



You Can Tune a Boiler, But You Can't Tune a Fish

Tim Leopold

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'You Can Tune a Boiler but You Can't Tuna Fish' can be thought of as a conversationalist text book. I first went to work for the Bailey Controls Co. in 1986 after graduating with a BSChE from Cleveland state university. At the time Marion "Bud" Keyes was the president of Bailey. He had decreed that the people tasked with choosing new hires concentrate on chemical engineers instead of the more traditional electrical engineers. The thinking was that Bailey was a controls company, and that chemical engineers with a more process oriented background, should be a good fit. So I was hired as a combustion controls design engineer (in training). There are quite a few trend displays throughout the body of this book. Many of them are meant to illustrate some concept or other. But some of these displays are in the book for a completely different purpose. The first time that I walk onto a job site there is no telling what I will find. Many times the boiler is swinging, and I don't mean in a happy way. The point is that there are hundreds, or maybe scores of hundreds of power plants out there in the world run by people who have no idea what good control looks like, because they have never seen it. That is the reason that some of these trends are in this book. I want people to know what good control is supposed to look like. I want our operators to have something to back them up when they request strong, stable, and robust systems. And I want to provide plant engineers and their management with some kind of acceptable baseline when they evaluate the system that they have. Much of this book is concerned with providing a basic understanding of boiler controls, and many of the problems and situations that are possible. Tuning is often a humbling task. I have, in the past, often stubbornly held to my pre-conceived notions of how things are "supposed" to work in the face of friendly advice from plant personnel, physical evidence to the contrary, and my own frustration at not overcoming a problem. Once I admit that, heavens forbid, I might be wrong, and drop my assumptions the solution is usually quite close at hand. It turns out that listening to what people have to say with an open mind and a respectful attitude is a pretty good way to learn and develop as a tuner, as well as a person. The body of this work has grown out of conversations with operators, management and other engineers during the course of some twenty years designing and tuning boiler control systems around the world. It is intended to give anyone who is interested in power plant controls a knowledge of the basic control loops that are involved. If your interest is in controls in general, I would like to think that there are some basic universals that are explored in this book. And if you don't care that much about the particulars I hope you will find it a good read.

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