

**THE LEONARD G. BERRY MEDAL FOR 1995
TO
ROBERT I. GAIT**

*Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The Leonard G. Berry Medal is awarded for distinguished service to the Mineralogical Association of Canada. This year's recipient is Robert Irwin Gait of the Department of Mineralogy of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Bob has been active in the association for many years, and served as secretary in 1973. However, his greatest contribution was serving as subscription manager for eight years, from 1975 to 1983. At the beginning of this period, the business office of the association was being moved from Ottawa to Toronto, and Bob's involvement in this move was substantial. His work load increased once everything was moved into the Royal Ontario Museum, where he supervised the work of the association's single assistant, known to Bob as Mrs. MAC. One staff person was, however, entirely insufficient for the amount of work involved; consequently, Bob undertook much of it himself. Remember, this was in the time before computers took over much of the workload. Thus Bob worked under fairly primitive conditions relative to today's standards. Each mailing of the journal was, as described by Joe Mandarino, "a nightmare". Envelopes had to be sent through an antiquated addressograph machine, which apparently had its own agenda and personality. When envelopes were ready and the mountainous pile of cartons of the journal arrived from the printer, Bob would round up the entire staff of the Department of Mineralogy, and everyone would spend many "happy" hours stuffing and sealing envelopes. Subsequently, everything had to be personally transported by the subscription manager over to the post office. One very important change that occurred at this time was the switching over to second class mail for the journal. This pleased the executive of the association, as it saved a great deal of money, although establishing the process was initially a lot of hard work for the subscription manager. Between journal mailings, Bob was not allowed to be idle because there were always large amounts of outgoing mail to be dealt with. Orders for short course volumes were received daily and, because of Bob's dedication, processed rapidly. The sight of Bob dragging a couple of mail sacks to the nearest post box was a familiar sight at ROM almost every day. Bob coined the term "MAC-PAC" to describe these. Thus Bob, as a beast of burden, literally "carried out" the association's work. Throughout this period, Bob gave freely of his time and energy for only

one reason, to serve the Mineralogical Association, and for this we heartily thank him.

Bob has also well served the science of mineralogy, and indirectly the association, in his position as assistant curator at ROM, where he has provided services to the public in planning the new earth sciences gallery, supervising the gem collection, and in popularizing mineralogy by speaking to diverse amateur gem and mineral associations. These are valuable activities, which eventually may bear fruit with the introduction of new members to the association or provide the inspiration for young people to become professional mineralogists. Bob's academic and promotional activities have been recognized by the honour of having a mineral named after him, surely the most fitting epitaph for all mineralogists!

In conclusion, in recognition of your unselfish dedication to serving the members of the association, it gives me exceptional pleasure to present you with the Leonard G. Berry Medal for 1995. Thank you and congratulations!

Roger H. Mitchell, Vice-President

*Mr. President, Fellow members of MAC,
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Earlier this year, President Wicks asked me take a telephone call in his office – a most mysterious request, as the ROM lets me actually have a phone of my own. Well, it was Dr. Roger Mitchell, Chairman of the Berry Committee, calling to congratulate me on being the 1995 Berry Medalist. I was so stunned that I did not know what to say, and I sincerely hope that I did not insult him with my lack of a suitable response. I hope that I can now make it up to him by saying that I was overwhelmed that the Association has seen fit to award me this recognition. When I looked up the previous Berry Medalists, I realized that I am joining an amazing group of people, all of whom I know well, and have admired for most of my career. As the ninth Berry Medalist, I feel that my contribution to the Association pales somewhat beside the other eight: Ann Sabina, Treasurer for 27 years; Louis Cabri and John Jambor, editors of *The Canadian Mineralogist* for many years; Dick Alcock, whose wisdom placed the



ROBERT I. GAIT

Association on a solid financial footing; Joe Mandarino, my senior at the Royal Ontario Museum, the man who hired me, and became by mentor and friend; Guy Perrault, who taught me all my French (*mesdames et messieurs, merci beaucoup!*); Les Nuffield; who was Professor of Mineralogy at the University of Toronto when I joined the ROM, whose excellent book on X-ray diffraction enabled me to reach reciprocal space (albeit for a short time), and last, but really the first, Ron Graham, the first Berry Medalist, who guided me through the machinations of the MAC Council meetings, when I was Secretary and Subscription Manager, and taught me a lot of mineralogy in between. What a group of exceptional people to have as friends!

When I undertook the job of Subscription Manager in 1975, I had no idea of what I was getting myself into. It sounded nice and simple; my dear colleague Dr. Don Harris said that there was “nothing to it” – just stamp out of few labels now and again, and drop the journal into the mail. Well, the horror started when I drove the old ROM truck to Ottawa to relieve CANMET of the MAC Subscription Office and all its paraphernalia. It filled the whole truck and then some. Most of the truck was occupied by a metal monster known as an addressograph. This was a vile beast of antique

character designed to torture its operator, physically and mentally. In the end, however, I won, because the new Subscription Office switched over the modern world of computerized mailing lists, and the joy of sledge-hammering that monster to death and sending it to the scrap heap was beyond belief.

Four times per year, a telephone call would come from the editor or the printer, or both, to announce that “the next issue was on its way”. This meant that two thousand copies of *The Canadian Mineralogist*, half a tonne or so, would soon arrive at the ROM, and we would have to muster all the staff, and sometimes even Dr. Mandarino's kids, to help stuff the envelopes and lick them shut. Once done, they were packed into canvas mail bags and, with the old truck dragging its tail along the road, they would be hauled to the nearest postal station for distribution throughout the world. This was the quarterly high point for the Subscription Manager, who now knew that he had been able to spread mineralogical information to hundreds of libraries and individuals everywhere, and would not have to do it again for another three months.

During the rest of the year, the Subscription Manager's job was to keep the records up to date as to who had paid their dues and who had not. Sounds simple! But actually an enormous bugbear. Students would join for a year then quit. Members in foreign lands would claim that their issue had been eaten by a yak in order to get an extra one for a friend. People would pay twice for one year, or once for two years – the variations were endless. Once or twice a week, in rain or shine, ice or snow, I could be seen lugging a 50 pound (22 kg) sack of mail over my shoulder for delivery at the local Bloor Street post office. We could only load up 50 pounds of mail in each sack, as the post office staff refused anything heavier.

The MAC office also handled all the requests for back issues and short courses. There were hundreds and hundreds of them stacked in every nook and cranny of the Museum, some may even be still there in some lost space behind the mummies or the dinosaurs. Once or twice we had a “fire sale”, when we offered almost complete sets of back issues *free* for the price of postage, plus physiotherapy for the Subscription Manager. Finally, even though we had managed to dispose of huge amounts of back issues, space became critical at the ROM, so MAC rented a small office in the basement of the Britannia Building just across the road on Bloor Street. I take this opportunity of thanking the Royal Ontario Museum for its patience and consideration in allowing MAC to occupy part of the Mineralogy Department for so many years. By this time, my life became a little easier, as the MAC saw fit to employ an assistant to help me with the day-to-day running of the Subscription Office. I was fortunate

indeed to be able to employ Mrs. Donna MacComb, and she now had to wrestle with the addressograph and keep the records for members paid and unpaid. Mrs. MacComb did a fabulous job, and I thank her for her efficiency and humour, especially as she had to work in a dingy basement where you could not even jump out of the window when the going got tough. However, I still had to slog to the post office with sacks of mail on my back; luckily it was not as far this time.

Throughout all this I was responsible to MAC Treasurer, Ann Sabina, who was always cool, collected, completely unflappable, and a joy to work with. I could never have survived without her help and encouragement.

Then the Post Office dreamed up postal codes, and required that the outgoing mail be pre-sorted by postal districts and codes. This was totally contrary to our system, where the address list was alphabetically arranged by membership category, life, ordinary, student, and corporate. Thus, at every mailing, each group had to be re-sorted into postal code units. And of course MAC still had to pay the postage for this privilege. Toronto's giant postal gateway is on Eastern Avenue, and I hated that place. Even calling it a "gateway" was an irritating pun. Fortunately for me, just prior to my nervous breakdown (just kidding!), MAC decided that the archaic system we were using could be transformed into the 20th Century with the use of a computer. The Mandarino family took the Subscription Office off my back into the privacy of their home on Moore Avenue. Soon after that, I killed the addressograph and returned to a normal, happy life.

The Subscription Office is now in Nepean, Ontario, in the capable hands of Mr. and Mrs. MAC, Bob and Fran Pinard, who had already had a lot of experience with the Subscription Office prior to 1975.

I am deeply honoured to receive the Leonard G. Berry Medal, and I feel very humble in the light of the much greater contributions made to the Association by the other recipients. However, I am also very proud to be one of the medalists, and to honour in this way, the memory of Leonard Berry. I knew Len in the early part of my career at the ROM when he was on the ROM Board of Trustees. On his monthly visits to Toronto, he would always pay a short visit to the Mineralogy Department before returning to Kingston. Berry & Mason and Mason & Berry are still the neatest textbooks in mineralogy and are frequently used at the ROM.

In conclusion, I have so many people to thank that I do not know where to begin. Ann Sabina, Louis Cabri, John Jambor, Bob and Fran Pinard, Joe Mandarino, Donna MacComb, the ROM, all my colleagues past and present at ROM (who were roped into forced labour for the quarterly stuffing and packing sessions), and of course, our dear old faithful ROM truck, now retired to the great truck stop in the sky, for carrying far more MAC stuff than any truck should be expected to do.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you and the Association for this signal honour.

Robert I. Gait
