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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



I suspect that many of you have shared your interest in minerals and rocks in school classrooms, scouting meetings, or with other student groups-as a parent or relative, friend, or enthusiastic mineral scientist. Visits to my daughters' classrooms were annual events during their elementary school years. I assembled a show-and-tell collection that expanded with each year. Kindergarteners and first graders clamored to touch and hold the "rocks," and they loved to talk about "rocks" that they had found, or about whatever else popped into their heads. It was constant activity and chatter, but all with great enthu-

siasm. Sometimes, in anticipation of my visit, the teacher would ask all the students to bring in rocks that they had found. You can imagine the stories that came with each prized specimen.

With older kids, we talked about minerals and rocks and crystals. Have you ever tried explaining what a "mineral" is to a third grader?! I am pretty sure that no matter how clever I thought I was, most students continued to think of minerals as "rocks," but that was probably okay. Not surprisingly, the greatest hits included a coprolite, a large piece of glassy obsidian, a quartz-lined geode, and a large quartz single crystal from Arkansas. In particular, the quartz crystal was met with disbelief. How could something so geometrically shaped, and clear and shiny, form in the Earth? Even the ancient Greeks were astounded by quartz crystals found high in the Alps. Assuming they were a form of ice frozen so hard it would not melt, they gave it the name "krystallos," their name for ice, and the origin for our word "crystal." The quartz crystal was likely the first these students had seen, and so to them, it truly might appear otherworldly. I recall vividly that my own enthusiasm for minerals was transformed when my fourth-grade teacher passed around a beautiful quartz crystal during our science class. She had been given the crystal by a local rock-shop owner. I had never seen anything like it, and I was instantly hooked!

My closing act was a group of specimens that fluoresced brightly under long-wave UV light-which always elicited shouts of delight. Recently, I ran into a young man in a local grocery store who had been in one of my daughter's classes, and his first words were: "I remember that you brought those really cool rocks that glow to our class," which I had-almost 25 years ago. The goal of these times with students was not so much to teach definitions or even concepts, but rather to introduce rocks and minerals (aka Earth materials) as fascinating objects with stories that make the Earth, and science, more interesting, even magical-to create a memorable moment. When I asked the students if they had ever collected rocks, almost every hand went up. Likely, the materials many of us study for a profession were also fascinating to us at an early age, as they also seem to be for many kids. Perhaps this should not be surprising. Minerals are the basic building blocks of our solid Earth, and one can find them pretty much everywhere. They come in different colors and shapes, and some are even naturally polished or exhibit exquisite crystal forms. They tend to catch the eye, and because most are durable, and in many places can be picked up legally for free, they are convenient souvenirs, paperweights, and prized curiosities.

One of the exciting opportunities for all MSA members, and others in the geosciences, is to encourage this inherent curiosity that young students share about minerals and rocks by providing those memorable experiences, such as holding a quartz crystal or perfect pyrite cube, opening a geode, experiencing the flash of an opal, touching a meteorite that not only came from space but is 4.6 billion years old, or seeing a "rock" that glows. Such experiences can create a sense of "awe" that can change a person forever. Psychologists tell us that awe helps us see things in new ways. This "stop-and-think" phenomenon makes us more receptive to new information. Just this one special experience might open new possibilities or simply inspire curiosity for young students of all backgrounds. Clearly, they have the interest, and the challenge is how to help nurture it. Perhaps, simply putting a quartz crystal in a kid's hand could be the spark.

> **Jeffrey Post** 2023 MSA President

NOTES FROM CHANTILLY

- MSA 2023 membership renewals continue. Please renew today using the link on the MSA home page (www.msaweb.org) if you have not already done so.
- 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.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Many members contribute to MSA by including a contribution with their annual dues and/or by responding to special appeals. The new *MSA Forward* Annual Fund supports MSA's communications infrastructure. Depending on the wishes of the member, contributions are deposited with the principal of the MSA Endowment, J. Alexander Speer Outreach Fund, MSA Mineralogy/Petrology Fund, J. B. Thompson Fund, Edward H. Kraus Crystallographic Research Fund, F. Donald Bloss Fund, or Buseck Lecture Fund. The income of these Funds is used to support MSA's research grants in crystallography, mineralogy, and petrology; the MSA Undergraduate Prizes; the Mineralogical Society of America Award; the Distinguished Public Service Award, the Dana Medal, the Roebling Medal; the websites; and the Distinguished Lecturer program. If you have not done so previously, please consider contributing at the next opportunity.

EVENTS

2023 Goldschmidt Conference

The conference, which is organized by the Geochemical Society and the European Association of Geochemistry, will be held from July 9 to 14, 2023, in Lyon, France. For more information, visit https://conf. goldschmidt.info/goldschmidt/2023/meetingapp.cgi.

Geological Society of America Annual Meeting

This conference will take place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from October 15 to 18, 2023. The MSA will have its Awards Luncheon there, as well as Awards Lectures and sponsored presentations. For more information, visit https://community.geosociety.org/gsa2023/home.

42nd FM-TGMS-MSA Tucson Mineral Symposium

The symposium is held in conjunction with the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show[®] (https://www.tgms.org/show) and will take place on Saturday, February 10, 2024. The symposium is co-sponsored by the

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Tucson Gem and Mineral Society, the Friends of Mineralogy, and the Mineralogical Society of America. The symposium theme is "Pegmatites: Crystals Big & Beautiful." An audience of avocational and professional mineralogists and geologists is expected. Further details and the call for papers (http://www.friendsofmineralogy.org/call-for-papers/) are on the Friends of Mineralogy website.

2023 CALENDAR

Order your 2023 16-month calendar today. Published by Lithographie, this year's calendar is entitled *Tsumeb*. Each month is illustrated with a stunning photograph of a mineral sample. Please visit https://msaweb. org/2023-calendar/ to order.



DID YOU KNOW?

The seminal work known as the *Handbook of Mineralogy* is freely available on the MSA website: https://handbookofmineralogy. org/. Edited by John W. Anthony, Richard A. Bideaux, Kenneth W. Bladh, and Monte C. Nichols, the five-volume Handbook contains essential information on mineral species, including crystal data, physical properties, optical properties, cell data, X-ray powder diffraction, chemistry, polymorphism and series, mineral group, occurrence, association, distribution, name, type material, and references. The online version is updated by Kenneth Bladh as new mineral species are discovered. In addition, print volumes are available by contacting the MSA Business office at business@ minsocam.org.

MINERALS DAY 2023

This annual event, which began in 2020 as part of Earth Science Week (American Geosciences Institute), is on Monday, October 9, 2023. The theme this year is **Minerals: The Big Ideas**. The MSA is inviting anyone interested in minerals to send in the five to ten most important concepts about minerals that EVERYONE needs to know. The MSA will collate and rank the submissions and publish them on Minerals Day. The Big Ideas will be used as a basis for curricular materials developed by the MSA and will be made freely available on the MSA (www.msaweb. org) and Minerals Day (www.mineralsday.org) websites. The teaching materials will be accompanied by virtual professional development sessions for K–12 teachers and interested collectors. To submit your **Big Ideas**, please email them, and your rationales for your ideas, to Ann Benbow at abenbow@minsocam.org.

