

# LEADERSHIP RECALL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Past President, Baltimore Chapter 2011-2012

1. Would you give a brief biographical sketch of your life? (Place and date of birth, family size, early schooling, higher education, employment background outside of the HVAC industry, current family)

Born in Ft. Meade Maryland in 1960. Father was a career Marine and mother stayed at home, two (2) older sisters and a younger brother. Married with a blended family; six (6) children; four (4) girls and two (2) boys ranging from 28 to 15 years of age.

Even though my father was a Marine we stayed relatively local in the Quantico, Dumfries, Woodbridge and Springfield area of Northern Virginia. Currently live in Brookeville, Maryland on a small horse farm.

Went to Woodbridge Senior High School and participated in cross country, indoor and outdoor track. Graduated from Clemson University in 1982 with a BS in Engineering Technology.

Have worked in the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) field since graduating from college.

2. What attracted you to engineering and the HVAC industry?

Not really sure, math came really easy to me all along so I migrated towards a major in engineering.

At Clemson, my degree involved fluids, thermodynamics, central plants, refrigeration, controls and other aspects of the HVAC field. While some of it was tough at the time, the majority of it came relatively easy so it was a good fit for me.

3. What was your first job in the HVAC industry and where did it lead?

After graduating from college, a friend from college that lived in Parkton, Maryland got a job at Gipe Associates when they were in Timonium as a designer. They were looking for additional staff so I interviewed and was hired.

I was only at Gipe Associates for ±three (3) months when Ross Murphy Finkelstein (RMF) was formed. I went with the founders of RMF a few months later one of their early employees figuring I could grow with the company.

After eight (8) years with RMF, I moved on to my current company, Spears/Votta & Associates, Inc., where I am a major partner.

4. Describe the industry at the time. What were the challenges that you and your colleagues were facing?

At the time, there were none of the software programs that are staples of today's engineering firm, CADD, BIM, load calculations, energy modeling various selection software, etc. Things like the internet, email, scanning, etc. didn't exist. Everything was done manually, load calculations, equipment selections and drawings.

At that time, you had to learn to size and select equipment and manually draft on vellum with lead and "ditty bags". Early in my career there were "advancements" in drawing production, such as pin bars and mylar. The production of documents was ever progressing and has continued to this day.

The design process was fairly consistent with "rules of thumb" that had become the standard design tools. Just learning how to select specific equipment and mesh everything into a system were the challenges at that time.

5. How and when did you get started in ASHRAE?

I became a member of ASHRAE in 1984 and at that time there was contingent of very active members. I attended meetings to meet people/network and wasn't very interested or knowledgeable about the committees or board members. This allowed me to meet the people that I have dealt with throughout my career.

As time went on, I saw how valuable the ASHRAE experience and participation is to your career and became an active member. I initially worked on some committees and eventually moved through the Board to become the Chapter president.

6. What was your ASHRAE chapter, regional and Society experience?

The Baltimore Chapter has always had great leaders, been well organized and been a very active Chapter. That made it easy to want to become a part of the Chapter leadership. The experience during my entire participation in Chapter leadership was

exceptional. Those around me always had the goal of improving what was done before them which is what make this Chapter the best in the Region.

Almost every Past President has said “You get more out of it than you put into it.” While that sounds cliché, I don’t think this is a better, simpler way to state the overall benefits of being involved with the Chapter. You get to know others in the field exceptionally well and these are the individuals you deal with at all levels throughout your career.

I was only involved with the Region due to the required interface associated with being on various committees and the Chapter Board. Everyone associated with the Region was very committed to ASHRAE, was a significant resource and provided the needed assistance to help the Chapter succeed.

My Society level experience is limited to the Information that ASHRAE provides. ASHRAE is essentially our “bible” and the information and guidance that ASHRAE provides is critical to keeping on top of your career.

7. What were the major issues facing ASHRAE during your presidency or your time serving in subsequent positions?

The Chapter President prior to me was Jason Kaduk and he did an excellent job. There were really no significant issues that needed to be addressed.

As a Board, we had pursued several young engineers and manufacturers’ representatives to chair the committees and eventually move up through the Board. We had enough interest to put individuals in committees where they had interest and could excel. This was in its infancy but, we had a number of assertive members that thrived on the challenge of streamlining the process of running the Chapter, communicating with the Members and coming up with additional ways to improve the Chapter finances.

The year prior to my term as President we organized a Product Show at the beginning of the year. This was the first Product Show in quite a few years and it was successful. We looked at ways to continue, improve and expand the Product Show. Alex Clark, who was the Research Chair during my Presidency organized the first Rockfish Fishing Tournament with Bradley Watkins, who was the Chairman for both Membership and YEA. This proved to be a huge success and has continued to this date.

In general, there were real issues as the Baltimore Chapter is a very active and strong chapter will tremendous participation from the Members.

8. What were your presidential theme/goals?

I had several goals during my term and with the effort and help of the Board and Committee members we managed to succeed with most of them. We succeeded in the following:

- Increased Committee Chair and Committee Member participation of young members.
- Increased meeting attendance by 10%
- Increased awareness of scholarships to increase number of applications; increase amount of scholarships by 25%.
- Increased number of Research and Promotion donators by 10% (number of members donating)
- Increased Research and Promotion donations by 10% (amount donated)
- Started the Annual Rockfish Fishing Tournament to support Research and Promotion.
- Ensured the Chapter BOG and Committee Chairs are informed and up to date by organizing the Chapter communication process.

9. What significant motions/actions did you execute during your term or your time serving in subsequent positions?

The Baltimore Chapter was holding the Region III CRC meeting the year following my Presidency. This required a lot of planning from the CRC committee and obviously, there were the financial considerations and impacts. This involved several Board decisions beyond the typical Chapter responsibilities.

Having a new event, the fishing tournament, start under my term was also a test. The goal was to generate additional income for the Chapter to reduce the Chapter commitment to the National Research Fund and provide additional funding for the Chapter Scholarship Program. This has turned out to be a true win-win-win event. The participants have a great time, the National Research Fund is fully funded and we have increased the awards under the Scholarship Program.

We eliminated the Annual Spring Event. The event had been faltering for the previous few years due to the downturn in the economy. It was decided not to continue the event as it had begun to lose money and this would allow future Boards to focus elsewhere.

10. What do you consider to be the major accomplishments during your term or your time serving in subsequent positions?

I like to think that we started a few new events that bring people together and have a positive impact on the Chapter. We also organized things in a manner that streamlined the Chapter processes to make the process smoother for the following Boards.

11. Did any humorous events take place during your term or your time serving in subsequent positions?

Nothing that really stands out but, I had a great time throughout my entire involvement with the Chapter leadership. While we were always focused on our responsibilities, we made sure we had fun in the process.

12. Are there any things that you wish you could have done differently?

Nothing, we accomplished what we intended to do and things went relatively smoothly.

When you get to the end of your term, you realize how short the term really is. You have to set schedules and keep moving forward to get everything accomplished.

13. What events have changed ASHRAE since your presidency or since you started in ASHRAE?

During my term as president, ASHRAE changed its brand. This is when the ASHRAE logo changed, the name changed from American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc. to just ASHRAE and the focus on sustainability and the built environment began.

The focus on energy efficiency has challenged and changed the industry and ASHRAE is leading the way.

14. What events have changed the industry since your presidency or since you started in ASHRAE?

The progress of the LEED program and energy efficiency requirements that must be met are the biggest items. These are followed closely by the advancements in equipment and controls. It takes a lot to stay on top of your game in this industry now.

I can't forget the advancements in our product either. When I started in this industry everything was done in a manual fashion. Now everything, design, communication, signatures, etc. is done with a computer, software and in a digital manner. The speed of the industry has increased exponentially.

15. What has ASHRAE meant to you personally?

Participation in ASHRAE allowed me to expand the personal relationships with individuals that I interact with throughout the course of my day. It is much easier to deal with people you know, and are friends with, than people that you don't know.

I am an outgoing person but, ASHRAE help me become a better leader. As you progress through committees, you are assisted by those who have gone before you. as you progress through the Board, you are also assisted by those that have gone before you but you also get to watch them progress through the positions and learn. This process helps you grow and expand your capabilities, sometimes even beyond your expectations or what you thought you can do.

16. What advice would you give to a young person entering the HVAC field?

Become active in the ASHRAE Chapter. It is a lot of fun, you meet great people and you form career long, if not life long relationships.

There is nothing negative about it. By participating you can't help but expand yourself, both personally and professionally.

17. What other interests and/or hobbies do you have?

My wife and I have six (6) children and we love spending time with them. I also enjoy golf, fishing and bicycle riding, both road bikes and trail riding. We also have three (3) horses and since that is my wife's passion, I have started to ride with her, trail rides, hunter paces and fox hunting. All challenging but very rewarding hobbies.

18. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

I would just like to say thanks again to the Board Members, Committee Members and Chapter Members that were there with me.

You are interviewing me as if I put in all the effort but, without the effort of the Board Members and Committee Members and the support of the Chapter Members the Chapter my term as president would not have been as much fun and successful as it was.

That remains true today so, I want to thank you, Alex, for your support of the Baltimore Chapter of ASHRAE.