

# Reflections of Roy O. Martin III

I guess I just grew up with purple and gold sawdust in my veins. Given my family history, this is no wonder. My grandfather, born in Elkhart Indiana, started Roy O. Martin Lumber Company, Inc., Alexandria, LA, in 1923 after teaching bookkeeping at Lamar University and later selling lumber for Nicky Brothers of Memphis, TN. In 1929, he bought his first piece of timberland. Through the Great Depression, by the grace of God, bank loans and a tenacious style to never give up, Roy O. Martin, Sr. survived; then he thrived. He retired in 1962 owning 250,000 acres of timberland and left the management to two of his sons, Roy Otis Martin, Jr. and Ellis Martin who ran the Castor sawmill. The business continued to succeed under their guidance.

Roy O. Martin, Jr., my father, attended LSU's College of Engineering for a year and a half, before World War II lured him to the Coast Guard. He and my mother met in geology class. Back then, classes were small so "Martin" and "Morros" sat close together. Today, they would be five rows apart and I would not have been born! The LSU education and wartime experience served my father and my family well. The LSU tradition carried on to one of my older sisters, Joyce Thibodeaux, who was one of the first women to graduate in Electrical Engineering and my cousin, Jonathan who graduated in Industrial Engineering from LSU. He is the current Chairman of RoyOMartin.

As for me, I grew up in the Alexandria sawmill. At 17, I was old enough to work in the forest behind degreed foresters. After graduation in 1978, I decided quickly to attend LSU. Dad had already taken me to Tiger stadium several times to seal the deal. How could I go anywhere else?

Fortunately, the LSU Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME) was highly acclaimed, and I found out very quickly that to continue to meet my parent's expectations and receive proper funding of my educational experience, I had to devote more time to study than I liked. I made good enough grades to get into Tau Beta Pi, and continue to have a good time in Sigma Chi fraternity. Thank goodness for Dr. Whitehurst and others who helped me through dynamics, heat transfer and ME math to graduate with a 3.5 gpa. Along the way, I met Kathy Kilpatrick, a beautiful Chi Omega, and Baton Rouge girl while at LSU. We married and raised two LSU students, Chris and Laura who are majoring in industrial engineering and architecture respectively, today. Both of Kathy's parents have advanced degrees from LSU; her three brothers are LSU graduates. Truly, LSU has blessed our family.

In 1982, after college, I re-joined the family business as an engineer back at RoyOMartin, to help construct the first OSB plant in Louisiana. Kathy and I went back to achieve our MBAs after the plant was completed. We graduated in 1985, and moved back to Alexandria

to start our family and write another chapter in the history of RoyOMartin. I was elected treasurer in 1988 and in 1993 president of MHC Properties, the real estate and administrative arm of RoyOMartin.

In 2003, I was elected president and CFO of RoyOMartin. My engineering degree has been essential in all areas of my forest products business experience from plant design, layout, and plant location. Quality control, sales, supply chain management and, interestingly enough, management, finance and accounting are other areas I have used linear programming, optimization and other engineering principals. The problem solving techniques, science and mathematics taught in the LSU College of Engineering, coupled with a MBA from the E.J. Ourso College of Business, have prepared me for an exciting career. Any good student who is undecided on college majors should consider an engineering degree.

Today, RoyOMartin has 1300 employees, is the largest private landowner in Louisiana with 580,000 acres, all certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), operates five manufacturing facilities, and owns the largest logging company in the South. Perforex Forest Services, started in 2003 is a founder and the largest shareholder in Indigo Minerals LLC, a Houston oil and gas company headed by Bill Pritchard, the husband of Kathy's best friend at LSU.

This LSU thing really works.

I want to thank the College of Engineering for this prestigious honor, and I am humbled to have my name beside the likes of Patrick Taylor, Roland Toups and the many other giants of the engineering profession. Praise our Lord.

*College of Engineering*

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