AccuRay's genesis found in post-WWII nuclear technology

Jan. 16, 1983 by Andi Gates Dispatch Business Reporter

AccuRay Corp get off to a modest start 33 years ago in the basement of a two-bedroom Columbus apartment. But the roots of the company are in New England and the technology unleashed by the atomic bomb. Two of AccuRay's three founders, Bert Chope and George B. Foster, neither of whom have ties with the company today, met in November 1949 when they were employees of a Boston company called Tracerlab. Bert Chope's brother, Roy, an Air Force engineer with whom Bert shared an apartment in a
Boston suburb, was the third founder.

TRACERLAB HIRED Foster, who grew up in Chicago, studied at Harvard and spent five years in the Navy before engineering school to improve one of the company's new products, the beta gage. This device used radioactive material to measure sheets of raw materials, such as rubber
for tiremeking, during manufacturing. Foster was excited about Tracerlab, riding high as a glamor firm at the time. A spinoff of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tracerlab got started shortly after the A-bomb was dropped on Japan. It was among the first companies to explore the peacetime use of nuclear science. But neither Foster not Chope, an Ohio State University electrical engineer who joined the company in sales, stayed very long. After Foster set to work on
the gage, he said it became clear to him and to Chope that a complete redesign was needed for the gage to be useful to industry. Tracerlab wasn't interested I Foster's ideas.

"**MANAGEMENT** didn't want to spend the money," he said in an interview. Frustrated and believing the gage had enormous sales potential, Foster and Chope decided to quit Tracerlab and set up their own 'company. To do that, they needed a "fine-grind scientist" Foster said, and $50,000. Chope's brother, Roy, also an OSU graduate, joined the pair. "You figure out where the
Trees are going to be in the orchard," said Foster. "Then you need someone to grow them and make sure they have no worms; Roy Chope was that kind of fellow." Edward Blair of the Chicago investment. banking firm, William Blair & Co.,, and a classmate of Foster's brother, agreed to back the company by selling as agent for AccuRay $50,000 in securities. In June 1950, the Chope and Foster left Boston for Columbus and set up a lab in the basement of their Sells Ave. apartment. The company was originally named Industrial Nucleonics Corp, which was changed to AccuRay', the name of the company's product line, in 1979.

COLUMBUS WAS chosen, Foster said, because at Battelle Memorial Institute and the Chopes' friendship with an OSU physics professor. "Columbus also was the. economic center of gravity of the markets we wanted to serve: metals, paper and tires," he said. Battelle agreed to order and receive nuclear material from the government for the fledging company. The company moved to a vacant store and then a building on Chesapeake Ave, home for many Columbus high-technology firms. The first beta gage was sold for $10,000 in June 1951 to Mohawk Tire & Rubber Co., Akron. In 1960, Foster and the company parted ways. "I felt we should. Broaden our base of instrumentation into infrared, optics and acoustics and make a heavy effort to computers to integrate all this," he said. "There was a divergence of views ".

FOSTER SUBSEQUNENTLY formed three Columbus high-technology companies. One was later sold- to Reliance Electric, and today, Foster is president of Foster Air Data Systems Inc. and Chairman of Autech Corp. In 1968, another employee David A. Bossen Who had worked with Foster and embraced his ideas left to form Measurex Corp. The Cupertino, Calif., company is AccuRay's biggest direct competitor. Bert Chope left AccuRay in 1970. His brother Roy, and Edward Blair continue to be AccuRay directors.

ON THE NEXT PAGE IS THE ORIGINAL JAN. 16, 1983 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

AccuRay's genesis found in post-WWII nuclear technology

By Andi Gates
Dispatch Business Reporter

AccuRay Corp. got off to a modest start 33 years ago in the basement of a two-bedroom Columbus apartment. But the roots of the company are in New England and the technology unleashed by the atomic bomb.

Two of AccuRay's three founders, Bert Chope and George B. Foster, neither of whom have ties with the company today, met in November 1949 when they were employees of a Boston company called Tracerlab.

Bert Chope's brother, Roy, an Air Force engineer with whom Bert shared an apartment in a Boston suburb, was the third founder.

TRACERLAB HIRED Foster, who grew up in Chicago, studied at Harvard and spent five years in the Navy before engineering school, to improve one of the company's new products, the beta gage.

This device used radioactive material to measure sheets of raw materials, such as rubber for tiremaking, during manufacturing.

Foster was excited about Tracerlab, riding high as a glamor firm at the time. A spinoff of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tracerlab got started shortly after the A-bomb was dropped on Japan. It was among the first companies to explore the peacetime use of nuclear science.

But neither Foster nor Chope, an Ohio State University electrical engineer who joined the company in sales, stayed very long.

After Foster set to work on the gage, he said it became clear to him and to Chope that a complete redesign was needed for the gage to be useful to industry. Tracerlab wasn't interested in Foster's ideas.

"MANAGEMENT didn't want to spend the money," he said in an interview.

Frustrated and believing the gage had enormous sales potential, Foster and Chope decided to quit Tracerlab and set up their own company. To do that, they needed a "fine-grind scientist," Foster said, and $50,000.

Chope's brother, Roy, also an OSU graduate, joined the pair.

"You figure out where the trees are going to be in the orchard," said Foster. "Then you need someone to grow them and make sure they have no worms; Roy Chope was that kind of fellow."

Edward Blair of the Chicago investment banking firm, William Blair & Co., and a classmate of Foster's brother, agreed to back the company by selling as agent for AccuRay $50,000 in securities.

In June 1950, the Chopes and Foster left Boston for Columbus and set up a lab in the basement of their Sells Ave. apartment. The company was originally named Industrial Nucleonics Corp., which was changed to AccuRay, the name of the company's product line, in 1979.

COLUMBUS WAS chosen, Foster said, because of Battelle Memorial Institute and the Chopes' friendship with an OSU physics professor.

"Columbus also was the economic center of gravity of the markets we wanted to serve: metals, paper and tires," he said.

Battelle agreed to order and receive nuclear material from the government for the fledging company.

The company moved to a vacant store and then a building on Chesapeake Ave., home for many Columbus high-technology firms. The first beta gage was sold for $10,000 in June 1951 to Mohawk Tire & Rubber Co., Akron.

In 1960, Foster and the company parted ways. "I felt we should broaden our base of instrumentation into infrared, optics and acoustics and make a heavy effort to use computers to integrate all this," he said. "There was a divergence of views . . ."

FOSTER SUBSEQUENTLY formed three Columbus high-technology companies. One was later sold to Reliance Electric, and today, Foster is president of Foster Air Data Systems Inc. and chairman of Autech Corp.

In 1968, another AccuRay employee, David A. Bossen, who had worked with Foster and embraced his ideas, left to form Measurex Corp. The Cupertino, Calif., company is AccuRay's biggest direct competitor.

Bert Chope left AccuRay in 1970. His brother, Roy, and Edward Blair continue to be AccuRay directors.