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Degree: When, where, what, and what in?

I received my PhD in 1985 in marine geology and geophysics from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. I studied the origins of different types of plate boundaries, both convergent and divergent. It was fascinating to ask "why and when does deformation, fracture, and ultimately a convergent plate boundary occur?"

Did you stay in academia at all, and if so, for how long?

I don't think I had expectations about any career direction (let alone academia) or even aspirations, except for the fact that I wanted to enjoy the process. For example, at UC Davis where I completed my BS degree in 1978, I enjoyed math and science, and the *application* of those tools. I knew more about what I DIDN'T want to do—I didn't want to do a pure degree in physics or math, for example. Rather, I wanted to *apply* those tools. So, an offer to do further study as a graduate student at Lamont allowed me to build on those tools and extend them

to the natural environment. For me, it was a perfect mix (I loved the outdoors) and an honor to have the opportunity. Furthermore, being funded for graduate work and being based in New York City seemed too good to be true. The next six years of education in life and geology far exceeded my expectations. I believe it's important as a young graduate student to achieve a considered balance between study, exercise, and growing new friendships that will be with you for the rest of your life.

After completing my PhD, an oil company job was the obvious pathway for someone with my background and interests (i.e., practical application of geophysical tools). Despite a number of offers in Houston where I could have shared some lovely times with some very good friends, I was, for some reason, attracted to a fascinating research group in Melbourne, Australia, where I was offered a research fellowship at Melbourne University (Geology Department). From memory, the salary (\$18,000/year) was about one-third of what the companies were offering. I was single at the time and looking for that magical combination of intellectual, spiritual, and social challenge.

In 1987, after the two years as a Research Fellow in Melbourne, I thought maybe *now* I should go into an oil company, but decided instead to form a business providing services *to* the oil industry. Happily, I did indeed finally get to see my good friends in Houston on a regular basis as we sold services around the world.

We set up Geotrack International in 1987, based on novel fission track technology out of Melbourne University, and ultimately sold our laboratory-based services to all the major multinational and state oil companies around the globe. Starting your own business with an equally enthusiastic team is a wonderful opportunity, albeit risky. I have always been grateful to have met the people and the technology that allowed us to create a whole new market need in the international exploration sector. On reflection, I now see these scary risk-taking decisions as part of my DNA. I am fortunate that, in most cases, these decision points have led to immense fulfillment and personal growth. Fifteen years later when the business was doing well, traveling around the globe was no longer a buzz, and my two children were young, so my eye started wandering, with a view to the next adventure. As always, I was fortunate that my husband Glenn Duddy was tireless in his support of my pursuits and my questions about what life was meant to bring.

What is your current job? What path did you take to get there?

At about 47 years of age, this soul searching led to an offer to serve as Managing Director/CEO of Sienna Cancer Diagnostics in Melbourne, which I took up in late 2004. Sienna is a publicly owned biotech company, specializing in novel ways to detect cancer using noninvasive means (the PSA test for men is an example of such a test).

I had searched systematically for a role that fit the nexus of high technology, business, and community. I spoke to a lot of people, using and growing my network, trying to figure out what I wanted in my next career. I treated the exercise as a homework assignment, and had confidence (sometimes wavering) that I would succeed in finding something. I had come from a global high-technology marketing experience, so I thought I could extend that skill set to a community-based focus. Cancer seemed to fit the criteria, and technology challenges in the biotech space naturally appealed.

While the shift from oil and gas exploration to developing novel cancer diagnostic tests may seem fanciful, there are meaningful common denominators that not only facilitated the transition but also added value in my new setting. Knowing how to work with academics, identifying commercial opportunities, ensuring a vision of global application, and working with top people are key elements to any project or company, regardless of the sector.

What did your oceanographic education (or academic career) give you that is useful in your current job?

It is difficult for me to separate the superb academic education received at Lamont from the personal growth that necessarily occurred in parallel. A young immature girl (22 years old, from Pasadena, California) leaves Lamont six years later with more far more than a PhD. Without question, the education that I received has been a platform for other, seemingly unrelated, achievements that followed. My education gave me confidence, an understanding of hard work, enduring friendships, and appreciation of strong leadership. While the discussions these days around my office are about titration curves (showing responses to certain biomarkers), I can still contribute dangerously to strategic discussions about error analysis, trends, and next experimental steps. The detail and rigor that Lamont students are expected to follow in specific projects provides a foundation that allows you to come in at a higher level in later years and assess the strategic value of a piece of technical work. If you don't have that educational foundation, it will be hard to do anything else but pretend to add value in those settings.

Is the job satisfying? What aspects of the job do you like best/least?

Very satisfying because it is very challenging. What I like best is the teamwork. When we work hard and succeed on even a small challenge, it is enormously satisfying to see the joy it brings to the people around me and ultimately to value to shareholders.

Do you have any recommendations for new grads looking for jobs?

Be careful what you hope for, and let serendipity play its role. More specifically, try your best to enjoy every aspect of your graduate training, and that includes study, developing your network, and trying things outside those activities directly required for your degree. The more activities you try, the more clarity you will have in identifying what you may like to in the future. Do the best you can in your job and be mindful that it may be only one of five to six transitions that you will make in your life. There are no rules—no more gold watches. Let your friendships and your health be the common denominator that gives meaning to those transitions. ☞