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Interview with Bob Galvin

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Bob Galvin

(Interviewed on 19 June 1992 in Chicago, Illinois)

Video Roll # 6

Q: Why don't we start with what do you think about Joe Juran?

GALVIN: The way I picture Joe Juran is that he is an indefatigable inspiration.

Q: No one else has said that. He has been around for a long time and stayed pretty true to the road that he's been down. One of the things that he mentioned was that, when you accepted the first Baldrige Award, that you were most complimentary to Joe Juran. Would you repeat what you said at the award ceremony?

GALVIN: Well, I don't recall what I said at the ceremony, and I don't know whether or not I said anything directly about Joe Juran at the ceremony itself.

But what I generically recall is that I paid my respects to the pioneers who had, early on, given us the instinct for quality, and the reinforcement that what we were striving to do had to be right, because they had stayed the course.

And Joe Juran, who was a premier leader and role model at that time, and has continued, of course, to be, and I have commented that on a number of occasions, and I doubtless

commented on it at about the time of the receipt of the award.

Q: What do you think has kept Joe Juran on his course? Particularly in the United States when not an awful lot of people were listening ... from the early '50's into the mid-'60's.

GALVIN: I think Joe Juran has a an essential wisdom. And I think he had thought out the value and the merit of the quality theme and the quality systems' needs for our society. And I think he must have had an instinctive belief that eventually we would finally catch up with him, and ally with his objective, and try to implement some of those things.

My guess is that Joe Juran, in recent years, has taken heart that some of that's begin to work. And when we achieve, we, of course, reinforce our enthusiasms again. I think that Joe is not a quitter. He's a fighter.

He stands up for the little things as well as the big things. And I guess I've seen him more engaged in some of the more modest things that reinforce quality, and he's been a stickler. He's stayed with his values at the highest level. And he would not let any of us who might want to compromise, compromise at the wrong time.

Joe is a good political essayist, but he doesn't play politics. But he thinks he knows what's possible, and I think he's worked the possible right to the [illegible] edge.

Q: In Japan, we spoke to a number of people that Dr. Juran worked with after the Second World War. One of them said that Dr. Juran is sort of uniquely a philosopher on the subject of quality, not just simply a practitioner or a

technician of quality. How would you say the word, philosopher, applies to Joe Juran?

GALVIN: Well, if one of the working definitions of a philosopher is one that is seeking to understand what and why, Joe is a fundamentalist. And I believe he has understood the essence of quality and those who would be the practitioners of it.

And I think he's been able to explain the what and the why by understanding who we were and what we needed to know. So, yes, I'd say Joe has had a -- he is a philosopher, he's had a philosophy, and he's had a deep belief.

Q: The Japanese said that he has made a remarkable contribution to Japan's country. We spoke to someone from Australia who said Joe Juran has made an enormous contribution to the society, culture, the wealth of Australia, turning from an agricultural country to a manufacturing. Could the same be said about Joe Juran's contribution to society here in the United States?

GALVIN: I'm not able to evaluate the degree of his influence in some of these non-U.S. locations. But I can't imagine that, as effective as his influence has been outside of the United States, that it could come anywhere near measuring what I believe is the paramount impact that he's had in the United States.

He has impacted a large number of us and, whether or not he has had then the direct influence on some others, his influence has radiated through some of the rest of us. So I look upon Joe Juran as having had an inestimable impact on the United States.

Q: It had to be brave of you and others to say: we will stop doing business as usual, we will take people off assembly lines, we will teach people how to do things differently, we will allow people to recognize that perhaps they weren't working optimally before. How big an acknowledgment was that to make, and how difficult?

GALVIN: Well, I don't know how hard it is for some other corporate bodies to make those kinds of changes. That wasn't so hard here.

We had another influence, and that was the influence of my father. And my father was one who was very willing to admit a mistake. And never liked people who were numb, who stayed with things that were wrong. And so we've been guided by the essential principle of renewal.

That made it easy for us to look to the better ideas from the Joe Juran's, and to embrace them, and we understood them So we weren't troubled by these changes too much. There are always individuals in an institution who may have more difficulty than others, but that's the range of human nature and our various qualities.

But as an institution, we reached out to change and we heard from many people, but certainly from Joe, among others, that this was a change that was essential, and they were convincing.

Q: Joe Juran has spent almost as much time talking about the human impact on a shift to a quality oriented culture, as on the technological shifts. How unique is that point of view to look at the humanistic side of the quality culture?

GALVIN: Well, it's absolutely essential. In the case of my relationship with Joe, I don't know that we have dwelt on that subject in great detail, which I would, incidentally, credit him in a very special way. I think Joe has an instinct in guessing that people have estimated somewhat in his quadrant, at which point all he does is reinforce, versus preach.

And I think that's one of the interesting qualities of Joe Juran, is that he builds on what is there and doesn't feel that he has to be redundant on everything that he does.

As a consequence, I've found Joe to be immensely effective in a lot of quarters. We spent a lot of time at meetings of the Board of Governors of the Baldrige Award. And Joe would sit back and wait until the leverage point needed to be made. And he always had it.

Q: Has he ever surprised you? A lot of people have said that he's like a file cabinet. You bring up a subject and you see the drawer and the folder and the papers. Has he ever astounded or surprised you in that way?

GALVIN: Yes. Surprise sounds immensely exciting. But I was always pleased and benefitted by the fact that Joe would recall something from one of the meetings, like almost a human minutes of such affairs, and he would find the exception that some of the rest of us had dropped. And that would finally fill out the makeup of that past agenda.

So he seems to have a remarkable memory. And a remarkable ability to correlate that which he dealt with and then he has no qualms about calling that to our attention -- graciously, but firmly. And, thus, we go ahead and proceed to accomplish what had been promised but forgotten.

Q: One of the things he mentioned to me was that he remembered most warmly was an airplane ride that he shared with you from Washington to Atlanta. And what struck him was that two people from such diverse backgrounds could find such a strong relationship on a common ground. Do you recall what that trip was about?

GALVIN: I, regrettably, do not recall the discussion. I recall that we were together, and I recall that when we got on the airplane, we probably both wondered would we spend half the time reading our book or newspaper.

And we got to where we were chatting with such vigor that the plane ride was over before either one of us knew it was over. And probably we didn't finish the discussion.

But, no, I'm sorry I don't have any recollection of the direct contents. It was a beautiful and an enthusiastic discussion -- I do recall that very well.

Q: In 20 years the history of this period will be written, what do you think the historians will write about Joe Juran and his contribution to the world?

GALVIN: Well, I think Joe was a fundamentalist on a very significant piece of institutional wisdom that could affect corporations and other kinds of operating institutions. But I focus on it from the standpoint of the private sector class of institutions.

And I think that Joe imbedded these fundamental principles in people who otherwise would not have caught the message. And, therefore, he's made many of us stronger.

And then we could help implement a stronger country.

So his effect has readily been radiant.

Q: What's been interesting is that after we saw you last, we have talked to many companies and organizations. And what you've done is ... in places like the health care and now moving into legal culture. How is it that cultures that are sort different -- here at Motorola there's a strong centralized leadership. Law firms are a collection of individuals who are entrepreneurial. Where do you think the commonalities of interest are? How has what you started serve as a value for something as strange as a law firm?

GAL VIN: Well, to me, the common link is that most people are good, and one of the definitions of good is that they would like to achieve, and if they are both given the opportunity to achieve and the means to achieve, they'll reach out to achieve.

And quality is something that is measurable as a very significant achievement. And many things rally around quality. So, I don't think it makes much difference whether we're in a law firm or in a public agency or a corporation.

I'm seeing people in all of those walks of life that, once they're given the head and the hint as to how to get there, they'll reach out pretty strong and try to accomplish that.

Q: One of the things we're finding is that so many people and organizations don't have the patience to stick with the process long enough to start to see the enormous level of pay-back that's really there.

GALVIN: Well, if there is an impatience to follow through, I would speculate and estimate that is a function of a failure at the top of whatever that institution is -- a major department or a corporation or an agency.

And that if the people in the institution detect there is an impatience at the top, they will respond. If they recognize that there is a confidence level that a determined effort will eventually payoff, I think most people are willing to do that.

Within our institution, the most receptive group of people are the people who are the actual doers. They have a patience to do things right. Just give us a chance, they say. And so the leadership, who can be influenced by a Joe Juran, have to be inculcated with a role modelship for such patience.

Q: There are many articles about quality in all kinds of publications, here and in Japan, as well. In the popular press, you get the sense that there's this entity called a Juran/Demming or a Demming/Juran that somehow cohesively created the quality revolution in the world. Two halves of the same. In fact, is there an ability to differentiate what significant contributions Demming made to quality revolution, and what Joe Juran did?

GALVIN: I'm not a an analyst of the principal factors that each of those two gentlemen have contributed. So I can only take slices of that issue.

The fact that Mr. Demming has devoted a good deal of his energies and then, effective with the Japanese, represents a contribution of making a competitor a stimulation to some of the rest of us to become much better. I don't know whether that's a convoluted way of making a unique contribution to America in that particular aspect of his contribution.

And Mr. Demming's identification with the Japanese success is obviously somewhat more in the public eye. Mr. Demming has taught some very particular procedures. And I admire what he has caused to be achieved.

Joe Juran's thesis has, in my estimation, been a little bit more accommodatable to the American psyche and to the American character. And, thus, those of us who have a certain independence of efforts in quality probably can identify more readily with both the combination of principle and the flexibility of the application of those principles. Which I detect comes somewhat more from Joe Juran.

Americans are using both and I gather some Japanese are using both. But I think that we need diversity in our philosophies and in our teachings, as long as we're both aiming for the same high standards.

Q: Do we need a crisis to pursue quality? The Japanese did after the Second World War and clearly many American corporations did.

GALVIN: I guess the answer is mostly yes, we do need a crisis to make -- see changes of one kind or another. And the Japanese had a crisis of their own and, by becoming better, they created a crisis over here. And we're all getting better.

Q: How do you sustain interest, enthusiasm, motivation when the crisis passes?

GALVIN: Well, I think it comes from fundamental beliefs, and, in our case, we just keep recharging our energies, recognizing that our beliefs are paying off in tangible results, in satisfaction results, in influences on others who relate with us -- like suppliers and customers.

And my guess is that this is almost as close to a self-perpetuation machine as one can have.

Q: Why should the American people be the slightest bit interested in watching a television on the life of Joseph Juran?

GALVIN: Well, if the American people like the life story of a man who came from very modest means, who succeeded, who had values like their neighbors next door, and then did something extraordinary, I think they would like the story of Joe Juran.

And I think that Joe Juran is, quote, "our kind of people." And we'd probably like to hear about our kind of people.

Q: Would you finish the sentence: Joe Juran is --

GALVIN: Joe Juran -- Joe Juran is an indefatigable inspiration to those who like to achieve.

Q: Thank you, sir.

(END OF TAPE 6)

