



## CG&A President Todd Brooker leads by being engaged — without micromanaging

By Rachel Stowe Master

**BORN INTO A FOOTBALL FAMILY IN ALABAMA**, Todd Brooker moved to Texas as a teen and soon found his passion in petroleum engineering. After beginning his career in shallow water drilling, he joined petroleum consulting firm Cawley, Gillespie and Associates as a reservoir engineer. He earned his professional engineer license, became a partner and learned to juggle engineering and business development responsibilities before opening the firm's Austin office a decade later. In 2017, he took the reins as president.

CG&A celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2021. With offices in Austin, Fort Worth and Houston, the firm is primarily engaged in reservoir engineering, with a strong focus on reserves and economics reporting, A&D support, midstream volume modeling and SEC compliance.

Below, Brooker shares his insights on the value of internships and mentors, the challenges of leading during a pandemic, his optimism for 2022 and what it was like growing up where football is king.

**NAPE: You had three pretty incredible summer jobs in college — as a roustabout in California and oilfield operations in Michigan for Sun Oil and as an analyst in First Boston's energy group in New York City. What kind of impact did those have on your career?**

**TB:** Those summer jobs were transformational. Not only did I get to the oil fields for the first time and engage in some hard labor, but I also learned so much about the downhole side of the business while making a nice income. Then when I landed the analyst role with First Boston in NYC, I got a good taste of the financial side of the energy business, not to mention the high-stress, long-hour

and minimal sunlight environment. In short, these jobs taught me to work hard, find good mentors and that the oil and gas industry is crazy fun. My diverse summer internships were so impactful to my career in that they gave me confidence that I could work in any environment and be successful.

**NAPE: After college, you joined Chevron USA's Gulf of Mexico business unit in New Orleans as a drilling representative. What were your biggest lessons learned from being a company man working in the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico?**

**TB:** It was a whole lot of workovers and very little drilling initially, which makes sense, as I needed experience with jackup rig operations and

logistics before I could "graduate" to bigger and better projects. Thank goodness they paired me with Chevron veterans to learn the ropes and stay out of trouble. That was lesson No. 1 for me: Mentors are so important. Lesson No. 2: Get sleep when you can, but be ready for anything. Lesson No. 3: Always carry your tally book, and measure everything twice.

**NAPE: Three years later, you joined CG&A as a "very green" reservoir engineer. How did that come about and how did you get up to speed?**

**TB:** For that, I need to thank the great Dr. Larry Lake, my reservoir engineering professor at UT. I think he was still perplexed and miffed that I

chose drilling rather than production or reservoir right out of college, so he provided my name to CG&A when they reached out. I was so ready to get back to Texas. The president of CG&A at the time was very frank with me, saying he wanted to make me an offer but that I came with some “good, bad and ugly.” I had a sinking feeling and saw this going south before he said: “The good — everyone likes you. The bad — you know nothing about reservoir. The ugly — you own a home in New Orleans.” But he still took a chance on me. Regarding getting up to speed, there was no easy way other than on the job training. Dive in, pay attention, take notes, latch onto good mentors and grow your capabilities toolkit.

**NAPE: How important have mentors been to your success?**

**TB:** I had some great mentors who went on to be very successful business leaders, dealmakers and educators. Each mentor was very different in how they achieved great things, which was vital to helping me understand that you can accomplish a task many different ways, but you have to be flexible — especially in a team setting where everyone is very intelligent and driven. Oddly, that’s both intimidating and intoxicating.

**NAPE: You were named CG&A president in 2017. How would you describe your leadership style?**

**TB:** It has evolved over time through trial and error. In general I try to be engaged without being overbearing or micromanaging. I also try to be available to employees and clients at all times, which can be challenging. But I have learned that if you are fully present and actually listen — and also deal with the issue at hand and not procrastinate — it helps prevent future problems and keeps the machine running smoothly. I also have to say

that I work with some very bright and driven co-workers, who tend to take care of their business and require very little steering.

**NAPE: What have been the biggest challenges?**

**TB:** To state the obvious, the 2020 pandemic was a doozy of a challenge. It brought the world to its knees and roughed up the oil and gas business for quite a while. The “great reset” of our industry presented so many challenges — and not just business related. It impacted every employee and their families to the core. Being patient and understanding was the key. Flexibility was a must. And we managed to navigate some troubled waters with no layoffs. I am very proud of that. Other, nonpandemic challenges for me were thinking I could lead a 55-year-old company following a long line of some great leaders. It’s intimidating, to be very honest. But I did ask for it and embraced it as best I could. I have stumbled here and there, but I continue to learn and pivot each and every day.

**NAPE: Any leadership missteps you would be willing to share?**

**TB:** There have been many missteps, and most of them stem from having an engineering background and not one in finance or sales. One that comes to mind: My network was not strong enough initially. It’s much better now, but early on my net was not cast far enough, and it made business development that much harder. Looking back, I have had missteps on projects, with clients and with employees. Mistakes are inevitable. As a leader it’s a constant struggle to balance the art of knowing when, why and how hard to push your teams, but I try to keep it simple: Listen to your team, maintain a climate of trust, help them only where needed and get out of their way.

**NAPE: CG&A celebrated its 60th anniversary in April. What are you doing to ensure it’s on solid footing for the next 60 years?**

**TB:** Sixty years? I’m really focused on the next 10 years. Without getting into too many details, it’s the little stuff that amounts to big things. First, happy and healthy employees is priority No. 1. As Richard Branson once said, “Train people well enough so they can leave; treat them well enough so they don’t want to.” Second, continue to innovate so we can improve efficiencies, keep pace with our clients and attract new talent. Third, continue expanding our business offerings to properly serve our clients in a changing oil and gas environment — ESG, CCUS, sustainability, water management, etc. Lastly, networking, not just for me, but for all CG&A associates. Building meaningful relationships leads to good business.

**NAPE: What are you most excited about for 2022?**

**TB:** I’m really excited for our clients, who have struggled so much in the last 18 months. Higher oil and gas prices will help heal some wounds, allow for cash flow, profitability and hiring, and hopefully lead to a slightly higher rig count and associated production. That brings a little more balance to an industry that is so vital to the world’s health and wealth. In addition, I am very excited about the oil and gas industry in general. Not only is it rebounding financially, but it has also made huge strides in energy education, reduced flaring, methane capture, produced water management and just being better stewards of the environment. One of the coolest things coming out of this “operating cleaner” charge is that serious innovation is taking place that actually allows for improved profitability with sustainability.



Todd Brooker (age 1) with his dad, football great Tommy Brooker.



Brooker and wife Liza.



The Brooker family, from left: Liza, Jordan, Libby, Kylie and Todd.

**NAPE:** Your dad played football for the University of Alabama and later as a tight end and kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs, winning a national championship in 1961 and making it to the first Super Bowl in 1967. What was it like growing up in a football family?

**TB:** As a young boy in Alabama, you are either an Alabama or Auburn fan, and college football rules. No doubt about it, I had it good. My dad was an All-American player on a national championship team for Paul “Bear” Bryant. I lived in the same neighborhood as the Bear. I drove him around in golf carts and played checkers with his wife. I attended Alabama practices regularly, as my dad was a part-time kickers and punters coach in the 1970s. My brother and I have our dad’s 1978 and 1979 championship rings he got from coaching. The list goes on and on. Bottom line: I was privileged and lucky when it came to growing up in a football family. But my personal football career was short-lived, ending in high school after it was clear I was not hitting the 6-foot-3 height of my dad or brother, and I was much better at golf.

**NAPE:** Back in March 2020, you started an exercise kick to work out at least an hour a day every day. What prompted that and how’s it going?

**TB:** Boredom and survival. In the early stages of the pandemic, I had extra time on my hands and was at home all day, so I was looking for distractions. I randomly decided to keep up the progress after working out hard for a week straight. Then I made it to two weeks, one month, 12 months and somehow have managed to approach 600 days straight. I know I have annoyed my wife so many times at this point by squeezing in workouts at odd times or places, but overall she has been very supportive — probably because she has seen me at my chunkiest, but also she knows I am no spring chicken anymore and COVID-19 is still looming.

**NAPE:** You’ve been attending NAPE for over a decade. What are you looking forward to at NAPE Summit in February?

**TB:** Besides seeing all of my oil and gas friends in one location, I love NAPE because it gives you the pulse of the industry. You can walk into the exhibit hall or any function around town, and by reading the room, you can feel the health of the industry. In addition, you get an enormous wealth of information that can help guide your business model, not to mention new connections that can lead to business opportunities. ◆

## MORE ABOUT TODD BROOKER

**Hometown?** Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

**Education?** Bachelor of Science in petroleum engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

**No. 1 team?** Tie: Alabama Crimson Tide and Texas Longhorns (football). When they played in the Rose Bowl for the national championship in 2010, I sat in the Alabama section but wore my Texas gear head to toe.

**Go-to morning beverage?** Coffee, light cream and stevia.

**Favorite cheat food?** Several: meat lovers pizza, bacon cheeseburger, Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough ice cream.

**Recent good read?** *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink.

**Currently on your playlist?** Tame Impala, Cake, Weezer, Atmosphere, Metallica and Foo Fighters.

**Hobbies?** Dad puns, sarcasm, golf, basketball.

**Are you a pet person?** Yes, dogs — chocolate Labs rule.

**Three words that describe you?** Fortunate. Stubborn. Southern.

**Surprising fact?** I own a unicycle and can ride it.

**Advice for someone just entering the industry?** Never give up. Energy runs the world. It will always be relevant.

**Favorite thing about NAPE?** So many friends and associates in one place, building relationships and getting deals done!