

The Opal Express

Celebrate



Dads & Grads

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The
American
Opal
Society

June 2024

Volume 57 Issue 6

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

Please join us at our next meeting – June 20th and bring your opals to share with the group! We love hearing about your collections and what your plans are for your opals. Are you making jewelry or just collecting?

Our Annual Opal Show will be coming up later this year and we can really use your help! It would be so nice to have some new members help out with this event, if you can. This event is our only club show and is very well-attended! If you would like to help out, please contact Veronica Purpura for more details.

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: DFrac47&

- DON'T FORGET -
FATHER'S DAY
IS
SUNDAY, JUNE 16TH



Needed
Opal Express Editor
and
Facebook Admin



At the end of December, I will be retiring as Editor of The Opal Express and will also retire from being the Admin on the AOS Facebook page. I've enjoyed my time as Editor and Admin, but it's time to move on.

Therefore, AOS is looking for someone to take over these positions. The same person does not have to be Editor and Admin. The only requirement for Editor is that you are familiar with a document program (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc.). As long as the final document can be saved as a PDF file, you can use whatever program works for you. Newsletter content is up to you.

If you are interested in either position, please let me or Stan McCall know.

Kathleen James
Editor

Join us for the 54th Annual Opal Show







Koroit Opal photo
compliments of
Len Cram



54th Annual Opal Show
October 26-27, 2024
Velvet Rose Event Center



American Opal Society proudly presents **54th Annual OPAL, GEM & JEWELRY SHOW**

October 26th & 27th, 2024

Saturday 10AM - 6PM

Sunday 10AM - 5PM

!Fabulous New Location!

Velvet Rose Event Center

300 S. Flower St., Orange, CA 92868

Opal and Gem Dealers from around the USA and beyond
Rough and Cut Opals, other gemstones, jewelry & supplies
Huge Drawing Grand Prize custom design by Stan McCall
Many other prizes: gemstones, jewelry, books, tools, surprises
Free Demonstrations gemstone cutting, jewelry making, gemstone identification, faceting, gold panning and more!

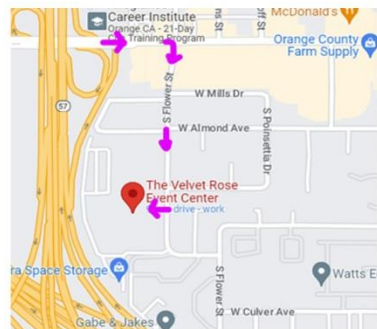
ADMISSION \$5.00 ADULTS

STUDENTS WITH ID & CHILDREN UNDER 15 FREE

FREE PARKING

American Opal Society, Inc.
PO Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
Contact: Veronica Purpura (714) 501-9959
info@opalsociety.org <http://opalsociety.org>
(dealer inquiries welcome)

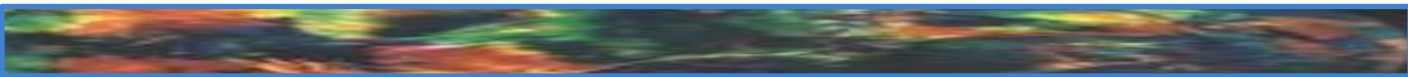
DIRECTIONS: exit Chapman from the 57 towards Orange. Take Flower Street and follow. Make a right into the venue just after passing Larkspur Drive. Parking lot is in the back. There is a church next door.



Why the New Mining Act Replaced The Miner's Right

by Mary Aracic

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James



Life in the Outback can be a big challenge as you are dealing with nature, but when it comes to opal mining, you face the biggest challenge of all time - where to start digging for opal.

Way back in the early days of mining, most of the books on opal were by safari writers, who gained their knowledge from miners that told them, "There are no rules to finding opal, opal is where you find it." Just go digging was the attitude.

There were many rushes over the years that left claims abandoned in the excitement. It brought great excitement to Lightning Ridge, as everyone was in on the action - men and women.

So it was best not to get caught up in it, as the best claims are taken already and you are left on the fringes. However, with the advent of so many rushes and publicity in city newspapers, Lightning Ridge became a popular place to live. The wonderful sparking colour of opal had brought scores of buyers to The Ridge and new markets were opened up all over the world, as opal had become a very popular gem to wear.

The increase in mining brought with it changes in mining techniques, so a

new mining law was introduced and opal prices increased for top grade opal. But it was hard to understand why the big time miners could be so put of touch with opal bearing ground, other than to tip the opal from it with heavy machinery.

It should be dug out with due respect and care for its beauty. It is the most wonderful feeling to hear the "chink" of the pick hitting opal down the mine. It lights up your life for it means you've struck opal!

The feeling of excitement that wells up at that sweet sound - at the thought "this could be the one" is indescribable. And then to chip away at the first to reveal the extent of the colour bar is something else. To have missed that moment of excitement and anticipation to the noise of machinery is beyond our ability to comprehend, other than to say, "those miners want to dig as much opal as possible and spend the money it brings just as quick". When you take into consideration that the bigger the machinery, the higher the expense, the claim had better produce good quality opal, or it will be a lesson in futility for many of them.

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It is also futile to ask “machinery miners” what part of the claim produced the most opal because they often wouldn’t have a clue, not finding opals until “wet puddling” the dirt, which could have come from any area of the claim.

Jim Lawrie, Deputy Registrar of the Department of Mines in 1974, had come to Lightning Ridge to sort out problems created by the introduction of the “New Mining Act 1973-1974”. It was good for the small-time miners as it meant that only two claims per person were allowed. Therefore a lot of ground that had been tied up by selfish miners was released, thus giving the individual miner a fair to, as opposed to multiple pegging and real-estating that went on for a long time.



Sketch by Shibaun Aracic

Accurate form of registering claims. Their cries of protest rang far and wide and union support was sought. It dragged on for so long that it became a major concern and something had to be done to break the dead lock.

When some of the original members of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association (LRMA) that had formed back in the late 1960s did not want the present leader of the Association to lead it into what was believed to be the wrong direction. A petition was started amongst law abiding miners and very soon enough signatures from the members, as required by the Constitution, to call a special meeting. This was handed to the President of the LRMA.

But the so-called Eureka Protest March was organized, mostly by those affected by the New Act. The Eureka Flag was raised aloft and off they went to the beat of a drum and the wail of a bagpipe down Opal Street and around the corner of the Town Hall in Morilla Street, followed by the crowds.

The hall was packed to capacity and the problem that had befallen the miners was thrashed out before Jim Lawrie, who sat next to the President of the LRMA. However, the “Eurekens” were out-numbered and new mining regulations went into full effect.

Continued on page 5

It took time for things to settle down and happiness was regained as everyone became used to the laws. But then another problem arose. Claim measurements were so far out that when the miner took his measurements to the mining office, the Registrar looked at him and said, "You've pegged the school grounds." The miner was so shocked, he protested, "But my claim is up at Canfell's." "Not according to your survey plan it isn't." was the reply.

That's when Stephen's sense of direction came in mighty useful. He'd learned orientation skills from his Uncle when measuring land with him in the wilds of Bosnia. So his investment in a good, reliable compass and measuring tape paid off!

Soon he became known to miners as a good, reliable claim surveyor, recognized and often recommended by the Mining Office.

Surveying claims took him all over Lightning Ridge opal fields, both near and far, and so the school, the Bowling Club and the shops were safe!

With the small income this generated, Stephen was able to support his family while continuing to mine for opals. It also enabled him to see and compare all different mining fields and discover where opal was found and where it had not, and the surface conditions of each spot. He continued doing this for many years.

Stephen was glad to relate, that not only did it give him a bit of money, but constant walking over the ground enabled him to observe the contours of the land, the rocky outcrops and specific types of trees that favoured opal bearing ground, compared to non-opal bearing ground.

This knowledge was invaluable. He also put divining to the test in a couple of favourable areas that produced opal for him, but he needed more time to profitably mine them, as our children were nearing school exams, so their future prospects came first. To Stephen it was like being an apprentice from the time he had sunk the first shaft - and he sank many of them in the early years of mining thus gaining valuable knowledge in many of them. The experience gave him a chance to compare the ground strata, layer-for-layer with the shafts that produced traces. Full of hope, he would follow the opal traces with a gouging pick, digging tunnels in all directions by candlelight.

Sometimes it paid and sometimes it didn't, such was the luck of the game. So with the bit of money we have saved from selling opal, we published our first book in 1979 and an updated edition in 1988, including more opal mining experiences.

Those that bought our books were happy with it and found it most useful.

Continued on page 6

Two women, mining opal at Lightning ridge, who bought our book told Stephen how they selected a claim in virgin ground. The area they chose had two wild orange trees on it. One of the surface indications our book mentioned. When they sank a shaft between the trees, they got lots of gem opal.

Over the years of surveying claims, Stephen found that miners were puzzled about the lay of the ground. Why should one claim produce millions of dollars worth of opal, when the claim next to it could send them broke? Therefore, Stephen decided to write a comprehensive book in which he could impart his knowledge gained to future generations of opal miners. He not only wanted to fill the pages with colourful pictures of opals that would light up people's lives, but he also wanted to fill their world with action pictures to inspire them with a sense of adventure in the real Outback.

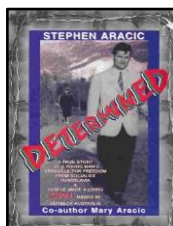
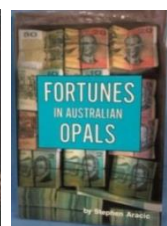
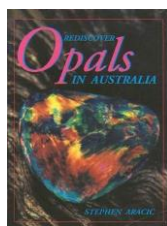
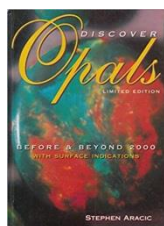
Up until this point Stephen's only experience was from Lightning Ridge. We'd been to White Cliffs in 1981, but he wanted to further his knowledge and include all the other commercial opal fields as well. He decided to utilize all the experience gained in his years of mining for opal in the Ridge and travel the Outback opal fields of Australia comparing the different mining fields and the opal bearing regions with non-opal bearing land and see the similarities

or differences. That way he could write a comprehensive opal book on all the fields of Australia. He dreamed of the day it would happen. Then one day his gouging pick hit a small pocket of nobbies with sparkling gem colour. We quit mining for the day in hopes of the "dream trip of a lifetime".

Stephen set about cutting and shaping them into nice size gems. A visiting opal buyer was so fascinated with the sparking gems and paid so well for them, that we could go on that wonderful trip.

Having packed our car, we left Lightning Ridge in 1991 with a feeling of great excitement and no preconceived idea of what it would be like to visit such far away places as Coober Pedy or the isolated opal fields in Queensland. The car we had at the time was a Citroen DS23. It was designed for all roads, with an adjustable lever for up or down, as well as 4WD in places.

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

DRILLING A STONE

by Brad Smith

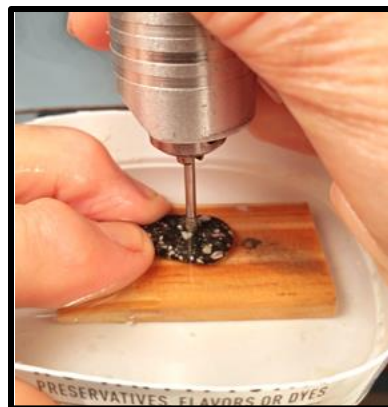
One of the things my students often ask to do is drill a hole through a piece of gemstone. The usual thought is to get a diamond drill, but I've been disappointed with the results.

I think the reason is that the tip of the drill is just pivoting in the hole and fails to cut well. When it looks like the drill isn't cutting, the tendency is to push with more force. The drill gets hot, and the diamond grit falls off.

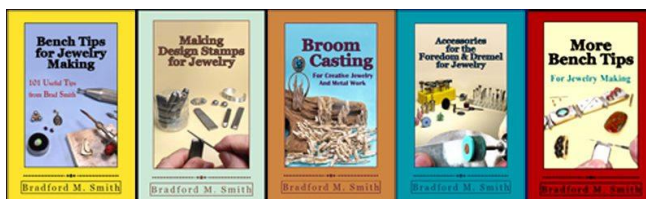
A much better approach is to use a core drill. This is a small hollow tube with a coating of diamond grit at the business end. The diamonds easily carve out a circular arc without undue pressure or heat buildup.

Core drills are readily available from lapidary and jewelry supply companies. They come in sizes as small as 1mm and are very reasonable in price. For instance, a 2mm diameter drill is about \$6.

Chuck the core drill in a drill press, Dremel or Foreman and be sure to keep the drilling zone wet to cool the tool and to flush out debris. If you're drilling a through hole, remember to ease up on the pressure as the drill is about to cut through. Otherwise you will usually chip off some of the stone surface around the exit hole.



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



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 8-9, 2024 – Escondido, CA

Palomar Gem and Mineral Club

California Center for the Arts – at the Conference Center, 340 North Escondido Blvd., Escondido, 92025

Hours: Saturday 10AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10AM – 4 PM

Our show is the largest indoor Gem and Mineral Show in Southern California. Held at the California Center for the Arts – at the Conference Center, 340 North Escondido Blvd., Escondido.

Admission: \$5.00, Children under 12 Free

Be entertained in 9000 square feet with 40 plus vendors displaying beautiful mineral specimens, faceting and lapidary rough fossils, and eye-catching handmade and vintage jewelry. This year we are expanding our vendors to independent artisans working in other materials. Our club experts will be demonstrating faceting, silversmithing, and cabbing. We have a close relationship with The Gem Institute of America and often have GIA students to ID gemstones of our guests.

Our visitors enjoy free parking, a well-lit, air-conditioned facility with clean restrooms. Old town Escondido restaurants are directly across the street. So, if you did not have time to go to Quartzite or Tucson, come and visit Escondido and shop locally at the show that is rapidly becoming the premier gems and mineral show in Southern California.

Contact: (425) 281-6218, tonifloyd41615@gmail.com

Website: <http://palomargem.org>

June 15, 2024 – Bellflower, CA

Delvers Gem and Mineral Society

Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, 14515 Blaine Ave., Bellflower, CA 90706

Hours: 10 AM – 4 PM

Rock & Lapidary Extravaganza. Parking lot sale – Tons of Fun. Free Admission, Free Parking. Gems, Minerals, Equipment, Odds and Ends.

June 29-30, 2024 – Culver City, CA

Culver City Rock & Mineral Club

Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA 90230

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM

2024 Fiesta of Gems – The Culver City Rock and Mineral Club will present its 61st Annual Fiesta of Gems Show on Saturday, June 29, 2024 from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Sunday, June 30, 2024 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA 90230. This year the featured gemstone is Turquoise. Admission and parking are free.

The Fiesta of Gems is a free educational event for the community which provides fossils, gems and mineral exhibits, demonstrations, and children's programs. We also offer jewelry making demonstrations, gem, mineral dealers, tools, and books sales. This event helps several community programs in Culver City and helps to educate and inspire elementary students in Earth Science activities. For more information contact Janice Metz at culvercityrocks35@gmail.com

Website: <http://culvercityrocks.org>

August 17-18, 2024 – Tehachapi, CA

Tehachapi Valley Gem and Mineral Society

Tehachapi Senior Center, 500 East "F" St., Tehachapi, CA 93561

Hours: 9 AM – 5 PM Both Days

Tehachapi Valley 18th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show. Mountain Festival weekend – Fun for the whole family, activities for the kids, raffles, and more.

Contact: (661) 972-1117, travis462@outlook.com

Website: <http://tvngms.rocks>

August 3-4, 2024 – Roseville, CA

Roseville Rock Rollers Gem and Mineral Society

@the Grounds Roseville, 700 Event Center Drive, Roseville, CA 95678

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

62nd Roseville Gem, Jewelry, Mineral, and Fossil Show in the huge, AC Roebbelen Event Center. Over 700 vendors, inside/out, featuring: Crystals, Fossils, Minerals, Amethyst, Beads, Gemstones, Meteorites, plus Free – Scientific Mineral and Gem ID – bring your rocks for a no-cost Scientific Identification! Fun for Kids in "Education Station", Petrified Wood, Stone carvings, many special exhibits. Demonstrations, Huge Rock Auctions. Lots to see for adults and kids at this family friendly event. General admission \$10.00, Kids – 12 and under Free. Parking \$10. Tickets at the door, online, or grab a discount coupon on our even website: <http://www.rockrollers.com/> Website: <https://www.rockrollers.com/show.html>

August 24-25, 2024 – Arcadia, CA

Pasadena Lapidary Society

Arcadia Masonic Lodge, 50 W. Duarte Rd., Arcadia, CA 91007

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

Now in our 75th year, Pasadena Lapidary Society celebrates our 64th Annual Tournament of Gems.

Contact: (626) 260-7239, marcia.pls.emails@gmail.com

Website: <https://pasadenalapidary.org>

September 21-22, 2024 – Monterey, CA

Carmel Valley Gem & Mineral Society

Monterey Fairgrounds, 2004 Fairgrounds Road, Monterey, CA 93950

Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM both days

Rocks, minerals, fossils, vendors, gems, silent auction, beads, equipment, exhibits, kids' stuff, and jewelry

Contact: susieharlow@gmail.com

Website: <http://cvngms.rocks>

September 28-29, 2024 – San Luis Obispo, CA

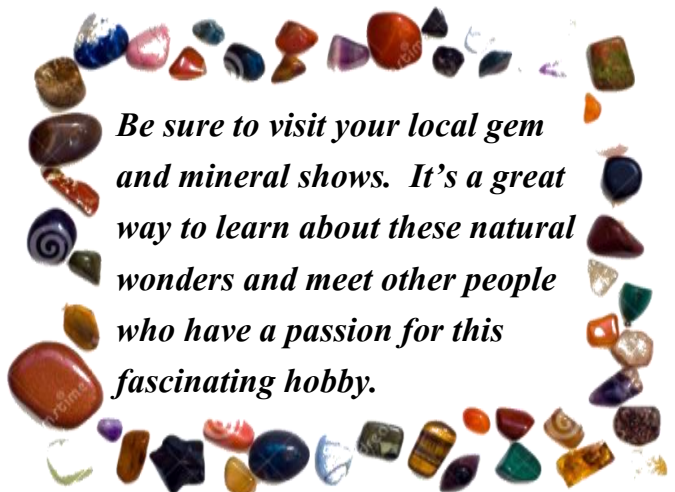
San Luis Obispo Gem and Mineral Club

Veteran's Memorial Building, 801 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM Daily

Gems By The Sea: Two dozen dealers, Unique handcrafted gifts by local artisans, Demonstrations of lapidary crafts, Children's activities. Free Parking. \$5 admission (12 & under free)

Website: <https://slogem.org/gems-by-the-sea/>



American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES	AMOUNT PAID
DUES: SELECT ONE	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$35.00	
	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

To pay via PayPal, please visit the [PayPal](#) page. The AOS PayPal account is membership@opalsociety.org. You may pay with a credit card or via your PayPal account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. If paying by PayPal, please [download](#), complete and send this application form by mail to the address above or email to AOS Treasurer aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org.

NAME			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
BUSINESS NAME			
ADDRESS		APT # or PO BOX	
CITY		STATE	
ZIP or POSTAL CODE	COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)		
PHONE - Home ()	PHONE - Business ()	FAX ()	
E-MAIL			
WEBSITE			
OCCUPATION	HOBBIES AND INTERESTS		

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.

☐ Address ☐ Phone ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

Please sign here: _____ Date _____

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 Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:
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 Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
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Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL

There should 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 warning will be stated if you are overdue.

A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, however, that as the system is now 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 05/04/24)

The Opal Express

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

Volume 57, Issue 6

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

3rd Thursday of the Month

6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

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

TO:



**Meeting – Thursday, June 20th
at the Anaheim Community Center
Social Time: 6:30 p.m.
General Meeting - Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.**



General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

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

**Next meeting will be Thursday, June 20th at the
Anaheim Downtown Community Center**

**→ Social Time: 6:30 p.m. ←
General Meeting - Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.**

American Opal Society

Website: <http://OpalSociety.org>
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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOpalSociety>
Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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Russ Madsen
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Bart Gampe
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