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Interview with Herb and Sandy Schwartz

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[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

[0:00:07] Herb Schwartz: My name is Herb Schwartz. I started on June 1st, 1959. I was a wage and salary analyst when I started. I spent four or five years doing wage and salary work. Including being a wage and salary manager. In Florida I spent three years as an administrative manager, and one year as a technical manager where I ran the PMEL, the Precision Measurement Equipment Lab, where we calibrated all the test equipment on the range, and we calibrated all of the test equipment for the range users. Companies like Boeing and Martin, and...

[0:01:00] Sandy Schwartz: Raytheon.

[0:01:01] Herb Schwartz: Raytheon, and Thiokol, those companies. We were relocated back to New Jersey in 1966. I was a wage and salary manager in Cherry Hill for two years. Then I found a job I really liked in marketing, now called business development, where I managed the preparation of proposals to the federal government for GE Government Services. I also managed a small group of marketing/proposal managers. After GE merged with RCA I continued in the same role until 1992 when I took a retirement basically to get the lump sum. Because the lump sum was frozen as of 1988. I continued working as a consultant, or as a part timer, depending on what the GE legal people required. Also worked for Martin and Lockheed as pretty much part time. Every year I worked fewer and fewer hours, and then I finally retired in 2009. My boss wanted to keep me until 2010, because he wanted to have an 80 year old employee. But they had a big cutback, and it was either cut me or cut a full time employee. So I graciously retired again.

[0:02:56] Speaker 3: This is your wife Sandy?

[0:02:57] Sandy Schwartz: Sandy.

[0:02:57] Herb Schwartz: Sandy.

[0:02:59] Sandy Schwartz: Yes.

[0:03:00] Speaker 3: Sandy, you're married to an RCA guy, but you also have a background?

[0:03:07] Sandy Schwartz: I definitely do. My father was a photophone engineer for RCA. He spent his time going to different movie houses to sync the sound to the movie. I vividly remember standing in front of some movie

theatres, especially at Christmas time, and looking in the window and knowing my father had something to do with this movie. I was very proud. I was very young, but I still remember that. Then my step-father, he started working GE before he got out of college, and then went to work for them. My mother after my real father died in 1943, we had been moved back to Camden; she was a dress woman in Camden after he died. So that was from '44 until about '47, I guess. She married my stepfather Ned Gary. Then, let's see, we had Susan, our oldest daughter, went to work for the video department in...

[0:04:16] Herb Schwartz: Westminster.

[0:04:16] Sandy Schwartz: Westminster.

[0:04:17] Herb Schwartz: We had a video studio that the training people were in. Tech training people.

[0:04:23] Sandy Schwartz: So she worked there. When Herb retired in 1992 and took the lump sum, the market was terrible so he sent me to work. He found me a job working in proposals as an editor. It turned out to be a job I really loved. It was exciting. I got to do... Travel a lot of different places. Worked on some very important proposals like the NISC, the FAA proposal, and it gives you a really great feeling of pride to be involved in a company that does so many good things. Living in Florida was great. To see the missile go up and to know that you had a part in that. We were on the beach in May 1961 and saw the first...

[0:05:18] Herb Schwartz: I think...

[0:05:18] Sandy Schwartz: Balloon go up. To see the first...

[0:05:19] Herb Schwartz: I think it was a Shepherd Flight that was.

[0:05:22] Sandy Schwartz: That was great.

[0:05:22] Herb Schwartz: Yeah.

[0:05:24] Speaker 3: Talk about your co-workers.

[0:05:27] Herb Schwartz: Well...

[0:05:29] Sandy Schwartz: First is Mike.

[0:05:31] Herb Schwartz: Well I still go to lunch with some retirees, that Government Services retirees started meeting for lunch about 20 years ago at a hotel on route 38, I can't remember the...

[0:05:55] Sandy Schwartz: Landmark.

- [0:05:55] Herb Schwartz:** Landmark. It had a restaurant on the second floor, and we had as high as 14 or 15 guys would meet on the second Tuesday, then it became the second Wednesday of the month. They had a fire at the Landmark so we moved to the Coastline. Unfortunately, our numbers kept dwindling, and dwindling, and dwindling. We got new members, but they still dwindled. Since it's kind of a headquarters, Cherry Hill operation, it was people from business development. People from finance, people from contracting. We had some, I say retired, some people joined us, but we had more attrition than we had new people. Now it's down to about four or five of us. We've started bringing our wives to fill in the...
- [0:07:05] Sandy Schwartz:** I counted because I worked for Lockheed. But Phil Millaroy is one of the people who is involved, and his father worked for RCA many, many years ago. They're from Haddonfield.
- [0:07:18] Herb Schwartz:** Yeah.
- [0:07:19] Sandy Schwartz:** Michael Comardo who was the president of the... Yeah, Mike is a good guy. He was a wonderful leader for the Government Services.
- [0:07:32] Herb Schwartz:** Incidentally, Ned Gary, Sandy's stepfather and my father-in-law, he had a knack for picking good people.
- [0:07:44] Sandy Schwartz:** Him of course.
- [0:07:46] Herb Schwartz:** Well she picked me. But the...
- [0:07:49] Sandy Schwartz:** No, but my father helped get him into RCA. Which was a good thing.
- [0:07:55] Herb Schwartz:** When the service company was staffing the TV branches, right after the war, television exploded on the market. The service company that did all of the installation and maintenance of antennas, and TV systems, they were produced by the Consumer Divisions. Ned and another manager, Bill Zuan, they were a travelling team in the North East. They happened to interview and make an offer to Andy Conrad who eventually became the president of RCA Corporation. Andy was hired as a branch manager in one of the Northeast cities. He went into marketing for the Government Services. He was the proposal manager for the contract that we one at the Eastern Test Range, which was the largest contract that we had ever had up until the merger, basically. That contract had as many as 4,000 employees. PanAm had another 4,000 employees. Andy lived on Merritt Island. He proposed himself as the contract manager. He had a boat and he would take the boat from Merritt Island to Cape Canaveral where his office was as the project manager.
- [0:09:33] Sandy Schwartz:** Interesting commute.

[0:09:34] Herb Schwartz: Yeah.

[0:09:36] Speaker 3: How did you feel your supervisors valued what you did? Did you feel as though they did?

[0:09:42] Herb Schwartz: I had some good supervisors. I had some guys I didn't see eye to eye with. Mainly in the Personnel Department, and I was in Personnel on two different occasions, and transferred out on two different occasions. It was just a philosophy difference. In Operations down at the Cape, I had two excellent managers. Ted Douss who hired me as his administrative assistant, and Paul Lejare who replaced Ted and hired me as the PMEL manager. Which was a kind of an experiment because I have no technical background. Just the business background. But they were happy with me, and when I left a year later they put another administrator in on the job.

[0:10:48] Speaker 3: How was RCA viewed by the other companies that you dealt with?

[0:10:52] Herb Schwartz: The other companies. Well, we dealt more with other divisions of RCA, and with the government contracting officers. Not necessarily with other companies. I think it was a mixed bag. Some of the customers felt they couldn't do their job without RCA. Particularly at sites where there was a large program. Say for the Navy, where the Navy rotated out every three years. Our contract was competed, but the longer we were there at... We were at AFAR for over 25 years. So our program manager had a functional reporting relationship to the captain that ran the program. As long as we were with that contractor.

[0:12:01] Speaker 3: And you may be more suited to answer this, but we hear about the influence of RCA on South Jersey.

[0:12:11] Sandy Schwartz: Oh.

[0:12:11] Speaker 3: Do you have any opinion on that?

[0:12:13] Sandy Schwartz: We flooded Haddonfield, that I know. Then the Moorestown people, they all lived in Moorestown. I went to grade school and high school with the children of many of the people my father worked with. They had carpools going. I don't remember any parties or anything. I guess a little too young for that. I think Haddonfield's growth was really because of RCA. All of the people who worked in Camden, and that worked in Cherry Hill. There were buses that used to go into Camden all the time. I remember even as a youngster being able to get on the bus and being able to go into Camden and go shopping. They had a Penny's. Penny's had the old fashioned slot where they put the money in the thing over the ceiling and they send to the...

[0:13:06] Herb Schwartz: Oh yeah.

[0:13:07] Sandy Schwartz: To the wherever they kept the money. That goes back a long time.

[0:13:14] Speaker 3: Now we've heard other people talk about the RCA family. Does that have any meaning to you?

[0:13:19] Sandy Schwartz: Oh yes. There's still friends and family. I mean, we talk about the people who have been gone, they're still with us. They're never gone. Even the ones I worked with, with Lockheed, who went back to the old days, there's something about working for a company. They were very paternalistic, Sarnoff was a dictator I guess. But that's how he made the company. You know, the company stuck together. My father worked in... My stepfather worked in Gloucester City for a while. It was a horrible place. I hated going in there. It was dingy and really awful. Then they moved everybody to Camden.

[0:14:07] Herb Schwartz: No.

[0:14:08] Sandy Schwartz: Oh to Cherry Hill. That's when they built Cherry Hill.

[0:14:10] Herb Schwartz: They built Cherry Hill and opened it in 1955, I believe. Originally there were five buildings. Then they built two more buildings. They became the landlord for a lot of John Rittenhouses's for people from Moorestown. His management staff. It was basically a home office for the consumer services people, DV Techs. There was a group called Tech Products. They went out and they maintained electron microscopes, beverage inspection machines, the movie, the photophone equipment. At that time RCA and Motorola were the two competitors in automobile radios. We had a group that maintained auto radios. We also maintained what they called radio marine equipment. Loran and those types of equipment aboard ships. At the beginning of Government Services was in 1942 when we had technicians aboard ships maintaining aboard warships. Maintaining the communications equipment and then later on when radar was born, they maintained the radar equipment during World War II.

[0:16:00] Sandy Schwartz: TV was huge. I remember, I don't know what year it was, I think I was still in high school, when they had a color showing of Peter Pan in Cherry Hill. And the families were all invited to go, and it was so exciting to see color and Peter Pan. I mean it was wonderful. I couldn't believe it. When we were growing up, we had a TV, but the TV was the kind that was flat and you had to look at the mirror. It was reflected in the mirror, and that was our black and white. It was a round tube, vividly, I remember that. So to see something in color

was incredible. It was so totally new. That's also how you really felt to be part of it because they invited us in to do that.

[0:16:57] Speaker 3:

Okay. How would you sum up the job RCA? Just a job? A career? How would you sum it up?

[0:12:11] Herb Schwartz:

Well obviously it was the best company I ever worked for. I worked 32 years and a few months. They gave me a great going away party at the Tavistock Country Club. I understand it was the last of the big...

[0:17:32] Sandy Schwartz:

It was.

[0:17:34] Herb Schwartz:

Going away parties. After that they tightened up on the budgets and so forth. I was given opportunities that another guy wouldn't get. The technical management, all those years in marketing and proposals. I became the expert on the due line. I never set foot on a site up there.

[0:18:05] Sandy Schwartz:

He tried.

[0:18:05] Herb Schwartz:

I tried. But every time I wanted to go on a site visit it was in the middle of a proposal, and they couldn't let me... They couldn't afford the time. We had great field managers. Particularly the field managers in Government Services. Each contract was like his own little business, where he had his own P&L. He did a lot of his own marketing. We helped him. We funded his marketing. All in all it worked out very well for me. Particularly, the last 25 years in marketing. In addition to the due line proposals my other high marks were I was the service company's proposal manager on the ASMIS Engineering and Development contract. That became... Yeah what is the...

[0:19:14] Sandy Schwartz:

AFMA?

[0:19:14] Herb Schwartz:

AFMA, no it's a Navy...

[0:19:17] Herb Schwartz:

No. Anyway, I can't remember the name. Also, Joe King and I in the early 1970s we put together a proposal and a briefing for our own management to establish a wholly own subsidiary called OMS Incorporated, which allowed us to compete better in the field engineering and field technician business. That subsidiary operation was adopted by GE and then by Martin. Virtually all of the employees in those companies are now covered by some sort of a subsidiary that all emanated from OMS. I'm proud of that.

[0:20:14] Sandy Schwartz:

His claim to fame.

[0:20:15] Speaker 3:

Did you want to...

[0:20:16] Sandy Schwartz: I loved working on proposals. I guess I'm normally verbose, love to write, editing; I worked for summer theater, I did a lot of different things. I had a lot of pride working for Lockheed Martin. I knew they were a good company, and because I came from the RCA background, I just made the transition... Transferred my loyalties I guess you would call it to Lockheed. I would still be working today. Except other things have taken place. But I did enjoy it. I worked for them 17 years.

[0:20:56] Speaker 3: Good.

[0:20:57] Sandy Schwartz: My father was a great guy. He started out as an engineer. He ended up in Cherry Hill in financial analysis. Mainly in the consumer and tech side. He established some innovative ways of pricing out service contracts, which was the biggest part of RCA's service company's business up until the merger with GE I guess.

[0:21:33] Herb Schwartz: Frank Diamond, do you know his name?

[0:21:36] Sandy Schwartz: Yeah, he put together a proposal to JC Penny. JC Penny wanted either RCA or GE to take over the maintenance of all of their, what they called their brown goods. They wanted to get out of the service business. So Government Services loaned me to Consumer Services to help put together a proposal that looked like a government response to an RFP. At that time George Prestwich was the president of Service Company. He was from Moorestown, knew what the government liked, and he liked the proposal so he dictated that somebody from the Government Services Proposal Group should oversee this proposal. I was elected, and it was very interesting. Particularly when it got into how they priced out their service contracts. Of course because it was much different than the pricing we had to present to the government.

Our first technicians served aboard ships in World War II in 1942, maintaining communications equipment that was built by some other division of RCA. After the war, we became involved with different defense systems. Different radar stations along the East Coast. I think we had our first contracts. We had a contract at the Frankfurt Arsenal, and it was a PMEL. A technician named Steve Heller started at the Frankfurt Arsenal, he became the manager there.

[0:23:35] And when he got the contract in Florida he was one of the first managers down there. He kind of followed along wherever Andy Conrad was, Steve Heller was one step behind him, and off to the side, Ed Griffiths was beside... I mean, they went up the corporate ladder to where Heller was Vice President of Operations for Service

Company. Which meant he had the Tech Products, the Consumer Services, and the Government Services. Then Andy Conrad of course became the corporate CEO replacing Bob Sarnoff, and Ed Griffiths replaced Andy Conrad when he resigned.

The first manager of Government Services that I'm aware of was a guy named Pinky Reed, R-E-E-D. I never met the man, but I just heard his name mentioned as a VP in the past. The first Vice President of Government Services that I ever dealt with was Andy Conrad. He replaced the guy named Don Kunzman who I never met. Most of the executives in Service Company in those days were from the Consumer Services side because that's where the big profitable operations were. Government Services had a very low return on sales.

[0:25:39]

Up until Jack Welch cracked the whip. And he makes us...

[0:25:45] Sandy Schwartz:

If you want to ask us about Jack Welch and how people felt about him.

[0:25:50] Herb Schwartz:

Well, it was mixed.

[0:25:52] Sandy Schwartz:

That was a sad day when they took the windows down. That was the end.

[0:25:56] Herb Schwartz:

It was a sad day when they changed the logo.

[0:25:59] Speaker 3:

Don Cook knows that? I talked to people he was employed under.

[0:26:05] Herb Schwartz:

Well I enjoyed working for RCA. I worked in so many different fields. I think I did better management-wise under GE, but they were a lot tighter with retirement programs.

[0:26:3] Sandy Schwartz:

Talk about devotion. I just thought of it. One Christmas morning he was working on a proposal, and he didn't want to wake us up. He had been up a long time. We have four daughters. He had been up a long time, and he didn't want to wake me up. So he left early in the morning, and as he left he tripped going out the front door. He drove himself to work, and his foot was really, really hurting. He went to the ER, and had broken his foot. But the proposal came first. Which is why you had to go and then on subsequent days, somebody came to pick him up. So he could continue working on the proposal. Do you remember which one it was?

[0:27:17] Herb Schwartz:

Yeah, it was... And we didn't win the job. It was interesting. When the Israelis pulled out of the Sanai, the State Department set up what they called an early warning system. Basically it was Americans in the Sanai in the middle pass. With temporary quarters and

communications equipment and so forth. Dining and housing, and all of that. The purpose was that the Israelis were afraid that the Egyptians would swarm up the middle pass and invade Israel. But they felt if there were Americans there, that would stop them, and we called it an early warning system. So we put a proposal together that was due early in January. Unfortunately there was another company that had the inside track, and we didn't win the job. Compelman was the President of Service Company at the time, and he had the whole proposal team come up to getatta-boys after the proposal was submitted.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]