

- How much do people know about this most precious stone.

DIAMONDS: THEIR LEGENDS AND USES

In the newly independent nation of Lesotho in South Africa, the wife of a poor farmer found a 601-karat diamond — the seventh largest in the world — which she sold for \$300,000! Karat was originally the weight of the carob seed, against which diamonds were weighed — but the term today applies to metric karat.

There is a story that the father of Winston Churchill while gazing down the pit of the Kimberley diamond mine remarked: "All for the vanity of women!" One of the ladies present countered by saying, "And the depravity of man."

A Persian legend says that in all creation the diamond is the most useless. In fact the legend says that it was the devil who created diamonds to excite avarice after Satan noted that gay flowers in the Garden of Eden fascinated Eve.

The earliest diamonds used in jewelry were found in India and Borneo, and these two places remained the chief sources of this precious stone until 1725 when diamonds were discovered in Brazil. The world's largest and finest diamond was found in South Africa. It weighed 1-1/2 pounds and was without any blemish. The South African Government presented it to King Edward VII for the crown jewels and it was sent from South Africa to London by ordinary, unregistered mail! Valued at \$2-1/2 million, it was eventually divided into nine stones and incorporated into the royal regalia.

Some stones are legendary — like the Blue Diamond, today known as the Hope Diamond. The Frenchman Jean Baptiste Tavernier was said to have stolen it from the forehead of the god Rama-Sita after disposing of the temple

priests, and the god was said to have taken his revenge by having the Frenchman eaten by wild animals. But this is pure fantasy as it is known that Tavenier is buried in Moscow where he died of fever. Another famous diamond — the Orlov — is also said to have been stolen from an Indian statue by another Frenchman. The Regent, or Pitt diamond also came from India. It weighed 410 karats and it is said that the man who found it smuggled it out by slashing his leg and hiding the stone under the bandage.

Diamonds, of course, have other commercial uses. An article entitled *Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend* says: "The diamond is still the hardest substance known.

Where the hardest tool steel will cut a groove five miles long in bronze; a tungsten-carbide tool stays sharp for 21 miles; the diamond-tipped tool will make a cut 1200 miles long. Diamond now produce most of the world's fine wire; diamonds also polish automobile piston rings, drill oil wells, cut all types of stone, polish dental fillings, play much of the world's recorded music. Yet if heated sufficiently in the presence of air, a diamond will vanish in a puff of carbon dioxide."

If diamonds are found in Borneo, isn't it possible that they can be found in places like Palawan? — *Alejandro R. Roces, Manila Chronicle, Nov. 11, 1967.*