

Feature

The Ed Snider Interview:

Edward Snider is CEO of Comcast-Spectacor, a company that owns the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team, the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team, the Wachovia Center, and several other sports-related businesses.

He is the recipient of many awards, is a noted philanthropist, and sits on the boards of several organizations, including the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, The Atlas Society, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center. For this interview we met with Mr. Snider at his home in Montecito, California.



Kaizen: Before you became an entrepreneur, you were a young man in Washington, D.C., with a paying job. What was the job, and why did you quit?

Snider: Well, I went to the University of Maryland and majored in accounting. In the state of Maryland in those days you could take the CPA exam and you were immediately a CPA. In most other states you have to work as an accountant first. So I took the exam and, much to my amazement, I passed. So I got a job with an accountant. He assigned me to an account in the suburbs of Washington called Kensington Esso. I went out and I was doing Kensington Esso's books and wiping the grease off of the ledger and finally figuring out that the guy had made about \$25,000. I was making \$5,000. I went to my boss and said, "How long do you think it will be before I make \$25,000?" He said, "If everything goes well, I can make you a junior partner. I'll bet in five years you'll be making \$25,000." This is a true story. I said, "Bernie, I'm really sorry, but this is not for me. I quit." I realized at the time I'd rather own a gas station. I've been entrepreneurial all my life.

Kaizen: When you quit, did you have a definite entrepreneurial idea in mind?

Snider: No, I really didn't have specific thing in mind, but I did go to work in a supermarket chain that my father had an interest in. My father was a grocer, and he finally built up to a couple of supermarkets, and he banded together with others who had a few and they formed a chain. I went to work there, and I was doing, I think, a very, very good job and creating a lot of things for the company. And I went to my boss, one of the owners—there were nine owners—and said, "I think I need a raise." I'd gotten married, I already had a child. He said to me, "Well you're already making more than the other sons in the business." There were several other sons of other owners. He said, "I think the gap would be too big." I said, "So my career is dependent on theirs? I quit!"

Kaizen: What did you do next?

Snider: During my career with the supermarkets, I had run a promotion of phonograph records—45 RPMs—overruns from Columbia Records. They had never been used; they were still in the boxes in the warehouse in Cataret, New Jersey. So a dear friend of mine and I decided to buy them and sell them. I sold them to the supermarket chain, and we had a big promotion, and

then they had about a third of them left over. So my buddy and I put them in the trunk of our car and we started putting them in drugstores. Then we started putting record departments in drugstores and supermarket chains and discount houses. We thought we invented this but found there were a few other guys doing it too. So I then started a record association with four other people around the country, called NARM—National Association of Record Merchandisers. They later changed it to National Association of Record Manufacturers, I think, because the industry has changed so much. NARM celebrated its 50th anniversary this year in San Francisco.

Kaizen: At this point what were you using for finance?

Snider: Well, we were making money, and the little bit of money that we had.

Kaizen: So you moved from NARM ...

Snider: Well, NARM was just an association. But the record business was called Edge Limited. My name was Ed and my partner's was Gerald. We were very successful and expanded

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

rapidly on a national scale. But we weren't prepared for that. We were very young. We took our top people and sent them to live in different cities around the country, without the proper training on how to run a division. So we ran into problems—not major financial problems but operational problems. Like we would go into a chain like Kresge's in those days, and they'd want us to go to other cities, set up different food chains, national chains, national drug chains. So we sold the business—not for a lot of money, but some money—just to get out because it was overwhelming us. It was a great lesson.

Kaizen: You sold that in what year?

Snider: In '63. And then, toward the end of '63, my brother-in-law, Earl Foreman, was very friendly with a guy named Jerry Wolman, who heard that the Philadelphia Eagles football team might be for sale, and wanted to know if I would go up and see what was going on, since I was—at the time—deciding what my next venture was going to be. So I went up to Philadelphia and strategically decided what to do to get the team, and we bought the Philadelphia Eagles for \$5,555,000. The Eagles are now worth \$1 billion.

Kaizen: Did you decide to pursue a sports career out of a general love of sports, or did a particular opportunity arise?

Snider: This was an opportunity that arose. I never knew where I was going. I actually think most entrepreneurs are that way. ... You either are or you aren't. And if you're fortunate enough to be born with it, it's



Philadelphia Flyers versus NY Rangers

just part of you. I don't think you can make an entrepreneur. You can encourage people who may not have realized that they were.

Kaizen: When you say you're born with it, what kind of traits would you say go into that—a kind of gung-ho-ness, keeping your eyes open for opportunity, risk-taking, tolerance for going out on a limb and taking a leap?

“Everybody said hockey was going to fail in Philadelphia. Of the six new teams, we were picked to be the least likely to succeed. We ended up being the most successful of the six.”

Snider: First of all, I think when you're young you're a bigger risk-taker than when you're older. And I think when you're young it's not the risk as much as it is you have this idea and you feel like it's going to work. And then you go for it. When I was a kid I was always doing things—selling magazines, a paper route. In college I hired my fraternity brothers because I had these lots I could get Christmas trees or Easter flowers from. In those days the kids would go to work at the post-office for Christmas. So I'd hire them, I'd pay them more and say, “We're going to have Christmas tree lots.” Stuff like that—I was always looking to do something.

Kaizen: So from the Eagles ...

Snider: While I was with the Eagles, we were working with the baseball team, the Phillies, to build a combination stadium, which was the rage in those days. The Eagles were playing in Franklin Field, the University of Pennsylvania's football stadium, with benches and, you know, nothing. And the Phillies were playing in an antiquated stadium called Shibe Park. So we worked together to build a new stadium and I was working with the city, and we picked an area in South Philadelphia. The city was buying up ground to build parking lots all around and so forth.

I'm sort of mixing this up, but when I was still with the Eagles, the then-owner of the Philadelphia 76ers came to see me and said, “You guys are working on a stadium—would you build an arena for the basketball team?” And I said, “Well, we're really not in the business of building arenas, but if I hear of anything I'll let you know.”

Shortly thereafter, I heard, and it wasn't big

news—it wasn't *even* news in Philadelphia—that the National Hockey League was expanding from six teams to twelve. All these cities were vying—Baltimore being one, and so forth. And we weren't even mentioned. So the banker who financed the purchase of the Eagles was with JP Morgan and was leaving. He was in their sports division and he was leaving to go to work for Jack Kent Cooke, who expected to get a franchise in Los Angeles in the NHL. So this guy told me all

about the League and what was going on. And I said, “Who can I contact?” He mentioned Bill Jennings, who was the president of the New York Rangers. So I went to New York, met with him and asked him what would happen if we built an arena—would we have an opportunity to get a franchise? And he said, “We'd love to have Philadelphia. It's one of the largest cities in the country. We just didn't know there was anybody interested.”

Kaizen: Was this fellow from the 76ers part of what put the idea of building an arena in your mind?

Snider: Yes. I knew you had one for hockey. At that time the 76ers were playing dumps. So I went to the 76ers and said, “If we build an arena would you like to be a tenant?” “Yes, we'd love to be a tenant.” So then I went to the city people that I was working with and I said, “If we build an arena on the parking lot of the stadium”—the stadium hadn't been built yet—“We'll put it on the parking lot and you'll end up with additional parking revenues and everything else: what do you think?” The president of City Council—a guy by the name of Paul Dortona—said, “I love the idea.” He marched me in to the Mayor—the mayor at the time was Mayor Tate—and told him what I wanted to do. And Mayor Tate said, “I love it,” and he called in the City Solicitor and the Finance Chief and said, “Find out how much that land costs and divide it over the length of the lease with a small interest charge, and that's the rent they'll pay and maybe a little bit of the parking.” So we made a fantastic deal and ended up building the arena for about \$8 million.

Kaizen: And this is the Spectrum?

Snider: Yes. I started out in partnership with Jerry Wolman from the Eagles football team. During construction and everything else, he wanted no part of it and wanted to sell it. I got the franchise because we guaranteed the arena. He wanted to sell it.

Kaizen: The arena was necessary for the NHL to give Philadelphia a franchise?

Snider: You had to have the arena finished before you got the franchise. From the time I thought of getting the franchise to the time that the arena was finished, it was sixteen months. Anyway, Wolman and I had a falling out. He wanted to sell everything; I didn't. He wanted to make a big deal and say that he had fired me, and it was headlines on the night that we opened up with the arena with the hockey team. So I ended up with a lot more of the hockey team than I wanted, or that I felt I could afford. I was scrambling to pay the \$2 million franchise fee and to get everything else done. I finally worked it out—I had a few partners. I owned 60 percent at the time—more than I wanted. I wanted around 10 percent.

As it turned out, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. Everybody said hockey was going to fail in Philadelphia. Of the six new teams, we were picked to be the least likely to succeed. We ended up being the most successful out of the six. Some of them disappeared.

Kaizen: Did any of the arguments of the nay-sayers at the time have any weight with you?

Snider: Once I closed the deal—I'll never forget—I was with my brother-in-law at the bar putting two drinks together to congratulate the fact that I did it, and I've got to tell you—I was shaking just thinking what I had done! When I split with Wolman, he took the arena part of our deal and I took the hockey part of it—we split interests. And then he really didn't pay much attention to the arena; it fell into financial difficulties. Well, actually, not only because he didn't pay attention but because he drained it of its money, because he needed it in other areas. So the Spectrum went into bankruptcy. I took it out of bankruptcy, even though I was the guy who had actually gotten it built and everything else—the whole project. But we had it split before the Flyers ever started, and I had the Flyers, he had the Spectrum. I took it out of bankruptcy about three years later, and paid the creditors a hundred cents on a dollar. It cost me about eight million dollars. And I think we made eight million dollars in the first year, so it was a pretty good deal. It shouldn't have been in bankruptcy—it was always successful.



Ed Snider, celebrating the Flyers' Stanley Cup victory in 1974

Kaizen: At what point did you know the Flyers franchise was a business success?

Snider: We played two of the original teams—I think it was Chicago and Detroit or Chicago and Toronto—on a weekend, at home. We beat them both. And by that time we were selling out some of the big games. Even though our ticket prices were like five dollars top ticket, the first year in existence we grossed about \$950,000 for the season. Now we gross over a million dollars per game.

And then we had a problem where the headlines said the roof blew off of the Spectrum. Actually some tarpaulin that they had laid down came off, but unfortunately it became a political football and they closed the Spectrum down. So we had to play our last eight home games on the road. Obviously because we were playing on the road the games were basically free. We played in Quebec City, we played in Toronto. I was beside myself because it was a financial disaster, although, fortunately, we were insured. But the insurance company wouldn't pay right away, obviously, and on top of that they didn't even want to pay. I got into one of the biggest fights I ever got in, but they paid because we did have insurance.

But the bankers who financed us—the vice president had played hockey at Harvard and the president of the bank had played hockey at Harvard. This was the most conservative bank in Philadelphia. I went to all the banks. They all turned us down. They didn't even know what hockey was. Finally I went to the bank they told

me don't even bother going to because it's the most conservative—Girard Bank at the time. And the two guys loved hockey! That's how lucky I was. Anyway, this banker, Bill Baer, came in and said, “We're putting a million dollars in your account as an additional loan, and you can pay us back when you can.” Because I was dead in the water with that roof blowing off.

Kaizen: How far into it, in terms of revenues and cash flow, were you then comfortable?

Snider: I'd say in about year three. I was scrambling for the first three years—it was a constant scramble.

Kaizen: The Flyers then won the Stanley Cup in 1974 and 1975. That is a major sporting accomplishment—for a new team to win back-to-back championships in only eight years.

Snider: To win in your seventh year had never been done before or since. Edmonton did it, but they had already been playing in the WHA. So they came in with a full team when the NHL and WHA merged.

Kaizen: The championships were also a major business accomplishment. What key business practices made possible such quick success?

Snider: By the time we won the two Cups we were selling out every game. And we basically

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

“I SKATE TO WHERE THE PUCK IS GOING TO BE, NOT TO WHERE IT'S BEEN.” WAYNE GRETZKY

From the Executive Director



We are enjoying another busy and productive semester at CEE. We have heard from two internationally-known guest experts; we are teaching new courses in *Sports Ethics* and *Entrepreneurship and Ethics*; we are planning two new courses for the Spring 2009 semester; and we hosted a conference on Entrepreneurship in the Rock River Valley Area. Read all about it within.

Our feature interview for this issue is with sports entrepreneur Ed Snider, owner of the Philadelphia Flyers and other sports enterprises. We met with Mr. Snider in California to explore his thoughts on entrepreneurship in the world of sports, the importance of resilience in recovering from unexpected difficulties, and the fascinating connections between success in sports and success in life.

At the Center, we are continuing to build up our collection of resources on entrepreneurship and business ethics, so please feel welcome to visit us on the second floor of Burpee—or online at www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org.

Stephen Hicks, Ph.D.

SNIDER, CONTINUED

sold out every game since. We've had a few weak years when maybe we had a thousand tickets we didn't sell. And at the parades for the two Stanley Cups, we had over two million people in each parade. Pretty amazing.

"I've always run the Flyers and all of my other ventures as a business. And sports has to be run as a business. You can't get too carried away."

Kaizen: That's great city support. How about in terms of the coaches and other team managers, and the rest of the business structure—what made that successful? In some cases coaches and owners are at odds with each other.

Snider: Well, I wouldn't say that owners and coaches are at odds with each other. First of all, the structure that I like is to hire a general manager. It's the general manager's job to hire the coach, to make the trades, to analyze the players, to analyze the coach. I don't interfere in any of that. If the general manager's going to make a major trade, he comes to me and he says, "I'm going to trade X with Y." And I start asking a lot of questions: "Why? Tell me about this other guy. Let me see his statistics. Why do you want to trade this guy? Why do you want to get that guy?" I've always run the Flyers and all of my other ventures as a business. And sports has to be run as a business. You can't get too carried away.

I've seen in other sports teams where a wealthy individual buys a team and then abdicates the business operation to, let's say, a general manager. Well a general manager is usually very well-versed in sports but not business. So you

see things get screwed up financially because this wealthy guy is running his empire and this sports team is his toy. But with me, and I think what's happened now in the last ten or fifteen years is, because salaries are so high and the numbers are so big, everybody has to operate it as a business.

Kaizen: Is the business of running a sports team in principle like any business, or are there unique elements in the business world of professional sports?

Snider: Yes, there are, because if you run a business and you're making widgets, and you make the best widget, and you have great marketing and so forth, your widgets are going to sell year to year and hopefully your market is going to get bigger. But in sports every year is a new year, and you're only as good as that year. And each year you have to try to compete with the twenty-nine other teams and it's very difficult. That's also one of the great things about it—you don't get bored.

Kaizen: So by the mid-1970s, the Flyers are making money, the Spectrum has turned around, and you've won the championships. You then created Spectacor as an oversight company or a holding company.

Snider: Well, it was a name given to all of our companies. In the 70s, I started one of the first pay-cable sports channels. At that time I had sports and movies, and, believe it or not, when

HBO started, they started as sports and movies. We wanted to compete with them and we did quite favorably in our market. We were a pioneer in the pay television business, and that company was called PRISM.

Shortly after that, we started a company called Spectacor Management Group. This is arena management. People were coming to us and asking us how we did this, how we did that, and finally I said, "Why are we going to give all this away for free? We'll be consultants." So we ended up becoming managers of arenas and stadiums and convention centers, and it grew into a major company called SMG—Spectacor Management Group—which I sold, and then I had a two year non-compete, after which I started a company called Global Spectrum, which does the same thing.

Kaizen: Over the next couple of decades you went into a number of sports-related businesses. At what point is this a strategy? And how much of it was serial entrepreneurship—an opportunity comes up or you get an idea and you go in that direction?

Snider: That's it.

Kaizen: But the end result is the same: over the course of a couple of decades you are ...

Snider: Yes. But then after we have all this we start getting strategic. We say, "We'd better have a strategic plan!"

Kaizen: And that's part of that lesson from the record distribution company—"We need to have a strategic plan if we're going to operate on this scale."

Snider: Exactly.



Wachovia Center, Philadelphia

Kaizen: What does it take to be successful at the initial entrepreneurial stage and as the CEO of a big firm or a set of firms?

Snider: You've got to hire people who are outstanding. That's the biggest challenge. And you've got to hire people who have skills that you don't have, or, not necessarily skills you don't have, but desires you don't have. I mean, I don't want to be a manager—I don't like it. So I hire people who are outstanding managers. It's not like I just pull them out of the air—you have people working for you who have skills that you see they can grow. And if you don't have them for a particular thing that you need, then you go out and try to find them. They might be working for a competitor or something like that.

Kaizen: Another major milestone for you was the opening of the Wachovia Center in 1996. What was the purpose of this new \$210 million state-of-the-art complex?

Snider: We weren't the first. There were other buildings that were built in hockey/basketball combinations, or also football stadiums, baseball stadiums. The whole world had changed. Rather than just a stadium with seats for people to come to watch an event, we now are not only in the entertainment business, but we're in the hospitality business. We have to do things that were just sort of second-hand. We always had concessions, but we didn't have restaurants and we didn't have suites where we served major buffets before games and so forth. So the advent of suites and club seats and things of this nature—we have incomes coming from sources that didn't even exist before. We had to keep up. If we didn't, we wouldn't be competitive with the other teams.

Kaizen: A striking point about the Wachovia Center is that it was funded privately—that is, no

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

CEE Guest Speakers: Terry Noel and Anil Singh-Molares



Dr. Terry Noel

The Center's first guest speaker for the Fall 2008 Semester was Dr. Terry Noel. Professor Noel (Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder) teaches Entrepreneurship and Management at Illinois State University, where he studies the process of entrepreneurial learning and how entrepreneurial thinking can benefit both startups and established organizations. Professor Noel spoke to the *Business Ethics* class on the theme of the virtuous entrepreneur, using examples from his own entrepreneurial failures and successes as a martial arts instructor.



Anil Singh-Molares

The Center's second guest speaker was Anil Singh-Molares. Mr. Singh-Molares is CEO of EchoMundi, an international product development company. Previously, he worked for twelve years at the Microsoft Corporation, where he was a Senior Director. Mr. Singh-Molares visited Professor Klein's *Introduction to Philosophy* course, Professor Hicks's *Business Ethics* course, and Professor Fahrenwald's MBA-level *Planning and Strategy* course, where he engaged students in discussions on a wide variety of topics, including the competitive advantage that liberal arts majors have in the business world.

CEE Course Development Grants



Professor Jules Gleicher

Congratulations to Dr. Jules Gleicher, who received a development grant for his course, *Political Philosophy of the American Revolutionary Era*, which will be offered for the first time during the Spring 2009 semester. This course will cover the era of the American Founding between 1776 and 1800, the most philosophic period in our history and, perhaps, the history of the world. Students will explore the Founding Fathers' political philosophy and its connection to their practical statesmanship.



Professor Steve Kadamian

Congratulations also to Professor Steve Kadamian who received a development grant for his course on *Entrepreneurship*, which will also be offered for the first time during the Spring 2009 semester. This introductory, undergraduate course will examine the role of entrepreneurship in a changing and complex global business environment and the challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs face when developing, starting, and growing an entrepreneurial organization. Particular focus will be paid to writing and developing a business plan that helps turn an entrepreneur's ideas and dreams into reality.

SNIDER, CONTINUED

tax dollars were used for its development. Is that correct?

Snider: It was primarily private. It was a \$200 million-plus building, and there might have been maybe \$12 million in government funds from different sources, maximum. And sometimes I think I’m stupid because the baseball stadium in Pittsburgh, the baseball stadium in Philadelphia, the football stadium in Pittsburgh, the football stadium in Philadelphia, and now the arena for the hockey team in Pittsburgh that’s being built—all of these were built primarily with government funds. We’re the only major facility in Pennsylvania that was primarily built with private funds. But to get it built with public funds I probably would have waited another three or four years and gone through all kinds of issues with government, which I hate to do. I like to have the government involved in my business as little as possible.

Kaizen: This takes us into the moral controversies about the appropriateness of using taxpayer dollars to fund the enjoyment of hockey fans and others. What do you think about those arguments?

Snider: I don’t get involved. I don’t really know the real answer, personally. I know that what happened was that, as leagues were expanding, or teams that were going bad in various leagues, they were given all kinds of incentives by various cities to move there. And other cities didn’t want to lose their teams and it became a competitive thing. But you

see all of the money the government puts into other ventures, like art museums and concert halls and so forth. There’s a lot of people who aren’t interested in an art museum or an orchestra. So I really don’t have a strong feeling one way or the other. From a personal point of view I’m happy that we built that building privately because, quite honestly, I don’t like to be involved with government.

“Success is linked directly to hard work and honest effort, and this is transferable to both sports and life.”

Kaizen: You mentioned the world of sports has changed dramatically since the 1960s. For young people thinking about going into sports entrepreneurship, where do you see the major opportunities now?

Snider: It’s not a big industry, people-wise. For example, the Flyers organization, the 76ers organization, there’s not a lot of people compared to most ventures that large. So it’s hard to break in, but you still can in sports. There’s radio, there’s television, there’s PR, there’s management, there’s finance. Many people who are working for us came in as interns. They were impressive as interns and then they came back and were hired at a low-level job and just worked their way up, like almost in anything else.

Kaizen: Given the huge expansion of professional sports over the past twenty years, where do you see the biggest opportunities for the next generation of sports entrepreneurs?

Snider: I think there are many opportunities. For example, in our facility now we have the arena football league. It had never previously existed. We have the lacrosse league that’s been around for maybe fifteen years, but it’s been pretty stable. We have indoor soccer—I don’t know whether that’s going to really ever make it, it’s always just struggling. Women’s sports: you have the WNBA now, mostly that’s it. But there are college sports programs, they need PR people. There’s a magazine that comes out weekly called *Sports Business Weekly*—it started as a little thing and it’s thick now. It has all the opportunities there, everything. There are more opportunities than ever—it’s a growing industry.

Kaizen: If you had to pick just one, which of your business accomplishments has given you the most pride and satisfaction?

Snider: People say I have the Flyer logo tattooed on my butt. It’s my baby. To start a team from scratch. Not to buy it. To develop the logo with the artist and seeing the different renderings. To decide on the team colors and to do all the things you have to do (a) to start and to struggle and to get it going and the financial struggle and everything, and then (b) to see it become a household name internationally and know the logo is recognized internationally.

Kaizen: Your business success has also enabled

your considerable philanthropic efforts. And most recently, you created the Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation (www.esyhfor.org/) in 2005. What is its purpose?

Snider: The mission is to use the sport of hockey to help educate youngsters on how to succeed in the game of life, and I think that we are off to a good start. The focus is to particularly serve inner city youngsters who would otherwise not have the opportunity to learn the sport of hockey and who would not have access to structured out-of-school supplemental educational programs. Knowing what goes on in the inner cities in the United States, in the neighborhoods—they’re ghettos there. When I was a kid I grew up in tough neighborhoods; I had a fight, it was a fistfight. But to see what goes on today with little kids being killed—shot and killed with guns, and having no hope—I always thought, “What can I do?” Because there were all kinds of groups trying to help these kids. What could I do to try and help them? And I felt that I could do it through hockey, and that’s why I started it. It’s been the most satisfying thing that I’ve ever done in philanthropy.

Kaizen: The Youth Hockey Foundation is using hockey as a “hook.” Hockey is great fun, but your primary purpose is to teach kids crucial life skills?

Snider: Yes. We take these kids, we put them on ice, and we provide all the equipment. They’ve never been on ice, and they just love it—it’s a great sport. And in order to be there they have to get good grades in school, and then we teach them life skills in classrooms as part of the whole thing. Their teachers come back and say that these kids have changed drastically. One girl, a black girl—we have boys and girls—wrote that she had no hope in life until she was in the Ed Snider Hockey Foundation. She was fifteen. Now—this is two years later—she says, “Now I’m getting all As, I’m going to go to college, I’m achieving things I never thought were possible. My life is now a wonderful life.” You get a letter like that, it makes it all worthwhile.

Kaizen: So you see a strong connection between sports and real life?

Snider: Absolutely. Participation in sports should not be devalued in the development of the whole child. As you referenced, healthy bodies lead to healthy minds. Our programs engender the belief that success is linked directly to hard work and honest effort, and this is transferable to both sports and life.



Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation

Kaizen: Last December, Wayne Gretzky came to speak to the kids. How did that come about?

Snider: He’s a great guy; I know Wayne very well. We were playing Phoenix, and my vice president of public relations—who also volunteers for Ed Snider Youth Hockey—said, “Suppose I try to get Wayne.” So I called him and Wayne did it and the kids were just thrilled.

Kaizen: How many children have gone through the program?

Snider: We started in 2005 with about 400 children. By the start of the 2008-09 school year we expect to enroll about 2,500. More important to us is the number of children that we can retain from session-to-session and year-to-year. And we’re pleased that we’re starting to see the same faces appearing. Our goal is to keep kids involved for the long haul. If they start at age ten, we want them until they graduate from high school.

Kaizen: You have achieved wealth, great satisfaction in your accomplishments, and—to complete the “hat trick”—great respect and appreciation from others—from being elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame to honorary doctoral degrees to being voted by readers of the *Philadelphia Daily News* the city’s greatest mover and shaker of the millennium. In what way do those honors add to your sense of accomplishment?

Snider: It’s nice to be recognized, I guess. It wasn’t a goal of mine, but once you are—I

appreciate it. Because if are making widgets and you make a mistake, nobody knows except you, or maybe five people in your company. But when you make a mistake in sports, every guy in every bar knows better than you anyway. I’ve been fortunate because the people of Philadelphia have been very patient with me and after all those years, and I’ve made a lot of mistakes.

Kaizen: Those who know you all speak of your dynamism and your ability to get things done. Where does all of the energy come from?

Snider: People would say to me, “What do you want—to be the richest guy in the graveyard? Why do you work so hard?” And I realized that I didn’t work for money; money was the reward. I never once said, “I’m going to be a millionaire,” “Or I’m going to make this much money.” All I wanted to do is feed my family, and after that I didn’t know where I was going. ... So I realized that I’d worked that way because I loved to work, I love to create, I enjoy it. You know, when my father had the grocery store and I had to mop the floor, I took great pride in mopping that floor. I took great pride that I’d get into every corner and there wouldn’t be a spot on the floor.

Kaizen: So part of it is an attitude toward work that you had when you were young. You didn’t have this dichotomy between work and pleasure.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Entrepreneurship in the Rock River Valley Area Conference



On October 16, the Center hosted a mini-conference on “Entrepreneurship in the Rock River Valley Area.” Participants included local business professionals, educators, and representatives from area business development organizations. The conference focused upon the Rockford area’s strengths and weaknesses in entrepreneurship development, existing and new initiatives to enhance entrepreneurship in the area, and the state of entrepreneurship education at the K-12, college, and post-graduate levels.

SNIDER, CONTINUED

Snider: No, I loved it. When I stacked the shelves at my father's grocery store, and I finished bringing the boxes up and emptying them and pricing everything, I wanted to see the shelves just sparkle. I called my dad over—I had a great father—he'd pat me on the back, "Fantastic!"

Kaizen: Many people have drive and dreams, but you have also been able to focus the drive and make the dreams real. What does it take to translate that drive consistently into successful outcomes?

Snider: Some of it is luck. Some of it is taking advantage of lucky opportunities. When you have an opportunity you have to recognize it, and you're lucky you have that opportunity, and then you've got to do something with it. But I think for me to give an answer to that would be some kind of egotistic diatribe. Why can Wayne Gretzky see things other players can't? I don't think he could tell you. I can't tell you.

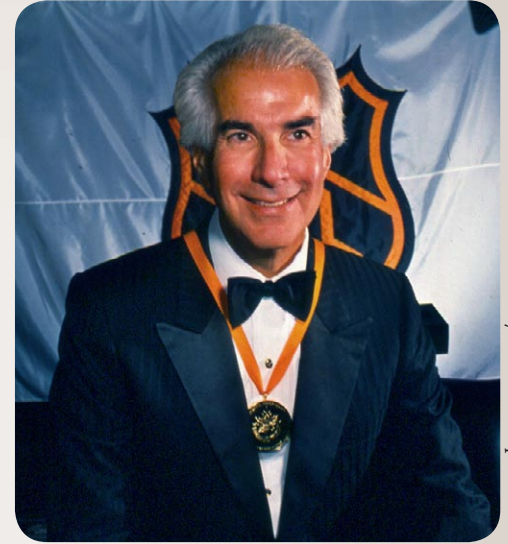
Kaizen: You don't have that perspective on yourself.

Snider: No. I could never explain it to you.

Kaizen: In closing, what is the most important piece of advice or encouragement that you would give to young people just starting out in their entrepreneurial careers?

Snider: If someone has managerial instincts, they're probably not an entrepreneur. I think the most important thing is that they have to know that they have entrepreneurial instincts. Now, I'm not sure I knew that when I was young. But if you feel that you're an entrepreneur, then if you have an idea and you think it's a real good idea, do everything humanly possible to pursue it. Sometimes it's not easy, but you've got to really work hard at it. Read stories all the time of great entrepreneurs who borrowed \$2,000 from their uncle or their father and started something that became gigantic.

I always felt that I was a normal, average guy, and that what I would like, other people would like. Trusting your own instincts and judgment and going by what you know. For example, if you're going to produce a product, or if you're going to open up a store, or you're going to come up with any idea as an entrepreneur, you have to ask yourself: Would you buy it? And if so, are you the average guy? To me the average guy is not necessarily someone who loves opera, so if you were going to do something in opera you may not make money, because it's not something that appeals to the masses. So if you're just the average Joe and you have an idea and think it will work, if it's something unique. Look at Silicon Valley: these guys became billionaires just with one idea. That's applying entrepreneurship to another level of brilliance. And inventors are not necessarily entrepreneurs, but if they invent something



Courtesy of Comcast-Spectacor

Hockey Hall of Fame portrait

that everybody wants, then entrepreneurs will come in and make it work. There are all different combinations.

This interview was conducted for Kaizen by Stephen Hicks. To learn more about Ed Snider and Comcast-Spectacor, please visit www.comcastspectacor.com. Kaizen's full interview with Mr. Snider will soon be posted on the Center's website at www.EthicsandEntrepreneurship.org.

改善

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CEE AND ROCKFORD COLLEGE

Kaizen is published by the Center for Ethics and Entrepreneurship at Rockford College. Founded in 1847, Rockford College is a four-year, independent, coeducational institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in traditional liberal arts and professional fields. One of 81 colleges nationwide designated as a "College with a Conscience" by the *Princeton Review*, Rockford College also is among 76 U.S. colleges and universities selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for inclusion in a "Community Engagement" college classification. Rockford College is one of 11 colleges in Illinois and 276 in the country with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the oldest and most prestigious academic honors society, and in 2007, was named a "College of Distinction."

In the Next Issue:
Reena Kapoor on
Entrepreneurship
and Marketing



Kaizen (改善) is a Japanese term meaning "change for the better" or "continuous improvement." Kaizen has been applied worldwide as a method for improving the efficiency of all aspects of a business continuously through a cyclical process of standardizing operations, measuring their efficacy, evaluating the data, and innovating to improve performance. Kaizen is also used to eliminate wasteful effort and to humanize relationships within the workplace.