

# DESERT GOLD DIGGERS GAZETTE

The official publication of Desert Gold Diggers Inc., Tucson, AZ

The Desert Gold Diggers is a non-profit prospecting club based in Tucson, Arizona, devoted to all aspects of small scale mining including panning, sluicing, dry washing, and metal detecting. In addition to promoting small scale prospecting, the club exchanges ideas and information on the various aspects of prospecting & mining. Visit our webpage at <https://desertgolddiggers.com> for more club information.



Desert Gold Doggers has 19 claims in southeastern Arizona. The claims are located in several gold producing areas including the Greaterville, Arivaca, Oro Blanco (Ruby), Las Guijas, Old Hat (Oracle) and Banner (Pinal County) mining districts. The club is constantly evaluating and pursuing additional claims.

## In This Issue

- Message from DGD President Ralph Montañño (p.2)
- List of Current DGD Board of Directors (2023-2025) (p.2)
- Meeting and Event Summary / New Members (p.3)
- Meet Bob Melzer, DGD Board Member (p.4)
- March Overnight Outing / Raffle Winners (p.5)
- March Overnight Outing Pictures (p.6)
- Outing Directors Report: February / March (p.7)
- Membership Meeting Minutes: February / March (p.8)
- Business Meeting Minutes: February / March (p.9)
- Business Meeting Minutes (continued) / Placer Pond Specimen (p.10)
- 2024 Nugget Raffle / Club Store Information / MASH Report (p.11)
- *Desert Leaf* Story about Desert Gold Diggers / Current Gold Price & Trend (p.12)
- Green Valley Photography Club Presentation (p.13)
- The Early History of Desert Gold Diggers (1982-1993) (p.14)
- An Important Tool - The Gold Pan (pp.15-16)
- April / May Special Events Calendar (p.17)
- Editor's Notes / Disclaimer (p.18)

## From the Desk of Ralph Montaña

*President, Desert Gold Diggers Inc.*

The March overnight outing is behind us and I would like to thank all of you that helped make the event a success. The weather cooperated, for the most part, and those who attended had the opportunity to win gold nuggets, gift cards, enjoy some prospecting, and see some beautiful sunsets. These events are fun and a great way to meet and get to know our new club members. We look forward to the next overnight outing, which will be October 4-6 at the Hope Claims.



Elections for Board of Director positions will take place at our April 2<sup>nd</sup> membership meeting. I encourage everyone that is interested in becoming more involved in the club to please volunteer for a position as a board member because the club cannot run without your help and guidance. As I've said many times, this is your club, so please get involved and help make a difference. As information, the list of current board members are shown below.

Until next time—HAPPY EASTER and HAPPY DIGGING!

### DESERT GOLD DIGGERS BOARD MEMBERS

The following is the list of current 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year board members. The list will be updated after the elections at the April 2 monthly membership meeting.

#### **ONE YEAR BOARD MEMBERS (2023)**

**Dan Walker (Board Chairman)**, Ed Madson, David Salars, Bob Melzer, Sharron Lapp

#### **TWO-YEAR BOARD MEMBERS (2023-2024)**

Joe Marihugh, Becky Marihugh, Hank Bassaraba, Ray Darragh

#### **THREE YEAR BOARD MEMBERS (2023-2025)**

Howard Cooper, Louis Pill, JR Smith, Kim Ransom

## Meeting & Event Summary (April-June 2024)

### Membership Meetings

**1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 PM.**

Ellie Towne Community Center  
1660 West Ruthrauff Road  
Tucson, AZ 85705-1253

The monthly meetings are an opportunity for club members to socialize, listen to guest speakers, and participate in nugget raffles at the end of the meeting.

Guests are welcome to attend!

### Business Meetings

**3rd Tuesday of every month at 6:30 PM.**

IHOP  
4187 N. Oracle Road  
Tucson, AZ. 85705-2721  
  
(Southwest corner of Oracle and  
Limberlost Road)

Access to monthly meetings using the ZOOM application will no longer be available until further notice.

### Events Schedule

#### **April:**

**02:** Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM  
**Officer/Board Elections**

**07:** (Sunday) Outing: PLACER  
POND Claims; 8:00 AM; Gardner  
Canyon Road & Highway 83

**16:** Business Meeting; 6:30 PM

#### **May:**

**07:** Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM

**11:** (Saturday) Outing: SNOOZIN  
Claims; 8:00 AM, Arivaca Rd. Mile  
Post 7

**21:** Business Meeting

#### **June:**

**04:** Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM

**09:** (Sunday) Outing: HOPE  
Claims; 7:00 AM; Gardner Canyon  
Road & Highway 83

**18:** Business Meeting; 6:30 PM

## Welcome NEW Club Members!

Brandon & Emily Aeschliman (Tucson)  
Dustin & Heather Altman (Tucson)  
Julie & Zee Chiti (Barberton, OH)  
Michael & Carol Comstock (Tucson)  
Derrick Douglas (Marana)  
David Erickson (Green Valley)  
Ben & Amanda Gentle (Marana)  
Cody Jameson (Tucson)  
Troy & Courtney Johnson (Tucson)  
Scottie & Misti Love (Tucson)  
Alexander Mathews (Tucson)  
John & Val Milci O'Connor (Tucson)

Isaiah Platz (Quartzite)  
Kevin Platz (Bonsall, CA)  
Michael & Marie Pond (Tucson)  
Robert Pond (Tucson)  
Dustin & Stephanie Rupel (Vail)  
Jack Satkoski (Tucson)  
Kenny Shupe (Bay Center WA)  
Stan & Denise Smart (Stockton, CA)  
Richard and Ronnie Smith (Tucson)  
Hugh Staver (Tucson)  
Chuck and Luz Trujillo (Tucson)  
Eric & Brittany Zacharias (Sierra Vista)



## Meet Bob Melzer - DGD Board Member

My name is Bob Melzer and I've been a member of Desert Gold Diggers since 1988. I am one of the original club members, have a lifetime membership, and currently serve on the Board of Directors.

I was born in 1927 in Chicago, Illinois, and will soon be celebrating my 97th birthday. I lived there until the "Chicago Blizzard of 1967"—the worst snow storm in Chicago history. More than 20,000 cars (including mine) and 1,000 city buses were stranded in the snow. People abandoned their vehicles and walked to stores for bread and milk. That is when we decided we were tired of snow and moved to Tucson.



Bob Melzer

When I was 12 years old, I read an article in Popular Mechanics about metal detectors and built my first detector using an oatmeal box as a coil. It worked, and even though I only found pennies, I was hooked on metal detecting. I purchased a metal detector several years later and detected in parks, playgrounds, and around the beaches of Lake Michigan. I found coins, rings, keys, and many other items. One day I was metal detecting in a park and women approached me. She was sobbing and said she lost her wedding ring and wanted to know if I would help find it with my detector. Luckily, I found her ring in a matter of minutes, which made the woman very happy. It was such a wonderful feeling to help someone in need.

I've metal detected in the Greaterville since the late 1960s. Back then, the area had not been detected heavily and there were days I found more than one gold nugget, with some laying on top of the ground. My favorite gold nugget was a 43-ounce "seahorse" shaped nugget I acquired in California in 1969. Unfortunately, I sold it when gold was only \$35 an ounce. The nugget now resides in a museum in south Texas and is valued over 1/2 million dollars! I guess hindsight is 20/20.



43-ounce  
Seahorse Nugget

I've enjoyed many wonderful experiences with the Desert Gold Diggers, but really miss the 15 members I prospected with that have passed away over the years. It is refreshing to see more young people joining our club and recommend that those looking to buy a detector spend a few extra dollars and get a machine that searches deeper into the ground. Gold is much harder to find with a metal detector than it was 50 years ago. Most of the surface gold has already been found and picked up. If you want to find gold, you need to go deeper—that's where you'll find the gold.

*-Bob Melzer*

## Overnight Outing: March 22-24, 2024

The March overnight outing was held at the Las Guijas Road campsite. Becky and Joe Marihugh were on-site on Wednesday, March 20, to reserve the camping area and to place signs along the road to provide directions for members not familiar with the area. Board members assisted in putting up needed equipment such as tables and chairs.

Members started to arrive Friday to select campsites and set up their prospecting equipment. The weather Friday night was very nice and campers enjoyed warm crockpot dinners. Grady Dees made pulled pork sliders and Becky Marihugh made chili. Kim Ransom had rolls and donuts and Joe Johnson had potato salad and pie. After dinner, the movie *Paint Your Wagon* with Lee Marvin and Clint Eastwood was shown.

The movie ended shortly after 10 PM and most of the campers retired for the night. A storm blew in around 3 AM Saturday morning and those in tents tried to stay dry. The weather was cool on Saturday morning and Ralph Montaña hid the nickel coins for the metal detector hunt—all 50 nickels were found. Kim Ransom sold DGD items from the club store and jewelry items. After the metal detector hunt a few members went to the claims to prospect. Members displayed gold they found during the outing.

Lunch began at noon and consisted of hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, potato chips, coleslaw, potato salad, condiments, soft drinks and desserts. A very special THANK YOU to Max and Andrea Offermann for manning the grill!

The gold nugget/gift card raffle began after lunch. The member-donated items that were raffled were definitely appreciated. At last count, 49 members attended the outing.

This overnighter was a complete success with many thanks for the good weather and help from the board members.

---

## Outing Raffle Winners and Special Award Recipient

### Gold nugget winners:

- Tim Nopens
- Andrea Offermann
- Bob Burgette
- Mike Kurpiewski

### Gift cards winners:

- Joe Johnson
- Joe Marihugh
- Max Offermann
- Kim Ransom
- Mike Kurpiewski
- Sean Mosley



**Special Award:** Bob Burgette received a special award recognizing his many years of service as the Desert Gold Diggers Gold Master.



## Overnight Outing Pictures: March 22-24, 2024



Desert Gold Diggers Campsite



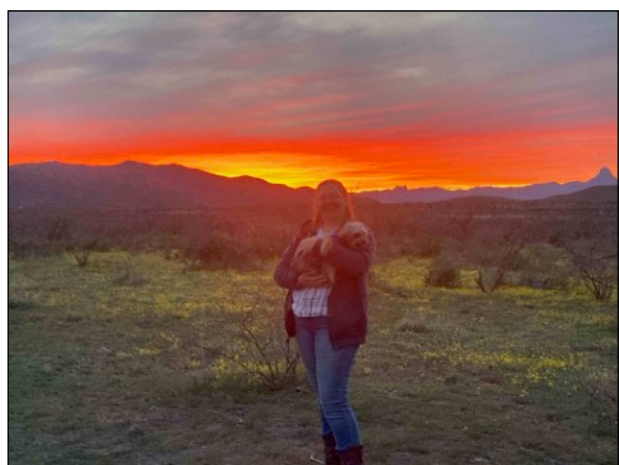
A nice picker



Joe Marihugh



Joe Johnson and Scar



Becky Marihugh and Ripper at Sunset

## Outing Director's Report: February 11 (Pilgrims Pride)

Our February 11 outing meeting place was MP7 on Arivaca Rd, but there had been too much rain for us to navigate the road to the Pilgrim's Pride Claims so we met at the Arivaca Mercantile Store at 8:00 AM. We had 11 members in attendance. The temperature was 29 degrees Fahrenheit with patches of snow.

We had a metal detector hunt held on the Wishful #1 Claim. Twenty-four (24) targets being hidden, three (3) for gold nuggets, three (3) for \$2 bills and 18 for \$1 coins. All except two targets were found—one for a \$2 bill and one for a \$1 coin.



There was plenty of water on the claims so prospecting was done with sluices, pans and recirculating systems. Not much gold was found but the weather did warm up.

The next outing will be an overnight outing March 22 thru 24 at the North Arivaca Claims at the Las Guijas Road Camp Site.

Keep finding the yellow stuff, Dan

---

## Outing Director's Report: March 22-24 (Arivaca Claims)

Preparations for our March annual overnight outing started on Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, with Becky Marihugh reserving our camping area and Joe Marihugh putting up signs on Thursday with other board members putting up tables and other needed equipment.

Members started to arrive Friday setting up their camping and prospecting equipment. Friday Night was nice and the potluck dinner warmed the campers with crock pot dishes. After dinner the movie *Paint Your Wagon* with Lee Marvin and Clint Eastwood was shown. Afterward most of the campers retired for the night.



Saturday morning I arrived around 6:30 AM and the temperature was cool. Ralph Montano hid coins for the metal detector hunt. There were 50 nickels worth three (3) gold nuggets, two (2) \$10 gift certificates, three (3) \$2 bills, and 42 \$1 coins. All the nickels were found. Kim Ransom sold DGD items from the club store and jewelry items. After the metal detector hunt a few members went to the claims to prospect. Members displayed gold they found during the outing.

Ticket sales of for the \$1 outing raffle and \$6 lunch began after the metal detector hunt. Lunch began at noon, consisting of hamburgers and hot dogs with baked beans, potato chips, coleslaw, potato salad, condiments, soft drinks and deserts. The raffle began after the lunch for gold nuggets, gift certificates and items donated by club members. At last count we had 49 members in attendance.

This overnighter was a complete success with many thanks for the good weather and board members help.

## Membership Meeting Minutes: February 6, 2024

- Ralph Montañó convened the meeting at 6:00 PM; opened with the Pledge of Allegiance; introduced new members/guests; asked about February birthdays/anniversaries; shared MASH information.
- Next outing is Sunday, February 11 at the Pilgrims Pride claims. Will move to Wishful claims if roads are muddy.
- Officer/Board of Directors elections will be April 2; need 1- and 3-year board members; need new people.
- DGD asked to speak to the Green Valley Photography club in March about gold prospecting.
- March 22-24 is the overnight outing: will have crockpot cook-off; detector hunt, lunch, nugget/gift card raffle, and a movie— “Paint Your Wagon”.

### Raffle winners:

- Hat: Keith Oliver
- Shirt: Chuck Nagy
- Badge: Bill Richie
- Yellow ticket: Hank Bassaraba; Ray Darragh; Dave Riley; Keith Oliver.
- Red ticket: Marion Harrison
- Ralph Montañó concluded the meeting at 7:21 PM.

---

## Membership Meeting Minutes: March 5, 2024

- Ralph Montañó convened the meeting at 6:00 PM; opened with the Pledge of Allegiance; welcomed new members/guests; asked about March birthdays and anniversaries; shared MASH report.
- Dan Walker reported the overnight outing will be March 22-24 at Arivaca; turn off at MP7— signs will be posted; Friday night crockpot cook-off; Saturday 8 AM metal detector hunt; lunch at noon; raffle afterward.
- Equipment will be set up to demo to the new members.
- Lunch will be \$6 a plate.
- Missing items were found at two claims— a battery at a Bruiser claim and a shovel at a Wishful claim.
- Elections coming up in April, Officer and Board positions available; those interested in being actively involved in the club should consider these positions.
- Watched a video: Where and How to Find Gold in Arizona Desert Washes by Kevin Hoagland.
- DGD will be making a presentation on Monday, March 18 at the Green Valley Photography Club monthly meeting.
- DGD will do another demonstration at the Gregory School in October (Oregon Trail Experience); let Ralph know if you would like to participate.
- Need volunteers to locate new claims.

### Raffle winners:

- Hat: Bob Melzer
- Shirt: Carol Comstock
- Badge: Eric Zacharias
- Yellow Ticket: Mike Phelps; Dave Riley; Ralph Montañó; Bob Burgette; Joe Marihugh; Dan Scheper; Shawn Mosley; Chuck Waters
- Red Ticket: Darrell Marihugh
- Ralph adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM



## Business Meeting Minutes: February 21, 2024

- Dan Walker called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM
- Darrell read previous meeting minutes; Dave motioned and Becky seconded; minutes approved.
- Webmaster: No report.
- Membership report: 304 current members; 13 new with 16 non-renewals; +8 for the month
- Outing Director report: the monthly outing scheduled for the Pilgrims Pride claims was moved to the Wishful claims due to muddy roads accessing the North Arivaca claims; 11 members signed in and detector hunt was conducted on Wishful 1; all but two (2) targets were found.
- Claims report: None
- Ray has been in touch with Valerie to provide updated information to the DGD website.
- Treasurer report: the club realized a profit of \$517 for the month.
- Website; will finalize required actions next business meeting.
- Membership report: Eight new members; 11 non-renewals; 314 members; decrease of 11 members.
- Expense reports submitted.
- Treasurer: Income \$2,259.56; expenses \$1,573.73; net income previous month \$685.83.
- Gold Master: No report.
- Historian: No new information to report.
- Public relations: No report.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- Elections will be conducted at the April 2 membership meeting; need to fill 1-year and 3-year Board positions.
- The Green Valley Photography Club demonstration is scheduled for Monday, March 18.
- Need 10-15 additional chairs for the overnight outing.

### **New BUSINESS**

- Planned overnight outing events.
- Dave will order the Porta-Pots
- The Gregory Schools is interested in having DGD do another presentation at the Oregon Trail Adventure on Tuesday, October 15, 2024.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:41 PM.

---

## Business Meeting Minutes: March 19, 2024

- Dan Walker convened the meeting at 6:30 PM.
- Darrell read previous minutes; Joe motioned to approve, Dave seconded.
- Ray requested info from the overnight outing since he will be out of town; need pictures and prize information.
- Bob Melzer will be featured in this issue of the Gazette.
- Club relationship with the Webmaster is good.
- Membership report: 15 non-renewals, 10 new members, 4 previous members, 315 total members.
- Expense reports submitted.
- Treasurer report: Income was \$2,764.87, expenses of \$3,596.73 for a net income of -\$831.86.
- Gold report: \$6,649.04 + specimen piece is club on-hand gold total.
- Outing Director report: Spring overnight outing is this next weekend; no other information report.

## Business Meeting Minutes: March 19, 2024 *(continued)*

- Historian: No report.
- Public Relations report: John Blennart passed away earlier this month.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- Additional chairs for outing: Mary provided eight (8) chairs and Ralph will provide 10 more.
- Ralph will bring equipment and other overnight outing supplies to the campsite on Friday.
- Joe will put up the DGD signs leading to the outing campsite on Wednesday morning.
- Porta-potties were dropped off today.
- Becky purchased \$250 of food for the outing and \$200 for gift cards for the afternoon raffle on Saturday.
- Max and Andrea have volunteered to do the cooking at the outing.

- The lunch cost will be \$6 per plate.
- Dave Salars will draw up papers listing news club account holders after the elections at the April 2 membership meeting.
- 1-year and 3-year board members will be selected on April 2.

### **New BUSINESS**

- Becky requested additional DGD logo stickers for new member packets; Ray will provide the contact information so Becky can place an order.
- A former member recently passed away and his wife donated his books on prospecting to the club.
- Bob motioned to end meeting, Dave seconded; meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.

---

## Placer Pond Specimen

Club member Mallard Casteel (Skokie, IL) was visiting Arizona and decided to do some metal detecting on the Placer Pond claims. Mal located a nice specimen that was partially buried, but visible on the ground and made his detector “sing.”



## 2024 Gold Nugget Raffle



Raffle tickets are still available for a **6.1 gram** gold nugget.

The raffle tickets are \$2.00 each and may be purchased at the membership meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. The lucky winner will be selected at a future 2024 membership meeting.



6.1 gram nugget

---

## Club Store

Be sure to stop by the Desert Gold Diggers Club Store at the monthly membership meetings. Some of the other items you will find at our store include, but are not limited to:

- Columbia long-sleeve shirts with the Desert Gold Diggers logo
- DGD Polo shirts and T-shirts
- Hats and Visors
- Patches and DGD License Plates
- DGD window transfer decals
- Numerous prospecting items

The Club Store carries DVDs that contain the color “topo” maps, GPS coordinates, directions to the claims, and other useful information. You can print out what you need, when you need it. Laminated topo that have color maps on one side and the GPS coordinates and directions on the other side are also available.

Please support the Desert Gold Diggers with purchases from our club

---

## MASH Report

1. Terry Becklund, DGD Vice-President, is recovering from medical treatment.
2. Marion Vittetoe had surgery on February 29 to remove a tumor close to his pancreas.
3. John Blennart, a formed DGD member passed away on March 11, 2024. John was an avid prospector and had a passion for detecting for gold and meteorites.

If you have an illness, injury of death in the family please contact Amber Clark at [amclark4691@gmail.com](mailto:amclark4691@gmail.com)

## Desert Gold Diggers Story in the *Desert Leaf*

During the August 2023 membership meeting, John Smith, a local freelance writer, spoke and requested information from club members for an article he wanted to publish in the February 2024 issue of the *Desert Leaf*—a monthly newspaper serving the Tucson, AZ, area with a monthly circulation of approximately 56,000.



John requested input from DGD members so he could provide a broad-brush description of recreational gold prospecting, and also asked that members contact him if they were interested in sharing their experiences from outings or personal prospecting experiences so he could give the *Desert Leaf* article more of a personal touch.

The link below provides the complete story which is titled “Is It Gold or a Bottle Cap?” The pictures in the article were taken at the October overnight outing in the Greaterville area at our campsite and at the Hope claims. The story appears on pages 38-39:

<https://online.fliphtml5.com/uyvk/umfs/#p=38>

---

## Price of Gold Continues to Rise

Gold prices closed at a record high Friday, March 29, at **\$2254.80 per ounce**, capping the best two-quarter stretch for the precious metal in eight years.





## Green Valley Photography Club Presentation

On March 18, Ralph Montañño, Dan Walker, and Ray Darragh were guest speakers at the Green Valley Photography Club's monthly meeting. Kim Holmes, the "Speakers Series" event coordinator, discovered our website and was interested in finding out more about Desert Gold Diggers. Kim reached out to Ralph because she thought the photography club would really enjoy learning about Desert Gold Diggers and hearing about what we do best—finding GOLD!

The presentation at the Green Valley Community Center lasted over an hour and was very successful—the 73 people attending the event were interested in learning about the history of Desert Gold Diggers, the history of gold mining in Arizona, the origin of gold, and different prospecting techniques. The photography club especially enjoyed pictures of the gold and the other interesting things DGD club members find while prospecting for gold.



Ralph, Dan, and Ray Discuss  
Prospecting Techniques

During the presentation, Ralph and Dan demonstrated how to use different prospecting tools and described the basic equipment needed to find placer gold. The audience was very interactive and Kim commented after the meeting that she was very impressed with all the questions club members asked. The photography club also had an opportunity to examine gold nuggets and gold specimens DGD members have found on our claims.

The presentation concluded with a 15-minute question and answer session. One of the first questions asked was “are you going to be giving away samples of gold today?” Although we left no samples, we thoroughly enjoyed sharing our knowledge, expertise, and prospecting experiences with the Green Valley Photography Club.



Ralph Discussing DGD Claims

## Early History of Desert Gold Diggers (1982-1993)

In January 1982, the Gold Prospector's Association of America (GPAA) sponsored a gold show in Tucson. Attending the meeting was George "Buzzard" Massey, one of the original founders of the GPAA. Massey was attending the Tucson gold show due to his interest in organizing local clubs that would be affiliated with GPAA.

During the gold show, George approached Lost Dutchman Miner's Association (LDMA) member Jim (Doc) Fennel about starting a GPAA club in Tucson. Jim prepared a sign-up sheet and took the names of people that were interested in forming a local gold club.

After the Tucson gold show, Doc Fennel scheduled a meeting on Sunday, March 14, 1982, at the Tucson Junior Chamber of Commerce building on Fort Lowell Road for those on the sign-up sheet. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss organizing a new Tucson gold prospectors club.

Doc Fennel acted as the Chairman at the meeting and passed out and discussed proposed By-Laws for the club with the prospective members. It was decided that the annual dues for the club would be \$6.00 and the following officers were elected:

President: Doc Fennel  
Vice President: Ray Bixler  
Secretary: Mary Waggoner  
Treasurer: Bob Waggoner  
Club Reporter: Otelia Murphy

The newly elected officers decided to conduct regular monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM. Twenty-three (23) members joined at the first meeting.

The new club needed an official name, so it was decided to have a contest at the April meeting to select a club name. Members were asked to provide suggestions and the person providing the winning name would receive a free one-year club membership. Rich Simpson's suggestion received the most votes and on April 5, 1982, the new gold prospecting club in Tucson was officially named **Desert Gold Diggers**.

The outings that first year were held at private claims, with permission of the owners—the first being at the LDMA claim in Stanton (20 miles north of Wickenburg), at the invitation of the GPAA. Other outings that year were at Big Bug, Greaterville, Arivaca, and Patagonia. Club records indicate that members "had a good time and lots of fun" at these outings.

Doc Fennel started writing the club newsletter, called the Gazette, and Ann Kessler researched the types of name badges available, and at the July meeting, the members selected the Arizona state-shaped black and gold badge. Membership continued to grow, and in 1991, the 100th member joined Desert Gold Diggers.

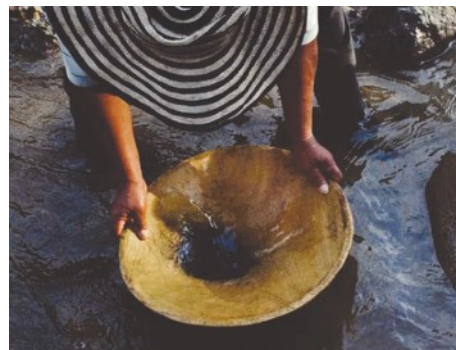
In 1993, a breakthrough occurred—at the November meeting, Jerry Schultz asked for volunteers to form a Claims Committee. In December 1993, Jerry Schultz, Tom Crosslin and the Claims Committee staked a claim and the first Desert Gold Diggers claim was acquired.

*(Thanks to Lucy Borowski, an original club member, and Mary Garcia, DGD Historian, for providing the preceding information)*

## An Important Tool—The Gold Pan

Whether you're a new prospector or a pro, the gold pan is still your most indispensable companion. It is used all over the world and is one of the first tools used in locating gold, and one of the last used to check the value of gold ore in commercial mining.

Purportedly, the "*Batea*" (a conical-shaped pan) was the first pan used. Developed by the Mayan Indians, the Batea is 15-24 inches in diameter and 6-8 inches deep. They were carved from wood and used to pan gold, diamonds, emeralds, rubies and gemstones. Anything heavier than common sand and gravel could be panned with this device. The Batea is awkward, heavy, and requires a great deal of experience before it can be used efficiently. It never gained much popularity outside of South and Central America.



In the early days of prospecting in the United States, the pan was commonly called the "gold dish." Many prospectors carved their own from a large block of wood using just a jackknife to do the rough carving and gravers from stream beds to sand the surface. Cow horns were also used to make gold pans. Carefully slit lengthwise and then steamed until it was soft enough to be worked, the horn was opened out and shaped into a shallow dish suitable for panning. In the old days the "gold dish" was the only means available to the small miner and prospector for the separation of gold.

Until recently, the most popular pan to evolve was the steel pan which is manufactured by a metal "spinning" process, which is much different from the crude hand-forged pans that local blacksmiths used to make. Although popular for many years, the most efficient pan today is one molded from tough plastic. It is far superior to the steel pan for several reasons: it is rust and corrosive proof; it can be textured with a fine "tooth" surface to hold the gold better; it is one quarter the weight of a steel pan; and the color can be black so that even the tiniest flakes of gold can easily be seen.

Using an injection mold process, riffles can be easily formed into a plastic pan which speeds up the panning process. Old timers often refer to these as "cheater riffles" because they allow the novice to pan with nearly the same degree of efficiency it took the old timers years to develop.

The common sizes of pans today are the 8-12 inch pan, used primarily for sampling, or clean up. The 14-inch pan is the most popular, multi-size use. The 16-18 inch pan is used by the more experienced panners and requires greater stamina and technique. An accomplished professional panner can only process about one cubic yard of material in an 8-hour day; however, with the development of the hand sluice, the dredge, and the rocker, even a novice can process about 3/4 cubic yard per hour.

## An Important Tool—The Gold Pan *(continued from previous page)*

Even with more sophisticated equipment, the pan is still necessary to clean up the sluice box. The concentrate is worked to where the larger gold can be removed, leaving only a black or very heavy sand. Black sand concentrates should be saved because they can be worth anywhere from one to ten dollars a pound, making it a valuable commodity. Recreational prospecting is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the United States, and here the gold pan is the prime tool with three million gold pans sold annually in this country alone.

Panning can lead to one of the most fascinating, enjoyable hobbies you have ever known. The gamble of taking a pan full of material and finding precious metal in any quantity, whether only a flake or laden with chunky gold, is a sensation that is unexplainable. Do not let anyone tell you that our rivers and streams no longer contain gold. Every year winter storms bring more to the surface, continually renewing nature's supply. It's all there for the taking, and the gold pan is still the best way to find it!

*(Citation: information obtained from <https://keeneeng.com>)*





## April 2024 Special Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2 Member's Meeting 6:00 PM	3	4	5	6
7 PLACER POND Claims 8:00 AM	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Business Meeting 6:30 PM	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## May 2024 Special Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7 Member's Meeting 6:00 PM	8	9	10	11 SNOOZIN Claims 8:00 AM
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21 Business Meeting 6:30 PM	22	23	24	25
26	27 MEMORIAL DAY	28	29	30	31	

## Editor's Note

Nominations for Officer/Board of Director positions will occur at the April 2 membership meeting. These positions are crucial to the success of our club and I am constantly amazed at all the “behind the scenes” activities that board members perform to keep our club functioning and successful.

I strongly encourage anyone that desires to have a say in the activities and future of Desert Gold Diggers to “throw your hat in the ring” and nominate yourself at the April meeting. The DGD President, Ralph Montaña, is absolutely correct when he says “please get involved and help make a difference!”



Ray Darragh, DGD Gazette Editor

Page 14 contains excerpts from the early history of Desert Gold Diggers. Thanks to Lucy Borowski and Mary Garcia (DGD Historian) for compiling and providing the information. The complete 1982-1993 history will be posted to the Desert Gold Diggers website in the near future.

---

***“May you always find yellow in the bottom of your pan”***



The Desert Gold Diggers Gazette is published as a service to the members of Desert Gold Diggers Inc. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the management and its members and neither the Desert Gold Diggers, its Board, nor the editor of this publication assume any liability for damages resulting from the use of Gazette information and club maps. There are risks associated with prospecting and the Desert Gold Diggers membership application states:

*“I acknowledge that prospecting and prospecting locations can be dangerous with numerous natural and artificial hazards. By signing up, as a member of the Desert Gold Diggers Inc., I, my spouse, my family, and/or my guests agree to release the Desert Gold Diggers Inc., their officers or assignees, and/or property owner(s) from any liability incurred during prospecting operations/outings. I further agree to have any guests accompanying me to one of the clubs claims on a private outing, to sign a club waiver prior to the outing.”*

The Desert Gold Diggers Board encourages submissions of articles from club members about prospecting or mining, as well as opinion pieces or the sale of items. All submissions will be reviewed and approved by the Board prior to inclusion in the Gazette.