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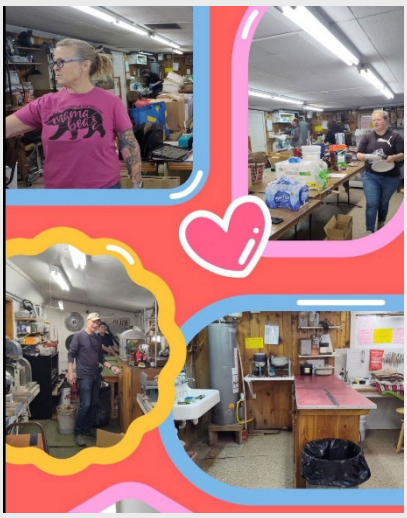
February 2026 Newsletter

Message from the President Cindy Pugsley

Where is our Snow? If you yearn for something fun to do, but are hindered by a lack of snow, visit the Shop to start a project. How about making a heart-shaped stone for your sweetie? The calendar is packed with open shops, classes, and opportunities to get together with others.



Shop Cleanup. A giant thank you to everyone who helped on Shop Cleanup Day. Shout outs to Cyrus, Carl, Charlotte, Megan, Denise, Mille, Heather, Shoshana, Toby, Bret, Craig, Nate and myself. New diamond wheels were installed, three new stools and lights were assembled for the jeweler's bench. Cabinets were organized and the office ... well a dent was made. Everyone worked hard and was rewarded with appreciation and pizza.

Gem Show Planning. We are off to a great start for this year's Gem Show, but I regret to report a dismal turnout at the first Show meeting! Only 4 people attended. which makes the Show very vulnerable to a labor crisis. Many hands make light work, and working

together leads to shared gratitude, a cheerful endeavor, and a successful Show.

This Wednesday Fehttps://us6.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/edit?id=10581702b 4th, at 5:15 is the second Gem Show planning meeting. It will be held at the Shop. Let's see more faces please! The most time consuming job, Contracts, is already assigned. We need a large group to share other tasks that will make the difference between a fantastic Gem Show ... and no Show at all. Nearly finished is a Gem Show Manual that takes the guesswork out of most tasks, and breaks down larger tasks into a few hours of effort a month, many of which can be completed from the comfort of your home. Our community LOVES the Gem Show so let's please all step up for this 72nd Annual Gem Show.

Other Committees. I will make this short and sweet. My vision for the Club is exciting. We have formed two very important committees with time sensitive tasks. Please email me at info@durangorocks.org to join one.

- **Building committee**. The Club's future depends on its members sorting out its future building needs. The Club has worked very hard to build a nest egg for a new facility and every month or two a commercial property comes up that is very nearly within reach and should be explored. If you like sorting out real estate options or if you have experience with construction, engineering or fundraising, please join this committee. Let's use our savings and time wisely to get the Club settled for its next 80 years. Future Durango area rock lovers and artists will thank you!

- **Membership Drive.** The Club's birthday was on January 1, when it turned 79. The Club is now in its 80th year! The Membership Drive committee will focus on social media to help area residents better understand what a special program the Club offers for learning

and outdoor adventure. If you like to make videos, take pictures, dabble in graphics or plan parties, please sign up for this committee. I am 100% behind this!

Slab Happy. The Shop maintains a few drawers of slabs for new shop users who want to practice shaping a stone. It's hard to believe but some people don't yet have buckets of rocks! These slabs are available to help people get excited and learn about lapidary. The slab drawers are running low and could use some new material. Please look through your slab collection to find something colorful you aren't likely to use, and donate it to the Slab Drawer! Thank you so much!

Gold, Silver and Stones, Oh My!
Many club members watch precious metals prices closely, both for our livelihoods and hobbies. These metals are at unprecedented highs. Silver is the "new gold" at over $100 an ounce (the last time gold was $100 was in January 1974). Colored stones are also on a sharp rise. Investors are especially seeking stones such as ruby, tourmaline, sapphires and even semiprecious colored stones like peridot and aquamarine. The market preference is for untreated, raw and ethically sourced stones. Similarly, humble, old stock jasper is on the rise, especially stones such as ocean jasper, poppy jasper, Bruneau jasper, Imperial jasper, Dalmation jasper, Mookaite jasper, and Sonoran Sunrise/Sunset. These stones are now commonly priced $10 to $80 per carat. Jasper's value is directly related to the quality of lapidary work and appealing patterns in each stone, as well as stones that have become exceedingly difficult to source. In worrisome economic times, it is useful to know that you might have a treasure sitting in a box in the garage!

Miner Poetry. Speaking of jasper … you've heard of Cowboy Poetry before. Well there are miner poets too! One of our gem show dealers is a Miner Poet (not to be confused with a minor Poet). He is bashful enough to submit anonymously, but his poetry speaks for itself. Thank you Jasper Miner! (Pictured is porcelain jasper).

The swinging hammer sings
The hard cold chisel rings
The callused miner's hands hold tight
As sore shoulders swing with might

Hard rhyolite rock is busted
In a place where intuition is trusted
Beautiful porcelain jasper in seam
Is the fuel for this miner's dream

The multicolored jasper that is broken
is but a small token
of all the hiking and looking
and all the campfire cooking.

Once precious jaspers are found
This signals the start of another round
The high grade rock is sorted and graded
Some given away and some is traded.

Once all the scratches are sanded away
It is time for polish wheels to come into play
Once the cab is polished like water wet
Then it is time for the gem to be set.

The silversmith tries with all their heart
To showcase the gem and do their part
The design for the stone is thought with care
Then the piece is made with flair.

The metalsmith works with so much passion
To accomplish the tedious but beautiful mission
The jewelry piece is finely done
And much admiration by the artist is won.

The piece is worn by a proud someone
who feels glad the work is done.
The treasured Earth's stone shines,
and it time to go back to the mine.

So Many Great Classes!
Wow, what a great lineup of February classes! View the Club's CALENDAR to register and for all the details (or enter www.durangorocks.org/events).
Here is a list of upcoming classes this month.

Fri Feb 6 - **Recycle your Scrap Silver** to save Money, with Shoshana Kaliski
Sun Feb 8 - **Cabochon Cutting and Polishing**, with Joel Arnold
Mon Feb 9 - **Mixed Metals Spirit Animal Earrings**, with Shoshana Kaliski.
Fri Feb 13 - **Rolling Your Silver Ingot into a Sterling Sheet**, with Shoshana Kaliski
Weekend Feb 14-15 - **Intro to Lost Cast Waxing Ring or Pendant**, with Jaymus Perry
Mon Feb 16 - **Circular Copper Container**, with Shoshana Kaliski
Fri Feb 20 - **Recycle your Scrap Silver to save Money**, with Shoshana Kaliski
Weekend Feb 21-22 - **Intro to Silversmithing Statement Ring**, with Carlos Manon
Mon Feb 23 - **Cuttlebone Casting with your Silver Scrap**, with Shoshana Kaliski
Fri/Sat Feb 27-28 - **Sterling Silver and Stone Poison Ring**, with Shoshana Kaliski

AND, don't forget our monthly **Social Hour** held the LAST Wednesday evening of the month from 6 pm to 7:15. At this time we get together to snack, share rocks and hear about someone's interests, advanced knowledge, or great rock trips. The February Social Hour is Wed Feb 25.

Guest Article: Trip Report to Pala Chief Mine
by Cindy Pugsley

After a three hour drive from Palm Springs we arrive in Pala, California, located in the northeastern part of San Diego County. The rolling hills are filled with orange groves and three-block towns. A sharp turn outside of town takes us up a short dirt road to the Pale Chief and Oceanside Mines. My cousin and I have signed up for a dig at the Chief. First stop is Oceanside, about half way up. It has a gift shop, a circle of running water, and sifting tables. All you need to purchases is a bucket of pay dirt and sift for treasures!

On and up to the top to the Pala Mine! The orientation explains what can be found heading down the mountain's back side. Here lies the pegmatite vein. It cuts through schist and granite like a pale ribbon. There is active mining going on and the tailings get dumped on either side of the vein. In the full morning sunlight the mountain sparkles with magic! In front of me are chalky white stones full of muscovite mica, milky quartz chunks with glassy fractures and feldspar blocks the size of bricks and suitcases.

Embedded in the rocks we found very small pieces of pink tourmaline, green tourmaline and some of both colors referred to as watermelon tourmaline. We also found lepidolite, a beautiful lavender sparkly stone and pieces of aquamarine. My cousin found a very large crystal point and I found a tiny one. Unfortunately we did not find any of the elusive kunzite or hiddenite, both types of spodumene.

The Pala pegmatite is a late stage granitic melt that squeezed into cracks underground, cooled very slowly, and concentrated rare elements, creating giant crystals and some of the world's most famous lithium and gemstone deposits.

This formation features coarse-grained igneous bodies that formed during the final stages of magma crystallization about 90-100 million years ago.

The most abundant rock to collect features black rod-like columns in a buff colored host stone. The rods range from short to long, and thick to thin. These rods are black tourmaline pegs, referred to as schorl or sometimes called seed tourmaline by old miners. This is tourmaline at an early stage of development. The black tourmaline could become enriched with lithium and manganese for a chemistry shift to Elbaite, starting the process that produces pink and green gems.

Walking through the Pala pegmatite vein felt less like walking on the mountain and more like walking through a cross section of the Earth's volcanic past. The stone field is chaotic, beautiful and strangely intimate, like you’re standing inside a geologic secret that just happed to be exposed.

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