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WHITTIER



ROCKHOUNDING

GEM & MINERAL
SOCIETY



ROCKHOUNDER

THE PREZ SEZ:

Christmas Message

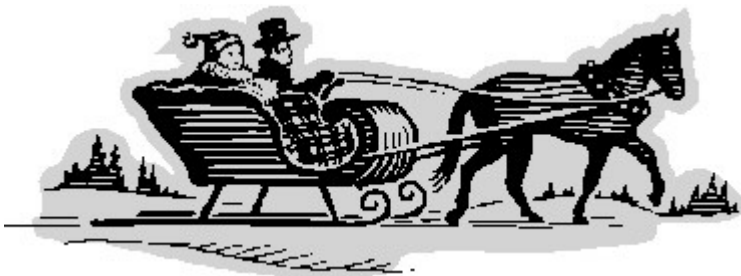
Well it is that time of year again. It is the time to rush here and there, to get presents for loved ones. If you have time, it's time to bake and plan. If you happen to be a rockhound, it's time to grind and polish stones and set them in findings for that special someone.

This month we will be gathering together for our annual Christmas potluck dinner. It is going to be special as it will be at the Turners just like last year. There will be a gift exchange (approximately around \$5.00), be sure to mark one of the following: his, hers or either. It should be a fun time. Also in January we'll be having a fieldtrip planning party, so think of someplace you'd like to go on a fieldtrip. Send a letter, a card, an e-mail or come to the meeting and tell us in person.

Where ever your travels take you, be safe and we'll see you at the potluck.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Joe Goetz



**WGMS Christmas Party,
Potluck and Installation of Officers**

**Saturday, December 16, 2006
at 6:00 PM**

**"Social Hour" at 6:00 pm
Dinner!! at 6:30 pm**

The WGMS Annual Christmas Party, potluck dinner and installation of new Officers will be held at the same location as last year. Members who have not already done so should contact Kathleen Turner at (562) 696-3222 to let her know you are coming and to obtain directions (if needed).

There will be an optional gift exchange which you are invited to participate in. The way it works is you bring a wrapped gift worth about \$10, marking it for a man, woman or suitable for either. Rock related gifts are preferred but anything is fine. Those who bring a gift will draw numbers, and presents will be retrieved one at a time until they are gone.

So come on out and savor the excellent potluck buffet while in the company of other WGMSers. See you there

Izzie Burns

Dues Are Due!

Yes, rockhounds, it is that time again when we pay the piper, er.. I mean the Club our annual dues. Please bring your dues payment to the Christmas Party or send it to the editor of this bulletin and he will deliver your payment to the treasurer. New members who paid at the October Show or later are paid through the end of 2007.

Single Adults - \$15.00
Married Couple - \$25.00
Juniors (Under 18) - \$5.00

Please send your dues to:

Whittier Gem & Mineral Society
c/o Jay Valle
1421 Latchford Avenue
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745

Rockgabbers!!!

How time flies when you're having fun!! The Rockgabbers meetings have been great fun, and we have all learned new things. During the year we have made bracelets, necklaces, rings and pendants. We have made bezels and clasps. But most of all we have enjoyed the friendships.

The Rockgabbers exhibited at the CFMS show this year, and had two cases at our club show in October. There were a lot of positive comments on both exhibits.

Next year we plan on continuing with new projects. The first meeting will be on January 20th and the project will be a circle loop bracelet. This is a simple but elegant bracelet, and will be an excellent starting project for the new person who has no experience with silver work. This project will allow new people to get up to speed with the rest of the members of Rockgabbers.

I would like to express my thanks to all the members of Rockgabbers who have contributed to making this endeavor a success and especially to the Turners and the Valles for allowing us the use of their homes for the meetings. I look forward to another year of new learning experiences.

Tony Fender

Welcome New Members

As a result of our very successful gem show, the following people have joined our rockhound family. Several of them have already been out on a Club field trip, and some came and helped out at the show.

Thank you for selecting the Whittier Gem & Mineral Society and welcome to the Club.

- Will & Yvonne Morton, Whittier
- Ellen Edmunds, Whittier
- Travis & Melissa Cuprak, Redondo Beach
- Drew Wilson, Pasadena
- Brian Bise, Whittier

December Birthstone : Blue Topaz
Birthstone Color: Blue

As cool and inviting as a blue lake on a blistering summer day, December's birthstone is derived from the Sanskrit word "tapas," meaning fire. This is because Blue Topaz was considered by ancient civilizations to have cooling properties. Not only was it believed to cool boiling water when thrown into the pot, but to calm hot tempers as well! This gemstone was credited with many other healing powers, among them the ability to cure insanity, asthma, weak vision and insomnia. The Blue Topaz was even thought to have magical properties in its ability to make its wearer invisible in a threatening situation.

Blue Topaz is the hardest of the silicate minerals. While pure Topaz is colorless, minor changes of elements within the stone result in a variety of other colors, such as blue, pale green, red, yellow and pink.

The blue hue is created when Topaz is heated, whether the heat source is natural or engineered by man. The three shades of Blue Topaz are Sky, Swiss and London Blue. The latter is the deepest blue and is often used as a less expensive substitute for Sapphire.

Topaz is found primarily in Brazil, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Pakistan, China, and the United States.

A gift of Blue Topaz is symbolic of love and fidelity. Luckily, this cool blue gemstone has no legendary power to put out the burning flame of love!

Alternate Birthstone

An alternate birthstone for December is the Turquoise. So named because it was initially brought to Europe by way of Turkey, this stone is one of the first gems to be used in jewelry. Turquoise was considered by ancients to be a sacred stone, protective against all manners of evil and ill health. This beautiful gemstone is mined in Iran and the southwestern United States. A gift of Turquoise represents friendship and luck.

From <http://www.about-birthstones.com/>

The Symbols and Traditions of Christmas **by Jerry Wilson**

The Date of Christmas

The idea to celebrate Christmas on December 25 originated in the 4th century. The Catholic Church wanted to eclipse the festivities of a rival pagan religion that threatened Christianity's existence. The Romans celebrated the birthday of their sun god, Mithras during this time of year. Although it was not popular, or even proper, to celebrate people's birthdays in those times, church leaders decided that in order to compete with the pagan celebration they would themselves order a festival in celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the actual season of Jesus' birth is thought to be in the spring, the date of December 25 was chosen as the official birthday celebration as Christ's Mass so that it would compete head on with the rival pagan celebration. Christmas was slow to catch on in America. The early colonists considered it a pagan ritual. The celebration of Christmas was even banned by law in Massachusetts in colonial days.

Mistletoe and Holly

Two hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Druids used mistletoe to celebrate the coming of winter. They would gather this evergreen plant that is parasitic upon other trees and used it to decorate their homes. They believed the plant had special healing powers for everything from female infertility to poison ingestion. Scandinavians also thought of mistletoe as a plant of peace and harmony. They associated mistletoe with their goddess of love, Frigga. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe probably derived from this belief. The early church banned the use of mistletoe in Christmas celebrations because of its pagan origins. Instead, church fathers suggested the use of holly as an appropriate substitute for Christmas greenery.

Poinsettias

Poinsettias are native to Mexico. They were named after America's first

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**Field Trip Report
Thanksgiving Weekend 2006
Opal Mountain**

Cold but fun! That was Opal Mountain this year. Oh yes, and the bird hunters.

Vern & Sylvia Cliffe and Ed & Corinne Imlay setup camp on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and enjoyed a small holiday feast on Thursday. Ed climbed around on Opal Mountain, as usual, looking for a lost seam of cherry opal that he had discovered some years ago and hasn't seen since. I arrived Friday morning just as the Imlay's were heading for home and the Cliffes were off to Diamond Pacific for some lapidary supplies. That left me the morning to myself.

Ed Imlay's repeated search of Opal Mountain for the reputed cherry opal inspired me to take a look myself. I climbed the south face to the white, bentonite clay saddle, avoiding hunters, and carried out my survey. Though I did not find a wide and long seam of any opal, I did find an area littered with small pieces of green, brown, white, orange and some red opal, all in float. I would have searched further in that particular area but I was competing with a trio of hunters with shotguns who were not happy that I was there chasing off the game. (My policy is to NOT annoy people with guns.)

By lunchtime Vern & Sylvia had returned to camp, along with Art & Ginger Ragazzi (day trippers) and soon -to-be new member Drew Wilson. Apparently, Drew had been following our newly-made signs and made wrong turn at a road split where the sign had been removed by person(s) unknown (we ended up having 6 of 9 new signs stolen.) He continued up this road and got stuck in soft sand. This could have been really bad but along came Art & Ginger who had also made the wrong turn. Art & Ginger pulled Drew out of the sand and eventually the two vehicles made it into camp.

Drew rode with me, and 3 SUVs headed into the canyon to collect opal. We started at the Amber Opal site where a nice seam of deep translucent amber opal was mined. Then off to the famous(?) orange opal area. By the time we finished up there, it was dinner time (I miss those long summer hours - though not the heat.) Art & Ginger made a run back to the highway while there was still some daylight and those of us left enjoyed a small potluck in Vern & Sylvia's trailer. This was followed by a blazing campfire and turning in early.

Bright and early Saturday morning the group headed for the thompsonite

location listed in many field trip guidebooks. After Sylvia showed us what we were supposed to be looking for, specimens of the illusive material were found. After that it was off to a brown agate location discovered some years ago and remembered by the Cliffee. After a little road hunting, the site was rediscovered and collecting was done. (Note: both of these locations deserve much more time than we gave them - maybe next time.)

Around noontime, Drew and I went into Barstow for the Barstow Gem & Mineral Clubs annual show. The Barstow Club always has the best showcases of member displays and we saw a number of dealer friends along with other rockhounds from other clubs. Bill Burns and his daughter Patricia (and grandkids) were there. Bill and I got into a little trouble at the silent auction table, though nothing we could not buy our way out of. Drew picked up some supplies at the Diamond Pacific booth. Dinner that night was in the Cliffee's trailer again and was good, as always. The campfire was enjoyed until later in the evening and was our last one for this trip.

That night (Saturday) the temperature dropped to a chilly 30° F. Vern & Sylvia were snug in their 5th wheel, I was comfy in my tent trailer, but Drew was sleeping in his car and had trouble getting warm. I know from personal experience that if you cannot keep warm during an outing, the trip can be a lot less enjoyable (understatement!). After shaking off the cold, we visited some collecting areas near Scout's Cove and dropped in to see the petroglyphs of Inscription Canyon. For those of you who don't know, petroglyphs are pictures created by local American Indians which are "pecked" into the dark basalt or desert varnish for probably mystic or religious reasons. This site has bighorn sheep and "flying saucers" (don't ask, that is what they look like - go see for yourself.) It also has various "contemporary" drawings made by more modern "artists", who are also referred to as "vandals." Though Drew was the only one who had not seen these objects of aboriginal art before, I always use these opportunities to photograph the pictures again since they can look different at various times of the day and at different seasons. Also different cameras can respond in markedly different ways to the incised graphic images. During the afternoon, a storm front began moving into the area and wind picked up considerably, lasting into the evening and making for a cold and blustery night. Drew caught the last rays of sunshine in the late afternoon and headed for home before dinner so as not to be trying to find the road out to pavement in the dark. A final dinner was had by Vern & Sylvia and myself. No campfire was possible due to the high winds so we made an early night of it.

Monday morning, after a slow start, we braved the weather to look over an old collecting area and then headed for home.

Jay Valle

Symbols and Traditions

(Continued from page 7)

ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett. He brought the plants to America in 1828. The Mexicans in the eighteenth century thought the plants were symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus the Poinsettia became associated with the Christmas season. The actual flower of the poinsettia is small and yellow. But surrounding the flower are large, bright red leaves, often mistaken for petals.

The Christmas Tree

The Christmas Tree originated in Germany in the 16th century. It was common for the Germanic people to decorate fir trees, both inside and out, with roses, apples, and colored paper. It is believed that Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, was the first to light a Christmas tree with candles. While coming home one dark winter's night near Christmas, he was struck with the beauty of the starlight shining through the branches of a small fir tree outside his home. He duplicated the starlight by using candles attached to the branches of his indoor Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was not widely used in Britain until the 19th century. It was brought to America by the Pennsylvania Germans in the 1820's.

Xmas

This abbreviation for Christmas is of Greek origin. The word for Christ in Greek is Xristos. During the 16th century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name, "X" in place of the word Christ in Christmas as a shorthand form of the word. Although the early Christians understood that X stood for Christ's name, later Christians who did not understand the Greek language mistook "Xmas" as a sign of disrespect.

The Candy Cane

Candy canes have been around for centuries, but it wasn't until around 1900 that they were decorated with red stripes and bent into the shape of a cane. They were sometimes handed out during church services to keep the children quiet. One story (almost certainly false) that is often told about the origin of the candy cane is as follows:

In the late 1800's a candy maker in Indiana wanted to express the meaning of Christmas through a symbol made of candy. He came up with the idea of bending one of his white candy sticks into the shape of a Candy Cane. He incorporated several symbols of Christ's love and sacrifice through the Candy Cane. First, he used a plain white peppermint stick. The color white symbolizes the purity and sinless nature of Jesus. Next, he added three small stripes to symbolize the pain inflicted upon Jesus before His death on the cross. There are three of them to represent the Holy Trinity. He added a bold stripe to represent the blood Jesus shed for mankind. When looked at with the crook on top, it looks like a shepherd's staff because Jesus is the shepherd of man. If you turn it upside down, it becomes the letter J symbolizing the first letter in Jesus' name. The candy maker made these candy canes for Christmas, so everyone would remember what Christmas is all about.

Santa Claus

The original Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, was born in Turkey in the 4th century. He was very pious from an early age, devoting his life to Christianity. He became widely known for his generosity for the poor. But the Romans held him in contempt. He was imprisoned and tortured. But when Constantine became emperor of Rome, he allowed Nicholas to go free. Constantine became a Christian and convened the Council of Nicaea in 325. Nicholas was a delegate to the council. He is especially noted for his love of children and for his generosity. He is the patron saint of sailors, Sicily, Greece, and Russia. He is also, of course, the patron saint of children. The Dutch kept the legend of St. Nicholas alive. In 16th century Holland, Dutch children would place their wooden shoes by the hearth in hopes that they would be filled with a treat. The Dutch spelled St. Nicholas as Sint Nikolaas, which became corrupted to Sinterklaas, and finally, in Anglican, to Santa Claus. In 1822, Clement C. Moore composed his famous poem, "A Visit from St. Nick," which was later published as "The Night Before Christmas." Moore is credited with creating the modern image of Santa Claus as a jolly fat man in a red suit.

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<http://www.wilstar.net/xmas/xmassymb.htm>

Year-end Notes from the Editor

I want to thank all of you who read this bulletin and ignore the occasional mistakes. It is virtually impossible, even with spelling and grammar checkers to spot all boo-boos before going to press. I also want to thank those who DO spot the mistakes and bring them to my attention. Some errors need to be corrected in the following bulletin.

In that category I place to following accidental blunder. In the show report of last month's bulletin I called Sylvia Cliffe by another last name. I am aware of her real name since we've known each other for more than 30 years by my count - since 1979. Sorry about that.

Under the heading of omissions, I failed to mention in that same show article the following people who were also instrumental in producing our 2006 Gem Show: James LaBorde, Annmarie Nastase, Virginia Pace, Brian Bise and Vern Cliffe. Thanks all, I do appreciate your hard work.

Jay Valle, Bulletin Editor

Why Men Have Two Dogs and Not Two Wives

1. The later you are, the more excited your dogs are to see you.
2. Dogs don't notice if you call them by another dog's name.
3. Dogs like it if you leave a lot of things on the floor.
4. A dog's parents never visit.
5. Dogs agree that you have to raise your voice to get your point across.
6. Dogs like to do their snooping outside rather than in your wallet or desk.
7. You never have to wait for a dog; they're ready to go 24 hours a day.
8. Dogs find you amusing when you're drunk.
9. Dogs like to go hunting and fishing.
10. A dog will not wake you up at night to ask, "If I died, would you get another-dog?"
11. If a dog has babies, you can put an ad in the paper and give them away.
12. A dog will let you put a studded collar on it without calling you a pervert.
13. If a dog smells another dog on you, they don't get mad. They just think it's interesting.
14. Dogs like to ride in the back of a pickup truck.

And, last but not least:

15. If a dog leaves, it won't take half of your stuff.

The Petrified Log, 11/05

Mysterious Montana Agate Scenes Seen by Microscope as Flaws

It has always been a mystery how the peculiar little scenes got inside a rock as hard as an agate. It is the claim of geologists that the spots were caused by infinitely minute seams of fissures in the softer parts of the rock being filled with metallic oxides when the world was young.

These oxides made four different colors that form various combinations of color when blended together, or appear in single colors in each rock. The red color is oxide of iron. The black is oxide of manganese. The green oxide of copper. The blue is oxide of nickel.

The theory has been elaborated by the help of high powered microscopes which show the tracings of little canals so close the naked eye could not detect it, but the oxides remained, stained the rocks in wonderful designs. The fernlike and branch effects of the trees, grass, and shrubbery, smaller canals from a common



center and in addition to these canals, the rock became flawed through shrinkage while passing through a period of evaporation which, according to scientists, has taken more than 3 million years to reduce the stone to the hardness of 7 points on the Mohs scale.

These canals and flaws have been perfectly healed by soft silicate formations of which the stone is a part, and the evaporation has caused the oxides to take on such forms as are seen on the window after a frosty night.

Technically, Montana agate is known as “Dendrite” agate and the moss spots are called Dendrites. It is the third hardest stone In the world, and is cut only with a diamond saw. There can never be two pieces alike even though cut from the same stone.

Via Gem-N-I 4/04 via Mineral Memos, 3/06

**Reflections on the life of James (Jim) Bliss
(Jim passed away last December)**

Jim and Betty Bliss joined the Whittier Gem and Mineral Society in the late 1960's and actively participated in the activities of the club until the sometime in the 1990's.

Around 1972 the club voted to build upright show cases in an effort to have some uniformity of cases for the annual show. Jim volunteered his wood-working equipment and garage space as a location to make the show cases. Six or seven club members also volunteered to assist in the construction. Members were also invited to have the club build cases for them if they paid for materials. A total of ten cases were made, eight for the club and two for members if my memory serves me correctly. The cost for materials for each of the cases was around \$100 at that time. The cases turned out to be exceptional, with the exception that, with advancing age, have turned out to be on the heavy side. No additional cases have been built since that time, but the club purchased a number of other upright show cases from a club in the San Fernando Valley that disbanded.

Jim and Betty were avid field trippers with Jim building a dune buggy, with the popular plastic body of the time. He purchased a wrecked Volkswagen Beetle, discarding the body and used the frame with the front end and engine to complete the job. In order for the Beetle's frame to match the plastic body, it was necessary to shorten the frame 10inches, along with shortening cables and the shift rod for the transmission. Jim's sense of subtle humor popped out during that process when he said that he had "cut the shift rod twice and it was still too short!"

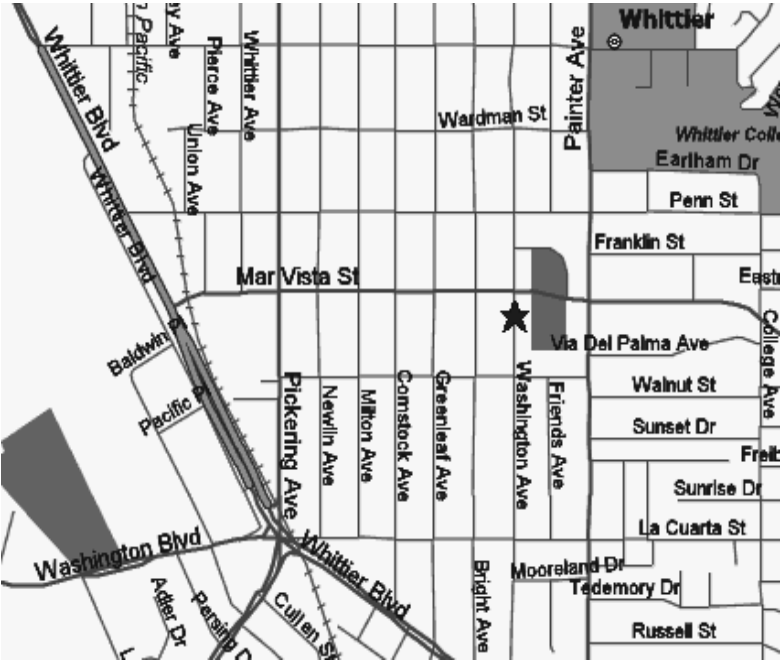
Those days (with cheap gas prices) often had members "scouting" planned field trips two or three weeks prior to a field trip. Jim and Betty and I, along with my daughter Karen, scouted a planned field trip to the Goffs area on a weekend, towing our dune buggy's behind our vehicles and sleeping over Friday and Saturday night in the cars. On the trip out there on Friday, with several stops along the way, Betty offered us bananas to snack on. We declined her offer several times that day, although we liked the fruit. The next morning as Betty was fixing cold cereal for breakfast, she was also cutting up bananas on top of the cereal. I kidded Karen as I said, "Well, Karen, it looks like we're going to get bananas!"

Jim and Betty were most certainly active members during their membership and they have been missed at the club functions

Our sympathy's go out to Betty for her loss and we trust she looks back from time to time on the lasting friendships they formed while in the club.

Vern Cliffe

WGMS MEETING LOCATION!
Whittier Community Center
7630 Washington Ave. Whittier



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Bulletin exchanges are welcome and should be sent to the editor.

Affiliations



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