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Arrow on this photo of the moon points to sliver of Devil's Lake lava

Central Oregon rock rests on the moon

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There is a bit of rock from Central Oregon on the bright moon these nights as the orb circles the earth.

It was placed there by NASA Astronaut James B. Irwin, who, with David R. Scott and Alfred M. Worden, was aboard Apollo 15 on the highly successful mission to the moon this past summer.

The story of how the Oregon rock, a splinter from a chunk of dacite near Devil's Lake on the Cascade Lakes Highway west of Bend, found an eternal resting place on the moon, starts with a dinner honoring the 16 astronauts who were guests of Bend in 1966.

Various Bend residents were hosts to the astronauts at a welcoming party held at the Bend Golf Club.

Floyd E. Watson, Bend building inspector, was host to Irwin and during the evening got well acquainted with him.

In time, Watson forgot the astronauts' dinner. Then in July, 1971, came the release of names of astronauts for the Apollo 15 mission to the moon.

In the list was Irwin, graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and from the University of Michigan.

Watson immediately wrote to Irwin, congratulating him on his appointment to the Apollo 15 command, adding "I am sending you a small sliver of Central Oregon lava which I hope you will be able to deliver to the moon for me. I have five grandchildren who would be eternally

grateful to you."

One of the grandsons hopes someday to enter the space program and fly to another planet.

Watson little expected to hear from the busy astronaut. Then came a letter this week. It was from Irwin, who had toured the base of the Apennine Mountains on the moon, rode, with Commander Scott, over rugged moonscape, drive an \$8 million "moon buggy" to the brink of an awesome rift, and studied billion-year-old rocks.

The letter was brief:

"I did carry your sliver of lava to the moon and left it there. I took a picture of the location, and will send it to you, as soon as it has been properly mounted."

The picture, autographed by Astronaut Irwin, was attached, with an arrow pointing to a small black object on the silvery lunar dust. That object was from a tongue of lava which ages ago flowed to the edge of the Devil's Lake basin.

Irwin dropped the bit of rock from Bend's moon country on the moon on July 31, 1971.

The story of the Oregon rock that found its way to the moon aboard Apollo 15 may not be at an end. The Devil's Lake area is in the Bend District of the Deschutes National Forest. Ranger Jack R. Krieger is considering marking the spot, adjacent to the highway, with a roadside sign. That sign, if approved, might read:

"A piece of rock from this site was placed on the moon in July, 1971, by Apollo 15 astronauts."