



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

Pride and Prejudices

Testifying before the NFPA Standards Council is an experience filled with awe. Here sit 15 or so giants of the fire protection industry, each with 5-inch thick agendas for their three-day session. They sit and listen and consider and question and ponder and discuss and decide. On their shoulders rests the fate of the NFPA consensus standards making process. They are attended by sage legal counsel, an extremely efficient standards administrator, and a stenotypist, whom they refer to as "the court reporter," even in that title reminding you that you have come to the bar of fire protection justice, seeking relief for your knotty problem.

"Oh yea, oh yea, oh yea. Come now before this court those who seek justice. Speak and be heard by the honorable court." OK, so they don't actually have a baliff, but sitting in that conference room at the Mecca of fire protection, Batterymarch Park, you would imagine one, too.

Well, folks, I sought justice, I spoke and for my trouble I experienced yet one more humbling at the seat of fire protec-

tion wisdom. You see, this most recent appearance was my third before the Council. Does that make me a veteran? Or just unlucky?

In any case, I knew the drill—or thought I did. I knew enough to smile warmly at Chairman, Dr. John Bryan, a man for whom I have respect beyond measure. I knew enough to nod in a comradely way in the direction of Dan Pileri, NFPA General Counsel, the one, in some cases anyways, who will sway the others with whispers of law suits and the like. I was aware enough not to be thrown by the fact that as each member introduced himself, he simply gave his name, followed by the phrase, "member of the Council," without a hint of affiliation or employer—for there are no affiliations here; no employers; just individuals surrendering valuable time to serve in this capacity so very important to assuring the fair and impartial handling of the consensus standards. I even actually knew almost everyone present, if not personally or deeply, at least enough to acknowledge them by name.

Twice during that bleak Wednesday afternoon, I spoke my carefully-worded position with conviction and genuine belief that I alone had considered all the aspects of the matter and had reached the most logical conclusion. And twice, in later executive session, the Council decided in favor of my opponent.

I tell you, it is a humbling experi-

ence to bare your intellect and will before these near-gods of your chosen career, and find them mentally snickering at what you've felt was clever rhetoric. A wound to the old pride it is, indeed.

Yet I am staunchly prejudiced in favor of the NFPA consensus standards making system. I may not always agree with the result of actions taken under this system. In fact, it may cause quite a hardship for me—like explaining to my boss how I could have possibly failed to convince the Council as to the wisdom of my position. Nevertheless, comparing this process with several other standards-promulgation methods, I will heartily endorse the NFPA system, hold the members of the Standards Council in high esteem, and feel that perhaps I at least gave them a moment of comic relief.

That is unless, "three strikes and yer out!" For it has been three trips to the Council for this guardian of the faith. Three times to be weighed in the balance and to be found wanting. Perhaps a toupee and a name change are in order?

Then I open my mail and find an encouraging letter like this one:

Dear Dean,

Congratulations to you and Wayne Moore on the development of *The Moore-Wilson Signaling Report*. It is a great forum to use for code interpretation.

I do not think you will get rich on \$66.00 a year, but enclosed is my check in that amount. This is such a great bargain that I am paying full price, even though you will receive this prior to the June 30 cut-off date for the Charter Subscription offer.

Once again, congratulations, and I look forward to receiving future issues.

Patrick M. Egan
Commonwealth Security Systems
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Well, the Standards Council may not see things my way, but Pat's vote of confidence helps balance my feelings of failure. And, I'm grateful. □

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