

Gem Mining at the Cryo Genie Pegmatite Mine, southern California; Report #6,
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On Monday Ken and Dave got started digging the rest of the pocket out. It seemed to be pinching down with only 2 small areas with pocket mud and a few quartz crystals showing. Even these closed down to a mixture of mud and broken feldspar in just a few centimeters. The apparent back of the pocket turned out to be the back of a roof plate that had fallen with its back facing the direction we were digging.

On Tuesday, they had filled up another 12 buckets of pocket material and found a dozen plates. Near the bottom of this section of pocket Ken exposed some really nice pink tourmaline crystals.

On Wednesday, they started removing the tourmalines and one of them looked bigger than Apollo from last year. All seem to be in better shape than the pocket last year and the green end is definitely a better color. None have been even washed off yet, we will wait and take to our cleaning facility not far from the mine. The clays will protect the crystals while being transported against further chipping.

Ken left one of the tourmalines in the face of the pocket to be video taped this weekend while it is being removed. The crystal was sitting vertically in the pocket with the large end down, looking like a very colorful cone hat, and is nearly 22.5 centimeters in length. I arrived early Friday morning, and together, Ken, David and I worked around the pocket in order to remove the crystal carefully.

We worked through the weekend trying to finish up the pocket but it kept on producing some quartz and feldspars. Finally, Sunday morning, the pocket had only a small area on the right side that still looked as if it might produce something. Then, around 3 PM the pocket opened up again and the dream of a gem miner came true. Several more large, pink and green tourmaline crystals were found and one of them Ken is saying is larger than any other pink tourmaline crystal found in the United States.

The pocket we thought would only produce the one significant crystal ended up producing 10 significant crystals. It was a segregated pocket, the major tourmalines were found in three areas only. The pocket was about 2.5 meters wide, 2 meters deep and about 0.5 meters thick.

Last year we joked that every pocket we found was better than the last pocket and now the tradition is carrying on. This pocket is much better than the Big Monday Pocket of last year in every aspect; the tourmalines are less broken up, better color and better luster and the accessory minerals are much better than any other pocket found at the Cryo Genie Mine.



Figure 1. Al Ordway admires one of the large tapered tourmaline crystals, pink at one end and blue-green at the other.



Figure 2. Jim Clanin (left) and Dave Kalamas piece tourmalines together from the muck.



Figure 3. Ken Gochenour with a tourmaline cluster.