Alfred Petrov was born in England in 1956, although his parents were both refugees from Eastern Europe, and his original home language was German. In his last year of primary school in England he remembers buying an old Dana textbook and the British edition of Fred Pough’s field guide, although his mother laments that he had been bringing dirty rocks into the house since he was two years old. When he was thirteen, the family moved to Ethiopia, where he acquired a fascination with volcanic activity. Petrov graduated from high school in Ethiopia and at sixteen went to college in Beirut, Lebanon, for one year. His family left Ethiopia in 1973, the year the Communist Party deposed Emperor Haile Selassie, and emigrated to California, where Petrov studied geomorphology and geology at San Diego State University. During his studies he commuted across the border from Tijuana, Mexico, where he learned Spanish. After graduation he found a job in Bolivia and started collecting Bolivian minerals, then moved to Japan for four years, where he worked editing research papers and, of course, collecting Japanese minerals.

After leaving Japan he went back to Bolivia where he remained for the next eleven years and where, in 1993, he became a part-time mineral dealer, thanks to his friend and mentor the late Rock Carrier. Since 1993 he has been selling his ugly rare minerals at shows in Tucson, Munich, Tokyo, and elsewhere, and enjoying considerable popularity thanks to his great sense of humor and fantastic storytelling. In the 1990s he and I spent more than two years living and traveling in Bolivia and visiting numerous mineral localities. These were great times, when the vast majority of Bolivian miners had no idea at all what a mineral “specimen” was. Our first visit to Lliaagua in 1993 was typical. It was on a Saturday, and when we asked people for specimens, every answer was the same: “You are lucky; today is concentrating day.” We had no idea what this meant until we saw primitive hand-driven mills crushing quartz veins, and miners’ wives panning for cassiterite in a creek. All that resulted from this trip were sacks full of crushed cassiterite and the miners’ surprise when we refused to buy them. It took a long time and several visits before the miners started to collect real specimens for us. The recent steady supply of minerals from Bolivia is one of Petrov’s biggest successes. We started serious

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Alfredopetrovite on a matrix of krüit'aite-penroseite. The white mineral in the background is felsőbányaitse. Field of view 1.5 mm. Brent Thorne specimen and photo.

mining of danburite and boracite crystals in Alto Chapare (with three local Indian children enthusiastically digging for us in their spare time), but probably our best mining success consisted of hundreds of nice Japan-law quartz twins from Kami. During this time Petrov often pestered mineralogists (including me) with unidentified minerals to study.

In the year 2000 Petrov left Bolivia's increasing political chaos with his family to live in the more stable Pekeskill, New York, where he worked for four years for rare-species dealer Tony Nikisch (Excalibur Minerals), but he still traveled to Bolivia every year to pick up more minerals. That same year he was also one of the six people to sign up to help Jolyon Ralph upload data to the new website Mindat.org, and he has continued that voluntary work as a member of the Mindat management team ever since. He still sells rocks at several mineral shows in Asia, Europe, and the United States, in addition to guiding tours for mineral collectors in Bolivia and Japan. Petrov is also the author of numerous articles in mineralogical journals in the United States and Germany, and he translates articles for mineral magazines in Spain and the United States. He currently splits his time between living in Japan and California, where he works for Jewel Tunnel Imports, the company founded by Rock Currier. And he continues to enjoy finding obscure microscopic rarities more than flashy gem crystals.

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Among its activities, FM regional chapters sponsor symposia and collecting trips. The national FM co-sponsors a symposium held at the annual Tucson Gem & Mineral Show, as well as contributes to other mineral symposia. The national FM presents an award each year for the best articles in The Mineralogical Record, Rocks & Minerals, Mineral Monographs and Mineral News. It also recognizes the top educational exhibits at the Tucson Show. FM has made its voice heard whenever there have been proposals to close mineral museums and collecting sites.

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