Over the next few months I want to tell you about Camp Paradise jewelry camp. This year the camp begins on Sunday, August 20, 2023.
An old Pacific Gas and Electric property from the 1950’s, the air is sweet with the scent of pine. It is nestled in the foothills between Grass Valley and Marysville, California. If you ever went to camp as a child it will bring back fond memories.

As you enter the property there is a flag pole surrounded by rocks in the middle of the camp. To the left is the mess hall and beyond that are the men’s and women’s dorms. To the right is the couples dorm. Past the flag pole and up the road a bit is “the barn”. (More about that later.). Next to the barn is a wonderful swimming pool. Yes, we certainly do suffer at Camp Paradise! The property is surrounded by a forest of trees and the air is fresh. Once you check in with Glenda it is time to go to our assigned rooms and unpack, have a look around and greet old and new friends. This is some of the best of times because we learn about the other people we will be spending so much time with over the next week. “Where do you come from? What are you here to learn? Where do you want to start tomorrow? How many times have you been to the camp?” All these questions and more.

Dinner is at 5:30 and we line up to get our plates and utensils and to rubberneck about what is being served. The food is hot, delicious and plentiful. Once served we find a table and begin new relationships or reconnect with old friends.

The camp directors are Jill and Gary Atkins from the Reno club. After dinner they explain the rules and lets you know what to expect for the next week. The rules are few and easy to abide by. We go over the schedule for the next week. Monday is Sell-a-rama when you can buy or sell stones, tools, jewelry, etc. Tuesday and Wednesday evening is free so you can attend lectures/demonstrations or relax after dinner. Thursday is the silent auction. All the items at the silent auction are donated and the money goes to the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Friday is wrap up and graduation.

Jill and Gary will then invite everyone to the barn. Ahh, the barn. Myths and legend are created there as well as beautiful jewelry. Alright, I’m lying about the myths and legends, but I can assure you that beautiful items are created.

The cost this year is $500 per week per person. THE FIRST 6 PEOPLE WHO CONTACT THE REGISTRAR TO VOLUNTEER TO COME TO CAMP ON SATURDAY, August 19, AT 9 AM TO DO HARD, HEAVY, PHYSICAL WORK (i.e moving tables, tanks, etc.) WILL GET AN ADDITIONAL $25 REDUCTION IN COST. They must have signed up before July 1, 2023.

If any of this piques your curiosity then I hope you will put money aside every month for the next few months and you can be a part of this creative adventure. Next month I will describe the barn and all the wonders it holds.
Last month I described the physical layout of Paradise jewelry camp. This month I want to tell you about “The Barn”.

If you remember, it is located up a little rise. Just before you get to the barn itself there is a swimming pool to the right. On the concrete pad outside the barn is the lapidary area. Two rows of tables are set with trim saws (2), a large Titan grinding/polishing machine, numerous Genie grinding/polishing machines, an Elk hide polisher, a bigger polisher...well, you get the drift. Tom is in charge of this area. A former CFMS President he is also the blower of the horn to let you know when classes begin and end and when meals are ready. A very important guy! Let me tell you a little about Tom. He has been a lapidariest for more years than he wants me to tell you. Talk about the Stone Age. Yes, pun intended. No lab fee.

Diamond Pacific has always been generous in lending machines to the students and Tom provides his expertise to teach students how to make a perfect cabochon. Once you have done that the sky’s the limit with what you can do in stone cutting and jewelry making.

Also in this area we have hard stone carving taught by Bob Rush. He will show you how to take an ugly stone (heaven for bid you have one) and show you the beauty hidden beneath. You will weep with joy at what he can teach you about carving stones. He also writes a regular column in Rock and Gem magazine. There is a lab fee to cover the extensive, expensive bits and burs he uses.

Also in this area is Dolly who teaches intarsia. This is her first year teaching at Paradise but she is very experienced and a delight to be around. This will be a class that requires 24 hours after you have assembled your piece. There is also a class fee.

Before we go into the barn I should point out that next to the mess hall is the soft stone carving area taught by Tammi, who is a young at heart and very sweet carver. Nestled under the shade of the trees, she gently guides your decision making about what you want to create. A little (or maybe not so little) soap stone, some hand tools or maybe electric tools and you are on your way to making your vision a reality. You will want to bring an apron and maybe a mask for this class. There is a fee for some materials.

Also in this area and situated inside the mess hall is the faceting area. Yes, the fascinating faceting. Gary Gooch teaches this and is a pro. Don’t tell him I said so! and don’t let his kind demeanor fool you. He is a tiger when it comes to faceting. If you have your own faceting machine you may bring it but he also has machines you can use. Here the students learn how to make stones flat as opposed to lapidary where they teach making stones round. Ahem...I digress. If you have ever seen the difference between a rough
stone just from the ground and that same stone faceted then you know that this is magical. The way the light is captured and bounces back to you is a sight to behold. You can do that in this class,

It looks like I didn’t get to the barn again this month but I will endeavor to do that next month. Keep saving that money for the next few months and you will have your entry fee to a world of creativity.

Paradise Jewelry Camp 2023
Part 3
By Jill Atkins

I started my jewelry career here in Camp Paradise and at the Reno Gem and Mineral Society. I didn’t know what an exciting, creative, wonderful time I would have making jewelry. I have bought DVD’s, gone to jewelry school classes but can honestly say that I learn more from my weeks at Camp Paradise jewelry camp than by any other mode. I am happy to tell you more about what you too can learn at Camp Paradise.

For two months I have been about to tell you about “The Barn”. This month I will begin telling you about it because there is a lot to learn.

When you walk in the barn, to your immediate right is the beginning silversmith class. Through the ages silver and gold have always captured peoples imagination. It has intrinsic value but more than that a silversmith can take a flat piece of metal and turn it into a thing of beauty. This class sets you on the road to doing just that. Taught by Steve (husband to Glenda) and one of the nicest guys you will meet, he will guide you from how to hold a saw for cutting metal, working a torch, what solder does, the does and don’ts of pickle (and what pickle is) to cleaning metal and polishing your finished piece. When you are done you have a piece of jewelry of which you can be proud. This is a 2 1/2 day class and there is a materials fee.

Just beyond the beginning silver fabricating area is the advanced silversmithing taught by Moi, Jill, who will help you achieve your goals in silversmithing. Just contact me before (weeks before not days before) and let me know what you want to learn so I bring the correct equipment. There is a $5.00 per week supply fee.

Advanced silversmithing is where you earn your stripes as a silversmith. If you have taken beginning silver classes elsewhere (within 3 years) this is your chance to polish those skills. (Pun intended.) In addition to Jill, your fellow students add to the collective information available...and not only in class. Countless times throughout the week you will find, get, make opportunities to talk with other students about a jewelry problem you have or you may be a solution to someone else’s problem. Camp Paradise is the answer place and the sharing place. You could wear a diamond tiara and no one looks askance at you. The first question they ask is, “Did you make that?” And the other question is, “How did you do that?”

You know what I’m going to say next. Keep saving that moola for a few more months and you will be well on your way to joining in this wonderful educational opportunity.
Paradise Jewelry Camp 2023
Part 4

By Jill Atkins

Last month I told you about silversmithing. It is located just inside the barn door on the right. Walking past beginning silversmithing and advanced silversmithing you come to Robyn who teaches Cold Connections. Robyn is the Reno Society treasurer and very knowledgeable. Robyn will teach you how to attach divergent items stones, rocks, glass, and anything else you have on to metal or other material and make it into a wearable piece of jewelry. The best part of her class is that you rock people and you glass people will not have to learn silversmithing! and you will walk away amazed that you made such a wonderful thing. She expands the realm of possibility. For those of you who have miniature people this is a great project to take home to them so they too can explore possibilities. There is a materials fee.

To continue in the barn...beyond the cold connection area you come to the dichroic glass and silver metal clay area taught by Judi Gooch who is wonderful and also Karin who is also wonderful. You are in good hands. To say that this area produces spectacular work is an understatement. Judy and Karin teach their students how to cut glass, assemble that glass on a base, add refinements and then slump it in a kiln. The result is a piece that rivals the finest jewels. Add a finding and a neck piece and you wear a beautiful new piece of jewelry. They also teach Precious Metal Clay. If you don’t want to learn silversmithing and you want to make jewelry incorporating a stone then this is the class for you. Your stone is set into the clay before firing and when it has finished firing you just polish and wear. Easy, peasy sort of. This is jewelry making after all and nothing is that easy but Judy and Karin takes you through the process to completion. And they are pretty cool gals to boot. There is a materials fee and you can purchase PMC and glass. Note: PMC one week…Glass fusing the other week.

I hope you can join me next month on this journey of exploring Camp Paradise. Keep saving every month. Camp Paradise is the bargain of the century because all classes (except for the materials fee), your room and board are all included in the fee.
For those of you who have not been getting your club newsletter let me bring you up to speed. Each year the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies sponsors a “Jewelry Camp”. It is located in Northern California. Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra, from Reno it is a 2.5 hour drive. From other clubs it may be closer or farther away. The camp was built in the 1950’s and harkens back to another era of mess halls, dorms and a flag pole in the middle of camp. It is charming in its rustic ness. Please do not mistake it for a Hilton. No one is going to put chocolate on your pillow…which you have to bring anyway! You will also want to bring a flashlight for the walk back to your dorm.

During this one week (or two week) camp the jewelry arts are taught including silversmithing, lapidary, casting, cold connections, wire wrapping, faceting, precious metal clay, dichroic glass, enameling, and 3 types of stone carving. For the cost of $500.00 per week, students get their housing, great and plentiful meals and all the classes listed above. I would be hard pressed to find a better bargain if the jewelry arts is your bag.

For the past few months I have been taking my readers through a virtual tour of the camp. If you are just tuning in you missed the part about the swimming pool. Yes, Camp Paradise has a big, beautiful, cool you down, pool. Almost the best part of a hot day.

To continue the tour of the barn I take you to Glen Fiala and wire wrapping. I don’t know Glenn very well as he is new to Camp Paradise’s teaching staff. But what I do know is that he is very talented. I am always surprised and amazed when I see someone take a straight piece of wire and bend it without kinks and wrap it around a stone or piece of glass. The technical skill is through practice but the artistic skill is innate and that is what sets him apart in his artistry. There is a materials fee.

Also in the barn is Janet Steigerwald who teaches enameling. Ooh, another opportunity to use fire! Janet will teach you about a basic jewelry technique that has been in existence for hundreds of years. The powdered glass has been a time honored way of adding color to metal. There is a materials fee and supplies to purchase.

For those of you who have been putting money aside each month you are half way there. See you in Paradise Jewelry Camp soon.
Paradise Jewelry Camp 2023
Part 6
By Jill Atkins

So far I have covered the layout of the camp, that the food is great, the accommodations rustic, and overall there is no better bargain than $500.00 for one week of learning about jewelry. But now we continue the tour of the barn. We have covered lapidary and soft stone carving and faceting in month two. Month three was about silversmithing both beginning and advanced. Month four was cold connections and dichroic glass/PMC. Month five you learned about wire wrapping.

The last class to let you know about is casting. Taught by Joy, is the casting class and she is a joy. I slay myself! In this class you will learn how to create work in wax, put it in a vestment mixture where it is baked and then you pour molten metal into the hardened vestment for your casting. Once the vestment is broken away you can see your casting. A spru cutter takes the spru’s off and your piece can be sanded and polished. Don’t worry about what a spru is. Joy will explain all. She has all the equipment you need but you may need to bring your own silver or buy from Joy. Joy also demonstrates broom casting. This is a process where silver is melted to the molten stage and then poured over a wet broom. Done in silver, copper or brass, you wear your pieces with pride because you will get lots of compliments. There is a materials fee.

By now I hope I have given you enough information about Camp Paradise that you will be ready to sign up for an opportunity to fine tune your artistic skills. Registration opens March 15, 2023 and you can find the application on the CFMSinc.org website.

More to come next month.
Paradise Jewelry Camp 2023

Part 7
By Jill Atkins

This month marks the opening for registering for Camp Paradise. Registration has begun. I hope to see you there.

This is the last installment about “The Barn”. The types of classes offered are silversmithing (beginning and advanced), Casting, Bead Making, Dichroic Glass, Precious Metal Clay, Enameling and Wire Wrapping. And these are only the ones in the barn. Outside of the barn is lapidary, faceting and soft and hard stone carving.

This concludes the tour of Camp Paradise and The Barn. I hope you enjoyed my take on the Paradise experience and that you will join me this year for a week (or two) of creative exploration.