

# *Reflections of Alden L. Andre*

In the fall of 1957, I left my hometown of Rougon, Louisiana, for the campus of LSU with \$100 in my wallet. Having graduated as valedictorian of my high school class, I also had a small scholarship, as I recall, worth \$100 per semester. I had great parents who unfortunately did not have the means to pay for my college education. They assisted me to their maximum abilities possible. However, they were the greatest in that, because of their circumstances, they raised me to understand that my education could stop nothing short of a bachelor's degree at LSU. As a result, I credit them for my hard studies in high school and graduation as valedictorian of my class. They also ensured that my only brother stop nothing short of a bachelor's degree in accounting.

I applied for work at the Soils Testing Lab in the Agronomy Department on the LSU campus. I was hired and worked my way through college analyzing soil from farmers across the state, such that the agronomists could recommend fertilizer and soil treatment to them. For the first year, the lab

was in the coliseum. For the last three years, it was in the Harry D. Wilson laboratories across the street from the coliseum. I earned .55 cents per hour the first year. When I graduated, I was earning \$1.25 an hour. I reflect on this, hoping that high school students will never say, "I can't go to college because my parents cannot finance it." Anyone can go to college and fund their own way if they truly have a good work ethic and a strong desire to get a degree. Certainly even today, no one should ever pass up the opportunity with the TOPS program being available to them. All that is needed to earn a "free" college education is to work hard in high school and make good grades.

I also credit LSU ROTC as a significant factor in my development, from a young man from the farming community of Pointe Coupee Parish, to an officer in the United States Army. ROTC training, and my service of six years with the Army, provided the training I needed to develop character, good citizenship, work ethic, and the recognition of the

privilege of living and serving the greatest country in the world.

As noted in my biography, I am not an engineer; however, in my nearly 40 years in management positions in the chemical industry, I have hired, trained, and managed many engineers over the years. In competing with engineers for management positions, I had to excel and learn the basics of engineering on my own. I credit my ability to move to various levels of management in my company by learning who were the best engineers of each discipline required, and managed them as a team to achieve the desired results. To the extent that they were available, I hired only LSU engineering graduates. In my 40 years in the industry, I have never experienced a bad one. This is the reason that I am presently funding, from my company our third Formosa Plastics \$100,000 Professorship.

I have had the opportunity to lead a very happy, wonderful and lucky life. I have had the support of the greatest wife, who did an outstanding job of rearing our two children while I was so busy working long hours in my career. I say a lucky life because not many in our industry survive two sales of a chemical plant in a top management position, much less the good fortune I had of being promoted with each acquisition. As a result, I have worked hard to give back to both my family and my community, as noted in my biography. All of these activities have been rewarding; however, the greatest is my association with the Capital Area United Way. The greatest feeling I had was to be Fundraising Campaign Chairman in 2001 and raise \$13.1 million dollars. This money was distributed to 56 agencies in the 10-parish area, providing services to all those in desperation and in need in our community.

It is very ironic that my fellow inductee is Dean Ed McLaughlin. He was the Dean that requested that I serve on his Industrial Advisory Board. My response was – “Dean, I don’t belong there. I am not an engineer.” His response was, “I want you on my Board because you hire, train, and manage engineers. You know what our product should look like, and you certainly can point out deficiencies for improvement in the curriculum.” With that, I accepted and have had the great honor of serving the college for the past eight years with three deans. Certainly to not be an engineer and to have acceded to chairmanship of this outstanding body is another milestone achievement in my career. I became the chairman in 2001.