

Wawanesa's Glenn McGregor with sons Brett and Mark, who followed their father into the insurance industry. The youngest McGregor, Derek, is a sales supervisor with Lays Canada in Winnipeg.



# THE MCGREGORS

By Ron Shorvoyce

**Y**ou might say Glenn McGregor is building an insurance dynasty. He's been a company man for more than three decades. A few years ago his son Brett decided to follow in his footsteps. Another son, Mark, is also in the business.

The senior McGregor works for Wawanesa Mutual Insurance Company in Wawanesa, Man., population 550. It's also his hometown and the historic site of the venerable insurer's head office.

As the company's VP Prairie region, McGregor manages the branch in Wawanesa; he's also responsible for a territory that takes in Western Manitoba and all of Saskatchewan. The regional offices have close to 80 staff, 55 of them in Manitoba and 25 in Saskatchewan.

McGregor, 54, grew up on a farm. He received his elementary and high school education in Wawanesa and later attended the University of Manitoba.

"It was three years of fun," he said of his post-secondary experience. "I didn't get much accomplished, but I did establish many lifelong friendships."

He briefly sold vacuum cleaners and accident insurance, going door to door,



Bjornson

before returning home to Wawanesa in 1978 to play small-town hockey and baseball and to land a position at the mutual.

"I started in the policy department. Over the next couple of months I moved on to the underwriting department and then went on the road for six years as a marketing rep."

In the interim he took night classes at Brandon University, earning a bachelor's degree in general studies. He also obtained a fellowship with the Manitoba Insurance Institute.

With Wawanesa he moved from marketing to farm underwriting supervisor, a role he assumed for a couple of years before being named underwriting manager for the branch in 1988. He assumed his current VP position in 1992.

There are 320 brokers in McGregor's territory, which means he travels a lot.

"Quite often we'll do a tour of many of the small towns in Saskatchewan, northwest of Saskatoon or down by Swift Current, to see how brokers are doing and to see how we can do better. I can easily spend three or four weeks a year on those kinds of trips."

McGregor met his wife Arlene at Wawanesa. She was already working there when he started and was the first person to show him around.

"I met her in underwriting. She



Morrison

trained me the first year I was there."

They married in 1979. Arlene later moved to a teaching assistant position at the local elementary school in Wawanesa, a job she only recently retired from to help care for their first grandchild.

The McGregors' third son, Derek, 25, graduated with a business degree from the University of Minot in North Dakota. He works as a sales supervisor with Lays Canada in Winnipeg.

The village setting of Wawanesa means Glenn McGregor's staff members live close to each other.

"We socialize after 4 p.m. and on weekends. But Monday it's back to the work environment, and there's no adverse impact on either work or the social life. It's something everyone understands."

John Bjornson, originally from Glenboro, also worked for the insurer until his retirement a few years ago. McGregor succeeded him as branch manager in Wawanesa. The two go back 30 years.



Heppner

Bjornson says McGregor is a great guy, a perfect host, very intelligent, fair-minded, and good at all sports, including golf.

"He's a unique golfer.

He's not really good friends with his driver, though. But he hits his irons a mile. He closes down the club face. It's nothing for him to hit a nine-iron 180, 190 yards."

Another old friend, Don Morrison of

Morrison Agencies in Deloraine, has also known McGregor for about 30 years. They used to play senior hockey against each other.

"He coaches a local senior team in Wawanesa," said Morrison, a onetime pro hockey player with the North Carolina Checkers of the East Coast Hockey League. "My son plays against his three sons. So he'll hear me yelling at him every once in a while."

He says McGregor was a good hockey player in his day. But he did have one fault.

"Glenn never could keep his head up. He used to get hit more in one shift than

I'd get hit in a whole game."

Brett McGregor, 29, started working at the mutual as a summer student after he graduated high school in 1999. He started in the mailroom, doing filing, and then moved to commercial underwriting, processing renewals. A little later he moved to Winnipeg, earning a commerce degree at the University of Manitoba. He continued working with Wawanesa, at the Winnipeg branch, while at school.

In 2003, after finishing university, he decided to explore the brokerage side of the business.

"I had the opportunity to work with Wawanesa, but I had to move to Calgary

to do it, and I'm kind of a small-town boy. I loved being in Wawanesa, so I ended up moving back and applying for a job at a brokerage in Brandon."

He landed a position with Guild Insurance, a half-hour's drive from Wawanesa, after an interview with Guild's late and highly regarded owner, Neil Andrews.

"We probably talked for about an hour and a half about life and business," Brett said. "I walked out of there knowing I wanted to be at Guild. I said to myself, 'That guy is exactly who I want to work for.' Neil was an incredible guy, a really good businessman, but also very compassionate."

It was a great opportunity – and McGregor could continue to live in Wawanesa. He and his wife Amanda, an instructor at Brandon's Assiniboine Community College, have a year-old son, Kai.

Brett McGregor's first role at Guild was processing personal lines programs. He moved up to operations manager, responsible for financials and general office management, and, in 2008, to commercial lines sales manager. He now has a share of the operation.

Dwight Heppner, a broker with MIG Insurance in Winkler, has been Brett McGregor's friend for about four years.

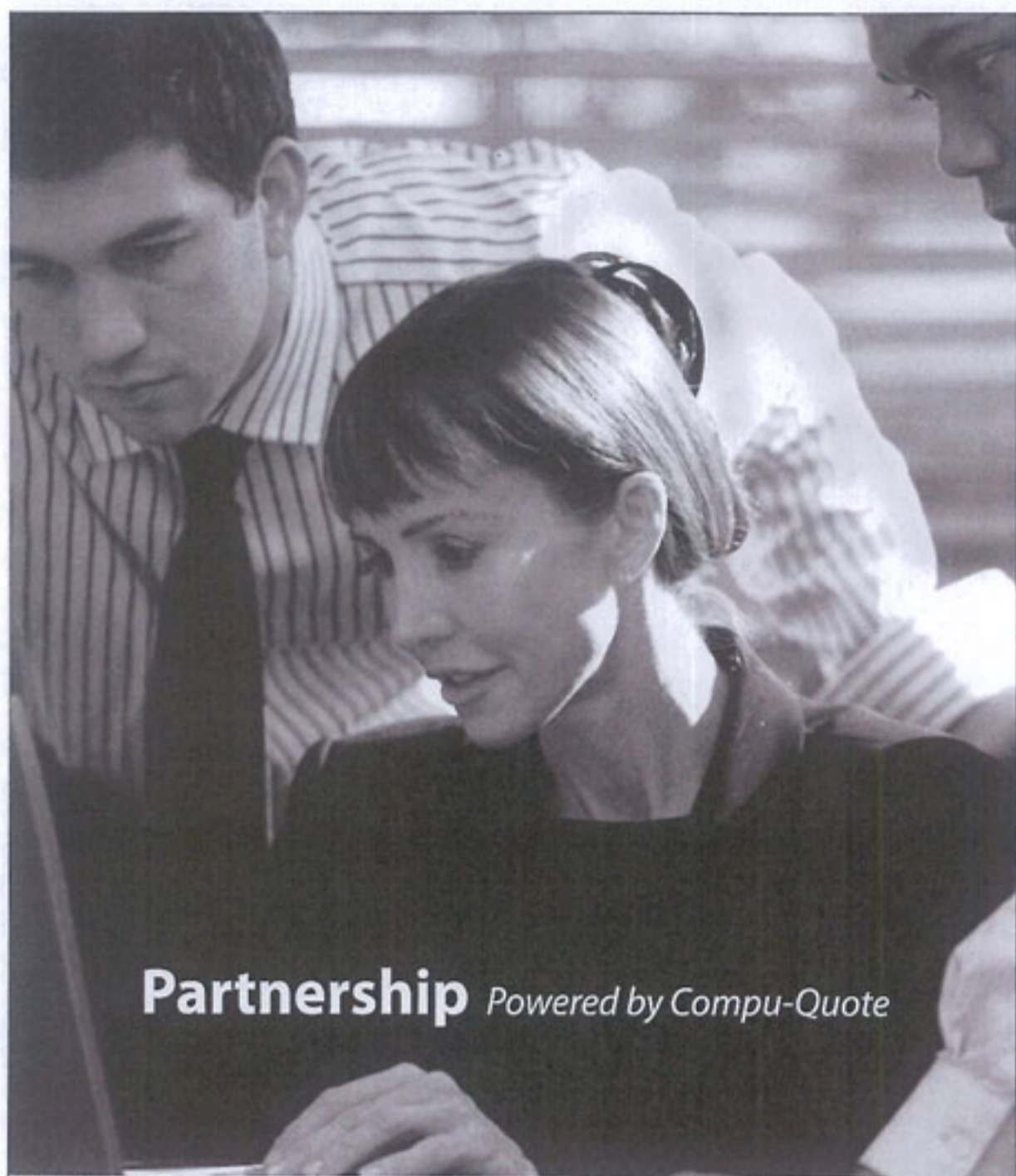
"We met through the Young Brokers group," Heppner said. "Brett has good leadership qualities, is very dedicated to his work and is good at what he does. He's intelligent and he cares what people think."

Mark McGregor joined Wawanesa last November as an underwriter for personal lines and farm business. He graduated from the business administration program at Alberta's Lethbridge Community College and had been working with Wells Fargo Financial in Brandon.

"I really like the insurance business," said Mark, who is 27 and single. "I was really involved in it my whole life and when the position came up at Wawanesa, it was a good opportunity. I could also live and work in my hometown."

Glenn McGregor is pleased his sons are doing well in their chosen careers. And he couldn't be happier Brett and Mark are also in the insurance business and living in Wawanesa.

"I live four blocks from work," said the senior McGregor, who has lived in the same home for 30 years. "When I talk to my city counterparts about commuting, it makes me appreciate the small town. After all, it's not very often you can work in a big city office environment in a small town. We're very lucky!" **IW**



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