The Conglomerate

Newsletter of the Baltimore Mineral Society
<www.baltimoremineralsociety.org>

Volume 7, Number 7
July 2011

BMS July Meeting – TUCSON!

from Jake Slagle

The next meeting of the BMS will take place on July 27th at the Cockeysville Fire Hall. The meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

The program will be our annual Tucson Roundup. Carolyn and Steve Weinberger and Jake Slagle will show slides they took at last February's Tucson Mineral Show. Although the official theme of the show was "Minerals of California", many spectacular specimens from around the world were also featured including a spectacular gold nugget from Australia and many "wow" specimens from China.

If you weren't able to visit the show in person, the beautiful slides and lively commentary will give you a flavor of the biggest rock show in America. The meeting will be hosted by the Weinbergers.

Following Quarry Rules

by Brad Grant

In recent days I have gotten reports of BMS members not following quarry rules while collecting. This is very serious.

When on one of our collecting trips, please follow all instructions that the quarry manager gives you.

If all of us don't follow the quarry rules, we will lose our privilege to collect at that quarry. If you have any questions about an area, do not go in the area. Find the Field Trip supervisor and the supervisor will contact the quarry manager about the area.

There can be no exceptions to following the rules set forth by our partners at the quarries we're fortunate enough to be able to visit. Most are pretty clear about not climbing walls, going behind berms or into specific areas that they consider unsafe.

Thanks.

Looking For Volunteers

The 46th Annual Atlantic Coast Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show will be held September 24th and 25th at the Howard County Fairgrounds. Continuing a tradition begun over 40 years ago, the Gem Cutters Guild, sponsors of the show, have offered BMS an opportunity to set up a table, show off what we do to the public, and hopefully entice a few members of the general public to attend our meetings and join our group.

We'll set up a display case at the front of the hall featuring mineral photograhs and specimens, but "manning" the table is up to us all. All we're asking is for you to volunteer about 2 hours of your time to sit at our booth and talk to the public. Bring some of your minerals to show off while you are there. We'll have a sign-up sheet at the July meeting for the early birds to get their preferred time slot....and we'll remind you about it as the time gets closer as well.

Baltimore Mineral Society

The BMS was established in order to allow its members the opportunity to promote the study of mineralogy and to act as a source of information and inspiration for the mineral collector. We are members of the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical Societies and affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month (except October, December and June) at the Cockeysville Volunteer Fire Hall beginning at 7:15 p.m. Visit the club website <www.baltimoremineralsociety.com> for directions.

Yearly dues are $10 for individual members and $15 for family memberships. 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.

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Write for "The Conglomerate"!
Send news, announcements, comments, observations, or articles to <mseeds@fandm.edu>. No e-mail? Hand in your submission at a meeting.

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Rubble from the President

by Brad Grant

With the warmer weather here, I hope everyone is having a nice summer and is looking forward to their vacations and spending time with their families. I am hoping that I can carve out some time for myself as well from work and go poking around some places.

I would like to take this time to thank Alice for hosting our June cookout. The food was fantastic and it is always special time when I can look at the wonderful Fluorite specimens on display in your basement.

I had a wonderful surprise over the past few weeks. Our hot water heater finally gave up on us after 16 plus years of faithful service. What was wonderful about this little event was that while the basement got flooded, I found a couple of Rocks and Mineral Books I had when I was younger (like 35 years younger!!!!!) and I had forgotten all about. Fortunately the books didn't have any water damage. So your President was quite pleased with himself. I was so happy that I was half tempted to replace the hot water heater myself, but Patty didn't seem to be too keen on that idea.

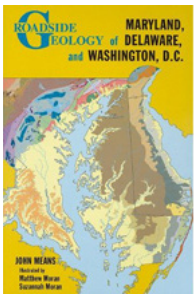
I 've postponed our July field trips to Shippensburg and Havre De Grace. First, the weather forecast tells us we're going to have 90^{+} degree days again and I've been having to work at my "real job" on Saturdays with no relief in sight. I will be getting emails out with the rescheduled trips.

I hope every one had a nice 4th of July holiday and I will see you at our July meeting where we'll get to drool over the spectacular minerals that were on display in Tucson last February.

Brad

Maryland Guidebook

by Mike Seeds



Geological processes proceed slowly as mountains rise and valleys erode, but the geology of Maryland shifted suddenly on October 15, 2010. That's when *Roadside Geology of Maryland, Delaware and Washington, D. C.* (Mountain Press, $24) was published. If you are familiar with the Roadside Geology series, you know the look of the books with the black and white photos and maps. The new guidebook is in full color, with photos of geological formations and full color maps.

The authors, John Means, Matthew Moran and Suzanne Moran bring their own expertise to the book. Means, author of seven

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• Other Local Clubs

◆**American Fossil Federation.** Meetings are held the 2nd Sunday of alternate months (Jan., March etc.) at 10:30 am at the Bowie Community Center, Bowie, MD. <americanfossilfederation.com>

◆**Chesapeake Gem & Mineral Society**. Meetings are held the 2nd Friday of each month (except August) beginning at 7:30 pm at the Woman's Club of Catonsville, 10 St. Timothy's Lane. Catonsville, MD.

◆**Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore**. Meetings are held the 1st Tuesday of each month except January, July and August beginning at 7:30 pm at Meadow Mill at Woodberry, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd, Suite 116; Baltimore, MD 21211. <gemcuttersguild.com>

◆**Maryland Geological Society.** Meetings are held the 3rd Sunday of alternate months (January, March etc.) beginning at 11 am at the South Bowie Community Center. <www.ecphora.net/mgs>

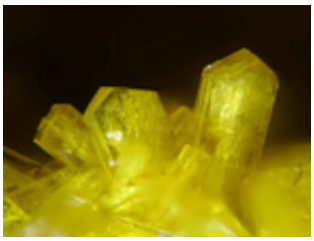
◆**Patuxent Lapidary Guild.** Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 pm. at 169 Defense Highway, Annapolis, MD. <www.patuxentlapidary.org>

In Quest of "the People's Mineral," circa 1954

by Alice Cherbonnier

Summer's a time for us to go to the beach or mountains, or—if inclined toward rock collecting—to nearby quarries or (air conditioned!) mineral museums. Families in the 1950s, however, had an additional recreational option that we no longer have: hunting for uranium. This was such a popular activity that it was written up in Better Homes & Gardens magazine's August 1954 issue. The long story, titled "Uranium hunt: Luck favors amateurs," encourages readers to get Geiger counters and "rush to the hills" ("....judging by the stories of riches garnered almost overnight, a man's chances of making a modest fortune are better now than ever before").

The Atomic Energy Commission helped fuel the collecting craze by buying up whatever "hot" rocks were found, amassing a national stockpile. "You will never own any of the ore you find," we are told, "for Uncle Sam has decreed that all uranium deposits are his. But he pays you well for finding it."



Slowdowskite
Katanga
Dem. Republic of Congo

Uranium, a metallic element that's found in over 115 minerals world-wide, does not occur pure. It can be found in such rocks as pitchblende, uraninite, sklodowskite, carnotite, shale, granite and limestone.

Amateur rockhounds were favored for collecting because they'd go anywhere to find radioactive rocks, whereas professional geologists were viewed as too cautious. We're told that several states out west even paid for "mobile schools" that roamed their territory offering lessons on the benefits of collecting and teaching people how to use Geiger counters.

Those who found radioactive rocks in the 1950s had to file mining claims in order to protect their interests. "Such forms," the story says, "are generally available for a dime at every grocery store in a mining area." Once filled out, the forms were to be filed, for a small fee, in the nearest courthouse. Keeping a claim active was simple: one merely had to do $100 worth of any kind of work on the claim every year.

Uranium is a toxic metal in addition to being weakly radioactive. Not once in this long story promoting uranium hunting by families does the writer mention any possible harm that might occur from exposure to radioactive material or to radon, one of uranium's decay products. There's no suggestion that it might be smart to wear a face mask or gloves or wash your hands after touching the material.

Ironically, the craze for collecting radioactive minerals might have inspired a whole generation of avid rockhounds who moved on to much prettier—and safer—rocks to hunt.

The BMS does not meet in August.
Our next meeting will be in September.

Have a wonderful vacation!

Big Rock Voice

by Mike Seeds

Recently a non-BMS member commented that the Baltimore Mineral Society was mostly micromounters, and that's not even close to true. Why would someone get that impression? What could you do about it?

Of course, BMS invented the idea of a micromounters' symposium, created and administers the Micromounters' Hall of Fame, and each October presents the oldest micromounters' symposium in the world. That has made BMS internationally famous. But out of 51 members on the current roster, only 5 are micromounters. In addition, two other members recently bought microscopes and a few others non-micromounters own 'scopes. So only about 10% of the club members are active micromouners.

Big Rocks
Quartz aka Herkimer "Diamonds". Sizes in this display range from 8" down to 2"....definitely not micromounts.

It happens that the editor of the newsletter and the publishers are micromounters, so their interests are naturally represented in newsletter pages. If you would like to see stories about big rocks, lapidary work, faceting, or other aspects of mineral collecting, all you need do is find your rock voice. The newsletter editors always welcome submissions. Members would love to hear about your collecting trip, what you bought recently, what you saw you couldn't afford, what you've had for many years and love dearly.

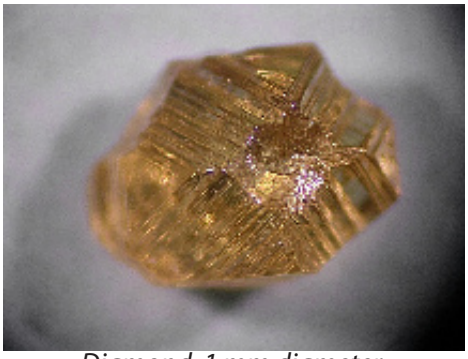
You can write an article, or you can just summarize the information you would like to present. The editor will gladly put it into final form. You can even submit photos of your favorite rocks, collecting sites, tools, etc. Send info to <mseeds@fandm.edu> or hand it to him at a meeting or mail it on paper. Make BMS represent your interests by making your interests known.

Shoebox Adventures: Weird and Wonderful

by Mike Seeds

Sometimes we add a specimen to our collection because it is a perfect example of a mineral form, but sometimes we add a specimen because it is just weird and wonderful. I never know what I'll find when I pull something out of my shoebox to work on. It's not unusual to find something strange under the microscope.

The little plastic box contained 7 tiny bits rattling around and a slip of paper that said "Diamonds, Dudno, Angola". None of the diamonds was larger than a millimeter and most were much smaller. Two were unremarkable crystals, but two were lovely cubes. Two more were octahedral and covered with fine striations, and the last was a strange mixture of an octahedron and a cube with thick growth layers. I turned it over and over under the scope until I decided to mount it with one of the tiny cube faces up so the octahedral layers would be clearly visible.



Diamond, 1 mm diameter
Dudno, Lunda Norte Provence, Angola

Mounting such small crystals is a pain, and I immediately thought of mounting them on squirrel whiskers. (Note that squirrel whiskers can only be harvested from squirrels who no longer have a vested interested in using them. Live squirrels are not good donor candidates.) Hall of Fame member Paul Smith loved to mount on squirrel whiskers, but it is an exercise best made a right of passage. Once you've done it a few times, you might want to move on. I decided to mount the diamonds with white glue on disks of blue paper punched out of a handy real estate ad. You glue the disk to a cork, coat the disk of paper with a thin layer of white glue and quickly set the specimen in the center of the disk.

In the end, I kept three of the diamonds and put the rest in my trade box. A cube and an octahedron are typi-

Weird and Wonderful

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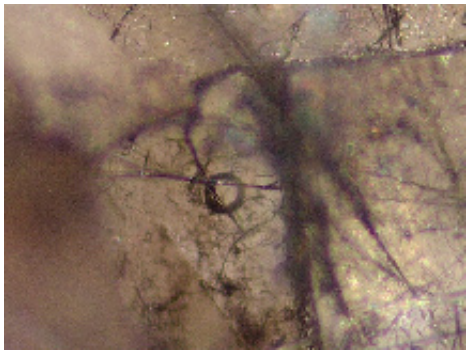
cal of diamond crystals, so they are good additions to the collection. The cube with octahedral layers is welcome because it is so weird.

One of the diamonds was special because it had the "rug habit." It was a small, unremarkable crystal left for last because it was not very interesting. As I lifted it with forceps and moved toward the fresh glue, it popped away, bounced a few times off my toolbox and bench, once off of my arm and then vanished into the rug. It will probably remain in the rug for a long time. Perhaps I should make a label for it.

Weird specimens crop of all the time when you start looking closely. A friend gave me a specimen of boulangerite and said, "Look carefully because there is a ring in there." Boulangerite is lead antimony sulfide, and it forms soft, gray, fibers that can curve like hairs. For reasons molecular, boulangerite hairs can sometimes curve back on themselves and form a ring. The rings are usually very small, so you need a 'scope to hunt them down. It took a long time, but I finally found the little ring buried down in the gray fibers of the specimen. I've studied lots of boulangerite specimens since then but never found another ring. It's just a tiny wonder of mineralogy.



Boulangerite ring, 0.05 mm diameter
Rogers Mine, Madoc, Ontario.

A friend has a micromount collection numbering over 16,000 specimens. He could mount more and expand his collection, but he explained recently that he had begun a project to study each of his specimens systematically looking for unusual things. He has begun a card file listing those specimens with bridges of crystals, unusual crystal forms, inclusions and phantoms inside crystals, rare twins and so on. That will take up lots of long winter evenings when he can't go collecting more rocks, and he will certainly find lots of weird and wonderful things. All he has to do is look.

A Guide to Radioactive Minerals

by Mike Seeds

Most minerals just lay there, but radioactive minerals are doing stuff all the time. The trouble is, they could be doing bad stuff. If you have any radioactive specimens, you should be sure you know how to treat them, how to handle them, and how to store them. It is a serious issue because radioactivity can cause serious illness.

A thorough and thoughtful guide to radioactive minerals is available online at
<http://www.nexus08.clara.co.uk/article.RadioactiveMineralSpecimens.A4.pdf>

Entitled "Here be Dragons - Or - The Care and Feeding of Radioactive Mineral Species" by Alysson Rowan, the 75 page article covers all of your questions, both those you might want to ask and those you really should ask. Section titles include, "Are My Minerals Legal?", "Will Nuclear Radiation make me sterile?", "Will I die of radiation poisoning if I eat my specimens?", and more.

The bottom line is, be sure you know how to store your radioactive specimens. Do not eat while you work with them. Do not inhale dust from them. And most of all, inform yourself if you collect radioactive minerals. Rowan's article is a fine place to start.

Cataloging Your Minerals

by Carolyn Weinberger

We had an interesting discussion with friends at the Syracuse show a week ago. We were all gathered around a mineral dealers booth and Steve was scrolling through his pda to see if we had something in our collection that the dealer had for sale. Another friend pulled out a long, computer generated list representing his collection and did the same and a third admitted to not knowing what he had. This led us to a discussion of how we catalogue our collection.

So now our curiosity is peaked. How do YOU keep track of your collection? Do you number specimens; keep index cards or list things on the computer? Do you store them alphabetically, by locality, or numerically and how...boxes, shelves, cabinets?

Let Mike hear from you. We'll print your method in these pages, get a discussion going, and perhaps you will discover the ideal way to catalogue YOUR collection.

Convention Recap

by Steve Weinberger

The American Federation is made up of 7 regional federations, like our own EFMLS. They hold their convention each year - moving from regional federation to regional federation across the country so that more people can attend. Traditionally, the regional federation that hosts the convention also holds their own meetings at the same time. It's always a fun event and a terrific opportunity to visit with friends from across the country and have access to dealers that you don't normally see in your own neck of the woods.

This year the combined convention was hosted by the Gem & Mineral Club of Syracuse, NY. When you think of Syracuse, you must also think of the Erie Canal which runs through the city, the massive amounts of salt that are mined from the area and used on our streets here in Maryland in winter storms, salt potatoes, Syracuse University, and of course lots of nearby mineral collecting areas.

Since we're both involved with both the AFMS and EFMLS, we attended both of the annual meetings which proceeded smoothly. Reports, which are distributed prior to the meeting, were quickly dispensed with, budgets approved and new officers elected. The Scholarship Foundation meeting was held just after the AFMS meeting and we're pleased to report that the Foundation will be able to continue awarding two $4,000 scholarships to twelve graduate earth science students next year.

Each Federation normally holds a Cracker Barrel session in conjunction with their convention. This year, instead of a "meeting", the group gathered at the Erie Canal Park in Camillus, a small town just west of Syracuse. There we took a canal boat ride and viewed the aqueduct that was built to transport the canal over Nine Mile Creek. Make of wood with stone arch supports, the aqueduct has recently been restored - although this time, treated wood was used instead of the original untreated. Quite an engineering project! Of course we also enjoyed the company of others, nibbled on delicious food, and viewed a reproduction of a canal store as it would have looked in the late 1800's.

Attending the awards banquet and editors breakfast is also always enjoyable. This year our friend Bob Jones (Sr. Editor of Rock & Gem Magazine) was the banquet speaker and kept the crowd regaled with stories about early rockhounds. Of course awards were given out for competitive exhibits, various competitions and on Sunday at the Editors and Webmasters breakfast, awards for bulletins and web sites. You'll have to attend the July BMS meeting to learn how our web site fared in the competition!

The show itself was excellent - with a number of mineral dealers who were new to us. We managed to add a couple of new thumbnails to our collection, and about 2 dozen micromounts. Prices appeared to be reasonable - a surprise considering how dealer expenses have risen.

Next year the EFMLS will be just up the road in Harrisburg the weekend of September 15 - 16 and the AFMS will be in Minnetonka, MN at the end of July. We encourage you to attend and find out what all the fun is about.

A portion of the Erie Canal at Camillus, NY and the restored Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct

Mineralogical Society of Cleveland Display

Hear, Here!

by Ellery Borow, EFMLS Safety Chair. From EFMLS News, June 2011

Can you hear me? I can hear you. In fact I can hear very well indeed. Frankly, that hearing is an amazing feat considering my background. For many years I worked in very, VERY loud plants, mills and various other noisy facilities. Most of those facilities were not just loud - they were places one could feel the loudness in ones feet, hands and torso. This loudness was not merely momentary loudness such as touching off a blast or being near the hammer, hammer, hammer of a pile driver. The loudness I experienced was constantly loud, 24/7 loud. One could stand by another and SHOUT in their ear and yet still not be heard. It was that loud.

Now the point of this story is not to point out my hearing, but to mention how important it is to protect yours. Over the years I have spoken with numerous hearing specialists. Specialists are very good with measuring how much hearing a person has lost. They do however offer differing opinions about how and why ones hearing may have been compromised.

It turns out that ones hearing has an excellent ability to the repair damage imposed upon its sensitive parts - within reason. Over time and continuing duress that ability to self-repair is often overwhelmed by amount of damaging sound waves.

Hearing one loud concert or one loud dynamite blast may cause a temporary feeling of hearing impairment. When exposed to concert after concert or blast after blast that hearing degradation may become permanent. In other words, the ears may no longer be able to repair the damage they experience.

It is easy to point ones fingers at one loud noise or another and say "Ah ha!, that is the culprit." While loud noises are often the culprit they are not the only culprits. If one is exposed to moderately loud noises for lengthy periods of time ones hearing again diminishes, and by pretty much the same means, the body has less and less ability to repair the damage. What are those less than painfully loud noises? Air compressor or electric rock drills and hammers, rock saws and grinding wheels, polishers, high pitched ventilation fans or diamond grinding tools can all cause hearing loss if ear protection is not worn. Even lower decibel noises, when one is exposed to them time and time again, may cause hearing loss.

The moral to this story is to wear your hearing protectors. Hearing protectors worked for me and will work for you. If in doubt as to the loudness of a noise, wear protection.

There are enough types and styles to make it most likely one will find protectors that are comfortable. Even if they are not - what is your hearing worth? Even if one has experienced some hearing loss already, use protection and save what hearing you have! I'd really like you to be able to hear me, hear the sounds of the breeze in the grass, and the wind in the trees.

For this month's safety refresher, please review Bill Klose's fine article on hearing safety in the March 2007 issue of the EFMLS News, which if you do not happen to have is available on the EFMLS website at <www.amfed.org/efmls>. Click on the "Newsletter' tab and then download the issue. It will arrive as a pdf file.

Lets all raise our ear protectors to a cheer of Hear Here!

Maryland Guidebook

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books and a professor of English and geology now retired from Hagerstown Community College, spent seven years traveling the highways of Maryland, Delaware and Washington D. C. studying the landscape and taking color photos for the book. The grace and quality of the language is a welcome addition. The book includes color maps and diagrams created by Suzannah Moran, a geography professor at HCC, and Matthew Moran, an art teacher at Seneca Valley High School, Germantown, MD.

John Means is also author of Maryland's Catoctin Mountain Parks: An Interpretive Guide to Catoctin Mountain Park and Cunningham Falls State Park (The Mcdonald & Woodward Publishing Company Guide to the American Landscape, 1995)

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The Conglomerate
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Upcoming Events

For the latest information, check out the web site of the Eastern Federation of Mineral and Lapidary Societies: http://www.amfed.org/efmls.

July:

27: BMS Meeting - 7:30 pm. Talk will be on the 2011 Tucson shows.

August:

12-14: East Coast Gem & Mineral Show, Eastern States Exposition, West Springfield, MA. "Tucson on the east coast". About 200 dealers - half of which are mineral dealers. Displays featuring the collection of Scott Rudolph (fabulous specimens!). Talks by Bob Jones and others too.

September:

17-18: 46th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show sponsored by the Central PA Rock & Mineral Club. Zembo Shrine, 2801 N. 3rd St., 3rd & Division Streets Harrisburg, PA.

24-25: 46th Annual Atlantic Coast Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show hosted by the Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore. Howard Co. Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd;, West Friendship, MD (I-70 at MD 32).

28: BMS Meeting - 7:30 pm.

September 30 - October 2:

Desautels Micromount Symposium. MHA Conference Center, Elkridge, MD. Good talks on minerals!

November:

12-13: 20th Annual Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by the No. VA. Mineral Club. George Mason Univ., Fairfax, VA.

Maryland Guide

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Commenting on his Roadside Geology book, Means said, "I went down roads to see what I could find. I discovered places that I never knew existed. I hope people see there's a lot in Maryland."