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Contributions of news items for the Bulletin are welcome and should be sent to the Bulletin Editor.

This bulletin may be quoted if credit is given.

→ NEXT MONTH

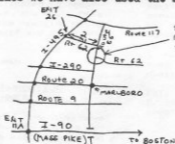
The next meeting of the MNNE will be the special Northeast Meeting on Saturday May 10, 1986 at the 4-H Convention Center in Ashland, Mass.

MICROMOUNTERS OF NEW ENGLAND

APRIL 1986

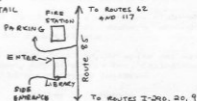
NEWSLETTER #106

The next regular meeting of the Micromounters of New England will be Saturday, April 12, 1986 at the Hudson Public Library, in Hudson, Massachusetts. Most of you may remember this library with the association of the flagpole which blew down during our last meeting there. Hopefully no such disasters will occur this time! The library is located about two miles from either the end of I-290 (at Route 85), or from Exit 26 on Route 495 (at Route 62). Entrance to the library parking area is between the library and the fire station and library parking is on the right. There is an entrance at the back of the building (although at times we have also used the side entrance).



SEE
MAP
DETAIL

MAP DETAIL



The nominating committee will present their slate of officers for 1986-1987 at the April meeting to be voted on by the membership. The proposed slate is as follows: Frank Leighton, President; Neil Briggs, Vice-President; Janet Cares, Treasurer; and Betty Sevrens, Secretary. Directors for the club will be: Palmer Sevrens (beginning a two-year term) and Pat Barker (serving for one more year). All officers will assume their duties at the end of the May meeting.

DONATIONS FOR THE NORTHEAST MEETING

Members are reminded that the Northeast Meeting is just one month away, and the April meeting will be one of the last convenient times to get your donations in for the sales table. Please remember that this material should be mounted and pre-pressed (if possible). Giveaways should be mounted or in a closed container. Please place the donor's name on giveaway material so that people will know whom to ask if there is any question regarding the material. Also remember that there is a deadline of April 24, 1986 for registration, and we would like to hold to this deadline if at all possible.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Les & Marge Hitchings
10 Church Street
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(617) 233-4968

Typo on Membership List:
Ed Piel~~a~~ not Ed Piel~~d~~

CORRECTION:(accidentally left off membership list)

Walter T. Cooper
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Brattleboro, VT 05301
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A BRIEF DISCOURSE ON QUALITY AND RARITY IN JUDGING

COMPETITIVE MINERAL DISPLAYS

I have noticed recently after attending pre-judging briefings, actual judgments, post-judging "gripe sessions", and reading judging critiques of, that there is a great deal of latitude in the judging of competitive mineral displays in the areas of quality and rarity. The following discussion will outline some problem areas and apply to any competitive mineral display where both quality and rarity are judged.

There is a set of uniform rules that guides the judges in performing a valuable critique of a competitive display. This rule book is called the Regional Uniform Rules and National Trophy Rules and is updated on a periodic basis by the Uniform Rules Committee of the AFMS. This book lists the rules under which competitive displays are judged at all AFMS shows. This book is also followed strictly by the member federations as the federation uniform rules.

The appropriate place to begin is with a definition. QUALITY: a characteristic or attribute; degree of excellence. (dictionary definition) Rule 7.6 of the uniform rules gives the following: Quality in mineral specimens shall refer to condition of crystals (freedom from bruises and flaws); size of crystals (typical of species); crystal arrangement (attitude of crystals on specimen); clarity: freedom from excess foreign material; and the amount of identified material that is visible.

I think there is little debate concerning the physical condition of crystals being perhaps the greatest portion of the criteria for judging quality. Crystal arrangement, clarity, and freedom from excess foreign material lend themselves mostly to aesthetics, but do affect our visual perception of the excellence of a specimen. The amount of identified material that is visible on a specimen would also denote some measure of character or fineness. However, there seems to be an inconsistency in the rules pertaining to judging quality that is giving some judges a fit. This is the mention of the aspect of crystal size (typical of the species). The size of a crystal is not appropriately be considered under rarity rather than under quality. Large size is generally a characteristic of unusualness rather than of perfection or excellence. A crystal of "typical" or smaller than "typical" size is more common (less rare) but may still be near perfection (quality).

Now we come to rarity. RARITY: Of an uncommon nature; valuable to a degree seldom found; not frequent; seldom met with or occurring; unusual. (dictionary definitions). Here we run into a problem. We must distinguish between rare and scarce. Rare, of which few examples, specimens, or instances are found; the word often implies unusual or uncommon character; scarce commonly applies to that which, though usually or formerly abundant, is for the time being, to be had only in diminished quantities; the word does not, like rare carry any implication of unusual qualities.

The uniform rules define rarity as follows: Rule 7.7 Rarity Defined. A rare mineral specimen may be abundant or scarce from time to time, and a common species may also be rare if it exhibits unusual color, habit, association, or other characteristics exceptional for that species. Rarity shall refer to the occurrence of each mineral specimen being judged in regard to the scope of the display.

In itself, this does not mean that just because a mineral is not available from dealers worldwide at this time, that it is rare, or if it is available, it does not mean that it is not rare. Many judges are "missing the boat" when judging rarity in competitive mineral cases. When citing certain specimens, some judges use the term "readily available" as a rationale for withholding-rarity points. Availability from dealers should not be a criteria on which rarity is judged. Granted, if a mineral is rare, it probably will not be readily available, but the reverse does not hold.

Unfortunately, this still does not completely solve the problem of a mineral such as Franklinite. This is the case of one mineral that is ubiquitous in one location but only occurring in two locations worldwide. The last part of the rarity rule states that rarity shall refer to the occurrence of each mineral specimen being judged in regard to the scope of the display. Occurrence (not availability) and scope of the display are the key words. Franklinite is locally abundant but only occurs in two localities. In a restricted display of Franklin minerals, the specimen should receive no rarity points (notwithstanding unusual form, association, etc.), however, in a worldwide display, Franklinite should be considered a rare mineral. This will surely rest heavy on some souls since there is hardly a person around who cannot readily acquire a nice specimen of Franklinite. In this case it would be more difficult to obtain higher quality points than rarity points since good specimens are so readily available.

In conclusion, I must mention that some judges use rarity as a "weeding out" device to separate competitive cases whose other scores are quite close. I have heard the following methodologies used: "X must be rare to receive all rarity points." (where X varies anywhere from a low of 5-out-of-35 to a high of 100%). This is perhaps the most subjective portion of the scoring. Even if the definition of rarity was without debate, its application in practice needs some scrutiny.

Although some may disagree with the uniform rules as they are written, they are here for the benefit of the exhibitor as well as the public. We should not cease to strive for more clarity and definition of criteria so that the rules may be applied more equitably in all situations.

Jim Fowler

Editor's Note - The article above was handed out to the participants of the Exhibitors Workshop sponsored by the Rhode Island Mineral Hunters in September.