

# LOW COUNTRY Diggings

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## PRESIDENT RAMBLINGS

By Whit McMillan



## BIRTHSTONE OF THE MONTH

By Will Postell - "Rock Reporter"

Hi everyone. Sorry I've missed the last few meetings. A stomach virus and travel for work kept me away and neither one was particularly enjoyable. This month, I'm sorry to say, I will miss the club meeting again but for something much more enjoyable; Dorian and I will be going to William Holland. This will be our 5<sup>th</sup> trip and I look forward to the classes for months. I've learned a lot from all of the instructors and from the friends I've made over the years.

No, the lodging isn't a five-star resort, but it's clean and fine for me. Some folks complain about the food, but I actually like it for the most part (I'm not too picky) and you can't beat the price. The area is interesting as well and offers a lot of opportunities to explore and to go out and collect specimens or visit the museums in Dahlonga or Franklin. I've found some really nice slabs digging around at the local rock shops.

If you haven't been to William Holland or to Wildacres, consider a trip. Both schools are a great value and do a great job of advancing our hobby. I'm sorry I won't be at the June meeting, but I'll hopefully have some nice opals to show off from my class when I see you in July. Also, July is our DMC club-sponsored collecting trip so look for details from Larry!

Whit

June affords you an excellent opportunity to claim three fantastic birthstones with that being pearl, moonstone, or alexandrite. We will focus on alexandrite for this month. Alexandrite (Al<sub>2</sub>BeO<sub>4</sub>) as a variety of chrysoberyl is an aluminum beryllium oxide. The most famous and highly prized variety of chrysoberyl was first discovered in the Ural Mountains of Russia only as recently as 1830 on the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of Czar Nicholas Alexander II. Natural alexandrite is a classic example of what the gem world calls the best-known color-change phenomenon, or "chameleon" among gems. Alexandrite can be a vivid green emerald color by daylight when viewed in sunlight, a lovely reddish purple in night-light, or a bright red in incandescent light. Only occasionally will it display a chatoyance effect ("cat's eye"). Consider how "rare and costly" the high quality natural alexandrite is and you will find it has a "professional athletes only" price range as it is now considered one of the most valuable gemstones.

Alexandrite, often containing small, needle-like parallel inclusions, is colored by chromium occurring in combination with iron. Alexandrite is rated an 8.5 on the Mohs Scale of Hardness and 3 $\frac{3}{4}$  times as heavy as water. Alexandrite grows as tabular or prismatic crystals in

*see Birthstone (Continued on page 3, column 2)*



### 2010 WILLIAM HOLLAND WORKSHOP DATES

June 13-19; October 10-16

### 2010 WILDACRES WORKSHOP DATES

August 23-29; September 13-19

## Program for June 10, 2010

**It's time for Show and Tell! Come see what your fellow members have been working on in their lapidary workshops.**

We meet Thursday, June 10 at the Ashley River Fire Department on Dorchester Rd. in North Charleston. Fellowship and refreshment begins at 6:30 P.M. followed by a short business meeting at 7:00 P.M. The Show and Tell program follows the business meeting. See you there!!

## PREVIOUS MEETING REVIEW

By Mark Easterbrook

Last month we had another Silent Auction. There was a lot of enthusiasm, as usual. There were some additional donated items to the auction by Ulmer Eaddy and Billie Eadler, namely mineral specimens that were collected over many years including calcite, amethyst, quartz, Smokey Quartz, and hyalite opal to name a few. There will be more mineral specimens to be offered at future silent auctions. Keep reading your 'Diggings' as to when the next Silent Auction will occur. Other items in the auction included, slabs, jewelry, plants, etc.

## MAY MEETING MINUTES

By Secretary Larry Moss



The May 13, 2010 meeting of the Lowcountry Gem & Mineral Society was called to order by Secretary Lawrence Moss at 7:05 P.M. at the Ashley River Fire Department classroom due to the absence of the President and Vice President at the start of the meeting... The opening prayer was led by Larry Moss... The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Lawrence Moss... There was one new member present... Treasurer Carol Pierce reported the transactions for the month... The motion was made and seconded to accept the report as read... A motion was made to approve the April 2010 Minutes as published in the Bulletin... The motion was approved.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Sunshine:** Sarah McNay reported that Jo Fee recently had surgery and is recovering at home.

**Hospitality:** Anne Turner thanked everyone who brought refreshments for the evening.

**Program:** This month's program was a silent auction. Some of the material donated by Ulmer Eaddy and Billie Eadler was included in the auction. Next month's program is the Show and Tell.

**Show:** The Show Report indicated the club spent more on copy costs than expected and more money was spent than was taken in by the grab bag sales and food concession.

**Field Trip:** There is a Dixie Mineral Council Field Trip to Glendon Quarry near Glendon, NC on May 15, 2010... On July 17, 2010, Lowcountry Gem and Mineral Society will sponsor a field trip to the Diamond Hill Quartz mine in Antreville, SC as per our Dixie Mineral Council hosting requirement. Free camping is available at the site on Friday night. Due to the heat, the dig will start at 7 A.M. on Saturday. There will be a fee.

**Old Business:** There was no old business to consider.

**New Business:** There was no new business to consider.

The business meeting was adjourned at 7:20 P.M.



## Mineral Pun That Henny Youngman Threw Out....

In a recession, the mineral collecting business is always picking up.

Source: Larry Rush from Rockhounds Listserve

### *Birthstone* (Continued from page 1)

granite pegmatites, metamorphic gneiss, mica schists, and is also found in alluvial deposits. The largest stone ever found, 1,876 carats, came from Sri Lanka. Large alexandrite stones are found these days only in museums or exclusive private collections.

Natural alexandrite being so rare and expensive has a much less costly alternative - a synthetic gem known as corundum alexandrite. The synthetic has been scientifically developed in the laboratory to duplicate a gem that occurs naturally. Its physical and chemical properties are virtually identical to the stone it appears to be. Since its introduction in the 1970s, corundum alexandrite has now become a favorite in the market place. Stones are faceted mainly in the step, Ceylon, round, brilliant cuts, and occasionally as an oval.

Today, alexandrite is mined in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, and since the end of the 1980's especially in Minas Gerais in Brazil. Deposits are also found in Myanmar, Madagascar, and Tanzania. The future supply of alexandrite is at best uncertain. No important new sources have been found and current deposits are mostly sporadic... *Will Postell*

Sources: Gemstones of The World by Schumann; Rocks & Minerals by Jones; Gems by Dennis; Rocks & Minerals by Chesterman



### HOW ROCKHOUNDS WERE CREATED

Author unknown

In the beginning, when the Lord created rocks as the building blocks for the earth, the Angels of Heaven inquired, "Sir, because rocks are inert, who shall know their role in the universe? Because they are inanimate, who shall reveal their great beauty and charm? Because they are inarticulate, who shall speak for them? Because they are immobile, who shall take the pieces of them about for all to see?"

The Lord replied, "I shall make a special breed for the noble mission; and, thenceforth, among all others; the breed shall be known as Rockhounds." And thus it came to pass.

Source: The Leaverite News, June-July-August 2005; via The Mountain Gem, May 2010 and others



### Safety Note

Submitted By Jeannie Beard

*[Editor's Note: Jeannie wrote this in response to the safety message appearing in the May Diggings on the same subject because it hits very close to home for her]*  
It's always good to carry extra Benadryl in our area (Benadryl cough syrup is even better, if you can get it) because of fire ant bites. I speak from personal experience! Two is NOT enough Benadryl. Doctors say over the counter Benadryl as an antidote should be 2 to 3 pills, and allow an hour for them to take effect. If there is an allergy to the fire ant bites, BE ALREADY ON THE WAY TO AN EMERGENCY FACILITY!!



### Shop Tip

**Cleaning Fragile Crystals** - To clean fragile or hard to reach places in mineral specimens, try Crew<sup>®</sup>, a product of Johnson's Wax. Spray the foam on the rock. Let it set a minute, then rinse with water. It is safe on all materials, including calcite and fluorite (*Editor's Note: I wouldn't try this with you water-sensitive minerals*).

Source: [Tumbler](#), 07/04; via [Shin-Skinner News](#), 01/06

### Hints and Tips

Authors Unknown

To clean and shine most drusy specimens, use Easy Off<sup>®</sup> oven cleaner (fume free is OK). Spray the specimen and then leave it overnight in a closed container or bag before rinsing. This even works on iron-stained quartz crystals.

Source: [Golden Spike News](#), August-September 2002; via [Canaveral Moonstone](#), June 2010 and [Hound's Howl](#), February 2010.

Is it CZ or a diamond? If the stone is loose, turn it upside down on its table and slide it over a thin black line on a piece of paper. When looking straight down through a CZ you will see a circle in the center of the stone. A diamond won't do this.

Source: [T-Town Rockhound](#), August 2002; via [Canaveral Moonstone](#), June 2010 and [Hound's Howl](#), February 2010.

