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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Mark Ghorso in New Zealand

### *MSA: Unexpected Benefits of Social Interaction in a COVID-19 World*

I write this, my second President's Letter, in early December 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is worse than ever, the daily death toll is tragic, and the lack of leadership from the federal government on curbing the spread of the virus is criminal. Hope is in sight, and maybe by the time you read this the situation will be better, but right now the prospects look bleak. But, despite the burden of self-isolation

and the obstacle of limited funding, over the past nine months the scientific community has responded to this seemingly never-ending crisis with innovation and resilience. In this message I want to talk about one of the really positive things that I've seen emerge from dealing with the pandemic, an innovation that I hope represents a permanent change in the way we conduct scientific interaction and will survive into our postpandemic world.

I suspect that my experience is typical in that over the past nine months I have attended more colloquia and scientific presentations than normal, albeit virtually, but, because they are virtual, I have benefitted from doing so at distant venues. At one of the universities where I hold a faculty appointment, I have the pleasure of attending weekly virtual research meetings and, by my account and others' assessment, those meetings are better organized and more productive than before the pandemic. I have had more direct interaction with the students who I cosupervise over the past nine months than ever before, and those interactions have been more mutually beneficial. I have attended and presented at more workshops and short courses than my usual travel schedule would permit. In short, I have had more and better scientific interaction with colleagues and students. Maybe others don't have this experience. I'd be curious to know. My point is that being coerced into communication in a virtual world as a necessity to avoid dying of a horrible disease has manifest benefits. Who knew? I am not advocating abandoning physical interaction in a post-COVID-19 world. That's ridiculous. Presentations and one-on-one dialog may work just fine, but teaching is certainly not as effective in a virtual environment, at least not the way I teach. It lacks the ability for personal engagement that is essential for effective learning. My argument is that there are some aspects of our day-to-day scientific discourse that are better as a consequence of adapting to the pandemic, and I hope that the scientific community will not abandon these modes of interaction once things return to normal.

As a consequence of COVID-19, the Mineralogical Society of America is reevaluating how we reach out to members and the broader scientific community with more creative uses of social media and virtual presentations. We have made a commitment to archive MSA lecture presentations and make them available on YouTube for general access. We are strongly encouraging organizers and presenters at MSA-sponsored short courses to record presentations to facilitate broader access. And, as we improve our online visibility, we hope to provide access to instructional materials to address curriculum needs, from K-12 through to college level. The impetus for much of this has emerged as a response to formidable challenges posed by the pandemic, but the solutions will help the outreach mission of the society in a post-COVID-19 world.

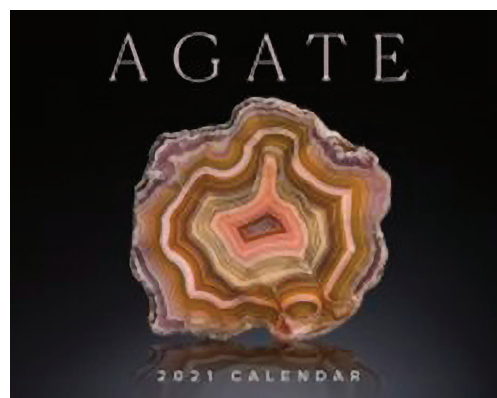
Stay safe and stay healthy.

**Mark Ghorso**, 2021 MSA President

## NOTES FROM CHANTILLY

- MSA 2021 membership renewal notices have been sent out to all 2019 and 2020 members. If you have not yet renewed, please do so by accessing the renewal information on the MSA home page at [www.minsocam.org](http://www.minsocam.org).
- Members and Fellows who are in the senior, honorary, and life categories are sent renewal notices. They need not pay dues, but are sent notices as the best way to prompt an update of membership information, particularly mail and e-mail addresses. The notices also afford an opportunity to purchase MSA publications and to make contributions to support MSA's programs.

## THE 2021 CALENDAR



The 2021 sixteen-month calendar has the theme *Agate*. The calendar is published by Lithographie, LLC, in cooperation with the Mineralogical Society of America, Martin Zinn Exposition, Tucson Gem and Mineral Society, Fine Mineral Shows, Denver Area Gem & Mineral Show, and Rocky Mountain Gems & Minerals. The calendar is available on the MSA's website at [www.minsocam.org](http://www.minsocam.org).

## AWARD NOMINATIONS

Nominations are sought for the 2022–2023 awards. **Nominations must be received by 1 June 2021.**

- The Roebling Medal (2022) is MSA's highest award and is given for eminence as represented by outstanding published original research in mineralogy.
- The Dana Medal (2022) is intended to recognize continued outstanding scientific contributions through original research in the mineralogical sciences by an individual in the midst of his or her career.
- The Mineralogical Society of America Award (2022) is given for outstanding published contribution(s) prior to the 35<sup>th</sup> birthday or within seven years of the PhD.
- The Distinguished Public Service Medal (2023) is presented to an individual who has provided outstanding contributions to public policy and awareness about mineralogical topics through science.
- Society Fellowship is the recognition of a members' significant scientific contributions. Nomination is undertaken by one member, with two members acting as cosponsors. A form is required. Please contact the committee chair or visit the MSA home page.

Submission requirements and procedures are on MSA's home page: <http://www.minsocam.org/>

## NEW OPEN ACCESS PUBLICATION

The MSA is pleased to announce the availability of a new open access publication via a link on its website. The e-book is *Principles of Stable Isotope Geochemistry*, Second Edition (2017) by Zachary Sharp of the University of New Mexico (USA). This pdf version, freely downloadable from the University of New Mexico website, was written to support a one-semester course in stable isotope geochemistry. It is also designed to be a general reference for researchers. The book's description, a list of chapters, and a link to download are at this URL: [http://www.minsocam.org/msa/OpenAccess\\_publications/Sharp\\_Stable\\_Isotopes\\_index.html](http://www.minsocam.org/msa/OpenAccess_publications/Sharp_Stable_Isotopes_index.html).

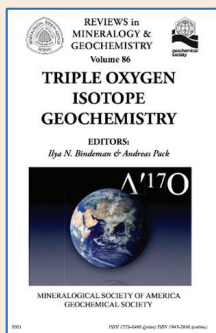
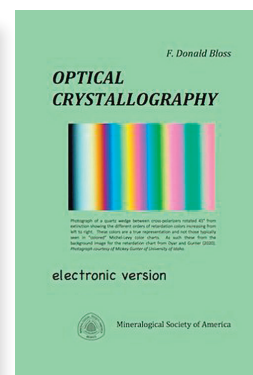
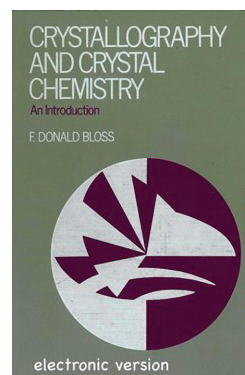


### Reviews in Mineralogy & Geochemistry Volume 86: "Triple Oxygen Isotope Geochemistry"

Ilya N. Bindeman and Andreas Pack,  
Editors (2021), ISSN 1529-6466 (print)

This new *Reviews in Mineralogy & Geochemistry* volume is now available in print from MSA, and in electronic format from MinPubs.org.

During the past two decades, two major and exciting fields have emerged in the science of stable isotope geochemistry, both related to understanding tiny variations in minor isotopologue abundances. The first field is related to the distribution of "clumping" of heavy isotopes in molecules, such as CO<sub>2</sub> or CH<sub>4</sub>; the second field is the use of small variations in all three oxygen isotopes. Both approaches allow researchers to resolve absolute temperatures, previously masked process pathways, and exchange between various reservoirs. In this volume, the authors concentrate on presenting information about the latter—understanding of variations among ratios of all three isotopes of oxygen, with a primary emphasis on terrestrial systems. New, high-resolution measurements are accompanied by advances in theoretical calculations that dovetail with empirical calibrations and applications throughout this volume. Triple oxygen isotope geochemistry is a young and rapidly evolving field and some of the observations discussed in this volume will undoubtedly be modified as new discoveries and improved protocols are developed.

F. DONALD BLOSS PUBLICATIONS  
NOW IN DIGITAL FORMAT

*Crystallography and Crystal Chemistry: An Introduction* and *Optical Crystallography: An Introduction* are now available as watermarked downloadable pdfs. Both classics in their field and still in use after many years, these publications can be ordered through MinPubs.org.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The MSA recognizes outstanding undergraduate students who have shown an interest and ability in the field of mineralogy. Students are cited by their departments for outstanding achievement in mineralogy-related courses. Each student is presented with a certificate to be awarded by his or her university or college. In addition, each recipient receives a one-year student membership to the MSA and has access to the electronic versions of *American Mineralogist* and *Elements*, as well as a *Reviews in Mineralogy and Geochemistry* or *Monograph* volume chosen by the sponsor, student, or both. Students are also listed on the MSA website. Members of the MSA can learn how to nominate their students by accessing **MSA Undergraduate Prize** on the **Awards & Grants** tab on the home page of the MSA's website: [www.minsocam.org](http://www.minsocam.org).

The MSA is growing its social media presence through its Facebook page, Facebook group, Twitter, and YouTube channel. Since 2011, the MSA Facebook page has 2,981 likes and 3,444 total followers. The MSA Facebook group has 49,537 members. The MSA Twitter account, which started in 2020, has 459 followers. MSA's YouTube channel, started in 2019, features videos from the MSA Centennial Symposium in 2019, as well as from Minerals Day 2020.

The MSA wishes to thank Dr. Andrea Koziol (University of Dayton, USA) and our Social Media Liaison for managing the Facebook and Twitter accounts.