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Not done dealing: Campbell's take different routes to similar goals



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Different paths have brought Brian and Mary Campbell success.

Mary and Brian Campbell will be honored with lifetime achievement awards on March 10 at the annual mergers and acquisitions awards event co-hosted by Crain's Detroit Business and the **Association for Corporate Growth**.

For decades, the spouses have followed separate paths for investing in and growing companies, one in tiny startups, the other in well-established industrial manufacturers. Neither shows any sign of letting their achievement awards cap their careers.

Mary Campbell spent the first five years of her career as a high school English teacher in Connecticut, beginning in 1967. She then moved to Chicago, answered an ad looking for trainees at the investment banking firm of **duPont Glore Forgan Inc.**, where she met Brian, and the rest, as they say, is history.

In 1987, Mary Campbell, Tom Porter and Hayden Harris founded Ann Arbor-based **EDF Ventures**, now the state's oldest venture capital firm. Porter and Harris have since retired.

EDF has invested in 70 early-stage technology companies over the years, nurturing budding entrepreneurs as they attempt to turn science projects into profits. The failure rate is high, but so, too, are the payoffs from companies whose products eventually intersect with market demand and either go public or are sold.

Recent home runs, in partnership with other VC firms such as Ann Arbor-based **Arboretum Ventures**, include the sale of **Greenplum Inc.** for at least \$300 million, of **HandyLab Inc.** for \$275 million and of **HealthMedia Inc.** and **Accuri Cytometers Inc.** for upwards of \$200 million each. Over the years, five portfolio companies went public.

Brian Campbell is at the other end of the investing spectrum, buying well-established, well-run manufacturing firms and rolling them into large companies. In the 1980s, while working for **Masco Corp.**, he built a portfolio of companies into Masco-affiliated **TriMas Corp.**, which went public on the **New York Stock Exchange** in 1989. In the 1990s, the company flourished by purchasing numerous small and midsize companies that were leaders in their market niches.

After Masco subsidiary **MascoTech Inc.** bought up outstanding TriMas shares in a \$1.2 billion deal in 1998, he joined **Kaydon Corp.** (NYSE: KDN) as president and CEO, leading its growth through acquisitions until he retired in 2007.

Brian, 70, and Mary, 66, plan to be active in the future -- Mary in more ways than one. A veteran of 18 marathons, she is training for the Boston Marathon in April and the Prague Marathon in May.

Not eager for days filled with talking about what he calls "stats" with other retirees -- golf scores, cholesterol counts and PSA numbers -- Brian Campbell has formed **Campbell Industries Inc.** to put together another portfolio of industrial companies.

"I'm still here. I'm still taking nourishment," he said. "I've been working since I was 12 years old, and it's become ingrained in my being. I love getting up at 6 a.m. and getting dressed and going to work."

Operating out of a house on Main Street near downtown Ann Arbor, next door to the house occupied by EDF, Brian Campbell said he is doing due diligence on two acquisitions and hopes to complete at least one by the fall.

"We will not be in a hurry. A deal is like a city bus. If you miss one, two blocks away there's another bus coming," he said.

He said he won't raise a fund but has commitments from two investors in Chicago and is looking to buy well-run companies with strong management teams and annual revenue between \$40 million and \$80 million. "If you give me 24 hours notice, I can write you a check for \$74 million."

EDF has raised three funds over the years, of \$25 million, \$80 million and \$60 million. Mary Campbell says she will likely raise another fund next year, a smaller fund of \$25 million or so from wealthy individuals instead of a larger fund favored by institutional investors.

"I don't ever not want to do this. There's no better work on the planet," she said.

While their investment styles have differed, friends and colleagues say they share a number of traits -- they are described as brilliant, wickedly funny, unable to suffer fools, loyal and having a knack for mentoring.

"I wouldn't have had the career I had without Brian," said Gerry Boylan, managing director at **Long Point Capital LLC**, a private equity firm in Royal Oak. "I learned more from him in the seven years I worked with him than in any other period from anybody."

In 1981, Boylan was four months into an entry-level job at Masco Corp., working the phone in the market research department to make calls, often hundreds of them, to find out as much as possible about possible acquisition targets.

One day he was told to make a presentation on the company plane to President Richard Manoogian and Brian Campbell, who had joined Masco as vice president of business development in 1974. Boylan was standing in the hangar when Campbell walked up and asked who he was. Boylan told he was the presenter.

"Brian asked: 'Are you scared?'"

""Yes.'"

" 'You ought to be. You understand this is make or break for you, don't you?'"

It was a joke, sort of.

They got on the plane, Boylan made the presentation and three weeks later Campbell offered a promotion.

"He was an incredible role model," Boylan said. "He taught me that often the best deals are the deals you don't do. ... Look at his career, and he's created value for investors at every stage."

Sam Valenti III, CEO and president of Bloomfield Hills-based **Valenti Capital LLC**, was a vice president at Masco when Campbell joined the company.

"He had a work ethic that was freakish. He's a force of nature," said Valenti. "He'd keep track of acquisition prospects for years. Everyone else wants deals that are fast, but he'd wait and wait. He'd want to get a company at the right price. He'd just wear them down."

Tom Kinnear, executive director of the **Zell Lurie Institute of Entrepreneurial Studies** at the **University of Michigan's Ross School of Business**, had Mary as an MBA student in 1978-79. "She was the crème de la crème of all the students we've ever had. Any good professor knows you learn from your students, and I've learned from her," he said.

Mary Campbell has taught at the business school as an adjunct professor and serves as an adviser for the \$5.5 million student run **Wolverine Venture Fund**, which invests in early-stage companies.

Michael Godwin and Jason Townsend are former directors of the fund, and last year, with Mary's support, founded **Resonant Venture Partners**, a small VC firm that has made two investments. She invested personally in their fund and offered them space in the EDF headquarters.

Godwin said woe be to any student who came to a meeting with Mary without being prepared.

"She's known for having a fierce, tough character, but if you hang in there long enough, you see her compassionate side. It's safe to say, Resonant would not be here today without Mary. When she's in your camp, she'll go to the wall for you," Townsend said.

Jennifer Baird began her career as an intern at EDF more than 20 years ago. She went on to co-found Accuri Cytometers. She is now CEO of Ann Arbor-based **Accio Energy Inc.**, a fledgling alternate energy company in Ann Arbor. Mary has personally invested in Accio and is its board chairman.

"When I left Accuri last year, I spent a lot of time with Mary exploring what I wanted to do. She made me think and rethink what I was going to do going forward," said Baird. "Mary's perspective is razor sharp. She can see to the root of a problem. She's willing to listen to you, and that helps her be a great mentor."

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