



Southwest Washington Gold Prospectors News

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SW Washington Gold Prospectors

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July Raffle Winners — by Kameron Mitchell

I always put our raffle winners on the front page of our Newsletter because it is THEY (as well as those who don't win) who really make this club provide the education and services to our community. Thank you all again.

Nugget winner: John Rogers

Gem winners: Ron Thomkins, Frank Knighton, and Miss Ellie. (Becky Beck and Steve Lewin accepted for her.)



John Rogers



Frank Knighton



Becky & Steve



Ron Thomkins

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Dreams of Alaskan Gold — by Kameron Mitchell

As a child growing up in the 50s, I was weaned on the cowboy shows such as Hopalong Cassidy, Sky King, Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger, and the like. Often there were episodes concerning an old prospector striking it rich, or thieves stealing gold, etc. I remember one movie where a tree was blown over in a storm and nuggets fell out of the root wad. Well, that did it for me. I caught gold fever! Being under ten it wasn't likely I would have many opportunities to search for gold, but I always was a carrier of the disease.

As I got older, I was told, and convinced, that all the gold had been found. So I shelved my desires to hunt for gold. Around 1986, I saw a TV program with George "Buzzard" Massie showing gold he found and how to get it. I watched his shows as often as I could for a couple of years. The desire to gold prospect came back full force.

I finally ordered my "Buzzard Spe-

cial" and joined the Gold Prospectors of America. I found gold the first time out. In 1993, I decided to become a Gold Life Member of the GPAA.

From the first shows, I wanted to follow in ol' Mr. Massie's footsteps and join the Alaska Expedition. Being a humble, working man trying to support a family and provide them with all their needs, I put off that dream. Well, after about 50 years of work, I finally retired. My retirement gift to me was a dream vacation: two weeks on the GPAA Alaska Expedition!! I would have liked more time, but my economic situation wouldn't allow it. For me, it was expensive, but I had to do it now! Put it off longer, and who knows? Maybe I'd have a heart attack or another stroke and not be able to go. You just never know.

On July 20, 2013, my dream had finally begun! I left Portland Oregon for Nome Alaska with a stop in Anchorage.

Our Boeing 737 made a valiant effort, with the help of a pushing full moon to catch up with the westering sun, but it was a race it couldn't win.

The plane left partly cloudy Anchorage and flew by the impressive peaks of the Alaskan Range toward the rainy skies over Nome. There was blue above and gray below in flight; there was gray above and green below upon landing. The fog, mist, and rain were okay though, because I was looking forward to plenty of sunshine in my gold pan in the coming two weeks!

I was met at the Nome Airport by the Creosus Camp host, Carl Isovitch. The camp co-host and Carl's wife Janet remained in camp preparing for the day ahead.

Looking around the airport area, I could see three old bucket-line dredges standing forlornly in the endless fog dreaming of their golden past.

Dreams of Alaskan Gold (continued)

I, and soon to be my good friend Jeff from Gresham, OR, rode from the airport on a paved road for a few minutes and then we turned onto the unpaved Teller Highway for the next sixteen miles or so. We turned off the highway onto a bumpy, single-lane track and drove very slowly for the next 4 to 5 miles. Our kidneys hoped for at least a few minutes of smooth road way but they never received their wish. We crossed a half dozen creeks and streams.

We crested the last rise and I caught my first glimpse of Camp Creosus perched above the chum salmon laden Cripple River. This was only the second full season at the camp, which could be seen in the new-looking plywood hooches and chow hall.

We quickly got checked in, our hooches assigned, and our indispensable ATVs checked out to us. We moved into our 4-person hooch and quickly settled in.

We discovered that a "common" highbanker operation begins on Sundays and ends at Wednesday noon. All we needed to do was spend four hours shoveling gravels into buckets, feeding them into a highbanker, or clearing the tailings, and we would receive a part of the "draw" or portion of all the gold dug by all the participants from all the camps who worked on the common on Friday evening at the main Cripple River camp.

At Creosus, we received one hot prepared meal a day, usually at 6:00 pm. The rest of the time, we had 24-hour access to eat "off the wall". This was one wall in the chow hall which held several well-stocked shelves of all kinds of cereals, teas, coffee, soups, stews, juices, snack, and more. For me, this meal plan was perfect. I could save time by eating at my dig instead of being interrupted to go to the chow hall to eat.

I was hoping to do a lot of dredging. The Arctic Creek dredge camp was back down the road about a mile. After, the common, I went there and got

assigned to a dredge. It was cold, foggy, and misty, but not unbearable yet. Although when the breeze picked up or a rain storm came through, miserable approached closely. Much needed are a good raincoat and hip waders of rain pants.

As I awaited day 2 and dredging, I had to see about getting some gold. I found a promising spot and filled a pan with gravels. I panned it out and found about a dozen colors. Fantastic! My first Alaskan Gold!

I got up in the middle of my first night at Creosus to answer the call of nature and nature was standing 10 feet outside my hooch door in the form of an Arctic fox who had been going through the slim pickings of the garbage. Other animals seen at or near the camp were ptarmigans, squirrels, a moose, a musk ox, and many other bird types. The Alaskan state bird, the mosquito (ha ha) was so soft present! However, with a deet lotion, Thermacel, and/or head net, they are pretty much held a bay.

I went dredging below the Arctic Creek dredge camp. In the few days we worked, we opened up a fairly large and deep hole. I had difficulty finding partners or tenders for this operation. Dredging alone can be dangerous, although out of necessity I did it a few days. I got down through the overburden to the pay layer but didn't get to punch through to bedrock. Those who may follow have a great hole to work with plenty of gold nearby!

The water is pretty cold. I was only able to stay under the water for 2 to 2 1/2 hours at a time. If you wish to dredge, you must take your own 7 mil (or greater) wet suit, mask, regulator, and so on. Weights are generally available. There are a very limited number of these items available to check out.

We all go on the Alaska Expedition for the adventure, experience, excitement, and, of course, gold. By day three, I realized that I wasn't going to find nuggets or pickers, but there would be plenty of flakes and fine gold. However, by day 4, I was already satis-

fied. I was having a great time and the beauty of the lad, the experience, and fun are other types of gold, perhaps more valuable than the gold itself.

Friday is the day of the draw from the common operations. We at Creosus had three ways to get there: 1) by truck which had a limited capacity and which was a 2 1/2 hour trip through Nome and then 12 miles down the beach; 2) the same trip by ATV, which is a bit quicker by about 30 mins (if the Penny River is not too high!); or 3) by ATV over the trail. The trail is not for the inexperienced, physically challenged, or unadventurous riders. I can say I rode that trail once, and it is doubtful I'll do it again!

I, and a couple of Creosus friends had a conversation with Cyndi Massie before the spaghetti dinner. What a pretty, kind, and nice woman. Then Tom came along and we moved our conversation outside for pictures and more conversation. I didn't realize how big Tom was until I stood next to him. He was a full head taller and somewhat wider than I. We all enjoyed our time with these two people who were very generous with their time.

The draw we all anticipated came after the EXCELLENT spaghetti dinner. The draw is always a fun, expectant, and exciting time. The Creosus bunch was a very lucky group. They selected numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 13! Good gold and concentrates was handed out to all the common participants. (As an aside, the second week Creosus camp drew number 1 again! This time it was drawn by the father of the man who won it the previous week!)

The next stop was the Saloon for fun and the talent contest. As is customary, Perry Massie opened the talent show and evening with his rendition of "North to Alaska". He has a very fine voice!

Day 6 saw me rise early and begin highbanking in a claim abandoned by a father and son who were leaving that day. I reclaimed it. The afternoon saw me dredging again. The second week I alternated between highbanking and

(Continued on page 4)

Concentrates — Meeting Minutes Highlights

Business Meeting 7/14/13 (unofficial minutes)

A total of 66 persons, including 9 visitors and guests, signed the attendance sheets.

The secretary read the minutes of the June 9, 2013 regular meeting. A correction was noted to the name of the assistant Facebook administrator. The minutes were approved as corrected.

The treasurer reported the total of donations and expenses. His report was accepted as presented.

Safety officer Randy Harper reminded everyone to stay out of the heat as much as possible, and be sure to bring plenty of water. We now have a bag for our first aid kit, which will be brought to every outing. There are medical information sheets to be filled out and returned to the safety officer if you have any medical issues that might arise at an outing. Also, at this time of the year, watch out for ticks and rattlesnakes.

Librarian Ernie Stinson reported that library materials are available for members with a club card.

Sunshine Person and Club Historian Becky Beck will be taking a group photo of attendees at this meeting for our scrapbook. One card has been sent out to a member.

Webmaster Rosalie Mitchell reported that pictures from outings have been added to the website.

Newsletter editor Kameron Mitchell reported that he may be moving out of the state within a few months, so a replacement editor is needed. See him if you may be interested and have questions.

Education Myron Hastings stated that he will be presenting information on upgrading your prospecting skills after the break today.

Facebook Linda Erickson reported that the site is growing with more members. There are two sites, one public and one private.

Unfinished Business

President Lewis reported that he had received an email from GPAA that the club has about 250,000 points to be used for GPAA merchandise.

Stickers with the club logo are now available for a donation of \$2 each.

The Longview Library educational event is set for July 30. Sign-up sheets for participating at this event are in the back of the room. More help is needed, as there are now about 500 children and their parents signed up to attend. The event has been expanded to start at 2:00, so set-up of equipment can start at noon. The event is at 1600 Louisiana Street in Longview.

New Business

Kameron Mitchell reported that he has tickets for

the PLP raffle, with the drawing to be held on July 18. Also, he still has a few GPAA membership kits available.

During the meeting break, Kameron Mitchell demonstrated the operation of his Catch-It II water table.

Announcements

The Blue Moon outing at the end of July will be re-scheduled.

Per a newspaper article dated July 5, 2013, the Oregon DEQ announced it will issue only 850 more permits for dredging. Already-issued permits are apparently grandfathered in. The current DEQ rules expire on December 31, 2013 and it is unknown what the rules will look like next year.

Steve Lewin is planning some beach mining. Those going will need a Discover Pass or pay for camping or parking. Tom Fest announced he lives about 40 miles from Cape Disappointment and will allow rigs to park or camp there, then carpool to the beach site.

The barbeque outing at Lewisville Park on August 17 will include games like horseshoes and bingo. Food has already been signed up for. Tables and chairs are available but you may want to bring your own chair.

For an outing on August 4

at Daybreak Park, Steve Lewin will bring a trommel for a common operation. Chris and Becky Beck will bring a highbanker for another common operation.

For an outing on July 20 at Copper Creek, it is suggested that you do not wear black or bright colored shirts due to insect issues. Be sure to bring your own lunch and beverages.

The D&K dredging class will be set for a date in August.

Education

Myron Hastings presented information on upgrading your prospecting process. Be sure to always carry two 5-gallon buckets with screens like 8 mesh to eliminate large rocks. Work on the inside curve of a stream and downstream of any in-river obstacles. First step may be to use a metal detector to locate potential gold. If using an in-river sluice up to 36 inches long, use a heavy rock or log to hold it down, and maybe use a black plastic bag to direct water to the sluice. Paydirt is usually in the 6 inches above bedrock, or in crevices. The last step in your process would be panning your concentrates.

The gold nugget was won by John Rogers. Gemstones were won by Frank Knighton, Becky Beck and Ron Tompkins.



Dreams of Alaskan Gold (continued)

dredging, spending most of my time highbanking. I worked at some aspect of the prospecting process usually from 7:00 am and you might still see me at the panning table at midnight. By the end of the second week, I was getting

some pretty good gold.

My only regret is I couldn't dredge as long or as often as I would have liked. I would say that dredging provides the opportunity to find the most gold.

This was a trip of a lifetime and my

dreams were nearly fulfilled. (I would have liked to have found a nugget.) On my way out of camp heading to the airport, we saw Tom, his kids, and the film crew go down to Arctic Creek to dredge. I can't wait to see that episode to see how they did!

SWWGP Copper Creek Outing — by Ernie Stinson

I arrived at 6:30 am Saturday July 20, 2013 at the Copper Creek GPAA claim located in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington. SWWGP club member Steve Lewin has the claim downstream from the GPAA claim to the mouth of the creek.

No other club members arrived until about 8:00 am or so, but that was alright because I spent the time talking to a family that was camping there. I invited them to our August 11, chapter meeting.

There were about 28 chapter

members at this outing and one other prospector that stopped by and talked to us. A safety talk was given before the prospecting began on things to be aware of for safety's sake.

The water was down and was just right for prospecting for gold. Everyone enjoyed themselves playing in the rocks and water just like the little kids in the playground sandbox I remember from my younger days.

I enjoyed taking pictures of everyone; however there was one place that I couldn't get to because I would

have had to climb down about 40 feet with a rope. (It seemed to me like a mile.) Going down was easy but the trip back up was the hard part. I'm a little too old for something like that anymore. So I watched our president Al Lewis and a few others go down. I was ready with my camera in hand to see someone slip and land on their you know what, but no one did. Darn it!! Ha ha.

May your pan be full of that yellow stuff we call GOLD.



Promising Prospects — Outings & Events

Upcoming Meetings:

August 11, 2013

September 8, 2013

Upcoming Outings:

August 17, 2013 BBQ

SWWGP OUTINGS

As of this printing date, there is only one outing that I know about. However, there will be many opportunities to learn about the environmentally sound methods today's miner use to extract precious metals at the meetings and at other official functions. There may also be opportunities to learn about the history of prospecting in our local area.

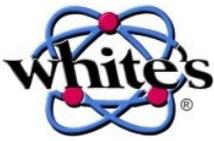
Our **Annual SWWGP BBQ** is scheduled for 17 August. An excellent covered site has been reserved named "Dogwood" at Lewisville Park just north of Battle Ground, WA. There is running water, picnic tables, restrooms nearby, and easy access to the river for panning and sluicing. Dredging season ends on the August 15, so that will not be available at this outing. We'll see you on Saturday!

Check us out online at www.swwgoldprospectors.org

The Tailings Pile — Other Notes of Interest

- **Become a GPAA member!** Membership kits are now available from the Treasurer, Kameron Mitchell.
- Don't forget to bring your items to the swap table to either sell or trade. Remember your donation to the club for each item you sell.
- All members in good standing may advertise for free. Send or give the editor your want ad or for sale ad.
- Remember, we have an appliance, metals, and aluminum can drive. Please bring in all your old appliances, scrap metals, and crushed aluminum cans for selling to a recycler. All proceeds are to go to the club. Thanks to all who have done so to date.
- Be sure to always sign in at meetings and outings (and update your information) to be credited with attendance. To be a member in good standing you must attend three meetings or outings each year.
- In addition to the manual dredging tool, the club has for check out the Grizzly III, high banker, and pans. See the Equipment Manager Dave Greer.

The Trading Post



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Mercury and the Gold Pan — by Bob Novak

In 1993 while in Alaska at Cripple River, I had the pleasure of meeting with the founder of the GPAA, George "Buzzard" Massie, who passed away in 1994.

We talked of many things but one was about gold. He was telling me about the old times and copper pans. He said they coated the pan with mercury to collect the fine gold. At the end of the day, after the fire cooled down, they put the pan onto the heat to evaporate the mercury.

Not realizing the coals were still

too hot, I put my pan on the coals. The next morning I found my gold had amalgamated to the copper pan. See the gold spot on the picture below? That's not the sun's reflection; that's my gold! Another lesson learned.



[Editors note: As Bob will tell you, mercury should never be evaporated in this manner. A retort should be used to recover the mercury. I have read that you can drink liquid mercury without harming your body, although I wouldn't try it. However, inhaling the vapors, over time, will kill you. Your body is unable to remove ANY mercury from your body, although there are some things the doctors can do, nowadays. Remember the "mad hatters" went mad because they were inhaling mercury vapors.]



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To:

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Meets 2nd Sunday every month at 1:00 pm
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Join us !

All interested parties are invited to attend one of our monthly meetings. There will be opportunities to learn about prospecting laws, methods, and equipment as well as some hands-on practice. There also are outings to enjoy the pleasures of the out of doors and prospecting for gold. Become a member of one of the newest chapters of the Gold Prospectors Association of America. There are no membership fees and GPAA membership is not required to join in the fun.