

## 2012 AGTA Board Elections

This year seven positions are to be elected to the Board of the American Gem Trade Association. - According to the AGTA By-Laws, the AGTA Firm Members will vote for the seven positions to be filled by Directors, and the seated Board will elect the Officers' positions from within.

**Members of the AGTA's Board whose terms of office expire in February 2012 are as follows:**

Benjamin Hackman	President
Kambiz Sabouri	Vice President
John Bachman	Secretary
Sampat Poddar	Treasurer
Ambrish Sethi	Director
Ruben Bindra	Director
Bear Williams	Director

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

Robert Bentley	Vice President
Cynthia Renee Zava	Director
Sushil Goyal	Director
Peter Bazar	Director
Niveet Nagpal	Director
Betty Sue King	Director
Gerry Manning	Director
Bill Larson	Director

The Nominating Committee was chaired by Past President Barbara Lawrence. The Committee Members were James Alger and Benjamin Hakimi.

**Candidates for Director for the 2012 AGTA Election are as follows:  
(Seven to be elected)**

John Bachman, John M. Bachman, Inc.  
Jeffrey Bilgore, Jeffrey Bilgore, LLC  
Ruben Bindra, B & B Fine Gems, Inc.  
Bruce Bridges, Bridges Tsavorite  
Bill Gangi, Bill Gangi Multisensory Arts  
Nanci Knott, Nanci Knott & Co., LLC  
Sam Poddar, Byrex Gems  
Kambiz Sabouri, Gem 2000, Inc.  
Ambrish Sethi, Manak, Inc.  
John Ternus, Lightning Ridge Opals  
Bear Williams, Bear Essentials

## 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.

### "IN GOOD STANDING":

This means those who have renewed their AGTA Membership for 2011. Members who are suspended may not vote.

### FOR ALL MEMBERS' INFORMATION:

Members and Honorary Members 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, September 10, 2011. 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 By-Laws. 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 2012 AGTA BOARD IN TUCSON:

Newly-elected Board Members will be introduced at the general Membership meeting February 3, 2012 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.



## John Bachman

John M. Bachman, Inc.  
Boulder, CO

I have served on the AGTA Board of Directors since 2007, and would be honored to continue for the next term. I am currently serving as Secretary and am on the Industry Rules and Nomenclature Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Ethics and Grievances Committee.

I am a colored stone 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 one hundred percent loose color gem business in the United States.

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 unified policies regarding treatment and certification issues; enforcement of our AGTA Member 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, and to maintain the respect and trust of our customers.

I also believe that for the AGTA to help its Members most effectively, our Board of Directors must advocate to use our resources carefully, continue to improve our AGTA trade fairs and other promotional opportunities that benefit our members, and communicate effectively with the AGTA staff in Dallas to reach the goals we set. My responsibility as a board member is to help ensure that AGTA serves the interests of the members in their common goals.

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.



## Jeffrey Bilgore

Jeffrey Bilgore, LLC  
New York, NY

2/1999 – Elected as Director

2/2000 – 2/2002 – Elected as Secretary; served on Budget, Lab, Industry Rules and Nomenclature Committees

2003 – Appointed to complete a Director term: served on Lab, Industry Rules and Nomenclature Committees

2010 – Appointed to complete a Director term: served on Budget and Shows Committees

2011 – Firm Member appointed to serve on Budget and Shows Committees

Dear Fellow AGTA Firm Members,

I ask for your vote to return to our Board of Directors. As illustrated above I have proudly served AGTA as a service to our association and the trade. It was then and with your votes, will again be a privilege.

In 2003 I started my company - for 31 years this industry has been my passion. In 2003 when my company opened our doors, it was thought to be the worst of times. Now more than ever all AGTA efforts need to focus on making our businesses better.

In 2009/2010, I returned to the Board as an appointment by AGTA President BJ Hackman. The changes of our "new" Board of Directors in the By-Laws & Constitution and in the focus of their efforts were quite an eye opener.

If elected I commit to represent the AGTA exhibiting Firm members - the American Gem Trader- companies like yours and mine. We are the firms that created AGTA as a forum to serve us, to illustrate our unique skills and to enhance our position in the American and global markets.

I believe AGTA has lost focus - it is trying to do too many things. With good intentions, energies and assets are being directed with little benefit to firm members who did not ask for but fund these efforts.

There are four areas I will focus on.

1) The needs and interests of the exhibiting firm member - we are the essence and life blood of AGTA. We

fund the association. In everything we do the first question must be how will it help the exhibiting firm member. Last year we lost 10% of our firm members - 33 companies. My first focus will be here - in serving, retaining, returning those lost and in finding new firms committed to ethically serving the American colored stone marketplace.

2) We need to focus our first efforts on protecting the interests of our members and our marketplace from international competitors. Those who come here and sell - in Tucson and otherwise - with no concern of taxes or disclosure. We also need to vigorously and relentlessly fight for our interests against laws like the Lantos Jade Act, laws that directly threaten our ability to feed our families. This must be the primary function of our trade association.

3) The Tucson Show - we must make it better. The show is the first reason we join AGTA! The decline of our show began long before 2008 - it has been in decline for a decade. We must focus on making the best it can be for the exhibitors and the buyers not for the Association. Many of our best exhibiting companies - Rafco, Colormasters, Bayco & Neli Gems to name a few - left our show not because of dire fiscal economics but because the show was no longer worked for them. We need to MAKE IT WORK AGAIN!

4) Economics of AGTA - we need to look at every charge to members and ask, is it reasonable and necessary. We need to look at every expense by the association in the same way! AGTA operates with the philosophy that we are within budget. However, the AGTA budget is full of expenses that most of us did not ask for and many would not approve. Every Board I have seen operate tries to "add value" to our membership. We need to focus on our core - the firm member - too much effort and money is spent to promote the Association and not the firm or manufacturing members. Too many assets are directed to "highly visible" areas that benefit too few members. These energies and assets need to focus on the needs of our core - when the firm members do better the Association is better NOT the reverse.

Lastly, the AGTA Board should not become a closed club - we need new blood and participation. Too many members of the BOD and executive committee have served for over ten years and seek to continue. Serving the association is a privilege, a service to AGTA and the trade. It should not become a career nor a career opportunity. Again, it would be an honor to represent firms like yours and mine to try to restore AGTA's focus on our needs.

Respectfully,  
Jeffrey Bilgore



## Ruben Bindra

B & B Fine Gems  
Los Angeles, CA

AGTA Member since 1996  
AGTA Director Since 2009  
Member of Jewelers Board of Trade  
Member of the International Colored Stone Association

I am proud to say that I have served as a Director of AGTA since 2009. My first term as Director was exciting and extremely fulfilling in being able to work with such world class professionals who share the same passion for our industry as I do. During my time as Director I've been a member of the Show Committee, as well as a member of the AGTA Spectrum Committee. Both responsibilities have been an absolute pleasure, and I hope to have the opportunity to further contribute to this organization as well as these individual committees. During these past few years we have been able to have fantastic results with the Spectrum Awards, now garnering more national attention and media coverage than ever before. I feel that as Director, I would promote more exposure like this to further educate consumers of what our organization is, and what type of quality and integrity our members represent.

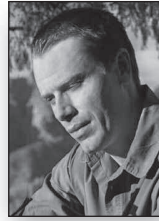
Our industry faces constantly changing challenges in an evolving marketplace. From new hard to detect treatments, to vastly improved synthetic material, there is no shortage of uncertainty for our consumer. My goal is to work hard to make our members aware of why disclosure is so essential and why it strengthens us as an organization. I would also like to work towards building a reputation for AGTA members as being the most prestigious and reliable source for buying gemstone and pearls.

There are always new challenges in the business world and the Gemstone and Jewelry industry is no different. The recession that hit us a few years ago is still prevalent in our country as this downturn in business has affected many of us. We do need to be innovative and take a leadership role to advocate color as a major part of jewelry industry. The AGTA is at the forefront of promoting colored gemstones in the United States. As Director, I would like to expand AGTA into an internatio-

nally recognized organization. I believe that some of the Top Gemstone and Pearl dealers are right here in the United States, the rest of the world should also know this.

I would like to further promote our trade shows to become the world class destination to buy gemstones and pearls for international buyers. The world has become a very small place and we need to make our shows attractive to buyers outside of the States. With our strict disclosure rules AGTA Gem fairs should be known as a safe vendor source for the retailers in this country as well as overseas buyers.

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 three more years. It would be an honor and a privilege. Thank you.



## **Bruce Bridges**

Bridges Tsavorite  
Tucson, AZ

Kenya Chamber of Mines, Member  
ICA, Member  
AGTA, Member

It is an honor to be nominated for the 2012 AGTA Board of Directors.

As far back as I can remember I have worked in the gem industry by my father's side. Growing up in Kenya I began prospecting at the age of five. Eventually I advanced to grading, manning the sorting tables, and operating a jackhammer on the reef face. It is through the kaleidoscope of these different roles that I have gained an insight into the complex nature of the gem industry.

In the present day there is an increasing need for a gem trade association that not only addresses the economic concerns of the gem industry, but also takes responsibility for upholding ethical standards. AGTA and its Members have successfully assumed this role. AGTA has both adapted to the ever-changing competitive landscape and developed an ethical standard against which all gem organizations, worldwide, should be measured. These safeguards are invaluable to consumers - and need to be promoted as such.

AGTA has traditionally focused its efforts and marketing on the retailer, relying primarily on this channel to disseminate knowledge of colored gemstones to the consumer. If elected I would like to focus on developing initiatives and campaigns aimed at increasing the public's awareness of both colored gemstones and the AGTA as an organization. AGTA would benefit immensely from a program aimed at encouraging the end consumer to seek out AGTA retailers to supply them with gemstones originating from AGTA Members.

Devoting my time to the Board of Directors for AGTA would be a fulfilling way to invest in the future of our industry and to serve my colleagues well. I hope to be an integral part of AGTA's success for many years to come.

It would be a great pleasure and true honor to serve AGTA Members on the Board for 2012. Thank you for your consideration.



## Bill Gangi

Bill Gangi Multisensory Arts  
Franklin Square, NY

I have spent the last 32 years in gem exploration, and as a lapidary artist, owner of Bill Gangi Multisensory Arts.

I hold a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University and taught art education in Massachusetts for 9 years.

I am a founding member of the Grove Street Gallery, Massachusetts's most successful artist-run co-op for 17 years.

I was a Regional Liaison for the Massachusetts Arts Lottery Council, responsible for overseeing \$5 million annually in grants to local artists.

I spent the last 20 years in Tucson, mining claims in six southwest states for unusual gemstones.

Multisensory Arts exhibits at 15 - 20 gem shows each year and I would like to put that experience towards improving and revitalizing our AGTA GemFair™ Tucson. Focus on increased attendance, better attractions to supplement the gem exhibit, better food on premises.

As a small business owner, I would like to increase the emphasis on direct Member benefits in AGTA, cost cutting to Members and mutual support with emerging technologies.

Most importantly, as a member and supporter of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) and several local level jewelry arts programs, I want to build a bridge to student jewelry organizations and jewelry arts education programs, to ensure that new generations of jewelers and emerging designers have massive exposure to colored gemstones from the earliest stages of their careers, ensuring for us a steady stream of new consumers.



## Nanci Knott

Nanci Knott & Co., LLC  
Mountainside, NJ

Graduate Gemologist- Gemological Institute of America  
AGTA Member and trade show participant  
AGS Member  
SJTA Member

It is a tremendous honor to be nominated for the AGTA Board of Directors. Gemstones have always been my passion, which has taken me on many exciting and educational travels and journeys. My experience has been quite extensive working within the gemstone industry for the last 25 years.

I have been fortunate enough to have acquired a working knowledge of manufacturing, buying and selling of gemstones. I presently travel working trade shows as well as retail establishments, selling and participating in seminar/trunk shows. By doing so, it has enabled me to promote colored gemstones and educate at the same time.

I would like to have the opportunity to educate retailers on a more extensive level and for them to be more accessible to AGTA and what we have to offer. Knowledge is power. As AGTA Members, I feel we can be more of an asset working towards this goal through seminars and in store training. AGTA is doing superb work marketing the Spectrum Awards and Cutting Edge Awards bringing global media attention. This is also a tremendous opportunity for us to acquire more retail membership through their entries. I am also very excited with AGTA's open website forum enticing a broader audience to familiarize themselves with our organization.

I am proud to be a Member of AGTA and would like our retailers to feel the same knowing there is a trust and confidence level they might not experience elsewhere. We want them to think of AGTA Members when they have colored gemstones needs and also to foster stronger buyer relationships. AGTA has done a wonderful job thus far and it would be a privilege to be able to support this going forward.

We are in an ever changing, fast paced world. Within our own members it is important to keep ourselves informed as much possible of new treatments and disclosures through our newsletters and website. We also need to continue with diligence enforcing our code of ethics, especially during trade shows.

It would be an honor and privilege to serve on the Board. I ask you for your support to allow me to work towards making this the finest organization in the Gemstone industry.



**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 (AGTA); Board of Directors.  
Director, Board of International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA)  
Director, Advisory Board of Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC)  
Patron, Rajasthan Association of North America in Canada

I am seeking the position as a Director on the Board of AGTA to continue serving AGTA 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 my financial skills and unfailing dedication to maintaining the ethical practices of the industry. Of course, I will be bringing with me the experience of over 25 years in the gemstone industry as founder and President of Byrex Gems Inc. to the position and my financial skills in keeping AGTA fiscally sound.

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 in taking the AGTA to the next stage.

It has been a great privilege working with the AGTA Board for the past nine 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 look forward to a vigorous continuation of my aims and intentions to help the AGTA grow.



**Kambiz Sabouri**

Gem 2000, Inc.  
Columbus, OH

I have had the honor of serving on the AGTA Board of Directors since 2005. I have served as co-chair of the Show Committee and have been a member of the Ethics and Grievance, Membership, Finance and Executive Committees. I have also served as the Secretary and Vice President these last few years.

Since I have joined the board, our industry has gone through many changes. The economic downturn along with a shift in manufacturing to overseas has required many of us, long term members of the AGTA, to re-adjust and re-focus and AGTA as an organization has had to go through these ups and downs along with its members. I believe AGTA has worked very hard to stay relevant and beneficial to its members mostly through our trade shows and other promotional activities, i.e. Spectrum Awards. For AGTA to be the "Authority on Color", the true voice of colored gemstones in the jewelry industry in the US, we need to work very hard to communicate the value, beauty and rarity of our products, through education and promotion at all levels, from consumer to large retailers and manufactures. Everyone in the industry should be aware of our high ethical standards through education and vigorous disclosure practices.

With my many years of experience working with fellow board members and AGTA staff, setting goals, building consensus, evaluating results and choosing courses of action, I believe I have proven to be a very active and effective member of this team. It will be an honor for me to be able to continue to work on all these fundamental goals as your representative on the Board of Directors of AGTA and promote our collective interest in these changing times.



**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.



**John Ternus**

Lightning Ridge Opal  
Glendora, CA

The attraction of the AGTA for me began with the Tucson Show. AGTA was widely recognized by the retailers that I talked to, as the place to go for the best of the best and that the integrity and ethics of those showing there was second to none. If there was one show to see in Tucson it was the AGTA. I still feel this way about our organization and hope if elected to the board, to serve my fellow members with this same spirit.

I work very hard to make it in our industry, as I know most of us do in these difficult times, and it is hard to watch our customers make purchase choices based on price, not value. I feel that among the many things that we need to re-instill in our customers and in doing so their clients as well, is the benefit of quality and service. When you buy based on value you get peace of mind and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for the industry. The excitement of a new find, the rarity and beauty of a "one of a kind", or an exceptional seminar. I know that I always look forward to getting recharged and inspired by all the things that are to be seen at the show, the new tools, new gems, and specialty cuts. This is part of the continuing education in our industry, and we all like to share what we have learned and where we got it. I'd like to hear people talking about the amazing stones and tools they saw at AGTA not "what a cheap deal they got in a tent."

Revitalizing this interest in value and quality, and making the AGTA Show the first stop of choice and the AGTA Directory the source they will use through out the year for their gemstone needs, continues to be one of our biggest priorities and challenges that we face.

I wear many hats in my business, as a miner, a cutter, a designer, a teacher, marketer and salesman (in store and out on the road), the list goes on. This gives me a broad perspective that I would like to share and to contribute to the greater success of AGTA. I am honored to have been asked to run and to be nominated for the Board of Directors of AGTA, and would like to thank you in advance for your consideration.



**Bear Williams**

Bear Essentials  
Jefferson City, MO

I started our gemstone importing business, Bear Essentials in 1992. We subsequently opened a gemological testing lab, Stone Group Laboratories, which grew out of the need to test the materials bought in the market. Both companies are currently members of the AGTA, and SGL is a fully equipped gemological laboratory.

Through our lab, I have been reporting on new gemstone treatments and deceptions, publishing reports in several international trade publications. I would like to see the AGTA become more involved in this sort of gemological "breaking news" in order for it to maintain its position as the "Authority in Color" and to keep its Members informed and up to date.

With the ability of the internet to spread false rumors, we need, more than ever, a place to go for reliable information on the latest developments. With cooperative assistance from gem laboratories and educational institutions, we can do this.

I first served on the board in 2003 and again in 2008. I've been chairing the Gemological and Industry Rules Committee, but have also chaired the Ethics and Grievance as well as Laboratory Committees in the past. At this time, I would like to ask for your vote in order to continue developing the educational and gemological programs that will increase the prestige and validity of the AGTA in these economically, gemologically and globally challenging times.

## AGTA By-Laws

### Article VI: Section 4 Nominating Committee/Election Process of the Board of Directors

The Nominating Committee shall consist of a Chairman who is the immediate past-president of the Board of Directors and at least three (3) Firm or Charter members, who shall be selected by the Chair. Other members may be added by as desired for geographical, categorical or other demographic balance.

- 1) Nominations Committee present the proposed slate at the June Board meeting;
- 2) Nominees will be announced in June
- 3) Additional nominees accepted if duly qualified (Nomination Committee or Petition)
- 4) Ballots will be sent out in August and votes tabulated in early September;
- 5) In September the new Directors will be announced;
- 6) New Directors will assume their positions in February.

By a three-fourths vote of the Board members seated and present, any name(s) submitted by the Committee may be vetoed. By a three-fourths vote of the Board members seated and 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 July so as to allow the Chief Executive Officer 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 ten (10) percent of the total voting membership presented to the Chief Executive Officer not later than the first day of August.

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 September. Ballots received later than said deadline shall not be counted. Ballots shall be opened and immediately tabulated by the Chief Executive Officer and at least two (2) members. The results of the vote shall be communicated by the Chief Executive Officer.

**AGTA**

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AMERICAN GEM TRADE ASSOCIATION