

## Wallis Marsh

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With the 100-year anniversary of the Mewbourne School of Petroleum and Geological Engineering looming, I have been reflecting on my Petroleum Engineering journey and wanted to share some thoughts with you.

When I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 1981, my Father, Twin Brother Ed and myself spent the night in Oklahoma City with a relative. On a trip to visit our Grandmother in Little Rock, Arkansas from our home in Nebraska, we made a stop for the night about half way in Oklahoma. This layover was transformational for me. Cousin Jim lived in the biggest house I had ever seen; it was like a hotel from a television show. During the visit, it was apparent that not only did Cousin Jim have money, but that he was happy as well. He loved his life and his career and he told us stories about his career and the wonderful times and vacations he had with his family. I sat there trying to take this all in and the wheels in my mind were turning. Here was a relative of mine that had happiness and a wonderful family with a beautiful home, I knew it was something I wanted as well.

Two weeks later on a Sunday night, when long distance charges were cheaper, I called Cousin Jim for some advice. I asked him "What do I have to do to become you when I grow up?". He responded, "Go to The University of Oklahoma, get a degree in Petroleum Engineering, work for a major oil company and learn everything you can about operations, then start buying oil wells". After that call, my identical twin brother Ed and I decided this was our path and we ordered the OU catalog. Our high school class schedule was now tailored to a freshman petroleum engineering curriculum.

We took summer jobs during college dealing with oil field operations and when I graduated from OU in 1990, I accepted a job with Texaco in the Mabee Field Office in the Midland Area. In 1996, I started my first company and began buying oil wells and have had my company ever since. I have been lucky in the sense that I started at a great time in the oil industry. I have

operated as many as 1,000 wells in four states over the years. I have seen ups and downs as all oilmen have, but I have made some money and realized the American dream. I love my career and feel honored to do something that I love and it never feels like actual work. However, what I cherish the most from my career are the people and organizations I have been able to help with my time and talent. Moreover, the people I have met and the friendships I have created will last a lifetime. I have met many "Great" oilmen in my career, but most of those meetings happened after I had done well. However, there were two special men that I met when I was a student struggling to pay for college and their impact was so important in my development.

In 1989, Edward and Wallis Marsh were looking at the summer job landscape at OU. Our first two summers home from college were spent in Little Rock, Arkansas throwing newspapers, busing tables at a catfish restaurant, and pumping gas thanks to the oil price bust. In 1988, we were fortunate enough to get a job with Samedan in El Reno working as roustabouts. It was a great introduction to the oil business, but we were part of a group and not given any real responsibility. The plum job, for so many reasons in 1989 was the Mewbourne job working as a pumper and it included a company vehicle. For the Marsh Brothers, this was extremely important because we only had one personal vehicle. The company truck allowed my brother and I some flexibility with transportation to hopefully find another summer job and use our Honda for getting around as well. As the job interview postings went up, my brother and I were ecstatic that we were both picked to interview with Mewbourne. As a matter of fact, the interviews were lined up back to back. My interview was first and I met with two Mewbourne representatives. I was trying to sell myself to these distinguished men and at one point in the interview I was asked the following, "among your classmates if we don't hire you, who should we hire?" I instantly said Edward Marsh, he is smarter than me and would do a wonderful job. After my interview ended, I met my brother in the hallway outside the Career Planning and Placement office and we traded shoes (we both wear size 14 and in 1989 we could only find 1 pair of dress shoes, so we traded off) and he went in for his interview. About 35 minutes later, he came outside to get me and he said "they want to see both of us". I looked down at my feet and he smiled a little and said "I think it's good".

Joe Odom and Curtis Mewbourne were sitting in the interview room. Curtis had this huge grin on his face and he said "We came looking to hire one person, but how can we pick between you two!". Mewbourne Oil Company hired both of us. Ed was sent to Perryton and I was sent to Woodward. I could try to explain the significance of these jobs to both of us, but the words could not do it justice. A summer paying job and the experience gained in the field, allowed us to pay for our senior year of college and build our resume for our future careers. My brother accepted a job with Unocal and I took a job with Texaco. Curtis Mewbourne and Joe Odom helped two brothers that had economic challenges survive. We had younger siblings and paying out of state tuition at OU was taking a toll. We ate in the cafeteria for five years and

lived in the OU dorms for three years. We had scholarships and student loans, but the Mewbourne job was huge for us, it was answered prayer. This act of kindness for the Marsh Boys will never be forgotten.

While writing this letter, I have thought about the last 15 years and my record in hiring summer interns. I have hired nine summer engineers over the years (including identical twins Ashley and Lauren King, both OU Grads) and have supported many programs and groups at OU, with athletics and housing being the major benefactors. I looked into supporting Petroleum Engineering, but thanks to you they are in great hands.

I suppose the purpose of my rambling letter is to say that outside people who are related to me, you and the Mewbourne Oil Company did the single most important thing that helped my brother and me. I have tried to live up to standards equal to those that I believe you and Joe Odom live by, but most of all I wanted to thank you for being so generous to me and OU Petroleum Engineering. You are the single most important thing to our beloved department over the last 30 years and I am honored to have had the pleasure to tell people what Curtis Mewbourne and Mewbourne Oil Company did for me and express my love for you.

Forever Grateful,

Wallis Marsh