

*Gem show officials collar
thief suspect. April 9/90*

Officials at the Brantford Lapidary and Mineral Club had a new experience at their annual Geo-Rama during the weekend.

They caught a gem thief.

It was the 18th year the club has put on its display of gems, jewelry, stones and visually stunning rocks and minerals.

"We've never had anything like this before," said club member Reg Dinsmore, who on Saturday organized a band of six people to watch a man reported to be pocketing some of the items for sale by dealers at the Woodman Community Centre.

"If every pair of eyes watching him had been a dagger in his back he'd have been dead 10 times over," said Mr. Dinsmore, 72, of Brantford.

The watchers looked on as the man helped himself to items from a number of exhibits. As he went to leave, about six people escorted the man to a back room, convinced him to empty his pockets and then called police, Mr. Dinsmore said.

Items stolen included a gold and turquoise ring, a large chunk of larimar and a hand-size crystal worth about \$200. "I don't know how he got it in his pocket," said Mr. Dinsmore.

More items were found in a car by police, who have charged a Woodstock man with theft of goods under \$1,000.

"We have no security guard, but all the officials are on guard all the time," said Mr. Dinsmore.

About 900 people attended the two-day event to inspect displays of gems, minerals, Indian artifacts, as well as precious metals — malachite from South Africa, amber from the Baltic Sea, amethyst from South America, jade from British Columbia and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan.

There also were demonstrations of carving soapstone, faceting semi-precious stones, working with gold wire, viewing minerals through microscopes, silver smithing, and making jewelry from titanium.