

SOUTHWEST GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Volume 51 No. 7.....July, 2010

P O BOX 17323, San Antonio, Texas 78217-0323

Our Website: www.swgemandmineral.org

TEMPORARILY meetings will tentatively be held the **second THURSDAY** of the month, except in October and December. Board meetings are usually held the second Monday after the general meeting.

TEMPORARILY

GENERAL MEETING: JULY 8, 2010

TIME: 6:15 pm – 8:00 pm

NEW TRIAL MEETING PLACE

1018 GRAYSON STREET

SAN ANTONIO, TX

DIRECTIONS: (traveling south on IH35)
*Exit #159A, turn Right at N New Braunfels Ave.,
Continue on to E Grayson St and address will be on the Left.
Entrance will be through door marked OFFICE.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THANKS TO ALL of you that handled the rain and difficulty in finding the location at UTSA! Other than these issues, I think we had a very interesting meeting. Dr. Eric Swanson, a real supporter of our Club, gave a super talk on the people and history of geology and determining the geologic age of the earth. Many theories have been presented through the years. However, the discovery of radio activity and the half life's of the radioactive elements eventually led man to project the age of the earth to be around 4.6 billion years old. The zircon crystal was critical to this determination and Dr. Swanson indicated the zircon is likely the oldest compound that we find on the surface of the earth.

We had special guests joining us for this meeting, a local Cub Scout troop and their leader. These scouts were working on their geology merit badges. Curtis Threatt provided a beautifully finished geode half to each of the scouts. Thank your Curtis for your thoughtfulness.

Everyone have a great summer and BEWARE of the heat! **BOB BOWIE**

CONCERNS CORNER

Lee Cook is working hard on recovery from his surgery. He seems to have the strength and determination to overcome this life altering surgery. "Old One Foot Joe" as he called himself is a strong man. His wife Gayle is a strong woman and together they will see this through.

Richard and Connie Moultrup continue battling various ailments. They too being a very strong couple, handle the blows of life and continue day to day.

Both of these families will appreciate our prayers and concerns on their behalf.

If you know of someone that needs mentioning, so that we can especially remember them, please let Gail know (info last pg. of newsletter).

MINI CLASSIFIEDS

Ultra Tee faceting unit, variable speed cw/ccw, with light tools and drip post. (needs new riostat) \$500.00

Call D. Peterson 830-627-8200

Gail Hyatt needs quart and pint CANNING JARS. If you have some bring to the meeting. OR call me 210-658-5876.

If you have anything to sell, trade or get rid of, contact Gail Hyatt.

Minutes of the JUNE Meeting

President Bowie called our meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He thanked UTSA for hosting our meeting. Bob introduced our special guest, a local Cub Scout troop working on their geology merit badges.

A brief business meeting included Jim Meloche reporting on a couple of financial transactions. Following this Bob introduced Kim Fischer, Director of Development – College of Sciences, Office of the Dean, UTSA.

Ms. Fischer welcomed our club and introduced the speaker for the evening, Dr. Eric Swanson.

Dr. Swanson discussed how much appreciated our scholarship dollars are to UTSA and how they are used. The program he presented, Deep Time: The Search for the Age of the Earth was truly fascinating. In Bob's "President's Message" the description of the program is right on the money.

Following Dr. Swanson's program there was a question and answer session. You could tell that he reached us by the many and varied questions that were posed.

At the closing of the meeting, Bob Bowie thanked the scouts for joining us and presented each of the scouts with half of a geode. The scouts seemed to enjoy the program as well as the geodes provided by Curtis Threatt.

Gail Hyatt, Secretary

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED....

ZIRCON

One of the few stones to approach diamond in fire and brilliancy, zircon is such a superb gem due to its high refractive index and color dispersion. Its colorless stones can closely resemble diamonds, and they have been intentionally and mistakenly substituted for them. Zircon exhibits double refraction, and bottom facets seen through the top of a cut stone will appear double. Diamond does not share this property, and so this is a useful test for distinguishing between the two gemstones, zircon is also significantly softer than diamond and cut stones will show wear on the edges of the facets. Zircon has been known since antiquity, and takes its name from the Arabic sargun, derived in turn from the Persian zar, meaning "gold", and "gun",

“color”. It has been mined for over 2000 years from the gem gravels of Sri Lanka, and was used as a gemstone in Greece and Italy as far back as the 6th century AD. It forms prismatic to dipyramidal crystals, which can be colorless, yellow, gray green, brown, blue, and red. Single crystals can reach a considerable size: examples weighing up to 5 lb (2kg) and 10 lb (4kg) have been found in Australia and Russia, respectively. Its colored varieties have been given other names in the past, although these are now obsolete, the transparent red variety has been called hyacinth (jacinth), clear and colorless zircon from Sri Lanka has been called Matura diamond, and the name “jargon” or “jargoon”, derived from the Arabic zargun, has been applied to all other gem colors.

Green zircon represents the green foliage of the kalpa tree, a gemstone tree that is a symbolic Hindu offering to the gods. Elsewhere in the East, wearing zircon was believed to endow the wearer with wisdom, honor, and riches. It was also an amulet for travelers.

USING ZIRCONS TO DATE ROCKS Zircon crystals are extremely hard, allowing them to survive in many types of rock. They are also resistant to chemical and physical change. These characteristics make them ideal for dating very old rock radiometrically. Radioactive isotopes, such as uranium, decay at a known rate over time, forming what are known as daughter isotopes. This means that by measuring the number of daughter isotopes in a zircon crystal with a rock, and comparing that number with the original number of atoms, it is possible to determine how much decay has taken place and estimate the age of the crystal and therefore the rock.

(This information on Zircon is taken from Smithsonian’s book ROCK and GEM.) Needless to say, there is wonderful information about Zircon on the Internet as well as countless publications. It is truly a fascinating stone.

COMING SOON

***Arlington Gem and Mineral Club 53rd Annual Show
Texas Treasures***

September 4, 2010 10am – 6pm

September 5, 2010 10am – 5pm

Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington, Tx 76011

***57th Annual Houston Gem and Mineral Society
Gem & Mineral Show***

*November 12-14, 2010
Humble Civic Center*

Website for South West Gem and Mineral Society:

www.swgemandmineral.org