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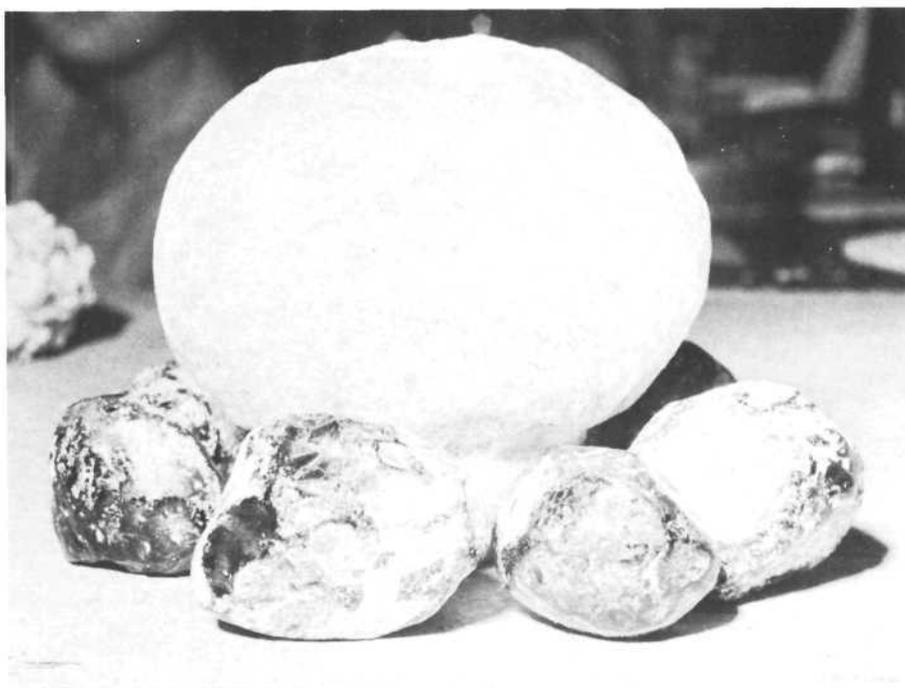
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## GEM-MINERAL FIELD TRIPS



APACHE TEARS SURROUND LARGE "TEAR PUFF." HEATED, TEARS CHANGE COLOR AND EXPAND.

## Apache Tears . . . FROM AN ARIZONA PERLITE MINE

By LUTHER MORRIS

DEEP IN THE earth a demon stirred, rumbled, expanded, and poked fiery fingers into a fissure in the surface crust. Violent tremors shook the area. The crust buckled and gave way under the tremendous pressures.

No longer imprisoned, the demon burst forth with a roar, unleashing the furies of fire, steam and molten lava, punctuated with thunderous explosions that spewed blobs of the earth's magma thousands of feet into the sky.

Lava poured down the rapidly growing cone. Ash settled in thick layers. Fast-cooled blobs formed into glassy obsidian nodules and embedded themselves throughout the cooling layers of ash and lava.

With internal pressure released, the demon settled back into the earth's core. Volcanic action subsided to steam and smoke, then died completely. Time passed and then came a "wet cycle"—water inundated the area leaving sedimentary deposits of varying depth.

More than 500 million years passed before man with his machinery stripped away the sedimentary layers to tap a commercially-valuable product in the volcanic residue.

Commercial development of perlite from an open-pit mine near Superior, Arizona, makes possible an interesting visit. Until recently it was necessary to park a few hundred feet up the hill from the entrance, to avoid seeing the "Posted—No Trespassing" sign, and sneak through a rusty barbed-wire fence. Unable to police the premises, aware of the dangers where blasting is conducted, and realizing that rockhounds will be rockhounds, the management solved the problem.

Now open to the public on week ends—25c per adult entitles entrance and the privilege of picking up or digging out and carrying home five pounds of Apache Tears (obsidian nodules).

These glassy blobs, with a hardness of 5 to 6 on the Mohs Scale, are prized by rockhounds and lapidaries as semi-precious gemstones. Items of jewelry



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made from the Apache Tears can be found in stores throughout the Southwest.

The tear pit is 64 miles (63 paved) from Phoenix. From downtown take

U.S. 60-70 east, thru Mesa, for 62 miles. At this point start looking for a sign on the right directing you to the pit; you will be able to see Superior directly ahead.—END

## Fish Lake Valley, Nevada--another good Apache Tear collecting field...

Nevada's Fish Lake Valley, lying along the California border on the eastern edge of the White Mountains, is a "happy hunting ground" for the amateur mineralogist. The big prize here: colorful Apache tears. The area also contains agates in various colors, jasper, rhyolite, some chalcedony, a few geodes and a scattering of petrified wood.

Fish Lake Valley is a field trip the family car—low-slung or otherwise—will not find difficult to negotiate. *Desert Magazine's* report on this area comes from F. B. Terry of Bigpine, Calif.

From Bigpine (motels, gasoline, groceries, supplies) the roundtrip to Fish Lake, via Westgard Pass, Deep Springs and Oasis, is 150 miles in length. There are no facilities after leaving Bigpine. Water is available in some of the mountain streams, but it is best to carry your own. This is an ideal autumn or spring trip—winter cold and summer heat are extreme in this area.

The collecting field itself has no water and very little firewood—but there is an abundance of wide open space, and you can make a dry-camp almost anywhere you desire.

To reach the main gem field, turn right (east) on the dirt road at Mile 67 from Bigpine. This junction is marked by its proximity to a Nevada State Highway

maintenance station on the main Fish Lake Valley highway (the turn-off is ¼-mile north of the station). A stream crosses the highway just beyond the station.

Travel this east-leading dirt road for eight miles. Near its end it makes a "Y" branch, in the crotch of which lie two old tanks marking the site of the borax mill ruins. Eighty years ago 200 men worked at this borax mine on the floor of the dry lake.

The low hills to the north and the area immediately surrounding them are a prize gem-mineral collecting area. Apache tears from this locality are nearly 90% translucent, with a wide range of color shadings: pink, green and gray. Some opaque specimens are red, black, amber and other colors. The farther north your prospect, the larger the tears tend to be.

At best, this area does not contain an over-abundance of agate, but Terry found some interesting specimens with cream, green and red coloration. Mottled cream and brown jasper was also picked up. The local geodes are not of the best quality.

The collecting area also can be reached from U. S. Highway 6 on the north. Almost immediately after turning south off Highway 6 onto the paved Fish Lake Valley road (Nevada 3A), a dirt trail branches left (east). The collecting field extends from 4.8 to 10.1 miles south of Highway 6 along both sides of this dirt road.—END

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