

Reflections of William A. Callegari

I left the small town of Cottonport in 1959, a shy, naïve young man with high hopes for the future. I was achieving a childhood dream, to attend LSU. I was initially made aware of LSU as a child by an uncle, who brought LSU mementos to me when he visited.

My high school was small in comparison with those of many students at LSU from larger cities. However, my years at St. Mary's Elementary and Cottonport High School, with solid fundamentals in English, math and sciences, provided excellent preparation for success during my years at LSU and beyond.

I knew that I wanted to major in engineering and chose agricultural engineering, I selected this program due to the availability of scholarships and the influence of Professor Mansel Mayeux, who was to become my mentor at LSU and in future years. He took me under his wing and helped to guide me in the right direction. Others who were also very influential in my LSU years were: the Department Head, Professor Harold Barr, and Prof. Wiley Poole, who supervised much of my work

activities at LSU. Also Professors Nick Carter, Finis Wratten, Harry Braud and more recently Professors Lalit Verma and Billy Cochran have been very helpful to me. These gentlemen taught me what engineering was all about and what it meant to be a "professional." I must also mention Mrs. Maude Timms, the department secretary, who looked after all of the students like a "mother hen."

I think fondly of my participation as a member of the LSU track team as a freshman under Coach Al Moreau. It was here that I met Jay Harvey, also an engineering student, who later coerced me into running for a student government office and has remained a lifelong friend. During my freshman year I lived in North Stadium. I remember the debates about politics, particularly the Earl Long dynasty, and the excitement and noise around the stadium on football weekends.

The Ag Engineering Department provided jobs throughout my four years at LSU. I worked at many different jobs including: painting almost everything that didn't move (and a

few things that did); shucking and shelling corn for experiments; taking and developing photographs for the Department; and conducting experiments and performing minor design projects. I worked 20 to 40 hours per week and learned a great deal about perseverance and the importance of doing things right. I supplemented this job during the summers and between semesters with other employment, such as service station attendant and construction worker. These experiences illustrated the importance of obtaining a degree and helped to establish more definitive goals for the future. These experiences also demonstrated that I could adapt to new and sometimes difficult situations and helped to set the stage for development of my entrepreneurial abilities.

I married my high school sweetheart, Ann Roy, while at LSU. It was her love, and moral and financial support, that encouraged and enabled me to graduate and to achieve success in the business world. She held down a full time job, first at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital, and later at the LSU infirmary, which provided the primary financial support during our time at LSU. Our first son was born a year and a half later and was quickly incorporated into our LSU world. One of the first things he learned was to “growl like a tiger.” I remember fondly the times when he was nestled in one arm and I balanced a book in the other, studying, while Ann prepared dinner or performed other necessary duties. These were great times for us, which served as the basis for a solid family structure for our children in the future.

Our social life consisted of such things as picnics on the river with Gene and Eulane Baker, crawfish boils and cookouts with neighbors. However, our primary social activity consisted of the LSU football games. We attended every home game and

have fond memories of those exciting weekends. I bleed purple and gold, and still get a thrill when the band marches out on the field for the pre-game show. These games still provide a place to meet with old LSU friends such as Freddy Cardwell and Waddell Morvant, whom I have known since high school.

ROTC was mandatory in 1959, and I served in the Air Force ROTC for two years. I was a member of the Arnold Air Society and was selected as Wing Sergeant Major by Major Simon in my sophomore year, the highest possible rank for a two-year cadet. This was a great experience and provided discipline and leadership training which was invaluable in my personal development.

Other highlights of my LSU engineering experience were: induction into Tau Beta Pi and Alpha Zeta; design and construction of an air cushion vehicle for an Engineering Day project; and running for a College of Engineering office.

I treasure my years at LSU, which is truly a great University. I am honored to have been selected to the Engineering Hall of Distinction. I have appreciated the opportunity to serve on several committees serving LSU and feel particularly honored to serve on the Dean’s Advisory Board. Receiving this award is particularly gratifying, and I thank my family and friends who have been instrumental in my life.