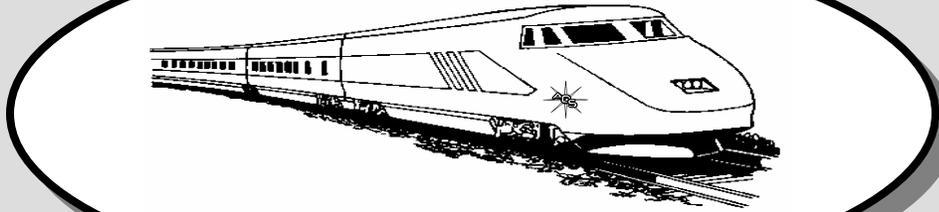


# The Opal Express

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## President's Message

*By Gene LeVan*

### The Special Opal Stone

How can a stone be so special? Well first It was created millions of years ago from silicon in a very large area more like a lake, no heat and pressure to make the opal just a lot of special ingredients in a hot climate layer by layer. Opal is so special that to find two stones the same is very unusual. Other precious gems like diamonds are very plentiful and matched gems are not rare. When you purchase rough opal it just looks like old dirt with no color just very plain material, but wait until cut the side and the surprise is coming to you. Because each stone is very different the story has no end.

When you retire and leave the daily routine a hole is also created and what can opal do about this? Plenty! Just buy an opal cabbing machine and some good opal rough and join the American Opal Society for instructions on how to do the cutting. The wonderful people at our general meetings will keep you going and you will forget your age. I have to warn you that opals are compulsive stones and you may want to have more and more! So come to your meetings and join the fun! We are a great group.

### 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: "knobby".

### Opal Society Workshop

The American Opal Society's workshop is open at Ball Jr. High School every Monday from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. The school is located at 1500 W. Ball Road in Anaheim. If you are traveling east on Ball

Rd. the parking lot entrance you need to use is just before the railroad tracks Room 37 is in the center of the campus.

Instruction will be given in cutting opal, wax models, lost-wax casting, fabrication, and setting stones. The workshop will furnish machines to cut and polish stones as well as a centrifuge for casting and a kiln for burnout. Please bring a roll of PAPER TOWELS with you for clean-up as the room is a science lab and needs to be kept spotless.

To attend, membership in the American Opal Society is a must due to insurance. A nightly fee of \$2 is asked to help keep the equipment in good running condition.

## Second AOS Live Auction on June 14th

The AOS will hold it's second "O-Bay," AOS live auction, will on Thursday, June 14 at our general meeting at 7:00. O-Bay will be fun, and "fund-raising," so come and snag a bargain while supporting your club!! **There were many great bargains to be had at the last event in March!**

Don't miss a chance to buy or sell opal rough, cabs, books, tools, display cases, and other neat gem stuff when members may bring up to 5 items each for sale, as long as they are gem-related, and are approved by the AOS Board of Directors. You must be an AOS member to sell at the auction, and you must sign a vendor agreement, printed here for preview. Vendors must donate 10 percent of the final price to the AOS, and will be paid after the refreshment break prior to close of meeting. We will arrive at 6:30 to help vendors prepare their items. If you have items for sale, please come early, and allow us to assign a Lot Number, any minimum "Reserve" price you may request, and log your items into our computer for easycheckout later!

Bidders may be members, or visitors, provided they have a photo ID like a driver's license, and are willing to abide by Bidder rules. You must have an official bid paddle to bid, so sign up early when you first get to the mtg. Copies of the Vendor Rules and Bidder Rules will be made available at the signup table when you arrive.

If you want to bid, you must sign in to get a paddle, and agree to the Bidder rules, which state that all items must be paid for prior to close of meeting, the highest bid wins, all sales are final, no returns or refunds. The AOS auctioneer has final authority to determine the high bid, and can accept or reject any bid at AOS discretion. Bidders cannot bid for another person, and must pay for and remove their auction items prior to the end of the meeting. Bidders are not permitted to loan their paddles to others.

Proceeds from the O-Bay auction will go toward AOS activities like our workshop, and our annual show preparation and advertising. Please be generous with your bids, and get a bargain at the same time!

## Harold Andersen has Passed Away

Long time member Harold Andersen passed away on May 15, 2007 after a brief illness. Harold was born on June 15, 1920 in Iowa. Harold was a resident of Seal Beach, California.

Harold joined the AOS in 1993 and has been an active member since then. In fact, Harold attended April's general meeting. For a number of years he was the CFMS representative for the AOS.

Godspeed, Harold. We will miss you.

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## Welcome to Magdalena; the Land of Opals

By Randy Lord



Camp in pit P Gallo

The main economic activity in the town of Magdalena in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, is stated on the above highway sign at the entrance to town. In 2006, while enjoying the sun and surf on the west coast of Mexico, I had the opportunity to visit this historic mining district and enjoy a beautiful, unchanged, colonial town where everyone had an precious opal or two in their pockets.

Many years ago, my prospecting partner Bruce, had given a ride to a young Mexican hitchhiker and was rewarded with some flashy stones.

Mostly yellow and orange base precious opal showing a bright red and green play of color, it was explained that these had been mined in the area so 20 years later we began a quest to see the source.

Boarding a cheap, last minute non-stop flight to Puerto Vallarta, a 2-week car rental was negotiated at the airport then a 4 hour drive south on Highway 200 found us at a rented house on the beach in the small seaside village of La Manzanilla. After a few days of body surfing, snorkeling, and



La Unica Mine



Miners and Buyers at Magdalena

enjoying a Mexican rodeo, three of us packed tents and a cooler and headed for the opal mines.

Driving Highway 80 east from Barra de Navidad on the coast, the two-lane highway passed through lush coastal areas with coconuts and papayas across two small mountain ranges. Six hours of driving by sugar cane fields found us closer to Guadalajara and much more traffic was encountered. We were able to circle clockwise on a perimeter road around the main city then headed 90km northwest on a Cuota (toll) highway. This US style, 4 lane split highway cost about \$10, had negligible traffic, fresh blacktop and with ample shoulders and good fencing the little rental Hyundai flew.

Needing a break partway to Magdalena, I decided to pull over for a driver change and to stretch the legs. Noticing a black, one-meter wide vein situated 20 meters away, I had to have a look. Large fragments the size of microwave ovens had been broken off by road construction, so lacking a hammer, I dropped one on a rhyolite boulder and like magic, shards of silver sheen obsidian scattered in the dust and weeds. Another one-meter wide vein exposed nearby appeared similar and road cuts for the next 30 km showed many interesting silica formations. After collecting 10 kg at the first site, we felt that the rental car springs should be saved for more important items, like beer and opals.

Driving into Magdalena that evening, reading the Land of Opals highway sign and spotting the Hotel Opalero (opal miner) gave us inspiration to head north of town to a mine site with a lot of history. After asking directions from some local farmers we arrived at dusk at the La Pata de Gallo (crows feet) mine and like all good canucks, set up camp in a pit and built a fire. In the morning, the mine site proved to be a semi-active operation utilizing a trackhoe with a hydraulic breaker and dynamite. We explored various pits and trenches but



La Unica Miner



La Unica Mine pit

no miners showed up and the roads showed only critter tracks in the volcanic dust. Common opal was predominant but precious opal stayed true to its name and was much harder to find. Its scarcity was probably the reason the miners were not present.

After breaking camp late in the morning we headed back into town and stopped at a major opal shop on the main street called OM, Opalos de Magdalena ([www.opalosedemexico.com.mx](http://www.opalosedemexico.com.mx)). We inquired if it was possible to visit their mine site to dig for opal and camp overnight. For a small fee we obtained permission and were given a note to borrow hand tools from a resident caretaker. We

drove north 10 km over cobblestone and gravel roads to the small village of Santa Nina and found La Lupita as described. Silica was everywhere with obsidian nodules scattered over the ground and in a large excavation, agate and opal veins were exposed. A small shrine to their local saint had been erected on site and we explored without tools for the afternoon. Visiting the mine owner nearby, he gave us sledge hammers, pry-bars, and chisels as well as a taste of the fine local Tequila and a tour of his magnificent garden.

After camping for the night we explored the main pit with tools and found some sections where precious opal had filled many tiny vesicles. Despite the large amount of silica present we considered this to be a tourist dig. We also noted many more mine sites in the local hills but decided to head to downtown Magdalena for more information. We stopped first at the OM shop and while there, many local miners came by to sell their wares. We decided to hang around. Many beautiful parcels changed hands and even mineral specimens like fluorite and calcite were offered. Finally 3 brothers and their father invited us to La Unica (the only), one of the pre-eminent and original mine sites in the area. We jumped at the chance.

Following their jeep south of town through sugar-cane fields and



Rock pick near an agate and opal mix

along gravel roads we arrived in their village and had lunch. While there we were shown a beautiful water-filled globe about 8 inches in diameter that held stunning fiery-opals glued on a tree like peaches. As our rental car could not access the mine site, we all piled in the jeep and headed up a local mountain through the scrub pine and oak woodlands.

We were driving up the flank of a major volcano and the road was at times steep and loose. Arriving at the mine site, an open pit the size of a stadium greeted us and miners were at work everywhere. Some were tunneling in the debris that had been removed in years past in order to retrieve opal that had been overlooked. Others were drilling and blasting in the lower areas of the pit. The 3 brothers took us on a tour of the area and some remarkable similarities were noted from volcanic hosted opal occurrences both here in BC and in Mexico.

The igneous volcanic rocks in the Magdalena region cover the whole spectrum. Basalts, rhyolites, trachytes, pearlites, zeolites, obsidian are all present. The high-silica environment and localized temperature pressure gradients are reflected in the wide dispersion of past, present, and producing mines, numbered at over 300! At every location we visited, a wide sequence of volcanic activity was apparent. Veins of agate, nodules of obsidian, pearlite and zeolites were always present. The nature of opal to occupy open spaces is the key. Vesicular and fractured material must be broken repeatedly as precious opal may be present next to common opal or hyalite.



QM Hotel Mantle

Some zones at La Unica contained many zeolites, others had obsidian, pearlite, agate, and much common opal. Oxidation and flow banding of the rhyolite was evident while scoria, volcanic conglomerate and tuff were all visible. Various forms of silica had taken the opportunity to infill fractures and vesicles alike. I was fortunate to find specimens of precious opal laying on the surface and the brothers were great hosts allowing us to take it. Driving down the mountain at the end of the day we encountered vaqueros (cowboys) riding horses driving cattle by fields of agave cactus. Back in town an elderly Mexican gentleman cowboy rode up to us on his bicycle and from his pocket showed a piece of flashing red opal the size of a pencil eraser that he wanted \$1000 US for. It was a prize piece, but out of our budget. Driving our rental car back to Magdalena we noticed plumes of smoke and found that the sugar-cane fields had been set on fire with flames up to 10m high licking the roadway.

That night we decided to splurge on a hotel room at the Hotel Quintas Minas (five mines) and stayed in luxury. The main fireplace in the hotel lobby was faced with agate, obsidian and opal. The next morning we went back to OM and were shown the equipment and techniques of the owner and master opal-cutter, Juan Jose Virgen, but that will be another article. At the local Zocalo (main square), we fanned out to look for items. Many vendors, buyers, and locals congregate there and never have I seen so many people wearing Optivisor. Many packages with different grades of opal were offered, however it is definitely buyer beware.

The Mexican market values clear, crystal precious opal the most. Many precious opals are cut with matrix material and these

look fine and make a good gemstone. However, some are fabricated using plastic or epoxy that is tinted and swirled to look like authentic matrix. My partner purchased a package of these matrix solids and another vendor pointed out that they were in fact agglomerates. Rainbow obsidian was overpriced but in general the prices for precious opal are fair, after serious negotiations of course, and there are not many scam artists.

While most connecting roads in Mexico are two-lane blacktop, many villages have unusual road surfaces. Some have concrete-blacktop-gravel-mix, and on occasion you will encounter paving-stone roadways. These can disable a standard vehicle very quickly. Tire repair shops and excellent mechanics are abundant though. Pemex, the national oil company, has attendants who will fill the gas tank, check tire pressure and fluid levels however, unless you have been driving through bug-storms, the windshield will not get cleaned.

A significant feature of Mexican roads are Topes (speed bumps) on the entrance and exit of most towns and villages. They generally require the vehicle to be going slow as they are tall and steep. Local drivers will try to drive around if possible and as they know the system better, follow their lead. Driving these mountain roads require skill and attention. Passing lanes do not exist, but the truck and bus drivers have a system of indicating when it is safe to pass. It is wise to keep your window down to listen for vehicles as many locals driving fancy pick-up trucks will tail you and pass anywhere. On this trip, driving over 2000 km on many different roads, there was never a concern or problem, however use caution and respect. Farmers driving tractors, cowboys on horses, trucks



loaded with sugarcane, motorcycles carrying families, animals and pedestrians can be found anywhere.

Near Magdalena, the huge volcano of Tequila is a prominent feature at 2987 meters / 9700 feet high and its effect is more widespread than just hosting opal mines. The town of Tequila is located 30 kms from Magdalena and its distilleries produce many famous brands. Sugar-cane fields are common in the rich bottomlands but elsewhere the agave cactus is cultivated. These splendid blue-grey cactus plants occupy a large percentage of the landscape and they contribute greatly to the local economy.

The life of an agave cactus is long for an agricultural crop. After planting, it takes 5 to 10 years until harvest and the fields must be tended with the cactus trimmed and weeded then replanted afterwards. An insect pest similar to the pine beetle here in BC is gobbling up agave plants and causing concern to the farmers as they do not have a solution to their bug problem either. The blue gray agave fields have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site but the bugs don't know this yet

Like fine Tequila, good quality precious opal is not abundant and commands respect and value. Luckily the area of Magdalena provides both in a beautiful part of Mexico that is easy to visit. It is not necessary to camp out as accommodation is available in most towns. Bugs are few, no scorpions were encountered and while days were warm and comfortable, nights at 2300 meters/7500 feet in the mountains are cool. The friendliness of the people and the unchanged splendor of these heritage towns make a visit here an opaleros delight!

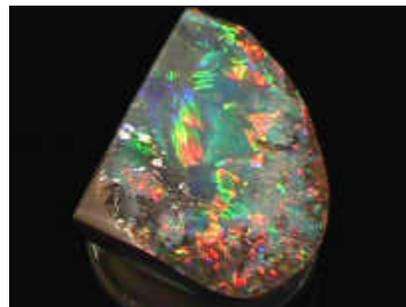
**The Editor – Randy is a long time AOS member from Canada and the first opal miner of B.C. Whitesail opal.**

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## Australian Opal Exhibition – Celebrating the Passion

The passion of opal will be at the heart of the sixth Australian Opal Exhibition being held at the Gold Coast International Hotel, Surfers Paradise on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007.

Miners will be coming out of the bush to the big city bringing their hard won opal to admire and purchase. Along with wholesalers from all over Australia they will have the largest range of opal seen in one place from rough and rubs through to polished stones of all grades including collector's pieces, specimens and beads. Black opal from NSW, boulder opal from QLD and light opal from SA will be available to the trade.



Artisans from all over will be displaying their most innovative jewellery designs from classic to funky, one off designs to commercial lines, all featuring Australia's National Gemstone.

This trade only Exhibition will provide a great opportunity for retailers and wholesalers to add opal to their line of goods if they do not already stock it, complement their opal stocks if they do, meet suppliers, gather new ideas, make new friends and have fun.



The organizing committee brings generations of opal

experience to putting together this exhibition for the benefit of the industry. Sherman, Evert, Burton are names that any opal aficionado will immediately recognize as playing a major role in developing the most unique gemstone industry in the world.

We are privileged to have their descendants donating their time and energy to this Exhibition. Vince Evert's daughter Janice is the President, Des Burton's son Paul is the Treasurer, Ernie Sherman's grandson Peter is a committee member along with industry luminaries Jeremy Lomax, Alan Kisiel, Chris Price, Keith Smith and Secretary Djaniah Woolford.

The Coordinator Maxine O'Brien brings a wealth of experience to develop this Exhibition into the foremost opal event in the world. She has been involved in the



industry since mining with her father as a child and has been the Secretary/Manager of the Lightning Ridge Miners' Association for over 12 years and of the National Opal Miners Association since its inception.

The Australian Opal Exhibition is a non-profit association and all profits go into promoting the event and the promotional program for the Exhibition is very proactive this year.

We are offering a great incentive for the trade to attend the Exhibition as any attendee who spends over \$1,000 will be eligible to go in a draw to win a \$2,000 travel voucher.

Exhibitors will have the opportunity to win their space for free in the 2008 Exhibition.

The Australian Opal Exhibition is a fantastic opportunity for the whole opal industry to come together to celebrate their passion for opal and with this in mind the Committee has planned some great social events so all participants as well as working hard can also have some fun.

An Exhibition dinner will be held on the evening of Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> August in the Patio Restaurant of the Gold Coast International Hotel featuring a delectable seafood buffet at a cost of \$55 per head.

The Committee will be hosting a charity golf day on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August teeing off at 8 am at the Palm Meadows Golf Course just ten minutes from the Hotel. We will play 18 holes of golf being a four person Ambrose. It will be irrelevant whether or not you can play golf as the teams will be selected based on experience so there will be a mixture of golfers, hackers and non-golfers in each team. A barbecue lunch at 1 pm will round off the day all for a cost of \$130 per head. Golf carts will be supplied, players can hire their clubs at a cost of \$35 and naturally a drinks cart will be on the course so Bloody Marys for breakfast may be the order of the day. Any profits will go to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The five stars Gold Coast International Hotel has put together a great accommodation package for the Exhibition and rooms are available for \$155 per night. This is for a room only and all other costs will need to be paid by the guests.

If you wish to exhibit or attend the Australian Opal Exhibition or if you simply want some more information you can phone Maxine on 61+ 427 920 474, email [mail@austopalexpo.com.au](mailto:mail@austopalexpo.com.au) or log onto the website [www.austopalexpo.com.au](http://www.austopalexpo.com.au).

Released by and for further information contact: Maxine O'Brien, Coordinator, Australian Opal Exhibition Inc. Ph: 61+ 427 920 474

**Photographs:** Scenes from the 2006 Australian Opal Exhibition including the famous Galaxy Opal which was on display.

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## Mars Rover Unearths Surprise Evidence of Wetter Past

### NASA NEWS RELEASE

Posted: May 21, 2007

PASADENA, Calif. - A patch of Martian soil analyzed by NASA's rover Spirit is so rich in silica that it may provide some of the strongest evidence yet that ancient Mars was much wetter than it is now. The processes that could have produced such a concentrated deposit of silica require the presence of water.

Members of the rover science team heard from a colleague during a recent teleconference that the alpha particle X-ray spectrometer, a chemical analyzer at the end of Spirit's arm, had measured a composition of about 90 percent pure silica for this soil.

"You could hear people gasp in astonishment," said Steve Squyres of Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., principal investigator for the Mars rovers' science instruments. "This is a remarkable discovery. And the fact that we found something this new and different after nearly 1,200 days on Mars makes it even more remarkable. It makes you wonder what else is still out there."

Spirit's miniature thermal emission spectrometer observed the patch, and Steve Ruff of Arizona State University, Tempe, noticed that its spectrum showed a high silica content. The team has laid out plans for further study of the soil patch and surrounding deposits.

Exploring a low range of hills inside a Connecticut-sized basin named Gusev Crater, Spirit had previously found other indicators of long-ago water at the site, such as patches of water-bearing, sulfur-rich soil; alteration of minerals; and evidence of explosive volcanism.

"This is some of the best evidence Spirit has found for water at Gusev," said Albert Yen, a geochemist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif. One possible origin for the silica could have been interaction of soil with acid vapors produced by volcanic activity in the presence of water. Another could have been from water in a hot spring environment. The latest discovery adds compelling new evidence for ancient conditions that might have been favorable for life, according to members of the rover science team.

David Des Marais, an astrobiologist at NASA's Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif., said, "What's so exciting is that this could tell us about environments that have similarities to places on Earth that are clement for organisms."

Spirit and its twin rover Opportunity completed their original three-month prime missions in April 2004. Both are

still operating, though showing signs of age. One of Spirit's six wheels no longer rotates, so it leaves a deep track as it drags through soil. That churning has exposed several patches of bright soil, leading to some of Spirit's biggest discoveries at Gusev, including this recent discovery.

Doug McCuistion, director of NASA's Mars Exploration Program, said, "This unexpected new discovery is a reminder that Spirit and Opportunity are still doing cutting-edge exploration more than three years into their extended missions. It also reinforces the fact that significant amounts of water were present in Mars' past, which continues to spur the hope that we can show that Mars was once habitable and possibly supported life."

The newly discovered patch of soil has been given the informal name "Gertrude Weise," after a player in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, according to Ray Arvidson of Washington University in St. Louis, deputy principal investigator for the rovers.

"We've looked at dozens of disturbed soil targets in the rover tracks, and this is the first one that shows a high silica signature," said Ruff, who last month proposed using Spirit's miniature thermal emission spectrometer to observe this soil. That instrument provides mineral composition information about targets viewed from a distance. The indications it found for silica in the overturned soil prompted a decision this month to drive Spirit close enough to touch the soil with the alpha particle X-ray spectrometer. Silica commonly occurs on Earth as the crystalline mineral quartz and is the main ingredient in window glass. The Martian silica at the Gertrude Weise patch is non-crystalline, with no detectable quartz.

Spirit worked within about 50 yards of the Gertrude Weise area for more than 18 months before the discovery was made. "This discovery has driven home to me the value of in-depth, careful exploration," Squyres said. "This is a target-rich environment, and it is a good thing we didn't go hurrying through it."



NASA's Spirit rover has found a patch of bright-toned soil so rich in silica that scientists propose water must have been involved in concentrating it. Credit: NASA/JPL/Cornell

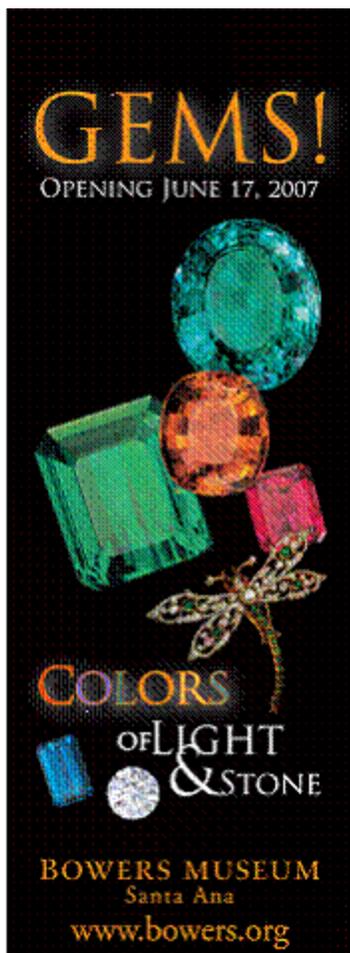
Meanwhile, on the other side of the planet, Opportunity has been exploring Victoria Crater for about eight months. "Opportunity has completed the initial survey of the crater's rim and is now headed back to the area called Duck Bay, which may provide a safe path down into the crater," said John Callas, project manager for the rovers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

*If there's silica on Mars, maybe there's Opal... The Editor*

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## World-Renowned Collection of Gems To Open At Bowers Museum

*"Colors of Light and Stone," the Expanded Gem Collection of Michael Scott, Returns to the Museum from June 17, 2007 for a Year-Long Run*



In early 2002, Bowers Museum made history with the first public exhibition in a museum of the priceless Michael Scott gem collection. More than 300 exquisite pieces, showing a rainbow range of colors and the rarity of stones, displayed the scientific and artistic aspects of gemstones. It was then exhibited in 2005 at the Shanghai Museum where it was enjoyed by more than 850,000 visitors. Arguably the most important private gem collection in the United States, with few rivals in the world outside of the royal families, it's back and features even more luxurious pieces. "Colors of Light and Stone" opens on June 17, 2007 for a year-long run in the new Anderson-Hsu-Tu Gallery of Bowers Museum.

"Colors of Light and Stone" is the most important exhibition of colored gemstones, diamonds and gems as art ever shown in a U.S. museum., says Dr. Peter Keller, president of Bowers Museum, who is also a geologist and gemologist and who curates this exhibit. "What is particularly impressive is that the collection was amassed by one individual in only about 14 years!"

Michael Scott, the first president of Apple Computer has a collection that rivals that of any national museum, if one excludes historic jewelry such as the Hope Diamond. The collection focuses on quality, but also on variety. In "Colors of Light and Stone" one will see most of the major gem species in every color and variety known. In addition, one will see very rare examples of little known color varieties such as green tanzanites and "electric-blue" Paraiba tourmalines. It also includes 25 examples of cut "collector" stones — those too rare to be used in the general jewelry trade.

The Scott Collection and the exhibition also focus on gemstones as art, largely German gem carvings by artists Bernd Munsteiner and Gerd Dreher and the work of Seattle-based silversmith/contemporary artist, John Marshall, plus some antique jewelry from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries.

A comprehensive list of Bowers Museum lectures that pertain to this exhibit are found at the end of this article.

Bowers Museum is located at 2002 North Main Street in Santa Ana. Admission prices for eight exhibits that include "Colors of Light and Stone," "Treasures from Shanghai: 5,000 Years of Chinese Art The Opal Express

The American Opal Society

and Culture" and "Mummies, Death and the Afterlife of Ancient Egypt...Treasures from the British Museum" and five permanent exhibits are adults: weekends \$19 and weekdays \$17; senior (62+) and students: weekends \$14 and weekdays \$12. Children under 6 are free. As a special membership privilege to commemorate the grand opening of the Dorothy and Donald Kennedy Wing, \$65 memberships (\$45 for seniors and students) gain entry for two adults and all children in the household under the ages of 18 all year until May of 2008.

## Colors of Light and Stone Lecture Series

**Sunday, June 17 1:30 PM**

**Lecture: The Scott Collection**

Michael Scott, retired Apple Computer president, shares an overview of his gem, minerals, and gem-carving collection.

Admission: Members \$8; General \$10

**Friday, June 22 1:30**

**Film: Splendid Stones**

Take a National Geographic journey around the globe to discover the origins of these most coveted gems.

Admission: Free with paid admission

**Saturday, June 30 1:30 PM**

**Lecture: A Timeline Of Gems And Jewels**

Gemologist and jewelry historian Christie Romero presents a chronological overview of some of the gems on display in the Scott Gem Collection, including dates of discovery and historical examples of the jewels in which they were mounted.

Admission: Members \$8; General \$10

**Friday, July 13 1:30**

**Film: Gemstones of America**

Journey through the richest mines in the United States and through the vaults and high security room of the Gem and Mineral Collection at the Smithsonian Institution.

Admission: Free with paid admission

**Sunday, July 15 1:30 PM**

**Lecture: Jade, The Stone Of Heaven**

Fred Ward, National Geographic photographer and founder and owner of Gem Book Publishers, discusses the reverential passion that China has shown for jade for more than a thousand years and locations throughout the world where this unrivaled stone is found.

Admission: Members and Students \$8; General \$10

**Friday, July 27 1:30 PM**

**Film: Diamonds - Objects Of Beauty, Objects Of Greed**

Visit a world of ancient myths and magic, human adventure and tales of amazing wealth and power to understand the vibrant, alluring and dangerous world of diamonds.

Admission: Free with paid admission

**Sunday, July 29 1:30 PM**

**Lecture: Windows in the Earth - The Microworld of Gems**

John Koivula, senior gemologist for GIA and author of more than 50 articles on gemstone inclusions and microscopy, reveals the terrestrial origins, the mystery of the geologic processes, and the microscopic beauty of some of nature's most intriguing and treasured offerings.

Admission: Members \$8; General \$10

**Saturday, August 4 1:30 PM**

**Lecture: Developments in The Gemstone Trade**

Via stunning images, gemological photojournalist Robert Weldon, G. G., Manager of Photography & Visual Communications with the Gemological Institute of America discusses the development of fair

business practices in the mining and trading of gemstones around the world. Weldon has authored hundreds of articles and his work has taken him to the world's most important and exotic gem localities.

Admission: Members \$8; General \$10

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**Friday, August 10 1:30 PM**

**Film: Splendid Stones**

Join National Geographic on a journey around the globe to discover the origins of these most coveted gems.

Admission: Free with paid admission  
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**Friday, August 24 1:30 PM**

**Film: Gemstones of America**

Journey through the richest mines in the United States and through the vaults and high security room of the Smithsonian Institution.

Admission: Free with paid admission  
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**New Way of Mapping Gemstones**

**Scientists say the new technique measures the color patterns of individual gems.**

(CNN) -- American forensic experts say they have come up with a way to map the profile of individual gemstones.

Jewelers and scientists say each gemstone is unique, but until recently, proving this had been difficult.



The new technique, called "microspectrometry," allows this to happen by mapping each stone's color patterns.

Paul Martin, one of the scientists involved in the work and president of California-based company CRAIC Technologies, told

CNN that changes in light caused changes in the gemstone colors.

Being able to map this was difficult, especially when it came to measuring ultra violet light, invisible to the naked eye.

The blue in sapphires is caused by the transfer of electrons between charged iron atoms; spinels and rubies are red because of chromium impurities.

Mapping the variations in color will enable jewelers to spot a gem's type and quality, including whether it is a fake. It could also help with identifying stolen gems, Martin said.

He said his company's usual line of work included analyzing forensic data gathered from crime scenes.

The gemstone mapping discovery came about after adapting a technique normally reserved for analyzing glass.

The scientists recorded the wavelengths of light emitted by a 10-micrometer point on the surface of individual stones and found that each had a different spectrum.

The findings were presented at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting in New Orleans last month.

The Gemology Institute of America grades gemstones by mapping their flaws, as well as recording their cut, carat weight and clarity.

George Rossman, a mineralogist at the California Institute of Technology, was skeptical of the claim that every gem's spectrum was different, "New Scientist" reported.

But he accepted that mapping variations in color could provide useful information.

"The question that needs to be researched is whether this tool adds enough to what is out there already," he said.

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**The Day in Numbers: \$12,360,000**

POSTED: 7:31 a.m. EDT, October 10, 2006

**\$12,360,000:** The price paid Monday for "The Lesotho Promise," the 10th largest white diamond ever discovered and the largest diamond found this century, by the South African Diamond Corporation at an auction in Antwerp, Belgium.

**\$20,000,000:** The price the diamond, found at the Letseng Diamond Mine, Lesotho, is expected to fetch once it has been cut up.

**603:** The weight of the golf ball-sized diamond in carats (the unit of measurement for gemstones defined as a fifth of a gramme or seven thousandths of an ounce). It was the largest gem found since the 777-carat Millennium Star was discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1993 by a young girl playing outside her house.

**3,106:** The size in carats of the biggest rough diamond ever found, known as "The Cullinan," found in South Africa in 1905.

**\$372,000,000:** The estimated value of Cullinan I, or the "Great Star of Africa" -- the largest stone cut from the Cullinan and the second-largest cut diamond in the world -- part of the Crown Jewels owned by the UK's Queen Elizabeth II on display at the Tower of London.

**22 August, 2006:** The date the Lesotho Promise was discovered. "The diamond sorters, a black woman, went into the room and put her hands into the glove box and she opened up the compartment and this jewel that you see over there fell out in front of her," said Clifford Elphick, CEO of Gem Diamond Mining. "As reported to me, she started screaming and the rest of the staff thought she had been electrocuted and they ran into there to see if she was okay to be confronted with the Lesotho Promise." From <http://www.cnn.com>.

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**Death of Royal Postpones Pearl Auction**

May 3, 2007 – The Associated Press



*In this undated handout picture made available by Life Style Auctions on May 3, 2007, The 'Arco Valley Pearl', 3.1 inches in length, will be up for bidding at Abu Dhabi's Emirates Palace and on the Internet, where it is estimated to fetch up to \$8 million. The 575-carat pearl from 12th century Mongolia once belonged to Chinese emperors, Persian kings, the grandson of Genghis Khan and Marco Polo. (AP Photo/Life Style Auctions, HO)*

A death in the Emirates royal family postponed the auction of the largest pearl on the world market, just hours before the bidding was to start Thursday.

According to the organizers of the auction, the news that Sheik Saeed Bin Nahyan Bin Mubarak al Nahyan — son of the Emirates' education and science minister Sheik Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan - had died in a car crash on Tuesday led to the postponement.

No new date was set, said Paul Fletcher, manager of the Dubai-based Lifestyle Auctions. The 800-year-old pearl, whose illustrious owners included Chinese emperors, Persian kings, the grandson of

Genghis Khan, and the famous Venetian adventurer Marco Polo, was expected to fetch up to \$8 million.

The 575-carat, 3.1 inch natural saltwater pearl known as the Arco Valley Pearl was brought to Abu Dhabi less than two months ago by Khaled al-Sayegh, a jeweler and chairman of the auction's organizing committee. He said the pearl was privately owned but declined to reveal the owner's name.

Auction proceeds were supposed to help rehabilitate the pearl trade in Abu Dhabi and the Gulf region, where a century ago most people lived of treasures hidden in the oyster beds of the sea.

"The organizers felt it was not appropriate to celebrate a revival of the pearl trade at the time of mourning in the royal family and in the Emirates," Fletcher said.

Named after a previous owner from Austria's Arco Valley family dynasty, the pearl up for auction is white with a touch of blue, with pink and cream on its sides. It has been drilled three times: to fit among the jewels of an unknown woman's tiara, to go with a ceremonial mandarin suit and to fit a crown or turban decorated with precious stones belonging to a Persian king.

It has since been restored to its original shape.

Court documents prove the pearl was owned by Kublai Khan, the 13th century emperor of China and grandson of Genghis Khan. Experts believe Kublai Khan gave the pearl to Marco Polo as a gift.

Arco Valley is only the biggest pearl up for sale in the world.

The 9.45-inch Pearl of Allah is the world's largest. It was found by a diver off the Philippine island of Palawan in 1934 and is stored in a museum in that country.

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## June 2007 Gem & Mineral Shows

7-9--ROSWELL, NM: Show, "Gems of Enchantment"; American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Rocky Mountain Federation of Mineralogical Societies; Roswell Convention and Civic Center, 912 N. Main St.; Thu. 9-5, Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, children under 12 free with adult; turquoise, precious stones, jewelry supplies, exhibits, door prizes, silent auction, field trips, wheel of fortune, demonstrations; contact Frank Whitney, (505) 317-3930; e-mail: fdw@hughes.net.

8-9--PRICE, UT: 1st annual show; Castle Country Rock, Fossil & Mineral Club; College of Eastern UT, Student Center, 526 North 300 East; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7; free admission; rocks, fossils, minerals, jewelry, stone etchings, metal detectors, equipment, displays, demonstrations, door prizes; contact Patrick Braun, P.O. Box 236, Ferron, UT 84523, (435) 384-2211; e-mail: pbraun@etv.net.

15-17--LANCASTER, CA: 68th annual convention and show, "50 Years of Rock 'n Gems"; Palmdale Gem & Mineral Club; 2551 W. Avenue H; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; adults \$5, children under 15 free with adult; lectures, seminars, dealers, lapidary demonstrations, kids' crafts, jewelry making demonstrations, beads, minerals, rough and cut gems, books, equipment, supplies, competitive and noncompetitive exhibits, metal detecting treasure hunt Sun., field trips; contact John Martin, (661) 942-8336; e-mail: Smartin@antele.com; Web site: www.palmdalegems.org.

16-17--CAYUCOS, CA: Annual show; San Luis Obispo Gem & Mineral Club; Cayucos Vets Hall at the Pier, Cayucos Vets Hall at the Pier; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; free door prizes, gems, jewelry, beads, minerals, fossils, tools, findings, wire wrapping, carvings, rough slabs, polished cabs, gifts; contact Bob Hurlless, (805) 772-7160, or Richard Sittinger, 1770 Orville Ave., Cambria, CA 93428, (805) 927-2223; e-mail: Richard@Mineralofthemothclub.org; Web site: http://mineralofthemothclub.org.

21-24--PRINEVILLE, OR: Show, "Prineville Rockhound Pow Wow"; Prineville Pow Wow Association; Crook County Fairgrounds, 1280 S. Main St.; Thu. 9-6, Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-4; free admission; field trips Fri., Sat. and Sun., auction Sat.; contact Rebecca, P.O. Box 671, Prineville, OR 97751, (541) 546-9473; e-mail: buss\_r@msn.com.

22-24--SAN DIEGO, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; Scottish Rite Center, 1895 Camino del Rio S.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: .

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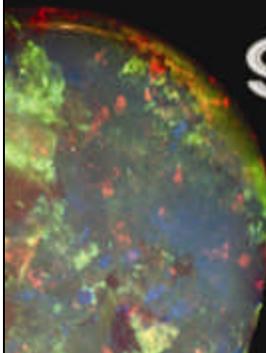
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# American Opal Society Membership Renewal

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
<b>DUES:</b> <b>SELECT ONE</b>	All <u>US</u> Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$30	
	<u>International Members</u> All addresses <u>outside</u> of US Addresses	\$40	
ADDITIONAL BADGES \$5.00 each (First Badge <u>free</u> when joining)		\$10	
ONE TIME INITIATION FEE All <u>New</u> members		\$10	
SENIOR DISCOUNT Age 65 or over deduct \$5		-\$5	
<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:  
**American Opal Society; PO BOX 4875; Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875**  
 An optional, quicker method of payment is via the **Internet**. To pay, just visit the membership page on our website at [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_application\\_by\\_web.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm) and complete the form. You may pay with a **Credit Card** or via **PayPal** account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. The AOS PayPal account is [membership@opalsociety.org](mailto:membership@opalsociety.org).

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

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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

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



**Volume #40 Issue #6  
June 2007**

TO:

### Some Topics In This Issue:

- Magdalena; the Land of Opals
- Harold Andersen has Passed Away
- Australian Opal Exhibition
- Mars Rover Unearths Silica
- World-Renowned Collection of Gems At Bowers Museum
- New Way of Mapping Gemstones
- The Day in Numbers: \$12,360,000
- Death of Royal Postpones Pearl Auction

### Important Info:

**Board Meeting – June 5th**

**General Meeting - June 14<sup>th</sup>**  
**Second AOS Live Auction!!!**

A great way to get opals, gems, etc. at a bargain price!  
Bring in your own stones, jewelry, etc. to auction.

### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

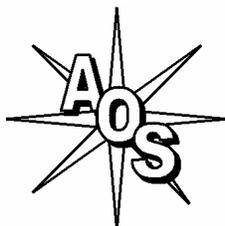
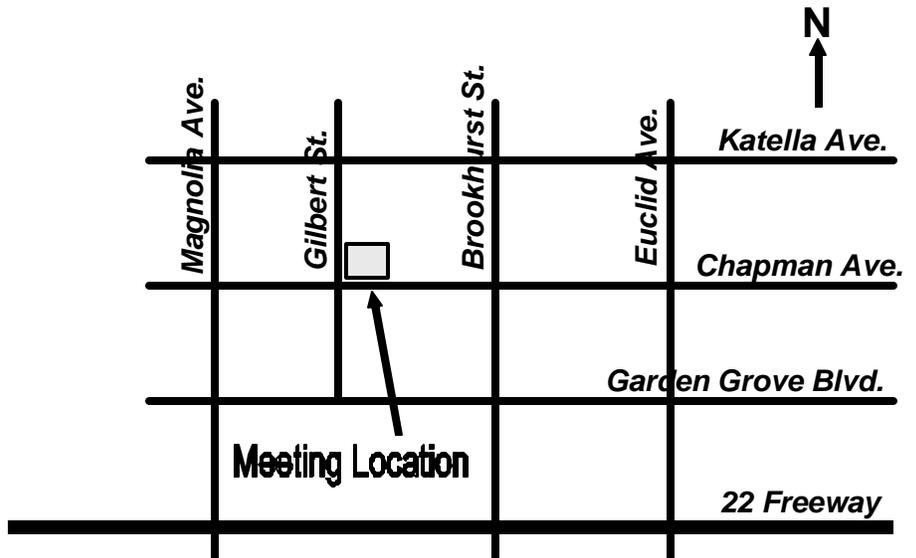
2nd Thursday of the Month  
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM  
Garden Grove Civic Women's Club  
9501 Chapman Ave.  
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)  
Garden Grove, CA

### MEETING ACTIVITIES

Opal Cutting, Advice, Guest Speakers,  
Slide Shows, Videos, Other Activities

# June 14th:

# Second AOS Live Auction!!!



## The American Opal Society

<http://OpalSociety.org>

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