

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



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

The Panorama Prospector

June 2007

Panorama Gem and Mineral Club Minutes for May 15, 2007 *By Joe Barreca*

We limped through the last meeting without our esteemed president, Johnie Pitman and our secretary, Luci Bristow. We did have Treasurer Sylvia Allen however and Vice President Steve White to keep us in order. Sylvia started out with the financial report. We have \$6663.73 in the bank. After expenses we cleared \$1315 from the rock show.

We are giving out \$1000 in scholarships, Steve Fox is giving the award out in Kettle Falls and Diane Lentz will handle Colville. The Chewelah School District dropped the ball and will have no scholarship this year, but promises to do better next year.

Diane also had a rock booth at Pottery by the Park, a craft fair in the Junior High Parking lot that was well-received.

The Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies will meet in Butte August 3-5th. There will be a rock show, field trips and a lot of other activities. You can find out more at www.buttetours.info. This is also the time to submit resolutions to the



organization, some of which are printed in the May NFMS Newsletter.

There were also announcements of several field trips, Saddle

Mountain, Adams Mt and Boulder Pass. The dates have passed for all of them. Steve Fox has a report on Boulder in this newsletter. Steve also offered some buckets that would be great for rock collectors. Several have been reserved but he will also bring some to the next meeting.

Entertainment for the last meeting was a video on rock hounding sites around the United States. Good thing we have that TV now.

The Columbia River Rock and Mineral Shop *By Owner Stephen Fox*



I have been in business about one and a half years now, and I am located in Marcus, Washington at 1301 Cider St (Highway 25 North). Just look for the two story gray house and come on upstairs. I specialize in specimens rather than polished and cut stones, and bulk or large rocks (rock garden type rocks). I have just about all you would want from A to W. I don't have any Xenolith, Yule Marble, Zincite, or Zoisite, yet. Right now I'm still not sure what xenolith is, other than it has something to do with igneous formations. Give me time though.

Okay, that's the nuts and bolts of my rock shop. You walk into a rock shop and you know there are going to be rocks and minerals. In mine you also get stories about some of the stuff I have and how I collected some under duress (ie. bears, cougars, wolverines, hostile former girlfriends, weather, etc.). Eventually I plan to expand into metal detectors, rock books, pans, and other rock hounding needs. I am looking into the feasibility of rock hounding tours of this area, and I am available to schools for rock and mineral seminars (elementary and junior high usually).

I was a middle school, eighth grade Earth Science teacher in Spring Creek, Nevada when I got the opportunity to buy this business building that is now my shop. So I took this opportunity and moved in. The original name of my rock shop was to be "Spotted Fox

Rocks”. Nobody gets it and I got tired of explaining the title. I’m spotted (freckled), the name is Fox, and I’m selling rocks. I just got tired of explaining to people that I was not selling rock music, therefore the change to the present title. Some people have asked me if it’s just a little daunting to go into a business like this. I respond by asking if they have ever tried to get an eighth grader to understand the concept of $D = M/V$ or even how to do the math for density. This is a cakewalk. (Below are some “Garden Rocks”)



When you get an opportunity, stop by anytime Tuesday through Saturday. When you do, I’ll try to have coffee ready. Donuts are your responsibility.

Stomping Around Our Back Yard

By Steven Fox

First and foremost, I want to put the blame on this jaunt into the backwoods where it belongs. Dave. Going by his brilliant directions (“Go to the top of Boulder and take the first right”) I led about 10 brave souls up to the top of Boulder Creek to look for some Schorl (black tourmaline) that Dave swears is up there. It still is.

The day started out pretty iffy, with clouds that promised rain and cool temperatures. We decided to risk it anyway. So about fifteen after nine on this great Sunday morning some five vehicles followed my truck, confident that I had some sort of a clue as to where I was going. Please keep in mind one of my philosophy’s of life as you read this: “You ain’t lost if you don’t care where you’re at.”

On the road I thought we were going to do okay, and a couple of raindrops on the windshield did not cause any great concern. When we got to the top of Boulder we turned right into a very nice campground. Good place to stop and get our bearings. Harold and I took a scouting trip up a promising logging road and did not see anything of the type of host rock that would contain schorl or even garnets. I need to point out here that I was using Joe’s geology map of Ferry County to figure out what

rock type we needed to find to get into the schorl or garnets. I think it is a very good guide but the user needs to study more. When we reported what we had seen, it was decided to go over towards Curlew and take the next right that we came to. Again we found a very nice logging road and went up it a couple of miles. Here we could see off to our left a cliff face that looked promising. Hoping that the road that we were on would wind over to it we went on down our logging road about another two miles or so where it came to a very abrupt fork. One road went up to our right (a very sharp turn) and to our left it came to an ugly stop (a mound of dirt and a small pool of water). It turns out that our right would have taken us back to the campground. We did not know this at the time and so we turned around and went back to see if we could get to the cliff that looked promising.

When we stopped, we decided that a healthy walk up to the cliff face was in order. It did not look like it would take very long to get there as the cliff was only a hundred yards or so away. So with rock hammers, buckets, backpacks, extra water, and confident that we were onto something good, we started out. After struggling up through the woods about two miles, we came to the cliff face and found a rock that did not contain any useful minerals in it. A total bust except for the short walk. We then walked the hundred yards or so back down to the vehicles where we decided to have lunch (at my age it IS easier to walk down than up.)



Strange rock in Diopside formation

Right after lunch, Mike and Scott decided to go off on their own to see what they could find. The rest of us decided to head over to South Sherman to get at some diopside. Steve claimed that it was going to rain and that maybe we should head back. I rightly claimed that it never rains on me when I’m swinging a rock hammer and we would be fine. So with a short break at the campground, we were headed over to Sherman Pass.

When we hit 395, a slight downpour was watering the local fauna, although some people will

claim that it was coming down in buckets. We could still see the highway, sort of. This continued on over to Sherman Pass road. When we stopped at South Sherman road to make sure we had everybody, it had stopped raining, but we had lost Steve. We presumed that he headed on home for the day and was not going to chance it. With the sun shining down on us, the seven that were left went on up to where the diopside is located.

Success! There were quite a few nice crystals that were found and some strange-looking rock that I will bring to the next meeting. Everybody here was having a good time digging and I hope will make a return trip to get at what may prove to be larger crystals. This formation shows promise.

Like I said, I'm going to blame Dave for this trip. We all had a good day and for that we have Dave to blame.

Inverell, New South Wales, the Sapphire City

By Joe Barreca



Club members probably noticed that I have been gone – especially since there have not been any newsletters for a couple of months. My wife Cheryl and I were in Australia traveling. I managed to see some world-class fossicking, (Australian for Rock Hounding) places. Most were pretty rugged. This one is actually in some very nice country. I wrote a series of stories and posted hundreds of pictures of our trip on my web site. www.mapmet.com. Just click on the wallaby to see a list. A couple more are forthcoming. I will be using them, with some amplification for people actually interested in rocks, in the next few issues of this newsletter. We visited Inverell right after staying for a couple days in Lightning Ridge, world famous for its black opals. More about that in future stories. For now, here is a story about our brief

visit to the Billabong Blue Fossicking Park just outside of Inverell.

Reluctantly leaving Lightning Ridge behind, we headed back south on the Castlereagh Highway and then east on the Gwydir Highway.



Cheryl studied a map book and picked a camping spot called the Gum Flat Reserve. We bought some ice and filled the autogas tank in Moree and drove along the Gwydir River till we found the road. It headed over a cattle guard and along the river. The first spot we saw was pretty trashed out, so we drove further into the reserve. We scared up hundreds of probably feral goats along the way. After some searching, we decided



on a spot with a view of the river. Seeing one flowing was heartening in itself. The bad news was that with so many goats overgrazing, every plant that survived near the ground had thorns. After we stopped I pulled cactus pieces, burrs, and bush thorns out of the Nissan's tires (and some that had punctured Cheryl's light rubber soled Nothinz - Croc-like-shoes). Luckily, there were no leaks in the tires and Cheryl had better soled sandals handy.

The next morning the sunrise over the river was spectacular. Joining in the festivities were raucous flocks of Galahs and pink Cockatoos wheeling round from tree to tree and the goats grazing at a safe distance from our camp.

I was reading up on Inverell, the next large town in a booklet from an *i*(info) Center and discovered that Inverell is the “Sapphire City”. There are sapphire mines and fossicking sites all around it



with not just sapphires, but topaz, zircons and diamonds. Not only were the sights getting really interesting, the countryside was beginning to look idyllic. The grass was green and tall. The trees were healthy. The pastures were not overgrazed and there were crops of sorghum, corn and sunflowers. We turned at a round-about (keeping left of course!) planted with bright flowers and stopped at the huge Inverell visitors’ center in a



park next to the MacIntyre River, that was actually flowing (unlike many we had passed already).

The visitor center was not only big, it housed an extremely nice collection of rocks, cut gems and minerals. I’ve included a picture of the agates, (probably from Agate Creek). They also had a large collection of rutilated quartz (crystals with needles of other minerals imbedded in them), another product of Australia, sapphires of course and great mineral specimens from around the

world. You could even buy bags of “sapphire gravel” and sift through them yourself to pick out the sapphires.

They had local wine, pecans and olive oil for sale too. We had not intended to stay long but I decided we should check out this sapphire thing for ourselves and picked out a place to visit on our way to Glen Innes. We headed out along the main highway through town called “Fossickers Way”. Soon we turned off on a pleasant country road and over some small hills to Billabong Blue Sapphires, <http://billabongblue.fossickingpark.com.au/>.



It had a circle of caravans and cars around the campfire pit in the middle of the parking lot, a lower level where the fossicking was going on, and a rustic shop where Rhonda, the owner, held sway.



I explained to her that we didn’t have time to do much fossicking but I wanted to take some pictures and do a story for our rock club newsletter back home. She was happy to let us visit with her clients and suggested that we talk to a gal out fossicking below, named Carrie, about how to find sapphires.



Carrie was happy to show us the ropes. She also showed us a very nice dark blue sapphire she had found previously and had cut to make a pendant necklace. Having a mine where sapphires can be found is just the beginning. Sapphire gravel is much like any other gravel. It is dirty and dusty with rocks of all sizes. Sapphires are normally not very big. So the first step is to shovel some of the dirt into a sieve, pick out the big rocks and shake out the dirt. Next you need to wash



the gravel to get the dirt and dust off. They had big round troughs of water for this. Shaking the sieve in the water moves the heavier stones, including the sapphires to the center. This gravel also had zircons and topaz that were worth saving. Then they used 55 gallon barrels with some heavy burlap on the top to spread out the contents of the sieve in the



sunlight. Without strong light, it is hard to see that the sapphires are clear. They look black until you hold them up to the sunlight. Even after you have a



collection, the best ones need to be cut and polished to bring out the color and clarity. It takes a lot of people to get it all done. We wandered around the park a little and were looking at some washed

gravel with another customer, when Cheryl picked up a pea-sized stone and noticed that it had one flat side with a radial pattern on it. This turned out to be a star sapphire. My picture doesn't do it justice. Too bad we didn't have time to find a few for ourselves. Just before she put the kettle on the grate over the campfire (for tea, of course) Rhonda gave us a small bag of sapphire sand to pick through, like she gives to kids, and we were on the road again.

