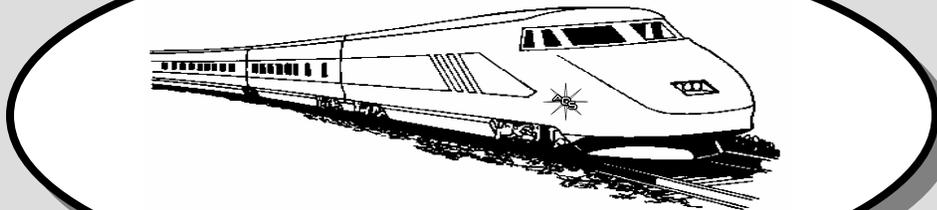


The Opal Express



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Presidents Message

By Jim Lambert

"The Show" is here! Don't miss it on **November 1st and 2nd, 2008**. Please be ready to volunteer your help. The Board gets very busy during the planning of this very complex event and, in our own humanity, may neglect to personally request individuals for help at the show. Please don't be shy or feel forgotten and walk up to any Board member to ask how you may help. Your help is needed very much and truly appreciated. Especially at the front table! Hope everybody had a great summer - Thank you!

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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: "theshow".

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Opal Society Workshop

The American Opal Society's workshop is open at Ball Jr. High School every **Thursday** 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. 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.

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**It's here!!!
Don't miss it!**

**The American Opal Society's 41st Annual
OPAL & GEM SHOW**
The Largest Opal Show in USA!
Sat. & Sun., November 1 & 2, 2008
Saturday 10AM - 6PM
Sunday 10 AM - 5PM

Opal and Gem Dealers from around the USA and Australia. **Rough and Cut Opals**; other gemstones; jewelry & supplies. **Huge Raffle** many prizes of gemstones, jewelry, tools, etc. **Free Opal Seminars** on Saturday & Sunday with Paid Admission.

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For more information, contact:

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Phone: (562) 621-1805, e-mail: fineblackopal@sprynet.com

Jay Carey

Phone: (714) 525-7635, e-mail: jaycarey@charter.net

**Bring this Coupon for
\$1.00 off Admission**

AOS Newsletter Coupon - 2008_010_05

Arts Council Raffle

The American Opal Society donated a white-base Coober Pedy opal necklace for the annual fund raising raffle of the Anaheim Arts Council. The 5.76 carat stone was donated by AOS treasurer and Arts Council representative Russ Madsen; while AOS vice president Stan McCall of Custom Creative Gem Cutting donated the materials and artistic talent to craft the beautiful setting. Drawing for the Arts Council raffle prizes takes place Thursday, October 2, 2008.

Good luck to all who bought tickets!

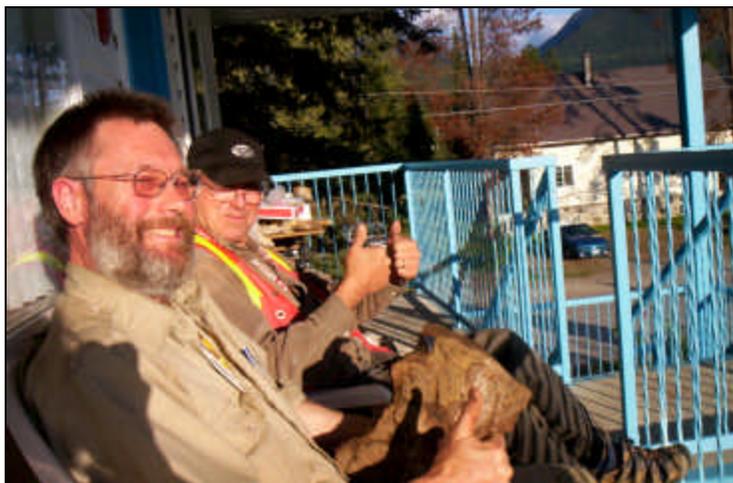


Opal Pendant Donated by AOS to the Anaheim Arts Council

The 10 minute Rule and CBZ (Canada's Best Zircon?)

By Randy Lord

We all know about Murphy's Laws when it comes to prospecting but how many know the 10 minute rule? It works as follows: 10



Gem explorers Randy Lord (foreground) and Bruce Holden, holding their zircon in matrix

minutes before you are about to get picked up by helicopter after a day of traversing and sampling in the alpine is when you find the days best sample or specimen. Let's see how this rule came into play recently.

Date: Labour Day, Sept 1, 2008

Location: Above tree line, Blue River BC

Target: Locate REES (rare earth elements) associated with carbonatites in a metamorphic setting that includes gneisses, schists and pegmatites

Project: Prospector Bruce Holden and myself get set out at 8:15 AM by a pond in an east facing sub-alpine basin. A thin coating of ice covers the talus and creeks and the plants are frosty. We have the last working scintillometer and as soon as the chopper leaves I put on my knee pads, then power up the scint and it starts to chirp immediately. As we zero in on the hot zone (high gamma ray count per second) we trench down about a foot and discover a small walnut sized piece of black mineral causing all the commotion.

This scint has an audible signal that starts with a low growl then goes ultrasonic with really hot rocks (high counts per second). This black piece is very hot for its size so we sample and flag the spot then traverse east to another drainage. The ice melts slowly as the

sun warms up. Circling back to the first basin we locate and sample another piece of float and while writing up notes, boulders come crashing down in front of us, right on our intended traverse. It is maybe 9 am and the day is off to an auspicious start!

Carefully zigzagging up the basin we stop and sample more hot rocks and listen at more rock fall. By mid afternoon we are just below the top in a safer position. Aside from the earlier big rock fall, the afternoon is magnificent. The freezing nights had made for a BFD (bug free day) and for the first time in a couple weeks it was T shirt weather. We continue to sniff with the scint and make our way to our pick up spot, a small flat on a ridge near a known carbonatite showing.

Carbonatites are an unusual intrusive or extrusive igneous rock that contain mostly (>20%) carbonate minerals such as dolomite and calcite. Weathering rapidly, they are very recessive with often little exposure. Recognition can be difficult as they may appear like a marble and fizz the same with acid. However some of the minerals found associated with carbonatites include amphibole, apatite, biotite, colombite, magnetite, pyrochlore, sovitte, vermiculite and zircons. Economic importance is related to disseminated concentrations of the metals niobium and tantalum, used in trendy things such as cell phones, lap tops, ipods and hybrid cars. China supplies 90 percent and consumes 60 percent of the world's rare earths/metals market hence exploration interest worldwide.

We worked our way uphill to the carbonatite showing and continued digging and flagging hot spots. Around our pre-arranged 5PM pick up time we assembled our tools and packs next to where the chopper skids would land. At +\$1200 hour you don't waste time loading. The pilot radioed he would be there in **10 minutes**. I said to Bruce that was plenty of time to have another quick look back where we had last been sampling and I set off pronto, leaving pack and tools behind.

This carbonatite exposure is on a ridge covered with alpine heather on one side and a steep weathered slope on the other. This gradient went from 45 degrees to cliff about 75 feet below but luckily the weathering generates a dirty pea gravel. Crossing the slope just 15 feet below the top edge I spotted something shiny in the dirt on the edge of a float boulder.

Brushing dirt away I saw a lustrous, beautifully terminated brown-red pyramidal crystal about 1" on each edge. It was perched atop a 60 pound piece of carbonatite float. I realized that crack hammer and chisel were 400 feet away and time was short. I ran up to the packs hooting, ran back, then putting my jacket over the crystal, managed to cleave a piece of matrix the size of a beer flat with the zircon still attached. With chopper noise approaching I showed it to my partner and heard the first of many comments that started with Holy ____! On the 15 minute ride back to Blue River I told the pilot I thought we would likely be headed back to that spot tomorrow as the rocks were pretty hot!

Back in camp, a motel with 4 drill crews and 15 exploration staff, I washed the piece off and looked at it in the sunlight. There was a split down the middle of the zircon and only one slightly bruised edge from its years of exposure. Otherwise it had excellent shape, magnificent luster and the weathered carbonatite matrix had many rice grains of apatite showing.

With the sun still shining I set it on the display table we had outside our room. As the old guys (Bruce and I) had been bringing back interesting specimens, one of the project geologists came up the walkway and asked if we had found anything this day. I deliberately showed the bottom side first then as I flipped it over I again heard the comment Holy ____ (you fill the blank)! "That may be Canada's best zircon", said Rod Tyson, a knowledgeable Canadian mineral dealer.

Pretty soon the rest of the crew showed up with cameras and Holy ____! comments. Plans were made to sample that site carefully the next day. I was asked not to leave the zircon outside that night so I set it on our coffee table in our unlocked room.

Next morning when the fog lifted 3 of us went back with picks and hammers. Climbing ropes were set up for safety and after

examining the float we dug into the weathered material looking for floaters. Zircons are tough but only a few small ones appeared. We then started digging in a horizon that looked promising. Only large pieces of magnetite and a few small zircons were the reward for the days digging.

Later in the afternoon a storm system kicked us off the mountain. The killer specimen is company property however the intention of parties at this time is for it to go on public display if it is Canada's best zircon, at the ROM possibly. So don't forget to wear your knee pads, always follow up on the hot stuff and above all remember the 10 minute rule!

Randy Lord is a long time AOS Member, show dealer, and article contributor. The Editor

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Australia: Ridge over Rubble Paupers

Sept. 18, 2008

By Darrin Ratajczak

"I want opal. I want opal."

Old Clarrie coaxes the divining rods as he slow-dances with them in the white dust. One twitches and the other dutifully nods for him to slow. A shift of the foot and they twirl with excitement.

"There's opal here. The wires know it," he says as he sidles up to the rock and runs his fingers over its contours as if it was the face of a lover. The "wires" may know it, but the wall of white rock in front of us isn't giving much away.

In the harsh tungsten light some 10m underground, it's as if the old man's face has been cut from the rock itself. With a thick mop of grey hair licked back and random outcrops of salt-and-pepper stubble, he looks like a Dorothea Lange portrait of a prospector.

I came to Lightning Ridge expecting to find a plastic reproduction of Australia's most famous opal mining town, but to my surprise found a living frontier where you can still experience the life of an opal miner much as it has been since the first shaft was sunk back in 1901.

After nearly 20 years working claims around The Ridge, the wires are a relatively new thing for Clarrie. Opal, particularly the highly-prized black variety endemic to The Ridge, is an elusive and demanding master, so any hint to the inside running is more than welcome.

This particular claim in the Sheep Yard opal field 80 km west of The Ridge has been Clarrie's life for the best part of 13 years, chipped away with no more than a jack hammer, brute strength and a blinding faith. What it has yielded barely covers the yearly registration fee.

For many in the fields, spending much of the day underground is unexceptional. But 20 minutes is enough for me to feel the dusty tailings eating into my throat and my heart pound as if I'm breathing underwater. Clarrie reinforces the impression.

"Aw, Christ yeah, it's a bastard of a place; blokes get lung cancer all the time. Worse is the snakes. They get pretty snakey when they fall down the shaft."

"So what do you do?" I ask.

"Ya grab a shovel and beat the shit out of it." Of course.

Locals will tell you that The Ridge's northern-most opal fields of Sheep Yard, Grawin and Glengarry are how Lightning Ridge used to be.

At first sight, Sheep Yard looks like the colony of giant mutant ants. Scrubby clumps of stunted cypress pines, box gums and Mitchell grass are separated by the ubiquitous mullock heaps.

From a couple of feet to several metres high, these mounds of grey-white rock and soil are the by-product of excavation and the reason everything is covered in a dusty film. Rusting hulks of abandoned machinery dot the landscape like the left-over shells of insects.

Among all this sit the miners' camps. Clarrie's is typical of many. The basic structure of corrugated iron and unfinished logs seems to be held together more by disused mining equipment, odd sticks of crumbling furniture and the detritus of life than actual walls and roofs.

Although opal was first found around the fields as early as 1906, little happened until the discovery of an opal the size of a man's fist. Called The Light of The World and weighing in at almost 450g, it started the rush of 1928.

The area slowly fell into decline again until the discovery of a rich seam in Glengarry in 1970 at a spot now known as Millionaires' Gully.

Fittingly, the Sheep Yard rush began on Melbourne Cup Day, 1985, when a wandering couple found opal near some old sheepyards.

Lightning Ridge now supplies nearly all the world's black opal,

the most rare and valuable form of the gem.

Maps of the fields are more of a loose guide than a definitive depiction. The rough-hewn tracks skirt around claims and between mullock heaps. Then there are the open shafts -



Claims around Lightning Ridge are peppered with piles of tailings, discarded machinery and open mineshafts.

only recently fenced to prevent wayward drunks from coming a cropper.

That evening, I joined the local mining fraternity at the Glengarry Hilton. As the name suggests, the Hilton is the most opulent of the fields' "pubs in the scrub". In effect, it's a more impressive collection of unfinished logs and corrugated iron than the camps.

At the Hilton, ZZ Top-style beards and beaten-up Akubras are de rigueur - teeth optional.

I'm soon embraced by a group of locals keen to share a yarn.



Rare black opals actually come in a range of colours. Photo / Bret Phibbs

Gisella, one of the co-owners of the Hilton, happily pulls out a pack of opals she's selling for a friend. The half-dozen or so gems range in size from a pea to a 10c coin.

"There's more than \$10,000 worth here," she tells me.

The term "black opal" can be deceptive. Black refers to the underlying body colour that makes overlaying colours more vivid. Some contain only blues and greens, like a tropical lagoon. Others blaze with fiery reds and oranges. Others mix every colour.

The famous stones have names like Picasso's Palette, Halley's Comet and The Fire of Gidgea.

On the surface, the town of Lightning Ridge looks much like any outback town. But there's an eccentric side to this miners' paradise. Ever since Charlie Nettleton first gathered saleable quantities of opal in the early 1900s, the Ridge has attracted a veritable United Nations of prospectors, drifters and gamblers: the lucky and the lost.

Nobody really knows how many people live in the town. Officially it's around 1800, but some say it's 10 times that and eight out of 10 are said to be born outside Australia.

To taste the eccentric, take a guided tour or one of the four car-door tours - self-drive tours where numbered car doors act as signposts - and you'll find Amigo's Castle, a private home built single-handedly from ironstone in the style of Roman ruins near the builder's birthplace in Northern Italy.

Just up the road is a strange concrete monument to the world's famous astronomers. Why astronomers? Why here? Beats me.

The car doors will also lead you to one of the town's better tourist attractions - The Walk-In Mine. Here you can take a self-guided tour of what was once a working mine. It's one of the easier mines to access, but still not recommended for the claustrophobic.

To the west of town is the Three-Mile opal field and Lunatic Hill. In 1986, an opal valued at \$2.5 million and named Halley's Comet was found at the open-cut mine here.

However, for me, it is the names of the claims and the history behind them that is more interesting. With names like The Black Hand, Dead Bird and Blind Freddie's, you can image the stories.

The Leaning Tree claim, for example, got its name back in 1921 when claim owners Jack Souter and his brother discovered a ratter (thief) in their mine.

Being pragmatic folk, the brothers put a rope around his neck and hung the man from a nearby leaning tree.

The good-hearted Souters didn't leave the hapless ratter there for long, however, and as soon as he was released, he lost no time leaving town.

Frankly, if you chose a place called Lunatic Hill to rob a mine, you were never going to make it as a ratter anyway.

If you prefer to get your hands dirty, there are plenty of places around town to go for a noodle (local parlance for scouring discarded mine tailings for opal).

I heard several stories of tourists who found opal worth hundreds and even thousands of dollars this way.

But for my money, prospecting is best left to the professionals like old Clarrie, because it's the people and stories of the Ridge that are far more colourful than anything pulled from the ground.

GETTING THERE: Lightning Ridge is 359km from Dubbo. Qantas Link and Rex fly to Dubbo from Sydney daily, with a Rex connection to Lightning Ridge daily except Saturday.

ACCOMMODATION: The Glengarry Hilton has backpacker-style accommodation in rooms for two or four for \$16 per person. Ph +61 2 6829 3983. The Lightning Ridge Hotel Motel has camping from \$18 for two, cabins \$63 and \$5 per extra person, double rooms \$85. Ph +61 2 6829 0304, www.ridgehotelmotel.com.

FURTHER INFORMATION: The Visitor Information Centre has tour maps for \$1. Ph +61 2 6829 1670; www.lightningridge.net.au. Town tours for \$25 a head by Black Opal Tours and Outback Opal Tours. From <http://www.nzherald.co.nz>.

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Caring for Jewelry—What You Need to Know

Jewelry is one of our most intimate and cherished accessories. An elegant pair of pearl and platinum earrings, for example, makes an individual statement, nestled against the skin and resplendent in lustrous light. Yet, according to experts at the nonprofit GIA, chemicals found in everyday substances like hairspray, lotions, perfumes, or other cosmetics can permanently damage the nacre of your dazzling pearl, and can corrode the alloys in that shiny setting. Understanding how to care for your treasured jewelry can make a world of difference in maintaining its beauty and keeping its heirloom quality sparkling for generations to come.



Many jewelry stores offer free check-ups or professional cleanings at scheduled intervals.

GIA says that light and heat can affect a colored gemstone's durability and color. Just as the sun's harmful rays can damage our skin, over time and in excess, it can also fade and weaken some gemstones, such as amethyst, kunzite, topaz, and pink conch-shell cameos. Pearls and other delicate materials, like ivory, will bleach under extreme exposure to light. Other gems, especially amber, can darken over time when exposed to too much light.

Excessive heat and sudden temperature changes may also fracture the gem. Heat can easily remove the natural moisture some gems need to keep their beauty. Pearls, for instance, can dry out, crack and discolor. Opals will turn white or brown, develop tiny cracks, and might lose their play-of-color.

Exposure to chemicals can damage and discolor precious metals – gold, silver, and platinum – and may harm some colored gems. Fine jewelry should be removed before diving into a chlorinated swimming pool, or before using household cleaners. Many of these cleaners contain ammonia, and are only safe for diamonds and the more durable colored gems. Chlorine bleach, another common household solvent, can pit gold alloys.

GIA recommends cleaning most colored gems with warm water, mild soap (no detergents), and a soft brush. A pulsed-water dental cleaning appliance and a soft, lint-free cloth can also be used. Be sure to stop the sink's drain or use a rubber mat in case the stone comes loose from its setting.

Soft gems, such as pearls, on the other hand, can easily be scratched. GIA suggests using an unused makeup brush instead, and warm, soapy water. Lay the pearls on a towel to dry. The wet string can stretch—and attract dirt—so don't touch a string of pearls until they are completely dry. Pearls worn every few days should be restrung once a year.

Proper jewelry storage is often overlooked. Jewelry should never be tossed into a drawer or on top of a dresser—that's a recipe for scratches and fractured gems. Most jewelry pieces come in a box or pouch from the store, which is a perfect place to keep them. Sterling silver, for example, should be kept in an anti-tarnish bag or cloth.

Jewelry boxes that feature individually padded slots for rings, and posts for hanging necklaces and bracelets, are also ideal. Like

pearls, opals draw moisture from the air. Storing your opal ring or pearl earrings in a dry area, such as a safety deposit box, can actually do more harm than good. When traveling with jewelry, protect the pieces from scratches or other impact damage by padding the jewelry.

Many jewelry stores offer free check-up or professional cleaning at scheduled intervals (once a year is common). GIA recommends consulting a professionally qualified jeweler, such as a Graduate Gemologist, Graduate Jeweler, or Accredited Jewelry Professional. For more information about gems and jewelry, and GIA's internationally acclaimed education, visit [GIA's Web Site](http://www.gia.edu), or call 800-421-7250.

From <http://www.gia.edu>

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Photographing Opal

Here's an interesting thread from Ganoksin Orchid Digest on how to photograph opal – always a problem! The Editor.

From June 4, 2008

From: Kevin P. Kelly

Anyone here ever make a sow's ear out of a silk purse?

Photographing opals: I'm using a Nikon on a tripod set up in my studio using ambient light coming from a skylight.

Now for the problem: I'm trying to see the color in the opal that I see live through the camera's eye. The color in the opal is astonishing, gorgeous but I can't get it in the camera. I use the macro setting, focusing perfectly in that regard; but the color I see with the naked eye is nowhere to be seen. I peek over the camera and the color is vibrant.

I tried everything I can think of. I've tried to shoot from above the stone, move the stone to off center, but still in focus; lower the camera to photograph directly into the stone. Nothing seems to work.

I have the opposite problem that L Surpin mentions about manipulation. The color never comes close to the vibrancy of the live color. Should I attach a disclaimer?

From: Alberic

Hi Kevin:

I've never shot opals, but a couple of tricks recommended by friends who do:

(A) Try shooting it while it's submerged in either distilled water or alcohol.

(B) Add a polarizing filter, and try it with and without water.

The fun part is going to be avoiding the reflection off the top of the water. You're going to have to be shooting nearly straight down into the water. The polarizer will help control that, but it may foul up the color flashes. (Do this in a dark room, at night, with the room lights off.)

Hope this helps...

Brian.

From: David J McIntyre

Kevin,

The flash of an opal's color will vary enormously as you vary the angle of illumination vs. the angle of observation. In short you would probably like the results if your illumination and observation were coaxial. This would automatically be the case if you were using a surgical microscope with internal illumination, and you might even find the most pleasing results if only a percentage of the illumination is coaxial.

Dr. Mac

From: Andreas Grau

> I'm trying to see the color in the opal that I see live through the camera's eye.

Kevin, check back Brian Meek aka Alberic's post dated 08/06/02 in the Photographing Jewelry 101 thread. He talks about

photographing reactive metals, a problem similar to yours, it seems to me.

<http://www.ganoksin.com/orchid/archive/200806/msg00042.htm>

Let us know how his suggestions work with opals.

Andreas

From: Judy Willingham

Hello Kevin,

Regarding the problem photographing an opal so that the fire is captured: I've had the best luck by immersing the opal so that the stone is covered shallowly with water. Obviously the camera shoots down from above. There must be absolutely no vibration or the surface of the water will be rippled. Also look for reflections in the water of lights, etc. and make adjustments.

The photo through water shows much more of the fire, but I'll bet it will be necessary to Photoshop the fire bits individually for a good picture.

I'll be watching to see what others say,

Judy in Kansas

From: Jo Haemer

Kevin

Try placing the opal in a clear container of water. I've had it really make opals pop in a photo with natural light. It washes out any faceted stones in the ring though.

Jo

From: Hans Durstling

Kevin,

In respect of photographing opal the same thing happens to me. The camera (digital Fuji finepix) does not see what the eye does.

I believe this is probably due to the fact that the camera processes the digital information from the sensor (by means of a more or less accurate, mathematical, averaging-out algorithm) before it commits it to memory. Wayne Emery could comment on this much more authoritatively than I. (Wayne? Yoo-hoo...you on deck somewhere?)

If my supposition is correct this would imply that 35 mm analogue slides might give a more accurate rendition. Anyone feel like doing some comparative experiments?

Cheers,

Hans Durstling
Moncton, Canada

From: Wayne Emery

Correct answer is glycerin or benzyl benzoate.

Wayne

From: Helen Hill

> I have the opposite problem that L Surpin mentions about
> manipulation. The color never comes close to the vibrancy of the
> live color.

I think that's the same problem we're all having (all who've posted seeking advice). It's not a case of trying to make a piece of jewellery look better than it really is, but we're trying to make it look as good as it does in real life and the camera just doesn't seem to do that.

It must be a very frustrating problem in the case of your opals Kevin, as that's predominantly the stone you work with and their colour play is the essence of their beauty.

I find it really difficult to capture the fire in stones too. I have some really good quality, well cut CZ's that put most diamonds to shame - they really are F clarity/D colour and the different colours that flash from them is simply gorgeous - but I simply can't capture that with the camera. They just look dull and lifeless and no better than if I'd set a piece of glass in the jewellery. Looking at images of diamonds all over the net, the same applies to them as well. I may get comments about using cheap stones and that I shouldn't expect any different, but for my stage in the business and my buying power,

they are appropriate - and in any case I actually prefer wearing the pieces I've made and set with the CZ's to wearing the diamond jewellery I have.

Has anyone found the secret to capturing the spectral colours that stones like diamond, demantoid garnet and good quality CZ's exhibit? Or is it a case of the camera not being able to capture what our binocular vision sees, as suggested yesterday?

Helen
UK

<http://www.hillsgems.co.uk>
<http://www.helensgems.etsy.com>

From: leonid surpin

> I'm trying to see the color in the opal that I see live through the
> camera's eye. The color in the opal is astonishing, gorgeous but I
> can't get it in the camera.

Opal consist of tiny silica spheres held together. The play of light is due to splitting of light beam by spaces between the spheres.

Laws of Optics dictate that Angle of Incidence equal to Angle of Reflection. That means that in order to see the opal play of color, camera must be positioned along the Angle of Reflection. That is the theory.

In practice if we do that, the picture that we get is not what we see. If our cameras would be transparent we can position light directly behind the camera, but cameras are not transparent and that would not work.

The solution is to use a "beam splitter". I will try to describe it, but without use of drawings it is confusing, so Google on it for more info.

Make a cardboard tube. Inside walls must covered with light absorbing material like black velvet.

In the center of the tube position glass plate at exactly 45 degrees angle to the tube's long axis.

In the side of the tube make an opening in such a way that a light beam through the opening would strike the glass plate in the center.

Position tube between camera and opal aligned with the direction camera is facing.

Shine strong light through the side opening at 90 degrees angle to the long axis of the tube. Take a picture.

The mechanics as following:

Light beam through the opening strike the glass plate. Depending on glass refractive index, some of the light will go through, but some will be reflected towards opal. When light strike the opal, a portion will be reflected towards the camera alongside the tube axis. When it hit the glass plate, again some of the light will go through, and some will be reflected. What it means that only a small portion of the light will reach the camera, so exposure must be long, and you would need sturdy, professional quality tripod, but picture should approximate what the eye sees.

Beam splitter can be bough ready made, if money is not a problem.

Leonid Surpin
www.studioarete.com

From: Mike Kelley
Hi Kevin, and all,

I'm usually a lurker here, being a lapidary, but you've hit my area now. Ambient light probably isn't strong enough there. And your skylight probably affects color temp as well as strength. Artificial light is very tricky. Reds are the hardest to get usually. I generally shoot a dozen shots for each keeper.

I've gotten good results in sunlight, but that will wash out really bright stones. Traditional opal viewing rules say to have the light coming over your shoulder. Not easy to do with photos. I often use mixed light sources. The best usually is daylight with some incandescent and/or my Ott-Lite. A mix of just the incandescent for warmth (rapidly disappearing due to energy conservation agenda) and the pure white balanced OTT-LITE works well for many stones.

The Opal Express

The American Opal Society

Of course glare and light spots are a problem. Sometimes you can solve a reflection problem by immersing the opal in water so there's no reflection on the stone itself. It takes a lot of light to show the opal color, as the eye is much more sensitive. But really bright opals will overwhelm the camera sensors, particularly if there is a strong UV component to the color. Lots of my black opal/blue silk stones wash out into purple where the blue is most intense.

I actually used to get pretty good results with my old computer flatbed scanner. A low dome or flat face stone will photograph pretty well if it is put into a small puddle of water on a flatbed scanner. Sometimes you have to try pretty weird things to get what you want. I've been thinking of trying one of these little gooseneck LED work lights. They are pretty strong and you can get concentrated light at whatever angle will show the color play best. Anyone who has used this system might want to chime in here too.

Background color is another huge factor. Your camera will be influenced by the surface color behind the opal. I get totally different results with the same light and stone, but different colored surfaces. The body color appears different on different colors of background too.

A tiny change in viewing angle presents a different display with opal. Peeking over the camera means that you are viewing the stone from a different angle than the camera.

The digital "film" sees and captures light differently from the eye, so it'll almost never be perfect. Each opal will require a different light mix too. Body color affects the camera's ability to record the play of color.

And then there's the whole question of Photoshop filter manipulation. Don't get us started on that slippery slope. I don't go there, but many do.

You are certainly not alone. Capturing opal color is the opal dealers' greatest challenge. Can't sell 'em if you can't show 'em.
Mike Kelley

From: Alberic
Greetings all:

Apropos of Leonid's beam splitter idea: why not just use a ring flash, or ring-light?

These are flashes that screw onto the nose of your lens, and surround it with light emitting surface. They provide even light straight out from the lens.

There are modern LED versions that are daylight balanced (allegedly) and that are constantly on, instead of being a momentary flash.

I've shot faceted stones with them with some success, although that was an experiment. (I boosted the ring light off my engraving microscope to see what'd happen. It worked, but I haven't had a need to shoot stones like that again.) The opals might respond well to it. (Hummm...now I'm curious...)

Cheers -
Brian

From: gwen doran
Hello,

I recently photographed an Ethiopian Black Opal which had the most beautiful range of colours! As with the common complaint, I could not get what I was seeing to show up in a static photo. I set up a platform in the sunlight and then used half a dozen mirrors to reflect the sunlight onto the opal in different areas... the result was not fantastic, but at least I got some of the colour-play captured in the pictures.

Maybe this helps?

From: Mike Kelley
Hi Kevin and all,

Giving it all more thought, particularly about why, less than how? Part of the eye vs. digital camera problem was suggested correctly, I think, by Hans, as inherent in the digital process. More expensive digitals will let you adjust white balance, bracket

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exposures, dump RAW files for Photoshopping and other tricks, but that's a lot of fiddling, even for those good at it. A lot to learn for a busy jeweler too. I recall my old store in Austin, back in a previous century, when all we had was 35 mm or larger format transparencies. I recall that method produced some very true pictures of opals I had cut. For some purposes, that might be a solution, but probably not for day to day work. I can't imagine the time and expense if I had to use roll film, then scan it for showing on the website or on eBay or wherever. It takes too much time even now with digitals, I think.

But another factor is how we process information ourselves, in our head. The camera has one eye, we have two. So first of all, we are getting twice as much color information to our brains as the camera is getting to the "film". The other aspect is that each of our eyes sees a slightly different color display, due to the opal's physical structure and how it processes light. Even that tiny displacement makes a difference, and the three dimensional model we build in our brain is richer in dimension and contains more color information than a photo ever could. OK, you can laugh now, at me sitting here blinking at a tray of opals, first one eye, then the other, then both. Go ahead, we'll wait. OK, now you try it. Make sure no one is watching or they may question your sanity and finally take you away.

I used to use a ring flash with roll film, but I find that flash just washes out the stone, wet or dry. With water, you don't have to shoot straight down, the camera and lights can be set at any angle which shows the color best. With opal, you'll usually want several angles anyway, to show off the changing color display. I often use an empty stone bubble to hold the opal in water, and it's easy to hold it in your hand, or place it on a beanbag and change the angle of shooting. I don't usually use a tripod, preferring the dynamics of rolling the stone and camera for the best angle. I do throw away a lot of fuzzy shots though. I have an older digital without image stabilization. I guess I need a new camera too, I'd think that the more megapixels, the more color information and possibly a truer rendition.

Mike Kelley

From: John Donovan

Don't know much about this... I was wondering if this is a case where film might be better than digital... That's a question that might be rhetorical. I went looking, as I do, out of curiosity. Found a couple of things that might be interesting to some:

<http://tinyurl.com/5eeapw>

<http://tinyurl.com/6xlvdv>

In one of the posts on the above link, there is mention of a man named "Len Cram" - expert opal photographer and all around interesting guy, for any who might search for him...

<http://www.donivanandmaggiara.com>

From: johnnyg

Hi Folks,

I can't tell you what to do to get that shot right with the opals, but it seems to me, that the problem I had when photographing opals was they came out with almost too much flash and fire, especially the black opals. They did look that good in my hand but only with perfect light conditions so for a customers viewing, I had to downplay the fire a bit. And I think I used both film from 4x5s to 35 mm, and digital. Both mediums had their own set of hurdles I'm sure but probably second nature to a photographer. Try incandescent lighting as my experience is that opal in sunlight usually gets a bit washed out. Many of them look terrible in sunlight.

John

From: Noel Yovovich

> Photographing opals: I'm using a Nikon on a tripod set up in my > studio using ambient light coming from a skylight.

When my pro photographer (Larry Sanders) photographs pieces of mine with opals, he uses little spot lights which he bounces off tiny mirrors to aim the light just so, to let the lens see the color

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our eyes see. It is painstaking (read: expensive) work, and before he had a digital camera to use for instant proofs, it still didn't always come out right.

I cannot imagine that you are ever going to get anywhere using ambient light.

Noel

From the Orchid Digest from <http://www.ganoksin.com> , Dated from 6/4/08 to 6/7/08. Printed with permission of Ganoksin.

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Giant Diamond Unearthed in Africa May Set Record

September 22, 2008

A huge gemstone that could become the world's largest polished round diamond has been found at the Letseng Mine, owned by Gem Diamonds, in Lesotho, southern Africa.

The diamond weighs 478 carats and is the twentieth largest ever found. Gem Diamonds said initial examination suggests it has a flawless center and could produce a 150-carat round-cut white diamond worth tens of millions of dollars.



Sept. 21: A model holds a white diamond weighing nearly 500 carats in this undated handout photograph released in London.

"Preliminary examination of this remarkable diamond indicates that it will yield a record-breaking polished stone of the very best color and clarity," the company's Chief Executive Clifford Elphick said in a statement.

The stone would dwarf the 105-carat Kohinoor in Great Britain's Crown Jewels. The largest rough diamond found was the Cullinan, in 1905, which weighed 3,106 carats uncut.

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October 2008 Gem & Mineral Shows

3-5--COSTA MESA, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center/Bldg. 10, 88 Fair Dr.; 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: www.gemfaire.com

5--FALLBROOK, CA: 51st annual show, "Fall Festival of Gems"; Fallbrook Gem & Mineral Society; Sun. 10-4; free admission; contact Mary Fong-Walker, (760) 728-1130; e-mail: 1konMining@gmail.com

9-11--MOUNT IDA, AR: World Championship Quartz Crystals Digging Contest; Mount Ida Area Chamber of Commerce; Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Fairgrounds Rd.; Thu. 9-3, Fri. 9-3, Sat. 9-3; free admission; keep all you find, meet other miners, maybe even win a prize; contact Maureen Walther, Mount Ida Area Chamber of Commerce, Mount Ida, AK 71957, (870) 867-2723; e-mail: director@mountidachamber.com; Web site: www.mountidachamber.com

10-12--SANTA ROSA, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; Sonoma County Fairgrounds/Grace Pavilion, 1350 Bennett Valley Rd.; 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: www.gemfaire.com

11-12--PAYSON, AZ: Annual show; Payson Rimstones Rock Club; Tonto Apache Res. Recreation Center, BIA 101/Hwy. 87N, south end of town,

behind Sonic; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; admission \$3, children under 12 free; dealers, gems, minerals, fossils, rough material, lapidary equipment, jewelry findings, silent auctions, Spinning Wheel, Education Corner, fluorescent light display; contact Barry Jones, (928) 476-3513; e-mail: froggie1048@msn.com

11-12-TRONA, CA: 67th annual show, "Gem-O-Rama"; Searles Lake Gem & Mineral Society; SLG&MS Lapidary and Show Bldg., 13337 Main St., at Trona Rd.; Sat. 7:30-5, Sun. 7:30-4; free admission; 20 dealers, wholesale pink halite, 50 exhibits, geode cutting and sales, demonstrations, gem dig, door prizes, field trips to Searles Dry Lake; contact Jim or Bonnie Fairchild, (760) 372-5356; Web site: www1.iwisp.com/tronagemclub/

11-12-VISTA, CA: Show; Vista Gem & Mineral Society; Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; 13 dealers, faceting and silversmithing supplies, minerals, gems, fossils, slabs, rough material, books, specimens, handmade beads, equipment, gold and silver jewelry, gem identification, country store, displays, wheel of fortune, raffle, five demonstrators; contact Cherie Wilson, (760) 726-6961, or Lois M. Harr, (760) 724-0395

17-18-ANDERSON, CA: Shasta Gem & Mineral Society; Shasta District Fairgrounds; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; contact Bill Seward, (530) 365-8641

17-19-CLIVE, IA: Show, "Treasures 2008"; Des Moines Lapidary Society; 7 Flags/KJY Events Center, 2100 100th St.; Fri. 4-8, Sat. 10-4, Sun. 10-4; adults \$4; minerals, fossils, beads, gemstones; contact Cheryl, 228 5th St., West Des Moines, IA 50265, (515) 334-0020; e-mail: cheryl@artisticbead.com; Web site: www.artisticbead.com

17-19-DEL MAR, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; Del Mar Fairgrounds/Exhibit Hall, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd.; 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: www.gemfaire.com

18-19-CAYUCOS, CA: 7th annual fall show, "Cayucos Gem & Mineral Show"; San Luis Obispo Gem & Mineral Club; Cayucos Vet's Hall, Cayucos Vet's Hall at the Pier; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; free door prizes, gems, jewelry, beads, minerals, crystals, fossils, tools, findings, cutting rough, meteorites, moldavite, jade, cabochons, wire wrapping, gifts; contact

Dianna Deem, (805) 909-2514, or Richard Sittinger; e-mail: Richard@Mineralofthemothclub.org; Web site: www.mineralofthemothclub.org

18-19-PLACERVILLE, CA: 25th annual show; El Dorado County Mineral & Gem Society; El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Dr., Hwy. 50 exit 44B; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$3, children 12 and under free; free kids' activities and rocks, lapidary demonstrations, special fluorescent exhibit, 40 case displays, more than 40 dealers, bargain rocks, auction, geode cutting, grab bags, raffle, door prizes; contact Jackie Cerrato, P.O. Box 950, Placerville, CA 95667, (530) 676-2472; e-mail: info@rockandgemshow.org; Web site: www.rockandgemshow.org

18-19-WHITTIER, CA: Show, "The Beauty Within"; Whittier Gem & Mineral Society; Whittier Community Center, 7630 WA Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; dealers, displays, silent auction, sand scoop, club sales table; contact Jay Valle, 1421 Latchford Ave., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745, (626) 934-9764; e-mail: res19pnb@verizon.net

24-26-PLEASANTON, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; Alameda County Fairgrounds, 4501 Pleasanton Ave.; 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: www.gemfaire.com

25-26-CANBY, OR: Show, "Earth's Hidden Treasures 2008"; Clackamette Mineral & Gem Club; Clackamas County Fairgrounds, 694 N.E. 4th Ave.; Sat. 9-6, Sun. 10-5; door prizes, demonstrations, silent auction, fluorescent show; contact Rick Mauer, 9878 S.W. Alsea Dr., Tualatin, OR 97062, (509) 691-6395; e-mail: tallerricardo@juno.com

25-26-LOS ALTOS, CA: Annual show; Peninsula Gem & Geology Society; Los Altos Youth Center, 1 San Antonio Rd.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; adults \$3, Juniors (12-18) \$2, children under 12 free; dealers, lapidary, gems, minerals, fossils, exhibits; contact Stan Bogosian, (408) 568-2489; e-mail: sbogosian@aol.com; or Dave Muster, (408) 245-2180; e-mail: mustersgems@yahoo.com

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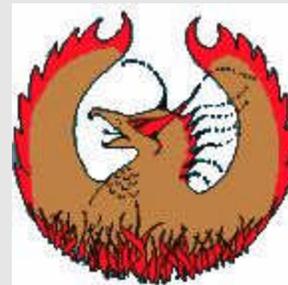
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A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note, however, that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be AUTOMATICALLY 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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**Volume #41 Issue #10
October 2008**

TO:

Some Topics In This Issue:

- Arts Council Raffle
- The 10 minute Rule and Zircon
- Australia: Ridge over Rubble Paupers
- Caring for Jewelry
- Photographing Opal
- Giant Diamond Unearthed in Africa

Important Info:

Board Meeting - October 6th

General Meeting - October 11th
Working Meeting to Prepare for Opal and Gem Show

Opal & Gem Show – November 1st

**October 11
Working Meeting to Prepare for Show**

**November 1 & 2
Opal & Gem Show**

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

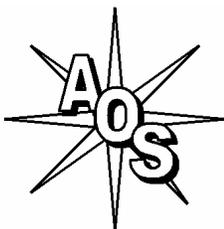
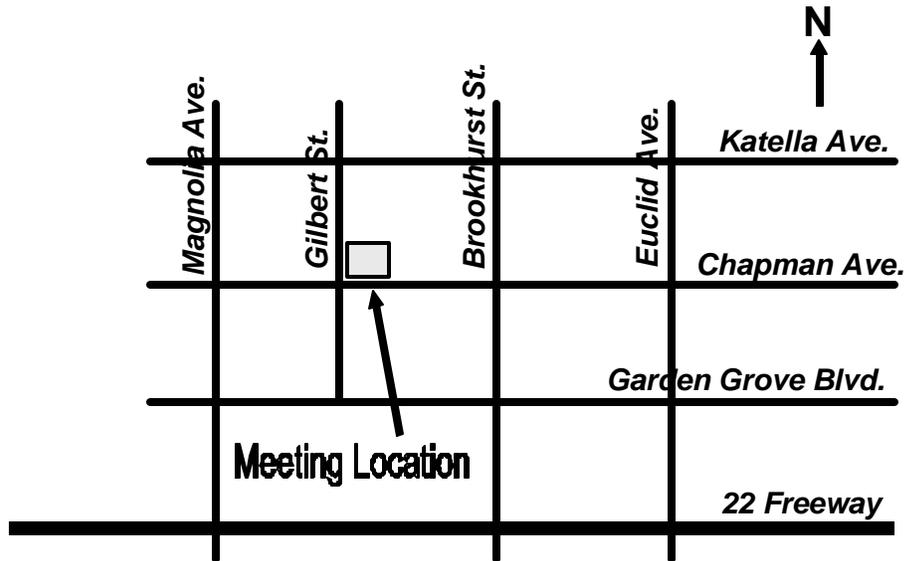
2nd Thursday of the Month
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
Garden Grove, CA 92841

(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

MEETING ACTIVITIES

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



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