

The Opal Express

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



Member

Member



Volume #31 Issue #09 September 1999

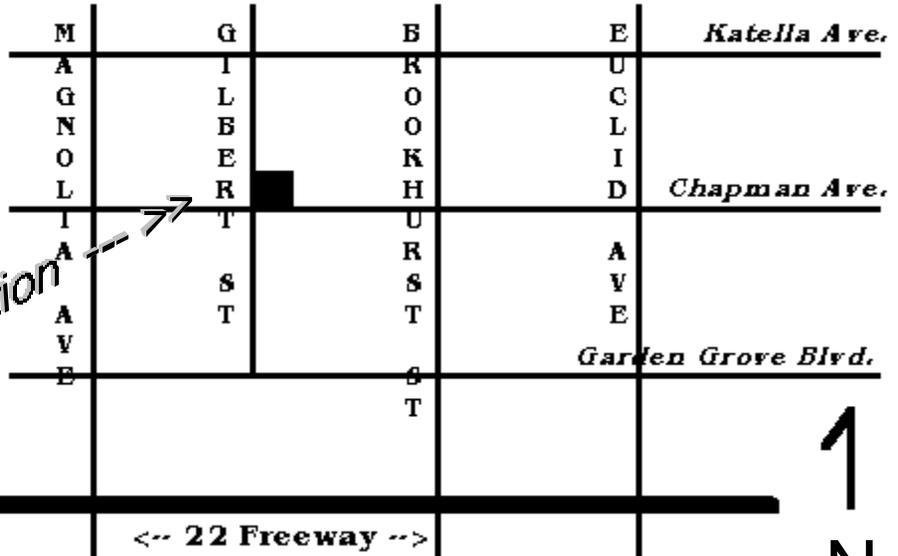


TO:

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

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Remember When?

A Look Into Past Newsletter Items

The following item penned by editor Vic Mayo appeared in the February 1973 AOS Newsletter

(Dateline Feb 2, 1973) The attendance at the January Meeting established something of a record. We do not maintain official records of meeting attendance, but an informal nose-count is usually made to determine whether a trend or pattern can be discerned in the type of programs possibly having the greatest general interest and serving to bring out the crowds. The attendance at this meeting was forty-eight members and twelve guests.

I believe the prior record was set the evening of Don Hudson's presentation of "Where the Color Comes From," but I must sheepishly confess I was so anxious to hear the presentation that I forgot to count noses. The estimate of the attendance at that meeting was based strictly on the fact that I had to sit so far from the speaker because of the crowd.

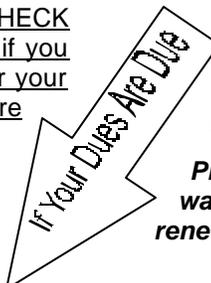
The January meeting opened with an introduction of the guests and a welcoming talk by President Elmer Reed, and a brief address by Executive Secretary Bill Judd. Elmer Reed then introduced the evening's program, which was a presentation of two slide and tape shows put together by Elmer Reed and Ross Stambler during the past year, and narrated by Ross. The first one was "Dopping of Opal" and the second was "Basic Handling of Opal," showing techniques and equipment used. The "Dopping of Opal" created a lively discussion during the question and answer period.

It also made me realize that there appears to be a gap in my development as a neophyte opal cutter. My first feeble attempts were made with wooden dowels of various diameters, and how I suffered on seeing some good opal shattered during the dopping process! After I learned to dop opal "properly" with wooden dowels, I was horrified to learn there was a metal nail technique which would have saved some pretty good opal

(Continued on page 7)

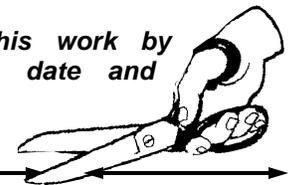
Are Your Dues Due Now? PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

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\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 (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 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)

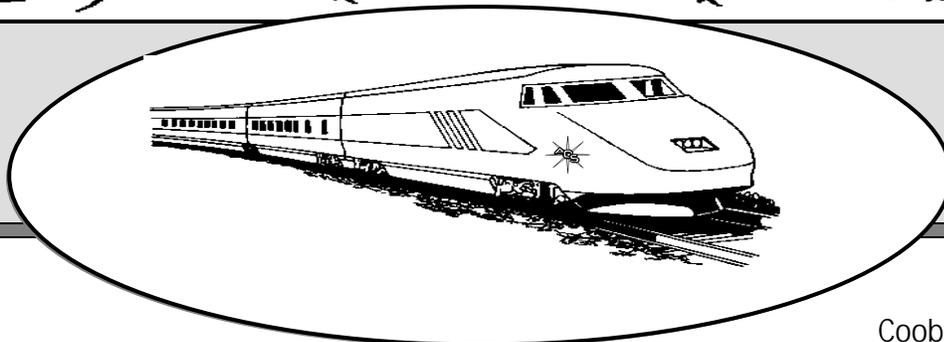
PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname or name of your opal related business.

The Opal Express

SEPTEMBER 1999

Published monthly by the American Opal Society

Volume 31, Issue 9



September General Meeting
Coober Pedy Video from Murray Willis

President's Message from Carol Bova

Short and Sweet

Come to the September meeting!

Bring donations for door prizes for our show in November!

Bring your newest opal to show and tell!

Plan to talk about the December Holiday Pot Luck!

Sign up for your special assignment to make the AOS Opal & Gem Show a success!

See you there!

Carol

PS – BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Please note the regular Monday Director's Meeting falls on Labor Day. You will be contacted by email and/or phone with alternate scheduling arrangements.

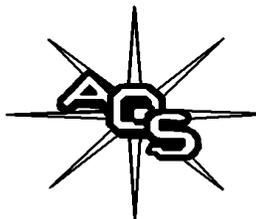
For our **September general meeting** we are looking forward to a video treat. We have received a tape from Coober Pedy sent by Murray Willis. This video covers recent activity and developments in the area.

Come to the meeting and see what's happening these days in Coober Pedy!

General Meeting: **Thursday Sept 9th 7:00 PM**

Coming up October 14th— Claire Gagnon will present a talk and slides on his trip to Brazil at the general meeting in October.

Mark your calendars!



Work Shop Information...

The NEW LOCATION for the Opal Society workshop is now available! It is the lapidary classroom at Walker Jr High School, 8132 Walker St., La Palma, CA 90623

Directions: (Choice of 3 Freeway approaches)

- [1] Exit the 605 at Carson St and proceed east, or
- [2] exit the 5 or 91 Fwy at Valley View and proceed south, or
- [3] exit the 22/405 Freeways at Valley View and proceed north.

Walker Jr HS is on Walker St north of Lincoln Ave. It is on the east side of Walker between Crescent Ave. and La Palma Ave. Drive to the far back of the school to the Lapidary Arts classroom.

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. ☼

DATES TO REMEMBER

General Mtg.
Thurs Sept 9th
7PM

Director's Mtg.
(to be scheduled)

Opal & Gem Show
Nov 6th & 7th

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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“How would you like to try digging at my claim? I have just blasted and the digging should be good.”

The elevation at Joe's cabin is about 4300 ft. The elevation where the opal was formed is about 5000 ft. The opal in this mine formed in a manner altogether different from the opal at the Nowak mine (Kern County, California). First of all, opal is composed of silica and water. To have any opal formation take place, you have to have hot or warm water to dissolve the silica. Since the opal that we are mining is in volcanic lava, there was a lot of volcanic activity here many years ago. This is the basis for all opal. At the Nowak mine, the solution percolated through the entire rock then deposited opal in the gas pockets or vugs that were in the rock. The opal at Joe's place was formed not from a solution filtering all through the rock; it formed only where you had seams or cracks in the rocks.

A geologist came up to the mine one day and pointed out a dike to me. At the time, a dike to me was over in Holland where the little boy stuck his finger in it and saved all of Holland. I think that's the way the story goes. Don't hold me to that. As the geologist pointed out things to me, he explained how the dike worked. Directly above the opal deposits that are now enclosed in solid volcanic rock, are sheets of volcanic lava that extend deep down into the earth. The hot water was forced up through these sheets of lava because it was the only way that the water could get to the surface. The volcanic flow below it is solid lava. Wow, I thought to myself, this guy is no dummy. By the way, he was there representing the BLM to see if we had opal and that we were actively mining it. I know I am getting a little ahead of myself, but let me finish the story so I can tell how the opal is mined.

On that particular day we were blasting up on top of the hill. We had just lit the fuse and there was our good and faithful servant, the BLM ranger, starting to drive up the hill.

Joe saw him and yelled "Fire In The Hole." Well Joe had one of these real deep and loud voices that I think the good people could hear in Gerlach on a clear day.

The BLM "good and faithful servant" heard Joe and stopped in his tracks. Wrong thing to do. He was about one third of the way up the hill and right in the middle of the blast zone.

Again foghorn Joe let out a yell, "Get that piece of #%^* out of here before you get smashed to smithereens."

The ranger slammed the car into reverse and a backwards semi-rooster tail appeared from his wheels. After the explosion we all got to talking and he said that they were going to make this into a wilderness area and that this mine would be excluded because he could see that we were actively working it. You can see by my writings so far that one event will bring up several stories to tell. Now I will get back to the story about the opal.

The seams in the rock have closed up and have become airtight. The rock at Joe's is about four times harder than the rock at Nowak. The only way to break it was to find one of these seams and then use a hammer and a chisel to do the job. To mine the opal, we cut the handles off the sledge hammers to about one and a half feet. We used 6-8-10-12-all the way up to 16 lb. sledges. It was hard work.

At the time I first started to mine at the Black Rock, I was 41 and in the best shape of my life. I could swing these hammers 8 hours a day. So now you have an idea of what I did and how the opal was formed. Time to get back to the first part of the three parts that I got involved in.

Joe had given me a crash course on how to mine the opal. I spent the rest of the day mining there and had uncovered quite a few nice opals. I said good-bye to Joe and thanked him for the opportunity to dig at his place. The next morning I had quite a surprise – Marv had talked my brother into driving up to Ray's place with him. That day I showed them all the nice stones that I had gotten at Joe's place. This kind of made them a little bit excited about digging there.

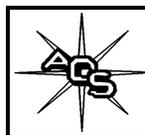
We spent another week digging at Ray's and Joe's. My brother Mike and I also made arrangements to come back to Joe's place the following summer because that's where the best opal was. This was the start of a friendship that would last for four more years. Before we left, Joe told us that we needed high explosives to mine the opal. Nowadays people know about "nitrate fertilizer" or "Prell" as it is called from the Oklahoma bombing. That would be what we would use along with dynamite and blasting caps to set it off.

This proved to be the beginning of some of the great fun times in my life. Before we left we made an agreement with Joe to send him money for the explosives each year before we came out so that everything would be ready when we arrived. We would mine there a full month each year until the last year when we were there for a month and a half. As I look back at these special times in my life, I am thankful that I was blessed to be able to experience being with wonderful people in such a unique place as "The Black Rock Desert."

Back in Santa Monica I realized that I needed to document the mining. Cameras were O.K. but I wanted to get moving pictures of the mining. They had the old 16 millimeter cameras but I didn't care for them. Don't forget, this was 1980. Video cameras had just come out and they were really expensive. At the time I had checked the ads and the asking price was \$2,300 for a new video camera. That was a lot of money in 1980. In fact it is a lot of money right now. It was probably equivalent to \$4,000 today.

Somehow the Lord blessed me and I was able to save about \$1,300. I found an ad in the paper and was able to buy a year-old camera that cost \$2,300 for \$1,300, just what I had saved

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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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E-mail 76550.1366@compuserve.com
(Deadline for items: 15th of the month prior to each issue)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Timothy LuCarelli



Membership Roster Changes/Additions

New Listing - Timothy LuCarelli 3850 Knight Street Glenville, IL 60025 (847) 724-9206

Dues Expire 99-08

ITEMIZATION

ITEM: Sad News – The Opal Society sincerely regrets member **Harriette Breitman's** untimely passing.

Harriette was a well known member of the AOS. Recognized for her beautiful opal carvings and finely crafted jewelry, she was a graduate GIA gemologist, presented a symposium talk on Opal Carving at the 1998 Opal Show, held opal carving classes, and her article on carving techniques appeared earlier this year in Rock & Gem magazine.

Please also see page 9 – God Speed Harriette

ITEM: Safety Chairperson – East coast AOS member **Cathy Gaber** has kindly volunteered to take the position of Safety Chair. Thank you very much Cathy for the current article about solar exposure. We look forward to future items on safety while rockhounding and working with opal.

ITEM: Club Volunteers – While we're on the subject, **volunteers** are still needed for several club positions folks. Please check the listing on page 6. Perhaps you have a talent or ability that can help out.

ITEM: Workshop – **Stan McCall** reports the workshop is now fully operational. He is opening it regularly on Wednesday nights, and arrangements are in line for Mondays as well. Regular hours are 7PM to 10PM, on either night. Please continue to call Stan for reservations as described on Page 5 of the newsletter.

ITEM: Opal & Gem Show – the date of the show is drawing nearer. Folks, we need plenty of help...please contact **Wes Roth** to sign up for the various chores and services club members provide during the weekend of show. Let's all get together and make this another great American Opal Society **OPAL Happening!**

If you have any opal-related items including rough or finished stones, jewelry, books or ??? that you can donate for **Opal Show door prizes** please come forward. In the past we have had some very nice prizes. Please help make this drawing another good one!

Mike Kowalsky notes the negotiated room rate this year for Opal Show guests at the Quality Hotel is \$69. For this rate, be sure to make your reservations through Reservations Manager Caroline Bice at 714-750-3131.

ITEM: Rock & Gem (October 1999) – Opal Issue. Several very good articles on opal appear in the October issue of **R&G**. In fact it's an opal bonanza from cover to cover. In the kick-off article on page 12, a **7 TON boulder opal** from Andamooka is described. Note that our own **Mike Kowalsky** took the photo of this giant mass of opal – it must be huge, the picture alone nearly fills two pages (smile). This is also the first of two articles by **Barbara McCondra**.

Next, a fascinating article about opal stabilization and crack repair details the experiments and successes of AOS member **David Lippman**. David's process is described by Bob Jones as including soaking and impregnating porous or cracked opal with resins under a vacuum; the resins are subsequently hardened with heat. Years of study show these stones are holding up to the test of time. In addition David sometimes darkens the base color of the stones, principally with silver nitrate, before stabilizing them.

Louisiana opal from the Hidden Fire Opal Mine is the subject of the next article. This material takes a good polish and can be quite nice as shown by the stones depicted although I must say the pieces I have seen personally looked too "sandy" and were quite gray. Finished stones are known for hardness sometimes reaching 7 on the Mohs scale because sedimentary quartzite sand is a major constituent.

Unfortunately the mine has been closed permanently due to difficulties complying with various mining regulations plus the opal deposit occurs on Boise Cascade land and the company has declined to permit entrance for rockhounding.

A fine article by **Tony Dabdoub** discusses buying opal rough. Tony writes in part, "To put things into their proper perspective, let's just say that opal cutting takes five minutes to learn and a lifetime to master." This directly relates to selection of rough because the first thing one needs to do before learning to select good rough is have some idea how to cut opal. Tony suggests that beginners step right in and start doing some cutting.

(Continued on page 5)



OPAL
SHOW
DOOR
PRIZES
NEEDED

- Do you have any opal-related items including rough or finished stones, jewelry, books or ??? that you can donate?

ITEMIZATION (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

He then goes on to offer many good suggestions and hints about what to look for in rough: [1] always buy it dry to look for cracks and other imperfections, [2] consider the finished shape you intend to achieve and try to assure the rough will yield that stone, [3] look for a consistent band of color around the stone, [4] brighter color play is always desirable (and more expensive) Tony includes several excellent hints and tips about predicting fire pattern from the appearance of rough.

Opal deposits and free digging sites in Nevada are detailed in an article by James E. Mulkey. Here it is noted that the mines are open through the summer months, both in the **Virgin Valley** and the **Black Rock Desert**.

In a second article, Barbara McCondra shares the tale of her adventure searching for opal at the **Mintabie fields** and relates something of how the opal is located at the mines and later fossilized on the "push heaps" created by dozers moving overburden. It is interesting to note that in Mintabie the rejected overburden is open to anyone who wants to try their luck. Furthermore, some of the opal here fluoresces and can be located in the dark by blacklight.

ITEM: Lapidary Journal (August 1999) - Cutting Mexican Jelly Opal by Noel Rowe is the subject of a fine article which covers selecting rough, orienting, dopping (avoid heat), cutting (running the wheel is described) and polishing. Look for this issue in the AOS library.

ITEM: Upcoming General Meeting topics – September 9th video from Coober Pedy provided by Murray Willis of Australian Opal Mines. October 14th, slide show and talk about Brazil presented by Claire Gagnon.

ITEM: Christmas Party – December meeting will be our annual Christmas party and potluck. Plans are just beginning but as of this writing, the party will be on our regular December meeting date, Thursday, Dec 9th.

ITEM: OPAL & GEM SHOW COMING SOON! – Our annual show November 6th & 7th is fast approaching. Make plans now to attend!

ITEM: AOS Presentation to LA Gem & Mineral Council – Plans are going forward and late October is the expected date of a special presentation to be given about opal to the Los Angeles Gem & Mineral Council. Opal experts from the Opal Society are looking forward to sharing their expertise at this meeting.

ITEM: Wise Words – "Remember that the desert is not the world's back yard...it's our front yard. Do your citizen's best and keep our deserts clean." (Michael Peterson - Rockhound Notes – editorial information 8/99)

Workshop schedule

Be sure to check here for workshop schedule updates. The dates listed below are those available to the AOS in our **NEW WORKSHOP AT WALKER Jr HIGH SCHOOL**. The shop can be opened to members on Monday and Wednesday nights. **Please continue to contact Stan McCall by calling him at Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session.**

September 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 fees: effective immediately...
SHOP USAGE FEE IS \$3 PER SESSION.
- 5) 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.

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.

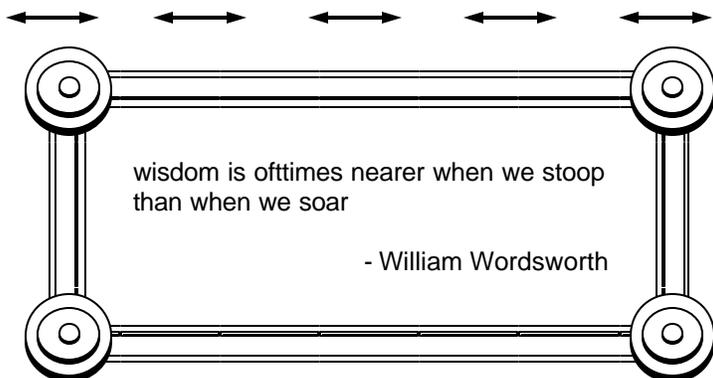
6) HISTORIAN

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

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 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).

AND A HEARTY THANK YOU TO ALL THE FOLKS WHO ARE PUTTING IN THEIR TIME AND EFFORT TO MAKE THE OPAL SOCIETY OPERATIONS RUN SMOOTHLY !!!



WHAT'S THE STONE

by Benjamin Mark of Tyler-Adam Corp.

Okay folks. Let's play a game. It goes like this: I'll tell you about this gem...you see if you can figure it out. No peeking at the graphic till it's over. Word of honor? Yes? Okay...first we need a word to replace the gem. How about my daughter's middle name...to wit: Tyler. So there it is. Instead of the true name of the gem...I'll use Tyler. Y'all ready? Hmmm? Here we go.

The Tyler appealed to Shakespeare as a symbol of inconsistency. In "Twelfth Night" he has the clown say to the Duke: "Now the melancholy God protect thee, and the Tailor make thy garment of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is very Tyler."

How we doin' so far, folks? Any Shakespeare aficionados out there?

Geronimo Cardano...bastard...mathematician...physician...astrologer...friend to Leonardo da Vinci before moving to England...had this to say about the Tyler: When having bought one for fifteen gold crowns, he found as much pleasure from it as he did from a diamond he had bought for five hundred crowns.

While the Tyler has often been called the Queen of Gems, few descriptions are broad enough to give our gem its full due. Considered lucky by some and unlucky by others...it is thought that the Tyler was the inspiration that prompted the writing of the novel by Sir Walter Scott entitled "Anne of Geierstien".

If any of you regard the Sir Walter Scott business with a touch of Deja Vu...it's because I covered the Tyler from a different slant quite some time ago...and I then also referred to the novel. But never-the-less...onward.

While New South Wales is today not considered the prime source of the Tyler...in the early 1900's a number of deposits of this gem were found. The specimens were extraordinarily beautiful. It is said that \$2,000,000 worth came out of those mines...which is a rather astounding figure when taking two things into consideration. One...the year. How much was 2 million in 1900 worth today? And two... this is not a diamond we're talking about. Nor is it a ruby or a sapphire or an emerald.

Well...there it is. Another hint...another clue.

Arabs believe the Tyler fell from heaven in flashes of lightning, and therefore acquired its colors and brilliance. As the Roman Empire expanded its boundaries...the Tyler became a part of much of its loot.

Do you folks remember the days in a not too distant past when knights made it a practice to hunt down dragons and chop off their heads? Do any of you have any idea why? Oh sure...some of you might say...heck...dragons were evil and foul smelling creatures that breathed fire and frankly didn't deserve to live on this earth. Or some of you might say...aw heck...a guy needs something to hunt. Why not a dragon? Yeah...well...all might be true. But there's another reason ...a little more mercenary. You chop off a dragon's head...and what do you think you find inside?

(Continued on page 9)

AUSTRALIAN OPAL AT ITS BEST

Part 4

by Barb Whyre

The "Pride of Australia" was found in 1915 by Tom Urwin and Snow Brown at Phone Line (off Fred Reece Way), shortly after the beauty of "Flame Queen" had taken people's breath away.

"Pride" had also been known as "Red Emperor" and cut to a 225 carat stone that just fit into a tobacco tin. She was doublesided with two distinct color bars. The bar on the back was totally different – much lighter and almost harlequin – compared to the main bar of dark rich flashes of color on the face. Ernie Sherman bought her, plus another three stones, from the miners for 2,000 pounds around 1920. It was the highest price ever paid for four black opals – Sherman was thought to be MAD!

The "Pride of Australia" was valued in 1931 at 2,000 pd. alone and was sold in the 1950's from the Percy Marks Collection, Sydney. Some say the price was 150,000 pounds, but Greg Sherman reckons not more than 50,000 pd. was paid for this mostly green-shot-with-orange black opal. "Pride" was later stolen from the new owner, Forest Lawn Memorial Cemetery, Los Angeles. Sherman was at a complete loss, of course, when he was asked to replace it!

Each *Opal Express* presents an account of discovery as researched by Barbara Moritz, Secretary of the Ridge Historical Society in her quest to unravel the history of the black opal fields in New South Wales, Australia. Should you have constructive information, please email: barbeemitz@yahoo.com or write to Box 1, L/Ridge 2834 Australia. ✨



Safety Report by Cathy Gaber

Sun and Sunglasses

You know going out into the sun can damage your skin and possibly even cause skin cancer. Do you use sun screen every time? You should, even in the early morning and the evening, even if you don't have particularly sensitive skin. It only takes about 20 minutes for the effects of the sun to be potentially damaging. It also takes about 20 minutes for sun screen to be fully effective after it is applied to your skin, so put it on before you need it. Waterproof varieties (including sweat proof) aren't really as well proofed as they'd like to be, so reapply it regularly if you are out for a long time, especially if you are in water or sweat a lot. Effectiveness of sun screens can also diminish in the bottle. For best results, buy new sun screen every year.

What about your eyes in the sun? Sun screen obviously is not an option, but sun glasses are. Buy sun glasses (or clip ons for clear prescription glasses) that block UV rays and wear them. Squinting is not really effective at protecting your eyes and it may predispose you to wrinkles. Another way to protect your eyes is to wear a hat that will shade your eyes. Studies have shown that people who wear sunglasses and/or a hat in the sun are less prone to develop cataracts.

Beyond sunburn, most of the negative effects of the sun do not present themselves for many years, or even decades, so protect yourself in advance. ✨

Remember When?

(Continued from page 1)
for me.

However, before I could create a run on the nail market I had the traumatic experience of purchasing some fantastic rough and walking around with the stuff in a bottle, afraid to put it to the wheel until I could get some expert advice on how to cut it. My advice came (thank goodness) from an excellent source, Bill Judd, but again I must confess my hair stood on end when he showed my how to cut and polish the stones without benefit of dopping. Those of you not afraid to develop the safe-cracker's syndrome – well-sanded fingers – might learn the technique from Bill. And just in time to preserve my sanity, I did see, lately, that Bill uses nails for some of his smaller stuff, so I guess I can feel safe from ridicule in starting a nail collection.

The two educational slide and tape shows built up by Elmer Reed and Ross Stambler have been very warmly received. However, it is felt that another slide and tape presentation might be appropriate to introduce the other two. This show should lay the groundwork for the two presently on hand, by giving some information on the origin of opal, where it is found, shots of different types of opal rough and polished, opal jewelry, etc. The introductory show should be able to stand on its own merits and be produced with introduction, continuity, and ending sufficient to be of interest in itself.

A show of this type requires much more material in the way of photographs or slides than we have on hand...It is hoped that with your help Elmer and Ross can produce another of their outstanding educational presentations. ✨

(from the Newsletter of the American Opal Society 2/73)

(I would like to add parenthetically that the slide show program on dopping opal was later converted into a VHS video tape which Ross Stambler showed at a Board of Directors meeting about 4 years ago. Using nails for dopping as mentioned in the program and by Vic Mayo in the article above presents the advantage that it is possible to warm the shank of the nail and thereby bring heat to the dop wax without overheating the opal rough. I found from personal experience that this method has considerable merit. I was able to adjust stones that needed to be reoriented slightly as cutting progressed, or with a little more heat, flow the dop wax and get a better bond to the stone in cases where it hadn't adhered very well initially. Also, it is possible to shape the end of a nail to hold and cut even very tiny stones and a well-cleaned metallic surface of a nail provides a good bond with green dop wax. There is a special compound of dop wax containing powdered aluminum which I believe was originally developed by AOS members for dopping with



Polishing Silver

A gadget to clean and polish silver can be purchased at the office supply store. Ask for a fiberglass cleaner. It is a sort of brush and gets into the smallest cracks and does a beautiful cleaning job. It's especially fine for intricate silver jewelry that you have hand cast. ✨

(Gulfport Chips (date unknown) via Gem Carver's Guild of America 8/99)

Black Rock Desert

(Continued from page 3)

up. What a coincidence. Video was so new, that one guy asked me where was I going to have the film developed – and he was serious.

Now I was set. I couldn't wait for the year to pass to the time where we would be on the Black Rock again. The year passed quickly. We sent money ahead to Joe and everything was set. I bought a used 1970 Ford van and this van would drive me to Nevada for the next 12 years of mining which would also include 9 years in Virgin Valley. My brother bought a used motorcycle and I already owned one. We would use these as cheap transportation up to the mine as it was 80 miles round trip to the nearest gas station.

It usually takes about two days to get to the Black Rock from southern California without killing yourself trying to drive 16 – 17 hours in one day.

We would stop the first day just north of Bridgeport, CA and camp right beside the Walker River. It was a beautiful place in the mountains. It was there that I was inspired to write some prose which I still have to this day.

After leaving God's little paradise we both knew what lay up ahead. The northern Nevada desert and the forbidding Black Rock. We pulled into Second Street then made it up the winding road to Joe's place. Joe was happy to see us and said that all the goodies were ready for blasting. I was ready to with my new camera and the anticipation of seeing my first blast.

I woke up the next morning really excited. We had never been this close to where high explosives were set off.

Joe - "O.K. here is the plan. Bob, you insist on being about one fourth mile away to film the explosions. Well personally, I think you will be buried in a pile of rocks. But that's your choice, not mine."

Joe also told us to bring along a piece-gun. Plenty of angry snakes everywhere - especially the guys with the little rattles attached to their tails. The Black Rock Desert is a haven for these snakes. They like to be where there aren't a lot of people and the Black Rock is the perfect place with only 6 human inhabitants.

Joe – "Here is what we will do. Mike and I will set the explosives. Bob, you will be on the other side waiting for your fate. We will light the charges, wave our hands, and run like Hades. Then we will jump into the Jeep and wave good-bye to you forever."

That last statement got me thinking a little bit. Joe had been setting off these charges for quite a while and knew roughly where the danger zone was.

But I put all this out of my mind. I was determined not only to mine the opal, but to make it exciting by the films that I would shoot. The closer I was to the blast, the more exciting would be the shots. In my mind it was settled. I would get good shots, or die trying. The plan was that they would drive down the hill where it was safe.

After the explosion went off, if I was still alive, I would fire two quick shots from my forty-five. As you can see by Joe's statement, he really thought that I was going to "buy the farm."

The fuse was lit, Mike and Joe split, and I was alone to my fate. I had put all the bad thoughts out of my mind and was concentrating on the filming. It seemed like an eternity waiting

for the big bang.

Then it happened, I saw a bright flash, and giant boulders shooting up into the air. Then a billowing white cloud followed. I remembered some of the war films where a soldier in a fox hole would hear the whistle of an incoming shell. I was still looking through the lens of the camera filming the final puff of smoke, while my ears were perked skyward listening for the whistle that may come. It never did. I had pulled it off!

Now for some fun! No sense shooting the gun off too soon for the all clear. Lets make it a little suspenseful. I waited for about a minute. This would get my brother and Joe wondering whether I had made it or not. I didn't want to wait too long as to worry them, only to make it a little suspenseful. After about a minute I fired two shots and they came a-running up the hill in their Jeep.

"We were worried for a while when we didn't here your gun go off right away."

"I was busy putting away my camera gear."

Joe - "Looks like it will be safe to be in this spot when the explosions go off. Bob's still here."

"Well let's just say that I pioneered this spot!"

The evenings were a time for enjoying a good meal and swapping good stories. I wasn't here to tell my stories, but to learn everything that I could about the Black Rock, so I let Joe do most of the talking and asked a lot of questions. I was like a human sponge just soaking up everything.

We were all sitting around one evening when Joe said to us. "Do you see that big rock up on the hill, in the saddle? Well there is something standing next to that big rock."

I had a hard time seeing the big rock, for it was about a half mile away. I got out the binoculars and looked on the hill. Sure enough it was an antelope standing next to the big rock.

"How did you know it was there, Joe?"

"Well I have been here for about 20 years now and I know where every rock is and what should be in that particular spot."

Wow! I just learned some of the ways of the desert.

Let me tell you about the Piute Indians. They are a funny breed of people. They have their morals, but think a little bit differently than I do. Sometimes in the winter after the desert rains, the Black Rock gets wet and some of the cars get stuck in the mud. The old dirt road that comes up from Gerlach is very slow. It can often take 4 hours to drive it. Depending how fast you choose to go, driving on the playa of the dry lake usually takes 30-40 minutes to go the same distance. So you can see why people get tempted to take the Black Rock even when it may be wet.

The Piutes have their own code. When a car gets stuck on the Black Rock, the owner's got three days to get it off. After that they figure that the people aren't really interested enough to remove it so it is fair game and is stripped. If I see a car going past my place and he isn't kicking up dust, I figure someone is probably up to no good.

It is a day-to-day learning experience out here where some of the laws are made by the people who live on the Black Rock Desert. ☼

(to be continued next month)



In Memoriam

Harriette Breitman

The American Opal Society Mourns the Loss of Our Member: Harriette Breitman

We report with sorrow the death of AOS member Harriette Breitman following surgery in August.

We will all remember Harriette. She touched the lives of many people in many organizations. An active member of AOS, the Gem Carvers and other L.A. area groups, she was a frequent speaker at club programs. Often a demonstrator at gem shows, she eagerly shared her passion and skill. She will be sadly and profoundly missed.



WHAT'S THE STONE

(Continued from page 6)

Scads and scads of Tylers...waiting to be plucked.

I don't want to bore you folks, so I'll give you one more hint. This biggest and best source for our Tyler today is Australia. And for those of you who have not yet guessed what a Tyler is...well...it's an opal.

And the prettiest of them all is the Black Opal...of which I have a picture. So quick quick my friends...before the graphic changes... To my home page...down the table menu till you get to the box that says Tidbits Graphics...and click on Tyler.

And there ya have it. ✨

Benjamin Mark

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Bulletin editors please note:

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Tel: 1-800-20-TYLER

What's

Calendar of Upcoming Events Dates and Locations of Shows

Sept 4 – 5 10AM-6PM Valley Prospectors, Los Rios Rancho, 39610

Sept 18 – 10AM-6PM Sept 19 10AM-5PM Huntington Ctr Mall, Community Room, 7700 Edinger Ave., Huntington Beach, CA

Sept 25 10AM-5PM Sept 26 10AM-4PM Delvers G&M Soc, Woman's Club of Downey, 9813 Paramount Blvd.,

Sept 25 10AM-6PM Sept 26 10AM-5PM Carmel Valley G&M Soc, Monterey Fairgrounds, Monterey, CA

Sept 29 – 30 & Oct 1 – 2 9AM-5PM Oct 3 9AM-3PM Sportsman Club of Joshua Tree, Sportsman's Hall, 6225 Sunburst

Oct 9 9AM-5PM Oct 10 9AM-4PM Valley Gems, 9050-1/2 West Avenue J, Lancaster, CA

Oct 9 8AM-5PM Oct 10 8AM-4PM Searles Lake G&M, 13337 Main St,

Oct 16 10AM-6PM Oct 17 10AM-5PM Whittier Gem & Min Soc, 7604 Greenleaf Ave., Whittier, CA

f Nov 6 – 7 AOS Opal & Gem Show, Quality Hotel, 616 Convention Way, Anaheim, CA

