The Opal Express

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

Volume #36 Issue #07
July 2003

In This Issue:

TO:

Important Dates:
Board Meeting: July 3
7:00 PM at Ball Jr. High School

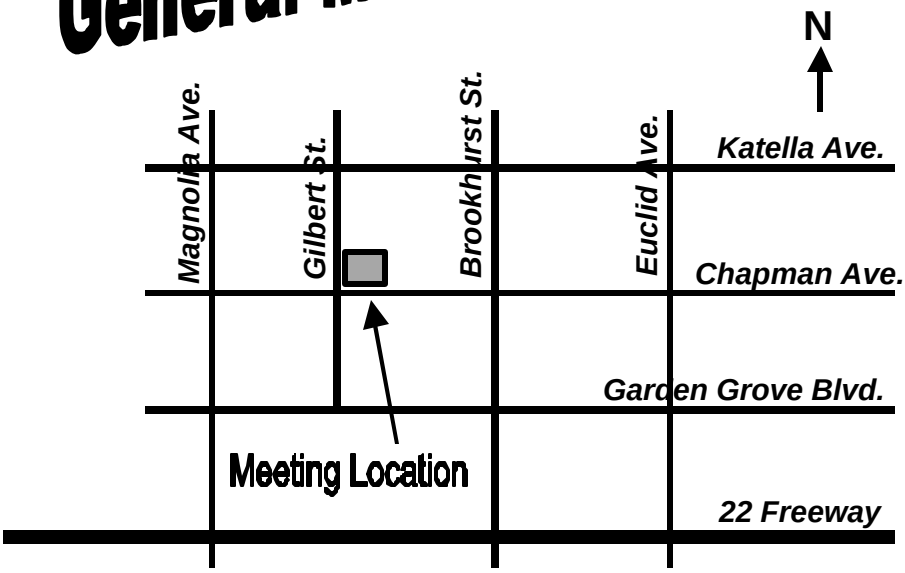
General Meeting: July 10

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

2nd Thursday of the Month
7:00 pm - 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*

General Meeting: July 10th



The American Opal Society

http://opalsociety.org

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American Opal Society Membership Renewal

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
DUES: SELECT ONE	*All US Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii*	$25.00	
	International Members = All addresses outside of US Addresses	$30.00	
ADDITIONAL BADGES = $5.00 each (First Badge free when joining)		$5.00	
ONE TIME INITIATION FEE = All New members		$10.00	
SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or over deduct $5.00		-$5.00	
TOTAL PAID – DUES, less Senior Discount plus Badge plus Initiation Fee (if Applicable)			

Please make check or money order payable to "American Opal Society". Mail payment and application to:
American Opal Society; PO BOX 4875; Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

NAME		
BUSINESS NAME		
ADDRESS		APT #: or PO BOX
CITY	STATE	ZIP or POSTAL CODE
COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)		
PHONE: Home ( )	Business ( )	FAX ( )
E-MAIL	WEBSITE	
OCCUPATION:		
HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:		

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.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER & DEALERS LIST: The AOS publishes a membership directory once per year in its Newsletter, the *Opal Express*. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information that you want listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address ☐ Phone ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

☐ Include my name & address on a list provided to the Dealers selling at our Annual Opal & Gem Show.

If you checked any box above, please sign here: _____ Date_____

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

The Opal Express is published monthly by
***The American Opal Society*.**

Editor-Jim Pisani
Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:

The Opal Express C/O
Jim Pisani
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

Email: webmaster@opalsociety.org
Article Deadline is the 20th of the month prior to each issue

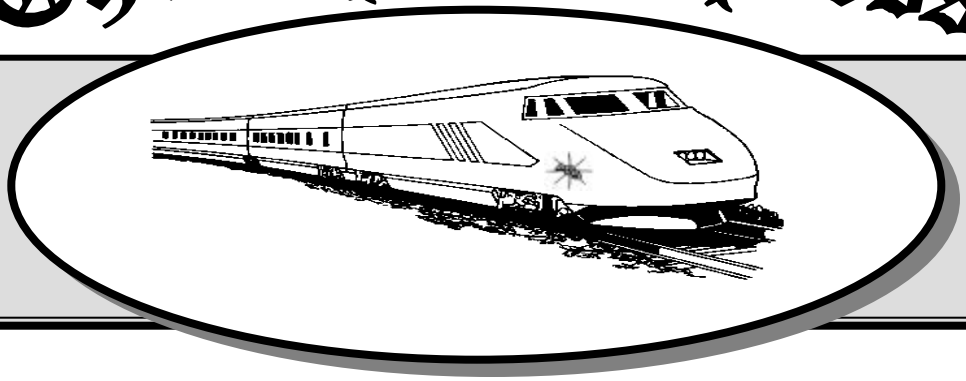
Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL. If your label shows **the** current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

A 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.

Thank you,
The Editor

The Opal Express



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July 2003

Volume 36 Issue 7

President's Message

By Pete Goetz

HI FOLKS,

As I mentioned in last months Opal Express, the Opal Society was invited to participate in the Culver City Clubs "Fiesta of Gems." We set up two display cases. One with opal from Australia and Ethiopia and one with opal from North and South America. Both cases contained many examples of opal from these parts of the world. Mike Kowalsky did an excellent job of "merchandising" the displays which drew many visitors and many very favorable comments. It was fun speaking with those folks who were not aware that opal could be found in so many places in North and South America. Also, our own Mike Kowalsky gave a seminar titled Created Opal Identification, which was well attended. (Mike will have more on this in separate article in this volume.)

Attendance at last months general meeting was fair. I guess summertime will take its toll. Speaking of attendance, many of you live a great distance from Garden Grove Ca. making it difficult to attend the general meetings. In lieu of coming to the meetings, I hope that whenever there is a "rock and mineral or gem show" in your area, that you put on your AOS name badge and attend these shows. By doing this you can help spread **OPAL FEVER,** let the general public know we exist, and possibly generate membership.

REMEMBER, the Opal show is coming up fast. We still need volunteers!

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Opal Workshop

The AOS opal workshop is at **Ball Jr. High School** on 1500 W. Ball Road, Anaheim, CA. It will be available for AOS members on Wednesday. Contact **Stan McCall** for details at **(714) 220-9282** if you plan to attend a session.

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Addendum To June Donation

We forgot to mention last month that **Murray Willis,** who donated to the AOS a very nice Boulder Opal Specimen has a business called Australian Opal Mines of S.A. (See http://www.austopalmines.net.au/).

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Culver City Gem Show

AOS Created Opal Identification Presentation

The AOS was invited to make a presentation relating to the theme of the show which was Opal. Mike Kowalsky put together a presentation on identification of created opal. Stan McCall helped in the presentation. He reviewed and critiqued some of the charts. He also provided an input on how to cut simulant opal to minimize some characteristics and make a more realistic natural look to the finished stone. He cut a demonstration piece which was photographed and incorporated into the briefing. A method was shown on how to observe the stone to determine if it is a simulated opal or a natural opal.

The presentation was well received by a full room of interested individuals. Many stayed after the briefing to examine the large display of samples of imitation and simulant opals. Many of the attendees also came to visit the two display cases that the American Opal Society had on the show floor. It was interesting that the case with the opal specimens from North, South and Central America had the most questions and interest by the viewers. Many had not seen the breath of opal found in the Americas especially the United States. The Culver City Gem Show attracts a lot of individuals interested in Opal and our efforts to support the show were well received and appreciated.

It is planned to present the briefing at a future monthly meeting.

Archived Newsletters Available

The Opal Express Archives are up and running again. These archives go back from the present to 1998 and in PDF file format. A account name and password and required to get into the protected area. This password will change monthly and will be in the Opal Express.

The link for the archives is:

http://www.opalsociety.org/aos_member_login.htm

To login into the protected area, type the following on the Login page:

Name: member

Password: 3opals

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Queensland Opal

Opal is Australia's National Gemstone. Australia has three main types of natural precious opal, with varieties defined by two characteristics of body tone and transparency. These include precious opal varieties such as black opal from Lightning Ridge in New South Wales and white opal from South Australia, Queensland boulder opal and matrix opal. Minor occurrences of precious opal of volcanic origin are also known in basaltic lavas and pyroclastics.

The term 'boulder opal' describes precious opal, which occurs in deposits within weathered sedimentary rocks of Cretaceous age in western Queensland. This type of precious opal is in fact unique to Queensland.

The opal is found within siliceous ironstone concretions or boulders, which range in size from less than a few centimetres to a boulder size of greater than 20 centimetres.

The smaller ironstone concretions up to 5 centimetres across, are known as 'nuts', and these may host a kernel of solid opal or contain a network of thin veins of opal through the ironstone. The best development of this variety of opal is at Yowah where the concretions form distinct nut bands and the nuts are known as 'Yowah-nuts'.

Only a small proportion of boulders contain precious opal. Boulder 'matrix opal' is where the opal occurs as an infilling of pores or holes or between grains of the host rock (ironstone). Like other precious opal, there are many varieties of boulder opals defined on body tone, play-of-colour and transparency. These mainly include black boulder opal, dark or light boulder opal.

Occurrences

Queensland's opal fields, located in the west and southwest of the State, include:

- Yowah field (the southernmost field centred on the small town of Yowah and includes Black Gate)
- Koroit field (northeast of Yowah)
- Toompine field (east and southeast of Toompine and includes Lushingtons, Coparella, Duck Creek, Sheep Station Creek and Emu Creek)
- Quilpie field (west and north northwest of the town of Quilpie and includes some of the more productive mines in recent times - Pinkilla, Bull Creek, Harlequin, and probably the most famous mine of all, the Hayricks)
- Kyabra-Eromanga field (west and northwest of Eromanga)
- Bulgroo field (north of Quilpie field in the Cheviot Range and includes the Bulgroo, or German's and to the north Budgerigar)
- Yaraka field (includes the mines in the Macedon Range, such as Mount Tighe)
- Jundah field (west of the town of Jundah over the Thompson River and includes the Jundah and Opalville mines)
- Opalton-Mayneside field (centred on the old abandoned township of Opalton and to the south in the Horse Creek - Mount Vergemont area), and
- Kynuna field (south of the town of Kynuna, the furthest field to the north).

These opal fields lie within a 300 kilometre wide belt of deeply weathered Cretaceous sedimentary rocks known as the Winton Formation, which extends in a north northwesterly direction from Hungerford on the New South Wales border, west of the townships of Cunnamulla, Quilpie, Longreach and Winton, to Kynuna, a distance of about 1000 kilometres.

Boulder opal is widely distributed in these rocks within ironstone concretions or boulders, which are generally elongated or ellipsoidal in shape (from a few centimetres across to up to 3 metres in size).

The boulders may be confined to one or more layers known as the boulder layer or may be randomly distributed through the weathered sandstone. Their composition ranges from sandstone types (a rim or crust of ferruginised sandstone surrounding a sandstone core) or ironstone types (composed almost entirely of iron oxides).

The opal occurs as a filling or lining between the concentric layers or in radial or random cracks in the ironstone, or as a kernel in smaller concretions or nuts (as found at Yowah and Koroit fields, the famous 'Yowah-nuts').

Matrix opal is where the opal occurs as a network of veins or infilling of voids or between grains of the host rock (ferruginous sandstone or ironstone).

Rare seam or band opal is also found and is typically encased in ironstone.

Pipe opal occurs in pipe-like structures which may be up to several centimetres in diameter within the sandstone and these structures may be hollow or opal filled.

Wood opal is occasionally found replacing woody tissue material.

As opposed to other sedimentary precious opal, boulder opal is attached to the ironstone and stones are usually cut with the natural ironstone backing intact. Solid opals may be cut from the ironstone material where the opal is of sufficient thickness.

Boulder opals are fashioned to standard shapes and sizes but are also cut in freeform shapes to highlight their individual beauty and to avoid wastage. Magnificent picture stones are also cut but these are mainly of interest to collectors rather than for jewellery use.

Mining, Production and Outlook

The larger mines worked in recent years are large open-cut operations.

Overburden is stripped from zones of ironstone boulder concretions. Boulders are carefully removed from the ground for processing. Heavy equipment has been used to open up most areas of old workings.

Underground methods are still applied with success in some areas. Shafts are sunk until a prospective layer is intersected, rapid sinking of shafts being accomplished with Calweld bucket drilling rigs. Miners use "light" electrical machinery driven by portable generators.

If the boulders show any evidence of opalisation, they are first removed from the mined ground and collected up for later inspection for opal content and sorted in readiness for sale as rough or for further processing.

Opal is cut and polished into cabochons or free-form shapes. These may be solid stones, doublets with a dark coloured backing, or triplets where a thin slice of opal has a quartz or glass capping fixed to the top as well.

For boulder opal, some of the ironstone is left attached as a natural backing, producing natural doublets. Other stones are cut from the ironstone matrix containing opal.

Production of opal in Queensland has remained steady during the 1990s, but a decline was experienced during the latter part.

However, Australia produces almost all of the world's opal for use in the jewellery industry and increasing demand and better prices will result in a recovery of production levels.

The Australian export market for opals has been in decline in recent years, but this trend is likely to be turned around as production increases from existing and new deposits. Australia exports most of its opal to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, USA and Europe.

As most old diggings have now been largely worked out or reworked by open-cut methods, exploration to find new prospects has commenced over known opal bearing country.

Well-resourced exploration companies have become involved and are applying more systematic and extensive exploration techniques on a regional scale in the search for new deposits. Positive results have been reported, which should lead to further exploration and new mines.

In addition to the traditional opal fields, exploration for opal has been undertaken in the Hebel - Dirranbandi area near the Queensland - New South Wales border where there is a 70 kilometre northern extension of the Cretaceous Griman Creek Formation, which hosts the Lightning Ridge opal field.

Detailed exploration by one company (Redfire Resources NL) has found gem quality black opal and prospective conditions in the area. Exploration tenures remain current in the area.

Opportunities exist for further exploration and mining of opal in Queensland by companies as well as smaller prospectors and miners. This is largely due to innovative measures in the State's mining legislation (Mineral Resources Act 1989) which has encouraged exploration.

The Department of Mines and Energy encourages feedback from mining and exploration to maintain a legislative regime, which is supportive of the opal mining industry.

Text by Barry Neville (bneville@dme.qld.gov.au), Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland, Australia. http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/mines/

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Virgin Valley Mining

By Opal Bob (Bob Halahan)

A new day, a new story. Well I "generally" took you through volcanic lava mining. As you can see it is some pretty hard stuff. Most people would just chip away at it and get what they could. Be we got real serious with all the explosions and tackled it in a serious way. You don't need a lot of money to be serious about mining. Determination is the key word. You will only get back from mining what you put into it. Hard work is always essential. But more than that it is being observant of what you are mining and how it is formed. In Virgin Valley it is a little more of a challenge because it is more than just digging it up. It is learning how to "Read " the bank that makes a successful digger. Every mine is different, but as you dig the bank it will give you certain indicators that opal will be in that general area. Some people go to the valley and just plug ahead thinking that they will eventually hit one. Maybe so. But that is luck, not skill. As you learn what indicators are in the bank, when they start to appear, they are telling you to just dig a little farther and you will find the opals that are waiting for you. That is how I was able to be a good digger in Virgin Valley.

The opal in Virgin Valley was formed all together different than the opal on the black rock. A gigantic lake was in the valley millions of years ago. Redwoods and "can't spell this word," Sequoias, you know the other big red tree, along with deciduous trees grew around the lake in Virgin Valley The front of the lake was naturally dammed up by a rhyolite flow that was about 500 ft. high. Now comes the fun and how we are going to make the Virgin Valley opal. The reason for the redwoods and so forth was that the ocean sea breeze nourished them. This came all the way from the ocean. Mountains then rose up, and then cut off the ocean breezes. The trees died and then fell into the lake. Limbs and pieces of limbs were washed ashore. Now here is where it really starts. An earthquake broke the natural breast of the dam which was the rhyolite formation and the lake drained out. Another volcanic eruption came about. this time it was mud flows the entered the valley then covered up the limbs and branches. Along with the mud was a lot of volcanic ash. You know that stuff that came out in the Mt. St. Helens explosion. Well the two mixed together. Now you have limbs covered in mud and ash.. "Then" some caustic solution seeped down and caused the limbs to decay. Sometimes completely, and sometimes partially. Then the hot water picked up the silica from the volcanic ash, "which is highly siliceous", and dissolved the silica and then deposited in the holes where the limbs were. Walla, you now have the makings of the Virgin Valley limb cast opals. Opals cast after limbs.

Since the limb casts are in a hard clay, different tools are used to mine it. Sharp needle point picks along with shovels are the basic tools. When an opal is discovered, a person will then take a needle point screw driver to pry it out. Great care must be taken at this point to try and get the opal out from the hard clay in one piece. That's it. Hope this helps.

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Catch A Falling Star

by Stephen J. Bespalko (FGMS Member)

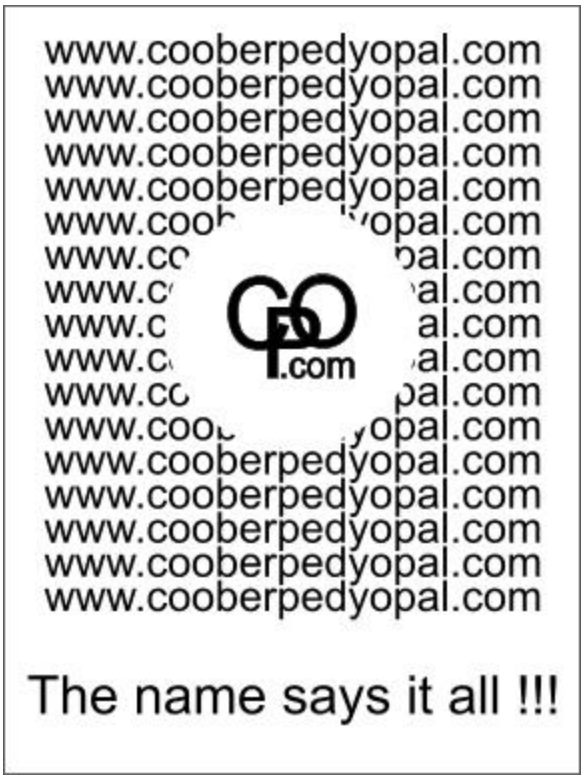
[Ed. Note: This article won second place in the adult article competition in the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies in 1996.]

On October 3, 1996, a large fireball was seen over many parts of the southwestern United States. The size of the meteor appears to make this a very rare event, and offers club members the opportunity to hunt for a piece of the meteor, which is believed to have made it to the ground. Additionally, there is an opportunity to help internationally renowned scientists with their investigation of the meteor fall, along with the possibility of winning a reward for finding a piece of the meteorite. (Also, it wouldn't hurt to have a chunk of this baby in your collection.)

Mark Boslough, of Sandia National Laboratories, and John Wasson, of UCLA, have developed a hypothesis of what happened. They suggest that the object first entered the earth's atmosphere at about 8 p.m. MDT on October 3, 1996, east of Las Cruces, New Mexico. The trajectory of the meteor was roughly east-north-east from there, towards the Texas Panhandle. While it descended at a shallow angle, it slowed and aerodynamic forces began to break it apart. Fragments could be seen falling from the main body of the meteor along the path that the meteor followed.

Boslough and Wasson believe that the main meteor fragment had sufficient momentum to carry it back into space, where it circled the earth once before reentering the atmosphere over California. Until fragments of the meteor are collected in both California and Texas (or possibly New Mexico), they can't prove that the two fireballs seen that night are part of the same meteor; however, the likelihood of the two events being linked is quite high, Boslough asserts. The fact that the two fireballs were on such a similar path, the time between the events, and the location of the two meteor falls all lead them to suspect that the two events are linked.

Since I work at Sandia National Laboratories, I gave Dr. Boslough a call to find out what new information had come to light since the latest set of news articles on the meteor were published in the papers. He told me they had just completed the analysis of the seismic signals from the earthquake sensing system in California. The fact that the instruments intended for detecting earthquakes were able to record the sonic boom from the (hypothesized) reentry of the meteor is an indication of how large an event this was. Enough of the sensors picked up the sonic boom to give scientists a very accurate indication of the California trajectory. They believe that the bulk of the meteorites fell just west of Little Lake, California, in and around the China Lake Weapons Testing Area, and perhaps as far east as the Panamint Valley.



Last month 9/03

Boslough believes that the meteor is not a metal meteorite. The evidence collected so far leads him to believe that this is a "stony" or chondrite meteorite. He suspects this because metal meteors tend not to come apart in the air, while this one may have blown apart twice. Pictures of this type of meteorite can be found in Rocks From Space (http://fgms.home.att.net/roxspace.htm) by O. Richard Norton, which I reviewed in the Lithosphere [August/September 1994]. In particular, see Chapter 17, "Hunting For Meteorites," which shows what stony meteorites look like in the environment in which the fragments are believed to have fallen in California.

Dr. Wasson is offering a reward for a piece of this meteorite, and may be contacted at the following address: Dr. John Wasson; UCLA, Institute of Geophysics; Los Angeles, CA 90095.

For those with Internet access, the email address for Boslough is mboslo@sandia.gov. Wasson can be reached at wasson@igpp.ucla.edu. They would like to hear from anyone who saw the meteor, has video tapes or pictures showing the meteor, or anyone believing they found a piece of the meteorite.

The scientific interest in this meteor is based on the rarity of a "capture and reentry" event, as this one appears to be. There have been only a small number of similar events recorded. The most recent event of this type was the well-publicized "Peekskill Fireball" that occurred on October 9, 1992, in which a meteor crashed into a car parked in a driveway in Peekskill, New York -- thus the name. Prior to that, there was a fireball seen in August 1972: The meteor was not captured by the Earth's gravitational pull, but thrown into a new orbit after grazing the atmosphere. Based on data that included a film taken by a tourist in Grand Teton National Park, scientists believe that the meteor could return next year on August 11.

If you find a piece of the recent meteor (or any meteorite, for that matter), there are a few things you can do to help the scientific inquiry. Boslough suggests that, even if you want to keep the fragment, to document the location where the meteorite

was found as accurately as possible. They would especially like pictures of the fragment *before it is moved*, showing the fragment in relationship to its surroundings. If you don't have a way to accurately determine the location of the fragment (such as with a Global Positioning System unit), simply mark the site and notify the scientists mentioned above. Any information they receive of this nature will greatly aid their work. Boslough indicates that he does not believe that handling the fragments will damage them in any way or diminish the information they can extract from an examination. He said he would also be interested in knowing if there are any obvious marks on the ground around the site where the fragment(s) are found.

From the Lithosphere (November 1996)
Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society, Inc.; Fallbrook, CA

The preceding article was originally published in the November 1996 issue of Lithosphere, the official bulletin of the Fallbrook [California] Gem and Mineral Society, Inc; Richard Busch (Editor).

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Tips & Hints

To get the most out of gold sheen obsidian, saw with the bands, as if they were a stack of plates and you want to unstack them. Watch for spots of fire." It isn't plentiful, but opal-like colors do sometimes appear in gold sheen.
Original source Unknown via The Agatizer 8/02.

Do not try heating stones in a microwave oven. All stones have a certain amount of fluid in them and it very well could be dangerous!
Original source unknown via Breccia 2/02.

To clean non-plastic, metal, costume jewelry, immerse it in rubbing alcohol for five minutes. Rinse in warm water and dry with a lint-free cloth. To prevent metal costume jewelry from tarnishing, store it with a piece of white chalk.
Source unknown via Breccia 2/02.

To preserve newspaper Clippings of your accomplishments, dissolve a milk of magnesia tablet in a quart of club soda overnight. Pour into a glass pan large enough to accommodate the flattened clipping. Soak clipping an hour. Remove and pat dry. Estimated life span - 200 years!
Original Source unknown via Rocky Review 2/02.

Wipe a piece of Chalk Over your jeweler's files. The chalk keeps the file from clogging and you can blow it off.
From Rockfinder 10/91 via Rock n' Review 2/02.

Camping Tip: Never throw a plastic bag into a campfire. It can heat-seal and explode with the violence of a shotgun blast. Anyone standing close by can be sprayed with the molten plastic and be severely burned.
Original Source unknown via Rock Rollers 3/02.
Compiled from The Nugget, 9-2002

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TLC For Gemstones

By Shelly Kuehn

Diamonds are not indestructible! People are often surprised when they take an engagement ring or a pair of fine earrings to the jeweler and find that the diamonds in them are chipped around the edges. Diamonds can split along the lines of their cleavage planes when used roughly.

Here is how to preserve them and other valuable stones.

Stones cut from crystals (tourmalines, garnets, rubies, and sapphires, to name a few) are the most durable.

However, other crystalline stones such as kunzite, tanzanite and topaz have sensitive cleavage planes. If you are hard on your jewelry, it might be best to mount kunzite and tanzanite in pendants or in protected settings.

Inclusions (foreign substances encased in crystal) make the emerald vulnerable to breakage. Emeralds have more than the average (that is what gives them their beautiful green color). Pink and red tourmalines also have many inclusions. Wear such jewelry when your hands are at leisure to avoid banging the stones.

Heat and ultraviolet rays can harm some crystals.

Kunzite and amethyst fade under long exposure to sunlight or such ultraviolet sources as sun lamps. The harsher elements of nature, such as salt water, are detrimental to crystals too.

Most crystalline gems benefit from cleaning in commercial jewelry cleaners. Clean them weekly. Not all of them should be cleaned in a home ultrasonic unit. Zapping dirt with sound waves can be harmful to emeralds, peridots, tanzanites, and zircon.
Via Stony Statements 3/01, via Glacial Drifter 11/02, via Golden Spike News 2/03.

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Test Your Gemstone Genius

By Sharon Goldman Edry

JUNE 13, 1997 - -- How well do you know your gemstone lore? If you want to communicate the romance of colored stones to your customers, you'd better know your history, myths and legends. Here is a challenge for you: Can you answer the following gemstone questions? Take the quiz and check your answers at the end (no peeking!) to see what kind of gemstone expert you really are.

1. What gemstone name comes from the Greek term meaning "without wine"?
   a. ruby
   b. tourmaline
   c. amethyst
   d. emerald

2. What gemstone was believed to cure bleeding?
   a. sapphire
   b. topaz
   c. emerald
   d. ruby

3. What gem was discovered by the Egyptians in 3000 B.C.?
   a. emerald
   b. turquoise
   c. zircon
   d. peridot

4. Which stone was most often mistaken in the past for other gemstones such as ruby?
   a. red beryl
   b. spinel
   c. topaz
   d. garnet

5. Which gemstone is also sometimes known as olivine?
   a. peridot
   b. tourmaline
   c. emerald
   d. jade

6. Which stone was worn by Scandinavian women to protect their hair from going gray?
   a. garnet
   b. pearl
   c. opal
   d. onyx

7. What gem is often ground up and sold as medicine components?
   a. aquamarine
   b. pearl
   c. coral
   d. amethyst

8. Which stone inspired Hindu legends that said the gem was actually solidified moonbeams that reached earth?
   a. onyx
   b. white sapphire
   c. moonstone
   d. ruby

9. Which gemstone was fashioned into a lens used by Nero to view the gladiators, because he found the color to be calming?
   a. amethyst
   b. sapphire
   c. aquamarine
   d. emerald

10. Which gemstone was named in honor of the birthday of the Russian czar?
   a. alexandrite
   b. iolite
   c. kunzite
   d. agate

Answers: 1. (c) 2.(d) 3. (b) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (c) 7. (b) 8. (c) 9. (d) 10. (a)

If you had:

8-10 correct answers: Gemstone Genius

You really know your gemstone trivia! Your customers will be beguiled by your colorful gem anecdotes, which will translate into big, bigger and the biggest sales.

4-7 correct answers: Colored Stone Contender

You know a lot about your romantic product, but there is much more to learn! Read up on gemstone lore and your romance with your customers will grow.

0-3 correct answers: Go to Gem Class

You need to read up on your gemstone lore, because you're missing out on a great way to introduce your customers to the beauty and romance of colored stones.

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July Snippets

by Barb Whyre

A very special visitor arrived from Sydney in the person of Phil Brady. His grandfather Phil and Uncle Tom, prominent opal buyers, arrived from White Cliffs in 1909 and moved into their new home that December. Tom eventually went to Coober Pedy and based himself as the Brady buyer of South Australian opal.

The Brady home was the first "real" house in the Ridge. Built of corrugated iron with duo chimneys fashioned in metal, it is similar to the Broken Hill miners' cottages. There was originally no verandah. Once added, the Victorian lace trim of cypress pine (termite resistant), softened the facade.

Another room was added at right angles for the Roman Catholic meetings. The timber was probably sawn at Gooraway nearby, the coach and change station on Dungalear, south of Lightning Ridge.

In 1918, Phil Brady and his family left for a stint on the land in Queensland,. However, within a year, they were settled in Sydney and back in the opal business. His two sons, Tom and Harold, plus up to 40 people were employed in their manufacturing jewelry workshops at Randwick right through the 1940s. Our visitor Phil is the son of Tom.

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Chipped Opal (or Polishing Opal)

Here is a thread of messages that I found in the Orchid Digest from http://www.ganoksin.com concerning the polishing of opals that I found interesting. They were published from 5-14-98 to 5-18-98. The Ganoksin Project provides an information forum on the Internet free of charge for all things connected with jewelry and jewelry making. Visit it and see! Printed with permission of Ganoksin. The Editor

From: Mollie Arnette, marnette@citcom.net
Sure is heartbreaking to screw up! Hope somebody can help! I have a beautiful stone that I was told is a "lemon opal". I am pretty ignorant about stones and can only describe this stone as a jelly type opal, mostly a beautiful lemon colored translucent freeform cab with some cloud like inclusions. It is shaped more or less like a 3D sloped triangle with a ridge along the top. Of course when I was trying to push the bezel around it I chipped a good part of the ridge out of it. ARGH! I have probably made matters worse now, but I attempted to reshape the stone (which wasn't hard to do) and then tried to polish it with ZAM, but can't get the same gloss and/or texture to match the rest of the stone. Anybody have any suggestions? Thanks for your help!!!
Mollie, in beautiful western North Carolina, USA

From: Richard O. Martin, R-Orion@postoffice.worldnet.att.net
Molly,
Opals can be very anxiety-producing to set -- I've cut and set a lot of them. Prongs are difficult enough and bezels are especially tricky. You know that now, unfortunately, so what do you do? If you're happy with the re-shaping you've done then it's just a matter of repolishing. My advice, unless you have lapidary experience and equipment, is to take it to a local gem cutter (there should be plenty in your area; look up members of your local rock club. If you email me the name of your town or the nearest large town I can probably find a contact for you). The process of polishing stone is generally similar to polishing metal but requires entirely different machinery, techniques, abrasives and polishing agents. Zam just won't polish opal, even if the stone's surface is sufficiently prepolished, and I suspect it isn't. Most cutting/polishing operations must be done wet to prevent heat build-up, especially with opal.
The opal could be from Mexico, although there is a beautiful yellow opal from central Idaho that is sold under the trade name "Lemon opal." Similar opals occur elsewhere around the world.
Good luck.
Rick Martin in wet, dry, windy, calm, cloudy, sunny, warm, chilly Ventura County, CA

From: Carol J. Bova, bova@bovagems.com
Zam's too aggressive I'd wager. Cerium oxide (optical grade #2) usually does nicely on opal.
Carol, bova@bovagems.comm, http://www.bovagems.com

From: Jerry & Norma Holt jeranor@ptialaska.net
Mollie, I guess from your message that you don't do lapidary work so I hope this helps. Smooth the piece with a stone or perhaps 220 grit wet or dry paper depending on how badly it is chipped. Smooth further with 320 and then perhaps 400 grit. Using a strip of buckskin leather or something similar that is soft and pliable. Coat the leather with a creamy solution of cerium oxide or aluminum oxide polishing powder and water. These are available from any lapidary supply house. Holding the piece solidly in a vise or something similar, buff the dull part of the stone until you get an acceptable polish. Buff it as you would a shoe. Keep the leather moist with the slurry.
Jerry in Kodiak

From: ArtWrkshop, ArtWrkshop@aol.com
Dear Mollie,
If the opal has been properly prepared for polishing, so that there are no readily visible scratches on it, you can get a great final polish with tin oxide. If you don't have a lapidary outfit, you can do the final preparation by hand by first sanding the stone with 600 grit sandpaper and then emery cloth. Now mix a paste of the tin oxide with water and coat either a felt polishing wheel, or if you want to do it by hand, a piece of leather with it. Then you can get a great polish on your stone (be careful not to overheat the opal if you use the felt polishing wheel).
Good luck,
Tom Tietze

From: John Burgess, johnb@ts.co.nz
G'day Mollie;
I find that a slurry of tin oxide on a leather lap rotating at around 800 rpm works to give a brilliant polish on nearly all stones, from agate to the soft ones like malachite and lapis etc. Cheers,
johnb@ts.co.nz, At sunny Nelson NZ

From: ekmtuc@azstarnet.com
Hi Mollie,
I would recommend contacting one of your local gem and mineral clubs (there are quite a few in N.C. call your chamber of commerce they should be able to help) There should be a number of people there who will be able to recut your stone. It sounds like it may be an American opal from up in Oregon. Usually that material has inclusions like what you describe. You can repolish it yourself if you have taken it to a fine enough grit with some cerium oxide on a leather buff. You can contact me off list for more information on how to do this since opal is very easy to crack and this is somewhat off topic. Barring all other solutions you can send the stone to me and I can re-cut it, but first I would recommend finding someone local to save yourself the shipping charges. Feel free to contact me off list if you have any questions.
Jason Penn, Jason Penn Designs, (520) 793-3825

From: Bob &/or Barbara, bobert@redshift.com
Try tin oxide or chrome oxide for your polish. Believe it or not you can also polish with diatomaceous earth. I've never tried the last one, but have polished many an opal with chrome oxide on a leather buff. Messy, but what a shine!
Bobert, Carmel, CA
"There is no substitute for good manners except fast reflexes"

From: Dave Sebaste, davidse@mindspring.com
Let me assure you... its much more heartbreaking to screw up an opal you cut yourself! Been there, done that!
Zam is probably not a great polishing compound for opal, like it would be for turquoise or other soft stones. Cerium oxide or aluminum oxide on leather or felt (kept damp) would probably have a better result. Be especially careful to avoid overheating the opal... keep it cool and damp.
Also, it's important that the surfaces be very smooth and scratch-free before you even attempt a polish. Like working with metal, a poorly prepared surface will never yield an excellent polish.
How was the show in Franklin last weekend?
Dave Sebaste
Sebaste Studio, Charlotte, NC (USA)
dave@sebaste.com , http://www.sebaste.com

From: Marion Bleily, mbleily@micron.net
Mollie: We have used tin oxide to polish our yellow opal with great success. I think that the lemon opal is the same. It should give it a high shine. Hope this helps you.
Micki Bleily, http://www.bleilysgems.com

From: Duane Baysinger, dbaysinger@kih.net
Hi Molly, If you have already reshaped the stone, you can easily polish it with some diamond polish and a knife edge felt lap on your flex shaft. It will take at least two grits, 600, and 1200, and 3000. Be sure to clean well after each step.
Duane, Studio B, Corbin, KY

From: Lee Einer appealsman@earthlink.net
Hi, Mollie!
Getting a good, glassy polish on a stone can be tough, particularly when the stone is soft or porous. The traditional polishing technique for opal is to use tin oxide on a wet felt buff, being careful not to let the stone heat up or the buff go dry.(Some lapidaries prefer cerium oxide or Linde A, but I'm thinking Zam is just too coarse for the job at hand). No polishing agent will help, however, if the stone was not first sanded with successively finer grits in order to remove any scratches. If you have not already done this, try sanding the opal first with 400 grit wet paper, then with 600 grit, and then use tin oxide wet on a felt buff, again being careful not to let the stone get hot.
If you still can't get a good polish, then something else is probably going on. I have had occasion to work on soft, porous stones that would just not take a polish despite my every effort. In such cases, consider using a hardener such as Hot Stuff (basically superglue- cyanoacrylate) or Opticon. These substances soak into the surface of the stone, then harden it enough to allow for a good polish.
Hope this helps!
Lee, Dos Manos Jewelry, Phoenix, Arizona

From: onyx@wac.com
Hi Mollie, Zam won't cut it. It might smooth the opal out a little but be wary not to get the opal hot when polishing. Better yet use water cooled lapidary equipment and polish with tin oxide on a leather lap. If the opal is of any value it would probably be best left up to someone local that you trust who has experience with opal cutting. Chips happen to the very best of setters.
Good luck,
Don Wollwage

From: GINIROLL@aol.com
Mollie, Where did you get the lemon opal? I'm trying to find someone who carries it. I just returned from the G&LW show in Orlando, Fl. and couldn't find anyone who even knows what it is. Can anyone out there tell me more about what lemon opal really is - a true opal? or something else? It's just a beautiful stone.
Thanks,
Gini - On the west coast of Florida where it is in the 90's already.

From: ekmtuc@azstarnet.com
I am very curious who was selling this material in your area, I have had three separate inquires from your area of the U.S. recently. There are quite a few different places this material comes from. One is up in the Idaho-Oregon area it sounds like that is the type of material Mollie has (that material has typical inclusions) Another newer find is in Africa and I have seen some material that was claimed to be Australian. I have a friend who handles the American variety I have some of the African variety and I am not to sure about the Australian variety. If you are interested in some cut stones please let me know. It is a natural opal no dyeing or coloring and it is a very pretty yellow color. It will be easiest to reach me by phone because I am leaving to go to Chicago tomorrow for the Inter-gem show. (anyone please stop by the booth to say hi #411) If you would like to wait to see some stones I will be at the G&LW show in Franklin N.C. in July I don't know the booth number yet but I will post to the group closer to show date. HTH
Jason Penn, Jason Penn Designs, (520)793-3825

From: Jerry & Norma Holt jeranor@ptialaska.net
Gini,
I bought several pieces of lemon opal at Tucson in February from a company called EARTH LOVE, 3440 Youngfield Street, Suite 353, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, 80053. Seller said it came from Nevada.
Jerry in Kodiak
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July Gem & Mineral Shows

2-6--MADRAS, OR: 54th annual show; All Rockhounds Pow Wow Club of America; Jefferson County Fairgrounds; jewelry, faceted gems, minerals, fossils, crystals, carvings, clocks and motors, intarsia, rough rock, swap tables, door prizes, auction, rock toss, daily field trips for members; contact Eula Dillard, 145 E. 179th, Spanaway, WA 98387, (253) 847-2755.

4-6--FLAGSTAFF, AZ: Show, "American Gem & Mineral Show"; Flagstaff Gem & Mineral Society; Little America Hotel, Butler Ave. and I-40; Fri. 11-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; adults $2, children under 12 free; contact Val Latham, 6598 Pintail Dr., Flagstaff, AZ 86004, (928) 527-9895; e-mail: Godsrocks@aol.com.

10-13--NYSSA, OR: Show, "Thunderegg Days"; Nyssa Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture; Nyssa School Grounds; Thu. 9-8, Fri. 9-8, Sat. 9-8, Sun. 9-5; free admission; contact Cleta deBoer, P.O. Box 1646, Nyssa, OR 97913, (541) 372-3091; e-mail: nyssacofc@fmtc.com.

11-13--CASPER, WY: Annual show, "Rocky Mountain Federation of Mineralogical Societies Show"; Natrona County Rockhounds Club; Parkway Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, 123 W. E St., I-25 and Center; Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-4; contact Ed McKnire, c/o NCRC, P.O. Box 123, Mills, WY 82644, (307) 265-6202; e-mail: rmcknire@attbi.com.

11-13--DURANGO, CO: 50th annual show; Four Corners Gem & Mineral Club; LaPlata Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall, 2500 Main Ave.; Fri. 11-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; donations accepted; contact Tricia Jacobson, 369 Mountain Top Rd., Durango, CO 81301, (970) 385-6877, e-mail: fireicestudio@earthlink. net; or Marie Wester, 1045 C.R. 204, Durango, CO 81301, (970) 247-9648; jmwester@fone.net.

18-20--KENO, OR: Rock swap and camp out; Klamath Rock & Arrowhead Club; Pacific Power Recreation Campground, Hwy. 66, 12 miles west of Klamath Falls; buy, sell, trade or just look at rock-related items, jewelry, fossils, etc., tailgating $3 per unit, fee camping; contact Ken Newnham, (541) 892-2219; Web site: http://webpages. charter. net/eaglescouter/keno.html.

18-20--MARION, NC: Show, "Carolina Emerald Mine Gemstone & Jewelry Sale 2003"; Gold Prospectors of America; Carolina Emerald Mine, 1694 Polly Spout Rd.; day1: Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-6; free admission; contact Don Davidson, 1694 Polly Spout Rd., Marion, NC 28752, (828) 738-9544; e-mail: gemmine@wnclink.com.

19-20--ESCONDIDO, CA: Annual show; Palomar Gem & Mineral Club; Escondido Army National Guard Armory, 304 E. Park Ave.; Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-5; free admission; regional and local gem and mineral dealers, supply and craft dealers, drawings, demonstrations, displays; contact Don Parsley, (760) 745-6181.

26-27--MATTITUCK, NY: 22nd annual show; Long Island Mineral & Geological Society; Mattituck High School, Main Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults $3, children under 12 free with adult; jewelry, minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary, jewelry demonstrations, grab bag, hourly door prizes; contact Eva or Bill Guyton, (631) 765-1326.

26-27--TENINO (OLYMPIA), WA: 7th annual show; WA Agate & Mineral Society of Olympia; Parkside Elementary School, State St. S; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; tailgate show, display cases, demonstrations, held during Tenino's OR Trail Days Celebration; contact Daniel A. DeBoer, (360) 866-3940; e-mail: key-lock@-attbi.com.