

## EDWARD ORDOGNE JR.: ELET ALUMNUS FINDS NICHE AT NOPD



If Edward Ordogne Jr. appears perhaps a bit reserved about his accomplishments, it's because he is a humble and a spiritual man who credits his path "to the glory of God."

Once this 42-year-old New Orleanian shares his inspirational story of struggle and success, the pride and enthusiasm in his voice can't be contained. Neither can his deeply felt gratitude for the people, the program, and the college that have helped him realize his dreams.

Ordogne credits the strength of his family for helping him rise above the challenge of growing up as the third son of five children in the Desire Housing Project. "It was a tough time, a tough environment," he explains. "But Mom and Dad raised us to strive for perfection always. I was inspired by that."

Ordogne's parents imparted to him the importance of a solid education base on which to build a career and a life. "I knew people could be destroyed for lack of knowledge," he says. "I didn't want that to be me. I wanted more."

Over a decade ago, Ordogne was working as a water service investigator for the Sewage and Water Board, but found that living paycheck-to-paycheck, with no opportunity for advancement within the division, was a dead-end.

With no hesitation and no regrets, amid the challenge of balancing a marriage and fatherhood to five children, Ordogne made education his priority and entered college in 1997 with determination. He inspired his wife, too, to return to school.

"We were in our thirties, but we were like college sweethearts," Ordogne reminisces. "Our first few semesters, we took classes together. I'd carry her books for her to class." Later, when his wife pursued Business Administration and Accounting and he was in ELET, he loved walking her to her seat before class and studying with her at home.

Ordogne initially placed into development classes at Delgado, but his enthusiasm led him to excel in them and, though perhaps overzealously, plunge head-first into ELET. He chuckles: "When I was first enrolling, I saw this ELET class, and thought, 'that's what I want to do, so I'll just take it.' I didn't realize there was a natural progression of classes, that I couldn't just jump right into a class like that from the start."

Ordogne recalls sitting in class and listening to other students responding to questions, using industry terms he'd never heard. "I didn't know what they were talking about," he says. Ordogne almost lost his motivation. He gathered his books after a class and told Mike Nixon, ELET associate professor, that he was ready to give up. Nixon wouldn't hear of it.

"These other guys are already working in electronics, and they're here to finish out a degree, but don't be intimidated," Nixon told Ordogne. "You're just the one who belongs here. You're why Delgado is here: to give everyone an opportunity to learn and achieve. We're here for you."

Ordogne didn't give up, and with the guidance of instructors including Ramon Ariza, ELET department head, and Nabil Abukhader, ELET associate professor, he obtained his Associate of Science degree in December of 2002. "I am who I am today because of them," Ordogne says. "The individual support, encouragement and attention I got from them have helped me beat the odds and realize my goals."

Today, Ordogne is an electrical/electronics technician for the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) Electronic Support Section. He is an integral part of a team of technicians whose primary function is to issue and repair handheld police radios; install and remove mobile radios; install and remove mobile data terminals (i.e., in-car computers); and, with another section of the NOPD, install and remove video camera equipment.

"This work is critical to the daily function of the NOPD," explains Lt. Simon Hargrove, Ordogne's supervisor. "These radios and computers are officers' lifelines, the heart of our communication system, their connection to the department and each other. They are essential to our dispatch so we can meet the needs of the community."

As the section is key to the mission of the NOPD, Hargrove says Ordogne is a key part of the mission of his section. "Ed has truly distinguished himself, despite being the 'newcomer' on the team. He has done this through both his enthusiasm and his diligence. I think Delgado's ELET program gave Ed a jump-start on success in his career because it gave him confidence, encouraged his thirst for knowledge, allowed him to be driven and reinforced his meticulous nature."

Ordogne says things are great now. "I'm happy in my work, and I'm not stressed," he says. "I've been married 20 years and am still madly in love. My kids have learned it's never too late for you to go to school. My daughter is going to college now. I've told her, and I'd tell anyone, that education is a priority, and if I can do it, anyone can."

"I'm not better than anyone else," Ordogne insists. "I just had the advantage of Delgado. Delgado is about hands-on learning, and not just theory, but application. Professors Nabil, Ariza and Nixon all went above and beyond to teach me, in and outside of class, because teaching is more than a job to them. Their first concern is always the well being of their students."

Ordogne stays in close contact with his Delgado professors and colleagues. He never hesitates to contact them to explore solutions to unusual problems that arise at work or share insights of his own. And, just as generously, he gives back to the college that gave him so much by serving on the ELET department Advisory Board.