Letters From My Mentor #11, by Anthony J. Albini

Thursday (1985)

Dear Tony,

The check ought to make it possible to get some kind of work done at UConn. I’m very much obliged. I was all set to go down there this week, but I came down with a horrific cold. My voice is just coming back. I realize, of course, that the college year will be shortly be over, and Professor Gray may not even be there. If I established good relations, however, I imagine next autumn and winter could be productive.

I haven’t been to the Hewitt Gem mine in so many years…mainly because I haven’t been sure of its status. [dumps are totally gone now, AJA]. I’ll try to talk my way in, my next visit “home”. I well remember seeing veins of coarsely crystalline magnetite, in place, right next to the pegmatite…or even in it. Unfortunately, I never saved much at the time. I’d certainly like to get a few rich specimens. Yes, and the maghemite is desirable, too, though skuzzy in appearance. Years back, I found that it’s quite magnetic, if peeled away from the magnetite; of course you need a strong magnet.

Save some of those things [?, AJA], and I’ll leave some of my Case prospect bismuth minerals for you, at my Mother’s. Or maybe with Russ [Behnke, AJA] if I see him. That’s about the only place I’ve collected this spring. I believe the bismuthinite supply is dwindling there; large boulders, I’m sure, contain much more fine material. The finest bismuthinite generally occurs in rose quartz [ or colored by the Bi mineral, AJA, hard to tell]; the crystals can be parallel. Chalcopyrite and covellite make nice specimens, though the material is scanty. The covellite forms rich blue platy crusts on or with chalcopyrite. Curprite may be present, as reddish smears. Not a trace of dioptase.

My last two times at the Strickland quarry I found absolutely NOTHING! It’s rare for me to go back to the car with an empty bag.

I wonder if that crude yellow crystal with the microlite and beryl, from the Hewitt pegmatite, is monazite…the glassy variety. Examining it carefully, it’s not isometic; looks more monoclinic prismatic, I think. It should be x-rayed. The end of the beryl crystal has a thin layer of bertrandite. No bavenite at Hewitt’s? Very rich specimens came out, a year before the Rt. 9 discovery: platy fragile white aggregates.

Cordially, Dick

P. S. The old cordierite locality in Bigelow Hollow is at the lowest point on the highway…just as you get to the bottom, on the left-hand side, where there are ledges…that is, when coming in from the Wilbur Cross Parkway. Is it Route 171? There’s cordierite there, with sillimanite and rhodolite garnet; but the Haddam material is much better.

D.