope that the new year brings everything that you hope for.

Merry Christmas



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Diana Martin
Designer/Artist

***Individual Silversmithing
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How Do You Find Agates? **Agates Inside Out by: Karen A. Brzys**

The formula for successful agate hunting is: Focus + Patience and Time + Confidence + Knowledge and Understanding = Successful Agate Hunting!

By focus we mean that when you go agate hunting, you must make a commitment to do just that. Most people who look for agates probably like all rocks and suffer from “pretty rock syndrome”. What is recommended is that if you want to look for pretty rocks, give yourself a specified amount of time. Allow yourself 15 or 30 minutes to pick up pretty non-agate specimens. Then make a commitment to agate hunt and ONLY pick up agates or agate-want-to-be rocks. Focus is important because it facilitates the efficient use of your time.

Patience is the next key. Other than in designated agate mines, agates in all other locations are few and far between. Patience and time are important. Successful agate hunters commit to the search and spend significant blocks of time. Those who go to a beach, gravel pit or farm field and look for 20 minutes may get lucky and find an agate or two. Those who designate a half-day or longer will certainly have more success. Allow yourself time to get totally engrossed in the agate-hunting challenge. In this way each agate expedition is like a treasure hunt!

Confidence is a key variable that many agate hunters overlook. If you start your search with the attitude “I can’t find an agate,” then you probably will not. So when you go out agate hunting, it may be a good idea to beef up your confidence at the beginning of your search. The first thing you should do is look for a little “chipper” or for a seam agate that only has a little bit of agate in it. You may have to get on your knees or sit so that you can see the smaller rocks. There are more tiny agates in the world than there are larger ones; thus, they are easier to find. Once you find one, put that rock in your pocket and declare yourself a successful agate hunter! No matter what happens the rest of the time you agate hunt that day, you have not been shut out. This initial agate may not be the one that you would normally keep, but it counts. From a psychological point of view, this confidence can make a difference. The power of positive thinking can go a long way. BELIEVE that you will find agates!

The last part of the formula for success is knowledge and understanding. To be successful, you have to THINK LIKE AN AGATE. You have to think from within an agate nodule and understand the specific characteristics that can help you to pick up rocks that have the highest likelihood of being an agate.

Submitted By: Rena McMickens

This will be a six part series that will be submitted by Rena. Enjoy!!

Christmas party pictures can be viewed on facebook. I am adding some for those that don't have facebook.





By: Jimmy Lampham

Tumbling 101

Ever since early man found smooth stones in a stream bed or along the seashore, artisans have been thinking of ways to duplicate the smoothing action of natural forces and movements for bringing out the beauty of irregularly-shaped stones. Parents will often buy a tumbler to introduce budding lapidary enthusiasts (or themselves) to the process of polishing those rocks they picked up on vacation. This will be a brief, introductory discussion of tumbling.

Picking a Tumbler: Tumblers come in a number of forms, shapes and sizes, from very small, inexpensive tumblers, made of plastic, to professional models capable of working tens of pounds of rock at a time. Even if you are only going to do a handful of stones, I wouldn't recommend a plastic tumbler. A 4-pound capacity unit with a molded rubber barrel (the container you put the rocks, grit and water into) should be sufficient for most non-professional users but, if you find you have gathered more leftover, trimmings, cut ends and pebbles than you thought you had, larger capacity units are available. Some of the barrels have facets on the inside to increase the tumbling action and some are just made round like the outside. My experience suggests that the kind with the facets is better for most applications. If you are tumbling material that is very soft or delicate you may need to use a smooth barrel. The tumbling action will still take place, it just won't be as aggressive. For this project I was using a 4-pound tumbler with a faceted barrel.

There are also tumblers that work by vibrating but this article will deal only with rotating tumblers.

One note about tumbling: It isn't fast, particularly if you are tumbling the harder stones (agate, jasper, petrified wood, etc.). Plan on listening to the tumbler for a couple of months, twenty-four hours a day.

Setting Up Your Tumbler: When deciding where to set up your tumbling operation, constant noise is a consideration. Inside a garage would keep the noise from bothering neighbors and would keep your equipment out of the elements but ventilation is important and the noise may bother you. The motors of tumblers often generate a fair amount of heat and, if unable to ventilate properly, can overheat, even to the point of becoming a fire hazard. If you can set it up outside, be sure to provide protection from the possibility of rain but, again, make sure there is plenty of ventilation. I have my tumbler set up outside.

Abrasive/Grit: OK. You have your tumbler and you have it set up. You may have received several packages of grit of varying coarseness with your tumbler. If not, you will need to find a lapidary supply (like Kingsley North or Rio Grande) or possibly a larger craft store (I was surprised to see packages of grit at a Hobby Lobby store in Louisiana...). Tumbling, like any process of smoothing or polishing starts with a coarse grit for "roughing" then moves through progressively finer grits until the finest level of grit, or "polish" is used. If you examine the stones after each level of grit, you will find scratches. The purpose of the progression of grits is that each one removes the larger scratches from the preceding coarseness of abrasive. Even the finest polish, when viewed under a powerful microscope will show the surface is actually covered with tiny scratches but they are so small we perceive them as a smooth, polished surface. As in other smoothing and polishing, the more steps you use, the better result you will get. If you try to skip too many steps, the next grit you use will have a difficult time removing the larger scratches of the previous abrasive. The multi-step process takes longer but will produce better results. That advice has worked for me in other lapidary work, metal finishing, even woodworking. The grits I used in the tumbling project I started for this article were 80, 150, 220, 400, 600 and chromium oxide polish. There are other polish materials (tin oxide, cerium oxide, Linde A) but I have always had good luck with the Chromium Oxide. The kits that I have seen come with tumblers usually have three levels of grit (probably 80, 220, 600 or equivalent) and a polish.

Know your stones: Now it's time to pick your stones. It is best to have all stones in the tumbler of a similar hardness. If you have soft stones with hard stones, you will often find the soft stones ground into oblivion by the action of the harder stones as well as the grit. Soft stones are also often porous and don't take a good polish anyway. A simple way to tell if one rock is harder than another is to try to scratch one rock with the other rock. The rock that gets scratched is certainly the softer rock. For this project, I chose some old pieces of agate. Agate is a good candidate for tumbling because it usually has interesting patterns and is dense enough to

take a great polish but is very hard and will take longer to tumble. The pieces used were mainly about the size of a golf ball or smaller and I didn't prepare them in any special way except to rinse off most of the clumps of dirt and spiderwebs. Other good candidates for tumbling are jaspers and most petrified wood.

Some careful rinsing and a little scrubbing with an old toothbrush and the formerly rough rocks were now beautiful, **Loading the Tumbler:** I filled the barrel of the tumbler about three-quarters full with rough rocks. An old trick I was shown years ago was to add a handful of small pebbles or trimming chips to the mix. For this project I used some old aquarium gravel. These small pieces will get the grit into irregular spots in the rough that the larger stones just won't get into. I then put two tablespoons of 80 grit abrasive into the barrel and added enough water to cover the stones. I made sure the top edge of the barrel and the gasket for the cover were clean and closed the barrel. (Note: If you are tumbling softer stones, you may not need to start with a grit as coarse as 80.) I turned it on its side for a few minutes to make sure it did not leak, put the barrel on the tumbler, plugged it in and let it go. I checked with the neighbors after a couple of days and they did not seem to mind the noise too much.

Tumbling: After one week I stopped the tumbler and checked the mix. The water was now gray and getting "soupy" with ground rock. There was still a lot of roughness on the stones, though. I felt around on the bottom of the barrel and could not feel any grit. I added two more tablespoons of 80 grit, cleaned the top of the barrel and the gasket for the cover (always check that the two surfaces are clean enough to seal), sealed it back up and started the tumbler again.

I repeated the checking process every week for three weeks (stones softer than agate take less time to get smooth). Each time I had to add grit because, even though silicon carbide is really tough, it gets worn down with use. By the end of the first step, the water was a thick, gray soup. It's not toxic or harmful to the ecology – it's just powdered rock – but use a lot of water to rinse it down the drain.

Note: If you have some stones that have smoothed enough when you check the progress, you can pull them out of the current grit mix and put them back in at a later stage.

The stones and the inside of the barrel were rinsed VERY thoroughly and examined several times. As in other smoothing or polishing projects you must be very careful to not have grit from the previous step left because it will scratch your next steps. When I was satisfied that the rocks and barrel were sufficiently clean, I put the rocks back in, added two tablespoons of 150 grit, added water to cover the rocks, closed it up and started again. Since the hard work (rough cutting) was done by the 80 grit, I let this go two weeks before checking.

When I checked the rocks again after two weeks they looked like they were ready to progress to the next step. This was true each time I checked after the 220, 400 and 600 grit steps. One week might have been sufficient after these later steps but I have found that a little bit of extra smoothing at each step will pay off in the finish of the final product. Again, careful rinsing was done between the steps of grit.

The stones were now ready to polish.

One of the tricks often used with the polish step is to use plastic or rubber pellets in the mix to carry the polish around but not let the rocks bang into each other like was happening in the Tumbling stages. Some people use a buffering device like the plastic pellets and some do not. I prefer to use the plastic pellets just to be safe. I have heard of some people using rice or oats to cushion the stones or make the liquid thicker so the stones would not hit together as violently. I haven't tried it but it sounds intriguing....

Polishing: After thoroughly rinsing off the 600 grit and water, I put the rocks in the barrel again and added two tablespoons of chromium oxide polish, a handful of plastic polishing pellets, water and closed it up again. I am a bit generous with my use of grit and polish but have never regretted it. Unless you only have a limited amount of grit, I'd suggest using enough to be on the safe side. A warning about chrome oxide – it's not toxic but it is bright green. Be careful when you are working with it because it can stain – your clothes, your kitchen counter, that towel you are using to wipe off your hands and anything else that might be of concern....

This time I let the tumbler run for a week before checking. The stones had a nice polish but I felt they would be better with one more week of polishing action. The initial amount of polish seemed to be still sufficient so I didn't add any more. After one last week of tumbling with polish, it was time to clean up and see the finished product. Again, be careful when working with the chrome oxide. I poured the rocks, water and plastic pellets through a colander so as to not lose the plastic pellets. They are shiny gems that showed off the colors and patterns inside the rocks. Tumbling takes time but the finished, polished stones are well worth it.