

# Bulletin of the Mineralogical Society of Southern California



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The 841th Meeting of The Mineralogical Society  
of Southern California

## Recent Finds at the Oceanview Mine by Walter Mroch

**Friday, March 14, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.**  
Geology Department, E-Building, Room 220  
Pasadena City College  
1570 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena

### Featuring:

- New finds at the Oceanview Mine
- 43<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Micro-mount Conference
- Field trip to Lead Mountain
- Rainbow calcsilica

## March Meeting

### Recent Finds at the Oceanview Mine

By Janet Gordon

Walter Mroch will be the speaker for the Friday, March 14, 2008, MSSC meeting. The meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. in room E220 in the Geology Department of Pasadena City College. Mr. Mroch will bring us up to date about the latest finds at the Oceanview Mine in the Pala District of San Diego County.

The presentation will cover the Oceanview Mine development, mining techniques, and mineral specimens found to date. The last pocket mined has the first recorded aquamarine found in the Pala District and was mined for several months throughout 2007 and 2008. Hundreds of specimens were recovered, with the best on display at the Tucson Show by Pala International. The best specimen recovered so far is a gemmy aquamarine with doubly terminated schorl. The aquamarine in the photo below by



Mark Mauthner of GIA is about 3 inches in diameter. For more information, go to the Pala International website and read the article about the Oceanview Mine there. Mineral specimens from the recent finds will be on display at the meeting, and

some will be offered for sale.

Mr. Mroch is a certified underground miner and also the owner of the Gem and Mineral Exploration Company ([gemandmineral.com](http://gemandmineral.com)). He has been involved in several

mining projects throughout the western USA including the Maynard Topaz State Lease in Utah, Solar Wind Bixbyite Mine, Pelican Point goethite, the Himalaya Mine, and now the Oceanview Mine. He will bring along copies of the Topaz Mountain Field Guide at \$20 per copy as well as some minerals from the Thomas Range available for sale to interested MSSC members.

## **43<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Micro-mount Conference**

by Walt Margerum

First I want to thank Mother Nature for her cooperation in holding off the rains until after the Conference ended. It appears that we rank right up there with such illustrious events as the Rose Parade.

The conference opened on time at 3PM with registration and microscope time. Like magic food appeared at 6PM and we all had a great buffet dinner. It always amazes me that this mostly uncontrolled event ends up with more than sufficient quantities and varieties of food. I suspect that Ann Meister is secretly organizing more than she lets on. After the buffet Sugar White gave her “What’s New in Minerals” presentation. Of particular interest to me were the pictures of cubic crystals of gold. They are the sharpest cubic hopper crystals I have ever seen. The pictures were good too. Garth Bricker then showed slides of “Bluebell Minerals from the Mansfield Collection”. It is always interesting to see what could be collected in the ‘good old days’. The conference then adjourned until Saturday.

The conference reopened at 8AM with registration of guests. After a short time, the giveaway table was filled to overflowing and surrounded by eager collectors. For those into salt water fishing, picture seagulls around the bait barge. Garth and Janice Bricker opened the ‘sales’ table. At 10 am, Bob Housley opened the day’s activities with announcements concerning the planned field trip and the day’s auctions,

followed by general announcements of interest to the group. At 10:15 he introduced the morning's speaker, Joe Marty, who presented a talk and picture show on "New Finds in the Southwest." Below are two photos by Joe Marty. The one to the left is Nissonite from Boss Mine, NV and the one to the right is wulfenite from Kabba Mine, AZ.



It is almost a cliché to say that the talk was interesting and the pictures were great. They always are! The minerals for the silent auction were set out as were those for the verbal auction. At noon food again magically appeared, thanks to Ann Meister and Sugar White, and everyone had their fill. After lunch the verbal auction was commenced by Gene Reynolds and Bob Housley.

While the bidding was not as active as in the past, the auction was a success (see photo below by Walt Margerum).



It was followed by more microscope time and time to continue the silent auction, which was closed at 3:15. At 3:30, Bob Housley then introduced the

afternoon speaker, Jack Kepper, who gave an excellent

presentation on the “Mining Archeology and Ore Deposit at Laurium Greece (the ore deposit part opens up the mineralogy)”. The talk concentrated on the Classical Period (5<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC). Below is a picture of washing platform and breakage room in Thorikos by Jack Kepper, What surprised me was the sophistication of their mining and milling techniques.



Slightly after 6PM,-another meal appeared, and the feeding frenzy was repeated for the final time. After dinner, it was time for the short talks and presentations part of the conference. Bob Housley introduced Ray Hill who gave a presentation on the “Minerals of British Columbia”. This is an area largely unknown to most Southern California collectors. Don Howard then presented “What is new and interesting in mineral names”, followed by “Trent Agate”. The former showed an interesting suite of minerals from Summit Rock Oregon and described his most recent efforts to correctly assign names to them The latter described the identification of native arsenic inclusions found in the Trent OR agates. After a short break to change from computer presentations to slide

show presentations, Bob Housley then described the Sunday field trip location and showed slides of some of the minerals that have been found there. Alfredo Petrov concluded the presentations with a talk on “Minerals of Japan” that concentrated on minerals found in high temperature fumaroles of volcanic regions. On a recent trip, he was able to collect some of the rare mineral, roedderite, which was first discovered in meteorites, and has only been found at about a dozen locations on the Earth.

I want to thank Bob Housley for his work in getting speakers, and all the effort he expended during the show. Al Wilkins did his usual fine job of preparing badges, setting up the electrical boxes, and collecting money for the auctions. Gene Reynolds helped by supervising the giveaway table, acting as auctioneer, and presiding at the silent auction. Garth and Janice Bricker did their usual excellent job of assembling and vending the minerals at the “sales” table. I want to thank all the speakers for their entertaining and educational presentations. I give kudos to Ann Meister and Sugar White for ensuring that we were adequately fed, and to all those that brought food for the pot luck dinner. I also wish to thank the San Bernardino County Museum for hosting the show.

### **The Lead Mountain Field Trip**

by Robert Housley

Lead Mountain is a few miles northeast of Barstow and is easy to reach on fairly good dirt roads. It was mined for lead and silver around the turn of the last century, at about the same time as the nearby Calico area was being mined for silver. After the lead and silver ores played out, Lead Mountain was most recently mined for barite occurring along the same vein system during the period from 1930 to 1933. Besides the main mine, there are several interesting prospects nearby, three of which for want of better names we refer to as the Wulfenite, Upper Copper, and Lower Copper areas.

The Lead Mountain area is cut by a series of generally northwest trending faults, which are largely mineralized with barite, calcite, limonitic iron oxides, and silica ranging from jasper and chalcedony through druzy quartz. The main mine is on one of them. Barite veins outcrop over a several square mile region. Three prominent ones can also be seen in Barium Queen Mine area to the west.

Despite the storm pounding the coastal areas and horrible driving rain in Cajon Pass, the day of the field trip dawned sunny, but windy with scattered clouds in Barstow. Seven people besides myself, Wes Gannaway, John Dagenais, Andrew Turner, Al Wilkins, Jane Jones, Toni Callaway, and Pamela Birge, and one dog, Kane, braved the conditions and came on the trip.

Our first stop was the prospect we call the Lower Copper area. This is a mineralogically interesting area, but since it is right next to the road the only things that can be found easily here are malachite on quartz and barite, and limonitic pseudomorphs probably after siderite. I broke up a larger rock that rain had recently exposed on the main dump and found nice micros of jarosite on quartz, along with some gold and silver sulfide that showed up in the SEM. Careful examination under the binocular microscope also revealed some very small pockets of tiny green needles on some pieces. In the SEM these proved to have the general composition  $(Y,Ca,Al)Cu_6(AsO_4|HAsO_4)_3(OH)_6 \cdot 3H_2O$ . In the interior of crystals Y and Ca are about equal and both much greater than Al, whereas on the crystal surfaces Al is dominant. Thus these crystals range from being on the boarder line between agardite-Y and zalesiite in the interiors to being goudeyite on the surfaces. For simplicity, I am calling them agardite-Y.

After half an hour or so at this locality, we continued on to the main mine. Toni, Pamela, and Kane mostly collected on the dump below the south access adit. The rest of us went in and immediately started collecting around the point where this adit intersected the vein. At this point the vein

consisted mostly of porous barite clusters with limonitic iron oxides and minor hemimorphite. It was easy to remove nice barite micros and thumbnails from the wall in numerous places, so no one went on to explore the rest of the mine. From the conversations going on it sounded like most people also got hemimorphite, cinnabar, and mimetite.

I was most interested in finding coronadite, which occurs in sprays of fine black needles, usually too small to see with the loupe. I particularly collected barite clusters associated with dark oxide material, hoping some would be what I was after. It worked out well. I have about a dozen micros showing nice coronadite sprays. They are associated with tiny satiny balls of goethite on the barite. In the process of collecting them, I also got plenty of the barite and hemimorphite for the give away table next year.

By about 1 pm, we had collected all of this main mine material that we wanted for the time being so we came out for lunch. After lunch, Toni and Jane decided to head out to be sure and avoid the impending rain, so we bid them goodbye.

The rest of us decided to next visit the Wulfenite area. It consists of an outcrop and dump around a small unmarked vertical shaft. Both the dump and the outcrop proved to still be more productive than I expected. Soon Andrew found nice botryoidal smithsonite on the dump and Wes started breaking up a big rock full of wulfenite micros near the outcrop, sharing them with everyone. Then John and Al found more very nice smithsonite in both the botryoidal form and as individual clear crystals on the dump. Meanwhile, I was breaking up and sharing a rock full of cerussite.

By about 3:30 pm, the wind was picking up and we could see the clouds on the horizon moving our way. With some reluctance we decided to leave the Wulfenite area and go on to the Upper Copper area while we still had time.

The wind was even stronger at the Upper Copper area, but we spent about half an hour there anyway. Several people found nice aurichalcite samples and Wes found some



interesting chrysocolla pseudomorphs after a blocky orthorhombic mineral. We then retreated back to the Wulfenite area, where we continued to work until we felt the first drops of rain.

We walked the short distance back to our vehicles. After a happy and productive day of collecting we headed home about 5 pm, just as the rain was starting in earnest.

**Dues are Overdue!**

If you have not paid your dues, this will be your last Bulletin. We will miss you.



**Rainbow Calsilica  
Natural? Or Manmade?**

By Shou-Lin Lee

To people who are familiar with natural gems and minerals, the appearance of rainbow calsilica, which resembles a plaster version of fordite (see photo to the left)



ranges

of the layers are straight, like what you would see in a sedimentary rock. Occasionally, some of the layers curve and create a wavy pattern. The color in each layer is often bright: turquoise blue, light blue, coral red, pink, yellow, pastel green, dark green, light green, and brown (see photo below). Most of

the colors are highly saturated, and not confine to one particular hue. On close inspection, the material resembles layers



of colored plaster. It is porous and crisp and has the hardness of about 4. It requires stabilization after been cut into cabochon. A drop to the floor would shatter the piece. I did a water soaking test and found that the material soak up ten percent of its weight in water. While vendors who sell the material often insist the material is natural, gemologists who studied the material arrived at a different conclusion. The Gems and Gemology Volume 38 Winter issue published a study done by the Swiss Gemological Institute. The lab found that the material contained various synthetic pigments, and therefore concluded that the material was man-made in origin.

It seems that the verdict is in: rainbow calsilica was not produced by nature, so why am I writing about it now? Because after listening to so many claims, I wonder if it is it possible that somewhere out there naturally occurring rainbow calsilica do exist

Here is what I know about rainbow calsilica. The first time I saw rainbow calsilica was January, 2002 at Claud's Jaboree Show at Laughlin, Nevada. This vendor told me that the material was mined in Mexico. He could not tell me the exact location because it was a trade secret, but he assured me that the material was one hundred percent natural. To validate his claim, he also told me that a certain geologist had studied the material and wrote a paper. In this paper, not only did the geologist conclude that the material was natural, there were also pictures of the mine. However, when I pressed for the name of the author and the journal where the article was published, he could not give me any information other than that his neighbor vendor had a copy of the article and was unfortunately blown away by wind. The vendor's story about the article was so lame. It just further convinced me that the material was man made. But the material did have great potential for cabbing or carving and the vendor did not ask for very much so I ended up with a bagful.

As I showed off my new find in a rock club gathering, members' reactions were mixed. Some were skeptical. Some were attracted by the colors. After I repeated what the vendor told me, one of members surprised me by saying that she had no doubt that the material was natural because she saw the same kind of rocks when she visited the legendary city, Petra in the Middle East. She said that the locals used some colorful rocks, just like the kind I had, to color the wall at Petra. Her words reminded me of the sand paintings from Brazil. In Brazil, there are sand painting artists who use colorful sand to form pictures in a bottle. Unlike the children's craft of filling up a bottle with layers of colored sand that you see in some craft fairs, the Brazilians use naturally colored sand. A friend of mine who grew up in Brazil told me that there is a place in Brazil where one can collect colorful sand by scratching colored layers of rocks. I wondered would the rock look like rainbow calsilica?

Later that year, in one of the rock club show, I spotted a vendor who was selling rainbow calsilica slabs had a two-page article posted next to the slabs. The article was a photocopy of a typed written essay on plain white paper. The article stated that a certain geologist (no name) tested the material and concluded that it was natural. There was a color picture of a pile of large rainbow calsilica boulders. Not only was the article badly written, there was no author's name or reference of publication. I thought if this is the article that the vendor at Laughlin referred to, it only convinced me that whoever wrote the article tried to hide the fact that the material was man-made.

The next year in Quartzsite I found another vendor who had a basketful of rainbow calsilica. This vendor told me that not all rainbow calsilica were equal. There were the kind made out of paint chips from automobile plants, then there were some from ceramic factory run off. But, his was the real McCoy. His was natural because he collected them himself from a desert in Mexico. I was excited. This is the first time I

actually met someone who went to the mine. So I asked where in Mexico? The vendor became hesitant and vague. According to him, the place was far deep in the desert, and took several days on foot to reach. I could not tell whether his hesitation was because he really did not know the location or because he considered the location a trade secret. I decided not to press and got another bagful.

Then by chance I found out that it was sold as “all natural” gems by a TV shopping channel for several years. It was featured in Home Shopping Network, Mind Find by Jay King program. Mr. King assured the shoppers that the material was all natural. The program not only ran segments of lapidarys at work fashioning rainbow calsilica into cabochons, but also showed a picture of the mine. The picture was of a barren landscape with a cliff. On the cliff there was a narrow band of rainbow calsilica running horizontally. However, he did not tell the name of the location. Is he telling the truth?

What interested me is, why the deception? Do people like it better if it is “natural”? There is a market for man-made gems. Fordite , a.k.a. “Detroit agate” which is paint chips scraped out from the Ford motor company Detroit plant has a following. Does “natural” sell better?

## **WEST COAST GEM& MINERAL SHOW**

Holiday Inn - Costa Mesa ❁ Bristol Plaza ❁ 3131 S. Bristol  
St.

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## **2008 Calendar of Events**

- March 1-2 2008, Arcadia, CA** Monrovia Rockhounds, Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanical Garden, 301 N. Baldwin Ave. Hours: 9 - 4:30 both days
- March 1-2 2008, Escondido, CA** Palomar Gem & Mineral Club, Army National Guard Armory, 304 Park Avenue Escondido, CA Hours: Saturday 9-5, Sunday 9-4
- March 1-2 2008, Ventura, CA** Ventura Gem & Mineral Society Seaside Park - Ventura County Fairgrounds 10 W. Harbor Blvd. Hours: Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4
- March 8-9 2008, San Marino, CA** Pasadena Lapidary Society San Marino Masonic Center 3130 Hunting Drive Hours: Saturday 10-6, Sunday 10-5
- March 8-9 2008, Salinas, CA** Salinas Valley Rock & Gem Club Spreckels Veteran's Memorial Hall 5th and Llano Streets - Hwy 68 Spreckels Exit Hours: 10-5 both days
- March 8-9 2008, Turlock, CA** Mother Lode Mineral Society Stanislaus County Fairgrounds Hours: Sat. 10 -6 , Sun 10-5
- March 14-16 2008, San Bernardino, CA** Orange Belt Mineralogical Society Western Regional League Ball Park 6707 Little League Drive Hours: Fri, Sat. 9 a.m. to dusk; Sun. 9 - 4 Emma Couveau (951) 288-6182
- March 15-16 2008, Vallejo, CA** Vallejo Gem & Mineral Society Solano County Fairgrounds (junction Interstate 80 & Hwy 37) in the County Bldg. Hours: 10 - 5 both days
- March 22-23 2008, Angles Camp, CA** Calaveras Gem & Mineral Society Calaveras "Frogtown" Fairgrounds Hwy 49 Angels Camp Hours: Sat. 10 - 5, Sun. 10 - 4
- March 22-23 2008, Roseville, CA** Roseville Rock Rollers Roseville (Placer) County Fairgrounds 800 All America City Blvd. Hours: Sat. 10 - 5; Sun. 10 - 4