

The EDGE

November 2000 Issue

Equity & Diversity in Geoscience & Engineering

Please don't hesitate
to give your input...

Send submissions
to the DAWEG
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*(please save your submission in
Word for Windows 95
or include your submission
in the text of your e-mail)*

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*Newsletter for the Division for Advancement of
Women in Engineering & Geoscience*

A Division of the Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of British Columbia

The Annual General Meeting for DAWEG

September 30, 2000

By Margaret Li, Chairperson

The DAWEG AGM was held at the Holiday Inn Metrotown in Burnaby. This year, the DAWEG AGM was honoured by three very distinguished speakers: Ms. Hiromi Matsui, Mr. Phil Sunderland and Dr. Anne Cordon. The meeting was enthusiastically attended by about 20 members and guests, and was made a success by the encouraging words from the three guests speakers and the formation of the new executive.

Hiromi Matsui, APEGBC Council and Past President of SCWIST

Hiromi shared with the group on the work of other groups of Women in Engineering such as Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (CCWEST), The Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST). Also she shared with the group the words of wisdom from some role models of women in science and engineering:

- ❑ Nancy Paris-Seeley, Bio-Medical Engineer – *"I think the future lies in being knowledge-based – using our brains, not our resources."*,
- ❑ Catherine Roome, Telecommunications Engineer – *"If you go where your heart is, you will enjoy your career."*, and
- ❑ Monika Marcovici, Multimedia Producer – *"Don't let anybody intimidate you and don't set your sights too low."*

Hiromi concluded by encouraging the group to:

- ✓ Focus and act in a STRATEGIC way,
- ✓ Build relationships (APEGBC, CCPE, other groups, universities and industries), and
- ✓ Make History and Build Futures (MAKING IT HAPPEN!).

Phil Sunderland, P.Eng., President of Council, APEGBC

At the request of the group, Phil had a one-hour open discussions on some general issues instead of going through his prepared slides. The discussion was most informative. Topics included:

- ❑ Registration of APEGBC for new members (decisions made by volunteers in committees and not by staff),
- ❑ The role of CCPE (Canadian Council of Professional Engineers) and the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board in ensuring standards in the profession,
- ❑ Opinions on the oath read in the Iron Ring Ceremony – the wording of ‘slaving’ according to Kipling,
- ❑ The issue of obtaining more recognition from society for the contribution by engineers, and
- ❑ Help and information given to new comers to Canada with engineering qualifications and the draft information document DAWEG started some time ago.

Ann Condon, Professor, Department of Computer Science, UBC

Ann's topic was "Experiences with Mentoring". She shared with us her experience as a graduate student and faculty in various universities and her mentors at those times. She especially benefited from the guidance she received from her mentors when she was an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin, e.g. in grants, awards, etc. Her experience could be summed up as:

"One of the most important aspect of mentoring is 'instilling a dream'."

She encouraged mentoring, not just women engineers mentoring younger women, but also male mentors for women engineers.



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“What Glass Ceiling?”

October 16, 2000

By Margaret Li, Chairperson

Words of Wisdom from some industry role models at the Panel Discussion organized by SCWIST (Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology)

Micheline Bouchard, President, Motorola Canada

Advice for moving up in the corporate ladder and for succeeding in life:

- ✓ **Self confidence**
We must preserve our self confidence even if things don't work out the way we wanted them. It could be that we have not been in the right place and the right time. According to Micheline, it took her 10 years to get her first promotion.
- ✓ **No one can succeed alone**
We must build a network of supporters, allies and promoters, be visibly competent by getting involved in visible projects, and staying in touch with people who can help us. Micheline sends 600 Christmas cards to stay in touch.
- ✓ **Work on the right projects**
Look for strategic projects (ones that are crucial to the survival of the organization, generate revenue, cut costs, etc.).
- ✓ **Think strategically and broadly**
- ✓ **Develop leadership skills**
Seek opportunities to lead (e.g. volunteering), expand network and build up reputation. Micheline's reputation of being a leader was established and she was invited to prestigious boards even before she became CEO.

Micheline concluded with the advice that:

"In all cases, keep a "winning" attitude. Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% of how we react."

Indira Samarasekera, Vice President, UBC

Lessons learnt 'along the way':

- ✓ Find what you love to do and do it.
- ✓ Choose your guides wisely. Indira had many mentors along the way (e.g. professors, friends, etc.).
- ✓ Pursue excellence uncompromisingly.
- ✓ Network.
 - Build contacts – people provide you with advice,
 - Invest time – face-to-face contact, not email, and
 - Diversify the range of networks (e.g. community, schools, etc.)
- ✓ Give back what you received (e.g. volunteering, sitting on committees).
- ✓ Rise up to challenges – this is the only way for us to grow.

Maria Klawe, Dean of Science, UBC

Some advice:

- ✓ Find something you love.
- ✓ There is no wrong decisions in life. It is never too late. Sometimes adversity makes us grow.
- ✓ Keep your eyes open for opportunities and don't be afraid. Maria finished her Ph.D. in Math and went back to embark on another Ph.D. in Computer Science.
- ✓ Find a balance in life – life comes in stages. None of us have to do everything all at the same time.

She concluded by saying that there are real advantages and disadvantages of being a woman in a male-dominated profession. One advantage is that if you are really good and have the courage, there are many opportunities. One disadvantage is that you have to be more committed and better to get some initial recognition.



DAWEG Sponsors the Personal Skills Stream at APEGBC's 2000 Annual Conference
October 20, 2000

By Daniela Constantinescu, Advocacy Coordinator

The large audience of the Personal Skills stream at APEGBC's 2000 Annual Conference on Friday October 20 has made the stream a success. It has proven that BC engineers and geoscientists have a keen interest in steering their careers themselves and, to this end, they deem important to develop their "soft" people skills.

DAWEG thanks both speakers and participants for the success of the stream. Speakers' professionalism and enthusiasm has made each session informative and an opportunity to evaluate oneself and one's experience, to meet peers and share relevant experiences. The interactive, playful presentations contributed to participants quickly tuning in and fully enjoying the topics.

Murray Axmith, Pacific's Cheryl Smith, has challenged everyone to Take Charge of Their Career and to honestly assess how easy they adapt to change through identifying themselves with cartoon characters. When Coaching Without a Whistle, she has presented successful coaching experiences in difficult circumstances, demonstrated a coaching session herself and let everyone else practice their newly acquired abilities.

David Guthro, from The Consulting Edge: Movers and Shakers, has made the case for Emotional Intelligence by having the audience exercise social and self-awareness skills from the presentation onset. David handed everyone a play card representing their social status and asking them to guess the card from social interaction with the others.

Mary Bennett, from the Learning Exchange, has argued for the importance of Making Your Own Rules. Challenging participants to prioritize the rules according to which they conduct themselves, Mary has stressed the importance of honesty to oneself, and also of staying focused on one's goals and persevering in achieving them.

At DAWEG, we are working to make next year's Personal Skills stream a bigger success by selecting topics that help you discover ways to accelerate your professional growth while meeting your personal challenges. We hope to see you there.

***Where are All the Women?
at the Pacific Energy Innovation
Conference***
November 5-8, 2000

By Maggie Wojtarowicz, Editor

At a recent conference hosted by the Pacific Energy Innovation Association, where your Editor volunteered to help run things smoothly, upon entering a ballroom filled to the brim at 20 or so tables during a key note address, your Editor made a startling unto herself observation: "WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN???". Being a Civil Engineer from Waterloo, with a 1:7 class ratio of women to men, the conference site "should" not have appeared all that atypical...and yet... These 20 or so tables seated precisely eight (8), out of which (on average) one (1) was most definitely identifiable as a female. Coincidence?

Is it really such a great surprise considering that (according to Statistics Canada) the number of men in natural and applied sciences and related occupations doubles the number of women, and that the number of men in management occupations at least quadruples the number of



women? (These two occupations essentially represent the composition of the audience at the conference.) And yet, there is only 20% more men in the workforce than there is women, and the make up of the Canadian population is exactly half male and half female. Furthermore, in business, finance and administration occupations—the sector that is most often charged with being the driving force of innovation—the number of men is only half that of women. Food for thought. How do we close these gaps? CAN and WILL it ever be equal?

Reference:

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Labour/labor45.a.htm>

Choose your battleground. Choose your fight. It still is an all-too-familiar struggle to be heard and be taken seriously. But the decision to persevere in being listened to is ours for the making. An enlightening tale related by a brave woman—who may look like a mouse, but her sensibility roars like a lion—on a research expedition "with the boys" in the roughest of terrains.

The Editor

“Indiana Mouse and the Temple of Fools”

By Melissa Felder

The first indication that things were not as they should be most likely started in Townsville. The "new car" purchased for the expedition turned out to be a twenty-year old jeep with a bad rep, an unwelcome surprise I did not relate to my parents and loved ones. I was far, far away in Australia, about to embark on a two-month journey to research, photograph, and document aboriginal rock art in the Kimberley. The Kimberley pretty much represents one of Australia's last frontiers, and any travel or work in the area has to be well-planned and similarly

supplied. I had been in correspondence with the expedition members for over a year now, and our final numbers had dwindled from eight down to three for the majority of the trip. I had never met any of the team members face-to-face, and understandably was incredibly curious about how we would all get along.

We didn't. This conflict manifested itself throughout the trip in an almost violent lack of consensus as well as the propensity for he-with-the-louder voice to win any argument. For example, we were not able to start on our journey west to the Kimberley until we had a roof rack put on the car to carry our massive amounts of equipment. "Joe", the expedition leader, proposed that in the interim we conduct a mini-expedition up to Cape York to test out the photographic equipment. Well that sounded reasonable, as the roof rack would apparently take about a week to get, and I didn't think any of us (myself, Joe, and "Poe" the photographer) wanted to hang around the city for a week. Strangely enough, the very morning of our departure Joe comes roaring into town all smiles, the sun glinting off a newly installed roof rack. Wait a minute. A roof rack? As the reason behind the mini-expedition had now evaporated, one would think that alternate plans to proceed with the real expedition would be made. Alas, my perception of what constituted good judgement would turn out to be the mere squeakings of a mouse to my expedition companions.

Good judgment was also clearly in short supply when we lit our first fire to cook the first of many batches of one-minute lunch noodles. We had stopped next to a beautiful green stretch of river that was flanked by long banks of clear white sand. I went off to collect some wood, whistling happily as I walked. It felt wonderful to be outside; an experience that, in Australia, is only complete with the sounds of cackling kookaburras and whispers of dry brush. I soon returned to the car with my selections,



whereupon I encountered a merrily crackling fire and the pleased statements of Joe and Poe. The bony dry roots of a massive dead tree embraced the fire lovingly. Wait a minute... dry old roots of dry old tree? Fire? What on earth are you guys doing? That tree will go up in flames!!! They told me I was being ridiculous until it did go up in flames, resulting in an hour and a half of mad dashes to and from the river. A mouse cannot run very fast carrying a pail of water, you know.

After the fire fiasco, we finally got to an area where we could set up camp and equipment. It turned out that Poe was more interested in photographing the cute camp girl than any rock art in the area, but at least we learned how to use and set up everything properly. This was important given that one of the prime goals of the trip was to have gallery quality photographs of rock art, a goal that would be facilitated by the excellent equipment sponsorship Poe had procured. We actually had some very interesting days out in the region, one of which included a trip to the mysterious Quinkan Mountain, rumoured to be a magic place for evil spirits. However, as time was waxing quickly, we soon concluded our mini-expedition and returned to Townsville to ready ourselves for the real thing.

Finally the big day arrived - off to the Kimberley!! Bitumen by day, trailer parks by night, all the way to Kununnara, Northern Australia. As you may imagine, this was not the most fun road trip of all time, but I'll save the stories for the confession (i.e. my book). The excitement didn't really begin until we made it to the spectacular entrance into the Kimberley, demarcated by two massive boab trees and the sudden appearance of the Gibb River Road. At this point I should interject that the very name "Gibb River Road" is enough to strike fear into any Australian without a spare tire, as it is, most decidedly, a road from hell. Every nut, bolt, and tooth came undone in the 600 km of its extent

due to the corrugation (a.k.a double black diamond terrain). On the second day on the road Joe and Poe, to their credit, "smelled something". I jumped out immediately, feeling guilty because I thought it could be due to the recent diet of beans we'd been having. I therefore elected to remain clear of any olfactory senses by checking the rear of the car. When a suitable time period had elapsed, I came around to the front and noticed a damp patch collecting a short distance in front of the car. Aha! A fine example of the old "hole in the radiator" situation.

Before I continue, let me give you three details about this business : (1) it was eleven o'clock on an inky night, (2) we were two hundred kilometres from anything, and (3) we hadn't seen a car for six hours. Add to that the supposition that water (which we had plenty of) can provide a temporary substitute for radiator fluid and you have the following decision: Wait for another car to tow us 150 kilometres to the next fuel station. This car will also have the equivalent of two tanks of gas, and will miraculously appear within the next half an hour. The mouse thinks about this briefly, and then squeaks: "Do you thing that's a good idea?". You see, I was coming to learn that my suggestions were never adopted outright, as I usually had to wait for either (a) the idea to become appropriated by someone else and/or (b) the nocturnal sounds of Australian animals to get louder and scarier. So finally, after an hour of gentle prodding courtesy of yours truly, off we went with a busted radiator, an exasperated mouse, and two seasoned expeditioners that were delighted with their brilliant solution of filling the radiator with water. We finally arrived in Kalumburu Mission, which was located at one dusty end of Gibb River Road. At last we were in a position to proceed to the heart of our expedition, the wilds of the Kimberley.

After a few failed attempts, the results of which were mostly attributable to the late wet season flooding the roads and some mechanical trouble, we were able to make into the approximate environs of our intended destination. We did get stuck in soft muck twice and scrape the car up something fierce. We also had the dubious pleasure of camping in a snake-infested bog because the "track" ended in impenetrable brush (I must say that it is a most unpleasant sensation to turn around in your sleeping bag and hear squishy noises underneath you). As the days progressed and the dry bush started to get wilder and thicker, it became apparent we would have to forge our own track down to the nearest river. Even that effort was ultimately doomed as we soon reached a point where we could go no further. This unfortunately made our whole plan a bust due to the dangers of leaving the car in such a risky area for fires, miles from anywhere and full of thousands of dollars of equipment. This realization was crushing. As a last attempt, we decided to go check out the river by foot in the faint hope we could find some clearer areas nearby. On the way we saw an absolutely monstrous snake that was sliding itself into a small mud pool. The evidence of its passing was soon hidden under the opaque surface of the pond. Brrr. We were left literally dumbfounded by the size of the beast, and I think it was at this point that we all became aware of the faintly ominous undertones associated with the wildness of this place. To top it all off, when we got to the banks of the river we realized that we'd have to swim across with all the camera gear instead of wading as we originally had planned, as the river was swollen to five times its usual size. Add to that a score of crocodiles patrolling the river and you get shades of Indiana Jones, with real-time effects (or perhaps real-time shades).

I think the last nail on the coffin of Hoped For Common Sense In Expedition Companions was the proposed solution to the above obstacles; which was to "light our own bushfire and clear

the area". I had to be decidedly sneaky about influencing this argument, with thought-provoking statements like the following: "Hmm, it sure is windy out here" and "Boy, fire can move fast, eh?" and "Too bad there's nowhere to run except into the crocodile infested river!" before I finally had to roar - "Like any of us know one thing about bushfires you imbeciles!!!". This last statement was my declaration of resignation as group mouse.

In the end, it turned out it was a very good thing we didn't light a bushfire, as when we returned to Kalumburu we discovered we had had a petrol leak for the last few days. Can you imagine? BOOM! I can see the headlines now - "Stupid researchers extinguish themselves in a trail of flames". But wait - what's that I see? Could it be a charred mouse staggering out of the flames? The mouse kingdom erupts in wild cheering, for Indiana Mouse has escaped certain death once again!

UPCOMING EVENTS...

DAWEG Christmas Party

*All DAWEG members are invited to a
Penthouse Christmas Party...*

*Friday, December 8, 6pm - 11pm
Penthouse 1, 907 Beach Ave. (at Hornby)
Buzz 2301*

*Please bring a Christmas Tree Ornament
(homemade or otherwise) for the tree,
and choose your favorite one when you leave.*

*RSVP Evannah Edge
Phone: 408-5844*

