



TONY JAMES

Managing Director of Carbine Resources, Tony James, was made a Life Member of WASM Alumni in August, an honour that acknowledged a decade at the helm of the school's alumni association. At 53, James is still at the "pit face", now on a new quest for gold within the historic tailings of the Mount Morgan Gold Mine in Queensland. James reflects on his career and a treasured relationship with WASM that began some 35 years ago.

WASM Alumni Life Member Tony James believes the key to Australia's ongoing dominance in mining can be attributed to one key skill: understanding geology.

"It's really knowing that geology and applying it to mining," he says.

"Due to our comprehensive understanding of specific rock and its mineral properties, we are able to mine lower grades and keep tight controls in mining"

The Carbine Resources managing director says that skill is of ongoing importance as ore bodies become harder to find and potentially more challenging to mine.

"The ability to thoroughly understand the rock and its contained minerals will continue to be of fundamental importance to the Australian mining industry," James says.

James, who was made a WASM Alumni Life Member in August is currently leading the charge at Carbine Resources to complete a Definitive Feasibility Study (DFS) on the mining and reprocessing of historical tailings associated with the famous Mount Morgan Gold mine in Central Queensland.

"I was attracted to the challenge for two reasons. The first, is that previous technical work indicated the economic margin is significant enough to form the basis of a strong growth, junior company," he says.

"The second, is the opportunity to significantly contribute to the improvement of the acid mine drainage environmental issues that has been associated with this mine for over 100 years."

James was born in Bridgetown, WA, in 1963 and, with a teacher as a father, lived in numerous regional towns during his childhood. It was his father who pointed him in the direction of WASM.

"He encouraged me to go to Kalgoorlie to visit WASM for a 'Focus on Mining' tour," he says.

"He believed the mining industry had a bright future in WA and that it was a good fit for me. He was right."

James was accepted and began studying as a mining engineer in 1981.

"My first vacation job was working as an underground labourer at the Silver Lake Nickel mine in Kambalda," he says.

"I also spent my study breaks working at the Perseverance and Lake View and Star mines - both now engulfed by the Super pit."

James recalls a grand passion operating a compressed air driven 12B bogger underground on the Golden Mile.

"I spent many hours bogging and driving small electric locomotives delivering gold ore to the ore pass systems at the shafts," he says.

After earning a diploma, James returned to WASM in 1988 to convert that into a Bachelor of Engineering, Mining Engineering.

James' career has seen him gain experience amid challenging roles in a wide range of locations including BHP Gold Mines, Telfer, Mt Pleasant, Newcrest, Western Metals, Delta and Aurion Gold, Black Swan Nickel Mine, Lion Ore and Alacer Gold Corp.

James has always had a love for operations.

"I love working with colleagues to overcome engineering and other technical challenges," he says.

"It is very satisfying achieving the set production targets with the real satisfaction you have achieved what you set out to do.

"Down-to-earth, friendly interaction with like-minded, motivated people is the best," James says.

Some of those operational roles led to what James considers his greatest career achievements.

"My work as the Underground Manager at the Telfer Gold mine in the early 1990's exposed me to some real technical issues associated with challenging ground conditions," he says.

"Later, as Mining Manager at the Kanowna Bell Gold Mine in Kalgoorlie the introduction of the underground haulage system and paste fill plant set the basis of the underground mining operation which continues today."

He also nominated another highlight as the building of the Higginsville gold mine for Avoca Resources after the discovery of the Trident mine.

All these experiences have shaped James's approach to management and his inclusive leadership style.

"My management approach is definitely based on teamwork and consultation - not dissimilar to the key values you get as a WASM graduate," he says.

"Mining engineering, for me, isn't about being a technical expert in any particular field, but having the ability to get across several disciplines and involving their key experts as required.

"What I've learned is you have to listen with empathy and go out of your way to spend time with people, have fun and enjoy working together," James says.

James renewed his relationship with WASM in 2000 when returned to Kalgoorlie to take up a role at the Kanowna Belle Gold Mine for Delta Gold.

"I decided I should put back into WASM in acknowledgement of all the great opportunities I have received as a graduate," he says.

That led him to become the president of the WASM Alumni, a position he held for 10 years and of which he is now the immediate Past President.

"That period of time was

challenging for the Alumni and we have strengthened our resolve as to the importance of WASM and the value of those degrees received by its graduates over more than a century," he says.

"We are working hard to re-establish those strong affiliations and ensure the legacy continues."

James has been humbled by the award of WASM Alumni Life Membership.

"I truly appreciate the recognition. It's nice to be rewarded for the effort and service one puts into an organisation like WASMA," he says.

"To be recognised within that group of special people is extremely humbling and gratifying."

And the Life Member has some words of advice for WASM students and newly-minted graduates.

"Do your time and enjoy yourself as you go along," he says.

"There will always be time enough to become the boss and earn the big bucks.

"The more experience and knowledge you have will enhance your achievements in the later stages of your career," James says.

He is married to Ann with three adult daughters and lives in Floreat, WA. Outside of mining, James enjoys cooking, fishing, wood working, "keeping my lawn green" and "punishing himself" by supporting the Fremantle Dockers. ▀



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