



THE NORTH CAROLINA CHAMBER
PROUDLY PRESENTS ITS

AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED CITIZENSHIP TO

THOMAS E. SKAINS

FORMER CEO OF
PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS

After a long hiatus, Tom Skains has finally started playing the trumpet again. Skains grew up an aspiring musician, serving as lead trumpet in his college jazz ensemble, touring with the Tom Jones Band and playing with The Temptations—quite the resume for a college music major who grew up in a household brimming with Big Band and World War II melodies.

And while his love for music never waned, an eventual business degree and a Houston-based internship during Skains's second year of law school redirected his aspirations toward the natural gas industry. He clearly made an impression; fresh out of law school in 1981, Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation (which Skains refers to as "Transco") hired him on full-time as an attorney in the areas of natural gas supply, rate and federal energy regulatory matters.

Skains quickly rose through the ranks at Transco, ultimately serving as Senior Vice President from 1989 to 1995. Upon the sale of Transco to Williams in 1995, Skains decided to accept an offer from Piedmont Natural Gas and relocate his family to North Carolina.

“ YOU’LL HEAR A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY ‘YOU CAN TAKE THE BOY OUT OF TEXAS, BUT YOU’LL NEVER TAKE THE TEXAS OUT OF THE BOY’. HOWEVER, I LOVE NORTH CAROLINA AND WOULDN’T CONSIDER LIVING ANYWHERE ELSE. ”

After a mere seven years, Skains became President and Chief Operating Officer at Piedmont, and one year later was named Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer—a far cry from the musician who played the trumpet to help pay his way through college and law school.

Skains’s passion undoubtedly contributed to his success at the helm of Piedmont Natural Gas. One of his greatest accomplishments, he says, is his work with the Piedmont Pride initiative, which focuses on “the right people getting the right results the right way.” As part of this internal campaign to create a “healthy, high-performance culture,” every Piedmont employee participated in leadership training, maximizing employee potential and adding value for customers.

“I believe in leaving a place better than you found it. If we all did that, imagine what we could do,” he says. These values have always been embedded in the Piedmont philosophy, he adds. “Our first CEO believed that if you build your community first, you build your company.”

In the spirit of improving the community, Skains acknowledges Piedmont’s transaction with Duke Energy in 2016 as one of his greatest accomplishments. The transaction added Piedmont’s 1 million natural gas customers to Duke’s existing customer base.

“I knew this would create superior long-term value for our customers, shareholders and community,” he says.

Skains now serves on the board of directors for Duke Energy, BB&T Corporation, National Fuel Gas Company and Champions for Education, a nonprofit benefiting the First Tee and Teach for America programs. Daily, he continues to put into action the principles that guided him throughout his professional career. A firm believer in the Golden Rule, Skains devotes a great deal of time to the American Heart Association, United Way and American Diabetes Association.

His other guiding principle? “I firmly believe in working hard and playing hard,” he says. During off periods, Skains might be out golfing, quail hunting or traveling with family and friends.

As a matter of fact, just prior to the interview for this article, Skains said he was dusting off the trumpet and practicing again.

“It’s a work in progress,” he says.