

Micromineralogists of the National Capital Area, Inc.

Founding and Early Years of Micromineralogists of the National Capital Area, Inc.

By Cynthia Payne



Cynthia and the HOPE

The Micromineralogists of the National Capital Area began in 1967. We have many new members and as I appear to be the only charter member still around, so I thought maybe I should record our beginnings.

(The Mineralogical Society of DC was organized in 1942. When we think about that date, we wonder about those founding members and why they would start a club during a war.)

I decided to write a history of our club's micromounting from when I became interested. I wrote a history of our conference a couple of years ago, so I will skip that part of our activities.

In the early 1960's there was a small group of micromounters who met once each month in someone's home. **Jack Barbour, Phil Cosminsky, Bob Gates, Florence and Ted Ruhoff**, and a few others. I went to maybe half a dozen meetings, and then the group broke for the summer and never got together again.



Phil Cosminsky with his micromounts

In 1966 a group of us in the Mineralogical Society of DC talked **Paul Desautels** into teaching a class on crystallography. He had just given a program on the subject but we really wanted to learn much more about it. We met once each week for many months. At the time Paul was active in MSDC. In fact, he was President one year. At the end of the course Paul suggested we stay together and continue studying or we would forget what we had just learned. Almost all of us were interested in micros so we decided to form a micromount club. The organizing meeting was in **Paul Dunning's** house, where we elected him president. I don't remember who was Vice president, **Vernon Wertz** was Secretary-Treasurer and Editor. My husband, **Warring Barnes** did not know anything about minerals but he did like to go collecting and volunteered to be Field Trip Chairman. We couldn't wait to get out, so the club had our first trip to Cedar Hill Quarry in February the next year.

We met in members' homes, with enough table space for our microscopes. We started as a study group, and for several years. We studied the crystal systems, then learned about a particular mineral, such as pyrite, calcite, copper. Next, we studied sulfates, oxides, silicates, etc. Each member would prepare and conduct a program. Everyone brought several specimens, which were passed around for everyone to see. Grant Edwards was a chemist, so we could always depend on him to bring print outs on the chemistry of whatever the subject was.

I had a very small house, but in 1969 we built a large addition, a living room and a new kitchen. Someone gave us a pool table. We put a full sheet of plywood on that pool table and didn't worry about damaging a good table with rock chips and dust. After a few months we all decided that the large table that we could put a dozen scopes on was better than anyone else's place, so we started to have all meetings at my house. After a year or so, a couple of members said they felt guilty imposing on me. On the contrary, I was happy with the arrangement. In



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winter they had to go out in the cold and drive home. I turned out my lights and went to bed. When we started the club, we had coffee and donuts for refreshments. After a short time, the donuts went aside, and we had more variety depending on who was hosting the meeting. **Margaret Malone** was a great cook and made the most wonderful desserts. We usually had eight to fourteen people at meetings, and almost all were active micromounters. Margaret and Warring were the only spouses.

One day **Eric Grundel** told us he had been to visit **Phil Cosminsky**, who had moved to Harrisburg, and had gotten acquainted with a professor at James Madison University, who started a micromount group of students. He said we really should visit Phil and JMU.



Eric Grundel

It was winter, so we scheduled it as a field trip to the University. Phil took us to the Geology building where we met **Dr. Lance Kearns**.

That was in February, 1980. That trip started the annual winter field trips to JMU.



**Dr. Lance Kearns
with his wife Cindy**

In 1982 unfortunately, Phil had died. He had given his micromount collection to Lance, so we could still see his collection. By then, our visit had become a regular winter field trip. We felt we could ask Lance, to teach us how to use a Petrographic Microscope. He immediately agreed, but said we needed two full days. So later that spring a group of us went to JMU, for the weekend. During lunch **Ruth Wertz** and I sat at a table with Lance, and after a short time the same thought occurred to both of us. We asked Lance if he would speak at our next conference. He has been a speaker several times since. Later he taught another class using heavy liquids to identify minerals. On one trip we

found the microscopes locked in the cabinets. **Joe Murter**, being extraordinarily handy with tools, took the doors off and got the scopes out. One trip it started snowing just after noon, so we decided we better start home early. As soon as we got over the mountain the snow stopped and the sun was out. That day with Lance is one thing I missed when I was traveling to Florida for winters.



Joe Murter

For many years we entered a competitive micromineral case in the EFMLS show. Ruth took it to the National Show for several years. Sometimes the exhibit was a variety of micros, or educational. One year it showcased the Goose Creek Quarry with photos and detailed explanations of half a dozen of the species found there. We almost always won awards, usually a first or second. In 1970 at Atlanta we won "Best in Show for Societies". My husband, Warring did not see much point in showing micros when the viewer could not see them. He had a complete machine shop, so we built a case with a traveling lighted magnifier, which was a great hit. The wiring and switches wore out about the time **Paul Smith** and other Micromounters started using pictures next to each Micro, so I retired it.

I covered the first thirty years of our conference in a previous article, so I will not write anything about it here. But to know about the early days you should know something about those who started the club and kept it going in the early days. I will list some of our founding members, who did other things in our hobby, besides in our club.

Art Roe, who had been volunteering at the Smithsonian after he retired, moved to Tucson. He went to the University of Arizona and properly curated the Micromount collection, then added hundreds of specimens to it. Art wrote numerous articles which were published in the Mineralogical Record. Art is also a member Micromounter Hall of Famer.

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Ruth Wertz, who was mainly responsible for our Conference, was Vice President for many years and President on and off for 7 years. She was the Director of Wildacres for 13 years, on the EFMLS Rules Committee for 16 years, Chair for many of them, AFMS Rules Chairman, President of EFMLS 79-80, exhibited award winning minerals and micros at EFMLS & AFMS shows. Ruth was the editor of The Mineral Mite for 6 years, and wrote articles for Rocks & Minerals. She is also a member of the Micromounters Hall of Fame.

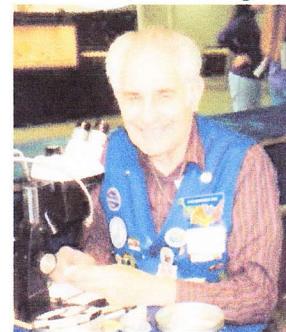
Vernon Wertz was our Secretary, Treasurer and Editor for our first fifteen years.

Cynthia Payne was club President on and off for 6 years, VP several times, Exhibits Chairman 1967 until? She was the AMC Speaker Chair fourteen years, on EFMLS Rules Committee thirteen years, and Co Chair 1982-84. Cynthia was an EFMLS and AFMS Judge for education, minerals, and nomenclature exhibits. She was a Micromount instructor at Wildacres 1980-86. In 1991, she exhibited Miniature Minerals and Micros at EFMLS and AFMS shows. Cynthia designed the Wildacres patch and pin. She is a member of the Micromounters Hall of Fame. While volunteering at the Smithsonian she cataloged Paul Desautels and Herb & Geneva Corbett's micromount collection, as well as part of Randy Rothchild's collection.

We had some other exceptional people who were not founding members, but who contributed a great deal to the health of our club.

Herb and Geneva Corbett were almost charter members. They joined in 1968, and came from Baltimore every month for our meetings. Herb was Vice President for two years, which was very generous as he was very active in the Baltimore Mineral Society. He was Chairman of the Symposium and founder and chairman of the Micromount Hall of Fame. Herb cataloged Neal Yedlin's micromount collection at the Smithsonian. Both Herb and Geneva are members of the Micromounters Hall of Fame.

Fred Schaefermeyer joined in 1982. He was treasurer for nine years, Editor for three, President for three, Co-Chairman of the Conference for a couple of years. He became President of EFMLS and AFMS, including a half a dozen AFMS committees for years. He was a judge of minerals and micros, lectured at other clubs and taught at schools. He is a member of the Micromounters Hall of Fame and also the Bulletin Editors Hall of Fame.



Fred Schaefermeyer

Paul and Jenny Smith joined us in 1976. When our meetings were in Maryland they started having informal meetings in their basement for residents of Virginia who lived too far away to get to regular meetings. One reason we moved to Long Branch for meetings was because they said it was getting too crowded in their basement. Paul was always thinking of ways to mount specimens, for instance he mounted micros on squirrel whiskers. He wrote many articles for The Mineral Mite, and always demonstrated at every show he could get to. Jennie taught crystallography and wrote the book on Crystallography that we could understand.

Paul and Jenny Smith

