The Opal Express
American Opal Society
P.O. Box 382
Anaheim, CA 92815-0382

Volume #30 Issue #02 February 1998

Member Member

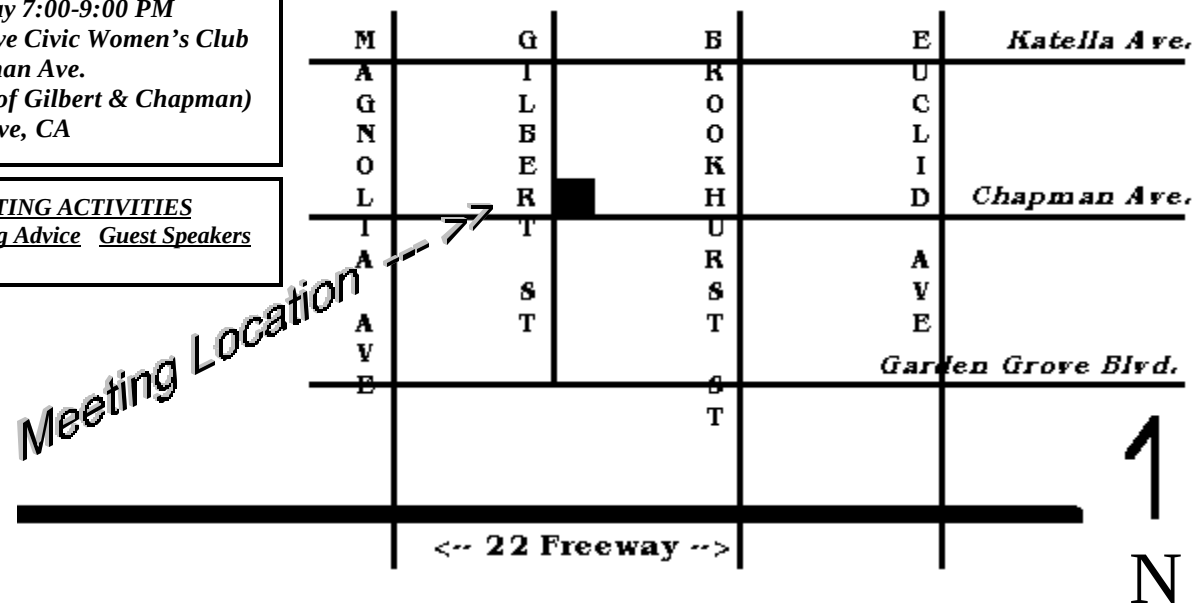
Will Not Be Delivered Without Postage

GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12TH 7PM

TO:

GENERAL MEETINGS —
2nd Thursday 7:00-9:00 PM
Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)
Garden Grove, CA

MEETING ACTIVITIES
Opal Cutting Advice Guest Speakers



!! Happy Valentine's Day !!

American Opal Society Officers

Wes Roth	*President*	*(714) 897-2984*	*email wesroth@earthlink.net*
Carol Bova	*Vice Pres.*	*(818) 845-8610*	*email bova@gekoplex.com*
Mike Kowalsky	*Treasurer*	*(714) 761-4876*	*email mykowalsky@aol.com*
Pete Goetz	*Secretary*	*(714) 666-2084*	*email mpg1022@aol.com*

DUES POLICY REVISED - effective 1/1/98

Henceforth, there are three dues rates and memberships will begin in the month a person joins the Opal Society. This will greatly simplify the fee structure and (it is hoped) reduce questions and errors in dues payments. For members age 65, a $5 senior discount applies to all rates.

Three (3) Dues Rates are for families and **are now based on your county of residence**.

Rate #1 ($26): ***Local area*** = members reside in Los Angeles, Orange, or Riverside counties.

Rate #2 ($20): ***California & USA*** **=** all US addresses other than local counties.

Rate #3 ($30): ***Foreign*** **=** all memberships outside USA.

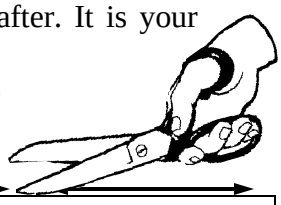
Label Changes: Your address label now displays your dues expiration date as MM-YY where MM is the month and YY is the year your dues expire. Expiration dates also appear in the membership roster.

Are Your Dues Due Now? Presently, everyone is either due now (01-98), or paid up for the coming year (01-99)... again PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or the membership roster if you are listed there. If you see **01-98** your dues are DUE NOW.

If Your Dues Are Due

Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive the Feb and March newsletters but 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 make sure your dues are current.

Please help us make this work by watching your expiration date and renewing promptly. Thanks!



DUES RENEWAL FORM

(membership renewal form rev. 1/1/98)
d:\ameropal\newsltrs\forms\dues_due.pub

American Opal Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 382

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!!

Make check or money order payable to: American Opal Society, Inc.

Please mail payment and renewal form to the club address at left.

DUES RENEWAL RATES (select one) **

1) LOCAL AREA member $26.00
(addresses in Los Angeles, Orange, & Riverside counties)

2) CALIFORNIA & USA $20.00
(all US addresses outside local area counties)

3) FOREIGN $30.00
(all addresses outside USA)

**** $5 SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or**

DEALER LIST: Yes, include my name/address on a list provided to Opal Dealers selling at the most recent Opal Show.

(if yes, please sign or initial here)_____date_____

without your signature here you will

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: Yes, include my name and/or address and/or phone information in a published AOS membership directory...
[Please circle any of these —> **NAME** / **ADDRESS** / **PHONE** if you prefer a partial listing.]

(if yes please sign or initial here)_____date_____

without your signature here you will

NAME:_____

ADDRESS: _____ **APT #: or PO BOX:** _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** ____ **ZIP:** _____

COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE U.S.)_____

TELEPHONE: Home (____)
_____: Business (____)
_____

Indicate above any name or mailing address changes

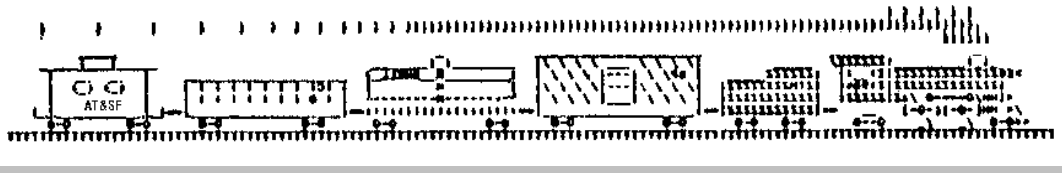
NAME BADGE ORDER FORM: (OPTIONAL)

Number of badges ordered_____

($5.00 EACH - includes engraving)

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.

The OPAL EXPRESS



FEBRUARY 1998

Published monthly by the *American Opal Society*

Volume 5, Issue 2

President's Message

from Wes Roth

Greetings,

Just returned from Quartzite and as usual had a good time seeing old friends and meeting new ones. There are quite a few new dealers from Australia this year.

Our lecture for this month will be by Conrad Grundke on the subject of Intarsia. He is a second generation artist in this field as well as instructor at Saddleback College. Please see the article beginning on this page for further information.

Look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting.

As always
Wes Roth
President

You may be a rockhound if...Your bookshelf has more rocks than books, and the books you have are about rocks. ❁

William Grundke INTARSIA articles appear in Gem Carver's Newsletter

Over the past months a series of articles discussing Intarsia have been presented in the newsletter of the Gem Carvers Guild of America. These are the articles by Bill Grundke described by Connie Grundke in his biographical notes. To date there have been 5 parts presented. All are archived and available to AOS members in the Society library.

It certainly bears mention that opal is frequently selected by artists for fine intarsia work, exa mples of which have been featured in Rock & Gem, Lapidary Journal and other publications. ❁

INTARSIA - February meeting topic

Connie Grundke, our speaker for February will share his knowledge of INTARSIA. As always, friends and guests are welcome!

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

Conrad ("Connie") Grundke
Connie was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 27, 1931. He spent four years in the US Navy aboard various destroyers during the Korean conflict. Most of his working life was

(Continued on page 3)

AOS INFORMATION & VOICE MAIL NUMBER IS (714) 502-1333

WorkShop Information...

The Opal Society workshop is located in a light industrial complex in Fullerton. The address is Unit #9, 651 N. State College Blvd.
Directions: exit the 91 Fwy onto State College Blvd. and go north. Proceed through the intersection of Orangethorpe continuing a short distance further on State College. Go over the railroad tracks and turn left into the complex on the west side of the street. If you go over the second RR crossing turn around. Proceed behind the front row of businesses and make your first right. Then follow the road around to the left. The workshop has a large "9" over the door.
Only AOS members may use the equipment and workshop. You will be required to sign a release form as well.
Workshop Schedule on Page 5 shows dates/times and appointment instructions. ❁

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 12th 7 PM
General Meeting

Board of Directors
February 10th 7PM
(at Workshop)

Opal & Gem Show
November 7 & 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

INTARSIA

(Continued from page 2)
spent with IBM as an engineer working for 10 years in Evanston, Illinois and the last 20 years in San Jose, Calif. He retired in 1986 after 30 years with IBM.

He started working in lapidary about 1976 after visiting his father, William Grundke, in Laguna Hills, Calif, who was deeply involved in the intarsia art form at that time. Connie continued his lapidary work as an avocation by creating jewelry and silversmithing until he retired and moved to Laguna Hills where he joined his father. Connie completed his first intarsia in July, 1990 under the supervision of his father.

Since then he has created several intarsias which have been exhibited throughout the state and has won awards in both local and American Federation Shows. In 1994 Connie was asked to take over the Saddleback College Emeritus Classes in Lapidary and Intarsia due to the ill health of the current instructor. Since then Connie has expanded the realm of knowledge of both local students and rockhounds in the area through lectures, teaching and exhibiting this art form and once again made the "Grundke" name synonymous with unique and beautiful intarsias.

William ("Bill") Grundke

Bill was born on December 13, 1906 in what was East Germany until 1990. He worked most of his life as a painter learning his trade in Europe before moving to Illinois. Through his many years of mixing colors to satisfy critical interior decorators and home owners, he has a remarkable sense of color which has carried over into his many avocations.

He began his artistic career working with oil paints while a young man recuperating from rheumatic fever, but had little time for this type of activity while working for a living at his trade. After retiring, he eventually moved to Leisure World retirement community in Laguna Hills, California. There he once again had the opportunity to work with oil paints and soon filled the walls of his home with paintings.

In an effort to find something which did not result in such a plethora of completed works, he took a Lapidary class in 1972 from Russ Hind, who was an instructor at the Emeritus Institute of Saddleback College in Mission Viejo. The lapidary shop in Leisure World is one of the finest non-commercial shops in the country, and Russ had been teaching this course there for over 20 years. He was instrumental in introducing hundreds of individuals to this art form.

It wasn't long before Bill became the resident expert in Intarsia , and eventually "the" artist in this art form in the US. Many of the techniques that he developed were innovative and are still used today. During the 1980's his works were exhibited in many of the Mineral & Gem Society shows in the west. He has completed over 70 intarsias over an 18 year period and was the most prolific artist in the country, especially when one realizes that the average time to complete an intarsia, like his, is 3-4 months.

His series of articles in Gems & Minerals magazine in the early 1980's, has the most complete description of how to make an intarsia that exists to this day. He has sold many of his works and has several pictures hanging in the museum in Hilo, Hawaii. Unfortunately, Bill has had deteriorating eyesight and has not been able to work on an intarsia for about 8 years. Now his enjoyment comes from working with Connie, passing on the knowledge that he has developed over the years.

Connie says, "I am looking forward to the 12th of Feb and hope that I can satisfy your need for a bit of enthusiasm for another area of Lapidary that is not often known." ❁

Name Badges...

Price per badge is $5 which includes the badge itself and engraving of up to two lines of text: one line for your first and last name and, if you wish, a second line for nickname or if applicable, your opal related business name. These engraving options give members flexibility to include many types of identification.
Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for completion of engraving. ❁

Got Email? You might want to get Lapidary Digest!

The Lapidary Digest is a e-mail mailing list devoted to all aspects of lapidary arts except faceting. It is published about twice a week, and only in Digest form.

In a mailing list, people send in questions and these are published. Others send in answers, and thus various lapidary topics are discussed through this question/answer procedure. In addition, the Administrator asks individuals to write articles on topics of interest to Lapidaries; for example, papers on 'Streak Testing', 'Lapidary from a Wheelchair', and 'Hardness' are three articles which have been published, and one on electroplating of lapidary items will be published in the near future.

To date, 109 issues have been published and the list has over 800 subscribers. To subscribe (which is free, of course), send an e-mail note to <lapidary@mindspring.com> and put the word SUBSCRIBE on both the Subject line of the Header and in the body of the note. You will receive a Welcoming letter with details of how to access the Archives, and the policies of the list.

Hale Sweeny - Administrator - Lapidary Digest
hale2@mindspring.com - Durham, NC ❁

PLEASE NOTE!!! The American Opal Society assumes no responsibility for injury or damage due to accidents or carelessness. Members and guests assume all risks

The Opal Express is published monthly by
The American Opal Society.

Editor---Russ Madsen
Please address all inquiries to:
The Opal Express, P.O. Box 382, Anaheim, CA 92815-0382
AOS Information Line & Voice Mail (714) 502-1333
E-mail 76550.1366@compuserve.com
(Deadline for items: 15th of the month prior to each issue)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

#1161 Louise Oleson
#1162 Russell Spiering

Membership Roster Changes/ Additions

New Listing - Jim F. Hilliard	1139 Sea Fog Dr.	Gilbert, AZ 85233-7545		Member #1116 Dues Expire 99-01
New Listing - Tad Jankowski	57 A Robinwood Ave.	Jamaica Plain, MA 02130	(617) 522-6888	Member #1108 Dues Expire 99-01
New Listing - Louise Oleson	2340 E. 4th St. #307	Long Beach, CA 90814-1174	(562) 930-0989	Member # 1160 Dues Expire 99-02
New Listing - Hisako Schlatter	11222 Santa Maria St.	Stanton, CA 90680-3132	(714) 892-1168	Member # 1131 Dues Expire 99-01
Changes - Harry Barrett			(541) 866-2556	Member # 1067 Dues Expire 99-01
Changes - Phyllis Brouse			(530) 877-9266	Member # 9539 Dues Expire 99-01

Remember

A Look Into Past Newsletter Items

In Vol 16 No 5 (May 1984) an Opal Express article discussed "Finishing Touches" the topic of the April 1984 general

(author unknown) In cutting and polishing opal it is imperative to keep in mind that the final finish determines if the stone has any value at all. The final finish is everything! In order to improve the finish of your stones I recommend that you utilize silicon carbide sanding paper. After I have shaped my stones on the 220 wheel on my machine I then use a piece of 220 grit silicon carbide sand paper and finish shaping the stone by hand. The 220 grit paper will take out any flat spots and helps give the stone good symmetrical shape. After the 220 grit paper I then sand the stones by hand with 600 grit paper. This takes extra time but does make for a superlative final polish. After sanding with 600 paper I then proceed to polish on my machine at 1200, 3000 and then final polish with 14,000 and 50,000 diamond paste on a hard felt wheel. I am convinced that opal will polish with many different compounds (cerium, Linde A, MGX etc.) if you take the time to sand by hand to get a good pre-polish — without it no amount of final polish will help the stone.

Other hints which will help you create stones which are both beautiful and presentable are:

A: Make sure your stones are symmetrical and accurate, i.e., rounds must be ROUND. Ovals and teardrops must not be lopsided. This sounds obvious, but many stones are not even and symmetrical.

B: No sharp edges can be allowed. Make sure you bevel the bottom of each stone so that it will not chip at the time of setting.

C:When making freeforms add shape and contour to the stones — if they look like polished prunes they will have significantly less value (even with more carat weight) than free forms with accentuated contoured lines. ❁

TUMBLING TIP

Measuring an ounce of grit

Many tumbling instructions tell you how much grit or polish to use per pound of rock, and this is usually in ounces. If you do not have an ounce scale handy, here are the equivalent teaspoon measurements:

Coarse, medium or fine grit:
1oz. = 4 level teaspoons

Polishing powder: 1oz. = 8 level teaspoons

from Canterbury Mineral and Lapidary Club 5/96 via The Palomar Gem 1/98

Glossary of Terms for the Certificate of Assessment by LRMA* Opal Advisory Service

Description: A general description of the stone

Weight: The weight of the stone by the carat (0.2 grams)

Dimensions: The width, breadth and height of each stone in millimetres.

Shape: The shape of the stone - round, oval, freeform, etc.

Cut: The cut of the stone. Most opals are cabochon cut and this section also describes the thickness of the colour bar.

Brightness: The clarity and brightness of the colours displayed.

Colour: The most predominant colour or colours appearing in the stone.

Pattern: The distinctiveness and colour display of the coloured segments, unique to every individual opal, determine a pattern's quality.

Consistency: The consistency of the pattern and colour throughout the face of the stone.

Orientation: The clarity of the colours displayed by the stone from all directions, seen by looking at the face while twisting the stone.

Inclusions: Inclusions are a naturally occurring part of the majority of opals and include potch (common opal) and sand. Inclusions in the face of a stone are generally ignored unless they detract from the beauty of the stone. Most inclusions occur on the back of the stone and therefore do not affect the value of the opal.

(This article was taken from the Hong Kong Opal Auction No. 1, published by Pickles Auctions Pty., Ltd. 54 Kingsgrove Road, Belmore, N.S.W. 2192, Australia)

(*LRMA: Lightning Ridge Miner's Association -rgm)

from the newsletter of the Northwest Opal Association 1/98

Silver Soldering Tip

When you get too much solder on a spot when making silver jewelry and try to file it off, the process takes quite a while. To get rid of the excess solder without filling, take a narrow strip of silver 1/8" wide by 3/4" long and cut a slit in one end. Heat the piece with excess solder on it and touch the cut strip to the excess solder, which will flow up the slit.

from Stoney Statements via PVGMS Tumbler Jan/Feb 1998

WORK SHOP SCHED-

Be sure to check here for workshop schedule updates. The dates listed below are those available to the AOS in our time share agreement with the Searchers. The shop is presently being opened to members on Wednesday nights but...Please continue to contact Stan McCall by calling him at Lapidary Intl. (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session. Also, please check the AOS voice mail for information about expanded and/or modified shop schedules.

FEBRUARY
WORKSHOP CALENDAR

MONDAY: 2nd - 9th - 16th - 23th

WEDNESDAY: 4th - 11th - 18th - 25th

SATURDAY: 14th - 28th

SUNDAY: 8th - 22nd

WORK SHOP RULES

These rules are effective October 1, 1997. Please see newsletter for monthly shop schedule.

1) Shop may only be used by AOS members.

2) Shop users must sign liability waiver.

3) Shop users must sign in. Shop supervisor will maintain sign-in list and collect usage fees.

4) Shop usage will be in sessions on scheduled days as noted below:
- -Session #1 10AM - 2PM
- -Session #2 2PM - 6PM
- -Session #3 6PM - 9PM

5) Shop usage fees: effective immediately...
SHOP USAGE FEE IS $3 PER SESSION.

6) To assist us in scheduling, shop sessions need to be reserved in advance. Please contact Stan McCall or any member of the board of directors to reserve shop time.

OPAL IDENTIFICATION... how to tell where it came from (part 2)

by Russ Madsen

(A 1997 Opal Symposium Presentation by Joan Skinner of Opal Traders International)

Andamooka: located south of Coober Pedy, Andamooka is noted for two types of opal: crystal and what is known as Andamooka matrix opal.

There is also an **Andamooka white base** opal. This white base material bears a resemblance to crystal...it is somewhat translucent. This contrasts with the densely white appearance of Coober Pedy white base. Also, while there is some iron staining it is not as dark as the staining on Coober Pedy white. A final distinguishing characteristic is that generally, one will not see massive pieces of this material.

Andamooka mining activity is not now and never has approached the scale of Coober Pedy. At most there are usually 400 miners in Andamooka while Coober Pedy is a town of about 5,000.

Andamooka Crystal: a transparent background is this material's dominant body quality. Unlike crystal from other regions, it seems to "glow" as the color play radiates within the stone. The surrounding rock is tinged a peach color due to traces of titanium in Andamooka soil.

In a slide from Andamooka, Joan showed viewers an open cut mine that reveals a cross section of typical Andamooka geology. There is an iron layer several feet below the surface. This layer does not bear opal at all. The peachy colored layer below is the producing level.

Because a basalt cap layer covers much of the opal level and separates it from the iron layer above, much less iron seeps down to the opal occurrences. Therefore Andamooka material displays only a relatively small amount of iron staining.

Mintabie: Mintabie is known for fine crystal opal. And unlike the other regions there is **no iron staining** here. The host rock is a white sandstone and very grainy (vis a vis Coober Pedy or Andamooka where the host rocks are very fine grained).

Mintabie rough typically occurs in thin to thick opal bands with grains of gypsum and quartz "sand" embedded in the upper and lower surfaces.

Brazilian crystal: While this material is not presently being mined it bears mention. Brazilian crystal occurs in a sandstone strata under an 80 foot cap rock layer of basalt. The source is very remote, located north of the Amazon River. Because of the presence of the basalt much blasting has been employed to retrieve the opal.

(Continued on page 7)

SHOWCASE DONATED

Member - Treasurer Mike Kowalsky has kindly donated his show case to the club.

Thank you Mike!

The case is in very good condition and it is hoped we will use it to prepare an Opal Society CLUB CASE for display at shows in the local area.

We would like a volunteer willing to help organize and maintain this case.

Primary responsibilities:

(1) function as a contact for members seeking to place opal in the case,

(2) organize and arrange the opal in the display.

This will be a fun project and will create a fine way for the Opal Society to highlight the Queen of Gems.

Interested in helping?

Please come forward at a meeting or call a board member to volunteer. Thank you!

Cutting Challenges (part 3)... by Russ Madsen

(A 1997 Opal Symposium Presentation by Tim Thomas of House of Tibara)

We ended last time hearing why it is important to avoid storing opal in a bank vault. Advice that cannot be too often stressed. After making this point Tim Thomas related an anecdote about a Mexican opal cut and polished in Oregon. It was owned and kept near the coast for some 10 to 15 years. One day the owner wore the stone on a trip inland. As soon as the opal was moved away from the humidity near the ocean it started cracking! The question is then begged...**how does one store opal?** And why do dealers keep opal in water? Opal is displayed in water by sellers to show it's potential. Buyers can see how it will likely look when polished. There's no need to store opal in water, good rough can be stored dry.

Tim advised listeners to take the opal home and let it dry out immediately so if it cracks or shows hidden flaws the buyer can go right back to the dealer.

There is an exception though. If a person is **preparing to cut very old opal** that has been in a jar of water for many years, the most conservative advice is to first seal it in a zip lock bag with a moist paper towel. Pin prick the zip lock bag. Then put this bag inside a jar with a screw type lid closed and turned slightly open. Put the whole package on a shelf for 6 months. This will let it dry slowly to avoid shocks.

On Dopping: Here Tim Thomas was emphatic—NEVER heat opal. NEVER expose opal to chemicals. And NEVER freeze opal to release it from the dop. Use epoxy to cement the opal to a dop stick. To remove a finished stone, the most conservative advice is to use a trim saw to cut the stone off the dop stick, then, with 600 grit, sand away any epoxy remaining on back of the stone. Again, this is the most conservative approach; it best protects opal from physical and chemical shocks. Tim stated that acetone may assist in removing epoxy but the user must be aware that acetone is hydroscopic (attracts water molecules). It may draw water out leading to cracks should the silicon dioxide unbond from the opal's internal water molecules. Sanding is preferred.

Throughout his talk Tim emphasized the importance of understanding that opal can be "shocked" through harsh (mis)handling. Such shocks may be physical or chemical. The salient notion is that they may set molecular activity in motion that can lead to unbonding of opal's silica spheres. If this happens cracks may follow. Not necessarily any time soon either. Once set in motion, such molecular activity may be ongoing and result in cracks weeks, months, or even years later. For these reasons, it is wisest to ALWAYS approach opal in the most conservative manner possible. ❁ *(to be continued)*

ZZYZX

CFMS is sponsoring an Earth Science Studies program March 15 to 22, 1998. The location is Soda Springs, four miles down Zzyzx Road off Highway 15, near Baker, CAlifornia.

Facilities include dorm style & double occupancy rooms, with ample parking for RVs. Bathrooms and showers are in a separate building nearby. Workshops include lapidary arts and bead stringing. Bob Jones, well-known minerologist, will be with us the entire week.

The fee is $200 per person for a week-long desert vacation which includes facilities, instructions, field trips and three meals a day. Attendance is limited to 60.

From Izzy and Bill Burns, Ray & Florence Meisenheimer of the CFMS Earth Science Committee via the CFMS Newsletter 12/97

from The Nugget 1/98

OPAL IDENTIFICATION...
how to tell where it came from (part 2)

(Continued from page 6)

While this material shows a "peachy" stain similar to Andamooka, it has a distinctive pin fire of a special type. Australian pin fire appears to be always on the surface of the opal. **Brazilian pin fire appears to emanate from within the stone.** Joan noted that the pin points change color if a stone is turned; all the while though, they continue to look like they are coming from within the stone.

Another characteristic is an overall "glassy" appearance of the rough. While all opal appears somewhat glassy, Brazilian is notably more so than Australian.

(*I note parenthetically that a jar I brought to a meeting was identified by David Kramer as Brazilian. I thought it was Andamooka crystal. It fits Joan Skinner's description of Brazilian exactly. -rgm*)

Joan noted a final characteristic of Brazilian material. It is very unusual to see large pieces. The chunk depicted in her slide looked (by comparison to the coin in the photo) to be at least 2" x 1". Joan indicated it was the largest piece with color play she has ever seen.

Lightning Ridge: opal from the Ridge is found in two different soils and two different colors. One soil is red iron stained brown, the other is a very white soil that is very very fine, almost a talcum-like powder solidified. This soil is relatively soft and tends to fill nooks and crannies of Lightning Ridge rough.

The **base color** of L/R crystal can be very clear but is often translucent with shades toward grey. There is a general tendency of all Ridge material to be a mixture of base colors ranging in shades from grey to black.

The characteristic shape of most Lightning Ridge material is rounded lumps called nobbies. There is another shape called (in today's PC climate) Chinese Hats. More on Hats in a moment.

Nobbies are found almost exclusively at the Ridge. Therefore this shape is a very good indicator that a sample of opal is from there. Typically nobbies are nodules of opal ranging in size from a pea to as much as 2" or more in diameter. Haley's Comet is a nobbie the size of a fist. The structure of opal in a nobbie will be circular or more or less spherical with a core of one base color surrounded by bands of any other base color. Showing a picture of a grey nobbie, Joan pointed out it is entirely possible for the interior to be any color including black and one really cannot know without cobbing or beginning to cut it.

Chinese Hats are believed to form from dripping water, perhaps in the manner of a stalagmite. They are characteristically topped with a small blob of opal and over all, have the shape of a bamboo hat, i.e. a cone with the opal blob on the pointy top, then somewhat hollowed out underneath. The pointy top is often crystal or semi-translucent and often intensely colorful. There tends to be little color play in the structure below.

Next Joan showed a slide of an open cut at Lightning Ridge. The very light or white copey layer showed clearly a few feet below the surface. Brown iron layers appear but again the iron is not as intense as in South Australia. Thus Ridge opal is not as likely to have red or brown iron staining on it.

Showing a slide of the interior of nobbies, Joan noted a principal reason L/R material was seldom exported in the past was because an all-grey chunk could easily have a solid black core. And without cobbing, sawing, sanding or grinding there's just no way to tell. Depicted on the screen were several examples of nobbies that were grey over their entire exterior surfaces. One was dark-grey in the center, two were definitely black, and one was almost white. From the outer surface they all looked very similar, uniformly grey. ❁

(to be continued)

Tucson Tent Collapses!!!

This late breaking story just in from Bob Keller via the Internet

Date: 04-Feb-98 18:59:29 ToID: 76550,1366
From: Bob Keller >INTERNET:bkeller@rockhounds.com
Subj: Disaster at Tucson

I just wanted to get the word out that there's been a major disaster at the Tucson Show. Last night during a storm, the main tent at the Congress Street Expo completely collapsed. It was a very large tent with tens of thousands of square feet and occupied by scores of mineral, rough and equipment dealers. The tent was closed when it collapsed so fortunately no one was killed or injured. However, the damages due breakage and water could easily run into the millions of dollars.

I surveyed the scene there today and am preparing an initial report with some pictures which will be posted to the '98 Show report pages at Bob's Rock Shop late tonight:
http://www.rockhounds.com/rockshop/snapstbl.html

I'll update this report page on the tent disaster at the Congress Street Expo as more information is released by local media, the show promoter, and gleaned from those who were there.

Bob Keller
bkeller@rockhounds.com
http://www.rockhounds.com

A.F.M.S. / C.F.M.S. NEWS

FROM: AFMS Newsletter 11-97
FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORTS
(excerpts)

THE CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL SOCIETIES, INC.

Rosemarie Young, President

I've just signed an agreement with the BLM Center in Barstow to 'adopt' a road into a wilderness area in the Northern Cady Mountains, CA. (At our Convention meeting in June the Directors approved the adoption.) The agreement states we will clear vegetation from the travel corridor, monitor and maintain water bars, culverts, drains, switchbacks and energy dissipaters; remove large obstacles from the travel corridor, maintain stream and wash crossings, route signs and markers and clear trash. We will then have access to the historical Pink Hills collecting area. The road requires 4-wheel drive vehicles, but there is a campsite near the Interstate 15. We hope this will open the door for more access to collecting areas for our members.

from The Nugget 12/97

How Geologic Time Periods Got Those Crazy Names

(Researched by Stephen Burinsky)

The three geologic eras are the Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic, from the Greek for ancient, middle and recent life. They are divided into 11 periods, most of them named for places where rocks from the period were first discovered.

The Cambrian Period (570 to 500 million years ago) is named for Cambria (or Wales). The next two periods also have Welsh names. Ordovician and Silurian for two Welsh tribes, the Ordovicies, and Siluries.

The Devonian is named for Devonshire, and Cretaceous comes from "creta", Latin for chalk. Creta refers to the white cliffs of Dover.

The Jurassic is named for the Jura Mountains in Germany, and the Permian for Perm in Russia's Ural Mountains.

The Triassic got its name because it was easily divisible into three parts. And the Carboniferous is named for carbon, because most coal deposits date to that period.

The most recent periods are Tertiary and Quaternary named for types of rocks dated to those times. They are divided into epochs, whose names all end in "cene", a Greek root meaning recent.

Pleistocene is from the Greek for most recent. Preceding it are the Pliocene, Miocene, Oligocene, Eocene, and Paleocene, for the most recent, less recent, little recent, early recent, and oldest recent. Got all that now?

from Oregon Rockhound 12/95 via Long Beach Mineral & Gem Society Newsletter 12/97

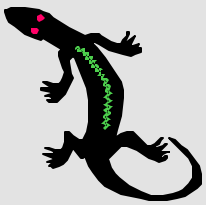
QUARTZITE IN REVIEW

We have heard from several AOS members who attended the gem and mineral shows in Blythe, and Quartzite.

From the sound of it, attendance was down in the early part of January in both locations.

Perhaps activity will have picked up the later part of January and into February.

Is it possible that the land use restrictions around Quartzite have cut into visiting by rockhounds with RV's and campers?



Congressional Legislation Update

The Sovereignty Protection Act, HR-901, was authored by Rep. Don Young (R-AK) to require congressional approval for all future land designations within U.S. borders. It guarantees that local citizens and public officials will participate in designating any land for inclusion in U.N. land reserves that are near their homes or communities. Currently, U.N. Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves within the U.S. are designated without the approval of Congress and without consultation with the public and local governments.

The National Monument Fairness Act, HR-1127, was authored by Rep. Jim Hansen (R-UT) in the wake of President Clinton's designation of 1.8 million acres in the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. It would change the 1906 Antiquities Act by requiring the President to get approval of Congress for proposed monuments larger than 50,000 acres in a single state in a single year. It would also require the President to seek written input from the governor of the affected states.

Property bill clears hurdle - The House Judiciary Committee on October 7 approved the "Tucker Act Shuffle Relief Act," a bill by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) to make it easier for property owners to mount legal challenges against Federal action that reduces the value of their property. It is named after the 1887 Tucker Act which has forced property owners into a costly, time-consuming-"shuffle" between two federal courts that have jurisdiction to hear their cases. Smith's bill would allow both the Federal Claims Court and the Federal District Courts to hear takings Cases, ending waits of a decade or longer for property owners seeking their day in court.

By Jeff Harris, Executive Director, National Coalition for Public Lands and Natural Resources, as reported in the Alliance for America's publication, Alliance News, October, 1997.

from Rockhounder 11/97

An Open Opal Mine in Spencer, Idaho

In my article some time back on making opal doublets/triplets, I reported (from a source) that public fee digging had been suspended at all of the Spencer, Idaho opal mines. But I see that the March issue of Rock & Gem carries an ad announcing public digging dates for 1998 at "The Original" Spencer Opal Mines.

According to the ad, those wishing more information should send a SASE to P.O. Box 521, Salome, AZ 85348 (October to April) or HC 62 Box 2060, Dubois, ID 83423 (May to September). Phone numbers are (520) 859-3752 and (208) 374-5476, respectively.

Rick Martin

from Lapidary Digest #111 2/4/98

January General Meeting Presentation

by Russ Madsen

David Burton's Yowah Observations

David began his talk on Yowah at our January meeting by noting that Yowah is a "real" community with NO pub! This is quite unusual in Australia. In recent years electricity has reached the area (7 years ago now) and as of 5 to 6 years ago only about 12 miles of unpaved road remain. The route to Yowah has become quite passable. Because the weather in Yowah is extreme most people mining are visitors, very few are year-round residents. Summer temperatures AT NIGHT remain 110'-115'F. More than that, because the town's water comes from a 29,000 foot bore hole it reaches the surface HOT! This water must be cooled before one can take a shower.

Yowah opal is described as limonite "cemented" with opal because the matrix is very rich in iron. The material formed as opal penetrated the seams and interior of the ironstone nuts. If opal can't penetrate the center of a nut it typically leaves thin opal in a 'seam' around the exterior in the "biscuit". **Biscuit** is a term describing the tan, softer matrix which surrounds the ironstone/limonite nuts. Some nuts are formed of hematite as well.

The **pattern** of opal deposited in the center of a hematite or limonite nut can have value for its own sake although it shows no color play.

Splitting nuts is a learned process. Nuts from each area and level must be split in their own way. Methods most commonly used involve hitting the nuts with a sharpened metal tool such as a hatchet but some nuts are best split by freezing.

Yowah has set aside an area for **tourist fossicking**. Someone commented that it would be very picked over, but noting that it is not, David emphasized that some very nice material can be found in this area. No mining claims are permitted to be filed on it either.

Polishing Yowah opal: Because the opal is softer than the nut, David advises polish the nut first then polish the opal. Finally go back and repolish the nut. These steps result in the least degree of undercutting of the opal.

In describing **digging for Yowah nuts**, David talked about finding a level where the rolling action of an ancient stream bed moved and rolled the ironstone nuts as the opal was penetrating them. In such a level the best opal is found. He advised that if you dig a hole stay with it because if you don't, you will come back later to find someone has filled it up with their tailings. Ulp. We heard about David's "*Perfect American Hole*". He dug it 10 feet deep, with nice straight walls, steps going down...all the amenities. But never found a nut level and had to leave. When he returned next trip ready to dig, sadly, the hole was "gone". Buried and covered over completely.

Yowah does have **fossils**. Coprolite (dino dung), teeth and bones have been found there. The town has a flea market for a few hours on Sunday. It is possible to buy very decent material at reasonable prices.

Because the region is very remote, it takes about 2 1/2 hours to get safely to the nearest hospital. Yes the operative word is safely. One must be wary when passing through **Kangaroo Alley** lest one hit a roo and not get to the hospital at all. Mining in deep, cool - damp conditions carries a risk of long term health problems so most miners work only part of the year.

Cutting strategies: Sawing Yowah requires an "ear" for the sound of the blade hitting opal. One must "go through the mud". Finish the nut as if it were agate using chromium oxide and a little Linde A, then go back and polish the opal with diamond.

During his talk David passed around several truly spectacular examples which showed why he likes Yowah opal. The room filled with oohs and aahs as we held one piece after another, all **magnificent stones**. Color play in Yowah can be some of the best opal has to offer and everyone in attendance got to enjoy holding and turning many examples from David's collection. Wes Roth also brought in some fine specimens including rough and everyone got a chance to see hints of opal on the exterior of unsplit nuts and opalized biscuit surrounding nuts as well.

In conclusion David emphasized the **romance of opal** and the gem industry generally pointing out that part of the fun is being dazzled and enticed by the wonder of fine Yowah gem material. He said, "If you aren't enjoying the romance you're missing part of the fun!" ❁