

The Opal Express

American Opal Society
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875



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Volume #33 Issue #08 August, 2001

Board Meeting – Monday, Aug. 6

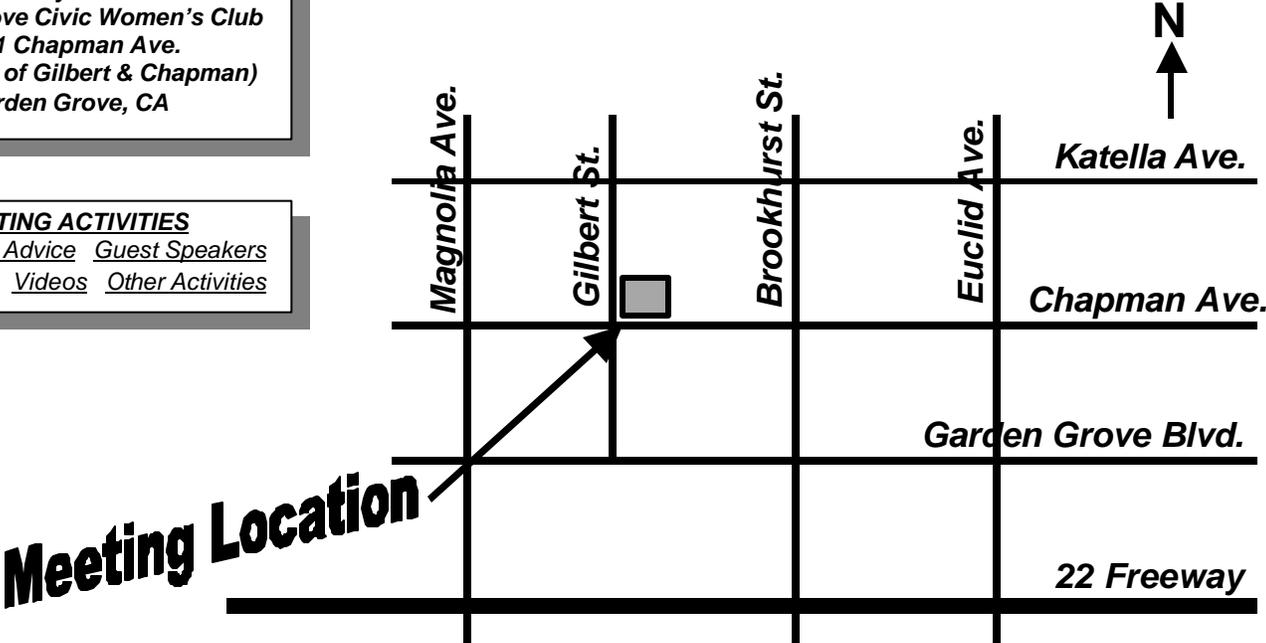
General Meeting – Thursday, Aug. 9!
Bonita Chamberlin on Afghanistan

Come here her tale of walking over the Hindu Kush mountains from Pakistan, tip-toeing through mine fields, avoiding bandits, dodging bullets and bombs, and here work to help the local people develop an economy based on mining & marketing the incredible range of gems from this region.

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

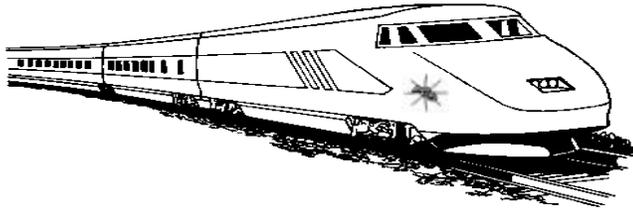
MEETING ACTIVITIES
Opal Cutting Advice Guest Speakers
Slide Shows Videos Other Activities



The American Opal Society
<http://www.opalsociety.org>

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From Mike Kowalsky

Greetings from the Opal Fields of Yowah. It has been a wonderful experience returning to the warm and friendly miners, cutters and opal lovers at Yowah. It was one of my greatest life experiences having the honor of opening the festival last weekend here in Yowah. I would like to thank Gwen Burney for the invitation and the honor of opening the Yowah Festival for 2001.

I have met many people from Yowah and Lightning Ridge this past weekend, and had many wonderful conversations on the subject of Opal. In my short speech I tried to explain how the American Opal Society is helping to develop a market for rough opal of many grades by helping new and more experienced opal enthusiasts learn the process of cutting and polishing, evaluating rough opal and designing some form of jewelry to place it in. I pointed out that most of the opal rough that is mined can be utilized by this market and the world's largest potential market is in the US.

The jewelry design contest had some exquisite designs containing some breath-taking Yowah Opals. I hope my slides come out so everyone can view them. It seems that the winners of the Yowah design contest have also won top awards in the Lightning Ridge contest and some design contests in the US.

There was a display of the design contest entrants and an extensive display of superb opal and opal specimens that was organized by Eddie Maguire. I was invited to add to the display four opals from the America's display that I had brought along with me. One was a blue opal

specimen from Idaho, another was an opal from Louisiana, one was from Honduras and the last was from Brazil. So I was able to have a small display of opal from the Americas that has been displayed in our AOS showcase at several gem and mineral shows in California.

The display of rough and finished opals by the dealers contained some of the best opals to be seen at any gem and mineral show. I must say that prices with the US dollar value were exceptionally good. I made a few purchases of both finished and rough opal which will be displayed at the September meeting.

I must repeat that just being here for the annual Yowah festival is a memorable experience. Not only seeing the opal and the opal designs but talking to many people who have contributed to the knowledge and experience of opal from the early times to the present. I had many conversations with Len Cram and Steven Aracic on the history of opal and they shared their experiences with me. It was nice to know that most people in the Opal arena are interested in Opal wherever it is found, both precious opal and what some consider potch opal. As a collector, I collect both types of opal and found many people interested in all types of opal from around the world.

I am looking forward to many more adventures on this trip and you will hear of one which happened after the Yowah festival in my other article in this issue. (See page 2)

Mike

PS I hope you'll make a special effort to attend the August 9th meeting. Bonita Chamberlin has been rescheduled to be our speaker, and it should be a great program!

Newsletter Archives Online

There is one password for all members: the password is Opalsrus. (Do not touch the member box and just type the password.) The newsletter archives have been just recently made to work, and more articles will be added in the future.

=====
A Day With Len Cram

I was delighted when Len Cram invited Andrew and me for a tour of some of the original mines in Queensland and other mines in the vicinity of Yowah. We accepted immediately and offered our Nissan Pathfinder for the trip. So on Monday morning, we started off from Yowah on this momentous tour. We met Duck Creek Mike during the festival and knew that the plan was to visit him and his mine. Len also promised a stop at a famous roadhouse in a place called Toompine.

Len started through the back roads shortly after leaving Yowah. We were able to see the outback that still looked very much the way it was during the early days of opal mining. One of the interesting stops was at a river that had provided signs of opal deposits to the early miner/explorers. Of course we stopped there and looked for signs ourselves. The rocky slopes of the river had many interesting samples of opal in the early stages of development. We continued on to the original mine. We viewed the original shaft opening that had a gidgee tree growing inside it. Len estimated that the tree was at least 100 years old. Then we viewed the open cut that had been made in recent years by the newer breed of miners.

As Len described the various levels visible in the open cut, I was able to videotape his narration and the levels as he described them. The video tape and slides of this trip will be shown at a future AOS monthly meeting.

We continued on and ended at Duck Creek Mine and met Mike there at about lunch time. We all shared our food and had a very nice lunch in the shaded area by Mike's camp, which was close to the mine. Afterwards, Mike invited us to view his mine closely. We were able to climb down and see the areas that he is working in. Later we

saw some spectacular stones that had been found in Duck Creek Mine.

Off we were to view some other mining areas with a memorable stop at the mine known as Pride of the Hill. This was the first Opal Mine that had a recorded mineral lease. Again, as Len Cram described the levels and parts of boulders that were embedded in the side of the mine, I was able to capture that on videotape. It will also allow me to relive this memorable day when I share this video with everyone.

Our last stop was at the Toompine Roadhouse which has stood throughout the many opal mining years in this area of Queensland. There we quaffed our favorite libation known to many as VB. And so ended a memorable day with Len Cram, our narrator, historian and driver.

I wish to thank Len Cram for such an exciting trip to the past and present of opal mining and allowing me to capture it on videotape to share with our American Opal Society members.

Mike Kowalsky

OPAL SOCIETY WORKSHOP

The workshop at Walker Jr. High is available for the use of AOS members on Wednesday nights. Please call Stan McCall at Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session.

WORKSHOP RULES

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 fee is \$3 per session.

To assist us in scheduling, please call Stan or a board member in advance to reserve shop time. Thank you!

SHOW DATES

10-11--BUENA VISTA, CO: Swap, "Contin-tail Rock Swap"; Colorado Federation of Gem & Mineral Societies; Rodeo grounds; Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-6; free admission; Greg Tunnicliff (303) 499-1434; ctunnicliff@msn.com

10-12--SEASIDE, OR: 5th annual show; Seaside Convention Center, 415 1st Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; Jean Miller (503) 829-2680, fax (503) 824-3218.

11-12--LAKEVIEW, OR 21st annual show, "Rock Roundup"; Tall Man Rock Chippers; Fairgrounds, Hwy. 140; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; camping available

11-12--NIXA, MO: 21st annual rock swap; Ozark Mountain Gem & Mineral Society; 1571 N. West-Maples Rd.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; Eddie Maples, (417) 725-3001

11-12--TOMAH, WI: Annual show; Driftless Area Gem & Mineral Club; Masonic Center, 520 E. Saratoga St.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; Jim Devoe (608) 378-4677.

17-19--LEBANON, PA: 4th annual show, "Gem Miner's Jubilee"; Mid-Atlantic Gem & Mineral Assoc Lebanon Expo Center, Rte 72 & ocherty Rd.; Fri. -Sat.10-6, Sun. 10-4; MAGMA, (301) 565-0487; beadware@erols.com

18-19--BOSSIER CITY, LA:ARK-LA-TEX Gem & Mineral Club; Bossier City Civic Center, 620 Benton Rd.; Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5.Okley Davis (318) 949-2518

18-19--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: 47th annual show, "Golden Gateway to Gems"; San Francisco Gem & Mineral Soc; Herbst Pavilion at Ft Mason Center Sat. 10-6, Sun 10-5 415) 564-4230; Judy: goldpin@earthlink.net

YELM, WA: Show, "Gems and Minerals of the Great Northwest"; Nisqually Valley Rockhound Society; Yelm High School, I-5 exit 111 (Marvin Rd.); Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; Leonard Cone, (360) 491-1429

18-20--LAKE GEORGE, CO: Annual show; Lake George Gem & Mineral Club; 37370 Hwy. 24; Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-6, Mon. 9-6; Mike Sandifer (719) 748-9058; mikesandifer@webtv.net

24-26--PITTSBURGH, PA: Show, "Carnegie Gem & Mineral Show"; Carnegie Museum of Natural History, (412) 622-3131; WilsonM@CarnegieMuseums.org
www.CarnegieMuseums.org/cmnh/gemshow

25-26--LADYSMITH, WI: Show; Flambeau Gem & Mineral Soc; the Armory on Hwy. 27, 1 mile no of Hwy 8; Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4; Wyde Peterson (715) 532-6769

25-26--PEORIA, IL: Annual show; Peoria Academy of Science Geology Section; ITOO Society Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Rd.; Sat 10-5, Sun 11-5 Jo Deen Schmidt, (309) 467-2826

Aug 31-Sept 2--BRUNSWICK, GA: Golden Isles Gem & Mineral Soc; Stellar Conference Center, 144 Venture Dr., I-95 exit 8/38; Fri 12-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 10-5;(912) 265-4259.

31-2--ENUMCLAW, WA: 63rd annual show, "Rainbow of Gems"; Puyallup Valley Gem & Mineral Club; King County Fairgrounds; Fri-Sat-Sun 10-5; admission \$4, seniors \$3, juniors \$2, NFMS convention, field trips; LaVon, (253) 531-7294; lrlogan@juno.com; Jim, (253) 847-3355; strocks@aol.com

Aug 31-Sept 3--FORT BRAGG, CA: 39th annual show; Mendocino Coast Gem & Mineral Society; Town Hall, Main and Laurel; Fri. 10-4, Sat. 10-4, Sun. 10-4, Mon. 10-4; free adm, Don and Karen McDonell, (707) 964-3116

Aug 31-Sept 3--SILVER CITY, NM: 18th annual show; Grant County Rolling Stones Gem & Mineral Soc; Silver City Recreation Center, 1016 N. Silver St.; Fri.-Sat-Sun 10-6, Mon. 10-5; free admission; free field trips on Sat., Sun. and Mon. (Labor Day), Albin Chalk (505) 538-3911 atchalk@zianet.com

SEPT 1-3--ASHEBORO, NC: 9th annual show, "Labor Day Gem & Mineral Show"; Randolph Arts Guild; Days Inn, Albemarle Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-6, Mon. 10-5; Glenn W. Morton, (336) 629-7555; glenn@milita.net

Sept 1-3--CANBY, OR: 19th annual show; off Hwy. 99E; Sat 9-6, Sun. 9-6, Mon. 9-4; free admission; Jean Miller (503) 829-2680, fax (503) 829-2318

Mark Your Calendar!
AOS Opal and Gem Show Nov. 3 & 4, 2001
Quality Hotel, Anaheim, CA

IDAHO TRIP

The Idaho Trip planned for June was postponed until August. Details will be firmed up when Mike Kowalsky returns from Australia.

If you want more details, contact Mike through email at mykowalsky@aol.com, or phone him at (714) 761-4876.

-----Opal Express Advertisement-----

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and

<http://www.shed.com/aom/home.html>

Internet Note

There is a new eGroup called FossickOZ. This group specifically will focus on sharing information about "fossicking" for gems and minerals in Australia. For more info, email Paul at: paulandsharyn@bigpond.com.au

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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Release #01-157

**DEPARTMENT OF ARMY AND DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
ANNOUNCE EXPANSION PLAN FOR NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER**

The Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior have submitted to Congress a proposed plan for expanding maneuver training lands at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., while protecting endangered and threatened species and their critical habitats.

The plan, entitled *Proposed Expansion Plan for Fort Irwin and the National Training Center*, was submitted to Congress Friday and accompanied by a draft of proposed legislation providing for the withdrawal and reservation of public lands known as the *Fort Irwin Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 2001*. Both documents were required to be submitted to Congress in legislation signed by President Clinton on Dec. 21, 2000.

In accordance with that legislation, on March 28, 2001, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Secretaries with a Preliminary Review of the key elements of the proposed expansion plan. The Secretaries have relied on the Preliminary Review to assist in more precisely defining the nature and scope of an expansion plan for the NTC and to identify elements that must be addressed in the formal consultation process under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The National Training Center is the only instrumented training area in the world suitable for force-on-force and live maneuver training of heavy brigade-sized military forces. It provides the Army with essential training opportunities necessary to maintain and improve military readiness and promote national security. The NTC must be expanded to meet the critical need of the Army for additional training lands suitable for the maneuver of large numbers of military personnel and equipment, which is necessitated by advances in equipment and by doctrinal changes.

The proposed expansion plan submitted to Congress Friday could open up approximately 110,000 acres of new maneuver training areas next to existing NTC boundaries and release for training use approximately 22,000 acres of current Army-owned land within the NTC.

"The proposed expansion plan renews the Army's commitment to provide our soldiers with the most realistic training possible - training that will no doubt save soldiers' lives in future conflicts. The plan also demonstrates our commitment to protect the natural resources on the land America entrusts to us," said Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White.

Some of the lands under consideration for expansion of the NTC are home to the desert tortoise and Lane Mountain milkvetch, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act. The plan for the expansion of the NTC provides for such expansion in a manner that complies with the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The draft legislation for the proposed expansion states explicitly that the Army will not conduct any ground-disturbing activities prior to the completion of all necessary reviews and consultations required by these laws, and certification by the Secretary of the Army and Secretary of the Interior of full compliance.

"The proposed expansion plan strikes a balance between our goal to preserve and recover endangered species and the need for America to meet modern standards for combat readiness," Interior Secretary Gale Norton said. "I feel that the process established in the plan and draft legislation will allow us to meet these goals as well as full compliance with all environmental laws," Interior Secretary Gale Norton said.

In accordance with environmental regulations, the public will be given opportunity to comment on the proposed plan at specific points in the process. The Army will announce these opportunities for comment in advance.

For more information, please contact Ms. Karen Baker, Army Public Affairs at 703-697-7592 or Ms. Stephanie Hanna, Department of Interior Public Affairs at 202-208-6416.