

'She won't be right' mate! We **do** need an opal valuation system!

["She'll be right mate!" is a typical expression used by Australians to say, 'near enough is good enough.' Unfortunately this philosophy has become a part of our persona with resultant unfortunate business side effects. Just as well for us, we are starting to get a bit better organized in our way of doing things nowadays. Here is an example of that]

It must have been thirty five years ago when I first met Peter Evans. As I remember, he was sitting at an opal cutting machine somewhere in Sydney, attempting to extract the best polish for Queensland boulder opal, with its challenging matrix of ironstone. Never one to hold a secret for long, he revealed, 'Just try using an old nylon carpet, charged with tin oxide.' 'That'll bring the shine up on this stuff'

Peter has been at the forefront of the opal industry for a long time. A genial, helpful guy with a determined glint in his eye and a stack of advice, he has obviously thought long and hard about the opal stone. Set against the backdrop of how us 'Auzzies' do things in an ad hoc sort of way, Peter is a far cry from the "She'll be right" mentality. Always quizzing things. Always inventing. A self made man who is not afraid to put his ideas into action and challenge the status quo.

And challenge he has. Particularly when you think of tackling the problem of creating a grading system to simplify opal valuation. Such a system, if successful, would be a piece of equipment in demand by every jeweler in the world worth his metal [if you'll excuse the pun]

The difficulty we have in arriving at a consistent opal valuation system is that opal is not like any other gem stone. Most gems have a certain consistency of color and clarity, making them not so difficult to categorize and value.

Opal however is the renegade of the gem world. Its colors and patterns challenge the imagination. You think its one color and it suddenly flashes a different color. You see a pattern on one end of the stone, and it swaps to another pattern on the other end as it is rocked to and fro. The varieties of opals are endless. It is one of the most interesting of all industries to be involved in. Once you are bitten by the opal the bug, the bite is deep and lasting.

This then is what Peter had to address. How do you get a dumb computer to analyze color, clarity, background, pattern, imperfections, and shapes? Most of us are still wondering how he did it, but he has indeed accomplished it, even though, already there have been a number of revisions of his original program.

What we already have though, is a consistent system taking into consideration the nomenclature established by the gem industry association in Australia. [see: <http://www.opal.asn.au/nomenclature.htm> Anyone in the world, with a computer can access what has been not so modesty but legitimately described as "The Smart Chart" Available online at such sites as www.opalmine.com Imagine, if everyone in the world starts using this system, there will be no more confusion as to whether an opal is real or not, or whether its value is right or not. Congratulations Peter, on a job well done. - Peter Brusaschi www.opalmine.com 'Opal Ridge' Australian outback opal fields Lightning Ridge

Peter Brusaschi is the author of the CD 'The ordinary Bloke's guide to opal' and has sponsored the site <http://www.opalmine.com> with its opal chat forum, for the past 10 years. Peter has been visiting the Australian outback for the past 37 years and is an expert on the subject of opals and outback travel.

