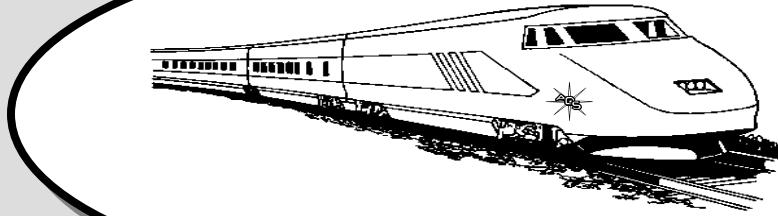


The Opal Express

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President's Message

By Pete Goetz

Hello fellow Opalholics, hope you had a great May Day and Cinco de Mayo. May is a great month, Linda - like ending last year and starting this year. So what is new for this year?? Well, it's not really new, but new for this year. The OPAL Show of course. We still need a few volunteers. I would like to see some new names on the duty roster.

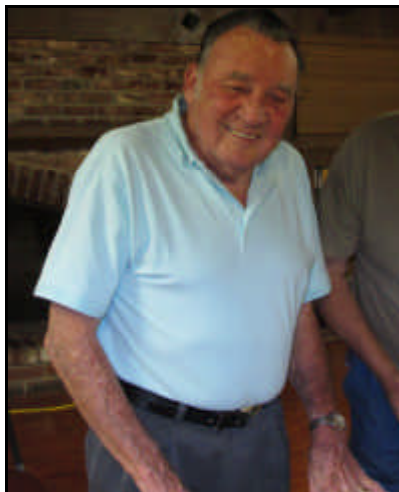
Last month we had a really great general meeting. Topic was "Intarsia". I have often wondered what I was going to do with my faceting machine. Know I know, well, not intarsia, but it might come in handy to help fit stones to mountings.

Our membership is slowing growing but, it seems to be people from afar. This is good, but let's see if we can rustle up some locals. Those that can attend meetings help out at meetings etc., etc., etc...

Sorry this shorter than normal, I'm a little under the weather.

Last Month's Speaker - Charlie Mann

Charlie Mann gave an excellent talk at the last meeting and gave some excellent techniques on how The Opal Express



Charlie Mann at the Clubhouse

to make intarsia. Charlie uses a Facetron Faceting machine to make the pieces that go into the intarsia. Also, he makes sure that he has plenty of stock material cut in strips at right angles. One of his methods is to use super glue. aka cyanoacrylate, and make sure that it is above 72 deg F. The Webmaster plans on putting the recorded video of his talk and demonstration on Society's website, <http://opalsociety.org>, for all to see. Thanks, Charlie!

Members Only Website Password

To log onto the website's members only area at: http://opalsociety.org/aos_members_only_area.htm type: Name: "member" and Password: "opallover".

May's Speaker: Meg Berry

Renowned Gem Cutter & Carver Meg Berry will be May's speaker for the AOS General Meeting. Meg will present her "Phenomenal Stones" talk, which will include discussion of opal carvings.

In 1974, at age 20, Meg Berry headed west from Kalamazoo, Mi to seek her fortune in California. With a short background in silversmithing, she was drawn to the jewelry business. Finding a Gem Cutting School at Grieger's, Inc. in Pasadena shaped the rest of her life. Meg studied faceting under Bob Llivingston Sr., starting in 1974. She soon became his apprentice and a full time employee at Grieger's. In 1977 she was awarded a Master Faceter Certificate. For the following two years Meg worked in Los Angeles as the cutter for a large wholesale gem house.

Meg studied gemology at the Gemological Institute of America starting in 1976 and received degrees in Colored Stones and Gem Identification. Bicycling has always been Meg's other passion, and this progressed into serious racing, on road and velodrome. A severe crash left her temporarily unable to work and wanting a change of environment. In 1980, after moving to Carlsbad, Ca., she opened a small lapidary called Megagem. Meg found herself doing predominately trade work so she closed the doors to all but custom cutting for private clients, and resumed her racing career.

In 1989 Meg began a professional relationship with Pala International and Bill Larsen and Josh Hall. She became their full time cutter, not only faceting any of the myriad colored stones that pass through their doors, but cabbing, carving, designing and stringing necklaces, and repairing anything that had gotten a booboo or needed a new look.

Meg has been recognized with more than a dozen trophies and awards in the AGTA Cutting Edge competition, as well as receiving international acclaim and contracts for her work. In 1992 the late Mel Fischer, renowned and successful treasure hunter, requested that Meg come off maternity leave to facet the largest of the rough emerald crystals from the sunken Spanish Galleon, "Atocha", for his

wife. Since then, Meg has cut more than 100 of these lost "Old Mine" crystals, providing a documented provenance from the lost cargo to the contemporary gems. During the construction of the new G.I.A. building in Carlsbad, Ca, Meg was honored by the late Vince Manson with the contract to cut and polish the concept pieces of rocks and slabs that are placed in the naming plates outside each door.

Meg resigned from Pala in 2003 to pursue her personal dream of a whole new look in fine gems. She is currently producing one of a kind extraordinary gemstone creations, using a combination of techniques including faceting, carving, frosting, and piercing, sometimes all on the same stone! Her current work is thematic, designed to provoke not only appreciation for the beauty of nature, but an emotional response.

Organic, whimsical, pastoral, sometimes erotic, always personal, Meg feels that her work is successful if the viewer's first impulse is to reach out and touch each sensuous piece.

Meg's prolific work with almost every type of colored gems has perfected her talents and developed the facility to wrest the most striking and enhancing creations available from within the rough treasures she brings to life.

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OpalSociety Group on the Internet

The American Opal Society has an on-line e-Group called "OpalSociety". It is for members to communicate on club activities and as a discussion forum for all things opal. It is located at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OpalSociety/>.

All members are invited to join and by clicking on the button "Join This Group" on the web page to join.

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Continuing with Chapters 3 & 4 of the book From Rags to Riches & Disasters

By Peter Greisl

Chapter 3 - The Fools of Andamooka

We were down in the 36 foot shaft crouched in the tunnel which opened in to a small hall only supported by 2 pillars of about three feet in diameter, not knowing anything about tunneling and mining I still recognized that the two pillars which hold up the roof did not look very safe to me.

Anyhow we pointed our lamps towards the tunnel wall and what we seen left us absolutely speechless. We saw green colored bands about 2 to 3 inches in height running along the wall. Herman looked at me and said " we could not be that lucky", of course both of us never ever seen a real Opal in its natural habitat, so assumed we found this large amount of opal and tried to find a reason why it is still here. Any how we started to gauge out approx 3 hessian bags full of about 20 kilos each. I got Herman to climb to the top and pull these three bags up.

We left the mining tools in the shaft and just got the bags put them in the car and drove at terrain allowable speed back to town to show Rudi and thank him for steering us to this fortune.

As we arrived Rudi was still sitting outside the Co-Op and chewing on a piece of Chicken Leg.

As he saw us he shouted out "That was quick" had enough already."

I smiled and said" Thanks Rudi we just made our first major find." he replied "what you mean"

I said Herman "get a bag and lets show him" Herman got a bag and while all this took place people (Miners) starting to gather to see what all the commotion is.

Herman emptied the Bag in front of Rudi and stepped back, Rudi got up and walked over to the pile of sand stone (which it was and we did not know then of course).

He started to grin and that grin developed in the most hysterical laughter to which all the bystanders joined in. Herman and I looked at each other and could not understand the reaction we got from the people when they saw our stones/slabs.

When the laughter subsided, we heard the whispers "Bloody Sand Stone" and the people started to move on. Rudi said "this is shit it is plain Sand stone which absorbed the opal silica before it settled in a pocket or seam which is not porous and then solidify to make Opal".

We felt like a real bunch of Idiots, He said "Go down next to the Post office there is Schultz he is a Opal Buyer and the Postmaster tell him who you are and ask him to show you some rough opal he will show it you and tell you a bit about it."

Disgusted we went to the next mining dump and emptied all our bags, then went to Gusses Restaurant and had a meal and when we were sitting there other miners etc, were looking at us and smiling; obviously our stupidity news travelled very quickly.

After dinner and still having the adrenalin surging through my body I was in no position to throw myself on the camp stretcher and going to sleep even after the long trip and not having had much sleep. I said to Herman lets go to the bar and get a couple of beers and see if we can strike up a conversation and maybe finding out more of what and where to look to find traces or opal. At the bar there were a couple German guys standing and feverishly talking in their language about their claim and work they will have to do tomorrow. I looked in their direction and caught one of the guys look at us, I raised my schooner glass in a toast fashion and returned this gesture, So I said in loud voice hallo and he returned the same but added " just guys just arrived today?" I moved a bit closer and agreed, when he finished his drink I offered to shout one round and they accepted and so we started talking, I told him about our experience of this afternoon and the guy whose name was Klaus said" it was you with the sand stone?" I said "unfortunately it was us and I am sure we are marked as the town Idiots". He said "no not at all a lot of people which never seen an opal in a mine and have no Idea of the ground structure and the layers and where the Opal levels are incur and slips etc," Well as soon as he finished I was lost and had no idea what the guy was talking about.

But he noticed my puzzled look and said, "It is not very difficult" once you know you will not make this mistake twice ".

And he started to explain and even drew and named everything on Beer Coaster which I took with me.

One thing what he said was " why don't you go and do a bit on noodling which gives you a bit of experience about rough opal." and he explained what he meant. I said to Herman " hey that's a great Idea why don't we do this and we can do this on our claim maybe it gives us an indication what stuff came out of it." Then Klaus said "have you got a No. 7 Sieve" I looked at him stupid and he said "so you can screen the dirt and only large pieces stay in the sieve and you get rid of all the loose finer dirt." I said no we do not so he offered us one we can borrow.

We had a couple more beers and changed the subject to where we were from and what were our ideas etc. It turned out to be a nice evening and I started to feel more relaxed and tiredness started to creep in.

We thanked them and said we would meet them at the Co-Op at 7 in the morning as that was the time they start working and get petrol for their machinery and car.

Herman and I went to our sleeping quarters and went to sleep with our clothes on filthy and dirty without a shower for the last couple of days.

The next morning we asked at Gusses if there is a possibility to have a shower, he said yes, I said to Herman I just go and meet Klaus and Ludwig and I come back and have a shower and breakfast before we start the day.

As I arrived at the Co-Op at 5 to 7 they both were here already, they gave me a couple sieves of different gauge and said I can use them as long as I need them. I thanked them they wished me good luck and off they went and I returned to have my shower. Because of the water situation being tank water I had to be very quick and could not soak under the shower. We then went in the restaurant and had

breakfast instead of our dried hard salami and cracker biscuits and stale coffee. We had a lavish meal and we were ready for action.

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Chapter 4 - Work Starts

We arrived at the Claim with our equipment sieves bucket etc, and started this so called noodling by loosen the dirt with picks and started scratching around like a pair of constipated chooks of course we picked up every piece of rubbish which we thought could be opal and threw it in the plastic bucket. Eventually we found pieces which looked like potch and seen some shade of blue colour in some of them.

Once we had quite a heap of loose dirt we started to take the sieve with the larger holes and sifted the dirt and were left with larger pieces. When we had a pile of larger pieces we stopped sifting and sat down and started inspecting them. What a waste of time just bloody rocks and gypsum and the famous colored sand stone. Herman said "if this is the way of making a fortune in Opals then I rather work at a sewage treatment plant."

We had a drink and a rest and just sat there and stared at the heap of dirt we went through. It was after 2 pm and quite hot and there was no shade when all of a sudden a Land rover pulled up and out got the a Khaki Uniform dressed person, which we found out was the Ranger, he ask us a few questions who we were and what are we doing here (which I thought was a strange question), obviously we were not Ballroom dancing. We just told that is our Claim and pointed to the Pegs, he wished us good luck and left.

I said to Herman "how about we go down the shaft and see if we can find the opal level and any traces". So down we went and shifted some dirt out of the way and found there were tunnels leading in various directions. Herman went in one with his pick and lamp and screwdriver and I went in the other direction.

I looked very closely at face of the wall and try to figure out the layers so I can recognize any changes and different levels in the ground formation, I picked away and found where the gypsum finished and just below I noticed a very narrow band of real dark brown seam I picked away at it and suddenly it sounded like breaking glass and I got my screwdriver and started to dig out these pieces I had read that in one of my books when you hear this sound don't pick as you could smash a large piece, you have to be like a Surgeon removing a boil from your bum very gentle. I was sure it was what is called potch it was about 2 -3 mm thick and grey in colour, I picked away and got a few more pieces out before there was nothing left, I put it in a linen bag which I always had with me for later closer inspection. I shouted out to Herman to see how he was doing and got a negative reply I told him about my discovery and he came back and joined me.

Just as I was going to finish I noticed there was a sudden drop of about 7-8 inches in this dark brown seam and continued on, I started picking away and right where the seam dropped down on the bottom of the drop I found a piece of potch which was about the size of a matchbox and the same grey colour but as I turned it around and inspected it, I saw at one corner the most beautiful colour display of green orange but it was not bigger then about the size of little fingers first knuckle about 1.5 to 2 cm and about 5 mm thick the rest was all grey potch.

We both got so excited we started digging away without any result, there was nothing left just dark brown dirt.

Anyhow this got my hopes and dream rekindled again and I was full of the Opal Mining Spirit with firm belief that's my destination.

We claimed out and packed up the car and also took the Bucket with the finer dirt from noodling and went back to town.

We arrived at Gusses and had a cool beer and sat down and started talking.

We were formulating a plan of action, and in came Klaus and Ludwig, we asked them to join us which they did I bought a round and they asked us how we made out we told them about our noodling experience and then about what happened in the shaft, Klaus said be very careful do no start picking at the pillars even

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there are traces as the whole lot could cave in he then explained what the drop was, it was called a slip and many large parcels of beautiful crystal opal came out of slips. I showed them the piece we found and Ludwig said " That a nice piece and when it is cut and polished into a solid you should get at least 150 to 200 Pounds for it." I am still amazed that after the currency change in 1966 on the Opal field they still did refer to Pounds.

He then said if you want to follow us to our shack I slice the opal out of the potch and then tomorrow morning take it Peter Vlack is a very fair Buyer and see what he offers you if you would sell it." he continued in saying " If you want I throw the dirt into our concrete mixer I wash it for you to see if there is any color amongst it."

I could not thank them enough so we finished our drinks and went with them; they had a shack at White Dam with Generators cutting gear etc, a very primitive but well set up operation.

Klaus got the Concrete mixer started an threw our bucket of dirt in and a couple buckets of water and started tumbling the lot then dipped it out on square box which had fine mesh wire bottom, he then said " I could see bit of colour but what you do when you get back put a little at the time in washbowl and some water and sit under a light or do it tomorrow in sunlight and check out every piece". Ludwig called us and he was sitting in front of his cutting machine and started slicing the stone, when he was finished he handed me a lovely piece of Opal which was absolutely full of color and when you held it to the light you could see right through.

We thanked them and made our way back with our first Opal. I could not sleep I was wide awake half the night the adrenalin was still pumping.

The next morning at 8 am we went to Peter Vlack, knocked on his door and he came out and asked what he can do for us, we introduced our self's and told him that he was recommended to us by Klaus and Ludwig if he could have a look at some opal and give us any Idea what he would pay for, he admitted he knows Klaus and Ludwig and added they are very nice people.

He said "yes come on in and show me what you got." Inside I pulled out the stone and gave it to him and he dipped into a bowl of water which was on his desk and twisted it and turned it and said, "I give you 80 Pounds for it if you want to sell it."

I said to him "can I think it over as it is our first piece" and he said Yes you can do this it is a standing offer anytime you ready to sell, you just come and see me."

We thanked him and went back to our sleeping Quarters.

I looked as if I was in a trance and Herman said to me, "What's up?" I said "Herman I just made a decision, I am not going to Mt. Isa, I am going to find suitable accommodation here and go back and bring my family here and work the Claim. You still have plenty time to go to Mt. Isa to work there if you wish."

He replied "Alone that would not be much fun, if you want I work with you here."

We shook hands and I said "ok let's not waste time let's find a place to live, and what I want you to do if it is ok with you, I just grab my family and we head straight back here and you stay back in our flat and sell up everything call in second hand dealers etc, and then when you ready you come and you

bring the money and your family, but you must ring me when you leave so I can find a place for you to stay." He said that sounds great let's get going."

I spoke with Guss and told him of my plans and he said the only place where I could find something was at Dutton Valley but it rough," We got directions and we went there.

Jack Dutton was an old fellow in his late sixties very hard to guess his age he could have been older, he has some Nissen (don't know the spelling) Huts which were converted into one and two room accommodation, very rough with a 44 gal drum for Water and a Bucket Shower outside covered by a curtain Kerosene refrigerator, Gas lighting and wood stove for cooking a day and night couch which acted as a Bed, a wardrobe, and small table with two chairs everything was very used. Jack charged 4 Pound per week rent,

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Water we have to buy it came with a tanker from White dam it was very murky but I learned from other tenants to use Epsom salt for clearing. Well I sorted everything out with Jack and I got my Accommodation I just was thinking how my little lady would like it, well that I had to sort out when I am back in Sydney.

We collected our luggage dropped the mining gear at Klaus and Ludwig's place and we left the fields on Sunday at 4 am in the morning heading back to Sydney.

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An Opinion on Opals

By Gerry Manning, Manning International

How to correct long misrepresented "facts" about opal? Even highly respected labs often misstate information regarding opal characteristics and treatments.

Here are some observations from my personal experience:

- Opal is NOT sensitive to solvents, not unless you're talking about the same acids that are used to etch glass.
- Opal is NOT sensitive to or vulnerable to ultrasound. I've used ultrasound with opal for more than 35 years with no adverse effects.
- Gem opal is NOT — as some have claimed — up to 12 percent WATER. That, if true, would mean that one could literally shake water from the stone! In fact, there are infinitesimal amounts — or, no water — left in any gem opal. Often, water vapor has remained trapped in the silica lattice. This is where an experienced buyer has a distinct advantage in providing the market with reliably "cured" opal. I am speaking of Australian, Brazilian and Mexican opal, not some of the less stable varieties that are so porous as to soak up water through their open lattice gaps.

Regarding dying, infilling, or impregnating?

Sure there are categories where these treatments do apply. oolitic opal, or "Sugar Cured" opal is in-filled (infused) with a sugary solution, then placed in sulfuric acid, the sugar blackened or "carbonized" to imitate the appearance of natural black opal. Some oolitic materials and hydrophanes can be "stabilized" with resin compounds, dyed to resemble black opal. But these are the minority of opal varieties. They are NOT the norm.

But how does one correct popular misconceptions regarding gem opal? I've tried over the years, but generally accepted "facts" about opal continue to prevail. (This is not to mention the superstition surrounding opal as a "bad luck" stone. There's a wealth of information to disprove this misnomer, but that's the stuff of another article.)

Regarding the "new" Ethiopian opal:

Before you think that I have a vested interest in detracting from the "legitimacy" of this new market participant; let me disavow such a notion. I truly hope that this new find will become a reliable staple in the marketplace. I've purchased rough material and will continue to experiment with it, learning of its do's and don't's.

Having said this, let me continue with my own personal experience to date. For one thing, Ethiopian opal is still untested by time and exposure to normal wear. I've cut a score of material and observed many characteristics that are, I think, worth discussing with you.

This material is more susceptible to heat (in my experience) than Australian or Brazilian opal. It absorbs moisture through capillary action. And, unlike Brazilian hydrophane that turns "crystal" when water is absorbed into the lattice, this Ethiopian material behaves in an opposite manner. A good percentage will lose color, becoming nearly transparent during the cutting process due to water absorption. As a cutter must actually SEE the material he/she is cutting, this phenomenal characteristic can present quite a challenge. Where did the color go? Can one actually define the perimeter? Can one really see the surface anomalies during this "wet" stage?



Ethiopian opal in various drying states of the dop. Top to bottom. 1) Still wet. 2) Still wet 3) Really wet 4) Still wet, but drying – see other photo for total transparent stage. 5) wet/dry, not cured fully. Later stones 5, 1, and 3 cracked completely under drying heat (100 watt desk lamp over stoned for 5 to 8 minutes heat test).

I've had stones actually "explode" off the dopstick when I've removed them to turn top to bottom or bottom to top. With so much moisture absorbed into the lattice, even the heat of the alcohol lamp to remove the green low heat wax can cause the moisture to seek a fast escape route from front, back or sides of the stone on the dop. This can result in a quick and unexpected exit from the stick. (Note: I observed no cracking in spite of this unexpected escape route.)

Sadly, after finishing several really lovely stones with unusually fine "crystal" color display, a not insignificant percentage has cracked — or crazed — in the final polishing stage. This is decidedly



Know your opal? What is what and from where? Guess and look for answers below.



Stones on the dop sticks. Center and right are almost fully "wet". Stone on left didn't make the final stage. All Ethiopian. Stone on right is fine, weeks after finishing..

Answers to Opal Quiz

1: Australian, 2: Australian Crystal, 3: Australian Opaque, 4: Gilson Created, 5 Australian Crystal, 6: Ethiopian in drying stage, 7: Australian, 8: Ethiopian just off the dop and fully water-filled, 9: Ethiopian in drying mode but still "wet".

NOT a characteristic of Australian, Brazilian or Mexican opal. It MAY be something similar to the Idaho materials and the less stable materials from other parts of the world.

Finally, with the lattice of Ethiopian material being so accepting of moisture, even a humid environment will allow moisture to penetrate the stone. Washing dishes or doing other daily chores — may expose it to undue challenges, possibly absorbing unwanted low viscosity oils, detergents or other liquid-borne materials into the spaces between the silica lattice. And the notion that merely polishing the material "seals it?" Not so. While some stones seem to hold up very well, others do not — even in the earliest stages of processing. And, because the hydrophane-like nature of the lattice is so welcoming to impregnation, we shall necessarily be on guard for (undisclosed) impregnated stones ("stabilized" with resins or other hardeners).

The jury is still out on Ethiopian opal, in my opinion. With almost 50 years as an opal cutter, rough buyer, etc, I tend to take a long view on any newcomer to the market. And in this case, the frenzy over Ethiopian opal is one to take a step back from and be cautiously optimistic, with a dash of circumspection. It is not to say, however, that Ethiopian opal will not prove itself in the long term. We have more data to gather, more stones to cut, more experience to report.

Please see the photo examples for some of the cutter's challenges in bringing this opal to life as a finished gemstone. *From AGTA ePRISM*

Illegal Opal Mining Destroys Vietnam's Rice Fields & Landscape

April 05, 2011

HO CHI MINH City, April 5 (Bernama) -- Illegal mining of opal has devastated rice fields and landscapes in a commune in the Central Highlands Province of Dak Nong, Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported.

Dak Gan Commune, Dak Mil District, which has borne the brunt of the illegal mining, is pockmarked with large, deep holes spread over dozens of hectares.

The illegal exploitation in Dak Mil began in 2005 but it has become more intensive and blatant in recent months, especially with the Vinamin Joint Stock Company bringing in 10 power shovels for excavating.

An opal market has opened on Highway 14 just a kilometre away from the Dak Gan People's Committee.

A report by Dak Mil District agencies, which sent an inspection 6-8— COSTA MESA, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center Bldg. 10, 88 Fair Dr.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$7, children 11 and team, said 15 power shovels were being used in Dak Gan, mostly by people from other localities who had bought lands, mainly farming, from locals.

With the miners paying high prices for land, many farmers were ready to chop down coffee, pepper, and cashew trees to sell their land.

Nguyen Xuan Khue, head of Dak Mil district's Natural Resources and Environment Sub-Department, said since opal was a precious stone, only the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment had the authority to issue mining licences.

So far not a single individual or organisation had been licensed to exploit opal in the area. However, local agencies had been unable to stop them due to lack of personnel, Khue said.

Nguyen Xuan Anh, Khue's colleague, said most of the opal mined illegally was exported to China. The penalties for mining were too lenient to deter offenders, he said.

For instance, Nguyen Thanh Don of central Nha Trang City was recently caught with six cubic metres of opal and chalcedony but fined a mere 3.5 million VND (US\$170), he added.

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsworld.php?id=576397>

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New Mineral Discovered on Antarctic Meteorite



Wassonite – new mineral on a meteorite found in Antarctica.

April 06, 2011

A meteorite discovered in Antarctica in 1969 has just divulged a modern secret: a new mineral, now called Wassonite.

The new mineral found in the 4.5-billion-year-old meteorite was tiny — less than one-hundredth as wide as a human hair. Still, that was enough to excite the researchers who announced the discovery Tuesday (April 5).

"Wassonite is a mineral formed from only two elements, sulfur and titanium, yet it possesses a unique crystal structure that has not been previously observed in nature," NASA space scientist Keiko Nakamura-Messenger said in a statement.

The mineral's name, approved by the International Mineralogical Association, honors John T. Wasson, a UCLA professor known for his achievements across a broad swath of meteorite and impact research.

Grains of Wassonite were analyzed from the meteorite that has been officially designated Yamato 691 enstatite chondrite. Chondrites are primitive meteorites that scientists think were remnants shed from the original building blocks of planets. Most meteorites found on Earth fit into this group.

Yamato 691 likely originated from an asteroid orbiting between Mars and Jupiter. It was discovered along with eight other meteorites by members of the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition on the blue ice field of the Yamato Mountains. They constituted the first significant recovery of Antarctic meteorites. Follow-up searches by scientists from Japan and the United States have recovered more than 40,000 specimens, including rare Martian and lunar meteorites.

The research team used NASA's transmission electron microscope to isolate the Wassonite grains and figure out their chemical makeup and atomic structure.

When meteors hit the ground they are called meteorites. Most are fragments of asteroids (space rocks that travel through the solar system), and others are mere cosmic dust shed by comets. Rare meteorites are impact debris from the surfaces of the moon and Mars.

"Meteorites, and the minerals within them, are windows to the formation of our solar system," said co-discoverer Lindsay Keller, space scientist at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. "Through these kinds of studies we can learn about the conditions that existed and the processes that were occurring then."

From <http://www.foxnews.com>

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12,000 Carat Tanzanite Discovered



12,000 Carat Tanzanite

March 1, 2011

TanzaniteOne Ltd. has recovered a 12,000-plus ct. tanzanite, one of the largest tanzanite gemstones ever found, it announced March 1.

The 12,100 ct. rough stone was discovered at the company's flagship tanzanite project in the Simanjiro district of Tanzania. Initial examinations have indicated that it is the third largest tanzanite recovered by the company and could be the third largest tanzanite stone ever found.

Photo courtesy of TanzaniteOne

The gemstone will now undergo appropriate analysis, including color and clarity grading. The stone is expected to contain a significant A grade component under the tanzanite classification system. It will most likely be divided into smaller—but still large—pieces to be cut and polished at the company's in-house cutting facility. From <http://www.jckonline.com>

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Bench Tips - Testing for Silver

By Brad Smith

With the price of silver going over \$45 an ounce today, it got me thinking that I should be sorting my scrap metals a little more carefully. Part of that process is identifying some of those unknown "silvery" pieces in the bottom of the toolbox.

Silver testing solutions can be used to distinguish high silver content alloys like Fine (.999), Sterling (.925) and Coin (.900) from alloys that have the same appearance but no silver content, like German Silver or Nickel.

I purchased a half-ounce bottle of JSP Silver Testing Solution #GT41 for \$ 3 with a fresh solution you have an instant reaction after applying it to the metal being tested. Procedure is simple - as you apply a small drop, look for a color change. Note that the acid will leave a slight mark, so choose a spot that is out of the way or will be easy to polish.

Here's the reaction I got when testing various materials:

Material	Color Reaction
Fine silver	Red/Orange
Sterling silver	Brick Red
80% silver 20% copper	Dark red changing to gray
Brass	Yellow changing to blue
Nickel	Gray-green
Copper	Yellow changing to blue
Steel	Black
Stainless Steel	No color change

Caution - If you do any of this testing, know that you are handling a reasonably strong acid. The GT41 label says it includes nitric acid and potassium dichromate.

Wear safety glasses. Do not get any testing solution on your skin. Always have a solution of baking soda and water handy to neutralize acid. Wash and clean up well when you're done.

From <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTips/message/212>

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Mississippi Opal at Gem & Mineral Show

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Gem and Mineral Society's 20th annual Magnolia State Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show

November 07, 2010 This year's show will have quality exhibits featuring rare gemstones, beautiful jewelry and a variety of unique artistic creations.

One exhibit this year has excited the gem and mineral societies members, commonly known as "rockhounds," and that is Mississippi's own and recently discovered precious gemstone -- opal.

This exhibit is being made available, courtesy of James E. Starnes, a geologist with the Office of Geology, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality in Jackson.

The exhibit, according to Starnes, will include a segment of opal in the rough (contained in the natural matrix the way it was found).

There are two pieces that have been cut and polished into gem quality specimen to show the opal's color and beauty by the Mississippi Gem and Mineral Society members in Jackson; and one has been mounted in gold as a pendant. The exhibit will contain geological information about the opal from the Office of Geology.

According to John Wright, show chairman and a retired geologist, Mississippi has an abundance of "semi-precious" gem stones. These stones include jasper, carnelian, agate, quartz and many others that can be found in area gravel pits along with petrified wood and fossils.

But, Wright said, there have been no "precious" gem stones until the recent discovery of the Mississippi Opal in Claiborne County by the Office of Geology's Mississippi State Geological Survey Surface Geology Division, while gathering data for detailed geological mapping of the Catahoula Formation.

Officials say the Mississippi Opal is similar to the opal that has been mined for nearly a century in Vernon Parish, La.

Much of the Louisiana gem quality opal on the open market today can be attributed to Ben F. Stevens, who is author of "Louisiana Opal -- The One that Dares to Be Different." Stevens will be a dealer at the show (Exquisite Stones) with some of the rare Louisiana Opal for sale along with copies of his book.

May 2011 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at <http://rockngem.com/showdates/>

6-8—BISHOP, CA: 10th annual show, "Eastern Sierra Gem & Mineral Show"; Lone Pine Gem & Mineral Society; Tri-County Fairgrounds, Robinson Bldg., Sierra St. and Fair Dr.; Fri. 6-9, Sat. 9:30-5, Sun. 10-3; free admission; field trips, lapidary demonstrations, lampwork beads, flint knapping, sphere making, displays, world's largest fulgurite, local minerals and fossils, spinning wheel, geodes, vendors, door prizes, children's activities; contact Francee Graham, P.O. Box 667, Lone Pine, CA 93545, (760) 876-4319; e-mail: franceem@qnet.com

7-8—RENO, NV: Annual show; Reno Gem & Mineral Society; Reno Livestock Events Center Exhibit Hall, 1350 N. Wells; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5, seniors \$4, children \$3; more than 20 dealers, gems, minerals, fossils, beads, lapidary and silversmithing equipment, more than 60 exhibit cases, demonstrations, flint knapping, gold panning booth, silent auction, door prizes, field trip, raffle; contact John Petersen, 480 S. Rock Blvd., Sparks, NV 89431, (775) 849-1522; Web site: www.renorockhounds.com

13-15—ANDERSON, CA: Show, "Northern CA Treasures CFMS Show & Convention"; Superior CA Gem & Mineral Society; Shasta District Fairgrounds, 1890 Briggs St.; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$4, seniors \$3, students \$2, children under 12 free; displays, world-class speakers, auction, demonstrations, raffle, dealers, minerals, fossils, jewelry, gems, beads, supplies, gifts; contact Steve Puderbaugh, 19652 N. Hirsch Court, Anderson, CA 96007, (530) 604-2951; e-mail: steve@applyaline.com; Web site: <http://superiorcal.com>

13-15—SACRAMENTO, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; Cal Expo Bldg. A, 1600 Exposition Blvd.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$7, children 11 and under free; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

18—McCLELLAN, CA: Show; Rings & Things; Garden Pavilion, 5640 Dudley Blvd.; Wed. 11-3; free admission; gemstones not available in our catalog or

online store, bead strands, 15% off many gemstone and bead strands, findings and stringing supplies; contact Dave Robertson, PO Box 450, Spokane, WA 99210, (509) 252-2900; e-mail: [drobertson@rings-things.com](mailto:d Robertson@rings-things.com); Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/index.html

20-22—SANTA ANA, CA: Wholesale/retail show, "Spring West Coast Gem & Mineral Show"; Martin Zinn Expositions; Holiday Inn-Orange County Airport, 2726 S. Grand Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; open to the public, more than 80 wholesale and retail dealers, minerals, fossils, gems, jewelry, lapidary supplies; contact Martin Zinn Expositions LLC, P.O. Box 665, Bernalillo, NM 87004-0665, (505) 867-0425

20-22—SANTA BARBARA, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; Earl Warren Showgrounds, Exhibit Hall, 3400 Calle Real; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$7, children 11 and under free; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

21-22—HERMISTON, OR: Annual show; Hatrockhound Gem & Mineral Society; Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Hwy. 395; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$2, 15 and under free with an adult; contact Mike Filarski, (541) 922-5091; e-mail: stonemorlin1@netscape.net

21-22—JACKSON, CA: 11th annual Tailgate Gemboree; Fossils For Fun Society; Kennedy Gold Mine, 12954 Kennedy Mine Rd.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; indoor exhibits, outdoor dealers, rocks, gems, minerals, fossils, Sat. auctions, surface mine tours, gold panning; contact Debbie Bunn, P.O. Box 255702, Sacramento, CA 95642, (916) 929-6665; e-mail: fossilsforfun@hotmail.com; Web site: www.fossilsforfun.org

22—SAN BERNARDINO, CA: Show; Rings & Things; Hilton San Bernardino, 285 E. Hospitality Ln.; Sun. 10-2; free admission; gemstones not available in our catalog or online store, bead strands, 15% off many gemstone and bead strands, findings and stringing supplies; contact Dave Robertson, PO Box 450, Spokane, WA 99210, (509) 252-2900; e-mail: [drobertson@rings-things.com](mailto:d Robertson@rings-things.com); Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/index.html

THE OPALLOVER

My Fellow Opalholics and Rockhounds, by now you must have noticed a Story in your Newsletter about an Australian Migrant from Austria of his experiences as a Miner in the search of the famous Rainbow Rock known as Opal, I am this person.

I have given this Story to the American Opal Society as a gift in recognition of what AOS has done for the Opal Industry and particular for its Miners.

As you know Andamooka has produced some of the world's best Crystal Opal, and I feel you should get the benefit to obtain some of the great Andamooka Opal and Matrix etc, which is slowly diminishing.

We have some wonderful Andamooka opal in the rough for you, if you have any other interests for example rough opal for beads, carvings or specimens please let us know. I am sure we will have something that will satisfy all your opal needs.

Should you wish to see some pictures of the Opal, then please don't hesitate to e-mail or phone me and I shall oblige to satisfy your request.

Peter Greisl, Andamooka Miner & Owner

- Andamooka smaller stones 1 oz \$80
- Andamooka Inlay blue green or doublet \$380/oz .4 oz \$152
- Andamooka Gem .0532 oz/1.65 grams \$165
- Andamooka bright stones & chips – still needs tumbling \$95/oz \$195 (4 oz remaining)
- Andamooka Potch & Colour \$7/oz - 30 oz \$210
- Andamooka Gem Painted Lady on & in Angel stone 14 oz \$205
- Andamooka reds & greens \$245/oz - 1.1 oz \$265.50
- Special Andamooka Rainbow Matrix treated & sealed double sided reds, greens, golds 2.1 oz \$320
- Andamooka \$8,000/oz .0415 oz/1.29 grams \$332
- Andamooka reds, greens very bright suit small cabs & doublets 1 oz \$375
- Andamooka Mixed suit solids \$480
- Andamooka Gem (1 stone) \$4,000/oz .315 oz \$1260
- Andamooka "Sand Hill" faced stone \$5,600/oz .368 oz \$2,060
- I have Chrysoprase at \$80, \$160, \$320 and \$400/kilo. (2.2 lbs.)

The Opallover

E-mail: pkg25@wesaveyoudollars.com

Website: www.opallover.com (under construction)

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American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
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	NEW MEMBERS	\$40	
INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)		\$10	
PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)		\$5	
ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your First Badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$10	
TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable:			

Please make check or money order payable to "American Opal Society". Mail payment and application to:
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An optional, quicker method of payment is via the Internet. To pay, just visit the membership page on our website at http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm and complete the form. You may pay with a Credit Card or via PayPal account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. The AOS PayPal account is membership@opalsociety.org.

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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.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: The AOS publishes a membership directory once per year in its Newsletter, the *Opal Express*. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information that you want listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

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Editor-Jim Pisani
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The Opal Express C/O
Jim Pisani
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
E-mail: editor@opalsociety.org

Are Your Dues Due Now?
PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.
A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note, however, that 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 assure your dues are current.
Thank you,
The Editor

The Opal Express

American Opal Society
P.O. Box 4875
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Volume #44 Issue #5
May 2011

Some Topics In This Issue:

- Last Month's Speaker - Charlie Mann
- May's Speaker: Meg Berry
- From Rags to Riches & Disasters, Chapter 3 & 4
- An Opinion on Opals
- Illegal Opal Mining in Vietnam
- New Mineral Discovered on Meteorite
- Mississippi Opal at Gem Show
- 12,000 Carat Tanzanite Discovered
- Bench Tips - Testing for Silver

Important Dates:

May 4 - Board Meeting

May 12 - General Meeting:

Renowned Gem Cutter & Carver Meg Berry will be May's speaker for the AOS General Meeting. Meg will present her "Phenomenal Stones" talk,, which will include discussion of opal carvings.

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

2nd Thurs. of the Month
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
Garden Grove, CA 92841
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

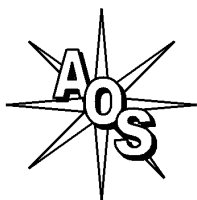
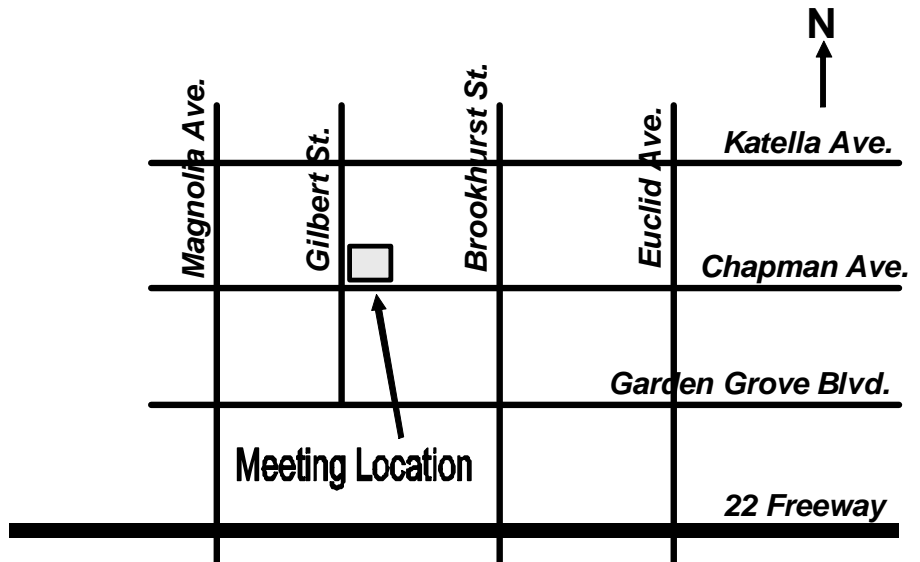
MEETING ACTIVITIES

Opal Cutting, Advice, Guest Speakers,
Slide Shows, Videos, Other Activities

TO:

May 12th

Meg Berry, Gem Cutter & Carver



The American Opal Society
<http://OpalSociety.org>

Pete Goetz
LaVerne Christenson
Jim Pisani
Gene LeVan

President
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(714) 530-3530
(714) 531-4041
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email: mpg1022@aol.com
email: laverne@socal.rr.com
email: editor@opalsociety.org
email: fineblackopal@sprynet.com