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Findings based on marketing research conducted September 2000 by AGTA.





Election Newsletter

The American Gem Trade Association

December 2004

2005 AGTA Board Elections

About AGTA Elections

This year one of two Vice Presidents; one of two Secretaries; and three of nine Directors are to be elected to the Board of the American Gem Trade Association.

Members of the AGTA's Board whose terms of office expire in February 2005 are as follows:

Robert Linder	Vice President
Roland Naftule	Secretary
Sampat Poddar	Director
Bear Williams	Director
Open	Director

The following AGTA Officers' and Directors' terms continue through the coming year:

Eric Braunwart	President
Ashok Sancheti	Vice President
Allen Kleiman	Secretary
Barbara Lawrence	Treasurer
Michael Arnstein	Director
Michael Avram	Director
Betty Sue King	Director
Glenn Lehrer	Director
Rick Krementz	Director
Steven Stieglitz	Director

The **Nominating Committee** was chaired by Past President Richard Greenwood. Committee members for the 2005 nomination slate were Michael Avram, Pini Pinchasi, Simon Watt and Eric Braunwart.

Candidates for the 2005 election are as follows:

Vice President: Barbara Lawrence
Boston Gems & Findings, Inc.

Secretary: Sampat Poddar
Byrex Gems, Inc.

Rick Krementz
Richard Krementz Gemstones LLC

Director: (three to be elected)

Robert Bentley	Robert Bentley Company, Inc.
Joseph Bernfeld	Unibest Corp.
Haridas Kotahwala	Royal India USA, Inc.
Surinder K. Mittal	The Kay El Co., Inc.
Omi Nagpal	Omi Gems, Inc.
Kambiz Sabouri	Gem 2000, Inc.

WHO CAN VOTE IN AGTA ELECTIONS? All AGTA Firm and Charter Members *in good standing* who have completed their 6-month probation may vote. Ballots are enclosed for those members.

"IN GOOD STANDING": This means those have renewed their AGTA membership for 2005. Members who are suspended may not vote.

FOR ALL MEMBERS' INFORMATION: Affiliate Members, Honorary Members and recently approved members whose 6-month probationary terms has not yet expired are ineligible to vote. However, this Election Newsletter is sent to ALL members and applicants for membership to keep the entire organization and prospective members informed on the election proceedings.

WHO SIGNS THE BALLOT? Ballots MUST be signed by the designated member of record for each member company. Ballots signed by persons other than the member of record cannot be tallied. The member of record for each company is the person whose name appears in the AGTA *Source Directory*, on all invoices and on AGTA correspondence.

VOTING DEADLINE: In order to be counted, ballots must arrive at the AGTA office in Dallas, Texas by the close of business day, January 10, 2005. Ballots may be faxed to 972-620-8124.

VOTE COUNTING PROCEDURE: Ballots will be held, sealed in their envelopes, until they are opened and counted by the Executive Director and two AGTA members, as directed by the AGTA Constitution. Any interested member who wishes to observe the counting of the ballots is welcome to do so. Please contact the Executive Director for the time and location of this event. Election results will be reported to all AGTA members shortly after the ballots are counted.

MEET YOUR 2005 AGTA BOARD IN TUCSON: Newly elected Board members will be introduced at the general membership meeting February 6, 2005 in Tucson and will take office at the Board meeting on February 9, 2005. Please read the following pages for each candidate's views and goals before casting your votes on the enclosed ballot.

Vice President

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Barbara Lawrence

Boston Gems & Findings, Inc.
Boston, MA



Thank you all for the opportunity to have served on our Board for the past three years. Believe it or not I look forward to working another three years as Vice President. As Vice President I hope to continue to keep the channels of communication open between the Board and the membership. We have some huge projects coming up in our organization, and I believe we will have to communicate and coordinate more than ever to reach our goals. The Smithsonian Project is probably the largest undertaking the AGTA has started since the beginning of the lab. I see Eric, Doug and the Board spending a lot of time and energy making this project successful for the members, and for the promotion of colored gemstones. It will be extremely important for the Board to work together to coordinate not only this project, but also all our new promotional plans, our membership outreach, our educational outreach, and of course the success of the GTC. I look forward to working on these projects and also speaking with you as they develop.

Barbara

Secretary

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Richard Kremenz

Richard Kremenz Gemstones, LLC
Newark, NJ



Many of you may already know me. I have been active on many committees, and sit on the GTC Board of Governors. I also sit on the Jewelers Vigilance Committee Board.

For those that do not know me, a little background. I am 49 years old, the fourth generation in my family's business, which was founded in 1866. I lived for five years in Brazil and a year in Africa. I completed my first Ironman triathlon in September. The letters after my name include GG, FGA, CG, and an MBA from Harvard.

I love all the colors; my business works with about 80 colors, from paraiba to emerald to rose quartz. I think I can represent almost all the factions in our industry. I was elected to Director four years ago, and now am running for the position of Secretary.

AGTA has several challenges ahead. The GTC (Lab) has been an important resource for us, and also very expensive. The new corundum treatments continue to threaten our industry and our lab, as does the misuse of disclosure system. Key to our success will be generating a strong financial base for the lab, as it cannot be funded any longer from trade show revenues. As Budget and Finance Co-Chair for this year, I feel I have been effective on keeping the focus of the lab on finances. We are working on implementing a new operational plan and increase production (and cash flow).

Ongoing, **our trade shows have to continue to be the premier color venues in the US.** Tucson is changing, and we must work to keep our show and our members in first place, despite new competition from JCK-Phoenix, and changes with GJX and GLDA. There will be changes in JCK-Las Vegas, and we will continue to put AGTA members first.

Publicity and promotion must be increased and improved. Deficits in the lab have curtailed many promotional projects, so getting the lab into healthy financial territory is essential.

I ask for your vote. Please feel free to contact me if you want to discuss any AGTA issues at rick@rkg1866.com.

Article VII Standing Committees

Section 7 Nominating Committees

ARTICLE VII

Standing Committees

Section 7

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of a Chairman, who shall be the Immediate Past President and three (3) Charter or Firm members selected by the Chairman. In selection of committee members the Chairman shall endeavor to ensure that various geographical areas of the United States are fairly represented.

In the event of the inability or unwillingness of the Immediate Past President to serve as chairman of the Nominating Committee, the President shall appoint a replacement subject to the approval of a majority of the voting members of the Board.

The Committee Chairman shall, on or before the first day of September each year, submit to the President and the Executive Director a proposed slate of nominees for each vacancy in the Board of Directors and officers which shall occur by expiration of term of office in February of the following year. The Committee shall endeavor to submit more than one (1) name for each such vacancy.

The list of nominees shall be presented to the Board of Directors for review at the fall meeting of the Board. By a three-fourths vote of the Board members present, any name(s) submitted by the committee may be vetoed. By a three-fourths vote of the Board members present, the Board may require the committee to submit an additional nominee in those cases where only one name was submitted.

In either such case, the committee shall submit new and/or additional names forthwith, but not later than the first day of December so as to allow the Executive Director to prepare the mail ballot which said ballot shall be mailed to the membership no later than the 10th day of December each year.

In addition to the persons nominated in accordance with the foregoing procedure, the mail ballot shall also include the name of any person nominated by written petition signed by at least ten (10) percent of the total voting membership presented to the Nominating Committee Chairman and the Executive Director not later than the first day of December each year.

Member signatures shall be invalid if they appear on more than one petition per officer or director position.

Mail ballots shall be returned to the AGTA office so as to be received not later than the 10th day of January. Ballots received later than said deadline shall not be counted. Ballots shall be opened and immediately tabulated by the Executive Director and at least two (2) members. The results of the vote shall be promulgated by the Executive Director.

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Omi Nagpal

Omi Gems, Inc.
Los Angeles, CA



I served on the AGTA Board for five years from 1998 thru 2003 and will be happy to serve again if called upon to do so. One of the goals of the AGTA has always been to promote awareness of colored gemstones, thus creating an opportunity for our members to sell more. I will work towards that goal in addition to finding ways to have better communication between the Board and the membership.

Have a great holiday season.

Omi Nagpal

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Kambiz Sabouri

Gem 2000, Inc.
Columbus, OH



A strong AGTA, focused on our common interest, which is promoting colored gemstones, can significantly enhance our trade. I, as a member of this organization for the past fifteen years, have benefited greatly from it.

For AGTA to become a stronger voice in the industry, it first needs to become a much stronger organization. This strength has to come from its membership; a membership who has trust and confidence in its leadership, knowing that they are there to promote and protect their interest as colored gemstone dealers. A key factor in building this trust is having a high level of transparency in the decision-making processes particularly in the area of finances. Such an approach will lead to plans that serve the entire membership, in a fair and equal manner. I have long been advocating this and will continue to do so as a Board member.

Outside of our trade, I have experience serving in the administration of organizations that have consensus building and consultation as their core value. In order for any member-supported organization to reach its potential, its membership needs to be able to express their thoughts and opinions having full trust that it would be taken into consideration. The elected leadership of the organizations also needs to realize its sole purpose is to serve the best interest of the general. I believe we can reach this level of maturity and success in our organization.

Trustworthiness, strong ethics, fairness, mutual respect, vision, fiscal responsibility, and long-term planning are the type of common sense business practices that have made each of us a success. I believe the Board needs to reflect these same core values and principles. My goal as a Board member is to make this shared vision our source of strength.

For Secretary

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Sampat R. Poddar

Byrex Gems Inc.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Education:

MBA (Canada), MA (Canada), CFA
(Chartered Financial Analyst, USA)

Associations:

Director, American Gem Trade Association (AGTA); Co-Chairman, Budget & Finance Committee
Executive Director/Treasurer, Canadian Jewellery Association (CJA)
Ambassador to Canada, International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA)
Past Vice-President, Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC)
Supplier Member, American Gem Society (AGS)
Firm Member, American Gem Trade Association (AGTA)
Wholesale Member, Canadian Jewellery Association (CJA)
Member, TEC (The Executive Committee)

As founder and President of Byrex Gems Inc., my experience in the gemstone industry has spanned a period of more than 16 years. I have learned through my educational and professional training, the importance of integrity and unfailing adherence to ethical practices in the industry. Our employees follow similar principles and are primarily professional gemmologists (GIA's and FCGMA's) equipping us to thoroughly understand the technicalities of the gemstone industry.

As an Ambassador to Canada for the ICA, I have been exposed to international issues pertaining to the colored stone industry. In addition, to continue innovation at Byrex, I am continuously exploring new facets of the industry. Our efforts have received a great response from the gemstone world, such that our master cutter received first place in the Cutting Edge Competition of the 2002 AGTA Spectrum Awards.

(Sampat Poddar, Continued)

As a TEC member -- my membership in this group is one of pride and great benefit, to me, and the Byrex organization. The Executive Committee, founded in 1957, is an international organization of CEO's dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and enhancing the lives (and businesses) of CEO's. CEO's involved with TEC make better business decisions; increase their accountability on critical objectives; grow in their business and personal lives; and, improve management of essential strategic changes.

As the Treasurer at the Canadian Jewellers Association, I have had hands-on experience in planning, managing and controlling financial issues of the Association.

As a Director of AGTA for over two years, I have learned the intricacies of the functioning of AGTA and am ready to take up more challenging tasks at the Board.

As AGTA Secretary, I will do all my best to:

- attend AGTA Board Meetings as required;
- disseminate information of the minutes and notices of meetings, including all motions and votes during elections;
- preside Board Meetings, if and when required by the incumbent President, or as authorized by the AGTA Board; and
- work closely with AGTA Administration and the various AGTA Committees, focusing on current issues and events affecting AGTA, its members, and the gemstone industry in general. Together, we will endeavour to meet AGTA's mission to enhance the confidence and reputation of the colored stone industry to the jewellery world.

Prior to my creation of Byrex, I worked as a Financial Advisor for a Provincial Government in Canada. As a Director of the AGTA, I would continue to work to streamline finances, as I have an extensive background in this field.

I thank you for your consideration.

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Robert Bentley

Robert Bentley Co., Inc.
New York, NY



Over the years I have been fortunate to work with a dynamic and creative community of people who collectively have tried to bring fresh ideas, innovative designs and quality materials to the colored gemstone and pearl industry. We have helped to establish growth of the market for unusual natural material, and unique and imaginative cutting.

The AGTA has been paramount to the growth and development of this community and I am grateful for the opportunity to give back to the organization that has done so much for us. I hope to continue to build upon and learn from the work of those who have previously served. I am especially interested in bringing the concerns and needs of the entire membership to the Board. AGTA Board members have an opportunity to provide an invaluable service to our community. It is my hope that the members of AGTA will entrust me with that responsibility and privilege.

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Joseph Bernfeld

Unibest Corp.
New York, NY



I have been in the precious stone business for over thirty-three years. I opened Unibest Corporation 30 years ago. I have used my experience to develop and market the sale of gemstones in many countries all over the world. My framework of over thirty years experience would be beneficial to the AGTA.

I would like to see several goals met as an AGTA Board member:

Promote integrity and honesty in business.

For suppliers to divulge everything about the treatment of gemstones before being sold.

AGTA Lab has the potential to be the most extensively used lab. The lab should have faster answers. "Time is of the essence."

The precious gemstone industry is at a crossroads. People would like more color but with negative publicity no one is excited about purchasing colored gemstones. We need to do something about that.

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Haridas Kotahwala

Royal India USA, Inc.
New York, NY



I was born in 1939 and raised in Jaipur, India, the Colored Gemstone Capital. After graduating in 1959, I joined the family business of gemstone manufacturing and trading. In 1968, I moved to New York and established Universal Gem Traders, Inc. as its President. I am a fourth generation gemstone dealer but the first from Jaipur (India) to establish a business in New York.

Over the next 3 decades, our organization and our family established offices in all major color gemstone centers of the world - Idar Oberstein (Germany), Hong Kong, Bangkok, Miami, Brazil. We are involved in all aspects of Colored Gemstone Trade - from rough processing to jewelry manufacturing using colored gemstones. We manufacture and trade in most natural colored gemstones.

Our organization has been participating at major Trade Shows for the last 30 years and annually we do about 40 shows.

I have been the founding Vice President of IDCA (Indian Diamond and Color Stone Association). Subsequently, I have served as its President on 3 different terms. Also, I have been a founding member of the International Colorstone Association (ICA). For my dedication to the gemstone trade and community, I was honored with a Proclamation from New York State Assembly and the US Congress.

The Future of the Gemstone Industry is very bright and I am very optimistic about it. Naturally, new times offer new challenges. Today technological innovation and global competitiveness are the new challenges.

In the US market, treatments and enhancements, have become more acceptable and transparent. A large part of the credit goes to AGTA for its efforts. However, more needs to be done in the US and more importantly, around the world.

Today the customer is not only satisfied by wearing jewelry that is only white (plain diamonds). The sophisticated customer prefers the vibrancy of colors. We need to identify our sophisticated customer and promote our products accordingly. The target audience cannot be limited to the US alone, but the entire world should be our focus. It is time to reach out.

As an example, AGTA not only should have special sections in trade shows in Tucson and Las Vegas, but also in Basel, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Japan and other important international trade shows.

AGTA is a respected trade body. Persons of high esteem and integrity should be elected to govern such a trade body. These persons should bring knowledge, understanding and passion to the Board. They should see a bright future of the trade and must be willing to contribute to that future. I am such a person. Besides the above, I bring tradition, experience and a global vision. We want the trade to flourish in a fair and ethical manner.

As you know, I have offered my candidacy for the post of director of AGTA for the year 2005. It is my strong desire that we strengthen AGTA and the trade. I request you to please vote for me so that I can contribute with my experience to our Association.

For Director

A three year term starting February 2005

■ Surinder K. Mittal

The Kay El Co., Inc.
Dallas, TX



I would like to thank all those who responded to my request for a nomination petition for this election. I sent it to about 50 members and I got an overwhelming reply from over 85 members.

I am one of the first ten people who helped co-found AGTA. In 1981, I remember being at the poolside in the Holiday Inn South in Tucson, Arizona when we all collected \$100 from each person there so we could start an organization called AGTA. Immediately after, I was in an unfortunate car accident in which I lost my younger brother. I was in the hospital and recovering with physical therapy for two years. Therefore, I was unable to be actively involved in the initial stages of when AGTA was founded. Due to my family loss at the time, I wasn't involved in the AGTA and therefore, lost my seniority in the association.

I started my own gem business over 30 years ago in Dallas, Texas. My company does over 60-70 trade shows a year across the USA for the past 30 years. Many of my customers refer to my company as the "McDonalds" or "Sam Warehouse" of the gemstone business. I have a lot of experience and knowledge in the gemstone industry and have worked with industry people in India, Thailand and Brazil. I have been contacted by EGL many times for consultation in diamond grading. I have also supplied stones to GIA and helped with any consultation they may have.

I have also been actively involved in non-profit community organizations including the International Lions Club and have been past President in office.

With my experience, knowledge and passion for colored gemstones, I hope to promote and continue the strength of this association. I would like to enhance the image of our organization and grow our sales at the trade shows worldwide. I want to be given the opportunity to serve on the Board so I can help grow our industry in all aspects.