

George H. Brown

Born 1908; died December 11, 1987; chief engineer at RCA when the company entered the computer market with the RCA 501.



Education: BS, University of Wisconsin, 1930; MS, University of Wisconsin, 1933; EE, University of Wisconsin, 1942.

Professional Experience: 40 years an employee and executive of the Radio Corporation of America.

In 1934 Brown established the correct theory for the performance of vertical radio antennas, and in 1936 he published the fundamental principle for calculating the patterns of directional antenna arrays. In 1938 he developed the vestigial sideband filter for television transmitters. Later during World War II he developed radio frequency heating devices for the production of penicillin, and in 1948 he co-authored the definitive papers on the propagation of ultrahigh-frequency radio signals. He was named RCA's executive vice president for research and engineering in 1965, and before his retirement in 1972, he served in other corporate executive positions and on boards of directors.

In 1958 the RCA 501, the company's first large transistorized data processor, was produced under Brown's direction as the chief engineer of commercial electronic products. Brown believed that with proper management the firm could have succeeded with commercial computers. He ascribed RCA's failure to ill-advised decisions by president John J. Burns and board chairman David Sarnoff as to how to compete with and be compatible with IBM. As to David's son (Robert), Brown wrote, "I believe that all the elements for failure were in place when he [Burns] became president ... he simply hastened the termination."¹

QUOTATION

"It has been my good fortune to have had an exciting and pleasant life and a rewarding professional career. I have encountered some of the world's great people, the near-great, and the supposed-to-be great. Of course, most of the folks I would classify as 'great' never make the headlines."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

¹From Brown 1982.

Biographical

Brown, George H., *A Part of Which I Was: Recollections of a Research Engineer*, Angus Cupar Publishers, Princeton, N.J., 1982.

UPDATES

Portrait inserted, 2012, MRW.