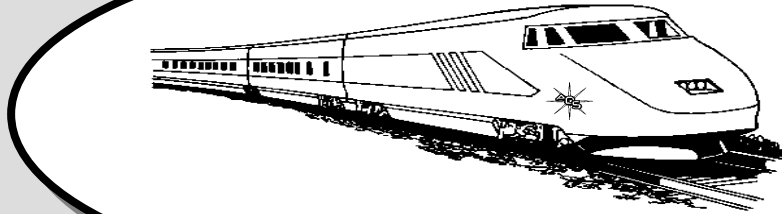


# The Opal Express

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## Members Only Website Password

AOS website's members only area: Name: "member" and Password: "opalyear".

## Polishing Tips

### Jade Polishing Agent

A little graphite mixed with chrome oxide and applied to a muslin buff makes a wonders jade polishing agent. When using chrome oxide for polishing, mix it with a solution of 1/2 water and 1/2 vinegar.

### Polishing Peridot

Apply a drop of lemon juice or vinegar to speed things considerably. The slight acid seems responsible for the improvement. Rinse laps and splash pans with plain water when finished.

*Reprinted from Rock Chips, June '06*

## Bench Tips

### BENCH SHEARS

When cutting sheet metal, it's quicker and easier to use a set of shop shears as compared with using a hand saw. The cut is not as precise, but many times you don't need that. Shears will easily cut up to 24 gauge sheet, and some will cut 22 or even 20 gauge.

Current prices for shears run from \$13 - \$22 in jewelry catalogs, and the Joyce Chen scissors recommended on some jewelry blogs run more than \$20. But we found a cheaper alternative at the 99 Cent Store - some gardening utility scissors that were only \$1.07

I buy a half dozen of them at a time for use in my jewelry classes.

They're great for cutting bezels, trimming around a bezel cup, and cutting a piece off a larger sheet.

### BEZEL CLOSER

A bezel closer is a steel punch that makes quick work out of pushing the metal down over a round stone and burnishing it. The working end is a concave cavity that fits over your bezel or prong setting and is pushed and twisted to capture the stone. Sets can be purchased but are expensive and contain many sizes you will probably never

use. If all you need is one or two sizes, here's how you can make them yourself.

Find a good quality, round steel rod a little larger in diameter than your bezel cup or prong setting. Cut a 5 inch length. File both ends flat. Locate the center of one end, center punch a divot, and drill a small pilot hole about 5 mm deep. Remember to use a little oil as lubricant when cutting steel.

Select a ball bur a bit smaller than the steel rod but slightly larger than the bezel. Enlarge the pilot hole to a full hemispherical cavity. Test for proper fit with your bezel. Bezel should first contact the cavity about a third of the way in. When the size is correct, polish the cavity using Zam on a length of chopstick in your flexshaft. If the tool is not polished, it will leave scratches on your bezel or prongs.

When using the tool, the first step is to capture the stone correctly. I usually work by hand and push the punch straight down over the bezel or prongs. This causes the metal to start bending over the stone. Now inspect with a lens to be sure the stone is staying level. This is repeated until the stone is seated on its bearing and can't move anymore.

Next, you want to force the metal down onto the stone uniformly all the way around. While this can be done by hand, I often gently tap the punch with a hammer. Finally, I burnish the bezel by twisting the punch around.

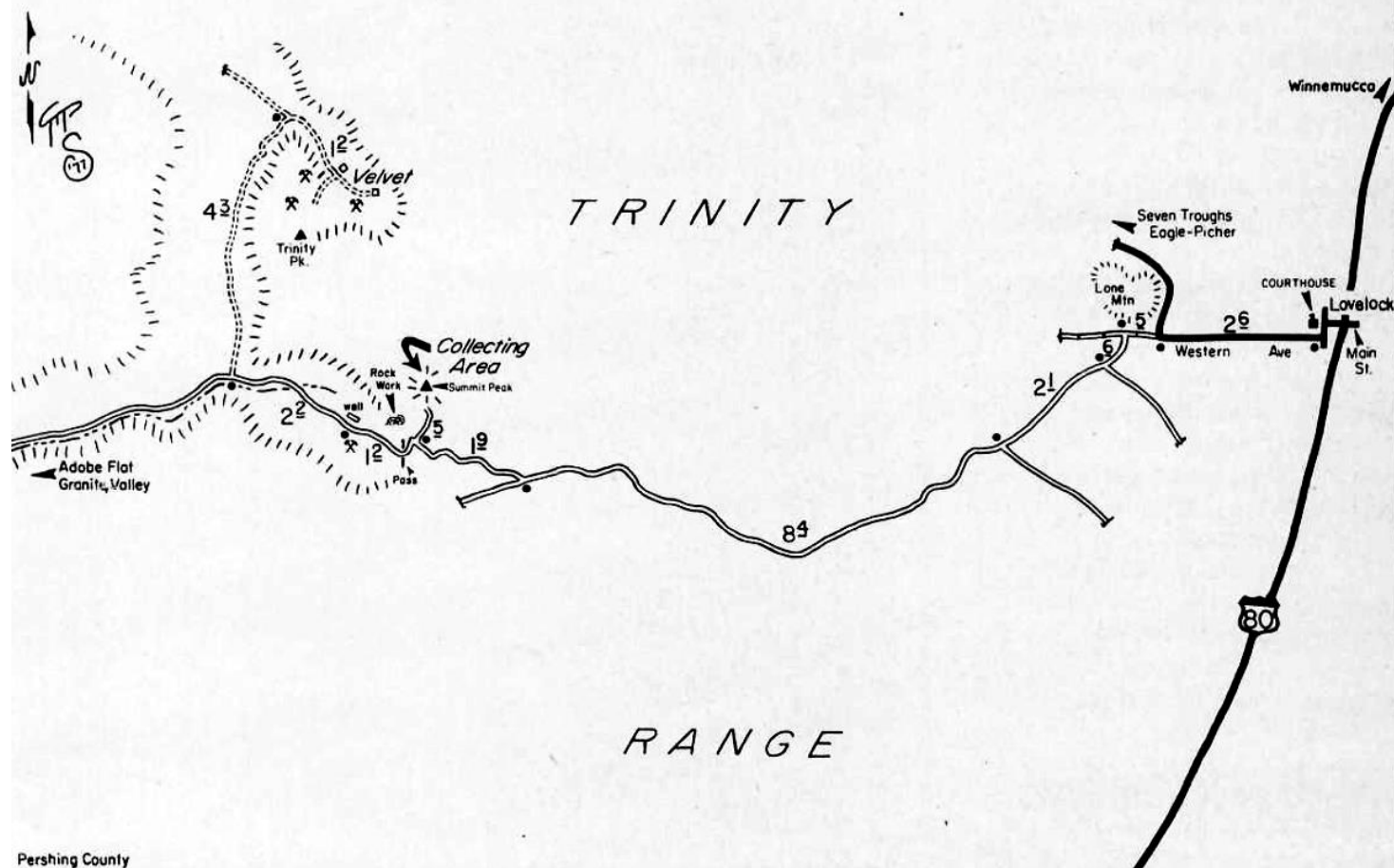
More Bench Tips by Brad Smith are at facebook.com/BenchTips/ or see the book "Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" on Amazon.

## AOS Calendar for 2013

Below is the tentative AOS Calendar for 2013.

American Opal Society Calendar	
Date	General Meeting Topic / Speaker
10-Jan-13	Opals of The Americas, Part 2 – Jim Pisani
14-Feb-13	Fluorescent Minerals and Opals - Jim Pisani
14-Mar-13	Michael Greyslock on Gold Detecting
11-Apr-13	Dr. Walt Johnson on Jewelry Making
09-May-13	Video on Opal Mining in Brazil
13-Jun-13	Live Opal Auction
11-Jul-13	Opal Cutting Seminar
08-Aug-13	Member Show & Tell
12-Sep-13	To be announced
10-Oct-13	Opal & Gem Show Work Session
03-Nov-13	46th Annual Opal & Gem Show
04-Nov-13	46th Annual Opal & Gem Show
14-Nov-13	Opal & Gem Show Recap
12-Dec-13	AOS Christmas Party Potluck

# Velvet, Nevada



Velvet Nevada Map

Here's an old 1977 Desert Magazine article on a little know opal deposit in Nevada. I'm curious if any of our members have been there or seen the opal from this location. Please contact me at [editor@opalsociety.org](mailto:editor@opalsociety.org) if you have.

The Editor

## All's not Smooth at Velvet

By Mary Frances Strong; Photos by Jerry Strong

The morning sky was exactly as we had ordered. Huge, cottony clouds floated across an azure sky. It would be a great day for exploring. True, there were dark cumulus clouds on the far horizon. However, after nearly a week of cloudy, rainy weather, we chose to ignore them and set our sights for the Velvet Mining District in the Trinity Range west of Lovelock, Nevada.

Our interest in this locale had been aroused by a 1923 mining journal report which stated: "Some good fire opals have been found in the volcanic rocks of the district." I must admit we were skeptical about finding fire opal, since any deposit of gem material would surely be under claim. Such reports generally turn out to be common opal which often occurs in conjunction with agate and jasper. On an earlier trip (Desert July 1973), we had collected some beautiful opalite, agate and petrified wood near the Eagle-Picher Mine also in the Trinity Range about 10 miles north. Perhaps the Velvet District would be as rewarding.

Prospects for an interesting trip seemed good as we headed west from Lovelock on Western Avenue. When the paved road turned north, we kept ahead for a half-mile then turned left and traveled southwesterly toward a pass in the Trinities. Off to the southeast, we

soon had a panoramic view of the Humboldt River Valley flanked by the towering Humboldt Range. We also noted some unusual "mounds" and later discovered they were "tufa domes" along a former shoreline of prehistoric Lake Lahontan.

During the recent 5,000 or so years, evaporation has reduced this once tremendous body of water to only a few vestigial lakes such as Pyramid, Carson, Winnemucca and Walker. The Humboldt and Carson Sinks, as well as Sand Springs Marsh, are residual playas left by Lake Lahontan. The tufa domes, consisting of calcium carbonate, were precipitated from mineral-laden water as evaporation progressed. In some cases, algae may have assisted in the process. Tufa domes are found in many places in the west and their size and shape vary widely. At this locale, they resemble "rock pineapples," some possibly 20 feet high.

Approximately nine miles from Lovelock, the road we were following gently curved west and we could see the pass in the distance. It also began to deteriorate into a two-track trail. In some places, considerable water had run down the north track, eroding it deeply. We drove along on quite a slant. From this point, the route is not advisable for trailers. There are several open areas in the vicinity for camping.

We continued another four miles and noted there hadn't been any vehicles over the route since the storm a few days previous. When a horn honked behind us, we really jumped. Since they couldn't possibly pass, we concluded they wanted us to stop. It was even more of a surprise to find ourselves facing two deputy sheriffs!

Cecil Coinger and "Rocky" Ging were on patrol. They were curious as to our destination and imparted considerable information about the region. Upon leaving, they advised us, "You folks call the station when you return this evening. It is a mighty rough trail to Velvet and the recent storm has probably played havoc with what trails are left. If you don't report in, we will know you need help." We were very impressed by their thoughtfulness and sincere interest in our welfare.

Another mile of travel brought us to the summit — a narrow ridge between peaks. Spread out far below was Granite Valley and a shimmering playa called "Adobe Flats." Dark, foreboding clouds hung over the Sahave and Blue Wing Mountains to the west. The storm clouds were much closer and heavier than when we had started the trip. But, since the sun still smiled on the Trinities, we felt no concern.

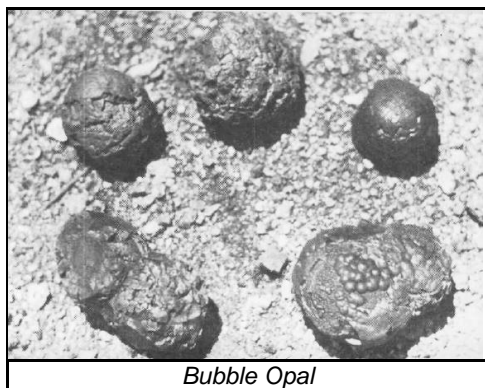
So many stops had been made along the way, a lunch break was now in order. To our north, a volcanic pillar projected from a rock-strewn hill and a faint trail headed in its direction. "Let's pull over there," Jerry suggested, "we can look around after lunch." We parked near the prominence — enjoyed our repast, then hiked around its western base. The talus slope dropped off rapidly and the footing was mighty loose.

Very shortly we found ourselves walking over a bed of nodules. They ranged from walnut to baseball size. Their exteriors were "warty" and of tan to brown color. Some of the nodules were loose but the majority coalesce into large masses. Many of the solidified groups contained opal centers — not "fire" but darn close to it. It is entirely possible that fire opal may occur in an occasional nodule but we were not lucky enough to find one.

Hiking around the north side of the peak, we hit the jackpot — chunks of beautiful jasp-agate. It was vein material which had been shattered in situ and was now being exposed by erosion. Specimens ranged from small pieces to several pound chunks. Jerry noted a small, colorful knob protruding from the talus and proceeded to dig out our best find — a six-pound, two and a half-inch thick slab.

The quality of the material is very good. Coloring is terrific — both brilliant and subdued — splotchy and plumey. Colors include bright orange, red and yellow, as well as softer shades of tangerine, green, brown, white and purple. The latter adds interest to the varying patterns.

Once again, I am asking those of you who visit this locale to limit yourselves to a few choice pieces. The supply is limited. Jerry and I have accepted as our creed "take only a little and leave a lot for others." Through this article we are "sharing with you" and hope you, too, will share with others. Keep in mind, the Bureau of Land Management permits "collecting only in reasonable amounts." If we do not observe their rules, our collecting privileges can quickly be stopped.



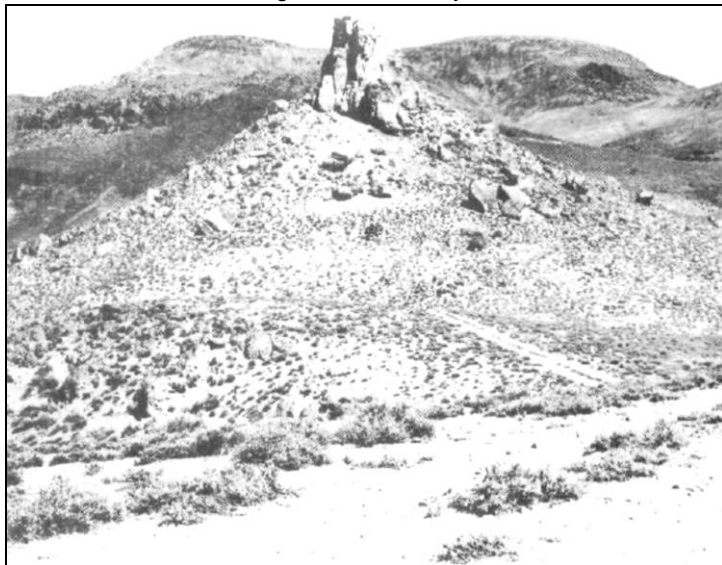
*Bubble Opal*

An icy, brisk wind had sprung up while we were in the collecting area. The shelter of the car and a hot cup of coffee were welcomed. "Shall we explore further or visit the ghost camp of Velvet?" Jerry queried. "It is too darn cold to hike around now. I would rather see Velvet," was my reply.

Our route led down a narrow canyon on the western side of the pass. Across the canyon to the north, some intricate rock work came into view. It was extensive and we stopped to speculate on its purpose. Obviously, it wasn't an old road, nor did it appear to have been associated with any buildings. We were fascinated and

curious. "Wish we had seen this rock work before we talked with Cecil and Rocky," Jerry remarked. "They may have been able to shed some light on its origin."

We continued downslope about a mile and came to a little oasis of green shrubs, cattails and a watering trough. There was evidence of some mining and small, but colorful specimens of jaspagate were scattered about. This was different material from what we had found at the summit. Lucky as always, Jerry promptly picked up a perfect birdpoint and several broken arrowheads. They gave evidence that Indians had roamed the region in earlier days.



*Summit Peak in the Trinity Range provides the collector with colorful jasp-agate and interesting nodules. Good material will be found on the talus slopes encircling the basaltic pillar.*

Two miles west of the watering trough, we saw faint tracks on the north bank above the wash. We turned right and drive up on the slope. Ahead, a dim trail headed north across the alluvial fans at the base of the Trinity Range. It had seen little use in recent years. Brush had overgrown the tracks and water from numerous heavy storms had cut gullies and deposited rocks of all sizes along the old tracks. If this was the road to Velvet, it would not be smooth sailing. The next four miles of travel was mighty slow going as we picked our way over large rocks, through gullies and sandy stretches, then



*On the western side of the pass, Lowry's well provides an "oasis" for wild birds and animals, as well as cattle. Small pieces of attractive jasp-agate, different from the material at Summit Peak, are found scattered about the area.*



Left: Rich ore was never found at Velvet and less than a thousand ounces of gold and silver were produced. Prospects, a mine shaft and camp ruins, are all that remain. Below: There are many single nodules at the base of Summit Peak, but the majority coalesce into large masses with opal centers.

up and around sections of trail made impassable by washouts. It was four-wheel-drive country to test a driver's skill. Not dangerous, but there was adequate opportunity to ruin tires, hang up or get stuck.

It was decision time when we junctioned with a road coming in from the northwest. Should we turn right or left? We also faced another problem — the weather.

Storm clouds, which had seemed so far away earlier, were now gathering over the Trinities. A few drops of rain fell as we discussed which trail to follow. It was late November and the temperature was rapidly dropping. At our elevation of over 6,000 feet, precipitation would soon turn to snow. As the navigator for our team, I told Jerry, "I feel sure Velvet is on the north slope of Trinity Peak. It can't be more than two miles from here."

I next made a suggestion which was unprecedented for me. "Let's turn right and follow the wash into the canyon. It shouldn't snow too heavily for a while." I never like to be out in the back-country, on a mountain trail in a snow storm. Perhaps this is because we are snowed-in regularly at home. At home I love it. In a vehicle — miles from nowhere — no thanks. However, I just had to see Velvet!

Jerry was willing. He never worries about such things. In about a mile, the trail made a short, steep climb out of the wash and led us into an amphitheater in the mountains. Here, we found the first rock ruins of the old mining camp of Velvet. Driving on, we soon could see dozens of prospects riddling the mountainside. During two periods of activity — 1911 to 1919 and the 1930's - there had really been a valiant effort to locate rich ore. "All had not been smooth at Velvet," since the total recorded production was between 10 and 1,000 ounces of both gold and silver.

Native gold occurred here in sugary quartz veins in Tertiary volcanics. Other vein minerals included silver, pyrite, stibnite, chalcocopyrite and proustite. "I wonder why they called it Velvet?" I asked Jerry. He thought the ore might have been mammillary or soft like velvet. We followed the sadly deteriorating road to its end and found the remains of a primitive frame cabin. Piles of rusty cans in the wash indicated a lengthy occupancy. There was also an open shaft and several fair-sized dumps.

The sky had now darkened considerably and Jerry advised, "I won't guarantee how photos will turn out but I'll "do my best." While he was taking photos, a small break in the clouds occurred over Trinity

Peak and the sun shone on it for a moment. I had been watching the sky, hoping for a break, and gasped in amazement. "What's the matter?" Jerry called. "Look — look at the peak," I cried. The light was reflecting on a sizable dark area under the peak. It was emerald green and looked like folded velvet!

Now we knew the origin of the camp's name. The north side of Trinity Peak receives very little sunlight and, consequently, supports a large field of green lichen. Our view only lasted a minute or two and, as the clouds closed in, snowflakes began to fall.

It was dark by the time we returned to Lovelock. A light rain was still falling the next morning and clouds obscured Trinity Peak as we headed south. The trails we had followed proved while "all was not smooth at Velvet," the district offers outdoor enthusiasts a field of beautiful cutting material, a little-known ghost camp and a vast, pristine land to explore.

*From Desert Magazine October 1977*

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## From Rags to Riches

### Chapter 34 – Opals Galore

*By Peter Greisl*

It was Saturday afternoon, and we were ready to go to Doug Johnson, So we walked across to his place and he was standing at his Range Rover, and when he saw us he said, "Hi, come on in." We went in the yard and he moved us into his house, which was very nice there was not a single luxury missing, he asked us to sit down and he offered us a drink which was a nice glass of champagne and he sat opposite us in his armchair, and we talked about our self and our plans. And he just encouraged me all the way and said not to give up if the purse can withstand it. He then told us about how fortunate he was and then learned all about opals and there values and decided to buy and sell Opals, he also told us how he started to learn to fly when he was sixteen years of age, and when he bought his first plane which helps him a lot to get around very quickly to do deals with his buyers.

I was very impressed and I could see the man knew what he wants from life.

Doug then asked me if I am able to drop him and pick him up at the Airstrip whenever he comes and leave and park his Rover in the Yard and lock the place up. I told him that should not create any problems, as I can hear the plane coming in and so far there were always either the single engine Cessna from Johnny Lyons or your twin engine Comanche. So all I have to do just grab your Rover and pick you up and drop you home, and when you leave you just stop here I jump in your car and I take you to the Airstrip.

"Yes", he agreed," only when I leave, I want you to wait till I disappear behind the horizon, as sometimes I forget something and I have to go back to pick up whatever I forgot. The other thing is I want you to help me with the preflight check, I will explain and show you." That's fine Doug, I replied.

He did show us the some exquisite Opal and several Boulders with Opal on it, what a magnificent show. He told me that he only deals in very large parcels, that why he is not too well known as an Opal Buyer.

I asked him if he would be so kind and have a look at the Opals we have for sale, I also told him there will be most likely more as Johnny is in the process of sorting, tumbling, and cleaning a few bucket full of opal seam.

He agreed and said well you can bring it across tomorrow morning and I will give a fair Idea what you could ask.

We had another drink and just chatted and before we left he told me he is flying out tomorrow afternoon will I be available, of course I told him and we left. The time was now 3:30PM and just as we got to the door Chris said "I better start preparing dinner," Ok Darling I sit outside and enjoy a glass of Beer if we have some left, I replied, I got my beer and I sat on the Bench and just as I took a sip, the familiar sound of the Ute appeared and Johnny drove up, I asked

him "where is Scotty," he told me he dropped him home as he wanted to get his car to go down to the Opal Restaurant for dinner.

I said, "Well how was your day," He replied, "It was very good, I had a lot of help from Klaus and Ludwig all the stuff is sorted and cleaned on their machine, I got everything in Jars, and Tins etc. and a sack full of potch," We went inside and sat at the table and brought all the jars and tins in. Chris was preparing the dinner and listened to what was going on here. Johnny pulled out a coffee jar and it was filled with water and great Opal pieces, h we had already 3.5 ounces of the same material and he told us this lot is 1.25 ounces, the next jar he produced was full with doublet and triplet material, again the same colour and Johnny said, "That lot is 1.5 ounces," I said, "Is it getting any better, this is all very exciting and nerve wrecking." "Well unfortunately this is all about the good opal, but there is a tin of nice Jelly, with reds and greens but mostly blue." Johnny explained. Chris brought a old towel just as I was tipping out the tin on the table, this material was not in water like the other stuff. I emptied the tin, and we picked up piece by piece and licked the stones which were at various sizes. Johnny told us this lot was 25 ounces.

And the bag outside had in it about 40 ounces of potch some pieces had a faint hue of blue.

I said, "I cannot belief with all this small piece of opal, there has to be the Nest Egg somewhere, or someone has got it already."

Johnny replied, "When you look at where all the seams were and came from, they all leaded towards the main pillar, hence I am convinced it is there if it has not been already discovered." "Well it looks like we just have to put the cut in," I replied.

"We should not be too hasty, while we finding something and we still have ground left to work with, we should continue as long as we can," Johnny commented. I had to agree to what he said, but I am so anxious to find out if there is more or not.

I Commented, "I suppose what you just said does make sense so let's just continue the way we are, by the way we have now 4.75 ounces of solids, 2.75 ounces of doublets and triplets, and 3.5 ounces of chips plus 15 ounces of jelly, and 40 ounces of potch and colour. This should give us a few dollars again." "I take all the stuff across to Doug Johnson tomorrow morning and he is going to put a figure on to it of what we should ask." Johnny said "I think the solid material which is Crystal Opal and so are the doublets and triplets, we should get at least \$600 an ounce and the doublets at least \$300 an ounce, and a \$ 100 for the chips, and they are all nice and clean." "So I expect that we should get at least \$ 4,000 for the lot, that makes my share about 8 weeks' pay from the co-op", I commented.

"Well Boys, it is time for dinner, I made you Wiener Schnitzels and Potato Salad,"

Johnny you are dirty, go and have a shower we wait," Chris said. "Ok Boss," Johnny replied and went to get clean clothes and disappeared in the shower.

We sat down for the dinner which was absolutely scrumptious and enjoyed a cool glass of beer with it.

Suddenly there was a sound from a car which stopped in front of the house and then a knock, I opened and there was Trevor he was one of the Rangers which patrolled the fields.

I greeted him and ask him to come in. He came and said, "Sorry to trouble you so late, but I am here in reference of the shooting at Marianne's place, can you tell if there is anything you can add to this disaster," Apparently had been stalked by a person and accosted several times, and with Blue being out of time a lot she was scared," I noticed he was putting words in my mouth of what he would like to hear. So I replied, yes she mentioned a few times that she is scared of a person who many times followed her." Can you recall of what happened the night of the shooting?" Yes, I can I said, "we were sitting here and having dinner, and heard Blue driving off, and after quite a while a car came screaming up the road and stopped in front of Marianne's house and we heard a door slam and a man screaming "Bitch where are you, I am going to kill you." And then there was a gunshot, and a couple seconds later another Gunshot.

We went to have a look and thought that Marianne shot the stalker, but then a voice shouted Marianne shot Blue. When we got there was Blue lying on the ground with blood running from his fore head and Marianne just bursting into tears and the Nurse from the Hospital was there and took Marianne inside the house and shut the door. We went home after and that was it.

Trevor took everything down in his notebook. I asked him what is going to happen to her; he replied, "Nothing it is classed as accidental death, she will not be charged as she was acting in fear, of her life.

"Thank you for your assistance I am sure with you statement the matter will be put to bed," Trevor wished us good night and left.

That is great news, I said.

After this exciting evening we sat for a while and just talked on kind of topic and then we went to bed.

The next morning I was up fairly early and could hardly wait to see any motion over at Doug Johnsons place. I had all the gear ready in a small suitcase and just waited to go to Doug, Beatrix came out and showed me her little Garden she made and she planted Tomatoes, and Capsicum, which Chris bought her some seeds to plant, she is watering it regularly and pointing out the little shoots which started to come. It was nice to see such happiness in a little girls face just by seeing her rewards for her little effort of planting seeds.

I looked across to Doug's place and he was outside, I walked over and asked him if it is ok to bring my stuff now or later. He said get it and come across and we have a coffee at the same time, great I replied I be only a minute.

I went back told Chris I am going to Doug and let Johnny sleep since it was only 8:15 in the morning. I went across and Doug was sitting outside under a umbrella at an outdoor setting, and had a Jug of coffee there he offered and ask me to help myself to sugar.

And he said, "Well let's have a look", he had piece of paper and a pen and I handed him the two jars of solids, he looked and ask me the weight, I told him and that went on right through all the material. He then said this is very nice stuff and it came from Tea Tree Hill," I said "how do you know," He replied, "I bought Drago's parcel for 45,000 pounds which he found couple years ago and it was the same material. You are either working his old claim or you nearby. "That's amazing someone else told me that about Drago" I replied.

He continued, "These solids are worth at least 400 pounds an ounce, and you can halve the price for the doublets and triplets, without confusing you I suggest you ask for \$6,000.00 for the lot you don't split anything if they would like to buy your opal they must buy everything, who do you go to sell your opal too?" We go to Peter Vlack, he was always very fair with me," I replied. Doug said when you see him tell him that you saw me and tell him I offered \$ 5,750 without the Jelly and the Potch and colour." He knows that I don't buy Jelly or Potch and that is the reason why you did not sell to me, and see what he says." I was absolutely stoked, I was so excited, as our findings increasing in Value every time so far, I hope this is a good omen.

Doug said, "Anytime you find this kind of material always charge \$800.00 an ounce and halve the price for doublets etc., and \$100.00 for good clean chips like these here, and don't sell for less, you got here top grade Opal, and I wish you will find a pocket like Drago did." I thanked Doug for all the help and info, and said to him" I am going down to see Peter Now," Good Luck he said and I see you this afternoon when you take me to the Air strip. I nodded grabbed my Suitcase with the Opal and went across to my place.

It was 10:00AM and Johnny was up and drinking coffee, Chris told me the breakfast is cold, and gave me some scrambled eggs and toast and a coffee.

"So what's up" Johnny asked me. I said to him, "Do you trust me?" "Of course" he replied immediately, then don't ask me questions now, I am going out for a while as I want to proof something to myself, I will tell you everything when I return and let's hope what I will tell you will be exciting news, keep your fingers crossed." Chris laughed and said "what's all the secrecy," Ha I smiled wait and see."

I finished my breakfast and said see you all later," I grabbed the Case and left. I drove down to Peter Vlack, he was standing outside with a cup of coffee in his hand, I pulled up and said to him, "Hi Peter, are you doing business today?" He replied "I am doing business every day, come in."

I went inside and he sat down behind his desk and I sat opposite him and he said "what have you got for me," I opened the case on the floor and pulled out the Jar with the solids, the doublets and the chips, then the jelly and last but not least the potch and colour. And put it all in front of him.

He looked and said very nice material, dipped the water out put it on the scale and wrote again some letters on his pad, the same with the doublets and the triplets, he also weighed the jelly and the potch. I broke the silence by saying "I just came from Doug Johnsons place as you know I leave right across from him." Peter asked what did Doug say, I said well Doug does not buy Jelly and Potch and colour but he likes the rest, but I don't want to sell just the opal I want to sell the lot. Peter asked did Doug make you an offer, I said yes he did, and now I waiting to hear your offer but it has to be for the lot. He replied what was your price you did ask Doug for? I told Doug I want \$6,000 for the lot. If you are prepared to pay this price then I will do business with you right here and now. He said what did Doug offer you for everything? Doug offered me \$ 5,750 without Potch and Jelly, which I declined, I want to sell the lot and for not less than \$6,000 Peter started rummaging through the Jelly and the potch, and he seems to pick up the potch pieces which show quite some nice blue hue.

He started writing again and looking and each and every piece of solid opal and then the doublets, and finally said I really got no use for the potch, I smiled and replied well I throw this in as a bonus, he chuckled and said. I have to admit it is good opal, and I can use the Jelly. So what's the problem I replied, Peter if you decline I will walk, and I am sure I will get my money what I am asking for, and please don't forget you will always be my first port of call when I got some good material. He commented yes you did always sell to me that count for something, Ok you got a deal. He got up and walked over to his safe and pulled out \$ 6,000 in 50 and 20 dollar notes and handed it to me. I thanked him for doing business and he just said it looks like you still on Tea Tree Hill, I acknowledged and took my case and I left for home with my money.

When I arrived home I virtually was attacked by news hungry people.

When I sat down I told them to sit and I told them what went on at Doug Johnsons Place, and then the Scenario with Peter Vlack, and then I pulled out from my shirt the \$ 6,000.00 dollars and split it into two piles and shoved one pile across to Johnny who could not belief his eyes. I said here you are my friend, your share. He thanked me and said you might as well go and do all the selling by yourself fin the future, you got \$2,000 more then I estimated. Yes I replied and thanks for that to Doug Johnson, and we got rid of all the potch and jelly as well.

Chris hugged me and said Darling there is our stake for a new start if we have to leave the fields, I agreed yes it is. Johnny said "Well I better pay my share for the equipment and whatever is owing to you." Chris brought her ledger and sat with Johnny and she had everything down dollar for dollar, Johnny looked and agreed to everything, which totaled \$1,200 he gave Chris the money and said here is another \$300 for more rent and board, Chris said you are not due yet so you will be in credit for 10 weeks after next week. Great Johnny replied, and he took his \$1,500 and said "I am going to send mum some money again on Monday."

"Great Johnny, I am really happy that you can do this." I replied. "Well on this occasion; I take you all to dinner tonight at Gus's place.

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## How Do We Know the Age of the Earth?

From <http://wwrgis.wr.usgs.gov>

The Earth is a constantly changing planet. Its crust is continually being created, modified, and destroyed. As a result, rocks that record its earliest history have not been found and probably no longer exist. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that the Earth and the other bodies of the Solar System are 4.5- 4.6 billion years old, and that the Milky Way Galaxy and the Universe are older still. The principal evidence for the antiquity of Earth and its cosmic surroundings is: The oldest rocks on Earth, found in western Greenland, have been dated by four independent radiometric dating methods at 3.7-3.8 billion years. Rocks 3.4-3.6 billion years in age have been found in southern Africa, Western Australia, and the Great Lakes region of North America. These oldest rocks are metamorphic rocks, but they originated as lava flows and sedimentary rocks. The debris from which the sedimentary rocks formed must have come from even older crustal rocks. The oldest dated minerals (4.0-4.2 billion years) are zircon crystals found in sedimentary rocks in Western Australia.

The oldest Moon rocks are from the lunar highlands and were formed when the early lunar crust was partially or entirely molten. These rocks, of which only a few were returned by Apollo missions, have been dated by two methods at between 4.4-4.5 billion years in age. The majority of the 70 well-dated meteorites have ages of 4-4.6 billion years. These meteorites, which are fragments of asteroids and represent some of the most primitive material in the solar system, have been dated by five independent radiometric dating methods. The "best" age for the Earth is based on the time required for the lead isotopes in four very old lead ores (galena) to have evolved from the composition of lead at the time the Solar System formed, as recorded in the Canyon Diablo iron meteorite. This "model lead age" is 4.54 billion years.

The evidence for the antiquity of the Earth and Solar System is consistent with evidence for an even greater age for the Universe and Milky Way Galaxy.

- (a) The age of the Universe can be estimated from the velocity and distance of galaxies as the universe expands. The estimates range from 7 to 20 billion years, depending on whether the expansion is constant or is slowing due to gravitational attraction.
- (b) The age of the Galaxy is estimated to be 14-18 billion years from the rate of evolution of stars in globular clusters, which are thought to be the oldest stars in the Galaxy.
- (c) The age of the elements in the Galaxy, based on the production ratios of osmium isotopes in supernovae and the change in that ratio over time due to radioactive decay, is 8.6-15.7 billion years. Theoretical considerations indicate that the Galaxy formed within a billion years of the beginning of the Universe.
- (d) Combining the data from (a) and (b), the "best," i.e., most consistent, age of the universe is estimated to be 14-17 billion years.

From *Pick and Pack*, 12-2006

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## It's not a Collection until its Organized!

By Ray Hill, *Great South Gems & Minerals, Inc.*

I have had the privilege of going out rock hunting with many folks in recent years. Some of the people that went with me are knowledgeable and have been at it for a long time and a few are just beginners. I personally have been going on collecting trips for about twenty years now. I can think of no other hobby I'd rather be involved in. Rock collecting has brought me many hours of enjoyment and has put me in contact with some really great people over the years.

I think one thing about this hobby that all of us enjoy is being able to share, or show off our collections to others. I know I do. It brings me great pleasure when someone comes into my office and comments on all the pretty rocks on display. After all, being able to brag a little about what you have done is icing on the cake, so to speak. It certainly makes the effort worthwhile.

And, one thing that amazes me is the fact that there are many "collectors" that like going on the field trips and getting buckets of rocks, then bring them home and do nothing with them. The material ends up sitting in boxes or buckets in the basement or garage for ever and ever. They have not taken the time to get the material they have found organized in any manner. I've been to another rock collector's house and when I asked to see their collection they would take me out to the back yard and show me the rocks lying around the flower beds or maybe show me buckets of material, with spider webs and dust covering the tops, out in the garage. I think to myself, "This isn't much of a collection!" It is just a bunch of rocks. There's no organization to it.

Now, I know that rockhounds are a varied bunch. They have different backgrounds, educations, experiences, incomes, etc. I understand. One person may be into tumbling or cutting stones for jewelry while another is thrilled about a different facet of the hobby (Pun intended!) like fossils, meteorites, doing inlay work or whatever.

But one thing I don't understand is the collector not having some kind of organization for the material they collect. It may be that some folks are not interested in showing off their finds, or don't know how to organize the material they've collected. It's my humble opinion that you don't have a collection in the true sense of the word unless you have your material organized where you know what you have and where it came from. And, by the way, not having your rocks organized, identified with name and location, greatly reduces its value.

In the past 20 years I have had a number of people contact me and say they have a rock collection that was collected by their father, aunt, uncle, or whatever, and wanted to know if I would look at it and give them an idea as to the worth of the material and to see if maybe I would like to purchase the material. When they brought the material over, I didn't think much of it because of the condition it was in. There would be no labels on any of the material and they would not know where the material came from. "It's just some rocks Dad collected" they would say.

You can take common road gravel, put it in a small box with an attractive description label giving the name of the rock, where it came from, maybe the type rock (Igneous, Sedimentary, Metamorphic), the hardness of the rock, and maybe the date it was found, and low-and-behold, it now has a value. It's no longer just common road gravel! It is now a cataloged specimen in a collection. The rock now has "character"! It is now an identified, marked, labeled specimen, with value.

Recently, one of my rock buddies and I went over to a site within a couple of miles of my home where workers were doing some heavy grading of a large lot that was going to be a Super WalMart. It was late in the evening and none of the workers were around, so we looked through the material they were bringing out of the ground with their heavy equipment. We found large quantities of a metamorphic rock, biotite mica schist. We both loaded up as much of this material as we could tote away that evening. The next day, I got outside on my rock bench with this material and a hammer and chisel. I put together three flats of this material in three different sizes. I put the specimens into the fold-up boxes and typed nice description labels for them. My daughter photographed the material and we put it up on our site. This was last summer. To date, we have sold about three hundred dollars' worth of this mica. We were able to do this because we made nice size mineral specimens out of the large chunks, put the pieces into small display boxes, put description cards with each specimen and turned the material into good collectable specimens.

Just a pile of rocks by themselves do not make collectable specimens.

I recently wrote an article entitled "So Your Child Likes Rocks". In this article I explained the importance of organizing your rocks. It's not a collection until it is organized!!! Let me tell you what I do with

my rocks, especially those I personally collect. Like many others, I will gather up as much material as I find when I'm on a field trip.

Some of the material contains good looking pieces and other pieces are not so good. I think we all do this. When I get back home I take all of the material that I have collected and clean it, usually outside on my rock bench using the water hose. Then I will lay them out on a board to dry. Once the rocks have been cleaned and dried, I look through them to see what I have. At this point I pick out the really good looking specimens that I want to put on display inside in my rock cabinets. I put each one in a white fold-up box, and then place them in one of my collection cabinets. I place the balance of the material on my "Rock Wall". See my article, "Get rid of those buckets" at <[www.greatsouth.net](http://www.greatsouth.net)>.

I place the cleaned pieces on my rock wall in groups so I will know what an item is and where it is from. Nearly every rockhound that comes here spends time out there walking up and down my rock wall admiring the specimens.

Every specimen I have in my personal collection has been identified with description labels that give the name, location, date acquired, mineral group, and how I obtained it. If I purchased the specimen, I put the price that I paid for it on the label.

Should something happen to me, those that look at my rock collection will have this information without having to "dig" for it. This adds value to any type collection... rocks, pipes, razors, sea shells, fishing lures, etc.

It's not a collection until it is organized.

What if someone showed you a cigar-box full of mixed type lures...without any information as to what they were, how old they were, where they were from? You wouldn't think much of that box of stuff would you? Well, that's because there is no organization to it.

**GET YOUR ROCKS ORGANIZED INTO A COLLECTION.** As an absolute minimum you should write down the name of your rock specimens and where they came from. I use slide-out drawer collection cabinets for my smaller specimens. I put the stones in one of those white fold-up boxes, the right size for that specimen and then place a typed label in the box. I glue the label to the back inside wall of the box, that way it can never get misplaced. When I am showing the specimens, or am studying specimens in my collection I always pick up the fold-up box with the specimen in it so as not to handle the specimen itself. In recent years since my collection has grown I have drawers for a group of specimens. I have two drawers that hold my collection of calcite specimens. It's amazing how many different colors and crystal shapes that calcite takes. I have calcite specimens from all over the world; many different colors and crystal formations. I have two drawers dedicated to my quartz crystal collection, representing many different types and locations:

smoky quartz, tabby quartz crystals, rutiled quartz crystals, quartz crystals with water bubbles, skeletal crystals, phantom crystals, etc.

I know what every specimen is, where it came from, when I got it, how much I paid for it if I purchased it, who gave it to me if it was a gift. You can also catalog your collection by assigning a number to each specimen and maintaining a journal with the information for each specimen. This is a lot of work and takes dedication. I don't have the dedication to go that far. But I am convinced that if you are going to be a rock collector, you need to develop a workable system for keeping your specimens identified and basic information about each specimen.

It doesn't have to be an elaborate system, just something to keep track of what you have. That's important. If you haven't started keeping some type information on your rocks specimens, I suggest you start now. To start, get a bunch of the white fold-up boxes to put your specimens in. They come in many different sizes. Place each piece in a separate box to protect it from banging against other specimens. Either write out or type a label that will fit into the box. Glue the label to the inside. You can now place your identified specimens in a display case, a cabinet drawer, or even a shoe box. You can also place your specimens in the fold-up boxes in cardboard drink flats that you can get at any convenience store.

They are free. Then you can stack them, one atop another in a safe place.

So, stop making excuses. Get your pretty rocks organized. Make labels for them. Store them in a suitable place. After awhile, you will be able to look at your many treasures, properly identified with basic information and admire with pride, the collection and the work you've done to create it.

From <http://www.csms.us/pickandpack/Pick&Pack2009/09%20Jun.pdf>

## May 2013 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at <http://www.rockngem.com/show-dates-display/?ShowState=ALL>

3-5—BISHOP, CA: Annual show; Lone Pine Gem & Mineral Society; Robinson Bldg.; Sierra St. and Fair Dr.; Fri. 6-9, Sat. 9:30-5, Sun. 9:30-3; free admission; dealers, demonstrators, field trip, children's activities, door prizes, drawing; contact Steve Mobley, Lone Pine, CA 93545, (760) 793-6025; e-mail: [steve@littlebearsteve.com](mailto:steve@littlebearsteve.com)

3-5—SAN RAFAEL, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Marin Center; 10 Avenue of the Flags; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7 (3 days), children (11 and under) free; jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, more than 70 exhibitors, jewelry repair while you shop; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

4-5—ANAHEIM, CA: Annual show; Searchers Gem & Mineral Society; Brookhurst Community Center; 2271 W. Crescent Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4:30; free admission; silent auctions, Wheel of Fortune, children's jewelry making, demonstrations, display cases, dealers, lapidary, tools, fossils; contact John Walker, (503) 703-9465; e-mail: [john\\_walker@juno.com](mailto:john_walker@juno.com); Web site: [www.searchersrocks.org](http://www.searchersrocks.org)

4-5—PASO ROBLES, CA: Annual show; San Lucia Rockhounds; Pioneer Park & Museum; 2010 Parkside Ave.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; dealers, demonstrations, drawing, silent auction, kids' activities; contact Kim Noyes, (805) 610-0603; e-mail: [kimnoyes@gmail.com](mailto:kimnoyes@gmail.com); Web site: [www.slrockhounds.org](http://www.slrockhounds.org)

4-5—YUCAIPA, CA: Annual show; Yucaipa Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Scherer Center; 12202 First St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; displays, kids' activities, silent auction, raffle, 18 dealers, beads, jewelry, rough rock, books, in conjunction with the Yucaipa Arts and Crafts Fair;

contact Lee Peterson, 31059 Nice Ave., Mentone, CA 92359, (909) 794-0731; e-mail: [res09ayd@verizon.net](mailto:res09ayd@verizon.net); Web site: <http://yvngms.org>  
10-12—COSTA MESA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center; 88 Fair Dr.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7 (3 days), children (11 and under) free; jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, more than 70 exhibitors, jewelry repair while you shop; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

17-19—SANTA ANA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; LLD Productions Inc.; Holiday Inn-Orange County Airport; 2726 S. Grand Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; more than 80 local, regional and international dealers, minerals, fossils, gems, jewelry, beads, lapidary and metaphysical supplies; contact Regina Aumente, PO Box 665, Bernalillo, NM 87004, (505) 867-0425; e-mail: [mzexpos@gmail.com](mailto:mzexpos@gmail.com); Web site: [www.mzexpos.com](http://www.mzexpos.com)

24-26—SANTA BARBARA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Earl Warren Showgrounds; 3400 Calle Real; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$7 (3 days), children (11 and under) free; jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, more than 70 exhibitors, jewelry repair while you shop; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

25-27—JUNCTION CITY, CA: 31st Annual Bigfoot Gemboree; Trinity Gem & Mineral Society; North Fork Grange Hall; 131 Dutch Creek Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5, Mon. 10-4; free admission; gems, minerals, fossils, rock products, raffle, drawings, demonstrations, exhibits, children's activities, indoor dealers, outdoor tailgaters; contact Lucy DeMaris, c/o TG&MS, PO Box 159, Weaverville, CA 96093-0159, (530) 623-1183; e-mail: [TrinityGemAndMineral@Peoplepc.com](mailto:TrinityGemAndMineral@Peoplepc.com)

31-2—VENTURA, CA: 76th Annual Show & Convention; CA Federation of Mineralogical Societies; Ventura County Fairgrounds; 10 W. Harbor Blvd.; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5 (3-day pass \$12), seniors \$4 (3-day pass \$10), students (age 13-17) \$3, children (under 12) free with adult; "CA Rocks", displays, gems, minerals, fossils, lapidary arts, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County exhibit, competition exhibits, speakers, ongoing jewelry-making demonstrations, raffles, silent auctions, more than 50 dealers, children's activities, dinosaurs; contact Rob Sankovich, 1961 Havenwood Dr., Thousand Oaks, CA 91362, (805) 494-7734; e-mail: [rmsorca@adelphia.net](mailto:rmsorca@adelphia.net); Web site: [www.cfms2013.com](http://www.cfms2013.com)

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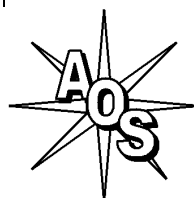
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FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
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ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your First Badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$10	
TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable:			

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**NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:**  
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**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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**Are Your Dues Due Now?**  
 PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL. There should be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue. A warning will be stated if you are overdue.  
 A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. 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  
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

**Volume #46 Issue #5  
May 2013**

## Some Topics In This Issue:

- Polishing Tips
- Bench Tips
- All's not Smooth at Velvet
- From Rags to Riche: Ch. 34 Opal Galore
- How Do We Know the Age of the Earth?
- It's not a Collection until its Organized!

TO:

## Important Dates:

- May 7 – Board Meeting:
- May 9 - General Meeting:  
Video on Opal Mining in Brazil

### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

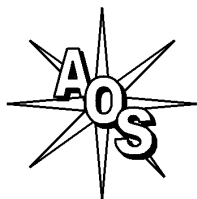
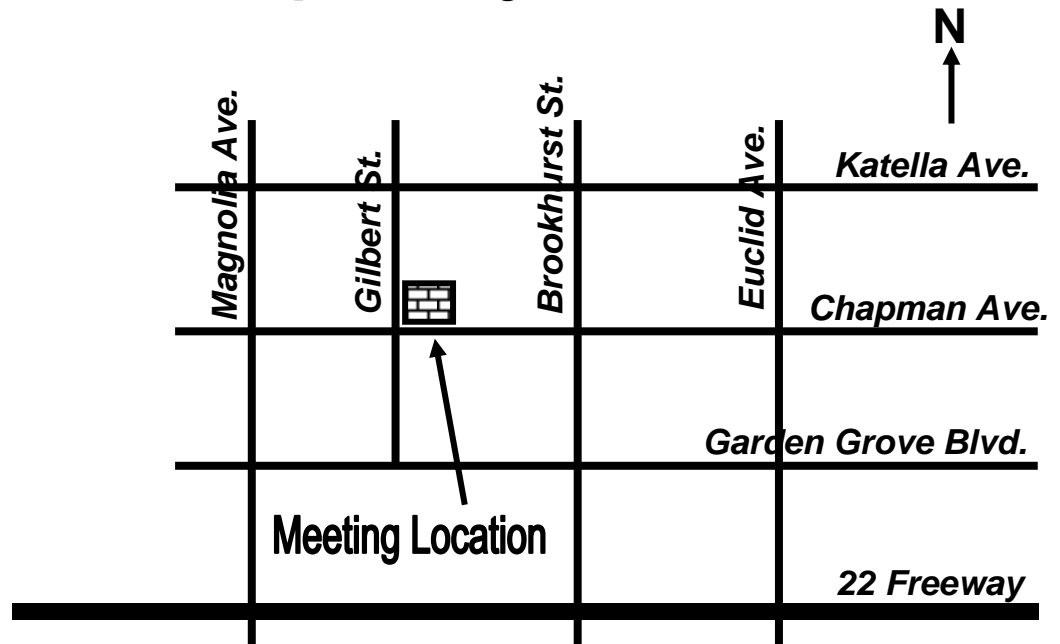
2nd Thurs. of the Month  
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

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

## May 9 Meeting Opal Mining in Brazil Video



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