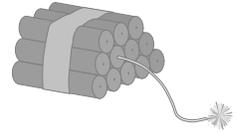


The Primer



Newsletter of the Golden West Chapter, International Society of Explosives Engineers
23633 Brewster Drive, Columbia, CA 95310

Volume 20

Spring/Summer 2009

Issue 1

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www.iseegoldenwest.org

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Co-President's Message...

Bill Warfield:

I have been traveling across the US since the beginning of the year. During my travels it has become apparent that each person has their own way in dealing with the economy and their individual situation. I have come to one conclusion however, now is not the time to pull the covers over your head and wait for this to go away. Early on, the sentiment was to sit back and wait for other people, meaning government types to solve the problem, after all they created it. Many were closing up the purse strings expecting that dollars would soon be flowing from Washington and they would not have to spend any of their own money. In the meantime we have seen banks and other major companies taken over by "our" government.

I traveled through the Idaho, Montana, Washington mining districts last week and there is much confusion existing about which direction we are going. A lot of money has been spent to outline new ore bodies and new mines. This is all on hold as companies are waiting for a judge to come down with a decision. All arguments have been submitted over a year ago and still no judgement. Now the concern is whether a contract is worth anything, see comments following. This does not even get into the issues of equitable pay, union card check rules, health care or any other issue that could go against the bottom line. Our regulatory agencies are becoming more enforcers and seem to be intent on issues large fines to control what they feel is wrong. MSHA just issued fines of \$60,000 against 2 individual mine foreman for unsafe practices. This is on top of what the Company was charged. Not to judge and say that they were not responsible for what happened but this is becoming unprecedented, the individual supervisor is being fined individually.

Now is not the time to sit back and wait for this to be over. Read the news coming out from the ISEE, the NSSGA and your own State policy makers and you can see that the money currently being spent on construction is not being used for what was advertised. Get involved in what is going on around you. If you don't want to work on making changes nationally, do so locally. Find out what is being proposed in your local area. See what your State and National representatives are proposing and tell them if you disagree. DO NOT wait for the Change to come to you, it might not be to your liking.

(continued on page 2)

The Primer

Co-President's Message (Bill's - continued) ...

The following is a note circulated by the Northwest Mining Association:

NWMA Members and Friends:

Attached please find a letter and press release from Frank McAllister, Chairman and CEO of Stillwater Mining Company. Stillwater is the only U.S. producer of palladium and platinum and is the largest primary producer of platinum group metals outside of South Africa and Russia.

General Motors has petitioned the bankruptcy court to terminate outright the Stillwater Palladium and Rhodium Supply Agreement. A very troubling aspect to this move is that Stillwater has learned GM plans to continue its agreements to buy palladium from producers in Russia and South Africa.

As Frank McAllister states, "We certainly recognize that the current economic downturn has decimated the automotive industry, forcing GM and others to make some difficult choices. At the same time it seems disingenuous to me, during a period when preserving American jobs is such a high domestic priority, that GM, while receiving immense financial support from the U.S. government, would elect, as I understand it, to continue its supply agreements with foreign palladium suppliers while seeking to terminate an agreement with the sole U.S. miner of palladium."

As per Mr. McAllister's letter, we ask that you contact your congressional delegation and let them know of your concern with GM's course of action. Also attached for your reference is a letter from Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner regarding this matter.

Thank you for your help.

*Northwest Mining Association
10 N Post St Ste 220
Spokane WA 99201
(509) 624-1158*

If you want a copy of the referenced letters please drop me a line and I will forward them to you.

Now for some good news! I have been talking with Kevin Ernst - Manager, Sales and Development for Davey Bickford USA, Inc. Kevin has spent years in Nevada working in the explosives business and is interested in helping the Golden State Chapter organize a Student Chapter at Mackay School of Mines at UNR. With Kevin located in Reno he will be a big help to us in that effort. Kevin has even volunteered to make a presentation at one of our meetings. We should think about having a meeting now that we have a speaker. Anyone want to take this on?

Have a great finish to your summer. Keep your fingers crossed that some of the Stimulus funding will find its way to your district. There has to be some construction work that needs to be done that will require drilling and blasting and lots of aggregates.

Best regards,

Bill Warfield

Co-President's Message...

Wes Bender:

OK, what's with this Co-President thing you ask... A good question. It seems that at the last business meeting, there was no one willing to step up to the plate to run the Chapter during these tough times. I had made the mistake of previously telling Carey that, if no one stepped forward, I would be willing to handle the chore, albeit from a long ways away. The upshot was that Bill was willing to stay with it if the two of us could handle it together. Seems to be working ok. Bill is located locally but is extremely busy and doesn't have the time to do the whole job. On the other hand, being retired I've got more time, but I'm some 900 miles distant.

There were several other changes that took place at the business meeting. After several years of non-performing Vice Presidents and minimal Board Member participation, it was decided that the VP position could go and the Board be reduced to two members. This gives you a 5 person (6 with the Co-Pres thing or a past president) committee to run the Chapter. Too early to tell if it will work well, or if we will eventually need to go back to a full complement of officers.

Let's face it, participation in Chapter activities has been rather bleak over the past several years, and today's economic climate doesn't help matters. Until we can get through these times, we're probably going to continue the Chapter in a bit of a holding pattern. Other organizations are having similar problems keeping things going smoothly. Only recently, two of the local SME Chapters found the need to merge in order to continue at a decent pace. Members of a couple of other ISEE Chapters have indicated to me that our situation is not particularly unique. Eventually we will get back to having sufficient interest to resume our normal schedule of activities.

I would like to thank those of you who took the time to fill out our questionnaire that went out with the dues invoice. The response was not overwhelming to say the least, but the information is being analyzed and will be put to good use. Some activities that are being discontinued are the result of conditons that are not within our control. For example, the State of California has halted sport fishing for salmon, at least for a few years. Some good suggestions were offered for other items though . The results will be presented in the next issue of *The Primer*.

As always, we're looking for articles for this newsletter and/or suggestions for articles. Do you know of a blaster (or other individual) who should be recognized for some interesting or important work that he has done? Let us know and we'll track them down and try to tell their story. Ed Criley contributed a story about a project at Mt. Redoubt in Alaska. It starts on the next page and makes for entertaining reading.

As I write this, I'm gathering my fishing tackle and other outdoor stuff for one of our fishing trips to the Sierras. Claudia hikes while I chase trout. I always meet her at the trailhead with a cool brew. The overall experience probably adds a few years to our life expectancy.

Cheers, *Wes Bender*

The Primer

Mt. Redoubt revisited ... by Ed Criley

Maybe you have seen the news stories about Mt Redoubt in Alaska erupting these past few weeks. I was there after the last one, so this is about it. It must have been in the summer of 1991, could have been '90. Mt Redoubt erupted in 1989 and '90.

Did I tell you about another one of my and JVS' adventures to Alaska? (ed note: JVS is Jack Van Shack) Bob Page and another Phd, Bernard, wanted to record the location of the magma of Mt Redoubt in Alaska using explosives as the energy source in addition to the earthquakes they were recording with their seismographs.

Mt Redoubt had had an eruption during the year before. Enough ash was erupted into the air to close the Anchorage airport at times. Mt Redoubt is the second volcano in a north south chain on the west side of the Cook Inlet, just across from Kenai and southwest of Anchorage, and extends on into the Alaska chain of volcanoes. In 1951 the northern most one, Mt Spur, erupted enough to throw ash on Anchorage. Mt Illiamna, the next one is way down there in the boonies, and the next one is Katmai National Monument, a lot of old lava flows. The Phds had made arrangements for them and us to stay at the Drift River oil pipeline camp at the northeast end of Mt Redoubt and on the Inlet.

JVS and I flew into Anchorage. We spent a few days gathering enough lamp cord for the shot line and a roller to put it on, other necessary items including explosives while Bob and the others were taking care of the seismographs around Mt Redoubt. Earlier in the summer I was in Seattle checking out the area for a seismic experiment. At a local super-market, I happened upon a big sale of 1968 Inglenook Cabernet Sauvignon (a California wine)... this was 1990 or 91. I remembered from 1984 in Maine (of all places) as being very good wine, so bought all four bottles. When we were in Anchorage, I found the only one left., so had to have it too. Not that this means anything. JVS and I opened it after our successful excursion to Mt Redoubt.

The mountain was pretty inactive by this time. Its history seemed to be in spurts for a month or so and then goes back to sleep. But still there was always talk.. or in the backs of minds about the location of the pipeline station... what if it actually put out lava, But it had not in historic time so it was just talk mostly, and now with active monitoring of any earthquakes within the volcano, the element of surprise should be minimal.

They had placed about twenty seismographs around the volcano to record the earthquakes and any lava movement within the volcano. JVS and I were asked to shoot in a few ponds around the mountain and in the Crater itself. JVS was in charge of the field operations for the branch, and I coordinated all of the seismic refraction field projects, and we both were loaders and shooters.... "The experts"??

We, with the help of a helicopter, loaded six and shot them. We would bundle about six boxes of ammonium nitrate, each box with two thirty pound "sausages", and with a one pound booster added, and with prima-cord strung through them. It takes a booster to detonate two or three boxes of the explosive and a detonating cap or prima-cord to detonate the booster and a detonating cap to detonate the prima-cord.

(continued on page 5)

Mt. Redoubt revisited (continued)...

We usually used the prima-cord at the explosive package, and attached a cap just before we were ready to shoot; a little safer that way.

The boxes would be taped together, good ol' duct tape; a rope tied around each bundle and a five foot rope with a big loop at the top. The helicopter would hover above and we would attach the rope to his hook. He would fly over to the pond and drop, as close to water as possible, the bundle into an area that we, via, radio would say "drop". The size of the bundle depended upon the depth of the lake or pond. Six hundred pounds were usually the limit the helicopter wanted to fly with. Mostly they only had to fly a few hundred feet. These ponds were only ten feet or less deep so we used only 300 pounds, which even then threw a lot of water out, others such as in Kenya were a hundred or more feet deep. About five hundred feet of shot line was run out to an over looking place to the shooting box.... and "BOOM", all that work shot to hell.

They also wanted to shoot one in the crater..... just east from where the eruption had taken place. If you didn't know better, you would never have believed there had been an eruption. The crater was quite large and the eruption had only been in a vent on the west side of the crater, so where we were to work had not been too affected by it or the snow had covered any traces, so it looked safe. It was quiet, clear, beautiful scenery. I can't remember any steam.

The helicopter put us in a place a few hundred feet away from the site Bob and Bernard had chosen. I didn't know until we had off loaded the explosives, that we were a couple hundred feet from where we were to lower the charges to a ledge about a hundred feet down. We had to carry the stuff to the loading site. Everyone helped to lower, by hand, 1000 pounds of the explosive down about 100 feet onto a snow ledge. Afraid the helicopter might dislodge it if it had to hover there long if we used it. We tried several locations to shoot from. That was probably our biggest challenge.... trying to string out a thousand feet of shot line from a helicopter to a place in the snow field which was not going to collapse on or under us when we shot and not shower a bunch of rocks on us from above.

After a couple tries and broken shot line we located a good solid rock outcrop to shoot from, but we were still a little concerned about a steep wall to our south, that a bunch of rocks would fall on us. I asked the pilot how fast he could get this thing off the ground... he said about 3 seconds. We sat in the back, me with the shot box in my lap and JVS with a pair of wire cutters. The pilot started the helicopter, I pushed the button, JVS cut the shot line and threw it out the window; and we were airborne. JVS thinks we were airborne as he was still cutting the wire. There was snow in the air everywhere, the snow bridge near the shot point collapsed. The air cleared and we were able to see the broken ledge and the snow bridge. It was quite spectacular. We circled around, observing the area, and landed back at our shot site to pick up our equipment and roll up the shotline. Not many rocks fell. Bob and the others were up on the top of the wall, they said it was pretty impressive (we thought it was too),and everyone was happy!
ever after.

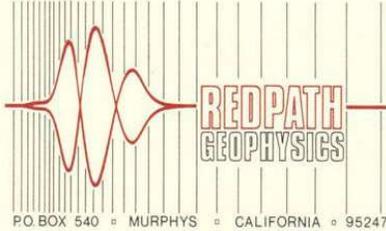
Working with all these guys (and those in the whole Branch) was joy. They were all interested in their work, and the job at hand.... and the scientists (Phds), men or women, didn't mind getting their hands dirty.

The Primer



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Editor's Notes ...

This issue of *The Primer* is a bit late. I've been busy traveling and there really hasn't been much to write about anyway. We'll try to get another issue out in a month or two. In the meantime, I'm still scratching around for new material. Hate to recycle articles from the past, but I may have to. Many thanks to Ed Criley, who sent along the Mt. Redoubt story. He took the time from his retired status in Computertino to send me a few notes and I thought the Mt. Redoubt story should be passed along. I'm sure many of you have stories that need to be told, and we've got a receptive audience. Why not send them along. Even if it's just a few notes, I can help you flesh it out.

For those of you who are reading this newsletter online at the website, or who have downloaded it, take a few minutes to look around the website and then drop me an e-mail if you have suggestions for improving the site. Several of the things that are there are the result of suggestions (mostly from Jerry Fulghum). I intend to gradually add some more of the back issues to the archive. We've got plenty of server space, so there is room for more "stuff" if you want it. I would also ask a few of you early members to check over the Chapter history page and send along any pertinent information that we can add there. I'm sure that we had more charter members at the organizational meeting than are listed on that page, but I can't recall their names. (I had one additional name sent in by a non-member, but the name submitted definitely wasn't one of the charter members.)

Gordon Coleman has been kind enough to collect past issues of *The Primer* and bind them to put in our chapter archives. Thanks, Gordon. Carey Haughey is the current keeper of the archives. With the newsletter now in electronic format, archiving is easier. It is only a matter of time and all publications as we know them will be in that form. I don't know about you, but my opinion of print newspapers has steadily declined over the past few years. I subscribed to the Wall Street Journal for over 30 years. For some reason, their mail distribution started going south about three years ago. It was bad enough that the news was a day old before it got to my mailbox, but to have it delivered from one to three days late just didn't get the job done. Last year I switched to USA Today. That paper has shrunk in size considerably and their reporting is very shallow. Now I'm looking again. I warned Claudia that future reading is probably going to be done on a screen. She's not keen on that, but I suspect there's a Kindle or other similar reading device in her future. (Somehow sitting on the side deck in the morning with a cup of coffee and an *electronic device* isn't quite the same.)

Stay busy. Stay out of debt - and encourage your government to do the same.

Cheers, *Wes Bender*

The Primer

How Come ...

1. If you're too open minded, your brains will fall out.
2. Age is a very high price to pay for maturity.
3. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
4. Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
5. If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.
6. My idea of housework is to sweep the room with a glance.
7. Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious.
8. It is easier to beg forgiveness than get permission.
9. For every action, there is an equal and opposite government reaction.
10. If you look like your passport picture, you probably need the trip.
11. Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.
12. A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel good.
13. Eat well, stay fit, and die anyway.
14. Men are from earth. Women are from earth. Deal with it.
15. No husband has ever been shot while doing the dishes.
16. A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.
17. Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.
18. Opportunities always look bigger going than coming.
19. Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away three weeks before you need it.
20. There is always one more imbecile than you counted on.
21. Experience is a wonderful thing. It enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.
22. By the time you can make ends meet, they move the ends.
23. Thou shalt not weigh more than thy refrigerator.

(Now THAT explains a LOT of things.....)