

Harry J. Longwell, LA A '63

The Longwell Family Endowment for the Louisiana Alpha Chapter at Louisiana State University

bORN IN BUNKIE, LA, Harry J. Longwell's work ethic developed when his family moved to nearby Alexandria to establish a second-hand furniture store and household moving company. After clamoring to be involved, he held down his first job at six-years old as a shoe-shine boy (a nickel during the '40s) on Saturdays with his mother's admonishment, "Do not mess up the customer's shoes."

Harry has been hard at work ever since and was the second in his immediate family to attend college. From his days at an all-boys parochial school, Menard Memorial, he learned about engineering from professional/career day discussions. "I'm an outdoor person and saw engineers as 'outside people' who worked with their hands and had technical expertise." He also had exposure to engineers through an aunt who was a fuel supplier in Grand Isle, LA, in the early days of offshore work. She thought highly of those in the oil industry.

He set his sights on Louisiana State University as it was the biggest school in the state with the most options including petroleum engineering. Harry and his wife, Norma, were married between his sophomore and junior years and had the first of four sons a year later. Their second son arrived within another two years giving motivation to find a good job as soon as he could after graduation. The Suez Canal Crisis was around this time and enrollment in petroleum engineering dropped. During his junior year, a counselor told him there was no future in the field and suggested he get out immediately. "Oil was \$1/barrel, but I stayed with what I thought I wanted to do."

Began Exxon Career

Harry began his career with Exxon as a drilling engineer in Exxon Company, U.S.A.'s (Humble Oil) production office in New Orleans. After a number of assignments in Louisiana, California, Texas, London, and New Jersey, he returned to Houston as president of Exxon Company, U.S.A. in 1992. He was elected senior vice president of the corporation and director in 1995. Harry was named executive vice president of the corporation in 2001. He retired as a director and executive vice president of Exxon Mobil Corporation in Dallas after more than 41 years with the company. His primary responsibilities included the corporation's worldwide oil, gas, coal, and minerals exploration, and production activities and human resources.

Harry is a Distinguished Member of the Society of Petroleum Engineers and a member of the All American Wildcatters. Among other professional, civic, and philan-

thropic activities over the years, he served on the executive committee of the board of directors of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, chairman of board of trustees of University of Dallas, and chairman of M.D. Anderson's Cancer Center Board of Visitors and a life member of that board. Harry received an honorary doctor of science degree from LSU in August 2004 and was named alumnus of the year in 2005.



He cites his greatest accomplishment beyond his family as his career at Exxon Mobil, rising through the ranks after starting as a new hire at 22-years old and coming into the workplace knowing no one. "Through my career I enjoyed working with thousands of very highly-capable people in all disciplines and doing it reasonably successfully with high standards and expectations, but none higher than I expected from myself," adding, "And I was able to instill that in most without discouraging them." He credits the strong values he carried into his career with growing up working in a small family business. "I saw early on the importance of dedication to what you

were doing regardless of the level of sophistication it took and how to work with people at all levels who respected each other and got the job done." Harry is also proud that his oldest son, Harry III, has pursued a successful engineering and management career at Exxon Mobil as well.

With today's rapidly changing technology, Harry notes, "It's more important than ever in engineering studies to understand the fundamentals of various disciplines and then be very open-minded and creative in terms of how those fundamentals can be taken to the next level. That's what continues to drive the explosion in technology today." Students must also, "Have a strong work ethic that is unmatched by anybody else and an ethical, moral approach to everything you do."

Harry and Norma's gift through the Longwell Family Foundation to endow the Louisiana Alpha Chapter at Louisiana State through the Chapter Endowment Initiative stems from decades of his family's involvement with the chapter. To date, three generations have been initiated, including himself, son Paxton John Longwell, M.D., LA A '86, and grandchildren (Paxton's children) Madison Elizabeth Longwell, LA A '17, and Harrison John Longwell, LA A '19. Harry notes that with an LSU engineering degree you have "the ticket to ride" enabling good, professional employment immediately out of school. "Engineering is the most important college in the university. It is the excellence in academic achievement and application that is most important, and that is what Tau Beta Pi recognizes."