Member Spotlight

A monthly highlight featuring an ASEG member. All past member spotlights can be found in our newsletter archive.

We welcome **Katarina Van Der Haar** under the spotlight in this issue as she shares her enlightening story!

Katarina is not a stranger to ASEG as she currently serves as an Assistant Federal Treasurer for ASEG. Katarina is also a Reservoir Engineering Consultant at RISC Advisory.

Professionally, I am a petroleum engineer, but I have also studied geology and geophysics. I liked Geophysics because it combined physics with rocks, and I thought it was novel and clever. I believe giving back to the broader industry is essential, and that's why I am the Assistant Federal Treasurer for ASEG. The professional societies that disseminate industry knowledge and connect professionals comprise many volunteers. I have benefitted so much from them, so I pay it forward and give my bit.

1. ***Let us know who you are and what you do.***

   As a Petroleum Engineer, my most recent experience is as a consultant providing technical analysis and advice on oil and gas assets worldwide. I have also worked for two major oil and gas companies. I hold a degree in geology and geophysics, and I think geophysics is quite interesting. Although I don't work in geophysics, I still like rocks and appreciate the sciences that bring us insight into our earth.

2. ***For how long have you been working in the industry?***

   If I include the early days: I started working as a roughneck on drilling rigs in 2010.

3. ***What are your thoughts on job-hopping, and is it something that can be planned?***

   Sometimes you need to change jobs, and sometimes you want to. It is generally not a good idea to keep changing jobs because it doesn't reflect well. Future employers might think, "Why would I employ you if you leave quickly anyway?". But if you change jobs a lot, you will have more experience than someone who always stayed with the same company. Just like with everything else, there is a risk and a reward. Also, some positions consist mainly of temporary contracts, so job-hopping is unavoidable. Generally, if you are unhappy in your role or are treated poorly, you should never worry about how things look on a CV.

4. ***Do you foresee your next career move?***

   Some things are out of your control. And if you are in a situation where you need the money, you do whatever is necessary to make money. You can be more selective if money is not the #1 priority. I look at my next move from several angles: what makes sense in a traditional career progression and what is the next stepping stone of where I see myself going.

5. ***From your past professional experiences, which transferrable skills do you value the most?***

   Knowing how groups of men function, which I have learned from my time on the drilling rigs.

6. ***What are your most significant strengths, and where do you attain them?***

   I think we all have one thing that we are incredibly good at and do effortlessly. I think it is actually a personality trait or a talent and has little to do with what we have learned throughout our career.

7. ***What is one thing you wish someone had told you when you were at university?***

   None of the charts in the textbooks represent reality. The reality is scattered and consists mostly of erroneous, unusable data points. During my role as a petroleum engineering consultant, incomplete data is the norm. One has to deal with uncertainty, which can be frustrating but also interesting.

8. ***What challenges have you overcome, and how did you do so?***

   I strongly believe in doing something in your life that is hard. It brings about timeless, unwavering confidence in your abilities. I worked on drilling rigs as a roughneck (rig hand) for four years. It is challenging work, and it pushes you to your limits. The only way to get through it is to believe in your strength and ability to do anything.

9. ***What inspires or guides you throughout your career?***

   I have always made an effort to ask more senior people about their views and advice. This has been incredibly useful in seeing the different career options and in hearing about other things that need consideration.

10. ***Given a choice, would you prefer extra mentoring on the science, your career or how to handle/explain exploration geophysics and its benefits to the community?***

    I would choose extra mentoring for my career as I think if one keeps a curious and open mind, reads and asks many questions, the technical knowledge will come about inadvertently. What doesn't necessarily come on its own is a successful career. Of course, there are differences in the meaning of success. But to me, the majority of success comes from fruitful relationships with the people we work with. I find that the complex yet interesting part is the maze of people, opinions and expectations we need to navigate in our careers.

11. Who do you look up to as an idol?

I have the utmost respect for the people who sacrificed their freedom to inform the public about unethical government and company actions. Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning

12. What is one thing that we wouldn't know about you?

My mother tongue is German, and I have a degree in Arabic.

13. What do you do in your spare time?

I like to hike mainly in the Perth hills, but I managed to make it to the Dolomites in Italy last year. And I recently started sailing and being part of the sailing crew for sailing races.

Hiking the Dolomites in Italy.

14. Which book are you reading right now?

"Predictably irrational" by Dan Ariely. It is an eye-opening account of how irrational our decision-making truly is.

15. How could the ASEG inform the public about geophysics and its benefits to everyday life?

I think we should be relatable and talk about the things people like. This would be through demonstrating the use of geophysics in archaeology or mining for alumina/aluminium or mining for diamonds and gemstones.

16. What do you think the future of geophysics will be like?

I think the future will be bright. The world's population is rising, and more people are escaping poverty, which is excellent. So many resources must be explored and developed to create the products essential for human living. Geophysicists will play a significant role in this, and I don't think that -in our lifetime- AI will replace a lot of the work. There is just too much scatter in the data to teach AI to make the right decisions. Human geophysicists will be needed for quite some time.

17. In your opinion, what do you think is shaping the future of geoscience careers in Australia?

I think the Australian government plays a large role in making exploration activities attractive for companies.This means, reducing red tape and potentially providing tax incentives. If it is difficult for companies to explore here, they will just do it elsewhere, and the jobs will go with it.