



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Richard M. Church, Jr., P.E.
Distinguished Mechanical Engineer, 2018

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1977

President
Church Upstream Technologies, Inc.

Richard (Rick) M. Church, Jr. was born Los Angeles, California on December 14, 1954. His father worked as a machinist for Rockwell, which began a lifelong connection to the space industry. At age 6, the family moved to a farm in southwest Missouri, milking cows and performing farm duties for the next 6 years. Here he began playing the trumpet in 3rd grade and marched in the local town parades. The family moved to Houston in 1966 where his father started a manufacturing company doing work for NASA and other aerospace companies. He worked at the machine shop business through high school. In 7th grade he decided to be an engineer. "I wanted to design things, not build them." He switched to playing the baritone and was in the marching band. At Spring Woods High School, he took 4 years of drafting and received state honors. He decided The University of Texas was the best engineering school for him and they also had a marching band. After a tryout with "Vincent R. DiNino" he was told he wasn't good enough as a baritone player to make the band. But if he could switch to a Tuba, he may have a place for him. The first time he held a Tuba was at freshman band orientation. So, it began 45 years of playing in the Longhorn Band and Longhorn Alumni Band.

He worked for Dr. Marcus in the ME materials department at UT for 2 years, operating the scanning electron microscope, studying failure analysis of materials. Dr. Kenneth Ralls was also a mentor in the ME materials department at UT. Rick worked summers at Cameron after high school and through college as a draftsman. Rick was an officer in the Longhorn Band in charge of all refreshments at rehearsals and home games, including visiting bands.

Rick began his career in 1977 at Cameron, working in the drilling products engineering group. His first design project was for 25,000 psi working pressure

blowout preventers, the highest-pressure units ever made. He received 2 patents for blowout preventer designs. In 1979, at 25 years of age, Rick was promoted to engineering manager of Cameron's Louisiana operations which employed over 800 people.

He was employed by McEvoy in 1984 and was transferred to Aberdeen as engineering manager of subsea systems in Europe. In 1988, he was employed by a Norwegian oil company, as a consultant on subsea production systems until 1990. In 1991, He formed an oilfield services company, Church Oil Tools, with his brother Dan. A customer asked them to design some new high-pressure valves in 1994. They were to be called "frac" valves. The business thrived, and they sold the company in 1998. In 2001, Dan and Rick started a new company, Church Energy Services. They manufactured high pressure drilling equipment, including blowout preventers. They sold the business again in 2010. Rick and Dan are currently starting a new business venture, Church Upstream Technologies.

Family values were the strength of his commitment to achieving goals and gaining the respect of his peers. His brothers, Alan, Dan, Mike, sister Debbie and parents Richard and Nelda formed a strong foundation and helped navigate through life's difficult challenges.

The UT Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Longhorn Band has given so much to the success of Rick. He has endowed scholarships to Longhorn Band members, dedicated to his parents, as well as endowments to the Longhorn Band Legacy Fund and the Department of Mechanical Engineering at UT. Rick and his family, Lana, and Valentina live in Houston and spend time at the Church Ranch near Austin.