

NEWSLETTER

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March Meeting . . .

Long-time members will recall that each year, just prior to our annual opal show, we have an appraisal session, primarily to assist members who plan to sell their stones in the AOS Showcase. Last year, however, things were a little out of kilter, and we did not hold the appraisal session. We have since had some exciting presentations by Program Chairman, John Hall, and have had to postpone the appraisal session until our March meeting.

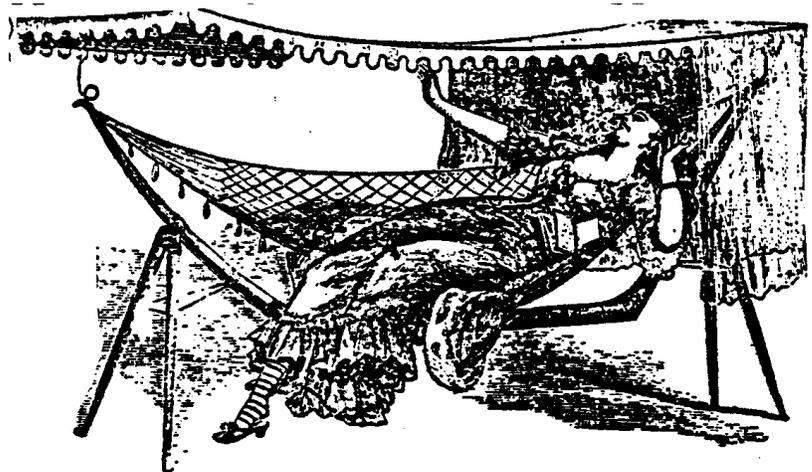
It was truly amazing and gratifying to see the tremendous turn-out. It seems these workshop sessions are of tremendous benefit, not only to newcomers, but to the old hands who are inclined to get a little rusty in the use of the appraisal form.

Six tables were set up, with anywhere from 6 to 10 people at each. Each table was staffed with an experienced pro in appraisal, and the fun began. I was honored to be asked to lead one of the tables, and enjoyed bringing out for discussion some of the salient features of six stones that my team appraised. There were many interesting points brought out, such as the following:

1. One of the participants remarked that he was led to believe that each appraisal should be multiplied by a factor of 2 or 3 to cover inflation, and the increase in the price of opal since the form was generated in 1971. I have found, however, that it is not necessary to compensate for inflation. It is rather difficult to explain, but as it turns out, the final appraisal always comes out in terms of today's dollars, and not the value of a dollar in 1971, so we have an automatic compensation. This was effectively proven when we studied the results of the appraisals of the six stones.
2. The form is most effective if the stone is of average thickness. Most stones turn out somewhere between $\frac{3}{32}$ and $\frac{6}{32}$ ($\frac{3}{16}$) of an inch thick. Even a 22X30 opal cab will be less than $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch. Study a ruler for a while and make a few measurements of your own, and you will see what I mean. In fact, I just now measured a 30 x 40 jade cab and found it to be 5 mils thick, or just a smidgen over $\frac{3}{16}$ ths.

We were dumbfounded to find that one stone was appraised at about twice the amount any of us would pay for it. As we studied the stone (about one inch long and 5/16 wide) we suddenly realized that it was about 1/16 inch thick! A normal stone would be half as thick. If the stone (it had solid fire) were split with a thin opal saw, there would be two pieces with the same eye appeal, and the original price, considered too high in the single stone, would then be justified in the two stones.

3. Never ever buy a stone without viewing it away from the high intensity lights we find at Rock & Gem Shows. We appraised one stone which was weird beyond belief! When viewed under normal fluorescent lighting it was washed out, bland kind. of crystal. Even when viewed with a high intensity light at other than a 90 degree angle it was lifeless. But, and this was most amazing, when viewed under high intensity incandescent light at about exactly 90 degrees (both light and eye angle head-on to stone) it yielded every color of the spectrum with most impressive brilliance. Given all these conditions, the opal (of approximately 3 carats) was appraised at only \$1800 since it not be feasible to have an incandescent high intensity light shining on the stone continuously. The owner of the stone accepted our appraisal in good grace. She was, admittedly, as frustrated in coaxing out the fire, as we were!



Refined Lady Suffering Vapors From Racy Reading

Those of you who could not attend the meeting may conduct your own appraisals by using the enclosed appraisal form and the instructions on the reverse side. So go ahead, Bunky, it is really quite simple once you get the swing of it!!

One word of caution in the use of the appraisal form. The appeal rating carries tremendous weight in the calculations. The value rating can usually be quite accurately determined, and the carat weight is a constant for any particular stone and cannot be changed. However, the appeal rating is used as a multiplier, and any small change here is reflected as a great change in the final value of the stone. So caution is advised in estimating the appeal rating, lest an exercise in appraisal becomes an exercise in frustration!!

AMERICAN OPAL SOCIETY
APPRAISAL FORM

CATEGORY	VALUE RATING					APPRAISAL VALUE RATING
	1	2	3	4	5	
BASE COLOR	JELLY OR WHITE	GRAY	SEMI BLACK	NEAR CRYSTAL CLEAR	CRYSTAL CLEAR	
FIRE COLORS	RED GREEN	GREEN	BLUE GREEN	MULTI- COLOR	RED MULTI- COLOR	
INTENSITY	VERY LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	VERY HIGH	
			APPRAISED VALUE RATING			

- ①
- ②
- ③
- ④

APPEAL FACTOR	MARKET RATING						APPRAISED APPEAL RATING
	0.5	1	2	3	4	5	
	POOR		MODERATE		HIGH		VERY HIGH

- ⑤

VALUE RATING	X	APPEAL RATING	X	CARAT PRICE	⑥
CARAT PRICE	X	WEIGHT (CARAT)	X	TOTAL PRICE	⑦

EXPLANATION

We list three categories of characteristics. Each is divided into five factors that affect value. Case color is the background color and white bas, or clear jelly has a value of 1. A stone with this characteristic and value would be entered as 1 in the right hand column. Stones exhibiting any other color have a numerical value for that factor.

Fire colors refers only to the color flakes or sheets when examined under incandescent light. (Note: Fluorescent light is not recommended for evaluating opal). The lowest value 1 is used when the two color, red and green, are evident. When the full spectrum of colors is visible, it is multicolored. A fire color of 5 is used when all colors are there, but with a predominance of red.

Intensity is the inner glow or brilliance of the play of fire. Incandescent lighting is helpful, but to obtain a better evaluation of "intensity", use reduced lighting.

The values of the three characteristics are entered at the right and totaled. The total is then multiplied by the "market rating". Market rating should include consideration of shape, symmetry, workmanship (scratches, symmetry, bezel line, bevel) as well as fire pattern. Real gems will have obvious market appeal. The total obtained by multiplying appeal rating X total, of the value rating should be very near the retail price of opal being evaluated in dollars per carat weight.

This simplified Opal appraisal form is usable for 95% of the Australian Opal that is purchased or sold by the opal public, It does not apply to treated opal, nor doublets, nor triplets.

NOTE: 1/2 values may be used in the value rating scale as well as in the market rating scale.

Form designed by The American Opal society, 3-25.71 (rev.) for the guidance of Opal Society Members.

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Place stone at spot marked X. This will permit ready reference to the stone and form:

- Step 1: Determine base color. Is it white? If so, place it's value rating (1) in box No. 1.
- Step 2: Determine fire colors. Is it multicolor? Does it contain all colors? If so, place its value rating (1) in box No. 2.
- Step 3: Determine intensity. Let's assume our theoretical stone is of medium intensity. Place it's value rating (3) in box No. 3.
- Step 4: Total boxes 1, 2, and 3. Enter total value (8) in box No 4.
- Step 5: Be honest now, and select most applicable appeal factor. Is it moderate, but a pretty good moderate? If so, place a market rating (2) in box No. 5.
- Step 6: Multiply Value Rating (8) by Appeal Rating (2) and place total (16) in box No. 5.
- Step 7: Multiply Carat Price from box 6 (16) by weight in Carats and enter total in. box No. 7. Thus, if the stone were 3 carats the appraisal value would be in the neighborhood of \$48.00, which is about right for a white base, multicolored stone of medium intensity, with a moderately high appeal rating.

The appeal factor has a strong influence on the final appraisal, since it is a multiplier. For instance, if a stone with the same carat weight of base color and fire color, and intensity were cut in the shape of a heart (same carat weight), and hearts turn you on, it may increase the appeal factor to 3. That would increase the carat price to 24 and the stone would be appraised at \$72.00.

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By the way, you say you do not. carry an appraisal form with you when you attend the Pock & Gem Shows? Well, keep your eye on the next Newsletter!! We are coming out with a wallet-sized form, sealed in plastic. Isn't that racy?! It's enough to really give one the vapors!!

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Vick Mayo