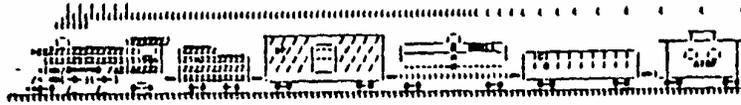




# The OPAL EXPRESS

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JEWETT PATTEE, EDITOR

## MESSAGE FROM YOUR PREZ!

HAPPY NEW YEAR A LITTLE LATE.

I would like to take this time to thank all of you who put your trust in me and voted for me to lead us upward and onward in this ever diminishing group joiners world.

More and more people are less attracted to a club or organization where they have to spend some time giving and not being entertained at any kind of meeting. Hopefully, with the invitation cards of the Founding Chapter with the weight references inside, we can induce friends of the QUEEN OF GEMS to become supportive members. Ask for several of these cards for your own use, as well as that of prospective members. This might give them an incentive to help OUR AMERICAN OPAL SOCIETY GROW.

Members join for a year or so, learn all they think they need to know, buy a machine for their own cutting and polishing, then say, "I don't need to be a member, I know it all now!"

They lose out on some points overlooked, like inclusions that should be cut out, bad potch areas that if cut right will yield 1 or 2, maybe three brilliant stones rather than 1 semi-lustrous, low grade stone. These and other helpful hints can teach you something new, you can also help other members learn more, by sharing ideas you have picked up outside the Society's confines. As another example, an aluminum marker stick will mark only on a stone of up to 7, Mohs Scale. (Mohs Scale being, mineral hardness test.) Diamond is 9.2-10. 10 is the hardest in the purest form of Carbon under extreme pressure and heat, yielding in diamond, some of the best gem quality stones. Opal is 6-6.5 Mohs.

IN the Founding Chapter workshop, a pointed aluminum wire is used for marking cabochon outlines. These lines are not erased by water while grinding shape and size for calibrated stones. There are just a few ways you can save time and precious opal that could otherwise be wasted. If you have any helpful hints, you would like to share with our members, please send a note explaining your experiences along these lines.

What points of interest would you like to see concentrated upon in our Seminar for the upcoming Opal Show on October 21 and 22 in Long Beach? Write and let us know in what areas your interests lie, so we can cover what we might otherwise overlook. Remember this is your AMERICAN OPAL SOCIETY, you and everyone you get to join and participate, count in our plans for now and for the future. Without you, the WE becomes I and there the Society ends. Help us to help you. Thanks, Dick Koch.

## FOUNDING CHAPTER NEWS

Hal Brees, President, 714-820-6446.

Congratulations to our new President Hal Brees and new Vice-President, Bobbie Gledhill. We all wish a speedy "get well" to Bobbie who has suffered with double pneumonia. Bill Means is continuing as Treasurer and Catherine Doten was elected Secretary.

Our Christmas potluck and New Year's potluck was so enjoyable we have voted and decided to have a potluck every month. We may have to diet for three days after but, "won't it be worth it!" Last names beginning with Q-Z are to bring hor d'eurves or salad; A-H bring casseroles; and I-P are to bring dessert. Please bring your own table service. Dinner will start at 7:00 pm and meeting will begin at 8:00 pm.

Our February speakers will be Dick Koch and Cliff Coan. We will be filled with their knowledgeable experience on "Orientation of Color." Don't miss this one!

At our last board meeting in January we talked about doing things to raise money for our fund. We decided to extend our artistic ability by painting sweatshirts. So bring all your loot to the meeting and check out these beautiful creations.

Also at the board meeting it was suggested that we charge \$1.00 to each person who comes to the workshop at Edith's. It was voted on and passed. This will become effective February 1st, 1989.

We would like to wish a warm welcome to our visitors from our January chapter meeting.

Don't forget to bring your friends and prospective members to the meeting on February 9th, 7:00 pm at the Santa Fe Springs Library.

OPAL prices continue to soar--according to "THE GUIDE" a book of wholesale gemstone prices published in the U.S.A. Black opal prices have increased about 30-40% in the last three months; but more mixed increases in semi-black and crystalline black. Boulder opal is up 10-15%. Crystal opal and other types of precious opal have increased about 10-12%.

From JC-K's report on opal: The Australian publication "THE JEWELLERY VALUE", updates on opal wholesale prices in that country, states that prices on white and crystal opal have risen 40% and top material goes for more than \$500.00 per carat, wholesale. Lightning Ridge black opal prices are up 40% since January. Boulder opal prices are up 30% since January; fine gems bring up to \$3000.00 per carat.

The Australian dollar is strengthening against the U. S. dollar, so expect these large jumps in prices to be passed on to us in an even larger jump. 2 to 8 carat stones are the most in demand and will have the largest price increases.

Mintabie black opal production has dropped drastically. If you can find any dealer with any of the old Mintabie black for sale at a reasonable price, you might consider picking some up.

From ROCK AND GEM comes word of a new find of precious opal in Idaho by John Cantlin. The opal has a blue groundmass with bright green or blue fire colors. It is described in an article in the February issue. The mine is open for digging at a fee of \$125.00 per day.

Dick Koch sends word that he is trying to arrange for discount prices on the Gemstone 6" trim saw. If you think you might be interested call him for details. The number is on the back cover of your OPAL EXPRESS.

The information below was taken from GEMSTONES, a paperback book found at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

## RAINBOW COLOURS

The brilliant colours displayed by opal and labradorite, and in the fiery sparkle of diamonds, arise when white light is split into its constituent colours. White light consists of electromagnetic waves of different wavelengths, each wavelength appearing a particular colour. A complete 'rainbow' spectrum exists, from the long red through to the shorter violet wavelengths.

*Dispersion* is the origin of the 'fire' in gemstones. When light enters a mineral the various wavelengths are differently refracted, red the least and violet the most, so that the colour spectrum is spread out (fig 24). Gem minerals vary greatly in their ability to disperse light, and their dispersion can be measured as the numerical difference between the refractive indices of specific blue and red wavelength.

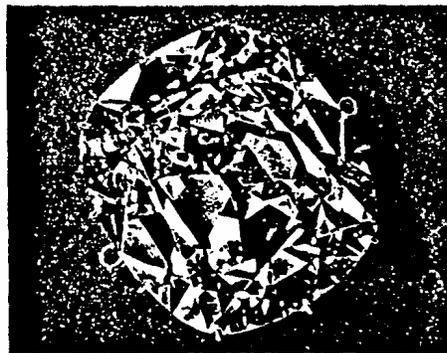
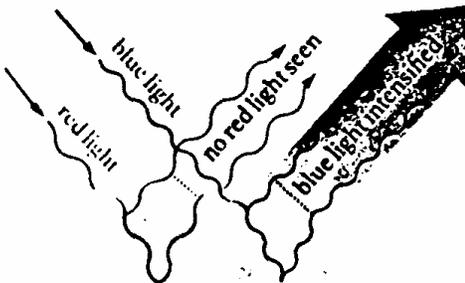
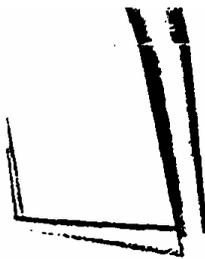
Interference causes the iridescence in labradorite and the rainbow effects seen in cleavage cracks and tarnished surfaces.

When light falls on very thin, transparent mineral layers, as in labradorite, it is reflected from both the upper and lower surfaces (fig 24). Since the reflected rays have traveled different distances the wave troughs and peaks of the various wavelengths either coincide or are out of step. A colour is enhanced if they coincide but little or no colour is seen for out-of-step wavelengths.

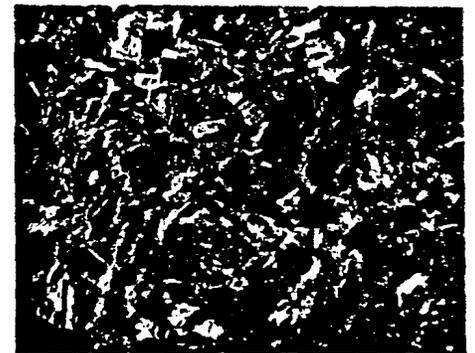
In precious opal, which is composed of transparent, regularly sized and stacked spheres, light is scattered by the network of voids between the spheres (fig 26). Interference occurs between the emerging rays, the range of colours seen depending on the size of the spheres and the angle at which the opal is viewed. Larger spheres produce a complete spectrum as the opal is tilted, but small spheres generate only blues and violets.

white light

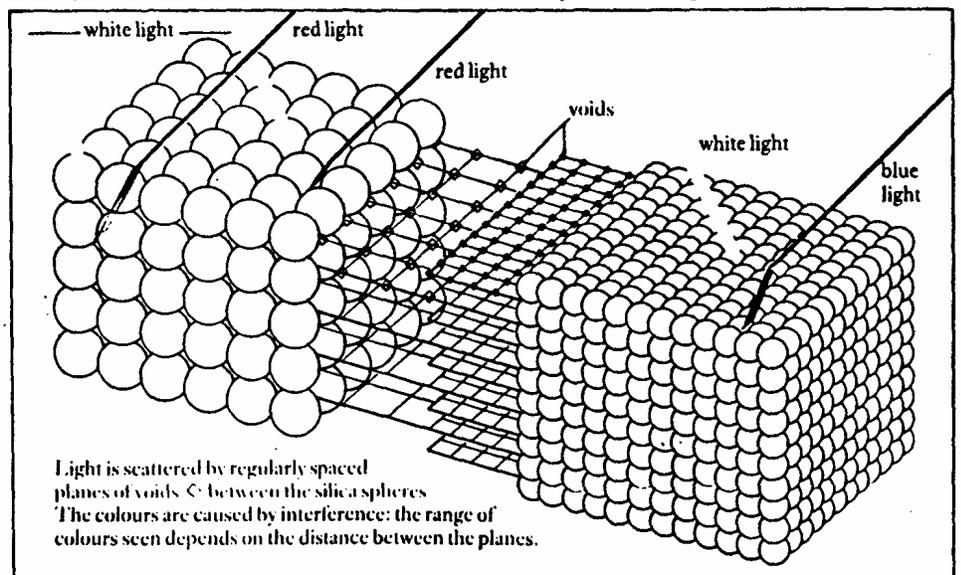
full spectrum



25 Dispersion in the Cullinan II diamond



27 Play of colour in opal



26 Structure and colour in precious opal



THE BLACK OPAL  
(Dedicated to the late Percy Marks)

The Orchid Gem, a fairy crown;  
Like bits of stars that tumbled down  
In dusky settings blue or brown Long ages yore.  
The virtues of all gems we know,  
What e'er their lustre, hue or glow,  
Australia's own black opals show,  
And something more.



The morning's blush; the golden ray  
The clouds on fire at close of day;  
The purpled hills where wild flowers play  
That nature bore.  
The rose confessing to the dew;  
The fickle ocean's changing hue;  
The Southern Cross in midnight blue;  
And these and more.

The palette where Jehovah laid  
His every colour, every shade,  
To paint the universe he made  
Both sea and shore.

A shattered rainbow in a shell,  
Its glories hidden where it fell;  
The gem without a parallel-  
All this and more.

Mother of fire that never burns;  
Whichever way the jewel turns  
Some new aurora one discerns  
Unseen before.  
When mother earth laid bare her breast  
To show what jewels she possessed,  
Black opal far outshone the rest  
And something more.

A cupid's heart on fire 'twould seem;  
Or speckled trout in mountain stream;  
The love glow in a maiden's dream  
When hearts adore;  
As sunbeams through rose windows fall  
In haloes on cathedral wall-  
God's benediction on us all-  
One blessing more.



Spirit of night, the soul of day;  
Just how it glows no one can say,  
Save that it be some heavenly ray  
Sent on before  
Whose jewelled splendour typifies  
The glory of the world that lies  
Beyond the Gates of Paradise  
Forever more.



FRED Emerson Brooks

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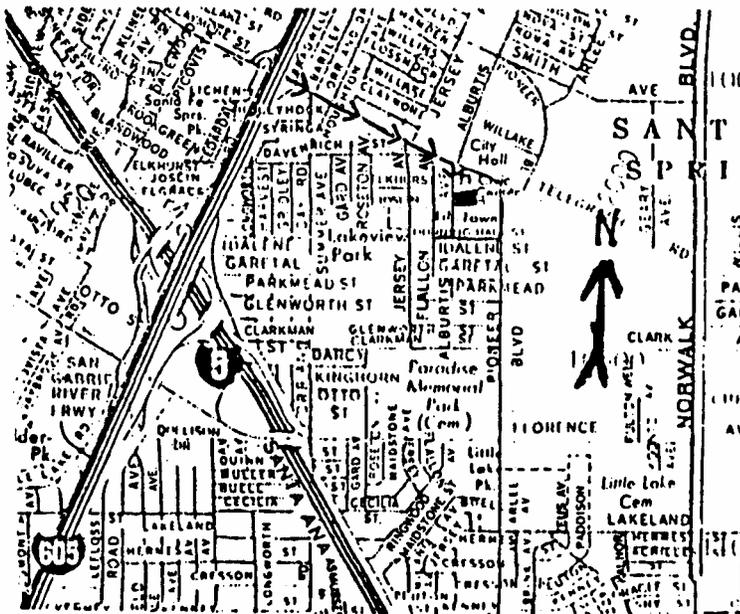
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