

# suburbanlife

THE BIRDS' MAGICAL SEASON

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Robert S. Cheadle Jr., the founder of **Roberts Technology Group, Inc.** and **RTG Films, Inc.**, grows his business and prepares for the future through an ongoing partnership with **Meridian Bank.**

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Clockwise from top left: Meridian Bank Senior Vice President/Head of Commercial and Industrial Lending Geoff Sheehan, Roberts Technology Group Founder Robert S. Cheadle Jr., Meridian Bank Senior Vice President of Commercial Lending Christopher Godshall, and Michael Cheadle and Brian Cheadle, each a Vice President of RTG's two business divisions.



# The Total Package

Robert S. Cheatle Jr., the founder of **Roberts Technology Group, Inc.** and **RTG Films, Inc.**, grows his business and prepares for the future through an ongoing partnership with **Meridian Bank.**

**B**y the mid-1990s, after more than 15 years in the pharmaceutical industry, Robert S. Cheatle Jr. had earned his reputation as a supplier and a doer. His expertise, ingenuity, and industry contacts had contributed to the meteoric rise of two different pharma machinery companies, though he had to stand by as each of those companies fell prey to consolidation. As a result, he developed an intense desire to build a business of his own—one that would succeed not only for the rest of his career but also endure for generations to come.

"I was tired of building companies up

and seeing them get sold," he says. "I built two companies for other people, so I decided, 'Now I'm going to do it for myself.' So that's what I did."

In 1995, Cheatle founded Roberts Technology Group in Pennsylvania, and the business has since grown beyond his wildest dreams. The company's 33,000-square-foot Chalfont headquarters houses two distinct business units: one that provides premium packaging machinery to North American companies under the ILPRA and SOLLAS brands; and another that provides flexible packaging film materials and tray containers

for companies in the industrial, commercial, and consumer sectors, both in the United States and around the world.

"I wanted my business to be recession-proof," he says. "You can sell high-end packaging machinery to a client every 10 years or so, but you can sell film and trays every day, for just about anything that can be bundled, overwrapped, or sealed in a tray; when we first started it was CDs and DVDs, and we expanded into cosmetics, pharmaceutical, food, and other areas. We're now working on films made from corn and trays from sugarcane that can be recycled or composted. We're always getting involved with new technology."

Cheatle hasn't built his business alone, of course. He credits his team, which includes several family members—namely, his wife,



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his brother, his sister-in-law, and his two sons. Likewise, he believes his enterprise likely would not have achieved such a high level of success without partners like Christopher Godshall, Senior Vice President of Commercial Lending for Meridian Bank, which is headquartered in Malvern.

Cheatle's relationship with Meridian started with Dennis Matarangas, whom Cheatle had met while Matarangas was working for another bank. In 2018, after Matarangas moved over to Meridian, Cheatle felt compelled to follow him, despite having to incur a significant financial penalty. Chris Godshall then became Cheatle's primary point of contact in the runup to Matarangas's retirement.

"Meridian has been with me through everything," Cheatle says. "They financed the addition for our building. They financed all our credit lines and term loans for slitting machinery. They helped us finance our inventory. ... Chris goes over our financials every year; he has carte blanche to talk to my accountant. He's also been a big help with taxes. By changing to an S corp, I've probably saved a couple hundred thousand in taxes."

Cheatle and Godshall speak regularly, and they also have face-to-face meetings at Roberts Technology Group's headquarters. Such visits give Godshall a chance to meet with other members of the leadership team—including Cheatle's sons, Brian and Michael, who have since entered the leadership circle as Vice Presidents of the two divisions—and get a bird's-eye view of the company's operations.

"During those sit-down meetings," Godshall says, "we'll review the financials, but Rob will also give us his commentary about where he sees the business going—'this may come up, this may not.' He's very transparent in terms of his business outlook, and that makes it easier to go to bat for him when something comes up."

The relationship is both reactive, in that Meridian responds directly to Cheatle's needs, and predictive, in that Godshall and his team proactively look for opportunities to help his client improve its financial position. For example, approximately three years ago Godshall helped Cheatle split the financing for the two unique enterprises—Roberts Technology Group, helmed by Cheatle, and RTG Films, led by his brother, Thomas P. Cheatle. Doing so has created advantages such as easier access to financing, enhanced risk management, and more flexibility in business operations.

While Meridian is there to help Cheatle plan for the future, the bank also helps him



Besides regular phone conversations, Rob Cheatle and Chris Godshall have face-to-face meetings at Roberts Technology Group's headquarters. These visits give Godshall a chance to meet with other members of the leadership teams—including RTG Films President Thomas P. Cheatle, shown shaking hands with Godshall—and get a bird's-eye view of the company's operations.

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weather any storms that arise. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most notable examples. Meridian played a key role in helping Cheatle secure vital funds through the Paycheck Protection Program, a federal loan program established by the CARES Act in response to the pandemic.

"I had to fill out paperwork for eight days straight because [the government] kept changing the application process, but Meridian helped us get approved really fast," Cheatle recalls. "We were an essential business, so we still had the lights on, and I had the money within 10 days so we could cover payroll and bonuses. Meridian made it easy, even though I didn't sleep for eight days. Without them I never could have done it that fast. I had some friends [who own businesses] and it took them several months to get that money."

The partnership extends far beyond the bond between Cheatle and Godshall. Other members of the Meridian team are essential in managing wire transfers from international clients in countries such as China, Colombia, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, and Peru. Al-

though the transfers are often complicated, Cheatle has the confidence of knowing the transfers will go through seamlessly, thereby avoiding cash-flow disruptions.

Cheatle, who is "coming up on 70 years old," is slowly passing the torch to the next generation—meaning his two sons. That said, he has no intention of going anywhere anytime soon. Godshall says the same applies to Meridian.

"Relationships evolve as businesses evolve," Godshall says. "When Rob first came to us, he had a relationship with Dennis, and now he has a direct relationship with me. I'm now in the process of building the relationship with Tom, Brian, and Mike. When the boys eventually do take over the businesses, I think they will lean on us just like Rob does now."

Cheatle adds, "I'm always thinking about our future, and so is [Godshall]. Meridian is expanding, and we're expanding, too. I can see a time in the near future when we have to expand to another facility or even bring another company on board. If that happens, I know Meridian will be there." ■