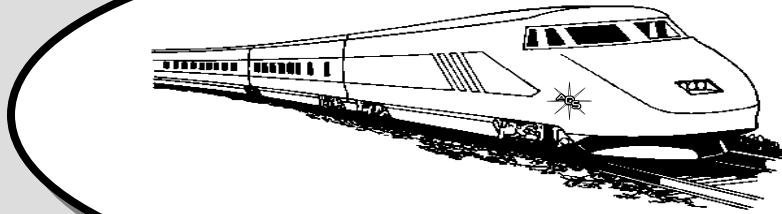


# The Opal Express

Published  
monthly by  
The  
American  
Opal  
Society



August 2010

Volume 43 Issue 8

## Table of Contents

President's Message	1
Anaheim Arts Council 2010 Fundraiser	1
July Recap – Walt Lombardo	1
Did You Know that there is an Opal Mine in Europe...	2
Sealing Andamooka Rainbow opal with Opticon	3
Members Only Website Password	3
Treasures from Down Under	3
West Texas for Rock Hounds	5
August 2010 Gem & Mineral Shows	7

## President's Message

By Pete Goetz

Well gang, what can I tell ya. If you were not there, you missed a really great lecture on Diamonds. The lecture focused mainly on the diamond industry in Canada. Talk about hash working conditions; below freezing temperature most of the time, snow, winds, and slippery roads. What more could an underpaid miner ask for??

OPAL show getting closer... we still need some volunteers mostly for the reception desk, help setting up seminars, food service, helping setup and tearing down electrical stuff (see Corey), putting out signs....

## Anaheim Arts Council 2010 Fundraiser

By Russ Madsen

Greetings AOS members. The Opal Society is again supporting the annual fundraiser drawing of the Anaheim Arts Council.

**TICKETS** Tickets for the drawing are \$10.00 each, or 7 for \$50.00, or 15 for \$100.00.

Please participate, the Opal Society is an Arts Council member organization and we are hoping to sell \$1,000.00 tickets before the end of October. To date we have sold \$150.00.

**DRAWING DATE** The Arts Council drawing will be Nov 4<sup>th</sup> at the Arts Council meeting. Winners need not be present.

**PRIZES** First prize is \$1,000.00 cash and you might be the lucky winner of a very nice black opal necklace donated for the drawing by AOS members Gene LeVan and Stan McCall. There are many other prizes donated by Arts Council member organizations.

You may buy tickets at Opal Society general meetings or contact any board member, or email or call Russ Madsen to discuss mailing tickets to you. Russ Madsen (cell) 562-884-2254 (email) [chairman2rgm@verizon.net](mailto:chairman2rgm@verizon.net)

Arts Council scholarship funds and grant funds such as the grant received by the AOS for this year's show expenses are generated by proceeds from this annual drawing plus participating clubs receive back a portion of ticket proceeds. All donations are tax deductible.

Thank you in advance for your support of this important cause.

## July Recap – Walt Lombardo

Our July speaker, Walt Lombardo, gave an excellent talk on **Diamonds Occurrences in North America.**

We learned all about diamond pipes, which occur more than one would have thought on the continent. The Canadian diamond pipes are producing considerable amounts of diamonds! Other pipes are in Arkansas and Colorado, and more may be discovered.

Walter Lombardo can be reached at Nevada Mineral & Book Company, 342 S. Tustin Street, Orange, CA 92866, phone (714) 633-1549 and [www.geologicpublications.com](http://www.geologicpublications.com)



July Speaker - Walt Lombardo

## Did You Know that there is an Opal Mine in Europe...

**No? ... Neither Did I, Until I Found This One At Dubník, Slovakia**



Map showing Slovakia Opal Locations

The following is produced for tourists and has not been edited, but photos added:

The unique Dubník's opal mines are located in the middle of northern part of Slánsky Mountains. From Prešov they are 28 km away and from Košice 35 km away. From Cervenica is the former administration center of the noble opal mining, now an abandoned settlement, about 3 km away and from Zlatá Bana about 5 km away. Dubník's deposits of noble opal, larger and more extensive Libanka and smaller Šimonka, are an outstanding phenomenon from the global world point of view. Nowhere in the world the noble opal was mined in ordinary mining in such a large extent and so long ago. The noble opal, like other kinds of common opal is a hydrogel with fluctuating amount of water. Its chemical formula is  $\text{SiO}_2 \cdot n \text{H}_2\text{O}$ . The content of quartz in the Slovak noble opal fluctuates from 89,0 – 93,3% and water content from 6,1 – 10,9%.

The opal develops from low thermal post volcanic solutions by



Slovakia Opal Mine

precipitation of a gellike quartz substance. Beautiful and typical color play and opalizing of noble opal is caused by light interference on interfaces of submicroscopic layers of gel like opal tiny balls.

On the beginning of noble opal mining on the Slovak territory no written data have been preserved. The oldest information on noble opal at all comes from approximately 500 BC from the works of Greek and Roman authors. Relatively detailed information is supplied by Plinius in his work *Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII*, where he writes, among other things, "no other noble precious stone is so pleasing by its appearance to the eye". It is quite possible, that the beginning of opal mining might reach up to the pre Roman times. The first written reference on the noble opal on our territory is from 14 May 1597, further proof is a rescript from 5 November 1603. The fact, that the mining of noble opals is older than the first given written references, we consider proven, since Doctor Anselm Boetius de Boot, the personal physician of the Cesar Rudolf II., in his work *Gemmarum et lapidum historia* from 1609 remembers an old noble opal collapsed mine and open pit mines in operation. In 1771 there was found up to now the biggest known piece of noble opal, weighing 3035 ct (607 g), which due to its beautiful and strange color play, was called Harlekýn (Vienna Imperial Opal) and at present it is preserved in Vienna museum.

The biggest boom of noble opal extraction was achieved in the period from 1845 – 1880, when the Goldschmidt family became the tenant. In opal mines there were more than 350 miners and up to 13 grinders employed and the noble opal from Dubník is highly appreciated and looked for on world markets. In this period the largest extent of mining work was done, either new galleries and shafts, or cross drifts, exploratory drifts, insets and extracting in older mine workings. Based on his knowledge in 1878 the surveyor Alexander Gessel expressed his assumption, that according to the extent of workings the beginnings of the noble opal extractions reach up to the 10th or 11th century.

In 1889, when Brothers Eggers became tenants, the biggest



Slovakia Precious Opal

known nest of noble opal was opened, with the dimensions 75 x 50 x 30 cm, in which three small layers (stribers) of high quality noble opal were deposited with total weight over 120,000 ct. In 1891 the first written claim on the competition of Australian noble opals was registered. From 1896 up to 1992, up to the closing of the mines the state conducted its business on the opal deposit. The state restricted extraction of noble opal due to lack of demand on extracted opals.

The last extraction work was conducted in 1918 and until 1922 only maintenance work and securing of workings, which consisted in water pumping to prevent the flooding of 15m and 30 m horizon.

From <http://www.hcgms.org/Newsletters/HCGMS%20June%202009.pdf>  
From High Country Gleamings, 6/2009, Henderson County G&MS (North Carolina)

+++++

## Sealing Andamooka Rainbow opal with Opticon

From 7/14/2006 to 7/16/2006

I'm a jeweler and lapidary from Tucson, Arizona. I've been working with some beautiful Andamooka matrix rough with great results - but in the parcels I purchased from Australia I got what's called Andamooka "Rainbow" Matrix opal as well. This is a more porous opal, that - due to pits in the surface - won't take much of a polish. I've been advised to use Opticon. My trials have been a disaster! The opal looks the same. I'm not sure if I have to use the heat-sealing method ( which I haven't tried) or if I can just mix the Opticon with the hardener and apply it, wait to dry, sand and polish? What grit sandpaper on Opticon? What polish works best after treatment with Opticon? Is a bumpy surface normal after Opticon dries? How far down do I sand after treatment? I think I sanded too far... because the pits and pores were still apparent. I'd be grateful for any tips or instruction. Jessica at galaxy6@cox.net  
From Jessica Dow, Email: [galaxy6j@cox.net](mailto:galaxy6j@cox.net)

Hi Jessica,

I am from Aus and my son cuts and polishes boulder opal. He found that when he was polishing his opal some of the material between the layers of opal were soft and broke up when polishing. Our local gem club members suggested that he soak the pre cabbed stone in Opticon for at least 48 hours and it may help.

However I was talking to a professional cutter recently and was telling him about what my son had been told. He told me that he never uses anything but diamond grit to polish the stone. From memory it was 250000 grit. So it makes it hard who to believe. Best of luck.

From Howard , Email: [hthomson@nrggos.com.au](mailto:hthomson@nrggos.com.au)

Opticon is used for filling voids. And the best results of penetration comes when using the heating technique. However, its still a trial and error process from that point. I recently been cutting some Spencer Opal, and the best end result is triplets. But during the cutting process i do use a basic two part epoxy called Devcon to insure the piece stays together as i slab/trim or grind it. I've also used Opticon on allot of Copper Silicates from here in Arizona for cabochon cutting. And have had good results using the heat method for Opticon. But I still have follies from time to time, and prefer staying away from using any type of glue in the end polish on the cab. Only to insure a stable matrix. AS i wipe all stones of Opticon, or its get all ground off the surface.

From Shain, Email: [freeform@freeformcabs.com](mailto:freeform@freeformcabs.com), Web Page: <http://freeformcabs.com>

Jessica;

Sorry for the memory lapse, but the product is referred to as water glass. A Google search for water glass is also informative'.

From Max Gaultney , Email: [itsjustice@citlink.net](mailto:itsjustice@citlink.net)

Jessica;

There is a product called liquid glass, sold from Vulcan's Workshop ebay store that may be what you are looking for. I tried it on some soft porous stone (petosky Stone). I had mixed results because I have lost the instructions for the use of the product and have had no luck getting more, . aif you try and like this product I would like to hear from you.

From Max Gaultney - Email: [itsjustice@citlink.net](mailto:itsjustice@citlink.net)

Hello Jessica;

I am not a lapidarist or jeweler and I have not worked with opal; but I have made quite a few thin sections.

As I understand it, Opticon is a type of epoxy. If I am wrong, I am sure someone will let me know. Anyway, in doing thin sections of rock chips it is sometimes necessary to treat them to keep them from tearing apart during the grinding. I have used epoxy thinned with toluene for that purpose.

The Opal Express

The American Opal Society

The chip is soaked in the thinned epoxy for a few hours and then heated for several hours. The fluids are drawn into the voids and fissures where the epoxy hardens. I think the heating only serves to drive off the toluene and heating might damage opal, so probably just letting it set for a period of time would accomplish the same thing.

For thin sections, I used five parts of toluene to one of resin and then added the hardner. For surface fillings, perhaps a little less toluene might suffice.

I hope this is helpful.

Don

From Don Peck , Email: [dpeck@jinfionline.net](mailto:dpeck@jinfionline.net)

Don...Thanks for trying to help! I found an opal cutter with some experience who gave me some solid advice. I'm curious about this treatment process of yours though, I've never heard of it before. Is it how rock-hounds treat their specimens? Does it dry with a clear, glassy finish on the surface of the rock- or is it a treatment used only to fill voids and fractures? I actually hate using this stuff, and I plan to avoid material that needs this kind of treatment in the future. I simply can't afford to throw this opal away, so I'm doing what I can to make the best of the material. Thanks again!

From Jessica

Hi Jessica

A "thin section" is actually a petrologist's sample of a rock for study under a microscope. A very thin slab of the material is cut to roughly 1.5 cm by 4 cm in size, glued to a glass slide, and then carefully ground down until there is only about a hair's thickness left on the glass - and it's usually translucent, except for any opaque grains that might be in it. Under the 'scope, the various mineral grains can then be identified by their optical characteristics, usually using some special lighting techniques.

This is not something your average rockhound does - has nothing to do with the care and feeding of mineral specimens or lapidary materials. Don was just offering an approach from petrology (the study of rocks) that he thought might be useful to the problem you have.

I have, though, tried using epoxy to stabilize crumbly matrix in mineral specimens. It works - but so does a dip in thinned white glue, and the white glue approach is much easier. I haven't used epoxy in years...

Regards

From Alan

Jessica,

The epoxy in thin sections is essentially invisible, even microscopically, after it cures. It is not a coating on the surface, but merely serves to prevent the fabric of the rock from tearing apart during grinding.

I don't know whether it would fill very small holes in the surface of a stone or not. You mentioned that the Opticon was thick and bumpy on the opal. I think Opticon is an epoxy that might be thinned with toluene. If that is the case, it could be washed over a slightly porous surface before the final grind and polish. It might not work, but then again . . .

From Don Peck , Email: [dpeck@jinfionline.net](mailto:dpeck@jinfionline.net)

## Members Only Website Password

The password for the members only area is "flash".

## Treasures from Down Under

*Getting down and dirty in a quest for gemstones.*

By PAULA RILEY

November/December 2007, Nevada Magazine

Photo: Paula Riley

August 2010

Page 3

Murmurs of appreciation greet the stones Alan Felker displays in his gently cupped hands. "When I saw the glimmer in that bucket," he tells his fellow rockhounds, eyes crinkling with pleasure, "I about fell off my perch." The shimmer of a rainbow caught in hunks of precious fire opal is a just reward for a long drive and sweat-filled hours spent picking through clots of dusty earth.

Felker is proficient at this type of hunting and gathering, but virtually anyone can prospect for gemstones, natural bling of off-road adventurers. Before you set out, here's a brief geology lesson: Nevada does rocks like no other state. Nevada's upper echelon



includes opals, garnets, and smoky quartz. To get your hands on some, start by acquiring basic knowledge, then gather a few supplies and seek a little help from your rock-loving friends.

The novice collector can find inspiration from the family-oriented Reno Gem and Mineral Society, an educational-social club with a focus on teaching basic identification, important because a stone's outerwear can disguise its inner beauty. Members such as Felker share success stories and hunting hints at regular gatherings. The club also organizes monthly field trips for collecting en masse, especially beneficial for beginners. Ernie Kastenbein, long-time member, says, "Specifics are what you get from others who have been there and done that." Norvie Enns, the club's shop director and an instructor, agrees. "Find someone who's already been there," he says, "and go with them." He favors the group approach, but adventurous souls could take the indie route.

Several commercial opal mines and more than 200 private claims operate in Virgin Valley territory, the high desert of northwest Humboldt County, where prized black opals and many-hued fire opals result from silica and minerals deposited in the cavities of disintegrating buried forests. Opal hunters search for crusty tree-limb shapes or broken bits protruding from the pale dirt.

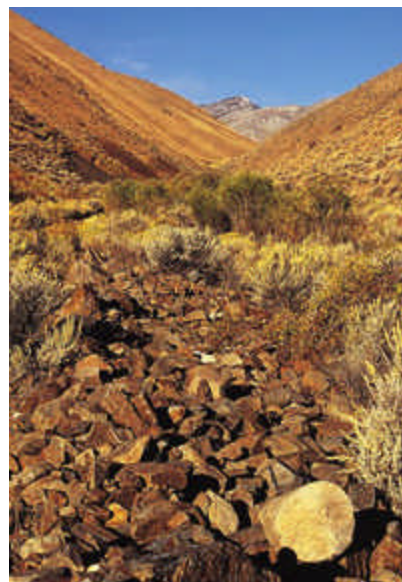
Michelle Blowers, a Californian who hunts in Nevada, says, "There is nothing like spotting that glint of color in the grey sand. Your heart leaps. You brush off the dirt...the colors burst like tiny rainbows...after that you are hopelessly hooked. There is no cure for opal fever but more opals."

Fees for digging at private opal mines can range upwards of \$100. Take U.S. 95 north from Winnemucca 28 miles to State Route 140, then north to Denio 70 miles. Virgin Valley, situated in the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and containing mines such as Royal Peacock and Rainbow Ridge, lies west of Denio near the Oregon border.

In eastern Nevada, garnets, a type of feldspar, are abundant at Garnet Fields Rockhound Area—turn at the sign six miles west of Ely off U.S. 50. At the top of Garnet Hill you'll find wheelchair-accessible restrooms, a picnic area, a few camping spaces, and plenty of parking. Admittance is free. Kick along the roadway to unearth crystals glowing like luminous red eyes in pale-colored rhyolite. Hunting is easiest following a heavy rain or after snowplows have cleared the road. Better yet, "Get away to where there haven't

been too many people," says Enns, who has found ¾-inch jewelry-quality garnets off the beaten path. You can try the southwest quadrant of the hill.

Mine tailings near the top of Petersen Mountain, approximately 33 miles north of Reno, yield pale brown to black smoky quartz, a type of silica, ideal for displaying as is or cut and polished as gems. Distinctive flat sides and corners distinguish their crystal shapes from ordinary dirt and rocks. With a hand-held



rock pick, rake a portion of the loose tailings toward you, then sift through it by hand. You'll need four-wheel drive, work gloves, a pick (or shovel), and a bucket. To reach Petersen Mountain, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, travel north from Reno on U.S. 395, continuing exactly 10 miles beyond Hallelujah Junction. Turn east onto the unmarked dirt road, which will take you to a parking turnout at a gate near the top. Walk in to the tailings that have been dumped nearby. Beware of signs marking active mining claims, and do not trespass on them.

Most guidebooks and Web sites suggest necessary tools and safety measures for successful gemstone hunting. You should have sturdy boots, sun and wind protection, potable water, and a cell phone, although not all areas receive cell signals. Sites that charge fees for digging (fee-for-dig) might rent shovels and buckets; otherwise, bring your own tools. Don't go alone into the back country, and remember, collecting is forbidden in state parks.

Many Reno Gem and Mineral Society members learn to cut and polish gem shapes from their favorite specimens. Annual membership runs \$21, with classes in lapidary, silversmithing, beadwork, and wire-wrapping costing \$6 or less.

Don't despair if you come home with specimens good only for gracing your garden. Unlike with fishing, you get to determine the keepers. As Enns says, "I don't have to know what a specimen's mineral content is to think it's pretty." So what if your finds aren't precious gemstones? They might be any of the hundreds of collectible minerals native to Nevada, and before you know it, you might be hooked—and headed toward becoming a rockhound.

#### ONLINE BONUS

Mystical properties of gems and rocks  
Weekend prospectors forage for gemstones that can be polished and set into jewelry. Some folks believe some stones have mystical, even magical, properties, and they are intrigued by lore dating back thousands of years. Here's a sampling of Nevada minerals and their spiritual meanings:

Need to predict the future? Look to the state's official precious gemstone, the Virgin Valley Black Fire Opal. Northern Nevada has the corner on North America's supply. Once considered more valuable than diamonds, opals are associated with good luck, hope, and purity.



Wisdom and the ability to align chakra are properties assigned to turquoise. Since the early 1900s, Nevada has been a major producer of the blue stone, which was prized by the Pharaohs and later by Native Americans.

If you want to know whether you were George Washington in another life, check out garnets.

According to legend, the gem helps you view past incarnations.

If you are addicted to chocolate, the purple amethyst can break habits as well as boost contentment.

Carnelians ward off rage, envy, and fear, and at the same time promote love between parents and kids. A bowl full at the dinner table might work wonders.

Malachite was the cosmetic of ancient civilizations. It not only produced a vibrant green eye shadow but supposedly protected children against evil spirits.

Onyx, which is sometimes used in cameos, is associated with happiness, good fortune, and wisdom.

And, the bloodstone is all about energy and renewal. You might want to carry one to a Sacred Stone Massage appointment at the Ritz-Carlton, Lake Las Vegas in Henderson.

Information on gemstone meanings and lore can be found in: *Love is in the Earth: A Kaleidoscope of Crystals, Updated* (726 pages), Earth-Love Publishing House, 3440 Youngfield St., Suite 353, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033.—By Ann Henderson

Celebrate Nevada Mining Week

As part of Nevada Mining Week, observed October 21-27, you can spend the afternoon in a 4,500-square-foot simulated underground mine, pan for gold, examine more than 150 minerals and other mining artifacts, and explore the mining industry's importance to Nevada. The free activities will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, October 26 at the McCaw School of Mines, located at Gordon McCaw Elementary School, 57 Lynn Lane, across the street from the Henderson City Hall and Civic Center off Basic Road.

The Nevada Mining Association and the McCaw School of Mines Foundation will host the family event in recognition of Nevada Mining Week. For more information, call 702-799-3546.

From

[http://www.nevadamagazine.com/index.php/issues/read/treasures\\_from\\_down\\_under/](http://www.nevadamagazine.com/index.php/issues/read/treasures_from_down_under/)

## Romancing the Stone:

### West Texas for Rock Hounds

By Lisa Mann, Freelance Writer

"We're spoiled here in West Texas," says Teri Smith, Owner and Curator of the Last Frontier Museum at the Antelope Lodge in Alpine, Texas. "If we have to dig for it, well, we think twice. There's so much just sitting on the surface."

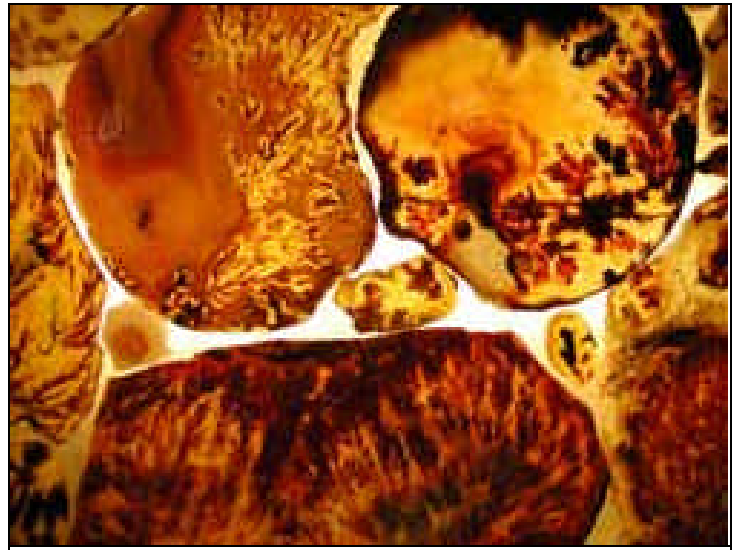
But that didn't stop Smith from bringing home a 2,000 pound agate and jasper boulder from a ranch near Alpine. "Teri's Big Rock" was excavated with a back hoe, and set down in the rock garden in front of the Antelope Lodge. "It's not exactly where I intended to set it," laughs her husband, John L. Smith. "But once it was there, we decided it wasn't going anywhere."

"This area is famous for the Texas plume agate, of course," says Teri Smith. "But there's an incredible amount of material here." Agates found in the area include: red plume, black plume, flower garden, moss, pom-pom, banded, Marfa bouquet, polka dot, iris, Rio Grande, and agates of every color. Other finds include: jasper, chalcedony, geodes, fucioils, fossils, calcite, Aragonite Psuedomorph, labradite, calcite, rose and smoky quartz, citrine, feldspar, and opal. According to Smith, amethysts of many shades can be found, but the crystals are seldom big enough for jewelry.

Although finding specimens is pretty easy in West Texas, finding land to hunt on can be more difficult. There are no public lands here; most of the area is private ranch land. Some property owners are leery letting rock hunters use their land because of liability concerns, or because people have left trash behind after being granted access. Smith has developed relationships with many of the local ranchers, and now leads groups onto several local ranches that are closed to the public.

Smith teaches a beginning rock hunting class one Friday evening a month, followed by a field trip to one of the local ranches on Saturday. "I started the Museum not just for rockhounds from out of town, but for the locals. They're just tripping over the most beautiful agates, and they don't know it. My classes are usually full of local ranchers who want to know how to identify what they find on their land. All over Alpine, embedded in stone walls and fireplaces, are the most beautiful specimens. But people don't know what they are. They just knew there are a lot of pretty rocks around here."

But the "pretty rocks" aren't only available only to ranch owners. Woodward Ranch and Stillwell Ranch, both outside Alpine, are open to rock hunters year-round. Woodward Ranch is closed for a few



Texas Plume Agate.

weeks during deer hunting season (usually late Nov-early Dec) to protect rock hunters from over-exuberant hunters.

The 22,000 acre Stillwell Ranch has 65 RV hookups for \$15 a night; primitive camping, including a shower, for \$5 per person (\$1 for kids under 12) and charges \$ .50 per pound for rocks found on the ranch. There is a general store and the Hallie's Hall of Fame Museum (memorabilia of Hallie Stillwell, a well-known pioneer woman) at Stillwell Ranch.

Agate, particularly moss and plume, and petrified wood can be found at Stillwell ranch. "At Stillwell Ranch, I've found what we call 'Rio Grande Agate', which is rounded agate chunks that seem to have come down the river because they don't look like any of the agate found here. They can be lace, or 'fire & smoke' patterns, or anything else," says Smith. "The Rio Grande agate is almost always covered with a "rind" that is white and makes it hard to spot unless you look carefully, but it's worth it."

The time of year, or your tolerance for heat, may help make your decision for where to go (though both ranches have their pluses, and you can quite easily plan a trip combining combine a day or two at each). Stillwell Ranch is much closer to Big Bend National Park, but is at a lower elevation, and has very little shade, making it almost unbearable in the summer months, while Woodward, at a higher elevation, and with somewhat more shade and creek near the campgrounds can be—for West Texas—somewhat more comfortable. Spring and fall can be beautiful at both Stillwell and Woodward Ranches.

Woodward Ranch, a 3,000 acre ranch run by Trey and Jayson (Jan) Woodward, has been a rock hunters Mecca for three generations. "Lots of people have come here through the generations. They came when they were kids, and now they come back with their kids, or even their grandkids," says Jan Woodward.

Woodward Ranch has a rustic cabin with 10 bunk beds available for \$60 a night, 8 RV sites for \$15 a night, and primitive campsites for \$10 a night. There is a rock shop on the Ranch. They charge \$1 a pound, after sorting, for rocks found on the ranch. "We take Visa, MasterCard, cash, and barter," says Jan. "Electricians, masons, anything—keeping up a Ranch is full time work. We'll also trade for finished product, especially finished product that we don't have the equipment for—like spheres."

The main part of Woodward Ranch is freely accessible to rock hunters and offers over 60 different varieties and colors of agates—including Texas red plume agate. Florescent calcite, gem labordite (5.7-5.8 hardness) and precious opal can also be found here. "There's not much fire in our opals," admits Trey Woodward, "But it's the only precious opal in Texas."



John L. Smith.

Another section of the ranch—the Needle Peak section—has a different terrain and geology. It is much lower, and hotter. It borders Big Bend National Park, and is pretty remote. It is 11 miles off the road, and is only be accessed by guided tour. Trey Woodward provides tours of the Needle Peak area from October to April for \$50 a day per person, with a three person minimum. "Down there," says Woodward, "everything either sticks, stings, or stinks. But it has some of the most beautiful agate. Once you've seen some, it makes the trip worthwhile." Needle Peak has petrified wood,

septesannums, jasper, aragonite crystals, and thistle agate. The thistle agate is extremely rare; according to Trey, only about six pounds in total have ever been found.

"To find the red plume, you have to know what you're looking for," says Woodward. "To find the rest, you just have to go out and half try." Trey and Jan are happy to show visitors what to look for—and where. "What we usually suggest is that you take a bucket and go out near the rock shop for an hour. You'll find plenty just outside the parking lot," says Woodward. "Then bring it back, and we'll sort through it with you, show you where you're going wrong—if you are—then when you go back out, you'll know exactly what you're looking for."

"It takes a while to train your eye for plume," he explains. "You have to look for the biscuit shape in order to distinguish it from the igneous basalt. The biscuits will always have a flat bottom if it's plume. All the plume has a quartz crystal or cavity in it. You just shave it just like cutting open an oatmeal biscuit—parallel to the bottom."

"To find outstanding plume at Woodward Ranch, pick an area at base of hill that has outcrops of volcanic rock at top. Using a small hand rake dig around in soft soil to expose biscuits and other agates," advises Edward Gerber, a Houston, TX rockhound. "Another good area to look is near the base of the many small canyons. The hard way is to use heavy pry bar and sledge hammer to break off chunks of volcanic rock and bust up to reveal biscuits. It's harder work, but you can get some nice large biscuits. Trey and I did this on my last visit and found some large biscuits. Whatever

method you choose to use will provide nice material well worth the \$1 a pound."

Some people have complained that both Stillwell and Woodward Ranch are "picked over", but many local rock hunters disagree. "Woodward Ranch is wonderful," says Smith. "I've heard people say it's picked over, but that is simply not true. I've been there every day for a week, and found something different every day. And every time it rains, more comes up. I don't know, maybe in the 1950s there was so much littered around the ground that today it seems like less. But there's an abundance of material, and it's not hard to find."

Ring Huggins, the owner of Many Stones Rock Shop in Terligua, Texas, agrees. "I have been hunting on Woodward Ranch since 1963 and never fail to come home with something worth while. This year we have had lots of rain so there is lots of good rock washed out."

West Texas has enough rock hunting acreage to keep a rockhound happy for a couple weeks. But if your family or traveling companions don't share your enthusiasm, the Big Bend region offers plenty of rock-free fun, too. Horseback rides, hiking, raft and canoe trips down the Rio Grande, jeeping roads and tours, beautiful scenery, mountain bicycling, bird watching, star gazing at McDonald Observatory, art galleries—even the mysterious Marfa lights—can help keep your friends busy while you hunt.

And even the most addicted rock hunter won't want to miss the unforgettable Big Bend National Park. Remember, though, that no collecting is allowed in the park, so you'll want leave your finds and your tools in a room or campsite outside the park, or packaged up tightly and stowed in a storage or trunk area, so that a ranger doesn't think you collected them in the park.

"One of the neat things about the Big Bend is that there may still be minerals out here that haven't even been discovered," says Smith. "I have heard of topaz and turquoise, among others, but haven't found them personally. As I am able to gain the trust of the ranchers and work with them, we may find other types of minerals, or agate with a never-before seen pattern."

"In the Big Bend area, we're mostly rock hounds, not prospectors" says Smith. "There is a difference between a rock hound and a prospector. A rock hound collects for the love of it, and a prospector collects for the money in it. A prospector won't share. A rockhound tells you where the good places are, and if they have the time, they'll take you there. If you don't find something, they'll dig the hole and hand you the rock, and if you still don't find what you were looking for, they take you home and give you a specimen out of their collection. Rockhounds are some of the most generous people on earth. At the end of the day, a rock hound has two things: lots of friends and lots of rocks. The prospector has neither."

#### For more information, contact:

Teri Smith  
Last Frontier Museum and Antelope Lodge  
2310 W. Highway 90  
Alpine, TX 79830  
432-837-2451  
[tsmith@brooksdata.net](mailto:tsmith@brooksdata.net)  
[www.antelopelodge.com](http://www.antelopelodge.com)

#### Classes:

<http://www.ebigbend.com/metadot/index.pl?iid=3654>

Trey and Jayson Woodward

Woodward Ranch  
HC 65 Box 40  
Alpine TX 79830  
432-364-2271

[paradiseranch@hotmail.com](mailto:paradiseranch@hotmail.com)  
or: [tryewoodward@hotmail.com](mailto:tryewoodward@hotmail.com)  
[www.woodwardranch.net](http://www.woodwardranch.net)

Directions : Take Hwy 118 (the road to Big Bend) south from Alpine, TX.. The gate, marked "Woodward Ranch", is 16 miles south of Alpine on the right.  
Stillwell Ranch HC 65 - Box 430  
Alpine, Texas 79830  
432-376-2244

<http://www.freeranger.com/stillwell/>

Directions: From Interstate 10 at Fort Stockton, take U.S. 385 south 58 miles to Marathon. Stay on U.S. 385, drive another 46 miles to FM 2627 and follow it southeast five miles.

#### Tourism

Visit Big Bend

<http://www.visitbigbend.com/>

Alpine Texas Chamber of Commerce

106 N. 3rd St.

Alpine, TX 79830

800-561-3735

[chamber@alpinetexas.com](mailto:chamber@alpinetexas.com)

<http://www.alpinetexas.com/>

Big Bend National Park

432-477-2251

<http://www.nps.gov/bibe/home.htm>

#### Shows

Annual Texas Big Bend Gem and Mineral Show

April 17-20, 2004

Contact: Judith Brueske of the Chihuahuan Desert Gem & Mineral Club at 432-837-5353.

The Study Butte Gem, Mineral, and jewelry Show (Thanksgiving weekend)

Chair; Ring Huggins 432-371-2994 or [ring@overland.net](mailto:ring@overland.net)

#### Clubs

Chihuahuan Desert Gem & Mineral Club

<http://www.agates123.com/cdgmcc/>

The Rollin' Rock Club Of Texas And Any Other State Or Country Of The World And Outer Space:

<http://home.flash.net/~jmarkm/rollin.htm>

#### Rock Shops

Ocotillo Rock Shop

205 North 5th Street,

Alpine Texas 79830

432-837-5353

[ocotillo@overland.net](mailto:ocotillo@overland.net)

<http://www.alpinetexas.com/oco.htm>

Last Frontier Museum and Antelope Lodge

2310 W. Highway 90

Alpine, TX 79830

432-837-2451

[tsmith@brooksdata.net](mailto:tsmith@brooksdata.net)

[www.antelopelodge.com](http://www.antelopelodge.com)

Woodward Agate Ranch

HC 65 Box 40

On Hwy 118, 16 miles south of Alpine

Alpine TX 79830

432-364-2271

[tryewoodward@hotmail.com](mailto:tryewoodward@hotmail.com)

[www.woodwardranch.net](http://www.woodwardranch.net)

Many Stones

On Texas Highway 118 eighty miles south of Alpine

at Study Butte, two miles from the northern entrance to Big Bend National Park.

P.O. Box 3

Terlingua, Texas 79852

432-371-2994

[ring@overland.net](mailto:ring@overland.net)

<http://www.manystones.com>

Moonlight Gemstones

1001 West San Antonio St.

Marfa TX 79843

432-729 4526

<http://users.wirelessfrontier.net/~ysgwd/munlitgem.htm>

Blue Agate Rocks & Gifts

603a North State Street,

PO Box 561

Fort Davis, TX 79734

432-426-9027

#### Advice for Rock Hunting in West Texas

- This is cactus (and miscellaneous prickly plants) territory; come prepared with sturdy shoes and long pants.
- This is also rattlesnake country. They'll avoid you if they have a chance, but don't put your hands in any holes that you can't see the bottom of. Don't try to pick up, catch, or kiss rattlers.
- West Texas can be extremely hot in summer and only very hot in spring or fall: bring a hat, sunscreen, and more bottled water than you think you'll need.
- Bring empty soda or beer flats or heavy canvas sacks to store your finds and a smaller bucket that you can carry and fill as you collect. You might also want a small chipping hammer and safety glasses.
- Bring a squirt bottle to wet the dusty rocks to see if there is any color on the outside.
- Ask permission before hunting on private land.
- Close all gates behind you, and don't litter.
- Don't collect in the National Park, and if possible, avoid bring tools or finds from outside the park into the park; they may be confiscated by rangers.
- Bring eye drops if you have contacts, as there is lots of wind and dust out here.
- Search in bright sunlight—especially between 10 am and 4pm—except in the dead of summer, then try to get your hunting in before 1 or 2 pm.
- Hunt after a rain; rain will expose or bring rocks to the surface.
- Search near cow patties, suggests Teri Smith. No one else will be searching there.
- Fill up when you see a gas station; Brewster County is sparsely populated; you may not get another chance.
- Before you go out hunting, stop by The Last Frontier Museum or the Woodward Ranch Rock shop—or any of the local rock shops—and take a look at what you're likely to find. You'll get great advice. "The rock hounds around here are great people," says Teri Smith. "They know a lot and they love to share. Don't know what to look for? They'll show you. Don't know where to look? They'll tell you."

From <http://lisamann.fatcow.com/articles/romancingthestone.html>

\*\*\*\*\*

#### August 2010 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at

<http://www.rockngem.com/showdates.asp>

7-8--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Show, "Golden Gateway to Gems "In the Pink"; San Francisco Gem & Mineral Society; County Fair Bldg. (Hall Of Flowers), Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. and Lincoln Way; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7, seniors \$6, child under 12 free with adult; demonstrations, jade carving, chain maille weaving, wire wrapping, bead stringing, silver metal clay modeling, cabochon cutting, CA Academy of Sciences displays; contact Carleen Mont-

Eton, 4134 Judah St., San Francisco, CA 94122, (415) 564-4230; e-mail: publicity@show.sfgms.org; Web site: www.sfgms.org

14-15-LAKEVIEW, OR: Show, "Tallman Rock Roundup"; Tallman Rockchippers; Lake Co. Fairgrounds, 1900 N. 4th; Sat. 10-4, Sun. 10-3:30; free admission; kids' activities, silent auction, dealers, demonstrators, field trips; contact Johanne Deidrich, 244 N. M St., Lakeview, OR 97630, (541) 947-3237; or LeRoy Johnson; e-mail: lostmymarblesor@yahoo.com

14-15-WALNUT CREEK, CA: Show, "Contra Costa Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. at Broadway; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; admission \$6; contact Jerry Tomlinson, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: sfxtl@earthlink.net; Web site: www.crystalfair.com

20-22-COSTA MESA, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center/Bldg. 10, 88 Fair Dr.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

20-22-LONG BEACH, CA: Show; MalicJewels Jewelry & Gift Show; Long Beach Convention Center Hall B, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 11-6, Sun. 11-5; free admission; loose diamonds, colored gemstones, contemporary antique, estate, costume, custom designed, gold, silver, titanium and beaded jewelry, beading supplies, mineral specimens, gift items; contact Debbie Williams, 270 E. Hunt Hwy., Suite 16, #323, San Tan Valley, AZ 85143, (480) 458-7600; email: debbie@malicjewels.com; Web site: www.malicjewels.com

20-22-SEASIDE, OR: Show; OR Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Shows; Seaside Convention Center, 415 1st. Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; free admission; free pearls to 100 ladies daily; contact Jean Miller, P.O. Box 136, Molalla, OR 97038, (503) 829-2680; e-mail: shadow92337@molalla.net; Web site: www.ogmshows.com

21-22-BOSSIER CITY, LA: Show; Ark-La-Tex Gem & Mineral Society; Bossier Civic Center, 620 Benton Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$4, students \$1, children 5 and under and Scouts in uniform free; door prizes, youth activities, exhibits, live demonstrations; contact Charlie Johns, 9314 Overlook Dr., Shreveport, LA 71118, (318) 687-4929; e-mail: cwsejohns@bellsouth.net; Web site: www.larockclub.com

21-22-DULLUTH, GA: Show; Intergalactic Bead & Jewelry Show; Gwinnett Civic Center, 6400 Sugarloaf Pkwy.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5 Sat., \$4 Sun., children 12 and under: free; unique beads, exhibitors offering helpful advice; contact Angela C., 3865 Lawrenceville Hwy., Suite 107, Lawrenceville, GA 30044, (888) 729-6904; e-mail: angela.couch@beadshows.com; Web site: http://beadshows.com

21-22-MADRID (CANTON), NY: 44th annual show; St. Lawrence County Rock & Mineral Club; free admission; outdoor/indoor show, kids' fluorescent

mineral hunt Fri., mineral-collecting field trips, free wire wrapping lessons, geode cracking, swapping; contact William deLorraine, (315) 287-4652; e-mail: wdellie@verizon.net; Web site: www.Stlawrencecountymineralclub.org

21-22-YELM, WA: Show, "Biggest Little Gem Show in the N.W."; Nisqually Valley Rockhound Society; Yelm City Park, Hwy. 507 (I-5/Marvin Rd. Exit 111); Sat. 10-6, Sun. 9-4; free admission; silent auction, door prizes, kids' booths, tailgaters, inside displays; contacts Mike Smith, 18814 119th Ave. SE, Yelm, WA 98597, (360) 458-8747, or Tim Howard, 17240 110th Ave. SE, Yelm, WA 98597, (360) 458-7841; e-mail: Tim\_WSSMI@comcast.net

27-29-SAN DIEGO, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Gem Faire Inc.; Scottish Rite Event Center, 1895 Camino del Rio S; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

27-29-SANTA CLARA, CA: Show; MalicJewels Jewelry & Gift Show; Santa Clara Convention Center, Hall D, 5001 Great America Pkwy.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 11-6, Sun. 11-5; free admission; loose diamonds, colored gemstones, contemporary, antique, estate, costume, custom designed, gold, silver, titanium and beaded jewelry, beading supplies, mineral specimens, gift items; contact Debbie Williams, 270 E. Hunt Hwy., Suite 16, #323, San Tan Valley, AZ 85143, (480) 458-7600; email: debbie@malicjewels.com; Web site: www.malicjewels.com




Opal auctions.com Established 2004  
Deal direct with Opal miners and wholesalers.  
over 100,000 opals sold  
Australian and world Opal fields  
[www.opalauctions.com](http://www.opalauctions.com)

**Custom Creative Gem Cutting**  
**Stan M. McCall**  
*Lapidary and Jewelry Artist*

Custom Jewelry Designs & Repairs  
Gemstone Cutting & Repolishing  
Diamonds, Opals, Colored Stones

(714) 220-9282  
6029 Orange Ave. Cypress, CA 90630  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~custom-creative/>  
[custom-creative@earthlink.net](mailto:custom-creative@earthlink.net)  
*Tuesday-Saturday 10am-3pm. Appointments Also Available*



*Miners & Exporters of Boulder and Boulder Matrix Opals.*  
**Jeff Chappell**  
Phone (Aust) 61 3 50234695  
[Jeff@yowahopals.com.au](mailto:Jeff@yowahopals.com.au)  
[www.yowahopals.com.au](http://www.yowahopals.com.au)  
Discover the wonderful world of the Yowah Nut.

**Opal Business for Sale**  
**[AustralianOpalImports.com](http://AustralianOpalImports.com)**

- Everything -  
Displays, Rough,  
Finished Stones, Gold Jewelry,  
Trade Name, All Rights and National Ads.

**Gene and Loretta LeVan**  
Phone: (562) 208-7494  
[fineblackopal@sprynet.com](mailto:fineblackopal@sprynet.com)



Your Source for Ethiopian Wollo Opal  
info@pearladelmar.com  
[www.pearladelmar.com](http://www.pearladelmar.com)



# American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
DUES: SELECT ONE	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$30	
	NEW MEMBERS	\$40	
INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)		\$10	
PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)		\$5	
ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your First Badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$10	
TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable :			

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

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

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

**MEMBERSHIP ROSTER:** 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

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

The Opal Express is published monthly by  
 The American Opal Society.  
 Copyright 2010. All rights reserved.  
 Non-Commercial Reprint Permission Granted Unless Otherwise Reserved.  
 Editor-Jim Pisani  
 Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:  
 The Opal Express C/O  
 Jim Pisani  
 P.O. Box 4875  
 Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875  
 E-mail: [editor@opalsociety.org](mailto:editor@opalsociety.org)

**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 #43 Issue #8  
August 2010**

TO:

### Some Topics In This Issue:

- Anaheim Arts Council 2010 Fundraiser
- July Recap – Walt Lombardo
- Opal Mines in Europe
- Sealing Andamooka Rainbow Opal
- Treasures from Down Under Nevada
- West Texas for Rock Hounds

### Important Dates:

August 9 - Board Meeting

August 12 - General Meeting  
Member Show & Tell Night

Members are to bring their favorite opals, gems, specimens, creations, etc., to show off to the Society.

# August 12 Show and Tell Night

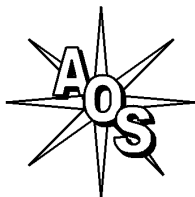
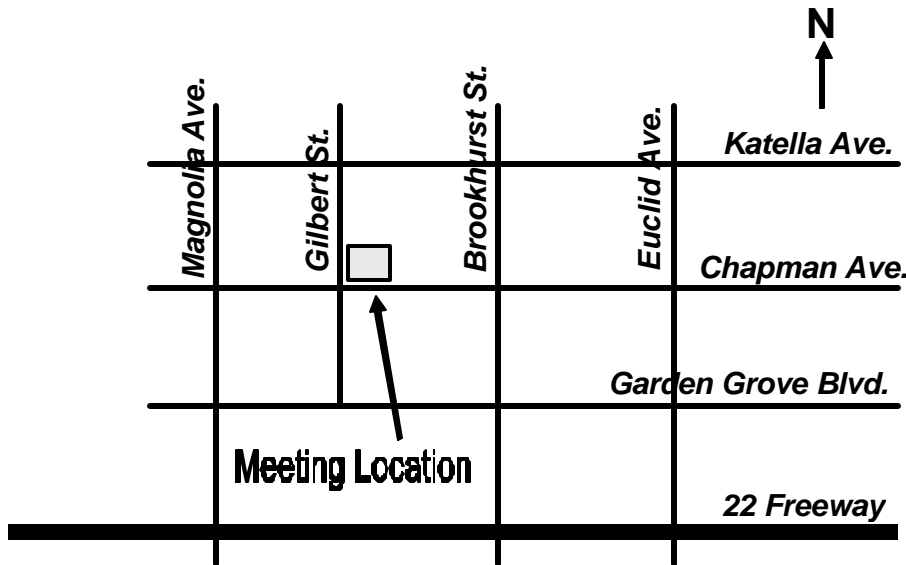
### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

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



## The American Opal Society

<http://OpalSociety.org>

Pete Goetz	President	(714) 530-3530	email: <a href="mailto:mpg1022@aol.com">mpg1022@aol.com</a>
Corey Kuepper	Vice-President	(714) 736-0581	email: <a href="mailto:rockhwn@aol.com">rockhwn@aol.com</a>
LaVerne Christenson	Treasurer	(714) 531-4041	email: <a href="mailto:laverne@socal.rr.com">laverne@socal.rr.com</a>
Jim Pisani	Editor & Webmaster	(714) 815-4638	email: <a href="mailto:editor@opalsociety.org">editor@opalsociety.org</a>
Gene LeVan	Show Chairman	(562) 208-7494	email: <a href="mailto:fineblackopal@sprynet.com">fineblackopal@sprynet.com</a>