

Lois Harvey: the Rock Hound

Written by By Ava Barlow, Staff Writer

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April 21, 2011 - Located on the corner of Collin and Parmele is a home with a yard full of rocks and flowers, in all sizes and colors. In fact, it is a little difficult to see the rocks from the road due to the colorful irises now towering up and over for spring. But strolling down the many brick sidewalks throughout the yard puts one in the perfect place to admire the many wonders displayed in the gardens.

On a recent walk with Lois Harvey, the owner of the rocks and flowers, through the midst of the gardens, many words escaped her mouth. Words like eternal prince, sneak preview, rare edition, spring dancer, toulouse, star woman, season ticket, epicenter, hot fudge, maui moonlight, and ask alma were thrown about familiarly - as some of the names for the many varieties of irises she has blooming or will be blooming very soon. The outside iron ore rocks do a good job of containing the plants inside the different beds where they are planted.

But, enter the house and a different verbiage is heard as she talks about geodes, rocks, minerals, gemstones and how she became a Rock Hound when she was in the late 20's or early 30's of her life. As a single mother of six by this time, she had little time for herself or for traveling, but any loose rock along the side of the road was in danger of being accosted and brought home with her.

"I don't know what my fascination was, but I had to bring these things home with me," Harvey said.

Harvey came to know, as she studied rocks and the different formations, that round shaped rocks usually have something on the inside. It might be a mineral deposit, the beginning of a gemstone or even a crystal. Her children, as they have grown and traveled over the world, have added to her collection, always looking for something unique to the area where they visited to bring her for a souvenir. Her vocabulary includes words like azurite, malachite, lapis lazuli, quartz, amethyst, boulder opal, magnetized hematite, kyanite, banded ironstone, mendoza onyx, autonite, trilobites and many more. She can tell you how they were formed, areas they are native to, areas where the best species are found, and where jewel-quality stones are found.

She is also known to be a rock licker, because a wet rock will show you their beauty better than a dry one. She has a squirt bottle that she uses to show off some of the fabulous colors on the inside of the rocks.

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Harvey also admits that the older she has gotten the more sophisticated she has gotten with the choices of her collecting. She has one enhydro, a stone with water still trapped inside, which scientists believe will take another several hundred thousand years for the water to turn to stone.

Harvey readily admits she doesn't know it all and is hesitant to use some of the equipment she has bought to slice, tumble and polish rocks, but she loves the finished product and the raw too. One such rock she showed looked like an unattractive brown rock, but in taking the two pieces apart that it was previously broken into, she revealed a very beautiful inside, one that would take one's breath away. She also displayed a mexican coconut, with a round rough exterior in a shade of brown. It appeared she was holding a small coconut, until she separated the two parts and showed a white interior that was a Geode. How can something so beautiful be inside something so indistinct, unless - like a rock hound - you know what you are looking for.



Harvey has many rocks on her front door steps. She will even turn on the faucet and show those interested how the rocks look after they are wet, so the real beauty will come through. She may give just enough information that those listening will become a rock hound, or at least wonder if every rock they see might have a beautiful interior. **One rock in Harvey's extensive collection is this brown one, that looks insignificant from the outside, but makes a case for "Dont judge a book by its' cover" because of the inside, which glistens and shines. - Ava Barlow staff photo**