

## **Interview with Chapter Past President, Mr. Jon Wilmore**

*Q: Thank you for taking the time to answer a few questions about yourself and your exciting year as ASHRAE President. I know you've been a long-time sales engineer at RB Akins. How did you get started in this industry and get to where you are today?*

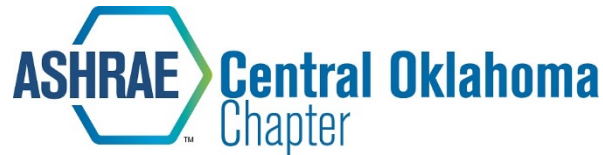
I started college in my mid 20's because I had joined the Marine Corp right out of High School. My first class in college was Intro to Engineering and there was another "older" guy in that class named Tony Arango. We took every class together since that class, and when we graduated, Tony told me that I needed to go work at Trane with him. I called the recruiter and he said that they only had an opening in Tulsa because a guy named Joe Sanders had already filled the position in OKC. I spent 6 years in Tulsa, and Joe Sanders, who had left Trane and joined RB Akins, called and said that Bert Akins was going to retire and they needed someone to help out in sales. It's crazy to say that was 13 years ago now.

*Q: If my memory serves me right, it seems that you got involved in ASHRAE later in your career. What made you originally join and then ultimately get involved and go through the chairs?*

I actually joined the NE OK Chapter in 2002 when I went to the Tulsa Trane office. I moved back to OKC in 2008 and joined both ASHRAE COK and BOMA. BOMA's meetings were on the same day as the ASHRAE meetings so I couldn't do both. I would go to the occasional ASHRAE meeting but didn't really get involved until Jeff Forman sat next to me at a lunch meeting in 2018 and asked me if I would be his CTTC chair. I had no idea what he was asking me to do, but I'm not usually someone that says no when asked for help, so, I had to figure out what CTTC meant. I did that for 3 years at which point I was approached by something called a "Nominating Committee" and once again, I couldn't say no.

*Q: When you started as Chapter President in July of 2022, it seemed like you came in with a flurry of new ideas and energy. Can you provide a recap of that?*

I appreciate that, Dusty. My President Elect year didn't really give me anything to do, so I took the chance to start planning for my year. Attendance had been down since Covid. I wanted to do something big, including a few social events, that would get people excited to be at ASHRAE events again. The Expo was the big event and then the Cornhole Tournament was the most fun ASHRAE event that I've ever been a part of. I also wanted to get as many people involved as I could, so I created multiple co-chair positions under each chair. I remember that first July BOG meeting having around 20 people in attendance, which is way more than any other BOG meeting I had been involved with. For those that don't know what CTTC means, like I didn't when Jeff asked me to do it, they also don't know what the BOG meetings are about. Honestly, that meeting is what will determine if the Chapter is successful or not. It is where the Officers, Board of Governors, Chairs, or any member that wants to attend come up with, and execute, these new ideas that make the chapter so much fun to be a part of.



*Q: The cornhole tournament turned out to be a huge success, especially from an attendance standpoint. Attendance like we just don't normally see at ASHRAE chapter events, outside of the golf tournament. What made that particular ASHRAE event so popular?*

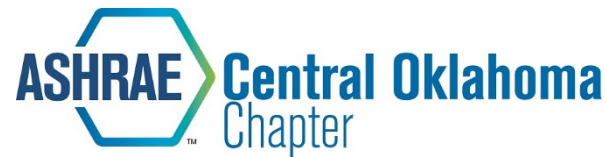
What a great event! I remember seeing a photo of more than 100 people on our Chapter Website from a past lunch meeting at 50 Penn Place and I wanted to create an opportunity to update that picture with a current photo. I knew that it wasn't going to happen at a lunch meeting because our meeting attendance was consistently in the 20-40 range. I brought up the idea in a BOG meeting to do a Cornhole Tournament around a March Madness theme and we discussed ideas for the event for the next 30 minutes. A huge shout out to Michele Lefebvre for spending multiple afternoons making phone calls to get people to commit to be a part of either sponsoring or playing. We filled 64 team slots and had several others that came out to hang out and watch the tournament. We had engineers, mechanical contractors, general contractors, equipment reps, controls contractors, and a couple of owners that were in attendance, and that to me is what made it so successful. We were able to socialize with all types of people in the industry for a few hours and just forget about work for an afternoon. We gave away a prize for best dressed, best team name, the winners, and of course the 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize that I took home.

*Q: To me, the crowning achievement of the 2022-23 year was the first annual HVAC Expo in downtown OKC. Can you summarize some of the aspects of that event that made it so unique?*

We wanted to create a mini AHR show for all of those that haven't been able to attend one. ASHRAE had several rules that we had to follow so that we weren't competing with the AHR show. The size of the event center, the number of booths, etc. We toured a few different venues and the best fit, and lowest cost, was our brand-new OKC convention center. The Expo took several of us many hours to put it together (Giant thank you to Heather Martin, Michele Lefebvre, Stephanie Thomas, John Parks, Pamela Dunlap, and all the other volunteers that helped make it an amazing event). We ended up with 40,000 square feet filled with 100 booths, 8 breakout sessions, and a social happy hour to cap it off. There were over 400 people that attended the one-day event and we were able to raise almost \$60,000, which we split with ASPE. It was such a big success that we decided to share the event with the NEOK chapter and alternate annually who would host the event.

*Q: I attended the CRC in Monterrey, Mexico in April, and going into that conference, I felt that Central Oklahoma had a "Golden Gavel" level of a year. It had to be emotional for you to see the almost unbelievable amount of activity that the Monterrey Chapter had over the year, and then to watch them get the Golden Gavel. Can you reflect on that?*

That is very kind of you to say Dusty, thank you. I was put into a position at young age to lead a dozen Marines as a Section Chief on a howitzer and I learned that if you don't complain, listen to others' ideas, be passionate, and have fun above all else, then those people around you will do the same. Monterrey has that culture across every single chair in their chapter starting with their President. When Randy announced the Monterrey Chapter as the winner for the Best Newsletter in the region, every person from Monterrey started to yell and bang on their tables, it was amazing. The young man from



Monterrey that was the Newsletter Chair jumped up out of his seat, hugged the first three people that he saw, tears of absolute joy fell from his eyes. When he got on stage to accept the award from Randy, he missed his hand when going in for a handshake, so he just gave Randy a huge hug too. So, after seeing that, was I emotional when I saw Monterrey win the Golden Gavel? Yes, but not because I hadn't received it. I felt like we had a great year and I'm very thankful for all the people that helped me make it a great year. I just hope that I was able to start getting people in the COK Chapter to be as passionate as the Monterrey Chapter.

*Q: Now that you've moved through the chairs, what advice would you give to future ASHRAE chapter leaders?*

Stay involved, be passionate, and have fun above all else. I understand how much work goes into putting together an ASHRAE Chapter President Year and I know it is enough to say "OK, I'm done," but, we need those leaders to stay involved in the chapter. If you show people that you are committed to doing a great job, others will get behind you. If you aren't having fun, do something else.

Dusty Stoabs, PE, LEED AP  
*ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Historian*



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