

## Long-Lasting Friendships

By Tony Curatola, Ph.D.



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**M**y IMA® career began while I was a student at Drexel University and Paul Dascher, Accounting Department chair, convinced me to attend a dinner meeting with him one night. My first impression was friendship. You would have thought I had known these people for years.

I became inactive for the next few years while pursuing my Ph.D. at Texas A&M University, but I was reintroduced to IMA when I joined the faculty at Louisiana State University, where Vince Brenner, Accounting Department chair, valued being an active member. Although I was a “Yankee” (and reminded of it repeatedly), the friendship that I had experienced in Philadelphia was the same in Baton Rouge. During my eight years in the Baton Rouge Chapter, I gained hands-on experience with managing various chapter offices and working with and managing associate directors to complete tasks in a timely manner. Some of the talented people that took the time to mentor me include Jerry Baldwin and Jack Dentin of the Baton Rouge Chapter and Joe Cheleno and Pete Meo of the New Orleans Chapter. They not only taught me the value of IMA, but they embraced my family, making them honorary members of IMA through the many social events that were so integral to the organization back in the 1980s. They even went so far as to entrust the leadership of the chapter to me. Through their support, and our members, we were able to win a banner.

My Baton Rouge experience has served

me well in both IMA and my academic career. I’m an active member of the Mid-Atlantic Council and have served on numerous global committees for the past 22 years. I was even given the opportunity to serve as vice president for Area C on Leo’s Diamonds when Leo Loiselle was IMA Chair. Leo and Emily Loiselle taught me that IMA was a wonderful organization but that family and laughter were more important.

It’s hard for me to imagine that I’ve been an IMA member for more than 30 years and editor of the Taxes column for the past 20. This organization has provided me many wonderful opportunities, especially the one to make long-lasting friendships around the country. Both my wife and I have commented on many occasions that no matter what city or state we visit in the United States, we probably have at least one IMA family member there. I envy today’s young members because they will build relationships not only in the United States but around the globe as IMA expands its reach.

For a while I was concerned about our future, but I don’t worry any longer because I know that we have a true IMAer in Jeff Thomson at the helm. So my advice to our student members is simple: Learn the technical material from the professors at your university, and then take advantage of the hands-on experience that participation in student and professional chapters can provide. What you learn today from IMA will benefit you forever and a day. **SF**