

The Opal Express

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



**Volume #38 Issue #7
July 2005**

TO:

Some Topics In This Issue:

- Opal in Mississippi
- Man Made Diamonds
- Daniel Toledo Lecture Summary
- Travels in Australia with Frank Gross
- Opal Festival in Lightning Ridge
- Agates
- Jasper or Agate
- Agate Inclusions
- Ocean Jasper

Important Info:

Board Meeting
July 12th

General Meeting
July 14th

Lecture: ROBERT G. GULLAGE -
Certified Gemologist on Opals and the
Jewelry Business

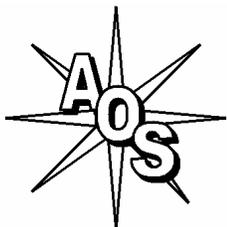
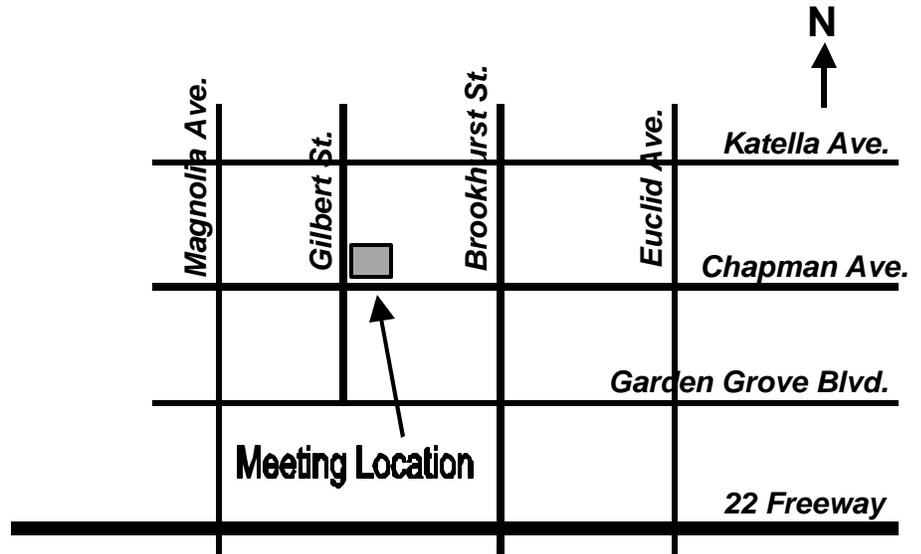
— GENERAL MEETINGS —

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

July 14th Lecture: ROBERT G. GULLAGE Certified Gemologist on Opals and the Jewelry Business



The American Opal Society

<http://OpalSociety.org>

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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.

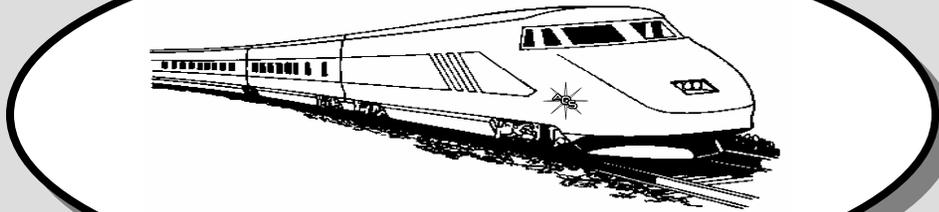
Please sign here: _____ Date _____

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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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Opal
Society



July 2005

Volume 38 Issue 7

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Vice President's Message

By Eugene LeVan

I have been under the weather for the last thirty days with a back injury not able to get around to perform for the Opal Society. The board meeting normally at my house was canceled in June. The general meeting in June with our new speaker Daniel Toledo presented outstanding ideas on designs with opals and new mounting techniques.

More new speakers are scheduled for the balance of the year, be sure to come listen about opals and other gemmy ideas. I am back on track to provide the leadership for July's meeting.

Members Only Website Password

To log onto the website's members only area at: http://opalsociety.org/aos_members_only_area.htm type: Name: "member" and Password: "spencer".

July Speaker - : Robert G. Gullage

The lecture at the July 14th general meeting will be by Robert G. Gullage on Opals and the Jewelry Business.

Robert is a long time jeweler at Lapidary International and is a certified gemologist.

Man Made Diamonds

By Steve Weinberger (ABC News, September 25, 2003. (From Gem Cutters News, 10/03, via The Glacial Drifter 10/03))

Man-made diamonds are not new. They've been produced by companies in the United States and Russia for a number of years. Because of the expense involved and the small size of the stones produced, the production thus far has gone into the industrial market.

Now, two small companies, Apollo Diamond in Massachusetts and Gemesis Corporation in Florida, each have produced a new type of lab-made diamond that is difficult, though not impossible, to distinguish from natural diamonds.

Both Companies insist that their man made gems--to be sold at lower prices than natural diamonds--will be labeled so that they will not be confused with natural diamonds. Many experts say that the average retail jeweler would not be able to tell the difference on their own without the use of gemological laboratory equipment that allows both synthetic and natural materials to be identified.

Natural diamonds are formed of carbon that has been exposed to immense heat and pressure over billions of years. Synthetics have the same physical properties, but they are created in a laboratory.

The new manmade diamonds from Apollo are created in a few days by a machine through a process called chemical vapor deposition. Diamond crystal is formed when a plasma cloud of carbon is deposited onto diamond wafers. The wafer seeds grow into diamond mini-bricks, rough diamonds that are sliced into wafers, and cut and polished into diamonds.

At Gemesis, synthetic diamonds are created through a high-pressure, high-temperature technique that mimics the geologic conditions under which natural diamonds are formed. In a capsule placed under high temperature and pressure, graphite--a form of carbon--breaks down into atoms and travels through a metal solvent to bond to a tiny diamond seed, crystallizing layer by layer. Three or four days later, the stone that is formed is then removed from the chamber and cut and polished into a synthetic diamond.

The two companies' products are bigger, better and brighter than their synthetic predecessors.

The stones being marketed today are canary colored and sell for approximately \$3,250 per carat, about 30% less than natural stones of the same color.

Reference: Diamonds--The Antoinette Matlins Buying Guide: How to Select, Buy, Care for Diamonds With Confidence and Knowledge by Antoinette Matlins.

Tips & Hints: Work Out That Flat Spot

To work out that flat spot in a cab, mark a cross on the stone with an aluminum pencil. When the cab is properly ground and shaped, you will have erased the cross and eliminated the flat spot.

From Golden Spike News 1/1997 via The Palomar Gem 9/2000

Tips & Hints: Small Repairs??

Dip a round toothpick into the resin bottle or tube of epoxy and another into the catalyst container. Twist the two toothpicks together and you will have enough glue for a small repair job without a mess at all.

From The Palomar Gem 9/2000

Precious Opal: Mississippi's First Gemstone

By: James E. Starnes, Geologist, GIT
MDEQ - Mississippi Office of Geology

This is an exciting new find of opal right here in the USA! To see the color in the opals, view the newsletters in the archives at our website at <http://opalsociety.org>. The editor.



Rough Mississippi Opal Sample #1

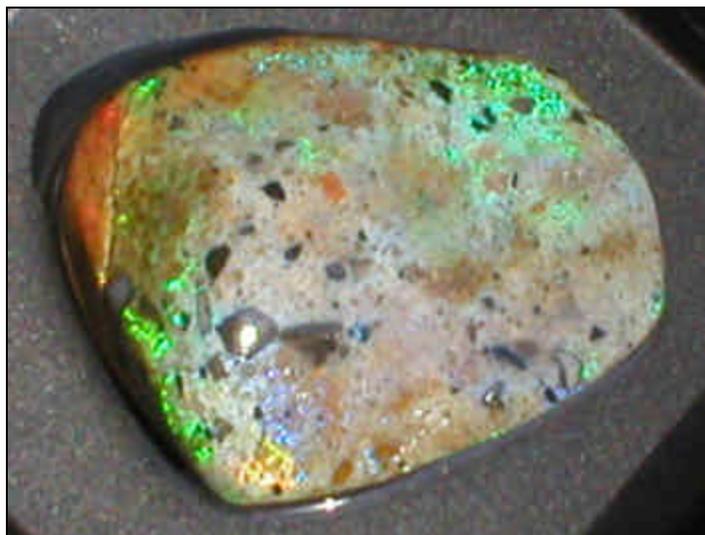
Mississippi has been endowed with extremely rich fossil deposits dispersed throughout much of the exposed geological section. Many of Mississippi's unique geological treasures adorn local personal collections and professional collections in museums as far away as Japan. Though the interest in Mississippi's geology by collectors and scientists is mainly in excellently preserved fossil specimens, many coarse-grained, aggregate-bearing deposits such as the Citronelle and Pre-loess gravels are regularly combed for semi-precious stones such as agate, carnelian, jasper, clear quartz, and fossil palm. Until recently, no precious stones have been reported from Mississippi.

In neighboring Louisiana, small-scale mining of gem-quality opal has been done in the basal Fleming Formation (Catahoula Formation equivalent in Mississippi) of Vernon Parish, Louisiana, near the Texas border for over a hundred years. The vibrantly



Rough Mississippi Opal Sample #2

colored opal cements coarse-grained sand into hard sandstone and quartzite which were fashioned into gemstones and once sold to Tiffany's of New York. Much of the Louisiana Opal on the market today can be credited to recent prospecting by Ben F. Stevens, whose mine is closed at present. ("Louisiana Opal-The One That Dares To Be Different" by Ben F. Stevens, 1999)



Finished Mississippi Opal Sample #1

Recent detailed geological mapping of the Catahoula Formation in Claiborne County by the Mississippi Office of Geology's (Mississippi State Geological Survey) Surface Geology Division under a United States Geological Survey (USGS) Statemap Grant led to the discovery of another precious opal deposit much like the Louisiana locality. The material was first tested for gem quality by the Mississippi Gem and Mineral Society's artisans, Janie Hand and Joy Rushing. The exquisitely crafted stones show brilliant flashes of fire, ranging in color from green to red.



Finished Mississippi Opal Sample #2

A 7.5 min geological map of the area was published by the Office. Though, no specific details on the location of the outcrop are being divulged to protect it from being raided before it can be completely studied by scientists. The site is sensitive, not only because of the presence of precious opal it contains, but pre-historic artifacts have also been found in association with the site. These artifacts include pottery, artifacts made from local chert gravel, and artifacts of Catahoula quartzite (some of which are opalescent).

Because of the amount of volcanic ash that was deposited in the Catahoula Formation, a number of quartzite bearing exposures can be found along its outcrop belt in Mississippi. Therefore, it is entirely possible that other exposures of the Catahoula Formation in Mississippi may contain precious opal deposits that have yet to be discovered.

For more information about the geology of Mississippi contact MDEQ at www.deq.state.ms.us or call us at (601) 961-5500.

Daniel Toledo: Creativity and Originality

By Russ Madsen

June's guest Speaker was Daniel Toledo speaking on the subject of Creativity and Originality. Daniel Toledo is an exceptionally skilled wildlife artist, jeweler, painter and sculptor.

He began his presentation noting duplicity makes consumers "tired". Seek to be as original as possible in your creativity. Daniel noted he was introduced to opal by David Burton and Gene LeVan. Commenting that Michelangelo observed about his sculptures that "the stone was speaking to him," Daniel noted each beautiful opal deserves to be set for its best presentation and he lets the opal speak to him.

He then described an opal setting technique he has developed. It is not bezel, nor prong setting. He calls it backsetting with a retaining plate.

The face or front of the setting is preformed and receives the opal inserted from the back. Then a custom formed retaining or backing plate is attached behind the stone to hold it in the setting (see Illustration #1).

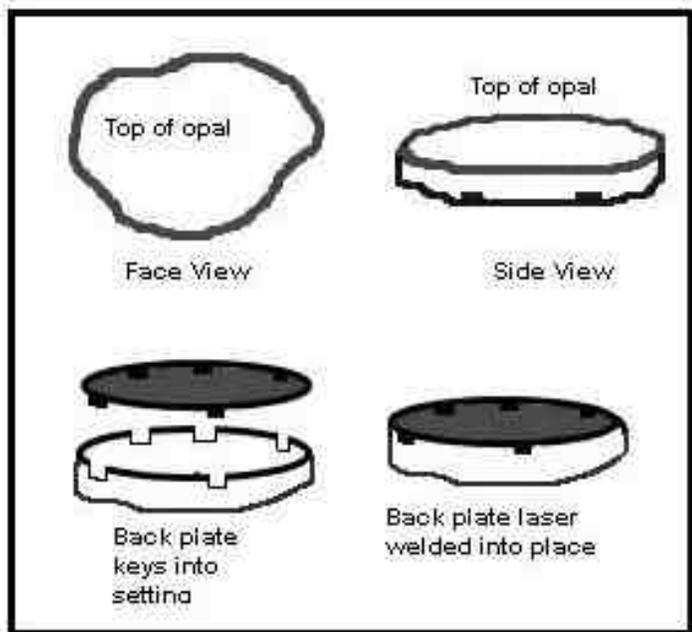


Illustration #1 Backsetting an opal

A technical problem Daniel had to overcome was assuring the retaining plate was strongly attached to the setting. He considered using soft/cold solder (i.e. tin/lead solder). This is inherently troublesome for several reasons. Among these is excess heat. In addition, the backing plate may be coated with black enamel or there might be epoxy in the assembly of an opal doublet or triplet.

Then he heard about laser welding. Heat from laser welding is so localized it is possible to replace broken platinum prongs (at 4,000°F) without removing a stone from the setting.

He has never had any trouble with backing plates which have been spot welded by this laser technique. He usually uses 5 weld spots or tacks on a large stone, 4 on a medium stone and 2 on a small stone. Laser welding is not particularly expensive as each weld tack costs approximately \$15.00.

An important detail is to make sure the backplate is accurately created. The setting and backplate are keyed to each other and formed to exactly match the shape of the opal.

Daniel does all his own wax work then contracts out the processes of casting, setting, soldering and laser welding. He has

found time is limited and cannot move forward with his creativity if he does these processes himself.

He makes the point that backsetting gives him the ability to create very fine jewelry pieces using extremely nice freeform opals that would challenge or defy ordinary metalsmithing and jewelry making techniques. As an example the group was treated to viewing a beautiful necklace featuring a fine Peruvian blue opal with an asking price of \$45,000.00.

Backsetting involves making a unique setting for each unique gemstone. The main setting and back plate are sized and shaped in wax exactly to the individual opal being set. The setting created by this technique holds the opal snugly but without and real pressure on the stone.

The backplate is usually 1mm to 1-1/2mm thick. The keyways (see Illustration #1) are usually about 4mm wide.

Daniel cautions that an important step toward a successful outcome is to make sure the wax is very clean and accurately carved. Also be sure to leave a slight space (the thickness of a layer of cloth, book-binding tape) as "slack" for shrinkage of the finished casting as it cools. Otherwise the setting may "pinch" the opal and need to be reworked for proper sizing before assembly.

Cloth tape is available from art supply stores. It was noted that this tape is particularly useful because it will conform to a freeform opal without wrinkling as it wraps and follows the shape of the stone.

For some pieces, Daniel uses black "cold set" enamel to coat the inside of the backplate. This coating will stop light from reflecting back through a clear or translucent opal giving it a better play of color. As with any enhancement, such a coating is always explained to a buyer. Daniel emphasized the ratios of catalyst, resin and color must be perfect for the enamel to set properly.

Asked about how he decides where to go with a design theme, Daniel responded he favors freeform opal cutting and seeks to maximize the cut of the stone not by retaining carat weight but by cutting for best appearance. He noted that freeform cutting brings out the best of what an opal offers. His designs follow from listening to the opal. Sometimes a he sees a specific image, other times a general theme is suggested by a stone's characteristics. Daniel advised follow your desires and listen; designs will come to you.

Like diamonds, great opals need "papers". A fine opal should be professionally graded and certified for grading and authenticity and a true statement of provenance of the stone should be made available to the buyer.

When asked about using Precious Metal Clay (PMC) he indicated he has not used this material to date.

Besides metalsmithing and jewelry making, he does 4 to 5 shows per year. He also paints and sculpts. In fact he sold his first painting when he was 9 years old. It sold in 1958 or 1959 for \$50.00!

After his service as a United States Marine during the Vietnam war an art gallery owner suggested he consider being a wildlife artist. He loved the idea and went to conservation groups to learn what they could offer about animals: body shapes, behaviors, personality types and characteristics, habitats. He traveled the world studying animals firsthand as a wildlife artist. He has purchased every book about animals he has been able to locate including everything from art to anatomy.

One day in a Jack LeLane gym doing sit-ups he overheard three men next to him talking about jewelry and manufacturing classes. A discussion ensued and they collaborated to create a curriculum that compressed two years of classes into 6 months of intense study.

Another question asked where his inspiration is found? Creativity is a two-sided coin or double edged sword. Creativity implies destructivity. This writer was reminded of renowned bird artist John James Audubon who sometimes found it necessary to kill his feathered subjects so they could be posed as desired for his

famous paintings. Daniel pointed out that an artist must respect both sides of this coin.

As a Marine in Vietnam in an anti-tank division he encountered Khalil Gibran's quote, "From the depths of your valleys come the heights of your mountains." Daniel noted he has been on both sides of the coin. He then asked who in the room believes in angels? With a smile and a nod he said if you are seeking inspiration, "Call on the right angels."

Addressing the question how ones lifestyle and day to day time constraints fit creativity Daniel observed this varies. Sometimes the two are inverse; sometimes he is up until 3:00am working on a design; sometimes an idea is immediate and complete; sometimes it is at the dinner table; sometimes the process is vague and slow; sometimes it is crisp and clear. His wife is adept at using Photoshop and can sometimes help or advise about an idea.

Using RTV silicon rubber he always makes a cold set casting of a wax before sending it out to the casters just in case something untoward happens.

Returning to the theme of the evening's talk Daniel noted there are 360 degrees in a circle and there are as many ways to look at any animal, plant etc. Daniel advises - as an artist ask yourself, is your style changing? Are you getting different views? Are you looking at all your options?

Opal is a natural phenomenon, therefore look at nature for inspiration and resources for creativity. Look at animals, plants, fossils, micro-organisms. Daniel asked, "Have you ever been in a jungle?" He noted he hopes no one has to be there due to a war but having been there he highly encouraged anyone seeking to be a wildlife artist to go into the jungle.

Our thanks to Daniel Toledo for such an interesting presentation.

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The Adventures of Frank Gross in Aussie Land

This is the first of a continuing series of entertaining commentaries via e-mail by member Frank Gross on his travels in Australia. Frank, an ex-patriot Aussie living in Southern California, is back visiting old friends and neighborhoods and will be taking an expedition to the opal fields of Lightning Ridge.
The Editor

May 30th, 2005 – The Super Shuttle picks me up in 1½ hours.

Date: Mon 5/30/2005 7:13 PM

Off to the Land of Oz...

Best wishes,
Frank G

June 2nd, 2005 - The Adventures of Frank Gross in Aussie Land

Hello All,

I made it "The Land of Oz" just fine. The winds were with the plane and we cut a half hour off the flying time, only 13.5 hours instead of 14 hours. The plane was only half full so and I lucked out by having the two seats next to me vacant. I had the window seat. This meant I could commandeer the two vacant seats and lie down on them for a semblance of sleep. It still was uncomfortable but I think I got three or four hours of shut eye.

They wanted \$30 to drive me into Sydney but I said that was too dear to the cabbie. The cabbie said "Well, you just go find another ride then." I did. I took a shuttle (\$9) through peak hour morning rush hour that was being driven by a mad Russian. He got us all (there were 6 of us) to our destinations in record time but I am sure we all had white knuckles from holding onto anything that was fastened to the shuttle. I rented a car for \$AUD 15 (plus \$10 insurance per day) per day! "Bayswater at Kings Cross. I will always rent my car from this place from now on. THERE IS NO KNOWN CHEAPER PLACE.

Hey, if any of you know Mike Kowalski's email address can you email me with it. Since he and I are to meet, with [Len Cram](#) I hope, in Lightning Ridge I would like to mail him my letters too. Can you also get me Gene LeVan's email address too.

Anyhow, everything is just fine here. This is the first of many emails you will receive.

I gotta go now. I think I'll go down to the pub for a tinny.

Best wishes,

Frank Gross, in the Land of Oz

June 5th, 2005 - Hi Jim from Frank G

Hi Jim,

Sure, you can group all my emails together and publish them in the Opal Express.

I am staying with good friend in the town of Nowra at present. I have to take back my rented car tomorrow after my dental checkup and I will spend a night with my daughter, Gabrielle. She lives and works in the Epping area of Sydney. I will load her up with presents one of which is a bottle of the new liqueur "Hideous" I think she will be in possession of the only bottle in Australia. I am sure she can use it at one of her parties. I can't wait to find out what it tastes like. I am sure I will say "That's Hideous all right" when I do. :)

The weather is clear and the temperature brisk here in Nowra right now. I went up to Dapto to the Dapto Markets at 6 in the morning yesterday, Sunday. We had a fine time walking around the stalls for a few hours. Then it was off to the Gerroa Fishermen's Club for drinkies and appreciation of the fine view of "Seven Mile Beach" from the club's position atop a hill.

I am buying a car off a friend of mine on Wednesday and will use this to travel to Lightning Ridge in mid July. I have a lot of business to do whilst there.

Anyhow, that's all from me right now. More later.

Best wishes,

Frank Gross

June 17th, 2005 - News from Australia - Frank Gross

Well, I have been in Australia for two weeks now and have not stopped. I have bought a car from my good friends Yani and Nobby and will sell it back to them when I am finished with it on the 14th of August. This is great I pay \$1500 for a good car, and then sell it back to the original owners for two or three hundred dollars less. I get a car to drive here and there for, say, \$300 (Australian dollars) for 11 weeks. I, of course, will take good care of it as I am not a lead foot. You wouldn't want to be around here anyway as there are more patrol cars out and about here in Oz than in LA. There are A LOT of [Red Light Cameras](#) and [Speed Cameras](#) here too. Red Light Cameras take your picture when you go through a red light and you receive a nice \$250 ticket in the mail. If you want to have the incriminating picture you have to send \$20 EXTRA. A Speed Camera which are set up around known locations all around the state check your speed and if you are going over the speed limit you again receive a ticket in the mail AND if you want the picture, well, you know...

We have had gale force winds which are definitely COLD blowing here for the past two days. It is lucky that the grounds are fairly dry otherwise there would be a lot more trees down that what there is at present.

Today, Friday, my friends Yani (from Indonesia), Nobby (Mauri from New Zealand), Aussie Chris and I traveled to Wollongong (Aboriginal for "See, the monster comes") to hit the Asian supermarkets. All in all we bought about \$200 worth of food. Yani loves to cook anything Asian AND she is GREAT at it. Nobby is a retired Cordon Bleu Chef from the Hilton Hotels who is now retired. I have had many, many good tips from him in my cooking. Gosh, my mouth is now watering from the great food I have had at that household. Hope I don't drip on the keyboard.

Tonight, is my treat at Yani and Nobbys. I am making my FAMOUS Garlic Prawn Pizza. The recipe will NOT be divulged so you can all just drool. Imagine the smell of pizza, heavy with garlic and the smell of roasted shrimp wafting through your hallways... Well, just imagine it, your not getting any... Gee I'm mean...

Tomorrow there are perhaps 8 garage sales we will go to around the Nowra (Aboriginal for "Black Cockatoo") area. Sunday it is the Dapto Markets which is about a 50 minute drive north of Nowra.

The trip to Lightning Ridge is scheduled for mid July and I am looking forward to seeing Vicki and Peter again to wheel and deal. Come' on everybody. If you want to ask me a question about Australia please do so. Jim can publish it in the Opal Express and I will respond. My email is fwgross3@yahoo.com
Best wishes to you all.
Frank Gross, in Australia

June 23rd, 2005 - Frank Gross Australian Saga

G'Day Everybody,

I'm sitting here in the heated library of Nowra at 10:22 in the morning writing this. Outside it is windy, cold and rainy.

I heard the rain coming down softly whilst in bed in the trailer I am staying in and stayed in my sleeping bag an extra 45 minutes - why get up when it is raining?

Anyhow I got up around 8:15 and made some pure Kona (from the big island of Hawaii) coffee. I started drooling when the smell started wafting through the trailer. That big, hot steaming mug of Kona coffee with cream and sweetener sure hit the spot! Next I made breakfast which consisted of baked beans, an egg and bread with peanut butter. Then... another mug of Kona.

Not much to do today. I emailed Vicki and Peter of Down to Earth Opals telling them of my request for rough but I haven't received a reply from them yet. I will get the number of the Lands Department in Lightning Ridge and give them a call to see if I can get a map of the Ridge area with latitude and longitude on the edges. I will need this when Chris and I take our two day long hike through the hopefully unexplored bush in hopes of finding opal lying on the ground. We will be plotting our course on the map via Chris' GPS. We will be camping out one night way, way out in the bush. I think could cover perhaps 40 kilometers on the trip which will be over two days and a night. I have a light weight tent I will carry in my pack. By the way I got a pack at the local recycling garbage depot (tip) for \$4. Chris got his for \$3 but his is smaller than mine. My pack is large enough to carry my sleeping bag and tent and food for the time I will be in the bush.

I can't wait to get to Grawin (actual spelling) to see this pile of opal patch. It is said the pile is as big as a football field and was accumulated over many years of digging. We will stay at least one night in Grawin, which is about 70 kilometers west of Lightning Ridge.

Chris and I watched a rented DVD last night called "Starship Troopers 2". I had seen the first "Starship Troopers" perhaps 4 years ago and it was pretty good. #2 is good but not as good as #1.

Tomorrow, Friday, Yani (my Indonesian friend), Chris and I will travel to Berrima to this giant bookstore called Berkelew's. This place is an old two story homestead cram packed with old books. If you are looking for a rare or out of print book this is the place to go. We will picnic in Berrima park and perhaps go have a drink in the pub. Then we might stroll to the historic Old Berrima Gaol (Jail) which is still in use and pick up a bargain made by a prisoner. Then it will be a leisurely stroll through the many craft and antique shops there. I think the whole township has no more than 500 residents. The Hume Highway, New South Wales main inland arterial road passes through the town.

Anyhow, that's all from me right now.

More later,

Frank Gross, in Australia

This has been a Frank Gross Production

+++++

**The World's Biggest Opal Festival
Only 5 Weeks to Go!!!**

27 June 2005



**OPAL JEWELLERY DESIGN
AWARDS ASSOCIATION INC.**

Inc. 347 2591 · ABN 49 025 417 477

PO Box 638 · Lightning Ridge · NSW 2834 · AUSTRALIA

Telephone +61 02 6829 4488 · Facsimile +61 02 6829 4477 ·

Email ojdaa@wj.com.au

There are only 5 short weeks to go until the world's biggest opal event – the Lightning Ridge Opal Festival. The event is in its own right – the country's best opal show attracting over 4000 visitors and locals over the four days from 28 – 31 July 2005.

This year's event will prove to be one of the largest in history with the combination of the National Opal Symposium, the International Opal Jewellery Design Awards and the Opal & Gem Expo all taking place in the last week of July. The spotlight will be on Lightning Ridge and the town will be a buzz with opal buyers, miners, jewellers, designers, politicians, tourists and the media.

The event gives Lightning Ridge the opportunity to shine on the world stage. It delivers the town and Shire with an unprecedented opportunity to gain press coverage and it is the best call to action to entice hundreds of people to visit the area. Annually the event injects over one million dollars into the local economy and acts as catalyst to spark opal investment in an otherwise slow economy. The Opal & Gem Expo now attracts all types of opal – black, white and boulder and the country's biggest buyers.

As a local, you are encouraged to get involved in the activities. There is plenty happening over the course of the week, for details check out the Program of Events displayed in most shops around the town. For Opal & Gem Expo Stalls and the Opal Queen, contact Angela on 0407 455 413, for the Opal Jewellery Design Awards Competition and dinner, contact Lyn on 6829 0203, and for the National Opal Symposium, contact Maxine on 6829 0427.

For further information, contact Angela Myers on 0407 455 413.

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Agates

Author unknown

A process which took nature hundreds, thousands or perhaps millions of years to complete cannot be covered easily in a few words, but let's take a simplified version of their creation: First came the raw material, silica (silicon dioxide SiO₂). This compound is a combination of silicon and oxygen and is a major rock builder in the earth's crust, being second only to the compound water in abundance. With silica so common, gems should be everywhere, but their formation depended upon special conditions, and this is where our story begins.

About 400 million years ago the Pacific Northwest began to rise from the sea. In a succession of volcanic upheavals, a landmass rich in silica was created. Occasionally these lavas cooled so rapidly they formed a volcanic glass, obsidian. Generally, however, volcanic masses cooled slowly, tended to crystallize and were porous, eventually breaking down to release minute particles of silica. This free silica, in turn, was dissolved by acids in percolating ground waters, then transported and finally deposited as concentrated liquids in subsurface cavities. Experts differ on how the liquids eventually became solids; however, the following basic silica forms were the result.

Crystalline - Silica deposited in obvious crystal forms and known as quartz or rock crystal.

Opaline - A silica form similar to chalcedony but totally non-crystalline, more porous and containing small-added amounts of free water (3 to 14 percent) held within its structure rather than its chemistry. Gem opals are of this form.

Cryptocrystalline - Silica deposits of microscopically fine-grained, almost noncrystalline masses known as chalcedony. Chalcedony characterizes agate and jasper.

Each of these silica forms occurred within cavities of previously formed rock and is termed secondary deposits. How each formed, however, depended largely on where it formed.

Individual gemstones, when found in gravel bars or loose soil, are usually a long way from their birthplace, having rolled and tumbled with the eroding forces. Generally the surface landmass of their origin has long since crumbled and vanished. However, some gems are still embedded where they developed and show that each basic type resulted from its own characteristic surroundings.

Agate: The result of Chalcedony, which filled empty gas pockets or cracks in otherwise solid rock, forming as nodules or seams. Since only limited amounts of foreign materials were included, the stone is fairly pure and ranges from clear to translucent when held to the light. Not all agate formed this way with the two exceptions being thunder eggs and fossils.

Recognizing and Testing Agate: The mineral world has many look-alikes, but not all have gemstone quality. To avoid filling your pockets with excess rock, three simple tests can be made:

Luster: Look for even-textured, non-granular material ranging from clear (glasslike) through translucent (semi-clear) to opaque (blocking out light). Rough specimens may have a glassy, waxy, pearly or even dull appearance and can be better judged when wet. Agate: Waxy, clear to near opaque. Jasper: Waxy to dull and opaque. Opal: Pearl-like, clear to opaque.

Fracture: Broken edges are usually conchoidal (cupped, shell-like fractures as on a chunk of glass). Water-worn pebbles often show curved, crescent-like surface markings. An exception to this is opal, which tends to be brittle and more angular in fracture.

Hardness: Part of the reason these are termed gemstones is in their ability to polish well and withstand abrasion. They rank between 7 to 7.5 on the Mohs hardness scale.

Probably no gemstone is known in a greater variety of colors and patterns than agates. And like fingerprints, no two of these are ever exactly the same. However, recurring agate character types have been given appropriate names such as: White or Milk Agate, Turtle-Back, Coated Agate, Snakeskin Agate, Blue Agate, Amethystine Agate, Carnelian, Sard, Polka Dot, Sunset Enhydro or Water Agate, Fortification Agate, Iris or Rainbow Agate, Banded Agate, Sardonyx, Grape, Eye Agate or Orbicular, Tube or Pipe Agate, Angel Wing, Dendritic, Moss, Plume, Flower, Sagenite Agate and our own Ellensburg Blue Agate.

From Pebbles, Apr. 2000 via the 7/03 Flatirons Facets.

Jasper or Agate?

By David Olsen

Jasper and agate are the rocks we hobbyists deal with most often in pursuit of our goals as lapidaries and collectors. Do we really understand the difference between the two?

Both jasper and agate are composed of extremely fine interlocking quartz crystals called cryptocrystalline quartz. As such, they are both members of the fine-grained quartz family referred to as chalcedony. Chalcedony occurs throughout the world in beds, bands, nodules, geodes, botryoidal masses, as a replacement of fossils, wood tissue or other minerals, and as a cementing material. It is deposited from silica-rich waters, often carrying other impurities.

It is the presence of these: mineral impurities which stain the micro-quartz grains to produce the wide variety of colored patterns,

banding effects and inclusions that differentiate the basic "gem" forms of cryptocrystalline quartz - jasper and agate - from ordinary drab chalcedony.

In general, agate is a transparent to translucent form of chalcedony in which the coloration takes the form of regular bands, rings, clouds, wispy inclusions or distinct groups.

Jasper, on the other hand, can be somewhat translucent, but it is most often opaque...with color usually much darker than agate and... totally random with respect to distribution and pattern.

From the Owyhee Gem 1/95 via the 2/03 Flatirons Facets

Agate Inclusions: Sagenite and Plume

By Pat McMahon, Oak Creek G&MS

Agates with inclusions are some of the rarest and most beautiful agates in the world. These inclusions may be sagenitic, plume, dendritic, or moss.

Sagenite - or more accurately, sagenitic agate - is any agate having acicular or needle-like mineral growths. These hair-like filaments are often arranged in fans or sunbursts. The inclusions come in a wide array of colors.

Plume agate has fluffy-looking inclusions that appear soft and have depth. Plume agate inclusions sometimes resemble feathers, plants or flowers. Colors may vary, as in sagenite.

Dendritic agate displays thin, tree-like growths, usually black or dark brown, as in Montana agate. Dendrites may also occur in limestone, talc, sandstone, beryl, corundum and other minerals.

When inclusions in agate are random in pattern, often creating the appearance of seaweed or moss, we have moss agate. Moss agate comes in many colors but is often green. Moss is the most common type of inclusion in agate.

From the The Agatizer 7/99.

Ocean Jasper



There is a gorgeous new find from Madagascar called Ocean Jasper." (Some are calling it "Orbicular Jasper-" in reference to its colorful orbs, and some "Moon Jewel Jasper.") But "Ocean Jasper" seems most fitting, as it was found right along the shore, actually being covered by water at high tide, and only accessible at low tide! Plus, there are no towns nearby, and no roads so the rough must be brought out by boat. The collector who found it described his experience this way. "In 1997, the Mineralogical Encyclopedia (GRUND Publisher) reproduced a picture of this mythical Orbicular Jasper, but with an unknown caption. From this time on, collectors of rare species of minerals have been dreaming of this fabulous Jasper from Madagascar.

"After many fruitless, expeditions, the site has been found again. Following, a mission of 45 days, including 20 days of navigation, methodically following the coast, stopping in each fishing village, the site was finally rediscovered. Along the seashore, a group of rocks spread over 50 x 30 yards, is only visible at low tide.

This new rock has been found along the northwest coast of Madagascar." The deposit formed similar to a rhyolite flow but has been totally resilicated. The rhyolitic spheres or orbs come in an astonishing array of colors and color combinations. The background can be white, pink, green, red or yellow. Botryoidal formations as well as a white and deep green druzy are also common. The deposit, being located at the edge of the ocean, can only be collected at low tide. Ocean Jasper is produced from only one mine near Marovato, which is owned by Paul Obenich of Madagascar Minerals. This wonderful new lapidary material is distributed in rough form exclusively in the U.S. through The Gem Shop, Inc. from Madagascar Minerals. The following is an excerpt of an article from Lapidary Journal's June 2000 issue under "Top Ten Trends from Tucson" by Si & Ann Frazier. "It's hard to believe that the large deposit of beautifully patterned Jasper on the east coast of Madagascar first written about in 1922 could have been lost for the better part of a century, but it was. Dominated by pinks and greens and circular patterns or orbs, from which the terra orbicular derives, this jasper made a comeback in 2000 and was the buzz of the [Tucson] show among those interested in cabochon, bead, or carving materials. Edged with small quartz crystals, some large polished pieces made particularly attractive displays."

"Orbicular jaspers distinctive patterns are made up of round or spherical inclusions of contrasting colors floating in solid jasper. The orbs can range in diameter from a millimeter to a centimeter, and frequently show a particularly dramatic concentric banding. How orbicular jasper forms is still a scientific mystery, although a graduate geology student at the University of California at Berkeley is now putting advanced technology to work on this problem."

From website <http://www.mineralofthemonthclub.org/ocean.jasper.htm> via Town Rockhound 6-05 Via the Breccia. 6-05

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July 2005 Gem & Mineral Shows

1-3 - FLAGSTAFF, AZ: 19th annual show; Flagstaff Gem & Mineral Society; Little America Hotel, Butler Ave. and I-40; Fri. 11-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$3, children under 12 free; rough rocks, gemstones, minerals, jewelry,

beads, crystals, fossils, tools, equipment; contact Val Latham, 6598 Pintail, Flagstaff, AZ 86004, (928) 526-5152.

1-3 - PASADENA, CA: Show; International Gem & Jewelry Show Inc.; The Pasadena Center, 300 E. Green St.; contact Cathy Garsow, (951) 698-4833.

1-4 - SISTERS, OR: 9th annual show, "Roundup of Gems" Jean Miller; Sisters Elementary School; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6, Mon. 10-5; contact Jean Miller, P.O. Box 136, Molalla, OR 97038

8-10 - SALT LAKE CITY, UT: Show; Gem Faire; UT State Fair Park, 155 N 1000 W; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; gem show; contact Gem Faire, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

15-17 - PORTLAND, OR: Show; Gem Faire; OR Convention Center/Exhibit Hall E, 777 MLK Jr. Blvd.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; bead show; contact Gem Faire, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

15-17 - SUTHERLIN, OR: Show; Digger Don's Rockhound Club; Community Center, 150 S. Willamette St.; Fri. 4-8, Sat. 10-8, Sun. 10-5; contact Mezdulene, (541) 459-3115; e-mail: mezdulene@jareeda.com.

22-24 - SAN RAFAEL, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Marin Center/Exhibit Hall, 10 Avenue of the Flags; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; gem show; contact Gem Faire, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

23-24 - SANTA MONICA, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; bead show; contact Gem Faire, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

23-24 - TENINO, WA: 11th annual show, "Rock & Gem Rendezvous" WA Agate & Mineral Society, Tenino Rock Cruisers; Parkside Elementary School, Stage St. S; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; contact Daniel Deboer, 5107 Brenner Rd. NW, Olympia, WA 98502, (360) 866-3940; e-mail: keylock@comcast.net.

27-31 - FRANKLIN, NC: Annual retail and wholesale show, "Whistle Stop Gemfest" Whistle Stop Antique Mall; Whistle Stop Mall, Hwy. 441; Thu. 9-6, Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; jewelry, gems, minerals, rocks, specimens, knapping material; contact Chris or Nancy, (828) 369-6341.

29-31 - SANTA CLARA, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Santa Clara Convention Center, 5001 Great America Pkwy.; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

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