

# The Story of The Opal Hunter

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If only my parents had have known what would be the result of exposing a young boy to the beauty of the Australian opal. (I am sure that if they had wanted to have a doctor in the family they would have bought me a stethoscope to play with) However this was not the case.

My father was always off on some great adventure hunting down man eating sharks for Bob Dyer, fishing for crays in the most dangerous waters of Australia, taking tugboats to Indonesia and bringing back silver jewellery, bartics, wooden carvings and other exotic items.

All of these, helped shape my young mind. But one great adventure left me altered and changed for life.

We were living in Freemantle, Western Australia and my father and his brother arrived home. They pulled up in my father's Eldorado Cadillac.

"Boy, open the boot of the car and bring in the bags," my father said jokingly.

He had a strange glint in his eye. I had seen him excited before, but not like this, he was sort of skipping and dancing.

"Rosa, Rosa, put the kettle on," he called to my mother.

I turned the key to open the boot, it popped up and behold an aladin's cave of dazzling sunset colours. I had never seen so many beautiful things in one place. Each plastic bag was numbered and bundled carefully and lovingly.

The boot of that cadillac was jam packed with stone after stone. It took 15 minutes running back and forward for the two brothers to empty their bounty into mum's kitchen, which now looked more like a jewellery shop than a kitchen.

"What are these?" I asked my father.

"That one's a yacht, that one's a new car and that one's an aeroplane," he said. I thought he was joking, but by now the two brothers were busy grading out the spoil. But what are they called.

"These, boy are big Opals from a place where dingos roam free in the black night and people live in black holes in the ground."

"Where's that Dad?" I asked. "Coober Pedy, Son."

This was my first taste of Australian Opal.

Many years passed and our family moved all over the country. I grew up, married and started a family of my own.

We settled in Brisbane and the Lord was good to us, but I could never seem to settle. We packed up a big bus and set off around Australia.

We traveled up and down the east coast for some time, but felt drawn to go to Lightning Ridge, Home of the Black Opal.

We leased a mineral claim, moved our bus onto it and started our new adventure in the Ridge. I got opal fever very quickly and started fossicking, cutting opal and eventually did some mining. We made many friends and mining companions and I just loved the lifestyle and the feeling of finding a piece of precious opal.

Family circumstance required us to move from Lightning Ridge after about 5 years, but the dream of opal was still in my blood.

I once again got the Opal bug and traveled to Quilpie in the south west of Queensland - Boulder Opal country. I opened a shop and started to cut boulder opal and show tourists what to look for when fossicking opal. Not satisfied to simply cut and polish bolder opal. The opal bug has got me again.

My son, Ed and I, Ed have purchased a boulder opal mining lease and an old escavator with the money left over from the sale of our house. My wife Linda is getting very lonely as we often go out to the mine leaving her at home with the other children. We return late at night. Summer was a challenge for the new chums to the boulder game, flies, floods and extreme temperatures have added to the mix, however we have had some success and hope that winter will provide better working conditions.

To find out more about the Opal Hunters adventures, signup to the Opal Hunter Newsletter.