

## **A B (Bruce) Bell MAusIMM**

1946 – 2013

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Bruce's farewell in Auckland was very fully attended by his family, many friends and industry compatriots. Bruce not only had many friends but was also well liked and very much respected by his fellow workers in the mining and minerals industry. It was fitting that at the end of the ceremony when the love of his life, who became his devoted wife, Margaret (Marg) was carrying out their grandson that Bruce's grandson very loudly asked "Are we going to have some cake now?" For those that knew Bruce, and his love of cake, this showed that his genes had been most properly passed on. Given Bruce's even greater love of rocks, we may well have listened to Bruce's early stages of development as a geologist.

Bruce went to school in Auckland and attended Auckland University where he included geology in his first year's studies, was inspired in geology, and then obtained a B Sc in geology. Geology provided the conduit for Bruce's love of adventure, travel and visiting new horizons. To the end he was an enthusiastic and passionate, not to mention successful, exploration geologist. His earliest work was as an Auckland based consultant. His work was always sound, setting the basis for his accepted technical excellence. He early specialised in New Zealand exploration, literally exploring from Fiordland to Northland. Eventually this led to forming and running the fledgling New Zealand exploration and mining company Sigma Resources. Sigma was eventually absorbed by its parent company Delta Gold. Bruce was also involved in exploration in Australia for Delta Gold and early affiliate Canyon Resources.

Bruce was also active in Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia and most recently China, being the Chairman and CEO of King Solomon Mines. In fact while Bruce was diagnosed with bowel cancer six years ago surgery and chemotherapy kept it in check until it became more aggressive four years later. Bruce's oncologist could only raise his eyebrows in astonishment at Bruce's requests following treatment stages of when he could travel to China again.

While King Solomon Mines was the last of the companies Bruce was to form as a listed explorer, Bruce's listing 'career' began in early 1987. Following exploring and assessing a variety of exploration and mining projects throughout New Zealand, Bruce placed a suite of prospects into a New Zealand mining float. This resulted in Sigma Resources. Sigma Resources was listed on the New Zealand stock exchange on 6 October 1987. The company had two weeks of fame, with elevated stock prices, before the stock market crash of 1987 saw the share price dwindle. Then only a few months later all mining companies were precluded from exploring on Department of Conservation land, and two thirds of Sigma Resources exploration portfolio were lost at the stroke of a misguided Wellington politician's pen. Bruce then moved to Melbourne working first for Delta Gold. He then evaluated and gathered together Victorian properties and Highlake Resources was formed. When this exploration vehicle was acquired by Ballarat Goldfields it led to Bruce's return to New Zealand.

Bruce now looked to Asia, settling on China as the location for his next exploration attention. Again, following many years of work in China, while being based in New Zealand, Bruce together with fellow New Zealander Stephen McPhail, formed and listed King Solomon Mines which is today actively exploring in China's Inner Mongolia province, with good results to date for their drilling efforts.

Those who had the good fortune to know Bruce universally describe him as one of nature's true gentlemen. He always was willing to assist wherever possible, never looking for anything in return. Again those who knew him never heard him raise his voice in anger. His only two swear words were "Gosh" and "Gee". Having said this he from time to time did raise his voice, but only for his beloved All Blacks.

Bruce has long been an active member and supporter of the AusIMM, recently receiving his 40 years membership certificate from President Alice Clark. He attended as many New Zealand Branch Conferences as his offshore forays would allow.

Bruce was a very family oriented person, and great husband to Marg. He literally worshipped the ground she walked on. He was a great father to Andrew and Stuart, always being there to support them in whatever endeavours they would attempt. Whenever possible while his family were growing up he shared his work experiences with them, leading to many 'interesting' adventures. He adored all his four grandchildren, especially having three granddaughters (he came from an all boy family) prior to welcoming the arrival of his grandson, .....

As Marg said at Bruce's memorial service, Bruce packed a full lifetime of experience into his sadly shortened time. Bruce's friends and mining colleagues who were privileged to know him feel the same.