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Career Abstract John Hill

Extraordinary good luck has dogged my professional footsteps for over half a century. I obtained a first class matric at Durban High School and a BSc (Hons) and MSc from Natal University, South Africa.

I was blooded in the mid-fifties in the Witwatersrand gold mines as an underground geologist where the stopes were spitting shards due to rock pressure. As a diversion I was a crew member on a whaling ship in the Antarctic for four months.

In 1957 I obtained a two year contract with the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. I was involved in porphyry copper and VMS search. A memorable interlude was being stranded for six weeks on a Polynesian coral atoll while engaged in phosphate appraisal.

Following a mineral exploration (DIC) course at the Royal School of Mines I joined the Malayan Geological Survey for a three year contract. My principal responsibility was cassiterite search on Malay reservations. Unintended consequences were a close encounter with a band of Chinese insurgents and walking into a herd of elephants in bamboo country.

In 1964 I arrived in Sydney for an interview with Electrolytic Zinc Company, I was booked into the Temperance Hotel, Kings Cross. Wandering into an adjacent pub where I encountered the six o'clock swill - my initial contact with Australia was not auspicious. For the next eleven years I worked with Electrolytic Zinc Company (Vic Cottle, Chief Geo.), Central Pacific Minerals (John Ivanac, GM) and International Nickel (Robin Curtis, Exploration Manager). I was involved in a wide range of investigations involving porphyry copper, uranium, VMS, gold, rutile and coal in Australia and Brazil. There are two among many memorable events. I heard "The Eagle has landed" by a camp fire north of Leonora: while sitting on top of the Jukes Darwin Range, Tasmania, looking down on the penal colony of Sarah Island and irritably kicking loose rock I unearthed a complete fifteen kilogram convict ball.

In 1975 I joined Preussag Goslar as Australian manager. This posting took me to exploration and evaluation projects in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Fiji and Ireland. Preussag was operating on behalf of the German government to obtain base metals for the national industry; targets were Mt. Isa sized resources. Instructions were curt. At five pm the phone would tinkle and without preamble would be "Mr Hill, you will do this or that" or "Mr Hill, you will arrive in Goslar next Wednesday, a car will meet you at the airport", click. When the German government realised that there was a global glut of resources funding ceased and Preussag closed all its exploration offices in 1988.

Between '88 and '90 I was asked to locate mineable gold ore for two juniors who had built mills before establishing economic mill feed, an excellent example of Fools Gold. It was at the TC8 gold mine, Tennant Creek, that I witnessed the 6.7 inter-cratonic earthquake that blocked the shaft and disabled the mill, the miners had to use the emergency air shaft. That day I had call from Ross Large from the Tasmanian seismic station who was amazed we were all still standing.

In 1991 I attended a financial evaluation course at the Royal School of Mines, London and then commenced a decade like no other. I became involved in a program for the rehabilitation of Russian gold mines. I then wrote a Mining Economics course for Moscow State University and commenced lecture programs for universities and institutes in Russia and Kazakhstan, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra. From these activities followed gold consulting assignments in Cote d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, the Mongolian border, and gulag country in the Russian Far East. Initially I worked as an Associate with RTZ, Bristol, but finally with Australian Mining Consultants, Melbourne.

In 2002, aged 70, I decided to run a cattle property in the Upper Hunter. Currently I am involved in oversight of a limestone project and have prepared submissions for a proposed coal mine. I have written my autobiography, 'Time Lines and Fault Lines' and write a monthly blog 'towardsthefinalhour.com'. None of this would have been possible without the assistance of my family. In the words of A B Facey it has indeed been "A Fortunate Life".