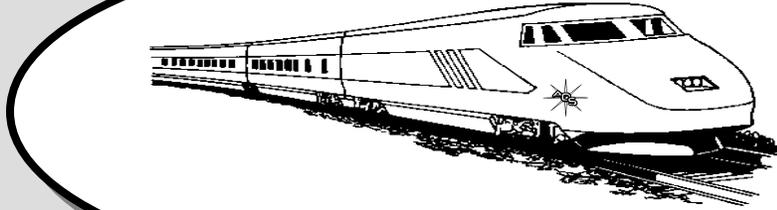


# The Opal Express

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This list of people to thank is long: I will provide a more detailed show report in the December issue of the OPAL EXPRESS.

Thanks guys, you did great!!

## Members Only Website Password

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

## Editor's Message

By Jim Pisani



AOS President Pete Goetz

## President's Message

By Pete Goetz

Our annual OPAL and Gem Show went well this year. We missed some of our old friends, made some new ones, and maintained our friendships with are regulars. For those vendors who read the OPAL EXPRESS, I would to thank you all for being there and helping make this a great show.



Opal Express Editor Jim Pisani

Dear Members,

Sorry about the late delivery of the **Opal Express** this month. Getting ready for the show occupied my time completely. Our show was a good one again this year. Lots of great opal for sale! I personally bought a lot and am excited to cut some of it.

As editor, I am always looking for tidbits, articles, etc. on opal, gemstones, etc. for our newsletter. Feel free to submit your own articles to the Opal Express. Just mail it or e-mail it. We accept most pertinent articles. It can be about opal and other gemstones, mining, field trips, jewelry, jewelry making, etc.

Also, to reduce costs, consider getting the Opal Express by e-mail. It costs about \$1.00 per newsletter per person to postal mail.

Take care,  
Jim

## Outback Opals

By Carla Caruso

Long seen as just a tourist gem, Australia's national gemstone is shaking off past stigmas to be embraced by a new generation. CARLA CARUSO reports.

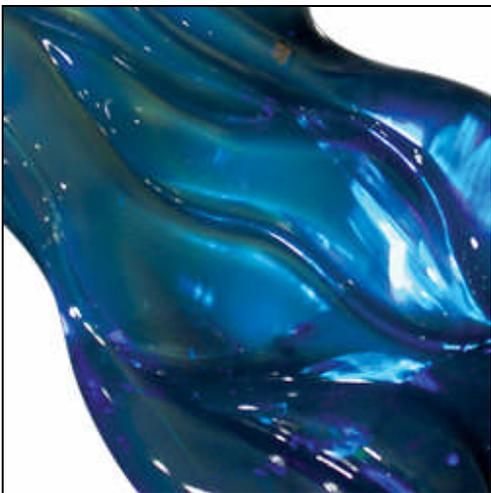
From dusty, remote parts of Australia comes the opal, Australia's national gemstone. The multi-coloured gem is an icon of the outback. Indeed, 95 per cent of the world's opal is produced here.

Opal fields lie in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, with black opal found in the New South Wales town of Lightning Ridge, Boulder opal in Queensland and white opal mainly from South Australia.

Federal Government agency Austrade estimates current Australian production figures for uncut opals between \$100 million and \$200 million.

Yet, while the US, Japan and much of Europe enjoys the stone, few Australians would have opal designs in their jewellery boxes.

Lightning Ridge opal expert, gemmologist and valuer Michelle Schellnegger says past stigmas have been hard to shake, but it is slowly happening: "There used to be a lot of discount, souvenir-style tourist stores with opal, which may have tended to cheapen it in



International Opal Jewellery Design Awards 2007

some people's mind. But, today's retail outlets are offering more variety and quality opal jewellery. There are still the classic and conservative styles of opal jewellery available, but we are seeing more contemporary designs as well."

The small-scale nature of the industry also means things have been slow-moving, according to Maxine O'Brien, the

coordinator of the trade-only Australian Opal Exhibition, and the secretary-manager of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association. "As far as the Australian domestic market goes, we're a fairly small industry," O'Brien says. "There's not a lot of promotion for the end consumer."

Plus, Australia's opal industry is struggling to keep pace with the resources boom, with opal miners being drawn into more lucrative mining jobs, says Andrew Cody, the company director of opal exporter Cody Opal and president of the International Coloured Gemstone Association (ICA).

There are other challenges, too, he adds: "The opal industry is suffering quite dramatically from the state of the American economy due to the Australian dollar being so high. As well, the value of the Japanese yen has fallen. Tourism is well down and, unfortunately, it's going to get worse with the rising cost of fuel. Australia is on the worst side of it, because we're further away. It's never been quite this difficult."

Contrary to the doom and gloom, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Challenges have forced the opal industry to look "out of the box", and investigate new types of customers and emerging markets, such as China and Russia.

The ICA has organised its first dedicated coloured gemstone trade fair in October in Dubai, another promising new market.

Innovation in design, such as using sterling silver and inlays - layering fine opal in another metal - for more affordable options, is also helping to attract younger clientele at home.

And, it's working well for Sydney-based Opals Australia, according to national accounts manager Clayton Peer.

"In collaboration with a Sydney based designer, we have developed a sterling silver collection, titled the Phoenix Range," Peer says. "This range is targeted towards consumers who are price-conscious and looking for cutting-edge designs, refined finishes and quality opal at an affordable price. Our silver products are targeted towards younger consumers, aged from 18 to 35 years old."

Opals Australia is also promoting a branded image in the marketplace, using branded stands and signage, so consumers associate with its "OA" label, rather than just with the opals themselves.

"We are currently seeing a positive growth in the Australian domestic market," Peer says. "Our branded range is having great success throughout Australia."

Also emerging is a focus on design. Adelaide boutique jewellery house iOpal uses cutting-edge, one-off designs for its "discerning clients", teaming opal with everything from African fluorite beads to Argyle diamonds.

Schellnegger says she has noticed the change: "Conventionally, most black opal has been cut into an oval shape, with a cabochon, but there has been much more emphasis on freeform or designer pieces. In the last 10 years, there has been an increase in non-conventional shapes."

Such innovation has been on show at the International Opal Design Jewellery Awards, held in Lightning Ridge every two years, of which Schellnegger has been a judge.

Other recent events upping the design factor include the National Opal Miners Association's (NOMA) Opal Fashion Bash in Townsville in April, which saw Miss Universe Australia contestants strutting down the catwalk in opal jewellery, and the Australian Opal Exhibition on the Gold Coast in July, where the gem collided with fashion and art to create the million-dollar opal hat that was on display (see page 39).

NOMA president Drago Panich puts it simply: "The youth is our future and the greater number of young and dynamic people we can directly expose to our national gemstone, the brighter the future will be for the opal industry."

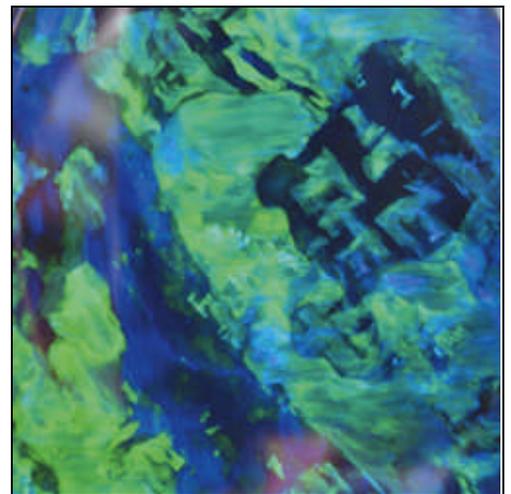
Sunshine Coast retailer Opals Down Under has also been attracting the young market with its new Slider bead range.

"We have released beads in our new Sliders range, which sees

opals shaped into doughnuts, with a silver sleeve inserted through the hole," explains manager and opal cutter Scott Coggan.

"This allows the beads to not only be worn as pendants but, depending on the diameter of the hole, also be used on European-style bracelets, such as Pandora, Trollbeads and Chamilia."

Opals Down Under advertising and internet coordinator Rhys Fox says the store has also had a surge in enquiries for opal engagement rings in recent months among young couples.



Opal Closeup

"I think couples are wanting something different to diamonds and a good amount of these customers are actually having the rings hand-made for a completely one-off approach, which is fantastic," Fox says.

For such a request, strong Queensland Boulder opals are recommended with a bezel or rub-over setting - as opposed to a claw setting - to protect the stone.

Schellnegger says there are other developments in the works, each helping the opal's cause: "Two consecutive Qantas issues recently featured stories on Coober Pedy and Lightning Ridge, plus, the JCK magazine in the US did an opal feature recently; the more that it is out there, the more that people will consider it."

Jewellery Decisions gemmologist and trainer Sarah Gambi, who has worked internationally for names like Cartier, Bulgari and Rolex agrees: "More marketing and more involvement with the big high-fashion firms, such as Tiffany and Co and Cartier, will help to get opal out of the duty-free zone and into the high-market luxury brands."

consider it here.

"An interesting example was that we had somebody show us an opal jewellery design in a magazine from New York," he said. "She asked if we could do something like that here. She had to see it in New York to appreciate it."

The opal industry has certainly had its challenges in recent times, from a tourism downturn to the poaching of promising talent by other industries, yet despite it all, Australia's national gemstone is rising to the task by looking to new markets and clientele, and changing its approach.

With the right amount of foresight and innovation, the outback stone can only shine brighter, abroad and closer to home.

#### Discovering opal: some facts and figures

The name opal comes from the Greek word *opallios*, which means to see a change in colour.

When rotated, the gem can show off an ever-changing interplay of fiery colours. Each opal is one-of-a-kind and the different varieties offer a wide range of colours, shapes and sizes for the customer.

Black opals are the rarest and most valuable of the stones. The world's most valuable black opal, the Aurora Australis, was found at New South Wales' Lightning Ridge in 1938 and is valued at \$1 million. It weighs 180 carats and sparkles with red, green and blue against a black backdrop.

Black opal recently became the official gemstone of New South Wales.

Opal is largely made up of a variety of natural silica found in the earth and is mainly mined using open-cut and the traditional shaft and tunnelling method.

There are three major mining areas in Australia, each producing a different variety of the stone: Coober Pedy in South Australia; Lightning Ridge in New South Wales; and central Queensland.

Coober Pedy is home to the white opal, which is sometimes referred to as the milk opal. White opals can be differentiated by their pale white or light body tone. They're much more plentiful and common than any other kind of opal and generally display less vibrant colours. Although, as some of these light opals tend to be more transparent, a brilliant colour play may ensue.

Nearby towns Mintabie and Andamooka also have the gem.

Black opal, recently named the official gemstone of New South Wales by the NSW Government, is found in the town of Lightning Ridge. The stone has an underlying dark background hue, which gives the colour a greater intensity; however, the word "black" doesn't refer to the face of the opal just to its background - and its precious colours come in a rainbow of hues.

Boulder opal is found all over central Queensland, including such areas as Quilpie, Winton and Opalton. It is often found as a thin veneer of opal of vibrant colours naturally covering the surface of the ironstone rock that is unique to Queensland. Sometimes it is found

as very colourful pinpoints in a matrix - or the fine-grained portion of rock, where coarser minerals or rock fragments are embedded.

German geologist Johannes Menge made the first Australian opal discovery in 1849 in Angaston, South Australia. Consequently, the Queensland Boulder Opal and Lightning Ridge fields attracted many miners during the 1880s. Opal production later became a commercially viable industry. Production began at White Cliffs, NSW in 1890, from Opalton, Queensland, in 1896, and at Lightning Ridge, NSW in 1905.

Many written accounts of early opal discoveries suggest that most were accidental - an opal-bearing rock, kicked-up by a galloping horse, a shimmering stone, swishing around in a shallow creek.

When Australian opals appeared on the world market during the 1890's, the Hungarian mines in which opal had been discovered before, perpetuated the notion that Australian opal was not genuine. Perhaps this was because the Australian gems had a fire not seen in overseas specimens.

Indeed, by 1932, the Eastern European opals were unable to compete with Australian opals and ceased many overseas mines stopped production. This is how Australia won the title of premier opal producer of the world.

There is a uniqueness about Australian opal. Most of the production is from sedimentary rocks and there are no such deposits anywhere else in the world, according to Anthony Smallwood, opal research scientist and lecturer.

Jewellery Decisions gemmologist and trainer Sarah Gambi says Australian opals are high in quality: "You need three things to judge a good opal - the background, the pattern and the colour - and Australia had all three."

Others believe it's hard to judge a good opal on three factors only. Smallwood says the vibrancy of the colours and patterns of Australian opals are outstanding: "Really good opals have this vibrancy and 'zing' about the colours that often just leap out at you," he says.

One stigma that has plagued the opal over the years is that it is considered bad luck

by some. Sunshine Coast retailer Opals Down Under is quick to dispel the myths on its website: "The 'bad luck' myth is the result of centuries of misinformation, superstition, wives' tales and jealous diamond traders spreading rumours. Opal has also been considered a good luck talisman and lucky charm throughout the ages and has been prized by many civilisations."

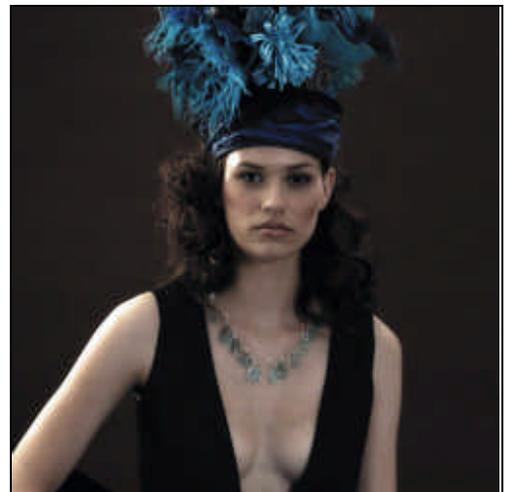
It certainly hasn't stopped overseas customers and celebrities enjoying the stone - US media mogul Ted Turner famously gave actress Jane Fonda a massive black opal engagement ring, and there have been many others. Gambi also says: "The Japanese love this stone. For them, it is said to bring good luck."

Opal is the traditional birthstone of October.

First published September 2008

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carla Caruso has been a jewellery junkie for as long as she can remember, has covered the Vicenza gold fair in Italy and one day hopes to pen a novel



\$1 million opal hat image courtesy Australian Opal Exhibition



about all that glitters. She has been a freelance contributor to Jeweller since 2005.

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## Almost Everything You Need to Know About... Taking Care of Opals

By Ron Fulmer

There seems to be much confusion about the proper way to care for and clean opals. This is a simple guide that will let you preserve your beautiful opals and keep them looking their best.

To care for Opal correctly, two of the basic physical properties of this unique and beautiful gemstone must be understood.

Precious Opal contains around 6%-10% water (sometimes higher). Opal has a hardness of 5.5 - 6.5 on the "Mohs" scale of hardness. First and foremost you must determine if your opal is a natural occurring solid, doublet or triplet. The care instructions for each can differ significantly.

When purchasing Opal, buy quality stones only from knowledgeable dealers or jewelers, preferably someone who is a cutter. The reason for purchasing from a cutter is, many jewelers don't understand Opal, and therefore cannot offer you the right care advice for a particular Opal. If you know precisely the type of Opal you have purchased, you will know how to care for it.

What can I do if my stone loses its polish or becomes scratched?

This is the main reason for recommending you buy from people who cut Opal. For example, if you get an Opal from a cutter and after prolonged periods of wear and tear your Opal may need repolishing (in most cases it can be re-polished at a reasonable price). Or alternatively, if you have damaged the opal and it needs to be "reworked", then this is the person to do it for you, or at least give you the best advice.

Can I put Opals in water?

Yes! Solid Precious Opal should be placed in a dish of clean room temperature water for at least 10 - 15 minutes, every 12 months or so.

From personal experience (gained from over 27 years of cutting, collecting and handling opals) this allows the gemstone to absorb moisture it may require therefore preventing any crazing or cracking caused by drying out (especially if the opal has been subjected to harsh or dry conditions).

### Basic Care Practices:

Always remove rings when "Washing Up". Even solid Opals can be adversely affected if subjected to sudden temperature changes (such as being placed in very hot water).

If the stone is an opal doublet or triplet, it is unwise to place it in water (particularly hot water with detergent, as in washing up) for any length of time as it may effect the cement that is used to bond the stone segments together (Doublet - 2, Triplet - 3).

Don't wear OPAL when gardening. Sand or soil is abrasive and will wear the polish off the stone over time. Also there is the chance, if you are doing any sort of work that could bring the stone in contact with hard surfaces, a flick of the wrist in the wrong direction could chip it.

How do oily substances affect an opal?

It is recommended you do not place Opal near oils or oily substances, however oily hand and face creams will usually not damage Opal (except that they may "build up" around a ring and make it look unsightly).

How do I store Opals for long periods of time?

De-humidified atmospheres, (such as bank vaults and safety deposit boxes) are to be treated with caution when storing Opals for long periods, as they can extract the water content from an Opal over time, causing the Opal to crack or craze.

If Opal must be stored in these conditions, it is strongly advised to put them in a sealed plastic bag with a little water to prevent drying out.

Also it is advisable to check your Opal every 6 - 12 months to ensure it has not "dried out". Otherwise, it is generally safe to store them away, as long as the area is not overheated.

### Displaying Opal:

Don't store Opal for prolonged periods of time under hot lights, as this could crack the stones if the heat builds up and is magnified (as in a showcase).

If Opal is to be displayed under these conditions it is strongly advised to place the Opal in or near a source of moisture (ie; a bowl of clean water or wet sponge).

### Cleaning Opal:

Opal can be cleaned in soft detergent (washing up detergent) in lukewarm water using a cloth or soft brush. After cleaning, Opal should be rinsed in clean room temperature water.

By following these few simple rules on basic Opal care, your Opals will last forever as a source of enjoyment and natural beauty.

Author - Ron Fulmer,

Director of Processing and Sourcing,

Gemstone Services Australia Pty Ltd,

From <http://www.vgms.org/bt/vgms0108.htm#25> Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, The Tumble Rumble 7/01

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## The Discovery of Tanzanite

Tanzanite was not discovered in the way many believe. Geologist JOHN SAUL tells the true story behind this mysterious deep-blue beauty.

Many accounts of the discovery of the alluring blue tanzanite have found their way into print, most of them quite misleading or simply wrong.

The stone, which was the first new gem of commercial importance since the discovery of alexandrite in April 1834, was found on July 7, 1967 by Manuel de Souza.

De Souza, known as Mad Manuel due to his overwhelming passion for prospecting in the African bush unarmed and on foot, began his prospecting adventures on the Lupa Goldfields of western Tanganyika, India in 1939. But when it became unprofitable to mine gold after World War II, he moved to Dar es Salaam.

As there were no minerals to seek in the coastal region, de Souza departed for the Shinyanga diamond fields but Tanzanian prospecting licenses for diamonds were nearly impossible to get, due to the monopoly of the Williamson Diamond Mines.

Following a period in the region of Lake Victoria, de Souza moved to Arusha to try his luck in the Kilimanjaro area.

On Easter weekend in 1967, his feet got particularly itchy and he hired a pickup and driver to drop him and his equipment at a destination he had selected southeast of Arusha.

Not having anticipated how bad the roads were, the driver refused to go further than a village called Mtakuja, deep in Maasai country. There, tens of miles short of the agreed-upon destination, de Souza was unceremoniously off-loaded from the vehicle.

He didn't know it yet but such serendipity had brought him to a spot about four miles from the future tanzanite find.

Jump forward to June 7 when de Souza, accompanied by four men he had hired in Mtakuja for mere shillings a day, stumbled across a transparent blue stone sitting on the surface of the ground.

From its colour he thought it sapphire but dismissed this when he tested its hardness.



Back in Arusha, he consulted the only reference book on mineralogy in his possession and decided that olivine (also known as peridot) was the closest match to his stone.

He registered it as such on July 25, 1967 - a move prompted by the Tanzanian law that required prospectors to specify the minerals before registering a mining claim.

It did not take de Souza long to discover that the gem was not olivine, but he remained at a loss as to its actual identity. Some said it was dumortierite, others argued cordierite. Swahili-speaking prospectors fittingly-labelled it Skaiblu, meaning sky blue.

Around this time, de Souza sent samples to the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), perhaps the only lab with the equipment at the time to identify zoisite.

Ultimately, however, it was a Tanzanian government geologist named Ian McCloud who eventually identified the mysterious sky-blue gem as tanzanite, though the gem wasn't named until samples reached Tiffany and Company vice president Henry Platt.

Platt appreciated the beauty of the material and subsequently coined the name tanzanite, in reference to its country of origin. De Souza died at age 56 on August 21, 1969, prompting the Northern News to run an August 29 proclaiming de Souza the "hero of the tanzanite rush". Yet, within a short time, fanciful versions of the tanzanite story began to circulate.

One is that Ally Juyuwatu made the find, but he and his then mining partner Alloys Anthony Duwe were quick to proclaim Manuel de Souza as the original discoverer.

Another was Habib Esmail, an erstwhile claim jumper in the employ of well-known Greek miner George Pappas. And yet another supposed discoverer is Jumanne Ngoma, a sometime employee of Esmail's.

An article in Life magazine in 1969 reported that de Souza was led to the find by a Maasai but this was rejected by Chief Soibhe, who had shared milk with de Souza at Naisinya manyatta in the traditional Maasai manner of signaling of acceptance. Notably, none of these alleged discoverers has ever come forth to seek compensation.

In the years following the discovery, de Souza received great attention. "European gem dealers soon learnt the true story and Manuel's discovery and his success swelled throughout Europe courtesy of social and factual magazines including Bunte (Jan 1969), Der Spiegel, Jasmine (July 1969), Time (Jan 1969) and Life (May 1969)," wrote son Angelo de Souza. "This was undoubtedly the most fulfilling and productive phase of his life. Manuel's prospecting ventures never stopped and his discoveries found their way to the attention of leading gemologists of the time.

"While notoriety from European socialite magazines was welcome, it was the recognition of his find by such notable academics as Professor Strunz (Germany), Dr. Baker (Germany) and Dr. Saul (American based in Kenya) that meant the most to Manuel. Dr Saul, for instance, did a Fission Track Dating published in the American Mineralogist that Tanzanite could be 550 million years old. It was the importance of these data linking his name to a gem crystallized hundreds of millions of years ago that made all the failings he endured on his journey worthwhile."

Manuel's children and other members of his family are now scattered all over the world in Tanzania, Denmark, Malta and the United Kingdom. The house where he lived is now the residence of the Bishop of the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro.

These days, the tin roofs and electric lights of the tanzanite mines are visible from the right-hand side of planes landing from the west at Kilimanjaro International Airport. Whether they recognize what they are glimpsing or not, the tanzanite mines are the first thing that many early-morning tourists arriving from Europe see of Tanzania.

*About the author: John Saul is a geologist and founding member of International Colored Gemstone Association. He also discovered and owned the famous John Saul Ruby Mine in Kenya. This article first appeared in the Spring/summer issue of InColor -*

*the official publication of the International Colored Gemstone Association.*

*First published July 2008. From*

<http://www.jewellermagazine.com/Article.aspx?id=220&h=The-discovery-of-tanzanite>

## Gold Coin Sellers Angered by New Tax Law Amendment Slipped Into Health Care Legislation Would Track, Tax Coin and Bullion Transactions

*By Rich Blake, July 21, 2010*

Those already outraged by the president's health care legislation now have a new bone of contention -- a scarcely noticed tack-on provision to the law that puts gold coin buyers and sellers under closer government scrutiny.

The issue is rising to the fore just as gold coin dealers are attracting attention [over sales tactics](#).

Section 9006 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will amend the Internal Revenue Code to expand the scope of Form 1099. Currently, 1099 forms are used to track and report the miscellaneous income associated with services rendered by independent contractors or self-employed individuals.

### Coin Dealers Flipping

Starting Jan. 1, 2012, Form 1099s will become a means of reporting to the Internal Revenue Service the purchases of all goods and services by small businesses and self-employed people that exceed \$600 during a calendar year. Precious metals such as coins and bullion fall into this category and coin dealers have been among those most rankled by the change.

This provision, intended to mine what the IRS deems a vast reservoir of uncollected income tax, was included in the health care legislation ostensibly as a way to pay for it. The tax code tweak is expected to raise \$17 billion over the next 10 years, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation.

Taking an early and vociferous role in opposing the measure is the precious metal and coin industry, according to Diane Piret, industry affairs director for the Industry Council for Tangible Assets. The ICTA, based in Severna Park, Md., is a trade association representing an estimated 5,000 coin and bullion dealers in the United States.

"Coin dealers not only buy for their inventory from other dealers, but also with great frequency from the public," Piret said. "Most other types of businesses will have a limited number of suppliers from which they buy their goods and products for resale."

So every time a member of the public sells more than \$600 worth of gold to a dealer, Piret said, the transaction will have to be reported to the government by the buyer.

Pat Heller, who owns Liberty Coin Service in Lansing, Mich., deals with around 1,000 customers every week. Many are individuals looking to protect wealth in an uncertain economy, he said, while others are dealers like him.

With spot market prices for gold at nearly \$1,200 an ounce, Heller estimates that he'll be filling out between 10,000 and 20,000 tax forms per year after the new law takes effect.

"I'll have to hire two full-time people just to track all this stuff, which cuts into my profitability," he said.

An issue that combines gold coins, the Obama health care law and the IRS is bound to stir passions. Indeed, trading in gold coins and bars has surged since the financial crisis unfolded and Obama took office, metal dealers said.

The buying of actual gold, as opposed to futures or options tied to the price of gold, has been a particularly popular trend among Tea Party supporters and others who are fearful of Obama's economic policies, gold industry members such as Heller and Piret said. Conservative/libertarian commentators, such as Fox News Channel's Glenn Beck, routinely tout precious metal on the air as being a safe, shrewd investment in an environment in which the financial system -- and paper money backed by the rest of the

world's faith in the U.S. government's credit -- is viewed as increasingly fragile.

The recently revealed investigation by California authorities into consumer complaints against Goldline International, which has used Beck as a pitchman, and Superior Gold Group (which has not) has put a spotlight on what one liberal leaning politician, Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., calls the "unholy alliance" between gold coin sellers, such as Goldline, and conservative talk personalities, such as Beck.

Beck, who through his spokesman, Matt Hiltzik, declined to comment for this story, and [Goldline marketers](#) portray gold coins as a better alternative to owning bullion in the event that the U.S. government ever decides, as it did under FDR in 1933, to make it illegal for private citizens to own physical gold. At that time, the U.S. dollar was still pegged to the price of gold; the gold standard was abandoned during the Nixon administration.

Rep. Daniel Lungren, R-Calif., has introduced legislation to repeal the section of the health care bill that would trigger the new tax reporting requirement because he says it's a burden on small businesses.

"Large corporations have whole divisions to handle such transaction paperwork but for a small business, which doesn't have the manpower, this is yet another brick on their back," Lungren said in a statement e-mailed to ABCNews.com. "Everyone agrees that small businesses are job creators and the engine which drives the American economy. I am dumfounded that this Administration is doing all it can to make it more difficult for businesses to succeed rather than doing all it can to help them grow."

The ICTA's Piret says identity theft is another concern because criminals may set up shops specifically to extract personal information that would accompany the filing out of a 1099.

The office of the National Taxpayer Advocate, a citizen's ombudsman within the IRS, issued a report June 30 that said the new rule "may present significant administrative challenges to taxpayers and the IRS."

*From ABC News Internet Ventures*

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**Mineral Identification and Acids**

*By Michele Yamanaka*

ACID??? That's scary stuff! Yes-it can be. And you should never work with acid without following safety procedures. In fact, no one, no matter how old, should ever work with acid without having someone more experienced there as supervisor until he/she proves able to follow safe procedures and to demonstrate responsibility and caution.

• **What Is An Acid?**

It is a substance, usually in liquid form, that reacts with something else, causing the hydrogen of the acid to be freed and replaced with a positive ion of the other material. To make it simple: it will make something dissolve and often bubble.

Not all acids are equally dangerous. The safest acid to use is vinegar (acetic acid) and it is available easily. The other acids are dangerous. An acid easily found, but needing to be handled with care, is muriatic acid, used to maintain swimming pools. It is a weak form of hydrochloric acid (HCL). sulfuric acid, sulfamic acid (a weak form is used to clean coffeepots and remove calcium), nitric acid and oxalic acid (for iron) are other better known acids.

• **Why Test With Acid?**

The way some minerals react to acid can help identify the elements in them. Generally, only certain minerals will show a reaction to acid. This helps you narrow down what your mystery specimen may be. And certain minerals cause the acid to do particular things - a definite clue to what you have. Some minerals only react with a certain reaction that positively identifies. Here is a partial list.

ACID	WHAT HAPPENS-	MINERAL or ELEMENT
Vinegar	Bubbles (usually slow)	Carbonate like calcite, limestone
Muriatic	Bubbles fast	Carbonate like calcite, limestone, azurite, malachite, aragonite
Muriatic	Solution turns green, then add ammonia and it goes blue	Some kind of copper
Muriatic	Solution turns blue	Some kind of copper
Muriatic	Solution turns pink	Cobalt mineral present
Muriatic	Solution turns yellow	some kind of iron mineral
Muriatic	"Rotten egg" smell	A sulfide
Muriatic	Choking greenish fumes -	A manganese oxide like pyrolusite, manganite, psilomene
Muriatic	A rubbery transparent is a silica gel and forms on mineral	Ziolites like natrolite, datolite, hemimorphite
Muriatic	White porous spongy residue left on mineral-	Also silica but not gel-forms on some zeolites, but also biotite, chrysocolla, rhodonite, serpentine, pectolite.

**A. Testing Procedure for vinegar: put specimen in cup of vinegar and watch for bubbles**

**B. Testing Procedure (not vinegar)**

- 1) Follow safety rules
  - a) Be in well-ventilated area.
  - b) Test in glass or porcelain cup or tube
  - c) Have a rinse container with baking soda to neutralize acid
  - d) Wear acid-resistant gloves
  - e) Wear safety glasses
  - f) Do the tests over an acid-resistant surface
  - g) Gallon of water
- 2) Do not use a good piece for testing
- 3) Try to grind up a small piece into powder or as small as possible.
- 4) Put in test tube or cup.
- 5) Use eyedropper to add acid to mineral powder.
- 6) Record what happens.
- 7) Pour out acid mix into rinse container with baking soda.
- 8) Rinse cup or tube with water, pouring it into rinse container too.

**C. Testing Procedure on the field (only useful to check bubbling, not mineral content).**

- 1) Put specimen to be tested on ground.
- 2) Use eyedropper to remove small amount of acid from glass bottle.
- 3) Put one drop on surface to be tested.
- 4) Pour water on specimen to wash off acid

Sometimes fluorite and calcite will be found in the same location, without nice crystals to help one know which is which. By testing a small piece with a weak acid like vinegar, or possibly muriatic, you can decide which you have by whether it bubbles. Calcite bubbles; fluorite will not (unless the acid is hot.)

Often you may have a guess about what something is, but the acid test can help you narrow it down. For example, you may have a blue-green mineral and think it is a copper ore, but if you don't get the "copper" reaction, it can't be copper ore. Then you must look at what other minerals appear blue-green.

Your nose can help you in acid testing too. If you smell a "rotten egg" smell during the test, the mineral is some kind of sulfide.

This is just a beginning. You can do further study on acids for identification by using a book like *A field Guide to Rocks and Minerals* by Frederick Pough. Have fun and be safe!

Reference: *Gemstone & Mineral Data Book, John Sinkankas*

From *MWF Newsletter January 2003*

Via *Breccia - 10/2010*

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## Safety in the Shop

By *Owen Martin, AFMS Safety Chair from AFMS News, December 2009*

A note on safety in your shop, lab, work room, basement, etc. As a fossil hunter sometimes the thing that I most look forward to and likewise dread the most is getting my ? stuff? back to the house.

I may have to use a pressure washer to blast off mud from my fossilized wood or 40 pound ammonites, use some chemicals to clean lime off some invertebrates or maybe use some tools, be they hand or pneumatic, to chip off the tougher crust. Maybe if I'm lucky I found a good ? round? of pet wood that I want to cut and polish down at the club. Ooooh, and I just found my first agate ever and I don't even know what I can do to that yet! What ever it is that I do there is almost always some inherent risk in the process. Below is a list of different hazards to consider in the lab.

**Eye protection.** As I mentioned above power washing is a good example of something a lot of us do that can potentially injure your eyes however certainly not the only thing. Almost every type of prep-work that we practice necessitates eye protection: grinding, polishing, cutting, shipping, sand blasting, soldering, chemical cleaning, etc. Different types of eye protection should be used depending on your activities. For most of us protective glasses are good, however, goggles may need to be worn when using chemicals or when grinding certain materials. As co-worker of mine once said to a lady that liked to put on makeup while driving, ? no matter how advanced modern medicine has become, glass eyes still don't look real.

**Respiratory protection.** Similar in some ways to eye protection respiratory protection can be very important when handling certain cleaning chemicals and when dealing with certain dusts. Asbestos is a common example of a respirable dust that although not inherently toxic can cause cancer, especially with smokers. Other dusts can temporarily clog breathing passages thus impacting, sometimes critically, the body's ability to get oxygen into the blood. Chemicals can be very bad, too, as the lungs can quickly introduce toxins into the blood. Of note some of the oils that we use in our cutting saws can be dangerous. Keep in mind that dust masks may not stop some dusts and certainly no airborne chemicals.

**Chemical safety.** The most common chemical accidents usually have something to do with the above mentioned issues and involve acids, soaps, other caustics and solvents. PLEASE READ the safety notes or MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) on all chemicals you may use. Some need to be used in areas where there is good ventilation, others require high-end respirators and still more may necessitate protective clothing. Not common in the shop, but you never know! Also, be aware of the potential danger of mixing chemicals and as a general rule don't do it. Most of us have probably heard that mixing chlorine and ammonia, two of our most common household chemicals is bad. Essentially the mixing of the two releases chlorine into your air - very bad.

**Hearing protection.** What? You didn't hear me the first time? Do you remember the pictures of all the trees blown down in the same direction after Mount St. Helens erupted? Loud noise does the same thing to the ear and much like the trees once the filia (hearing fibers) are damaged they don't stand themselves back up. If you think =maybe I should be wearing ear plugs' then it's usually a good indication that you already answered the question.

**Electrical and Fire hazards.**

If your shop is like mine then it can get pretty cluttered. Bottles of flammables may end up next to overloaded electric out-lets or boxes of old journals. Cleaning up the clutter has two (or more) benefits by reducing fire hazards and making it more obvious where potential problems exist - like damaged electrical cords or overloaded outlets. Ideally flammable liquids will be stored in a flammables storage cabinet. If you have a pretty good sized shop then one of these is a good investment. F or most clubs the local fire code will require enough to handle what you have on site.

The hazards involving fire and electrical vary in type and risk level. Having been ? grounded? on four different occasions I can tell you that water and electrical cords do not mix! I used to work as a caretaker for saltwater fish tanks and it had its challenges... Overloaded plugs can be a problem in our shops. Keep in mind that just because a tool isn't turned on doesn't necessarily mean that electricity still isn't running through it. Fire and shock are both risks in this situation. It's safer to keep your equipment unplugged and properly stored when not in use.

**For some general rules:** Always wear eye protection. Keep your shops cleaned and well organized. Make sure electrical chords are in good condition. Keep reactive things away from each other, be they chemicals, electrical, fire hazards or combinations of each. Don't mix chemicals. Practice safety in your shops!

As always, if anyone has a safety incident or issue that they would like to share with the organization please contact me at <owenmartin@yahoo.com>. Thanks!

From; via The Rock Collector, 12/09 , via the Breccia, May 2010

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## November 2010 Gem & Mineral Shows

12-14-POMONA, CA: Show, "West Coast Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show"; Martin Zinn Expositions; \*\*THIS SHOW HAS BEEN CANCELED\*\*

12-14-PUYALLUP, WA: 6th annual show, "South Sound Gem, Opal & Mineral Show"; Boeing Employee Mineralogical Society, Northwest Opal Association; WA State Fairgrounds, Meridian St. S and 9th Ave. SW; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; contact Lyle Jorgensen, (425) 483-0557; e-mail: [mechanix@comcast.net](mailto:mechanix@comcast.net)

12-14-SACRAMENTO, CA: Show, "Golden Harvest Of Gems, Mineral, and Jewelry Show"; Sacramento Mineral Society; Scottish Rite Center, 6151 H St.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, children (6-12) \$1; dealers, rock slabs, beads, findings, fossils, gold and silver jewelry, mineral specimens, rock carvings, gemstones, jade, indian, meteorites, tools, wire wrapping, kids' activities; contact Sacramento Mineral Society, P.O. Box 160544, Sacramento, CA 95816, or Tarance Beguhl; e-mail: [tarance@sacramentomineralsociety.org](mailto:tarance@sacramentomineralsociety.org); Web site: [www.sacramentomineralsociety.org](http://www.sacramentomineralsociety.org)

12-14-TACOMA, WA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Tacoma Dome/Exhibition Hall, 2727 E. "D" St.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Yooy Nelson, (509) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

13--VALLEJO, CA: Show, "Christmas Gift show and sale"; Vallejo Gem & Mineral Society; Vallejo Veterans Memorial Bldg., 420 Admiral Callaghan Ln.; Sat. 9-5; admission \$1; beads, jewelry, minerals, jade, crystals, gems, door prizes, club member sales, lapidary crafts, silver casting work, beading; contact Dan Wolke, P.O. Box 706, Vallejo, CA 94590, (707) 334-2950; e-mail: [dncwolke@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dncwolke@sbcglobal.net); Web site: [www.iwired.org](http://www.iwired.org)

13-14-LAKE HAVASU CITY, AZ: 41st annual show; Lake Havasu Gem & Mineral Society; Aquatic Center, 100 Park Ave.; free admission; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; more than 30 display cases, handcrafted jewelry, mineral and fossil collections, educational displays, hands-on activities, kids' games and prizes, demonstrations, cutting and polishing gemstones, silversmithing, dealers, tools, findings, rock slabs, finished jewelry, door prizes, raffle prizes; contact C.J. Stone, (928) 505-2865; Web site: <http://lakehavasugms.org>

13-14--SEDRO WOOLLEY, WA: Show, "Treasures of the Earth"; Skagit Rock & Gem Club; Sedro Woolley Community Center, 720 State St.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; hourly door prizes, dealers, demonstrations, children's activities; contact Vi Jones, (360) 424-8340; e-mail: [rocks1x1vi.george@verizon.net](mailto:rocks1x1vi.george@verizon.net)

13-14--YUBA CITY, CA: 19th annual show, "Festival of Gems and Minerals"; Sutter Buttes Gem & Mineral Society; Franklin Hall, Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds, 442 Franklin Ave.; contact Inez Berg; e-mail: [inez\\_brg@Yahoo.com](mailto:inez_brg@Yahoo.com); or Eric Anspaugh, (916) 567-9750

20--CLACKAMAS, OR: 37th annual auction; Columbia-Willamette Faceters' Guild; Monarch Hotel, 12566 SE 93rd Ave.; preview 5:30, auction 7-10; contact Gail Lough, (971) 678-2862; e-mail: glough7@gmail.com  
 20-21--BREMERTON, WA: Show, "2010 Fall Festival of Gems"; Kitsap Mineral & Gem Society; The President's Hall, Kitsap County Fairgrounds, 1200 N.W. Fairgrounds Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; club displays, junior events, silent auction, raffle prizes, dealers, demonstrations; contact Jim McClure, (253) 265-3011; e-mail: pogy2@centurytel.net  
 20-21--FAIRFAX, VA: 19th annual show; Northern VA Mineral Club; George Mason University, Student Union Bldg. II, Rte. 123 and Braddock Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5, seniors \$3, teens (13-17) \$3, children (12 and under) and Scouts in uniform free, GMU students with valid ID free; more than 20 dealers, minerals, fossils, crystals, gems, jewelry, carvings, meteorites, demonstrations, exhibits, door prizes, kids' mini-mines and fossil dig, silent auction Sun.; contact Tom Taaffe, (703) 281-3767; e-mail: rockclctr@aol.com; Web site: www.novamineralclub.org/  
 20-21--WEST PALM BEACH, FL: 43rd annual show; Gem & Mineral Society of the Palm Beaches; South FL Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd.; Sat. 9-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7, children free; gem mining, fossil dig, exhibits, demonstration area, hourly door prizes, scholarship fundraiser; contact Barbara Ringhiser, (561) 588-5458; e-mail: bar5678@aol.com  
 26-28--CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA: Show; Alex Kuznetsov; Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, 197 1st St. SW; Fri. 4-9, Sat. 9-7, Sun. 9-5; adults \$7, seniors and students \$5, children free; lectures, demonstrations, door

prizes; contact Alex Kuznetsov, (403) 202-1971; e-mail: calgarygemshow@gmail.com; Web site: www.calgarygemshow.com  
 27-28--MONTEREY, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Monterey County Fairgrounds, 2004 Fairground Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com  
 27-28--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Show, "San Francisco Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Fort Mason Center, 99 Marina Blvd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$6, ages 12 and under free; 30 dealers, minerals, gems, crystals, beads, metaphysical healing tools; contact Jerry Tomlinson, P.O. Box 1371, Sausalito, CA 94966, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: jerry@crystalfair.com; Web site: www.crystalfair.com  
 27-28--WICKENBURG, AZ: Show, "Wickenburg Gem & Mineral Show"; Wickenburg Gem & Mineral Society; Community Center, 160 N. Valentine St.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; more than 40 vendors, gems, minerals, jewelry, door prizes, grab bags, spinning wheel, raffle; contact Beth Myerson, P.O. Box 20375, Wickenburg, AZ 85358, (928) 684-0380; e-mail: myerbd@gmail.com

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**Are Your Dues Due Now?**  
**PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL.** If your label shows the current month/year your dues are **DUE NOW**. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.  
**A Renewal Grace Period** of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note, however, that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be **AUTOMATICALLY** dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.  
 Thank you,  
 The Editor

# The Opal Express

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



**Volume #43 Issue #11  
November 2010**

TO:

### Some Topics In This Issue:

- Outback Opals
- Taking Care of Opals
- The Discovery of Tanzanite
- Gold Coin Sellers Angered by New Law
- Mineral Identification and Acids
- Safety in the Shop

### Important Dates:

November 11 - General Meeting

December 9 - Christmas Potluck

# November 11

## General Meeting - Show Review

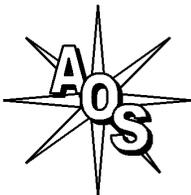
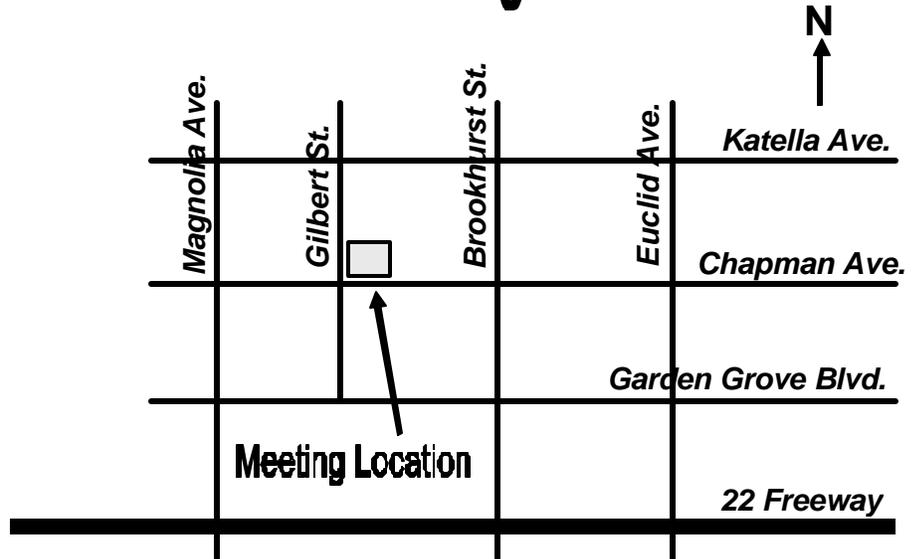
### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

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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<http://OpalSociety.org>

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