



American Opal Society

P.O. Box 3895, Downey, California 90242
(213/869-4155)

Monthly Newsletter

June 5, 1976

Meeting Dates:

June.....Thursday, June 10, 1976

Time: 7:30 P.M.

Place: Downey Moose Lodge 663
12741 S. Bellflower (Second Floor)
Downey, California

July.....Thursday, July 8, 1976

NOTE: New Time: 7:30 P.M.
Meeting Place Place: ELKS LODGE (ANTLER ROOM)
Starting in July(see map) 1223 WOODRUFF AVE, DOWNEY, CA

May Meeting

Our American Opal Society is riding the crest of a surge of interest in carving. Comes naturally, with opal being one of our most interesting materials to carve, as well as one that won't require quite as much time as some of the harder stones. Our May meeting featured another carver of renown, our own "Carvin' Marvin" Wilson. One of Marvin's recent achievements is reported in great detail in a long article in the May 1976 Lapidary Journal. The Journal article, written by one of its contributing editors, states that the 9-pound ruby crystal used for the carving may be the world's largest. The work, commissioned by a Texas philanthropist, was a collaborative effort by Marvin Wilson and Lincoln Borglum of Montana's great granite face carving fame.

Marvin modestly acknowledged he was still learning to carve, and added that the statement applied particularly to carving opal. To demonstrate how he had come to appreciate the carving qualities of our favorite gemstone, Marvin displayed a very large opal cabochon that would have been an unacceptable piece in the usual cab form. But by judicious removal of the potchy places, and a minimum of the good opal, a beautifully stylized face remained on the surface of the cab. It is now a beautiful carving of some value.

It was thus that Marvin illustrated that often the alternating areas of fire and patch in the opal will suggest a carving design -- a face, a flower, or some leaves, or unlimited other combinations. Standard calibrated stones (cabs) require cutting away and losing 40 to 60%, and more, of the volume of the rough opal. But a good carving can often utilize 90% of the rough. The carving can also be arranged to show the best fire to best advantage. It's not unreasonable to even use scrap and throwaway pieces from the capping process as sources of material.

A word of caution was given. At some times during the carving process it is necessary to work dry in order to see the detail. Marvin says that some opal being marketed today is so poor it becomes an explosion looking for a place to happen! And during that dry work which generates heat in the stone and requires close observation of detail, better have some safety shielding for the eyes. Polishing can be more hazardous than cutting, as more localized heat is generated. Marvin tried testing with the tongue, but soon discovered that a wet tongue touched to a hot opal can produce disastrous results!

As to the tools for carving, Marvin says there are many ways to carve as there are carvers. He found the various muzzy wheels and separating discs dusty and short-lived. He found the various diamond tools satisfied his needs, and faster than anything else. Sometimes too fast! But he cautioned that shallow carvings are really not good, high relief is much preferred. Marvin uses the hand-held flex shaft tools, although he acknowledges that there are experts who hold the work against a tool on a fixed arbor machine.

Marvin noted one other advantage of the opal over any other stone. The opal can produce any and all the colors of the rainbow, regardless of its form or shape. No precision cutting or faceting is needed to bring out its beauty! This characteristic has enabled opal to contribute, as much as any other factor, to the popularity of the lost wax casting process, from the day when it was considered a disreputable practice.

We all appreciate these words of wisdom from Marvin Wilson's years of satisfying practice in his profession.

Item: Carver John Haidostian offers instruction in the "famous" Judd shop on the fourth Wednesday of each month. And Bill Judd continues to offer his knowledge and use of shop and equipment to new members and beginners each Monday and Tuesday.

Item: At the May meeting, Chicago visitor Lyle Backus reported on the activities of a group of opal experts in that city. They sense a growth in popularity of opal.

Item: The June meeting will be the last one held in the Downey Moose Lodge. The new meeting location for July will be ELKS LODGE, 1223 Woodruff, Downey, CA. We will meet in the ANTLER ROOM which is the large meeting room behind the ELKS Lodge.

Item: Ex bulletin editor James Sgro, who although just finishing high school, has been active in opal cutting and lost wax casting, as well as lecturing on these activities to rock clubs, has just been apprenticed to goldsmiths in a notable Beverly Hills jewelry manufacturer's establishment.

Item: The June meeting of the AOS will feature a talk by Roger Pearman about types of opals and opal mining. He also will show a slide tour of the Australian opal fields.

Item: Election of officials of the AOS will take place at the upcoming June meeting.

Item: Organization of the annual AOS Opal Show and Opal Seminar is completed. The show will take place at the Norwalk Civic Center, 12700 Norwalk Blvd, Norwalk, CA on October 9 and 10, 1976. The Seminar topics for the first session will be Opal Selection, Opal Cutting, Origin of Color, and Type Identification; the topics for the second session will be Opal Mining in Mexico, Srencer Idaho, and Australia, Opal Estetics, and Jewelry Design for Opals.

Editor: Jack K. Lennard

Contributing

Editors: Jim Sgro
Jim Holland

MAP OF LOCATION OF NEW MEETING PLACE FOR AOS

