

# Oilman lauded for his giving

**Sam Gary realized luck helped him and worked to give others a chance.**

By Mark Jaffe *The Denver Post*

Sam Gary started wildcatting in the 1960s and promptly drilled 39 dry holes. The 40th hole changed everything and was the seed for the Piton Foundation.

Since 1976, Denver-based Piton has supported a host of education and community programs with \$56 million, according to the foundation.

Gary, now 83, is slated to be recognized today by the Council on Foundations for his efforts to turn oil and gas money into good work.

The council, which represents 2,000 foundations, will give Gary its Board Chair's Award.

In 1967, Gary discovered the Bell Creek Field in eastern Montana. More than 400 wells were drilled in that field.

Nine years later, Gary created the Pi-

ton Foundation with the goal of providing opportunities for children and their families to move from poverty and dependence to self-reliance.

"After Bell Creek I started thinking about luck," Gary said in a statement. "The creation of Piton caused me to see the world through eyes of people who really didn't have a chance."

The foundation is supported primarily by contributions from the Gary-Williams Energy Corp. and is considered the community investment division of the oil company.

Among programs Piton has backed:

- Medical Home — a project to improve health care for children in the low-income Medicaid program.

- The Denver Preschool Program, which serves 6,000 children.

- An outreach program to help low-income working families apply for federal tax credits. About 270,000 Colorado families receive \$470 million in earned-income tax refunds.

"A dry hole is an event — not a woe-is-me event, but a what-did-I-learn event," Gary said. "You try to be aware good things can happen. All that's true in philanthropy."

Gary receives his award today at the council's annual conference, at the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center.



**Sam Gary** founded the Piton Foundation to aid those living

in poverty.