



# SAABE TIMES

A Publication of the San Antonio Association of Building Engineers

September, 2000

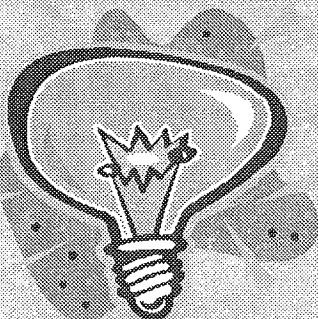
Mark Your Calendar—

## Lighting Basics

Please join us for our monthly General Membership Meeting, Wednesday, September 20, 2000. Greg Graham and Wyatt Stevenson of American Light will present a program detailing the basics of lighting sources as well as new items, energy-saving items and controls.

American Light, Inc. has been in business for 18 years and maintains six locations in San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Houston, Corpus Christi, and Fort Worth. The company is a full-line lighting and electrical supply house specializing in energy audits, controls and lighting remodels.

Greg Graham and Wyatt Stevenson have 18 and 13 years of experience in lighting and electrical service, respectively. Be sure to bring your lighting questions and concerns to the meeting; they will be happy to address them.



## Education Corner

by Mike Lusk

### Upcoming Seminars:

#### **NTT:**

“Troubleshooting Electrical Control Circuits”; Houston Sept. 26-28; Austin Oct. 10-12; and Dallas Oct 17-19. \$985.00. 1-800-922-2820.

“Refrigeration and Air Conditioning”; Dallas Oct 10-12; Austin Oct. 17-19; San Antonio Oct. 31 – Nov. 2; and Houston Nov. 7-9. 1-800-922-2820.

“National Electrical Code”; San Antonio Sept. 26-28. 1-800-922-2820.

“Industrial Electronics”; Dallas Oct. 3-5; Houston Oct. 10-12. 1-800-922-2820.

“OSHA (1910.269) GT & D High Voltage Electrical Safety”; Dallas Sept. 26-27; Austin Sept. 28-29. 1-800-922-2820.

“Welding”; Houston Oct. 24-26; San Antonio Oct. 31 – Nov. 2; Dallas Nov. 7-9. 1-800-922-2820.

#### **LEWELLYN Technology:**

“Basic Industrial Electricity & Basic Industrial Electricity II”; Dallas Oct. 10-11; Houston Oct. 24-25; San Antonio Oct. 26-27. \$349.00. 1-800-242-6673.

#### **Association of Energy Engineers:**

“Fundamentals of Buying & Selling Energy”; Dallas Oct. 11-13. \$1270.00. 770-279-4385.

#### **COMPED Solutions:**

“Troubleshooting & Maintenance PCS”; San Antonio Nov. 2, 3 & 14; For more information and prices, call 1-800-258-7246 (Or call Mike for a faxed copy of the brochure).

#### **Performance Training Associates, Inc.:**

“Building and Facility Electrical Systems”; San Antonio Nov. 13-14. \$395.00 per day or \$695.00 for both days. 1-800-208-6108.

And for you adventuresome souls, ASME Professional Development; Understanding Chiller Performance; HVAC Systems – Sizing and Design; and several courses on elevators. Courses held in such nice places as New Orleans, Las Vegas, San Diego, Las Vegas, Alexandria, VA, Las Vegas, Charleston, SC, Houston, or Las Vegas. If you might be interested, call me for more information. That’s all for this month.

# Above the Ceiling

by Paul Thompson

## Taking the Heat

Yesterday we went up to 109° to break San Antonio's all-time high record. Today it was 111°. We're not just inching up — this is more like what Bob Beamon did when he added two feet to the long jump! We're baking. Fires out west in Montana, Idaho, Kerrville....Kerrville?! And San Antonio is setting records in electrical usage with the CPS crews busy replacing blown transformers. Which eerie beauty do you prefer: the sight of hundreds of acres burning in the night, or the brilliant, powder-blue light and out-of-this-world sound as a transformer explodes? You got to laugh or you'll cry.

...And the aquifer continues to drop. Still in Stage II, which means being able to water a total of seven hours a week, down from 28 hours a short couple of months ago. For those of us who have acreage, this is a real stretch. Forget that lush green lawn; in fact, the word "green" is pretty much history. Hopefully, some of this stuff will survive. And the dry ground is shrinking, twisting and busting pipes, cracking foundations, keeping SAWS crews busy (along with the concrete and foundation guys). If (when) we get to Stage III, the *real* watering restrictions begin. I believe you can only water in years ending with an odd number...

Don't suppose you've had any *AC calls* have you? With the stress that these conditions put on all systems, you find out where your weak links are real fast. But be careful out there, especially if you have to work on a roof. Make sure you drink lots of water, wear a hat, take breaks more frequently, keep in the shade as much as possible and get out of the heat NOW if you experience any signs of heat stress (dizziness, etc.). Probably not a bad idea to let somebody know you're out there and check in routinely. Be safe — these things can sneak up on you.

Sorry to all you folks (a record turnout of 80) who came to see the SAPD Bomb Squad at the July General Membership Meeting. As you know by now, we got stood up (again) when they were called out on a bomb threat (again). But luckily, the meeting didn't bomb when SA Fire Department Chief Rodney Hitzfelder jumped into the breach. On zero notice, he put on a very professional seminar on SAFD's "pre-planning" program for fire emergencies. Their ultimate goal is to have a computer database of every building in town. This would be a basic "map" of each property (floor plate, egress, stairs, fire control room, on-site hazards, etc.) which could be pulled up by any fire crew at the touch of a button. More on this to come.

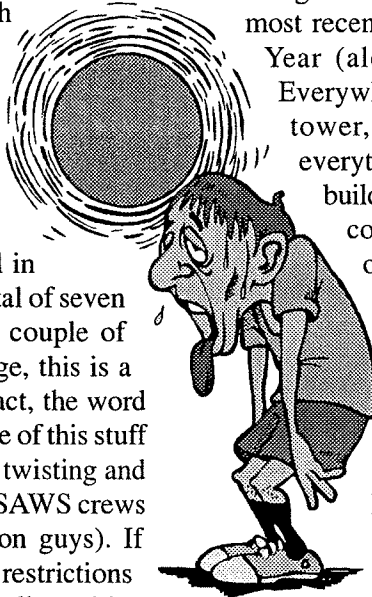
Congrats to el new guy, Cesar Alvarado, who was

recently elected to the position of Treasurer. Welcome to the frying pan!

For those of you who missed last month's tour of the Forum Building, what can I say? You missed it!! After touring the building, it is easy to see why The Charlie was most recently named SAABE Building Engineer of the Year (along with co-recipient, Bernardo Chapa). Everywhere you went, from the brand-new cooling tower, to the machinery rooms, to the roof — everything was the definition of a well maintained building: clean, organized, equipment labeled, pipes color-coded, logs up-to-date, procedures spelled out step by step, records at your fingertips — *very* professional. But there is a secret Charlie may not want you to know — he's got a veteran crew behind him (the newest guy's only been there five years) that help put him on top! Thanks, Charlie! Now, who would like to host the *next* building tour? Say, Bernardo, what's the Saint Anthony like?

Recently, I was called to the carpet by a letter from a ticked-off Associate (vendor) member. He took exception to my ringing endorsement of our paid sponsor (Amcon Controls) and pointed out that SAABE should never take the position of showing favoritism towards any one vendor. To this I can only say, "Guilty as charged." Although we always encourage our members to use *SAABE vendors*, I clearly went over the line here. It was wrong and I am sorry. Does it seem to be getting hotter in here, or is it just my imagination?

Like Camilo says, "It's a weather thing — whether you like it or not."



## Heard It Through the Grapevine



- Elena Castillo is now the Chief Building Engineer for Rector Management. She can be reached at 495-2195.

# A Tall Tree Has Fallen

by Paul Thompson

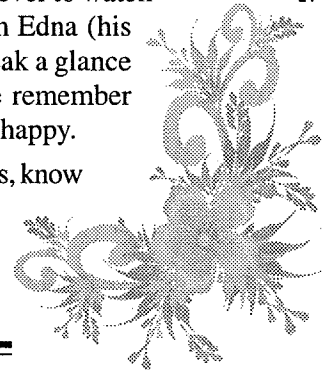
Clinton Fritz, one of SAABE's "founding fathers" and a fixture at our General Membership Meetings for years, recently passed away at the age of 70.

Fritz (as he was known to most) was born into a large, German-speaking family in Fredericksburg. Trained as an electrician since age 18, he did a stint in the Army and worked for a couple aircraft companies before hiring on at the old downtown SASA building in 1971 as an Assistant Building engineer. Over time, he rose to the position of Chief Building Engineer overseeing not only the headquarters building, but also all of SASA's branches.

In the late 70s, Fritz was SASA's on-site rep for the construction of the SASA (now Pyramid) Building. He was there through every step of construction, from cow pasture to one of the most architecturally significant buildings in San Antonio today. Fritz was the first and only Chief Engineer the building had until his retirement in 1993.

Fritz loved hunting, fishing, family reunions and weddings. A crack shot, he took part in target shooting at the Fredericksburg Schutzenfest. People remember him as a perfectionist, and brave, having survived three heart surgeries. This guy had no fear of heights — I remember him literally dancing on top of this rickety-looking scaffold 35' above the lobby floor. And he loved sports — the Texas Rangers, Houston Astros and Dallas Cowboys. That is at least until the JJ's took over and fired Tom Landry. He vowed never to watch them again after that, although Edna (his wife of 47 years) says he'd sneak a glance at them now and then. People remember him as always smiling, always happy.

So Fritz, if you're reading this, know that we're still doing the morning rounds the way you taught us. Thank you.



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## How Do I Sell A Membership to SAABE?

Now that the Year 2000 Membership Drive is underway, you may be saying to yourself... "I am not a salesperson. I would have no idea where to start trying to sell a membership." Well, in response to your trepidation, take these points into consideration:

Would any of my contractors appreciate expanding their business marketing potential by meeting other potential customers who may not be already aware of their product?

Do I have any friends who are employed by other buildings that may have an interest in sharing their experiences with others in the same occupation?

Do I know anyone that would benefit from our Certified Building Engineer Accreditation Program?

Who do I know that works as hard as I do and might appreciate a lunch once a month in an organization that sets us apart from the rest and dedicates a few hours to my education and well being?

Don't forget that our Year 2000 membership dues are 40% off their normal annual cost until October. In October, new members will pay their Year 2001 dues and receive the last three months of the Year 2000 free.

## Backflow, Back Talk! (Part One of Three)

Back in the summer of '93, in a building we will call the Arboretum, which is located about 60 miles from Phoenix, Arizona, the domestic water was contaminated by a backflow from a fire sprinkler system. Tenants to the facility first noticed the unpleasant taste in June of 1993, and by August, employees drinking the water began to experience symptoms of gastroenteritis.

Three small wet-pipe sprinkler systems had been installed in the Arboretum, each relying on the pressure of the domestic water distribution system to operate. The systems were reportedly filled with a mixture of 30% propylene glycol to keep them from freezing (in Phoenix?).

None of the systems had a backflow preventer, although a single, 1 inch, spring-loaded, soft-seat check valve had been installed between each system and the domestic water to prevent water from the sprinkler system from flowing into the domestic water. An appropriate pressure gauge had also been installed downstream of the check valve on each system.

When the pressure of the domestic water is higher than that of the sprinkler system, the domestic water passes through the check valve into the sprinkler system to equalize the pressure. If the check valve is working properly, the water is then trapped in the suppression system.

In August of 1993, the maintenance staff noticed that the static pressure of the sprinkler system protecting a specific area was nearly equal to that of the domestic water, while the static pressure of the two other systems were significantly higher. In turn, they called the sprinkler contractor, who presumed the gauge was broken. When the gauge was found to be operating correctly, the Arboretum asked the contractor to replace the check valves on all of the systems with reduced-pressure-principle backflow prevention devices. The Arboretum's engineer then took apart the failed check valve and found two pieces of what appeared to be black rubber gasketing on the suppression side of the check valve.

Trying to figure out what chemicals might have caused the odd odor, the Arboretum's managing director contacted the contractor and the sprinkler manufacturer, who said that the only chemical used in the system was propylene glycol. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), similar to our TNRCC, was unable to get enough contaminated water to test successfully. However, the researchers did notice that the water they did collect had a

pungent, sweet odor. And propylene glycol according to its material safety data sheet, is odorless. ADEQ was concerned that other chemicals (probably ethylene glycol), had been added to the system to control corrosion and recommended that the domestic system be flushed. After this had been done, the Arboretum reported that all problems had been eliminated.

This particular incident illustrates a problem that fire protection leaders, public health and water officials have struggled with for years: how do you balance the need for fire safety and with the need for a safe public water supply?


There is a possibility that sprinkler water, whether stagnant or introduced by fire department pumping apparatus, will flow back into the public water supply and contaminate it, causing illness or even death. This possibility has led many public health and water officials to require backflow prevention assemblies on all automatic sprinkler systems. While backflow prevention assemblies may effectively protect the integrity of the domestic water supply, they are also a source of friction loss that can reduce water pressure in a sprinkler system.

The fire protection community and various water authorities agree that the sprinkler systems to which chemical additives are introduced should be protected with approved backflow prevention assemblies. However, they don't agree that all automatic sprinkler systems should require such devices.

More backflow back talk next month!


Charlie's Law: Psychiatrists say that one out of four people are mentally ill. Check three friends. If they're OK, you're it!

*"Just a Maintenance Man"*



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GenesisSupply@aol.com



**Ken Kee**  
861-5267 mbl.

**Rhondo Jauer**  
219-8150 mbl.

**Alvin Thompson**  
219-0813 mbl.

## Texas Wisdom

1. Never slap a man who's chewin' tobacco.
2. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
3. Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier 'n puttin' it back in.
4. If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.
5. If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.
6. Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.
7. There's two theories to arguin' with a woman. Neither one works.
8. If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'.
9. Don't squat with your spurs on.
10. It don't take a genius to spot a goat in a flock of sheep.
11. Always drink upstream from the herd.
12. Never miss a good chance to shut up.
13. There are three kinds of people: The ones that learn by reading, the few who learn by observation, and the rest of them who have to touch the fire to see for themselves if it's really hot.

*a name you can trust*



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**SAABE TIMES**  
**September Issue**

*Final Thought —*

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”  
— *Will Rogers*

**2000 Board of Directors**

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Bill Blackford Secretary	967-8766
Cesar Alvarado Treasurer	357-2258
Mike Lusk Education Director	340-2533
Mike Alvarez Vendor Representative	824-9581

Lynn Forester (830) 981-5223  
Association Coordinator

**Membership Luncheon**  
**September 20, 2000**

**Time:** 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** The Barn Door  
8400 N. New Braunfels Ave.

**Topic:** Lighting Basics

**Speaker:** Greg Graham and Wyatt Stevenson of  
American Light

**Sponsor:** American Light

**Upcoming Luncheon October 18:**  
**Ward Systems**

The SAABE Times is produced monthly for the San Antonio  
Association of Building Engineers by:



210-340-5454  
e-mail: inkspot@onr.com

# SAABE MEMORANDUM

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TO: Members of San Antonio Association of Building Engineers

FROM: SAABE Board of Directors: Paul Thompson, President  
Elena Castillo, First VP  
Tom Lasater, Second VP  
Cesar Alvarado, Treasurer  
Bill Blackford, Secretary  
Mike Lusk, Education Director  
Mike Alvarez, Vendor Representative

DATE: September 14, 2000

RE: Certified Building Engineer (CBE) Program

Dear Members:

The SAABE Board of Directors has received and discussed a written formal complaint about a recent decision of the CBE Committee regarding an application for Master Level Certification. In the interest of full disclosure, we are informing our membership of the grievance and our response to it.

On the reverse side of this insert you will find a letter from the applicant (identity not disclosed) and our reply. If you have any questions about the matter, please feel free to call Paul Thompson at 524-9285.

August 14, 2000

TO SAABE:

It was at your request that I apply for my Master Engineer Certification and to join your organization., I did only to be greatly disappointed at the way you run SAABE it is my opinion that it may not be " but it smells like a good old boy run organization "

I applied for a Master Building Engineer Certificate and you awarded me a Journeymans Certificate without any written explanation as to what I was lacking in credentials. I provided you with all the information that you ask for in your application for this position, you only needed to review what was sent too you properly.

I have made several calls to the President , Vice President and Mike Lusk trying to get some answers, no one had the answers, at one point the Vice President Elena Castillo told me that the certificate really did not mean much this was very disappointing to hear from one of the board members.

I will not accept the Journeymans level Certificate as it would be an insult, and I request a refund of my annual dues that was paid in May and I expect this to be prorated from May and not Jan.



San Antonio Association of Building Engineers  
PO Box 691861  
San Antonio, TX 78269

(830) 981-5223 metro  
fax (830) 981-5188 metro

September 7, 2000

San Antonio, TX

Dear

We are in receipt of your letter dated August 14, 2000 and the Board of Directors has discussed the points therein.

Your application was considered by a committee of CBE designees who are highly regarded in the industry. As we stated in our letter to you dated July 18, 2000, several areas in your application were found to fall short of the Master level requirements:


The Certified Building Engineer designation was created and is maintained solely by the San Antonio Association of Building Engineers. SAABE sets the standards and requirements for the CBE program — not any governmental agency nor the applicants themselves. All requirements are clearly explained on the application. It is this clear delineation of experience and education criteria that keeps the CBE program from being run like a "good old boy organization".

The difference between a professional designation and a governmental license is an important distinction. Ms Castillo's comments, which you reference in your letter, were meant to clear up any confusion that the CBE might be considered a city license or registration. The fact that it is not issued by a city or state agency does not make the CBE meaningless.

While our bylaws clearly state that dues are forfeited upon member resignation, the Board agreed that you should never have been accepted as a Regular Member because you do not meet the qualifications for that category. With this mitigating situation, your \$150 payment will be refunded in full. To avoid a similar situation in the future, all CBE applicants must be currently employed as a building engineer.

We thank you for your interest in our organization and wish you well in all your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

  
Paul Thompson, SMA  
President

President - Paul Thompson, SMA, Pyramid Property Management, Inc.  
First Vice President - Elena Castillo, Rector Management, Inc.  
Second Vice President - Tom Lasater, The Carlyle  
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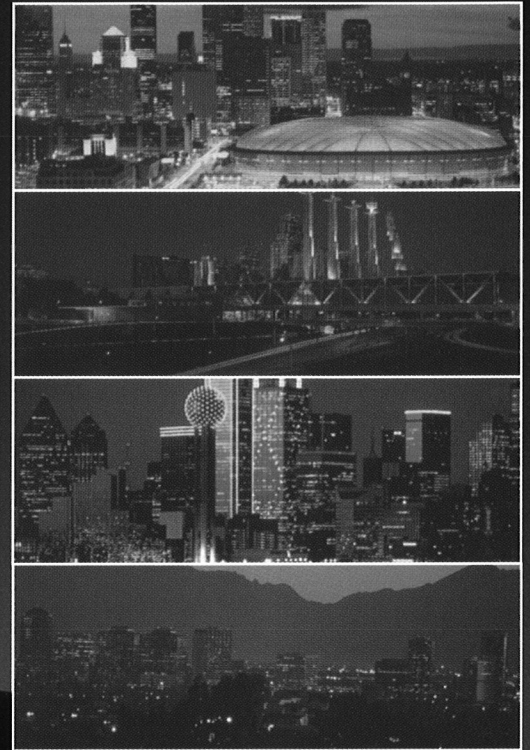
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