

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



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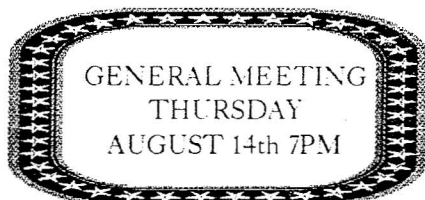
Volume #29 Issue #8
August 1997



Member

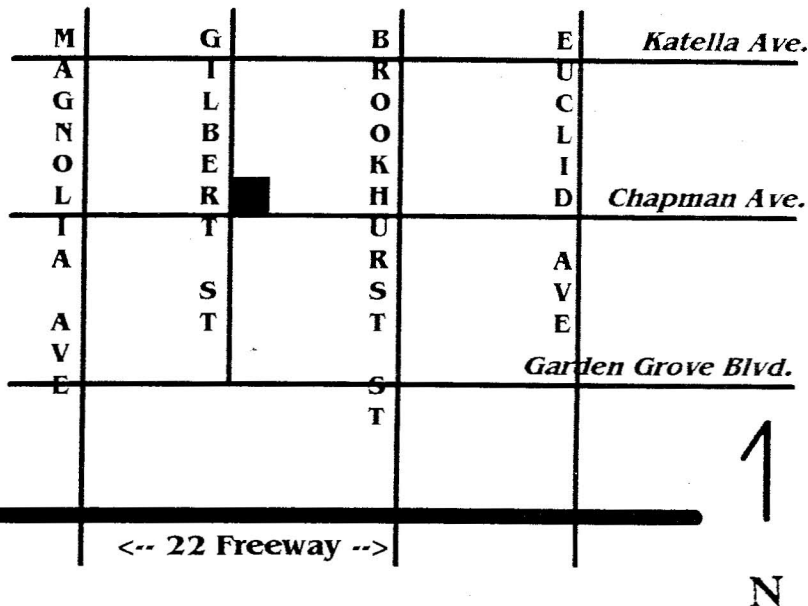


Member



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



American Opal Society Officers

Wes Roth **President** **(714) 897-2843**
email wesroth@earthlink.net
Carol Bova **Vice President** **(818) 246-7535**
email bova@geckoplex.com
Mike Kowalsky **Treasurer** **(714) 761-4876**
Pete Goetz **Secretary** **(714) 666-2084**

What's happening???

Calendar of Upcoming Events Dates and Locations of Shows

Sept 13 10AM-6PM: Sept 14 10AM-5PM Faceter's Guild,
Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 Crescent Ave.,
Anaheim, CA

October 1-5 8AM-5PM Sportsmans Club of Joshua Tree,
6225 Sunburst, Joshua Tree, CA

October 8 10AM-6PM October 9 10AM-5PM Pomona Rock
Hounds, Masonic Hall, 1025 N. Vine Ave., Pomona, CA

October 11 8AM-5PM October 12 8AM-4PM Searles Lake
Gem & Mineral Society, 13337 Main St., Trona, CA
(call for field trip info Bonnie Fairchild (706) 372-5356)

October 11 - 12 9AM-5PM both days Valley Gems Gem &
Mineral Club, 9050-1-2 West Ave. J. Lancaster, CA

October 11 9AM-5PM October 12 9AM-4PM Victor Valley
Gem & Mineral Club, San Bernardino County Fairgrounds,
14800 7th St., Victorville, CA

October 18 10AM-6PM October 19 10AM-5PM El Cajon
Valley Gem & Mineral Society, El Cajon Valley Masonic
Temple, 695 Ballantyne St., El Cajon, CA

October 18 10AM-6PM October 19 10AM-5PM Whittier
Gem & Mineral Society, Whittier Masonic Temple, 7604
Greenleaf Ave., Whittier, CA

October 31 - Nov 1 10AM-6PM: Nov 2 10AM-5PM
Palomar Gem & Mineral Club and Council of San Diego Co.
Min. Soc., Al Bahr Shrine Center, 5440 Kearny Mesa Rd.,
Adjacent to Hwy 163, San Diego, CA

CFMS/AFMS NEWS...

from ALAA Issue, 1st Quarter, 1997

National Parks Get New Name

In a recent article entitled "The Taking of America", by Karen Lee Bixman, it was suggested that Americans might be losing control of management of some of our most precious assets, our National Parks. Several National Parks already have entrance signs calling them "International Biospheres", a creation of UNESCO, part of the United Nations. The facts seem to be that because of this UN designation, UN is becoming "advisors" on management of our National Parks.

The ALAA would not be officially concerned except that the management concept of these "International Biospheres" divides them into 3 sections, a wilderness zone, a buffer zone, and a cooperation zone. Therefore

Safety Report

by Joe Hafeli, CFMS Safety Chairman

Much information has been put out lately cautioning everyone to not fill a gasoline can in the back of your pickup, especially if you have a plastic bed liner. It has been known for many years that gasoline sloshing around in a metal container can build up static electricity, much the same as walking on a nylon carpet. You have all seen the spark from your door key in a hotel with nylon carpets. You are cautioned to fill your can on the ground so static electricity will be shorted to the ground as it is generated.

When full, put the cap on securely and lift it into the truck. If the can is filled in the truck, especially if it has a plastic liner, the static electricity can build up a strong charge that can ignite the gasoline. If this should happen it could be a major catastrophe for both you, your vehicle and anyone else near.

Remember the old rule, one gallon of gasoline equals 14 sticks of dynamite time five (5) gallons of gasoline equals the power of 70 sticks of dynamite....**THINK SAFETY!!!!**

CFMS NEWSLETTER 8/97 VIA THE NUGGET 8/97

Joe's comparison of the power of dynamite and gasoline brings to mind another example which may be a bit more directly comprehensible. Let's say your vehicle gets 15 miles to the gallon of gas. Instead of putting your gasoline in the tank, or a can, let's say it ignites directly behind your car. The resulting blast from a 5 gallon quantity will generate sufficient force to propel your conveyance 45 MILES down the road...that's likely to be into the next county even in Los Angeles! Be careful with gas cans folks!

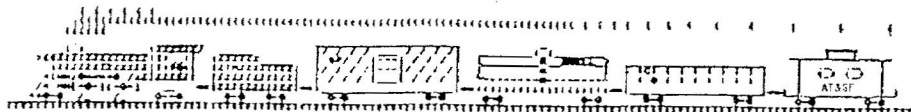
some of our collecting sites are in "harm's way". It is interesting to us that this whole concept was first brought to our attention through an article by June Culp Zietner in Lapidary Journal, July 1988 entitled "IS THE ROCK COLLECTOR AN ENDANGERED SPECIES" in which June pointed out that a proposal enlarging our National Parks was a real threat to many popular collecting areas. Now it looks like they may have found a different way to restrict our activities. The ALAA is not certain of just how many of our National Parks have received this designation, but we are told it is quite a number of them. Of note is a Bill in Congress, introduced by Congressman Don Young (HR 901 in the 105th Congress) which is entitled The American Land Sovereignty Protection Act, which would terminate any UN control over our National Parks. Possibly we should support it. JS & BC

VIA CFMS NEWSLETTER 8/97



The OPAL EXPRESS

Published monthly by the
American Opal Society...



Volume # 29 Issue #8
August 1997



President's Message



Greetings,

Here it is August already, where is the year going, actually where is the year going so fast...

Some good news for the Opal Society, we will be featured in the October issue of "Rock & Gem" magazine. This apparently came about on very short notice and I would personally thank our editor Russ Madsen for getting the information together and to "Rock & Gem" as quickly as he did.

I'm told there will also be articles by Barbara McCondra and David Burton, congratulations to all.

On to the 1st opal sale (another is being considered for Oct as a pre Christmas gift idea). The sale went very well and there were some very happy faces and some good comments on the quality of the materials available. I have been asked by several people about obtaining some of the opal rough if you live outside the area, its easy...

Contact any of the board members, let them know what you are interested in and they will send it to you. You then send a check to the Opal Society P.O.Box, if for any reason you wish to return the material send it to the same address.

til next time,
Wes Roth
Preident

from under the hat...

you may be a rockhound if...the city informs you a landfill permit is required to put any more rocks in your backyard

WORKSHOP INFORMATION...

Shop foreman Stan McCall reports the Pixie units are now fully reconditioned and ready to use for cabbing. Stan asks that members contact him at Lapidary International (714) 827-5680 for the latest update on status of the workshop.

SAW NEEDED: we are looking for good 6" and 10" saws for the workshop. Please call Stan at # above if you are aware of either size available in good used condition.

The shop is located in a light industrial complex in Fullerton. The address is Unit #9, 651 N. State College Blvd. To get there, exit the 91 Fwy onto State College Blvd. and go north. Proceed through the intersection of Orangethorpe continuing a short distance further on State College. Go over the railroad tracks and turn left into the complex on the west side of the street. If you go over the second RR crossing turn around. Proceed behind the front row of businesses and make your first right. Then follow the road around to the left. The workshop has a large "9" over the door. Only AOS members may use the equipment and workshop. You will be required to sign a liability release.

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Dates To Remember

**General Meeting
Thurs August 14 7PM
Please note---> Our
meeting this month is
at the Women's Club
NOT the workshop**

**Annual Opal Show
November 8 - 9**

Remember When?

A Look Into Past Newsletter Items

Here are two items from the January 1973 AOS newsletter...

General Item: (Add to Opal Lore)

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the Newport Beach area have a bit of required reading--a fine local newspaper called the "Daily Pilot". It quite often carries a short column by J.C. Humphries, of Humphries Jewelers, Costa Mesa. We are indebted to Mr. Humphries for the following column which appeared in the January 3rd edition.

GEM TALK
Today
by J.C. Humphries

The "Bad Luck" Opal Myth

In 1869, one of Sir Walter Scott's heroines, Anne of Gerstein, blamed her misfortunes on opals in her possession: and thus England began a 134 year old superstition that opals brought bad luck.

It is thought that Elijah Peacock, who founded the jewelry dynasty bearing his name, idolized Scott and believed this portent of evil. He emigrated to America in 1837, before Queen Victoria ridiculed the superstition by giving her daughters opals on their wedding days. With Peacock, however, the "bad luck" onus of opals came to America.

Elijah's ban on opals in his Chicago jewelry store persisted through five generations of management until, less than a year ago, the company adopted the ancient Roman tradition that the "rainbow" lurking in each opal is a symbol of hope.

If you have had any doubts as to the true tradition of opals, you can now dismiss them, knowing that in spite of the false superstition, these beautiful gems have become more popular than ever.

General Item:

The "in" thing among opalholics today seems to be the enhancement of opal color by use of various treatments or heating processes. A very good example of this was brought out in the December Newsletter in which President Elmer Reed described a burning newspaper treatment for Mexican Opal.

In line with that, I have in my hand an article clipped from Gems and Minerals Magazine published about 1965. Bill Judd was kind enough to release from his musty dusty scrapbook for this newsletter.

Acid Improves Opal

Mrs. -----, Honolulu, Hawaii, reports that an oriental jeweler in that city improves the fire in precious opal with muriatic (hydrochloric) acid. He soaks the stone in undiluted acid for three weeks. According to Mrs. -----, who has tried this technique, the fire in the stone increases twofold. After the opal is removed from the acid, it should be washed thoroughly in water and immersed in glycerine for a time. The jeweler says that so far as he knows the stone will retain its fire indefinitely.

(We have not tried this and it is passed on as information only. Be sure to try any technique of this type on a poor stone first before trying it on something valuable. G&M Ed.)

BOOK review... by Russ Madsen

OPAL ADVENTURES

by Paul Downing

This book was first published in 1990 and is rarely referenced. What a shame! It's packed with highlights and opal delights: it transports the reader to the wondrous world of the Australian outback. It shares as clearly as possible the inner workings of opal dealing, cutting, and pricing. Author and AOS member Paul Downing is known the world over as an opal expert. With fine style Paul shares with us from the depth of his opal knowledge and understanding.

I must confess when I first acquired it, I set this book aside without reading it. I already have "Opal Identification And Value" and from its title presumed this was no more than a collection of anecdotal opal stories. WRONG! Well, and right too. It is a collection of opal stories...wonderful stories...and much more. I sincerely regret leaving it sit on the shelf for a year.

Last March we drove to New Mexico and on the way home Jane took a turn at the wheel. As she did I sat with this book in hand. Next thing I knew I was saying, "Jane, listen to this" and started reading out loud to her from Chapter 10 "An Opal Buying Trip".

"My miner friend Staff and I left about 7:45AM...we crested a small hill and saw a man standing next to a small fire. He waved us down. It was one of the miners and was he a mess! Blood was caked on his face. He was covered with dirt. In a heap behind him lay the remains of a Toyota Land Cruiser."

Paul continues, "...he complained of pain every time we hit a bump...To keep him awake we asked what happened...as he crested the hill, there were three kangaroos in the road...He swerved to miss them and rolled the Land Cruiser...He had violated one of the prime rules of the outback. When a roo is in the road, hit him, don't avoid him. It's the only way to survive...The outback cars are set up for just such an event with an extra heavy Roo Bumper...A lot of people, like us, solve this problem in a different way. We try not to drive at night if at all possible."

Discussing where opal is located and the adventure of finding a good deposit, Paul notes the following:

"...Nearby was a line of trees going up the ridge. Several old miners told him that opal is often found under such tree lines...When his partner asked him why he chose that spot his reply was that the tree would provide shade from the hot sun...They have since taken a great deal of opal out of this mine. It was luck, not science, that led this miner to his big find. Yet the tree line probably signified a fault in the earth which could cause concentrations of opal."

Several methods for locating opal are discussed including divining techniques. Paul's well known "lucky hat" story is presented too.

"If there is an art to successful opal mining it might be this. Pick an area where others are finding opal. Stand in the middle of an unpegged area and throw your lucky hat into the air. Dig a shaft where your hat lands. If you don't find any opal, get a new hat!"

As we rolled along an Arizona highway we were transported by Paul's words to each and every well-known opal location in Australia: Coober Pedy, Mintabie, Andamooka, White Cliffs, Lightning Ridge, more Lightning Ridge, and Queensland. We continued our own opal adventure through the book and learned about some of the unusual dealings that have surrounded the fortunes and failures of opal miners: how the price is haggled; booms and busts; new fields; the thrill of a beautiful find; a rush spawned by a good strike. All these are here.

Many fine color plates of wonderful opals are presented. Included are a number from the work of renowned opal photographer Len Cram. Opal formation and Len's theories are discussed. And finally the question What's It Worth? is addressed. This chapter is a good overview of opal valuation (Paul's full discourse on the subject is presented in another of his books, "Opal Identification and Value").

"Opal Adventures" is a well-written, entertaining book covering all aspects of the magical world of opal. It belongs on the book shelves of opal lovers everywhere! -rgm

"Opal Adventures"

by Paul B. Downing, PhD, Majestic Press, 1990, 1993

"Eclectic Lapidary" a Hit...

Our own VP, Carol Bova, is having good success with her electronic magazine ("e-zine"), "The Eclectic Lapidary". Her review of the book "Suiseki: The Japanese Art of Miniature Landscape Stones" is being used by the publisher in their book ads!

Carol writes, "Suiseki is an art form that will be readily understood by the mineralist and the rockhound alike. Both are accustomed to seeking the forms and colors of stone and mineral that please the eye and meet collecting goals. From here, it is an easy step to appreciating this ancient art."

"Suiseki: The Japanese Art of Miniature Landscape Stones"
by Felix G. Rivera, Stone Bridge Press, 1997

Name Badges...

For those who still have not gotten yours, the price per badge is \$5 which includes the badge itself and engraving of up to two lines of text: one line for your first and last name and, if you wish, a second line for nickname or if applicable, your opal related business name. These engraving options give members flexibility to include many types of identification. Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for completion of engraving.

NEWS ON ROSS STAMBLER

DR. ROSS STAMBLER A DIRECTOR AND LONG TIME MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN OPAL SOCIETY IS PRESENTLY CONFINED TO THE PARK VISTA NURSING CENTER WHICH IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MORNINGSIDES LIVING FACILITY WHERE HE LIVES IN BREA. ROSS IS IN GOOD SPIRITS AND WOULD LOVE TO SEE OR TALK TO HIS MANY FRIENDS. HE IS LOCATED IN ROOM #54, BED B AT PARK VISTA NURSING CENTER, 2525 N. BREA BLVD., BREA. HIS PHONE NUMBER IS (714) 256-8152.

TO REACH PARK VISTA FROM THE 57 FREEWAY, EXIT ON IMPERIAL HWY. AND GO WEST TO BREA BLVD. PROCEED SOUTH ON BREA BLVD JUST PAST BASTANCHURY RD. THE FACILITY IS LOCATED ON THE WEST SIDE OF BREA BLVD.



1997 Opal & Gem Show News

OPAL SHOW UPDATE

THE OPAL SHOW, SCHEDULED FOR NOV. 8 - 9, 1997 WILL AGAIN BE HELD AT THE QUALITY INN IN ANAHEIM. THE SHOW PROMISES TO BE ONE OF THE BEST IN RECENT MEMORY. WE HAVE SEVERAL NEW FEATURES AS WELL AS RETAINING THE BEST ASPECTS OF PREVIOUS SHOWS.

THIS YEAR'S OPAL SEMINARS WILL BE HELD ON BOTH SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. THIS EXPANDS THE ABILITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OPAL TO MORE ATTENDEES. IN ADDITION, WE WILL HAVE NEW SUBJECT AREAS WITH A GREATER TECHNICAL EMPHASIS THAN PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED AT PAST OPAL SHOWS.

WE ARE AGAIN HAVING THE FREE GEMSTONE IDENTIFICATION SESSIONS PROVIDED BY SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE (FORMERLY RANCHO SANTIAGO COLLEGE). THESE SESSIONS, COORDINATED BY LOTHAR VALLOT, PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR DIAMONDS AND OTHER GEMSTONES EVALUATED FOR AUTHENTICITY AND VALUE. ALSO YOU CAN TEST YOUR OWN GEMSTONE KNOWLEDGE IN THEIR GAME CALLED "GEM FOOLERY".

CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN SIGNED WITH THE QUALITY INN AND THE CITY OF ANAHEIM AND ADVERTISING AND OTHER ASPECTS ASSOCIATED WITH A SUCCESSFUL SHOW ARE PROCEEDING WELL. A SIZABLE NUMBER OF DEALERS HAVE ALREADY PAID FOR THEIR DEALER SPACES, THUS ASSURING ANOTHER EXCELLENT SELECTION OF OUTSTANDING MERCHANDISE.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOV. 8 - 9 AND WE WILL SEE YOU THERE.

THANKS.

JAY

August General Meeting...

CUTTING MEXICAN ROUGH

Our August meeting will include a presentation/discussion led by Stan McCall on the subject of cutting Mexican rough opal.

This is intended to assist us in working with the material we have. If you bought a parcel of the rough at our last meeting, please bring it and we will have a round table talk about how to approach various pieces.

If you missed last month, don't despair, as Wes has noted in his message, it is likely we will hold another sale of the parcels at our October meeting.

We will have one of the cabbings machines on hand to demonstrate cutting strategies as well.

If you have questions about how to approach Mexican material, don't miss this chance to participate in the meeting!

DIFFICULT OPAL ROUGH

Long time AOS member, opal dealer and opal symposium speaker Tim Thomas, The House of Tibara has given us a homework assignment of sorts folks.

Tim will be one of our guest speakers at the 1997 Opal Show Symposium and Tim's topic will be Approaches To Difficult Cutting. Tim has asked that we, in turn, help with this subject by providing ASAP all questions we may have.

Please Be Specific! Send in sketches or diagrams of problems you are encountering. Send E-mail or snail-mail describing what you want to learn or what went wrong. Talk about this at our meetings. We need to feed as much of our *trouble* to Tim as we can so he can give us as good a talk as possible.

Tim notes that difficulty may be in the eye of the beholder. He wants to help as much as possible. If we provide guidance about or needs for a Symposium talk it will enhance the result. Please don't be shy! Speak up, and soon as Tim's working on his talk now!

July General Meeting...

MEXICAN ROUGH PARCELS SOLD

Members attending the July meeting enjoyed a good bit of hob nobbing and studying of the Mexican rough parcels before the sale began at 8PM. Everyone drew numbers to determine the "order of go" and groups of 4 were permitted to go in and pick one parcel per person.

As the evening progressed and parcels were selected, ooh's and aah's began as folks shared their new treasures with each other. After everyone had a turn to select a parcel, a second round of selection was permitted for those who wanted to buy more. This process made it possible for everyone to have a good chance at getting their own nice rough.

Additional parcels are still available in all categories. Parcels consist of either opal in matrix (mostly pink rhyolite), or loose opal pieces. Parcels are made up by weight (weights are approximate). The grades and prices are as follows.

Matrix Opal parcels

"A" Grade 4 oz \$50.00

"B" Grade 4oz \$35.00

Loose Opal parcels

"A" Grade 2 oz \$40.00

"B" Grade 2 oz \$30.00

OPAL IDENTIFICATION

(How To Tell Where It Came From)

...will be the Symposium topic presented this year by Walter or Joan Skinner of Opal Traders International.

Do you have a jar of opal rough you bought and now you wonder what area it came from? Do you even know if it's Australian? Brazilian? Welcome to my "nightmare" (smile). I have just such a jar. You probably do too.

Here's our chance to learn the characteristics of opal from various formation sites and locations. Don't miss this informative talk at our 1997 Opal & Gem Show in November!!

BETTY SHEFFLER DAY:

A Very Special Event

(via the Internet) by Elizabeth Commean

On September 20, 1997, geode lovers and rockhounds from Midwest rock clubs will band together to honor Betty Sheffler, a remarkable woman and rockhound role model, who has been a source of inspiration, information, and enjoyment to rockhounds not only in the Midwest but truly all over the world.

This fun-filled event will include geode hunting at the Sheffler Geode Mine, Alexandria, Missouri, a get-together social time for lunch, a tailgate-swap, a geode opening party, a best geode contest, and an evening dinner banquet. Coverage of the event will be in Rock and Mineral Magazine and Rock and Gem Magazine.

In addition, the Mayor of Keokuk, Iowa will proclaim Saturday, September 20th as "Betty Sheffler Day," event t-shirts will be available, and a celebrity appearance will be made by Mark Bortz, rockhound and former Chicago Bear at the evening dinner.

Rock clubs are invited to honor Betty by making her an honorary member of their club. All rockhounds are invited to send letters of goodwill greetings to Betty.

For more information on the event, contact Elizabeth Commean, 624 Terra West Drive, Freeport, Illinois 61032, (Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.), evening phone: 815-233- 5139, or email at <BettyCom@aol.com>.

HONORARY CLUB MEMBERSHIP: Rock clubs are invited to make Betty Sheffler an Honorary Member of their club. Certificates will be prepared for any club desiring to do this at no charge. Any rock club who would like to have a certificate prepared for them to be presented at the dinner by rock club personnel or others (in their absence) should contact the reservation person named below.

LETTERS TO BETTY: Rockhounds unable to attend are invited to participate by writing a letter to Betty. Letters should be sent to the address below and will be read or given to Betty at the dinner.

FOR LETERS OR RESERVATIONS --- Elizabeth "Boo" Commean -- via email at <Bettycom@aol.com> -- or to 624 Terra West Drive, Freeport, IL. 61032. -- or phone at 815-233-5139. (Calls are welcome.)

Advertisement

GREAT DEALS ON ROUGH AUSTRALIAN OPAL AND CUT STONES. Great value rough opal, very stable, all price ranges. White base to multicolor crystal. Rough stones have not been picked over. Stable cut stones from all fields, all price ranges, all grades. Dealers, jewelers, hobbyists all welcome. (818) 989-1686 or write to **LAND OF WONDER**, Eric Scott, P.O. Box 261142, Encino, CA

Advertisement

AUSTRALIAN OPAL IMPORTS

Mr. Genzmer is selling his private collection!

Rare opals include: Lightning Ridge Black and Queensland Boulder, most were mined in the 70's.

Contact Geoff Genzmer at 468 San Marcos Pass Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93105 or call (805) 967-5041

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Editor---Russ Madsen

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(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.