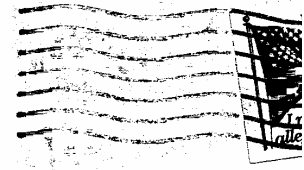


Feb 1994



THE OPAL EXPRESS  
AMERICAN OPAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 382  
ANAHEIM, CA 92815

Russ Madsen  
3936 Stearnlee Ave  
Long Beach CA 90808

OFFICERS  
JAY CAREY - PRESIDENT (714) 525-7635  
DAVID BURTON - V. PRESIDENT (714) 827-5680  
TOM HAYS - TREASURE (714) 838-9262  
BONNIE BURTON - SECRETARY (714) 649-3130

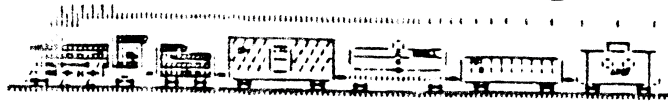
MEETINGS ARE HELD 2nd THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 6:30 - 9:00PM AT THE SUNKIST BRANCH OF THE ANAHEIM LIBRARY.

	91W		91E
ATEI VIXX	Lincoln	Sunkist	57
	901 S. Sunkist		
	Ball		



# The OPAL EXPRESS

Published monthly by the  
American Opal Society...



VOLUME # 26  
February 1994

## THE COLORS OF OPAL

Opal is the one gemstone that when it comes to color it could be called the rainbow stone. With the variety of colors of its matrix and the fact that opal will flash all the colors of the rainbow. You also have to take into account the varying range of color patterns that opal can display even in the same stone, so how could you think of opal as anything less than the rainbow stone.

In the book called "The Guide" they put opal in three groups, Black, Light and Boulder. These are then put into many sub-categories. Under Black Opal, you have Black, Semi-Black, Grey Base and Crystal Black. Under Light Opal you have Crystal, Semi-Crystal, Jelly and White Base. Under Boulder you have Black, Crystal Black, Semi Black, Grey Base, Crystal, Semi Crystal, Jelly, White Base and Ironstone Matrix Opal. These all refer to the color of the base only and have nothing to do with what colors will flash or the color pattern.

Let's start with the smallest group, Black Opal. What makes a black opal different from a Semi-Black? The Black Opal is opaque when held up to light and viewed from the top. It will have a black or very dark background. A Semi-Black has a dark gray or other dark background and will be semi-translucent. If this was a step on a ladder it would be between black and gray base. The Gray Base opal has a true gray base and will be opaque when held up to the light and viewed from the top. The Black Crystal Opal will have a gray or other dark base and it will be transparent to translucent when viewed from any angle. As you can see the one thing they all have in common is that they have a dark base color.

The next group we will look at has less in common. The only connecting thread they have is their light base color. Under the Light Opal, the Crystal Opal is Translucent to Transparent with a showing of color play. The Semi-Crystal is semi-translucent and will have a color of light gray to clouded white. It will not be dark gray or black. Jelly Opal is colorless to transparent with little color. The colors you get are usually purple, blue or blue-green. The most common opal we see is the last type of light opal, White Base Opal. This opal will be translucent to opaque white and show a play of color.

MEETINGS ARE HELD 2nd THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 6:30 - 9:00PM AT THE  
SUNKIST BRANCH OF THE ANAHEIM LIBRARY.

The last group of opal is Boulder Opal. Boulder opal basically represents all the different categories of opal. They have an ironstone host matrix and will form a thin seam of color within the ironstone backing. There is one exception, white base opal will form thick opal layers.

What colors of flash are found in opal? You name it. There are four primary colors; red, blue, yellow and green. But these will vary into orange, purple or any color under the sun. This is the true beauty of opal.

The last thing that makes the color of opal so special is the pattern of flash. There are five basic types of flash: they are Pinfire, Flashfire, Broad Flashfire, Rolling Flashfire and Harlequin. In Pinfire you will see small pinpoint circles of fire when viewing from the top and what will look like stacks of pins when viewed from the side. In Flashfire, there are large areas of fire, but they will not cover the whole opal and there will usually be more than one color in the opal. Usually the color will be irregular in shape. Broad Flashfire is sheets of color that will cover most if not all the opal. There will usually be only one color but sometimes there will be small areas of other colors. The next is Rolling Flashfire this is where you have sheets of color which roll across the surface of the stone as it is moved. You may have one of several chunks of color that roll or seem to float over the surface of the stone as you move it. Because the color is seen when you move the opal it is almost impossible to photograph this type of opal but this type of opal is highly prized. The last type is Harlequin this is made up of square or angular blocks of fire set closely together but overrunning each other. True Harlequins are rare. There is a pattern called Flagstone Harlequin which contains patches of color that are different shapes, but they fit together perfectly as in a flagstone walkway.

There are four rare patterns listed in Opal Identification and Value by Paul Downing. They are Ribbon or Flame Pattern. This is similar to the a Harlequin but the angular pattern does not fit closely together through the entire opal. Another is Chinese Writing which will as the name implies look like Chinese Writing. The Straw Pattern will look like it has pieces of straw in the opal. The last is Zebra or Mackerel Sky. This is well defined lines of color.

There are two colors of opal that I have not found much on. There is even some controversy over if they are even opal. As was pointed out to me by a gemologist; if a stone has a refractive index of 1.45 it is opal. The two colors are pink and blue. They are made up of a base color of either pink or blue and may show color flash or not. The blue is transparent to opaque and has a wedgewood blue base. It is found from Mexico thru Arizona and into Idaho. The pink as far as I can find out is only found in the Andes Mountains and so has gotten the name Andes Pink and the blue that comes from there is called Andes Blue Opal. The Pink is opaque and may or may not show color flash.

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

You will notice that this month's newsletter contains the ballot for next year's officers and board members. There are places for write in candidates in case you want to nominate additional persons to run for office or board membership. Please mark your ballot and return it as soon as possible. Ballot counting and final voting will be done at the March 10th meeting. The ballot contains a mixture of "new" and "old" members and contains the balance necessary to provide strong leadership over the next year. I want to thank Edith Ostrander for heading up the nominating committee and doing such a fine job.

It has been an honor and a pleasure serving as your president during the last two years. We have come a long way during this time and have accomplished most of the objectives that I originally established. We have reestablished our monthly meetings at our new Sunkist Library location, have gotten our treasury back to a strong financial position, have started work on next year's show, scheduled for November 5th and 6th again to be held at the Quality Inn, and have rejuvenated both the membership and the leadership of the society. As I have said before, I believe it is healthy to limit the leadership to two years in office, just as we talk of limiting elected public leaders to two years in office. This is one of the main reasons that I decided not to run again even though I enjoyed the experience during the last two years so much.

Even though we have accomplished much there is more to do. First, we must find a new location for the workshop. No one responded to my request last month to help us resolve this situation. We need a no cost or low cost space for the workshop. Perhaps someone has a garage or other suitable location to volunteer. Secondly, we need help in arranging monthly speakers. Perhaps someone can volunteer to organize a program for a monthly meeting. Thirdly, some members have not sent in their 1994 dues. Please do so right away if this applies to you.

As I have said I have enjoyed the last two years as your president and look forward to working with the other board members to help maintain and improve the society in future years.

Your President  
Jay Carey