Collector Profile:

Kay Robertson

AND HER MINERAL COLLECTION

Thomas Moore
3750 E. Via Palomita #34102
Tucson, AZ 85718

Kay Robertson spent a privileged childhood and youth in Venice, where her German-Jewish father was a dealer in art and antiques, but the coming of World War II displaced her and her family to southern California, where, age 86, she lives today. Kay has been a major presence in the world of serious mineral collecting, both in the U.S. and Europe, since the mid-1950's, and now has a collection as rich and varied as her life itself has been. The collection contains about 13,000 specimens, including a subcollection of minerals from Germany which is among the best such assemblages in private hands in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Visitors to many Tucson Shows past might have noticed an imposing-looking elderly lady, gray hair pulled back in a bun, progressing across the floor of the Convention Center’s “Main Show” to engage veteran collectors and dealers in intense conversations. Since about 1992 (my own first time at the Tucson Show, and the first time I met her), Kay Robertson has circulated about the shows with the aid of a cane, a walker, or a good friend’s arm. But it is not hard to imagine how, in earlier times, she must have moved about tirelessly, seeing everyone and everything, telling stories, flashing newly acquired specimens, and in general keeping other advanced collectors quite on their games by confronting them with her knowledge of classic mineral occurrences, especially those of central Europe. Her alert, intelligent bearing and German-accented voice very clearly convey that this talkative lady is best attended to with respect, for she is a living archive of the history of serious mineral collecting, both in the U.S. and Europe, since the mid-20th century.

Kay has lately turned 86, and says sadly that increasing infirmity now has brought an end to her Tucson pilgrimages; the 2005 show was regrettably her last. She remains intellectually keen, however, and has by no means ceased her activities mineralogical, artistic and social. She is still occasionally able to make it to local mineral shows in southern California, and nearly every day she works at the job of writing, in longhand, a book about her life. In myriad corners and cul-de-sacs and along many walls of her small, lavishly cluttered, one-story house there are cabinets holding portions of her enormous mineral collection, which is as distinctive and idiosyncratic as the life story that she is now committing to paper. Below is a sketch of these two, necessarily intertwined stories—of Kay and of her collection.

PRIVILEGE, WAR AND EXILE

Kay Robertson was born in 1920, and the earliest phase of her life transpired on a classical Old European stage, with bright backdrops of wealth, high culture, and cosmopolitanism. Later, when war had ended that order of things, exile, Yankee-style improvisation and Western American backdrops took over. (In these respects, coinci-
In 1920, he leased the luxurious Katherine from a working-class Munich family. Back in Venice in the next four years. In 1919 he married Kay's mother, a girl named Gregorio (…), on the Grand Canal.

In 1911, therefore, he moved to Venice to set himself up as an independent art dealer, choosing as his headquarters a beautiful medieval building, once the Abbey of St. Gregory (Abbazzio di San Gregorio), on the Grand Canal.

When World War I came, Adolf returned to Germany and enlisted in a Bavarian regiment which fought on several fronts during the next four years. In 1919 he married Kay's mother, a girl named Katherine from a working-class Munich family. Back in Venice in 1920, he leased the luxurious Palazzo Nani Mocenigo, where he would maintain an art gallery and raise a family. Kay (Gabriella Katherine Loewi) was born in the palazzo; of two sisters who later were born there as well, one died young and the other lives today in northern California.

In 1923, Adolf Loewi became honorary German consul in Venice, and thus was inaugurated a busy, opulent decade from which Kay's earliest memories derive. She and her sisters went to a school for the children of the small colony of expatriate Germans in Venice; she recalls being dressed in laces and ribbons for formal entertainments, and wealthy art clients and diplomats coming through, and a grand banquet, once, for Admiral Canaris, a German war hero in command of a battleship which stopped to visit. At school Kay spoke German and at home she spoke both German and Italian. After school hours a succession of private teachers instructed the sisters in French and English, the other two of the four languages which Kay now speaks fluently.

During the early Depression years, Adolf Loewi did much to support and encourage the many poor artists, German and otherwise, who lived and struggled in Venice. But in 1933, the first year of Nazi rule back in the homeland, foul emanations of anti-Semitism forced the girls' withdrawal from the German school. Kay finished her formal schooling through an accelerated program of private lessons at home, and, during 1937–1938, in a finishing school for girls in Lausanne, Switzerland. This education was old-fashioned and “classical”—Latin, Greek, Italian history, art history, no math, no science—with the result that to this day Kay regrets her incompetence (as she calls it) in formal mathematics, and her unease even with chemical formulas, even, yes, of mineral species. As she had decided that she would soon enter her father's business in a "modern" and practical way, she took many elective courses at the Lausanne school, not only in art and design, but also in bookkeeping and business practice. Meanwhile a beloved teacher there, a Miss Bolton, helped her to firm up her English (which would come in handy quite soon).

In June 1938, Kay began work as her father's secretary, doubling informally as a creative assistant in interior design. In July, at the first shift to anti-Semitic policies by Mussolini's government, Adolf Loewi applied for an immigration visa; at the time of the Munich crisis of 1938 he was working in Paris and found himself barred, as a Jew, from re-entering Italy. Kay at this time was with him in Paris, since the two were completing together their last and greatest European commission: designing the interior of the new, very ornate Italian Embassy (today Kay's intricate ornamentation of the ballroom ceiling may still be seen in the embassy building which, after the war, became the Palais de Boisgelin). The Loewis finished this huge two-year job on January 31, 1939; on February 1 they boarded the U.S.S. Washington, and on February 9 they disembarked in New York.

Presciently, Adolf had set up a New York branch office in 1933, and upon his arrival six years later he was able to sell some major works to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, providing much-needed funds for further movement. The Loewis did not like New York, and by June 1939 they were already renting quarters in Beverly Hills, California. In December of that year they bought a large house above Sunset Strip, and Kay has remained, quite contentedly as she recalls being dressed in laces and ribbons for formal entertainments, and wealthy art clients and diplomats coming through, and a grand banquet, once, for Admiral Canaris, a German war hero in command of a battleship which stopped to visit. At school Kay spoke German and at home she spoke both German and Italian. After school hours a succession of private teachers instructed the sisters in French and English, the other two of the four languages which Kay now speaks fluently.

In June 1938, Kay began work as her father's secretary, doubling informally as a creative assistant in interior design. In July, at the first shift to anti-Semitic policies by Mussolini's government, Adolf Loewi applied for an immigration visa; at the time of the Munich crisis of 1938 he was working in Paris and found himself barred, as a Jew, from re-entering Italy. Kay at this time was with him in Paris, since the two were completing together their last and greatest European commission: designing the interior of the new, very ornate Italian Embassy (today Kay’s intricate ornamentation of the ballroom ceiling may still be seen in the embassy building which, after the war, became the Palais de Boisgelin). The Loewis finished this huge two-year job on January 31, 1939; on February 1 they boarded the U.S.S. Washington, and on February 9 they disembarked in New York.

Presciently, Adolf had set up a New York branch office in 1933, and upon his arrival six years later he was able to sell some major works to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, providing much-needed funds for further movement. The Loewis did not like New York, and by June 1939 they were already renting quarters in Beverly Hills, California. In December of that year they bought a large house above Sunset Strip, and Kay has remained, quite contentedly as she says, a Californian through all the decades since.

In 1943 the Loewi art firm co-ordinated a major show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and Art (as it was then called), displaying 465 pieces of woven silk contributed by several important U.S. museums and private collectors. The show attracted huge crowds, and Kay, who had written the show catalog, was ecstatic—thus began her long and happy association with the Los Angeles County Museum, eventually to take forms more mineralogical than artistic. After the war years the business flourished;
American museums and private collectors were buying art. From Europe, at various times, the Loewis had shipped or carried much stock—chiefly complete antique rooms (wainscotings), sculptures, and woven silks ranging in historical period from medieval to early 19th-century (Kay today still has a small stock of such pieces, and occasionally sells from it to raise mineral-purchasing money).

A cousin of Kay’s had immigrated from Europe to Canada, and had enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force for World War II. In the service he became a close friend of a flight officer from Winnipeg, William J. Robertson, who would serve with distinction in the North Atlantic and Indian Ocean theaters. In September 1944, just after Kay had become a U.S. citizen, the cousin introduced her to Bill, and on July 7, 1945, in Victoria, British Columbia, they were married. After Bill’s discharge from the service in 1946 the couple took an extended honeymoon-like road trip around the West (featuring stops in “rock shops”), and after their first child, a son, was born in the same year, they moved to Los Angeles, where Bill began an apprenticeship in Adolf Loewi’s firm. Over the next five years, a daughter and another son were born. Only one of the three children, David John Robertson, survived to adulthood (indeed he has just become a grandfather); but James William Robertson died suddenly, aged six, of a mysterious seizure suffered at school, and Jane Alexandra Robertson, an invalid all her short life, died of cystic fibrosis at age eleven. In the 1950’s and early 1960’s Kay also had to deal with the failing health of her mother: despite the diversions provided by a successful marriage, an art business, and a growing interest in minerals, these were very difficult years.

In 1970 Adolf Loewi retired, and Kay and Bill took over all business duties. With his second wife (Kay’s mother having since died), Adolf moved to Hawaii, where he died in 1977, and at this time the Robertsons bought out Kay’s stepmother’s share of the business. During the 1970’s and the first half of the 1980’s the Robertsons very actively marketed furniture, paintings, and decorative objects, especially textiles; Kay was “on the road” all over the U.S. and Europe for much of this time. But after Bill Robertson died in 1986 a slow deceleration set in. Kay closed down the last of the business in 2003, retaining only a private collection of textiles and of miscellaneous art works mainly of sentimental significance. As mentioned, she still occasionally sells works of art, but mostly, these days, she spends her time with her mineral collection. During the Robertsons’ 40+ years of marriage, Bill, who was indifferent to minerals but skilled at carpentry, built many fine cases of drawers to house Kay’s ever-growing collection. Now, although she has long since despaired of catching up on her cataloging, Kay has countless mineral-collecting stories to ruminate on and to tell, beginning with one concerning a malachite and two quartz specimens in a French jeweler’s shop, a very long time ago . . .

THE GROWTH OF THE MINERAL COLLECTION

In the summer of 1928, when Kay was eight, the family took a trip to the resort town of Chamonix, France, at the foot of Mont Blanc. If Kay could swim across a small lake, her grandmother said,
she could have a doll. Kay made the swim. On the way to the store
to buy the doll they passed a jeweler’s shop where three mineral
specimens, a malachite from the Congo, an amethyst from Uruguay,
and a colorless quartz crystal group, were displayed in the window,
and, of course, Kay told her grandmother “Forget the doll—get me
those.” Grandmother remembered: for Easter of the following year
she wrapped up some crystal specimens and hid them like Easter
eggs for Kay to find—the specimens were from a “curio cabinet”
that Grandmother’s children (Kay’s father and uncle) had had in
Munich during the previous century.

On a 1936 trip to the Hohe Tauern, Kay bought, for two Austrian
schillings, a smoky quartz crystal (which she still has today) in a
souvenir shop on the Grossglockner Pass, but that is the end of the
short list of mineral-memories from Kay’s European childhood and
youth; the next encounter, dated 1942, is set in the desert of Califor-
nia. While seeking some private and beautiful spot at which to set up
her easel and paint a landscape, she met an old man selling mineral
specimens from his trailer (she recalls wulfenite and Virgin Valley
opalized wood). After spending a while with the man Kay found that
she’d spent so much money that she couldn’t afford another night’s
hotel bill, and her little vacation was shortened by a day.

In Los Angeles during the early 1950’s, Kay looked up occasion-
ally from her many troubles to find that minerals were for sale at
the Farmer’s Market at Fairfax and Third, and a few other places
around town: fifty cents, she recalls, could buy you, for instance, a
pretty galena. The first mineral show Kay attended was held in 1952
at the Shrine Auditorium. There she was especially impressed by
an exhibit which the Santa Monica Gem and Mineral Society had
mounted, and she joined the organization. The members turned out
to be overwhelmingly of the lapidary persuasion, but Kay quickly
found and befriended two major exceptions, Verne Cadieux and
Marion Godshaw; the latter did much to encourage her interest in
“natural” minerals and to increase her knowledge of them, as did,
somewhat later, the highly knowledgeable Jean Hamel. Taking out
a subscription to *Rocks & Minerals* helped as well.

Soon she had a routine of regular visits to a mineral shop called

Figure 4. A pull-out
drawer full of German
specimens from St.
Andreasberg, Harz
Mountains, in Kay Rob-
ertson’s mineral room.
Tom Moore photo.

Figure 5. Fluorapatite crystal on matrix, 1.8 cm, from Val
Maggia, Ticino, Switzerland, with old handwritten label dated
1831. Kay Robertson collection; Jeff Scovil photo.
“The Bradleys,” and was taking her two then-living children along as she regularly looked in on the many small shows held around southern California on weekends. In 1955, for Bill and Kay’s tenth anniversary, the family traveled to San Francisco for the California Federation Show—her first really large mineral event. While Bill was taking the children to Fisherman’s Wharf a dazzled Kay lost control and bought $35 worth of mineral specimens, shocking herself with her profligacy. The $35 figure went on to become symbolic and even, eventually, mythic: Kay made a rule whereby she could not spend more than $35 on any single mineral specimen, and for the next 31 years she followed the rule without a slip. As her sophistication grew and as mineral prices inflated, the rule, of course, became increasingly quaint, but still it was not until 1986, when Bill died, that she let herself buy more expensive pieces. Today she looks back with a kind of prideful nostalgia on the $35-per-specimen era which, besides being almost congruent with her marriage, marked for her (one gathers) a kind of self-directed apprenticeship in mineral collecting.

Local adventures continued: in 1956 she talked a dealer called “Chuckawalla Slim” down from $10 to $5 for a fine miniature of English calcite—for quite a few years this Slim sold surprisingly good and surprisingly varied worldwide minerals out of his trailer, which he mostly kept parked in the desert just outside of Palm Springs. Also in the mid-1950’s, more significantly for the future, Kay found the ads of the Arizona dealer Scott Williams in the pages of Rocks & Minerals in which a gentleman in Hamburg offered to trade German for North American specimens (although the ad was in English, Kay wisely responded in German). Herr Erich Lindemann turned out to be a childless widower of advanced age with a very fine collection of classic and contemporary German minerals. After they had completed a few mail exchanges of U.S. and Mexican specimens for German ones, Lindemann began pressing Kay to visit Germany, and so, in 1964, she undertook a four-week mineralogical tour—her first time in Europe since 1939. In Hamburg, Lindemann proposed to Kay an arrangement whereby she, in the U.S., would put a fair retail price on German specimens which he would send her, then sell them for him; for her trouble she could keep whatever specimens she wanted, paying Lindemann only half (her own set) price for these. Kay, not wanting to think of herself as a “mineral dealer,” was very reluctant at first, but Lindemann needed money and she was flattered by his trust in her and excited by the possibilities for acquisition. Thus for the next few years she carried out the commission in a supercharged way, launching the building of a serious subcollection of German minerals.

The 1964 trip widened Kay’s collecting horizons in multiple ways. While Bill was in London conducting company business, she visited and was entertained and instructed by mineralogical notables including Professor H. Ziehr, Werner Lieber, August Hartlaub (see below), the managers of the famous Krantz firm of Bonn (from whom she had been purchasing specimens since 1961), Alex Kipfer of Switzerland, and Dr. Alfred Hanauer. The last-named gentleman was then becoming Germany’s first serious micromounter, and this was exciting, because Kay too had recently taken up micromounting (having acquired her first microscope after “trading for cash” with her sister a sable coat that had been their mother’s). Kay was a found-
Hugo Strunz, who at the time was busily publishing formal papers—guidance—in effect supplementing the work of the renowned Prof. Joe Mandarino and Scott Williams, she usually could provide that help from professional-mineralogist friends such as Bill Roberts, their Hagendorf specimens to her and ask for guidance. With some Hartlaub and others had “talked her up,” collectors would send look of crystals, colors, matrix, associations, etc., and thus, after she was and is, with her artist’s eye, extremely sensitive to the mineralogy, let alone any access to determinative equipment, contemporary imagination). Although Kay had no formal training per parcel: the bargains included there would doubtless stagger the Hartlaub regularly sent her parcels of selected pieces, asking $50 Minemines to the confusing mix. The whole “xanthoxenite problem,” as Paul Moore called it (Moore, 1975), was not resolved until the mid-1970’s, and probably would not have been resolved even then without Kay’s “eye” and without the impetus of her communications with concerned parties. A 1976 letter to Kay from John S. White, then curator of minerals at the Smithsonian, thanked her for “the labor and the diligence [you invested in sorting out] the story of xanthoxenite. Without such a marvelous guide, I doubt that I could have reconstructed the story since it has become almost hopelessly complicated.” This is Kay’s proudest memory of how she, merely an amateur with a microscope and a good “eye,” was able to contribute to mineralogical knowledge.

From the mid-1960’s onwards, Kay has continued to establish friendships with many eminent collectors and mineralologists including (besides those named above) Mark Feinglos, Russell McFall, Martin Hanauer (Alfred’s son), Max Hey, Neal Yedlin, Lou Perloff, Arthur Montgomery and Fred Pough. About Pough, she remembers fondly (as do many collectors) how A Field Guide to Rocks and Minerals served as a central text in her early days of collecting, and, more personally, how Pough kept urging the Southern California Micromineralogists Society to mount a symposium, first in Santa Barbara, later in Santa Monica, to rival the famous micromounters’ event in Baltimore: Kay and her friend Juanita Curtis handled logistics for the first two of these gatherings.

With the founding of the Friends of Mineralogy (and the Mineralogical Record) in 1970, Arthur Montgomery at once invited Kay to become a member. As it turned out, she served on FM’s Board of Directors for many years, and when she could no longer sit in regularly at Board meetings she made a generous farewell gesture, donating $1000 to endow a “Best Educational Case” award to be given each year by the Friends of Mineralogy at the Tucson Show. And speaking of collectors’ cases displayed at Tucson, Kay’s cases...
over the years have been typically Eurocentric and erudite; they have included “Calcites from Andreasberg,” “The Siegerland,” “Minerals of Cornwall,” and entire cases devoted respectively to Galena and the Apatite Group.

One of Kay’s projects during the 1980’s was to provide much-needed advice and moral support to the German publisher Rainer Bode while he was establishing the periodicals *Magma* (now defunct) and *Mineralien Welt* (now flourishing). Her publications during the decade include informal, informative show reports for Lanny Ream’s newsletter *Mineral News*. And, with her multilingualism, her ability to read old German script, and her large collection of old European atlases and gazetteers, Kay has helped many curators and private collectors to decrypt old handwritten labels denoting places whose names and/or political affiliations shifted, perhaps multiple times, since the days of mining. To keep building her mineral collection she has made further forays to Europe: a major coup came in London in 1984, when she was able to buy from the English dealer Brian Lloyd about 80 important specimens from the early 19th century Neeld collection, including wonderful Iceland calcites and ancient, excellent mimetite specimens from Badenweiler in the southern Schwarzwald.

*Figure 9.* Silver, 5.7 cm, from Kongsberg, Buskerud, Norway. Kay Robertson collection; Jeff Scovil photo.

*Figure 10.* Hureaulite, 2.75 cm, from Hagendorf-Süd, Oberpfalz, Bavaria, Germany. Kay Robertson collection and photo.
A remarkable depth in specimens like those just mentioned is the most salient feature of Kay’s collection today. Perusing it through one whole long weekend in Los Angeles, I was too simultaneously dazzled and frazzled to take many notes on individual specimens; general remarks, plus a few photos which Jeff Scovil took several years ago, will have to suffice to describe this extraordinary accumulation of more than 13,000 cataloged specimens, plus several hundred more which still await cataloging.

THE ROBERTSON COLLECTION

Kay lives with a housekeeper/cook who handles domestic imperatives, but her small house nevertheless is full of an elegant clutter, with books, paintings, *objets d’art*, and cabinet-size mineral specimens scattered everywhere, including on most sittable pieces of furniture in the living room. This is a gracious and sympathetic sort of clutter, the best of the ballast which a rich life has declined to drop—but to glance into the dining room, study, and bedroom is to see vague stacks of yet more “stuff” which includes flats of mineral specimens too. The “mineral room,” quite small to start with, is difficult even to turn around in, as its volume is crammed with protruding specimen and filing cabinets, a microscope platform, her late daughter’s old mineral collection, bookcases laden with mineralogical books in four languages, etc. A modest door in one
Figure 13. Brucite, 15.4 cm, from Wood’s Chrome mine, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Kay Robertson collection; Jeff Scovil photo.

Figure 14. Mimetite, a 6.2-cm matrix specimen from Johanngeorgenstadt, Obersachsen, Germany, with a label from the Royal Imperial Mineral Cabinet in Vienna dated 1806. Acquired through Brad van Scriver. Kay Robertson collection; Jeff Scovil photo.
corner leads, not to a storage closet as one would expect, but to a chamber lined head-high with cabinets full of still more specimens: this, it turns out, is the carbonate closet (plus drawers of uncataloged Hagendorf phosphates and a few drawers of rough and cut gemstones); complex silicates are in a huge cabinet of pull-out drawers in the hallway, sulfosalts and a cabinet of quartz are in the bedroom. The specimens are of all collectible sizes, from small thumbnail to large-cabinet, and there are many drawers full of micromounts. You do not just inspect this collection, you cohabit with it, until, reluctantly, you must leave to catch your flight home.

When examined with any care, the collection gives consistent evidence of its creator’s refined taste, keen eye for aesthetics, and encyclopedic knowledge of major occurrences for every major mineral species and a great many rare ones: more than 1,300 species are represented in all. The collection thins out a bit in material of later date than, say, 1985, although an occasional something-or-other quite fine from Dalnegorsk, Yaqgangxian or Shigar is apt at any time to pop up, and many specimens of the newer things are uncataloged and thus have not yet reached the “main drawers.” The collection’s depth may perhaps be evoked through two, almost randomly chosen, examples. The epidote suite includes specimens from Zsiptau, Moravia; Knappenwand, Untersulzbachtal, Austria; Seebachkar, Obersulzbachtal, Austria; Bourg d’Oisans, France; Mt. Blanc, France; eight localities in Switzerland; four localities in Piedmont, Italy; Arendal, Norway; Prince of Wales Island, Alaska; the Laxey mine, Idaho; twelve localities in California; Salida, Colorado; Hawthorne, Nevada; four localities in Baja California, Mexico; Capelinha, Brazil; the Morro Velho mine, Brazil; Ica, Peru; Kari-Kari, Potosi, Bolivia; Harts Range, Australia; Wadd, Baluchistan, Pakistan; and about twelve others—many of these localities are represented by multiple specimens. In the stibnite suite are beautifully crystallized specimens from Příbram, Bohemia; Kremnitz, Slovakia; Allchar, Macedonia; La Lucette, Mayenne, France; the Pereta, Cetine and Niccioleta mines, Tuscany, Italy; seven localities in Romania; Trepča, Serbia; the Ichinokawa mine, Japan; Kadamzhaï, Kirghizia; Bau, Borneo, Indonesia; Chiang Mai, Thailand; Maona Lari, North Island, New Zealand; the Stayton district, Hollister, California; Antimony Peak, Kern Co., California; the White Caps mine, Manhattan, Nevada; ten more localities in the western U.S.; Zacatecas and Oaxaca, Mexico; La Salvadoura, Oruro, Bolivia; Jucali, Peru; and about fifteen others. While of course not all of the specimens are “killers,” at least half in each suite for each common species are very good to extremely fine. A satisfying number of specimens display crystals on matrix, with recognizable associations: Kay cares that her specimens illustrate paragenetic suites (insofar as is possible) almost as much as she cares that they feature good crystal aesthetics. The labels are thorough and clear, and many, many specimens are accompanied by backward progressions of earlier labels. Browsing through these drawers carries much of the hidden-treasure or rare-educational-opportunity feeling that typically comes with prowling in back rooms of great museums with collections assembled over centuries.

Kay allots two large cabinets to the German subcollection (though strange German specimens are also found in the “general” cabinets), and anyone who, like the present writer, shares her special fondness for classic German mineral occurrences will spend his most rapt, slow-motion time of all in this part of the mineral room (where a map of Germany and an original painting of Kay’s grandfather look down from the wall). They’re all here, in multiple samples ranging in quality from “study grade” to absolutely superb: Freiberg acanthite and stephanite, Schneeberg proustite and erythrite and roselite and uranium-bearing species, Andreasberg pyrargyrite and dyscrasite and fluorite and pink apophyllite, Siegerland malachite and anglesite and millerite and galena, Schwarzwald fluorite and barite and silver, Obermoschel cinnaobar and moschellandsbergite, Ems pyromorphite and cerussite, Johanngeorgenstadt mimetite, Öhrenstock hausmannite, Fichtelgebirge topaz and microcline and herderite, Ehrenfriedersdorf cassiterite and fluorapatite, Ilfeld manganite, Ronneburg whewellite, Hagendorf phosphates . . . undsoweiter. Unfortunately, in one of the cabinets the German specimens are piled on each other without protection, and the big pull-out drawers are shallow and rickety, such that one has to be careful, when moving the drawers in and out, to avoid decapitations; pull-out drawers are shallow and rickety, such that one has to be careful, when moving the drawers in and out, to avoid decapitations or rollover disasters: thin foam rubber sheets cover these piled-on specimens, but it is still as if these precious things are fragile old friends which Kay has allowed to share her home with her awhile, provided that they somehow look after themselves.

However, Kay has provided very responsibly for the inevitable time when the collection must move on. She has long since willed the whole thing, including the library, will go to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, where it will come under the care of her longtime friend Dr. Anthony Kampf, curator of the Museum’s already great mineral collection. Kay’s tie with the Los Angeles County Museum goes back, as already noted, to the early 1940’s, and very soon after Kampf’s accession to the...
mineral curatorship in 1977 she knew that the collection could be placed in good hands there for the foreseeable future. The visitor to the Museum’s public mineral display will notice that dozens of specimens already on view there have come as gifts from Kay Robertson—when she goes shopping for minerals these days she shops as much for the Museum as for herself. Tony Kampf will have a huge job to do when Kay’s collection comes under his care, but, meanwhile, for Kay’s single-handed and single-minded creation of this treasure—almost as if it were a work of art—applause and bravos, even tossed bouquets, are surely in order.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although she says that having me visit her and appreciate her collection was “a pure treat,” I still must thank Kay Robertson for her hospitality, and for providing logistic help, during the weekend I spent in Los Angeles taking notes for this article. Thanks also to Dr. Tony Kampf for the thorough guided tour he provided of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History’s mineral collection.

REFERENCES

