

## Sir Laurence Brodie-Hall,

Laurence Brodie-Hall (Brodie) was born in London in 1910 and migrated to Australia in 1924 where he worked as a farm-hand in NSW before venturing to Western Australia in 1927. He and a friend bought a garage business but went broke during the Depression. He then went gold mining in the Murchison where he began at the very bottom - as an underground miner. He enjoyed the social life on the Goldfields where he engaged in amateur theatricals, played the violin and sang - much to the delight of his many friends.

In 1934 Brodie joined WMC's Triton mine near Cue as a machine miner. From there he went to Kalgoorlie, took a shift job at the Kalgurli Ore Treatment Company's plant and began a part-time course at the WA School of Mines. Next he went to work at the Emperor Mine in Fiji in 1939, but when war broke out he returned to WA and worked as Plant Superintendent on Claude de Bernales' Baileys Mine at Coolgardie. When Japan entered the war Brodie enlisted as a sapper in the Royal Australian Engineers and by the end of the war he had risen to the rank of Captain in the 2/2nd Mechanical Equipment Company.

When demobilised he returned to Kalgoorlie and completed Mining and Metallurgy Diplomas at the WA School of Mines under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme. In 1948 WMC's Managing Director, (Sir) Lindesay Clark, offered him a job as junior mine geologist at Norseman. He wasn't there long before he was transferred to Melbourne as Technical Assistant to (Sir) Lindesay Clark.

In June 1951, after having worked on proposals to re-establish gold mining at Bullfinch, Brodie was appointed General Superintendent of Great Western Consolidated with the parting comment from the Chairman, Sir Walter Massy-Greene, 'You made the estimates, you go and make them work.' For the next seven years he worked at Bullfinch where his reputation for technical innovation and good management was established. Unfortunately the combination of high inflation and below-expected grades resulted in a financial disaster for the company.

In 1958 Brodie was promoted to WMC's General Superintendent in WA, and in 1962 he became an Executive Director. In this role he directed the considerable broadening of WMC's operations including the major expansion of Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie, re-opening of the Mount Charlotte mine, the formation of Three Springs Talc and Alcoa of Australia. He was directly involved in the Geraldton Iron Ore Joint Venture, which led to Australia's first shipment of iron ore under long-term contract to Japan in March 1966. It was due to his encouragement and support that WMC discovered nickel sulphides at Kambalda in January 1966. The rapid establishment of Kambalda Nickel Operations in 1967, the Kwinana Nickel Refinery in 1970 and the Kalgoorlie Nickel Smelter in 1972 were among his major achievements.

In 1967 Brodie moved to Perth where he involved himself increasingly in industry and community affairs. He was President of the WA Chamber of Mines from 1970 to 1974, a member of the Australian Mining Industry Council and President of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in 1973. He was awarded the Institute Medal in 1976 and Hon. Life Membership in 1988. He served on many Government and Advisory bodies including the WA Environmental Protection Council, the CSIRO Council and was Chairman of the State Committee of CSIRO for many years. He received the WA Citizen of the Year Award in 1974, was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in 1976, created a Knight Bachelor in 1982, and was made a Freeman of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder in 1989. Sir Laurence was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the Australia Day Honours in 1993 in recognition of his significant contribution to the mining industry in Australia.

Following his retirement as an Executive Director of WMC in 1975, Brodie retained his position on boards of WMC and Alcoa of Australia for a further seven years. He was Chairman of Kalgoorlie Lake View Pty Ltd, Kalgoorlie Mining Associates, Central Norseman Gold Corporation NL, and Three Springs Talc, until 1982 and Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie Ltd, until 1985. He never lost faith in gold and worked tirelessly to maintain viable gold mining operations at Norseman and Kalgoorlie against falling prices, rising costs and sometimes-pessimistic shareholders. Outside the WMC Group Sir Laurence was Chairman of Westerntech Innovations Corp and Energy Research Group (ERG), and a director of Coolgardie Gold NL and a number of non-listed enterprises.

For many years Sir Laurence maintained a keen interest in the WA School of Mines and was Chairman of the School's Board of Management for a long period. He devoted himself to raising the status of the School and a considerable amount of money to provide for its further development. He also served on the Council of the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT which became Curtin University) and received an Honorary Doctorate of Technology from WAIT in 1978. He was appointed a Fellow of Curtin University for his many years of service to tertiary education in Western Australia. His name is commemorated in the '*L C Brodie-Hall Administration Centre*' at Agricola College, Kalgoorlie, the '*Brodie-Hall Research and Consultancy Centre*' at Curtin University and '*Brodie-Hall Drive*' at Technology Park near Perth. On receiving the AusIMM Institute Medal in 1976 Brodie remarked, 'The citation could in time be paraphrased to make an appropriated epitaph which would proclaim, *The success he achieved, he owed to the mining industry, education and the community.*' Sir Laurence was interested not only in academic qualifications but also in the personal development of individuals and there are many in the industry today ready to acknowledge the help, guidance and encouragement given them by '*the man who made it from the bottom to the top*' without losing the human touch.

Brodie-Hall died in 2006.

## References

WMC Group Historical Information Collection, WMC Limited, Melbourne Presentation of Institute Medal, 1976, to L.C. Brodie-Hall, *Proceedings No 263*. (AusIMM, Melbourne, 1977) 'Presentation of H L M to Sir Laurence Brodie-Hall'. *Bulletin No 293*, (AusIMM, Melbourne, 1988) Brodie-Hall, L C, *Brodie* (Northbridge, Western Australia: Access Press, 1994) Membership Records, (AusIMM, Melbourne) G M Ralph, Transcript of a recorded interview, Sept 1985 Numerous Newspaper and Journal cuttings Personal information Gilbert Ralph MBE