

## **John Ford Jewelers accepts Platinum Honors at 2014 AGTA Spectrum Awards™**

**Date:** *April 8, 2014*

This past summer, local jeweler, John Ford and son Christopher made the journey from Galveston to Lightning Ridge, Australia. And, so began the story of “The Maxine.”

John Ford Jewelers was awarded Platinum Honors in the Classical Division of the American Gem Trade Association’s 2014 Spectrum Awards. The award-winning ring features a black opal that he purchased in Lightning Ridge, Australia.

John named the ring “The Maxine” in honor of Maxine O’Brien, manager of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association Ltd., in recognition of all her hard work and dedication promoting Australian opal. The ring from Ford’s Lightning Ridge Collection contains an oval black opal weighing 5.76 carats, accented by 2.44 carats of round and baguette diamonds set in platinum.

“Getting to catch up with Maxine and share life stories is always special,” says Ford. “After a night at the Bowling Club, I always leave with a few stories worth sharing with my Texas friends.” When asked about the Bowling Club, John said, “think of it as the Australian version of the Artillery Club - just a little rougher!”

Maxine O’Brien has been secretary/manager of the Lightning Ridge Miner’s Association (LRMA) for the past 20 years. The LRMA is an industry association representing the black opal miner of Lightning Ridge, NSW and the surrounding opal fields. John is a proud member of the association. Maxine is also the coordinator of the Australian Opal Exhibition and previous treasure and committee member of the Australian Opal Centre. The Australian Opal Centre is a national project being developed in Lightning Ridge to preserve, display and research the greatest public collection of Australian opal, opalised fossils and the color history and heritage of the Australian opal fields. John thought who better to name a ring in honor of.

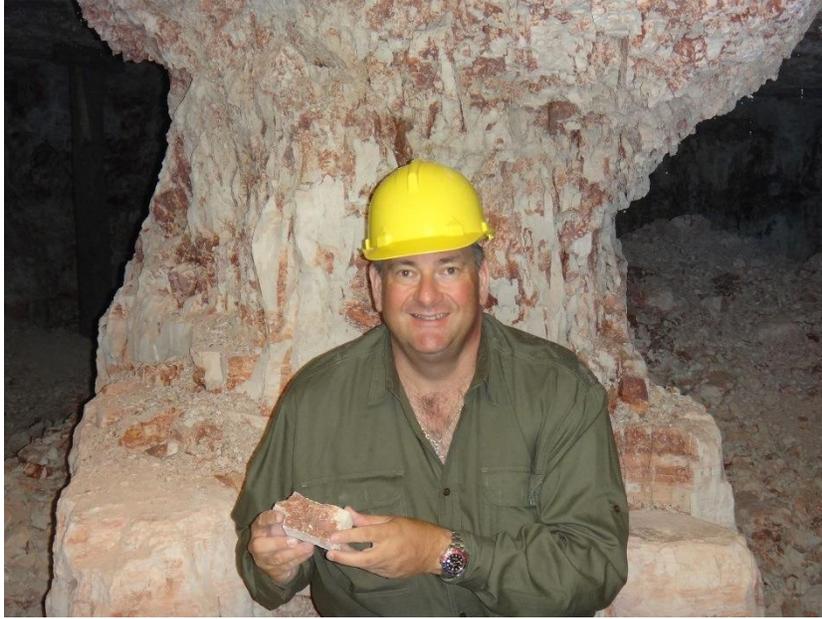
Maxine and a few other Aussies recently made the trip to Tucson, Arizona to accompany John during the AGTA awards ceremony. “Walking up to accept the award in Tucson was great but being able to share the occasion with Maxine O’Brien was even greater”, John said with a smile. He thanks Maxine for a great year and looks forward to his next Australian adventure.



"The Maxine"



John and Namesake, Maxine O'Brien



John Touring a Lightning Ridge Mine