



From The

# Bench

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## Letter to Mr. Waters on His Retirement

by *Cassandra White*

My first semester at TIJT has been quite an experience. I was able to be taught by a man who has dedicated his life to making sure his students will be prepared for not only later semesters but also for life in this big world of ours. Mr. Waters is an excellent teacher, good man and good friend to many.

Former and current students alike, come to visit with him, ask advice, and receive encouragement from him. This is a testament to a man who you hear nothing but wonderful things about.

This man gives his students respect, courage and faith to do their projects, and he makes you laugh when it seems you need it most.

Even when you rush through the door a couple of minutes late praying that he still has his famous clipboard in hand, you know that he is only trying to instill a good work ethic in you.

Listening to Mr. Waters' stories about everything from his experience in the jewelry industry to his favorite past time – fishing for crappie, as we all know – is an everyday activity. Even when Angela is calling “Mr. Waters, Mr. Waters, Mr. Waters” or I am near tears over a mishap with a project, Mr. Waters is calm and collected and knows how to handle the situation no matter what.

I feel very privileged to have been able to learn from Mr. Waters

and just to know him as a fellow person. Future students in the jewelry program will never know what they have missed by the retirement of this awesome instructor. Although we are saddened by his departure, we are all happy that he is able to retire and spend time with his wife, children and grandchildren, as well as fishing, of course. While this school and all his students have been blessed to have had Mr. Waters for so many years, it is time for him to hang up his clipboard and say goodbye.

Congratulations on your retirement, Mr. Waters. We will truly miss you and will keep you and yours in our prayers. You leave such big shoes to fill. Goodbye and God bless from Cassandra White and your other students and alumni.



**Angela Hampton, left, and Jacqueline Bartush, right, both won national scholarships to attend Paris Junior College's internationally renowned Texas Institute of Jew-**

## A Brief Look at Our Division Chair

by *Dustin Floyd*

Ulla Raus, the division chair of the Texas Institute of Jewelry Technology, has been in the jewelry business for 50 years. Ms. Raus started in the industry in Germany at the age of 14, study-  
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photo by Bill Lamb

# Art Metals Makes a Comeback at TIJT

by *Laura Hayes*

As of spring 2007, an exciting new class has been developed as part of the learning available at TIJT. Offering students a chance to learn specialized techniques not taught in the jewelry technology course, Art Metals was once taught by Ms. Raus but has been absent from the curriculum for several years. With the addition of Beth Taggart-Fowler to the TIJT teaching staff, Art Metals has enjoyed a strong revival.

Mrs. Taggart-Fowler comes to us with a strong background in the arts, having received her BFA

in Metalsmithing at the University of North Texas, where she studied under renowned professor Harlan Butt. She then attended TIJT in the late 90's, after which she went to work in the jewelry industry. Mrs. Taggart-Fowler worked for two independent jewelers, gaining experience in sales, repair, manufacturing and custom design, before her husband's job brought her back to Paris in 2006.

Mrs. Taggart-Fowler was hired by the school to start a course in jewelry arts and has been extremely successful in

doing so. The school's lapidary room has been redesigned so that a well-appointed metal arts lab coexists with the stone-cutting equipment, and she has seen to it that the school has acquired quality equipment such as a new flat rolling mill and a kiln for her students to use when enamelling. Students have several hours of class each week, and the lab is often available for additional use. It is not unusual to see several students at work on design projects every evening and even at free moments during the day.

Students in Mrs. Taggart-Fowler's class are presented with several techniques to learn, including chasing, repousse, enamelling, granulation, reticulation, mokume gane and more. Enamelling and mokume gane have been particularly popular with students in recent semesters, but Mrs. Taggart-Fowler allows students the freedom to experiment with many methods, requiring only that they complete a certain number of projects in a semester. Students are encouraged to research specialized jewelry techniques that interest them, and Mrs. Taggart-Fowler works with them to understand and master those methods. The class is extremely conducive to creative experimentation and can be credited with the sharp rise in entries for this semester's school design contest. As Mrs. Taggart-Fowler continues to work with her students on a variety of specialized skills, we expect to see even more fine metal arts pieces.

# Lunchtime Learning Opportunities at TIJT

by *Cristin Nelson*

The TIJT Student Association has enjoyed success this year in offering short lunchtime classes for members. Two such classes were offered in the fall of 2007: pearl stringing and wire wrapping. I took both classes, finding them enjoyable for the opportunity to learn something new. While students may or may not find themselves using these skills in the jewelry trade, they can always use them as hobbies.

The pearl stringing class this semester was taught by Mrs. Calloway. It was interesting learning how to pull the pearls on the string without getting it tangled up – good luck! Frustration set in trying to string the pearls, drill the holes bigger and fixing unwanted knots in the string...oops.

The Student Association Trea-

sure, Johanna Simpson, taught the wire wrapping class. This class was great as wire is how I got interested in jewelry in the first place. We used silver and gold colored wire, twisting and turning to make our own designs around the stones. An added bonus was that the stones we used were supplied by the Cabochon Cutting Class taught by Gove Dee Slate, providing his students extra practice as well.

You don't have to give up your lunch hour for these classes, as the setting is casual and bringing your lunch with you is encouraged. I highly suggest that anyone with even an ounce of interest try taking some of these classes. Who knows – the skills you learn could come in handy someday in your work.

## Through the Eyes of a Miner – Crater of Diamonds State Park

by *Jarred Bleacher*

As you walk along the pathway heading into the field at Crater of Diamonds in Murfreesboro, Arkansas, you begin to wonder. You think to yourself, how in the world am I ever going to find a diamond in all this dirt? On October 27th, 2007, several members of the Student Association and their guests were asking themselves that same question. Although, unfortunately, none of the attendees found any diamonds this time around, the trip was a

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ing for three years at a college for jewelry. She then studied under a master jeweler for two years. Ms. Raus spent years learning the jewelry business and preparing herself to hand it down to newcomers wanting to enter the industry. That eagerness to pass along her knowledge is what drove her to become a teacher. She has been teaching here at TIJT for twenty-one years and has no regrets. For Ms. Raus jewelry is a passion, and her greatest joy is to witness the success of her students. She claims that her secret to life is to stay active, going to work every day and learning something new.



success and everyone spoke of returning to Murfreesboro.

For anyone who has never visited this state park, or even heard of it, it is located 70 miles northeast of Texarkana. Nestled in a beautiful state park, the Crater of Diamonds dig site has been open to the public since 1972. With over 37 acres of plowed field to mine, it is no surprise that a diamond is found nearly everyday. The largest diamond to be found was an enormous 16.37 carat stone located in 1975. The state park also contains its own water park, opened in 2004, as well as campsites, hiking trails, nature observation blinds and fishing opportunities.

While students returned with only pockets full of dirt and gypsum, the trip was a blast for all and will most likely become a bi-annual trip. For more information about the Crater of Diamonds State Park, visit their website at <http://www.craterof-diamondsstatepark.com>.

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## Troubled Rain

A story by *Timothy Stoker*

The soft light of an early morning glazed my eyes, gently warming my face. The moon was still traveling downward through a cool dew mist, as if the sun was chasing the moon's light from its well hung position in the sky. This was the morning I had waited for; the rest of the day was far from my mind. Before this morning, life had become a bitter taste in my mouth, as if it were a fruit plucked too soon from the vine. This was the day I would reopen my mind to unconscious clarity, choosing to let go of all that is worldly and had corrupted me.

My journey began with one foot in front of the other and my body then mind following. Where I was going was unimportant to me. I needed so much to let go. I was now guided by an unknown force, with me submissive to its will. Now, looking around at a world I was utterly unfamiliar with, the tenseness of my neck and the burdens of my mind were lessened. Visions of misfortunes went swimming at random intervals through my thoughts like a million shooting not knowing their destinations. I found myself stopping to admire the beauty that surrounded me, as it would take importance over the heavy discontent and replace it with ease and soft touches of the colors and smells of the natural. There were pastures of light gold and hills of thick green trees that rolled on to what seemed like the end of the earth. At that moment I treated myself by removing my

shoes, my feet tickled with delight by the tall thick grass beneath them. Nature had truly stimulated me to the point of bliss.

Until this point I had not looked back, somehow thinking that this would keep me in the moment. Now the sun was once again saying its goodbyes. Not wanting to be stripped of all that I was feeling, I dreaded the return of what I knew was inevitable. So I stopped at a small brook with the tiniest waterfall and lay down in a silky patch of Bermuda grass and moss. The sun was now fully at rest, and the stars had awoken at their brightest. As the soothing sound of water played its lullaby, the crickets played their violins. My thoughts for the first time were of absolutely nothing. For the first time in what seemed like an eternity, clarity, contentment

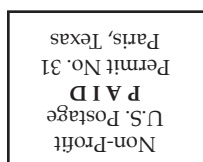
and conscious were relieved. This was a mystical moment in time that had to end, but for that moment it was remembered.

My thoughts were coming back, and the dirt on my brain began to build up. I grabbed on to each one of those thoughts and placed it with a star in the sky. Visually watching them dangle over my head, they would stay separate and clear. Some were harsh realities, some restless things, all tiny torments of an everyday life. I stared at them and pondered which one to work with first. A cloud came along and covered the stars. I didn't know the cloud intent, but I knew it was up to something. Sure enough a light rain started to fall. I decided I would stay next to my waterfall and the ever-so-soft grass. I had a mission, and the cloud would

eventually move away. Letting the raindrops find their places around me, I closed my eyes for another thoughtless moment. When I finally opened them, I looked up and the cloud was gone. Unfortunately it left me not knowing in which order my thoughts had been placed on the stars. However was I to begin again? Suddenly two raindrops hit me dead center in both my eyes. No matter how much I wanted to blink and wipe them away, I chose not to. Instead I looked up through the drops of rain, to my thoughts and all of the stars.

At that wonderful moment, through the blur and all the wonder, it was clear.

WHAT DID I SEE THAT DAY?  
THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS  
THERE!



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