

THE OPAL EXPRESS

Celebrate



Dads & Grads

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American
Opal
Society

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Volume 54 Issue 6

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

Summer is finally here! I hope you spent the Memorial Day weekend getting out in the fresh air, maybe having a BBQ, going to the beach or just relaxing on your patio.

If you've been reading your emails, you will know by now that we have made the difficult decision to cancel the 2021 Opal Show. We are now concentrating our efforts for the 2022 show. Stayed tuned for updates!

In the meantime, please stay safe, stay healthy and keep busy. And please continue to social distance and wear your masks - we aren't completely out of the woods yet with the pandemic!

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: Freeform27 (case sensitive)



Let's extend a hardy AOS welcome to our newest member!

Kara Lawrence

Thank you Kara for joining the American Opal Society!

DON'T FORGET DAD!

Father's Day is Sunday, June 20th

Have you heard?

We have new AOS badges!

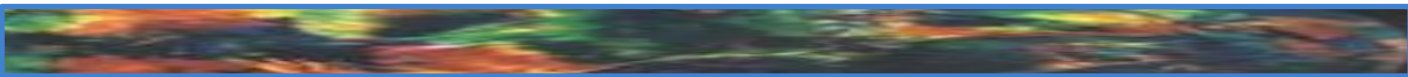
- ❖ One free badge for each new member
- ❖ Badges are \$15.00 for existing members

If you would like a new badge, please contact Treasurer, Russ Madsen.

How the Greatest Opal Book Eventuated

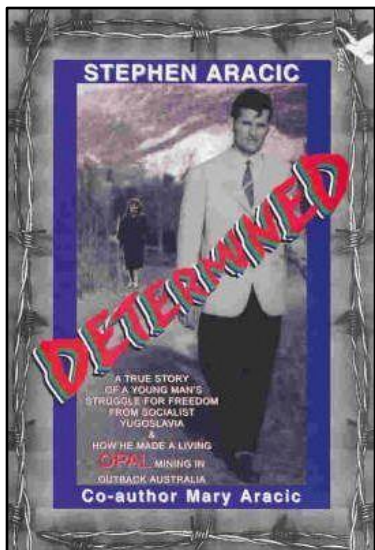
by Mary Aracic

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James

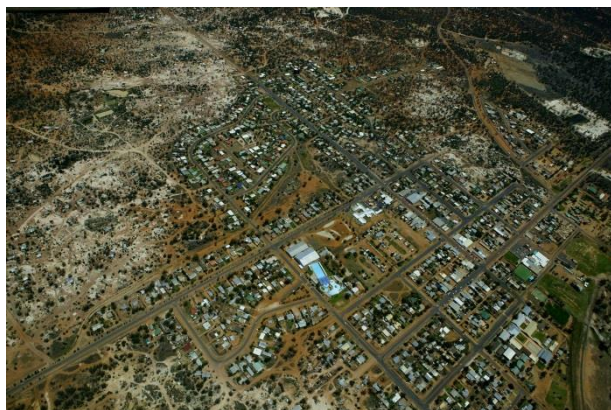


The opal industry is so indebted to the American people for showing such great interest and love for Australian opal. Not only classed as an icon, but recognised as Australia's National Gemstone. But the real credit must go to the opal miner who is akin to being "a star" in his own right. For he is the one privileged to dig for opal underground, an experience so great, the ground shakes and lightning flashes.

Imagine the thrill of seeing the "seven colours of the cosmos" – sparkle before his eyes. And picture the miner who struck a nobby named "Haley's Comet" worth \$600,000. A gem that only Mother Earth could produce. Then again spare a thought for the unfortunate miner who gets a bucket of nobbies worth zilch! He would have spent \$18,000 on a claim, backfilling and restoring the ground. How sad for him – better luck next time. Keep trying. But never give up! Is the fervent prayer amongst the "Determined" – the name of Stephen's latest book explaining how it all began.



His story is one of escaping oppression in a communist country in the former Yugoslavia "falling down a mountain of snow in his effort to flee the regime", at last to find freedom in becoming an opal miner in Lightning Ridge. Thus in turn, he generously shares his knowledge of opal mining to beginners.



Aerial view of Lightning Ridge, Australia.

Where were the books when the beginners started mining? Ask the experienced miner where to find opal and he laughs! "If I knew where it was, I wouldn't be telling you. Start digging over there by that tree." And he dug up a fortune.

Oh the lure of Opal. How it draws you in. For me, I recall an experience of a lifetime! When I spotted a nobby on top of my shovel of opal dirt, with a "glint of green" staring at me, I downed the shovel in excitement and had to get Stephen's attention – too busy digging in the Opal Level to be interrupted. But from where he stood, the colour changed to red as if by magic. I was so amazed.

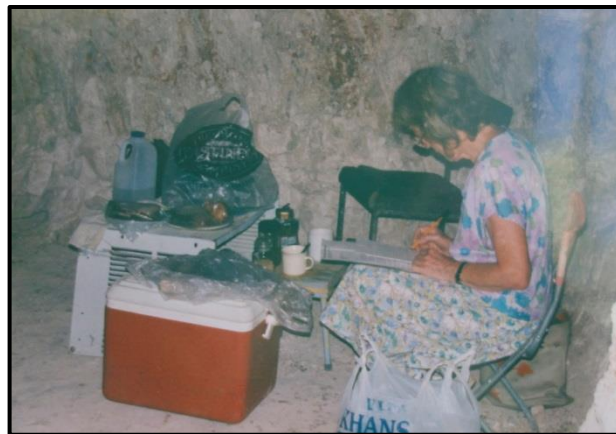
Continued on Page 3

We sat down with a cup of coffee to admire the phenomenal find of the day. Then drove home across the dry Coocoran Lake. Just to experience the opal fields along the way is so therapeutic. The ridges and the bearing it has on opal finds is very interesting and the interaction of the black soil plains on the “million dollar crops” produced after floods, have been known to stop opal mining for a while. But the benefit to the farmer is tremendous, given prize crops of wheat, sunflowers and sorghum from the nutrients in the soil and his hard work.

Once home. Stephen did a brilliant job in shaping and polishing the stone, that morphed into a brilliant gem featured on the cover of our book – “Rediscover Opals in Australia”. So having launched our three precious children from an Outback education into city life, we hitched up our caravan and took to the “real” Outback opal fields of Australia to produce what is currently considered the best opal book ever written.



Mary shoveling at the mine.



Mary writing opal books down in the mine, while Stephen is digging for opal.

Our book was described by Michael O'Donoghue in his book review in the Geological Journal of Great Britain, who classed our book “Discover Opals”, numbered 1 – 1,500 as the best he had seen. He went on to suggest that it persist in availability.

Finally establishing itself as an accepted classic among books, the Limited Edition sold out in a year, much to our amazement. Only a couple of spares are left.

Having acquired valuable knowledge of the vast opal fields of Australia, we felt there was much more until in the most isolated of places. So it was time to hit the trail again, carrying with us a vast experience, as each place holds its own surprise. Every miner is different, as is the opal they search for – no two stones are alike.

Our 416 page opal book tells newcomers of how and where to mine for opals by observing ground structure, the contours of the earth, certain trees that favour opal ground, and rock outcrops.

We appreciate the fact that our opal books did so well on the opal market, giving rise to the fact that people want to learn more about opal. We keep a folder of letters of appreciation from all over.

Continued on Page 4

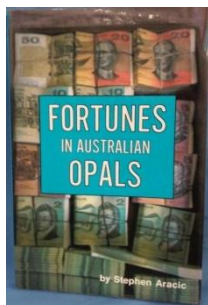
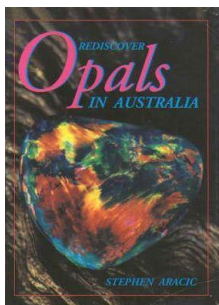
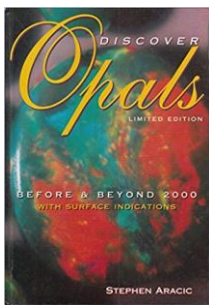
The following is an excerpt from Weir Smith. He was so mesmerized by it, the details and pictures:

Stephen,

You are one of my idols. The first time I saw your book was at Margaret's bookstore in Lightning Ridge.

The paper quality is outstanding. It shows everything I want to know about opal. Your book helped me know how to haggle with opal miners and related bargaining. I still remember how you said "never accept the first price". In addition this book shows many stunning opals with price. This is a great help for me to learn different types of opal and grade them. It also tells where people can find opals in Lightning Ridge and Australia. For example, I learned that T-Bone, 3 Mile, 6 Mile, 9 Mile and 10 Mile are where the most famous opals came from. Furthermore, lots of little stories that you experienced during your mining culture are fascinating to me as a foreigner. All in all, this is a comprehensive opal-related book. It is suitable for anyone who is interested in opal. Great job Stephen.

Then there was Rick from Tasmania being a romantic, ordered our book for this girlfriend to entice her to go "opaling" with him to Andamooka and Coober Pedy. Talk about "romancing the stone", Rick sure had the right approach!!



You'll find more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in these books.

As AOS Editor, I would like to thank Mary and Stephen Aracic once again for allowing us to share their wonderful stories from Lightning Ridge. I look forward to sharing more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in future newsletters!

Editors Note: Stephen was so generous to gift me a copy of his book, "Determined". I thoroughly enjoyed it and highly recommend it! Thank you Stephen!

10 Opal Facts You Probably Didn't Know

1. There are several claims about the origin of the name "Opal." One is that the name comes from the Sanskrit word "Upala," which means "valuable stone." Another claim is that the name came from the Greek word "Opallios," which means *to see a change of color*.
2. Opal is the designated gemstone for the 14th wedding anniversary.
3. The gemstone is revered as a symbol of hope, fidelity and purity.
4. Opal is formed from rain and usually contains 10% water. As water runs down through the earth, it collects silicon deposits and then seeps down into cracks in the rock. After most of the water evaporates, it forms a silica deposit that eventually turns into opal.
5. The discovery of opals on Mars led scientists to believe that water may have been found on the planet for billions of years than previously thought.
6. The play of color in an opal refers to the rainbow-like iridescence commonly found in the gem. The assortment of colors seen in opals can be attributed to millions of tiny silica spheres that refract light and turn it into the colorful spectrum noticeable in most opals. These spheres have to be just the right size and in the right position to create enough color for us to see.
7. An opal's play of color is just one of the factors that determine its value. The other two are brilliance and size.
8. Opals can be classified into various categories including white opal, black opal, fire opal, boulder opal, and crystal opal. White opal is the most common while black opal tends to have the best play of color.
9. Opal is the national gemstone for Australia. In fact, an estimated 95% of the world's opals come from the "down under" continent.
10. With a rating of 5.5 to 6.5 on the Mohs Scale of Hardness, opals require a bit more care than other harder gems to ensure they don't chip or break.

From: <https://www.kloiberjewelers.com/uncategorized/10-opal-facts-your-probably-didnt-know/>

~ Bench Tips ~

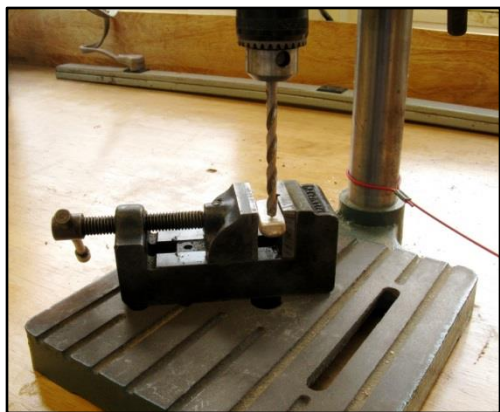
This page will be dedicated to bench tips and techniques from our readers. If you have bench tips you'd like to share, let us know! Bench tips can be anything - metal work, lapidary, wirework - anything creative that you would like to share. Send your tips to: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

DRILL PRESS VISE

by Brad Smith

A drill press vise is a versatile tool to hold a workpiece securely and in precise alignment. It reduces the of risks of working with high power motors, using larger drill bits, and dealing with heat generated in the operation. The vise can be clamped to the drill press table if needed and is quite handy for use at the bench to hold things for sawing or riveting.

You can find them at stores that carry machine tool supplies. My feeling is that the best ones are made from steel. In particular, I like the ones with V grooves cut into the jaw plates. That lets me hold a punch straight upright or hold a rod horizontal. To find a supplier, search on "drill press vise" at sites like micromark.com mscdirect.com/enco smallparts.com grizzly.com



DENTAL GOLD

by Brad Smith

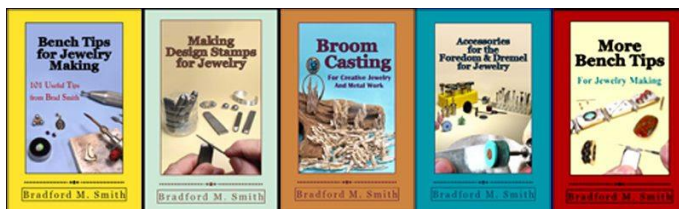
You might think that a couple pieces of dental gold would be valuable, but if you only have a small amount, it can be a problem. Sending it to a refiner is expensive for small lots.

I made the mistake of thinking I could melt it and roll out my own sheet. It turns out the trace metals in dental gold make it a good material in your mouth but cause it to crack if you try to forge it or roll it out as a sheet. They ruined my whole ingot.

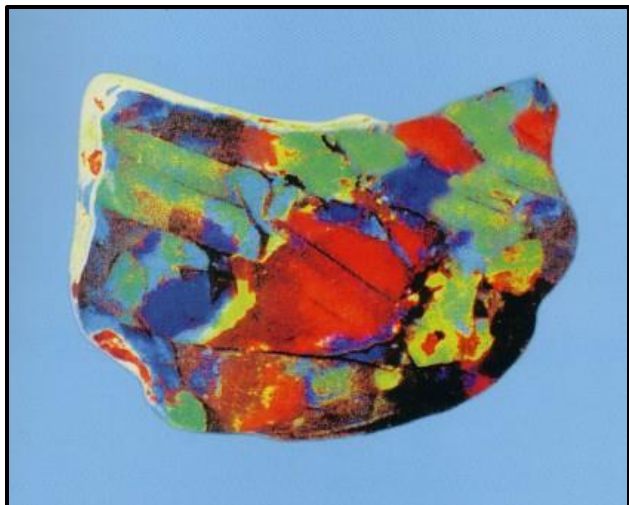
So what to do with a couple gold crowns? A reasonable alternative is to try incorporating the metal into your jewelry. If you have enough material to do a casting, that's probably the best use for dental gold.

If you're not into casting, try melting it on a solder pad and while molten, divide it into small pieces with your solder pick. Then re-flow each piece to make little gold balls for use for accents on your designs. The balls can also be planished a bit to make small discs or struck with a design stamp to add texture.

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



Famous Opals - "Pride of Australia"



Pride of Australia Opal

(information courtesy of Altmann & Cherny)

'Pride of Australia', also known as 'Red Emperor', was found in 1915 by Tom Urwin and Snowy Brown at Phone Line (off Fred Reece Way).

The Pride of Australia is shaped like the continent. The 2" x 3" opal has black and blue veins interlaced with brilliant red streaks. By 1954, it had toured at least five World Fairs as "the greatest opal of Australia, and therefore the greatest opal in the world



Dr. Hubert Eaton examines his "Pride of Australia" opal with the Collector of Customs while guards look on.

This double-sided gem cut to a 225 carat stone that just fit into a tobacco tin. There were two distinct colour bars. The one on the back was much lighter and almost harlequin, totally different to the main bar of dark, rich flashes of colour. Ernie Sherman bought 'Pride' plus another three stones from the miners for £2000 around 1920. It was the highest price ever paid for four black opals.

The 'Pride of Australia' was valued in 1931 at £2000 on its own, and was sold in the 1950s from the Percy Marks Collection, Sydney.

In 1954, Dr. Hubert Eaton was the President and Founder of the world famous Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, CA, and owner of one of the most important gem collections in the United States.

Percy Marks, Ltd., located in Sydney, Australia, was home to the opal when Dr. Eaton was craving for his collection. This firm was supposed to have the greatest opal collection in the world. The Pride of Australia was sitting in the display window when Dr. Eaton arrived.

To Dr. Eaton's dismay, the opal was not for sale. Dr. Eaton chose several other opals and told the firm that he wanted all of these opals plus the Pride -- if the Pride wasn't thrown in with the deal, then there would be no deal. Dr. Eaton wrote in a letter to his assistant, "Well, to cut a long story short, after quite a time, it ended by my going to the bank and getting a draft payable to Percy Marks, Ltd."

Some say the price was £150,000, but Greg Sherman reckons not more than £50,000 was paid for this mostly green-shot-with-orange black opal. 'Pride' was later stolen from the new owner, Forest Lawn Memorial Cemetery, Los Angeles.

From:

http://www.1earth.com.au/jewelry/opal/pride_of_australia.html

The California Poppy: An Indicator of Copper

Don O'Donnell, Lake Havasu Gem Club



Photo courtesy of:

<https://growtherainbow.com/blogs/news/california-poppy-eschscholzia-californica-the-ultimate-flower-guide>

Plants have been used by prospectors searching for minerals since the Middle Ages. Some plants favor soils that contain or have an abundance of a particular element. Many prospectors use the desert trumpet as a gold indicator, even though it has not proven to be a true gold indicator. Plants of the mustard family excel in absorbing uranium and may be of use to the geobotanical prospector who is searching for uranium minerals.

The California poppy is a known indicator of copper, as it requires copper to exist. Some copper compounds are soluble in water, so the presence of poppies does not necessarily indicate that there are copper minerals in the immediate area. Roadside occurrences of poppies should be ignored because of the presence of various contaminants from the passing cars and trucks.

The presence of poppies in the open desert is much more meaningful. Near the San Manuel Mine, north of Tucson, poppies grow in profusion on the ground known to be mineralized with copper. At a fault, which places mineralized ground against non-mineralized ground, the poppies terminate abruptly, and the fault line can be traced by the poppies. Often, dumps at copper mines are completely covered by poppies.

Since gold, silver and other metals are frequently associated with copper, the presence of the California poppy can be a clue to the possible presence of valuable metal deposits. For the rockhound, many of the primary and secondary copper minerals are of interest. They include chalcopyrite, turquoise, malachite and many more.

*Ref. California Mining Journal, Edgar B. Heylum Ph.D.; Richard Pearl, Clackamette Gem, April 1994
From Northwest Newsletter, Dec. 1994 via the Flatiron Facets 5/03*

Did You Know?

On March 2, 1903 the California Poppy, *Eschscholzia californica*, became the official state flower of California.

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.

June 12-13, 2021, Escondido CA

Palomar Gem and Mineral Club
340 N. Escondido Blvd., Escondido CA 92025
Saturday – 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM-4PM
Palomar Gem and Mineral Show – presented by the Palomar Gem and Mineral Club. Held in the California Arts Centers museum and ballroom. A beautiful indoor facility. Secure for vendors and comfortable for attendees. 30-35 dealers.
Website: pgmcshow@palomargem.org

June 25-27, 2021 Lodi, CA **CANCELLED!**

CFMS Annual Show and Conference

June 27, 2021 – Fallbrook, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society
123 W. Alvarado St., Fallbrook CA 92028
Time 12 Noon – 4 PM
Contact (760) 728-1130
Email: info@fgms.org

July 10, 2021 – Bellflower, CA

Delver's Gem and Mineral Society
Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, 14515 Blaine Ave., Bellflower, CA 90706
Parking lot sale! Our Society is holding a parking lot sale. We will be selling rocks, minerals, equipment and other odds and ends.
Website: delversgemclub.wordpress.com

August 14-15, 2021 – Arcadia CA

Pasadena Lapidary Society
"Inspiration Unearth", 62nd Annual Tournament of Gems
Arcadia Masonic Center, 50 W. Duarte Rd., Arcadia
Hours: 10-5 Daily
Contact: Ellen Ferrell 1-727-512-0381
Email: ellenbf207@aol.com
Website: pasadenalapidary.org

September 4-5, 2021 – Reno, NV

The Reno Gem & Mineral Society, Inc.
Jackpot of Gems
Reno Convention Center, 4390 S. Virginia St., Reno
Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact Dan Ellis, sailondan55@aol.com
www.renogms.org

September 18-19, 2021 – Chico, CA

Feather River Lapidary and Mineral Society Silver Dollar Fairgrounds
2357 Fair St., Chico, CA 95928
Saturday 9 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM
Contact: 1 530 586-7052; Website: <http://featherriverrocks.org>

October 9-10, 2021 – Los Altos, CA

Peninsula Gem and Geology Society
One No. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022
Saturday and Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: 1 (408) 834-5384, steve_job@sbcbglobal.net
Website: <http://pggs.org>

October 10, 2021 – Fallbrook, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society
Fall Festival of Gems
Location: Across the street from the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum, 123 W. Alvarado St., Fallbrook, CA in the parking lot.
October 10th, 9 AM – 4 PM
Contact (760) 728-1130
Email: info@fgms.org

October 16-17, 2021 – Santa Rosa

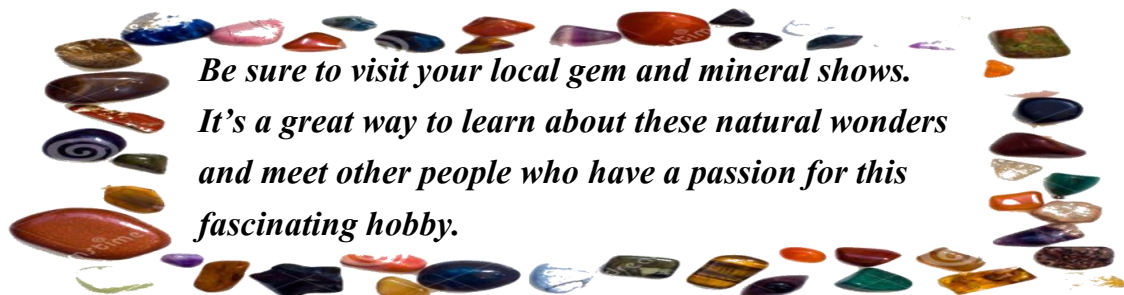
Santa Rosa Mineral & Gem Society
Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave, Santa Rosa
Hours: Saturday 10 AM-6PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: Janyce Vickers (707) 217-0636
Email: santarosarockshow@hotmail.com

October 30-31, 2021 – Mariposa CA

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club
Mountains of Minerals Show
Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5007 Fairgrounds Rd.
Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM-4 PM
Contact: Meredith Meehan, mgmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

November 13-14, 2021 – Yuba City

Sutter Buttes Gem and Mineral Society
29th Festival of Gems and Minerals
Yuba – Sutter Fairgrounds
442 Franklin Ave., Franklin Hall, Yuba City
Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact 916 677-6696, horita@comcast.net
Website: <http://sutterbuttesgemmin.org>



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	
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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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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
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Volume 54, Issue 6

— 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 June*



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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Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqVRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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