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The Making of a Society



The Merger of ASHAE and ASRE



► ADAPTED FROM PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF ASHRAE

“Prestige is itself difficult to evaluate, but a combined society with a broader scope and an increased membership can be expected to be looked on with greater respect by other professional groups as well as by its own members. The merged society should be better able to sustain full and unquestioned leadership in covering professional engineering in matters in Refrigeration, Heating, Air Conditioning and Ventilation.”— E.R. Queer, 1958



In the 1920s, the new field of air conditioning was advanced by exploding technological accomplishments in the household refrigeration industry. Made possible by the entry into the industry of manufacturers with mass market production ability and the capital necessary to finance new technology, these new developments included direct expansion systems, extended surface condensers and evaporators, thermostatic valves and hermetically sealed compressors.

The overall significance of these events was that air conditioning became a field of interest to the members of the heating and ventilating engineer’s society and to the refrigerating engineers.

As heating systems evolved from steam and hot water to forced warm air systems, combining the heating and air-conditioning functions, the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers in 1954 changed

its name to the American Society of Heating and Air-Conditioning Engineers. That same year, the Refrigerating Engineers mailed proxy ballots to its membership proposing to add Air Conditioning to its name, but too few votes (both pro and con) were received and the proposal was lost.

By the 1950s, there was significant overlap in the research programs and in the meeting sessions of the two societies. There was a large crossover membership as well, with many members of the two societies, particularly the leadership, attending annual, semi-annual and regional meetings of both organizations.

Consolidation of the two societies had been considered as early as the 1920s. Willis Carrier, president of ASRE in 1927 and ASHAE in 1931, was an early proponent. A plan for consolidation had been defeated in 1937, and in 1941, a joint committee

operated to review the ASHAE and ASRE relationship.

By 1954, with talk of overlapping interests greater than before, it was clear to the leaders of both societies that closer cooperation was required. To achieve this, a joint Committee on Cooperation was formed.

When first appointed, the objective of the committee was to determine how the societies could cooperate without consolidating. As the committee’s work progressed, however, the idea of merger gained wider acceptance. In 1956, two ASHAE regions put forward suggestions for merger. By 1958, about 1,000 people belonged to both ASHAE and to ASRE. ASHAE’s membership was 11,700 and ASRE’s was 7,000. About 60% of activity in each society was devoted to air conditioning.

The principal problem facing a merger was opposition by individuals interested in only limited segments of the industry. These people included the ice and cold storage industry, domestic refrigeration industry, the steam and hot water heating industry and the ventilation and exhaust-air industry.

In June 1958, the councils of each society approved the Proposed Merger Plan drafted by the Committee on Cooperation. The plan next would

be mailed to ASHAE chapter presidents and ASRE section presidents to stimulate discussion at the local level.

ASHAE President Elmer Queer outlined the premises for the merger. "An extensive research program similar to that now conducted at ASHAE would be carried out by the merged Society.... The Society would continue to conduct a comprehensive program in the development of codes and standards, as now carried out by ASRE. The merged Society would furnish financial support to local groups, similar to the present practice of ASRE, and so established as not to interfere with the current practice of having local group dues as now done by ASHAE...."

There was much debate, especially within ASRE. C.F. Holske, ASRE President in 1948 wrote, "As to common interests in air conditioning, competitive operations generally produce more and better results than unilateral operations.... I suggest you vote NO to the merger proposal."

Cecil Boling, president of ASRE, crossed the country, explaining details of the plan. "Personally, I have no feelings except for the preservation of the hard-won standing of ASRE and for the welfare of the interests represented by its members and its programs. However, it is my earnest conviction that the march of time, the inevitable shifts of technology, the present and undoubtedly to-be-continued emphasis upon newer factors within what was once a predominantly refrigeration situation, lead to the conclusion that what is best for ASRE is a merger, which will permit broader coordinated development in two closely allied fields where the common problems are the transfer of heat and the circulation of air.... Today it is really not a question of whether ASRE and ASHAE should merge but of when."

As required by the Membership Corporations Law of New York State, the Plan for Merger was submitted to the memberships of ASHAE and ASRE. To become effective, the plan would require the approval of each society by two-thirds of those voting, either by proxy or in person.

At a special meeting held in Chicago on Dec. 1, 1958, in the Conrad Hilton, ASHAE members overwhelmingly approved the plan, with 5,307 voting in person or by proxy in favor and only 405 against.

ASRE's vote was held at the opening session of its Annual Meeting in New Orleans on December 1. Crosby

Field, ASRE president in 1938 and a staunch opponent of the merger, was next to President Boling until 4:40 in the morning as the proxies were counted. When all votes were tabulated, 86% of ASRE's members had voted with 3,516 in favor and 1,293 against.

Milton Garland, an ASRE member at the time, remembers of the merger, "I was against it, but, of course, I stayed with the Society because if that's what the majority wanted, that's the way we should have gone. But I know quite a few of the refrigeration people dropped out at the time. It was obvious that the refrigeration people were going to lose control simply because there are far more people in the heating and ventilating business, and there always will be.

The approved plan called for elected officers of ASHAE and ASRE to serve alternating six-month terms. Cecil Boling served as the first president of ASHRAE from January 1959 to June, followed by Arthur J. Hess, the last president of ASHAE. Mr. Hess had been sworn in as ASHAE president on the evening of Jan. 28, 1959, and served until the next day when the consolidation became effective. John Everetts Jr., served the first full-year term as president of ASHRAE, June 1961 to June 1962.

Operation of ASHRAE began with a meeting of its executive committee at 10:30 a.m. at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia on Jan. 29, 1959.

Elmer Queer wrote in that month's Refrigerating Engineering magazine, "An opportunity presents itself for real membership activity in the work to be done at the local level. The basic planning merely sets up guide lines with the chapters having virtual autonomy in organizing to fit local needs, The Regional Directors will provide guidance in solving problems and serve as liaison with the national organization and with the Board of Directors."

Cecil Boling's prediction was "a future of even greater proportions." He said, "True, numbers alone do not make a great organization. But the give and take of the past few months offers convincing evidence that the members of ASRE and ASHAE have the highest of professional standards, clear-cut objectives for further accomplishments and the sustained ability and willingness to see things through to rewarding ends. ASHRAE will greatly strengthen our profession." ●

