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

The Jan 17th Meeting

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

Starts at 6:00 PM !

The Panorama Prospector

January 2006

Christmas Party
Dec 20th 2005

Twas the Tuesday before Christmas and all through the hall… Oh never mind. There is a decent version in the column next to this read by our stalwart president, Johnie Pitman at the club Christmas party.

As usual, the food was great. Mable Barrans and the rest of her crew did an admirable job of balancing the meats, salads and other dishes, and making us wait till last to eat the desert, which included an especially big cake custom-made for the rock club. Even people who arrived late, like Steve White, didn't have to settle for humble pie after having to work over time.

Johnie also festooned the tables with a wide assortment of polished rocks. How often do you get to eat a big pot-luck dinner and pick rocks at the same time?

Besides the food, the other main events of the evening were poetry reading and story telling; and the gift exchange. Where appropriate, gifts were labeled with tags indicating if the gift was for a man or a woman. That didn't prevent me from picking up one labeled "For a Woman". It was an assortment of soaps. Fortunately, some people brought extra gifts and I am thankful for getting a really handy diamond knife sharpener that does serrated blades and fish hooks too. But the real treat was Johnie's poem:

Sylvia Petty opening her gift

DREAMER'S FIELD TRIP
By Johnie Pitman

T'was a beautiful day, and all through the camp,
Not a blister or pain, not even a cramp.
The tools were all slung by the pickup with care,
In hopes that "Sir Rex" soon would be there.
The children were restless, all ready to dig,
While the vision of crystals loomed very big.
The women with their hats, and the men their caps,
Had just gotten out their shovels and maps.
When all of a sudden, there rose such a chatter,
I jumped to my feet, to see what was the matter.
Then way down the valley, they looked very small,
Came the pickups, the campers, the cars and all.
Up the road they came, in a cloud full of dust,
The field trip at last, t'was crystals or bust.
When what to my watering eyes, would show up,
But a Bronco, a jeep, and an old pickup truck.
With an energetic driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a flash, it was the Sidekick.

Johnie Pitman reading this poem

Faster than an eagle, the directions they came,
And he whistled and shouted, and called us by name.
Come on Silvia, and Bev, and Dianne, and Eve,
Lets go Ray, and Joe, and Bob, and Steve.
From the top of the ridge, to the top of the draw,
Lets dig, and dig, and dig, till our hands are raw.
As we started to dig, and sift through the sand,
The long awaited moment, was now at hand.
So there were sticks and stones, and chips that flew,
with a shout of success, and the cry "Yah Hoo".
Then there was a twinkling, I saw on the ground,
The winking and shining, of crystals I found.

As I drew in my breath, and was turning around,
Down the hill came Rex Barrans, with a bound.
He was dressed all in blue, from his feet to his head,
And his clothes were all tarnished, like silver and lead.
A bundle of rocks, he had flung on his back.
He looked like a prospector, just opening his pack.
His rocks - how they twinkled, and the colors did vary.
His quartz was like roses, the garnet like a berry.
Some reflected sunlight, to make a rainbow,
And some of the calcite, was as white as the snow.
Then he pulled out his prize, his face all aglow,
An amethyst crystal, was his best of show.
Sun was hot on our backs, I want you to know,
So the rest in the shade, t'was heaven below.
There beautiful pieces, are all here to find,
So quit goofing off, and get back to the grind.
At the end of the day, there were stories to share,
We've got secrets, and follies, and finds to compare.
The best crystal of all, a lump of pink beryl,
It was very unusual, and dug out by Carol.
My dream that a beauty, was just out of sight,
After working and working, was leav-er-rite.
As we broke camp that night, I packed up my pick,
We started our cars, and the little Sidekick.
I heard it announced, as we drove out of sight,
We will see you next year, same date and same site.

A Quick Trip to the Leadville Mine

By Joe Barreca

The trouble with picking rocks in the winter is that – at least in places like Onion Creek – there is snow on the ground. The work-around is to explore an old mine, one that is easy to get to. The Leadville is right off Onion Creek Rd.

Mike Latapie and Grandson Ryan at the Leadville

Just inside the entrance is a fairly large chamber, 15 feet high and 15 feet wide. You can follow the slant of the ore body along the right hand wall. There is a cave-in about 50 feet back that left a mixture of soft rock and clay on the floor. It blocks enough of the adit going back into the hill so that one or two feet of water fill the tunnel. The timbers are rotten from there on in so we would not have wanted to go much further anyway. But this pile gets you close to some interesting stuff, and made a dry warm spot for a couple of packrats to build their nests.

On the left side at the back was a slide of sparkling black clay with a crystalline fuzz growing out of it. It was too soft to move, pretty much like cotton candy.

Cotton Candy fibers on a muck pile.

It must have formed fairly quickly because the mine has been worked in the last few years by a friend of Mike's. I tried putting a little in the bottom of a bucket (a bag would have crushed it). But it dissolved in the slight bit of water in the bottom of the bucket. It would be beautiful in a micro mount if you could find a way to save it.

We scanned the area with the UV light. The walls glowed light blue with a surface deposit. Also glowing with the same blue were the bodies of daddy long-leg spiders clustered there for the winter. (picture in normal light).

Spiders clustered on the mine walls.

Finding Placer Treasures
By Bob Bristow

I had wanted to visit the Cere's Hill deposit west of Centralia, Washington, for some time. I knew it had produced a lot of colorful agates, jasper, and petrified wood. I finally made it one day in early spring. My instructions on how to get there were rather vague, but the "digs" south of the road gave it away. About two acres had been dug up by rockhounds in a series of gravel beds just under the surface of the soil. Most of the gravel was less than one inch in diameter so the agates were small. I decided I wanted to try for larger game and looked at the surrounding country. From the dig area, the ground sloped up to a ridge top about a quarter mile to the north. There were several small gullies near the top that indicated that material had washed down to the lower slopes at some time in the

past. The gravel dug by rockhounds probably came down from there and dropped out when the slope became shallow enough. The larger rocks should have dropped out at a slightly greater slope. This meant that near the top, there could be a residual placer where the soil and smaller rocks were washed away from the large rocks. Near the bottom, there could be a stream placer where the large rocks were left when the slope lessened. The lower slope could also be a residual placer if the water had not flowed too fast. I decided to try the lower slope and picked a spot at the foot of the steep slope. I found bedrock to be only about a foot and a half below the surface. The bedrock was littered with rocks up to several inches in diameter. The rocks include agates, jasper and petrified wood. It appeared to be a residual rather than a stream placer. Bedrock was a rotting conglomerate and the cementing agent had turned into a sticky clay that wouldn't rub off the rocks. The clay made all rocks look identical. It is recommended, in a case like that, that you knock the corner off each rock to see if it is a "keeper." The first three agates I found were beautiful carnelian that shattered like glass when I tried to take a small chip off one end. From then on, I then selected stones by shape. The agates were lumpy with round pits. The jasper and petrified wood were water-worn and had been in the gravel pile before it was cemented into conglomerate. The agates had formed later in holes dissolved out of the conglomerate. They took the shape of the cavity and the pits were where pebbles had protruded into the hole. This was a very good deposit, but I didn't get back for a couple of years. When I did, I found that the landowner, Weyerhaeuser, had erected a cyclone fence along both sides of the road with "No Trespassing" signs. At one time, Weyerhaeuser welcomed rockhounds, but a new executive had decided they couldn't afford to loose a few acres out of their millions, and tried to close all rockhound sites.

Agate-Jasper (not from Cere's Hill)

Both kinds of placers are interesting but residual deposits are especially interesting to collectors because they are often overlooked and can contain a great amount of goodies.

The above is an example of a residual placer where the gold and other treasures are left after everything else is washed away. Stream placers are quite different. Everyone knows about stream placers! That's where you squat beside a stream, dip your pan in the gravel, swish it around a couple of times, and pour out your gold into a pouch. In a young stream placer, the gold and other heavy minerals are dropped with the big rocks. The placer is mature when the vibrating water causes the heavy minerals to work their way down to bedrock. Stream placer deposits where gold is located are also interesting because that is where garnets, sapphires, rubies, and diamonds are found.

Luci and I were staying at the Sheep Mountain Lodge east of Palmer, Alaska. My gold pan was begging me to go put it to use. We drove a few miles west toward Anchorage and drove down under the Caribou Creek Bridge just across from the big Matinuska Glacier. I

looked the situation over and saw where others had been prospecting. They had been following the usual directions and had dug up the fine silt behind several big boulders. All you could hope to find in the silt would be extremely fine flour gold. The Sheep Mountains appeared to be still rising and Caribou Creek cut right through the mountain. I reasoned that gold was probably still being eroded out and would be dropped with the big rocks in the creek. I tried a patch

East of Palmer Alaska

of four to eight inch rocks and sure, enough, found a half dozen flakes in each pan. While I was busy panning, another couple drove down off the highway to see how we were doing. They were both pilots for a British Columbia airline and informed me that they had just taken a lesson in panning. They also informed me that I was doing it all wrong. He continued to criticize my work and obviously wanted to show me the right way. I handed him my pan and shovel and said we would be back after lunch. In about an hour we returned and I wanted to see his gold. Not a flake! He was very discouraged, but he felt better when I told him the technique he had been taught was for old, mature, placers and this one was still forming.

The above is an example of a stream placer. So, how do you find placer deposits? I will skip the instructions for mature stream placers. They are well known and are listed in all prospecting books. Following is what I have found works for me.

1. Finding new stream placers can mean a lot of hard work. A trick to reduce the work and get better results for young placers is to think like a rock. (Haven't all of us collectors been told we have rocks in our heads?) By thinking like a rock, I mean what would you do if you were a garnet being carried down a stream in a flood. Where would you become lodged? Since garnets are significantly denser than common rocks, they require faster water to be lifted. The same water that will lift a garnet will lift a much larger common rock. You, as a garnet, would then come to rest with those much larger rocks. What does this mean in searching for that garnet? Look for large rocks along the stream, preferably a layer of large rocks exposed in a cut bank. Dig around those large rocks. Only if you find garnets (or other collectables) there, should you go to the trouble of digging down to bedrock for the really big ones in a mature deposit.

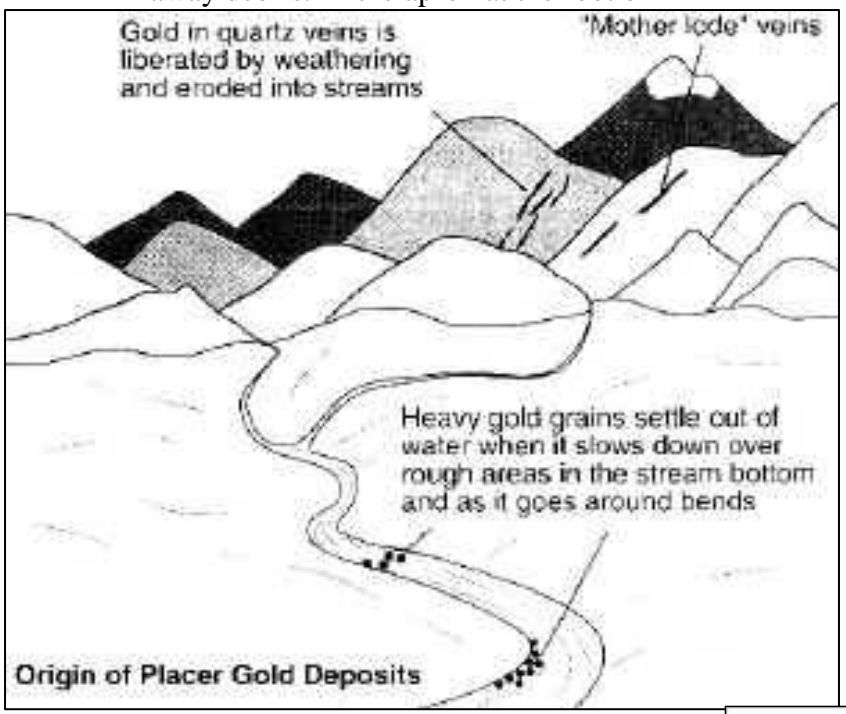
Garnet

2. Keep in mind that what comes down a stream at any given time depends on what the stream is cutting through up above. This means that the minerals you are looking for will probably be in layers and not scattered all through the gravels.

3. Look at the rocks drained by the stream. If they are all sedimentary, there is little chance of good placers. If the rocks are igneous or metamorphic, the chances of a placer deposit are good. If you see schist, think of garnets in the streambed.

4. Residual deposits are completely different. This is where the rock holding the sought-after mineral has disintegrated and has been carried away by erosion. Many minerals can

form deposits this way with quartz minerals being the most common. Agates, geodes, and quartz crystals are often contained in rocks making up a cliff or steep hill. Pieces of the rock will fall off the cliff and disintegrate freeing any quartz specimens. The rock fragments, being very small, will wash on down the slope leaving the quartz in place. If there is considerable erosion, the quartz can work its way down to the base of the debris pile below the cliff or down to bedrock on the side of a hill. The first step in locating a residual deposit is to determine if a deposit is likely. Look on the cliff for signs of quartz or other minerals that weather slowly. Look on the debris pile or the side of the hill for small quartz fragments. If any of these are found, there is a good chance of a residual placer deposit. The digging then begins. Look for a depression on the cliff or on the hill that, if present, could channel water and help carry away debris. If the apron at the foot of



the cliff is steep, try digging at the base. The quartz and debris may have been carried down to the foot where the debris was washed away.

5. Residual placers also form where there are no cliffs. The process takes longer

Mining placer box replicates the action of natural placer deposits.

because the disintegrated rock is carried away at a slower rate. There are many, many residual placers that have not beendiscovered because they are very difficult to find. The author has found several residual placers by going to similar-looking terrain near known deposits and simply digging an exploratory hole. A related type of placer is one in which the minerals are left on gravel bars.

6. minerals are not concentrated because they are of about the same density as the stream gravels. Many agates are found in these placers. The famous Montana agates are found in gravels all along the Yellowstone River. Before the dams were built, the Columbia and Willamette Rivers were great producers. A collector could pick up a gallon bucket of agates, jasper and petrified wood in a single morning after a spring flood.