

## *Spokane Bar Sapphire Mine & Gold Fever Rock*

April 2004

Dear Friends:

Shimmering reflections of forest green trees blur land into lake. Pools of blue and indigo water waver in threads waiting for direction. Flattened water gives way to corrugated ripples shaping the downstream current. Cold breezes stir frosted shade into a dusted blue sky at the Spokane Bar Sapphire Mine near Helena, Montana.



A perfect four-carat blue sapphire was found by a Michigan couple today at the Gold Fever Rock Shop. Several groups of visitors arrived at the sapphire mine on the banks of Hauser Lake to try their luck with sapphire mining. Representing diverse areas, Kalispell, Montana, Michigan and Colorado – all brought families and friends to experience the thrill of gem hunting. The excitement was contagious and the sapphire mine staff were amazed at the rampant droves of kids holding up sapphires and counting quartz and moonstone among their bags of treasure. The 71 degree weather was almost enough to get us through the fear of winter. The snow line is still visible and our weather forecast still uses that word – in a generous manner.

Stacks of Monster Mine boxes left on the UPS truck to be dispersed around the country. Rocks are always a welcome addition in Florida. John from Ft. Lauderdale displayed Montana sapphires at the Miami Mineralogical and Lapidary Guild show March 27-28. He has been on our monthly order list and displayed a sapphire collection at the Miami show. People at the gem show had lots of good comments about the Montana sapphires especially the variety of colors.



Tour groups and local schools are scheduling field trips. The May calendar is starting to fill up. Our tour guide – Deb – takes groups first to a historical site,

describing the miners in the past – their reasoning – for piling up heaps of boulders, trenching water ditches for twenty miles and flushing water into sluice boxes. Those pesky sapphires plugged up the sluice box and had to be dumped out next to the sluice. Gold, the motivating target, garnered enough pocket money for miners to trade for grub in Helena – a ten-mile trek by wagon.



Volcano cones on the south side of the Helena valley are visible from Cactus Hill above the sapphire mine office. Decomposed feldspar and bentonite clay stretch to the east for several miles. Eroded volcanic dykes scattered sapphires and garnets in gravel bars downriver.

Minerals are collected in the Spokane Bar gravel pit by those on the geological field trip. These specimens range from bedrock shale to jasper, olivine and serpentine. Bags of sapphire gravel are a tour finale and the excitement is catching. Occasional gold nuggets found in the sluice box gravel ensure a lifetime memory as well as gem grade sapphires for future adornment or wealth producing inducement. The greatest gain is the geological and historical knowledge gathered plus the opportunity to be history in the making for record finds!

Thomas Opre films will be filming at the sapphire mine this spring for our educational video. Those still interested in the Discovery Channel, *Hunt for Amazing Treasures* program “*Fortunes Abound*” aired May 1, 2003 can still inquire about a rerun next quarter. The Discovery Channel said to call their office the second week in June for details. Their phone numbers are 1-859-342-8439 or alternate 1-212-548-4987.

Thank you for your interest in sapphire and gold mining.

Sincerely,

Deb and Russ Thompson and staff at the Spokane Bar Sapphire Mine  
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