

Thomas M. Botts UW Distinguished Alumnus

By Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

Fast Facts:

EDUCATION: BA '77,

Civil Engineering

OCCUPATION: Executive VP of
Global Manufacturing Royal Dutch
Shell, retired

SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Led a team of 30,000, employees and contractors, at 30 refineries and chemical sites around the world; board member of three of Shell's largest employee networks for women, Hispanics and African-Americans; member of American Petroleum Industry and National Manufacturing Association; board member of EnPro Industries, John Wood Group plc, and on the Council of Overseers for the Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University.

When Tom Botts was growing up on his family's ranch outside of River-ton, Wyo., as the only son in the family he might have been expected to continue the ranching life. Instead, his father encouraged him to go to college and then do something else. "My dad loved the life but he didn't think I would," Botts recalled.

As it turns out, he was right. "Ranching was a great way to grow up but I wouldn't have been happy doing it for a lifetime. It was a no-brainer for me to go to UW for an engineering degree."

Botts recalls his early days on campus, living on the 4th floor of McIntyre Hall before moving into an apartment off campus. He was involved in Mortar Board, Tau Beta Pi, and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Before he knew it, he was a senior and he was interviewing on campus with Shell Oil. Upon graduation, he was hired as a civil engineer. Two weeks later, he married his "childhood sweetheart." Right after that, he and his wife, Shelley, moved to Ventura, Calif., where he started his 36-year career with that company.

"California was great," he recalled. "I could see Ventura Beach from my of-

fice." He spent some time playing volleyball on the beach, enjoying the steady 72 degree temperatures and never needing to turn on heating or air conditioning. "It was quite a departure for a kid from Wyoming."

It wasn't all fun and games, of course. The company was shifting Botts' focus toward petroleum engineering. After two years, he became certified and licensed in that field.

During this time he took on an array of Upstream assignments in both engineering and operations across the U.S. By 1990 he was Division Operations Manager, responsible for onshore Upstream operations in the western half of the U.S.; later he assumed responsibility for both engineering and operations as Division Production manager.

In 1995 he was appointed Treasurer of Shell Oil Company. Three years later he moved to London, holding positions as U.K. Gas Director, U.K. Oil Director, and U.K. Managing Director. In 2003 moved to the Netherlands and became Executive VP for Exploration and Production, Europe. He was named Executive VP of Global Manufacturing Royal Dutch Shell in 2009. He retired in 2012.

"I thought it would last a couple years, but the good thing about a global company is that you can quit and do something else but it is all within the company," Botts said. His first 20 years were spent in either California or Texas. Normally once someone begins their career in the States, Botts explained, that is where they stay. Botts and his wife had young children and thought it might be a good experience for their family if they could go overseas. So he was able to obtain the position in London, then in Scotland, then the Netherlands. "We were not sure what it would be like, but we decided to give it a go. Thirty-six years later, it's a career."

In the meantime, his parents had passed away, and the family ranch had been taken over by others. But, the young Botts family had purchased property near Moran, Wyo., with views of Jackson Hole and the Tetons.

"We wanted to give the kids a sense of home, so we brainwashed them, telling them wherever we lived that Wyoming was their home. Now they return as often as they can, so our tactic worked."



Thomas M. Botts

During the time Botts was Executive VP for Exploration and Production, Europe, three of the company's five regions were headed by people from Wyoming. "The odds of that are a bazillion to one," Botts said. "I had credibility and respect from day one. Not just because of the solid engineering background I got from UW, but also from the work ethic I learned from ranching. You do what you say you're going to do, you do what your part is. That was reinforced at school in Laramie."

Eric Marsh, Executive vice president of the Encana Corporation in Plano, Texas, said of Botts:

"Rising to the rank of EVP in a multi-faceted company like Shell is a huge accomplishment. Often, it is much more challenging than running a small company because of the complexity of the various businesses and product lines. Tom Botts is a leader in understanding how to move an organization from a current state to a future successful state. He exemplifies how a Wyoming attitude goes a long ways toward creating a successful business. He is a winner and does it with integrity."

Now that Botts is retired from Shell Oil, he is living full time in Wyoming and has turned his attention to today's UW engineering program. In 2012

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he was appointed by Gov. Matt Mead to the Wyoming Governor's Energy, Engineering, and STEM Integration Task Force for UW. In April 2012 spoke for the UW School of Energy Resources Distinguished UW Alumni in Energy Speaker Series.

He is part of a group driving the integration of the School of Energy Resources and the Engineering school. "The governor and the legislature have a vision that is really unique," he said. "It will be difficult to pull off, but the determination and drive and the way

the governor has chosen to go about it is exciting."

Part of the concept is to gather a group of industry leaders who went to UW, such as Botts, and explore what it takes to create a top tier engineering school. Top tier usually refers to being in the top quartile of rankings issued by national magazines or other rating institutions. Botts explained that part of the approach is to consider what industry leaders look for when they go to universities to hire. "When you start peeling the onion on the questions, you look

at what kinds of students you attract, what kinds of faculty, the programs you execute, the research that you do: these all dial into what it is to be Tier 1."

Botts said when he learned he'd been named a UW Distinguished Alumni, he thought: "Holy mackerel do you have the right guy?" But he said he was very honored and pleasantly surprised. "Especially later in my career and since I've retired I've wanted to give back to the university. I attribute a large part of the success I had to the experience I had at UW." ❧

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