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## Field Camp: It's Not Optional for the Professional

In column 128 (Jul/Aug '10) I discussed the topic of "The changing face of academic geoscience training" and noted academia's apparent change in the importance of field camp as part of professional geoscience training and the firm opinions of a number of practicing professional geologists who contributed to a discussion of the topic on [LinkedIn.com](http://www.linkedin.com) that field camp is not an option, it is a requirement for basic professional geoscience training. So far (as of November 5<sup>th</sup>) there have been 46 comments posted; see [http://www.linkedin.com/groupAnswers?viewQuestionAndAnswers=&discussionID=17818767&gid=1776965&trk=EML\\_anet\\_qa\\_title-dDhOon\\_0JumNFomgJt7dBpSBA](http://www.linkedin.com/groupAnswers?viewQuestionAndAnswers=&discussionID=17818767&gid=1776965&trk=EML_anet_qa_title-dDhOon_0JumNFomgJt7dBpSBA) (remember to run the whole address together). Peter Dohms, CPG-07141, has compiled a summary of this discussion organized by topics that appears elsewhere in this issue.

Everyone commenting agrees that field camp is important. However, Mike Dobbins commented that the University of Texas's 6-week course costs about \$5,600 for tuition, equipment, etc. and cuts into the summer that could otherwise be devoted to taking other courses allowing graduation in 4 years or having a summer job to help pay for everything. Dobbins agrees that field camp is important but feels that a 3-week hydrogeology camp will better suit his needs.

While I agree with Dobbins' concern about costs, I, and I expect everyone

else who commented, believes that you should experience a wide range of field problems, not just the area in which you intend to specialize. As many of us who've been geoscientists for a while know, you often have to switch from one area of geoscience to another in order to keep employed.

Stephanie Jarvis', SA-1495, "North to Alaska!" student's voice column in the Sep/Oct '10 *TPG* provided an excellent description of the myriad things she learned spending 2 weeks in the vicinity of the Mendenhall Glacier. It wasn't just the technical details pertaining to her research topic, it was dealing with devil's club, working in the rain, interacting with a wide variety of other researchers, and I'm sure other things that gave her an important part of her professional training.

One year, I was the graduate assistant for the Colorado School of Mines' 6-week undergraduate field course. While I had a variety of camp chores—the position was informally known as "ash and trash"—also had the opportunity to go out mapping with a number of different professors while checking on the undergrads and mapping the field problem of the week.<sup>1</sup> This allowed me to see the different ways each professor used to approach the field problems and made their field maps. These differing approaches reflected both the professor's interest and the areas they worked in (desert, rain forest, etc.) From each I learned something useful.

The American Geological Institute published *Status Report on Geoscience Summer Field Camps* by Margaret Anne

## Topical Index-Table of Contents to the Professional Ethics and Practices Columns

A topically based Index-Table of Contents, "pe&p index.xls" covering columns, articles, and letters to the editor that have been referred to in the PE&P columns in Excel format is on the AIPG web site in the Ethics section. This Index-Table of Contents is updated as each issue of the *TPG* is published. You can use it to find those items addressing a particular area of concern. Suggestions for improvements should be sent to David Abbott, [dimageol@msn.com](mailto:dimageol@msn.com)

Baker in 2006. [http://www.agiweb.org/workforce/fieldcamps\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.agiweb.org/workforce/fieldcamps_report_final.pdf). This report notes the importance of field camp for geoscience education for basic geoscience training but cites a number of reasons for the 60% decline in the number of colleges and universities offering a field course in the last 20 years to less than 15% of the 695 schools listed in AGI's Directory of Geoscience Departments. Cost being the chief reason. Nevertheless, "a majority of the Bachelors of Science degrees in geology/earth science require field experience as part of the core curriculum. Many schools are allowing for field experiences other than formal field camps to be used to fulfill this requirement." Just how good these alternatives are depends on the program. Many schools lacking a formal field camp encourage students to take one at another institution and most institutions offering a field camp accept outside students for their field camps, allowing the transfer of credit back to one's home school. The AGI report contains a listing of institutions offering formal field camps.

Clearly, most geoscientists agree that field camp is an important core requirement. As a CSM geology club T-shirt stated, "He who sees the most rocks wins."

Since graduating, I've also participated in lots of field trips offered in connection with geoscience society annual meetings and local geoscience organizations. Such field trips are not a substitute for field camp but are important supplements to field camp and are an important

1. The CSM course was not in a fixed location but moved around from week to week, which kept the professors from getting bored with a particular field problem. This also allowed selection of field problems emphasizing different types of field work, sedimentary, volcanic, igneous, etc.

part of continuing professional development for all of us.

## My Favorite Frauds

**Peter Hahn**, CPG 10923, wrote thanking me for my article on frauds in the May '10 *TPG* and the follow up articles in column 129 and "Michigan's Mythical Gold Mines," both in the Sep/Oct *TPG*. Hahn provided references to two additional papers on the topic, Lechler, P.J., 1997, Gold from water (and other mining scams): Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Special Publication 22, and Lechler et al, 2010, Geochemical sampling of selected playas in Nevada: Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Open File Report 10-1. The promotion of schemes involving "unassayable" precious metals is a continuing problem. If you become aware of such a scheme, please let your state securities agency, whose name or agency varies by state, and also the enforcement staff at the US Securities and Exchange Commission know about these schemes. It's part of our duty as geoscientists in protecting the public.

## The Role of The Professional Geologist (column 128, Jul/Aug '10)

**Barton Stone's**, CPG-11114, article, "Drilling: the most cost effective technique for mineral resource evaluation," which appeared in the Sep/Oct 2010 issue of the *TPG*, is an excellent example of the types of useful, practical papers published in the *TPG* that I discussed in column 128. The "scientific" journals don't bother with such useful information. I also recommend Stone's article to any geoscientist doing any type of drilling, not just those in the mineral exploration business.

## Ethics Training

**George T. Fitzgerald's**, CPG-6582), article, "Ethics Training," in the Sep/Oct 2010 issue of the *TPG* provided an interesting outline for an ethics training session specifically designed to meet the requirements for ethics CPD required annually for Texas-licensed geologists. It can easily be adapted to similar requirements for other states. From time to time I've been urged to prepare an on-line ethics training session for meeting such requirements. I've never done so. I have given half- and full-day ethics training sessions in various places. While I prepare PowerPoint™ slides posing various

ethical situations, I find that the discussions by the various participants about these slides provide the most important part of the session. I trust that those of you who've been reading this column over the years, or those of you who've used the regularly updated index of these columns posted on AIPG's web site, have learned that any particular topic that isn't pretty black and white provides a number of gray areas worthy of exploration.

## Receipt of an Unexpected Bonus after Work is Completed

**Matt Shumaker**, CPG-07319, sent me the following hypothetical ethics question. An AIPG member, who is also a state registrant, has completed a fixed price contract, or a contract with an hourly fee. In both the AIPG Code of Ethics and the State's governing law, the member-registrant is not permitted to take on the case with a fee contingent on a favorable outcome. That is fully understood by both parties, and fully accounted for in a plainly written contract. The work is completed. The member-registrant has done a good job. The client is extremely happy with the outcome. So happy is the client, that unexpectedly and fully outside the expectations of the member-registrant, and not expected under the terms of the contract, the client sends the member-registrant a large bonus check. Can the member-registrant accept this monetary bonus? What do you think? Do you know of anyone who has encountered this situation?

I sent Shumaker's hypothetical question regarding the unexpected receipt of a bonus from a client after the completion of a study for a client to members of the Ethics Committee and received a number of diverse replies.

**John Rold**, CPG-00448, responded, "In this hypothetical situation I don't feel that there are any problems or ethics violations with accepting the bonus. The contract clearly states that it was not a fee based on the outcome."

**John Gustavson**, CPG-02637, provided a similar response, "Yes, because this bonus was neither in the contract nor expected. The situation is similar to valuable Christmas gifts from clients. Taxable, but not unethical."

**Fred Fox**, CPG-01273, has a different view, "The answer, unfortunately for the consultant, is no. The project is key to it, having been negotiated, signed

and completed. The consultant has been paid for his work, and that's what he does on a professional basis. Accepting additional remuneration for that project would be unprofessional, and therefore unethical.

"Actually, I was going to say that this scenario would be extremely unlikely, but I remember that I was involved in something somewhat similar. Many years ago I discovered a commercial deposit on a piece of property under lease. A lawyer for the owner offered me a form of remuneration that truly was uncalled for. I sorely needed the money (I think he knew that) but could not in good conscience accept it (and did not). I was paid a salary by my employer, that was what I did for a living, and I had been paid for my work. Later on I got into studying philosophy and ethics, and found that I had done 'the right thing' intuitively. Conscience can drive one to the proper ethical decision. All you have to do is stay on course."

**Perry Rahn**, CPG-03724, agreed with Fox stating, "The AIPG member should not accept this bonus check. It just doesn't look good. Rather than pay him a bonus with cold cash, it would look a lot better if the client hired the member again on some other project."

**Michael Ruddy**, CPG-09741, concurred with Fox and Rahn, "No, under no circumstance should this 'hypothetical' situation allow the registrant to accept the bonus or gratuity, after. The individual's recognition of the work performed should be this person's bonus, not a monetary bonus. This person was working on a fixed price contract/hourly fee. This is this person's profit, nothing else. The individual should look at his bonus as continued work (revenue) for the job well done. Accepting a large monetary bonus is not only unprofessional, it is also unethical, no matter how you look at it. It would be further aggravated if this individual did not claim this on his/her income tax statement. As this pans out, if the individual accepted the bonus and understood the meaning of not taking contingency fees or favorable outcome on his behalf, then I seriously doubt this individual would claim this on income tax.

"I have been working for the State of Missouri for quite some time now. I have had shoddy business owners try to bribe me (with money), to turn my head, or to overlook the violation(s). The only favorable outcome for me, was to take it to the federal authorities which in turn,

assessed large fines, and one business owner to close the doors altogether. Perhaps your question asking if anyone is aware of a similar situation can be answered as yes, by me. Not only were the bribes, intentions that I encountered to turn my head—an insult to my integrity, it was also an insult to my status of CPG, PG, and RG.”

Ruddy’s experience deals with bribes, which are clearly unethical and illegal. As posed in the hypothetical, the bonus was unexpected and received following completion of the report so that it cannot be really viewed as an inducement to write a favorable report and therefore a bribe. The question of whether the bonus was reported to the IRS as income was not part of the hypothetical, but clearly it should be.

**Rima Petrossian**, CPG-10038, wrote, “I have not heard of a case like this for geologists, but in other professions bonuses like this are more common. I think this case as written sounds ethical as long as there was no verbal understanding or implied reward for ‘good’ results, but then who could ever prove that one way or another? It would be up to the individual to give back the bonus if they felt it was bribery for future transactions. I believe that, due to contractual agreements and relatively high professional rates, happy customers should tell others and hire you again as a reward, not with additional money. It sounds like it depends on the finances of the giver, a lot to a consultant might not be much to a wealthy financier who may not have to go through litigation due to the outcome.

“I might feel some sort of future obligation by accepting a large gift, but another person might not. Ultimately, a token gesture is more appropriate to keep future transactions honest, but on the face of this one contract, the consultant completed the analysis before receiving a bonus and nothing unethical transpired.”

A colleague recounted a situation similar to the hypothetical question. In this case, the geologist prepared a report on a prospect and received, as per the contract for the work, a smaller cash fee and warrants for the client company’s stock that had an exercise price significantly above the then current trading range. The warrants were good for two years and expired because the exercise price was never reached. Recently, because the prospect had finally resulted in a significant discovery, the client company

awarded the consultant new warrants that allowed the consultant to receive additional compensation for the working on the prospect. The client company had made millions on the deal and believed that the consultant should receive additional compensation reflecting the prospect’s success. The consultant has no expectation of doing similar work for the client in the future and appreciated receiving the new warrants.

This discussion highlights a couple of important points. First, the hypothetical assumes that the bonus was entirely unexpected and therefore the consultant’s work was not affected by the receipt of the bonus. Unless the report was done as part of an audit, which is subject to stricter no conflict rules, there is nothing illegal about accepting the bonus. However, accepting the bonus has the consequence of potentially influencing future work for the client due to the possibility that another bonus may be forthcoming if the report is positive. If the consultant has no problem with this being the only job that will ever be done for the client, acceptance may be okay. As Petrossian points out, such bonuses may be more common in other industries.

However, the “optics” of accepting the bonus present a problem. How will others who become aware of the situation feel about it? Would you like to see the situation described in the newspaper? This is the point Fox and Rahn raise. Particularly if the consultant expects that there may be future work from the client, the bonus cannot be accepted because of the perceived conflict of interest arising from the potential receipt of a similar bonus following future work on successful prospects. **Ron Yarbrough**, CPG-06545, and **Larry Davis**, CPG-07105, also believe that the “optics” of the situation should be avoided and feel that the best “bonus” is additional work from the client and/or recommendations to others that the consultant be retained. While the “optics” of a situation is clearly something to consider in assessing an ethical situation, there is no clear provision of the AIPG Code of Ethics prohibiting the acceptance of the bonus, especially when the consultant does more work for the client.

Having said that, I recognize that many in the petroleum and mining industries agree to work on a prospect for a reduced, or sometimes even no fee, in exchange for an overriding royalty or stock interest in the client company. If this arrangement is clearly disclosed in

the report, the conflict of interest is made known and those relying on the report can act accordingly.

Further comments on this issue will be welcomed.

ETHICS

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## Geologic Ethics & Professional Practices



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