



# Conglomerate

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## • **Upcoming Shows**

For the latest information, check out the web site of the Eastern Federation of Mineral and Lapidary Societies:

<http://www.amfed.org/efmls>.

### **MARCH**

**6-7: Stanton, DE** - Annual Gem & Mineral Show and 61st Annual EFMLS Convention hosted by the Delaware Mineralogical Society. Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 11am-5pm, Delaware Technical and Community College @ I-95 Exit 4B, Churchmans Road (Rt 58) Newark (Stanton), DE. Adults \$6, Seniors \$5, Juniors \$4, children under 12 free with adult. [www.delminsociety.net](http://www.delminsociety.net); Wayne Urion (302) 998-0686 or [wurion@aol.com](mailto:wurion@aol.com). Discount coupons and more info at [www.delminsociety.net](http://www.delminsociety.net).

**20-21: Gaithersburg, MD** - The 42nd Gem Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD Show Hours: Sat. 10am-6pm; Sun. 11am-5pm. Montgomery Co. Fairgrounds. Directions: <http://www.mcagfair.com/>

**26-28: Elkridge, MD** - 37th Annual Atlantic Micromounters Conference, hosted by the Micromineralogists of the National Capital Area. MHA Conference Center, Elkridge, MD. Registration & Info: Steve Weinberger, [cscrystals2@verizon.net](mailto:cscrystals2@verizon.net).

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## **Next BMS Meeting: Wed., Feb. 24 at 7:15pm**

The next meeting of BMS will be held February 24th, 2010 at the Cockeysville Fire Hall. See our web page [www.baltimoremineralsociety.org](http://www.baltimoremineralsociety.org) for directions. The meeting will begin at 7:15 pm. After the short business meeting, the program will be “**Mineral Favorites.**”

BMS program chair Jake Slagle explains how this will work: “Everyone who attends is asked to bring in up to five of their most special and/or interesting minerals to show off and address the group for a minute or two about each one. In the event that members bring in more minerals than there's time to address, the format will be to have each member do one or two—presumably the most interesting mineral(s)—and after everyone has presented, then start round two.”

Jake reports that Dennis Coskren (coskrenite) has been lined up for the March BMS meeting to address us on the minerals of Alum Cave Bluff in Tennessee.

## **Minutes of Jan. 27 BMS Meeting**

Vice President Bradley Grant called the January 28th meeting of the Baltimore Mineral Society to order at 7:15 P.M. Since our December meeting was cancelled, the first order of business was the election of officers for 2010. There were no additional nominations offered from the assembled group. Al Pribula moved that the slate be elected as presented. Seconded by Steve Weinberger. Motion carried.

**President** - Bradley Grant

**Vice President** - Jim Hooper

**Secretary** - Carolyn Weinberger

**Treasurer** - Bob Hudgins

**Directors** - Bernie Emery, Steve Weinberger

*(Desautels Chair Cal Pierson and Past President Mike Seeds automatically are members of the Board. Brad Grant and Ed Goldberg continue as Field Trip co-chairs.)*

The minutes of the November meeting were accepted as printed in the December *Conglomerate*. Treasurer Bob Hudgins indicated that the club remains solvent. He reminded members that dues were being accepted.

President Bradley sent around a sign-up sheet for meeting refreshment volunteers. February will be the Weinbergers.

Bradley indicated that he is setting up a **March 13th field trip to the Churchville Quarry** and that he has also contacted the MD Materials Quarry in Northeast. This quarry may be open again for collecting in the fall.

Carolyn Weinberger made a motion that Bradley contact the Baltimore County Fire Dept. and reserve the Cockeysville Fire Hall for our meetings as far in advance as possible. Seconded by Lynne Luger, the motion carried.

The Corbett Award was presented for 2009 to Larry Krause for his long term dedication to the club. Larry was selected by the previous award recipients because he's served in almost all the offices, edited and mailed our newsletters, hosted numerous parties, helped with the Desautels Symposium, and volunteered numerous times to take an office, or help out with any task during his entire involvement with BMS.

*see next page*

**MARCH**, *continued*

**27-28: Chambersburg, PA** - 32nd Annual Gem-Mineral & Jewelry Show, spons. by Franklin County Rock & Mineral Club. Shalom Christian Academy, Chambersburg, PA.

**APRIL**

**17-18: West Mifflin PA** - 2010 Monongahela Rockhounds Gem Mineral and Fossil Show. Sat.: 10am-6pm; Sun.: 10am-4:00 pm. at West Mifflin Volunteer Fire Company, #4 Skyview Hall, 640 Noble Drive, West Mifflin PA 15122. Web Site: [www.monongahelarockhounds.org](http://www.monongahelarockhounds.org) or call 724-327-8618.

**24-25: Franklin, NJ** - 38th Annual NJ Earth Science Gem & Mineral Show (& Outdoor Swap). Co-sponsors: Franklin-Ogdensburg Mineralogical Society, NJ Earth Science Association and Sterling Hill Mining Museum. At Franklin Borough School, 50 Washington Ave. <http://sterlinghillminingmuseum.org/visitorschedule.php#events>

Visit <http://www.amfed.org/efmls> for more information.

**Baltimore Mineral Society**

Mike Seeds, *president*, 717-285-3745; Bradley Grant, *vice president*; Bob Hudgins, *treasurer*; Carolyn Weinberger, *secretary*; Larry Krause, *newsletter*, 410/828-0024.

E-mail news or questions to: [mseeds@fandm.edu](mailto:mseeds@fandm.edu) or [managingeditor@verizon.net](mailto:managingeditor@verizon.net)  
Write c/o 1106 Gypsy Lane West Baltimore, MD 21286.

FIELD TRIP INFO:  
E-mail [Edmund.A.Goldberg@usdoj.gov](mailto:Edmund.A.Goldberg@usdoj.gov) to learn about upcoming mineral field trips.

The business meeting was adjourned at 7:40 P.M. following which a DVD of a talk given by five mineral collectors during a recent Tucson Gem & Mineral Show was presented.

—Carolyn Weinberger

**Shoobox Adventures: Halite from Sodom and Hades**

Yesterday I reached into the shoobox on the end of my bench and pulled out some crystals labeled “halite and sylvite.” That’s not peculiar, but the label said they came from the south end of the Dead Sea, and that’s an interesting collecting site.

Halite is, of course, just salt, *NaCl*, but Sylvite is potassium chloride, *KCl*. Potassium chloride is marketed as a salt substitute, and a sprinkle on your eggs is OK. But in quantities as large as a few teaspoons it is a poison. Furthermore, natural potassium contains 0.118% potassium-40, which is a radioactive isotope with a half-life of 1.26 billion years. A physics teacher says she likes to impress audiences by holding a container of salt substitute up to a Geiger counter. Nevertheless that level of radioactivity is not harmful. Each human contains about 140 g of potassium, which generates about 4400 decays per second producing mostly electrons but some gamma rays. Evidently our bodies can easily repair damage at that level. Eat a banana and you add about 12 decays a second to your body.

The interesting thing about the specimen isn’t the chemical composition, but rather the source. The label says, “Nirvana Hotel/Resort north of Sedom.” Wikipedia says that Sedom is a modern name for Sodom of Sodom and Gomorrah fame, and the area is now known as Sdom. This ancient site is now occupied by the Dead Sea Works, a huge operation using big evaporation pools to extract potash from the waters of the Dead Sea. You can see the evaporation pools at the south end of the Dead Sea in the satellite photos at *MinDat* or Google Maps.

The label mentions the Nirvana Hotel/Resort, and there are an unsurprising number of places around the world called the Nirvana Hotel.

Nevertheless, there is only one at the Dead Sea. The Nirvana Hotel/Resort is located in Ein Bokek, a district of expensive hotels, resorts, and spas just north of the Dead Sea Works on the Israel side of the Dead Sea. In satellite maps you can see the big resorts and their big, blue (unsalty) swimming pools and even locate shopping centers and the official Tourist Health Clinic. The river Jordan is the main tributary flowing into the Dead Sea running through the Sea of Galilee between Israel and Syria and then south into the north end of the Dead Sea, which has no outlets and is thus very salty. There are also thermal springs at the south end of the sea, and those extra-mineral-rich waters are supposedly very good for joint ailments.

You can make your reservation or at least see a photo of the Nirvana Hotel at [www.nirvana-hotel.com](http://www.nirvana-hotel.com).

Under the microscope the crystals are cubic and mostly clear with a few sand grains stuck to them. Presumably they were picked up on the beach at the hotel one sunny day. Sylvite looks just like Halite, so I can’t tell the difference in the crystals, but it is safe to assume that where you find large amounts of natural halite you also find sylvite. The Dead Sea is certainly a salty place; the nearby Mt. Sodom is mostly salt. From the condition of the label, the material must have been collected some years ago, but the crystals come from an old friend who has passed away, so there is no asking for an explanation.

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**—BMS MEETING SCHEDULE—**

7:15 P.M. 4th Wednesdays at Cockeysville Volunteer Fire Hall, York Road just south of Shawan Road. No meetings in Oct. (Micromount Symposium); December (BMS holiday party), May (BMS Picnic).

**—It’s time to renew your BMS Membership!—**

Individual memberships \$10; family memberships \$15. Send payment along with your name, list of family members if applicable, address, phone and e-mail to: **Bob Hudgins, 6713 Balmoral Overlook, New Market, MD 21774**. Or: renew at the next BMS meeting!

## Other Local Clubs

### Chesapeake Gem And Mineral Society, Inc.

(<http://chesapeake.rockclub.us/>) meets the 2nd Friday of each month except August at 7:30 P.M. Women's Club of Catonsville, St. Timothy's Lane & Old Frederick Rd; Catonsville, MD.

### Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore, Inc.

(<http://www.gemcuttersguild.com>) meets the 1st Tuesday of each month except January, July and August at 7:30 P.M. at Meadow Mill at Woodberry, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 116; Baltimore, MD

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New Market, MD 21774  
Or: renew at the next BMS meeting!

## Write for "The Conglomerate"!

Send your observations to [octahedron1@mac.com](mailto:octahedron1@mac.com) or [mseeds@fandm.edu](mailto:mseeds@fandm.edu) for inclusion in *The Conglomerate*. Don't have email? Hand in your submissions at a meeting or by snail mail.

These crystals remind me of the natural halite given to me by Larry Eisenberger. Salt is salt, but the crystals he gave me came from an exploratory oil well in Tioga County, Pennsylvania at a depth of 5300 feet. That's a mile down. Perhaps there is an ancient seabed down there. Larry had to recrystallize the salt, so the perfect little cubes aren't what came up from the depths, but so what? The molecules have just been allowed to go back into the arrangement they naturally prefer. Larry's halite didn't quite come from hades, but it did come from that direction.

—Mike Seeds

## Tucson Reflections: Awesome, as Always

By the time everyone reads this, we will be back at home investigating all the microscopic water crystals left for us by mother nature. They say that no two are ever alike, but we're not about to prove or disprove that theory!

We spent the first two weeks of February out in Tucson visiting the various mineral and gem shows. Although it appears that attendance was once again down from previous years, most dealers seem to have had an excellent show. Buyers were spending money, although with caution.

The theme of the TGMS "main show" this year was Gems and Gem Materials. All the major museums pulled out all the stops again and displayed fabulous gems and the best specimens of their rough crystals from which gems of that type are obtained. Wonderful eye candy.

Not to be outdone, the major gem and mineral shows that are always open before the main event also featured wonderful gem crystals and fabulous mineral specimens. New this year was a cache of 1" or more topaz crystals found at a pocket at Topaz Mountain, Thomas Range, Utah. Prices for the "2nd tier" quality ranged from \$200-\$300 per specimen.

Awesome specimens that we saw included azurite "suns," a new wulfenite find from Nevada, and lots of new Erongo Namibia aquamarine clusters. As in past years, these larger specimens carried with them price tags featuring several zeroes!

We did purchase several thumbnail and micro crystals to add to our collection, and, as usual, took many photographs.

Next year the main show theme is "California Minerals" and the displays and dealer stocks should be just as exciting as this year was. —Submitted by Steve and Carolyn Weinberger

## Late-Breaking News: A Tucson Recognition!

Member Jessica Simonoff, our mineral whiz, received special recognition during the annual awards banquet at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show. Jessica was all set to enter her first competitive display during the show, but our "little bit of snow" forced a change in plans. Not being able to fly out of BWI because their flight was grounded, the family drove to Raleigh, NC and got a flight out from there. Unfortunately, the new flight arrangements prevented them from carrying Jessica's display on the plane because of unheated baggage areas.

Mineral dealer Rob Lavinsky routinely recognizes and gives awards to juniors who enter a competitive display. Jessica was recognized despite not being able to put her case in this year by both the master of ceremonies and Rob.

Congratulations to Jessica on her achievements and her recognition by many, many of the dealers and mineral collectors.

—Carolyn Weinberger

## Maryland's Good Old Days Recalled in Tucson

Dr. Joseph F. Schreiber, Jr. is one of but a few collectors still around who enjoyed the kind of pickings that were available in Maryland during the first half of the last century. During an interview with the retired University of Arizona geology professor during my visit to Tucson this February, he discussed many collecting venues, but his informa-

## Wildacres: 2010 Season Schedule

The spring dates for Wildacres are April 23-29. BMS's own Bernie Emery will be one of the instructors, teaching Basic and Intermediate Cabochons. Other workshops include Chainmaille Jewelry, Exhibiting and Judging, Faceting, Basic and Advanced Fused Glass, Jewelry, Kumihimo, Mineral Identification, Scrimshaw, Basic and Intermediate Silversmithing, and Wirewrapped Jewelry. The speaker in residence will be Bob Jones.

Fall dates are September 6-12. BMS's Steve Weinberger will teach Faceting, while Bruce Gaber will lead workshops on Photographing Small Mineral Specimens and Photographing Gems & Jewelry. Other workshops include Basic and Intermediate Cabochons, Geology I & II, Glass Engraving & Etching, Making Metal Beads (Cold or Hot), Precious-Metal Clay, Silversmithing, and Basic & Intermediate Wirewrapping.

Other activities for participants are field trips, auctions of "good stuff," tailgates, and Fun Nights. Facilities include two lodges, a dining hall, a library and auditorium, a mineral and lapidary workshop and a pottery studio. All are heated. Meals are served family style. Sleeping rooms have private baths and have either two twin beds or one double and one twin bed.

Each session costs \$350, including lodging, meals, and instruction. Registration form is available at <http://www.amfed.org/efnls/regform.pdf>. For more info, call Pamm Bryant at 804-457-4698, or email her at [pjbryant6@juno.com](mailto:pjbryant6@juno.com).



Dr. Joseph F. Schreiber, Jr.  
photo courtesy of Jake Slagle, from <http://mineralbliss.blogspot.com/>



Dr. Schreiber's specimens from the Gunpowder Quarry include a garnet in gneiss (above) and allanite in gneiss (below).  
photos courtesy of Jake Slagle, from <http://mineralbliss.blogspot.com/>



tion about Maryland will be particularly interesting for BMS members.

After service in World War II, Dr. Schreiber used the G.I. Bill to earn his B.A. and M.A. degrees in geology from The Johns Hopkins University. Later he earned a doctorate at the University of Utah, where his research was on the sedimentary record of the Great Salt Lake. He joined the geology faculty of the University of Arizona in Tucson after serving in a similar capacity at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater from 1955–1959.

Dr. Schreiber refers to Maryland as "beautifully situated with igneous and sedimentary rocks and their metamorphosed equivalents, particularly where gneiss and metagabbros are present."

His interests in mineralogy and mineral collecting began in 1938 at the Natural History Society of Maryland, when he became a member of the Junior Division. Charles "Charlie" Ostrander, who authored *Minerals of Maryland* in 1940, was his mentor. He began collecting in the Baltimore area where he and his mineral collecting friends could travel on the Baltimore Transit streetcars. Before the Woodberry Quarry dumps in the Jones Falls Valley gave way to progress, he recalls the collecting as having been "great!" A streetcar ran north on Falls Road to points from which both the Bare Hills Copper mine dumps as well as the Bare Hills Chrome pits were but a short hike away. He showed me a vial of magnetite crystals from the former that were the largest I've ever seen from that locality. He recalls finding the best variety of minerals when combing the serpentine barrens in the vicinity of the chrome pits. (Some of these remain accessible today.) He reached collecting localities further north in Baltimore County by car. A favorite was the Harry T. Campbell Quarry, now the Texas LaFarge Quarry, in Texas, MD. Here, he collected a specimen of wernerite, an uncommon

prize in Maryland; it the most attractive Maryland wernerite I've seen.

Back then, Dr. Schreiber and his cronies were able to collect in numerous still-active quarries—an opportunity today's collectors today can only dream about. If blasting were to happen on a Friday, he says a quarry would usually be available to collectors on the weekends. The long-closed and inaccessible Gunpowder Quarry was among them. Quarry workers would often pile up the garnets that popped out of the gneiss at their change shack. Dr. Schreiber also collected the allanite in gneiss at that quarry. Although allanite has been reported from various Maryland localities, the piece he showed me was the first I'd seen (*see photos*).

West of the Baltimore area in Carroll and Frederick Counties, Dr. Schreiber visited many of the dumps and openings on private land where, mostly in the 1800's, copper and other metals had been mined. The landowners became their friends and welcomed them. Many of these spots have since been built on or paved over. Where possibilities for collecting remain, few landowners are as willing to so readily accommodate collectors today.

The minerals that Dr. Schreiber showed me are among the very few that he has kept since retiring. Most of his specimens were added years ago to teaching collections and to the University of Arizona Mineral Museum, which has stored them away. Some other time, I would love to see and photograph some of them—but not on this trip: the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show beckoned.

—excerpted from a much longer story by Jake Slagle. Read the entire story on Jake's blog, "Mineral Bliss." See <http://mineralbliss.blogspot.com/2010/02/marylands-good-old-days-recalled-in.html>