



Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

Profiles of Mechanical Engineers



Norris Allman, P.E.

**Senior Supervising Test Engineer
Public Service Electric & Gas
Union, NJ**

Education:

BS, Mechanical Engineering, Cooper Union

Job Description:

Engineering manager in charge of testing functions for a large northeastern power utility.

Advice to Students:

"I think an engineer should be flexible enough to go from one field to the next. I think the lines of just being a mechanical engineer or civil engineer or electrical engineer, a computer engineer, are fuzzy nowadays. You have to have the ability to go from field to field almost."

Comments:

Norris worked on Wall Street before going on to complete his engineering degree. He finds that his business experience is helpful, for as an engineer he often deals with the business side of projects.

Video Transcript 1:

"I would highly recommend that people learn how to get along with others because it's a lot of teamwork. Unfortunately, some people cannot work as part of a team, and they're not going to be successful. But yes, all of your engineering classes, all of your technical skills are important. But being able to work with people -- that's paramount as far as I'm concerned."

Video Transcript 2:

"I think one of the reasons that you will find that you have more foreign students or more minorities getting into engineering is that people are judged by what they know, more so than by their friendships or what school they went to. It's a technical business, and industry and business are looking for people who know things. And if you're technically competent, I think you'll do very well."

Video Transcript 3:

"I think the opportunities are different, not necessarily more, not necessarily less. I think that they are different. A person cannot put themselves in the box of saying that I'm a thermo-

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engineer or I'm a mechanical engineer who's just going to specialize in HPAC. You have to be more flexible. You have to be able to adapt more so today than perhaps 15 or 20 years ago."

Interview:

Our company now has a division that builds power plants in South America, an enterprise that didn't exist five years ago. This was a large, but regional utility company, and there was no occasion to work and travel outside of the U.S. Today, it's different. We just sent a crew to Venezuela to evaluate several power plant projects. We are in a different environment today, an international environment that will continue to grow in the future.

Q: We are at PSE&G with Norris Allman, who's a mechanical engineer who's been kind enough to offer his time, advice, and services, in the making of this video for ASME Sloan Career Guidance. Norris, good morning. How are you today?

Allman: I'm fine, John. How are you?

Q: I'm OK, too. When we first talked on the telephone, you were very interested and a very interesting person, and you spoke with great enthusiasm about getting involved in this videotape and the project, and you knew that it's for career guidance. This enthusiasm would lead me to believe that you have something to say to people like yourself, who years back, are now looking at approaching a career as a mechanical engineer. Could you tell me a little bit about why the enthusiasm? What do you think this field offers them?

Allman: Well, several things. First of all, I was once a university professor. I taught a college-level course and I'm very interested in helping the young people make career decisions. I wish that when I was growing up there were someone that I could've turned to, who could have helped in guiding me in my career decisions.

Q: Right. Tell me a little bit about your experience in college and how you first became interested in mechanical engineering, and then how that interest progressed?

Allman: Right. Well, initially, I started off as a business major. The reason I got involved with business is I had a summer job working at a company on Wall Street, and the fellow there tried to get me to major in business, and I tried it for one semester, and after taking some of the business classes I found that really wasn't me. My interest was really in engineering. So, I decided to switch after the first semester. I had originally started going to NYU, and I transferred to Polytechnic Institute of New York and switched to engineering.

Q: Do you remember what it was, the course you took, that really took your interest and when you first decided to become a professional?

Allman: Well, probably the "Thermo" classes. They're probably one of the tougher classes to take. But, engineering was something that I always enjoyed in high school. I was always a very good math and science student. So, it was natural for me to continue in the engineering field.

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Q: Let me ask you, Norris, the things that you looked at coming into the profession that you felt were offered to you and the opportunities that made themselves obvious to you, in your career path thus far; have you been disappointed, or have you been more than happy about where you've gone? And tell me a little bit about how your expectations have been fulfilled, in specific.

Allman: Well, it is different than what I thought it would be. When I first started, I was thinking that engineering would be nothing but sitting at a desk, doing calculations all the time. As I got into the field, I gravitated more towards management. That's something that sort of evolved. When I first started with the public service, I used to do nothing but calculations. Accident analysis of nuclear power plants. But now my major responsibilities are really administrative. So, it has changed greatly over the years.

Q: And for young people looking at this career today, do you think the opportunities are as numerous and as diversified as they were, let's say, 20 years ago? Less so or more so?

Allman: Well, I think the opportunities are different, not necessarily more, not necessarily less. I think that they are different. A person cannot put themselves in the box of saying that I'm a thermo-engineer or I'm a mechanical engineer who's just going to specialize in HVAC. You have to be more flexible. You have to be able to adapt more so today than perhaps 15 or 20 years ago.

Q: Tell me, what is the name of the company you're with now?

Allman: Public Service Electric and Gas. We're a major utility in New Jersey.

Q: Have you always worked for them, or have you had other jobs?

Allman: I've had other jobs, but not for any long period of time. Really just temporary jobs. As I mentioned I worked at a company on Wall Street, doing technical analysis of stocks, and I did that for just about three years off and on.

Q: What does that have to do with your skills as an engineer?

Allman: Well, now I'm more involved in looking at corporate issues. My experience down on Wall Street, if you want to say, gave me a greater appreciation for that aspect of the business.

Q: Working on Wall Street, I'm sure you were able to get a sense of global markets. Earlier today, I know that you were speaking with Tom and Anne about how the global economies and how the shift in all things globally has affected even a company like PSEG.

Allman: Right.

"Profiles of Mechanical Engineers"

Q: Could you tell me a little bit over time -- not just now -- but go back a few years and tell me about the company prior to that kind of globalization, and how this company's economic interests and opportunities for engineers have changed as a result of the world becoming smaller due to globalization?

Allman: Sure. In our particular company, our utility, we had a franchise which just consisted of the state of New Jersey, a portion of the state of New Jersey. Not even the entire state. We were always looking at growth within the confines of a portion of New Jersey. That's no longer the case. Today, it's possible for utilities to branch outside of their service territory and to serve other markets within the country and even the world. Our particular company now has a company where we are building power plants in South America. That's something that didn't occur five years ago, 10 years ago. We never had an opportunity to travel outside of the U.S. for this company. Today, it's different. We have a crew we sent down to Venezuela to look at some power plants, so it's drastically different, and I think it's going to continue to be different in the future.

Q: Do you like that?

Allman: I like that. One thing, I like to travel. I've been to several places in the world. I've been to China. I've been to Africa. My wife and I, we love to travel. We love meeting new people, experiencing new culture, eating new food. I enjoy it.

Q: Would you say, though, that working for a concern like this company, would a mechanical engineer coming in today look forward to being able to travel and get involved at a hand-to-hand level with different cultures?

Allman: Definitely, because the U.S. does not have a monopoly on good ideas. When you travel and you get to see how people do things in other countries, you get ideas that perhaps you wouldn't normally have thought of. When I travel to China, I was talking with some of the engineers over there, and they have a novel approach of how they tackle some of their problems.

Q: What's novel about it? Tell me about it.

Allman: Well, in many ways, they have to make do with a lot less money. So, they don't have the technology. They don't have the automated systems. They don't have the computers. At least, not when I was traveling through China. So many of the ideas that they came up with were homemade things, things that they just had to put a lot of time and sweat to develop because they didn't have the ability to go out and purchase things as we do in the U.S.

Q: OK. I have a question for you. Your son, hypothetically, goes to college, comes back to you and says, "Dad, I've looked around. I've studied different things. I think I'd like to become a mechanical engineer." Is this good news or bad news?

Allman: I think it's good news. It's still a good profession. It's still a good way of making a living. I enjoy what I do. I think it's honest work. It's ethical work. It's something that you can leave at the end of the day and feel good about what you have accomplished. So, yes, I would

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encourage him to do that, if that's what he wished to do. I don't think my son has really made up his mind as to what he wants to do.

Q: With regard to economics and this job, has being in this profession met the economic standards that you have for yourself in terms of advancement and money? Salary, benefits, that kind of thing. How are you doing?

Allman: Right, right. Well, I'm doing very well financially. Working for a large utility helps because the pay at a large utility is probably a lot better than some of the other industries. So I've done very well financially. We have a lot of good programs here. I don't have to worry about health plans. I don't have to worry about a lot of other things that people in other industries tend to worry about more.

Q: "Other industries?" Meaning? Other mechanical engineers in other parts of the industry or in actual other professions?

Allman: Well, in other professions. Being with a utility for a number of years used to be greater job security than a lot of other industries. But this is changing. At least in our industry, there's no guarantee that a person has a job for life, and I find that's true in just about every industry that you go to now. There's no such thing as guaranteed employment, and I think that's good for the country, too.

Q: Why is that?

Allman: Well, it forces you to have the best people in all areas.

Q: I also agree with that, although I've been a freelance person my whole life. A lot of friends in different areas, they have to stay on their toes more, and you say that's true in your profession as well?

Allman: Right, right, definitely so.

Q: What advice would you give for women and people of color and people from other minorities -- whatever they might be -- considering coming into this profession today?

Allman: Well, I would highly recommend it. I think one of the reasons that you will find that you have more foreign students or more minorities getting into engineering is that people are judged by what they know, more so than by their friendships or what school they went to. It's a technical business, and industry and business are looking for people who know things. And if you're technically competent, I think you'll do very well.

Q: Where do you look forward to going with your work?

Allman: Look forward to in my work? Well, right now in my particular position, we're looking at streamlining our costs, and, unfortunately, that involves trying to reduce the number of personnel. That's something that I don't look forward to. That's something that somewhat depresses me. The only thing that really gives me a lot of hope is that I fully believe that as our company is permitted to expand, that there will be greater opportunities to give people

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advancement opportunities, because right now as companies contract, it's difficult to promise people that things are going to be better.

Q: Let me ask you this, are you at all involved in the hiring of people at this utility?

Allman: Yes.

Q: Do you review or talk to people, and if you are involved in that, what are you really looking for in a young person today, who's coming here as a mechanical engineer? What are you looking for in that human being?

Allman: Well, I really look for people who can get along with people. I've had to discipline people. I've had to let people go, and the people I've had to let go were not because they were technically unqualified. It was because they simply could not get along with other people, and in engineering, you have to have people who can talk with each other, who can work on complex problems and find solutions. You can't have people fighting all the time.

Q: I think that's a good point. We're at a public utility. It's a corporate environment. I think that it would at least initially have the feeling or quality to an outsider of being a serious place. Is there any levity in this job?

Allman: Yes, we have a lot of fun. It's a different world today, in that we have to keep track of costs. We have to make sure that we operate efficiently. But, yes, we do have a good time. As a matter of fact, last week we had a barbecue where we invited all the retirees to come back. It's good to meet old friends, people who haven't been with the company for 10, 15 years, and they've all said how much they enjoyed working here, and that's good

Q: Let me ask you this. Supposing I were a young person -- which oddly enough was true a long time ago -- let's say I was interested in becoming a mechanical engineer and, in fact, at this utility. If I called you on the phone and said, "Listen, I'm giving thought to become a mechanical engineer. I'd like to come out and talk to you and meet you, look at your company, just with an eye towards seeing what goes on." What would you think of that? Would you have me out?

Allman: Yes, I would, especially if I knew you were sincere. Sometimes we do get phone calls from people who perhaps are not sincere. They don't really have any interest in engineering. They're really just looking for a job. But, if a person is sincerely interested and they're willing to make a commitment, sure, I would be more than willing to invite a person in and take them around.

Q: What's a typical day for you?

Allman: Normally, my day begins when I arrive at about 7:30. What we have to do is go over all the time sheets for what people were working on the previous night. Then, I'll meet with the test engineers, all of the seniors, and find out what sort of problems they may have had the day before. We do a lot of testing for asbestos, and normally, there may be a very hot project that's in the works. So, I'll go over with the test engineer what he's done for the previous day's

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work. We also do radiological testing downstairs, so I'll also touch base with the test engineer in charge of the radiological sampling, to find out what has happened previously.

Q: During the course of your day, what are the things that you have to do that you like least about your work?

Allman: Well, I hate time sheets, and I hate the budget information that has to be supplied. I hate filling out paperwork. It's something that I dread.

Q: What are your favorite moments of the day?

Allman: Really, the technical work. I really enjoy what I do.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about that. What are the technical aspects?

Allman: Well, we get involved with doing all of the testing for radiation, as I mentioned. So we get down to the site, from time to time, and we just make sure that there is no radioactivity in any of the samples which we collect.

Q: OK, and when do you get out of here at the end of the day?

Allman: Oh, normally, about a quarter to five. I normally stay a little bit later at the end of the day.

Q: Later than other people here?

Allman: Yes, because that's when you can get things done. When you don't have the interruptions, you don't have the phone ringing; you don't have people come into your office because we're a utility.

Q: So you leave here a little later than most of the others?

Allman: Yes.

Q: OK, why is that?

Allman: Well, that's normally when you can get most things done. You don't have the interruptions, you don't have the phone ringing. You have a little bit of quiet time.

Q: And when you get home, how's that? What do you do in the evening?

Allman: Oh, gee. Well, normally, my 10-year-old will have 1,001 questions. He'll want me to take him to McDonald's or take him some place. But I enjoy that. I love my kids. We have a great time.

"Profiles of Mechanical Engineers"

Q: Have you ever brought any of your kids to work?

Allman: Yes, as a matter of fact, they were here last Friday. We had a picnic here at the laboratory. So, everyone brought in their kids and their spouses.

Q: In the course of the day, do you ever have a moment or two where you can reflect on the work you're doing, or are you so busy that you really can't put that kind of experience together?

Allman: Oh, no. In the morning, we have to prepare a little report because we have to meet with our manager to go over the top jobs, what's hot. He normally would like to see an overview of what we're working on.

Q: What's hot right now, Norris?

Allman: What's hot right now? Well, we had a problem with our UPS system. Our universal power system, which failed. So, I lost all of my detectors. So, I didn't have anything to count samples with.

Q: How did you solve that?

Allman: Well, we had to make a lot of phone calls rapidly, and we got a replacement from our offices downtown, and now we're up and running and we're humming along.

Q: Would you say that this organization meets with a daily load of problems that need to be solved continuously?

Allman: Oh, sure, definitely. I mean we're a utility. We have thousands of transformers out there in the field that have to be tested. We have three nuclear power plants. We have several generating stations. There's always something that's breaking, because this is a testing lab, and we have to test things all the time. So, there's always something that's hot. There's always something that has to be done.

Q: Can I assume, then, that a lot of the things that you test, you may look at something to determine why something failed, as well as preventive testing? Is that correct?

Allman: Absolutely. We are very big in "preventive medicine," if you will. We have to try to find out ways that we can prevent things from breaking in the future because it's not economical just to wait for something to break. If you can figure out what's causing it to break and modify things to prevent it from breaking in the future, you're going to be successful, and that's what we're looking at doing now.

Q: Great. You know you mentioned before or you wrote in some of the paperwork that we looked, at that your public utility has had to downsize a little bit.

Allman: Yes, yes.

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Q: So what are the characteristics that the utility is looking for, in people that they will keep on? Is it a personal, professional or economic phase shift that is downsizing this utility?

Allman: Well, it's a lot of things, but what the company is looking for in terms of people is people who can adapt. You have to be able to do more than one thing. You have to be able to be multi-talented and multi-faceted. It's a necessity.

Q: If there was any one thing in particular that you would say to young people who are looking at this profession with an eye toward really taking it on and devoting themselves, what would you tell them now?

Allman: Well, I still believe it was a good profession to get into. I would highly recommend that people learn how to get along with others because it's a lot of teamwork. Unfortunately, some people cannot work as part of a team, and they're not going to be successful. But yes, all of your engineering classes, all of your technical skills are important. But being able to work with people, that's paramount as far as I'm concerned.

Q: And lastly for this area, what are the hardest aspects of this job personally for you? What are the things that are difficult challenges that you are now trying to overcome within yourself?

Allman: That's a good question, John. The downsizing is probably the toughest. I've had to go through a process of bidding on my own job, where you're actually interviewed and I've been successful in getting my old job back, but that's different from many years ago.

Q: Norris, just for the record, what I'd like you to do is basically when I stop with this question, in a very light and informative way, tell me your name, the name of the company you work for, your job title, how old you are, how long you've been at the company and what it is that you do. What is the job description?

Allman: My name is Norris Allman, and I am a Senior Supervising Test Engineer at Public Service Electric and Gas Company. My job responsibility is supervising a group of six engineers, which are involved for testing for asbestos and testing the environment for radioactivity. I've been with the company for 23 years.

Q: Let me ask you something, how would you describe yourself? What kind of a person, your temperament, the things you like, how you feel. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Allman: Well, basically, I'm a very quiet person, somewhat shy. But I'm a very technically oriented person. I like details. I like technical things.

Q: You spoke before about when you started off in your career, you had something to do with business, Wall Street, and then you eventually made this phase shift to mechanical engineering and this job here. Take me back to when you were in business and tell me how you made that journey. Chart that for me a little. Tell me what the significant things were that opened up this profession to you.

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Allman: Well, back then the person who really influenced me to get involved with the business discipline was my old boss, and he had a love of what he did. He used to be a Technical Analyst. So, he used to analyze stocks. He used to tear up a balance sheet, and he used to find out what made a company tick, and it was because of his love for business that really got me interested in business initially. But as I started to study it more in college, I found that it really wasn't me. And I switched to something that I enjoyed when I was in high school, which was engineering. But, it really was the person who influenced me, and I think that's probably true of a lot of fields. If you talk to someone who has a love for the field, sometimes that love is contagious.

Q: Excellent. You mentioned high school. Apart from anything relative to your career or necessarily relevant, tell me about life as Norris in high school? What was going down? What year was it? What was going on around you?

Allman: I went to a school called Stuyvesant High School, which was a specialized science school. Back when I was in high school, you had the Vietnam War going on. So, I remember it as an age of demonstrations. People were very upset about the war. I was concerned about the war because I knew that as soon as I got out of high school, I would have to go. It was a very active, active period. That's what I remember most about high school.

Q: And on a personal level, what was life like with your family and friends, your social life? Where did you think you were headed? What was going on for you?

Allman: Well, we were very poor. My father didn't go to college. My mother didn't even finish high school. But, they were very adamant about us finishing high school and going on to college. And although they didn't have a lot of money, they really pushed education for us. So, I was fortunate to win a scholarship to college. I had the ability to go to the University of Michigan. I could have gone to California. But I decided to stay local, because again, money was a consideration for us back then. So I went to school at, initially NYU, and then Polytechnic Institute of New York.

Q: Did you have a lot of friends there? Were you a pretty social guy? Did you kid around as well as do your work?

Allman: Yes, I was pretty popular. I used to work in a laboratory, as a matter of fact, while I was in college because, again, I had to have a job to pay for some of the incidentals because as I mentioned, we were very poor. Yes, I got along well with everyone. I really enjoyed my college days.

Q: What do you expect of yourself in the future?

Allman: One of the things I like about ASME is the integrity of the profession. The things which we do are important. People can get hurt. People can get injured if you have people put their ethics aside. In my life, I've had people actually come up to me and offer money or bribes to purchase their equipment. Now being a member of ASME, they like to push ethics, and I think that ethics is something which should be pushed more in society in general. People should not compromise principles.

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Q: And looking at the profession as a whole, where would you like to see the mechanical engineers of tomorrow take this profession? And what is it you think they're going to be giving to, or contributing to society, furthering in essence, that has not been done before?

Allman: Well, there are a lot of things. In terms of making life easier for people, for mechanical engineers sometimes it's not as glorious or as glamorous as, perhaps, a lot of the things that are taking place in microprocessors. But I think just in general, in terms of making products easier, faster, fabricating things, I think we have a lot to offer.

Q: And you would encourage people to look at this career path?

Allman: Yes, definitely, definitely. It's been a good profession for me. I know my career has taken a lot of twists and turns. But it's something that I've enjoyed.

Q: If you were to leave it for any reason, Norris, where do you think you would go? And what are the skills that becoming a mechanical engineer, which skills did you need as a mechanical engineer, do you think are most transferable, that you could take with you to another profession or area?

Allman: If I left this particular area, probably it would be to start some sort of a manufacturing business, because I do enjoy business, too. I do enjoy working with people, and I do enjoy making things. So, if I were to leave engineering, it'd probably be as an owner or a principle owner of my own business. Where do I see the field going in general? Computers are everywhere, and I think even if you look at the "ME Magazine," you'll notice that more of the articles are geared towards computers. We are in the midst of a revolution, and sometimes you don't notice it, but the whole industry has been changed by the computer, and I think mechanical engineers probably have to embrace the field a little bit more than what we've been doing in the past.

Q: Norris, does your wife work?

Allman: Yes, she does. My wife is a secretary. She works in the Human Resource Department. So, both of us work, and we have three kids, so it's difficult sometimes juggling everything.

Q: Are you active in your family life?

Allman: Yes. I have a little boy who right now is having some trouble in school. So, we've had to meet with the teacher from time to time. He likes to joke around. He likes to kid around. He's a normal 10-year-old. So I'm active with meeting with the teachers to try to steer him in the right direction.

"Profiles of Mechanical Engineers"

Q: Tell us the kinds of things that you do in your personal life that help you maintain your vitality as a person and as a professional.

Allman: Well, I like to exercise. I know as I get older, the stomach starts to get a little bit bigger. So, I like to play a little handball, do a little swimming. Exercise, I find, helps me to relax. It helps me to focus, and a good game of handball, sometimes you can get out all your frustrations of what has happened on the job.

Q: What are the kinds of things on the job that are frustrating to you and how do you deal with those things?

Allman: Because of downsizing, costs are something which are becoming more critical, and it's frustrating to have to go to budget meetings and to go over the same sort of questions over and over again about how you can cut costs. That's difficult. But I know that it's something which is necessary. It's something that I don't enjoy.

Q: When you have a problem that you can't solve, what do you do? How do you solve it?

Allman: It's an old saying, but sometimes I like to just relax and sleep on something. I find I think a lot better if I'm not constantly rehashing the same problem over and over and over again. Sometimes if you just sleep on it, you can come up with a solution, and I like to say to people, "Hey, how would you handle this?" I find that, collectively, people are a lot smarter than they are singularly.

Q: Jump back to your life as an undergraduate. What was that like? Studying? Did it come easy? Was it difficult? How did you balance studying and social life in college?

Allman: I went to school in New York, so I lived at home, and I also worked. So, I didn't have a lot of social activities. So, it was difficult to work and to study and to take all the classwork. But I was a good student. I always was a good student. I mentioned that I had a scholarship, so I had a relatively easy life as an undergraduate.

Q: Anything that you would do differently after having the experience of 20 years?

Allman: Differently? I probably would be a lot more aggressive in terms of perhaps starting out on my own, perhaps going into sales. And that's not inconsistent. I think if a person were to go into sales, it helps them to sharpen their self-confidence because, don't get me wrong, I still love mechanical engineering, but I think the experience of being able to sell something helps a person in their everyday life because eventually you have to end up selling yourself.

Q: Are there connections between sales and what you find you have to do as a manager and supervisor?

Allman: Definitely. More so, my responsibility is to bring, in effect, sales into the company, and I really wish I had more experience in doing that. I'm learning on the job. But I wish I had an opportunity to learn off of the job.

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Q: Aside from that one manager that influenced you, who else in your life influenced you to take the path that you're taking?

Allman: Well, my first supervisor, I found him to be a brilliant fellow. This is when I was working in the mechanical division of Public Service. I had just started. I was an engineering assistant, and for the most part, what that involved was making Xerox copies of drawings, running things down to other engineers. But, this particular manager gave me assignments that involved some technical expertise. And I was very impressed with how he could tackle a problem and solve it.

Q: You mentioned earlier that in downsizing, you found yourself in a situation of having to bid on your own job.

Allman: Yes.

Q: Could you say something more about that experience?

Allman: I think it's something that all companies are going through. You're trying to find the best people for the remaining job slots. It was a process where I had to actually meet with my supervisor. We went over what I did. We went over what I felt the job would be like a year from now, two years from now, and in effect, I was just interviewed for my same job. I also was given the opportunity to bid on other jobs. I don't see anything wrong with the process. I think it's a good process. I think it's something that all companies will simply have to go through.

Q: What kinds of things have been instrumental in the job transitions that you have had? Have these been planned? Have these been accidental? Have you fallen into things? How's it been over the last few years?

Allman: Some of them have been planned, some of them have been accidental. When I first started with the company, I used to do a lot of traveling, a lot more engineering work. I used to work on design work, having drawings made up, traveling to different parts of the U.S., mostly to Cleveland, Ohio, working with the manufacturers. Now my job is mostly managerial, mostly administrative. I don't do a lot of technical work nowadays. And sometimes I really miss it. I really miss the technical details.

Q: So why not go back to the technical detail?

Allman: Well, you get to a point where you really have to -- if you want to advance in a company -- you have to get into the managerial side. I do have the ability to dabble in it, if you will. To take a look at a calculation, to see whether something is wrong. But I miss it, and I guess I could do it if I wanted to, but that time has passed.

Q: How has the company changed since you've been with it?

Allman: The company is a lot more business-oriented. When I started, we were a strictly regulated company, and perhaps things were not always as efficient as they are today. But now we have to account for all of our time. We have to bill out all of our time to whatever client

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we're working with. So, we're very business-focused now. That's a drastic change over the last few years.

Q: How has engineering changed within the company over time?

Allman: We had a lot more engineers in the company years ago. Now a lot more things are being out-sourced. It's probably true of a lot of industries. A lot more things get sent outside the company nowadays.

Q: You don't have the words "mechanical engineering" in your title.

Allman: No.

Q: Do you want to say anything to engineering students about that?

Allman: Well, I think an engineer should be flexible enough to go from one field to the next. I think the lines of just being a mechanical engineer or civil engineer or electrical engineer, a computer engineer, are fuzzy nowadays. You have to have the ability to go from field to field almost. Yes, you do need the background, but you should have the ability to go from item to item or field to field.

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