



The District of Gemology

Volume 6 Issue 1

Spring 1999

Desert Heat Transforms Chapter Members

Dateline Tucson Feb. 1999

Chapter members John Lees and Martin Fuller, normally considered two of the more mild-mannered and upstanding members of the Washington D.C. chapter of the GIA Alumni Association, were apparently dramatically affected by the Tucson heat, according to eye witnesses. "They'd been a goin' to that there Tucson Gem Show year after year, and I jes know'd that sooner or later they'd ketch that cactus poisonin' or some sech," barked Joe, a local barkeep.

It seems that one evening, after an apparently low-key gathering of several chapter members at a local steak house, Lees and Fuller were separated from the rest of the group by a bottle of single malt and that was the last they were seen in their city-garb.

"It was a real shame", said Bobby Mann, chapter president. "I feel like it was my fault. I mean, I did invite them out for dinner. I just can't believe its come to this! If anybody does find them, I hope they bring 'em back alive. They're really just two harmless strange guys when you get to know them."

Sources close to the story have implied that John, aka "Knees Lees," has been known to wear a plaid skirt at times while apparently strangling a sheep, while Fuller's notoriety to this point in time is said to be limited to shaving in public and publishing bad humor. Inquiries as to their whereabouts can be directed to Brenda Forman, who has had to put together nearly this entire issue on her own since Fuller is AWOL and Lees has the mailing list.

W A N T E D



Mean John Lees and Fast-Draw Fuller

DEAD OR ALIVE

President's Letter ***by Bobby Mann***



We are three months into 1999. I hope that you have had the opportunity to attend a monthly meeting. We have a busy spring planned. In addition to our regular monthly meetings, we are planning to offer two GIA Seminars in May. Details will follow. These reduced-rate Chapter-sponsored seminars fill up fast and space is limited, so sign up early. In June, we will offer an FGA Spectroscope Seminar and there are more events in the early planning stages.

Starting with the March meeting, we will have a short Board of Directors meeting from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. before the regular meeting. You are welcome to attend and offer your ideas and opinions. These meetings are open to anyone interested so come early, get involved and serve on a committee. We need your help and active participation as the Chapter continues to grow.

Then from 7:00 to 7:30, socialize, network, meet and make new friends and business contacts. Visit our Show, Tell and Sell Table. See new exhibits and hand-on demonstrations. Bring something to share, a new discovery or find, a tool or instrument to demonstrate. You may bring gemology-related items to sell at the meeting — instruments, tools, equipment, gemstones, books, etc.

We hold a short business meeting at 7:30, followed by our guest speaker's presentation and a question and answer period.

Do you have any gemology-related books or magazines that you would like to give away? Bring them to the meeting and deposit them in our Recycle Box to be shared with others. You can also see what the Box has that you might like to take home. This is give and take.

We will need new officers in 2000 and beyond. That is a two-year commitment, so get involved now. Serve on a committee. Talk to any officer about learning their job. Consider donating a few hours to our Chapter to help continue its success.

Bobby Mann

WE GOOFED!

In the Winter 1998 issue's Honor Roll of Donors, we mistakenly identified Heller Antiques as Weller Antiques. Abject apologies are hereby rendered and penance is being done.

Condolences
To Chapter Members
Bruce & Cathy Gaber
At the passing of both of their
fathers
In the last quarter of 1998

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ATTENTION, PLEASE!

Meeting Fee Choices for 1999

With the costs of postage and printing rising, we need to change the way we structure our meeting fees. *Please read the following carefully, choose the fee you wish to pay, and notify Chapter Secretary John Lees of your choice:*

Full Meeting Fee — \$40:

- Receive all monthly meeting notices.
- Receive the quarterly newsletter, *The District of Gemology*.
- Free admission to the 11 monthly meetings.
- Opportunity to be listed in the Bi-Annual *Gemological Resource Directory*.

Half Meeting Fee — \$20:

- Receive all monthly meeting notices.
- Receive the quarterly newsletter, *The District of Gemology*.
- Opportunity to be listed in the Bi-Annual *Gemological Resource Directory*.

No Meeting Fee:

- Continue to receive monthly meeting notices -- *but ONLY by notifying Chapter Secretary John Lees.*
- You may still attend any monthly meeting for \$10 per meeting.
- Meetings are open to anyone interested. Bring a guest!*

Let John Lees know your choice!

Address: Box 1908, Leesburg, VA 20177
 Telephone: (540) 882-4742
 E-mail: jaleesco@mediasoft.net

Winners Again! D.C. Chapter Wins GIA Best Newsletter Third Year Running!

Yea and hurray!

For the third year running, the D.C. Chapter has won GIA's annual award for Best Chapter Newsletter. So Co-Editors Martin Fuller and Brenda Forman duly and happily toddled out to Tucson to accept the award on the Chapter's behalf at the great Gem & Mineral Show out there in the desert.

And here they are, smiling for the camera and happily holding the ceremonial cheese-tray (Brenda's admittedly irreverent term for the commemorative plaques awarded on such occasions). Any resemblance to Mutt and Jeff is purely coincidental.



On Tuesday evening, January 19th, Erik Diamond of Assael International spoke to the Chapter about South Sea and Tahitian Pearls. Diamond is Vice President of Sales for Assael International, a company that has become world famous for having introduced the jewelry industry to the glorious Tahitian cultured black pearls of the Southwestern Pacific.

Showing a map of the major pearl producing areas, Diamond noted that South Sea pearls come from areas reaching northwest of Australia towards Indonesia. Tahitian pearls come from an arc of ocean across French Polynesia in the South Pacific.

All of these areas are very remote. Consequently, production costs are very high. A great deal of airplane transport is needed. Workers need on-site living quarters and access to a small town. All



Lois Berger and Pearl Milliren with some of Diamond's South Sea Pearls.

of this requires large amounts of money. Meanwhile, only 5% of total production is gem quality.

The productive part of an oyster's life is about eight years, during which it can be implanted up to four times. The second, third and fourth production from the same oyster will yield different shapes and colors, but it is impossible to predict what they will be.

The ideal colors in South Sea pearls are white, white-pink and white-silver. Tahitian pearls come in hundreds of colors. In what was easily the highlight of the

Erik Diamond

South Sea & Tahitian Pearls

*by
Brenda Forman*

evening, Diamond circulated numerous samples of purely spectacular pearls. It is difficult to convey the impact of these amazing gems -- their blazing brilliance, at times staggering size and dazzling range of colors from gleaming whites through startling peacock greens to every conceivable shade of grey and black. It was a singular experience to touch, feel and marvel at them.

The oyster that produces these astonishing gems leads a precarious life. The initial trauma of implantation causes fully fifty percent die or reject the implant. The survivors are taken to locations that produce the best pearls. They need three months to recover. Every three weeks, they must be pulled up, cleaned and flipped. Water temperature must be carefully monitored and there must be enough food available. What with storms, overcrowding and fluctuating water temperatures, every day in the water is a risk.



Diamond points out major pearling areas

The Japanese Akoya industry is in deepening trouble. Their pearling areas are too overcrowded and the oysters don't get enough food, which raises the mortality rate. The Japanese have chosen to cope with the problem by leaving their oysters in the water for ever shorter periods of time -- these days, a mere six months. Consequently, both yield and quality are going down. Until now, this has been masked by the fact that the Japanese have had stores of pearls to fall back on to supply the market, but these are depleted now. This year's crop is 35-50% less than in 1997, and in 1997 it was less than it was in 1996. Diamond's advice was to stock up now because demand is outpacing supply.

Indonesia is getting back into production, specializing in the in-between sizes, i.e., 10-12mm. (Indonesian pearls tend to be creamier as opposed to white-silver.) They may try to pick up some of



Showing examples of Tahitian pearls

the slack in the Akoya market. There is also a big market in Japan for smaller Tahitian black pearls, so Indonesia may well try for that market too. China is coming in at the other end, producing a saltwater version of Japanese stock.

In a discussion of grading and price points, Diamond noted that no grading system has ever succeeded for pearls because there are so many variations. One questioner from the audience noted that GIA is developing a rating booklet now that places Akoya, Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian pearls all under one system. Diamond was unimpressed. "Great!" He answered. "They'll fail!"



*Louise Taggart
teaching class in 1993*

Gem lovers of the Greater Washington area lost a true gem last year. Louise Taggart, possibly the area's most influential amateur gemstone teacher for the past forty years, died of a stroke on December 13, 1998. Just the month before, she had celebrated her 98th birthday with each of her gemstone classes.

Louise began teaching about gems in the early 1960's and since 1971, she had taught for the Montgomery County Adult Education Department. Her contagious enthusiasm for the subject created many devotees of the gem and mineral world.

A teacher of the old school, she was strict in the classroom. She would bang the desk for attention, tell the gray-haired "girls" to be quiet and demand that the students close their books and pay attention. And they did just that.

She didn't just teach by the book; her class was very much a hands-on experience using jewelry samples from her own vast collection. Each piece had its own intriguing story.

She also relied on the various gem and mineral magazines for up-to-date information and generously lent the issues to her students. Her classes were so informative that many of her students

loyally returned each semester for more than a decade.

The Christmas parties that Louise held in her home for her students were a real treat. The pot-luck suppers and white elephant gift exchange were just the beginning of the fun. Large melon-size stones of many colors lined the walk to the front door. The dining table was sprinkled with tiny multi-colored gems. The coffee table vitrine and a large glass display cabinet were filled with her jeweled treasures, and a special showcase was filled with rhodochrosite birds and specimens. She lived immersed in her cherished memorabilia.

Louise was a skilled jewelry designer who often worked in collaboration with her daughter. She favored large rings, ornate pins and unusual beads, but almost any kind of stone could spark her interest.

Louise Taggart's Legacy

*by
Cathy Gaber*

Stones that others might feel were flawed due to an inclusion or an unusual feature could become her favorites because of their individuality. To help illustrate the identifying characteristics of genuine gemstones, she had assembled quite a collection of fakes for comparison.

Her gem and jewelry collection grew out of her many travels with her husband Paul who, through the State Department, was stationed in Germany for several years and covered most of the rest of the world on shorter junkets. Louise continued to travel to some favorite gem localities even after his death nearly 20 years ago.

Her love of gems and teaching came early to her. She was born Louise

Elizabeth Cook in Prairie Home, Nebraska, in November, 1900. While growing up in Nebraska, her interest in gemstones was sparked by a piece of South Dakota rose quartz that her family used as a door stop. After moving to the Washington area, Tony Bonanno's gemology course was the beginning of her formal interest in gemstones.

Unusual for a woman of her time, Louise had earned a college degree from the University of Nebraska and had taught social studies in Nebraska and Denver, Colorado. When she came to this area, she became a high school substitute teacher in Bethesda, MD. It was a natural progression to go on to teach about gems.

She won the 1977-1978 Outstanding Continuing Education Teacher award from the State of Maryland, for which her gemstone students had nominated her. This led to an article in the December 1978 *Lapidary Journal*, "Louise: Collector and Teacher." In 1995, she was delighted to be the first recipient of the Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Washington, DC's Education Award.

At her funeral, her enthusiasm, her tenacity and her leadership were noted by many. She had done just what she wanted to do, right until the end. She was an exceptional woman, devoted to teaching her favorite subject. Her influence will continue to be felt now that Lisa Carp, a member of our GIA chapter, has taken over teaching Louise's classes.



Louise Taggart at home

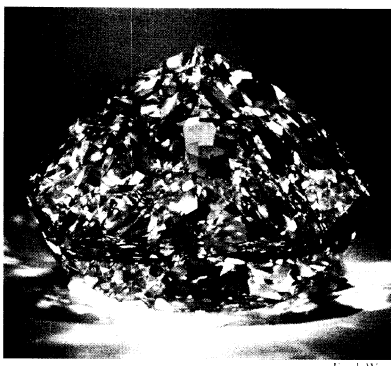
Gabriel Tolkowsky

*April speaker is the world
famous diamond cutter*

NOTE: The date and place for this wonderful evening has been changed. Date is now Monday, April 5th. Place is now Hyatt Arlington Hotel in Rosslyn.

Our April speaker will be the world-famous diamond cutter, Gabriel Tolkowsky, developer of the flower cuts and the Gabrielle cuts. The

photo shows one of his most celebrated achievements: the Centenary Diamond, a D-color, flowless diamond weighing 273.85 carats, cut to celebrate the Centennial of the De Beers Company. Over a period of



Fred Ward

The Centenary Diamond

three years, Gabi Tolkowsky designed, cut and polished this amazing gem.

Among many other achievements in his long and distinguished career, Gabi Tolkowsky has been the Managing Director of Diatrada N.V. of Antwerp and a consultant to the C'SO in London. More recently, he was appointed worldwide consultant for the De Beers Group.

Currently, with his son, Jean Paul, he directs his company in Antwerp, Gabi S. Tolkowsky & Sons, BVBA

Gabriel Tolkowsky's legendary skill continues a family tradition: his great uncle, Marcel Tolkowsky, developed the parameters the AGS now uses to define the ideal cut for diamonds.

Around Town &

Around the Web



By Davia Kramer

For six successive Thursday evenings from April 22nd through May 27th, Smithsonian Associates is offering a series, *The Dazzling Realm of Gems and Jewels*.

April 22nd: *Gemstones of the World*, Fred Ward (our very own).

April 29th: *Legends and Lore*, Eve Reppen Rogers, VP Sotheby's North America

May 6th: *Harry Winston: A Design House*, James Haag, Global Retail Marketing Director, Harry Winston

May 13th: *Jewelry as Art*, Joyce Jonas, Pres., American Society of Jewelry Historians

May 20th: *Gems and Jewels at the Smithsonian*, Jeffrey Post, Curator, National Gem & Mineral Collection

May 27th: *The Auction House*, Gary Schuler, Senior VP, Jewelry Business Auctioneers, NY.

For more information, call Smithsonian Associates, (202) 357-3030.

Tucson Tidbits 1999

Ah, those precious Tucson moments. The tacos, the beer, the margaritas at El Minuto Cafe. (Yum, yum, yum!) The party to celebrate Kitty Mann's birthday. (You two are the *sweetest* couple!) Martin Fuller provided yet another highlight with one of his



*Another Day,
Another Disguise*

trademark transformations in honor of the GIA's big Sixties Banquet. (Oh, Marty, those love beads are groovy!!)

And back home, the panel of experts told the rest of us all about it. (Fred Ward is behind the camera, skilfully catching the rest of us in unguarded moments....)



Cervesa!



The Great Panel



Celebrating Kitty's birthday

Guatemala's Black and Rainbow Jadeite

by

Fred Ward

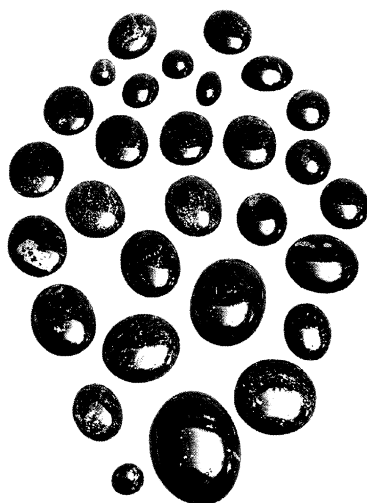
Throughout the world jadeite is recognized as a premium gemstone, precious not only for its great beauty but also for its cultural significance. Guatemala has maintained the world's longest historical association with jadeite, supplying all the native Central American cultures (Olmec, Toltec, Mixtec, Zapotec, Aztec and Maya) with jade. No mine site other than Guatemala's Motagua Valley area has ever been identified as a MesoAmerican jade source.

For the last four centuries, the source of Central America's jade remained hidden, lost from the memories of the surviving Maya. An American couple, Jay and Mary Lou Ridinger, operating *Jades, S.A.* in Antigua, found their first jade quarry in 1975. Their finds in Guatemala gained recognition as the source for most if not all the jadeite used by Mesoamericans for three thousand years.

In 1987 came the first of many discoveries that led to a series of unique jades. Initially the Ridingers found a deep rich homogeneous black jade, named *Maya Black Jadeite*, that was better than any yet seen. Then they found black jadeite with a huge bonus: flecks of precious heavy

metals sparkling throughout the gems. This glittering jadeite with its "Starry Night" effect was named *Galactic Gold* and is the only jade ever seen containing gold, platinum, silver, nickel, cadmium, copper, zinc, and other metals. To top off this wave of discovery, examples of a wonderful foamy blue jadeite that had not been seen in nearly two thousand years were uncovered. *Olmec Blue Jadeite* is known and greatly appreciated among collectors and anthropologists and usually seen only in museums. Finding the still rare blue jadeite in the Motagua Valley proved the origin of this prized material.

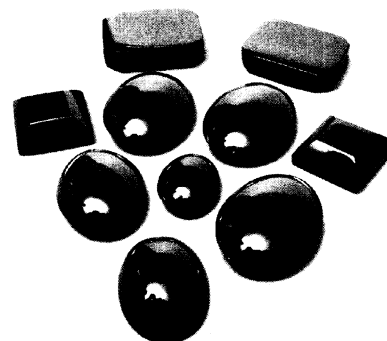
This past year a third mining area has brought a new round of discoveries that is rewriting the history of jade in Central



Galactic Gold

America. Lavender jadeite, the second rarest and most valuable of all jades, was unknown in the New World until this past year's find. G.I.A. has already identified the new material as "translucent jadeite jade." This exciting color was an instant success, appearing as beads, cabs, and carvings. With it came what can only be described as a unique jade, *Rainbow Jadeite*.

Master jade carvers regard a single jade boulder with three separate colors to be a "gift of God." Within some new *Rainbow Jadeite* boulders one can find lavender,

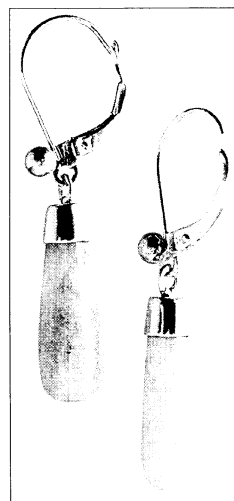


Maya Black Jadeite

blue, white, pink, creamy yellow and green. *Jades, S.A.* guarantees that all its jadeite colors are 100% natural and unenhanced. World-class jade carvers have already discovered this remarkable new material as Guatemala takes its place as a leading producer of beautiful gem-quality jadeite.

Reliable quantities of fine black jadeite from Guatemala are available in rough for carvings as well as in a range of cab and beads sizes. Black jadeite from the Motagua Valley area represents the creamiest, richest, and best black jadeite in the world, far exceeding Burma's darkest, which is gray and can only be sold as "charcoal."

Galactic Gold and *Rainbow Jadeite* are also available in rough for cutting and carving and as finished cabs from 8x8mm to 40x30mm.



Rainbow Jadeite Earrings

My First Day in Bangkok

By Martin Fuller

First of all, it can't be done. Don't do it. Don't even think about it. Stay with me. You'll understand shortly.

After more than 25 years in the jewelry business, I'd had it up to here with clients returning from the Orient, getting their jewelry appraised, and each and ever one exclaiming, "You're in the jewelry business and you haven't been to Bangkok?!!" I swore I'd throttle the next globe-trotter to utter those words, only to hear them next from a Thai travel agent



Tai Chi in Bangkok's equivalent of Central Park

who had such a deal for me. He had purchased a ruby in Thailand for his brother here in the State and he wanted an appraisal before delivering the prize. Unfortunately he'd been sold a flame-fusion synthetic and once he realized his predicament, he didn't need any throttling from me. He was doing a pretty good job on himself. He did have a great deal on a round-trip to Bangkok, however, and \$700 later, I had a ticket. It all happened so fast.

The trip to Bangkok is long and unforgiving. First you fly across the States, then across the Pacific (in my case, to Tokyo), then you board a jet to Bangkok. Four in-flight movies



Martin, Ted Themelis & Charlie Bieber

and 24 hours later, you land in Thailand. It is 10 p.m., but your brain and body are convinced that it's twelve hours different from what the sun, the moon, the stars and Immigration are telling you.

Through friends and colleagues, I had arranged a number of appointments over the course of my stay and as my time in country was short, I began early the next day.

My first priority was just to take in the exotic surroundings. The humidity was thick with the scent of Plumeria and city life. No matter what you remember of *The King and*



Bill Larsen, (center) owner of Pala Intl., wanders into my line of sight as the cops hold up their signs to change directions for rush hour traffic. At left is Nick, the demantoid garnet king.

I, the Bangkok of today is fueled on diesel and through its bloodstream course mosquito-like motorbikes, taxis, buses, trucks and "Tuk-Tuks," little three-wheeled motorized derbies for the very adventurous. March 1st, my first day in town, was a major Buddhist holy day and the numerous shrines were awash with the faithful paying tribute with offerings of flowers, incense and prayers. Two blocks from my residence (which is another story) was the "Central Park" of Bangkok. This park, landscaped with lakes, ponds, flower gardens, acacias and Banyan trees, was filled in the early morning with mixed groups



Cutting a Fine Burmese Ruby

of young and old, men and women, engaged in various social activities, some performing Tai Chi, Chi Gong, yoga and various martial arts, and some swing dancing, doing the cha-cha, even weight lifting — all outdoors and each to their own music.

My next appointment was to meet with a Burmese man named Sai Htoon, a British-schooled engineer and a factory owner in Bangkok. Sai Htoon was born in the Shan district of Burma near Mogoke and had numerous friends in the mining industry. In the 1960s, at the request of his friends, he helped to develop modern techniques for heat-treating ruby and sapphire. Sai Htoon introduced



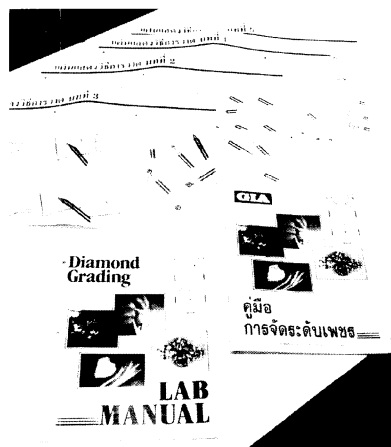
The Best Fried Bananas in Bangkok!

me to a family-run business on Silom Road in the Bangkok jewelry district (similar to West 47th Street in New York City) that specializes in high-end, unheated Burmese goods.

It's not yet noon on my first day and I'm seeing the best of the best: 10ct.-plus Burmese sapphires



Rubies, Sapphires & Spinel



Translating the Courses -- Easier Said Than Done

and rubies. Where does it go from here? We leave this meeting, my mind reeling, and as I walk from the private office to the reception room, I bump into Ted Themelis, whom some may recognize as the author of *The Heat Treatment of Ruby & Sapphire*. (Three weeks earlier, I had bumped into Ted in Tucson. Small world.) We arranged to meet, but due to some of the world's more hellacious traffic, appointments in Bangkok are pinpointed only as far as "a.m." or "p.m." So an indeterminate time later, we visited Ted's office in Bangkok where he and Sai Htoon traded gem treatment recipes.

Our next appointment was with Mr. Charlie Bieber of Precious Link, also specializing in fine ruby and sapphire. Precious Link is an arm of the Mouawad Group and is located in the Vora Wat Building on

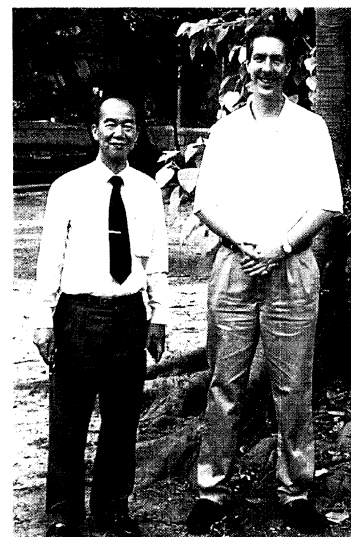


Chris Keenan, Director of GIA Thailand

the same floor with GemKey. While waiting to meet with Charlie, we were given a tour of the GemKey web-page and magazine publishing facilities, sure to be the subject of a future story.

The next stop was the Bisco Tower Building, home of GIA in Thailand. Chris Keenan, the director, had been one of my instructors years ago in New York and has been in Thailand for more than six years. He has been instrumental in the development of GIA's presence in Thailand. Chris was especially accommodating, giving us an impromptu tour of the facilities while his staff was busy indoctrinating a new group of students on their first day of class.

My first whirlwind day ended with a trip to the tailor's and a fitting for a custom-



Sai Htoon - My Friend and Guide

made suit. Hey, you never know when you might get back to Bangkok, so I may as well do it all! (Well, OK, not everything!)

My four remaining days were as crammed with activity as the first. If United Airlines had been able to accommodate me, I would have happily stayed on another four days. Even as it is, I've only scratched the surface here. However, it's 3 a.m., our sworn deadline impends, and I've run out of space. So, stay tuned for the further adventures of *Martin and the Jewels of Siam*.



Thai Fast Food

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The Critical Angle

By Martin Fuller

Greetings! Welcome to our first issue of 1999. If you weren't at the Tucson panel meeting you may not have heard that we received the "1998 Chapter Newsletter Award" at the GIA banquet in Tucson. We are very proud of this honor, and grateful to our chapter for its support, not only for articles provided by our members but also for the technical and education support the editors have received from the board, including classes in Pagemaker and Photoshop. This support is a critical factor in our winning this coveted award, as it has undoubtedly contributed toward the quality and esthetics of the publication.

As good looking as the publication is, its utilitarian and educational aspect is of utmost importance. That you, the reader gain from reading this newsletter is my greatest desire. It's good that it is fun to

read, as no matter how jam-packed with knowledge it might be, if it was a tedious read, it wouldn't be worth publishing. On the other hand, fun to read is one thing, but at a cost to the chapter of over \$1,000.00 a quarter, we need to get some feedback from you, the people footing the bill, that this newsletter is serving your needs.

Brenda and I each volunteer close to 40 hours of our time per issue, and we need to know that we are spending our time in accordance with your wishes. We like to think we work for you.

On another topic, while in Tucson, I was asked by Patrick Ball to sit in on the GIA Alumni Committee meetings, and I joined up with Richard Drucker and the "Participation Committee". A good bit of our meeting was dedicated to fine tuning the Carat Point program, including topics as "Grandfathering" carat points to past officers (not members at large). The most pertinent aspect of this topic was the

setting of a deadline for claiming points for past service, and that deadline is January 1, 2000. So all you past officers had best submit your request for points as soon as possible. The details of this fine-tuning of the Carat Program will soon be published by the home office, and will include details on point awards to non-alumni associates, such as FGA's. Ironically enough (and I still beg to differ, though I was voted down) though points are also available for publishing articles, no Carat Points are available to us lowly newsletter editors.

Another point Patrick Ball brought up was the concept of Chapter web pages, possibly in lieu of newsletters. I'm not sure how I feel about the "lieu" part, but perhaps in conjunction with a newsletter, such as GemKey is doing, now that may be the way to go. We're going to need a web guru to volunteer for that project. Anyone out there with the expertise and gumption, please give us a call.

The District of Gemology

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