

# Reflections of Robert A. "Bob" Deason

It is an honor to be recognized by LSU. This is something I never expected, and perhaps would have been considered unlikely by my professors at LSU.

I grew up in Natchitoches, Louisiana the son of a professor at Northwestern State College. My parents gave me a respect for education and an expectation of obtaining a strong educational foundation. They were very pleased when I choose LSU.

My first day at LSU was an eye opener. My high school buddy, Bill Beyer, and I were assigned a room in Tiger Stadium. When we arrived at the room we found two other students already there, and we were surprised to see that it was a four-man room. We were even more surprised to learn that the other students were recent refugees from Cuba. Many people were fleeing Cuba in those days and LSU opened its arms to a number of students. They arrived in this country penniless; overnight many had gone from wealthy to broke. But this country and LSU gave them opportunity. That semester made a lasting impression on me.

My initial year and a half at LSU I was majoring in chemistry and performed poor academically. The 1960's were a turbulent time in the U.S., and in 1966 I dropped out of school and joined the U.S. Marine Corps. I'd like to claim it was all patriotism that drove me to join the military, but I have to admit that the Tiger Lounge also contributed. But there is nothing like a year in Vietnam to refocus a kid.

After graduating from high school, I had been very fortunate to have summer jobs working on road construction in the western U.S. This

experience gave me a love for building. While in Vietnam, I realized that I did not enjoy my original choice of study and decided that when I returned to LSU I must get to a course of study that I enjoyed. I returned to LSU in 1968 to study civil engineering. LSU gave me the chance to become a builder. Finding something I enjoyed was the first step to a successful career.

During my last year at LSU my wife, Dagmar and I were married in the Methodist Chapel on campus. That union continues after more than 40 years and has produced three kids and seven grandkids. LSU gave me much more than a degree.

My career has allowed me to be a builder of pipelines, refineries, chemical and petrochemical plants, and offshore and onshore production facilities and many other things. These projects have taken me throughout the U.S., Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe. The countries I have worked in are too numerous to list. I believe these projects improve the world. Cheap energy has fueled global development, while chemicals and petroleum products have benefited lives all over the world. I have been fortunate to watch prosperity break-out in many developing countries and believe engineering and often American engineers are a catalyst for world growth. LSU should be proud of the role it has played in benefiting mankind.

In 2003, I was asked to take over a struggling offshore contractor, J Ray McDermott. J Ray had a storied history and was a founder of the offshore oil and gas industry. The company had once been one of the largest and most successful companies in Louisiana but was now teetering on

bankruptcy. To put it simply, the world had changed, J Ray had not. The foundation I received at LSU, a lifetime of problem solving, and a great team (many LSU graduates) made for a remarkable turnaround. We proved that American builders could still compete globally.

When I reflect on my career and look for keys to my success, I offer the following:

- A strong technical foundation from LSU.
- A willingness to take the most challenging assignments, often in the most difficult places.
- Willingness to learn from my mistakes, never blame others regardless of circumstances.
- Recognize that every success or failure is a learning experience, and you can learn from everyone no matter how high or low their position.
- Respect those you work with - - employees, clients, competitors; a leader is not successful because of his intellect; he is successful because of the intellect of those around him.

Finally, let me again thank LSU and Dean Koubek for this recognition. I truly am humbled. I have great respect for the contribution made by the LSU College of Engineering. I am very fortunate to have had the chance to start my career at LSU.

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