

Jack Hammell Says—

"I Don't Blow My Money"



Even by telephone, it is difficult now to reach the busy Jack Hammell.

By ROGER IRWIN
(Star Weekly Financial Editor)

THE pick flashes down to the bare rock. A chunk of quartz chips off, ice-white but slenderly threaded with yellow. The prospector has struck it rich. He has walked his last bitter snow-trail, made his last hard portage. He is wealthy.

Well, maybe. The sporting young men from the Bay St. mining houses will gladly offer 10 to one against it. They will give odds only slightly more conservative than, long before the first tailings from a gold-mill blight the landscape, the prospector will be out with a new grubstake and chipping away at less promising rock. Prospectors rank among the very good business men indeed to cope on even terms with those who will next deal with the gold find and who, as like as not, will be high-bidding chisellers.

That may sound harsh, but the words are those of a recognized authority, a man who is among the very few to be both good prospector and good business man. After 25 years in the bush, Jack Hammell managed to find his way just as effectively through the sticky musk of mining finance. Today he is one of the top half dozen in the mining business, possessed of very considerable wealth and the most violent set of opinions in Toronto.

At 61, John E. Hammell looks a good 50, an illusion perhaps heightened by the fact that he is a natty dresser. His suit, on this occasion, was in two of the lighter shades of brown, contrasting decisively with the green tones of his tie and shirt, the emerald of his cuff-links and the gleaming blue of his ring. This feeling for color is reflected in the decoration of the small office he uses for his own in the three-quarters-floor he rents from the Bank of Commerce. On one wall a prospector, the traditional burro in the background, examines a sample of gold ore. On another, above a tableload of actual samples that would drive the pictured prospector plumb loco, are a couple of African warriors vividly painted by the famed European artist, Adam Styka, brother of Tade Styka, one of whose vivid paintings recently appeared in The Star Weekly. The third wall windows shows Toronto harbor and the crisp green of the island. On the fourth are two romantic pictures, also Stykas, of an Arabian camel-driver and his girl.

Among the warriors, the Arabs and the gold, Mr. Hammell sits at a small and expensive desk in his small and extremely expensive office. People come and go, and Mr. Hammell is very busy. He believes that he is doing something important for Canada as well as for Jack Hammell, and he expects to do a great deal more for both of them in the future. He has minutely plotted the next 19 years of what he disdainfully calls "this kindergarten course". He will study, add immeasurably to his knowledge, prepare for at least a decade of real usefulness. He expects to live to 100, but remembers that the Hammell forebears lived only to the early nineties. At any rate, he is sure he will figure largely in whatever Canadian history is being made in the 1960's.

A Violent Individualist

PENDING this distant removal from earthly things, Jack Hammell is busy at the moment with the Pickle Crow, the Uchi and the McIntyre Red Lake, (Mining men always use the definite article before the name of a property. Not just Lake Shore or Hollinger;

always the Lake Shore, the —). He thinks they will all be very great mines.

He talks about them with the same fervor he once felt about the Flin Flon, the Howey, the Markar and the Greene Stabell some of which turned out quite satisfactorily. His language, glittering with magnificent phrases, heard nowhere but in Jack Hammell's office or in whatever cabin or club he may at the moment be occupying. They are magnificent and utterly unquotable. He uses them to point up his opinions on those subjects in which he will brook no disagreement, and which include mining, finance, government, philosophy, religion, architecture and porcelains.

He talks excitedly, with swift gestures but without an instant's pause. Jack Hammell has had his share of publicity in the last 10 years, but he has never been interviewed. The record remained clean when this reporter finished an hour's session, his questions still unasked. There wasn't time.

For any understanding of him, it has to be realized that Hammell is still a prospector. In every generation there appear people who are violent individualists and who fret at the little restraints of society. Their feet itch. In Elizabeth's time they stuck privateering licenses in their pockets, went out to find Eldorado and in passing discovered a new world. In Hammell's heyday it was a mining license, Eldorado was the whole pre-Cambrian shield, and the new world was the north country. Today they fly planes for Mr. Hammell and his like, or else for their own amusement.

Hammell was 10 years old when the itching feet carried him away from Simcoe county, where his Irish parents had settled. They carried him to New York and other points south, east and west. The other and more important compass-direction came later. The records of this era are far from detailed, but it is established that at various times he was a boxer fighting for \$50 purses, that he worked for a financial house as something he vaguely describes as a "Wall Street punk" and that he rode camels in Egypt and drove hard bargains in various European capitals. At any rate, the era lasted 17 years, and it was 1904 when he revisited Ontario and his home up near Beeton. In Toronto, he sat in the King Edward hotel and heard people talking about silver at Cobalt and what the street elegantly described as "the big dough."

"They talked millions like nickels," says Mr. Hammell. It was the kind of conversation to stir the imagination of a young man with a taste for outlandish places and a hearty respect for money. He went north and learned prospecting first-hand. Old-timers felt kinship with a new footloose rebel, and they took to him also because he was a square-shooter. That he is, according to his lights, no one has since questioned in the north or in Toronto.

His Contribution to Canada

HE did very well in the years that followed. When the big switch came from silver to gold, from Cobalt to Porcupine, he switched too. Twenty years ago he had made a pile that to him seemed adequate, and he retired. He put behind him the loneliness and hard living that are the price the prospector pays for freedom and adventure. He returned to the normal life of a man among his fellows. He hated it.

But he went back to prospecting and stayed with it until the late 20's. He had money behind him now, and he handled bigger stuff than before. Flin Flon, which turned into

An extraordinary story about an extraordinary Canadian, who "has the most violent set of opinions in Toronto." At 61, he has mapped out his life until he is 80. "If a religion is not demonstrable," he says, "it isn't worth a hatful of cold soup." ... Roger Irwin reveals something of Jack Hammell's religion.

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, was his, although it is unlikely he made much money out of it. Howey was his, big in its time but now a minor producer because, he says, they didn't follow his advice. The whole Red Lake camp he claims as his creation. Lots of people in the street have a superstitious feeling against that camp, but Mr. Hammell's faith in it is unshaken. "In ten years it will be—" he begins, and goes on with predictions no more extravagant, probably, than he once made about Flin Flon, and today sees fulfilled.

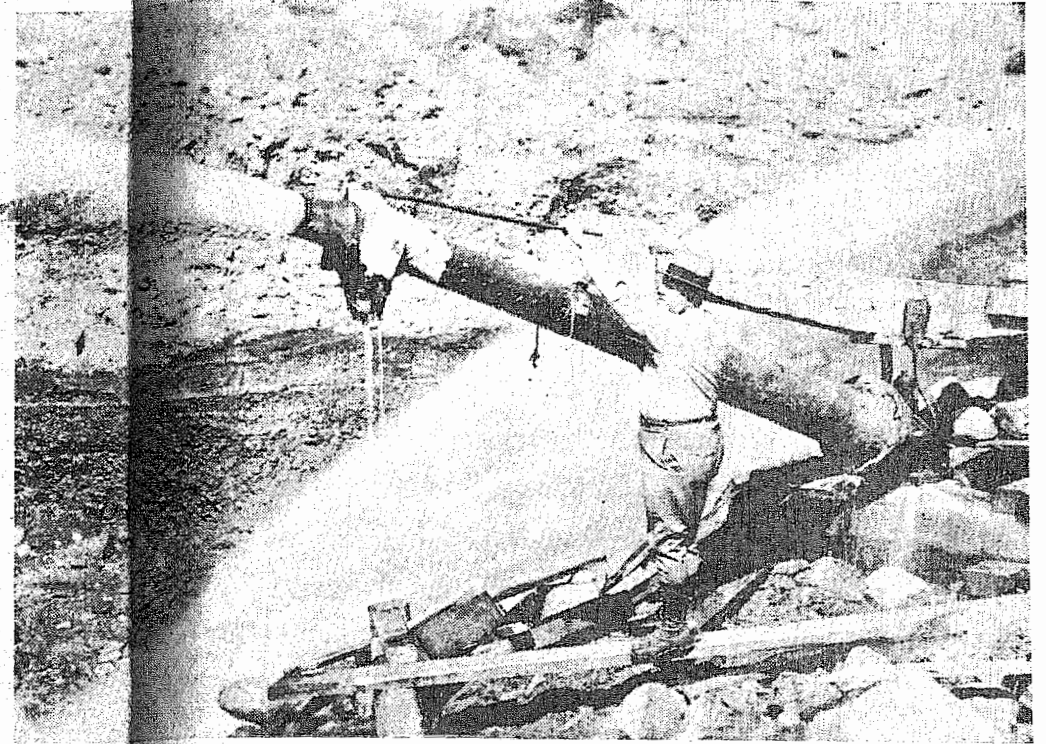
If they are not fulfilled, it will not be from any lack of personal effort and expenditure on Mr. Hammell's part. He has already spent \$110,000 for the McIntyre holdings there, adjoining the old Howey. He is laying out another \$500,000 "to protect the worldly stake of the people who followed me into that camp."

"Within five years," he says confidently, "I hope to have established a city of 1,000,000 population at the little Red Lake camp. Two shafts are already down and we hope for a big low-grade mine. There are lots of people trying to get in, but I'm taking the gamble myself. If my dream doesn't come true, no one but myself will be hurt."

So with Pickle Crow, which he "peddled all over the world without getting a taker". He staked his own money in it to the extent of a half-million guarantee. And now Uchi: "Instead of diluting the stock, selling stock from the treasury, I'm going to carry the mine myself up to \$1,500,000. And you've never heard of that being done before."

He was the first to realize the tremendous possibilities which the airplane held for mining. The company he formed long ago for exploring new fields from the air has since faded into obscurity, but it turned gold mining into a mass-production industry. All the big syndicates adopted his technique of flying a dozen prospectors to a plain and dropping them at intervals for a month's work. Incidentally, of course, it has all but ended the kind of prospecting which Hammell himself knew so long and which he recalls sentimentally today. The prospector has ceased to be his own man and has gone on the company payroll.

He himself pays his prospectors \$150 a month, and 10 per cent. interest on their holdings, and he keeps a fatherly eye on what they do with it. They are still apt to discount the values of security. They are still apt to



Jack Hammell, the prospector, directs a giant nozzle in the placer gold fields in the Yukon.

blow the money. Hammell recalls how he got \$100,000 each for the men who made the Flin Flon strike and how he saw to it that it was delivered to them in sound bonds paying six per cent. per annum.

But the main thing is, he feels, that his own men and a great many others are working steadily today as a result of his activities. That he sees as his justification, his contribution to Canada. "Thirty-four thousand men," he proudly claims, "are working in the north today because of what I did."

For himself, what he has done has made him a very wealthy man. He has a house at Oakville in which, among a great deal else, Tiffans and Rembrandts crowd Chinese porcelain dogs and such items as the salver on which the bear's crown was carried. In the garden, among a great many other things, are stone lanterns and a bridge from Japan, another bridge he himself designed, a large glass-walled bird-house, and a pavilion beside the swimming pool where ice-cream can be served to the bathers. He is very proud of all this, too, because design and decoration are his own creation. His architect, he says, had as little to do with the fundamentals as his mine managers have with a decision to take a cross-cut from the 350 level. Their job is detail. Mr. Hammell attends to policy.

reads 64 Periodicals

"A PROSPECTOR has plenty of time to think things out," he remarks. Especially if he has a brain as incessantly active as Jack Hammell's, he will in time argue with himself a great many of the problems of mankind and, in the absence of any third party, will reach conclusions which seem so sound as to be beyond question. Since these truths emerged without external help, there will be a tendency to discount external opinion thereafter.

By finding means to express his individualism, Hammell is a happy man today. He runs his mines. He flies north in his own planes for underground inspections. He writes outrageous letters to the heads of governments showing them the utter folly of their ways. He corre-

sponds with important people who are sincerely fond of him. He thinks about the future.

He subscribes to 64 periodicals published in various parts of the world, and he looks over each day's batch when he gets up at 4 o'clock each morning. After he has seen the sunrise which, barring clouds, he hasn't missed in years, he reads his papers for three hours. After the day at the office, he gets in another hour's reading. He hadn't thought up a routine like this when he retired back in 1918, and that was why the itching feet took him back to the trail.

Which means that he is still getting a lot of fun out of life, while still taking it pretty seriously. He has studied for the last 45 years every religion on earth, knows the strong points and weaknesses of each. His studies have led him to the conclusion that the ancient religions are all right if lived up to in their real truths. They were not much more than a preface to Christian philosophy. Christianity, Mr. Hammell determined in a long series of lonely nights, is the only religion to offer practical help to a man face to face with realities. "If a religion is not demonstrable," he concludes, "it isn't worth a hatful of cold soup."

"The trouble with the world today is that Christians, with few exceptions, have been crucifying Christ instead of preaching Christ was crucified. These preachers are objects of pity rather than censure."

Strong Views About Money

A LOT of people wait outside Mr. Hammell's door, and write to him or phone him, in the hope that he will contribute a bit of his money to this and that. For the fun of it, he added up the "touches" and attempted touches made so far this year. They reached the impressive total of \$3,500,000. Most of them got nowhere. Mr. Hammell has no doubts about who merits his help.

He has strong views about money and the misuse of the power it brings. He expresses a keen distaste for "purse-proud autocrats who think money is meant for the select few." He believes that they and their attitude toward wealth will cause what he vaguely but ominously calls "trouble" in the not distant future.

To him, the not inconsiderable fortune he owns means the comforts and beauty he can buy with it. "I've got a nice home and a lot of nice things in it," he says. "I don't blow my money on the usual things. I don't keep race-horses, yachts or women. I buy things that are going to make me happier for as long as I live and will still be capable of making other people happier after I go."

"I don't use my money to ruin anybody."

"I don't run markets up and down, though it's easy enough to do it. That's not my kind of dough. My shareholders trust me and they're going to keep on trusting me."

"Some of the boys who were north in my time are trying to crash top society. They're trying to buy their way in, forgetting what they used to be. They're another kind that are going to make trouble before long."

The Rockefeller and Ford collections, holding all there is to know about politicians, youth and industry, are outclassed by his, Hammell contends. "I have a complete record of every politician, from cabinet minister down, since Confederation, and I know enough about some of them to blast them out from under their hats if I wanted to." His archives include data on Quebec since the time of the Indians, the low-down on Spain, Austria, and why the country let Hitler in, and the Jewish race since its inception.

"I get a great kick out of it—watching the self-aggrandizement and pride of these little sects and races," Hammell said. "But the next war won't be to end civilization. It will start civilization. And you and I will live to see it."

A lot of strange ideas come to a man when he is out there on the trail, and has been alone for a month or so, thinking the way prospectors have to think things out for themselves. Jack Hammell said again: "There's going to be trouble in Canada before long and somebody will have to take things over—"



The giant temple Buddha which holds a prominent place in Mr. Hammell's Oriental garden.