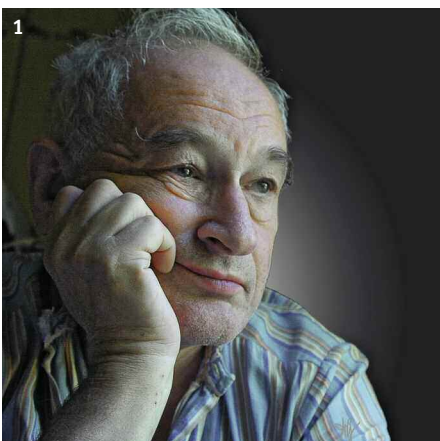


## BORIS KANTOR: ABOUT MYSELF

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1. Boris Z. Kantor. Self-portrait.

*The Mineralogical Almanac Editor has asked me to tell its readers how I became a collector and a mineral lover.*

It happened that I'd become a mineral collector three times. The first time was in my childhood when I was presented the book *Entertaining mineralogy* by Alexander E. Fersman in 1937. The wonderful pictures and magic words "tourmaline," "chalcedony," "potassium salt" took my breath away. If only I could have found any mineral specimen! At least topaz or even Iceland spar... just to look at it and hold in my hand so long as I wanted, to show to everyone and no one else can have it. In the summer at our dacha I imagined myself as an Ural miner and was looking for minerals. I found nothing but I wanted to do it and was absolutely sure to find something. All of us are great optimists at the age of seven.

Mum took me to the Fersman Mineralogical Museum. I was shocked by what I saw. I wasn't myself, I didn't want to leave. I was determined to become a mineralogist. My parents, who understood my feelings, bought a whole collection of sixteen tiny samples in the box divided into cells. I touched my treasure every minute and was always admiring it. All of me was in the world of pyrites, zinc blende and so on. There was a real precious stone there, aquamarine!

However, as it started so it ended. In my second grade in 1939 I became fond of doing chemical experiments and forgot about minerals. Then came the war and evacuation... When I came back to Moscow I spent all of my free time in the chemical lab of the Central Station of Young Technicians. There were already serious deals, the synthesis of dichlor-biphenil-sulphur, an assumed medicine for tuberculosis, organo-metallic compounds etc...

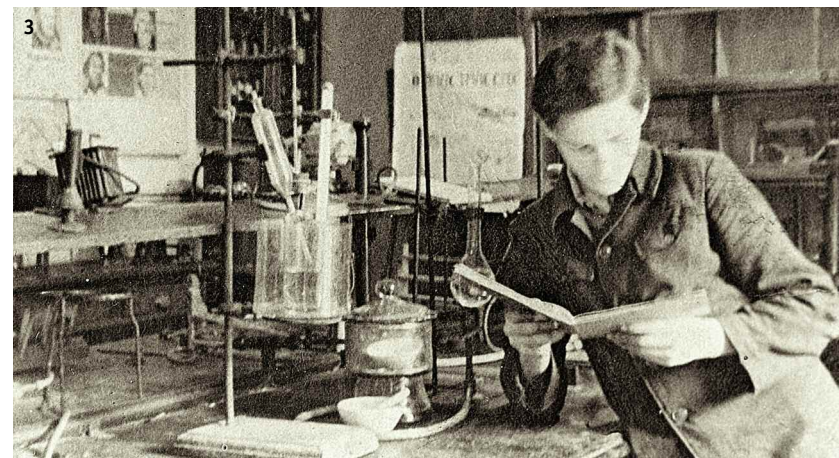
Having graduated from the school in 1948 I was to enter the Chemistry Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University but entered, however, not the University but the Moscow Automobile and Road Institute. I was engaged in probabilistic calculations of electric supply of urban transport, protection from inductive influence of high voltage transfer lines etc.

After hard work on my candidate thesis and its defense in 1967 I felt some mental vacuum to fill in. I remembered my childhood and decided to help my fifth grade son collect some minerals for nature study at his school. In the summer we lived not far from Gzhel (Moscow Oblast), where we could accidentally find pieces of ceramic raw materials, feldspar, sometimes with black tourmaline or purple cubes of fluorite. And in a local lime pit we dug beautiful geodes with rock crystal.

By the beginning of the school year our task had been completed, the box from ten eggs was full of specimens. But the hunt for minerals had already become our goal and we spent every weekend in quarries. And we read all the books which we could get. Thus thirty years later I again became a collector.



3. Boris Kantor in the chemical laboratory of Central Station of Young Technicians, 1947.  
The photo from Boris Kantor's family archive.



Early or late in some cases an unexperienced collector can go out on a wide and clear road. Our case belonged to anecdotal ones. We found a big lump of magnetite in the quarry near Podolsk. How could a big lump of magnetite be in the limestone quarry? Nobody could explain our discovery so we were sent to the man who could certainly do it. We saw a strong man with tough fists. He spoke ironically but listened carefully and it was seen he was able to concentrate on the subject. So I got acquainted with Victor I. Stepanov, mineralogical authority of those years, philosopher and expert on the subject (practician), a man of independent conviction and steady principles who was involved in World War II as the officer. The latter meant a lot for people of his surrounding. Victor I. Stepanov was not only a first class professional. In his mind a mineral was alive; it was born and lived its own life, getting "personal" features under the impact of external conditions. These were not only flowery words and free fantasy, but real science with its logics and system of evidence. Twenty years of friendship with this extraordinary man before he passed away in 1988, his ideas and way of thinking, our countless disputes, hard days and months of work shoulder-to-shoulder in the field enormously influenced me in my mineralogical interests and attitude to life. Since then I've always checked my deals and thoughts by Stepanov.

He had a lot of specimens from his field trips; we helped him sort them out in the well-known rooms in the cellar of the Institute building his collections and working space were. The rooms was also an informal scientific center. Colleagues and amateurs from everywhere, even abroad, flocked to Stepanov. They wanted to get advice, to hear his opinion, argue, look at his collections, carefully packed "cabinet" size specimens in carton boxes with detailed labels. It was the time of the formation of the Soviet school of ontogenesis mineralogists with heated discussions in which I was involved. In the Stepanov's basement I got acquainted with many famous scientists like Mikhail N. Maleev, Arkady G. Zhabin, Yuri M. Dymkov, Nikolay P. Yushkin and others.

The spring of 1968 was the first season of deliberate search. As soon as the snow melted we started to scout quarries and rock exposures around the country. It wasn't just a hunt for collection specimens. There were wonderful excursions with very interesting lectures and studying the practice of field work. At a ravine near Staraya Sytnya village near Moscow rich reserves of chalcedony were found and many years later these finds served me as a reference material for work on agate genesis.

At Stepanov's advice on May holidays we headed for Kerch (Crimea). In the Kamysh-Burun quarry and on the seashore we collected spectacular barite spherulites, specimens of anapaite and certainly vivianite in shells. A part of these finds was do-