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Anthony Rich retired recently as Vice Chairman of Reuter subsidiary Rich Inc. Wearing a hard-hat, he is shown here, with his son Jerry inspecting work at a New York brokerage house where Rich equipment was being installed.

Anthony Rich: from radio ham to leader in communications systems

CHICAGO

By the time Anthony Rich retired at the end of last year, he had turned a boyhood fascination with electronics, and nearly four decades of hard work, into one of the most successful companies of its kind in the world. Chicago Correspondent Mike Conlon reports:

Reuter subsidiary Rich Inc, which he founded, supplies custom-made communications systems for trading rooms. Headquartered near Chicago's O'Hare Airport, the firm employs 716 people in more than a dozen cities. At mid-year 1987, it accounted for 10% of Reuters revenue.

But in 1949 and 1950 it was just Anthony Rich with a one-room office, a small loan from his parents and an idea that communications were on the edge of an explosive growth cycle.

Rich, now 70, sold his company to Reuters in 1985. In retirement he and his wife, Norma, divide their time

between homes in Florida and suburban Chicago. He now has time for two favourite hobbies - boating and amateur radio.

It was the latter where the story began, according to his son Jerry Rich, the company's President.

In the 1920's growing up in Depue, an Illinois river town 100 miles (160 kms) outside Chicago, the Rich family had one of the first radios in town and Anthony built his own crystal set, sometimes staying up past bedtime to tune in to distant stations.

Right out of high school he opened up his own radio shop, selling radios and appliances, Jerry Rich told *Reuters World*.

Rich moved to Chicago during World War II, working for an electronics company where he taught combat troops how to use their radio packs.

But after the war he wanted to be his own boss, and saw a chance to put his skills to work as a custom designer and builder of sound and communications systems for schools, hospitals and even jails.

The Rich school systems combined the paging, two-way communications, public address, television, dismissal

signals and other functions into a single system. Over the years thousands of students have marched into and out of classrooms to the commands carried by his designs.

Doctors have checked in, patients have called nurses and medical personnel have monitored goings-on in hospital systems built by Rich.

Jailers have kept watch on their prisoners with cameras using infra-red light in Rich-installed systems, and the proceedings in the board rooms of many Fortune 500 companies have been conducted over sound systems put together by Rich.

Today Rich is a premier designer of trading room systems, providing customers a console full of financial information.

"Out of a lot of that early design is where we came up with some of the ideas and thoughts which are used in the financial industry today," Jerry Rich said.

"It took a lot of engineering talent and a lot of good management skills to make sure that we put together the best in quality. And I think we've always been known as a quality organisation."

"When we were discussing a possible merger with Reuters back four and a half years ago one thing that always surfaced was the quality of the Rich organisation. You've got to point to the top man who put it all together," he said.

At its December meeting the board of Rich Inc., expressed its admiration for Anthony Rich's "achievement in building up the company from scratch to become the leader in its field with an unexcelled reputation for reliability, quality products and responsiveness to customer demands."

Reuters Managing Director Glen Renfrew said: "Tony stayed on much longer and worked much harder than we had any right to expect after the merger. We are deeply in his debt. We shall miss his thorough and thoughtful leadership."

