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ASHRAE President 2017-18



I'm living in Denmark with my wife, Rita. We have four daughters and five grandchildren. One is on the way.

And my whole education took place in Denmark. I went to the Technical University to do my master's, and there I did my PhD also.

We are very fortunate. In Denmark, education is free. That's one of the things you see from your taxes.

I came into the industry by chance, and that was a deciding moment in my career.

I had done the bachelor's, three years' study, and then we had a course in surveying, and if you had that course, you could go to Greenland, which is a part of the Danish kingdom, and do surveying in the summertime as a student job, and it was really well paid.

So a colleague of mine and I applied for getting this job, but we didn't get it.

But then my professor, Fanger, who is one of the Hall of Fame of ASHRAE, asked me if I wanted to do a student job for him and run some testing on thermal comfort with human subjects.

Since then, I have not done anything else than working with indoor environment.

What intrigued me was, here, I could work with people, because basically what we were looking at was, what is the best indoor environment for people?

So you work with people, you work with something you were able to explain to everybody, because everybody is exposed to the indoor environment and has an opinion on it.

So I think that was very intriguing.

So it was not hardcore system, mechanical thing. It was also a very human thing.

You could say my first job was a PhD because a PhD in Denmark is paid like a young engineer, so it's really a job you are paid for.

But after my PhD, I continued at the university as a research engineer.

But a couple of years after I finished my PhD, I started part-time in a company manufacturing instruments for measurement of the indoor environment. I was helping build up a new branch for that.

And that led me to, in the '90s, go to the head office in the US.

So I went to the US with my wife and one of the children in the '90s. We worked out in the Boston area.

But then I wanted to do something different, so I went back to academia and went to Virginia, to Virginia Tech, where I was teaching architects about indoor environment, heating, and cooling.

But as it didn't come up with a tenure track for me, I said, "*Now I'll go back to Europe.*"

And then I went to Germany.

My PhD at that time was on radiant heating and cooling, so I went to a company there manufacturing mainly floor heating and cooling systems and was head of R&D.

And then finally, my old professor called me back to take over his position at the university.

So in 2004, I went back to the university, and since then have been a full professor there.

My ASHRAE career started when my professor said, "You should publish some of your results from your PhD in ASHRAE."

So in Denmark, we didn't have, at that time, ASHRAE chapters, and so in this regard, ASHRAE was not known.

We had our own HVAC society built up, you could say, doing the same thing as ASHRAE, organizing education, seminars, writing handbooks, and I was active there.

But for publishing research and presenting it, I was told, or my professor suggested, "*Go to an ASHRAE meeting.*"

So I went to my first ASHRAE meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1978.

And that's where I started my membership, so next year I will have been here 50 years, and I have only missed one meeting since then.

Well, the presidential year has been probably one of the most exciting years in my life.

And many people from the outside think, "Oh, you're only president one year." Yes, but it takes you about nine years where you're involved in the leadership before you become president, so one year is enough.

At that time, the two presidents before me were focusing on our strategic plan. So we each took part of the strategic plan as our headline for this presidential year. Mine was extend, so extend the community. I wanted to make ASHRAE more global.

So I was very much focusing on that ASHRAE should look at the global community and not mainly focus on the North American community.

So during that year, it gave me then a chance to visit a lot of chapters in the US and, of course, all over the world. I can tell you, I think I traveled 250 days that year.



But traveling was not uncommon to me. Before that, I had several years where I was traveling 130 days. So that was not... But I came to a lot of new countries, and fortunately, my university told me it was okay because I asked our president, *"I'm now going to use almost a year on ASHRAE."*

And he said, *"No, that's a very good credit for the university that you can work as president."*

And being only the number two at that time from outside the US, that was also a reason I said I have to work on the global thing.

What ASHRAE gave me, not only through the presidential year but during the years, is that you build up a network, and you learn leadership.

I had done some leadership by being chair of different standards committees and so on, but that's something you learn by doing, going all the way up to be president.

And of course, the result of all these activities is also that I have been in all 51 states and visited more than 100 countries.

I managed to make ASHRAE more global.

There had been some attempt earlier to make it more global, and I think one time we had a publication or so on how ASHRAE should become global. But that was more, being global was everybody else should do the same as ASHRAE, and that's not my meaning of global.

Global is to work with other societies around the world, and we have the same goal of good indoor environment, lower energy consumption, and the impact on the world.

So I think I succeeded in making a change that way. And that was my goal, and I think partly I succeeded.

So what we got, we got a new region in Europe that had been part of a bigger region before that. And then we got a new office in Europe and got one in Dubai also.

So as I said, if you are in Denmark, at that time, we didn't have student chapters, we didn't have other ASHRAE local organizations.

So what I told the students was like I was told also, is that's a good place where you can meet other people who are interested in the same as you. You can build up your network. Try to become a member.

If you have a local ASHRAE organization, do that, but you can also be a member and come to the annual meetings.

But I think to go to the annual meeting is a big thing. You need a sponsor. It's expensive, and traveling and so on.

But eventually, most people, what you see is, get hooked by ASHRAE.

One thing about students also is they often look for student jobs.

In a small company, you may be able to work with many sides of what a company is doing, and you will learn more.



So that would definitely be my advice to some of the younger students.

There is a life outside society, and there's also a kind of technical life outside the society. I know ASHRAE is making standards, but there's two worldwide big standard organizations where I have been very active. So it's still, you can say, part of my work.

The other things I have been doing, I have always been very interested in sports.

I have played competitive football, real football, European football, and badminton. It's a sport which is not well-known in the US, but worldwide, a small country like Denmark has been one of the leading.

So that, of course, triggered also to be interest.

I was running marathons and so on.

But nowadays, I'm more watching the sports and go ride on my bike.

And then I have a big wine collection. I'm interested in wine, so I think I may have wine enough for the rest of my life. It may be some friends come and maybe empty it, but wine is definitely my interest, and good restaurants.