



# The Conquest of Copper Mountain: A Vivid, Personal Account of the Discovery and Development of a Spectacular Outcrop of Ore in the Remote Peaks of Irian Jaya, Indonesia

*By Forbes Wilson*

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'The Conquest of Copper Mountain' is the dramatic story of a geologist's dream come true: the discovery and subsequent development of the largest outcrop of base metal in the world.

In 1960, Forbes Wilson, in charge of a worldwide mineral exploration program for Freeport Minerals Company, masterminded an overland expedition into the rugged and remote peaks of Irian Jaya (then Western New Guinea), Indonesia. His objective was to locate a unique geologic feature - a huge black knob of ore known as the Ertsberg, first sighted by a small group of Dutch climbers some 24 years before.

In touch with the outside world only by primitive jungle radio and the occasional parachute delivery of supplies, Forbes Wilson and his party trekked for 17 days across almost inaccessible terrain to an altitude of 12,000 feet, a journey that took the gifted geologist to the limits of human endurance and revealed to him an unforgettable country whose extraordinary landscape, exotic vegetation and simple tribal society he records here in vivid detail. The results of his expedition were exhilarating: measured and sampled, the Ertsberg proved to be the world's largest above-ground outcrop of copper ore.

Wilson's vision and determination brought Freeport back to Indonesia in 1967. A 63-mile access road was carved through the middle of two mountains; the world's largest tramways were built and longest slurry pipeline assembled-in what the trade press called 'Freeport's Mission Impossible' the company succeeded, in five years, in bringing a sophisticated mining operation to the totally isolated Indonesian highlands, and in drawing together the civilizations of the Far East and West.

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