

A Few Favorite Specimens (and Why I Like Them!)

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Diopside and Calcite
Location : Mindouli, Republic of Congo

Customers and other collectors always ask me how I select specimens for my inventory and for my personal collection. My answer is always the same: I look for those specimens which have a combination of aesthetic appeal, historical or mineralogical interest, and excellent crystal form. I explain that I



Fluorapatite
Location : Sapo Mine, Brazil

like specimens which engage both the eye and the intellect. If they are at my home or in my booth at a show, I point to my favorite specimens and explain how they meet these three requirements. I've selected four of my favorites to do the same here. The first three are part of my inventory and are available for sale to any interested collector.

The bright blue fluorapatite specimen from the Sapo Mine in Brazil definitely fits all three criteria! The contrast of the crystals against the stark white albite matrix is stunning and the tabular 2.1 cm main crystal is perfectly placed in the center of the matrix. As for mineralogical interest, fine books of muscovite completely cover the reverse of the specimen, providing a unique look at the paragenesis of this vein. Finally, the fluorapatite is sharply crystallized, with typical zoning, a gemmy exterior, and great luster. Truly a beautiful specimen in many ways! And the specimen has an interesting anecdote to go with it: I was travelling with it in my carry-on luggage when

To see more of these beautiful specimens and discuss them with Ed, visit him at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show, Booth# 1028-1030. February 13th-16th.

Explore Ed's website: www.edwardsminerals.com or drop him an email: info@edwardsminerals.com.

I was pulled from the security line for additional screening. Taken back to a secure area, I was asked to unpack the specimen. After examining it, the security personnel swabbed it for explosives. It seems that it was so fluorescent in the x-ray machine, it triggered an alert!

Up next is a superb diopside and calcite. In this specimen, the beauty lies more in the color and luster than in its shape. A floater with no matrix, the diopside forms a solid grouping of doubly-terminated crystals. The diopside exhibits the perfect color for the species, a deep, luminous blue-green, with excellent clarity. The sharpness of the crystal form also catches the eye and is enhanced by the fine vitreous luster. The uniform field of color is slightly broken by small calcite crystals. When they first view this specimen, most people assume it is from Tsumeb, known for its fine diopside specimens. In fact, it comes from Mindouli in the Republic of Congo, and it is an extremely fine specimen for the locality. In addition, the specimen has historical interest as well. It dates back to the mid-1800s, and was at one time sold by Boubee & Co. and part of the Jean Behier (after whom behierite is named) collection.

The third specimen is a little jewel of a benitoite,



Benitoite, Neptunite and Joaquinite
Location : Dallas Gem Mine, California

neptunite and joaquinite from the Dallas Gem Mine in California. This tiny treasure features the three minerals for which the mine is famous—all in one aesthetic thumbnail! The benitoite is a fine, translucent, deep blue, triply-terminated crystal which would make a fine specimen by itself. What makes the specimen one of my favorites is the tiny, sub-millimeter joaquinite perched on a contrasting spur of white natrolite. It could not be positioned any better if I had placed it there myself. The black neptunite provides just enough contrast and matrix to complete the specimen. That the mine is the type locality for both benitoite and joaquinite and that both are very rare silicates just adds to its uniqueness!

Finally, the old elbaite, orthoclase, and smoky quartz specimen resides in my personal collection. At first glance, it may appear somewhat nondescript when compared to the many fine tourmalines from Paki-



Elbaite, Orthoclase and Smoky Quartz
Location : San Piero in Campo, Elba Island, Italy

stan, California, Africa, and Brazil. However, it is from the type locality for elbaite (San Piero in Campo, Elba Island, Italy), so we need to evaluate this specimen in view of its historical significance. From an historical standpoint, this specimen has a superb provenance. It was in the collection of Clarence Bement, one of the premier mineral collectors of the 19th century. His collection was sold to J.P. Morgan, who then donated it to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The AMNH label accompanies the specimen. The trimming of the specimen also provides mineralogical interest—modern American specimens remove more of the matrix, eliminating much of the geological context. In this case, the matrix is substantially intact, showing the pegmatite nature of the deposit. The elbaite crystals have a fine, deep red, true rubellite color and good size for the locality. Also, they are well-placed and aerial on the matrix with good contrast to the creamy orthoclase and dark smoky quartz. Both of these characteristics make this a fine specimen for the locality. Given all of these factors—historic, mineralogical, and aesthetic—this specimen is my favorite of my collection.

If you would like to see more of these specimens, or discuss them with Ed, you can visit his booth at the TGMS show (booth 1028-1030), drop him an email at info@edwardsminerals.com, or explore his website at www.edwardsminerals.com!