

Sager's petroleum career with Conoco spans globe

By DEBRA BAKER BECK, ALUMNEWS Editor

When a British magazine named distinguished alumnus Harry Sager (BS '51) one of the "10 most influential oil men in the world" in 1985, his immediate reaction was "you guys must be crazy."

But those familiar with Sager's accomplishments might beg to differ with his modest self-assessment. Over his career, Sager has been at the forefront of developments in the petroleum industry worldwide — not bad for a guy with a *civil engineering degree*.

Sager devoted his entire career to Conoco Oil and its affiliates worldwide. A large portion of his time was spent overseas with Conoco's International Division, coordinating production activities from Libya to Indonesia and from the Persian Gulf to the North Sea, including resident management assignments in Dubai and London. But it all began just 30 miles from his Lusk, Wyo., home at Lance Creek.

Sager joined Continental Oil Co. in 1955, after serving with the Naval Civil Engineer Corps during the Korean War. When his four-year military commitment ended that year, Harry and his new bride, Anne (by coincidence, a Laramie native), wanted to return to Wyoming, but opportunities were limited at the time. Oil was a possible entry point for that dream, so he and Anne went to Houston where the oil industry headquarters were located; and he worked his way up the streets of Houston interviewing for jobs with companies in that field. Harry got his chance with Continental (later Conoco) and took his first assignment at, of all places, Lance Creek.

They didn't stay there long. Over the course of about a year, the company's training program, designed to prepare new engineers for all aspects of the industry, took the couple to Glenrock and Linch, Wyo.; Denver; Ponca City, Okla.; and Houston. Early in his career, he also took assignments at Linch and Powell, Wyo.; Denver; Cody, Wyo.; and Billings, Mont. The Sagers didn't have much time to set down deep roots.

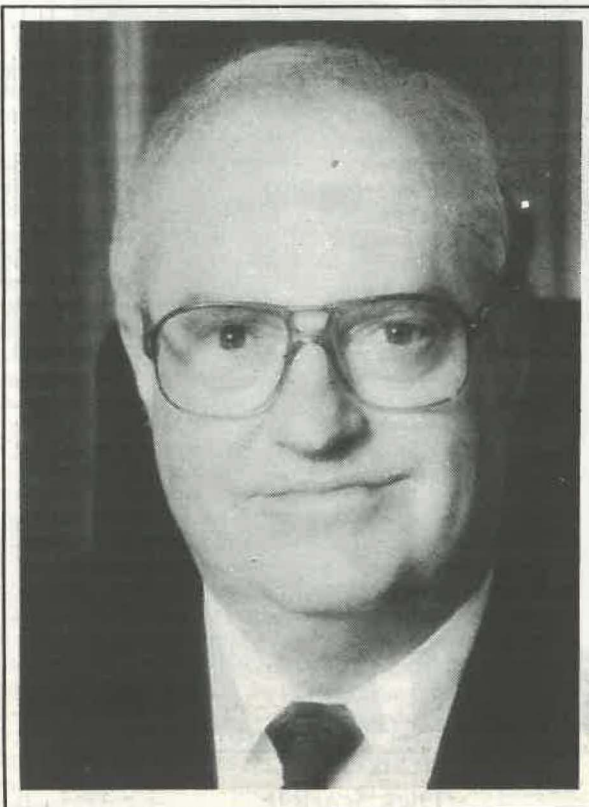
While working out of Billings in a remote Montana oil field in 1964, Sager took a phone call that significantly altered the course of his professional life. At the other end of the line was a former supervisor, now in New York City, asking Sager to transfer there to help run Conoco's international operations. It didn't take long to say yes, and soon the Sagers were headed back to the East Coast. While in New York, Sager helped plan and execute Conoco's new production interests in Libya. Within a few short years, production at that site reached 1 million barrels per day.

Conoco next moved the Sagers to the Middle East so that Harry could work on a new oil discovery at Dubai in the Persian Gulf. His title was vice president and manager of operations for Dubai Petroleum Company. The Sagers' time there was generally pleasant — it was basically a safe place to live, with a colorful, centuries-old history as a sea-faring trading community. Citizens were forward thinking, and the "benign dictatorship" placed no real restrictions on people living there.

Sager supervised an exciting operation in Dubai that involved a great deal of exciting innovation. When the company constructed a major off-shore oil site there without using pipeline to shore, it was an industry first. Rather than apply traditional methods, it instead stored the oil in large underwater tanks fastened to the sea bottom, a process that Sager and his Dubai-based crew developed. With this system, ocean-going tankers could come right into the field for their loads.

In 1973, Sager transferred to Conoco's Stamford, Ct., headquarters to oversee the company's Middle and Far East operations. The job still gave Harry many opportunities to go overseas, as he traveled to such destinations as Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Taiwan, Iran, Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Africa.

The Sagers moved again in 1976, when Conoco consolidated its operations to the Houston office. With that move, Harry's focus also changed, this time to Conoco's Euro-



Harry Sager

pean oil and gas interests. For about four years, he oversaw a dynamic part of the company's operations from Texas and traveled many times to the United Kingdom, Norway and Holland. Sager moved to London in 1980 to serve as chairman and managing director of Conoco (U.K.) Limited. There, he managed completion of the Murchison field development in the North Sea and development of the Hutton field, among others. The Hutton project involved constructing the world's first tension-leg platform, a floating oil and gas drilling and production platform attached by vertical tethers to the sea bottom. This process allowed the platform to sway but not bob up and down in the stormy North Sea. Again, Sager and his colleagues were at the forefront of technological development within the industry. That same process now is a key to new, ultra-deep water projects in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Sagers enjoyed living in London, which they found to be a wonderfully interesting and hospitable place, with history around every corner. The couple purchased a home built in 1827 and settled into life in the United Kingdom with John, the younger of their two children.

It was an active time for the petroleum industry, and industry/government relations had a high profile in London. In addition to representing his own company, Sager served a year as president of the United Kingdom Off-shore Operators Association, a prestigious organization that looked after industry interests.

Outside of work, Harry assisted Anne with the establishment of the Paddington Integration Project, a program offering continuing education for mentally handicapped young adults. The need for such a project became evident when John, who has Downs Syndrome, completed the UK equivalent of his high school education and the family realized that Great Britain lacked the necessary training opportunities to assist developmentally disabled young people. Anne took charge of founding this important program, and Harry supported her efforts along the way.

In London, Sager also was a member of the Royal Geographic Society, the Institute of Petroleum and the Royal Automobile Club. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

The Sagers made their last company move in 1986, when Harry returned to Houston to become vice president of North American production. He also was named a vice president of Conoco's new parent company, E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. In 1988, the firm promoted him to executive vice president for exploration and production for North America and group vice president of Du Pont. Sager retired in December 1992 as executive vice president, exploration production, for Conoco and senior vice president of E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company.

Wyoming Ties

Sager's enrollment at UW might not have been inevitable, but it also wasn't surprising. Harry grew up in Lusk, Wyo., in a family with strong Wyoming ties. His mother (Jeanette Sager), and an aunt and uncle (Gertrude and Roy Chamberlain) operated Lusk's Ranger Hotel and a family ranching business, Ord Ranch Company.

Uncle Roy challenged young Harry to do well academically and to take upper level math and science courses.

"I found academic adjustment at the university relatively easy, having done some serious math and science courses in high school," Sager says.

Roy represented Niobrara County in the Wyoming Senate in the 1940s and early 1950s. He took great interest in UW while chairing the Senate's education committee and later served as a UW trustee. Chamberlain also helped establish the University of Wyoming Foundation.

"That put me into the university family from my grade school days," Sager says.

Fellow alums may be interested to know that, Anne did not attend UW, her own ties are strong. Her paternal grandfather, John A. Hill, was a longtime president of the UW College of Agriculture and sometimes acting president. Her parents, Ross C. Hill and Florence Platt (Williams), both graduated from

After growing up with an intense interest in things, Sager's enrollment in the civil engineering program seemed natural. Once there, he found plenty of excellent professional role models on the engineering faculty. Among the most important were Engineering Dean H.T. Person and faculty members A.J. McGaw, Mullens and John Hill (who would later become in-law — Hill is Anne's

"They were strong leaders, no question about it," says of the engineering faculty. "If you spent four years with them, you came away not only with a good engineering background but also a lot of confidence."

These professors "really had a firsthand feel of real world was like." Acknowledging that quickly becomes obsolete, they focused on giving their students a "managerial viewpoint of engineering" allowed them to see "the big picture," rather than one small part of a

Biographical Informant

Harry and Anne Sager have two children, Elizabeth (Yates) and John, and one grandson.

Now retired, Sager remains active as president of the Ord Ranch Company, the family-owned land company at Lusk, Wyo. He serves on the boards of the Offshore Logistics Company of Lafayette, La.; the Mercer Arboretum Foundation of Houston, Texas; and the University of Wyoming Foundation. He also serves on the University of Wyoming College of Engineering Steering Committee. Sager is an honorary life director of the American Petroleum Institute and is a graduate of the Stanford Executive Program, Stanford University.

Sager is a member of the Society of Petroleum Engineers. He is a past director of the National Ocean Industries Association, the Western States Petroleum Association, the Harris County Children's Protective Services Fund, the Houston Grand Opera and the Harris County Heritage Society. Over the years, he also has served on the Engineering Foundation Advisory Council, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Petroleum Engineering Advisory Board at Tulsa University.

While at UW, Sager was active in Sigma Nu fraternity and served as its president from 1950-51. He also was elected to Sigma Tau, UW's engineering honorary at the time.