

Neil "Mick" McMurry Distinguished Alumnus

By Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

Fast Facts:

EDUCATION: BS, '68, Business Administration

OCCUPATION: President, Nerd Gas Company, LLC

SELECTED

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: UW Medallion Service Award (with wife Susan K. "Susie" McMurry); College of Business Distinguished Alumnus, UW Cornerstone award, Governor's Arts award.

FAMILY: Wife, Susie, daughters Jillian McMurry and Trudi McMurry

HOBBIES: Jets and Corvettes, visiting with granddaughters

If civilians were soldiers, Neil "Mick" McMurry would have a chest full of medals. Instead, his honors are in the form of countless accolades from the Wyoming business and philanthropic communities, and the University of Wyoming. These honors recognize McMurry's contributions of not just wealth, but of time.

McMurry went from his college graduation to two years of service in Vietnam, where he flew helicopters. From there he and his brother Vic McMurry ran a heavy construction company, McMurry Brothers, for 20 years. They sold the business in 1990, and then Mick McMurry started Nerd Gas Company, LLC, an exploration and production company based in Casper, of which he is president. He wanted to name the company National Energy Resource Development, but his daughters suggested he shorten it to what they felt was appropriate to their father's nature: Nerd. "The name stuck," he said.

The headquarters stand at the intersection of roads he dubbed "Guts" and "Luck." The gas company had core assets in the Green River Basin, the Overthrust Belt and the Powder River Basin. He purchased a working interest in the Jonah Field, which turned



Neil "Mick" McMurry, Distinguished Alumnus

out to be so profitable the UW football field bears its name due to McMurry's donation. The company has since sold off its interests in that area of the state and is now focused on an oilfield construction company, a charter aviation company, banking, and other ventures.

"I've always been blessed to have very good employees. That's the most valuable asset of company. A lot of them are UW grads. They are well educated, hard working, and a lot smarter than I am. That's what you strive to find in business. They do a great job for me."

Brent Hathaway, Dean of the College of Business, said "Mick McMurry is Wyoming's most notable business leader, active in the energy industry as well as in other entrepreneurial endeavors. All of his businesses have been developed to benefit the people of Wyoming." One result of this success was the founding of the McMurry

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Foundation in 2000. The foundation was created to serve the youth, the underprivileged, and various civic institutions in Natrona County and around Wyoming. Through the foundation, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Wyoming, Casper

College, the Central Wyoming Counseling Center, the Wyoming Community Foundation and many others have received funding. He and Susie, along with board member George Bryce, review each funding proposal themselves. "It is a daily commitment. We have to be strong enough to say no sometimes. But that's part business, and it's part of life."

"As we get older we realize it isn't the money that matters in life," McMurry added. "It is what you have built and given, and what your character is - we've focused on that with our foundation. If you aren't sharing with others you haven't succeeded. We aren't done yet paying it forward."

Another aspect of McMurry's philanthropy has centered on giving time and advice directly to UW. He helped develop the Wyoming Technology Business Center and the UW Convention Center. He has been executive-in-residence for the College of Business.

McMurry said he was "a very average student" because he was busy working with his father W.N. "Neil" McMurry on road construction projects while in college. That left just enough time for him to hit the books and complete his business degree. "I never thought of any degree besides that one. My father was an entrepreneur and that was what I wanted to do."

Father and son have spent the last few years at work on a biography of the elder McMurry, with the help of Pinedale, Wyo., historian Ann Noble. The book's title is *Hurry McMurry*, recalling the nickname given to Neil McMurry as he hurried from one construction project to the next. Although Mick McMurry collaborated on this book, he said he still is in competition with his 87-year-old dad in real estate and other business endeavors. "He's never going to retire, so I guess I can't either."

As for being named a Distinguished Alumnus, McMurry simply said, "Who would have thought? Not me." He expects to enjoy the Homecoming celebration, ride in the parade, and "have a lot of fun." He's purchased a suite in the new Wildcatter seating, which he's named Jonah Suite. "I'm hoping being indoors will make Susie more interested in football." ❦