

Reflections of Sidney E. Fuchs



A license to learn.

What greater gift or skill can one acquire as you go through life? Ever since I was a young boy growing up in New Orleans in the 60s and 70s, this philosophy has been a key part of my DNA. My parents were incredibly smart with an abundance of common sense, although neither graduated from high school or attended college. Growing up during the depression, these options were not available to them. My dad, an auto mechanic by trade, constantly reinforced that it just wasn't good enough to know the bare minimum about what you were doing; you needed to be the expert. The intellectual curiosity he instilled in me was the fuel that would flame my desire to learn as much as I could about

any subject in which I showed an interest. LSU would allow me to take that philosophy, enhance it, and put it into practice. I have been benefitting ever since.

I have had a blessed and fortunate life. I've worked incredibly hard, but I've had many breaks and good luck along the way. The people in my life that have helped me get where I am today are too numerous to name, but I am grateful to each of them. The best way to show my gratitude is to return the favor by helping those I can assist. I've discovered that there is no greater joy in life than helping others achieve their goals. Money, fame, and power are all empty situations unless you can leverage those assets to make the world a better place.

I am proud that I am a self made man. I came from a solid family of meager means, worked my way through high school and college—summers, nights, weekends, and holidays—whatever it took. Those experiences taught me the value of hard work, relationships, resiliency, and persistence. Upon graduation, I left New Orleans with thousands of dollars in student loans (all repaid), \$1000 in my pocket, and in my college car headed to Washington, DC. I hated to leave Louisiana, but in 1987, you had to follow the opportunities.

My wife, Susan, and I met at LSU when we were both in the LSU Tiger Marching Band. We married soon after graduation while I was in training with the Central

Intelligence Agency. One week I was sitting in class, carrying a book bag, calculator, and mechanical pencil, and the next week I was wearing camouflage and night vision goggles, carrying an M-16 assault rifle and learning how to do night time infiltration/exfiltration from a helicopter—talk about opposite ends of the spectrum. Throughout my 25 year career in National Security, I've used my engineering skills as a CIA Officer, Department of Defense and Intelligence Community Advisor, and as a Defense Industry executive, leading organizations that have been at the forefront of engineering, technology, and operations support to our Nation's global security efforts. I've logged over 1 million miles on airplanes

over the past quarter century and have been part of teams and missions that most can only read about in the novels or see in movies. I never imagined my career would take this trajectory, but then again, that is what makes life interesting. You never know where it will take you. You have to be open to what life throws at you and you have to take some risks.

I will always be grateful for LSU, the College of Engineering and the Mechanical Engineering Department. Earning a degree in engineering is a nontrivial accomplishment and knowing that I could master this complex material gave me confidence to attack any challenge that would confront me throughout my life. You don't go to school to get a degree in "CEO".

You have to pull from all of your experiences and skills to be an effective executive. It is no wonder the best CEOs have engineering backgrounds.

The Good Lord has blessed me with a wonderful life and has given me the opportunity to help others. My wife, Susan, is my best friend and a major reason for my success. I am grateful that LSU brought us together. My sons, Bill, Bobby, and Jim, are my life's greatest gifts and I've learned more from them than I could have ever imagined. I am so proud of the young men they have become and know they will do great things in their life. I hope they are as fortunate as I have been to have mentors that can guide them along the way. Dr. Robert Courter and

Mr. Dennis Adams—patient, firm, and fair mentors who gave me encouragement and opportunity while pointing out areas that needed attention. I will always be grateful for their mentorship and friendship. My friends and family—I love you all and value you in my life.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my family, friends, colleagues, and to LSU. I am truly honored and humbled to have been bestowed this prestigious recognition. It is every LSU graduate's dream to one day be recognized by LSU for their professional accomplishments and contributions and I am grateful for this acknowledgement. Geaux Tigers!