

Bendix Radio Memoirs

by
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I find it strange to wake up thinking about events and relationships that happened nearly fifty years ago. My time with the Bendix Radio Division of the Bendix Corporation lasted from August 1954 until February 1962; nearly eight years. When I came to Baltimore as a 19 year old farm boy from Pennsylvania, I was advised by family members that Bendix was "THE place to work". With this advice, a good technical education in drafting, and one year of college, I arrived at the personnel department on Joppa road full of anticipation, but was told that there were no openings. They did, however, allow me to take the two aptitude tests for the record. One of the two tests had a time limit, and, when I finished both tests with a perfect score, I was told that I was the only person who had ever finished the timed test. When I left that day in August 1954, I had a job in "Pappy" Gerns department as a Junior Draftsman at \$199.50 per month.

I spent about one year in a group for beginners run by Lou Healy and Ralph Powell. Other members I can recall were a typist, Betty Ford, Frank Triolo, and Roland Hartman. A redhead named Barbara Couch (she would say "Pronounce it 'couch', like you would lay on"), worked in the blueprint room. After my training period, I was assigned to a design group supervised by Russell Wray. In that group I worked on the FPS-14, FPS-18, and TPN-12. Bill Casagrande, Ed Biddle, Carroll Nasuta, Dominic Pacione, Frank Kovanda, Franny Elder, and Norm Nogie were also a part of that group. Norm Nogie turned out to be my mentor and took me under his wing. He attempted to extract and develop all the innate capabilities I possessed. He was also an influence to me to pursue the continuing of my engineering education which resulted in my graduation from Johns Hopkins with a BSE. Norm and his wife Betty, who worked in the Transformer Department in the 50's, were true friends.

While I was a member of Russ Wray's group, I also filled the responsibilities of Engineering Liaison to Harbor Field and Broening Highway on the FPS-18 and TPN-12. Many colorful associates worked on those lines. One I can remember is Pat Tull. During this time period, there was a reorganization that disbanded Pappy Gerns' department in favor of project oriented departments. Russ Wray's group was assigned to Bob White's department. Two delightful persons also part of that group were Bob's secretary Evelyn Stapleton, and Thelma Craig.

In November of 1960, Carroll Nasuta, Glenn King, and I accepted the challenge of working for the Bendix Systems Division in Ann Arbor, Michigan on loan for a "temporary" period. The project was the flying portion of the Syncom satellite (I think it never flew). We worked with George Bata, and finally got back to Joppa Road in at the end of May, 1961. The biggest challenge we had during this exercise was getting paid. Even though both divisions were part of the same corporation, they couldn't figure out how to get money to us. After two months in Ann Arbor, I remember borrowing money from George just to be able to buy groceries. We were told that it gets cold there, but that "it is a dry cold". Well, we had one period when the temperature failed to get above zero

degrees during the daytime for two weeks . . . and it was being driven by a 20 miles per hour wind. That was COLD, dry or not.

Bill Boblitz was the captain of the Bendix duckpin bowling league I bowled in for most of my time there. Skip Bevins and Ron Reigger were also members. "Shug" and Charmaine added an interesting aspect to the league. On at least one occasion, Charmaine threw a bowling ball airborne at the pin boy. Yes, there used to be pin boys. Charmaine was also an imposing figure during the 50's strike.

As it turned out, Bill had a much greater impact on my life than just our bowling relationship. In July of 1958, he arranged for me to date his cousin for her company's annual Summer outing. When she turned out to already have a date, I was introduced to her friend and coworker, Rosamond Ballesteros. Rose's brother-in-law, Pat Rafferty, was a member of the Test and Instrumentation Department for many years until he retired in 1994. The end of this story is still TBD. Rose and I just celebrated our 43rd wedding anniversary. Thanks, Bill.

The names of many other acquaintances mostly in the design and drafting functions during that time period also come to mind: Howard Hancock, Danny Nasuta, Henry Renner, Ralph Kibler, Charlie McGee, Mel Schneider, Buck Buchanan, Al Winters (Al was sure a case, wasn't he?), Stan Jordan, Roger Taylor, Joe Iaconi, Bernie Fell.

It has now been forty years since I left Bendix. Although many faces pass through my mind, the names are getting harder to recall.

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