



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Nathaniel I. Shapiro

Mechanical Engineering Hall of Fame, 2006

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1957

President (Retired)

NIS Land Corp.

Nathaniel (Nat) Shapiro earned his BS in mechanical engineering from The University of Texas at Austin in 1957. After graduating from UT, his first job was with Dow Chemical in Freeport, Texas. In his seven years with Dow, Nat was transferred to Houston and then Chicago. His years with Dow were all associated with engineering and business. When Nat left Dow, he was employed by a contractor with whom he had worked through Dow.

After years of experience, he decided to create his own engineering sales business, where he worked with several domestic and large European firms. During this time, his wife Betty was also cultivating her business in property management, in which they combined their enterprises. Their combined businesses grew in real estate investment and property management. They acquired properties in Austin, Houston, Galveston, Dallas, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Georgia and Louisiana. They grew to an enterprise of as many as 200 employees. Nat notes that their offices always had burnt orange carpeting.

The Shapiros decided to wind down their real estate and property management business, and in 1986

Nat became the project manager for the creation of the George Observatory, built in Brazos Bend State Park, in Brazoria County. In 1990 the result was the opening of the largest telescope and observatory open to public viewing in the southern half of the United States.

The Shapiros spent three years of their lives building the George Observatory. They were later honored for their contributions to this wonderful facility by having their bare feet cast in concrete at the Houston Museum of Natural Science main building at Herman Park in Houston.

Nat was always a strong supporter of The University of Texas at Austin, the College of Engineering (now the Cockrell School of Engineering), and the Department of Mechanical Engineering. The Shapiros made a point of joining many of the departmental events and were important members of the ME family.