



(Left) The founders and co-owners of System Source, Bob Roswell, left, and Maury Weinstein, right, first met while attending Hebrew school in Somerset County, N.J. (Photo by Steve Ruark)

# Blinded by the Light

Long ago, a pair of lifelong friends and entrepreneurs saw the future – on a computer screen.

By Jonathan Shorr

Thirty-eight years ago, Bob Roswell and Maury Weinstein were just ahead of the curve and decided to go into the computer business together. While Roswell had a degree in computer science, Weinstein was an electrical engineer.

Roswell and Weinstein grew up together in central New Jersey and knew each other since Hebrew school. To start the business, Weinstein sold some stock options he acquired in a previous job, and they borrowed some money and opened Baltimore's first ComputerLand franchise in Lutherville. Within a few years, they bought two more, downtown and in Columbia.

"It quickly became clear that you couldn't sell IBM computers to Black & Decker and have a store full of kids that wanted to play Atari video games," Roswell remembers. "It was just a bad business model."

They decided to go for the business market model. In 1991, Weinstein and Roswell changed the company's name to System Source, bought up a couple of smaller companies, and now employ about 70 people.

"We found our niche as system integrators," Roswell says, meaning they consult with organizations to design, purchase, install and maintain their technology infrastructure, from computers and software to phone systems and servers, from cloud applications to help desk and ongoing employee training. *The Baltimore Sun* has named System Source a "Top Workplace Award Winner" four times.

Also housed at the company's Hunt Valley headquarters is the System Source Computer Museum, "one of the best collections of historical computer gadgets and technology in the world," according to Roswell.

Featured on the "PBS News Hour," in the *Toronto Star*, *The Daily Telegraph* in London, Baltimore area media and even on Chinese TV, the collection includes about 6,000 to 8,000 items on display, plus far more in storage: abacuses, slide rules and adding machines, a 720-cubic-foot Univac computer, early video games, Apple computers and even a working Linotype machine from the mid-1950s.

Although some of the pieces are from Roswell's family — for example, his grandfather's 1930s Monroe calculator — he has been actively acquiring, repairing and tinkering with vintage technological items for about 25 years.

"About two-thirds of what we have here works," Roswell says proudly of the museum. Sometimes people who know he collects old technology will call with a lead, but he regularly gets inquiries, often when people are cleaning out older relatives' homes. Sometimes they think what they have is worth a lot of money (it hardly ever is, he says). More often, they just want to find a good home for something they know a parent or grandparent treasured.

Roswell regularly gives tours of the collection to a wide range of groups. During the course of one week, for example, he hosted volunteers from the National Electronics Museum in Linthicum Heights, an elementary class from Redeemer Parish Day School and a group of senior citizens.

Different groups gravitate to different items, Roswell says. Some older visitors love to see machines that they grew up with. On the other hand, "that pay phone amazes kids. Most of them have no idea how to even work a dial phone," he says.

Nearly four decades after they started the business and a half-century since they first met, Roswell and Weinstein are still partners and still going strong.

"We approach the world in very different ways and tend to spend our days in very different ways, even though we're in the same place. But it works," says Roswell with a laugh. "I say I have two marriages -- I'm married to my wife and I'm married to Maury. We've been at it a long time."

For information about System Source, visit [syssrc.com](http://syssrc.com).

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