



## WELCOME BACK!

It's been a while since the last newsletter. We planned one for Christmas - and things were happening. Then, we planned it for New Years - and things were happening...

So, this is a pretty big Newsletter, but it's got LOADS of stuff - and starts 2016 with a huge bang. I hope you're as excited about the year as I am - and I hope you enjoy all the cool new stuff we've been working hard to build for you. Check it out!

## 2016 ACADEMY IS OPEN!

The Academy live training events have been so popular - we've got a truly international crowd in almost every event, now - with 2015 attendees from Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Chile, Canada - and all across the USA. With travel like that, people have been asking for earlier notice to let them plan logistics for travel, etc.

We heard you - and the 2016 events are not only scheduled - [REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN](#). There are only two classes on the schedule, and only 10 seats per class available.

If you want to be among the 20 people we're going to train this year, it would be a good idea to take advantage of early registration discounts and enroll quickly.

The **EVENTS** page on the site has extensive information about what we do and how we do it - with loads of photos and a bunch of new video clips that show what to expect.

If you are ready to take the brakes off your faceting art, [follow this link](#) to check out the details and videos of what the event will be like.

**BASIC TRAINING  
RESERVE MY SEAT**

We'll be excited to see you here!

# MASSIVE WEB SITE UPGRADE!

If you haven't checked the site lately, you're in for a treat. I've been working hard for a couple of weeks to implement a total site upgrade in preparation for a very aggressive development, cutting, and training year.

[New Menus for Navigating Resources](#) have been installed to help you find what you want to learn quickly - whether it's in the free areas or in the new members-only section. Everything is organized in cascading menus so you can find the exact video or article you want quickly!

[New Materials](#) have been added - including new videos and FREE New Designs - With Video Instruction pages. There are a bunch of these that will be coming out throughout the year.

[The first of those is a CAM oval design](#) with a short L/W - ideal for newer faceters graduating from SRB's and building their skills with CAM architecture.



[Graduates' Galleries](#) are another new addition to the site. Check out some of the gemstone art produced by our graduates - in some cases within months of graduating our resident training program. [I wonder when we'll be seeing your work among these galleries?](#)

[The New Private Membership Area](#) is another thing we're pleased to finally offer. The members area includes articles, audio and video training in both technical and business subjects. The technical areas already include materials on dopping and transfer, polishing, and rough evaluation. The business area already includes things like an extensive video presentation by a master goldsmith and jewelry store owner about how up-and-coming faceters can open the door to business with jewelers.

We'll be growing this area as time goes by - and based on the requests and suggestions of actual members. [With a hot-line to asking for custom training information, what will you ask for?](#)

# CORIAN IS DEAD LONG LIVE MATRIX

In evaluating laps, we're always looking for what's easy to use for lots of materials, whether you're a beginner or experienced. Economics are a factor, but "what's easiest to use" for fast and reliable results is our main focus.

During the past year, we experienced both quality issues and delivery issues from the Corian supplier. And, over the past few months, [we've been using the Matrix lap](#) so much - and with such success - that we've dropped our recommendation for the Corian altogether.



Corian is a "cheap tool" that's been adapted to faceting, while Matrix is a purpose-designed and built product that's been delivering faster and more consistent results with less time lost to maintenance, etc.

## (not so) D'LITE-FUL LAPS

Some months ago, we began to carry and recommend the D'Lite line of resin-bond laps. During the intervening months, our confidence in the manufacturer's reliability - including especially the "one free re-topping" promise - has lead us to stop carrying or recommending the product. As of this update, the Raytech is the only resin-bonded lap we're recommending.

# ZINC+ REDEAUX

In yet more lap-news, we're going to return to the Zinc plus notes from last newsletter. It was only after we published that I got a comment from Gearloose that read:

"This zinc is lead and cadmium free, and is a specially deoxidized and hardened fine grain material, for gentle smooth running. It has never been used for faceting before."

[I'm continuing to use my Zinc plus](#) for pre-polishing with 3k Voodoo Prepolish, but I'd recommend for most people to start by charging it with 8k - or use a very light touch. Though the 3k leaves a fine pre-polish finish, it cuts quite rapidly on this alloy. We're preparing to do Voodoo production, and I'm going to mix more 8k than usual in anticipation of this...

## HOW FINE IS A FROG'S HAIR?

This is a response to the mail bag:

Question:

[Since I see a Faction machine in the background of your videos can you tell me how you cut a 43.37 angle on this machine?](#)

Answer:

While good modern faceting machines can hold tolerances of 0.1 degree, mere changes in pressure against the stone will cause shifts of multiple points at the second decimal place.

Lots of time and frustration are wasted by newer faceters (or those that don't quite understand the tolerances issue) trying to work in the second decimal place.

Extraneous information in that second digit caused me no end of errors when I was starting, and I won't tolerate working with a design with distracting noise like that on it.

If your design has something other than a zero there, go into GemCAD and clean the design up. If you're not practiced with GemCAD, clean the design up by rounding the angles on your diagram.

A good machine and lap will hold 10ths of a degree just fine, but not more than that. Get good at 10ths and you'll do great.

I hope this helps!

If you want to see your question answered here - or on the blog - or maybe even in a custom video - [use the contact form on the site](#) and submit it. [There may be a reward for questions that I make into a video...](#)

# SECRET SOURCES (TUCSON SHOW PREPARATION)

Every year, as Tucson approaches, people e-mail asking me to "share my secret sources" - as if somewhere in an alleyway in Tucson, there's a proverbial platform 9¾ - through which one gets the magical super-deals on giant, perfectly-colored, perfectly-clean, chunky faceting rough. "You just look at that stuff and it almost cuts itself into awesomely marketable and profitable gemstones."

I'm sorry that's not the case (so far as this mere Muggle knows).

The only "secret source" for faceting rough involves the "secrets" that experienced and expert cutters know about how to evaluate what's in front of them - and how to work that material to best presentation, and maximum value and yield. The best rough in the world - at a give-away price - isn't much use if you don't know how to get the most out of it.

**Now, repeat after me:**

**"There is no un-searched rough. There is no rough that hasn't been high-graded already."**

This is the simple fact: EVERYTHING you're going to see has been picked-over - by the miners, the mine-owner, the rough dealer he likes the most, everyone that rough dealer knows, and everyone at every show or byway where that guy has stopped before you see him.

You don't get to see anything that hasn't already been rejected by MANY people before you - and MANY of them with more experienced eyes than yours.

It's important to wrap your brain around that fact. **Your job is to identify value and opportunity that others didn't see or embrace.** Past outright misrepresentation, the responsibility for selecting good raw materials for one's art is on the shoulders of the artist - not the art-supplies vendor.

**YOUR SKILLS** - in rough evaluation, design selection, faceting execution, and presenting to your market - are the only "secrets" that are really in play.

Those things involve the tuition of time, of practice, of study - and perhaps formal training. Build your own "secrets" of rough sourcing systematically and carefully - and recognize every bit of money and time lost to a "bad purchase" is one POSSIBLE way to pay tuition for lesson in your art ...

# FREE MONEY (RETIREMENT PLAN FOR OLD LAPS)

Here's more "free money" for you.

When a metal-bonded lap "wears out", it will cut very slowly and also begin to leave nasty scratches. You can decontaminate the lap in various ways, scrubbing with LAVA soap, etc. But, ultimately, the time will come to stop using it for faceting.

Depending on your amount of work, and whether you're using cheap toppers or Crystallite Steel, you'll have some laps that need to retire every year.

If you google "diamond honing stone" you'll see that diamond hones for sharpening knives are quite expensive - especially larger ones. And, if you're even a little bit clever you already know what I'm going to say: Move your metal-bonded diamond laps from your shop to your kitchen and gift yourself with a \$50 or \$100 sharpening tool that will give years more of service.

I have enough of these things that I periodically give them to friends for Christmas gifts.

I'm telling you this in January because I didn't manage to send a newsletter in November - and because it gives you a whole year to save your laps so you can save some money as you make your friends happy NEXT Christmas. (See what I did there?)

That's the massive Happy New Year and Tucson Preparation newsletter for 2016.

Watch for our Tucson Show Report edition of the Newsletter - along with announcements about some polish ... stuff ... as soon as we can put that together.

Meantime, enjoy the new site upgrade, and the new free stuff - and maybe we'll see you in a live event soon.

All the best,  
John Bailey, Faceting Academy

