



THE AGATEER

The Newsletter of the Madison Gem and Mineral Club

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November 2018

Program on October November 27

"A journey through the world of mineralogy" (a.k.a Welcome Home Gabriela!)

Gabriela Peralta comes home to present a "survey" of her rockhounding days followed by a description of her doctoral research. Long time club members will remember Gabriela as a budding scientist. If we kept records, she would hold the record as the youngest presenter to the MGMC ever! She has been rather busy with finishing her Ph.D., giving presentations, submitting more papers for publication, and traveling. She recently traveled to London. We are lucky to have Gabriela in town for the club meeting – and she will be helping out at the Gem and Mineral Show.

STILL IN NEED OF SHOW VOLUNTEERS!

Hi fellow club members. The annual show is coming up very soon, and we are still in need of volunteers. I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important it is that the show is fully staffed. We want our show to be running smoothly or at least with a minimum of chaos. Otherwise, we risk not serving the public or our vendors well. This also puts at risk the great reputation our show has. So I am making one last plea for help. I won't go into descriptions of all the jobs. Refer back to the September Agateer for those. Just let me list what we still need.

- 1) We need people in club sales at various times.
- 2) We need help with security. This involves observing and reporting any suspicious activity. No direct confrontation is necessary. There has been a rash of shoplifting at some recent shows, so this is particularly important this year.
- 3) I could use one more person to do gold and sapphire panning on Saturday, noon-2:30.

4) Finally, it is always nice if you can stay after the show closes on Sunday to help pack up and move everything out and back to storage. The more hands we have, the faster it will go.

I should also say that drop-ins are *always* welcome as there is almost always a job that needs doing. If you would like to help, you can call me at 233-7970, or you can email me at scotmoss@gmail.com. Thanks and I'll see you at the show.

Scot Moss

. P.S. The football Badgers are away at Purdue, and the Packers play on Thursday night the week before.
--Stephanie

**Next Meeting: Tuesday,
November 27 at 7p.m. in
AB20 Weeks Hall
UW Dept. of Geoscience**

**Annual Christmas Party:
December 9, Sunday 2:00 - 5:00 pm
at 2010 Wenona Drive
Bring a dish to pass and utensils
(We play rockin' games of Bingo, too!)**

All About Opals by Carlos Peralta

According to us, the prettiest gems are opals. They proudly display all the colors you know well and many more that you have never seen before. They are interactive, they will show you different color palettes as you move the gem or the light source (or as you move yourself). This effect is known as "Play-of-color." The commonly used word "Fire" is not technically correct and shouldn't be used as a synonym for Play-of-color.

They are addictive hence the "Opalhollic" name.

There are two main opal kinds: precious opals and common opals. They can be tell apart easily: if it shows play-of-color—it is a precious opal. If it doesn't then you have a common opal. Another useful distinction is between black opals and "not black" ones. Any opal that has a dark body color is called "Black." The color can be real black, dark brown, dark blue, or dark grey. The most sought after opals are those which are "black" and precious.

Virgin Valley, NV opals. Probably the prettiest precious opals in the world. Their play of color is breathtaking. They can seldom be used in jewelry because they will craze (break down into million pieces, turn white, become opaque, and make you cry.

To be honest, all opals will eventually craze. The ones from Virgin Valley do so in a few days so we keep them in glass domes filled with distilled water; the ones from Australia might take hundreds of years before they die. Actually, opal crazing is an advantage: you get to see them every day inside their protective watery cocoon.

Our most treasured rockhounding experience we have the privilege to experience is to break a clump of

moist clayish rock and liberate an entombed rainbow in all its glory. Yes, they come fully colorful straight from the ground. At the Rainbow Ridge opal mine in Virgin Valley, we found black precious opals, precious opals, pure black, and pure white common opals. Two additional but rare specimens are: an opalized pine cone and a specimen of petrified wood with the vessels filled with opal.

Juniper Ridge, OR common opals. The mine is located in south central Oregon. It is a very small mine. It produces several different colors of common opals. Some are very clear and can be faceted. Our most outstanding find were two pieces of opaque chocolate colored opal. It really looks like chocolate. We have asked the owner if he has seen and/or has some similar materials. There is no record of any additional opal of this color.

Louisiana, LA precious opals. Also a very small mine that is not accessible to collectors. The precious opals found there are very different from any other opals. They have been described as “concrete with fire.” There are two main colors: dark grey and brownish. Both have “pin fire” which are tiny specs of precious opal disseminated among the “concrete” rock. They are very difficult to find in rock show.

Spencer, ID precious opals. These are whitish opals with play-of-color that resemble the ones found in Australia.

Competition Schedule 2018

All members are urged to bring specimens for the monthly competition. Questions may be directed to Carlos Peralta, at 509-2836. Cash awards: 1st place \$10; 2nd place \$5. Unless specifically instructed, the specimens for the Competitions described below can be self-collected, or purchased, or given to you by somebody else. Please make sure to write a short description (including the name of the specimen) on a 3 X 5 card or similar.

November 2018. Museum eligible Have something in your collection that you think could be in a museum? If you think Rich might look at it longingly, bring it along and let's see our best stuff.

October Competition Results: Precious Opal - must show fire

1st: Black Opal - Australia (Bernie)

2nd: Ethiopian Opal (Marsha Z.)

If you have competition ideas for next year, let Carlos Peralta know.

Calendar

November 17-18 MGMC Annual Show - Alliant Energy Center

November 27 MGMC Monthly Meeting

December 9 Christmas Party 2-5 pm

No Club Meeting in December

NOV 10: QUINCY, IL Gem City Rock Club Annual Show, 10 am - 5 pm. Community Room in Quincy Mall, 32nd & Broadway, Quincy. Contact Jane Huelsmeyer, 1479 North St., Fowler, IL 62338; (217) 434-8655; jhuelsm@gmail.com

NOV 10-11: FREEPORT, IL Northwest Illinois Rock Club Annual Show. Sat 9 am - 5 pm; Sun 10 am - 4 pm. Highland Community College, 2998 West Pearl City Rd., Freeport. Contact: Brian Green, (815) 745-2228; bgreen57@hotmail.com nwilrockclubfrbt.blogspot.com

NOV 17-18: MADISON, WI Madison Gem & Mineral Club Annual Show. Sat 9:30 am - 5 pm; Sun 10 am - 5 pm. Alliant Energy Center, 1919 Alliant Energy Ctr Way, Madison. Contact: Nevin Franke, (608) 251-2601; shows@madisonrockclub.org

The Agateer is the official publication of the Madison Gem and Mineral Club. It is published monthly, and mailed as a benefit of membership to all Madison Gem and Mineral Club members.

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Membership is open to all individuals, and applications for membership will be accepted upon payment of annual dues, which are \$15.00 for adults (18 and older), \$5.00 for junior members (ages 6-17), and \$20.00 for families. There is a \$6 surcharge for printed and mailed copies of the Agateer.

Visit the official website of the Madison Gem and Mineral Club at <http://madisonrockclub.org>

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