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Interview with Lennart Sandholm

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Lennart Sandholm

(Interviewed 29 October 1991, Atlanta, GA)

Video Rolls #26-28

Q: Your name? Spelling?

SANDHOLM: My card.

Q: It is Dr. L-E-N-N-A-R-T

SANDHOLM: Double N .. Sandholm, Sandholm in Swedish, but in English, it's Sandholm, usually. Good.

Q: How long have you known Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: I met him the first time in 1965. And there was an international conference in Rotterdam and I was a speaker there, and then I was introduced to Dr. Juran. And, of course, that was very great because I had bought his Quality Control Handbook earlier, when I started as a quality control manager at the Electrolux Company, and that was 1961.

So it was really great then to be introduced to Dr. Juran.

Q: What was it like when you got to meet him?

SANDHOLM: It was a very great moment for me, I must say. And Dr. Juran was very friendly, and I was quite young then. And I told him I got a fellowship to study quality control in the States. And this was early in September, I think, 1965, and at this conference in Rotterdam.

And then I said, I will go to the States two weeks from now. And then he said, you must see me and come to my home so we can discuss your studies. And certainly, when I

went to the States for *this* half year of studies, then I was a visitor Dr. Juran in his home, couple of times.

Q: What is Dr. Juran at home like?

SANDHOLM: I remember that we had lunch together and he had a very simple lunch. Maybe it was some cereals, I think that. And then, when I was there, one of the times, there was also a space program. I think it was the Apollo program when you launched a man on the moon and then to bring him back again.

So we was watching the landing of *this* -- what do you say, now we have to repeat it, I think --the astronaut. And I also met Mrs. Juran, and she was very kind.

And, since then, he had --: he came to Sweden later -- 1966 -- and then when all the times he has been to Sweden, he has also been in my home. So I have visited his home, he has visited my home, several times.

Q: The difference between public and private Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: Of course, the private Dr. Juran is more personal and he's very much interested in what is going on in the family. And I had then three girls growing up, and he followed these three girls from the birth of them. And always, when he came, he brought some toys. And these toys were creative toys. And he was really studying the girls, how they played with these toys.

Q: How has your life been changed as a result of your contact with him?

SANDHOLM: I have learned a lot from Dr. Juran. I started as the quality control manager of the Electrolux Company, Sweden, and the corporate quality control manager, and, of course, by then used the ideas of Dr. Juran. And I was a head team as a lecturer for the top management at the Electrolux Company.

But 1971, I terminated with the Electrolux Company and started as a management consultant in the quality control field. And when I mentioned that to Dr. Juran, by the way, then he said: I will support you, and I will come to Sweden and conduct seminars and courses organized by you.

And, of course, this has been very important to me and my professional development. So Dr. Juran has really been a mentor to me. And I have learned a lot from him, and we have had a very good cooperation in all these years.

Q: What have been the most important lessons that you have learned from your mentor, Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: I think that is to be professional. And professional in all ways, when dealing with clients, we're dealing with students, dealing with other quality control people.

And also, really, to find what are -- we can say the important facts, and start from the facts when you're assisting companies. And not just having opinions and beliefs. We must have the facts. It is very important.

Q: What is known about him in Europe?

SANDHOLM: He's very well known in Europe. And, by the way, the first time he came to Sweden, that was already 1948, and he was guest lecturer at the Royal Institute of Technology, where I -- by the way, I am an adjunct professor there since two years ago.

And then, he has been to Sweden several times and lectured, but not just Sweden, of course; other parts of Europe. And he's very well known in Europe. And he always uses to take part in the annual quality control conferences organized by the European Organization for Quality.

And to present papers there. And, of course, these papers always we can say that is the peak of the program.

Q: What was it like when he was playing with your daughters?

SANDHOLM: I remember very well -- and that is not so many years ago, because I have a son, and he is not so old. Maybe three or four years ago, Dr. Juran and my son played with cars, because my boy, my son, is very interested in small cars. So they put all the cars together on a line and had a very nice time together, really.

And it seemed that Dr. Juran enjoyed it very much, and certainly my son.

Q: Does Dr. Juran speak Swedish?

SANDHOLM: No, I don't think so.

Q: Does your son speak English?

SANDHOLM: No.

Q: How did they communicate?

SANDHOLM: But they could communicate very well.

Q: How did they do it?

SANDHOLM: Oh, just by doing things and showing things and so forth.

Q: What role has he played in making quality important to people of America and of Europe?

SANDHOLM: It's difficult to also know.

Q: Or maybe in making quality of interest to people beyond the professional kind?

SANDHOLM: People beyond the professional

community, I think they don't know so much about Dr. Juran. And now I can just talk about the situation in Europe, and particularly in Sweden.

But if you talk with industrial people and managers, they know about Dr. Juran and, of course, they have seen his things several times. And there is an ... that he has been in Sweden many times, and there was so many references in articles and books to what he has been doing.

Q: What part has he played in products that are now reaching consumers?

SANDHOLM: Of course, the products are improved. And the reason for that, to a very high degree, I think, is Dr. Juran. And because he has developed procedures; he has developed concepts, and so forth. And these are applied by more and more companies. And these companies are making products for the consumers.

So, in that way --

Q: What will be the largest single contribution that Dr. Juran will be given credit for?

SANDHOLM: I think it's his work on quality improvement. And I think he was the first man really to discuss that it's not enough with quality control. We have to improve. And his theories, then, on sporadic and chronic problems, and we have to work with the chronic problems. And that is also what the successful companies are applying now. And they then will gain a lot from this.

Q: What is the Juran Trilogy and what part should it play for companies?

SANDHOLM: There is a structure we can see, because the Trilogy includes three processes: Quality of Planning, Quality Control, and Quality Improvement
And when I present this to companies, and I do this in all

my seminars for upper management, and also for middle management, then I said, you have to start with Quality Improvement. And there is a very clear sequence of events then, given by Dr. Juran.

And so you will reach a much better level. And you learn, also -- when you are working on quality improvement -- lessons, and these lessons learned should be applied then in the quality planning. Which means prevention work later.

Q: Many companies start enthusiastically, then it becomes stalled. What are the reasons?

SANDHOLM: I think it depends on upper management. And they must really give leadership here, a hands-on leadership. And they should not stop this. They have always to work on this, and they have to, really, to motivate the people, and they have to demand results, they have to give resources, and so on.

So it must be a long-term program on that And if there will be a success or not, it depends on the top guy of the company. And that's my experience. And I've seen some success stories.

But there, the top person, the chief executive officer, is very much involved in the work. And he's, maybe, he has launched a program, he has also -- he is also following up . this and see that it really continues.

Q: What stands in the way of their doing it?

SANDHOLM: Because they have not just quality to think about. There are also other matters in a company, and maybe, in some cases, the reason was or is that they really don't know what is their task, what is the role that they have to play.

They think that the quality is wonderful and they have to do something and they can increase the profit through quality. But they are not really convinced about their own leadership in order to achieve this.

And I am preaching this very much when I talk with top managers about it. And they agree to this. But even then, I've seen that there are then difficulties, really, to get the program going on.

(END OF TAPE 26, START TAPE 27)

SANDHOLM: And so I lecture abroad a lot, particularly in developing countries. And I remember -- and I can tell you this in advance -- when I mentioned this to Dr. Juran the first time that I was going to start an international training program for developing countries, a ten-week training program in Sweden, then he immediately said, I want to meet these people, I want to be there and talk with these people.

Q: You have been doing consulting for years.

SANDHOLM: "For 20 years.

Q: Is the 20th year easier?

SANDHOLM: Yes, there is quite a difference. I can see that now. Because now, more and more industrial leaders, they are interested in quality. And they also see that they need to get assistance, particularly there is a need for training of their personnel in the quality field.

And that was not felt 20 years ago. But, on the other hand, there are much more consultants around now in order to -- to assist industry in this field.

Q: There were not many 20 years ago.

SANDHOLM: No.

Q: What did Deming do? What has Juran done?

SANDHOLM: For me, Deming is mostly a statistician. And so he is using these tools, and he has not developed so

much really. He's still done just on the track we can see.

While Dr. Juran is always developing. And he's trying really to look behind what he's seeing here and to explain that. And also, then, to come up with models, programs, and so on, in the changing world that we have really.

And so Dr. Juran is more trying to get, we can say, new ways in the quality field and developing a lot of concepts and so on.

Q: What part of his work draws on the work of others, and what is truly original?

SANDHOLM: Of course, it's very difficult to answer such a question. And I think that a lot of it is original thinking. But, of course, when he has met managers, he has met course participants, and talked with these people, then he will get ideas.

And one idea here, one another idea there, and maybe he can put the ideas together. And then there are -- he will develop them some, we can say, a concept based on that, a process based on that. It's like a glimpse of elimination, maybe.

And I remember very well, it was one of the international training programs, with people from developing countries -- and this was 1973 already. And Dr. Juran made a presentation on industrial development and the first stages of industrial development.

And then we had a question and answer period. And then a participant -- and he came from ... America, here -- had some ideas then regarding the work of the Standards Institute, the National Standards Institute, and they have played a very important role in developing countries, and the development of quality there.

But Juran was earlier a little bit criticizing this. And he didn't know, really, the role that such an institute should play in the quality development of a country. But when this ... American came with some ideas here, and this matched Juran's approach, we -- and then Juran said afterwards, this

was a glimpse of elimination.

And based on this glimpse of elimination, he also wrote a paper and that was published on the role of the board-- this standardization board is in developing countries. And that was very fruitful really.

Q: What do you most admire about Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: Mostly I admire his -- that he's very professional. That he's, I think -- I must think a little bit here what to say in English.

What I most admire -- what I most admire, Dr. Juran, is he's very professional and he is always looking for facts. He's a very modest man, and he's not just taking certain things and trying to sell this. He is really trying to be very helpful to the company. Helpful, also, to people.

And, of course, he could just use some of his concepts and sell these and ., a lot. And that what some other gurus or consultants are doing. But he's really trying also to be critical and say what should be done here, what should be developed further, and so forth.

Q: Why does Dr. Juran keep working so hard?

SANDHOLM: Dr. Juran is very interested in his work, I think. And to develop new things. And he is also seeing that this is becoming more and more important.

And he was in Sweden last year, and that was his last visit to Sweden. And I remember very well, he said, this must be my last visit to Sweden because I have 15 years of work in front of me and I have to give priorities to things now. As I, he says, was then 86 years old.

Q: What did Dr. Deming do for Japan, what did Dr. Juran do for Japan?

SANDHOLM: The first one to come to Japan was Dr. Demming, and I think it was 1951. And then Dr. Juran came

a couple of years later. What Dr. Deming brought to Japan was the statistical tools. He -- he's a statistician. So he preached that very much.

And when Juran came, then the Japanese was -- then they got was the management tools. And to me, management tools are much important. The managerial approach to quality. And that is also considered by the Japanese.

But as -- when Dr. Deming was there, they created this Demming Prize. And then this later has become very prestigious, and I think Demming is very much related then to the Demming Prize. And then it's thought that Deming has been very important, really.

But I think -- and I'm convinced about that -- that Dr. Juran has been much more important to the development of quality in Japan. And, of course, not just in Japan, but all over the world.

Q: Why is there a Deming Prize, but not Juran Prize?

SANDHOLM: Because, if Juran had been there before Demming, then there had been a Juran prize instead.

Q: Would you tell us about this photo?

SANDHOLM: This is taken at the Electrolux headquarters in Stockholm, 1966. Because there was an international conference held in Stockholm. And I invited Dr. Juran to give a paper there. And he was to give a paper.

By the way, there was an extra session on quality circles, Japanese quality circles. And that was the first time this concept was mentioned and discussed outside Japan. So now the Japanese has that in their history of quality circles.

So when Dr. Juran was in Stockholm, I asked him to conduct a seminar for the upper management of Electrolux Company. And he said, yes. And then he came there and so we are just talking here before the seminar. And there's also the vice president of manufacture.

Q: Can you think of an incident when suddenly people discovered who it was that you were with?

SANDHOLM: Not right now. I don't have any.

Q: Do you get the sense with him that you're with someone who is famous?

SANDHOLM: No. I know that he is famous, but I know him so well, so I don't recognize him in that way, I can say. And to my children, he's just Dr. Juran for them. And he is a member of the family, more or less.

Q: When other people join you, is there a reaction to Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: Yes, it -- they regarded this to be a very great event, of course, to have Dr. Juran there. And because they had heard about Dr. Juran a lot. And it was very great to me, also, to be able to get him to Electrolux Company. And that was not once; it was a couple of times, by the way.

Q: How is seminar attendance when Dr. Juran is going to make an appearance?

SANDHOLM: There is a very good attendance. And so it was so good when we started, and so Dr. Juran said, let's have it twice every year. So then we continued to have it twice every year. And we got about 50, 60 people every time for one week.

Q: Why should someone care or know about him, and watch a TV program about Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: I should say that this is a remarkable man. And he was born in Europe, and the situation was not so good when he was born, where he was born. And then he has really -- maybe I will do it in this way.

I should say that this is a remarkable man. And he has

had, I think, a very wonderful life. It started with very unsafe situation -- no, it's not the right word. We can try it once more.

I should say that he has done a lot to the world, really, to people in general. And he has had a remarkable life. He started out with very, very poor conditions. He left Europe. He came to the States. And he really became successful in his life.

And we are going to mention his name many, many years ahead. Not just when we're talking about quality. But life in general, and the improvement of the situation of people.

Q: What have I not asked about Dr. Juran?

SANDHOLM: I must have a look in my notes.

(END OF TAPE 27, START TAPE 28)

Q: What makes Dr. Juran the way that he is?

SANDHOLM: He is very interested in people, I think. And he is very interested in what is going on. I think he is very interested -- his interest in many things. He's interest in music, literature, and so on. And he's always trying to explore what is going on. And he will never stop his exploration.

Q: What is it that has taken him there?

SANDHOLM: He is a very bright person. And so he can combine this, the great interest in people, the great interest in what is going on. And he's trying to see what is behind, really, what is going on, to explain certain things.

And that means that he is exploring. And it happened to be quality; could be another profession, as well.

Q: What is it inside him that will not permit him to stop working?

SANDHOLM: Is it better to work in the garden? Is it better to do these other things? If a person likes to do this kind of work and is dedicated to the work, then I think it's the best way just to proceed, and not to stop this, where at a certain age.

Because some people are really interested in what they are doing. And, of course, they should continue then. Otherwise I think it's not good to that person. And so everyone should be able, I think, to do what he or she thinks is important.

Q: What is Dr. Juran's family life like?

SANDHOLM: I don't know so much about that. I have met his wife sometimes, but I don't know how he is with the other parts of the family.

Q: What are some of his other interests?

SANDHOLM: He's very interested in music, I understand. And particularly in operas. And he -- it seems that he is also interested in history because when we are discussing certain things, then he knows a lot about history. And also literature.

Q: What surprises you the most about him?

SANDHOLM: I'm not surprised now, but maybe I was surprised when I started to know him. Because, of course, this was already then the guru, the great man in my professional. And then when I brought him to my family and then he was just like a member of the family, and played with the kids, and so on.

And that was -- surprised me a lot, really. Because I didn't watch him in that way when I saw him at conferences and meetings and so on.

Q: Does he consider himself a guru?

SANDHOLM: Maybe officially he will not admit that.

But I think he considers himself to be a guru.

Q: What do you think Dr. Juran believes his greatest contribution will be?

SANDHOLM: The great -- I think it will be how-to-manage quality. And, of course, quality improvement is a part of quality management, as well. But more on how to manage an organization so you will reach certain goals here in the quality field. And the role of upper management, particularly.

Q: Where have his insights come from? What makes him focus on how people are affected?

SANDHOLM: Because he really tries to find what is behind what is done here, and to explain that. And he knows that we can't just have the tools here. But there is the focus on tools very much- And I'm also criticizing that quite a lot.

And maybe it's more simple just to work with tools. And -- but what we have to achieve is better quality, lower cost, and so on. And that means that we can't just work with one of the truths. We have to find out what is appropriate in each particular case.

But in order to be successful then, it's also necessary to have a culture here. And that must come from upper management. So there must be a change here in the thinking of the company, all through the company.

Q: How are upper managers alike dealing with quality, and how are they different?

SANDHOLM: Upper management in Japan, they are very -- they are concerned about the result of what they are doing. And that has -- that is the case now, and that started in the 1950's. Because they have to improve quality in order to be able then to develop their economy. And so they couldn't proceed in the way they were doing in the 1950's.

So they got ideas from Juran, but also ideas from Demming. And they started to work on that in order to gain a result. And they became successful. And that means that they're also convinced that these ideas work

Now, if we take Europe or the United States, then the European and the American companies, they were successful in the 1950's, 1960's, and also in the beginning of the 1970's. So they didn't have to worry about quality. And they conserved their products. They could get a good earning, and so.

But then there was a change late in the 1970's, and it was quite clear, early in the 1980's, that something had to be done, and that they had to improve quality and they had to work in another way.

And then, of course, they looked into what is going on in Japan. And they started also to apply what the Japanese did. Now, when we are in the 1990's, then more and more upper managers are convinced that they have to work in the same way. They have to see to it that there is hands-on leadership in quality; that there is a quality culture in their organization.

So now, I think, if we compare the successful European companies and the American companies on one side with the Japanese companies, I think that difference is not too great.

Q: What will be required to catch up and even surpass Japanese managers?

SANDHOLM: We have to continue and work on improvements all the time. And as the Japanese do, they don't relax. They have annual programs for quality improvement. And we have to do the same. And we can manage because there are more and more success stories in Europe and in also in the United States.

Q: Can we ever catch up?

SANDHOLM: Oh, we can say that America started before Japan. Because the -- we can say the more

professional work in the quality field, it started already in the 1920's in the United States. And Juran was then taking part in this when he was with Western Electric in the 1920's. It was started there.

And then in the States you have developed this, and also in partly in Europe. But then after the World War -- World War II -- the Japanese, they had to develop their economy.

And to develop this through industrial development. And that meant that they couldn't have products of poor quality, which they started with. Because they had no market. And they were forced to make a change here, otherwise there wouldn't be any economical development of the country.

So that was very good motivation for upper managers and industrialists in Japan. They had to do something. And they listened to Dr. Juran. So when he was there and lectured, they listened to him; they went back to their companies; and they started to try what he said. And started from the top of the company, they started with themselves.

And then, level by level, all through the company. And they became successful.

Q: Why does it take a crisis to do this?

SANDHOLM: Because if there is no crisis, and the company's doing quite well, I think that upper management is not really concerned about quality. And the reason is that they don't know, really, what it is about. And the leadership they have to take in that.

So they are devoting their work to other areas, instead. Marketing, for instance. But, when there is a crisis, of course, then something has to be done.

And I remember many times Dr. Juran has been asked by participants in course -- in seminars, that in my company, upper management is not interested in quality. And what shall I do about it. And then Dr. Juran says, you should wish that it would be worse in your company so that will be a crisis situation and then you will see that something will happen really.

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Q: *Where would we be without Dr. Juran?*

SANDHOLM: We have had a lot of products not meeting the needs of the customers. And we have spent a lot of money on defective work, and complaints, and so forth. So the economical situation have not been so good for the companies, but also not for people in general.

Q: *Would you begin this with Dr. Juran?*

SANDHOLM: So, yes. If Dr. Juran had not done the work he did, I think that the situation in the society had been different. Not just in the American society or European society or Japanese society. We have had the products not meeting the needs in the same way as they're meeting the needs now of the users of the products.

The companies have lost, I think, a lot of money on defective work, scrap pre-work complaints and so forth. And they have not been working in such an efficient way as they are now.

And we can see that some companies are not doing that, and there you have also poor situation.

Q: *Dr. Juran is the man who -- ?*

SANDHOLM: Dr. Juran is the man who started the quality revolution, both in Japan and in the West.

Q: *What picture will you see in your mind?*

SANDHOLM: The picture I will see of Dr. Juran is that he is carrying his bag with all his visual aids. He's walking in a very high speed from the hotel in Stockholm to the lecture room.

And I asked him once when I went -- walked with him, you are walking that fast, and it's very difficult to cope with you when you're walking. And then he said: I learnt to walk

that fast when I was living in Minnesota, because we stayed outside Minneapolis and we didn't have money for the bus tickets, so I had to walk and it was very cold in Minneapolis, so I had to walk fast.

Q: Thank you, this is wonderful.

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