

# The Rock Slab News

FEBRUARY 2006 VOLUME 41 ISSUE 2

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## The Purpose of the Searchers Gem & Mineral Society

*By-Laws, Article 1, Sec. 2*

*This society was formed for the purpose of banding together a group of congenial persons for the purpose of studying mineralogy and the earth sciences by means of association with other mineralogical societies and with their members; presentation of public exhibitions, lectures, and similar programs; field trips for exploration, study and collecting of specimens; the encouragement of interest among young people and the fostering of interest in mineralogy and the lapidary arts; the procurement and maintenance of collections of minerals, mineral products and related pictures, writings and other information thereof; and all other means which are appropriate to the accomplishment of the primary objectives above set forth.*

*This organization is not formed for profit and none of its assets shall be used for the pecuniary gain or profit of any individual who is or may become a member thereof.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By Clarke Benich*

Hello again fellow Searchers!

Hard to believe we're already into February. I guess the saying "time flies when you're having fun" is based on the truth after all!

The month started out with a wonderful trip to Afton Canyon (which was one incredible field trip) organized by Norbert Bernhardt which included an excellent potluck dinner, lots of exploring and getting together with fellow Searchers enjoying life or just plain being alive. There was more material available there than the law should allow, and the scenery was breathtaking, so much so that the only way I can honestly describe it would be to say – "Thank you, Norbert"!

Then came my first shot at running our General Meeting followed by the January Board Meeting, and although I was extremely nervous, it went rather smoothly. And, I was able to spend a few days in Quartzite (which was my first time) where quite a few members met up, had lots of fun and I even met some of the old-timers who I had not met previously.

I guess to sum it all up I'd have to tell all of you who have been idle for whatever reasons, you are really missing a lot! Please come out of hiding and get together with all of us who are enjoying the fellowship and good times. That is what clubs are for . . . FUN, enjoyment, fellowship, learning experiences, the experience of teaching what you know to willing students, getting others interested in the hobby that we all enjoy so much. This club has a lot to offer, and the more participation involved, the more we can offer each other and the general public as well. So get out here with us and have some fun!

Clarke Benich

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Check our website for unexpected changes in schedule! [www.searchersrocks.org](http://www.searchersrocks.org)

- General Meetings:** 7 PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, Jan - Nov
- Board Meetings:** 7 PM, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, Jan - Nov
- Workshop:** Thursday, 6 – 10 PM, free wire-wrap class.  
Saturday, 3 – 7 PM Free silver-smithing class 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays (schedule varies).
- No workshops:** Nov 23 & 25.
- Location:** Anaheim Downtown Community Center  
250 East Center St.  
Anaheim, CA 92805
- Mailing Address:** Searchers Gem & Mineral Society, Inc.  
P.O Box 3492  
Anaheim, CA 92803
- Website:** [www.searchersrocks.org](http://www.searchersrocks.org)
- Membership Dues:** Individual \$20  
Couple \$25  
Junior (17 & under) \$2  
Valid Jan 1 – Dec 31, not prorated.
- Bulletin:** Submissions due 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month via e-mail to: [editor@searchersrocks.org](mailto:editor@searchersrocks.org).  
Bulletin distributed 1<sup>st</sup> week of each month. Mail exchange bulletins to the editors:  
Jenny Stavreva & Kathy Clark  
18661 Silver Maple Way  
N. Tustin, CA 92705-2144
- Charter Date:** June 20, 1958
- Affiliations:**
- California Federation of Mineralogical Societies
  - American Federation of Mineralogical Societies

## SEARCHERS BOARD

### Officers

President	Clarke Benich	714/552-7336
1 <sup>st</sup> V.P. (Programs)	Virgil Talbott	714/490-0416
2 <sup>nd</sup> V.P. (Field Trips)	Steve Duncan	714/532-4703
Director	Karen Fox	714/832-3580
Secretary	Lorri Renck	714/826-2844
Treasurer	Patricia Underwood	562/864-4195
Federation Delegate	Patrick Freeman	714/758-9273

### Committee Chairpersons

Anaheim Arts Council	Margaret Neeley	714/535-2030
Editor	Jenny Stavreva Kathy Clark	714/736-4345 714/639-9927
Historian	Beth Pelfrey	714/774-2754
Hospitality		
Library	Maggie Vigil	714/288-2072
Membership	Kathy Clark	714/639-9927
Monthly Drawing	Anastacio O'Campo	714/490-0416
Phone Tree	Audrey Nichols	714/827-8345
Phone Tree Asst. 1	Sharon & Bob Burson	562/860-5938
Phone Tree Asst. 2		
2006 Show	Beth Pelfrey	714/774-2754
Show Co-Chair	Anastacio O'Campo	714/490-0416
Sunshine		
Veteran's Coordinator	Larry Richey	714/846-3573
Website	Karen Fox	714/832-3580
Workshop	Herb Beckman +?	714/778-1496
Rock 'n' Kids	OPEN	

## FEBRUARY EVENTS

- 14 **General Meeting, 7-9 PM**  
**How to Buy Silver, Liz Gayle**
- 15 **Board Meeting, 7 PM**
- 22 **Show Meeting, 7 PM**
- 25,26 **Field Trip – Clay Mine Rd.**

## FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Date	Location	Leader	Details	Status
Febr, 25,26 2006	Clay Mine Rd.	Beth Pelfrey	North Edwards Onyx, jasper, agate, petrified palm wood	Planned

We still need input from members. Tell us about places you would like to go, regardless of whether you have been there before. In the case of places with which you have some experience, we need you to share your knowledge. Maybe you could even lead or co-lead a field trip. Please contact Steve Duncan at (714) 724 7102 or [wsd@iteris.com](mailto:wsd@iteris.com)

## LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

### Amber By Karen Fox

In January, Jonas Ruzgyz spoke to the Searchers about Amber. Jonas' interest in this unusual material, not technically a stone, yet beautiful and rare enough to rank as a true gem, was fostered by its abundance in his native country, Lithuania, which borders on the Baltic Sea. Jonas shared a wealth of knowledge with us and brought along a stunning collection of amber art pieces, jewelry and specimens. His presentation is summarized below, augmented by information from other sources.

### Appearance

Amber occurs in colors ranging from pale to bright yellow, milky yellow, yellow-orange or even yellow-green and brown or brownish red. It is generally transparent, but may appear translucent due to the inclusion of debris or tiny bubbles. The opaque white amber (oil amber) valued most highly in the Baltic States derives its color from countless microscopic bubbles trapped in the material. Europeans currently favor the translucent yellow variety, but value is set primarily by fashion and superstition and changes with the times.

### Composition

Amber is often called 'fossilized resin'. Chemically, it is a hydrocarbon called succinite after the succinic acid (C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>16</sub>O) present in most types of amber. Amber is not a single compound but a mixture of several compounds. There are many different types of fossilized resin found around the world. Their chemical compositions are unique, yet their physical properties are almost identical. Most common is amber from the sap of an extinct evergreen tree similar to our American white cedar. However, many other trees produced sap that formed amber, including spruce, fir, umbrella pine, date pine, alder and even flowering species such as rhododendron and hydrangea.



*Jonas Ruzgyz with a large piece of amber.*

## Source

Areas along the southeastern shores of the Baltic Sea currently produce about 90% of the world's gem-quality amber. The Dominican Republic in the Caribbean produces much of the remaining 10%. Most of that is brown to brownish-red. Minor occurrences are found throughout the world, including most of the United States, Canada, Japan, Siberia, Africa, Sicily (source of a rare green amber), Europe and the mid-East.

## Formation

The 'fossilization' process takes place over time as molecules in the gummy, sticky resin begin to cross-link or polymerize, forming longer chains which produce a harder material called 'copal'; this may take thousands or even several millions of years. Further changes involve the evaporation of volatile oils (terpenes) from the body of the resin, finally resulting in 'amber'. The distinction between resin, copal and amber is a contentious issue within the amber community because it is not based on age alone. The length of time needed to allow the majority of turpenes to escape depends upon the surrounding environment and the initial properties of the resin. For instance, Borneo amber is of Middle Miocene age. Specimens that come from sandstone beds are dark and are considered to be true amber yet specimens that come from clay beds of the same age are yellow copal. Clearly, the kind of sediment is very important and heat and pressure are also expected to influence this process. However, amber is found only in weakly-compacted sedimentary formations. If the amber had been subjected to greater compaction and/or any considerable temperature, then it would have been destroyed long ago. Another critical factor is the presence of an anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment for most of the transformational stages, since the corrosive effect of oxygen will eventually reduce a chunk of amber to a pile of chips. Generally the anaerobic environment is achieved through immersion in water. The Baltic and Dominican Republic amber sites both

show evidence of long-term immersion in sea water. On the flip-side, even jewelry only a few decades old can show distinct signs of surface crazing and cracking that are indications of oxygen attacking the amber's surface.

## Age/Size

Ambers as old as 360 million years have been found in the Urals. Switzerland and Austria have yielded material dating to 200-230 Mya. Baltic amber seems to be between 30 and 60 million years of age and amber from the Dominican Republic is younger still. Ambers of the United States and Canada range in age from contemporary with the Baltic material to considerably more recent than that from the Dominican Republic. Specimens are usually fragments to nodules, but have been found in head-sized balls up to 20 lbs. The largest specimen was discovered in Sweden and weighed 231 lbs.

## Enhancement

- **Clarification/Spangling** - If the material is not clear, it may be immersed in linseed oil and heated. This usually clarifies the bulk of the material and larger air bubbles blow up to produce a characteristic spangled effect.
- **Pressing** - Amber chips may be heated to just below the melting point and pressed to produce larger pieces of 'amberoid'.
- **Dying** - generally the colors appear unnatural to experienced amber aficionados.
- **Insertion of Fossils** - a hole or cavity may be drilled or carved, an insect or other inclusion inserted, and the hole filled with melted amber or copal. The species of insect is usually a give-away.

## Identification

Amber is often imitated by plastics, colored glasses and some modern tree resins, not to mention copal.

- Hardness – amber has a hardness of 2 to 2.5 on the Mohs scale, roughly similar to a fingernail. Most resins and copal are softer and not as tough. Glass is harder.
- Specific Gravity – most amber floats in salt water and sinks in fresh water, unless it is loaded with bubbles. Plastics usually sink, although some exist that will even float on fresh water. Copal's behavior is similar to amber.
- Inclusions – can distinguish amber from plastics and glasses.
- Hot-point test – a heated needle applied to amber usually produces a pine-like odor, while copal is sweeter or lemony and plastics exude a distinctive chemical odor.
- Burning – amber burns with a clear yellow flame and produces black sooty smoke. Copal produces a whitish smoke.
- Odor – When copal is rubbed vigorously a strong smell of resin may be produced as the sample still contains many volatile oils in the form of turpenes. Amber produces little odor.
- Solvent test – place a drop of alcohol on the specimen and allow to evaporate. Repeat 2 or 3 times and tap with a finger to test for tackiness. Copal will become sticky while amber will not.
- Melting Point – amber melts at 200-300 degrees C, while copal melts at <150 degrees C.



*A selection of amber pieces displayed by Jonas Ruzgys.*

## **FEBRUARY PROGRAM**

### **How to Buy Silver**

By Virgil Talbott

February's speaker is Liz Gayle who will be discussing how to buy silver. Her first love is stones, but after attending jewelry classes and realizing that there was a real lack of jewelry supplies she opened her own jewelry supply business which caters to colleges, universities and interested groups.

It sounds like this should be a very interesting evening and especially enlightening to those of us who are interested in wirewrapping, silversmithing and jewelry in general. Put this one on your calendar.

## FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

February 25 & 26, 2006

By Beth Pelfrey

The February Field Trip is the last weekend in February and it's to a great location, about 135 miles from Anaheim, north on I-15 to Hwy. 395 North through Adelanto to Kramer Junction, left on Hwy. 58 then follow the map below.

Both days we will be meeting at 9:00 am. Campers will BE at the dig area which is a dry camp, no charge and no facilities. Bring food and plenty of water. Those who can, please bring firewood for the potluck Saturday night.

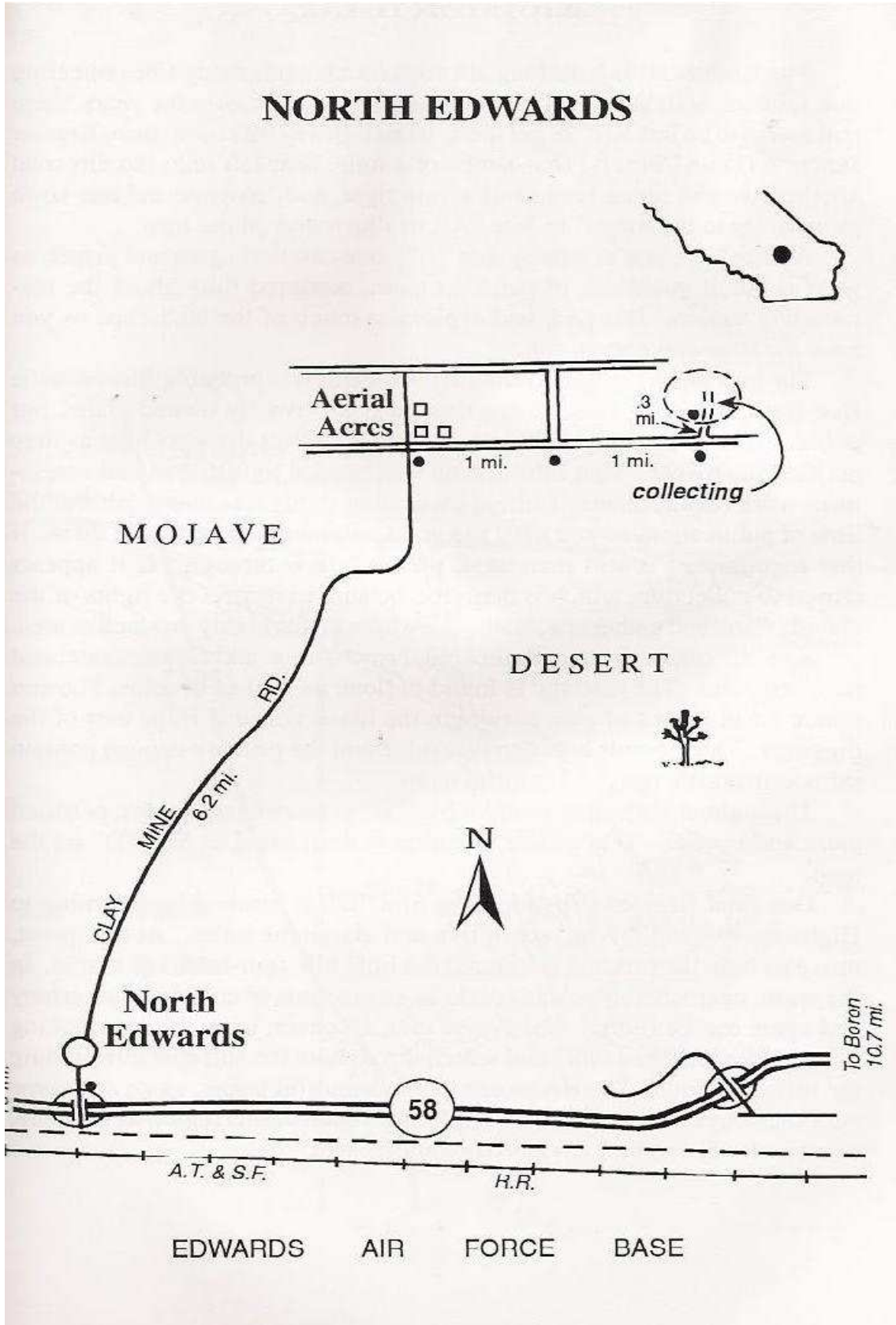
The material is North Edwards Onyx which some call travertine. The colors run from vivid red/yellow/green/black stripes to black and white to red and white and everything in between. The best material is found about 2 or more feet down, so be prepared with picks, shovels, small sledges and chisels, gads, pry bars, gloves and eye protection. Steve and I will have two tools available for everyone to share that will crack the seams and make it easier for you to make little rocks out of big rocks.

The onyx is not hard like agate so it is not difficult to wedge a chisel in and break off pieces any size you want to take home. I recommend team digging; the results will be better and it is more fun. There is plenty of material, or at least was the last many times I have been there. The colorful onyx is perfect for bookends, paperweights, spheres, and much more. You can make lovely jewelry as well, but do bear in mind that it is not as hard as agate and jasper and though it works up faster and shines like you won't believe, it would scratch if you tried a belt buckle or ring. Bolas, pendants and earrings would work nicely, too.

Sunday we will be going to a nearby location, Castle Butte, for a reliable source of jasper, agate, petrified palm wood and so on. Most will be in float, but as always, digging may turn up better specimens. We will be spending at least 2 hours here.

Later on Sunday, on the way back through Boron to Kramer Junction, about 20 miles from the campsite, is a wonderful site for very colorful red and pink agate material that seems to be petrified palm wood of some kind. This is the only spot I will actually stick my neck out and say I that I recommend high-clearance or even 4-wheel drive. I am sure all good Searchers will share rides.

Those of you who have the Mitchell book, see page 92 for the map to get to the campsite for the Sierra Pelona Onyx. Map to campground below. There will be Searcher signs at every turn so you can't get confused. (I don't get lost, just confused, ask anyone!) Call me, Beth Pelfrey, for questions (714-774-2754).



## SHOW REPORT

By Walter Mroch and Kathy Clark

There are still a few positions available on the 2006 Show Committee. We encourage members to volunteer early to help the Committee Chairs get organized and properly staffed for this show. This is the club's sole event that generates the majority of our operating funds for the year and helps to keep your member dues lower.

We are looking at offering member-only day spaces (5) for Saturday and Sunday at the show where members can showcase their creations and sell them. Interested members should contact Dealer Chairman Walter Mroch at 714-826-2132 if interested.

Ken Landers informs us that he needs 300 grab bags for the show. These are always a good money-raiser and something that kids especially enjoy. So let's all help out and get these bags to Ken Landers (714-535-5126) by the April General Meeting so he can fill them up.

Help out Show Chairman Beth Pelfrey and Co-Chair Manny O'Campo make this one of the best shows ever. We need to do everything possible to make it happen and grow the show. We need members to think outside the box more than ever. If anyone has good media/television contacts now is the time to get involved.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY AND HAVE A  
WONDERFUL TIME ALL OF YOU WHO  
WERE BORN IN FEBRUARY!**

**OUR SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS  
TO MARJORIE WEASE, WHO TURNS  
92 THIS MONTH. ALTHOUGH SHE  
IS NOT ATTENDING THE GENERAL  
MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS SHE  
GREATLY SUPPORTS THE  
SEARCHERS AND SHE IS WITH US  
IN SPIRIT!**

**WHAT A WONDERFUL MONTH -  
THE MONTH OF LOVE - HAVE A  
LOT OF IT IN YOUR LIFE!**

**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

### Membership fees are due on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006

at the existing rate of  
\$20 per individual,  
\$25 per couple  
\$2 for juniors under 17.

### POST OFFICE OR E-MAIL?

We're trying to cut the costs of mailing out the bulletin by using e-mail instead. Some advantages to e-mail are that you receive it earlier, it is in color and you can print only those pages you want to keep. One disadvantage is you have to have a printer and use your own paper if you want to print it. If you currently receive the bulletin through the post office and would like to receive it through e-mail, please let me (Kathy Clark) know by phone, 714-639-9927, e-mail [hanky1panky3@yahoo.com](mailto:hanky1panky3@yahoo.com) or you can sign a list at the next meeting.



## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 6-10 PM lapidary, wire-wrap class	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 3-7 PM lapidary, silversmithing.
		<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 6-10 PM lapidary, wire-wrap class	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 3-7 PM lapidary, silversmithing
	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 7 PM General meeting	<b>15</b> 7 PM Board meeting	<b>16</b> 6-10 PM lapidary, wire-wrap class	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 3-7 PM lapidary, silversmithing
	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 7pm Show meeting	<b>23</b> 6-10 PM lapidary, wire-wrap class	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Field Trip Clay Mine RD. with B Peltrey
<b>26</b> Field Trip – Clay Mine Rd.	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>				

### SEARCHERS GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Kathy Clark  
18661 Silver Maple Way  
North Tustin, CA 92705-2144  
hanky1panky3@yahoo.com  
714/639-9927

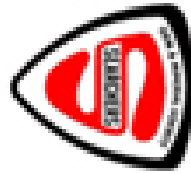
*Please Print!*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jr. Member 1: \_\_\_\_\_ 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birthday: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_

2006 dues are valid January 1 through January 31.  
 Individual: \$20  
 Couple: \$25  
 Junior members (17 and under): \$2

Please indicate the club activities that interest you:  
 Minerology ( ) Geology ( ) Lapidary ( ) Fossils ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Meet other Searchers and volunteer to help a committee(s):  
 Anaheim Arts Council ( ) Historian ( ) Library ( ) Website ( )  
 Membership ( ) Monthly Drawing ( ) Phone Comm. ( )  
 RSN Editor ( ) Sunshine ( ) Veteran’s Workshop ( )  
 Hospitality ( ) Workshop ( ) Rock’n’Kids ( ) Annual Show ( )  
 Silent Auction ( )



# The Rock Slab News

Volume 41 Issue 2

February 2006



Jenny Stavreva & Kathy Clark, *Editors*  
18661 Silver Maple Way  
North Tustin, CA 92705-2144

## TRADITIONAL FEBRUARY BIRTHSTONE

### AMETHYST

It symbolizes sobriety, peace, protection, and tranquility. The name comes from the Greek word “amethystos” which means “not drunken.” Amethyst was considered to be a strong antidote against drunkenness, and wine goblets were often carved from it. It was thought to encourage celibacy and symbolize piety, which is why it was very popular in ornamentation in the Catholic and other churches in the Middle Ages. In particular it was considered the stone of bishops, and they still often wear amethyst rings. Purple has long been considered a royal color, so it is that amethyst has been in such demand for much of history, and appears in the British Crown Jewels and was also the favorite of Catherine the Great of Russia and Egyptian Royalty.

