

An NCAC Anthology in Noise and Vibration

Laymon N. Miller

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NCAC, know what that stands for? If you are in acoustical practice in North America, at least, you know it stands for “National Council of Acoustical Consultants,” which, is “. . .an international organization [since 1962] committed to supporting the acoustical profession through: recognizing expert Acoustical Consultants and Engineers, promoting opportunities for peer interaction, providing a reference tool for the public to learn more about the profession and to find a consultant matched to their needs.” The NCAC decided to publish this book, of articles collected or authored, or both, by Laymon Miller.

I will try to make this a balanced review and as impartial as I can get. But an upfront confession — On one hand, I applied for NCAC membership and never got accepted, so that is a downer. But, on the other hand I know, respect, and like, most of the members of NCAC and I knew and liked and respected the late author and just about all of the people to whom the author discusses in the book. My last book review met with comments like: “A miasma of asinine clichés unrivaled in western letters.” While this quote can be interpreted in many ways, according to the editor of NCEJ, it might be best not to use it in print ads.

In keeping with on one hand and the other hand approach — I'll discuss the contents, then discuss the few minor criticisms I had about the book and finish with the many, many fine points about the book and a summary.

Enough procrastinating — And now to the review, here's a bit about the physical layout. The soft cover book, almost an inch (2.5 cm), is densely populated. The table of contents has many articles, some as short as two pages, and others around ten pages. There are lots of illustrations and drawings, and there is no index.

The book's title is a bit misleading — This is not really an anthology of NCAC. Rather it is really, and mostly, a collection of maybe all of the Miller's published writings (he was prolific). There are more than 80 “chapters.” Each article is mostly by, but sometimes about, Miller. Also, it contains a few articles by others including writings by Leo Beranek, Eric Ungar and Eric Wood.

The chapters are generally chronologically organized — but not always — and the subjects range from office acoustics to World Trade Center rescues, to aircraft noise, to HVAC noise, to vibrations, and to philosophy. Did I miss some topics? Oh yes. . . tributes to

people, experiences as an expert witness, and so much more.

The front inside page is titled, “An NCAC Anthology in Noise and Vibration — Laymon N. Miller: in Two Parts.” Huh? Two parts? That was different than the title of the book and a bit confusing. It took a few minutes to unravel the deep mystery. After an Introduction by Neil Shade and a Preface by Kerrie Standlee, there is a title (or subtitle) page by Miller called “My acoustics toolbox: Filled with Decibels, Hertz, and Memories with Occasional bits of Boldness and Courage.” That really summarizes the essence of the remaining pages of the book, and then the solution to the mystery of the “parts” mentioned on the front page is solved.

Part 1 consists of published articles, including those in journals and magazines and is about 130 pages in length. It covers the articles from 1957 to 2008, more or less chronological, reproducing articles from

- Machine Design,
- Architectural and Engineering News,
- Noise Control,
- A memo — Port Authority of New York and New Jersey,
- Heating Piping and Air Conditioning,
- Sound and Vibration,
- Acoustics Today, and
- Maybe I missed a few.

Also, scattered throughout are Miller's personal introductions to the topics. I think a surprising and enlightening feature in these reproductions is that some of the drawings we see today are found in contemporary papers and publications.

Part 2 is mostly a collection of articles published in “NCAC Newsletter” and covers the rest of the book. This selection covers the period 1996 to 2012 and includes an article by Leo Beranek and Noral Stewart.

So, back to the hands — On one hand the book is frustrating to read. It is hard to find stuff, especially without an index and with the articles in the Table of Contents vaguely called “Just think” (p. 146) and “President's Message” (p. 174). The chapters are loosely organized, although perhaps the best it can be, given the wide variety of subjects covered. Also, it took some time to figure out why the book was in two parts. But on the other hand, the book is wonderful. It contains a bunch of old articles that are as relevant today as they were many years ago. The articles are well-written, enjoyable, and filled with information, some of which I forgot but a lot which I never knew. All of the people written about, or who authored articles, are highly-respected, knowledgeable acousticians.

I'm glad to have this book. I recommend this book to all readers of this Journal. Those of us geezers who have practiced acoustics most of the time interval this book covers will much appreciate a lot of the works shown in the volume. Those younger acoustical engineers will do well to read this book — there is a lot to learn in almost every “chapter.”

Buy the book. It is inexpensive enough and, if you are lucky enough, and qualified enough, to be an NCAC member, you get a good discount.

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