



SPRING 2017

## In Memoriam: Founder Thurman Ira Potts

The founding director of the University of Louisiana Monroe Construction Department, **Thurman Ira Potts**, was born December 28, 1921, and died March 24, 2017. He served as director of the Northeast Louisiana State College (later NLU and ULM) Construction Department from its beginning in 1966 until his retirement in January 1987.

Potts, born in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, came to northeast Louisiana after a 20-year career as an architect in South Dakota. He'd grown up in Kansas, earning his BS in architecture from Kansas State University and his MS from the University of Nebraska.

The day after the Pearl Harbor bombing, Potts enlisted in the Marine Corps. He survived the "bloodiest 76 hours of World War II" at Tarawa and a year later was severely wounded in the Battle of Saipan. He received the Purple Heart in 1944.

Potts was one of the founding members of the professional organization the American Institute of Constructors (AIC)—in fact, he named the group, and he was involved in shaping their original missions—to create curriculum standards for construction education



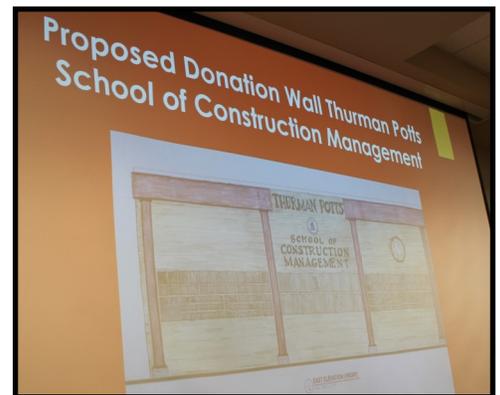
and to recognize individuals through education, experience, and a national examination process as certified professional constructors. AIC formed the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE) to establish curriculum standards.

Under Potts' leadership, the NLU School of Construction grew to become one of the largest construction programs in the nation and was the first program to receive the ACCE accreditation in 1976. The program had more than 500 majors at its peak and graduated more than 1,000 constructors under his tenure.

After retirement, Potts stayed involved with the construction program until recently. He was Professor Emeritus and an honorary member of Sigma Lambda Chi. In 2004 the Thurman Potts

Endowment for Construction Education was established to recognize the program's first director.

Potts is survived by his wife of 71 years, Nadine, as well as three daughters and one son—Nancy Roberts, Jane Brown (Kenny), Diane Bee (Mike), and Daniel Potts. Potts is also survived by six grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ira and Elizabeth Potts; two sisters, Alice and Thelma Potts; and one grandson, Christopher Potts.



*President Bruno announced that when donations reach \$3 million, the complex will be named the Thurman I. Potts School of Construction Management. Donation checks should be made out to the ULM Foundation/Thurman Potts Naming Fund 94082.*



AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR CONSTRUCTION EDUCATION

## Constructor of the Year: Steve R. Traxler

The Construction Industry Advisory Council is honored to present its annual Constructor of the Year award to Steve R. Traxler, president and general manager of Traxler Construction Company.

Traxler, born in Winnsboro and a 1969 graduate of Winnsboro High School, earned his bachelor of science in Building Construction from NLU in 1973. His honors included being named a member of the Sigma Lambda Chi International Construction Honor Society.

Southport Construction Company, New Orleans, was the site of Traxler's first professional career positions. As an estimator, project manager, and superintendent, over his four-year tenure he oversaw a variety of commercial ventures, including a French Quarter restoration and oil field crew quarters.

In 1978 Traxler launched his namesake Traxler Construction Company, which is licensed in building construction, heavy construction and municipal and public works. Traxler Construction routinely handles projects up to \$20 million in both Louisiana and Arkansas.

Traxler's entire family, including his wife, sons, and daughters-in-law, are graduates of NLU/ULM. Both his sons, Steve Jr. and Stewart, work for the family business. He has been married to his wife Lillie for over 40 years.



*IAC President Don Greenland presents Constructor of the Year award to Steve Traxler at the April 7th Awards Luncheon.*



*Charles Poole was named the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year at the April 7th IAC Awards Luncheon.*

## Distinguished Alumnus of the Year: Charles Poole

Receiving his Alumnus of the Year award at the luncheon memorializing his mentor, Thurman Potts, was a tremendous honor for Charles Poole, who has great memories of the effect Potts had on his professional and personal life.

Poole is thankful for the education he received at NLU, having served on the Industry Advisory Council for 35 years, 10 years as chairman. While a student he was active in the student AGC and served as the local chair of SLX, the national honorary construction fraternity. This led to his serving as chairman of the Northeast Chapter of the Louisiana Associated General Contractors.

After graduating from the School of Building Construction at NLU, Poole worked for a heavy highway company building highways, airports, bridges and ports for 43 years. During this time the company changed its name from Louisiana Paving Company to T.L. James and Company, Angelo Iafra

Construction, James Construction Group, and Primoris Services Corporation.

When Poole was promoted to vice president of James Construction Group, he and other top managers were offered the opportunity to purchase ownership of the company. It subsequently grew from one of the largest heavy highway and industrial companies in the Gulf South to a major division of Primoris Services Corporation, an energy, pipeline, industrial, and construction holding company with a footprint from the east coast of Florida to Washington State.

*Congratulations to both Steve Traxler and Charles Poole for the honors they deservedly received from the ULM Industry Advisory Council.*



## National Ranking: #6

In January 2017 the University of Louisiana at Monroe School of Construction Management was ranked #6 in the nation as one of the “50 Best Value Schools for Construction Management 2016” listed by BestValueSchools.com.

ULM’s program ranked higher than institutions such as Clemson University (#8), Indiana State University (#13), Appalachian State University (#15), and Louisiana State University (#19).

The methodology used by the polling agency focused on factors an average student looks for, such as affordability, high-quality curriculum, and opportunities for student involvement, as well as the program’s accreditations, degree popularity, enrollment, and graduation rate.

BestValueSchools.com described ULM as an intimate educational environment that provides enormous opportunity, focusing on three major areas within the program: benefits that come with the small programs, scholarship opportunities of more than \$10,000, and the program’s 100 percent placement rate and top starting salaries for recent graduates.

Dr. Ed Brayton, director of the School of Construction Management, said that ULM’s Construction Management graduates continue to be placed in positions around the globe. “It is an honor that our program has been ranked #6 in the U.S. Most people don’t know that we were the first program in the U.S. to be accredited by the American Council for Construction Education.”

Founded in 1966, the program that celebrated its 50th anniversary in April 2016 is committed to being the premier institution in construction in the state of Louisiana. It trains its students in the fields of commercial, residential, highway/bridge, heavy industrial, utility and civil works construction.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics points to a big upswing in the demand for experienced, qualified constructors over the next decade. In fact, numbers indicate that there will not be enough construction management graduates to meet expected growth. Through the year 2024, predictions are that 1,028 positions will go unfilled each year.

“We will strive to be the best construction management program for our students, their employers, and the construction industry,” says Brayton.



*The CM team formed in January 2017 with faculty members Nick Hardy, Don Colegrove, Greg Smith, and Jerry Madden—along with Director of the School of Construction Management Ed Brayton and Assistant to the Director Debbie DeNardin.*



*Tom DiNardin (above) and Deb DiNardin (below) received appreciation plaques at the IAC Awards luncheon from Director Ed Brayton for their work on branding and promoting the School of Construction Management.*



## Greetings, NLU/ULM CM Alumni and Friends:

I was extremely saddened by Thurman Potts' passing because he was an integral part of the reason that I came to ULM in the summer of 2014. At the funeral, I was listening to family and friends reminiscing about fond memories of Thurman, and it reminded me of the first time I met him. It was on July 3, 2014, in the construction conference room, and he listened to my vision to realign the Construction Management Program, upgrade the facilities, and increase enrollment.

My first suggestion was to add a construction practices lab and locate it on the south end of the construction building. The IAC (Industry Advisory Council) executive committee agreed, and we proceeded to create a fenced-in construction practices laboratory space. In the following weeks, Thurman would stop by and chat. I remember fondly that on one occasion he asked where the plan files were. We moseyed over to the plan files, and he proceeded to find a drawing that he had created showing a practices laboratory he had designed for the south end of the construction building.

Furthermore, the Industry Advisory Council has created a strategic plan titled the "2020 Vision," from which I created the financial strategic plan that proposed a two-story high bay enclosed construction practices lab, including a materials and soils lab as well as classrooms at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million.

Also, our "2020" Vision Plan includes an Atrium as a welcoming area based upon a conversation I had with Don Beach in October 2015. Don, a long-time supporter of the program, mentioned that we needed an area that welcomed people into the construction building. In December 2015 Don and Fran Beach contributed \$200,000 toward the design and construction of that welcoming area now called the Don Beach Atrium. In January 2016 Nabholz Construction contributed \$50,000, followed in February by Steel Fabricators of Monroe, who contributed \$40,000. Finally, the IAC contributed \$110,000 for a total of \$400,000.

On March 10, 2017, a competitive bidding process took place, and Traxler Construction was low bidder at \$659,000. On April 7, 2017, the IAC recommended and approved that we secure the additional funding needed to build the Don Beach Atrium as designed. Therefore, we are now in need of \$259,000 within the next 3 months so that this project is fully funded and we can start construction. If you are interested in supporting the Don Beach Atrium project, you can go to this site—[goo.gl/z8SLzT](http://goo.gl/z8SLzT)—or make your checks payable to **ULM Foundation —Don Beach Atrium— referencing account 92649**. In addition, I will match your contributions to the Don Beach Atrium project up to \$10,000.



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Also, this summer, 2017, President Bruno has approved \$430,000 for the removal and replacement of the mechanical system in the construction building along with the needed repairs to the roof.

Furthermore, the IAC and the School of Construction Management thank Ken Naquin, Louisiana AGC Executive Director, and Vic Weston, Chair of the Contractor's Education Trust Fund, for their \$70,000 donation to replace 41 computers and to install a Smart Board system in our computer room. This upgrade was needed since the addition of a new construction spreadsheet course and a new 3D modeling course to the program.

If you would be interested in becoming a member of the Industry Advisory Committee, please contact Ed Brayton at 318-342-1871. We appreciate your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ed Brayton'.

Ed Brayton, Director  
ULM School of Construction Management

University of  
**LOUISIANA**  
Monroe

