

JØRGEN PHILIP-SØRENSEN: THE PASSING OF A LEGEND

ROY STEMMAN recalls the man who laid the foundations for G4S

TO WRITE THE history of the global security industry without mentioning the Philip-Sørensens would be an impossible task. From 1901 through to 2010, three generations of the Philip-Sørensen family strove successfully to create a security business of the highest standard.

Jørgen Philip-Sørensen, like his grandfather and father before him, had a passion for the industry, as well as a remarkable entrepreneurial spirit. These qualities enabled him to expand the Group 4 business at a remarkable rate, becoming a legend in the process. Its merger with Securicor in 2004 created the world's largest secure solutions organisation, G4S.

His death, at the age of 71, on 18 January is undoubtedly the end of an era, but his legacy ensures that his name and his achievements will not be forgotten.

After the creation of G4S he became chairman of the new company, stepping down in June 2006 when he accepted the position of President Emeritus of the


company. A feature on his career was published in *G4S International*, June 06, which is available on the website (www.g4s.com).

Jørgen Philip-Sørensen was known to most former colleagues and friends as either "Philip" or "JPS" and we invited some of them to pay tribute to him.

Speaking soon after receiving news of his passing in Switzerland, **Nick Buckles**, G4S chief executive officer, said: "I first met Philip around 10 years ago at one of the global industry association meetings and worked closely with him at the time of the merger that created G4S and subsequently when he became our chairman.

"He was always central to the development of the security industry and its regulation and was a strong advocate of improving standards and the industry's reputation.

"What struck me about Philip was his amazing instinct around acquisitions and business opportunities – he seemed to always have a gut-feeling about



whether something was a good deal and whether or not it would be successful. He usually got it right.

"He also had a tremendous connection with employees and he never let us forget about the importance of front-line staff in terms of delivering quality service to customers.

"He believed in investing in people through training and development and providing them with the best possible opportunity to put their skills into practice – always with the customer in mind. This is something which we continue to focus on today.

"He was very well-respected by a huge number of people – their affection for him is obvious from the many tributes and messages that we have received from friends and colleagues around the world. He will be sadly missed."

Grahame Gibson, G4S chief operating officer and divisional president, Security Solutions, worked with JPS for nearly 27 years, which he describes as "a lifetime really", adding:

"His passing leaves a big gap in my life. My work and my personal life have been inextricably linked to JPS and the company for a long, long time. It is more than the end of a chapter in my life – it feels to me like the book has been closed and I have turned the last page. The book had many chapters and was full of comedy and tragedy, successes and failures, laughter and tears, and now I have to start a new book.

"I would not have met my wife without the BT Global Challenge [during which Grahame





PREVIOUS PAGE: In the grounds of the Farncombe estate, on a hilltop overlooking Broadway and the Vale of Evesham, which was the headquarters of Group 4 Total Security before its merger with the Danish company Falck.

ABOVE: Too young to be a real officer, but a very young and confident Philip dressed for the part and seems already to have his sights set on a career in security.

ABOVE RIGHT: Three generations of Philip-Sørensens: Philip sits on the knees of his grandfather Julius with his proud father, Erik, standing behind.



circumnavigated the globe on the *Group 4* yacht]. If I hadn't met my wife I wouldn't have two great young children to keep me young and I certainly wouldn't be living in the US.

"I am one of many examples of JPS trusting and supporting people through their careers and their lives. Once he had confidence in a person, he would support them through thick and thin.

"He was happiest during our new market development phase when we were opening up companies in new countries almost every month – Hungary, Czechoslovakia (as it was), Poland, Bulgaria, Turkey, Kuwait, UAE, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Slovenia, Albania, Russia, and so on.

"Here, in full flow, we witnessed JPS's vision and acumen, particularly with people. He was in Hungary the week after the Iron Curtain fell – and came back with a piece of the Iron Curtain and a business deal (of course). He will be greatly missed."

David Hudson, G4S regional president, North Africa, Middle East and Southern Asia, had the longest working relationship as well as a close friendship with JPS. He describes him as "a giant of a man" who "towered over us with his vision and his energy", adding:

"I knew him for 45 years and he never lost that stature and charisma. He always believed in himself and his ideas, which proved to be correct. He carried

those ideas through and he wasn't often wrong. He also believed in people and he made time for people, whether a president, prime minister or a security officer. He just inspired the people he met.

"His achievements were many, but there are three that were outstanding. The first was his decision to open up in eastern Europe after the Iron Curtain came down. No one else had the courage to do that at the start yet he took the company into not just one but five eastern bloc countries.

"Then he decided to open up in India, despite being advised that he shouldn't. He didn't listen, and the G4S company in India is now the world's largest single security operation with 138,000 people.

"The third was moving into custodial work. We were the first company to run a private prison – HMP The Wolds – in the UK as well as to undertake prisoner transportation. We were at the forefront of what was happening and, although it was a huge financial risk, he believed in it and he did it. Now, it's normal practice.

"He came out to India in October last year for our 20th anniversary celebrations. He was clearly very sick but he wanted to come. He needed help to get onto the platform in order to make a speech. It was unbelievable.

"I will miss him as both a friend and a mentor. He will also be missed by my family and the many people whose lives he touched."

Alf Duch-Pedersen, chairman of G4S, had also witnessed JPS's commitment to the security officers who provided the core service of his business, around the clock, 365 days of the year. "They were the people he wanted to see when he visited different places. He believed in them as people, as well as in their contribution to the company.

"I got to know him when Group 4 and the Danish company Falck, of which I was chairman, decided to merge in 2000. Once we got together and discussed the idea in principle, it didn't take us more than 10 minutes to agree on how we would do it and what the next steps would be for Group 4 Falck after the merger. And that included a hopeful merger with Securicor in the future, which of course happened. He firmly believed that it would enable us to be the world's biggest secure solutions company, and he was right.

"Philip was straight to the point. He sometimes gave the impression that he wasn't quite sure what he was doing, but it didn't take long for you to realise he knew *precisely* what he was doing. He was easy-going, even when we were negotiating large sums of money. He also had a fantastic memory and was very good at spotting strengths and weaknesses in people. That was one of his great fortunes – he usually recruited the right people.

"Philip was always focused on the future. He wasn't so interested in the next quarter or half-year results, he was much more interested in long-term prospects.

"Probably his greatest strength was his ability to talk to people. He loved it. When he was in a room everyone knew it. Most of all, I will miss our times together and our discussions."

"Inspirational" was the first word that came to mind when **David Banks**, managing director of G4S Care & Justice Services (UK), paid his tribute. "What was special about JPS was that he encouraged us to be ambitious in achieving our goals or fulfilling our dreams. He allowed people the freedom to develop and was generous in support."

JPS was also larger-than-life in so many respects. "Most chief executives, when deciding where to hold the naming ceremony for the company's new racing yacht, would have chosen a port," explains Banks [who raced on the *Group 4*]. "But not JPS. He chose Broadway, Worcestershire, which was the company's head office at that time, even though it was 750ft above sea level.

"I can still recall vividly that 40-ton around-the-world ocean-going vessel being reversed very slowly down the drive on a Cotswold hillside. It was incredible and



it was typical of JPS's belief that if you put enough effort into something, it can be done.

"It was also inspirational in winning the commitment of the whole company and sharing all that was exciting and good about the Global Challenge with employees around the world."

Waldemar Schmidt, former CEO of ISS, the cleaning company which sprang out of JPS's grandfather's security business in 1934 and is now a global facility services group, knew Philip for a generation, "first as a shrewd and highly respected colleague in the service industry and later as a board member of his beloved security company and as a good friend".

As far as this "self-made global entrepreneur with vast interests" was concerned, Waldemar Schmidt regards the creation of G4S as "Philip's masterpiece" and an event that would have made his father and grandfather very proud.

He reminds us that though JPS preferred to stay out of the limelight, "his deeds have not gone unnoticed. In 2001, Queen Elizabeth II bestowed on him the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) and in 2008, Queen Margrethe of Denmark awarded him The Order of Dannebrog."

He adds: "His very unique spirit will continue to live wherever he was active."

JPS was active not only on behalf of his own company but also of the security industry as a whole. →

JPS was never happier or prouder than when his yacht and her crew demonstrated what winning was all about. OVERLEAF: A drink, a cigar and a smile: how JPS would wish to be remembered.

In 1934 his father, Erik, had been one of the four founding members of the Ligue Internationale des Sociétés de Surveillance, an association of private security organisations which has played a vital role in defining, establishing and maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards on a global scale. Philip followed in his father's footsteps, joining the Ligue in 1959, becoming a board member in 1967 and serving as its chairman from 1980 to 1996, when he was elected the Ligue's lifetime president.

Hans Winzenried, the Ligue's Secretary General, first met JPS in Montreal at a Ligue General Assembly in 1986. "I did not imagine that this was the beginning of a friendship and many encounters with a personality who would give the security industry a global footprint.

"JPS really lived for his Ligue and during all the years he hardly missed a board meeting, a seminar or a General Assembly. It was always my duty, as Secretary

General, to make sure that his 'union book' – as he called the booklet which recorded his attendance – got stamped at the end of a successful meeting.

"The last Ligue board meeting took place in September 2009 in London," Hans Winzenried adds. "As always, JPS did not just attend the meeting, he also brought in his ideas and comments. Who of the board members would have thought that his seat will be unoccupied at the forthcoming meeting in February 2010?"

"On behalf of the Ligue, I would like to express our thanks to this great man for the immense work he dedicated to our association."

Many other tributes to Jørgen Philip-Sørensen have been posted on a special website: www.jpsmemorial.co.uk. A memorial service, attended by 600 friends and colleagues, was held at Worcester Cathedral on 26 February. ■

