Field Notes
The story of the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists
David Finch
PREFACE

The Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists is an internationally-recognized organization dedicated primarily to the dissemination of technical information relevant to the exploration for and the development of petroleum resources. In doing so it has established a wide spectrum of activities ranging from regular and theme publications to conventions, field trips and short courses. It has allowed its members and those participating in its activities to network with their counterparts throughout the industry. While always trying to fulfill its mandate as a national organization, the Calgary-based Society has been able to take advantage of its globally unique situation of having such a high concentration of its members in one location. Being able to attract almost one thousand interested listeners to its bi-monthly luncheon talks has made it the envy of other groups for whom this would be only an annual event.

The CSPG is like the proverbial elephant – it is different things to different people. Some value it for its technical contributions and eagerly participate in the activities that support this work, whether that be publications or conventions. Others see it as a "people" organization and wish to facilitate the establishment of ties amongst those already in the Society and industry as well as to other communities. Up-and-coming university students (through the Student Industry Field Trip), other geological organizations (through the Canadian Geoscience Council) and occasionally the broader political world (as in the Mount Logan controversy) have all been influenced by our Society. At one stage there was also a regulatory flavour but that has been largely superseded by the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta. I would like to thank our author, David Finch, for pulling these strands together into the compelling story of a mature but still vibrant Society.

Clinton R. Tippett
Archives and History Committee Chair

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Society’s records date to the founding meeting in 1927 and provide an excellent foundation upon which we built this short review. Over the years several geologists have summarized part of the Society’s history, including Joe Irwin in the 1966, Jack Webb in 1972 and Bill Ayrton in 1976. Don Weir, Don Axford, Jack Porter, Aubrey Kerr and others have also contributed to this goal. Presidential reviews sometimes provided a multi-year perspective. Members of the Archives and History Committee kept this project alive and have included Dave Monachello, Colin Yeo, Jack Porter, Bill McLellan and Clint Tippett. In 1997 Aubrey Kerr began contributing a regular historical column to the Reservoir, a task he handed on to Jack Porter in 2001, and these columns have also helped tell the story of the Society. The late Rory Hankel of the Publications Committee supported the creation of a history of the Society for many years.

Many past Presidents agreed to be interviewed by the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project and reflected on their time on the Society Executive as part of that process. Aubrey Kerr, Jack Porter, Alice Payne, Kathy Scales and Clint Tippett critiqued this manuscript and Bill Ayrton and Gordon Williams graciously entertained many last-minute questions. Don Glass, a long-time editor of Society publications, gave the manuscript a gracious penultimate read with an insightful eye and a sharp pencil. My thanks also go to Doug Cass and the staff of the Glenbow Archives and Library for their ongoing contribution to the preservation of the history of the petroleum industry. And finally, Clint Tippett deserves mention again as the driving and directing force in the last few months before the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary; the Society owes this publication to his vision, determination and wisdom.

David Finch - Historian April 14, 2002
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Frank Beales, cleaning unconformity, Banff area
1949. (CSPG Collection)
Need for a society . . .

“As more geologists joined in the search for oil in Alberta, it became more and more apparent that some medium for an exchange of ideas was needed.

- Glen Ruby
In the beginning . . .

“It happened in this way,” wrote founding member T.B. Williams many years later. “In the autumn of 1926 P.D. Moore and I arranged to lunch together once a week at the Empress Cafeteria. There we discussed the affairs, geological and other, which were interesting us. The numbers at the meeting grew and when Link returned in 1927 [from his Ph.D. studies] he suggested that a formal organization should be set up.”

And so this informal group created the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists (APSG) at an organizational meeting in December 1927. They based the Society on the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG). The Society received a charter in early 1928 from the provincial government and seventy-five years later geologists are celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of what is now the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists.

Four wise men . . .

But what were geologists doing in the Canadian west so many years before the famous 1947 discovery of oil at Imperial Leduc No. 1? As John Allan, the first Vice-President of the ASPG and the founder of the Department of Geology at the University of Alberta in 1912, wrote: “In the period from 1873 to 1910, four ‘wise men’ from the east (Ottawa), Selwyn, Tyrrell, McConnell and Dowling had observed and recorded several important pages on the geology of Alberta, of which there are still many uncut pages.”

These early wise men were not “petroleum” geologists – though they knew of the tar sands. The easterners were explorers, in the employ of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). Their quest was mineral wealth, specifically for coal and water for steam engines, but also for salt and any other economically profitable minerals to help fire the Canadian version of the industrial revolution. Only by accident did those who followed discover the vast hydrocarbon potential of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin.

The Canadian oil industry dates back to 1858 when the first commercial North American petroleum came out of a well dug into the ground by hand near Petrolia, Ontario. Small discoveries of natural gas at Pelican Point on the Athabasca River in northern Alberta (1898) and in southern Alberta at Langevin (1883), Medicine Hat (1890), Bow Island (1909) and Turner Valley (1914) as well as of crude oil at Waterton (1901) all teased and hinted. But the discovery by the Royalite No. 4 well of highly pressured sour wet gas in the Mississippian limestone flowing at a rate of 24 million cubic feet per day from the 3740 foot level at Turner Valley in 1924 was the first major find. Subsequent drilling expanded the Turner Valley Field and led to significant crude oil discoveries in the 1930s and 1940s.
Alberta produced only 844 barrels of oil and gas condensate in 1924 compared to Ontario’s 154,368 (423 bpd) but it galloped past Ontario in 1925 to produce 183,491 (503 bpd) or 67 percent of the total Canadian supply. In 1926 Alberta boasted six refineries and thirty-three oil companies. Twenty-two gas producers worked fields at Wainwright-Fabyan, Redcliff, Viking, Wetaskiwin, Medicine Hat, Bassano, Suffield, Foremost, Bow Island and Turner Valley. By 1930 Alberta’s production reached 1,396,160 barrels (3,825 bpd), or 92 percent of the Canadian supply.

Working in Alberta . . .

By 1927, $20,426,000 – 90 percent of the capital employed in oil production in Canada - was at work in Alberta. As a result, the oil companies formed the Turner Valley Producers Association (today’s Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers) in 1927. Other related associations with an interest in petroleum included the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (formed in 1898) that created a natural gas division in 1926, the Ontario Natural Gas Association (1919) and the predecessor to APEGGA, the Association of Professional Engineers of Alberta (1920).

But it was the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, formed in 1917, that provided the most direct influence and support for Canadian petroleum geologists in 1927. Seven of the original twelve founding members of the ASPG also belonged to the AAPG. The American organization was the model the Calgary geologists used when they created their own society.

The AAPG’s objectives were “to foster the spirit of scientific research... to disseminate facts... to maintain a high standard of professional conduct... and to protect the public from the work of inadequately trained and unscrupulous men posing as petroleum geologists.”
“To meet from time to time . . .”
The men who formed the ASPG in 1927 were anything but unscrupulous. Consultants, academics and corporate geologists, they were all above reproach. Dr. John Allan, Dr. Ted Link and Stan Slipper are the best known of the founders. Stanley Davies, Glen Ruby, Russel Johnson, Prentiss Moore, Elvis Whitwell, Robert McNeely, Harry Hunter, Thomas Williams and J. O. Howells also helped create the Society.

As the story goes, Glen Ruby and Stan Slipper planned the founding meeting while negotiating the treacherous road between Calgary and Edmonton. Ontario-born Slipper worked for the GSC and as a consultant before joining the Canadian Western Natural Gas Company when it created a geological department in 1925. Ruby was from Iowa and was in Canada as Vice-President and General Manager of Hudson’s Bay – Marland Oil Company.

In the fall of 1927 Stan Slipper circulated a letter to Alberta petroleum geologists, inviting them to meet at the Gas Company boardroom in Calgary on the afternoon of Saturday, December 17, 1927. It was a sunny winter day, the Calgary Daily Herald reported, and the temperature was a balmy 27°F or -2°C.

Stan Slipper called the meeting to order and Glen Ruby moved that the geologists form a society to be called the “Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists”. Qualifications would be identical to those of the AAPG – in fact, the first ASPG applicants filled out an AAPG application form on which the words “Alberta Society” had been substituted.

University of Alberta geology professor John Allan described the advantages of creating an Alberta society. Discussion followed and the consensus was that geologists could be members of both the AAPG and the ASPG. Ted Link recommended that anyone not already a member of the American Society “make application for membership as soon as possible.”

Stanley Davies, holder of a Technology of Oil degree from the Royal School of Mines in London, England and with experience as a petroleum geologist and engineer in Romania, Trinidad, Mexico and California, suggested a more national name for the Society. Glen Ruby argued that a Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists would need to include geologists from central Canada, with “different problems and such an organization would be too all-embracing and impractical.” A vote approved the creation of the ASPG.

Chairman Slipper then appointed Glen Ruby, Ted Link, Russel Johnson and Stanley Davies to draw up a provisional constitution during a fifteen-minute break. Ruby, always prepared, pulled a draft copy of a constitution out of his suit coat pocket and read it to the committee.
The quality of young Canadian geologists . . .

“While their field experience was limited, they had been schooled by professors who had a knowledge of Canadian geology that was not to be found in the library. Without exception, these young men were dedicated geologists and well above the average then being turned out by the American colleges. I best remember Jack Webb . . . . whose uncle was the first man to swim the English Channel and Ruby thought ‘the gift of stick-to-itiveness’ could be inherited.” - Glen Ruby

Sharing information . . .

“Both Ted [Link] and Oliver [Hopkins of Imperial] gave us many valuable suggestions with regard to what to look for, but being competitive, never where to look for it!” - Glen Ruby
The group reconvened at 4:30, accepted the constitution and then unanimously elected Stan Slipper as the first President. John Allan accepted the role of Vice-President and Ted Link agreed to serve as Secretary-Treasurer. Glen Ruby and P.D. Moore passed when asked to serve as Business Representative so Elvis Witwell took the job.

The twelve men each signed up as members – but only 11 paid their $1 dues! – and the new association extended Glen Ruby a “vote of thanks” for helping to create the Society. Russel Johnson’s only official contribution to this meeting came late in the day when he made a considerate motion that the meeting be adjourned. It passed.

The Alberta Society patterned itself after the AAPG, but its aims were less grandiose. The purpose of the ASPG was “to meet from time to time with the aim of discussing problems concerning the geology and technology of petroleum, natural gas and allied minerals.”
T.B. WILLIAMS

A biography of Thomas Bowerm an Williams could be substituted for the story of many geologists during the difficult first half of the twentieth century. As both a hardrock and petroleum geologist, “T.B.” took work wherever he could find it. While working the midnight shift at the Canmore mine, the lights went out, stranding him hundreds of feet below the surface. Copping down a ladder in a part of the mine that had only recently taken the life of the most recent night supervisor, he suddenly found himself hanging by his hands when the bottom rung broke on the ladder in a seemingly bottomless shaft. Scrambling to safety and worried about keeping an appointment to guide the mine manager through the plant at shift change, he made his way up through a maze of mine shafts until he reached the surface. He then ran back to his quarters, cleaned up and returned to the mine just in time for the inspection. Born in Ontario, Williams took his Masters degree at Queen’s University and received a Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Wisconsin. In addition to his work as a coal geologist, he taught at universities in the Canada and the United States and served as a consultant to various levels of government and industry. As a member of many societies, including the AAPG, Williams was also ASPG Business Manager in 1932 and President in 1935 during the deepest years of the Depression in the Alberta oilfields.

G.M. RUBY

This motivating force behind the founding of the Society was born in Iowa. Glen Ruby’s education included a double major in engineering and geology and a double minor in English and philosophy at the University of Nebraska. Before coming to Canada, he served in the U.S. Army and worked as a consultant for American companies and interests in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela and the U.S. State Department. In 1927 Ruby was Vice-President and general manager of Hudson’s Bay – Marland Oil Company in charge of geological work in Western Canada. He even got his pilot’s license in 1928 to make better use of his time as a busy geologist in charge of a large territory – the Canadian West. An accomplished man, he remarked just before his 79th birthday on his life of hard work: “My people were very poor, and I learned early that work is okay - if you get used to it.” Ruby’s contributions to the Society included arranging the first meeting, writing the constitution and drafting two of his employees, R.B. McNeely and E.V. Whitwell, into the Society.

T.A. LINK

During WWII Ted Link ordered shotguns for his field crews stationed at Norman Wells. They arrived quickly enough, but his repeated requests for shells fell on deaf ears. Exasperated, he finally wired the U.S. commanding officer at Whitehorse, saying, “A bear ate two of my geologists yesterday; now will you send those g. d. shells?” They arrived the next day. Born in Indiana and educated at the University of Chicago, Dr. Link was best known for his discovery of the Norman Wells Field in the North West Territories in 1920. Link was a multifaceted individual who was also deeply involved in the Leduc field. He published on a wide range of geological topics. In 1927 he was at work for Imperial Oil. As a member of numerous societies, including the AAPG, he gave greatly to the ASPG. His account of the 1929 ASPG banquet summed up the atmosphere in the early years. “The interaction of ideas and stories continued at this banquet, and long speeches were conspicuous by their absence.” Link served as the first Secretary-Treasurer of the Society and as its second President. As the AAPG district representative for Western Canada, he encouraged communication between the AAPG and the ASPG, ensuring close ties. He served as the President of the AAPG in 1956-7 and, since he had taken out Canadian citizenship, he became the first Canadian to lead the American association.

S.E. SLIPPER

Stan E. Slipper and Charlie Dingman were probably the first wild well control team in the history of the Canadian petroleum industry. In 1918 the Department of the Interior dispatched them to kill the gas well that had been flowing uncontrolled at Pelican Rapids since 1897. It was on fire when they arrived so they used jacketed bullets to shoot off the damaged well head and an old boiler stack to divert and extinguish the flames before attaching another wellhead. Born in Ontario and educated at Queen’s University, Stan Slipper worked for the GSC and the Department of the Interior before becoming a consultant to oil companies. By 1927 he was in the employ of the Canadian Western Natural Gas, Light, Heat and Power Co. Ltd., of Calgary. An expert on Alberta geology, he was the ideal first President of the ASPG. He also served the Society as Secretary-Treasurer in 1937.
P.D. MOORE

Prentiss D. Moore came from Indiana where he attended the state university before taking a degree at the University of Chicago. By 1927 he was working for Royalite in Turner Valley. He explained the benefits of membership in the AAPG to the founders of the Alberta Society at the founding meeting. Before leaving in 1931, he recommended the AAPG hold its annual conference at Banff. The oilmen presented him with a gift watch at his farewell party, "inscribed with a cross-section of Turner Valley from an original drafted for the purpose by his colleague, 'Doc' T.A. Link."

H.M. HUNTER

A prairie boy from North Dakota, Harry M. Hunter was 24 years young at the founding meeting of the Society. With a degree from the University of Alberta and practical experience as a surveyor at Cranbrook and as a mining engineer in Canmore, he had just been hired as a geologist by Stan Slipper at the Gas Company on Dr. Allan's recommendation. Hunter served as ASPG Secretary-Treasurer in 1929, as Business Manager in 1935 and 1937, and as President in 1939.

R.B. McNEELY

Born and trained in Oklahoma, Robert Barnes McNeely must have had quite the summer in 1927. For several months the Okie rode a horse and scavenged the rocks in northern Alberta with a pack-train survey team for Glen Ruby and the Hudson's Bay – Marland Oil Company. Bob McNeely returned to the United States in 1928.

J.A. ALLAN

John Andrew Allan was born in Aubrey, Quebec in July 1884. He studied geology at McGill University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before moving to the west in 1905 to do geological work. In 1912 he established the Department of Geology at the University of Alberta and served as its first head. In 1920 he published the first geological map of Alberta. A member of numerous societies, his bibliography includes some 160 articles dating from 1909 to 1954. In October of 1926, as a university scholar and a practicing geological consultant, he vigorously defended the viability of the Turner Valley Field against vicious attacks made by a California geologist. Allan served as the first Vice-President of the ASPG in 1928. His geological hammer, passed down to each new CSPG President, symbolizes the authority and responsibility of the office.

R.V. JOHNSON

In 1937 the Vancouver Sun wrote “When the time comes to write the history of Alberta's oil fields and particularly that of Turner Valley, the name of Russel V. Johnson will undoubtedly occupy a prominent place in the recordings.” He was “a consulting geologist and probably the only one of a miniature army who did not desert The Valley in 1929-30 when the world went into a tail spin and far fields looked very green, even to eyes interested in black, gummy oil.” Johnson was also a member of the AAPG and the CIMM and worked as a consultant in Calgary until the 1940s. He served the ASPG as Vice-President in 1935 and President in 1936, guiding the young Society through a dark period.

S.J. DAVIES

Stanley J. Davies held a degree in Technology of Oil from the Royal School of Mines in London, England. During the early 1920s he worked as a petroleum geologist and engineer in Romania, Trinidad, Mexico and California. In the latter part of that decade he worked for the Department of the Interior and as a consultant to several oil companies and the city of Calgary. As a member of the AAPG, CIMM and other geological organizations, Davies added credibility to the ASPG.

J.O. HOWELLS

A native of Llanddensant, Wales, Howells graduated as a mining engineer from the University of Wales and came to Canada in 1924 to study mining methods and organizations. He joined the staff of the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary in 1926 as a teacher of science and geology. He spent his summers doing geological work for various mining companies in the Canadian and American west.

E.V. WHITWELL

Elvis Whitwell was only in Canada for a few years with the Hudson's Bay – Marland Oil Company. Born in Missouri and educated at the University of Oklahoma, he served as the first Business Representative of the ASPG.
George R. Elliott, District Engineer of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Division (forerunner of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board) examining dolomitic limestone core recovered from Okalta No. 1 well in Turner Valley, 1929. (Glenbow Archives NA-771-69)

“Pete” Sanderson, Medicine Hat, Alberta, 1908. (Glenbow Archives NA-3232-28)
During the exhilarating explosion of activity in the Alberta oilpatch in the late 1920s, the future looked bright indeed. But the calamitous collapse of the stock markets in November 1929 plummeted the world economy into a depression. Luckily, the important crude discovery at Turner Valley in 1936 and unprecedented demand for petroleum during World War II fuelled the search for hydrocarbons in the Canadian west.

The first two decades of the life of the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists were as eventful as any in the Society's history. The boom and bust that ran a full cycle from 1928 to 1947 set a pattern for more that followed – each shorter and more urgent than the last. And through this cycle the Society's leaders developed the direction and core programs that have served geologists ever since.

**Looked over or over-looked?**

J.O.G. Sanderson – known as Pete from his bronc-riding days – was ASPG President in 1932. “One temporary low-point was exemplified in 1931. Only one major oil company (a subsidiary) was then exploring for oil and gas on a comprehensive scale in western Canada. In March of that year a management - geological department conference was held and the [Royalite] geological staff was reduced to two geologists. The conference had reached the conclusion that the geological department had ‘looked over’ the best prospects for oil and gas fields in Alberta and that little remained to be done. It has subsequently been demonstrated that the words - looked over - had been well chosen but were used wrong-end-to.”

Petroleum Geologists, boosting the membership from twelve at the organizing meeting to thirty-five in 1928.

Pete Sanderson summarized the Society's philosophy: “It was not intended that it should be organized as an industrial group or institute with its efforts and findings to be specifically dedicated to the benefit and profit of commercial companies.”

**Speculating . . .**

Reflecting the optimism of the founders of the ASPG, the first monthly meeting took place at the Palliser Hotel on February 6, 1928 – cost was $1.00 per plate. T.G. Madgwick gave an oral paper entitled “A Major Fault Plane at Turner Valley.” T.B. Williams presented another paper on Turner Valley at the second meeting, speculating on the prospects on the north end of the field.

The First Annual Conference of the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists convened in Edmonton on March 1 and 2, 1929 with Vice-President John Allan as Chair. The assembled delegates heard and discussed five 30-minute papers on Friday and ten on Saturday.
The Society “conferred an honourary membership upon Dr. R.C. Wallace - President of the University of Alberta and later Principal of Queen’s University.” The University of Alberta, as host, provided lunch. Glen Ruby and the Hudson’s Bay - Marland Company sponsored the Saturday evening banquet at the Canadian National Railway’s Macdonald Hotel on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.

The sharing of information and socializing that has always been important to the Society has not been without controversy. For example, the Supervisory Mining Engineer of the Department of the Interior refused his employee, Grant Spratt, permission to make a presentation to the conference because papers read before the ASPG were often thoroughly discussed and criticized. The ASPG membership reacted and “a formal resolution of protest was drawn up.” Finally, the Supervisory Engineer relented and allowed Spratt to deliver his paper, “Stratigraphy of the Colorado Formation in the Plains of Southern Alberta.” Internal dissension also affected this conference when Calgary organizers rejected papers by Edmonton members of the Society because they were not specifically related to petroleum geology.

**Spreading the word . . .**

The papers from the 1929 conference appeared in the Bulletin of the AAPG in 1931 as “Stratigraphy of the Plains of Southern Alberta: The Donaldson Bogart Dowling Memorial Symposium.” Dowling had worked for the GSC for 40 years, was an expert on coal in the southern plains and also wrote an early paper speculating on the possibility of Devonian oil. The AAPG released this volume on behalf of the ASPG as part of a new relationship that affiliated the two societies in 1931. In December, 1930 the ASPG began a long tradition of symbiotic meetings with other societies when it joined the members of the CIMM to hear A.J. Goodman present a paper called “The Structure of Turner Valley.” In 1931, with CIMM help, the Society commissioned a cairn in memory of Dowling and it was installed during 1933.
The Society subscribed to two geological journals in 1932 as part of its ongoing commitment to publications and placed them in the Calgary Public Library along with another title the City of Calgary provided for the public to read.

Discussions at meetings ranged from specialized topics, such as the advantages of rotary drilling over cable-tool technology, to subjects of general interest to the industry. For example, Calgary-based geologists were concerned that the transfer of natural resources from the federal government to Alberta in 1930 would force a move of government geologists from Calgary to Edmonton, so the minutes of the February 14, 1931 meeting of the ASPG state: “They wish to oppose the change.” And individual members were not required to follow the “party line”. When the ASPG endorsed the principle of gas conservation – Turner Valley producers were burning profligate amounts of natural gas in order to produce liquids – members of the Society employed by the gas interests in southern Alberta refused to go along with the official Society stance.

As finances grew tight the Society moved its monthly meetings from lunch at the Club Café at 111 - 8th Avenue S.W. to members’ homes in the evenings. Once a Calgary member volunteered to drive the Edmonton members to the annual meeting in Calgary if the Society would pay for the gas and oil. Society dues rose from one dollar to two in 1930, fell to a single dollar again in 1935 while unemployed members were exempted from paying dues by the Executive. At the sixth annual meeting on December 8, 1934 the Society cancelled the subscriptions for geological magazines for the public library – the city did the same – cut back the number of meetings and reported a bank balance of only $75.21. At the gathering Stan Slipper wondered aloud if there was enough interest to keep the Society alive. “Very little geological work was being done.” But the small membership voted to continue meeting and later joined CIMM members to hear a paper by the superintendent of the Gas and Oil Products absorption plant at Turner Valley.

Membership numbers dropped from a high of thirty-five in 1928 to just ten in 1936, the year crude oil erupted out of the wildcat well at Turner Valley Royalties No. 1, downdip from the producing gas wells. A boom followed and Turner Valley producers soon had more oil and gas than markets. By early 1939 the independents were lobbying for a pipeline to Winnipeg or any other market, but the majors, importers of offshore oil, boycotted the proposal.

The Society grew slowly during the late 1930s and the first meeting in 1939 included extensive discussion about the relationship with the Association of Professional Engineers of Alberta. After World War II began, Society members were busy trying to find production for the war effort and contributing to an article titled “Possible Future Oil Provinces in Western Canada” in a special 1941 issue of the AAPG Bulletin called “The Possible Future Oil Provinces of the United States and Canada.” The Canadian paper, presented at the annual meeting of the AAPG in 1941, was another early co-publication of the ASPG and the AAPG and it suggested the potential of oil in the Devonian.
“July 8/40 Monday. Looked for horses all day and didn’t locate them.”
- Bill Farmilo, 1956 President

B.R. McKay’s GSC survey party, Alberta foothills, 1940.
(Glenbow Archives NA-5606-4)
Exploration efforts grew during the war and Turner Valley's production expanded to meet the demand – in fact it was grossly overproduced, resulting in permanent damage to the reservoir. The oilfield reached a production peak of over ten million barrels of oil (27,500 bpd) in 1942. Ted Link encouraged the Geological Survey of Canada to continue regional mapping and supporting studies. Dues rose back up to $2.00 in 1943 and the Society bought six copies of The Stratigraphy of the Southern Plains of Alberta to award to promising students in the Department of Geology at the University of Alberta, thus beginning the tradition of supporting the education of future geologists. Norman Wells, which Link helped develop during the 1920s, began moving its oil through the Canadian-American Norman Oil Line (CANOL) in 1944 near the end of the war.

The end of the Society?
In 1944 the Society brought the guest speakers of the AAPG Distinguished Lecture Tour to Canada for the first time, sponsoring them to give lectures on new aspects of geology to interested audiences around the country.

ASPG President D. B. Layer’s report of activities for 1945 challenged Society members to become more active in the Society. They had only published one paper that year and he predicted that if the Society wanted to remain viable and serve geologists and the public, it needed to broaden its activities and actively seek new members.

Though the Society’s membership had gradually grown to almost one hundred members by 1947, petroleum production had peaked in the Turner Valley Field in 1942 and had dropped to 5.5 million barrels (15,000 bpd) by 1946. New oil fields were desperately needed but most companies had just about given up on Alberta. Hundreds of dry – or worse, gas-filled – holes had given the Canadian west a bad name and geologists appeared unable to find new sources of oil. Turner Valley crude production seemed to be an anomaly and exploration companies were on the verge of leaving Alberta for other parts of the globe.

March 20, 1942
Nickle’s Oil Bulletin headline:
“ALBERTA’S OILFIELD ASSUME NEW IMPORTANCE AS ALASKA DEFENSE HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION STARTS!”
“The United States Government has called Turner Valley into action against the Japs. The Valley has been called upon for the many thousands of barrels of high grade aviation gasoline and motor fuel needed for the construction, maintenance and protection of the new vital defence highway to Alaska.”
A SPG field trip, Banff area, 1950.
(Glenbow Archives PA-2166-128)

ASPG publications sales desk, 1954.
(Glenbow Archives PA-2166-57)

1957 ASPG Executive (left to right) - Past President A.W. Greenwalt and President J.A. Downing, seated. Treasurer J.R. Pow, Secretary W.A. Greenwalt and Vice President S.A. Kerr.
(Glenbow Archives PA-2166-11)
“The birth of the modern oil industry . . .”

“I watched on Thursday afternoon while IMPERIAL-LEDUC No. 1 kicked itself off and staged a spectacular ‘flare’ scene,” wrote Carl Nickle in the *Daily Oil Bulletin* on Friday, February 14, 1947. “In the small hours of this morning I shivered in a raw wind while my hand on the flow pipe recorded the steady pulsating of oil heading for the storage tanks and gas heading for the flare.”

By the end of 1947, 28 of the 33 wells drilled in Alberta’s newest oilfield were flowing oil! The Leduc-Woodbend oilfield’s production passed Turner Valley in 1948 and by the end of 1951 oil production from it and Redwater was twelve times greater than the rapidly depleting oldtimer – almost forty million barrels annually (over 100,000 bpd).

This new level of production challenged Alberta’s oilmen in many ways. Atlantic No. 3 near Imperial-Leduc No. 1 blew out and ran wild for six months – and was on fire for fifty-nine hours – before finally being brought under control on September 10, 1948. And it was not controlled until after it had flooded a farmer’s field with 1.4 million barrels of oil – a spill five times the size of the oilspill created by the Exxon Valdez decades later. And, in 1952, Canada’s first sulphur plants at Jumping Pound and Turner Valley began producing elemental sulphur from the noxious hydrogen sulphide that had been routinely vented to the atmosphere for decades.

Finally, on January 2, 1950, income from petroleum leases, royalties, taxes and other fees displaced liquor as the single largest income generator for the Alberta government. Oil was king!

Numerous oilpatch organizations sprang into being in response to this.

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**The Devonian Discoveries**

Ancient Devonian reefs held this treasure. Ted Link’s drilling at Norman Wells in 1920 found oil in similar reefs, but few seriously considered the Devonian a likely reservoir in Alberta. In fact, it took until into the 1950s for geologists to understand the significance of these immense deposits – eventually almost ten billion barrels of oil and more than 26 Tcf of natural gas!

But Devonian discoveries at Leduc-Woodbend and Redwater made the Canadian prairies self-sufficient in petroleum in early 1949 and additional finds including Golden Spike and Swan Hills during the next dozen years prompted construction of oil and gas pipelines to central Canada and the west coast. By 1959, the year Canada produced its billionth barrel of oil, Canadian production exceeded consumption and the country technically self-sufficient in petroleum. Strangely enough, 1959 was also the year the Oil and Gas Conservation Board (part of today’s Energy and Utilities Board) released its report into the potential of using a nuclear explosion to liquify the oil in the McMurray Oil Sands – it never happened.


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“Not yet. No point in getting excited. I’ve waited 36 years for this day, and I reckon the oil will keep for another hour or two until I’ve had my lunch.”

Farmer John A. Gow, on being asked if he wanted to see the gusher on his land near Barons, Alberta, November 22, 1950.
flush of activity. The men who negotiated the surface and mineral rights for the industry formed the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen in 1948 and drillers banded together in 1949 to create the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors. Industry “spies” formed the Western Canadian Oil Scouts Association in 1949 and expanded it into the Canadian Oil Scouts Association in 1951. Women in the industry created the Desk and Derrick Club in late 1950 and oil companies expanded the mandate of their regional organization and formed the Canadian Petroleum Association in 1952.

The Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists had a significant head start on these other organizations although its annual budget did not exceed $100 until 1944. Its Executive economised in various ways, such as using a rubber stamp to make letterhead instead of purchasing printed stationery. But during the dozen years after the discovery of oil in the Devonian reefs, the Society greatly expanded its profile. For example, membership increased from about 100 in 1947 to 1142 in 1959. Serving the needs of a booming Society required new programs, activities and publications.

Meetings increased in number in the late 1940s with regular luncheons at the Club Café at 111 – 8th Ave. S.W. and evening sessions at the Elks Hall at 114 – 7th Ave. S.W. The Society’s public profile rose in 1949 when founding members testified as experts at the Alberta government’s Dinning Commission into the province’s natural gas reserves. Imperial Oil’s Ted Link predicted reserves of at least 17 Tcf, far in excess of the 4.26 Tcf figure commonly quoted – and even his estimate has proved very conservative. When it came time to determine future requirements in order to assess the potential to export gas, consultant Stan Davies argued for a 40 year reserve – the life of a mortgage – and against exporting gas until there were “probable recoverable natural gas reserves to adequately supply” the needs of Alberta consumers.

Hosting the world . . .

The Society’s next big milestone was in 1950 when it hosted the first regional meeting of the AAPG, the Society of Exploration Geophysicists and the Geological Association of Canada to be held in this country. This first Annual Field Conference (the early conferences were all field trips), guided by Chairman L.M. Clark, took place at the Banff Springs Hotel from September 5-8, 1950. A small, twenty-page Banff Area Field Trip guidebook with two maps was the first stand-alone ASPG publication and marked the beginning of the Society’s important publishing program. The Society created its Medal of Merit in 1951 to honour the best paper presented at the annual meeting; Jack Webb was the first recipient in 1952 for his paper, “The Geological History of the Plains of Western Canada.”

Interest in geology grew quickly in the 1950s and two other regional groups began meeting. In early 1951, 33 geologists and geophysicists formed the Saskatchewan Geological Society. Even though they were interested in more than just petroleum geology, the SGS affiliated itself with both the AAPG and the ASPG. Their activities included field trips, formal meetings, symposia, awards and occasional publications. Three years later like-minded geologists formed the Edmonton
Geological Society – it became the Edmonton Section of the Geological Association of Canada in 1974. Also affiliated with the AAPG and the ASPG, its activities included meetings, dinners, an annual dance, annual smoker, annual field trip, AAPG Distinguished Lecture Tours and awards. In the early years, there was also an annual stag with free beer.

The Alberta Society expanded its social activities in 1952 when it created the Annual Dinner Dance to supplement the regular luncheon and evening meetings. It also celebrated the 25th anniversary of its founding at the December 10, 1952 luncheon. The membership voted to grant twenty-five Honourary Memberships to the founders and the 1928 members and to formally recognize them at the Silver Anniversary Meeting on January 21, 1953.

Publishing the news . . .

The 1953 Third Annual Conference and Symposium set a new standard for Society events and publications. Although the 1950 Banff conference had released a small publication, the 1953 Guidebook set the example for years to come with 230 pages of papers, a map and a road log. Cam Sproule and Jim Scott edited it and that year’s President, E.O. Abbott, concluded: “This was the most ambitious single publishing venture yet undertaken by the Society and is a collection of papers of uniformly high merit.” These guides have become an important part of the Society’s publications program and have featured nearly every geologically significant part of Canada as well as important regions of the United States, China and the Soviet Union.

Bill Gallup organized the 1953 conference and 320 registrants – including 62 from the United States – made the field trip to the Crowsnest Pass “a great success.” Busses were still in the future for the field trips, so geologists piled into dozens of cars – “the cloud of dust didn’t settle for a month” – and filled the trunks with beer for the two day excursion. Riley’s sponsored the fried chicken lunch the first day and Schlumberger the second.

In May of 1953 the Society published the first issue of the ASPG News Bulletin – a monthly circular that became the Journal in 1955 and evolved into the Bulletin in 1963. Editor K.A. Olson wrote that “the chief consideration was its use as a means to strengthen the Society. . . . by providing the membership with interesting material not obtainable elsewhere.” The first issue included abstracts of forthcoming papers, advertising and The Exploration Desk column by L.E. Workman. At the end of his first article, entitled “Winterburn Silt Concentration”, Workman asked for submissions: “Your offer to set forth an observation will be gratefully received; your cooperation when called upon will be appreciated. Papers may be quite informal. Should you prefer, ideas and statements may be dictated by phone to the Desk secretary. We supply all punctuation.” J.C. Sproule ended the obituary in the News Bulletin for Frederick Anderson Killer, a young Imperial Oil geologist who died after a short illness, with a personal touch: “May God bless you, Fred, and be kind to the folks you left behind.” There was also a list of New Members and columns titled Personal News and News from the Nursery included gems like: “Al and Iris Swidinski (Phillips) are recently proud of Patricia Ann. Al is doing nicely and is entirely normal.” Though sponsored by various companies, a note at the
back of the newsletter stated: “The deficit in publication of this first issue was largely met through the generosity and support of Exploration Consultants and Norman J. Christie.” Nick Bidniak won a $25 award in the contest to design the ASPG insignia that was used in publications and on a Society pin.

During 1954 the Society helped establish a Technical Library as part of the Calgary Public Library. The same year members of the Saskatchewan and Alberta societies contributed papers to a publication on the stratigraphy of the Alberta basin. Dedicated to Dr. R.L. Rutherford, a geology professor at the University of Alberta, the volume was co-published with the AAPG and was entitled, *Western Canada*

### New Oil from a New Field
- **Arne Nielsen and the Cretaceous**

Some of the west’s first petroleum discoveries came from rocks of a young geological age – the Cretaceous. Heavy oil of the McMurray tar sands is in the Lower Cretaceous. Gas at Medicine Hat, Bow Island and Viking are in the Upper Cretaceous.

Compared to these earlier discoveries – most were known or developed before WWI – the Pembina discovery of 1953 is quite recent. Society Member Arne Nielsen and colleagues are credited with this discovery. The Upper Cretaceous Pembina Cardium Pool is different from the other big finds, the reef structures in the Devonian. Instead, Pembina oil is trapped in a relatively thin reservoir, in a stratigraphic pinchout trap. The Cardium contains western Canada’s largest oilfield, Pembina, over 2,500 square kilometres in size! Companies scrambled to get in on the action and eventually drilled more than 5,000 wells and produced almost two billion barrels of oil. (The Cretaceous eventually produced more than 5 billion barrels of oil and over 77 Tcf of gas)

The Society’s Cretaceous publications include: *The Mesozoic of Middle North America* (Memoir 9, 1984) and *Petroleum Geology of the Cretaceous Mannville Group, Western Canada.* (Memoir 18, 1997).

“Gift to the ASPG.
S. J. Davies, one of the ASPG founders, has donated to the Society twenty-five dollars, no strings attached. Anyone with a ‘Tax Problem’ is invited to consider the ASPG treasury. As we know, the financial security of the AAPG as well as other scientific societies has been attained through such gifts.”

ASPG News Bulletin, August 1953

Sedimentary Basin: *The Ralph Leslie Rutherford Memorial Volume.* Editor Leslie M. Clark noted: “Dr. Rutherford, or Ralph as he was known to so many of us, played an important part in the training of a large percentage of the petroleum geologists that are actively exploring and developing Western Canada. For this, as well as his extensive field research on the structure and subsurface geology of the Foothills Belt and the Plains of Alberta, his ready wit and stimulating ideas, we feel it highly fitting to honour him in this way.” The Society also published the first *Lexicon of Geologic Names in Alberta and Adjacent Portions of British Columbia and Northwest Territories* in 1954, a compilation of 196 recognized stratigraphic names.

Notes from a rousing discussion at a smoker in late 1954 reflect some of the arguments that have circulated in the Society since the beginning. As early as 1923, geologists who wanted to be formally recognized by the Alberta Public Utilities Board had to join the Association of Professional Engineers of Alberta – the APEA – and be classified as mining engineers. Joe Irwin suggested all ASPG members join the APEA because geologists “are represented in all legal matters by the Prof. Eng. and in order to hold professional status under the law a geologist would have to belong to P.E.” Since 1939, he argued, geologists “have come under P.E. Act and to have an act of our own would involve considerable difficulty and negotiation.” He added that the APEA offered “legal control over the members of the profession.” Bill Gallup probably made many interesting comments, but concluded: “It seems that for the present we should continue to co-
operate.” W. Ogilvie noted the Act protected the geologists' status and “prevents those who are not geologists from passing and signing reports as geologists . . .” But, he added, the “basic aim of the ASPG to advance petroleum geology cannot well be merged into the basic aim of the P.E. which is to preserve professional status.” M. Sorenson added his dissenting voice and concluded: “It is time for us to disassociate ourselves from the P.E. and get our own act.”

Dues rose from three to five dollars per year in 1955 with two dollars from each member designated for the new Journal of the ASPG. A replacement for the monthly Newsletter, it included full papers along with news and information. Members considered amalgamating with other societies, but could not reach consensus.

Celebrating growth . . .
Alberta celebrated its fiftieth anniversary as a province in 1955 and the Society participated by hosting a second regional AAPG meeting in Canada at Jasper. Papers at this conference focussed on the stratigraphy of the Jurassic and Carboniferous in Western Canada and were published in 1958 as the John Andrew Allan Memorial Volume. A founder and the first Vice-President of the Society, Dr. Allan was also a professor, the founder and the first head of the Department of Geology at the University of Alberta, and an early and influential geologist. The Society honoured him again many years later, on December 5, 1986, when it gave the John A. Allan Plaque to the government of Alberta at the official opening of the Mount Allan Olympic ski area in Kananaskis Country.

The Allan family donated Dr. Allan’s geological hammer to the ASPG in 1955. To this day the John A. Allan Memorial Hammer is passed on from one President to the next because it was “used by Dr. Allan on his many geological field trips in the search for knowledge, and is the ASPG’s symbol of authority. It stands for the proper conduct of the duties and responsibilities of office and as a reminder of the high standards required of the geologist both as a scientist and a citizen of his country.”

On January 20, 1956 the Society registered itself as an incorporated body with the Government of Alberta and filed a full set of bylaws. Legal documents can make for dry reading, but the Society at this time was notable for its compact nature, with only five committees: Program Committee, Journal Committee, Annual Field Conference Committee, Names & Correlation Committee and a Membership Committee.

In 1957 Society membership passed the one thousand mark and it created the Annual Honorary Address. According to Jack Webb, this series “has given our members the
benefit of presentation by many eminent geologists.” The June 1958 issue of the Journal included the first corporate sponsor list. Four years earlier the Society had decided against approaching companies because corporate memberships were deemed unnecessary and likely to erode the independence of the ASPG. In 1958, “to give the Society a more predictable income and to obtain funds in a more business-like manner,” the Executive reversed this decision and accepted six corporate members and twenty-one associate corporate members.

The Society’s tradition of encouraging scholarship in geology began in 1958 when it presented the first annual Link Award (named in honour of Society founder and second President Ted Link) to Ron White for his paper “The Innisfail Oil Field.” That same year the Society also created an award for the best petroleum-related thesis at a Canadian university. R.G. (Bob) McCrossan won that year for his undergraduate thesis and in 1964 the Society presented its first M.Sc. thesis award to A. Lissey and its first Ph.D. thesis award to J.A. Westgate.

Society operations were becoming so busy in the late 1950s – a $65,000 budget to administer, 32 technical meetings to organize and over 900 pages of information to publish – that the Executive decided to hire its first employee, Helen Fairhurst, in 1958. Given the growing literature on the geology of the Canadian west, the Society also released a special publication, the Annotated Bibliography of Geology of the Sedimentary Basin of Alberta and of adjacent parts of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, 1845-1955, edited by Bob McCrossan.

Looking to the future . . .

In addition to providing information to geologists and other earth scientists, Society members were once again called upon to provide expert testimony in 1958. Prime Minister Diefenbaker’s royal commission into the energy industry, known as the Borden Commission after chairman Henry Borden, needed information about petroleum. Though the ASPG usually maintained its distance and protected its reputation as a scientific organization, its members appeared before the commission along with the experts from the Canadian Petroleum Association and estimated potentials at 50 billion barrels of oil and 300 trillion cubic feet of gas.

And just in time. At stake was the development of the oilfields in the Canadian west. Although finding oil is usually considered the most difficult part of the petroleum development process, by 1957 Alberta’s booming economy was being suffocated by a lack of access to markets – it had the capacity to supply all of Canada! A worldwide glut of oil in 1959 had caused the Americans to raise a “voluntary” quota system against Alberta oil imports into the American northwest. Domestically, Alberta oil was not economically competitive with Venezuelan petroleum brought into Montreal. More oil was coming onstream each year and with the tar sands on the verge of becoming economically viable, Alberta was desperate for markets.

As the ASPG approached the 1960s, geologists began to realize that the future was being decided not by their ability to find oil, but by international economic and political powers. Canadian oil and gas had entered the global marketplace.
Feast and Famine . . .

A curious string of events in late 1960 forever changed the relationship between international producers and consumers. In the face of a worldwide glut of oil, on August 9, 1960, Standard Oil of New Jersey cut the price it paid to exporters of oil by 7 percent, or fourteen cents per barrel. John Loudon of Shell said it was “the fatal move. You can’t just be guided by market forces in an industry so essential to various governments. You had to take other things into consideration. You had to be so very careful.” Oil exporting countries reacted quickly and on September 14, 1960, created a cartel called OPEC: the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Though Canadian producers were struggling to find continental markets for petroleum, domestic consumption was rising. Natural gas had surpassed wood as a fuel in homes in 1955, overtook hydroelectric power in 1960 and, in 1964, pushed coal aside. In early 1960, the Alberta government announced that its cumulative income from oil and gas related taxes, royalties and fees had totalled a billion dollars. Finally, on February 1, 1961, the federal government in Ottawa created a National Oil Policy. It protected Ontario for Canadian oil, ensuring a market for Alberta petroleum in central Canada.

But for young petroleum geologists the job market was poor. Because of the oversupply of oil, companies were cutting back the staff in their exploration departments in spite of the long-term need for reserves. Experienced geologists, of course, considered this trend suicidal and tried to encourage youngsters while protecting their own jobs.

The Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists responded to this severe downturn by creating an Employment Committee in 1960 with geologist W.A. (Al) Hiles as first chairman. “In the spring of this year it became apparent that an unusually high incidence of unemployment had developed in the geological field sufficiently severe to merit investigation by the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists acting on behalf of several of its members, then without jobs.” Hiles investigated employment possibilities, contacted companies and generally worked as a one man referral agency.

Committee records show some thirty unemployed geologists were forced to change careers while others returned to university for graduate work or to teach. The crisis continued for several years and in 1962 ASPG President Ted Best responded to a geologist looking for advice on getting a job in Alberta by writing that “the job situation is relatively stable with few geologists being dismissed but very few new jobs developing either. When opportunities develop they are mostly for geologists with considerable local experience.” Female geologists had an even slimmer chance, according to Best: “Generally the demand is highest for recent graduates but female geologists are not in great demand because of the lack of flexibility, i.e. inability to fulfill jobs such as wellsite.”
Society members worked for three years to expand the data and the new volume included 554 recognized stratigraphic units.

The first Past Presidents’ Dinner, in 1960, was a smashing success. It drew 240 Society members and honoured the thirty-one Past Presidents of the Society – though only twenty-one were able to attend. The dinner cost $3.50 per plate and the Past-Presidents each paid their own travel costs to Calgary. Avid astronomer Ted Link titled his special address “Some Thoughts on Outer Space” and his abstract stated: “...because of the fact that we are living on a planet of mediocre size, in a solar system of relatively modest dimensions, situated in a galaxy of average magnitude, the odds are greatly against the long-held and cherished belief of the human race that it is the highest developed and most intelligent organism in all of space.” He encouraged photo-geologists to work with other scientists and astronomers to assess the universe in order to better understand meteorites and other space items – “since they are the only tangible or concrete objects from outer space which should tell us something definite about the physical composition of bodies beyond our planet Earth.”

In 1961, the ASPG sponsored the Polar Wandering and Continental Drift Symposium. Wanderers of a different sort took an informal field trip to the Bahamas and a report of their activities in April 1962 concluded: “Similar trips to geologically important areas are worthy and could be continued at intervals in the future.”

In 1963 the Society convinced the AAPG to hold its main convention outside the United States for the first time. The Alberta Society helped organize the American Society’s annual...
A Sporting Society

Sporting events have played an important role in the Society’s history. Over the years, geologists have organized several events that have become important traditions.

In keeping with the social norms of the times, Fred Brechtel and other Society members decided to start a Men’s Golf Tournament in 1961. Several companies made $50 donations to purchase fifteen permanent trophies for the winners of the flights – each named after formation names and Foothills area terminology. Winners in the June event received a trophy while the runners-up were awarded umbrellas, golf jackets or golf shoes. Consolation prizes included golf shoes and golf shirts.

The ASPG Executive supported the tournament under certain conditions: it had to be self-supporting and was not permitted to make a profit. It was also to keep its expenses to a minimum – the estimated entrance fee was $15, and preference had to be given to ASPG members. In 1981 the Executive decided to drop the Men’s Golf Tournament from its official roster of fully-sponsored activities although the event was allowed to continue using the CSPG name and the Society still sponsored one flight.

And twenty-five years after the Society started the Men’s Golf Tournament, the CSPG sponsored the first annual Ladies’ Golf Tournament, August 14, 1986 at Douglasdale Estates Golf Course.

In 1990, Bill Haskett and his energetic “Open Golf” tournament committee created the first CSPG golf event that was open to all Society members. According to President Ed Klovan, this new CSPG tournament “nicely supplementing the thirty-year-old Men’s Tournament and the more recently established Ladies’ Tournament.”

During the 1980s the Society created two new sporting traditions. The first CSPG Squash Tournament in 1983 reflected the more active recreational choices of a new generation of geologists. And in 1989 almost one hundred Society members participated in the first annual 10 Kilometre Road Race at Fish Creek Park. These successful events have become important Society traditions.

In early September 1999, the Society held the first joint CSPG/CSEG Hockey Tournament with the geophysicists. According to organizer Frank Pogubila, the idea for this three day event sprang from a few bottles of beer. Every year, on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week following Labour Day, explorationists lace up the skates. Eight teams compete, with players ranging from twenty-two to eighty-six years of age. A handful of women also participate and Pogubila says the hockey is always a “very positive experience for both men and women.” About 90 percent of the players are members of the CSPG or the CSEG. The tournament breaks even financially, but if it ever makes money the committee intends to donate the profits to the Educational Trust Fund.

meeting in Toronto, drawing on the 650 members of the ASPG, and the members of the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Geological Societies who also belonged to the AAPG.

The Society also worked with the University of Alberta to co-sponsor the Earth Science School – later called the National Conference on Earth Science – at the Banff School of Fine Arts in May 1963. ASPG member Gordon Williams chaired the organizing committee that created week-long professional development courses at the graduate level. The Carbonate Research Symposium was the first of these annual events and, in 1988, the Geology and Petroleum Markets Conference was the last.

The desire to change the name of the Society to reflect its national role grew throughout the 1960s. Although a questionnaire on the topic in late 1965 only drew 190 responses, all but ten supported the change. At the December 16, 1965 meeting forty-five voted in favour, twenty-seven opposed but a 75 percent majority was necessary so the “motion was therefore defeated.” The topic arose again in 1967 and the findings of an inquiry included: “One of the main arguments for retaining Alberta in the name of the Society seems to be nostalgic, a sort of wistful desire to return to the days of the barefoot geologist.”

Categories of most of our membership:

(a) Professionals
(b) Generalists
(c) Specialists
(d) Trainees (Students)
(e) Non-geologists

(f) Inept & Incompetent Geologists

(g) Management types
(h) Corporate

1967 Inquiry into a National Name, emphasis added!

Even though 90 percent of the membership supported a name change, Past Presidents
Farmilo, Best, Woodward, Kirker and McCrossan suggested, instead, the unification of the three groups – the Alberta, Edmonton and Saskatchewan societies – into a “Western Geological Societies” organization. Only if such an organization failed would these men support a change of name for the Society.

In 1969 geologists from the various western groups joined together to form the Canadian Association of Petroleum Geologists. By 1970 there were 1700 members in the organization but in 1971 it became apparent that the CAPG was unable to attract geologists or groups elsewhere in Canada. At the same time the memberships of the EGS and the SGS were shrinking, while the ASPG grew to 1800. The CAPG tried to act as an umbrella organization but ended up doing little more than releasing publications for the three societies. Consequently, the CAPG dissolved when geologists formed the national Society in 1973.

Publishing programs expanded quickly during these decades and in 1963 the Society joined forces with the EGS and SGS to create the quarterly Bulletin of Canadian Petroleum Geology – an expansion of the Journal. Although Society membership was only 1287, demand for the Bulletin was so brisk that the Society printed 2000 copies of each issue.

The Geological History of Western Canada was published in 1964, the culmination of a project that had been four years in the making. It took as its prototype the 1954 Rutherford Memorial Volume, published in conjunction with the AAPG. Edited by Bob McCrossan and Perry Glaister, this comprehensive publication included numerous maps, cross-sections and correlation charts with descriptive text. It provided a comprehensive account of the stratigraphy and historical geology of the southern portion of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin south of Great Slave Lake. This massive book represented many thousands of hours of work by Society volunteers but sold for $25, a testament to the Society’s mandate to share knowledge. A 1982 estimate for reprinting alone was $300 per copy. The volume was an instant success, with more than 3500 copies making their way into the hands of users in the first few years.

A growing body of publications made it hard to keep track of all the Society’s literature, so an Index to the Bulletin for May 1953 to December 1962 was published in April 1965. The Society began printing a separate newsletter in 1965 to keep members up to date, announcing its technical meetings and other items of interest. The Bibliography of Geology of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin and the Arctic Islands, 1957-1963 arrived in 1966 and the Society began selling the Geological Highway Map of Alberta in 1967.

In April of 1969, the Society released the Gas Fields of Alberta volume; edited by L.H. Larson, it was a companion piece to the Society’s 1960 reference text, the Oil Fields of Alberta (1960).
Spreading the word . . .

Among other initiatives during this period, in 1964 the Society considered creating a museum to display and interpret the geology of western Canada but concluded it was impractical at the time.

The Society’s concerted drive to attract corporate members in the early 1960s yielded excellent results. “Acting on the principle that many companies had never become corporate members simply because they had never been asked, the committee found that asking produced results.” By the end of 1966 the Society received 45 percent of its revenue from corporate sponsors, a level of funding that allowed it to fund its ambitious publications program.

Conferences and symposia have always been an important part of the Society’s annual calendar and in 1966 the ASPG held its conference with the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists. The Joint Conference on Exploration for Natural Gas in Canada attracted 586 geoscientists, 60 percent of whom were geologists. R. Martin of the ASPG and J.B. Cameron of the CSEG chaired this event. In addition, symposia were held on structural geology and reefs, with a total attendance of 800 delegates.

The Society sponsored an International Devonian Symposium in Calgary in 1967. Chaired by H.R. (Helen) Belyea and D.J. (Digby) McLaren, the symposium attracted 841 Society members and another 238 geologists came from eighteen countries around the world. Three years in the planning, it boasted 200 papers, thirteen field trips, 2451 pages of papers published in two volumes and a field trip guidebook for the Canadian Cordillera.

These titles, along with the Oil Fields of Alberta, the Geological History of Western Canada and the Gas Fields of Alberta, constituted the essential library of practical publications on which Canadian geologists relied for the next thirty years.

In 1968, the Society joined with the Geological Survey of Canada, the Geological Association of Canada and the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy to support an ASPG-sponsored display at the International Geological Congress at Prague.

The first Calgary Core Conference took place in 1969 under the direction of George D. Grant. He recalls getting the idea from a similar event held in Regina by the Saskatchewan Geological Society. Its core conference was a hands-on event, “with your nose in the rocks” he recalls, because “core is the absolute truth when you get down to it.” Monti Lerand chaired the next Calgary Core Conferences, in 1975 and 1976. He says the cores date back to the start of rotary drilling, in the late 1920s. Given the Alberta government's regulations that require submission of core and make it available for public inspection after one year, it provides an incredible wealth of information for geologists. “The rocks are the foundation of subsurface studies” says Lerand, and the Society’s sponsorship of these ongoing conferences is a valuable contribution to petroleum geology.

In addition to its regular activities, the Society also increased its profile by serving members in new ways. In 1964, a committee began investigating computers, a relatively new tool,
1969, the Society created a Helicopter Safety Committee “as a result of concern over the increased number of helicopter accidents.” The Canadian Petroleum Association and the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada were also involved, but the group decided that the ASPG would make the most logical agency to pursue this topic. As a result the Society studied helicopter use in 1970, reviewed reports of accidents and created a geologists’ equipment list as well as a list of equipment to put into a survival Drop-Pack. In 1972 the Society published a *Helicopter Safety and Operations Manual* under the guidance of committee chairman M. de Matharel. The Committee expanded its mandate in 1973 and changed its name to the Aircraft Safety Committee as it continued monitoring the safety of all airborne transportation systems.

*A drink with lunch . . .*

After meeting in various places for the regular luncheon and evening meetings, the Society moved to Penley’s Dancehall at the corner of 5th Avenue and 3rd Street S.W. in Calgary in 1970. That year’s President, George Grant, remembers the luncheons were held upstairs in the Al-San Club, named after operators Allan Bertram and Sandy Anderson. The Al-San’s private club status allowed geologists to take a beer or a glass of wine with lunch which allowed the Al-San to make a bit of money off the drinks. And according to Grant, “a little refreshment never hurt some of the presentations – they needed a little liquid support.” Lunches for about 300 people were catered and cost 75 cents. Evening meetings were held downstairs in the dancehall.

In the late 1950s the field crews had given up the horse and turned to fixed wing airplanes and helicopters for reconnaissance and so, in

“*I travelled all over the United States that year giving speeches to various societies saying, ‘You ought to come to Calgary.' We actually made a movie, the only time a movie has ever been made advertising the convention and we had a helicopter fly down the main street of Calgary showing how big it was in those days and it was quite a movie.”*

AAPG 1970 convention chairman Jack Browning
The Society began the 1970s with a busy slate of activities and publications, each of which expanded the role of the organization and prepared it to take on a national character. In June 1970 the ASPG hosted the annual meeting of the AAPG in June. The influx of members of the American association made it the largest technical conference ever held in Calgary to date, with over 4,400 delegates attending events around the theme “Oil in the Demanding Decade.”

In February 1972 the Society joined with five other Canadian earth science societies and formed the Canadian Geoscience Council. Eleven scientific organizations eventually became involved, representing more than 10,000 geoscientists. During August 1972 the Geological Survey of Canada hosted the 24th International Geological Congress in Montreal; the ASPG helped organize the event and hosted field trips to the Canadian west.

Monkey Trials?

During 1970 the mandate of the Association of Professional Engineers of Alberta was legally broadened to encompass geoscientists and become the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta. Thus began a long debate concerning the relationship between the ASPG and APEGGA and the need for professional certification that continues today.

Oil at the end of the Rainbow – Mike Hriskevich and Banff Oil

Devonian finds were nothing new in the 1950s and 1960s, but the discovery of oil at Rainbow in the northwestern part of Alberta was another story.

Conventional wisdom allowed for reefs in the area, but wildcat wells had found no oil and the area had been written off as “gas-prone” – sour gas at that. But Society member and 1969 President Mike Hriskevich decided to drill anyhow. Using tricky seismic data – after decades of mutual suspicion and rivalry, geologists and geophysicists were just beginning to work as a team – Hriskevich and his colleagues identified a likely drilling prospect for Banff Oil.

“And of course, I insisted that it was going to be called Rainbow,” he said many years later, “the pot of oil at the end of the rainbow.”

Lucky as well as good, the first well hit 145 metres of oil pay as well as sulphurous gas. Rainbow proved that the tall, spiky Keg River reefs – some of which soared as high as a 30 story building – could hold copious amounts of oil in a region that others had written off as producing nothing more than sour gas.

By 1970 there were more than 1,000 wells in the northwest corner of Alberta, enough to justify building two oil pipelines to Edmonton.

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the theory of evolution.” As a result, the Alberta Education Department withheld approval for the book. Mike Hriskeyevich, ASPG President in 1969 and a devout Christian and a respected geologist, argued its merits. For a time it looked as though the five hundred members of the True Education Committee had won and he wrote: “It certainly appears to us that this is an excellent example of democratic rule by minority.” By 1974 the dispute had receded and the junior and senior high Science Curriculum Committees added The Face of Time to their recommended reading lists.

Less controversial was the release in 1972 of the long awaited “Views of Canadian Geology in Colour Slides.” That same year the Society received a grant from Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to help print The Future Petroleum Provinces of Canada - Their Geology and Potential, a collection of eighteen papers. Edited by Bob McCrosan, this 720 page book was the first in the Memoir Series.

A national name . . .

The issue of the national name for the Society erupted again at the Beer and Bull session in 1972 where the assembly decided to create a Committee for a National Name. John Andriuk served as committee chair and he recalls there was a move afoot among non-petroleum geologists in other parts of the country to form a union. The oilpatch geologists, however, were not interested in such an organization, so ASPG members decided to expand the role of their Society to include all Canadian oil geologists.

“A member may publish dignified business, professional, or announcement cards, but shall not advertise his work or accomplishments in a self-laudatory or unduly conspicuous manner.” 1973 CSPG Code of Ethics, point 7.

“Whereas the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists has grown from its modest beginnings in 1928 to become an organization of national scope and world-wide membership . . . “ in early 1973 the membership resolved to change the name to the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists. “The purposes of this Society are to advance the science of geology, especially as it relates to petroleum and natural gas; to promote the technology of exploration for finding and producing these resources from the Earth; to foster the spirit of scientific research throughout its membership; to disseminate information relating to geology and the associated technology of petroleum and natural gas to its membership, the public at large and government; to inspire and maintain a high standard of professional conduct of the part of its members; and to provide the public a means of recognition of adequately trained and professionally responsible petroleum geologists.”

“The means used to achieve these purposes may include the publication of technical papers, the holding of meetings, symposia, conventions and field trips, granting of scholarships and research grants, and the support of other societies and associations with similar objectives.”

And so, at the final ASPG meeting on January 18, 1973, with overwhelming approval from the one hundred members present, the Society finally changed its name to the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists. Two of the Society’s charter members were in attendance – Harry Hunter, who was also a founder, and Jack Webb.

The 1960s and early 1970s had been an exciting period in this history of the Canadian petroleum industry. Building on the discoveries of the late 1940s and 1950s, geologists continued finding new fields in northern Alberta. Exploratory drilling in the Arctic in the late 1960s and early 1970s proved that many oilfields of the future would be farther north.

The Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists entered the mid-1970s with a newly expanded mandate. Though the events of this period had exposed the geoscience community to a taste of international economics, the next seven years would introduce the Canadian petroleum industry to the tumultuous and challenging arena of international politics.
Subservient or independent?

Petroleum pricing in Canada “must be subservient to industrial strategy” said Ontario Premier Bill Davis to the assembled oil executives at the 20th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Petroleum Association (CPA) on April 3, 1973. That September the Liberal government under Pierre Trudeau froze the price of oil for five months to combat inflation and created a new export tax to keep almost half of the world price in federal coffers. In 1974 Ottawa announced plans to reduce oil exports in 1975 and to stop them completely by 1982. Alberta fought back, trying to keep central Canada from controlling its economic future, by providing small explorers with incentives and royalty tax credits.

This federal-provincial acrimony erupted in the midst of the largest international oil crisis to date – an export embargo by the oil-producing countries in the Middle East in October 1973. The world oil price at Montreal had dropped to just $2.45 per barrel in 1970 – the lowest since WWII – but as a result of OPEC price setting it soared to $13 in 1973 and reached almost $45 per barrel by the end of the decade. Tempers flared, pitting international, national and regional economic and political forces against one another on both economic and political fronts in an unprecedented struggle to capitalize on the largest petroleum boom of the 20th century.

Domestically, petroleum use continued to climb quickly. Two hundred thousand natural gas meters had been installed in Canada by December 1973 – proof that over 8 million consumers were depending on this convenient fuel for heating and cooking.

In 1972, the pressure to bring on stream additional secure sources of petroleum forced U.S. President Richard Nixon to make the decision to build a 1250 kilometre long pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to Port Valdez in Alaska. Other highlights of this period included the creation of Petro-Canada in 1975 and the arrival of the first barrel of Western Canadian oil in Montreal on May 1, 1976 through an extension to the Interprovincial Pipe Line.

Justice Thomas Berger’s moratorium on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline in 1977, after two years of study, gave notice that northern cultural and land claims issues would be included along with economic and political considerations in future petroleum developments. The implications for geologists were far reaching, as not only was immediate development delayed, but the exploration that could prove up additional reserves was pushed off into the future until these issues could be resolved.

The oil industry flourished in unprecedented wealth in the late 1970s, as prices skyrocketed towards a predicted $100 per barrel golden future. In 1978 Syncrude began producing synthetic crude from the oil sands at Fort McMurray. Meanwhile, enterprising geologists found sour oil and gas at West Pembina in Nisku pinnacle reefs of Devonian age within the Ireton shale basin, which had been thought to be too deep during deposition to permit reef building activity.

On the frontiers, Panarctic Oils made a major gas discovery at Whitefish in the Arctic Islands in 1979, the same year the discovery of oil at Hibernia promised that, in the future, the Atlantic offshore would become another major Canadian oil province.
Running out of cigars . . .

Cal Evans remembers travelling to Ottawa with 1970 President George Grant during the energy crisis in May 1973 to present a report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works. *The Future Petroleum Provinces of Canada - Their Geology and Potential* – published in 1973 as the first volume in the CSPG Memoir Series – documented the fact that Canada was not running out of petroleum reserves, just cheap oil. “So we weren’t running out of cigars,” Evans recalls, “we were just running out of 5 cent cigars.”

The CPA also made presentations to the politicians in its role as the industry lobby that represented most of the major companies. But it was unprecedented for the President of the petroleum geologists to take the initiative and speak out in this manner and it caused some controversy. As a technical society, the CSPG representatives felt they could present information in a manner that was scientific and without bias. Evans remembers being well received in Ottawa and he thinks the report was reasonable and balanced. As to whether geologists should speak out in difficult political times, he says: “I personally believe that the Society not only has a right, it has an obligation to share its science with the public and probably more so now than ever.”

The events and activities of the next six years proved the renamed Society was reaching out to serve the national geological community. The CSPG applied to have its AAPG status changed from Affiliated Society to International Associate and it became a member of the World Petroleum Congress and of the Canadian Geoscience Council. Membership grew by more than 40 percent from 2027 in 1973 to 2886 in 1979.

The Society and the Geological Association of Canada sponsored the “Symposium on the Geology of the Canadian Arctic” in 1973 and the groups jointly published the results. The J.P. Gallagher Library committee began developing a geology library at the University of Calgary that same year and the Society also formed the Honorary Membership Committee to administer its oldest award. Granted regularly since the 25th Anniversary Annual Meeting on January 21, 1953, the Honorary Membership was the Society’s highest award until it created the Stanley Slipper Award in 1989.

The Society began publishing the *Reservoir* in January 1974, a monthly newsletter that announced CSPG events and served as a forum for the

There’s an ancient Chinese curse that says, ‘May you live in interesting times.’ 1973 was an interesting time. It was the year of the Yom Kippur War . . . . All of a sudden the Arab embargo of 1973 doubled and may have even tripled the price of oil virtually overnight and caused great consternation. It was the hot topic of conversation everywhere.”
Cal Evans, 1973 CSPG President

The 1973 CSPG Beer and Bull session at the University of Calgary was entitled “Great Expectations - Industry Expectations of Students and Student Expectations of Industry.”

Mackenzie Delta, NWT. (Shell Canada Limited 002592)
discussion of issues. The Executive also appointed area representatives in 1974 to assure close ties with Society members throughout the country.

A symposium called “Canada’s Continental Margins and Offshore Petroleum Potential” in 1974 attracted over 1100 geologists who attended fifty papers offered concurrently in two theatres. A third room featured continuous films of Arctic and offshore exploration. The 1975 convention, the first joint “Exploration Update” co-sponsored with the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists, utilized the facilities of the new Calgary Convention Centre. Bill Evans of the CSEG and Bill Ayrton co-chaired the May event which 1455 people attended – but not without some last minute glitches. Ayrton recalls that they wandered “around the Convention Centre with hard hats when it was being built with our fingers crossed that it would get completed in time for us to open the doors. And they just made it. In fact on the weekend before we opened, a pipe burst in the lower part of the Convention Centre and this flood of water went all over the floor, soaked the carpet and those people at the Convention Centre replaced the whole carpet in 24 hours. So that was sort of exciting.”

The Society created the J.B. Webb Memorial Trophy in 1975 to recognize the best student paper given at the Western University Geological Conference. “Jack” Webb was a charter member of the Society, served as Secretary-Treasurer in 1931 and as President in 1940. He also wrote the first Society retrospective, “The Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists: A Brief History” in 1972. F.F. Krause of the University of Calgary received the first J.B. Webb Memorial Trophy in 1976 for his paper “Stratigraphy and Sedimentation of the Sekwi Formation (Lower Cambrian) in the Sayunei Range of the Mackenzie Mountains.”

A few good jokes . . .

Despite the success of the first Past Presidents’ Dinner, the second was not held until 1975. Unlike the open meeting in 1960 that had attracted 240 members, only the current Executive and the nineteen Past Presidents attended this event. Society President Dave Organ reviewed the Society’s activities and future plans and then opened the meeting for discussion. In a letter to Jim Kirker, another Past President, he suggested the event needed a chairman – a duty that now falls to the immediate Past President – and concluded: “Anyone who has a few good jokes should be asked to tell them.” In the years that followed the dinner became a forum for the discussion of current problems and helped the serving Executive formulate future policies.
What do you know about . . .

In 1976 the Society struck the Student Industry Field Trip Committee. Bill Ayrton recalls conducting a recruiting trip to Maritime universities and hearing a similar refrain every time he asked the question: “Tell me about the geology of Canada.” The top students were very knowledgeable about their area, but when asked what they knew about the Precambrian Shield the answer was often, “Well, not very much, I know it’s very old and it’s got minerals in it.” About western Canada and the oil industry: “I don’t think I can tell you much.”

“So we put together a committee,” Ayrton says, “we raised about half a million dollars from industry and donations and we put on the first Student Industry Field Trip. And it’s gone every year since with one student from every university across Canada.” It began with a desire to expose young geoscientists to the oilpatch for a week. The first SIFT ran in early May 1977 and it has grown into a two-week trip that introduces thirty-one top students to a whole range of activities: lectures, field trips – including a low level flight over the Rocky Mountains – core workshops and an exploration game where four students create oil companies. Investing their capital in land and wells, they search for oil. A panel of expert geologists chooses the winners based on their geological savvy and profit statement. A wind-up wine and cheese social event allows for interaction with additional working geologists. There is also a chance for employment because the SIFT committee actively solicits summer job placements with petroleum companies for its students.

Bill Ayrton still gives the initial lecture each year and believes the project changes lives. “I was influenced, and maybe you were too, in your career, by a few individuals or a few events and again, maybe you could count those on the fingers of one hand.” Perhaps it is not surprising that about three quarters of the volunteers that work on the SIFT committee are alumni of this unique program that has introduced more than seven hundreds students to a career in the oilpatch.

For example, Christian Viau was a SIFT student from the University of Montreal in 1979 and recalls the experience “opened my eyes completely and gave me a lot of desire” to become a petroleum geologist. As a result, he has worked in the oilpatch ever since and has served on the CSPG Executive and was the Chair of the 1997 convention.

John Maudsley from the University of Alberta participated in the 1984 field trip, became an exploration and development geologist with Imperial Oil and chaired several Society committees, including SIFT in 1989.

John Maudsley from the University of Alberta participated in the 1984 field trip, became an exploration and development geologist with Imperial Oil and chaired several Society committees, including SIFT in 1989.

Marie Tremblay credits SIFT with bringing her to Calgary. As a student at Laval University in Quebec City in 1984, she recalls the Society “really put on an amazing trip for us.” She landed a job with Esso as a result of the industry contacts she made and is currently an Instructor in Earth Sciences at Mount Royal College where she teaches geology and physical geography.

Indraneel (Indy) Raychaudhuri has served the Society as Services Director on the Executive and as a volunteer on the SIFT Committee since 1993 “as a way to give back to the program that gave me the opportunity to get into the industry.” He participated in SIFT as a McMaster University Student in 1988 and considers it a “wildly successful program.”

And finally, Veronique Dumas was a student at the University of Ottawa but already had a job offer from Shell when she attended the 1997 SIFT. Among the highlights were the chances to see geology “right in front of you” and from far above in the airplane flyby. She says the course taught her a lot and exposed her to nearly “every aspect of the work.”

Funding to operate these field trips has come from the CSPG Fiftieth Anniversary Trust Fund which was created in 1978 with tax exempt status. During the 1980s the Society made donations to the fund from general revenue several times though the Fund “suffered a severe blow as a result of the November Stock Market Crash” in 1987. The Society expanded the Fund’s educational mandate in the early 1990s with new programs aimed at high school teachers through EdGeo and at students through Youth Science Fairs. In 1992 the Fund’s name was changed to the CSPG Educational Trust Fund with the responsibility to “act as the primary source of Educational Outreach Funding for the CSPG.” Donations to the Fund continued through the 1990s. In 2001 the ETF’s role expanded to include responsibility for the Honorary Address, the Visiting Lecturer Program, regional scholarships, undergraduate and graduate thesis awards, funding and awards at inter-university geological conferences and general philanthropy. Income from the investments alone cannot fund all these programs, so the Executive supplements the Trust Fund income as necessary. Contributions to the ETF are always welcomed from individuals as well as corporations – and they are still tax exempt.
In 1976 the Society created the Link Award Tour (the award itself dates back to 1958). Each year the winner of the prize for best oral presentation of a paper at a regular CSPG meeting travelled the country presenting that paper. The Society also formed a Speakers Bureau that year to coordinate the Distinguished Lecture Tours, Business Trip Talks and the Link Award Tour.

The Tracks Award also dates to this period, when Bill Ayrton’s executive decided to bestow a new award on members who made “a significant contribution to the success of the Society.” Although major awards recognizing the efforts of members who organized the annual convention, published important papers or made other high-profile contributions had already been established, the Society needed a unique token of appreciation for the unsung volunteers who “have made tracks” and set an example for others to follow. The Society’s 1965 President Rein de Wit took on the challenge of fabricating the memento – “dinosaur” tracks on a 6 inch slab of tile. Ayrton recalls: “So he came back the next day with a beautiful clay model and three dinosaur footprints across it and I said, ‘Rein, how did you make those?’ He said, ‘I slaughtered a chicken last night and I used its feet and they worked beautifully.’ So those were the Tracks and those are still given.”

Ten CSPG members received Tracks Awards in 1976 and many dozen more have been awarded since, thanks to the sacrifice of that one chicken. The Society elevated the Tracks Award to recognize exemplary service to the Society in 1985, the year it introduced the Service Award to serve as the entry level award for contributions through committee or other Society work.

In 1976 the Executive created the CSPG Women’s Group, but it only lasted a few years. More than 120 geologists’ wives attended the first meeting in November to help form the club. These women added a new dimension to the Society by organizing a Ladies Program and a Creativity Display (exhibits of hobbies and talents) at the CSPG - CIMM joint convention on enhanced recovery. The Annual Dance and Barbecue also benefited from the logistical support provided by the Women’s Group. Attempts to plan a skating party one winter fell apart when a chinook melted all outdoor ice surfaces in the Calgary area. The Women’s Group also helped organize programs for spouses at conventions, but it disbanded after the 1979 convention.

In anticipation of the Society's fiftieth anniversary in 1978, a Geological Calendar Committee began collecting classic Canadian geological photographs for the first in a series of calendars that highlight the geology of Canada. The committee printed 3200 copies of the 1978 calendar and this CSPG publication is still popular.

The Society also created a new award in 1977 for students in the Maritime provinces. The first recipient of the CSPG Trophy (Atlantic Universities Conference) was Richard Dubreuil of Mount Allison University for a paper called “The Anorthosite Problem.”

The 1977 Nominating Committee compiled a reference work called “CSPG Members and Their Activities – Since 1965.” It resides in a blue binder – often referred to as “the blue book” – by the CSPG office staff. This sixty-seven page document with related charts is an alphabetical listing of members who were active in Society leadership during this period and serves as a valuable record of a slice of the history of the Society – especially given that it was generated in the days before computer-assisted databases.

**A Golden Anniversary**

The Society was still expanding to fill its national mandate when it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1978. As Bill Ayrton wrote at the time: “Traditionally the Society had been concerned with the geology of Canada, specifically Western Canada, but in more recent
years the scope has broadened to include symposia of an international nature on the Devonian, the Triassic, and the worldwide principles of hydrocarbon occurrence.”

In those fifty years the small Alberta Society had expanded from a handful of geologists to 2749 and its budget had grown from less than one hundred dollars to almost half a million. Dues, meanwhile, rose from $1 to $25.

The busy Society conducted one day field trips, continuing education seminars on coal reserves and environments of sedimentary deposition, a Technical Speakers program that organized the Distinguished Lecture Tours and the Link Award Tours, an Honorary Address and regular meetings. Honorary Memberships, Tracks Awards, a Special Award to the General Chairman of the Fiftieth Anniversary Convention for excellent work, the Medal of Merit, the Link Award, Undergraduate Awards and the John B. Webb Memorial Trophy all recognized contributions to geology and the Society. The Society also created the Special Service Award in this year to recognize convention organizers and others who contributed in outstanding ways. (It became the President’s Award in 1984.) Social activities included a golf tournament, the Annual Dinner, the Past President’s Dinner and Women’s Group activities.

By its fiftieth anniversary more than eighty committees were at work organizing the Society’s ongoing functions. In addition, three other groups gave added depth to the Society. Six technical divisions dealt with structural geology, geochemistry, geomathematics and computer applications, palaeontology, sedimentology and coal. With the exception of the Palaeontology Division that was established in the early 1960s, all the divisions were formed between 1974 and 1976. CSPG area representatives in Victoria, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Quebec and Dartmouth and at twenty-one universities also helped connect the Calgary-based Society to petroleum geologists across the country.

The Society continued collaboration with the Geological Survey of Canada, the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta, the World Petroleum Congress, the Canadian Geoscience Council, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the National Conference on Earth Sciences and the Petroleum Resources Communication Foundation – today’s PCF – which all contributed to its diverse and international character.

Publishing, one of the Society’s prime activities, continued with regular issues of the Bulletin of Canadian Petroleum Geology, the Reservoir, the Membership Directory and the Geological Calendar. Two reference volumes, The Phanerozoic Geology of Canada and the Field Guide to Rock Formations in Southern Alberta as well as Memoir No. 5, Fluvial Sedimentology were printed. As a guide to the growing collection of publications, the Society also released a bibliography, the ASPG - CSPG Subject - Author - NTS Area Index, 1931 to April 1977.
Most memorable of all, however, was a special convention chaired by Jack Browning. “Facts and Principles of World Oil Occurrence” was an exciting three-day meeting attended by 1894 people and featuring sixty-two speakers. His Excellency Sheikh Yamani of Saudi Arabia gave the keynote address. The Society released the proceedings of this conference as Volume 6 of the Memoir series in 1980. The Society also hosted a major convention on “Research in Petroleum Industry in Canada” with the Canadian Geoscience Council.

A picnic in the snow . . .

In 1978 the Society began a tradition of celebrating Logan Day as Canada’s National Geology day in the fall of each year. Geologist Geri Eibacher imported the idea from Peru, where geologists hold an annual celebration of the birthday of their pre-eminent geologist. Ward Neale ran with the idea and organized the first Logan Day on Sunday, October 1, 1978 – 127 people attended, not including kids and dogs.

Logan Day commemorated Sir William Edmond Logan, the man who founded the Geological Survey of Canada in 1842 and served as its first director. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in January 1856 – the first Canadian to be so honoured – and he is considered Canada’s “pioneering geologist whose surveys made it possible to tap Canada’s treasury of minerals.”

For almost two decades, geologists and their families made an annual pilgrimage to campgrounds in the foothills – Sibbald Flats near the Elbow River and Sandy McNabb on Sheep Creek west of Turner Valley – into the very heart of some of the most fascinating geology in the mountains. Camping, hiking, fishing, playing soccer games in cow patty-infested fields, horse shoes and relaxing filled out these weekends as did the roast pig barbecue and the Logan Day Toasts to prominent living, and deceased, geologists. Similar events took place in Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, London and Ottawa in Ontario and in Newfoundland.

Mountains often make their own weather and in 1988 the Alberta Logan Day was “weathered out” by a very bad storm. The 1992 event had better weather and organizers compiled a songbook to use while gathered around the campfire in the evenings. “It sure helped to have the words of the songs, but now we need to remember to bring lanterns or flashlights!” Logan Day celebrations eventually died out in 1994 due to lack of interest in organizing the event – or perhaps too many cold weekends.

The last year of the 1970s featured a joint convention with the CSEG, “Exploration Update ’79 – Success of the Seventies, Energy for the Eighties.” A University of Calgary geology professor, Len Hills, served as President that year and he found the chance to work closely with geoscientists in the industry invigorating.
But the international economy affected the Canadian oil industry and explorationists in new ways. During tight times large companies divested themselves of small properties that they had accumulated in the 1950s to 1970s. These “packages” were actively sought by small companies that had germinated in this environment; these in turn lured geologists away from the majors and into the entrepreneurial world of small and mid-sized exploration and production companies.

Nothing, however, could have prepared the petroleum industry for the tumult of the 1980s.

The East Coast and Don Axford

In 1942 Socony-Vacuum Exploration Company (Mobil) drilled a 14,000 foot well ten kilometres offshore from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Thirty years later the same company drilled another well offshore from Nova Scotia and found encouraging but non-commercial quantities of oil and gas in the Cretaceous.

Don Axford picked the location of the 1972 well and his leadership eventually led to other discoveries on the Scotian Shelf. But prevailing academic wisdom discounted offshore reservoirs. Even after years of study, his superiors reacted to his recommendation for a wildcat offshore well with statements like “That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard!”

Though the East Coast development process took until the late 1990s to bring production online, and despite the tragic sinking of the Ocean Ranger drilling platform in 1982 with the loss of all eighty-four lives aboard, the massive resources in this frontier area of Canada continues to promise opportunities for the future.
**Power and control . . .**

It’s never the boom people remember, it’s the bust. After the rise in the price of oil through the 1970s, the downturn of the 1980s exposed the Canadian petroleum industry to unprecedented hardships. Not that the oilpatch failed to make new discoveries. In fact, it was Canada’s success at finding petroleum just as the world demand began to shrink in 1982 that contributed to the hard times.

Historically, Canada’s federal government has had to attempt to balance the resources and needs of far-flung regions in one of the largest countries in the world. The National Policy of 1870 used immigration, tariffs and a railway to the West Coast to encourage national growth. Similarly, Ottawa’s 1961 National Oil Policy protected the Canadian oil markets west of the Ottawa Valley for Canadian petroleum producers who faced competition from cheap offshore oil. During the 1973 oil crisis Ottawa again intervened in the national interest, protecting Canadian consumers from inflation and from rapidly escalating world oil prices with a National Energy Policy.

But it is Ottawa’s 1980 National Energy Program that most people remember, either as a catastrophe or as a curious generator of exploration activity. Faced with predictions of expensive oil and shortages of supply, the Canadian government implemented an ambitious program of taxation, exploration and Canadianization – all intended to protect the Canadian national interest. Laudable objectives perhaps, but as the price of oil fell during the 1980s, major oil companies reduced their Canadian exploration programs and the Liberal government’s reputation in western Canada suffered yet another black mark.

Oilman Jim Gray of Canadian Hunter commented on this struggle for control over natural resource revenue in April 1981: “The debate is being waged on an ideological front, on a political front. The real dispute is over power and control.”

Finally, a Conservative government and the western producing provinces signed the Western Accord in 1985 with the producing provinces, undoing many of the taxes and restrictions imposed by the Liberals. The ideological battle won by the Conservative government and its friends in the petroleum industry did not, however, change the new reality that faced the oilpatch and the CSPG: with Canada physically and economically tied into a continental energy grid with the world’s largest petroleum consumer – the United States – the future was inextricably linked to American political and economic priorities and the complex forces of the international oil and gas marketplace.
“Bankrupt by the summer of 1987 . . .”

Membership numbers indicate the CSPG, in spite of hard times in parts of the Canadian oilpatch, peaked and then dropped off somewhat during the 1980s – from 3100 members in 1980 to over 4000 in 1985 and then down to 3800 in the later 1980s.

Management of the massive organization – almost totally volunteer – became a major challenge in the 1980s. The Society’s cash accounting system and lack of long-term planning meant it catapulted along, spending more than $500,000 a year without a clear sense of its financial health. One year the Society lost more than $130,000, another it made a healthy profit, and at other times it broke even.

Just as the oil industry had mushroomed during the 1970s, the Society had also expanded its activities without much concern for its spending patterns. But the system that had worked well during the boom created real headaches for the volunteers in the 1980s.

For example, in 1986 Society treasurer Bill May wrote: “The outgoing [1985] Executive had just completed a five year forecast which showed that the Society would lose about $130,000 in 1986 and that the CSPG would be bankrupt by the summer of 1987. The challenge for the incoming Executive was to bring financial responsibility into the operations of the Society. This was not a pleasant task, nor was it the job we anticipated when we ran for office.”

Society records and interviews with Past Presidents reveal four major problems that dogged the Society during the 1980s and still demand attention in this seventy-fifth anniversary year.

First, the Society has always relied on an unpredictable base of funding. Although membership income is consistent, annual fees seldom cover the costs of member services. Publication sales are intended to cover associated costs but it could take years – or decades – to recoup capital invested in inventory. Annual conventions are unpredictable revenue generators, though they have created considerable profits in more recent years.

Secondly, as the oilpatch cut back during the downturn in the mid-1980s, oil companies let go staff and reduced their level of commitment to societies like the CSPG. Geologists have always taken their exploration work seriously, but as corporations expected more work from fewer employees, volunteer energy was squeezed. Also, with an increasing emphasis on professional managers, fewer explorationists have moved into the Executive suite. The lack of geologists sitting in company presidents’ chairs has reduced the perceived value of the Society to the industry and its ability to provide direct corporate financial support.

Another major factor that affected the CSPG was its lack of ongoing management. Although individuals cycled through the three positions of Vice-President, President and Past President, the remaining positions on the Executive changed each year, limiting continuity. Most of these volunteers worked hard to learn their jobs, but were just barely into the saddle before handing over the reins to the next rider at the end of the year. As President Gordon Williams wrote in 1985: “Although this procedure guarantees the infusion of new ideas, it is inefficient, a waste of
talent, and makes it difficult to maintain continuity from year to year.”

Lack of continuity on the Executive was most noticeable in the fourth problem area: long-term planning. Although the annual round of events such as conventions and field trips created predictable demands, the sporadic release of large publications incurred large bills that were costly to produce and could tarnish a otherwise balanced budget. These challenges faced the CSPG Executives during the tough decade that was the 1980s.

**Still on the upswing . . .**

The first year of the 1980s seemed as bright and prosperous as the heady days of the late 1970s. The Society created the R.J.W. Douglas Memorial Medal for “outstanding scientific contributions in the field of sedimentary geology within Canada.” Bob Douglas had been well-known for his geological cartography and was associated with the GSC until his death in 1979. Dr. Hank Williams of Memorial University, well known for his work on the Appalachian Orogen, was the first recipient of this award. In 1980 two volumes in a new series of lexicons were issued: *Arctic Archipelago* (Volume 1) and *District of Mackenzie and Yukon* (Volume 2). The Executive created a new Certification Investigative Committee to address geological professionalism and how best to handle the need for certification of geologists.

The Society ended the year with a net profit of $89,985 but with concern for the future. Almost immediately after the release of the details of the NEP in October 1980, the Society struck a National Energy Program Committee in the hope that it would “provide significant statistics regarding the program’s effect on petroleum geologists.”

Investigating the Society’s relationship to APEGGA and the effects of the NEP were just part of the job, 1980 President Bob Orr recalls. “Many will say that these are political matters and not the concern of a technical society. To the contrary, I feel that we petroleum geologists must be concerned with professional standards and political programs that will affect our profession at the educational and employment levels.”

The 1981 Executive worked to expand the Society’s national mandate – to make sure it was the Canadian and not the Calgary Society of Petroleum Geologists. For example, in face of criticism that the Society needed a broader scope, President Fred Calverley reacted by creating a National Liaison Committee made up of geoscientists from other parts of Canada. The 1985 annual report concluded “the NLC has become more active and effective in its role as a national Executive advisory committee.”

The Society also began publishing the Canadian Paleontological Monograph Series, called *Palaeontographica Canadiana*. This series is extensively illustrated with drawings or photos of fossils and supported with descriptions and classifications. Published jointly by the CSPG and the Geological Association of Canada, they are “devoted to major contributions to Canadian paleontology: it will be dominantly, but not exclusively, systematic in content.”

Society revenues dropped in 1981, in part caused by a drop in publication sales. The 1981 Convention also came up short, with only 655 fully paid participants and forty-one students.
attending the Third International Symposium on the Arctic. As a result the convention netted only $20,000.

...less than favourably received...

By 1982 the effects of the collapsing world oil price were beginning to affect the oil industry. President Neil Hutton recalls that “our unsolicited commentary in 1981 on the likely effect of the NEP on the employment of geologists... were less than favourably received.”

The American Association of Petroleum Geologists and the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists came to Calgary in 1982 for the largest geoscience convention ever held in the city – over 8000 delegates. Bill Ayrton and Bob Orr, among others, had gone head to head with the AAPG management over the financial arrangements for the convention and the Canadians came away with a formula that allowed the CSEG to share in the considerable profits.

But the proceeds from that convention did not shield the Society from the deficit it ran that year and the Society ended the year with a $97,000 shortfall. New expenses included a move to new office space in the old Calgary Herald building, though members of the Executive did the renovations in the evenings and weekends and even helped move the furniture. Costs associated with supporting two full-time employees added to the budget and there were also increased publication and mailing costs and a decrease in returns on investments. As a result, the Society raised its annual dues from $25 to $40, the first increase since 1978.

During 1983 the Society fought back against its financial problems and recorded a surplus of almost $220,000. An IBM personal computer made its debut in the CSPG office this year, allowing the Society to keep closer tabs of its finances. Society President Ian McIlreath remembers that “because of this downturn in the industry we realized that companies were making choices as to the memberships that they would support for their workers. ... We began to realize this whole concept of value for the client.” The Executive worked hard to reduce the number of committees, from almost one hundred to about sixty. Some were eliminated, others amalgamated, while the Executive found additional ways to streamline operations.

The Society also became affiliated with the Atlantic GeoScience Society in 1983 but ongoing tension with APEGGA – “always a major issue” – continued in 1983. The Society worked within the CSEG/CSPG/APEGGA committee to resolve the problems. “However, it would appear that, at least for geologists, the major problem now is registration portability and we feel that it is necessary to address these concerns before restrictive legislation within various provinces can be passed.”

The Society’s bimonthly technical luncheons outgrew the small Al-San space at Penley’s Dance Academy and went looking for new accommodations. The Westin Hotel and the Convention Centre both offered facilities large enough to host 1000 or more for the noon-time gatherings and the Society met at each on a trial basis. According to McIlreath, the Convention Centre was determined to introduce “French style” service to large Calgary luncheons and insisted on serving each item of the meal from service trays instead of fully loaded plates. The Society was sceptical and found that its luncheon dragged on to ninety minutes so it took its regular meetings to the Westin where the meal and presentation could comfortably be completed within an hour. The traditional question period after presentations fell by the wayside at this time.

Although Society membership numbers continued to rise until 1985, oil prices slid to half of their 1980 value. As 1984 President John Maher pointed out in his annual report, from
1950 to 1983 about 110 new geologists got jobs each year, but in 1984 employment was down.

As a result, the Society created the Special Advisory Committee on Education under chairmanship of P.A.T. (Pat) Haines to recommend educational strategies for the Society for the next decade. It also provided financial assistance to the Youth Science Foundation which awarded an annual $300 cash prize award for the Gold Medal at the Intermediate Level in Physical Sciences and a $200 cash prize for “a deserving display on an energy-related topic.”

Society funding also helped finance the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project, an innovative series of tape-recorded interviews with prominent oilpatch personalities. CSPG member Aubrey Kerr spearheaded this project, which interviewed more than three hundred people, 25 percent of whom were geologists.

As part of a drive to make the Society more national, in 1984 the Executive decided to begin publishing abstracts in both English and French in the *Bulletin*, with Society volunteers providing the translations.

Society finances continued to ride the rollercoaster, recording a loss of $12,154 this year on a total budget of $468,540 expenditures.

The Society is healthy, but . . .

President Gordon Williams was at the controls of the Society in 1985, the year membership peaked and concern over the financial future of the organization became most pronounced.

Membership hit an all time high of 4077 but that year’s convention, held in Edmonton with the CIMM as part of the drive to make the Society more national, made a profit of only $8,000. Williams noted in his annual report that each part of the Society needed to “be designed to make a profit, not merely to break even.”

The Society came up with several innovative ways to make money. The Special Fund-Raising Committee of the Fiftieth Anniversary Trust Fund initiated the First Annual CSPG Art Project and solicited works from western Canadian artists who produced “original works for commission, auction and sale, on the theme ‘Exploring Art and the Earth’” in April 1986.

As well, a new Merchandising Committee was formed this year to design and sell CSPG merchandise to members. It produced silk ties with the Society logo, Society crests, baseball caps and T-shirts and listed beer mugs, belt buckles and ladies’ scarves as potential future promotional items.

At this time, the Society began charging non-members a higher rate on publications and the convention, and giving preferential treatment to members for Society functions.

But financial problems dogged the Society during 1985 and in spite of the Executive’s best efforts to balance the budget, the Society ran a deficit of $132,628. The cost of printing of Memoirs 9 and 10 accounted for a large part of the shortfall. Projecting expenses was very difficult, especially for large publications, and, facing possible bankruptcy by the summer of 1987, the Executive made the decision to accept the recommendation of Treasurer T. Ross Lennox to change to the accrual system of financing “to better reflect the net cost of different projects over several financial years and to assist in financial planning.” It took until the early 1990s to work out the new accounting system and computerize the operations, but the Society’s finances became easier to track and the Executive used this tool for long term planning.
In spite of anxiety over finances, the Society found additional ways to recognize its many volunteers. It created a new award in 1985, the Voluntary Service Award, and presented it in order to “recognize contributions members make through committee or other Society work.” The Tracks Award, first given in 1976, became a mid-level award to recognize a higher level of service and major medals continued to recognize the highest levels of achievement.

A collection of black and white photographs of all Society Past Presidents was unveiled in this year, a project initiated by John Maher. The photographs, which now hang on the wall at the head of the table in the CSPG boardroom, are a reminder of the men and women who have given direction to the Society for seventy-five years.

**Back from the brink . . .**

The 1986 Executive attacked the Society’s financial problems head-on, pulling it back from the brink of insolvency with several short-term initiatives and fundamental changes.

Cost cutting was imperative, so the Society cancelled the membership directory, limited the *Bulletin* to 100 pages per issue (a 20 percent reduction), made the *Reservoir* more self-sufficient and renegotiated printing contracts and the office space lease.

Sensitive to the hardships being experienced by geologists – many were losing jobs during this drastic period of cutbacks – the Society held the line on membership dues for the unemployed at $40 while raising regular dues to $50 to generate more income. It also charged lower fees for the convention and Continuing Education courses to those without jobs and, as it had done during the downturn in the 1960s, provided a register of resumes for prospective employers to review at the CSPG office. Each committee also did what it could to help keep the Society financially solvent.

The 1986 convention made a small profit of “over $50,000 in very tough economic times” wrote President Don Cook, and as a result of the dedicated work by Society members, the loss for the year was only $616 compared with a projected loss of $130,000.

The five-year plan initiated by the 1985 Executive recommended two new executive-level positions to promote continuity. So, in 1986, an Assistant Business Manager and an Assistant Treasurer began serving under the Business Manager and Treasurer for a year before taking over the job in 1987.

The Society also presented a memorial to the Alberta government on December 5, 1986 at the official opening of the Mount Allan Olympic ski area in the Kananaskis. The John A. Allan Plaque recognized one of the founding members of the Society for his contributions to the province: “A man of exceptional talents, he gave unstintingly of his time and strength in promoting science in Canada.”

Cost cutting continued in 1987 as the Executive found more ways to control the Society’s finances. A new lease reduced office expenses again and the computerization of the books
helped with the accounting. Revenues from publications increased and allowed the Society to end the year with a profit of $39,534.

Memberships were another source of revenue, growing 6 percent. Corporate memberships also increased from twenty-five to seventy-six though student memberships had dropped 55 percent from 1985. Unemployment continued to harass geologists and the Society did what it could to help. “The manpower committee estimates that the oil price decline of 1986-87 caused approximately 25 percent of geologists to be dislocated from their jobs, some changing jobs and others changing careers.” More than fifty companies made use of a file of 137 resumes at the Society office.

The number of active committees reached an all-time high, topping out at 100. In an effort to maintain continuity, the Executive formed a Publications Review Committee to review new publication proposals and monitor the progress of all publications. Indicative of a shift in the industry from exploration to development, two new divisions began meeting: the Hydrogeology Divison and a Reservoir Development Geology Division.

The computerization of the CSGP office became evident in 1988 under the direction of the Computer Facilities Committee. Though the transition eventually allowed the Society to save money, the process was not easy: files on four different computers on three sizes of floppy disks had to be converted to a new standard. Membership and accounting records as well as mailing lists and other routine office operations all competed for scarce computer time on a machine with less memory than today’s small pocket organizer. Office manager Sheila Dylke recalls needing a signup sheet to schedule time on the one office computer – that boasted two large floppy disks! But by the end of the year, according to President Mike Cecile, the computer system was “allowing the Executive to have up-to-date financial records at all times.”

The Society’s financial future was still not assured in the late 1980s, even though the price of oil was rebounding and memberships had stabilized. But expenses were in check and income was stable. The change to an accounting system based on a modified accrual basis finally took place in this year, allowing for a more accurate representation of the Society’s financial health.

The policies and procedures put in place by the Executives in the mid 1980s bore fruit in 1988. The Society ended the year with a profit of $57,693 and Cecile concluded: “The Society continued with its outstanding financial management in tough times.” Funds on hand at the end of the year totalled $331,655 and this healthy cushion allowed the Society to pay the annual SIFT expenses from general revenue and the Fiftieth Anniversary Fund continued to grow.

The 1988 Annual Awards Dinner and Dance recognized the previous year’s award winners,
included live entertainment and also was “a salute to our last surviving founding member Harry Hunter.” More than 250 people attended the dinner and corporate sponsors helped keep the Society subsidy of the event to a minimum.

And finally, in its role as a national Society, the CSPG created a new award, the J.A. Downing Memorial Trophy – Central Canada University Geological Conference. Clint Cowan of Queen’s University received the first trophy for his paper, “Hydrothermal Spelean Mississippian Valley-type Mineralization; Banded Flourite Rythmites of Southern Illinois.”

Rowan Gorilla I flaring at Cohasset A-52, March 1986. (Oilweek)

A disturbing, and historic, trend appeared once again in the last year of the 1980s – enrolments in geoscience programs at Canadian universities bottomed out just as the industry began expanding. As President Bill May noted, undergraduate enrolments in geology had dropped from 4200 in 1985 to 1500 in 1989. “Interest in geosciences is declining and all professionals should do their part to stimulate interest, especially at elementary and junior high levels.” Supply and demand seemed to be working perfectly out of step – only a small number of students were entering a course of study that would deposit them into a job market at the peak of the next boom.

As financial health returned, the Society once again began funding new initiatives. In 1989 it created two new awards: the Norcen/CSPG Undergraduate Scholarship of $1250 to a student in a Western Canadian university, and the Stanley Slipper Award, the Society’s highest award which was named after the Society’s first President. John Masters of Canadian Hunter was the first recipient of this award, a two ounce gold medal that recognizes “petroleum explorationists who have made a significant contribution to petroleum exploration in Canada.”

In 1989 the Society also began funding the Visiting Geologist Program. Peter Meehan on a tour of six universities giving his paper, “Amauligak, Discovery to delineation.”

That same year the Society and the CSEG released an important co-publication, the Geophysical Atlas of the Western Canadian Hydrocarbon Pools. Edited by D.A. Cederwall of the CSEG and the Society’s 1979 President, L.V. Hills, it was designed as a sophisticated training book on petroleum exploration. By blending geophysics and geology into each example, the book was an important tool in the education of members of both disciplines.

The 1980s ended on an upswing, as had the 1970s. The price of oil was on the way up but after a tumultuous decade and a close call with financial failure, the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists was on much firmer footing as it prepared to face the last decade of the twentieth century.

(Oilweek)
The unstable 1980s, as it turned out, were not an aberration but just a foretaste of things to come. Instead of settling down, the international energy industry became more complicated. Gone were the days of decade-long periods of growth, interspersed with a few years of downturn. The cycles shortened so dramatically that in the twelve years leading up to the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists’ seventy-fifth anniversary, the industry experienced three major booms and busts.

The period opened with the Gulf War and is closing with rising tensions throughout the Middle East. It was punctuated with major fluctuations in prices, booms and busts in the wider economy, a growing linkage of Canada to the United States, a new level of global terrorism and, for a time, cut-throat competition for capital with the darlings of the investment community – the dot-coms and high tech stocks.

The CSPG had reacted to the crises of the 1980s by streamlining its operations, implementing a new accounting system and emphasizing the importance of breaking even on each part of its operations.

As the international oil price plummeted again in the early 1990s, the Society once again faced another set of challenges. Hiring levels fell again and volunteer energies were squeezed even tighter. Even though memberships fell by 12 percent, the Society increased member dues and consistent profits from the annual conventions allowed the Society to operate with an almost $2 million budget by its seventy-fifth anniversary.

During this most recent period, the Society’s operations became more like a business, with routine operations relying less on volunteer efforts. Still, the Executive and hundreds of volunteers on the dozens of committees continued to be the lifeblood of the organization. Energetic ideas and educational programming and publications still relied heavily on the volunteer efforts of petroleum geologists from coast to coast. As a result of the new organizational model, the Executive spent more of its time making decisions and providing direction to the Society. With an office staff of four under the leadership of a dedicated Business Manager, the Society’s business began to operate more efficiently and it provided an unprecedented level of services to its members and the public.

Abstracts for the annual convention first appeared in the Bulletin in 1990, providing information on the contents of the forthcoming talks. Reflecting the increasing concern for the health of the planet, CSPG members created the Environmental Geology division, with the purpose of “imparting the important knowledge that geologists can bring to environmental matters.”

Membership dues didn’t even cover stamps . . .

President J.E. (Ed) Klovan’s Executive struggled balancing its $400,000 budget – not including convention expenses – and his annual report identified the $50 dues as only partly covering the cost of doing Society business.

“Clearly this situation cannot continue without seriously jeopardising the financial integrity of the Society.” Nevertheless, it took the Executive
another seven years to raise the dues. Other problems included low advertising revenue, increasing publishing costs for the Bulletin and the Reservoir as well as office, awards and committee expenses that grew every year. Even the social programs ran slightly in the red.

Although the Society lost money on its operations in 1990, it ended its year with a profit of over $81,000, which “was almost entirely due to revenue generated by the Annual Convention.” By year end it had $486,522 in short-term, low risk investments.

In order to recognize the importance of CSPG volunteers – 650 were active in 1990 – the Society created the Volunteer Award in this year and awarded it to eighteen members who served the Society in important ways. It became the entry level award, increasing the status of the (Voluntary) Service Award, created in 1985, and the Tracks Award, first given in 1976.

“You know, for every star there has to be ten labourers . . .”

Jim MacDonald served as the 1991 President and though, in this quote, he was referring to the hundreds of volunteers that kept the CSPG alive, it could also apply to his own tenure. While serving as Vice-President, he took over many of Ed Klovan’s duties when the 1990 President took ill. MacDonald also made the hard decision to reduce inventory of ASPG and CSPG publications and during his tenure on the Executive he always kept close tabs on the number of copies of books printed by the Society. He points to Klovan before him as perhaps more imaginative and credits himself with less flamboyant skills. MacDonald contributed to a housecleaning of the organization by streamlining the decision making and working with the convention organizers to extract a fair share of the profits from the joint convention held with the AAPG in 1992.

The optimistic oil prices of 1990 proved deceiving and when the price dropped quickly in 1991 the industry cut explorationists just as fast. Society membership fell 5 percent as a consequence. Still, the Society turned a modest profit on its operations, with income from the convention again more than compensating for a small loss in other operations.

J.D. Reimer and M.R. Teare were the first recipients of a new award this year, the Andrew D. Baillie Award, for the best student oral presentation at a CSPG convention. With Andy’s permission, the Society added a second Andrew D. Baillie Award in 2001 for the best poster. Baillie was a Society member for more than fifty years and spent the last two decades of his career teaching geologists in Canada and around the world. Andy died in 2001 and is fondly remembered as a fine geologist and mentor.

“And they insisted that I run against a man.”

Alice Payne had toiled long and hard in the trenches of the CSPG, on numerous committees and in the thankless job of Treasurer in the days before computerized record keeping.

One of the duties of the Past President is to find a full slate of nominees for the next election and according to Ed Klovan, “I nominated, I’m proud to say, the first female for President, Alice Payne, and she won.”

Win she did, but she recalls a lot of people asked Klovan if he really thought she could win. Alice recalls him saying “How about running for Vice-President? You are the only person I know who’s got the experience and enough balls to do it.” And she did not win by acclamation. “They thought that people should have a choice, so they found someone who was willing to run against me.”

Alice’s positive attitude towards life helped keep the Society going during 1992, another tough year. Membership continued to drop as more companies let geologists go. According to her annual report, demand for university graduates
was at a ten year low. Everyone hoped the downsizing was over but, even if it continued, she had enough experience to know that the world of geology was bigger than the oilpatch. Her advice to the unemployed was “Go do diamonds, go do minerals, go do some more geology.” With her record of searching for copper, coal, gold, uranium and other resources, she had the perspective to encourage and inspire her peers.

Financially, the Society continued to rely on a profitable convention to balance the books and support its educational programming. For example, the Society donated $17,993 to outreach programs, including the Science Alberta Foundation, and invested another $55,000 in the Educational Trust Fund, the new name for the Society’s Fiftieth Anniversary Trust Fund. It also ran a field trip to Russia’s West Siberian Basin, a first for the Society.

“Furthermore, along the way we had some fun!” says the woman who took on the task of leading the CSGP. Breaking new ground is not always easy, and she is pleased to have helped changed the Society’s attitude towards women. “Because when Kathy [Scales] came along to run for President [in 1999] they’d all found that their arms and legs wouldn’t fall off having a lady President. I think I did a good job being President and I set a real good example of what women could do as President.”

Not all initiatives proved so successful. The CSGP published 1500 copies of a Consultants’ Directory just once, in 1993. “The visiting international petroleum geologist program has not matured,” says 1993 President Peter Putnam. “You know, you try a few things and some happen and some don’t.”

But overall, the mood was changing in the oilpatch. Even though memberships continued to fall and student membership was down 50 percent from a 1985 high of 299, Putnam saw an upturn. So the Society took the initiative and created a new continuing education initiative called The Advantage Program. Several instructors put together a set of lectures in a week-long overview program. For those who had been laid off in the mid-1980s and needed a refresher course or for recent graduates who needed more instruction, this program provided another educational opportunity until the late 1990s.

After twenty-two years serving the Society, Sheila Dylke retired from the CSGP office in 1993. With more women entering geology, the 1993 Executive included three female members, and Putnam noted this was “a harbinger of trends to come.”

But old issues continued to dog the Society. Finding new volunteers was still a problem and if the expected upturn took place, Putnam hoped more new faces would volunteer to take over the roles usually filled by older members. Financially the net profit was lower than in previous years, but printing costs were down and technical programs had created a profit. As a result, the Society was able to donate $44,115 from general revenue to the Educational Trust Fund.

Society operated at a loss “as is traditionally the case.”

The recovery that Putnam had predicted became evident in 1994 under the leadership of President Rick Young. After slipping for seven years, membership stabilized at the 3200 level.
Committees were active as were the technical divisions, but the Coal Division closed due to lack of interest.

Always seeking new ways of earning income, the Society commissioned local artist Peter Rice-Jones to create a series of six bronze sculptures – called “Readers of the Earth” – depicting geologists in different settings. Plans called for a run of one hundred limited edition bronzes, but the program unfortunately failed to live up to expectations. Only about sixty were sold, and it was not a terribly successful income generator.

However, the financial affairs of the Society were still quite good, undergirded by a healthy profit from the annual convention and sales of the new Geological Atlas of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin. Almost a decade in the making, this massive 510 page oversized reference work covered the same geographic area as the ASPG’s 1964 Geological History of Western Canada. However, according to senior compiler Grant Mossop, who gave a decade of his life to the project, the second publication had access to information from about 300,000 wells instead of fewer than 50,000 used for the 1964 Atlas.

The Society never lost faith in the project, says Mossop, but the financial problems that plagued it in the mid-1980s prevented the Society from making a commitment to even the printing costs – some $300,000. The earlier Atlas also benefited from more direct support for the project from the oilpatch as many companies assigned their geologists to the project as part of their workplace duties. The 1994 publication, by contrast, relied totally on volunteer labour from its authors, one third of whom worked in the oil industry with the remainder coming from the ranks of academia, various research councils, the Geological Survey of Canada and consulting firms. As a result, at least ten CSPG Executives worried over the Atlas but in the end, it was a core group of volunteers, with Morley Brown and Art Slingsby as leaders, who charged into the offices of oil companies, government agencies and many other organizations, willing to accept donations of cash – almost any amount would do until it added up to over $500,000 – and other assistance to this massive project.

The geoscience community supported the new Atlas generously. The total hard and soft costs associated with the project exceeded $12 million – or almost $3500 for each of the 3500 copies printed. Working at the cutting edge of the electronic publishing period, the entire book was produced digitally. The last copies of the Atlas sold in 2001, so a CD-ROM version of the Atlas is in the works. In its own way, the 1994

1994 Geological Atlas of the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin, Figure 3.4
Atlas became a fundraiser for the CSPG as the income from each sale went into general revenue.

As a result, the Society ended the year in a healthy financial position with an accumulated surplus of $1,279,534. The Society used part of the profits to help sponsor a CSPG Chair in Petroleum Geology at the University of Calgary for three years – nine companies also helped fund this position, along with the University of Calgary. CSPG member Dr. Cindy Riediger won the competition to teach in this sponsored geology chair.

Riediger brought a special perspective to the teaching of geology at the University of Calgary. Not only did she have a strong academic background, she also had experience working in the oilpatch as a consultant and with the GSC. As a result, she introduced two programs into the geology program at the University of Calgary, each designed to bring industry and the classroom into closer harmony. Both the undergraduate work-study program and the course-based masters degree recognized the increasing demands of a degree in geology.

For example, by the mid-1990s many companies no longer hired summer students or offered in-house training programs for their young geologists. As a result, recent graduates often had no field experience – a real liability in a discipline where, as they say in the profession, “the best geologist is the one who has seen the most rocks.” So the University created a Geology and Geophysics Co-operative Education Program, a work-study option that placed students for one term each year with an oil company or a government department. It added a year to the undergraduate course of study, but as a result of the experience and contacts made in the program, of the ten students who completed this program, all got permanent jobs. Many more students participate in this program, adding one or more terms of work-study to their education.

For more experienced geologists already in a career, the University created a course-based M.Sc. program to allow professionals to pursue more education on a part-time basis. Instead of taking four half courses and writing a thesis, geologists or geophysicists take eight half courses and complete a project in order to acquire the advanced degree. A dozen students have graduated from this M.Sc. program and it continues to provide an alternative educational opportunity for working geoscientists.

At the end of the three-year sponsorship term, the University of Calgary continued funding Dr. Riediger as an Assistant Professor, a position she still holds. Looking back on the position she occupied from 1994 to 1997, she concludes: “The CSPG Chair position was a great opportunity for networking among the CSPG, industry and academia. It provided a vehicle for dialogue, allowing us to convey information about our department to the industry and the CSPG membership, and also for industry to indicate to us what knowledge and skills new graduates needed to have learned at university, in order to become successful exploration geoscientists.”

Each new Executive works hard to carry on the traditions of the Society, but they also try to effect changes they hope will contribute to the stability of the operations. In the face of a continuing struggle to keep the Society solvent, George Eynon’s 1995 Executive implemented several new policies and initiatives.

Some were mundane, while others looked farther down the road. For example, the Society installed new accounting software and changed its fiscal year-end to August 31 in order to lower auditing expenses and put less stress on staff and volunteers.

Although the Society always tried to operate on a break-even or profitable basis, for financial prudence the Executive set a goal of having at least two years of operational funding invested as a financial cushion.
On average, annual conventions had been adding about $100,000 to the net worth of the Society for each of the previous five years, so the Executive felt confident in committing the Society to an ongoing contribution to the Educational Trust Fund: $100,000 in 1995 and $200,000 in each of the following five years in order to provide it a stable base. The finances in the late 1990s, unfortunately, did not allow the Society meet this goal.

Most importantly, however, was this Executive’s decision to create a new staff position in the office – a paid Business Manager. The first Executive, in 1928, included a person in the role of Business Representative, a title that was changed to Business Manager in the early 1930s. By 1986 the duties of the Business Manager and the Treasurer had become so extensive that the Society added positions of Assistant Business Manager and Assistant Treasurer to share the workload and add continuity.

By 1995 the day to day operations of the Society had become so busy that President George Eynon suggested adding an Executive Director to the payroll. Though this idea was considered seriously, the Executive decided to create the Business Manager position instead and to hire a

The Frontiers

Those regions of Canada that are not part of the prolific Western Canada Sedimentary Basin but have thick sedimentary sections have always had a special attraction for petroleum geologists. From Cam Sproule in the Arctic Islands to Don Axford on the East Coast and Jack Gallagher in the Beaufort Sea, exploration leaders and those that they have been able to convince of their vision have been lured by the possibility of new discoveries in these untapped regions.

Activity on Canada’s frontiers has been driven by a combination of this prospecting spirit, changes in the Canadian regulatory framework, sovereignty and national supply concerns, jurisdictional issues and global price oscillations. The heyday of land capture was in the early 1960s, when the generous provisions of the Federal Permit System allowed companies to take up vast tracts of land at relatively little cost.

Peaks of drilling occurred on the West Coast in the 1960s and on the East Coast and Mackenzie Delta-Beaufort Sea (driven in part by the 1968 discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska) in the 1970s. A prolonged campaign in the Arctic Islands by Panarctic and others led to numerous discoveries, while the resulting trio of Taglu-Parson’s Lake-Nigglingak in “The Delta” form the core of today’s Mackenzie Delta Gas Development project. The greatest level of activity, however, came in the early 1980s as a result of the National Energy Program and its generous Petroleum Incentive Payments program for Canadian companies willing to explore on the frontiers, often through farm-ins on the holdings of their multinational counterparts. Since the crash of oil prices in the mid-1980s, exploration activity has been more subdued, and more effort is going into the development of prime finds of earlier years such as Hibernia, Terra Nova, White Rose, Sable and the Delta.

However, hopes do not fade. The power of new concepts, often proven elsewhere and paired with innovative technologies, has again spurred exploration in places like the deep water off Nova Scotia. The future of Canada’s frontiers continues to look bright for those with the vision to explore in these remote but tantalizing sedimentary basins.

skilled person to run the busy operational side of the Society. For example, while she was Treasurer in the 1980s, Alice Payne remembers working until midnight many Friday nights entering data into the early computerized accounting program.

Eynon turned over the job of hiring the Business Manager to his Vice-President, Gerry Reinson, the person who would work closely with the new employee. Reinson recalls a large response to the advertisement and a committee narrowed down the applications to a handful for interviews.

The Society hired Tim Howard as its first – and current – salaried Business Manager in December 1995. Reinson says the hiring committee had a good set of guidelines for its search process but the job description developed as the new position evolved. Coming from a military background with experience working with non-profit organizations, Howard has worked with the CSPG to bring its operations into line with industry standards. For example, the Society began developing a Strategic Business Plan in the late 1990s – similar to plans created in the late 1980s. By the seventy-fifth anniversary the Executive was working with a detailed business strategy that identified the Society’s goals, a plan for accomplishing the objectives and estimated costs. Accounting procedures were updated too, so that monthly Executive meetings review current financial records for each area of the budget, including all committees. As a result, each Executive operates within the framework of a three year business plan that gives direction and accountability to the Society.

Successive Executives have benefited from this plan and used it to create continuity in an organization that is governed by an ever-rotating Executive. Revisions are an important part of the strength of the strategic planning process and in 2001 Society President Brad Hayes reported “the Executive has been freed from most day-to-day operational concerns, and can spend most of its time on planning and organizational issues.”

In 1995 the Society changed the name of the CSPG BBS (Bulletin Board System) Committee to the CSPG On-Line Committee and charged it with “promoting the Society's activities on-line to its members and making its collective knowledge base available to geoscientists in Canada and worldwide through digital/electronic means.” It created the first home page for the Society and has grown into an informative and educational website.

A quorum of twenty-five?

Hard times once again hit the oilpatch in 1996 and the current euphemism which called for everyone “to do more with less” also applied to the CSPG. For the third year in a row, the Society ran a deficit – in spite of a convention that generated a $200,000 profit, the highest to date – and geologists watched as their friends and colleagues lost their jobs. Companies cut back on in-house training as the “quest for efficiencies” became paramount.

Gerry Reinson’s Executive improved the effectiveness of the Society by updating its bylaws which had been unchanged in twenty years. For example, he recalls “You needed a quorum of twenty-five to pass anything and our membership was 3,500. I mean, hello.”

In the face of cutbacks to in-house training programs in the oilpatch, the Society worked to create more CSPG continuing educational opportunities for all geoscientists.

No symbol of change is more obvious than a move, and in 1997 the Society left its offices in the old Calgary Herald Building and moved into a storefront location in the Aquitaine Building at 540-5th Avenue S.W. President Ric Sebastian recalls the Society wanted to increase “pride of membership” and the sunny new office presented a more professional face to both the public and the geological community.
With Tim Howard taking on increasing responsibility as Business Manager, the Executive rearranged itself from business positions to roles along representational lines. Directors of finance, programs, services and corporate relations as well as a Senior Managing Editor lightened the load on the President. Committee members also benefited from the change, with a director on the Executive more in tune with their activities and to whom they could report.

“A year of housekeeping” is how President Sebastian remembers his term. Changes to the accounting system were still underway, and once the new software was operating effectively, it gave the Executive a monthly synopsis of the financial health of the organization. The publications inventory required housekeeping too, and stock that was unlikely to sell was disposed of physically and written off the books. In keeping with increasing costs, the price charged for technical luncheons rose to $20 and membership dues also went up from $50 to $65 – the first hike in eleven years.

The Reservoir changed format in this year, from a black and white, coat-pocket size, no frills newsletter, to a colour magazine format with more information on luncheons and other activities as well as non-reviewed scientific articles. The expanded publication allowed for better communication with the membership as well as room for advertising to help offset publication costs.

Other services to members this year included improvements to the website as well as a large and successful convention held jointly with the SEPM (now called the Society for Sedimentary Geology). A special feature of this assembly was a wrap-up event called the Core Meltdown. This social event took place at the AEUB Core Storage Centre at the end of the convention and was such a success that it has become a new Society tradition.

He also gave credit to the Executives before him who had struggled to improve the financial reporting system so that “our financial bleeding, which occurred over the past few years, has stopped in 1998.” The annual convention made a net profit of $319,000, another record, allowing the Society to end the year with a surplus in excess of $100,000 and more than a million dollars in equity.

The new Reservoir came into its own in 1998 and turned a profit as a result of increased advertising revenue. But it was a large job to produce, so in September the Executive decided to turn over the design and production of the magazine to MacdonaldCole and the CSPG’s long-term publications partner, McAra Printing. In 2002 the Society signed a new contract with MacdonaldCole. The Reservoir became a stand-alone publication, responsible for its own profitability and MacdonaldCole agreed to share profits with the Society on an equal basis.
Other initiatives that simplified and streamlined CSPG operations included hiring Nesbitt-Burns in February to manage part of the Society's investment fund wisely in long-term instruments. This new Long Term Investment Strategy initiative came from the Executive Finance Committee.

When Kathy Scales led the Society as President in 1999, the price of oil – which had rebounded from a twenty-two year low to almost $38C per barrel – was the biggest business story of the year. But the Society’s operations still needed careful attention during the upturn. The 1999 Executive revised the Strategic Business Plan and helped focus financial and strategic objectives for the future in order to “enable the Society to overcome the effects of an ever-rotating Executive.”

But the road was bumpy and Scales recalls the ongoing challenges of installing yet another new accounting software program and a computerized membership database. On the upside, the Society’s outreach programs included ongoing funding for the Calgary Science Centre’s Invent An Alien contest, which was created in 1996. In 1999 the CSPG and the CSEG were founding sponsors of “The Oil Game.” This board game challenged twelve to eighteen-year-old students to work in teams of five to create an oil company and to look for oil and gas through role-playing activities. Petroleum companies sponsored the games and donated them to schools. By early 2000, fifty games were on order.

Other initiatives during this year included restarting the website and updating it to New Millennium standards. Staff member Jaimè Croft managed the site successfully, complete with advertising. The Society also organized a new Volunteer Committee to find places for willing members to fit into the Society where their talents could be best utilized. As the chair of this one-person committee, Blythe Lowe keeps a list of positions that need people on the Society’s many committees and matches two or three volunteers with committee chairs who can use their help.

The Society expanded its national scope by working towards establishing an East Coast division in recognition of petroleum development in that area. It supported scholarship programs at Maritime universities as well as talks by visiting petroleum geologists at the same institutions, all in an attempt to work towards the objective of developing an Atlantic or Maritime division. The Society also helped the Atlantic GeoScience Society fund its publication of The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces that was published in 2001.

Terry McCoy’s review of the Past Presidents’ meeting in 1999 highlights this important annual event which was first held in 1960. “Past Presidents of the Society are invited to pay hard cash to listen to the then President, Kathy Scales, extol the virtues of her tenure. For this privilege, the Past Presidents are then given the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns that they may have with the way the Society is being managed in comparison with their (stellar) year. The President is called upon to politely manage all incoming queries. The 1999 meeting was no exception to the usual raucousness of this particular crowd. Issues of
particular importance focused on the financial health and quality of the Reservoir, and the recent lack of publications.”

**Capitalizing on the Convention**

After many rounds of discussion and careful examination of the potential benefits and risks, the 2000 Executive made the decision to hire an Event Coordinator. In this new staff position, Lori Humphrey-Clements has worked closely with each convention chair to organize and manage the myriad of details that go into hosting the Society’s largest income generator. She also keeps the books for the convention, helps with administration and sells exhibit space. As a result, Lori lightens the workload for the convention chair and provides continuity and savings to the Society.

The GeoCanada 2000 Joint Society Convention was a Canadian first: it pulled together the membership of six major geoscience societies – the CSPG, the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists, the Canadian Well Logging Society, the Geological Association of Canada, the Mineralogical Association of Canada and the Canadian Geophysical Union. Using the theme The Millennium Geoscience Summit, the convention reviewed the past and looked forward to future challenges. It was also the first CSPG conference to benefit from its own website and the first to be held at the University of Calgary.

New positions for geologists continued to be tight during this period. The static level of memberships during the 1990s – down about 1000 from a peak of nearly 4400 in the mid-1980s – was something of a concern. But as 2000 President Ian Hutcheon says, it appeared participation rates in the Society were constant and there were just fewer positions for geologists to fill.

**On the eve of the seventy-fifth anniversary . . .**

Not content to rest on its laurels, the CSPG Executive in 2001 charged ahead with many new initiatives and activities. It rejoined the
Canadian Geoscience Council, according to President Brad Hayes, “in an effort to gain a more national perspective on earth science issues.” The Society expanded the Educational Trust Fund’s role and gave it responsibility for the Honorary Address, Visiting Lecturer Program, EdGeo program, regional scholarships, undergraduate and graduate thesis awards, funding and awards at inter-university geological conferences and other geoscience outreach related programs. The ETF’s $750,000 investment does not allow it enough income to support all this programming, so general revenue helps fund these initiatives while the Society solicits contributions from individuals and corporations to increase the fund. The Society created a Public Affairs Committee to help promote the objectives of the ETF.

Taking the lead from an AAPG program that set up six geoscience centres at universities in the United States and Europe, the CSPG joined the American association in the founding of a Geoscience Professional Development Centre at the University of Calgary. This centre provides industry-specific courses for geoscientists early in their careers and for those in need of a mid-career upgrade of their knowledge. Over one hundred enrolled in the first year’s courses and the centre’s director, Dr. Rudi Meyer, plans to expand the curriculum to offer sixteen courses in 2003. Other project sponsors included the CSEG, APEGGA and the Society of Exploration Geophysicists.

The 2001 “Rock the Foundation” convention was the first solo-society convention for the CSPG since 1996. It was well attended by 2306 delegates and was a financial success. It provided abstracts on the website and on a CD as well as in book form – a feature that thrilled the “oldtimers” who preferred the hard-copy version.

Ladyfern and Tom Boreen

The 2000 discovery of the Ladyfern Field, close to the Alberta border in northeastern British Columbia, sparked a level of industry enthusiasm rarely seen since Leduc. Coming in at over a Tcf of reserves and with single well deliverabilities of up to 50-100 mmcf/d, this accumulation was soon producing 800 mmcf/d or 5 percent of Canada’s natural gas stream. Instrumental in this discovery was geologist Tom Boreen. After receiving the Society’s Best Ph.D. Award in 1994 for his thesis at Queen’s University on cold water carbonates in Australia, Boreen joined the oilpatch at Home Oil/Anderson Exploration prior to moving to Shell Canada, where he concentrated on the Middle Devonian Slave Point Formation north of the Peace River Arch. Working closely, Boreen and his geophysical counterpart identified a prospective fairway for hydrothermal dolomite. With the acquisition of Shell’s Plains assets by Apache, the play moved into high gear and the Ladyfern Field became another important find.

“ But what will stand you the best, I think, is having a solid foundation that you keep updating. I think education is still going to be a very important aspect of the future for anybody and you just have to keep on learning for the rest of your life, not get yourself dated or out of date.”

McGill University Professor Emeritus Eric Mountjoy

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This was the first convention to take full advantage of the new Events Coordinator. Regan Palsgrove, the first convention chair to benefit from working with Lori Humphrey-Clements, concluded that the position provided important cost savings and was a great asset to managing the convention. A new Convention Planning Committee, created to take the onerous task of planning future conventions off the shoulders of just one person, also contributed to the success of this event. Current Chair George Eynon and his team help provide continuity through this permanent committee. They plan conventions five to seven years down the road, allowing the current Convention Committee to concentrate its efforts on organizing the next event. The Convention Planning Committee also liaises with other societies, such as the AAPG and the GAC, to schedule joint conferences in the future. It intends to sponsor smaller events, similar to the banff continuing education conference and the popular core conferences, throughout the year.

In an attempt to recognize the senior members of the CSPG, the convention committee organized a Long-Term Members Reception in 2001. More than 300 invitations went out to geologists who had been members for more than thirty years and the response rate was over 90 percent. About 250 people attended the packed reception and everyone enjoyed the event immensely, creating a new Society tradition on the spot. The convention and the Society jointly funded the reception.

The Society ended 2001 in a good financial position, a small loss of $6,546 basically allowing it to break even on a $1.9 million budget. It raised membership dues to $100 even though the expense of providing the Reservoir and the Bulletin alone amounted to about $125.

The Society used new technologies to reach out to its membership across the country in innovative ways. For example, it produced the first webcast of a Technical Luncheon address as part of the Society’s drive to make its services more available to members outside the Calgary area. Other possible services include an online search engine, digital access to all CSPG publications and online conference registration – if reliable and cost-effective.

Finally, a small group of CSPG members formed a Core and Sample Division this year. In a move that must have pleased oldtimers, up to three dozen geologists meet regularly to discuss maintenance and access issues. Reading the rocks never seems to go out of style.

Looking to the future . . .

It’s not fair to ask the current President, Bruce McIntyre, to review the events of 2002. But we asked him to reflect on the challenges the Society faces today and give some insight into its future direction.

Many geologists today are in their mid-40s and McIntyre thinks the industry might be in for a crisis in ten or fifteen years when they retire.
And so the Society is working to attract new people into geoscience. Graduates from western universities are familiar with the oilpatch, but geologists coming out of central and eastern Canadian universities need to know more about the potential for a career in the petroleum industry. The Society is working with universities across Canada to develop young geoscientists.

Another challenge is as old as the CPSG – making it relevant to geologists from coast to coast. Historically the Society has fostered relationships with similar organizations, but new technology is offering additional opportunities. The website is also becoming more interactive and will soon provide members with access to a database of all CSPG publications and the option to pay their annual dues and register for conventions more conveniently.

The Educational Trust Fund – created as a fiftieth anniversary initiative in 1978 – constantly seeks new ways to offer educational opportunities to geologists and the public. The Student Industry Field Trip (SIFT) has always been its main annual event, but a broader base of financial support is necessary if the ETF is going to expand its outreach activities and provide more professional development. The Executive is seeking ways to increase the trust fund endowment, including an innovative royalty lottery. Donations to the fund are always accepted too, and the ETF’s tax-deductible status makes it an attractive charitable cause.

Change can take many years to bear fruit and McIntyre reflects that the once onerous job of being CSPG President, which often consumed forty or more per week, has been made much more reasonable since the restructuring of the office and the hiring of a salaried Business Manager in 1995. The resulting four person office allows the Executive to lead the Society efficiently and McIntyre’s job as President is part-time.

That’s as it should be, after all. The Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists began in 1927 as a group of dedicated volunteers. They were passionate geoscientists with a desire to meet from time to time to discuss topics of technical interest and share in social events. Based on this solid foundation of a history of dedicated volunteers and a desire to explore geological ideas, after seventy-five years the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists still upholds these important goals.

Bruce McIntyre speaks for all the Presidents of this society when he concludes: “It’s a very strong organization and I hope it continues to be that through the next seventy-five years.”

“One of the most important things that the Society is doing now is dealing with students and the Student Industry Field Trip is the prime example of that. It does more than just scientific good because it brings students from all across the country into the Calgary environment. They learn about the culture of the oil industry, they learn about other parts of their country and they learn a lot of science.”

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