

# The Opal Express

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



Member

Member



Volume #31 Issue #04 April 1999

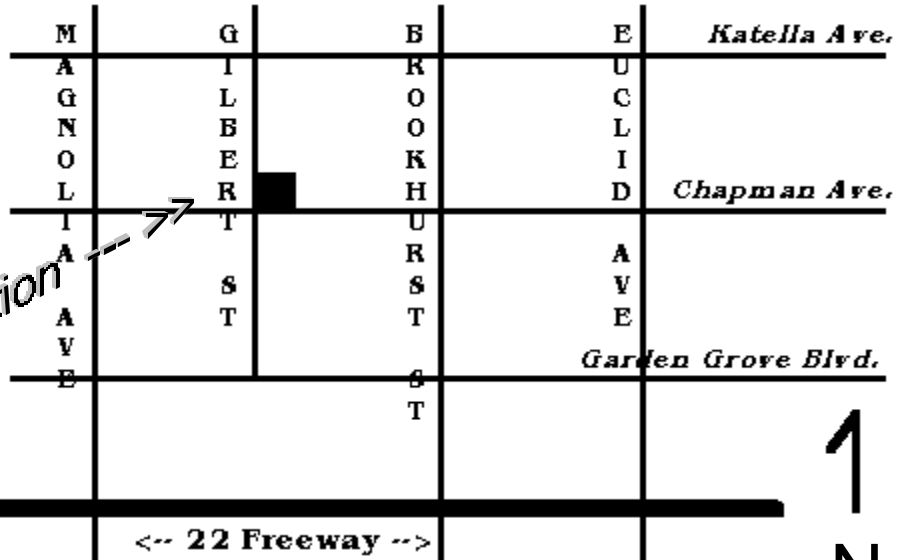


TO:

**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* →



## American Opal Society Officers

<b>Carol Bova</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>(818) 845-8610</b>	<b>email bova@bovagems.com</b>
<b>Mike Kowalsky</b>	<b>Vice Pres.</b>	<b>(714) 761-4876</b>	<b>email mykowalsky@aol.com</b>
<b>Alan Farquer</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>(714) 537-0556</b>	<b>email nnf@earthlink.net</b>
<b>Jim Pisani</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>(562) 948-6374</b>	<b>email vulajim@gte.net</b>
<b>Russ Madsen</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>(562) 425-9788</b>	<b>email 76550.1366@compuserve.com</b>

*"Diamond Jubilee of Gems"*  
**CFMS 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Show & Convention**  
 June 18, 19, 20, 1999

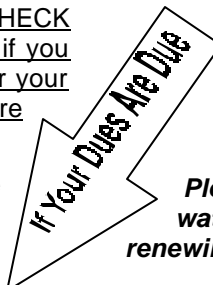
Do you have any plans for the middle of June in 1999? A suggestion and an invitation to the 60th Annual Show and Convention of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies is tendered by the hosts, the Mother Lode Mineral Society.

FOR APPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCED REGISTRATION FORM REGARDING  
 RV CAMPING, ACCOMMODATIONS, MAPS, BANQUET AND EDITORS' BREAKFAST  
 & MEETING: CONTACT YOUR FEDERATION DIRECTOR or  
 Bill Meadows, 308 San Juan Dr., Modesto, CA 95354 (209) 848-2709

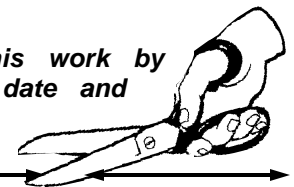
**Are Your Dues Due Now?** PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

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 watching your expiration date and renewing promptly. Thanks!



**DUES RENEWAL FORM**

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



**American Opal Society, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 382  
 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 <small>(addresses in Los Angeles, Orange, &amp; Riverside counties)</small>
2) CALIFORNIA & USA	\$20.00 <small>(all addresses outside local area counties)</small>
3) FOREIGN	\$30.00 <small>(all addresses outside USA)</small>
** \$5 SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or over <deduct \$5.00 from above>	

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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ APT #: or PO BOX: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE U.S.) \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: Home ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ : Business ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

FAX ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate any name or mailing address changes

**NAME BADGE ORDER FORM: (OPTIONAL)**

Number of badges ordered \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\$5.00 EACH - includes engraving)

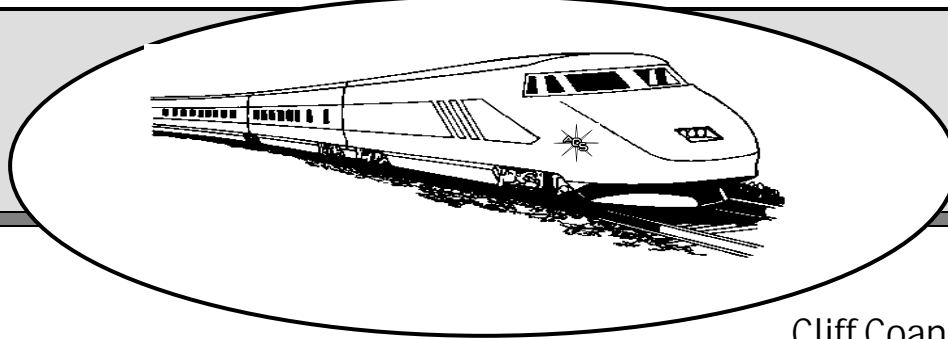
PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname or name of your opal related business.

# The Opal Express

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Published  
monthly  
by the  
American  
Opal  
Society

Volume 31, Issue 4



## APRIL GUEST SPEAKER

Cliff Coan Returns to present Part II

## President's Message from Carol Bova of his talk - REAL WORLD OPAL CUTTING

In like a lion, out like a lamb. Well, March kept its traditional promise! We were facing a roaring problem at the beginning of the month - where to relocate the AOS workshop. At the end of the month, thanks to Wes Roth's persistent efforts, the problem was resolved by the approval of our application for use of the Walker Jr. High School lapidary facility two evenings a week. A few details are still being resolved, but we should have more information ready by our April meeting.

The Stoddard Wells tailgate was a lot of fun, and several members were selling, and a number of local members came up for the event and the field trip. One of the organizers promised it wouldn't rain, and he was right! A big storm split right around us, half going north and half going south, leaving us a lot of wind, but completely dry!

It is amazing the amount of fear opal can inspire in experienced lapidaries. It is up to each of us to share as much information and clear up as much misinformation as we can whenever we attend events like the tailgate. Events like this are great opportunities to share what we know about opal, and encourage membership in the Opal Society and attendance at our November Opal Show.

There is a lot of hand wringing round the country about club memberships declining. Everywhere you go, you hear: "We've got to bring in more 'young' people." Well folks, I don't care how young or how old our members are. Our youngest opal-holic in training, is a pre-teen and I'd be delighted to celebrate some of our more

We look forward to another informative evening Thursday April 8th as Opal cutter Cliff Coan will take us through the nitty gritty of cutting opal. In March Cliff laid the groundwork with a fine discussion of practical background and many particulars any opal-holic needs to account in approaching the Queen of Gems.

We learned for example one of the things that makes a **REAL Opal-holic**. Cliff asked how many in the group had spent a MORTGAGE Payment on opal rough???

Cliff recommended Frank Leechman's *The Opal*

*(Continued on page 3)*



### DATES TO REMEMBER

General Mtg  
Thurs April 8th - 7PM

Directors Mtg  
Mon April 5th - 7PM

AOS  
Opal & Gem Show  
Nov 6th & 7th

senior members passing the century mark one of these years. What I want to see is the continued information sharing, the sense of community and the joy of our shared interest that has brought us to this point.

We had 30 members and guests for the first session of Cliff Coan's two part Opal Cutting program last meeting. (Part 2 continues as our April program.) This was the largest attendance in recent years. In today's complex world, the demands on our time are incredible. Families need time together. Work demands our time in exchange for our paychecks. Fatigue demands its payment in time off from everything. What's left is what we can spend on everything else in our lives whether it's survival, worship, or recreation. I am deeply grateful to the officers and board members and volunteers who give the

*(Continued on page 3)*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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# March/April Guest Speaker Cliff Coan

(Continued from page 2)

Book as an important reference for anyone interested in cutting or learning more about opal.

(NOTE: Members, this book is available in the club library.)

## Questions

Before you begin, a question to ask yourself:

### How Much Opal To Buy

How many opals do you want to cut?

- one for your spouse?
- one for yourself?
- a few for family and friends? Commercial quantities?
- i.e. how far are you going to go with opal cutting?

These questions lead into the subject of buying opal rough, how much to spend, and of course, where to buy?

It is imperative that you have a **reliable source/trusted dealer**. You may pay a little extra compared to shopping for price alone but the value of the relationship may well be worth far more than this price difference.

Cliff noted that as he was learning the lessons above, he got together with a dealer whom he trusted but whom he also figured was overcharging somewhat for rough material. However, this same dealer taught him a great deal about how to cut opal. And in the long run, the relationship was extremely valuable to him.

To get top quality rough and take advantage of quantity prices, Cliff suggested AOS members get together and have 2 – 3 folks go in shares on a parcel.

### Questions regarding opal cutting equipment

What kind of equipment to use depends on a few factors:

- what can you afford?
- do you need it to be available all the time?

(E.g. the AOS club workshop equipment may be all you need but if you are going to cut a lot of opal plan to set up a shop area of your own that is always ready to use.)

- is it good quality equipment?

(this seemed an odd question, but Cliff noted one uses an entirely different technique for cutting white base versus crystal opal and the question really being asked is whether the equipment is good enough to cut crystal!)

(Continued on page 8)



## 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. ✿

# President's Message (cont)

(Continued from page 2)

extra time to make the Opal Society run smoothly. And I'm proud of the membership who makes the commitment to be members and participate each year.

So come out to meetings whenever you can. We are always glad to see you.

We're not keeping score to give you a hard time if you can't come ...

we're counting our blessings when you can!

Wishing each of you a renewing Easter or Passover!

Carol

Carol J. Bova, President



## HUMOR IN MINERALOGY

by Francis Gore

**Almosthadite** - refers to a specimen of which the major portion remains on public display in a remote quarry.

**Cantrememberite** - one of the more common specimens, typically from locations generally unknown in the present time.

**Droppedite** - a collection of cleavage fragments representing a high-quality cabinet specimen formerly on display.

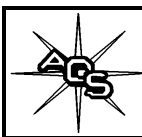
**Nolabelite** - one of a class of minerals or fossils of relatively little value appearing in most private collections.

**Cantquitespellite** - resembles a specimen in the University collection with an even longer and more complex name.

**Oncehadite** - used in reference to extremely unusual specimens traded at rock shows before true identity was realized.

**Usedtohaveite** - a secondary form of specimens including marcasite, best recognized by the permanent brown ring where the specimens formerly sat on the shelf. ✿

(Original source unknown, via Palomar gem 11/98)



**PLEASE NOTE!!!** The American Opal Society assumes no responsibility for injury or damage due to accidents or carelessness. Members and guests assume all risks during club activities.

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 Editor---Russ Madsen  
 Please address all inquiries to:  
 The Opal Express, P.O. Box 382, Anaheim, CA 92815-0382  
 E-mail 76550.1366@compuserve.com  
 (Deadline for items: 15th of the month prior to each issue)

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

#1192 Kirby Davis  
#1193 Murray Willis  
#1194 Peter Carroll



## Membership Roster Changes/Additions

New Listing - Kirby Davis

1833 W. 247th Place, Lomita, CA 90717

(310) 326-0790 Member # 1192

Dues Expire 2000-03

## ITEMIZATION

**ITEM:** (Question) A member asks is it possible to send dues for more than one year?

(Answer) Yes certainly. Please feel free to do so. Paying in advance will secure your membership for the number of years you choose at the present dues rate.

**ITEM: BOOK REVIEW** (by Carol Bova)

**The World of Opals** by Allan W. Eckert  
Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997  
ISBN 0-471-13397-3

*The World of Opals* is a fascinating and surprising book. It offers a history of the many theories and scientific facts about opal formation, play of color, and stability, and weaves a number of personal stories and anecdotes throughout the book as well. The opening sentence of the Foreword was so lyrically romantic, I expected only a rhapsody in praise of opal. Eckert's love and appreciation of opal is obvious, but it is accompanied by plain-spoken, directly factual accounts of opal discoveries and mining, and straight-forward reviews of scientific studies of opal.

Anecdotes woven throughout the book also show Eckert's respect and admiration of several well known opal celebrities and add insight and information in a very personal context. The candid interview with Len Cram about his opal growing experiments and experience was like peek-

ing over their shoulders as they spoke. Eckert attempts to acknowledge as many notable individuals as possible throughout his historical reviews.

The black and white photos are very well done and illustrate the appearance and conditions they are intended to. The color plates in the center of the book are excellent, but leave you wanting more.

The compendium of opal occurrences world-wide provides an amazing amount of information for a book of this size. There are also twenty-four pages of names and brief descriptions for types of opal, and a listing of some of the world's most famous opals.

Overall, this is a great addition to any opal-lover's bookshelf!

**ITEM: Wildacres Workshop – A Special EFMS Invitation**

Over the years we have received numerous requests from members outside the Eastern Federation to attend one of the popular Eastern Federation sponsored workshops at Wildacres. After much consideration, the Federation has decided to extend a formal invitation to all members of clubs belonging to other Federations to join us.

Wildacres, as many of you know, is a non-profit retreat dedicated to furthering human relations. The Wildacres campus features two residence lodges with motel style private rooms, numerous craft shops, meeting rooms, an auditorium, library and dining room. It is a place of solitude and majestic views set in the mountains of North Carolina about 40 miles from Asheville. The Eastern Federation has been privileged to use the retreat facilities for the past 26 years.

The proposed list of educational classes for the 1999 workshop sessions include:

S = spring session F = fall session

**Four day classes** - applicants take only one class the entire session if one of these is selected:

Faceting	S	F
Certified Judging	S	F
Micromounting/		

(Continued on page 9)



### Advertisement

GREAT DEALS ON ROUGH AUSTRALIAN OPAL AND CUT STONES. Great value rough opal, very stable, all price ranges. White base to multicolor crystal. Rough stones have not been picked over. Stable cut stones from all fields, all price ranges, all grades. Dealers, jewelers, hobbyists all welcome. (818) 785-7394 or write to:  
LAND OF WONDER, Eric Scott, P.O. Box 261142, Encino, CA 91426-1142

**HELP WANTED**  
**PLEASE READ – YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU**

The positions listed below are presently open and we are seeking volunteers to fill them. Please see what you can do for your club!

**1) PROGRAM CHAIR**

-this position involves making contact with and scheduling guest speakers and preparing a short article for the newsletter describing upcoming events.

**2 MEMBERSHIP BADGE COORDINATOR**

-this position involves taking blank badges to the engraver and mailing finished badges when ready.

**3) REFRESHMENTS CHAIR**

-arrange for or bring refreshments to monthly meetings. Costs are reimbursed by the club.

**4) DOOR PRIZE CHAIR**

-this is a new position and will involve arranging for door prizes donated by members which may be raffled or given away to those in attendance at monthly meetings.

**5) WOODWORKER / CARPENTER**

-this position will involve construction of new show cases for club opal displays to be shown at a variety of locations primarily other club shows.

**6) Safety Chair**

-this position involves preparing a short newsletter article regarding safe practices as a club member during workshop activities, field trips, club meetings etc.

**7) Historian**

-this position involves bringing the club history written by John Hall up to the present

**PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE, if you are skilled in any of the above we NEED your help. If you are not skilled and have a big heart – volunteer anyway, we'll figure something out! A number of people have been doing significantly more than their fair share of the work to the benefit of all members of the club. Let's see if we can even that burden out a bit.**

**TO VOLUNTEER: Please contact any board member at meetings or by phone, or email. ☼**

## Workshop schedule

**Please be aware, workshop arrangements are undergoing change. We will be moving out of the existing shop and preparations are underway to get set up in the new shop. If you plan to attend a shop session please continue to contact Stan McCall by calling him at Lapidary Intl./Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680.**

### April 1999

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

= Available Workshop dates       = General Meeting date

## WORKSHOP 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:
  - Dates tentatively to be Monday and Wed. at the new location (details were not available at the time this issue was going to print)
- 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.

***For your enjoyment -- an intercepted letter which seemed worthy of distribution -- purported to be genuine. Satire at its finest.***

Smithsonian Institute  
207 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20078

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for your latest submission to the institute, labeled "932d11-D, layer seven, next to the clothes-line post...Hominid skull." We have given this specimen a careful and detailed examination, and regret to inform you that we disagree with your theory that it represents conclusive proof of the presence of Early Man in Charleston County two million years ago.

Rather, it appears that what you have found is the head of a Barbie doll, of the variety that one of our staff, who has small children, believes to be "Malibu Barbie." It is evident that you have given a great deal of thought to the analysis of this specimen, and you may be quite certain that those of us who are familiar with your prior work in the field were loathe to come to contradiction with your findings. However, we do feel that there are a number of physical attributes of the specimen which might have tipped you off to its modern origin:

1. The material is molded plastic. Ancient hominid remains are typically fossilized bone..
2. The cranial capacity of the specimen is approximately 9 cubic centimeters, well below the threshold of even the earliest identified proto-homonids..
3. The dentition pattern evident on the skull is more consistent with the common domesticated dog than it is with the ravenous man-eating Pliocene clams you speculate roamed the wetlands during that time..

This latter finding is certainly one of the most intriguing hypotheses you have submitted in your history with this institution, but the evidence seems to weigh rather heavily against it. Without going into too much detail, let us say that:

- A. The specimen looks like the head of a Barbie doll that a dog has chewed on.
- B. Clams don't have teeth.

It is with feeling tinged with melancholy that we must deny your request to have the specimen carbon-dated. This is partially due to the heavy load our lab must bear in its normal operation, and partly due to carbon dating's notorious inaccuracy in fossils of recent geologic record.

To the best of our knowledge, no Barbie dolls were produced prior to 1956AD, and carbon-dating is likely to produce wildly inaccurate results. Sadly, we must also deny your request that we approach the National Science Foundation Phylogeny Department with the concept of assigning your specimen the scientific name *Australopithecus spiff-arino*. Speaking personally, I, for one, fought tenaciously for the acceptance of your proposed taxonomy, but was ultimately voted down because the species name you selected was hyphenated, and didn't really sound like it might be Latin. However, we gladly accept your generous donation of this fascinating specimen to the museum. While it is undoubtedly not a Hominid fossil, it is, nonetheless, yet another riveting example of the great body of work you seem to accumulate here so effortlessly. You should know that our Director has reserved a special shelf in his own office for the display of the specimens you have previously submitted to the Institution, and the entire staff speculates daily on what you will happen upon next in your digs at the site you have discovered in your Newport back yard.

We eagerly anticipate your trip to our nation's capital that you proposed in our last letter, and several of us are pressing the Director to pay for it. We are particularly interested in hearing you expand on your theories surrounding the transposing fillification of ferrous metal in a structural matrix that makes the excellent juvenile *Tyrannosaurus rex* femur you recently discovered take on the deceptive appearance of a rusty 9-mm Sears Craftsman automotive crescent wrench.

Yours in Science,  
Harvey Rowe  
Chief Curator-Antiquities

(From Newsletter of the Gem Carvers Guild of America 6/98)

# Letters To The Editor

A friend sent e-mail recently and wrote in part...

## Bikes and Opals

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 12:56:54 -0600

We went to the Field Museum yesterday and caught the Art of the Motorcycle exhibit...

After we finished we wandered into the gem room and saw the opals on exhibit. Just unbelievable. There were a couple of big flat black opals, and some orange-red ones that I think they labeled as fire opals.

Stunning. We thought of you, so, hi!

Phil (via the internet)



## A New Member writes...

When giving a talk on "Healing Herbs and Gemstones" for the Long Beach Mineral and Gem Society I expressed an interest in opals (birthday October 12) and some friends were kind enough to give me a copy of your newsletter.

Since I have retired I have more time to spare and can indulge in a long wished for connection with opals. Please accept my request for membership and an opportunity to learn more. Check enclosed.

I would be pleased to give your organization my talk on the ancient uses of gemstones and herbs for healing along with a display of jewelry I have made.

Sincerely

(Mrs. R. V.) Kirby Davis



## GEM CARVING AND POLISHING CLASS FORMING

As a follow up to her successful opal carving class held a few weeks ago, Harriette Breitman (see ad on the right) is offering another carving class for Opal Society members. This will be a one day session covering more advanced techniques and particularly information about polishing once a carving is developed.

**The session will be from 10 AM to 4 PM, with date to be determined as folks enroll. To sign up, call Harriette at (310) 204-3513.**

Price will be \$35 per person, a substantial discount available for AOS members only. ✿

## MUSEUM INFO

(The next item details an exhibit at the Los Angeles Natural History Museum and may prove helpful or informative to our AOS committee working on an Opal presentation for the supporters of this museum)

### Dinosaur Exhibit

There is an exhibit of 120 Russian dinosaur and other pre-historic fossils on display at the LA County Natural History Museum through May 2. This is one of the largest dinosaur exhibitions ever sent on world tour. The fossils were found in Mongolia, Kazakhstan and on the Russian plain west of the Ural Mountains.

The fossils date from the Carboniferous Period, about 300 million years ago, to the Late Cretaceous. They include eggs, a hatchling, and an adult *Protoceratops andrewsi*, as well as *Psittacosaurus mongoliensis*, thought to be the ancestor of the horned triceratops, and the tiger-sized and saber-toothed *Inostrancevia alexandri*.

Proceeds from the exhibit will help support Moscow's Paleontological Institute and Museum, one of the largest of the world's museums specializing in fossils. ✿

(From *The Agatizer* 2/99 via the nugget 3/99)



## Advertisement

### Carvings by Harriette

Harriette Breitman

One of a Kind Fine Jewelry

Designer of Wearable Art

Available for commissioned design and fabrication of custom "One of a Kind" jewelry and sculpture. People, animals or crests can be carved directly from photos in a wide variety of gem materials.

I began my career in 1973 and am a graduate gemologist and designing jeweler working in gold, sterling, fine silver and precious gems.

I am a lecturer on carving and sculpture techniques and teach the fundamentals of gem carving at one-day workshops or in private lessons.

**To reach me please call (310) 204-3513**

**Individual or Group Instruction  
On Sculpting and Carving Techniques**

**Learn How to Turn a Stone into  
A Unique Work of Art**



## March/April Guest Speaker Cliff Coan

(Continued from page 3)

Cliff offered some general advice regarding opal cutting. Have someone look at and critique your cutting results. Be prepared to ask questions.

### Is Opal Fragile?

What about opal being fragile? Cliff assured the group that a properly cut and polished opal, when properly set, can last a lifetime. Cliff described a properly cut opal as having a flat back which can be evenly supported by a matching flat setting.

Discussing the nature and source of opal's color play, Cliff recalled that in 1963 the electron microscope was perfected and opal's microscopic silica spheres were discovered. It was found that only opal with evenly packed spheres of same size produced color play. Also, smaller spheres are not as bright as larger spheres. In potch opal the spheres are arranged haphazardly and vary in size considerably. Thus they produce no refraction of light, no color play.

**About cutting** Cliff also offered that the layer of color must be thick enough to cut DOWN INTO it slightly to achieve best results.

Of all opal mined in the world, only 5% has any color play. Of THAT five percent, 95% is NOT precious opal. Only 5% of 5% is precious or gem quality material. The rest, if it has any color play is "potch & color", not precious. Cliff handed around examples of the gradations of this type of material. Cliff noted that if you are cutting inexpensive rough, expect frustration and poor results!

### **RULE: Always Cut For Quality**

Think of this whenever a stone has a problem. Example: it may be possible to cut one big stone with a little potch or cut out the potch and cut two smaller stones. Generally it is better to cut the smaller stones.

Cliff cut opals for the production jewelry industry for 7 years. This required cutting calibrated opals and there's lots of pressure from the manufacturers for perfectly calibrated stones. It is well known that everyone buys jewelry based on appeal, hardly any buyers check quality of workmanship. Therefore, stones that can be quickly set in calibrated findings are a must. Unfortunately the pressure for quantity sometimes forces poor cutting results and a poorly cut or hastily/poorly set opal may crack later.

Defects which can lead to cracking include (1) an opal/setting that are not evenly matched/flat; (2) prongs that are not filed flat on the side facing the stone; or (3) a bottom edge of the opal that has not been beveled.

### **Orientation**

Usually a stone will tell you which side is the top. Occasionally problems such as shape of the rough, internal inclusions, etc dictate another orientation.

Let the rough talk to you! HAVE A LOT OF PATIENCE!!!

If in doubt, set it aside a while and wait.

**Regarding dopping:** Cliff asserted he has never had an opal come off the dop. Don't lean into the wheel like you are cutting agate. Develop an "OPAL" touch.

### **Why is opal stored in water?**

As a buyer ALWAYS ask to see the opal parcel dry! Opal is stored in water because its appearance wet most closely resembles what it will look like polished. Be aware that water, and even more so glycerin, hides cracks.

### **On Cracks versus crazing**

Opal can take a lot of heat IF heated gradually. Cliff notes that this observation applies only to Australian opal adding that most Mexican opal is heat sensitive. When dopping start with a warm stone. This will produce a good strong bond which when combined with the opal cutter's touch as described previously will produce success in cutting opal that will have very little tendency to craze later.

90% of all opals are cut as calibrated ovals. Round stones bring problems because even a small error in roundness shows up dramatically when such a stone is set.

### **On Stabilizing Virgin Valley Opal**

Begin by soaking a stack of newspaper about 12 inches thick. Slip opal pieces between the pages. Mark the date and wait one full year and opal will be stabilized from drying very slowly.

### **On Laps, Grits and Diamond**

Crystal opal is more brittle, therefore flakes more easily. It needs a 320 lap for working it. Cliff suggests starting with white base material as it is more hardy and 180 grit can be used. Be sure to break in all diamond wheels with agate to knock off uneven edges of the diamonds. Finally Cliff noted an interesting anomaly. A course wheel (say 180 grit) may cut slower because the 320 grit diamond particles are "sharper".

**DON'T MISS APRIL'S MEETING WHEN CLIFF COAN WILL CONCLUDE HIS PRESENTATION OF REAL WORLD OPAL CUTTING TECHNIQUES. ✨**

Of all opal mined in the world, only 5% has any color play. Of THAT five percent, 95% is NOT precious opal.

We confide in our strength, without boasting of it;  
we respect that of others, without fearing it.

-Thomas Jeffer-

## HOW TO SHAPE AND POLISH OPALS WITHOUT MACHINERY

Opal is a hydrated silica with varying amounts of moisture. its hardness varies from 5.5 to 6.5. This method of cutting and polishing opal practically eliminates fracturing from heat. There are four basic steps in shaping and polishing:

1. Sanding off the matrix on both sides to locate the best fire.
2. Rough shaping the stone.
3. Sanding and prepolishing, which results in the final shaping and size.
4. Final polishing the gemstone.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. A carborundum stone, double grit (sold by most hardwares).
2. Wet or Dry sandpaper. 400 and 600 grit.
3. A piece of inner tube, 6" square (from a tire).
4. Two pieces of corduroy or velvet material, 6" square .
5. Polishing agent, Tripoli or Tin Oxide.
6. Aluminum pie pan.
7. Dop stick and household glue or cement.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Place carborundum stone on the inner tube in the pan, coarse side up. Pour water on the stone until some stands on top. Always work opal on a very wet stone. With a circular motion, grind off matrix on both sides to reveal the best fire. Mark size of desired stone on the back of the opal and grind down to size. When size has been obtained, wash opal, carborundum stone, inner tube and pan. **DO THIS BETWEEN EACH PROCESS.**

Now the opal is ready to be dopped. Use a cold dop of household cement. Coat the end of the dopstick. Also coat the back of the opal. Let it set a minute, then press together. Stand in modeling clay or other support to dry, about eight hours.

When the opal is set on the dopstick, use the coarse side of the carborundum stone to shape the opal. Wash all equipment. Then, this time, using the fine side of the stone, sand out all the scratches, wash and proceed. Go through this process frst using the 400, then the 600 sanding paper. The opal should have a prepoly on it.

For the final polish, use the same process with the tin oxide. A little Linde A may be added to the tin oxide if you wish. To remove the stone when finished, soak overnight in water and the stone will come loose. Good luck and may you have a beautiful stone.

Malachite, Turquoise, Chrysocola, as well as many other stones under 6.5 hardness may be polished with this method. ✿

*From Petrograph and others via Gem Carver's Guild of America 3/99*

## Wildacres Invite (cont)

microphotography	S	F
Gem ID	S	
Channel Work	S	silver soldering experience needed

**Two day classes** - applicants take two classes if these are selected:

Silversmithing	S	F
Cabochon making	S	F
Wirecraft jewelry	S	F
Soapstone carving	S	F
Gem Trees	S	F
Intro to Crystallography	S	F
Basic Jewel. Repair	F	requires soldering experience
Basic Fossil collecting	F	
Beading	F	

In addition to the educational classes each session will feature a guest speaker, an auction, a "fun night", tail gate session, and a free day set aside to explore the picturesque surrounding the Wildacres Retreat.

### Dates and guest speakers for the EFMS Wildacres Workshops are as follows:

#### SPRING (S)

Session 1 - May 24 - 30. Speaker is Jay Linger, publisher of Matrix Magazine

#### FALL (F)

Session 2 - September 7 - 13. Speaker is Nancy Koski, an expert on Herkimer "Diamonds".

The cost for each session is \$250 per person which includes room and board for the week. There is an additional modest charge for materials for the classes you take.

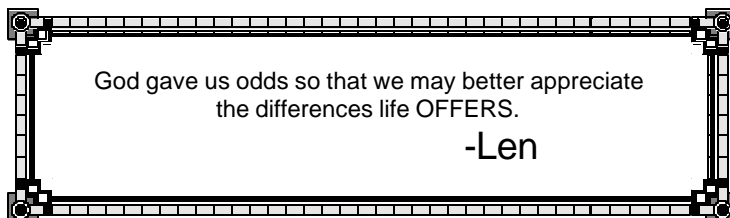
For those interested in attending, major airlines serve Asheville, NC and Hickory, NC (both about 60 minutes driving distance) and Charlotte, NC (about 2 hours drive). ✿

### Want more information?

Contact Jennie Smith, 4400 San Carlos Drive; Fairfax, VA 22030-5369  
e-mail: <JPMicros@aol.com>

or Carolyn Weinberger, PO Box 302; Glyndon, MD 21071-0302 e-mail<cweinber@bcpl.net>

This method  
of cutting and  
polishing  
opal  
practically  
eliminates  
fracturing  
from  
heat



God gave us odds so that we may better appreciate  
the differences life OFFERS.

-Len