

# Insurance West

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Hands**  
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silver lining**

**Hacked**



## The Idea Guy

Waggoner's Pete Tessier plays lead fiddle at IBAM

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IBAM president Pete Tessier met future wife Marni Waggoner, whose father Ed founded Winnipeg's Waggoner Insurance, in Vancouver after a round-the-world backpacking trip. The couple has two sons.

# The Idea Guy

Dave Schioler, CEO of the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba, says Pete Tessier, the president of the association, is a very sharp fellow. "He's an idea guy," says Schioler, "who doesn't get selfish about the ownership of ideas." **By Ron Shorvoyce**

**S**elf-admitted risk taker, artist, hockey blogger and erstwhile Deadhead. Pete Tessier is all of those things and more – including president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba.

A part owner of Winnipeg's Waggoner Insurance Services, a family-held business, Tessier isn't like most people who operate a brokerage. He'd done a lot of other things in life before settling into this line of work.

Tessier, 39, is originally from the West Coast. He says he "came out to Winnipeg for the good weather." He was born and raised in Vancouver, where he attended St. George's School, an independent prep school for boys on the city's West Side. Tessier later earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Victoria.

"The fine arts companies weren't hiring, so I had to do something else. While in university I worked at the head office of London Drugs, doing art projects

for internal productions. I continued working there after university, doing things like developing corporate communications strategies."

He did get to do some real art work, though, painting a 30-foot-long by 15-foot-high mural of a paddlewheeler for a New Orleans-themed event the drugstore chain was staging. He worked with the company from 1992 to '95.

"I just seemed to stick around like mould."

At the age of 24, Tessier decided to travel.

"I jumped on a plane to London, went overland to Egypt and then flew to India, where I stayed for three months. Next I flew to Thailand and went from there to Indonesia before going to San Francisco, where I lived for a while, working in construction."

San Francisco is where he first encountered the rock band The Grateful Dead

and its diehard fans known as Deadheads. The Deadheads travelled wherever and whenever they could to the band's concerts.

Tessier journeyed solo around the world, but says he was never concerned about getting into difficulty. He always made friends along the way.

"You're never really alone. You always seem to meet a lot of people and find a way to do things and be with people and have fun and explore and just enjoy."

Most of his memories are good ones, with the exception of a three-day camel ride in India. His nether regions paid a high price.

"Riding that camel was a huge mistake."

While in San Francisco Tessier began to feel he needed to do something with his life, so he returned to Vancouver.

Once home, things quickly changed for the better. Tessier met his future wife, Marni Waggoner, who would eventually lead him into the world of insurance. Together they travelled for three months to India and Thailand before heading home again, where Marni had a job at Vancouver's St. Paul's Hospital.

They married, and Tessier landed various contract projects. He also worked at developing a couple of Internet companies, one marketing art work and another involving a photo-processing service.

But both were risky businesses and he didn't have any long-term success with either. In 1999 the couple had their first child, Liam, and in 2001 they decided Marni would continue working while he would be a stay-at-home dad, doing the odd contract job.

"About that time my father-in-law presented the option for us to become partners in his brokerage. In 2002 we moved to Winnipeg, where I began my insurance career."

Tessier's brother-in-law, Brian Kreitz, also part owner of Waggoner, helped him get settled into the business.

"At first I was basically watching and learning. I was quickly enrolled in the Autopac certification course, and then in a CAIB 2 immersion class. Once I had my licence, it was a go from there."

It took about six months before Tessier decided he really liked the business. He doesn't specialize, but is interested in the marketing end of things.

Waggoner Insurance launched in 1998 after Ed Waggoner stepped out from under his Ranger Insurance franchise to establish an independent, family-owned operation. The brokerage, a large-

volume general agency, has a total of 16 employees working at the original office in the Garden City Shopping Centre and at its St. James location.

"My brother-in-law Brian, my father-in-law Ed and his manager, Janice Braden, had done an amazing job making it into a strong financial and insurance-relations business before I got involved. It made it easier for me to be successful."

Laurie Friesen, assistant manager of the Garden City location, has been in the industry for 22 years, 11 of them with Waggoner.



Friesen

"Pete's a really fun boss," she says. "He takes his work seriously, but he also brings some light-heartedness to the office. Insurance can be a difficult occupation, and it's always nice to have someone to discuss issues with. He'll make time for you and listen, and he's always there for you no matter how busy he seems to be. Pete has a lot of insight to share."

IBAM CEO Dave Schioler has known Tessier for several years.

"Pete is a very intelligent guy," Schioler says. "The first time I met him I knew

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he was passionate and informed about issues. He's an idea guy who doesn't get selfish about the ownership of ideas."

Schioler also says Tessier is "absolutely hilarious."

The success of Waggoner Insurance has allowed Tessier to pursue other interests. In 2005 he and brother-in-law Kreitz set up Waggoner Industrial Products.



Schioler

"We sell hoses, fittings and accessories for fluid, air and water transfer. We even have a rear-mounted plough for moving snow. We have a separate shop, a 5,000-square-foot warehouse in an industrial park in Winnipeg. Usually we're stocked with every kind of hose imaginable."

The firm distributes its products from northwestern Ontario, across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, to the oil sands of Fort McMurray, Alta.

When he's not selling hoses or insurance, Tessier writes a hockey blog – [www.hockeybuzz.com](http://www.hockeybuzz.com).

"I'm a very passionate Vancouver Canucks fan. What I write depends on what's going on with the season, the team and developments in the NHL. It's a fun little thing, and it keeps up my interest in hockey." **iw**



## Spotlight on The People **BETTY CUFF**

### MANAGER, CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Of Danish roots, Betty falls into that rare breed of Vancouverite who was born and raised in Vancouver, coming into this world at Vancouver General Hospital on December 30th. (She says she couldn't wait for the New Year.) She grew up in West Vancouver with her three older sisters (Hanna, Lis and Mary) and younger brother Martin, and attended Hillside High School. Always an energetic and creative youngster, when she wasn't participating in volleyball, basketball or gymnastics she was helping build sets for the school drama or music productions.

After high school and a semester at Capilano College, it was off to her first job at Birks. She soon realized career opportunities were limited, and in 1976 she found her way into the insurance industry when she accepted a job as "Girl Friday" at Vancouver broker F.E. Stewart (now BFL).

In 1979, the opportunity to sign on with a brand new company came along, and Betty accepted a job as policy typist/junior underwriter with Paragon (now AXA). But when hubby's job came a-calling in 1980, she headed to Alberta. It was a few positions later, a fifteen-year stint at Sovereign and a move back to B.C. before she found her way back to her roots with AXA in 2000 as a Senior Marketing Rep. A lady of many talents, Betty has held a number of senior management positions along the way; and in her current role as Manager Corporate Communications she makes sure that the Company always puts its best foot forward, being responsible for advertising, promotion and our communication presence.

Married to soulmate Derek (33 years), she has two wonderful children: son Shane, 28, and daughter Lisa, 27. With weekend lacrosse games behind them and the kids out of the house, Derek and Betty can often be found at the golf course, hiking or cycling some of the great treks around Port Coquitlam or just kicking back and working in their garden.

As one of AXA's "originals", Betty's great sense of humour and infectious laughter are all part of the fabric of a Company that believes finding solutions comes from doing "the right thing."



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### VITAL STATS

- The Tessiers now have two boys – Liam, 11, and Jay, 6.
- The family often returns to B.C. to visit Pete's family. His mother Frances, who is retired, lives in the Gulf Islands. In summer they also spend time at the Waggoner family cottage on Lake Winnipeg.
- They live in an older, two-storey home in the River Heights section of Winnipeg. "People call it Renovation Heights."
- Tessier collects Grateful Dead music. "I also listen to a band called Phish."
- He tries to answer e-mails promptly, sometimes by phone. "I think it's better when people hear your voice."
- He also likes football, soccer and golf. "I'm an avid golfer who can never find the time."
- Tessier considers himself easygoing, with few dislikes. "But it really bothers me when people use their cellphones when driving. That needs to be outlawed." **iw**