

***Interview with Ed Sax, September 24, 2015 talking about his background & work experience:***

VRCM: Ed, I'm going to ask you to "bare your soul" and just give me a quick biographical sketch of you, your profession, some of the things you're proud of in your accomplishments...

ES: Well, tell you what. I'll go back to college in which I majored in sociology under Talcott Parsons. And then on graduation went over to Europe to work with a group called the Winant Volunteers. That involved doing social work in London. After that I bicycled around Europe.

VRCM: What year was this?

ES: This was 1950. One of our volunteers was Ann Rockefeller and several years later she invited all of us to their residence in on top of a hill in Tarrytown, overlooking the Tappan Zee Bridge. And that was great fun. By that time I had acquired a Lincoln Continental convertible, so I was properly equipped and so... (laughs) Sometimes I look back and wonder if that would have been a good opportunity to go from where I was working – the unlikely Sikorsky Aircraft – to possibly doing something in New York. But I enjoyed my work Sikorsky Aircraft.

VRCM: You were working at Sikorsky?

ES: Yes. After I got back from my European tip I thought helicopters would be interesting: they are the only form of transport that don't need prior preparation of terrain or shore line. And I came down here to Kaman Corporation first of all. And I didn't have an engineering degree; I had a sociology degree. So they didn't figure I would do very much for them. I went down to Sikorsky, and they asked, "you know how to take pictures?" I think they saw in my resume that I had started a photography club and I said yes, I certainly do know how to take pictures. So they put me in the metallurgical laboratory and its photographic facilities. And I did a lot of things there, including being turned down by Sikorsky for a proposal that made a process too efficient and would have displaced a group doing the job a little differently by hand. It would put some of his people out of work and he didn't want to see that happen. He was a very kind hearted person, as well as being an aeronautical genius, I think.

And then I decided to leave Bridgeport, and do a little graduate work at MIT. In the process, I met the MIT reference librarian, Margaret Little, on exchange scholarship from England who later became my wife. MIT at the time was building the first transistor-based computer and also working on the first numerical controls in their servo lab facility. Later on I would become very active in the Numerical Control Society, and head its Connecticut chapter. In 1980 it was absorbed into the Society of Manufacturing Engineers. By then numerical control had become a standard procedure and stepping motors were being made by Superior Electric in Bristol, Connecticut. But it was interesting while it lasted to see how all of that worked out. And among other things it brought me down here to Connecticut. I had been working in numerical controls, particularly a relatively low cost one made by Superior. I did many installations of it on Bridgeport milling machines and became very proficient.

Then I was wooed by another company which had a new numerical control product. It was another MIT company and unfortunately its chief engineer died in an automobile accident: he was stretching himself too thin, I'm afraid, running between New England and Ohio. So at any rate, I left that company and came down here to West Hartford Connecticut and Superior Electric. There my work was quite interesting because it involved numerical controls making the components for numerical controls; mainly the printed circuit boards. This involved several systems: one for wiring the back plane between the boards that connected one board to the next, and another for doing the artwork on the printed circuit board; a third one for drilling the board which had been etched with that artwork – drilling holes for the placement of components. And all of that was very interesting. The company sent me on a tour through their European branches and I enjoyed that very much. But unfortunately Bert Nelson, founder and president of the company got to retirement age, and because my product wasn't terribly profitable, his successor retired my product line and I left the company to work with Dynage, a little company up here in Bloomfield. The company was right on Blue Hills Avenue, opposite Kaman. And it had a nice group of people. We made small printed circuit boards that acted like logic cards. They were very high reliability types, immune to electrical noise and designed for power plant application.

After a few years a device called a *programmable logic control* came on the market and we hired an engineer to make that and for some reason or another things

started falling apart. I left the company but was retained as their New England representative and went all over the place, including the Twin Towers where the Engineering Department of American Electric Power Company was located. So I had an interesting time. And I expanded my manufacturer's representative role to a number of other companies as well.

I was doing pretty well when one summer I started working on my house. Our garage extended out beyond the main part of the house, so that its roof became a deck. And the deck around the pillars for the railing was starting to rot away. I relocated new pillars that mounted beyond the deck edges and in the course of doing that, grabbing something I thought was tightly fastened and wasn't, I fell and landed on my head, resulting in a bi-lateral hematoma that literally slowed me down and I had to be operated on.

After working for a while after that, I retired and was thinking what to do next when the Royal Typewriter Company burned down. I saw the smoke rising from that fire. Two wings were left standing and I thought, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a museum of communications technology involving typewriters and all kinds of other stuff, much of which was done here in Hartford. So I wrote a letter to the Hartford Courant, which they published, suggesting such a museum, only Stop and Shop beat me to it – they bought that property and tore down those two remaining wings for their single-story store and more level parking.

Defeated in that area, I heard about a radio museum starting up in East Hartford. So I went over there and talked with John Ellsworth, the director. Very much impressed with what he was doing, I joined up and have been with the museum ever since.

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