



## Rod Freeman is marked by loyalty, passion and love for family

By Linda Hsieh, Associate Editor

**GROWING UP IN** Laurel, Miss, in the 1970s, Rod Freeman lived just down the street from the National Supply store manager on one side and the Oilwell Supply store manager on the other.

But don't misunderstand – he didn't gain any insights into the oil industry because of this.

"When I graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1980, I didn't know anything about oil and gas. The closest I'd been to an oil rig, like most people, was a gas pump," Mr Freeman said.

Fortunately, someone saw the untapped potential underneath that rawness. Hired first at National Supply, Mr Freeman has since built a career of more than two decades at Helmerich & Payne and a long history of service to the IADC. He currently serves as H&P's Administrative Manager for the Offshore Division and as Vice Chairman of IADC's Mississippi Chapter.

"When I first started out, I had no idea what to expect in this industry," he said. "Basically, I went straight from the frat house to the warehouse – overnight."

And the man who put him in the warehouse was Ed Jacob, then the National Supply store manager in Jackson, Miss., and currently is Grey Wolf's Senior VP Domestic Operations. Even now, 25 years later, Mr Jacob recalls the potential he saw in the young Rod Freeman.

"Rod was energetic, and he was intelligent," Mr Jacob said. "But we started him out from the bottom – driving pickup trucks, delivering supplies to drilling rigs. And he steadily worked his way up to sales. I absolutely saw a lot of potential in him."

Although the time they worked together was short – only 4 to 5 months before Mr Freeman was transferred to Jennings,



For Rod Freeman, family has always been his top priority. In the back are son Will, 16, and Mr Freeman. In front are daughter Kate, wife Betty Lynn and youngest daughter Laura Alice.

La – he said he gleaned valuable customer experience from Mr Jacob, whom he describes today as a big mentor.

After learning inside sales in Jennings, National Supply sent him to Venice, La., in 1981 to work as a field salesman.

"I found that not only did I really enjoy the industry, I also really enjoyed sales. Getting out and meeting customers and interacting with rigs ... everything was exciting to me," he said.

Mr Freeman worked about five years at National Supply, during which he learned the "rope, soap and dope" of the drilling business. In 1985, it was again Mr Jacob who recommended him to Jim Bishop at Helmerich & Payne as Southern Division Administrator.

And that's where Mr Freeman has remained for the past 20 years – and where he found another influential mentor, Mr Bishop, H&P's VP Administration.

"Jim basically taught me all about the numbers game," Mr Freeman said. "He's incredibly knowledgeable about the numbers, what to look for in them and how to read them."

Having a great mentor and boss in Mr Bishop was obviously a big plus, but Mr Freeman also credits the overall excel-

lence of H&P with sustaining a loyal, 20-year career at the same company.

"Helmerich & Payne is just a top-notch drilling contractor," he said. "It's been exciting through the good times and the bad. And I look forward to the market growth that we're seeing."

Not content with being just a key player at an industry-leading company, Mr Freeman has also carved out a leader's niche at IADC's Mississippi Chapter. After joining in 1988, he was elected as vice chairman in 1992 and served in that post until 1995. Then from 1996 to 2000, he served as the chapter's chairman, and since 2003 he's been back in the vice chairman's seat.

The change between having Mr Freeman as chairman or vice chairman, however, is virtually nonexistent, as far as current Mississippi Chapter Chairman Rob Holbrook is concerned.

"Rod and I, we don't have a relationship where I'm chairman and you're vice chairman. It's a partnership," said Mr Holbrook, VP-Drilling Operations at Rapad Drilling & Well Service Inc.

Especially with the Mississippi Chapter being a small one, Mr Freeman said, it's been important to stay close-knit as a group.

As for how his service with IADC will be remembered, Mr Freeman joked that it will probably be the golf tournaments. "We have some pretty good golf tournaments over here," he said with a laugh.

Mr Holbrook, however, was certain Mr Freeman would be remembered for much more.

"I think the chapter will remember him for his dedication," he said. "Rod always makes sure that anything we do as a chapter is done correctly and is thought through beforehand. He's professional, well-spoken, and just a pleasure to be around. Everybody like Rod!"

And despite an outstanding history of service to IADC and to his company, Mr Freeman noted that family has always been and remains his top priority.

Juggling his duties as husband and father and his responsibilities at H&P and IADC appears to pose no problems for Mr Freeman, and people around him testify to his well-rounded success.

"He's loyal and passionate, and he loves his family," Mr Jacob remarked. "And I would say our industry needs more people like Rod." ■