

Oilweek's Rising Stars 2008

With our inaugural Rising Stars selections, we shine a light on Canada's next oil and gas leaders

■ The Canadian oil and gas industry has its bright stars. They're the visionary men and women who have built this industry from the ground up, and who continue to lead it in a time of profound change and against monumental financial, socio-economic, and environmental pressures.

We all know who Canada's oil and gas shining stars are. But few of us have heard of this industry's next phalanx of leaders, those Rising Stars who one day will take their place as industry icons.

These future stars are growing in brilliance in all sectors of the industry. They are in the research labs, solving problems that have plagued the industry for years. They are in the machine shops, creating new tools for finding, for producing, for processing our ever-dwindling supplies of oil and natural gas. They are in our cities, creating new ways to finance this, our plant's most capital-intensive of endeavours. And they are in our towns, going out of their way to create special places to live, work, and play for their employees, for the families of their employees, indeed for all who live within their own little patch of the patch.

For the most part, however, these future stars toil in obscurity. They may be stars in their own company, or in their own town, but to the rest of us they are unknown. Until now.

With this, *Oilweek's* inaugural class of Rising Stars, we hope to shine a light on the industry's best and brightest, and to showcase the depth of talent that exists within the industry.

These 20 stars—all under the age of 45—were selected from nominations received over several months last fall. They were chosen based on their professional achievements and on the impact they make, not only within their own company, but within their community. Keep an eye on these people—they are our industry's Rising Stars.

Photography by Joey Podlubny



George Gosbee

CALGARY, AB

Founder and Chairman, Tristone Capital Inc.

As it's applied to George Gosbee, founder and chairman of investment banker Tristone Capital, Rising Star might be something of a misnomer: George is already high in the firmament, heading up one of the top investment banks in the world at the ripe old age of 38.

George founded Tristone in 2000, based on the philosophy that firms advising the oil and gas industry need to be as knowledgeable about that industry as its clients. His creation matches financial expertise with technical expertise, and Tristone has since grown to be one of the premier independent energy advisory firms in the world, offering full investment banking services for its clients from offices in four countries.

A 16-year veteran of the financial community, Gosbee began his career at Nesbitt Thomson and continued with his interest in the industry by obtaining his commerce degree from the University of Calgary. Prior to founding Tristone, George was managing director of Newcrest Capital Inc. for three years, and before that he spent five years with Peters & Co. Limited, where he was a managing director and first crossed paths with Marshall Abbott, at the time a vice-president at Stampeder Exploration Ltd. and now the chairman and chief executive officer of Sabretooth Energy.

FAST FACTS

Born: Aug. 30, 1969

Education: B.Comm. (finance and petroleum land management), University of Calgary

Family: Married to Karen, sons John (13) and Carter (10), daughter Isla (6)

"He took us on the road to investor road shows, and when I started another company, Equatorial Energy Inc., he did the same, promoting the company and telling our story," Abbott says.

A signature event for Abbott and his relationship with Gosbee and Tristone came late in 2001, only a few weeks after the events of Sept. 11 virtually closed down the American investment community. Still, George succeeded in raising \$23 million for Cougar Hydrocarbons Inc., a private company that Abbott launched earlier that year.

"For George to raise \$23 million—the largest blind pool ever at the time—just weeks after 9-11 was pretty amazing, and showed me that he was a level above everyone else when it came to knowing the markets and knowing his clients."

That knowledge caught the eye of Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach, who earlier this year hand-picked George to oversee, as vice-chairman, the creation of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, a new provincial crown corporation charged with managing the province's \$70 billion in assets.

George is also chairman of the board for the Alberta College of Art + Design and holds board positions with Calgary's Edge School, the Alberta Economic Development Authority, and the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta.

In 2007, while a member of the Cross Conservation Foundation's board of directors (chaired by Marshall Abbott), George chaired the foundation's annual Cuisine Gala, which raised more than \$700,000. He followed that up in March 2007 by chairing the Edge School's Legacy Dinner, raising \$400,000 for educational scholarships. And Tristone's Global Give Back Program annually donates time and resources from each Tristone office to the local community.

It is that energy and passion—for both work and the community—that has helped George rise to the top of his profession.

"George is on the road eight days a week, but he still has time for the little guys and the little organizations, and I will always have time for him," Abbott says. "He's left the board now because of time commitments, but the momentum he created has continued." ★



Darrell Nimchuk CALGARY, AB

Vice-President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, Flexpipe Systems Inc.

As vice-president of finance and chief financial officer of Flexpipe Systems, 38-year-old Darrell Nimchuk holds a position of authority and responsibility in a fast-growing pipe manufacturing company.

Flexpipe designs and produces high-pressure, corrosion-resistant, coiled, continuous pipe. The product, which involves a patented, triple-layered design, is manufactured in the company's headquarters in Calgary.

Darrell's ten-year rise in the industry began in 1997 with the receipt of his Certified Management Accountant designation. The program involves passing the management association's Strategic Leadership Program—early training that has served him well.

Before joining Flexpipe, Darrell worked for Inuvialuit Environmental and Geotechnical Inc. When he decided to join Flexpipe in 2002, it was a fledgling company barely out of the concept stage. As director of communications for Certified Management Accountants of Alberta, Shannon Pestun relates that when Darrell joined Flexpipe, "the business was still deciding what its logo should look like."

Darrell started in the position of controller and was quickly promoted to vice-president of finance and chief financial officer.

It turned out that his gut feeling about the company's potential proved to be correct: Flexpipe was destined to burst out of the gates and win a solid place among its peers in the service sector.

For example, in the last two years, the company has won several accolades including: 2006 Regional Industrial Research Assistance Program Award, 2006 Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Innovative Business of the Year Award, and recognition by *Alberta Venture* as one of Alberta's 25 fastest growing firms worth over \$25 million.

The company made its first commercial sale a year after Darrell joined. During the next six years, he built its accounting division from a one-person operation to a team of ten, along the way establishing progressive accounting standards and helping the company grow annual sales to \$70 million.

FAST FACTS

Born: March 6, 1970

Education: Certified Management Accountant, 1997;
M.B.A. (finance), Athabasca University, 2007

Family: One of Calgary's most eligible bachelors

In 2007, Darrell added to his qualifications by obtaining his M.B.A. from the University of Athabasca, with a specialization in finance. Flexpipe president and chief executive officer Regan Davis says, "He completed an M.B.A. while working at Flexpipe in a very demanding role." Regan, who has known Darrell for five and a half years, describes Darrell as "confident, tenacious, and aggressive—very aggressive."

Although peers consider Darrell ambitious and demanding, he values his employees and makes sure they know it. He fosters "a learning environment that supports the human spirit," says Pestun. Davis adds, "Darrell has pretty high expectations of his staff, but the team that is with him is very committed, very loyal to him."

Darrell manages his time so that he can also make an impact outside the company.

For example, he currently serves as the chair of the Petroleum Services' Association Finance Committee. He also volunteers with iMPACTsociety, a non-profit association that runs the HEROES mentoring program for disadvantaged youth. And in his spare time he coaches bantam hockey and teaches power skating to kids aged 3 to 12.

Pestun describes Nimchuk as a rising star who has not forgotten his prairie roots. "Though his experience and success speak for themselves," she writes, "what makes Darrell a rising star is his character. Alberta has seen many young executives who have forgotten their roots—where they started, who helped them in their careers, and who their communities are. Darrell is not one of them. I cannot help but be touched by a young professional who doesn't forget that his hard work has been touched a little by luck." ★

Chad Goldade

REDCLIFF, AB

Founder and President, Cantool Industries Inc.

Chad Goldade's success comes to him by virtue of combining the old and the new.

The "new" is the latest technology the owner and president of Cantool Industries outfits his shop with. The diversified, high-tech company repairs, designs, and manufactures products with the aid of computer numerical control equipment, CAD/CAM software, 3-D modelling, and a Laser Scan arm.

Its broad range of services within the oil and gas industry and other sectors, including several patent-pending products, have kept the Redcliff-based company busy during the slowdown, even in this hardest hit region of shallow gas activity. In fact, Cantool, which currently employs 28 people, is staffing up and buying more machines to handle additional work.

The "old" is the traditional values Chad holds in servicing his clients. He goes that extra mile. If he doesn't sell the part, he knows where the clients can get it. If it is a simple part repair, he will do it but will also try to think of a way to make that product better. If it is a complex engineering project, he will work with the client to identify his future needs and potentially solve his other problems.

"Chad's willing to do anything for anybody. It doesn't matter whether it's his best friends or somebody he doesn't know," says Rob Aberle, a middle school teacher at Medicine Hat's Notre Dame Academy who has known Chad since elementary school.

FAST FACTS

Born: March 5, 1980

Education: Business Administration from Medicine Hat College

Family: Married to Shaye, five-month-old baby, Millie

Going the extra mile seems to be a business approach that runs in the Goldade family. His father, Ken, who owns D&D Oilfield Rentals, was instrumental in helping him understand the value of doing more than expected. Mind you, Chad had plenty of time to learn this family lesson. He was assisting his dad on small jobs from the age of six. When he was 14, he started working in the oil patch after school, on weekends, and full-time in the summer.

Going the extra mile has been good for business, but it has also benefited his community. "Anytime you turn on the radio or read the local newspaper, you hear about Chad's business supporting local baseball teams or teams and participants in other sports," Aberle says.

Chad is on the executive board of the Medicine Hat Oilmen's Association. He is active in all the business and industry associations and still finds time to manage the Medicine Hat Hockey Hounds Midget 15s' rep team.

"He's a very hard-working individual that, for as much pressure and stress that he's under, he's the most laid back, easygoing guy you'll see," says Joel Eresman, owner of a Calgary Co-operators insurance agency and friend since high school. "At the end of the day, he comes off as not having a care in the world." ★

"Chad's willing to do anything for anybody. It doesn't matter whether it's his best friends or somebody he doesn't know."

— Rob Aberle, middle school teacher,
Medicine Hat's Notre Dame Academy





Jennifer Adams CALGARY, AB

*President and Chief Executive Officer, Gushor Inc.,
and PhD candidate, University of Calgary*

The scientific community often doesn't see the forest for the trees. Many scientists write brilliant papers on narrow fields of research but have little idea of how they connect to other disciplines and even less so of how their findings might translate into practical, real-world application.

In this divided terrain, it becomes apparent why a scientist with a gift for opening channels of communication and integrating data from various disciplines would become as celebrated as Jennifer Adams.

In 2004, even as a PhD student working under Professor Steven Larter at the University of Calgary, Jennifer was named as one of Canada's top 25 young bright minds by *Maclean's* for her PhD work on computer simulations to unlock the secrets of the microbes that turn oil into tar.

Now, as president and chief executive officer of Gushor, a reservoir simulation and fluid property characterization company spun off during her PhD studies, Jennifer has propelled the company of eight full-time employees to profitability, with a revenue of \$1.2 million in its first year of activity.

"Jennifer has actually integrated a lot of reservoir geoscience and reservoir engineering that people have been talking about for years," says Larter, her PhD supervisor and chief scientist for Gushor. "She's managed also to persuade the oil and gas industry to start doing some things that were thought [to be] pretty esoteric just a number of years ago, but that are [now] very useful."

Jennifer's other professional achievements—the scholarships, her conference contributions, her published papers, her six patents, the commercial software packages she has created, her leadership in scientific education, her current position as chair of the Geofluids Technical Division of the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists—could take up the rest of this profile.

But there is a common thread to the life of this daughter of a biomedical engineer and granddaughter of a prominent geologist. It stems from what she says her father taught her: part of being a scientist is being able to share.

FAST FACTS

Born: July 18, 1974

Education: B.Sc. (honours in geology), University of Waterloo; M.Sc. in Hydrogeology, University of Alberta; PhD, University of Calgary, Petroleum Reservoir Group (completing her PhD this spring/summer)

It is a lesson she seems to hold close to her heart. Gushor reflects this principle by sharing scientific research and explaining what it actually means to the petroleum industry.

Her drive to mediate and bring together different groups and different disciplines is spun of the same thread. On an emotional level, it fuels her "extreme generosity and helpfulness," as Larter puts it. On an even deeper level, it may even shape her spirituality, which she says is most important to her.

"As a part of an Anglican parish, I often write poetic prayers that I read at service," she admits somewhat sheepishly.

Think of it as an even higher-level work of synthesis—bringing together mind, body, and soul, converting data into meaning, seeing the forest through the trees. ★

"Jennifer has actually integrated a lot of reservoir geoscience and reservoir engineering that people have been talking about for years."

— Steven Larter, PhD supervisor; chief scientist, Gushor Inc.



Darcy Miller

BARRHEAD, AB

President, All Around Oilfield Services

The western Canadian oil patch is sprinkled with hundreds of success stories, but too often, the only ones that come to light are the big-dollar success stories: multi-million-dollar deals that put Canadian expertise on the world stage; wildly successful chief executive officers with pay packages that would rival the gross national products of many third-world countries.

Not too often do we hear of the classic success story: hometown boy makes good. But in Barrhead, a bustling agricultural and service town northwest of Edmonton, Darcy Miller has fashioned his own hometown success story, as president and owner of All Around Oilfield Services.

Back in the spring of 1998, Darcy and a high school buddy, Brian MacGillivray, were casting about for a way to get off the road and closer to home—Darcy had been working as a safety advisor in the oilfields around Swan Hills, an hour north of Barrhead, since graduating from high school a few years earlier.

Their combined assets included a little cash, a new pressure truck, and an aging Peterbilt tank truck bought from a dealership in Saskatchewan. That was enough, though, to get started, and soon All Around was working the oil fields around Barrhead, hauling water to the rigs and coalbed methane wells in the area and bringing waste water back for disposal. The company also does a little dirt and excavation work, some minor wellhead maintenance, and a skiff of chemical cleaning work.

Four years later, as the business began to expand, Darcy bought out Brian—who went on to start his own agricultural services firm—and three years ago, Darcy's younger brother Mike bought a stake in the firm. Darcy and a second brother—Kevin—are partners in an affiliated heavy equipment rental firm, while their sister Lorraine acts as safety coordinator for both companies. Their mother helps keep the shop in top shape—"She comes around about once a week just to make sure everything is running right," Mike says—while a nephew cleans up the shop after school.

In just 10 years, All Around has grown into a 17-employee operation, while Darcy's fleet has expanded to more than 50 units, ranging from trucks and trailers to cats, backhoes, graders, and skid steer loaders. And he still has the two trucks he began the business with.

FAST FACTS

Born: May 15, 1967

Education: Graduated from high school in Barrhead

Family: Married Jackie, his high school sweetheart, in 1987

"That truck, she's just like a good rodeo bull—we put her to work two or three weeks out of the year, usually in the spring, but the rest of the time she just relaxes out in the yard," Mike says. "She'll always be with us."

The rodeo metaphor is an apt one for Darcy, Mike says. Back in the early 1990s, Darcy caught the rodeo bug, and now, from April till September, he's going down the road to local rodeos around western Canada, as a steer wrestler and occasional team roper.

"He was late getting into it, but he's not slowing down any as he gets older," Mike says. "In fact, the local rodeo has a roping event for those 40 and over—Viagra Roping they call it—and Darcy's pretty excited that this year he can go in that event."

All Around donates extensively to local rodeos throughout Alberta, and is a major sponsor each summer of the local Barrhead rodeo, while Darcy sits on the board of directors of the Wildrose Rodeo Association. ★

"That truck, she's just like a good rodeo bull."

— Mike Miller, brother

Tony Loria

CALGARY, AB

Head of Investment Banking, Genuity Capital Markets

While teaching in Thailand, Tyler Wilson took a friend to the top of his apartment building for a panoramic view of Bangkok. That was where Tyler lost his footing and fell from a two-storey elevator shaft, striking his head on a concrete roof nearly five metres below. The fall and the subsequent emergency brain surgery at Thailand's Bumrungrad International Hospital left him in a coma for ten days. When he awoke, he faced a lengthy and difficult recovery and a \$100,000 medical bill.

Tony Loria and his wife Carmel are friends of the Wilson family, so they didn't hesitate to help out in any way they could. For Tony, this involved taking a lead role in organizing a series of fundraisers to raise the money to cover the family's foreign medical expenses and even making a contribution to the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre in Calgary.

"He didn't think twice about helping the Wilson family," says James Heaps, a colleague at Genuity Capital Markets. "In fact, he was even more driven than normal to make sure that Tyler was taken care of."

FAST FACTS

Born: December 28, 1970

Education: BA (economics), University of Calgary

Family: Married to Carmel, daughters Sofia (3) and Fira (9 months)

The oil and gas investment banking industry is full of long hours and personal sacrifice. The field is rife with stories of men in their thirties who give their career their all at the expense of their marriages or families. Tony's story is less common. What makes him a bit of an anomaly is his unwritten policy: when it comes to family, put everything else on hold.

"Family is the number one thing for Tony," Heaps says. "It's a given that you need to work long hours in this business, but if you need any kind of personal time, it takes priority over everything else. It's something he tells us and he practises it himself."

And yet, people who know him say a word that characterizes Tony is "driven." His professional star burns as bright as any leader in the oil and gas community despite his insistence on a work-life balance.

Tony first emerged on the investment banking scene in 2004, first as chief financial officer for numerous companies in ARC Financial Corporation's portfolio, and then as a founding partner and vice-president of investment banking for Lightyear Capital Inc., an independent institutional investment dealer.

In 2005, he joined MGI Securities, a virtual unknown in the sector, as managing director, where he built the investment banking team from scratch. Rather than look for financial experience in prospective team members, however, he went hunting for those with practical and technical expertise in the energy sector that could then be applied to the investment banking field.

In just two years, MGI fronted deals worth more than \$1 billion, and Tony's star was on the rise. In 2007, he joined Genuity as head of investment banking, and has accelerated the pace he set at MGI: in just his first year, Tony and his team are on track to book more than \$1 billion in syndicated financings.

His style of leadership is that of a coach to a player. It comes naturally to him from his years as a university football team captain. Then at the age of 22, he started coaching at the university level.

"I was young enough to be one of the guys, yet I had to be their coach," he explains. His situation now at Genuity is not much different. "They challenge me. I challenge them. I'm a very flatline leader." ★

"Family is the number one thing for Tony."

— James Heaps, colleague, Genuity Capital Markets





Jeremy Cheyne

CALGARY, AB

*Chief Financial Officer, Vice-President of Finance and CFO,
Black Goose Holdings Inc.*

Sports performance and business performance often correlate. The whole team-building thing and the pile of sports terms that make up so much of business lexicon attest to a common lineage. But in Jeremy Cheyne's case, it is his high level of success in both sports and business that sets him apart.

At just 27 years of age, Jeremy has completed an executive MBA program (his convocation was last March). As chief financial officer for Black Goose Holdings Inc., a privately held Calgary exploration and land acquisition company, Jeremy has played a key role in putting the start-up on the map.

In just a year, Black Goose has already confirmed 50 billion cubic feet of gas. At a time when practically no company was raising money, it raised \$10 million in one month and now is following up with additional financing of anywhere between \$20 million and \$40 million. In the last six months, its reserves value stood at between \$180 million and \$220 million.

"The team's been unreal," Jeremy says. "Coming from other oil and gas companies where things happen pretty slow, this is like a rollercoaster. I think it's because of the young people. We're all eager and go-getters."

No doubt it is a team effort, but Jeremy is one guy you want on your team. When he made the AAA Midget Buffaloes, the hockey team ended up going to the national championships. The next year in junior hockey, he broke the Alberta Junior Hockey League record for points in the season and was the leading scorer in 2001. On a scholarship to Western Michigan University (a top-10 hockey college) he was nominated Academic Player of the Year two years in a row. He capped off his hockey career playing pro in the East Coast Hockey League and eventually ended up playing in Germany.

"Sports have been a huge help to me," Jeremy says. "The biggest thing is leadership—being able to say things in front of the team."

Speaking with conviction is something that particularly impresses Scott Douglas, director of investor relations for Black Goose. "Whether that's in front of guys 20 or 30 years his senior, Jeremy has no problem standing up for what he thinks is the right decision," he says.

FAST FACTS

Born: July 10, 1980

Education: Degree in accounting from Western Michigan University's Haworth College of Business; M.B.A., University of Calgary

And actually, making the right decisions is also part of Jeremy's skill set. When playing in Europe, he could have decided to stay for another couple of years and maybe break into the NHL. But his strong academics and his knowledge of oil and gas brought him home to a job and eventually an M.B.A. program.

Another key quality to his success is dedication. Angus Jenkins, president and director of Black Goose, points to Jeremy's work ethic and knowledge of financial accounting procedures as exemplary.

Now that Jeremy is finished with school, he has more time and can return to yet another sports passion: lacrosse. After all, he was a professional lacrosse player for the Calgary Roughnecks at one time. These days, he still plays hockey and lacrosse on senior teams and shares his experience by coaching minor lacrosse teams and helping out with a AAA hockey group in southeast Calgary, putting on camps and breaking up skirmishes. He also is dedicated to KidSport Foundation, a nonprofit group that introduces underprivileged children to sports.

When the workday is done, after coaching community sports, what does a young guy with energy to burn do? He stays active, of course, and runs his two dogs he got from the Animal Rescue Foundation—a husky cross and a Labrador cross. ★



John Schadan CALGARY, AB

Vice-President of Domestic Business Development, SNC-Lavalin

A decade ago, as civil engineering icon, SNC-Lavalin was kicking around the bitumen development ball along with just about every other engineering firm in the book, a decision was made to focus on the mining aspect of the sector.

Reckoning that coal was a “pretty good” precursor to bitumen, SNC-Lavalin lured John Schadan away from the coal mining industry in 1999 and plunked him in the Calgary office in a business development capacity, where he could quickly learn the ropes of the oil and gas business.

“That worked out so well, and he displayed such energy and drive, that we thought it might good for him to broaden his experience by spending some time in the Edmonton office,” says Harry Sambells, SNC-Lavalin’s senior vice-president and general manager. “There, he would be working on his own and reporting to the general manager of our Edmonton office.”

As director of business development in Edmonton, John was basically filling a project operations role, overseeing the day-to-day execution of projects in the pipeline and facilities sector, as well as some oilsands sector work, Sambells says.

After a few years in Edmonton, John returned to Calgary to help out with business development, and in 2007 was named vice-president of domestic business development, with a focus on what SNC likes to call “mineable” energy projects and in situ bitumen developments.

“But that’s not all,” Sambells says. “He’s also been strong on our full suite of services, has excellent people skills, [and] excellent management skills.”

John also has a rare ability to look ahead, identify new trends before they’re apparent to others, and help position SNC to take advantage of those trends, Sambells notes.

“Take carbon capture and sequestration. This is a new area for us and he’s taking a leading role in terms of looking at what we can do, where we can go with carbon capture and storage.”

It’s not all serious stuff for John though, says Martin Stoklossa, a project manager in the Edmonton office who nominated John for *Oilweek*’s Rising Stars feature.

FAST FACTS

Born: May 7, 1965

Education: B.Sc. (mining engineering), Queen’s University, 1988

Family: Married to Louise, three children: Cosette (11), 9-year-old twins Sydney (daughter) and Taylor (son)

“He’s well-liked and an extremely hard worker, and he certainly works to empower his team members,” Stoklossa says. “But he also manages to look at the lighter side of things, while still staying professional—he actually injects fun into the workplace.”

John has been a career-long member of the Canadian Institute of Mining (CIM), dating back to his days working in the coal industry, and he continues that commitment to the CIM today, most recently as president of the Edmonton branch during his time there with SNC.

And an even broader commitment is to the United Way, which John has supported for a number of years, both in Calgary and in Edmonton, culminating in his position as a member of the Campaign Cabinet for the 2008 Calgary and Area campaign, which launches in September. ★

“He’s well-liked and an extremely hard worker.”

— Martin Stoklossa, project manager, SNC-Lavalin

Leah Lawrence

CALGARY, AB

Business Development Advisor, EnCana Corp., and Aspiring Politician

Leah first came to *Oilweek's* attention back in 2004, well before we ever had the notion of featuring 20 of western Canada's best and brightest.

Why, you ask? Leah was a fellow publisher who earlier that year had launched *Prairie Peaks News*, an independent news magazine reporting on natural resource development and environmental issues in western Canada. It lasted only five issues, but its balanced coverage of both environmental and social issues put Leah in the sights of many magazine and newspaper publishers.

That was Leah then. Today, she's undergone a complete career makeover. As an integral part of EnCana's business development team, Leah and her colleagues are investigating ways of growing the company's carbon dioxide-enhanced oil recovery business: an area that EnCana has identified as one of key growth in the years to come. "I believe carbon sequestration is key in our efforts to start taking real, tangible action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly," says Leah, ever the visionary, ever the forward thinker.

FAST FACTS

Born: June 3, 1969

Education: B.Eng. (industrial systems engineering), University of Regina; M.B.A. (Economics), University of Calgary

Family: Common-law partner, Chris Biegler

As commendable as that is, however, it's only one of the ingredients in the remarkable Leah Lawrence pie. This spring, Leah ran for a seat in the legislative assembly in the riding of Calgary-Mountain View. Flying the colours of the Progressive Conservative party, Leah fought an admirable battle against the Liberal incumbent in the riding, David Swann. It was arguably the toughest seat to win by the PCs in the province and in the end, Swann emerged as the victor, with 51.5 per cent of the votes cast in that riding, versus Leah's 30.9 per cent. Despite her loss, it was a significant showing for a candidate who, up until then, was a complete newcomer in the political arena.

Asked about her political experience and whether she'd do it again, Leah commented, "Running in, and losing, a provincial election, was my biggest accomplishment to date.... Making a decision about running for politics again shouldn't happen in the first weeks and months after a loss. That being said, running for political office is the most fun I've ever had."

And, as if being a businesswoman and aspiring politician isn't enough, Leah is also a strong supporter of the environment. In 2000, she was one of the founding members of Climate Change Central, the first public-private partnership on climate change in Canada. In recognition of this accomplishment, the following year she was nominated for a Calgary YWCA Women of Distinction Award in the area of science, technology, and the environment.

Today, Leah sits on the board of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, is the chair of the planning/environment committee of the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association, and is a Member of Council for the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA).

And after a tough day at the office (board meeting, political rally, or whatever else she's been up to that day), her and her partner, Chris Biegler, can be seen touring around on their BMW motorbikes to blow off some steam.

Impressed? We were.

Welcome, Leah, to the inaugural class of *Oilweek's* Rising Stars. ★

"Running for political office is the most fun I've ever had."

— Leah Lawrence, business development advisor, EnCana Corp.





Scott Saxberg

CALGARY, AB

Founder and President, Crescent Point Energy Trust

Among the many criteria for *Oilweek's* inaugural search for Rising Stars, perseverance—in the workplace and outside it—was a key consideration. All of our 20 Rising Stars have succeeded in the face of long odds, overcoming obstacles that would have prompted others to throw in the towel.

For Scott Saxberg, defeat has never been an option, whether in the boardroom, where he helps direct—besides his own company, Crescent Point Energy Trust—the fortunes of five other companies, or on the ice, where he competes regularly in an industry hockey league against teams from other producers and service companies.

This ability to win against long odds is most evident in Crescent Point's leadership position in one of Canada's hottest conventional oil plays, the massive—and still growing—Bakkenplay in Saskatchewan.

Scott saw the potential of the Bakken early in the play's development, and staked Crescent Point to a dominant land position even as others were just beginning to explore its potential. Through a combination of land purchases and strategic acquisitions, Crescent Point is now the leading developer in the Bakken, accounting for about 70 per cent of the play's 18,000 barrels per day of production.

FAST FACTS

Born: May 26, 1968

Education: B.Sc. (mechanical engineering),
University of Manitoba, 1991

Family: Married to Rachel; sons Graeme (9) and Kellen (6)

To say that the Bakken has been a company-maker for Crescent Point might be stretching a point, but there is no doubt that Scott Saxberg has been a company-maker for the trust, which he launched as a conventional junior producer (Crescent Point Energy Ltd., named after the road leading to the Saxberg family cottage in Ontario's lake country) in 2001, before converting to the trust structure in 2003 when it acquired Tappit Resources Ltd.

From a staff of 10 in 2001, Crescent Point now boasts more than 150 employees, with a leader, says Stephanie Mesher, who nominated Scott as a Rising Star, who is a cut above others of his ilk.

"There are leaders who can start up a company, with their hands-on, can-do attitude," Stephanie wrote in her nomination letter. "Leaders like Scott who have the vision and drive to drive that company to the next level are more unusual, as this implies an ability to motivate and manage a far larger team as it executes the business strategy."

That ability to motivate extends beyond Scott's corporate world: he has fostered a climate of community involvement and charitable giving at Crescent Point, and last year, its employees racked up more than 650 hours of volunteer time and more than \$100,000 in donations to a long list of organizations, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Inn from the Cold, Habitat for Humanity, and the Alberta Cancer Foundation. In Saskatchewan, beneficiaries of cash donations have included causes in Stoughton and Alida—in the heart of the Bakken play—and a host of schools throughout Crescent Point's operating regions.

"Several employees are involved in local organizations and have leveraged corporate resources to provide additional support," Mesher writes. "And the company provides extra cash donations to organizations where employees are involved on a personal level."

While encouraging behind-the-scenes support for community organizations, Scott himself has taken a visible role in promoting the oil and gas industry, notably with respect to Ottawa's decision in the fall of 2006 to change the way income trusts are taxed and to Alberta's decision, in the fall of last year, to change the way oil and gas production royalties are levied.

Publicly and privately, he is seen as an industry spokesman, and he's adopted a proactive stance in defining the impact of these policy changes for Crescent Point and for the industry, and has been directly involved in government lobbying activities through CAPP, Mesher notes.

"Over the last 18 months, in particular, despite the fact that Scott is still in his 30s, and considerably younger than most of the acknowledged senior oil patch leaders, his reputation as an established oil and gas sector heavyweight has been secured with his involvement in political lobbying efforts and his frequent appearances and quotes in national and local media as a spokesman ably representing not only his company, but also his industry." ★



Quinton Rafuse

CALGARY, AB

Manager of Geology, Ember Resources Inc.

Good geologists are rarely linear thinkers. They may have a strong logical side, but they also have a creative bent. It is that ability to think laterally, to live in the grey zone, that acts like an internal gyroscope guiding them clear of more rigid professions like engineering or accounting.

If ever this rule of thumb applied, it does to Quinton Rafuse, manager of geology at Ember Resources. His work is helping to unlock the vast potential of coalbed methane in Alberta.

But a somewhat unlikely counterpoint to his career is an abiding interest in film. In fact, for a brief spell between leaving engineering school and settling into geology studies, film school was a consideration.

In the end, however, he settled on serving his artistic inclinations by helping found the Calgary International Film Festival in 2000, and is currently producing an experimental drama short film with a Vancouver-based group set to premier at a French film festival this May.

A third dimension to this oil patch Rising Star is his social activism. Since moving into Calgary's Inglewood/Ramsey district, he has become a familiar face in the community association, and has served on the board of the Ramsey Community Association since 2005.

Last fall, he commissioned a non-profit, third-party safety audit that led to a number of initiatives addressing public safety and social issues in the inner city.

"It's about improving the place you live," Quinton says. "I have a big social ambition in that respect."

That ambition also extends beyond his community. During the last provincial election, he volunteered in Mike Robinson's Calgary Foothills campaign.

Eclectic interests sometimes suggest a restless imagination. But in Quinton's case, he is firmly grounded in the geoscience of his career. Doug Dafoe, Ember chairman and chief executive officer, calls Quinton "our resident professor. He takes to heart teaching us things about rocks and science."

FAST FACTS

Born: Dec. 29, 1975

Education: Went to Royal Roads University in Victoria on a scholarship. After a year of mechanical engineering, he bought himself out of the scholarship at a cost of \$17,000 and enrolled in geology at the University of Calgary

Family: Married to Karin Poldaa

This professor, however, is more Indiana Jones than tenure-track pedagogue. When he started with Alberta Energy Company—in 1999, just before it merged with PanCanadian Petroleum Limited to become Encana Corp.—he experienced a wide range of projects across the continent, from wildcat exploration in Alaska to probing western Canada's tight sands; from drilling deep offshore wells to punching down multi-well horizontal programs.

If there is any hint of grey-haired professor in him, it would be in his knack for being entrusted with senior-level responsibilities.

Steve Harding, who worked with Quinton at EnCana, recalls Quinton's leadership skills even as a much younger man.

"At the time, EnCana had extensive field season in the Brooks Foothills of Alaska, adjacent to the North Slope. Quinton coordinated one of those field seasons for us. He physically coordinated all the logistics—the helicopter support, field camps, and all the operational things—as well as figuring out where to actually run the expedition," Harding says. "He did a very good job of it. And this from a guy with only three or four years [of experience]. Normally, you'd have two or three people with 15 or 20 years' experience organizing this." ★

Peter Kiss

ACHESON, AB

President, Morgan Construction and Environmental Ltd.

When Peter Kiss graduated and took over the family business providing heavy equipment for site construction and reclamation, he had a vision of the type of company he wanted to build, the size and pace of growth of the company, and the type of clients it would have.

Then about six years ago, an opportunity presented itself in the form of a major contract with an oil company. The only problem was it would require Morgan Construction and Environment to more than double its size to handle the job.

“Peter said we were going after it. The rest of us said, ‘You’ve got to be kidding,’” recalls Kirsten Krywko, Morgan’s human resource, health, safety, and environment leader. Morgan ended up getting the contract and keeping it. “He doesn’t listen to people who say it can’t be done. In a way, it’s sheer stubbornness.”

Tim Brewster, Morgan’s chief financial officer, describes Peter as someone who sees opportunities that others don’t. “Peter leads with his heart, and never stops pushing, which means that it is always exciting around here.”

Morgan’s 20 employees and over 100 field operators may not always have a choice about the level of excitement, whether it’s pursuing oilfield construction in Alberta or chasing mining work in the Northwest Territories.

FAST FACTS

Born: Jan. 25, 1972

Education: B.Sc. (environmental conservation sciences),
University of Alberta

Family: Married last year to Deanna

It may be an environment “without a boring day in all the eight years I’ve worked here,” as Kirsten puts it, but what saves Morgan from being the sweatshop some hard-charging company presidents can inadvertently create is Peter’s genuine interest in his employees.

This comes through in the details: the conversations he has with his employees, the fitness room in the company building, the education program that funds up to four courses per year for his employees, the fact that families are invited to semi-annual supervisors’ meetings.

“It’s a cliché, but it surely is like a family here. It’s a fun work environment and very close,” Kirsten says.

Peter is also intent on extending this sense of belonging to aboriginal communities where he helps develop skills and provides business and employment opportunities. It benefits Morgan, but Peter truly believes in this work of integration by also providing unencumbered support and financial donations to these groups.

“I have trouble with the fact that some of these communities have 75 per cent unemployment—and we’re bringing in foreign workers?” Peter says. “As business leaders, we need to change our thinking around this issue.”

Closer to home, Peter throws his support behind youth. Morgan is the main sponsor of the Devon Grand Prix of Cycling, which raises money for the Devon Youth Drop-In Center. The company supports a variety of minor league sports—baseball, hockey, and rodeo—and is also a contributor to the Stollery Children’s Hospital in Edmonton.

All of this support, Brewster notes in a letter supporting his nomination of Peter as an *Oilweek* Rising Star, is strictly philanthropic.

“When Peter assesses sponsorship and donation requests, the decision is based 100 per cent on the cause, not the benefit to Morgan, and as a result, Morgan has been a part of several worthwhile causes that otherwise might not have found support.” ★

“Peter leads with his heart, and
never stops pushing.”

— Tim Brewster, chief financial officer,
Morgan Construction and Environmental Ltd.





Sally Lawrence

CALGARY, AB

Assistant Manager of Research and Technology, Sanjel Corporation

In the words of her boss, Sanjel vice-president Neil Warrender, Sally Lawrence is “not your typical lab-dwelling, type-B propeller-head.” A quick glance at her resumé might leave a stranger with that impression—her technical ability is obvious to any layman, and nobody wins a research degree from Oxford just because she knows a Bunsen burner from a beaker.

What Sally brings to Sanjel every day, and what prompted Neil to nominate her for as an *Oilweek* Rising Stars, is that she combines that high level of achievement with “passion, flair, and what the French call *joie de vivre*.”

“I’m not sure if it’s the Irish heritage, her youthful exuberance, or maybe just the red hair, but her lively personality endears her to colleagues, co-workers, managers, salesmen, clients—you name it,” Warrender says. Conventional wisdom would also suggest that Sally speaks and works on a level stratospherically higher than the rest of us, but in reality, Warrender says, she’s adept at bringing clarity to even the most arcane and complex subjects.

“When you do track her down...drawing on a whiteboard or presenting her latest findings, you will be struck by the ease with which the story flows and how readily the key points are understood,” he wrote in his nomination submission. “You will certainly smile at the enthusiasm with which your questions are answered.”

Sally came to Sanjel almost by accident when Warrender—who joined the company himself late in 2002 with a mandate to beef up its technical profile—was referred to her credentials by a mutual acquaintance.

“I wasn’t specifically looking for a research chemist, but this gentleman had received some communications from her—I guess she was networking, seeing what might be available—and while he wasn’t in a position to hire her himself, he suggested I might want to take a look,” he tells *Oilweek*.

The rest, as they say, is history: a phone call, an interview, and Lawrence was hired as Sanjel’s very first research scientist.

And what a hire she has turned out to be since September 2004. Almost out of the blocks she made an impression at Sanjel, Warrender commented in his nomination submission.

FAST FACTS

- Born:** Sept. 21, 1976
- Education:** B.A. (natural science) Trinity College (Dublin, Ireland), 1995; D. Phil Organometallic Chemistry, Oxford University, 2003
- Awards:** Prendergast Bequest, Oxford University, 2003
Jesus College Graduate Scholar, Oxford University, 2001–2003
- Career Milestones:** First researcher at Sanjel, 2004; named assistant manager, research and technology in September 2007

“A ‘Rising Star’ in any profession should have a gift for their trade, a raw talent that looks easy to the layman and impresses the professional,” he reported. “Sally is an exceptional chemist. In her three years with Sanjel, she has solved one of the toughest problems in hydrocarbon fracturing, creating new, patented technology for Sanjel and unique and affordable solutions for our clients.”

That breakthrough, he says, may have solved a decade-long problem that refineries across Canada have been having while processing crude oil recovered from reservoirs that have been stimulated with hydrocarbon-based fracturing fluids.

Those fluids, it turns out, contain volatile phosphorous, which contaminates the produced crude to such an extent that refinery distillation towers were becoming fouled with a gooey mess after processing the contaminated crude.

Sally was successful in breaking down the chemical structure of these gellant fluids and designing new chemical structures that provided the same ability to carry proppants into the reservoir during a frac job but did not leave behind volatile phosphorous that would contaminate the produced crude oil.

“To put the scale of this achievement into perspective, Sally has solved this problem ahead of all of Sanjel’s competition, including a number of extremely large, global organizations,” Warrender says.

Frac chemicals based on Sally’s work—and proprietary to Sanjel—will be delivered this spring, at which time they will immediately be put into use in field trials.

Stay tuned, because when they work, Sally’s star could go higher still. ★



Sean Frisky REGINA, SK

Founder and President, Ground Effects Environmental Services Inc.

While studying engineering, Sean Frisky also worked at an oil refinery where he saw first-hand just how much time equipment stood around broken rather than running. He convinced his employer to let him work on a broken down Multi-Phase Vapour Extraction (MPVE) system—a machine designed to clean up oil contaminants from soil. That experience led Sean to design an entirely new MPVE system that boasts 300 fewer parts and 99.9 per cent run time (a standard Sean's company maintains today on all its equipment).

That work also launched Ground Effects Environmental Services.

Today, Sean has more than 30 new products, 70 industry innovations, 1 patent, and 2 pending patents for new products. He has led Ground Effects from a two-employee shop in 1998 to a multi-million-dollar company employing 35 people.

A particularly significant feather in the hat is the company's EK3 Electrokinetic Remediation Technology, which allows for cost-effective, on-site remediation of salt, metals, and hydrocarbons from soil and water—a first for the industry.

Building on that success is a recent spinoff from the EK3 Electrokinetic. This new technology is aimed at cleaning up oil spills, but oilsands companies might find application for it in the oilsands, says Calvin Prokop, Ground Effects' business development manager. "It could work great for cost-effectively producing oil out of the oilsands in situ in an environmentally friendly manner," he says.

These are the type of innovations that have earned Sean the National Research Council's Canadian Innovation Leader Award in 2007, the Saskatchewan ABEX Award for Best New Product, and a place among finalists for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year as well as the Business Development Bank Young Entrepreneur of the Year awards.

Not bad for a university dropout. Okay, that may not be fair. One course shy of his engineering degree, Sean opted for a career and fame over a piece of paper—something to do with building one of the largest remediation companies in North America getting in the way of those last few credits.

FAST FACTS

Born: March 27, 1969

Education: Studied environmental engineering, University of Regina

Family: Married to Colleen, daughters Samantha (4) and Alex (21 months)

And who can blame him? This is a man who is not only a creative engineering force but also an entrepreneur with a flare for knowing a business and growing a business.

"He sees possibilities others don't and he isn't afraid to try something new," says Brita Lind, a co-owner of a local marketing company that works with Ground Effects.

Sean's community involvement follows a vision of strengthening Saskatchewan's business and manufacturing infrastructure. He is a tireless promoter of his province, demonstrating to the world that Saskatchewan contributes innovative products and thinking well beyond its borders.

The Saskatchewan government recently included Ground Effects as one of its poster children for getting this message of innovation out to the rest of the country.

Sean is also a board director of Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, a member of the Saskatchewan Environmental Industry and Managers Association, and a member of the South Saskatchewan Lean Manufacturing Consortium. ★

"He sees possibilities others don't and he isn't afraid to try something new."

— Brita Lind, co-owner of a local marketing company

Kris Smith

FORT McMURRAY, AB

Vice-President of Planning and Strategy, Suncor Energy

Those of us outside the legal profession have a preconceived—and not entirely accurate—picture of the typical corporate lawyer: three-piece suit, conservative tie, and a personality about as buttoned-down as the custom-stitched shirts most of them wear.

Those on the inside, however, know the truth: that corporate law can be as varied and stimulating as its practitioners care to make it, and Kris Smith, who's now vice-president, planning and strategy for Suncor Energy in Fort McMurray, has turned the practice of corporate law on its ear in helping turn Suncor into a force to be reckoned with among integrated producer and refiners in North America.

Kris came to Suncor in 2000 at the age of 30 as corporate legal counsel, but he was quickly recognized as a rising talent, and three years later was named director of legal affairs in Suncor's new United States subsidiary in Colorado.

He established the legal department for the U.S. refining and marketing business, which at the time consisted of a newly purchased refinery in Commerce City, Colorado, and associated pipelines and retail stations. He completed the transfer of all of these assets to Suncor and managed the legal complexities of setting up operations in a new jurisdiction.

FAST FACTS

Born: Feb. 27, 1970

Education: BA (political science), University of Alberta, 1992; LL.B., Dalhousie Law School, 1995

Family: Married to Sandra, with a son Ethan (7) and a daughter Katherine (4)

A year later, he was bumped up the ladder again, to general manager of business services for the U.S. refining operation, and it was here that he played a key role on the management team charged with advancing Suncor's downstream integration strategy, which included the acquisition of a second Commerce City refinery and turning the company into the largest refiner in the U.S. Rocky Mountain region.

"This management team oversaw a US\$400-million upgrade of Suncor's Commerce City refinery between 2004 and 2006, which represented a very significant investment for that community," says Kirk Bailey, executive vice-president of oilsands, for Suncor in Fort McMurray. "At the same time, Kris personally oversaw the negotiations for Suncor's acquisition of a neighbouring refinery and helped ensure a smooth integration of the new refinery with Suncor's existing facilities in 2005."

In 2007, Kris returned to Canada where he was put in charge of business services at Suncor's oilsands operations in Fort McMurray. And he's also been named acting vice-president of operational excellence, a wide-ranging role that sees Kris overseeing a team of 80 employees responsible for everything from asset management to shared services like finance, legal, and information technology.

"With current production capacity of 260,000 barrels per day and plans for further growth," Bailey says, "operational excellence is a critical priority for Suncor."

A relative newcomer to the booming town of Fort McMurray, Kris is still settling in with his family, and is still in the process of integrating into the community. In the past, however, he's loaned his legal talents to the Calgary Humane Society when he served on that organization's board of directors between 2001 and 2003.

Wherever he decides to direct himself outside the workplace, Bailey notes, Kris will bring the same level of effort and expertise that has made him a Rising Star at Suncor.

"In just seven years, Kris has accumulated an impressive record of accomplishments at Suncor. He has demonstrated a rare capacity to adapt and excel in a number of diverse and very challenging roles," he says. "Far from being pigeonholed into one area of expertise, Kris has shown an ability to quickly grasp complex challenges in a dynamic business environment. He is a strategic thinker and a strong leader who combines a sharp analytical mind with excellent interpersonal skills." ★





Butch Gering (left)
and Mick MacBean.

Butch Gering SWIFT CURRENT, SK

President, Diamond Energy Services

Mick MacBean SWIFT CURRENT, SK

Chief Executive Officer, Diamond Energy Services

A little over a decade ago, Butch Gering and Michael (Mick) MacBean took a leap many of us think about but few of us follow through on.

With little in the way of hard assets but with an abundance of moxie, the long-time school buddies launched Diamond Energy Services, offering well completion services to the still relatively young oil and gas sector around Swift Current, southwest of Regina.

"Butch—who was working as a service rig manager in Swift Current—had been talking about it for a long time, that there was room in that region for another competitor," Mick says. "I was working in Calgary as an investment banker, but together we convinced ourselves it would work. We founded Diamond Energy Services in 1996, and in 1998, when we saw a really good opportunity to really grow the business, I got out of the investment banking game and moved back to Swift Current to take an active role."

The rest, to use a rather tired cliché, is history. From basically a one-man show, Diamond Energy Services grew quickly, both in Saskatchewan and beyond the wheat province's borders. Well services are offered now from a location in Red Deer, while coiled tubing services are marketed out of Medicine Hat.

FAST FACTS

Born: July 7, 1967 (Butch); Nov. 14, 1967 (Mick)

Families: Butch is married to Ladine and they have three daughters, Tenille (13), Taylor (11), and Talysha (10). Mick is married to Isabelle and they have one daughter, Camille (13) and two sons, Sammy (10) and Brady (7).

The company is now one of the biggest employers in Swift Current, with a payroll of more than 100, and one of its biggest community boosters.

"Diamond Energy Services—Butch and myself—have made the choice to live in the community and not live off the community," Mick says. "As we are a large employer in the southwest [of Saskatchewan], and we want to make it a great place to live and raise a family, we're very rooted in the community."

Rooted, indeed. Like most parents on the prairies—and across Canada, for that matter—Butch and Mick have done the early morning hockey practices in the dead of a Saskatchewan winter, the weekend tournaments in towns from Belle Plaine to Balgonie and beyond. This past winter, in fact, some of those endless trips paid off: the Swift Current Wildcats, a AAA midget girls team they sponsor, climbed to the pinnacle of midget hockey in Canada by winning the Mac's Midget Tournament in Calgary.

Besides sponsoring the Wildcats, both Butch and Mick coach minor hockey in Swift Current, and their air horn is a legendary accompaniment at home games of the Swift Current Broncos of the major junior Western Hockey League.

While hockey might be their passion—Scott Taylor, who nominated Butch and Mick for the Rising Stars, says the two can usually be more easily found at the local rink than they can be found at the shop—it isn't Diamond Energy Service's only target for philanthropy in Swift Current.

The company sponsors the Roughnecks, a minor football team in Swift Current, and both Mick and Butch are directors on minor sports boards in the city: Mick with the Swift Current Minor Football Association and the Broncos of the WHL, and Butch with Swift Current Minor Hockey.

Arts, culture, recreation, education, and charitable and non-profit groups have all benefited from Diamond Energy's giving spirit in Swift Current, and during the summer, either or both of Butch and Mick can usually be found manning a massive portable bar-becue they make available for school, community, sporting and special event occasions.

And the community recognizes their contributions—in 2006, the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce presented Diamond with its Business Excellence award for community involvement. ★



Peter Knapp CALGARY, AB

President, Bryan Mills Iradesso

A decade ago, Peter Knapp was a young, bright-eyed investor relations consultant with Energy Communications, a company that hosted investment forums for oil and gas companies.

It was there that he first crossed paths with Jan Alston, at the time president and chief executive officer of Purcell Energy Ltd. Peter accompanied Alston and other Purcell executives on road show tours, doing such an effective and efficient job that a few years later, when Peter launched his own investor relations firm, Iradesso Communications, Alston and Purcell were his first clients.

"We were entrepreneurs ourselves at Purcell, and we liked the idea of this young, energetic, and committed fellow bringing quality investor relations services to the oil and gas community," Alston says now. "Then, as now, Peter's primary goal has always been to look after his clients' interests to the best of his abilities, with honesty and integrity."

In the early years of Iradesso's growth, Alston relates, he was always concerned that Peter wasn't quite charging a high enough retainer for all the services he was providing. Attempts by Alston to increase the retainer were often deflected, another example, he says, of Peter's desire to do the best by his clients.

FAST FACTS

Born: Jan. 25, 1975

Education: B.Comm. (honours), McMaster University, 1997

Family: Married to Laura, with an infant son Oliver and twins on the way

Peter cut his teeth in the investments sector as a research analyst with Humboldt Capital Corporation, a niche investment fund specializing in oil and gas. It was there that he first became interested in helping emerging oil and gas companies tell their stories, and that interest prompted his move to Energy Communications, where he soon rose to general manager, travelling across North America with oil and gas executives to deliver presentations to investment professionals.

In 2001, Peter founded Iradesso Communications and has managed its growth ever since, always with service, reliability, integrity, and excellence as touchstones.

Most visible to those outside his circle of clients is his *iQ Report*, a quarterly summary and comparison of the financial and operating results of conventional energy trusts and junior oil and gas companies he launched in 2003. Focusing on companies with production between 500 and 15,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, the *iQ Report* is widely read internationally by investors and oil and gas companies, and is seen as a key barometer of the health of that sector of the industry in Canada.

Iradesso's quick rise to prominence in the investor relations field caught the eye of executives at Toronto-based communications firm Bryan Mills Group Ltd. In 2007, the two companies merged to create Bryan Mills Iradesso (BMIR), a national, full-service communications and investor relations firm.

"His confidence, hard work, and ability to put together a strong team have allowed him to grow the company into the respected, national organization it is today," says Kelsey Mullen, communications coordinator for Bryan Mills Iradesso. "Oil and gas company presidents, investors, and the media turn to Peter for advice about where the industry has been and where it's headed."

Outside the office, Peter's major commitment is to the Big Brother organization, which he has supported since 2005. The importance a mentor can bring to a child's development is what motivated his interest in the organization, along with the impact mentors such as Bob Lamond at Humboldt Capital had on his own development.

BMIR is also active in the community, supporting a range of non-profit organizations including KidSport Alberta, the Making Changes Employment Association of Alberta, Calgary Winterfest, and the Rocky Road Ride.

"Peter feels so strongly about the importance of honesty, integrity, and professionalism that he turns away clients who do not share these principals," she writes. "This desire to do the right thing, even when it comes at a price, makes Peter unique and outstanding." ★



Ron Visser CALGARY, AB

Founder and President, Beyond Compliance Inc.

Eight years ago, Ron Visser recognized an opportunity to use his expertise in regulatory compliance to create a software company that would help members of the oil and gas community navigate complex and sometimes obscure regulations.

Then 31, Visser already had a familiarity with regulatory frameworks, having worked as an environmental consultant and inspector for the Energy Resources Conservation Board (formerly the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.)

In 2000, he parlayed his expertise into co-founding, with Murray Smith, the company Beyond Compliance. The firm began as a core group of six individuals barely making ends meet. With Ron as its president and chief executive officer, in less than eight years the company grew from one with \$150,000 in annual revenue to one offering multiple services, staffed by 30, and earning almost \$3 million.

The company, whose software system was first known as the Integrated Compliance Management System, built its reputation on the claim that it dramatically reduces the "paper chase," by centralizing data needed to keep up with regulatory requirements.

The way Beyond Compliance's system works is that it begins by profiling each client individually. So, for example, a small oil and gas company would have to abide by completely different regulatory requirements than would a pipeline company.

Then the Beyond Compliance team creates a series of modules, each of which address a different aspect of compliance. The data is coordinated into a central location to ensure transparency and eliminate redundancies.

The company stresses the fact that using its software simplifies the lives of its clients. In doing so, they say, it increases their employees' productivity.

FAST FACTS

Born: June 15, 1969

Education: B.Sc. (chemistry), University of Alberta

Family: Married to Loreen, three children:
Ross (10), Colin (8), and Sarah (5)

Visser's expertise in regulatory systems is recognized by the Canadian Standards Association certifying him as an ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 auditor. He is a sought-after public speaker, addressing conferences organized by associations such as the Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada, the Petroleum Services Association of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Canadian Institute.

Admirers describe the corporate culture at Beyond Compliance as vibrant and dynamic.

Juan Benitez, the company's current president, has known Ron for eight years. Although Ron did not start with a lot of business experience, he has "become more formal in his business management, more savvy." He adds that Ron has an outstanding ability to take clients' problems and design a piece of software to help them solve the problems.

On a personal level, his colleague Rob McMurtry credits Ron with an ability to connect not just with clients, but also with his staff. "His compelling personal philosophy comes through as clearly in the oilfield as it does in the boardroom," says McMurtry. "He has that great and rare ability to connect the dots across a number of related concepts and designed a business that was both compelling to our clients and to our own team."

Ron carves out time to volunteer in his community as well, spending evenings and weekends coaching minor hockey, soccer, and baseball. He plays hockey in a men's league twice a week during the winter, is involved with league baseball during the summer, and extends the values of teamwork and accountability from the playing field to the office suite.

But he's taken his interest in hockey and in coaching to a higher level, participating as a panel member in Hockey Canada's coaching mentorship program, which sponsors clinics at which coaches can easily connect with a mentor.

And he's extended his own personal values into the corporate culture at Beyond Compliance, encouraging employees to get involved as a way to give back to the community. On this level, Beyond Compliance employees have participated in the Canadian Blood Services' donor program, and are actively involved every year in the annual United Way campaign. ★



Melinda Scherger

CALGARY, AB

Manager of Joint-Venture Accounting, Devon Canada Corporation

Melinda Scherger is on a mission. It fires her soul and is the driving force behind all her professional and personal relationships and everything she has accomplished. That mission is to help people become the best that they can be.

As manager of joint-venture accounting with Devon Canada Corporation, Melinda leads team of 50 and also sits on almost every human resource committee in the company, including committees at an industry-wide level.

One of her particularly significant contributions to Devon was creating a career development program. It allows each person in her team to chart a career path not only within her department but also within Devon, which in Calgary alone employs some 1,500 people.

"I try to get people to see the bigger picture. Just crunching numbers is seeing the smaller picture. But everything you do makes a difference to the bigger picture so let's understand what that bigger picture is," she says.

That only one person has left her team in the past two years has caught the attention of other managers and departments. She now sits on a committee adopting a similar initiative throughout Devon's many departments.

Trace Melinda's mission back, if you must, to her upbringing on a farm in Manitoba and what she was denied: support for anything but a vision of a young woman's place in life as barefoot, pregnant, and tied to the stove.

"In that environment, living at home, I wasn't very successful," she says now, but without remorse. "It was after I got married in my early 20s that my husband actually encouraged me to go back to school."

So at the outset of her oil and gas career, Melinda took on part-time studies towards an undergraduate degree in accounting. Four years later, she graduated with the highest marks in the faculty.

Three years later, she achieved Certified General Accountant (CGA). Easy to say, but during that time, she already had two babies and was still working full-time. Somehow she managed to pull off the top marks in the province, earning the Certified General Accounting Association's President's Award and Certificate of Excellence.

FAST FACTS

Born: Sept. 29, 1963

Education: Certified General Accountant, B.Admin.,
Athabasca University

Family: Married to Campbell, son Rollend (15), daughter Michila (14)

"When the kids were young, I would get up at 4 or 4:30 every morning and do my assignments for university and later for my CGA. That way, when the kids were awake, I was 100 per cent available for them," she says. Working in Calgary's downtown, Melinda was fortunate to have a daycare in the same building. She spent her lunch hours with her kids. Later, they attended a downtown school, so the connection remained intact.

This balancing act between family and career makes Melinda's accomplishments all the more impressive. Men can be more one-directional; how many would say, as Melinda does, that their children are their first priority?

Melinda's mission is also bearing fruit in her children's lives. Last year, Michila represented Calgary at the Alberta Winter Games and won gold in wrestling. From as early as she could string together sentences, Michila would say she wanted to do what her mother does for a living. So business studies may be in her future.

And Rollend is being groomed as Canada's next prime minister. Really. He was just selected for a leadership convention on Vancouver Island. Only two children from each school across Canada are selected for this honour. Typically, these students are in grade 11 or 12—Rollend is in grade 10.

Melinda's community involvement currently tends to be through her children. The whole Scherger family was recently at St. Mary's Cathedral cutting vegetables and setting plates at a Feed the Hungry event thanks to her daughter's school volunteer club. Then there is the ongoing commitment to judging debating club events. And when all else fails, there is the family band, Sibling Rivalry, to manage.

"Once a month, I line up a gig for my kids," she says. "They play a number of instruments—keyboard, guitar, flute. I arrange for them to play at community centres or for the old folks at retirement homes, mingle and talk with them. They play everything from oldie mouldies to some current stuff." ★