

History of Floyd Berlin Past-President 1983-84 New Orleans Chapter

Floyd Berlin during his career saw the evolution of the air conditioning industry to what it is today. Floyd spent nearly his entire career at Cary B. Gamble & Associates, a local firm that was one of the most influential consulting engineering firms in the country. Besides being the training ground for many of our local engineers, several of its' employees served as presidents in our local ASHRAE chapter.

Floyd was born on October 25, 1927 in Marksville, Louisiana. He graduated from Marksville High School in 1944. Immediately after high school, he attended the U.S. Army Corps Aircraft & Engines School and worked as an aircraft welder at two air bases. He then attended Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now known as University of Louisiana at Lafayette). He left soon after to join the Navy in 1945. He served on an amphibious repair ship in the Asiatic Pacific in the Philippines, and also on the Yangtze River in China. After leaving the Navy, he returned to Southwestern. He then joined Western Electric Co. during the late 1940's installing telephone equipment.

In May of 1950, Cary B. Gamble and Associates, Inc. hired Floyd as a draftsman. After several months of drafting, he began designing air distribution systems. Soon after he was calculating and designing entire HVAC systems. Cary Gamble was an innovator who always explored alternative solutions. Their work involved specialized engineering projects for clients throughout the country. Gamble was also very involved with BOMA, an association of building owner and managers, on a national level. Because of the reputation the firm had and the contacts he made with this organization, the firm was provided an opportunity to work throughout the country.

Floyd had an opportunity to work on and witness some very interesting projects. One he recalled was a cold storage facility in New Orleans, designed at -10 degrees. The facility used batt insulation with no vapor barrier, and the ceiling froze. The ice threatened to collapse the entire ceiling, which would have cost nearly an enormous sum of money to replace and repair. To "dry" out the ceiling, a chemical air drying system called a kathabar system was used, and with the addition of vapor barrier to the insulation, the ceiling was saved. Another was a museum in Chicago, which did a "dust study" to determine high traffic areas. By collection and analyzing the amount of dust generated, it dictated where filtration systems were located for maximum results. One more activity that the firm was involved with was energy studies and audits. These audits were done for many of their customers, including South Central Bell, AT&T, and Exxon. One such

audit was done on a building in Nashville, built in 1955 and with a mechanical design by Cary B. Gamble. That early design included many energy efficient components. This audit revealed significant energy savings, which was very unusual for buildings designed that long ago.

During his time at Cary B. Gamble, Floyd worked on many varied projects. He worked on buildings in Los Angeles when there was a restriction on any building above 12 stories for seismic considerations. He worked on a lengthy project at the Art Institute of Chicago. Cary Gamble was called in through his reputation and BOMA connection. Ralph Elizardi did a thorough survey. He presented a report with a series of steps to the Institute that would correct all their problems, but take 10 years to complete. The report was referred to as “the bible”. The Institute made the commitment, and Floyd, along with Randy Lewis, became frequent visitors to the Windy City. Many things had to be learned as problems arose. One of the interesting problems was that most exhibits were built in plywood casings. Plywood contained salt, which attracted moisture that destroyed artwork. With the use of reheat to lower the humidity, the problem was solved. Also developed were cocoons designed with vapor barriers to protect stored documents and artwork. All of this was new technology at that time.

When Floyd began in the 1950's, most larger systems were multizone with face and bypass control. After multizones, dual duct systems became popular. A product was developed that was ideal for these systems called “Miami Carey Ductwork”. It was fine at that time, but would not be very popular today, as it was manufactured out of asbestos! Variable air volume systems were unheard of, but Floyd recalled one of the early “manual” VAV systems. The Montleone Hotel had transoms, and a damper was installed in the transom with a rod operator that could be opened or closed manually – hence one of our first VAV systems! Barber Coleman, who Cary Gamble worked closely with to provide solutions to problems, had a product called the “Vol Adjuster”, which could be placed in grille taps with a flexible cable to a damper to adjust volume. With that, early individual zone control was provided. The use of reheat in systems really changed the way buildings were designed. Finally, variable air volume systems became popular, but the challenge became design of systems that did not “dump” air.

Cary Gamble died in 1963. The firm was incorporated shortly before his death, so this allowed the firm to continue operation after his death. The firm went through leadership changes, and in 1979, Floyd became one of the principles in the firm. He became president of Cary B. Gamble and Associates in 1984, and guided the firm through 1991, when the firm closed.

Two projects stand out that Floyd is especially proud of. The Data Center for South Central Bell in eastern New Orleans was one that he took over almost at inception. Curtis and Davis were the architects, and the 3 story building had several interesting design elements. The air handlers were custom built up units, with a perimeter heating system and interior VAV. He also designed the Middle South Utilities Building in Gretna, which utilized a central plant, and also a computer water cooling system.

Floyd throughout his career recognized the importance of relationships, and reliance on the manufacturers and their reps for guidance and assistance. This was a trait that was also practiced by Cary Gamble, who worked closely with different manufacturers to develop products to solve problems. Floyd also stressed the importance of mentors who assisted him during his career. He said they included fellow workers, manufacturers reps, architects and engineers who he collaborated with. To name a few, he mentioned Cary Gamble, Tommy Stokes, Ralph Elizardi, Red Martin, Paul Coe, and Randy Lewis – along with many others. He also reflected on his years active in ASHRAE. Cary Gamble supported the local chapter and encouraged his employees to take an active role. He also provided them the time to devote to the organization. Floyd joined ASHRAE on February 1, 1956. He recalled his years through the chairs as very rewarding. He served as chapter president in 1983-84. He became a life member in July, 1992.

Floyd keeps busy these days with work at his church, St. Luke's on Canal St. Floyd, who was married to his wife Lucille in 1949, has two daughters; one lives in Pittsburgh and the other resides in Metairie. His hobbies include woodworking, which he says keeps him busy building furniture for his daughters. Floyd still attends an occasional ASHRAE meeting. He has had a rewarding career, but more importantly has maintained the personal relationships and friendships that guided him throughout his life.

Based on interview by Buddy Hodge, March 21, 2003.