



## An Interview with George Jackins

Society President (1998-1999)  
Birmingham Chapter President (1974-1975)

ASHRAE Historical Interview  
Interviewed by John Jeffcoat (Chapter Historian)  
on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**ASHRAE** - George you have been involved with ASHRAE for a long time in a lot of different roles. Can you give me your background on how you ended up in the industry?

**George Jackins** - When I was a senior at Georgia Tech in 1958, I interviewed with a gentleman for a job with the American Blower Division of American Standard. He hired me and told me that it was a requirement for me to join ASHRAE. I hadn't graduated yet, so I joined ASHRAE as a student member at Georgia Tech. At the time, there was no student program in ASHRAE at Georgia Tech. Nonetheless, I joined as a student member in 1958. After graduating, the job involved me moving to Birmingham, AL. From there I became active in the local ASHRAE chapter.

**ASHRAE** - Within the local ASHRAE chapter, there are four roles that our membership is typically drawn from: consulting engineers, manufacturers' representatives, building owners, and mechanical contractors. Outside of being a building owner, you have filled all of these roles at different points during your career, with the large majority of that time being spent as a consultant. How would you compare your times in those three roles?

**George Jackins** - Well, the happiest time was when I was a manufacturers' rep and I sold mechanical equipment to contractors.

**ASHRAE** - Why was that the case?

**George Jackins** - Being a rep allowed you to be involved in the marketing and the specification writing, as well as helping contractors and engineers. This is a really important part of our industry. As a consultant, on the other hand, I became disillusioned as we did more design work and work for architects. I didn't enjoy that at all.

**ASHRAE** - Where did your career path take you after this?

**George Jackins** – I ended up taking a different path that lead me into the consulting engineering business. The primary focus of my initial consulting business was energy management. This was a very hot topic in those days with ASHRAE. Over time, the energy management kind of faded into just plain consulting work. Today on the other hand, energy management is a basic skill as far as mechanical consulting engineers are concerned.

**ASHRAE** – Was it just happenstance that you got into energy consulting not long after the OPEC oil embargo?

**George Jackins** – At that time, there was a lot of focus on energy conservation and the HVAC industry was sadly neglecting this. I would say that through ASHRAE there was a movement towards trying to develop a way of saving energy. I just happened to be there at the right time. Birmingham got involved with the chapter immediately.

**ASHRAE** – So after you left Georgia Tech in 1958, you got involved with ASHRAE in Birmingham relatively quickly. How many members did Birmingham ASHRAE have at that time attending meetings?

**George Jackins** – I don't recall how many people came to chapter meetings, but the Birmingham chapter has always been a very active group of people in our industry. As a matter of fact, I would say in ASHRAE Region 7, I would say that we were a leading force in getting people to think in terms of saving energy.

**ASHRAE** – What is your opinion on why the Birmingham chapter of ASHRAE has done so well as a chapter as compared to some of our peers? Do you think it was just the leadership or was there anything specific to Birmingham that made it a little easier for ASHRAE to be successful here?

**George Jackins** – I think that the people in Birmingham were very active in ASHRAE and that activity reflected in the strength of the chapter.

**ASHRAE** – As a former society president of ASHRAE, you obviously have a very exhaustive history of service to ASHRAE. Can you give us an approximate trajectory on how you went from being president of the local Birmingham chapter of ASHRAE to becoming president of the entire society?

**George Jackins** – Well, I became the chapter president for the year of 1974-1975. After I served as chapter president, I continued to stay active in the region in committees, including the Energy Management Committee. It had just started in ASHRAE at that time and I ultimately became chairman of the committee. I was active in the regional activities at the society level and served on numerous committees (membership, energy management, etc.). Through my activities at the regional level, I ended up getting elected as a society level Director-at-Large on the Board of Directors. After being Director-at-Large, the next position is the society vice president, so I moved from Director at Large into that position. I served as vice president for two years, which is pretty typical. After the two years as a vice president, I became treasurer. Once you become treasurer, it pretty much means that you are in line to become president within a few years. After this, I became president-elect and then president.

**ASHRAE** – You were society president during 1998-1999?

**George Jackins** – Yes.

**ASHRAE** – How time intensive were your obligations during that time period?

**George Jackins** – You don't do much else. You pretty much decide that you are going to spend a year being president of ASHRAE. As president of ASHRAE, I represented the society all over the world. I traveled to Singapore, Argentina, England, Australia, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, and to the Netherlands. Closer to home, I visited 49 of the 50 states, as well as all the Canadian provinces minus one. I was pretty much travelling all the time.

**ASHRAE** – So you were on the road non-stop?

**George Jackins** – When you become ASHRAE president, that is your job for the year. I still had a business and it was still going. I was around enough to make sure everything stayed together, but there was no question that there was a lot of sacrifice during that year.

**ASHRAE** – I have noticed that incoming society presidents always have a platform that they try to advance during their year as president. What was the focus during your presidency?

**George Jackins** – One of the things that grew out of my year was the ASHRAE Learning Institute. I wouldn't say that it was my idea, but it was something that I championed and supported during my year as president. This has grown since then into a major part of the society. I was just one of many people involved, but being president, I was able to make sure it got attention.

**ASHRAE** – As someone that has been in the industry for a long time, have you noticed any trends or see anything on the horizon that may affect ASHRAE in the years to come in a major way?

**George Jackins** – I think No. 1 would be energy conservation. It has become more and more of a factor in our industry. No. 2 would be commissioning. You know building commissioning has become so important now and nobody even thought about that back in my days. This is a very good trend. There is no question that we need to improve the quality of the systems that are being installed, their reliability, and the ability to predict what the energy usage will be.

**ASHRAE** – As someone with a long history with ASHRAE at the chapter level up to the highest levels of the society, what would your advice be to younger leaders in ASHRAE today?

**George Jackins** – Learn all you can! It is as simple as that.