

Reflections of Roland M. Toups

The engineering profession just seemed like a normal educational progression for me. Dad was a graduate mechanical engineer and my hero. I admired him greatly and watched him rise to the CEO level of a major Louisiana corporation. So off to engineering school I went with a twin brother in tow.

After we both completed graduate degrees and received Air Force commissions at Georgia Tech, we were privileged to spend four exciting and challenging years at Cape Canaveral. This was in the early '60's and the fledgling space industry was really coming into its own. Working there with real dedicated engineers, I realized what a wonderful door the profession opened to many varied career fields.

During my Air Force stint, I met my wife Kay, who has been the love of my life for forty-one golden years. Our two children are LSU graduates. Both of them married LSU graduates, so now we are all "Tigers" through and through. We

also have six "purple and gold" grandkids following closely behind.

At Turner I have been inspired and mentored for thirty-seven years by another outstanding LSU graduate and past recipient of this award, Bert S. Turner. Our executive staff and managers at Turner Industries are comprised of many LSU graduates who have contributed greatly to our success over the past 50 years.

I often think back to how things have changed in the technical world compared to my days at Tech with a slide rule hung on my belt. We did not even dream of developments such as nanotechnology and photonics. As we all know, change over those fifty years has been dramatic.

Yet there remains a constant in engineering education. Engineers have been and are now always taught to be disciplined, to think logically, and to work diligently to understand the basics of science. Thermo, heat transfer, and

differential calculus just did not come naturally – it took a ton of sweat equity.

Perhaps that is the biggest lesson I learned from my engineering education. I firmly believe that such a background prepares a young engineer to develop into a technical manager in almost any line of business, given people skills and other qualities of a good leader.

As chairman of the Board of Regents, I fully realize how important it is to this state to have a pre-eminent nationally recognized institution. LSU's "Flagship Agenda" must be in place for that status to be realized. Substantial progress is being made in many areas. We can only accept success – no other option is acceptable for the benefit of future generations – my grandchildren and yours.

My sincerest thanks is extended to the College of Engineering for this prestigious honor. Thanks also to the many folks who have helped me along this career path. It has been a fulfilling and wonderful journey.