

HISTORY OF THE ORE GANGUE

By Nancy McKellar

Ore Gangue – for graduates of the University of Saskatchewan's Geology Department these two words do not conjure up piles of slag left over from the mining of valuable minerals, but rather, a student society that was the source of camaraderie and not a small amount of beer drinking while at university. The Ore Gangue is the oldest undergraduate society on the U of S campus. On January 18, 1934 a group of students gathered to form a geological club. A committee was formed to draw up a constitution and decide on a name for the club. The first regular meeting was held on January 23, 1934 and the name "Ore Gangue" was adopted. However, in a letter dated April 9, 1932, geology undergraduate Melvyn Thompson writes to his family that "I was out to a banquet and dance the Monday night previous to Easter. It was a function of "Ore Gangue" held at the King George Hotel. Only members and their lady friends and officials were there, 25 couples, so you see it was quite an exclusive affair." We can infer that the geology students were socializing outside of classes for some time before the official incorporation of the club. Either way, the Ore Gangue has a long and proud history for geology students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Starting in 1937, the Ore Gangue put out a yearly publication, *The Concentrates*, which highlighted the previous year's activities and achievements. As well, that year saw the formation of an alumni group of Ore Gangue graduates, a group that remains strong and active to this day. For the Golden Jubilee of the University of Saskatchewan in 1959, *The Concentrates* put out an expanded version recording the history of the Geology Department, including the activities of the Ore Gangue. As well, the 1984 issue of *The Concentrates*, the 50th Anniversary of the Ore Gangue, contains much valuable information. Much of the history summarized here comes from those issues of *The Concentrates*. In addition, the University of Saskatchewan Archives has several boxes of Ore Gangue material, including the minutes of meetings from 1934-64 and many photographs. Both *The Concentrates* and the Archives were rich sources of material for this article. Finally, many Ore Ganguers graciously responded to my e-mailed questions and/or met me for coffee and shared their stories and memories of their time at U of S.

The fledgling organization quickly developed an esprit de corps. In 1940, the Ore Gangue



Figure 1. Ore Gangue Crest (photo courtesy of Tracey Jungwirth).

decided to design a crest that is still used today (Figure 1). Its use quickly expanded from the cover of *The Concentrates* to include articles of clothing such as jackets and hockey jerseys. One Ore Ganguer confided that by the time she left university she had approximately 20 articles of Ore Gangue clothing including jackets, t-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, hoodies, and shorts. Old Ore Gangue clothing can often be spotted at Ore Gangue golf tournaments, Christmas parties, and along the running and bike paths in downtown Calgary.

One of the first functions of the Ore Gangue, outlined in its constitution, was the giving of a seminar by each graduating senior on a topic of interest in geology, mining, or metallurgy. The idea behind these seminars was to give students experience in public speaking and to inform younger students of the wide range of possibilities in geology. There was a seminar

given in conjunction with each Ore Gangue meeting. Around 1950, the recording of topics of the seminars disappears. The Ore Gangue minutes mentions them again in 1960, noting that seminars are to be given by graduate students and fourth-year students at regular meetings. As early as 1962, students were questioning the necessity of giving seminars at each meeting, but there is no record of any vote or decision made. Over time, and with increased numbers of students enrolled in the department, the giving of seminars morphed into seminars organized by the department rather than the Ore Gangue. They are given at irregular intervals, usually on Friday afternoons at 4pm, by graduate students, professors, and visiting lecturers.

Any Ore Ganguer will tell you that the *raison d'être* of the Ore Gangue was and is the social activities. These activities ranged from informal gatherings, hanging out in the student lounge playing bridge, and intramural sports to the formal Fall and Spring Banquets. The banquet and dance referred to in the 1932 letter by Melvyn Thompson became a tradition for the Ore Gangue. Initially, there was a fall and spring banquet, followed by a dance. Dress was formal, gents in ties and jackets and the ladies in long dresses. The "Geology Queen" was mentioned sporadically in the minutes until about 1963. Who or what purpose she served remains a

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Figure 2. Original coffee room, aka "The Dungeon", 1980 (*The Concentrates*, 1980).

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mystery. Over the years, the banquet evolved into a more casual affair. Currently, there is a Spring Banquet, no dance, and less formal dress. Awards are handed out at the banquet, some serious, some not. Over the years awards have included the Michael D. Welch Award, Leadership Award, Sports Award, President's Award, John B. Webb Memorial Trophy, as well as Athletic Supporter's Award, Squeaky Shoe Award, Smoked Moccasin Award, Blue Goose Award, Rusty Hammer Award (Flin Flon Field Camp), and Crushed Can Award (Zortman Field Camp).

The heart and soul of the Ore Gangue is the coffee room (Figure 2, page 15). In the old engineering building, the original location of the Geology Department, it was located in the basement, a dark and dingy place. From the beginning, it was used as a storeroom as well as being a hangout for students between classes. Boxes of rocks, some allegedly radioactive, and cores were piled high at one end of the room. Over time, tables and chairs were acquired and countless hands of bridge and cribbage idled away the hours between classes. One of the more interesting stories revealed in the Ore Gangue minutes was the controversy over coffee being allowed in the student lounge. The idea of setting up a coffee urn to raise money for the Ore Gangue was

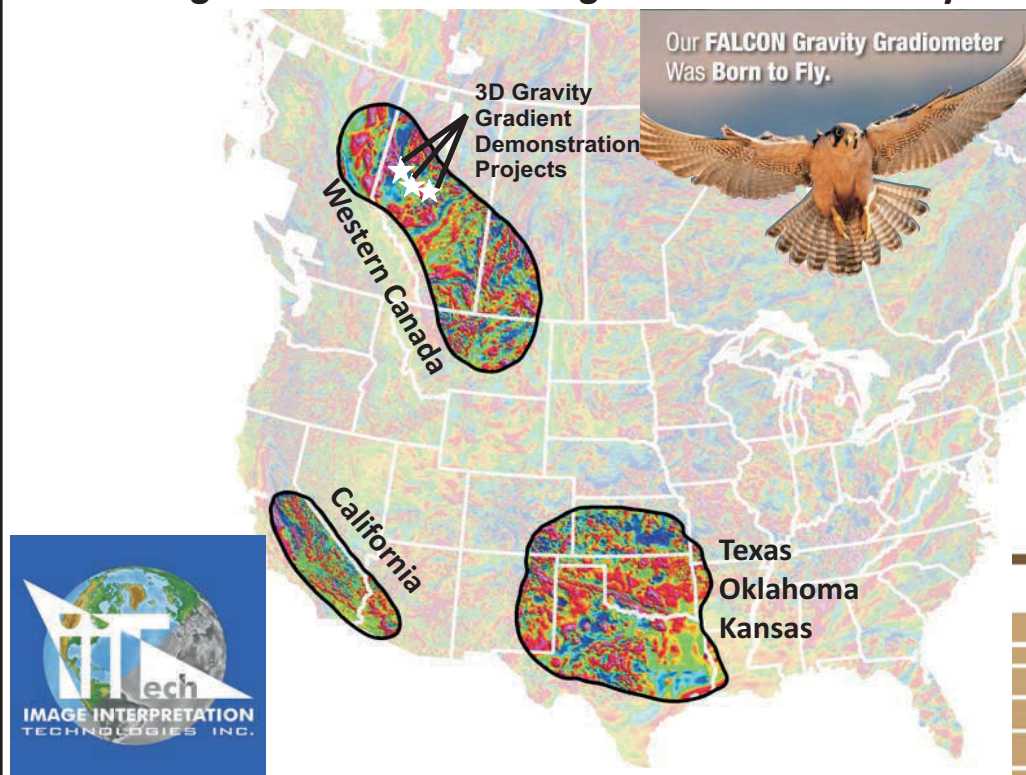
first proposed to the faculty in January 1963. The proposal was not met with enthusiasm. In February, the response from the faculty was that an urn could be set up in the washroom foyer, staffed by an Ore Gangue member and only at noon. The faculty cited what they felt were the poor economics of the proposal. The discussion bounced back and forth until November, when the faculty agreed to a proposal that the coffee urn could be run by Ore Gangue members in the student lounge at coffee breaks. December 1963 finally saw the initiation of selling coffee at 10 cents/cup. The profit from the first seven weeks of operation was \$44, exceeding all expectations and in February of 1964, the proposal was made to purchase a larger urn. Unfortunately, the record of Ore Gangue minutes stops at around that time, so we don't know exactly when that urn was purchased. However, Dave Kennedy, editor of *The Concentrates* in 1968-69, noted the acquisition of a new 80-cup coffee pot in his end-of-the-year message: "This chrome-plated, spigot-bearing beast apparently spews forth a brew so powerful that any new student innocently taking a drink is immediately addicted to the habit of 'Ore Gangueing' for the remainder of his university days." In a further illustration of the quality of the coffee, and likely an explanation of why it was so, Dave writes "thus exchanging my

pen for a gas mask, rubber gloves, and a cleaning brush, I will proceed to the dusty depths of the coffee room and clean out the coffee pot which has had a brew rotting in it for the past five months." Another Ore Gangue told the story that the force of the water upwards in the large percolator was so strong that a rock was placed in the basket, along with the coffee grounds, to prevent the top from flying off. The black coating that encrusted that rock was further testimony to the strength of the brew. One can only hope that the rock was not a radioactive ore, thus endangering the DNA of future generations.

Students who weren't in geology rarely entered the coffee room, and did so at their peril. One Ore Gangue tells the story of arranging to meet his new girlfriend at the coffee room. Upon descending cautiously into the basement, she stepped into "The Dungeon" and was confronted by guys smoking, eating lunch, playing cards, and generally "doing all of the things guys do when there aren't any women around." This occurred, of course, prior to the advent of many women geology students. Fortunately, a gallant Ore Gangue saved the day by entertaining her until the tardy young man appeared. Sadly, during the summer of 1980, the old coffee room was filled with cement

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when renovations were done to stabilize the physics building in which it was located. The Ore Gangue lounge in the new geology building, which opened in 1986, is a much larger, well-lit space. One of the major changes, other than fresh air and natural light, was the presence of a TV. Students often watched sporting events together, and the occasional soap opera or cartoon. However, it serves the same function as the original dingy basement of being a place where students can just hang out, watch TV, take a break from the rigors of studying, and find support from fellow students.

Ore Ganguers got together for many informal gatherings throughout the year. One favourite spot was the Sutherland Bar, located on Central Avenue in Saskatoon a little more than a mile away from campus. Beer was cheap and the atmosphere was well suited to the student crowd. Stories about the Sutherland include streaking on St. Patrick's Day by a certain young couple wearing nothing but green paint in the late '70s as well as the refusal of management to serve students until the return of certain missing tables and chairs. Nobody knows exactly how this happened, but beer glasses from the Sutherland found their way into the apartments and homes of numerous geology students.

Students organized many other social occasions: parties for Halloween, Christmas, or no occasion at all. Costumes were frequently involved and beer was always around. Through the years, Ore Ganguers organized funspiels, talent nights, pub nights, the End-of-Semesta Fiesta, and many others. The Ore Gangue also participated in campus-wide activities. In 1974, the students created an ice sculpture of two flying Canadian geese with the title "Fly United" for a campus-wide competition. After hours of artistic endeavor that lasted well into the evening and the consumption of significant quantities of beer, KFC was brought in and demolished in mere minutes. In addition, an Ore Ganguer who made his own beer left and came back with his latest brew. Another Ore Ganguer blames his ill-feeling the next day on the "green" beer. Stories from these activities are retold, often with embellishment, at Ore Gangue functions to this day.

Intramural sports have long been an important part of Ore Gangue activities. 1947 is the first mention of participation in intramural activities in the Ore Gangue minutes. The Executive was to be responsible for setting up teams. The Golden Jubilee (1909-1959) issue of The Concentrates notes that the winning of the Greig Cup for curling and the Donald Trophy for Tug-of-

War in 1940-41 were the highlights in the sporting history of the Ore Gangue to that point. The first intramural hockey team was organized in 1962. Although the teams were not known for their great hockey prowess, they provided great fun for participants and fans alike. And the team actually managed to win the season in the early 1980s. Broomball was an intradepartmental sport that enjoyed popularity for some years. The 1968-69 Concentrates described the division of the large number of participants into Hard Rockers, Soft Rockers, North Enders (Geophysics and Mining), and Old Timers (profs and grad students). The annual tournament was known as much for its after-party as for the games themselves. For many years there weren't enough women students to form Ore Gangue intramural teams. Women students who were sports-minded often played with the girls from the College of Agriculture. By the 1980s, however, there were women's squamish, soccer, floor hockey, and volleyball teams. During the 1983-84 school year the women's teams did not have to default a single game all season due to participation on the teams by the increasing numbers of women geology majors. Another highlight that year was the first place finish of the women in the intramural volleyball league, the first time that had occurred in Ore Gangue history.

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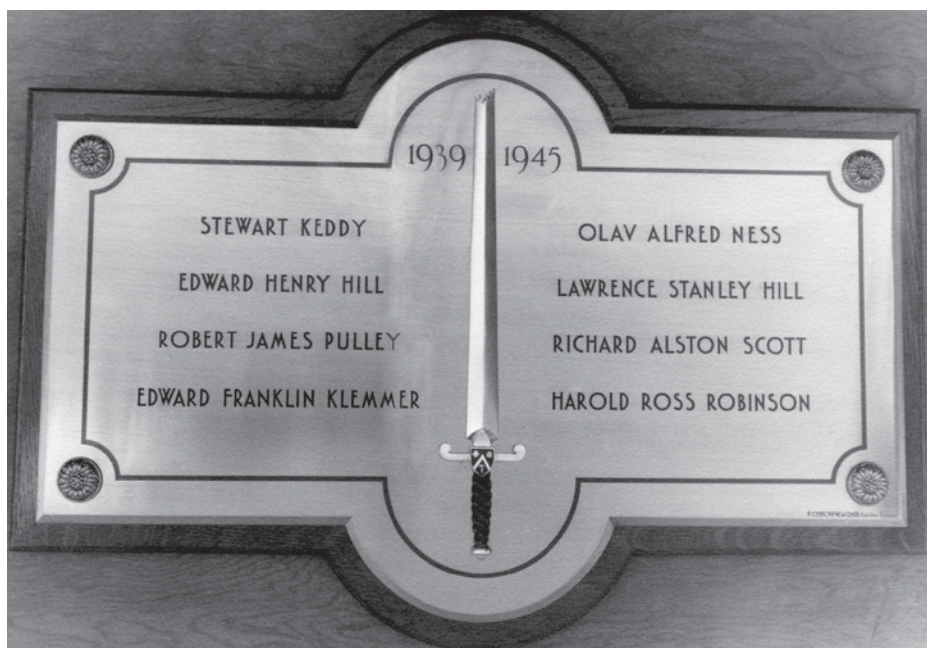


Figure 3. Wall plaque honouring Ore Gangue members who died during WWII (From U of S Archives).

That year the men fielded teams in squamish, football, hockey, curling, volleyball, slo-pitch, and basketball teams, with less spectacular results. But a few years later, the men recorded a first-place finish in intramural hockey. The Sphinxer Cup is awarded to the winner of the annual hockey game between the Geology and Biology departments. One Ore Gangue member cites his scoring a hat trick in the Sphinxer Cup as his best OG memory and a lifetime highlight. All in all, Ore Gangue teams provided fun, relaxation, an additional excuse to drink beer, and a much-needed outlet in which to blow off steam.

The Ore Gangue and Geology Department have always participated in activities to promote the department. In 1937-38, Geology joined with the Engineering and Ceramics Departments to set up a show for other students exhibiting what each department had to offer. Over the years, this biennial event was repeated in conjunction with Engineering, Chemistry, and the Ceramics departments until the termination of the ceramics program in 1951. Ultimately, Geology Day was established as an annual Open House event held on the first Sunday in October, also known as Logan Day. William Logan is considered to be the Father of Canadian Geology and the Founder of the Geological Society of Canada. For the past few years, The Ore Gangue has organized a Career Night that is well attended by both industry and students.

An event that originated at the University of Saskatchewan in 1964 is the Western Inter-University Geoscience Conference. This conference has been held for 48 consecutive years, with the location rotating amongst the

western universities. It is entirely student-run, student-oriented, and provides an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to present their research, network with other students, find out about job opportunities,and drink beer. However, the event most remembered from WIUGC conferences is the annual bun fight that occurs at the banquet each year. The origins of the bun fight have been lost in the mists of time, but one particularly epic fight in 1980 was halted when Dr. Kupsch bellowed, "We are geologists; we do not throw buns at each other!" There is no evidence to suggest that this admonition had any effect on the ferocity of bun fights in subsequent years. 1980 was also the first year the Ore Gangue had a female president, Pat George. At the WIUGC she was presented with a commemorative plaque that consisted of a long cylindrical coral or sponge flanked by two gypsum rosettes.

The Geology Department and the Ore Gangue have a long tradition of helping their students. In 1938, the Ore Gangue Fund was established to benefit student and graduate members in the areas of educational facilities, establishment of student prizes or scholarships, or other purposes deemed appropriate by the trustees of the fund. Any money left over from the operating budget of the Ore Gangue was to be put into the fund. The first deposit was \$20.62. The Ore Gangue Fund was the seed money for the Memorial Plaque Fund in 1945 that was created to honour Ore Gangue members who lost their lives in World War II (Figure 3). It was designed by Professor A. L. C. Atkinson and unveiled in November 1948. It hung over the door to the Geology Department in the

east wing of the Engineering Building until the department moved into its own building in 1986. It now resides on the wall opposite Room 161 in the new building. Following that, the leftover money from the Plaque Fund was rolled over into the Ore Gangue Memorial Fund, established by a bequest from Lt. Harold R. Robinson, B.A. '41, in 1945. In 1949, two prizes were established from this fund: the OGMF prize for Leadership and the OGMF prize for highest academic standing. These prizes are still awarded today. The Leadership Award is determined by the Ore Gangue Executive and presented at the annual Ore Gangue Banquet. The Highest Academic Standing Award is presented at the Arts and Sciences Awards night around the same time as Spring Convocation.

The 1959 issue of *The Concentrates* announced the initiation of a scholarship named after F.H. Edmunds, first professor of the Geology Department, and J. B. Mawdsley, first Head of the Geology Department. The goal was to fund a \$400/year scholarship. Surveys of graduating Ore Gangue members at that time indicated that they were willing to donate \$30 each. Today, the scholarship is awarded to a student who has completed his/her second year in the areas of Geological Sciences or Geological Engineering and carries a value of \$2,000/year.

Ore Gangue alumni have a strong presence in the oil industry in Calgary. The annual Ore Gangue Golf Tournament began in 1999. It has been held at several golf courses in and around Calgary and the weather has varied from warm and sunny to wind and sleet over the years. Through the sale of "mulligan" certificates not only were golf scores improved, but \$12,000 has been donated to the Michael D. Welch Memorial Book Prize Fund. As well, over \$25,000 has been donated to the Alumni Fund. Currently, a committee has established the Ore Gangue Alumni Bursary Fund. Its purpose is "To provide financial support, reward academic performance, and recognize contributions to the Earth Sciences student community for students in the Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan who are members of the Ore Gangue." The fund has been structured as a bursary to take into account financial need as well. In order to provide long-term, significant financial assistance to as many as two third-year and two fourth-year students per year, at least \$500,000 must be raised. Any Ore Gangue member so inclined can go to the Ore Gangue website where there are three different ways set up for you to make your donation.

Ore Gangue members also take care of each other
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in non-monetary ways. Many times an Ore Ganguer already working has taken a new grad under his/her wing and acted as a mentor. The annual Christmas Party and Golf Tournament in Calgary are a means of networking and possibly finding a job for new grads. The telephone/e-mail grapevine is active and efficient at disseminating news and requests regarding Ore Ganguers.

The first field trip organized by the Ore Gangue was to the Eagle Hills and North Battleford in 1937. The next recorded field trip, according to the 1959 issue of *The Concentrates*, was in 1953 to the Little Rocky Mountains in Montana. This trip was so successful that it became the site of one of the annual field camps, headquartered in Zortman, Montana. The trip was the "soft rock" field trip, where sedimentary rocks are studied, along with igneous intrusives. The Flin Flon, Manitoba trip is the "hard rock" trip to the metamorphic rocks on the edge of the Precambrian shield. Other field trips organized through the years were to mineral deposits in Manitoba; Ardmore, Oklahoma; a Lock Up Your Rocks tour through Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico during Spring Break in 1992; the SEG Conference in New Orleans in 1998; and Recent Carbonate Environments in Yucatan, Mexico in 2004.

The Flin Flon Field Camp was the first regular camp for Geology majors at the University of Saskatchewan. It was likely initiated by Dr. Mel Stauffer, who conducted structural geology research in the Flin Flon area, and reflected the hard rock focus of the Department at that time (Figure 4). Accommodation in Flin Flon was in a hotel or cabins associated with the hotel. Among the memories recalled by Ore Ganguers was appreciation of the fascinating rocks, beautiful scenery, and the fact that the bar was located within this particular student's field area. Another Ore Ganguer recalled that Dr. Stauffer somehow ended up in the hotel swimming pool, fully clothed, along with other field camp participants. Building a fort out of the furniture in his Flin Flon hotel room and passing out in it is yet another story from an Ore Ganguer who shall remain anonymous.

Accommodation at Zortman varied through the years. Apparently, it started in hotels/motels, switched to cabins, then back to a hotel and finally to trailers in the 2000s. Occasionally, students ended up sleeping on cement garage floors. In 1962, the small staff at the hotel was so overwhelmed by the size of the group that the students effectively took over the preparing and serving of breakfast. In 1980, there were sufficient cabins for all of the guys but not the three girls attending. They stayed in a tent for the duration. Luckily



Figure 4. Flin Flon Field Camp, 1990s (top photo, p. 9, 70th Anniv. PowerPoint presentation).



Figure 5. Zortman Field Camp, 1990 (top photo, p. 17, 70th Anniv. PowerPoint presentation).

the weather was good and one of the women remembers, "I don't recall it being a hardship... and we didn't have to put up with the guys burping, farting, and generally being guys!" Stories from the Zortman camp abound. There was the time, in 1962, when students went to the rodeo in nearby Mobridge with Ethel, who had been the owner of the local brothel when the mine was still open. Or the incident in 1973, when students rolled rocks down the hillside in Alder Gulch with Dr. Caldwell. An unnamed inebriated student was locked in the Zortman jail (Figure 5) in the middle of the main street. Only Dick, the owner of the bar, had the key to release him. One student recalls being totally confused as to what he should be doing because the professor spent all of his time panning for gold. Ore Ganguers from the early '90s recall hot springs, professors, and the lack of bathing trunks, while those from the late '90s have a favourite memory involving cars, guns, and the Zortman bar. But the best story is another one from 1962, in which two students got into an argument in the bar over whether hard-

rock or soft-rock geologists were tougher. The door to the bar opened and a cowboy entered. One student rushed over and asked, "Can you settle an argument? Who is tougher, hard-rock or soft-rock geologists?" The cowboy looked the student straight in the eye and said, "Cowboys" and kicked the student in a very sensitive spot.

Stories about the Ore Gangue are endless. Each student has his or her special moments, funny moments, frustrating, and triumphant moments. The refrain repeated over and over again during the research for this article was that the Ore Gangue provided a home away from home for geology students. Geology departments at many universities have the reputation for being closely-knit communities, but few, if any, can match the Ore Gangue of the University of Saskatchewan for longevity and importance in students' lives.

Note: Names have been largely omitted from this article to protect the innocent...and the guilty.