Upcoming Events

**Saturday, July 30, 8:00 p.m.**
Paul Galbraith in concert at the Church of the Covenant on Newbury St., in Boston. (See Page 5)

**Sunday, July 31, 4:00 p.m.**
The Back Bay Guitar Trio performs as part of the Newburyport Yankee Homecoming series at the Inn Street Stage in Newburyport, MA.

**Friday, August 12, 8:00 p.m.**
Jeffry Steele plays guitar arrangements of Renaissance music, featuring pieces by John Dowland, plus Boccherini’s Concerto in E with Monica Steele, piano. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1123 Washington St, Gloucester MA.

See Calendar section for details

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Letter to Members

**Dear Members,**

Welcome to the Summer 2005 BCGS Newsletter. We’ve kicked off the hot season with concerts by even hotter artists: the first and second prize winners of our November ’04 competition. First Prize winners Corey Harvin and Ben Gateno of the Pedestrian Guitar Duo shared their groundbreaking modern repertoire in an intimate concert at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, while Second Prize winners Igor Golger and Hiroko Kajimoto, aka the Transcontinental Duo, wowed the large crowd at the Newton Free Library with their virtuosic guitar and flute playing. A hearty congratulations to all four wonderful young artists, and special thanks to Beth Purcell at the Newton Free Library for the fruitful collaboration!

For our final concert this season, we are very pleased to present world-renowned guitarist Paul Galbraith, whose innovations with the eight-stringed guitar have truly broadened the potential of the instrument, and whose technical and musical artistry take him into the realm of the legendary. Please see inside the newsletter for concert details, and don’t miss the opportunity to hear this brilliant and passionate musician!

I’d like to thank the members who sent in responses to last issue’s request for feedback and suggestions. We received some very interesting ideas which we will be developing over the coming months. And now, I’d like to hear from you members out there again, this time to know what artists you’d be most interested in hearing perform, and whose concerts you have most (or least) enjoyed over the past seasons.

This month’s Society Speaks column features lively discussion on the ever evolving topic of ideal sitting position. You will also find in this newsletter a touching and personal tribute by Harry Pellegrin to the late guitar pedagogue Albert Valdes Blain.

Wishing you all the best,

Sharon Wayne, Artistic Director
“How do you position your guitar while playing and why?”

Thanks to all of you who responded to this survey! These surveys give all members the opportunity to express their personal opinions on a variety of subjects, and they provide a wealth of information for the readership. Please note that the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor.

***

What is important is that my sitting situation not affect my music. I always look for a low seat, something lower than the height of my shin bone, so my feet are solidly on the ground. I always use a foot stool that has an upward angle to it, which just feels more stable than a flat foot prop. That’s as specific as my seating preference gets, though. I also don’t hold any one posture, but don’t let myself hunch over. This freedom of posture allows for more animated playing and keeps me from getting pain in the back. I think that having an overall lax preference for any certain playing position is not necessarily a lack of discipline, but a way to leave more room to work on the music rather than other concerns.

Nick Cleveland

***

I remember way back in preparation for competitions around ‘79, ‘81 and ‘84 I was spending a great deal of time practicing. I would sometimes tally up to 8 hours per day for practice time and seating position was no small issue.

I had discovered a great help to reduce or eliminate the thigh muscle fatigue of my left leg while holding the guitar on that leg. I simply angled my left foot on the foot stool at about a one or two o’clock angle to my body. My left foot would form an “X” shape against an angled foot stool opposing the weight of the guitar. With the help of the left foot heel in this position the need for thigh muscle to push against the instrument or to hold the leg from falling to the left was eliminated.

I also discovered that if I “collapsed” into my seat position using no muscle to keep my torso erect I could practice for longer periods with little unusual muscle fatigue. More recently, one of my student’s fathers, a physician, reiterated just that to me. This was a nice bit of reinforcement.

One other discovery I made way back when was the milking stool. Though it is not as comfortable as the standard seating position it is equally supportive. A farmer’s common milking stool, (or seat that will hold me exactly 11 inches off of the ground — most steps work well too), eliminates the need for any foot stool since the left leg in this situation is at the proper height for the guitar. It is most helpful if the cows are around too. Best of luck in practice.

Bob Squires

***

For my most challenging repertoire, I sit on a stool one foot off the ground with both feet planted on the floor. This way I get the instrument supported by both thighs and don’t have the lopsided feeling using a footstool gives me. The position affords ready access to the upper frets and artificial harmonics. There are two disadvantages: the audience cannot see me well unless I’m on a stage or raised platform and after about an hour my lower back starts hurting.

For most recitals though, I sit in a standard arm-less chair with one leg (usually the left) crossed over the other, resting on the right knee at mid-calf. The instrument digs into the left thigh and, for the sake of stability, is angled slightly downward—my right elbow pulling back slightly on the bout. On less challenging pieces, I may switch legs. My lower back fares pretty well in this arrangement.

In most of my church or background music gigs, I play standing up (with a strap on my Hasselbacher, which also has a bridge pickup), as I can play the majority of my pieces reasonably well and am free to move about or cue a choir. Again, the inward pressure from the right elbow is important.

Jeffry Steele

***

I sit in front of the chair and put a Dynarette cushion on the left leg (without a foot stool). Foot stools gave me a backache. I still need to take short breaks for resting the left leg, but the Dynarette cushion helps a lot. I took Alexander Technique lessons to learn to relax while playing (a major problem for me) and it helped too. Now I basically try to be more aware of what I am doing with my neck and back while playing.

Robson Goulart
The next survey topic is as follows:

“Do you record and if so how? What software or hardware do you use, and do have any tips for setting up a home studio?”

Please keep your responses brief—50 words or less! Responses may be condensed if they exceed brevity. Indicate whether you wish to include your name with your response or prefer to comment anonymously. If you have suggestions for future surveys—send them along!

Send your response to bob@bobhealey.net by August 1 and receive a FREE set of D’Addario strings (while supplies last), courtesy of D’Addario.

The BCGS would like to acknowledge its appreciation to the D’Addario company, who graciously donated a set of its strings to each contributing author of this issue’s Society Speaks column.

Nick Ciraldo Named Assistant Professor
Former BCGS Artistic Director Nicholas Ciraldo has recently accepted the position as Assistant Professor of Guitar at the University of Southern Mississippi. He will teach 25 students, coach several guitar ensembles, and hold weekly masterclasses. He can be reached at nicholasciraldo@yahoo.com.

Be Heard!
The BCGS is always interested in member contributed articles and reviews of guitar concerts, scores and CDs. To find out how you can contribute to this newsletter, drop Charles Carrano a line at c.carrano@comcast.net.

Let them know you saw it here..
Please tell our advertisers you saw their Ad in our newsletter when making a purchase! This helps strengthen our advertising revenues, which we rely upon to bring you this newsletter, concerts and festivals.
Performance Parties

None currently scheduled. Check bostonguitar.org for the latest news of performance parties as they are scheduled!

For information about hosting a performance party, contact Ben Arditi (barditi@comcast.net).

BCGS Sponsored Events

Saturday, July 30, 8:00 p.m.
Paul Galbraith in concert at the Church of the Covenant on Newbury St., in Boston. (See Page 5)

New England Area Events

Sunday, June 5, 12:30 p.m.
Eclectic Guitar Performance featuring Pat Cardeiro & Jane Darcy at the Coffee House 309 in Fall River, MA. Donation $10.00. To assure seating call (508) 496-4386. For more info visit www.darcyguitarstudio.com or e-mail darcyguitarstudio@aol.com.

Thursday, June 23 at noon
The Back Bay Guitar Trio, featuring David Newsam, Steve Marchena, and John Mason, perform a free concert as part of the WCRB Summer Concert Series at Copley Square in Boston. Visit www.backbayguitartrio.com for details.

Saturday, July 30 at noon
Gerry Johnston performs classical and jazz at the Inn Street Stage in Newburyport, MA. For additional information visit www.yankeehomecoming.com or call (978) 372-2250.

Sunday, July 31, 4:00 p.m.
The Back Bay Guitar Trio performs as part of the Newburyport Yankee Homecoming series at the Inn Street Stage in Newburyport, MA. Free admission. For additional information visit www.yankeehomecoming.com.

Friday, August 12, 8:00 p.m.
Jeffry Steele plays guitar arrangements of Renaissance music, featuring pieces by John Dowland, plus Boccherini’s Concerto in E with Monica Steele, piano. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1123 Washington St, Gloucester MA. Adults $10, children $5. For further info call (978) 282-3106 or visit jeffrysteele.com.

Sunday, August 14, 1:00 p.m.
Eclectic Guitar Performance featuring Pat Cardeiro & Jane Darcy at the Coffee House 309 in Fall River, MA. Donation $10.00. To assure seating call (508) 496-4386. For more info visit www.darcyguitarstudio.com or e-mail darcyguitarstudios@aol.com

Wednesday, August 24, 7:30 p.m.
The Back Bay Guitar Trio performs at Gore Place in Waltham, MA. $15 general, $12 seniors & students with ID, $8 members. Visit www.goreplace.org for more info.

Friday, August 26, 8:00 p.m.
Jeffry Steele plays guitar solos from France and Latin America — plus Bach’s Sonata in C and Rodrigo’s (Aranjuez) Adagio with Monica Steele, piano. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1123 Washington St, Gloucester MA. Adults $10, children $5. For further info call (978) 282-3106 or visit jeffrysteele.com.

Saturday, September 10, 8:00 p.m.
Rick Bernstingle performs the music of Dowland, Bach, Barrios and Albeniz at The Concord Performing Arts Center, 51 Walden St, Concord. Tickets, $15.00 at the door, $10.00 for seniors and society members. Visit www.51walden.org for more information.

Festivals & Workshops

July 10-15, 2005: Thayer Performing Arts Center Summer Chamber Music Institute
Aaron Larget-Caplan will be teaching and coaching at the Thayer Performing Arts Center Summer Chamber Music Institute from July 10-15th in Lancaster, MA (40 minutes from Boston). No audition for the Institute; ages 12+. More info at www.alarget-caplan.org/thayer.html. Former London Symphony violist, Peter Sulski is the director and is more than willing to answer any question. Email him at www.petersulski.com.

July 10-16 2005: 1st Acadia Classical Guitar Festival
July 25-29, 2005: The National Guitar Workshop Classical Summit

Paul Galbraith will be the special guest this summer at The National Guitar Workshop Classical Summit, taking place from July 25-29, 2005 in New Milford, Connecticut. The summit brings together a number of great classical guitarists to teach and play; students have the opportunity to study with four different teachers throughout the week, in addition to attending world-class classical guitar concerts every evening. Faculty for the week includes Lily Afshar, Julian Gray, Nathaniel Gunod, Frank Koonce, Andrew Leonard, Martha Masters, Marc Teicholz, Marija Temo and Jason Vieaux. The 2005 Classical Summit will also host a solo competition open to all ages, with a $4000 first prize. For more information, visit the NGW website (www.guitarworkshop.com), or call (800) 234-6479.

August 3-16, 2005: Guitar Institute at the Golden Mountain Music Festival

Dr. Jose Lezcano will be offering a Guitar Institute at the Golden Mountain Music Festival in the Czech Republic, August 3 to August 16, 2005. The GMS Guitar Institute will offer individual lessons, guitar ensemble, and incorporation of participants into chamber ensembles. For more information about the Golden Mountain Chamber Academy, link to gms@gmcema.com. You may also contact Jose at jlezcano@keene.edu or call (603) 358-2180.

August 23-29, 2005: 8th International Guitar/Composition Congress/ Festival of Corfu


*** Advertising in the Calendar is free of charge ***

Send your listings to Larry Spencer at lspencer777@hotmail.com, or mail them to: Larry Spencer, BCGS Webmaster/Calendar Coordinator, 1200 Concord Rd., Marlborough, MA 01752.

Deadline for the September-November issue is August 1.

Listings submitted after the deadline will be posted on the BCGS Web site.
A Tribute by Harry Pellegrin: a Son Linked by the Guitar to a Mentor and Father

By Harry Pellegrin

Albert Valdes Blain (10 April 1921 - 30 January 2002)

I met Albert Blain in 1974. I had heard of him by reputation, of course. The guitar teacher who had brought me along to that point at which I was ready to undertake a study of the classical guitar at the college level, well, he had admonished me when he’d heard with whom I would be studying. With much the same advise as Mary had given the servants at the marriage feast at Cana, he’d told me “Whatever he tells you to do, just do it!”

Born in Havana Cuba in 1921, Albert Blain was still a New Yorker—he’d lived in the City since 1923, the year his parents brought him and brother Roland to the United States. His father had chosen the guitar for Albert and Roland. The two would become a duo performance act, recording extensively in the 1940’s and 1950’s.

Albert Blain studied with Andres Segovia, the performer and educator who is truly the father of the Classical Guitar revival of the 20th century. After retiring from the world’s concert stage, Blain opened a guitar studio on 13th Street in Manhattan.

So there I stood on the doorstep of Albert Blain’s apartment on the South side of 13th Street. I did not know what to expect. I feared the worst—an autocratic, dictatorial, uncompromising, harsh master. I rang the bell and waited. It was a Friday afternoon, four o’clock and I was the last student of the afternoon. The door swung open and there stood Mr. Blain. I was ushered into a long room lined with artwork, plants, hardwood floors and leather furniture. A double music stand occupied a space close to the windows, two grand piano-style benches and footstools faced the stand. A brace of guitar stands flanked this tableau, each held a priceless Herman Hauser classical guitar. I didn’t know the book value of these instruments at the tender age of seventeen, but they sure looked impressive.

Albert Blain was associated with or on the faculty of any college in the New York City area that sported a guitar program of any repute whatsoever. He was on the faculty of Bronx Community College, The Mannes College of Music, and Brooklyn College by the 1970’s. Little did guitar players from the Bronx, signing on at the Community College, realize just how top-shelf a teacher they would soon be molded by.

John Martelli and I both attended Bronx Community College and were guitar majors. We both had our lessons on Friday afternoons, back to back, so we soon began car-pooling together. We both were astounded by our fortune. Although my old teacher had told me that Blain was an outstanding player and amazingly gifted teacher, he never told me about the recordings, the studies with Segovia, the published book—the stature of the man.

Albert Blain was a mortal man with all the life-experience that most people have. He had a son, I believe his name is Robert. Whether through death or divorce, Mr. Blain was without permanent female companionship when I met him. He never lacked a female escorts at concerts or artistic receptions. My intent is not to discuss the man’s private affairs, so no more will be written of these matters.

Michael Newman, sixteen year-old wunderkind, having debuted at Carnegie hall that spring of ’74, was the toast of New York City’s classical guitar community and also a student of Albert Blain. Michael was a technically superb player with an interpretive edge that was years ahead of what his youthful countenance might indicate. He had begun his studies with Albert Blain at a young age and was about to attend Mannes College.
In 1976, I graduated from Bronx Community College and decided to continue my studies with Mr. Blain while going for my Bachelor’s at The Mannes College of Music. There was always the slim possibility I would be assigned a different guitar teacher at Mannes, but my fears were put to rest when I got my first schedule. It seemed to me that the Blain students were of a different temperament than the students of the other Mannes guitar faculty. Blain’s students seemed to be the rock n’ rollers of the classic guitar world—showmen with gobs of technique and fire. “Big Tone!” “Big Sound!” were comments most often heard by Blain’s students. He wanted his disciples to fill a recital hall—with people, yes, but more importantly—with sound! And not just any sound, the heavy sweet sound of a Ramirez 1a. In 1976, Mr. Blain (or Uncle Al as us disrespectful little hooligans referred to him among ourselves) went to Spain and hand-selected an instrument for me from Ramirez’ workshop. He chose well. I still play it after all these years and it still delivers sumptuous rich and balanced tone.

Albert Blain did not rely solely upon the whims and fancy of musical stylings and students for his income. He was also part owner of the five-star Spain Restaurant on 13th Street between the Avenue of the Americas and Seventh.

I became good friends with Chris Hnottavange, another of Blain’s students while at Mannes. An anecdote from 1979 really shows the kind of person Mr. Blain was. Chris was a starving artist, working in a copy shop on Lexington Avenue part time while trying to go to school full-time, practice a program for a graduation recital, and pay for an apartment on 85th Street. Food was not something for which Chris budgeted. I too was off my feed. My Dad had been diagnosed with cancer and between the lethargy of depression and spending hours sitting in hospital rooms, there was little time or desire for food. Chris and I had both lost a lot of weight. One afternoon, Blain looked at the two of us for a moment then spoke. “No lessons today, we’re having a field trip!” He knew the reasons behind our drastic weight loss. We were firmly escorted to the Spain Restaurant where Mr. Blain ordered a huge pot of paella and the biggest, thickest most tender steaks I have ever encountered. Once a portion of the food was consumed, the wine flowed. “And don’t forget, we can do this any time!” he told us on the way out.

Albert Blain was not a fan of modern music and considered the electric guitar in any form to be an abomination. Even so, he was keenly aware that the electric guitar had motivated a good number of his students to move on (and up, he’d say) to the classical repertoire. “At least my students will be good at what they do and be able to support themselves” he’d say when we’d discuss gigs we had played on “the abomination.”

I graduated Mannes in 1980. My Dad passed away in 1981. Mr. Blain announced to us that he would be retiring and moving to Spain permanently. I felt as if every mentor and role model in my life had abandoned me. I had always intended to continue studying with Albert Blain after graduation, but I was out of school, out of work, and out of money. There was no room for guitar lessons. I later heard that Mr. Blain had sold his Hausers to students of his for well below market value. That was so “in-character” for him. He’d want the instruments to have good homes with players who would love them for what they were and remember the man who had owned them. I spoke with Albert Blain for what I believe was the last time in 1982. “I’ll send you a post card from Spain. They have great wine and terrific women in Spain!”

Maybe six months later I did indeed receive a post card. “I’d like to tell you guys that I miss you all” said the writing on the reverse side of a picture of a beach and bikinied women “but it’s just too nice here!” The postal cancellation had obliterated the return address.

In 1997, I ran Internet searches for Albert Valdes Blain, but no information was available. Barry Lazarus, a fellow Blain student, emailed and wrote that as far as he knew Blain was still alive and well and living in Spain. I was overjoyed, but there was no contact information.

In 2003, I once again ran a Google search. This time I found Albert Blain. The obituary was dated August of 2002.

Funny how these few words may be all most people will ever know about Albert Blain. His book, “700 Years of Music for the Classical Guitar,” is out of print and his recordings haven’t been available in ages. You’ll see him mentioned in many a famous performer’s or instructor’s resume, but you’ll never hear about the humanity and kindness this gentleman of the guitar possessed. I’m here to tell you that Albert Blain was a terrific friend and mentor to a student. He didn’t have to be this way to just another pimply kid with a guitar, it was his nature and character to be a hard task-master with a soft center. I will miss him with almost the same intensity that I miss my natural father. He imparted so much into my life, not just about the guitar, but about how to be a human being.

Boston Classical Guitar Society
1802 Village Road West
Norwood, MA 02062
(Address Correction Requested)

The Boston Classical Guitar Society Presents

Paul Galbraith, In concert
Saturday, July 30 at 8:00pm

Church of the Covenant,
67 Newbury Street, Boston, MA
(See Page 5)
The Boston Classical Guitar Society
Presents
Paul Galbraith
In concert

Saturday, July 30 at 8:00pm

Church of the Covenant,
67 Newbury Street
(at the corner of Berkeley Street),
Boston, MA 02116

Tickets: $20 General Admission.
$15 Students, Seniors & BCGS Members

Directions

From the North: Via I-93 and the Tobin Bridge: Proceed to the Storrow Drive exit (follow ramp signs carefully). West on Storrow Drive to exit for "Copley Square/Back Bay" (a left exit.) At the end of the ramp, at a stoplight, turn left onto Beacon Street, then a quick right onto Arlington. Three blocks to Newbury Street (Ritz-Carlton Hotel on the corner), right onto Newbury, and then one block to church.

From the South: Via the Southeast Expressway: Take exit 20, staying in the left lane of the exit ramp. Follow sign to South Station via Frontage Rd. At the second light turn left. This is Berkeley Street. Continue on, taking a slight jog to the right as it crosses Tremont. At that point you'll see Covenant's spire 6-8 blocks ahead on the left.

From the West: Via Storrow Drive: East on Storrow to "Downtown" exit, which is in the Storrow Drive tunnel. Ramp curves right; at the light at its end, turn left onto Beacon Street, then a quick right onto Arlington. Three blocks to Newbury Street (Ritz-Carlton Hotel on corner); right onto Newbury, and one block to church.

Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90): East to exit 22, "Prudential Ctr/Copley Square." Stay in the right lane (for Copley), curving right as you exit the tunnel. Straight ahead through two lights, then left at the third onto Berkeley Street. Three blocks to the church, at the corner of Newbury Street.

Via the MBTA: Any Green Line train to either the Arlington or Copley Square stations; approximately 2 blocks to the church.

Parking is extremely limited on the streets near the church (all spaces metered). Meters are free after 6:00 p.m. Nearby garages are on Clarendon Street Just beyond Boylston and just beyond Stuart; and there are outdoor lots on Newbury at Dartmouth.

Program

French Suite No.2 in C minor (tr. to E minor), BWV 813 ............ J.S.Bach (1685-1750)
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Air
Menuet
Gigue

Variations and Fugue on “La Folia”.................................Manuel Ponce (1882-1948)

Intermission

Valses Poeticos ..................................................................Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

Ma Mère l’Oye (Mother Goose Suite).........................Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Pavane de la Belle au Bois Dormant (Pavane of Sleeping Beauty)
Petit Poucet (Tom Thumb)
Laideronnette, impératrice des pagodes (Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodes) ......
Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (Conversations between Beauty and the Beast)
Le jardin féerique (The Enchanted Garden)

All works arranged for eight-string guitar by Mr. Galbraith
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1980 RAMIREZ 1A. 667mm scale length, exceptionally balanced registers, spruce like trebles for a cedar top. Big sound, with Mark Leaf case. Call (978) 486-4011 or email frederic.bernstingle@verizon.net.

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For Sale by Lance F. Gunderson, (207) 439-7516, email: lancefgunderson@yahoo.com:

YAMAHA CG50 Romanian spruce/Brazilian, 650/52, laquer finish. As-new condition. This is the top of the line from Yamaha, a custom order. Currently CG50’s are selling for $9,800 at Richard Click, $8,400 on the net from a dealer, $5,600 at Zavelatas, and $3,000 from me. This is a top-flight concert guitar at a great price.


GIBSON L5C 1964 Sunburst, DeArmond, OHSC. Exc. condition. Owned by me since 1966. $7,000.

ALAN CHAPMAN 1995. Charming, playable, perfect for the aspiring professional. Cedar top, fine condition, one slight ding. Originally $3,500. Asking $2,700 (case included). E-mail Alex at ahenryahenry@yahoo.com, or call (617) 480-4870.


Luthiers and Dealers

ALAN CARRUTH, LUTHIER. Offering handmade guitars of all kinds and lutherie instruction at 51 Camel Hump Road, Newport, NH 03773. (603) 863-7064, www.alcarruthluthier.com.

STEPHAN CONNOR, Classical Guitar Maker. Come visit my shop and try out the latest guitars! (508) 294-1711, Catauemet, MA, stephconnor@juno.com; www.connorguitars.com.

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Strings and Accessories

STRINGS BY MAIL. Providing classical guitarist with the best products, at low prices, while maintaining the highest standards of customer service. PO Box 188, Mount Joy, PA 17552. Phone (717) 492-9825. Fax (717) 492-9129, www.stringsbymail.com.

Guitar Instruction


CLASSICAL, FLAMENCO, JAZZ GUITAR. Private instructions, all levels. Prof. concert guitarist; 30 years exp. Theory/comp/improv. Guitar Accessories. By appt. Lance Gunderson (207) 439-7516 / (617) 527-4904, lgunder@attglobal.net.

PRIVATE GUITAR CLASSES, acoustic or electric, classical, Latin, improvisation and theory in Medford. Call for an appointment: Maurice Cahen: (781) 874-0224 or e-mail mauricecahen@comcast.net.

Classifieds are $10 per issue for a 32 word ad ($0.25 for each additional word). The fee includes posting on www.bostonguitar.org. Send inquiries to Charles Carrano, BCGS Editor, by email (c.carrano@comcast.net) or US mail (102 Manchester Road, Newton, MA 02461).

The deadline for the next newsletter is August 1.