

Personal details

Born Brisbane Australia 1945. Health Good. Keen traveler and collector with an eye for detailed investigation. Hobbies include camping, fishing, travel.

At a very young age started collecting rocks and crystal, buying my first collection of gem minerals at eight years old, 56 years later every piece remains in my collection. Whilst in high school I was fortunate to be taught faceting and by the age of sixteen owned my first faceting machine.

After finishing school started working for a Retail Jewellery Chain and it was here that I “discovered” the Gemmological Association of Australia leading to a continuous membership to date of forty four years. I completed their Diploma of Gemmology and became a Fellow of the Gemmological Association of Australia in 1966. I then joined Pan Pacific Products a Sydney based company dealing in rough and cut sapphire. For three years I assisted the principle in buying rough sapphire in Northern New South Wales and selling cut sapphire to the jewellers in Sydney and Melbourne.

After three years I decided to enroll in Macquarie University to study geology. I was fortunate enough to be able to study “full time” financed by holiday employment as a marketing manager of rough sapphire for a fledging sapphire miner using the specialized knowledge I had gained with Pan Pacific Products. During my three years at University there was a huge expansion of the Australian Sapphire Mining Industry due to an ever increasing number of Thai rough buyers.

In 1972 gained my Bachelor of Arts majoring in Mineralogy and Petrology (At the time equivalent to a BSc.). I then went into full time employment as a the manager of a sapphire mining operation called Giltspur Gems & Minerals N.L. based at Glen Innes in Northern NSW. There I was responsible for managing the prospecting for three alluvial sapphire mines as well as sorting, grading and selling of the sapphire production. It was here that I started building close relationships with the buyers from Thailand that last to this day. It was also when I first realized that almost all Australian sapphire was heat treated to improve clarity. My studies at University made me well versed in the principles of exsolution in minerals and the Thai buyers let slip that they could improve the appearance of the rough sapphire by the application of heat. I put two and two together and built my first furnace which failed to produce any tangible results.

Giltspur had some severe problems at board level so I took my new bride and set up a business of cutting gemstones in an old rented farmhouse. This was also a failure and as my ne wife was expecting I decided to seek employment. Late in 1974 I found a position as Marketing Manager of Dominion Mining N.L. at Inverell. At that time they were the biggest sapphire miners in Australia and I had the responsibility of managing the sorting, grading and selling of their rough production. During my time with Dominion I made several trips to Thailand resulting in Dominion entering into a joint venture with a Thai group to process and then market the company’s production in Thailand. My wife and

son and I spent almost a year living in Bangkok working on this project which was just showing signs of success when a major financial crisis caused the company to pull out of the arrangement.

In 1978 I was offered a newly formed position as Executive Officer of the Gemmological Association of Australia (NSW Branch). The position was an experimental one and only lasted one year, it did however bring me back to Sydney where I started my own company with a stock of a few ounces of rough sapphire and six cut ones.

The company was named Sapphex Pty Ltd operating as wholesaler of rough and cut Australian sapphire and employing three lapidaries processing primarily Australian rough sapphire.

During the period 1978 to 1983 I spent considerable time travelling in Thailand and Sri Lanka buying rough and learning all I could about the gemstone industry and in particular the heat treatment of sapphire. During the period I also worked with Mr. N.E. Jewell in the preparation of mining tender applications in Sri Lanka under the Mahavelli Irrigation Scheme.

Sapphex Pty Ltd grew during that time and started a retail outlet specializing in jewellery repairs and valuations.

By 1987 the company was wholesaling a wide variety of gemstones and had established it's own small lapidary in Bangkok. I sold the retail arm of the business to concentrate on the processing and wholesaling operations.

In 1984 I started doing some part time consultancy work for T.J. & P.V. Nunan who at the time were the largest sapphire mining operation in the world. Initially I assisted with grading and assessment methods for the rough production and then moved on to running trials and experimentation with heat treatment methods using a wide variety of furnace types. I was also involved in the coordination of a major scientific study of the heat treatment of Australian Sapphires funded by Nunans and undertaken by the University of Technology in Sydney. I was involved in the assessment of sapphire deposits in Laos for Nunan Sapphire International and a Thai syndicate and this in turn led to me advising the Thai company Nakorn Gems L.P. in the setting up of modern performing equipment.

During the period 1987 to 1990 I spent considerable time in Sri Lanka planning and then creating a modern gemstone cutting factory in Sri Lanka employing over 160 personal cutting calibrated Australian Sapphire. All processing steps were "in house", from the sorting of rough, through treatment to the grading, pricing and marketing of the cut production.

Nunan sold his business to Great Northern Mining in 1991 and I returned my attention back to Sapphex concentrating on building the wholesale gemstone sales in Australia.

Also in 1991 I joined with a Thai syndicate forming a joint venture with the local authorities in Yunnan province Peoples Republic of China to prospect with the intention

of mining ruby deposits near the Red River in Southern Yunnan Province. This project was finalized in 1996 and whilst fine quality ruby was found there weren't sufficient quantities for commercial mining.

For the last decade Sapphex Pty Ltd has grown to become a comprehensive source for all types coloured gemstones supplying the Australian Jewellery Industry's needs through offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Over the years I have been involved in many industry and gemological bodies.

Currently:

President of the Gemmological Association of Australia (NSW Branch).

Trustee of the Gemmological Association of Australia (NSW Branch).

Director and Council member of the Gemmological Association of Australia

CBJO representative for the Gemmological Association of Australia

Gemmology lecturer

Chairman of the Australian Jewellery and Gemstone Industry Council and representative for the Gemmological Association of Australia

International Colored Gemstone Association member and Australia Ambassador

Member of the Jewellers Association of Australia

Member of the Gold and Silversmiths Association of Australia

Member of the Gemmological Association of Hong Kong

Member of the Mineralogical Association of Australia

Member of the Gemological Institute of America Alumni Association

Previously:

President, Vice President and management committee member of the Gemmological Association of Australia (NSW Branch).

Secretary Board of the Federal Board of Studies and Examinations of the Gemmological Association of Australia

Board Member NSW Branch Jewellers Association of Australia

Associate of the Australian Museum

Member of the Australian Museum Geodiversity Group

Director of the Jewellery and Allied Trades Valuers Council

Other Industry Activities:

198? IGC

Responsible for the organization of a three day tour to the New South Wales opal and sapphire fields

2000 ICA. Responsible for the organization of a six day tour of the Australian gemstone mines and pearl farms.

Publications

Referees