

The Opal Express

Published
monthly by
The
American
Opal
Society

December 2024

Volume 57 Issue 12

Merry Christmas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message	1
What is the story behind mistletoe?	1
Needed Opal Express Editor and Facebook Admin	1
Why the New Mining Act Replaced the Miner's Right	2
Introduction to Smoked Treated Welo Ethiopian Opals	6
Bench Tips	7
Upcoming Events	8

President's Message

Merry Christmas Opalholics!

I hope everyone is ready for the Christmas holidays – the end of the year sure came fast, didn't it?

We will have a Potluck at our December 19th at 6:30 p.m. (Board Room at the Downtown Anaheim Center). Due to fewer members and size of room, anything heated should be pre-heated/cooked and brought over already done. We do have outlets and a counter if you want to use a crockpot.

Veronica will bring homemade candies (caramels, turtles, fruit gummy candies, peanut butter bonbons, etc.) along with carving knives, utensils, serving tools, foil, power strip, paper towels, to-go containers, and more. She might bring some extra sodas from home (already chilled). I will bring rotisserie chicken (already cooked). So please feel free to join us and bring a side dish of your choosing.

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting



What is the story behind mistletoe?

In the Norse culture, the Mistletoe plant was a sign of love and peace. The story goes that the goddess, Figg lost her son, the god Baldur, to an arrow made of mistletoe. After his death, she vowed that Mistletoe would kiss anyone who passed beneath so long as it was never again used as a weapon.

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 also up to you.

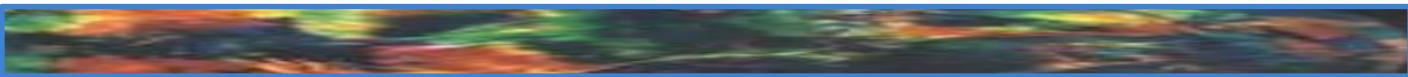
If you are interested in either position, please let me or Stan McCall know.

Thank you
Kathleen James, Editor

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 out 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.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

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

A lot of the bigger scale miners objected strongly and a dark cloud descended upon Lightning Ridge. When “The Miner’s Right” was replaced by a more

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 they had 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 4

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 hand 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 5

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 was 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.

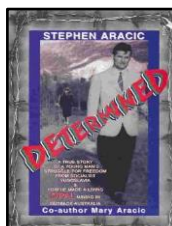
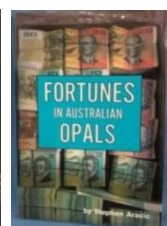
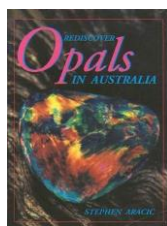
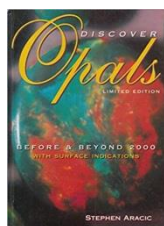
Up until this point Stephen's only experience was from Lightning Ridge. We'd been to White Cliffs in 1981, but he wanted to further his knowledge and include all the other commercial opal fields as well. He decided to utilize all the experience gained in his years of mining for opal in the Ridge and 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.

Introduction to Smoke Treated Welo Ethiopian Opals



Smoke treatment for Welo Ethiopian opals begins when the preformed opals are placed into a box with a small wood chip fire underneath. This set up allows only the smoke to pass through the opals and not the heat. Setting up the perfect smoking box system took us a long time to figure out the right distance to keep the opals from the fire to ensure the best yield of finished smoke treated opals without cracks from the heat of the fire. We lost many opals to heat cracks fine tuning this treatment.

Since Welo Ethiopian Opals are hydrophane, this making them very porous, allowing for them to deeply soak in the smoke. The time frame for the treatment process normally takes around 2 hours sometimes longer and is a permanent treatment.

It is amazing to see this treatment done because you can start out with Welo opal performs that all look to be the same base color and after the treatment will end up with all the pictured mixture of base colors mixture from green, tan/brown, yellow, dark black. Normally there is only around 25% that turn yellow or green base color. Majority turn tan/black base after treatment.

After the treatment process the fire color play is very much enhanced. Most all smoked Welo opals end up with fire play brightness of at least 4/5-5/5

A lot of people have never seen or heard of smoke treated Welo opals. Some people that do know of this treatment think it is horrible for the Welo opal business because of people not disclosing whether a opal has been treated.

The major concern is the mixing up of the natural base color Welo Opals with the treated. Natural Untreated Welo opals are found in a variety of natural base colors. Some of which include clear / silk / brown / tan / green / dark crystal / white/ grey / purple / red / yellow / lavender / blue crystal / pinkish white.



Konjo Opals wants you to be aware of this treatment process. We will always label any smoke treated opal that we offer for sale with full disclosure of treatment. We also offer Lab certification from a choice of labs if you would like on any of our opals. Send a message for more details on lab certifications. If you would like to buy any smoked treated Welo opals send a message for pricing.

From:

<http://www.opalauctions.com/auctions/ethiopian-opals/item-317852>

~ 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

DIVIDERS

by Brad Smith

A set of dividers is a tool I find very useful in laying out the geometry of a piece I'm making. It has two needle-like tips with an adjustment to set the spacing between them.

They can be used to transfer a measurement. Let's say you need a 7mm wide strip of sheet metal. Set the spacing between the divider tips to 7 mm on the ruler. Then lay the sheet on the bench, put one tip against the edge, and run the dividers down the edge scribing a line parallel to the edge.

Dividers can be used to mark equal segments of a line or arc. For instance, assume a line between A and B that might be straight or curved, and you want to divide it into 5 equal lengths. Set the dividers to an estimate of the distance. Starting at Point A, use the dividers to mark off five lengths along the line. If you end up short of Point B, lengthen the distance on the dividers.

If you end up overshooting Point B, shorten the length of your dividers. After a few tries, the length on the dividers will be the exact distance you need to mark the 5 segments.

Dividers can let you quickly find the center of a circular disk. With one tip of the dividers at the edge of the disk, set the other tip to an estimate of where the center might be. Fix one tip of the dividers at the 3 o'clock position and scribe an arc with the other tip near the center. Do this again from the 6 o'clock, 9 o'clock, and 12 o'clock positions. The arcs at the center will form a small four-sided box. The center of the box is at the center of the disk.



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.

January 18-19, 2025 – Exeter, CA

Tule Gem & Mineral Society
Exeter Veterans Memorial Building, 246 Chestnut St., Exeter, CA 93211
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Tule Gem & Mineral Society Gemboree
Contact: bandgbing@aol.com
Website: <http://www.tulegem.com>

February 15-16, 2025 – Antioch, CA

Antioch Lapidary Club
Contra Costa County Fairgrounds, 1201 West 10th Street, Antioch, CA 94509
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Antioch Lapidary Club Jewelry, Gem & Rock Show. Admission \$7, Admission is Cash Only. All vendors take credit/debit cards.
Website: <http://antiochlapidaryclub.com>

February 22-23, 2025 – Vallejo, CA

Vallejo Gem and Mineral Society
Solano County Fairgrounds McCormack Hall, 900 Fairgrounds Drive, Vallejo, CA
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
59th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show
Contact: (415) 254-1506
Website: <http://vjgems.com>

March 1-2, 2025 – Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem and Mineral Society
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura CA 93003
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
62nd Annual VGMS Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show. Kids' activities; jewelry-making demos; exhibits; raffle prizes, hourly silent auctions; dealers in fossils, mineral, lapidary materials; gold panning, Second-Hand Treasures Store of gently used items, books, and plants.
Free admission but the Fairgrounds charges parking if using the Fairgrounds lot.
Contact: (805) 312-8467, info@vgms.org
Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 8-9, 2025 – Turlock, CA

Mother Lode Mineral Society
Turlock Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway, Turlock, CA
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
Rock & Gem Show, Educational Family Event.
Minerals, Beads, Fossils, Tools, Fluorescent Room, Dinosaur walk-about, Gem Identification, Kids Activities, Gold Panning, Demos, Exhibits, Great Food, Free Parking
Contact: (209) 499-0533, skitrish1112@hotmail.com
Website: www.turlockgemshow.com

March 7-9, 2024 – Stoddard Wells, CA

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club
1-15 toward Barstow. EXIT #157, stay on Stoddard Wells Road. Follow the signs 7 miles to tailgate
Hours: Daily 9 M – 5 PM
49th Annual Show; Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club, Annual Stoddard Wells Tailgate; Friday-Sunday 95p; Free to vendors and public; Vendors offering slabs and cabs, findings and equipment, minerals and fossils, rough material, handcrafted and faceted jewelry. Family field trip on Saturday 9a-1p at local collecting site.
Contact: Dave Duncan (831) 406-0214, president@vvgmc.org
Website: <http://vvgmc.org>

March 15-16, 2025 – San Jose, CA

Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd., San Jose, CA 95111
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM Daily
Children under 12 free with adult. Active Duty/Retired Military/Military Dependents/First Responders Free with valid ID Card. Scouts in Uniform Admitted Free. Adults \$8 – save \$2 when you buy online!
<http://www.scvgms.org>
Bring any of our advertising paper or electronic for \$1 off admission.
FREE PARKING
Website: <http://www.scvgms.org>,
facebook.com/santaclaravalleygem&mineralsociety/

March 22-23, 2025 – Angels Camp, CA

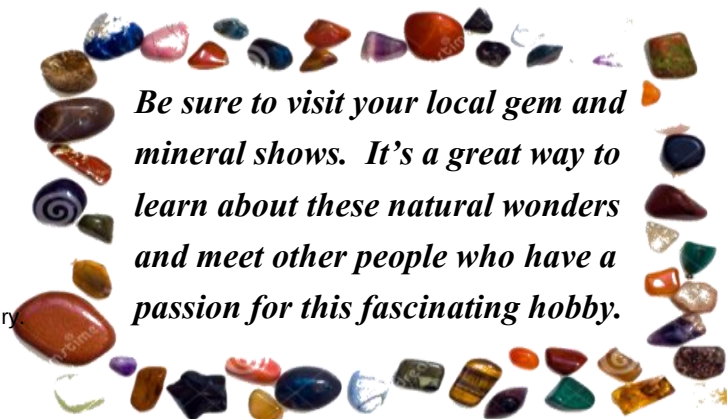
Calaveras Gem and Mineral Society
Calaveras County Fairgrounds, 2465 Gun Club Rd., Angels Camp, CA 95222
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
The Calaveras Gem and Mineral and Jewelry Show at the Calaveras County Fairgrounds Frogtown. Admission is \$4 for adults; kids 12 and under are free, if accompanied by a paying adult. There will be numerous exhibits featuring jewelry, carving, faceted gemstones, and polished rocks. There will be demonstrators in disciplines such as fastening gemstones, wire wrapping, chair fabrication, and rock carving. Dealers will be selling jewelry making supplies and tools, beads, minerals, handcrafted jewelry, meteorites, fossils, ETC. Snack bar and food trucks on site. Free parking and shuttle service from fairgrounds gate up to the show building.
Contact: (209) 736-4892, annachristiansen7132@comcast.net
Website: <https://calaverasgemandmineral.net/show.html>

April 12-13, 2025 – Placerville, CA

El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society
El Dorado County Fairgrounds, Placerville, CA
Hours: Saturday and Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: (530) 676-2472
Website: <http://edcmgs.org>

April 12-13, 2025 – Mariposa, CA

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club
Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5007 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa, CA 95338
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Mountains of Minerals! Mountains of minerals, rocks, fossils, jewelry, supplies, geode cutting, silent auction, raffle, and FOOD!
Contact: mgmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.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: 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 _____

The Opal Express is published monthly by The American Opal Society.
 Copyright 2024. All rights reserved.
 Non-Commercial Reprint Permission Granted Unless Otherwise Reserved.
 Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:
 Editor
 American Opal Society, Inc.
 P.O. Box 4875
 Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
 E-mail: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL

There 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 12

— 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, December 19th
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, December 19th 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>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/opalsociety>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOpalSociety>
Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

Stan McCall
Russ Madsen
Kathleen James
Bart Gampe
Veronica Purpura
Jamie Cassidy-Curtis

President
Treasurer
Editor
Webmaster
Show Chairman
Secretary

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

email: aos.president.01@gmail.com
email: aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org
email: aos.editor02@gmail.com
email: bgampe@gmail.com
email: aos.showchair@gmail.com
email: jamiec275@gmail.com