

## **Ron Anderson – a remembrance**

In November 1974, I joined Alcan Jamaica Limited (Aljam) as Staff Geologist. At that time the company had two major challenges on its hands that I can recall. One was the recently imposed Bauxite Levy, the other was access to company-owned reserves in the parish of St Ann to keep the St Catherine-based Ewarton Plant in production, as the Schwallenburgh deposits were rapidly being depleted. The only other reserves controlled by Alcan on the north side of the island were located in Pedro Valley southwest of Claremont, and more than 12 miles NW of Ewarton, as the crow flies.

Earlier that year, while working with the Mines and Geology Division at Hope Gardens, I had submitted an application to Alcan. Weeks passed without any news and, when the call came for me to attend an interview, I journeyed from Kingston to the company's Head Office on Brumalia Road in Mandeville. I was greeted by a beautiful young secretary by the name of Brenda, who introduced me to her boss, and my principal interviewer, Ronald E Anderson, affectionately known to some as Ron and to others as Mr. Bauxite, and who held the post of Chief Raw Materials Engineer (later changed to Manager, Mineral Resources Department).

Ron was born in Scotland on June 13, 1930 and joined Alcan in Jamaica on March 16, 1956. At that time, Kirkvine had been producing alumina since December 1952 and construction of Ewarton was about to commence. Ron's chief responsibility was geared to carrying out a detailed assessment and evaluation of all company-owned bauxite properties in the parishes of Manchester and St Ann. This included surveying, drilling, and analysis of borehole samples to determine the tonnage and grade of each deposit for mine planning and ore reserves computations, all of which meant maintaining a dotted line relationship with Alcan's chief geologist in Montreal. Bauxite deposits on private properties, which the company sought to acquire, were also assessed. And the maps generated by his Department were for many years the foundation by which both the Kirkvine and Ewarton Mining Department's prepared their annual and 5-year mining plans.

When we met, Ron knew that I had little bauxite experience, but at that time Aljam needed a geologist familiar with the island's geology, because one of the transportation options the company was considering was the construction of a tunnel under Mount Diablo. To do this required

drilling a series of bore holes along the proposed alignment down to the proposed tunnel level, logging the drill core, drawing geological maps and cross-sections, and undertaking geo-technical test work on samples collected, under the supervision of AA Mathews Inc, a USA tunnel consulting company headquartered in California.

On accepting the job, I could sense that this was the beginning of big things to come. Ron acquired a new Land Rover for his Department, which he assigned to me to carry out the intense and long hours of field work that the tunnel project demanded. To boost his Departments technical expertise further, he sought the services of Gordon Sabiston, an Alcan chemist\ mineralogist from the Arvida Research Centre in Quebec, Canada, who joined the group in 1975.

Our findings revealed that the project was technically feasible, but concurrent with our work was a move by the Government to enter into various joint ventures or partnership agreements with the bauxite\alumina companies, buy back bauxite lands and reallocate 40-year reserve blocks of bauxite to each. Ron was principal spokesperson for Alcan Jamaica on bauxite reserves and was at the forefront of many meetings and discussions with Dr Carlton Davis and Parris Lyew-Ayee of the Jamaica Bauxite Institute (JBI).

In 1978, when the Jamalcan Agreement was signed, lands formerly owned by Reynolds between Schwallenburgh and Moneague were now included in Alcan's new mining lease, and the dream of building a tunnel under the mountain was laid to rest. But, over in Manchester the Russell Place reserves were rapidly being depleted and it was Ron who together with JBI and Reynolds Jamaica Mines (RJM) engineered an exchange of RJM's Hope and Melrose properties containing an estimated 19 million tonnes, for the Alcan-owned Ramble and Bonneville properties in St Ann, for a similar tonnage.

Between 1975 and 1984, the Mineral Resources Department of Alcan Jamaica Company, under Ron's guidance and management, soared to lofty heights contributing immensely to a better understanding of aspects of Jamaican bauxite and geology with participation in various conferences locally and internationally and the publication of several papers and one book. These included: The 1975 Geological Society of Jamaica Bauxite Symposium in Kingston; the joint ICSOBA and Clay Mineral Society (CMS) conference in

Kingston in 1977, the first Alcan Mining and Geology Conference in Montreal in 1979, Ron's bauxite visit to China in 1980, the Geological Society of Jamaica Bauxite Symposium in 1982, and an Alcan Mining and Geology Conference in India and Malaysia in 1984. The publication of "Minerals and Rocks of Jamaica" in 1982, although not written by Ron, was fully supported by him. It was type set by Brenda Ramsay, the Departmental Secretary and launched in Kingston under the patronage of the then General Manager, Keith Wake. Brenda Ramsay is today, the Mayor of Mandeville.

Ron's influence was also present in other ways. I recall, on one occasion in the early 1980s while carrying out field work on the Charlemont property in St Catherine, before construction of the Mud Stacking Site started, a surveyor remarking that the fuel tank was near "E" and requesting permission to fill up at nearby Ewarton Works. When asked by the pump attendant to what department the vehicle was assigned, he replied "Geology". Not recognizing this word, the attendant inquired into the nature of the work. The surveyor then set about describing the process of exploration drilling, to which the attendant promptly stopped him and said, "Oh! You mean Mr. Anderson's Department."

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Although Aljam's work came first, Ron had a keen interest in other areas: he was a staunch and active Rotarian, and rarely missed a Mandeville luncheon meeting; a founding member of the Archaeological Society of Jamaica; a member of the Geological Society of Jamaica, a former Chairman of Jamaican Gypsum and Quarries Ltd, and a collector of coins and rare maps. It was this diverse interest in "Things Jamaican" other than bauxite, for which I owe Ron a huge debt of gratitude. His willingness to let me discuss, think and operate 'outside the box', while working for him, played a major role in our, and by extension, Aljam's, contribution to the furtherance of geological education in Jamaica.

In late 1984, Ron was appointed Assistant to the newly-appointed President and CEO, Dr Keith Panton, and played an active role in matters related to Port activities. Six years later he elected to take retirement.

He was a kind, caring, well-mannered and courteous gentleman; knowledgeable, well-informed and a tremendous source of information. He will long be remembered by those of us who worked with him, and will be sorely missed. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his wife, Jean, and family. May his soul Rest in Peace.

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**Anthony R.D. Porter**