



The District of Gemology

Volume 8, Number 1

Spring 2001

Tucson 2001 Panel *What's Hot, What's Not*

Once again, our expert panel convened to bring us up to date on what was hot and what was not in Tucson this year. The panel consisted of Fred Ward, Lois Berger, Davia Kramer, Bobby Mann, Helen Serras-Herman, Andy Herman and Courtland Lee

Fred Ward kicked off the discussion with a series of his inimitable shots of interesting things involving pearls. A slide of a frog made of Chinese freshwater stick pearls was particularly arresting as were shots of "Rosebuds," i.e., tissue-nucleated Chinese pearls that go awry for unknown reasons and produce a knobby surface. He and Lois Berger bought some supposedly tissue-nucleated Chinese pearls, sawed them in half and found that contrary to what is currently being maintained, the Chinese are indeed using bead-nucleation.

Moving on to other gems, he noted that there's a new jadeite mine in Burma. He showed large 16mm jadeite beads from this find, drilled and carved with a crosshatch pattern and selling for \$12K/strand wholesale. In Bali, there a new opal find yielding stones with a blonde coloration. Black and white diamonds are very big this year. The black ones are Australian brown Argyle diamonds that are irradiated to turn them black.

Another big item this year was red and green mottled ocean jasper from Madagascar. And he also saw

tsavorite earrings selling for \$5 a pair. Fred speculated that these were probably from material stolen from Campbell Bridges.

A series of colorful shots illustrated his point that the I-10 "strip" is now anything BUT gems. It has become an outdoor bazaar of anything and everything, undeniably colorful but not particular gemological.

Lois Berger was next, detailing her finds and conclusions on the subject of pearls. She noted that there was a lot of new high-end merchandise. A great deal more Chinese high-end pearls will be coming on the market in the next few years and will be exported through Hong Kong. There won't be any supply/demand control on this new merchandise and so the market will bottom out. Production is likely to go from today's 1200 tons to 2000 tons in the next two years. "We will be knee-deep in pearls," she said.

Companies that are not financially strong will have big problems.

Foreseeing this, some dealers (such as Sealink) are dropping their prices now because they don't want to be caught with a lot of inventory.

China still has a lot of low-end goods and these have dropped slightly in price as dealers try to unload them, but the very small size goods have disappeared. Farmers simply don't want to bother with it. Instead, they want to leave the mol-

Continued on page 6



Davia, Lois, Fred and Andy telling it like it is.

Michele Zabel

President's Letter by Carolyn Chappell



Seems to me like we are getting a lot of interesting information we can use as well as nifty slide shows from the speakers we are having.....so if you haven't been able to make some of the meetings this year, those of us that have..... are getting ahead of you!

And don't forget Bobby Mann's all day Ivory Seminar coming up on Saturday, May 12th!

The Board tries to bring you a broad spectrum of speakers to enhance our education and give you the opportunity to ask questions. So.....try to come and join us each month in the spirit of learning more about our gemology field and also experience the fellowship with each other.

We have been fortunate to have several new people at each meeting this year, and I heartily welcome them and hope they join our ranks permanently. Currently, we have almost 90 members renewed for the year. We are in the process of getting our nametags ordered, and you should be wearing them soon. Hope to see you at the next meeting!

Carolyn Chappell

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Dana Schorr on Tanzanite

Dana Schorr, our first speaker of the new year, gave us a superb survey of that lovely gem tanzanite and its homeland Tanzania. Schorr has spent 20 years in the gem industry and has been traveling to East Africa since 1991. His talk was a rich blend of gemology and the history and society of an area of the world he clearly loves.

From the tip of South Africa to the tip of Somalia, East Africa is yielding gemstones. (In addition to tanzanite, Tanzania produces tourmaline, alexandrite, chrysoprase, chalcedony, prasopal, spinel, pyrope, spessertine garnet, amethyst, sapphire, iolite and diamond.) In the period from 1976 to 1985, however, there was very little mining. Even Tiffany, which had been first to promote tanzanite, dropped out because they couldn't get supplies.

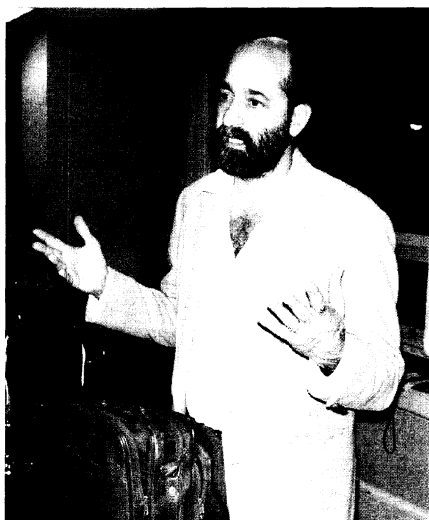
In the late 1980s, however, the Tanzanian government lost control of the mining area and about twenty thousand miners descended on it and began mining on their own. As a result, the market was flooded and prices dropped in half. In 1991, the government regained control of the area and tried to formalize the situation by giving people legal permission to mine and breaking the area up into individual holdings. Most of these miners use very primitive techniques. They are small scale, transients, moving from place to place as discoveries occur.

The Merilani mining area is divided into these blocks:

- Block A has the deepest deposit.
- Block B produced the finest color and is also where the 1998 floods began.
- Block C, the Afgem mine, is the nearest to the surface and the only mechanized mine.

The mines go down about 200 meters. Tanzanite might go down about 500 meters but nobody really knows because no one has drilled that deep as yet. If indeed the deposits do go down to 500 meters, Schorr thinks that about 30% of the whole world's supply of tanzanite has been mined.

After the stones are faceted, all are heated. Natural color does exist but even that will be improved by heating. Heating is done to about 550-650 C. (If it's heated over 650 C., it will go colorless.) The enhancement is stable. Some tanzanite is also being fracture filled.



Dana Schorr

Fred Ward

On April 9, 1998, there was a huge rain. The barrier across a major gully burst and completely flooded three mines in the gully below it. The shafts in that area are like an ant mine, going every which way. The water went into those three pits, spread into the network of underground tunnels and filled them from the bottom. Miners were swallowed up from below. Some 65-70 people died in the flood. The mines were shut down for about two weeks but everything is back in operation now. There was no effect on production. The drop in supply was not due to the flood; production had already slowed because the material was not being found.

Doing business in Tanzania is a matter of

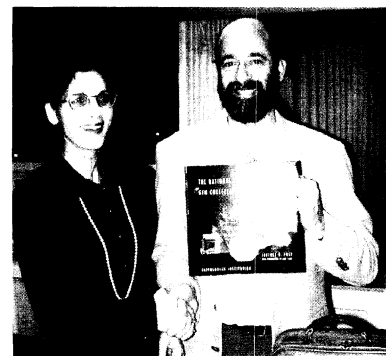
having the right contacts since the rules are pretty loose. The Masai are the main dealers. They will not go underground; other tribes do the digging. Most of the larger stones are now being cut in Africa.

Most of the faceters in Africa are Sri Lankan because they have long experience and history in faceting. In the past, the stone was oriented toward the blue axis so that the finished stone would look like sapphire. Now, however, the material is too expensive and so they go for yield.

Top color is so rare that the price can go as high as you like. However, there's no such thing as a "best color." The rarest color for tanzanite is a saturated blue, but that doesn't mean it's the best. Size is important up to a three-carat gemstone and a quality cut can increase the value by 20%.

Schorr stressed that the most important factor in valuing tanzanite, ruby and sapphire is *full spectrum light*. However, he noted, the spectra of GIA's lights vary, which means that GIA's diamond-grading system is based on a false lighting standard.

About 20-40 kilos/month are coming out of the mines now but most is poor quality. Overall production is down 80% from its peak. Schorr's purchases of first color are down from 30% to 10%. Afgem thinks it can expect 20 years of production. With at least \$10M invested, they are unlikely to drop their prices.



With Kusam

Fred Ward



*Ever-
photogenic
Bobby*

Bobby Mann may be a past president of this chapter, but there is nothing past about him. He operates very much in the present and the future. His ivory workshop will be held this spring, he will be reinstating the chapter library, and he is already calling for donations for our 2001 auction. His enthusiasm and skill as both auctioneer and organizer have been instrumental in making the auction a highly successful event. He is a charter diploma member of the GIA Alumni Association and a charter member of the Washington D.C. Chapter (1982), which he served as president in 1994-1995 and 1998-1999. It is easy to see why he was the GIA Alumni Association Regional Member of the Year in 1997.

A native Washingtonian, Bobby grew up in Southeast D.C. and has always lived within a few miles of the city. He graduated from St. Francis Xavier Grade School in 1950 and St. Johns College High School (a military school) in 1954. He was a housepainter with his father's painting business from the time he could hold a paint brush, but it was not his life's ambition.

His first set of wheels in high school was a 1928 Ford Model A Sedan. Then after high school he bought his first motorcycle, a 1948 Harley Davidson, which he soon traded for a 1950 Harley Davidson. He started hill-climbing competition and won his first trophy in 1955. He continued competing in hill climbs, scrambles and field meets, winning more trophies, until the late 1950s, when he became a professional racer in American Motorcycle Association sanctioned events, competing at all levels up to expert in both dirt track and road races.

Bobby gave up racing in 1963 when he joined the D.C. Fire Department. Over 28 years, he worked his way up the ranks all the way from Private to Captain. When

he was assigned for two years to the ambulance service in S.E. (including during the 1968 riots), he delivered many babies and tended victims of shootings, stabbings, accidents, overdoses, etc. His Silver Medal for Valor in 1972 was awarded for rescuing children at a fire.

Kitty and he met at a motorcycle race and they eventually married on January 28, 1967. Bobby and Kitty each have a son from previous marriages, and they consider their pets, Dilly, a black toy poodle Kitty's son gave them for Christmas, and a 17-year-old cat named Tunis, an important part of their lives. In the 1970s, he and Kitty dug and collected old bottles, which inspired their interest in antiques. They were almost sent to jail

Member Profile

Bobby Mann

*by
Cathy Gaber*

by a sheriff in Loudoun County, VA for digging in an old dump near a graveyard. (It didn't help any that Kitty was packing a hand gun!) Bobby told him that he was a D.C. firefighter and pleaded successfully for their release.

They have dealt in antiques and period jewelry since 1970 using the name "Nothing New." They always look for the unusual in small antiques, glass, pottery, toys, etc. Up to 1999, antique shows, a shop and conducting Estate Sales kept them busy. They also managed Jewelry Store Liquidations for Michael Sales during the 1980s and 1990s. Bobby was involved in appraisals, consultations and identification of gemstones from 1979-1995. They now deal only on eBay's internet auctions.

Bobby joined the International Society

of Appraisers in 1982 as a charter member of the National Capital Area Chapter. He achieved full member status through testing in 1986 and completed the Appraisal of Gemstone course in 1991. He was the chapter president 1988-1990. He received the Distinguished Service Award in 1993, the Meritorious Service Award 1991-1992 and the Lamp of Knowledge Award 1992-1993 from NCAC-ISA. He received his Graduate Gemologist Diploma from GIA in February, 1982 and his Professional Gemologist Diploma from the Columbia School of Gemology (Tony Bonanno) in July, 1983. He also belongs to GAGB, Gemological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory of Great Britain.

Samples from Bobby's collections have often been displayed at our chapter meetings. Colorless gemstones appeal to him due to the difficulty in identifying them, and his collection has grown to nearly 100 varieties. He uses his unusual ivories and lookalikes in his talks and hands-on workshops on ivory ID. In May, 1996 he co-founded the International Ivory Society with Bob Weisblut. Bobby produces Ivory Comparison ID Kits with samples of real and imitation ivory, and he is writing a book on Ivory ID, which he hopes to finish later this year.

Bobby's decisive, quick thinking, take-charge attitude, no doubt honed while racing and working at the fire department, contribute to his practical approach to the needs of the chapter.



This is Dilly (or if you want to be formal about it, Piccadilly), the newest member of the Mann family. (She really does have a nose!) Kitty reports that Dilly's Heart Belongs to Bobby.

On Monday evening, March 19th, in one of the loveliest voices it has ever been my pleasure to listen to, Gail Brett Levine let us through the minefields of detecting value — or the lack of it! — in jewelry auctions. Through her expert eyes, we began to see the telltales and giveaways that allow us to spot the fakes and the pastiches and save our money for the good stuff.

First and foremost, she declared, “Take nothing for granted!” Be vigilant, and *be there*, either in person or through a knowledgeable representative. Above all, “Don’t rely on the auction catalog.” The auction house employee doing the catalog entries is its lowest new hire who probably knows little or nothing about the jewelry being described. Consequently, both descriptions and condition reports are highly undependable. Be aware that the only thing in the catalog that the auction house will stand behind is whatever is in *bold-face* type. Everything else is in the category of *caveat emptor* and if it’s wrong, you can’t go back at them for it.

If the pre-sale estimate seems too low for the caliber of the piece as it is described in the catalog, it’s your tipoff that there’s



Are we maybe dubious?

Fred Ward

a problem. You immediately have to ask yourself, “What’s wrong with this picture?” The answer can repeatedly turn out to be, “A lot!”

Tips for the neophyte detective:

- If the stones are in *ajouré* settings, turn the piece over; the edges of the ajouring should be crisp, clean and regular, not ragged and sloppily outlined.
- Hold cameos up to the light to reveal any cracks.
- To spot a Thai replica of an older piece, look at it edge-on; a Thai piece will be very thin because when they copy from the catalog, they can’t transfer the one-dimensional catalog image to three dimensions.

Gail Brett Levine

What’s Wrong With This Picture?

- In authentic Art Nouveau *plique-à-jour*; the enamel colors will shade from one into the next; in new pieces, the color will appear in blotches of solid color. In authentic pieces, the enamel is contained neatly within its wires but in new copies, it will spill over onto the wires.
- Gold discoloration is a big warning sign. Gold does discolor but not easily.

Gail then illustrated these stern maxims with a series of slides showing pieces recently sold at auction. First was a succession of “married” pieces, some skillfully, others coarsely done. In some, pieces from different periods joined nicely to produce something new and handsome. But others showed clumsy soldering, repeated repairs, elements glued in when soldering had failed, and dark spots where gold had been discolored.



Listening Attentively

Fred Ward

None of these faults had been revealed in the catalog descriptions. But those descriptions did sometimes contain veiled allusions that could tip off the vigilant reader. For example, the plating on one piece was described as “white-accented yellow gold.” This actually meant rhodium plating. Another shoddily made bracelet was described as “bearing the signature of David Webb.” But that phrase was not in bold type and so the auction house wasn’t committing itself to its accuracy. In fact, the signature was on a plaque soldered onto the bracelet, not directly on the metal itself.

Another series of slides dealt with identifying genuine period pieces versus modern copies. As each slide went up, she asked the audience, “Old or new?” Then she pointed out the telltale characteristics that revealed each piece’s ancestry. To point the contrast with the fakes and pastiches, she showed slides of the genuine article such as a ravishing Art Nouveau dragonfly, a breathtaking Cartier *tutti frutti* bracelet, and a genuine Victorian micromosaic. Once you’ve seen the genuine item, you wonder how you could possibly be taken in by the fakes. But as Gail Levine repeatedly pointed out to us, it’s not only possible, it happens a lot and we ended the evening grateful to her for making us so much wiser and harder to fool.



Fred Ward
Lois, our Pearl Maven

Tucson - from page 1:

lucks in the water, produce better pearls and make more money.

Meanwhile, prices have become very irregular with no set price per strand. Each was an individual decision by the vendor. Furthermore, the high-end strands are old merchandise, showing that they haven't found buyers. Mid-range and high-range prices are holding, however.

There are no keshi in Chinese freshwater pearls. Chinese goods are keshi-like. (Real keshi is created after the first harvest when the mollusk can sometimes be closed up again to regrow pearls that are malformed.) A Chinese strand of keshi is now comparable in price to a nice strand of South Sea pearls.

As she does every year, Lois has compiled a detailed report on the current situation in pearls. That report available from her: Lois H. Berger, c/o Fuller & Assocs., 7921 Jones Branch Drive, Suite 311, McLean, VA 22102.

Next up was **Davia Kramer**. She said that Ken Scarlett had told her that 80% of his work at the lab these days consists of de-

termining if the stone has been heat treated. This is reflected in the fact that a big price difference is beginning to show between natural and heat-treated stones.

There's been a big new demantoid find in Namibia yielding stones up to 10 carats. They have little square dark inclusions rather than the familiar horse-tail inclusions. Meanwhile, Russian demantoid is being greened, while tourmaline and alexandrite are being fracture filled.

She and Martin Fuller had taken a pair of NAJA classes at Tucson. The first day was devoted to Lucent (synthetic dia-



Michele Zubel
Fred and Lois share a laugh

monds), Nova (neon greens) and Belataire (diamonds turned from brown to D/E/F under high pressure.)

Lucent is making blue-red and yellow diamonds. Under ultraviolet light, the reds make a beautiful cross. Nova HTHP (high-temperature high-pressure process) makes yellow diamonds. Under ultraviolet light, they show green. They can take a P-to-Q diamond and if it survives the process, turn it into a fancy yellow in only three minutes. The stones come out coated in black so they must be repolished. Belataire can use only Type 2 diamonds.

The second NAJA class was about how

to be an expert witness and survive. Important points:

- 1) Get a retainer from the lawyer.
- 2) Make sure your resume is correct. Include your education and accomplishments. Make sure the boilerplate refers to the subject of the case.
- 3) Remove the royal "we".
- 4) Proof-read your report.
- 5) Watch out for your mannerisms.
- 6) Listen to the question and always pause before you answer to give your attorney time to object.
- 7) Let your lawyers prepare you.
- 8) Avoid absolute words.
- 9) Ask for a glass of water.
- 10) Don't let the lawyer abuse you because he will!

Bobby Mann followed to talk about his ruling passion: ivory. Many dealers brought mammoth tusks to Tucson but mammoth ivory is a by-product of gold mining. So when gold prices are up, more mammoth ivory comes to market.

Alaska and Washington dealers sell mammoth jewelry. The Indonesians and Chinese are carving lots of hippo and mam-



Michele Zubel
Andy, self-confessed "Opal-Holic"



Bobby Mann, the Ivory Man

Michele Zabel

moth ivory — they're even doing billikens! He didn't see any elephant ivory except in antique jewelry

Andy Herman and Helen Serras-Herman talked about the doings in the town of Quartzsite, north of Tucson. Its population is about 2000 most of the year but from mid-November to mid-January, it's inundated with some million people. All the shows are outdoors. The main event sells everything — even rocks!

Prices in Tucson are wholesale and retail. In Quartzsite, they're rockhound prices — midway between. There was lots of boulder opal and lots of Yowah conglomerate

pieces. (Yowah nuts are ironstone on the surface but when that surface is cut open, the center can be opal. You can't get whole ones, though, because the miner break them all open looking for the opal.)

Briolettes in gem beads were the hottest thing in beads this year. As in Tucson, there was a lot of ocean jasper but the quality varied widely. The labradorite was very good this year. The Afghan indicolite was a beautiful translucent green, the best Andy's seen in years.



Michele Zabel

Paparazzo Bobby

worms. The wormholes are later filled with fossilized material.

They bought very little faceting rough. It was so expensive that it didn't make sense to go to the expense of having it faceted when you can buy it cut.

Courtland Lee, rockhound extraordinaire, talked about how the Chinese and Russians want cash only. They



Fred Ward

**Michele and Helen
at the exhibit table**

don't buy anything, just dump their stuff and leave. You get some super bargains from them but who knows how long that will last?

Fred Ward wrapped up the proceedings by asking what the audience thought the going price was on high-luster black Tahitian pearl earrings? About \$125, was the consensus. "Well," he said, holding up a board filled with gleaming black studs, "the Chinese have got the look without the price — \$1 each. And they're hematite! And they're perfect!"



Davia and Bobby

Michele Zabel



Michele Zabel

Courtland, Resident Rockhound

The Bulletin Board

UPCOMING SPRING SEMINAR: IVORY AND ITS SUBSTITUTES

Date: Saturday, May 12th, 2001
Time: 10 am - 4 pm
Place: 7425 Democracy Boulevard
 Bethesda, MD
Price: \$25.00 per person

Bobby Mann and Bob Weisblut, co-founders of the International Ivory Society, will present a chapter-sponsored, all-day workshop on "Ivory and its Substitutes" on May 12th, 2001. Class size will be limited to 25. If demand warrants, the seminar will be repeated. Time, place and price above. The seminar will be conducted with slides and will include hands-on work with comparison samples. Each participant will receive a workbook to use and take home.

You will learn nondestructive testing techniques for identifying the following natural ivories: Elephant, Mammoth, Walrus, Hippo, Whale, Narwhal, Warthog, and Boar, Seal and Elk Teeth, as well as rare examples of Babirusa and Dugong. The seminar will also include natural ivory substitutes Bone, Antler, Tagua and Hornbill Ivory, Shell, Coral, Meerschaum, Ivoryite, Chalcedony and Amber, plus manufactured ivory look-alikes celluloid and plastic.

We will have raw and carved examples of all common natural ivories and some rare examples, also natural and manufactured look-alikes and we will demonstrate the use of a blacklight LWUV with comparison samples.

The following tools may be helpful, but not necessary, to bring:
 Optivisor (low power)
 3X eye loupe or loupe
 3X hand held magnifier
 10X eye loupe or loupe

For more information, contact Bobby Mann: Tel: (301) 894 2016 or e-mail: mannivorymann@aol.com.

Send your e-mail addresses to Cathy Gaber for the next Directory

Cathy Gaber would like to include our e-mail addresses in the next directory and asks us to send them to her so that she can distribute them to other chapter members. Send them to her at <bodhi@his.com>

Bruce and Cathy Gaber Honored Once Again

*At the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show banquet, **Bruce Paul Gaber** received the First Place Award in the digital category of the Werner Lieber photo contest sponsored by Friends of Mineralogy. The photo was a composite of two views of a galena crystal from Dal'negorsk.*

*At the January meeting, the Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Washington, DC, presented **Cathy Gaber** with the annual Honorary Lifetime Member Award for 2000. Her contributions to the club include two years as Secretary, six years as 3rd VP for programs, numerous quizzes, member profiles, video reviews and reports.*

*Other GIA chapter members who have received this award are **Al and Barbara DeMilo** in 1997 and **Helen Serras-Herman** in 1998.*

Oops! We goofed!

*In the last issue's Honor Roll, we misspelled the name of the generous donor from Floryna Gems. He is:
Gabino (Lou) Flores.*

Center for Jewelry Studies website

For a terrific crash course on everything you ever wanted to know about jewelry, go to Christie Romero's knockout "Center for Jewelry Studies" website at <<http://www.center4jewelrystudies.org/index.html>> It's a great site filled with Christie's trademark blend of erudition and sparkle. Included are complete program information and online registration for Christie's 3rd West Coast Antique & Period Jewelry Seminar, and a reference page full of useful information and links to other antique & period jewelry-related sites. There's also an online order form for signed copies of Warman's Jewelry, 2nd edition and a forum for antique and period jewelry discussion and Q & A at the center's page on Coolboard.com.

No Butterfly Ballots Here!

by
Fred Ward

Every two years at about this time our chapter's Board of Directors turns its collective attention to its single most important task, nominating a slate of officers. In order for the chapter to survive and thrive it must be managed skillfully, creatively, and financially responsibly.

To retain our unique position as the only GIA chapter in the world holding twelve meetings a year, we have to raise more than \$7000 annually, keep meetings lively and interesting by finding fascinating speakers, and maintain our membership at more than a hundred. All these tasks are handled by a dedicated group of

chapter volunteers that slowly evolves biennially as some members retire and others are elected.

We have four elected officers and several appointed members of the Board. Existing officers may run again for the same office or for a different position. Usually one or two stay for another two-year term, a system that has turned out to be very successful because it provides continuity. But in order to have new ideas and new personalities on the Board, the existing officers are constantly scanning the chapter for potential candidates.

Leading the group currently is President Carolyn Chappell. Her job is to oversee all chapter activities. Carolyn was presi-



*Chapter President &
Prominent Barbershopper
Carolyn Chappell*

form various tasks that arise each year. Currently Michele Zabel and Fred Ward fill those positions. Newsletter editor and auction manager are vital jobs that directly impact the chapter's success. Brenda Forman and Bobby Mann hold those two titles.



*Getting Down to Business
The Gang's All Here*

Beginning at the next quarterly Board meeting, we will begin looking for the officers to serve for 2002-2003. As usual, recommendations are welcome. Only by having a creative and energetic Board can we keep our chapter growing and improving. It's everyone's responsibility to help. In this we are all volunteers working together.

dent once before, when the chapter first formed. Kusam Malhotra is Vice President. This term is her first service as an officer. The main role of the VP is securing our speakers and organizing chapter programs. Melanie Marts is chapter Secretary. Her tasks are many. She arranges accommodations for speakers and lecture rooms for meetings. She handles the membership mailing list. She keeps track of attendance and is our liaison with GIA in California. Toby Fitzkee serves as Treasurer. As such he is responsible for collecting and disbursing our money. He also sells our raffle tickets.

Board appointments fill other important positions. Former officers fill two Member-At-Large positions. Their jobs are to provide continuity, to advise, and to per-



*Melanie Marts, Appraiser &
Chapter Secretary*



*Kusam Malhotra,
our Elegant Veep*

DONORS OF \$100 OR MORE TO THE 2000 HOLIDAY AUCTION. THANKS!

Lois H. Berger, G.G.

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**Howard and Pearl
Milliren**

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