

Champlain Valley Chapter – Region I – 2007-08 Gold Ribbon Submission



History of Bernard J. Young, Life Member ASHRAE

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This article is a compilation of information gathered from chapter documents and an interview with Bernie on August 14, 2007. Bernie is a Past President of the Champlain Valley Chapter (CVC) and has been a major contributor to the HVAC (Heating, Ventilating, Air-Conditioning) industry here in Vermont for the past 30 plus years.

Bernie was born in Lewiston, Maine, in 1939 and is the 5th of 6 children. He grew up in Portland, ME after his family moved there in 1941. Bernie graduated from Deering High School in 1957 and attended Portland Junior College (now U. Maine, Southern Campus). After one semester majoring in business/accounting his father became ill and Bernie had to quit school.

Bernie's father owned one of the largest union piping contractors in Maine. In Bernie's words his father was a very bright man and a hard driver. As is true with many of us it took Bernie most of his life to appreciate and understand this. Bernie got his start at age 8, in his father's business, sweeping and dusting the office for \$0.25/week, sorting stock at 12, driving a truck and plumbing at 15, and running his first project by age 18. At one time he was the youngest Master Plumber in the State of Maine at 21 years of age. His father passed away in 1960 when Bernie was 21. He and his brother ran the business with their mother until 1963 when they liquidated the business and his mother retired. Bernie was married to his first wife in 1961 and has two daughters.

Bernie got his first taste of Vermont working on the Baird building at the then Mary Fletcher Hospital. He was working for the Mahaney Company out of Maine. He was the office Project Manager in charge of the project. He then went into the sales side of the business as a District Manager for Iron Fireman boilers with ME, NH & VT as his territories. He then came to Vermont in 1972 to work for what is now Vermont Boiler

Specialists, Inc. which was owned by Harry Atkinson. Bernie worked there until 1978 when he parted ways with VT Boiler on Pearl Harbor Day. He remembers this well since he met his second wife Nancy the very next day. He and Nancy were married in 1981 and he has two step-sons from Nancy's previous marriage. Nancy's youngest son have been blessed them with a granddaughter Kaylee who is 2 years old as of this writing.

Bernie obtained most of his skills and knowledge through "on the job training". He spent many a night on a boiler room floor watching the operation of the boiler and paying attention to what the systems were doing when no one was there to tinker and play with it. He also had a side job repairing classroom ventilators during the evenings as a way to learn about other systems. Bernie first became involved with ASHRAE in approximately 1973. Bernie credits ASHRAE as being good for networking and a great resource for educational materials. He would often sit down and dissect the formulas and methodology in the Handbooks to expand his knowledge and experience.

After Vermont Boiler, Bernie went to work for Bobby Miller at New England Air Systems as the Piping Division Manager. He remembers some good times working with Bobby and going to ASHRAE meetings. They started early, 5am, and had a full day in by lunch time. As many of us understand, ASHRAE isn't just about the technologies and education it's also a source of business relationships and long lasting friendships. I found it interesting that similar to Gordie Root's recollections, Bernie remembers those ASHRAE 'meetings' lasting into the late hours of the evening...of course this was after the business meeting and technical program activities were over. Bernie remembers meetings being held at the Lincoln Inn, at the top floor of the "high rise" at 1 Burlington Square, and at a Greek restaurant that was on Shelburne Rd.

After getting burned out on the management side of the business, Bernie left New England Air to go back to work as a pipe fitter for the first time in over 20 years. He remembers it as "damn hard work" being in a 9 foot deep trench at 20 degrees below zero. He quickly became the Northern Division Superintendent for Pittsfield Pipers with between 15-140 men in his jurisdiction. Bernie then started and managed the Piping Division for Northeastern HVAC until 1985. Maybe it was those minus 20 degree days or maybe it was the frustration of seeing poorly operating systems that owners were dealing with, but in 1985 Bernie started his business Mechanical Consulting Services.

Bernie had worked with engineers from the sales side of the business and he'd worked as a contractor many times over the years. He'd seen too many situations where the engineers were not given any construction administration budget to properly verify the purchase and installation of their designs and had seen too many un-reputable contractors promise the world and the cut corners to make a profit. He's clear to note that this doesn't apply to every engineer and contractor out there, but there were enough cases to spur him to start his business. Bernie saw an opportunity to help owners make the building operate as it was designed to and he made a living doing this for 15 years. Bernie, with Nancy's help would survey the existing systems, talk with the owners about their business and then using already documented methods provide drawings and specifications to fix the issues. Bernie was, and is very up front that he is not an

engineer; he uses means and methods that are already proven and simply applies them appropriately to solve owner's system operational issues. He's not "designing anything new". He would work with teams of contractors that he knew would provide quality installations and leave the owner with systems that met their needs.

Bernie is clear that Nancy was his true partner in the business. Nancy had grown up on a farm and had never been exposed to the construction industry. She started out doing the technical typing and business management. Bernie then would bring her on some of his job site visits. They would often video tape the existing systems and then use those to help create "as-builts" (I know...record drawings) of the systems since many times there were no drawings to speak of. Nancy and Bernie both took CADD (computer aided Design and Drafting) classes at Essex Technical Center. During the summer months and on larger projects they would take their RV to the owner's site and perform their pre-proposal walkthrough. Bernie would give his notes to Nancy, she'd type them up and they would turn around a proposal before ever leaving the site. Bernie and Nancy were together 24 hrs/day, 7 days/week for 15 years running the business. I don't know many couples that could do that! Bernie says he started the business for \$500 and sold it for well more than that 15 years later! (use your imagination) The main reason for selling the business was that he'd had his second heart bypass surgery.

Bernie went to work for New England Air again, this time under the ownership of Steve Bartlett, and then went back to Vermont Boiler Specialists, Inc. for 5 years, building that business. He is now self employed again offering his knowledge and services as requested.

Bernie served in all of the Chapter officer positions at the CVC except secretary. He chuckled that he "got out of that one". When I commented that I thought secretary was fairly straightforward, he quickly reminded me that he avoided it back BEFORE computers. Oh...now I get it. Bernie and Nancy also assembled the first Chapter Roster, again in the time before computers. Bernie noted that back then there was less support from Society for chapter member data and roster type information. Currently it's fairly straightforward for the Membership Chair to obtain roster data, not so before the days of electronic member files and the Internet.

Some of Bernie's most memorable projects are a project on North Champlain St. that converted electric heat to hot water baseboard. Bernie noted that he worked with Efficiency Vermont on this project. He explained that he had teamed with a plumbing contractor for the project. When performing the pre-bid walkthrough he noticed something that not many, if any, others had picked up on. The boxes for the convectors were the same dimensions as those needed for the hydronic system, so rather than remove all the boxes they simply removed the electrical elements and ran the fin tube sections inside the existing shells. This was a significant capital cost savings and probably won them the project. This was an operational building with tenants, they performed the whole project without any master shut downs. It was the first VFD (variable frequency drive) project Bernie had done and it also used self balancing valves.

Another notable project was an apartment building on St. Paul Street. Bernie recalls it as probably his most complex project. The original project was built during the South American copper mine strikes, so copper was extremely hard to get. The whole project had utilized stainless steel coated copper and used silver solder to put the pipe together (seams). So over the years the seam corroded and began to leak. To make distribution system replacement more challenging, the building is pre-stressed concrete construction so core drilling was not an option. All of the systems were run in chases throughout the building.

So...with the building fully occupied they ran all new 4" and smaller copper mains without any major shutdowns. They did have (2) 1-1/2hr shut downs. They did have to cut some corridor walls to install runs out from the chases, but the openings were reinforced per structural engineer's instruction.

I hope you've enjoyed this account from Bernie as much as I enjoyed quizzing him about his past and present. I also had the pleasure to work with Bernie and Nancy for a few years and they are truly wonderful people who set an outstanding example for us to follow both in business and in life. Some of Bernie's hobbies are golf, fishing, camping, canoeing, biking, snowshoeing and downhill skiing. Nancy also enjoys golf and is involved with the Red Hat Society.