



# Yukon Prospectors' Association

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## AL KULAN WELCOMED INTO CANADIAN MINING HALL OF FAME by Jane Gaffin

Jane Gaffin is a Whitehorse-based freelance writer who specializes in mining.

The late Alan Kulan is slated for induction into the prestigious Canadian Mining Hall of Fame on January 20. The awards ceremony and dinner will take place at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

The legendary mining figure is best known locally for his 1953 discovery of the Vangorda base-metal deposit, which led to a major role in finding the enormous Faro lead-zinc-silver deposit.

During the 1970s, the Faro mine was heralded as Canada's top lead producer and as the biggest post-Klondike event to put the Yukon on the world map.

The 2005 Toronto ceremony marks the 17th annual awards ceremony which honours people who have made various and significant contributions to the Canadian minerals industry.

Portraits of the inductees and their awards hang in the Hall of Fame in the University of Toronto's mining building.

Over the years, the Hall of Fame has been sponsored by such professional organizations as the Mining Association of Canada, the Prospectors and Developers Association, the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum as well as the weekly Toronto-based Northern Miner newspaper.

Nominating a candidate to the adjudicating committee is a long, rigorous process. Thanks go to Kulan's dedicated champions Mr. and Mrs. John Riley of California and Dr. Donald Gorman, professor emeritus University of Toronto.

No single biography exists about Kulan. But books like *Cashing In*, a history of the Yukon's hardrock mining history, and the *Mine Finders*, along with a wide array of technical journals, newspaper and magazine articles, CBC radio interviews and a video produced from early-day film footage by Ed Sommer of Switzerland, confirmed Kulan's achievements.

Endorsements and acceptance were based on the "brilliant career of an outstanding Canadian prospector, minefinder, mining executive and community benefactor who merits being ranked with prominent explorers, as well as with peers in the mining industry."

Gorman was the mineralogist who received the original mineral specimens that Kulan and associate Gunar Penikis found in the Blow River-Rapid Creek area in 1974.

After Gorman identified their probable rarity, Kulan donated the specimens to the Royal Ontario Museum for identification and display.

As a result, Gorman and Kulan began a friendship. As well, the locality in the Yukon's remote northeastern corner became known as the source of the world's finest crystal specimens of lazulite, wardite, augelite, arrojadite and several other phosphate minerals.

Additionally, several new species were discovered. The first was appropriately named kulanite. Further research was made possible at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, due to Kulan's generosity.

Commissioner Jim Smith accepted Kulan's gift of new blue lazulite on behalf of the Yukon residents in 1974.

The showcase housing the exquisite crystals, which Smith proclaimed as the Yukon's official gemstone in February 1976, is tucked away in the eastside MLA offices of the Yukon administration building.

Smith wrote a glowing account supporting Kulan's membership into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. "(A)s Commissioner of Yukon (1966 to 1976), one of the few instructions I ever received from the Federal Government was to create and maintain a climate where private enterprise could thrive."

He continued: "Consequently, Yukon was a bustling mining community inhabited by a sturdy group of go-for-broke miners who represented the epitome of the free enterprise system. One of that group was Alan Kulan.

"He had what it took to scour the country-side with a purpose, and while a certain amount of luck shone on his efforts, hard work was the real key to his discoveries."

Smith pointed out that most people confronted with success tend to lean back a little and savour the rewards.

Kulan's attitude was that yesterday's victories should be used as a springboard to more of the same tomorrow, declared Smith. "(T)he face of the Yukon changed forever under his investigative eyes."

It was while John Riley and his wife, Mary Louise, were visiting the territory in 1985 the couple learned of Kulan's discovery of hitherto unknown minerals. They also heard about the extensive roles the University of Toronto and Royal Ontario Museum had played in analyzing and naming kulanite and nine other new minerals.

Both Rileys are University of Toronto graduates and scientific explorers in their own rights. They have close faculty ties with their alma mater.

Riley, who holds a master's degree in business administration, is a retired newspaper manager. He was inspired to write a non-technical treatise on the subject of "new minerals", partially because institutions seldom received acclaim for any non-teaching work.

Riley also wanted to bestow recognition on Kulan for his generous contribution to the scientific and research communities.

The Rileys went on to spearhead the Alan Kulan Memorial Lectureship Series, established with a trust fund in 1989. It is jointly-sponsored by the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Yukon Geoscience Forum and the University of Toronto.

The Rileys and Kulan family members have attended every lecture, which alternate annually between Whitehorse and Toronto.

Dr. Stephen Scott, a university of Toronto geology professor, gave the inaugural address in Whitehorse in April, 1994. His video presentation called "Ores of the Ocean" was more appropriate than initially realized.

Dr. Scott, a director of the university-based Scotiabank Marine Geology Research Laboratory, surmised that ocean exploration would have captured the imagination of Kulan as an innovative thinker looking for new frontiers to conquer.

Few attendants were aware that by the late 1960s, Kulan actually had invested a bundle of money in the first non-government, non-military submarine. The privately-owned, Vancouver-based submersible vessel was designed to probe the ocean's depth for exploration, research and marine-salvage work.

It was while Kulan was engaged in a business meeting with mining associates in the Ross River lounge on September 12, 1977, local resident John Rolls walked to the table and shot the 55-year-old multi-millionaire in the face with a .357 Magnum revolver.

The Yukon Prospectors' Association earlier inducted Kulan into the Yukon Hall of Fame in 1988. His name is engraved indelibly on the base of the bronze three-metre-tall prospector statue that watches over downtown Whitehorse from Main Street and Third Avenue.

