

“FACES OF GSN”

Joseph A. Kizis, Jr.

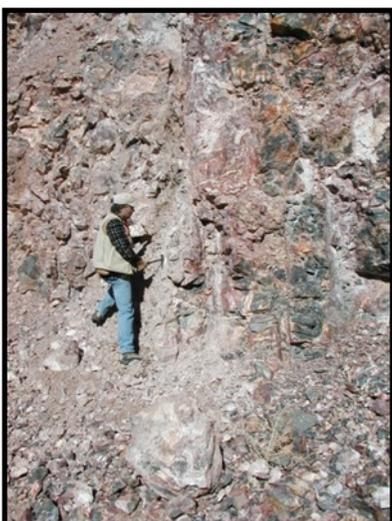
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I was eight-years-old and swaggering along side my cousin when he matter-of-factly said, “I’m starting a stamp collection.” Tommy was three years older and... heck, he had a pellet gun! When I just as matter-of-factly told him I expected to start a stamp collection pretty soon too, he surprised me with, “I’m tired of you always doing what I do. Why don’t you collect something else... how about rocks.”

“Yeah, well maybe I will. Here’s a good one right here in Grandpa’s driveway,” as I picked up a rounded pebble of bull quartz, abandoned in Connecticut by a receding glacier. I headed for home.

Being a Sunday, my Dad was at the kitchen table reading the newspaper while my Mom was busily working on dinner. “I’m going to start a rock collection,” I muttered as I walked past.

“That’s good... maybe you’ll become a geologist,” offered my Dad, sensing there was more to the story. “Yeah, sure... maybe,” I said under my breath, wondering what the heck a geologist was and what they did. So I headed to our still-new “S&H Green Stamp” encyclopedias to look up geologist. There I found a photo of a rugged-looking fellow in a cowboy hat carrying a Geiger counter over some brightly colored rocks in Utah. People get paid for doing that? That’s what I want to do when I grow up.



**It still looks like a felsic dike to me
(Wind Mountain pit, Nevada)**

And so I did. An Italian oil company in Denver gave me a scintillometer and sent me to the Big Bend area of Texas to look for uranium. This was my first job after receiving a B.S. degree in Geology from Kent State University. The novelty of lugging around a scintillometer wore off after a couple of years, and I went back to school at the University of Colorado to earn an M.S. degree in Geology. I was fortunate to have Gulf Minerals offer to help support my thesis expenses if I would help them with a uranium project near Austin, Nevada. I took them up on the offer, and working on that project, I fell in love with Nevada.

Upon receiving my M.S. degree, I wanted to explore for base metals, but Exxon’s uranium group offered me too much money for an in-debt grad student to pass up. So I moved to Casper, Wyoming to look for uranium in Montana. After the Three Mile Island disaster, however, Exxon decided to transfer me to Reno to work on their new Mount Hope molybdenum project.

That began a succession of opportunities with several companies to explore for various commodities in Nevada and elsewhere: Sedex Pb/Zn/Ag for Exxon and Amselco in Nevada and Idaho... Au-rich VMS in Arizona, Colorado and Au in Utah and Nevada for Atlas... then the real fun began. Freshly laid off from Atlas and with a 2-year old toddler in 1992, the entrepreneurial bug bit, although it had been nibbling for some time by then. Such circumstances tend to focus the mind, and I managed to quickly stake a few exploration properties and to pick up a couple of clients for consulting. Over the next several years, I had the good fortune to work with many great people and companies in many interesting parts of the world. But after years of never quite feeling confident about the next mortgage payment as an independent consultant, I joined my first Canadian Junior.

In the mid 1990’s, I was consulting on several projects with mine geologist Steve Bruff. One was Fairmile Gold’s Buffalo Valley project in central Nevada, where we were finding intrusion-related gold deposits using geochemical zoning based on relatively new and inexpensive ICP analyses. The company sent me to Toronto to tell the story to various mining analysts, which was received with appropriate skepticism until we returned with the results of new mineralized holes, as predicted. I soon joined Fairmile as VP Exploration and eventually took over as President.



**Don’t sneeze, that’s the pilot wedged on my left
(Homestake Ridge, B.C.)**

(FACES OF GSN—Kizis, cont.)

There is nothing better than a Junior with money, but there is not much worse than a Junior without money. So the Fairmile experience did not really end well, and it was back to consulting after a short stint doing environmental work for Science Application International Corp (SAIC) that ended thanks to the 9-11 attacks and subsequent recession. In 2002 I leased one of my properties to one of the Manex Group companies, another Canadian Junior. They asked me to run the exploration program, and then in 2004 asked me to run two of their companies as President. I am still with those companies, although in typical Canadian Junior fashion, the names have changed a few times. During that time, our talented exploration crews have added many ounces of gold and silver to our resource columns.

Being an exploration geologist can be brutal on family life and personal finances, as we all know, not to mention the snakes, bears, bugs, and such... so why do we do it? I guess I do it because it is almost never boring, usually scientifically challenging, and often great fun. The thrill of discovery is hard to explain, except possibly to other high-stake gamblers... and what an interesting mix of activities: one day presenting an overview of our projects to investors at the Mayfair Hotel in London, and the next week flying in a Hughes 500 around the toe of the Cambria Ice Field in northern British Columbia.

To all of you newly minted geologists, as with all professions, it is not always great fun. My worst day professionally was in August 2008 when I got a call that our project's helicopter crashed and killed two drillers, the camp manager, and the pilot. Every year I breathe easier when the last flight leaves our camp in B.C.

Another bad day was when a cardiologist told me that I had a congenital heart defect and needed open-heart surgery... pretty much immediately. That brings me to the GSN.

Rich DeLong approached me at a GSN meeting in May of 1998. He cleverly waited until after I had finished my first "lcky" draft. He asked if I would consider stepping in as GSN Vice President for 1998/1999 and then staying on as President the following year, as was the usual progression. I hesitantly said, "Sure... I suppose." That was a great decision, although it was probably good that I did not have any idea how much time being President would consume.

I hesitate to remind any of you who were around in 1999/2000 what it was like to earn a living as an exploration geologist, but the GSN faced similar ugliness during that dark period. The GSN management team stepped up to the challenge. I am most proud that we developed an email version of this monthly newsletter to save increasingly significant postage costs and set up the GSN Foundation to stabilize our philanthropic activities. Greg French and I did most of the "heavy lifting" to set up the GSN Foundation, and I was honored to serve as Chairman of the Board for its first five years. We also helped to re-institute the Winne-mucca Chapter.

It is all very foggy in my memory after these 10 years, but upon being released from the cardiac ICU I began receiving calls and visits from GSN members. Notes, emails, and visits continued well after I returned home. If I did not properly thank any of you then, I will blame it on the pain-killers and thank you now; I appreciated it more than you probably know. I guess in spite of being a group of hard-headed, nomadic individualists, the GSN is a pretty close community. That is one important reason to belong to this great organization.



**The "selling" part of my job
(Munich, Germany)**



**Sometimes it's hard to believe we get paid for what we do
(sunrise on a float plane between Prince Rupert and Alice Arm, B.C.)**