

2009 AGTA Board Elections

The AGTA Board of Directors holds elections on a rotating cycle in order to guarantee coherence of the Board's long-term plans. The Nominating Committee was chaired by Past President Eric Braunwart. Committee Members for the 2009 nomination slate were Dana Schorr, Schorr Marketing and Kailash Rawat, Rawat Gems, LLC.

This year the President, one of two Vice Presidents, one of two Secretaries, the Treasurer and three of nine Directors are to be elected to the Board of the American Gem Trade Association. Terms are for three years beginning February 2009.

Candidates for the 2009 election are as follows:

President:

Benjamin Hackman Intercolor USA

Vice President:

Kambiz Sabouri Gem 2000, Inc.

Secretary:

John Bachman John M. Bachman, Inc.

Treasurer:

Sampat Poddar Byrex Gems, Inc.

Director: (three to be elected)

Peter Bazar Imperial-Deltah, Inc.

Ruben Bindra B & B Fine Gems

Ron Ringsrud Ronald Ringsrud Co.

Ambrish Sethi Manak Jewels, Inc.

Members of the AGTA's Board whose terms of office expire in February 2009 are as follows:

Barbara Lawrence	President
Benjamin Hackman	Vice President
Kambiz Sabouri	Secretary
Sampat Poddar	Treasurer
Eric Schwotzer	Director
Glenn Lehrer	Director
Peter Bazar	Director

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

Robert Bentley	Vice President
Betty Sue King	Secretary
Sushil Goyal	Director
John Bachman	Director
Gerry Manning	Director
Bill Larson	Director
Open	Director
Open	Director

About AGTA Elections

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.

What Does "In Good Standing" Mean?

This means any Firm or Charter Member who have renewed their AGTA Membership for 2008. Members who are suspended may not vote.

Member Information:

Associated Industry Professionals, Colored Diamond Suppliers, Estate Jewelers, Manufacturers, Retailers, Students, Honorary Members and recently-approved Firm Members whose 6-month probation period has not expired are ineligible to vote. However, this Election Newsletter is sent to ALL Members to keep the entire organization 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, **September 10, 2008**. 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 Chief Executive Officer 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 Chief Executive Officer 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 2009 AGTA Board at AGTA GemFair™ Tucson:

Newly elected Board members will be introduced at the general membership meeting February 8, 2009 in Tucson and will take office at the Board meeting in Tucson.

Please read the following pages for each candidate's views and goals before casting your votes on the enclosed ballot.

For President



Benjamin Hackman

Intercolor USA
New York, NY

Firm Member, AGTA
Member, ICA
Member, New York Gemstone Association
Member, Jewelers' Board of Trade

Last year I was elected to serve as a Director on the AGTA Board of Directors, after having served two previous terms as Director and Treasurer. Now I have the privilege of running for the office of President. I have been a proud and dedicated Member of AGTA for 26 years. Our current Board of Directors is a strong and dedicated group, and I am confident that I can continue the strong leadership we have experienced with our current President, Barbara Lawrence.

There has been a tremendous amount of change taking place within the colored gemstone trade and there are a lot of issues facing us today. I firmly believe that AGTA is the leader in the colored gemstone industry and my goal is to work to strengthen the AGTA name as the "Authority in Color." I think there are many exciting things that AGTA can do to build our Association into an even stronger group and to make our message of disclosure and ethical sale of colored gemstones heard throughout the world.

Being active and well known in the trade for the past 30 years, and familiarity with most domestic and international traders, suppliers and organizations, is what I continue to offer to our organization. I appreciate your confidence as we continue to build and grow AGTA and I would be proud to serve as your President. Thank you.

For Vice President



Kambiz Sabouri

Gem 2000, Inc.
Columbus, OH

Fellow AGTA Members:

I had the privilege of serving on the Board for the past four years, acting as the Secretary for the past three. The nomination committee recently asked me to serve as the Vice President and I am honored to accept this nomination. I am asking for your support to continue to represent you on this Board.

The present economic environment have made it very difficult for all of us and this and other factors such as consumer demands and expectations for sustainable and ethical practices, supply concerns, treatments, etc... has made AGTA more of an organization that we all depend on to assist us in understanding and dealing with these issues.

AGTA is only as strong as its Members and its resources are limited to what we as Members are willing to share with it. I believe through strong and efficient communication, management and leadership we can draw upon each others strength and resources to grow to be the premier colored stone organization in the world. I am dedicated to AGTA and its mission and hope to work with all of you in reaching our common goal and advancing our organization.

Yours truly,

Kambiz Sabouri

For Secretary



John Bachman
John M. Bachman, Inc.
Boulder, CO

I have been on the AGTA Board of Directors since 2007, and would be honored to serve as its Secretary. I am currently serving on the Industry Rules and Nomenclature Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee.

I am a colored gemstone dealer and my perspective comes from over thirty years of activity in the mining areas of Sri Lanka and in all aspects of the dynamics of gem production there; my long-term, personal relationships with mine operators, gem merchants and lapidaries; and my operation of a competitive one hundred percent loose color gem business in the United States. My experience on the AGTA Board has sharpened my awareness of the issues we face, and I am excited to be active in finding ways to meet these challenges.

I believe we need to focus on the outsider's perception of just exactly who we are, as members of the AGTA. In gem dealing, integrity is everything, and that should be the underpinning of our public image. This applies to our products and how we represent them, and the ethics behind the way we conduct business. To me, that means continued support for the AGTA Gemological Testing center and unified policies regarding treatment and certification issues; enforcement of our AGTA guidelines; and discussions leading to clear policy regarding issues of ethics related to producing countries, our foreign partners, and any other matter that can affect the way our industry is viewed. This is integral to AGTA's mission to promote the colored gemstone and pearl trades.

I also believe that for the AGTA to help its Members most effectively, our Board of Directors must advocate for fiscal responsibility and use our resources carefully. Our responsibility is to serve our Members.

I will continue to be a strong advocate for the gem and pearl dealers in the AGTA. Thank you for your support and your vote.

For Treasurer



Sampat R. Poddar
Byrex Gems Inc.
Toronto, Canada

Education:

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

Associations:

Active participation and involvement with organizations and committees, as follows:

*Treasurer,
American Gem Trade Association, Board of Directors*

*Vice-President, Executive Director/Treasurer,
Canadian Jewellery Association (CJA)*

*Ambassador to Canada,
International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA)*

*Past Vice-President,
Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC)*

I am eagerly seeking the position of Treasurer of AGTA to continue serving for the next three year term. I am very pleased indeed to have the opportunity to address my thoughts, vision and aspirations for the future of AGTA. With that, I sincerely offer my full commitment and dedication to ensure the growth of AGTA.

My constant companions shall be integrity, energy, initiative, originality and unfailing dedication and knowledge to maintaining the ethical practices of the industry, of course, bringing with me experience of over 20 years in the gemstone industry as founder and President of Byrex Gems Inc. to the position.

As Director of AGTA, and currently Treasurer, I have learned the intricacies of the functioning of AGTA and am ready to take up more challenging tasks at the Board.

It has been a great privilege working with the AGTA Board in the past years, and helping to share its growth and success. I trust my ideas, judgement, and energy have served the Association well and proven fruitful.

I eagerly look forward of course to a vigorous continuation of my aims and intentions to help the AGTA grow.

Thank you.

Sampat R. Poddar
President & CO
Byrex Gems

For Director



Peter Bazar

Imperial-Deltah, Inc.
East Providence, RI

I am presently completing the third year of my first term on the AGTA Board. The experience has been both rewarding and frustrating. The fact that it takes a while to get up to speed and start to understand the dynamics of the AGTA Board convinced me that I should seek another term.

I feel the insight into the successes and the failures over the last three years will prove invaluable should I be privileged to serve another term.

I am President of Imperial-Deltah and in addition to serving on the AGTA Board I also serve on the boards of the Cultured Pearl Association of America and The Plumb Club.

It is my belief that the AGTA is a unique organization which has established ethical standards for our industry. The Tucson show is the finest gem show the industry has and I am proud to serve as Co-Chairman of the Show Committee.

We are all aware that our industry is going through greater change than I have witnessed in my 30 years in this industry. I believe the AGTA must adapt to these changes. If given the opportunity to serve another three years, it is my intention to facilitate the AGTA'S mission of increased involvement among retailers and U.S. companies in the colored gemstone/pearl industry, disclosure, fair-trade and a voice to the industry.

It is the duty of a Board Member to participate in the development of policies, procedures and directives which will then be executed by the AGTA staff.

One of AGTA's greatest assets is their fine staff all of whom I have had the pleasure to work with.

I thank you for the last term and look forward to serving another.

For Director



Ruben Bindra

B & B Fine Gems
Los Angeles, CA

AGTA Member since 1996
Member of Jewelers Board of Trade

I started B & B Fine Gems in 1984 selling loose gemstones to the retail jewelers all over California. In the late 1980s I started doing the trade shows all over the country to expand the business. In 1993, I started manufacturing a line of fine jewelry with all the manufacturing done in Los Angeles. There has been a lot of competitive pressure on the entire industry to take manufacturing overseas, but I always wanted to promote the "Made In America" brand and keep the jobs here in our country to support the place which gave us such great opportunity. I have managed to do so till today having kept all production still in Los Angeles.

Our industry faces constantly changing challenges in an evolving market place. From new hard-to-detect treatments, to vastly improved synthetic material, there is no shortage of uncertainty for our consumer. My goal is to keep the integrity of our industry intact and promote further education of such issues to retailers, as well as stronger encouragement of full disclosure of treatments. Such actions must be taken to provide strength and security for our clients and members.

We need to really promote AGTA as a safe vendor source for the retailers in this country, because as a group we believe in and are required to disclose the treatments done to the gemstones which we sell. Our Members face recourse for misrepresentation of sold materials, and have consequences to pay if such a thing were to happen. We abide by a certain ethical code, and in this country there is no other such vehicle for the Gemstone Trade. We need to promote ourselves a lot more than we have done so far and promote that we represent the ethical & fair sale of such colored gemstones.

I do travel to Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand regularly to purchase gemstones, and as a company we sell at more than 30 trade shows in a calendar year since 1988.

I really feel that I will make a positive impact on the AGTA Board of Directors and appreciate the opportunity to represent you as a Director for the next three years. Thank you.

For Director



Ron Ringsrud
Ronald Ringsrud Co.
Saratoga, CA

Although I have never held a position in the AGTA before, I have been a Member for 15 years and have been a colored gemstone dealer for over 25 years.

People that know me know that I am passionate about colored stones. I am also fiercely independent and I like it when an organization does not try to manage my affairs. Having said that, I must add that what I do expect from my organizations and affiliations is guidance and a vision for the future. The AGTA has been the best organization for those reasons.

In 1983, I formed my own emerald wholesale business, specializing in Colombian emeralds. For 25 years that is what I have been doing exclusively. I am proud to say that my business and my family have flourished over those years and I hope to be a colored stone dealer for 25 more years as well. I have written numerous articles on emeralds that have been published in all the trade journals as well as GIA's "Gems & Gemology" magazine. I have been a host and guide for international buyers, museums and trade groups in Bogotá as well as occasional trips to the mines. During the 1998 World Emerald Congress held in Bogotá I was a featured speaker and host.

The years have taught me that customers need to be treated with respect, education and honesty. A colored gemstone organization like AGTA has to be the same way. I will do my best to see that the people in the trade that we serve will be better supported and educated than before. The world is changing fast and the jewelers and consumers will be demanding more from us; it is a great responsibility and it is a joy to carry it out. It is a joy because we have, among our Members, some extremely knowledgeable, capable and big-hearted people. Our Membership is as diverse and unique as the stones we sell. It is these strengths that I want the AGTA to share with our clients and project to the world so that we may have more clients and more success, year after year.

For Director



Ambrish Sethi
Manak Jewels
San Francisco, CA

Member of the following organizations:

*AGS – American Gem Society
AGTA – American Gem Trade Association
CJA – California Jewelers Association
JBT – Jewelers Board of Trade
IDCA – Indian Diamond and Colorstone Association
NCDIA – Natural Color Diamond Association
WJA – Women's Jewelry Association*

It is my great pleasure to be nominated for the Director position on the AGTA Board. My company, Manak Jewels has been part of the AGTA organization from the very beginning of its inception. Manak Jewels has always been in the colored gemstones business serving the industry for 32 years. Our love with colors is so strong and intense that we continued our progress and innovations into the color diamond category.

Manak Jewels' philosophy of business is highly progressive, which has made our company very visible in the global marketplace. This is the philosophy I would like to bring to the AGTA management and increase the Association's awareness and influence globally.

Today the color gemstone trade is in a very unique environment and is rapidly changing with new technologies, greater international partnerships, and discoveries that challenge and influence the existing trade and association standards and mind sets. In addition, the composition of the people in the trade is diversifying with the younger generations entering businesses with fresh and innovative ideas and creating opportunities to further promote the trade. As the industry evolves with this transition, it is important for all of us in the trade and as AGTA Members to continue to reinforce and guarantee to pass down AGTA's core values and principles to the new generation. As a business owner facing and embracing these exciting changes in the business landscape, I hope to share my experiences that will ensure the founding principles are not only maintained but appropriately expanded with the shifting landscape. It is with this progression that I would like to take AGTA into the next generation.

Honesty, fairness, trust, knowledge, and professionalism are virtues that my company Manak Jewels sincerely upholds and which have contributed to the company's credibility in the trade. It is these same virtues that AGTA exemplifies and thus Manak Jewels strongly aligns itself with the organization.

With my decades of experience in the industry, the hard work put in to our company to achieve its reputation, and the our dedication to the continuation of the AGTA mission in our daily operations are key indications of why I would be a strong leader to promote and strengthen the AGTA organization.

I thank you all for your consideration in my candidacy and hope you will grant me a vote as a Director on the AGTA Board.

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 1st day of June 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 name for each 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 August 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 August 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 five (5) percent of the total voting membership presented to the Executive Director not later than the 1st day of August 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 no later than the 10th day of September. 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.

As stated in the AGTA Constitution.

