



The Helena Mineral Society Newsletter



Gem, Mineral, and Geological Education and Experience

January 2011

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Classifieds

. Smithsonite is this month's mineral. It is named after James Smithson, founder of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Chemistry is Zinc Carbonate. Hardness is 4 to 4.5 and weight is 4 to 4.45, varying according to composition.

Optical properties: It is translucent and crystals are sometimes transparent. Colors are commonly green, purple, yellow, white, brown, blue, orange, colorless, gray, pink or red. It has a perfect cleavage forming rhombohedrons.

Fracture is uneven. Luster is pearly to vitreous.

Crystals are rare and brittle. Fibrous masses are quite tough.

Smithsonite is a secondary mineral occurring in oxidized zones of sulfide veins and is derived from the alteration of sphalerite in the presence of limestone. Associated minerals include hemimorphite, cerrusite, malachite, azurite anglesite and pyromorphite.

Locally Smithsonite can be found at the Elkhorn Mines, the Summit or Montana Silver Star Mine and the Joe Dandy Mine.

A specimen of this mineral will make a fine addition to any collection

**Helena Mineral Society
Officers for 2010-2011**

President: Andrew Horton
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Vice-president: Kathy Bruce
443-1175

Secretary: Vacant

Membership Chairman
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Member-at-Large: Norm Smith
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Show Chairman: Gary Parisi
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Program Chairman: David Jordan
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If you are interested in taking a wire wrap class, contact Phyllis Smith at 475-3127 for more information.

4 new wire wrap books are available for check out from the club library. Please limit check out time to 1 month per book so others can use them too. Contact Kathy Bruce at 443-1175 to check out these or other books.

If you are making grab bags for HMS, please use ordinary weight fabrics such as shirt, dress or sheet fabrics. Drapery and upholstery fabrics are too stiff to gather up and tie easily. Also, please use only soft, smooth, light-weight cords such as packaging string and make sure cords are long enough to tie after bags are filled.

Now is the time to be considering where you would like to go on field trips this year. If you have a special place or a new area to check out, contact Martin Landry at 431-8081.

If you have grab bag material and want to drop it off, contact Wayne Waters at 458-4919 to make arrangements.

Show dates for 2014 have been secured. They are April 11, 12 and 13, 2014 at the Helena Civic Center.

The 2011 HMS Christmas Party will be held

Dec. 10 at the Hannaford Street Church. More info later.

Next regular meeting is Feb. 11, 2011

-1 COLLECTORS PROFILE - Dr. Dave Jordan

One thing is immediately obvious upon entering the Jordan home...they love minerals! A small display on the wall of the living room pays homage to Dr. Dave's first collecting trip almost 50 years ago. While on a bicycle ride across his home state of Illinois, Dave and a boyhood friend stumbled upon a store with some minerals for sale where he purchased a few colorful cleaved fluorites from the famed Hardin fluorspar district. It's fantastic that he kept those specimens for all these years!

There was a long hiatus in his interest in minerals while he pursued degrees in medicine and ultimately received a MD in 1971. After a stint in the army, Dave and his wife Natalie settled in Helena where he established a practice in internal medicine. Then, in the spring of 1984 Dr. Dave was up on Mount Helena enjoying a day of photography when he came across an interesting blue and green rock.

Further investigation lead him to a pit with a caved in adit where he collected a bunch more pretty rocks. His discoveries turned out to be azurite and malachite, but more importantly they peaked a lasting interest in minerals and a 25 year relationship with the Helena Mineral Society. Over his tenure with HMS Dr. Jordan spent 12 years leading field trips, acted as vice president and in October he graciously stepped to the plate as program chairman. At the Helena Mineral Show Dave and Natalie always manage to come up with great specimens for a display case, and last year took first place for their exhibit on mica. Dave is also one of the master minds behind my favorite event, the Crystal Collectors annual gathering.

While the Jordans have specimens from around the world, their pride and joy is definitely their case of self collected material from Montana, especially those from Mount Helena. While we can all readily appreciate the flashy classic specimens from localities around the world, it takes a true connoisseur to appreciate the scientific intricacies of suites of minerals from a single locality, even more so one as under studied as Mt Helena. In addition to the aforementioned copper minerals (azurite and malachite) which are likely part of the famed Cosmopolitan "copper" lead sought by the early copper barons, Dave's Mount Helena collection includes samples of galena, rosasite, calcite, dolomite, hemimorphite, cerussite, desclowitzite, vanadinite, quartz, limonite ps. pyrite, and sphalerite. Additional specimens include possible mimetite, smithsonite and mottramite while gold and silver were noted in assays.

During our interview I was privy to some wild collecting tales. I laughed at the image of Dave joining Pete Knudsen for a day of mining at the PC. As he told it, they first made sure the escape truck was ready and running, then they lit the fuse on a bundle of explosives and ran like mad, jumped in the pickup and peeled out! After counting the number of blasts...apparently correctly....they returned to the mine face to reap their rewards. How exciting! Another especially memorable outing was the club trip into the Lexington Tunnel between Butte and Walkerville. While it is always special to collect underground, and a bit creepy to think about the need for hard hats and self rescuers, this trip sounded like a mile and a quarter walk through history. As Dave explained, the Lexington tunnel was actually a tunnel built by the mining companies with the expressed purpose of evading higher taxes which would have otherwise been assessed at the portal in Walkerville, in favor of the lower taxes at the other end in Butte. While in the tunnel Natalie scored with a nifty find of euhedral pyrite.

While Dave's self collected specimens are noteworthy, I am even more impressed by his uncanny ability to find amazing specimens in the oddest places; sometimes even tripping over them on his front porch! Patients have delivered unsolicited boxes of rocks to his doorstep and a neighbor even gave him a superb specimen of barite from his days underground at the Meikle mine. Once, Jordan found a grimy little rock at the back of an estate sale for which he paid 50 cents. When he washed it off it turned out to be a nice specimen of gold! And there's more...

A while back a patient was taking care of an old guy with a rock collection who was going to have an estate sale, and Dave was asked if he'd like to come by early to take a look at some of the stuff. Not expecting much, it was quite a surprise to find specimens of Ouro Preto imperial topaz, 8 - 10 inch diameter pieces of precious opal from the Virgin Valley and Lightning Ridge, Idar agates, a manabach twinned amazonite, rainbow obsidian, a 3 inch euhedral beryl, and a 2 cm emerald on schist matrix from the Habach Valley, Salsburg, Austria. He tried to dissuade the owners from selling their minerals at garage sale prices but they insisted Dave pick what he wanted with one caveat, that the big specimen on the mantle was not for sale. That specimen? A really pretty piece of ...glass! When he went to the estate sale the next day there were three additional boxes of "rocks" on the floor in the back of the garage from which he picked out some fine opal specimens and Saxon topaz crystals. When he inquired as to the price of all the boxes, he was told he should wait until the end of the weekend when everything would be half price. He was absolutely assured that rocks never sell at estate sales and they would be there on Sunday. Not only that, he would be doing them a favor because the estate concessionaire would have to take them to the salvation army where they would ultimately be disposed of in the dumpster! Sadly, when Dave and Rick Bidmead returned on Sunday to purchase the boxes of minerals for the club some other collectors had beat them to it. You can imagine the treasures they held.

While I'm happy for Dave and Natalie, I must say that I wish I had scored those treasures. Aside from that, I am left wondering about the original collector of the specimens. Apparently his name was Emil Albert Starz, who around 1880 started Starz Pharmacy in Helena. Obviously, this man was quite an astute collector with the connections and recourse to pursue the acquisition of some excellent pieces. But wouldn't you like to know more? Provenance is such an important part of today's collections and this serves as a good reminder to all of us who care about minerals to carefully catalog our specimens and to talk with heirs about the disposition of the collection. I would further suggest that we include a brief autobiographical statement with our collections to keep that human connection alive. But most importantly, regardless of who got them, I'm just relieved that those spectacular minerals were saved from the dumpster!

The **Collectors Profile** column is aimed at sharing our members diverse interests in geology with the goal of improving communication and networking within our organization. If you would be willing to be interviewed for a future issue please contact me, Wiley, at WileyHUDSON@gmail.com .

Meetings

The Helena Mineral Society meets at the Mountain West Bank located on Montana Avenue between Aspen and Poplar. Meetings are the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm. There is no regular meeting for the month of December. See you there! Friends, guests, and new members are always welcome

To place a classified ad, please see me in person at one of our regular meetings or you may e-mail me (Gary) with your information at gjparisi72@yahoo.com. Ad will run in the newsletter for that month only unless specifically requested to run longer.

Pictures and Articles Needed:

If you have a picture that you want to share, please send it to me, along with a short description of the activity, where it took place, and when, and I'll put it in the newsletter. If you'd like to share your field trip adventures with those members who are unable to attend, please feel free to contribute to the newsletter. Just e-mail me your experiences, and I'll make sure they're entered. Remember, this is your newsletter, and your contributions make it better.

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