

# *Reflections of Edmond J. Langhettee, Jr.*

My education at Louisiana State University began in March 1945. I can vividly remember sitting at my desk in the Pentagon barracks the following August, wondering whether I should reconsider my decision to enter petroleum engineering. Nuclear energy in its most devastating form had just been introduced to the world. I had selected petroleum engineering because it was a relatively new discipline in an exciting growth industry. There seemed to be a great chance for creativity within the broad scope of petroleum engineering responsibilities. With the reckless abandon of youth, I decided to “chance it.” That was one of the best decisions of my life.

I have had an absolutely wonderful and most interesting career. Although I spent practically my entire working life with The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company, through its diversification I was fortunate to have a tremendous variety of experience in addition to the technical and managerial involvement with the oil and gas business. My career is a good

example of how far from one’s original discipline it is possible to move during a lifetime of work. I never dreamed in August 1945 that one day I would be making decisions on water resources in Hawaii, industrial development on the Mobile River, reclamation on the Houston Ship Canal, underground copper mining in Michigan, or open-pit gold mining in Nevada, to name a few.

Although never an expert in any of these areas, I was able to handle these and many other projects because of my educational background and engineering training at LSU. While at the University, I was taught how to learn, analyze, and think logically. These lessons, together with the diversified curriculum in petroleum engineering, have been invaluable to me in coping with problems arising from almost any phase of engineering, in providing logical solutions, and in assimilating new technical knowledge that helped make me a more productive manager.

I have associated with many LSU engineering graduates during my years in industry, and employed several in the development of LL&E's Petroleum Engineering Department. They were all talented, resourceful people who reflect credit on the University. One common trait that I observed and admired was that they were all well-rounded. I recall during my undergraduate days feeling that all non-petroleum courses, and especially electives, were distractions from my real purpose. In retrospect, I can appreciate the wisdom of the broadened curriculum we were given. Many of those courses have been of real practical value because of my varied experiences. The remainder have certainly made me a more balanced person. I am pleased to see that the modern-day curriculum provides engineering candidates equally broad undergraduate training. This will ensure that future LSU engineering graduates are prepared not only to meet the technological demands of industry, but also to provide the leadership that we expect of engineers in today's world.

These are difficult times for the energy industry. Worldwide oil price instability and domestic gas surpluses have caused a substantial retrenchment in hiring and spending plans. Because of the tremendous concentration of oil reserves in the Middle East, the rate of free-world oil production and its resulting price are beyond the industry's control. Oil companies can only react to changes in economics by increasing or reducing operations and staffing as indicated, and quickly, because it is so capital intensive. I have observed these cycles for the past 39 years and I doubt that the industry will ever reach an extended period of economic stability.

This poses a real problem for young people who have career aspirations in the oil and gas industry. It is distressing to see the drop in petroleum engineering enrollment. During these down-cycles, we should do everything possible to encourage students to enter this very essential, productive discipline. From my own experience, I can assure them that they will be prepared for a much wider scope of opportunity than a single industry can provide. It is my sincere hope that some potential engineering students will be influenced by these comments.

In reflecting back on my days at LSU, I am sure they were among the happiest and most rewarding times of my life. I gained a lot more at LSU than a fine education. It was there that I met the lady who has been my wife for nearly 39 years. It was there also that I made many great, close friendships, which have lasted through time. Finally, I was privileged to study under two inspirational teachers, Benny Craft and Murray Hawkins, whom I came to know well as both mentors and friends. I have indeed many reasons to be grateful to Louisiana State University.