



Brook A. Simmons, '89 **President, The Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma**

Believing the newsroom was his future, Brook A. Simmons started his career as a staff writer with his hometown newspaper, The Daily Ardmoreite. The desire to see the journalistic process from the other side led him to Washington, D.C., where he served in several capacities for former Oklahoma Sen. Don Nickles. After nearly a decade on Capitol Hill, Simmons shifted to the lobbying arena serving clients in oil and gas, aviation, agriculture, community development and high-tech. His path to the Petroleum Alliance also included time as government affairs manager for an oil and gas producer where he managed federal, state and local issues. Simmons recently shared favorite memories of his time at OU and shared advice for current Gaylord students.

What is your favorite memory from your time at the J-school?

Late nights at the Oklahoma Daily. I learned more valuable journalistic and

press aide in Washington, D.C., instead of being the reporter asking the questions. Life intervened at that point. Suddenly, I was off on a different path than I intended.

Describe your role at the Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma.

Our mission is advancing Oklahoma's most important economic engine – the crude oil and natural gas industry – to benefit human progress. We are responsible for one-third of the state economy; \$1 of every \$1 in earned income; 1 of every 4 jobs; \$1 of every \$4 in public spending through the taxes we pay in support of schools, roads, bridges and other state and local priorities.

As humans, everything we do, every hour of the day, everything we have, and everything we aspire to have – even time doing absolutely nothing – requires petroleum.

life lessons from that work as a young reporter, managing editor and editor-in-chief than in all my classes combined.

At one point, I was carrying a full class load while putting in more than 40 hours per week at The Daily. I was there early. I was there late. I scrambled between the newsroom and the backshop. I loved the precision required to physically paste-up and shoot the pages back then. The backshop wasn't my responsibility, but once in a while the pros would let me wax, cut and paste something minor. I sometimes would float over to the advertising shop where the cool, beautiful people worked. They knew how to sell. No matter what the discipline you pursue, you have to be able to sell.

That was the tipping point for me. I realized that I loved what I was doing and that I might actually be able to feed myself doing it.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at the J-school?

Several compete for the title of favorite. I was probably closer to Andy Rieger, editorial advisor and assistant professor, than most of the faculty. Bruce Hinson taught me that knowing how to write a lead would serve me well regardless of my career path. Legendary Editorial Advisor Chuck House got me started and told me through clouds of cigarette smoke that I should work at The Daily. The most entertaining professor was J-Law Professor Mack Palmer.

How did your career path lead you to the Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma?

I was curious enough to want to find out what it would be like to answer reporters' questions for two years as a

My role is to chart a course for a large, complex member-driven organization comprised of competing interests. I am fortunate to have a team around me that plays offense and defense well.

What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?

The most significant moments of my career came when like-minded professionals worked together to solve complex problems. That work frequently happened in the dead of night. Only those in the room will ever know about it. Those were moments of forging trust. Success or failure is always about people.

How did the J-school prepare you for your future career?

It taught me to write and the joy of hard work worth doing.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?

Let me focus on news communication. Take the time and make the commitment to play it straight. This world needs more reporting that is fact-based and supported by data. Anecdotes aren't data. The collapse of objective reporting and politicization of the media is undermining individual liberty. Cultivate objectivity and reason as your noble cause. Also, local journalism is important. Life isn't all about the White House Briefing Room.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

I spend time with my children. I hunt, fish, get outdoors, pilot aircraft, sail boats and ride horses. None of these I do enough. I enjoy being active.



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