

Dan Zaug

Johnson Controls, Inc.

A tribute to 40 years in the industry



By: Ted Gerber – Iowa Chapter Historian 2024-2025

Dan Zaug retired from Johnson Controls, Inc. in 2025. Dan's career and ASHRAE involvement over the years surely put him in the conversation for the ASHRAE Iowa Chapter "Mount Rushmore of members". He started with Johnson Controls, Inc. in 1984 and worked through the technological revolution of the past 40 years. He also graduated from Iowa State University in 1984. This history project will be not only a nice tribute to a long-time selfless volunteer of the Iowa Chapter, it will also bring to life some key milestones our industry went through over the past 40 years.

Early Life

Dan was born in Waterloo, IA at Allen Hospital. He lived in Waterloo until 3rd grade when he moved to Dubuque where he attended Marshall Elementary School, Jefferson Junior High School, and Hempstead Senior High School. Graduating High School in 1979, Dan finished 3rd out of 600 students in GPA. He also played football all 4 years. In his final season, Hempstead lost in the 4A finals to Mason City and head coach Barry Alvarez who went on to become one of the winningest coach in Wisconsin Badger football history. During Dan's summers, he worked for Jungers Construction working on residential remodels and new home projects.

In college, Dan attended Iowa State University. He graduated in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. Dan was a valued member of the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society. In April of 1984, he passed the EIT test. While attending ISU, Dan was an active and contributing member in many student groups. He was a part of the Residence Hall Student Body Government and a member of the UDA Student Senate. Eventually, he became the UDA President and also the Inter-Residence Hall President.

Personal Life

After Dan graduated college, he found the love of his life. In May of 1985, Dan met Janelle Kinnetz while playing co-ed softball in the Des Moines area. They were eventually married July 16, 1988. Dan and Janelle have three children together and two grandchildren. Their son and daughter-in-law, Brandon and Sarah Zaug, live in West Des Moines with their two boys, Kreighton and Kannon. Brandon works at Wells Fargo. Their son, Brett Zaug, lives in West Des Moines and works at Iowa Beverage. Their daughter, Abby Zaug, lives in Clive. She owns and operates Westside Dance Academy in Waukee and will marry Adam Frascht June 27, 2025.

In retirement, the Zaug's hope to travel. They enjoy sports and hope to see as many MLB parks, NFL stadiums, and college venues as possible. They also want to explore national parks and other historical points of interest while also enjoying some warmer weather down south! With their love of family and friends they always see Iowa as being their home.

Professional Life

On June 1, 1984, Dan began working for Johnson Controls. His official retirement date was April 1, 2025 completing 40 years and 10 months of service. Dan worked in many roles at JCI including application engineering, project management, owner direct sales, construction sales, performance contracting sales, and ultimately retired holding the title of Senior Account Executive.

During Dan's tenure at JCI, he discovered the local ASHRAE Iowa chapter and saw the benefits that is offered the industry and local engineering community. He began attending meetings enjoyed the

networking and friendships formed through the local and regional meetings. He joined the organization on May 1, 1995, and will become a life member on October 1, 2025. He has attended Region VI CRC over 20 times. He helped the Iowa Chapter CRC Committee host the event 3 times in 1998, 2009, and 2018. In 1997 he joined the Iowa Chapter board and began serving in a CTTC role. He has served in nearly every possible role that is out there and has been the Attendance chair since 2013. The Iowa Chapter is very thankful for his nearly 30 years of service outlined below.



- 1997-1998 Programs Chair (CTTC Chair)
- 1998-1999 Programs Chair (CTTC Chair)
- 1999-2000 Secretary
- 2000-2001 Treasurer
- 2001-2002 Vice President (President Elect)
- 2002-2003 President

"I was president of the Iowa Chapter 2002-2003. This was the year we switched from manually cut and paste newsletter to an electronic newsletter. This was spearheaded by Benny Skelton."

- 2003-2004 Historian (Past President)
- 2004-2005 Honors/Awards
- 2005-2013 Board of Governors

"I attended 15 CRC's in a row before missing Minnesota in 2012. Over the years there have been many, many great memories from the CRC's. The Iowa Chapter has always had a strong representation at the CRC and we are known for how much fun we have."

- 2013-2025 Attendance



When asked how the chapter has evolved over the last 30 years, Dan mentioned the prominence of the student chapter at Iowa State University and the employers that have encouraged and given members the latitude to attend and serve within the chapter. The recruitment level at the student chapter and employers tapping into that organization for internships and full-time hires has led to a strengthening of the Iowa Chapter and the Student Chapter at ISU. Dan can't help but reiterate to new young members to jump in with both feet to attending and serving in the chapter. The more you put in, the more you will get out of your membership. Local relationships are not only beneficial from a personal level but also help in the professional realm with the heavy reliance on business-to-business coordination and contracting that happens within our segment of the industry. Dan believes the strength of the chapter lies within the YEA group, and the investment level by the younger members has a chance to take the chapter to new heights, even as the Iowa Chapter is already regarded as one of the top chapters in Region VI.

"In my time with ASHRAE there we several protocols being used including Lontalk, N2, OS2, etc. ASHRAE pushed for the HVAC industry standardizing on a protocol. ASHRAE proposed BACnet protocol and this is now considered the industry standard. It was great to see how ASHRAE works for our industry."

As part of this project, we also asked Dan about some of the key industry changes that Dan has seen over the past 40 years. One of the largest transitions Dan saw and was intimately involved in was the move from pneumatic controls to direct digital controls (DDC). This transition helped buildings save between 10% and 30% energy consumption by allowing building operators to control their buildings more accurately, helping to troubleshoot problems more quickly, and allows engineers to design more complex control sequences to achieve energy efficiency levels not previously possible. Dan also mentioned more HVAC equipment being provided with onboard controls from the factory and the shift of building automation contractors as an integrator of devices that meet BACnet protocols set forth by the industry and supported by ASHRAE as another shift that sticks out. Other equipment advancements include modulating boilers, magnetic bearing chillers, variable refrigerant systems, and alternative energy sources such as geothermal, wind, solar, and biofuels.



Dan also mentioned the technological advancements that have changed our industry. The new data that building owners and operators have at their fingertips to operate and manage their facilities more efficiently through scheduling, trending data, system and fault diagnosis, and predictive maintenance has changed the built environment for the better. As that technology has also crept into the construction process with BIM modeling and virtual environments, the building operators as well as the construction teams have had to add the tech skills to build and operate such sophisticated buildings. The days of calibrating pneumatic thermostats and controllers have long disappeared. A programming skillset is now required for a lot of those same calibrations in our occupied spaces.

When asked about his favorite part of working in our industry, Dan proudly reflects on our enhancements to human life. While heating, cooling, and IAQ used to be a luxury, it is now a requirement! Dan loved being a part of the journey to improving energy efficiency and quality of life through coordination with engineers and contractors to design and build leading edge systems and controls over the past 40 years. He cited ASHRAE as one of the driving forces in the push for energy efficiency and always knew that the society and local chapter would continue to educate and promote the evolution of the built environment. Being a part of ASHRAE allowed him to stay educated on current trends and be involved in the path to a more sustainable way to design, construct, and operate buildings.



Dan believes strongly in the power of relationships. There is no better example than the relationship he forged within his own workplace, Johnson Controls, for over 40 years. He routinely worked alongside younger associates and new hires to help mentor them in the industry. He also became a well-known figure throughout the Midwest and the nation within the Johnson Controls network. He built strong relationships with his customers which led to positive outcomes on his projects and repeat sales through large campuses and school districts that he served. The ASHRAE Iowa Chapter was also fortunate to be a large part of Dan's working career, and he developed many strong relationships through that involvement.



In Dan's parting, he reassured us that he will continue to participate and be a member of the Iowa Chapter for years to come and is excited to see how the chapter and society will grow and change for the betterment of our industry in the years ahead.