

The Opal Express
 American Opal Society
 P.O. Box 382
 Anaheim, CA 92815-0382



Member

Member



Volume #30 Issue #4 April 1998

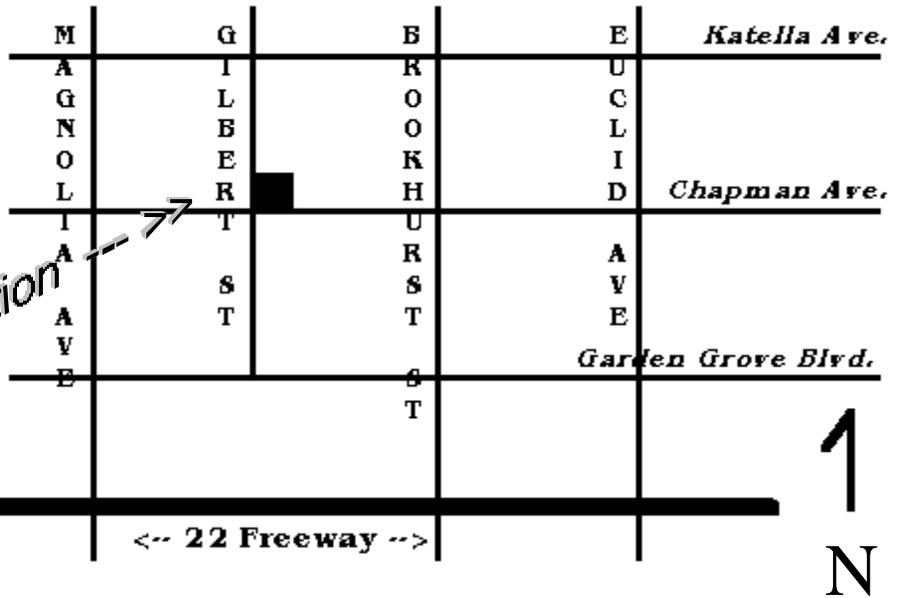


TO:

GENERAL MEETINGS —
 2nd Thursday 7:00-9:00 PM
 Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
 9501 Chapman Ave.
 (NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)
 Garden Grove, CA

MEETING ACTIVITIES
 Opal Cutting Advice Guest Speakers
 Slide Shows Videos Other Activities

Meeting Location →



!! Happy Easter !!



American Opal Society Officers

Wes Roth	President	(714) 897-2984 email wesroth@earthlink.net
Carol Bova	Vice Pres.	(818) 845-8610 email bova@bovagems.com
Mike Kowalsky	Treasurer	(714) 761-4876 email mykowsky@aol.com
Pete Goetz	Secretary	(714) 666-2084 email mpg1022@aol.com

DUES POLICY REVISED - effective 1/1/98

Henceforth, memberships begin in the month a person joins the Opal Society. This simplifies the fee structure and will reduce questions and errors in dues payments.

Three (3) Dues Rates are for families and are now based on your county of residence.

Rate #1 (\$26): *Local area* = members who reside in Los Angeles, Orange, or Riverside counties.

Rate #2 (\$20): *California & USA* = all US addresses other than local counties.

Rate #3 (\$30): *Foreign* = all memberships outside USA.

SENIOR DISCOUNT: Age 65 and over, deduct \$5 from the above rates.

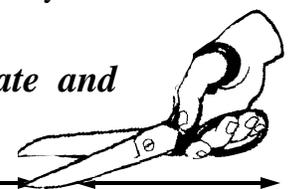
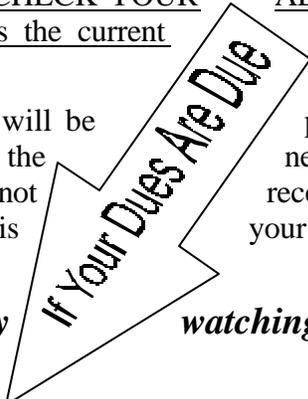
Label Changes: Your address label now displays your dues expiration date as MM-YY where MM is the month and YY is the year your dues expire. Expiration dates also appear in the membership roster.

Are Your Dues Due Now? PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed there. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are **overdue**.

Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note however that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be AUTOMATICALLY dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.

Please help us make this work by renewing promptly. Thanks!

watching your expiration date and



DUES RENEWAL FORM

(membership renewal form rev. 1/1/98)
d:\ameropal\news\tr\forms\dues_due.pub



American Opal Society, Inc.
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Anaheim, CA 92815-0382

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!!

Make check or money order payable to: American Opal Society, Inc.

Please mail payment and renewal form to the club address at left.

DUES RENEWAL RATES (select one)	
1) LOCAL AREA member	\$26.00
(addresses in Los Angeles, Orange, & Riverside counties)	
2) CALIFORNIA & USA	\$20.00
(all addresses outside local area counties)	
3) FOREIGN	\$30.00
(all addresses outside USA)	
** \$5 SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or	

DEALER LIST: Yes, include my name/address on a list provided to Opal Dealers selling at the most recent Opal Show.

(if yes, please sign or initial here) _____ date _____

without your signature here you will not be included in the dealer info list

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: Yes, include my name and/or address and/or phone information in a published AOS membership directory...

[Please circle any of these —> NAME / ADDRESS / PHONE if you prefer a partial listing.]

(if yes please sign or initial here) _____ date _____

without your signature here you will not be included in the member roster

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CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE U.S.) _____

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FAX (____) _____

NAME BADGE ORDER FORM: (OPTIONAL)

Number of badges ordered _____

(\$5.00 EACH - includes engraving)

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname or name of your opal related business.

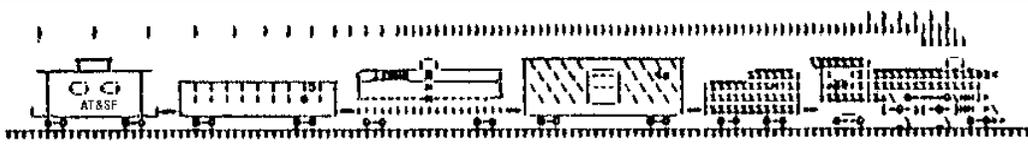
Please indicate any name or mailing address changes

The OPAL EXPRESS

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Published
monthly
by the
American
Opal
Society

Issue 4



President's Message

from Wes Roth

Greetings

Well here it is already the month of April.

This month we are pleased to have with us as lecturer and demonstrator, Andy Anderson, who will speak on the subject of wax carving and metal casting.

Andy is a Native Californian, born in the city of San Pedro. He has been working in the jewelry field for the last 12 years and lectures to students of all ages. He also volunteers his time and expertise at the Veterans Hospital in Long Beach.

He travels the world as a trainer for disabled athletes, as well as competing in world class wheelchair events, most recently the Boston and Los Angeles Marathons.

Please bring your field trip ideas and questions with you as we are hoping to plan a trip for later this month to one of the local dig sites.

I would like on behalf of the American Opal Society, to say Thank You to Roy Kopman, an AOS member from the 1970's for his donation of over 50 waxes (rings and other forms) to the workshop.

Hope to see you at the meeting

Wes Roth
President

You may be a rockhound if...the local college's geology department asks permission to hold a field trip--in your back yard. ☼

Field Trip Plans

Be sure to attend our April General Meeting to provide your input regarding field trip plans. Please see page 3 for a list of tools and other items to bring for typical opal digging sites.

Remember also: This is a banner year for desert wildflowers and now's a great time to be out rockhounding! ☼

AOS INFORMATION & VOICE MAIL
NUMBER IS (714) 502-1333



DATES TO REMEMBER

General Meeting
Thurs April 9
7PM

Annual Opal &
Gem Show
November 7 & 8

workshop Information...

The Opal Society workshop is located in a light industrial complex in Fullerton. The address is Unit #9, 651 N. State College Blvd.

Directions: exit the 91 Fwy onto State College Blvd. and go north. Proceed through the intersection of Orangethorpe continuing a short distance further on State College. Go over the railroad tracks and turn left into the complex on the west side of the street. If you go over the second RR crossing turn around. Proceed behind the front row of businesses and make your first right. Then follow the road around to the left. The workshop has a large "9" over the door.

Only AOS members may use the equipment and workshop. You will be required to sign a release form as well.

Workshop Schedule on Page 5 shows dates/times and appointment instructions. ☼

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Dues Renewal	1	"Extinct Trees" Growing	3	Kitchen Table Triplet	5	Buying Triplet Material	9
Field Trip Plans	2	Welcome New Members	4	Workshop Schedule	5	Gluing Doublets/Triplets	9
Field Trip Checklist	3	Disappearing Camping Areas	4	Show Calendar	8	Tips On Tumbling	9

Field Trips: What to Bring... In Your Opal Digging "Kit"

By Wes Roth

"Basic check list" for a field trip:

1. Rock pick, 3-4lb sledge hammer, chisels (assorted), dental picks, pry bars large and small.
2. GLOVES and a box of band-aids or a travelers first aid kit.
3. Pliers or nippers for trimming rocks, whisk broom, old paint brushes for clearing area.
4. Canvas bags, buckets for tools and materials you will gather.
5. Squirt bottles as well as plenty of drinking water. A clean squirt bottle is good for misting your face.
6. Large hat as well as layered clothing and a sunscreen product; safety glasses or a face shield.
7. Ground pad to sit on while digging.
8. Film canisters, or containers, for small specimens.
9. Jeweler's loop for examining the interior of opal nodules.
10. Camera and extra film-local scenery can be beautiful.
11. Flashlight with extra batteries and even though you hopefully won't need it, rain gear.
12. A cellular phone is a good idea also.

For digging at Opal Canyon or the Nowak mines it is most important to have a pair of nippers (cheap wire cutters work well).

This is hard rock digging but noodling in the tailings can turn up very nice stones too. ❁

(I would like to add that Wes and I had a great time out at Opal Hill digging fire agate a couple weeks ago {Hi Nancy!}. Hard rock but a fun day and I came home with a bucket full of rocks to check later. I expect to bring examples to the next meeting. -rgm)

Name Badges...

Price per badge is \$5 which includes the badge itself and engraving of up to two lines of text: one line for your first and last name and, if you wish, a second line for nickname or if applicable, your opal related business name. These engraving options give members flexibility to include many types of identification.

Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for completion of engraving. ❁

Editorial License by Russ Madsen

I try not to do this too often (no more than once a decade, pleeeeeease!) but it seems my time came to experience a complete computer meltdown. Around the middle of March all systems on the old 486-66 muddled to a halt and I found myself at the store shopping for a new machine.

The outcome is a decent piece of equipment but the time lost capturing old data and program files has about erased any chance of a complete newsletter this issue. I apologize to you all for any deficiencies that may appear by the time this issue goes to the printer.

While I'm at it here, I will again remind everyone that any and all material relating to opal is welcome. Please email or snailmail your ideas, questions, subjects for articles and the like to the club addresses listed below.

If you have an idea for an article write it up. I'll gladly rework the text if you want (or not if that is your preference). If you have the idea for an article's subject, but don't want to prepare an article, call and we can do an "interview" type article which I will author in the format of the articles drawn from the Opal Show Symposiums.

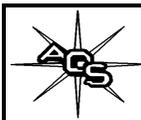
In any event, thanks for understanding if this issue proves to be a little "short". -Russ ❁



Extinct Trees Found Growing In Australia

In the Blue Mountains of Wollemi National Park, 125 miles west of Sydney, in an almost inaccessible area, pine trees that were believed to be extinct for 150 million years have been discovered alive and growing. These trees reach over 100 feet tall and some over 10 feet around... They have a very rough bark and have a dense waxy foliage. Only 23 adult trees and 15 smaller trees have been found but 40 seeds have been recovered. These trees have been named the Wollemi Pines and horticulturists at the Mount Anna Botanical Garden have put the seeds in a special nutrient solution hoping for germination. On December 15th the horticulturists announced then have a seedling. ❁

From Hygrade (no date avail) via Staurolite May/June 97



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Editor---Russ Madsen

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AOS Information Line & Voice Mail (714) 502-1333

E-mail 76550.1366@compuserve.com

(Deadline for items: 15th of the month prior to each issue)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

#1166 Lupe Hernandez
#1167 Faye McDowell

Birth Announcement and Congratulations!

If you were at the Opal Symposium last November you no doubt are aware that the following was news in the making.

Walter and Joan Skinner of Opal Traders International are the proud parents of Alexander Roosevelt Skinner, born March 15, 1998 – 8lbs. 10ozs...CONGRATULATIONS folks from all of us at the American Opal Society. ☼

Membership Roster Changes/Additions

New Listing - Lupe Hernandez 2916 E. 56th St. Long Beach, CA 90805 (562) 408-0772 Member # 1166 Dues Expire 99-03

New Listing - Faye McDowell 362 Winslow Ave. Long Beach, CA 90814 (562) 597-7684 Member # 1167 Dues Expire 99-03

The Disappearing BLM 14 Day Areas *is anyone paying attention?*

By Gary and Virginia Tucker

Has anyone noticed the BLM lands that have been open to park for a few days (14 day stay areas) are disappearing faster than Al Gore's Glaciers? Colorado River parking, other than organized parks that want beaucoup bucks to stay, should be placed on the endangered list as they meet the criteria and need immediate protection. Our recent trip south illustrates vividly the loss of these historic places to camp. Sportsman's Park, below Davis Dam, and the entire frontage road between there and the Laughlin Bridge is now off limits to overnight camping. Take Off Point, above Parker Dam, and the road around Havasu Springs have also been closed to 14-day stay and designated Day Use Only, except for the "Cross Roads" which is the only 14-day stay for free remaining on the strip – but availability there is very limited. Even the dunes area has been fenced off. What about the area around Quartzite and Yuma that have been historically open for 14-day stay?

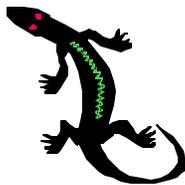
Several years ago the long term sites were designated free, then \$25 per season, a couple years later \$50.00 per season, and now \$100.00 per season. How high will the fees have to go before the people come to the realization that Al Gore and his environmental extremist friends do not want any of us using the public lands period! 14-day stay areas have been reduced by 106,000 acres, leaving only 4,100 acres dedicated to 14-day stay in the Quartzite area. See the "La Posa Interdisciplinary Management Plan" (Pick up or write for a copy at 2555 East Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, AZ 85364-2240) which reads a lot like the "East Side Ecosystem Management Project" which is doing the same thing to 145 million acres of public lands in the Northwest.

This should cause serious concern to the RV community and all the nation's citizens. Why is this being done by the BLM? The old "Red Herring" of sewage (There has been a very successful movement to classify "excrement" as a hazardous substance) right up there Plutonium -239, and trash will surely be used to rationalize much of this action. I think one should dig a little deeper and you will come to the conclusion the Green Movement will not be satisfied until we humans are off the public lands. This point (was) again illustrated by the recent announcement to drastically control travel in our National parks. What can we do to provide our children and grandchildren with the same rights we have had to use our free public lands?

This is a political problem: we must enlist the aid of all our Government Representatives from County Commissioners to the highest levels of State and Federal Government to roll back these most draconian attempts to keep us off the public lands. Hopefully our generation's legacy to our progeny will not be to have squandered the rights to use the public lands! ☼

From Blue Agate News 3/98 via Rockhound Notes 3/98

...stay areas have
been reduced by
106,000 acres,
leaving only 4,100
acres dedicated to
14-day stay in the
Quartzite area.



THREE ROOMS AND A PATH

By Richard Gunn, council Reporter

In Nashville, every family boasts
Of five rooms and a bath!

But in my youth I never had
but three rooms and a path.

They built the outhouse on the bank
Of Tumbling Creek and then

Each time I passed I had an urge
To push the outhouse in.

For weeks I fought this powerful urge.
And one day I was weak—

I slipped out to the outhouse, and
I pushed it in the creek.

That night my Dad called me aside,
And all he had to say

Was: "Do you know who pushed the house
Into the creek today?"

I told my Dad that it was I –
he didn't even chide –

But then and there with leather belt
Prepared to tan my hide.

"But daddy, when George Washington
Cut down the cherry tree,

He told the truth and so his pa
Let little George go free."

"But let me ask you something, son."
My dad said with a frown.

"Was his pa in the cherry tree
When George cut it down?"

From The Roadrunner 2/96 via Rocky Review 3/98

The Kitchen-Table Opal Triplet

By Hans Durstling

Hans can be reached at sinico@nbnet.nb.ca.

An opal triplet is a composite stone made up of three layers. On the bottom is the backing layer, of black basalt or other dark stone, or perhaps of black architectural glass. In a pinch, I've even used dark welder's shield glass. In the middle of the sandwich a very thin layer of precious opal, which in turn is covered over by a protective "dome" of clear quartz.

Unfortunately a hint of stigma attaches to the "triplet" designation, a spillover from other precious stones where making a composite is usually an outright fraud. It's amplified by a gap in understanding between the goldsmiths and the stone cutters. The goldsmith works his material in quite a different way. He can shape it and alter it almost infinitely. He doesn't have to contend with features that can't be changed, and so will tend to expect, even if unconsciously, a similar range of possibilities from the stone cutter. Also, a goldsmith, while he may be stone-savvy, probably is so to a limited extent. He will have heard of a variety of treatments, triplets, doublets, foilings, dyeings and such designed to imitate high value precious stones, and so will regard the word "triplet" with mistrust in any context. An opal triplet however

(Continued on page 6)

WORK SHOP SCHEDULE

Be sure to check here for workshop schedule updates. The dates listed below are those available to the AOS in our time share agreement with the Searchers. The shop is presently being opened to members on Wednesday nights but...Please continue to contact Stan McCall by calling him at Lapidary Intl. (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session. Also, please check the AOS voice mail for information about expanded and/or modified shop schedules.

April WORKSHOP CALENDAR	
MONDAY:	6th - 13th - 20th - 27th
WEDNESDAY:	8th - 15th - 22nd - 29th
SATURDAY:	11h - 25th
SUNDAY:	5th - 19th

WORK SHOP RULES

These rules are effective October 1, 1997. Please see newsletter for monthly shop schedule.

- 1) Shop may only be used by AOS members.
- 2) Shop users must sign liability waiver.
- 3) Shop users must sign in. Shop supervisor will maintain sign-in list and collect usage fees.
- 4) Shop usage will be in sessions on scheduled days as noted below:
 - Session #1 10AM - 2PM
 - Session #2 2PM - 6PM
 - Session #3 6PM - 9PM
- 5) Shop usage fees: effective immediately...
SHOP USAGE FEE IS \$3 PER SESSION.
- 6) To assist us in scheduling, shop sessions need to be reserved in advance. Please contact Stan McCall or any member of the board of directors to reserve shop time. ✪

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The Kitchen-Table Opal Triplet

(Continued from page 5)
imitates nothing.

Why make a triplet? There are two reasons. First, in opal you or I can afford, the colour often runs through the stone only in a thin layer, most of the stone being a bland white or cream coloured "potch." If you could grind away all the useless part of the stone you'd end up with a wafer of colour like a single cornflake and often not much thicker. And what can you do with that except break it? Second, play of colour is opal's distinguishing feature, and opal in a triplet shows its colours to their very best advantage. In fact, in some cases, the colour of a stone which is sufficiently thick that it could be cut as a solid stone is dramatically improved further when it is cut as a triplet. Bear in mind that you are not putting in any colours that are not already there. What you are doing is carefully working the stone to extract its maximum beauty. And that, after all, is what gem cutting is all about. There's nothing counterfeit about these purposes. As far as I am aware only for opal is making a triplet a traditional and fully legitimate technique. Perhaps for ammolite also, but that's so recent a stone on the market that one can hardly speak of a cutting tradition.

Right then. After this much philosophy let's get some dirt under the fingernails. The nice thing about making triplets is that if you have opal rough and a few basic tools, you can do the whole thing on the kitchen table. If you're really skilled at improvising you don't need a saw, or even a capping machine. But both help, and we will be

using them.

Usually the opal rough you buy in a small bottle for, say, in the 30\$ an ounce range consists of chips of white opal somewhere between a dime and a quarter in diameter - often smaller, seldom larger. These are chips that a professional cutter refused, there not being enough saleable, good colour material in them to adequately compensate him for the time it would take him to cut them. The key here is "adequately compensate". There may well be colour in the rough. It may well make an excellent stone when the colour is carefully worked free. But if a professional cutter is going to spend three hours doing that, he needs to be sure the result is going bring a hundred dollars or two. As amateurs, we don't have that problem. We do it because we enjoy it. Thus our affordable rough opal is not necessarily trash, but is necessarily time-consuming.

It's that colour seam that you want to isolate in the form of a thin wafer. There are lots of ways of doing it. You can grind down to the seam from the top, or you can grind away the bottom, or, if you have a thin slicer saw, you can saw away the potch on both sides. But for the purposes of this story, we're hand grinding on the kitchen table.

Onto the kitchen table a newspaper is spread out, and on that goes a piece of plate glass, say one foot long by 6 inches wide to give a good working surface. The plate glass will be the underlay on which the grinding is done. Glass 1/4" thick is good, being thick enough that it doesn't bend much and is not so fragile.

Put down on the glass just a small knife tip of 220 grit abrasive, moisten that, and, holding the opal between your fingers, rub it round and round and back in forth in the grit

(Continued on page 7)

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The Kitchen-Table Opal Triplet

(Continued from page 6)

slurry. At first the opal chip will bind up a bit, catch and dig into the glass, but once its rough edges have been removed it'll grind quite readily. You'll be surprised how fast it wears away. Check periodically to see how close you're coming to the colour layer. Once you hit the colour, stop grinding. Now you've got to think and make decisions.

Check the colour layer. The aim is to develop the biggest possible area of colour which of course gets you the biggest opal wafer and thus also the biggest finished stone. If the colour layer is more or less flat, you're in luck. You can get a good area of colour. If it runs through the stone in a wave or saddle shape, then you have problems. Imagine a colour layer in an "S" shape. You'll have to look carefully and consider which "leg" of the S you'll want to expose to give you the biggest area of colour. If the colour layer is like a "U", do the sides or the bottom present the bigger useable areas? Picture it as a bent ham sandwich. Your challenge is to grind away the bread to expose a maximum area of ham.

Once you've got the maximum extent of colour exposed, the next step is to cement on either the top or the bottom, the top being a wafer of clear quartz, the bottom being dark basalt or black glass. I like to cement on the bottom, the basalt, first, because that way when you continue the hand grinding to remove the excess on the top side of the stone you can watch as the colour layer develops and the colours intensify (or weaken, in which case you grind no further) as you grind closer and closer to the basalt.

Initially I was afraid I'd grind away too much of the colour, so I'd leave the wafer in the middle of my triplets fairly thick. The trouble with that is, with the opal we hobbyists commonly use, the thicker the opal layer is the more of the white base colour stays in the wafer. The result is a triplet in which the opal colours appear as if through a cloudy, milky veil. The thinner the colour layer on the other hand, the more dramatically the colours stand out against the black backing. So, after a bit of experimentation perhaps, don't be afraid to grind the opal down to a very thin layer indeed, in some cases almost as thin as a sheet of paper. Cementing the opal to the black backing first allows you to check the progress of this effect as you work.

Just to recap, the procedure I use is to grind the opal chip on the glass until the maximum area of colour is exposed. That side of the chip is then cemented to the black backing. The backing also should first be ground flat on the glass sheet grinding lap. You don't need to go any finer than 220 grit, and that's still rough enough to give a good gripping surface for the epoxy.

For cementing I use epoxy 330. It dries clear and strong. Prior to applying epoxy the surfaces to be glued should be cleaned with acetone, since finger grease harms the bond. Bubbles are a constant hazard, though, and here I've found

warming the stone, the quartz top and the backing helps make the epoxy thin and runny. I use an old restaurant coffee warmer upon the heating element of which I lay a slab of three quarter inch granite. It takes a while to warm up, but holds heat nicely. A heat lamp works well also. The chip should be lowered with tweezers onto the backing at an angle, and then gradually eased down flat, somewhat like laying a book down slowly on the table. This procedure helps prevent bubbles. It's also easier said than done.

In fact, working with epoxy on an opal chip half the size of a dime is not a lot of fun. No matter how careful you are, the epoxy gets on your fingers, your tools, and the working area. Epoxy covered tweezer tips make manipulating the opal chip a procedure to be accompanied by a background music of curses. Keep a bottle of rubbing alcohol handy to unstick fingers and tools.

The glue doesn't need to be epoxy. Canada Balsam is used, as are stick shellac and even dop wax. You'd think the dop wax would leave a tell-tale colour, but the sticking layer is so thin it's transparent. Each of these adhesives is made to flow by heat. Thus a triplet made in this way is more susceptible to coming apart if the piece of jewelry it ends up in is subjected to undue heat. Also, Canada Balsam and stick shellac are more difficult to come by than epoxy.

Once you get confident you can glue up a number of opal chips on the same backing, and then grind them all down in one go. This saves time but lessens the control you have over each individual stone, since all will be ground to the same thickness.

Assuming you're still working with a single opal chip, once it's ground down to its final thickness the wafer of clear quartz is cemented on top in the same way as described above. Clothespins and bobby pins help hold things in position, gentle heat from a heat

lamp speeds curing. What you have now is a sandwich: black backing on the bottom, the thin layer of opal in the middle, a slice of clear quartz on top.

The finished sandwich is now treated as any normal cabochon would be, shaped, domed and polished. I always go for maximum area of opal, which means that the finished cabochon stones are not necessarily oval, since in order to get that standard oval shape I'd have to sacrifice some of the opal. After all that work putting it together, it seems a shame to grind it off again. Grind the black backing layer as thin as you can, 1/32nd inch is more than sufficient. Otherwise, with too much backing, you get too thick a stone. The stone should be cut with a comparatively low profile. Too high a dome acts as a magnifier and makes the stone look unnatural, and also, looked at from the side, the high dome is transparent. The finished stone is bezel set, with the bezel covering the joint.

The aim is to develop the biggest possible area of Colour... which of course gets you the biggest opal wafer and thus also the biggest finished stone.

The Kitchen-Table Opal Triplet

(Continued from page 7)

And that's all there is to it. The result is a triplet with brilliant colour flash and that is no less "real" than any other stone. However, it's not uncommon for such a stone to be sold to an unsuspecting customer simply as "opal" without any elaboration. That indeed is unethical. A triplet should always be identified as such. ❁

From Lapidary Digest No. 91 12/7/97

(Lapidary Digest editor, Hale Sweeny, offered the following biographical comments on the above triplet article)

The first version of this paper appeared in Eclectic Lapidary last year; Hans Durstling revised and rewrote it expressly for publication here - no graphics! It appears first in this issue as it gives methods for making triplets by hand, and his descriptions provide a foundation to the other papers.

Hans Durstling has been a member of the list since June, almost from the beginning. He has contributed several articles to LapDigest, the most recent one about retensioning saw blades. He is a freelance writer, jewelry maker and stone cutter living in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, near the Bay of Fundy. His stories, reviews and commentaries have appeared in Canadian Geographic Magazine, The European, Toronto Globe & Mail, Canadian Mineralogist, Mineralienwelt, Rock & Gem and many others. He now works primarily in corporate and industrial writing explaining complicated scientific and technical products and processes to layman readers, and writing and narrating corporate and technical videos. A considerable portion of his time is taken up with the constant battle to keep minerals and gems ("the hobby that got out of control") from taking over entirely. ❁



Cutting Challenges / Opal Identification Articles Will Return Next Month

Presuming April is a more sensible month around the word processor both of the above series from the 1997 Opal Symposium will continue next month. My apologies to you the readers, as well as to Joan Skinner and Tim Thomas for the interruption.



Happy Easter



What's Happening?

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Dates and Locations of Shows

Apr 17-18 10AM-6PM Apr **19 10AM-4:30PM** Las Vegas Gem Club, Henderson Convention Center, 200 Water St., **HENDERSON, NV**

Apr 17 12-7PM Apr **18 10AM-7PM** Apr **19 10AM-5PM** Gem Faire, Scottish Rite Temple, 1895 Camino Del Rio South, **SAN DIEGO, CA**

Apr 25-26 9-5PM Antelope Valley & Palmdale Gem & Mineral Society, Challenger Memorial Hall, Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, **LANCASTER, CA**

May 2-3 10AM-5PM Kern County Mineral Society, Kern County Fairgrounds Ming & S St **BAKERSFIELD, CA**

May 2 10AM-6PM **May 3 10AM-5PM** Searchers Gem & Mineral Society, Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 W. Crescent Ave., **ANAHEIM, CA**

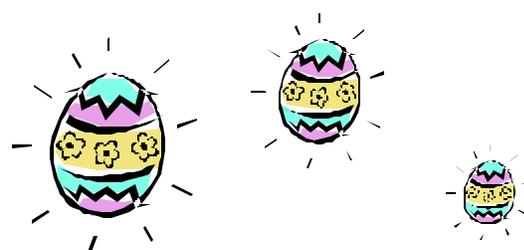
May 15 - 17 West Coast Gem, Min. & Fossil Show, Holiday Inn, Bristol Plaza, 3131 S. Bristol, **COSTA**

May 16 9AM-5PM **May 17 10AM-5PM** Conejo Gem & Mineral Club, Borchard Park Community Center, 190 Reino Rd., **NEWBURY PARK CA**

May 30 10AM-7:30PM **May 31 10AM-4PM** Goddard Middle School, 859 E. Sierra Madre, **GLEN DORA, CA**

May 30-31 Rockatomics, Gem & Mineral Society, 8500 Fallbrook Ave., **WEST HILLS, CA**

June 6 10AM-6PM **June 7 10AM-5PM** San Diego Lapidary Society, Al Bahr Shrine Ctr, 5440 Kearny Mesa Rd, **SAN DIEGO, CA**



Buying Triplet Opal Material

By Darlene Munroe

Buying material for triplets isn't difficult; tell the opal dealer that you want to buy opal for triplets, and tell the dealer the size of triplets you wish to make and the colors you want (mostly red or green/orange). If you do not have a saw, ask for thin material, or ask whether they will slice them for you.

Ask also for backing material. Here in the NW we have a lot of Basenite that cuts easily and, when cut, is quite black. It is found up in the mountains, like Green Mountain up north from here.

I did sell kits with all the material that you needed, all sliced up. Unfortunately, I can't get the quartz caps now, so have stopped making up kits. ❁

Darlene Munroe
dmunroe@sprynet.com

From Lapidary Digest No. 91 12/7/97

~~(and one more item from Lap Digest #91)~~

Gluing Doublets and Triplets

...(the articles in previous issues of Lapidary Digest) about new and different glues are wonderful. I make a lot of opal doublets and triplets and after trying the **uv** glue I will have a hard time going back to epoxy. I glued two microscope slides together and soaked them in water, alcohol, lacquer thinner, and acetone. So far there is no sign of them coming unglued. I love it... ❁

Michael Sielaff
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(Ed. Note: The glue Michael refers to is a Loctite Crystal Clear Glass Adhesive 81190 or CGA -1, sold under the DURO label. hale)

From Lapidary Digest No. 91 12/7/97



The Wind and Waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators.
...Edward Gibbon

Tips On Tumbling

By Jack L. Hill

I once heard a fellow say, "You can't turn a zircon into a diamond no matter how hard you try." This is a perfect slogan for tumbling: a batch of poor quality stones will certainly guarantee you a collection of worthless stones in the end. Perhaps one of the greatest hindrances to quality finished stones is the use of poor material. A few rules regarding the material to use, if followed, will save you time, money, and disappointment.

First: Never put a conglomeration of stones of different hardness in the tumbler. One thing will become apparent almost immediately—the soft ones will grind away. If you don't know the hardness, just use the scratch test. The harder stone will always scratch the softer one.

I have had my best results when I keep agates, jasper, and chert together in my tumbling mix. If possible, I try to use only one kind of material at a time.

Badly fractured or deeply pitted stones will usually still be pitted or fractured after days of Tumbling - - Cull out the ones which obviously will not make a decent finished product

Second: Badly fractured or deeply pitted stones will usually still be pitted or fractured after days of tumbling. Cull out the ones which obviously will not make a decent finished product. Sometimes if I have a stone that looks like it might have potential, I will go to my rough grinding wheel and grind out the pits or fractures. I have saved a lot of good Lake Superior agates using this technique.

Third: Slabbed material makes excellent finished stones. You can break it up or cut to certain shapes on your saw. Sometimes I grind down the edges on pre-formed pieces I plan to tumble.

Fourth: Be safety conscious. Breaking hard material can be extremely dangerous. Always use heavy leather gloves and goggles. I have a small sliver of agate embedded in a bone in my thumb as proof of carelessness. Also be sure that no person is close by when crushing rocks. Some of the slivers can travel a long way. ❁

From T-Town Rockhound 3/95 (honorable mention in 1996 AFMS Adult Article Contest) via newsletter of the Searchers 11/97



Executive Ability is deciding quickly and getting someone else to do the work.
...John G. Pollard