

First gold brick poured

Gathered investors, residents are all smiles

It was a golden moment for Bralorne-Pioneer Gold Mines chairman Louis Wolfin, one that he and many Bridge River Valley residents have waited many years for.

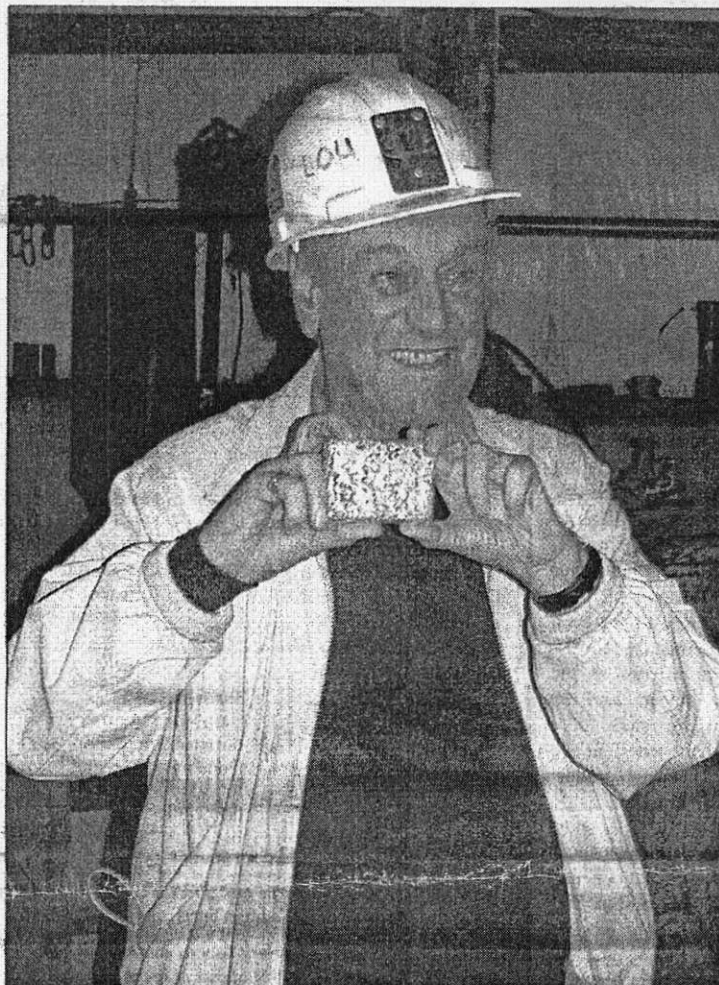
At shortly after 11 o'clock on Thursday morning, with a crowd of about 30 company directors, investors, friends and interested community members looking on, the first brick of gold at the new Bralorne-Pioneer Mine was poured.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with company president Bill Kocken, Wolfin wore a broad grin as Keith Law took molten gold from a newly-installed furnace in the mill building and poured it into the cast. Within minutes, the newly-minted 40 ounce brick had cooled and was being passed from one admirer to the next as Wolfin shook hands and received congratulations.

Gun Lake resident Kay O'Keeffe, 81, posed for photographs with Kocken, Wolfin and their \$17,000 treasure. O'Keeffe was on hand when the last gold brick was poured in Bralorne in 1971.

"I was here to see it," she recalled. "A brick, of course, was a lot bigger back then."

After sharing a champagne and orange



On Thursday Keith Law of Technic Canada poured the first gold brick at the new Bralorne-Pioneer gold mine. A few minutes later, company chairman Louis Wolfin's smile gleamed as he held his sparkling 40 ounce, \$17,000 treasure.

juice toast to the day's events in the bunkhouse at the mine site, Wolfin was happy to make comparisons between the old mine and new, for it's the storied history of the mine that makes its future gleam with possibilities.

"I saw it when it was operating in the 1950s and when you look at what was taken out of here, and what's still here to be developed, it's one of the great properties in the world," Wolfin said.

In the 1930s 'Ma' Murray called the Bralorne-Pioneer Mine the "richest gold mine in

the world" and few would have argued. In 1935 the mine processed 550 tons of ore per day with an average grade of one ounce per ton. Wolfin recalled that the mine produced 100,000 ounces per year in its heyday. Before it closed in 1971, the Bralorne and Pioneer properties had produced 4.1 million ounces of gold, worth \$1.5 billion at today's prices.

Wolfin, who has been involved in mineral development in the area for decades, lights up when he talks about the potential he sees for the re-opened mine.

Currently, miners are working at the 300-foot level in the newly-developed Peter zone and results have been promising - assays up to a half-ounce per ton and better. But Wolfin says what's most promising is that there is no end to the possibilities for development.

"All the work that's been done so far has been in the Peter zone. We've haven't even got into the old Bralorne mine property yet," he said.

"When you look at the potential for development at the sites of the

old Congress mine, the BRX, the old Minto mine, we're just scratching the surface."

Wolfin acknowledges that developing tunnels in the old mine site and surrounding properties is costly. He is in Europe this week to find more financing for his venture.

Kocken said there are currently about 40 people employed at the mine, about half of them local residents. Currently 12 miners and mill workers are working 24 hours a day. The mill is processing about 100 tons of ore a day and the company plans to push towards the permitted limit of 500 tons a day over the next 24 months.

Kocken, who has been the on-site manager for the past seven months as the company got its mill up and running, said there could be as many as 30 miners working underground this summer.

"We've probably spent \$3 million in the past seven months, and out of that probably \$1 million was spent in Lillooet," Kocken said.

Wolfin said a new ball mill, already on site, must be installed before the mill can reach its capacity of 500 tons a day.

Gold Bridge Hotel owner Corinne Baker said, while she has not seen a huge increase in business, the re-opening of the mine is reason for optimism for local residents.

"I think the exciting part is that we have people working in this valley again," she said.

"It's resource industries, logging and mining, that keep us going, it's not tourism."

Her boyfriend, miner Paul Egan, quit his job in Yellowknife to come back to work in the Bralorne mine. Egan is happy to be working at home again, but remembers the disappointment he felt when the mine re-opened briefly in 1995-96, only to close when the price of gold plummeted.

Mining is an expensive business, Egan said, and continued financing will be the most important component in the mine's success.

"We need lots more money, and lots more exploration and development," he said.

Weather Effects

Gail Moore will be featured in film on weather and health

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Planning for 2010

Coun. Roshard and Olympic Committee start to work

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