

# Book Cliffs Field Trip May 1-2 Report

By Ron Knoshaug

Judy and I headed to Grand Junction about 9 Friday morning and had to travel on roads from dry payment to slushy conditions. We arrived at the dig area in the Bookcliffs about 1:30. At this time, a snow squall was moving through the area so we had lunch in the vehicle. It quit snowing so we headed out to explore for some interesting



nodules in which to find our treasures. Unfortunately it was cold and the wind was blowing fairly hard. We did not last very long with Judy's fingers turning blue and my ears beginning to ache. So we headed to Grand Junction and went to antique stores. Don and Gail Beamer and Sharon Perry had arrived before us and stayed out in the dig area much longer than we. Before we left, however, Judy found a band of barite with a few crystals in it. One is shown below. Sometime Friday Marge Regal arrived at the dig area..

**Judy beginning to dig in a Nodule during the cold and windy conditions Friday. (Ron Knoshaug Photo)**

**Gail and Sharon digging out a nodule on Saturday. (Bob Loeffler photo)**





Sometime Friday afternoon or evening, Dan and Vicki Aber arrived and set up camp near the dig area. Arriving Friday evening, Jim Hall camped out near the Abers. Bob Loeffler also arrived about midnight Friday and stayed at the Motel 6.

For Saturday, the weather forecast did not look good, with 40% chance of rain. Judy, Marge, and I headed for the dig area, hoping to find some crystals before the rains start. Judy and I dug in a few nodules before settling down in a couple on the ridge. Since Sharon was finding some water-clear barite (small but very nice), Don, Gail, and Sharon along with Bob went back to the area they were digging on Friday. The weather held; it did rain in the area, but only on the south side of Grand Junction. The temperature was to my liking and we were not bothered by those pesky black flies.

It was a good day. Jim dug in a few nodules on the east side of the digging area and found some nice barite crystals. Marge hit a nodule with some nice barite in it. When the day was done, some of us headed to Applebees for dinner.



**Sharon and Gail looking for barite crystals with Don watching.**

(Bob Loeffler photo)



**Cluster of clear barite crystals on matrix**  
(Ron Knoshaug specimen and photo)



**Judy's specimen 1.5 inch by 1 inch with inside growth showing.** (Ron Knoshaug photo)



Saturday's night weather forecast for Sunday called for 50 percent chance of rain. During the night it rained and in the morning the streets were all wet in Grand Junction. I thought it was going to be a muddy day out at the dig. Judy and I headed out and to our pleasant surprise, the rain had not materialized in the dig area. We continued to dig all day until five and then had to head home. When we left, Jim, Marge, the Beamers, Abers, Sharon, and Bob were still at the dig area.

The trip home over Vail Pass was an experience. Along I-70 heading west, we saw many signs that chains were required for all commercial vehicles over Vail Pass. As we neared Vail, the signs now read that Vail Pass was closed. At mile marker 176, we had to exit and either turn back toward Vail or wait out the closure in a parking lot near the freeway. We elected to wait; it was about 7:30 pm. We ate and tried to sleep. The police would not tell us what the problem was or a probable time for the road to open. About 11:00 pm the road opened and the mass of vehicles headed over the pass. On the west side of the pass, snow was falling quite hard, traffic was single file, and a few vehicles should have stayed in Vail for the night. After experiencing icy roads all the way to Georgetown, we finally arrived home about 2:00 am Monday.

Monday morning's paper said the road was closed because of a 20 car pileup near the Copper Mountain exit. After they removed the junk, the road reopened. Don and Gail Beamer drove home by the route through Leadville and over Fremont Pass. Dan and Vicki Aber, using more common sense, spent Sunday night at the dig site and had a nice drive home.



**Flowers found at the Book Cliffs.  
Photos by Bob Leoffler.**

**Left: Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja linarefolia*)**

**Below: *Lewisia* (*Lewisia pygmaea*). Also called Bitterroot**

**The participants on the field trip had a great time, the weather was terrific, and barite crystals were found. See you on the next barite exploration field trip.**

