

## In Memoriam: Peter Theyer

by J.M. Pacey

Dr. Peter Theyer passed away on July 7, 2017 at his Winnipeg home after a brave and courageous battle with ALS.

Peter was born in Kirchheim unter Teck, Germany in 1943 and graduated from the University of Vienna, Austria, where he pursued his doctoral degree in Geological Science. His career as a gifted geoscientist took him to many locations over the years including the Dominican Republic where he discovered what eventually became an open-pit mine, as described in his own words:

*I was the geologist in charge of doing the mineral resources of a swath of land that Falconbridge leased from the Dominican Republic. The agreement was, once you start pouring nickel, you start paying one dollar per hectare per year. The second year 2 dollars, then 3 dollars. It's a very standard kind of thing, so you don't monopolize an area.*

*An American consulting geologist did an assessment of hundreds and hundreds of creeks flowing down from the central mountain. It's kind of like a spine going down. He did the analysis of the mineral sediment in the creeks. Hundreds of creeks. I looked at the map and nothing! Nothing, nothing, nothing! So, what the heck am I going to do? I don't trust other people. I thought, "Peter, check it out yourself." That's the way I always operate. I want to see for myself, no matter how hard it may be—it's hot as hell and humid—but I'm going to hike along these creeks. After maybe two or three days, I'm walking again through one of the creeks and...nothing. I always had a dog with me. It was nice because trees provided shade and you're walking in cold water.*

*I looked down to see red flakes in the sediment which meant there were oxides. Usually these are oxides of iron or manganese or something that might be valuable. I look on the map from the consulting geologist and there is nothing! I thought, "Sir you are full of s\_\_\_! You have never taken a sample. It's impossible. The least that you have in there is iron. Why isn't there anything on the map?"*

*I kept walking and thinking, "Does this make any sense at all? Somebody is lying here." Of course, I took samples and then walked around a curve in the stream and...it was beautiful. There was a waterfall about two metres high. As a geologist, you immediately wonder, "Why do you have a waterfall here?" There must be something hard underneath different from where the water goes gently down. There must be a hard spot. It's like any other waterfall. There's a cause for it.*

*I took my hammer and bashed it against the rock to get fresh rock and it was bright yellow, which means sulphides. For a geologist, that is "WOW!" It's absolutely excellent! It turned out to be an open pit for copper, gold and zinc that I found. Which, for an economic geologist, is a very exceptional achievement—a big, big, big deal!*

Peter was transferred to Manitoba where he initially worked for Falconbridge, later joining the Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS) in 1976 as an economic and mineral deposits geologist working in all areas of the province. His expertise was in mafic-ultramafic intrusions and associated magmatic nickel-copper-chrome-PGE deposit types, namely in the Bird River, Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Thompson and Fox River belts. He also contributed to the Geoscience Data Compilation for southeastern Manitoba, and authored over ninety reports and



maps during his tenure at the MGS. He raised his family and settled in Manitoba for the rest of his life.

In 1993, Peter returned to the north to open and manage the MGS regional office in Thompson where some 30 years earlier he had launched his career exploring the Thompson belt. He was instrumental in initiating new co-operative projects, many of which included research collaboration from universities in Manitoba and throughout Canada. Peter discovered an undocumented soapstone occurrence near Thompson. He also developed detailed petrographic methods for studying komatiites, and was involved with the mineral potential assessment for the multi-year and multi-disciplinary endangered spaces program for the province.

After retiring from the MGS in 2006, not content to sit idle, Peter joined Wildcat Exploration where he continued to fuel his passion for geoscience in exploration and mentorship of young geologists.

His many interests beyond geology included a lifelong passion caring for dogs, reading and mountain climbing. Once again, in Peter's own words, a tale of a mountaineering adventure in Montana with his colleagues and friends Paul Gilbert and Dave McRitchie.

*I always felt most alive coming up a mountain. At the edge of Avalanche Lake, we saw a small, rapidly flowing creek emerge under a metre-thick ice cover, flowing into the lake over a bed of very large boulders. Dave suggested exploring the narrow gap between the lake and the overlying ice by squeezing under the ice over the boulders. I reluctantly agreed to follow him because he was well experienced in exploring caves, as Manitoba leader of a caving club.*

*We crawled approximately 10 metres over wet boulders trying not to fall into the creek or to get too wet from dripping ice. The light in the cave gradually changed to a bluish green mixed with*

*a beam of sunlight coming in through a huge melt hole in the ice far above us. We stood in a huge, cathedral-shaped gap, carved out of the ice by the rushing stream that was leaping approximately 30 to 40 metres and along the way, broke into many individual diaphanous falls, somehow like bridal veils.*

*Dave and I gaped at this awesome spectacle until the wet and cold drove us back into the sun. We both were stunned and speechless by what we had just seen so that we hardly noticed that we hadn't said a word for several minutes. We just knew that we had been in the presence of something truly majestic and extraordinary.*

In recent years during Peter's retirement, he continued his love for editing and achieved the twelfth position of proofreaders for Project Gutenberg, proofreading out-of-copyright books to be available as e-books. In his years with the project, Peter proofread 27,545 pages!

He also volunteered his time and expertise with the Winnipeg Humane Society, as well as with all things mechanical for anyone who asked. With boundless energy and generous with his time, Peter often offered himself, and visited and stayed loyal to his long-time friends despite his illness. He was truly an inspiration to the end.

Peter will be missed by friends and colleagues. His passionate and sometimes unorthodox approach to mapping and understanding the geology of Manitoba lives on. We remain saddened by the loss of a colourful, energetic and enthusiastic member of the geological community. Peter is survived by his two children, Nathalia Theyer-McComb of Vancouver, and Nicholas (Debra) Theyer of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; three



grandchildren Luke, Benjamin and Matthew; his two brothers, Hans of Frankfurt, Germany, and Fritz of Washington, DC.



Left to right: Paul Gilbert, Peter Theyer, unknown, and Dave McRitchie in Roscoe, Montana.