

*Chapter 10: MY CAREER WITH GRAYBAR*

*This comprises 46 years and 3 months of active service plus 2-1/2 years as a consultant, with a unique, employee-owned company. The first 28 years were filled with hard work and incremental rewards. The final 20 years in St. Louis were mostly eventful, interesting, and rewarding. Part of the Graybar story is at <http://poweringthenewera.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/graybar-story.pdf>.*

Graybar Electric Co. began as an electrical engineering company in Cleveland, Ohio in 1856. One of its founders, Enos Barton, later joined with Elisha Gray, an inventor, and moved the business to Chicago as Western Electric Manufacturing Company. Elisha Gray and Alexander Graham Bell each filed for a patent for their version of the telephone on February 14, 1876, Bell's application won out with the patent office. Elisha Gray sued Bell and the case went all the way to the Supreme Court where Bell's claims prevailed. Gray sold his interests to the Western Union Telegraph Company including the civil case he had against Alexander Graham Bell disputing his patent for the telephone.

The Bell Telephone company acquired the Western Electric Manufacturing Company in 1881 and became A. T. & T. in 1889. In 1925, A. T. & T. sold the Bell Telephone Mfg. Co. to ITT. The distribution business of Western Electric was spun off as a separate company named Graybar Electric Co. (after the founders Gray and Barton). When a suitable buyer could not be found, the company was sold to its employees in January 1929. Supposedly one of the reasons for there not being an interested buyer was that there was a requirement that all employee benefits must be maintained after purchase. The New York Times ran a front-page story on the purchase. The founder of Forbes Magazine was quoted calling it "an extremely important development". It was the first time that a company of Graybar's size and importance had been purchased by its employees. At its founding on 12/11/1925, Graybar Electric Company moved into the largest office building in the world at the time, which was 420 Lexington Ave. and is still known as the Graybar Building.

The Graybar motto printed in Western Electric News in 1919 is:

"It is of interest to look back over the events of the past, but it is of value only as a basis for a look forward into the future. The Company's past achievements, in which we have a just pride, do not of themselves insure continued progress and success in the years to come. It must grow or it must die, and so it is that any business organization which attempts to live on its past reputation is doomed to fall."

I was hired by Graybar Electric Co. on March 26, 1956, by John Florig, the Operating Manager. My first boss was Tony Orlando, the Warehouse Supervisor. Also in the warehouse were Joe Cain, Joe Davison, and Herb Harries with Dave Dellmin at the sales counter. In the office were Ed Hudak, Frank Petretich, Bob Cooksey, and George Rowlands. The Secretarial staff included Mary Sundin, Lois Tice, Teresa Pandone, and Jenny Stelnicki. The sales force included Sye Shultz, Chester Duck, and John Asperger.

Graybar, at the time I was hired, was a company of many relatively small profit centers where advancement was limited unless you were willing to take advantage of openings that occurred in other locations. I made the moves a total of five times to climb the ladder to my final position that was about a step or two below a vice presidency position. I am sure that my lack of a college degree kept me from some promotions that might have led to bigger things, but I am satisfied that I accomplished everything that hard work and dedication could bring me.

I have never lived on the "edge" intentionally, so it was always difficult for me to put the fate of my family in the hands of destiny. This made most decisions much easier over the years when they influenced my earning capacity. There was always the choice to remain where you were comfortable and reasonably happy or move on to where there were better possibilities for the future.

I regret that these decisions of mine, to accept advancement with the company, always seemed to be so predictable and that there was little or no discussion about these upheavals before the determination was made to move. In my defense, that is the way that things were for me growing up. I didn't have input into the half-dozen or so moves that we made during my first 18 years. In addition, I do not know that I ever had a serious discussion of more than 5 minutes length with my dad. This was true even though I lived alone with him during my teen school years.

For over 35 of my years with Graybar, I was in management and supervisory positions. The biggest and most frequent criticism that I heard about my management style is that I was too lenient. I plead guilty with an explanation to these charges. I always tried to be understanding about people. Everyone in my family, including me, had flaws and I think that I felt that you had to acknowledge that some people had more flaws than others, but you must look at their good points as well. I fired very few people during that time and then only as the very last resort.

I do not believe that anyone who worked for me can say that I wasn't fair and honest in my dealings with them and others. I did protect some people who had extraordinarily trying personalities because I thought the circumstances warranted my overlooking while not condoning these idiosyncrasies. But they knew what problems they were causing me, and I believe that in their reflective moments they regretted their troubling actions. I mention in the chapter on my early married life that I learned a lot from watching my brother manage in his jobs. I believe that I was scrupulous about following company procedure; although, I did as much as I could to get things changed with which I didn't agree.

In business, I employed one strategy that speaks to my reserve. If I felt that a particular course of action was correct but was misunderstood or not popular, I would generally not stress my support for that course but work for it behind the scenes and wait for a more opportune time to champion it. The problem with this strategy is that it required that I knew without any doubt that the actions or policies I was not articulating wouldn't prevail at the present time. I think that this meant that I had to listen more closely and evaluate better. My recollection is that this worked about half the time. In business meetings and informal business and social discussions, I learned to express what I thought and knew.

Early in my career with Graybar, I had an office manager and another co-worker who had extremely caustic personalities. It was seldom that a friendly word was uttered by either of them. I realized that there must be reasons for their attitude, so I avoided confrontations with them; but when it was impossible to get out of their way, I had to make a choice. I could respond in kind, or I could figure out a more pleasant method of dealing with them. At that time, I decided that I wasn't going to let anyone pull me down to their level.

I have said that being hired by Graybar was one of the miracles that pulled my life together. There are several reasons I say this - first, is the close comradeship among the people I worked with due to a significant degree because Graybar is an employee-owned company. I became an owner in my third year with Graybar. Every 3 years, at that time, they gave all employees a chance to buy shares of stock based on the size of one's salary. In 1959, I was offered 54 shares of common stock for \$20.00 a share. This would cost over 3 month's salary, so it was not lightly that I committed to buy this stock. Fortunately, Graybar arranged for time payments through a bank. My resolve was rewarded the following year when a 100% stock dividend was declared, and I had doubled my ownership. That original \$1080.00 investment is now worth about \$40,000 and has paid over \$75,000 in cash dividends over the last 60+ years. My stock ownership position has increased over the years from \$1080 to over \$650,000. Annual income from dividends on this stock has historically been at least 10% (even in tough economic times); so, it now provides a substantial amount of my annual retirement income. To show how well Graybar treats its retirees, the value of the stock that I had at retirement has almost quadrupled in just over 20 years.

The second reason that I felt fortunate was that there were always prospects for advancement and I received ten major promotions and increased 14 grade levels during my career. As I said before, five of these promotions required relocating. When I accepted my first move from Youngstown to Pittsburgh in 1964, my pay raise was only \$50.00 per month, but with a promise that I would be considered for openings in the near future. That promise was fulfilled twice in the next four years. When I started with Graybar, there were 3 inside office salesmen: Frank Petretich, Ed Hudak and George Rowland. Although they progressed beyond that job none of them progressed beyond Youngstown. This was also true for everyone else that I worked with in Youngstown with very few exceptions.

My first job with Graybar was in the warehouse as a receiving clerk. I was responsible for the unloading, verification and recording of incoming shipments. This was a hard job for a 130-pound specimen that was not used to any substantial expenditure of effort. I was told that the reason my job was available was that the last person who was hired went out for lunch on his first day and didn't come back. It was fortunate that I was promoted to an office clerk position within my first year. One hidden benefit of my short time working in the warehouse might have been that it reduced my exposure to asbestos. From the 1940s to the 1970s asbestos pipe was in wide use in the electrical industry. It was something that had to be regularly handled by the warehouse personnel.

During the next 7-1/2 years, I was given two more assignments finally into what was termed an office salesman or inside salesman position. That second promotion got me on the "House Committee" which entitled me to receive a second bonus each year in addition to the annual profit-sharing bonus which everyone received. Over the years this annual bonus increased from my first one of \$400 to my last full bonus of almost \$50,000. Since this bonus is always based on not only company profit for the year but also our local district results, it often varied substantially but always provided a significant part of my annual take-home pay. The reason this caused a significant amount of family budget handling was that even though the dividends were distributed quarterly, more than half of my total income came in the first quarter of the following year.

During my time as office salesman in Youngstown, I was involved in many changes of technology – from the selling of the newly developed "Radar Range" (a refrigerator sized precursor to the microwave oven) to development of the medical defibrillator. My first experience with the latter was when a purchasing agent at a local hospital called to order a transformer and foot pedal operator and I had to ask how these would be used to determine which items to be furnished. One of my customers was Raffel Brothers Restaurant Equipment Supply (RB), a supplier of kitchen equipment who, later, created Arby's fast-food chain. While in Buffalo in the 1960's we had the Mennen-Greatbatch Company as a customer. They were in the forefront of inventing and developing the heart pacemaker. Many electronic devices that we use today were not invented yet or not in wide use. One of those was electronic calculators. The device that was used by our billing clerks to do calculations was the Burrough's Calculator which was patented in 1888.



The most innovative equipment we had was the FAX machine, that, although it was invented in 1843, there were several upgrades in the 1960s to permit telephone transmission. In 1974 it still took 3 minutes to send one page. One of the founders of Graybar, Elisha Gray, patented a method to permit the sending of signatures over long distances.

Among the training aspects of Graybar were periodic sales meetings after work. One of these that I attended while in Youngstown was led by a representative of a wiring device manufacturer who was introducing to us the Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter which was invented in 1961. We were told that someone (maybe the inventor, Charles Dalziel) once demonstrated its safety by having someone in a bathtub of water (we were told it was his daughter Isabelle) when a live wired electrical toaster was thrown in.

At the time of my transfer to Pittsburgh, as an inside salesman in Youngstown I was responsible for the office contacts for customers of one of our highly successful salesmen, which included some of the larger manufacturers, contractors, and other establishments in the surrounding area. When that salesman learned that I was leaving Youngstown for a \$50 raise, he discussed with our branch manager his offer to pay that raise out of his sales commissions if I would stay in Youngstown.

That man was my earliest mentor. He made sure that I met personally with all his most important customers. He even arranged for some off-hour work for me with one of his contractors, so I could make some extra money. When Graybar decided to start an honorary society to formally pay tribute to its top managers and salespeople, he was one of the first group to receive the Gamma Beta Sigma award. Sy Shultz died at a too young age some years after my transfer to Pittsburgh. He had been an inveterate cigar smoker and developed cancer in his jaw. His son later became a very successful salesman for Graybar.

During this time, I had another mentor who was one of the branch managers while I was in Youngstown. We worked together on sales promotions and so forth; and otherwise discussed business frequently. He later was promoted to sales manager in Pittsburgh, and as a member of upper management helped my career over the next few years. While he was in Pittsburgh, he was instrumental in my next promotions to be District Warehouse Supervisor in 1966, and Branch Operating Manager at Buffalo, NY in 1968. He was promoted to a corporate executive position in New York. Unfortunately, Merle Sullivan died at a relatively young age and did not reach his full potential as many speculated that he was headed to be president of the company. Strangely, his daughter contacted me on Facebook in 2024.

My job in Pittsburgh was essentially the same as what I was doing in Youngstown. As an inside salesman in 1964, I was responsible for several large important accounts including the local electrical power utility. A significant lesson that I learned during this period was taught to me by a newly appointed office salesman whose desk was immediately in front of mine. He asked me a lot of questions as would be normal, but he had one question that he asked repeatedly time after time. It occurred to me that maybe the reason that the answer didn't stick with him was that he could always get the answer from me. I would probably have done him a service if I had originally told him to look it up.

I was promoted to District Warehouse Superintendent in May 1966 to replace a man who asked for a transfer back to his original home in Boston. I think this was mainly because he had significant problems with the warehouse crew which belonged to the Teamsters union. Relations with the union were touchy at that time and I was involved in the salary negotiations that included a short strike. However, I had excellent dealings with the "rank and file" workers and was able to do things that my predecessor would not have even considered for fear of being reported by one of his employees. I found out that he had been taking money from the owner of the trucking company that we used for local deliveries. He offered the same to me and I had to turn him down. He offered instead to see that I could get good deals on auto repairs. I never had to use that offer. I couldn't bring myself to report this to my boss.

At that time, major appliances were a large part of our business. We had an Appliance Sales Manager named Irv Schutzer. Irv was a great kidder, particularly with the salesmen who worked for him. About that time, the Volkswagen Beetle, which was introduced to America in 1949, underwent significant changes and became much more popular and was the first automobile model to sell 20 million cars. One of Irv's salesmen bought one and extolled all its benefits to anyone who would listen. Automobile mileage to a salesman was very important, so he lorded over his buddies. Irv took notice of this and decided he had to do something.



The upper-level warehouse was where we stored most of our appliances, so Irv slipped the shipping clerk, Jim Lohman, a few bucks and had him use our forklift gasoline to top off the VW's gas tank every day for a couple of weeks. This made the salesman ecstatic, and he couldn't stop bragging on his VW's terrific gas mileage. When he got to the point that no one could stand him, Irv told Jim to begin siphoning out a little amount each day increasingly. After a couple more weeks, the salesman complained he was going to have to take his car in for a check-up. He later reported that the service department didn't believe him when he told them that he had been getting 200 miles per gallon and that now he was only getting about 10.

One of the many projects that I had responsibility for was dealing with the merchandise in the purchase of the inventory of a large wholesaler of small consumer appliances. Because this was a new business for us, we had to make room for receiving the merchandise which came into us by the truckload over several weeks, we had to send hundreds of major appliances to an outside warehouse; ship hundreds of lawn mowers to another Graybar location; move hundreds of televisions from one floor to another; and disassemble, move, and reassemble hundreds of feet of shelving. While all this planning, coordination and manual labor was going on, we continued to maintain our normal flow of business.

Early in 1968, my boss asked me to go with him to Buffalo on a training mission. While there I was to observe the warehouse operation and make notes of what could be done to rearrange the warehouse and otherwise make the operation more efficient. I went back a few weeks later and implemented those recommendations. What I did must have made an impression because later that year I was asked to transfer to Buffalo to be the Operating Manager. My first transfer to Pittsburgh was a very easy decision. The two children were still small, and Jonny was not yet in school. This second transfer was quite a bit harder with 3 children and one on the way. The deciding factor was the inducement that I would now be "in management" and getting management pay and bonuses. The warehouse crew gave me a nice set of luggage as a going-away present for my 1968 promotion.



official board and commission chairman of his local church.  
— R.E. Dapper, Pittsburgh.

10 Aug., Sept., 1968 OUTLOOK

My time in Buffalo was among the best of times but was also one of my more trying periods. This episode is also dealt with in Chapter 7, dealing with "My Regrets". We were there for 5+ years and it was during that time that we bought our first house in Alden NY. The Buffalo branch was probably the closest-knit organization that I was ever a part of. We had people from the office to our home all the time and were invited to their homes frequently. We bowled together and generally enjoyed each other's company. We made friendships with our Lancaster, NY neighbors and contact with one family of them continued even after we both had moved several times and continues until today. While in Buffalo, I interviewed for a position in New York City. It was one instance where my whole heart would not have been for the move, but I probably would have accepted the offer if it had been forthcoming. My last 3 years in Buffalo were very frustrating and late that final year I made a decision that could have led to my departure from Graybar.

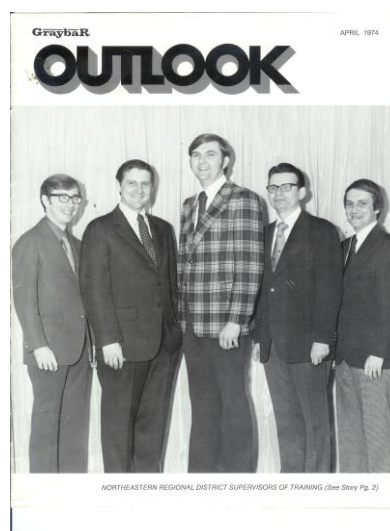
During my final year or so as Branch Operating Manager in Buffalo, we were in a downturn in business that had a significant effect of my ability to do my job. We were in the middle of a recession that caused lots of retrenchment. Two things happen when business is dropping - you must cut expenses, which, sometimes means losing people; and people see that they are not getting raises and promotions, so worker moral goes down. The people that you lose may be some with the best prospects for the future, but because of the need to assure that you have fully trained staff, the last hired is usually first fired.

My boss, Harry Cody, the Branch Manager, and I thought we were doing our best in preparing our operation for the downturn. Near the end of the year, we lost one of our four female clerical workers. Harry and I figured we could best cut back there, so we did not fill the position immediately. Shortly after the first of the year when the budget was announced, we learned that each branch was expected to cut back one employee. We argued that we had already done our cutting but lost out and was forced to lay off a young man who we felt had significant potential.

We felt that other decisions that our district management made that year were arbitrary and were made without considering input from our monthly operating reports. I became more and more disillusioned during the year and made unsuccessful attempts to be transferred to a different district. In addition to our annual bonus being reduced, I did not receive a pay increase for 3 years but learned that our Branch Financial Manager did get a raise. Near the end of that year, I made the flawed decision to tell my boss that I couldn't continue in my job the way things were going. I told the District Operating Manager that I could not continue in my present job while he was in Buffalo giving me a "talking-to". I requested a transfer back to Pittsburgh, which was approved for the beginning of 1974, where I would again be Warehouse Superintendent.

This could have been a career-ender for me except that a former boss of mine was now a Regional Vice President and he put in a good word for me with the corporate Vice President of Operations who was choosing participants in a new program he was initiating. I was sent to a meeting in Rye, NY where the first group of five District Supervisors of Training was announced. In a conversation with an assistant to the VP, I was told that he, himself, had been skeptical about me because of the demotion, but the VP told him that I was the one that my former boss, John McGrath, wanted for the job. This new job was good for my career. Not only was it a promotion but I was promoted again a little over year and a half later.

The good impression that I made on this former boss was the difference between moving ahead and probably leaving Graybar. Of course, there is also the possibility that if I had kept my mouth shut and stayed in Buffalo, that a completely different path might have taken place. Since it would have been considered a lateral promotion at best, I might not have gotten the job of District Supervisor of Training and what happened from then on might have been completely different.



The new job, which restored my previous grade, required that I travel frequently to our other branches in Buffalo, NY, Youngstown, OH, Greensburg, PA, and Wheeling WV. My position entailed creating training programs for operating personnel at all levels and providing on-the-job training where necessary.

Although I was living out of my suitcase for the next six months, I did enjoy the travel and interaction with the other employees of the district. I think the new job widened my horizons and gave me confidence that I would be able to handle whatever position was next for me. The worst part of the whole deal was that my family didn't move to Pittsburgh for almost 8 months. This allowed the kids to finish the school year in Alden and for us to sell the house without having to use a realtor. Since my training job involved travel to each of the branches, I was able to be in Buffalo once or twice a month for extended stays that always included a weekend.

During the following summer, I was even able to take my family with me on a few working trips to other cities, where they could stay at the motel with a pool, and I could have lunch with them, and they could check out the city. This time we were in Pittsburgh less than two years when I was offered the position of Assistant to the District Operating Manager in Philadelphia. This was a significant move up for me, but it was also a critical year for my family. Carol, who had graduated from high school, did not want to move from Pittsburgh. To accept this offer, we reluctantly agreed with her decision to stay and room and board with a neighbor. I felt at the time that this was a turning point for me. After all, I had requested what amounted to a demotion to leave what I considered to be a worrisome situation in Buffalo. That act alone could have shut down any future advancement. Not accepting this promotion would likely be a career-ender.

Although the experience of my time in Philadelphia was beneficial in many ways, this time was also one of the more vexing and trying in my professional life. At the time that I moved into this job, I was to be second in charge of the operating department for a district which stretched from Harrisburg, PA to Washington, DC and included six branches. It was a bad time because the nation was still in a recession, which hit our business so intensely that we were still cutting back for the next two years. What this meant, initially, was that I was given the responsibility to also function as the Branch Operating Manager of the Philadelphia branch. As part of this job, I was given a choice of several possibilities of someone to act in a next level subordinate position to me in the Philadelphia branch. Without knowing any of the prospective candidates, I felt it would be a disservice to select one without getting to know their abilities better. It also meant that, regardless of who was promoted, we would have one less person in our customer service section, which was already short-handed. My decision was that I would forego filling this position until I could better assess the situation. Until then I had to fill that role myself in addition to my other jobs.

What happened was that, over time I did not feel comfortable with any of the prospective parties moving up, mostly because I thought that, by losing the customer service position, which would not be filled, the job of supervising a reduced force was beyond the ability of any of them. It was four years before I was finally able to bring someone in to fill this position. For the first years of this time, I did my job and the subordinate one also. The next year when business started to come back the management wanted to change the structure of the Philadelphia operation and they appointed a new sales manager.

At least twice during my career, I was forced to counsel an employee about a touchy personal situation. In both cases, female employees complained that a young male employee needed to use deodorant protection. I was able to relate to this situation since, soon after I was promoted from warehouse work into the office in Youngstown, I discovered one day that someone had slipped an aerosol deodorant into the pocket of my jacket which was hanging in the lobby.

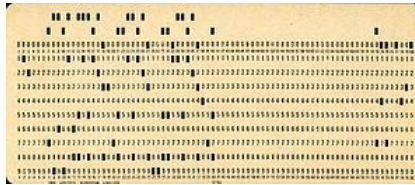
All the time that I was in Philadelphia, I was the direct contact with what was going on in Graybar's newly upgraded IT department which meant trips to Minneapolis and St. Louis. Any training or dissemination of information for the Philadelphia district went through me.



JON R. BRILL, Assistant to District Operating Manager at Philadelphia, 25 years on March 26. Jon began with the Company in 1956 at Youngstown as a Warehouseman. He also served there as Office Salesman. He transferred to Pittsburgh in the same capacity in 1964, becoming Warehouse Superintendent in 1966. In 1968 he transferred to Pittsburgh as District Supervisor of Training. In 1975 he transferred to Philadelphia as Assistant to District Operating Manager, his present position.

OUTLOOK•MARCH 1981•9

On March 26, 1981, I completed 25 years with Graybar. In August of that year of that year, the first personal computers were put on the market by IBM. During my career with Graybar, beginning in Pittsburgh in 1964, I had hands-on dealings with Graybar's computer usage. Initially it was with the punch-card accounts receivable system that was just getting started at that time.



The District Operating Manager asked me to work with others that were trying to straighten out problems with the information that was being reported by this nascent accounting process. Later, as Operating Manager in Buffalo, I was on the front line in training the first operators of our new Honeywell punched tape inventory control and computerized shipping/billing document production machine.



Later, when the company moved forward with a main frame-computer system, I was designated as the Philadelphia District delegate to the national information technology group. As such, it was my job to attend training sessions in Minneapolis so that I could provide most of the training and support for the local operators. As the Assistant District Operating Manager and the Philadelphia Branch Operating Manager, I had to fit these responsibilities into my everyday functions. Fortunately, this was the part of the job that I enjoyed the most. A couple of times, I was able to take JoAnn and the younger boys with me on training trips to Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, and Harrisburg. I was finally able to fill the position of Head of Customer Service after about 5 years.

In 1984, after 8 years in Philadelphia, I was offered a position with the IS department which had just recently been moved from Chicago to be near our new headquarters in St. Louis. They were at the beginning stages of creating a new business computer system. At the time it was described as a two-year commitment. This proved to be significantly short of reality, as we did not install the first version of this new system until 1988 and the final version in 1990. We had a cadre of 12-15 initially which grew significantly over the years. This all took place during the years of the development of the internet.

**The first Internet domain name** was registered on March 15, 1985, by a company called Symbolics.com. In 1985, only six companies held dot-com domains. By 1992, there were fewer than 15,000. In 2010, there were 84 million separate domains, and in late 2019 there were 144 million registered .com domains.

My first position in the IS department was Senior System Design Analyst which meant that it was my responsibility to research and to write the specifications for several of the business functions that would be computerized. The processes that I was responsible for were 3 of the main areas within the system. I wrote the Customer Order Entry, Customer Order Maintenance, and Purchasing processes for the first stand-alone business computer system in the electrical industry. This process took the first couple of years after I moved to St Louis.

Our department was also responsible for customer service of our current computerized processes. During this time, I took numerous business trips with my boss Jim Ford. We traveled to Grand Rapids, MI, Waco, TX, Boston, Philadelphia, and Houston, as well as Rochester, NY, Syracuse, NY, and Dallas a number of times. The highlight of one trip to New York City was a dinner at the Smith and Wollensky Steak House. On a trip to Dallas, the president of our company took us to his favorite Chinese restaurant.

We had a false start to our first implementation in St. Louis district in 1988. We found that the hardware that we had purchased to use was not adequate. Everything ran exceedingly slowly and unpredictably. Those of us who were in the branches had to spend all our time running down problems and reporting issues back to the IS management. We did finally get the district converted but much later than planned.

The next few years were spent in preparing to implement and implementing the business system in 18 districts with about 205 individual locations. We converted one district at a time. We would spend a couple of weeks in preparation and would go as a group to the district that was being converted. Several team members would be at the main district location and at least one member would be in each of the other locations. Most of the time, I was responsible for the conversion of one of the branches in each district. Among the branches that I had business trips to or that I helped to convert were: Peoria, IL; Davenport, IA; Wilmington, DE; Texas Instruments, TX; Boston Telecom, MA; Boston, MA; Rochester, NY; Greensburg, PA; Orlando, FL; Miami International, FL; Miami, FL; Nashville, TN; Memphis, TN; Grand Rapids, MI; Henderson, NV; Los Angeles, CA; Minneapolis, MN; San Francisco, CA; Olathe, KS; Atlanta, GA; Youngstown, OH; Dallas TX; Louisville, KY; Richmond, VA; Philadelphia, PA; Houston, TX; and Las Vegas, NV. (JoAnn was with me on the ones that are underlined)

The conversions of all Graybar districts were completed in November 1990. Our company felt this was a historic milestone for Graybar but that we were at the very earliest stages of cultural change in the way that most large companies do business. With electronic invoicing and fund transfers, computer to computer order entry, additional zone inventories, and the ease of locating materials across the country, we have begun a new chapter in our ability to service our customers' needs. We could provide customers with reports of our service levels, track the number of orders received, shipped, and delivered on time as well as the number of shipments made on orders, the number of back orders, and returned goods. Our customers would be able to enter their own orders online, either manually through the internet or computer to computer.

Quoting the following from "Timeless Values Enduring Innovation – The Graybar Story" by Richard Blodgett

"Graybar participated in the 1980s technology revolution not only as a seller of products but also as a user of new technologies. Electronic technology began to change the way the company managed its operations and interacted with suppliers and customers."

"Technology helped jump-start Graybar's logistics business. Following the break-up of AT & T, the company took over warehousing and logistics for Southwestern Bell, one of the new Baby Bells. This marked the first time an electrical products distributor had managed a major company's warehouses."



“To operate the warehouses efficiently, Southwestern Bell, Graybar and McDonnell Douglas developed one of the earliest sets of EDI (electronic data interchange) protocols. These protocols allow computers to communicate with each other in standard formats so that purchase orders, invoices, shipping notices and other documents can be transmitted and processed electronically, eliminating paper document.”

“Graybar soon was providing supply chain management services to other companies, including electronic products manufacturer Texas Instruments. It even opened a branch in a Texas Instruments factory to supply products on demand.”

“In 1982 the company introduced an experimental system to enable customers to order products “on-line”. *(my note: We called that GRAYBARNET)*

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“Graybar acquired its first mainframe computer, a Honeywell-Bull, in 1987. The use of mainframes was common in many industries at that time, but wholesalers were late to the party. Graybar was one of the first distributors - if not the first – to utilize a mainframe to help run its business.”

End Quote.

In 1991, I was promoted to manage the department that I had been working in for 6 years. This IS group was always close not only in working together but often in after hours and off-day recreation. Several times a group of 10 or 12 managers and analysts would take a long weekend at the Lake of the Ozarks for fishing, boating, and card-playing. Here is a picture of the 1987 group (all male) portraying the Chicago Mob (I'm in the white suit).



These years were some of the most productive in the company's history but also some of the most challenging. We were constantly trying to find new ways to use the technological advancements that were coming with increasing rapidity. Another benefit of working with Graybar occurred after Ken and Chuck graduated from high school. The jobs that I had while in St. Louis required periodic travel. Quite often JoAnn was able to travel with me. We made many business trips together over the next 15 years. Several of the business meetings in Las Vegas and Los Angeles included the wives of the other participants.

J O N R.  
B R I L L



**Jon R. Brill,**  
Senior  
Business  
Systems  
Specialist at  
the MIS  
Center, 35 years of service  
on March 26. Jon joined  
Graybar Youngstown in  
1956 as a Warehouseman,  
progressing to Office Sales  
in 1957. He transferred to  
Pittsburgh in 1964 as Office  
Salesman, later becoming  
Warehouse Superin-  
tendent.

Jon was appointed  
Branch Operating Manager  
at Buffalo in 1968. He  
returned to Pittsburgh in  
1974 as District Supervisor  
of Training. The following  
year he transferred to  
Philadelphia as Assistant  
to the District Operating  
Manager. In 1984 Jon  
joined the General  
Department at the MIS  
Center as a Senior System  
Design Analyst. He was  
appointed Senior Business  
Systems Specialist in 1990.



**Ken Klindworth,** (left) is General Manager of the Information Systems Department. "IS is focused on understanding and supporting Graybar's business," he says, "We're looking at every opportunity where we can use technology to efficiently support the company's future business growth."

**Jon Brill** (center), a Graybar veteran with 40 years of service, is Manager, Business Systems Planning and Development. He helps identify and implement technological systems that make Graybar a better value-added distributor for our customers.

**Ted Hoffman,** Assistant General Manager of the Information Systems Department, is the Department's top hardware person. He is responsible for keeping the company's information machinery running smoothly.

J O N R.  
B R I L L



**Jon R. Brill,**  
Manager,  
Business  
Systems  
Planning and  
Development at  
the IS


Department, 40 years of service  
with the company on March 26. Jon  
joined Graybar in 1956 as a  
Warehouseman at Youngstown. In  
1957 he became an Office  
Salesman there. He transferred to  
Pittsburgh in 1964 as an Office  
Salesman. Jon became Warehouse  
Superintendent in 1966. He was  
appointed Branch Operating  
Manager at Buffalo in 1968.

Jon returned to Pittsburgh as  
Warehouse Foreman in 1974. That  
same year he was appointed  
District Supervisor of Training. He  
transferred to Philadelphia as  
Assistant to the District Operating  
Manager in 1975. Jon joined the  
Information Systems Department  
in 1984 as Senior Systems Design  
Analyst. He was promoted to  
Senior Business Systems Specialist  
in 1990. In 1991 Jon was promoted  
to Manager, Business Systems  
Planning and Development, his  
current position.

The position I enjoyed most was Manager, Business Systems Planning and Development which I held from 7/1/1991 to 5/30/1996. In this job, I was the direct link between IS and our users worldwide which included internal Graybar users, as well as our customers, suppliers, and vendors. It gave me the opportunity to see first-hand the rapid progress that technology was making. I was able to influence and put my own mark on the development within my company. The people who worked for me came from many Graybar locations across the country and I feel that we really had the “cream of the crop” as far as capabilities are concerned. Unfortunately, highly capable persons are also sometimes highly determined which made their supervision complex. I celebrated my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Graybar in this position.

To guarantee an orderly transition to a new era in the IS department, I agreed to accept a new title that was created for me at that time. On 6/1/1996, I became Manager, System Application Redesign. In this position, I acted as a resource of knowledge about the business computer system of the company and as a facilitator for projects dealing with improving the current computer system and replacing elements within that system.

JON R.  
BRILL



**Jon R. Brill,** appointed Manager, System Application Redesign at the Information Systems Department. Jon joined Graybar in 1956 as a Warehouseman at Youngstown. In 1957 he became an Office Salesman there. He transferred to Pittsburgh in 1964 as an Office Salesman. Jon became Warehouse Superintendent in 1966. He was appointed Branch Operating Manager at Buffalo in 1968.

Jon returned to Pittsburgh as Warehouse Foreman in 1974. That same year he was appointed District Supervisor of Training. He transferred to Philadelphia as Assistant to the District Operating Manager in 1975. Jon joined the Information Systems Department in 1984 as Senior Systems Design Analyst. He was promoted to Senior Business System Specialist in 1990. In 1991 Jon was promoted to Manager, Business Systems Planning and Development, his position prior to this appointment.

At the end of 1998, it was becoming evident to everyone in the information technology industry that the anomaly that became known as the “Year 2000 Bug” was something that needed to be addressed - and quickly. Our dependence on computers made the specter of large-scale failures an issue that required an innovative response. I was given the job of Manager, Year 2000 Compliance. As such, I had to coordinate all our efforts within the company as well as dealing with the concerns of customers, suppliers, vendors, and regulators.



The term Y2K had become shorthand for a problem stemming from the clash of the upcoming Year 2000 and the two-digit year format utilized by early coders to minimize use of computer memory - then an expensive commodity. If computers interpreted the "00" in 2000 as 1900 in the billions of items that contained some elements of computer coding., this could mean headaches ranging from wildly erroneous calculations to, some speculated, large-scale blackouts and infrastructure damage. It was an issue that everyone was talking about near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but few understood. The majority of people have absolutely no clue how computers work. So, when someone came along and said look, we have a problem involving a two-digit year rather than a four-digit year, their eyes would glaze over.

As we all know now, thanks to the efforts of millions of workers, the expenditure of billions of dollars, and mostly to the marshalling of a broad alliance of committed and dedicated Year 2000 teams, few significant problems occurred. Since proving a negative in this case is almost impossible, we can't say what might have happened without these extreme efforts. The one thing that we can say is that we were fortunate that the bursting of the "Dot-COM bubble" happened after, in March 2000, instead of 2 years before. Nearly 5 trillion dollars were wiped out in that market drop. If the money needed for all the Year 2000 remediation was not there, who knows what might have happened.



### GRAYBAR'S YEAR 2000 TEAM

Front Row: **Linda Hoffman**, Senior Project Leader; **Tracy Jeffers**, Staff Specialist; **Cliff Spinner**, International Operations Manager; and **Bob Trolander**, National Marketing Manager.

Middle Row: **Jon Brill**, Manager, Year 2000 Compliance; **Deb Weis**, Manager, Electronic Commerce; **Melissa Russell**, Personnel Specialist-HRIS; **Catherine Wallace**, Senior Communications Technician; **Stan Levy**, Manager, Data Processing Operations; **Sandy Dahm-Schell**, PC Applications Coordinator; and **Don Ludwinski**, Manager, Network Systems.

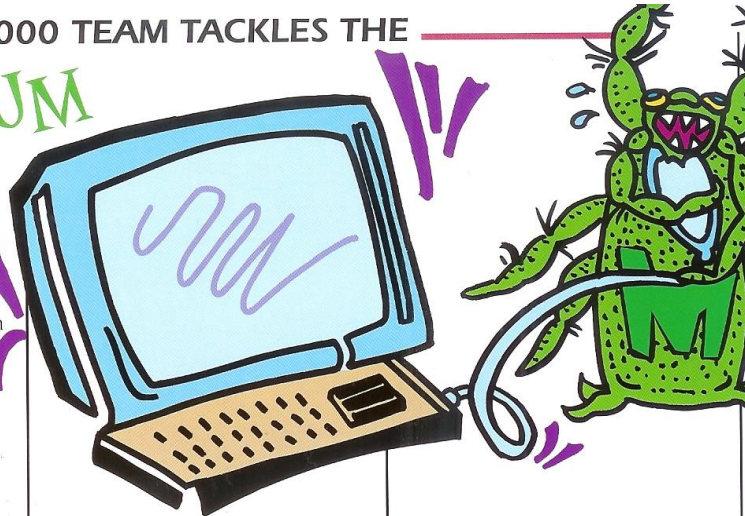
Back Row: **Jon Huizenga**, Corporate Accounts Services Manager; **Mike Albers**, Quality Assurance Manager; **Karl Griffith**, National Market Manager; **David Hughes**, National Safety Manager; **Norm Haines**, Manager, Software Systems Analysis and Programming; **Carl Lagerquist**, National Manager, Advertising and Sales Promotion; **Bill Sanderson**, Manager, Security Systems; and **Larry Anderson**, Senior IS District Delegate.

## GRAYBAR'S YEAR 2000 TEAM TACKLES THE MILLENNIUM BUG

**W**ith less than nine months until the computer clocks roll over to the Year 2000, Graybar's "mission critical" computer systems have been tested, and we fully expect that they will be ready for the first day of the new millennium. Starting with an IS review of our mainframe operations in 1996, we have planned, researched, fixed, tested and re-tested. In addition to computer software and hardware, our planning included equipment in our facilities, the products that we sell and the readiness of the companies we do business with.

For our mainframe programs we used a technique known as "windowing" to fix any date problems that were in the software. This allowed us to complete changes in 1997 and permitted testing to be done in 1998. Many other problems were averted by replacing old hardware with new Y2K compliant hardware. The Year 2000 Team meets periodically to address remaining issues and to review our progress. Ken Klindworth, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, gives frequent progress reviews to Graybar's president and his senior staff, and the Board of Directors is updated on a regular basis.

An outside consultant has reviewed our Year 2000 plans and provided suggestions for improvement based on their experience with this topic. Some changes were made to the way the project was being tracked based on the consultant's recommendations.



Graybar has avoided many of the pitfalls that other companies have encountered through early planning that began with the design of our current computer system. Decisions made during the last ten years have contributed to the ease of conversion in our systems and have helped keep our costs comparatively low.

Information about our Y2K plans is posted on the Internet for customers and suppliers. Both InfoLink and the Graybar web site ([www.graybar.com](http://www.graybar.com)) have Y2K related statements and forms to use when dealing with this subject. We have also provided links to the web sites of some of our suppliers as well as other companies that are providing Year 2000 information. We have seen a significant increase in the dissemination of information on all Y2K issues during the last year. Media coverage is increasing daily, and thousands of Internet sites address this important issue.

Graybar's Year 2000 Team, which includes members from most departments in the company, met on January 25 to discuss plans for the remainder of 1999. Two issues the team is

addressing will have a great impact on our efforts to ensure that we avoid most of the predicted hazards. One, we are considering employing a system-wide test to verify that the systems that have been tested independently will all work together. The team will determine how and when we could accomplish this without a major disruption to our normal business processes.

The other major issue to be addressed is the preparation and implementation of contingency plans. Contingency plans are intended to minimize as much as possible the effect on Graybar of business interruptions due to failures caused by unfulfilled Y2K compliance. These failures could occur in services such as electrical power distribution – despite all the planning and effort being expended. The contingency plans will provide guidance for continuing business processes and whatever corrective actions might be necessary. The Information Systems Department will be on a high level of alert during the transition period to provide whatever help is necessary to reduce the effect of any disruptions. ♦

— Jon Brill  
Manager, Year 2000 Compliance



After shepherding the Y2K process through its wrap-up phase, on 6/1/2001 I was given my final promotion to Manager of Special Projects which basically meant that I could work on projects that interested me. During my last year, I acted as a facilitator in several ongoing process enhancements. In this situation, I would make recommendations; assist in planning, and provide myself as a resource in whatever capacity that was necessary. I was also part of the team that was tasked with determining which, if any, of the business software programs that were commercially available would best meet the needs of our company. It had been determined that the hardware we were currently operating with had too many limitations on our continued growth. This meant that we were either going to design and produce our own software or use a commercial package that was modified to our needs. After 46 years and 3 months, at the age of 67, it came time to think about retirement.

<b>J O N R . B R I L L</b>	
<p>Manager, special projects at the IS Department on July 1, 2002, after 46 years of service with the company. Jon began his Graybar career as a warehouseman at Youngstown in 1956. He progressed through various office sales, warehouse supervisory and branch operating positions at Youngstown, Pittsburgh and Buffalo before being appointed assistant to the district operating manager at Philadelphia in 1975. Jon transferred to corporate headquarters as a senior systems design analyst in 1984. He became senior business systems specialist in 1990 and was named manager, business systems planning the following year. He was appointed manager, systems application and redesign in 1996 and became manager, year 2000 compliance in 1998. Jon was promoted to manager, special projects in 2001, his position at retirement.</p> <p><i>"My wife and I intend to travel more and play more golf. We suggest that everyone do what they feel is best for their family, and right now this is what's best for ours."</i></p>	

My official retirement occurred June 30, 2002, at which time I was hired as a consultant. In this capacity I could usually set my own hours; much of the time I was also able to work off-site including times when I was on vacation. I probably averaged about 30 hours a week and while at home I was still working 40-hour weeks, Graybar had begun the process of migrating from the self-developed computer business system that was implemented in 1988 to the enterprise resource planning software developed by SAP AG (a German company) specifically for its purposes. I was familiar with this software since I was part of the team that was responsible for recommending the next generation of computing at Graybar. This has grown into the broadest installation of SAP software products in the wholesale electrical industry. It was implemented within budget, both in time and expense.

My participation in this project was two-fold:

1. During the life of the project, it was necessary to maintain the operation of the current business system. I operated as a facilitator in several areas; working with business specialists, system analysts, and programmers within Graybar to assure the functionality of several business processes. I also, acted as the intermediary to users, Graybar customers, and Graybar suppliers in the use of these business processes.

2. I acted as a System Design Analyst to develop several processes and about 20 business reports for the SAP computer system. I created design specifications and worked with business specialists, system analysts, and programmers to create the software for these processes and reports. I assisted in the testing and quality assurance for this software. The design, coding, testing, and implementation were all successful and resulted in an extremely smooth transition to a new computer business system that encompasses all the company's business processes.

The third main reason that I feel that Graybar was a unique opportunity for a life's career was what was provided towards retirement. Graybar's pension plan is mainstream and not greatly more than the average for large corporations. When the employees bought the company from Western Electric in 1929, it was one of a very few large companies that had a retirement program. When they first tried to sell that part of the company in 1925, they made a condition that all the company benefits must be retained. That was probably one of the reasons that no buyer could be found, and the company was finally sold to its employees in 1929. It appears that they got a bargain.

In the early 1970's, they did something that was extremely helpful to retiring employees. At that time, they changed compensation and added what was called a "profit sharing savings plan". Each year a certain percentage of the employee's salary was added to a savings plan like a 401K. The percentage was almost always 10%. Prior to this, the complete bonus, paid every year to employees in management positions, was in cash. This forced savings, for me, resulted at the time of retirement in an amount that has provided a substantial portion of the income that JoAnn and I needed in addition to our Social Security and stock dividends.

The regular pension plan (a defined benefit program), that Graybar provided me, guaranteed a monthly income equal to 1% of my best 5 years average salary for each year of employment. I decided to take this as a lump sum instead of a monthly annuity. This amount has been invested and with reasonable care and management has provided many years of comfortable retirement. I can say that without the retirement program that Graybar provides, I would probably have taken steps on my own to prepare for retirement, but Graybar certainly helped me to do what was important.

I was fortunate in my work, in that I always felt that what I did was important to the company and that I almost always gave it my best. The last 20 or so years were by far the best because we were breaking new ground with our computer system and there were daily opportunities to learn new things. As a member of upper management, I was involved in significant decisions and planning.

The fourth great benefit of working at Graybar was that, by and large, you were in the company of good people who felt that advancing Graybar's interests was not only best for the company but important for its employees. This continues into retirement though an organization that was founded over twenty-five years ago – OMEGA (Older More Energetic Graybar Alumni). We meet every year in Las Vegas to see our friends and hear from the CEO how Graybar is doing.



Tampa Retirees Jon Brill, Sonny Harper and Tampa Director, Operations Dale Thayer enjoy a retiree luncheon in June.

In my years since retirement, I have also attended most of the annual retiree luncheons for those living in the Central Florida area that is held in Tampa; as well as the annual February OMEGA 5-day get together in Las Vegas.

In the more than 20 years of my retirement Graybar has continued to grow and prosper, reaching the highest sales figures in its history in both 2021 and 2022 after a small decrease in the pandemic year 2020.

**Chapter 11: MY RESUME'**

*When I finished my consulting work for Graybar at the end of 2004, we moved to Florida. I did not see myself without some type of work to occupy my time, so I determined to investigate what I might do that would be interesting, flexible, and worth my time. I compiled this resume at that time, for that purpose. Several things played into the situation to alter those plans. We found that we did not wish to give up our annual vacation in Hawaii; there was much more work to do with the Florida landscape; and I found other interests to keep me busy such as researching my ancestry.*

**RESUME FOR JON REID BRILL, SR.**

12313 Westfield Lakes Circle  
Winter Garden, FL, 34787  
Tel. 407-287-9359

Born August 3, 1935, Youngstown, Ohio; graduated from McKees Rocks (PA) High School May 1953; attended Duquesne University 1953-54; active employee of Graybar Electric Co., from 3/26/1956 to 6/30/2002; consultant to Graybar Electric Co., from 7/1/2002-12/31/2004.

In the 46+ years as a full-time employee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest American-owned wholesale electrical distributor (2019), I was fortunate to obtain a wide experience in the following business fields:

1. Corporate Operations Management
2. District Operations Management
3. Branch Operations Management
4. Department Operations Management
5. Unit Operations Management
6. Customer Service
7. Training and Education
8. Sales
9. Warehousing.
10. Personnel Management
11. Computer Business Systems Design
12. Computer Business Systems Testing
13. Computer Business Systems Implementation
14. Computer Business Systems Support

**January 1, 2005, to Present – No occupation; time spent preparing to relocate from St. Louis, MO to Winter Garden, FL, relocating and enjoying time off from a 49-year career.**

**July 1, 2002, to December 31, 2004 – Consultant to Graybar Electric Co., Inc., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

Salary \$65.00 per hour plus expenses Total Salary for 2-1/2 years \$172,206

Management Incentive \$6,673 Cash Dividends \$28,165 **2-1/2 Year Total \$207,044**

Graybar began the process of migrating from the self-developed computer business system that was implemented in 1988 (see below) to the SAP R/3 ERP software developed specifically for their purposes. This grew into the broadest installation of SAP software products in the wholesale electrical industry. It was implemented within budget, both in time and expense.

My involvement in this project was twofold:

1. During the life of the project, it was necessary to maintain the operation of the current business system. I operated as a facilitator in several areas; working with business specialists, system analysts, and programmers of Graybar to assure the functionality of several business processes. I, also, acted as the intermediary to users, Graybar customers, and Graybar suppliers in the use of these business processes.

2. I acted as a System Design Analyst to develop several processes and about 20 business reports for the SAP computer system. I created design specifications and worked with business specialists, system analysts, and programmers to create the software for these processes and reports. I assisted in the testing and quality assurance for this software.

The planning, development and migration was successful and resulted in an extremely smooth transition to a new computer business system that encompasses all of the company's business processes.

**June 1, 2001, to June 30, 2002 – Manager, Special Projects, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO.**

2001 Salary \$103,780 Management Incentive \$49,928 Cash Dividends \$11,687  
Stock Dividends \$5700 Profit Sharing \$13,832 **2001- Total \$185,126**

2002 6 Mo. Salary \$52,716 Management Incentive \$15,802 Cash Dividends \$10,525  
Profit Sharing \$6,852 **2002- 6 Mo. Total \$85,895**

In this position, I was responsible for the design, testing, and implementation of several computer business processes, most prominent of which was a rebate recovery system. This system automated a manual process of filing claims with Graybar's suppliers to obtain rebates on products that were sold with the understanding that the supplier would underwrite the sale at a lower than standard price. The electronic process instituted with 3 of Graybar's suppliers resulted in recovery of several million dollars each year with minimal human intervention for both Graybar Electric Co. and its suppliers.

**January 1, 1999, to May 30, 2001 – Manager, Year 2000 Project, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

**1999 Salary** \$91,505 Management Incentive \$40,864 Cash Dividends \$9,489  
Stock Dividends \$4,580 Profit Sharing \$15,417 **1999- Total \$161,855**

**2000 Salary** \$97,238 Management Incentive \$43,224 Cash Dividends \$10,676  
Stock Dividends \$5,500 Profit Sharing \$13,101 **2000- Total \$169,759**

In this position, I was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the company's planning, documentation, remediation, and upgrading of equipment subject to the possibility of failure or degradation due to the Year 2000 computer anomaly. As such, I reported directly to the Board of Directors. I was involved in all planning, purchasing, testing and final approval of projects to assure that all equipment and systems would be ready to function normally at 1/1/2000 and thereafter. This position required interaction with other companies involved in "Year 2000" projects of their own; attendance at "Year 2000" seminars; and communication on this subject both within Graybar and with personnel of other companies. All of the above involvement was successful, and the company did not suffer from any system or equipment failures as a result of the Year 2000 anomaly.

**June 1, 1996, to December 31, 1998 – Manager, System Application Redesign, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

**1996 Salary** \$75,959 Management Incentive \$30,659 Cash Dividends \$7,139  
Profit Sharing \$0.00 **1996- Total \$113,757**

**1997 Salary** \$79,370 Management Incentive \$29,125 Cash Dividends \$7,885  
Stock Dividend \$4,020 Profit Sharing \$12,641 **1997- Total \$133,041**

**1998 Salary** \$87,458 Management Incentive \$32,742 Cash Dividends \$8,743  
Stock Dividend \$8,340 Profit Sharing \$14,456 **1998-Total \$151,739**

In this position, I acted as a resource of information about the business computer system of the company and as a facilitator for projects dealing with improving the current computer system and replacing elements within that system.

**July 1, 1991, to May 30, 1996 – Manager, Business Systems Planning and Development, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

1991 Salary \$59,714	Management Incentive \$11,704	Cash Dividends \$5,194	
Profit Sharing \$0.00			<b>1991- Total \$76,612</b>
1992 Salary \$63,240	Management Incentive \$10,032	Cash Dividends \$5,409	
Profit Sharing \$7,327			<b>1992- Total \$86,008</b>
1993 Salary \$65,558	Management Incentive \$23,525	Cash Dividends \$6,074	
Stock Dividend \$2,760	Profit Sharing \$8,908		<b>1993- Total \$106,825</b>
1994 Salary \$68,805	Management Incentive \$23,208	Cash Dividends \$6,666	
Profit Sharing \$10,960			<b>1994- Total \$109,639</b>
1995 Salary \$71,156	Management Incentive \$30,657	Cash Dividends \$6,859	
Stock Dividend \$4,160	Profit Sharing \$12,078		<b>1995- Total \$124,910</b>

In this position, my responsibilities included the following:

1. Hire, train, and supervise personnel for the design, development, testing, implementation and support of the company's computer business systems.
2. Assess products and software that were offered by vendors for use by our company.
3. Communicate with customers, suppliers, and vendors regarding the use of business systems and software.
4. Work with Officers, Department Heads, and other company personnel to assure that all systems were operating efficiently and productively in their areas of concern.
5. Assist Chief Information Officer in preparation of plans and budgets for IT Department.

These years were some of the most productive in the company's history but also some of the most challenging. We were constantly trying to find new ways to use the technology advancements that were coming with increasing rapidity.

**November 1, 1990, to June 30, 1991 – Senior Business Systems Specialist, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

1990 Salary \$53,136	Management Incentive \$16,985	Dividends \$4,990	
Profit Sharing \$5,259			<b>1990- Total \$80,370</b>

In this position, I was responsible for the support of the following modules in the newly implemented business computer system:

1. Customer Order Entry
2. Counter Order Entry
3. Customer Order Maintenance
4. Purchasing
5. Inventory Analysis and Forecasting

During this time, the company implemented the newly designed computer business system. Although there were many technical hardware problems initially, the installation was completed successfully and allowed the company to develop from less than \$2 billion sales in 1990 to over \$5 billion in 2000.



**September 1, 1984, to October 31, 1990 –Senior System Design Analyst, Graybar Electric Co., IT Department, St. Louis, MO**

**1984** Salary and moving expenses \$53,674 Management Incentive \$10,912 Cash Dividends \$3,276 Profit Sharing \$6,321 Offset to moving expenses \$9,539 **1984- Total \$83,722**

**1985** Salary \$36,848 Management Incentive \$12,394 Cash Dividends \$3,624 Stock Dividend \$1,820 Profit Sharing \$4,924 **1985- Total \$59,535**

**1986** Salary \$39,537 Management Incentive \$7,277 Dividends \$3,822 Profit Sharing \$4,681 **1986- Total \$55,317**

**1987** Salary \$42,705 Management Incentive \$7,147 Cash Dividends \$4,135 Stock Dividend \$1,900 Profit Sharing \$5,200 **1987- Total \$61,087**

**1988** Salary \$46,008 Management Incentive \$14,306 Cash Dividends \$4,599 Stock Dividend \$2,240 Profit Sharing \$9,047 **1988- Total \$76,200**

**1989** Salary \$50,145 Management Incentive \$17,253 Cash Dividends \$4,839 Stock Dividend \$2,340 Profit Sharing \$6,740 **1989- Total \$81,317**

In this position, I was responsible for the development, implementation, and support for the following modules in the planned business computer system:

1. Customer Order Entry
2. Counter Order Entry
3. Customer Order Maintenance
4. Purchasing
5. Inventory Analysis and Forecasting

**November 17, 1975, to August 31, 1984 – Assistant to District Operating Manager, Graybar Electric Co., Philadelphia, PA**

**1976** Salary \$15,445 Management Incentive \$2,895 Cash Dividends \$1,684 Stock Dividend \$2,360 Profit Sharing \$1,834 **1976- Total \$24,218**

**1977** Salary \$16,340 Management Incentive \$1,737 Cash Dividends \$1,816 Profit Sharing \$1,808 **1977- Total \$21,701**

**1978** Salary \$xxxxx Management Incentive \$xxxxx Cash Dividends \$2182 Profit Sharing \$xxxxxx **1978- Total \$xxxxxx**

**1979** Salary \$xxxxxx Management Incentive \$xxxxx Cash Dividends \$2,400 Stock Dividend \$2,180 Profit Sharing \$xxxxx **1979- Total \$xxxxxx**

**1980** Salary \$xxxxxx Management Incentive \$xxxxx Cash Dividends \$2,400 Profit Sharing \$xxxxx **1980- Total \$xxxxxx**

**1981** Salary \$xxxxx Management Incentive \$xxxxx Cash Dividends \$2,545 Stock Dividend \$2,400 Profit Sharing \$xxxxx **1981- Total \$xxxxxx**

**1982** Salary \$28,752 Management Incentive \$6,035 Cash Dividends \$2,696 Stock Dividend \$1,400 Profit Sharing \$3,478 **1982- Total \$42,361**

**1983** Salary \$31,344 Management Incentive \$6,229 Cash Dividends \$2,940 Profit Sharing \$3,757 **1983- Total \$44,270**

**Xxxxx = missing records**

In this position I was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Philadelphia branch and was tasked with assisting the District Operating Manager with the overall management of operations in a district that included branches in Allentown and Harrisburg, PA, Wilmington, DE, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, MD.

I was specifically in charge of about 40 persons in the Philadelphia operating department. I was responsible for the maintenance and security of the Philadelphia office and warehouse.

**February 15, 1974, to November 16, 1975 – District Supervisor of Training, Graybar Electric Co., Pittsburgh, PA**

1974 Salary \$13,406 Management Incentive \$2,536 Cash Dividends \$547  
 Profit Sharing \$1,594 **1974- Total \$18,083**

1975 Salary \$13,081 Management Incentive \$4,209 Cash Dividends \$1,301  
 Stock Dividend \$1,200 Profit Sharing \$1,729 **1975- Total \$21,520**

As the only full-time trainer in the Pittsburgh District, I prepared training programs, wrote detailed local instructions, presented training classes and assisted in on-the-job training of personnel in Pittsburgh and Greensburg, PA, Youngstown, OH, Buffalo, NY, and Wheeling WV. In addition to District Management, I reported monthly to the Corporate Vice President of Operations.

**January 1, 1974, to February 14, 1974 – District Warehouse Superintendent, Graybar Electric Co., Pittsburgh, PA**

Refer to May 16, 1966, below.

**June 1, 1968, to December 31, 1973 – Branch Operating Manager, Graybar Electric Co., Buffalo, NY**

1968 Salary \$XXxxx Extra Compensation \$XXxxx Cash Dividends \$XXxxx Stock Dividend \$XXxxx Profit Sharing \$XXxxx **1967- Total \$XXxxx**

1969 Salary \$XXxxx Extra Compensation \$XXxxx Cash Dividends \$XXxxx Stock Dividend \$XXxxx Profit Sharing \$XXxxx **1967- Total \$XXxxx**

1970 Salary \$8,940 Management Incentive \$5,600 Cash Dividends \$1,068  
 Stock Dividend \$2,300 Profit Sharing \$1,589 **1970- Total 19,497**

1971 Salary \$13,474 Management Incentive \$5,000 Cash Dividends \$920  
 Profit Sharing \$1,874 **1971- Total \$21,268**

1972 Salary \$13,474 Management Incentive \$1,867 Cash Dividends \$1,006  
 Profit Sharing \$1,534 **1972- Total \$17,881**

1973 Salary \$13,474 Management Incentive \$2,418 Cash Dividends \$1,222  
 Stock Dividend \$1,100 Profit Sharing \$1,589 **1973- Total \$19,803**

**\$XXxxx – missing records**

In this position, I was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Buffalo branch which included a sales office, counter operation, and warehouse. As such, I had approximately 15 employees reporting to me in customer service, office service, sales counter service and warehousing. I was involved with the Branch Manager in planning and budgeting for operations and personnel. I was responsible for the maintenance and repair of all capital equipment and buildings.

**May 16, 1966, to May 31, 1968 – District Warehouse Superintendent, Graybar Electric Co., Pittsburgh, PA**

1967 Salary \$7200 Extra Compensation \$4,000 Cash Dividends \$439 Stock Dividend \$1,020  
 Profit Sharing \$1,120 **1967- Total \$13,779**

In this position, I was responsible for all warehouse operations in the Pittsburgh District with specific responsibility for the day-to-day operations in the Pittsburgh warehouse. The Pittsburgh warehouse contained thousands of electrical items and materials including small and large consumer appliances. It was my responsibility to see that they were stored in a manner to assure their security as well as efficiency in selecting, packing, and shipping our products. In addition to warehousing issues, I was involved with transportation, inventory, and personnel situations. Since the employees under my supervision were unionized, I was also involved daily with labor concerns. I was responsible for the maintenance and repair of all capital equipment and buildings.

One of the many projects that I had responsibility for was dealing with the purchase of the inventory of a large consumer appliance wholesaler. To make room for receiving the merchandise which came into us by the truckloads over several weeks, we had to send hundreds of major appliances to another warehouse; ship hundreds of lawn mowers to another Graybar location; move hundreds of televisions from one floor to another; disassemble, move, and reassemble hundreds of feet of shelving. While all this planning, coordination and manual labor was going on, we continued to maintain our normal flow of business.

**September 16, 1964, to May 15, 1966 – Office Salesman, Graybar Electric Co. Pittsburgh, PA**

I was responsible for the customer service of a group of customers assigned to two sales representatives. I was in contact via telephone and mail with these customers to assure that their needs for electrical products and services were met, including the quoting of prices. I was accountable for the issuance of invoices for delivered products. As the senior person in my work group, I assisted my manager in the training of new employees. I, also, assisted other departments in their end of year accounting procedures.

**February 15, 1957, to September 15, 1964 – Office Clerk and Office Salesman, Graybar Electric Co., Youngstown, OH**

I was responsible for the customer service of a group of customers assigned to two sales representatives. I was in contact via telephone and mail with these customers to assure that their needs for electrical products and services were met including the quoting of prices. I was accountable for the issuance of invoices for delivered products.

**March 26, 1956, to February 14, 1957 – Warehouseman, Graybar Electric Co., Youngstown, OH**

My main responsibility as warehouseman was in the receiving and unloading of incoming shipments; originating the paperwork to account for the shipments; and assisting in putting the incoming products in the proper place in the warehouse. I would also assist in assembling orders for customers and loading shipments onto outgoing trucks.

**June 1954 to March 26, 1956 –** worked in several locations as salesclerk and assistant manager for the Isaly Dairy Co., Niles, OH and Youngstown, OH; as a short order cook at the Toddle House Restaurant, Youngstown, OH; and as chef in training at the Town House Restaurant, Youngstown, OH.

**September 1953 to May 1954** Enrolled at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA, majoring in physics with mathematics minor. I attended on a 4-year full tuition scholarship from Duquesne University.

*Chapter 12: Our Middle Years of Marriage*

*I made a pivotal decision in Buffalo which might have had a disastrous effect on my career. It was either extreme luck or a reward for some things that I had done that impressed one of my previous bosses that fortune shone on me in 1974. I accepted a demotion to cause our return to Pittsburgh after 5-1/2 years in Buffalo. Within 2 months, I was given a promotion that jump-started the rest of my career.*

Not long after becoming the Pittsburgh Warehouse Supervisor again, on January 1, 1974, I was told that they wanted me to attend a meeting at Rye, NY. It was there that they told 4 other young men and I that we were to be given a new responsibility of District Supervisor of Training for our respective districts in the Northeast Region. In a conversation with one of the coordinators of the meeting who I had previously known, it was brought up that he was surprised that, given my recent demotion, I was still considered for this position. He told me that John McGrath, my original boss in Pittsburgh, who was now a District Vice President of the Northeast Region, wanted me specifically. This probably was another one of the miracles in my life that changed everything because I had been on a path that probably would have led to my departure from Graybar.

On February 15, I began my new job, and was living out of a suitcase in Pittsburgh. In the months that I was living in Pittsburgh away from my family, it was a big burden on JoAnn to handle so much on her own. She did this with no complaints other than missing me. My new position put me in charge of all training in the operating department for the Pittsburgh District. I would travel between Pittsburgh and the branches in Youngstown OH, Buffalo NY, Greensburg PA, and Wheeling, WV. When doing training in the branches, I would generally spend one or two nights. Because Buffalo was a longer trip, I would make those visits 3 days plus a weekend with half days spent in travel back and forth to Pittsburgh.

Over the next 2 years I did a lot of driving. This was just after the time that our country was under an oil embargo by OPEC which began on October 19, 1973, and ended in March 1974. During that time the price of oil went from \$2.90 a barrel to \$11.65. The price of a gallon of gasoline went from an absolute price of 41¢ in 1973 to \$2.38 in 1981. President Nixon declared a maximum speed limit of 55MPH to save fuel during this emergency. This indirectly led to the increase in purchase of Japanese automobiles because they were generally smaller and more fuel efficient. We bought a Pontiac Grand Am as our second car. In June 1974, the first use of a supermarket price scanner happened when a 10-pack of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit Gum was scanned.

When I started my new job, we had not yet sold our house in Alden which we needed to do before buying a house in Pittsburgh. This new job situation provided a good reason why the urgency to sell and buy a new house was reduced. Since I could spend about a week a month in Buffalo doing my job, we continued to try to sell our house without a realtor; we could get our price of \$41,000; the kids could finish out the school year and we could try to find a house near where we had lived previously. That summer we moved into 2505 Springwood Dr., Glenshaw, PA. Springwood Drive was a nice short cul-de-sac. We paid \$45,900 for this 4 bedroom 2-story house that was about 15 years old at the time.

We began going to church at St. Paul's Methodist Church, 1965 Ferguson Rd., Allison Park, PA. Carol was driving by now; having been taught by her mother. JoAnn and Carol started selling Avon products. Carol and Jon attended Shaler Area High School; Ken and Chuck went to Rogers Elementary School.

After our move, I sometimes took JoAnn and the younger boys with me on trips to other branches. They could spend the days by the pool at the motel while I worked. I reported directly to the Vice President of Operations in New York and proposed methods and content for training sessions. I was also able to bring small groups into Pittsburgh for more concentrated training. Most of the training that I did was one-on-one "on-the-job" type which was familiar to me since I had been doing a lot of that since my first transfer to Pittsburgh.

On August 8, 1974, the first resignation of an American President occurred. Richard Nixon resigned before he could be impeached for crimes related to the Watergate break-in of the Democratic National Committee offices in 1972. He was succeeded as President by Gerald Ford who had succeeded Spiro Agnew as Vice President in October 1973, when Agnew resigned under duress for crimes committed in office. Sixty-nine people were indicted and 48 people were convicted of crimes relating to the reelection campaign of Richard Nixon in 1972.



This is a backyard view of our new home.

On August 25, 1974, The Washington Hotel in Berkeley Springs, that my sister Nancy was managing was burned to the ground along with several adjacent businesses. We had previously stayed in that hotel. One year that we stayed there in early spring, a snowstorm caused traffic problems on the route through Berkeley Springs and there was an influx of people needing to stay overnight. JoAnn pitched in to prepare rooms for the travelers; some of the rooms hadn't been used in some time.

JoAnn has always been determined to make sure that we send greeting cards as indicated to our relatives and friends - fortunately, because, if left to me, it might not get done. She corresponded to some degree with all our relatives and particularly our mothers. When my mother wrote to us, it was invariably more than 5 pages and based on the content often took her a week or more to write. A sample written on January 13, 1976, follows.

408 Columbia Street 21502

Tuesday Jan 13

Dear Brill Family

Received your Christmas card a couple days ago. It came from Dead Letter office in Wash. D. C., but still was re-addressed to Columbia "Drive", but guess they figured it out down here. It scared me when I saw that big brown envelope with D.C. P.O., up in the corner. We never did get Thanks giving cards Mary Bess sent, but maybe she put Columbia Ave., and the people kept them.

I am finally getting squared around about my mail as since after Xmas the P.O. in Boileau is readdressing mail to here. Basil was careless with mail but finally Mary Ann found everything and I just got things yesterday she sent, that had come as far back as Oct. He forgets where he puts things.

I don't know when I will get out there to get some stuff we need badly, but Mary Ann wrote yesterday and said everything was safe and she would take care of my things. They have the Chapel all finished except the pews and she said "Mary, the first mass said in it will be in your honor." Of course I don't believe too much in mass, the way the Catholics use it, but at least it's a prayer. I know if I have rain I have to pray



myself for forgiveness, and I also feel that I can pray to God for others, and that He will hear me, just as much as a Priest.

Was glad to hear you had a nice Christmas and were all together and hope Carol had a job there. We had a nice quiet Xmas as it snowed so much we couldn't go out Xmas day. Bud came about six on Xmas Eve and stayed until Friday evening. He took us out Fri to eat and to the library etc., but that was all we did. On Sat I had sore throat and felt bad, and on Sun 28<sup>th</sup> I started with the hives, was so bad on Mon that I had to go up to hosp. emergency. Then started with a bad cold in head and chest, and I still cough and blow, but its getting better. Martha caught it from me, and still coughs. We have never been any place, and even Nancy has never made it up here, but when things seem better it snows or rains and gets cold and icy. Martha and I did go out yesterday and walked up to the library and then back down to Plaza. We shopped a little and then got groceries and came home in a taxi. I was so tired and did a lot of coughing last night, but its a loose cough now. I havent had a cold like this for two years, and seems like I was so sick with it.



Did you know you have a new brother  
-in-law? Mary Bess and Roger were married  
Dec 30<sup>th</sup> in the Methodist Church there in  
Anderson, Dodie & David were there and some  
of Rogers people. I sure wish them happiness.  
Antoinette keeps begging me to come out there  
to see their new home and I would like to  
go but its such a hard trip. I havent seen the  
children since May of '74, but she and Manuel  
came out to see me once since then. They  
had a New Years party and "house warming" and  
they called me. It sured I like everyone was  
having a wonderful time. Little Cravin has  
to go back to Cleveland hosp, for further surgery  
I think. She says he looks strong and healthy.  
I had such nice letters from Manuel and  
Michael at Xmas time. They both write well but  
little Manuel writes a beautiful hand, so neat  
and even. They wanted to put him up in 6<sup>th</sup> grade  
but Manuel and Antoinette said they'd rather not,  
you never know what is the best thing for a  
child, but it is a shame to hold him back.  
Antoinette feels so slighted that I havent been  
to see them for so long, but as I told her, I  
havnt even been to Berkeley since I came  
here. Anyhow, I told her, the time is coming



When my children will have to come to see me, as my running around days are about over. I want to go places but just when I think I can, I get a spell of arthritis or something, and who wants a hick old woman around. Well I thank God that I am as well as I am, and I don't really give up, and I am really better than I was there at one time. I hope you all will come to see us when you can, and I will be up there to see you when I can.

(It's a shame about this paper but Billy scribbled on about every page)

Wednesday

Bill and Madelon are coming in half an hour to take us out so I had better get this letter ready to mail. I have been trying to get some letters written. Hope you are all well and that I hear from you soon.

Love to all

Mother B,



On April 4, 1975, the software company Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque, NM. In July, we took the kids on a trip to Walt Disney World with our camper. We had our dog Muffy with us. Muffy had been given to us by a friend while we lived in Alden. She wasn't happy when we left her alone in our camper and did a bit of damage to it while we were gone. We also had a problem because we had parked the camper over an ant hill. We had to empty out and clean every drawer and shake out all our clothes.

At that time, the entrance fee and ride tickets could be bought separately at Disney World. It cost us less than \$40.00 each day with food and souvenir purchases. When the park opened in 1971, the entrance fee was \$3.50 for adults and \$1.00 for children and rides were 10¢ to 90¢ each for A to E tickets. A package ticket for an adult that included seven rides was \$4.75 and parking was 50¢. Lunch and dinner entrees were \$1.15 to \$2.60, and drinks were 15¢ to 30¢.

Carol had met and started dating her future husband David Jeffrey Wolff who lived across the street from us on Springwood. They both graduated from high school in 1975 and neither desired to continue their education. This added a complication when later in 1975 I was given the opportunity to interview for a promotion to Assistant to the District Operating Manager in Philadelphia. I flew to Philadelphia where I learned that in addition to my new position of assistant to the District Operating Manager, I would be expected to manage the operations of the Philadelphia branch, acting as Branch Operating Manager, the job that I had in Buffalo. The big difference would be that Philadelphia branch was 3 or 4 times larger than Buffalo. I assume that the reason this promotion was being offered to me was probably at the recommendation of the Regional Vice President. This would be an increase of 2 pay grades and a substantial raise. I didn't see how I could turn it down. The three boys had only had one year in the present school, so it probably wasn't as big of a deal for them. Carol was insistent that she remain in Pittsburgh and arranged to stay with a neighbor.



Carol 1975

It wasn't an easy time for anybody; school had already started. I found it hard to decide where to locate, as about half of the staff in Philadelphia lived in New Jersey, so I decided to lease a house for 6 months and take our time to look around. We sold our house in Glenshaw for \$50,000. We found a big house at 144 Powder Horn Lane in Media – about 45 traffic minutes from Graybar. We moved in shortly before Christmas. Jon graduated from Penncrest High School in Media and the other two boys went to Rose Tree Elementary School.



My mother moved from Brownsville, PA to Cumberland, MD late in 1975 to be near her twin sister, Aunt Martha, and my sister Nancy in Berkeley Springs. She sold the house to her next-door neighbors. On December 30, my sister Mary Bess Stubbs, who had been divorced for some time, married Roger Rains who owned several Burger King restaurants in Georgia and had been her boss.

Carol was with us for Christmas 1975 and that was probably the last time that we saw her before she made known that she wanted to marry David before he enlisted in the Navy. They set the date for next July 31 and JoAnn made all the arrangements on a trip to Pittsburgh that spring.

On April 11, 1976, the first Apple computer came on the market; it was followed a year later by the Apple II developed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, it was the first successful mass-produced microcomputer designed for home use. It came standard with 4 kilobytes of memory, game paddles, and a demo cassette with some programs on it. Most people used their televisions as monitors. The Apple II sold for about \$1,300. In 2021, that same money would buy you an iMac, with 4 gigabytes — one million times the original amount — of memory, a sleek backlit 21-inch monitor, and a 2.7 gigahertz processor.

Our time in Media was short and otherwise uneventful. We attended First United Methodist Church in Media, but I do not recall the pastor's name. In May, we moved into a house that we bought at 815 Hallowell Lane in West Chester, PA. Again, this was about 45 minutes to an hour in traffic to Graybar. We paid \$51,500 for a 3 bedroom 2-1/2 bath split-level on a 1/2 acre corner lot (2022 estimated price \$450,000 for that same house). It was about 5 years old and had water seepage problems that we only learned about later. Eventually, I had to have French drains installed to alleviate flooding in the lower level. This is the first house that we owned to which I made considerable changes and improvements — including adding a back porch on the upper level with steps leading down to an above ground pool with fencing around that. We became close to our new neighbors, and they made the relocation much easier. Our half acre lot was a little bigger than that with our previous homes. The younger boys took turns with the mowing as they got older, but Jon Jr. always thought that we were stricter with him.



815 Hallowell Lane, West Chester

We joined the United Methodist Church of West Chester at 129 S. High St. in West Chester. Over time, we became very involved with the activities of the church and felt close to Dr. Williams, the pastor. The younger boys went to school at Glen Acres Elementary School and later Stetson Middle School and Henderson High School. Jon Jr. chose not to continue with his education at the time and went to work at Stetson Middle School which later became part of his state retirement benefits. When, later, he went on to work in security and with a local police department, he took a course in criminal justice.

On July 18, 1976, Nadia Comaneci of Romania was awarded a perfect 10 for her routine on the uneven parallel bars at the Montreal Olympics. This was the first ever Olympics gymnastic perfect 10 score; she went on to receive 6 more at that Olympics. Romania at that time was part of the Soviet Union and was ruled by Nicolae Ceausescu. Nadia defected to the United States in 1989 and became a naturalized citizen. We returned to Pittsburgh for Carol's wedding on July 31. The wedding and the following reception went off beautifully, which Kenneth, Charles and Jon Jr. enjoyed.





Carol was a beautiful bride and my pride and joy as I walked with her down the aisle.



It was hard for her mother and I to let go of our daughter and we agonized between seeing her live her own life and keeping her close to us for the next 40+ years.



During much of my first 3 years in Philadelphia, I was short-staffed and tried to make up the difference myself. I did put in long hours and extra days but hopefully was able to put my problems behind me when I came home. With the younger boys in school, JoAnn took a job with a catering service that provided lunches at the schools, cooked for "meals on wheels" and catered parties. She worked her way up to be a supervisor. Her paycheck helped a lot as the cost of living in the Philadelphia area was high. In fact, things were so tight that we had to borrow money from my mother. (I am ashamed to say that I don't think that I ever paid her back \$1500) Because my annual bonus was such a significant part of my earnings and it fluctuated up and down, we had to learn to budget in such a way that a dip in total income did not cause a significant problem. Slow business conditions meant that our cash bonus was reduced for several years.

In chapter 10 about my Career, I have described the conditions that I encountered during my time in Philadelphia. Much of these problems had to do with the after-effects of the recession of 1973-75 which was brought on when President Nixon devalued the US dollar against the price of gold. This violated the Bretton Woods Agreement that had been negotiated with over 40 countries after WWII. During all that time the price of gold had been pegged at \$35 per ounce. Gold in coins or bars had been illegal to own from 1933 until 1974.

During our time in West Chester, we had many adventures but none quite like this when our new van was hit by a school bus and ended up on our front door stoop.



In April 1977, we drove to West Virginia, JoAnn stayed behind while I brought the boys home. On the way we stopped in Cumberland to see my mom who was just getting out of the hospital and planning on moving to a new apartment. We had lunch with her and Aunt Martha and drove on to St Louis. I promised to bring her TV from Brownsville when I went there to get anything else that was worth salvaging from what she had left behind with her neighbor.

There was a blackout in New York City in July 1977. In the 25 hours before power was restored, more than 1,600 stores were looted, more than a thousand fires were set, and nearly 3,800 looters were arrested. On July 19-20, 1977, another flood hit Johnstown PA. This was at least the third major flood to hit this area and there were 84 reported deaths. In 1889, when the Southfork dam failed, there were over 2200 deaths. Again in 1936 a flood resulted in about 2 dozen deaths.

Carol moved to Fort Walton Beach, Florida to be with David at the Naval training base.



In May 1978, the first Compact Disc was announced by the Philips Electronics company of the Netherlands. That summer we vacationed in the Poconos; one of the highlights was the boulder field at Hickory Run State Park. This field is 16-1/2 acres of boulders, some of which were as big as a small house. This field was created during the last ice age by glaciers as they receded dropping the remnants of the mountain tops that the glaciers had trimmed.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/Hickory\\_Run\\_State\\_Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/Hickory_Run_State_Park)

Until the 9/11 attacks, the tragedy in “Jonestown” on November 18th, 1978, represented the largest number of American civilian casualties in a single non-natural event. It is unfathomable now, as it was then, that more than 900 Americans – members of a San Francisco-based religious group called the Peoples Temple – died after drinking poison at the urging of their leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, who had moved them to a secluded South American jungle settlement.

It just goes to show what can happen to people who are deluded by the message of a leader of a cult bent on controlling the lives of its followers. That episode led to the saying about someone swallowing a wildly offbeat scenario, that they are “drinking the Kool-Aid”. Jim Jones instructed his followers to drink the cyanide-laced punch and to give it to the children first. There were survivors of this who could later describe what went on.

On March 26, a peace treaty was signed by Egypt and Israel that ended a 30+ year state of war between those two neighbors. U. S. President Jimmy Carter Brought the leaders of those nations together at Camp David for long negotiations leading to this historic agreement.

On Wednesday, March 28, 1979, a nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island, PA had a partial meltdown and several small radioactive vents. Since that day, the reactor that failed has been shut down and the nuclear material removed. Studies have shown that there were little adverse effects from this serious breach unlike the disaster that happened seven years later in Chernobyl, Ukraine.

David Matthew Wolff, our first grandchild was born April 25, 1979, and we drove to Fort Walton Beach to see him in July.



Davey with Mom

On July 1 1979, Sony introduced the Walkman portable cassette player which weighed almost a pound. Cassette player technology had been around since 1963, but Sony miniaturized it and made it portable as well as private, with no external speaker. Skeptics doubted that it would sell, since it lacked recording capability, but Sony's founder replied, "Don't you think a stereo cassette player that you can listen to while walking around is a good idea?"

Later in 1979, we took Ken and Chuck to Gettysburg, PA where we took a tour of the battlegrounds and went from there to Hershey Park. We still had our camper and used it quite a bit. Later we sold our Starcraft "pop-up" camper and got a Shasta 19' travel trailer.



In 1979, a gasoline shortage developed as it had in 1973-74, as a result of the Iranian Revolution. We could only purchase gasoline on odd or even days depending on the last number on your license plate. Since I had a long commute, I decided to buy a small standard shift Fiat to drive to work. One Saturday, on my way to work, the clutch strap broke, and I was not able to shift into low gear at stops. I had to avoid stopping all the way into work – which I was able to do. To get started on the way home, I got help with a push. The District Manager, who had also come to work on a Saturday and lived near me said he would follow me home. I completely fooled him when I had to make a quick, illegal turn to avoid some traffic and a red light. We later tried other things like riding the train and converting a van to use for pick-up at the railroad station or ride sharing.



After the [1973 oil crisis](#), the U.S. government imposed a [nationwide 55 mph speed limit](#), and fuel shortages and rationing were widespread. Drivers (especially commercial [truckers](#)) used CB radios to locate service stations with better supplies of fuel, to notify other drivers of [speed traps](#), and to organize blockades and convoys in a 1974 strike protesting the new speed limit and other trucking regulations.<sup>[8]</sup> The radios were crucial for independent truckers; many were paid by the mile, and the 55 mph speed limit lowered their productivity.<sup>[7]</sup>

Their use spread further into the general population in the US in the middle of the 1970s. Originally, CB (named Citizens Radio by the [Federal Communications Commission](#) as of 1972) required the use of a [callsign](#) in addition to a purchased license (\$20 in the early 1970s, reduced to \$4 on March 1, 1975); however, when the CB craze was at its peak many people ignored the requirement and invented their own nicknames (known as "handles"). Lax enforcement of the rules on authorized use of CB radio led to widespread further disregard of the regulations (such as for [antenna](#) height, distance communications, licensing, call signs, and transmitter power). Individual licensing came to an end on April 28, 1983.<sup>wikipedia</sup>

September 7, 1979, ESPN began broadcasting. On May 18, 1980, after two months of warning activity, Mount St. Helens in Washington state erupted with a violent explosion and landslides. At least 57 people died and effects such as a 12-15-mile-high column of ash was formed that covered Yakima, WA, 90 miles away in 4 to 5 inches of ash. The immediate blast zone where everything was destroyed was approximately 200 square miles and the energy expended was about 1600 times that of the largest atomic bomb explosion to that time.

In 1980, a team of researchers consisting of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Luis Alvarez, his son, geologist Walter Alvarez, and chemists Frank Asaro and Helen Michel discovered that sedimentary layers found all over the world at the Cretaceous–Paleogene (also known as the Cretaceous–Tertiary or K–T) boundary contain a concentration of iridium many times greater than normal (30, 160, and 20 times in three sections originally studied). Iridium is extremely rare in Earth's crust because it is a siderophile element which mostly sank along with iron into Earth's core during planetary differentiation. As iridium remains abundant in most asteroids and comets, the Alvarez team suggested that an asteroid struck the Earth at the time of the K–T boundary. There were earlier speculations on the possibility of an impact event, but this was the first hard evidence. \*

\*[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cretaceous%E2%80%93Paleogene\\_extinction\\_event](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cretaceous%E2%80%93Paleogene_extinction_event)

This discovery, one of the most important in scientific history, indicated that an asteroid the size of Mt. Everest hit the earth near Chicxulub in the Yucatan Peninsula approximately 66 million years ago and led to the extinction of dinosaurs as well as 75% of all species at that time.

I celebrated my 25<sup>th</sup> Graybar anniversary in 1981. At the party they had for this I made a comment that was understood and appreciated by those attending. I said something to the effect that "I knew when we moved to Philadelphia that it had one of the greatest zoos in the country – I just didn't know that I was going to be working in it,"

On January 20, 1981, Iran released the 52 captives from the U. S. embassy who had been held for 444 days. Their capture was retaliation for President Jimmy Carter allowing the hated Shah to be treated in the U.S. for a medical condition. The first truly portable personal computer, manufactured by the Osborne Computer Co., was sold in April 1981. It weighed 25 pounds and had a 5" screen and 2 floppy drives. In August, IBM introduced its first personal computer, the 5150 which is recognized as the model for most of today's non-Apple computers. The first space shuttle Columbia was also launched in April. Prince Charles married Lady Diana in July. Ronald Reagan appointed the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor to the Supreme Court in July.

In 1982, 😊 Smiley, the first emoticon was suggested to be used to express emotion in an email. It was made up of a colon : a dash – and a close parenthesis ). In August, the first compact disc was produced with a recording by ABBA. On October 1, 1982, EPCOT opened in Orlando. In December, the first permanent artificial heart, designed by Robert Jarvik, was implanted in a human.

On February 28, 1983, 80.4 million viewers watched the last episode of M\*A\*S\*H, a sitcom set in Korea during the war years. Until the 2010 Super Bowl it was the most viewed television program. The last episode in 2019 of Game of Thrones drew 19.3 million viewers.

During our years in West Chester, 1975 – 1984, we drove to Cumberland every year to visit Mom and Aunt Martha. Now in her late 70s, Mom was infirm but always ready to go out for dinner. We stayed several places during those visits but probably mostly at Rocky Gap State Park which had great amenities for camping.



Celebration with Mom, Aunt Bama, and brother Bud

On June 18, 1983, the Challenger space shuttle launched with Sally Ride, the first U. S. woman in space. She later said of her flights, "The view of Earth is absolutely spectacular, and the feeling of looking back and seeing your planet as a planet is just an amazing feeling. It's a totally different perspective, and it makes you appreciate, actually, how fragile our existence is. You can look at Earth's horizon and see this really, really thin royal blue line right along the horizon, and at first you don't really quite internalize what that is, and then you realize that it's Earth's atmosphere, and that that's all there is of it, and it's about as thick as the fuzz on a tennis ball, and it's everything that separates us from the vacuum of space."

We went to West Virginia in the summer of 1983. While in Berkeley Springs, we attended a family reunion at Uncle Bill Hunter's cabin. I Believe that mom and Bud were there, and I have pictures of Mary Bess and husband Roger Rains, Nancy and husband Roger Glass, Susan Webster, Nancy Leigh Webster, and Antoinette.

Much of the time that Mom lived in Cumberland, my brother Russell Jr. (Bud) lived with her or close by. She also had her twin sister Aunt Martha and Aunt Martha's only child Billy Price and his family living nearby. My cousin Bill had led an interesting life. He put himself through college working for the railroad. Much of that time seemed to be while he worked the night shift at the control station that had to monitor and control the tracks that the trains were to run on. Working at that job allowed him to do his college studies in his spare moments.

Cousin Bill eventually became the Pastor of a local church – he was still working for the railroad. JoAnn and I participated in one of the services at his church. I was amazed at how comfortable he seemed in this calling. He was educated, engaging, and personable. He was very much loved by his congregation. It was kind of strange as his wife was not the typical "Pastor's Wife". The two of them suffered a terrible tragedy during this time. Their daughter was killed in a hit and run accident on a motorcycle. We attended the services for her funeral.

Alarms went off in a Russian early warning Command Center in September 1983. It seemed to indicate that the U. S. had launched 5 ICBMs (inter-continental ballistic missiles). The officer in charge was skeptical due to the small number. He reasoned that a "First Strike" would call for many more nuclear weapons. His skepticism kept the world from a nuclear holocaust. The USSR found that there was a glitch in their warning system.

While we lived in West Chester, Carol and her family moved to that area. On October 15, 1983, Jon Jr. married Amy Louise Walters. They were divorced 7/20/1988. In the summer of 1984, I was offered the opportunity to transfer to St. Louis to be part of the team that was charged with designing the company's next business computer system. For me, there was not much of a decision to make but it was not that easy for JoAnn and the boys. JoAnn had her job and friends at work. Ken and Chuck were in their last years of high school.

We sold our house on Hallowell Lane in September 1984 for \$86,700. This move was during a period when inflation and interest rates were slowly coming down from the high in 1980 of 13.5% inflation and 16.63 % mortgage rate. What was called "The Great Inflation" by economists lasted from the beginning of the Viet Nam War in 1965 until it started to come down in the early 1980s. Several other issues contributed to this and included the price of energy, larger social spending, pursuit of full employment, and the unlinking of the world's currency to the price of gold.

Our company was cognizant of the difficulties that this situation created for people that were being asked to transfer so there was a very liberal plan to accommodate this move. First the company arranged to have my house purchased at a good price which saved many costs; then they committed to reimburse part of my interest costs for several years as my first mortgage in St. Louis was at 14.25 % (it took until 1992 to get the interest rate down to 8.875%). They also gave us a significant amount to cover miscellaneous expenses which helped to pay for an Apple Macintosh computer for Ken and Chuck. I had promised this expensive toy to make this move more palatable for them. Apple had just introduced the Macintosh computer in January. The introductory model had a built-in 9" monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM and sold for \$2495 (about \$6200 in 2020). I don't remember what we paid for the one we bought but it was like a miracle machine that both boys picked up on in no time and to some extent affected the rest of their lives.

We purchased a 4 bedroom 2-1/2 bath ranch style house with a full basement for \$91,500 at 12962 Weatherfield Dr., in Seven Pines development of unincorporated St. Louis County, just a couple of blocks outside Creve Coeur. The house had a sunken living room and leather tile floor covering in the entrance way. It also had water problems in the basement that we had to eventually fix with "French" drains. We did get a \$2000 reduction of purchase price for water marks we saw on the basement walls.



Our home in Missouri

In addition to having the water problem fixed, we made a lot of improvements to this house. We finished off all the full basement where there was only a laundry room when we moved in. We started with a game room at the bottom of the stairs where we had our pool table and a bar. I made a shop with a table saw, lathe, radial arm saw, and drill press. We had a large room for storage on shelves; and I later added an office, a bathroom and a room that could have been used as a bedroom in an emergency. We put in a concrete deck in the back for our hot tub and later enclosed it with an aluminum and glass 3-season room. Over the years, we replaced the furnace, air conditioner and all the windows and siding. We remodeled all the bathrooms and the kitchen. The roof was replaced after a hailstorm, and we buried drains to take rainwater away from the house.

Ken and Chuck enrolled in Parkway North High School at 12860 Fee Fee Rd. just a short walk from the entrance to our development. In 1985, Kenneth graduated from Parkway North. He was not anxious to go back to school. After a while he decided to move back to West Chester and live with his friend Wes. He later took courses in computer technology.



Parkway North High School

We joined Green Trails Methodist Church at 14235 Ladue Rd. in Chesterfield, MO and were welcomed by Rev. Kenneth W. Gottman. Over time with this church, we became more active including serving on the pastoral relations committee.



Green Trails Methodist Church

Carol and 6-year-old Davey visited us in St. Louis. They joined JoAnn, Chuck, and I on a trip with our travel trailer. This took us to Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Iowa. During this time, we visited the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon National Park, Zion National Park, Grand Tetons National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Mt. Rushmore, Badlands National Park, the Truman house in Independence MO and many other sights along the way. We travelled over 3000 miles in 19 days, so our longest stops were 3 days at the Grand Canyon and 2 days at Yellowstone.



In 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt saw the Grand Canyon for the first time, he said "**The Grand Canyon fills me with awe. It is beyond comparison — beyond description, absolutely unparalleled throughout the wide world. Let this great wonder of nature remain as it now is. Do nothing to mar its grandeur, sublimit, and loveliness. You cannot improve on it. But what you can do is to keep it for your children, your children's children, and all who come after you, as the one great sight which every American should see**".



Guided tour of the Grand Canyon



Carol, Davey, JoAnn, and Charles at Mt. Rushmore Museum

Joann and I have been to the Grand Canyon more than 6 times. We were there once with her mother, once with Charles, Carol and Davey, once with Jon Jr, and once with Jon Jr and his family.

On November 20, 1985, the first version of Microsoft's Windows 1.0 was released. On January 22, 1986, my sister Nancy's husband, Roger Glass, died in Berkeley Springs and we drove there for the funeral. Roger was only 57 and died after suffering a heart attack. He died during heart surgery to repair the damage of the heart attack. He had 10 children with his first wife and was married to my sister Nancy for more than 10 years.

Less than a week later, on January 28, the space shuttle Challenger exploded on take-off over the Atlantic Ocean, killing all seven crew members in the view of millions on television. The crew included a schoolteacher, Christa McAuliffe who would have been the first teacher in space. President Ronald Reagan, in a national address written by his speechwriter Peggy Noonan, said "**We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and 'slipped the surly bonds of Earth' to 'touch the face of God.'**" In early 1986, Halley's Comet came into view for the first time in 75 years; on February 9, it came closest to the sun. It won't be seen again until 2061. Unfortunately, I missed my only chance to see it.



In June, Charles graduated from Parkway North High School. He decided that he would go to Southeast Missouri State University at Cape Girardeau, MO.



Southeast Missouri State University

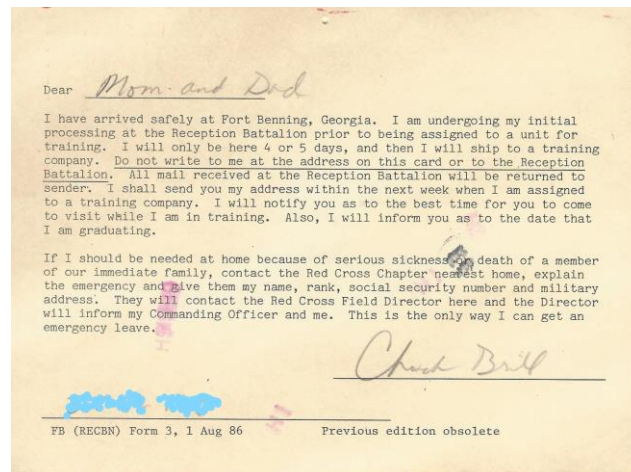
In June, we traveled to Winter Park, Colorado to the timeshare we had purchased in February named Indian Peaks. We found the mountainous country to be beautiful and interesting and have returned to Indian Peaks several times. We took a whitewater rafting excursion on the Colorado River.



On October 1, 1986, my mother died in Cumberland MD at the age of 81. We drove to Berkeley Springs for her funeral where she was buried in Greenway Cemetery next to my dad.



After his first semester at SE Missouri State, Chuck came home and told his mother and me that he felt that he was wasting his time. He wasn't applying himself to his studies and felt he needed something to get him back on track. This was not a big surprise since, even though he tested above average on the Stanford Achievement Test, he had not performed much above average in high school. He enlisted in the Army in February 1987 and was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for basic training. He was home for Christmas in December, the last we had with Ken and Chuck both staying in the house.



Chuck's first army communique to home

Even though there were a few times later that one or another of the kids returned temporarily, basically, JoAnn and I were now "empty nesters". We had a great 20 years in St. Louis. There were many things to do. We enjoyed attending concerts by the St. Louis Symphony under the direction of Leonard Slatkin and bought some of their recordings. We attended many shows at the Fox Theater and particularly appreciated the magician David Copperfield, the music of Neil Diamond, and the wide variety of offerings that the theater presented. Occasionally, we went to one of the casinos.



In March 1987, Ronald Reagan vetoed the "Civil Rights Restoration Act" which basically required educational institutions which received federal funding to treat everyone, including the female sex, equally in all aspects of their organizational life. This veto was overridden in both houses of Congress.

We took visitors up in the Gateway Arch several times. The Gateway Arch is a 630-foot monument, clad in stainless steel and built in the form of a weighted catenary arch. It is the world's tallest arch, the tallest man-made monument in the Western Hemisphere, and Missouri's tallest accessible building. It was built in 2-1/2 years between 1963 and 1965.



While we lived in St. Louis, JoAnn took several jobs and did a lot of charitable functions to keep herself busy. She worked for an office cleaning business for a while; this led to a job at an art gallery. A lot of what she earned at the art gallery went towards paintings that she liked, particularly those by Pat Buckley Moss. We also started to go to art auctions and bought a few paintings that way. JoAnn volunteered to deliver meals on wheels and did that off and on for several years.

As I have indicated in the chapter on my Career with Graybar, the time we spent in St. Louis was undoubtedly the most enjoyable of all. Part of it probably was because I was only in a supervisory position for 5 of those years, but the work was always something I looked forward to every morning. It was fun working with people who enjoyed the progress and accomplishments that we made.