



INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN ENERGY

2025



A SUPPLEMENT TO

Oil and Gas
Investor

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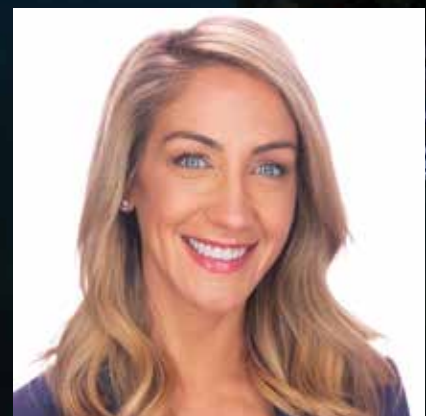


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Stephanie Reed, Partner
2025 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN ENERGY
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Deon Daugherty · ddaugherty@hartenergy.com

SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR

Joseph Markman · jmarkman@hartenergy.com

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR

James Milbrandt · jmilbrandt@hartenergy.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Nissa Darbonne · ndarbonne@hartenergy.com

SENIOR EDITOR, ENERGY TRANSITION

Velda Addison · vaddison@hartenergy.com

SENIOR EDITOR, SHALE/A&D

Chris Mathews · cmathews@hartenergy.com

SENIOR EDITOR, GAS AND MIDSTREAM

Sandy Segrist · ssegrist@hartenergy.com

SENIOR EDITOR, TECHNOLOGY

Richard Stubbe · rstubbe@hartenergy.com

ASSOCIATE DEVELOPMENT EDITOR

Jennifer Martinez · jmartinez@hartenergy.com

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SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR, DIGITAL

Darren Barbee · dbarbee@hartenergy.com

DIGITAL EDITOR

Giselle Warren · gwarren@hartenergy.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Lisa El-Amin · lelamin@hartenergy.com

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

VICE PRESIDENT, SALES

Darrin West · dwest@hartenergy.com
713-260-6449

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER AND DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Jeremy Bunnell · jbunnell@hartenergy.com
713-260-5204

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Grace Giddings · ggiddings@hartenergy.com
713-260-6471

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Rachel Richards · rrichards@hartenergy.com
713-260-4602

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Katie Tassos · ktassos@hartenergy.com
513-739-5283

ADVERTISING TRAFFIC MANAGER

Valerie Moy · vmoy@hartenergy.com

HART ENERGY CORPORATE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND PUBLISHER

Richard A. Eichler

VICE PRESIDENT OF DIGITAL

Derick Baker

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Jordan Blum · jblum@hartenergy.com

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS ADVISER

Russell Laas

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Oil and Gas Investor and Hart Energy proudly honor the **2025 Influential Women in Energy** honorees.

Now in its eighth year, this year's list recognizes 31 outstanding female owners, entrepreneurs, engineers, financiers, technologists, and others across the energy sector. This group of women possesses the dedication, innovation, and leadership that continues to drive progress and shape the energy industry's future. Thank you for breaking barriers, inspiring others, and paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable energy landscape.



Keynote Speaker **Jonna Mendez** | Former Central Intelligence Agency Chief of Disguise
Best-Selling Author of *In True Face, A Woman's Life in the CIA, Unmasked*



Pinnacle Award Winner **Christine Ehlig-Economides** | Professor & Hugh Roy & Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished University Chair | University of Houston

2025 WOMEN IN ENERGY HONOREES

Sarah Bairstow - Chief Executive Officer | Mexico Pacific

Sonja Bruce - Senior Vice President | BOK Financial

Jennifer Charbonneau - VP Innovation | Chord Energy

Moni Collins - SVP/Energy Lending | First Horizon

Traci Cook - Senior Vice President & Chief Accounting Officer | Ascent Resources

Britney Crookshanks - Senior Vice President - Land | Infinity Natural Resources

Sarah Delille - Vice President US Country Management | Equinor

Katy Dickson - Senior Vice President - Technology | Patterson-UTI Drilling Company

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Danielle Fuselier - Segment Director – North America Land | Baker Hughes

Jaclyn Goodell - Director of Acquisitions & Divestitures | ConocoPhillips

Katherine Graham - Chief Technology Officer | Priority Power

Tracey Henderson - Executive Vice President Exploration | APA Corporation

Crystal Heter - Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer | Tallgrass Energy

Katie Hill - Chief Operating Officer | Vital Energy

Nabila Lazreg - Unconventional Resources Technical Advisory Lead | Aramco

Catherine Little - Partner | Bracewell

Samantha Martinez Castillo - VP Reservoir Performance Americas Land | SLB

Patricia (Patti) Bryant Melcher - Founder & Managing Partner | EIV Capital

Lori Mettelle - Tax Partner & National Practice Leader, Oil & Gas | Moss Adams

Laura Preng - Partner | Preng & Associates

Thaimar Ramirez - President & General Manager, Midland Basin Business Unit | Occidental Petroleum

Lauren Read - Vice President Operations, Carbon Ventures | BKV Corporation

Stephanie Reed - Partner | Formentera Partners

Deanna Reitman - Partner | Faegre, Drinker, Biddle & Reath

Meredith Stieler - Vice President, Accounting | EnCap Flatrock Midstream

Courtney Stephens - Chief Executive Officer | QED Energy Associates

Deidre Toups - SVP of Mergers, Acquisitions & Integration | Superior Energy Services

Lauren Varnado - Partner | Brown Rudnick

Katrien Verlinden - President & Chief Executive Officer, Saipem America Inc | Saipem

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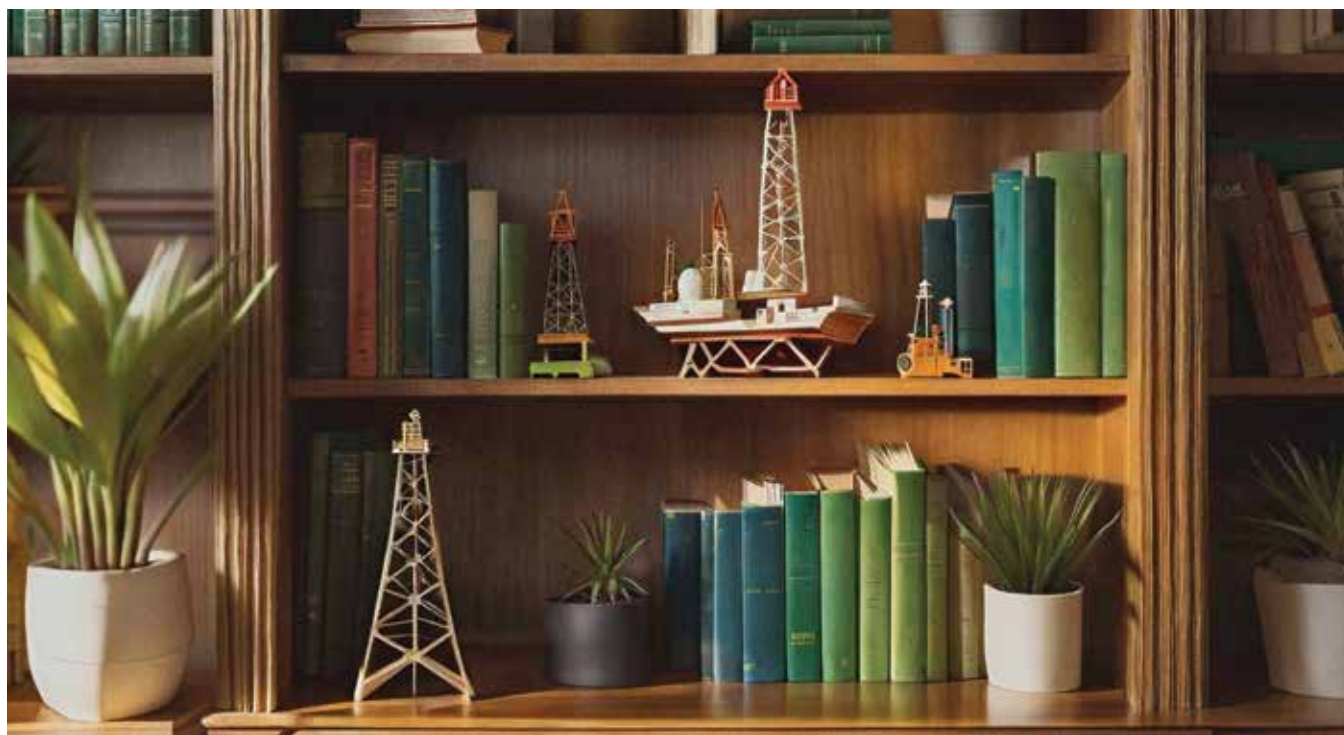
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It's Not Hard to Find a Woman of Influence in Energy

But it is a challenge to choose a limited number from hundreds of worthy candidates.

DEON DAUGHERTY | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



SHUTTERSTOCK

Each year, it seems there are more exceptional nominees for our Influential Women in Energy recognition, which intensifies the process of winnowing the list to a manageable number.

Before we meet to discuss nominees, our committee members peruse the list and apply their own criteria to choose names they'll fight for—and throughout the multi-meeting process, there is an occasional voice passionately raised to ring throughout the room.

It's not a bad topic for heated discussion: who's the best of the best of a really impressive list.

Even our established criteria—each choice must be



someone who represents the values of *Oil and Gas Investor* and the perspective of its leadership—is admittedly subjective.

So, how can I assert that our selections are made in a fair, thorough process?

No one gets every name they want. We limit our choices to the professional lives and achievements of the women nominated, but there's no single way to either attain influence or wield it.

Our group of women of influence in energy includes more than those with "chief" somewhere in their title. Frankly, it must extend beyond the C-suite.

Women comprise about 20% of the workforce in the

energy industry, according to the International Energy Agency. That's compared to 40% in the workforce as a whole.

But despite the low number, it's not hard to find a woman of influence.

Books are stuffed into shelves and drawers, and scattered on top of the various tables both in my home and office. The collection amassed over the years includes classic literature, wonky political tomes, current events and issue analysis, biographies, poetry once memorized and now mostly forgotten, and a few tawdry tales. Lining them up according to purchase date would tell an interesting story.

As my collecting habits refined, the hoard expanded to include first and early editions, some of them signed by the author.

And when my favorite uncle died a few years ago, I inherited an Art Deco period, beautiful but battered cabinet that has since housed those volumes. The shelving order doesn't change much, and one night when I was contemplating this column, I zeroed in on the top row.

There are signed volumes from World War II veteran and politician Ken Towery, a CD signed by The Crickets in 2007 (those still alive after *The Day the Music Died*), southern gothic novelist Rick Bragg, post-punk rocker Nice Cave and ... Nissa Darbonne.

Y'all know Nissa as the superstar newshound who writes the *At Closing* column at the back of every edition of *Oil and Gas Investor*.

But I know Nissa as a colleague who's often the smartest person in the room and blessed with a smooth Louisiana accent, which she deftly uses to share her knowledge and incisive wit. She's a veteran oil and gas journalist, and her book, *"The American Shales,"* is perched between Bragg and Cave on my shelf. She is also a gracious mentor, guiding new reporters—as well as more seasoned journalists like me—when they've got questions or concerns.

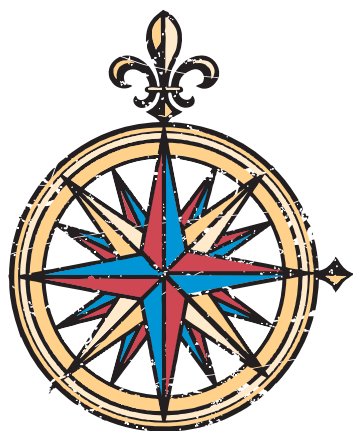
Harkening back to the IEA's reporting that 20% of the energy workforce is women, I realize that Nissa is my 20%.

My point is that influential women abound in our lives. Not the "influencers" peddling themselves and their wares on the Internet; and not the mothers, grandmothers, bosses or teachers whose influence we can't avoid. But women we encounter serendipitously who grace our lives and careers with leadership via influence.

All this to say that if you or your nomination didn't make the final cut this year, please fill out the form now to join the Class of 2026. ■



DEON DAUGHERTY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Sequitur
ENERGY RESOURCES LLC

Sequitur is honored to congratulate this year's talented honorees.

MEET THE 2025 Honorees



Sarah Bairstow



Katy Dickson



Katie Hill



Thaimar Ramirez



Lauren Varnado



Sonja Bruce



Danielle Eveslage



Nabila Lazreg



Lauren Read



Katrien Verlinden



Jennifer Charbonneau



Danielle Fuselier



Catherine Little



Stephanie Reed



Julie Woodard



Moni Collins



Jaclyn Goodell



Samantha Martinez Castillo



Deanna Reitman



Traci Cook



Katherine Graham



Patricia Bryant Melcher



Courtney Stephens



Britney Crookshanks



Tracy Henderson



Lori Mettille



Meredith Stieler



Sarah Delille



Crystal Heter



Laura Preng



Deidre Touns

We take energy forward

We're committed to making energy safer, cleaner, and more efficient for people and the planet. By combining industry-leading technologies and services with operations in over 120 countries, we're collaborating with customers to transform the future of energy—everywhere.



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Dorothy Marchand



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Ann Massey



Lisa Stewart



Janet Dietrich



Vicki Hollub



Regina Mayor



Cindy Taylor



Myra Dria



Nancy Jo House



Beth McDonald



Tiffany (TJ) Thom Cepak



Claire Farley



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2019 Honorees



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Becca Followill



Maria Mejia



Cynthia Welch



Helima Croft



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Melinda Yee



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Lees Rodionov



Lisa Davis



Jennifer Grigsby



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Kate Day



Shauna Noonan



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Emily Baker



Hinda Gharbi



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Andree Griffin



Tiffany Polak



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Bonnie Black



Johanna Haggstrom



Heather Powell



Amanda Brock



Samantha Holroyd



Kristen Ray



Jaime Butler



Wendy King



Julie Robertson

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2021 Honorees



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Teresa (Tracy) L. Dick



Sarah Karthigan



Katie Pavlovsky



Marcia Backus



Whitney Eaton



Christine "Chris" LaFollette



Pamela Roth



Sylvia K. Barnes



Jill Evanko



Melanie Little



Mari Salazar



Leslie Beyer



Melinda Faust



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Allyson Anderson-Book



Lindsay Grider



Sarah McLean



Emily Santoni



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Marie Merle Caekebeke



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Zainub Noor



Denna K. Arias



Angie Gildea



Karen Kearby



Revati "Rani" Puranik



Amy Chronis



Sasha Gumprecht



Christina Kitchens



Dianne Ralston



Byrony Coan



Morgan Hager



Shelly Lambertz



Anna Scott



Amanda Eversole



Janelle Harre



Carri Lockhart



Jennifer Simons



Robin Fielder



Jennifer Hoffman



Emily McClain



Sophia Friese



Hillary H. Holmes



Sarah Morgan



Elizabeth Gerbel



Josetta Jones



Hilary Penrod



Barbara Baumann



Deborah Gholson



Diane Montgomery



Allison Sandlin



Serena Buck



Stephanie Hertzog



Yuliya Olsen



Rachel Schelble



Le'Ann Pembroke Callihan



Jen Hornemann



Tania Ortiz-Mena



Sweta Sethna



Carrie Carson



Alisa Lukash



Alina Parast



Teresa Thomas



Naana Danquah Jefferson



Sarah Magruder



Heetal Patel



Keila Aires Diamond



Jill McMillan-Melott



Megan Pearl



Marianella Foschi



Carmen Millet



Kathryn Roark

Powering the Future, Honoring the Past:

Celebrating the 2025 Influential Women in Energy

C. M. Russell Museum congratulates the 2025 Influential Women in Energy honorees. Your dedication, innovation and expertise have ensured the success of an industry and its culture. Your leadership is indicative of the women of the North American Plains culture where women were the lifeline of that society. C. M. Russell's iconic painting *Women of America* reflects these shared qualities. Your accomplishments are enduring.



Charles M. Russel (1864–1926), *Women of America*, 1924, watercolor, 20 x 30 in.

Available at The Russell® auction, March 2025,
C. M. Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana.

Contact Duane Braaten, Director of Art and Philanthropy,
at dbraaten@cmrussell.org or 406-604-4751.



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Rebecca Boudreaux



Beth Good



Heather Leahey



Serena Agaba Rwejuna



Andrea Wescott Passman



Ana Amicarella



Courtney Brownie



Kajsa Greenhoward



Catalina Leal Isaza



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Kayce Bartlett



Lyndal Cissell



Barbara Harrison



Kendra Lee



Jan Sherman



Nooshin Behroyan



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Carolyn Benton Aiman



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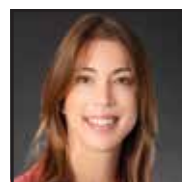
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Pioneer in the Field and the Classroom

The University of Houston petroleum engineering professor has left an indelible mark on the industry and blazed a trail for women.

JORDAN BLUM | EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

As an expert for Schlumberger in integrated reservoir characterization, well design and well stimulation, Christine Ehlig-Economides contributed greatly to her field while in the field.

But she is recognized most for her distinguished career as a pioneering petroleum engineering professor, training the current and future generations of the industry.

For these reasons, Ehlig-Economides is Hart Energy's 2025 Pinnacle Award recipient, celebrating a lifetime of exceptional achievement in the energy sector and academia.

She helped establish petroleum engineering departments at universities. She developed methods of analyzing well test data from multilayer reservoirs that became the worldwide standard for the oil industry. And, of course, she has served as a role model for women in engineering.

She started out in academia, moved to Schlumberger and, after 20 years at what is now SLB, she returned to universities full time in 2003, first at Texas A&M University and then to the University of Houston, where she currently resides as the Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen distinguished university chair in petroleum engineering.

Ehlig-Economides began her studies in mathematics, earning her bachelor's degree from Rice University before continuing for her master's from the University of Kansas. She then pivoted to chemical engineering and, in 1979, earned her doctorate in petroleum engineering from Stanford University.

Ehlig-Economides discussed her career and the evolving role of women in energy with Hart Energy Editorial Director Jordan Blum.

Jordan Blum: How have the prospects for women in the energy sector transformed over the years, including your personal journey?

Christine Ehlig-Economides: I always tell people that a huge turnaround for me was actually the Title IX under [President Richard] Nixon's administration. I graduated with honors from Rice [University] with a math and science background and nobody would offer me a job. Nobody. And the reasons were, "Are you married?" "Yes, oh, well you might get pregnant. No, we can't hire you." Or, "No, I'm sorry, we have too many bachelors in our lab." I mean, really awful stuff. Furthermore, I didn't take very many engineering classes because we were clearly not welcome there. As soon as Title IX passed, it was revolutionary and, in particular, young women went into



chemical engineering. I don't know how much you know about engineering, but chemical is not considered the easy choice.

That opened the door for me. Then somebody dared to hire me at the Kansas Geological Survey, and that just kicked things off. I was super well-

prepared to get into engineering. So, when it came to look into a Ph.D.—this is around 1973—the person I was working for told me, "I know you're interested in computer science, but there's no future there." (Laughs) There was just a real academic opposition to computer science in that timeframe. Instead, I was urged to go and talk to chemical engineering, and I did, but I took an interest in petroleum engineering because my first job was groundwater. It occurred to me that multiple phases would be more interesting than just water. So, that's how I got started. Petroleum engineering was not known for having a lot of women involved, but it has evolved. And we do see women achieving very well in petroleum engineering. High on my list would be [Occidental Petroleum CEO] Vicki Hollub because she's CEO of a large independent oil company and very innovative, at that.

It's exciting to see what women have achieved over time. At Schlumberger, at one point, women wanted to try to get together and management forbade us from doing that. They didn't want us to meet. I have no idea why. But then, as women started to get to VP and higher-level positions in the industry, they started asking Schlumberger, "Why don't I see any women at my level in your company?" It changed. That's the way Schlumberger worked. In the 1960s, it took the decision to hire people in all the countries where they operated. Wherever you went in Schlumberger, you saw a very diverse international crowd, except not many women. But that, too, evolved. It eventually came to about 16% women. And where did that come from? That's about the percentage that were graduating in engineering. It was not about excluding women. They did not want to compromise the skill set.

I was very immersed in this evolution of women becoming more visible in an industry that wasn't known for hiring women. But industries in general were not hiring women when I got started.

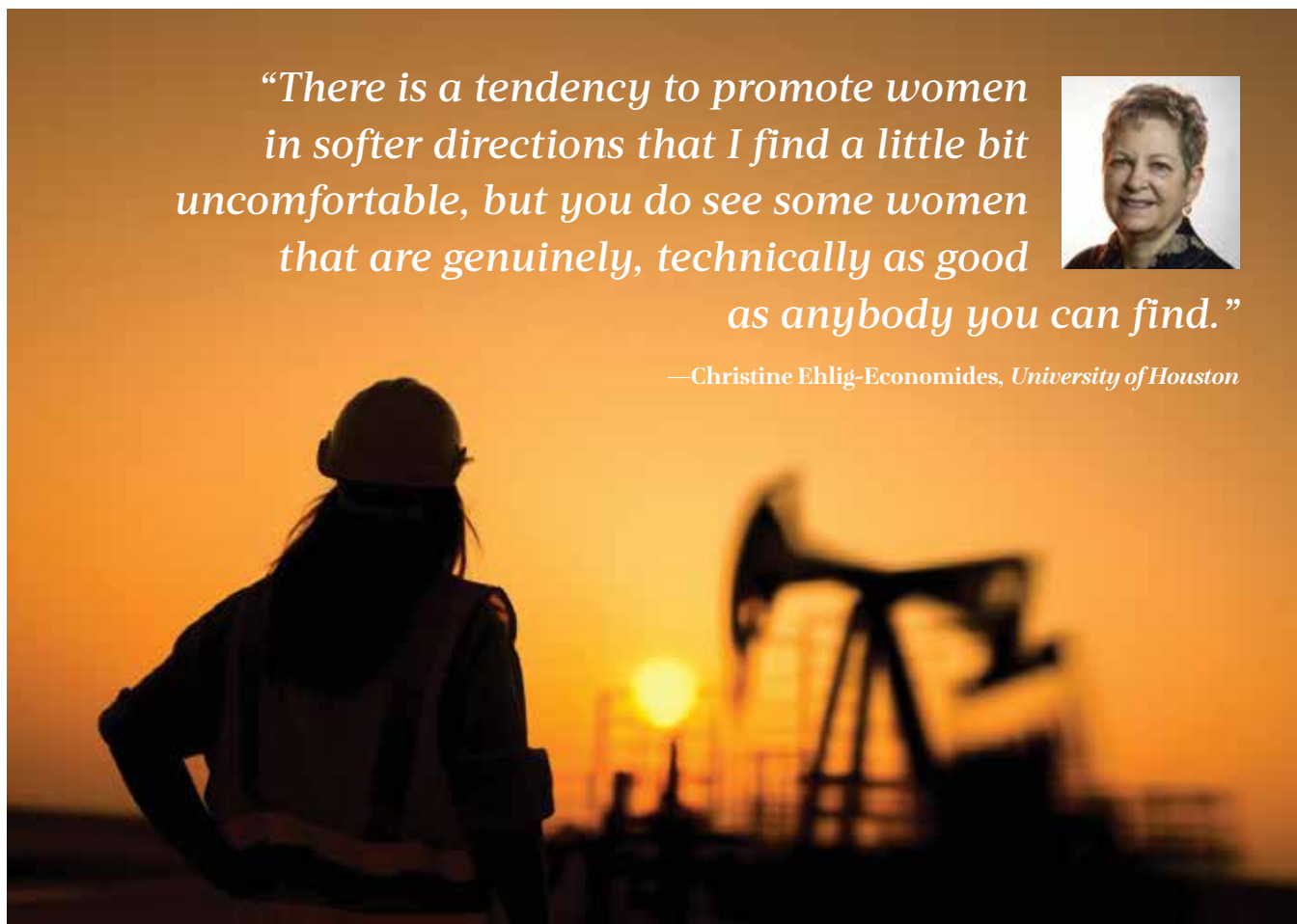
JB: Obviously, things have evolved a lot, but do you think the energy industry still has a ways to go?

CE: Well, really, women do have opportunities in the petroleum industry, and we do see some shining stars. There

“There is a tendency to promote women in softer directions that I find a little bit uncomfortable, but you do see some women that are genuinely, technically as good as anybody you can find.”



—Christine Ehlig-Economides, *University of Houston*



SHUTTERSTOCK

is a tendency to promote women in softer directions that I find a little bit uncomfortable, but you do see some women that are genuinely, technically as good as anybody you can find. I guess technical bias is not what everybody cares about, but it's certainly where I come from.

JB: What's your take on some of the opposing forces potentially hurting petroleum engineering enrollment? On one side, you have the anti-fossil fuel effort that discourages some people. On the other hand, and maybe more lately, there almost seems to be an anti-science push encouraging more people to enter trades and not achieve higher levels of academia. I wanted to get your thoughts on the challenge there, and how things are going within the world of petroleum engineering academia?

CE: Well, this anti-science feeling is utterly disturbing. Across the board, it's so misplaced and so stupid for the country. As to petroleum engineering, this is a big challenge, I think, for the discipline because it's challenging what we do. It's not a choice for somebody that wants an easy ride, but, for people who do go ahead and do petroleum engineering, it is really interesting, the material we cover and what they do in the workplace. It is definitely something that someone with some technical talent will enjoy doing.

This natural bias that we fear is communicated within the high schools and even before may be discouraging the best talent from taking an interest in petroleum engineering. Over

my career, the numbers in petroleum engineering in the United States have mostly declined, except for the period between 2010 and 2014 when the industry desperately needed more people and that was easily known by young people. The University of Houston was way overpopulated at that point, and we were not the only ones.

Apart from that, we are now at a time where petroleum engineering programs generally struggle, but we think we've seen the base of the valley. This has happened before. And, so, enrollment numbers are increasing and, hopefully, we'll be able to graduate enough people for the industry. There was a time when the big companies, the Chevrans and the Shells and the Exxons, they had excellent training programs, so they could hire engineers, really, of any background. But they don't have the resources that they had in the past.

And federal funding has not favored traditional petroleum engineering. With collaboration with companies, there has been some. But, even that, it's not core business directions. It's CO₂ storage, geothermal, these sorts of things. It's going to be interesting to see whether [new Energy Secretary] Chris Wright will have any impact on what is available for research funding in the Department of Energy.

But I do find the energy transition space wonderful. It is rich in innovative directions, so it's not all bad for petroleum engineering research to take some interest in transition directions. I also think that our industry needs to look for alternatives that reflect concerns over the continued



CHRISTINE EHLIG-ECONOMIDES

Geology students who joined Christine Ehlig-Economides on a field trip to Denmark.

combustion of fossil fuels. My own research interests favor hydrogen for that reason. It is a fascinating time to be in the industry, but I can't remember a time I was in the industry that I couldn't have said that.

JB: Switching gears a bit, when in your career did you think it would be economically possible for there to be a shale boom for tight rock?

CE: I think when it happened. (*Laughs*) And here's why. My earlier career, my 20 years at Schlumberger, was strictly international. Even though I was based for a significant part of the time in the United States, Schlumberger had my sites on international companies and operations—West Africa, Indonesia, South America, anywhere but the United States. So, I was woefully ignorant (*laughs*) actually of U.S. resources. But, when this shale gas success started to happen, it just totally caught my attention. I really learned U.S. unconventional more than conventional. It was and is technically challenging.

Something that's amazing about the United States is mineral rights, because landowners have the rights of the minerals below them. I think this is a big key to why the United States has led the world consistently over history in technical advances. When the landowner has something in the game, they get a return on what happens. They're part of the team that agrees to the risk. It's really impressive to see what advances have come because of that, and we're the only country like that.

JB: Do you think we've pretty much cracked the code on the shale boom, or do you think there's still major technological discoveries left to be made?

CE: It's pretty straightforward. The advantage is, you can almost look at it on a well-by-well basis. With \$5-\$10 million to invest, you're going to get a return on investment. Compare that to, I don't know, half a billion to make something happen in deepwater. And that's just your starting point, right? It's a big enabler. You can go out there and make a profit.

Now, there are some issues showing up. Texas is headlining them because these wells that look like geysers are erupting brine. I fear that that is related to produced water disposal in Texas. So, instead of earthquakes like what was happening in Oklahoma, we're getting surface leaks of

brine. Now, I may have that wrong. I'm trying to ... actually study it and confirm these likely connections. But, right now, it's more of a temporal connection. We are injecting a lot into formations that are not far from where this is happening. It looks like there's a connection, but we need to make sure the subsurface supports that.

I will say this. When the industry discovers that we have a risk like that, we fix it very quickly. We don't keep doing something that's causing farmland to get contaminated with saltwater. We don't do that.

JB: Where else do you think there might be discoveries left to be made, both domestically and internationally?

CE: Well, we know two arenas of interest apart from what's already there. I mean, with the unconventional, the recovery factors are like 10% or less. So, 90% of the hydrocarbon is still there. There's lots to do to improve the recovery factor. And you could say, "Well, why don't we do that already?" Well, because it's too profitable to just keep drilling the wells as is because the first oil is at a much higher rate, and you get the recovery you need to justify keeping that well, and now you have that well. So, there's a lot of future for getting more oil and shale gas.

Two known enormous hydrocarbon prospects are at two ends of a spectrum. At one end, it's cold because that's going to be your gas hydrates. They're not super cold, but they're around freezing temperature and relatively shallow. This is methane that is in crystalline form, hydrate form with water. Wherever you have hydrates, and we know they're everywhere. We know where they are because the drillers have drilled through them. They're a drilling risk, but there's 200 times the methane content when it's in hydrate form. But we don't know really how to produce it. The Japanese are probably the lead on this because they have hydrate formations near Japan.

The other end of the spectrum is the kerogen oil shale. Some people call it oil shale. This is basically immature source rock—young, a bit shallow—and it hasn't been buried deep enough and in a high enough temperature to convert kerogen to oil and gas. But, if we heat it up, we can speed up Mother Nature. There are places in the world that do produce this kerogen shale oil, and U.S. land has huge shale oil resources, so don't look for us running out of oil. ■

Revealing the Life of a Spy

The CIA's former chief of disguise faced off with international terrorists and domestic misogynists.

In her life as an international spy, Jonna Mendez perfected the art of being comfortable in her own skin—even when she looked like someone else.

The CIA's former chief of disguise once appeared as a younger woman in an Oval Office meeting, stunning former President George H.W. Bush when she unmasked. The president's reaction was all the more remarkable given that he was a former CIA director.

Mendez, keynote speaker at *Oil and Gas Investor's* 2025 Influential Women in Energy luncheon, details her illustrious career in a memoir, "In True Face: A Woman's Life in the CIA, Unmasked," published in 2024.

"I had always thought that if you were going to spend a major part of your life working, you should tackle something that made a difference," she writes. "We used to refer to this as 'touching the wire,' CIA shorthand for delicately, in some small way, helping to nudge history in the right direction."

One of the ways Mendez made a difference was within the agency itself. When she started her career in the CIA's typing pool during the 1960s, the clandestine services in the agency housed a culture of misogyny considered to be among the worst in U.S. agencies.

Mendez was able to build a career and rise through the ranks of the CIA in the face of multiple roadblocks. She became a technical officer despite lacking the required degree or experience; attended a career development program open to few women; and developed skills in disguise so she could qualify for overseas assignments.

Her advancement irked some males in the agency who just couldn't handle a woman being promoted ahead of them. In her book, Mendez recounts an instance in a bar in which a male colleague mouthed off to a group of Navy SEALs about how women should not be allowed on the shooting range.

Mendez approached him, raised her beer and poured it on his head. The colleague was infuriated, though the SEALs were entertained.

"I knew I would find a way forward," she writes. "You could call it fearlessness, or you could call it blind determination. Whatever it was, it propelled me forward time and time again."

Mendez's career in the agency's office of technical science began in the clandestine imaging division. She landed a position as a photo operations officer and started working with invisible ink and microdots. An intensive career development training course included short-wave



JONNA MENDEZ

radio techniques, how to plant a bug and how to build an explosive device from everyday materials.

During the Cold War, she trained a young Afghan fighter to photograph military aircraft during the Soviet occupation of his country, helped develop processes to disguise CIA case officers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and disguised a defector from an Asian country as a Marine Embassy guard to spirit him out of the country.

In the intelligence business, information is siloed and outcomes often never come to light. Mendez put her life at risk and served her country knowing that only a few would know of her accomplishments.

"I had to trust that the role I was playing was important, a necessary component of a bigger picture I would probably never see," she writes. "Success earned no applause, and none was expected. That was the nature of the work, and of the job." ■

—*Oil and Gas Investor*

A YEAR AGO

Hart Energy's annual Influential Women in Energy program recognizes those who have distinguished themselves throughout their careers in the industry. At the 2024 event, Hart Energy honored Leah Turner, former program director of GeoFORCE Texas, with the Pinnacle Award. GeoFORCE Texas is a free outreach program for high school students at the University of Texas at Austin that is designed to identify the next generation of STEM leadership.





HART ENERGY

Sarah Bairstow

CEO • Mexico Pacific • Houston

Closely adhering to the overachiever playbook, 15-year-old Sarah Bairstow attached her first five-year plan to the wall of her bedroom in Australia, perhaps unknowingly preparing for her career as a business titan in Asia.

After developing a passion for cultural studies and Japanese in high school, Bairstow enrolled in Australia's first university to offer an Asian studies program, earning her degree in international business (with honors) and a parallel degree in law (with honors) before graduating and joining a prestigious law firm.

It was then that the energy bug bit.

"Helping clients figure out how to acquire or develop energy projects across oil and gas, mining, power and renewables became my forte," Bairstow said.

So much so that one of her clients, Australia-based energy giant Santos, brought her on to help figure out how to bring its \$18.5 billion Gladstone LNG project online. It was a one-year commitment that turned into a 10-year role as head of strategic projects and LNG marketing (commercial), with Bairstow worked across various areas from initial concept to operations.

"Developing, building and operating new energy businesses became a passion and the nucleus of my career," she said. "It's never easy developing a viable new energy concept, let alone

securing the support of key project stakeholders, but I've thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and feel immensely privileged to have worked with so many talented colleagues and project partners."

But Bairstow has not spent her career in pursuit of the easy way. Like many overachievers, finding herself outside her comfort zone becomes a comfort zone in and of itself.

"Mostly, the events that shaped my career required me to step outside of my comfort zone—which has happened all too frequently as my career has evolved—and weren't always voluntarily," she said. "But they're the very events that push you to realize how resilient and capable you really are."

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I enjoy a challenging adventure, from flying planes to diving with great white sharks.
- 2** I enjoy life with my husband John and children Ruby and Billy.
- 3** Mexico Pacific's anchor project, the Saguaro Energía LNG Facility, is a three-train, 15 mtpa West Coast North American LNG export facility located in Puerto Libertad, Sonora, Mexico. The facility achieves significant cost and logistical advantages, including the lowest landed price of North American LNG into Asia.

What has surprised her about the oil and gas industry is how solutions for the future are often found in the past.

"Despite the need for the energy industry to continually evolve, be it through technology, environment, market drivers or otherwise, there is always merit and often answers in looking back, be it lessons learned or pathways navigated," Bairstow said. "The energy industry has seen phenomenal growth and shifts in demands, markets, technology, new products, etc., and so often, as an industry, we find one sub-sector leveraging prior learnings or skills from another related energy sector to navigate that evolution.

"The energy industry is an incredibly varied space with so much potential for cross-pollination and growth."

Not that a career in oil and gas doesn't present challenges.

"I've certainly had plenty. Many associated in the earlier stages of my career trying to figure out how to own my space in the room as a woman in a male-dominated industry," she said. "There are also always corporate challenges, no matter what role you hold in an organization, but it's always the people that hold the solution. Sometimes you just need to have the right people around you and know the right question to ask."

And it helps when there are mentors who are ready and willing to answer.

"In a very male-dominated industry, I've been lucky enough to work for, and with, some remarkable women, each of whom stood firmly in their worth, knowledge and self," Bairstow said. "Unfortunately, women still stand out; there aren't enough of us in the industry, but it certainly makes it easier to find a friend and mentor when you need one."

In addition to her father, who would answer her doubts about facing up to a challenge with a "why not?" attitude, one of her early mentors was a boss who was a big fan of the New Zealand rugby "All Blacks Team" and brought the team's mantras to the office, which Bairstow took to heart.

"My favorite is 'play where your feet are at' which speaks to the importance of both staying grounded/humble and being present," she said. "If you're in a meeting, be present. If you're at home, be present. Simple but powerful." ■



“Mostly, the events that shaped my career required me to step outside of my comfort zone—which has happened all too frequently as my career has evolved—and weren’t always voluntarily. But they’re the very events that push you to realize how resilient and capable you really are.”

SARAH BAIRSTOW, CEO, Mexico Pacific

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Sonja Bruce

Senior Vice President, Relationship Manager - Energy Banking
 • BOK Financial • Denver



As a finance student, Sonja Bruce never imagined that knowing the technical details of extracting hydrocarbons from shale formations would be part of her day-to-day life—but now she’s glad it is. Bruce has an MBA, a certificate in energy finance and management, and is a licensed investment banker—the rest she learned on the job.

“I never imagined I would need to know so much about petroleum engineering and geology in a finance career,” Bruce said. “Understanding decline curves, well spacing, reservoir pressures and fracking all go into understanding the financing of an oil and gas company and how to structure a debt facility.”

As a relationship manager, she manages a large portfolio of oil and gas companies, which means consulting with CEOs and CFOs, and providing the full spectrum of energy-related

products and services.

Fresh out of college in 2005, Bruce walked through the doors of BOK Financial and has not looked back. She was immediately drawn to the culture of the company.

“From the first person who sent me up to HR, onwards, I felt like this was the place for me. After that, I was driven to work hard, and to learn and grow within the organization,” Bruce said. “I was surrounded by people who loved their careers at BOKF and who saw my drive and encouraged my professional development.”

A few years into her career, she learned about the impact of George Kaiser, chairman of BOK Financial with deep roots in oil

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I have a twin sister, who is my best friend, and we are the oldest of two sets of twins.
- 2** My dad enlisted in the Army at 17 and was stationed in Germany at 19, where he met my mother and where they raised us. He served our country for 38 years, almost all those years in Germany, where they still live to this day.
- 3** BOKF was my first job out of college, 20 years (as of January 2025) and counting. I started my career as a teller and got to where I am today by being eager to learn, asking lots of questions and listening to feedback from my managers and peers.

and gas. That inspired her to learn as much as she could about the energy business and join the company’s energy group. In 2012, now with an MBA in tow, she got her chance.

“What I love the most about this industry is how the hydrocarbons that we help extract from deep within the earth have changed the world for the better,” Bruce said. “Things we take for granted like turning our lights on, having heat in the winter, flying across the globe and picking up a phone to FaceTime someone on the other side of the world in an instant. It makes me immensely proud to be able to say that I am a part of this industry.”

Bruce grew up in Jägersburg, Germany, where her father was stationed with the U.S. Army. As the sole provider for a family of six, he worked long hours to advance in his career and also earn a college degree at night.

“His expectation was for us to attend college and earn our own degrees but first he needed to earn his,” she said. “He said he would never set expectations on us that he did not have for himself, and that has always resonated with me.”

The foundation of her leadership philosophy is leading by example.

“I believe that actions speak louder than words,” Bruce said. “Going back to the lesson my dad taught me at a young age: Don’t expect others to do something you are not willing to do yourself.”

She considers her strongest trait to be optimism, which allows her to approach challenges with confidence, knowing there will be a solution. Bruce also makes it a point to see the best in others, which helps her to build trust and lasting connections.

They are traits she puts into practice in her personal life as well. She is an active volunteer in her community in Denver, spending over 100 hours a year in service to others.

Her advice to young professionals seeking to emulate her: Embrace lifelong learning.

“Our industry is constantly evolving and facing new challenges,” Bruce said. “To remain relevant, we have to stay curious and continue to learn.” ■



From left to right: Cristina Stellar, Mari Salazar and Sonja Bruce.

Congratulations to this year's Influential Women in Energy 2025 honorees.

Sonja Bruce is the latest BOK Financial Influential Women in Energy honoree, joining Mari Salazar (2021) and Cristina Stellar (2024).

At BOK Financial, we know that women are fueling development and momentum in the energy industry. They're pushing boundaries and are a catalyst to growth. We're proud of the talented BOK Financial Energy Financial Services teams working in lending, investment, engineering and all aspects of the energy sector.

Congratulations to all the 2025 Influential Women in Energy Honorees!



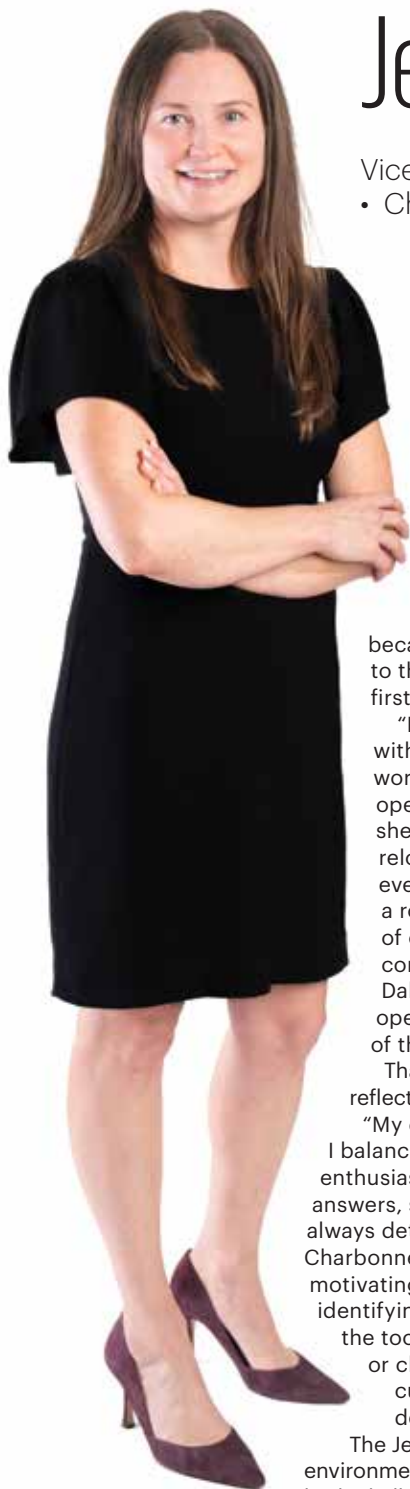
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Jennifer Charbonneau

Vice President, Data Analytics, Innovation and Project Management Office
 • Chord Energy • Houston



Jennifer Charbonneau, chemical engineering degree in hand, launched her career by heading straight to the California oil fields in a hydraulic fracturing role for Halliburton. She would spend a good portion of her career in the field, working across multiple states, in part

because it offered what drew her to the oil and gas industry in the first place: teamwork.

"I loved the idea of working with a team, running equipment, working outside, being in operations and getting results," she said. "And I still do!" After relocating to Houston and eventually transitioning to a role with Chord outside of operations, she remains committed to visiting the North Dakota field sites, believing operations represents the heart of the business.

That team-first attitude is reflected in her management style.

"My colleagues have shared that I balance knowledge, curiosity and enthusiasm—sometimes I have the answers, sometimes I don't, but I'm always determined to figure it out," Charbonneau said. "They've described motivating others as 'Jennifer 101:' identifying areas for growth, providing the tools and resources to improve or change, and fostering a culture of learning and development."

The Jennifer 101 workplace is an environment that she strives to make both challenging and supportive for members of the team.

"Feedback from colleagues has highlighted that I'm driven, passionate and committed to continuous improvement, which inspires those around me," she said. "I communicate goals early, ensure buy-in and use innovative, engaging approaches to keep the teams motivated."

The supportive atmosphere includes filling in gaps for those gaining new skills.

"If they are more knowledgeable, step aside and find mentors or tools to help them continue refining their skills," Charbonneau

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** While I care about achieving results, I genuinely care more about the team and people.
- 2** My daughter has traveled with me on at least 20 work trips since she was a baby.
- 3** I enjoy good bourbon and scotch.

said. "Contribute to the team's success where possible, and if the team fails, focus on identifying lessons learned. Continuously ask if there is anything needed and if there are any obstacles that can be addressed."

Sometimes, addressing those obstacles means gathering insight from unexpected sources. One executive at Chord Energy shared an article on emotional intelligence that Charbonneau used to help transform the safety and leadership culture for the 130 employees working on the frac fleet.

"One thing I try to keep in mind is that everyone I meet has a unique set of experiences, and, if I am really listening, has the possibility to teach me something new and be a mentor," she said.

Charbonneau has driven many division- and company-wide changes in her career. Some initiatives succeeded; some didn't. In 2018, she was tapped to attend Leading Organizational Change, an executive education course at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton business school, which helped her understand how to enable her team to lead future changes and achieve the desired results.

The openness to new ideas is a handy trait for a leader in a constantly changing industry. Her flexibility and willingness to learn all aspects of operations, even if it meant relocating or living on-site for months, led to more opportunities and a deeper respect for the entire process, from permitting and drilling a well to bringing it online and maintaining production.

Another Charbonneau trait: When she takes on a challenge, she is all in.

"In the last few years, my roles have changed twice," she said. "My current position was not anticipated, but when asked to lead new teams in an unfamiliar area, I swiftly adapted, created strategies, set goals and hired staff.

"When faced with unknowns, I dive in, making it both my work and hobby. In my new role, I spent many nights and weekends during the first year working, involved my daughter (Annabella, 12) in learning data science, AI and coding on the weekends, and established connections with experts in these fields."

But success is nothing if not shared.

"For me, the most rewarding part is understanding what excites individuals and inspires them to contribute to something bigger," Charbonneau said. "Helping them build new skills, grow in their careers and feel part of a meaningful mission is what drives me to show up every day and give it my all." ■



“When faced with unknowns, I dive in, making it both my work and hobby. In my new role, I spent many nights and weekends during the first year working, involved my daughter (Annabella, 12) in learning data science, AI and coding on the weekends, and established connections with experts in these fields.”

JENNIFER CHARBONNEAU, Vice President, Data Analytics, Innovation and Project Management Office, Chord Energy

Congratulations to this Year's 31 Influential Women in Energy!

Recognizing that experience and diversity are inextricably intertwined, Baker Botts is committed to fostering diversity both internally and across the legal profession. We believe diversity is a common thread that binds us together and brings valuable perspectives, knowledge, and talents, thereby allowing us to be more creative and effective in the practice of law and in service to our clients.

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Moni Collins

Senior Vice President, Senior Relationship Manager – Energy Finance
 • First Horizon Bank • Houston

One of the most profound events in Moni Collins' energy career occurred outside of the energy space.

In 2008, she had been working in Washington, D.C., for four years both in government and in a role that interacted with the federal government.

But the Houston native was homesick and also wanted to return to energy finance. Her announcement, however, stunned her colleagues, even though she had contemplated the move for some time.

"Their disappointment and confusion resulting from my lack of open communication about my career goals or lack of inspiration in my role taught me that I cannot expect those around me to know what I want or what I am missing," Collins said. "I must tell them. I must advocate for my career, my goals and myself. Giving others an opportunity to provide feedback, support or guidance can open doors I did not even know existed, and it can show me where the closed doors are, and that I need to build my own."

The challenges and the accompanying lessons never stop. The pandemic year of 2020 threw a lot at her and is what she describes as the toughest year of her professional life.

"Not only was the industry experiencing history-making volatility, creating extreme pressure for many clients, but my bank (IBERIABANK) merged with [First Horizon] in the middle of that year,"

she said. "Introducing new colleagues, credit partners and executives who did not know me or my clients made an already challenging situation more challenging, because what I do is more than just banking—it is relationship banking."

Another challenge is one faced by many influential women in energy: there are not many of them.

"Too many times, I have walked into a client meeting as the only woman or one of only a few. This was intimidating as a young associate and caused me to question my own relevancy in many situations," Collins said. "I have been ignored, not

THREE MORE THINGS

1 In October 2021, I completed the virtual Boston Marathon with a time of 4:20. Running 26.2 miles is hard—period. Running it with no fanfare along the course (except for your family and friends who surprised you at mile 6 and stayed there as you passed miles 12 and 18), no water stations, no huge finish line—that will show you what God always knew—you are stronger than you ever thought.

2 As a child of the '80s and lover of so many great '80s movies, I have never seen "Dirty Dancing."

3 I love to read. At any one time, I likely have three to four books on my nightstand, and my Libby app always has a solid queue. Some of my favorite books from this last year are "Lady Tan's Circle of Women," "The Four Winds" and "Fourth Wing," among others.

looked at eye-to-eye (even when I asked the question), and dismissed."

But while being a female in oil and gas and banking was and is still not the norm, "the environment has certainly improved," she said.

"I could say that experience alone has helped me overcome this challenge, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the men I have worked with and for who made me feel relevant, who included me in discussions, who supported me, not because I am a female but because I deserved to be there," she said.

Collins values authenticity, accountability and transparency in herself, and uses these traits as her foundation for leadership.

"A team is more than its results," she said. "Leadership that highlights these values and develops each team member's strengths, constructively supports areas of weakness and cultivates an environment of trust, can naturally produce results.

"If we are all rowing in the same direction, each of us trusting the other, we will go far, but when you need me to be the heavy, have the tough conversation, or ask the challenging question, I will do it because that is part of my job as a leader. You need to believe in me, and that I am your shield so that you can focus on your part of mission execution."

Collins tells young professionals in energy to accept that no one has it all figured out. It's best for an up-and-coming professional to surround herself with those willing to support and lift her up, even when she stumbles or does not have all the answers.

"Learn from every mistake—those are the teachable moments," she advises. "If we were all perfect and knew every answer, how dull the world would be. And ask for help! Most people are happy to help; they need to know you want it." ■



Way to go, Moni.

Congratulations to Moni Collins, Senior Vice President and Relationship Manager, on being named a "2025 Influential Women in Energy" honoree by Hart Energy, and for the leadership you bring every day in helping our clients and communities find a way. Moni joins a distinctive list of women advancing women's participation and leadership in the energy workforce.

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Traci Cook

Senior Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer • Ascent Resources
 • Oklahoma City

Traci Cook joined the oil and gas industry in 1994 at Chesapeake Energy, where she was at once taken by the entrepreneurial spirit of the industry. “No matter what role you played, there was an element of being a ‘wildcatter,’” she said. “Every day was a new day.”

On one of those new days, Cook was tasked with building a tax division for the fledgling Chesapeake. It was a particular challenge because she had no prior experience in the tax field. What she did have was the confidence of Chesapeake founder Aubrey McClendon and CFO Mark Rowland.

“They trusted me and gave me opportunity after opportunity,” Cook said. That trust paid off for the company.

“I learned a lot about myself and my ability to build a quality team over that next five years,” she said. “This led to me being promoted to vice president of accounting, responsible for financial reporting, tax and forecasting.”

The opportunities would keep coming for Cook in her career because changes in the company and industry kept coming and she was open to handling them.

“Between the evolution of the science guiding the oil and gas industry to the never-ending market cycles, you learned quickly to be versatile and open to change. I quickly realized that I possess a remarkable capacity for change,” she said. “Over the years, I have told many young people: you will either love or hate this industry. Those that loved it are survivors, in my opinion.”

Cook estimates that Chesapeake employed about 300 when she started in 1994, of which about 30 were in accounting. By the time she left to join Ascent Resources 20 years later, the company had 12,000 people on its payroll, of

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I’ve traveled on the Orient Express through five different countries.
- 2** My dream job was to be an FBI agent.
- 3** Over my career, I’ve been a part of approximately 100 debt and equity offerings.

which about 500 were in accounting.

The speed of growth led to changes in her career goals. When she began at Chesapeake, her main goal was simply to “keep up.” She wanted to learn all she could about the industry so she could become a good leader. She also recognized that she couldn’t do it all alone.

“Many of the challenges I faced were the result of rapid growth at Chesapeake which required building a strong team to support the growth,” Cook said. “Along with the years of experience at Chesapeake and the confidence of Ascent’s CEO Jeff Fisher and CFO Brooks Shughart, we have been able to build a top tier accounting team at Ascent. I think it is important to build a team that includes members who don’t all think alike and those that you consider smarter than yourself. It is productive to not be intimidated by others’ intelligence. There is always going to be someone who knows more than you. Bring your skills to the table and learn from theirs.”

A quote often attributed to President Theodore Roosevelt (“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”) is relevant to Cook’s leadership philosophy.

“I think it is very important for your team to know you not only care about the company, but you also care deeply about each one of them,” she said. “It has been important to me to build an environment that is energetic and positive where we celebrate each other. I feel strongly that if your team is happy and challenged at the office, they will have positive energy to love and cherish their families at the end of each day.”

To that end, Cook believes in setting the bar high and letting each individual’s energy fuel the team. The results reflect on the department as a whole.

“We want to have a seat at the table and this requires building a great deal of knowledge in not only the company, but the industry as well,” she said, adding that she feels joy when she sees her team members building bridges with the other disciplines in the company. ■



“I think it is important to build a team that includes members who don’t all think alike and those that you consider smarter than yourself. It is productive to not be intimidated by others’ intelligence. There is always going to be someone who knows more than you. Bring your skills to the table and learn from theirs.”

TRACI COOK, Senior Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer,
Ascent Resources

Congratulations, Traci!

Congrats on being recognized as one of the 31 Influential Women in Energy! Ascent Resources is honored to celebrate your remarkable accomplishments in the energy sector. Your leadership has been instrumental in our company's success and serves as an inspiring example for young professionals across the industry.



Traci Cook
Sr. Vice President -
Chief Accounting Officer



Britney Crookshanks

Co-Founder and Senior Vice President of Land • Infinity Natural Resources
 • Morgantown, W.Va.



Britney Crookshanks has early ties to the landman profession. She got her start helping her mother copy documents and update maps during her senior year in high school in West Virginia. While in college, she continued to work in land during breaks in school as she evaluated numerous majors to define her career path.

But the more she learned by working in the land industry, the clearer the choice became. At the time, East Coast universities didn't offer land management programs, so Crookshanks dropped out of school and took on the task of educating herself in the field.

"I spent the next 12 years taking every opportunity afforded to me to learn the many facets of land," she said. "I worked in the field as a landman and in-house at different Appalachian operators before co-founding Infinity Natural Resources in 2017."

She later completed a Regents bachelor of arts in which she fashioned her own course of study. Since then, she has worked with numerous local universities and colleges to help create programs to support people specializing in land management or the land profession in the Appalachian Basin.

"So much of this industry supports the entrepreneurial spirit, which brings a high level of energy and excitement to the workplace," Crookshanks said. "You can create opportunities for yourself by working hard, connecting with

each other and adapting to the changing environment. I love being challenged and being forced out of my comfort zone in a fast-paced environment. Whether technology is advancing, regulations and laws evolving, or markets adapting, there is always something new to learn and a new solution to be found."

Which doesn't mean that finding those solutions are easy.

"There have been times in my career I was provided opportunities to expand my skill set with little or no training,"

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** My favorite place to be is on the water with my family. When I retire, I want to live on a sailboat and spend my time sailing to new places and exploring new cultures. For the time being, I'll settle for cheering on my children as they do water sports.
- 2** I spent a large portion of my childhood living in Toronto, Canada, and I loved it! I have such fond memories of living in the Canadian culture and learning about a new country.
- 3** Happiness and working hard are always choices you make. Some seasons in life, it might seem difficult to make the decision to work hard and be happy but the choice is always there.

Crookshanks said. "It can be paralyzing to look at a new task and not understand how to get started. But when I get overwhelmed, I have repeated the saying, 'Do you know how to eat an elephant? One bite at a time.' It's a good reminder that in order to get a project finished, you have to get it started and take one step at a time."

An early career assignment involved securing a pig launching site for a midstream company in Pennsylvania.

"It was the first midstream client I represented and I had absolutely no idea what a pig launch could be. I knew it wasn't actually something that would launch a pig, or, at least, I hoped it wasn't," she said.

She began researching what the company needed for its pipeline inspection and cleaning device and, as she had always done, figured out a solution.

"It was a lesson I still utilize every day," she said. "You don't have to know all the answers, but you need the resources to learn them."

As the leader of the land team at Infinity, she taps into the skills developed as the mother of three active children, both in positive and negative situations.

"I think it's important as a leader to not be afraid of difficult conversations," Crookshanks said. "You must be willing to be uncomfortable to show inspirational leadership. Whether you are having to deliver difficult news to a team member or receive feedback that is hard to hear, you must get comfortable with the uncomfortable."

"One lesson I am always learning, whether it's raising my children or helping support our team, is there can be more than one right answer or more than one way of doing things."

She also strives to emphasize the positive contributions of all members of her team.

"Sometimes folks might not fully see or understand how someone has positively impacted the results," Crookshanks said. "Being a champion for each other will teach the team how individual members impact overall success." ■



“(W)hen I get overwhelmed, I have repeated the saying, ‘Do you know how to eat an elephant? One bite at a time.’ It’s a good reminder that in order to get a project finished, you have to get it started and take one step at a time.”

BRITNEY CROOKSHANKS, Co-Founder and Senior Vice President, Land,
Infinity Natural Resources



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Sarah Delille

Vice President - Country Management • Equinor • US



Fresh out of engineering school in France, Sarah Delille knew she wanted to work abroad, but didn't know much about the oil and gas industry when Total called with a job offer. The position, however, was in Houston, home to NASA's manned space flight program. That made the decision to accept it an easy one for the self-described space enthusiast.

She found the energy industry to be just as compelling.

"From the moment I started, I was amazed by the industry—drilling deep into the ocean, building platforms that can handle hurricanes and broadly utilizing cutting-edge technology was truly captivating," Delille said. "Now, with the energy transition and AI shaking things up, it's even more exciting and continues to fascinate me."

In her role as head of U.S. Country Management for Equinor, Delille must possess at least some knowledge in a wide array of fields, a good fit for someone with an insatiable curiosity.

"Early on, I realized it's not possible to master everything—engineering, drilling, construction and

financial controls—though I wish it were," she said. Instead, she focused on excelling in

her own roles while learning from colleagues, books, conferences and podcasts. This enabled her to connect the dots among disciplines and gain a solid understanding of how they interfaced.

Delille's career progression has been helped by leaders and mentors who made time to listen and coach. One who had a particularly significant impact was a senior colleague early in her career who worked with her to develop financial models for offshore platforms.

"He took the time to walk me through every step, answering all my questions—no matter how basic—and cheering me on as I built

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I'm a bit of a math nerd—I competed in Math Olympiads during high school, and I now give free math lessons to elementary and high school kids who can't afford tutoring. It's a way for me to share my passion and give back to the community.

2 I've been fortunate enough to live in five different countries and learn five languages—though I still make plenty of mistakes in each one. Every time I've learned a new language, I've gained fresh insights into local traditions, social norms and values. I believe this immersion broadened my worldview and strengthened my ability to connect with people on a more meaningful level—especially helpful for an extrovert like me.

3 I once made a 30-minute drive to an early morning partner meeting in downtown Houston, only to realize in the parking garage that I was still wearing slippers instead of heels. Thankfully, I had a pair of running shoes in the trunk, so I switched into those. Not the most polished look, but definitely better than showing up in slippers!

a new model for the Gulf of Mexico," she said. "What really stuck with me was how knowledgeable yet humble and approachable he was. It inspired me to aim for that same balance in my own career: mastering new skills and helping others grow. That experience taught me how crucial mentorship, collaboration and always keeping an open mind for growth can be."

Not all of her mentors worked in a nearby office.

"One of the most impactful mentors was Terry Bonno, who was a senior executive in a different company. We'd meet regularly to talk about career and leadership, and her advice has stayed with me to this day," Delille said. "Terry once said, 'Sarah, you're still young. Treat challenging situations like a petri dish—experiment, observe the outcome and learn from it. Over time, you'll get better at handling anything that comes your way.' That was over a decade ago, but I still live by her advice and share them with my own mentees. This philosophy has shaped how I face obstacles and embrace opportunities, always with an eye toward growth and learning."

That approach has been put to the test numerous times early in her career when she occasionally encountered gender bias in a male dominated workplace, sometimes mistaken for an assistant or intern and burdened with admin tasks in addition to her actual job. Frustrating? Absolutely. Eye-opening? No doubt. Fortunately, society has made some strides since then.

"I learned to navigate with confidence and resilience, constructively challenging biases and advocating for others who share these hurdles," she said. "These experiences inspired my commitment to fostering inclusivity, supporting diverse perspectives, and mentoring younger women. Although progress has been made, we must keep pushing for meaningful change." ■



“From the moment I started, I was amazed by the industry—drilling deep into the ocean, building platforms that can handle hurricanes and broadly utilizing cutting-edge technology was truly captivating.”

SARAH DELILLE, Vice President - Country Management, Equinor



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SCAN HERE TO NOMINATE!



Katy Dickson

Senior Vice President, Technology & Engineering

- Patterson-UTI Drilling & Current Power
- Houston

Growing up in Montana, Katy Dickson knew she wanted to be an engineer but hadn't decided on a field. It wasn't until she graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering that she finally found her field, and it happened to be an oil-producing one in the Gulf of Mexico.

Dickson began working with Transocean as part of an offshore rig engineer training program that allowed her to receive hands-on experience working all positions from roustabout and roughneck to marine and subsea engineering. After two years, Dickson took an onshore position with Nabors Industries as a project manager and was later promoted to engineering manager, responsible for two rig-up yards and supporting an operating fleet of 200+ rigs. She joined Patterson-UTI Drilling in 2012, tasked with developing engineering, rig construction and field service programs. She shifted her focus to technology, building up the Controls & Automation and Digital Solutions departments, and growing the teams organically.

During her time at Patterson-UTI, Dickson has guided the strategic acquisitions of Warrior Rig and Current Power. She has also led several first-to-market projects, including installing battery energy storage on a land drilling rig and providing microgrid technologies for several applications.

"I've always been very curious and eager to learn as much as possible. By applying this mindset to every aspect of my work, I gained a deep understanding of everything from equipment and systems to company structures and industry regulations," Dickson said. "This approach has given me a strong foundation to build and grow my career."

Still, moving ahead that far, that fast requires mentors who are willing to take a chance on you.

"I've always admired leaders who recognize individual potential, regardless of experience, and assign projects or roles that challenge and promote growth," she said. "Early in my career, I was fortunate to have mentors like Steve Woelfel at Transocean and Ron Morrison at Nabors, who provided me with such opportunities. I'm also grateful to the leadership team at Patterson-UTI for trusting me to build and expand the organization's engineering and technology departments."

Like many who enter the energy industry, Dickson struggled with working in a sector that has won few popularity contests with the general public in recent times.

"Over time, however, my perspective evolved and I've developed a profound appreciation for the critical role the energy sector—particularly oil and gas—has played in shaping modern civilization," she said.

To young professionals in the industry, her advice is to stick it out.

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I have a 1972 MGB that I rebuilt in high school and still tinker on today.
- 2** I've always loved the performing arts and was involved with several plays in elementary, high school and college. Now I'm happy to be a patron whenever possible.
- 3** I grew up in a small Montana town with about 3,500 residents. I appreciate the sense of community this naturally established, and work to instill that same sense of community in my workplace.

"It's very probable you'll have the same doubts I experienced regarding the negative public perception of the industry," Dickson said. "With time, hopefully your perception evolves to appreciate how important energy is to the world."

The compelling nature of oil and gas work acts as a boost to Dickson as a manager in motivating her team.

"It can also be important for individuals to understand the broader impact of the projects they're working on—to 'see the bigger picture,'" she said. "It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day tasks, but taking time to provide this perspective can be an effective way to inspire and energize teams."

"Celebrating success is also a powerful tool," she added. "Engineers tend to be very focused on what needs to be fixed or improved. It's important to remind people to reflect on their progress and recognize their achievements."

Dickson's leadership philosophy is to give direction; not to be a helicopter boss.

"As much as possible, I try to cast a clear vision for teams, then get out of their way," she said. "My focus is on equipping them with the tools they need for success and proactively addressing potential roadblocks. When projects don't go as planned, my first step is to reflect on what I might need to adjust to better support their progress."

Her pro tip to engineers who are new to the business is to head to the fields.

"If you're going to work in an operational or engineering role, it's crucial to know the equipment, the processes and the challenges personnel face in the field," she said. "In the moment, you'll likely question why working long hours in the field adds value, but the hands-on experience will pay off significantly in the long run." ■



“Engineers tend to be very focused on what needs to be fixed or improved. It’s important to remind people to reflect on their progress and recognize their achievements.”

KATY DICKSON, Senior Vice President, Technology & Engineering,
Patterson-UTI Drilling & Current Power



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Danielle Eveslage

CFO • Harvest Midstream • Houston



It was the oil and gas industry's impact on global economics that attracted Danielle Eveslage, who earned her bachelor's degree in economics and electrical engineering at Rice University and an MBA from University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

"My career trajectory has been shaped by diverse opportunities within the energy sector, progressing through roles in financial strategy, corporate planning and leadership, where

I've driven value creation, collaboration and innovation," she said. "Reliable and affordable energy access is core to economic vitality, with oil, natural gas, renewables and other energy forms playing complementary roles in meeting these needs. In my opinion, there will be longevity and the ability to build a career in oil and gas for long time to come."

During her time in investment banking, Eveslage worked long hours on strategic, board-level issues. It taught her the importance of being prepared and having the confidence to act decisively.

"The banking environment taught me how quickly transformational events and opportunities can arise and disappear," she said. "It also underscored how the smartest people surround themselves with even smarter, more capable individuals who can challenge thinking and contribute to developing innovative solutions during critical moments."

Eveslage's family, especially her parents, instilled in her the importance of hard work, perseverance and embracing challenges. Her sisters have been there for both support and a bit of that competitive spirit.

"My parents have always encouraged a love of math and science and have reinforced never giving up in the face of obstacles," she said. "Their guidance encouraged me to try new things, constantly push my boundaries and focus on continuous self-improvement, which has been foundational to my ambitions and career trajectory."

Prior to her current position as CFO of Harvest Midstream, Eveslage served in both finance and M&A adviser roles at

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I love being outside. I love being with my husband and my two amazing children, enjoying their craziness every day.
- 2** There is no substitute for traveling and experiencing unique and different parts of the world. I have hiked the Inca Trail, been to the running of the bulls in Pamplona and been hot air ballooning over Cappadocia.
- 3** We love Houston. After graduating from Rice, I thought I would live in someplace "awesome," but honestly, in visiting new places, we find ourselves comparing activities to Houston—restaurants, kid activities, proximity to outdoors. Getting involved in the community and school also provides a greater connection.

Hilcorp Energy. Before that, she was an investment banker with Barclays Capital, advising on mergers, acquisitions and capital-raising initiatives.

"Throughout my journey, I have encountered challenges that required careful balancing and proactive problem-solving," she said. "To address these, I consistently focused on being forward-thinking, assessing next steps and having a great team around me."

Eveslage said her leadership philosophy is rooted in collaboration and innovation, where she prioritizes valuing each individual's contributions and ensuring they understand how their work influences the bigger picture.

"I believe that fostering a sense of ownership in responsibilities builds confidence and drives accountability," she said. "Trust is at the core of my approach—not only trust in the quality of the work but also trust in the team, the process and the collective commitment to shared goals."

Eveslage has learned the value of building and relying on strong support systems, both personally and professionally, to navigate complexities in a complex industry and an ever-more complex world.

"Balancing career, family and quality time is never simple, but I am fortunate to have a husband who has been, and continues to be, an incredible supporter," she said. "His encouragement has made it possible for me to manage these priorities effectively while remaining focused and resilient."

Eveslage encourages the next generation of leaders in oil and gas to tackle challenges head on.

"My advice to young professionals in the energy industry is to focus on building knowledge, credibility and confidence," she said. "Take ownership of your work, embrace challenges, and view them as opportunities to grow and showcase your expertise."

"Actively seek mentorship and surround yourself with smart, capable individuals who can challenge your thinking and help you grow. Stay curious—never stop learning. Most importantly, make your voice heard, contribute boldly and trust in your abilities to make a meaningful impact." ■



Danielle Fuselier

Well Construction Segment Director – North America Land
 • Baker Hughes • Houston

Danielle Fuselier’s professional life is a variation on the sandwich generation theme: following the example of her mother, a 33-year veteran of the energy industry, and setting an example for her 13-year-old daughter.

Her mother was an early influence on her career choice.

“Being a female engineer in the industry in the ‘80s was tremendously more challenging than any of my experiences,” Fuselier said. “She’s been there to listen, support, encourage and offer her opinions personally and professionally. She, along with my daughter, are my inspiration to push as far as I can—to show my mom her sacrifices were worth it and made me the person I am today, and to show my daughter that with hard work and dedication you can have a fulfilling career.”

Her mom is still her No. 1 mentor, but many others, from peers to direct managers, have provided guidance in her career.

“The best advice I have received was to learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Building on that, if a potential role makes you nervous, it’s a good sign you may actually be ready to take it on, because if a role doesn’t scare you, it’s more than likely not going to challenge you,” she said. “That advice came from a previous CEO of our company and I’ve tried to embody that when role opportunities have been presented since then.”

The opportunities have come with challenges, especially during industry downturns like the one in 2016. Her work scope expanded considerably in what she now terms a “trial by fire.” At the same time, it provided an opportunity to bolster her executive engagement and presentation skills, work with senior leaders and build a wider network across the company.

Her first expat role threw her into a completely new job function supporting a new region (Sub-Saharan Africa) while relocating her family to the U.K.

“I learned a ton about resilience and how to lean on my team, and it was an incredibly humbling experience, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out seven months later,” she said.

Navigating motherhood and career has also challenged Fuselier, not just in the broader notion of a work/life balance, but adapting to day-to-day urgent needs like stomach bugs, fevers and business trips.

“I leaned on my husband and mom a lot and still do; my mom helped with day care pick-ups when I was away

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I was warned early on in college to not go into the energy industry—even back then there was a stigma around the cyclical market nature and work-to-the-bone expectations ... and if I did ever join to never work for a service company. While there’s been some really tough years, my career so far has been a very rewarding experience that I’m very proud of.

2 I’m a big hard rock fan, as is my husband, and we try to catch a few concerts a year. Nothing beats turning up the music after a tough day, or before a critical meeting or customer pitch. Some bands I’ve been following since high school and they are still putting out amazing albums, which have been a backdrop of numerous life changes for me.

3 If I could pick an alternative career I’d love to be a sideline reporter for the NFL. I’ve also been told I would make a good lawyer because I like to argue.

from home for longer international trips when our kids were younger,” she said. “Female co-workers going through similar challenges were another source of support to compare notes with. But it was a tough time, especially when encountering external judgement on being a working mom sending her kids to daycare and recovering from a medical complication after my daughter’s birth that required 18 months of physical therapy shortly after returning to work.”

Fuselier advises young professionals in the industry to “enjoy the ride” and be flexible with opportunities to advance.

“Early in your career, progression is more structured and skill-based, but as you progress to mid-career, role changes can be more opportunistic and seemingly out of the blue,” she said. “It’s important to know what you want to achieve, but focusing on the learning a role can provide versus just the title can help you be prepared when those phone calls come. It’s also equally important to understand your non-negotiables.” ■



Jaclyn Goodell

Director, Acquisitions & Divestitures • ConocoPhillips • Houston

Jaclyn Goodell joined ConocoPhillips' Public Policy team in July 2010, just three months after *Deepwater Horizon* exploded in the Gulf of Mexico. The subsequent oil spill transformed the industry and her career.

"This experience thrust me into high-impact international projects, acting as one of COP's representatives for developing the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers' good practice guidelines for the development of shale oil and gas," she said.

Working to shape the industry's evolving regulatory and operational landscape, Goodell collaborated with international teams, establishing relationships across disciplines and gaining insights into the interconnected nature of policy, operations and corporate strategy.

"This early experience taught me the importance of adaptability and the value of making an immediate, meaningful impact," she said.

When the COVID-19 pandemic enveloped the world, thrusting the industry into unprecedented economic volatility, Goodell was part of the team helping guide ConocoPhillips through the crisis.

At the time, she was a senior energy analyst in the company's chief economist office and led the creation of a high-frequency indicator report that tracked the oil market's recovery, providing critical insights to executive leadership and the board.

Growing up in New York, Goodell had limited exposure to the energy industry. When she entered the field, she was struck by the interconnectedness of global energy markets and how geopolitical events, weather patterns or shifts in consumer demand can have cascading effects, from price volatility to supply chain challenges.

"This realization deeply impacted how I approach my work, reinforcing the importance of thinking strategically and globally, not only when analyzing market trends but also when assessing risks and opportunities," she said.

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1 I have a deep passion for exploring the world and have visited 45 countries so far. Most recently, my husband and I took our kids—and even our parents—to Paris to cheer on Team USA at the Summer Olympics.
- 2 Photography is one of my creative outlets. I've documented my children's lives through a daily photo project, capturing special moments nearly every day since they were born.
- 3 I'm passionate about community service and have consistently dedicated time to volunteering, finding fulfillment in making a positive impact on others' lives. Currently I serve on the board of Undies for Everyone.

Her perspective proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic when rapid shifts in demand and supply underscored the importance of adapting quickly to market disruptions, whether through operational changes or value-focused market consolidation. It also influenced her collaborative approach, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered to make informed, forward-looking decisions.

"This period honed my ability to analyze complex, rapidly changing situations and communicate actionable recommendations, demonstrating resilience and strategic thinking under pressure," she said. "Together, these events underscored the importance of agility, collaboration and clear communication in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in the energy industry. They not only shaped my professional expertise but also reinforced my passion for contributing to meaningful strategic solutions in a dynamic field."

It also influences her leadership approach in her current role as ConocoPhillips' director of A&D. Goodell has been instrumental in completing over \$30 billion in transactions, including the landmark \$22.5 billion acquisition of Marathon Oil and the \$9.5 billion purchase of Shell's Permian assets.

"I frequently lead cross-functional, diverse teams across time zones," Goodell said. "To motivate my team, I prioritize creating an environment that fosters collaboration and transparency. I ensure that goals, expectations and timelines are clearly communicated at the outset of any transaction or strategic initiative."

"By involving team members in the planning process and maintaining open lines of communication, I help everyone feel aligned, valued and invested in achieving shared objectives. This approach not only drives engagement but also ensures we work cohesively toward success, even across geographical and functional boundaries."

She encourages young professionals to seek mentors early in their career and pursue relationships across teams, disciplines and organizations. "I've been amazed at how often my path has intersected with the same people, even as I've transitioned into very different roles within ConocoPhillips," Goodell said. "These relationships have been invaluable in navigating challenges, gaining insights and fostering collaboration." ■

Katherine Graham

Chief Technology Officer • Priority Power • The Woodlands, Texas



Innovations in technology can help to make clean, sustainable energy more accessible to everyone, Katherine Graham believes. She is also focused on doing everything she can to make that a reality.

“I decided after college to learn how power plants operated, grids operated and learned how much technology needed to evolve to provide transparency and automation,” Graham said. “This took me to work for APX, a software company in the [San Francisco] Bay area, that provided software to wholesale energy market players and supported environmental commodities.”

She spent 15 years at APX, eventually rising to COO, before moving to MP2 Energy, a unit of Shell. The new role introduced her to the residential and commercial retail energy space, and allowed her to connect with other global Shell retail businesses and learned the similarities and differences between markets and systems. In 2022, she became chief technology officer for Priority Power, one of the largest independent energy services providers in the United States.

“My focus has always been to work within dynamic and innovative companies that strive to address energy constraints in new and impactful ways,” she said.

Graham’s biggest influences in her life were her grandmother and father.

“My grandmother lived to be 105 years old,” she said. “She lived in a time where women were not encouraged to have careers. Despite this, she fearlessly moved from a small mountain town in Venezuela to the bustling capital city of Caracas, where she became involved in politics and fought for the rights of women and the underprivileged. Her unwavering

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1 I’ve traveled to over 25 countries.
- 2 I mentor two to three high school- to college-aged girls every year.
- 3 My motto: Be confident in who you are and go surprise people. Don’t be scared to fail; you can always try again!

confidence, determination and passion have been passed down to my mother, who in turn instilled them in me.”

Graham’s father, a military veteran and civil engineer from a family of Italian immigrants, built numerous projects around the world that still stand.

At the start of her career, Graham’s goals centered around adding value to her organization through automation. As she progressed in her career, she made mentorship part of her mission in an industry struggling with increasing diversity in the workforce.

“I have throughout my life been in situations where I was one of the only females or Latinas, or both, trying to take on a role. This was true throughout my education, when I played college volleyball, on the 24x7 shift desk, in technology in the Bay Area and management teams,” she said. “While often it seemed intimidating, I always thought of my grandmother, father and other mentors. Today, the work is just as much about who you are doing it with as it is the specific role. I continue to stay driven to learn from those around me and give back to our younger girls to also have confidence to join me in this industry and make their mark. There is tremendous opportunity in this field and I want to introduce our industry to as many young people, and especially young women, as I can. The future is extremely bright for young people in this industry.”

Her career has given her a front-row seat to the energy industry’s rapid technological advances.

“I’ve been surprised at how much technology has outpaced the speed of the energy regulators,” Graham said. “I’ve seen many opportunities for technology to help solve or support the energy transition more, but the pace of change is furious. Every day, businesses are looking for better ways to be sustainable and less dependent on the risk of higher energy costs.

“I think this is the most exciting opportunity for the next 10-15 years. In technology, you have to have enough industry and market awareness to take the right risks at the right time.”

Graham advises young professionals to soak up knowledge from senior colleagues and learn as much as possible about the market.

“There are so many stories from the trenches that will illuminate lessons from the past,” she said, “which you cannot learn from a YouTube video.” ■



Tracey Henderson

Executive Vice President, Exploration • Apache Corp. • Houston

Tracey Henderson, a trained geophysicist, took to heart the advice of her early career mentors to excel in every role she undertook. For the first 16 years of her career, this dedication was focused on sharpening her technical expertise.

“I loved the science, the technology and collaborating with peers and industry experts,” she said. “I envisioned myself leading a technical pillar, such as becoming a chief geophysicist. At that time, I did not foresee moving into leadership roles.”

Funny thing about excellence, though—it often begets excellence. Henderson credits the high standards she strived to meet in technical roles for her success in later leadership roles.

“Initially, I was a bit resistant to moving out of technical roles into leadership positions,” she said. “Fortunately, I had excellent mentors and sponsors who encouraged and pushed me to take on leadership roles that would eventually lead to my current position. ‘I would encourage you to aim higher’ was a quote from one of my mentors that stuck with me.”

But that transition to leadership from technical roles presented unique challenges. Henderson’s specialized training lacked certain business development skills and as she first moved into leadership, that gap became apparent.

To bridge it, she acknowledged what she didn’t know and focused on broadening her business knowledge.

She took courses in accounting, finance and business management and completed an immersive leadership development program at Harvard Business School.

“To successfully transition my career, I dedicated the time and committed to learning the skills I needed to advance my career,” Henderson said.

Still, even Harvard Business School can’t teach an executive to love what she is doing and want to share it with those she leads.

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I have a twin brother.
- 2** I love dogs and have two very needy German Shepherds.
- 3** I have worked extensively in Africa and have visited 11 countries there.

“I am very passionate about geoscience and exploration, and I find this shared enthusiasm to be a strong motivator for the teams I lead,” she said. “I leverage this common ground by setting clear goals and providing strategic context for their work and helping them understand how their contributions support the company’s overall goals and objectives. I also maintain regular and open communication with my team, which helps foster trust and allows me to provide regular feedback and coaching.”

Henderson’s perspective is that two basic factors influence career paths: how one reacts to events beyond control, and conscious decisions.

In her career, the cyclical nature and volatility in oil and gas prices and activities created high levels of uncertainty at times, leading to corporate buyouts and numerous downsizing events.

“These experiences helped me develop resilience and adaptability to change, which have served me well,” she said.

Then there was the big decision to take a big career risk.

In 2004, Henderson had a good position at an established company and a supervisor who described her as having a “very bright future.” But opportunity beckoned in the form of a private equity start-up—more risk but potentially significant upside. She made the call to join the new company and it was a good one.

“That start-up was very successful, went public, and I worked there for 17 years, ultimately becoming chief exploration officer,” she said. “I took a risk, and it was the most impactful decision I have made in my career.”

This opportunity paved the way for her to join Apache and lead the company’s exploration division. In this capacity, she manages a diverse portfolio of exploration assets spanning Suriname, Egypt, Alaska and Uruguay. To Henderson, oil and gas is an industry brimming with potential for young professionals.

“Our industry is known for its volatility but also for its tremendous resilience and ingenuity,” she said. “As a result of previous downturns and sentiment around oil and gas, we are seeing a shortage of young talent today, and that shortage will lead to great opportunities for young energy professionals across a range of disciplines.” ■



“Fortunately, I had excellent mentors and sponsors who encouraged and pushed me to take on leadership roles that would eventually lead to my current position. ‘I would encourage you to aim higher’ was a quote from one of my mentors that stuck with me.”

TRACEY HENDERSON, Executive Vice President, Exploration, Apache Corp.



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Crystal Heter

Executive Vice President and COO • Tallgrass • Denver

“I never looked to the top of the mountain and wondered how to get there,” Crystal Heter said. “I simply eagerly tackled the steps right before me and encouraged others around me. In the blink of an eye, the daily accomplishments amount to significant progress.”

Possessing the mindset to focus on the next steps is integral to success, particularly if the assets you work with have changed hands.

“Corporate transactions have taught me not to fear change. Without change we are stagnant in growth whether from a business or personal perspective,” Heter said. “Perhaps I’ve just been extremely fortunate, but each progression of the company has brought positive growth in so many ways. The opportunity to witness and influence the evolution of this company’s culture has been such a privilege. In the Tallgrass of today, we have concentrated such a dynamic team of strategic thinkers that bring the balance of diversity and alignment to accomplish initiatives at a pace and an approach second to none.”

Heter’s career began with an internship with Texaco in her hometown of Denver following her senior year in high school. She was also

encouraged by a high school chemistry teacher who told her, “We need more women engineers.”

After she earned her bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from the Colorado School of Mines, she continued her education during construction of the 1,700-mile Rockies Express Pipeline, where the mantra from her mentors was always “bring a solution, not just a problem.”

Another morsel of helpful advice from a mentor is almost

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I have been with these same industry assets my entire career, starting as an intern. I have walked through the doors of the same office for 25 years.
- 2** I love change! I prefer to think of it as a pursuit of continuous improvement and optimal efficiency. I have learned through my leadership experiences that I need to be cautious not to let this love be perceived as perpetual discontent. It is so incredibly important to celebrate the wins and continually look for progress over perfection.
- 3** My childhood dream was to be a circus acrobat, the one that swings from the elephant’s trunk!

Sherlock Holmes-esque: “Only in considering all the potential solutions, even those that initially seem absurd, can the best option be found.”

One of the greatest challenges Heter has faced in her career is stepping back so that a subordinate can find that solution.

“I have found one of the greatest challenges of progression to be transitioning from a doer to a leader. High performers realize progression early by being the best doers and once they move into leadership, delegating to your team, allowing space for failure and growth, is hard!” she said. “Personal growth and progression are hard! This can be one’s failure as a leader if they aren’t cognizant of the challenge and intention to manage out of their doer mode.”

What has not been a challenge for Heter is facing adversity as a woman in a traditionally male industry.

“I have had more than my fair share of male mentors supporting my growth,” she said. “I believe it is invaluable, and often forgotten, to celebrate men who support women. It is through the acknowledgement by men that women are perfectly capable of the same achievements that we truly rise and become inspirations for the next generation of women leaders.”

On that, Heter cites the familiar quote, “Here’s to strong women: May we know them, may we be them, may we raise them.”

“I didn’t get the opportunity to raise strong women, but I do have the exceptional opportunity to raise my two sons, Maximus and Crosby, to recognize and respect them,” she said.

To those entering the oil and gas industry, Heter suggests focusing on taking the next steps and not worrying so much about the career mountain up ahead.

“My advice to young professionals would be that nothing can replace commitment to your work,” she said. “If you are committed to performing at your best each moment, your career can build with great momentum. Surround yourself with like-minded colleagues of diverse backgrounds and get to work!” ■



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Katie Hill

COO • Vital Energy • Dallas

From early in life, Katie Hill was learning to lead.

“My grandmother instilled in me a relentless curiosity and a deep appreciation for the value of education,” Hill said. “My mother taught me an invaluable lesson about perspective: while we may not always understand why people act the way they do, when faced with the choice to interpret someone’s intentions positively or negatively, always choose the positive. Most of the time, you’ll be right—and even if you’re not, you’ll be happier until proven otherwise.”

This foundation of curiosity and optimism set the stage for a lifetime of learning and growth. Mentors played a key role in shaping Hill’s career, encouraging her to challenge assumptions and remain adaptable.

“My Dad was my first mentor,” she recalls. “He taught me the importance of understanding fundamentals and testing what you know through teaching others. Another early mentor imparted valuable advice: every opportunity and every boss will present a mix of strengths and weaknesses. Some bosses you will enjoy working with, some will teach you a lot and others you will trust implicitly. If you have at least two of those three, it’s generally a productive opportunity.”

Now an accomplished leader, Hill strives for humility, collaboration and empowering her team. She fosters a collaborative environment where innovative thinking thrives.

“I encourage my team to set ambitious stretch goals that challenge them to grow while ensuring they have the support and resources they need to succeed,” Hill said. “By asking thoughtful questions and facilitating open dialogue, I help guide strategic and innovative thinking, ensuring our efforts align with broader organizational goals and long-term value creation.”

While collaboration is key, Hill doesn’t shy away from tough decisions. “I hope my colleagues would say they appreciate my decisiveness, focus on problem-solving, and willingness

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I believe a sustainable lifestyle is built on exercising, spending time outdoors, and eating well—and I firmly believe chocolate counts as a health food.
- 2** I am a natural competitor. I enjoy sports, racing and even card games, always eager to learn a new game.
- 3** My first job as a prep assistant at a local cooking school taught me persistence. I had to convince them to hire me because I had no experience, and teenager-quality cooking skills, but in exchange, I got to sit in on all the classes!

to adapt when needed. I work to create a team culture where challenges and disagreements are addressed openly and where solutions are developed collectively.” Hill also encourages a “fail fast” mindset which promotes testing new ideas quickly, constructive feedback and pivots as needed to find the best solutions. This approach fosters innovation, trust and a shared commitment to achieving goals efficiently and effectively.

Hill earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mechanical engineering from the University of Michigan before starting her career as a deepwater Gulf of Mexico engineer. From there, she went ashore to support assets in the Utica, Eagle Ford, Barnett, Midcontinent and Uinta Basin. She now leads operations for Vital Energy in the Permian Basin.

Hill’s technical and leadership skills were honed through a series of challenging roles. “I was drawn to the industry because of the complexity and scale of problems we get to solve,” Hill said. “My career in the energy industry has been shaped by a deep commitment to advancing domestic energy independence and ensuring reliable, affordable energy for American communities.”

Like many engineers who transition into executive roles, Hill had to develop new skills. “One of my most significant challenges was learning to communicate effectively across diverse professional settings, where perspectives, priorities and expertise can vary widely,” she notes. “Building these skills requires active listening, adaptability and ensuring alignment among cross-disciplinary teams.”

She also tackled the unique challenges of a cyclical industry and strives to turn volatility into opportunities. “By leveraging data-driven strategies, fostering collaboration and focusing on long-term operational efficiency, I’ve been able to turn these challenges into opportunities for innovation and growth,” Hill said.

Hill’s journey from curious learner to innovative leader is a testament to the power of strong values, mentorship, and adaptability. Her resilience and her technical expertise, combined with her collaborative leadership style, continue to drive success in the ever-changing energy industry. ■



“My Dad was my first mentor. He taught me the importance of understanding fundamentals and testing what you know through teaching others.”

KATIE HILL, COO, Vital Energy

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Nabila Lazreg

Unconventional Resources Technical Advisory Lead
• Aramco • Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

“I was drawn to a career that would allow me to make a difference.”

It’s a simple statement, one echoed by many in the oil and gas business. But for Nabila Lazreg, who grew up in Algeria and was one of only two women in her university class to study mechanical engineering, it is a mindset that reflects far more than a vocational choice; it is a radical departure from a cultural norm and a choice about how she wanted to live her life.

“Engineering and working in the oil field weren’t just jobs for me—they became a mission to pave the way for others, particularly those who were told ‘no’ or felt that their dreams were out of reach,” she said.

In her first job with Schlumberger, she spent significant time in the field, working in remote desert locations in Algeria. She became expert in all aspects of operations, from site and fleet management to making logistics and contract engineering operational calls. She was promoted quickly, taking responsibility for managing multibillion-dollar assets and teams of over 100 people. Her limited English at the time was more than balanced out by her can-do attitude.

It was her time in the field—the knowledge gained and the skills honed there—that would propel her career and enable her to make an impact, not just on individual well performance, but on how companies approach shale development.

After transferring to the Permian Basin, Lazreg became aware that the only way to unlock unconventional resources was multidisciplinary integration, innovation and rapid, “on the fly” decisions.

“This approach led to several breakthrough discoveries, the development of new technologies and the birth of the shale revolution,” she said.

The journey took her to multiple places in U.S. and Canada, where she worked with senior management of leading oil and gas companies, advising them on how to best unlock unconventional reservoirs. She then joined the E&P “operator side” in 2009, where she has since worked in the startup and development of most of today’s prolific shale plays—the Bakken, Permian, Eagle Ford, Marcellus, Uinta, Montney and Duvernay, among others.

“Working with operators not only allows me to contribute at much bigger scale, it also allows me to challenge the status quo, break down barriers and influence strategic decisions,” Lazreg said. “It has allowed me to see and experience firsthand how the industry impacts the communities we operate within. Seeing the

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1 My son is my best achievement.
- 2 English is not my first language, and I do struggle with writing.
- 3 I enjoy traveling solo.

transformation and wealth the industry brings to, in some cases, stressed areas such as the Northeast U.S. in the early days of the Marcellus, or New Mexico before the Permian boom, and other areas in the world, and seeing their people, businesses and infrastructure transform was what drove my determination and persistence.”

But there was another challenge that she was eager to tackle: expanding unconventional resources outside North America. She moved to the United Arab Emirates, where her work on an unconventional natural gas reservoir project has helped that country transform from gas importer to exporter. She is now in Saudi Arabia, working to develop the liquids-rich Jafurah gas field.

“I’m not satisfied when working on small-scale projects; I’m at my best when I’m part of a project that significantly impacts the country,” Lazreg said. “Being involved in transformative projects has made me bold—and perhaps even ruthless—in my pursuit of excellence. It has also strengthened my ability to make the best decisions in high-pressure situations.”

Being a force of nature may not be a requirement of having such a consequential career, but it is a useful trait. Lazreg admits that colleagues may find her “challenging, high-paced, persistent, bold, unapologetic and always 10 steps ahead.”

She believes in giving frequent feedback to her team, including those in leadership positions, and she is passionate about mentoring talent.

“Since moving to the Middle East, I’ve been very impressed by these young professionals’ determination and drive,” Lazreg said. “Mentoring is big part of my job here and building the next generation of shale disturber is the legacy I want to leave.” ■

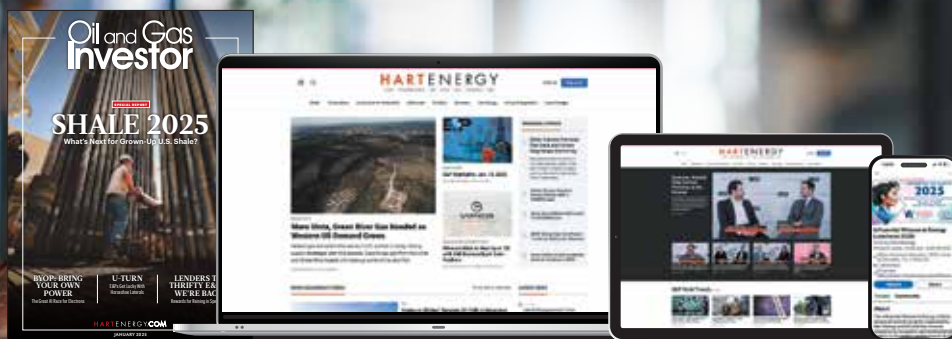


“Engineering and working in the oil field weren’t just jobs for me—they became a mission to pave the way for others, particularly those who were told ‘no’ or felt that their dreams were out of reach.”

NABILA LAZREG, Unconventional Resources Technical Advisory Lead, Aramco

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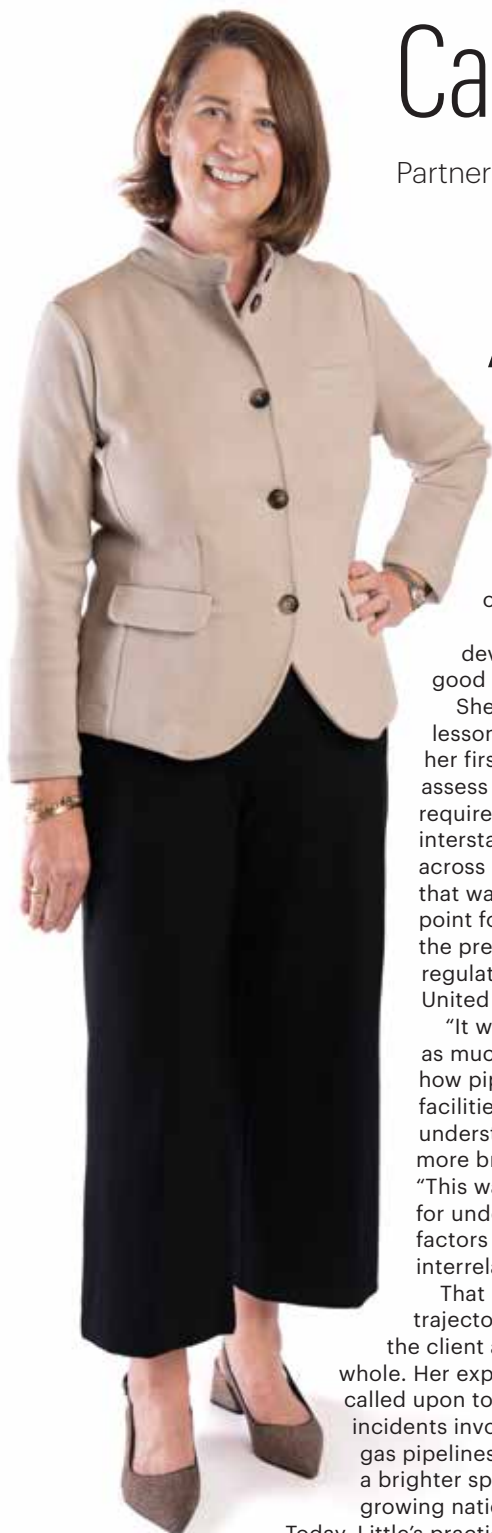
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Catherine D. Little

Partner • Bracewell • Washington, D.C.



At the outset of Catherine Little's legal career, she received sage advice from her mentors that has held true:

- Listen and ask questions;
- Two heads are always better than one; and
- The best business development is good work.

She took those lessons to heart in her first assignment to assess release reporting requirements for an interstate pipeline company across multiple states, and that was the jumping-off point for the development of the preeminent oil and gas regulatory practice in the United States.

"It was my goal to learn as much as possible about how pipelines and LNG facilities operate and to understand the industry more broadly," Little said. "This was my initial baseline for understanding how those factors and legal issues interrelate."

That project put her on a trajectory for more work for the client and the industry as a whole. Her expertise was ultimately called upon to handle several major incidents involving both oil and gas pipelines. Those cases cast a brighter spotlight on her firm's growing national practice.

Today, Little's practice encompasses construction, operations, maintenance and inspection, incident response and security issues for oil and gas pipelines, associated storage and LNG facilities. She works with clients to address administrative enforcement actions and develop litigation strategies, and advises them on policy, legislative and rulemaking developments.

Little and her team also manage compliance audits as well as internal and governmental investigations. The latter involves the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I began my career as an environmental lawyer.
- 2** My pipeline practice actually originated out of Atlanta, which is not what most would expect for an energy practice!
- 3** I firmly believe that Charlottesville, Va., is the center of the universe.

General and the Department of Justice.

Little began her career practicing environmental regulatory law after earning her J.D. from the Tulane University Law School. While she had no particular aspirations toward working in oil and gas upon graduation from law school, she was quickly intrigued by the dynamic nature of the industry through her work with pipeline operators.

"The dynamic nature of the industry is one of the initial reasons I was drawn to the work," she said. "It is an enduring attribute of the industry, which continues to hold my interest and challenge me, as do our exceptional clients, every day. The energy transition, in particular, has presented many opportunities and likely will continue to do so."

The challenges Little has faced are similar to many in the top tiers of their professions: managing a full-time legal career and meeting the needs of clients alongside family life. She is married and has three adult children who live all along the Eastern Seaboard.

"I am still encountering and (hopefully) overcoming [those challenges]," she said.

Her own parents were her primary early influencers.

"They were both educators and big proponents of a liberal arts education followed by graduate skills for a marketable trade," Little said. "They also worked very hard to raise and send five kids to college, and we all worked hard to make them proud."

Her management philosophy is to lead by example in terms of dedication to clients, providing the highest quality of work, and communicating effectively, both with clients and members of her team. "And, above all, to be human."

Little encourages collaboration and a team approach with those she works with. That includes regular feedback and providing a clear path for team members to contribute and succeed.

"That said, I believe that my team—including Annie Cook and Mandi Moroz—motivates me perhaps more than I motivate them," she said.

Little advises young professionals in the legal end of the oil and gas industry much like her early mentors advised her: "Listen, read, and learn—the building blocks of succeeding in just about anything, but particularly this industry with a rich history and an ever-changing global landscape." ■

Samantha Martinez Castillo

Vice President - Americas Land, Reservoir Performance • SLB • Houston



When Samantha Martinez Castillo began her career in oil and gas, she knew little about the industry other than it was a hot spot for technology and innovation, and full of challenges for females. She would give it five years, she told herself, then quit and start her own business.

"Twenty years later, I'm still here, as excited as I was the first day," she said.

"I remember being the only female in my area and I really wanted to set an example and even pave the way for the ones that would come after me," Martinez Castillo said. "I felt I was as capable as any man to perform the job and add value."

She also wanted to have an international career. Martinez Castillo grew up in a small town in Mexico and had never left the country. She aspired to immerse herself in other cultures and learn from them. To accomplish that, she set a goal to understand and learn as much as possible about the oil and gas industry and its main drivers and opportunities.

"Every assignment has been a learning experience that has helped shape who I am today (taking into consideration that I was changing roles every two to three years on average)," she said. "In my first assignment, being in my home country but away from my family, the company gave me early responsibilities as a manager. At that time, it was a highly male-dominated industry where there was a lot of

unconscious bias and harassment. It taught me resilience, to be strong and to never give up."

The gender bias and stereotyping Martinez Castillo encountered were obstacles to overcome.

"I was excluded from some jobs because the customer wasn't allowing women offshore," she said. The workplace environment, however, would improve.

"I saw the culture changing positively as more companies started implementing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive environment for women, from

THREE MORE THINGS

1 When I joined the industry, I started to write a book about a girl who worked in oil and gas, her adventures in the field and how to overcome the challenges that she was facing by being away from her family, moving from country to country learning new cultures. I still enjoy writing, and I hope to someday publish it.

2 I love extreme sports and the adrenaline that comes with it. I have done skydiving, bungee jumping and paragliding on several occasions.

3 Since I joined the energy industry, I have moved and lived in eight different countries. Along the way I learned two more languages (French and Portuguese, besides English and Spanish). I feel proud and privileged to have had this opportunity.

recruitment to retention; there, it was all about resilience and not giving up," she said.

Balancing the life of a mother (her son is now 7) with the work schedule of an executive was another challenge.

"It's a work in progress, but the first thing is understanding that I don't need to be perfect as a professional, as a mom and as a spouse," Martinez Castillo said. "Managing priorities is important, together with building the right support system with my husband, family and friends. Companies nowadays recognize the importance of diversity and are more willing to support the career growth of women."

For Martinez Castillo, leadership stems from adaptability. Team dynamics and circumstances determine how much and what levels of guidance and coaching, direction and support are needed to encourage collaboration.

"I believe in teamwork, empowering those around me. It's only by having a strong team that you can make an impact and take the right level of risk suitable for your business."

To succeed in this business, Martinez Castillo advises young professionals to learn as much as they can.

"The energy industry is constantly evolving, so developing a habit of lifelong learning is crucial. Stay informed and adapt to change. Don't be afraid to explore different roles early in your career; the energy industry can be volatile so developing resilience and a positive attitude in the face of setbacks will help you succeed in the long term," she said.

And embrace problem-solving, the trained engineer urges. The energy sector faces complex challenges, so learn to think critically and creatively about problems and be open to unconventional solutions.

"Most importantly," she said, "be a part of shaping the future of energy by embracing sustainability and innovation, and don't be afraid to seize opportunities in both traditional and emerging energy markets." ■



Patricia (Patti) Bryant Melcher

Founder and Managing Partner • EIV Capital • Houston

Patti Melcher joined SCF Partners at its founding in 1989 because she didn't just want to advise oilfield service companies, but to make an actual difference in the industry by helping them grow as part of an investing firm.

She left in 1994, again to make a difference—this time not in the industry, but in her life.

Melcher's daughter was born in 1991 with significant developmental disabilities. She left SCF to ensure her daughter received the help she needed.

"This led to co-founding The Joy School in 1997," she said. The Houston school serves about 160 students who struggle academically, socially, with executive functioning skills or other challenges. Melcher served as president and board chair and is now a trustee emeritus.

"While it was difficult to manage essentially three jobs—operating the school, consulting/making investments and taking care of children—I learned so much and [it was] also incredibly rewarding," she said.

Melcher said her greatest challenge has been managing her personal and professional life.

"As a woman, I believe that you can have it all, just not at the same time," she said. "Having a special needs child changed my career trajectory that I had envisioned for myself, but it has been a fuller, more rewarding career. Founding The Joy School has impacted so many more people than I could ever have imagined. A special needs child impacts the whole family, so helping the child to be successful in school improves the well-being of every member of the family."

But contributing to the community at large was not new to Melcher. She has served on the boards of several nonprofits, including Children's Museum Houston and Dacamera, a producer and presenter of chamber and jazz music. One of her early mentors was L.E. Simmons, co-founder of Simmons & Co., where she started her career, and founder of SCF Partners.

"L.E. Simmons has had the most influence on my career," Melcher said. "He encouraged me to get involved in the community and volunteer for non-profits while in my 20s. He taught me important lessons about investing in the energy industry while modeling humility, honesty and hard work."

She passes on this encouragement to young professionals in the oil and gas industry.

"Seek out challenges. Get out and meet people. Build your network by helping others (getting involved in professional organizations; making introductions within your network)," Melcher said. "Volunteer in the community—giving money is important but give your time and your expertise, also."

Melcher met energy investor Tony Annunziato in 2002 and

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I started a natural foods company with my best friend in 2004. We made her Spanish family Gazpacho recipe into an on-the-go natural food called Go Appetit. We grew over several years and were distributed in 600-700 stores across the U.S. and Canada. We were just going to raise additional capital for further expansion when the financial crisis hit in 2008 and we saw sales slow dramatically, and we decided to shut it down. At the same time, oil prices went to \$35, and it looked like the right time to get back into the energy industry full time.

2 I played violin growing up. My first job (in high school and college) was playing violin for Colonial Williamsburg (in full colonial costume).

3 During COVID, I bought a 200-year-old house in rural Kentucky which I have been renovating and enjoying.

began helping him with some of the private energy companies he had funded, including acting as interim CEO. Annunziato would later provide the capital to found EIV Capital in 2009, asking Melcher to lead the new private equity firm.

EIV Capital focuses on providing growth capital to entrepreneurs and companies in the energy industry and currently has over \$2 billion of assets under management.

"The industry is incredibly resilient and made up of extraordinary people who face daily challenges that include volatile commodity prices, difficult working conditions and solving technical problems," she said. "In addition, the industry reinvented itself from a U.S. industry in decline in the 1990s to one of rapid growth in the 2010s with the evolution of shale technology."

Melcher said she loves the dynamic nature of the energy industry.

"In addition to ever-changing global supply and demand fundamentals and volatile commodity prices, the industry constantly faces and solves technical, logistical and workforce challenges," she said. "It is an industry that celebrates entrepreneurs and risk taking. It is OK to fail, as long as you get back up and keep going. It is a 'can do' industry that continually improves how it finds and produces affordable energy that makes our standard of living possible." ■



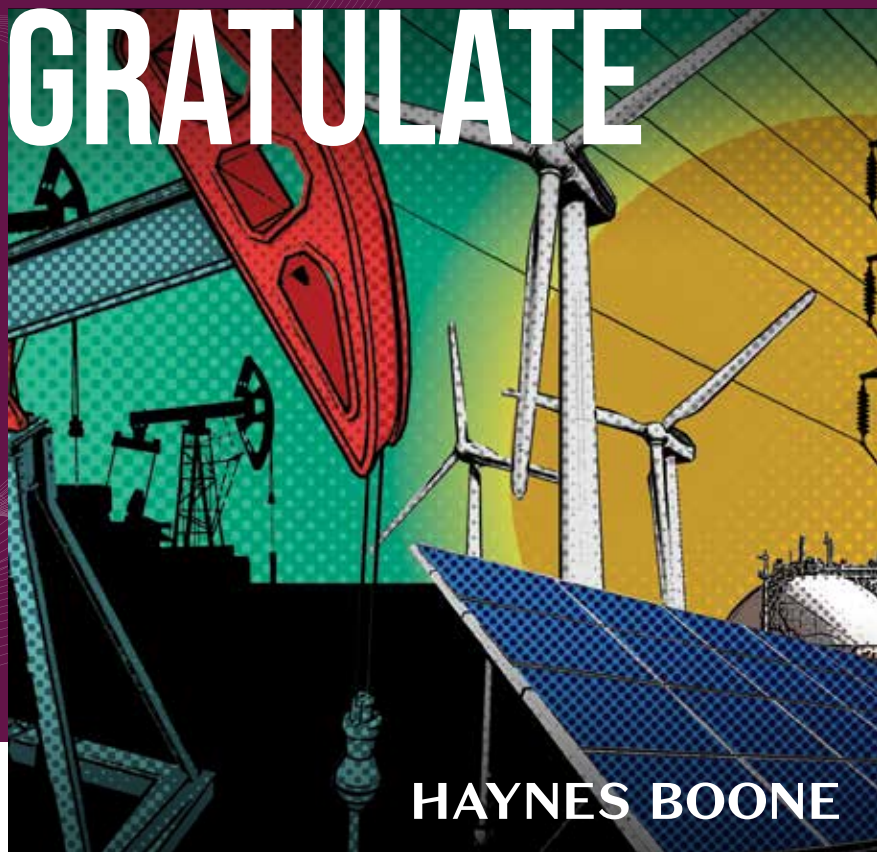
“As a woman, I believe that you can have it all, just not at the same time. Having a special needs child changed my career trajectory that I had envisioned for myself, but it has been a fuller, more rewarding career.”

PATRICIA (PATTI) BRYANT MELCHER, Founder and Managing Partner, EIV Capital

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Lori Mettille

Tax Partner and National Practice Leader, Oil & Gas • Moss Adams • Dallas



Lori Mettille was confident about her tax expertise but nervous about her lack of familiarity with oil and gas when she applied for a job in 2006 with Hein & Associates, an accounting firm later acquired by Moss Adams that specialized in the energy space.

Her future mentor, Duane Snyder, the firm's tax practice leader in Dallas, had no such concerns. "I'll teach you that," he said, and her career in energy was launched. Snyder's influence transcended the knowledge he imparted about the ins and outs of oil and gas tax work. He showed her how to lead.

"He taught me to always 'train your replacement,' which has been one of the most rewarding parts of the profession—watching those that you have had some small part in training move up through the organization," Mettille said. "This has also allowed me the opportunities to take on roles like oil and gas national practice leader. He also taught me the real value of teamwork and that the team is always behind you."

Mettille does not hesitate to join her team in the trenches when working on a client project.

"I actively engage alongside my team members, demonstrating that I am willing to roll up my sleeves and tackle any tasks

necessary to meet deadlines. This hands-on approach, instilled in me by many of the leaders who trained me, not only fosters a collaborative environment but also reinforces the idea that we are all in this together, striving for a common goal," she said. "I have always believed that by actively participating in the work, I can provide real-time guidance and feedback, helping my team members grow and learn in the process. I believe that empowering our team members is essential for building a strong foundation for the future, as it prepares them to take on greater responsibilities and eventually step into leadership roles themselves."

That accessibility to her team and actively providing support has paid off in what they are able to accomplish.

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I grew up on a cotton farm in Midkiff, Texas, southeast of Midland, which contributed to my work ethic as there were many hot summers spent working in the cotton fields. My mom is one of the hardest working people I know, to this day, and instilled that work ethic in me which has been one of the keys to achieving my ambitions. Equally as important, she also instilled in me my faith, humility and servant leadership.

2 I have become really good at working, when needed, from softball fields across the Dallas Metroplex. I have two beautiful daughters who play competitive softball, so we spend countless hours weekly at practices, private lessons and tournaments. In all fairness, my husband, Mark, takes the brunt of this. We joke that he is the girls "Uber" driver.

3 My husband and I were married at a Catholic church in Grapevine near the Gaylord Texan Resort. Because he also grew up on a farm in Iowa, he was insistent on taking care of the transportation from the reception to the Gaylord. We were probably the only couple whose transportation from the reception to the Gaylord was on a trailer pulled by a John Deere tractor. In spite of the fumes, the wedding party had a great time, and we certainly received some interesting looks as we arrived at the Gaylord.

"Many of us have worked together for a long time and they have become my work 'family,'" Mettille said. "This sense of camaraderie fosters an environment where we can rely on one another, knowing that we have each other's backs in both challenges and triumphs, both at work and outside of work."

After mastering the tax rules applicable to the oil and gas industry, Mettille advanced in her career by sharing what she had learned.

"My goal has been to establish myself as a 'famous person' in the industry by serving as a speaker for various industry conferences, collaboration with external partners as well as participation in various organizations, including COPAS (Council of Petroleum Accountants Societies) of Dallas where I have been a member for many years," she said. "This also led to my participation on the NAPAC (North American Petroleum Accounting Conference) Committee, including leading the Tax Tract Planning Committee."

Mettille advises those entering the field to grow along with the growing industry.

"I would encourage young professionals entering the energy industry to embrace the unique opportunities it offers," she said. "This is a dynamic field that is continually evolving. As the industry transforms, it's essential for us to adapt and grow alongside it, which keeps our work engaging throughout our careers. Embracing change and being open to learning will not only enhance your skill set but also make your career journey that much more fulfilling." ■



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Laura Preng

Partner • Preng & Associates • Houston



Laura Preng's career arc has taken her from interviewing people for her job as a TV journalist, to interviewing people as part of the recruiting process for energy executives.

"I love our industry and the talented, smart people in it," Preng said. "I love that I get to take my interviewing skills as a reporter and apply them to my role as a search consultant. I genuinely enjoy learning about people and hearing their stories; I get to tell my client's story and attract top talent, which undoubtedly impacts and influences the business."

Preng began her career as a reporter and anchor for the CBS affiliate in Jackson, Miss., before moving up to the NBC affiliate in Nashville, Tenn. She left television news to be spokesperson for the Tennessee Department of Public Safety before returning to her hometown of Houston and the executive search firm founded by her father that bears the family name.

"When I first entered the industry, my goal was to learn as much as I possibly could and become an expert in my field," she said. "I wanted to establish credibility based on my merit and not just my last name, so that companies/clients would entrust me to lead their most critical search needs."

So, she became a student, reading everything she could get her hands on, and attended classes and workshops for newcomers to the industry. She started as a recruiter for Preng's sister search firm, Energy Careers, reaching out to engineering talent. It wasn't easy, because reservoir engineers at that time were bombarded by calls from recruiters.

"Fortunately, I called a few people who were kind enough to take the time and explain to me what they did for a living, because it was clear I had no idea what I was talking about," Preng said.

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I am a character in J.T. Ellison's first novel "All the Pretty Girls."
- 2** I am a closet Foo Fighters "groupie"—I have seen them in concert nearly 20 times.
- 3** I've had the opportunity to interview several former presidents, historical figures, celebrities and musicians as a reporter. My favorite was with Willie Nelson, whom I interviewed backstage at the Ryman following the death of June Carter Cash. He was so kind and generous with his time, despite losing a dear friend.

"Although I am engaged in higher-level searches at Preng, those conversations were valuable and led to some long-lasting friendships," she said. "I realized that putting yourself out there can be intimidating, but if you are persistent and open to listening and learning, you can overcome most challenges."

One of those challenges has been her role as a woman in a male-dominated industry.

"When I was a journalist, there were a lot of women in the newsroom or on air to look up to and want to emulate," Preng said. "When I began working in the energy industry, I was fortunate to meet some women who were very successful in their fields. So, while I often felt like the odd man out, so to speak, in the early days, I knew that with hard work and determination, rising to the top was achievable."

Nevertheless, it was intimidating for her to walk into a boardroom to convince the directors that she was the best consultant who represented the best firm to lead the search for their next CEO or other top executive position.

"I struggled with imposter syndrome, for sure, but I continued to put myself out there, and today I'm proud of the companies I have had the opportunity to partner with, the leaders I have placed and the positive effects they had on the business," she said.

While oil and gas is considered a relationship business to a large extent, the executive search function of the industry is almost entirely about relationships. Preng was fortunate to be mentored by her father, David Preng.

"I joke that he is the mayor because he seems to know everyone in the energy industry," she said. "He has always stressed that we are in the people business, and it is important to build and nurture authentic relationships and treat others how you would like to be treated. It seems obvious, but sometimes it is important to step back and realize that the work we do will influence someone's career path, impacting them and their family, as well as our client and the future of the company." ■

Thaimar Ramirez

President and General Manager, Midland Basin Business Unit
• Occidental Petroleum • Houston



To succeed in the rapidly evolving oil and gas industry, young professionals are advised to be open and adaptable to change.

For Thaimar Ramirez, though, it's never been a problem. The native of Venezuela embraces it, whether it's changing countries (Venezuela and U.S.), roles (petrophysics, reservoir engineering, completion engineering, field operations in well site geology, completions, production), basins in various geographical locations (Alaska, Venezuela, India, West Africa, Oklahoma Panhandle, Peru, Middle East, Rocky Mountains, Permian, Canada, Argentina, Anadarko, Uinta) or even vineyards (she is working on her sommelier certification).

"Change," said Ramirez in an understatement, "is part of my DNA."

But it's also an element of her ambition. The political and economic environment in Venezuela was in such disarray when Ramirez graduated that she couldn't find a job, even though she was valedictorian of her class with a degree in industrial engineering. Opportunities, she decided, were elsewhere, so she studied English, pursued a graduate degree in the U.S. and went after them.

"Every job I have had has been an event that continues to shape my career," Ramirez said. "I have been offered projects no one wanted to

work on because they were not high profile, but I did them and created opportunities."

That included a position as an operations geologist, one that didn't appear to match her skill set. But she trusted the judgement of her boss and found success.

As a leader, she relies on two pieces of advice from mentors: "The team needs to function with you or without you," and "It is about them, not about you."

"I encourage people to learn their strengths and weaknesses,

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I have worked at places at -50 °C and places at 50 °C.
- 2** I have had 12 roles, 17 bosses and have moved 15 times in my 20-year career.
- 3** I was ambidextrous until I was a teenager, now I am mix-handed.

focus on their strengths to excel and work on their weaknesses with stretch goals (as I do for myself), strive for excellence and extend trust," Ramirez said. "Empower employees by ensuring they have the competencies and clarity on the organizational goals, set clear expectations and provide real-time feedback so everyone succeeds."

Even high-performing employees need a work environment that fosters success. Ramirez said her team has repeatedly achieved or surpassed its goals and has created a winning culture.

"This is not a coincidence; it is the collective effort," she said. "Reward the team for their success—they take all the credit, I take the blame. However, when they are empowered, they take ownership and are accountable."

Ramirez wants her team to take risks and experiment.

"Rather than the saying, 'fail fast,' I encourage the team to 'learn fast,'" she said. "Provide opportunities for self-development. Pursue excellence. Help individuals work effectively in a team environment."

Effective leadership requires effective and assertive communication from the leader, which Ramirez said she continues to work on.

"Everyone has elements of the message being communicated right but also elements that are only their perception," she said. "I had to work hard on empathy and overall emotional intelligence, including self-awareness. I work on my weaknesses—not all at the same time, as they are many—but I set a clear vision and stretch goals for professional and personal development. I've learned to be comfortably uncomfortable and to rely on a large and diverse support network."

From the start of her career, Ramirez has pushed herself to be her best by continuing to learn and expand her skill set, taking on roles that made her uncomfortable and challenging the status quo. She encourages young professionals to do the same, as well as ignoring so-called ceilings to advancement.

"Be persistent until you achieve your goals, taking one step at a time and celebrating progress along the way," she said. "Seek out sponsors for your ideas and use your strengths to differentiate yourself. For each rejection, understand what is holding you back and work on it immediately. Focus on understanding people's interests rather than just taking a position on a matter. Finally, find an environment where you can be your best self." ■



Lauren Read

Vice President of Operations, dCarbon Ventures
• BKV Corp. • Denver

Lauren Read's grandfather, Junior DeVere (Bob) Seader, was a professor and chair of the University of Utah's chemical engineering department. He was an authority on computer-aided process design, mathematical modeling, alternative fuels and rocket engine thermal protection. He was also an early influence on Read's life, teaching her that using math to solve real-world problems can be both challenging and fun while making a tangible difference.

"That hooked me on the idea of engineering and has really driven me since to want to be a builder and implementor of solutions," she said.

Many of those solutions have been directed toward the global push for sustainability.

"I feel privileged to be a part of creating engineering solutions to make energy sustainable," Read said. "CCUS (carbon capture, utilization and sequestration) has efficient, scalable applications for industries like natural gas processing and ethanol, and I'm now able to use my previous upstream experience to develop and implement CCUS projects across the country."

Read's first job in energy was as a reservoir engineer for an Exxon Mobil offshore platform producing over 16,000 bbl/d. She trained through the company's three-year new engineer development program, gaining valuable on-the-job experience, such as identifying and developing new drill well locations for optimum reservoir management and managing injection wells for secondary recovery.

Read moved over to Exxon Mobil's subsidiary, XTO Energy, where she managed production optimization and surveillance of five Rockies natural gas plays in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming. There, she learned more about drilling and completions, well work, tubing design and well control in various plays and differing regulatory environments. She joined BKV in 2018 to manage the company's upstream assets in the Marcellus Shale.

Building and leading the operations team in Pennsylvania for two years turned out to be one of Read's favorite career experiences.

"We were on the ground, working every day to solve production challenges and provide communities near and far with clean, reliable energy," she said. "And now I'm working to make natural gas, electricity, ethanol and other industries even cleaner by using saline aquifers for permanent carbon dioxide storage. For the last three years, I've been working to develop and execute CCUS projects, leading the operations team of dCarbon Ventures—the low

THREE MORE THINGS

1 My family and I have 11 pet chickens, and they are all different breeds with different plumage and egg colors. They roam the yard freely and are very affectionate with our kids and even our hunting dog!

2 I've moved over 12 times in the past 17 years. The energy industry has taken me all across the country, and I've enjoyed the adventures it has brought me across deserts, forests, swamps, mountains and oceans.

3 In college, I had the chance to study from textbooks my grandfather wrote, such as "Separations Process Principles" and "Product and Process Design Principles."

carbon solutions business at BKV."

Developing projects to make energy production more efficient, reliable, safe and sustainable means being open to new ideas. Read said she is continuously surprised by the number of great ideas out there.

"The ideas are there; they just need to be evaluated, justified and then implemented," she said. "That is where value is created—in finding the best projects to do and doing them well. That makes it an important part of my work to often be in listening mode and focused on helping my team implement their good ideas."

Read's leadership approach is to foster a culture of empowerment. She sees herself as a coach who helps her team members get to the root of challenges and then supports them through their resolution.

"I believe it's hard for a team to feel motivated if they don't understand how their piece fits into the puzzle," she said. "Giving context and sharing the 'why' behind what we're doing is an important part of my job."

Read advises young professionals in the energy industry to harness their great ideas in a way her grandfather would appreciate.

"Using actual data validated with common sense is a powerful combination," she said. "Opinions are many; make yours an informed one so it has more value. Understanding when data doesn't make sense is another powerful skill to develop." ■



“The ideas are there; they just need to be evaluated, justified and then implemented. That is where value is created—in finding the best projects to do and doing them well. That makes it an important part of my work to often be in listening mode and focused on helping my team implement their good ideas.”

LAUREN READ, Vice President of Operations, dCarbon Ventures, BKV Corp.



Cleaner Energy, Smarter Solutions.

BKV is shaping the future of sustainable energy, driving innovation in CCUS through dCarbon Ventures—our team dedicated to pioneering sustainability solutions.

Leading the charge, **Lauren Read**, VP of Operations - dCarbon Ventures, has been named one of Hart Energy’s Influential Women in Energy. We’re proud to champion diverse leadership and celebrate Lauren’s well-deserved recognition.



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Stephanie Reed

Partner and Chief Commercial Officer • Formentera Partners
• Austin, Texas

As the shale revolution gained momentum, the Permian Basin transitioned from vertical development, commingling production from different zones, ultimately shifting to horizontal development with vastly larger completions and longer laterals. This evolution was a game-changer for the basin, the oil and gas industry, and the global economy.

It also propelled the career of Stephanie Reed, who started as a landman for Permian operator Parsley Energy during this pivotal era and is now a partner and senior executive at Formentera Partners.

“We had to pivot our mindset around segmented ownership, allocation and acreage geometry, which led to trades and the creation of tremendous value by being early movers to drive inventory creation,” she said, reflecting on that period. “We cut our teeth on drilling horizontal wells and building a company to effectively execute in this changing environment that required us to push the limits. Successfully navigating the challenges and opportunities of this shift led to a rerating of acreage valuations. We learned that by securing the footprint and allowing the industry to innovate—lengthening laterals and fine-tune completion designs—we would be well positioned to be fast followers and capture tremendous value.”

That mindset is shared by Formentera.

“We’ve accumulated a lot of acreage held by production in Tier 2 areas across the Lower 48, and as the industry and development operations evolve and innovate, our position is primed for a rerating,” she said.

Reed considers Bryan Sheffield, Formentera’s managing partner and Parsley Energy’s founder, to be one of the greatest mentors of her career.

“Bryan is one of the most generous people you will ever meet—generous with his time and especially in discussions about failures and misses,” she said. “He leads by example, which taught me to own mistakes and remain humble throughout my career because there will be hills and valleys. This advice has made me a better leader.”

There is a lot to learn from those who pioneered this industry, Sheffield told her. Reed took his advice to heart, recognizing the importance of reading, listening and learning as much as possible from those around her.

“In addition to Bryan, I’m incredibly fortunate to have worked with many long-term colleagues that have had a hand in shaping my career, including Matt Gallagher, Paul Treadwell, Carrie Endorf and Blake London.”

Other key influences in her career include two friends from her time at Texas Tech: John Sellers and Cody Campbell, co-

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I love challenging myself outside of work too. If I’m not working, I’m either in the gym or the kitchen cooking with my family.
- 2** My first position in the industry was a division order analyst.
- 3** I’ve been fortunate to ring the bell at the NYSE twice (so far) in my career—first as an executive and the second time as a director.

founders of Double Eagle Energy.

“I have tremendous respect for both of them, as I witnessed the early days of small land deals that led to more strategic risk and, ultimately, to building one of the best private E&P companies in the Permian, twice over,” Reed said. “They are a prime example of the tremendous value that can be built in this industry by taking calculated and opportunistic risks, sticking to a steadfast vision and building a team focused on execution. I’m proud to call them friends.”

Now leading her own teams, she seeks to create a culture of trust, mutual respect and continuous improvement.

“True leadership isn’t about commanding from above; it’s about clearly communicating a vision and fostering an environment where contributors feel valued, empowered and accountable,” she said. “This mindset, deeply rooted in ownership and accountability, has shaped my leadership philosophy and approach.”

Reed, a former college basketball player, describes herself as “incredibly competitive.” One of her early goals was to make a meaningful impact on her team’s success, whether concerning deals or operations, by driving results and positioning her colleagues to be opportunistic and seize opportunities.

“I bring this mindset with me to the office every day and my team embodies this approach,” she said. “It’s hard to secure big wins if we don’t take care of the small wins day to day.”

Reed’s advice to young professionals in the energy industry mirrors that of Sheffield.

“My advice is to stay eager and hungry for opportunities but balance that ambition with the humility to listen and learn,” she said. “The energy sector is complex and ever-changing, so being open to guidance and absorbing knowledge from experienced colleagues is invaluable.” ■



Deanna Reitman

Partner • Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath
• Houston and New York

From her first energy job as an office manager for a derivatives trading desk while in college, Deanna Reitman was well aware of the energy industry’s male dominance. What she didn’t realize until later was the support and camaraderie among women in the sector.

“I vividly recall attending conferences where, out of 200 attendees, only two were women,” she said. “We would naturally gravitate towards each other, offering confidence, strength and comfort in an environment where we were often outnumbered.”

The solidarity among women has had a profound impact on her work, Reitman said, providing her with the courage to ask questions and engage actively in discussions, even in rooms predominantly filled with men.

“These interactions empowered me to invite myself to dinners and drinks, building a network of support that bolstered my professional confidence,” she said.

Feminine strength has always been an essential component of Reitman’s life.

“My mother grew up in foster care ... and her resilience and determination to overcome her circumstances profoundly shaped my ambitions and work ethic,” she said. “From an early age, I was inspired by my mother’s unwavering strength and her ability to face adversity with grace and perseverance. Her experiences instilled in me the importance of hard work, education and self-reliance. Despite the challenges she faced, she always emphasized the value of seizing every opportunity and never giving up on my dreams.”

Since launching her energy career, with law degree and MBA in hand, Reitman’s aspirations have evolved. “When I first entered the industry, my primary goals were straightforward: I needed to survive and make a living,” she said. As she advanced, she set a personal benchmark to excel in whatever she undertook, which led Reitman to build a strong foundation in legal and regulatory compliance, particularly within the energy markets.

“At Faegre Drinker, I am actively involved in developing carbon and sustainable digital commodities markets,” she said. “I am also dedicated to structuring complex energy security transactions that transform waste energy products into new, valuable energy commodities.”

“My work aims to demonstrate that market-based solutions can drive significant progress in combating climate change. By fostering innovation and regulatory compliance, I strive to show that human ingenuity and market mechanisms are key to solving some of our most pressing environmental challenges.”

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1 I love the color pink.
- 2 I absolutely love to eat dessert.
- 3 Even though both my husband Glenn and I are lawyers, both of our sons are artists.

Among past challenges in her career, Reitman faced resistance from colleagues with political agendas.

“This manifested in various forms, particularly as I began to achieve notable success in my field,” she said. “I have always just concentrated on the work to be done and the cultivation of everyone on the team in order to provide the client with the best work product. I have never thought to focus on any political or internal organizational agenda to further my own career.”

Reitman relied on her own resilience and a strong support system, particularly her husband Glenn, to navigate difficult situations at work and focus on her professional goals.

She also promised herself to seek opportunities elsewhere if she felt her contributions were not valued or respected.

“This mindset empowered me to make strategic career moves, ensuring that I was surrounded by individuals and organizations that recognized and appreciated my experience and proficiency in the industry and hard work,” she said.

Reitman counsels young professionals in the energy industry to be open to learning and to work hard, but also to be patient.

“Career growth in this field can take time, and it’s important to remain steadfast and persistent,” she said. “They should take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way, whether it’s a new project, a challenging assignment or a chance to expand their network. These experiences will build their expertise and open doors for future advancement.”

But, Reitman said, it won’t happen unless the work genuinely excites them.

“Passion for their work will drive them to excel and stay motivated even during challenging times,” she said. “They shouldn’t be afraid to make mistakes; they are an inevitable part of the learning process. Embracing mistakes, learning from them and using them as stepping stones to improve and grow is essential.” ■



Courtney Stephens

CEO • QED Energy Associates • Houston

Courtney Stephens was happy to leave her doctoral program in theoretical mathematics, but her career plans were an empty set. Then, just days later, after connecting with an energy industry recruiter, she started work as a petroleum analyst at Netherland, Sewell and Associates.

"I didn't choose the industry—it chose me, and I am forever grateful," she said.

After NSAI, Stephens moved to Waterous and Co. (now Scotiabank), contributing to various domestic and international mandates as a part of the technical team. In 2005, she took a position as senior engineering technician in Marathon Oil's Southern Business Unit. Stephens worked on the Barnett Shale team, the southern U.S. exploration team, the North America diversity council and the upstream domestic business development team as a senior commercial analyst.

It was during her tenure at Marathon that her son Nathan was born, an event that would reshape her life and career.

"I asked Marathon HR if I could come back to work one day a week after my son was born, then grow to two days a week, then three and so on. They said no," Stephens said. "This allowed me to close my chapter with Marathon and to start my own story."

In 2010, she founded QED Energy Associates, specializing in providing reservoir engineering technicians to the industry. QED provides reservoir engineering tech training, consulting and placement services.

Stephens' early-career experience as a technician became the foundation of her later entrepreneurial success.

"As a non-engineer at a reservoir engineering consulting firm, I was definitely told that I could only ever be a tech," she said. "This continued into my second job at Waterous & Co., a boutique investment bank in oil and gas, and although I was still told I could only be a tech, I got to learn about all disciplines and roles within the upstream and corporate finance."

It was only in her third job at Marathon that she was granted the freedom to be more than "just a tech." Carri Lockhart, a senior Marathon executive, told her that her degree in math did not limit her in the engineering world.

"The diversity team at Marathon encouraged me that my differences made me a better, more capable leader," Stephens said. "I now wear the label of 'Tech' proudly, as do hundreds of QEDers."

Now a role model herself, Stephens looks to the example of Lockhart as what a leader should be: "strong, intelligent, and passionately dedicated to justice, what is right and what is good. She was a value creator, an encourager and an advocate for others."

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I am an only child. T. Boone Pickens was an only child. At the Decision Makers Breakfast at Winter NAPE 2013, he said that when he fell out of bed his parents claimed it was the greatest fall that had ever taken place. I find that I greatly relate to this, and I am sure my son does as well. I talk to my parents all the time; their love and support is essential to me. Even though my son is 17 now, my husband and I are grateful that he still likes us as people, and we are honored to get to spend time with him, adventure with him and watch him accomplish his goals.

2 I am never more comfortable than when I am on stage. I love public speaking and acting, and my first love was always dance. I was Mavette of the Year - 1997, and as an adult I met one of my best friends and QED's Managing Director of Training, Erin Randolph, at a local dance studio.

3 My husband is British. As an undergrad, Centenary encouraged international travel, even requiring students to spend one semester living in a culture other than one's own. I spent my intercultural exchange at St. John's College, Oxford University, where I met friends who introduced me to this handsome Chemical Engineer studying at Imperial College. I fully intended to bring him back to Texas, and I accomplished my goal.

Stephens defines a great leader as one who seeks to take responsibility, not place blame, when problems arise.

"When mistakes happen, as they do, I try to look at my own responsibility in the matter," she said. "Did I give my team the proper tools, the proper training, the right resources and time to accomplish the goal? What could I have done better?"

Stephens said her colleagues know that she has their backs and that they can count on her.

"I have asked my team, and they said they like to work with me because I am: 'knowledgeable, a hard worker that never quits,' that I am 'determined, encouraging and positive.' They say that I 'strive to make things fun at work' and that I 'see them as people.'

"They know that if they need something, I will be there for them," Stephens said. "I care more about their lives than I ever cared about any business or dollar, and that goes a long way." ■



“When mistakes happen, as they do, I try to look at my own responsibility in the matter. Did I give my team the proper tools, the proper training, the right resources and time to accomplish the goal? What could I have done better?”

COURTNEY STEPHENS, CEO, QED Energy Associates

Congratulations to all of Oil & Gas Investor's 2025 Influential Women in Energy

Savvy, proudly led by 2023 Honoree, Founder and CEO Sarah Magruder, is delighted to sponsor and attend this year's luncheon, and host Coffee & Mimosas for prior honorees!



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Meredith Stieler

Vice President of Accounting • EnCap Flatrock Midstream
 • San Antonio

As the U.S. natural gas and power trading markets moved through deregulation in the 1990s, Meredith Stieler was in the thick of it. She was part of a business unit at the forefront of creating Enron's natural gas and power trading operations. She then was recruited to support an elite group of Enron traders in London. There, she was tasked with hiring, training and helping build from the ground up a trading platform for Enron's U.K. operations.

The company's spectacular collapse in late 2001 was tough, Stieler said, but her experience there had allowed her to work with some of the brightest minds in the industry, gaining insights and skills that proved invaluable. And as significant as the company's fall may have seemed at the time, it paled in comparison to what was about to come.

"At the age of 40, I lost my husband, and the father of our 4- and 5-year-old children, to stomach cancer," Stieler said. "My entire world was flipped upside down. Suddenly, I had to figure out how to keep everything going as sole parent and provider."

She was in pure survival mode, realizing that her family needed her more than ever and her career had to be put on hold.

"Over time, that experience taught me just how strong and resilient I could be," Stieler said. "I learned to focus on what truly matters, manage my energy with intention and handle challenges with determination."

That chapter of her life changed her not just as a person, but as a professional.

"It gave me a level of empathy that influences how I lead and solve problems today," she said. "I now have a sense of perspective that helps me stay calm in high-pressure situations because, honestly, once you've been through something like that, very little feels impossible. I learned that no matter how many plans you make for your career, you must be adaptable."

When Billy Lemmons, a great mentor and colleague from her time at Enron, was assembling a team for his new midstream venture capital firm, EnCap Flatrock Midstream, Stieler was a natural choice. For her, it was a full-circle moment.

"It marked a significant shift (or rebirth) in my career, but also a natural progression as I embraced this entrepreneurial venture," she said. Her role as vice president of accounting makes her responsible for all compliance, human resource and accounting functions, including treasury management, employee benefits, tax matters, and company policies and procedures.

THREE MORE THINGS

1 I grew up in Liberty County, east of Houston, where we have a farm that has been in my family since 1879. Now, I live in the Texas Hill Country, where my husband and I raise cattle and goats on land his family has stewarded for 85 years. Although I've spent much of my career in big cities, I'll always be a small-town country girl at heart.

2 In rural life, it's not uncommon for a mother animal to abandon her baby. My husband, children and I have bottle-fed many baby goats. We also raised a baby Axis deer that became best friends with our border collie puppy. Watching them grow up together brought our family so much joy.

3 Not many people can say they got their letterman's jacket as a freshman in high school, but thanks to being a state finalist in UIL Typing, I did. Yay for typing 90+ words per minute, and no athleticism required!

The advice Stieler imparts to young professionals in the industry is the same she gives to her two adult children who are starting their own careers. It is the importance of integrity and humility, two qualities she believes are critical in all facets of life, but especially when leading others.

"Integrity is about doing the right thing, even when no one is watching," she said. "Being honest, fair and always acting responsibly is the key to gaining trust from your co-workers, customers and partners."

"Humility is an important value to have personally and professionally. Open communication and valuing everyone's input fosters stronger relationships and successful decision-making."

Those are two values that are at the core of the culture at EnCap Flatrock Midstream, she said. "I like to describe our company as a team of humble intellectuals who strive to be good stewards of the capital and assets with which we have been entrusted."

Embodying these values, she added, not only shapes how people work with others, but defines the kind of leaders they become.

"I believe that by lifting others up, you can create a culture of success where everyone benefits," she said, "and I have certainly found that at EnCap Flatrock Midstream." ■



**EnCap Flatrock
Midstream**

Congratulations Meredith Stieler

on being selected as a
2025 Influential Women
In Energy honoree.

Meredith leads with integrity,
grace, and humility, and is
most deserving of this honor.



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Deidre Toups

Senior Vice President of Mergers, Acquisitions and Integration
 • Superior Energy Services • Lafayette, La.

People, Deidre Toups said, have shaped her career more than events. One person in particular was her first boss in the energy industry, who created opportunities for her, brought her into the executive arena and expressed confidence in her ability to succeed.

"Others, mostly men, ironically, considered me their advisers for crucial decision-making and encouraged me to take on more responsibility," she said.

The confidence shown in her has been well-earned through decades of making tough choices, working hard and learning, learning, learning.

"I fell in love first and foremost with the people [in the energy industry]," Toups said. "They were down-to-earth, authentic, hard-working, and most of them had become experts in their specific fields through hands-on learning and trial and error."

And it was an industry that literally opened up the world for her.

"It allowed me to travel to so many interesting places and experience many different cultures of also very hard-

working, authentic people," she said. "My career has taken me to the U.K., Canada, Middle East, Asia, the Caribbean and South America—places I likely would never have seen otherwise."

It also presented challenges in managing a work-life balance that she has tackled head on.

"I had an executive coach once who helped me work through my guilt as a mom with a demanding career," Toups said. "She taught me to challenge my limiting belief that it was a trade-off; one role had to suffer for the other. I

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** I dropped out of high school, got married and had my first child at 16.
- 2** I scored the highest in the State of Louisiana on the CPA exam and in the top 100 in the U.S.
- 3** I won a country and western dance contest in college with a partner who is now an industry colleague.

changed that belief to declare that I could be great at both, and, holding that new belief, I was able to create conversations and requests that allowed me to be successful."

One of the key events in her career was her first work trip out of the country. She had been married only a couple of years and had a young baby. Being away on business was not easy on the young family.

"But I very much wanted my management team to know they could depend on me to step up and address the challenges the organization was having despite these concerns," Toups said. "And I wanted to be there solving the problems and did not want fear to keep me from growing personally and professionally."

The struggle of managing the work-life balance causes many women to pull back on their careers when they start having a family because they don't see a path to managing both, she said.

"I have done my best to overcome this by prioritizing what is important on my calendar, in my daily schedule and sometimes down to the very hour/minute," she said. "Also, I don't apologize for the demands of one over the other. I have a philosophy to make the best decision you can with the information you have, be as considerate as you can of others, and then, no guilt."

Among the things she has learned is to value quality over quantity.

"I don't have to be there for everything or even every day of their lives, but I do need to be present when I am with them and spend quality time together," Toups said.

Another aspect of herself she has learned to value: vulnerability.

"I am upfront and honest in conversations about all the things I don't know about our industry," she said. "I am skilled at financial analysis but know very little about the technical side of the business. Rather than trying to pretend or avoid these conversations, I am open about how little I know. Most men that I have encountered have appreciated this approach and have been more than willing to help educate me. It creates an authentic relationship and allows me to continue learning." ■



Empowering Every Voice, Energizing Every Idea.

Empowerment is at the heart of everything we do at Superior Energy. We know that true progress comes from the diverse voices within our workforce. By empowering women to contribute, lead and innovate, we're not just shaping the future of energy—we're creating new opportunities for everyone.

Together, we're fueling a future where every voice is heard, and everyone has the chance to succeed.

Congratulations to Deidre Toups for being named as an honoree for the 2025 Influential Women in Energy.



Lauren Varnado

Partner, Litigation & Dispute Resolution Practice Group
• Brown Rudnick • Houston

The best piece of advice offered by a mentor to Lauren Varnado has been, “Be brave—fight like hell when you are right but have the humility to admit when you are wrong.”

Since launching her legal career at the start of the shale boom, Varnado has represented energy clients, including Shell, EOG Resources, Energy Transfer, EQT Corp., among others, in disputes that raise novel legal questions related to the development, production and transportation of hydrocarbons.

Her practice has covered a wide range of disputes, including lawsuits alleging breach of joint operating agreements, oil and gas leases, joint development agreements, energy marketing agreements, gas sale and purchase agreements, theft of trade secrets, class action royalty cases, and climate and winter storm litigation.

“My early influences were the partners I worked for at my first firm (Fulbright & Jaworski),” she said. “They were trailblazers in energy litigation—they successfully defended oil and gas companies in hostile venues and taught me to think innovatively in trying cases and advising clients with complex legal issues.”

Successfully defending oil and gas companies in hostile venues has come to define Varnado’s career. Representing energy producers in cases where her physical safety, and that of her team and clients was threatened has only made her more determined to vigorously advocate for her clients.

“The extent of misunderstanding by the public (and jurors) about the energy industry has been a surprise to me,” she said. “This can and does create hostility towards energy companies, which is obviously a challenge in litigation representing those companies. Education is the key to changing attitudes and beliefs. At trial, I view it as part of my job to educate the jury about the energy industry more broadly and correct misinformation that may influence them.”

But the biggest challenges in her career have involved issues beyond disputes over mineral rights and royalty obligations, risk mitigation in operations, and even highly-scrutinized climate disclosures. Efforts to confront injustice, bias, and harassment—as both a woman and as a lawyer who has been vocal about corruption and unethical conduct within the legal profession—have presented the most significant challenges for Varnado over her career.

“I wouldn’t say that I have overcome these challenges, but they require tenacity and a thick skin,” Varnado said. “Not everyone will like you, much less support you. Having a deep conviction to do the right thing for clients and sense of duty to protect the integrity of our legal system pushes

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** A judge pulled a firearm on me and my co-counsel during a trial over gas royalty payments. After I reported it to the FBI, the story went viral - it was in People Magazine, The Daily Beast, The Daily Mail, and reported by major news outlets (CBS News, NBC News). As a result of our efforts, the judge was forced to resign, lost his license to practice law, and was admonished by the state supreme court. Subsequent investigations showed he was stealing from the court’s coffers and routinely intimidated witnesses, including child sex abuse victims. Importantly, he will never practice law again.
- 2** My sons have double-first cousins—meaning, my sister and I married brothers. Trust me, it was legal!
- 3** I won first place for my age group (women 20 years and under) in the 2004 Houston Marathon. My time (3 hours 21 mins) qualified for the Boston Marathon.

me to rise to the challenge. You cannot listen to anyone who does not wholeheartedly root for you to win and celebrate your successes.”

Varnado’s leadership approach is focused on empowerment and accountability. She said she tries to lead by example—hard work, transparency, networking and building relationships, and continued education about the energy industry.

“I encourage my team to think creatively and strategically to achieve the client’s business objectives and to always put the client’s needs above their own,” she said.

Varnado rewards team members who excel with a turn in the limelight.

“An example from a recent arbitration: An associate on our team did fantastic work preparing for the final hearing, i.e., trial,” she said. “She earned and was rewarded with the opportunity to question several witnesses at the hearing, including an expert witness.”

Above all, Varnado’s mission is to serve energy clients and support U.S. energy production.

“American natural gas can drive global decarbonization,” she said. “Innovations in energy technology will help the world find true sustainability. Now, more than ever, it is critical to defend the rights and protect the technology of U.S. energy producers. And I am proud to have the privilege of getting to do that.” ■



Katrien Verlinden

President & CEO, Saipem America and Country Manager, North America • Saipem • Houston

By the time she was 5 growing up in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, Katrien Verlinden had a gas turbine blade on her nightstand and knew that she would work in the energy industry. Her father, a mechanical engineer working in the global turbomachinery industry, sparked her early interest in engineering, energy and innovation with pictures of his trips in small planes and helicopters to offshore platforms in the North Sea and onshore oil & gas facilities in remote deserts.

The energy industry’s dynamic nature and potential for driving global progress offered her an environment to pursue her ambitions.

“I always wanted to make a positive and tangible difference by being in the business of designing and building highly technical things that are essential to all,” Verlinden said. “I also knew I wanted to work in an international environment, gain strong technical expertise and execution experience, and develop a global perspective on energy challenges and solutions.”

Verlinden started her career at Italy-based engineering, procurement and construction giant Saipem in 2000. She advanced from project engineer through management roles, mainly across the Middle East and North Africa, moving up to CEO of the company’s Algeria unit, and eventually relocated to Houston where she would become CEO of Saipem America and Country Manager for North America, responsible for all business lines.

“I have always been curious, looking for challenging opportunities to learn new skills and travel globally, and my different roles at Saipem have allowed me to do exactly this. At Saipem, we deliver a large range of solutions worldwide, including onshore, offshore, low carbon and drilling, with a constant need for innovation. I thrive in those demanding environments, and I am motivated by stretch assignments where I can tackle challenges with team spirit. My work is incredibly varied and engaging.”

Becoming a successful and effective leader is in no small part a result of how she has taken on the challenges in her career, first in the work that her company performs.

“The EPC industry is tough—we are always working really hard to deliver against challenging timelines and budgets, often in very harsh and remote locations,” she said. “Our work requires dedication, robust problem-solving skills, risk management and tenacity. It also requires a supportive family as we are often away from home for long periods of time. My husband is in Italy, while my parents and siblings all live in Belgium. I’m blessed to be the aunt and godmother of a tribe of adorable nephews and nieces (the youngest just turned 1) and

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** One of my nephews is Luciano Darderi, a professional tennis player with a current highest ATP ranking of 32. We have always been very close, and I am proud to see him excel.
- 2** Two things I do every single day are reading and studying Korean. I admittedly buy far more books than I can ever read. I am fluent in Dutch, Italian, English and French, but I am particularly passionate about languages with different writing systems. It all started with Ancient Greek in high school, but now I am focusing on Asian languages (Chinese, Japanese and especially Korean).
- 3** I am part of the Stanford alumni team who have founded Reaction, a global community and investment fund, whose mission is to measurably improve 1 billion lives within a decade.

we make a collective effort to stay in touch frequently as we are a close-knit family,” Verlinden said.

She has also faced the challenge, shared with many, of being a woman in a male-dominated industry. Though Verlinden never sought to be a role model based on her gender instead of her work, she acknowledges the importance of being a woman in a leadership position.

“When I started my career, I became aware that I stood out among my male colleagues in the office or on site simply because there weren’t many women in the industry,” she said. “This (unwanted) visibility meant that my skills would be under greater scrutiny and judged more harshly. I quickly realized that I could overcome this first perception by showing my passion for the job, working very hard and delivering results, effectively proving that I belonged.”

In fact, her managers did not hold her back because of her gender and placed her in multiple leadership roles in different geographies and cultures.

“Being often the outsider, as the only foreigner and/or woman, posed initial challenges in each new role, but I found that once the team got to know me, I was always accepted,” Verlinden said. “In retrospect, it also helped me focus on learning quickly, collaborating well, becoming highly adaptable and resilient, bringing a positive attitude and team spirit—ultimately making me a better colleague and leader.” ■



Julie Woodard

Senior Land Manager • Expand Energy
• Oklahoma City

Impressions matter.

Julie Woodard has been the beneficiary of a lot of advice over her career, but those two words encapsulate much of it.

“Your reputation is what you have that you can control,” she says. “Our industry and profession are highly dependent on successful relationships, and every interaction that we have with someone leaves an impression.”

Woodard launched her career as a Landman with Chesapeake Energy after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in economics, pre-law from Oklahoma State University and completing the Energy Management program at the University of Oklahoma. She led land business development and exploration activities in the Midcontinent before becoming Land Manager for Chesapeake’s Marcellus land team in 2016. In 2024, she was named Senior Land Manager for Expand Energy following its creation by the merger of Chesapeake and Southwestern Energy.

No matter how educated, everyone who joins this business has a lot to learn about the oil and gas industry, and among those Woodard credits for mentoring her are land professionals who spent countless hours helping her to develop technical acumen and expertise.

“I am surrounded by industry experts and thought leaders who have consistently been supportive of me and who have influenced how I approach strategic issues using innovation,” she said.

The advice she received was straightforward and provided a foundation for career success:

- Learn her role and expectations;
- Deliver more than is expected;
- Volunteer and participate in as many professional association events as time would allow; and
- Earn trust to earn more responsibility.

Mentors are not the only teachers, though. Life happens, as well, as Woodard, married with three children, has learned.

“One of the challenges I have faced is how to balance work and personal life,” she said. “Striking a balance between professional responsibilities and personal demands can be very difficult. Implementing boundaries has been critical to ensuring a healthier work-life balance.”

THREE MORE THINGS

- 1** My favorite vacation adventure so far has been ziplining through the jungle in Costa Rica.
- 2** I spend most of my time outside of work at dance competitions with our girls and the football stadium or basketball gym with our son.
- 3** Although I attended both Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma, I consider myself a Cowboy!

Another aspect of her on-the-job education was managing periods of boom and bust.

“Price fluctuations and geopolitical events have had direct impact on financial investment in development projects and, as such, companies experience either expansion or contraction,” Woodard said. “Either scenario results in a need for creativity from an asset management standpoint and that is where intellectual development opportunities arise—create value given the resources (or lack thereof) you have.”

One of the resources she counts on is her team. Woodard’s goal as a manager is to create trust and promote collaboration with the goal of having an effective and engaged team.

“Motivation should stem from the environment that is created whereby each team member feels trusted, valued and empowered to make a difference through the work that they do,” she said. “Recognizing victories and failures are critical to motivation.”

Woodard said she hopes her colleagues view her as a professional who brings value to the table and respects the value they bring.

“I respect all perspectives and exhibit trustworthiness, positivity and communicate effectively,” she said. “I am willing to admit my shortfalls and areas of weakness. Being self-aware and being willing to talk about it speaks volumes and can have a dramatic effect on dynamics and effectiveness of a leadership team.” ■

A portrait of Julie Woodard, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue blazer and gold hoop earrings, smiling. The background is a blurred green and yellow outdoor setting. The image is framed by a blue geometric shape with white diagonal lines.

Julie Woodard
Sr. Manager, Land

**Expand Energy congratulates Julie Woodard
for being recognized as one of
Hart Energy's 2025 Influential Women in Energy.**

As Expand Energy works to expand energy access and opportunity, leaders like Julie are critical to fulfilling our mission. Julie is a tireless advocate for our industry, a strategic leader within our company and a passionate volunteer in her community.

We are proud to call her our colleague and to celebrate her success.

Queen's Chess: Changing the Rules

There's a popular response to the inexplicable: "I don't know. I don't make the rules." But what is known with certainty, as shown throughout history, is that we can change them.

NISSA DARBONNE | EXECUTIVE EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Until Queen Isabella of Spain changed the rules of chess, the queen piece could only move one or two squares at a time. A voracious learner as a child and throughout her life in the late 15th century, Isabella was also a chess master.

The change she inducted—the queen moving multiple spaces and in any direction—is the one played today and is known as “Queen’s Chess.”

In it, the queen is the most powerful piece.

She applied her chess mastery in her approach to the business of queening itself, defying her king half-brother’s numerous attempts to marry her off to someone suitable to his ambitions rather than hers.

She eloped instead with her own choice: Ferdinand of Aragon, a neighboring monarch, who consented to her demand that he be subordinate to her.

As queen, she physically led troops into battle, bringing her children along.

And there is that world event for which she is most known: financing Italian explorer Christopher Columbus’ expedition that was to discover a western route to Asia.

Her knowledge of science was rich enough to challenge Columbus on his estimate of the number of days the trip would take, thus the amount of supplies needed.

Columbus’ math was fewer than half the number of days she calculated.

And she was correct, as his expedition carried supplies only sufficient to reach the Caribbean and return to Spain rather than enough to reach Asia and return.

(That Earth was spherical and not flat had been well known since ancient Greece; the “flat Earth” story was a 17th century invention that was advanced further by Washington Irving in an 1828 biography of Columbus.)

Isabella’s investment in Columbus’ science project upended the world’s power ranking.

Spain quickly rose to the top due to its vast new trans-Atlantic empire.

And Isabella contributed to the eventual end of Venice’s monopoly in the eastern Mediterranean over trade with India and other destinations east as others found the South American route, the Panamanian route and the south African route.

World history was changed, but not in terms of the world’s view of the usefulness of women.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Queen Isabella I of Castile and Leon: military strategist, financial backer, chess whiz.

‘We Were Visible’

Amazon Prime Video recently picked up the 2020 movie, “Misbehaviour,” that features events around the 1970 Miss World pageant in London.

Most of us were barely conscious yet in 1970 or not yet born. From a 2025 lens, what was acceptable at the time is shocking today.

Contestants’ measurements were part of judging and were included in the live show’s introductions of each finalist.

More surprising, the group of finalists turned their backsides to the cameras for judges, audience members and television viewers to linger in review of their bums.

Bob Hope began his monologue with, "I'm very happy to be at this cattle market tonight." He followed with more jokes about women.

Then, he and the broadcast were famously interrupted.

Women who had taken seats in the audience simply by buying tickets stood, rattling noise-makers, throwing flour bombs onto the stage, dropping leaflets onto the floor from the balconies, raising signs and water pistols, and rushing onto the stage.

When Hope returned, he spoke viciously, saying anyone who would disrupt the contestant "girls" and the proceedings "have got to be on some kind of dope."

The program culminated with crowning a new Miss World—while she was still wearing her swimsuit.

Sue Finch, one of the protestors, told the BBC in 2020, "Nobody had known in the general public about the feminist movement until that moment. All of a sudden, it burst out into people's homes on their television sets. For that moment, we were visible."

They changed the world.

Something Else Happened

But it gets even better. Something else happened that evening: Contestants from two first-time nation participants won both Miss World and runner-up.

The nations: Grenada and a first-time "Africa South" entrant in recognition of apartheid.

Both are Black women: Grenada's Jennifer Hosten and South Africa's Pearl Jansen.

There's a popular response to the inexplicable: "I don't know. I don't make the rules."

But what is known with certainty, as shown throughout history, is that we can change them. ■

A documentary on Queen Isabella that includes her invention of Queen's Chess is available on YouTube. Mention of Queen's Chess is at approximately 15:30. A documentary about the 1970 Miss World pageant, featuring both contestants and activists, can be found at the below QR link. The archive of the live broadcast of the 1970 pageant itself can be found at at the QR link below. The protest begins at 39:00.



Queen's Chess



Contestants and
Activists



1970 Pageant



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