

THE OPAL EXPRESS

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September 2021

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

September is here and although is still very hot here in California, other parts of the country are enjoying a bit of fall weather - some places with beautiful changing leaf colors.

We had hoped to start in-person meetings again when state restrictions lifted in June, but because of the Delta variant, we will not be having any in-person meetings until January at the earliest.

Please stay safe and get vaccinated if you can, and if you can't, please remember to wear your mask and social distance. We want to see everyone when we start having meetings again and future shows!

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: 4BLuefiRE3 (case sensitive).**

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.**



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

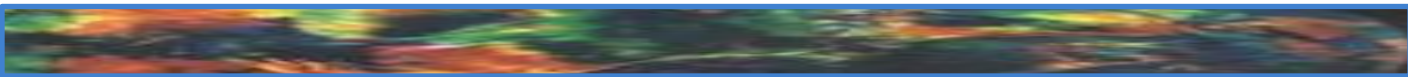
Ginger Lai

**Thank you Ginger for joining the
American Opal Society!**

Opal to Colour Your World

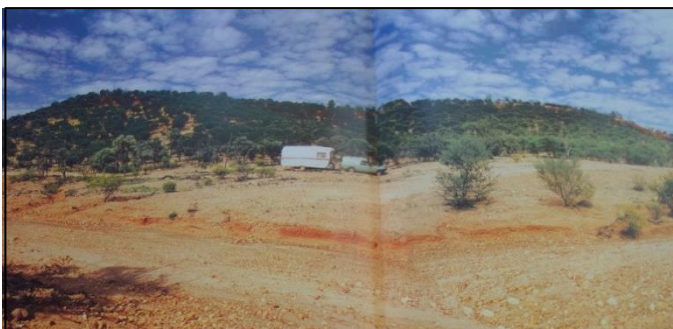
by Mary Aracic

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James



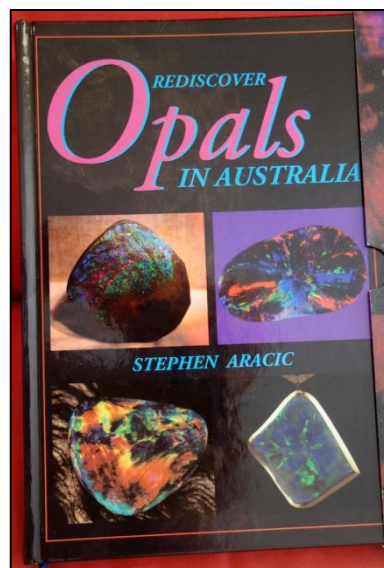
Traveling the Outback opal fields of Australia is an education in itself! And to meet the wonderful people involved in opal is better still. Traffic along the way, though hectic, can be very interesting giving way to animals - with hopping kangaroos that have to be avoided as they come out of nowhere. An assortment of wild pigs hurried across the road as did little herds of wild goats and kids who scuttled into the bush not wanting to be hit. But the cutest little fellow of all that stopped us in our tracks was an echidna in no particular hurry to go anywhere.

But best of all was a cow parked across the middle of the road feeding her calf. We drove slowly, not wanting to disturb her. By the time we got to Quilpie, our caravan had suffered a shake up on the rough road. Cupboard doors had opened as if by magic and dust everywhere. But when we settled in at the caravan park and cleared the dust, things looked a lot better.



Meantime, Stephen got to talking to a man from Adelaide, who had camped next to us. He said he'd been to Hammonds Mine and bought a lovely blue/green, sparkling opal ring for his wife, that she loves. Being a retired fuel

delivery man around Adelaide, he was very interested to travel with his wife among the gas and oil wells through the Outback opal fields, having reached Eromanga, a 104 km drive from Quilpie, a long way from the shops, he didn't know whether to turn left or right at the junction to Hammonds Mine. So having camped in the council caravan park, he went to the local pub, thinking he could ask the miners, who might have been having a beer, for directions but no miners were there, so he asked the bar maid, but she had no idea. Returning to the caravan, he remembered he may have left a copy of our opal book in the glove box. Sure enough, it was still there. So while his wife cooked dinner, he'd found directions to Hammonds Mine.



They set off early next morning and were amazed at the high dingo fence that crosses vast areas of the most scenic country and the warning signs to close the gate after you, but they were very happy with their purchase at Hammonds Mine.

Continued on page 3

It is very easy to get lost in the scenic hills of opal country. But it helps to have a sense of humour as told to Stephen years ago.

Robert Newman, a former mayor from the Gold Coast, went mining the Opalton district with a few friends from Winton, who told Robert that they were going fishing in the Thompson River, 170 km way out of Winton. They asked Robert if he and his friends would like some fish, to which he replied, “Yes, please.” They arranged to meet Robert at a certain spot at 6 p.m. But when Robert told his friends, they laughed and said, “That’s a fishy tale. Those fellows are having you on!” Where are they going to catch fish - the mud? But Robert told his friends he was going to keep his promise and go there. So they set off in the car, which wasn’t going well in the heat. By the time they reached the spot, it was 7:30 p.m. and no one was there.

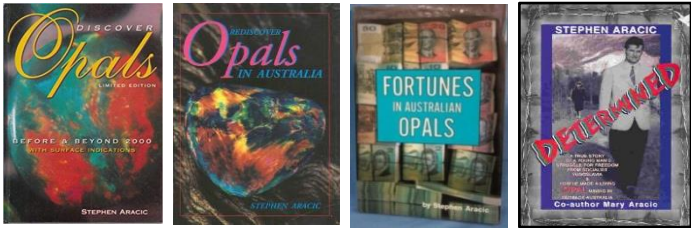
“What did we tell you?” said his friends. Robert walked on a bit and saw a broken branch. Further on, he spotted a plastic bag tied to a tree, dripping from the last of the frozen ice blocks and four fish were inside the bag with a recipe on how to cook the fish and the words, “enjoy them mate”. Several days later, at a local hotel, a fellow asked Robert, “Did you get the fish those men left you?” “Yes, said Robert, they were great!” “Well, said the fellow, those were the only fish they caught that day, but the fellows wanted you to have them as promised.”

One day while they were still in the Opalton area, Robert and his mates decided to go walkabout in search of new locations. Now, it’s one thing to walk through the bush exploring for traces of opal, but when this group turned around to head back for camp, none of them knew which direction to take. They were totally lost. One of the men, known to be a great character and under such circumstances was prone to have a trick or two

up his sleeve. Taking full control of the situation, he told the men, “Let’s walk to the top of the hill yonder and I will use my compass to find out camp.” No worries. Up the hill they trudged, as the day closed in around them. Just before sunset, the character drew a huge compass on the ground with a stick and standing on the N point of the sign, he stood straight and tall. He then flapped his arms like wings, put his hands to cup this mouth and shouted as loud as he could, “Hey you all to the North - get stuffed!” Standing on the S point of the sign, he did the same thing. The men were stunned in amazement, as he repeated the performance East and West of the sign! Thus he told the people living in the four corners of Australia to get stuffed, just as the had always wanted to do.

They spotted something shining in the distance. It was their camp. So the happy group made their way back without any trouble and they all got a good laugh out of it. You can’t beat a sense of humour when lost in the Outback.

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!



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

~ 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

FANCY RIVET HEADS

by Brad Smith

Brass escutcheon pins are an easy way to add a nice look to your next riveting project. The pins have perfectly rounded heads so all will be the same size and shape. They can be used for fastening several pieces together or just used to provide accents and added detail on a piece.



The pins can be a little hard to find, so try the best hardware stores first. Be sure to get solid brass pins, not brass plated steel. If unsure, test them with a magnet. They are easy to find online. Just do a Google search on "brass escutcheon pin".



For best results, select a drill that gives you a hole with a close fit to the rivet. Trim the rivet to a leave a little less than one diameter sticking out the back side. Place the head on a scrap of hard plastic on the anvil so as to not flatten the head. I prefer a ball peen hammer (with a small 3/8 inch ball) for setting the rivet.

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



CARVING GEM-QUALITY OPAL

by Theodore Grussing

Part 2 of 2

Shan Gimn Wang was commissioned to do the carving, through Lapidary International. After studying the opal for several weeks, Mr. Wang proposed several viable plans based on his knowledge that the central area, as previously mentioned, was comprised of numerous thick, straight red bars and the sides of the piece were potch (common opal, no play of color) with several undulating bars and swirls of intense blue and green in them. The idea that appeared most promising was to use both outer sides in a heavy relief carving, and to cautiously expose the underlying red bars; if the finished carving was to reach its maximum potential, these bars would have to be exposed substantially and they would have to be good, clean material, not sandshot. Peacocks were selected as the subject matter of the relief carving. Mr. Wang determined that peacocks would give him the greatest artistic freedom to use the undulating color bars and, too, that the colors in this area of the opal were very similar to those found in the live birds. Also of great importance was the ability to adjust the positioning of the peacocks depending on the colors and their orientation. Figure 3 shows the design on the opal shortly after the rough carving process had been started. Soon after work began, the choice was confirmed, and it also became apparent that the red bars were clean, not sandshot. One major surprise was the uncovering of a thin, but extremely



Figure 3. Design sketched on partially carved opal rough of the Royal Peacocks. Photo by Tino Hammid.

intense, lime-green color bar, which serves as the background for the peacock on the other side of this piece. This carving illustrates the extraordinary skill required in carving gem opal, an intertwining of the sculptor's art and the very strong play of color of the stone. The weight retention was nearly 72%. This carving is currently on loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

BLACK-OPAL SNUFF BOTTLE

Some time ago, a friend of the author purchased a snuff bottle of black opal that was so poorly carved and polished that almost no play of color was present on its face. There was, however, a strong,

Continued on Page 6

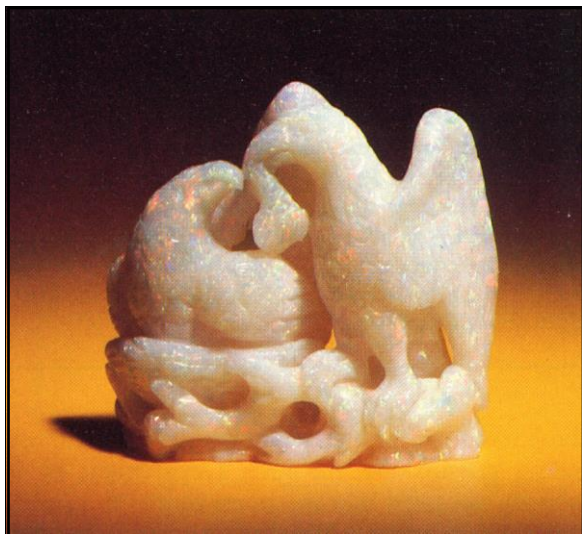


Figure 6. In this opal carving, the carver has fully utilized the play of color in the stone to highlight the subject matter; 34 x 31 x 14 mm, 130 ct. Photo by Tino Hammid.

reasonably thick color bar of blue, green, and some red on the sides running under the face of the bottle. It did not appear that the bar had been exposed, but it was obvious that the original carver had at least partially hollowed it out. Two questions arose: (1) Would there be sufficient thickness left when the piece was recarved to expose the color bar? and (2) Would the bar display strong play of color? After examining the piece; skilled carver Hing Wa Lee reported that there was a reasonable possibility of salvaging it and exposing the beauty of the hidden color bar. The result of his reworking of this piece is pictured in figure 4. The color bar is now exposed and the bottle takes on new life: strong electric blues and greens roll across the surface, with some reds as well. It has been estimated that the value of the carving was increased by a factor of seven even with a

weight loss of over 25%. This black-opal carving, weighing just over 100 ct, is currently on loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

THE “DISASTER”

The play of color in opal is the primary source of its value as a gem material; this factor is further refined into intensity of color, number of colors, which colors, color patterns, percentage of coverage in color, trueness of color, whether or not the color is directional, and so on, but in the end it all boils down to color.

In the previous two examples, Messrs. Wang and Lee optimized the value of the opal entrusted to them by using their highly refined skills to work *with* the opal. This last example shows how a person, though skilled in the art of gem carving, proved inept in dealing with the play of color in fine opal and caused irreparable harm to ‘a collector’s piece.

The anonymous carver was given a fine piece of Olympic material (Olympic field, Coober Pedy, South Australia) to work with. The rough opal weighed approximately 800 ct and was a solid chunky piece with numerous strong color bars in it.

It was anticipated that a magnificent carving would emerge, displaying strong and uniform play of color. The result was, literally, a disaster: the collector who owned the piece received a very fine carving, from the point of cleanliness

and detail, but the stone had virtually no play of color. Indeed, it appeared that the carver had set out to destroy color wherever it surfaced and left it buried under potch wherever he was unable to drill it out. The weight loss of over 65% was greater than would have occurred if the stone had been cut into cabochons. The result (shown in figure 5) is a nicely carved piece of opal that shows very little play of color and is worth a fraction of what it could have been. Figure 6 illustrates the results in similar material when the carver (in this case, Mr. Wang) makes full utilization of the play of color.

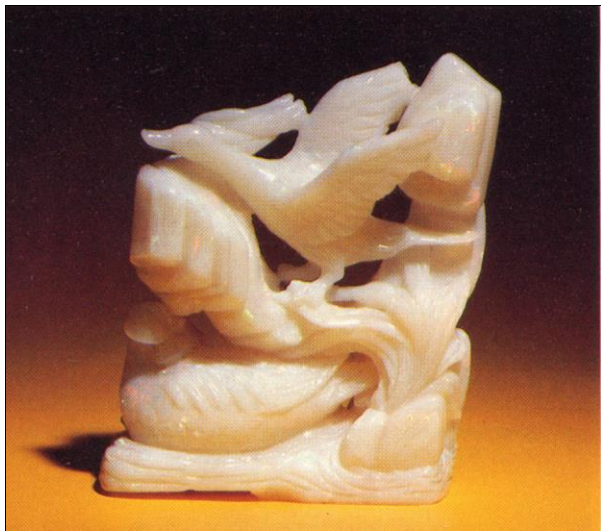


Figure 5. Although the actual workmanship on this piece is good, the carver has eliminated the play of color and thus destroyed the impact of the opal. Photo by Tino Hammid.

CONCLUSION

The carving of gem-quality opal requires a highly skilled artisan who knows how to utilize the play of color in his art. In the final analysis, it is the play of color in opal that determines its value, and one who is skilled in bringing this color out and

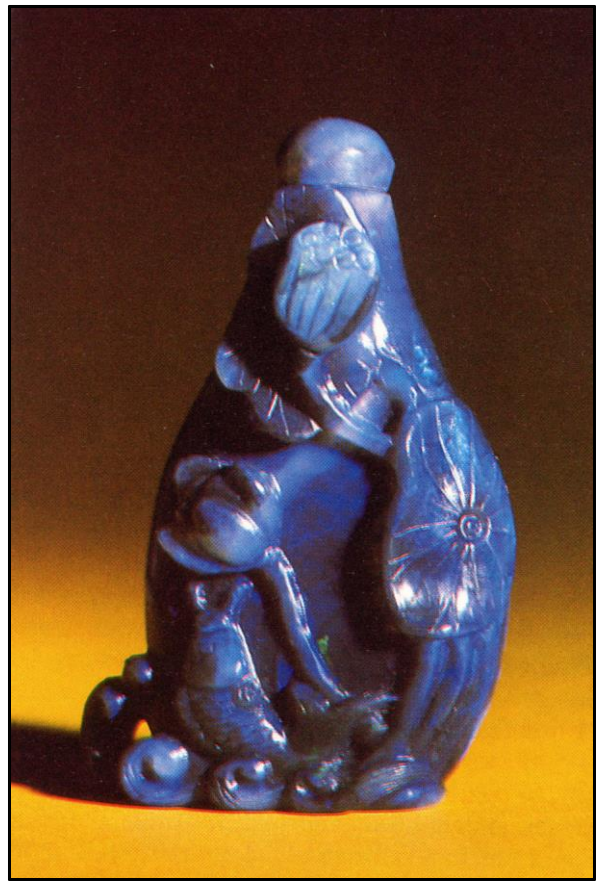


Figure 4. Black opal snuff bottle after being recarved, 100 ct. Photo by Tino Hammid

properly orienting it in his carving will greatly enhance the value of the finished piece.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Grussing is an attorney in Huntington Beach, California. He also is an owner of BGN Ltd., a firm specializing in gem opal. Acknowledgments: The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to Messrs. Shan Gimm Wang and Hing Wa Lee for their efforts in educating him in the art of gem carving and to the many clients who have tutored him in their respective fields of expertise in the gem and mineral trade. Special thanks to Maj. George W. Owens, USAF, Ret., and to Mr. Cleveland C. Weil, who first introduced him to the beauty and mysteries of opal. Thanks also to Mr. Mike Waitzman and Mr. Tino Hammid of GIA Gem Media for their excellent job in photographing the figures in this article. Anyone who has ever tried to photograph opal knows what an exacting task it is.
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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.

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 Fair-
grounds, 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>

September 24, 25, 26, 2021 – Stoddard Wells, CA

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club
45th Annual Stoddard Wells Rockhound Tailgate. Location: Dale
Evans Parkway and Stoddard Wells Road, Apple Valley, CA. Go
straight on Stoddard Wells Road, will turn to dirt. Follow 7 miles to
"Tailgate". Signs will mark the road. Cars & RV's can make it with
ease, go slow. See our website for additional details and directions.
Hours: 9 AM – 5 PM daily
Free event, everyone is welcome! FREE Vendor Spaces, dry
camping, restrooms available. First come, first served. All donations
welcomed. Handcrafted jewelry, cabs, slabs, rough, and more. Food
served breakfast & lunch. NO saving spaces or competing with
VVGMS's fundraising activities – i.e. food, drinks, grab bags, spin
the wheel or auctions. Saturday field trip 9 AM – 1 PM.
Contact: (760) 243-2330, dwaina.barron@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.vvgmc.org>

October 1-3, 2021 – Vista, CA

Vista Gem and Mineral Society
Vista Gem and Mineral Open Air Market
Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave.,
Vista CA 92083
Friday and Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: 1 (760) 214-8770
Website: <http://www.vistarocks.org>

October 2-3, 2021 – Grass Valley, CA

Nevada County Gem & Mineral Society
Nevada County Fairgrounds, Main Street Center, 11228
McCourtney Rd, Grass Valley, CA 95949
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
54th Annual Earth's Treasurers Show. This year's show will
feature over 20 vendors, over 24 showcase exhibits, as well as
an outstanding petrified wood display. There will be numerous
demonstration tables, the gold panning experience, kids
activities, gold specimen raffle, and much, much, more. SEE
YOU AT THE SHOW!!!
As Covid 19 restrictions could be somewhat fluid in October,
there may still be or be a reinstituted State of California
requirement for show attendees to be properly masked.
Contact: 4vancian5@att.net
Website: <http://nccgms.org>

October 8, 9, 10 & 11, 2021, Clovis CA

Fresno Gem & Mineral Society
Clovis Rodeo Grounds, 445 Clovis, CA 93613
Time: Friday-Sunday Oct. 8th-10th – 10 AM – 5 PM, Monday Oct.
11th – 10 AM – 4 PM
Central Valley Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by Fresno Gem &
Mineral Society. The show will be held outside and indoors where
vendors will be displaying and selling their rocks, minerals and

fossils. From rough to cabs, from jewelry to wind chimes you will find a
great variety! Adults and children will enjoy the fossilized sharks teeth,
dinosaur bones, sparkling minerals in all their forms plus beautiful
handcrafted jewelry.
Contact: 1 (708) 821-7575, danielbolm096@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.fgms.us/>

October 9, 2021 – Antioch, CA

Antioch Lapidary Club
Antioch Lapidary Club's Annual Artisan Jewelry and Rock Show
Antioch Lapidary Club's clubhouse, 425 Fulton Shipyard Rd.,
Antioch
Time: 10 AM – 4 PM
Directions: Take Highway 4 to Antioch; exit A Street and go north,
towards the water. Turn right on E 18th Street; go approx. 3/4
mile; turn left of Cavallo Road. Follow Cavallo, across Wilbur
Avenue. You are now on Fulton Shipyard Road. Cross the
railroad tracks and immediately turn right into the parking lot.

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 – Placerville, CA

El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society
El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Dr., Placerville, CA
95667
This show will be held indoors at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds
with secure spaces for 25-30 vendors.
Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: (530) 676-2472
Website: <https://eldoradomineralandgem.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, mcmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

(Info continued at the top of next column)

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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-Editor
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Editor - Kathleen James
The Opal Express
PO Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
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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
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

Volume 54, Issue 9

— 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 September**



General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805

Stayed tuned! We may be starting up meetings again at the Anaheim Community Center. We are currently checking into getting our old room for meetings.

American Opal Society

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YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqVRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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email: aos.president.01@gmail.com
email: aos.treasurer.01@gmail.com
email: aos.editor02@gmail.com
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email: jamiec275@gmail.com