

BRIEF HISTORY OF BELING CONSULTANTS, INC.

AND ITS

INVOLVEMENT WITH A.S.H.R.A.E.

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Beling Consultants, Inc. is a multi-disciplined consulting engineering firm providing design services continuously throughout the Midwest since 1936. Headquartered in Moline, Illinois, Beling's growth has expanded over the years, from its early start as a two-man office to its present size of 135 employees in six offices, with branches in Peoria, Joliet and Rockford, Illinois; Burlington, Iowa; and Denver, Colorado. Yet, throughout this history of growth, the Beling involvement with the Mississippi Valley Chapter of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, Inc. (A.S.H.R.A.E.) has remained constant.

Beling Consultants provides design services in Mechanical Engineering - heating, ventilating, air conditioning, plumbing, fire protection and energy management; Electrical Engineering - power generation and distribution, illumination, electrical specialty and control systems; Civil Engineering - sanitary and industrial wastewater collection and treatment, water distribution and treatment, site development and land surveying; Transportation Engineering - street and highway studies and designs; and Structural Engineering - concrete, masonry, steel and wood structures of all types.

Beling Laboratories provides environmental air, water and wastewater testing services, including stack sampling, compliance testing, wastewater monitoring and pilot studies.

These services are provided for architects, institutions, industries, commercial enterprises, governmental agencies and developers.

Over one-third of Beling employees are graduate engineers, more than half of whom are registered professional engineers in some 11 states.

While Beling Consultants' experience includes buildings of all types, major projects in recent years have been hospitals, detention and correctional facilities, wastewater treatment plants, schools and colleges. The company also has been heavily involved in energy conservation and design of energy management systems.

Earl H. Beling founded Beling Engineering Company on June 1, 1936, and added his first associate, Robert F. Demange, a month later. Years later, Beling described this first office as being "a very small, stove-heated, cold, cold room" over a local hardware store on Sixteenth Street in Moline.

By the first Christmas, "We had just about used up our working capital and were on the verge of borrowing to keep going," Beling later wrote. "But we had a Merry Christmas, because we were on our way up from a very low plateau. After all, the thing that counts in life is which way we are going."

From this meager beginning, the company gradually expanded to six employees and opened its first branch office in Peoria, Illinois in 1946. By 1949, the firm, now known as Beling Engineering Consultants, had a Moline office staff of 8 to 10 persons and had moved to a reconverted "store front" building on Seventh Avenue near 15th Street.

The Moline office continued to grow, as did the Peoria office, and each relocated several times to meet the needs of an expanding engineering market. New branch offices were opened in Champaign, Rockford, Joliet and Des Moines.

Present Company President Roy M. Conrad has written of those days of the late 1940s and 1950s, saying: "In those days we frequently moved our limited staff members from one office to another as needed."

By 1969, with a staff numbering well over 100 members and growing, a corporation known as BEC, Inc. was formed to handle fiscal and technical responsibilities, with key personnel of Beling Engineering Consultants serving as directors and officers. Professional engineering continued under Beling Engineering Consultants.

Additional branch offices had been opened in Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cedar Rapids. "About that time, our corporate philosophy for growth and expansion recognized a need for less diversification in branch office location and more emphasis on fewer and larger, multi-disciplined offices," Conrad wrote some years later. "Hence, some of our branch offices were gradually phased out, resulting in the structure we have today."

The 1970s were considered an eventful, transitional period for the firm with significant milestones. In 1972, the Moline office relocated to its present location, the former Moline High School building. In 1973, Bob Demange, the first associate hired by Earl Beling, retired as Moline's Office Manager, and billings for the year reached \$2 million for the first time in company history. In 1975, Roy Conrad was called to Moline to assume the presidency of BEC, while Earl Beling became chairman of the board. In 1976, the accounting department converted to a computerized system for payroll, general ledger and cost controls. Then, in 1977, at the age of 76, Earl Beling died, but as company officials are quick to respond, "The

firm remained stable because of prior planning." That same year, company billings reached \$3 million. Finally, in 1978, Beling Engineering Consultants merged with BEC, Inc., resulting in a change of the company name to Beling Consultants, Inc.

In 1983, Beling's expanded its computer system to include nine IBM Personal Computers and two Computer Aided Drafters, making it a leader among Midwest engineering firms with a computer system of this magnitude.

Beling Consultants has been included among ENGINEERING NEWS RECORD's Top 500 Design Firms each year since 1967.

Although not actively part of the organizational team forming the Mississippi Valley Chapter, several Beling employees have been very active in the local A.S.H.R.A.E. chapter.

Robert Demange, then Manager of BEC's Moline office, was President of the Illinois-Iowa Chapter of A.S.H.R.A.E. the year prior to formation of the local chapter.

Earl Beling was one of the program speakers during the local chapter's first year of organization in 1974. The following year Beling served as Chairman of Research Promotion. Then Chapter President John Roth wrote of his involvement saying, "Of course, he did a super job of gathering support (arm-twisting) and we gathered over \$4,300.00."

A year later (November 1976) Mr. Beling was guest of honor at a local chapter meeting where he received a plaque from the national A.S.H.R.A.E. organization recognizing him for his 50 years of membership, and acknowledging his outstanding achievement as Chairman of the local chapter's Research Promotion Fund solicitation committee.

Company President Roy Conrad has been Program Chairman (1976-1977) and has participated in several panel discussions over the years (April and October 1976 and January 1983). He later served jointly with John Roth as committee co-chairman of Research/Promotion. He is a past President of the Peoria Chapter of A.S.H.R.A.E.

In recent years, BEC's Moline Office Manager Keith O'Higgins has actively served the local chapter, first as chapter treasurer (1978-1979), President-Elect and CRC Action Committee Chairman (1979-1980) and President (1980-1981). It was during his term of office that the local chapter received the Presidential Award for Excellence and Star Award and was granted "Premier Chapter" status after O'Higgins and then chapter historian Bill Swanson made attainment of premier status a special project and goal for the year. Also, during O'Higgins term of office, the first A.S.H.R.A.E./Earl Beling Memorial Scholarship was established and awarded to a local engineering student to further his education. This scholarship is jointly funded by A.S.H.R.A.E. and the Beling Fund.

In 1982-1983, O'Higgins successfully served as general chairman of the Mississippi Valley Chapter's hosting of the Region VI CRC held in April 1983 at the Blackhawk Hotel in Davenport, Iowa. He later was elected to the position of Regional Vice Chairman of Research Promotion, a position he still holds.

Beling Consultants has been recipient of numerous awards for design excellence. Most recently the Mississippi Valley Chapter awarded the firm the Energy Management Award for the First Federal Savings and Loan Project in Moline, Illinois (1984). Other A.S.H.R.A.E. awards have included

the HVAC System Renovation for Energy Conservation at the Franciscan Medical Center in Rock Island, Illinois (1983); the Moduline Variable Volume System for United Central Plaza Bank, Rockford, Illinois (1981); and an Energy Efficient Design Award for Kartridg Pak Company in Davenport, Iowa (1981). The Kartridg Pak project was awarded a regional award as well as a local award.

The accomplishments of Beling Consultants can best be summarized as the company founder summarized his own life in a letter to his grandson:

"I've always felt in my own case that whatever success I have enjoyed in business or in life in general was not due to the fact that I was particularly well endowed to start with, but was due to the ability to get the most out of what I was endowed with, and that was done mostly by just plain hard work and determination."