

SHEILA J. HAYTER

ASHRAE President 2018-19



Sheila Hayter: I grew up in Manhattan, Kansas, was there in the '70s, which is part of my story because I grew up in the time when there was a lot of focus on the energy crisis from that era and, awareness building around the environment and things like that, and so my whole growing up was being exposed to those types of things. And on top of that my dad is an engineer. He was, at the time, a professor at Kansas State University in mechanical engineering and was really did a lot to help us build awareness and to build appreciation for our impacts and how we use energy and our impact on the environment. And one story I like to tell is he would change the thermostat in the house. There were no setback thermostats back then. And so, every time we went to bed at night, he would set the thermostat, get up in the morning, reset it, leave the house, reset it. He was always resetting that thermostat. And being in Kansas, it was hot in the summer and cold in the winter, so that thermostat was used all year long. So that just really, you know, helped me build an awareness about energy in general.

I became involved with ASHRAE in college. I was a member of our student branch and starting about my second year, about my sophomore year, I think it was, I was the program chair for our student branch. So, my first job out of college is I worked for an engineering consulting firm doing mechanical system design. I actually worked for presidential member Don Bonfleth. He was president in 1985 and '86, in Cincinnati, Ohio. I get to Ohio, start my job, and several months after I started is when Desert Storm started, which was one of our military conflicts in Kuwait back in 1990 and, which immediately put the country in a recession, which made it really challenging for a lot of people, especially, those in industries like consulting engineers where you're providing a service to other organizations. So it was hard. It was, we were trying to do our good work at the same time, the company was going through a downturn in their business volume. But my biggest takeaway from all of this is that Don Bonfleth, my boss, he was the principal, he had principles that if you're going to do an engineering Solve an engineering problem with consulting engineering situation in a building-built environment. You're going to do it right. And whether or not the person that hired you asked you to do things efficiently, considering the environmental impacts of the project, all of those types of things that were not important in the early '90s, if they asked for it, that was great, but they usually didn't because this was a recession. They didn't want to pay for extra. They didn't know that you could do these things without the project costing more. And he was like, "We're gonna do it right." And we did the analysis, and we thought through it right. And that kind of instilled in me this belief that, you can do good projects that save energy, that reduce environmental impact, that have these other benefits, that don't have to cost more.

So, my ASHRAE history is primarily on the society-level side. The first winter conference was in New York. I was ready to walk in the room, and at the I figured out which technical committees aligned with my interests and which I also felt like would, give me the kind of knowledge and network and things that I need in order to do my job better, you know, so figuring that out. Picked a few and walked in those rooms, and at the TC meetings at the New York meeting I said, "What do you need me to do?"

A couple years after being in Ohio, an opportunity came up for me to move to where I am working now, which I've been at for 30-plus years. And I moved to the Denver area. I live in Golden, Colorado, now. And once I moved to Colorado, I became engaged with the Rocky Mountain Chapter in Colorado, and I was the TIGA chair for a while, which was the predecessor to our Government Affairs Committee, and helped our chapter engage with public policy makers' discussions and, thinking about kind of issues our chapter could support locally and that sort of thing.

So, my focus during my presidential year was very much influenced by my career leading up to that point. And I work at a Department of Energy National Laboratory, and my whole career has been, starting out focusing on advanced energy systems for buildings and, since then I've, my career's evolved in many different ways. I'm more holistic now, where it's looking at larger energy systems and how buildings interact with, The greater energy systems that are out there. And so my career in ASHRAE has also been influenced by that, by that focus, that looking forward, that thinking about how our energy consumption and the impacts environment and how these energy systems interact with each other. And so, coming to the presidential year, my thing was, building a new energy future. And the idea was trying to help people in our society, in our ASHRAE society, appreciate that, buildings aren't just a box with equipment in it, and then you make this equipment work together, and now you have systems that's making a comfortable and efficient space for people or, you know, animals or plants or whatever you're putting in that box. But instead, that box is connected to everything else, and we're all connected, and you can especially look at it through, like, our electrical grid system, where it's an integral piece of the system. And how, on the outside of this box, there's, at the time this was a really new concept, things were changing rapidly. But the buildings industry, we weren't really appreciating that yet.

Where the change was happening was on the outside of the box. Instead of just electricity being generated and sent to the buildings to be consumed so the buildings were just using, but it was getting to that point where, in order to ensure a, a reliable and dynamic energy system outside of our box, we needed to have more interaction between what we were doing in the buildings and what we're doing to the other energy systems surrounding us. And so, the real focus of my presidential year was to raise awareness about that and to help our ASHRAE members understand, well, what's our piece in this, in this changing paradigm?

Part of my message was that, well, there had, like, three components to my message, and that's that we need to, we need to become aware, so we need to open our eyes and say, "This is really going on around us." We need to get engaged in that conversation so that we can position ourselves as being leaders and being experts in the space so that others see us as a resource and come to us. And then we need to take action, so we need to start. We need to do something right now.

What would I have done differently if I had had all the time in the world and all the resources and everybody, enough volunteer times where they could have put 100% of their focus on it and that sort of thing? I really would have liked to have built up our collaborative efforts with, on the utility sector side, a little bit more than we did. My daughter graduated. She has her mechanical engineering degree, and she's working for a consulting engineering firm and has for the last several years and is now starting to be in roles where she is managing her own project and she has teams of people and stuff. So, it's very fun to see that. And then her friends, you know, in that. So, what I tell them every time, it's, Use your resources. So, who do you know? What, and it's not just the people looking up but looking across, too. So, it's your colleagues can help each other. You people that you work with on a job site, maybe a completely different job, have experiences that you don't have. Learn from them. Learn from each other. Build a network. So,

it's that network that, together, you can solve problems so much faster and with more creative solutions. The more diverse thought you include in addressing a problem, the better solution you're gonna have at the end.

I have lived in Colorado for 30-some years for a reason. My interests and hobbies align with what are very stereotypical of the area. I spend a lot of time outside. In the wintertime, I alpine skiing is my happy place. I, it's just I like being in the mountains. You can't ski all year long because there's not snow all year. So, the other times of the year, I spend a lot of time biking and hiking and just being outside and doing that sort of thing.

What does ASHRAE mean to me personally? ASHRAE's been a part of my entire life. My dad was involved as an ASHRAE member from my earliest memories. So, we would go on vacation wherever the ASHRAE annual conference was. That's what we did. They, as they say, you get out of it what you put in, but if it, and you also get what you need out of it. So, it's, if someone needs, you know, soft skills development. I'm a better leader because I practiced at ASHRAE, and I keep, I always tell people it's, you can't fire a volunteer; at least, it's really hard to fire a volunteer. So, when I would screw up in my various roles being, in my various leadership levels, from being subcommittee chair of a TC back in my early career up until being president, you can make mistakes. And so now I have all of these people that have helped me. I want to help them. I want to enable them. I want to help them be successful in what they're doing and what they're trying to achieve personally and, in their careers, and as friends and as a community. It truly is a, it's a community.

The future of ASHRAE is it's going to continue to expand as it is now, where we are going to see a lot of growth. I think we're going to see a lot of growth internationally. And I think ASHRAE is, as an organization, our leadership would really like to see, like, more ASHRAE standards used globally and things like that. Well, I think we're getting positioned to make that happen. There's a lot of, what is ASHRAE going to be focusing on as we move forward? ASHRAE it's a great organization because there are so many people that provide so many experiences and, the creative thought that comes together. And will help be a leader in this transition to AI and whatever's next. It's going to continue to be a leader as we're figuring out how do we help minimize the impact of our industry on the greater environment the global environment in general as we work to decarbonize or whatever's next. All these pieces are coming together. We know what's coming and we are set up to be able to provide the resources for it, which is great. I think we'll do good.