

“MERCURY-ILLUMINATED”
A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY
OF VLADIMIR I. VASIL'EV

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1. Vladimir Ivanovich Vasil'ev
(March 22, 1929 – May 8, 2020).

On May 8, 2020, passed away Vladimir Ivanovich Vasil'ev; he was 91. Vladimir I. Vasil'ev was a man who has not received either any titles of honor or insignias because of his quite complicated temper, but he left a deep imprint in the field of studying mercury minerals. Without any exaggeration, he was one of the most authoritative researchers in this field not only in the former USSR, and in Russia, but also worldwide. His achievements were recognized by the International Mineralogical Society, and a mercury mineral vasilyevite, which was discovered in California (USA), was named for him.

Here is a quotation from *The Canadian Mineralogist*:
“*Vasilyevite, a new mineral species of ideal composition (involving complete anion order) $(Hg_2)^{2+}_{10}O_6I_3Br_2Cl(CO_3)$... has been identified on five micromount specimens collected from a small prospect pit within the dumps surrounding the long-abandoned Clear Creek mercury mine, New Idria district, San Benito County, California. ... The mineral is named vasilyevite in honor of Vladimir Ivanovich Vasilyev (b. 1929), of the Institute of Geology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk, Russia, for his numerous contributions to the study of new and rare Hg-bearing minerals, particularly those discovered in the former Soviet Union... The mineral and mineral name have been approved by the Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names IMA (2003–2016). Holotype material, consisting of four micromount specimens, two gelatin capsules with micrometric specks of pure material, one SEM stub and two single-crystal mounts, is housed in the Systematic Reference Series of the National Mineral Collection at the Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, under catalogue number NMC 68094. The polished sections used for both the quantitative reflectance and electron-microprobe studies are preserved at The Natural History Museum, London, U.K., under catalogue number BM 2003,5...*”

Papers on vasilyevite:

Roberts A.C., Cooper M.A., Hawthorne F.C., Stirling J.A.R., Paar W.H., Stanley C.J., Dunning G.E., Burns P.C. (2003) Vasilyevite, $(Hg_2)^{2+}_{10}O_6I_3Br_2Cl(CO_3)$, a new mineral species from the Clear Creek Claim, San Benito County, California. *The Canadian Mineralogist*, 41, pp. 1167–1172.

Cooper M.A., Hawthorne F.C. (2003) The crystal structure of vasilyevite, $(Hg_2)^{2+}_{10}O_6I_3Br_2Cl(CO_3)$. *The Canadian Mineralogist*, 41, pp. 1173–1181.

In our long-lasting searches for a title for this paper, we eventually decided to borrow this title from a publication by two researcher geologists at the Institute of Geology and Mineralogy, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, Geliy Sergeevich Fedoseev and Konstantin Romanovich Kovalev. Their paper was published in 2013 in a collection of memoir papers by veteran researchers and devoted to the 50-year history of the Institute. Published memoirs on a passed away person sometimes contain both true stories and sort of legends, as the authors of these publications are well aware that this person shall not be able to see this. However, the paper on Vladimir I. Vasil'ev we



2. Vladimir I. Vasil'ev at the Aktash mercury mine, Gornyi Altai, Russia, 1966.



3. Vladimir I. Vasil'ev (left) and Oleg K. Grechishchev examine samples from the Arzak deposit, Tyva, Russia, 1986.

referred to above was published when he was active and worked hard. Hereafter are some quotations from this paper:

“*The discovery of new minerals cannot be either somehow learned or inherited, because this is a type of activities of particularly gifted professionals. This type of activity requires hard and diverse work and much quickwittedness, meticulousness, and a wide area of thought in various fields of knowledge and adjacent avenues of research. This is, of course, an engrossing and very interesting work, but also a very laborious one, which requires a virile mind and a sound potential of creativity.*”

V.I. Vasil'ev, one of the most distinguished experts in mercury deposits, goes to his numerous discoveries by pursuing a laborious pathway of a hard-working and originally thinking researcher, who possesses a treasure-trove of encyclopedic knowledge and is fanatically devoted to his labor of love, who is an extraordinary innovator and can-do man, and who is eager to master high-precision techniques for studying the mineral microworld. V.I. Vasil'ev names mineral species he discovered mostly for famous geologists who were his gurus, masters, and colleagues: kuznetsovite for Acad. Valerii Alekseevich Kuznetsov; shakhovite for Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Prof. Felix Nikolaevich Shakhov; saukovite for Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR Alexander Alexanderovich Saukov; grechishchevite



4. Coffee-Break at a conference, 1984.



5. Vladimir I. Vasil'ev and A.A. Obolenskii sort out samples at a field camp in the Kurai Depression, Gornyi Altai, Russia, 1965.