

DONALD G. COLLIVER

ASHRAE President 2002-03



Dick Worth: Good morning. I'm Dick Worth, member of the Jacksonville, Florida ASHRAE Chapter. I'm on the Historical Committee, and I'm also Region 12 Historian. This morning, I'm privileged to be able to talk with Don Colliver. Don, welcome. Don was the 2002–2003 president of ASHRAE.

Don Colliver: Thank you. Good to be here, and it's, you know, I've looked at these tapes and looked at some of this over the years, and I just feel honored to be able to sit here and talk some with you this morning. Well, we're glad, it's good to be here in cold Chicago.

Dick Worth: Yes, that's for sure. Let's start off with just history about where you were born, where you went to school, where you're still at school and family.

Don Colliver: Well, that's always a great, great place to start. I was born and raised on a small farm in South Central Kentucky in the Mammoth Cave area. Grew up on, grew up on a dairy farm. And my father was a vocational agriculture teacher for 40-plus years. Was an educator. He was born and raised during the Depression era and was in World War II and so forth. And so, my mother was a home economist, and after I went to school, then she started teaching. So, I come from a background of educators. My father taught for 40 years, and I have one brother who's, five years older than I am. So, he was born right after World War II, and I was born in '52, so that was basically the post-World War II baby boom at the end of the post-World War II baby boom, and was as I say, born and raised on a farm and worked on the farm all through and going up and going through school, and we had a greenhouse, paper routes and so forth to make money for college and so forth. And then I went to the University of Kentucky and did a BS in, agricultural engineering, with, area specialty dealing with basically the environmental area as far as dealing with doing environmental control in various agricultural-type buildings, and then did a master's work at UK also, University of Kentucky. And from there I went to Purdue University and got my PhD at, Purdue, dealing, or working with, basically, solar energy and, and green drain. And from there, upon graduation from there, I then went to the Biosystems and Ag Engineering Department teaching and research at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. And have been there now since '79. So, what's that? 26 years.

Dick Worth: Great. That's good to have a long career at one place that it has.

Don Colliver: Things evolve over time, but basically the research area has been dealing with energy usage in buildings, and looking at all different types of buildings, from agricultural

buildings, where we're talking about greenhouses and confined animal housing, and then, oh, maybe 25 years ago, it evolved into dealing with residential buildings, and that's kind of when I got involved with in- or involved with ASHRAE. And so, since that time I've been involved in dealing with air infiltration, doing looking at trying to look at air infiltration in smaller structures, and then also from that evolved into looking at design climatic conditions. Design dew point data was some of the research that I did for ASHRAE research project. And then that evolved into basically my research team did the design weather conditions. That was in one of the recent or the update to the Handbook of Fundamentals where we actually went in and greatly expanded the number of stations and so forth of build of design conditions.

Dick Worth: Don, when was your first exposure to ASHRAE?

Don Colliver: First exposure to ASHRAE, I guess, was in '79. And I never will forget. At that stage of the game, what I was doing was looking at research, and I was a new researcher and so forth. And I was aware of ASHRAE with courses coming through, and I had a copy of the fundamentals and so forth that my instructor had gotten for us in my undergraduate work, and then, um, when I started my research career then. I started looking at various areas where to deal with trying to get what I felt was the best information related to energy and buildings, and of course it came to ASHRAE, and I guess the first meeting I went to was Kansas City meeting, which was out in well, I guess that was the late '70s. And that was my first experience with ASHRAE and is actually going to one of the professional meetings and sitting and listening to all the technical sessions. And I was, frankly, I was just in awe of what all was going on. And the other thing is that there was a notice on one of the boards that was talking about one of the regional dinners. And I says, "Well, hey, there's somebody from my region here, and I'm in, as it turns out, Region VII is what it's called." And so I went to this dinner, and I, there were maybe 30 people there at this restaurant and so forth, and of course I didn't know anyone, but was felt very much at home. And had a great dinner, had a good time and so forth, and then after dinner, this fella stands up, I didn't know him from Adam, he stands up and he starts going around the room and calls every single person in that room by name and tells where they were from, what they were doing tell them what they were doing within ASHRAE. And I said, "Something is clicking here. There must be something right going on with this organization." And, you know, I just, and to this day, I can remember sitting in that dining room and watching this fellow, and as it turns out, it was the Director and Regional Chair, and he just knew everybody in the room. And I remember on the plane back, I wrote him a note, and I says, "You know, something is good about this organization. When someone knows this many people and knows this much about them, that it is a true people organization, and it is the- the focus is on helping people." And at that stage of the game, I was hooked.

Dick Worth: You happen to remember who the DRC was? Billy Manning. Okay, I've met him, too.

Don Colliver: Billy Manning, as in and as it turns out, for many years after that, I would go to the dinners and well, and still go to the dinners, but every DRC goes in and calls everybody in the room by name and tells what they're involved with, so it's a great experience.

Dick Worth: I agree. I was part of the Region VII CRCs and annual meetings and things for quite a while myself.

Don Colliver: So that was my introduction to ASHRAE.

Dick Worth: Don, did you have any research projects funded by ASHRAE?

Don Colliver: I did. I was involved in dealing with, as I said earlier, with looking at air infiltration in residences because that's where my research area was, even though I'm in the Ag-Engineering department, which is involved with various areas, but one of those areas is dealing with environmental control buildings, whether it be for plants in greenhouses, confined animal housings, or structures for homeowners. And so, I got involved in residencies and looking at the energy involved in, energy usage in residencies and started looking and saying, "Well, one of the big unknowns and one of the big variables is the air infiltration." So that's kind of where my area of interest was focused, and so, looking at that, and then I got involved with Standard 90.2, the residential energy standard. And so that was another area that I got involved in in the standards arena within ASHRAE. And so, from there, in parallel, I was running some ASHRAE research projects dealing with component air leakage, and so that got me involved more in the research area of ASHRAE. And along with that, then the Standard 90.2, and from there, I got involved in the Standards Committee and worked for several years in the Standards Committee and so forth, and served then as chair of the Standards Committee, and, of course, went through all the ramifications and issues dealing with standards and the way, at this stage of the game, standards were evolving to a certain extent. And from then I had a little stint as working with the Program Committee, and served on the Program Committee, and from there I went to DAL, and then after DAL, then as Vice President, and then on up through the chairs.

Dick Worth: Right, did you promote ASHRAE to your students at the University of Kentucky?

Don Colliver: Not only did I, yes, I still do. Okay. Because I'm still teaching courses and that's one of the areas that I think is probably one of those areas that is probably underutilized. And the involvement of students. And today's students are changing from what they were several years ago in that they're more focused on what am I gonna do five years down the road? Or what am I gonna do in my job? And so not only then and even now is that that is a big part of my classes is that, and it's one of the great programs that we have, the activities of working with students and the student membership. So, my students then become student members of ASHRAE, and as such they get the Handbook of Fundamentals and so forth. And actually, our local chapter's got a great program that the student pays half the bill and the chapter pays the other half. So, the students are very involved and enjoy doing that. And in fact, they, you know, they're interested in what kind of jobs they're going to be able to get out after school. And so that's one of those big driving factors, I think, for our students.

Dick Worth: So, it's more of a hands-on approach. You're giving them reality, or glimpses at reality of... I, as a student I really didn't know any engineers. And I was into engineering because of the math and science background, and I had a fear because of that, and it looks like you're taking away some of the fear by exposing them to potential careers.

Don Colliver: Well, and certainly that is part of it. I guess part of that is that I missed part of the part of it while I was in college. I did, basically, it was a co-op with the, with the rural electric cooperatives. And during the summers, I would go out and do load calculations. There's a this was a time when electric heat was in existence, and we were seeing heat pumps coming on board, and so the co-ops that I worked with were saying, "Well, in order for us to make sure that our homeowners are satisfied as a service, we will go out and we will do the load calculations and do the recommendations on what the size of equipment, those types of things." So, that basically is how I got started in it. And it was more of a hands-on approach. And I never will forget to this day is listening to the, my office was right outside where the, the bill collection, or where the people came in, pay their bills. And I never will forget the little old ladies that would come in and, and complain about, you know, I'm not able to pay my bills. What can I do? And so, and that's made a major impact: anything that we do does impact people. And then what we need to be doing is doing what we can to try to make people's livelihood easier and better. And so that then, I try to take to our students and say, "Okay, you know, these types of things and the decisions you're making you're making recommendations. You need to give the recommendations to your clients and let them make the decisions because they're the ones that are going to have to live with them over the years. But you need to give them the best options and to the best of your abilities."

Dick Worth: Don, earlier we talked about your family your mother and your father, your brother. How about your current family? Can you tell us a little bit about those people?

Don Colliver: Always proud of that, and yes, I have two sons. I got married right before I went to do my Ph.D. work at Purdue. And then in '81, and that's another interesting story when our first son, my wife, was due in early July. In 1981. And as, I didn't know at that stage of the game how always you count on the end of June being an ASHRAE member or being at an ASHRAE meeting. I can tell from your grin, you know what's going to occur. But so, this so happens to be that I was living in Lexington. The summer meeting that year was late June in Cincinnati. And this was right before cell phones came on board: '81. And so, I drove to Cincinnati every day and told the room monitors, I says, "This is kind of what's going on. My wife is now nine months pregnant. If I, if you if you get a call, I'm gonna be sitting here." And so, I drove back and forth to the ASHRAE meeting, and in anticipation of the birth of my first son, and he was, as it turned out, was late by three weeks, so, but so he was born in late July of that year, but so then and I now have two sons. The second one was born about a few years after that so and they are now one of them is out of college and going to seminary, and the other one's a junior in college now. My wife is a retired guidance counselor in the schools. So, we truly come from an educator family.

Dick Worth: Don, were there any specific goals that you had while president of ASHRAE? And how do you feel that you met those goals? Well, that's a tough question.

Don Colliver: It well, it's not as the tough part is did you meet those goals? Now, I think one of the things that as we go through it, I felt very honored to be the president of an organization when I first started, and that was only emphasized later on the honor associated with it as I traveled. And I think that's one of the things that a lot of people don't realize how extensive it is, is that you basically are working for ASHRAE for a year. And I know I had 61 meetings or conferences in 48 weeks that I attended. And there was never an occasion when there was not a great deal of respect for the person that was wearing the ASHRAE President's pin. And so that was even a greater a greater sense of honor of knowing the respect as I as I traveled the world, the respect that the world has for our organization and the integrity that our organization has is held in such high esteem that to represent the organization was a truly great honor in order to do that.

And so, I guess every president has a certain series of goals that they're looking at and looking toward, and I know one of our recent presidents was talking about this organization is like a huge battleship. And you are dealing with a rudder and trying to send the battleship in the direction it takes it has a huge momentum associated with it, and you just try to do what you can to try to shift that to a certain direction or keep it going in the direction that it's in. But certainly, I think that there are goals that they each president has as they're going through that. Certainly, the goals that I had were and my theme that year was, and- and this is the presidential year of 2002-2003, and my theme that year was building a better world. And I guess one of the things that my inaugural address was, I first showed a picture that was, that was, probably unusual. And when I put it up on the screen, I looked out into the audience, and I saw a lot of weird faces, or a lot of faces, no, I didn't see a lot of weird faces. I saw a lot of faces that, that were giving me a strange look, because the slide that I had on the screen was one of a cemetery, which is kind of an unusual thing, but, and it did what I wanted it to do, and that drew some attention.

One thing that I didn't get into earlier was the that my father had a great love of and translated that to me, and that was genealogy. And I have traced our genealogy now back to about 23 generations. But the slide that was showing was I did a sabbatical while I was or did a sabbatical in England. And while I was there, I was able to using some of the work that my father did, lead me to some areas, and then while I was there, I was able to do a little bit more. But I was able to go to well, my family came from Oxfordshire, Oxford, England. And I was able to find the old parish records of my, of my ancestor, and the church where my ancestors were. And I asked to see the parish register and came and they, they brought me, they took me back into this little darkened room, you know, so that you don't have bright lights that, that degrade the paper and so forth, and put on the gloves, and they came out with this, with this book that was a leather-covered or covered book and, and it was, you could tell it was very, very fragile, and it was actually the parish register. Of this little church, Benzie, outside of Oxford. And I opened it up and looked at it, and there on the very first page was the was the christening of my grandfather

seven generations ago. And so, I kept turning the pages very, very slowly, very brittle paper and so forth, and, and I noticed that all the weddings were witnessed by this Joseph Colliver, and I thought that was kind of strange. And then all of a sudden, the handwriting changed, and I looked at it, and it said, "Died and buried this day, Joseph Colliver, clerk of this parish." And so, what I had actually been seeing was by the handwriting of my grandfather seven generations ago, seven great-grandfathers ago. And so, the picture that I showed in my presidential address was the cemetery where my grandfather was buried.

And I took that and I said, "Okay, what can we do as an organization so that seven generations downstream from me can people in those generations say, 'These people built a world that was good for me.'" Thus, my theme that year was building a better world. And as emphasis, my theme was trying to look at what can we do as an organization worldwide so that our great, great, great, great, great grandchildren will look back on us and say, you know, they left the world a better place than they found it.

Whether it be in energy, whether it be environment, whether it be in education, whatever it might be. And so that was kind of what my theme was that year, and as such, then, we had a lot of emphasis on education; we had a lot of interest in looking at environment. At this stage of the game, sustainability was just getting on the forefront. This was very close after the events of 9/11, 2001, so that was greatly impacting what was going on at that stage of the game. And then also energy was a big component. And I guess when I was looking at it, and with my background in standards, I said, you know, ASHRAE and its standards work, you know, in the early or late part of the 1900s, or the 20th century, what we were doing is ASHRAE was asked to put together some energy codes. And we did that. We raised to that challenge. And that's what we've gotten a great deal of respect from.

But since that time, what has happened is that our energy standards have been just bare minimums. And so, what I challenge the society to do is say, we need to develop a set of a suite of documents that will tell us how to build buildings better. What can we do to build buildings that will save 30% less energy or 50% or 70% less energy than what was that bare minimum standard? And those are some of the types of things that that we've been working on since then, so those are, I guess, some of the successes of those years.

Dick Worth: And I think we've seen a lot of follow-ups in other organizations, like the LEED Initiative.

Don Colliver: The LEED Initiative certainly is a big part of that. And certainly, now what is happening is, as we are putting together and as we are developing guidance on how to build buildings that do use 30% less energy than what is called for in 90.1.

Dick Worth: One last question. I know that you appear to have had a good time. If you had everything to do over again, would you do it any differently? Or has it just been a totally fun ride and you'd keep everything the same?

Don Colliver: Well, you know, it's always, very interesting to say, if you had it to do over again, what would you change? And I guess there certainly are always things that you might change, things that you might like to do better. I guess being able to slow down and be able to actually have the interaction with the people. You meet so many great people. And ASHRAE is so much about the people and the family of ASHRAE. And what has happened is, is that I am as close to the people in my, that served on EXCOM with me, I'm closer to those people than I am many of my own family because I spend more time with them. And ASHRAE is a big family, and I think that there are some tremendous things that we that we could do, but I look back on it and I say, "Man, we are really doing some great things." And I think that what we're lacking now is just the imagination. We're not lacking, we might say we are lacking money or we're lacking talent or time or people and so forth, but we're just lacking the imagination to say, "How can we take these things and move forward with what we already have?" And as we move forward, I think that we will find that, truly, the great things we're doing will continue.

Dick Worth: I agree. Well, I appreciate it, Don. It was a pleasure talking with you today and look forward to meeting you at future ASHRAE meetings.

Don Colliver: We will certainly enjoy that over the years, because it that's one of the great things that both my wife Becky and I have greatly enjoyed, and she has too. Is that not only have I have a whole new set of brothers and sisters, she does the same with all the spouses of the ASHRAE members. It's been a great, been a great time.

Dick Worth: Thank you very much.

Don Colliver: Thanks for the opportunity.