

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie is smiling and standing next to a large, complex engine. He has his hands resting on the engine. The engine is dark with various pipes, hoses, and components. A yellow hard hat is visible on the engine. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a workshop or factory setting.

PEOPLE

Thursday, April 2, 1998

ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

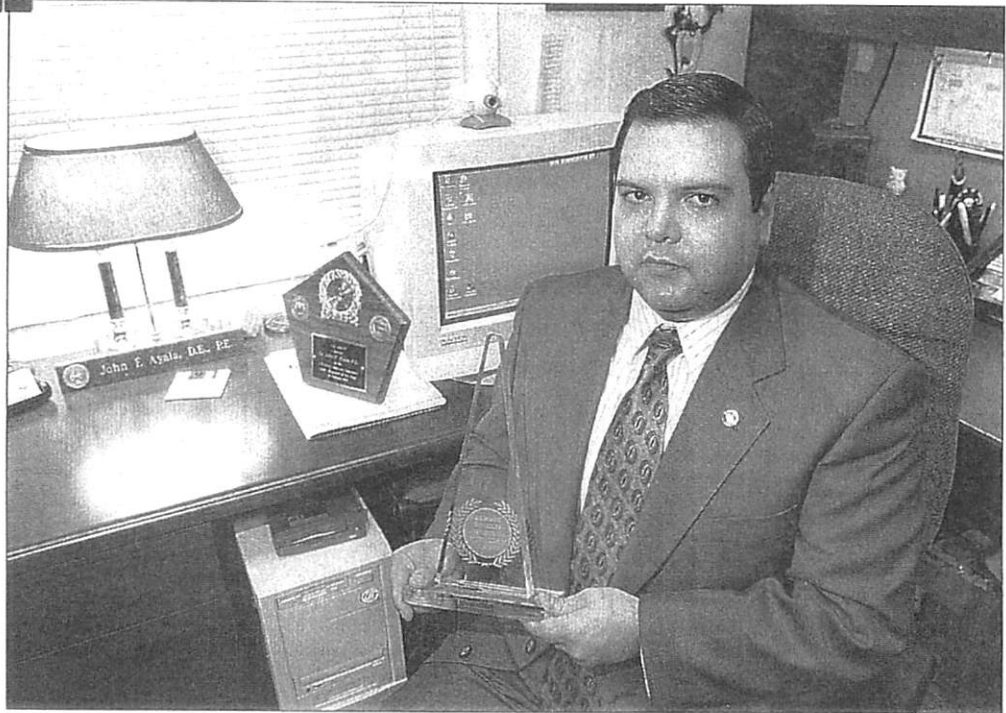
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Spring Break
at all?
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Different back-
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PROFILE



George Tuley/Caller-Times

CCAD industrial engineer John Ayala says consulting production people is a part of his job that he likes a great deal.

■ **John Ayala, 32**
 ■ **Personal:** Born and raised in Corpus Christi; 1983 Carroll High School graduate; parents retired CCISD teachers Amado and Patricia Ayala; younger brother, David, electronic engineering/computer science student at UTSA.
 ■ **Education:** Graduated Texas A&M University-College Station with Doctor of Engineering, May 1996; master of science, industrial engineering, A&M-College Station, Dec. 1989; bachelor of science in electrical engineering, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, May 1987; also, executive graduate training.
 ■ **Articles:** "T700-GE700 Engine Design of Experiments, Engine Test Cell Rework Acceptance Rate Improves," Army RD&A May-June 97; "CCAD's Partnership for Improvement" (with R. Mayo, D. Phillips), Army Logistician Sept.-Oct. 97; "Corpus Christi Army Depot's Rotary Wing Sustainment Project," Army RD&A Sept.-Oct. 97, among others.
 ■ **About recognition:** "I've gone to school every summer for as long as I can remember, and sacrificed a lot of personal time, so these awards make it more rewarding." Also named 1997 Hispanic Engineer of the Year, by Hispanic Engineer Magazine.
 ■ **Favorite 'Star Trek' films:** "The Wrath of Khan"; "Star Trek: First Contact."

JOHN AYALA

Army Materiel Command Engineer of the Year
gives taxpayers 'more bang for the buck'

John Ayala recalls watching "Star Trek" on television as a boy and thinking of the scientific and technological possibilities it represented. "That gave me an awakening in science and engineering," says Ayala, Manufacturing Technology program manager at Corpus Christi Army Depot's helicopter-overhaul facility. "I would think of what it would be like to go out in space, and the places I would go. I'd also watch all the rocket launches at that time." In his work at CCAD, Ayala is able to explore new technological frontiers by developing better repair techniques for military helicopters. For his role in this and other programs he was named 1998 Army Materiel Command Engineer of the Year. His recommendations for different processes saved taxpayers an estimated \$24 million.

"We would tear an engine down, overhaul it, put it back together and test it, and we found they were failing quite a bit," Ayala says. "I got a cross-service group of engineers, mechanics, quality folks together and got everyone's input. My job was to sort through all that — and data we had collected prior — and make recommendations."

"We had had a rework acceptance rate of about 33 percent, and once we implemented the changes it changed to 90 percent. That made it better-faster-cheaper, and that felt good."

Ayala begins a six-month temporary assignment April 6 at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., working with Dr. Robert Rohde, the Army's manager of research and development. Ayala applied for the

post to learn more.

"He basically decides what projects get funded," Ayala says. "I want to learn from him how people do business up there, and bring that knowledge back here."



Marshall
ANDERSON

Ayala's fellow industrial engineer Elaine Lambert says his persistence makes him a good manager.

"John is a very thorough person, and he is someone who will go an extra 200 percent to get a question answered," she says. "When someone tells him no, he makes sure he fully understands the reason behind it, and he often challenges it. He knows the system and

how to work within it for the benefit of everyone." Ayala says his parents fostered his tendency to question the status quo.

"They resisted stereotypes of Hispanics, and they both challenged the system a long time," he says. "They helped me develop mental toughness. The biggest obstacles I faced in this work were getting people at the higher levels to understand that people at lower levels were just as smart."