

Reflections of Harry J. Longwell

When I think about my important career milestones, my four years at Louisiana State University rise to the top of the list. They represent an important transition time. Norma and I were married, we started our family, and I obtained an excellent, all-around engineering education which enabled me to work and progress with a great company.

Having survived the freshman screening process, I was ready for College of Engineering and, particularly, the Department of Petroleum Engineering. I entered challenging, but not threatening, environment that stressed interpersonal skills and developed thought processes necessary for expeditiously solving business and technical problems.

In the early 1960s, the Petroleum Engineering Department was relatively small in size, but large in opportunity. Small classes and only three professors created an intense learning environment and the opportunity for as much one-on-one interaction as you could handle. Benny Craft, Murray Hawkins and Bill Holden each had a special area of teaching expertise,

but their common denominator was a devoted interest in their students, an interest which inspired confidence in the student. These three men were proponents of tough academic standards along with a “can do, get it done” attitude.

This, coupled with their sensitivity to people, created an environment underscored by a high degree of teamwork and commitment, an overall environment very similar to that found in the petroleum industry. Consequently, after graduation, I was well prepared to meet Exxon’s expectations. This learning experience, which helped to develop my management skills, has remained with me throughout my career.

My first mentor at Exxon, then Humble Oil and Refining Company, was Roy “Phatz” Sullins. Phatz also had a strong relationship with the LSU Petroleum Engineering Department and his organization’s work environment reflected similar philosophies and work practices. In fact, after retiring from Exxon, Phatz Sullins joined LSU’s Petroleum Engineering Department and made a strong contribution in the area of

drilling technology. So strong, in fact, that the Well Control was named for Phatz in memoriam.

I credit LSU in general, and the Petroleum Engineering Department in particular, for providing a solid foundation on which I could build a great deal of my career success. Because of LSU's fine technical education and the excellent reputation in the petroleum industry which its graduates have produced, I was recruited by one of the best companies in the world, Exxon. I have never forgotten that, and my strong allegiance to the university and the department continues. Due to all the opportunities that my education at LSU has given me, I am committed to work toward continued excellence for the university. Two of my sons are petroleum engineering graduates of LSU. What better recommendation could I give?

A few years ago, Zaki Bassiouni invited me to join an Industry Advisory Committee for the department, which was facing declining enrolments and state funding difficulties. The two years I spent working closely with Zaki, Ted Bourgoyne and other faculty and staff members were personally very rewarding. More importantly, I saw that the educational principles which Craft, Hawkins, and Holden laid down in the 1950s and 1960s continued today.

I also have had the pleasure of working closely with the Alumni Association in the last few years and have gained considerable insight into the university and its direction under Chancellors Wharton and Davis. Based on these past and current experiences and associations, I strongly endorse the statement, "LSU – A Great University."

In my position with Exxon Company, International, I travel all over the world and deal with members of industry and government officials. Some of these individuals are LSU

engineering graduates. You can usually spot them by their spirit, commitment, and fervor for the task at hand. I am proud to be among them and am honored at being inducted into the Engineering Hall of Distinction.