

# The Opal Express

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



Member

Member



Volume #32 Issue #03 March 2000

**General meeting Thursday  
 March 9 7PM**

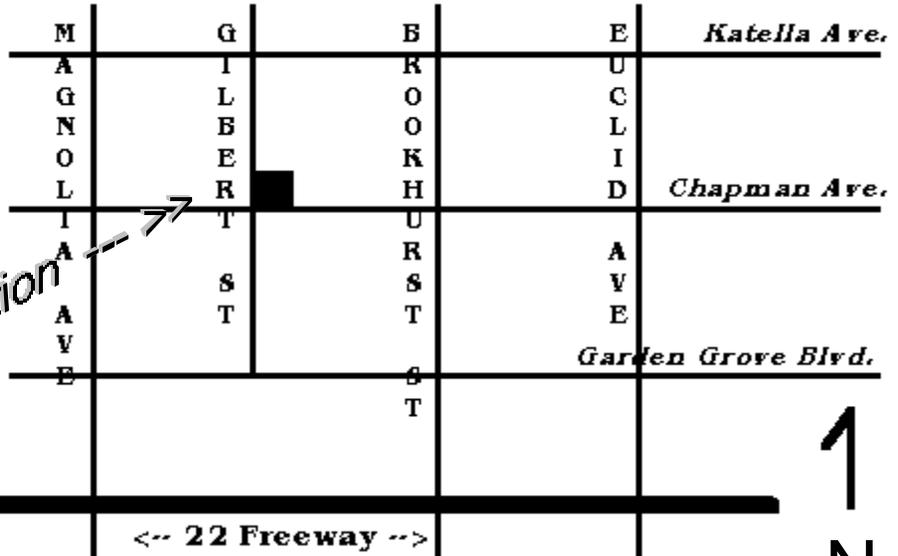
TO:

**Black Opal - video con-**

**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

Carol Bova	President	(818) 845-8610	email bova@bovagems.com
Mike Kowalsky	Vice Pres.	(714) 761-4876	email mykowalsky@aol.com
Allen Farquer	Treasurer	(714) 537-0556	email nnf@earthlink.net
Jim Pisani	Secretary	(562) 948-6374	email vulajim@gte.net
Russ Madsen	Editor	(562) 425-9788	email 76550.1366@compuserve.com
American Opal Society website		http://www.opalsociety.org	

**The Poisonous Trio**

"Leaves of three, let them be." Can you recognize the poisonous trio - ivy, oak and sumac? You should, even if you have never been allergic. Experts at the American Academy of Dermatology report that approximately 85 percent of the population will develop an allergic reaction to poison ivy, oak or sumac if exposed to them.

The active ingredient that causes the contact dermatitis is an oil called urushiol. It can remain an irritant for a year or more on clothing or tools if not washed off. Urushiol can become airborne if the plants are burned, potentially causing serious harm to eyes, throat and lungs, so mind your campfire well.

Poison ivy has slightly glossy green leaves that grow in groups of three. The leaf shape may vary, and the plant may grow as a vine or as a low shrub. The plant may produce yellow-green flowers and greenish white berries that resemble a peeled orange. In winter, it can also be recognized as a hairy red vine on trees. Poison ivy can be found throughout the United States, although it is most common in the eastern and central portions.

Poison oak looks similar although it is usually more shrub-like, and its leaves are shaped somewhat like oak leaves. The hairy undersides of the leaves are always a much lighter green than the surface. The plant may develop hanging clusters of greenish or creamy white berries, although many plants bear no fruit. Poison oak grows on the west coast of North America.

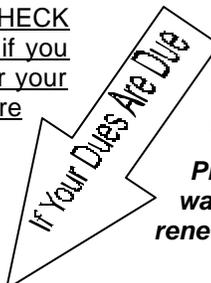
Poison sumac grows mainly in uninhabited areas, especially in swampy locations. It grows to about 5 or 6 feet high, with 7 to 13 leaflets of elongated leaves arranged in pairs, with a single leaflet at the end of the midrib. Poison sumac can be distinguished from harmless sumacs by its drooping clusters of green berries. Harmless sumacs have red, upright berry clusters.

There is no effective prevention but avoidance. Long pants, long sleeves, gloves, etc. will help protect your skin. For best results, wash contaminated skin within 5 minutes with soap and water. Remember to wash clothes and tools as soon as possible. Pet fur can also carry the oil, so if Fido went with you, he'll need a bath too.

If you do get a rash, a doctor can prescribe oral antihistamines or corticosteroids and corticosteroid lotions and skin creams. ☼

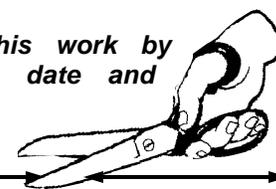
**Are Your Dues Due Now?** PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

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:\ameropa\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
<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>	
<b>** \$5 SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or over &lt;deduct \$5.00 from above&gt;</b>	

**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)**

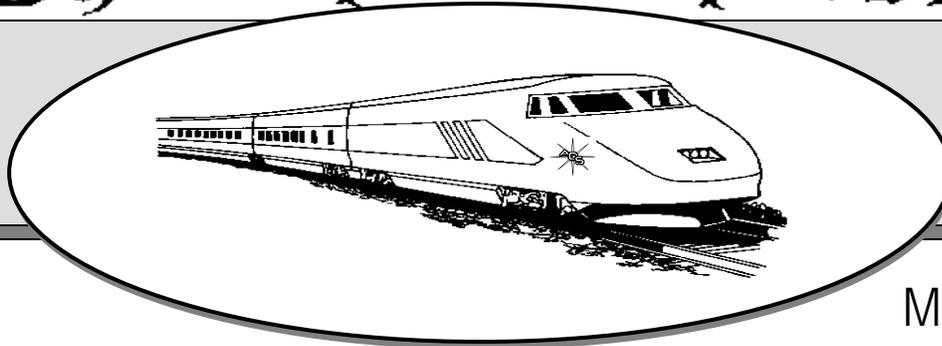
**PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname or name of your opal related business.**

# The Opal Express

MARCH 2000

Published monthly by the American Opal Society

Volume 32, Issue 3



## March Guest Speaker

### President's Message from Carol Bova

Have you ever had a good sized interesting piece of rough that just wasn't going to work out as a cab? After attending the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, you just might find another way to use it!

Clare Gagnon will be demonstrating the art of gem carving, and this could be your chance to learn a new skill or refine your current techniques. If you're already a carver, bring a finished piece to show while we socialize after the program.

We will continue our new practice of door prizes for those attending the meeting. Last month's door prize was a piece of Yowah boulder opal and we had a contributory drawing for a set of carving bits. (I know that's one member who's going to attend Clare's program!)

Don't miss out on the information and the fun. See you in March!

Carol

P.S. Eight months to Show Time! If you're a dealer and haven't received a show packet, let us know!

**Clare Gagnon** will be our guest speaker at the March general meeting. Clare will demonstrate carving techniques as Carol notes in her presidents message.

Come on out and enjoy an evening learning about this excellent technique for working opal. Personally I have concluded that carving is quite often a better approach than cabbing for finishing opal to its best effect. Whether you are carving opal now or want to start or simply want to learn more about tools and techniques, here's a great chance to learn!!

Remember, friends and guests are always welcome at our meetings. The more the merrier.

And don't forget members attending meetings qualify for the door prizes, mates!



#### DATES TO REMEMBER

General Mtg  
Thurs March 9th 7PM

Director's Mtg  
Mon March 6th 7PM

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

### Work Shop Information...

**The LOCATION for the Opal Society workshop** 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. ☼

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Dues Renewal	1	Australian Opal at its Best	3	What's Happening?	4	Opal Mining Adventures	6
Safety Report	1	McCondra Report - Fossils	3	Welcome New Members !!	4	Notes From Lightning Ridge	7
Clare Gagnon-guest speaker	2	Itemization	4	Workshop Info	5	Field Trip - Stone Canyon	7

# AUSTRALIAN OPAL AT ITS BEST

Part 10

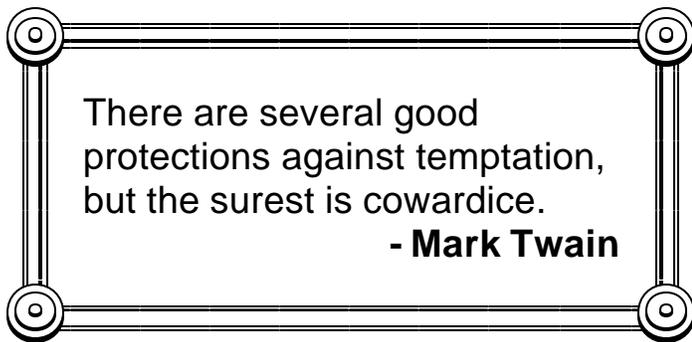
by Barb Whyre

More excitement in 1928 at the Grawin. John Landers reported in July that the "Sunset Queen", the main chip from a large opal weighing 4 ounces, was but another example of the fine material being mined – lots of BIG stones. She was semi-black with all colors, radiant red predominating, and was the most valuable portion retrieved from 14 meters.

Paddy Bourke, the man who came away with "Sunset" and other sizable chips of 70-80 carats each, reckoned if he hadn't broken it, the entire piece of opal was 12.5 cm square and would have weighed 9 – 10 ounces! He believed it would have been nearly as valuable as the "Pandora", mined the same year at the Ridge, valued at 2000 pounds.

Then a month after "Sunset", Charlie Nettleton, the first professional prospector at the Ridge in 1902, unearthed a stone of 1000 carats at Old Glengarry. Landers was staggered by the continuing quantity of opal produced southwest of the more famous Lightning Ridge Fields. He emphasized in his reports during that era that "the Grawin can hold its own"!

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 opal fields 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. ✿

# The McCondra Report

By Barbara McCondra

## OPAL FOSSILS OF AUSTRALIA – Part 2

(continued from the February 2000 *Opal Express*)

Allan W. Eckert's new book *THE WORLD OF OPALS* recaps finding of shells, crinoids (pieces of long many jointed stems that supported a flower-like animal), and belemnites now extinct. Tusks, corals and trigonids (a prehistoric cockle) are also on the collectors' shelves.

White Cliffs, N.S.W. produces both land and marine fossils of opal along with seams of opal. A plesiosaur skeleton, 8 feet long, was mined by Ken Harris. The area is known for the opal "pineapples" as they are called, not because they truly are, but because their spiked cone shape so resembles the tropical fruit. It is believed they are really pseudomorphs of gypsum – where gypsum crystals were replaced by opal.

Petrified wood is usually found in conjunction with seam opal. The Andamooka opal field in South Australia, in its heyday, was known for its fantastic opal and a couple of plesiosaur skeletons of red crystal opal, one on display in Adelaide and one, sad to say, was cut into cabochons.

Visit the Australian Museum of Natural History in Sydney and take a gander at Eric, the plesiosaur. He is a prehistoric marine reptile and his opalized skeleton was found, I believe, in Andamooka. The museum was not able to purchase this magnificent opalized skeleton without assistance. Their cry for help was answered by the taxpayers of Australia, and philanthropic organizations and businesses. The money was raised and Eric was purchased. His gemmy bones are on display in the museum as a two-dimensional rendering of his skeleton.

In order for the display to make sense lying flat, some bones had to be omitted. It's not common knowledge that a very many of Eric's fully opalized bones, are still "entombed" in the labyrinth halls of the museum's lower level.

Robert Jones, the Museum's Collection Manager and his associate, Dr. Alex Ritchie, who is now retired but still haunts these downstairs tombs of paleontological secrets, pulled open drawer after drawer in the storage cabinets and

(Continued on page 5)



**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.

The Opal Express is published monthly by  
The American Opal Society.  
Copyright 2000. All rights reserved.  
NON-COMMERCIAL REPRINT PERMISSION GRANTED  
UNLESS OTHERWISE RESERVED  
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

George Butts



## ITEMIZATION

**ITEM: Doorprizes** at the February meeting: **Bob Dixon** won the Dremel tool and kit, and **Jim Pisani** took home a nice piece of boulder opal rough. Congratulations to you both!

Folks, remember you get a free ticket for being in attendance and you can buy extras as well.

Furthermore, each free ticket is also good for the year-end finale drawing to be held at the Christmas pot luck dinner. Come on out to the meeting and get your chances to win!

**ITEM: Black Opal** video continuation. We watched more of the *Black Opal* video at the February meeting. And it will be the subject of the March meeting as well. This is an exceptionally informative and well-made production which takes you right through cutting and polishing Lightning Ridge black opal. Very clear presentation of techniques and how to apply them when working with nobbies. Excellent photography and beautiful opal too!

**ITEM: CFMS SHOW News–Welcome Back to Riverside!!! Says Pat LaRue CFMS President-2000**

Hosted by: Valley Prospectors  
Admission: \$5 Adults, \$4 students, seniors,  
Under 12 Free with adult  
PARKING Free

CFMS is going back to Riverside for its 2000 Convention and Show. We celebrated our 60th year of existence here in 1996. We will hold the first Convention and Show of the new millennium here in 2000. All activities will be held at the Riverside Convention Center.

**Gold & Gem Show  
and 64th CFMS Convention  
August 4 - 6, 2000  
Riverside Convention Center  
3433 Orange St., Riverside California**

**ITEM: Anglic Gemcutter**, a monthly magazine "Of, For & About Gemcutters Interests; may our Global Tribe prosper". (503) 632-4826 Ph/FAX/Mess. information; DISCOVER/ Visa/MC accepted by telephone/FAX/letter. Editor Rick Ford, mAGi@bctonline.com

**ITEM:** CFMS website is <http://www.cfmsinc.org>  
AFMS website is <http://www.amfed.org>

**ITEM: Field Trip March 17 – 19** Victor Valley Tailgate Swap & Show. The event is held north of Victorville on the flat just in front of the Verde Antique quarry. There'll be plenty of material to purchase and you're invited to bring any material you'd like to trade. Side trips up to the quarry are a short climb uphill. A pretty tri-colored marble is found on the east side of the same hill. -Information provided by Brad Smith

## What's happening???

### Calendar of Upcoming Events Dates and Locations of Shows

**March 11 10AM-6PM March 12 10AM-5PM**  
Pasadena Lapidary Society, San Marino  
Masonic Lodge, 3130 Huntington Dr, San  
Marino, CA

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

**Mar 17 – 19** Victorville Gem & Min Society,  
Victor Valley Tailgate Swap & Show,  
Victorville, CA (see *ITEM:* at left for details)

**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 Kearney Mesa Rd, San Diego, CA

**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**

64th CFMS  
Convention  
August 4 -  
6, 2000  
Riverside  
Convention  
Center

# Looking Back

Did you help to pour the punch?  
 Or to put the chairs in place?  
 Or if a member seemed  
 to have an unfamiliar face,  
 Did you try to make them at their ease  
 or did you clasp their hand?  
 Or did you just ignore them,  
 and let them forlornly stand?  
 Did you volunteer for Committee work  
 or weren't you even there?  
 Did you try to help pull the load,  
 or did you duck your share?  
 Or were you in absentia,  
 ensconced upon the shelf?  
 We have no right to ask you,  
 so why not ask yourself?

(author & original source unknown, via pegmatite 01/00)



## The McCondra Report

(Continued from page 3)  
 let me gaze upon Eric's "leftovers."

I asked the two esteemed colleagues, who had been so much help to me in past identification of N.S.W. fossils, about the Queensland boulder opal fields. They informed me that Queensland fields are not known for much opalization of fossils. Although around Lake Eyre the gathering of many large skeletons (no traces of opal) seems to say that the inland sea was shut off both north and south by the raising up of low ranges that run east and west. This suggests that the amphibians claimed a series of slowly drying lagoons as their habitat.

I was told that true ironstone fossils are scarce and need to be studied and documented. They encourage miners to bring newly found fossils to the museum for study. There are disappointments when excited miners and researchers alike find that exciting "discoveries" are often just not so. Often, the human mind can see what it wishes to see and with its imagination extrapolates an unusual concretion into fossil remains.

Most ironstone shapes, other than wood, appearing for identification in Sydney, have, although they look to be a fossil to the miner, turned out to be an ironstone concretion. Concretions come in many shape categories other than round or oval. There are rumors on the Yowah opal fields that the Queensland Museum has paleontologists studying some ironstone shell casts (devoid of opal). Leslie Stewart and Andreas Georghio of Yowah unearthed what looks to be a large ironstone tree with opalization. They are cleaning and preparing it for display.

Yowah has a claim owned by Trafford and Val Hughes called The Wood Claim. It produces gem quality crystal opal and matrix opal wood casts. Also called pipe opal it has long been known that some pipe opal holds traces of wood tissue. The experts still argue what form the pipe opal was originally, i.e.: steam vents, reeds, wood, crinoid stems, etc. Others say all of the above. ☼

## 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.**

### March 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	30	31	

= 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.

# OPAL MINING ADVENTURES – Virgin Valley Nevada

Part 4

By Bob Halahan

## The CCC Camp

The Virgin Valley campground was really a beautiful place when we stayed there. The "Three C's" (Civilian Conservation Corps) had built the swimming pool in the late thirties and the shower was located in the old pump house next door.

The swimming pool was actually dug by the three C's and a warm Artesian well was tapped for the water source. The water still flows and is a comfortable 90 degrees. During our stay there, everyone made an effort to keep it clean.

The Fish and Wildlife Service which had control over the campground did nothing to improve it. It was as if they were trying to discourage people from coming there. One ranger actually buried all the garbage cans so as not to be bothered with emptying them. When this didn't work, they had to make a dump.

In LA, my brother and I got hold of a ladder from a swimming pool that was being dismantled. We hauled it all the way to V. V. and installed it at the swimming hole. After we left, they took it out to discourage people from swimming there.

We were there when they rounded up all the wild horses from the adjacent hills. The guy in charge said there was no sense feeding them because they were going to take them out somewhere and shoot them. They did that!

Next they were hoping that the campground would disintegrate because they did nothing to keep it up. As you can see, it's the same old story, the government trying to push people off the lands that belong to them. Since you can't sue the government, or stop them, someone came up with a great idea. Why not sue each individual person for their actions. If all these court cases got into the news it would create a scandal because all of these different people were being charged with different misdemeanors. To this end, the Virgin Valley area locals formed a group called "People For The Refuge." Since the surrounding area was a wildlife refuge, it was a good name.

I heard from my good friend Red before she died that the rangers had put the ladder back, deepened the pool, put new benches in, and fixed the old shower house. They are such nice, wonderful people to have done that!! I always wondered a little why they had such a quick change of heart????

## "Green Hand George"

You noticed I kind of set his name by itself. There is a reason for this. Not that he is special, but let us say "different." Oh, if it weren't for the characters in this world, how boring it would be! Thank you Lord for all the entertaining people that make our lives fun to live.

Here is George's story. He was born in England in 1907. He came from a wealthy family. With wealth comes it's privileges. I seem to remember that his parents died when he was about five years old. He then came to this country around 1912. Wasn't that the same year that the Titanic sunk? Just think for a while if he had taken "that boat" across instead of a later one. His aunt was taking him to the USA to start a new life.

In those times, since they had money, "the privileged" were given special treatment. For example, they didn't have to go through all the health inspections that immigrating common

people had to endure.

His aunt was a wise old bird. She told him that he would have to go through the inspections with the common people so that he could appreciate the hardships which they had to go through.

He once told me that it turned out to be a very good thing. He said that he had seen people with rashes and other medical defects crying in the corner. He came up to this one little girl and asked her why she was crying? "Because I have something wrong with me and my mother and I can't come into this country."

As he went around the room, he encountered stories of the same nature. This was to give him an appreciation of how lucky he was to be in this great country for the rest of his life.

When I first came to the valley, someone told me there was an old man with a claim producing some very unique opal. They said he was living over there in a 'Fallout Shelter.' Well that kind of got my curiosity up. I had to see for myself.

So the next day my brother and I headed off to "Green Hand George's". I'll bet you are wondering where he got that name? I gave it to him. When we arrived at the "Place," sure enough, there was an underground shelter.

"Hi, my name is George." Then he extended one of his 'Green' hands to make our acquaintance. "I'll bet you are wondering about my 'Green Hands'?"

"Not really," I said. To each his own!

"Well, let me explain. I mix up a solution to color the rock which my opal comes in. Right now, I am using Tidy Bowl."

I looked around for a toilet, but there was none! In fact, there wasn't even an out house.

"You are probably wondering where my out house is? Let me tell you a story that will explain where it is." By now my eyes were searching every hill around the place looking for 'The Lost Toilet.'

George continued, "I was warned that the Bureau of Land Management was going around the valley looking for out-houses that were not self contained, just to create a fuss. Well let me tell you, I sure had a surprise for them when they got here. It was one of those female type rangers who came a calling."

"I represent the B.L.M. and I can't find your outhouse anywhere! Do you mind if I look in your 'Bomb' shelter?"

"Ma'am, that's not a bomb shelter, that is my home."

After looking at Green Hand George's 'Home,' she said, "I can't for the life of me see anywhere where you could go to the bathroom!"

"Have you noticed how green my garden is, and how well everything is growing?" Green Hand kind of smiled and said, "why don't you stop by at the end of the summer and try some of my vegetables? They are quite tasty!"

The B.L.M. lady broke into a loud laughter and then stepped into her car. We could hear her laughing all the way down the road. ✿

(to be continued next month)

## Notes From Lightning Ridge

Hi, I was in error reporting the accident recently, Mario the buyer was not involved. It was another Mario. Rumors fly thick here.

Our name of Lightning Ridge is well justified. The name came into being over 100 years ago when a shepherd and some hundreds of sheep were incinerated by a mammoth lightning bolt - the name stuck. A few nights ago the whole town was awakened by a crash that sounded like the earth splitting in two. It was the TV and radio repeater antenna taking a direct hit.

Dr Ram Pratap, Lightning Ridge resident for many years was killed in a light plane accident near Brisbane a few days ago and will be sadly missed by his many friends here and in the great world outside our little town.

I know I promised mining machinery, but I have to go to Sydney this morning so it will have to wait. We have a 7 hour drive up the western falls of the great dividing range, and over the top to the coast. Some magnificent scenery on the way. I am looking forward to the cool climate, as the past few days have hit 35 deg. C.

gotta run,

james d

<jdumar@iniaccess.net.au>

-----  
If you want to see a picture of the Ridge with lightning, go to <http://www.wj.com.au/index.html>. While you are there, you might also look around at the pictures of LR. From what I read, there are ironstone ridges all around which attract lightning, much as does a lightning rod!! Hale

(from Lapidary Digest #240 10/18/99)



## FOSSILS

While we are enjoying Barbara McCondra's attention to opal fossils in The McCondra Report, here's a heads up to all who are interested generally in the subject of fossils.

There are two nice articles presently in circulation which discuss recent finds and developments in the fossil record. These are the February 2000 issue of *Rock & Gem* and the March 2000 issue of *National Geographic*. Both reveal exceptional photographs of rather amazing fossil finds.

*National Geographic* provides an overview of a site in Germany where they are locating impressions of 40+ million year old fossil feathers and other fine details such as the stomach contents and fur of small animals.

In *Rock & Gem*, highly detailed fossils of insects appear from the Florissant Fossil Beds in Colorado. Fossils of delicate structures such as insect wings have been found. ☼

## Ode To An Opalhollic

By Dolores Rose

My husband is an opalhollic,  
It's a fact, 'tis sad, but true.  
It sounds bad, but he's not sick,  
He has LOTS, but thinks it's few!

He has Aussie stones of white,  
Spencer, Boulder & Mexico.  
His eyes glaze when greens blaze bright.  
He grabs the jar and home they go!

They are stacked in jars and bottles,  
He has them stashed in every drawer.  
From booth to booth he never dawdles  
To fulfill his lust for more!

If we spread opals out like carpet  
We would have them wall to wall.  
I'll put my money on a bet  
That he could never cut them all.

(from GI Nugget 12/98)

## How To Find The Star In A Garnet

Cut both ends of a three pound coffee can. Put a light with a 300-watt bulb inside the can. Make a cover with a 1-inch hole in it and put over the can with the light inside.

Make a bar with holes ranging from 1/4 to 1/2 inch. Place the garnet in the appropriately sized hole.

Rotate garnet over light coming through the 1-inch hole until the dark spot in the garnet shows up in the middle of the garnet. Mark this spot with fingernail polish. Dop on the spot marked and shape and polish the garnet.

The star should be exactly opposite the spot you marked. You can also dop exactly opposite the sport marked and work the stone accordingly. Either side should produce a star. ☼

(Staurolite Jan-Feb / 00)



## CFMS FIELD TRIP TO STONE CANYON RESCHED-

Here's information about the postponed field trip to Stone Canyon. The new date has been set for Saturday, May 13th. Meeting point is 9AM in Parkfield, CA. There is a \$25 fee which permits the gathering of 50# of Stone Canyon jasper. If anyone wants additional amounts it will be .50 cents per pound. There will be about 20,000#'s dug up and waiting for the group according to the article in the CFMS newsletter. Bring CASH, no checks accepted.

Also, no dealers or commercial resellers. This material and field trip are made available to hobbyists and rockhounds.

Attendees MUST be members of a CFMS club, if you belong to the AOS you qualify.

4x4 high clearance vehicles strongly recommended.

Bring tools and protective gear for sharp-edged jasper: eye goggles, gloves, hammers & chisels. ☼