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Interview with Brad Stratton

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Brad Stratton
(Interviewed on 29 October 1991, Atlanta, GA)

Video Rolls #34.35

**Q: Your name, spelling?**


**Q: You're a media guy?**

STRATTON: Sure.

(OFF CAMERA INSTRUCTIONS)

**Q: Why has been your contact with Dr. Juran?**

STRATTON: Well, I think probably because he used to be involved very heavily with all sorts of ASCQ, American Society for Quality Control, activities. Used to write for the same magazine that I now write for. Had a column called, I think, The Management Comer.

And I think they think that, based on the fact that we used to work for the same organization, or I work for the same organization now that he used to, at least, do some work for, and presumably we keep track of everything that happens in the quality world, that we'd probably be up to date on what's happening with his life.

**Q: What is the professional perception of Joseph M.**
Juran?

STRATTON: I think, first of all, the quality industry is very lucky in that the real old guard is still alive. There's a lot of industries where the main people who got everything started are long gone by hundreds of years.

And I think his role right now is he's more or less the person who got a lot of the things started, or was at least there when it was started. So he not only brought up a lot of the things or did a lot of the things right from the beginning, but the things that he didn't do, he was there to witness.

If you go back to his days with the Hawthorne Works, when he worked for -- oh, whatever arm of it of AT&T they call that, I think it was Western Bell or something like that back then -- he was working with Walter Schuhart back at the time when Walter was making his first original discoveries that there was such a thing as a control chart.

And it was only a few years after that -- I believe that was 1923 -- it was only a few years after that where Dr. Juran was actually involved with some work with him.

Q: What direct contact have you had with him?

STRATTON: I'd say most of it's been on the phone or by letter. Usually me calling up or writing to him, looking for some information, wondering if he could, perhaps, put together a paper for the magazine. Or if, oh, he could help us in some way or another.

Usually, it's for some written piece that we'd like to have for the magazine.

Q: How accessible is he, and what's it like to deal with a guru?

STRATTON: I would consider him very accessible. Whether it's the fact that I work for Quality Progress
magazine and that's part of the reason he responds so quickly. Or if he responds to everyone as quickly as he does to me, I'm not sure.

But I know that if I send along a letter, or send along a FAX, or -- I usually try to use those two ways because it seems to me if you get the written word out to him, it's a better way to have him respond.

I know that he responds to me very quickly, and he usually responds to me in far more a thorough matter than I would ever consider him wanting to respond to me in. He's, on a couple of occasions, has really gone beyond the call of what he's done for us.

**Q: What interchange for you defines him?**

**STRATTON:** Sure. This summer we started working on a project that's going to appear in the December 1991 issue of the magazine. And we were looking for people who were, you know, were the quality professional back around the time that World War II started.

And so I was getting in touch with a number of the people that I thought would be appropriate to have in the magazine at the time. And I sent out a letter to him and I, you know, said, would it be possible for you to perhaps have time for a discussion or put together a paper for us or something along those lines.

And he called back a few weeks later and he said, well, you know, we had that letter that you got in and I thought that was a good idea, to write a story about what was happening 50 years ago when World War II started.

And I thought to myself if I just write to you about World War II, which is a relatively short period of time in United States history, about four years, he said, you wouldn't really get the full feel of what the war was all about.

So what I've started to do and I'm most of the way done with it, is I've started to write an article that looks back at
World War II in the perspective of the 20th Century, and I started, oh, around the craftsmanship era that was toward the end of the last century, and I took it up through World War I, what was happening in the '30's.

And then, through World War II, some discussion of World War II, and then taking it up to present day. And, you know, he said it much quicker than that, fortunately. And the whole time, if you could have seen me, my jaw would have been dropping because I was just waiting for my opportunity to say, you know, that's a nice idea, I think that's a good paper to write and I'd appreciate it if you did write it.

Then he quickly added that even though he knew that it might be a bit later than he thought that he originally said that he could have it in by, he did have this trip to Europe coming, and he was going to try to have it done before he went off to Europe so he could continue on this thoughts with it so he wouldn't have it broken up the trip.

And it did show up before he went to Europe, and it's -- it's something that I thing the people who read the magazine in December of 1991, are really going to enjoy the article.

Q: How were the gurus that were around after World War II, and where are they now?

STRATTON: Well, the interesting thing is, of course, they weren't considered gurus back at that time. They were more or less -- I don't know if they were ever shunned, I think they were just more or less ignored after World War II was over.

Dr. Juran has talked about in the past, he's talked about how the manufacturing systems in the country were -- were having so much pent-up demand for products, and all the companies that were making consumer products during World War II, or at least the majority of them, had been converted to some sort of wartime use.

And so, by the end of the war, whether it was refrigerators
or automobiles or whatever, there was this huge demand. And literally, anybody who could make these items was going to be able to sell them, because there were lots and lots of families that needed them. And so there was very much a trend toward quantity. I mean, a horrible trend toward quantity in the country in the late '40's, early '50's.

And, essentially, everything that the quality people had to offer were things that the American industry wasn't really interested in. They were far more interested in selling a lot of projects, selling a lot of their products.

And so, you know, the ones who were still key at the time, Schuhart was considered -- and I think if you talk to a lot of the quality professionals today -- still is considered the father of quality control. They called him Uncle Walter. I guess everyone called Schuhart, Uncle Walter. And he was, by far, the most influential person.

There were a few other people, kind of lesser known names, where if you go through the history, you can find there was a gentleman called Leslie Simon, who I believe -- he was like a lieutenant general when he retired from the army.

But he was one of the key military people who realized what all this quality stuff is that people were talking about during the war. Had learned about it in the '30's. Had applied it to a lot of the things that were going around with the ordnance depots where they where they were making sure during the war that the artillery shells would work.

And so Leslie Simon was a big, big man. As a matter of fact, he was the -- when the American Society for Quality Control awarded their first Walter Schuhart medal, Leslie Simon was awarded it, and had a very nice speech in, I believe it was 19 -- oh, boy -- far before me being born -- about 1951, I think, or 1952 that was.

And, well, who else are some of the other big names.

A lot of the other people -- I guess a lot of the folks -- Ralph Wareham, George Edwards -- those types of people. A
lot of the things that they were doing right after World War II is they were -- they were trying to figure out -- they had all these good things going with quality, and even though industry wasn't necessarily listening to them whole-heartedly, some industry was listening to them.

Some industry had figured out that they were able to do their jobs a lot better now, and so there's no reason why they shouldn't continue doing things this way.

And there were a series of classes that took place during the Second World War, and the purpose of those classes were to educate people about quality control techniques.

And now we're talking about very basic quality control techniques. What a control chart was, what a sampling plan is. Really nothing very much more complicated than that. Just because that was the stage that everybody was at.

Everybody was at an inspection stage and they were sitting at the end of the assembly line and throwing away all the bad stuff, and it was all garbage at the point. And there was just very little to take the quality processes upstream.

So they were trying to teach them a few things. And they had done some of these sessions. As a matter of fact, I should really remember how many people; I think there were seven or 8,000 people that wound up taking these during World War II.

And they were thinking, well, how can we keep this going. And one of the things that they did --

(OFF CAMERA INSTRUCTIONS)

Q: You have a strong historical orientation.

STRATTON: Only because I've just been doing this stuff for the last month or two. Okay. Okay.

Q: What will history look at as the greatest achievement of Joe Juran, or of Ed Demming?
STRATTON: I think Demming is going to be the person who's remembered for waking a lot of people up. I've read stories; I've never attended his sessions. But Dr. Demming is well known for when he teaches, he wants your attention. And he's not above raising his voice, yelling at a few people during his seminars, just to make sure he keeps everybody's attention.

And I think Demming has raised a lot of attention of what quality is all about, and has really jarred a lot of people to notice it. So I think that might be his biggest point.

I think Dr. Juran's greatest point will be that he was -- he was the type of person who maybe took the people that were -- their attention was caught by Dr. Demming, and said, gosh, where do we go next. And they were looking, you know, they were trying to grasp at something.

And once people become aware of quality, what they do is they start to notice that not everything in life is what Dr. Demming has to offer or what Phil Crosby has to offer or whatever. There's dozens of plans out there.

And I think a lot of people will look at what Dr. Juran has put together, what he believes is important, and how he has organized his Planning for Quality that he talks about and is very much a centerpiece of what he does.

I think that's one of the things that he's going to be remembered for is that these people who had their awareness raised, where did they go next. Well, they found this wonderfully well organized set of programs called, you know, Juran on Planning for Quality, and those types of things that he had to offer.

And he was the person that really got them organized and runmg.

Q: Dr. Juran, the man who -- ?

STRATTON: Planned quality. He really -- it's intimidating. I think anybody who sits through a session in
quality might walk out of it, and go, we can never do this, this is incredible, this company here that was talking to us today, they're on their sixth year of the program and they think they're getting somewhere, and they think they're starting to get organized and things are starting to work out for them; and, gee, if that's what they're like six years down the road, and we're at such-and-such a stage now, how're we going to get there.

And I think the type of planning that Juran offers, you know, the kind of reasonable way to sit there and not look at as this huge project that you can't possibly finish, but as a rather reasonable thing if you just take it in the right sections, and you make sure you plan it all out ahead of time.

Q: What are some of your favorite anecdotes?

STRATTON: Oh, wonder -- I have to think for a second on that one.

I can think of one of the favorite things that happened that I've read about. And -- 'cause like I say, a lot of this stuff predates me 'cause I'm just a little bit younger than some of the other folks involved with this business.

But he -- he's probably the person that really -- really gave a name -- gave a structure to what's known as Pareto Analysis, which is essentially the 80/20 rule, where 80% of your problems are caused by 20% of the things that could possibly cause problems within your organization.

And he gave a name to it because he did research back on some Italian person back from centuries ago, and found that he had done some of the similar research, but he'd -- he had assigned it to wealth within the Italian -- within the Italian community, or whatever it was, I forget exactly how it all worked out.

But -- so he gave this -- this whole idea of analyzing where your causes of your problems are, the 80/20 rule, he gave it the Pareto name, and then, later on, he realized that,
while it was something that was indeed -- could trace its roots back to this gentlemen, he had really invented -- Dr. Juran himself had really invented what all this 80/20 stuff was.

Pareto Analysis, probably he should have just gone ahead and named it Juran Analysis and let it go at that, and we wouldn't be calling it Pareto Analysis to this day.

But if you go back and trace the history of where that phrase came from, he's actually the person that did most of the research for, and I think it's -- it's a more or less his style that he went, well, I named it Pareto Analysis, you all know what it means now, why should we change the wording for it. Well, let's just go ahead and leave as it is and we'll keeping studying this way.

Q: There's Demming Price, Schuhart Control Chart, the Ishikawa Fishbone Diagram -- what will carry the future of the Juran name?

STRATTON: That's an interesting question. It's probably -- it's probably too bad that something hasn't been named for him up to this point. It seems to me that there's a lot of things that could have been named.

There's lots of awards that are out there in the world that, you know, carry people's names who perhaps were named--you know, the awards were named for the person because a lot of times I think awards are named for people who have recently died and people are trying to perpetuate their names.

And I think maybe there's a few good awards out there that might have been a good idea for him to be named for already. I'm not sure what's left. I'm not sure if somebody wants to come up and find a way to put his -- his name next to something.

I know that his book, the big book that he has, Juran's Quality Handbook, is something that, if you say Juran's Book, people immediately know, even though Dr. Juran has written
several books in his lifetime, and probably by this time hundreds of papers that have been printed in many places, everybody knows it's that thousand or fifteen hundred page Juran's Quality Control Handbook that you're talking about.

And it -- it continues today, to this day, to be one of the best single reference sources out there. Maybe that's what -- I know that's what carries his name now, and that's probably one of the most identifiable things about him is that -- is that huge handbook that he's put together.

(END OF TAPE 34, START TAPE 35)

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION)

Q: Communicating quality, internally, externally.

STRATTON: I think what you want to do first, and it's one of the problems that people have when they're dealing with this whole quality thing, is there's a -- it's not quite the jargon that you might find in heavy statistical fields or electronics or something like that where there are all sorts of abbreviations and things like, that could throw off the novice.

But I think there's some basic terms out there that you really need to know what you're talking about. You know, we talked about the -- things like Pareto Analysis. What's Pareto Analysis? Who's Pareto?

If you're going to go into an organization and you're going to talk to them about quality, you better make sure that the first thing that you do is you sit down and say, okay, we've got a new subject here.

There's a lot of things here that are going to sound a little familiar to you, but we'd like to make sure that all the terms are right, that you know what we're talking about so when we get into discussions down the road that, you know, we can all speak the same language and we're not sitting there trying to repeat ourselves just to get to the basic point of what we're talking about.
Q: What are inhibitors quality improvement?

STRATTON: I talked to some people a few years back from an organization that makes air conditioners. And they were -- it was a single plant that had implemented a quality improvement program. And they were doing great things. I mean, they had a -- they had done some things in their product line that they never thought were possible.

They had unions in there, and the unions and the managers were really just talking to each other. Fantastic. And they were -- they were wanting to take it to the next level, and -- 'cause the next level was, the way that the air conditioners were being designed, was making it difficult for them to assemble it.

And -- so they said, we need to get more people involved with this. And so now they had to take it from their one little plant -- they were going to try to take it to the whole corporation. And the whole corporation went, humph, wait a second. It's not our fault that these things aren't right, I mean, it's you guys assembling them, you know.

You know, they were going to top management and they were saying, look, we've got to have these products designed better because they're just not being designed right for us to make 'em right.

And they were going, oh, no, no, that's not how it works. The managers -- the top managers had no interest in the programs, they thought it was a nice thing. I think they were actually happy that the union -- union people were actually quiet in this one plant, and maybe they were having problems in some of the other plants.

But -- but they weren't willing to take any sort of responsibility that it was their job to be sitting there and -- and doing it for the entire organization.

And I don't know, I haven't talked to the people lately about what happened there, but I suspect that it -- it was doomed to fail because it just -- the guys right at the top were
like being very resistant to the whole thing, and they were saying, no, it's not our responsibility.

Q: *How does he fit into the on-time, thorough, careful?*

STRATTON: When you -- when you read what he's written, it sounds like he's sitting there talking to you, is there's a certain voice that he has that comes through in his writing, too. Which is very interesting, I think.

I think anybody who picks up and reads an article that he writes, if an editor -- if an editor hasn't taken it and chopped it to pieces, what they find is that his very slightly formal style of talking is still there in his paper, and you can almost hear him saying these things.

And so what you wind up with is a paper that isn't -- isn't a dryly written article. It has a -- it has his personality in there.

And I think that's what a lot of writers lack when they get into a technical subject, is they think they have to fall back into a reverse construction for all of their sentences where they have the predicate before the subject and they're always backing into things.

And -- and his style of writing is very friendly and it's -- even though it can be a complicated subject, you'd never get that idea from his writing, 'cause it's so -- so simple and down to earth.

Q: *Where does Dr. Juran fit with writers?*

STRATTON: Well, first of all, I like -- I like dealing with him first of all, because if you ask him to do something, he almost always does it. You know, he might say, well, I have a -- I have some restrictions from a -- from this contract that I'm working on, or this project that I'm currently tied up with.

But the minute he says, yes, I can do it for you, if he says
he'll have it to you in a month, he'll have it to you in three
weeks. If he says he's going to write about ten pages worth
of material, it's going to be ten pages packed full of things.
He -- he always :finds ways to get all sorts of interesting
information that you'd never think was in the subject in the
first place.

And he just fills out the whole picture. He doesn't usually
write about just one narrow thing, but he finds ways to
expand to make sure that he gets the total picture told, so the
person who picks it up, who maybe never heard about quality
or never heard about J. M. Juran before in his life, will be
able to -- will be able to get a full picture of what he's
writing about.

Q: What feedback does the publication get?

STRATTON: The majority of the feedback I think that
we get is by -- by phone calls, people calling up saying little
things here and there. Or sending in letters on subjects that
we've had in the magazine.

Q: How about feedback about Juran's worked compared
to all other work?

STRATTON: I think people are always impressed when
they see his name.

I think that there's -- one of the things that they may not
know, that I'm certainly not going to tell them, is that because
he had such a sincere involvement in the first ten years, first
20 years, of the organization --

-- the American Society of Quality Control -- that he feels
-- I think inside, he feels a sort of an obligation that -- that if
he -- if he is asked to write by this organization, that he
would like to continue to help this organization that he was in
on the ground floor of helping establish.

And -- and so people are usually impressed when they see
his by-line in the magazine because it -- it raises the -- it raises the prestige that goes along with Quality Progress magazine that we can have this very reputable world authority writing on the pages.

And I think people sometimes don't know that, hey, we've got a little -- we've got a little power, too, and we can get a few people like this writing for us.

But he's very good at making himself available for us.

**Q: What do you admire most about him?**

**STRATTON:** He doesn't beat you over the head with the fact that he's the -- he's done a lot of good things. Some other organizations you don't know when they're -- when they're sending things out to you. You don't know if they really earned the praise that they have or that they -- I'll start over on this one.

There's a lot of people who will tell you about themselves. They say that I invented this or I invented that or I was there when this happened or I was there when that happened.

I don't think I've ever had Dr. Juran say in anything that he sent along to me, well, when I was there doing this or I was the person who originated that. If he does, it's almost apologetically.

He'll say, well, I suppose I was in on the design of what this quality planning thing should be all about. Or I guess it was my idea that it would be a good idea to have what started off as six or 800 page handbook, and it would be a book that anybody could use.

So he -- he doesn't believe in a lot of hype about himself, at least I've never got that impression that he thought there was any need to build up his name. I think he lets his work speak for itself.

**Q: What do you admire most about Dr. Juran?**
STRATTON: He's a proud man, I think. And he doesn't get caught up in a lot of self-promotion. I think that easily he could. He could tell you about all the great things that he's done in his life, all the good things that he's helped other people with. But he doesn't

He just seems to continually want to do more for people, and he doesn't seem really concerned about whether he gets the recognition for all the things that he's done. He's just more or less satisfied that he's done them, and he goes on to the next thing.

Q: What makes Dr. Juran tick?

STRATTON: I don't know. I've told some people I wish there was a way for the whole world to have a Dr. Juran right now that was 50 years old. It's really too bad. Obviously, it's what happened in his life from the turn of the century when he was born up to today, that makes him what he is.

But the man has such great energy at 86 or 87 years old, that you start to think, man, if this man was just 50 years old now, and the whole quality revolution is just taking off, what would this man have the energy to do. Because he doesn't slow down.

He makes his trips worldwide every year. He makes his -- he still keeps up a rigorous schedule of trying to help out the Baldridge Award in any way he can. The man just goes and goes and goes. And I don't know how he keeps doing it.

And I think to myself, well, if he was 50, I mean, he'd go non-stop. It would be amazing.

Q: What would the world be like without him?

STRATTON: I think there's a shortage of really reputable organizations out there that if you say you need some help, that they're willing to find a way to help you. It might cost a few dollars to be helped by some of these organizations.
But I think there's a whole organization of really -- very sincere people. People who are very concerned about helping get your job done for you. Helping you do your job better. And I think all of what they do, and their sincerity and their desire to really help out your company, I think a lot of the emanates from the person who's on the top.

And I think, in his case, he's established his really quite a large worldwide organization. And I think a lot of'em call back and think back to what he's all about and maybe that helps guide them in the way that they do their work. They don't have to say that we're the best or they don't have to remind you of things like that.

It's just more or less well known that if you're involved with this Juran Institute, that you're dealing with quality people. And I think perhaps an entire network of people that's set up now, maybe the network wouldn't exist. Or would exist in a different way that it wouldn't be as helpful, that I think it has been in the last, oh, the last 13 or 14 years that it's been in existence.

Q: Why should anyone care about Joseph Juran?

STRATTON: I think maybe one of the things that's hidden in most companies is its management level. You see the big name people, obviously, sometimes they come to the real forefront. They wind up on all the television commercials, things like that.

I think those are the exceptions. In most corporations, your managers are relatively well known people, but they're people who are trying to run their organization better.

And I think if you start to have an appreciation for what the nation's industries are all about, you start to wonder, well, you know, for an -- in order for an organization to be well run, it has to have good management that gives good leadership.

Well, where does that good leadership come from. And
one of the things that's really behind the scenes, something that wouldn't see unless you were real familiar with the organization or the inner workings of the organization, is perhaps who's consulted with them along the lines.

And here's this person who has helped, you know, count off all the organizations that are represented as clients of his organization, and you can probably say that most of them have something that they can say thank you to Dr. Juran for helping them do, even though they've come out in their corporate report and said, this year we spent a few dollars to bring in a corporate consultant, the Juran Institute.

And we're visited by Dr. Juran, and he did many, many good things for us, and his name should be here on our page because he's one of the people that's -- that's helped us turn around our company that was going into the tank and now it's back in much better shape than it was.

**Q: What would convince you to run a documentary on Joseph Juran?**

**STRATTON:** I think it might reach the intellectual of 'em. See, one of the -- one of the real problems, I think, to the entire quality picture is that there doesn't seem to be the real sexy key things that other -- other subjects might have.

You talk to people about quality and you say, well, it's a five or ten year event to get yourself going on it, and they say, well, isn't there some one big whiz bang thing that you've got right off the top that says let's get going? And you have to say, no, there isn't really anything like that.

The focal points that you have to be careful of is that you don't put too much emphasis on a kick-off. There's lots of quality programs that focus on a kick-off day, you know, and people get done with kick-off day, and go, why don't we just kick off.

So I think that's one of the -- one of the real problems for the whole quality movement when I explain to people what I
do and what I write about They go, gee, that doesn't sound too interesting, there's no like big events involved with that. You go, well, no not 'really, but the long term of it is very beneficial.

And so I could see where if you were trying to promote this to somebody, you would -- you'd have a good selling job in front of you.

Q: **Why are people to share, and what role has Dr. Juran had in this openness?**

STRATTON: I think if you organize a conference like the IMPRO conference, that Dr. Juran orchestrated for many years, you design a conference like that to bring a lot of people together, a lot of people who would never talk to each other. I mean, you have the electronics firms talking to railroad companies that are talking to government employees in the navy or in the IRS.

And all of a sudden, you throw all these people into a big room, and each one of these people are coming into this room going, boy, this quality thing, I don't just not sure if it's going to work out for my industry. I mean, it might work out for those guys in Detroit, but I'm not sure if it works out for me.

And then all of a sudden, you have all these people who have been brought together, and they start talking to each other, and they starting going, oh, we've got the exact same problem that you guys, you know, I'm a -- I'm trying to make sure that my train runs on time out to the West Coast and you people are trying to process 1040 forms that people have -- or W-2 forms or whatever the income tax form is for that year.

But we've got the same problem. We're still trying to do the same thing. And I think if -- if you look at what the IMPRO is all about, I think the most interesting part about IMPRO is go to the lunches.

Go to the lunches and watch people just go and sit down at a table, watch them leave the people that they walk into the
luncheon with to just go find a seat at some table some place where they can sit down and just talk to people that they've never met before, that are in a totally different business. They can get into some sort of brief conversation with, and they start finding out that we're all in this boat together.

And I think that's -- that's a good example of one of the things that he's done to like bring a lot of different organizations together that would never talk to each other otherwise.

Q: What have I not asked you?

STRATTON: One thing you haven't asked me. You've actually asked a lot of the good things to ask about him. It's not a subject that I can speak to. But I think one of the more interesting things that he did in his life, if you could find people that could speak to the subject, was -- in the early 1950's when he was -- when he went to Japan, and there were just, I guess, a few of the real management consultants back at that time, they probably weren't even called management consultants.

But there's Dr. Demming and Dr. Juran are the people that you know of because they both were given the awards by the emperor over there. And the motivations that went into his deciding to go over there. You know, there's -- and for decades after World War II, there was always the derogatory -- the Japs and the nips, you know.

And just horrible about the Japanese people. And yet here was a person that decided that he was willing -- he saw the devastation that had gone on there, and he felt some sort of inner need that he had a contribution that he could make to this country.

What went into his thinking that made him think that it was a good thing to go over to Japan and rebuild who -- a country that a lot of people still perceived as an -enemy. Why would anybody go help the enemy rebuild their economy.
And that's what he did. And I think there's probably a few fascinating answers sitting out there. I don't have the answer to the question. But if you found the people who were, perhaps, familiar with him at that time, I think his motivations.

And I think what the long term of that work --

(END OF TAPE 35)