

THE ROCKFINDER



Joyce Larson, Editor
Michiana Gem & Mineral Society
144 Spruce Drive
Westville, IN 46391

FIRST CLASS MAIL



MICHIANA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY

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Scholarship	
Display.....Mary Miller	451 S. Illinois St., So. Bend, IN 46619
Publicity.....Dawn Cytacki	1606 E. Madison St., So. Bend, IN 46617
Membership.....Members - and Board of Directors	

The MICHIANA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY, a non-profit organization, is affiliated with the MIDWEST FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL AND GEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES and with the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL SOCIETIES.

Regular Meetings

Time: 2:00 p.m. EST	Place: Westminster Presbyterian Church
Fourth Sunday of each month	1501 W. Cleveland Road
June - Field Trip meeting	South Bend, IN
July - No meeting	West of the St. Joseph River
August - Annual Club Picnic	
December - Date to be announced	
Christmas Party	

Dues

Individual	\$ 6.50 per year
Family	10.00 per year
Junior	2.00 per year

Rockfinder Staff

Editor.....Joyce Larson	144 Spruce Drive, Westville, IN 46391
Co-Editor.....Margaret Heinek	7091 E. East Park Ln., New Carlisle, IN 46552
Staff.....Bob Heinek/Club Members	

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Permission is hereby granted to reprint, at any time, items published in the ROCKFINDER provided due recognition is given.

THE ROCKFINDER



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DECEMBER 1992
SOUTH BEND, IN

PUBLISHED BY: MICHLANA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY

DECEMBER BIRTHSTONE - Zircon and Turquoise

HOSTESSES FOR 1993 - Please mark on your Calendars

January - Bess Wise
Gordon Dobecki
Larry Hess

February - Pam Rubenstein
Marge Collins
Phyllis Smallwood

March - Joe Kossack
Sister Georgia
Sister Jeanne

April - Margaret Schultz
Paul Godollei
Gladys Pacholke

May - Pam Rubenstein (?)
The Klodzinskis

June & July - None

August - Club Picnic

September - Open

October - Molly Elwell
Marie Crull
Joyce Larson

November - Pat McLaughlin
Kathy Miller
Catherine McHugh

December - Christmas Party

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

- 8 - Clayton Merrill
- 9 - Margaret Schultz
- 10 - Margaret McHugh Hawkins
- 11 - Molly Elwell
- 16 - Danny Zeiger
- 16 - Lynn Carson
- 29 - Bob Heinek

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

- 3 - Chris & Jerry Shoemaker
- 22 - Rob and Judy Heinek
- 24 - Pauline & George Kelsheimer

Peace



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

MARGARET'S COLUMN

HAPPY HOLIDAY TO ALL OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS! BOB AND I HOPE YOUR NEW YEAR WILL BE HAPPY AND HEALTHFUL.

The end of the year can be a sad time for some, but hopefully it won't be for you folks. I always look forward to a new beginning, sometimes I am disappointed, but there is always something new to experience.

1992 was a sad year as we lost some good friends and several members have been ill. Just found out that Stan Kile had a heart attack and is in the hospital. Get well soon, Stan. Mary Miller reports she is recovering from her back surgery, and will be with her brother until sometime early January.

Our club has had two field trips this fall, and I for one really enjoyed them. The trip to the Museum was spectacular and the Rings of Fire was indescribable. Wow! Our Christmas party went well, there were about 47 there, but we did miss so many of our members. Bob and Kathy Miller had a game that was fun too. Thank you, Millers. Everyone that helped in setting up the tables, the food, decorations and cleaning up, THANKS! Everything was good!

I want to thank all of the 1992 officers for a job well done. Thanks to all members for the work they have done, and are doing, each month at the meetings and for our annual show each Labor Day weekend. The cooperation of the members is what makes the Michiana Gem Society a 1st rate club. Our show profit helps finance our postage on the bulletin, our hospitality each month and field trips. I especially want to thank Joyce Larson for her work on THE ROCKFINDER. Joyce is our link between the members of the club and the MWF and AFMS.

If you haven't paid your dues for 1993, please send them to Sister Jean, 52700 Shellbark, South Bend, IN 46628. If you have a change of address or phone number, please let us know right away, we want to get the roster out in January.

Again, Happy Holidays to all.

Margaret

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Lu Ellen Brown
2097 Depot Road
Niles, MI 49120
Ph: AC 616/684-6365

Joan Scherer
Diane Bowman
P. O. Box 4803
Fairview, NM 87533-4803

Joan reports after a 10 day trip, she and Diane have decided to settle in northern New Mexico. Their view must be spectacular being framed by the Rio Grande, Jernez Mountains and Black Mesa across the Rio Grande. Their home is 35 miles no. of Santa Fe, 35 miles from Taos, and 17 miles from Dixon where her daughter & family reside. They are looking forward to rock hunting - it appears there is quite a variety of minerals in that area. They send best wishes for a wonderful Christmas to all in our club. Our best wishes to them, also, and much success in their relocation.

I'll knock on their door sometime in 1993, Don't know exactly when, but I'll be there.

Joyce



MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 1992
MICHIANA GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

President Heinek opened our regular meeting. Guests, Jeffrey Barrick and Troy Anderson were introduced. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the October minutes as printed in The Rockfinder. The treasurer's report was read and approved for audit.

Committee Reports

Program - Today's program was briefly introduced.

Sunshine - Mary Miller is on total bed rest for her back injury. We wish her the best.

Correspondence - Margaret received a letter from member Tess Miller, in Elkhart, whose husband is recuperating. She also received a letter from Service America and Century Center thanking us for our business from the show.

Library - Paul Godollei is instituting a new lending procedure. At each meeting he will bring a list of the books and films we own. If you would like to borrow something, sign up for it and he will bring it to the next regular meeting.

Old Business - The bus for the trip November 27th to Chicago is full. We have 47 people (members and guests) going to the Museum of Science and Industry to see the Rings of Fire and the rest of the museum. Then we will attend the Geodon Rock Show in Wheaton.

New Business - The Christmas party will be on Sunday, December 16th. Set up is at 12:30 and we will eat around 1:00. Please bring decorations to help make the room festive. The club will provide ham, beef, rolls, butter, cheese, crackers and drinks. Please bring a dish to share. Also bring your own place settings (plate, silverware, napkin). Hope to see you there!

Margaret and Bob Heinek and Marie and Bill Crull will sponsor the South Bend Gem Show, April 16-18. This will prevent any outsider from bringing in a similar show. There will be no club booth and

no club displays. The club may contribute a kiddie corner if we wish.

Larry Hess is beginning work on our new directory. If your address or phone number has changed, please let him know.

Bob Miller's nominating committee made the following nominations for officers:

- President.....Margaret Heinek
- Vice-President..Larry Hess
- Secretary.....Pam Rubenstein
- Treasurer.....Sister Jeanne
- Liason.....Paul Godollei

The floor was open for nominations, but no further names were presented. The above slate was elected unanimously.

Program - We made jewelry from polished slabs and beads. Everyone had a good time - thanks for bringing in all the supplies for us, Margaret!

32 members, 5 junior members and 2 guests attended.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Rubenstein



**

As
 we are
 on the
 threshold
 *of another
 Yuletide
 season, let us
 *renew our faith
 *in mankind and let
 ****us rededicate****
 ourselves to that great
 task of making this world
 a greater place in which to*
 live...a world reflecting the *
 true spirit of Christmas with its
 divine message of peace, love and
 good will.

||
||
||
||

MERRY CHRISTMAS

(-taken from Flint Flashes)

IT'S ALL IN THE STATE OF MIND

If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you think you'd like to win, but you can't,
It's almost a "cinch" you won't;
If you think you'll lose, you've lost;
For out in the world you'll find
Success begins with a fellow's will;
It's all in the state of mind.

Full many a race is lost
Ere even the race is run,
And many a coward fails
Ere even his work's begun.
Think big and your deeds will grow,
Think small and you fall behind,
Think that you can, and you will;
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, you are;
You've got to think high to rise;
You've got to be sure of yourself
Before you ever win a prize.
Life's battle doesn't always go
To the stronger or faster man;
But sooner or later, the fellow who wins
Is the fellow who thinks he can.

(Author Unknown)

* * * * *

DID YOU KNOW?

1. GYPSUM when heated to 110-120 degrees Celsius, forms a white powder called Plaster of Paris.
2. When the igneous rock OBSIDIAN is heated it turns into PERLITE which is used in potting soil for its moisture-holding properties.
3. DIAMONDS are not formed from coal, but produced beneath the earth's crust at 5000 degrees Fahrenheit and a pressure of one-million pounds per square inch. The rock source of diamonds is an igneous rock, KIMBERLITE. Only 20% of the diamonds mined are of gem quality.

(-via The Rocky Reader)

* * * * *

Credits to GEM-TIME, Las Vegas, NV for all humorous drawings in this issue!

TIPS TO OUR NEW TUMBLERS (JUNIORS)

Tumbling is becoming an "IN" thing for many of our Junior Members and their parents. So, these tips might be helpful.

1. If you start with junk rocks, only tumbled junk will come out! So start with good material and you'll be more pleased with your tumbled results!
2. Pre-trimming your stones can be a must. Consider how you want to use the tumbled stones and cut them down to size before you start! Also, you can determine some interesting shapes.
3. Choose rocks of similar hardness so that the softer rocks won't be ground away by the harder ones. Keep agate, flint, petrified wood, beach agates in the same batch. Separate obsidian, amethyst and rose quartz into a different batch.
4. Consider the size of your rocks. A balance is most desirable - some bigger ones in with the smaller ones.
5. In the tumbler, the action takes place when stones grind against stones so you need to have the tumbler at least half full...up to 3/4 full.
6. Take advantage of the Club library where there are books on tumbling!
7. Don't learn the hard way...NEVER pore used grit down a sink drain...unless you have a cousin in the roto-rooter business!
8. Cleaniness is important...wash that tumbler thoroughly between grits, especially before the final polishing step.
9. Add a little baking soda to your tumbler...this helps to reduce the hydrogen gas build-up in a sealed tumbler. The baking soda also helps in the clean-up of the tumbled stones.
10. Patience leads to a good polish on your stones. Don't rush the process. Tumbling takes time!

(-from Mr. D via The Rocky Reader)

(P.S. I gave some of my tumbled stones to my grandson for his fish tank. They really make a colorful base for the tank.)

(Editor - Joyce)

* * * * *

EDUCATION THROUGH SHARING
1993

This award is given to unpaid individuals who have been active sharing their knowledge and talents of the lapidary arts and the earth sciences (geology, mineralogy, gemology, paleontology, etc.) These individuals share in many ways, such as donations of specimens, talks, lectures, one-on-one teaching, demonstrations, exhibiting, writing articles, photography, field trips, identification of specimens, legislation, helping with land surveys, museum specimen catalogueing and identification, etc.

The American Federation of Mineralogical Societies and Regional Federations want to know about these people so that we can honor them. The nominations can be sent in by the club, the individual or any individual in the club and you may nominate as many in your club as you wish. Be as specific as possible as to how many people the honorees have interacted with; the time involved; the age group; and the kind of group (e.g. a gem and mineral club, school, senior citizen, museum, public agency, etc.) We want to have a word picture of these people, not just a list of their activities. We return all the documents so pictures and letters documenting these activities are helpful.

Send the narratives to the chairman of your federation by March 1, 1993 and he/she will send the top three on to the AFMS chairman for judging. The activities described in the narrative must take place during the year January 1, 1992 through December 31, 1992, but it is helpful to have some background of the person.

(MWFMS - Chairmen Carol Anderson, 918 13th Ave., Green Bay, Wisconsin 54304)

This is an article the Topeka, KS editor put in for their Juniors. It is interesting to all ages. (Credit to The Glacial Drifter via Beehive Buzzer)

LESSONS FROM THE GEESE

1. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock gains 71% flying range over each bird flying alone. LESSON - People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and more easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.
2. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediately in front. LESSON - If we have as much sense as the goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go.
3. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies at the point position. LESSON - It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks, sharing leadership, interdependent with each other.
4. The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. LESSON - We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging -- not something less helpful.
5. When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, to join another formation or rejoin their flock. LESSON - If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll stand by each other.

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together.
(-via Hy-Grader & The Thumblicker)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (Kathy Miller, President - Taken from the MWF Newsletter)

Much has happened during this past year and I am pleased to be able to bring you positive news on some of the most recent subjects. As I will only "touch base" on them, be sure and follow through by reading your upcoming MWF Newsletters.

At the fall MWF Executive Council meeting in Oshkosh, WI, it was voted upon (effective immediately), to have an Insurance Program Committee. This Committee will be headed by Robert Mullaly. The purpose of this committee will be to look into a Midwest Federation Liability Insurance policy. The policy would be in the name of Midwest Federation (corporation) to protect it from liability claims total and per incident. The policy will have a page of co-insured in which the names of participating clubs will be shown as equally insured.

Did you notice the (new to some of you) name of Robert Mullaly. Welcome Bob back! He has served in many positions of the MWF and we are pleased he has accepted this new hat in the Federation.

More good news - our past Convention and Show Advisory Chairman, Marve Starbuck has gone to a great deal of time and effort to line up annual MWF show/conventions to no avail. Much discussion took place at the MWF Executive Board and Committee meetings in Oshkosh, WI. Something needed to be done to help entice MWF clubs to host these conventions. It is a lot of work for any club to put a show/convention on and they should have more of a benefit than in years past. A recommendation was made and approved to bring to the MWF Council consideration to vote on amending the MWF By-Laws Section 7 regarding Federation/Club net profits. You will find this motion and the recommended split in this newsletter. To see this carried through, we need you to attend the convention next summer in Houghton, MI.

Are you looking for a gift for certain persons in your life? Coming soon... Gordon Boone Director of Supplies, will have available new MWF bolos sets with ties. These will be sold at a minimal price and the hottest thing out. The bolos come in attractive colors that both men and women will enjoy.

The MWF wishes to express a sincere note of sympathy to the family of Ruth Mogg who passed away October 25th. Ruth had been the Commemerative Stamp Chairman of the MWF for many years.

Permanent Committee Chairman-a reminder...please send Kitty Starbuck MWF Newsletter Editor, your progress articles. The MWF clubs need to know what you are doing for them.

Having started this message on a positive note, I will end on the same.

Bob and I want to wish each of you a joyous and blessed holiday season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Kathy

(Re: Club Net Profits and Recommended Split - "The host society shall receive seventy-five percent (75%) of any net profit, and the Federation shall receive twenty-five (25%) of any net profit.") This is a change from the current 50-50 split.

QUIPS - Even in the Stone Age, when women wrote down their ages, they were chiseling.

(-via The Glacial Drifter & Smoke Signals)

The doctor asked the weatherbeaten mountainer how he was feeling. "It's like this," drawled the man after a few seconds of silence, "I'm still kicken, but I ain't rais any dust."

(-via The Rock Rattler and Cabber Gabber)

THE RED ROSE OF OKLAHOMA - OKLAHOMA ROSE ROCK

Barite Roses, consist of reddish-brown sandy crystals of barite (barium sulphate) in petal-like clusters that resemble a rose in full bloom. They are composed of sand and barite in nearly equal proportions and were designated the official State Rock of Oklahoma on April 8, 1968, when Governor Dewey F. Bartlett signed House Bill #1277.

Barite Roses are only found in Oklahoma and a few whitish gray and yellow ones across the Kansas line. A somewhat similar mineral, selenite, a form of gypsum, is often mistaken for barite roses. Selenite is found in many places, such as Egypt, California, Texas, Libya, etc. However, barite roses are very scarce; particularly the best roses. These roses may be seen at the Timberlake Rose Rock Museum in Noble, Oklahoma, south of Norman on Highway 77. Noble was designated the Rose Rock Capital by Governor George Nigh in 1983. A yearly Rose Rock Festival is held in Noble the first Saturday in May.

CHEROKEE ROSE

When gold was found in Georgia, the government forgot its treaties and drove the Cherokees on their forced march to Oklahoma. One fourth of them died before reaching their destination.

Looking down from Heaven, God decided to commemorate the brave Cherokees, and so, as the blood of the braves and the tears of the maidens dropped to the ground, He turned them into stone in the shape of a Cherokee Rose. This is why they are so plentiful in Oklahoma, the end of the Trail of Tears.

(-via Rockhound Harold)

COMMUNICATE!!

A woman went to her lawyer seeking a divorce. "Do you have any grounds," the lawyer asked? "Oh, about two acres," the woman answered. "Do you have a grudge?" asked the lawyer. "No, but we have a carport," she answered. "Well" the lawyer queried becoming frustrated. "Does your husband beat you up?" "Sometimes I get up earlier", she said. Exasperated, the lawyer demands, "Madam, why on earth do you want a divorce?" "Oh, I don't know, but my husband says we don't communicate!"

(-via The Rock Rattler, Flint R&G Newsletter and Michigan Gem News)



CARVE THESE STONES

- SEPIOLITE (Meerschaum) can be worked with steel wool.
 - ALABASTER (Gypsum) worked with file-the harder type lightly with a handtool.
 - TALC (Soapstone) worked with files and sandpaper.
 - ANTHRACITE (Coal) worked with files, polishes like hematite.
 - BLACK JET (Hard Coal) works fast, polishes well.
 - CALCITE (Marble, Onyx) worked with handtool and tungsten bits.
 - ARAGONITE (like Calcite) worked with a handtool.
 - HOWLITE worked with a handtool and can be easily dyed.
- (-Condensed - via The Rock Rattler, Diablo Diggins & Tuscarora Bulletin)



FRACTURED MEDICAL TERMS

- Artery - The study of paintings.
- Barium - What you do when CPR fails.
- Cesarean Section - A district in Rome.
- Colic - A sheep dog.
- Coma - A punctuation mark.
- Congenital - Friendly.
- Dilate - To live long.
- Fester - Quick.
- G.I. Series - Baseball game between teams of soldiers.
- Grippe - A suitcase.
- Hangnail - A coat hook.
- Medical Staff - A doctor's cane.
- Morbid - A higher offer.
- Nitrate - Lower than the day rate.
- Node - Was aware of.
- Outpatient - A person who has fainted.
- Post-Operative - A letter carrier.
- Protein - In favor of young people.
- Secretion - Hiding anything.
- Serology - Study of English Knighthood.
- Tablet - A small table.
- Tumor - An extra pair.
- Urine - Opposite of you're out.
- Varicose Veins - Veins which are very close together.



CACHE OF CLOVIS SPEAR POINTS FOUND

Archeologists, working in the State of Washington, have now excavated the largest cache of Clovis spear points. Clovis stone points, which are at least 11,000 years old, are the earliest undisputed evidence of humans in the Americas.

They were first discovered at sites throughout North America. Washington State University reported that the spear points, stone tools and bone implements provided evidence of the earliest known humans in the Northwest. Although the artifacts have not been scientifically dated, archeologists estimate that they are about 11,200 years old. Some of the spear points are nine inches long, twice the usual length. Archeologists said they are not sure whether the points were used for hunting bison and mammoths, or for some ceremonial purposes.

(-via Delvings, Chert Chatter & Del Air Bulletin)

MONEY WELL SPENT

You pay your dues and what do you get?
A year filled with fun and friends, you bet
You learn about rocks and minerals too,
There's oodles & oodles of things to do.

There are field trips and shows and program galore.

Now, what do you mean? Can't we offer you more?

Sure..there are scads of books for you to read,

To keep the old noggin from going to seed.

There are auctions, door prizes and raffles to boot!

If you are lucky enough, you can win lots of loot.

You don't have to remember, you are reminded to meet,

By card, phone or bulletin which we hope is a treat.

There are displays at each meeting for you to see,

Coffee, tea or juice and cake (for eaters like me.)

Did I hear you say work: Yes, there is that too,

But it can be fun if you work With a crew
Just do your share..don't leave it to

others,

We would all skip the work if we had our "druthers".

So plunk down your money and smile when you do,

Because there are pleasures in store for you.

Can't think of a way you get more for your dough,

Than by joining a club with "get up and go
You can visit with friends to your heart's

content.

"SO DO PAY YOUR DUES", 'tis money well spent!

(-via Gem City Rock News)

WINTER FORECAST?? - "Onion skin is very thin, mild winter is coming in.

Onion skin is thick & tough, winter will be cold and rough".

(Better check your onions!)

(-via Weather Lore)

From your Editor:

It's Saturday night - the 19th of December and I have just had the chance to sit-down and put the December issue together. I know as I type this - with intentions of running it off on the copier tomorrow and in the mail by Monday, that many of you will not get this issue before Christmas. I just want you to all know I am wishing each and everyone the "Happiest of Holiday Seasons". I'm "home alone" tonight, have the Christmas tree lighted, the pine scent candle lit, have a "Special" on TV, and I am comfortable in the "old" sweatsuit & slippers. I am in my mind, going over the happenings in my life since last Christmas. I feel very fortunate for my family. On November 24th my fourth grandchild arrived - Alex. I have four great kids, two terrific sisters and all of a sudden I want to say - a partridge in a pear tree. Suddenly I have a great deal of Christmas spirit. I'm looking forward to making the decorated cookies and having my family here Christmas Eve. The Californians, daughter Jenny and grandson Jordan have already arrived - they are out visiting. Alex's Mom, daughter Linda, husband Andy and granddaughter Ashley in San Antonio won't be able to make it this year, however I did make a trip there the last week of November for a week. Daughter Kristen & grandson Joshua will be here, and son Hans and girlfriend; my travelling buddy - sister Sue, and sister Arlene & husband. Our family has really gotten small and I miss Christmases past where there wasn't room around the table for all to sit. It has been a good year for me, with much travelling. I am so glad to have my family and friends. Many of you will recognize yourselves in the "friends" category as you read this.

I am making some definite New Year resolutions this year also. Believe I will tell them to you so you can check with me next December to see how many I was able to keep. Here goes:

1. Quit smoking! This will be a real challenge. You see I have been smoking since 1951. I have tried acupuncture, the patches - I'm still at it - maybe hypnosis will work. I came home from work last week and my grandson had hid all the cigarette packages - he says, "Grandma, don't you know what secondary smoke does?" Yes, Jordan I know - I will really try!
2. Lose 30 pounds. I am sure this won't be all that difficult - after the holidays that is. It's strange to realize I am shrinking in height. Actually one and 3/4 inches to date. The extra lbs. are going the wrong direction.
3. Get these closets cleared out. I have a hard time parting with material things. Need to convince myself - if you don't wear it regularly - get rid of it.
4. Finish the furniture refinishing that was started two years ago.
5. Get all my projects and supplies organized. I'm tired of looking for things that I know I have somewhere and am not able to put my hands on when I need them.
6. Hide the credit card!

There probably should be more resolutions I should make. The above are the major ones and I will make an all out effort to keep them all.

Thanks to all the editors of the exchange bulletins for keeping me supplied with material for The Rockfinder. My pages would number less without your articles. I wish more of our club members would keep me supplied with articles of their own. This goes for young and seasoned (note I didn't say old) members alike. I think some articles about you, would probably be more interesting than articles about me. You see, I have been at this December issue since 4 p.m. this afternoon looking for articles of interest. Help me out. With that, I'll bring my article to a close and again - all the best to you in the coming year.



SURGEONS TEST SEA CORAL AS A BONE SUBSTITUTE

Certain types of sea coral, collected from reefs in the Pacific Ocean, are being used to create a new bone substitute that may prove useful in some operations that now require bone grafts.

The developers of the substitute, Eugene W. White and his nephew Rodney A. White were attracted to the coral by its similarities to bone, both in chemical composition and structure.

Dr. White, a professor at Pennsylvania State University, first observed the coral's structure while scuba diving in the South Pacific.

Trauma, periodontal disease and congenital birth defect leave millions of people with inadequate bone in the facial area, particularly the upper and lower jaw.

The traditional method of correcting this is a bone graft, in which the surgeon removes bone from one location on the body, usually the hips, ribs or skull, and relocates it to a problem area where it grows together with the existing bone.

Grafts are effective, surgeons say, but they require two surgical procedures, increasing the chances of scarring and other complications. In addition, the implanted bone, "tends to shrink with time", said Dr. Harvey Rosen, an associate clinical professor in plastic surgery at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

For years, doctors and researchers have sought an effective substitute in hopes of eliminating a step in the reconstructive process. Unfortunately, they have found it impossible to duplicate the complex, interconnected system of pores in bone. This porous structure is essential to sustain bone growth.

Coral, a hard deposit built up by minute animals called coral polyps, consists of calcium carbonate. Calcium in this form is inappropriate for grafting since it would quickly be absorbed by the body. It can, however, be converted with heat, water and phosphate that is the major mineral component of human bone.

In converting the coral, it is essential to retain it's maze of pores and channels. Doctors believe this structure allows bone to grow into and through it. Dr. Rosen said the substitute serves as a matrix for bone growth and is not susceptible to shrinkage.

Although no research on the substance has appeared in scientific journals, Dr. Rosen presented a paper on it last month before the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons.

The substance is now being marketed by Interpore International of Irvine, California. Dr. Rosen, who is not affiliated with Interpore, said he had used the substitute in 65 patients. Of the operations, he said a third were for "purely cosmetic reasons". He said he has followed 45 patients for more than a year, and has found that the new substitute is "holding up very well".

(-via The Glacial Drifter, San Jose Mercury-News, Rock Scoop & Owyhee Gem)

