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My wife, Sue, and I have been traveling regularly to Tucson in February since we first attended the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show about 35 years ago. Over that time, we've grown from spectators to integral participants in the "main show."

Normally, we begin thinking about our "pilgrimage" during the holiday season, especially if we are preparing a presentation or display for one of the shows. The weather this past winter was especially harsh in Oregon, with colder-than-average temperatures and all-time record snowfalls, so we began thinking about our Tucson journey earlier than usual. When combined with the fact that we were doing both a presentation and a display, our preparations also started earlier than usual. Indeed, even though it was not completed until minutes before it was scheduled, I started to work in earnest on my presentation well before the start of the new year.

Gradually, preparations for our trip were completed. We had secured a place to stay while we were in Tucson and the day came to depart. Because we had to transport a display, we elected to

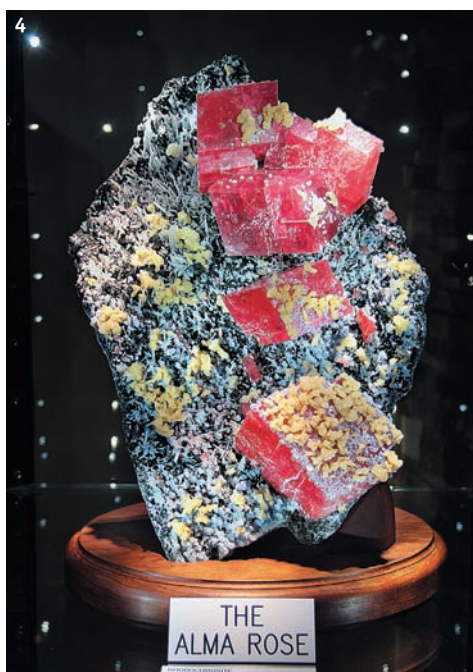
travel by car, even though the distance from our home in Central Oregon to Tucson is about 1250 miles (2000 km) and takes about 3 days. The trip can take longer if we encounter bad weather, but we had good weather this year, so travel was quite pleasant.

On the second day, we typically reach warm weather in southern Nevada. We begin seeing palm trees, start thinking about our first "real" Mexican dinner, the friends we expect to meet, and the minerals we'll see. If we travel through Beatty, Nevada, which we often do, we'll stop for sweets at the largest candy, dried fruit, and nut store in the entire state. After that, it's a mad rush to Tucson: past Las Vegas, through Kingman, through the "city of rocks," through Wikieup, and past the Joshua trees of the Mojave Desert, which eventually yield to the Saguaro cactuses of the Sonoran Desert, and then finally into Tucson.

We arrived about 5:00 p.m., and immediately set about unpacking. The task was nearly completed after an hour. That left time for us to share a good dinner with our friends Steve and Ann Ouderkirk, with whom we shared accommodations in Tucson, and still get a good night's sleep. We were up early the next day, energetic, excited, and ready for what the day would bring, whether it be good minerals, good friends, or both.



1. A Fabulous Tucson
Sunset from the
Entrance to the
Westward Look Resort.
Photo: Al Liebetrau.



4. *The Alma Rose* on Display at the Westward Look Show.

5. Leslie Moclock, Curator of Minerals at the Rice Northwest Museum of Rocks and minerals, and Sharleen Rice Harvey, co-Founder of the Rice Museum.

6. Julian Gray (Executive Director) and Brian Lees (Collector's Edge)

7. Carole and Bob Jackson, prominent northwest collector of Spruce claim fame, at the Westward Look Show.

Photos 4–7: Al Liebetrau.

when they first became available, so we were looking for a nice reasonably priced specimen. This year, we found the right one at *Mineral Movies* (Jeff Fast). It is a complete 1.5" (3.7 cm) octahedron with a beautiful finish.

On our second evening in Tucson, we joined Jim Horste and his brother Dave and friends at Tin Town, where we enjoyed an evening of good food, good fellowship, and a private showing of Jim's latest fluorescent mineral offerings. Tin Town, located just south of the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, is a private museum that houses an amazing collection of old mining artifacts. Western, Arizona, and movie memorabilia, art deco objects, and just about anything else you can imagine. Among other things, the collection includes a circus wagon, jail, mine and ore tram. Tin Town offers a very limited number of accommodations which Jim and Dave occupy when they are in Tucson. It is certainly safe to say that their accommodations are among the most eclectic in Tucson. Where else can you sleep in a genuine circus popcorn wagon or in the bath tub used by Audrey Hepburn in the movie "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (Fig. 2 and 3)?

On a subsequent evening, we joined a large group of collectors, dealers, and friends at the Gaslight Theater for an evening of purely American entertainment. The performers, most professionally trained, entertain in the classic melodrama style. This uniquely American style depends heavily on word-plays and shared cultural experiences, so many of its subtleties can be difficult for our foreign guests to understand. This evening of fun and relaxation has long been organized by Terry Huizing.

During our week of socializing we continued another tradition by joining Bill and Diana Dameron one evening for dinner, this year

at The *Coronet* Cafe. This *Coronet* is a brasserie-style cafe situated at the historic *Coronado* Hotel near downtown Tucson. The Café serves old world rustic cuisine accompanied by hand-crafted sangrias and cocktails with live music playing the background. The *Coronet* is an excellent place for dinner, but it was quite busy the night we were there, so not a particularly good place to sit and enjoy a quiet coffee.

The brief respite between the closing of the show at the Elks Lodge and the opening of The Westward Look Fine Mineral Show not only gave us some time to socialize, but it also gave me time to work on my presentation and prepare labels for our display, neither of which was completed when we arrived in Tucson.

Our level of activity increased considerably with the opening of the Westward Look show. This is a show for those who appreciate high-end minerals, so we naturally wanted to spend considerable time at it. Moreover, the "featured collector" was the Rice Northwest Museum of Rocks and Minerals. We had to visit the Rice exhibit because we are quite familiar with the museum and count Julian Gray (Executive Director), Leslie Moclock (Curator of Minerals), and Charlene Rice Harvey (Co-Founder) among our good mineral friends (Fig. 5, 6, 7). The Rice Museum is well known for owning one of the two finest rhodochrosite specimens — called the *Alma Rose* — ever recovered from the Sweet Home mine in Alma, Colorado, and arguably one of the two finest rhodochrosite specimens ever mined anywhere (Figure 4).

There are always marvelous world-class specimens to be seen at the Westward Look show, but we didn't find as many minerals of interest for our collection as in past years. However, we were honored that Joachim Callén chose to photograph the specimen of copper