



# THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA MINERAL CLUB INC



Crystals are the flowers of the Mineral Kingdom



## THE MINERAL NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 51 No. 7

OCTOBER 2010

### A Tale of Two Diamonds

Dr Jeffery E. Post, the Smithsonian Institution's Curator-in-charge of the Gem & Mineral Collections of the National Museum of Natural history will be our November speaker. Jeff will tell us about the recent research on the Hope and Wittelsbach-Graf diamonds, two unusually blue diamonds that apparently originated in India. Having the two diamonds unmounted and available for testing provided an unprecedented opportunity to determine similarities and differences between them.

While perhaps best known to mineral collectors for his work with the museum's gem collection, Dr. Post's research interests include the coating and oxidation features like desert varnish and den-

drites. He is the author of *The National Gem Collection*.

For show and tell, please bring a dendrite or a "gem" in your collection.

All club members are also invited to attend a dinner at 5:20pm with our speaker (you must pay for your own meal, though) at:

Rock Bottom Brewery  
4238 Wilson Boulevard Suite 1256  
Arlington, VA 22203  
(703) 516-7688  
<http://www.dogfishalehouse.com>

Please RSVP to Sue Marcus if you plan to attend the dinner prior to the meeting, at [rlhaskins@verizon.net](mailto:rlhaskins@verizon.net)

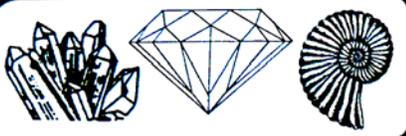
#### NVMC Schedule:

25 Oct. General meeting of the NVMC at 7:45pm

22 Nov. General meeting of the NVMC and AUCTION at 7:45pm

The date for the December meeting will be forthcoming in a future issue of *The Mineral Newsletter*.

24 Jan. General meeting of the NVMC at 7:45pm



**19th Annual GEM, MINERAL AND FOSSIL SHOW**

Presented by the Northern Virginia Mineral Club, Inc. [www.novamineralclub.org](http://www.novamineralclub.org)  
Sponsored by the Dept. of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences at GMU

Date: November 20 & 21, 2010

Place: Student Union II Building  
George Mason University Campus  
Braddock Rd. & Route 123, Fairfax, VA

Hours: Saturday 10-6, Sunday 10-4

Admission: Adults: \$5, Seniors & Teens (13-17): \$3,  
Children 12 & under, Scouts in uniform,  
and GMU Students w/ valid ID are FREE.

Demonstrations, Exhibits, and Door Prizes. Mini-mines for children to dig in and get free fossils & minerals. Over 20 dealers with Fossils, Minerals, Crystals, and Gems for sale.

Use Parking Lot A (east), enter Lot A from Nottaway River Lane.  
Look for our Courtesy Shuttle to Mineral Show

#### Inside this issue:

September Minutes	2
Show Volunteers Needed	3
Okenite Geology is fun	4
Science Festival Photos from Marie Brown's sale	5
<u>Club information</u>	6

## Sept. Meeting Minutes

**By Kathy Hrechka, Secretary**

President, Barry Remer opened the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Show Chair, Tom Taaffe spoke about the MVNC Show to be held Nov. 20-21 at GMU. Volunteer details will be published in the next newsletter.

Kathy Hrechka was awarded a certificate of achievement from the American Federation for a previously published article. She spoke briefly about it, and encouraged members to write articles for the newsletter.

Old Business: Club show, Nov. 20-21. Tasks include; set-up Friday evening, donate minerals for Sunday's auction, door prizes, and kids table. Take down would occur Sunday afternoon. Taaffe needs members to fill four show cases. Contact Kathy Hrechka if you want to display your minerals.

[kshrechka @ msn.com](mailto:kshrechka@msn.com) Sheryl Sims recommended announcing door prizes every 30 minutes when the show gets busy. Robert Clemenzi will bring touch tables rocks, and Joe Murter's miniature rock shop.

Break for delicious refreshments.

George Reimherr requested a correction be made to the minutes of the September newsletter. Stilbite is brown, and stellerite is orange/brown in color.

Door prizes were won by Alec Brenner, Marie Brown, and Tom Taaffe.

Announcement: The Baltimore Mineral society is having their annual conference in Maryland Oct. 1-3.

Show & Tell for first meeting after the summer:

Gerry Cox promoted the Wildacres program by Spruce Pine, NC. She said the weekly room and board is an affordable rate, including various mineral related classes. She will include details in the next newsletter.

Alec Brenner prized his self-collected, local shell fossils, and dinosaur bones fossils from Montana.

Sheryl Sims was excited about her new Herkimer diamonds in matrix from New York.

Jim Kostka exposed his radio active minerals which he acquired from a market east of Harrisonburg, VA. He also had a radio active pocket watch, which he verified with his Geiger counter.

Jeff Guerber also spoke about his summer collecting.

Dave McClean spoke about his Colorado collecting, feldspars, hematite, black biotite, and quartz.

Barry Remer introduced new guests: Lucio Andrea, Steve Johnson, Steve Cox, and Michele Harris. Club members welcomed them.

Program: Vice President Sue Marcus selected a short program entitled, "The southern Appalachians: A Changing World" by the USGS.

### Send in your Stories!

Other club members really do love to read about the adventures of other club members. Won't you submit an article about your field trips taken in the last several months? Send your article to the Editor (see last page for email and mailing address).

George Reimherr offers corrections to the June Minutes during the September meeting. Photo by Sheryl Sims



## Volunteers Needed for our Show

### By Tom Taaffe – Show Chairman

Yes, we are still looking for volunteers to help out at our 19th Annual Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show on Nov 19, 20 and 21, 2010. Friday night set-up is typically 4 PM - 9 PM. Show hours are Sat 10 AM - 6 PM, Sun 10 AM - 4 PM.

Please don't hesitate to email me at Rockcllctr @ aol.com or call me at 703-281-3767. Friday night (Set-up) Nov 19, - We need 2-3 volunteers to help move stuff from the storage unit to GMU. We need someone with a good sized vehicle (Med-Lg Pickup or Suburban sized) to join them at the storage unit at 4 PM. This task is best started as early as possible while it's still light out.

Friday, starting at 5 or 6 PM, We need volunteers to assemble 4 exhibit cases, tape blue table coverings to every table in the Ballroom. We also need to place and tape down securely our heavy duty extension cords. FYI We usually order pizza at 7:30 PM for any starving volunteers.

Admissions, Saturday & Sunday We definitely need people to sign up to help run the Admissions desk. Shifts are 2-3hrs and admissions are taken all day from 10 AM to about 5:30 PM. We need to cover all time slots. We DEFINITELY need back-up volunteers to be ready to take turns with whoever takes the earlier shifts.

Examples of shifts that members could volunteer for Saturday Nov 20 are 10 AM - 1 PM to be followed by 1 PM - 3 PM, finally 3 PM - 5:30 PM. On Sunday Nov 21, Shifts could be 10 AM - 1:00 PM, then 1:00 PM - to about 3:30 PM.

Kid's Activity Tables – Sat. & Sun. - This is a fun thing to do! And we need more volunteers! We always need a minimum of 2 people at the Kid's Activity tables throughout the day starting at 10 AM. When it gets really busy in the afternoon (that can happen without warning), we will need 3 or maybe even 4 volunteers to handle the surge and administer the assorted quizzes, provide and explain answers and to help the kids select their free specimens. (Kids get one free specimen for each completed quiz).

We also need plenty of people to be ready to spell them throughout the day and share these duties. If you are planning to be attending the show either or both days, please consider helping at the Kid's Activity. Tables for an hour or two. You won't regret it! The Kid's tables are open the same hrs as the show, Sat 10-6, Sun 10-4.

Silent Auction on Sunday 2 PM. Rob Robinson needs at least one other person to help him run the Silent Auction. Bidding typically runs from 2 PM - 3 PM on Sunday afternoon. Following the Auction, the 2 auctioneers then determine the winners and call the winners to the stage to pay for the items they won. Sunday Night Take-down 4 PM. We will need lots of helping hands to take down the show. This entails the following: Disassembling the exhibit cases, packing the cases safely and securely. We also remove all blue table coverings from all the tables in the ballroom, we roll up our heavy duty extension cords and putting them into the correct tubs, and we gather and properly packing up all miscellaneous club supplies. We also now take most of the Kid's items back to the storage unit as well.

Following that, several of our stalwart club volunteers take everything back to our Fairfax storage unit and put everything away carefully for easy access and use again next year. Another task is to fold up and stack all wooden rental tables on the rolling cart that we get from the rental company. We are still needing and accepting donations for the Silent Auction and for hourly door prizes.

Contact Rob Robinson or Tom Taaffe.

Donations can be Books, Magazines, Minerals, Fossils, Jewelry, etc.

That's all I can think of for now.

Once again, PLEASE SIGN UP TO HELP!

Thank you.

Sincerely, Tom Taaffe, Show Chairman



Tom Taaffe talks about the show during the Sept. meeting. Photo: Sheryl Sims

**Question:** *What's round, white<sup>1</sup>, and fur-like to the touch?*

**Answer:** *A mass of okenite!*

## Okenite

By Sheryl Sims

An amazing looking mineral, I encountered *okenite* for the first time at a recent mineral sale. While scouring through a table chocked full of someone's life-long collection of minerals for a "find," my daughter, Amber, ran up to me with a small box that contained what looked to me to be a pom-pom. "Isn't this cool?" she asked, gently stroking it with her finger. Glancing up, I was surprised to find a small, white, cotton ball! "What is this?" I asked, wondering why anyone would keep a cotton ball in a mineral specimen box. To our surprise, we discovered that what we assumed was a cotton ball was actually okenite! We were even more surprised to learn that it had come from Poona, India! Now, that was cool! It was so cool, in fact, that I decided to do a little research on it so that I'd be able to recognize the next time I ran across a sample. Not long after that, I spotted okenite in a collection of basalt geodes belonging to a friend.

Here's what I learned: Okenite was named after Lorenz Oken, a German naturalist (1779-1851), who, in 1828, discovered it at Disko Island, Greenland<sup>2</sup>. Born Lorenz Ockenfuss, he studied natural history and medicine at the University of Wirzburg. He was admitted to the university under the name *Ockenfuss*. Later, however, after working as privat-docent, he shortened his name to Oken<sup>3</sup>.

## Geology is fun

Hi, I am grateful to have the opportunity of sharing my interest in geology with high school students.

Open [www.bishopireton.org](http://www.bishopireton.org) where Miss Parnell is crediting me and Mr. Taaffe with the school's new mineral collection for Earth Science. I am having fun, guest teaching by having students study mineral samples, etc.

For the past ten years have taught geology merit badges to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 5th grade students. The high school students at BI are responding very well to the in hands-on geology labs, which gives me great pleasure.

I give thanks to my fellow Northern Virginia

Okenite is a Class VIII silicate. It is frequently associated with zeolites, calcite, prehnite, quartz, and apophyllite<sup>4</sup>. Very fragile, okenite crystals are flat-leaf-shaped, fine, and fibrous. Masses of Okenite are found in Ireland; New Zealand; Chile; Greenland; Poona, India; the Czech Republic; and Montana<sup>5</sup>. It has a hardness of 4½-5; perfect cleavage; and it has a triclinic crystal system. Okenite's composition is:  $\text{Ca}_5\text{Si}_9\text{O}_{23}\cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>6</sup>.

Now, the next time you attend a mineral show or swap, you, too, will be able to recognize Okenite! Why not add it to *your* collection? It would make a great addition, and would, no doubt, catch the eyes of budding rock hounds and geologists.

1. In addition to white, Okenite can also be colorless, pale yellow, or blue. *Smithsonian - Rock and Gem*. Ronald Louis Bonewitz, p. 268.
2. [www.1911encyclopedia.org](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org)
3. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenz\\_oken](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenz_oken)
4. *Smithsonian - Rock and Gem*. Ronald Louis Bonewitz. p. 268.
5. *Handbook of Rocks Minerals & Gemstones*. Walter Schumann. p. 92.
6. *Rock and Gem, Smithsonian*. Ronald Louis Bonewitz. p. 268.

Mineral Club members, specifically to Fred Schaefermeyer, since 1985.

Sincerely, Kathy Hrechka



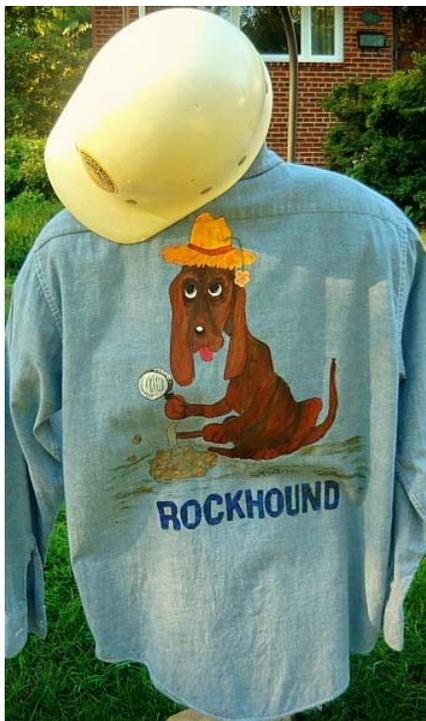
**Celebrate Science:**  
**Don't miss the Expo on the National Mall**  
**Festival Dates:** 10/10/10 - 10/24/10  
**Expo Dates:** 10/23 & 10/24  
October 23 and 24, 2010, 10am-5:30pm  
Over 1500 hands-on science and engineering activities  
More than 50 stage shows on four stages  
A free event for all ages



**Photos**

*From Marie Brown's sale*

*Photos courtesy Sheryl Sims*





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PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
[HTTP://www.novamineralclub.org](http://www.novamineralclub.org)

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## The Northern Virginia Mineral Club

You can send your Newsletter articles to:

Robert Winsor  
35740 Roundleaf Ct.  
Round Hill, VA 20141

Or via email: news.nvmc @ gmail.com

**Visitors are Always Welcome at our Club Meetings.**

**Please bring your  
summer finds to one  
of our upcoming  
meetings!**

**And, bring a friend.**

**Submit articles for  
the newsletter!**

**Purpose:** To promote, educate and encourage interest in geology, mineralogy, lapidary arts and related sciences. The society is a member of Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies (EFMLS)

<http://www.amfed.org/efmls> and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS)  
<http://www.amfed.org>.

**Dues:** Due by 1 January of each year; \$15.00 Individual, \$20.00 Family, and \$6.00 Junior (under 16, sponsored by an adult member).

**Meetings** are held at 7:45 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month (except

May and December\*) at **Long Branch Nature Center**, 625 Carlin Springs Road, Arlington, VA 22204. Phone (703) 228-6535. (No meeting in July & August.)

(\*Changes announced in the newsletter.) Snow schedule - Arlington county schools.