

In Remembrance of Harry Rountree

January 22, 2017 marked the passing of one of the Central Oklahoma Chapter's Hall of Fame members, Harry E. Rountree. Harry's professional accomplishments, both in industry and in ASHRAE, are a testimony to hard work and dedication to his profession. Harry was not our oldest living chapter member, but he was the member with the longest continuous membership. Harry had been a member of ASHRAE for 64 straight years! Many of Harry's contributions to ASHRAE are reflected in our Chapter Honors and Awards list on our website, but to honor Harry in this month's newsletter, we are republishing an article from the February, 2013 edition of the Sou'Wester. In that newsletter, Alan Loeffler, chapter Historian, shared some of Harry's life experiences.

Dusty Stoabs, PE, CPMP, LEED AP

ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Historian



Excerpt from the February, 2013 edition of the Sou'Wester

Impact of an ASHRAE Student Chapter - Part Two Sitting Down and Taking With Our Most Senior Chapter Past President

There are always insights gained from talking to experienced seniors. In last month's history section of our newsletter Harry told about the role of the student chapter of ASHRAE in his life as an engineering student. Recently Harry Rountree shared some of his experiences from his 60 years working in our industry in Oklahoma.

In the spring of 1950, Harry hitch-hiked from Stillwater to Oklahoma City, so that he could investigate job opportunities. He was graduating from Oklahoma A&M (name soon after changed to Oklahoma State University) in Mechanical Engineering. He looked for "Carnahan and Thompson Engineering" in the phone book and was soon in the downtown office building where they were located. Since it was Saturday, there was a reduced crew working. (Yes, Saturdays were work days.) Harry talked to some staff, leaving his contact information. While exiting the building, he noticed Bill Collins' firm on the building directory. When Harry inquired in Collins' office, he discovered that the boss was not in that day. Harry soon received an invitation to work at Carnahan and Thompson. Years later, Bill Collins joked with Harry about his absence from the office that day and not being able to meet him. He said, "Harry, that Saturday was the luckiest day of life for both of us!"



Harry and Norma Rountree

Harry's first project was working on a remodel of the First Baptist Church building in Oklahoma City. He ran the loads on the structure and did the drafting for the plans. Harry's first 7 years in engineering were mainly spent at Carnahan and Thompson, along with short assignments with Manhattan Construction, M.W. Kellogg and Phillips Petroleum. After Harry got his engineering license, he was given the opportunity to have his own engineering firm. For over 27 years, Harry was a principal in Davis, Robinson and Rountree, later changed to Davis and Rountree. After shutting down his own firm in 1984, Harry worked for another 25 years, working at The Benham Group plus working by himself on many projects.

When he looks back over his career, he can point to over 1,000 projects with which he was involved, about half being with Southwestern Bell Telephone.

Harry uses telephone buildings he was familiar with to point out how the use of buildings can change, thus altering heating, cooling and ventilation requirements. When he first did his design work on the buildings in the 1950's, the main requirement was human comfort. "There were 100 women telephone operators on the 13th floor of the phone building at 3rd and Broadway. There was only heating, plus open windows and pedestal mounted fans for ventilation in the office for comfort." Mechanical cooling came later. Then came the automatic switching equipment, complete with vacuum tubes and electronics which generated lots of heat. The need for operator comfort diminished, and equipment cooling requirements increased. Later still came the compact switching equipment with reduced space requirements. Then the telephone buildings had excess space to deal with. Technology changes over the years have made the HVAC engineer adapt also.

Most ASHRAE chapter members realize that Harry is in a small distinguished club, "The Two Timers" – those who have served as chapter president twice. Harry first served at president in the 1969-70 year (he received the Golden Gavel Award), then later, in 2006-07 when a need for leadership developed. Harry has served his industry and our Central Oklahoma Chapter for over 60 years (he reminds us that he was a student member before he came to OKC). Among the many ASHRAE honors he has received are ASHRAE Fellow, Distinguished Service Award, Award of Merit, and he is a Life Member. Harry was honored by being named to the Central Oklahoma Chapter Hall of Fame in 1994. He is one of the giants of our profession, and we acknowledge him as such.

Alan Loeffler, chapter Historian