

**Historical Background**  
**Of The**  
**Old Pueblo Lapidary Club**  
**As of January 2007**

## Introduction

In July 2005, President Bill Carmody appointed Sylvia Czayo as OPLC Historian. Sylvia appointed Shad Blair as her assistant. Officers at this time were: Vice President Phil Babcock, Secretary Ursula Wilson, Treasurer Donna Pugh, Board of Directors Shad Blair, Paul Head, Tom Miller, Merlyn Hiller, Rim Tallat-Kelpsa, Membership Chairman Jim Griffin.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE OLD PUEBLO LAPIDARY CLUB

The Old Pueblo Lapidary Club was started in the spring of 1970 by a group of enthusiasts in the area. George E. Milburn was the President in 1970 and 1971, and he issued the first bulletin in June 1970. The club met at the Blue Saguaro Restaurant for its meetings at this time. Earl and Mary Cox were active in starting the club as evidenced by the following article written by Mary for the bulletin last March:

### A CLUB IS BORN

Looking back 10 years, memory takes me to a rather small rock shop, family owned, and known as the Agate Discount House. Bob and Ruby Criss were the owners. They loved rocks and were friendly and helpful to all that came to the shop. I spent many hours exploring and looking at equipment too.

I first met Jim Moody who was tugging sacks of rock from all over the world in the rock yard giving a helpful hand to Bob. Ruby asked me if we would be interested in helping form a lapidary club. We were thrilled! George Milburn came in; he explained what the club would like to do; cut, polish and identify rock – a ‘teaching’ club. We said, “Yes, count us in”. Ruby signed us up and a date was set for a meeting. A few people met in the back room: Bob and Ruby Criss, Jim Moody, George Milburn, Joy Arey, Jean Rogers, Joan Warmington, Earl and Mary Cox, Carol and Ed Babitzke, and Janet Eyler.

Joe Arey had a small silversmith shop at the north end of the building. He did faceting as well. He had equipment for cutting stones. We used his shop equipment and knowledge. Bob and Ruby had rocks and supplies. We were set to open the door to charter members. Word of mouth brought a group to the Blue Saguaro Club across the street. We met in the big dance hall for an organization meeting. George Milburn was appointed chairman. The obtaining of a charter and setting up a constitution and by-laws were discussed. George was authorized to proceed. One of our first meetings was a “show and tell”. Interest mounted. We again met at the Blue Saguaro and elected George our first President, with Joan Warmington our Vice President. We welcomed more interested people. We made plans for teaching cabbing. We needed instructors so Bob Criss, Jim Moody, Joe Arey and George Milburn volunteered. Jim Moody was made supervisor. Hours in the evening were arranged. The classes were held in Joe Arey’s shop, using the equipment there. One of our other charter members from Detroit, Michigan volunteered to teach silversmithing. What a boost this gave our infant club! Louise Drovedahl started classes, using her own tools, as we had no money as yet to buy equipment... She knew her job.

The hum of stone being cut on carborundum wheels, the noise of slabs being cut on the saw; filled the little room with sound. Eyes fixed on hand-held stones, people completely absorbed in what they were doing, instructors hovering over their shoulders, were the first group to be the beginning of our teaching classes of Old Pueblo Lapidary Club. Our membership was open to all that were interested and became our charter members. We

decided to have a newsletter to give our members helpful and useful information. So was born our newsletter. Thus, from a little seed planted came our club as we see it now, with a membership exceeding 200, a building of our own with scheduled classes in cabbng, silversmithing, faceting, and the uses of stone in many ways and fashions.

George Milburn had classes in his garage on cabbng and also faceting in October 1970, with cabbng and silversmithing classes started in November 1970. This will be a brief resume of the humble beginnings of the silversmithing class.

There was a small section at the end of the Discount Agate House, which was donated for our use by the then owner, Bob Criss. Off this section was a small room which contained a table, two chairs, a vise and a Prestolite tank. This we used for silversmithing. The other part was used for cabbng. The club had nothing else. Joan Warmington donated a table lamp for our use. Someone had put the hose on the tank out of business by cutting a hole in it, and I supplied another, which to this day is still on it. Wherever it may be. We could accommodate only two students, and the teacher had to stand. At first we had two teachers and classes two nights a week, but problems arose, and it was resolved by having classes only one night a week.

The students had to cooperate with each other, as one could not shape a piece of metal on a mandrel or straighten it when the other needed to solder, as the table jiggled. The club had nothing in the way of tools and mine were used. We used my fordham polishing equipment until we could proudly buy a polishing machine. We charged each student a dollar a night. Classes were from seven until nine. Bit by bit we were able to buy the bare essentials. The vise on the table meant that I did not have to tote one of those back and forth every night.

The students were taught how to make a ring. I felt that would give them the basic knowledge of sawing, filing, fitting, shaping and soldering as well as setting stones. At first, this was done with copper, as the process would be the same and it would give them the knowledge of handling the tools. I supplied the copper. After they had made a respectable copper ring, they knew how to proceed, and they brought their own silver and made a silver ring. That was the finish of their class. They had learned the basics. Other students then went through the same process.

The names of some of the early students include: Mr. & Mrs. Buge, Mrs. R. Welch, F.T. Lord, Mary Cox, Carol and Ed Babbistke, Leroy and Molly Meyers, Al Lapioli, Janet Eyler, Dee and K. Vaughan, Karl Marschinke and his late son John and Everett Wogstad. From there, some went on their own and the work exhibited by some of them is proof of their ability. I am very proud of them.

I typed a series of concise instructions covering every phase of silversmithing, including the setting of stones and all the tools and materials needed. This I gave to each student.

The first year's report to the club showed a credit balance of ten cents and we had bought a number of necessary tools.

When the second year was over, we had all the basic tools and I turned over to the Treasurer \$78.00 for the use of future silversmithing classes. That was the start. Ten years has made quite a difference.

In 1971, the meeting place was changed to the Junior Chamber of Commerce building on Fort Lowell Road. Upon reading the old bulletins and meeting minutes of the first year, it can be seen that the usual problems of setting up a constitution and by-laws, getting members to accept jobs, and generally trying to make things run smoothly, were the main items appearing in the reports. At the meeting of April 15, 1970, the name "Cutting Remarks" was chosen as the name of the club bulletin.

In January 1972, the club met for the first time at the Tucson Garden Club. Jean Warmington was the new President. They had a booth at the Pima County Fair that year in March with various members demonstrating cabbing, silversmithing and faceting. Classes were held at 3401 N. Dodge Blvd. In June of 1972, classes at North Dodge Blvd. had to be given up, as the space was no longer available. After this for sometime, classes were by appointment.

In October at the annual meeting, Jim Moody was elected President for 1973. Again a fair booth was a feature of the year. The first Annual Gem Show was also held that year.

1974 found Karl Marschinke at the helm. Meetings were at the Tucson House Apartments. Only three meetings were held there, as the rules of the Tucson House were that the residents were not to be charged dues and this was not acceptable to the membership. Milton Reiner was chairman of the Second Annual Gem Show held at the old club, but then in May the meeting was held at the Western Savings building on Campbell Avenue until October. In March of that year, George Milburn offered the club use of a building he had available at 3162 E. Milber, south of Ajo, west of Palo Verde, for a workshop and the club accepted. Considerable time and money was spent getting his building in shape for a workshop and meeting room. In October and December 1974, meetings and a potluck were held at the Central Baptist Church at 535 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

The November meeting with Gene Davidson elected President for 1975 was held at the Western Savings meeting room. In 1975 a booth was held at the County Fair in the spring and on October 10-12, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Lapidary and Gem Show was held with Bob and Marion Poulson as general chairmen. During 1975, meetings were held at the Central Baptist Church. Regular classes were held at the Milber Street Training Center in September of that year. Beginning cabbing and advanced cabbing and some 'Thursday Night Specials' with Harry Keith coordinating. Dick Milliron had a silversmithing class, which began on September 12<sup>th</sup>. December of 1975, the present Dale Avenue property was bought and various methods were used to raise money.

Earl Upham was elected President at the October meeting and held the first meeting in the new building on Dale Avenue in January 1976. No booth at the County Fair in 1976 but plans were made for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Gem Show with the Poulsons as chairmen again.

Earl summed up the year with his report in the bulletin for December 1976. His comments were to the point and still hold true to the present time. Here are his comments:

The main goals that were fulfilled starting with 1976 were:

1. **MOVING** into our new location at 3124 north Dale was perhaps the highlight of the year. I don't know of any lapidary organization in the United States that has the fine facilities that we have for OPLC. It is a complement to the people of our OPLC that they were willing to take such a move. I see nothing but a bright future for our club and the complex. A commitment has been made that we will continue to grow and prosper for the benefit of those interested in the art of lapidary.
2. **FIELD TRIPS** were provided for several months at the first of the year. It seemed quite a problem getting his phase going, but eight or nine were made to points of interest. I hope during 1977 that this phase of our activity can be expanded even more as we will have some of our problems out of the way at the end of this year.
3. **BUILDINGS** were bought but that was not the end. It was necessary that we have much work done to make them adequate for our needs. Our Building Committee spent many fruitful hours working for you. The shops are in use, as the students will tell you. They are nice and adequate for our club. As the demand grows, they can be expanded. All those people who have worked know the pleasure of fellowship and fun...work too that made it all possible.
4. **CLASSES AND EDUCATION** is what it is all about. When one joins an organization it is usually for his own benefit. He wants to know something about a certain art or profession. The real worth of an organization is what you will gain as a person by belonging. I hope the classes will continue to grow until we have something going for our membership every day. Our thanks to those who give of their time and talent to make this possible.
5. **FUND RAISING** is essential for our club to make its many payments on the building, insurance, utilities, etc. We are not a two-bit club as you have demonstrated by authorizing a great expansion in buying our complex worth approximately \$65,000. Just in buying a house or whatever, ownership means money must be generated to take care of obligations. The members have been great participating in the raffles, grand raffles (donations), silent auctions, etc. in bringing in the money... paper, cans, books, and you name it. Your participation has just been no less than fantastic.  
THANKS TO ALL...
6. **ANNUAL GEM SHOW...** Who can forget this GREAT SHOW? Problems galore were overcome in making this one of the outstanding shows that we have had. Approximately 3,434 fine people paid to see the show. Ruth Balzer just gave me a check for the sum of \$4,195.69 from the show. Material was bought in addition to build some additional showcases this year. Marion Poulson and all who fulfilled their

commitment to our GREAT CLUB should be proud of the fantastic job that was accomplished in spite of problems that were overcome during the year. THANKS TO EVERYONE...

Milt Reiner was elected President in 1977. Gene Davidson was chosen as chairman of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Gem Show on October 21<sup>st</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup>. Potlucks, raffles, and auctions and the paper drive were ongoing features of the year and brought much needed cash to help pay off the \$65,000.00 expense of the new quarters. A field trip to the Patagonia area with leader Ralph Brandle was a big success with many members collecting Jasper, Agate, Hematite and Geodes. The practice of having demonstrations on Thursday nights continued the instructional activities of the club along with the cabling and silversmithing classes in the newly opened shop area. Slowly the new meeting area was developed and improved by the hard work of George Campbell and Harry Householder as leaders. A continual cry for more workers at the Saturday workdays was heard. However, most of the work was done by only a few willing members. However, everyone is appreciative of their efforts over the years. The show in 1977 showed a profit of over \$5,500.00, which helped reduce the building debt.

Oliver Coslett was elected President for 1978 and Virginia MacIntyre as Vice President and program chairman. In January, the Goldenaires and the Goldensteppers presented their program of dancing and various skits and acts at the fun night, which was enjoyed by all. Virginia had many interesting Thursday night workshops and demonstrations during the year. These were very informative and she got almost everyone to participate in them. George Campbell was the chairman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Gem Show at the Community Center on October 12-15, which was a huge success due to the hard work of the committee and members. Again, about \$5,000.00 profit was made. This year, the first yard sale was held on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, with over \$100 going to the club coffers. Since then, four or five other yard sales have been held at the meeting building on various Saturday and Sunday dates which were moderately successful money makers. However, the clubrooms are somewhat off the beaten track and not well attended by the general public.

At the annual meeting in October, Walt Wells was elected President for 1979. However, due to his obligations with the US NAVY, he had to be absent from many meetings and in August the Vice President, Clayton Gibson, took over for Walt and finished out the year. Milt Rainer was chairman of the highly successful Annual Show on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Jim Moody took over as President this year, 1980, with Tony Amshoff as Vice President and program chairman. It was thought to discontinue the weekly demonstrations and have them only once a month. However, the membership wanted them continued. Bailey Battiste is chairman of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Show on October 24-26 at the Community Center. We all anticipate a good show again this year.

## Presidents of OPLC

1970-----	George Milburn
1971-----	George Milburn
1972-----	Joan Warmington
1973-----	Jim Moody
1974-----	Karl Marchinke
1975-----	Gene Davidson
1976-----	Earl Upham
1977-----	Milt Reiner
1978-----	Oliver Coslett
1979-----	Walt Wells
1980-----	Jim Moody
1981-----	Jim Moody
1982-----	
1983-----	
1984-----	Tom Burger
1985-----	Eldon Smith
1986-----	Gene Davidson
1987-----	Gene Davidson
1988-----	Norbert Kauffeld
1989-----	Norbert Kauffeld
1990-----	Don Knight
1991-----	Don Knight
1992-----	Clayton Farnsworth
1993-----	Tom Harrelson
1994-----	Bill Elliott
1995-----	Bill Elliott
1996-----	Jack Mignery
1997-----	Gary Howell
1998-----	Earl Stewart
1999-----	
2000-----	Chuck Peters
2001-----	Chuck Peters
2002-----	Earhart
2003-----	Art Kavan
2004-----	Art Kavan
2005-----	Bill Carmody
2006-----	Don Rittenberry
2007-----	Ron Davidson