

GEORGE MACLEOD (*former General Manager*)

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To set scale I began with a BS and MS Stanford, as graduate student taught mineralogy lab, met one of the students a gorgeous blue eyed blond Princess, married her now some 63 years ago. I started with Standard of California as a field geophysicist looking for oil. We have four grown and married children, seven grandchildren, three great grandchildren.

My life got interesting when in 1957 my father in law, brother and a few others joined together to form a new company to grow silicon crystals with Dean Knapic. The first crystals we grew were about 100 grams and shaped pretty much like your thumb. I was Director of Marketing for this powerful start up. We were successful in learning to grow silicon crystals but in the process used up all the dollar capital and more than we had ever dreamed of. Of Course we went broke, all got fired with me and the Princess and four little children out of work. That should have taught me to stay away from start-ups! But I am a slow learner.

Monsanto in 1960 was starting a silicon business and hired me to be their first salesman with a territory West of the Mississippi. At the time only silicon uses were for solar cells and power rectifiers -- no integrated circuits, most beginning transistors were made with germanium. We continued to make great progress growing silicon crystals and the applications were rapidly growing. In 1964 I was moved to St Louis and promoted to be Director of Marketing of their new Electronic Materials group.

Sometime around 1966 Monsanto Research phoned me and said they had something spectacular to show me. They took me in a dark room, put a black cloth over my head and with great excitement asked me to look through a microscope. I could see NOTHING – all black! More discussion and more looks through microscope and FINALLY I saw it, a TINY faint red glowing spot. Frankly I was not impressed but the research types standing around were aglow with forecasts that this was the end of the incandescent light!! This was indeed big news the first Monsanto optoelectronic light. And I am sure there were other labs around the world beginning to get the same type of results. Technical progress at Monsanto would be rapid. I went back to work trying to sell silicon and other electronic materials.

Early in 1968 Monsanto asked me to lead a group of fifteen young engineers to begin building commercial products with this new optoelectronic technology. I pointed out all the problems and dangers of entering the electronic device business. I said that it would be essential to move to Silicon Valley where we would have access to materials and personnel but more importantly be motivated by the fast moving new technical ambience that would encourage and motivate our young team. The Company`s response. "This is your project George, go for it!"

By September we had with help from the corporate Engineering group, selected a site, contracted for a new tilt up 3,000 square foot building and importantly hired a new Semiconductor Chief Engineer from Fairchild Semiconductor. The first arrivals from St Louis Research arrived by mid-September and we had lift off!!! And make no mistake none of this could have happened without major help from the personnel of Monsanto Research, the help and performance of the technical people selected for the staffing, all the personnel in other Monsanto areas like Legal, Personnel, Engineering, and Finance.

But be all this is as it may within a few months this new group began to turn out new optoelectronic products.

Because there were so many unknowns we selected our name as Monsanto Electronic Special Products all within the group knowing that the initials ESP could stand for Extra Sensory Perception to make a clear statement that we were going to need help from every source. Finally the incredible work and enthusiasm and creativity of all the young people we brought with us and hired here in California acted as if they were all on a religious crusade. We were going to light the world with our Light Emitting Diodes. Well they say pioneers get arrows in their backs and now some 40 years later the rest of the world is finally beginning to see our dream of those glory years finally come true... The world is indeed going to be lit with our Light Emitting Diodes.

And to prove I am a slow learner after two start-ups I began yet another one. After leaving Monsanto, Greta and I bought fifty raw, rocky, hilly acres in Sonoma Valley with the intent of clearing the land and planting a vineyard and then learning how to make great wine from those grapes. Well we did that and now after some 30 plus years we are recognized for our great grapes and special wines. And these thirty years and the twenty with Monsanto have each one been wonderfully happy and special from every dimension and goal planned and achieved. Just a wonderful life. But somehow now at age 90 I have overlooked one small detail that many find very important. None of those years of great happiness coupled with great achievement have made any money!

Oh Well!!! Maybe you can` t have everything.



George – Monsanto days



George – today

(Photo by Carol Craford)