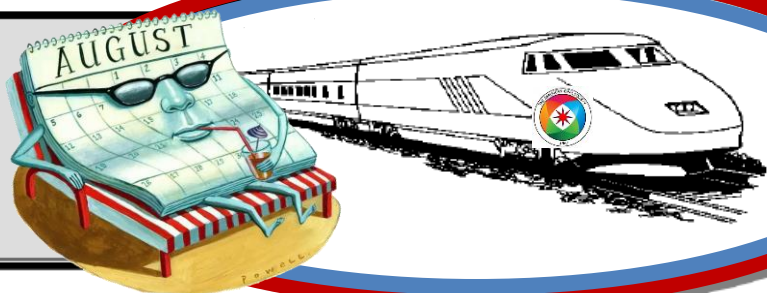


The Opal Express

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

It is with much sadness that I must report the passing of lifetime member Len Cram. Len was a champion of the opal world through his great books and his fabulous photography of opal. Not to mention his theories on the formation of opal and actually growing opal in a controlled environment. Len greatly supported the society by giving us free use of any of his photographs for publishing purposes.

Just before his passing, Len sent the society part of his autobiography about his adventures of visiting the opal mines of the USA. With his permission we will publish segments in our newsletter. Len's adventure consists of about 40,000 words and will be published in The Opal Express starting in 2025.

Kathleen James, the Editor of the Opal Express, has decided to resign after a five year run. She is also the Admin for our Facebook page. and will be resigning from that position also. The society is currently searching for a new editor and Facebook Admin starting in 2025. Any takers out there?

Last but not least, don't forget about the big sale of goodies on August 25th. See Page 7 for 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: DFRACT47&

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

Did You Know?

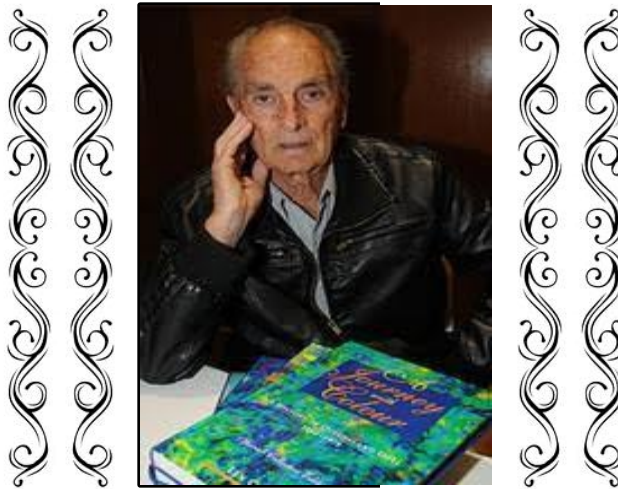
In the original Roman calendar, August was first called Sextilis, Latin for the sixth month. It was renamed in honor of Rome's first emperor, Caesar Augustus. Later, January and February were added to the calendar, making August the eighth month.

In a standard year, no other month starts on the same day as August. But in a leap year, August begins on the same day as February.

From: <https://pripsjamaica.com/blogs/9-fun-facts-about-august>

The Remarkable Len Cram

by Barbara Moritz



The remarkable Len Cram went Over the Rainbow in the early morning of 8 July 2024. He suffered a heart attack so it was quick. Len was 95 years old, upright and had all his faculties.

Len gave selflessly to the Opal Industry. His adventures are legend, and he published the histories of opal miners across Australia, their discoveries and the development of machinery. His colourful photographs compliment over twenty booklets in the past 30 years, many self-published.

Len settled on the Ridge with his family in 1961. He initiated the build of an Adventist Church and was early in the development of a Japanese market for black opal. Len was the first opal miner to serve on Walgett's County Council. From his airplane, he made food drops to the surrounding properties during 1970s flood times. Len was a foundation member of the local Historical Society and a Life Member for his contribution of documenting the development of Lightning Ridge.

But before this, Len was on the Queensland opal fields, a young man from the Lake Macquarie area. He was the oldest of 11 in his mother's two broods. Three brothers predeceased him.

Len's spirit will linger in the beautiful opals he captured on film in his steady hand. He was curious about opal's formation and the International Institute of Graduate Studies in Canberra awarded him a Doctorate of Philosophy (Honorary) in 1998 for his work with opal. He recorded astounding opal beauty along with Australian opal mining history in his hard-copy *Journey with Colour* series.

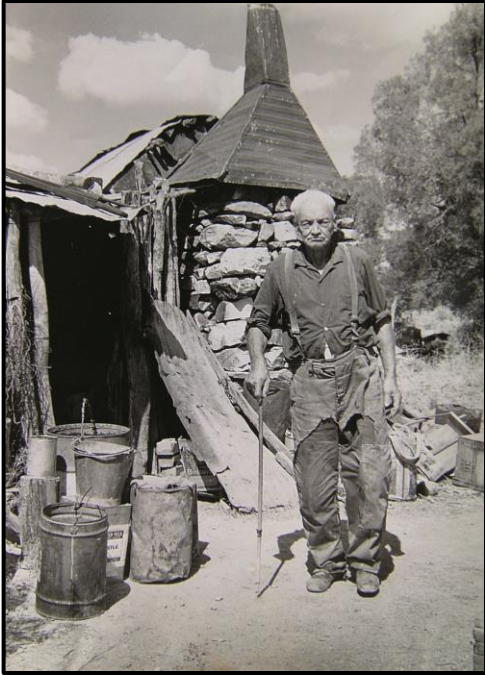
If congratulated and thanked for his Gift to the Opal Industry through his multitude of books and oral history, Len modestly replied that he only lived his life as he wanted to; he was not special. We know different . . . Rest in Peace Len Cram.

Lightning Ridge Historical Society

14 July 2024

Dunstan's Stone - The First Famous Lightning Ridge Opal

by Len Cram



Fred Bodel in 1963

Charlie Dunstan commits suicide, Walgett Spectator, 16 November 1910:

We were horrified last Monday to learn that an old resident of the field, Charlie Dunstan, had committed suicide. He was found dead in his hut, lying on the floor with a pea rifle beneath him. The police found an empty cartridge in the gun, and an open razor nearby. It would appear that he first thought to use the razor, then changed his mind and used the rifle.

Stuart Lloyd records a few interesting facts about Charlie Dunstan in his book:

He found a famous stone at the Angledool field that was named after him. He was a very hard happy go lucky worker who loved his liquor and often indulged in bouts of heavy drinking. He had one of the best

claims on Angledool field, and the ratters took advantage of him when he was in this condition. Frank Tattem said he once saw even men come out of Charlies claim at sunrise one morning. On one occasion after recovering from a binge, he put a notice in his mine for the ratters, which read: 'For goodness sake use your own candles.' In one instance after discovering a pocket of large opals, he had trouble getting one of them out of his pocket to show a friend while it was still in the rough.

Fred Bodel, who in 1906 saw a lot of Dunstan's opal, told me that among his many gems were three exceptional big stones. One as big as a cricket ball was stolen from him in a pub at Angledool, [Not to be confused with the opal field of the same name] while on a drinking binge, the other two he sold. Dunstan and his partner, Happy Jack, [Jack Burke] were two of the first Opal Kings on the field. Murphy, the field's most famous buyer said at one stage they sold him £1,000 worth of opal in six weeks. John Landers, who also knew Dunstan, wrote an article on him for the Walgett Spectator in 1921, said:

"On that bitter cold night in September 1906, on my first trip to Walgett and the Ridge, I was sitting by a great log fire in Dodd's Hotel, when a stranger came in. We entered into conversation, and he told me he came from Lightning Ridge. I at once became interested, and told him I was going out there to try my luck for

Continued on Page 4

opal. The name turned out to be Charlie Dunstan, who was at the time, an acknowledged Opal King of the field. We met again on the following morning, and he showed me about 20 or 30 beautiful stones, among which was an enormous black stone. He told me it had come from his claim at Angledool, and that his partner, Happy Jack Burke, a short time previously, had dug it out. He said he just had it weighed in the bank, and that it was nearly six and a half ounces! It appeared to be nearly five inches long, and two and half inches thick and the same in width. In shape, it resembled an enormous egg. As far as I can remember, this stone was all opal, no potch showing anywhere.

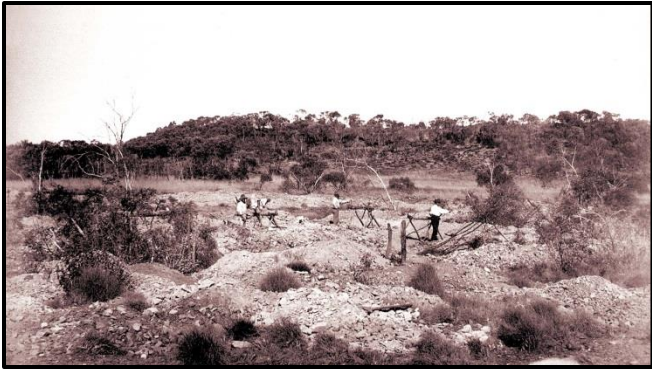
During my sojourn at Lightning Ridge, I have never, nor has anyone else, seen so large a stone of such quality and beauty. I asked him the value of it and he replied "about £120". I think he told me years after, that he sold it to a man named Martin for £100. Black opal in those days was not a valuable jewel as it is today. Martin kept it for some time, and not being able to realise a profit on it, sold it to Murphy, who sent it around the world trying to sell it but without success. It eventually came back to Australia when it was sold on the field to Francis, "Berlina". Francis had no better luck than the others did and he gave it to Samuels who sold it for £100, for which he received £3 commission. For the next ten years, this

stone seemed to be lost sight of. All trace of it entirely disappeared. About 18 months ago, I read in one of the leading newspapers of a beautiful large black opal in the Washington State Bureau, New York, about 20 cubic inches in size, which would be about the size of Dunstan's stone and the value of it was £56,000, not dollars. This would in all probability be the stone from the Ridge.

I remember Charlie Dunstan and Happy Jack telling me that when they found this stone, it was so large, they could not fit it into their tea billy to carry it home! In the ground, beautiful sheets of opal that immediately crumbled and fell to pieces as they peeled them off, were wrapped around it. Happy Jack also said that for almost 18 inches before he came across the opal he was peeling these wafer thin sheets of opal out of the opal dirt. This claim of Dunstan's in the opinion of all the old hands, must have been the richest we ever had. I remember Dunstan telling me that he sold Murphy a 60 oz parcel of black barred stones for £62. I also remember him telling me some three years later that he was sure he had sold £30,000 worth of opal for £900. Poor Charlie sleeps in our little cemetery. Success killed him. Peace be with him. They both loved the joy of living and perhaps will be mates again where black opal does not trouble them. However, we still have their memories."

The Imperial Opal

by Len Cram



Working a small section of old ground at Opalton in 1906.

Opalton has produced some of the geological wonders of the world, and the “Imperial Opal” is no exception. Valued at £50,000 in 1901, an incredible amount, it weighed 250 carats. An astonishing piece of crystal opal, it was found in 1895 during the height of production and bought by Maurice Lyons, a leading Brisbane lawyer, also an entrepreneur heavily involved in land and mining ventures.

The only description we have of the gem is from the London Times of 9 March 1901, written after their reporter was invited to a special viewing:

“It was not the best sort of day on which to inspect such a magnificent jewel, the atmosphere being overcast and dull. Only the opal when taken out of its box and wrappings seemed to light up the room. Those present looked at it with a certain awesome joy, and handled it in the same spirit. “How beautiful! How splendid!” said the ladies. Sir Horace Tozer said, of all the Queensland opals he had seen, this one was the finest.”

“The gem has been cut into an irregular shape pending the ultimate decision as to the purpose for which it will be used. In its present shape it is two and half inches long and one and half in depth weighing 250 carats. It is not its size that is considered so remarkable, but its quality. Its brilliance almost approaches that of the diamond and has all the colours of the ruby, emerald and amethyst, which are clearly marked in a beautiful harlequin pattern. It was broken in two during mining, the smaller piece, less than half the size of The Imperial Opal, is also an extraordinary gem. The stone comes from Opalton, in the western district of Queensland, and was discovered six years ago.”



Len Cram, Opalton, July 9, 2009

During a conversation while showing Sir James Dickson the gem in 1899, Lyons told him it was his intention to present the gem to Queen Victoria at the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament. As there were no Australian gems in the Crown Jewels he believed it would be a fitting representation of the new Commonwealth of Australia. Sir William

Continued on Page 6

George Herbert, another of his friends, named the stone, The Imperial Opal, after learning of his intentions.

In preparation to carrying out his plan, Lyons had the gem deposited in a London bank, with the intention that the Queen should have the first inspection, knowing her preference for opals. Unfortunately, due to her death, she never saw the gem, but Lyons, still wanting to present the gem to the Crown, offered the stone to King Edward. The London Daily Chronicle commented on his gesture in March 1901:

“Mr Maurice Lyons, of Queensland, is desirous of presenting to King Edward The Imperial Opal for inclusion in the Crown Regalia. His Majesty has not yet seen this magnificent jewel, but we believe that he has indicated his views on the matter, and takes the position that so valuable a gem could not be accepted as a gift from any individual subject to the crown. It is Mr Lyons’ desire that The Imperial Opal should represent the Australian Commonwealth in the Crown Jewels.”

Unfortunately, I have not been able shed any light on what might have happened to this incredible opal. I would appreciate it should any reader know its whereabouts or even a smidgen of its lost history.

Printed with permission from Len Cram and prepared especially for the American Opal Society



Len Cram on the field in 1996

Did You Know?

Home of Queensland Boulder Opal, Opalton lies 124 kilometres from Winton. Opal was first discovered here by George Cragg in 1888 and the first mine was worked in 1894. By the end of the decade there was a bustling township of 600 and Opalton became known for the enormous volume and quality of its opal. In 1899 the largest piece of opal ever recorded was mined from Opalton, a pipe opal more than three metres long.

Now home to a much smaller community, Opalton boasts one shop where you are likely to meet all the locals when the mail is delivered every Thursday. Try your luck in the public fossicking area. There are camping facilities at the bush park and basic cabins are available.

Source: <https://www.queensland.com/us/en/places-to-see/destination-information/p-56b25f732880253d74c47791-opalton>

Pete Goetz's Estate Sale

Greetings,

Last year, before the our annual Opal Show, the AOS lost Pete Goetz to illness after many years active with the club. The AOS gratefully received donation of his collection by his widow, Kathy. The club held a first sale in June with the AOS and Searchers' members and now it's time for round two with more clubs and the general public invited.

The date for the sale will be Sunday, August 25th at Veronica Purpura's house (see below). It will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. AOS club members are asked to arrive as early as 8 a.m. to bring down the collection, set-up and price. Most of the sale will be indoors with various large machines (casters, kilns, saws, etc.) set up on the shaded porch just outside. Many prices are negotiable.

Items for sale will range from minerals, gems, crystals, specimens, lapidary equipment, jewelry supplies, machines, casting and waxes, opals and more.

Catalogs with the pictures of items in the collection (minus AOS club items) will be provided and are uploaded to our dropbox for preview of what's available. Here's the dropbox link:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/s3k8h3mlpdn4z0djxul4g/APJ4vv7EH59907JKPfk_h8A?rlkey=05l2wfd_d08otc4gd3s1xoo1f3&st=m99b9p1m&dl=0

Payment methods will include cash, check (made to the American Opal Society), PayPal (info@opalsociety.org), along with Zelle (aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org) and Square (through Veronica, who can transfer funds to the AOS).

The sale will be at 676 S. Scout Trail, Anaheim Hills, CA 92807. Veronica's cell phone is 714-501-9959. The neighborhood has plenty of street side parking and is safe. A ramp will be set up near the front steps to reduce steps for wheel chairs and trolleys. I own a dog and two cats (allergy warning) but the dog will be kept in the backyard/backroom and the cats will be upstairs and won't bother anyone.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Veronica Purpura
AOS Show Chair

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 2-4, 2024 – Nipomo, CA

Orcutt Mineral Society

Nipomo High School, 525 N. Thompson Ave., Nipomo, CA 93444

Hours: Friday 10 AM-5 PM, Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM-4 PM

56th Annual Rainbow of Gems: Over 60 rock, gem and fossil dealers including food trucks. Kid's booth, Treasure Chest with Raffle at 3:00pm on Sunday.

Contact: (805) 929-2783, nipomocowgirl55@yahoo.com

Website: <http://omsinc.org>

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 70 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 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://tvqms.rock>

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, kind's stuff, and jewelry

Contact: susieharlow@gmail.com

Website: <http://cvqms.rock>

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/>

October 12-13, 2024 – Redwood City, CA

Peninsula Gem and Geology Society and Sequoia Gem and Mineral Society

Redwood City Community Activities Building, 1400 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City, CA 94061

Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM daily

Rocks, Minerals, Fossils, Gems, Jewelry, Beads, Demonstrations, Kid's Activities

Contact: cci@pacbell.net

Website: <https://www.sequoiagemandmineralsociety.org/sgms-gem-mineral-show.html>

October 12-13, 2024 – Long Beach, CA

Long Beach Mineral and Gem Society

Signal Hill Library, 1800 E. Hill Street, Signal Hill, CA

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

2024 Gems on the Hill

Contact: (562) 253-1390, lbmineralgemsociety@gmail.com

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

October 19, 2024 – West Hills, CA

Woodland Hills Rock Chippers

First United Methodist Church, 22700 Sherman Way, Woodland Hills, CA 91307

Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM

Contact: barnettcelia53@gmail.com

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

October 19-20, 2024 – Santa Rosa, CA

Santa Rosa Mineral & Gem Society

1351 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95404

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

Earth's Treasures: Come enjoy the many and varied specimens slabs, rough rock, fine stones and jewelry the earth has created for us.

Contact: (707) 849-9551, coons@sonic.net

Website: <http://SRMGS.org>

October 26-27, 2024 – Sacramento, CA

Sacramento Mineral Society

Scottish Rite Center, 6151 H Street, Sacramento, CA 95819

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

88th Annual Sacramento Gem, Mineral, & Jewelry Show.

Free parking, \$8 adult admission, kids under 12 free with paid adult

Contact: (916) 662-5819, gemshow@sacramentomineralsociety.org

Website: <http://sacgemshow.com>

October 26-27, 2024 – Orange, CA

American Opal Society

Opal Gem & Jewelry Show

Velvet Rose Event Center, 300 S. Flower Street, Orange, CA 92868

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM

Sunday 10 AM- 5 PM

54th Annual Opal, Gem & Jewelry Show

Rough & cut opals and gemstones, jewelry,

supplies. Huge drawing. Free demonstrations.

Contact: (714) 501-9959, info@opalsociety.org

Website: <http://opalsociety.org>

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 (<u>Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail</u>)		\$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 related business.
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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 E-mail: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

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 06/23/24)

The Opal Express

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

Volume 57, Issue 8

— 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, August 15th
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, August 15th at the
Anaheim Downtown Community Center**

→ Social Time: 6:30 p.m. ←

General Meeting - Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.

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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