

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



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

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## The Panorama Prospector

### May 2009

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#### Minutes of the Meeting April 21, 2009

*By Ginger Pitman*

On a warm night (finally) our meeting began with our welcome of 5 visitors. Next month refreshments will be provided by Mable and Reba, thank you for volunteering. Sylvia gave the treasurer's report and Bill gave our show report. If all the bills are in, the club made \$827.07 on our show. With some new and one time expenses that is very good.

Diane asked for help from our club on a field trip for the seventh graders and Steve Fox said he would be our representative.

Johnie read the article sent to the Northwest Federation as we nominated Rex Barrans as our candidate for Rockhound of the Year.

The Panorama Gem and Mineral Club nominates: Rex Barrans as our Rockhound of the year. Rex has served as field trip leader for ten years. He schedules the trips and secures permission, calls or e-mails everyone setting time and places to meet, he includes several other clubs. At the present time there are 50 -60 families on the list. Rex led seventeen field trips last year. He is a great resource for mineral identification.

Rex built the "wheel of fortune" and "ring toss" we use at the annual show. He tumbles rocks and fills the 500 grab bags. He has donated numerous specimens for our monthly silent auctions to raise money for scholarships.

The club received a thank you note for the great job Steve Fox did giving a rock demonstration and talk at the Springdale High School.

Johnie will be picking up our scholarship applications May 1 and getting them to our trustees. Diane will present at Colville, Steve will present at Kettle Falls. The next field trip is to the McGruff Quarry. Remember to contact Rex if you are attending any field trip.

Bev Bockman gave us a report from the NWMS mid year meeting, she is our club's voting representative. The big news is the combined NWMS and American Federation show at Billings, MT July 30, 31, Aug 1, 2.

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#### The Jim McGruff Quarry

*By Steve Fox*



April 25<sup>th</sup> started out as a beautiful spring day, with rain or snow in the forecast. Meteorologists just do not know how wrong they are when they fail to take in a rockhound's desire to explore a fertile area of minerals and rocks. It probably rained and snowed on area ballgames and track meets, but it always rains on high school ballgames. I think it's in the rules somewhere, But I digress...

We all showed up at Waitt's Lake Resort at about 10 AM with Harold and myself in the last vehicle to come in (at least I did not see any other vehicle pull in after us). There were a bunch of cars there already, and one count had it at twenty cars. I never got an accurate count of how many people were there, but I estimated between 25 and 30 people present. I may still be low on the count as we were everywhere in the quarry. This was the most people who have shown up to one of our outings since I joined the club about three years ago. I had not met at least half the people there, so I was busy meeting new friends as I picked up rocks. Scott was our designated leader, as Rex was not feeling well. Ours was the last vehicle in the quarry and before I could park there were hand trucks out and loaded with boulders, rocks were already being put into pickups and cars, and just a lot of general activity. It seemed almost everybody had their favorite type of rock and were busy picking them up. I felt like I was an hour late.

At first I just stood there and drank in the scene. The rock colors ran from a cream white at the top to the

Also remember the North Idaho Mineral Club's show at the fairgrounds in Coeur d'Alene on June 6 and 7. We will be sending our new fluorescent display over to help enhance the show.

After a show of hands from members who would actually use some club equipment, a committee of Mike L., Steve F., Scott J., Steve W. and Johnie was set up to look into buying what the committee thinks the club should buy first. Motion was made and after discussion it was voted to let the committee spend up to \$2000 on equipment for the club. A waiver will be needed to use the equipment and a payment for use set up to repair and replace parts.

Bill asked permission to look into improving and increasing the lights used for our fluorescent display. He did a great job and things went well for the first year.

Steve Fox announced he will travel up to 100 miles to local schools or groups to do a "show and tell" on rocks and our club. He is our # 1 ambassador!

Following our break Johnie did our program entitled "The 100 Rock Test". On three tables were rocks to identify: table E had rocks considered easy or beginner rocks. Table I were rocks considered intermediate level and table A was considered advanced with mostly minerals. We hope every one had a chance to see new material maybe they have only heard of or learn some names. Every one seemed to have a good time.

darker greens and green-black at the bottom level of the quarry. Although the yellow-green/white serpentine was present at all levels of the quarry in varying amounts, it dominated the middle quarry. This was where the most activity was taking place, so naturally I went walking.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> level quarry turned out to be about a short 75 yard walk down the road from where I parked my truck. So with bucket in one hand and six pound sledge in the other I was off. After dropping down a steep part of the road and skirting a wide seep, I found myself alone and in a very small part of heaven. This is what I came for: dark green serpentine, some of it running into the black form. A three hundred (without any scales I am taking liberties with the actual weight of the large rock, which was probably somewhat lighter, and I don't care because



Steve Fox and Johnie Pitman presented a hour long program to the first and second graders of Kettle Falls Grade School. Steve gave his part on rocks, his floating pumice was a hit and he got lots of giggles and "ahs" when he explained what coprolite was, after he had passed it around for everyone to handle. Johnie did fossils and with the help of a good overhead the specimens were very impressive. He included both animal and plant fossils. Both the presenters and students had a good time.

that sucker was heavy) piece of deep green serpentine caught my eye and my greed gene. After taking a short look around, I filled up my bucket and then did a little more exploring up an old road. There in the bank was what appeared to be a somewhat light purple shale. I filed this rock away for later inspection.

At this point I decided to get my truck and try to move that boulder. So as I started to climb the five miles back to the truck (yes, I'm getting older) I stopped and told a few folks about what I had found. When I got back down to the lower quarry there were about 6 or 7 other folks scrambling over the rocks. After backing over a small boulder several times, I finally backed up to the rock I couldn't pick up. I began by getting to know the people that were with me. What a great bunch, even though a nice lady named Pat chewed me out for reducing the humongous boulder a little with my sledge. I heard her say words like "just wrong", and (I think) "sacrilege". She stopped short of telling me I was going to burn, but I could hear it in her voice. So as a result most of the rock is still there, and I don't have a hernia. The light purple rock? Talc, or if you prefer soapstone. It's in the road cut bank. It's easy to spot and loose in the dirt.

Lunch! I got out my ice chest and sat down to watch Dave, Mike, Jerry, Brian and somebody I don't know go at a ledge like badgers after a woodchuck, while I ate my sandwich. They made me sweat just watching them work. It turned out they were after the elusive blue-green serpentine. After a while I decided to go up and see how they were faring. Mike showed me what they were after, and I could see why they were working so hard. This is very beautiful stone and well worth the hard work to get it. I started to work an area just below them and found some beautiful small red pieces. Later I did find a very nice blue-green piece, along with some nice translucent yellow-green pieces.

The find of the day came from another Dave. He handed me a piece with what looks like crysotile fibers. Asbestos. I'll bring it to the next meeting. For me and Harold (who picked up some really nice rock himself) it was time to go. Rain was coming and I'm a fair weather rockhound. We were by no means the last to leave. Dave's pickup was starting to sit down on the axles and Mike had found a new vein of the blue that he and Brian were going at with renewed vigor. Scott and Bill were at the top of the quarry and had been digging out some really nice stuff themselves. I'll save that spot for when we can next go in.

I would like to thank the owners of the Jim McGraff Quarry for allowing us to go in, explore, and take home some outstanding serpentine. It was a wonderful day that you made possible.

This is a picture of the case Johnie put in for the weekend at the ParkView Senior Center, he was asked to give a presentation and had a table of rocks he talked about and could be handled and viewed. The talk was on April 24.



## Upcoming Field Trips

May: Saturday May 23<sup>rd</sup>: Adams Mt. (two locations) Quartz Crystals, Malachite, Epidote and others. Meet at Fuitland Store at 10 AM. Need 4x4 and digging tools.

June: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, North Idaho Rock Club annual show at Kootenai County Fairgrounds.

Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup>, Franson Peak: Quartz/Amethyst Geodes – Meet at Harvest Foods parking at 9 AM (loose and hard rock tools and extra food and water.)

Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup> – Phillips Ranch Mine: Selenite, Chalcopyrite, Galena and more... Meet at Harvest Food Parking Lot 10 AM.

## Hot Springs, Sunstones and Cold Nights

*By Joseph Barreca*



Well, sometimes you can be a little too eager to get out there and get those rocks. The case in point is our recent trip to California to see our new grandson. I figured we could get some rockhounding in on the way back. The dark wedges in the above picture are the shutter that did not open completely because it was 20° out and our breath was freezing to the windows. This was our camping spot, Ramhorn Springs, just off Hwy 395 in Northern California, altitude 5200 ft. We had heard that there were some hot springs and lots of obsidian just over the hill and north of here, but after a long drive and a snow storm, we were not ready for a 6000+ ft pass and finding a camping spot in the dark. So we camped at Ramhorn and reassessed our options.

Johnnie Pitman had suggested we stop at Davis Creek and talk to the store owner there about

rockhounding in the area. On the way there we were already finding obsidian chips in the gravel on the highway. What I really wanted to do was look for precious opal in Virgin Valley, Nevada. We found

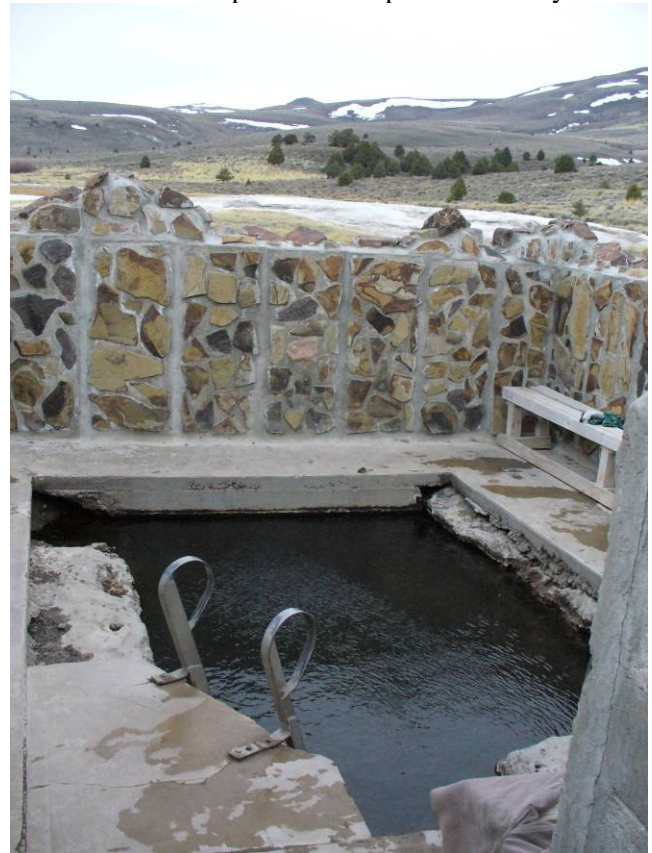


the Davis Creek Store (seen here). It did have some obsidian as well as a deli, grocery, rocks, maps and permits. You can call it yourself if you are planning on driving down that way, (530) 233-3758. I have some obsidian already and checked my other options. A call to the Royal Peacock Opal Mines in Denio Nevada revealed that they would not open till the middle of May. This was late April. It was over 6000 ft, a hundred miles off track and 100 more back, so that was not going to work.

We kept heading north past Goose Lake to Lakeview, Oregon. We had a hot springs book that had pictures of a remote spring on Hart Mountain, I got to thinking about Sunstones near Plush, Oregon on the way to Hart Mt. We stopped at a library in Lakeview and got some information on the Dust Devil Mining Company. We also picked up a brochure for Lake County Oregon put out by the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, 877-947-6040. It had a map showing rockhounding sites all over this huge county that include, Obsidian, Sunstones, Cinnabar, Agate, Petrified Wood, Jasper, Thunder Eggs and Opal. The brochure also had a lot of other information but we were pretty-much hooked. Calling the Dust Devil was not effective, if it wasn't for poor reception, they wouldn't have any reception at all. The web site said that sifting for sunstones was free but they charged 1/3 of wholesale for gem-quality rocks over 5 carats. You can check it out yourself <http://www.dustdevilmining.com>.

So we filled up with gas (this is important, there are very few gas stations north of Lakeview) and headed to Plush. Plush was a lot like Davis Creek except with sunstones instead of obsidian. We headed out on gravel roads to the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. Up a good, but winding road to above 6000 ft. A vast plain of sagebrush, shallow lakes and dry lakes spread out below the Hart

Mountain Mesa. A few more miles of washboard and we made it to the Hot Springs. It was not especially hot (98° F) but felt great to us. The wind was howling and even though we camped in a sheltered spot, we decided to lower the tent top on our camper for stability.



Notice the snow still on the mountains above the spring. A soak, some hot food and red wine and we were ready for another 20° night.

In the morning, we headed down the mountain and across the sage brush to the sunstone area. In Plush, we had picked up a very nice brochure with a map ([http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site\\_info.php?siteid=110](http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid=110)) to the Public Sunstone Collection area, near the Dust Devil and Spectrum Mines. It was cold but the wind, snow and clouds were gone and the sun started to warm things up. We got out to Dust Devil and tried to find someone to talk to. The manager, Don Beaufort, is a big friendly guy with big ideas on how to develop the claim. There was a little village of trailers and RV's on the rim of the pit. You can rent these if you are digging there. There was a lot of machinery, some water they used for washing rocks in a tanker – but probably not for drinking. Don actually used to go up to Hart Mountain to get water near the Ranger Station there because it is so pure and fresh. That is at least a 24 mile drive over washboard roads with a 1000 ft climb. So I would bring

water. They provide pretty nice sifting tables with rollers and boxes with 1/2" and 1/4" mesh.

Don pointed us toward a pile of dirt that they had just pulled out of the pit, and we started sifting.



This picture was taken in the morning. It wasn't long before we were plenty warm. We only worked at it for about 3 hours and found a lot of sunstones. But they were not very big and none of them had the color that makes them precious. If you are serious about sunstones, staying longer and moving a lot of dirt, seems to be the key. There is a layer of country dirt over a hardpan layer of rocks. The sunstones seem to be in pockets of clay under the harder rocks. No one would say that directly, but that's what the old-timers appeared to be working. We decided to just buy some nice stones from Don and learned a lot in the process.

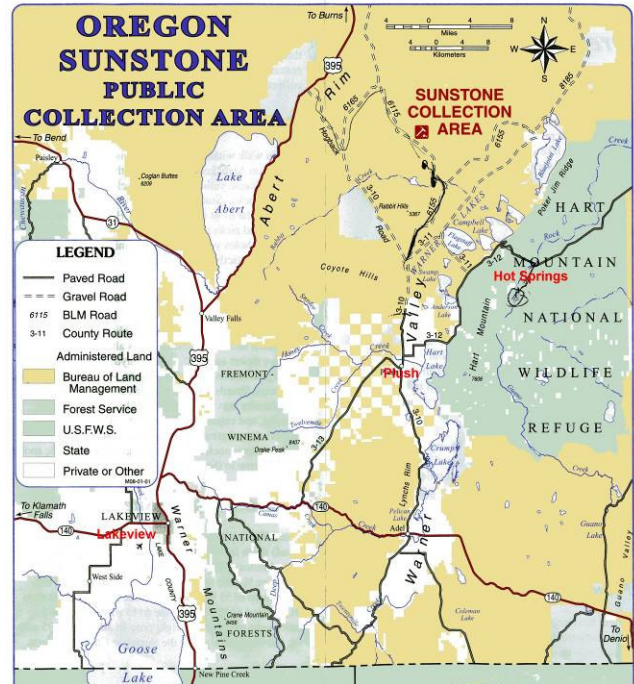


Sunstones can be yellow, red or multicolored. Some rare stones will even change colors in different light as alexandrite does, and some are different colors when viewed from different directions (dichroic and trichroic). We bought a stone that looks green from two dimensions, but looks red from the third as well as one with both red and green for 2/3rds of wholesale price. They are 6.5 to 7.2 Mohs hardness and can be carved and polished.

With that, we were on the road again bouncing our way across Misery Flats on the way back to Hwy 395. I stopped to take a picture of Hart Mountain to



show how it towers above the desert floor, but something is lost in the translation.



I wish I could say that the rest of the trip was uneventful. The highway from Hogback Road north to Burns was in great shape and had almost no traffic. We were very low on gas as we got to Riley, a small town just west of Burns where 395 meets Oregon 20. We rolled to a stop in front of the gas pumps relieved to find gas and a county sheriff rolled up in back of us happy to find out-of-towners who had just done a California stop. Soon I had a full tank and a \$240 ticket. Luckily the Harney County judge was more understanding and dismissed the charge. Still, even if you don't see moving cars, watch for parked cops at that intersection.

We pushed through to the Clyde Holliday state campground on the John Day River. It was low in elevation, warm, inexpensive, had electricity at every site, running water and hot showers! We woke up in the morning and were not freezing. Hwy 395 is beautiful winding through the mountains to Pendleton. We stopped to visit the Tamastlikt Museum outside of town, which was new, huge, friendly and fascinating. The nearby casino, which no doubt supported it, was bustling. The museum was very quiet. (Next time we visit the grandkid, we're going later in the season.)