

## Robin Siegfried

The family's successful business, NORDAM, gives them the opportunity to give back to their community.

### Chapter 01 - Introduction

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**Announcer:** NORDAM is a Tulsa-based aerospace company that employs 2,500 “stakeholders” worldwide. But, before there was a NORDAM, there was a sixteen-year-old boy who left Pennsylvania in 1911 because his parents could not afford to take care of him. Ray H. Siegfried was on his way to Texas by train but only got as far as Sapulpa, Oklahoma, because he was running out of money. He found work as an office boy for The Texas Company, which eventually became Texaco. After various exploits, his gregarious personality led him to the insurance business and he formed R.H. Siegfried & Co.

Ray married Ruth McBride and they had one child, Robert before Ruth's untimely death in 1936. Bobby Siegfried worked alongside his father for thirty-eight years at R.H. Siegfried & Co. Bobby married Betty Helfrich in 1938 and they began the third generation of Siegfrieds: Diane, Ray II, Robin, Celest, and Rick.

Over the years the family-owned insurance company would often take control of failing companies they had insured. Through this rehabilitation Ray Sr. would preserve the companies and the jobs they provided, and in so doing they would meet their insurance obligation.

Just such a situation arose regarding a little company named NORDAM.

The grandson of that sixteen-year-old boy, Robin Siegfried, tells the story of the family and the company known as Northeastern Oklahoma Research, Development and Manufacturing: NORDAM, heard here on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com), supported by the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities at The University of Tulsa

**Chapter 02 - 6:50****Grandfather Siegfried**

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling. Today's date is September 10, 2015. Robin, would you state your full name, please?

**Robin Siegfried:** Robin Siegfried.

**JE:** Do you have a middle name?

**RS:** No.

**JE:** Really?

**RS:** Used to, got rid of it.

**JE:** Is that true?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** You didn't like it?

**RS:** No, it was that when I came out of college I was always known as Robin, but my real name was Robert. And so when I started working in the same town as my father everybody started calling me Robert or Bobby. And I was never known as that. And all my papers that I had to sign legally said Robert and Bobby and that went that way.

And so finally, I said, "I'm known as Robin." I went down and changed it, no middle initial—Robin Siegfried.

**JE:** Interesting story. What is your date of birth?

**RS:** 12/16/48.

**JE:** December 16, '48, and so your present age would be?

**RS:** Sixty-six.

**JE:** And we're recording this here in the recording facilities of [VoicesofOklahoma.com.](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com), in Tulsa. Where were you born?

**RS:** In Tulsa, at St. John's Hospital.

**JE:** And your family has a connection to St. John's Hospital.

**RS:** We do.

**JE:** Which I will get into. Your education, quickly here—elementary, where did you go to school?

**RS:** I went to Marquette, then I went to Cassia Hall, and then I went to the University of Oklahoma.

**JE:** You graduated from the University of Oklahoma in what year?

**RS:** 'Seventy-two.

**JE:** I think you became a member of the Board of Regents there, didn't you?

**RS:** Not in '72, but I did later.

**JE:** Yeah. And weren't you chairman of the—

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** ...Board of Regents—

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** ...at one time?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** How many years did you serve there?

**RS:** I served seven. They asked me to re-up and I said I'd had enough, time for somebody else to do it.

**JE:** What was your degree in at OU?

**RS:** Just business with a major in management and finance.

**JE:** What did you do then after college?

**RS:** I went to work for NORDAM.

**JE:** So you went right to work. And how did you get involved in and how did you work in the family business? What did you do there?

**RS:** NORDAM was fledgling at that time, it only was a year old or so. And we'd had really no products, but it was a method for my brother and I to have our own thing, if it succeeded, rather than go into the family business, which was insurance. So I was kind of the outside guy, developing markets, developing new programs that we could bid upon and manufacture.

**JE:** And I want to get into some of that later on. Let's go back to the very beginning and talk about your grandfather, who would be Ray H. Siegfried. What was his middle name?

**RS:** Henry.

**JE:** Okay. I believe he came out of Pennsylvania.

**RS:** He did.

**JE:** Can you talk to us about what brought him here and a little bit about that?

**RS:** This was my father's father. And my father, Bobby, was an only child of him. My grandfather, Ray, was one of twelve children and he was the youngest. And his mother could not keep him because they were too poor. His father, as we understand it, was a drunken train bum, and he was never home but he was a hobo, you might say as what we know it.

So my grandfather's mother put him in a foster home because she couldn't take care of him. This would be Ray's mother put him in a foster home, which was a Catholic nun-based facility. So that's when he became a real Christian and a Catholic. And he knew that there was jobs to be had in Texas in the oil business.

His father, being a hobo, he learned from him how to hobo and he was gonna do that on his way to Texas. He became a telegraph operator to make enough money to buy his next ticket to the next train stop. And then he'd telegraph operate for some money until the next ticket came. He worked his way and the train stopped in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, and I think it was Kiefer, Oklahoma, or around Sapulpa somewhere, he got a job as an

office boy for a company called the Texas Company, which now as we know is Texaco. He became an office boy and he kind of liked Sapulpa and that area. There was some oil there so he never made it to Texas.

He fell in love with this lady who was the singer and piano player in a bar in Sapulpa, and that became his wife later on.

**JE:** And her name was?

**RS:** Her name was Ruth. I don't know her maiden name.

**JE:** I think I have it here, McBride, Ruth McBride.

**RS:** Okay, and that was my middle name, McBride.

**JE:** Oh really? Well, that's a nice name, you should have kept it.

**RS:** Yeah.

**JE:** All right. So then he gets married to Ruth and what's happening to him then?

**RS:** So he always had a gift of gab, he could sell anything, I guess. He went to work selling insurance for a guy named Tom Braniff, who was running an airline, mainly for the mail. Mr. Braniff also had this insurance company, so long story short, Mr. Braniff became more interested in his personal time running an airline and flying as a pilot than the insurance.

So eventually, my grandfather bought the insurance agency from Tom Braniff, and Mr. Braniff spent full time in the airline. He changed that to Siegfried Insurance.

**JE:** We should connect the name, of course. That was Braniff Airlines we're talking about. And there were other people around that were pretty instrumental in life, I think, W. K. Warren, and L. F. Rooney, founder of Manhattan Construction Company, they all kind of ran together, didn't they?

**RS:** They did.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** They did. Mr. Warren Sr. and my grandfather were great friends. When Mr. Rooney died, he was his best friend and he was at his deathbed, which was at the top of the Mayo Hotel where he lived and died there.

**JE:** Mr. Rooney lived up there.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** On top of the Mayo Hotel.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Lived and died there.

**RS:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Wow.

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**Chapter 03 - 6:15**  
**Siegfried Insurance**

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**John Erling:** Then he forms the R. A. Siegfried Insurance Company.

**Robin Siegfried:** That is correct.

**JE:** What kind of an insurance and bonding company was it? Who did they cater to?

**RS:** It was basically a property and casualty insurance company. They did some life but that was not their big thing. He became really good at bonding pipeline companies for oil and drilling companies. They did a lot of insurance with the forerunner of the Williams Companies, Parker Drilling and the like.

**JE:** You must be, obviously, very proud of your grandfather. How old do you think he was when he came to Tulsa?

**RS:** Oh, I know, he was twelve.

**JE:** Twelve years old?

**RS:** Twelve years old. He made it here by himself.

**JE:** And then, obviously, he lived a number of years before he met his bride, Ruth. But to have come here at twelve...

**RS:** His highest education was sixth grade.

**JE:** I guess you've already alluded to it, he must have had that very outgoing personality and everybody liked to be around him.

**RS:** He did. When St. John's Hospital was originally being developed and built they hired the largest hospital builder at the time in Madison, Wisconsin. My grandfather didn't have a lot of connections at the time. He was just an insurance salesman. Maybe the name will come to me in a minute but there was a very wealthy oilman here who was the foundation of the hospital, but he had no personality. He had all the contacts but couldn't close.

So he got with my grandfather and the two of them would team up on the potential givers to build the original hospital and tag team them, you might say, and that's how the original building got started.

**JE:** For St. John's Hospital?

**RS:** For St. John's.

**JE:** Wow. He was the kind that was involved in many civic issues, but beyond St. John's Hospital he was instrumental in creating other entities in this town as well.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Like Christ the King Church.

**RS:** He was involved in that, yes.

**JE:** And Cassia Hall.

**RS:** All the empty land bordering Utica that hadn't been built upon, he bought and gave it to Cassia to protect the whole block area. And that's still not built upon.

**JE:** Right. Wow, that is very interesting. Your grandparents had one son, right?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And he then was your father.

**RS:** That's right.

**JE:** And he was Robert, also known as Bobby.

**RS:** Right.

**JE:** Did he work in the insurance company?

**RS:** He went to Cassia Hall, Marquette, we all went to Culver Military School in the summertime, now four or five generations have gone through that school.

**JE:** Where is that?

**RS:** That's in Culver, Indiana. It's about eighty miles to the east of South Bend.

**JE:** So that was a summertime activity?

**RS:** It was like a military school but summer.

**JE:** Uh-huh (affirmative). And you have memories of that, obviously. How old were you when you first went there?

**RS:** When I was a freshman till when I was a junior in high school.

**JE:** Did you like it?

**RS:** I loved it. First year was pretty tough because they pick on you. But after that you get to pick on the other kids, so you got some rank.

**JE:** That's been a tradition in your family. Obviously, the values you and the younger generations have learned from them have been good.

**RS:** Oh, I think the values that we took home from that were great. And it's still a very strong school. Just yesterday I recommended some people to go there and look into it for their children for next year.

**JE:** Huh (surprised statement). We'll talk about your brother Ray, he obviously went there too then, right? In Culver.

**RS:** He did.

**JE:** Then your father eventually marries a young lady by the name of?

**RS:** Betty. She was from Detroit, Michigan, and was some sort of clerk in an insurance company that he was representing back here in Oklahoma, it was called Standard Accident. He'd go up there periodically to do business and he started courting her, and he brought her back here and married her.

**JE:** And she was Betty, so that was your father and mother. From that marriage, there were how many children?

**RS:** Five.

**JE:** And their names would be?

**RS:** Diane is my oldest sister, she married a guy named Lindsay Perkins, they still live in Tulsa here. Ray II married Malan Hastings, and they still live in Tulsa. He is deceased. And then myself, I married a lady named Sherry and we live in Tulsa. And then the next is Mary Celeste Bindall, my sister who lives in Tulsa. And then the youngest is Harvey Richard (Rick) Siegfried.

**JE:** From your marriage, do you have children?

**RS:** I have two boys.

**JE:** And their names are?

**RS:** Roman and Reagan. Roman was born brain-injured, he's thirty-seven now and he lives in Skiatook in a regular neighborhood home with a couple that has been caring for him for ten years. He's twenty-four hour care.

And then I have another son named Reagan, his middle name is Henry. He works for the family business, NORDAM.

**JE:** This all sounds pretty smooth, the insurance company along and I'm sure the insurance company had its ups and downs in all that, but Ray Sr. was always able to right the ship and make it happen.

**RS:** He did. He did a lot of bonding. A lot of times he would size up the deal and instead of forwarding the premium to the underwriter he'd just say, "I'll take the risk," took all the premium himself and hopefully it didn't cave in. Most of the time that worked.

One of the times it didn't, so he was going to have to pay for the performance bond that the company, which eventually became NORDAM, wasn't going to perform. And that's how our family invested in NORDAM.

## Chapter 04 - 7:10

### Ray Siegfried/NORDAM

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**John Erling:** Let's pick up on your brother Ray, Ray Siegfried II. Do you recall his birth date or year?

**Robin Siegfried:** He was born February 1, '41.

**JE:** Nineteen forty-one. And then, I guess, he attended Cassia Hall?

**RS:** Marquette, Cassia Hall, Culver, Notre Dame.

**JE:** Out of Notre Dame, what does he do?

**RS:** He went to work for my father and grandfather in the insurance business.

**JE:** But somewhere along the line he joined the army.

**RS:** He went to the army right after college.

**JE:** I'm picking up on this because he competed in the army on the Korean Boxing Team.

**RS:** He was stationed in the DMZ between North and South Korea. He was a boxer at Notre Dame and at Culver. So he became a boxer when he was in the service there. This is just before Vietnam really got hot and heavy.

**JE:** I think he joined the army as a second lieutenant.

**RS:** He did, he went through ROTC.

**JE:** So he then also worked for the insurance company for a period of time.

**RS:** He did.

**JE:** He was pretty young, he was twenty-six years old when he comes here and works the insurance company. Then this company that you alluded to was Northeastern Oklahoma Research Development and Manufacturing Company.

**RS:** That is correct.

**JE:** And now we know what NORDAM stands for.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And how in the world anybody would come up with the name NORDAM, but now we know what it stands for. And—

**RS:** Well, my brother always instead of telling that long story that sounds like a big attorney office he's just saying that it's short for Notre Dame.

**JE:** Oh? Ha-ha-ha. Loyal, loyal, loyal. Right.

**RS:** And our colors are blue and gold as well.

**JE:** Okay. And by no accident, I'm sure. And so this company was a bankrupt business, I believe you've already referred to it as.

**RS:** It was.

**JE:** And it happened to be insured by your father and grandfather.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** That's their association with that company.

**RS:** And so they went down to the courthouse steps. They bought the company instead of having to just to pay the performance off, because he did not forward the premium to the underwriting company. This was the one he was going to take a risk on. And it caught him.

So he sized it up and said, "Well, maybe I can salvage this company rather than pay off and just have nothing." So he sent Ray down there, my brother, to see if he could salvage it.

Really, the only product they had was a fold-up boat that you fished in and it had a plastic hinge of some sort and you put it on the top of your car, to go fishing. So it was very lightweight and very mobile. The problem is, after about a hundred bends of the hinge the hinge would break off. So you had two pieces of a boat that was kind of worthless. Long story short, the boat didn't make it.



So Rockwell, Rockwell, Tulsa, had a big contract with LTV, which we know is Vought now, Ling-Temco-Vought, which was in Dallas, they were making the A7 Fighter, which was the new navy fighter during the middle of the Vietnam era. So they succeeded in a contract to make the vertical stabilizer thin cap, which is the top of the vertical wing in the back. It had a radar antenna on the inside of it. It was a fiberglass and a honeycomb product. At the time, they losing a lot of money on that particular project.

**JE:** Who was?

**RS:** NORDAM.

**JE:** Who sold NORDAM to Rockwell to say, "We can do this"? Was that your brother?

**RS:** No, that was done before we got there.

**JE:** Oh, they already had the contract?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Oh, okay.

**RS:** But they were losing a lot of money on it.

**JE:** Okay.

**RS:** And it was a management issue. So they turned that around, the program, financially. And then about that time, we went out to American Airlines and said, "We're in the aerospace manufacturing business, what do you got for us?"

And they laughed at us for a while. We found out what an FAA repair station certificate was, so we went and got one of those. Because American told us to. Well, American is the largest employer in the city.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** And they were airplanes and we had this one little contract for an airplane, so it made sense to go out and try to do something in aerospace.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** So we started fixing wings for them, wing components, that were throwaway items at the time. That really gave us a boot up. And we immediately captured airline business all over the world because we're the only guys that figured out how to fix a wing. And the wings were being damaged where trucks run into them, not really crashes, deterioration because many of the components were made of honeycomb, like a beehive, but it was aluminum. They were laminating honeycomb for lightweight purposes to aluminum skins or titanium. This is now the jet age coming from out of reciprocating engine age and you had to have lighter technology so the airplane could fly faster and quicker and get off the airport.

That was our really first start of having a major push was the repair of wing components for the airlines around the world.

**JE:** And American Airlines gave you that start?

**RS:** That's right.

**JE:** Then you were in business, jets and commercial and military aircraft, right?

**RS:** Over the years we found new markets for basically lightweight structures. We found them all over airplanes, all over helicopters. Then when Vietnam was really in the midst of this horrible war, they were fighting that war, basically, with helicopters. Troop transports were mainly the mechanism to get around. They were all made out of honeycomb body panels. Most of them were being made by Bell Helicopter in Ft. Worth. Bell Helicopter could not supply enough body panels for replacement because they were being shot up, not necessarily crashes. And they couldn't produce them fast enough.

So we took this repair technology for wings, applied it to body panels for helicopters, sold it to the Army, and we just got truckloads of stuff on a weekly basis from Vietnam because we could turn them in thirty days and Bell Helicopter couldn't make them in two years.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful expression).

**RS:** So we had an immediate market.

**JE:** Wow. Now is Ray, your brother Ray, leading as president and CEO of the company?

**RS:** That's right, and I was selling it.

**JE:** Okay.

**RS:** So I was the guy out there on the road trying to expand our markets, our customer base, trying to find new markets.

## Chapter 05 - 6:07

### Who is Your Worst Vendor?

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**Robin Siegfried:** And over the years we basically became turnaround experts. All's we knew was aerospace, so when we'd go out there in the marketplace, one of my standard questions to the customer was, "Who is your worst vendor?" I'd ask numerous airlines this and they'd always say the same few vendors that they didn't like, because their quality or their service wasn't any good, or whatever their problem was.

And then I'd ask them, "Well, what product was that?" And they'd always say the same product. So I said, "There must be a market here for somebody else to fix that problem." So we go out and develop another better method for that product or buy the company or merge it or something. And so many of our products we found in the marketplace, we were not engineers that invented a widget. It all came from the marketplace of a company and its product not meeting the service requirements of the industry.

**John Erling:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**RS:** And that's how we grew into so many different products. It all came from asking questions of the customers.

**JE:** Wow. I'm thinking about the money, because this thing is beginning to grow. Did you have to go out and borrow a lot of money to get this thing going, or was the sales so fast you didn't have to do that? How did that work out?

**RS:** Well, the insurance business funded the first few years until the bonding requirements and the insurance requirements from our customers became pretty hefty.

So our father and grandfather said, "This is too much risk for us. We want out." So we bought them. That was in 1976.

**JE:** We, meaning?

**RS:** Ray and I.

**JE:** You bought your grandfather and father out of NORDAM?

**RS:** Because they had been helping us fund it and they were getting a hefty return as well. But they finally said, "This is too much risk."

**JE:** "You boys are now on your own"?

**RS:** We're on our own. So we did what everybody else does, we went to the banks and borrowed. We never went and sold a piece of the business to somebody else in trade for funding.

**JE:** What banks did you go to here in Tulsa?

**RS:** F&M Bank was our mainstay bank for many years. And then we outgrew them. They finally said, "Let's make a happy split. You've hit the maximum of debt, go somewhere else."

We did business with First National, BOK, whatever their names were—

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative), right, right.

**RS:** ...way back when. Now most of the banking is not in this state.

**JE:** Those were exciting times for you, weren't they, how this business took off?

**RS:** It really was. I personally traveled 250 days a year for twenty years, all over the world. One time I left on Valentine's Day, February 14th, I left out of LA, and I was gonna be gone only on a six-week trip to Asia, starting from LA and going to New Zealand and Australia. And by the time that I got up to Singapore, Japan, and Asia—communication at that time was Telex—Ray was monitoring all of the business I'd already gotten back to Tulsa, and he just says, "Keep going."

I was single, I mean, it was fun. And I came back July 4th.

**JE:** With a ton of business.

**RS:** With a ton of business.

**JE:** Okay, so we would want to know then, why were you going to these other countries? Who were you calling on in them?

**RS:** At that time mainly it was airlines; we were fixing their wings. And by then we were into window refurbishment, which now we manufacture the whole window. You go to their junk

pile and you look at the junk pile in these airlines all over the world, many of these were not very technically proficient people in some of these countries. You tell them you could fix that, and if they didn't respond to you, I'd say, "Okay, I'll buy your junkyard."

That would get their interest. "Why would you want my junk and willing to pay me money for it?"

I said, "Because it's fixable." That was another pitch I came up with to be able to get their attention to send me the parts.

**JE:** So you bought junked parts?

**RS:** Um-hmm (affirmative). We refurbished them and made them good and there are certificates of quality and the FAA guidelines you go through, so you're meeting all of the criteria needed to make them serviceable.

**JE:** Was there any other company in the United States that would be considered your competition?

**RS:** Not at that time, no. We invented that market for wing repair. And we probably controlled it for at least ten years sole sort.

**JE:** Huh (thoughtful expression).

**RS:** Not that was fun.

**JE:** Yeah. Today NORDAM performs those services but what are some beyond that?

**RS:** Over the years we bought and sold companies. We'd have to fix them up; they were sick when we bought them. We'd move them into Tulsa, we'd fix them and either keep them or sell them.

**JE:** Were they airline?

**RS:** They were aviation related. Some of them were related to components on helicopters, some of them were on business jets, some of them were in the inside of the airplane instead of the outside, and some of them were not related to composite structures, they were machining parts. But they were sick companies that people didn't listen to their customer so it wasn't easy; but your customer smiles when you give him a product, acceptable delivery schedule, with acceptable quality.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** He smiles, he wants you again.

**JE:** Right, right.

**RS:** And that's the way you got to do.

**JE:** It seems like a simple concept, doesn't it?

**RS:** It does.

**JE:** But it can be hard work too with that simple concept.

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**Chapter 06 - 2:32**  
**NORDAM Expands**

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**John Erling:** So then the number of employees you're hiring, I mean, it's getting bigger and bigger all the time that number.

**Robin Siegfried:** It is. Some of the components got so big that shipping became a real issue. Some of these engines that we worked on, the cowlings to the engine and thrust reverser, which is the brake on the back of the engine, are ten feet in diameter. And you don't just ship those on another airplane. And it's too an expensive of components to put on a boat.

So we established a factory in Wales to service the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Why did we go to Wales? Because the factory was available empty from somebody else that wasn't there anymore for whatever reason. Plus they gave us a whole bunch of employees that were quite skilled. And they paid our wages for a while, to employ people in Wales.

We did the same thing in Singapore. There's now a factory in Mexico that we do the same thing. Different components, but what we had to do is go for logistic purposes rather than trying to go for cheaper costs. And we have five or six different locations here in Tulsa.

**JE:** So all this growth was in the '70s, '80s, '90s?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** The time period that we're talking about. I keep thinking about this twelve-year-old boy who came to Sapulpa, and all of this comes because he landed here. He could have ended up in some other town, some other place, whatever, but it happened to be here.

**RS:** Well, you know, it could have been the Texas Company or the girl playing the piano that kept him here, who was his wife. I can't answer that but when he got in the business we discussed he got in through purchasing Tom Braniff. When he got out of the business, where my father and he sold the insurance company is when another aviation company made him get out, which was NORDAM, in that they had to sell because got too old to run it themselves. And the next generation, my brother and I, had done something different.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** So my grandfather always said, "The start and finish of my whole working career was aviation."

**JE:** How old was he when he died?

**RS:** I think he was ninety-three.

**Chapter 07 - 6:12****ALS - Plane Crash**

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about Ray. You said he was born in 1941, and he died in October of 2005. He was just sixty-two years old when he died.

**Robin Siegfried:** Yes.

**JE:** Tell us about the disease that took him, the illness that took him.

**RS:** Lou Gehrig's Disease, which is a name nobody can say so they say, "ALS."

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** The big change that happened in our family and the company, NORDAM, all happened at once. And it was the month after 9/11, it was October 8, specifically, in '01. We had taken twelve or fifteen people, many of which were customers and friends, aviation associates, and we went to Canada on a caribou migration hunt. When you go on these things you have to fly in airplanes that are what they call "bush planes," with a bush pilot. He's almost flying right over the top of the bush.

The first day that we hunted, some people scored, some people didn't. We had three airplanes; one was a de Havilland Beaver, one was a helicopter, and one was a Cessna 200 Series airplane that was on a floats. It was light snow, we were coming back from the day's hunt, everybody's loaded in these three different airplanes—and one of them didn't make it. Um (hesitation sound), I was in the one that didn't make it, as well as seven of us. Three people died, one of which was Jimmy Pielsticker who was our life's long friend who owned Arrow Trucking. He died in the accident. The pilot died, as well as the president of our company, Charles Ryan.

I was the most severely injured of the four survivors.

**JE:** What were your injuries?

**RS:** I had broken my legs in twelve different places between my ankles and my knees.

**JE:** Let's include these other names that were with you then.

**RS:** Jamie Hagan, who was our ranch manager in Stone Bluff, Oklahoma. We had Vince Westbrook, who was the tennis coach at Tulsa University. And Mike Case, who's in the real estate/building apartment business here locally.

**JE:** This is in far northern Canada and it went down into a lake, into water?

**RS:** Yes, we crashed because the ice accumulated on the wings and it lost its lift upon landing. So we fell five hundred feet out of the sky into the water.

**JE:** You're in that water with broken legs, when you were crashing you must have thought, "This is it, I'm dying."

**RS:** Well, you know, that's the first question that people ask you is, "When you knew you were

going down, what happened?" It was stone quiet, the whole airplane. We knew something bad was getting ready to happen, but it was only probably for about three seconds. Your life doesn't go in front of you because you don't have that much time.

The next thing you know, you're in water trying to figure out what the circumstances are. There's a couple of dead bodies around. We're out in the middle of water and the water is freezing, so it's right at thirty degrees because it was starting to freeze. The snow was blowing and the wind was blowing. The waves were...so you had to grab onto something. Nobody had any life jackets.

How we got out is we flew over the camp coming in for a landing. We're in a tent camp and somebody heard us or saw us fly over but we didn't come back. So after a while, the camp director said to one of the guides, "Take the little johnboat out there and see why they have not come back to the dock here yet."

He came upon us about twenty or thirty minutes after we were in that water and saw what had happened.

**JE:** We should point out that Ray had flown ahead in another plane and was back at the camp waiting for you to show up.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And so that's why he wasn't on that plane, he was on another one.

**RS:** Yes. Myself going forward was in really bad shape for a year because I was in a wheelchair, I had found later that I got severe hypothermia and that affected my heart, so I have afibulation. Every time that I'd be able to start walking they'd do another surgery. This was in '01, and I had my twenty-fifth surgery last February.

**JE:** Oh, wow!

**RS:** And this is the first time that I've been able to walk any distance without pain since that time.

Charlie Ryan was our president and he was our lead deal maker, and he died. The next day or so after we had returned to Tulsa, Ray had gone to the doctor for a review of something that he had done before the trip. And he told him at the time that he had ALS. So in one week you have the three top executives of NORDAM, one of them's dead, one of them's out of kilter for at least a year, and the founder and CEO has just been diagnosed with a delivery of death pretty soon.

**JE:** Wow, what a shock.

**RS:** Uh-huh (affirmative). But I was in the hospital for a week in Montreal, that was the closest major hospital that I could get care.

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**Chapter 08 - 5:56**  
**Ray's Announcement**

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**John Erling:** Ray you said, he went to the doctor. He must have noticed something strange going on.

**Robin Siegfried:** Well, he did, and this was before the accident.

**JE:** Oh.

**RS:** He went to a doctor for whatever reason and he had these quirks in his skin, looks kind of like when you see a horse or a dog trying to fumble off a fly, they kind of have the ability to make their skin just kind of move in a certain area of their body. We can't do that as humans, but it was happening to him, these little twitches would come at different places, that's how he noticed that something was different. Then he went and did other diagnoses, I guess, and they found out.

**JE:** How did he handle that?

**RS:** Well, he didn't tell many people for quite some time, wanting to study himself what he's faced with. I'm sure that he told his personal family, immediate family.

**JE:** Did he keep it from you too for a while?

**RS:** Oh yes. He didn't say anything in the company. Of course, I'm gone, Charlie's out, he had a lot of others things besides himself to think of. How do we rebuild the executive staff? Finally, when, I guess, he was comfortable in delivering a message and comfortable with a timeframe and what it does to you, he had a party at his house and nobody knew what it was for. Maybe his immediate family did. And there was a couple of hundred people there, and this was not his birthday, not Christmas, you know.

So he gets up and he says, "I've got this, I'm going to beat it. I need your help, your prayers." And I think he lasted four years. The last two was horrible, it was something that nobody would want to go through. The disease affects everybody differently. It can affect one person's arm and not affect the rest of the body.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful expression).

**RS:** He got it everywhere.

**JE:** Including his lungs?

**RS:** You know, I can't say that I know exactly what it got but basically it gets every piece that you have, where eventually every organ in your body, if you want to stay alive, is being faked somehow.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). He didn't let it keep him from being out socially because I remember there was a function and he was in a wheelchair. And then he had what we call the "puff and sip" system where he was able to communicate on a screen, what his thoughts were.



**RS:** Yes. Yeah, the man who invented that still has ALS and he's had it for like twenty-five years.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** It's some sort of technology with computers that he looks at a screen and the screen has the computer board as we touch our fingers on, the ABC, and he looks at that with his eyes because that's about all that was functional, and he could type out with his eyes the message he's trying to deliver.

**JE:** Yeah. And I think it was kind of a tuxedo night, he even had a tuxedo on. I mean, the fact that he would want to be out social like that, he was a very obviously outgoing, sociable man anyway. But that he'd want to do that is remarkable.

**RS:** That was his nature, he was a fighter. When he got challenged he'd do everything he could to overcome whatever that challenge was.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** That was his personality.

**JE:** Must have been tough for you to stand by and watch this happen to him.

**RS:** Oh yes, I mean, uh (hesitation sound), he was my best friend.

**JE:** Yeah. And the two of you had built that company through all those years and to see him and so young, he would have been fifty-seven or -eight years old when it hit him, since he died in '62. So he was in his late fifties.

**RS:** Yeah.

**JE:** Think how young that was.

**RS:** Yeah.

**JE:** And you were six or seven years younger than him?

**RS:** I'm six.

**JE:** Six years, yeah.

**RS:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Then the end comes for him. Were you near him? Were you with him when that happened, when he died?

**RS:** No. They basically didn't want many people around.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** And I don't know if that was his family's choice or himself, but most people couldn't go see him.

**JE:** It's one of the most horrible diseases mankind can ever have.

**RS:** I agree.

**JE:** To be trapped and frozen in that body and not be able to—

**RS:** And you still have your brain.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** It's the opposite of Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's, you lose your mind—

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**RS:** ...but you keep your physical.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** So you don't know what's happened to you in Alzheimer's. Where you know, ALS, what's happening all the time. If you ever had a choice, those are two bad choices but I'd probably take the Alzheimer's because you don't know as a person. And that's why Alzheimer's is very difficult for the spouses or the caregivers.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** Not to say that ALS is any better.

**JE:** Yeah. When Ray dies, the leadership was already in place, he made sure that happened.

**RS:** Yes. Ken Lackey came in as the CEO. Ken is a very stabilizing person. He didn't know the aviation business but he knew people skills, banking, and keeping things together. He did a very good job in waiting for the next generation to take over the business. So he was kind of their mentor.

Now they're in place, he's still chairman of the Board but he's not active in the company anymore.

## **Chapter 09 - 4:27**

### **Plane Accidents**

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**John Erling:** I'm coming back to the plane crash you talked about. That was not the first plane crash that you survived.

**Robin Siegfried:** That's correct, I was in two others.

**JE:** I'm talking about the one in March of 1996, you were flying a helicopter.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Is the other plane crash before that?

**RS:** It was.

**JE:** What was that about?

**RS:** I was with Kenneth Adams of Bartlesville; he was a pilot, in his airplane. We were coming from Kansas City back to Bartlesville, we ran into a snowstorm and we iced up. Coming for a landing at the Bartlesville Airport we lost flow of the wings about a hundred yards high and too short of the runway. Though we just missed the runway coming in it didn't hurt anybody but it trashed the airplane pretty good.

**JE:** So no injury but pretty scary?

**RS:** Scary.

**JE:** All right, then bring me to March of 1996 and the helicopter.

**RS:** Ray and I were flying a helicopter, he was the pilot. We were flying to Chandler, Oklahoma, to go pheasant and quail hunting and we lost control upon landing. We had a very hard landing. The helicopter exploded because it was full of gas. We both got out. He ate the cyclic, which is the stick you guide between your legs, but he didn't eat it like sticking a sucker into your mouth, it kind of got a sideways hit on his mouth. So he tore up his legs pretty good but it didn't do any damage to his teeth or gums.

I broke my back. Fortunately, there were a couple of kids that saw it and were there very promptly. We got out right before it exploded immensely and we were like twenty yards away when it exploded. We had had a case of shells in the backseat. I'll never forget laying there—these kids were maybe fifteen—I didn't know what damage I had until I ran out there about twenty yards and then my back started hurting. You know, you're full of adrenalin.

So we're laying down there and these kids say, "Did you have any bullets in that...]"  
"Yeah."

He said, "We need to get you out of here because now we're going to get shot." And all of these shotgun shells were now being exploded and it was just firecrackers everywhere.

About that time, the famous pilot Chuck Yeager shows up, he was part of our group. And he took control because he knows crises situations and first-aid and all that. They got us on some plywood boards for my back and got us out of there. So that was my second one.

**JE:** How long did it take you to recover from a broken back?

**RS:** My back hurt at certain times, you know, when you're on it and when you're walking, for at least eight years.

**JE:** Well, by the time it—

**RS:** I wore a brace for a year.

**JE:** By the time 2001 rolls around and you have another accident that back is probably finally healed for you.

**RS:** Yeah, it's healed.

**JE:** And then you take another crash.

**RS:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** You must have reflected on that many, many times. "I have been saved through three airplane crashes." Ray too had been saved from two of them. Did the two of you wonder why?

**RS:** Well, you know, people ask me that and I think a lot about that. And my wife says, "There's a reason why you're still here; let's find out what that is."

**JE:** All right, and have you found out?

**RS:** Oh, I don't know what it is but it changed my life. I'm a lot calmer. I let not so many things get to you and, you know, you start doing some of your bucket list.

**JE:** Yeah. What a time, you had that accident and Ray. It had to be a tremendous shock to your system that you eventually worked through and you were a fighter too. You talked about Ray being a fighter, so were you.

**RS:** Yes. You got to deal with what the good Lord delivers to you and manage it accordingly.

**JE:** Yeah.

## Chapter 10 - 9:13

### Fight Night

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**John Erling:** Let's talk about fight night. That comes about because Ray obviously had this love for boxing and he was quite an accomplished boxer. So can you tell us the beginnings of that and how that came about?

**Robin Siegfried:** We went to an event somewhere where it was a fight night and I think it was in Dallas or maybe Atlanta, somebody had put this thing on. It was called Fight Night and it was a charity event and it was a black tie. We copied it. This was just after we had sponsored and managed the Olympic Box-Off here in Tulsa that we were able to get here before the '84 Olympics.

We made a hundred thousand bucks for the Olympic Fund in maybe a weekend or something. This was the preliminaries of these potential fighters that made the Olympics. We thought, "You know, this was so much fun and everybody had a good time, let's do it some more." And so we just kind of took this fight night idea, went with it and changed it and modified each year and it went for twenty-five years or something.

**JE:** Well, there's no question that it was one of the major, at least, male social events in this town, it drew mostly males, the black tie and the cigars and all that kind of thing. And it was testosterone night, I suppose.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And of a charity. And so what did the money go to?

**RS:** We decided that this thing would be so successful after a couple of years that these people would put it in their budget. And annually they would know that this funding was coming. And so they'd hire more people or do a capital project. And we thought, "You know, at the same time, there's always some people that don't want to come back to Fight Night."

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** And we thought, “We’ve got to always continue to market new people to come because you get fallout.” So we thought if we changed the charity at least the charity will help us market their board and get their patrons there and all that. So by traveling the charity we did two things: we made sure it was not in their budget every year, and it was a one-time gift, and it had to be a capital project that they wanted. Second of all, they had to help us market new people to fill up the seats. And that concept worked.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). The celebrity boxers that you attracted to Fight Night, some names that were famous and popular in the country, who were they?

**RS:** Number one is Muhammad Ali.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** He came two or three times. Joe Frazier, Ken Norton. Then we had football players from the Dallas Cowboys come and we had Bob Stoops, Barry Switzer, we had the OSU coaches, we had TU coaches. It just goes on and on because they wanted to be there because they heard it was cool.

**JE:** Yeah. I’ll never forget, I talked with my son David, Joe Frazier, he signed something for us, and he still was upset with Muhammad Ali. He was mad at him—I don’t want to go in the story of it—but anyway, it was fun for us to be able to talk to these famous athletes. And you and Ray brought them to town. It was a fun thing for all of us, all around.

**RS:** One of the most famous fights ever, still to this day, was the Muhammad Ali/Joe Frazier fight, the Thrilla in Manila.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** And that is when they say that maybe Ali got his Parkinson’s because he got hit so many times and he never hit the canvas.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** After that fight, for some reason, they disliked each other immensely, Frazier and Ali. They never could bring themselves to get together. So thirty years later or something, we decided that we were going to make that happen. It would be the first time that Frazier and Ali ever saw each other since the time that they were in Manila. We did it Nelson’s Buffeteria—

**JE:** Downtown Tulsa.

**RS:** Downtown. We had Muhammad there first and he was sitting with his plate of food at the regular booth. Then we brought Frazier in about ten minutes later, and he was just walking with his plate after the buffet line, going down, and he sees Muhammad there. Muhammad looks up at him and he says, “Hey, Joe, it’s about time you came and had lunch with me!” That was his first statement. And it was not like, “I’m going to punch you out,” it said, “Sit down and let’s talk.”

They couldn’t believe it either and it was way overdue. That was pretty special.

**JE:** Did they know that the other one—

**RS:** They did not know that we were doing that.

**JE:** Wow. It was Joe Frazier that I was talking to, but even though he was friendly, he still harbored some resentment—

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** ...to Muhammad.

**RS:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** But could be civil and nice to him and so forth, but, yeah, that's a great memory.

**RS:** And that was before Muhammad had really decreased in his health.

**JE:** Yeah. And then, of course, he had about three or four boxing matches going on. Some we partly watch, partly visit, look at the boxers and it was that kind of a deal. I don't know if any famous boxers really boxed.

**RS:** The famous guys, they're too old—

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** ...by the time they become famous, so, you know, you give them a thousand bucks and they show up.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** 'Cause that's good money for them now, they'd spent it all.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** And there was a guy we founded called Butterbean. Butterbean was a white guy who was from, I think, Atlanta. He was a machinist and he was as round as a soccer ball. He kept his hair very short. So we used this guy named Tony Holden, who was a big box-match promoter around here, still is. Tony is a great guy and we said, "Let's get something different."

So he said, "I've got this Butterbean guy and he's never fought, but he's got such an outstanding personality, if he doesn't win or he doesn't do anything we can really prime him up and going through the cocktail party to have a great time, people will love him."

So he came in a day or so early and we took him to all the charities, we were sponsoring them, and he just loved it. He gets in and he has no fight tactic quality of punch at all. He stands there in the ring for about his first thirty seconds, sizes up his opponent, and then goes in like a ramming head with these arms just turning like windmills. And he's so big—he weighed three hundred plus pounds—that the poor guy on the other side, he'd never seen a boxer with such poor tactics that he'd knock him out in another thirty seconds.

He was such a nice guy and I think we paid him eight hundred bucks to come, plus his expenses. Afterwards he said, "I've had more fun tonight and being with you for two days than I have ever had. I got to come back."

So the next year we had him come back. He had fought a few times. His personality makes him. And he came back the third year and he said, "I won't be able to come back

anymore because you can't afford me anymore." But he fought for ten years and he made a living at it. Got to quit his machining job and he gives us the credit for finding him.

**JE:** That's great.

**RS:** His name was Butterbean and he looked like one.

**JE:** That's funny. Why did Fight Night come to an end?

**RS:** Well, you know, I really don't know that. The second generation, they're not boxers. The CEO now is a woman who is Ray's oldest daughter.

**JE:** That'd be Meredith.

**RS:** Meredith. It was still a successful event, they were selling the house out. It is time-consuming to manage the process, and I think that they wanted to get away from all men, lots of whiskey, fighting—

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** It's kind of to some maybe negative.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** And they wanted to change it, make more money, and do something different. So they did and they're doing some education funding or something with it now. We used to annually make a hundred thousand bucks for that night.

I saw the other day after this event that Meredith and second generation did, and I think their number was like three hundred thousand their first year.

**JE:** Hmm (surprised sound).

**RS:** They did something right.

**JE:** Right. And it was probably time. Everything runs its course anyway, so it was probably time for it.

**RS:** Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** And it's nice that it boosted to another generation.

## Chapter 11 - 4:27

### ND and OU Football

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**John Erling:** Ray's career was distinguished by his chairmanship of the General Aviation Manufacturer's Association 2002. That's when he knew he had ALS. He had received those kind of honors.

**Robin Siegfried:** Yeah, but he's got some good honors there. There was a statement he made and he says, "When you know you're going to die people all show up and want to put your name on somewhere."

**JE:** And so at Notre Dame it's Siegfried Hall Dormitory.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** He was very involved in Notre Dame, wasn't he?

**RS:** He was.

**JE:** He served the University of Notre Dame on the Board of Trustees. He was also on the boards of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the University of Portland, and here, the University of Tulsa. He received an honorary Doctor of Law degree from Notre Dame in 1992, and an honorary doctorate from the University of Portland in 2002.

You were the OU guy, he was—was there a little thing between the two of you? And during that time, OU and Notre Dame would have played?

**RS:** Well, there was always this rumor that Notre Dame and OU would not schedule one another. We never could figure out which side wouldn't play the other. He was a trustee at Notre Dame and I was a regent at OU, so we said, "Let's make a game happen, 'cause they're not going to schedule one another." There's some bad blood that goes back and we couldn't figure out where it was.

This is when this guy named White, and I forgot his first name, was the AD at Notre Dame, who is no longer there. And Joe Castiglione, who is still at OU is the AD. And this was when SMU got on the death wish where they stopped the football program at SMU for some rule violations. Notre Dame had scheduled SMU that next year.

Usually you're scheduling these games eight to ten years in advance. The SMU thing never happens to anybody. So Notre Dame was without a game. We took that and said, "Well, let's go try to schedule them for that hole that they have in the program."

And so we did, with the promise that we would have another home on home game later, and that Mr. White would take charge in negotiating that. So we thought that we would have the opportunity to have three games within six years.

We had the first game, it was at Notre Dame.

**JE:** The first game at Notre Dame.

**RS:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And how did that turn out?

**RS:** Ray and I, we're happy that we got that scheduled with the promise that we'll schedule two more home on home. And we had to do that one quick because it was that hole that SMU had left. So we said, "Well, you know, we got to have fun doing this, let's make a wager of some sort."

So we said that we're gonna bet no points, heads up, who wins loses a million bucks.

**JE:** A million?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Who's betting?



**RS:** Ray and I.

**JE:** Between brothers, okay, got you.

**RS:** Yeah, okay. And the loser has to pay to the winner's school whatever contribution that would be, whatever he won it. And also the loser had to wear to every NORDAM company event, for a year after that, his color blazer with his emblem on it, like, "I lost, yay."

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** So I have to give a million bucks to Notre Dame, which the company did. And, of course, he got to spread it around wherever he wanted. I had to wear a green blazer with Notre Dame on it, all year.

**JE:** What was the score of that game?

**RS:** Umm (thoughtful sound).

**JE:** OU losing.

**RS:** It was like within a touchdown.

**JE:** Okay. Wow.

**RS:** So then they didn't start scheduling these other two games. And so we really pushed it. Well, Mr. White got terminated and there's been a couple of ADs there. But they finally rescheduled them thanks to Joe Castiglione on a home on home, and those were the last five years. And I didn't bet again.

**JE:** I understand. Notre Dame recently came back to OU and defeated OU.

**RS:** We won one and we lost one.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** So of three games, we lost two.

**JE:** Right.

**RS:** Won one.

## Chapter 12 - 3:22

### Community Involvement

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**John Erling:** The Siegfrieds were also very involved. Ray was particularly, and you too, in the United Way here in Tulsa, raising a ton of money.

**Robin Siegfried:** Ray was chairman, probably '88, somewhere around there, and I think that his number was like ten million. I think my year as the chairman was '93, and I know my number was sixteen million then.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** Now they're at twenty-five or something.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** We were always very active with the United Way and ran campaigns within the company and we matched dollar for dollar. It's an easy way to give to a wide variety of causes that are needs in the community. Because they do so well in sizing up the needs and making sure that those charities are running their books financially to where they say they will.

**JE:** Yeah. Do you think you and Ray got so involved in the community because your grandfather did the very same thing?

**RS:** He did. And we didn't know that until years later going through some of his pictures and we found that he was the chairman speaking to the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the United Way.

**JE:** Wow. Ray was very interested in diving and underwater exploration.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** Was that your dream too? Did you get involved in that?

**RS:** I was not at Texas A&M. He was on the dive board or something, I think it was Texas A&M. That's the leading archeological school in the nation for underwater stuff. I was a diver but not involved in the archeological stuff. He liked to dive on wrecks.

**JE:** He was involved in several shipwrecks, discovering them?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And he would actually be diving down there.

**RS:** He would, he even went and dove on one of the older ships off the coast of Portugal, which you have to have special permission to get to dive there.

**JE:** So because of your interest in diving and in water and then, obviously, seeing very beautiful fish, he was director of the Oklahoma Aquarium Foundation. And then you got involved with the Tulsa Aquarium, right?

**RS:** The guy named Harvey Row, we went to school together at OU at the same time. Harvey was a great guy and he was always pushing to have this aquarium here. He finally got a hold of us and Ray and Susan Savage was the mayor at the time. We wanted it to be about 71st in Riverside, where now something else is going in. The city nixed that.

**JE:** I think they wanted it originally also at Mohawk Park. Wasn't there some decision about it at Mohawk?

**RS:** I don't recall Mohawk, maybe so.

**JE:** And then they pushed it to 71st in Riverside. And that didn't work.

**RS:** No. So it got done in Jenks, where it is now. Harvey was the big pusher behind that. So we committed to help build it out by the shark tank.

**JE:** And anybody whose been out there has seen how you can walk underneath it and look up and see the sharks. So that was a nice contribution that you made there.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** And have delighted many families and children. Siegfried name has touched many, many areas of our community.

### Chapter 13 - 4:03

#### NORDAM - Ranch

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**John Erling:** Just about NORDAM, today they would employ nearly three thousand?

**Robin Siegfried:** Yes.

**JE:** Probably in nine major aviation manufacturing and repair facilities on about three continents?

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** That kind of wraps that up. When we've heard talk about how that got started to what it is today it's pretty remarkable.

**RS:** It's been a lot of fun.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** It'll continue. The next generation, they've figured out what they want to do with it and now they'll start doing it. You know, everybody, when you have a change in leadership, the style changes—

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** ...the culture of the company.

**JE:** Sure.

**RS:** Just natural.

**JE:** And you're fortunate that you've had leadership within the family that can continue it on.

**RS:** Yes.

**JE:** I mean, the Siegfried name stays on in that manner. Tell me about the ranch. You moved out to Wyoming. Tell us about that ranch that you secured out there and why you did that.

**RS:** Well, I've always wanted to be a cowboy. My father, when we were growing up, always had some land as speculative development, somewhere around Tulsa. It started at 21st and Sheridan. He owned a square mile there. And then it moved to 71st and Sheridan. Then it moved to 91st and Garnet, which is now Theater Ridge.

**JE:** So you're saying that these were all...ranches?

**RS:** Ranches that we had here where I learned how to be a cowboy.

**JE:** Okay.

**RS:** So I've always wanted to live on a ranch and physically work it to see what that was like, because I always did it part-time. You had to go to school. So Sherry and I found this ranch in '97, after moving around in Jackson Hole area since '88. It was not in good shape at all.

Over ten years we rebuilt it. We lived up there for like twelve years, full time. It gets a little cold in the winter.

We had an entertainment facility that was an old filling station that we moved about a mile away after they were going to tear it down. It was a log structure that was built in 1910, or so. We moved it and made it an entertainment facility where we take Fortune 500-type companies that were entertaining either customers or reward programs for super salesmen or just birthday parties. We rented it out and catered it and had music and horse demonstrations. That went on for ten years until the county says, "We don't want you to do that anymore. Matter of fact, we don't want anybody in this county to do that."

That's why we're leaving. The county is establishing so many rules, because most of the land there is owned by the national parks or the feds. So it's a supply and demand. And you get so many people who want to be in that area, but, for some reason, the culture of the people in Teton County, not Wyoming—they're not representative of Wyoming—want to control everything.

Physically it's getting tougher to live in that twenty below environment and feed your horses and stuff. So we decided we're coming home.

**JE:** Your wife, Sherry, has been a trooper, hasn't she been, through all this?

**RS:** Oh, she's, she's been great.

**JE:** You're still a young man, what do you see for yourself as you come back to Tulsa?

**RS:** Well, as long as I can get on a tractor and be out in the field, I'm going to bring my horses back here and I have a place to do that. That's where I'll spend a lot of time. I'm looking forward to seeing some friends I hadn't seen in a long time. I'm not looking forward to the heat. We don't have that up there. We have no humidity, so there'll be parts that I'll miss. And it's time to come back and socialize a little more and lay back.

You know, I went up there to say that I was going to read books.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** And I don't think that I've read more than three in the last twelve years. Just too busy.

**JE:** And too much fun, right.

## Chapter 14 - 3:27

### Robin Is Alive

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**John Erling:** So you can look back, and I'm sure you still miss Ray to this day, every day, you said he was your best friend. Any reflection on life as you look back? You've probably already said it's changed you, all these accidents and loss of your brother.

**Robin Siegfried:** You know, when you have the opportunity you've got to enjoy it. And make as many friends as you can because some day you may need those when you're in a bind. The outpouring, when I came back here after the accident and I was all bunged up for a year, was absolutely incredible. The people that showed up at the doorstep, people we hadn't seen in years.

You know, Bill Doyle, a friend here who's in a wheelchair; he had an accident. When I had to get a fitting for a wheelchair he was the first guy over there to help me get the right one.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**RS:** And modify the house to where you can do all these things, when he's in one himself.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound), and then the outpouring when Ray died, I mean, that was tremendous too. I attended that service that we had in the civic auditorium. That drove quite a crowd.

**RS:** Yes. You know, he had the time to plan because it was not an emergency accident that your family has a week to plan.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** And he had a lot of thought, and man, he did it right, didn't he?

**JE:** Yes, he did, yeah he did. Any advice to young people who listen to this?

**RS:** Work hard. Take the extra time to study and to know what your product may be or your skill. And if you can, hang on to people that may have that skill and let them be your mentor. There's nothing wrong with hanging on the shirttails of somebody that's better than you.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**RS:** And 'cause they may take you along with them. I've always tried to hire, when I hired, somebody that was better than me because they'll take you along with them.

**JE:** That's good. And you said that with emotion in your voice. And I want to thank you. The Siegfried name, it's solid in this community. After all these years, NORDAM name is solid in this town. And you ought to be proud. And we're proud to have talked to you. Thank you for giving us your time.

**RS:** Well, thank you, John, for what you've did over the years.

**JE:** Yeah.

**RS:** And I'll mention—there was one time you called my name out on the radio at KRMG, and I was a dead guy. I did come back to haunt you.

**JE:** And what you're referring to is that morning, I think it was October 9th, it was a Monday, this crash would have happened on a Sunday.

**RS:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** We heard about it when I was on the air. And the information I got, when I announced the crash, was that Robin Siegfried had died. You are absolutely right, and you're here to be in my face and say, "John, I'm very much alive."

**RS:** Right.

**JE:** As we shake hands, that's great. I'm glad you brought that up.

## **Chapter 15 - 0:33**

### **Conclusion**

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).