

# In the loop: Gemologist travels globe for stones

Allen Brown's search for rare gemstones had taken him to Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Nigeria and Brazil.

## Q&A

WITH YOUR  
NEIGHBORS

ALLEN BROWN

The Methuen gemologist travels worldwide — he's off to Thailand in a few weeks — to find unique stones that he will later sell to local goldsmiths to turn into jewelry.

It's a lifelong passion Brown has been at for 25 years that started when he was a teenager. In high school Brown fell in love with stones, he said, when he and a friend would travel to mines in New Hampshire in search of crystal minerals. After that, Brown began purchasing gemstones and making jewelry for friends.

The gemstones he sells cover a wide range, from as little a \$20 to the tens of thousands.

**What's the most valuable stone you've found?**

Per carat, it was a 7-plus carat color changing sapphire that went from blue to amethyst purple. It was found 50 years ago in Sri Lanka. It was worth about \$4,000 per carat, (about \$28,000).

**Ever had a security scare while searching for stones worldwide?**

In Madagascar, carrying guns as protection is pretty standard if you want to see what's out in the gemstone world. I have not had anything stolen.

**What kind of jewelry do you wear?**

I have a few rings that I wear while at trade shows, teaching and lecturing. One is a Tanzanite purchased in the rough and faceted by one of our cutters. I designed it ... it then took the custom goldsmith about a year to carve the wax, cast it, use two colors of gold, sandblast, finish and set the ring.

**What's the most unusual stone you have found?**

One very unique item that we sold this

year was what is called a Watermelon Tourmaline. This one originated in the world famous Newry, Maine, strike in 1972. The crystal was about the size of a soda can. When the crystal was sliced and held up, the outside rim was green and the inner part of deep pink — reminiscent of watermelon. This watermelon slice weighed 500 carats and its future home is in a museum dedicated to Maine minerals.

**On your upcoming trip to Thailand, what do you hope to bring back?**

The gemstone market is global and many gemstones from other parts of the world will find their way to cutting facilities or to those in the gemstone business — one being Thailand. Though gemstones from Thailand and surrounding countries will be abundant, gemstones from Madagascar and Africa will also be there, as the rough enters the country for sale and to be faceted. I might find something that I was not looking for or expecting to find, but that I couldn't pass up due to beauty or rarity.

— Stephanie Chelf



MARC MCGEEHAN/Staff photo

Methuen gemologist Allen Brown examines a yellow beryl from Tajikistan through a loop.