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Interview with Joe Rosenberg

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[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

[0:00:07] Joe Rosenberg: My name is Joe Rosenberg. I started in 1957 at the Missile and Surface Radar Division in Moorestown. I stayed there till '64. I left that division because of McNamara's Cut. I was out for a year from RCA and then returned to Hightstown, the aerospace division in Hightstown, New Jersey. In 1970 I returned to Moorestown and finished my stint at RCA and GE and retired in '93.

[0:00:52] Interviewer: What was the first project that you worked on?

[0:00:55] Joe Rosenberg: The first project was the ANFPS-16 which is a tracking radar. We built a large group of these to track the missile, the space flights of Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo, putting in radars in Bermuda, Florida, and then further down range. That was a tracking radar which became...was one of the breadboard... making things there in Moorestown at the time. I then worked on some of the other programs. We evolved into other tracking radars, and ultimately into the BMEWS, the Ballistic Early Warning System which goes to clear Alaska, Greenland and Scotland, and that was to detect any Russian Missiles or aircraft coming over the poles.

[0:02:26] Interviewer: Were there any other big projects that you got to work on, because you said you went through different divisions?

[0:02:30] Joe Rosenberg: Well, in Moorestown I also worked on a Marine Corps radar, and this was used in Vietnam for designating aircraft to bomb. It was a portable radar you set up on a hill. I also worked on...We did some preliminary work for the equipment in Hightstown because they hadn't developed a manufacturing facility there, so we produced some of the early space program systems, cabinets...not cabinets but assemblies and things that they used in the cabinets and in the spacecraft. I also was on a temporary assignment in Cambridge, Ohio, we had a plant, we built some walkie-talkies in Camden. I didn't work on that project but we moved the production program out to, there, and I went out with some troubleshooters for then the President of the military division, Art Malcarny and Natle Lev, six of us went out to straighten out that project because it went afoul, they were supposed to build 10,000 of them and they actually bombed and we had to get them back on track, and we ultimately got them after three months of hammering the guys, to do the right thing.

[0:04:30]

I also...Let's see what else...Oh, I also worked on modifications to the ANFPF-16 which was the tracking radars to extend the range from 500 miles to 1,000 miles and ultimately, there was modifications, ultimately we used at 240,000 miles to track our launch of the spacecraft to the moon.

[0:05:13] Interviewer:

Were there any co-workers that kind of stick out in your memory that you'd like to talk about?

[0:05:18] Joe Rosenberg:

Well, yeah, the guy that hired me, that was Al Farcus. He hired me. I was working in Texas for the government at the time, and they gave me an all expense paid move to Moorestown. My wife is from Texas, so we moved up here and we've lived here ever since. I also worked with Dave Smith, who was the Head of Manufacturing Engineering, and ultimately I was a Test Engineer, then I was promoted to Project Engineer and RCA paid for my schooling at Drexel. It was then Drexel Institute of Technology, and I ultimately got my degree from Drexel, and it became a University. Other projects I've worked on in Hightstown was on the weather radar, the NASA weather radar under Abe Schnaff who was considered the father of TIROS and he helped the National NASA...He provided this system that would circle the earth and take pictures which becomes our modern weather pictures that you see daily on television. It was TIROS. Then we did some work for GE at the time which was Nimbus and we also did the lunar orbiter, the first lunar orbiter that...

[0:07:18]

...orbited the moon before we landed there, and then I worked on the space camera that they carried, the astronauts carried to the moon, and took the first pictures of leaving the earth. I also had worked on the Viking program. We bid the Viking program which was then to Martin Marietta which later became part of Lockheed Martin, but that was the spacecraft that went to Mars, and I did some of the development of the location and heat and noise that was used for some of our equipments. We weren't the prime contractor, but we did a major part of the electronics that went on that trip. I returned to Moorestown when that program was pushed back several years, and started to work on the AEGIS program. I worked on what we called it the MFAR, which is the multifunctional radar which was later, designated as the Spy-1 which is the basic phase of the radar which was used on all AEGIS ships today. We built quite a few ships within Moorestown and shipped them to then to Pascagoula, Mississippi. I was there for the first...commissioning of the first cruiser which is right over here in Philadelphia now in the mothballs.

[0:09:18]

We produced 26 of those ships, and ultimately we're in the hundreds of ships. We're now modifying those to Lockheed Martin, the successor, is still building...We have eliminated the high powered tubes and we use solid state, distributed power transmitters which are much more convenient and efficient, and we're still operating with...I still say "we" but, Lockheed Martin, successor of RCA, is still working with the navy to produce various ships that worked on, the littoral ship which is the small, low drift that can go in the coast where it doesn't crack it's bottom, and we're producing...Some of those I worked on, some of the initial parts for Lockheed Martin after I came as a stint as a high school teacher in Philadelphia and Hightstown. GE paid for my teaching certificate, and I went here at Rowan to get certified as a Math teacher. I took one course down here early on in that career, but then I went back 14 years after my retirement; and just until two or three years ago I worked for Lockheed Martin.

[0:11:05] Interviewer:

You talked a lot about the major work that you did, how did that work turn into like a good social life with RCA?

[0:11:15] Joe Rosenberg:

A good...Sorry?

[0:11:16] Interviewer:

What was the social life like outside of RCA?

[0:11:20] Joe Rosenberg:

We had the RCA family. We used to have big parties, especially in AEGIS we took over the Marion Caterers and we had Thanksgiving parties, dressed up in costumes. I had lots of friends that I still have and friends that are no longer with us, but many friends. We had a good social life at RCA. Another thing notably that I did when we were doing BMEWS, our technicians hadn't had any training in transistors, so I studied transistors and then I prepared a course where I taught the testers and technicians what a transistor was and had them, you know, so that they could service them.

[0:12:28] Interviewer:

What was the workplace like at RCA?

[0:12:30] Joe Rosenberg:

The workplace was like...We had a family magazine called 'The RCA Family' and it was truly a family. Not like today, but it's been...it was like a family, you sort of thought you were going to be there from when you first started until you retired and that's what happened to me, and it was a good life. I made a good living, went to school. They paid for my schooling...It was a wonderful experience. Not too many companies including Lockheed Martin are like that today.

[0:13:15] Interviewer:

You said you moved from Texas to Moorestown, could you see any visible impact that RCA had on South Jersey?

[0:13:25] Joe Rosenberg:

Oh yeah. I never worked in Camden. I visited there a few times for various things, but it really was one of the major companies in South Jersey. It provided employment, it provided public help. It was really a benevolent organization, under Art Malcarney who started out a wireman on the assembly line, became an inspector, rose to...no college education..., became a manager of manufacturing and ultimately rose to be the Head of the Defense Electronic products reporting directly to Sarnoff, who was the head of RCA at the time. Then he passed away, and we had a series of some good and some not good people that ran RCA at the time.

[0:14:37] Interviewer:

Your overall journey at RCA, how would you kind of sum it up, how was your career?

[0:14:43] Joe Rosenberg:

It was miraculous. I mean it couldn't have been better. Like I said, the type of work, the interest that I had in the work, the people that I worked with, I can't say enough...the people I worked for except for one or two exceptions, you always get those. Everybody... I hope that the country returns where there are companies like RCA, but I doubt it. It's mostly dog-eat-dog and bottom line and we have a lot of non...When I worked there it was mostly engineers who rose to some high management positions and knew what engineering was. Today it's bottom line engineering, MBAs that are...don't realize sometimes what's good for the country, what's good for the company, what's good for the products. They're looking bottom line next few years to get their bonus and get out. I said Newtron Jack was like that. Jack Welsh when he took over GE sold us down the river. He took RCA and chopped it up and sold it in pieces and made more money than it was worth, so...Like I say, it's not limited to RCA. Airlines...Some of the people bought airlines just to buy the airplanes because they were cheaper than they could buy them from the companies, and they made more money than the stock was worth so they were called the corporate raiders.

[0:16:43 inaudible]

It's a different...There were some vicious people in the old days, but the thing is we had a lot of benevolent people too that took care of the company, the country, and involved in politics. They were that meaningful representatives. Like I say, it is the Jimmy Stewart movie, 'It's a Wonderful Life'. That's it.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]