

Place: **Union Hall**
Meyers Street
Next to Campus Life
In Kettle Falls



Time: 7:00 PM
Third Tuesday
Each Month
(Jan.-Nov.)

The Panorama Prospector

August 2007

Panorama Gem and Mineral Club Minutes for July 17, 2007

The meeting began at 7:00 pm sharp. Johnie asked Vanita about hospitality for the August 21 meeting. Luci and Harold Ingram are providing cookies for the next meeting.

Luci presented Johnie with an award for his poem "Dreamer's Field Trip". He was sure surprised! Congratulations, Johnie!

Steve White talked about his trip to the California Redwoods. The Marcus Music Festival was discussed. The Rockhound Retreat to Oregon was discussed and it will be September 3 – 9. The prices are \$240.00 R&B, \$45.00 for workshop, \$35.00 for fossil dig.

Correction: Your secretary got confused and told you the wrong information about Emerald Creek. The true story is: Emerald Creek is closed Wednesdays and Thursdays and open Friday through Thursday through Labor Day.

Johnie and Ginger plan to attend the NW Federation conference in Butte, Montana on August 3, 4, and 5.

Several Field Trips were discussed. The one decided upon was a gold panning trip to Northport/Juanita area on July 28. Meet at Northport gas station by 9:00 AM. You will need a gold pan, shovel, and footwear that you don't mind getting wet.

It was mentioned that the Portland Gem and Mineral Show would be September 28-30, 2007.

A fluorescent booth was discussed. This will be explored further and discussed at a future meeting.

Steve Fox talked about his trip to New Mexico. He brought a sample of chalcedony for us to view.

Joe and Cheryl Barreca showed us a video of their trip to Australia. What a fantastic trip! Thanks!

The meeting closed at 9:00 PM.

Panning for Gold By Joseph Barreca



Johnie Pitman with a pan of mud

On July 28th several cars carrying newby gold-panners followed Johnie Pitman and Rex Barrans from Northport 8.66 miles up the Northport-Boundary road to a place on the Columbia River where Johnie guaranteed that we would find gold.

Before he led us down to the river, Johnie supplied us with gold pans and a pamphlet on rules, which is also a permit, to pan for gold on Washington Rivers. The pamphlet spelled out a lot we didn't know. It specifically mentioned the Columbia – above Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. We needed to wash the mud out of our gold sand before we did the final panning with river water. That is what Johnie is doing with the big half-barrels in the picture above. We also needed to dig above the water line so we would not disturb fish in the river. He showed us where gold was likely to be found in pockets down on the bedrock behind big boulders. The action of the river in depositing gold on the bottom and washing the lighter rocks away from it is exactly what we learned to imitate with a gold pan.

The gold pan is a deceptively elegant tool. Not all pans are created equal. The ones Johnie used (and Dave Paquette too, as I remember) are “Garrette’s Gravity Traps”. I am determined to get one and found that they are available at Double Eagle Pawn, Axel’s Pawnshop, Browen’s Hideout and Swanson Prospecting Supplies in Spokane. What I like about them as opposed to some others I have seen is that the baffles are sunken into the lip in such a way that you can easily wash the black sand back down into the bottom without having to force it back over raised ridges, but perhaps I should explain.



Working a shovelful of dry dirt down into gold happens in several steps. First, you take out the large rocks (assuming they are not solid gold!), by hand. You fill the pan with enough water to liquefy the whole load. You may need to stir it a bit with your hands to do this. Then you need to shake it around for a minute or so to insure that the heavy materials sink all the way to the bottom. Johnie gave us each a couple of BB’s to prove this effect. You need to pour the muddy liquid back into the wash barrel and repeat this step several times until the water is fairly clear.

Now you can bring the pan down to the river. Find a nice place to sit down. you are going to be there for awhile. Get more water in the pan and shake it back and forth from side to side as you tilt it forward over the baffles. This assures that the heavy material will catch on the lips in the bottom and the lighter stuff will work its way over the edge. This works amazingly well. You can actually see little rocks, heavier

than any one piece of sand, being pushed up as the heavier particles of sand fill the baffles. At some point, it is probably efficient to turn the pan to the side stranding these little pebbles in a place where you can scrape them out of the pan by hand but wash off the sand around them before they exit.



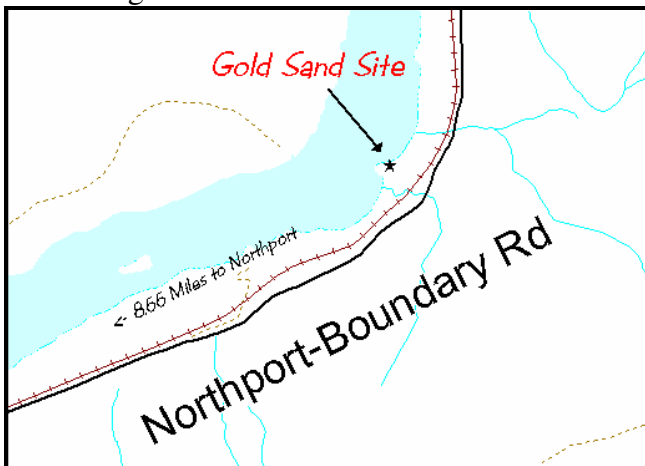
Rex Barrans getting out every speck of gold

You will see the sand in the bottom start to separate into a normal dirt brown color and below that, black sand will stick to the bottom. You want to wash out the brown and keep the black. Some lighter black particles will wash out too and with them, some sparkly pieces you were hoping were gold. Don’t worry, the pan is working. If you wash all the black sand back into the very bottom, your BBs should appear. And, if you have any, tiny specks of gold show up on the bottom.

Here is where Johnie came up with a great trick. That black sand helped push the light stuff out of the pan, but now, it stands between you and your gold. Turns out it is mostly iron. Johnie took out a magnet and with a few sweeps, pulled away most of the black sand.

The final tool is an eyedropper. Johnie had a few and some tiny glass vials to keep our gold dust in. Make sure the eyedropper has no grease in it, as the gold will stick to that and fowl up the next steps. Get some water into the dropper, and with some gentle pushes, you can blow the sand away from the gold on the bottom. Then pinch the dropper bulb, get it right next to the flake of gold, and suck it up. You can squeeze it out into the glass vial and rinse it a few times so it flushes to the bottom. Voila! You have pure gold dust out of what looked like just plain dirt.

After a page and a half of description, you may be getting the idea that this is rather tedious. You are right. If it was easy, gold would be cheap. Using a gold pan is a good way to see if there is gold to be found in a spot. It is not necessarily the most productive way to retrieve it. Panning is also good for finishing off a load of gravel that you have worked down to fine sand. Dredges and sluices are more productive, but also more heavily regulated. Bob Bristow advocates a device he calls a “rocker”. I have not seen one, but am eager to check it out.



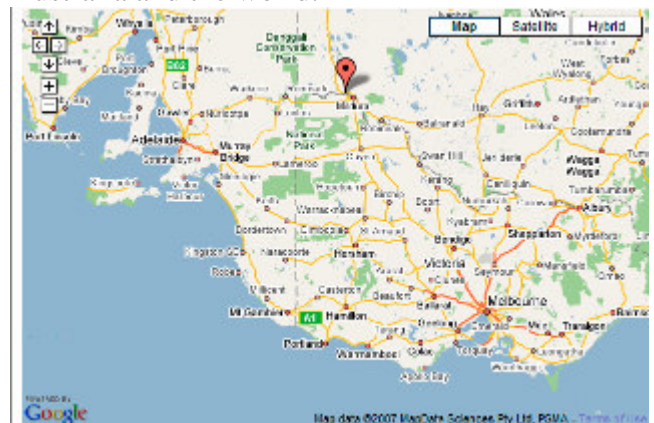
This site did not have nuggets of gold, but did have good color. It was a good place to learn how to work your way down to very fine flakes. We were not the first to find it. On the way to the river, we walked through a forest where the ground was covered in large round boulders that the Chinese miners had carried out of the river by hand to clear the way for their dredging operations in the 1850's. All the prospectors will tell you that gold keeps washing down into the rivers and streams every year. You can tell from how rounded the nuggets are, how far away you are from the “mother load”. Most mines were found by prospectors this old fashioned way long before metal detectors, geological surveys and core drilling came into play.

It is exciting to find something so valuable and useful without large machinery, fancy gadgets or toxic chemicals, though all of those have come into play in the quest for gold. Panning is good clean fun. I recommend that everyone learn how just for fun. It works for many kinds of gems and other metals too.

Woodsies Gem Shop Mildura, New South Wales, Australia *By Joe Barreca*



Now for some more rockabilia from the land down under. Chances are that you have not heard of Mildura. It lies about 500 kilometers up the Murray River from Adelaide. In the past decade or so, it has evolved from an agricultural town, known for its grapes and dried fruit, to a major tourist attraction, mostly due to the fame of Stephano de Pieri, a world-class chef, who turned its natural bounty into a destination for “foodies” from around Australia and the world.



It was a welcome attraction for us after several days crossing the hot, dry and barren interior of New South Wales. Even though we had a hard day cruising in a paddle steamer on the river, sleuthing out places to eat and buy food downtown and doing some chores on the Internet, I talked Cheryl into a fossicking excursion to the outskirts of Mildura to find Woodsies Gem Shop, renowned for its stock of thousands of cut gems, jewelry and polished stones of all kinds.

On the way, we passed this sign.



I'm pretty sure it doesn't have anything to do with Carl Jung or Sigmund Freud, but we kept moving anyway.

Besides all the stuff it has for sale, Woodsies has a restaurant decorated like a cave.



In the back you can see a sign for Aladdin's Cave. This is where they keep their private collection, and you pay a small fee to tour



it. It really was worth the price of admission. I liked this selenite from the Pernatty Lagoon. It is a kind of gypsum found nearby in South

Australia. In fact, they had a lot of gypsum artifacts that included an eight foot long log that had lain in a pond near a gypsum mine for 50 years or so since the mine had closed. It became

encrusted in gypsum crystals and was on display in the main room of the gem shop.



The boot was in the same pond and was covered with crystals.

They also had the biggest piece of opal that we saw while we were there, even though we went to two famous opal mining towns later in the trip,



neither had a chunk of precious opal near the size of this one from Coober Pedy (which we didn't visit).



Besides its well-known assortment of unique fauna, Australia has an abundance of equally strange fossils. These leaves and ancient fish fossils are a good example.

A large contraption on a side porch caught my eye as we left the shop. The “Purple Rock Muncher” is a rock tumbling machine that uses a 4 wheel drive train to turn large tires that have been reworked to hold the water, grit and rocks. Only one tire was full when we went by,



But I’m sure this baby can crank out a lot of polished rocks.

Johnie’s Dubious Award

If you didn’t make it to the last meeting for the official ceremony, here is a picture of the

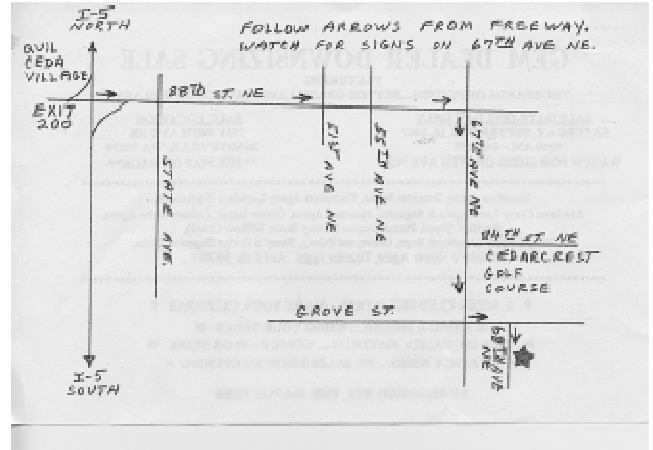


object in question. The question of course is “What kind of adult poetry was this anyway?” As Lucie mentioned in the minutes, this was a national award for his poem “**Dreamer’s Field Trip**”. You can verify it on page 11 of the September A.F.M.S. Newsletter. It was a great poem reworked from “The Night Before Christmas” that Johnie wrote

for our Christmas meeting 2005, and Lucie read to us again at the July 2007 meeting.

So congratulations again Johnie, but please, don’t wear this pin around in public.

Gem Dealer Downsizing Sale



(We got a notice in the mail about this sale. There is no name or phone number.)

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