

Charlotte Preston Awarded the Leon Ritzler Honorary Member Award



Douglas Hucker, AGTA CEO, and Charlotte Preston.

This week the fabric of our lives may seem a little off kilter. Maybe the songbirds seem a trifle less melodic or your breath catches just a tad when you inhale, as if a small portion of the oxygen has been removed from our air. Last week we lost one of our family, Charlotte Preston.

If you didn't know Charlotte she would probably escape your notice as you rushed down the corridor to attend a seminar at the GemFair in Tucson. She was very gentle-mannered and unassuming. If you did know Charlotte she would invariably greet you with a warm smile and pleasant greeting. She would engage you in pleasant but meaningful conversation and then excuse herself to attend to her duties as producer of the seminar series at our show. Aside from being one of the warmest, most genuine people I have ever known, Charlotte was a consummate professional. She planned and flawlessly executed our seminar series in Tucson for nearly two decades.



Charlotte and friends at the AGTA Spectrum Awards™ Gala in Tucson, Arizona.

I knew Charlotte for thirty or more years. I first met her when she joined the staff at the American Gem Society, then in Los Angeles, when I was with GIA. We had many opportunities over the years to work together at educational events and trade shows. When I joined the staff at AGTA, I had to get my hands around an entire association very quickly. Learning that Charlotte was responsible for our seminar program at Tucson was like a twenty-pound weight lifted off my shoulders. Check that responsibility off the list.

Charlotte was just a great person to work with and a great friend. I used to tell Charlotte that I thought her business name, Charlotte Preston Catalysts, was kind of snooty for a Kansas native, but her email was far more apropos, "getsitdone@aol.com." Now that was Charlotte. Earlier this year, when she told me that she was facing an end of life illness, I was pretty much a bag of goo. Charlotte, however, approached it with aplomb and remarkable courage. I wasn't surprised.

This year the AGTA Board of Directors voted to award Charlotte the Leon Ritzler Honorary Member Award. Early on, when the AGTA defined the different Member classifications, they included an Honorary Member category. Named after Leon Ritzler, the first AGTA President, the Honorary Member Award can be given to any person, selected by the Board of Directors, who had made a meaningful contribution to the growth and/or improvement of the natural colored gemstone industry.

I traveled to Minnesota a couple of weeks ago to visit with Charlotte and her wife Mary, and to present her with the obligatory plaque that accompanies these awards. It was inscribed as follows:

The 2016 Leon Ritzler Honorary Member Award To Charlotte Preston

"Education is the movement from darkness to light."

Allan Bloom

In honor of the woman who made and maintained education as a mainstay of our GemFair Tucson experience. Because of her efforts, men and women who attended our show left not just with beautiful gemstones, but

with a richer and more fulfilling experience. The Board of Directors of the American Gem Trade Association hereby bestows to Charlotte Preston the Leon Ritzler Memorial Honorary Member Award

September 28th, 2015

I know that Charlotte appreciated the award. But in true Charlotte fashion, she was modest. I got the sense that of greater importance and meaning for her was the work she did for the AGTA and the friends that she brought into her life over all the years. We visited for a couple of hours, sat on the front porch with Mary and had a glass of tea. We talked about our kids, our jobs, and all the people we knew over the years. It rained a little.

- Douglas K. Hucker

Let no one weep for me, or celebrate my funeral with mourning; for I still live, as I pass to and fro through the mouths of men.

Quintus Ennius

<http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/104659/?fullname=charlotte-ann-preston>