

## Why Do We Collect?

For anything that is collectible -- that is, just about *everything* -- there is someone who will collect it. The activity is fraught with social, emotional, and psychological ramifications that range well beyond my expertise and the intent of this discourse, and since I do not profess to be a psychologist, I don't intend to explore the question with any semblance of qualified acumen in that field. I can, however, speak from experience, which likely everyone can relate to.

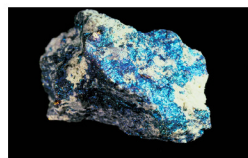
I do know this: regardless of the perceived or real monetary value of the collectible, everyone I know collects something, even those who otherwise don't consider themselves to be collectors and are not necessarily aware that they are actually collecting something! The one thing I find in common with all is that they keep things for a connection to the past...*memories*. I challenge you to find anyone who has not hung onto such mundane things as an old concert ticket, sports program, or dinner menu for no other rational reason than commemoration of an experience. I know a woman who collects old teapots; another, gift shop spoons from around the world (from her own travels and gifts from others). These are seeds that, if properly nurtured, will sprout into a collection, which in turn blossom into a *passio* -- and for the luckiest -- an occupation!.

Essentially, it's not just the acquiring that is important, but also the acquired *knowledge* of the things we've amassed that have taken on a meaning unto itself, and having these objects creates a sense of responsibility to care for them, to carefully preserve them for future generations. I usually take exception to referring to anyone as an *expert* (often such individuals merely have an opinion, and are in a position to express and exploit it) but if you need qualified information on a subject, find a collector!

Since this is a journal aimed at fellow rockhounds, professional and amateur Earth scientists, naturalists of any ilk, and aficionados in general, the actual question I want to pursue is...



(continued on next page)



## GML Publishing

a division of the  
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and Lithologic Survey**  
Las Vegas, NV 89107  
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## Discover Minerals

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a mineralogy journal reviewing the mines,  
mineral resources, and geologic history of  
the Mojave Desert region

## Regular Components

## Features

Mine of the Month

Element of the Month

## Mineral Showcase

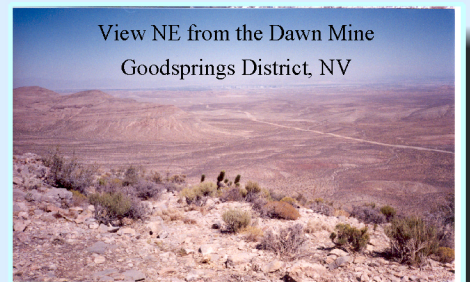
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## Guest Contributor

## Publisher

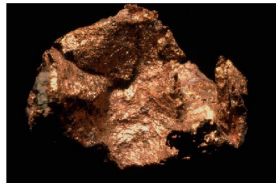
G. Miles Lehman

View NE from the Dawn Mine  
Goodsprings District, NV



## *Why do we collect minerals?*

I cannot pretend to know why *you* collect—the reasons are probably as varied as there are minerals to collect—but I can share with you why *I* collect, what inspired me to start in the first place, and the relevance it has



for me emotionally, intellectually, and professionally. Keep in mind that I don't collect rocks and minerals exclusively; I also collect such things as coins and logo golf balls, but minerals are certainly my primary passion. *But why?*

I've always been an outdoorsman, attracted to anything that got me outside. It probably helped that while growing up, I was not burdened by indoor distractions as the internet, videos games, and other such modern-day contrivances (although there was TV (in color, eventually), but there were only three channels!). Sports was, of course, a primary focus for me, but I was also something of a natural explorer. The local stream was a favorite destination; always an adventure waiting to be experienced there. Heading home with varied booty as reward for successful campaigns was certainly expected...toting anything from turtles to crayfish, snakes, frogs, and of course rocks, was fair game. I was, after all, a collector!

It follows that I pursued an education in marine science as a young adult, but emerging from

college hardly prepared me for the real world. I thought I was going to be the next Jacques Cousteau, only to find myself destitute in Las Vegas by the remorseless recession of 1980! But there was a silver lining—or rather, *gilded*. The recession drove the price of gold up from below \$100, to well over \$800 in just a few months (nothing compared to the recession that culminated in 2008 and still being felt to some degree, but nevertheless seriously significant at the time.)

## *Opportunity favors the prepared mind*

The study of any one science discipline requires edification in all. Chemistry, geology, zoology, botany, mathematics, etc., function hand in hand with one another. With the value of gold reaching such lofty levels, low-grade deposits that were one day not considered economically viable, suddenly became enticing possibilities the next. I met, by pure chance, a small group of investors interested in pursuing “golden” possibilities. They needed expertise in the field, and I offered my services, thus launching my career as a geologist. *They did not need to know that I was a novice, nor did I volunteer the information.*

I soon found myself exploring the mines in the Goodsprings District in Clark County, Nevada, (most of which were still accessible at the time) mapping the underground layout of the

excavations, noting the local geology in comparison to considerable library research, and collecting specimens for study and testing. My passion for mineral collecting was ignited in earnest...a passion so indelible, I could tell you the details about each specimen collected -- even what the weather was like that day! My experience grew with every exploration, unfazed by the confines of a mine, or the potential dangers therein (subject of a future article).

## *The answer should be clear by now*

we save for the memories -- in the beginning, at least. But in and of themselves, such things as rocks and minerals, like everything else, are just mementos of an explicit experience. However, purposefully *collecting* takes on far more meaning, encompassing not simply an interest in the item itself, but a basic interest in the topic in general. The debate over the reasons people collect lumbers on, but one truth cannot be denied, people will always continue to collect, whatever the reason. It is an unquenchable desire for all the knowledge that those things can teach us...about the world we live in, about the Universe we are a part of, and ultimately, about ourselves.

