

The Opal Express

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



Member

Member



Volume #32 Issue #02 February 2000

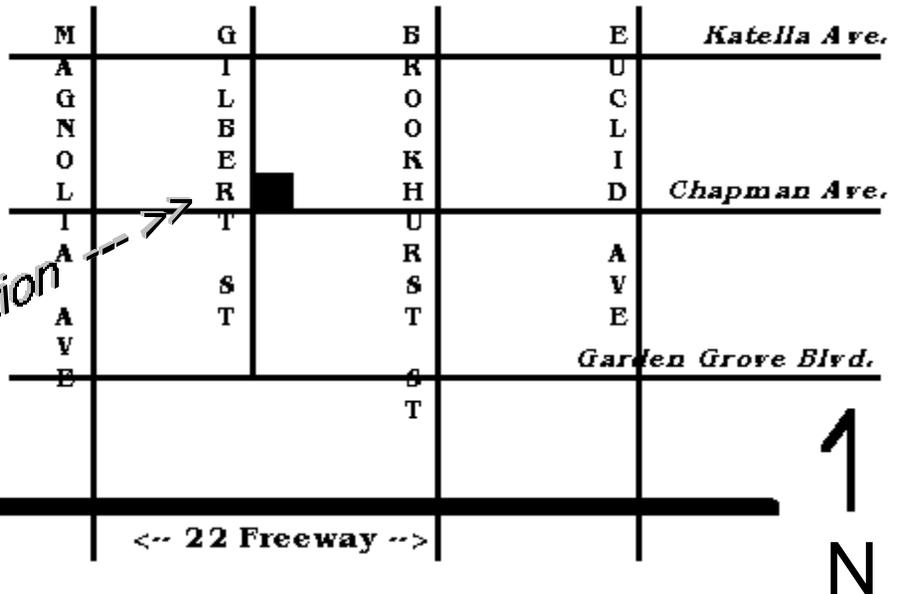
**General meeting Thursday
 February 10 7PM**

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 Valentine's Day !!



American Opal Society Officers

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American Opal Society website		http://www.opalsociety.org	

OPAL MINING ADVENTURES – Virgin Valley Nevada

Part 3 By Bob Halahan

Virgin Valley would prove to be totally different from my stay on the Black Rock. Here I met many interesting people who arrived yearly to mine this beautiful stone. Some were mercenary, some were beautiful people. It didn't take long to separate the two.

I made friends with a couple from Seattle, Washington named Red and Roy Baker. At that time I was able to look into the hearts of people and to know their true nature. Red and Roy were real people. I took Roy under my wing and taught him how to look for and to mine this precious stone, sharing all my opal digging knowledge.

Red, Roy's wife, was a very special person. She had a good personality and a heart to match. She was a very giving person who invited my brother and I over for dinner and cooked up some fabulous meals. What a cook she was!

My brother and I sometimes got together with Red and Roy and another couple from Seattle to go arrowhead hunting. There were arrowheads all around the valley. We went out to dry lake beds and up into the hills around the valley to hunt for them. We all found our fair share.

A man from British Columbia came to the valley one year and led me to an old abandoned gold mine. We explored the mine and found it to be a very exciting place.

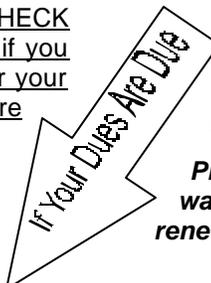
I arranged to take my friends from Seattle there the following year. "Well Red and Roy, are you ready for the great adventure that I have planned for you this year?" Red was a little skeptical. "I don't know if I am ready for this," was her reply.

The mine's entrance was very small and we had to crouch low to get in, then it opened up into a 7 ft. high ceiling. I led the way. Strapped on my back was a 30 lb. battery to power a 250 watt light along with the video equipment.

(Continued on page 6)

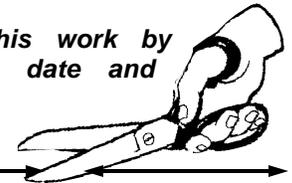
Are Your Dues Due Now? PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

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.]

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NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ APT #: or PO BOX: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

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Please indicate any name or mailing address changes

NAME BADGE ORDER FORM: (OPTIONAL)

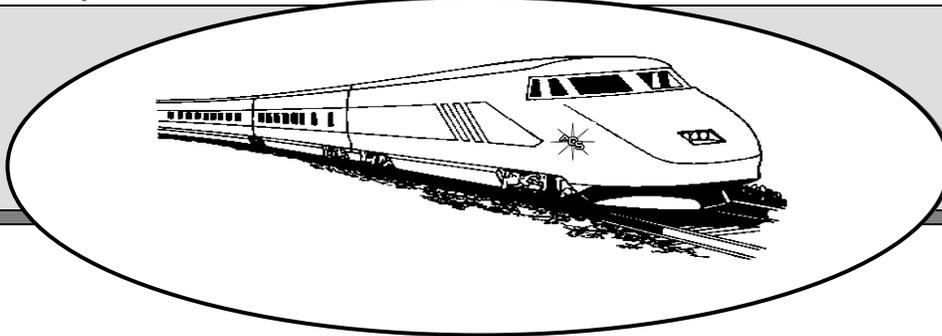
Number of badges ordered _____
(\$5.00 EACH - includes engraving)
PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname or name of your opal related business.

The Opal Express

LAPIDARY ARTS CLASSROOM

Published monthly
by the
American
Opal
Society

Volume 32, Issue 2



President's Message from Carol Bova

Either no one reads this column, or you are all happy with the way we're doing things! No one has offered any feedback on what they like, don't like or want for the coming year. Or did I put you to sleep with a boring message? Were you sick with a Y2K bug like I was? Well, I'm asking again:

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!!

What programs do you want?

Do you have a suggestion for a field trip?

WE NEED YOUR THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS. If you have any thoughts or suggestions for the 2000 show, it's time to let us know now. It takes a long time to put all the pieces together to make a show happen.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR BOARD!

Communication is an essential component of a show, or of any organization at all. The *Opal Express*, and our American Opal Society website at <http://www.opalsociety.org> are our official communications with the world, and we rely on our members to communicate with the Board to keep us on the right track..

YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT TO US!

Your input to us is just as important because we rely on your feedback to help direct our future planning!

HOW TO CONTACT THE BOARD?

Call, write or email me, or any of your officers or board members. Contact info is listed in every copy of the *Opal Express*.

I'm sure you have something you want to say!

Carol

For fastest contact with me by mail:
P.O. Box 5388, Glendale, CA 91221-5388
My Phone: 818-845-8610
My email: bova@bovagems.com

PS: My treat for those of you who are online is an article on an alpine opal discovery in British Columbia at <http://www.bovagems.com/eclectic>

It's a modern day opal adventure tale!



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
Feb 10 7PM

Board of Directors
Mtg
Mon Feb 7 7PM

Annual AOS
Opal & Gem Show
Nov 4th & 5th

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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AUSTRALIAN OPAL AT ITS BEST

Part 9

by Barb Whyre

The "**Pandora**" is probably the most famous namestone of all and was the largest opal of the day. She was mined in 1928 towards Bald Hill, not far from where "Queen of the Earth" was unearthed in 1908. Almost more famous, however, is the story of selecting the new shaft site, which bot-tomed at 15 feet on this fantastic lump of opal overtaking "Queen" in size, except she was light-faced.

Jack McNicol and old-timer Fred Bodel made quite a performance over the matter of choosing new ground for the shaft. Ordinarily known as "Lucky Fred", this was one time he missed out! A toss of a coin would decide where the new shaft would be sunk - by McNicol. Bodel would stay cleaning out the old one. And you didn't start a new shaft on a Friday, so it was only marked out, and ready to go. After all, no good ship ever sailed on a Friday, and beginning a shaft represented just such a sor-tie!

"**Pandora**" had a thin black back and was as big as a small man's forearm. She measured 4 x 2 x 1 inches, weighed 5 oz. (700+ carats) in the rough, and was later identified as a fossil, the blade bone of a plesiosaurus. Harold Frazer was entrusted

with the cutting and polishing of "**Pandora**", with his wife Dolly probably doing a fair share of the work.

The finished stone weighed 590 carats and was on display in the town. One end represented a beautiful fan or peacock's tail and the other part of the stone was different opals, all harmonizing in their wonderful colors. The value was estimated in four figures. Hector Jenkins, a local opal buyer/miner, offered to swap his Chevrolet (230 pd. new) plus 10 x 100 pound notes for "**Pandora**"!

But the miner often seems to miss the timing of his sale and McNicol ended up with about 800 pounds (one account says 220 pd.). "**Pandora**" has been displayed around the world and changed hands many times. In 1964, she was in the USA and valued at \$146,000. She was sold by auction at Sothebys, London, in 1965 for 6,200 pounds.

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 early history of the black opalfields in New South Wales, Australia. Should you have constructive information, please email: barbeemitz@yahoo.com or write to Box 1, Lightning Ridge 2834, Australia. ✿



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. ✿

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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)

Notes From Lightning Ridge

G'day from the Ridge.

Some definitions: you can own 2 claims. A claim here is 50x50 meters, generally square. You can buy one for around \$500-\$1000, or peg one yourself. To peg a claim, gather up your gear: good compass, 4 steel stakes, claims map, and 100 meter tape. Look for the mines department survey peg and shoot a bearing and measure to your corner peg. From this datum go around the clock taking bearings and measuring 50 m to the peg location. Peg. Shoot the next bearing. Repeat until you have 4 pegs in the ground. Add the 4 bearings and you should come up with 360 degrees for a square claim. If you come up with a different result, go back to datum. You will next need to map your claim using a protractor trace overlay. You get it from the mines dept. Check your work. If you bottom on opal. There will be a rush on your boundaries. If your claim is inaccurately pegged relative to the map, it will be challenged and overpegged if money is there. More than 1 degree inaccuracy on your bearings is grounds for cancellation so do use a good compass. Next register your claim with the mines dept. This will cost around \$500 including bond with a recurring annual fee of around \$400. The bond is to ensure you restore the ground. This means backfilling all the hole, and removing any spoil.

If it is a rich claim and you take all the dirt from below, it can fall right up to the surface! Then you have to bring in lots of top dressing at big expense. If you don't restore the ground, you lose your bond, and next time you register a claim, your bond can go higher and higher...

So how do you know where to peg? Prospecting is a very large subject covered in Stephen Aracic's newest book. It has thousands of color photos and is the definitive work on opal mining. It covers almost every field in Australia. Anybody wanting one, email and I will send it to you.

We look for paleo channels of the cretaceous. These are buried under 1-25 meters of sandstone here. Little depressions where water stands, and infiltrates down; box trees, wild orange trees, visible linear faults, "blows" (mixed opal dirt and broken sandstone pushed upward from the level below), and tree LINES delineate faults on the surface.

You can peg an area like this for a claim, or get a 30 day exclusive license for the large slice of country you like and drill it with a 9" prospecting drill.

OK. We got opal prospecting block 16a which takes in some productive fields. We want to find a new field and register all the ground in our names, those of our families and friends. If not, there will be a rush, and neighbors you know are better than strangers.

So we start drilling about 3 holes down to the level at 60'. The ground is hard here with bands of silcrete that the drill doesn't like. We plan to have down time of 1 day a week. We can't afford more than that coz the prospecting lease only

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

Opal Mining Video

Last month **Stan McCall** brought a video of opal mining in Australia called Black Opal and the meeting enjoyed the first half. We are planning to continue watching the tape for our February meeting.

Door Prizes

Bob Dixon, wearing his Hospitality Chairman hat, advises that we are going to have door prizes at the meetings.

Here's the plan. There will be a sort of roll call and each member attending the meeting will receive one ticket for the night's drawing.

Year End Grand Prize Drawing

Don't miss the monthly meetings!!! This is how you get into the year end drawing. Each of the tickets from monthly meetings will be accumulated throughout the year. Then there will be a final door prize drawing at the annual Christmas party. Bob promises a real nice prize will be awarded to the year's lucky winner. ✿

From tickets at the monthly meetings there will be a final door prize drawing at the annual Christmas party at the end of the year!!!



runs 30 days. So, we are looking for a big sandstone plate. Under that, there may be seam or nobbies, potch or gems. Once we find and define the sandstone plate, we will be looking for faults and slides in it, and all level dirt from each hole will be washed and examined. Sometimes you find potch, rarely color. Sandstone is considered sufficiently good trace to put down a shaft.

When you find opal, keep your mouth shut or you will definitely have nocturnal visitors who can steal lots in a short time. It is no fun hauling dirt up out of your claim that had opal in it before the ratters got there. These people are extremely well organized and professional in their thieving, and also heavily armed. They are no joke so if you find something, TELL NO ONE!!! Some claims have produced over USD 10 million so it is pretty low risk thieving for the potential reward. There are plenty of people trying to catch the ratters, and they are sometimes caught. They get a light sentence and come back to their old game. Oh well...different in the old days!

Next time: mining and equipment, costs of mining. ✿

regards to all,

james dumar

jdumar@iniaccess.net.au

www.lightningridgeopal.com

The McCondra Report

By Barbara McCondra

Workshop schedule

OPAL FOSSILS OF AUSTRALIA

"Fossils have been described as part of the pattern of history's broad tapestry," in Frank Leechman's, "THE OPAL BOOK". That history tells of an ancient Australia whose interior was once an inland sea. Because of this sea, the sedimentary layers that were deposited over millions of years trapped skeletal remains of saltwater life. As the land rose and the sea receded, freshwater life forms left fossil threads to embellish the weave. Both animal and plant remains left impressions in the sand, mud, and silt. Tracks of animals, reptiles, and birds were solidified and cemented for us to view today when their strata becomes uncovered by erosion or the burrowing activities of Man.

Imagine the thrill of seeing a pre-historic hunt, frozen in time, in the sediments near Winton, Australia; where the fossilized footprints show the frenzied tracks of small animals fleeing from a monster size track belonging to a dinosaur 13 feet tall at the hip or the equal thrill of gazing deeply into the shimmering gem fire of an opalized vertebrae. These paleontological records are the precious gems of Australia's history and sometimes, in the case of opalization they are literally, "precious gems."

The opalized fossils were recorded by Tully Wooleston in his books "OPAL, THE GEM OF THE NEVER NEVER" and "THE SPIRIT CHILD" printed in the early 1900s. The author's trips to the outback opalfields are chronicled and include eye witness descriptions of magnificent specimens. He acclaims the beauty of opalized fossils seen in South Australia & N.S.W. but does not mention any opalized shells in Queensland.

Around any campfire in the opalfields of today, stories of fossilized dinosaurs, snakes, turtles, flying reptiles and even a human skull abound. It is the paleontologists who are the weavers of the tapestry and their chore of separating fact from fiction is a path fraught with frustration. Little proven research seems to have been published in comparison to the wealth of information on other fossils.

The most widely known opalized fossils are from the South Australia area where magnificent gem opalized shells have long been treasured for use in jewelry in their natural shell shape. They are highly prized for their especially bright sharp fire. The most magnificent of shells in Coober Pedy, home of white and crystal opal, are sought after by gem merchants the world over. Belemnites, the opalized, torpedo-shaped exoskeleton of ancient squids, command top prices in the gem community. Mollusks, gastropods and bivalves, and snail shells are often found consisting of the most valuable gem quality opal.

Opalized mussel shells are often found clustered around a fossil wooden log. Rumor has it that two sea turtles fully opalized were stolen from their owners and cut into cabochons to be rendered unclaimable and then sold. ✪

(From Outback Report 7/98)

(to be continued next month)

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.**

February 2000

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				

= Available Workshop dates = General Meeting date

WORKSHOP RULES

Please see calendar above 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.

(Continued from page 1)

I had taken this battery and the same 250 watt light to Carlsbad Caverns and it lit up the whole cave as I was making my tour. Powered by the battery, the light was on for about two and a half hours. This will give you a pretty good idea how big this battery was. Some of the people in the Cavern left the guided ranger tour and followed me around using their video cameras without any light of their own.

Back to the story. The camera, light and battery were along because I was going to make a documentary of our exploration called "The Gold Mine Adventure." When we first entered the tunnel, the men had their flashlights turned on.

The women, "Boy is it dark in here."

I let this go on for a while to kind of get them 'in the mood.' Women have such great imaginations and it doesn't take much to lead them in a mischievous direction. Then I flipped the switch on the spot light and the whole mine lit up.

"WoW." That's better.

We followed mine car tracks to the first turn to the right and took it. I knew from last year's adventure that a short way down the line was a ladder that went up into the ceiling. It took a lot of coaxing but I finally convinced the women to go

up. I told them there was a beautiful room up there that had this real pretty blue rock running through it that looked like turquoise. I said I called it "The Blue Room." That did it, up the ladder came the two fearless women!!

I had the light shining on the ladder. First Red came up, then Karen came up. Karen was half spooked before she got into the mine. As I shined the light to the left, I was careful just to reveal some railroad ties that looked like a hole and a shaft.

Right off I said to Karen, "Careful, its a 90 ft. drop off there." It was dark and I would have given anything to see the look in her eyes.

Then I shined the light up into the ceiling and around the room. It was a beautiful sight. Veins of chrysocolla ran through the entire room.

Karen's words, "It's beautiful - lets go."

Well, let me tell you, she scampered down that old ladder like a jack rabbit.

From there we all continued along the tracks. Eventually we came upon an old pile of rocks. The women were a little skeptical "again."

Time for a little encouragement. "It's just an old pile of rocks, probably left by the miners."

"I don't know," was Red and Karen's reply.

(Continued on page 7)

Advertisement

Black Opal Rough

**Lightning Ridge black opal at field prices. Check price list with many pictures on fast server at <http://www.opalrough.com>
Email: opal@tpg.com.au Visa, Mastercard and cheques accepted.**

Visit my mine at this website and try opal mining – you could win free rough opal.

Send for the amazing new opal cutting video and book package by Greg Pardey, long time cutter to the opal industry. This package sets a new standard for opal cutting resources and is a must for serious opal cutters and beginners. He demonstrates his revolutionary spin and hatch technique, shows how to cut solids doublets and triplets and offers numerous valuable tips on equipment and Lightning Ridge black opal. This 1 kilo package is US\$99 plus \$15 postage.

Special Offer: Trader Opal Rough: 1 kilo mixed blue green and the odd multicolour nobbies, mixed sizes on black or grey base for US\$280 plus \$15 airmail postage. Opal can be returned if not satisfied.

**Keith Rigby Opals PO Box 58 Gladesville 2111 NSW Australia
Phone (61) 2 9816 3221 Fax (61) 2 98177883 Field Buyer – Field Prices
Visiting Tucson, San Francisco and LA in February – Contact me to meet up.**

(Continued from page 6)

"Come on, the end of the mine is just a short way ahead." We reached another pile of rocks and I nudged them over it.

Now my next 'plan' will be put into high gear. On the way back, as I stepped over the pile of rocks, I made the bold and loud statement, "This is cave-in number two."

There was silence. Nothing was said. Then I carefully stepped over the first pile of rocks. "This is cave-in number one."

Still a deadly silence. O. K. I know this next thing that I am about to say will surely get to them. "You know, the first time that I came across this cave-in, I was looking for an arm or something that might be sticking out from that pile of rocks."

That did it, "We will see you later."

The women shot ahead and we could hear their frantic voices saying something like, "Let me out of this mine."

They were gone.

Now we have three "Men" left - I hope. Have you ever heard, 'here is where we separate the men from the boys'? Maybe more correctly in this case - 'here is where we separate the men from the crazies'.

The girls have gone, scared out of their wits. I wonder why?? As the movie goes on with the exploration, we finally come to "The Shaft."

There it was, a shaft that went down 70-80 ft. It was pitch black as we looked down. Now comes the moment to test the men. Much like the "Elusive Search For The Common Opal Deposit" with Len Cram, where his fortitude was tested, it was their turn. The ladder had been built sometime in the early forties and they knew this. How good is this fifty year old ladder? Will it hold my weight? (These were big guys who weighed about 240 lbs. each.) I had casually mentioned that the guy from British Columbia said a few of the steps were broken.

"Lets Go," I said.

"What!?! Don't tell me you are going to go down that old, broken ladder with a 30 lb. battery on your back along with all that TV gear?"

"Yep! Not only that, but I am going to do it with one hand so that I can film my descent 'into the unknown'."

(I think three key words helped them make their decision: *old ladder*, *broken*, and *unknown*.) I was determined to make this an exciting movie and to give people the experience of what it is like to descend a ladder not knowing what is ahead. It made it exciting for all of us.

I had asked Roy and Norm, my buddies, to follow me down. Here was their reply. "You mean your ex-buddies."

As you can see, every one has a line that they draw, this was theirs. As the movie shows, I was the only one who descended. There were a few words spoken trying to talk me out of this stupid caper, but to no avail.

There I was descending the ladder, balancing myself with the 30 lb. battery, shooting with one hand and jumping from rung to rung with one hand. I had one thing going for me, I could use my feet to test the strength of the rungs before I did the "One Handed Trick."

As I went down, I had a rough idea where the rungs were broken from my friend from Canada. When I got to the broken ones, I figured out a way to use my one free hand to jump two rungs. That was quite a feat and a little scary. When I finally reached the bottom, I discovered a lot of rabbits had wandered into the dark mine and fallen down the shaft. It smelled like a morgue down there. Looking left and right, there were tracks that led about 200 ft. in each direction.

It wasn't long before I couldn't stand the smell anymore and I ascended and rejoined my "fearless buddies." Then we made our way out of the mine. They all thanked me personally for the experience, especially the women although their "Words" were a little different than the men's.

The memories that we all shared on that day were recorded and can never be taken away from us. We had all shared a fun experience together that would be etched into our minds forever. I sent a copy of the tape to my friends Red and Roy and Karen and Norm. A few years after I made my last trip to the Virgin Valley, my wife and I decided to meet Red and Roy in Primville, Oregon on a geode hunting trip.

It would be the last time that I would see my good friend Red. We kept in communication for the next few years. Then one day she wrote and said that she had leukemia but that it was in remission. She was a beautiful person who was totally in tune with the Lord. She had told me so.

I really didn't know how serious her illness was, so to give her peace, I sent her a copy of the audio tape "What heaven is like." She wrote me back and told me that the tape made her feel close to the Lord. She was so pleased to have received it. I had not heard from her for about a year when I got a call from her husband Roy telling me that she had passed away about a year ago. I felt a sadness come over me. Then I felt joy come into my heart. The Lord told me that she was now with Him. As I finish this story, I can see her happy smiling face that will be in my heart forever.

She was my "Friend." ❀

(to be continued next month)



The Opal Express
MONTHLY ADVERTISING RATES

Advertising in *The Opal Express* is as follows...

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BUSINESS CARD AD	\$ 5.00 / MO. (3-3/8" x 2-1/8")
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QUARTER PAGE AD	\$10.00 / MO. (3-1/2" x 4-3/4")
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HALF PAGE AD*	\$20.00 / MONTH
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FULL PAGE AD*	\$40.00 / MONTH

*** (Size of FULL PAGE = 9-1/2" x 7")**

Ad copy must reach the AOS by the 15th of the month preceding desired publication date/s.

Please make checks out to: American Opal Society, Inc.
Please send ad copy with payment to:
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P.O. Box 382
Anaheim, CA 92815-0382

BOILING WATER MAKES ROCKS

Water is a solvent if it is hot enough or acidic enough. In the acid scenario, rainwater meets carbon dioxide, seeps down, encounters sulfides and, bingo, sulfuric acid.

This liquid roams and dissolves minerals and puts in motion mineral substances to travel and interact with other substances. Malachite is formed this way. The bumps on turquoise indicate dissolved minerals flowing in cool water.

In the hot water scenario, rainwater seeps into the ground and goes deep enough to be heated by magma or already boiling water. Now heated, this water moves back up by a process of steam and condensation - dissolving minerals and redepositing their constituents along the way. Cooled, the water sinks, encounters again the heat source, moves upward, repeats the dissolving and depositing. This repetition gives agate its layered look Amethyst crystals can form once the silica content of the water thins out sufficiently.

Perhaps the oldest, certainly for jewelers the most fortuitous, case of raindrop to rock is the formation of opal, in yet another scenario.

In a dry desert area, the rainwater goes down through permeable rocks rich in silica. The downgoing water carries silica to the underground water table, raising it. Being raised, it spreads out to fill fissures and such. The rain stops, the dry desert eventually drops the water table down by evaporation, but the ledges and fissures are left high, and not completely dry. Within these fissures, the silica rich water gets richer by evaporation. When the silica to water ratio is just right, spheres form (bubbles). These spheres are what make opal opal. With further evaporation, the spheres become gelatinous, eventually harden, and, like adding ball bearings to a cup, they layer the cavity in an orderly fashion. Water is trapped between the spheres.

The orderly arrangement of the spheres diffracts the light (segments and moves it around). This light movement, in combination with the varying amounts of water inclusions, gives the light play of precious opal. Water here acts as a sort of music to the spheres.

Yes, water is a solvent. Find enough opal and many of your financial problems will be solved. ☼

Source: ***Gemstones and their Origins***, by Peter C. Keller.

--Ed Montgomery, Minerals Chair

AOS at Tucson!

We appreciate the efforts of Tim & Barbara Thomas of Tibara Opal in promoting the American Opal Society. They have arranged for AOS membership materials to be offered at Tucson at Holiday Inn Holidome, Feb. 3-11, Pavilion #138-139. Tim is also presenting an opal seminar there. Thank you Tim and Barbara!

Thank you also to Mike Kowalsky, Jim Pisani and the other board members who coordinated the design and printing of an attractive cover to our membership form to use in Tucson. Mike will be covering the event and will report back to us next month (perhaps with video footage of Tim Thomas' opal seminar!).



...Perhaps the oldest, certainly for jewelers the most fortuitous, case of raindrop to rock is the formation of opal...

A FEW MORE WORDS ABOUT OPALS

Opal's chemical composition, SiO₂+H₂O (silicon dioxide plus water), makes it a near cousin of the quartz family (SiO₂) but, unlike quartz and all but a very few other minerals, opal's structure is composed of tiny spheres (see Ed's report, at left) instead of crystals. Obsidian, a volcanic glass, is another example of a stone with a non-crystalline structure.

Precious opal's play-of-color is thought to be the result of this unusual structure in combination with various impurities (mineral inclusions) that cause light diffraction of a unique and highly prized sort. Common opal, or potch, which does not exhibit play-of-color, can also be quite beautiful, as in Mexico's fire opal (orange to red) or Peru's solid blue or pink material. ☼

-- Beth Rosengard

(from The Nugget 12/99)

What's happening???

Calendar of Upcoming Events Dates and Locations of Shows

Feb 18 – 27 10AM-10PM San Gorgonio Mineral & Gem Society, Riverside County National Date Festival, Gem & Mineral Bldg, 46-350 Arabia, Indio, CA

Feb 26 – 27 10AM-5PM Del Air Rockhounds, Sierra Pelona Rock Club, Woodland Hills Rockchippers San Fernando Valley Gem Fair, Plaza Recreation Center, 12240 Archwood, North

Mar 3 – Mar 12 Fri 12 noon–10PM; Sat & Sun 10AM–10PM; Mon–Thurs 4PM–10PM Imperial Valley Gem & Min Society, Midwinter Fair & Fiesta grounds, Gem & Mineral Bldg, 200 East

Mar 4 – 5 9AM-4:30PM Monrovia Rockhounds, Arboretum, Ayers Hall, 301 N. Baldwin Ave.,

Mar 4 9AM-5PM Mar 5 9AM-4PM Ventura Gem & Min Society, Seaside Park (formerly Ventura County Fairgrounds), 10 W. Harbor Blvd, Ventura, CA

March 11 10AM-6PM March 12 10AM-5PM Pasadena Lapidary Society, San Marino Masonic

Mar 18 10AM-6PM March 19 10AM-5PM Northrop Grumman Gem & Min Club, 12329 Crenshaw Blvd, Gate 16, Hawthorne, CA

Mar 25 – 26 10AM-5PM North Orange County Gem & Min Society, La Habra Clubhouse, 200 W. Greenwood, La Habra, CA

Mar 25 10AM-6PM Mar 26 10AM-5PM San Diego Mineral & Gem Society, Al Bahr Shrine, 5440

Apr 15 9AM-6PM Apr 16 9AM-4PM Mojave Mineralogical Society, Boron High School Multi-purpose Room, Boron, CA

Aug 4 - 6 CFMS Gold & Gem Show, hosted by Valley Prospectors, Riverside Convention Center, Riverside, CA

Safety Report

by Cathy Gaber

Water, water everywhere...

You've heard it, probably even said it "Water, water everywhere and nary a drop to drink." Most of the time we take clean, safe drinking water for granted and figure that we can always get bottled water if we need it, but in emergency situations at home or in the field, it doesn't hurt to have some idea of how to prepare drinking water. Never drink water directly out of a lake, stream, etc. unless you want to risk endangering your health through the ingestion of pesticides, parasites, animal waste and other pollutants.

One of the most effective steps in purifying water is boiling for one full minute. Start with clean looking and clean smelling water if at all possible. If the water is cloudy, filter it first through several layers of clean cloth. Once the water is boiled, it is bacterially safe to drink and should be stored in clean non-corrosive containers. If the flatness of boiled water does not appeal to you. The water can be aerated by pouring it back and forth several times between two containers. Letting it sit for several hours or adding a very small pinch of salt may also help.

Chemical treatment with chlorine or iodine can be used when boiling is unfeasible. Both work best in warm water and are not really recommended as effective for surface waters. A rough formula for using chlorine bleach is 10 drops per quart (double for cloudy water), mix and let sit 30 minutes. The water should have a slight chlorine smell. If not, repeat with half the bleach. If it smells too much like chlorine, let it sit for several hours or aerate as above. Iodine from your first aid kit can be used at the rate of 5 drops per quart (again double for cloudy water) with a 30 minute resting period. Chlorine or iodine tablets can also be purchased at sporting goods stores. Follow the package directions.

Just because you are in a foreign country, do not think the same methods don't apply. An adage for travel is "Don't drink the water." This is not a joke, and the problem is not confined to drinking the water. Do not use ice in your drinks, brush your teeth, wash your food or cook anything to less than boiling unless you are sure the water is safe. You may not have access to a stove or be able to build a fire, but if you have electricity, an inexpensive immersion heater can be used. It takes patience, and you can't boil much water at a time, but it is effective. If water is only filtered, it should definitely still be boiled. The chemicals above can also be used. One of my favorite stories about traveling in India came from a very proper English school teacher. Whenever she was uncertain if the water would be safe to drink, she had an ingenious solution for brushing her teeth without using water. She used gin!

For more detailed information, check out:

<<http://www.epa.gov/OGWDW/>> -Cathy ☼