

CHAPTER PRESIDENT
SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

Chester Nowicki

“The GPAA is doing a whole lot with different activities and they’ve changed a lot. They’ve become a lot more political. They want everybody to be able to go out on public lands and recreate ... I like them for that. A lot of the interaction the chapters have with the GPAA is about land rights. — *Treasure Seekers of San Diego President Chester Nowicki*”



Above: At the Bates Nut Farm Festival, Chester showed visitors young and old how to pan for gold and properly use a metal detector. His son and grandsons stopped by to visit the booth. Left to right: Jacob Nowicki, Chester Nowicki, Alex Nowicki and Richard Nowicki. **Below:** Girl Scouts were taught how to pan for gold by Chester and members of the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County.

Nowicki: Land rights a big part of GPAA

Teaching children about prospecting and getting outdoors are key

By KRISTI WATERWORTH
For the GPAA

There’s a lot more to being the president of a Gold Prospectors Association of America chapter than knowing a little bit about pretty rocks. Just ask Chester Nowicki, head of the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County. For Nowicki, being a local chapter president means educating others, community involvement and making sure everybody has a great time, whether they’re prospecting or attending a GPAA meeting.

Nowicki and the TSS members dedicate a great deal of energy to teaching children about the history of mining. They can frequently be found at community events, in elementary school gymnasiums and at Boy Scout meetings, telling the stories of the ’49ers and showing their young audience how to pan for gold.

“We do a lot of elementary schools, as many as we can per year. We talk about James Marshall, James Sutter, the California Gold Rush and the American River. I dress the part and I show them my red handkerchief filled with gold nuggets



(gold painted rocks) and we talk about the old days, what they had for gold panning and all that,” Nowicki said. “Dress me up like an old prospector and give me an auditorium full of kids and I go away from this day and age. I’ll start talking about the people involved and the kids say, ‘How old are you?’ like I was born in those days. I get into the spirit of the whole thing. I love working with youngsters. We’ve expanded now and we do presentations for both Boy Scouts and

Girl Scouts, as well.”

After telling the story of the gold find that drew tens of thousands of prospectors to California, Nowicki and his helpers line up the kids and show them how to pan for gold. They get to keep whatever they find while prospecting in sand-filled tubs laced with gold-painted rocks and gemstones. Although they go back to class messy, they all have a great time.

“Every kid gets to pan for gold nuggets. It kind of blows them away that they have

“gold” and they get to keep it. They don’t realize that it’s just gold-painted rocks,” Nowicki said. “At the same time, we buy polished gemstones and sprinkle them in the pans, too. The girls like the gemstones and they’ll trade their gold to the boys for the gemstones. I think the girls are making out better than the boys are!”

Of course, the stories aren’t just for the kids. And, the chapter meetings have reflected Nowicki’s love of great lectures for the last seven years. No matter the time of the year, a meeting of the Treasure Seekers promises to be spiced up with guest speakers from all over the world.

“When I first started as president, we were down to about 30 members and then we started getting these great speakers on metal detecting, geology, gems and geo-caching and our membership went up to 50 and then 70. I had to keep asking for more chairs for our auditorium. Then, we had a geologist from England come to talk to us about meteors and meteorites. We had people standing everywhere. I got in trouble for blocking fire lanes,” Nowicki said. “But, it’s

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my job to see that we're all having fun. When I go to a meeting and we have a really fantastic speaker, you can hear the people say, 'Man, that was excellent!' That's my role. That's what I thrive on."

It's not all fun and games for Nowicki, though. He and the Treasure Seekers are active in the fight for preserving access to public lands in California and the western United States. They take every opportunity to ensure the voices of gold prospectors and small-scale miners are heard by the government entities that manage public lands.

"Ever since the Obama administration took over, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell [and formerly Ken Salazar] and California Gov. Jerry Brown have been continuously closing off public areas — so we're always staying on top of those. We go back and forth between different groups and talk to them about the closures," Nowicki said. "We have some lands that are still open to the public, but no one is using them to hike and recreate on, so the government is closing them off because they don't want to pay extra forest rangers. If you're not going to use it, they're going to fence it off. We go around and voice our opinions to groups like the U.S. Forest Service and we do a lot as far as keeping our lands open."

Nowicki and his friends keep on top of the changing laws and restrictions affecting access to public lands with the help of the GPAA. In the time that he's been a member, Nowicki has watched the GPAA develop a strong resolve when it comes to public land access. With their help, the many chapters stay updated on various public land battles.

"The GPAA is doing a whole lot with different activities and they've changed



Members of the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County taught children at the Bates Nut Farm Festival in Valley Center, Calif., how to use prospecting equipment, including metal detectors, and how to pan for gold.

a lot. They've become a lot more political," he said. "They want everybody to be able to go out on public lands and recreate or whatever they want to do with the exception of destroying the lands. I like them for that. A lot of the interaction the chapters have with the GPAA is about land rights."

Despite all the work he puts into the fight for public land access and the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County, Nowicki makes sure to find time to go out and prospect. He splits his time between gold prospecting and metal detecting, but gold prospecting is dearest to his heart. No matter what he's doing, he loves being outside. If he happens to find something

unique, that's just icing on the cake.

"I like being outside, hiking and seeing what old prospectors left. A lot of the areas where we go were mined in the late 1800s and early 1900s and have a lot of history," Nowicki said. "My most interesting find out there was a piece of gold with a host rock on it near the Yuba River. Sometimes when you find them, they'll just be a piece of quartz with just a little bit of gold matrix in it, but finding a chunk of gold still with its host is pretty special."

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NOTE: DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, OUR FINAL DRAWING WILL NOT BE HELD AT THE SPRING 2014 GPAA GOLD SHOW IN SALEM, OR., AS ADVERTISED - SIMPLY BECAUSE THERE WILL NOT BE A GPAA GOLD SHOW IN SALEM IN THE SPRING OF 2014. BECAUSE OF THIS, OUR FINAL DRAWING HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED AND WILL BE HELD . . .

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CHAPTERS CORNER

Why you should join your local GPAA chapter

By **LOUIS ESCARCEGA**
GPAA Chapters Administrator

The Gold Prospectors Association of America currently has 17 new GPAA Chapters being formed which will bring us to a total of 128 Chapters in 45 states.



Louis Escarcega

The only states that do not have local GPAA chapters are Hawaii, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Now, even though that's extraordinary, we know that only 10 percent of GPAA members attend local area chapter meetings.

Why only 10 percent? I posed that question to some GPAA members, chapter members and chapter officers recently. What I discovered is that an overwhelming number of people aren't a part of a chapter simply because they don't know what a chapter is.

What is a local GPAA chapter?

First, let me tell you what a chapter isn't. It isn't a place you go to pay dues. Membership in any GPAA chapter across the country is free. A chapter isn't a place where you go to make any kind of payment.

A chapter is not a place where you go to have more rules imposed upon you. It's a place where you can go to learn and understand what rules for local mining and prospecting are already in place.

The purpose of GPAA chapters is to provide a friendly atmosphere for members and non-members to interact and

learn different methods of gold prospecting, small-scale mining, gem hunting, metal detecting and treasure hunting. GPAA chapters are family-oriented and open to single adults, parents and their children. We teach members how to identify gold, gems and other precious metals in the field and legally mine them for themselves. There is *no cost* to you as a participant to attend lectures, demonstrations and hands-on training at chapter meetings.

Strength in numbers

Chapters also provide a forum for members to learn more about conservation, how to respect Mother Nature and how to prospect and mine responsibly. You'll also learn about your mining rights. GPAA chapters help to provide strength and a local voice for small-scale miners. Chapter members support for one another in the gold prospecting community at a time when your rights to access and mine — not only on public lands in the western United States, but everywhere — have come under attack by extreme environmentalist groups and some federal agencies. Find out what you can do to protect your freedom.

Up close and personal

Local chapters are formed for the purpose of bringing prospectors together — people who are passionate about gold prospecting and small-scale mining and share common ground. Meetings are fun places to make friends, tell stories and listen to the prospecting adventures of others. You'll hear interesting guest speakers talk about gold prospecting, mining equipment, safety practices and treasures found. And, in some instances, becoming a member of a local



Above: Kids count the coins they found during a prospecting demonstration by members of the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County at the Bates Nut Farm Festival in Valley Center, Calif. **Below:** Chester Nowicki, president of the San Diego Treasure Seekers and his prospecting pals take a break from gold prospecting at Roaring Camp. (Left to right) Jerry Goldstein, Robert Cook, Nowicki and Jim Mears. For more information about the Treasure Seekers of San Diego County, [see story on Page 18](#).



chapter comes with benefits specific to that chapter, great food and lots of laughs.

In other words, local GPAA chapters and their members take this huge nationwide association and make it personal. Our chapter members are our strength and our reason for existence. They put a friendly face on an organization that, like any other national group, can seem impersonal at times — not that we mean to be.

Organizations, by their very nature, can seem impersonal until you get down to the grassroots and find out for yourself what it's all about from others who have been there, done that and are still doing it!

Get outdoors, attend outings

Another bonus of being a part of a GPAA chapter is that these members not only have monthly meetings but they organize outings together on claims or leases, including common digs at which you can get hands-on experience working with seasoned prospectors.

Chapter members attend schools, fairs and other community events where they share with others the excitement and outdoor adventure of prospecting and small-scale mining and build the strength of their own chapters by attracting new members.

Who wouldn't want to be a part of a group like that?

Getting together

Now, if you're one of our lone wolf prospectors who choose to "go it alone," let me tell you that, besides being a greenhorn gold prospector, I'm a skydiver, hiker and I ride a Harley. Trust me, I enjoy being alone sometimes. I get it. And, the GPAA respects your choices. But, some of the greatest times I've had doing any of those activities is when I've been able to do them with other like-minded individuals.

Friends, family or even strangers I've just met seem to enjoy hearing my stories a lot more than me telling myself the same stories over and over. Do life together. Share your experiences. Teach the next generation. That's what it's all about.

Want to start a chapter?

For those GPAA, LDMA and Lifetime members who don't yet belong to a local GPAA chapter, remember chapters are free to join and are your best bet for meeting new friends and finding more gold!

For more information about joining or starting a GPAA chapter in your area, call 1-800-551-9707. Ask for the chapters department.

Louis Escarcega is the Chapters Administrator for Gold Prospectors Association of America. He can be reached at gpaachapters@goldprospectors.org.

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This issue's featured GPAA state director is Joe Smoot of West Virginia. See story on Page 16.

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