

Ron Granger: A Revenue Man

by Jane Gaffin

Since early memories, Ron Granger (Hall of Fame) had worked toward a goal of striking out on his own as an independent prospector, being his own boss, a free agent, banging rocks, staking claims, optioning his properties to junior or large exploration companies, and, hopefully, at the end of the day, finding at least one mineral deposit worthy of developing into a mine.



The 20-year-old Ron Granger, 1955

It was while growing up in a northern Ontario town and attending North Bay Collegiate Institute and Vocational School he started educating himself outside the classroom. Alone, he explored the backyard of North Bay, a community nestled between Lake Nipissing and Trout Lake.

Out there in an expansive wilderness, he was introduced to and began developing an avid curiosity about rocks and minerals. From the outset, he had a sharp eye for the unusual. It's otherwise known as "paying attention" and is best developed without the distraction of a sidekick.

He was affable, friendly, talkative enough, but not gregarious by liking. He was reclusive by nature and liked his own company which explained what drew him into the wilderness where he began honing those skills that contributed to a life-long career.

Like most youth, his thoughts drifted to going beyond North Bay's confines to gallivant around the country and discover what life had to offer. Prospecting was an occupation that was easy to pack up and cart to anywhere he wanted to go on the planet.

He could pitch a canvas hermitage in the secluded bush as a base camp. At night, if he so desired, he could open the tent flap to a billion, buzzing, hide-biting mosquitoes as his only company and study the billions of incandescent stars polka-dotting the black sky. Or, he could shut out the world and study textbooks late into the night by Coleman, if he wanted.

By day, he would swing a rock hammer in one hand, a magnifying lens dangling at the ready from a lanyard looped around his neck. One boot might be on gold and silver, the other might be on copper or other valuable metal, he hoped, as he moved along, trying to outwit that tricky Mother Nature who had furtively stuffed the Earth's pockets with worthwhile bounty.

Finding precious or base metals in economic-sized compartments was a gamble like having to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. The prospector's work is an eternity of crap shoots, a relentless task of trying his luck day after day, year after year.

Add the additional uncertainty that every time somebody wins somebody else loses. It translates into a litany of how unwary prospectors get fleeced. On the other hand, while prospecting is a high-stake business, it offers the chance for some big pay offs.

It was fortuitous that life's events had unfolded as they had. In the spring of 1966, the 31-year-old Granger was pointing Arlington Silver Mines' blue 1965 Jeep Wagoneer in a northwest direction. His work was taking him to the prospector's paradise of the Yukon Territory where he would soon collide head-on with his long-term goals.

Ronald Alfred Granger made his debut to the world on January 14, 1935, in Hamilton, Ontario, a bustling port and industrial center strategically located in southern Canada at the western end of Lake Ontario, kissing close to Buffalo, New York.

His younger brother Robert N. (Bob) Granger was born 18 months later.

They were the sons of James Alfred Granger, a Bell Telephone Supervising Construction Foreman, and Grace Reynolds Granger, who had once worked as a Bell Telephone switchboard operator. Later, Mr. Granger's job took the family to North Bay.

In formal education, the two Granger brothers were opposites.

Bob grew up fascinated with the mining pursuits of his older brother Ron who was influential in Bob's following a legal career. He practiced in Toronto, specializing in mining and resource law, and was appointed to the prestigious Queen's Counsel.

"I was not cut out for sitting in classes and being told how to think," declared Ron. "I left school in the early spring of 1953. I was 18 years old. But I didn't write grade 12 and 13 until I was 25 years old."

He was a prodigious reader and possessed the gift of knowing how to find out what he needed to know through research and books of choice. He was blessed with somewhat of a photographic memory and grasped what interested him. If not, he kept digging. He wanted to read and study that which benefitted him and not clutter his mind with useless nonsense.

Yet he accepted the fact that learning is one of the finest occupations of life and school was to teach students how to find out what they wanted to know.

"I have always carried a complete Shakespeare, a book of Robert Service's verse and a good dictionary with me," he related. "I have a very large library of everything from mythology to psychology to ornithology. It includes collections on Ernest T. Seton, collectors' firearms, western settlement, native Americans, anthropology, biology and so forth."

It was not a disgrace to be without a diploma. Many men made fortunes without one. It just sometimes was mighty inconvenient. He knew what he knew because he knew it. But he did not have a piece of paper to prove what he was supposed to know and a potential employer had to be convinced to hire him at face value.

The impatient six-foot-three student with large, thinking eyes and a slow, contemplative style of talking, had been anxious to be out in the fresh air, roaming and investigating, shaking hands and getting better acquainted with Mother Nature who pulls the strings.

As a result of Granger's early-day enthusiasm for the North Bay bush, his career blossomed rather quickly. He began to carve out his own niche of expertise and earned a reputation for having the instinct for finding additional ore others missed. Companies hired him to fill positions as a mine geologist.

Granger worked his way around the part of the granite foundation of the Canadian Shield that hosts many famed mining camps that had been economic gifts to the whole

country during the Dirty Thirties. A man who wanted to work could always land a job in the big mines or the smaller mines that ringed the major gold and nickel producers at Sudbury, Timmins and Kirkland Lake.

While doing time in some of the famous camps, Granger learned to see the indicator signs for minerals. He blasted the bejeezus out of rock. He operated drilling machines rigged with diamond-studded bits to bore into the granite and produce cylindrical rock samples. The many metres of core told a story about what was going on down deep inside the Earth.

He split the core lengthwise, examined it with a lens and logged each piece as to depth and hole number. Sometimes the minerals sought were clearly visible with the naked eye.

Half the core went to the labs for assaying; the other half was stored in elongated wooden, specially-constructed trays called core boxes and slipped into wooden racks for long-term storage and future retrieval.

It would be necessary to test the stored core later to determine the best metallurgical method to implement as an ore-recovery process should a deposit be deemed feasible to develop into a producing mine.

For two years, 1953 to 1955, Granger worked for Packsack Diamond Drill and a related prospecting syndicate. A group of three financiers--Andy Robertson, Reg Minogue and Hugh Irving--had formed an agency around the prospecting work of Harris Hanson, a resident of the famous Kirkland Lake gold camp.

Both Harris and Granger were loners. Only on rare occasions did they work together on the same prospect.

Then Granger began concentrating specifically on gaining actual mining experience. He started off in 1956 at AER Nickel.

The AER, which stood for the initials of owner Al E. Rosen, was under development at Sudbury, in the heart of Canada's largest mining region. The orebodies were situated along what was known as the Worthington Offset, a spur to the main Sudbury Basin structure. It was on this branch from the main body that Granger was assigned to learn about underground mining procedures.

Al Rosen and Andy Robertson, a financier of the nameless prospecting syndicate, were the bosses who had sent Granger to Sudbury.

"I was to assist the company's senior men in developing the underground workings via two large timber headframes over vertical shafts," explained Granger. "These were built in those last days before lower-cost open-pit mines began to dominate in Canada."

Granger was acquiring underground-mining training, for sure. As a bonus, he was learning to survey under the tutelage of the temporary mine manager, Robert Coutts.

Coutts, a story in his own rights, had learned his surveying skills during the Second World War. After a circuitous route, Coutts would finally land in the tiny northern British Columbia (B.C.) community of Atlin, a stone's throw from the Yukon border. There, he settled into his cozy log home and wrote the invaluable reference volume, **Yukon Places and Names**.

Granger's career progressed nicely between 1955 to 1957. When the Toronto-based firm Simard & Knight was inundated with large contracts and needed extra people, several times the Robertson-Minogue-Irving syndicate seconded Granger to the mining consultants.

In this way, Granger's geological and geophysical mapping began to lose its amateurish tinge. On-the-job training was enhancing his skills to transfer his interpretations to paper.

He never forgot to read and study. Soon, he packed his books and bags and caught a westbound passenger train that clacked some 450 miles (720k) over steel to his destination of Manitouwadge, an Ojibway name meaning "Cave of the Great Spirit".

The community was located north of the Trans Canada highway, halfway between Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. It was the first instant urban model built in Ontario and founded in 1953 to support the copper mine owned by Geco, an acronym for General Engineering Co. Ltd.

One nearby copper-lead-zinc mines in the area was the independent Willroy Mine where Granger was headed. Both the Willroy and Geco were discovered in 1953 and went to production in 1957.

The Willroy was the namesake of two weekend prospectors, **William** Dawidowich and **Roy** Barker; a third party, Jack Forster, owned a third interest in the claims.

Theirs is the epitome of a success story that every prospector dreams of. It is a story of how an unskilled, untrained threesome, who had never run a race before, lucked into the winner's circle, and were presented with trophies of money, stocks and net-smelter-returns.

"Barker and Dawidowich were occasional claim stakers who went to Lake Manitouwadge to stake a showing mentioned by Dr. Ed Thomson of the Ontario Department of Mines," Granger began. "They needed a plane so they took in Forster as a partner. He was a car dealer in their town of Geraldton and owned a small plane."

Typically, every time somebody wins, somebody loses. According to Granger, two other prospectors had beat them to the punch. But when the first prospectors' rock samples

didn't assay for nickel the pair didn't record the claims. The ground came open and was staked by the three partners, Will, Roy and Jack.

"Bill Hargraft was an old friend to them and a partner with the Hamilton brothers in GECO, so they made an option deal that was a good one," recalled Granger. "The mine was not only rich but big, and they got \$0.05 per ton in addition to the cash terms. They were very wealthy. Forster put a water system into the town of Geraldton, That wealthy."

Moreover, they had part of the claims that made up Willroy to the west, which, with the Howie claims, made a good mine as well--but not so big or rich as the Geco Mine, added Granger.

"Bob Coutts was a good friend of Bill Hargraft and did some early work for GECO getting the mine built before I got there. Noranda bought in years later."

Granger's short but fruitful tenure at Willroy started with an English-born mine geologist who hired him on speculation. "I was hired as a geological draughtsman. There was a tough metals recession on then and they were piling the zinc cons (concentrates) on the ground as it would not pay to haul them out."

Granger didn't think that the mine geologist who hired him believed that a self-taught man could do mine geology. "But he soon changed his mind," said Granger.

"In a while I was starting to remap the whole mine and later I re-logged the entire core library. Then I mapped surface for a great distance and I made them an orthographic projection of the entire mine, for which they gave me a good bonus," he said.

"They had a good engineering department but were weak in geology, as many mines were back then."

By now, Granger had swiftly honed a penchant and reputation for "seeing" invisible ore and was lured away from Willroy by the mine manager at Temagami, a town northeast of Sudbury in the vicinity of Cobalt and Haileybury, close to the Quebec border.

The Temagami Island Mine, operating between 1954 to 1972, produced some of the purist, highest-grade copper ore ever mined in Canada. The property became one of the main legs in a series of prospects around which the weighty Teck Corporation was ultimately formed.

"The mine manager at Temagami was Bill Huston, a friend of mine from Sudbury," Granger recounted. "He knew what I could do in ore-finding and he tempted me away from Willroy by telling me that 'half of the PhDs and professors in Canada' had failed to figure out the Temagami geology."

Granger was still a young man in his mid-20s when enticed by the promise that he could win a big reputation if he succeeded in his quest for finding more ore. Granger proclaimed his success within the year's time allotted.

At this undertaking, he had the pleasure of another “unschooled” mine geologist’s company.

“Ol’ Doc (Norman) Keevil of Temagami-Teck & Geophysical Engineering had ‘unschooled’ Bill Hammerstrom of Cobalt on geology staff at Temagami at the same time I was remapping and relogging that mine. His son Norman, Jr. was a new PhD and had a desk in the same room with Bill (Hammerstrom) and me.”

Granger noted that his was an uncanny knack for somehow “seeing” the unusual nature of the deposit and figuring out where to find more ore.

When his job finished at Temagami, the company offered to send Granger to study mining engineering at Queen’s University in Kingston, a small city located at the head of the St. Lawrence River, at the east end of Lake Ontario.

But he declined the generous offer as he had done previously when another mining company had made a similar proposal. “It would have tied me to the companies for a term of many years,” he said.

Granger was of strong personality and liked doing projects his own way. He was getting educated while on the go, traipsing around the country sightsighting. Besides, these were the golden years of mining. And Granger was moving toward his goal to work as a self-employed prospector...”as soon as I could do so without starving,” he added.

Why bother with university, anyway? “I was a surveyor underground and on mill installation before I took trigonometry at the age of 25!” He laughed, ironically. “Yet the trig class didn’t do anything for me.”

Still, he contended, his mapping and re-logging at a series of mining operations did lead to the finding of a considerable amount of additional ore reserves.

When the Temagami assignment finished in 1959, it was time to set sail and see more new country. He took a year’s job in the Caribbean where he conducted bauxite exploration for Harvey Aluminum of America.

“Al Moore, a professional engineer, was project manager,” Granger related. “We lived in Kingston, and drove to the offices and labs at Guanaboavale, north of Spanishtown. The deposits were throughout the St. John’s Hills area.”

While in Jamaica, he taught himself first-order triangulation methods to tie many bauxite deposits together. “I got the texts and studied them at night, then did the work the next day.”

Rarely did anyone actually instruct him in what to do, he said. Rather, he embraced the responsibility with which he was entrusted to observe and progress.

In 1960, he returned to Canada and was once again hired by his syndicate friend Andy Robertson to work a two-year exploration and development contract in the Gowganda district of northeastern Quebec.

When Granger returned from that remote place in 1962, his path fortuitously crossed with geological engineer Albert (Bert) F. Reeve, a boyhood friend from North Bay.



**Ron Granger (left) shown with Bert Reeve
at the Granger home in Creston, British Columbia, 1990**

After leaving high school, their mining career paths had forked.

Reeve, who may not have been any more enthralled with school than Granger, had stayed, written his exams and graduated from North Bay Collegiate. He was graduated from the Provincial Institute of Mining at Haileybury, Ontario, before earning a geological engineering degree from Michigan College of Mining & Technology in 1961.

Now, he was back in Ontario. For a short while, Granger and Reeve partnered in a contracting business.

However, the West beckoned. The mining industry was hopping as though being jerked on invisible wires. The two mining men headed cross-country to Canada's westernmost province of British Columbia.

In the beautiful, energetic port city of Vancouver, the two men formed the consulting-contracting firm of Granger, Reeve & Company.

Concrete cities built of view-blocking, glass-and-steel high-rises and housing too many people was not to his liking. After four years, Granger was starved for a good feed of independence in an isolated corner of Canada.

He departed the partnership. John Stollery, a geological engineer, came on board with Granger's friend Bert Reeve. The firm underwent a name-change and emerged as the high-profile Cordilleran Engineering Limited. For many years afterwards, Granger said, Bert Reeve vetted his assessment work reports and signed-off on them as well as doing some consulting work for a company later formed in 1968 called Yukon Revenue Mines.

Granger went back into the contract business. While working in Eastern Canada, he had gained a reputation as somewhat of an authority on silver deposits, he said.

Another Bert--this time Bert Nesbitt, a Vancouver geological consultant--had on occasion sub-contracted Granger to manage British Columbia projects for him on behalf of Arlington Silver Mines.

Now the Yukon was the present-day exploration hot spot and had become a fad in Vancouver mining circles. Arlington Silver turned attention north and Nesbitt offered Granger the geology, electromagnetic (E-M), magnetics and geochemistry work on a substantial contract in the Ross River area.

The area of interest was in the central Yukon, about 12 miles from where the Dynasty Explorations syndicate was going full bore on a rotary-hole drill program out in the Anvil Range. The ground would subsequently be proven as the gigantic Faro lead-zinc-silver deposit that put the Yukon on the map, first as Canada's top lead producer, then as a 10,000-ton-a-day concentrate producer.

Millions of dollars were poured into the project; billions of dollars were expected to be returned from the mineral cache that would dwarf the Klondike goldfields, Keno Hill silver camps and the Clinton asbestos deposit.

The Anvil Range had ignited into the biggest staking rush the territory had ever known. Over 17,707 hardrock mining claims were squared off or tied on to, inflating the mineral exploration business to a worth of \$10 million one summer.

Before setting off north, Granger had made a side trip to see a car dealer in Nelson, a charming town born on mining in the early 1900s and located on Kootenay Lake in British Columbia's southern interior.

There, as per instructions, he took possession of Nesbitt's client's 4-wheel drive unit that was supposed to serve as his bush vehicle in the Yukon.

But, like many models, the Wagoneer was not of sturdy build to endure prolonged 60 to 70 below zero Fahrenheit temperatures that the Yukon faced over the next several winters.



Ron Granger with Jeep Wagoneer, Blind Creek, 1966

Granger did, however, find the vehicle satisfactory for light work. "But the second winter in the Pelly River valley was so cold for so long the multitudes of spot welds which held it together began breaking from metal failure. By spring it was a basket case. I sold it for \$500 to prospector Glen Harris who needed parts for his machine."

It was March 23, 1966, when Granger turned off the Alaska Highway at Mile 918 and guided the blue chariot down Two Mile Hill to the floor of the Yukon River valley into a boardwalk frontier burg sporting 6,000 residents and no traffic lights.

The Edgewater Hotel had Western-style swinging gates at the entrance to its beer parlor down on Front Street. If hitching posts had graced the anterior of the false-front stores and log buildings, it would have completed a typical scene from any duster movie.

The Yukon's capital city was dusty, muddy or frozen, depending on the season. Late March was still winter, trying to be summer. Whitehorse's Main Street was a frozen six-block mudhole, starting at the slumping clay bank to the west and running perpendicular to the Yukon River.

It was a haphazard shack-town that demonstrated little architectural planning as concrete-block buildings gradually replaced log structures. Taxes and living expenses were exorbitant. Housing conditions were bad and in short supply. Newcomers could rent a small hotel room for \$300 a month, or pitch a tent.

The appeal of the northern community was not what met the eye but how the place affected the spirit. Yukoners of the day were not merely residents of the isolated territory by birth, profession or trade, but rather a race of staunch, fiercely-independent individualists who wanted freedoms, specific lifestyles and minimal government interference. In other words, they damned well wanted to be left alone.

Basically, all the place had going for it was scenery, history, romance, a narrow-gauge railroad and a wealth of untapped resources.

Yukoners worked hard and they played hard. It was an excellent place to make money and get ahead. Jobs were plentiful. A person could quit a job one day and start with a new employer the next morning.

It also was a good place for fools to throw money around frivolously and end up broke.

In those days, the mining industry was king and activity was going full blast North of 60. It didn't matter an iota that the general public didn't know a sulphide from the city limits, a new mineral find was grist for newspaper copy and coffee-shop gossip. Residents were in a collective mood to invest in penny stocks.

Nearly every day, they heard of another discovery, joint ventures, partnerships and the reorganization of junior exploration companies. The agreements that weren't completed at the staking posts amidst the weeds were finished in the bar.

A vast number of kegs of brew and gallons of hard liquor were consumed while locals hypothesized, theorized, conjectured and speculated. It was not uncommon for mining deals to be inked and fortunes lost over tables in the watering hole at Capital Hotel central.

The resource-rich Yukon was bursting at the seams with an exhilarating medley of busyness and making international headlines, too.

United Keno Hill Mines was producing ore from its old silver camps at Elsa; New Imperial Mines, a few miles south of Whitehorse, was constructing a mill and had been doing extensive exploration on its 17-mile-long, crescent-shaped copperbelt property that paralleled the Alaska Highway, west of Whitehorse.

Cassiar Asbestos Corporation owned the producing asbestos mine in northern B.C. near the Yukon border and was grooming its commercial-grade Clinton Creek asbestos property near Dawson City for production. Whitehorse was home of the maintenance garage for the fleets of Cassiar and United Keno Hill trucks.

The town was small. Gossipy residents were eager to hear and spread fresh news and see fresh faces. They were well aware when a stranger entered the gates.

Ron Granger had a fairly good grasp on the lay of the land and had met quite a few residents by the time he finished setting up accounts before Bert Nesbitt flew to Whitehorse on Canadian Pacific Airlines for their pre-arranged appointment.

They were registered delegates at the Second Northern Resources Conference, a forum designed to be staged every three years in Whitehorse. It was founded by geological engineer Dr. Aaro Aho (Hall of Fame), a principal in the Dynasty Explorations syndicate that was going full tilt out in the Anvil Range.

The idea had burbled up in Dr. Aho's brain back in the 1950s. He possessed a vast knowledge of the North and a keen interest in natural resources and was full of creative ideas on how to profile and sell industry to every sector. He remained active in his creation from inception in 1963 until his death in 1977.

Over the next 2-1/2 days, hundreds of inspired delegates mixed and mingled, listening to scores of papers presented on a wide range of renewable and non-renewable topics.

Afterwards, Granger set out for Ross River. The Jeep skidded over 78 miles (125k) of narrow, twisty, gravel, pot-holed Alaska Highway that intersected at Johnson's Crossing with the South Canol Road, short for Canadian American Norman (Wells) Oil Line. The wartime U.S. military-built Canol out-snaked the Alaska Highway for another 162 miles (260k) to Ross River.

The badly-deteriorated road wasn't maintained in winters, except for emergencies. It wiggled along, steeply climbing then deeply dipping, twisting and turning, cutting through the colorless, bleak and drab scenery of early spring.

Soon, the Yukon would be freed from its icy bondage. In the land of the midnight sun, foliage would pop out and flourish overnight, seemingly to make up for time lost during the dead winter months.

Still, it looked like divine rock-hunting country as the road tagged along beside the Rose River most of the way to Granger's destination.

His was a late afternoon arrival in the disheveled oasis of crooked cabins, modest frame abodes and Atco trailers poking out of a forest and tangled undergrowth. The rough-hewn Indian village, replete with about 400 permanent residents, had been plunked down unceremoniously on the banks of the Pelly River.

Ross River was not a tourist destination. Accommodations were sparse, especially with the present exploration explosion bulging the settlement. Big-game outfitters Werner and Else Koser provided Granger with a place to park his boots and lay his head until he could get his exploration camp built between Blind and Van Gorder creeks.

Van Gorder Creek was named for prospector and trapper Del Van Gorder, manager of the Taylor and Drury trading post at Pelly Banks around 1910. It was probably southern soldiers, who drawled "r"s into "ah"s that caused a phonetic spelling "Vangorda" to be officially recorded on maps.

Regardless by which name it's called, the creek is a tributary to the Pelly River, a very important transportation corridor in this neighbourhood.

On VanGorda creek, in 1953, Al Kulan (Hall of Fame) discovered the 10-million-ton Vangorda lead-zinc deposit, the precursor to finding the Faro deposit where Dynasty crews were presently slogging away in advanced exploration stage.

Finding the Faro deposit was the unplanned fallout from Kerr Addison Mines hiring independent prospector Kulan on the payroll one season. In 1956, the Swim deposit was staked and mineralization indicated with drilling in 1964, the same year that Dynasty Explorations was formed to explore the Anvil district.

Soon, Granger was living out on Van Gorder Creek, keeping company with the big boys who invaded the area with large crews and were spending scads of money.

"The Whitehorse mining recording office told me that I filed more mileage in the next two years than the three largest corporations in the camp," said Granger, who controlled hundreds of miles of contracts of his own.

Granger kept busy staking, mapping, prospecting and geologizing his way around the Yukon as the calendar picked off the days and months to 1968.

He had put in a tremendous effort in the Pelly River area, then spent many years in the Mt. Freegold and Big Creek areas near Carmacks, a rowdy little village 100 miles (60k

north of Whitehorse on the Mayo Road, subsequently renamed the North Klondike Highway.

Nearby, Revenue Creek (NTS 115-I) flows into Big Creek, three miles above Seymour Creek in the Carmacks area. Fred Guder (Hall of Fame) named the creek "Revenue" to denote a stream that had generously afforded him enough winnings to "pull his own freight" and carry on his passion for independent prospecting.

In 1940, Guder had built a cabin and sporadically mined placer gold there, Granger explained. In the shafts, he also found rounded pieces of the mineral chalcopyrite, the main ore of copper. He finally was able to isolate the source.

It was 1954 before he felt confident that his work warranted offering the property for an option agreement. He contacted Whitehorse-based Alec Berry (Honour Roll), a scout and public relations man for Conwest Explorations that owned Cassiar Asbestos and was developing Clinton Creek Asbestos.

Berry manned the company's low-ceiling, log cabin office that tilted a bit on its Main Street moorings. The story wound through the usual Conwest protocol. Berry called his friend, Conwest's chief geologist, in Vancouver. Dr. William Smitheringale called Fred Connell in Florida where Conwest's founder and principal spent the bulk of his time.

Connell authorized his chief geologist Smitheringale to pay Guder the "good faith" sum of \$1,000 to give Conwest an opportunity to assay samples for content. In a search for base metals, Conwest carried out a small exploration program.

Over the years, Teck Corporation toyed with the property as did Cominco, Asbestos Corporation and Canex Mines.

It was 1967 when Granger first met the famed Guder who was by then 72 years old. "But he could still sink a shaft 20-feet deep in three days time and walk 10 miles on a mountainside without resting," Granger admired.

An option agreement was struck with Guder for the Revenue Creek mining claims on behalf of Granger and General Enterprises (GE), a Whitehorse road-building contractor. In 1968, it was those claims that substantiated the formation of Yukon Revenue Mines Ltd.

When the terms of the option agreement were fulfilled, Yukon Revenue owned the claims, which were prospected and drilled over a long period in an effort to locate gold, silver, chalcopyrite or any other mineral that might reveal itself. At the same time, Yukon Revenue was fanning out in the territory to examine other prospects.

Granger happened to meet the two Harrys--Harry C. Fromme (Honour Roll) and Harry Johannes (Hall of Fame)--a few years before, in the spring of 1966.

They were kingpins in General Enterprises, a large Whitehorse-based contracting emporium that was diversified into: contract building, rock-moving and road construction; a batch plant mixing most concrete for Whitehorse that was undergoing a face lift and house-building boom; a retail and wholesale building-supply depot; a logging, sawmill and framing division; plus any other miscellaneous and profitable divisions that tweaked the owners' imagination.

The new item on the menu turned out to be mining. General Enterprises already controlled a couple of other local construction firms. Together, they collaborated to construct a big portion of the large Yukon projects, including the mid-1960s contract to excavate the open pit at Cassiar Asbestos Corporation's new Clinton Creek Asbestos project, near Dawson City.

The sizable heavy equipment maintenance shop was on Industrial Road, where, in later years, a modern office complex was added. Additionally, GE owned a small airplane and a helicopter and had pilots on payroll to fly them.

Jack Hogan, a sharp, high-blooded, energetic, outspoken young man of only 26, was the accountant. It was to his credit that GE never missed a trick.

In off-times, a glut of heavy earth-moving equipment might be sitting idly in the yard costing money instead of making it when the machinery could be working for them. It was a good excuse to get into the exciting mining game.

While realizing a handsome tax-write off and perquisites and maybe wresting some wealth from the ground, GE would lease out the equipment for Yukon Revenue to dig holes and push gravel and dirt around on both placer and hardrock mining projects.

Both Harry Fromme and Harry Johannes had a fascination for geology and mining which was going through a halcyon phase in the 1960s.

Granger's introduction to Harry Johannes, a small-stature man, came when GE was extending the new Robert Campbell Highway. It was under construction to eventually accommodate White Pass' fleet of trucks hauling ore concentrates between Whitehorse railhead and the Faro mine.

The all-weather gravel road, completed in 1968, loops some 367 miles (590k) from the North Klondike Highway at Carmacks to meet the Alaska Highway in the southeast Yukon at the Alaska Highway community of Watson Lake.

"I had hired some bulldozer time from Harry Jo as the advance equipment was roughing out a trail that passed one of my tent camps," submitted Granger, who was then working in the Van Gorder Creek area near Ross River.

"Harry Jo was extremely interested in prospecting but had been crippled by polio in one leg as a child and was limited in what he could do in the bush. He lived downtown

Whitehorse with his wife Kay. They had no children but were quite devoted to each other,” he said.

“Harry Jo had been involved with the development and mining of the Johobo bornite copper deposit behind Kathleen Lake in what is now Kluane National Park,” Granger related. “The very high-grade ore was direct-shipped out of Haines, Alaska, to a Japanese smelter.”

Johannes and Granger spoke the same enthusiastic jargon. Soon, Harry Jo introduced Granger to his partners and recommended they all work together.

The five partners each held a 20-percent interest in Yukon Revenue. Harry Fromme was president and continued in that position until his retirement more than 20 years later; Harry Johannes’ directorship covered the same period.

Other directors were Bob Warner, Archie Bruce and Granger. Jack Hogan, GE’s crackerjack bean counter, was secretary-treasurer but not a director at the relevant time.

By the time Granger had met the grandees of the construction business, they were already wealthy. There was no indication that the stampede of money was going to cease.

It seems that Fromme may have been from Manitoba, as he once mentioned to Granger that he had attended The University of Manitoba. “He told me that he was 18 years old when he came into Yukon on snowshoes, following Jack Dalton’s trail from Haines, Alaska, to join his older sister Gladys and her husband Archie Bruce on Sheep Creek beside Kluane Lake where they were hand-mining placer gold.”

Gladys was a graduate geologist, a rarity to find a woman degreed for a so-called man’s profession in the 1950s.

Fromme had studied geology as well, but didn’t outwardly portray indications of a deep knowledge of mineral matters, said Granger. “What Harry clearly did have was an entrepreneurial sense for business and money-raising.”

Fromme also had experience as a hand miner on a placer gold prospect at Squaw (Dollis) Creek and built and occupied one of the log cabins at (Jack) Dalton Post. Up the Alaska Highway from Kluane Lake and the site of his kin’s placer diggings, Fromme owned claims on Burwash Creek, too.

He never worked his Burwash holdings. Instead, he sold out to German interests at a high price in the late 1970s. Granger recalled that he was greatly angered when Revenue Canada would not allow him to use the cost of his assessment work as a tax write-off.

When Fromme and his brother-in-law Archie Bruce had decided they wanted to enter the construction business, they approached Harry Johannes, a prairie-born cousin of the brother-sister combo, Gladys Fromme Bruce and Harry C. Fromme.

Johannes owned a bowling alley between Hougen's Department Store and the Taku Hotel on Main Street. To raise seed money for Fromme and Bruce, Johannes used his business as collateral and teamed up as a full partner until his retirement in the 1980s.

Both Harrys had spent time in the bush as young men and understood what was required to operate in wilderness situations, Granger praised. "The partners gave me a retainer plus day billing and expenses, with the use of their equipment and office space for joint activities in prospecting and mineral development."

Granger spent half his time working on Yukon Revenue projects that included staking large blocks of mineral claims during big staking rushes that were sparked by the announcement of a fresh mineral discovery that inflated the investor crowd's mood to speculate.

One of the big rushes was in the Anvil Range, followed by a rush to the northeast near the Northwest Territories border in the Selwyn Basin. The 1960s and 1970s were exciting years to be in mining in the Yukon.

Half of Granger's time focused on his personal prospecting and staking activities, sometimes in conjunction with one or more of his Yukon Revenue partners, bringing in veteran prospectors like Glen Harris (Hall of Fame), who received a per diem plus a percentage of any rewards realized. Granger and Harris appreciated each other and often worked together on their own projects.

Harris was handy. He was a heavy equipment operator, a mechanic as well as a prospector and was wiry as a coat hanger and tough as a wolverine. Harris had Cat-skinned for General Enterprise, Yukon Revenue, the Clinton Creek and Faro mines and even helped build the Alaska Highway in the late 1940s.

During his prospecting career, Harris had teamed up with a number of good prospectors. One was Joe Suits (Prospector of 1992), a shy Indian fellow who hailed from the Boswell River country.

Ron Granger and Harry Fromme grubstaked Harris and Suits to stake Boswell River silver showings that were traditional Suits family knowledge, then Granger and Fromme optioned the ground with the intention of rolling it into a newly-formed private company.



Diane Granger, husband Ron, and Glen Harris, Seymour Creek, 1983

Fromme put the silver claims into Golden Empire Mines. For added mileage, he rolled in a distant copper property on the Wind River, way up in the northeastern Yukon. Granger drilled the Wind River property and constructed an adequate dirt airstrip there, similar to the one that was built at the Boswell River property.

“We were the first ones to take a Cat and 4x4 truck to the north side of Boswell River, a tributary to the Teslin River in the Big Salmon Range,” said Harris. “That was a kind of feat in itself,” he stated. “We had to build a continuation of the Amoco (American Oil Company) road to the Boswell River and then had to find a descent place to cross it. This was in the early 1970s.

“We remodelled an old cabin and put on a new roof that had fallen in but the logs were still sound. We made a decent place to stay as we had brought in all the plywood with the D-4 Cat and a 4x4 truck on the winter trail.

“We built about seven miles of road on the north side of the river on ground we had staked for a company that we had intended the public to go on. It never happened,” he said, “much to our disillusionment.”

Then Ontario-based Barbara Barde of Ontario was assigned to produce a TV docufilm on mining activities in northern Canada, a project funded by the federal department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The film was intended for airing cross-country and in the classrooms of the nation.

The producer contacted Granger who narrated the film. He took the TV crew to Boswell River to shoot on-site footage of prospectors Harris and Suits carrying out traditional grassroots prospecting in true northern style.

Harris was a ham but being a movie actor was not in Suits' repertoire. In any event, despite the native man's extraordinary shyness, Suits possessed a keen sense of humour. So, he amused himself playing host on his turf, plying the film crews with an endless outpouring of strong, sweet bush-brewed tea.

Harry Fromme had garnered a reputation for his astonishing prowess to peddle properties at heavenly sums. "He would take my records and maps to Vancouver and vend them to interested mining companies for amounts of money that never ceased to amaze me," Granger exulted. "With my share from one down payment that Fromme obtained, I bought the house at 503 Main Street."

When the principals of Yukon Revenue were banding together in anticipation of their new high-prospecting adventures in 1967, Ron Granger and Diane Tripp teamed up. Both had spousal baggage to dispose of legally before they could marry in their 503 Main Street house on April 24, 1971. Their son Bradley was born August 8, 1974.

Under Diane Granger's long, thick, black tresses, which she wore up in public, was a sound business head. She had a knack for knowing when to buy, sell or hold investments and had a Midas touch for making money on the gold market. Her quick wit and perky personality matched her walking gait that always denoted she knew where she was going.

In the 1980s, the federal Conservative administration in Ottawa appointed her as the first woman chair of the Yukon Territory Water Board. Any chauvinistic male board member or so-called consultant who thought she could be pushed around in the decision-making arena was sadly mistaken. Mrs. Granger did not suffer fools. The incompetents were soon on the resignation list.

Conveniently, across the street from where the Grangers lived was the quaint heritage home, encircled by a shaded grass lawn, that was owned by the Yukon Chamber of Mines. While Mrs. Granger concentrated on market investments and water board business, her husband was investing 21 years of indomitable dedication in that lobby association.

Most presidents of the group burned out after only one year. Granger surfaced as a battered warrior after three gruelling consecutive terms--November, 1976 to November, 1979.

Nevertheless, he was proud that the arduous campaigns he led held back the tide a while longer on yet another flood of regulatory changes surging down the pipe from the talking heads in Ottawa.

One of Granger's many volunteer duties was to chair the development session of the Sixth Northern Resources Conference that wrapped up October 20, 1978. At that particular conference, the threadbare word "hope" was once again cited as the major outcome.

Politicians once again gushed platitudes and shop-worn promises that the federal government would consult with those who would be affected before any northern decisions and regulations became final. Bold-type newspaper headlines read: "Promises! Promises! Promises!"

Major issues of grave concern were land alienation, mining regulations and taxation. Ten, 20, even 30 years later, land alienation, mining regulations and taxation were still bones of contention.

Once the decision-makers made up their minds, lobbying efforts and consultation were mere speed-bumps to the process. Changes were as inevitable as the annual spring flooding of Big Creek.

Little did Granger know that nine years later his arm would be twisted like a corkscrew until he consented to let his name stand for president once more. He was elected to his fourth and final term November, 1987 to November, 1988.

When Granger was not serving as chamber president or sitting as past president between 1968 to 1989, he was elected as one of the 12 directors or was a director representing an organization that had a seat on the board. His energy never flagged and he never seemed to be discouraged.

The chamber had a long-standing annual tradition dating back to 1952 of offering introductory prospecting classes to the public in the spring. After an enthusiastic bunch of novices learned to identify a few basic rocks and minerals and took a field trip, Granger assisted with teaching the advanced course.

From him, students learned to stake and record mining claims and enter into good property option deals that conceivably would lower their risk of being hosed by shady operators.

Granger also put forth plenty of effort in the formation of the Yukon Prospectors' Association (YPA) which held its first official meeting on January 11, 1971. Due to wording of the constitution, Granger couldn't run for office in the new organization.

Despite his stance as a free agent, he did have a strong attachment with Yukon Revenue Mines and was strongly connected with the Yukon Chamber of Mines that had strayed from its roots of supporting the independent prospector.

As the chamber leaned heavier toward lobbying on behalf of the mine operators and large exploration companies, a faction of prospectors branched off as a separate entity so the “little guys” could have a voice. But both the chamber and the prospectors worked closely together on common-interest issues.

Whereas Granger was not on the executive, he was an avid participant in the formation of the prospectors’ club from the outset. Later, he researched candidates deserving to be named to the Honour Roll. He also was a speaker at the gala 1988 Yukon Prospectors’ Association’s Ball that launched the Hall of Fame and Honour Roll projects.



Ron Granger speaking at the Prospectors’ Ball, 1988

Names of inductees were engraved on brass plates attached to a wood-burning art piece, produced by artist Bill Wallis of Atlin, B.C. The commemorative artwork is on permanent display in the foyer of the Yukon government administration building.

Soon, the good idea for paying tribute to prospectors was cast in metal in 1992, thanks to the monumental efforts of prospector association president Bruce Patnode and sculptor Chuck Buchanan.

A bronze commemorative sculpture was erected downtown and the public took immediate ownership of the Yukon's favorite prospector that stands nine feet tall in the courtyard of the Elijah Smith Building.

Sadly, Granger's wife contracted cancer and the three-member family had to leave Whitehorse in 1989. They chose to resettle in Creston in southeastern British Columbia, partially due to the closeness to major medical facilities as well as Granger's allurements with some interesting mineral deposits he had examined in the area during the early 1960s.

After enduring two surgeries, the insidious disease took Diane's life on October 18, 1998.

On May 28, 2004, Granger was remarried in Ardill, Saskatchewan to a Registered Nurse (RN) and a birding aficionado, Linda Van Damme. They make their home in Creston where it is still not unusual for Granger to receive phone calls from young, curious geologists about Yukon Revenue's past work in specific areas or on a specific property. When possible, he willingly proffers clues or forwards hand-drawn maps to the inquirer.

No longer physically able to thrash around the bush as in his youth, Granger took on the tough, self-imposed assignment of penning his memoirs between the covers. The author can be contacted at ragranger@shaw.ca about the illustrated autobiography titled **Good Prospects**.

* * * * *

Ron Granger was honoured as a Lifetime Member of the Yukon Chamber of Mines in 1989.

The Yukon Prospectors' Association inducted him into the Hall of Fame in 1992 in recognition of the outstanding contributions he made to the Yukon exploration industry. His name is engraved in the base of the bronze prospector statue that watches over downtown Whitehorse from Main Street and Third Avenue.

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Harry Johannes was inducted into the Yukon Prospectors' Association's Hall of Fame in 1989, the same year Harry Fromme was named to the Honour Roll. Both names are engraved in the base of the bronze prospector statue.

Harry Johannes' widow established a scholarship with the Yukon Foundation in honour of her husband; applications are open to post-secondary students enrolled in engineering sciences with emphasis on geology.

See related articles: *Yukon Chamber of Mines Formed to Assist Prospectors*; *Alec Berry: Conwest Exploration's Super Sleuth*; *Fred "Fritz" Guder: Freegold Fame*; *Aaro Aho: Mine Finder Believed Deeply in Yukon*; *Al Kulan Welcomed into Canadian Mining Hall of Fame*; *Bert Law: He Helped Prospectors Fulfill Their Dreams*; *Art Anderson: Asbestos Mine Discoverer was No. 1*; *Glen Harris: A Prospector Who Simply Won't Quit*; *Joe Suits: Prospector of the Year 1992*; *Jimmy Kane Wrangled for Jack Dalton*; *The Yukon's Favorite Prospector*; *Bruce Patnode: Designer of Prospector Statue*; and *Chuck Buchanan: Sculptor of Bronze Prospector Statue*.