

The Opal Express

American Opal Society
 P.O. Box 4875
 Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875



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Volume #33 Issue #05 May, 2001

Board Meeting - Monday May 7, 2001

General Meeting – Thursday, May 10!

Leslie Neff and Larry Hoskinson will speak on Coober Pedy opal. Join us at 7 PM!

TO:

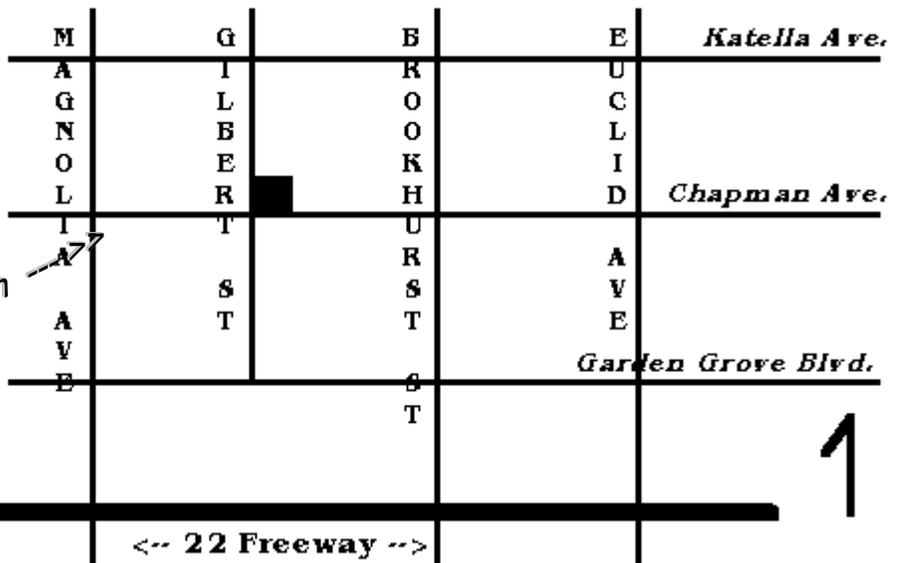
GENERAL MEETINGS —

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 →



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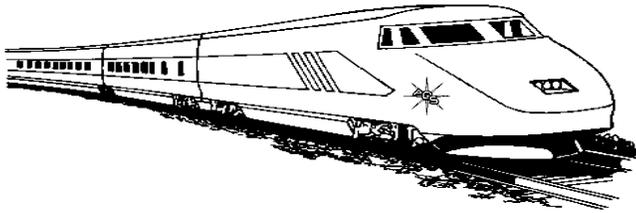
The Opal Express

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Published
monthly
by the
*American
Opal
Society*

Volume 33, Issue 5



Review of Western Queensland Opals CD by Carol Bova

The 'Western Queensland Opals' CD created by the Queensland Government Department of Mines and Energy represents an amazing look at the geology, opal occurrences, infrastructure, and mining claims history of a number of areas in Western Queensland. These geographic data sets related to opal exploration and mining are offered here in digital format for the first time. The maps on this CD provide an extraordinary amount of detail and will prove to be fascinating for the armchair explorer and should be extremely useful for the field explorer.

Links on the initial page provide additional background information on the technical aspects of the CD's contents, as well as Opal and Fossicking Information. This CD will become a valued tool for opal lovers and explorers. Kudos to the Queensland Department of Mines and Energy for producing it!

A Detailed Look at the Opals CD Contents Opal Information

This page opens with very brief descriptions of the history of opal mining in Australia, the chemical composition and structure of opal, different types of opal, and types of play of color. The page continues with more information on geology of the opal areas, opal fields, mining, processing and production, values and prices, exploration and new developments and winds up with a link to comprehensive six-page list references to Queensland opal.

The photos of opal mining in progress are good, and there are links to a map of altered Winton Formation and Grimman Creek Formation areas which are described as prospective host rock for future opal discoveries which give a sample of the types of information maps in the GIS sections of the CD.

(continued on page 2)

President's Message

From Mike Kowalsky

I was saddened to hear that our planned speaker last month, Bonita Chamberlin is in the hospital because of injuries from an accident. We wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to hearing her speak in the future.

This month's big news is that we have negotiated a contract with the Quality Inn in Anaheim for our annual show on November 3rd and 4th, 2001. Now we can get down to the business of sending contracts to all who have asked for them and others who are considering displaying at our show. We are also planning the seminars to be held during the show.

In April, our monthly meeting participants were treated to views of two specimens of opal mined in the US. One was the sample of rough opal from Woodward Ranch near Alpine Texas. (One of our members, Pete Goetz, and a friend went to Woodward Ranch during spring break and obtained some additional samples of rough opal.) The second specimen we had in April was a finished piece of blue-based opal from Idaho. Both specimens have portions with fire showing. Both specimens will be in the AOS display case we are getting together for the Searchers and the Culver City Shows.

Some of us are planning to go to Idaho to the Blue Opal Mine in late June.

Come see us at our next monthly meeting on May 10, where Leslie Neff and Larry Hoskinson will be speaking on Coober Pedy opal. See you there!

Mike

Review: Western Queensland Opals CD (cont'd)

Fossicking Information

The Queensland Department of Mines and Energy is responsible for regulating fossicking (prospecting) for opal, sapphire, chrysoprase and other gemstones including agate, thunder eggs, aquamarine, topaz, zircon and garnet. The Opals CD includes information on legislation, and has a FAQ section with useful definitions. This page also explains the different types of licenses and their cost, and explains where fossicking is allowed with and without permits.

Gemstone Information

At the bottom of the Fossicking page is a simple note saying, "Gemstone Information," and a set of 3 links labeled: chrysoprase, opal and sapphire. Each link is to a full page of very interesting information. In future publications, the gemstone information warrants a page of its own, with descriptive photographs of the gemstones described.

Data

The Data link gives extensive information on additional materials that are available and points of contact.

How to Use the CD Maps

When a user understands the terminology, and the system, it's fairly easy to use. But if the users are not familiar with GIS (Geographic Information Systems) formats, they will find that learning to use the CD is not intuitively obvious, especially if they load the CD before reading the jacket copy. (I initially only read as far as the instructions for installing the free Esri ArcExplorer 2 data browser on the jacket of the CD, and that was easy. If I had continued onto the next paragraph, it might have been easier, but having missed them, I had to get assistance from a computer pro to learn the basics.) On the CD, the directions are under the heading of Software on the HTML pages of the CD. A brief note under the Introduction that instructions are found under the Software link would be a welcome addition.

Once installed, ArcExplorer provides good information on how to use its features in its Help Menu. Expect to spend a little time exploring and learning how to use the features. Once learned, they open up a world of information. By their description, "A Map View is a collection of themes, a theme being a distinct set of geographic features in a particular geographic data source. For example, a Map View showing a country might have one theme

representing cities, one theme representing roads, one representing rivers, and so forth.

Exploring a Map View

When, for example, the Geologic theme is selected, a label appears when the cursor passes over a color coded feature. In the Winton area, geologic features shown are Winton Formation, alluvium, residual sediments, Mackunda Formation and Werite Beds. To identify opal locations, you first select Opal Occurrences by clicking on that theme in the legend which appears to the left of the map. Red spots indicate opal locations, so clicking on any red spot on the map with the Identify tool opens a results box. The box shows the mine name, and in this case, shows it was an abandoned mine, gave its location, described the host rock as Winton Formation; Cretaceous; Arenite-Mudrock, produced less than .1 tonne of opal, gave longitude and latitude, and various other information.

Double-clicking on a theme allows you to select a specific field within the theme to be displayed on the map. You can choose to see what mining claims are in a given district, then explore the details for those that are displayed.

Areas Covered

The opal project CD has 1:250,000 geological maps for the following areas: Brighton Downs, Connemara, Dirranbandi, Eromanga, Eulo, Mackunda, Maneroo, and Toompine. Thirty other areas are available for purchase from the Department of Mines and Energy, Queensland in digital format, and all 38 are available in hardcopy (paper) for a fee. Professional miners may be interested in the other reports such as borehole, magnetic, radiometric and electromagnetic surveys available from the Department of Mines and Energy.

Contact Info: Produced by Department of Mines and Energy, Queensland Minerals and Energy Centre, 61 Mary Street Brisbane Queensland Australia 4000, GPO Box 194 Brisbane Queensland Australia 4001.

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OPAL BOOK COLLECTORS!

**For a list of out of print opal books –
email me in Australia at
hmartin@mullum.com.au**

Harry Martin

A Trip to the Himalaya Mine

Here is another story about a Himalaya Mine trip to add to the others that have come out in the past couple of months. This trip was taken on April 22, 2000.

The Himalaya mine in San Diego County has been a magnet for rockhounds for many years. But it has been off-limits and out of reach for us amateurs. My friend Jim Pisani called one day in mid-April and said he had reserved 2 spots on the Saturday trips that Simon King leads to the Himalaya a couple times each month. I jumped at the chance and the fifty bucks didn't seem too much to pay for the opportunity. The arrangement was that we would meet Simon on Saturday April 22 at 8:30 AM in Santa Ysabel. I watched the weather forecasts as the day approached. It called for light rain and fog with clearing later in the day. That didn't seem much like the inland weather we are used to but there wasn't much we could do about it. Jim's wife Rhonda and my wife Maureen were offered the opportunity to come along but they vehemently declined. They preferred to stay home and cook a gourmet meal for us when we returned. I thought to myself that this is rockhounding at its finest.

As promised, the weather was lousy. We arrived in Santa Ysabel and met the other 7 people who had signed up. The weather couldn't dampen the spirit of THAT group. Simon King collected the money and showed off a box of tourmaline that he had collected on his previous trips. Simon took a load of people in his Jeep and I took the rest in my Jeep. This minimized the number of vehicles driving on the private roads that lead to the mine. We headed west through the fog on a nice paved road that passed through the non-town of Mesa Grande. We then turned off onto a dirt road that the rain had turned into slippery ruts. We couldn't see the countryside at all. I followed Simon's taillights until we arrived on the mine dump. We checked the GPS and compass and marked our location on the chart. Still couldn't see much past the dump. We parked smack in front of one of the mine entrances. Turned out that entrance had a cave-in just inside and they had opened another one just 100 feet further around the mountain. Neither of the tunnels had been used in a long time.

Everyone jumped out of the Jeeps and set up for digging and screening. The rain had washed the surface of the dump and it was quickly obvious that small pieces of colorful tourmaline could be found right at your feet. Those of us with bad eyes found that

crawling around on hands and knees with our reading glasses on was productive.

But there was plenty of mine tailings that were crying to be screened. Many of the folks got out their screens and started digging and shaking. There was a mud puddle that quickly became the place everyone washed the material left after the shaking. It was there that the color of the tourmaline started to show up. The rain really was not our enemy – it helped us in many ways. There was not one complaint about getting wet.

As the day wore on, the clouds would lift briefly and we could see that we were on a beautiful wooded hillside. In the springtime, everything is wonderfully green on Gem Hill. We could hear the wild turkeys gobbling back in the trees. The only drawback was the Poison Oak that ringed the dump. It glistened in the dampness and beckoned us to brush against it. No one did to my knowledge.

Everyone compared the pieces of tourmaline they found. I proudly had the biggest chunk. It was a broken crystal about an inch and half in diameter and an inch long. It was both pink and green. Simon made everyone come look at it. I was proud and embarrassed at the same time.

Lunch was a fun experience. It was a time when everyone could sit around on the back of the Jeeps and on a big log and shoot the breeze. The group had a great deal of experience with minerals and rockhounding and I learned a lot by listening. Everyone had a baggie or two with a sandwich and some snacks. Everyone except Simon that is. Simon showed up with a loaf of bread, a huge bottle of mayo, a package of meat and a head of lettuce. He made his sandwich on the fly. He explained that the poker game the previous evening had lasted so long that he only had time to dump stuff from his fridge into a sack before he went to the meeting point. Besides, his wife was out of town and he was basically helpless without her. But the poker game was worth the trouble and loss of sleep.

As we neared the end of the day, we heard a screech from Simon. In the middle of the very muddy road, he saw something angular sticking out. He reached down and pulled out a prize piece of tourmaline. It was 4 inches long and 1½ inches in diameter and was partially embedded in a piece of quartz. The color was beautiful. He was so happy he could hardly
(cont'd on page 4)

Himalaya Mine Trip (cont'd)

talk. We wondered how such a specimen got there and Simon conjured up the vision of small rubber-tired mine trucks bouncing out of the mine with their hoppers full of rocks and crystals. Occasionally some nice stuff would fall out on the road and get covered with dirt. All of a sudden my piece of tourmaline seemed rather puny.

Even though the 2 entrances to the Himalaya that we parked by had not been used in years, there was a new entrance 200 yards up the hillside. Through the trees we could hear the sounds of engines running and it was obvious that a great deal of mining activity was happening up there. I suppose a new dump was being created which someday other rockhounds may be allowed to sift.

All in all the day was great and worth the money – in spite of the weather. If anything could have been better from a rockhound point of view, it would have been a guided tour of the active mine itself. I would have loved, even for extra money, to see the real underground pegmatite getting mined and the large crystals that are so valuable, and to take some pictures of it all. I think the mine owners should consider doing all the things that would make that possible on a scheduled basis.

When Jim and I got home, the wives had a great meal waiting, complete with hors d'oeuvres and wine. They had a great day and so did we.

Bill Lokken
Mission Viejo

Rock and Roll - Is Your Vehicle Ready? *by Cathy Gaber*

You're ready for your field trip, you have your tools, safety equipment, water, etc. packed and you've made plans for what to do with the great minerals or rough you will find. Have you given any thought to getting your vehicle ready for the trip too?

Nothing replaces regular maintenance as one of the best safeguards to a car or truck's continued reliable service, but before a trip, there are a number of things that should be specifically checked. Tires should be examined for bald spots and appropriate air pressure. A simple gauge that can be kept in the

glove compartment is an easy way to test the latter. Car fluids should also be checked. Be sure the oil, radiator fluid, battery water and window wash fluid are at the proper levels, and don't forget gas! It might also be a wise idea to carry extra containers of all of these fluids, especially if you will be any distance from "civilization". It doesn't hurt to clean the battery contacts, and if there is any doubt about the battery's condition, replace it.

To be really prepared, there are a number of useful items to pack in your vehicle. Jumper cables, a tire patch kit, a flashlight, flares, matches, a shovel and kitty litter (to be used to increase traction) are all practical things to have. A real spare tire is definitely preferable to a "toy" temporary tire which will not hold up over long distances or rough terrain. None of these things will do you any good though if you do not know how to use them. Learn to change a tire or patch one, know how to use jumper cables and how to replace your vehicle fluids. A seldom needed item, a winch, could be a real life saver if you do any off road driving especially in wet, boggy terrain.

Another potential hazard to watch for especially in rough terrain is your vehicle's clearance capabilities. A low clearance family sedan, especially weighted down with a few hundred pounds of freshly collected rock, runs the danger of bottoming out, possibly damaging the suspension or puncturing the oil pan. When in doubt, don't put you or your vehicle at risk.

For your own comfort, food, water and a blanket are also sensible additions. For peace of mind, you should also have your insurance provider's and roadside service's phone numbers handy. Last but not least, use your seatbelt.

There is nothing worse than a field trip gone unnecessarily bad by negligent vehicle preparation. It only takes a few minutes to give your car or truck the best possible chance to carry you safely and comfortably to and from your destination.

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STONE CANYON FIELD TRIP
Saturday, June 23, 2001
By Steve lyle,
CFMS Field Trip South Chair

We have been working to set up a trip into Stone Canyon again this year to coincide with the CFMS show in Paso Robles. This last week I received confirmation that we can hold the trip. The trip will be a one-day event during the Paso Robles show, on Saturday the 23rd. The trip is co-sponsored by the Santa Lucia Rockhounds and the CFMS. Paid attendance to the show is a pre-requisite for attending the field trip. The cost for the show is \$4.00 Adults, \$3.00 under 18 & over 55, and free under 12 and scouts in uniform. To attend the field trip, you must also belong to a CFMS member club or come as a guest of a CFMS member club. The material is the same as last year - some of the best Brecciated Jasper around! The material is very colorful and takes a glasslike polish. The rancher is asking the same fee as last year, which is \$25.00 minimum, and that gets you 50 lbs. of the material. Any additional material is at a cost of .50 cents per pound. You must bring CASH, as the rancher does not want checks. The rancher is planning to take a bulldozer to the location we dug last year and bring up fresh material between now and the trip. We will be meeting at the Fairgrounds in Paso Robles, located at 2198 Riverside Ave. We will be assembling in the parking lot across from the show at 7:30 a.m. I will probably be there by 7:00am. You will need to sign a waiver. We will leave the fairgrounds PROMPTLY at 8:00am to caravan to Parkfield. We will have tickets to the show available to those who have not yet attended the show. I want to stress a few things prior to the trip to make sure everyone is prepared.

Last year there were over 200 people who attended this field trip, and as we lined up to drive in the morning of the show, I had some people in the back of the line of 100 cars actually leave. I can only suppose they thought that being at the back, they would have no chance to get any good material. Also, people were getting upset as to who was going to get in first and where they were in line. Everyone who attended the field trip got as much as they wanted, and it was all top quality. It is a very good possibility that this trip, too, will have a lot of attendance, even being called so late. The main thing is, even if you're the last person in line, it is going to be great and you'll get the same quality material that the first person gets. Ralph Bishop pulled one of the best pieces of the day out last year after 95% of the people had left. Be patient, be courteous, (That's why we were invited back this year-we were so well behaved that the rancher was impressed by us), BE SAFE, and get great material. We will be working in close quarters so safety is a must. If you ignore safety, you will be asked to leave. This is also rattlesnake season and this is rattlesnake country. You must stay in the collecting area. People will not be allowed to wander off. Also, we expect that the area will be under extreme fire danger.

The Santa Lucia Rockhounds will be supplying a couple of canopies for shade, and water for people to drink. If you

plan on coming, safety glasses or goggles, gloves, hat, long pants and sunscreen are mandatory. I recommended a long sleeve shirt last year because this material is like razors when broken, and when it is hit with a hammer, the shards can become airborne and cut quite easily. But it will be very hot, so it is your choice. Bring a hammer, chisel, shovel, and buckets for your material. Bring plenty of fluids and a lunch.

High profile vehicles ARE needed, although it is not necessary that they be 4-wheel drive. This is a working cattle ranch, which means no animals are allowed. We recommend that children do not attend unless they are members of the club and are planning to collect material. All people who attend the trip will be charged the \$25.00 fee by the rancher.

Please!! This is a classic location that very few people have been allowed into in the last 30 years. We are being allowed back because of our good behavior last year. Let's show them again how orderly we can be, and this kind of trip can keep happening.

In the next few days, I will be posting this trip on the CFMS website (<http://www.cfmsinc.org>), so by the time you get this you should check the site for any further details. If you plan on going, please drop me an Email @ sivie@gte.net Thanks.

Steve lyle

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
American Opal Nov. Society Opal and Gem Show
Nov. 3-4, 2001 - Anaheim, CA

SHOW TIME!

May 12-13 2001 Reno, NV Reno Gem and Mineral Society, Reno Livestock - Events Center, Exhibit Hall: 1350 N. Wells Ave., Sat 10-5 Sun 10-4, John Peterson (775) 356-8820

May 19-20 2001 Newbury Park, CA Conejo Gem & Mineral Club, Borchard Park Community Center, 190 Reino Rd. , Sat. 9 - 5; Sun. 10 - 5, Don Bullard (805) 498-9399

May 19-20 2001 Yucaipa, CA, Yucaipa Valley Gem and Mineral Society, Schere Community Center, First and Avenue B, Sat. 10 - 6; Sun. 10 - 5, Richard Crockett (909) 790-3958, Publicity Linda Nichols (909) 790-1190

May 26 -28 2001 Weaverville, CA, Trinity Gem and Mineral Society, Lowden Park, Sat. and Sun. 10 - 5; Mon. 10 -4. Jack Jennewein (530) 778-3786

June 2-3 2001 Glendora, CA, Glendora Gems, Goddard Middle School, 859 E. Sierra Madre, Sat. 10 - 5; Sun. 10 -4, Mark Thompson (626) 335-3814

June 2 - 3 2001 San Diego, CA, San Diego Lapidary Society, Inc., Al Bahr Temple; 5440 Kearny Mesa Rd. (Behind the Hampton Inn) Sat 10-6 Sun 10-4, Richard Large () 693-0464

June 22-24 2001 Paso Robles, CA, CFMS Show & Convention - Gem, Jewelry, and Mineral Show, San Lucia Rockhounds, California Mid-State Fairgrounds, 2198 Riverside Avenue, Paso Robles, Co-Chairs: Bea & Sherm Griselle (805) 238-4366



American Opal Society Membership Renewal

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP (Select one)	DUES / RATES* (select one)**	AMOUNT PAID
1) All US Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$25.00	
2) International Members = All addresses outside of US Addresses	\$30.00	
3) Additional Badges/each	\$5.00	
** <u>SENIOR DISCOUNT</u> = Age 65 or over deduct \$5.00	-\$5.00	
Name badge (optional) \$5.00 each – includes engraving (Badge free when joining)	\$5.00	

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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 / E-MAIL / WEBSITE if you prefer a partial listing)

(If yes please sign here) _____ Date _____

Without your signature here you will not be included in the member info list.

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 here) _____ Date _____

Without your signature here you will not be included in the dealer roster.

NAME		
BUSINESS NAME		
ADDRESS		APT #: or PO BOX
CITY	STATE	ZIP or POSTAL CODE
COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)		
PHONE: Home ()	Business ()	FAX ()
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NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:
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.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The workshop at Walker Jr. High is available for the use of AOS members on Wednesday nights.

Please call Stan McCall at Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session.

WORKSHOP RULES

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 fee is \$3 per session.
5. To assist us in scheduling, please call Stan or a board member in advance to reserve shop time. Thank you!

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(Article Deadline is the 15th of the month prior
to each issue)