

April

APRIL MEETING - At the April meeting Wayne and Marian Henderson gave a presentation of some of the slides they took on their recent Mexico vacation. Wayne's interest in geology led to their taking some interesting and unusual views of the geological formations in the areas they visited.

Gracias amigos ! for a trip via the camera!

IDENTIFICATION -- MICA

Mica is one of the common rock-forming minerals. It is found in granites and pegmatites and also in metamorphic rocks, such as schists, gneisses, and pegmatites. It occurs as masses of small scales or as crystals known as "books."

The most distinguishing feature of mica is its perfect cleavage in one direction which allows it to split into paper-thin sheets. These sheets are flexible so they can be easily bent.

The varieties of mica are all aluminum silicates combined with other minerals and water. They are quite soft -- around 2 or 3 on Mohs scale -- so they can be scratched with a penny or even the fingernail in many cases. They have a pearly luster on the cleavage faces and a glassy luster on the side faces of crystals. Mica really glistens in the sunshine.

There are four common kinds of mica and they can be distinguished from one another mainly by their colors, which are due to the varying minerals they contain in addition to the aluminum and silicon. Biotite is dark-colored, usually black, but sometimes brown or green. Muscovite is pale, almost colorless, while phlogopite is a yellowish-brown. Lepidolite is lavender or light yellow and rarely occurs in distinct crystals but rather in compact masses of little scales.

Mica was once valued as a window-making material known as "isinglass." Today its chief use is as an insulator for electrical equipment, but it has many other uses, including the making of Christmas-tree snow. Lepidolite contains lithium and is an important ore of that metal.

Cleavage, softness, and luster are all good aids to distinguishing mica from other minerals. It might possibly be confused with selenite gypsum, but selenite cannot be split into thin sheets. Association, as well as color, helps to distinguish the varieties from one another. Muscovite and biotite occur in igneous and some metamorphic rocks, but phlogopite is the one usually found with crystalline marbles. Lepidolite is usually associated with other lithium minerals, such as spodumene, amblygonite, and tourmaline.

Frank and Eleanor Owens

EDUCATION -- Read and Henrietta Myers have prepared an educational case of fluorite. This case has eighteen specimens keyed for identification, and includes an article about the mineral, and the individual specimens. This is the first of several such cases planned to provide a "lending library" of educational self-teaching kits. You will be able to see this fine case April 20 at the Education table.

A Very Special Rock Show

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"Oh, look at this rock!"

"Man, see this cool one!"

"Did you taste the salt?"

"Isn't it beautiful!"

"What is this?"

"Ugh, that one stinks!"

"So that's what our State Stone looks like!"

"What color is this one?"

"You mean it was alive?"

"Is it real gold?"

If you were one of the lucky people who helped at the Rock Show held on the afternoon and evening of April 11, 1972, at the School for the Blind, the above remarks would sound familiar.

As about 75 students at the School travelled the length of six long tables filled with 68 specimens of gems; minerals and fossils, as well as carvings, spheres, lapidary and faceted materials, their enthusiasm and interest mounted and our helpers were hard pressed to keep up with the answers. No one wanted to miss a single item, and fingers travelled fast over the brailled labels and hurried on to "see" the specimens. Labels were also printed in large letters for the partially sighted. At the end of the line each student was invited to take with him a tumble-polished stone and a sample of Bellevue "Fool's Gold".

We wish to thank Harley and Isa Russell for helping us plan the Show and Read Myers, Lila Stevens, Gilbert Snyder, Mike Odenwald, William and Bessie Rogers, Sally Barber, Katie Hornbeck, Dave Dee, Loyd Pearson, Al and Cleora Purtill, and Wayne and Marian Henderson for helping during the Show, as well as Lloyd Conklin, William and Bessie Rogers, Read Myers, Frank and Frances Swagart, Ken Kurtz, Irene Jane Brett and Harley Russell for the loan of their specimens.

We can think of nothing more rewarding than to share our hobby with such delightful people as these handicapped students. Their beaming faces and hearty thank-yous as they left the Show put a glow in our hearts that is still being kindled by the many "thank-you" letters in braille or print that we are receiving.

Officials at the School were most cooperative and so very appreciative of our bringing this display to the students - they had never had a Rock Show before - that we would not be at all surprised to learn they would like it to be a yearly event. Don't turn down the opportunity to help if you get the chance, as you'll find you will get more enjoyment out of it than the students. We have wanted to put on such a Show for several years and are most gratified that it was such a success.

Jin and Bettie Patterson

