

Jack Thompson



You've certainly heard the name Jack Thompson if you've been to the CRC and attended the awards ceremony. They give out the Jack Thompson Award to the top chapter president each year. But who was Jack Thompson? Well, as you might suspect, if they named the top regional individual award after him, he probably had a very significant impact on ASHRAE. And you would be correct. Notably, he was a founding member of the Arkansas Chapter, being one of the signatories on the application for the charter (1952). He was Arkansas Chapter President (1956-57). He was Director of Region IX and then later Director of Region VIII (1966 to 1969). With Bill Collins and George Meffert, he conceived of, and then helped develop the Golden Gavel Award (1968). He organized the first ever Region VIII dinner at the Society Annual Meeting (1970), which is still a tradition today. Ultimately, in his honor, Region VIII created the Jack Thompson Award to be the most prestigious regional award given to an individual. But, aside from all of that, Jack Thompson, the man, was one of our very own Bill Collins' closest friends. We often think about ASHRAE as a way to receive technical training, but ASHRAE events are instrumental in helping make connections and even in developing close friendships between members. Going to the local chapter meetings, fund raiser events, committee get-togethers, etc. is just the start. When you get involved and regularly attend the CRC, as well as serve at the regional level, you may get to know others in the region even closer than you know your own chapter members. That was the way Jack and Bill's friendship was. They lived in different states but were best friends through ASHRAE. Bill wrote about some of the good times he had with Jack in his memoirs, and I thought I would share them in this month's article. Here they are in Bill Collins' own words:

Bill Collins memoirs; excerpts on Jack Thompson:

In April of 1965, John Dube attended a Region VIII CRC in Tulsa and was made an Honorary Chief of the Acoma tribe. A few weeks later we attended a Region IX CRC in Albuquerque, I learned that a clerk in the gift shop at the hotel was part Indian, and I prevailed upon her to help out at the dinner that evening. She wore indian garb and was instructed to "throw your arms around the big fat man at the head table and give him a kiss". I didn't point out the "big fat man" as John Dube because there was no opportunity. Everything went off as planned - almost. The "big fat man" she kissed was Jack Thompson, Region IX Chairman. However, John did get a big kick out of it, and Jack T. was really flustered.

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During the ASHRAE Winter Meeting in Columbus in 1968, Jack Thompson, Regional Chairman of Region VIII, George Meffert, past Regional Chairman and myself held a lengthy discussion to find a way to stimulate chapter activity within the Region and we felt a competitive measure was necessary, with the resultant evolution of the Golden Gavel. The award was to acknowledge chapter excellence within the Region based on twelve rated criteria, judged by a committee of five members. I was to chair the committee without a vote.

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Frank Bridgers was installed as President in Kansas City on June of 1970. He invited his identical twin brother, John, to be his guest. On Monday morning about 11:00 I was sitting in the lobby of the Muhlebach Hotel when John came in to register. Tom White had been looking for Frank, and happened along as John was registering in. Tom had a check for \$1,000 from his chapter for the Research Fund. In those days that was a lot of money and such presentations would be made at the Presidents Luncheon that noon. Seeing John and not realizing it was not Frank, Tom approached him to discuss the presentation. Without identifying himself, John simply told him that he was not the proper party to receive the check. Tom countered "you mean I should give it to Bill Hole?". Bill was the outgoing President. That was all I could take so I went over and introduced Tom to John.

On that Monday night, Jack Thompson helped me round up about 24 members from our Region and we went out and held the first Regional Dinner in the Society's history. Suffice it to say, it was a huge success, and look at the results now.

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Friday night following the dinner there was a poker game. In the last game, after everyone else had dropped out, only three were left, Hugh McMillan, Jack Thompson and myself. Jack kept raising, and since he was known for bluffing, I had a full house and raised back, Hugh, seemingly in a stupor just kept calling. When the pot got to a little over \$400, the raising stopped. Jack had a flush, which I had beat with my full house, but the non-raiser, but caller, Hugh, nonchalantly turned up four kings. He quietly had out-bluffed both Jack and me.

The Winter Meeting of 1979 was held in Philadelphia, and the Spiegel's had invited a number of guests to a party in their home on Friday night. Since I had lost Mabel just two weeks earlier, I didn't feel much like partying and took a plane that didn't get me to Philly in time to attend. When someone questioned why I wasn't there, Jack Thompson spoke up and said that I was on the TWA plane that had been sky-jacked out of St. Louis that afternoon, and a number of the people believed him.

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The Winter Meeting of 1981 was held in Chicago at the same time as the MCAA was meeting in Maui, Hawaii, and ASHRAE President Chuck Sepsy was invited to the MCAA meeting, but couldn't attend because of the conflicting dates. When his declining of the invitation was sent to MCAA Hq., Jack Thompson then had MCAA invite me to represent ASHRAE in Maui. Naturally, I accepted. January in Hawaii was much more attractive to me than January in Chicago. Besides that I had the opportunity to see Jack Thompson receive the MCAA Distinguished Service Award.

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The Annual (summer) Meeting in 1985 was held in Honolulu. We did not stay in the HQ hotel, but opted for the "Pink Palace", the Hawaiian Biltmore, next door. The Southern Gas Association hosted a Chinese Dinner, to which we were invited. It was held in what was reputed to be one of only two, truly authentic Chinese Restaurants in Honolulu. As I can best recall, for reasons to be mentioned later, there were 23 courses to the meal. The "courses" were really samples, and between each "course" there was a sample of wine. The evening was quite enjoyable.

At the Monday noon luncheon, I had the honor to Emcee a program in tribute to Andy Boggs, for his service to the Society. After the luncheon, I was having difficulty trying to get the audience attention. Apparently the PA system was turned off, and as I shouted "Aloha" into the microphone, someone turned the PA system on - that got their attention.

After the meeting the Chapmans and we (Carlen and I) went over to Maui for a few days before returning stateside. Back in Honolulu we were in the Admiral's Club while waiting for our plane, and met up with Jack & Pollie Thompson who had stayed in Honolulu following the meeting.

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Several weeks later my dear friend Bobbie Vermillion and his lovely wife Bonnie hosted a party around their swimming pool that I was informed was to be an "after-glow" celebrating the success of the chapter's 50th anniversary CRC. When Jack and Pollie Thompson and several of my non-ASHRAE friends, whom B&B had concealed in their home, appeared, I was advised that it was a 70th birthday party for me - climaxed by being crowned with an Indian headdress and dubbed "Chief-of-Chiefs".

Jack Thompson has been mentioned numerous times throughout this missive, but there still needs to be some things mentioned about him. Although he called me his "one true friend", Jack had many friends, but also had his adversaries, principally because they didn't understand his intentions. Jack always tried for perfection, and that trait carried over to his work in ASHRAE. Anyone who was on a committee of his and didn't do the homework necessary, was sure to incur his wrath. He would often play the devil's advocate to stimulate discussion on motions at BOD meetings. He was a firm believer of the saying "if everyone votes yes at first blush, someone isn't thinking".

Jack served as Director and Regional Chairman of two Regions successively, first, for Region IX, and then for Region VIII. He was once proposed by the Nominating Committee for office that could have led to the presidency, but his superiors wouldn't allow him the time necessary. Jack had a domineering character, and only once did I see him with "his tail between his legs". In the early 70's he was on a committee to consider changing Regional boundaries. He came to a CRC reporting that Region VIII boundaries were going to be changed, something that had not happened on a prior change. That aroused the dander of the delegates, and he was informed in no uncertain terms that if he were to permit the committee to make a change, he would be "tarred and feathered". 'Twas the one time that I saw him cowed, except by his sweet wife, Pollie, of course.

I was with Jack in his hotel room in New York when he was interviewed for a position with Natkin & Co., and again in the Admiral's Club in Dallas when he was interviewed by George Linskie.

Yes Jack and I were good friends. When he came back from Saudi Arabia and married Pollie, his first trip was to Oklahoma City to visit Mabel and me. And when Carlen and I got married, we stopped to visit he and Pollie on the start of our honeymoon. That was the week-end that they were moving into their new home in Irving, but we had dinner at the Los Colinas Country Club. Three weeks later, on our return, we again stopped to visit the Thompsons in their new home. They had a hot tub and had invited Clarence and Hazel Gilmore over to meet us. Everyone except yours truly changed into swim suits and got into the hot tub. A month or so later we again met Clarence at a meeting in Tulsa; I said to Carlen "you remember Clarence don't you?" She looked at him and said, "Of course, but I didn't recognize you with your clothes on".

I was honored when Pollie asked me to deliver the tribute to Jack at his Memorial Service.

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"I'll do anything I can to help you if you will accept the nomination for President of the Society." Jack W. Thompson
(I had not aspired to that position, but Jack urged my wife, Mabel, to encourage me to do so, as well as with his own harassment. Later on I told Jack what he had said, and then he left the country when I became President. His response was, "that's the best thing I could have done for you".)



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