Memorial to Francis Cameron
1902-1975

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Francis Cameron, retired chairman and president of St. Joe Minerals Corporation, died at his home in Lakeville, Connecticut, on February 27, 1975, after a recurrence of a malignant illness.

Frank, as he was known, was born March 14, 1902, in Washington, D.C., the son of Dr. Frank K. Cameron, a chemist and metallurgist from North Carolina, who was later professor chemistry at the University of North Carolina, but who was at that time with the Bureau of Soils of the Department of Agriculture in Washington. His mother was Katherine Burke Boyle, who died shortly after the birth of his sister Elizabeth, when Frank was barely two years old. After this loss, Frank's father devoted special attention to the children, and even before Frank started school he had a summer trip with his father and sister to visit an uncle in Bozeman, Montana, and a camping trip by stagecoach through Yellowstone Park. Frank had early schooling at the Mt. Washington School for Boys, a boarding school in Baltimore, until his father remarried and his stepmother, Virginia Newton Cameron, brought the family together again in Washington. Frank continued in public schools there.

About 1915 his father took a position as metallurgist with the U.S. Smelting, Refining and Mining Company and moved the family to Salt Lake City. There Frank attended Eastside High School and then gained admission to the University of Utah High School. During this period his father took the family on a number of summer trips through the scenic areas of the west, such as Yellowstone, Jackson Hole, Zion, Bryce Canyon, and the Grand Canyon, and for two summers Frank joined the survey team of a friend of his father from the Interior Department in Washington, doing field work in the Utah mountains.

In that environment it was natural for Frank to develop an interest in geology and mining, and in 1920 he entered Stanford University to major in mining geology. His career at Stanford was complicated by his father's prolonged serious illness with diabetes, and Frank's help was needed to support the family. However, he graduated with a B.A. in geology in 1924, and in addition he completed some graduate courses in geology and mining engineering.

By 1925 Frank was working for the Consolidated Mining Company in Eureka, Utah, as assistant foreman and chief engineer, and in 1926 he went with the International Smelting Company in Salt Lake City as assistant geologist. Thus began his life-long career in mining exploration and development, with particular emphasis on those aspects of mining geology which led to the finding of new ore deposits.

In 1928 he accepted a position as geologist for the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, where the geologic and exploration work was directed by Reno Sales from
Butte, Montana. Frank was to serve with this company continually in various phases of their exploration programs until World War II. In the course of field work in Missouri shortly after he joined Anaconda, Frank met Louise Lang of Farmington, Missouri, but then in 1930, Frank was sent by Sales to Rhodesia for nine months of geologic work and mine examinations for Anaconda. This was closely followed by a trip to mining areas in Poland with George C. Heikes. Frank returned to the United States in February 1932, and on March 5, 1932, he married Louise Lang in Farmington, Missouri. The couple then settled in Toronto, Ontario, which served as a base for Frank's further exploratory work for Anaconda in Canada.

Shortly thereafter, Frank was called in by Sales to Anaconda's geologic headquarters in Butte, and in 1933 he was sent out to Seattle as a base for geologic work not only in the northwest but also in Alaska, British Columbia, and the southwest. Frank and Louise lived in Seattle for most of the next six years and their two sons, Frank K. and William L., were born there in 1934 and 1936, respectively. By 1939 the Camerons were back in Toronto, where Frank again made his base for Canadian exploration work.

When the United States entered World War II, Frank was one of the many mining men who headed for Washington and government service. He joined the War Production Board early in 1942, serving as a dollar-a-year man on loan from Anaconda. There he was involved in the organization of the lead and zinc groups in the W.P.B. Later Frank was persuaded by Dewitt Smith to transfer to the Metals Reserve Company as a special adviser on metal supply problems, and he was involved in the negotiation of various intergovernmental contracts with foreign countries. During this service in Washington, Frank came into frequent contact with Andrew Fletcher, president of the St. Joseph Lead Company, now named the St. Joe Minerals Corporation. When the war work came to an end late in 1945, Andrew Fletcher made arrangements with Anaconda for Frank to come to St. Joe as assistant to the president in New York City, and Frank continued with this company in successive posts for the remainder of his life.

In 1946 Frank was elected vice-president and assumed charge of the company's southeast Missouri mining and milling operations and its exploration programs. Exploration for lead at that time was centered in the "new lead belt" which was just beginning to be opened up in southeast Missouri. Before the end of the war, St. Joe had been getting low on ore reserves in Missouri, and exploration for new reserves was of great importance to the company. The first new lead deposit of this area was found at Indian Creek, and Frank took over the program of geologic exploration with the objective of extending this "new lead belt" by the use of the latest geophysical as well as geologic methods, including airborne tests from helicopters.

St. Joe obtained from the U.S. government mineral and surface rights to 120,000 acres favorably located for the finding of ore bodies, but the crux of the development work was the requirement that the company's holdings be cut down to a chosen 20,000 acres for long-term leases. This program, headed up by Frank under the overall direction of Andrew Fletcher, resulted in the selection of what was considered the most favorable 20,000 acres and led to the development within that area of the Viburnum, Fletcher, and Brushy Creek mines. Thus the program produced the needed ore reserves and brought the "new lead belt" to major size. A side effect was that the acreage that had to be turned back to the government, plus some surrounding areas, made room for mine development by other companies such as Homestake, Amax, Kennecott, and Asarco.

In 1953 Frank was elected a trustee (director) of the St. Joseph Lead Company, and in 1960 he was made president of the company when Andrew Fletcher moved up to the vacant position of chairman. Then in 1967 upon the retirement of Andrew Fletcher,
Frank became Chairman of the Board of Trustees, a post which he held until his retirement in 1971.

During his service with St. Joe, Frank was naturally also much involved in the exploration work and operations of that company elsewhere in this country and around the world—in northern New York, where the Balmat and Edwards mines were substantial producers of zinc; near Sullivan, Missouri, where St. Joe shared a half interest with Bethlehem Steel in the Meramec Mining Company, which developed and mined a large iron deposit at Pea Ridge; in Argentina, where a subsidiary, Compañía Minera Aguilar, S.A., operated extensive lead-zinc-silver mines; in Peru, where Compañía Minerales Santander, Inc., a Peruvian subsidiary, developed a lead-zinc-silver property; in Australia, where Jododex Pty. Ltd., a joint venture with Phelps Dodge, carried out exploratory work on a copper-lead-zinc discovery in New South Wales; and other explorations as well.

Frank was also a director of the Magma Copper Company and the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Company, and he was an officer and director of several St. Joe subsidiaries, including the Compañía Minerales Santander and the Meramec Mining Company.

Francis Cameron was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and a member of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, of which he was elected an honorary member, the Institute's highest honor. He was a member of the Society of Economic Geologists (president from 1956 to 1957), the Mining and Metallurgical Society of America (president from 1963 to 1964), the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, and the Geochemical Society. In 1961 Frank was presented with an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering by the University of Missouri in recognition of his development of mines in that state. He was also the recipient of the Saunders Gold Medal of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers in 1965 and the Daniel C. Jackling Memorial Award of the Society of Mining Engineers in 1968. From 1953 to 1956 he served as a member of the Advisory Board of the Atomic Energy Commission for raw material supply.

Frank's main professional interest was in the finding and development of metallic ore deposits through the application of geological techniques. It was his success in pursuit of this interest, particularly in southeast Missouri, which was the basis for the awards mentioned above. Frank was also a sound administrator who was able to make hard decisions when it became necessary, without deviating from his consistent quiet and gentlemanly manner. He had an unusually large number of friends throughout the mining industry and will be greatly missed.

For my part, I had known Frank since 1940 when we had nearby exploration offices in Toronto. Our paths crossed frequently thereafter—in Washington during World War II, in New York, on committees of the Society of Economic Geologists, and even as neighbors in the Lakeville and Sharon areas of Connecticut. Over this long period I had developed a great respect for his ability in and broad knowledge of mining exploration.

As a tribute to Francis Cameron, the St. Joe Minerals Corporation has recently announced the establishment of the Francis Cameron Fund in Economic Geology at the School of Earth Sciences of Stanford University.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FRANCIS CAMERON

1968  What is a "have-not" nation? (Jackling lecture): Mining Eng., v. 20, no. 4, p. 59-64.

For assistance in assembling the details of this memorial, I wish to express my appreciation to Frank's widow, Mrs. Louise Lang Cameron; his son, William L. Cameron; his sister, Miss Elizabeth Cameron; his secretary, Miss Patricia Dermody; and his former boss, Andrew Fletcher.