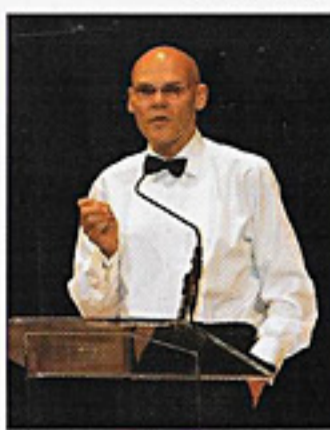


“Forever LSU” Kicks Off with Events Across the U.S.

“Forever LSU” is more than the last line of our alma mater, it’s also the name of an effort that will do nothing less than transform LSU into one of our nation’s leading universities. The campaign, which had been on the drawing board for more than a year, kicked off in June with a four-city tour that energized alumni from the streets of New York to the plains of Texas. By 2010, the Forever LSU Campaign will raise more than \$750 million for our university community, affecting virtually every program on the LSU campus. But, like any great philanthropic drive, it will require the leadership and involvement of LSU alumni and friends near and far to be successful. The kickoff tour was created to spread the word about the new campaign and build excitement for what promises to be four of the most important years in LSU history.

The first stop along the tour was June 19 in New York City, home to LSU’s NY Metro Alumni Association, one of the most active groups of its kind

in the country. LSU Chancellor Sean O’Keefe, System President William Jenkins and Athletic Director Skip Bertman were there to speak to the LSU faithful, along with LSU alums James Carville, Rick Wolfert and Harry Hawks. The event took place in the scenic Allen Room of Jazz at Lincoln Center, just outside of New York’s Columbus Circle. More than 200 LSU supporters packed the Allen Room to hear LSU make its pitch for its historic fundraising effort. Carville summed it up in an impassioned speech. “Nobody, no place is as indispensable to the people it serves as LSU, period,” Carville said, urging LSU alums to respond to LSU’s call to action.



LSU alum James Carville addresses the New York crowd.

With a successful mission to New York City, LSU’s representatives then moved to Washington, D.C., on June 21, where more than 220 LSU supporters joined the delegation at the Army and Navy Club, near Farragut Square. Former U.S. Senator J. Bennett Johnston was first to speak at the event, followed by

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Smiley and Bernice Raborn Honored with New Chair in Engineering

In the 1930s, they were well-known across campus as two of LSU’s most popular student personalities. Now their names will be well-known again on campus, this time in connection with a new endowed chair in the LSU College of Engineering. Smiley and Bernice Raborn, two proud LSU graduates from 1939, have been named in a chair established by their son and daughter-in-law to benefit LSU’s Mechanical Engineering department. Officially titled the “Smiley and Bernice Romero Raborn Chair in Mechanical Engineering,” the permanently endowed \$1 million chair was created through a \$600,000 donation from

the Raborn family, which was matched with \$400,000 from the State of Louisiana under the Board of Regents Support Fund.

Through the Raborns’ generosity, this new \$1 million endowment will be the first step in a larger effort to greatly enhance the capability of LSU’s Mechanical Engineering (ME) Department in both research and education through the establishment of numerous endowments for areas such as professorships, graduate assistantships, undergraduate scholarships and on-going operational support. The larger ME

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Smiley and Bernice Raborn

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Smiley and Bernice Raborn Honored with New Chair in Engineering

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initiative will also recognize the career of aerospace pioneer Dr. Maxime “Max” Faget, a 1943 mechanical engineering LSU graduate who played a pivotal role in the development of the Mercury and Apollo space programs with NASA.

The donors creating the chair are Francis “Buzz” and Marcia Raborn, who made the donation to recognize Francis’ parents, Smiley Raborn, Jr. and Bernice Romero Raborn, who met at LSU some 70 years ago.

For LSU Foundation Senior Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations Dr. Jeff Hale, who personally assisted the Raborns over a period of several months in creating a tribute that would fittingly honor Buzz’s parents, the experience was more than a career highlight. “On behalf of LSU Chancellor Sean O’Keefe and LSU Foundation President Bill Bowdon, I want to thank the Raborn family for their exceptional generosity and graciousness in creating this endowed chair.” Hale adds: “This gift stands as a testimony to the incredibly close family ties the Raborns share, as well as to Buzz and Marcia Raborn’s impressive grasp of the critical nature of endowed positions to the future academic, research and reputation-building success of Louisiana State University.”

The endowed chair comes at a critical time for LSU’s development into a top tier university nationwide. The Forever LSU campaign, announced earlier this summer, places great emphasis on creating new professorships and chairs in every college at LSU.

In the spirit of Forever LSU, Smiley and Bernice Raborn would be quick to tell you that LSU forever changed their lives, as well as the lives of their family. The couple met in the Huey P. Long Field House while both were students at LSU, and they’ve been together ever since. Ask Smiley the story of how they met, and he will gladly recall the day.

“As I remember, in those days we didn’t have a student union building. The Huey P. Long Field House was our union building. I had met a friend of Bernice’s named Letha Watkins, and she invited me over to have a Coke, and she (Bernice) was sitting at a table...and gosh, what a stunning young lady,” he says.

Bernice was equally impressed with Smiley as well. “I thought he was probably the handsomest man I’d ever seen,” Bernice says. “I couldn’t believe that he was interested in me.”

“I tried to keep you from knowing,” he replies.

Talking with the Raborns about their days at LSU is like opening a portal to a time of legend and mystery for modern-

day students and staff, a time when the campus was radically different from what it is today.

The Raborns attended LSU before there was a French House, before there was a Mike the Tiger and before LSU fans dreamed about two enclosed Tiger Stadium end zones. Smiley Raborn says the biggest difference between LSU then and LSU now is the number of vehicles on campus.

“The campus was very different in those days,” he says. “It was pedestrian. You walked. Now I see thousands of cars parked over there. There were five, maybe six, students in the entire four years that we were here that owned cars.”

That led to some close calls in the classroom, since students didn’t have the option of driving or taking the bus. “I had a military science class in the old Gym Armory,” Smiley says, “And it was a long way to the engineering labs, and I’d be late three or four minutes almost every time. And this one professor told me one morning, Raborn, we’re going to get you a calendar to get to class on time instead of a clock, because the clock isn’t working. I decided he didn’t like me, but he was one of the ones that was instrumental in me getting the job I got, in which I was the highest paid of any graduate that year, which I thought was fabulous.”

“It was \$165 a month.”

Bernice and Smiley also recall that LSU students did a lot more dancing in their spare time on campus back in the 1930s.

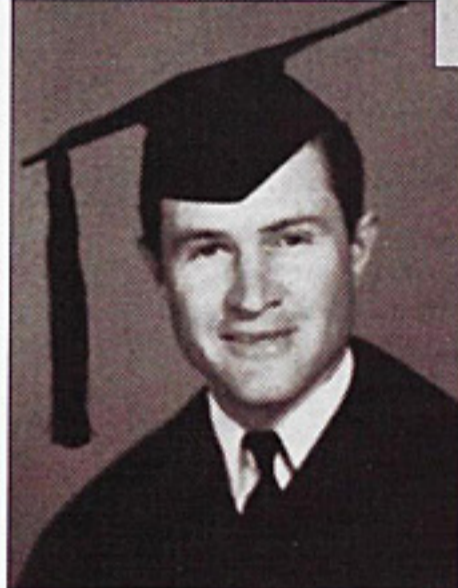
“In those days, ballroom dancing was a big thing,” Smiley

says, “Every Saturday night, there would be a big band... and the university invited them to come on Saturday nights to dances in the Gym Armory.”

“They charged us up front, 25 cents,” says Bernice. “Girls didn’t go on their own. You wouldn’t go unless you had a date.”

Smiley continues, “Sororities and fraternities would have what they called tea dances. They usually would start around 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. and they usually held them in the Field House.”

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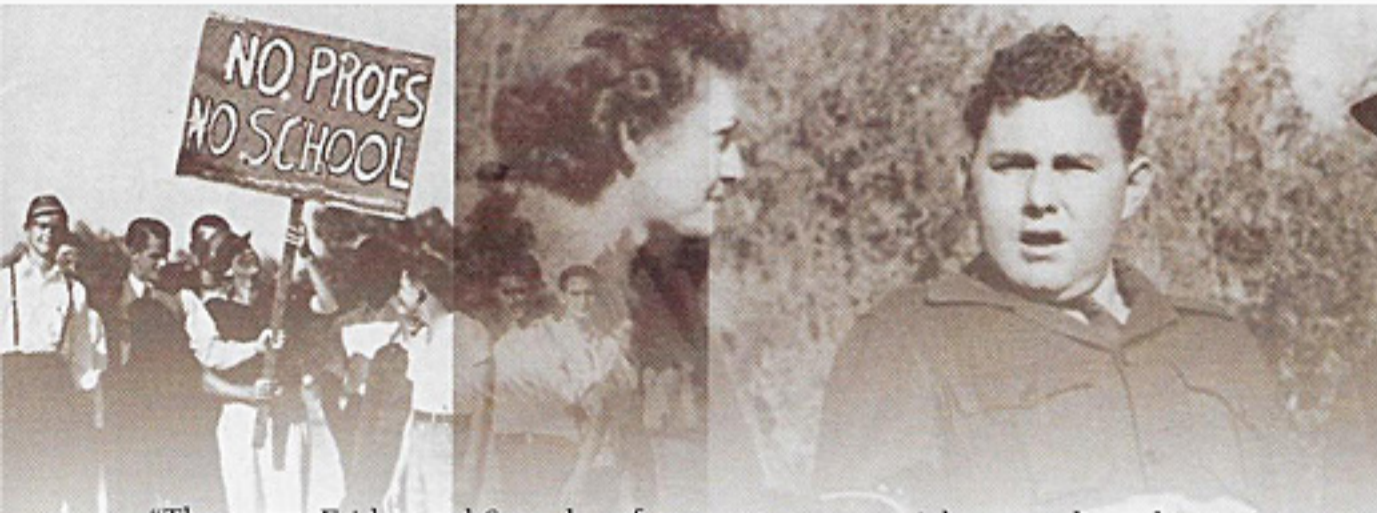
Smiley Raborn, 1939



Bernice Romero was a sponsor for Company C Engineers in 1939



Smiley Raborn (second from the right) with other Engineering students, 1939



“They were Friday and Saturday afternoons, so you might go to three dances in a weekend,” says Bernice.

When the LSU students weren’t dancing or walking to class, they were heavily involved in a plot which would change LSU’s history forever... the acquisition of LSU’s first live Bengal Tiger mascot, Mike I.

“We helped pay for and buy the first live Tiger mascot,” says Smiley, “In our sophomore year, a great friend of ours, as it turned out in later years, named Eddie Laborde... he and his fraternity brothers knew a zoo in Little Rock that had gone bankrupt in the Depression and they were having to sell off their animals. And one of the animals for sale was a royal Bengal tiger cub, and it was \$2,000. At any rate, they took up donations, they collected all this money from the students, and they shipped the tiger and he was in a box car. I didn’t see this, but the tiger arrived in this huge cage and he was about two and a half feet high and about eight feet long. They thought they were getting a cub but it was a full grown royal Bengal tiger!”

Indeed, the day Mike arrived was a day of playful chaos unrivaled at any time in LSU’s history. Students across campus organized walkouts from classes, some even blocking the entrances to campus so that professors could not report for work. When Mike arrived at LSU (behind schedule), the party lasted well into the night. The question then...was what to do with Mike?

“Later the State Legislature approved a \$4,000 grant to build a house that was on the same spot as it is now, only much smaller. It only cost \$4,000,” says Smiley. “Now I understand the new one cost \$3 million...so that’s quite a difference.”

Without a doubt, the Raborns took part in many historical events at LSU as students. Upon graduation, the two began to write their own history, with Smiley serving as a military instructor in World War II, and Bernice building the foundation of a rewarding family life.

After the war, Smiley Raborn took to position with the company that would later become CanDel Oil, overseeing the construction of the TransCanada pipeline. “I went there for 5 years (Canada), and I’ve been there 56,” he says.

Smiley retired from the energy industry at age 65 in 1980. He worked as an international petroleum consultant until 1995.

Meanwhile, the couple raised three children, (Francine, “Buzz” and Suzanne) and welcomed eight grandchildren into their lives, with four great-grandchildren arriving in recent years.

It was one of those children, “Buzz,” who surprised them at Christmas in 2005 with the news that a chair had been established in their name at LSU.

“Buzz is not one for fanfare...” says Smiley. “We have a family reunion at Christmas time. Two nights before Christmas Eve, we were at dinner and they were talking about their family and Christmas presents. And he said, ‘I established this chair in the College of Engineering in you and mom’s name.’ And I’m sitting there... and it dawned on me what he said. And I asked him, what’s all this about?”

“We’ve been walking on air. We were overwhelmed,” Smiley says.

“I was, too,” says Bernice, “I didn’t believe he could think up something like that.”

“I still have the feeling,” Smiley says, “I was overwhelmed and thrilled. And humbled. And honored.”

While it’s hard to say how LSU will change in another 70 years, one thing’s for sure: the Smiley and Bernice Romero Raborn Chair will be in place, guiding generation after generation of engineers through their own story with LSU. Who could ever have guessed that it was a chance meeting over a Coca-Cola at the Huey Long Field House in 1935 that made it all possible?

Meet the New Raborn Professor: Former Astronaut Dr. Leroy Chiao

So what specifically does the new Raborn Chair mean to LSU? The successful recruitment of a professor with the ability not only to instruct but inspire students, regardless of their college.

The first recipient of the Smiley and Bernice Romero Raborn Chair has already been chosen, and that man is Dr. Leroy Chiao, one of the most experienced astronauts in U.S. space exploration history. He is representative of the type of professor LSU can bring in to teach its students with a resource like the Raborn Chair.

Chiao will join the LSU faculty in Fall of this year, and brings with him experience from four different space missions, including a six-and-a-half month stay aboard the International Space Station during 2004-05. His 15 years of service at NASA will prove invaluable to Engineering students at LSU.

“This is a critical first step that will greatly enhance the College of Engineering, through the Mechanical Engineering Department and its mission of continuing excellence in engineering education and research,” says Dean Zaki Bassiouni of the LSU College of Engineering.



Former NASA astronaut Dr. Leroy Chiao will be LSU’s first Raborn Professor.