



March 2003

Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia

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SCAN

# Valedictory Address

## 2002 Centennial Gold Medalist, Heather Jackson

Good evening fellow graduates, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. As one of the 50 Nova Scotia graduates of the 2002 Uniform Evaluation (UFE), I would like to welcome you here tonight in the celebration of this significant achievement in our lives. Being successful in passing the UFE exam is an accomplishment that took hard work, dedication, and the support of many different people.

The UFE process itself may seem straightforward to most people at first glance – begin work with an accounting firm, go through two years of courses at ASCA, write a three day exam in the fall of the second year, and get the marks back two short months later. For many of the parents, other family members, and friends of graduates here tonight, this may have been the impression you had over the past two years. After all, we had taken difficult courses before. We had written big exams before. What could be so different about the UFE? Wasn't it just another exam, only a bit longer?

We had done well on exams before, so why were we so worried about this one? However simple the UFE may have seemed on the surface, let me tell you that the experience of going through it was quite different.

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of the UFE experience or those who may simply wish to remember, I'll walk you through the process tonight. For many of us graduates, the knowledge that we would be starting the CA program began in the fall of our senior year of university when the accounting firms began hiring. From the moment we were hired, not only did we have to worry about passing our university exams, we also had to ensure that we had the courses required by ASCA for admittance into the "official" CA program. I was working towards a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing when I decided that I wanted to work towards my designation. Once I

received notice that my application to an accounting firm was successful, I proceeded to look at ASCA's list of exemptions for my university and noted that I had no less than eight courses to complete in the nine months before I started work the following September. The only thing I could think of was, 'what had I gotten myself into?' Somehow I managed to make it through four of these exemptions during my final term at St. F. X. University, and spent my graduation summer at ASCA earning the rest, and meeting many other candidates who were in the same situation.

However, once all of these exemptions are finally out of the way, ASCA treats its students to Tax 1, its first official

correspondence course of the CA program. Employment deductions, personal tax credits, and marginal tax rates were only some of the rules we had to learn to survive this course. Our reward for passing Tax 1 was the opportunity to enrol in three in-class courses during the following summer. Many of the graduates here left their families and friends to live in the St.

Mary's University residence, doing battle with recycled food during the day and tiny rodents during the night. Although you can't beat a 9 to 4, jeans and shirts work week with Tim Horton's only a one minute walk away, no amount of coffee and donuts seemed to help in learning about the workings of paid-up capital in Tax II, to trying to hit the marking key in MAPAC, or to cracking the code of accounting for hedges in AFA II.

But, we all made it through the summer and upon returning to work, we spent our time trying to complete ASCA's final requirement to become a UFE writer – the Advanced Audit course. This absolutely fascinating course lasted only a short six months, and was comprised of weekly assignments and two long exams that we had to prepare for in between our own work assignments. But, on successful



Heather Jackson, 2002 Centennial Gold Medalist, delivers an inspiring speech to her fellow CA graduates.

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completion of this course, we were official UFE candidates and were finally enrolled in ASCA's UFE preparation course for the first three weeks of our "UFE summer".

After three weeks of practicing case after case in UFE prep, we were on our own to study until it was time to write the exam. Frustrations were high at many points during the summer when days didn't seem to be going well – the days when we couldn't hit the marking key, or when we couldn't bring ourselves to do another practice case. Some of us took our frustrations out on the golf course, but for someone like me who can't relax when I'm searching for a little golf ball among huge trees, I just ended up dreaming about the exam. I know that others here too have had the same dreams – the one where you can't get to the exam on time, or the one where you have no idea what the question is asking of you. No matter what though, we still knew that in the big picture, this was only an exam, and solid preparation

should get us through. Some of us chose to do this preparation in groups, while others found it best just to work at it alone. Whatever studying choices we made during the summer, our time was up on October 1st, and it was finally our opportunity to write the infamous UFE.

Unlike in prior years, the 2002 UFE consisted of only three days of writing rather than four, which many prior writers were quick to joke that this year's UFE would be easier because of that. However, three days of nerves, stress, and sore writing hands were before us, and nothing seemed easy.

We each have our own memories of the events of those three days, and I would like to share a few of mine with you tonight. The first was the Armdale rotary, which we had to cross to reach the Halifax writing centre. For those like me who hadn't experienced the rotary before, it appeared to be one large, circular mess of cars with no apparent

order that I would do anything to avoid. So I did. I spent extra time in the morning travelling through the Clayton Park area of Halifax to ensure I avoided the rotary. It may have meant leaving an hour earlier, but it assured me that I would arrive safely.

Another fond memory was the alarm that went off in the writing centre on day three. Luckily for us, Soula was quick to take care of the interruption, and only two valuable minutes of concentration were lost. Finally, there was the anxiety of trying to find all the hidden tax marks in the exam questions so that we could put Jim MacGowan's teachings to good use. These were marks that we were sure would be there. Marks that we had predicted would be there.

But, as we found out, no one can predict the UFE. It is unpredictable. It is hard. It is stressful. It puts you up against more than 2,500 other people across Canada who have had similar educational and work experiences, and only 70% of the candidates pass. And that's why being successful in

writing the UFE is such an accomplishment. It is an accomplishment that couldn't have been completed without the support of family, friends, colleagues, and teachers, and I would like to thank each group on behalf of my fellow graduates and myself.

To our families and friends, you have supported us from a time long before we were involved in this process, and this support has not faltered. Although there may have been times over the past few years when you haven't quite understood what we were doing with all this UFE business, or even what U.F.E stood for, I hope that I've shed some light tonight on what was going on and why we were the way we were. Thank you for your patience and your understanding. To my own parents and to James, I thank you for everything you've done for me. It's greatly appreciated.

To our colleagues, thank you for your support. Having people who have already

gone through this process sharing their experiences and advice was a great benefit to all of us. My firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers here in Halifax, has a great number of people who were willing to help its writers through all stages of the process. I know that many of the writers had UFE coaches to help them through the summer. My personal thanks (and my apologies) go out to my coach, Geoff Gatien, who had the not-so-glamorous job of dealing with my changing stress levels and reviewing my practice exams during the summer. For those of you who know what somebody's first attempt at writing the four-hour comp looks like, I think you can imagine what Geoff and the other coaches went through this summer.

Finally, to our teachers, professors, and instructors over the years, some of whom are in attendance tonight, thank you for passing on your knowledge, your experience, and your advice, and thank you for the confidence you gave us.

So, with the knowledge received on Friday the 13th of December that we had passed the UFE and with obtaining our 30 months of experience, we are Chartered Accountants, with all the opportunities, challenges, and obligations that go with that title. We will use the skills we have developed over the past few years, and will build on these skills through our work experiences to maintain the standards of the profession and continue to uphold the reputation of the CA. The 50 graduates here tonight welcome these opportunities and are prepared to accept the challenges and the obligations of this profession.

We will all use our CA designation to follow different paths in the future. Some of us will continue with public practice, some will enter industry, educational fields, or perhaps even start our own businesses. I offer my sincerest congratulations to my fellow graduates, and I wish you the best of luck in the future. Thank you to everybody for being here tonight, and enjoy the rest of your evening.



## 2002 Graduates

**Front Row; left to right:** Rodney Belliveau; Joel Forbes; Jason Hale; Chris Arsenault; Troy MacLaughlin; Peter Wong.

**Second Row; left to right:** Monita Taylor; Jan Bremner; Laura Mountain; Kimberley Livingston; Carrie Jones; Michelle Garland; Anne-Marie Lynch; Shannon Black; Shelley Aucoin; Jennifer Sheeran.

**Third Row; left to right:** Stacey Stone; Tara Brooks; Heather Jackson; April Greencorn; Helena Lotherington; Janet MacQuarrie; Leonard Shaw; Jeffrey LeGrow; Tracey Newman; John Martin; Tanya Boudreau; Sophie Boudreau; Janice Toner; Michelle Overmars; Suzanne Gould; Pam Burgess.

**Top Row; left to right:** Rob Cosman; Jeffrey MacBeath; Dirk Teunissen; Jason Clark; Michael MacPhee; Michael Hunter; Chris MacPherson; Ryan Pickup; Matthew Sullivan; Michael Zwicker; Gerry Hobson; Jason Wong.

**Missing from photo:** Rebecca Doyle; Darryl Paul; Lisa Roberts; Jeremy Sanford; Adam Sheparsi; Tammy Swim.

## David Hope Honour Roll

Shelley Lynn Aucoin  
Grant Thornton LLP, Dartmouth

Robert Michael Cosman  
KPMG LLP, Halifax

Rachel Michelle Garland  
Grant Thornton LLP, Sydney

Jason Neil Hale  
WBLI Chartered Accountants, Bedford

Heather Mary Jackson  
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Halifax

Jeffrey Craig LeGrow  
WBLI Chartered Accountants, Bedford

Anne-Marie Lynch  
Grant Thornton LLP, Halifax

Jeffrey Reid MacBeath  
KPMG LLP, Halifax

Janet LeeAnn MacQuarrie  
Steele, Williams & Rawding, New Glasgow

Laura Jean Mountain  
Grant Thornton LLP, Truro

Tracey Catherine Newman  
Lyle Tilley Davidson, Halifax

Ryan Douglas Pickup  
Grant Thornton LLP, Halifax

Matthew Lloyd Sullivan  
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Truro

Monita Rochelle Taylor  
Dockrill Horwich Rossiter, Bedford

Dirk Jan Teunissen  
KPMG LLP, Halifax

Jason Jin-Chuan Wong  
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Halifax

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#### ICANS Mission Statement

"To protect and serve the public and our members by providing exceptional services and resources within a well-regulated profession, and enable Chartered Accountants in Nova Scotia to be the obvious choice for financial management, assurance and other specialized services."  
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