

Nomination for Saskatchewan Geological Society Honour Roll

Submitted by: Pam Schwann, SGS Member (pschwann@saskmining.ca; 306.536.7458); January 25, 2023



Richard Tadeusz Kusmirski

April 5, 1953 – December 3, 2021

Introduction:

Rick Tadeuz Kusmirski, or RTK, was an accomplished and respected exploration geologist with more than four decades of experience throughout the world but primarily focused in North America, specifically in Saskatchewan in the La Ronge Gold Belt and Athabasca Basin. I was fortunate to be both a friend and colleague to Rick and I am very honored to have worked with his family, friends and colleagues to put Rick's name forward for the SGS Honour Roll. I would particularly like to thank Rick's brother and sister – Ed and Christine, and friends Tracy Hurley and Dave Billard for providing much of the colourful information that so vividly brought forth Rick's life in the citation below. I would also like to thank Dave McDougall for recognizing that Rick was a worthy candidate for the esteemed Honour Roll, and for giving me the gentle nudge to submit this citation.

In the Beginning:

Rick was born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1953 and was the second of three children to Ted and Sophie Kusmirski (Christine the eldest and Edward the youngest). Both of his grandfathers came to Canada from Poland in the early 1930's and once they'd earned enough money they brought over their wives and kids. His first home was a two-story house on Barnsdale Avenue in Central Hamilton that his family shared with another family. His parents bought a home in Stoney Creek in 1960. Rick attended Bishop Ryan High School where he played football, garnering a broken nose with resulting complications causing sinus issues that lasted his whole life. He was also in the drama club and acted on stage. He was a member of the chess club and seldom lost in interschool competitions. But when he did, he'd spend hours afterward replaying the match on the dining room table to analyze where he'd gone wrong and what he could have done differently to secure a more favorable outcome (seriously, hours). His first job was as a store clerk at the local Miracle Mart (picture a cross between Zellers and Canadian Tire), where in his words he "took care of the mother shoppers and their snotty nosed kids".

Formative Years & Career

Rick's career path was likely influenced more by his love of the outdoors than any particular yen for hunting rocks. Although once he got into Geology, he embraced it and was fully committed to his work and his team. He was into everything about the outdoors and enjoyed fishing and just going for a walk in the woods.

Rick's geological career began at McMaster University in Hamilton, where he obtained his BSc in Geology in April, 1977. His BSc Thesis was "*Petrographic Study of the Heron Lake Stock, Superior Province*", based on field work from his previous summer with the OGS. He continued on with his MSc at McMaster, which he obtained in April 1981. Rick's MSc. Thesis was "*Metallogeny of the "East South C" ore zone in the Dickenson Mine, Red Lake, Ontario; evidence for syngenetic gold deposition.*" The study was part of a research agreement with the Geological Survey of Canada and was initiated by Dr. Jim Franklin.

Like any good field geologist worth their salt, Rick's interest and insight into geology was enhanced by his many summer field seasons from 1974 – 1980, working for the Manitoba and Ontario Geological Surveys.

After obtaining his MSc. Rick worked in 1981-82 for Newmont Exploration of Canada exploring for gold and base metals in Baie Verte Peninsula, Newfoundland. In 1982 he moved to Saskatchewan to join the gold and base metals group at Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation (SMDC). Rick's talents as a bright, practical and "incredibly savvy geologist" did not go unnoticed and would later elevate him to District Manager for Western Canada. Rick actively participated in the discovery of a number of uranium, gold and base metal deposits, Rick is one of the few that can say they found a mine – As Exploration Manager with SMDC his crew found the high-grade and highly profitable gold mine, which was named after his beloved German Shepherd, Jasper. As District Manager for Western Canada, Rick was also part of the discovery of the Contact Lake Gold Mine in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park (Hmm- Bill Slimmon mapped that with the Survey – another instance of these two paths crossing) and the McIlvenna Bay copper-zinc deposit in 1988. Later in 1988, with the merger of SMDC and Eldorado Nuclear to form Cameco, the company's focus narrowed to uranium. Rick then became Cameco's Exploration Manager for the Athabasca Basin.

On a personal note, our paths first crossed when I Rick and his SMDC crew on the shores of Waddy Lake in the early 1980's. Rick's crew was exploring for gold along the Byers Fault and I was a student with Charlie Harper's Saskatchewan Geological Survey field party. The Crown Corp had a more substantial budget than the Survey and had a helicopter available for their field work while we grunted out the paces or boated to our mapping destinations. Other than a helicopter, one of the things Rick's camp was renowned for was the legendary mid-summer bash – complete with pig roast. I remember boating across Waddy Lake to join in the festivities – I believe that Bill Slimmon was our fearless captain – at least on the way over.

After leaving Cameco in 1998, Rick spent time golfing and on ski slopes. But a man of his knowledge and talents was a hot commodity, and Rick was relentlessly pursued by many companies, including fabled promoter Dale Hoffman, CEO of JNR Resources. When consulting for JNR, urban legend is that JNR beat Cameco in a staking race for the Moore Lake property in September 1999, directed by Rick from the 9th hole of the Saskatoon Willows. Rick subsequently joined JNR Resources as Vice President of Exploration in 2000 where he guided the exploration program that led to the discovery of the Maverick Zone, named after another one of his pets, on the Moore Lake uranium project with then-joint venture partner Kennecott Canada. When Dale Hoffman passed away in January 2001, a group of major shareholders persuaded Rick to take over as President and CEO. Rick led the company until February of 2013 when JNR was acquired by Denison Mines Corp.

I think Rick needed to have more dogs so he could find more mines

Soon after the JNR transaction, Rick was convinced by Skyharbour CEO Jordan Trimble, to again put his expertise to good use. Rick was one of the founding supporters and head technical advisor for this junior company, assembling and guiding an energetic and accomplished geological team, that included long-time colleague and friend Dave Billard, with expertise focused on Athabasca Basin uranium exploration. Rick contributed to Skyharbour's success until his untimely passing.

RTK was head hunted for his expertise at both management and board levels. He was a director of Rockridge Resources Ltd., Bessor Minerals Inc. and several other publicly traded companies.

Other Interests

Outside of the geological sphere, Rick enjoyed many hobbies. He loved sports, playing football in high school and squash at university and there was always a chess board nearby. In 1980, he decided to coach the McMaster geology hockey team, a motley crew who it is said had great heart, but decidedly less talent than the highly favoured athletics team. Whether it was his coaching prowess or the promise of copious beer, Rick achieved the impossible, leading the "Rocks" to an historic victory. Sadly, even though he lived in Saskatchewan for many years, Rick wasn't able to shake his allegiance to Hamilton, and was an avid Tiger Cats fan. During his high

school and university years, he'd regularly head over to his Babcia's house in Hamilton to fill up on perogies and kielbasa and walk over to Ivor Wynn Stadium to catch a game. As a testament to his persuasive cunningness, he even managed to influence others to become life-long Ti-Cats Fans.

Rick loved to travel, especially winter escapes to sunny destinations. He also loved to ski and made trips to Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper or Whistler at least once a year, often joined by his brother Ed. In the summer golf became a passion he quickly excelled at. Spending time with his dogs was one of his greatest joys. Anyone reincarnated as a dog would truly score the lottery if they wound up on his doorstep.

Rick was an exceptional host, and he enjoyed having family and friends over to spend time in the backyard and pool and enjoy other events like the "Taste of Saskatoon" and World Junior Hockey Championships.

Giving Back:

One of Rick's positive attributes was that he was a mentor to many young, and not so young, geoscientists and other industry folks. His influence on others started when he was a TA for petrology lab and field camps at McMaster and continued throughout his life. Those who interacted with RTK during their careers speak about how they benefited from his insight, wisdom, and generosity. They noted how Rick always took time to explain things, but also pushed you to observe and think outside the box to develop your own thoughts. I remember the many times he has said to me "What do you think Pamela?" Many even appreciated Rick's sardonic sense of humour. A private person, the friendships he made decades ago were valued, and continued throughout time, regardless of distance. .

Rick gave back to the Exploration community in many ways - including in various roles with the Saskatchewan Mining Association. He was Chair of the SMA Exploration Section and SMA Board Member from 1996 – 1999 when he was Exploration Manager with Cameco. He was gracious (yes) to be on the SMA Board again from 2014 – 2019 when he was a Director and Technical Advisor with SkyHarbour Resources. Rick was also active in the CIM Saskatoon Branch over the years.

Rick's impressive legacy in Saskatchewan mineral exploration will continue to live on as his family have set up the "Jasper Family Fund" at the Saskatoon Community Foundation. Starting in the Fall 2024, term, an annual scholarship will be provided to a U of S Geology student – undoubtedly to a young, savvy geologist who is true to family, friends and campmates.

Closing

Rick passed away much too soon in Saskatoon on December 3, 2019, at the age of 68. He is survived by his sister, Christine (Jack); brother Edward (Maryann); nephews Michael (Julie) and Alexander; nieces Carolyn (Lucas) and Elizabeth; great niece Ruby; and his former wife Jamie and her family. Rick was a loyal friend who touched many people's lives. While he will be sorely missed by all, we are able to celebrate his accomplishments and our experiences with him – no doubt over a glass of rum.

It is a great privilege for me to nominate **Richard Tadeusz Kusmirski** for the SGS Honour Roll Citation.