Harvey Oaks

Manufacturing Jeweler

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JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2010

From the desk of Gerry Gonya...Harvey Oaks Manufacturing Jeweler

Welcome to 2010! I have to admit I have had a rough time in writing the year 2010. It will probably be February or March until I get the hang of writing 2010 (twenty-10 sounds like something from a "Buck Rogers" movie). I hope you and I can be optimistic about what may or may not happen this year and continue to put our best foot forward. I can only hope and pray that we saw the bottom of the economic cycle during 2009 and things will start to look a little greener this year. I don't think that this will happen overnight, but at least by this time next year we can look back at our year in review and realize that 2010 was the beginning of the up-swing. Good luck to all of you in the year to come.

I just started to read an article in one of our gemological quarterly publications on a interesting gemstone that I was first exposed to over 10 years ago when attending the Tucson Gem Show. Ammolite found only in the southern part of Alberta, Canada looks like the image of a rainbow captured in a shell. Ammonite shells are found all over the world, but only in Alberta do they show the rainbow affect of colorization called ammolite. Ammolite is a gem material composed of aragonite that is derived from the shells of ammonites, extinct cephalopod mollusks found in marine sediments. When I first saw a ammonite shell it looked much like the small snails we find in ponds and streams. But these extinct cephalopod mollusk were around during the time of the dinosaurs. Ammolite is separated into two types: the first being fractured and the second being sheet. The fractured ammolite looks much like the skin of a lizard with rainbow color affect. While sheet ammolite appears to look like a beautifully ty-dyed shirt. Most of the early ammolite that I bought had the lizard skin look but lately I have been finding more of the sheet variety due to the dwindling supply of the fractured ammolite.

Most of the ammolite is found in open pit type mining which consist of removing the overburden soil and then using a backhoe or small excavator to dig into the remaining sediment supervised by a spotter. One of the largest producers of ammolite is a company called Korite International who happened to be the company that was at the Tucson Gem Show. Some of the mining for ammolite is done by what are called Artisanal miners or better known as surface miners. These miners, mostly from the Blood Indian Tribe, locate ammolite that shows up on the surface due to erosion. Some operations are a little more risky when these miners find themselves suspended over cliffs looking for ammolite specimens. From the reports that I have read it looks like the supply of ammolite should be ample for the next 10 to 15 years from the known reserves. Geological testing continues for new sites. Of the ammolite that I have purchased over the last 10 years I have definitely noticed an increase in price due in part by the limited supplies of fine ammolite and the growing demand by countries such as China and southeast Asia. If I can make it to the Tucson Gem Show this year I am hoping to work with Korite International to see what I might be able to buy.

Many of you are aware of various types of pearls that are on the market today, but some of the history of pearls I find very interesting. Before there were cultured pearls, naturally formed pearls were the only pearls on the market. Many tales talked about how the oyster ingested a grain of sand to start the process. Now some of these tales are true but it doesn't need to be a grain of sand. Actually it can be a tiny parasite or anything that imbeds itself into the oysters mantle tissue without being rejected. If you were to cut open a natural pearl to analyze its components you would find that it is composed of calcium carbonate($CaCO_3$) which is the same material as the shell. Another name of calcium carbonate is aragonite. This is held together by the oyster with a substance known as conchilion. When these two substances combine in a calcareous concretion, it is given the name of nacre – a term we are all familiar with when talking about pearls. This is what makes a natural pearl and the material we call mother - of- pearl. Mother of pearl is the interior shell surface also coated with nacre which gives it that iridescence we see.

When we look back in history before the time of cultured pearls and read about how rare these natural formations are, one can reason why so much prominence was given to a single pearl. The bible even talks about the value of the ownership of a single pearl. Now have enough natural pearls to form a complete strand and you have the value of one year of a working man's wages. It was written that King Charles I of England wore a large single pearl hanging from his ear lobe and when finally executed by parliament(beheaded)the crowd rushed forth to try and snag the pearl from his ear. Elizabeth Taylor still owns a pearl that was worn by Queen Mary I of England and King Phillip II of Spain. This pearl known as the "La Peregrina" was reported stolen from the Spaniards during the Napoleonic wars and brought to France. After hundreds of years of being sold and passed down it was eventually bought by Richard Burton and given to his wife – Elizabeth Taylor. The history and folklore goes on and on but we will end it here.

JANUARY – FEBRUARY - MARCH birthstones.

Garnet starts out the new year for the month of January. Most customers are familiar with pyrope and alamandite garnet(not necessarily by name but more by color). These typical garnets are the deep reds and brownish reds that we normally see. But don't forget the other 4 species of garnets that create colors such as violet reds, orange, and even green. All part of the garnet family but can very drastically in price.

February gives us the beautiful color of purple(violet) in the quartz variety we call amethyst. Sad to say that amethyst doesn't come in many different colors like garnets, but like most gemstones the intensity of color does vary.

March brings us that soft light blue gemstone we call aquamarine which reminds one of the beautiful color of the Caribbean Ocean. Many times we see confusion between the blue color of aquamarine and the heat treated blue topaz. The colors may be close but not the value.

A few notes of interest in some of the upcoming events. If all goes well Harvey Oaks Jeweler will be attending the Independent Jewelers Show and the Tucson Gem Show both during the month of February. So if there is anything special you are looking for please let us now so we can take your wish list along. These shows not only introduce us to some of the cutting new ideas that will be in the jewelry market but also gives us some very valuable educational conferences to help keep us abreast of any new things being discovered. Many of you have also commented about our TV adds on NBC channel 24. It was a new experience for us and by the responses we have gotten, possibly a worthwhile adventure. We also want to thank all of you for trusting in us during this past year 2009. We are very fortunate to have customers like yourselves – THANK YOU!

Well it's time to shut down the computer for the night. I wish all of you the very best in this new year of 2010 and hope and pray that we have seen the bottom of the bad economic times.

Gerry

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