

# Studio Spotlight

## The High-Tech Conference Room

**T**he conference room was like the Star Trek room of the building,” recalled employee Rick Hicaro. “It was so cool!” Unlike at the old Alexandria Hotel when products were pitched to clients in Marvin’s small office, the LaSalle office had a custom-built, state-of-the-art conference room that Marvin had spearheaded himself. Some of the room’s high-tech features included a multi-color lighting system concealed behind a suspended ceiling. Terry Webb explained, “The ceiling in the conference room changed to different colors. You could dial in any color, from blues to reds to anything you wanted.” The walls were made of teakwood, the floors were custom walnut, and the unique fashionable furniture was by famous designer Harvey

Propper. No expense was spared to make a memorable impression on clients.

This was the room idea meetings were held and would-be employees were interviewed. Most importantly, it was the presentation room where clients were pitched one-of-a-kind Marvin Glass prototypes that could hopefully make the client and MGA millions of dollars. Typically presentations were made directly to the president of each toy company with weeks or months of work behind each prototype, so it was critical the pitch be as impactful as possible.

First Marvin, the partners, and the client would sit on long sofas and have a comfortable chat while the motorized, remote-controlled window curtains were opened or closed to their desired preference. From there the client was lead to a table at

the head of the room, facing a beaded metal curtain that was also motorized. This is where the fully impressed client would be presented the product. The prototype would be walked in by the designer and demonstrated in front of them or on the table. Other times the metal curtain was remotely opened on command to reveal the prototype on display with an accompanying slide presentation projected on a big screen.

Buttons, knobs, and remote controls—starting way back in the late 1960s and constantly updated through the 1970s—did all the room’s gadgetry. No company had a set up like this back then. Employee Rick Hicaro explained, “It was a humongous room. It had a metal curtain that was like beaded metal that was on a motorized track, and that motorized track would drop down in front of a Leroy Neiman. The projector was hidden inside the back side wall.”

Hicaro went on to describe a custom-control panel imbedded in a side wall that controlled all the electronics. It was custom built by various Glass employees. “Marvin and the partners wanted to make this thing look cool, so there was a control panel. If you were to look at this black wall from the front, it was like a big panel straight out of Star Trek. There were lights on it. There are small monitors on it. There were buttons for the projection screen, the audio-visual stuff like cassette players and record players, the curtain opening, the colored ceiling lights, and the room’s temperature controls. It was a lot of show and dance. It was all controlled there, like the main control frame. So, you know, Clyde the customer would sit down, and then someone would hit a button and the curtains close. Hit a button, projector came down. Hit a button, screen came down, lights came up. Amazing for its time.”

**RIGHT TOP** The southeast side of the presentation room showing the color changing ceiling lights, windows with motorized curtains(right) and the motorized beaded metal

curtain(left) that would reveal a prototype on an expandable sliding shelf or a slide projector.

**RIGHT** A close-up of part of the control panel buttons and lights.



**LEFT** The northeast side of the presentation room showing the metal curtain on the right. Also shown is just part of the infamous star trek looking panel wall of electronic gadgetry that stretched almost the whole length of the wall. Some panels that are not shown could open up to reveal a full wet bar with a mini fridge and sink. The electronic audio and video equipment above the 34” TV included an audio cassette player, VHS video cassette player, Betamax video cassette player, AM/FM Stereo with dual audio cassette, stereo power amplifier and speaker system.

