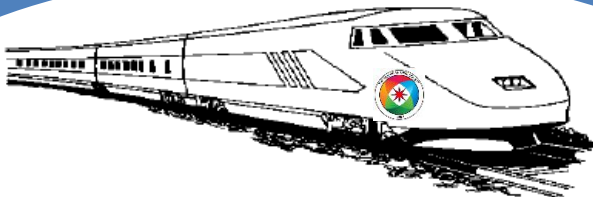


The Opal Express

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August 2020

Volume 53 Issue 8

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

We are now in the middle of summer and I hope everyone is still safe and healthy and keeping busy with jewelry or lapidary projects. I think we're in for a really hot summer – I hope everyone is able to stay cool!

Plans continue for next year's opal show. It's so strange not sending out postcards and flyers to dealers, schools and members. But rest assured, next year we will be sending out show notifications as soon as the Governor has given the California the green light to open up!

In the meantime, stay safe, healthy and keep busy!

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

Member area access is available only to members in good standing. Any other entry is unauthorized.

USER NAME: member
PASSWORD: BEntonite (case sensitive).

-- August General Meeting --

Due to the on-going pandemic stay-at-home order, we are not planning on a General Meeting for August.

However, the possibility of having a Zoom meeting has been brought up and if that's feasible, we will send out information regarding such a meeting.

Stan McCall, AOS President



If you don't already follow us on facebook, you're missing out on some great videos about opal cutting and polishing!

Check us out at:

<https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOpalSociety/>

And don't forget to like our page!

An Opal Story from The Land Down Under

by Mary Aracic
as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James

The following true story was sent to me by Mary Aracic. Does her name sound familiar? It should. Mary and her husband Stephen have written several of the best opal books ever published, including Stephan's recent autobiography, "Determined".

Dear Editor,

This letter from Dr. Archie Kalokerinos MB.B.S., portrays his feelings so much that it should be told in his honour . . .

Mary Aracic

Dear Stephen,

Words fail me when I describe my reactions to your book. It is indeed magnificent!

The photography is superb, the set out is perfect. You are to be congratulated.

It is a pleasure to show it to friends and associates and I like to look at it whenever I get depressed with the awful realities of medicine.

The photography on page 393 is just too good. I love it . . .

Dr. Archie Kalokerinos

Mary explains : "The opal he refers to sat on my shovel of opal dirt in nobby form, with just a hint of green amongst the opal dirt - such a rare event that I had to get Stephen's attention, who was gouging with the pick. He saw red where he stood on the far side of the shovel - so we exchanged sides in excitement. Then it was time for a coffee as we sat down to admire the wonders of nature."

"Stephen morphed the nobby into a gem of brilliant colours - that grace our soft cover book, "Rediscover Opals in Australia".

The following is Archie's story and what lead him to become an opal miner.

Dr. Archie Kalokerinos graduated MB.B.S. from the University of Sydney in 1951, and after a period as ships doctor. He spent the next six years in English hospitals. On his return he'd missed the blue sky - the brightness of his native land and the pure smell of the gum trees

His six years in England was very rewarding but he needed a medical practice and was wondering how to get one when a voice on the phone one night said to him, "I'm the secretary of the hospital in Collarenebri. We need a doctor. If you can come, even for a short time, it will help a lot."

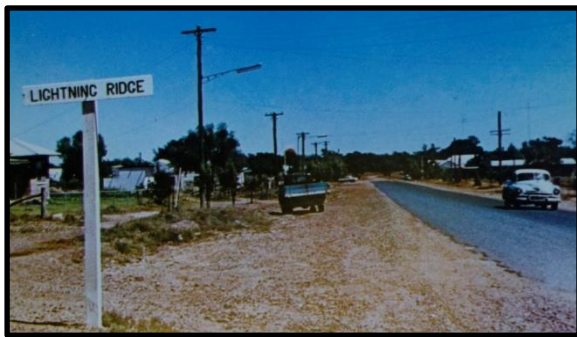
"I'll come for three weeks", said the doctor thinking it would give him time to find better, but he forgot to ask where Collarenebri was, so he had to ask a neighbour who had been there once! "Five hundred miles. It's very dry. I don't think you'll like it very much!"

Upon his arrival in Collarenebri, he was called to attend to a small boy who lay in a coma in the small township of Lightning Ridge 60 miles away and there was a fierce thunderstorm. The road was not sealed back then, so he got hopelessly bogged and had to walk four miles through the mud and slush to the nearest house and phone.

The bush nurse who answered his enquiries was not impressed with his predicament and said, "Oh yes, the boy? The policeman found that he'd been at his father's whiskey. No need to worry now."

"No need to worry." Archie said to the farmer who later helped to drag his car onto firmer ground. "What sort of people are they over there?" "Opal miners" the farmer replied. "Lightning Ridge is the only place in the world that produces black opal. It's an interesting place. Before you go back to Sydney, you must go out and see it."

Driving home on that day, across the ridges and plains fresh by the rain, the good doctor experienced for the first time "the spell of the inland". He saw a few drovers with their sheep, some kangaroos jumping through the bush and listened to the murmur of the breeze as it found its way through nature's wonderlands.



Entering Lightning Ridge



Digger's Rest Hotel

He vowed not to unpack his clothes for soon he would be going back to the city. But overnight, he changed his mind and spent eight turbulent, but happy years in Collarenebri.

He answered the call within 10,000 square miles that had been placed so quickly in his care, but most of all, he wanted to start a surgery in Lightning Ridge – “only once a week”. It was enough to taste another thrill and learn the secrets of nature’s rarest and most precious black opal.

So the good doctor’s love affair with opal came on him in so many different ways, from his patients in Lightning Ridge, that he couldn’t believe it would ever happen to him, that is until he met a man who found the multi-million dollar run in Coober Pedy. So he went there for a holiday that lasted three years.

But having learnt from a patient in his 30’s with coronary heart disease, it made him think seriously of his own health. Any man is liable to heart disease if he doesn’t take care of his own health, because he felt that his chances of a heart attack was high if he didn’t take a holiday - in a world far away from medicine.

No more lack of exercise, over-eating and mental tension. So he decided to act right away. He’s become an opal miner for a year or so - lead the life of a labourer. At the same time, he might get the chance of making a million. But when he announced his decision, people thought he was mad. A few envied him, while others feared he might injure his hands or lose his doctoring skills.

His relations worried if he’d lost all reason. That said, “He’ll strike it rich for sure”, so the doctor felt that he’d be obliged to produce great riches or never show his face in civilisation again. So for a greater understanding of this project, he had to organise a team to work with.

He blended in with Greeks, Italians, Germans, Cypriots and a mixture of Australians. Living with them, he became bearded, unwashed and unkempt, as water was scarce. He helped sink many fruitless shafts until his doctors hands bled. And as the months went by, he like many men before him, gripped by the fascination of the desert and the illusive opal.

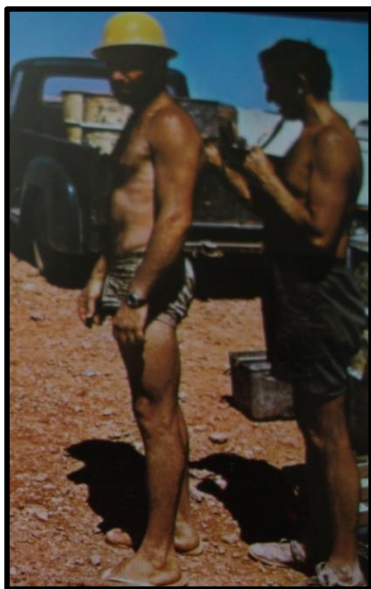
He not only braved the heat, but dust and flies, and miles of sunburnt plains and cloudless sky, a pattern of mine shafts with white sandstone dumps, tin sheds and dugouts that served as houses, and a never ending wind. That is Coober Pedy. For some a place of fortune, for others a living hell. Mostly on a plateau that spreads endlessly to the east in a gentle roll surrounded by the beauty of the Stuart Ranges.

After rain the desert blooms on a carpet of green, with colourful wild flowers, then returns to dust and gibbers (rounded stones).

When he settled into life in Coober Pedy, the thought that opal might be a few days away made him forget everything else. The heat, the isolation, the flies and the living conditions. Excitement within made him smile, which a work mate noticed, warning him to take it easy and prepare for plenty of hard work and sorrow.

As mining progressed he felt 100% fit, sleeping, working and living became a pleasure. He loved the country around him and the sky above. But his doctors skills didn’t go unnoticed. Once work got around, so he set a makeshift shed to treat those in need.

He lived through hope, disappointment and at other times, sadness as a team of miners left, broken financially and in spirit. Nothing upset him more than this. While a team worked, there was hope, when they left, hope left with them. But humour, as well as hope amongst the miners made him laugh, as he had almost forgotten how to laugh. The thought of opal is better than all the medicine in the world.



The doctor examines a patient

The day that launched the “Great Opal Rush” happened when the doctor and his mate, John, called to see Jack Cassimatis on the way home from work, to sample some of his coffee. Before long, a very powerful Greek pulled up outside in a 1952 Ford Prefect - a very small car for one so big. He was introduced to the doctor as “Big Jim”, who felt that he was broke and in a bad way.

Something had upset him. He called Jack outside for a long talk, and it was found what the trouble was. Big Jim had been told that there was opal about 25 miles away. He went to investigate and found some great “floaters” or surface opal. These had probably come from a nearby hill and Big Jim thought there was a good chance that opal would be in the hill. In confidence, he told one of his neighbours about it. They agreed to go out to have a look. But the next day, the neighbour didn’t turn up. Jim drove out to the spot along was amazed to find that the whole hill had been pegged and claimed. His neighbour had told someone else, and the news got around.

There was a rush and within a few hours, the whole hill was taken up. Naturally Big Jim was upset. Doctor heard him say, “I work hard here, you know that. When I find it, they take it away from me.” He was almost in tears.

Jack had to calm him down. “I’ll go out with you first thing in the morning and see what we can do.” It was a hard place to get to - narrow, deep loose sand, eroded gullies and no landmarks.

The whole hill looked like a cemetery, pegs were everywhere. Seven teams of miners had taken all the choice bits of ground and were standing looking at each other with considerable hostility. They were prepared to protect their own interests in any way possible.

Jim was very angry by this time. Big and strong, he looked as if he could the lot up. Fortunately, Jack was there to keep the peace. Doctor had no doubt that he prevented bloodshed.

How he did it, Doc didn’t know. Perhaps because he was older and the others respected him. He was tough too, despite his age. There was not many there who would stand up against him. The final result of Jack’s threats, persuasions and argument was that everyone on the hill agreed to form one big company. Work separate claims but share equally. “The doctor will draw up the contract.” Jack said. “Everyone will sign. Come to my place tonight for coffee.”

Doc was dumbfounded and said, “Do you think there’s opal there?” “Of course not.” Jack replied. “I walked all over that hill and not a sign of sandstone.” “Then why so much trouble?” asked Doc. “Young fellows.” said Jack. “Within a week, they’ll get sick of it and leave. The main thing is to preserve the peace.”

Coffee that night developed into a party. The ones feeling lucky were in high spirits - drinking, singing and dancing. One particular man, had already mentally spent his first \$200,000.

The contract that the doctor typed in multiple copies was a “masterpiece” that would never stand up in a court of law.

To create an impression, he included as many long legal terms as he could remember. Everyone signed and everyone had a copy. And they drank to his health. “Why don’t you come with us?” they asked. Doc asked Bill what he thought. “No.” he laughed. “It’s a waste of time.”

Next morning a cavalcade of vehicles, compressors, tools and men headed out for the new field. They were still singing and shouting “opal, opal” as they drove down the road. Work began with such an energy that it seem impossible. After all, why not? It is not very day that one gets to dig out \$200,000.

It was a race to see who would get to the bottom first. Tony did - by a long margin. He went down 90 feet into hard blue - surely something was wrong. The others compared notes - hard blue too, not even opal bearing ground.

Damn this place, it's no good, they said, so everyone left as Jack had forecast. Only the crows remained to ponder the folly of man.

After three months of digging, Doc and his mates hadn't found any opal. But it wasn't just them finding any. Even Bepi at the miner's store was worried. His credit outlay was enormous. Refusing old customers was hard, but he had little choice.

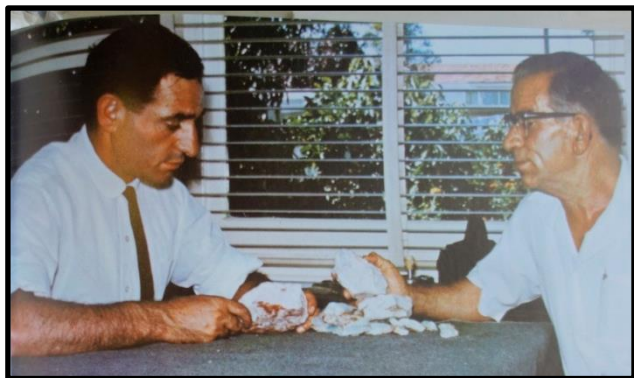
Some boys living nearby did very little work. They would sit about for hours doing nothing or spend their time shooting birds.

"They're queer fellows, why don't they work?" said Doc to Bill. "No guts left." Bill replied "Sadly, it gets you down after a while."

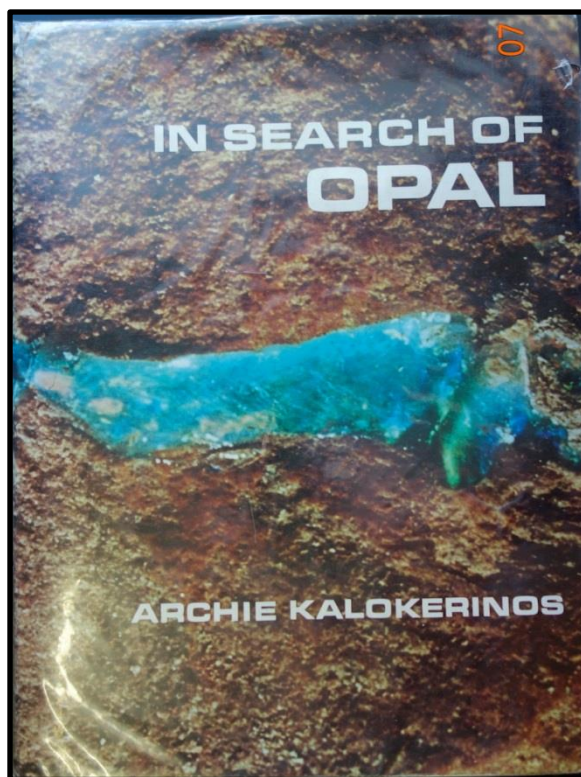
Doc discovered the truth. Not no guts, but no money. They couldn't buy gelignite to work, with no food to eat. Day-by-day they hung around hoping that some miracle would happen and allow them to continue mining. The birds they shot were cooked to eat.

One day they woke up to find they'd gone. Not a single goodbye or farewell.

At last the good doctor struck opal and his account of the strike is one of the most exciting stories ever told.

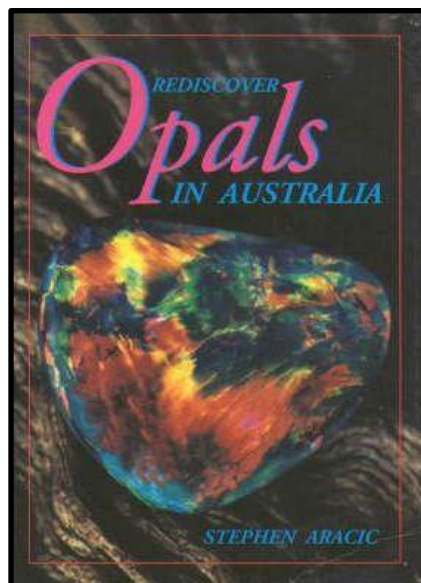


Dr. Archie Kalokerinos examining some of the opal which George Christianos, *left*, and his family dug out of the Eight Mile mine.



Find more of Dr. Kalokerinos's fascinating opal mining adventures in his book, "In Search of Opal".

As AOS Editor, I would like to thank Mary and Stephen Aracic again for allowing us to share this story. We look forward to sharing more opal mining stories from Down Under!



This is the book referenced in the story by Dr. Kalokerinos and Mary Aracic.

~ Bench Tips ~

This page will be dedicated to bench tips and techniques from our readers. If you have bench tips you'd like to share, let us know! Bench tips can be anything - metal work, lapidary, wirework - anything creative that you would like to share. Send your tips to: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

STRAIGHTENING WIRE

by Brad Smith

Have you ever pulled out some silver wire only to find that it's all bent up? The easiest way I've found to straighten it out is to stretch it a bit.

Simply put one end in the vise and grab the other end with a pair of serrated tip pliers. Then pull just enough to feel the wire stretch like a rubber band. This works best on smaller wire diameters, up to about 16 ga.

Be careful if you are trying to pull hard on a thick wire. Brace yourself in case the wire breaks or pulls out of the pliers.



DO BEZELS SHRINK

by Brad Smith

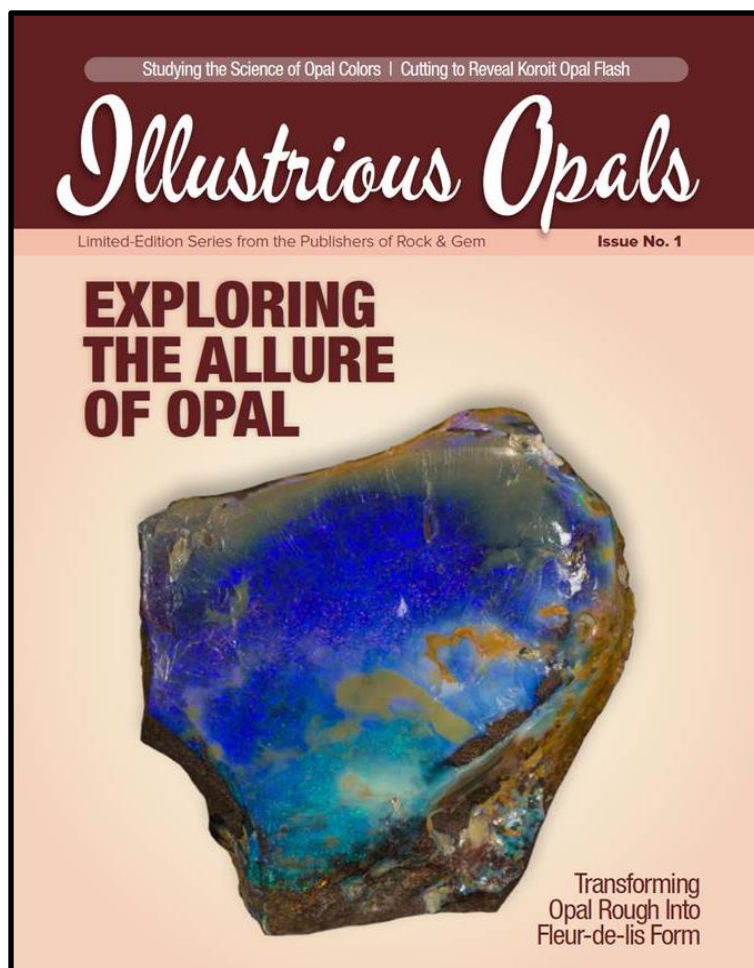
The engineer in me says there's no reason a bezel should shrink when I solder it onto a base plate, but I sometimes find that the stone won't quite fit into the bezel that was perfect just before soldering.

If that ever happens to you, here's a fix that usually works for those times when there's just a minor problem. I file or sand the stone down a little around it's base. For soft cabs like turquoise, lapis, jet or Howelite, you can use a sanding stick. Harder cabs like jasper or agates will require a diamond file. In a pinch, a ruby nail file from the drugstore will work.

There are two important things to remember when doing this. First, you can only make a minor adjustment to the stone's size. All filing or sanding has to be hidden by the bezel because it takes the polish off the stone.

Secondly, remember to round off all sharp edges on the bottom of the stone. A sharp edge here might sit on a little extra solder that's in the bottom joint of your bezel. Just a little bump here can put enough stress the stone to risk breakage when you burnish the bezel down over the stone.

Work Smarter & Be More Productive with Brad's "How To"
Jewelry Books on [Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)



If you would like to further your education about opals, then you have to check out Rock & Gem's Illustrious Opals!

Rock & Gem has a very exciting new limited edition series entitled Illustrious Opals coming out soon that is free for the first 6 months on our website and free to subscribers. The team at Rock & Gem magazine are producing a new multi-medium series of references entitled, Illustrious Opals. This limited-edition series includes four digital issues, available at the end of June, August, October, and the middle of December.

Each issue will contain a unique mixture of feature articles that discuss the science of opals, mining history, the present-day market, and operations involving opal extraction, and a gallery of various types and presentations of opal gemstones.

Each issue in the series also will include columns about working with opals as a lapidary material, a recap of recent sales of opals at auction, plus profiles of sponsor businesses that specialize in opals as part of their operation.

Visit www.rockngem.com July 1 to download Illustrious Opals. In addition to the digital issues, beginning with the August print issue of Rock & Gem, there will be a two-page glimpse at the gallery section of the upcoming Illustrious Opals issue. Last, but certainly not least, every issue will be available for single-copy purchases; however, as a token of appreciation, every digital issue of Illustrious Opals will be sent to current subscribers for free.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reader: If your organization has an opal or rockhound-related event, please email particulars to info@opalsociety.org. Upcoming Event listings will be included at the discretion of The Opal Express editor as space and scheduling permit.

August 15 – 16; TEHACHAPI, CA

Tehachapi Valley Gem and Mineral Society

500 East "F" Street, Tehachapi

Hours: 9 am – 5 pm

Contact: (661) 972-1117

Web site: <http://www.tvgms>

Annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

We have a wide variety gems, minerals

and jewelry plus kids activities and much more.

September 26-27; LANCASTER, CA

Palmdale Gem & Mineral Club

Antelope Valley Fairgrounds

2551 West Ave H, Lancaster

Hours: 10-5 Daily

Contact: Allison McClung; 661-839-7403

Email: ali_cares@aol.com

Website: palmdalegemandmineral.org

September 26 - 27; LODI, CA

Stockton Lapidary & Mineral Club

Earth Treasures Gems Minerals &

Jewelry Show

Lodi Grape Festival Grounds

413 E. Lockeford St., Lodi, CA 95240

Hours: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Contact:

Email:

Website: <https://stocktonlapidary.org/>

September 26-27; LONG BEACH

Long Beach Mineral & Gem Society

Long Beach Expo Arts Center

4321 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach 90807

Sat. 10 am – 5 pm, Sun 10 am – 4 pm

Gems by the Beach: Activities including Gold panning, displays, children's activities, demonstrators, door prizes, food trucks, free admission free parking. Dealers will be

selling a variety of gems, jewelry, rocks, fossils, beads, books & lapidary supplies.

Contact: Carol Kron and Karin Alvarez,

(562) 577-9044

Website: <http://www.facebook.com/LBMGS>

October 10 – 11; TRONA, CA

Searles Lake Gem and Mineral Society

13337 Main St., Trona

Gem-O-Rama Hours: Sat 7:30 am – 5 pm,

Sun 7:30 am – 3 pm

Contact: Jim & Bonnie Fairchild, (760) 372-

5356

email: slgms@iwwisp.com

Web site:

<http://www1.iwwisp.com/tronagemclub/>

October 10-11; GRASS VALLEY, CA

Nevada County Gem and Mineral Society

Nevada County Fairgrounds,

11228 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley,

CA 95945

Sat 10 am – 5 pm, Sun 10 am – 4 pm

2020 Earth's Treasures Show: Dinosaurs

Rule – Come see a life size T-Rex skull,

plus other fossil displays. 25+ vendors, gold

panning activity, lapidary demonstrations,

kids crystal dig, a Kids Korner with lots of

educational activities, as well as 30

exhibitors. Lazy Dog ice cream, Top Dog

hot dog cart, and our 16-1 Mine 1/4 ounce

of gold raffle.

Website: <http://www.ncgms.org>

October 11: FALLBROOK, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society

123 W Alvarado St

Hours: 9-4

Contact: Michelle Shearer; 760-805-2184

Email: info@fgms.org

Website: www.fgms.org

October 17 - 18: SANTA ROSA, CA

Santa Rosa Mineral & Gem Society

Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building

1351 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Hours: Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Sunday 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Contact:

Email:

Website: <http://www.srmgs.org/>

October 24 – 25: SACRAMENTO, CA

Scottish Rites Center

6151 H Street, Sacramento, CA 95819-

2604

84th Annual Sacramento Gem, Mineral

and Jewelry Show

Hours: Sat 10 am – 5 pm, Sun 10 am – 4

pm

Contact: (916) 662-5819,

gemsow@sacramentomineralsociety.org

Web site:

<http://sacramentomineralsociety.org>

Show web site: <http://sacgemshow.com>

November 7 – 8; RIDGECREST, CA

Indian Wells Gem and Mineral Society Inc.

Desert Empire Fairgrounds, 520 S.

Richmond Rd., Ridgecrest

Hours: Sat & Sun 9 am – 5 pm

Contact: (760) 375-7905,

jfrocks@dslextrame.com

Website:

<http://www.indianwellsgemandmineral.com>

Indian Wells Gem and Mineral Society 65th

Annual Show. Field trip Sunday November

8, 2020. Meet at Fairground at 9 am.

November 14 – 15: YUBA CITY, CA

Sutter Buttes Gem & Mineral Society

Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds

442 Franklin Hall, Yuba City, CA 95991

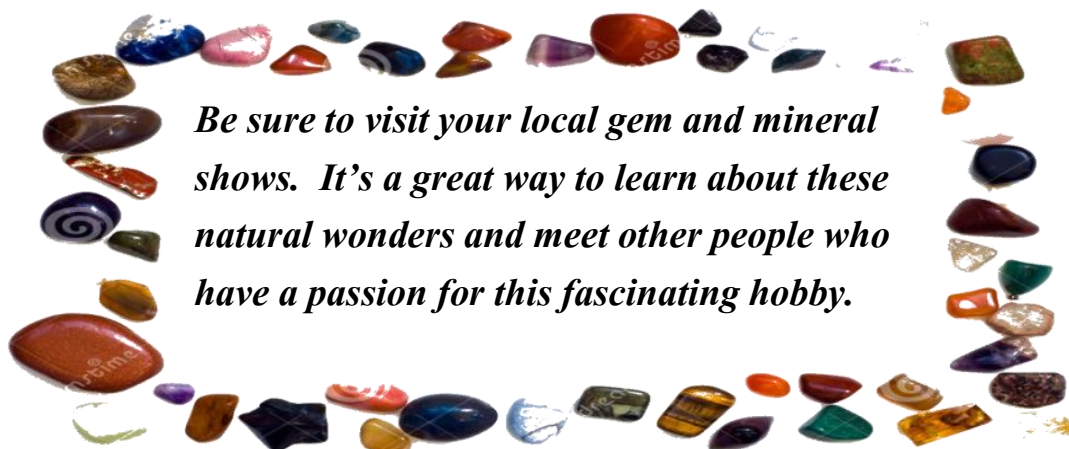
Hours: Sat. 10 am – 5 pm, Sun. 10 am – 4 pm

Contact: (916) 677-6696, horita@comcast.net

Show web site: <http://sutterbuttesgemmin.org>

29th Annual Festival of Gems & Minerals:

Raffle, silent auction, kids table, door prizes, exhibits and 14 dealers.



Be sure to visit your local gem and mineral shows. It's a great way to learn about these natural wonders and meet other people who have a passion for this fascinating hobby.

American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES	AMOUNT PAID
DUES:	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$35.00	
SELECT ONE	NEW MEMBERS	\$45.00	
INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)		\$15.00	
PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)		\$10.00	
ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your first badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$15.00	
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 via PayPal, please visit the membership page on our website at http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm to complete the form and make your PayPal payment. 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.

NAME	
BUSINESS NAME	
ADDRESS	APT # or PO BOX
CITY	STATE
ZIP OR POSTAL CODE	COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)
PHONE - Home ()	PHONE - Business ()
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 roster once per year in its newsletter, The Opal Express. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information you listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address ☐ Phone-landline ☐ Phone-cell ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

Please sign here: _____

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-Editor
Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:
Editor - Kathleen James
The Opal Express
PO Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
E-mail: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL OR NEWSLETTER E-MAIL.

There will be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue.

A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, that as the system is 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

(revised 11/27/19)

The Opal Express

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

Volume 53, Issue 8

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

4th Wednesday of the Month
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Anaheim Community Center
250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805



TO:



**No General Meeting
for August**



General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

**250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805**

Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Newsom's stay-at-home mandate, we are cancelling Board Meetings and General Meetings. If we find that using Zoom is a feasible alternative for our meetings, we will let members know the details.

American Opal Society

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Stan McCall
Russ Madsen
Kathleen James
Bart Gampe
Veronica Purpura

President
Treasurer
Editor
Webmaster
Show Chairman

(714) 220-9282
(562) 884-2254
(714) 828-1251
(310) 736-5528
(714) 501-9959

email: aos.president.01@gmail.com
email: aos.treasurer.01@gmail.com
email: aos.editor.02@gmail.com
email: aos.webmaster.01@gmail.com
email: aos.showchair@gmail.com