

"SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM"

DENNIS MCGILLICUDDY

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>> THE FOLLOWING IS A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>> THERE'S NO ONE EXACTLY LIKE YOU.

NO ONE HAS THE SAME FINANCIAL GOALS OR CARES ABOUT THE SAME PEOPLE.

THAT'S WHY RAYMOND JAMES FINANCIAL ADVISORS HAVE THE INDEPENDENCE TO OFFER UNBIASED ADVICE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU, AND IT'S WHY WE PIONEERED THE IDEA OF FINANCIAL PLANNING.

YOU MIGHT SAY WE'RE JUST AS UNIQUE AS YOU ARE.

RAYMOND JAMES, INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS FROM INDEPENDENT ADVISORS.

>>Geoff Simon: NOT ALL BUSINESS PIONEERS SET OUT TO BE PIONEERS.

SOMETIMES, THEY ARE PURSUING A NORMAL CAREER AND THEN AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, AND THAT OPPORTUNITY TURNS INTO THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME.

HAVING THE COURAGE AND THE FORTITUDE TO TAKE THAT

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEAP IS WHAT DISTINGUISHES PIONEERS FROM EVERYONE ELSE.

YOU'RE ABOUT TO MEET A SUCCESSFUL SARASOTA BUSINESSMAN WHO GAVE UP A LEGAL CAREER TO GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CABLE TV REVOLUTION IN AMERICA AND WHO OVER THE YEARS HAS BEEN AN ACTIVIST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE.

NEXT ON THE "SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM."

>>Geoff Simon: BACK IN THE 1960s, CABLE TV WAS STRICTLY A RURAL THING.

CABLE WAS USED TO BRING LOCAL BROADCAST TV SIGNALS TO SMALL COMMUNITIES THAT COULDN'T PICK THEM UP FROM NEARBY CITIES. IT WAS SMALL, BUT BIG CHANGES WERE ON THE HORIZON.

IN 1968, A YOUNG LAWYER NAMED DENNIS MCGILLICUDDY JOINED TWO PARTNERS TO FORM COAXIAL COMMUNICATIONS, A FLEDGLING COMPANY THAT SERVED ABOUT 200 CUSTOMERS IN RURAL FLORIDA. OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS, THEY BUILT COAXIAL INTO A SIZABLE CABLE COMPANY SERVING COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH AND MIDWEST. AS THEIR SUCCESS GREW, DENNIS AND HIS PARTNERS BRANCHED OUT INTO INVESTMENT BANKING, PUBLISHING, AND REAL ESTATE AMONG OTHER BUSINESSES.

NOW, DENNIS AND HIS WIFE GRACI ARE DIRECTING A LOT OF THEIR ENERGY TO PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL CHANGE.

DENNIS, WELCOME TO THE "SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM."

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: THANK YOU, GEOFF.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, THE MCGILLICUDDY, OR AS A LOT OF

PEOPLE KNOW IT IN ITS ABBREVIATED FORM, MACK, IS WELL KNOWN BOTH IN SPORTS, IN THE UNITED STATES, AND POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN FLORIDA.

GIVE US SOME OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF YOUR NAME, YOUR HERITAGE.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: WELL, MY GRANDFATHER, WHO MOST PEOPLE KNOW AS CONNIE MACK, WAS ONE OF THE THREE MEN WHO STARTED THE AMERICAN BASEBALL LEAGUE BACK IN 1901.

HIS NAME WAS CORNELIUS MCGILLICUDDY.

MCGILLICUDDY FAMILY HAD COME FROM IRELAND IN THE 1830s AND MOVED TO WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS.

AND MY GRANDFATHER HAD AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER SPANNING 50 YEARS.

HE OWNED THE TEAM.

HE STARTED OUT AS A MINORITY OWNER AND OVER THE YEARS PURCHASED 100% OWNERSHIP OF THE TEAM.

>>Geoff Simon: THE PHILADELPHIA --

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: THE PHILADELPHIA ATHLETICS.

AND WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP AS KIDS BEFORE WE MOVED TO FLORIDA, WE'D GO TO THE BALL GAMES EVERY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY THAT THE TEAM WAS IN TOWN.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, CONNIE MACK IS REFERRED TO AS THE GRAND OLD MAN OF BASEBALL.

GRAND OLD GENTLEMAN OF BASEBALL.

HE WAS THE MANAGER AND OWNER FOR 50 YEARS, AND THERE'S

ANOTHER CONNIE MACK THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE KNOW OF AS WELL,
NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER, BUT YOUR BROTHER, AM I RIGHT?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: MY BROTHER, WHO IS CORNELIUS
McGILLICUDDY THE III.

AND WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP, ALL OF THE FAMILY USED MACK.
MY GRANDFATHER WAS STILL ALIVE.

WHEN I GOT TO LAW SCHOOL, I STARTED USING McGILLICUDDY.
CONNIE, BEING THE NAMESAKE, KEPT THE NAME, AS THEIR DAD WAS
CONNIE MACK JUNIOR.

SO IT WAS NORMAL FOR HIM TO CONTINUE TO USE THE NAME.
AND AT ONE POINT IN 1980, 1982, CONNIE RAN FOR CONGRESS, WAS
ELECTED.

IT WAS A REALLY INTERESTING TIME FOR US, BECAUSE WE WERE NEW
TO POLITICS.

THE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT RAN FROM FT. MYERS TO SARASOTA.
MY WIFE GRACI GOT VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THAT CAMPAIGN.
AND CONNIE WAS SUCCESSFUL, AND THAT LED TO AN 18-YEAR CAREER
IN CONGRESS AND THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

AND I'M VERY PROUD OF THE WORK THAT HE DID FOR OUR COUNTRY.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, YOU WERE BORN AND RAISED UP TILL AGE
NINE IN PHILADELPHIA.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: THAT IS CORRECT.

>>Geoff Simon: AND, OF COURSE, THE McGILLICUDDY NAME OR
MACK NAME IN PHILADELPHIA WAS LEGEND.

BUT AT THE AGE OF NINE, YOU MOVED TO FT. MYERS, FLORIDA,

WHERE A LITTLE BIT OF THAT MAGIC PROBABLY RUBBED OFF.

HOW WAS IT TO MAKE THAT TRANSITION FROM BEING PART OF A
LEGENDARY FAMILY IN PHILADELPHIA TO SMALL-TOWN FT. MYERS
BACK IN THE 1950s, RIGHT?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: YEAH, WE MOVED DOWN TO FT. MYERS IN
1950.

I WOULD SAY FOR ME, THE BIGGEST TRANSITION DIDN'T RELATE TO
THE NAME.

I WAS NINE YEARS OLD.

I CERTAINLY KNEW THAT MY GRANDFATHER WAS A FAMOUS PERSON,
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY KIND OF SENSE THAT THAT WAS ANYTHING
OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

IT WAS, YOU KNOW, CHANGING FRIENDS, GETTING INTO A NEW
ENVIRONMENT, THE VERY SOUTHERN TOWN.

FT. MYERS WAS A TOWN OF 8,000 PEOPLE.

SO WE MOVED FROM MAINLINE PHILADELPHIA TO LITTLE OL'
FT. MYERS IN 1950.

GROWING UP THERE WAS FANTASTIC.

I LEARNED TO FISH.

I PLAYED BASEBALL.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, I PLAYED ALL THREE SPORTS.

IT REALLY WAS A VERY GROUNDING KIND OF ENVIRONMENT TO LIVE
IN.

AND I ACTUALLY FEEL VERY FORTUNATE THAT WE MOVED DOWN HERE.

>>Geoff Simon: WELL, TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND GROWING

UP.

YOU WERE ONE OF EIGHT KIDS, AM I RIGHT?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: THAT IS CORRECT.

>>Geoff Simon: TELL US ABOUT THE FAMILY AND YOUR PARENTS AND SOME OF THE VALUES THAT THEY INSTILLED.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: ALL RIGHT.

WELL, I THINK I'D LIKE TO START WITH MY PARENTS -- MY PARENTS MET AT DUKE UNIVERSITY.

HERE IS MY DAD, WHO IS IN THE EARLY 1930s, A YANKEE, CATHOLIC FROM PHILADELPHIA, THE SON OF A VERY FAMOUS PERSON. MY MOM WAS FROM TEXARKANA, TEXAS, A BAPTIST, AND HER FATHER WAS THE DEAN OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

HIS NAME WAS MORRIS SHEPHERD, AND HE DIED IN 1941 JUST BEFORE I WAS BORN.

SO I NEVER MET HIM.

BUT HE WAS A GREAT MAN.

SO IT WAS AN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE FOR TWO PEOPLE TO GET TOGETHER LIKE THIS.

AND, FOR EXAMPLE, MY MOM, WHEN SHE MARRIED MY DAD, HAD TO AGREE TO RAISE US AS CATHOLICS.

WHICH I MUST SAY THAT SHE DID WITH GREAT FERVOR, ULTIMATELY.

SO I'M ONE OF EIGHT CHILDREN, AND THE FIRST FOUR WERE BORN IN PHILADELPHIA.

WE MOVED DOWN TO FT. MYERS.

I'LL NEVER FORGET THE DAY ON MOM'S 40th BIRTHDAY, SHE GAVE

BIRTH TO HER FIFTH CHILD, JOHN.

AND SUBSEQUENTLY HAD THREE MORE CHILDREN, AND GAVE BIRTH TO BETSY WHEN SHE WAS 46 YEARS OLD.

NOW, AN INTERESTING TWIST, WHEN JOHN WAS BAPTIZED CATHOLIC, MY MOM AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS BECAME A CATHOLIC.

THE STORY DOESN'T END THERE.

19 YEARS LATER, JOHN BECAME AN ORDAINED BAPTIST MINISTER.

SO THERE IS, IN OUR FAMILY, MY SISTER IS A NUN LIVING HERE IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA, AND WE HAVE A VERY ECUMENICAL FAMILY.

>>Geoff Simon: WAS RELIGION DISCUSSED IN THE FAMILY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, DIVERSITY?

BECAUSE, OBVIOUSLY, YOUR FAMILY REPRESENTED RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: YES.

YEAH, I WOULD SAY MORE IN TERMS OF NOT OUTRIGHT DISCUSSIONS, BUT THE WAY MY PARENTS BEHAVED AND THE THINGS THAT WOULD HAPPEN IN EVERYDAY LIFE IS WHAT CREATED THE VALUES THAT I GOT FROM THEM.

I'LL TELL YOU A STORY.

WHEN WE HAD FIRST MOVED TO FT. MYERS -- SO I'M NINE OR TEN YEARS OLD.

WE LIVED PRETTY NEAR THE GOLF COURSE.

AND ONE SATURDAY MORNING, A BUNCH OF US FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD WENT OVER TO THE GOLF COURSE AND STARTED PLAYING TOUCH FOOTBALL WITH THE CADDIES, WHO HAPPENED TO BE

ALL BLACK.

AND WE HAD A BALL.

AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE EXPERIENCE, BECAUSE MOST OF THE BLACK GUYS WERE FOUR OR FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN I WAS, AND I WAS KIND OF RUNNING AROUND ALMOST UNDERNEATH THEIR LEGS AS THEY WERE LEAPING UP TO CATCH PASSES AND STUFF.

BUT IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE FUN THING TO DO.

WE GET HOME.

THE PHONE IS RINGING OFF THE WALL, AND THE PARENTS OF SOME OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDS WERE IRATE THAT WE WERE PLAYING WITH BLACKS.

AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE LESSON, BECAUSE MY DAD, A VERY LOW-KEY PERSON, BUT HE SAT US DOWN AND SAID THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS ALL UPSET ABOUT THIS KIND OF STUFF.

AND HE SAID, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT'S WRONG.

THE COLOR OF SOMEBODY'S SKIN IS NOT HOW YOU JUDGE THEM.

AND I DON'T REMEMBER ALL OF THE PRECISE WORDS, BUT THE MESSAGE WAS SO LOUD AND CLEAR, AND AT THE SAME TIME, HE WAS NOT REAL PEJORATIVE AGAINST THOSE PEOPLE.

HE SAID THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE PREJUDICE.

THAT'S HOW THEY'VE BEEN TAUGHT, AND IT'S NOT RIGHT.

AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT.

YOU GUYS DID NOTHING WRONG.

YOU KNOW, THAT STUCK WITH ME, OBVIOUSLY, VERY, VERY

IMPORTANT LESSON IN MY LIFE.

>>Geoff Simon: WAS YOUR FATHER AN IMPORTANT MENTOR TO YOU?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: YEAH, MY DAD -- BOTH MY MOM AND DAD WERE SUCH EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE.

MY DAD WAS SUCH A GENEROUS PERSON, AND THAT'S BECAUSE HE HAD EMPATHY AND COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE.

WHEN HE RETIRED FROM BUSINESS, HE ENDED UP HOW HE SPENT HIS RETIREMENT YEARS WAS WORKING AT THE HOSPITAL.

AND EVERYBODY LOVED HIM, BECAUSE HE TREATED EVERYBODY THE SAME.

HERE'S A PERSON THAT WAS, EVEN WHEN HE RETIRED, EVERYBODY KNEW WHO CONNIE MACK WAS IN FT. MYERS.

AND HE WAS SO LOOKED UP TO, AND HE SPENT HIS TIME, BECAUSE HE GOT ENJOYMENT OUT OF IT OF DEALING WITH PEOPLE THAT WERE IN THE HOSPITAL.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, AS A KID, WERE YOU INVOLVED IN SPORTS? WAS BASEBALL A PREREQUISITE --

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: IT WASN'T A PREREQUISITE, BUT I LOVED IT.

I WAS A PITCHER.

I LETTERED FOUR YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL IN BASEBALL.

I PLAYED BASKETBALL AND FOOTBALL, WHICH I FEEL REALLY LUCKY, BECAUSE IN THIS DAY AND TIME, I DOUBT THAT I COULD PLAY ON ANY OF THEM.

AND IT'S SO SPECIALIZED.

BUT WE WERE ABLE TO PLAY ALL THE SPORTS.

AND FOOTBALL, INTERESTING ENOUGH, WAS MORE OF A LESSON -- LIFE LESSON FOR ME BECAUSE I CAN REMEMBER THESE HOT AUGUST DAYS THAT FOOTBALL PRACTICE BEFORE THE SEASON STARTED, AND FOOTBALL IS A VERY PHYSICAL GAME.

AND THERE WERE SO MANY TIMES WHEN I WOULD FEEL LIKE I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN KEEP DOING THIS.

AND I KEPT DOING IT.

AND I LEARNED A LEVEL OF PERSEVERANCE BY THAT PHYSICALITY OF BEING OUT THERE IN THAT HOT SUN, MUSCLES ACHING, GETTING UP IN THE MORNING FROM TWO-DAY PRACTICES -- TWO PRACTICE DAYS, AND THAT ALSO HAS STAYED WITH ME.

THERE'S A PERSEVERANCE THAT I LEARNED FROM THAT, PLAYING FOOTBALL, THAT WAS VERY IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, YOU WENT ON TO THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, UNDERGRADUATE AND YOU ALSO WENT TO LAW SCHOOL. HOW DID YOU SEE YOUR CAREER DEVELOPING AT THAT POINT?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: WELL, I HAD IN MIND, I TOOK POLITICAL SCIENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE, WHICH WAS AT THE TIME KIND OF THE ONLY PATH THAT WAS RECOMMENDED FOR GOING FOR LAW SCHOOL.

I'M NOT SURE I WOULD RECOMMEND TO OTHER PEOPLE THAT THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO DO IT.

SO GOING TO LAW SCHOOL WAS ALMOST LIKE A NATURAL SORT OF THING.

I DID THAT.

I DID VERY WELL IN LAW SCHOOL.

AND I ACTUALLY HAD IN MIND THAT I THOUGHT I WOULD WANT TO BE A JUDGE WHEN I -- AT SOME LATER TIME IN MY CAREER, SO I CHOSE WHEN I GOT -- WHEN I GRADUATED FROM LAW SCHOOL TO GO CLERK FOR A FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT JUDGE IN JACKSONVILLE. AND INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, WHILE IT WAS FASCINATING JOB, AND WE HAD SOME REALLY INTERESTING CASES, INCLUDING DESEGREGATION CASES BACK IN THAT TIME, I LEARNED THAT IT WAS TOO PASSIVE FOR ME, AND SO I LEARNED SOMETHING THAT -- WHAT I DIDN'T WANT TO DO.

SO I GRADUATED, DID THAT JOB, AND THEN WENT TO WORK FOR A LAW FIRM THAT WAS A PREDECESSOR TO THE CURRENT HOLLAND AND KNIGHT.

>>Geoff Simon: IT WAS ALSO DURING YOUR COLLEGE YEARS THAT YOU MET YOUR FUTURE WIFE, GRACI.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: YES.

>>Geoff Simon: TELL US ABOUT THAT.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: THAT'S A DREAM.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GRACI, WE'VE BEEN MARRIED 45 YEARS.

WE MET BECAUSE SHE WAS DATING, AND ACTUALLY PINNED TO A BROTHER IN MY FRATERNITY.

AND SHE WOULD FIX ME UP WITH DATES FROM HER SORORITY, DELTA GAMMA, AND WE WERE GOOD FRIENDS.

ONE MORNING, BOTH OF US SKIPPED CLASS, ENDED UP IN A PLACE

CALLED THE HUB ON THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CAMPUS WHERE WE
PLAYED BRIDGE.

WE WOULD GATHER AND PLAY BRIDGE AND FOR THOSE WHO DRANK
COFFEE, DRANK COFFEE.

AND GRACI ANNOUNCED THAT SHE HAD BROKEN UP WITH THIS
FRATERNITY BROTHER OF MINE.

AND I IMMEDIATELY ASKED HER OUT.

AND I TELL YOU, I HAVE NO MEMORY OF -- IT JUST HAPPENED.

I ASKED HER OUT.

WE WENT OUT THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY NIGHT.

AND IT'S A MODIFIED LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, BECAUSE I HAD MET
GRACI BEFORE.

BUT THAT NIGHT WAS MAGICAL.

WE BOTH FELL IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER HEAD OVER HEELS.

AND THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF A 45-YEAR ROMANCE THAT I TELL
YOU, SHE'S THE LOVE OF MY LIFE AND THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE.

>>Geoff Simon: AFTER PRACTICING LAW FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS,
YOU ACTUALLY LEFT THE LAW AND BECAME AN ENTREPRENEUR.

YOU TEAMED UP WITH TWO PARTNERS AND FORMED COAXIAL
COMMUNICATIONS, COAXIAL CABLE.

WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

WHY DID YOU GIVE UP LAW TO GO INTO CABLE TV, A FLEDGLING
BUSINESS?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: WELL, THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE OF
THE PARTNERS STARTED IN LAW SCHOOL.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN WAS A LAW PROFESSOR OF MINE.
HE AND I BECAME FRIENDS DURING LAW SCHOOL.
AND ACTUALLY ONE DAY HE CALLED ME INTO HIS OFFICE AND SAID,
YOU KNOW, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I'M GOING TO TEACH
LAW.
I'M NOT SURE THAT THIS IS CUT OUT FOR ME.
HE HAD ALREADY BEEN IN BUSINESS.
MADE ENOUGH MONEY TO RETIRE, TEACH, AND I'M THINKING ABOUT
GOING INTO THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS.
SO WE KIND OF KEPT UP AFTER I LEFT LAW SCHOOL.
AND ONE AUGUST AFTERNOON, I WAS ON MY FIRST PAID VACATION
EVER, AND I GET A PHONE CALL FROM BARRY.
AND HE TELLS ME ABOUT THIS OTHER FELLA THAT HE GOT TO KNOW,
STEVE McVOY, WHO IS NOW THE THIRD PARTNER, AND THE CABLE
TELEVISION LOOKS LIKE A FASCINATING BUSINESS TO BE IN, WOULD
I COME UP AND TALK TO HIM ABOUT JOINING HIM?
AND REFLECTING YEARS LATER WHILE I WENT THROUGH WHAT I
CONSIDERED DUE DILIGENCE AND WENT UP THERE AND MET, THE
MINUTE I HUNG UP THE PHONE, I KNEW I WAS GOING TO DO IT.
THERE WAS KIND OF AN INSTINCT TO SAY THIS IS FOR ME.
I APPRECIATE YOU REFERRING TO BEING COURAGEOUS AND
INTRODUCING ME, I DIDN'T FEEL THAT WAY AT ALL.
I FELT LIKE I HAD GOOD, SOLID BASE IN LAW.
I COULD ALWAYS GO BACK AND PRACTICE LAW.
AND SO HERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME TO DO -- AND,

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

OF COURSE, IT TURNED OUT, NO WAY COULD I IMAGINE THE WAY THAT IT TURNED OUT.

MY LIFE AS AN ENTREPRENEUR AND BUSINESSMAN WAS SO FULFILLING AND INTERESTING, FILLED WITH A LOT OF UPS AND A LOT OF DOWNS.

>>Geoff Simon: WELL, LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME OF THOSE UPS AND DOWNS.

THIS WAS -- IN THE 1960s, CABLE TV WAS SMALL.

IT EXPLODED IN THE 1970s AND 1980s.

YOU PROBABLY COULDN'T ANTICIPATE THE WAY IT WAS GOING TO GO, BUT TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THOSE UPS AND DOWNS.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: WELL, WHEN WE FIRST -- WHEN BARRY AND STEVE FIRST GOT TOGETHER, AND THEN I JOINED THEM, THERE WAS THE PROMISE FOR SATELLITE, AND THAT WAS GOING TO BE SATELLITE TRANSMISSION OF BROADCAST SIGNALS AND OTHER PROGRAMMING WAS THE FUTURE OF CABLE.

AND WE ALL KIND OF KNEW THAT.

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME SATELLITE SIGNALS WERE AVAILABLE, PEOPLE WERE NERVOUS.

WAS IT REALLY GOING TO WORK?

AND, OF COURSE, IT DID, AND THE REST IS HISTORY.

WE STARTED OUT BUILDING SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES IN FLORIDA, GEORGIA, AND ALABAMA, SO SMALL THAT PEOPLE -- THAT THE BIG GUYS WOULDN'T GO AFTER.

AND WE DEVELOPED SOME TECHNOLOGY, I SAY WE, BASICALLY STEVE

McVOY, WHO WAS OUR TECHNOLOGY GUY, WE BUILT PARABOLIC ANTENNAS USED IN CANADA TO BRING SIGNALS IN FROM 200 MILES AWAY.

NO ONE ELSE WAS DOING THAT OR NOT MANY PEOPLE.

BECAUSE WE WERE IN THE RURAL SOUTH, WE COULD ACTUALLY PUT OUR CABLES UNDERGROUND.

WE COULD PLOW THEM UNDERGROUND.

WE REALLY LEARNED THAT BUSINESS IN THAT FIVE-DOLLAR-A-MONTH, IMPROVE YOUR SIGNAL OR BRING TV TO THE TOWN IF YOU COULDN'T GET ANY AT ALL.

THE FUTURE WE KNEW LAY IN THE BIG CITIES.

SO FAIRLY EARLY ON, WE MADE A JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENT WITH AN INSURANCE COMPANY BASED IN CHICAGO.

AND IT WAS -- THE FUTURE LOOKED UNLIMITED BECAUSE HERE IS THIS BIG INSURANCE COMPANY WITH ALL THE CAPITAL WE WOULD NEED.

HOWEVER, AS PLANS GO AWRY, THAT INSURANCE COMPANY WAS TAKEN OVER BY ANOTHER COMPANY, A CONGLOMERATE, THAT HAD ITS EYE ONLY ON THE INSURANCE BUSINESS, AND OUR INVESTMENT ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER INVESTMENTS OUTSIDE THE INSURANCE BUSINESS WERE REALLY PUSHED ASIDE BY THAT COMPANY.

AND WE ACTUALLY FOUGHT FOR OUR LIVES.

THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE US OVER, SELL EVERYTHING OUT, AND I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT AFTER FAIRLY EXTENSIVE CONVERSATIONS AND SOME PIECES OF LITIGATION, WE ENDED UP

SETTLING AND BUYING THEM OUT AND WERE ABLE TO, BECAUSE THE BUSINESS HAD GROWN DURING THIS TIME, WERE ABLE TO FINANCE THE PURCHASE OF THAT.

AND THAT KIND OF SET US ON OUR WAY THEN TO BUILD OUR BUSINESS.

>>Geoff Simon: AND AS YOU BUILT THE BUSINESS, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY WAS FINANCE, LARGELY.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: IT WAS FINANCE, SOME CONNECTION WITH MANAGEMENT.

FAIRLY EARLY ON, ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I'M VERY PROUD OF THAT WE DID, AND BARRY WAS THE ONE WHO FIRST SAID IT, IS, YOU KNOW, WE'RE NOT OPERATING GUYS.

SO WHEN WE GET BIG ENOUGH, WE NEED TO BRING IN PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS, AND WE DID THAT FAIRLY EARLY ON.

SO THAT FREED US UP TO LOOK FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO BUY AND SELL CABLE SYSTEMS TO -- AND PART OF MY JOB WAS THEN TO GO OUT TO THE MARKETS TO BUY -- TO FINANCE WHAT WE WERE DOING.

IN THE EARLY YEARS, IT WAS VERY TOUGH, PARTICULARLY FOR A SMALL PRIVATE COMPANY.

THERE WERE VERY FEW FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT HAD THE EXPERTISE.

NOW, WHEN CABLE TOOK OFF, THEN IT BECAME EVERYBODY'S DARLING, AND MONEY WAS EASY TO GET.

>>Geoff Simon: NOW, IN THE 1990s, THE THREE OF YOU SOLD COAXIAL.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: YEAH.

>>Geoff Simon: YOU HAD INVESTED IN OTHER BUSINESSES AS WELL,
BUT YOU TURNED A LOT OF YOUR ENERGY INTO PHILANTHROPY AND
INTO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, AS DID YOUR WIFE GRACI.
LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, SOME OF THE
PROJECTS IMPORTANT TO YOU.

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: WELL, I GUESS I WOULD START WITH ONE
THAT'S CURRENT RIGHT NOW THAT WE ARE IN OUR FIFTH YEAR A
PROJECT CALLED EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES.

EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES IS AN OUTDOOR ART EXHIBIT OF
BILLBOARD-SIZE WORKS OF ART, 39 OF THEM, THAT WE PRESENT
EACH YEAR AT THE BAYFRONT IN SARASOTA.

THE PHRASE "EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES" REPRESENTS THE NOTION
OF THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND FIGHTING HATRED
AND PREJUDICE.

AND WE ORIGINALLY STARTED THE PROJECT IN CONNECTION WITH THE
FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM IN ST. PETERSBURG.

THERE WAS A TRAVELING INTERNATIONAL EXHIBIT AROUND THAT SAME
CONCEPT.

IT WAS CALLED COEXISTENCE.

WE HAD SUCH SUCCESS THAT THE STEERING COMMITTEE THAT WE HAD
PUT TOGETHER SAID WE HAVE TO TRY THIS.

SARASOTA IS A GREAT ARTS COMMUNITY.

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN'T PRODUCE QUALITY ART AND CONTINUE THIS.

SO WE SAID WE'RE GOING TO DO IT ONE MORE YEAR.

WE'RE NOW IN OUR -- STARTING OUR FIFTH YEAR, AND I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT WE SHOULD GO OVER 500,000 PEOPLE THAT WILL HAVE SEEN OUR EXHIBIT EACH YEAR.

IT RUNS DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL, AND IT IS ONE OF THE MOST GRATIFYING EXPERIENCES THAT I'VE HAD.

IT'S BROUGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER.

THE MESSAGE IS SO IMPORTANT IN THIS DAY AND TIME ABOUT HOW DIVERSITY ENRICHES OUR LIVES, AND HOW IT'S SO -- AND HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT PEOPLE RESPECT THE THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS OF OTHERS.

WE GET SOMETIMES WAY TOO FOCUSED.

YOU KNOW, THE REALITY IS, IF WE LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE, THEN WE'VE ELEVATED OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.

AND ALSO, WE REALLY PROMOTE THE CONCEPT OF STANDING UP, SPEAKING OUT, TO FIGHT HATRED AND PREJUDICE WHERE WE SEE IT. SO IT'S, OBVIOUSLY, VERY DEAR TO MY HEART.

ANOTHER PROJECT THAT I AM SO PROUD OF, AND THIS IS ONE THAT MY WIFE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN FOR 20-SOME YEARS, AND I'M HAPPY TO REPORT NOW I'M ABLE TO HELP HER SOME WITH THIS, IS THE CHILD PROTECTION CENTER IS A NONPROFIT IN SARASOTA WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS TO DEAL WITH CHILD ABUSE.

MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE OF HOW PERVASIVE CHILD ABUSE IS.

IN SARASOTA AND DESOTO COUNTIES, WHICH ARE THE AREAS THE CHILD PROTECTION CENTER DEALS WITH, THERE ARE A THOUSAND REPORTED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE, AND WE ARE CURRENTLY ONLY

ABLE TO DEAL WITH 300 OF THEM.

THE EFFORTS OF THE CHILD PROTECTION CENTER AND WHAT GRACI HAS BEEN SPENDING THE LAST 20 YEARS TRYING TO DO IS TO BREAK THE CYCLE.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WHILE EVERY CHILD WHO HAS BEEN ABUSED DOESN'T BECOME AN ABUSER, 99.9% OF EVERY ABUSER HAS BEEN AN ABUSED CHILD.

AND WE HAVE ALL KINDS OF PROGRAMS AFTER THEY BECOME PERPETRATORS.

WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOR DEALING WITH WHEN THESE INNOCENT CHILDREN, I'M TALKING ABOUT TWO-MONTH-OLD, FIVE-MONTH-OLD KIDS, FIVE-YEAR-OLD KIDS.

IN SARASOTA, THE CHILD PROTECTION CENTER DOES SUCH INCREDIBLE WORK.

WE'VE NOW RUN OUT OF SPACE IN THE LOCATION WHERE THE CENTER IS, SO WE'RE NOT ABLE TO DEAL WITH ALL THE PEOPLE.

SO WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A MAJOR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO BUILD A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER, AND WE'RE GOING TO STOP THE CYCLE OF CHILD ABUSE.

>>Geoff Simon: PHILANTHROPY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, SOCIAL ACTIVISM ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU AND TO YOUR WIFE.

IN THE ONE MINUTE THAT WE HAVE LEFT, HOW DO YOU DECIDE TO GET INVOLVED?

AND HOW DO YOU DECIDE TO DIRECT YOUR PHILANTHROPY?

>>Dennis McGillicuddy: I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN I SAW THE

SAYING ON A WALL, ON A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE AND UNDERNEATH IT WAS THIS SAYING THAT SAYS "MANY THINGS CAN CATCH YOUR EYE BUT ONLY A FEW CAPTURE YOUR HEART."

AND THAT'S HOW I GO.

I KIND OF CONNECT TO WHAT REALLY MAKES MY SKIN TINGLE, WHAT MAKES MORE JUICES -- BECAUSE THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH WONDERFUL PEOPLE DOING GREAT THINGS.

AND YOU CAN'T DO THEM ALL.

SO THAT'S KIND OF HOW -- I SEE WHAT RESONATES WITH ME.

THE OTHER FACTOR, WHICH IS ANOTHER RESONATING FACTOR, IS THE PEOPLE THAT ARE INVOLVED DOING IT, IF I FEEL A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO THEM.

AND THAT'S WORKED PRETTY WELL.

>>Geoff Simon: WELL, DENNIS, IT'S BEEN GREAT HAVING YOU AS OUR GUEST.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO REACH US AT THE "SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM" WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, OUR E-MAIL ADDRESS IS SBF@WEDU.ORG.

AND YOU CAN VIEW THIS SHOW ALONG WITH PAST EPISODES OF THE "SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM" AT WEDU.ORG.

THANKS FOR JOINING US FOR THE "SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM."

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