
Bay Area Mineralogists

December 2007

Next meeting: Dec. 12, 2007
Foothill College

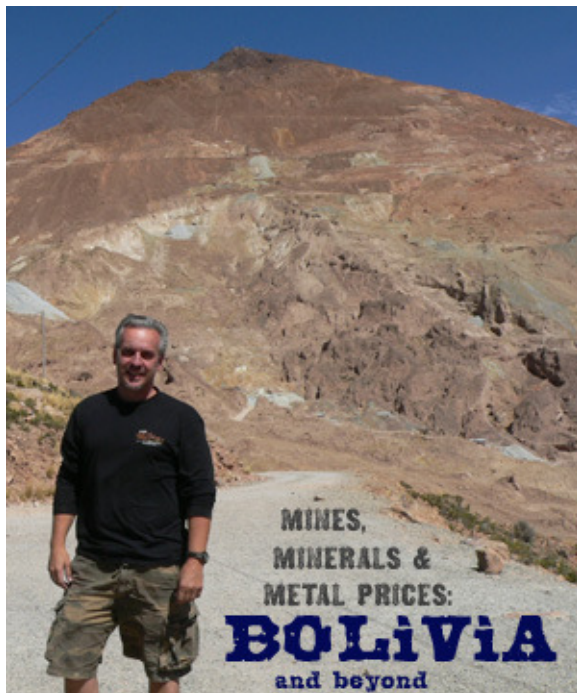
<http://www.baymin.org>



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BAM December Program



Intrepid BAM stalwart John Magnasco will give a talk on his trip to South America this year.

The dynamics of mineral collecting in Bolivia, and other parts of South America for that matter, have changed a bit from earlier reports. BAM member John Magnasco, spent six weeks in South America over the summer and has brought back a perspective on mineral collecting and buying in Bolivia, Peru and Argentina with a focus on Bolivia. John was hosted by Alfredo Petrov and some local Bolivianos during his stay. He traveled extensively within Bolivia and will provide a glimpse into the current state of the mines, minerals, metal prices and other factors influencing the mineral specimen market in some of South America's producing countries.

John suggests bringing minerals from Bolivia and Peru for "show and tell" – he'll have a few flats.

As always, start time is in the vicinity of 7:45pm. We meet in the Geology Lab at Foothill College. See <http://www.baymin.org/Meet/FoothillMap.gif> for a campus map. Bring \$2 for parking.

Notes from President Spence

For the January BAM meeting, Bill has put a couple of housekeeping items of the agenda: the meeting start time and what to do with our treasury funds.

It has been proposed to start meetings at 7 or 7:30 so people can get home earlier, thereby increasing attendance. With respect to the treasury, it keeps growing, but there's little that BAM spends money on other than the website and annual picnic. Bill is looking for a

consensus on what to do with the balance; whether or not we still need to collect dues; etc.

This notice is so all members will know in advance that these items are going to be discussed, so nobody can complain later – mark your calendars!

München 2007: The Raiberdaschi and Rösti schism

Claus Hedegaard

I always praise the special exhibit at the Mineralientage München and this year it impressed again with the theme *Minerals from the Top of the World* – that is Himalayan Minerals. Overall the Mineralientage does more than any other show to offer extra treats to the exhibitors, including the special exhibit, collectors' showcases, the Alpine theme pavilion, child care, fossil preparation, display for the visually impaired, soap stone carving, lectures, gold panning, etc. Don't pin me in the number, but it is a fair guesstimate that 20% of the floor space goes to auxiliary activities. This makes the show far more bearable for poor spouses and children dragged along by an eager collector, and also makes our hobby more approachable to beginners and those with less than a fortune to spare on specimens. More later.



This year the *alternative* market and dealers selling jewellery again made a strong showing and again to the dismay of some *real collectors*. Indeed this section does not interest me very much, but it is a major part of the market and thus justification for an event like Mineralientage München. Without people offering eternal salvation, there might not be enough of us to justify opening a keg ... I mean a show ... and sometimes these people bring weird rocks not to mention unusual applications of same. Perusing

a booth a lady with a loud voice praised a range of stones for all the wonderful healing qualities. Smoky Quartz supposedly relieves the pain of haemorrhoids – she gave me a terse look when I asked how it should be applied and decided I should rather go elsewhere. Inquisitive minds are not welcome.

Onwards Christian soldiers! I was going to look at minerals, not cures. There was only little really new material. No, that is not true. There was little really spectacular, new material, but there were many interesting specimens from new finds, which may not make the cover of major magazines. I just returned from Namibia myself a few days before the show and was delighted to see the new material of Herderite & Hydroxylherderite from the Erongo Complex at the show. The crystals are mostly a couple of mm, rarely above 1 cm and Erich Schmidt, who had the material analysed, explained the difference between Erongo Herderite and Hydroxylherderite to me.

The matrix is crystallized Fluorite of modest quality – crystals rarely exceed 1 cm, are mostly rough/frosted with grey, greyish green or purplish colour – associated by white, powdery Kaolinite until this is washed off. Mineral dealers like to reduce the paragenesis of specimens, particularly when that paragenesis is clay. Practically all 'Herderite' specimens offered are really Hydroxylherderite – Herderite is technically 'Fluor-herderite' but that name is a tautology and we all know Herderite is calcium beryllium fluoro-phosphate. Guess not, otherwise people – and we are talking museum displays as well, not just dealers and 'ignorant' collectors – would take care to label specimens properly as Hydroxylherderite. One mineral, Hydroxylherderite, is boycotted because 'the name is too long' and another, Herderite, pushed into de facto oblivion because it is rare and inconspicuous.

Anyway, these specimens of crummy Namibian Fluorite contain fine, elongate crystals of Herderite as well as Hydroxylherderite. Hydroxylherderite is by far the most common and forms whitish to greyish crystals, whereas the Herderite is cream to yellowish and one the specimens I saw, the Herderite crystals are larger than the Hydroxylherderite; yes, they occur on the same specimen.



Jordi Fabre also had some enigmatic specimens analysed. He has 'spent a fortune' on Epididymite and Eudidymite from the Malosa Complex (Malawi) seemingly to no avail. According to him, the silky, white, platy crystals sometimes prove to be Epididymite, sometimes Eudidymite. When you analyse closely spaced spots on the same specimen, it is sometimes Epididymite, sometimes Eudidymite and there is no way to tell them apart visually. This is really interesting! Both are polymorphs of $\text{NaBe}(\text{Si}_3\text{O}_7)(\text{OH})$ and evidently capable of forming as sectors of the same 'crystal'. Right now, I can not come up with other minerals doing that, but some micas may be good candidates.

I saw interesting Apatite crystals from Sapo Mine (Goiabeira, Minas Gerais, Brazil). The lustrous, dark olive-green crystals are about 1 cm across, have moderately elongated prisms and grow in parallel aggregates. The colour is concentrated near the surface but I am not sure whether it is due to fine-grained inclusions or a chemical component of the outer layer.

Collectors, like yours truly, favouring rare minerals were all hot and bothered about the new find of Botallackite from Cligga Head (Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England, Great Britain). The best piece at the show had freestanding needle crystals of Botallackite to about 1 cm, vivid dark green colour and superb lustre. This is from an interesting deposit, outcropping in the intertidal zone and the Botallackite is formed by the contact of seawater with copper sulphides.



I always praise the Bavarian kitchen and beer – I would be unjust, did I not. The organisers should be thanked for ensuring a range of foraging options at the show. I recall the poor food and meagre selection of drinks at other international shows – the shows where you gladly walk 20 minutes off site to get decent food. The Öko-Restaurant was back this year and that is where I spent most of my money ... for food, that is! But I could have opted for the large restaurant upstairs, the neat sushi place, one of the Italian style cafés. This is not a World-class culinary delight, but the food quality is far beyond standard-issue fast-food at other shows and venues. I enjoy the excellent, the sandwiches, maybe a Weißbier, an occasional sausage accompanied by Weißbier, ... and don't get stomach trouble and do not waste an hour on lunch. That too is part of a good show!

München offers a range of options for a decent evening meal and the show is conveniently placed in the game season, after harvest and after the breweries introduce autumn and winter brews. That said, getting the chance to enjoy the delights is a challenge to foreigners ... sometimes even to locals. Reading the menu is a challenge by itself. I am reasonably well versed in German but Bavarian is a different language and even if you can pronounce the dishes, you have no clue what it is! Asking a kind young Fräulein at my table, what is Raiberdaschi I got an explanation and said something to the effect "so it is Rösti" (pancakes made from shredded potato). Ouch! Rösti is Swiss so not only, was I told, that as a matter of principle, is it different, it really is different! The Circumpalpine tribes insist on their individuality. Inquisitive minds are not welcome. I am glad I asked a friendly soul and not the waitress. For whichever reason, friendly service is practically unknown in restaurants in and around München

(the staff at the Öko-Restaurant at the show is a pleasant exception). The food is great but often served by opulent bitches – yes, I know that is a derogatory term for females and I believe it is justified.

The show was practically smoke-free this year. The organisers encourage non-smoking, this year there were no ashtrays in the halls, and virtually all smokers went outside to smoke. Thank you for that, guys – it helped me a lot and I even heard a couple of smokers saying, it makes better show. All in all the show seemed to go well. The exhibitors I spoke to were happy with their sale, most buyers spent all their money and were happy with their purchase – this is really the key to a great show.

Back at the show I enjoyed the only spectacular novelty, I saw: Lustrous, thick, tabular Azurite crystals to 6 cm with minor alteration to Malachite in specimens to 15-18 cm or so from Milpillas Mine near Nacozari (Sonora, Mexico). Rob Lavinsky of Arkenstone had a couple of them.



A few specimens of greyish green Hydroxylherderite with lustrous, blocky crystals to 3 cm on matrix from Sassi (Haromosh, Pakistan) were interesting from a new find and in tune with the theme of the special exhibit.

As a sulphide-freak, I was taken by the new find of Galena xx from Hastenrath (Rheinland, Germany). The crystals are to app. 2 cm across with sharp octahedral faces and irregular cube faces. No, this is not the World's finest Galena but the specimens are well worth having and I always enjoy to see new material from easily accessible sites in countries, where "all the localities are empty, closed, reclaimed, ..." It is

truly amazing what you may achieve if you pick up your hammer and actually go!



Lino Casserini brought a small lot of fine Beryl var. Emerald from Cosquez, Colombia. Sharp crystals to 2 cm or so on 6-8 cm matrix. Not transparent but attractive colour.

Tabular, six-sided Bismuth crystals to over 1 cm across from Gang Opal in Schlema (Schlema-Hartenstein District, Erzgebirge, Sachsen, Germany) were supposedly from a recent find. I do not recall seeing similar material. The crystals are lustrous, silvery with prominent striation on the faces, perched individually in pockets of a dark, fine-grained, sulphide matrix.

... to be continued next month

Letters to the BAM Editor

Please send your comments, content, compliments, and/or complaints to Don Windeler, don.windeler@rms.com, 650-591-1644.