

NAYGN FOCUS:

A U.S. Affair

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The 2014 NAYGN U.S. Affairs Chair, Jimmy Hennen, discusses designing new nuclear plants in China, the diversity within the chapter membership, and his passion for classic cars during a conversation with members of the Recruiting and Retention Committee.

[E] Hi Jimmy! Welcome to your Focus interview! How are you?

[J] Hi Emily, I'm doing great!

[E] Let's dive right in. How long have you been with your company, and what's your current position in NAYGN?

[J] I'm the U.S. Affairs chair, outgoing in about a month. I've been with Westinghouse for a little over five years, almost six. I'm in the fluid systems group working on the AP 1000. I'm responsible for the primary systems like reactor coolant and chemical and volume control systems.

[E] What about nuclear interested you?

[J] Initially it didn't! I graduated from Clemson and started working for a small architectural firm in Chattanooga, but was horribly bored. I had a friend who worked out at Sequoyah who told me about a couple of postings at Westinghouse. It was either move up to Walt's Mill, which is southeast of Pittsburgh, or move to Charlotte. I chose Charlotte.

[E] I hear that's a beautiful area.

[J] Oh yeah. It was terrific. We were two hours from Clemson, three hours from the Western North Carolina



Jimmy Hennen and two friends after summiting Vallunaraju, an 18,650ft mountain in Peru.

Mountains, three hours from Charleston. It was fun!

[E] I read in your biography that you have a minor in international engineering and science. How has your background in that subject helped you in the Core?

[J] That was a program that Clemson had where you went abroad, and took nine hours of engineering classes and a foreign language. I went to Spain for that. In terms of helping with the Core, it helped me empathize with the variety and diversity we have in our membership. The language hasn't helped much, but the openness to

different types of people has.

[E] What's been your favorite part of being a Core member?

[J] Definitely working with the different people, including the Core members, the regional leads, and local chapter leads. They're all so committed to NAYGN and they have the innate desire to do more. We have a great group of local chapter leads and, even moving up a level to regional leads, they're consistently hard workers who are also fun to work with.



Sporting a Fu Manchu moustache, Jimmy Hennen scales the Great wall of China.

[E] Have you had the opportunity to travel to any other countries because of your position with NAYGN?

[J] I did get to go to China for six months last year with Westinghouse. We're building four AP1000s right now, so I went to the Sanmen site that's four hours South of Shanghai with the engineering organization that was there.

[E] What a great experience! Was that your first visit to China?

[J] It was tremendous. It was fun to see the plant that I've been designing for five years at that level of construction. Beyond that, it was fun to travel around Southeast Asia for pretty cheap. The people I was with were great. They were intelligent and had a strong sense of adventure, so traveling with them was amazing.

[E] So what was your least favorite part of being a Core member?

[J] Well, there's always the sense that more could be done. Developing tools, and gauging and motivating the chapter leads. A lot of the NAYGN leads feel a sense of burden if there's a situation that can be improved, but they can't accomplish everything that could be done.

[E] I can totally relate to that. A lot of our members probably feel the same way. What would be your advice to the incoming Affairs chair?

[J] Nate Bennett is the incoming chair, and I've told him that the most important thing is to determine beforehand how to define his leadership

brand. There will always be a sense of accomplishment and sense of "what else can I do?" The intangibles of a leadership brand can sometimes have more impact on the organization than hard deliverables like metrics.

[E] How would you define your personal leadership brand?

[J] [pause] That is a very good question. [laughs] At work I try to be more direct. With NAYGN I try not to let that results-oriented mentality influence me too much. I try not to be too serious. While we all have a job to do in NAYGN, it's not your day job. I try to motivate people to have fun with it and not think of it as another responsibility.

[E] Prior to being a Core member, did you have any formal leadership experience?

[J] Kind of! There were a few programs in Charlotte. One was called Leadership Energy Carolina. It was a four session group for future leaders of the nuclear industry in the Carolinas. We toured Savannah River Site, Columbia's Westinghouse Fuel Fabrications Facility, VC Summer's AP1000, and then we got to Raleigh and got to meet political officials and policy makers. It gave us a great taste of how they establish priorities and conduct their business. In addition to looking at other leaders, we did a lot of 360 assessments.

I also took an E4 Emerging Leaders class. That was a broader industry focus. Lots of renewable and fossil plant folks. It was more targeted, introspective leadership development, and was a very powerful class.

[E] Do you think E4 helped you in NAYGN?

[J] It has. It's made me much more aware of how I come across, and more comfortable with leadership in the sense that I can have a more objective view.

[E] How long have you been an NAYGN member and how were you recruited?

[J] I started at Westinghouse in July 2009, and joined right after that. Westinghouse had opened that office in February, so it was a new office with young professionals early in their careers. It was a pretty easy sell for me to join. We also had great support that helped set the NAYGN hooks in me.

[E] Once you start with NAYGN, you definitely can't stop. How do you balance being a working professional with your NAYGN duties?

[J] It depends! Starting as a local chapter lead my responsibilities weren't as heavy so it was easy to focus on direct ownership of the chapter. We kept our execs in the loop and had singular ownership in the chapter. Like work, NAYGN responsibilities increase as you go. It became more managerial later: delegating and inspiring people to pick up more.

[E] Life is all about balance, and it sounds like you have a great handle on it. How do you think being a Core team member will help you in the future?

[J] It's so nice working with a good team. It would be hard normally to work with a group in a purely digital sense. We only get together twice a year face-to-face, but a lot of my communication and personal relationship are formed most strongly in person. Luckily, I learned the skills necessary for digital interactions with the rest of



Jimmy Hennen's proposal to Lisa, his now fiancée, at his parents' house, outside Chattanooga, TN.

the Core, and that's translated in other areas of my work. Beyond that, it's really nice to see what goes on behind the scenes. Being on the Core gives you a great mentality for what it takes to make the organization run. Working on infrastructure upgrades and dealing with foundational changes, coupled with seeing results in the chapters is tremendous.

[E] It's such a large, geographically spread organization. No doubt that's incredible to see. So now that I'm done grilling you about work, I'm going to ask you a few fun questions. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

[J] Firefighter. I actually was one too. Clemson had a program for student volunteer firefighters. We'd work a full 24-hour shift, leave for class, and come back. It was a pretty unbelievable job.

[E] On that note, if you could have any job in the world, what would it be and why?

[J] That's tough... s***.

[laughs]

How do I answer that? I really do love being in the nuclear industry. I came

back from China and joined the systems group here, and love it. I also love cars and working on them, and would enjoy restoring them but... I love the challenge of work and the release of my hobbies.

[E] So are you a new, sports car guy or an old, classic car guy?

[J] I'm actually looking for an early 70s Bronco right now. Old classic.

[E] Nice! Like the O.J. Simpson one, or is that too new?

[J] Noooooo. That's a '96.

[E] Just joking, just joking.

[J] Mhmm. Sure you were.

[E] So what do you enjoy doing most outside of work?

[J] Well, I just got engaged last weekend!

[E] Congrats! We can talk weddings! My own wedding is a year from yesterday.

[J] I would assume that my normal weekend is going to change for a while because of that, but I like being active: out in the woods, or building something at home. I get bored easily.

[E] So you're a go-go-go type of person?

[J] Even if we go-go-go and get to the woods just to hang out there, that's fine. I just dislike sitting around.

[E] Have you set a date for the wedding yet? And are you having a big or small one?

[J] Sometime next fall. And I guess... kind of big? It's all really fresh, so I don't know, but I'm sure Elise would have a pretty good idea.

[E] I'm getting to the point where I'm stressed out, and I still have a year to go. Call me if you ever want to plan!

[J] How do you get stressed out with a year left?!

[E] I know. I think I'm going to be Bridezilla.

[J] Are you having a big wedding?

[E] Yeahhhhh. I think it's big. We have about 300 people on the guest list.

[J] No wonder you're stressed.

[E] Well, Jimmy, thank you so much for the interview and your time! I hope I get to seek you out at the PD Conference in May!

[J] Thank you, Emily! See you there.



Meet the Interviewer

Emily Wood works for DTE Energy at the Fermi 2 Nuclear Power Plant as a Human Resources Consultant. She is the outgoing past President for the Fermi NAYGN Chapter. She loves taking tropical vacations: St. Lucia and Hawaii hold the top two spots so far. She is a happy, hyper, random person, and she loves Pomeranians.