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My time with GE's E-Lab and thereafter

Now, I am 72 years old and rather active and healthy in body and mind. - In 1962, when I finished my doctoral thesis on 'Masers as networks with negative resistances' at the Technische Universität in Berlin, a recruiter from GE, probably a scientist from Schenectady, invited me to Paris for an interview. Subsequently Herb Rothenberg hired me by telephone for the E-Lab. Prior to being admitted to the USA my background was for months carefully scrutinized by the CIA and/or the FBI. They told me the exact days when as a student I had moved from one furnished room to another, details I never bothered to remember. But to our astonishment even then, they completely ignored my wife. As far as the agencies were concerned, she could have been an active member of the communist party.

On February 3, 1963, Gretel, the young woman I had married in May 1962, and I arrived by bus at the airport in Syracuse. The flight from New York had been diverted to Albany because of a heavy snow storm. Consequently someone who was supposed to meet us, had left before we came, but left instructions for us to go to the Mizpa Hotel. Our fortune consisted of our movable goods, some cash, and debt for a VW we brought from Germany.

During my first days with GE Steve Wanuga drove us around to help us find suitable dwellings. Until we could move in, we lived elsewhere, and Walt Brouillette picked me up in the morning and dropped me in the evening until our VW arrived. On the ides of March our first son was born. While Gretel was in the hospital, Steve, and perhaps Walt, helped me to move into the apartment we had chosen. A few months later Hugh Hair, a Scotsman, received as recognition for outstanding achievements a GE TV set. But he had already one, and we had none. So he loaned it to us. We felt really welcome and thank them all, and others, too. Ian Court from Ireland complained that he had poor chances to advance since his Irish grandmother had had red eyes. Jerry Rome, who later formed a company of his own – and after a while successfully sold it – told me what it was like to grow up in New York City, in the Bronx or some other area.

My first major assignment was a proposal to use spin echo effects (based on older work by John Eshbach (?) of Schenectady) and was classified as 'secret', but my clearance at the time was 'confidential', so I was not allowed to read what I wrote. Apart from that I worked on using ferrite devices as phase shifters for phased array antennas. A paper presented at a IEEE Magnetics Conference was well received and so were two papers published in the IEEE Transactions MTT. I was invited to join the MTT Board of Editors and stayed there until I had returned to Germany. After Herb Rothenberg left for a Government agency Nat Schwarz was my manager, and when he left for a university position, Earl Mullen took over. Shortly thereafter, in April 1967, I left to work for a small company, AEL, in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. At that time Jerry Suran was running the E-Lab. Earl presented me as a gift from all the people in the unit a Go game, which is still used today.

The contracts at AEL did not come in as the company had hoped, so after one year I left them. We remember, however, the time in the rural area near the Amish country and the contact with the colleagues there also as 'good ol' days' In April 1968 I returned to GE, Syracuse, but to HMES, to work as Technical Manager and there as project manager. The goal was to develop ferrite phase shifter drivers as printed thick film and later on thin film circuits. In June 1970 we

returned to Germany. By then we had three children, two sons, one daughter, all born in the Community Hospital, Town of Onandaga, and all having American and German citizenship.

In those nearly eight years in the USA, John F. Kennedy was shot, later his brother Robert was killed, Martin Luther King was shot, and in Alabama and Mississippi the blacks fought to better their status and gain full rights. – We joined a church, Gretel was active in the choir, I in Adult Education and as elderman and became Vice President of the church council and even chairman of a pastor-search-commission. So we felt fully integrated into the US society, but we had lived there only in middle class ghettos. The alternative to returning to Germany was to become US citizens. It was a very difficult decision, and with minor other influences we might have decided to stay. Those were exciting years. We are glad we had them, but do not regret that we returned to “old Europe”.

But one detail is disappointing. Had I stayed or worked later on eight more quarters in the USA I would have received and could keep full retirement benefits for ten year from the Social Security Services, but now, because of some treaty between the USA and Germany and special legislation here I get the benefits for eight years, but have to hand them over to the German administration (were they for ten years, I could keep them).

While working at HMES I learned of the possibility to study for an MBA degree – if with good grades – paid for by GE. I did so, got the grades and GE paid, but not yet halfway through I left for Germany. Here I worked a few years as technical manager for a small company, but in 1973 accepted a position as professor of math for future electrical and electronic engineers.

That left me time to become and be for ten years a member of our City Council, and to pursue a hobby scientifically: the dealing with interest bearing money in logic and law. The logic, which leads to exponential growth of the claim for capital, is easy. But the law is in all countries a mess of contradictions, following primarily the practices of the money trade. In 1995 I performed a 300 page study (in English) on interest in logic and law in the European Economic Area for the Commission of the European Union and defended against other practices the strictly logically derived calculations. They have now to be used throughout Europe to calculate effective interest rates for consumer credits. The American APR for credits would be illegal here. But what in Great Britain is called APR is legal and correct. It means what in the USA is called APY, but in the USA is used only for savings. Since then I have been invited to write on the subject for the “Handbuch für Deutsches und Europäisches Bankrecht” (Handbook on German and European Banking Law, Springer, 2004). I had hoped I could extend the study to cover e.g. the situation in the USA, but so far I couldn't. Nobody wants to pay for it. Nevertheless, I still work in the area. - Physically I am in good health, too, and try to stay fit.

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