

# The Opal Express

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



**Volume #38 Issue #3  
March 2005**

TO:

- Some Topics In This Issue:**
- *The Collectors Corner*
  - *Louisiana Opal Question*
  - *An Australian Opal Field Trip*
  - *Carving Rocks*
  - *Jade*
  - *Winter Safety - PART 2*

**Important Info:**

**Board Meeting  
March 7<sup>th</sup>**

**General Meeting  
March 10<sup>th</sup>**

*Lecture -Pricing Opals  
by Eugene LeVan*

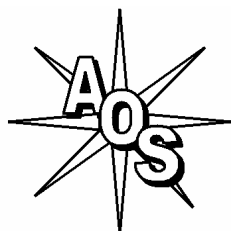
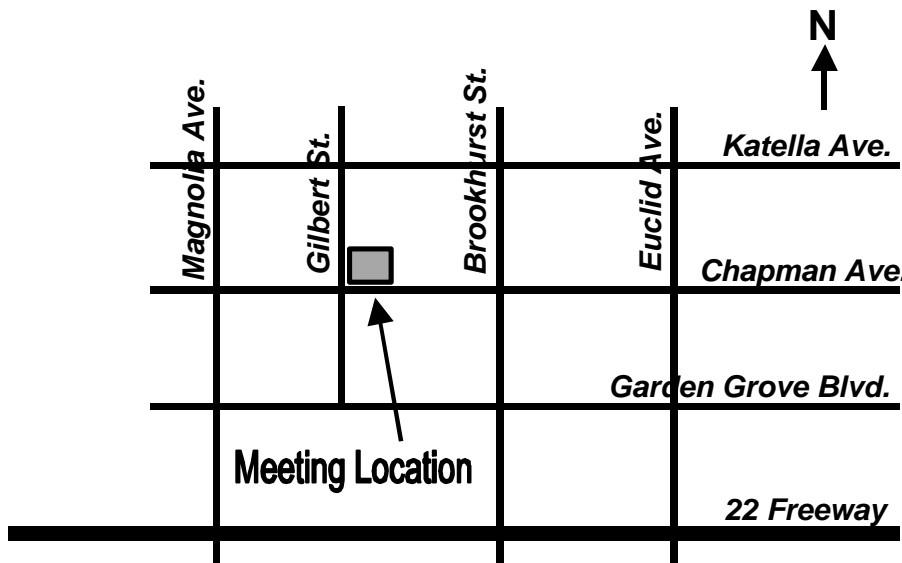
## **Mar. 10th Lecture - Pricing Opals by Eugene LeVan**

**— 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



**The American Opal Society**  
<http://OpalSociety.org>

Walt Johnson	President	(714) 533-1287	email: donnawalt@msn.com
Eugene LeVan	Vice President	(562) 621-1805	email: fineblackopal@sprynet.com
Russ Madsen	Treasurer	(562) 884-2254	email: chairman2rgm@cs.com
Fran Todd	Opal Show Chairman	(310) 721-5614	email: toddle@aol.com
Jim Pisani	Editor & Webmaster	(562) 797-5239	email: webmaster@opalsociety.org

# American Opal Society Membership Renewal

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
<u>DUES:</u> <u>SELECT ONE</u>	All <u>US</u> Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$25	
	<u>International Members</u> = All addresses <u>outside</u> of US Addresses	\$30	
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<u>ONE TIME INITIATION FEE</u> = All <u>New</u> members		\$10	
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<b>TOTAL PAID – DUES, less Senior Discount plus Badge plus Initiation Fee (if Applicable)</b>			

Please make check or money order payable to "**American Opal Society**". Mail payment and application to:  
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 An optional, quicker method of payment is via the **Internet** using **PayPal.com**. To pay, just log onto your PayPal account and "Send Money" to the AOS account, **webmaster@opalsociety.org**. There is no transfer charge!

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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 and NEWSLETTER MAILING:** 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   
  E-Mail the Opal Express Newsletter instead of Postal Mail

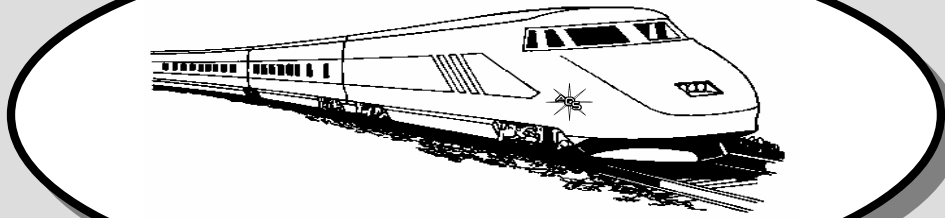
- Include my name & address on a list provided to the Dealers selling at our Annual Opal & Gem Show.

Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<p>The <u>Opal Express</u> is published monthly by  <b>The American Opal Society.</b>                  Copyright 2005. All rights reserved.                  Non-Commercial Reprint Permission Granted Unless Otherwise Reserved.  <b>Editor-Jim Pisani</b>                  Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:  <b>The Opal Express C/O</b>  <b>Jim Pisani</b>  <b>P.O. Box 4875</b>  <b>Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875</b>                  E-mail: <a href="mailto:webmaster@opalsociety.org">webmaster@opalsociety.org</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Are Your Dues Due Now?</b></p> <p><b>PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL.</b> If your label shows the current month/year your dues are <b>DUE NOW</b>. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.  <b>A Renewal Grace Period</b> 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 <b>AUTOMATICALLY</b> dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.                  Thank you,                  The Editor</p>
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# The Opal Express

Published monthly by  
The  
American  
Opal  
Society



March 2005

Volume 38 Issue 3

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## President's Message

By Dr. Walt Johnson

At last month's general meeting, members present discussed what they would like to see from the American Opal Society, where have expectations been met, where you have been disappointed, and what do you feel should be done to improve the organization.

Over 100 ideas came forth ranging from identifying, pricing, repairing, setting, and digging of opals. Also suggested were museum visits, excursions to opal diggings, expansion of curriculum to include other gemstones, and to enlarge the Opal Express to include book and magazine reviews and to use color photographs.

Your executive board took each suggestion and objectively discussed the ideas and began working on new strategies for finding solutions,

Eugene LeVan, owner of *Australian Opal Imports* and Vice President of the American Opal Society, will be lecturing on March 10 on pricing of opals using a professional program similar to the GIA system of grading diamonds. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

On April 14 our guest speaker will be Dave Burton, owner of *Burton's Gems & Opals at Lapidary International*. His topic will be on what type of opals sell, "What is Hot and What is Not."

Your board of directors is open to suggestions as to guest lecturers, field trips, or interesting information about opals. Please contact any board member with your ideas.

## Stoddard Wells Swap Meet

On March 12 & 13, the Victor Valley Gem & Mineral Club will be having their Annual Tailgate Event at Stoddard Wells. A number of members of the AOS usually go and - or sell there. It is

a great place to find good rough and other lapidary products for a good price.

To get there, exit I-15 at second Stoddard Wells Rd. exit East of Victorville and go east for 11 miles. It is a dry camp with porta-potties. Soft drinks, BBQ, coffee, and a bake sale booth is available.

## Opal Workshop

The AOS opal workshop is at Ball Jr. High School on 1500 W. Ball Rd., Anaheim, CA. It can be open for members on Monday. Contact Stan McCall at (714) 220-9282.

## Members Only Website Password

To log onto the website's members only area at: [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_members\\_only\\_area.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_members_only_area.htm) type: Name: "member" and Password: "tecopa".

## To have your Newsletter E-mailed to you...

About a third of the members are receiving their newsletter electronically. Thank you! You are helping offset printing costs of your Society! Getting your newsletter e-mailed is entirely voluntary. We will continue to mail by post as long as members request it.

There are a number of advantages of having an electronic copy of the newsletter. You can save paper by just viewing it electronically. Color photos and pictures can be viewed. A digital copy never wears out and can be printed over and over again. Also, they are much easier to store. A CD could hold dozens of newsletters.

If you want it e-mailed, please e-mail the editor, Jim Pisani, at [webmaster@opalsociety.org](mailto:webmaster@opalsociety.org). Please indicate your name and e-mail address that you want it mailed to.

Thanks,  
Jim Pisani, Editor, American Opal Society

## The Opal Discussion Forum

The American Opal Society has an On-Line Opal Discussion Forum. The Forum is a way for people that have questions on opal to post a question or comment to the Society or general public. Members and non-members alike can post a reply.

We encourage member experts to monitor the Forum and participate in a discussion to help those with questions. Also, members will find past postings of great interest, with archives going back to December 2000.

The Opal Discussion Forum can be accessed for the website, or by this address: <http://opalsociety.org/talkshop/index.html>.

## The Collectors Corner

By Mike Kowalsky

I plan to write a series of articles to discuss the subject of collectors and specifically collectors of opal related items. I expect to write an overall article, hopefully with color pictures, for the 2005 Opal Express Color show issue which we plan to have available for our annual November American Opal Society Gem and Mineral Show.

I didn't realize that I became a collector of opal and opal related items after I cut my first gemstone and didn't put on it on the market. It was many years later that I found I could use my collection of Slocum Stone "created opal" for my presentations on "How to Identify Created Opal". Now they are unavailable, except from private collections, at this time.

As I have traveled to more gem and mineral shows and to Australia to the Gem and Mineral Shows at Lightning Ridge and Yowah, I discovered a new class of items that were also part of collectors' dreams and wishes. I discovered that the miners and cutters in Australia collected specimen opals that were not meant to be cut but were specifically saved to display and enjoy viewing. Some of the pieces were only roughly formed but others were specifically cut to enhance the opal colors with the rock or matrix that they were created in. I started collecting opal specimens which I now find can't be duplicated.

I remembered the first time I was in Andamooka I saw, in a dark corner of a dealer's porch, a large specimen which was covered with brilliant opal. I asked if it was for sale but received a laugh as a reply. I later found out that they were called painted ladies and I have never been able to afford one. I suspect that many of them have succumbed to hard times and ended up as cut stones.

Next I discovered that books were being published which discussed and provided superb pictures of the many types opal and stories of how the opal is mined. At least I recognized that these books, which were published by now famous authors such as Len Cram and Stephen Aracic, would become collectors items. But I misjudged the collectors market and now realize that these precious books would gain in value much faster than I expected.

The American Opal Society has some opal and opal related collection items that were donations from Australian Miners such as Murray Willis of Coober Pedy and Lightning Ridge and American Miners such as Claudia and A.J. Coutier of Spencer Idaho and Rena Schmidt of Tucson, Arizona. We use these AOS specimens and solicit specimens from AOS members for our display case for the purpose of educating the people who visit our annual show with these displays of opal. One of our popular cases consists of opal from North, Central and South America. We continued adding to our goal, of obtaining opal samples from different states within the United States, by the purchase at Tucson of our first sample of opal from Utah. The diversity of opal in the U.S. includes samples from Alpine, Texas and Louisiana. We also expanded our samples of different shades of blue opal from Peru.

I have noted some of the problems that members of AOS have in participating in or adding to their collections. That problem is information. I find that there is little information within the AOS and the AOS annual show on items to collect. I would like to suggest that dealers pay more attention to this segment of their customers and provide more information. One way is for book dealers to provide write-ups about new opal books and make that information available for us to publish in the Opal Express. I understand that the latest Len Cram volume on his series "A Journey with Colour" was available at our last show. However, it was only identified with a sign but not available to see an unwrapped copy. Perhaps a notice in the Opal Express would help as well as seeing the actual copy.

A number of dealers had collectable specimens of opal. Some were clearly visible but many were hidden behind the tables. I would like to suggest that opal specimens be brought forward to take some of the precious table space. The only way collectors and potential collectors can develop their taste is to view and experience the specimens. I know that many future collectors may not buy a specimen the first time they view them but if they really like it, they won't hesitate to buy it or a similar one the next time they see it.

I would like to encourage our advertisers in the color version Opal Express to put a specimen in their ad. This will make a statement that they carry and will have specimens. The result may be to sell more specimens if the collectors know to look for them. Rod Griffin always has superb, unique pieces of opal specimen at all the shows he is at. I know I missed a unique specimen at last year's Tucson show because I waited too long to make up my mind. Next time I will not hesitate to make my decision.

I have started with the obvious collectors items. Next time I plan to introduce you to more exotic collection items.

### Louisiana Opal Question

*I found this on the Orchid Digest on the status of Louisiana opal.*

*The Editor.*

From: Craig Gardner, Date: Jul 17-21, 2000

I have question about Opal value. A number of years ago I bought a chunk of Louisiana opal from a local rock shop. What I got was a chunk of the cinnamon brown with lavender, green and a little blue fire. I recently read in the August issue of Rock & Gem magazine that Louisiana opal is now selling by the caret rather than by the pound as it was when I bought what I have. I took a piece back to the rock shop where I bought it and showed Vons son (Von passed away some years ago) the piece he checked it out and said it is a very a high quality piece but that after reading the same article he is unsure of its value.

So my questions are how is Louisiana opal sold by the gram or by the caret and where could I get an accurate estimate of its value. One piece weights 386 grams the other 187 grams as well as several slabs. I live in Northern California  
Craig Gardner Redwood Valley CA

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**From:** John McLaughlin

> So my questions are how is Louisiana opal sold by the gram or by  
> the caret and where could I get an accurate estimate of its value.  
> One piece weights 386 grams the other 187 grams as well as  
> several slabs.

Craig, I read the same article. However, the Louisiana opal I saw for sale in Quartzsite this year was not selling by the carat or gram. The price depended on quality and the material was sold by the piece without much regard to weight. The opal is in a sandstone matrix and, for the most part, is not especially good for jewelry (that's only my opinion).

It is rare and I believe it has much more value to collectors than to jewelers. You might try your inquiry on the Rocks and Fossils list <rocks-and-fossils@europe.std.com>, which is populated by mineral and fossil dealers. It would also be helpful to post a photo along with the request for information.

John McLaughlin Glendale, Arizona jemstone@amug.org

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**From:** Christopher L. Johnston

Some 9 years ago I was hired by Boise Cascade Corporation to evaluate the opal deposits on their Louisiana forest land. I had had the opportunity to inspect some of the rough and processed material being offered about the same time at the Pueblo Inn at Tucson. Geologically or perhaps mineralogically speaking the material is a "common opal-precious opal cemented, lithic, fossiliferous, arkose" or perhaps simpler a "dirty opalized

sandstone". While the bulk of the material that I inspected at that time was as described above, there was one piece that emerged from one of the local Louisiana diggers that was +/- 80 grams of pure, transparent, colorless (and unfortunately without fire) opal. According to the miner it had been out of the ground "fer yeears" and showed no sign of crazing.

The macro geologic literature that covered the area indicated that the systems source was a volcanic or large scale hydrothermal system in what is now Texas. While I have neither samples nor a copy of the Boise Cascade report (it was proprietary) I do remember concluding that what value the bulk of the material had was low (less the USD \$20/kg) and had utility for carvings, eggs, spheres and large scale slabs, I do distinctly remember mentioning that if material similar to the large single "bomber" I was shown but containing precious opal fire was discovered, then Louisiana would quickly occupy a spot as a important locality. There were stratigraphic considerations that made exploration difficult and mining, the strata that contained the opal and "opalized sandstone" occupied a topographic "low" in the region just at water table, making any mining effort expensive, primarily from the enormous pumping costs which were not warranted by overall low value of the material. In fact the primary miner of the material at that time was limited to active mining during the dry, end of summer and fall months into early winter when the water table was at its lowest. The primary pit at that time was adjacent to a flowing stream.

In conclusion while I think the material was very interesting I perceived it at that time to be more of a geologic or mineralogical oddity than a commercially viable gemstone. However there is a great deal that could have changed in the ensuing 9 years.

From the *Orchid Digest* from <http://www.ganoksin.com>, dated July 17-21, 2000. 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.

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## **A Field Trip to Australian Opal Country**

or

### **An American in Paradise, Part 1**

*By Margaret Malm*

*I found this article in the archives the Lapidary Digest. The Lapidary Digest was one of the first Internet discussion forums, Edited and Published by Hale Sweeny ([hale2@mindspring.com](mailto:hale2@mindspring.com)). The Lapidary Digest was one of the best digests on the Lapidary arts and had excellent postings. The Lapidary Digest is now defunct, but its memory lives on. The complete archives of it are saved on <http://www.gemcutters.org/index.html>.*

*Margaret Malm was one of the digests Associate Editors. She wrote the following series of articles while touring the opal fields of Australia with AOS member Barbara McCondra's tour group. Margaret used Barbara's laptop to write trip reports about opal fields she has visited and her wonderful adventures. Barbara has stopped her tours the past few years. Hopefully, she will continue them one day. I have heard from a number of members who had been on one of Barbara's past tours that they were extraordinary!*

*This excerpt is from Issues No. 276-279, 5/21/2000 - 1/13/2001. The Editor*

Man coming down stairs at hotel: "G'day!" Me: "G'day!" With perfect Australian accent, of course! Yes! Yes! Yes! I'm in Australia with Barbara McCondra's Outback Gems Australia opal tour.

The "characters" in this epic are:

- Leigh Miller, from Nevada; an opal cutter-polisher, and fellow Lapidary Digest subscriber.

- Jane Thornton, from Tucson; a retired nurse specializing in babies.
- June Humphrey, also from Tucson and Jane's friend; a retired Mechanical Engineer.
- Dick and Marilyn Rodenburg, from Denver. Marilyn is a faceter.
- Margaret Malm (me); retired Kodak chemist and now a sometimes seasonal Park Ranger at Zion National Park. Opalhollic, and one of the Associate Editors of Lapidary Digest.
- Barbara McCondra; our Fearless Leader; tall and sturdy, arranger extraordinary, and a really exceptional lady. Barbara is known more commonly (actually famed) in this area as "Eskimo Nell", as she spent some time in Alaska working on the Alaska Pipeline. Formerly a teacher, until she got Opal Fever.
- Ron Vil, Barbara's son; our chauffeur, shepherd, and general arranger.
- Michael with the unspellable name (a Swede turned Aussie), who is Ron's assistant and driver of the "Ute", a sort of special Aussie pickup truck that hauled our baggage. In the area where we were heading it's always good to have two vehicles, in case of trouble.

We found out before we even left Los Angeles that our trip was going to be something special -- they had had so much rain in the (Bush) in Australia that the road into Yowah, which was to have been our first stop, was flooded, and that we would be going to Lightning Ridge, home of the fabulous black opals, first. Okay, we can do that!

Lightning Ridge is a bustling town in New South Wales, just south of the border with Queensland. I was surprised at two things: First, it was a larger town than I had expected. Second, the country around there is not nearly as stark and treeless as Coober Pedy, which I had visited a few years ago and which I had mentally pictured "The Ridge" as resembling. It has modern conveniences such as a grocery store, bank, many, many opal dealers, and -- a gambling casino!

The casino is actually the Lightning Ridge Bowling Club. Bowling in the English sense of "lawn bowling", not our type. It has a cafeteria-type restaurant where we ate dinner one night, as well as a room full of slot machines - "Pokies" to them, and a place to play Keno. It is owned by the Mayor, who also just happens to be the owner of the "station" where the first opal discovery was made. He essentially donated that land to the cause, as he charges no rent to the miners. But he has a good income from the club; they recently completed a new addition with a sort of "rec room" for the miners; the million plus dollar mortgage was paid off quite quickly -- out of the income from the pokies! Miners are great gamblers; to be expected, I guess, as mining opals is also a great gamble.

The town itself is sited on the first original claims, now reclaimed and no longer mined. They use a lot of tin in their construction (including siding and fences) as the white ants (termites) are quite voracious and quickly eat up any wood except pine, which is thus quite rare and expensive.

Most of this wide area is rather heavily wooded; Box trees, and other species of Eucalyptus -- there are something like 220 different species of Eucalyptus trees in Australia, and they seem to be in the great majority. As you approach, the mines, although not far from the highway in most places, are pretty well hidden in the trees. The Ridge is growing, and they are expecting, through the promotion of tourism, that their yearly visitation will rise from 80,000 to one half million!

We got to go down into one mine there, -- and NOT the "tourist" walk-in mine, either! -- Barbara had arranged with Jimmy Burgh and Mats Ericsson to go out to Jimmy's mine at "Wyoming", one of the major areas along the Ridge. It is in many ways a typical mine, in that it is fairly shallow. While there is opal to be found at several depths, they tend nowadays to mine only the upper level(s),

as it is just too costly to do the deeper ones. And since they figure that only about 15 percent of the opal along the Ridge has been mined as yet, they can easily afford to do the easier stuff first. We all clambered down a hanging ladder 17 feet to the bottom of the shaft, and watched as Jimmy worked his neat (home-made) excavator, which chewed up the "opal dirt" in short order, even though it is a bit harder than most right here. The material his excavator gouged out was sucked by a vacuum into a good-sized pipe (I would guess about 9 inches diameter) and up to the surface, where it was deposited in a truck.

After they had chewed up a fair amount, their truck was full. "Oh," said Jimmy. "I had figured we would probably find a "nobbie" for you to see. Oh, well. We have some 'potch' over here that you can 'mine' by hand." So Mats got out a small pick and pointed at a small bit of gray showing on the wall. I carefully excavated it and found -- a small bit of gray "potch". Then June tried her luck with another bit. "You can dig it out and keep it for a souvenir", said Mats. Suddenly, as she gingerly excavated around it, she saw a bit of color! Hey! As she carefully exposed it, it fell out into her hand. As Mats saw it come out, he said, "Oh, my, I think that one is too good to let you keep!" Further examination showed a beautiful "Red on black" nobbie that they though might be worth as much as \$10,000! (They took it down and had it cut; turned out to be "only" \$2000, and June bought it from them).. It is an absolutely gorgeous black opal, showing a full range of colors.

After the truck was full, they took it over to a water source for washing and "tailing out". There actually is lots of water in Lightning Ridge, as it is poised over a huge artesian basin. Their well goes down 3400 meters; but there is enough water there for 2500 years, but only enough pressure to force it naturally to the surface for 50 years, so they will eventually be faced with pumping it. So they do not waste what they have; for instance, the sewer water is reprocessed to be used for watering lawns. The material is put on a conveyer belt which takes it up into what resembles a large cement mixer. Water is added and it is tumbled for awhile. Then it comes out the spout (again, just like a cement mixer) into a long shallow tray, where it is "tailed out", i.e. gone over and the opal picked out. We got to help with that. I found one piece that they though deserved further investigation, and several that showed "color" but not enough to do anything with, and those I got to keep. The first piece cut a matched pair of very nice opals that they priced at \$400 each. The others are great souvenirs!

Most of the miners live on or near their claims. Their housing is required by law to be "temporary" and moveable. Thus most of them live in definitely primitive conditions. While Lightning Ridge has power, the fields do not -- they use generators, or solar power - - as the power lines would get in their way. And of course, no piped-in water. Most have tanks in which they collect rainwater, but this is not enough for their needs, as the area averages only about 18 inches of rain per year.

We have also visited a number of people here, including Len Cram, the man who has found out how to grow precious opal, which I will tell you about later, and some dealer/cutters from whom we bought some fine opals (both rough and cabbed) at bargain prices; again thanks to "Eskimo Nell and her encyclopedic knowledge of all things around here. And a short session with one of the local opal cutters who lives in an old historic mud house on how to cut opals.

As the time to head out to Yowah, home of the famous "Yowah Nuts" approaches, we are wondering if we will get there, as the water is still being reported about 4.5 meters over the Paroo River Bridge. But we are heading out tomorrow, and while we may have to take the "flood boat", or -- if the water comes down a bit, maybe ride across on the flood truck, we are determined to get there!

*(To be continued)*

"Margaret Malm" <kadok@redrock.net>

## +++++ Carving Rocks

*By Joan Earnshaw*

Almost any kind of rock may be carved with the proper tool and patience. There are some usual steps to follow in beginning a carving.

1. Select the rock that you want to carve. The main criteria for this is just personal choice. However, I would select a rock no harder than 4 or 5 on the Moh's scale of hardness. This is for more than one reason. Harder rocks require diamond tools to work, which cost more. Harder rocks take longer to complete. If you are just starting, it is helpful to start with a rock that is easier to work on and more encouraging to see results sooner.
2. Tools can be either hand tools or power tools. What you are familiar with is easier to use. I suggest hand tool to start with so you can learn the "feel" of the stone and see how the stone will react to files, handsaws, chisels, etc.
3. After selecting your rock, then decide what you want to carve. Sometimes, you can see an animal or plant or just a geometric shape in the rock. If you can, then you're off to a good start. Or if you can't see something intrinsic in the rock and already have a shape in mind, then draw a rough outline on the rock. Remember that if your rock breaks unexpectedly that it may be possible to alter your design or switch to a new one. What if you can't think of a design? Try looking at some whittling pattern books for ideas. Look at Rock and Gem magazine or Lapidary Journal.
4. Suggested tools are a pocketknife (remember that this is a little hard on the blade so use an old one), a hacksaw or coping saw, a sharpened screwdriver, chisels, hammer, and files. Wood rasps will work as coarse files. Angle grinders can be utilized if you want to remove a lot of rock quickly. The tools used can vary. Eye protection is a necessity. Ear protection with noisy power tools is recommended. Professional sculpture tools are expensive and no necessary when you are beginning. If you start with inexpensive tools, or with what you already have on hand, then, if you find that this is not for you, you don't have a lot of money invested.

Remember that it is best to proceed slowly to avoid breaking the rock. Also remember that some rocks fracture. A chisel and hammer would not work on rocks that fracture easily. You need to work those with rasps, files, and small saws - tools that will not shatter your rock.

When you get your shape close to the finished size that you want, it is time to think about smoothing and polishing. You can start with coarse grit sandpaper and switch to finer and finer grits. I recommend wet-or-dry sandpaper and sanding wet when you get down to the finer grit. It works better and faster. Yes, there is power equipment that you can use - like a Foredom tool and appropriate attachments and probably some other power tools, but remember that you are undoubtedly going to have to do some sanding by hand unless your design is totally smooth. All bumps, grooves, nooks and crannies have to be sanded.

You can polish with polish on a pad, cloth or leather. Or you can use Akemi sculpture polish which seals the stone (usually used on alabaster or marble) or Johnson's paste wax and buff it well. This seals the carving. This is especially helpful if you plan to put the carving out in the weather. You can also talk to carvers who have been doing this for years and ask them how they polish their carvings. Carving and sculpting is best learned by hands on experience after you are shown the basics.

Warning: I have found that sculpting is habit-forming, but not harmful when done carefully. Not taking care can result in mashed fingers, rock chips in eyes and loss of skin.

-from *Pick Hammer News, February 2001, via The Leaverite News, April 2001*

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**HINT:** After a tube of epoxy has been opened, dab Vaseline on the threads. The cap will not stick and mess up your tube. Vaseline around the rim of your tumbler before bolting on the lid makes a tighter seal and it will be easier to remove later.

From *Achates, March 1994, Via Strata, 3/03*

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## Jade

Lapidaries and jewelers should constantly attempt to call gemstones and rough material by their correct name. Jade has many other stones named after it, as any material. The confusion as to what jade is, has been compounded by this deceptive practice.

- Amazon jade is aventurine.
- American jade is a rock - a mixture of idocrase and grossular.
- Australian jade is chrysoprase.
- Colorado jade is green microcline.
- Flukien, Manchurian, and Honan jade are all soapstone.
- Indian jade is aventurine.
- Jadite is pure jade. (editor's note ? - not sure what he means)
- Jasper jade is green jasper.
- Korean jade is bowenite, a hard variety of serpentine. (Mexican jade is green dyed marble or calcite.
- Oregon jade is a dark green jasper.
- Silver Peak jade is malachite.
- Transvall jade is a massive variety of green grossular garnet.
- Real jade such as BC jade, Alaska or Yukon jade are truly nephrite jade:

Nephrite Hardness 6-6½ S.G. 2.95 R.I. 1.6 -1.63

Jadeite Hardness 6½-7 S.G. 3.3 R.I. 1.66 - 1.68

Possibly more information (some true, some false) has been written regarding the polishing of jade than all other lapidary materials combined. And so, one concludes that jade is difficult to polish. The answer is "Yes" and "no". Let us consider the mineral itself. There are three separate and distinct minerals that are known under the general term jade: Nephrite, Jadeite, and Chloromelanite.

Nephrite is the one found in BC, Alaska, and Wyoming. This is the one we shall consider here. Let us first consider the nature of these rock-forming minerals. They are described as being fibrous, which simply means that structurally, they are a mass or network of tiny fibrous hair-like crystals, much like straws in a straw stack. They are so fine in nephrite that they cannot be seen even with a powerful magnifier. A peculiarity about crystals is that they are generally softer parallel to the crystal growth, and harder across the crystal. It is just this simple characteristic that creates all the difficulty in applying a polish, if one uses the same procedure as for example, agate. However, provided one has the proper equipment and uses it in the proper manner, nephrite jade is easy to polish. And now for the job.

From *THE PALOMAR GEM February 2005.*

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## Winter Safety - The Deceptive Killers PART 2

*By Chuck McKie, Safety Chair*

### Be Prepared! Before the Storm Strikes

#### On the Farm/Pets

- Move animals to sheltered areas.

- Shelterbelts, properly laid out and oriented, are better protection for cattle than confining shelters, such as sheds.
- Haul extra feed to nearby feeding areas.
- Have water available. Most animals die from dehydration in winter storms.
- Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter.
- In Vehicles, plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm.
- Fully check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins.

#### Carry a WINTER STORM SURVIVAL KIT:

- Mobile phone, charger, batteries
- Blankets/sleeping bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Knife
- High-calorie, non-perishable food
- Extra clothing to keep dry
- Large empty can to use as emergency toilet. Tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes
- Small can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water
- Sack of sand or cat litter for traction
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper and brush
- Tool kit
- Tow rope
- Battery booster cables
- Water container
- Compass and road maps.

#### Other

- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Avoid traveling alone. Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes.
- Dress for the Season: Wear loose, lightweight, warm clothes in layers.
- Trapped air insulates. Remove layers to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill.
- Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent, and hooded.
- Wear a hat. Half your body heat loss can be from the head.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extreme cold.
- Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves.
- Try to stay dry.

#### When CAUGHT in a Winter Storm Outside

1. Find shelter, try to stay dry, cover all exposed body parts.
2. No shelter:
  - Build a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind.
  - Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
  - Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.
  - Melt snow for drinking water: Eating snow will lower your body temperature.
3. In a Vehicle - Stay in vehicle:
  - You will become quickly disoriented in wind-driven snow and cold.
  - Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat.
  - Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.
  - Be visible to rescuers:

- Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
  - Tie a colored cloth, preferably red, to your antenna or door.
  - After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.
  - Exercise: From time to time, move arms, legs, fingers and toes vigorously to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.
  - AVOID OVEREXERTION, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow. The strain from the cold and the hard labor may cause a heart attack. Sweating could lead to a chill and hypothermia.
  - Take Red Cross Cardiopulmonary Rescue (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training so you can respond quickly to an emergency. Courtesy of American Red Cross NOAA
4. Inside - Stay inside:
- When using alternate heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc., use fire safeguards and properly ventilate.
  - No heat:
    - Close off unneeded rooms.
    - Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors.
    - Cover windows at night.
    - Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.
    - Wear layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing.
    - Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and subsequent chill.
5. Family Disaster Plan
- Prepare for hazards that affect your area with a Family Disaster Plan.
  - Where will your family be when disaster strikes?
  - They could be anywhere at work, at school or in the car.
  - How will you find each other?
  - Will you know if your children are safe?
  - Disasters may force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home.
  - What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity or telephones - were cut off?
6. Steps to Take
- Gather information about hazards.
  - Contact your local National Weather Service office, emergency management office, and American Red Cross chapter.
  - Find out what type of disasters could occur and how you should respond.
  - Learn your community's warning signals and evacuation plans.
  - Assess your risks and identify ways to make your home and property more secure.
  - Meet with your family to create a plan.
  - Discuss your plan with your family.
  - Pick two places to meet: a spot outside your home for an emergency, such as fire, and a place away from your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
  - Choose an out-of-state friend as your "family check-in contact" for everyone to call if the family gets separated.
  - Discuss what you would do if advised to evacuate.
7. Implement your plan.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by the phone.
  - Install safety features in your home, such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.
  - Inspect your home for potential hazards (items that can move, fall, break or catch fire) and correct them.
  - Have your family learn basic safety measures, such as CPR, AED and first aid; how to use a fire extinguisher; and how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity in your home.
  - Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number.
  - Keep enough supplies in your home for at least 3 days. Assemble a disaster supplies kit. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers, such as backpacks or duffle bags. Keep important documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller disaster supplies kit in the trunk of your car.
8. A Disaster Supplies Kit Should Include:
- A 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day)
  - Food that won't spoil
  - One change of clothing and shoes per person
  - Portable radio
  - Flashlight with extra batteries
  - Extra set of car keys
  - Cash and a credit card
  - Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
  - One blanket or sleeping bag per person
  - First-aid kit
  - Prescription medicines
  - Emergency tools
  - Battery-powered NWR
9. Practice and maintain your plan.
- Ensure your family knows meeting places, phone numbers and safety rules.
  - Conduct drills.
  - Test your smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once each year.
  - Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
  - Replace stored water and food every 6 months.
  - Contact your local National Weather Service office, American Red Cross chapter or emergency management office for a copy of "Your Family Disaster Plan" (L-91/ARC4466).

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### March 2005 Gem & Mineral Shows

**4-6 — HAYWARD, CA:** Show; Mineral & Gem Society of Castro Valley; Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd.; Thu. 10-6, Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, children under 13 free with adult; gems, minerals, fossils, rocks, jewelry, beads, lapidary equipment, jewelry making supplies, live auction, door prizes, demonstrations, exhibitor cases; contact Ron Miller, (510) 538-2397.

**4-13 — IMPERIAL CA:** Annual show; Imperial Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Gem and Mineral Bldg., Imperial Valley Fairgrounds; exhibits, vendors, demonstrations; Fri. 12-10, Mon. 4-10, Tue. 4-10, Wed. 4-10, Thu. 4-10, Fri. 4-10, Sat. 12-10, Sun. 12-10; contact Trey Handy, (760) 352-2273.

**5-6 — ARCADIA, CA:** 45th annual show; Monrovia Rockhounds; Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanical Garden, 301 N. Baldwin Ave., 1 block south of I-210; Sat. 9-4:30, Sun. 9-4:30; adults \$7, seniors and students \$5, ages 5-12 \$2.50, under 5 free; 13 dealers, display cases, geode cracking, dino dig, treasure wheel, raffle prizes, \$1 grab bags; contact Janie Duncan, (626) 358-8157; e-mail: janieduncan@altrionet.com.

**5-6 — NEW YORK, NY:** Show; Excalibur Mineral Corp., NY Mineralogical Club; Holiday Inn-Midtown, 440 W. 57th St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-6; admission \$6; 20 retail and wholesale dealers, lectures, displays; contact Excalibur Mineral Corp., 1000 N. Division St., Peekskill, NY 10566, (914) 739-1134; e-mail: info@excaliburmineral.com; Web site: www.excaliburmineral.com.



**5-6 — VENTURA, CA:** 43rd annual show, "Artistry from Nature" Ventura Gem & Mineral Society; Seaside Park, Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; displays, lapidary demonstrations, door prizes, country store, video presentations, dealers, children's activities; contact Jim Brace-Thompson, 7319 Eisenhower St., Ventura, CA 93003, (805) 659-3577; e-mail: jbraceth@adelphia.net.

**10-13 — DEMING, NM:** 40th annual show, "Rockhound Roundup" Deming Gem & Mineral Society; Southwestern NM Fairground; Thu. 9-5, Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; displays, demonstrations, jewelry, rocks, drawings, raffle, field trips, silent auction, live auction; contact Barbara Hamilton, P.O. Box 1459, Deming, NM 88031, (505) 544-8643.

**11-13 — OGDEN, UT:** 54th show, "Gemstone Junction 2005" Golden Spike Gem & Mineral Society of Ogden; Union Station, 25th and Wall Ave.; adults \$2, students \$1.50, children under 12 free with adult, student and scout groups free on Fri.; more than 70 exhibits, door prizes, silent auction, children's grab bags, touch-and-see table and rock painting, demonstrations of silversmithing, chain making, gem faceting, lapidary, sphere making, rock painting, and wire wrapping, dealers with fossils, faceting rough, minerals, jewelry, petrified wood, gemstones and machinery; contact Bonnie Glismann, (801) 392-7832; e-mail: bonniesbylines@juno.com.

**11-13 — SPOKANE, WA:** 46th annual show; Rock Rollers; Spokane Fair and Expo Center, Havana and Broadway; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; theme "Agate: The Ancient Gem" contact Marian Knack, (509) 926 6444; e-mail: mknack@sprynet.com; or Leon Agee, (509) 276-3992.

**12-13 — SALINAS, CA:** Annual show; Salinas Rock & Gem Club; Spreckels Veterans Memorial Bldg., 5th and Llano St.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; gem and mineral displays, demonstrations, Wheel of Chance, silent auction, dealers with jewelry, gems and fossils; contact Jim Bassett, (831) 758-5830, or Bob Brewer, (831) 758-6274; e-mail: jbmcs@sbcglobel.net.

**12-13 — SAN MARINO, CA:** 47th annual show, "Tournament of Gems" Pasadena Lapidary Society; San Marino Masonic Center, 3130 Huntington Dr.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; contact Marcia Gotez, (626) 914-5030; e-mail: joenmar1@gte.net.

**12-13 — TURLOCK, CA:** Show; Mother Lode Mineral Society; Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, ages 12 and under free; artisan demonstrations, free children's activities, beads, findings, fossils, minerals, 70 exhibit cases including lots of dinosaur bones, educational exhibits; contact Terry McMillin, (209) 527-8000; e-mail: bud.mcmillin.b7yj@statefarm.com.

**19-20 — ANGELS CAMP, CA:** 29th show, "Exhibits of Nature's Wonders" Calaveras Gem & Mineral Society; Calaveras County Fairgrounds; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$2, children under 12 free with adult; contact Earl Klein, (510) 632-9373.

**19-20 — BAKERSFIELD, CA:** 3rd annual show, "Rock & Mineral Rendezvous" Kern County Fair Grounds, 1142 S. P St.; free admission; rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary equipment and supplies, beads and beading supplies, demonstrations in cabochon making, knapping, wire wrapping, sphere making, and silver smithing; contact Lewis Helfrich, Helfrich's Jewelry Creations, School Of Lapidary Arts and Bead Shop, 2225 River Blvd., Bakersfield, CA 93305, (661) 872-8230; e-mail: lewsrocks@netzero.net.

**19-20 — ESCONDIDO, CA:** Annual show; Palomar Gem & Mineral Club; Escondido National Guard Armory, 304 Park Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$2, seniors (65+) \$1, children under 12 with an adult free; gem & mineral dealers, demonstrators, opportunity drawing; contact Annie Heffner, (760) 735-8067; e-mail: annieheffner@yahoo.com.

**19-20 — SEATTLE, WA:** 51st annual show; North Seattle Lapidary & Mineral Club; Lake City Community Center, 12531 28th Ave. NE; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; lots of junior activities; contact Susan Gardner, (425) 483-2295; e-mail: sgardner3@mindspring.com; Web site: www.NorthSeattleRockClub.org.

**-27 — SPANISH FORK, UT:** 46th annual show; Timpanogos Gem & Mineral Society; Spanish Fork Fairgrounds, 475 S. Main; Fri. 10-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; free admission; Touch & Tell Rock Table, dealers, demonstrations, including flint knapping; contact Frank Weight, 602 Canyon Dr., Springville, UT 84663; (801) 489-4040.

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