

Reflections of Donald H. Daigle

I have only fond memories of LSU – a large number of them. I also feel a tremendous gratitude for what my time there provided me.

My earliest memories of LSU go back to my elementary and high school days, and the time I spent on campus participating in various 4-H Club activities such as livestock shows and statewide competitions. When approaching high school graduation, there was never a question about which university I would attend. Somewhere along the way it became obvious to me that I would follow the footsteps of my two older brothers and attend LSU. I can remember during my elementary school days our family driving my oldest brother back to LSU after weekends at home. The route took us past the Exxon Refinery. On those trips I decided that one day I wanted to become an engineer and work in that refinery, even though at the time I had no clue as to what an engineer was or what one would do in a refinery. Even upon graduation from high school in a small town in Southwest Louisiana, I had, at

best, a vague idea of what was involved in becoming a chemical engineer and what one really did.

There I was – young, enthusiastic, ambitious and confident; but academically rather poorly prepared since my high school provided little in the way of advanced math, physics or chemistry. That was the raw material and the challenge I presented to LSU and specifically to the College of Engineering. They wasted no time in going to work and doing a job on me.

The basic courses during the first two years closed the gap and provided me with a sound foundation in math and the basic sciences, as well as the very important humanities and social sciences.

Then came the core engineering curriculum. I gained immensely from the course work, but much more importantly from the faculty with whom I was given the opportunity to know and interact. These people were true professionals and shared not only their technical knowledge, but their

experiences, values, beliefs and outlooks on life. I will forever have a great deal of respect for, and gratitude to, men like Drs. Coates, Pressburg, Greenberg, Keller, Groves, Cordiner and the many other professors who shared a bit of their lives with me.

There was also the opportunity to develop and hone interpersonal, social and leadership skills through a number of varied campus activities. One particularly rewarding and valuable experience was my involvement in the forming of a colony of a social fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon. We formed a small colony during my sophomore year which was installed as a chapter a year later. It was then that I was involved in purchasing my first house – a fraternity house. By my senior year, the chapter was sixty strong and thriving. Through my role as president I was afforded the invaluable opportunity to interact very closely with, and learn from, a number of university officials and local businessmen.

As I reflect on my experiences at LSU, it is clear to me that the University and the College of Engineering added significant value to the raw material with which they were presented in my case. They turned out a product with sound and solid technical fundamentals, one skilled in problem-solving and analytical thinking, and one well grounded in the humanities and social sciences. I also came away with a sound appreciation for the value of teamwork and interpersonal relations, and a firm belief that each person has something unique to contribute, and that there is great value in providing an environment that encourages those different contributions. My various experiences on campus also significantly enhanced my leadership and interpersonal skills and my ability to balance various competing demands for my attention and time. Most importantly though, in my opinion, my university

experiences instilled in me a desire for, and an understanding of, the value of the pursuit of lifelong learning – one must always be working to improve and to learn more about a great variety of subjects.

As it turned out, the university provided me with the requisites to be employed by one of the greatest companies in the world, Exxon. It also enabled me to not only fulfill my childhood dream of becoming an engineer and working in the Baton Rouge Refinery, but I was able to manage it for five years before moving on to even broader endeavors. I indeed feel that I am fortunate to have been a part of the LSU student body and am truly honored at being inducted into the Engineering Hall of Distinction.