



ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

MARCH 2019 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY™ • PASADENA, CA



PLS members at the 1985 CFMS Annual Show in Ventura, Arlene and Harry Billheimer in the laced chairs. In sunglasses, Joe Goetz.



Dental exam for T. rex – one of many roles for Harry Billheimer as opening day approached for the LA County Fair Gem and Mineral Show.

When Harry and Arlene Met Rockhounding

by Nancy Robb

You'd be surprised how one weekend in the desert can change your life – and your family's lives for generations to come. But that's how it happened for many of us in the Pasadena Lapidary Society. That's how it was with my parents.

Harry and Arlene Billheimer were living quiet lives with four children in Altadena in the early 1960s. Harry worked at NBC Studios in stage production. Arlene was a housewife. Harry became assistant leader in my brothers' Boy Scout troop, where it so happened George Snyder was also a leader. George was a PLS member, famous for his customized VW Bug (*Rockhound Ramblings*, December 2018). Their first camping trip was a Desert Caravan to Calico. They pitched their tents at Tin Can Alley, and George introduced the troop to rockhounding. They collected calcedony roses, agate, and jasper.

Life as a PLS Family

The Billheimer family was hooked. We became PLS members. Every family vacation from then on combined my parents' love for camping, teaching, and rockhounding.

Continued on page 4

President's Message



Dear Fellow Members,

This past month has been hectic but still a very good one for our club. Everyone is putting their efforts together for the big show – the 2019 CFMS Annual Show & Convention. We will soon see the results: crowds coming to the Fairplex, the gathering of directors from other CFMS clubs at the Awards Banquet, the smiles of our volunteers, who will be justly proud of helping to put on a major event. Way to go, Pasadena Lapidary Society!

On our way to the Show, we have passed several milestones. It was my pleasure to announce at the February program meeting that Marianne Hutchins-Mejia has agreed to join the PLS Board, taking over as Membership chair for Marcia Goetz. Membership is a busy job: applications, annual dues, sign-in lists at meetings. Marcia has kept everything organized, up to date, and running smoothly for three years. Before that, she was PLS President for four years. Marcia will continue on the Board as a Trustee, and Marianne will apply her dedication and skills for the benefit of PLS. Marianne freely admits she loves data and data systems – and that's lucky for us..

Meanwhile, Joe Goetz is looking for someone to succeed him as Field Trip chair. Joe has been our guy for field trips a long time. He might have been leading field trips in the days of that photo on page 1. So it's understandable if we don't have someone who is ready today to take over the whole job. If you can help with a part of it – such as researching sites or leading one trip – please contact me or Joe. Field trips are a vital activity for PLS, and the Board will be looking for solutions.

I must mention also the passing of Davis Coghill, a warm-hearted and much-loved member of PLS. He so appreciated being part of PLS activities. I and many others will always think of him fondly.

At our February meeting, we had a robust turnout with 53 members signed in. This interest and support is another good sign for the upcoming Show. We still have openings for volunteers, and welcome your participation. See you there: March 8–10 at the Fairplex, Building 6.

Any questions, call or text me at (727) 512-0381.

– Ellen Ferrell, President

Officers, Trustees, and Committee Chairs

Ellen Ferrell, President (727) 512-0381 Ellenbf2007@aol.com
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Trustees Joe Goetz, Marcia Goetz, Chris Kyte

Committee Chairs

Annual Show	Ellen Ferrell	Marcia Goetz (cochair)
Bulletin / Historian	Karl Stull	Display Table Ferdie Sanchez
Education	Joan Harrison	Field Trips Joe Goetz
Hospitality	Elizabeth Weston	Librarian Jennifer Jang
Membership	Marianne Hutchins-Mejia	
Publicity	Mona Ross	Elizabeth Weston (social media)
Sunshine	Ellen Ferrell	Technology Ben Shutman
Ways & Means	Phil Lahr	Webmaster Eugene Kim
Workshop	Carolyn Duncan	

Membership

Membership per calendar year is \$25; for a second adult at the same address, \$15; further adults, \$10. Junior members are \$10. Initiation fee is \$10 per person (nonrefundable).

Renewals are due in October and delinquent after December 31. Mail checks to PO Box 5025, Pasadena, CA 91117-0025.

Meetings

Board Meetings – 1st Thursday of the month

7 p.m. at Matt Denny's Ale House
 145 E Huntington Dr, Arcadia
 PLS members are welcome.

Workshop – 2nd Sunday of the month

Fees are \$3 for half-day, \$5 for a full day. Equipment instruction is required; also liability waivers, eye protection, and closed-toe shoes. Bring lunch!

Junior members 9 and older are welcome with adult supervision.

Program Meetings – 3rd Tuesday of the month

Doors open at 6 p.m. Meeting is 6:30–8:45 p.m.
 Pasadena Central Library, 285 E Walnut St.

Contact Us

Email: info@pasadenalapidary.org **Instagram:** /PasadenaLapidary

Facebook: Pasadena Lapidary Society **Twitter:** @pasalapidary

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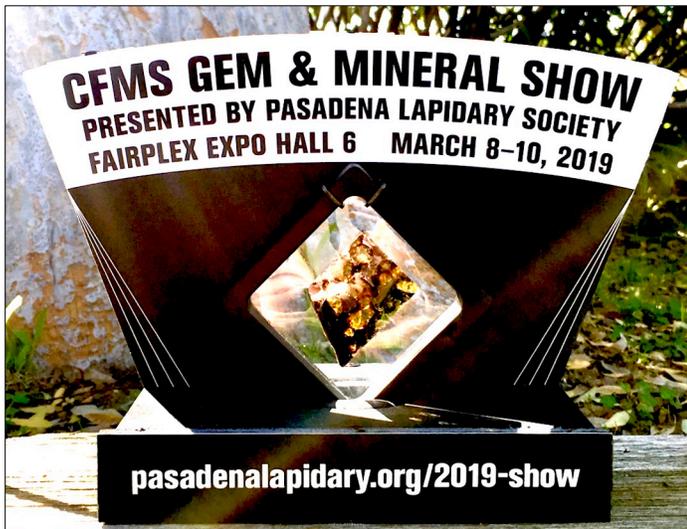
Editor: Karl Stull (818) 205-7135 newsletter@pasadenalapidary.org

Send articles by the 15th for publication in next month's issue. Very short items can get in as late as the 22nd but are not guaranteed to make the next issue.

Pasadena Lapidary Society™

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“What a long, strange trip it’s been,” the Grateful Dead might have said. Our meteorite first landed on Earth in Belarus.

Start Spreading the News

by Marcia Goetz

The Show is so close we can almost feel it. The excitement of the planning coming together to our end product of a successful Show. Now is the time for details to be taken care of – you know, the last-minute stuff.

A major aspect of the Show is publicity. Our publicity team has been planning for months, and now in the last few weeks there will be a big push to get the word out. Did you see our ad in the February and March issues of *Rock and Gem Magazine*? We have also spread the news through CFMS electronic media and through personal calls to other societies. Dealers have put our event in their calendars, flyers, newsletters, and Facebook and Twitter feeds.

Fairplex’s digital billboard will start telling everyone on the 10 freeway on February 22 about our Show. The sign has a great graphic by Ellen Limeres – simple yet dynamic. Drive by for a look (not during rush hour if you can help it).

Meanwhile, we are going to advertise at the edge of space!

Yes, really. Nathaniel Rowe has been working on a platform (see photo above) for a slice of pallasite meteorite that will travel to the stratosphere aboard a science balloon – on one of the regular flights by the Earth to Sky Calculus group.

If all goes well, the balloon will have been launched by the time you read this, and our meteorite will have been safely recovered. There will be a display case ready at the Show for this amazing rarity – a piece of space rock that fell to Earth and then flew up again... and then re-fell to Earth. With luck, the meteorite and Nathaniel’s platform will return to terra firma in good shape.

We’re counting on PLS members to help publicize this event – by sharing PLS news on your Facebook page. Visit our page on Facebook, and click to Share updates about the meteorite. This is a way you can help make the 2019 Show a great success. ❖

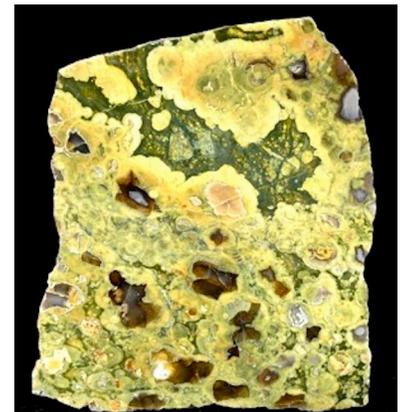
Program Meeting – March 19



See It at the Source: Rainforest Jasper

The March program will be “The Rainforest Jasper of Queensland, Australia,” presented by Dick and Mary Pat Weber. This beautiful green rhyolite has a distinctive look, making it a favorite of mineral collectors and lapidary enthusiasts for the past 50 years. Along with Mt. Hay thunder eggs, this unique material is only found in one location in the world.

Mary Pat and Dick are retired geologists. While touring Australia, they formed a friendship with the family that discovered and currently operates the Rainforest Jasper mine. The Webers were given access to restricted areas of the mine and were able to examine the private collection of the owners. The program will include specimens from the Webers’ own collection for viewing.



Rock of the Month. The Rock of the Month talk is a short talk, 5 to 8 minutes, about a rock, mineral, gem, fossil, or meteorite of interest to you. It’s a great way to share knowledge and get involved in PLS. Please contact me to give one of these talks.

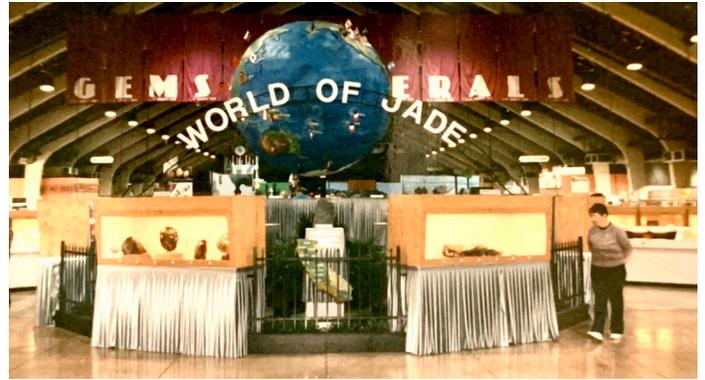
– Mona Ross

Willa stands in to demonstrate that this cylindrical section of petrified wood is probably the largest you’ll ever get to see in person. It will be at the 2019 CFMS Annual Show, and you are welcome to take photos of friends through the crazy hole that somebody drilled in the early 1900s. This stony log was once used as part of a mantel, and the hole was for the chimney pipe.





Harry and Arlene Billheimer were both enthusiastic carvers in jade. The expressive sculpture of hands is Harry's work. Arlene was fascinated by Native American culture and carved many pieces using the "cut away" technique, seeming to reveal figures inside the stone. Using the rind of a nodule as hair is another example of her inventiveness.



When Harry and Arlene Met Rockhounding *Cont'd from page 1*

PLS camping trips were the highlight of every month. Caravans of RVs towing jeeps and dune buggies headed out to obscure desert locations. The vehicles backed into wagon-train circles on the desert floor. After serious rockhounding by day, there were happy hours, potluck dinners, practical jokes, and storytelling until the campfire embers died down. PLS children were cared for by all. It was wonderful having many role models, showing the way for future generations of rockhounds.

Harry was an intelligent man with a driving personality, and yet he never wanted the spotlight. He served as PLS President and Show Chairman for many years, and – just as important – he taught others how to follow in his footsteps, so the shows would continue on long after he was gone.

In lapidary work, Harry was interested in slabs, cabs, tumbled stones, and thin sections for transparency cases. Our driveway was lined with oversized tumblers that ran all the time. Every project of his was completed with incredible attention to detail. He was an extraordinary jade carver.

The Amazing Arlene

My mother was a talented organizer, caring friend, and good listener – able to get people to do things when they might otherwise have held back. Raising four kids developed her leadership and organizational skills, and these blossomed when she became President of PLS and later CFMS. Once the kids were grown, she went back to school and earned a teaching credential in art, with an emphasis in silver-working and metal crafts. She taught metal-working in the junior college system.

Arlene took charge of the failing Gem and Minerals Show at the Los Angeles County Fair in 1982, with Harry as her right-hand man. She gathered support from many lapidary clubs. Together, they transformed the County Fair's annual show into a museum-quality event, and did it for 19 consecutive years. Harry and Arlene traveled the United States gathering display pieces from museums and private collectors. Some of the exhibit themes they collected for included "Dinosaur Bones and Eggs," "World of Jade," "Crystals," "Gems of California," and "Amethyst." Of course, the children's area was always huge and interactive.

Things We Remember

Harry and Arlene were always willing to share their passion for rockhounding. Children visiting their house left with a beautiful rock and a story about it. The neighborhood children called Harry "Mr. Rock Man."



As a classroom teacher, Arlene specialized in silver work. She liked to wear several bangle bracelets at a time, and friends joked you could hear her coming a mile away.



It just drives me crazy when slabbing a big, juicy, apple-shaped piece of agate that the last inch or so is lost, because the vise in the saw needs it to hold onto. Is there anything I can do other than donating leftovers to the PLS Workshop?

– LOSING IT IN LA CRESCENTA

Dear Losing It,

Donating to the PLS Workshop is always a good idea. We tumble scraps into polished stones, which may then be given out at classroom visits or added to grab bags for our annual show.

That said, you don't need to cut your slabbing short. Sawmaster Ben Shutman suggests a simple turnaround strategy. First, take the leftover piece out of the saw and glue it to a block of wood. Then clamp the wood in the saw and resume cutting. Use a water-soluble glue, such as Elmer's, so afterward you can drop the last piece in a bucket of water. In a day or so, the last slab will separate from the wood. To ensure a good bond when gluing, gently clamp the wood and rock in a C-clamp or vise.

There's another technique you might try, which I learned about from the Sage of Saws and just about anything else you want to know, Joe Goetz. He picked it up from Vern Cliffe, who in turn got it from one of the Old Ones – that's how rockhounds roll.

Anyway, find yourself a milk carton – the smallest size that will contain your rock – and cut a hole in one side. Mix a batch of plaster of Paris and pour it into the carton. Put your rock in the plaster and wait for it to dry. Peel away the milk carton, and load the block of plaster into the saw. You'll get every last slice of the rock, and the plaster will crumble away. Don't worry, plaster is soft. It won't damage or gum up your saw blade.



Some of their fondest memories were with rockhounding friends. One spring, Harry and Arlene took a drive with Mal and Ruth Meacham on every road in the Turtle Mountains – a farewell tour just before the area was closed as a national wilderness. My parents used to tell a story about Dick and Naomi Crotty and other PLS members crawling on their hands and knees during a howling windstorm in the Whipple Mountains – collecting desert roses to make earrings for the Billheimer and Crotty daughters.

Who could have known that a Boy Scout leader and a housewife would become such a force in California rockhounding – across four decades, helping to keep the hobby vibrant. They were just two ordinary people with a passion for the hobby. They lived their love of camping, rock hunting, and people. They taught their children, and all of us, skills to last a lifetime. ❖

Where will our hobby be in 25-40 years? What will future rockhounds need to keep their hobby and clubs viable? Our actions in the next decade will determine the options available to our successors. It's time to reach out!

– Arlene Billheimer, CFMS newsletter, January 1991



In Memoriam



Davis Coghill, a member of our club since 1998, will be remembered with affection by fellow PLS members and friends. He passed away in February. This photo is from our annual field trip to the Whittier claim.

Seen with him are his sister Marléné Kyte and Carolyn Duncan.

Welcome, New Member



Samantha Poepping (the “o” is silent) grew up in Los Angeles and collected rocks as a little girl. She loved finding the rocks, and still has several of her favorites from back then. Samantha is a self-taught silversmith. She joined PLS to learn more about types of stones and crystals to incorporate in her jewelry. She’s looking forward to field trips – finding rocks! – and workshops for cutting and polishing. It is important to her that stones and crystals in her pieces are from ethical sources following good stewardship practices in land management.



Represent Your Rock Club at the Annual Show

Volunteers needed for the Raffle, Kids Area, Grab Bags, and more – especially Friday, March 8. Please call, text, or email:

Ellen Ferrell at (727) 512-0381 / ellenbf2007@aol.com
 Marcia Goetz at (626) 250-7239 / joenmar1@verizon.net



Ferdie Sanchez and expert helpers Marianne Hutchins-Mejia and Stephanie Trat assemble special-edition gem trees for the Awards Banquet at the CFMS Annual Show. As you may have heard, Marianne is taking over for Marcia Goetz as PLS Membership chair. She brings great data skills to this key post.

Workshop – March 3



Take Heed, Different Day

Workshop will be on the FIRST Sunday in March to facilitate preparations for the CFMS Annual Show. But no worries: all equipment will be available as usual for members who have rocks to saw, slabs to trim, or cabs to polish. And don’t forget the library – there are some great project ideas in our books and magazines.

Workshop hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Half day is \$3, all day \$5. **Note:** We sometimes close early due to excessive heat, storms, or low attendance. If you plan to arrive late, please call ahead.

Park on the street or in the lot on the east side of the building. Entrance is on the west side of the building, down the walkway between buildings. Do not enter by the ramp in the parking lot.

For directions, please call me at (909) 455-4360 (cell) or (909) 593-2781, or email gum.quest@verizon.net.

– Carolyn Duncan



Susan Carter and Mona Ross add opal to our famous grab bags.

Inlaid with precious stones, this globe will be up for bids in the CFMS Show Silent Auction. It is amazing when illuminated. We will accept donations for the Silent Auction up to the last minute (almost), but they must be in good condition, ready to sell. Contact Armando Pedroza – (909) 455-6800.



Correction

In the print edition of the February newsletter, the caption on page 8 that mentions the Cady Mountains should have said Calico Mountains. That “road to Ludlow” actually runs toward Zzyzx (beside I-15, not 40). The next Dairy Queen is in Baker.



Illuminate fluorite with your phone flashlight – another good tip from Armando Pedroza.

Rock and Gem Shows

March 2–3 VENTURA: Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 West Harbor Blvd. Hours: Sat 10–5, Sun 10–4. www.vgms.org

March 8–10 VICTORVILLE: Victorville Valley Gem & Mineral Club, Stoddard Wells Tailgate, Stoddard Wells Road off Dale Evans Pkwy. Hours: 9–5 daily. www.vvgmc.org

March 16–17 SAN JOSE: Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society, Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd. Hours: 10–5 daily. www.scvgms.org

March 23–24 ROSEVILLE: Roseville Rock Rollers Gem & Mineral Society, Placer County Fairgrounds, 800 All American City Blvd. Hours: Sat 10–5, Sun 10–4. www.rockrollers.com

March 30–31 TORRANCE: South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society, Ken Miller Rec. Ctr, 3341 Torrance Blvd. Hours: Sat 10–5, Sun 10–4. www.southbaylapidaryandmineralsociety.com

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME CARNELIAN?

– ELLEN FERRELL, SEARCHING HER HANDBAG FOR A PEN

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
March 2019	Board meeting & Workshop are on special dates due to the Show.				1	2 Gem show
3 Workshop No classes in Show month	4	5	6	7	8	9 CFMS Annual Show Fairplex, Pomona Hosted by Pasadena Lapidary Society
10 CFMS Show Hosted by PLS Be there!	11	12	13 Board mtg PLS members always welcome	14	15	16 Gem show
17 Gem show	18	19 Program mtg Rainforest Jasper D & M P Weber	20	21	22	23 Gem shows
24 Gem shows 31	25	26	27	28	29	30 Gem show



Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc.
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Let's Go to the Show



Left: Known informally as “the postcard,” this treasure-map design by Ellen Limeres appeared on all kinds of promotional materials for the 2019 CFMS Annual Show – from the PLS website to handouts at community centers, farmers markets, a science teachers convention, and lapidary shows all over Southern California. You may notice a version of the treasure map on a digital billboard on your way to the Fairplex.

Tote bags and souvenir pins with this design will be on sale at the Show, with proceeds split between PLS and CFMS. See you there!

Above the fold: Amethyst crystal point, wrapped in a swirl of sterling silver wire, by Gloria Biesterfeld.