



Lake City Rockhound News

NORTH IDAHO MINERAL CLUB

August/September 2011

P.O. Box 1643 Hayden, ID 83835

MEETING AT LAKE CITY SENIOR CENTER 1916 LAKEWOOD DRIVE

667-4628 6:30 P.M. Visitors Welcome 3rd Thursday of month

See the NFMS web site at www.amfed.org/nfms See OUR web site for the club at www.northidahomineralclub.com

NO PROGRAM FOR AUGUST 18, 2011

Meeting cancelled

**See you the third Thursday in September Don't forget—
September 15—2011**

Federation meeting in Chehalis attended by Everett and Bev as voting members from our club, and Everett attended the ALAA meeting on Sunday as well. Report in September.

I just came from seeing Karen, Jim Rauch's daughter. She gave me Jim's new address to share with the club members:

4 Seasons Assisted Living across from CDA High School.

JIM RAUCH 860 E. Dalton, Winter Cottage Room #3 CDA, 83815 PHONE: 665-7200 and ask for Jim.

He would love to have company and can leave to go out to: meetings, lunch, dinner, or just to get out for a bit. Just CALL AHEAD: 665-7200 so he will be ready! Just check him out in the log book by the door on the way out of the building.

Karen Goodson's number is: 651-1246 or 689-3109 if you have any questions.

All of Jim's rocks are at his sons home in Post Falls. More info at the meeting.

Thank you, Diane Rose

Diane Rose

QUARTZSITE—HEAVEN OR HELL? From Mingus Rocky times-2009/Jan.

In the 1960s a few pioneer RVers found that the shallow valley just twenty miles east of the Colorado River was a cheap, basic but a pleasant place to spend winter months while their home states up north froze. Searching for some activities to brighten their time they decided on an activity which many shared as a hobby, and organized a gem and mineral show. From small beginnings it grew and grew till now it is a 'must' for rockhounds, just as much as is Tucson in February. But be prepared, there is more to the Quartzsite experience than the show.

If you approach Quartzsite along the 1-10 in mid summer you will pass through a settlement suffering from drought and temperatures which climb into three digits relentlessly, day after day. The town population is about two hundred at that time. There are a few shuttered stores, a sleepy motel, a fast food joint, and little sign of people. Approach Quartzsite in January and as you dip down into the valley there is a sea of white, the roofs of hundreds of thousands of RVs and motor homes. It is estimated that the population rises to over 1,500,000, all in RVs. The activity is chaotic, but all in the slow measured way that comes naturally to the RV population. For a few months there are a series of amazing flea markets, every item of junk imaginable. There are open air stage performances, restaurants of wholesome fare and dubious hygiene, several small supermarkets and a few pharmacies (RVers pop a lot of pills), and port-a-potties in abundance. The show, or shows because there are several running consecutively, are based inside a huge tent. Parking is difficult, there is a long way to walk to anything, haggling is expected and you will be ripped off if you are not knowledgeable about what you are buying. You will come away tired but happy with what you have got, having seen only a fraction of what is on offer and determined to return.

If you go you will find details of the shows all over the internet. If it is your first time try to go with someone who has been before. If you plan an overnight stay the motels are in Blythe, just over the Colorado in California, and you must make a reservation.

To answer the question: Quartzsite, heaven or hell? Summer is hell, but January and February are a sort of grubby, easy going, laid back, senior rockhound heaven.

'ERE WE SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

What exactly do your descendants know about your rock and mineral collection? When you are gone to your reward in heaven, or the other place, will they know what treasures you have collected over the years? How many of them can tell a valuable piece of jasper, because of its beauty or rarity, from jaspers found in abundance in the local quarry? Can they identify the rough precious and semi-precious gem stones you have been hoarding, from glass? When they come to dispose of your collection will they be throwing out the baby with the bath water? All those many hours collecting, all those dollars: will they go for naught. Too often, all around the country, collections are being given away for a tiny fraction of their worth. Even worse is the person invited in to assess the collection; declares there is little value, and, as a favor makes a paltry offer for the best pieces, and is gone, yes there are disreputable collectors. But just as you can decide on where your money goes, where you will be buried and what hymns there will be at your funeral, you can decide the fate of your rock collection. If you have offspring who are truly enthusiastic collectors you have no worries, except perhaps being shuffled off a little earlier than you may have intended. For the rest of us, to preserve your legacy as a collector, start here.

First realize that no matter how long you have been collecting, only a small percentage of the total rocks you have are of cash value to your descendants. A few more are of sentimental value.

Isolate the valuable items. Make labels, what it is, from where, collected when, cost then, value now, why keep it. Put in your will: I bequeath to whomever my best bits which I have labelled, not to be sold for at least five years, and then call the guys from the Gem and Mineral club to come and cart away the rest.

That way you will protect your legacy and give a nice boost to your old friends once you have fallen off your perch. There is a New Year Resolution in there somewhere.

Plagiarized from an article by Trudy Martin, President of SCRIBE, from what I can remember. By the editor of the Minus Club-Dec. 2010

Subj: **Buchanan Oregon Thunderegg Dig Field Trip**
Date: 8/5/2011 3:55:49 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time
From: nospam@orerockon.com
To: nospam@orerockon.com

Hello all, I have some exciting news and I am asking that you pass this along to anyone you think may be interested in a field trip. I have managed to secure the permission of the rancher who owns the famous Buchanan thunderegg beds 20 miles east of Burns, OR. to lead a rock club field trip there next month. The trip will be the weekend of Friday Sept. 16 to Sunday Sept. 18 (depending on the rancher's availability). Digging will be from Saturday morning through Sunday afternoon. We will be digging with hand tools and he will be charging 50 cents/pound which is a very reasonable price for these much sought after thundereggs.

Access to the beds is by short dirt roads which are suitable for high clearance vehicles or SUVs. Digging should be fairly easy, the best tools to bring are picks, rock hammers, and shovels. Bring heavy digging tools if you want to dig to China ! The rancher will try to get his pits cleaned out with a backhoe to prepare for our digging beforehand, but about 5 pits are currently open and should be easy to dig with some cleanout and hand tools right now. Each of the Buchanan pits contains different eggs, so there is a good variety available.

We can dry camp across the highway from the pits at a large, flat gravel pit area with a spring that is suitable for trailers and tenters, and limited camping will also be available across the highway. Other spots to camp are the Crane Hot Springs resort (electric, water, hot springs!) or the Burns RV park (all services), both less than 30 minutes from the beds. There are also a few BLM camping areas that you can use for a small fee (some may be free) nearby. Other nearby rockhounding areas within an easy drive include Stinkingwater petrified wood, agate, plume agate, Burns obsidian, fossil leaves, and more.

Everyone will be required to sign a liability waiver for the Mt. Hood Rock Club's insurance policy which will cover us (free of charge). You don't have to be a club member to attend. It is imperative that I give the rancher an estimate of how many people will be attending, so I need to get a count of how many people plan to attend in the next couple weeks - please contact me via email or phone as soon as possible!

Print this out and bring this to your next club meeting, email and call all your rockhound friends - we need a good turnout so the ranchers will be happy with the trip and invite us back again!

Tim Fisher

OreRockOn.com

rockhoundl@orerockon.com

503 631-8961

This is a terrific opportunity to get with some great people in the Mt. Hood Rock Club. Bill Johnson from our club would love to go if someone else would like to go and split the gas—etc. Sounds like a great trip. How about it??? Call him!!! 765 3099



Junior—mommy would like to talk to you about your rock collection!

Rubies, Sapphires and other sparkling baubles

By Gaston Lacombe April 2, 2009

Franklin, N.C.-Getting your bling on can be a dirty job, especially when digging for your own gems. You don't need to be an experienced miner to rummage through Mother Nature's jewellery box; the only requirements are a taste for the outdoors and a bit of a gambler's spirit. It helps though if, like me, you love rocks. Western North Carolina holds some of the richest and most accessible gem mines in the United States. Depending on where you quarry, abundant deposits of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, aquamarines, garnets and many other types of stones wait to be uncovered.

The area around Franklin has long been known for its rich alluvial deposits of corundum, the mineral that yields rubies and sapphires. Here, in the late 19th century, large corporations extracted corundum for jewellery and the production of abrasives. The development of less-expensive synthetics reduced demand for the stone, and by the 1940s commercial mining in the area had ground to a halt.

Today, tourism benefits the most from these earlier prospecting activities. Many old pits have been reopened and, at every turn of the highway, garish billboards urge visitors to come try their hand at gem-panning. Most of these operations offer "enriched" ore for washing and sieving at a flume. While it may be fun and easy for children to look for treasures in these prepared buckets, it felt like fishing in an aquarium. The gambler in me strove for a more authentic mining experience. As I arrived at Mason's Sapphire and Ruby Mine hilly location, the morning mist that blanketed the meandering road finally revealed an excavated, ochre-coloured mountainside. Already, a few enthusiasts were shovelling dirt, serenaded by bluegrass music from a loudspeaker. A staff member showed me rough and polished samples of the gemstones found in the area before handing me a bucket and sending me to haul out some mud.

Here, unlike similar outfits in North Carolina, the visitor has direct access to the mine. I was joined by a few dozen visitors from all over the eastern United States, many of them return customers.

A grandmother from Syracuse, N.Y., paraded around like a runway model showing everyone sapphire earrings made with the stones discovered on her last visit to Mason's. "Maybe I can get a matching necklace made with today's finds," she bragged, brandishing a newly unearthed 14-carat purple sapphire.

All day, the rubber-gloved tourists dragged vast amounts of ore to the sluice, where they thoroughly washed the dirt away, then sorted through the remaining gravel. The sound of pebbles rasping on metal screens mingled with the animated conversations. The helpful staff, with their eagle-eyed ability to spot the tiniest of gems, hovered around the prospectors to make sure nobody discarded anything of value. While some buckets yielded only mud, others hid one or more unpolished hexagonal gemstones. Twice during the day, the victory triangle rang to announce that a lucky miner had found a sapphire of 10 carats or more. "A few summers ago a young boy came upon a pocket of gems in the mine, and he dug up more than 800 sapphires and rubies in one bucketful " says mine owner Pete Civitello.

That sparked a rush, with cars lined up overnight to come mining. "Not everybody is that lucky," Civitello said, "but nearly everybody leaves with a few nice stones." A few other North Carolina mines grant direct access to their pit, such as Gem Mountain, located a couple of hours to the northeast of Mason's, near Spruce Pine. It offers "guaranteed" buckets as well as expeditions to one of its mines. Unlike Mason's, the rocky area currently exploited at Gem Mountain requires chipping, not digging. The site is dynamited on a regular basis, and visitors who take the mine trip are allowed to rummage through the debris and whack at the cliff with a pick. The main finds are aquamarine, golden beryl, black tourmaline, garnet, morganite and quartz. For Civitello and his staff at Mason's, the most important thing is the authentic mining experience, the type seldom found in North Carolina. The large corporations might have left in the 1940s, but this mine still holds enough gems to last us a few hundred years," Civitello said.

After a full day of digging, scrubbing and carefully sorting my gravel, I pocketed 20-some carats of small sapphires and was left with a load of muddy laundry. For me, no ending could be happier.

(Gaston Lacombe is a free lance writer based in Washington, D.C.)

6/2009 From the Pink Dolomite Saddle Bulletin