

Tributes flow in for former AEC chairman known as an 'outstanding Canadian'

BY SHAUN POLCZER, CALGARY HERALD AUGUST 18, 2010



David Mitchell founded Alberta Energy Co. in 1975 and turned it into one of the country's largest oil and gas firms. He was also a philanthropist and was instrumental in founding the Ernest Manning Awards.

Photograph by: archive, Calgary Herald

Tributes poured in from Calgary's oilpatch for David Mitchell, the former chairman and founding CEO of Alberta Energy Co. who died in Calgary on Monday at the age of 83.

Mitchell, who was awarded the Order of Canada in 1984, founded Alberta Energy Company in 1975 with a staff of four. It eventually went on to become one of the country's largest oil and gas companies.

Along the way he became the 35th governor of the Hudson's Bay Co. and sat on the boards of some of Canada's biggest corporations, including Air Canada, Noranda, Scotia Bank and LaFarge, where he sat alongside Hillary Clinton as a director prior to her husband's election as president of the United States.

Dick Haskayne recalled him as "a friend and mentor" who saw potential in people and nurtured a new generation of corporate leaders.

"I'm really going to miss him," Haskayne said. "In my view, the most significant contribution of any CEO is what they leave behind and I have great respect for any CEO capable of identifying those kind of people. It's a very sad day."

According to his obituary published in the Calgary Herald, Mitchell "was particularly pleased that Alberta Energy never laid off employees during some very difficult times." He headed several oil and gas industry associations and served for 26 years as the founder and president of the Manning Innovation Awards, which became a national organization with volunteers from coast to coast.

Former AEC chief Gwyn Morgan credited Mitchell with instilling a sense that business could be a force for public good and described his mentor as an "outstanding Canadian" who accomplished great things without a lot of attention or fanfare. In addition to solid business skills, Morgan said Mitchell also taught the value of philanthropy and giving back to society.

"I think he demonstrated that private enterprise can be the leader in making the community a better place," he said. "He was always there for the community . . . those basic values and those foundations endured."

Mitchell was an inaugural inductee into the Canadian Petroleum Hall of Fame in 1997, which said he started his career "in classic fashion," digging ditches in Turner Valley, according to the group's website.

Former employees said he never lost his strong work ethic or sense of humility even as AEC was becoming one of the largest corporations in North America.

Cenovus CEO Brian Ferguson recalled meeting Mitchell for the first time in an elevator when AEC was headquartered in the Standard Life Building in Calgary.

Ferguson, who joined the company as a 28-year-old accountant, was struck by Mitchell's warm persona and concern for the well-being of the company's employees.

"It was the first time I'd ever met a president or CEO," he said. "He was certainly somebody I looked up to."

Ferguson said Mitchell was a strong community leader who actively encouraged employees to volunteer for civic causes such as the 1988 Olympics.

Mitchell was particularly proud of AEC's environmental accomplishments and personally accepted a citation from Prince Phillip for the company's environmental stewardship. "Being part of the community was very important to him," Ferguson said.

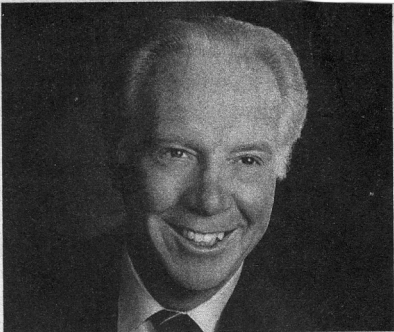
Michael Tims, the chairman of Calgary-based energy investment bank Peters & Co., credited Mitchell's tenure with Great Plains Development for his ability to identify and nurture talent.

"I think because of his own success as a young CEO, he was always very great about giving people responsibility at a young age," he said. "I think we've lost a really wonderful guy."

Even though Mitchell began relinquishing day-to-day duties after 1999, Encana CEO Randy Eresman credited Mitchell with laying the foundation of his company's corporate vision after the PanCanadian merger in 2002 to form the original Encana.

"Dave's commitment to excellence laid the groundwork for the Encana culture. His was a life well-lived and he will be missed," Eresman said in an e-mail. "So many people-- both in industry and in the non-profit sector -- have been positively influenced by his vision, leadership and community dedication."

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MITCHELL, David Edward
O.C., B.Sc., LL.D., P.ENG.

Dave Mitchell passed away in Calgary at age 83. He is survived by Doris, his loving wife of sixty years, daughter Donna, son David B. (Karen), and grandchildren Derek, Jessica, Miranda, and Carolyn. Medical conditions, which he was always reluctant to discuss, were an extreme burden on him, particularly in the last three years of his life. He was a caring family man, who deeply loved, enjoyed, and respected his family. Although city-raised, one special focus of his family life was Dave's beloved ranch near Priddis, which he created and enjoyed with his family for more than forty years. He loved the nature, wildlife, and trees along Fish Creek and in the nearby hills. Family activities also included journeys into the North, the Arctic Islands, Ottawa and elsewhere, to see Canada. He was a very proud Canadian. A respected businessman, Dave was CEO for twenty-nine years of two successful corporations; Alberta Energy, which he started with a staff of four, and Great Plains Development. Both were operated with high integrity and great social and environmental awareness. He was particularly pleased that Alberta Energy never laid off employees during some very difficult times. Dave was the thirty-fifth Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company; a director of several corporations including, Scotiabank, Air Canada, Continental Airlines, Chieftain International, Inc., LaFarge Corporation and Noranda Inc.; Chapter Chairman of the Young Presidents' Organization; President of the Independent Petroleum Association (now CAPP), and President of the Oilfield Technical

CAPP), and President of the Oilfield Technical Society. He enjoyed creating and developing new ideas and organizations such as Alberta Energy and the Manning Innovation Awards, and resurrecting the Calgary Fire Department's Cappy Smart Band. He founded and was President for twenty-six years of the Manning Innovation Awards which recognizes and encourages outstanding Canadian adult and high school innovators. This national endeavour has volunteers from coast to coast who donate their time and talents to recognize outstanding Canadians. To date, it has granted over \$4 million in Awards. Dave was an enthusiastic participant and supporter of many voluntary local and national endeavours and has received many accolades for his community activities. He was a member of the Senate and Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors at the University of Calgary; Chairman of the Calgary Police Commission for two terms; an active Honorary Chairman of the World Police and Fire Games; Honorary Calgary Fire Chief in recognition of his many activities for the Firefighters, and General Campaign Chairman of the Calgary United Way. His awards included appointment as an Officer of the Order of Canada, an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Calgary, and a Canadian Council Professional Engineers Award for outstanding community service. He was an inaugural inductee to the Canadian Petroleum Hall of Fame and was also an inductee into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame. His first regular job was digging ditches in Turner Valley. He joined the R.C.A.F. underage; became a Professional Engineer and enjoyed a never-ending stream of life's adventures. He remarked recently, "I have a wonderful family, have had fun at work and play, and am an extremely fortunate man." A Memorial Service will be held at First Alliance Church (12345 - 40 Street S.E.) on Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. Forward condolences through www.mcinnisandholloway.com. If friends so wish, in lieu of flowers, memorial tributes may be made to: Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation, P.O. Box 2850, Calgary, AB T2P 2S5. In living memory of David Mitchell, a tree will be planted at Fish Creek Provincial Park by McINNIS & HOLLOWAY FUNERAL HOMES, Park Memorial Chapel, 5008 ELBOW DRIVE S.W. Telephone: 403-243-8200.



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