

PARTICIPATION

By Bill Luke, Past President, NFMS
(1st of three in a series)

Ever since my year as Northwest Federation President in 2001-2002, I have been thinking of writing on this subject. It continually comes to mind as I read and hear things regarding our rockhounding hobby. Many recent articles in the Northwest Newsletter remind me that this might be the time to do it.

After retiring at the end of 1994, Betty and I wanted to do some traveling, to see some of the many wonders of the USA. One of the things that determined where and when to go on our trips was to attend the AFMS Shows and Conventions at each of the regional Federations that were hosting them. We planned itineraries to and from these shows that included visits with family and friends and tourist attractions such as National Parks and other areas of interest. Each trip took from a few weeks, to two months, and, in one case, all winter. This did give us opportunity to see a lot of the USA, many interesting sights along the way, and to do some rock collecting, too.

We did go to every AFMS Show in all of the Regional Federations from Boise in 1995 to Pt. Townsend in 2002. We went to most of the meetings at each of the Conventions, learning a lot from others about the various things the Federations have to offer.

During 2001-2002, we decided not to go to the Southwest for the winter, but, instead, to stay in the Northwest. I wanted to visit every NFMS club, if possible. That didn't happen, but we did meet with over 50 clubs by going to meetings or shows during the year. And, we have been to many other clubs during our 25 years of being active in the NFMS. We have listened to many of the usual problems concerning clubs- and not just rockhound clubs. Many members, friends and family, who also belong to other organizations, tell of the same problems whenever you have an organization consisting of people- they all do!

This introductory background leads me to the title of the article. All of this time, in all of these conversations, there was one common theme that I came to realize and have summarized in a word - PARTICIPATION! (Or lack of.) Most of the problems clubs have are because no one participates; most of the successes come when the members do participate!

Rockhounding can be defined as having three phases: collecting, preparing, and showing. We learn these things from each other, all rockhounds. We get the opportunity to do so through our clubs. Clubs need purpose, organization, and leadership which means they need officers and

committee leaders. We can PARTICIPATE by holding an office or by accepting an appointment to a committee. But, more importantly, as members, we must PARTICIPATE in the club activities (field trips, classes, shows, etc.) when others provide the opportunity for us to do so. Many opportunities have been provided; several will be pointed out in this article.

We expand our opportunities to learn from other rockhounds by joining organizations such as State Councils and Regional Federations. When I was Editor of the Northwest Newsletter (a couple of times) and of the AFMS Newsletter, I included articles by several different authors about, “What the Federation is”, “What it does for us”, “Why we should belong”, etc.

There have been MANY such articles written over the years. We won't go into that in this article, except to say that these articles are of no value if our members don't want to PARTICIPATE. While we were visiting the clubs, representing the NFMS, one of the topics I spoke about was, “What does the Federation do for us?” I said that I can answer some, or most of what the Federation does, but the “for us” part was up to “us”. It seems that most of “us” don't care. Most, if not all, Federation Directors will tell you that the club members don't care to listen to their reports at meetings. Instead, members should be curious to find out about those things that are offered for their PARTICIPATION.

Many years ago I was our club representative to the Washington State Mineral Council. Over the years, I have attended a couple of Oregon Council meetings in the Portland area. Currently, I am a Director of the Montana Council of Rock and Mineral Clubs and, as such, wrote an article for the Council Reporter about whether there will be a future for the Council. All of these Councils are, and have been, struggling over the years. They were begun by interested rockhounds for specific reasons. Now, many years later, we ask: Why do they exist? For what purpose? Do they have a future? Only your PARTICIPATION will answer these questions.

Many coalitions exist that share our interest in the outdoors, in access to public lands, in keeping areas open for us. Different outdoor recreation, amateur, hobby, sportsmen, organizations must and do band together. We should investigate and join any and all that share this common interest. If nothing else, support them with dollars where their dollars are well spent, with results!

Next month we'll continue with some ways in which we can participate. Without all of us taking an active part, our clubs will die, as so many have over the years. Each of us should at least PARTICIPATE in that one thing we joined the club for. Then, for most of us, we will find other interesting things going on. Consequently, we will all find more enjoyment, pleasure and satisfaction in belonging to our club and will want to PARTICIPATE even more.

PARTICIPATION

(2nd part)

The article last month identified the need for, and lack of, PARTICIPATION in our clubs. Many times our club and Federation leaders put great personal effort into projects that they are offering for us, or we are requesting from them. They provide the opportunity for us to PARTICIPATE. I will list some of those opportunities:

Leadership. Accept nomination for an office or an appointment to a committee. So many clubs are reporting that the same officers are being elected year after year, or are coming back to an office when no one else will accept nomination. We need fresh blood, new ideas. Capable, qualified people will not agree to a nomination. The most immediate example was last year in the NFMS. If no one will accept, will we eventually have to dissolve the organization because we do not have a President, or can't fill the Executive Board?

The committee people are the 'working people' who get the job done. Everyone who accepts an appointment should be willing and able to accomplish that job, and those who have the qualifications should volunteer. As a club president, and during my year in the NFMS, I have looked for people with a resume and a passion. That is, they have the experience, training, ability and desire to do that which they offer or accept to do. There are many people out there with the potential to do these jobs. Then it is up to the rest of us to PARTICIPATE for a successful venture.

Field Trips. In many, or most, clubs the subject of field trips comes up. Sometimes the club does not offer any. But, in several instances, the club and Field Trip Chairman or leader had a scheduled trip to (fill in your favorite area), to meet at (9:00 a.m.) in the (locally known parking lot). The leader waited till 9:30, 10:00 or later- no one showed up! Between these two extremes, there are many other examples where the officers, and committee people, have done their job and there has been too little PARTICIPATION. When we claim that we want field trips, we must show up, ready to go to work, get dirty, and enjoy getting to know our fellow club members. I personally think that next to fellowship the best thing about field trips is learning of new back roads and an excuse to explore them. Plus, we get to bring back 'treasures', mementos of the trip. There are many more memorable stories told around the rock pile about trips that produced garden rock or leaverites than there are about precious, valuable gems. Let's PARTICIPATE in the fun!

Collecting Areas. Next is availability of collecting areas so that we can have field trips. The NFMS and club Legislation Committees have existed to help us keep our collecting areas open. We have been asked to write to our politicians, but did we PARTICIPATE? I also believe we need better and more PARTICIPATION from those people within our clubs with knowledge, experience and ability to get the job done in filling these committee positions, and I know there

are many out there. The rest of us need information passed on to us. This subject is becoming more and more pertinent and acute with recent rules and regulations regarding our public lands. But we just stand by complaining and do not PARTICIPATE!

Instructing Classes. This is one of the main reasons many people join a club. We hear that one of the most requested items for the club to offer is to teach new (and old) members some of the variety of things that the rockhounding hobby is all about, how to prepare the items we have collected. We want to learn from the experts, the old timers. When the facility and instructors have been established, it is our responsibility to PARTICIPATE. Too many times, great effort and expense is expended to create the opportunity, and then no one shows up.

Club Shows. Every show needs more people to help in the planning, promotion, set-up and take-down and, especially, with all of the details that go on throughout the week end. When the sign-up sheet comes around, fill in your name. Offer to put in a display. Here is an opportunity for everyone to PARTICIPATE.

Newsletters. PARTICIPATE by reading your club bulletin, the Northwest Newsletter, the AFMS Newsletter and other publications. PARTICIPATE by contributing articles for the Editor to include in the next issue. PARTICIPATE by sharing opinions about the contents. PARTICIPATE by attending events announced in your bulletin.

Editors' Seminars. Most of us know or should recognize that our Editors take on a very important task by publishing our bulletins. These bulletins are the way our members are informed about upcoming events in our clubs so we can PARTICIPATE! We should support our Editors in every way possible: pay their dues to S.C.R.I.B.E., pay some of the expense so they can attend Federation Seminars, or other events. All members can help their Editors by writing articles, providing information on club activities or some technical article of member interest for the bulletin. The more PARTICIPATION by club members, the more interesting the bulletin.

NFMS Show and Meetings. Every club should send representatives. You have paid your dues, you should know what's going on, express your opinions, vote your choice, PARTICIPATE! Every member of the club should be aware of each and every issue. If there is concurrence, or a majority vote in the club, send your delegate to vote accordingly. If your club does not send a voting delegate to the Annual Meeting, then your wishes and desires will not be part of the decision.

In addition, by PARTICIPATING in NFMS events you'll get to know some wonderful people, see some great displays, collect in new areas and get to know more about rockhounding. Betty and I have collected many more gems in the people category than we have in the rock category. Every rockhound is a gem!

Some recent items in the Northwest Newsletter give us examples of people offering opportunity for us to participate. A few people are going to great individual effort to organize and lead events for us. These volunteers are participating, will we? Let's show our appreciation for their efforts by PARTICIPATING!

Rockhound Retreat. A few years ago, while we were spending a few days at the Kendalls, Larry and Rachel Abney were there. They were telling about the OMSI Labor Day event held at the Hancock Field Station on the John Day National Monument. Discussions led to Betty and me being invited to the event that year to help in instructing, since they were experiencing declining PARTICIPATION! During the weekend, we met with leaders from the station and monument and set up an NFMS event and schedule for the coming year. Rachel suggested the name for the event. Too few people registered! It was cancelled. The following year, Abneys, Lamar Tilgner, and others put together a plan and those who attended said it was a good thing and had great expectations for the future. Then, this year, the 3rd, again too few had registered by the Annual Meeting at Longview. A few hardy volunteers are still trying; but if no one wants this service, we may have to face that reality. It will not survive with lip service only. PARTICIPATION is required! Editor's Note: 2007 was successful with 24 participants.

Club Building by Keene Clay. Presented at the Longview Show, with a series of articles in the Northwest Newsletter, and scheduled again for Butte. Here is an excellent opportunity for club members and officers to find ways to improve their club, to build membership and to encourage PARTICIPATION.

When Betty and I first attended NFMS shows, Dorothy Lee presented a seminar by the 'Society Officers Council' with all sorts of useful information to help the clubs and their officers. This committee also produced 'The Book'. For a few years these seminars were well attended with the club officers learning much from Dorothy and from each other. Then, over the years, there was less PARTICIPATION until the committee 'died.'

These are just a few of the opportunities for us to PARTICIPATE! There are many more if/when we just look for and recognize them. If you have more examples, please share them with each other, with all of us. I recognize that this list is by no means complete. In the next issue, we will look at some examples of successes and failures depending whether the members PARTICIPATED or not.

(3rd and final part)

In the first two parts of this series, we have discussed how participation leads to success, and lack of participation leads to failure. We don't want to think of failure, but it is a reality of this hobby over recent years. Many clubs no longer exist because they did not offer opportunity or encouragement to their members; or members, new and old, did not PARTICIPATE in the things offered. When people do not PARTICIPATE the organization is doomed to failure.

Here are some Success stories and some not so successful:

Last Spring, we went out to the coast to visit family, attend some shows and the mid-year meeting in Pasco. Along the way, we were in Salem and attended a meeting of the Willamette Agate & Mineral Society. There were 137 people in attendance at that meeting! That's PARTICIPATION!

A few years ago, the North Idaho club nearly disbanded due to declining membership. They are now one of the growing, active clubs in the Northwest.

At the combined NFMS/AFMS Show at Pt. Townsend, the Mt Hood club offered to take on the Silent Auction. Many thanks go to that club for making it a success; and in the years since it has been a more effective fund raiser. They have PARTICIPATED.

Junior Members- At the Puyallup Valley sponsored show in Enumclaw, I was upcoming NFMS President and looking for good qualified people to appoint to various committees. One immediate concern was the Juniors. Gary approached me, wanted to know what was entailed in the job. Linda Keltz had the information that Sue Holland had developed and used for years while she chaired the committee. By Sunday afternoon, Gary said he had talked to Linda, reviewed the materials and had some ideas he wanted to try. We all recognize the job well done since Gary accepted the appointment. The Juniors are PARTICIPATING!

Web Site- Following the AFMS Show in Nashville where Marty Hart led a meeting regarding web sites for the AFMS and the regionals, I wrote an article for the Northwest Newsletter. I got an e-mail from a couple in the Yellowstone Gem & Min. Soc. in Livingston. Roger and Judy said they would volunteer to set up a site for us. You can now PARTICIPATE by viewing amfed.org/nfms. You can PARTICIPATE by sending information, by suggesting materials that could be presented, and by letting everyone know about the site. As Roger said, he can't do it alone, and Jack Eads agrees. He needs our support. Also, we would like to see every club have their own web site, connected to amfed.org, so that we can promote all of our clubs.

Insurance- This one is not a success story. At several of the AFMS Regionals, there were special meetings where the subject of insurance for our clubs was discussed. Now, I believe, every one of the Regional Federations, except Northwest has group coverage for third party liability. I have

tried unsuccessfully to get someone to PARTICIPATE by coordinating with the other regionals and with our clubs in hopes of making it available to us. Many of our clubs want and need this coverage.

Voice Auction- Chuck Sonner initiated this event and it has been an excellent fund raiser. With good ideas and leadership, in conjunction with our PARTICIPATION it can happen! We all need to participate by supplying good material to be auctioned and to bring \$\$\$\$ to purchase some of these good materials. After all, the sale is where the funds are raised.

White River Rock Club, 1964-1989 - Our first club. A 25 year old club was declining, experiencing almost no PARTICIPATION. Only 4-5 people at a meeting. The President sent post cards to all known current, past and potential members about the crisis that would be addressed at the next meeting. Be There! About 30 people showed up. Big discussion, esprit de corps, we'll do it, etc. At the next meeting there were about a dozen and the following one about six people were there to plan and volunteer to help with the upcoming show! Before adjournment that night, we decided to disband. It takes more PARTICIPATION than that to put on a show or to continue as a club.

Butte Mineral & Gem Club, Est. 1922- This club had been experiencing the usual decline in recent years. Most of the current members have only been in the club a year or two. But they are suggesting new ideas, volunteering to do things, and everyone is PARTICIPATING. We can only grow and get better with the spirit that is now in the club. It is exciting and rewarding to be part of it.

We hear and read all too often that there is a growing lack of interest and participation in our clubs. They are dying! What can we do? If your club has been successful in increased membership, increased interest, increased PARTICIPATION, please share that information by writing an article. You and the members who made it possible deserve commendation and recognition.

In closing, this article is intended to present a thought, a realization that I came to after many years. It does not have the answers. Many books and courses have been written on motivation. They still are; so maybe motivation toward participation is something that does not have an answer, either. In one class we were given this quote, "Remember, it's my motor you're trying to vate!" What's that mean? Is the point that you can't "motorvate" anyone? I hope not!

I believe the facts, the reality, do support the supposition: Most of the problems clubs have are because no one participates; most of the successes come when the members do participate!

Thank you Bill Luke, Past President, NFMS