

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

January 2007

Panorama Gem and Mineral Club

Minutes: November 21, 2006

Luci Bristow

Johnie opened the meeting at 7:30 PM by greeting everyone. Vanita sent around a sign-up sheet for the potluck dishes for our Christmas Party. No cookies or juice will be needed at the December 19, 2006 meeting. We will be sharing potluck! Be sure to come. We have a great time. If you are coming, and can do so, please provide a \$5 - \$10 Christmas gift for some lucky person. Please mark the gift as to whether it is for a gentleman or a lady. The Christmas potluck will be held at the American West Bank in Chewelah. Decorating starts at 5:00 PM. We will eat at approximately 6:00 PM.

Johnie talked about our Show planning meeting. The planning will begin at the January 15, 2007 meeting. The Show meetings start at 6:00 PM. Our theme this year is "Obsidian". Our show has been set for March 30, and 31. Set-up will begin on March 29, at 8:00 AM at the Fort Colville Grange Hall. Johnie has contacted the dealers and some have already responded. It will be a great show, so please, if you can, come and help us with setting up. Every hand is needed and greatly appreciated.

Steve White spoke on his researching a TV for the club's use. He stated they are going down in price. The TV we are considering is a LCD 28" one. After some discussion, a motion was made by Steve to purchase a 28" one. That motion was seconded by Jerry Hill and passed unanimously. A further motion was made by Rex to purchase a 32" one. It was seconded by Jerry Hill for Steve to purchase a LCD 32" TV. The motion was passed unanimously.

Diane Lentz showed us a clock made of petrified wood that she found at a shop, and has very generously donated it to the club for one of our prizes. Thank you, Diane!

Fran Davis said our hats are ready, but the delivery is somewhat nebulous. They will probably be ready for our next meeting, and then, maybe not. Thanks, Fran, for doing a great job.

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Thulite at Tunk Creek

by

Bob Bristow



Figure 1. Blue Schist of Tunk Creek

Can you recognize blue schist? Neither could I, but I had decided to see if I could find some of the famous thulite in the blue schist of Tunk Creek near Riverside, Washington. This was during my first visit to NE Washington. I was spending a week going from one mineral site to another with my son, Dale, and my brother and his wife. We stopped near the bridge over Tunk Creek and prepared to climb down under the bridge and search downstream. As we were putting our packs on, a car stopped and the driver very seriously warned us to not go down the stream. It was full of rattlesnakes and we were sure to get bit!

Blue schist is rare in most places, but is famous in the coast range of California as the home for several rare minerals. It is believed to have formed in California as plate scrapings. Not dinner plates, but tectonic plates. The whole North American continent is being pushed west by the opening Atlantic Ocean. The continent collides with plates in the Pacific. When these plates ram into each other, the boundary must give. In California, one of the oceanic plates was driven under the continental plate. As the dense basalt of the oceanic plate slid under the lighter granite of the continental plate, the material that had collected on the ocean floor slid off

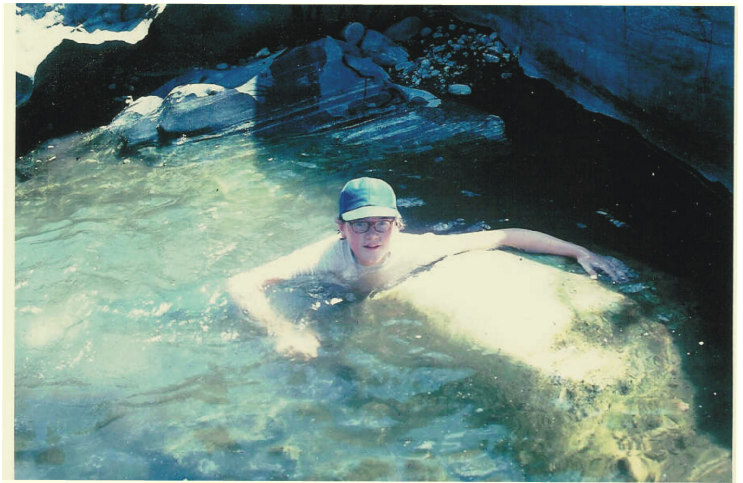
into a huge “windrow” under water. Later, the Pacific plate ruptured further out in the ocean and the old windrow was heated and pressurized until new, and sometimes exotic, minerals formed. Later yet, the whole windrow was lifted up and now forms the Coast Range.

That is California. How about Washington? The blue schist of Tunk Creek probably formed the same way. The old North American continent edge is approximately along the edge of Idaho. The land west of this line is mostly made up of a series of islands that “docked” with the continent. As each island was “rafted” in and docked, a new subduction zone formed further out to sea. The schist of Tunk Creek was probably formed at one of these subduction zones. When you walk down the creek, the rocks you see were formed from goo in the bottom on the ocean.

The blue schist of Tunk Creek is a gray, soft schist that erodes easily. Actually, much of the rock you see along the creek is not schist, but a coarse-grained gray rock composed of zoisite. In places, the gray turns to dark green and here and there it is colored pink. It is this pink variety that is called “thulite.” The books I had read on Tunk Creek said that there are blue sapphires associated with the thulite. The books also reported that on the hill south of the creek is located a pegmatite in which a small crystal of gem-quality aquamarine had been found.

Meanwhile, back at the Tunk Creek bridge, I smiled at the gentleman who had tried to discourage us from getting off the road and said, “Not to worry!” as I strapped on my revolver. Without a word, he disappeared down the road. Figure 1 shows the members of my family making their way through the water-sculptured schist of Tunk Creek.

We worked our way down the creek bottom looking for pink. It seems many people had had the same idea and little of the thulite was left. It was late summer and the creek was hardly flowing. However, there were large pools with many large fish. We began to think that we should be fishing rather than rock hunting! We eventually reached the edge of the Omak River canyon. At this point Tunk Creek tumbles down the steep cliffs through a series of small pools. We didn’t see any thulite, but the uppermost pool was occupied by a man and two women skinny-dipping. Since the temperature was over 100 degrees, a dip in the water sounded pretty good. We decided to “fat dip” on the way back up. (We jumped in with our clothes on and let them dry as we walked up the narrow canyon.)



One of the last pools before the creek dropped into the Omak River held what we were looking for, a large chunk of pink thulite. However, it was far too big to carry out and the thulite was so tough we gave up and left the whole thing there. Figure 2 shows Dale fat dipping around the thulite boulder.

There was plenty of light pink thulite, but I wanted some of the bright pink material that has made the area famous. As we worked our way back up the stream, I climbed up on a ledge and spotted a small bit of pink. When I broke open the rock, I found the beautiful specimen shown in Figure 3. I also found some very good material with a mixture of pink and green. I broke off several pieces and felt I had made a good haul. However, after I got home and turned over one of the green chunks, I discovered a large red ruby on the back side. Unfortunately, I had managed to hit the ruby dead center with my rock hammer and it was shattered. At any rate, I had found a ruby, which must be rare. I have heard of blue corundum (sapphire) being found but not red corundum (ruby).

Figure 3. Thulite Specimen



(Minutes continued from page 1)

The election of next year's officers was held and they are as follows:

President	-	Johnie Pitman
Vice President	-	Steve White
Secretary	-	Luci Bristow
Treasurer	-	Sylvia Allen
Trustees	-	Warren Buell – 3 Years
	-	Joyce Dawson – 2 Years
	-	Bob Bristow – 1 Year

After break, we had an exciting and very rewarding auction. Bill Allen was the auctioneer and did a fantastic job! At a rough count - we provided money for one of our scholarships!

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Christmas Party Pictures

By Joe Barreca



This year's Christmas Party, held again in the basement of American West Bank in Chewelah was a lot of fun. There was a good crowd. As you can see, there were plenty of presents to share in our draw-a-number present opening portion. The food was also plentiful and tasty (we won't say non-fattening).

After dinner Johnie used a couple of our new Panorama Gem and Mineral Club baseball caps to organize the number drawing. We postponed actually

selling them off to members (at \$10 a pop) until the next meeting.



The present opening itself was a little rowdy as it should be. Having some younger family members in the mix keeps it authentic.



(Here is Sylvia Allen assisting the younger set.)

The more impressive highlight of the evening was probably Lesley and Adam with a Christmas Song.



Cash and Treasures

By Joe Barreca

My wife, Cheryl, told me about this new TV show. It's armchair rockhounding, but in the winter that's not bad. It's on the Travel Channel so if you have cable or satellite TV look for it fairly often.



The host, Becky Worley, has a knack for really getting down to digging, sifting and even getting stones cut. And she has really good luck at it. Check out these finds:

Sunstones:

We found several sunstones in eastern Oregon; the best was a red one cut by a gemstone artist named John Bailey into a shape he had designed. He named it the "Indigo Cut" in reference to the production house. The finished stone was over 10 carats!! It was appraised at Bonham's Auction House in New York for between \$4,000 and \$5,000. We sold it to a couple in Oregon for \$5,200. When this couple first met, they went searching for sunstones at the same mine we went to, and sunstones have always had a place in their relationship.

Gold:

In two days of panning, we found just over seven pennyweight (there are 20 pennyweight in an ounce) of gold. The gold was high quality: 22 carat (24 carat being pure!), and was valued at around \$320. It was purified, melted down and sold to a goldsmith in San Francisco.

Sunken Treasure:

We found three items. Two were pieces of the ship, but the third was a silver coin. It is currently being cleaned (this process takes

months). The estimated value is at least \$1,500. The Fishers, owners of the dive site, own everything that is found on the dives, unless you are an investor in their company. However, they generously are giving the find to Becky once it's cleaned.

Meteorites:

We hunted with Steve Arnold and Geoff Notkin. Both are avid meteorite hunters. Steve has turned gemstone hunting into his business and owns a five-year lease to hunt meteorites in Brennan township, in Kansas. In 2005, Steve unearthed a record-breaking meteorite that weighed over a ton and is valued at \$1 million. When we tagged along on the hunt, Steve and Geoff found two meteorites: one weighed 83 pounds, the other 93 pounds. They named the second one the "Becky Stone," in reference to our host. The stone is currently on sale for \$120,000! As of this writing, it has not sold.

Aquamarine:

The rocks we found were cut into six individual gemstones. The largest was a pear-shaped 4.5 carat that was mounted as a pendant. The total estimated value of all the items we found was nearly \$2,000 retail. Becky wanted to keep the emerald-cut stone.

Civil War:

Our best find was a general's service button with a small piece of thread still attached to the back. Its monetary value is roughly \$40, but we felt that the historical value of everything we found was far greater, so we donated the few items we unearthed to the Civil War Life Museum in Fredericksburg, Va., since they helped us on the shoot.

Sapphires:

We found a total of about \$1,500 (retail) worth of sapphires. Only a few have been cut, and to realize the value they will need to be refined and mounted.

Fluorescent Minerals:

We found several specimens and donated them to the California Academy of Science, to be part of its displays.

So anyway, this is a fun show. Their web site has information on how to take similar trips and what to bring with you: <http://travel.discovery.com/fansites/cash-treasures/cash-treasures.html>.



Fossicking – It's Australian for Rockhounding

By Joe Barreca

Okay, right away you are wondering, "What has Joe gotten us into this time." Granted, rockhounding in Australia is not our usual fare. But Cheryl and I are planning a trip down there in March and April, so you may be hearing even more about it, and seeing less of my contributions to the newsletter.

In preparation, I went online and looked to find out what I could about rockhounding Downunder.



One of the first things was **Crocoite** Fossicking: "According to the Macquarie Dictionary, fossick means "to search unsystematically or in a small way for mineral deposits, usually over ground previously worked by others". However, fossicking could be more accurately described as searching for and collecting gemstones, ornamental stones, mineral specimens, alluvial gold, rocks and some fossils by tourist and recreational fossickers from the ground's surface or by shallow excavation using basic hand tools for non-commercial purposes."

Another thing I found out is that fossickers in Australia are incredibly organized. For instance, you can go to this site and find lists of hundreds of rock clubs all over the country, many with direct links to their own websites. <http://www.mineral.org.au/>

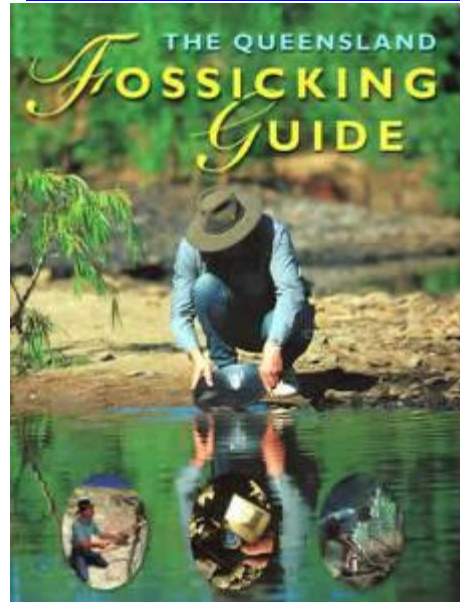
There are also many museums, none as well referenced as this one, the Minerals Heritage Museum, 61 Mary Street, Brisbane, Queensland, which is conveniently right where we are going.

There is one part that is going to bring some people down. All Fossicking in Queensland, and perhaps all parts of Australia is licensed. The Department of Mines and Energy is the agency responsible for the administration of recreational and tourist fossicking in Queensland. The Fossicking Act 1994 and Fossicking Regulation 1994 provide the legislative framework for the Department to administer fossicking activities. Fossickers licenses are issued by Departmental regional and district offices throughout the State, as well as through authorized agents. They don't cost all that much

though, a family can get a one month license for \$7.50 Australian (a little less than USD).

The up side is that the government has set aside a lot of popular places for fossickers to prospect. "The Department of Mines and Energy has established a State-wide network of declared areas and 'general permission' areas, which cover the main known collecting localities where the Government has sought permission from the land holder in advance to assist fossickers. Any further permission to access the land is not required by the individual fossicker. Camping is permitted in some declared areas and permits are issued by the Department."

On top of that, a lot of the money goes back into publications and activities of benefit to fossickers. One of them is this splendid online guide: www.gemfields.com/fossicking_guide/index.html.



You really can't think about gems in Australia without opals. 95% of the world's opals come from AUS. The opal belt runs for hundreds of miles from the southern border to the middle of Queensland and down into

New South Wales. There are maps, descriptions, contacts etc. for all of that in this guide.

Some other options are tours and resorts of special interest to fossickers. The picture to the left is Cobbold Gorge west of Cairns.

This article is just scratching the surface. If you have your own links to rocks in Australia, let me know.

