

Robert Rivers Everett

Born June 26, 1921, Yonkers, N. Y; designer of Whirlwind under Jay Forrester, and later president of the MITRE Corporation.



Education: BSEE, Duke University, 1942; MSEE, MIT, 1943; DEng, Northeastern University, 1985.

Professional Experience: research and development engineer, Servomechanism Laboratory, MIT, 1942-1951; associate director, computation laboratory, MIT, 1951-1956; associate head, Digital Computing Division, Lincoln Laboratory, 1951-1956; head, Digital Computing Division, 1956-1958, technical director, Command and Control Systems, 1958-1959, vice president, Technical Operations, 1959-1969, executive vice president, 1969; president, MITRE Corporation, 1969-present.

Honors and Awards: member, National Academy of Engineering; fellow, IEEE, 1969; IEEE Computer Society Pioneer Award, 1987.

Everett joined the MIT Servomechanisms Laboratory in 1942 as a graduate student and in 1943 as a staff member. He was Jay W. Forrester's assistant and became associate director of the Digital Computer Laboratory. Everett and Forrester had little or no experience working out the precise sequences of controlled electrical states required. In lieu of the knowledge of experience, Everett had at his disposal the theoretical insights of the pioneering investigators, among whom were Aiken, Babbage, Bush, Eckert, Goldstine, Mauchly, Stibitz, and von Neumann. Everett was compelled to undertake highly complicated system-building of his own, which had no precedent, especially in the realms of reliability of performance and rapidity demanded by Whirlwind. One never knew when Everett or Forrester would stop by a workbench or a test rig to see what was going on; there was no question they were keeping in touch, nor was there any reason to doubt their ability to grasp the essentials of problems and see avenues of attack. "Forrester would come into the lab and tear everything apart," recalled [an engineer], "and Bob would come along and put it back together again."¹

When the Lincoln Laboratory was formed by MIT in 1951, Everett became associate head of Division 6, of which he became head in 1956. Division 6 was responsible for overall systems design and testing of the SAGE system and its direction centers; it developed the first magnetic-core memories developed by Forrester. The SAGE-design parts of Lincoln were spun off into the nonprofit MITRE Corporation in 1958, and Everett was technical director. In 1959 he was appointed vice president and chief executive officer; ten years later he was appointed executive vice president and then president. He is a fellow of IEEE and is an adviser to several federal defense organizations.

¹ From Redmond, Kent C., and Thomas M. Smith, 1980.

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Significant Publications

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Everett, R.R., et al., "SAGE-A Data-Processing System for Air Defense," *Proc. EJCC*, Washington, D.C., pp. 148-155, reprinted in *Ann. Hist. Comp.*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Oct. 1983, pp. 330-339.

UPDATES

Portrait added (MRW, 2012)