this month, a tireless networker and business builder, David L. Bole, reaches a 50-year milestone in this business. Hardly a major oil industry event goes by without him making the rounds and shaking hands to develop business opportunities and strengthen ties.

Since 2007, he has been managing director at private-equity firm Quantum Energy Partners in Houston. There, his main duties include sourcing and due diligence for Quantum’s potential investments.

This Oklahoma native’s adventures have taken him to New York City, Pittsburgh, New Orleans and Houston. Along the way, he has served the Independent Petroleum Association of America as a member of IPAA’s board, as a regional director, as chair of the membership committee and the annual Wildcatters’ Ball in Houston. He also founded the IPAA Business Development Committee. No wonder he received the IPAA Leadership Award in 2004.

For the Texas Alliance of Energy Producers, he chairs the host committee for the Texas Alliance Houston Wildcatters’ events. Among other accomplishments, in 1997 he founded Randall & Dewey’s Annual A&D Summit held in Houston.

Bole was raised in Bartlesville, where his chemical engineer father arrived in the 1920s’ oil boom to join Cities Service Oil Co. Young Bole started in the oil patch at age 17 working on cable tool rigs in the summer.

After graduating from the University of Oklahoma in 1961 with a BBA in Petroleum Land Management, he joined Humble Oil in Oklahoma City as a field landman. He took a leave of absence to serve in the U.S. Army. Following his return to Humble, he worked in Ardmore, Oklahoma City, New Orleans and Houston.

He left Humble in 1968 to join Merrill Lynch, where he became national product manager for oil and gas investments in New York. Returning to Oklahoma City, he was co-founder and president of Edwards & Leach Oil Co., then chief financial officer for Alexander Energy. Later, he went to Pittsburgh and Equitable Resources Energy Co. as vice president, corporate development.

Back in Houston by 1996, he became a managing director of A&D advisory firm Randall & Dewey, now a part of Jefferies & Co. Prior to joining Quantum, he was president of SouthView Energy, a Quantum and Jefferies portfolio company.

He has served as a director of Huber Energy, Houston, and he is on the boards of Primary Natural Resources, Tulsa, and Chalker Energy, Houston; both are in Quantum’s portfolio.

At OU, he was on the Sarkeys Energy Center board of directors and now serves on the advisory board for the Energy Management Program in the Price College of Business, where in May 2011 he received the Price College Distinguished Alumni Award.

Investor David, you’ve been a land man, an investment banker, an oil company CFO and president, and the head of business development for several entities.

Bole Yes; I was bitten by the oil bug—my love for the industry was instilled by my father and his friends while growing up in Bartlesville. The common thread is top-flight people. I’ve been fortunate to have worked with some of the best talent in the industry, starting early with Bob Parker Sr. at Parker Drilling, and more recently with the founders of Randall & Dewey and Quantum.

Investor Which job was toughest?

Bole Having started out working on rigs, I learned early not to be afraid of hard work and challenges. I can’t think of a job or situation where the opportunities were not greater than the challenges (I always see the glass as half full), especially when you work with people you like and trust, and share similar values.

Investor How has business development changed?

Bole The fundamentals haven’t changed: you must understand and meet the needs of both the marketplace and your company. But today, with so much of the same information available to everyone on a real-time basis, it really falls back to your personal relationships. People still want to do business with people they know and trust.

Investor What’s your advice for the younger generation entering the industry?

Bole Be patient. Study, learn, and respect the technical and financial disciplines in the oil and gas industry. My PLM degree at OU required classes in engineering, geology, finance and law. I would encourage all young people to study the multiple disciplines in our industry because it makes work a lot more rewarding when you’re part of a team.

In my guest lectures at OU, I advise: “Follow your passion. The best career strategy is amazingly simple: work at what you love, and if you can’t, then love the work you do.”

Investor What’s next for you?

Bole While I will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of my employment with Humble Oil on June 5, I’m still as focused as ever, and excited about working with Quantum. Having begun there as an investor in Chalker I & II, then as president of a portfolio company, and now a managing director of the firm, I will continue to follow my passion for business development for the benefit of family, friends and business colleagues—and me.

—Leslie Haines