Report on a Case by the Board of Ethical Review

Case No. 74-1

Name of Firm on Baseball Uniforms

Facts:
A professional engineer who is a principal of an engineering firm proposes to sponsor a little league baseball team. The team would carry the name of the firm, and the name of the firm would be imprinted on the backs of the baseball shirts in a manner consistent with that of other teams in the league.

Question:
Would the use of the name of an engineering firm on the shirts of the players of the baseball team be a violation of the Code of Ethics?

References:
Code of Ethics-Section 2(b)-"He shall seek opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health, and well-being of his community."

Section 3-"The engineer will avoid all conduct or practice likely to discredit or unfavorably reflect upon the dignity or honor of the profession."

Section 3(a)-"The engineer shall not advertise his professional services but may utilize the following means of identification:

"(1) Professional cards and listings in recognized and dignified publications, provided they are consistent in size and are in a section in the publication regularly devoted to such professional cards and listings. The information displayed must be restricted to firm name, address, telephone number, appropriate symbol, name of principal participants and the fields of practice in which the firm is qualified."

"(2) Signs on equipment, offices, and at the site of projects for which he renders services, limited to firm name, address, telephone number, and type of services, as appropriate."

"(3) Brochures, business cards, letterheads, and other factual representations of experience, facilities, personnel, and capacity to render service, providing the same are not misleading relative to the extent of participation in the projects cited, and provided the same are not indiscriminately distributed.

"(4) Listings in the classified section of telephone directories, limited to name, address, telephone number, and specialties in which the firm is qualified."

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Discussion:
There is every reason to believe that the engineer in question has the sole motivation of providing assistance to a recognized and worthy civic endeavor. Section 2(b) of the code contemplates as broad a range as possible of contributions of engineers to worthy civic endeavors. It is not restricted to civic affairs of an engineering nature, nor does it restrict involvement in civic activities to those involving engineering expertise. It is, rather, a general exhortation for members of the engineering profession to be active participants in the betterment of their communities on a broad basis.

Having thus lauded the role of the engineer in sponsoring a little league baseball team, we must then observe that all such civic involvement must also be within and consistent with the other mandates of the code. Thus, the questions posed are whether the civic contribution is tainted by the use of the engineer's firm name for possibly less than unselfish purposes, or is it likely to reflect unfavorably upon the dignity of the profession.

Assuming that the engineer does not have a selfish or ulterior motive in making the name of his firm known to the public, it may be a matter of simple judgment to use the firm name for positive identification, as is often the case with sponsors of amateur baseball, bowling, or football teams. On balance we believe the language of Section 3(a) can reasonably be interpreted to permit the name of the engineering firm on the baseball uniforms because there is only a remote possibility that the name would be related to an offer or promotion of engineering services of the firm. With regard to Section 3, we believe it is unlikely that the dignity of the profession would be compromised by use of the firm's name under the stated conditions.

Finally, we offer the gratuitous advice to the engineer that he might well avoid even the slightest charge of impropriety by fellow engineers in his worthy civic endeavor by selecting a name geared to the team rather than to his firm. Thus, "Beacon Heights Tigers," for example, would just as well carry out the civic purpose and provide the same impetus for high morale of the players through the common identification.

Conclusion:*
The use of the name of an engineering firm on the shirts of the players of the baseball team would not be a violation of the Code of Ethics.

***Note**-This opinion is based on data submitted to the Board of Ethical Review and does not necessarily represent all of the pertinent facts when applied to a specific case. This opinion is for educational purposes only and should not be construed as expressing any opinion on the ethics of specific individuals. This opinion may be reprinted without further permission, provided that this statement is included before or after the text of the case.

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