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To All Members of the Roofing Metal Heating Associates (RMHA), Area Roofing Contractors, Roofing Material Distributors, or Manufacturer Representatives of Roofing Materials:

The RMHA is starting a program to forward electronic pictures of custom and local roofing system installations via email.

The RMHA hopes the Picture Reports will provide visual information to help all roofing industry professionals learn about unique projects and how other roofing professionals approach roofing system installations. Furthermore, we invite you to share these photos with others in the roofing industry who may find them informative.

There are no charges to receive the pictures, and you don't have to be a member; however, whether you are a roofing contractor, material distributor, or a manufacturer's representative, we hope you may consider membership in the future.

We also hope that area Roofing Contractors, Distributors, or Company Representatives will submit photos of roofing system installations to share with others within the local roofing industry.

If you are interested in receiving the Picture Reports, contact me via email or call my cell phone

Regards,
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At one time, throughout Philadelphia and probably other older, larger industrial cities, roofing contractors may have reflected the immigrant population that built the cities they lived in.

What am I talking about? What is the relationship between a past immigrant population that built a city and roofing contractors from a few decades ago? I have to go back to stories my father told me about his neighborhood growing up, his immigrant parents, and then connect them to several stories about neighborhood roofing contractors that I was told from the sons of roofing contractors.

My father's parents both immigrated to this country in the early 1900's. They lived in a neighborhood where one side of the street was from another European country. Both sides were immigrants, but neither talked to each other. My father was told countless times by his father to stay with his own kind. He told me that it wasn't until World War II, when the war draft mixed together young men from different immigrant groups and religions, that neighbors of different backgrounds started talking with one another. They all had something in common: their sons were together in a World War, and fighting for this new country they were all living in.

After the war, people were no longer totally indifferent to other ethnic groups. They left the safety of their neighborhood and moved in large numbers to the suburbs of several large industrial cities. There, people of different immigrant groups formed neighborhoods and lived together.

So, what does this story have to do with roofing contractors from decades ago and today's roofing contractors? Here are three short stories that describe how roofing contractors never left the safety of their own neighborhoods like the pre-World War II neighborhoods, and why their sons asked, "Why?"

One of the stories is mine, but I was told the other two. All three stories are from the sons of fathers who were roofing contractors.

Because we are talking about Philadelphia, to start, you have to understand the major highway system. Two major roads run through the city: Roosevelt Blvd. through the north and northeast sections, and Broad St., which runs through the south and north sections. Both roads are surrounded by numerous neighborhoods with different ethnic and religious groups.

One day the son of a roofing contractor located in the northeast section of the city asked his father, "How come we never do work on the other side of the Roosevelt Blvd?" His father's answer: "That area belongs to another roofing contractor. We don't go into his neighborhood, and he doesn't come into ours."

The second story was the same, but it happened in South Philadelphia, when the son of a roofing contractor asked, "How come we never do work on the other side of Board St.?" His father's answer: "We need passports to cross over Board St and we don't have them."

The third story is mine. We worked throughout West Philadelphia, and as in any city, you may only drive one or two miles to a job, but it can take up to 60 minutes because of time spent at stop signs, red lights, detours, and road construction. This is very different from highway driving to a job at 45 to 60 mph for 60 minutes. At highway speeds, you may have driven 30 to 40 miles in the same amount of time to reach a jobsite.

So, many roofing contractors were used to driving only locally to reach a jobsite, and my father was one of them.

I was awarded a re-roofing project in the suburbs of Philadelphia. We loaded the truck; I picked up my father, and off we went. My father's first question was, “Why are we getting on the interstate highway and going west?” I explained that we had a job in a town outside Philadelphia, which he had never heard of. After about 25 minutes of highway driving, he asked again where we were going and why it was taking so long. I answered again, but he didn't understand why I took a job that required such a long-distance drive outside Philadelphia. After about 45 minutes of highway driving west, away from Philadelphia, he asked again, “Why did you take a job so far away?” Well, I was young, so it didn’t bother me.

It was now about a 60-minute drive on the highway, and we still had not reached the job. Now he was getting angry: “Charlie, this is a ridiculous drive distance just to put a roof on. If we go any further west, we are going to meet Cowboys and Indians, and I didn’t bring a gun!”

Needless to say, while we were completing the roof over the next several days, I told my father to stay home, and he agreed.

Today, it is normal to drive one, two, or even three hours of highway driving to reach a jobsite and the same amount of time to come home, but decades ago, for many roofing contractors to leave the comfort of their neighborhood was unheard of.

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