

# *John A. Graves*



John A. Graves was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and moved to Opelousas, Louisiana, at age six where he attended elementary and high school. He graduated from what is now Opelousas Catholic in a pre-college curriculum. His extracurricular activities included football, basketball, track and student government.

Graves lost his father as a junior in high school which necessitated his having to provide his own college expenses. Having been inspired by President Kennedy's challenge to put men on the moon, Graves was drawn to Aeronautical Engineering at LSU and enrolled in 1959.

Aeronautical engineering was replaced by civil engineering as he believed he might prefer the outdoors work environment offered by civil. Larry McKee gave John his first job in the engineering business as a rodman in a field survey crew. Maintaining a full time job while attending school, he graduated from LSU in the spring of 1965 with a BS in civil engineering. With his sights set on being in the consulting engineering business, Graves spent the next year taking selective, mostly graduate level course work in business administration.

Graves' first full time job was with Edward E. Evans & Associates in 1968. Evans, a former LSU professor of structural engineering, founded the firm in 1953. John credits Evans as an excellent teacher from whom he learned a great deal beginning with structural work on the LSU Pete Maravich Assembly Center. In the early 1970s, Evans believed that he had serious health problems — which turned out to be less severe than anticipated — and effectively turned over the day to day operation of the firm to Graves.

Graves acquired full ownership of the firm in 1986, at which time the name was changed to Evans-Graves Engineers, Inc. . Over 35 years of his work experience has been spent as a Principal of Evans-Graves Engineers, Inc., where he is responsible for plan production and management of all phases of projects undertaken by the firm.

## *Reflections of John A. Graves*

My earliest memory of my journey at LSU begins at the age of six, when my father took me to a football game at TIGER STADIUM. He told me at the time that this is where I should go to college. Easily said, but the fact was that no one in either my mother or father's families had ever even attended college. Mississippi State was the opponent that evening and everything impressed me about the event, but especially the punters, who could kick the ball so high and seemingly out of the stadium as I viewed it.

Despite my early introduction to LSU, the road to Baton Rouge was not paved as well as I hoped. My father died while I was a teenager in St. Landry Parish and, with very little resources I got a job to fund my schooling. John F. Kennedy was President, who vowed to put people on the moon. That was as I saw it, my calling to engineering. After a brief stint in Aeronautical Engineering which I enjoyed, I believed my future could best be served by Civil Engineering, as I believed it offered the most varied project types and, at least a prospect of being outdoors at times. That decision proved to be one of the best of my life, followed by a storybook professional career. Beginning with a field position for Interstate 55 across the Maurepas Swamp and work on the LSU Maravich Assembly Center, during the construction phase was just the beginning. From those early beginnings there were Airports, Industrial Parks, Railroads, Multi-Use

# *Reflections of John A. Graves* **[continued]**

land development, High Rise Buildings, Highways, Bridges, Shopping Centers and more. More recently, endeavors have included the St. Francisville Audubon Bridge, the longest cable stayed span in North America and the Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, the largest Civil Works Program in the history of the United States.

Then there were those along the way who assisted with the journey when they really did not have to. Edward E. Evans, our company founder and former professor of structural engineering at LSU was a terrific mentor and teacher to me. While he was tough, hard and at times unreasonable, he was always fair.

Dr. Frank Germano and Dr. Ara Arman gave me much needed guidance both during my tenure at LSU and later in the workplace. There were so many others, how do you ever recognize them other than to try to assist others who may need and deserve a hand. I have indeed tried to do just that.

Other career highlights have included banking endeavors with former Governor Buddy Roemer over an extended period of time. The new learning experiences serving on those Boards and Committees was huge and remains so even today.

A board position on the Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation has given me a whole new

perspective on the field of medical research right here in Baton Rouge. And, who could forget 13 years on the Civil and Environmental Engineering External Advisory Board at LSU.

Finally, there is my family beginning with my wife of 52 years Cynthia, who married me despite the fact that I was at the time working in the swamp. Five children, that include three LSU grads, one of whom is an engineer and only the second female Student Body President at LSU and a member of the Board of Supervisors. A medical doctor, our company Vice President for business development and a Congressman who, as it turns out, actually serves the district that includes the LSU, Baton Rouge

campus. And, then there is our youngest who excels at so many things including graphic art to youth ministry. Nine grandchildren put the finishing touch on what I consider to be the most complete and fantastic career anyone could ever experience which began with those high punts in TIGER STADIUM.

It never was a job, always an adventure!

And, "GO TIGERS".