

Michiana Gem & Mineral Society  
Jason Hefner, Editor  
229 East State St  
Etna Green, IN 46524



May 2016 Volume 56 Number 5

Next Meeting 05/22

# THE ROCKFINDER

**We're on the Web! See us at: [www.MichianaGMS.org](http://www.MichianaGMS.org)**

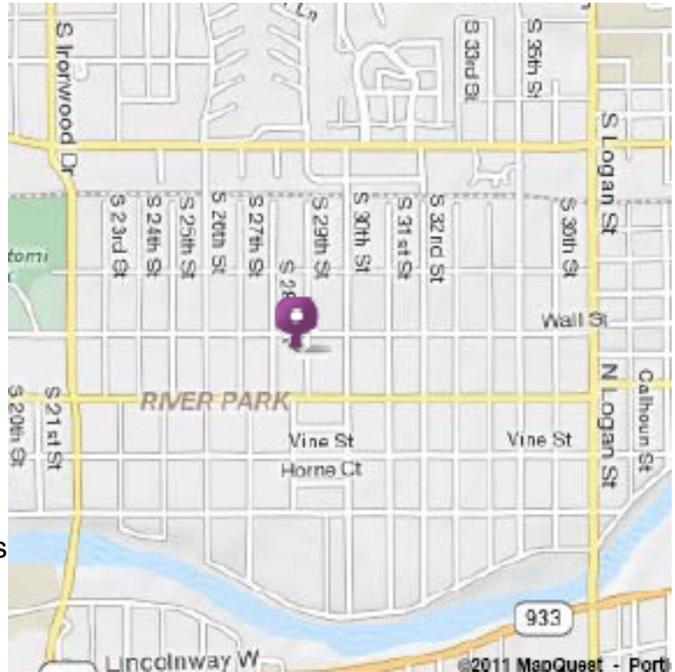
The purpose of the Michiana Gem & Mineral Society is to promote the study and enjoyment of the earth sciences and the lapidary arts, and to share lapidary knowledge and techniques. General meetings are usually held the fourth Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. at,

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
805 S. 29th St.,  
South Bend, IN.  
Please see the map to the right.

Doors usually open at 1:30 for meet & greet time.

Regular meeting exceptions include May (third Sunday), July (Club Picnic), August (Club Show) and the November/December meeting and Christmas party.

Board meetings are held before the monthly meetings. The annual club show is in late August.



**DUES**

Yearly Membership Dues are payable by December 15th of each year. Please choose type of membership below.

- Individual \$15.00     Family \$20.00
- Junior \$1.00         Subscriber \$7.50

Please indicate areas of special interest.

- General Geology     Gems & Minerals
- Fossils               Micro mounts
- Crystals              Field Trips
- Cabochons           Faceting
- Carving               Beads
- Jewelry Making

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 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, ST, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your dues and the bottom half of this form to:



Please read and sign this section

With my signature I hereby release the Michiana Gem and Mineral Society, Inc., and its individual members and the owners of any premises upon which I enter under permit granted to the society, absolutely free of any liability whatsoever, to my person or property, and further I will respect the equipment and property of the aforesaid owners.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Family Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Michiana Gem & Mineral Society  
c/o Diane Gram  
16301 Wild Cherry Dr  
Granger, IN 46530

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Volume 56 Number 5  
May 2016

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Michiana Gem and Mineral Society [www.MichianaGMS.org](http://www.MichianaGMS.org) is a not-for-profit organization affiliated with the Midwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies <http://www.amfed.org/mwff/> and with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies [www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org)

The *Rockfinder* is published monthly except July and August.

Please note that all items for a given issue of the *Rockfinder* are due to the **Editor** no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the previous month. This means that the due date for the March Issue will be February 5<sup>th</sup>. Advance items are appreciated. Material may be e-mailed to [hefner\\_family@hotmail.com](mailto:hefner_family@hotmail.com) or submitted via the U.S. Mail.

Editor:  
Jason Hefner  
229 East State St  
Etna Green, IN 46524

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any original *Rockfinder* articles as long as recognition is given along with the reprint.

REMEMBER – Items in The Rockfinder that are **BLUE & UNDERLINED** are links to the internet or email addresses. Just click on them for more information.



## President's Message - President Bill Foreman

Hello everyone!

After having attended the MWF Spring meeting and doing a lot of online searching and inquiry, I am learning a lot about how successful clubs BECOME successful. Planning and foresight by the President and Boards are important, as is adequate input and feedback from the members. The key, however, seems to be the amount of active participation of all members. Community outreach requires a lot of varied expertise, from scientific training in mineralogy to practical experience in the field to hands-on work in the lapidary workshop. I have minimal knowledge of the science of mineralogy, and just a rudimentary understanding of lapidary techniques. I do though, have experience in working with the public and no fear of speaking to groups (I worked as an Adult Services and Reference department head in a Public Library for 13 years). I try to bring my limited skills to the service of our Club. Continued on Page 2

## Up & Coming

**Next Meeting: May 22, 2016** Visitors are always welcome. Doors open at 1:30. Meeting starts at 2:00.

**Place:**  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
(29<sup>th</sup> & Wall)  
South Bend, IN. (This is in River Park)

**Program: Club show prep**

Host & Hostess(s) :Bob & Kathy Miller  
Joe & Marty Perry  
Diane Gram

## Board of Directors

President: Bill Foreman  
574-233-9178

Vice-President: Randy Hill  
269-465-5814

Secretary Jan Pellus  
574-264-4772

Treasurer: Diane Gram  
574-588-2665

Liaison: Bob Bell  
574-233-7352

## Committee Chairs

Displays: Mike Skoczylas  
574-251-0255

Editor: Jason Hefner  
574-858-9837

Educational: Jesse Zeiger  
574-259-5944

Facebook: Danielle Wilborn  
574-344-3385

Field Trips: John Davis  
574-232-8823

Historian: open

Hospitality:  
Linda Miller 574-291-5027  
Marsha Miller 574-498-6513

Juniors: Trista McIntosh  
574-780-1162

Librarian: Bill Foreman  
574-233-9178

Membership: Nancy Foreman  
574-233-9178

Programs: Kathy Miller (Interim)  
574-291-0332

Publicity: Nick Pellus  
574-264-4772

Safety: Julie Wieger 574-291-2597  
Jennifer Hefner 574-858-9837

Show Chair: John Davis 574-232-8823

Sunshine: Annette Freel 574-293-8193,  
Sherrie Kobie 574-522-0189

Webmaster: Joe Perry 574-295-9050

## President's Message Continued from page 1

To grow this club and develop the resources that successful clubs have calls for the active participation of as many members as possible. No skill or area of interest is more important than any other. Presenting a program, working with school/church groups, working with our Juniors helping out Trista...these are just a few of the endless ways anyone can become active. No matter how new you are to the club, you are a valuable and important source of knowledge. It would be great if we could fill all of the requests we receive for speakers and outreach programming. Our August Show and Sale hosting the Midwest Federation calls for as many helpers as we can get. We can pair up a new member with an experienced member so that they can learn how things are done, and they can get that warm, satisfying feeling of being a useful part of a team. Working a table, relieving members for lunch/bathroom breaks, or giving directions are all important to your Club. I would love to have the Show be a sea of green club shirts, with dozens of members on hand directing traffic and chatting with the public.

I bring up the issue of active membership regularly as a call-to-arms, not as a way of browbeating members. I have a vision of a vital and exciting Club, one with tons of outreach, a well-outfitted lapidary workshop, collecting trips and digs both local and distant, and lots of internal group activity and skill-building. That will only happen with an investment of time and the participation of all.

Remember, our 53rd annual Show and Sale is coming up in August (19th, 20th, 21st) and we will be hosting the Midwest Federation, so lets all show up and do our part. We will also be having our annual Club Picnic on August 7th. It will be held at the Bertrand Township Hall (check your membership booklet for directions). There is a covered pavilion, lots of shade, plenty of parking, and an air-conditioned Hall with bathrooms and kitchen in case of inclement weather. Bring along a dish to pass or something to share...it's a great time for all to visit and meet.

Two last things. First, please take the time to go to our website and read our Club Bylaws. This will spell out our basic structure and rules. Secondly, we are asking for members who want/need club shirts to contact me at [wjforeman58@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wjforeman58@sbcglobal.net). Shirts will be approximately \$8/shortsleeve, \$11/longsleeve, \$20/hoodies (prices subject to change based on actual quantity). You may also contact us at our Facebook page (top feed on our page), or in person at the meeting in May. We will be asking for input on what design to go with. Most have asked for a large club logo on back, but that will be determined by majority vote. We are asking for orders to be placed as soon as possible so that we may have them available for the Picnic on Aug. 7th.

# March 2016 Meeting Minutes

by Jan Pellus, Secretary

**Members in attendance** / Adults\_49\_\_\_ Children\_5\_\_\_ Guest\_1\_\_\_

**Call to Order:** President Bill Foreman

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Welcome**

**Secretary report:** Jan Pellus / Motion made and seconded to accept minutes as printed in the Rockfinder

**Treasurer's report:** Diane Gram / Motion made and seconded to accept report

**Liaison report:** Bob Bell / Kalamazoo show is next weekend. See me for more information.

**Parliamentarian:** Bob Miller / No Report

Midwest Federation/ No Report

American Federation/ No Report

**American Lands Access:** Tom Noe / Bill Foreman advised the memberships that there are corrections to the rules and regulations that were discussed in the last meeting. These corrections will be sent in a separate report. Bill also noted that Tom Noe will step down as our contact. Anyone interested in taking over, please contact the board.

## **Committee Reports**

**Displays:** Mike Skoczylas / John Davis stepped in for Mike S. Nick Pellus brought display pieces made from his collection as samples of things to be done to enhance and display rocks and minerals. Members are encouraged to put together displays for the upcoming Midwest Federation show. Jesse Zeiger brought selenite specimens collected from Mount Ida in Utah. Rev. Calhoun brought samples of the gem trees he is making for the Midwest Federation show table favors. Diane Gram brought a slab of a type of pudding stone she got from Utah. John Jaworski brought mica and selenite specimens.

**Editor:** Jason Hefner / Please keep sending articles and photographs.

**Educational:** Jesse Zeiger / No Report.

**Face Book:** Danielle Wilborn / Our face book account is doing well. We now have 159 followers. Please send photographs and stories.

**Field Trips:** John Davis / We have a field trip scheduled in July for Albese Quarry. We are losing more collecting sites. Don Church reminded us that gravel pits great collecting sites for agates, minerals, and fossils. Be sure to get permission before collecting. Kathy Miller reported that there are still 21 seats available for the Mazon Creek bus trip. It will be a one day bus trip. The cost is \$5.00 per person which will be given to the bus driver.

**Historian:** / No Report

**Hospitality:** Linda Miller / Thank you for the refreshments to Allen and Betty Gearhart, Everett And Ceclia Harrington, Bill and Marie Crull, and Diana Newport. We are celebrating Bill Crull's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Randy Hill's birthday, and Nick and Jan Pellus's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Congratulations to all!

**Juniors:** Trista McIntosh / No Report

Continued on Page 5

## American Federation of Mineralogical Societies News Program Competition – Why?

excerpted from [AFMS Newsletter Volume 69, Number 3 – February, 2016](#)

Have you seen any good programs lately at a Club meeting?\* Were they produced by a fellow Club member? No doubt, there was a round of applause to show appreciation. Why not encourage the producer to earn more than applause – by entering the Program Competition? There are real “rewards and recognition” for winners. Cash prizes defray production costs, an award certificate and pin are presented to the winners, and information about all winners is published in newsletters and magazines. But more important, each winning program is duplicated and distributed to the seven Regional Libraries, making the winning programs available to Clubs across the country -- giving their members a chance to enjoy and learn from them for many years.

\*If the answer to the first question is “no”, perhaps you can borrow an AFMS Winner from your Federation Program Library. There are many excellent programs available. Of course, not all winners are equal and older programs need to be replaced. We encourage you and/ or your Club to produce a presentation and enter the Program Competition. Why not share your interest, your enthusiasm for an aspect of the hobby – so others may benefit from it and you can reap the rewards. [Read the rest here](#)

## Midwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies News President’s Message

by David Rich, MWF President, excerpted from [MWF News May 2016 - Issue No. 552](#)

As of this writing, the weather people are saying 15 degrees, with 3-4 inches of snow coming. Wow! I hope this is the last of old man winter. (I came back to the Midwest from Arizona too soon!). By the time you read this message, the MWF Spring meeting will be history. I hope everyone had a wonderful time. Summit Lapidary and Akron Mineral, I am certain, made everyone feel welcome. Special thanks go out to Andy Carey of Summit Lapidary and Joe Spohn of Akron Mineral Society.

### **MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT: POSTER JUDGE TOM HAS EXTENDED THE DEADLINE FOR YOUTH ENTRIES UNTIL JUNE 15, 2016.**

Judge Tom is asking all those Juniors to get coloring. Rules for the “Amazing Agates” youth poster contest are found in this newsletter, and on the website. More exciting news: MWF Public Image Chairman, Regina Kapta, has some very interesting ideas. We are trying to get the MWF name out there, and Regina has created a series of three stunning publicity posters, which you will soon be able to download and print.

I am very proud that these amazing posters, and this promotional idea, came out of our federation. I am sure that other federations will see and emulate what we have done. Thank you, Regina. Our organization is fortunate to have such a dedicated and talented volunteer! [Read the rest here](#)



### Purpose of the AFMS

To promote popular interest and education in the various Earth Sciences, and in particular the subjects of Geology, Mineralogy, Paleontology, Lapidary and other related subjects, and to sponsor and provide means of coordinating the work and efforts of all persons and groups interested therein; to sponsor and encourage the formation and international development of Societies and Regional Federations and by and through such means to strive toward greater international good will and fellowship.

[www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org)



### Purpose of the MWF

To promote interest and education in geology, mineralogy, paleontology, archaeology and lapidary, and to sponsor and provide means of coordinating the work and efforts of groups interested in these fields.

[www.amfed.org/mwf](http://www.amfed.org/mwf)

## Upcoming Events

### May 28-29—WHEATON, ILLINOIS:

Annual show; Chicagoland Gems & Minerals Association (CGMA), DuPage County Fairgrounds; 2015 Manchester Rd.; Sat. 10 -6 , Sun. 10 -5 ; Adults \$5, Seniors \$3, Students \$3, Children under 13 free; Chicagoland Gems & Minerals Association (CGMA) 40th Anniversary Gem, Mineral, Jewelry and Fossil Show. Our Ruby Jubilee! Over 30 retail and wholesale dealers, special exhibits, gold panning, silent auction, door prizes, Kids Korner, demonstrations of jewelry making, silversmithing, wire-wrapping, cabochon-making, opal cutting, gem trees, faceting, and more. Air-conditioned. Food available. Special block of hotel rooms at discounted rates through May 6.; contact Jeanine Mielecki, (312)-623-1554; e-mail: jaynine9@aol.com or cgma@sbcglobal.net; Web site: [www.cgma.squarespace.com](http://www.cgma.squarespace.com)

**June 3-5—WAUSEON, OHIO:** Annual show; State Line Gem & Mineral Society, Fulton County Fair Jr Fair Bldg; 1814 SR 108, Exit 34 off Oh Turnpike; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-4; Adults \$4, Seniors \$3, Students \$3, Children 12 & under free; Come join us at the Fulton County Fairgrounds Junior Fair Building in Wauseon, OH for our 55th Annual Show. We are proud of our show boasting with demonstrations, silent auction, door prizes, mine safety class by Joel Vicary, soap stone carving class by Sandy Cline, and homemade food available at reasonable prices. We will be giving demonstrations on cutting and shaping cabochons, wire wrapping, kids activities, and geode cracking Glenda Gafner, 3720 Britton Hwy, Britton, MI 49229, (517)-403-6310; e-mail: ggafner@frontier.com; Web site: [www.statelinegms.com](http://www.statelinegms.com)

### June 4-5—MARION, KENTUCKY:

Annual show; Ben E. Clement Mineral Museum, Fohs Hall; 201 N. Walker Street; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; Admission with donations; The 11th Annual Ben E. Clement Gem, Mineral, Fossil, And Jewelry Show with Digs. We will have vendor tables, hourly door prizes, an Indian artifact display, silent auctions, children's activities, and a Ky. Geological Survey Booth. There will be museum tours featuring minerals from the famous Ky/IL Fluorspar District. There will be digs to local mines where you can collect fluorite and related minerals.; contact Tina Walker, P.O Box 391, Marion, KY 42064, (270)-965-4263; e-mail: beclement@att.net; Web site: [www.clementmineralmuseum.org](http://www.clementmineralmuseum.org)

## April Minutes continued from page 3

**Librarian:** Bill Foreman / We have many books, pamphlets, and DVDs available to the members. Come see me.

**Membership:** Nancy Foreman / There is one guest joining us today, Kathy Conley. Welcome Kathy.

**Programs:** Kathy Miller /May's program will focus on the Midwest Federation Show in August.

September's program will be given by Everett Harrington

**Publicity:** Nick Pellus / No Report

**Safety:** Jennifer Hefner and Julie Wieger / No Report

**Show Chair:** John Davis & Joe Perry / The program for our next meeting will focus on the upcoming Midwest Federation show. There will be sign up sheets for the various tasks at the show. We want to make this our best show ever.

**Sunshine:** - Annette Freel & Sherry Kobie / Get Well card to Linda Miller and Jason Hefner. A sympathy card was sent for former member Colin Bolinger

**Webmaster:** Joe Perry / No Report

## Old Business

Bill Foreman reported that the Midwest poster contest has been extended, for more information go to AMFED.ORG. Bill will also look into the Future Rock Hound badge program available for junior members. It is important that we nourish our junior members.

## New Business

MSHA certificates are here, please see Jason.

Email Bill Foreman for information on club tee shirts.

Club members are encouraged to promote our rock club to other people through outreach programs, and general conversations. We have a great club.

## Adjournment – Motion made and seconded

**Program:**

**Next Meeting: May 22, 2016**

## Petitioning info

by Tom Noe ALAA representative.

It looks like somebody stated at the meeting that nonprofits like ours can't send a petition about land use without endangering our nonprofit status. This is not true. Any nonprofit can petition the government or complain or communicate in any way it wishes, within limits. This is our right to free speech as individuals and as groups. This includes lobbying for or against government policies, procedures, proposed legislation and laws.

There are limits on the amount of lobbying a nonprofit can do.

[https://www.independentsector.org/lobbying\\_guidelines\\_public\\_charities](https://www.independentsector.org/lobbying_guidelines_public_charities) The key is whether a major portion of the group's activity is lobbying.

The ALAA was set up by the American Federation as a separate lobbying entity specifically because it would lobby as its chief activity. Rockhounds can contribute (non-tax-deductible) to the ALAA to support its lobbying efforts (and other efforts). Any organization can lobby the government occasionally and incidentally on any issue. Individuals, of course, have no limits at all on communicating with the government.

By the way, I don't recommend a petition. Individual letters are much better. Here's info on writing one: <http://amlands.org/9112/index.html> the problem is that people usually won't do it.

## It Depends on Your Interpretation of the Law..

Reported by Shirley Leeson

At the January meeting of ALAA in Quartzsite, Mike Hunerlach, US Forest Service Head Geologist (recently retired) spoke on "Rockhounding on Public Lands Managed by the Forest Service" and also gave insight into the laws, rules and regulations that affect collecting rocks, minerals and invertebrate fossils. Mike did a great job of telling us about the Mining Law of 1872 and how it is *interpreted* today by those in the Forest Service—which isn't necessarily the way the law is written. His strong suggestion was to get a copy of the Code of Regulations, Title 36, Parks, Forests and Public Property. He said he would help us locate those sections that are pertinent to rockhounds.

This is important because the newly hired rangers from the universities are leaning toward protecting plants, animals, trees, grasses and other nonhuman entities rather than managing our public lands for multiple uses by human beings, as the law provides. Frequently Mike found, in coming in to clean up a misunderstanding between ordinary humans and the Forest Service personnel, the rangers really weren't using the letter of the law, but their own interpretation of the law. In addition to Title 36, there is also Title 43, Public Lands, Interior Department. You can obtain your own personal copy from the US Printing Office or from Amazon. Or, you may also go to ALAA's site, [www.amlands.org](http://www.amlands.org). On the home page, scroll down to the article about the January meeting and click on either of these titles and download any part of either Title 36 or Title 43. (Beware: if you want a hard copy of Title 43, get the second book, from page 1000 on. I bought the first one and all the information I needed was in the second book.)

Mike has offered his help in learning more about the Code of Regulations and how to use it to our advantage—and this is a huge help.

--Excerpted from the Jan.-Mar., 2016, *ALAA Newsletter* ALAA is the lobbying arm of the American Federation, working on behalf of rockhounds to keep public lands open and accessible to all, including the elderly and handicapped.

## Goodbye to an old friend.. by Kreigh Tomaszewski

Fifty one years ago the Indian Mounds Rock Club of Wyoming, MI, received its Charter from the Midwest Foundation in a ceremony held 85 feet underground in the Alabastine gypsum Mine. After 51 years of access for our club, the mine owner is closing the mine.

The mine was started in 1908 and the shaft was completed in 1909. For about 35 years the miners came in each morning to clear the rubble from last night's blasting, and spent the afternoon drilling holes for the current day's blasting. At the end of the day the holes would be loaded with dynamite and touched off, and the dust was allowed to settle overnight. They came back in the next morning and started all over again.

The highest level of automation was hydraulic drills. They had help from donkeys pulling carts on rails to move the gypsum; the gangue was hand stacked on the sides of emptied tunnels/rooms. Wallboard had not been invented yet -- the mine output went into Alabastine Paint. The gypsum was crushed and mixed with paint to make paint that sparkled from the selenite crystals once it dried. The lack of automation (and some bad management) finally caused the mine to fail in the 1940's.

The current owner's family bought the mine and property shortly afterwards and turned it into a food warehousing business. The natural 50 degree mine was great for food storage. Rock is a good insulator and they could freeze a tunnel to 0 degrees, and it would take a year before it reached 32 degrees. Over the years they expanded into records storage and even host a secure data center underground. The business uses about 1/3 of the six miles of tunnels and rooms in the mine. Our club has had access to the remaining 2/3 of the mine that does not have cement floors or lights.

They used to give tours of the mine, and one employee led them all day. Every hour of the day school busses would arrive full of school kids, boy and girl scouts, Sunday school classes, and every other group you could think of. They would get a half hour tour of the facility, ending with fifteen minutes of collecting in a dead end tunnel. This went on eight hours a day, six days a week, at \$2 per child, for almost 40 years. Everyone in the Grand Rapids area had been to the gypsum mine as a kid from the 50's to the 80's (my first visit was in 1960).

In the 90's the liability insurance rates finally forced the mine owner to close the mine to public access. The Geology Departments at the local colleges, and our club, pressed the owner to give us restricted access. It took a few years, but we worked it out on a handshake. As Trip Chair for my club I have had the honor of taking up to 40 currently affiliated rock hounds into the mine every other month for six hours of collecting.

We show up on our arranged date, sign club waivers, pay a \$3 access fee (to nominally cover the cost of running the elevator), and enter through the door they have left unlocked for us. We run the elevator and walk thru the warehouse to the mine, where we have unlimited access for six hours. We can take out as much as we can carry, in as many trips as we want, as long as we only use hand tools, and wear a clean pair of shoes when we go thru the warehouse. Yes, I do give a safety lecture.

Over our 51 years of access there have been occasional ceiling collapses years apart (caused by groundwater seep) that have blocked access to parts of some tunnels/rooms. The mine is basically arranged as a large square of main tunnels, with side tunnels/rooms off both sides of the north/south main tunnels (and a lot of random connections between side tunnels/rooms). Continued next page

## Goodbye to an old friend continued from previous page

The past 18 months has seen three significant collapses, two of them associated with an earthquake in nearby Kalamazoo, MI.

I grew concerned about safety and contacted the mine owner, and the Geology department at Grand Valley University about the collapses (there seemed to be a paper waiting to be written and wondered if they were on it already). Ended up with a trip into the mine with the owner and five PhD Geologists to assess the recent collapses. We were able to confirm there was no 'throw', so the failures did not occur during the earthquake. Two collapses were due to weakening of the bedding planes during the quake but occurred after the earthquake. The third was due to groundwater seep.

The mine owner has been under (extreme) pressure from his insurance company and Lawyer to stop all (public) access for years. The public records storage people, and the data center, are also concerned about public access. His warehouse is a major component in the food supply chain, and that also generates security concerns about public access. The recent collapses tipped the scale.

As far as I have been able to find, our club was the only one in the world that has had regular access to an underground mine in the past five years. We knew that access would end someday. I have been amazed we have continued to have had unlimited access to the mine, on a handshake, for so many years. The mine owner has graciously allowed our club to take the last two trips we had scheduled after announcing the closure. I understand his desire to make sure any future injury in the mine occurs under Workman's Comp.

This morning I went to the mine at 9 am to wait for my 40 attendees. As expected, the door was open and there were no employees in sight. My usual trip has included seven clubs, but today I only had three; most of those attending were from my club. We went in as a group at 10 but needed five elevator trips to shuttle everyone and their carts, buckets, and hammers (the mine owner prefers we use the small elevator instead of the big freight elevator).

Once down I gave my usual safety lecture laced with some of the history of the mine. Then it was thru the warehouse part of the mine (about 1/3 of the mine's six miles of tunnels) to the unfinished portion we collect in. Time to change from shoes to boots, turn on our lights, and head into the darkness. We need shoes to go back thru the warehouse part so we don't track the sticky muck that is shale enhanced drywall mud on the nice clean concrete floors.

Most people made several trips back to the surface to empty their buckets or carts into their vehicles so they could continue collecting. I estimated the average rockhound took out over 250 pounds today against the mine's variable gravity (the closer you get to the elevator the heavier the rocks get). Alabaster in white and salmon. White and red pencil selenite. Two pockets with one inch double terminated water clear selenite crystals were found. And fish and shark coprolites from the shale layer at the top of the 12 foot thick gypsum bed. We also had lunch downstairs (food tastes better underground).

All too soon it was 3:30 and time to pack it out so we would be off the property by 4. Time to take a few final photographs and say Good Bye to an old friend. It was a good ride while it lasted.