

## Museum to display award given to ‘the Great Wildcatter’ Benedum

NOV 18, 2020  
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Oil and Gas Museum President Paul Hoblitzell, center, holds the Pioneer Award from the American Association of Petroleum Landmen that was posthumously presented to Michael Late Benedum, known as the Great Wildcatter. The Michael Late Benedum Chapter Tuesday gave the award to the Oil and Gas museum to be displayed at the Michael Late Benedum exhibit at the Oil and Gas Museum. From left, Stacy Tichy and Daniel Cooper, representatives of the Michael Late Benedum Chapter. (Photo by Jess Mancini)

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**PARKERSBURG** – The Oil and Gas Museum has been given an award posthumously presented to a famous wildcatter.

The American Association of Petroleum Landmen presented its Pioneer Award to Michael Late Benedum, a businessman who made his fortune in oil and gas. Benedum, who created the Benedum Foundation, was born in Bridgeport, W.Va., and died in 1959 in Pittsburgh.

The Michael Late Benedum Chapter of the American Association of Petroleum Landmen decided to give the 2019-2020 Pioneer Award to the museum where it can be on display, chapter representative Daniel Cooper, a registered professional landman, said.

The award will be on display at the Michael Late Benedum exhibit at the Oil and Gas Museum, museum President Paul Hoblitzell said.

Benedum, known as the Great Wildcatter, rose from humble beginnings. Among the companies he created and developed in the early 20th Century were the Transcontinental Oil Co., the Plymouth Oil Co., Hiawatha Oil and Gas Co., Big Lake Oilfield and Bentex Oil Corp. He was in Fortune Magazine's list of the wealthiest Americans.

*"He made all his money in the oil and gas business. Pretty much all over the world,"* Hoblitzell said.

In 1944, he and his wife, Sarah, created the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, named after their only child who died in 1918 at the age of 20. The foundation has since donated hundreds of millions of dollars to organizations and causes.

Benedum had a significant impact on oil and gas development in the region and, through the foundation, continues to improve the lives of residents in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and beyond, Hoblitzell said.

The Michael Late Benedum display was created in the days when the Oil and Gas Museum was established in the early 1990s, Hoblitzell said.

*"They've been good to us over the years,"* he said.

The museum also has started a fund drive to replace windows and is soliciting donations of \$1,000 per window, Hoblitzell said.