

# The POWDER MAGAZINE

32 EDITION

ELSA, YUKON TERRITORY

DECEMBER, 1976

## Long Service Award Dinner

United Keno Hill Mines, Ltd. honoured its long service employees at the fourth annual Long Service Dinner held in early October. Cocktails preceded a sumptuous six-course meal prepared by Western Catering.

Mine Manager G.S. Dundas expressed his appreciation of the long service employees, and made the various presentations. New arrivals to the Ten Year Club were presented with engraved gold watches. Six employees have recently completed ten continuous years of service: Mr. John Hevessi, Mr. Louis Hofer, Mr. Leo Lanz, Mr. John Monaghan, Mr. John Ponekker, and Mr. Joe Volf.

Engraved tie tacks made of U.K.H.M. silver were given to the new Fifteen Year employees Mr. Louis Kiss, Mr. Henry Kriebel, and Mr. Ralph Mease.

Employees who this year completed twenty years of service, Mr. H. Munzenberger and Mr. Carl Skoreyko, along with Twenty-Years-Plus members, Mr. Tony Sgorzelski, Mr. Louis Tjemsland, and Mr. Frank Wasse, were presented with engraved silver trays.

Mr. Arvid "Butch" Grundmanis, Mill Superintendent, this year

rounded out Twenty-Five years of continuous service. He is the second employee to do this, following Mr. Frank Schroyen, formerly Transport Department Head. Presentation of a beautiful silver tea and coffee service was made to Mr. Grundmanis, and his wife Virginia received a bouquet of roses and carnations.

Mr. Dave Emery, vice-president operations of Giant Yellowknife Mines, spoke on behalf of Giant's Ten Year Club, and unveiled its gift to U.K.H.M.'s Ten Year Club - an Eskimo painting done by Abraham Apakark Angkik from the Inuvik area and framed by a former giant shift boss, George Langlois. The painting is now displayed at the Main Office.

Following coffee and liquors, the guests adjourned to the Ikwoggy Lounge and enjoyed the music provided by Paul Geistdorfer and Carl Blanchard.

Fifty employees have now completed ten or more continuous years of service, encompassing eighteen per cent of the total U.K.H.M. work force.

Some candid photographs of the evening will be found on page 2.



"Realistically speaking, 25 years continuous service isn't such a long time. After all, it's only one-quarter of a century." The Godfather III, Arvid "Butch" Grundmanis.



Virginia Grundmanis displays engraved, silver, coffee and tea service.



"Honest-ta-gawd, Jack, the bear went that-away." Paymaster Stan Kula (R) discusses the nature of things with former U.K.H.M. Carpentry Head, Jack Andison.



Carl Skoreyko and wife Felicity display engraved silver tray honouring Carl's 20-years continuous service with U.K.H.M.



"Hoo, Ilse, that's the best almost-clean punch-line I've heard." --Fulvio Roberti and Ilse Munzenberger.



"I swear, Louis, the steak was this thick." Market Manager Joe Volf.



"C'-me-off-it, Joe, you know that was a roast, not a steak." --Louis Tjemsland.



"They're both crazy, it was a prairie oyster." -- John Ponekker.



"Methinks the luck of the Irish has just run out." -- Don Curry, Snr.



The about-to-be-luckless leprechaun, Qwen Moore, and Cecil Curry, Don's wife!



"Sorry Shirley, you'll have to scratch your knee yourself -- SOMEONE'S LOOKING!-- Tony Sgorzelski and Shirley Prancic.

# Charlie Brefalt

(Part 3)

Now that he had an option on the Elsa claim, Livingston Wernecke set to work. He set up a messhouse and bunkhouse for 30 men, blacksmith shop, compressor and change house, and had constructed a road to join the Mayo-Keno road over the Williams Creek summit; cost \$61,179.

Then the depression hit, and with silver as low as 26 cents an ounce, which was equal to Treadwell Yukon's average cost of producing it over the years, the company still made \$182,000 profit by mining the richest ore. Up to 1934 the Elsa produced 3,138 tons of ore averaging 492 oz. ton silver and 30.6 percent lead. The mill was removed to a new 175-ton plant at the Elsa, no ore was produced, but the Elsa helped prolong the Silver King operation as the lower levels were developed. The high grade ore was used as a sweetener to stabilize feed to the mill, which began operation March 5, 1936.

Later, on the 400 Elsa level, a shoot of pure tetrahedrite up to three feet wide was struck, about 150 feet long and 150 feet deep, running over \$4,000 per ton. The 406 stope, driven in this remarkably sweet ore, was called "the million-dollar stope", for this one small lens of ore produced several million dollars' worth of silver. Phil Bradley had never seen anything like it. In May 1940, the Elsa produced nearly half a million dollars in one month and the San Francisco office was crying for more.

Dan Tolmie had conserved his resources, but occasionally went out to celebrate, briefly buying rounds for the house in Keno. He even had a poor credit rating once, due to bills left unpaid at a time when he had \$25,000 in the bank. At one time he had about \$167,000 in the bank at Mayo, but continued to live frugally in his old log cabin, like all the other old timers, and many years later died "outside", with a considerable estate.

By contrast, Charlie Brefalt lived lavishly, with champagne and women, and all he wished for, several years in the Hotel Vancouver, certain in the knowledge that he could not take it with him, then again returned to make other fortunes in the Elsa area.

With his first fortune, Brefalt acquired a sophisticated wife whom he had met on a tourist boat, and he set her up in a sumptuously furnished cabin in Keno. In it he wore a silk bathrobe decorated with Chinese dragons, but with "miner's" socks on his feet. However, she was more interested in city life and left him when money began to run short. After he had sold to Wernecke he went after her again and she reportedly returned until she got a share again, then went outside and got a divorce.

Prospecting near the Elsa claim in 1925, Brefalt had discovered some siderite float in the next creek to the east and staked the No Cash claim, so named because he then had to borrow \$10 to pay the recording fee. Later he had become too busy with his rich Elsa discovery to work this ground, but Alec Gordon had found a small high-grade showing on it and told Ellef (Nels) Bjonnes, who got a three-year lease on it from Brefalt in 1930. The first year was free, then there was a 10 percent payment to Brefalt in the next two years. During these years Bjonnes made some money, particularly because silver increased in price from its depression low. Badly stooped over and feeble, Bjonnes lived his last years in the late 1950's at the Ambassador Hotel, now the Castle, in Vancouver, reported to be reasonably wealthy but absent minded.

After a few bountiful and spendthrift years following his Elsa operations and dealings, Charlie Brefalt was broke again and returned to the No Cash with the objective of developing another producer. He started in the winter of 1933-34. Bjonnes had left no ore in sight, but Brefalt blasted a hole into one of the walls of the vein and again discovered high grade. He got Tolmie to join him again and they set up a camp and soon shipped about 75 tons, some of it running up to 600 oz./ton, but prices were low - 35 cents per ounce for silver and 4 cents per pound of lead.

While working on the No Cash, Brefalt took a lay on Settlemeier's and Birmingham's property, hiring a man in his place with Elmer Gustaveson as a partner. Wernecke had optioned the property and done considerable drifting but had recovered only three sacks of ore. Brefalt's crew started the first of November. Wading around in two feet of snow outside in the dark, Brefalt selected a spot close to the cookhouse door, told his men to start digging, and left. Was it intuition, judgment or luck? In only a day and a half, his crew phoned and said they were finding bigger chunks of ore than they could handle. That year they shipped around 200 tons of ore, but Brefalt just had a one-year lease on the property. Settlemeier and Birmingham offered him an additional two years but he declined; it was a moneymaker, but handling the water was again becoming too costly.

In the middle of March, 1941, after Treadwell Yukon had shut down operations, Brefalt received a message from the San Francisco office offering him a lease on the Elsa mine, although he had never even asked for it. He started in again at the Elsa on the first of April. Following the smaller shoots of ore that the company had not touched, he con-

tinued mining with Elmer Gustaveson, making a good profit for another four years until United Keno Hill Mines took over.

Brefalt was one of the few who kept producing ore out of his lease on the Elsa Mine during the 1940's when all else was shut down. He helped Frank Buckle sample the Hector Calumet - only the dump was accessible, then in the late '40's when United Keno started a boom in the camp, he returned to make yet one more fortune. He moved to Keno, bought two cabins at Thunder Gulch, and started to stake abandoned claims. Then he took a lease on Alec Nicol's Vanguard claim on Keno Hill, did very well the first winter, but had to abandon the project next season because the ore was cut off by a fault (200 feet of drifting by Clyde Wann in 1962-63 did not find any more ore). In 1949 he sold nine claims to "Rees" Powelson and, with other claims recommended by Brefalt, the Mount Keno Mines property was assembled.

In 1950 Brefalt took sick and spent most of the summer in hospital in Mayo recuperating. In the fall, he spotted unsold ground belonging to him on claim sketches and lost no time in getting to Toronto to sell his Ajax fraction to Newkirk for \$30,000.

M.P. Aubrey Simmons had arranged for him to meet Prime Minister Mackenzie King in Ottawa, but in Toronto he was seized with a paralytic stroke and had to spend three months in a private patient's pavilion of the General Hospital.

In 1954 he thought he was recovered enough to renew work on the Vanguard claim, so he borrowed \$4,000 from the Royal Bank and started north with Alec Nicol early in May. However, he had overestimated his condition, could not sleep for five nights when he arrived in Keno, and at long last, in his 68th year, had to give up the north for good.

Retiring to a small seaside cottage near Roberts Creek, a few miles past Gibson's Landing north of Vancouver, the grand old Swede spent many years nursing his ailing third wife, gazing across the Strait of Georgia, and walking the gravel roads and paths in peace.

In 1963, after his wife died, Charlie returned to his original home at Amotfors, Sweden. Things had changed greatly; he was hosted to countless coffee parties, but irresistibly drawn to prospect for float in the hills near his home. His heart was still in the Yukon, and he was still asking about prospects in the Mayo district till his death in October, 1970.

# Brilliant Deduction

The population of Canada is twenty-two million, but there are seven million over sixty-five years old, leaving fifteen million to do the work.

People under twenty-one total ten million leaving five million to do the work.

Two million are government employees, leaving three million to do the work.

There are one-half million in the armed forces, leaving two-and-one-half million to do the work.

Deduct one-and-one-half million provincial, municipal, and city workers, and you are left with one million to do the work.

But there are 700,000 unemployed and 200,000 on welfare, so that leaves 100,000 to do the work.

Now it may interest you to know that there are 80,000 people out of the country at any one time and 19,998 people in jail, so that leaves just two people to do the work, and that's you and me brother -- and I'm getting damn tired of doing everything MYSELF!

(Our thanks to Mary Scholz for submitting this item.)

## The POWDER MAGAZINE

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# Christmas Message

Through the years Christmas has become an almost universal occasion for showing good will and concern towards our fellow men. It is the time when, with good intentions, we reach toward each other for better understanding and deeper friendship.

Each one of us, in his heart, must wish that the spirit of Christmas would persist through each day of our lives. Therefore, Christmas is a welcome opportunity to renew our good resolves, and hope that the spirit of Christmas may continue past

that one day.

May this Season bring us all closer together and give us the strength of our resolve to remain together.

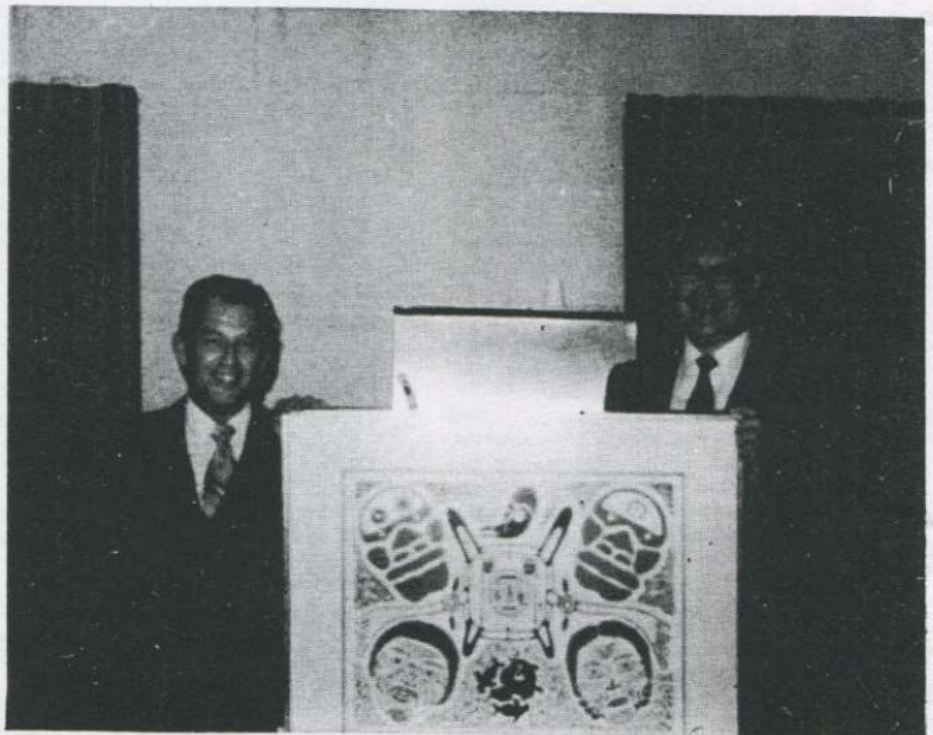
I hope that you and your loved ones share in the many old-time joys and blessings of the Season.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to ALL.

G.S. Dundas  
Mine Manager  
U.K.H.M.  
Elsa, Yukon



Merry Christmas



At the Long Service Dinner, Mr. Dave Emery, (R), vice-president of Giant Yellowknife Mines, presented the painting "Angatkro Manifest of Inuit Soul", done by Abraham Apakark Angkik, to Mr. G.S. Dundas and U.K.H.M.'s Ten Year Club. The painting now hangs in the Main Office.