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Profile of Polly Rash Hollis

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Polly Rash Hollis served in several influential positions during a career that spanned over 20 years in the satellite industry. She achieved prominence in her role as Vice President of the Public Service Satellite Consortium (PSSC). This non-profit unified the efforts of scores of universities, hospitals, public agencies and research groups in the U.S. and around the world and effective use of satellite systems for education, health care and other public purposes. At PSSC, she played a key role in the expansion of the first university and public school-based satellite systems to grant for-credit educational programs. Hollis also worked with Congress to obtain funding for the Advanced Communications Technology Satellite (ACTS) that played a key role in the development of Ka-band technology. She also designed experiments in satellite communications for health, education and state governments that were used on early C- and Ku-band experimental satellites launched by NASA.

Many of these early experiments were later converted to permanent programs by the nonprofit organizations involved. Subsequent to her work with PSSC, Hollis became Manager of International Business Development for Space Systems Loral, where she provided global liaison with important contacts around the world. A founding member of SSPI, Hollis served as President for three years and as Chairman for two. A notable achievement under her leadership was founding SSPI's annual Gala and Hall of Fame in October 1987. Hollis personally raised nearly \$100,000 for the milestone event from leading companies in the industry. SSPI inaugurated its industry Hall of Fame at the 1987 30th Anniversary of Satellites in Space, followed by its first formal dinner dance that evolved into today's preeminent annual Gala. Owing to her vision, determination, hard work and charm, Hollis made a significant and lasting impression on SSPI and the important role it continues to play in the industry. She was inducted into the SSPI Hall of Fame for her service in promoting public use of satellites for health and education, her leadership in enabling the ACTS experimental Ka-band satellite and her contributions to SSPI as its President and Founder of the annual Gala and Hall of Fame programs.

1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

...Joined PSSC in San Diego in 1977. I had been employed by Sea World of San Diego, so I went from the deep blue sea to the wild blue yonder.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

This is covered in the bio, I think. Most everything I did while with PSSC was innovative we taught large public entities to use satellites for medical, educational, and government use. We offered seminars and classes in how to use satellites for communication we segued from ATS-6 to the CTS satellite which required smaller, less powerful earth stations and allowed for new applications the really fun thing though was helping to found SSPI and particularly organizing, fundraising for, and presenting the first half-dozen SSPI Galas. The first was a three-day seminar which ended in a black-tie dinner dance and awards ceremony, the forerunner of today's Galas. It was a lot of work, and non-stop fun to do it with a great bunch of people, mostly women, who stepped forward and worked hard to make things happen.

3) What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced?

Most memorable event has to be the first SSPI Gala, with Arthur C. Clarke participating by satellite, the daughter of Guglielmo Marconi the leadoff speaker, and heads of the satellite industry companies and government agencies all participating in this new event.

4) What was the greatest obstacle?

In the beginning (the late '70s and early '80s) it took extra work to be taken seriously as a woman executive. That changed by the late '80s as more women became engineers, executives, and participants in this industry.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

To see into the future, I would contact my friends Dr. Joseph Pelton and Peter Marshall, who write books on this subject.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

Study and work hard. Understand the underlying technology as well as the uses and applications of satellites. Be kind. Help others. Keep learning, because what you know today isn't what you'll need to know next year.