

Reflections of Lodwrick M. Cook

I never thought I'd be writing about what I did in the summer of 1954, the year Louisiana State University sent me to camp. But thinking about that summer brings to mind many memories about my days at LSU.

“Camp” was LSU’s geology camp in Colorado, and in those days, petroleum engineering students were required to attend. I must admit I thought I was a little too old to be there climbing up slopes and sleeping in barracks again. After all, I wasn’t your typical undergraduate—I was 26 and had just finished three years of Army service as a first lieutenant. On top of that, I already had an undergraduate degree from LSU in mathematics and was now completing work for a petroleum engineering degree started earlier. In retrospect, however, it was a wonderful experience that helped open the door to a new, exciting world.

I began these reflections with a recollection of that summer experience because it was one of many such experiences at LSU that opened the doors to broader horizons.

Dr. Clay Durham, who was the geology professor in charge that summer, took us on field trips as far away as Las Vegas. We were happy then just to wash the field trip dust off in the municipal swimming pool before camping for the night near Hoover Dam. I bathed every day that summer, even in cold mountain streams. Life in the Army had taught me to try to make any situation as comfortable as possible, and my Army training for neatness and cleanliness earned me the nickname “Country Club Cook”—which I did nothing to discourage. (Little did I know during that visit to Las Vegas, by the way, that 30 years later I would head the company that sold the most gasoline in a five-state Western area that included Las Vegas.)

I have another vivid memory of a speech by LSU President Harold Stoke. At a time when I was focusing on my engineering studies, here was this learned and respected gentleman telling us how important it was to look beyond our own fields, to recognize the value of the “whole person.” His speech made a great

impression on me. I began to reexamine my interests and priorities. Since I wasn't doing too well in engineering and enjoyed math, I switched to the School of Arts and Sciences to pursue a degree in mathematics. This also enabled me to take more liberal arts courses and discover new areas of interest. I began to feast on the variety of subjects a major university provides, including those taught by professors like Dr. T. Harry Williams.