Alumni Update December 2007

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH! Send us your feedback. We want to know where life has taken you since you left West Virginia University. Complete and return this form with your news and comments. Also, pass this Newsletter on, or let us know any alumni who are not receiving Black Gold.

Send to:
Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering, WVU,
P.O. Box 6070, Morgantown, WV 26506-6070

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Brief News of Professional and Family Activities for Future Newsletters:

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http://www.pnge.cemr.wvu.edu/
With another school year underway, I am excited to take the time to reflect and share a little with you about everything going on in the Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering. In the past year, we have received a great deal of recognition and support, thanks to the success of our wonderful students, faculty, and alumni.

In this issue you will read about the exciting conferences, competitions, and ceremonies in which our students have participated. Events such as the IOGA and SPE meetings enable our students to receive knowledge and experience that will benefit them greatly.

The Department is steadily growing; this year we have 98 students in our undergraduate program, an increase of 80 percent over just a few years ago. Our students are high-quality, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Our faculty is growing as well. This year we are excited to welcome Dr. Yueming Cheng to our faculty. She comes to WVU from Texas A&M with an extensive knowledge of and experience in the field of petroleum engineering, as well as academic research.

We are proud to have one of our faculty members touring with the Society of Petroleum Engineers, giving lectures around the world focused on the application of artificial intelligence to the field of oil and gas. Look for the article about Dr. Mohaghegh’s exciting lecture series.

Our faculty has also been involved in funded research and publication of technical articles for scientific journals. A major research emphasis has been placed on natural gas production, including conventional and unconventional gas resources, such as coal bed methane, shale gas, and tight gas sand, as well as transportation. I firmly believe that natural gas has the potential to make a significantly larger contribution to both our nation’s energy supply and its environmental goals.

We are also very grateful for the donations and gifts we received over the past year from our Visiting Committee, alumni, and friends. With these donations we are better able to provide high-quality technology for our students and help our faculty in funding research.

In this edition of our newsletter, you will read, in particular, about a very important donation of reservoir engineering software from Schlumberger, a leader in oil and gas fields technology and services and an important industry partner.

Serving as your chair over the past several years has been an honor, a privilege and a gratifying experience. The success of the Department can be attributed to the dedication and resourcefulness of our people. I am truly honored to lead such a team of professionals and am looking forward to the challenges of the next five years.

Sincerely,

Samuel Ameri,
Professor and Chair
The Department recently received a major donation of sophisticated reservoir engineering software valued at $17 million from Schlumberger, a leading international provider of oilfield services and technology. The software, ECLIPSE, is widely used in the oil and gas industry.

"By providing our students and faculty with access to this state-of-the-art tool, this donation will help ensure that our students graduate with the most up-to-date skills and join the workforce with relevant experience," said Samuel Ameri, department chair. "It will also help attract top-quality graduate students and faculty members who will want to use this software in their research."

Several representatives from the company attended a special luncheon in October to celebrate the donation. Joining them at the luncheon were WVU Provost Gerald Lang, Dean Gene Cilento, Chair Ameri, and several faculty members and students from the Department.

At the luncheon, George Waters, a 1985 graduate of the department and a technical advisor for Schlumberger, announced that the additional donation of two $5,000 scholarships and/or fellowships to the department for the next three years, an additional donation worth $30,000.

Samuel Ameri, professor and chair of the Department, was recently named the 2007 “Oil and Gas Man of the Year” by the West Virginia Oil and Gas Association. The award was presented to Ameri at a luncheon in his honor in September during the 39th annual West Virginia Oil and Gas Festival held in Sistersville, West Virginia.

Professor Ameri received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in petroleum engineering from WVU, and is a registered professional engineer in West Virginia. He has more than 30 years experience in the field of petroleum and natural gas, in both industry and academia.

He has also been selected “Outstanding Teacher” several times by his students. For the past 30 years, Professor Ameri has taught Well Log Interpretation courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, and also consults on the subject.

He also has chaired WVU’s Athletic Council as well as the WVU Student Instruction Committee. He is an ABET accreditation evaluator and serves on the 2007 Advisory Board for World Oil Awards.

Professor Ameri also is very active within the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) on both a national and state level. He has served as a member of the program committee for the 2007 SPE Eastern Regional Conference and Exhibition.

He also has served on the SPE Education and Accreditation Committee, and was appointed chair of the Department Heads of the Petroleum Engineering schools within the U.S. and the SPE US Council. Professor Ameri currently serves as the faculty advisor for WVU’s SPE Student Chapter.
Mohaghegh Tours World as SPE Distinguished Lecturer

As a service to its worldwide membership, the Distinguished Lecture Program of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) selects and sponsors lectures by well-known scientists who are highly regarded as top experts in their fields. Dr. Shahab D. Mohaghegh has been selected by his peers at SPE as a Distinguished Lecturer to provide this service to the oil and gas industry. Dr. Mohaghegh is known as a pioneer and the top expert in the application of artificial intelligence and data mining in the oil and gas exploration and production industry.

In 2007-2008, as a SPE Distinguished Lecturer, Dr. Mohaghegh is taking part in a series of six tours that will take him to 17 countries, where he will lecture on “Smart Completions, Smart Wells, and Now Smart Fields: Challenges and Potential Solutions.” He will present a total of 26 lectures to local SPE chapters throughout the world with oil and gas business professionals as the primary audience. Many local chapters also include a strong representation by university faculty and students.

Dr. Mohaghegh began his lecture series in September with a tour of five major oil and gas cities in Russia. In October, he toured North America, giving lectures in New Orleans, Louisiana; Bartlesville, Oklahoma; and Mexico City, Mexico. Future destinations include Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Congo, Egypt, England, Gabon, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Egypt, England, Gabon, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, and Yemen.

PNGE Welcomes Newest Faculty Member

The Department is pleased to welcome Dr. Yueming Cheng as its newest faculty member. Dr. Cheng, who earned her Ph.D. at Texas A&M, has extensive experience in the petroleum industry, as well as in academic research.

Dr. Cheng received her bachelor’s degree in 1985, master’s degree in 1991, and PhD in 2003, all in the field of petroleum engineering. She also served as a research associate where she was responsible for multiple research projects, including integrated reservoir characterization and modeling, pressure transient test analysis, optimization of field development, and uncertain quantification of reservoir estimation.

Dr. Cheng has had fourteen articles published and also reviews papers for publication in the Society of Petroleum Engineers Reservoir Evaluation and Engineering journal. Please join us in welcoming her to WVU!

Ameri Reappointed as Chair of PNGE

Samuel Ameri, professor and chair of the Department, was recently re-appointed to another five year term as chair.

Department chairs are reviewed every five years by the dean of the college, and also are evaluated by other faculty members and colleagues. Ameri’s overall assessment for his performance as department chair was rated by his colleagues as an average of a 4.9 on a 5.0 scale. In his evaluation, Eugene V. Cilento, Glen H. Hiner Dean of the College of Engineering and Mineral Resources, said, “Professor Ameri is considered a reasonable and considerate person who works diligently to represent the WVU Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering to the professional communities.”
Samuel Ameri, professor and chair of the Department, remembers Richard Smith as one of the best students to go through the program, and said that he cherishes the wonderful relationship that he has developed through the years with Smith.

“The Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering at WVU is truly grateful to Richard Smith for all of the help that he has given us,” Ameri said. “He is a true Mountaineer.”

Smith came to WVU after graduating from St. Albans High School in St. Albans, West Virginia. It was here that he earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in petroleum engineering in the years of 1980 and 1981, respectively.

While at WVU, Smith served as a graduate teaching assistant for Mineral Engineering 1 and 2. He also worked as a summer intern for Halliburton Services during his junior and senior years, as well as the summer he spent as a graduate student. After graduation, Smith went to work for Halliburton Services as a field engineer in Elkview, West Virginia, where he took responsibility for engineering design, execution, and evaluation of oil and gas well pumping services. Most of his time was spent supervising service crews while executing hydraulic fracturing, acidizing, and cementing procedures. He was soon promoted to district engineer, where his responsibilities included design engineering, district sales, technical training, and personnel supervisory duties. He also assisted and advised management on local technical issues, economic evaluations, financial performance, and activity forecasting.

In 1993, Smith transferred to Houston, Texas, where he was promoted to technical advisor and was placed on special assignment in the Mobil Oil office working on projects for their non-core producing fields. This included selecting well candidates and writing work-over packages. His operating budget was selected as Mobil’s best operating non-core unit.

In December of 1995, he was transferred overseas to Southeast Asia, where he became an in-house engineer for the Royal Dutch Shell Company in Brunei. After the first year and half at Brunei Shell, Smith was promoted to country manager. He was responsible for all business development, operations and financial performance for a 120-person location covering the countries of Brunei, Philippines, and East Malaysia.

After a five-year tour of duty in Southeast Asia, he was transferred back to Weston, West Virginia, to head the business development program for Team #3 Area. He headed that position from February of 2000 to August 2006. During that time, Halliburton’s revenues and market share doubled.

After almost 26 years with Halliburton, he decided it was time for a career change, and went to work for Weatherford Fracturing Technologies. At the time, Weatherford did not have any operations in the Northeast, so Smith was hired as the new regional manager to start fracturing operations where he currently works.

At the present time, Smith is in the process of opening two new district camps in West Virginia, and will be responsible for all business development, operations, and financial performance for a $60 million start-up operation.
Over the summer, the Department was pleased to receive a visit by Richard Watkins, one of the first graduates of the Department. Watkins received his bachelor’s degree in 1963, one of the first two students to graduate with a degree from the newly founded Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering at WVU.

Earlier, petroleum engineering was an option within the mining engineering program in the School of Mines. After separating from the mining department in 1961, the Petroleum Option degree became the current PNGE degree.

At graduation, Watkins was accompanied by Tom Virden – the only other graduating senior from the department that first year. Watkins received the West Virginia Oil and Gas Association award for the outstanding graduating senior. He was also inducted into Sigma Gamma Epsilon, the earth sciences honorary, and made a charter member of Pi Epsilon Tau, the petroleum honorary.

After receiving his bachelor’s degree, Watkins went on to earn a master’s degree in petroleum and natural gas engineering from WVU as well. He also worked in the petroleum research labs at the Morgantown Experiment Station of the Bureau of Mines, as well as a research assistant in the college.

Watkins has retired from his position as vice president at D&M and is now a consulting petroleum engineer working as a sole practitioner. He also serves on the executive board of the McKinney Avenue Transit Authority and the board of directors of Texas Rail Advocates, and is a technical advisor for the Age of Steam Museum in Dallas, Texas.

(From left) Department Chair Sam Ameri, WVU alumnus Ben Statler, and College Dean Gene Cilento enjoyed a moment at the College tailgate before the WVU vs. Mississippi State Homecoming game in October. Statler and his wife, Jo, recently pledged $25 million to WVU, the largest single private donation ever, to fund programs in breast cancer and other health programs, along with programs at the College of Engineering and Mineral Resources.
Student Oil and Gas Well Project Takes Shape

Plans are currently in the works for a student-oriented oil and gas well project that will benefit WVU both academically and financially. Kenneth R. Mason, president of Drilling Appalachian Corporation (DAC), proposed the project, in which DAC will drill an oil and gas well that the Department can use to enhance the practical application of field and classroom studies for our students.

DAC will provide the capital investment to drill the well. Students will participate in a variety of ways, from selecting future drill sites to designing casing programs and cement jobs, reservoir analysis, well testing, fracturing design, and production. Students may also help to determine the depth of the well and take drill samples.

DAC plans to donate half of the income from the oil and gas well to WVU, and that half will be divided equally between our Department and the Athletic Department.

DAC was incorporated in 1984 and has been involved in the design, drilling, and production of more than 300 wells in north central West Virginia. DAC is a complete exploration and production company and has extensive experience in all phases of the industry. DAC also has received numerous industry awards for excellence in land reclamation and well site reconstruction.

Mason, founder and president of DAC, is a 1975 graduate of WVU’s School of Forestry and has been involved in the oil and gas industry for more than 25 years.

“My interest in developing this project,” said Mason, “was brought on by my desire to support our youth and one of the major universities that educates them.”

siblings pursue their dreams at WVU

Abbas Belyadi came to the United States from his native country of Kuwait several years ago with a dream – a dream to study petroleum and natural gas engineering at West Virginia University. With that single step, he started a family tradition.

Belyadi finished his B.S. and M.S degrees in the field of petroleum and natural gas engineering in December of 2006 and soon continued his studies at WVU, pursuing a Ph.D. in the same discipline.

Belyadi’s younger sister, Fatemeh, followed in her brother’s footsteps and also came to WVU to study petroleum and natural gas engineering. Fatemeh fulfilled her dreams by getting her B.S. in May of 2005, and completing her M.S. alongside her brother in December 2006.

History repeated itself again when Abbas and Fatemeh came to Department Chair Samuel Ameri’s office to introduce their younger sister, Zeynab, and younger brother, Hossein. Today, both of the younger Belyadi siblings are pursuing undergraduate studies in the department and are on the path to becoming successful professionals in the field of petroleum and natural gas engineering.

Abbas will be starting his Ph.D. studies in PNGE at WVU this fall, and Fatemeh is working for a petroleum engineering company in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She takes pride in being a WVU-PNGE alumna. All four of the Belyadi siblings have created memories at WVU that will last for the rest of their lives.

students receive recognition

Two of our students, Chelsie Hupp and Meagan Kleb, were honored for their outstanding academic achievements by the Desk and Derrick Club at its First Annual Oil and Gas Industry Appreciation Luncheon. The luncheon was held in Charleston, West Virginia, in October.

The Desk and Derrick Club was formed to promote the education and professional development of individuals employed in the petroleum, energy, and affiliated industries. Members and representatives from several local energy and affiliated industries attended the luncheon. The keynote speaker was Aubrey McClendon, CEO of Chesapeake Energy.

Hupp, a senior, and Kleb, a graduate student, each received a $1,000 scholarship along with the honor.
Students from the WVU Student Chapter of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (WVU-SPE) regularly attend SPE’s Northern West Virginia section (SPE NWV) meetings during the second week of each month. Students not only gain valuable insight on technological advancements, but also get the opportunity to meet industrial professionals and share common interests during these meetings.

Last winter, our student chapter was invited to organize a section meeting. The students and the chapter’s faculty advisor, Samuel Ameri, sponsored the meeting, which was held in February at the Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown.

The speaker for the afternoon was Delal Gunaydin, a graduate student from our Department. The topic of her presentation was “Estimating the Skin Factor as a Function of Time and Production Cycles in Gas Storage Fields.”

Our chapter’s officers met with the SPE regional director, George Koperna, and chairperson of SPE NWV section, Tom Suhy. The officers discussed their professional activities and future plans for the chapter with SPE leaders.

The student section meeting was well-attended by graduate and undergraduate students, as well as industrial professionals. SPE NWV Board of Directors congratulated the WVU-SPE Student Chapter for organizing a very successful meeting, and they look forward to the WVU-SPE Student Chapter sponsoring more section meetings in the future.

The Independent Oil and Gas Association of West Virginia, Inc. (IOGA) held its winter conference on February 6-7, 2007, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Charleston, West Virginia. Several undergraduate and graduate students from the Department represented WVU at this conference, enjoying the opportunity to interact with industry professionals. Students also had the opportunity to learn about the latest technological advancements, ranging from fracturing to cementing of conventional wells to other topics.

Lunch was sponsored by BJ Services Company U.S.A., Halliburton Energy Services, and Schlumberger Oilfield Services. The president of IOGA specially thanked WVU students for attending the meeting.

After the meeting, Samuel Ameri, professor and chair, invited all of the students to join him for an evening of dinner and conversation at a steak house in downtown Charleston.