

# Sherry Lees speaks at Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference



Susan Peterson

The Advancing Women in Agriculture conference is held twice annually, once in eastern Canada and again in western Canada, attended by women working in agriculture and agribusinesses. The intent of the conference is to empower both in the areas of hiring, retaining and advancing women in the agricultural industry. To date, it has been attended by around 3000 women and over 300 agribusinesses.

Sherry Lees, daughter of Herb and Marian Ransome of Crystal City, was a guest speaker at the conference held in Niagara Falls on October 30 and 31st. She is the Vice President of Finance at Parrish & Heimbecker Ltd. in Winnipeg and was recommended to the conference organizers by a colleague. Four hundred and thirty women were in attendance. Others on the podium during the conference included Dr. Marlo Shapiro and Debbie

Travis.

Sherry's guest speaker profile read: "From a small town farming community (Crystal City) to the boardrooms of large Agricultural businesses, this working mom will share what she's learned about being a female working in Ag over the past 25 years.

"She is a seasoned financial professional who grew up on a family farm in Southern Manitoba, working hands-on as many farm families do. A Chartered Professional Accountant and Chartered Accountant, she is someone who has worked through the ranks over the last 25 years as an Auditor, a Financial Analyst, a Divisional Controller, a Corporate Controller, a Corporate Treasurer and today is the Vice President of Finance for Parrish & Heimbecker based in Winnipeg, MB.

"Ms. Lees has learned as much about leadership from raising two fantastically different children as she has in the meeting

rooms and boardrooms of the Agricultural companies she has helped to lead."

Sherry's co-worker Theresa Bolton (Corporate Director of Recruiting, Parrish & Heimbecker), also attended the conference. When asked what Sherry had chosen as a topic. She replied: "Leadership Lessons Learned. Sherry gave an engaging speech about her career journey from being raised on farm (using the example of roguing fields under the direction of her father who instilled a strong work ethic), to having a family of her own and making decisions in her career in a way in which she balanced being a wife, mother and professional. Her speech also focused on finding the confidence within you as a woman in the workplace and not being shy about your strengths."

Theresa also felt the speech was particularly inspiring to the younger women in the audience.

"Sherry's story is an example to them of what can be accomplished if you put your mind to it, in combination with a strong work ethic and self-confidence," she said.

As Sherry was speaking, Theresa noticed many of the more seasoned women in the audience related to her speech by nodding their heads in agreement. "She did an amazing job. Many people approached her following her presentation and the next day to tell her how much they got out of it. There are lots of things circulating on social media (twitter, LinkedIn) about her inspiring presentation."

"Talk the talk... walk the walk." Clearly this defines Sherry. It takes tremendous courage to speak in front of large crowds, but she set the example of drawing on her experience and self confidence to get it done, empowering those around her as she did so.

AdvancingWomen  
Agriculture Conference

Q&A  
LISTEN  
LEARN  
NETWORK  
GROW

Sherry Lees  
Vice President, Finance,  
Parrish & Heimbecker, Ltd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Q. What's the first thing you do after getting out of bed?

A. After stepping over my two golden retrievers and feeding them I head to my home gym for a workout.

Q. What is the one thing you always make time for each day?

A. It's a struggle to say I do this every day but I try to make time for some quiet time for myself. Whether it's reading a book or working in my garden, something that keeps me balanced is having some time to myself everyday.

Q. Who had the biggest impact on the person you have become?

A. Without a question, this is my Dad. He is one of the hardest working people I've met and while he is hard working, caring and has a strong morale compass, he is also one of the funniest and good natured people around. He's taught me the value of working hard but also not taking everything too seriously.

Q. If you could call up anyone in the world and have a one hour conversation, who would you call?

A. That's easy. It would be my grandmother. She was taken from us too soon and was one of my favorite people in the world. After almost 25 years I still miss her and think of her often.

Q. List one thing on your "bucket list" that you still need to do.

A. Tuscany!

Q. What's the last great book you read or are currently reading?

A. I wish I could put down some pithy business book that would imply I'm scholarly but growing up on *Nancy Drew* I still gravitate to good mystery books. My two favorite authors at the moment are David Baldacci and Lee Child. I'm excited to read the new *Jack Reacher* novel by Lee Child after binge-reading all his books last year.

IMAGES COURTESY ADVANCING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

Sherry Lees (Ransome) grew up in Crystal City, graduating from TGCI in 1988. She then attended the University of Manitoba, receiving her Bachelor of Commerce Degree. She articulated with the accounting firm of Price Waterhouse from 1992-1995, at which time she earned her Chartered Accountant Designation.

In 1995, she became a part of the agricultural industry, taking the position of Chief Financial Analyst with United Grain Growers (Agricore United). In 2000, she accepted a new role with Agricore United as Controller, Crop and Production Services Division, and in 2007, became Corporate Treasurer of AU. When AU and SaskPool combined to form Viterra in 2009 and moved their corporate office to Regina, Sherry opted to stay in Manitoba where she and her husband Brian were raising their children. She took a 1-year break from the ag industry, accepting the position of VP Finance with the Interlake Regional Health Authority.

In 2010, the agricultural industry beckoned her again, and she came to Parrish & Heimbecker as their Corporate Controller, moving up to Vice President, Finance this past spring.

**In agriculture, roguing refers to the act of identifying and removing plants with undesirable characteristics from agricultural fields. Rogues are removed from the fields to preserve the quality of the crop being grown. In other words: weeding!**

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