

2008 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. Past President Eric Braunwart chaired the Nominating Committee. Committee members for the 2008 nomination slate were Bob Livian, Atlantic Gem Corp. and Bill Thorndal, Madagascar Imports, Ltd.

This year one of two Vice Presidents; one of two Secretaries 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 2008.

Candidates for the 2008 election are as follows:

Vice President:

Robert Bentley	Robert Bentley Company, Inc.
Surinder Mittal	The Kay El Company, Inc.

Secretary:

Anuj Jain	Gems One Corporations
Betty Sue King	King's Ransom

Director: (three to be elected)

Benjamin Hackman	Intercolor, Inc.
Gerry Manning	Manning International, Inc.
Bill Larson	Pala International, Inc.
Haridas Kotahwala	Royal India USA, Inc.

Members of the AGTA's Board whose terms of office expire in February 2008 are as follows:

Open	Vice President
Betty Sue King	Secretary
Robert Kane	Director
Benjamin Hackman	Director
Surinder Mittal	Director

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

Barbara Lawrence	President
Omi Nagpal	Vice President
Kambiz Sabouri	Secretary
Sampat Poddar	Treasurer
Peter Bazar	Director
Eric Schwotzer	Director
Glenn Lehrer	Director
Robert Bentley	Director
Sushil Goyal	Director
John Bachman	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 period 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.

Who Signs the Ballot?

Ballots MUST be signed by the designated Member of Record for each Member company. 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. Ballots signed by persons other than the Member of Record cannot be tallied.

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.

Voting Deadline:

In order to be counted, ballots must arrive at the AGTA office in Dallas, Texas by 5:00 pm CST on January 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 2008 AGTA Board at GemFair Tucson:

Newly elected Board Members will be introduced at the general membership meeting February 10, 2008 in Tucson and will take office at the Board meeting on February 13, 2008.

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

For Vice President



Robert Bentley

Robert Bentley Company, Inc.
New York, NY

Administration Committee 2007
Chairman Spectrum Awards 2004 - 2007
Co-Chairman Promotion Committee 2004 - 2007
Co-Chairman Membership Committee 2004 - 2007
AGTA Board of Directors 2004 - 2007
AGTA Member since 1994

The AGTA Nominating Committee recently asked if I would run for Vice President of the Board of Directors of the AGTA.

During the past three years I have served as Chair/Co-Chair of the Spectrum Awards, Promotion and Membership Committees. I have enjoyed a good working relationship with my fellow Board Members and the Executive Office.

The Spectrum Award has never shined more brightly. All participants have benefited from increased exposure to trade and consumer press, as well as, opportunities to work with fashion and media stylists.

New outreach programs for membership and exciting promotional projects are underway. We look forward to advancing our goals in these areas.

It is my belief that the Nominating Committee has asked me to take on this responsibility because of my level of commitment and dedication. I have found doing service for AGTA deeply rewarding.

I would like to be able to continue to serve with my fellow Board Members who give countless hours of their time and energy on a weekly basis to make progress on issues that are important to us all.



Surinder K. Mittal

The Kay El Company, Inc.
Dallas, Texas

I have been fortunate to serve on the AGTA Board for the past three years. I would like to thank all those who supported me in this effort. As an active member, I look forward and hope to continue to serve the AGTA as Vice President.

I am one of the first ten people who helped co-found AGTA. In 1981, I remember being at the poolside in the Holiday Inn South in Tucson, Arizona when we all collected \$100 from each person there so we could start an organization called AGTA. Immediately after, I was in an unfortunate car accident in which I lost my younger brother. I was in the hospital and recovering with physical therapy for two years. Therefore, I was unable to be actively involved in the initial stages of when AGTA was founded. Due to my family loss at the time, I wasn't involved in the AGTA and therefore, lost my seniority in the association.

I stated my own gem business over 30 years ago in Dallas, Texas. My company does over 60 trade shows a year across the USA for the past 30 years. Many of my customers refer to my company as the "McDonald" or "Sam Warehouse" of the gemstone business. I have a lot of experience and knowledge in the gemstone industry and have worked with industry people in India, Thailand, and Brazil. I have been contacted by EGL many times for consultation in colored diamond grading. I have also supplied stones to GIA and helped with any consultation they may have.

I have also been actively involved in non-profit, community organizations including the International Lions Club and have been a past President in office.

With my experience, knowledge, and passion for the colored gemstones, I hope to promote and continue the strength of this association. I would like to enhance the image of our organization and grow our sales at the trade shows worldwide. I want to be given the opportunity to serve on the board so I can help grow our industry in all aspects.

For Secretary



Anuj K. Jain

Gems One Corporations
New York, NY & Dayton, OH

Education:

D.A. Columbia College, Columbia University (1993)

Graduate Gemologist GIA (1993)

Members: AGS, AGTA, Buyers International Group (BIG), Continental Buying Group (CBG), Indian Diamond & Colorstone Association (IDCA, Secretary) JBT, MJSA, & Retail Jewelers Association (RJO)

Dear AGTA Colleagues,

It is an honor and a privilege to be nominated to serve on AGTA Board. Ever since I can remember gemstones have been an integral part of my life. In 1974 my father, an engineer with two Masters' degrees, started a part time business in Dayton, OH selling gemstones. For seven years he continued this business part-time, traveling on Saturdays with us. I have heard stories about me at age six sorting opals by what flashes of color I saw. It is this history that guides many of my decisions to this date and continues to fuel my passion for gemstones.

Since our inception we have added many products, and opened numerous diamond cutting and jewelry factories, but we have strengthened not abandoned our loose gemstones and pearls business. Whether it is at the fifteen shows we do a year or in my day to day interaction with customers, I always emphasize the importance of gemstones and how it can differentiate you from your competitors. As diamonds have become more of a commodity, we must seize the moment and stress the allure, profitability, and benefits of gemstones and pearls for the retailer. We must contribute by promoting gemstones and pearls both as an organization and individually as it members. Every interaction or event should be viewed as a chance to promote gemstones and pearls in a manner that is consistent with the AGTA mission statement.

I am confident that I can provide the existing experienced and qualified board members with new and innovative ideas. I am eager to both learn and contribute.



Betty Sue King

King's Ransom
Sausalito, CA

AGTA Board of Directors 2003-2007, Secretary 2005-2007
Charter Member 1981

CPTA Member since 2005

GIA Alumni Association: Associate Member since 1999

SNAG: Member since 1993

GANA: Professional Member since 1996

WJA: Member since 1992

I have had the honor to serve on the AGTA Board of Directors for two consecutive terms. During the past term, I Co-Chaired Membership and served on the Promotions and Spectrum Committees.

We have increased our membership at all levels and continue to incorporate numerous benefits for our members. The Designer Jewelry Pavilion features the most creative and talented designers in North America. Gemhall II offers Estate and Antique exhibitors as an additional attraction for buyers. We continue to update "Gemstone Enhancements-What You Should Know" and launched our new brand, "The Authority in Color", our affirmation of the Association's commitment to professionalism at all levels of our industry. Entries to the Spectrum Award and Cutting Edge Competitions have broken all past records for the past two years. This, our premier competition, rose to new heights of media coverage with creative directing from our committee.

My evolution as an independent pearl & gem dealer in the past 29 years has brought me into a world of incredible information, organizations, increasingly beautiful precious pearls and gems, and lasting friendships. It is my honor to give back to the Organization that has provided guidance and support throughout these years.

I bring the following skills to the AGTA:

- Extensive product knowledge in pearls & gemstones.
- Informative lectures on cultured pearls providing a foundation for self-empowerment.
- Fairness, open mindedness, global thinking problem solving approach to issues.
- Honesty, integrity & equanimity: foundations for successful business practices.
- Proactive approach for the evolution of business and professionalism.

The future of the cultured pearl and gemstone industry depends on our coordinated efforts to promote color to the public while providing maximum support to our clients at every level of commerce and education. Continued support of our Lab, the GTC, is integral to the protection of the integrity of the gemstone market as well as for the protection of the gemstone consumer.

In 2006, the Board met in San Diego for a retreat to assess the challenges and strategize the needs of the Association. I would like the opportunity to continue to actualize the goals proposed during this meeting. I ask for your support to continue building on the foundation I have contributed to during the past Boards to develop, shape and strengthen AGTA's vision for the future of the cultured pearl and gemstone industry.

For Director



Benjamin Hackman

Intercolor, USA
New York, NY

Having served two previous terms on the Board of AGTA, I had the privilege of being appointed to fill a board vacancy to serve out the remainder of this term. I'm also a member and currently serving on the boards of International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA) and New York Gemstone Association (NYGA).

There has been a tremendous amount of change taking place within the colored gemstone trade. A great deal of jewelry manufacturing has shifted overseas and a good number of our foreign suppliers are now either exhibiting at domestic trade shows or calling directly on our customers. AGTA was formed to promote the colored gemstone trade. With resources available through AGTA and commitment to provide service to our clients, I believe we can overcome these obstacles and continue to prosper.

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 have to offer to our organization.



Gerry Manning

Manning International, Inc.
Fairfield, CT

Member: Jewelers Board of Trade, Manufacturing Jewelers & Suppliers of America, Jewelers Vigilance Committee

My Fellow AGTA Members:

Manning International's association with AGTA spans its history - from start-up organization to its current position as one of our industry's major trade associations. In the past I've served as a Board member, Membership Co-Chair, Legal Affairs Committee Co-Chair, Industry Rules Committee member and Senior Vice-President. And now when our domestic industry faces a radically changed business landscape I'd like to be back in the Board Room to add my perspective to the choices we must make in facilitating our collective vitality and future opportunity.

We all know that foreign jewelry manufacturing and cutting centers have weakened our domestic hold in our own country. Each of us has had to deal with a shrinking number of independent jewelry stores. Each of us has seen the flight of domestic manufacturing capacity to foreign shores. Each of us struggles with extended credit terms necessary to sell in this country to an industry that has often allowed credit to mean license to stretch our capacity to supply.

Knowing all that, each of us has to make our way in this new fabric of international competition.

I believe one of AGTA's primary roles is to assist us in meeting these and other challenges by continuing to provide us with new, updated tools that give us an edge in selling our products to a wider domestic market; perhaps internet, perhaps other media - all at affordable prices.

In my 33 years as head of Manning International (Manning Opal Company, Inc.) I've served in many capacities; most recently as a mining and marketing consultant to a major Australian concern. In that role I established cutting protocols and developed new cutting applications. I'm a cutter myself, and a seasoned rough buyer. My company was among the first to assist the FTC in codifying consumer marketing language vis á vis synthetics and natural gem materials. As an AGTA Board member I co-authored our Gemstone Enhancement guide. I've been an expert witness in gem evaluation fraud cases for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Integrity, honor, reliability, fair value, professional knowledge; these are the bywords of our trade. I've spent a lifetime attempting to live by these words and their importance to the continued credibility of our company. If you see fit to elect me, I'll add my voice to the conversation that must surely propel us forward in a most challenging time for our Trade.

For Director



Bill Larson

Pala International, Inc.
Fallbrook, CA

Dear Fellow Members,

It is an honor and a privilege to be nominated to serve on the AGTA Board.

I have loved colored gemstones much of my life, and have committed to serve on the Board during a most interesting time for our industry. Treatments, environmental concerns, and politics complicate an already difficult and complex business. I have been involved, through my company Pala International, since 1968 in most aspects of the gemstone business from mining, traveling, importing, exporting, cutting, treatments, supplying and retailing and understand many of the crucial issues facing each aspect of our trade.

Pala International is a founding member of both AGTA and ICA. I have served on the Board of AGTA in its earliest years and have seen so much positive work from all the following boards, and would enjoy working directly on it once again. I have also served on several committees and understand what AGTA does for the industry. I am also currently the Western USA ICA ambassador.

With the coming of the electronic age we founded Palagems.com. All of us at Pala strive to make Palagems one of the most informative websites to promote colored gemstones in general on the internet.

I believe that a passion for color is what is most needed. Relating this passion throughout the retail public should be our aim. Our product is luxury and beauty, all we need is just a little more understanding on how to increase the public awareness, which as well increases the retailer's trust in us.

I would sincerely appreciate your vote.

Bill Larson



Haridas Kotahwala

Royal India USA, Inc.
New York, NY

I have been established in the United States since 1968, and established my first organization, Universal Gem Traders, Inc. I am a fourth generation gemstone dealer but the first from Jaipur (India) to establish a business in New York.

I have been the founding Vice President of IDCA (India Diamond and Colored Stone Association). Subsequently, I have served as its president on three different terms. Also, I have been a founding member of the International Colorstone Association (ICA). For my dedication to the gemstone trade and community, I was honored with a Proclamation from New York State Assembly and the U.S. Congress.

The future of the Gemstone Industry is very bright and I am very optimistic about it. Naturally, new times offer new challenges. Today technological innovation and global competitiveness are the new challenges. The target audience cannot be limited to the U.S. alone but the entire world should be our focus. It is time to reach out. As an example, AGTA not only should have special sections in trade shows in Tuscon and Las Vegas, but also in Basel, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Japan, and other important international trade shows.

AGTA is a respected trade body. Persons of high esteem and integrity should be elected to govern such a trade body. These persons should bring knowledge, understanding, and passion to the Board. They should see a bright future of the trade and must be willing to contribute to that future. I am such a person. Besides the above, I bring tradition, experience, and a global vision. We want the trade to flourish in a fair and ethical manner.

As you know, I have offered my candidacy for the post of director of AGTA for the year 2008. It is my strong desire that we strengthen AGTA and the trade. I request you to please vote for me so that I can contribute with my experience to our association.

Sincerely,

Haridas Kotahwala

ARTICLE VII

Standing Committees

Section 7

Nominating Committees

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 first day of September 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 (1) name for each such 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 required 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 December 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 December 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 Nominating Committee Chairman and the Executive Director not later than the first day of December 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 not later than the 10th day of January. 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.