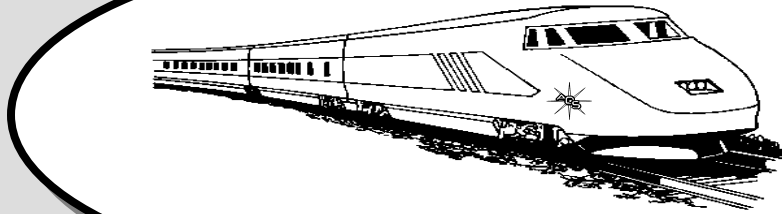


# The Opal Express

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## President's Message

*By Pete Goetz*

Happy Holidays fellow OPALHOLICS. Here's hoping the New Year will bring with it health, wealth, and a bunch of OPALS to all.

For those members who live near-by (or want a reason to travel), The OPAL Society is having it's annual Christmas dinner/meeting at the Garden Grove Women's Club located at the corner of Chapman and Gilbert Streets in Garden Grove. It's a sorta-kinda pot-luck. The A.O.S. is providing the turkey and you all are providing the fix 'ins. So throw together your favorite side dish or casserole dish and come join us. It will great fun, we can talk OPAL and OPAL related 'stuff' all night. What more could you ask for??

The annual OPAL and Gem show went well. We had an opportunity to meet old friends and vendors, and meet some new ones. More on the show from our V.P., Corey, in a separate article in this issue.

The A.O.S. has successfully contracted a venue for next years OPAL and Gem show. This will give us more time to plan an even more successful show for next year. It also gives some of you an opportunity to add a visit to the show during your travels or to come on down and be a part of the show. We would like to see more members involved with the OPAL and Gem show. More on this in later issues of the OPAL Express.

## Hello from Your Vice President

*By Corey Kuepper*

I just want to thank all the great people who helped with the Setup, Running and Tear down of the 2010 43<sup>rd</sup> American Opal & Gem Show, your work helped to make this year's show a Success:

Gene our Show Chairman, Jay, Bob, Eva for the food, Veronica, the Front Desk, Jim for all the lectures, etc... & tear down, Rich for the use of his van & Help with setup & tear down, Vincent, Dave, Dana & Susan, with setup & tear down, day & night time security people watching Front Desk, show & tear down, Edgar from the Whitehouse, To all the Demonstrators & Dealers Who came to show their Great Skills and Wares, Russ our fliers and Raffle Tickets, Pete our President, Laverne our Treasurer for their work all year long, and to all others I may have missed... THANK YOU.

## Opal Show Security Summary

*By Jim Lambert*

As far as the show Security is concerned - all went excellently. Not one item was reported as stolen or missing (if there was, at least not reported). Our two daytime Security Officers did a great job as one watched the front entrance and the other roamed around the dealers. I also did my part in watching the consumers as I blended in with them. Our two overnight security guards also did an excellent job in securing their areas through the night. Overall, in speaking to the dealers, most of them were very satisfied with the show and indicated that they will most likely return next year. Naturally, as expected, there were a few complaints.

## Two Bags Found at Show

Two paper bags of items someone bought were found after the show. If you left these bags, please call Core Kuepper at (714) 735-0581 and indentify the items to have them returned.

## 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".



Map of Ethiopia

The next two articles are from Member Steve Newstrom of Village Smithy Opals (<http://villagesmithyopals.com>). Steve and his wife Darlene took a trip to Ethiopia to find the source of the new Welo Opal. This type of opal was very prevalent at the Opal and Gems Show this year. The Editor

## Ethiopia: Opals, Agates & Coffee Beans Welo Opal Buying Trip Report-2010

By Steve Newstrom

**7/3/10 Billings To Addis Ababa:** With excitement and some trepidation we left Billings on time... boarding a small United AL CRJ200...destination [Addis Ababa](#), Ethiopia...but first Denver. The flight was smooth on time and comfortable...even for my six foot two inch frame. We left Denver for Washington Dulles aboard a [Boeing 757](#) that again was smooth and uneventful. Bought a Thai Chicken Wrap lunch on the plane and would recommend this tasty selection. Left Dulles on time on a very, very cramped [Ethiopia Airlines 767](#) that was sweltering hot from the start to the finish...no overhead cooling air nozzles by the reading lights.

**7/4/10 Addis Ababa:** Dozed on and off intermittently during the 9 hour flight, landed in Rome for fuel and cabin cleaning, but couldn't deplane. Next stop was Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa. Arrived Ethiopia at 7:00PM and spent a good hour going through customs and getting our visas, which are only available at the airport. Met our 3 good friends (& opal exporters) and were dropped off at the [Kaleb Hotel](#) in Addis... our home away from home. Had supper at the restaurant in the hotel and retired to our comfortable room for as long as we could stay asleep.

**7/5/10 Addis Ababa:** Exchanged US\$ for Ethiopian Birr... exchange rate is about 13 birr for 1 dollar. Then a visit to the Ministry of Mines and Energy was necessary, to obtain a permit to visit the opal mines near Delanta in Welo Province. Ethiopia is definitely a paperwork driven country... but getting permits is preferable to spending time in the Delanta jail... where western visitors to this small town, without guides and proper documentation have ended up. Darlene had her first taste of Ethiopian Montezuma's revenge... so we stopped at a pharmacy for [Ciprofloxacin](#) which seems to be effective against this bug. That evening the five of us went to a lovely authentic Ethiopian restaurant with our hosts. Had Injera (sourdough flatbread made



Casualty on the mountain road to the Delanta opal mines.

from fermented teff) and several types of wat (stew-like foods) and were entertained by traditional Ethiopian folk dancers.

**7/6/10 Addis Ababa:** Next day Steve had stomach distress (being polite) and started on the Cipro as well. Darlene and I sat next to a physician on the plane to Addis and he advised us to take Cipro and loperamide when we first have diarrhea symptoms... said it would only take a couple days on the antibiotic to kick the bug. So far it's worked for Dar... jury's still out for Steve. Toured Addis and saw the Haile Selassie Church and the [Ethiopian National Museum](#). Had a light lunch at a delightful outdoor café near the University where the National Museum is located. Went to bed with dreams of bright, crystal opal...tomorrow we begin our trek to the Welo opal mines.

**7/7/10-7/8/10 Delanta Opal Mines:** Rose early for a full day of travel and at 9:00 AM, left Addis, for [Kambolcha](#). Steve's stomach is feeling better and Darlene is pretty much back to normal... but neither of us felt up to eating breakfast...we're on the Africa diet? Our vehicle is a relatively new Toyota Land Cruiser with 2 spare tires on a roof rack...is that an indication of road conditions ahead? Driver is Solomon and our guide is Fitsum... both of these gentlemen were professional, courteous and able to withstand my weird, offbeat sense of humor. Solomon darted and weaved through very heavy traffic through Addis...we like to call it combat driving. I wouldn't have a chance behind the wheel here. But out in the countryside, highway driving changes from combat style to animal



Darlene questioning a camel for the best opal picking locations.  
The Opal Express The American Opal Society

avoidance style. Our driver had an almost instinctive reaction to the numerous sheep, donkeys, camels, cattle and goats...knowing which way the animals would turn...steering the Land Cruiser the other direction. Darlene's observation: the goats rule the road! My right foot kept reaching for a nonexistent brake pedal in the back seat. This is a very different driving style...exciting actually. We were starting to get used to it...but my right leg was getting a little exercise in the meantime.

Heading out of Addis we began climbing into the cool, moist mountains. The countryside thinned of car and truck traffic and became green and lush. Just past Debre Birham we drove through a mountain pass at near 10,000ft. The scenery was fantastic...thick stands of aromatic gum trees, similar to what we've seen during our many trips to Australia, but surrounded with cool crisp Montana like mountains. And then, before reaching Kambolcha, we dropped down into hot desert country where we saw camels, used instead of donkeys, as the preferred mode of transportation.

Our first night out of Addis was spent at the [Sunny Side Hotel](#) in the southern end of Kambolcha. Very nice bar and dining room, but the rooms weren't up to what we had seen in Addis or in North America. With hotel accommodations outside of Addis...if you have a working shower (hot water a plus), toilet that flushes, 2 towels and sound bed...you counted your blessings. And the blessings in this hotel were a very nicely appointed, clean dining room with very tasty western style food. This reminded us of a 2006 movie we had seen..."Blood Diamond" with Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Connelly. The quote in the movie was an acronym "TIA"...which



Overlook view of one of the many Welo opal diggings along steep river gorge cliffs below Delanta.

meant "This Is Africa"...used to express dismay when difficult situations occurred.

**7/8/10 Delanta:** Long days drive to the Delanta opal mines, so our travels that day began early. We found a decent 2 lane black top road leading to Desse, full of tight turns and switchbacks...climbing steeply into the mountains. Once passing through the busy market streets of Desse we turned onto a rugged, rough mountain road heading up into the terraced igneous mountains. Our first flat tire happened while crossing a dry stream...possibly due to the sharp basalt gravel covering the road. Delanta appeared when we topped out on the mountain above the steep river gorge. And here we saw our first troop of baboons in a tilled field as we approached the outskirts of town. Stops were made at the local Mining Ministry office for more permits and the police station for a police escort armed with a Kalashnikov automatic rifle. Our driver carefully drove the Land Cruiser as close as he could to the edge of town...right above the stunning geometric basalt column cliffs. Our hike began. With several guides and mining officials we descended the narrow foot trail along the steep cliffs. This trail wasn't for the faint of heart. An hour's worth of hiking brought us down to an overlook, from where we could see opal miners working to remove stones from a soft igneous layer...perhaps a fine grained igneous pyroclastic tuff

layer. Asking how to actually get down to the mines themselves, our guides pointed out a steep winding 5 mile trail, on the adjoining mountain, which led over and down the steep cliffs to the opal mines we were photographing.

But this deposit extends along the river gorge for several kilometers. We were able to visit and photograph only one of many opal diggings along the mountainside below Delanta. Some areas have high concentrations of opal where a single miner may dig out a kilogram of this bright crystal opal in a day. But other deposits may require a week or more for the same results. Due to the remote location of this deposit I'd guess some very intense prospecting might be in order...perhaps it already is. The Welo deposit is much richer than present day Australian opal deposits. But all work in Ethiopia must be done with relatively simple hand tools carried for miles down to the mines. Then all the tools and opals must be



*Mining Welo crystal opal along river gorge near Delanta Ethiopia*

carried back up to Delanta on foot...every night. Of course all this is done at approximately 10,000 ft. The gem-stones found at the Welo deposit are a type called hydrophane opal. Hydrophane opal is very hygroscopic and when immersed in water will lose its base color and play-of-color as quickly as an hour's time. Then drying for a couple days will return this opal to its original bright colorful state. Since this opal is mined in a slightly moist matrix the miners allow it to dry in the sun for several days before it is sold to various licensed Ethiopian opal buyers, inspected by the Ethiopian Ministry of Mines and Energy and shipped around the globe. Of course this is much different on our Australian opal buying trips: we go to several opal miners from whom we've bought opal for years and mail the stones back to the USA ourselves, via the Australian Post.

On the way back from Delanta to [Kambolcha](#) the rough road claimed another tire. While our guide and driver were changing the tire we hiked down to a dry nearby dry river bed. Among the colorful rounded river rock we found a plentiful supply of medium sized white, pale blue and green agates. Yup...opals aren't my only vice. What a great day...opals and agates. On the winding mountain road down from Desse to Kambolcha we sighted a hyena running across the road in our headlights...back to the Sunnyside Hotel for a late tasty roast chicken dinner and bed.

**7/9/10-7/10/10 Lalibela:** On today's journey we left our Welo opals behind and began a tour of the Northern Historical Region of Ethiopia. Our Land Cruiser tour would take us to Lalibela home of rock hewn churches, Bahir Dar on beautiful Lake Tana and nearby falls of the Blue Nile, Gondar and its 17th century castle, the Simien Mountains (and rare Gelada baboons & Walia Ibex) and beautiful Simien Lodge, Aksum and the Stelae and St. Mary of Zion Church, which is said to contain the Ark of the Covenant: brought to Ethiopia by Menelik the first...King Solomon's son with The Queen of Sheba.

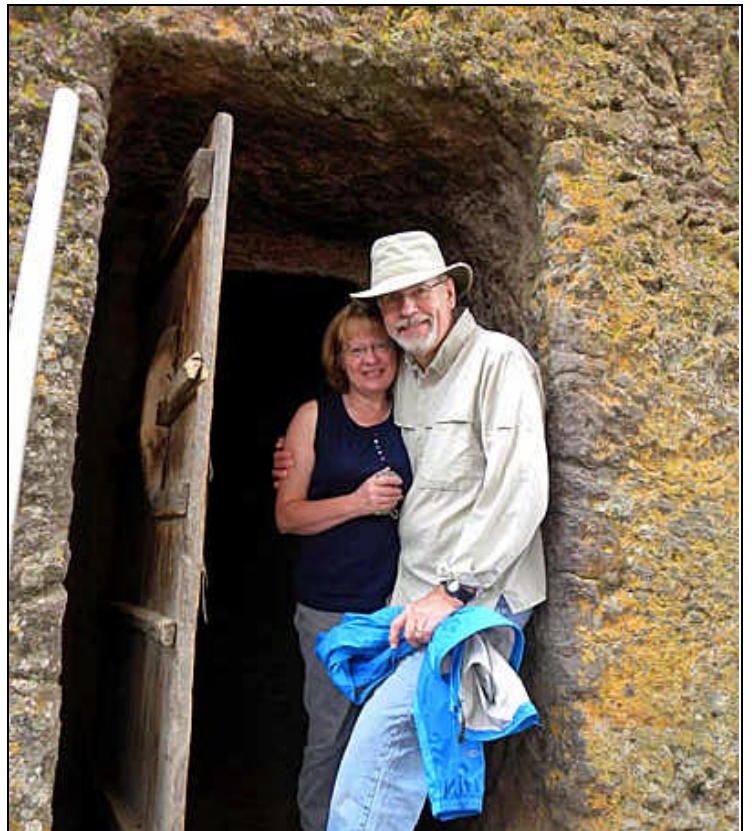
We were told the ark was brought out of the church to aid Ethiopia in its 1998-2000 war with Eritrea. And then a long 2 days journey to Addis Ababa for more opal business and the long flight back to Montana.

Trip started early with a drive through the warm lowlands south of Weldiya. As we climbed the switchbacks into the mountains leading to Weldiya the temperature dropped and the earthed greened. We continued to climb for many miles after passing through town and the air became very cool as the road leveled onto a high plateau near 10,000 ft. Here were traditional stone, mud and wood homes and small villages along a smooth new 2 lane blacktop road. After a



Horsemen on the road to Lalibela

couple hours of beautiful mountain scenery and lush fields of corn and wheat we turned north, at Bete Hor, onto a rough but passable 2 lane gravel road. From this point until we arrived in Lalibela traffic was very light and passenger vehicles, the occasional Landcruiser, very rare. I was sorry to leave Delanta and the opal mines behind...I



Side entrance to one of the rock hewn churches in Lalibela: One of Ethiopia's holiest cities.

could almost hear the opal siren's song...should have left Delanta with wax in my ears as Ulysses sailors did on their long voyage home from the Trojan war.

Upon arrival in [Lalibela](#) we checked into the lovely new [Mountain View Hotel](#) overlooking the cliffs below town and surrounding mountains...had dinner at The Seven Olives Hotel. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at the Mountain View Hotel and the [7 Olives Restaurant](#). The next 2 days were spent in Lalibela touring the rock hewn churches.

**7/11/10 Bahar Dar:** Today's travel was to [Bahar Dar](#) on the shores of the largest body of water in Ethiopia... [Tana Lake](#). We backtracked along the gravel road to Bete Hor then turned west travelling along the same high plateau until we dropped down from the Ethiopian Highlands into the [Great Rift Valley](#) where Lake Tana sat like a blue jewel among lush rice fields. In the central part of the city we checked into the large [Papyrus Hotel](#)...an older place badly in need of remodeling. Perhaps we just got a bad room, but the toilet wouldn't stop running, the room was full of mosquitoes (not a good thing in a malaria region...no window screens and the mosquito netting didn't fit the bed?), the sink was plugged and overall quality was very poor. TIA.

That afternoon, during a light thunderstorm, we drove out to visit the [Falls of the Blue Nile](#). The hiking trail to the falls was muddy due to the rain and the falls were flowing so swiftly that instead of the Blue Nile Falls it was truly the Brown Nile. The falls were indeed spectacular and I have no doubt that if we had visited on a better day, we would have enjoyed it more. Then back to the hotel for a shower, clean clothes and hot meal...yes.

**7/12/10 Bahar Dar and Gondar:** Slept in late that morning and had a very nice leisurely meal at the hotel. After breakfast we took a wonderful boat trip to a monastery on an island in Lake Tana. The island was very tropical indeed with monkeys, coffee and fruit trees in abundance. The coffee beans were the main stay for the inhabitants of the island. We saw several canoe-like boats made from the Papyrus reed that grew around the lake. Near shore in a small bay; we saw a hippopotamus with his eyes and ears peeking above the water. Back on shore in Bahir Dar, in a floating restaurant, we had a fantastic lunch of fresh caught Nile perch and local Tilapia. Darlene learned a couple Amharic words today...ishy=okay and abits=yes.

That afternoon we drove to [Gondar](#) and checked into the lovely [Goha Hotel](#), with its precisely manicured lawn and lovely flowers, on top of a hill overlooking the city. This hotel had some of the best food (and service) encountered on our trip...very highly recommended.

The room here was wood/brick with lovely tapestries and had an especially deep tub for soaking our old weary bones. The water wasn't hot, but it was tepid...warm enough for a good soak. Our guide surprised us with a horse cart ride up the hill to the hotel. The Israeli Ambassador was staying at the hotel so security was VERY tight that evening.

Later we went out to an American style bar the Golden Gate Bar and had a pizza supper along with great conversation and country/western music. A lot of Ethiopian/Americans live in Gondar...they left during the Marxist-communist rule of the seventies and eighties and returned to Gondar during the nineties where they are building a western style community.

**7/13/10 Gondar and Simien Mountains:** The next morning Darlene was sick again with intestinal problems...so she was back on the Cipro and Loperamide (thank you Dr. Weiss). Due to Darlene's illness our guide decided to just do a drive-by of the emperor's castle and leave early for [Simien Mountains National Park](#). Darlene spent much of this trip laying across the back seat with her head in my lap...she started to perk up a bit just after lunch...which she had skipped (Africa diet). The drive from Gondar to the Simiens was spectacular and encompassed lowland desert-

like country to steep mountains with altitudes over 10,000 ft. We checked into [Simien Lodge](#) in early afternoon and were pleasantly surprised by the immaculate and well cared for rooms and western-style amenities. Each room was a cabin constructed like a traditional round wood/stone Ethiopian house with a palapa-style thatched roof on the outside but comfortable western-style interiors. It was cold, raining and very foggy so we couldn't see the vistas of surrounding peaks that day. Even though it was cold we sat by a roaring fire and had delightful supper at the restaurant in the lodge. Darlene was feeling better now and we were enjoying our stay at Simien Lodge...this was certainly the high point of our trip. The cabins were cold...due to the clouds and fog the solar heaters weren't working...so we went to bed with a couple of hot water bottles prepared for us at the lodge.

**7/14/10 Simien Mountains:** We had a wonderful breakfast at the lodge that morning served with several cups of strong Ethiopian coffee...love the coffee here! This day's itinerary was an outing to spot [Walia Ibex](#) and [Gelada baboons](#). Roads were very muddy and slick and the rain was still a steady drizzle and visibility was no more than 50 yards. We had picked up a local guide and game warden for our trek so we had a full car. We weren't able to see any Ibex but I'm sure if the visibility had improved we would have been successful. The Gelada were a different matter entirely. We found a Gelada baboon troop of perhaps 50 individuals and were able to safely walk among them and photograph at leisure. And, now and then, the clouds would break for a bit and we would be able to see our surroundings and get a photograph of a waterfall or peak. Back to the lodge for a spot of lunch and then out to search for Ibex and Gelada baboons that afternoon. It was the same story with the weather that afternoon...heavy rains and poor visibility. But we were able to find another smaller troop of Gelada. When we walked back to the lodge that evening for supper we found the weather had broken and the sky had cleared. Oh my goodness...the vistas around the lodge were absolutely incredible! Too bad it was only 1/2



Majestic Falls of the Blue Nile had turned brown after a heavy thunderstorm.

hour before dark. Again we had another great supper and back to bed with hot water bottles. But on the hike back to our cabin we saw, for the first time, just how incredible the stars were at this altitude. We had plenty of comforters on the bed, but I was still glad I had packed a turtle neck sweater for warmth.

**7/15/10-7/16/10 Simien Lodge to Aksum:** Again...a great breakfast by a fire at the lodge then we were off to Aksum. Good to be on the road again. The weather had continued fair and the drive through the eastern slope of the Simien Mountains was gorgeous. This side of the mountains obviously was getting the lion's share of moisture and

was lush and tropical. We traversed steep terrain on rough single lane roads which caused us some concern...guess you could say it was a scary drive! But we saw several monkeys and another troop of Gelada baboons before we reached the lowlands. Along this part of our journey we had another flat tire and, of course, I went out to search for agates...and found several beauties...would love a trip to Ethiopia just for agates! Lots of road construction along this leg of our journey and travel was slow. But we were both feeling well and our lunch stop was very a nice outdoor restaurant with great food! I had tasty, though tough roast lamb, rice and a vegetable assortment and a Sprite...drink a lot of Sprite, Ambo Mineral water and Coke down here. All of our beverages we drink directly from the bottle...we're afraid to use glasses. In [Aksum](#) we took on a tour guide and viewed Queen of Sheba's palace, tombs and the many stelae (obelisk) dating from around 500 AD. The tallest stelae is 82 feet and decorated with relief carvings. Stayed at the Yeha Hotel...clean and had an impressive western style restaurant. The Internet Café next to the restaurant had 4 computers, 2 of which worked intermittently. You had to type very quickly to get computer work done. But at least they had computers and e-mail was accessible.

**7/17/10 The Road Back to Addis Ababa:** The road from Aksum to Addigrat was long and slowed by construction, but the scenery was stunning...enough to make up for the bumps. Once we hit Highway 1 at Addigrat and turned south toward Addis, the road improved. We were on the east side of the backbone-like mountains that run down the center of Ethiopia, so the climate was warm and dry. The western slope of the mountains gets the lion's share of the rain...just as it does in Montana. We made it into Kambolcha late that night as all the hotels in Dessie were full. But the Sunnyside Hotel was



Some Welo rough opal.

familiar and we were glad to be in a hotel with a western-style restaurant. As a bonus we scored a room with a comfortable bed this time! But do to the hotel being full Darlene and I had to share 1 towel...no wash cloths or hand towels. Up early, a quick breakfast in the hotel and on the road to Addis.

Late that afternoon we checked into our much loved Kaleb Hotel in Addis. Then we brought our laundry down to the desk, had supper, checked e-mail, soaked in the tub and climbed into a VERY comfortable bed early. You can probably tell by now that we LOVE the Kaleb Hotel, with its friendly and helpful staff, working Wi-Fi for our laptop, hot water, beautiful rooms with a balcony, wonderful maid service and great cappuccino in the lobby bar. Well known by the staff from our earlier visit, we were treated more like friends than hotel guests! The next few days we looked at several parcels of delightful crystal opal and purchased 19 kilos for shipment back home. And our local opal friends, knowing my love for Ethiopian coffee, gifted us with 4 kg of beans. We arrived 2 hours early at the

airport for a comfortable visit through outgoing customs and had a relaxed spaghetti dinner. Boarded the plane and were shown seats, much nicer than on the incoming flight, amidst the plane. Then Darlene and I began getting stomach distress...her symptoms much more serious than mine. She ended up spending a good portion of that flight in the rear restroom of the plane.

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## Cutting Ethiopian Welo Opal

*By Steve Newstrom*

The new opal deposit in Ethiopia, in Welo Province in the north of the country, is producing spectacular crystal opal displaying very bright play-of-colors in a variety of patterns. The opals in this new deposit, discovered in 2008, are nodule-like stones in an unusual variety...where some stones resemble top Mexican fire opal with excellent play-of-color, others resemble subtle dream-like stones from Brazil and many resemble bright crystal opal from the Andamooka opal field of South Australia. It's quite easy to become enamored with this opal.

Most of the opal from Welo is hydrophane opal. Hydrophane opal quickly absorbs water and the opal's base color appearance changes, becoming very clear. The play-of-color, though not entirely disappearing, fades out. But luckily this is only a temporary problem...when the opal is allowed to air-dry for 3-4 days, almost like magic, the body color and play-of-color return to normal. Some of this opal becomes white when going through its drying process...but it too returns to its normal crystal or semi-crystal state, although it may take a few days longer to become clear again and for the play-of-color brightness to return.

***Please read the following procedure carefully before cutting this opal!***

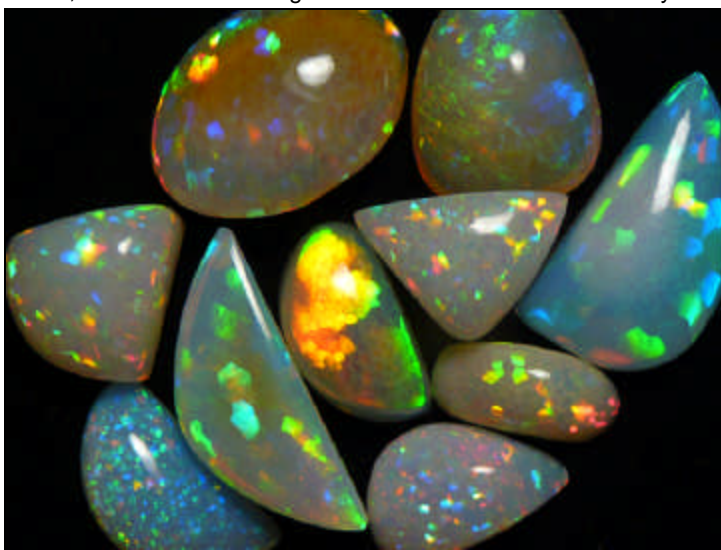
**Cabbing:** When cutting this material I use Elmer's Glue-All to glue the stone to a 1/4" x 5" long wooden dop stick. Let the stone dry overnight, then coat the non-waterproof glue with a coating of clear fingernail polish to make it waterproof. Avoid using dopping wax...especially if the opal has been exposed to and has absorbed water. Cracks can appear between the clear hydrophane portion of the opal and the still fiery portion of the opal, when partially wetted opal is heated. So be aware that this material can be VERY heat sensitive. I use a 220-grit diamond grinding dry wheel to rough grind the stone...dry. Opal's relatively soft and a 220-grit diamond wheel cuts fast enough and also doesn't leave the deep scratches (and won't be as likely to chip) that an 80 or 100-grit wheel will...especially when working dry. Watch for heat and dust (you might want to use a mask if you're doing a lot of opal cutting...opal dust can cause silicosis), but with light pressure on a diamond wheel, opal doesn't heat much. But it is important to check your stones temperature often.

I like to do the rough grinding dry, allowing the stones play-of-color to stay bright, to properly orient and rough shape the stone (if the stone has a uniform fire pattern throughout...orienting is not a problem & rough grinding can be done wet). But once that is completed I go to my normal water-cooled method of opal cutting using a 320 grit belt, on an expanding drum...for final shaping of the stone. And 600-grit will remove any leftover flat spots and course scratches...then onto 1200-grit and 3000-grit with a final polish using a mix of tin oxide and Linde A (10:1 ratio)...or 14,000 grit diamond. If you'd like, a disk with 50,000-grit diamond will give you a super final polish. Remove the fingernail polish coating by swirling in a jar with acetone in it for about 20 seconds (careful acetone is VERY flammable). Soak in a glass of water for 2-3 hours and the stone should fall off of the dop stick. If not let the stone soak overnight. I've never had a problem releasing the opal if it is allowed to soak in water overnight.

**Drying Welo Opals:** Here in Billings the air is very dry and Welo opals return to their original bright colorful state after drying for

2-3 days. But I've recently spoken to an opal customer who lives in a humid area and his cut Welos have taken an extended time to return to their original bright colorful condition after wet cutting. His solution sounds scary...but he's had good luck (a dozen good stones at this writing). He uses a programmable burnout oven and sets the temperature for 65-70 degrees Celsius. He programs the heating cycle to warm at 2C/minute and leaves the stone at temperature for 1 hour and then allows the stones to cool down naturally. His stones have dried beautifully without a problem.

**Dry Cabbing:** This procedure isn't for the faint of heart as it's still not a proven method of cutting Welo opal...so beware and be VERY careful of heat build-up. I've been experimenting with cutting this opal completely dry...except for moistening the polishing wheel slightly, when using tin oxide or cerium oxide on leather, to improve the polish. Tin or cerium doesn't seem to work well completely dry. But diamond compound with a bit of baby oil or extender fluid, should be fine for polishing...perhaps better than tin or cerium (I'm just old fashioned ☺ and I have a lot of tin oxide). I dop the stone to the wooden dowel using Elmer's Glue-all, as previously mentioned, but no fingernail polish is needed as this is essentially cutting dry. Again...watch carefully for heat build-up...this opal can be very heat sensitive. And if you are using Nova wheels or expanding drums with diamond/resin bonding: beware of sharp edges on your stones peeling off the abrasive coating on the wheels or belts...water provides lubrication for the belts and wheels so this may decrease your diamond abrasive wheel life. The dust coming off the stones can be dangerous as it causes silicosis!! So be sure to at least wear a good dust mask. The results cabbing dry have been encouraging...no color change to wait on. But the jury is still out...need to cut a few more stones to see how well this works on a variety of Welo opal types. To remove the stones from the dop sticks I simply use a fine jewelers saw to cut the stones off of the sticks, at the stone-stick glue interface. Then sand off any extra



*Cut Welo crystal opal*

wood or glue on fine (400-600 grit) wet/dry sanding cloth or a dry flat lap...checking often for heat.

If you have tried this please let me know (Steve: 406-651-4947) how dry cutting has worked for you...so I can pass this info along.

**Carving:** If you plan to carve this opal (it carves wonderfully) and are using syringes filled with color-coded diamond paste, beware of the color staining the opal. I've switched to mixing my own diamond compound (1200, 3000 and 14,000 grits) with a mixture of diamond powder and clear baby oil...it's even a bit cheaper...and it smells better☺. If you want it thicker add a bit of Vaseline and stir well...or for a different consistency, I've heard melted bees-wax or Crisco have worked well. I like to carve this material using a combination of diamond/metal bonded grinding

points, Cratex points (coarse, medium fine and extra-fine) for sanding and diamond compound on bullet shaped felt points...dry. When working dry, using these techniques, you won't have the color change problems associated with working wet. I've found that as long as I'm VERY careful with heat...checking the stones temp often...this opal can be successfully cut dry. But it is heat sensitive, like other opals, so care must be taken working without water.

Keep in mind this is just one of many cutting techniques that will accomplish the same result...a beautiful, well cut opal cabochon. The important things to remember are: cut slowly, avoid overheating your stones, smooth out flat areas and polish your opals well...checking carefully for scratches.

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## December 2010 Gem & Mineral Shows

3-5-EL PASO, TX: El Paso Mineral & Gem Society; El Maيدا Auditorium, 6331 AL; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$3, seniors \$2, under 12 free; gems, minerals, fossils, beads, jewelry, tools, books, equipment, geode cutting, silent auction, demonstrations; contact Jeannette Carrillo, 4100 Alameda Ave., El Paso, TX 79905, (877) 533-7153; e-mail: gemcenter@aol.com

3-5-HUACHUCA CITY, AZ: 2nd annual show, "Miner's Mania Gem Show"; Tombstone Gem Show; Tombstone Territories RV Resort, 2111 E. Hwy. 82; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; free admission; AZ lapidary artists, miners and collectors, many local minerals, AZ mining history displays, prizes, special raffle; contact Betty Krug, P.O. Box 414, Tombstone, AZ 85638, (520) 457-9505; e-mail: rockwranglers@gmail.com; Web site: www.tombstonegemshow.info

3-5-INPOLIS, IN: Show and sale; GemStreet USA; The IN State Fairgrounds, The Pioneer, Our Land Bldg., 1202 E. 38th St.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-5; fine gems, jewelry, beads, fossils, minerals; contact Jane Strieter Smith, (216) 521-4367; Web site: www.gemstreetusa.com

3-5-SANTA BARBARA, CA: Show, "Gem Faire"; Earl Warren Showgrounds/Exhibit Hall, 3400 Calle Real; 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

3-5-SARA SOTA, FL: Show; Frank Cox Productions; Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail (Hwy. 41); Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; gems, jewelry, beads; contact Frank Cox Productions, 755 S. Palm Ave. #203, Sarasota, FL 34236, (941) 954-0202; e-mail: frankcox@comcast.net; Web site: www.frankcoxproductions.com

3-5-SPRING HILL, FL: 36th annual show; Withlacoochee Rockhounds; Slovene American Club, 13383 County Line Rd.; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; adults \$3, students \$1, children 12 and under free; minerals, gemstones, fossils demonstrations, handcrafted jewelry, lapidary equipment, gem and mineral auction, Aaron's Breastplate and Famous Diamonds of the World replicas; contact Ralph Barber, (352) 200-6852; e-mail: barbersbloomers@hotmail.com

10-12-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

10-12-NORCROSS, GA: Show, "North Atlanta Gem Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show"; Mammoth Rock Shows LLC; North Atlanta Trade Center, 1700 Jeurgens Ct.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$4, under 16 free; gemstones, minerals, rough rock, lapidary supplies, beads, wire wrap, jewelry, museum-quality collectibles, hourly gift certificate drawing, grand door prize; contact Richard or Janice Hightower, 7334 Quail Run Rd., Lizella, GA 31052, (478) 935-9345; email: staff@mammothrock.com; Web site: www.mammothrock.com

10-12-SHARONVILLE, OH: Show and sale; GemStreet USA; The Sharonville Convention Center, 11355 Chester Rd.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-5; fine gems, jewelry, beads, fossils, minerals; contact Jane Strieter Smith, (216) 521-4367; Web site: www.gemstreetusa.com

17-19-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

## Opal Business for Sale [Australian Opal Imports.com](http://AustralianOpalImports.com)

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Tuesday-Saturday 10am-3pm. Appointments Also Available

## CLEARANCE Queensland Boulder Opal

We are clearing out  
our Opal collection

Total purchases up to \$2500 = 40% off

Total purchase up to \$5000 – 50% off

Total purchase over \$5000 – 60% off

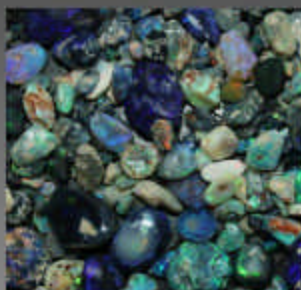
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TOPS A Rock Shop  
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# Opal Wilderness



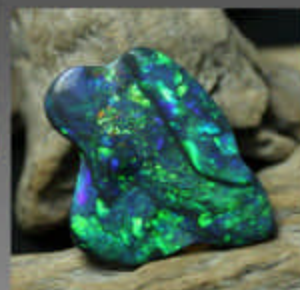
**Rough**



**Rubs**



**Cut**



**Carvings**

## Direct from The Miner

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P.O.Box 1337  
Lightning Ridge  
N.S.W. 2834  
Australia

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Int. Mob. # +61 408 024 415  
Skype : opalwilderness  
Email: [opalwilderness@gmail.com](mailto:opalwilderness@gmail.com)  
Internet: [www.opalwilderness.com.au](http://www.opalwilderness.com.au)

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# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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 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 #12  
December 2010**

## Some Topics In This Issue:

- Opal Show Summary
- Welo Opal Buying Trip Report-2010
- Cutting Ethiopian Welo Opal

### Important Dates:

December 9 - General Meeting

## Annual Potluck Christmas Dinner Party

The Annual Christmas Potluck Party at the Clubhouse. The Main course will be provided FREE; Please bring a side dish, dessert, or drinks!

### — 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)

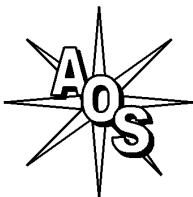
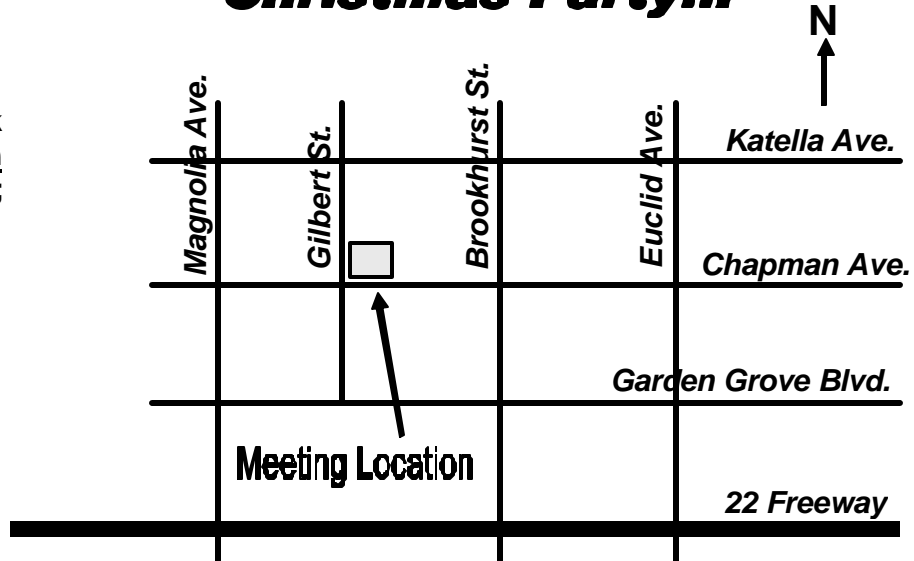
### MEETING ACTIVITIES

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

TO:



## **December 9th Annual Potluck Christmas Party!!!**



## The American Opal Society

<http://OpalSociety.org>

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Corey Kuepper	Vice-President	(714) 736-0581	email: <a href="mailto:rockhwnd@aol.com">rockhwnd@aol.com</a>
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Gene LeVan	Show Chairman	(562) 208-7494	email: <a href="mailto:fineblackopal@sprynet.com">fineblackopal@sprynet.com</a>