

ASHRAE Leadership Recall (formerly Leadership Recalled)
Transcription

Interview of: Billy R Manning

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Interviewed by: Pat Ivesdal

Pat Ivesdal

Hello. We're here in Atlanta, Georgia, the home of ASHRAE. And today at the 1996 winter meeting, we are fortunate to have one of our past, our present past presidential members, Mr. Billy Manning. He was president just last year 1994-95 the big centennial year. Billy. Glad to have you with us.

Billy Manning

Good to be with you.

P.I.

We'd like to hear a little bit about your background. Can you fill us in on the early life of Billy Manning.

B.M.

You mean way back when.

P.I.

Way back when. When little Billy was born.

B.M.

I was born in 1934, which makes me about sixty two this coming year. Roanoke, Virginia. I was the only child in my family. And at a very early age, we moved from Roanoke, Virginia into Newport News, Virginia, down along Chesapeake Bay. And we spent much more early childhood there. And after which we moved back to Roanoke, because of my father simply was laid off from a job and spent another year and Roanoke and then returned to Newport News where I proceeded to grow up and go to college. Rather interesting to me the fact that probably the reason I went to college was primarily as a result of a four foot, eleven inch mother who insisted that her son to get an education. And my interest at that time was drafting of all things. And later the vocation that I despised doing is drafting. But I went to Virginia Polytechnic Institute, majored in building construction, building technology, not a mechanical engineer. But building technology deals with all aspects of buildings including your HVAC systems. After graduating from the VPI, I went into the service, military service for two years. And came back and worked for the Newport News Ship Building ? Company for several years designing ships which I found to be very interesting. One of the things that I learned in my early adult life was the fact to never say never because before I had graduated, before I had got out of the service, I made a comment that I'd never worked for the Newport News Ship Building and ? Company nor would I work for the federal government. My second job was working for the federal government. So my first two jobs are places that I said I would not work. After which, in that particular case I was at Fort Lee with the facilities engineer for three four years. And then went with the corps of engineers in Washington, DC for a period of time. And after which I relocated to Birmingham, Alabama and was on the? University staff, involving

continuing education. And as Director of Professional Advisory Organization. I then became a building official in Tampa, Florida for a short period of time and people really questioned why I left Florida, because I went back to Birmingham after about nine months and became associated with building codes with ? Building Codes Congress International. And I've been employed by that organization ever since. A sort of a summary of a summary-

P.I.

How many years does that make with your current employer?

B.M.

Current employer has been twenty one years.

P.I.

Twenty one years.

B.M.

Been a rather interesting, yeah.

P.I.

What would you say were some of the highlights in your college years that led into your career? Can you, it just it was a happenstance?

B.M.

Probably happenstance but I think that certainly four years at the university told me that I did not want to do drafting. It was interesting though because the first job I had Newport News Ship Building ? Company I was put on the drawing board. And I was involved in designing or drawing up ship structure at that particular point. And then after about a two month period of time, they transferred me over to the hull tech, which then I became a designer which I found much more interesting than just doing drafting.

P.I.

Now did any of that involve the HVAC designs of ships.

B.M.

To some degree but it was primarily dealing with the mechanical aspects. For example I was fortunate enough to design the anchor handling equipment for the carrier Forrestal. As a young engineer I felt, gosh this was a heck of a responsibility to have

P.I.

What period of time was that?

B.M.

Uh let's see. That was '58-'59.

P.I.

'58 and '59. That was getting into Vietnam? Was Vietnam starting yet, no that was little-

B.M.

No that was shortly, the Korean conflict was beginning to slow down at that period and fortunately I did not have to go to Korea. I did all my service in the military in the states. But I was one of the fortunate ones who did not leave the states for that and I only served two years in the service.

P.I.

Now, I interrupted your thought on your career in the navy?

B.M.

No, career in a shipyard. But I designed the anchor grounding equipment and I went back several years after I left the company and I known that they had taken the ship-owner sea trial. And my first question was did they lose the anchor and they said no and I said well it was a damn good design.

The reason I said that I found out later on the reason I was selected to do the design for this particular anchor, for an anchor handling system for the Forestall was that the previous design had failed and they lost the anchor at sea.

P.I.

That would be a pretty expensive loss, wasn't it.

B.M.

I can assure you it was a well over design.

P.I.

And then now we're leading into the HVAC career yet?

B.M.

Yeah because at that point when I went with the corps of engineers I was involved primarily dealing with some of the fence activities, dealing with the nuclear aspects and I got into that at that time design, they call it an environmental design but it had to do with designing shelter space for people to occupy for fourteen days and so forth to assure that you had proper ventilation temperature and so forth for survival now. Not comfort, for survival for that period of time. And this lead into specially courses and so forth and my involvement into the HVAC industry.

P.I.

You received more training then? Because of the career that you went into-

B.M.

Yes, and started teaching some courses.

P.I.

And then you started teaching too. That left you rich for a career in the in the heating and ventilating.

B.M.

Well I'm not sure it was so rich but at least it gave me some qualifications that I could proceed in that area. Then got into the code aspect.

P.I.

Were you married at this time?

B.M.

Shirley and I were married when I was twenty one just before we got into service. And we were married in Bedford, Virginia which was her home. And then I went into the service for my short six week training period and she joined me in Fort Bevel and has been with me ever since.

P.I.

So you've tread down the HVAC road together then.

B.M.

Yes.

P.I.

That's right and do you have children Billy?

B.M.

We have one son. He is born in '56, makes him forty years old this year. He is a doctor, MD and he works in an emergency room. One of the interesting stories and Shirley would probably object to me telling this but I must. We've got a place near where he lives and he and his wife came over for dinner a few weeks ago. And opened a door and I saw our daughter in law with a strange man. And it was our son but he had shaven his face and he had also cut his hair. The first time we had seen his face since he was about seventeen years old. But I also asked him much earlier if anybody showed any concern when it came in emergency room with his long hair and beard. And he replied, dad, he said if they do, he says they're not sick enough to be in the emergency room. But he shared with me a story this time, the fact that one of the patients told one of the nurses that they did not want him to, did not want to see that doctor and she said why. And of course this was after he had shaven and said because he's too young.

P.I.

It's amazing to watch your family grow up like that. Now I want to hear about your experience with ASHRAE. How did that happen?

B.M.

Well, it occurred primarily because with my code work we were quite interested in the late 60s early 70s with the energy standard. One of the requirements we had at that time was to incorporate energy code provisions in our codes. And I was selected as one of the principal developers of the energy code within the United States for the three model codes. And as part of that we began to track the development of what we know now as ASHRAE standard 90-75. And as a result of that tracking of the 90-75, I quickly became a member of ASHRAE and became involved in that process. So as many of the people my age you find that we became associated with ASHRAE in a lot of cases because of energy or as energy conservation. We went on to actually convert 90-75 at that time to an energy code and published it. And we called it the model energy code for lack of any other better terminology. Using many of the requirements and that was spelled out in that document 90-75 at that time. And then we developed educational courses to accompany that and presented a number of courses throughout the United States. Chuck Sepsy associated with us on those programs and he was a president I think one year after we began our association. And he really was directly responsible for my involvement, initial involvement in the society itself.

P.I.

So he was a definitely influence on your-

B.M.

And this is really, in my case, I may be one of the unique people because I came into ASHRAE from the top side. I did not come in from the grassroots side.

P.I.

What chapter are you affiliated with?

B.M.

I'm affiliated with the Birmingham chapter.

P.I.

And that's in region seven?

B.M.

Region seven.

P.I.

But you're not active in the chapter level?

B.M.

Well I have not been active in the chapter level in terms of holding committee positions nor chairing any of the officers or been up through the chairs.

P.I.

You haven't gone up through the chairs.

B.M.

But probably for the last nine to ten years, I had been attending the board meetings and then the advisors. And been able to provide I think a tremendous input to the chopper because of my position being as a board member of being associated with the standards committee. So I was not active as an officer, I was not active as a committee person, but I was certainly active in my involvement with the chapter.

P.I.

How about the society level? How did that happen, that you got into the-

B.M.

Well as I mentioned, through my relationship with Chuck Sepsy, I got several committee appointments fairly quick. TCs and some substandard project committees. And very shortly after that-

P.I.

What year was that then?

B.M.

Oh, gosh, I think it was '67-'68, somewhere in that range, might have been '69. But I had been with standard project committees for a couple years and shortly after that, I think do to Chuck's input, I was elected to the standards committee. And so I served on the standards committee through vice chair and also chair of that committee. And from there I served another year tech counsel. And you can see that my growth in ASHRAE was rather rapid on up through at a society level, on up through to the presidency. And then I was elected to the board of directors by the board in this particular case, to fill the unexpired term of Al Utech who was elected to the board and serve something like a period of six months and decided that he no longer wanted to, could not no longer be involved with the society at that level of commitment. And so then I served to fill out his unexpired term and was elected on my own. And then after two years then I was elected to be a vice president. During a period of time I served on member council. I served on the technology council. Liaison to the education council. And all the committees associated there.

P.I.

You really got involved deeply with ASHRAE then from the technical side of ASHRAE.

B.M.

Yes.

P.I.

And that gives ASHRAE its richness when you have people from both sides, I believe. Don't you?

B.M.

Yes, I do but I also think that I learned a lot that initially, when I was dealing primarily with the standards committee, I did not recognize the significance of grass roots and the chapters. And I have to be more actively involved with the Birmingham chapter. I realize that it's essential that we marry both the

grassroots and the society level committees together. To keep those separate I don't think we would have as strong a society as we have. I almost look at technical committees and some of your standard project committees being very similar in respect to our chapters in a way because they are doing some very well, grass root basic work for the society like our chapters are. So therefore I think both parties or both aspects of society will serve by those two organizations. The technical committee and the standard project committees along with chapters.

P.I.

Do you feel that this is starting to come together more since you started with ASHRAE or do you think it's always been there and you just weren't aware of it?

B.M.

I think it's always been there. I don't think I was aware of it and I don't think, I think there are many people still not aware of that particular, those who are involved at the society level but also I think there are people at grassroots, do not realize the importance of our standard project committees, the people who develop our standards, who develop RTCs, our technical documents and the involvement in the handbook and so forth. So probably ASHRAE could do a little bit better job in educating the technical committees and the standards committees in dealing with the grassroots and the chapters and vice versa for the chapters in terms of what the technical committees do and also the standard project committees.

P.I.

Yes, kind of like a getting to know you type of a meeting or maybe getting to know you committee for technical and chapters. That's right. That's an interesting idea. Your year as president, that won't be too hard to remember will it. You may never forget it.

B.M.

That was really a great year and it was truly an honor to be selected to be or be elected as a centennial, and very humbling, to be the centennial president. Really got to do some very, very unique things of course placing the plaque in New York university at the meeting site of the first ASHRAE meeting. And being able to know that that plaque will be there on, I think it's Broadway and Third, under lights that you can always be able to see that. The opportunity to open the time capsule which had been placed by one of the two early organizations, emerging Society of Refrigeration Engineers in Philadelphia at the Franklin Institute. And less than a year later to go back and place their own time capsule at Franklin Institute.

P.I.

Did you make the decision of what to put in the time capsule or was that a committee decision?

B.M.

Well I had made a decision I was not going to take that responsibility. I realize a lot of responsibility goes along with the position of president but I felt it would have many, many better things if we had a committee appointed. So I used the historical committee and the centennial committee to have their input with the centennial committee actually deciding what finally was put in there. I think two of the most interesting contents. Were two vile, one being R 11 and one of R 12. And we had to get special authorization from EPA to actually place those in a time capsule and we have proposed that it will be open in 50 years from now. And then the centennial ball in Chicago. What a terrific event. The whole centennial celebration, not only the ball we had a reenactment of the first meeting of ASHRAE and these

actors did such a super job, I think of setting the stage and giving us a history of the society at its first meeting.

P.I.

Yes, I was in attendance at that and I appreciate all the talent that went into putting that program on.

B.M.

And it also gave me my opportunity to debut, as an actor, my being the individual from Alabama who suggested rather a lengthy name for the society, which no one seemed to like. But I just think that that set the case. And then the ball was just super.

P.I.

It was.

B.M.

The laser program, the lights, the decor. Everything was really, really super.

P.I.

Do you remember the bank, what in New Orleans?

B.M.

Ah yes.

P.I.

That was, was that the start of your presidential year?

B.M.

No that was the winner meeting. That was Neil Patterson who I understand you may have an opportunity to visit with later.

P.I.

But then came in on the-

B.M.

Well he and I, because at that time I was president elect and I think Neil should relate to this, but with a motorcycle and a Mardi Gras atmosphere, that was really a super interesting, I think, experience also.

P.I.

Yes I'm sure your year as president was quite a year. Did you and Shirley travel much in this year?

B.M.

We traveled to Europe on two occasions. Shirley went with me on the first. We went to the REVA meeting, which was an Oslo. We came back and visited with IIR in Paris and then we came back and visited with our ? friends in London. And then at the invitation of the Turkey Heating, Ventilation, Air-conditioned Association there, incidentally they took care of all my expenses. I participated in the initials show and annual meeting that they had there. And then later on in the year, my year, which was I think March, April time frame, Shirley and I did an around the world trip in 15 days. I don't advise that to anyone else. But we went to ?, Japan where I gave an update on the activities of ASHRAE. Visited with the leadership of five of our Far East chapters in Singapore. And then went to an international show that was put on by ISHRAE which is the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, Air-conditioning Engineers and also a chapter of ASHRAE. From there we went into, of all places Saudi Arabia and I expect Shirley was one of the few women that year ever to go into Saudi, particularly as a visitor. And then we went to Dubai and then from there to Cairo where we chartered the Egyptian

chapter and also a student chapter at the same time. And in India we also charted the first India student chapter. And then we came home.

P.I.

Do you keep a diary of all the places you go? Is there a staff member along to-

B.M.

No, all my memories are up here and very fond memories but the unfortunate part that you do forget the names and faces of a lot of people. But I think I also visited something approximating, it was 25-30 chapters. And I think the thing that's so impressive to me was the people and the respect that these professionals, internationally and nationally and Canada also and their regard for ASHRAE, it's just mind boggling, and their feelings for us. And really I think that's what makes ASHRAE, it's the people.

P.I.

The people.

B.M.

The people.

P.I.

Now you've already mentioned Mr. Sepsy?

B.M.

Sibs.

P.I.

Sibs. I'm sorry.

B.M.

Used to do building service engineers.

P.I.

Can you think of any other particular ASHRAE people that have been very influential to you?

B.M.

I think a very, very dear friend was Lou Flagg.

P.I.

Mr. Flagg, yes he is a-

B.M.

Lou Flagg is just a, I don't know, he's almost been mom mentor as I've gone up through the various positions within ASHRAE. And I always felt that very free to contact Lou. And I felt so comfortable with him being chairman of the Centennial Committee. And he's just a true gentleman. I think Milt Garland has been an inspiration to me during the centennial year. Tell you the interesting story about Milt was the fact that he was at the unveiling of the plaque in New York and then when we open the time capsule a month later in Philadelphia he was there. Now Milt is one hundred years old at the time.

P.I.

Yes he is.

B.M.

And come to find out he had been between the time we unveiled that plaque and the time we opened the time capsule, he had flown to the west coast and to Philadelphia. And he's just really a super individual, a tremendous inspiration. I attended his hundredth birthday party and he stood in a receiving line for something like 45 minutes to greet everybody. He left the podium early and said don't

anybody rush but I want to be here to thank everybody for coming. And he stood in an exiting line for another 45 or 50 minutes. This was a gentleman who's a hundred years old.

P.I.

Yes he is amazing. I had the honor of meeting him myself and I agree with you he's an amazing person and he might, I don't think he's here I haven't heard.

B.M.

No he's not here at this meeting but he said he had been to Atlanta a week earlier. And that he certainly will join us in San Antonio. And there's other people. I'm even going to mention Neil Patterson because Neil and I tracked each other through the standards committee and he actually was chairman of standards committee before I was. And a lot of his experiences and his leadership qualities whether he knows it or not, passed on to me.

P.I.

Helped you with your job as president. What would you say to a young person today starting their career in HVAC and possibly getting into ASHRAE?

B.M.

Well I would certainly encourage them to join but not only join but become involved. I think too often we have young people who would join a professional society and they expect everything to be provided to them from the society itself. The unfortunate part about that if you don't contribute you do not get anything. And I think through the contributing and through your involvement, I think you can actually you can maintain your professionalism in terms of the state of the art, the developments that's occurring in your industry, you can get the leadership, you can be able to have opportunity to speak and to make programs and it's an excellent training program I think for young people. And it's something that, you know, they've got to recognize that they've got to give up some of their time, they've got to attend the meetings but if they do it'll pay you back more than forward tenfold of what you contributed.

P.I.

Do you remember any humorous events in the last few years that you can relate to us about ASHRAE? Any meetings or has there been anything that tickles your funny bone?

B.M.

Well I tell you one that occurred when a good friend Damon Gowan was president. And Damon liked to indicate to everybody that it was a senior officers which at that time was the president elect, president, and treasurer who was actually had the power of the society. And so I instigated a little action and to prove the point the powers was in the hands of vice presidents and we had passed some motion at one of our EXCOM meetings that was rather motherhood and country and apple pie and it was typical motion would always pass. And so the four vice presidents got together and decided we're going to make a motion for reconsideration. And we did and we passed that motion to reconsider. And then we reconsidered the motion and failed it. And Mr. Gowan was sort of speechless. And we simply said, Damon, now you know where the power of the society lies. It's with the four vice presidents. I'm not sure who the other vice presidents were, but I must thank them for participating in that little activity.

P.I.

Did Damon enjoy the point that you were trying to make?

B.M.

No not at the time.

P.I.

Not at the time. Now he looks back and thinks it was kind of a good idea maybe.

B.M.

So there's a lot of humor in it and good fellowship.

P.I.

There are. The board meetings, there's always somebody that has a comment to make that keeps the humor there once in a while. What other interests and hobbies you have outside of ASHRAE?

B.M.

Well I enjoy playing golf when I get time. And incidentally Damon did get back at me because he was Master of Ceremonies in San Diego and the society did give me a check to buy some golf clubs and Damon whispered as I was going by he says, take my advice and take golf lessons. But I enjoy golfing. Shirley and I purchased a country place about four or five years ago and we spent a considerable amount of time up there working on it and getting it in order because I think we were probably trying to move up in two to three years. Those are generally the types of things that we enjoy, that I enjoy doing.

P.I.

Yes I'm sure that because of ASHRAE and your career you don't have a lot of spare time for as many hobbies as you might have later on.

B.M.

Well I'm beginning to develop for additional hobby because of boating because we have on a lake and fishing and things like this. And I started a retirement program last year when I became president of a ASHRAE and it's such that I spend a little over one hundred days of the year in the office. And the remaining time is mine so I do have a little bit more time to do those things that I want to do. And I it worked very fine to me because I stay professionally active but at the same time I have time for myself and for Shirley. Not sure Shirley would agree with me but.

P.I.

We'll find out later. I would like to skip back to your term as president. Now I can tell you but I'll let you tell me your theme as president.

B.M.

Oh gosh. It was standing on the shoulders of giants and that was tough to determine my theme but once it was settled I was really pleased with it because it recognized all the people who had gone before us in the past year and recognized the fact that they had built that foundation, their shoulders, that we could stand on. And I really felt good about my theme. It gave me the opportunity to really thank those people who've done so much for the society that. It was super.

P.I.

I agree with you. I think that was a wonderful theme for the centennial year. And I think that a lot of the chapters use that in their newsletters and in other words you generated a lot of ideas for the chapters and you may not even realize that you did that. But you did.

B.M.

Well I think one reason that I generate a certain interest by the chapter is because they had to have minimal points in history that year in PAOE to qualify. And I was intentionally done. But I was amazed that, I think something like 90 percent of the chapters actually qualified in the history category which I thought was outstanding for the centennial year.

P.I.

Yes and you were responsible for getting a lot of the chapters to write their histories and they'll be thanking you later on down the road because that's important for each chapter just like we're trying to record you into history, it's important that the chapters record themselves into history.

B.M.

I'm sure glad you're doing this today rather than 20 years from now. That'd be very difficult to try to go back.

P.I.

Can you think of any major issues that affected outside society while you were president?

B.M.

Well the issues of ozone depletion, global warming, indoor air quality, energy conservation were still there. And they are today and they will continue to be. And I think we were able to accomplish some things during my year for example, the ASHRAE standard 90.2 was approved and 90.1. the ? additions. We actually published some code like documents for those energy standards. I think one of the more pleasing thing to me was and I started this several years early and it did come to fruition during my term and that was a beginning the development of a standard for indoor air quality on commercial airlines. And that is under way and are I think now in the process of actually recruiting the chairman and committee and so forth. So I think that's very important because ASHRAE standard 62 relates to buildings and is a little bit different environment than you have in a cabin of aircraft. And so that was accomplished.

P.I.

During your term.

B.M.

Well the start of it was, not completed.

P.I.

I don't think anything ever gets accomplished in a year in ASHRAE.

B.M.

I learned that very same.

P.I.

You learned that early on. Do you have much connection with back net? I know that's another big issue today.

B.M.

That issue was finalized during my year and also on this began to test it with, I think it was 20 or 30 different industries to make sure that before we actually published it that it was a document that should be and would accomplish, it would be an applicable and appropriate standard for that year. And the other thing was that we got our first ISO standard that we had suggested to be developed and that was the building environmental design which will use as a basis of the development of that standard in national standard organization. Our standard 62 in our energy standards along with ASHRAE standard 55. And our 100 series standards and 90 standards. And we were named as a secretariat for that broad based standard and it had its first a plenary type meeting out in San Diego at the completion of my term which I think involves one of my themes that I deal with, was total building design. And if we talk about the total building environment design, that's part of that overall concept of total building design.

P.I.

That lead us almost up until this year doesn't it

B.M.

It sure to does.

P.I.

Now what would you, looking beyond this year, would you say you can see ASHRAE, the future of ASHRAE. Do you believe there's some changes going on?

B.M.

Most definitely. I think because of the improvement in technology and the areas of communications and computers it's just unbelievable what's going to be the potential for ASHRAE, I think in the future. I think we still must work on replacement refrigerants that are, you know, totally safe from the standpoint of fire, chemically safe from the standpoint of being hazardous to the human body and also not going to deplete our ozone or create global warming. And we still haven't got the perfect refrigerant, but that's something we've got to continue to work on and our research funds are going to be used for.

P.I.

And you plan on being active in ASHRAE after your work that you've done so far?

B.M.

I plan on being active but not near as active as I was during my president year, yes.

P.I.

Yeah it's pretty draining on a person. That's right.

B.M.

But I'm very fortunate. One of the things that the immediate past president has the opportunity to do is serves as vice chair and then chair of the nominating committee. But I think more important that he serves as a member of the long range planning committee and then vice chair and chair of that. And certainly he will have more opportunities, let's say help or develop a guide for ASHRAE in the future and I think excellent opportunity.

P.I.

That's an important role to play too and takes a certain background to be able to do that and you certainly have that background.

B.M.

Well if you served as president you have that background.

P.I.

There's a real highlight today and that's Shirley and she's here. Would you come over Shirley and make a comment about your role as an ASHRAE spouse and the ASHRAE presidential spouse as well.

Shirley Manning

Well I definitely believe in it and admire the talent and the efforts that have put forth, the dedication is just awesome. Whatever you sacrifice, and you know it's just for a year, you gladly do it. And if you believe in something, as we both do in ASHRAE, you feel like it's just a small contribution. It's a small year considering the bigness of ASHRAE.

P.I.

Well, thank you Billy, Shirley for being here. It's been a wonderful interview. I'm Pat Ivesdal, member of the Historical Committee and I was certainly a privileged to have this time with you today.