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# Interview with Joe Hoey

RCA Heritage Program

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[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

[0:00:07.6] **Joey Hoey:** Okay. Name is Joe Hoey. I started here in 1976. Worked initial place was Naval Systems Group which I think is no longer here that was part of IPS.

[0:00:25.2] **Speaker 2:** Okay. What was your first assignment?

[0:00:28.6] **Joe Hoey:** It was a project called Bulldog and basically I was a hardware engineer at that time, so I was designing some circuit boards and actually started working with microprocessors. They were just out Intel 8080 and that was my initial job to get the board up and running for the program.

[0:00:48.8] **Speaker 2:** Okay. How did you feel about your first project?

[0:00:54.5] **Joe Hoey:** I actually liked it very much because it was my first experience out of school, so I actually had no prior experience in engineering area. The group I worked for...my unit manager basically said it's a nice company to work for because it's like a small company within a big company. There's a maybe 15 people in the group. We had system engineers, hardware engineers, and test engineers. And it was. It's like a little company inside a rather large one.

[0:01:25.7] **Speaker 2:** Did you have a mentor or lead engineer or something that kind of showed you the ropes?

[0:01:31.3] **Joey Hoey:** Yes. My first unit manager was Dave Jack and he was here for number of years. Actually, he used to be a teacher in high school so he was very good at bringing me along and getting me up the speed on exactly what I had to do.

[0:01:47.0] **Speaker 2:** Now, you're rather unique in that you started as a really good hardware engineer and then went into software. Can you relate that progression in your career?

[0:02:02.2] **Joe Hoey:** Even though I was a hardware engineer, I did do a lot of the firmware development at the assembly levels so I sort of thought I was doing both hardware and software at the same time and I actually did that for almost 15 years. At that point in time, the hardware you had pretty much two direction that go into and to the FPGA design or off the shelf type of processing and at that point in time, they needed software engineers so I just jumped ship and

became a software engineer. I felt like I was doing exactly the same thing but I was just in a different group.

**[0:02:38.4] Speaker 2:** Okay. Can you give us a survey of the projects that you worked on?

**[0:02:45.3] Joe Hoey:** Okay, initially, again the group I was in was Bulldog and for the first... I believe 10 or 15 years I worked within that group, there was a Bulldog, Flaghoist, of course you know Center board. I worked on some IR&D programs that actually didn't go too far but it was 2 or 3 years I worked on that. So it was my 15 years, I did some work in some other groups. I think the job was Pachinko. It was a nice little hardware job that went on for about a year. At that point in time, I switched to software and my first job in software was Nervetrunk. That was a five year program which I guess you know all about also. After that I worked actually on STE upstairs in ... like I said it was INFOSEC area. I was on that working for about 4 or 5 years before I came back to the IPS area and I worked on I guess it was Surfer and eventually Kahuna. Now I'm actually in just working on Spiral II.

**[0:03:57.3] Speaker 2:** How do you feel about your career?

**[0:04:00.9] Joe Hoey:** Well, it's been interesting. I mean I always enjoyed working with the people and it was always a constantly changing group, so it's always interesting and I really enjoyed it.

**[0:04:15.2] Speaker 2:** Talk about your co-workers. What was it like?

**[0:04:20.5] Joe Hoey:** I normally got along with almost everyone I worked with. I always had I guess very good luck with my managers, very nice guys to work for. Lots of really smart people. When I first started here, of course, I'm out of college. I didn't know anything. I thought they're really geniuses. As the years went by, I seemed to kind of even up with as far as knowledge concerned was but I really enjoyed working with all the people throughout the years.

**[0:04:50.5] Speaker 2:** Why did you stay?

**[0:04:53.0] Joe Hoey:** Why did I stay? Actually I was going to leave a couple of times but they kept on giving rather good incentives, good reviews and rather large increases so I thought there's no reason to leave as long as I was enjoying myself.

**[0:05:10.1] Speaker 2:** Okay. You mentioned your managers, supervisors.

**[0:05:15.1] Joe Hoey:** Yes.

**[0:05:18.1] Speaker 2:** What was it like with them?

**[0:05:18.1] Joe Hoey:** Again, my first manager probably since I was new I really liked him a lot. That was Dave Jack and then I moved on to Jerry Curtis. He was a hardware engineer and he was also very nice, easy to work for. For a while there, I worked for Art Simons even though I was in a completely different area. He was my manager but he had no idea what I was doing and I moved on to, let me see, it was Mike Nolan when I was on STE, another nice guy, very technical. I pretty much like the guys that are very technical, the manager types. Recently, it's changed a little bit. The managers aren't so technical. They're sort of part of the management type but even there I've had a few guys, Tom Bukowski. I just... he is my current manager and he's very nice guy, easy to work with.

**[0:06:16.1] Speaker 2:** Have you felt that RCA and your supervisors valued what you did?

**[0:06:22.9] Joe Hoey:** I think so. I always got good reviews. They told me a number of times I was appreciated.

**[0:06:32.0] Speaker 2:** Okay. We've heard...

***[Pausing 0:06:41.5-0:06:58.4]***

**[0:06:59.6] Speaker 2:** Alright. We should go... We'll give it a shot anyway. Let's talk about the workplace. What was the environment like to you?

**[0:07:11.4] Joe Hoey:** It was very friendly. Again, we had different sporting events. We had softball teams. I actually ran for a number of years. I actually had a running team, run on different races. It's rather nice. We had the CAA and different activities, the Christmas parties and the kiddies parties like, very enjoyable.

**[0:07:38.9] Speaker 2:** The term in previous interview was the RCA family has come up. Does that mean anything to you?

**[0:07:46.8] Joe Hoey:** Well, sure. A lot of people here feel that things have changed a little bit here and again, I think back then it was... the structure of the company was a little bit different, again like you're like a small group working together as opposed to now you're of course multiple sections so I felt like it was more in the family because you work for the same people for number of years but I don't think it's really change all that much.

**[0:08:12.8] Speaker 2:** Okay. Would still consider it a family?

**[0:08:20.4] Joe Hoey:** Well, of course over the years most of the people I worked with have retired and there are a lot of new faces but I still think it's sort of a family. I enjoy work with the people.

**[0:08:30.1] Speaker 2:** Okay. What's your opinion of the assessment of RCA back then in the industry? How was it looked on?

**[0:08:46.6] Joe Hoey:** Well, I know when I first started first thing I thought of was you have the TV, RCA TV. It was always a top brand. I know back then when I first started they still had the broadcasting section here and it was top of the line company. I think back then there might have been... I think it was like, 3,000 people working here.

**[0:09:17.6] Speaker 2:** Did you spend a lot time with your co-workers outside of work?

**[0:09:22.5] Joe Hoey:** Yeah, occasionally. Christmas parties, after work hours, Friday nights, going out and again when somebody... like I said different occasions.

**[0:09:37.8] Speaker 2:** There is an idea that maybe RCA even changed South Jersey. Do you have any opinions in that area?

**[0:09:50.0] Joe Hoey:** No. Not really, no. I know Campbell Soup had a big impact but maybe RCA also had it.

**[0:09:58.1] Speaker 2:** What was the best thing about working for RCA?

**[0:10:03.6] Joe Hoey:** Again, I have to go back to what my original manager said it was like working for a small company inside and you had the benefit to the big company but working a small company. And I agree, I enjoyed working on the projects and the challenge of getting it done on time which is pretty much what we did for the most part. I really enjoyed that.

**[0:10:28.7] Speaker 2:** How did the customers look at us?

**[0:10:32.4] Joe Hoey:** I believe they were very happy. Again, the initial program I worked on, Bulldog, we had a production type development and it was actually installed...where in the world, 30 some sites so I think they were very happy with it.

**[0:10:53.9] Speaker 2:** What was the worst part about working for RCA?

**[0:10:57.6] Joe Hoey:** The occasional overtime and sometimes you really had to put some hours in, but that was just part of the job.

**[0:11:08.0] Speaker 2:** Okay. Did you actually feel that you were part of a team?

**[0:11:12.4] Joe Hoey:** Absolutely, yes. Yes, with... between the system engineers and the hardware engineers. Yeah, we're definitely a team. We all came in and got the job done.

**[0:11:25.4] Speaker 2:** Okay. In your neighborhood, did you know other people who worked for RCA?

**[0:11:37.1] Joe Hoey:** When I first started here, my neighbor, actually my next door neighbor actually worked here for a number of years, 30 years or so. He worked over in the factory in 17 building. Other than that, no, I really knew no one else.

**[0:11:49.9] Speaker 2:** Okay. How did RCA affect where you lived? Or did they?

**[0:12:02.8] Joe Hoey:** Not really. No. I originally grew up in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. When I got the job here, it was not much of a drive. I ended up buying a house down the shore and I would commute there a lot over the years. I'm actually living in Springfield, Pennsylvania right now.

**[0:12:24.5] Speaker 2:** Did you feel you had all the resources you needed to do your job?

**[0:12:30.5] Joe Hoey:** I believe so. Again, back then RCA, you didn't have your work station. You didn't have any of that stuff that I believe ... it was provided by the management. Yup. I had all the resources.

**[0:12:47.1] Speaker 2:** Okay. Everybody talks about when GE took over RCA, did you notice any specific changes, any good or bad influences there?

**[0:13:06.1] Joe Hoey:** As I recall the time GE took us over, they had just come through some kind of violation phase where they did some kind of government...I don't what it was and the first thing we had to do was go through a lot of those ethical training. We learn how not to cheat. I thought that it was rather odd that as RCA we never had an issue there. That was a little, little strange to start. There's also I guess I think back in '86 there was a layoff right between the transition of RCA to GE. I know that didn't go over too well with some of the people. But once we got going, it was fine.

**[0:13:48.2] Speaker 2:** Do you see yourself in a leadership position now?

**[0:13:53.4] Joe Hoey:** Not really, no. I was never good at being a manager. I was always too tough on people so I stuck with the technical side engineering. Did that for a little bit but I was a little too...

**[0:14:10.1] Speaker 2:** Do any of the junior year engineers come to you for...

**[0:14:13.6] Joe Hoey:** Yeah, I helped them out. Yes, definitely, but as far as being...

**[0:14:17.7] Speaker 2:** You're the technical leadership.

**[0:14:19.0] Joe Hoey:** I'm a technical leadership. That's correct. Yes.

**[0:14:22.4] Speaker 2:** Okay. How does that go?

**[0:14:24.4] Joe Hoey:** That's fine. Of course, recently, things are changing so much. So much you can help the younger guys since it's a like they can help

me more than I can help them, some of the technology coming out. But for the most part you need to get someone up to speed on something. Yeah, very helpful.

**[0:14:46.0] Speaker 2:** To be an engineer, you have to keep up with technology.

**[0:14:50.1] Joe Hoey:** That's correct.

**[0:14:50.2] Speaker 2:** Does RCA help with that all?

**[0:14:53.1] Joe Hoey:** As I recall, that a lot of after hour training courses. I remember my first course's I took was on microprocessor back then it was back then it was the RCA COSMAC or something like that and there is ... then I took different courses and I think it was Ada and C and things. Yeah they provided after hour courses.

**[0:15:27.7] Speaker 2:** Up to now, I mean you're still here and you're still one of the recognized contributors here, but up to now how would you summarize the trip?

**[0:15:44.4] Joe Hoey:** You mean me treating before...

**[0:15:45.7] Speaker 2:** RCA.

**[0:15:46.6] Joe Hoey:** Well, RCA again...

**[0:15:49.1] Speaker 2;** Just the job?

**[0:15:54.4] Joe Hoey:** I'm one of the few people that actually think it's a job as opposed to career. I always tell that to my manager as a job but I guess it's a career and I... with RCA since it was my first job coming out of school, very impressed with the people and the technology I was learning as years went by, different companies. I guess it became more of a job but ...

**[0:16:21.3] Speaker 2:** How do you think RCA stacked up against the other companies as far as just the job?

**[0:16:31.1] Joe Hoey:** I would say it's about even now.

**[0:16:38.1] Speaker 2:** What kind of impressions should we leave in the history book about this thing called RCA?

**[0:16:50.7] Joe Hoey:** Well, again, I guess it was a very technical type company. There's some really smart people working here and again, you can say a family type atmosphere and it was always nice. I guess like most people I wasn't all that happy when GE took over. I'd rather have RCA continue but that's just the way it is.

**[0:17:16.5] Speaker 2:** That's life, right? Okay. Do you have anything else that comes to mind, any events, stories, or anything else that you want to talk about, about RCA?

**[0:17:30.6] Joe Hoey:** Again, over the years things have changed a lot. I remember when I first started here. It was back in '76. It used to have a freight train still running on Delaware Street that was always interesting as you put on parking lot you kind of watch out for occasional freight train and the other interesting thing was Campbell Soup was right around the corner. And in the fall, I don't know if you heard or remember this, they were bringing in the tomato trucks and the tomatoes would fall off and within a week or so the street would be completely red with tomatoes. It was the most odd thing I've ever seen, tomatoes everywhere. I kind of remember that much about RCA and Campbell Soup.

**[0:18:16.0] Speaker 2:** Did you ever go off campus to eat or anything at lunchtime with any of your buddies or...?

**[0:18:23.6] Joe Hoey:** Sure. There's a number of places. I don't know if they're still open. I don't even remember their names anymore. Different areas around here, yeah.

**[0:18:32.8] Speaker 2:** What about the parties?

**[0:18:37.6] Joe Hoey:** The Christmas parties were nice. I didn't really attend all that many. The kiddy parties I enjoyed a lot, bringing the kids over, my nieces and nephews. I really enjoyed those a lot and a lot of retirements that were nice.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**