

LEADERSHIP RECALL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sherry Abbott-Adkins

Past President, Baltimore Chapter 2005-2006

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)
 - I was born in Baltimore, Maryland. I have a younger sister and brother. While attending high school, I also attended Carroll County Vocational Technology (Drafting). In addition to graduating from both high school and Carroll County Vocational Technology (Vo-tech), I graduated from University of Baltimore County (UMBC) in Mechanical Engineering. While in college, I helped with getting UMBC Student Chapter started. While attending high school I worked in the fast food industry.
2. What attracted you to engineering and the HVAC industry?
 - As a kid I always like math, science, puzzles, how things worked and how things went together. In high school, I considered becoming an architect and decided to take the drafting course in Vo-tech. Vo-tech gave me a trade to enter into the engineering industry as a drafter.
3. What was your first job in the HVAC industry and where did it lead?
 - My first job was a drafter (hand drafting) with a consulting engineering firm in 1983. Worked my way up in the industry and went back to college to get my degree. This has led me to own and operate my own consulting engineering firm.
4. Describe the industry at the time. What were the challenges that you and your colleagues were facing?
 - The industry at that time was a male dominate field. There were not many women in consulting engineering at the time I started.
 - When I attended ASHRAE meetings, most of the time I was the only woman that attended (sometimes Pat Dexter would attend). I knew only those who I worked with but they did not attend ASHRAE meetings. I am a shy person, so I would stand alone to the side and no one would approach to talk to me. The demographics were much older than I was then.

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

- I became active with ASHRAE in 1997, when an owner of the engineering firm I was working for asked me to help out the Baltimore Chapter with Scholarships.

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

- Chapter Level experience includes:

Scholarship Committee Co-Chair (1 year), Scholarship Committee Chair (2 years), Board Positions: Governor (2 years), Secretary, Treasurer, President Elect, President, Past President, Senior Advisor (2 years), Spring Event Co-Chair (1 year), Spring Event Chair (2 years), RP Chair (3 years), RP Committee member (4 years)

- Regional experience included three years as Region III RP RVC.
- Society experience included three years as Region III representative as part of the RP Committee.

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

- Attendance to our meetings were low.
- Membership in the Baltimore chapter was dropping.
- It seemed there was some confusion on what a board member was responsible for. Nothing was specific/tailored to Baltimore Chapter. Society had an operations manual but it was generic.
- Several committees were not performing well.

8. What were your presidential theme/goals?

President Goals:

- No “Rubber Chicken” for dinners. The entire year we had no chicken for any of the dinners.
- When new members or potential members attended a meeting, to have them feel welcomed.
- Board members during our meetings were asked to interact with members. Try to step outside of their comfort zone and interact with people they did not know.
- Increase attendance to our meetings.
- Increase membership.
- In addition, I wanted to leave the President’s position in a better state than when I started. I had a great group of individuals on the board that I knew would be able to expand on what I started.

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

- When new members or potential members that attended a meeting, a board member would approach them to greet them and make them feel welcomed.
- Board members during our meetings were asked to sit at different tables to interact with members in lieu of sitting at one “board” table.

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

- There was an increase attendance to our meetings during the presidency.
- Started writing down board member position responsibly and a timeframe.

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

- None that I can recall

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

- There is always something that you wish you could have done differently or in addition to.

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

- Energy efficiency
- Green technologies
- Availability of information on subjects, systems etc.

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

- The demographics for our chapter have changed. It is great to see many YEA members in our committees and on the board.

15. What has ASHRAE meant to you personally?

- I have met so many people that I would not have met otherwise.
- The experience I learned while being a part of a committee or board member has helped in my personal and professional level. For instance, when I was treasurer, I never used Quicken books software. I learned and use it currently in my office. It was on the job training.

- Being an Engineer and standing in front of close to 100 people at our meetings was a little nerve racking for someone that is shy. It helped me to step out of my comfort zone.

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

- Get involved in an organization that you feel connected to such as ASHRAE. There are many committee positions that a young person can get involved with. How much time do I need to put into a committee position? Seem to be a standard question. The answer is: That is all up to the individual. What you put into it, you will get out of it and more. The networking possibilities, educational aspects, experience and the resources that you obtain from getting involved is invaluable.

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

- I enjoy being outside and active.

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

- It was a pleasure for me to represent the Baltimore Chapter as the second woman President from 2005-2006.