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GLEN HARRIS: A PROSPECTOR WHO SIMPLY WON'T QUIT

by Aasman Design

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Glen Harris carries a sign these days, and it reads, "I can't talk but I can hear and understand everything." And, while strokes in 1985 and 1988 may have cost him his speech and limited his movement, it has not kept him from communicating his love for the prospecting game in the Territory.

Keying in his responses on an electronic-speaking device and using a pencil, diagrams, hand gestures and even rock samples when the technology fails to do what it's supposed to do, Harris tells his remarkable story.

"Prospecting gets in your blood," he says, "and you can't quit if you want to."

If it wasn't so, he might have quit years ago. Twice he's survived avalanches, once in the White River area in 1953, and once in the mountains near Atlin in 1984. He's been in a helicopter crash, been chased by two bears, and has gone through the ice in Cats and Skidoos. He once dropped through shell ice on the White River in a double track, dropping 10 feet to the rocks of the river bottom.

But always, Harris has continued prospecting. "There's always something around the corner, some new mystery..."

He came to the Territory in 1949, a 19-year-old Cheechako from Berwyn, Alberta. He worked for highway maintenance but left his position as foreman in 1953. "I decided I would rather eat black flies and mosquitoes and gain a chance to make a big strike that would take care of my money problems." He paired up with Pete Eikland (Hall of Fame) and a couple of mules for the summer and the two found several copper-gold showings.

Harris's first paying discovery was not even metallic, but rather an industrial mineral--gypsum. He promoted a large body of gypsum along the O'Conner River near the Haines Road, which was eventually sold to Queenstake Resources.

"I was also in the Anvil stampede from the beginning to the end, prospecting and staking--as I was in every one of any importance since then," he says, proudly.

In the 1970s, Harris teamed up with Al Carlos (Hall of Fame) and prospected the Pelly Banks area. An unusual discovery there was a 60 ton float boulder of 30 percent lead-zinc,

equivalent, he says, to the concentrate being hauled to Skagway today.

"We were self maintaining and sustaining," he recalls. "What the one could not do, the other could, and we were pretty well equipped for prospectors. Al had his own drilling rig and we bought ourselves a D-4 Cat to build road and haul the drill around. We did every aspect of exploration and did it for only a fraction of what it cost major companies to do. We had approximately 1200 claims there and you did not get much time to spend in the bar with assessment reports to have in on time."

The drilling program, conducted near the large float boulder to a depth of 800 feet, was inconclusive and Harris is still keen to take a hand shovel and see if what they intersected was just another boulder or a slab of the ore body.

After the Pelly Banks, Harris moved on to the Boswell River where he was the first to take a Cat and truck and construct an airstrip.

Over the years, Harris has also spent a lot of time in the Carmacks area, working for Yukon Revenue Mines as well as for himself. He helped to develop Caribou Creek which was sold to Doron Exploration.

Harris has partnered at various times with Harry Johannes, Harry Fromme, Ron Granger, Al Carlos, Grant Davidson, and Ron Stack. He is currently partners with his son, Bill, in Harris and Associates. The company holds claims in the Ross River area, on Freegold Mountain, the St. Elias region, and the Bennett Lake area.

"I can envision that some days there will be several new mines between Carmacks and Fairbanks," he said. "Lots of the area is unglaciated and susceptible to heap-leaching.

But that's just one of his predictions. "I think in due course, Harris and Associates will make history with one or two deposits or volcanogenic massive sulfides (VMS) on the north end of the highway," he said, referring to the Ellen copper/gold VMS property. The property lies within a sliced-off wedge of Alexander Terrane which hosts the impressive Windy Craggy deposit.

"It is my estimation that this is the next Windy Craggy in the making. It would be nice to have one in the Yukon as well as B.C."

While he is optimistic about the future of his prospects, he does not hold out much hope for the industry as a whole. "We are a dying breed of cat," he said. Harris fears there is too much government regulation now, and that there was much more prospecting activity in the early 1950s when he first started. His advice to the young person just starting out?--"Forget it all together."

But his own activities belie his blunt analysis. Even with the physical limitations placed on him by the strokes, Harris continues to get out as much as he can. "This summer I was out to Granite Mountain and Freegold and I've been up to the Dempster Highway to get fossil samples for the Chamber."

Which just goes to show, you can't keep a prospector down--it's in the blood.

GLEN L. HARRIS

January 22, 1930 TO August 28, 1997

Prospector Glen Harris quietly passed away on August 28, 1997. Funeral services were held from Christ Church Cathedral in Whitehorse on September 2, 1997.

Glen was born in Berwyn, Alberta, on January 22, 1930. The eldest son of Grace and Percy Harris, he is survived by his wife Ellen; children Heather (Simon), Bill, Doug (Melanie) and Kaiya; grandchildren Alejandro and Dmitri; mother Grace; brothers Donald and Albert as well as many nieces and nephews.

He grew up in the Peace River region of Alberta and came to the Yukon in 1949 to become the youngest foreman building the Alaska Highway. He worked at the pumpstations for the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline, built and operated a garage at Haines Junction and started a sawmill.

Glen took up prospecting in 1953 and this became the driving force in his life as he explored every remote corner of the Yukon. He participated in the Great Dynasty Stampede of 1965, staked many a claim in the Pelly Banks, Shakwak and Freegold areas and pioneered heap-leaching. When he wasn't out prospecting or on the trapline in winter, he operated heavy equipment for General Enterprises, Yukon Revenue and at Clinton Creek and Faro (mines).

Glen was happiest out in the bush, enjoyed the freedom of the outdoors, and persevered against all odds. He had a wonderful sense of humour and made many colourful friends along the way earning the name "Midnight".

Suffering strokes in 1985 and 1988, and a heart attack in 1995, he carried on prospecting with his son, Bill, and developing Caribou Creek. He was inducted into the Prospectors' Hall of Fame in 1989, was active in the Yukon Chamber of Mines and Yukon Order of Pioneers and also wrote short stories for the *Claim Post* and the *Northern Journal*.

"Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow...until you reach your dream."

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