

Don Fife is an engineering and economic geologist in California. He earned a B.S. in Paleontology and Stratigraphy and an M.S. in Geology at San Diego State University (SDSU). Don's Masters Thesis, *Geology of the Bahia Santa Rosalia 30-minute Quadrangle*, is on the Pacific Slope of Baja California. His thesis was published as part of GSA Memoir 140, *Reconnaissance Geology of Baja California* (Gastil et al, 1975).

Don has served four secretaries of the interior as appointee/advisor for geology served from 1981 to 1989 as the Secretary of the Interior's Advisor for Geology, Energy, and Minerals for the 25-million acre California Desert Conservation Area. His experience includes 14 years with the California Department of Water Resources and California Department of Conservation (CDMG). Don joined Converse Consultants in 1978 as a Senior Engineering and Mining Geologist. He edited and compiled two major Southern California geology volumes for the South Coast Geological Society: *Geology and Mineral Wealth of the California Desert*, (Fife and Brown, 1980) and *Geology and Mineral Wealth of the California Transverse Ranges*, (Fife and Minch, 1982). Don was and is one of the founders of the National Association of Mining Districts and one of the founders of American Land Rights Association, both with offices in Washington DC, California and Washington.

Don Fife grew up in the Mojave Desert helping his father in the family well drilling, excavating and mining business. A family friend gave his family a gold mine along a contact seam between granite and limestone. The tiny, gold vein was overlain by millions of tons of "worthless" white limestone (marble), which they blasted into the canyon below in order to expose the gold. The overburden rendered the gold mine economically unfeasible.

Don's father got a contract to haul limestone from a new quarry in nearby Cushenbury Canyon, near the present site of Mitsubishi's quarry and cement plant. This limestone was neither as white nor as pure as the limestone they had blasting into the canyon as waste. They realized the white limestone waste blasted into the canyon was far more valuable than the gold. They expanded their claim into the *White Ridge* 160 acre mining claim. This was patented and sold to Kaiser Steel in 1958 for steel flux reserves.

While at SDSU, Don's undergraduate thesis was *Geology of the White Ridge and White Knob Limestone Deposits*. In 1983 Don received a mineral patent on the 200-acre extension of the *White Ridge Claim*, known as the *White Knob Claim*. This required an 8 1/2-year battle with more than 20 Forest Service and BLM mineral examiners.

Both the *White Ridge* and *White Knob* claims were landlocked. Pfizer Chemical, Inc. had a virtual monopoly of white, high-grade limestone in Southern California. These companies, along with environmental groups, blocked access to these high-grade limestone deposits. In the mid 1980's, Don was a consultant appraising the mineral assets in the pending bankruptcy of the Kaiser Steel Mill. As a result, the Steelworkers Union acquired the *White Ridge* deposit for their vision insurance fund. Omya, the world's largest producer of white pigment limestone, was brought in as the operator. This former gold mine is now the second largest producer of white high-grade limestone in the western United States.

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