

ASHRAE Leadership Recall (formerly Leadership Recalled)
Transcription

Interview of: Bill Goodman

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Rod Kirkwood

This is a leadership recall interview with Bill Goodman who was president of ASHRAE in 1999-2000. And we'll find out how and why he became part of ASHRAE and what a great job he's done. Would you give us a brief biographical sketch of your life.

Bill Goodman

I can be very brief. I was born and to the family that, my mother, my father both had never been to college and so one of the goals they had for them and I guess and for me was to go to college and my dad said and oh by the way when you go to college you're going to be an engineer. So I didn't really have a choice but I was lucky I was pretty good in math and so that's kind of, but I learned you, because of the fact that my family, my mother and dad were, this was during the Depression, Rod as you can appreciate this, very few families had a lot of money and my parents did not have they were didn't have, they had enough, we had enough to eat and that sort of thing. My dad always had a job but it wasn't a very good job but it was a blessing in disguise quite honestly because I had to learn to work when I was young and start working probably when I was six or seven years old I never quit because I had to, I had to do it and then it you know after a while it becomes a kind of part of your culture so. But that's in a nutshell and I thank the Lord every morning I get up that I was born a white Caucasian male so because I think that that gives you some advantage in just being a male and the race that I have and that sort of thing.

R.K.

Okay, you were born, you got there and obviously you went to college.

B.G.

I went to college. One of the things that my father got interested in politics when I was, when I was in school when I was and you know K-12 school, I guess in junior high school he got very much involved in politics, not as a politician. He didn't really run for office, other than the school board but he had a friend that wanted to run for Congress. And they kind of made a deal that if that happened and he won then I would get an appointment to West Point and that would solve the problem of course of having to pay for me to go to college so I got all geared up for that and thought I would get my get the appointment but he appointment was supposed to be when I was, after I graduated from high school. Well the problem was my father got transferred to out of state out of, this was Oklahoma. He got transferred out of state and so I tried to figure out some way to become a Oklahoma citizen even though I wasn't eighteen years old yet but the congressman wouldn't buy it so I didn't get the appointment. But as it turned out that too was a blessing because the class I would have been in which

was in the first part of the Korean War and they got wiped out I mean a lot had a heavy casualty so you know it's always a blessing and I always had that, try to have an attitude of something doesn't go right that there's going to be something good there to happen. But I went to college, I went to University of Arkansas and studied mechanical engineering and graduated in four years and I worked in the summer time. Worked while I was in school to supplement the income I needed. By then my father's income had improved so he could help me a lot more than he originally thought so it turned out okay.

R.K.

And you went into the consulting business?

B.G.

Well you know the Korean war had started and I had gotten a, I had gotten a commission from R.O.T.C. so I went to head and went into the service and stayed in a couple years and got that out of the way and then I started my business career. My professional career I guess you call it and I stayed in the Army Reserve for a number of years but then I got out when I got my own business I decided I needed to get out because I just couldn't afford to get called up again and walk away from business that I just started so that was, but I started out early in my career after I got through with the service, I went to work as a sales engineer for a manufacturer who manufactured oilfield equipment and this was process equipment and I worked in their engineering department for a while and then I went to the field as a sales engineer and wound up in their Houston office. And then the company started having financial problems and the guy I worked for came to me one day and he said Bill he says you know you're young and you've done well with us but this might be the time for you to bail out. So I took the sage advice and left. So that was beginning of my career in the consulting business in a way.

R.K.

Well that gives us some background so we can go on from there then. What was your first job in the HVAC industry?

B.G.

Well you know when I went, my first job we got into, this oil field processed equipment, got into thermodynamic and heat exchanges and all that sort of thing so that's kind of a that was my introduction to it. And plus the fact that my father's background had been, he had been a, he later on ended up in that in the supply business, the heating, air conditioning, plumbing supply business and I joined him for a short period of time and that's kind of how I really got started HVAC industry, with that experience there. I met some contractors who encouraged me to do work for them after you know if I would leave my father's business and I chose to do that and that's really kind of how I got started consulting business. I really had never worked for another consulting engineer. I just kind of, I kind of winged it for a while with the help of contractors and some architects and people like that and ASHRAE that's where ASHRAE entered my life, was when I first got involved with HVAC, ASHRAE, I decided that ASHRAE was the only way to go and it was a must in the life of a HVAC engineer so I joined in 1960.

R.K.

So it was a good entry.

B.G.

It was a good entry, yeah.

R.K.

Can you describe the industry at the time that you entered it?

B.G.

Well you know that was, that was the kind of the mid sixty's and air conditioning per se was being introduced into residential, I think at that time you know there wasn't too many central systems for residences, although I wasn't that involved with residences but, and I think that the, you know modern air conditioning systems for buildings at that time were a lot like package equipment and then you know they had more and more designers were going to hydronic equipment and hydronic systems and that sort of thing. And it just it was a, you know it was a big change in our industry and where I live in the you know the mid-south, air conditioning is an absolute necessity. At least we think so now. When I grew up we didn't have air conditioning but now we all think you know, it's a necessity and I suppose it is.

R.K.

Well you didn't have the same concentration of people in building's either.

B.G.

That's right, that's right, that's very true.

R.K.

The business was a different kind of business then.

B.G.

That's very true.

R.K.

It wasn't done in confined spaces. Okay, let's see, how and when did you get started in ASHRAE?

B.G.

Well as I said I joined in 1960 and when I got started in the consulting business was about 1960 and I was not living in Little Rock at the time that's where I live now. I was living over in western Arkansas and I lived there for I guess about three years after I got started in consulting business and then I moved to Little Rock and one of the vendors came by to see me one day and said you know we've got a, ASHRAE has a chapter here and I'd like you to go as my guest and so I did and when I walked in the room of the ASHRAE meeting I noticed that all the top consulting engineers were there. These are the people that are most revered in our industry as far as being experts and the best reputations and I thought to myself must be something to this ASHRAE stuff I'm going to have to get involved in it more than I have up to this point. So that was that was the beginning of it.

R.K.

Well it was good for ASHRAE too that you became interested in it. Okay, let's see what's our next question. What was your goal in your presidential year?

B.G.

Well you know my theme was, I was very concerned, I've always, I came up on the I guess you say the membership side of ASHRAE and not the technical side and I was always concerned because I'd look at, I'd look at the number of members we had and we've seen, it was flat and I thought that I felt like there was a potential there if we could get more international people involved. People outside of USA and Canada. If we could because I knew there was interest there and we just had to, we had to find some way to make that happen and that would allow ASHRAE to grow and so that was my big theme and my big thing I want to do but it was going to cause a change with ASHRAE. There was no question about it. There was, there was resistance to it because some of our HVAC comrades that live in other countries

do not have the resources that we have and I knew that you know the cost of membership is going to be difficult, communicating with them is going to be difficult but we had to do it and we had to we had to change our mind about how we think about members outside of the North American continent. And so that was, that's what I felt like was needed to be done. How will it happen, I don't know we'll have to wait and see.

R.K.

Well it already has happened.

B.G.

Yes, I know it has but

R.K.

It simply proves you were right.

B.G.

I don't know about that but I feel good that I think the ball started, we had a certain number of people brought into the idea and I think it's going to, you're going to see some great results out of bringing in international people, people outside of the outside of the North American continent.

R.K.

What were some of the major issues facing the industry at that time?

B.G.

You know Rod, it's probably much like it was when you were president. 90.1 was still a hot issue. ASHRAE standard 62 was very much, was very much in the limelight. We were, you know the tobacco industry was upset with us. The utility people were upset with us, the natural gas industry particularly. And so and the electrical industry as well. And so it was a, it was a balancing act really for the Board of Directors, for the president, for the staff to try to figure out some way to make, you know update 90.1, update 62 and make this happen. And make this, you know, improve the environment in our buildings in so doing so.

R.K.

Plenty of challenges.

B.G.

Yes sir. Yeah, absolutely.

R.K.

Well let's see what's next. What events changed ASHRAE at that time?

B.G.

Well you know I think, as I mentioned the 62, I mean the international thing, I could see when I was president as I made my travels around the world and visited different organizations that I felt like had potential to form a chapter. I encouraged them to do that and I felt like that that was maybe a contribution I could make. I mean they were already close to doing it anyway and all I try to do is shove them over the edge. You know they wanted to do it but give enough incentive to do so. But I don't know whether ASHRAEs changed a lot, didn't change that much and in certainly in one year but it, it's you know, the issues that that you had are probably not that much different from the issues that I had. And you know we're, we write these standards and their consensus as you know and you're not going to get one hundred percent consensus. There's going to be some people that are going to be unhappy because their ideas were not incorporated in the changes that are made and so I heard from a lot of

people that were unhappy but I kept reminding myself and reminding them that you know these standards are based on consensus and it's not just consensus of ASHRAE, it's the public consensus. And I have always felt like that was the right answer now. Whether or not they agreed with me I don't know because I still see them in the halls and they still bend my ear about it.

R.K.

Okay. What events changed the industry?

B.G.

What events changed this industry? You mean changes the HVAC industry?

R.K.

Yeah.

B.G.

You know I think just off the top of my head I'd say controls. I think, you know pneumatic controls. I'm sure when you know when you got started when I got started the pneumatic was controls and now we've gone everything, the computer has changed everything. Quite honestly I mean you get down the bottom line it's the computer has changed our industry, it's changed the world is changed I guess everybody's industry. But it certainly has changed ours.

R.K.

I think that's a good answer. What has ASHRAE meant to the, in the goals of the industry?

B.G.

You know, ASHRAE as you well know is the most revered industry, or most revered society, technical society there is in the air conditioning, you know picture. And every place I went and that's that was a story that I was told and it's true. People are so proud to be ASHRAE members no matter where you go in the world. USA, Canada, Mexico, you know Brazil, any place you go. ASHRAE is the organization and I didn't realize this until I became president and traveled that it was that was the way it was but boy it is.

R.K.

Okay. What people started, what people were the ones that influenced you as you went along?

B.G.

You know there was a consulting engineer in Little Rock name Kent Pettit. I don't know if you remember Kent or not. Kent is deceased now and Kent was, he was probably the most respected HVAC engineer in the state and certainly maybe one the in the country, I don't know but he came to me one time and asked me if I would be, would be interested in being a regional vice chairman for research promotion and so I said yes and I was selected by the by the region and that kind of launched my career from the chapter into the region and into the region into the society. And of course Bill Collins and you know Bill Collins. Bill Collins is a great friend of mine and he had a lot of, a lot of faith in me. And of course my wife. You have to have an understanding wife to be an active ASHRAE member believe me because you know it if you really get involved with ASHRAE as if you have and I have, you're gone a lot you know and gone a lot there's a lot of weekends you're not around and you can't always take your wife with you. So you have to have somebody that really, really believes in you or it wouldn't happen and if she had not, my wife had not been supportive I probably would've done it

R.K.

Well I've got a couple more questions is all. What advice would you give to a young person entering the HVAC industry?

B.G.

That's easy, that's an easy question. You've got to get involved with ASHRAE. You've got to get involved with ASHRAE. I don't mean just, I don't mean just be a member. You've got to go to the meetings, you've got to go to the CRCs, you've got to go to the Society meetings because that's where you learn and that's where you learn from the experts. It's a chance to talk to other people that, er, that have the same problem you have maybe the same career path you are and there's no other way to go. The best engineers, the best HVAC engineers are those that have been involved with ASHRAE. Now that doesn't mean you have to be president of ASHRAE but it does mean that I think you need to be really involved with the chapter and with the region and if possible on the society level because there's so much, so much knowledge out there that you can take advantage of it if you don't do that you're hurting your own career.

R.K.

It's nice to have already met the guy who's made the mistakes so you don't have to make them.

B.G.

That's true, that is very well put and I agree with that.

R.K.

Well one last question. What was your major accomplishment for your year as president?

B.G.

Well I think, I think the international thing. I think the international thing was probably the one thing that I, you know the problem with 90.1 and the problem with ASHRAE standard 62 had existed for a long time and it probably will continue to exist but I felt like the international thing, I tried to launch ASHRAE into, think about you know the global economy that we're in now and to think in those terms and change the way we do business so that we can bring in a larger number of people in the organization because the hunger is out there. The hunger internationally is out there to be an ASHRAE member.

R.K.

Well I guess that's all we've got.

B.G.

Thank you Rod, thank you very much. Appreciate you asking me to do so.