**History of the Rock Food Table**

While on vacation in the Northwest in 1982, Bill and Lois had the opportunity to attend the Portland, Oregon, Gem and Mineral Show. While enjoying the show they noticed an exhibit of pastries. There was a cake, sweet roll, piece of pie, and several other items of rock that looked like food. They didn't give this sighting much thought until they returned to their home in Robstown, Texas. This is when Lois had the idea to exhibit a table of food-like rocks because they were the owners of several such rocks. Lois decided to extend an invitation to the club members in the Gulf Coast Gem and Mineral Society in Corpus Christi, Texas, to bring rock food items to display at the March 1983 show. Quite a few members of the club did bring their items, and the first "Rock Food Table" was born. After the display was set up and the members could see the results, more members saw the foods in their own rocks, and they contributed in 1984.

The Rock Food Table was presented as a project of the Gulf Coast Gem and Mineral Society. At its first show, in 1983, some Club members from San Antonio, Texas came to their show and were completely struck with awe. They inquired of Lois, “Would you bring it to San Antonio next weekend, and set it up as a special exhibit?” Lois agreed after a good deal of thought. Well, you know how that goes. They were at San Antonio and Houston asked for it to be displayed at the Houston show. Jackson, Mississippi saw the table at Houston and then the exhibit was off to Jackson. Montgomery, Alabama saw the display at Jackson, and this meant a trip to Montgomery. Since the first showing, the Table has been to 41 different show locations and traveled over 100,000 miles.

There is hardly a show where the exhibit is set up, where there is not an incident to report. They have had people try to throw away some of the items thinking that they were left on the table by accident. One young man even confessed that he had, while the Pattillo’s were away from the exhibit for a few minutes, put an item in his mouth thinking it was edible. Luckily, he did not bite down hard and did not damage his teeth. There are four "Do Not Touch" signs on the table, but quite a few times, it's the child that reads the sign and tells the parents that they should not touch the food items. It's not that they could damage the items, but that rocks break plates, and we do not want the plates damaged.

Most of the rocks in the collection are in their natural state. They may be cut to show how the rock looks on the inside or it is formed in the shape of natural food. Some of the pieces are dyed to resemble the food they represent. A few of the items have been purchased, but most have been collected while on rock hunts. Some of the items have been given to us by other rockhounds. To them, it is just a rock, but to the Rock Food Table it is a great addition to the collection.

Lois and Bill tried to stay near the exhibit to answer questions and to relate the earth sciences to the younger generation. They have noticed that people, in general, are pointers. They cannot stand and talk about the different items without pointing to the item that is being discussed. They have also noticed that people tend to smile while looking over the table. They have seen many people come to the table with a somber look on their faces and leave looking pleased. The table is truly an enlightening experience, and our reward is seeing people enjoy the Gulf Coast Gem and Mineral Society’s Rock Food Table while attending a gem show.

**Passing the Torch**

In 2013, Bill and Lois came to the realization that they weren’t spring chickens anymore. The exhibit was becoming too much to handle. In January of 2014, the Rock Food Table wasn’t displayed at the East Texas Gem & Mineral Society’s Annual Gemstone & Jewelry Show. It was highly anticipated and surely missed. This is when Keith and Toni Harmon acted. Keith is a member of ETGMS, has been our Show Chairman, and is a strong advocate for rock clubs. He knew that if something wasn’t done, the exhibit might be lost forever. Keith purchased the Rock Food Table on November 14, 2014. When Keith gave the news, he said “the exhibit will never miss our show again.” But after a couple of years, the added work of setting up the exhibit, along with setting up his dealer booth was a little more than he wanted to tackle. He’s not a spring chicken either. You guessed it, time to pass the torch again. In March 2017, Keith and Toni donated the Rock Food Table to ETGMS.