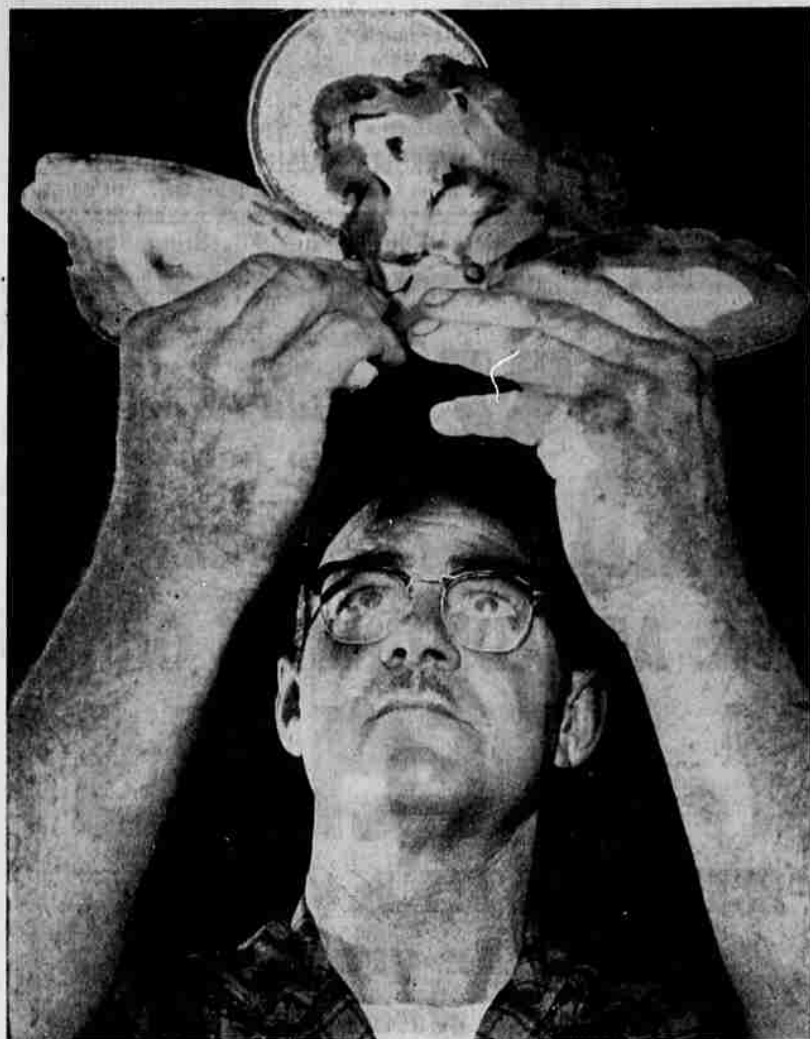


# Rock Hounding a Hobby for Whole Family



By DON BISHOFF  
Of the Register-Guard

"We used to just wander around on trips up in the mountains. We started picking up pretty rocks, one thing led to another, and here we are."

"We" are members of the James Hardin family of 1858 Garfield St. — Hardin, his wife, and 17-year-old daughter Carolyn. They have a workshop full of rock cutting, grinding and polishing equipment and a back yard piled with rocks.

The Hardins are rock hounds. Jim, who's president of the 180-member Eugene Mineral Club, says the hobby has no fancy name to describe it such as the stamp collectors' "philately."

But it has plenty of practitioners, fancy name or no. In addition to the Eugene Mineral Club, there's the 80-member Willamalane Rock and Gem Club in Springfield, and a total of some 48,000 organized rock hounds in 730 clubs throughout the country.

Club Sponsors Trips

A rock hound starts, naturally enough, by picking up rocks. What he does with them after he gets them provides the various off-shoots of the phase of the hobby lumped under the general name of "lapidary" — described by Webster as "of or pertaining to the art of cutting stones."

The Hardins generally do their collecting on a club-sponsored trip — usually an overnight camping trip. Prime rock-finding areas are scattered through the state.

"It depends, actually, on what you want to get," said Hardin. "This country is rather limited. About the only thing here is on the east side of the valley."

"Down around London Springs and London Mountain, south of the Cottage Grove Reservoir you find carnelian. It's an agate that runs light red in color."

"Then they've got some beautiful blue-banded agate in the Cougar Dam area. . . Close to Creswell on up to the Willamette River they've got beautiful agatized wood"

**Prime Areas East**

Hardin explained that the term "agatized" refers to one stage of the changing of wood into stone through time and pressures of the earth. The lowest or "softest" stage is called carbonized, next is the familiar petrified, then agatized, then opalized.

Prime hunting grounds for rock hounds are central and eastern Oregon, particularly around the Prineville area, Hardin said. He suggested that the novice go along with an experienced rock hound on his first few trips to learn where to look and what to look for.

Once the Hardins get their collection of rocks home after a trip they "wash the dirt off to see what we brought."

If a rock looks promising, it's clamped into Hardin's \$300-plus rock saw. A circular saw with tiny diamonds set in its edge cuts the rock into neat slices.

"The next step is to figure out what you want to make out of it," said Hardin. He showed a flat card with various sized and shaped holes punched out.

**Uses Vary**

"Let's say you want to make a necklace. You put the card against the rock and try to line up whatever size hole you want to use with an area of the rock that has some interesting color and design to it."

A trim saw is used to cut the pattern out of the rock slice. Then the rock is ground on a silicone carbide wheel, sanded, and finally polished on a leather disc.

The resulting stone—by now a beautiful object—is called a "cab," short for cabachon. Many rock hounds stop with this step and are content merely to display the polished "cabs." Others mount a number of them mosaic-like on tabletops.

Hardin makes jewelry from his, sometimes using commercially-made mounts, sometimes fashioning his own from silver.

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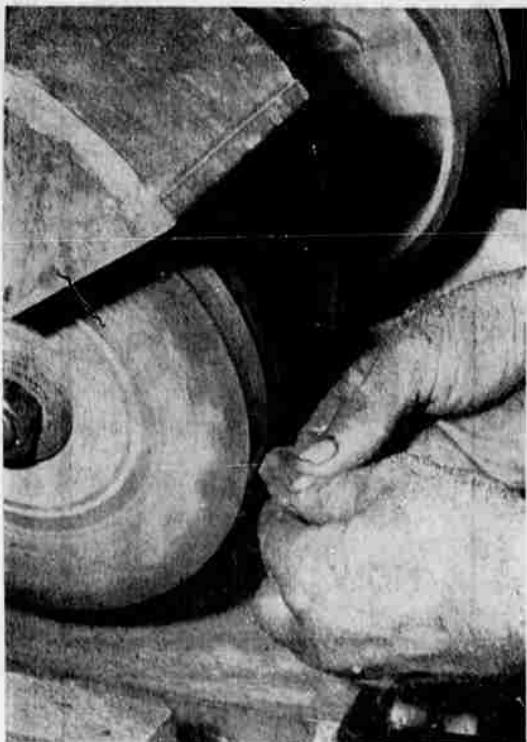
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## Beauty In Stone

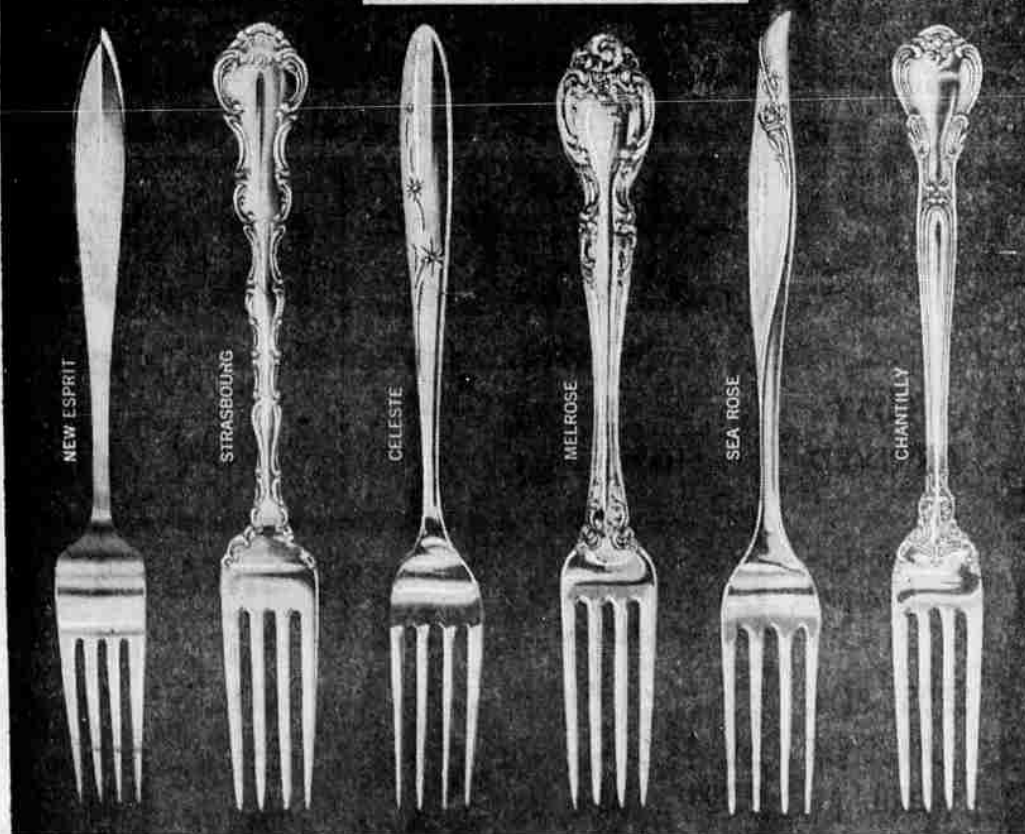
James Hardin, president of the Eugene Mineral Club, holds up three slices of rock that will be cut, ground and polished into colorful, beautiful ornaments. The lower photo shows one of the grinding operations. Hardin's wife Wilma and his daughter Carolyn share his interest in rock collecting. The Eugene Mineral Club has some 180 members and the Willamalane Rock and Gem Club in Springfield has 80.



(Photos by Joe Matheson)

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