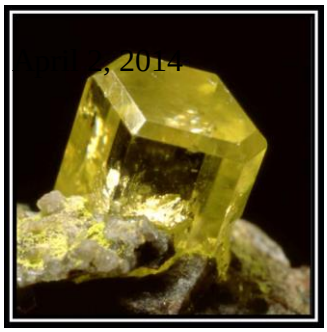
What's New in the Mineral World?



Report #56

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Greetings to all fellow pandemic-outlasting shut-ins and semi-shut-ins, good-book-rereaders and Netflix repeat-consumers, board game players, yoga space-outers, home-schooling draftees, and precaution-takers as we all must undoubtedly be (wash those hands! wear that mask!). But we are also, and here comes the good part, *mineral collectors* who conduct lengthy haunts of the dealers' sites on the Web in search of diversion (at least) and treasure (at best) that may help us to wear down these dreary, difficult days. Anyway, there's some *very good stuff* on the Web right now too; let me illustrate…

What's New on the Web

The pandemic has caused the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show to be cancelled this year, although we are assured that it will be back *next* year, fine as ever. Meanwhile, a late-April update on *Fabre Minerals* (fabreminerals.com) is called the "Pre-Ste. Marie 2020 (virtual) update," previewing some items that Jordi intends to offer (virtually) at around the usual time of the show, i.e. in the last week of June. However, it was in early February, during the 2020 Tucson Show, that I first got to see some of Jordi's splendid new specimens from a recent **chalcocite** find in the Las Cruces mine, Gerena near Seville, Andalusía, Spain—and I wrote about this chalcocite, too, as perhaps you have seen in the Tucson report in May-June 2020.

Right now, among the "pre-Ste.-Marie virtual" items on the *Fabre Minerals* website, Jordi has posted 15 handsome specimens of the new chalcocite, from thumbnail to small-cabinet size. They show sharp, lustrous metallic black cyclic twins up to 9 mm individually, forming uniform coatings over a dark brown to black matrix of massive chalcocite, pyrite, and Sb-rich tennantite, with a little white calcite mixed in. Really good Spanish chalcocite is indeed something new, so let us appreciate this significant find from

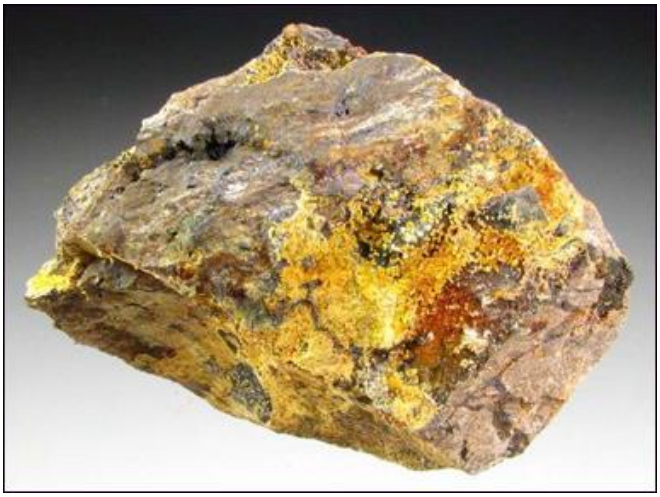
an open-pit copper mine still under active development: it's for sure that Jordi will let us know if new specimen strikes occur there.

Chalcocite, 3.1 cm, from the Las Cruces mine, Comaria Sierra Norte, Seville, Andalućia, Spain. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

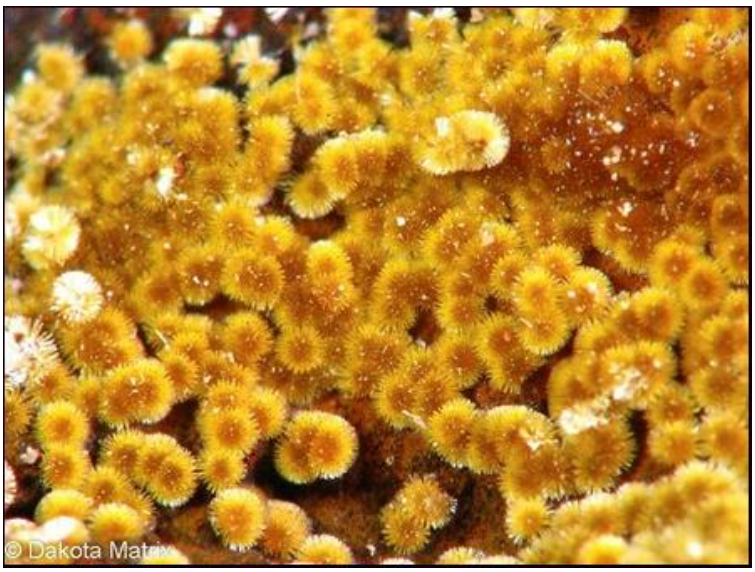
Jordi also offers nine beautiful miniature to small-cabinet-size clusters of **fluorite** crystals from the La Viesca mine, La Collada area, Asturias, northern Spain, all collected at this famous locality between 2005 and 2010. The crystals are lustrous, transparent cubes, some beveled by small dodecahedral faces, to 3 cm, in varying shades of blue through bluish purple. You can find "La Collada" fluorite on numerous websites these days, but this small lot of Jordi's is especially fine.

Fluorite, 8.2 cm, from La Viesca mine, La Collada area, Asturias, Spain. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Yes, April 23, 2020 was a while ago now, but the date is noteworthy, not only because it marked William Shakespeare's 456th birthday but *also* because it was then that Tom Loomis of *Dakota Matrix Minerals* (dakotamatrix.com) posted an unusual, brightly colorful page of "Southeast US Phosphates." These uncommon secondary species (cacoxenite, beraunite, kidwellite, strengite, phosphosiderite…) are from limonite bogs which were once little iron mines in Georgia, Alabama and Arkansas. They do not, as a rule, form collector-quality macrocrystals, but they can yield spectacular micromounts where they bloom in fissures, fractures and vugs in the soft brown matrix material. Most of Tom's pieces as seen in late May on the website were already marked "sold," but here I show you three shots anyway, for their educational value as well as, of course, for their beauty. The cacoxenite doesn't look like too much from a distance, but check out that close-up!



Cacoxenite, 5.5 cm, from the Brewer mine, Cedartown, Polk County, Georgia. Dakota Matrix specimen and photo.



Close-up of the cacoxenite specimen above.

And in the specimen from Arkansas the outer red-brown material is beraunite, the inner yellow cavity lining is cacoxenite, and the purple spheres laid in the middle like otherworldly-exotic birds' eggs are aggregates of strengite microcrystals:

Strengite (purple) with cacoxenite (yellow) in vug in beraunite (red-brown), 3.5 cm, from Three Oaks Gap, Polk County, Arkansas. Dakota Matrix Specimen and photo.

As everyone knows by now, Adam Wright of *The Adelaide Mine* (theadelaidemine.com) began in 2012 to extract magnificent **crocoite** specimens by the thousands from a huge pocket system, which he calls the "Red River Find," in the famous Adelaide mine, Dundas mineral field, Tasmania, Australia (see the article in the November-December 2012 issue of the *Mineralogical Record*). Adam still has plenty of specimens of Adelaide mine crocoite on hand, some to jumbo sizes, all of these being jackstraw masses of brittle, red-orange, sticklike crystals precariously held together by patches of gossany oxides—visit the site of *The Adelaide Mine* and see.

Now, though, there's a new Australian dealership (new to the Web, anyway) called *Crystal Fraction* (crystalfraction.com), which also offers fine crocoite specimens, some from the Adelaide mine, others from the nearby Platt and Dundas Extended prospects. All but one of the Adelaide pieces are jumbles of very thin "sticks" much like Adam Wright's, but one specimen is of a style I've never seen before in Adelaide mine crocoite. It is a 9-cm piece of earthy brown gossan with a deep open vug lined by well individualized, thick, wedge-terminated crocoite crystals—"from the clay pocket which is in the lower levels of the Adelaide mine and worked in the early 1990s," says the text. The specimen, from the former Frank Griffiths collection, thus predates the Red River Find and is certainly "different"; its price is $950.

Crocoite, 9 cm, from the Adelaide mine, Dundas mineral field, Tasmania, Australia. Crystal Fraction specimen and photo.

While you're on the *Crystal Fraction* site, go to Mineral Specimens → Australia and you will find several very attractive miniature to cabinet-size specimens of something not seen in any abundance for quite some time: **pyromorphite on malachite** from Brown's Open Pit, Rum Jungle, Northern Territory, Australia. Excellent specimens of this material first came to the Tucson Show in 2010 (see that report in the May-June 2011 issue), and the *Crystal Fraction* pieces were taken out in November of 2010 from what was called the "Pizza Pocket," but, to quote from the site again, "This location has been flooded since 2012 and is not likely to produce any more specimens."

Distinctively, Brown's Open Pit specimens show small but bright, yellow-green pyromorphite crystals peppered all over the rolling, velvety dark green surfaces of botryoidal malachite. For the spiffy 4.5-cm example shown here the price is a very reasonable $225, and there are more, just as pretty and a few larger, up for sale on the website.

Pyromorphite on malachite, 4.5 cm, from the "Pizza Pocket," Brown's Open Pit, Rum Jungle, Northern Territory, Australia. Crystal Fraction specimen and photo.

Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* (irocks.com) is now an even busier online presence than it was before the pandemic: Rob has new galleries offering specimens from Tsumeb; specimens from China; thumbnail and miniature specimens; specimens from the collection of Jack Halpern (that fine gentleman from San Francisco who happily celebrated his 100th birthday in May but has been doing a bit of de-accessioning lately); and an older gallery which still has lots of old classics from the collection of Kay Robertson (who died, age *almost* 100, in early May). Of course I can't show you all of these wonders, but, since I'm always interested in the New and the Different (i.e. in occurrences I hadn't known of before), let me mention Rob's two impressively Different cabinet-size specimens of **quartz pseudomorphs after anhydrite with hyalite opal**, from a site called Rumipata, Ichuña, General Sánchez Cerro Province, Moquegua, Peru.

Quartz after anhydrite with hyalite opal coating, 6.9 cm, Rumipata, Ichuña, General Sánchez Cerro Province, Moquegua, Peru. The Arkenstone specimen and photo.

These are clusters of bladed, flat-topped, former anhydrite crystals now replaced by quartz and coated by pale greenish hyalite, the hyalite coatings being fluorescent bright neon-green under shortwave ultraviolet light. The smaller specimen, shown here, is priced at $1,500; the larger one, 11 cm across, goes for $4,250.

The website of *Dan Weinrich Minerals* (weinrichmineralsinc.com) is also keeping busy these days. In an update of May 26, Dan offers nice new thumbnail-size specimens of, among others, epidote from Dom Basilio, Bahia, Brazil; fluorite from Larkin's quarry, County Galway, Ireland; prehnite from the O & G Woodbury quarry, Litchfield County, Connecticut; and anatase from Geiteryggen, Hardangervidda West, Norway. And the site's many pages are loaded with good-looking miniature to cabinet-size specimens of **axinite-(Mn)**, with accompanying epidote, from "Canta, Lima," Peru.

Now, "Canta" is the name of both a town and a province in Lima Department, and it would appear that this somewhat vaguely designated locality is a new one, at least for axinite-(*Mn*). Some very similar-looking examples of axinite-(*Fe*), many with epidote, have come in the recent past from other Peruvian localities (some said to be quarries, others just roadcuts), not only in Lima but also in Ica and Huancavelica departments as well. We could use more precise locality data, but in any case the "Canta" specimens are gleaming clusters of bladed, pale brown, translucent to transparent crystals, some with prismatic, pistachio-green epidote crystals peeking out here and there.

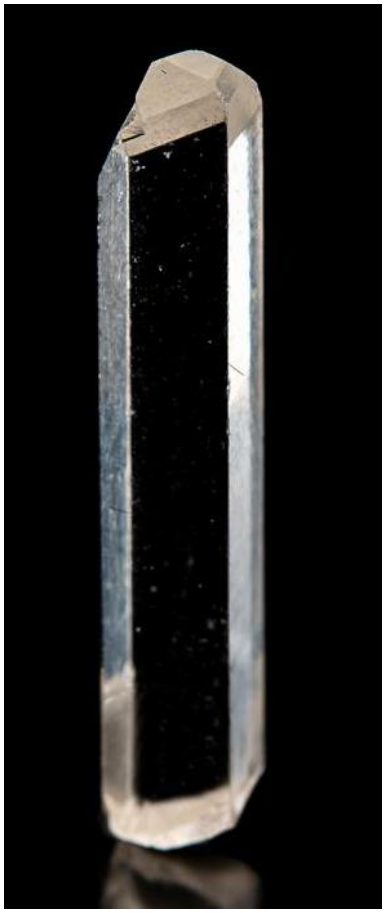
Dan asks $500 for the specimen shown below.

Axinite-(Mn) with epidote, 7.5 cm, from Canta Province, Lima Department, Peru. Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.

Having scrolled through Dan's many "regular" pages, one comes at last, for a kind of dessert, to the section called "Our Very Best," where superb thumbnail and small-miniature specimens, many from the collection of the late Diana Weinrich, are offered. One of these is an exceptional miniature of **native bismuth** from Schlema-Hartenstein, Sachsen, Germany ($4500).

Bismuth, 3.3 cm, from Schlema-Hartenstein, Erzgebirge, Sachsen, Germany. Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.

To linger on thumbnails (indulge me here) for one more entry, I'll recommend *Dave Bunk Minerals* (davebunkminerals.com), both for leftovers from the big sale of Rich Olsen's thumbnail collection at Tucson in 2020 (see the Tucson report in the May-June 2020 issue) and for plenty of other diminutive winning items on Dave's many pages of "general" material. For instance, pages 8 and 9 feature about a dozen loose crystals of the rare borate **nifontovite** from the Rey y Reina mine, Charcas, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Before 2008 nifontovite wasn't just rare but, you might even say, *stupidly* rare, and few collectors had ever heard of the stuff. But in May-June 2008 a pocket in one of the Charcas mines yielded about 35 loose, thumbnail-size crystals and two miniature-size crystal groups. Then, 2009-2010 saw the coming of maybe 50 more specimens from the Rey y Reina mine, including groups to cabinet size. Most nifontovite specimens seen on the current market are loose, individual crystals with single terminations, and Dave Bunk's current offering is the largest and best I've come upon for some time. The nifontovite crystals, from 2 to 3.1 cm long, are utterly colorless and transparent; some have little surficial speckles and scabs of yellowish calcite, but the prettiest and the priciest—like the one shown here—are so pellucidly clear that they hardly seem to be "there" at all save where ambient light hits an edge or a terminal face.



Nifontovite, 2 cm, from the Rey y Reina mine, Charcas, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

As mentioned, Dave Bunk is selling off the entirety of a splendid thumbnail collection assembled by North Carolina collector Rich Olsen, who is now moving on to the acquisition of larger pieces. At Tucson's Main Show, eager crowds kept ebbing and flowing, oohing and aahing, in front of the showcases bearing the Olsen thumbnails…I purchased two of them while still lusting after about twenty more.

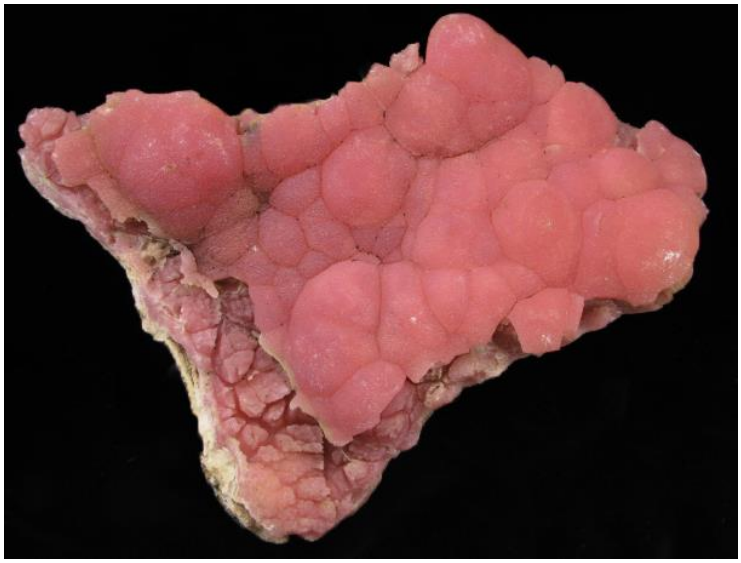
Here are three ex-Olsen beauties which remained (somehow) unsold in Tucson in February, their prices varying widely—from $200 for the **topaz**, to $850 for the **boleite**, to a rather ooh-aah $3,500 for the **stolzite** (next page).

Topaz, 2.3 cm, from Klein Spitzkopje, Erongo region, Namibia. Ex Rich Olsen collection. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Boleite, 2.3 cm, from the Amelia mine, Boleo, Baja California, Mexico. Ex Rich Olsen collection. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Stolzite, 2.6 cm, from Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia. Ex Rich Olsen collection. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Ibrahim Jameel of Westmont, Illinois and of *The Khyber Mineral Company* (khyberminerals.com) is someone I used to look forward to visiting in his InnSuites room during the Tucson Show, but now he no longer goes to shows. Instead he maintains an extensive, sophisticated website from which he does business exclusively. On May 6, Ibrahim posted several intriguing specimens of Japanese **rhodochrosite**, both from the familiar (but long defunct) Oppu mine and from the much less familiar Osarizawa mine, active only from 1936 to 1965.



Rhodochrosite, 15.4 cm, from the Oppu mine, Nishimeya-mura, Naka-Tsugaru-gun, Aomori Prefecture, Honshu, Japan. Khyber Mineral Company specimen; Ibrahim Jameel photo.

Most of the best of these pieces are already marked "sold," but there remain about ten miniature to cabinet-size examples of baby-pink botryoidal rhodochrosite from the Oppu mine, bearing low to mid-three-figure prices—except for the one shown above, which is the biggest, darkest, and generally most (forgive me) *oppulent*-looking of these antique items, priced at $2300.

Rhodochrosite from the Oppu mine almost always comes in botryoidal form, but the Osarizawa mine sometimes produced clusters of sharp, pale pink rhombohedral crystals suggestive of many localities in Colorado. The specimen shown below, the best of just four in the posting, is already, like the others, marked "sold," but hey, now you know what Osarizawa mine rhodochrosite looks like, and who among your friends and relations could say the same?

Rhodochrosite, 9 cm, from the Osarizawa mine, Kazuno City, Akita Prefecture, Honshu, Japan. Khyber Mineral Company specimen; Ibrahim Jameel photo.

Also, Ibrahim scatters about the "North America" section (three pages) of the *Khyber* website about 25 **wulfenite** specimens from the Ojuela mine, Mapimí, Durango, Mexico, all of which show the eccentric and likable "sandwich" habit characteristic of finds in Ojuela in 1980 and 1993. "Sandwich" wulfenite consists of tabular to thick-tabular crystals, individually to 1 cm or so, which are brown in their middles and yellow in their outer zones, in jumbled groups, sometimes on white dolomitic matrix and sometimes loose. Again, most of Ibrahim's specimens are marked "sold," but a few, from thumbnail to small-cabinet size, remain enticingly (as I see it) available.

Wulfenite, 3.7 cm, from the Ojuela mine, Mapimí, Durango, Mexico. Khyber Mineral Company specimen; Ibrahim Jameel photo.

As I've said, the *Khyber* website is very extensive, with, for example, 22 "clearance" pages devoted to specimens of very miscellaneous kinds, sizes, prices and personalities. I've chosen two of the "clearance" miniatures to show you here (and on the next page) just because they are pretty and slightly offbeat—and because the Congo **cerussite** costs just $72 and the Chinese **creedite** costs just $58.

Cerussite, 3.6 cm, from Mfouati, Bouenza Department, Congo Republic. Khyber Mineral Company specimen; Ibrahim Jameel photo.

Creedite, 3 cm, from the Qinglong mine, Dachang orefield, Guizhou, China. Khyber Mineral Company specimen; Ibrahim Jameel photo.

Once or twice before I have brought readers' attention to Marcus Origlieri's *Mineral Species* website (mineralspecies.com), wherein Marcus customarily offers specimens of very rare species and/or offers well documented antique specimens from old collections. It is the latter category which dominates a May 26 posting of "American Minerals," for here one has a rare chance of acquiring one of two relics (or both!) from long-gone eastern U.S. localities, and they're *attractive* relics at that.

Diopside, 4.4 cm, from De Kalb, St. Lawrence County, New York. Mineral Species specimen and photo.

The last major collecting of gemmy green **diopside** specimens from De Kalb, near Richville, St. Lawrence County, New York occurred in the early 1970s, and I have seen modest thumbnail-size crystals of the material selling for more than $500, but Marcus now prices this 4.4-cm group of sharp, stout, semi-gemmy diopside crystals from De Kalb at $125. (Readers interested in learning more about this old classic locality should consult George Robinson's article in the November-December 1990 issue.)

But the superstar of the May 26 *Mineral Species* update is a 5.4-cm **pyromorphite** from the famous Wheatley mine, Phoenixville, Chester County, Pennsylvania. During the latter part of the 19th century, Phoenixville was (with Bad Ems, Germany) one of the two best localities in the world for pyromorphite, the very finest examples having been taken during the 1850s from the Phoenixville district, a bit more than 20 miles west of Philadelphia. Not surprisingly, most of the surviving specimens which are seen on the market once in a while are heavily damaged, but this one of Marcus's was, he tells us, once in the collection of Arthur Flagg and clearly was well cared for there. From the photo, it appears that the specimen has nearly all of its little sprouts of olive-green crystals intact, and it is lustrous and fresh-looking, besides. Marcus asks $450 for it—and I would say that that's a *bargain*.

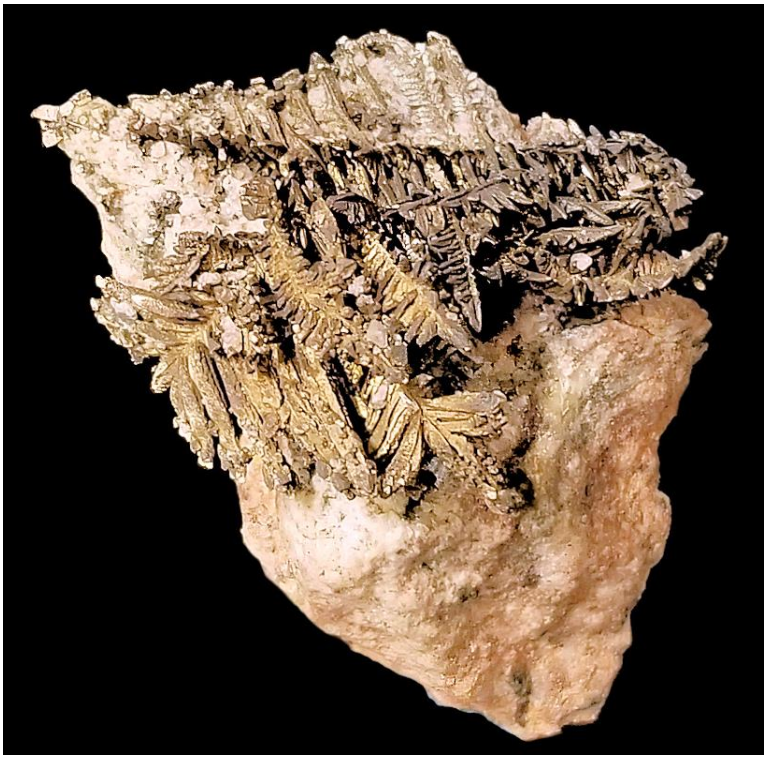
Pyromorphite, 5.4 cm, from the Wheatley mine, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Mineral Species specimen and photo.

Fine **grossular** specimens from a now defunct locality in Hastings County, Ontario, called the York River Skarn Zone are seldom seen on the market. To quote my own description in *Moore's Compendium of Mineral Discoveries 1960-2015*, "At a point on the east bank of the York River, near some old quarries in nepheline syenite about 11 km east of Bancroft, cinnamon-colored crystals of grossular ("hessonite") to 5 cm occur in calcite-filled and wollastonite-filled pockets in diopsidic rock." In 1994-1995, Mike Walter and his father conducted what Mike tells me was "an extensive collecting operation" at the locality, taking out "hundreds" of grossular crystals which have never yet been offered for sale. Some of these vividly colorful modified-dodecahedral crystals can be seen now on the website of Mike's dealership, *Geologic Desires* (geologicdesire.com). He says that more will be offered in person "the next time I do a show," but since we can't tell exactly when *that* will be, the web-surfer is welcome to check out the garnets as currently seen on the site of *Geologic Desires*. The crystals are cinnamon-brown to bright orange-red, and they range in size from under 2 cm to almost 8 cm; most commonly they are translucent but some are opaque while others (smaller) are gemmy. Some clusters of crystals show associations of green diopside and brown vesuvianite. At its best this is outstanding grossular, worthy to share cabinet space with your prize examples from Italy, Mexico and Vermont.

Grossular, 3 cm, from the York River Skarn Zone, Bancroft, Ontario, Canada. Geologic Desires specimen; Mike Walter photo.

Often I like to conclude my online survey by showing a single, rare and/or unusual and/or aesthetic, *exceptional* specimen…and often I've gone indeed to Kevin Ward's *Exceptional Minerals* (exceptionalminerals.com) to find the superstar. This time I found it on the "Tucson 2020 Showroom #4" page of Kevin's site, posted on May 14 with the usual big, dramatic photos of specimens of all kinds (although Kevin especially likes

silver-bearing species and in most cases his pages are heavy in these—as is this one). All right: here we have a magnificent specimen of dendritic **native silver**, with very sharp dendritic "feathers" lying quite lightly over the top of a tan-colored 5.7-cm matrix that looks like massive quartz. The most unusual thing about this superb silver specimen is the stated locality: "Kitwe, Copperbelt Province, Zambia." Mindat shows many copper mines around the town of Kitwe, and notes the occurrence of excellent malachite, pseudomalachite and libethenite in the district, but neither silver nor any silver-essential species is listed among the minerals occurring there. So either (perhaps) an anomalous silver-rich feeder vein was encountered at some time in one of the Kitwe copper mines, or (perhaps) Kevin has been misinformed about the locality. Never mind: let us admire this gorgeous specimen anyway, and, when we're through doing so, let us turn away from our computers for the rest of the day and continue summering, avoiding the virus, and taking care of each other.



Silver, 5.7 cm, from Kitwe, Copperbelt Province, Zambia. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

The best of summer wishes from me and from all the rest of the *Mineralogical Record* team.

Tom Moore

