

REFLECTIONS OF DR. WILLIAM A. BROOKSHIRE

I GREW UP IN A WORKING FAMILY AND DIDN'T

receive much encouragement to go to college and was the first in my family to earn a high school diploma. I had to work a full-time job during the day while attending night classes to finish my bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering at the University of Houston. When I went to work for Shell as a lab technician, I was in a group that had about 30 professionals and all but three had Ph.D.'s.

I arrived at LSU in September 1957, received my Master's degree in Chemical Engineering in January 1959, passed my final oral exam on December 10, 1960 and received my Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering in January 1961.

I was at LSU to study and get my PhD. There was very little social life for the graduate students. In 1958, LSU was the National Champion in football,

and in the 1958 and 1959 football seasons the Tigers won 18 games in a row. The graduate students in Chemical Engineering sat together at football games. This was probably the most exciting thing we did.

For undergrad, I had been a night student at the University of Houston, so it was nice to go to school in the light of day. LSU was an impressive campus, and I was pleased I was there. I also had an office, so that made studying much more convenient. Offices for graduate students are a real help although we did not have air-conditioning in those days.

When I started at LSU, the Chemical Engineering Department had four full-time faculty members: Dr. Coates, Dr. Keller, Dr. Pressburg and Dr. Von Rosenberg. M. F. Gautreaux was working on his Ph.D. and also taught regular classes. There were

also several of us that taught labs and graded papers.

As I recall, we had about the same number of undergraduates that you have now. A graduate assistant job was very demanding, requiring between 20 and 30 hours a week. During my second year of graduate school, we added Dr. Groves and lost Dr. Gautreaux to Ethyl Corp. Dr. Cordiner was added to the faculty in either my second or third year. I had classes from all the Chemical Engineering Faculty except Dr. Cordiner.

All the faculty members did their job well and taught me all I was capable of learning. They were willing to help when asked. The graduate students all liked Dr. Von Rosenberg and Dr. Gautreaux the best because they were more our age and had more common interests with the students.

December 10, 1960 was the day of my final oral exam which took place in early afternoon. Of course, I was nervous so I went to a movie about 10 a.m. The movie was "On the Beach" with Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner. The theme of the movie involved people on our planet trying to survive after a nuclear war. The movie's setting was Australia which was the only country that had temporarily survived. It was already apparent to scientists and politicians in the movie that Australia was not going to survive. In the film, people behaved in unusual ways as the public began to find out that the end was near.

I WAS COMPLETELY RELAXED FOR MY FINAL ORAL EXAM. What dumb luck to pick that movie on that occasion. I will never forget it.