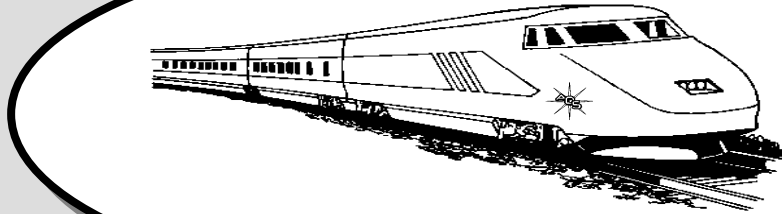


# The Opal Express

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## • Table of Contents

• President's Message	1
• July Speaker – Lothar Vallot on Simulants	1
• The AOS Live Auction Was a Success!	1
• Passing of Long-time Member Dr. John Hiller	1
• OpalSociety Group on the Internet	2
• Members Only Website Password	2
• Paperless Newsletter	2
• The Art of Opal Cutting	2
• From Rags to Riches & Disasters – Chapters 7 & 8	2
• Lost And Found: A Ring with a Story to Tell	4
• Gem of a Find in Tip Mulch	5
• Gem Silica and Chrysoprase	6
• Opal Grading System Aims to Restore Confidence	6
• July 2011 Gem & Mineral Shows	7
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## President's Message

*By Pete Goetz*

Hope you all had a great and safe 4th of July. How was my 4th you ask? I went to work. From our parking lot you can see the fireworks display coming from Disneyland. A couple cool-ones (soft drinks, that is), a bag of chips, and no crowd, I had an awesome time.

Last month's action went well. We had some visitors from a new OPAL find in Mexico who donated a sample of their material to be auctioned. Kudos to Jim Pisani and Will Smith for doing a great job running the auction. This month we will be educated by a real educator. Lothar Vallot will talk on how to identify simulants.

OK its "Band Wagon" time again. OPAL Show is coming up fast. We still could use some folks to help with electrical set-up, front desk, working with the food crew (no, not eating it), and general set-up. If you can help, call me (714-530-3530) I will put you in touch with the appropriate person. I am really excited about this year's Show. I have been in contact with several of our biggest vendor who, for various personal reasons, could not be at the Show last year, but have indicated they will be participating in this year's Show.

On a more serious note, Our membership is not growing as fast as we would like, costs are going up, fewer people willing to participate in the general administration of Society business, and those members who have been the work horses of the Society for a long time, are starting to 'burn out', and our fundraising efforts are weak. Several of the topics discussed at the last Board meeting were the health and future of the OPAL Society. Our health is somewhat stagnate, we seem to be in neutral, that is neither good

nor bad, but need a shot in the arm so to speak. Some of the alternatives for the future were not pretty, but, again, could improve dramatically with some new blood.

On a high note (HIGH NOTE) we are on the brink of being a really great Society with some additional participation from the membership. Talk at you all next month.

## July Speaker – Lothar Vallot on Simulants

Lothar Vallot, Gemology Program Facilitator at Santiago Community College and proprietor of Otten, Vallot & Co. will present "Simulants, Synthetics, and Treatments".

## The AOS Live Auction Was a Success!

The AOS held its sixth AOS live auction, on Thursday, June 9. WE had a great turnout and a lot of money changed hands! Some really good stuff was auctioned off. We had some great Welo opal offered by a new dealer, Gabriel Mosesson of Gamga Trade. It was a hot item!

A new opal mine owner, Juan Vital, also attended the general meeting. Juan had a large boulder with a full 1" seam of blue-based opal, some which had good blue-green fire. He mines it near Mazatlan, Mexico, in what he calls "the **Lightning Blue Mine**". Juan donated a sample from his mine to the auction. Thank you, Juan! This may be a huge discovery!

## Passing of Long-time Member Dr. John Hiller

Dr. John Jacob Hiller, Jr, 71 passed away on Thursday, June 23, 2011. He was born on October 25, 1939, the son of John J. Hiller & Marguerite Williams Hiller in Stroudsburg, PA. He graduated from Lafayette College, Easton, PA in 1961 with a B.S. in chemistry. He married Mary Jane Lyons on August 26, 1961. He received his PH.D. in Organic Chemistry from Case Institute of Technology, Cleveland, Ohio in 1965. He worked for various consumer product companies in R&D. His most well-known products were Dow Bathroom cleaner, Lysol household cleaners including Wet Ones, the first non-woven fabric wipe.

He was an avid rockhound and Opalcoholic, loved the desert and beautiful blue skies. He and his wife retired to Rio Rancho, NM in 2005. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, daughter Deb Hiller of Portland, OR & John J. Hiller III of Rio Rancho. Cremation will be performed by Daniels Family Funeral Services. His ashes will be made into a diamond for his love of science and the Lapidary arts. Donations can be made to Chemistry Dept., Lafayette College Easton, PA.

Dr. Hiller was a frequent Opal & Gem volunteer, usually traveling to California just for the show. His enthusiasm will be missed.

## OpalSociety Group on the Internet

The American Opal Society has an on-line e-Group called "OpalSociety". It is for members to communicate on club activities and as a discussion forum for all things opal. It is located at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OpalSociety/>.

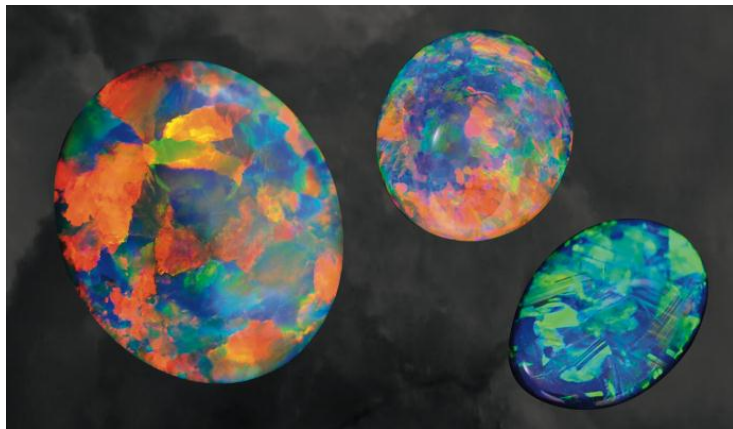
All members are invited to join and by clicking on the button "Join This Group" on the web page to join.

## 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: "opallover".

## Paperless Newsletter

Want to see color photos in your copy of the newsletter? Sign up for electronic delivery of the newsletter, and enjoy an added bonus by saving the club postage cost and a reduced membership fee! Also, you are saving paper. Simply contact Jim Pisani at [editor@opalsociety.org](mailto:editor@opalsociety.org).



Images from Cody Opal Australia

## The Art of Opal Cutting

October 07, 2010

Australia's national gemstone is also one of the most complicated to cut. GAA opal experts Anthony Smallwood and John Krook explain why it is an art form in its own right.

The cutting and fashioning of gemstones is an art. It is often forgotten that while there is an inherent beauty in the crystal nature of transparent gemstones, this is not always present in the opaque or translucent gemstones. Non-transparent stones – even those of great beauty or value such as opal – are often mistakenly referred to as ornamental or semi-precious gems.

Opal is such a mysterious gemstone that often its beautiful play of colour is hidden. Only an experienced opal cutter can produce an exquisite gemstone. So the opal cutter is an artisan of great importance, who alone can reveal an opal's hidden beauty.

So how does an opal cutter begin? An examination of the rough is key, as the origin and variety of opal will often determine what a cutter does; in this way opal is like no other gemstone.

A cutter working on a Lightning Ridge (NSW) black opal will require a different skill to a cutter who is about to produce a gem from Queensland boulder opal, who again will treat the rough material differently to the cutter of a superb South Australian Andamooka or Coober Pedy crystal opal. Each variety possesses its own unique challenge for the cutter in terms of the thickness of the opal and the material that forms the back of the gem (ironstone for boulder, black potch for black opal, and so on).

Once the opal cutter has established the thickness of their opal they can assess what shape will produce the best gem from the rough and show the best "face".

Generally, the cutter's biggest focus is to create a full-faced gemstone of the most vibrant colour and to polish it to a mirror finish. Every opal is unique, so a cutter's experience and intuition are important to success.

When it comes to boulder opal, the cutter must first assess how thin the opal veneer on the ironstone might be.

There's often not much to work with here. Often less than a millimetre in thickness, the cutter won't want to waste any precious opal. So they will interracially expose the layer of colour and follow it or trace it in an undulating nature to expose the vibrant colours. To allow this, boulder opal gems will often have an irregular surface and be cut in a free shape or free-form with irregular outline.

The opal cutter working with Lightning Ridge black opal, however, will often have the benefit of a thicker colour bar (as compared with boulder opal), so may choose to create a cabochon; cutting a high-domed precious gem if the colour bar agrees, or a lower-domed cabochon if that's all that is available.

It is likely he will produce an oval-cut gemstone as this is generally the most commercially viable shape. But free-form and irregular shapes are also produced for exotic designer jewellery.

Crystal opal and Light opal may be used to create both standardised-sized opal cabochons for jewellery and for more individually shaped free-form and opal carving.

Much of the commercial grade opal jewellery with standardised, calibrated sizes is cut from Light and Crystal opal from the South Australian fields. That's not to say plenty of these stones aren't still available for more exquisite shapes and carvings.

In considering the 'face' of the opal the cutter also takes into consideration the possibility of finding one of many named opal patterns – including 'butterfly wing', 'Chinese writing', 'harlequin' (often miss-used), 'rolling flash' and 'flagstone' among others.

Opal folklore is as vibrant as the stone; unique to Australia and to the outback regions of Australian pioneers from the 19th century.

As world renowned Australian opal expert Len Cram says, "Opal is like gold, once the fever is in your blood you can never get it out". Any opal cutter knows how right he is.

From <http://www.jewellermagazine.com>

## Continuing with Chapters 7 & 8 of the book From Rags to Riches & Disasters

By Peter Greis

### Chapter 7 – My new Partner

I got home and walked in and told Chris the latest what Ludwig told me. I took the opal chips and washed them in bowl and then I placed them in small Nescafe glass jar of which I had a few already made up. And they looked absolutely fantastic, plus the stone which Ludwig sliced of the piece of potch.

While Chris was preparing dinner, I had Beatrix sitting on my lap and she was looking at the jar with all the pretty colours in it. She said to me, "Daddy will you find more of these pretty stones, I can come with you and help you look for them".

I said "I know sweetheart you would find lots of them, but you see daddy is working and searching for these stones underground, and it is very dirty and does not smell to good, but I promise when I find another place which is above ground and has a lot of dirt then you and Mummy can come and help me to find some stones."

She was satisfied with this explanation and got up and said to Chris, "Mummy you promised me that I can have a little garden next to the house, can you help me tomorrow I like to grow some nice flowers". Chris told her that she will help her tomorrow. I was so great full that my family does not winge or moan about the situation, the only comment I have heard from Beatrix was when she asked Chris how long do we have to be here, Chris explained "Daddy wants to find enough of the coloured stones so we can buy a House in Adelaide, I am sure it will not be to long." I was so pleased and happy with my family knowing they are right behind me and belief in me, which of course feeds my ego and determination to not disappoint them.

I was sitting and staring at the jar of opal and my wheels are turning. I came to the conclusion without any equipment like a winch it would be an impossible task to extend any diggings and even starting a new tunnel and moving all the dirt in hessian bags pulling up by hand.

Chris ask why I am so silent and deep in thought, I told her" Chris I have to find someone who can help me and I need at least a Hand Winch to move the dirt if I want to continue there, tomorrow I will go down to the Co-Op as most people go there and I will ask if there is someone who wants to work with me and if there is winch for sale. " Chris replied "we should hear from Herman any day now, they should have sold everything by now and ready to come here if this is what they were going to do."

I said "Unfortunately I have no time to waste every day I do not produce anything we going backwards and our funds deplete even further."

On that note we had a quick shower and went to bed, I held Chris in my arm and said to her," I am really sorry I put you through all this, I should have done it when I was single not when I have a family to take care of." She said, "Look as long as we have each other we will be able to sustain anything, and please don't feel guilty about it, I have all the confidence that you will provide somehow for us, you always did." I hugged and kissed her and we went to sleep.

I was up at 6 am and full of spirit the opal fever surging through my veins, and I was sure that I will have a great and constructive day. I dressed grabbed a cup of coffee, and went to the co-op; there were already a lot of miners there to get petrol and diesel for their vehicles and machinery.

I greeted every one and exchanged some friendly words and then was my turn to fill up the car, there was a young guy in his early twenties well groomed not wild looking he was operating the Petrol bowser He introduced himself as Johnny Wacko and I told him my name we shook hands and he asked me if I am new on the field, I told him that I am here only a few days with my wife and daughter, I told him that I am looking for someone who might be able to work with me on my claim I would split everything down the middle. He said "Actually I am only filling in here for the guy who works normally here at the co-op but he is on holiday for another 2 weeks and I am only here till he gets back then I would be free. I was working with a guy and he left Andamooka to go to Coober Pedy to meet up with some family members and will work with them." I replied and you did not go with him." He said "No I wanted to stay on the fields but when this job is finished I will have to get back to Adelaide where I came from as I don't have any money no income and have no accommodation here, I am staying here at the Co-Op at the managers spare room for the time being." He then said "If you can wait for a couple of weeks and have any form of place where I could Camp out I would like to work with you, do you think you be able feed me till we find saleable stuff?" I replied, "I tell you what Johnny, let's not firm up anything, I go and speak to my wife and also see Jack Dutton as he has a Hutt which has an old Annex which we could convert fairly cheaply in to a room where you could camp out. I see if it is still available if we can transfer across and also I speak with Chris if she has no objection to have a lodger. I want promise anything and we have two weeks to decide." We shook hands and I paid for my Petrol and as I was going to drive off Mr. McCallum the Manager came out he said hello and we talked for a while I told him that I was a Butcher by trade and my dream is also Opal mining, I told him what Johnny and I was discussing and he said" He is good Kid, not a drinker works very hard, it is a shame that I have no permanent position for him, but he expressed he does not want anything permanent he came to Andamooka to mine Opal," I acknowledged what he told me said good bye and drove off I forgot to get a bottle of drink so I stopped at Johnny Lyons store and went in. He had a couple people in the shop so I waited, there was a guy in there he was at least 6 foot 6 or more, in very dirty clothes, he looked at me said "Hello and said new here?" I replied, "Yes been here a few days," He said "By the way my name is Frank, I am know

as Frank the Swede," I told him my name and told him "I have an old worked claim at Tee Tree Hill, but got all the problems in the world, it has a couple pillars with traces cannot take them out or it caves in, there are several tunnels leading off and some show strong traces of potch no colour of course but I been told it would need a blasting, and I have no idea about blasting and I am also worried that the blast may cave in the tunnel,"

He said "It depends where you place the charge, you must place it at the bottom of the face and drill down at an angle about three feet so it blows out the bottom and you then work the pick to take out the clay, rocks, gypsum etc., till you get to the level which you then drop on sheet and pull it up to inspect," I looked astounded and in disbelief, as he made it sound so simple and easy. Johnny Lyon said," If anyone knows about setting charges there is no one better on the field like Frank the Swede." My mind started ticking over and I said to him, "Are you working on a shaft or open cut," He replied," I am working on Boundary Rider digging in the side of an Open Cut by myself." He continued, "If you want I give you a hand for a while and we split what we get out, this is not a permanent arrangement it is only for a short while as I have to work my claim as well." I agreed and we shook hands and I said when are you ready to start?" He said," In a couple of days I have to just tidy up things and I will be ready." I told him we meet at the Co-Op on Wednesday which was the day when we start.

I was so excited again and I could already see my dream taking on shape. I could not wait to get home to Chris to tell her the exciting news; I had now two opportunities to have someone working with me. All I have to do now is to find out if Chris is ok with a move to the other hut and having a lodger which she has to feed as well.

I got in full of enthusiasm and excitement, I kissed my family and Chris said, "What are you doing home and why are you smiling like a Cheshire cat?"

I replied. "Today was the best day since we had the bad news about the Open Cut, I meet a guy at the co-op which would like to work with me, but there are conditions attached, I will not get angry and I will respect your decision on what I am telling you now." So I explained everything about Johnny Wacko, about moving to another hut and we feed him till we find saleable opal, then he will be paying board.

Chris just replied," Well if it helps you and also helps this young guy, then why should I refuse shelter and food if can afford it, I got no objection and maybe this other place is better if it is still available."

I told then Chris about Frank the Swede and she got all excited about our situation and said, "Let's hope this is the turning point."

She said to me, "Since you home can you take me down to the co-op I need a few things," I replied lets go, We went down to the co-op and did a bit of shopping and they had a notice board up, and I looked at it and saw an advert for a Winch with Villiers Motor for sale including three bucket and 100 feet of cable, three 12 foot Steel ladders and 6 twelve foot pipes for sliding the buckets on. The whole lot was \$1,000.00 Contact Peter Schultz at the Post Office, when I read this ad my mind started ticking over and I had to make a decision.

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## Chapter 8 – In for Shilling in for a Pound

While I went to see Jack Dutton Chris started to prepare a meal, I was wondering what is was. Jack was not there so went back and there was Steve the Greek standing outside our Shack and is talking with Chris, I joined them and after a couple of hello, Steve said, "I just came to look for you, and told your wife the reason for my call." I replied," And what would that be?" He continued by saying," Peter if you should be looking for working in a mine, I am looking for some to come in with me and work with me on Hallion Hill." I said," Don't you have someone working with you?" He came back with, "Yes I do but we have such a large area to cover and could use another hand, the way we work it is whatever we dig up and resembles coloured potch etc., we throw in a bucket we take it home and end of the week we clean it, sort it and sell it and split whatever we get three ways." "But

in the meantime if you need some money I will always let you have some and we take it out from your share." I looked at Chris and she said, "Darling it is your decision, but I think you should first see what happen with Frank and Johnny."

I agreed and said to Steve, "That's a very tempting offer Steve and I am sure will give it some consideration but I do have something lined up with Frank the Swede."

He made this comment, "Be careful with Frank he is very unpredictable and dangerous with Gelignite."

I said to him, "I will make sure of that, and please give me a couple of weeks and if you still look for someone then and I am not a Opal baron by then I will join you."

He smiled and replied, "That's fair enough."

He left and at the same time Jack Dutton drove in with his old Land Rover. I walked over to him and greeted him and asked him if he had a couple of minutes, to which he agreed and I told him of my dilemma and he replied with, "Yes it is still available but cost you a couple quid more the one you are in."

I told him this would be ok and he said "it is No.8 it is open have a look and if you feel good about come over and we fix things up." I thanked him went to get Chris and Beatrix and we went to have a look.

We were absolutely stoked when we saw it, it was bigger than the one we are in the main area had been divided in two rooms, the main room and a small room large enough to put the bed in for Beatrix so she got her own room and we had more privacy. I was already thinking how I would be able to be more intimate with Chris, and this solved the problem.

The place had a better Fridge also it had a two burner bench top gas stove, and the wood fire stove, table and 4 chairs, still the same Fold down Lounge to make the bed, an extra Kitchen cupboard, 4 wall Gas lamps plus a couple Kerosene Lamps with cylinders. It had two 44 gallon drums for water, but still the same Bucket Shower. We went and looked at the side where the annex was attached to the hut it was sheltered from sun and rain, it needed to be filled in with windows, which would be no problem Jack had plenty of building surplus laying around which we could use and I am sure I saw some louver windows, the frame is there but it was only screened of with fine mesh which was ripped. A few hours cutting and hammering and it will be done.

Chris walked back to continue the dinner whatever it was and I went to Jack and paid him the extra money and told him what I would like to do with the awning and asked him if I can scrounge through his building material and use whatever I need to do the job. He agreed and told where there were some tools hammer saw and nails etc.

I went back home and Chris was dishing up and she served me the most scrumptious 1lb T-Bone Steak with Potatoes and Mushrooms, my eyes just about popped out of my sockets and I stammered, "Where did you get his from," She said, "While you were gas bagging I bought it at the co-op butchery." I don't know Chris you always amaze me, with the things you do say and produce etc." And she dished up for her Mutton Chops and potatoes and mushrooms, and the same for Beatrix. I was going to ask why do I have a steak and they don't. Before I could speak she just said, "I know how much you love a nice T-Bone but we are happy with the Chops."

After Dinner I said to her "Tomorrow we move everything across, and I get Johnny to come up on Saturday and we will put in the widows in and finish off this awning.

We washed up and sat down and I got up to get something out of the suitcase I had in the wardrobe which was a bottle of "Liebfrau Wein" which is a drink we both liked.

She just looked and "uttered where did that come from?" I told her I bought it in Port Augusta and kept it for a special occasion which I feel is tonight." I have a lot to discuss with you, and what I would like to do is when Beatrix is asleep we sneak away for a little while, I am sure she will be ok. You know she is a good sleeper, we won't be gone that long and that far." She smiled and said, "What are you up

to? I hugged and kissed her and replied, "What do you think?" She said,

"Yes it had been quite a while since we have been alone."

Beatrix was in bed and looking one of her picture books and not to long after she dropped the book and turned over, we waited another halve hour to make sure she is sound asleep, without me prompting Chris she grabbed a Blanket and I took the Bottle of Wine went outside and started the Car, Chris was standing outside the door and was listening for a while for any sound from Beatrix, there was nothing so we drove off towards the Tree on Tee Tree Hill, we arrived and looked for a flat spot and we spread out the blanket and sat down, it was a beautiful starry night, we gazed at the Stars for a while in silence and I started speaking, "Darling I think I have to use some of our funds from the bank and spend it on mining equipment, "I would need \$ 1,000.00, I would like to purchase the equipment which was advertised on the co-op notice board."

She said "Darling it is obvious to do a good and save job you must have the right equipment, I understand that, all it means that you have be quicker with finding any Opal," and she smiled at me, "Now let's have a glass of wine."

I poured a couple of glasses and we toasted and drunk this golden nectar.

We looked into each other's eyes and noticed the sensual looks we exchanged, I took Chris into my arms and we laid back and we let our mutual desire take over our bodies and minds.

We returned back a couple of hours later only to find everything was just perfect.

Beatrix was sound asleep, I said to Chris, "I think we have to make an exception and go dirty to bed, she said I have still some luke warm water on the fire which we can use just to wash ourselves.

We went to bed and lay in each other's arm and went into a peaceful sleep.

I awoke very relaxed and full of fire ready to take on the world. Chris was already up and had the water boiling for a cup of coffee; Beatrix was outside playing in her make belief garden.

It was a glorious Friday morning and we were getting ready to move to the other hut. I went there first and lit the Kerosene fridge, checked the gas bottles for gas and the Water drums for water, everything was still full.

We did not pack up things we just carried all across and placed it straight into its appropriate place.

It took not more than a couple of hours and we vacated the hut and occupied the new one. Chris took also the curtains they did fit as the windows were the same size.

I asked her if she need me for anything, she replied "No I am fine you go and do what you have to," she added "Don't forget to take the Bankbook with you I think you will need it," and she smiled, kissed me and said "lovely night last night" and slapped me on the bum, I smiled back and replied "Sex Maniac." She grabbed a Broom and chased me out of the hut.

I never felt that good since I arrived here other then when I found that nice piece of Opal. My adrenalin is surging through my veins and I cannot wait to get my hands on the Pick and Bucket and move some serious dirt to get closer to my dream.

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## **Lost And Found: A Ring with a Story to Tell**

*January 22, 2011*

What do you call it when everything aligns to go your way?

A few months ago, Joanne Casalbore lost her wedding ring. She woke up on a Wednesday morning and didn't find it in either of the two places she usually sets it down. She looked around, wrote down all the places she'd been, then made calls. Nothing. Panic settled into despair.

Joanne had worn that ring for 33 years, since the day her husband-to-be gave it to her. It was Nov. 11, 1977, she says, without hesitating. She was heading from New Jersey to New York City for work, and he handed it to her before she left. "It's not very romantic,"



she says, but it was their moment, and she remembers it vividly, and so does he.

She later would have the diamond reset into a platinum wedding band. And now, that ring was gone.

"I felt so empty," she says. "And nothing, nothing could take that emptiness away."

By mid-November – almost a month after the ring was lost – Joanne's adult daughter, Ali, persuaded her parents to contemplate a replacement. One Saturday morning, Joanne and her husband, Carl, reluctantly headed out toward a jewelry store in South Park, near where Joanne works. But, as Joanne notes: "My husband is a man, and he turned in the wrong parking lot." That parking lot was another jeweler's – Donald Haack Diamonds and Fine Gems.

Joanne and Carl decided to go inside, where they were greeted by saleswoman Sara Wilkinson. Joanne told Sara about the lost ring, and Sara considered directing the couple to another salesperson who specialized in insurance claims. But Joanne was clearly upset, and Sara didn't want her to feel passed around.

The couple and the saleswoman spent more than an hour looking at diamonds and mountings. Joanne seemed to gravitate toward something completely unlike the ring she'd lost. "It's so different. It's so different," Carl said, gently. A couple of times, Joanne stopped the whole process to cry.

Says Sara: "Your wedding ring to me represents all the joys and tears of your marriage. You could see that all on her face."

Joanne and Carl narrowed things down to a couple of mounts and diamonds, then went home to think about it. They also considered trying to recreate the ring, and they kept in touch with Sara about that possibility. No one was in a rush.

At the end of the month, Sara received another phone call. A friend, Jackie Sherard, had something to show her. "I found something, and I'm pretty sure it's real," she said, after coming into the jeweler. She placed an unusual ring on Sara's desk. "Oh my God," Sara said.

The next day, Joanne came in with an appraisal of the lost ring. Sara had left a cautious phone message, and Joanne was skeptical, but then she watched Sara's eyes as she looked at the photo on the appraisal.

"You have the ring," Joanne said, more declaration than question. Sara pulled out a small cloth bag. She pulled the ring out of the bag. She placed it in Joanne's hand. There was screaming and jumping and, all across the office, crying.

"I still shake thinking about it," Joanne says.

Jackie, it turned out, had found the ring in an uptown parking garage – the same garage where Joanne's son parks his car. Joanne, who lives uptown, usually parks her car in a different garage, but she had used her son's spot on one day. She'd forgotten about that, so she'd never made the call to the same property manager Jackie called when she found the ring.

All of which makes the ring reunion even more unlikely. The Casalbores and Sara Wilkinson have thought about that often in the days since. What if Carl hadn't turned into the wrong parking lot that Saturday morning? What if Sara had handed them off to the other saleswoman? What if someone other than her friend Jackie had noticed something shiny on a parking garage floor in uptown?

"It's great," says Jackie, who never hesitated to reunite the ring with its owner. "A miracle," says Joanne, who thanked her with a gift and a hug. Says Sara, the saleswoman: "Amazing."

What do you call it when everything aligns to go your way? It happens more often than most of us probably want to admit, in big ways and small. We get green lights all the way home, or we happen upon the right moment, the right conversation. The right person.

That's harder to remember in times like these, when the stack of bad things in our lives seems to tower over the stack of good. Or maybe it's just human nature to see it like that.

Because when everything lines up to go our way, we call it serendipity.

And when everything doesn't, we call it life.

From <http://obsprimary.blogspot.com/2011/01/lost-and-found-ring-with-story-to-tell.html>

## Gem of a Find in Tip Mulch

*Ian Beynon with the opal he found in council garden mulch.*

*By Mike Knott 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011*

WHEN Kepnock man Ian Beynon decided to do some gardening while he was on leave on Monday, he didn't expect to find hidden treasure.

But that is exactly what happened when he put part of a load of mulch he had bought from the Bundaberg Regional Council around a tree in his garden.

Mr Beynon noticed something glinting in the sun, and when he took a closer look he saw it was a stone he recognised as an opal matrix.

"It was just a surprise," he said.

"I was overjoyed."

Mr Beynon said he recognised the stone because his older brother used to collect gems back in the '70s.

But he is still trying to work out how it got into the mulch.

"I'm surprised they didn't notice it when the stuff went through the mulcher," he said.

Mr Beynon said the stone had obviously once been part of a larger piece.

"It's got a flat bit on the side where it has obviously been cut off," he said.

"Somebody must have thrown it out with the rubbish."

Mr Beynon said while he did not think the stone would be very valuable, he hoped to have it made into some sort of jewellery for his partner.

"I could get it made into a pendant or something," he said.

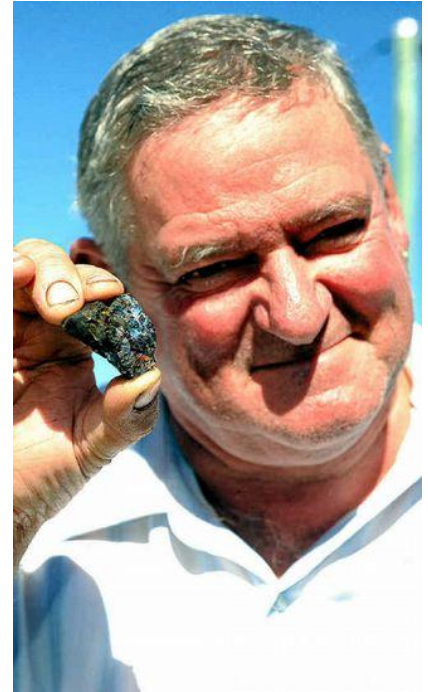
"I would like to see if there's more opal inside.

"I've got a friend who works with gemstones, I might see if he can do anything with it."

Mr Beynon said a neighbour of his said they should get a 10-tonne load of mulch and go through it with a sieve.

An Australian boulder matrix opal is precious opal mixed with the parent rock, ironstone, rather than having been deposited in seams or patches, like boulder opal. The parent rock contains iron, and the opal matrix is only found in Queensland.

From <http://www.news-mail.com.au/story/2011/06/24/gem-of-a-find-in-tip-mulch>





*Chrysocolla chalcedony (gem silica) - Top quality cabochon, drusy cabochon in a pendant, botryoidal cabochon, and carving*

## Two Greenish Chalcedonies: Gem Silica and Chrysoprase

*By Lee Peterson*

I was recently asked what the difference was between these two minerals and I did not have a ready answer. So after a little research, here it is: both of these minerals are chalcedonies that are colored by impurities. A chalcedony is an aggregate of submicroscopic quartz crystals intermeshed together that are translucent and of a single color. Brown to orange carnelian is a more common and well-known type of chalcedony.

The less common and more valuable type of chalcedony with vivid greenish blue color is *gem silica*. More correctly it would be called chrysocolla chalcedony because it is composed of near colorless chalcedony that has been stained, on a microscopic level, by infiltration of solutions carrying the same copper salts which give color to the mineral chrysocolla.

Note: Chrysocolla is too soft and fragile (H = 2 - 4) to be useable for jewelry purposes. Pure chrysocolla generally have a chalky, crumbly texture, or occur as thin powdery crusts on the surface of a rock. Gem silica has quartz's hardness of 7 and excellent toughness; it is quite suitable for jewelry use. Sources include Arizona, New Mexico, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines. Rarely, gem silica occurs in botryoidal (with a bubble-textured surface) or drusy (with a sugar-like crystal coating) form.



*Cabochons and carvings of fine quality chrysoprase*

Chrysoprase is chalcedony whose rich green color is derived from the presence of minute particles of a nickel containing mineral, willmseite. Geologically it forms as a precipitate from solutions containing silica and nickel compounds, generally derived from the weathering of serpentines. These solutions crystallize in fissures, cracks and cavities in various types of rocks. Historically deposits have been found in Eastern Europe, the US, Russia and Brazil, but most of today's chrysoprase production comes from Information and images are used with permission from Dr. Barbara Smigel, <http://www.bwsmigel.info/>

## Opal Grading System Aims to Restore Confidence

*By Sonia Nair, June 14, 2011*

Brisbane-based gem company Opal Horizon has launched a comprehensive quantifiable opal grading system as the first step in a global marketing effort to restore confidence in the gemstone.

Opal Horizon managing director David Horton said his company enlisted the expertise of international opal authorities to formulate the grading system in the hope that it would make opal gradings and valuations more transparent and therefore help increase worldwide acceptance of opals in the jewellery industry.

"After interviewing the CEOs of around 20





of the top jewellery companies in the world, we found that every single person was saying the same thing. There was no transparency in how opals were classified, graded and valued," Horton said.

Opal Horizon unveiled its opal grading system at the Gemological Institute of America's (GIA) Symposium on May 30 and Horton said it received "excellent" feedback from key industry players.

With Opal Horizon's grading system, jewellers and consumers can evaluate opal by quantifiable grading parameters based on the opal's category, colour and cut. 'Category' stands for the presence and degree of host rock in the opal, 'colour' assigns points to the opal according to its face, body tone, play of colour, brightness, pattern, directionality and special attributes while 'cut' looks at the opal's finish and polish, ease of setting, symmetry or balance and exclusion of defects.

Assessment of these three quality features will categorise an opal into five quality grades ranging from 'exceptional gem opal' to 'fine gem opal', 'gem opal', 'commercial opal' and 'promotional opal'. The grading system also allows for certification of quality.

Opal Horizon has also developed an international marketing strategy to reintroduce and promote opals to retailers and consumers. As part of the strategy, it intends to implement a retail education programme on opals.

Horton believes local retailers will reap the benefits of this grading system.

"There are a lot of myths and uncertainty about opal and while some retailers will admit that they prefer it that way because they can sell at the price they want, they admit it has damaged the industry and this is now the best way forward," he said.

While he concedes that the Opal Horizon-formulated grading system is not the first of its kind, he feels it is evolutionary and gemmologist Helen Levonis who gave a presentation at the GIA symposium about the grading system agreed with Horton.

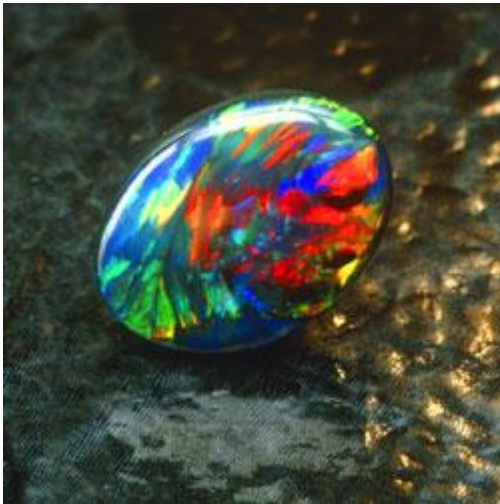
"While there are other grading, appraisal and evaluation programmes for natural precious opal, none have caught on as an industry standard because they are either too consuming, too complex or too simplified," Levonis said.

Several gemmologists from Opal Horizon will be attending the National Opal Symposium in Lightning Ridge in late July to talk about the new grading system and the company is also looking to get the grading system promoted in GIA publications.

"GIA does set global standards and by getting it accepted by GIA, which we appear to have done, we expect this will be the first step towards global acceptance," Horton said.

Horton hopes global acceptance will increase opal's standing in Australia, where more than 95 per cent of gem-quality opal is produced. "The Australian opal industry wants to grow but it doesn't want to change. You can't do one without the other."

From <http://www.jewellermagazine.com/>



## July 2011 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at <http://rockngem.com/showdates/>  
JULY 2011:

*The Opal Express*

*The American Opal Society*

*July 2011*

*Page 7*

**9-10—CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA:** 50th annual show; Culver City Rock & Mineral Club; Culver City Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 4117 Overland Ave.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; demonstrations, jewelry classes, club displays and exhibits, youth games, more than 35 dealers, gems, jewelry, minerals, fossils, tools, beadwork, castings, wire-wrap, carvings, glass-work, rough slabs, polished cabs, jewelry displays, door prizes, free specimens for junior rockhounds; contact Robert Thirlaway, (310) 462-2269; e-mail: [fiestaofgems@gmail.com](mailto:fiestaofgems@gmail.com); Web site: [www.culvercityrocks.org](http://www.culvercityrocks.org)

**14-16—NYSSA, OREGON:** Show, "Thunderegg Days"; Nyssa Chamber of Commerce; Nyssa Elementary School Grounds, 105 Main St.; Thu. 10-9, Fri. 10-9, Sat. 10-9; free admission; daily rock tours, search for thunder eggs, moss agate, petrified wood, or pink plume, rock and gem vendors; contact Susan Barton, 105 Main St., Nyssa, OR 97913, (541) 372-3091; e-mail: [nyssachamber@nyssachamber.com](mailto:nyssachamber@nyssachamber.com); Web site: [www.nyssachamber.com](http://www.nyssachamber.com)

**15-17—REEDSPORT, OREGON:** Annual show; Lower Umpqua Gem & Lapidary Society; Reedsport Community Bldg., 415 Winchester Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; free admission; dealers, demonstrators, Spin the Wheel, silent auction, door prizes, displays, raffle, gems, minerals, opals, turquoise, crystals, faceted gems, silversmithing, fossils, lapidary tools and equipment; contact Bill Hendrickson, 100 River Bend Rd., Space 17, Reedsport, OR 97467, (541) 271-6816

**15-17—SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA:** Annual show; Gem Faire Inc.; Marin Center, 10 Avenue of the Flags; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7 weekend pass, children 11 and under free; jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

**16-17—DARRINGTON, WASHINGTON:** Show and sale; Marysville Rock & Gem Club; Mansford Grange Hall, 1265 Rail Road Ave.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; free admission; displays, amateur dealers, demonstrations, kids' activities, Thunder Egg cutting, scholarship raffle, door prizes, free rock pile, rock pools, used tools and machines; contact Edward Lehman, 9120 20th St. SE, Lake Stevens, WA 98258, (425) 334-6282; e-mail: [wsmced@hotmail.com](mailto:wsmced@hotmail.com)

**16-17—ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA:** 42nd annual show; Gem City Rock & Mineral Society; JMC Ice Arena, 423 W 38th St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$3, seniors \$2, children under 12 free; rocks, gems, jewelry, minerals, fossils, wire wrapping, findings, beads, Mini-Mine, Discovery Blocks; contact Bob Gallivan, (814) 454-6770; e-mail: [gallivan@lycos.com](mailto:gallivan@lycos.com); Web site: [www.gemcityrockclub.org/show.htm](http://www.gemcityrockclub.org/show.htm)

**16-17—SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA:** Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7 weekend pass, children 11 and under free; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

**23-24—KALISPELL, MONTANA:** Annual show; Northwest Montana Rock Chucks; Flathead County Fair Grounds, Grandstand Bldg., 265 N. Meridian Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$1; demonstrations, silent auction, door prizes, minerals, jewelry, kids' activities; contact Milah Gano, P.O. Box 433, Lakeside, MT 59922, (406) 844-3560; e-mail: [mallards\\_g@hotmail.com](mailto:mallards_g@hotmail.com)

**23-24—TENINO, WASHINGTON:** 17th annual show, "Rock & Gem Rendez-Vous"; Washington Agate & Mineral Society, Tenino Rock Cruisers; Parkside Elementary School, Stage St. South (I-5 exit 88); Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-5; free admission; dealers, demonstrations, door prizes, spinning wheel, displays, during the Oregon Trail Days Celebration; contact Daniel De Boer, 5107 Brenner Rd. NW, Olympia, WA 98502; e-mail: [keylock1@live.com](mailto:keylock1@live.com)

**28-31—FRANKLIN, NORTH CAROLINA:** Retail show; Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin; Macon County Community Bldg., 1288 Georgia Rd.; Thu. 10-6, Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-4; adults \$3, seniors and students \$2, children 12 and under free; minerals, beads, handcrafted jewelry, rough and cut stones, lapidary equipment, demonstrations, door prizes, gold and silver jewelry, findings, jewelry repairs and mounting; contact Linda Harbuck, 425 Porter St., Franklin, NC 28734, (800) 336-7829; e-mail: [lindah@franklinchamber.com](mailto:lindah@franklinchamber.com); Web site: [www.visitfranklinnc.com](http://www.visitfranklinnc.com)

**29-31—LYNDEN, WASHINGTON:** Annual show; Gem Faire Inc.; NW Washington Fair & Events Center, 1775 Front St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

**29-31—PRESCOTT, ARIZONA:** 8th annual show and sale; Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, 3700 Willow Creek Rd.; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; adults \$2, children 12 and under free; contact Maggi Lieber, (520) 831-0017, e-mail: [flullierox@hotmail.com](mailto:flullierox@hotmail.com); or Judy Sullins, (928) 445-1117, e-mail: [sullinsjs@cableone.net](mailto:sullinsjs@cableone.net); Web site: [www.prescottgemmineral.org/shows.htm](http://www.prescottgemmineral.org/shows.htm)

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**JPG 05 - Mixed Andamooka Inlay**  
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**JPG 06-Andamooka Gem**  
0.124 oz \$725



**JPG 07 - Gem Crystal**  
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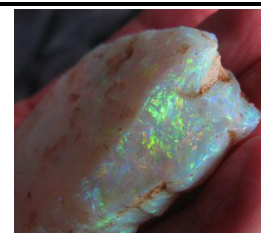
**JPG 08 - Gem Reds & Greens**  
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**NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:**  
 PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname, or name of your opal related business.

**MEMBERSHIP ROSTER:** 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.

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**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.  
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 Thank you,  
 The Editor

# The Opal Express

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

Volume #44 Issue #7  
July 2011

TO:

## Some Topics In This Issue:

- Passing of Member Dr. John Hiller
- The Art of Opal Cutting
- A Ring with a Story to Tell
- From Rags to Riches & Disasters – Chapters 7 & 8
- Gem of a Find in Tip Mulch
- Gem Silica and Chrysoprase
- Opal Grading System

## Important Dates:

July 6 - Board Meeting

## July 14 - General Meeting:

Lothar Vallot, Gemology Program Facilitator at Santiago Community College and proprietor of Otten, Vallot & Co. will present "Stimulants, Synthetics, and Treatments"

### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

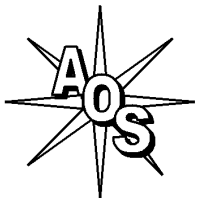
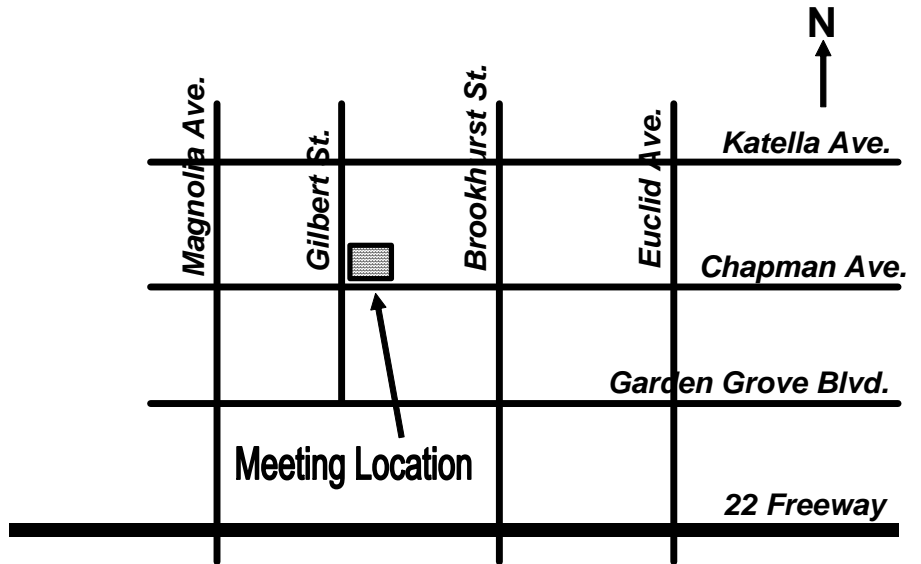
2nd Thurs. of the Month  
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

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

# July 14th Lothar Vallot on "Stimulants, Synthetics, and Treatments"



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