

▼ **DOW** -153.68
16,168.03

▼ **NASDAQ** -30.82
4,227.30

▼ **S&P** -13.72
1,845.73

MONEY



MAKING A LIVING



KIM WEIMER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lisa Bergson became the leader of what is now MEECO Inc. after the death of her father in 1985.

IN HER FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

By **CRISSA SHOEMAKER DEBREE**
STAFF WRITER

Lisa Bergson never intended to take over the business her father founded.

A journalist by training, Bergson knew little about manufacturing when she came to lead MEECO Inc., the Warrington-based manufacturer of trace analyzers for the gas, chemicals and semiconductor industries.



Three decades later, however, MEECO — founded in 1948 as the Manufacturers Engineering and Equipment Co. — and its sister company, Tiger Optics, have become some of the fastest growing companies in the region.

"I like the fact that our roots are manufacturing (and) engineering," said Bergson, 63. "This is really fundamental to what I fell in love with in the business, making things here, and the dignity and nobility of working with your hands."

Bergson's father, Harvard-trained physicist Gustav Bergson, founded the company in a Hatboro garage in 1948 to develop moisture analyzers using electrolytic technology under an agreement with DuPont.

The oil and gas industries were big

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customers, and the eccentric Bergson, who favored Hickey Freeman suits, homburg hats and cigars, became well-known at oil fields and the annual rodeo.

When Bergson fell ill in 1983, his only child thought her involvement in the company would only be temporary.

"I felt like I had to do it," said Lisa Bergson, whose mother died when she was young. "He had been a single father when there weren't that many. I couldn't turn my back on him. This business was his life."

Gustav Bergson never recovered from his illness, and died in 1985. Lisa Bergson held on to the company, fighting against critics who believed a woman — let alone one without an engineering background — could keep the company afloat.

Taking over the business was difficult, Lisa Bergson said. Her father was so fearful of competition that he didn't

document anything. Engineers had to recreate all his work.

MEECO grew under Lisa Bergson's leadership. She spearheaded the shift from analog analyzers to digital, and the company created the first solar-based analyzer on the market.

Lisa Bergson changed the name of the company to MEECO after realizing that customers preferred the company's acronym to its full name.

"I found a lot of our market was down south, and they called it MEECO," she said. "They called our analyzers MEECO. When they wanted one of our devices, they wouldn't say, 'Get me a moisture analyzer,' they'd say, 'Get me a MEECO.'"

In 1993, MEECO licensed technology from a Princeton University professor and began making laser-based gas analyzers under its subsidiary, Tiger Optics, which was spun out into its own company in 2001. Tiger Optics has been so successful, it's on Inc. Magazine's list of fastest-growing companies in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The success makes Lisa Bergson proud. She hopes her father would be, too.

"I think he'd be very happy," she said. "He'd be very surprised."

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