

John Shirra

John Shirra Memorial Scholarship

The "John Shirra Memorial Scholarship" was established by John's family, friends and business colleagues whose lives have been enriched by knowing John during his life. It is impossible to describe a person like John in a few words but we hope that the following will give you a sense of the type of person he was.

John David Shirra was born in Calgary in 1958. He attended Willowpark Elementary, R. T. Alderman Junior High, Lord Beaverbrook High School and Henry Wise Wood High School in Calgary.

During his school years John developed an interest and displayed considerable ability in many sports including tennis, squash, cycling and golf. His favourite location for athletics was in the mountains where he spent as much time as possible cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, hiking and camping. John combined his interest in ski racing with volunteerism and spent many weekends assisting the Lake Louise Ski Club with their Junior Ski Racing program and by coaching young ski racers at Mount Norquay.

John attended the University of Calgary from 1978 to 1982 during which time he successfully completed the Bachelor of Commerce program. John used his academic studies to fuel his entrepreneurial spirit; during one summer John and a friend established a small business called Sunshine Window Cleaners and a few years later he and a group of friends established a company called the Larch Group through which they imported goods from abroad and marketed them in the Calgary area.

After graduating from the University of Calgary in 1982 John travelled to Europe where he spent six months camping, cycling and exploring with friends. Later that year he returned to Calgary and joined American Eagle Petroleums Ltd. as the Executive Assistant to the President.

He spent four years with American Eagle during which time he displayed a strong work ethic, dedication and community spirit. He volunteered to teach a business class to a group of junior high school students and in typical fashion made this learning experience fun and interesting by using the Olympic Saddledome operations as a case study. He even arranged for the class to have a complete tour of the



Saddledome facilities, his plan being to have the students become interested in the business world through a medium to which they could relate.

In 1986 John returned to Europe to continue his business studies. He enrolled at Nijenrode, the Netherlands School of Business, and graduated with a Masters of Business Administration in 1987.

He returned to Calgary and commenced employment with Poco Petroleum Ltd. where, after four years of hard work and determination, he was promoted to the position of Treasurer. Shortly after this he passed away suddenly at the age of 34 years.

John possessed an amazing ability to organize his time: he had time for his family, he had time for his friends, he found time to work hard and succeed in business, and he found time to organize all the things that were fun to do as a group. John was constantly organizing such things as ski trips, weekends in Whitefish, movie nights and squash games to name a few. During all of these activities, John's characteristic sense of humour was always present.

John was an extremely caring person who practiced putting other people's needs ahead of his own. He was the kind of person who remembered your birthday and your anniversary. If he missed an important event in your life, he was genuinely grieved. He not only had numerous friends but cared to know many of their families as well. He inspired us to push ourselves to achieve higher goals. One of his favourite sayings was to stand at the top of a steep ski slope and turn to us with a big grin and say " I can ski that slope in three turns...." and the challenge was on.

John succeeded in business because he was a tireless worker and dedicated employee but he still managed to maintain a balanced lifestyle and enjoyed participating in sports and other activities. John had a great sense of humour and a strong community spirit which contributed to his overwhelming popularity with friends and business associates. He cared deeply about his friends and family.

As a continuing tribute to a great friend, family member and businessman, the John Shirra Memorial Scholarship was formed to assist university students in financing their studies. We attempt to select individuals displaying the same characteristics John possessed in life.