

The Opal Express
American Opal Society
P.O. Box 382
Anaheim Ca. 92815



Place
Stamp
Here

Volume #27 Issue #12
December 1995



Member

**Christmas Dinner
Party!**
Special Meeting
Date Dec 20th

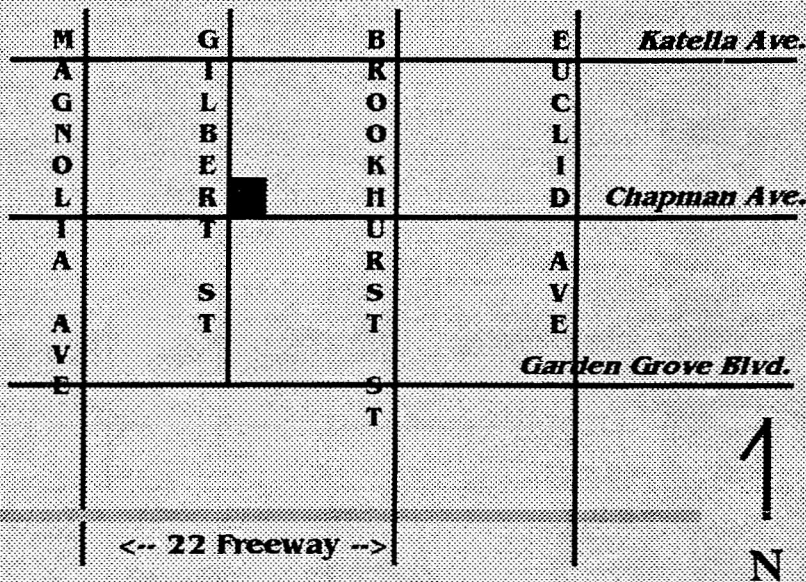
**SEE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
FOR RESERVATION INFO**



GENERAL MEETINGS—2nd Thursday 7:00-9:00 PM
Garden Grove Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
Garden Grove

Guest speakers, slide shows, other activities

**NOTE: BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL MEET AT
6:30pm PRIOR TO EACH GENERAL MEETING
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTIFIED**



American Opal Society Officers

David Burton	President	(714) 827-5680
Walt Lentz	Vice President	(310) 430-1680
Ross Stambler	Treasurer	(310) 693-6898
Russ Madsen	Secretary	(310) 425-9788



American Opal Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 382
Anaheim, Ca. 92815

1996

Membership Renewal

PLEASE NOTE: 1) I am interested in receiving information and mailings from dealers who were selling at the most recent annual Opal Society Opal Show and would like my mailing address provided to these dealers solely for this purpose... (if yes, please sign or initial here) _____ date _____

PLEASE NOTE: 2) I would like my name and/or address and/or phone information to be included in a membership directory available to the general membership of the Opal Society... You may choose (circle) any of the above if you prefer a partial listing. (if yes please sign or initial here) _____ date _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ APT #: or PO BOX: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE U.S.) _____

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

FAX (_____) _____

RENEWAL FEES: CHAPTER \$26.00
(over 65 yrs of age) 21.00

MEMBER-AT-LARGE 20.00
(over 65 yrs of age) 15.00

FOREIGN 25.00

** New Members ONLY: Please include additional one-time INITIATION FEE of \$10.00 with your dues payment (Initiation fee does not apply to current member renewals)

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

CHECK NUMBER: _____

PLEASE NOTE:

Annual dues are payable January 1st. Dues are not prorated. Chapter memberships (Founding; LA, Orange county) \$26 (\$5 discount for members over age 65 = \$21).

Membership other areas USA & Canada (Member at Large) \$20 (\$5 discount for members over age 65 = \$15)

Foreign memberships \$25.

** One time only Additional NEW MEMBER initiation fee \$10.00

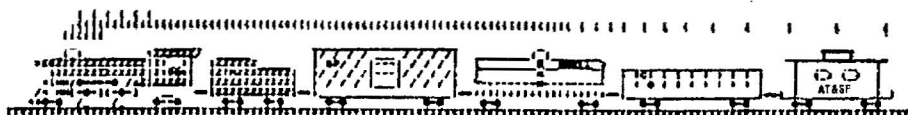
Please make your check or money order out in the proper amount, payable to The American Opal Society, Inc. and mail with completed form to the above address as soon as possible to avoid being dropped from the mailing list.

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society. Please remember to include this form with your payment.



The OPAL EXPRESS

Published monthly by the
American Opal Society...



Volume # 27 Issue #12
December 1995



President's Message



Hello and Merry Christmas!

The Opal Show was a huge success with the speakers disseminating information to all the members and guests at the seminars. We increased the overall show attendance.

The Christmas Dinner will be the 20th of December, a Wednesday, at 7:00PM. My wife, Yvonne, will be preparing pork ribs, a specialty of hers. The restaurant in back of Gems and Opals in Hobby City will provide everything else.

The price of dinner is still an estimate, but \$8.50 seems to be able to give us the best dinner yet. Call early for reservations at (714)-827-5680. Lapidary International will provide the wine for dinner.

MERRY CHRISTMAS !!

David O. Burton
President

December General Meeting...

As in the past we will have a Christmas dinner party instead of our regular general meeting for December. As David notes, we need your call ASAP to determine how many members and guests will be attending.

New members, please try to make it. This is a good opportunity to meet and get to know each other better. There are usually some nice opals to see as well. Last year David surprised us with an exceptional display case. If anyone else is interested in showing their beauties, perhaps you can talk to the folks at Lapidary Intl. when you make your dinner reservations.

It has been decided the price will be \$8.50 per person, payable that evening.

WORKSHOP INFORMATION...

Our workshop is available on Sunday mornings, by appointment, between 10AM and 12 noon. Only members may use the equipment. Remember Stan McCall is available to help and advise your work. To reserve a time slot please call Lapidary Intl. at (714) 827-5680. Our workshop is located at Lapidary International, 1228 Beach Blvd., Anaheim, CA (front of Hobby City).

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**Dates To
Remember**
December Meeting
Christmas Party
Dec 20 7PM

January Meeting
Jan 11 7PM
(Begin new location)

February Meeting
Feb 15 7PM
(Special date)

Opal Express December 1995 Page 2

OPAL SHOW REPORT

Another great show! It seems to get better and better each year. The finished and rough opal were spectacular, and all that beautiful custom jewelry, an outstanding display! Thanks to all the members, dealers, and opal lovers for generous contributions to our door prizes. They always stir up a lot of interest for our guests.

We thank Virginia Pace who offered to coordinate the demonstrators who generously volunteer their time. They add much to the show by not only exhibiting the working of opal but also helping promote the hobbies of jewelry making and lapidary in general.

We experienced some electrical outages evidently due to overloading. Dealers seem to be using larger lamps and more of them, this problem will be remedied next time.

Thanks to all of the AOS members who assisted in making the show happen. Considerable time and effort is required not only setting up and tearing down but in the general show operation. Now that we've reinstituted the opal seminars even more help was needed.

While it was gratifying to have all dealer tables booked well in advance, unfortunately this year we had to turn away some last minute dealers who wanted to be in the show. We will be looking into ways of expanding the capacity next year. This will not mean a new location; we have already made plans to use the same room at the Quality Inn in Anaheim and have set the date of our 1996 show as November 2-3.

Thanks again to all the dealers, demonstrators and members who contributed to the success of the show!

Walt Lentz
Show Chairman

(At the risk of singling one person out when I know so many gave so generously of their time and talents to make the show a great success, I would like to add a special note of thanks to AOS member Lucy Backus. Her family was in town from Chicago on a vacation timed specifically to attend the show; and while Lyle and their son attended the opal seminars Lucy graciously gave several hours of her vacation time to work the show entrance tables on Saturday morning. Thanks Lucy! -rgm)

OPAL SEMINAR REPORT

This year the American Opal Society presented in conjunction with its annual show a seminar entitled "Everything You Want To Know About Opal". This seminar was a major step in the restructuring of the AOS to provide greater benefits to its members and to be consistent with its long time goal of educating the public on all aspects of opal. The seminar was in all aspects a major success, with the conference hall being nearly filled to capacity for all five sessions.

The first presentation was given by Barbara McCondra on Opal Mining. Barbara was just back from Australia by two days and presented photos of recent mining developments. She specialized in her recent Yowah mining activities. This was a rare opportunity to learn about this little known subject. Paul Downing then presented to a jam packed conference room his approach to cutting and polishing opal. TV monitors provided close-ups showing Paul planning the project, orienting the opal, cutting and polishing the opal etc. Many thanks to Mike Kowalski and Russ Madsen for their creative TV work.

Walt Johnson, a "home boy" renowned in the southern California area for his jewelry making knowledge and creativity then presented video slides on the "do's" and don'ts" of making opal jewelry. His many slides on both good and bad approaches were very educational. Paul Downing then presented a talk on appraising and valuing opal. Paul, whose expertise is paramount in this area, has a book, an opal evaluation kit containing six reference opals and a new computer program which are available to those who want to become proficient in evaluating opal. You may want to contact Paul on these products, particularly if you missed the seminar.

The final presentation was given by David Burton of Lapidary International on opal fossils. This talk was of excellent educational value and was highlighted by a beautiful opalized Plesaurus rib which David restored and the largest opalized clam aggregation ever seen in the USA, weighing several hundred pounds.

For those who may have missed the seminar we will be presenting it again on Saturday August 10, 1996 as part of the AFMS/CFMS Diamond Daze national convention in Riverside CA.

Jay Carey
Seminar Chairman

!!!WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!!!

If anyone says I'm efficient and organized they might want to reconsider (smile). For no explainable reason it never occurred to me while updating the database and mailing lists throughout the year to keep separate track of who has joined the AOS during 1995, duh! I do hope the list below is complete and I apologize to anyone I may have missed. I am reasonably sure everyone who joined at the 1995 Opal Show is listed.

In any event, a hearty welcome to you all! Please come on out to the meetings so we can get to know each other better and share our love for opal. If you are planning to come to the December Christmas party/meeting do call soon to get your name and number of guests on the list...(714) 827-5680 [Lapidary International]. Dinner is \$8.50 per person including tip. You can't beat that so come on out! We have the restaurant to ourselves, let's fill it up! Remember also that the date is Dec 20th at 7PM.

Phillip Brown---editor The Opal News

Randy Petersen

Wes Roth

Bill Kaliher

Ardee Allen

Gerry Martin

Barbara Gasper

Leon Trecker

Gemological Institute of America

Donald Smith

Harry Barrett

Bob Dixon

Hal Langley

Joseph and Maria Jarrin

Carol Bova

Cynthia Nojorian

Cheryl Winder, MD

Dorothy Pinckney

Kathleen Croxton

Harriette Breitman

Sumei Yeh

Glenn Hermes

Nancy Bordeaux

Hal and Barbara Quiring

Michael Duby

Welcome to all of you, and please by all means, if you have any questions, comments, items of interest to share, and the like, do bring them up. That's what the club is all about!

OPAL SHOW DOOR PRIZES

Here's a list of the 18 door prizes we gave away at this year's Opal Show and the lucky winners!

A special thanks again to all those who donated such fine items for this year's drawing. And congratulations to the winners!!!!

Rather than put the items in any particular order, we numbered them randomly in the display, then drew tickets for the winners. Listed are the item number, donor, item, and winner's name. By now all the prizes should have been received by the winners.

(We hold the drawing at the end of the show so that everyone who attends has an equal chance for the prizes. We then mail or ship the prizes to the winners unless they happen to still be on hand as the show closes).

- 1) *Land of Wonder-Eric Scott-opal necklace*
---Mrs. John Pierson
- 2) *Australian Opal Mines-Murray Willis-chrysoprase*
---John Pierson
- 3) *Australian Opal Mines-Murray Willis-Mintabie seam opal rough*
---Verle Stadel
- 4) *Australian Opal Mines-Murray Willis-Mintabie seam opal rough*
---Daniel Butler
- 5) *Australian Opal Mines-Murray Willis-opal rough*
---Kim's Lapidary
- 6) *Land of Wonder-Eric Scott-opal rough*
---H. Haines
- 7) *Opal Traders International-Walter Skinner-opal necklace*
---David Smith
- 8) *Mining My Own Business-Phil Pearl-finished opal*
---Jed Crein
- 9) *Earthly Enchantments-Joel Haslam-wire wrap ring*
---Jeannette Rubinyi
- 10) *AOS member Wes Roth-2 oz Lightning Ridge rough*
---Paulette Scheffer
- 11) *Pamela Strong-June 1995 Lapidary Journal*
---B. Pesce
- 12) *Out Back Gems-Barbara McCondra-Yowah nuts*
---Heather Gerule
- 13) *Down Under Opal-Darlene Munroe-book "Opal Pricing"*
---Norm Ennulai
- 14) *Out Back Gems-Barbara McCondra-Lightning Ridge rough*
---Billie Harper
- 15) *AOS member Lyle Backus-magazine "Opal Journal International"*
---Wm. Sutton
- 16) *American Opal Society-finished opal*
---Jeanie Kitchens
- 17) *American Opal Society-finished opal*
---Lyn Ostensen
- 18) *Majestic Gems-Paul Downing PhD-book "Opal Cutting Made Easy"*
---Annie Goto

Opal...What Is It Worth??? (...And Why?)

Prompted in part by an article published in the June 1977 issue of Lapidary Journal titled "Opal As An Investment", this discussion will look at valuing opal, including something of how it is derived, and present some of the market trends Paul Downing has recently noted in the October 1995 issue of his publication, "Opal Market News". In addition to looking at what was said almost two decades ago about opal's value, a number of questions will be posed. I offer these mostly because I have been getting very interesting and varied responses as I ask them of a number of opal dealers and other opal experts. This is part of the "(...And Why?)" of this article.

I stated months ago that one of the reasons I joined the AOS was to learn about opal valuation. As I have pursued that objective, it has become something of a goal to strive for a widely accepted uniform valuation system. A few comments about this effort and the reasons I believe such uniformity is important to the future of opal will also be presented here.

I heartily invite members and other readers to write your thoughts or responses either in the form of articles for publication or letters to the editor; and if you prefer to discuss your ideas, by all means, don't hesitate to phone, I'm all ears!

What I have learned up to this point is first that it is undeniable, there is a market for opal. Well yes of course you say, but it strikes me as important to understand that this basic notion is the underpinning of any system of valuation. If there is no demand there will be no price. We can thank opal for taking care of the little detail of demand because it is such a wonderful stone. In spite of pricing variations, opal's attraction shines. Seeing even one example of world class gem opal, it's value is indisputable and such opal will always be in demand. But...how much is it worth? And why? The simple "why" is that it has appeal. I may never have world class opal in my collection but even typical "marketable" stones have appeal. The more important and more complicated answer has to do with market forces (supply, demand, and competition-both from other gemstones and other sources of enjoyment-to name but a few). It is also important to look at broader trends such as the overall health of the world's economies. If individuals who are potential opal buyers are unable to put food on their tables and clothes on their backs, it's unlikely they will be buying many opals in the near future.

I'm fast coming to the conclusion that one very significant market force may be working against opal. Unfortunately I must point out that this "force" is us, opal lovers who are in disagreement about how to evaluate opal. There are several opal evaluation systems: Paul Downing's has become perhaps the most well known; there is also the system of the Lightning Ridge Miner's Association, perhaps the most uniform now; Darlene Munroe's is described in her book "Opal Pricing"; there is the Opal Society system, presented in these pages last October; Tim Thomas' comments on the subject were reprinted here earlier this year. The list goes on. In point of fact however, nearly everyone I've talked to denies they use ANY of these systems. With the exception of Lightning Ridge opal being systematically evaluated by the Lightning Ridge Miner's Association one might conclude that there's no such thing as a definite price for the rest of the world's opal. We all know that's not true but as a newcomer to the idea of "What Is It Worth?" two years ago, that was (and to some extent remains) my conclusion.

Noone denies opal has value, but trying to get anyone to agree on specific numbers is like trying to catch water with a fork. In my thinking about this I find myself irresistibly drawn to a need for some concrete certainty. Not necessarily a hair split precisely down the middle mind you or the exact measurement of a gnat's eyebrow, but something upon which I as a "mere mortal" can rely when considering what an opal is worth.

In this vein I had a very interesting discussion with a gentleman by the name of Michael Ferguson. Michael may very well be one of the world's most hooked opalholics. He is an engineer and has a somewhat different perspective on the subject of opal's beauty. In the course of our visit we touched on the subject of quantifying opal's value. Michael noted that from an engineering standpoint it would be possible to examine any given opal and state precisely certain facts, particularly about the light it emits. All that one would need is light sensing equipment appropriate to the task. Just how much such a piece of equipment might cost is another matter. The significant point is that something about the characteristics of every opal is quantifiable. This is typically the first objection I meet about opal evaluation. Few in the business are willing to grant that opal can be pinned down like diamonds or other precious gems.

(Continued on Page 7)

General Meeting News...

January...New Meeting Location

Please take note of the map on the mailing cover of this issue of The Opal Express; our new general meeting location is the Garden Grove Women's Club at the northeast corner of Chapman Ave. and Gilbert St.; 9501 Chapman Ave., Garden Grove. As was previously noted this new facility has some nice features, particularly the fact that meetings may run later than 9PM if desired. They also permit coffee and other refreshments which we had been required to discontinue at the old location. To get to the Women's Club, exit the 22 Freeway at either Magnolia Ave. or Brookhurst St., then go north to Chapman Ave. and head to the Chapman Ave./Gilbert St. intersection. Notice that Gilbert St. does NOT go through to the 22 Freeway. January meeting will be Thursday January 11, 7PM.

February...Meeting Date Changed

Because the regular general meeting date in February falls during the Quartzite shows, it has been decided (for February only) to reschedule the General Meeting to the THIRD Thursday, February 15. Please mark your calendars.

1996 Dues are Due Now

Please mail the membership renewal form (Page 1 of this newsletter) with your dues payment soon. 1996 dues are due as of the first of the year (January 1). We will mail a follow-up reminder letter in February but to save newsletter space this will be the only time the renewal form will appear in the newsletter.

Before you renew, be sure to check your mailing label. If your label shows "-95" your dues are due as of 1/1/96. If you see the number "-96" in the right hand area next to your name and member number, your dues are already paid through next year. This applies to all you new members who joined at the Opal Show, plus several others.

Don't miss out! Please renew soon!!!

Opal Theft in Southern California

Opal buyers be aware!

In a report published November 20, 1995 the Orange County, California, Orange County Register carried details about a theft of \$250,000 worth of finished opals.

Brenden O'Neill of Sydney Australia apparently discovered his rental car had been broken into in the middle of the afternoon on Saturday November 18th. According to the story the theft occurred while he took a few minutes to enter a building and visit someone. When he came out after no more than 15 minutes he discovered the car window smashed, the rear seat cut open and the stones gone from the trunk.

The lost and unfortunately not insured opals consisted of approximately 15,000 low grade white opals and about 1,000 high grade stones.

OTHER OPAL NEWS

A Mintabie miner's "house" of galvanized metal was destroyed in a large explosion in the middle of the night. Luckily the miner was not there at the time and was unhurt but later estimated the damage at \$22,000.

Another miner from the area said the force of the blast felt like an earthquake and every camp in town was shaken. Murray Willis, who sent along the article noted Mintabie is a tough town, and that he knows the miner who was the victim. No reason for the blast had been determined but foul play was being investigated.



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Editor--Russ Madsen

Please address all inquiries to:
The Opal Express, P.O. Box 382, Anaheim, CA 92815
(Deadline for items is the 15th of the month prior to each issue)

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

What's happening???

Calendar of Upcoming Events Dates and Locations of Shows

Dec 15-17 International Gem & Jewelry Show, Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar, CA

Dec 15 Noon-7PM, Dec 16 10AM-7PM, Dec 17 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Scottish Rite Center, 1895 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego, CA

QUARTZITE, AZ mid January through mid February, see map and schedule on page 8 in this issue for specific events.

Jan 10-12 JA Las Vegas, Sands Expo & Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

Jan 12 Noon-7PM, Jan 13 10AM-7PM, Jan 14 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, Challenger Hall, 155 East Ave. I, Lancaster, CA

Jan 13 10AM-5PM, Jan 14 10AM-5PM Tule Gem & Mineral Society, 40th annual show, "Gemboree 96", Veterans Memorial Bldg, 324 Kaweah St., Exeter, CA

Jan 19 Noon-7PM, Jan 20 10AM-7PM, Jan 21 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Riverside Convention Center, 3443 Orange St., Riverside, CA

Jan 26 Noon-7PM, Jan 27 10AM-7PM, Jan 28 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Rd., Del Mar, CA

Feb 8-9 10AM-7PM, Feb 10 10AM-6:30PM, Feb 11 10AM-5PM Tucson Gem & Mineral Society Show, being held this year in conjunction with the 25th annual Fluorescent Mineral Society Show, Tucson Convention Center, downtown Tucson, South Granada Ave entrance, Tucson, AZ

Feb 16-25 10AM-10PM daily, National Date Festival Annual Gem & Mineral Show, Fairgrounds, Gem & Mineral Bldg, Indio, CA

Feb 17 10AM-6PM Feb 18 10AM-5PM Del Air Rockhounds, Sierra Pelona Rock Club, VIP Gem & Mineral Society, Woodland Hills Rock Chippers combine to present San Fernando Valley Gem Fair "California's Golden Treasures", Valley Plaza Recreation Center, 12240 Archwood St, North Hollywood, CA

Feb 17 10AM-6PM, Feb 18 10AM-5PM 28th Annual San Fernando Valley Gem Fair, "California's Golden Treasures", Valley Plaza Recreation Center, 12240 Archwood St., North Hollywood, CA

Feb 23 Noon-7PM, Feb 24 10AM-7PM Feb 25 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Earl Warren Showgrounds, Hwy 101 @ Los Positas, Santa Barbara, CA

Feb 24 10AM-7PM, Feb 25 10AM-5PM Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society, 41st annual show, "Desert Gems", Santa Clara Cnty Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd., San Jose, CA

Mar 1 Noon-7PM, Mar 2 10AM-7PM, Mar 3 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Orange County Fairgrounds, 88 Fair Dr. (entrance is Gate 5 on Arlington Ave), Costa Mesa, CA

Mar 1-2 10AM-6PM, Mar 3 10AM-5PM Mineral & Gem Society of Castro Valley, 50th Annual Gem & Mineral Show, Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd., Castro Valley, CA

Mar 2 10AM-6PM, Mar 3 10AM-5PM Monrovia Rockhounds, 37th Gem & Mineral Show, Masonic Temple, 204 W. Foothill Blvd., Monrovia, CA

Mar 2 10AM-6PM, Mar 3 10AM-5PM Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, Ventura County Fairgrounds, Seaside Park, Agriculture Bldg., 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA

Mar 7-10 9AM-5PM daily Deming Gem & Mineral Society, SWNM State Fairgrounds, Deming, NM

Mar 8 Noon-7PM, Mar 9 10AM-7PM, Mar 10 10AM-5PM Gem Faire, Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA

Mar 9 10AM-6PM, Mar 10 10AM-5PM Pasadena Lapidary Society, 38th Tournament o Gems Show, San Marino Masonic Temple, 3130 Huntington Dr., San Marino, CA

Mar 16 10AM-6PM, Mar 17 10AM-5PM Northrop Grumman Gem & Mineral Club, NGRC Clubhouse, 12329 Crenshaw Blvd. Gate 16, Hawthorne, CA

Mar 23 10AM-6PM, Mar 24 10AM-5PM South Bay Lapidary Society, Ken Miller Recreation Center, 3441 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA

Apr 14-19 CFMS Earth Science Studies, Zzyzx Road, Soda Springs, CA Advance registration required by March 4, 1996. Florence Meisenheimer 101 N. Wake Forest Ave., Ventura, Ca 93003 (805) 642-3155

Aug 9-11 AFMS/CFMS Combined Show, Diamond Daze, Riverside Convention Center, 3443 Orange St., Riverside, CA (AOS-OPAL SEMINAR)

What's happening???

American Opal Society Show Dealers Will Also Be At These Locations During The Year

1995 Opal Show Dealers Please Note...

As a courtesy to our show dealers, this space is available to list your other show locations throughout 1996. Please send in a list of dates and places and it will be printed in *The Opal Express* during the next year.

Opal...What Is It Worth??? (...And Why?) (Continued from Page 5)

I assert here that this perspective is doing a disservice to opal. It is my opinion that opal NEEDS the certainty of a system of valuation. It may not be possible to encompass the entire range of opal quality. as with other gems, valuation o high end examples is probably beyond the scope of any usable system. They are simply "off the scale". But this by no means should translate into the nebulous and vague cloud that seems to shroud opal pricing. In defense of all those who are in the business of dealing in opal I will quickly point out that noone with an opal in their hand would say it has a cloud around it. Every individual who prices opal will state with some degree of certainty a number for a stone. However, if the same stone is presented to several different persons will produce a range of comments and prices. While this phenomenon is almost invariably put to the nature of opal itself I submit that it may be as much or more a result of the nature of the "system(s)" being practiced. I forget where I read it but one view of an opal's value is..."If someone bought it, your price was too low." Surely intended as humorous, this comment does highlight the point here. Opal has value, but pinning it down is entirely another matter.

Market results reflect reality. Whether the price was right, wrong, high, low, or "on the money", if a stone has sold a point of market definition has occurred. This is a fact. And it clearly illustrates that a valuation system cannot be merely estimations o value, but must reflect what the experience of the market has been. Remember here that a market transaction must be bargained at "arms length" between informed parties without dures or undue influence.

(Continued on Page 9)

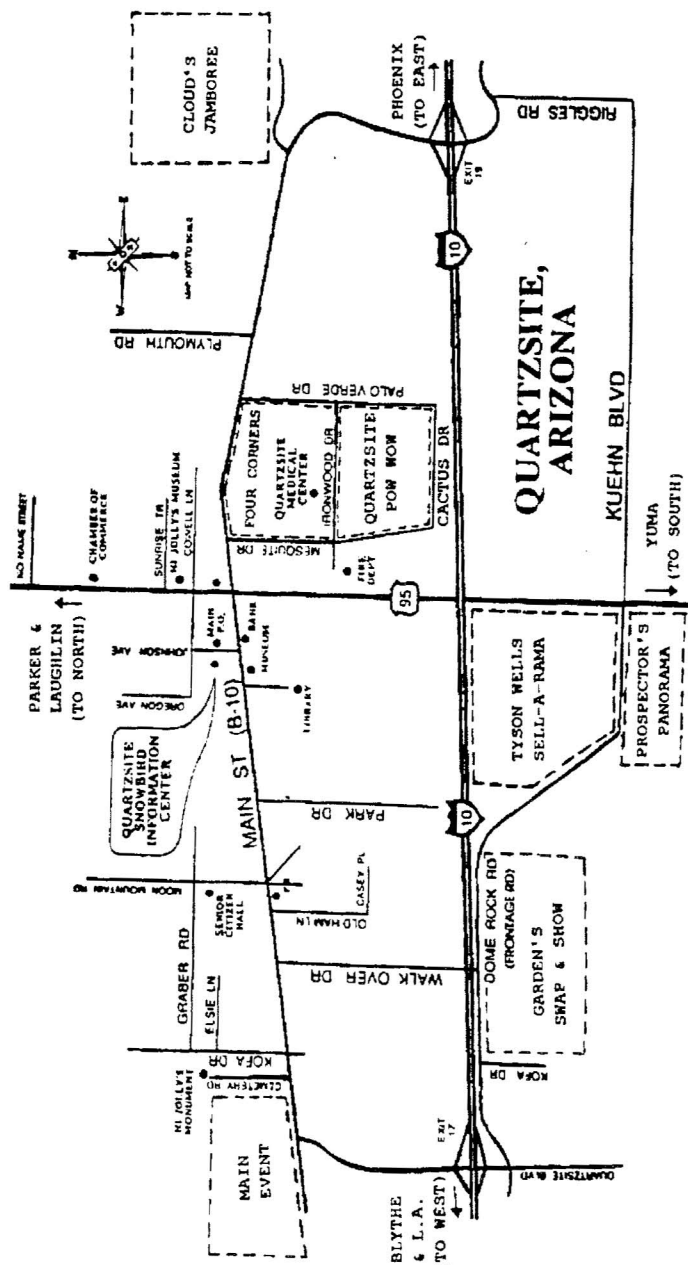
QUARTZITE NEWS

Quartzite Calendar

Events - Dates and Locations

Please Refer to Locator Map on Right

Jan 13 - Jan 21	Prospector's Panorama: Gold Show South of I-10 on Hwy 95
Jan 10 - Feb 10	Garden's Swap & Show South of I-10 on west side (Exit 17)
Jan 13 - Jan 28	The Main Event North of I-10 on west side (Exit 17) Choice #4
Jan 15 - Feb 15	Cloud's Jamboree North of I-10 on east side (Exit 19) Choice #3
Jan 24 - Feb 18	Four Corners Swap Meet North of I-10 on Hwy 95
Jan 27 - Feb 11	Prospectors' Panorama: Gem & Mineral Show South of I-10 on Hwy 95
Feb 2 - Feb 11	Tyson Wells Sell-A-Rama South of I-10 on Hwy 95 Choice #2
Feb 3 - Feb 11	Quartzite Sports, Vacation & R.V. Show North of I-10 on Main St.
Feb 7 - Feb 11	Quartzite Pow - Wow North of I-10 on Hwy 95 Choice #1 (500 spaces) Parking: Cars ~\$2; R.V.'s/trailers ~\$3
Feb 10	S.C.R.I.B.E. Symposium Senior Citizen's Community Center Time: 8:30AM (Mountain Time) Moon Mountain Road, Quartzite AZ
Feb 17-18	Spring Fever! The Grand Finale



Blythe, CA motels... (A special note of thanks to Gary McCague for preparing this Quartzite map and information list.)

Motel 6 — 500 W. Donlon St.
(I-10 at Lovekin Blvd exit)
Phone (619) 922-6666

Best Western Sahara Motel — 825 W. Hobson Way
(2 blocks north of I-10, exit Lovekin Blvd)
Phone (619) 922-7105 or (800) 528-1234

Comfort Suites — 545 E. Hobson Way
(1/2 mile northwest of I-10, exit 7th St.)
Phone (619) 922-9209

Travelodge — 850 W. Hobson Way
(2 blocks northwest of I-10, exit
Lovekin Blvd)
Phone (619) 922-5145 or (800) 367-2250

Comfort Inn — 903 W. Hobson Way
(1 1/2 blocks northwest of I-10, exit
Lovekin Blvd)
Phone (619) 922-4146

Easy 8 Motel * — 900 Rice St.**
Phone (619) 922-9191
*** (This is Gary's first choice for economical
and reasonable accommodations)



DIAMOND DAZE

1996

AUGUST 6 - 11

California Federation of Mineralogical Societies
American Federation of Mineralogical Societies

GEM AND MINERAL SHOW

Riverside Convention Center
3433 Orange St. Riverside, California

For Reservations, - Camping and Show Package Phone (818) 288-2896

50 years ago, rock and mineral clubs throughout California founded CFMS
at Riverside, California - Now we return to Celebrate

EXHIBITS - DEMONSTRATIONS - SYMPOSIUMS

Opal...What Is It Worth??? (...And Why?)

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Why will it benefit opal if there is a uniform valuation system? Why might someone object? The most obvious objection that comes to mind is that someone has purchased opal and may fear a uniform system will devalue their investment. This unfortunately may be a price of the process as it is entirely possible that some opal was bought at a price higher than the "market." Another objection, one I hear all the time, is that opal cannot be quantified. That it defies such rigorous limits because each stone is inherently unique. Fine, this may to some extent be true; it may even be an argument forceful enough to press for price "ranges" rather than specific numbers for various opal types. But these reasons bring nothing to the benefit of opal or its popularity either as a fancier's gem or an investment. Opal deserves better than to have its value shrouded in questions or uncertainty.

A uniform valuation system offers stability to the opal market. It is my view that this would have a strong positive long term effect on opal's popularity. Uniformity would eliminate doubt and produce a measurable price-demand relationship. Unlike diamonds, demand would be a clear influence on price since supply is hardly "controlled" at all. If availability of new sources falters and/or old sources dry up, changes in supply will certainly also play a role in the price equation. The point here is that a uniform grading system something like that of diamonds or collectible coins would enhance not detract from opal's market.

So, if it's such a great idea, why didn't it happen long ago? Maybe the task was too great and no one was able to gather enough information to describe the world market. Maybe the world market is too variable either overall or on a regional basis. Does this mean opal can't be quantified? I doubt it. Our experiment this year with pricing 7 stones highlighted why something needs to be done. At the opal seminar Paul Downing pointed out that there are currently very few persons in the United States with the knowledge, background or experience to properly appraise opal (note that this is the first time I've used the term 'appraise' in this discussion. Unlike appraisal, assessment or quantification of an opal may or may not be tied to a specific market).

I'm sure many if not all opal dealers would hold forth that they are more than qualified to assess opal, both finished and rough. But what does this do for the little guys like myself who want to come to the party? We need a system if only to attract new players. A working system will reduce vagueness. It will provide points of reference from which to go forward. This is the information "age". If a system of assessment were uniformly applied the next step would be to compile market data. What did stones of types x y & z sell for in the last month around the world? Such information gives a basis for describing the market(s). Paul Downing reports in his Opal Market News that there has been little movement in the price of several categories of finished opals. Coober Pedy is concerned about reduced production. Is this the beginning of the end for opal? Of course not. Is it a powerful argument for an evaluation system? Undoubtedly!!!

(To be continued next month)