An Interview with

SOREL REISMAN, Ph.D.

Conducted by Jeffrey R. Yost, Ph.D.

On

21 May 2014

Los Alamitos, California

Abstract

This interview with past Computer Society President Sorel Reisman provides brief biographical, education, and career information including discussion of his work for General Electric, IBM Research in Canada, Canadian computer services firm SDL and moving to IBM's U.S. operations as a manager providing industry/product support. He discusses the various roles he played serving the Computer Society—including as a founding board member of *IT Professional* magazine prior to becoming Vice President for Publications and then the Computer Society President. He details his goals and work in leading the Computer Society—including initiatives with publications, conferences, and other activities. Finally, he briefly relates his work and leadership in re-engineering and enhancing the infrastructure for MERLOT, a major online resource sharing platform to advance education.

Yost: My name is Jeffrey Yost from the Charles Babbage Institute at the University of Minnesota, and I am doing this interview as part of the IEEE Computer Society (CS) Leaders Oral History Project. It is May 21, 2014 and I'm here this morning, at the IEEE Computer Society office in Los Alamitos, with past CS president Sorel Reisman. Can you begin by just saying when and where you were born?

Reisman: I was born in Toronto, Canada, just four days after the war in Europe ended--on May 11, 2 days before Mother's Day, 1945.

Yost: Can you describe your intellectual interests in your pre-college days? What were you interested in?

Reisman: I was interested in sports, and girls, and messing around with things electronic. And I had a little laboratory in the basement of my parents' house, tucked away in a corner where I took things apart and hardly ever put them back together. [Laughs.]

Yost: Do you recall who were the major early influences in your life?

Reisman: I have a positive negative influences. You probably aren't going to put this in the thing, but one influence was the religious parochial school I attended, and as a consequence, I'm an atheist. [Laughs.] I've heard stories from kids that have gone to Catholic parochial schools; now they're lapsed Catholics!.

And the second influence was one that I recounted at the President's Dinner honoring me when I was Past President - sometimes called the "roast." I talked about when I was a senior in high school hoping to get into university. I was taking — we don't call them colleges in Canada, college is a different thing — you had to have three maths (geometry, trigonometry, and algebra), and two sciences (physics and chemistry), and two foreign languages (Latin, or French, or German), and two English courses (literature and composition) to get into any university program available. And pass with a C or better.

So that is what I was doing – taking all those courses.. And you didn't really have any options there. If you had all that, you could get into any program you wanted.. My first senior class (high school) physics test, I didn't do very well and I came home and I told my father I want to drop physics and take, I don't know, geography, history, or something. I had to get my parents to sign a form if I dropped or changed course. My Dad said to me, "If you drop physics what are you going to be, a lawyer?" I told this story at my roast; my daughter-in-law, who was sitting there is a lawyer, by the way — my apologies to you, Tracy— so he said, "No, I won't sign. You have to just work harder." And I did; and that was a pivotal moment or decision, or event in my life because it allowed me to pick any university program that I wanted. So I got accepted into what was called Honours Science, because I thought I'll do that and go to medical school. But then when I got my final grades, they were too good so I decided on engineering, [laughs] and that was just a big change in my life, really. So, influences - I also had a big influence when I was in graduate school.

Yost: We'll get on to that shortly. You completed your undergraduate degree at University of Toronto in 1967.

Reisman: Yes in 1967.

Yost: And what area of engineering did you focus on?

Reisman: I went into civil engineering; my first year was civil engineering; all the freshman engineering programs were all the same in the first year, except civils did a lot of survey and drafting. All the other course work and lab work was exactly the same. So at the end of your freshman year you could transfer into any other engineering program you wanted, provided your grades were ok. Most people didn't switch, but I did. I didn't find civil very interesting, I also didn't like the guys that were in my class. They were sort of different than where I'd come from; and during that first year I'd made friends with a bunch of electricals. Also I was elected freshman engineering president in that first year, so I got to meet lots of people in all the different programs. So I switched into

electrical and graduated from electrical in 1967. And in those days, the job market was fantastic; you had a choice of anything; it was so different. All the companies were seriously recruiting on campus - in the winter of 1966-67. And they weren't just interested in interviewing and having a presence, they were looking for people to hire. IBM was interviewing on a Saturday morning. I didn't sign up; I thought, screw them; I'm not getting up Saturday. How old was I? I was 21. I'm not getting up Saturday morning for anything. So all my friends went and interviewed at IBM; they all got hired by IBM. I interviewed with others, including with GE. I didn't really take the whole thing very seriously, any of the job stuff. It was so different then. And anyway, GE hired me and I went to work for GE one month after I graduated.

Yost: What types of things were you working on for GE?

Reisman: They had something called a Graduate Engineering Development Program, where you were four months here, four months there, etc. So the first four months I was at GE, I was in the Time-Sharing Department, they were in the time-sharing business in those days. They were really avant garde.

Yost: I've attended some industry history anniversary, historical events/celebrations, such as the 40th reunion of the IBM Stretch Project, but not the recent Dartmouth BASIC.

Reisman: GE was selling time-sharing - BASIC, and ALGOL, and FORTRAN, and getting into the world of programming; and engineers, for the first time, through time-sharing, had the experience of running their own computer. Anyway, I went to work in their time-sharing division first, and I just loved it. I'd had FORTRAN programming when I was in my second year, which was my first exposure to computing [on an IBM 1620] in 1964. I didn't love it so much then, but there's another interesting story related to that, I think interesting because it made me a better teacher later on. Anyway, so I worked in the GE Time-Sharing Department, which was my first quarter assignment. Then the second quarter, I got security clearance from the RCMP, which was the FBI and the CIA combined up there; I went to work in the GE Defense Research Group, which I

loved also. I coded submarine simulations and really slick stuff, it was really great. And then, what did I do? Oh yes. Somebody from NASA had come up from Kennedy Space Center and had designed and developed traffic control computers —— digital computers put into traffic intersections so that when there was an emergency, the police or fire department could notify the little box in the intersection and turn the traffic lights on/off for the emergency vehicles. So this was in 1967, 1968; and none of those boxes worked! They were randomly going off and on in every intersection, picking up different frequencies setting them off; so they had dozens and dozens of the boxes sitting there and each one of them had to be debugged, which meant putting capacitors in different places to filter out all this stray noise. So I'm a new electrical engineer, they put me in there to debug each and every one of those things.

They loved me at General Electric. (I sound like Donald Trump!) Anyway, I didn't find GE to be very challenging. I thought this is not what I want to do with my life. I loved the computer stuff there and I wanted to get back to it but they didn't have any positions. In retrospect, I know why they didn't have any positions -- they went out of business two, three years later [the Computer Division of GE was sold to Honeywell in 1970]. They all were going out of business around 1970, 1971, 1972; Burroughs, CDC, RCA, and I don't remember who the rest of them were. David [Grier] can tell you about all that.

Anyway, thought maybe I should go back to school. My wife and I had gotten married a year before. She said she always wanted to be married to a professor. Here I am with a bachelor's degree. I graduated in May, 1967, started work in June of 1967; got married in September of 1967; started an MBA program in September of 1967. I just couldn't handle it all so I dropped out of the MBA program. I was accepted both at York and University of Toronto, nighttime. I just couldn't do it all. I thought, I liked the school stuff, maybe if I got rid of a bunch of stuff — not my wife [laughs] — if I went back full time, it would be much more interesting and much more fun, and so after a year at GE, I applied to the University of Toronto and I was accepted. I gave GE notice that I was going to be leaving at the end of the year; and I did; I left in 1968 and, I don't know, June maybe of 1968, or July; took off a month or so, and went back to school in September.

Yost: Your primary advisor was J. Spelt, is that correct?

Reisman: Primary advisor in graduate school? Who?

Yost: J. Spelt.

Reisman: Where'd you get that name? Is that in the U of T records? [Reading a copy of his dissertation signature page handed to him by Yost] University of Toronto solo graduate studies program, final exams, etcetera; ah, no, no, no. Interesting. Wherever did you find this? Oh my God! I can tell you about this. He was probably appointed by the School of Graduate Studies; my primary advisor was R.G. Ragsdale. [I have no idea who Spelt was.]

Yost: Okay.

Reisman: Wow.

Yost: Can you talk about Professor Ragsdale as a mentor?

Reisman: This is the guy; the *influence* I was going to talk about before. First of all, let me tell you — I wonder what font they used on this? [laughs] — so in my first year back at school, I was in a program that was actually called Data Processing. In the middle of the school year, I went to the graduate school offices,— I don't know why, I can't remember — I was standing there waiting for somebody behind the counter to do something for me, and I was leafing through pamphlets and I opened up this one, it was about something called the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, which is the graduate school of education at the University of Toronto. I was flipping through their catalog -- and there's a department called Computer Applications.

I was looking at this stuff thinking, "Hey, this is really terrific stuff. This is all about technology and computers. " And the guys that were teaching there, Ragsdale and R.S.

"Bob" McLean, they were really into computing stuff. They were into operating systems and programming languages, and simulation; although there was artificial intelligence, we didn't know about expert systems; all this really cool stuff and I thought, this is better than the stuff I'm taking now. I was taking courses in things like numerical methods, theory of programming languages, and logic design, and this—the education institute— it was more people-oriented. Computer science is too theoretical. I like it but I'm never going to meet people in this field.

So I went over there to the education school, and I said I really think this stuff's cool. I think I'd like to take my engineering and computing background—I was also programming advisor at the university so people from all over the place would come and ask me about the IBM System/360, and 7094, Assembler, FORTRAN, and things like that. I said I'd like to come over here and do this education stuff because it's applied – not so theoretical.
They told me that here's what you have to do: you have to finish this year, get "A"s in all the courses you're taking this year, then come over here and take some education courses this summer, and then you're into the master's program. You have to do a master's then a Ph.D. And they weren't combined. So I said this is really cool, I want to do this. So I did.

The Computer Applications department was very small; there were four people, 4-1/2 faculty in the department, just graduate level. And there were maybe four graduate students, five — I don't remember, and Ragsdale was assigned to me and we became good friends. I remember; I'll never forget just sitting there in the summertime, at the ASR33 (teletype) terminal and I don't remember what I was doing there; and this little tiny kid came over to me, maybe she was six and yea high; rubbing my arm and she says, "You're furry." For real? It was his daughter. So leaping ahead many years, I got a call from his daughter. I kept a friendship going for all the decades after I moved to California. Anyway, I had a book that he authored a chapter in — I don't remember, probably have it there somewhere — and I got a call from his daughter about four or five years ago, and she told me he passed away. I had lost contact with him. He retired from the U of T and went back down to the States, to Mississippi, because he wanted to get

some more years for his pension down here. Anyway, he'd passed away of dementia. No, you don't die of dementia but whatever comes after that, you know, Parkinson's and that. When I was in graduate school with him, it was a real mentoring relationship. I never worked so many hours, and I loved every second of it. He got me to publish papers; he involved me in research with him;; he taught me to be a professor. Even though when I graduated I didn't become a professor, that's what I wanted to do. But I was all positioned to become an assistant professor, probably anywhere. but didn't do it, for practical reasons; but he was really super important to me.

I'll tell you another guy who was super important to me. When I was working for IBM; I worked at IBM in the laboratory from 1974 to 1978. I came down into the US in 1980; the director of the Toronto lab, whose name was Bill McLean. I think my first book I dedicated to him; but he kind of took me under his wing when I was at IBM and showed me and directed me on how to be a professional, a manager, a leader. So Ron was really, I think, key to my intellectual, academic development. Bill was key to my management/leadership development. I don't know what happened to Bill.

Yost: So when you finished your doctorate, did you look at a number of jobs within industry and how did you choose IBM?

Reisman: I wanted to be a professor. I didn't want to move from Toronto. There were only two schools in Toronto, two universities at the time. York University and there was the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto told me, you have to go away for a few years if you want to come back, because that's what they do.

Yost: Standard.

Reisman: Yes. So I didn't want to go away; I didn't want to leave Toronto, it's a great city. People in Toronto don't leave Toronto; nobody leaves. I'm the only one in my family that left Toronto; they're still all there.

Anyway, there was nothing at York; that was hardly a university at the time, so there were no academic positions, really. So I took a job with a consulting company whose offices were in the same building as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, doing educational technology consulting. The company was called Systems Research Group, which was later bought by something called Systems Dimensions Ltd., SDL, which was sort of like Andersen Consulting [now Accenture] in Canada. Systems Dimensions was a huge, huge company. And I was there from almost the day I graduated, so that would've been at the end of the academic year in 1973. I defended my dissertation in January of 1973. But the term didn't end until the end of May. I started in May or June, or something with Systems Research Group and worked there until the fall of 1974.

IBM had been advertising — oh, what a different world — IBM had been advertising. They wanted people and I'd become unhappy at SDL for a lot of reasons. IBM had all these ads and I looked at these ads and I thought I don't qualify for any of these jobs but I'll send a letter anyway. So I sent a letter to IBM and I said here's my resume and I think you could use me somewhere, It's a big company, all my friends were there still. I'll tell you an interesting story, too, going back.

I got a letter back from the IBM Canada Lab, and it said they would like to talk to me. And there was a guy in the lab, a director or senior manager, or something — Dick Mason — and Mason was on the editorial board of the *Journal of Canadian Information Processing*; the Journal of the Canadian Information Processing Society. And my Master's had won an award, second prize in their annual best paper awards; and he, I think, was the editor of the thing. So when my application showed up there at IBM, he knew who I was, although we had never communicated. And I think he was the one that facilitated my being hired into IBM, kind of another goofy story. They were building something called Future Systems and they hired me to work on Future Systems. Between the time they offered me the job and the time I showed up, they had cancelled the Future Systems Project, so they had to find something else for me to do in the lab, which turned into this big, multimedia computing project, which was fantastic.

Yost: You mentioned your master's thesis; I didn't ask you about that or your dissertation. Can you briefly describe those?

Reisman: Yes. The master's thesis; I fell in love with logic design when I was in computer science; I just loved the whole thing; architecture; in those days, anyway; it's changed somewhat. Everybody I knew my whole life was a teacher and I was surrounded by teachers in the family. That's another reason why this education program was appealing to me. In those days, there was an education focus in high schools on teaching of computing and computing principles. Computing in education was becoming very big - gaining publicity throughout K-12.

I can't remember exactly the motivation but I designed and developed a computer architecture that could be used for teaching computing principles in high school; I developed a language, an easy-to-use programming language — this was before structured programming — an easy-to-use programming language for kids to learn how to program. So I developed this logical architecture, and a machine language, and an assembly language, and a higher-level language – all to facilitate learning about computing. Anyway, I developed the architecture, I defined the machine language for the architecture, I wrote a loader for machine code, and an assembler, and a compiler, for all of those things. It was a complete architecture, and it worked. You could code in any of those different language levels. And they made me write whole thing in FORTRAN, all of those bits and pieces were written in FORTRAN so that you could move the whole system to wherever FORTRAN ran. Which was everywhere. And it worked! And they did it; it was fantastic. I mean, it was better than my dissertation.

It took forever to do this thing; and when I started my dissertation I thought to myself, I'm getting tired. I don't want to do another open-ended project. Instead, I decided to do some empirical research with a beginning, a middle, and an end. I can put together a project plan and I'll know when I'm done. I already had a kid, and this was hugely different from the Masters project. I wanted to finish my program and get on with life.

So that Masters thing was the thing that won me the prize; and it's probably one of the best things I ever did. I invented so many things that I later read about; list processing kinds of things. [Laughs.] In those days, nothing existed. There were no code libraries or anything. You had to write your own code. Those were the best days. [Laughs.]. [Dr. Reisman's dissertation was completed/defended in 1973 and was titled, "The Effect of Selected Variables on the Learning of Some Computer Programming Elements."]

Yost: Can you describe the IBM research lab and the early work you did there?

Reisman: It's different now. All my friends that were there that I worked with, they fired them all around 1990 when IBM redid itself, something like that; 1991, 1992, 1993. IBM was organized differently then, maybe they've gone back, I don't know; but they had the Data Processing Division, and the General Systems Division, Federal Systems Division. For IBM the world was also divided up geographically—so anyway, this lab was part of the General Systems Division (GSD) not a part of the US IBM Corporation. GSD did customized work, changes, to already released products. So, for example, we would get a request to ruggedize some minicomputer for some military purpose.

The year before, 18 months before I was hired, they had initiated a project called computerized instructional television (CITV). It was a TV-based, multimedia system that worked with a mainframe 360, 370, System 7 minicomputer, and all these multimedia terminals that used OEM products; Sony TVs, etcetera, etcetera. And so they had a bunch of engineers working on this stuff, and they didn't have anybody that really knew the field. It was a joint project between the IBM Canada lab and Waterloo, which in those days, still wasn't the Waterloo which it's since become.

When I was at the University of Toronto, Waterloo was a joke. We were THE engineers. Anyway, IBM needed somebody to come in and be what they called a product manager or something — I can't remember — but they needed somebody to oversee this; to work in the lab, work with the engineers. I didn't manage the engineers, but I managed the project. They needed someone to be responsible for project management, the idea being

to see what real products could come out of it all. That project went on from 1973, before I was there, and it ended around 1978; and it did everything it was supposed to do. It was really slick. I mean, it got me to travel all over the place and meet all kinds of people, learn all kinds of terrific stuff. You don't have to say this. I'll take this out. I was identified as a fast-track manager through this thing and went to all kinds of great management programs. IBM in those days was like the Marines. I think we were like cops; once you're one of those, wherever you meet an ex-IBMer, just like a cop, you're part of a group because you went through this training ordeal together. [Laughs.] And that was fantastic training, it was great. And the project was terrific, too; got me into multimedia computing, which I capitalized on, subsequently, when I went back to the university.

Yost: In 1978, you went into the education industry management with IBM?

Reisman: Yes; that's in my resume or what?

Yost: Yes.

Reisman: So in Canada, there was no future for a PhD at IBM. So here I am, right? I'm wanting to be a manager and get ahead; you can't be anything then unless you worked in the States, unless you worked for the IBM Corporation. If you worked for IBM in some other country, you had to be in marketing; that was the only path to advancement. At Canadian General Electric, there were two paths to senior management. There was the engineering path - the technical pat,; and there was the non-technical path -sales and marketing, I guess. And in IBM in Canada, the only path was the sales and marketing path. You looked at who all the senior executives were, every one of them had been in sales. Sales, sales, sales. So I had this opportunity to move into marketing, not sales, but sales support. They had divided their market into different industries, one of them being the "education industry." That was to develop the sales strategy for schools, colleges, and universities; developing and supporting the guys who were selling to schools, colleges, and universities around the country. So I thought, this is great.

Yost: I know IBM had Customer Engineers (CEs), and Systems Engineers (SEs) in the field at installations.

Reisman: Mine was industry support; this was yet another level – more like product support. Mine was part of the marketing teams, for all the marketing (sales) teams across the country. Thinking back, it was quite an extensive operation; but the focus for each education sales team was a little different – depending on what the team was trying to sell the customer. And really what it meant in Canada, and I talked to my marketing colleagues in other parts of the world (outside of the US) — it was the same — the main strategy and support materials (for each industry – education, health, finance, etc.) were really developed here (in the US), and we (in 'foreign countries) took that stuff and adapted it for the local situation. So anyway, what was your question?

Yost: I was just wondering if it was defined in terms of like a SE?

Reisman: Oh, yes. It was broader than that. The SEs, I'm not sure the SEs were so much part of the sales activity. I'd be the guy that would meet with whatever the customer CIO was in those days; vice president of instruction, administration, or research. Those were the three generic groupings of education stuff. I knew everything there was to know about instruction. Not so much the other stuff. Research had to do with what you'd sort of call high end computing today, including university lab kind of computing. And administration was all the systems for administrating a school, college, university. So I had to know about all those products, And if somebody was selling into a university our IBM administrative systems, then I would go there and tell them why our system was the right system for their institution, and all the benefits they would get, kinds of support, and all that sort of stuff. So I learned a lot; I was really good at it; it was fun.

Yost: This is kind of a question that relates to another research project I'm doing on the history of the IT services industry; a book I am writing. Were the services you were providing bundled in with hardware contracts or were they priced separately, were you

consultants with billable hours to the client, or was your work bundled as support that came with the hardware contract?

Reisman: Bundled.

Yost: That's what I expected.

Reisman: One day, I was sitting at my desk in the Royal Trust Tower, which is downtown Toronto, in 1979; I had a phone call. "This is Joe Blow, I'm with the legal department in Armonk."
"Oh yeah? How can I help you?"
"We are doing depositions for the anti trust …" My ears stopped hearing; blood was rushing through my brain. I can't remember all what was going on with IBM then, but it was huge and it was in all the papers all the time.
"We would like to speak to you." I said, "How do I know this is Joe Blow calling from Armonk and not the press?"
"Well, here's my number; call me back." So I called him back. God, the last thing in the world I wanted was to get a subpoena; I'd read that I could have been locked away for months.. Anyway, they asked me some questions. I thought I've got to give them answers that will get me out of this.
"No, I didn't know him; no, I didn't know him; no, no, no, I wasn't the party; it had to do with…" So they left me alone.

Yost: I understand in 1980 that you became a manager of DiscoVision Associates, and that's how you came to California.

Reisman: That's right. IBM had been trying to develop their own multimedia kind of system and components. They didn't use third party licensed products in those days. They had to build everything as their own. But they couldn't do it with multimedia. When I was in the Toronto Lab, I visited some of their research work that was going on down in New York, and they couldn't make the components themselves. So eventually

they went into a joint venture with MCA, who owned Universal Studios, and it was called DiscoVision.

I don't remember exactly how this happened, but MCA had, together with Pioneer Electronics of Japan, invented laser discs. And IBM couldn't do it themselves for a lot of reasons — so they partnered with MCA and Pioneer (who had already invented and were manufacturing discs and players), and formed this joint venture called DiscoVision Associates. And they brought in IBMers to run the venture. The president of thing had come from GSD. And they brought in different IBMers from around the United States, including a guy that was at Watson Labs. This guy at Watson Labs knew me; he had in fact, invited me to go to work at Watson Labs. He called me about this DiscoVision thing; they had hired him. And he called me; "Sorel, I'd like you to come down here to LA and head up the educational thing to do with this joint venture."

It was in 1979; it was just after Canadian Thanksgiving, and I flew down here and met his boss — and they offered me a job to come with so much more money. In those days we didn't make much money in Canada – there was a wage freeze in the country - plus an annual bonus, and they pay to move us. Anyway, we did it. So I had to resign from IBM in Canada in order to come here. I'll never forget it; the Vice President of Marketing said to me, "If this doesn't work, Sorel, you'll be back." Anyway, I came down, and this DiscoVision thing was a disaster from the beginning. That is something that is not worth pursuing now because it's a completely separate historical event. So we're all ex-IBMers working in Costa Mesa, around the corner from here. That's what got us here; they got me and my family a Green Card; and here we are.

Yost: So it was in the mid-1980s that you joined the faculty of Cal State Fullerton . . . what did you do from the early 1980s up to that point?

Reisman: Yes. So when this thing started to fail, I looked around, I'd made some friends down here, and I had met the Vice President of Toshiba. Toshiba had just gone into the computer business here, and they had just started a division called the Computer Systems

Division. The guy who was heading that up, I met him. They had essentially two groups; they had the printer group and they had the computer group. This was in 1981 Toshiba was trying to get into the computer business here, they wanted to compete with the IBM PC, which had just been launched — this was in 1981 — they wanted to bring their wonderfully better-manufactured personal computers over here (to the US) and compete against the IBM PC. So they wanted somebody to head that up; they got somebody to head up the dot matrix printer stuff, which they invented; then it was a big deal. I got hired by the VP to head up this computer thing -- and that was ultimately a disaster,too. I mean, everybody who tried to sell almost IBM-PCs, -- we called them Pretty Compatibles. And if they weren't exactly compatible, they were worthless. They were wonderful machines; the hardware was fantastic; but it wouldn't run anybody's software. It wouldn't run Lotus 1-2-3, and that was the only reason anybody ever bought a PC in those days. So no one wanted the Toshiba machines. I did that; from 1982-84, when Toshiba went out of the computer business. But they stayed in the printer business.

I and everybody who worked for me, they let go, -- which I resented so much. I figured a company like Toshiba should be able find a place for us. [Laughs.] Anyway, so I started to fish around. My friend and boss at Toshiba, the Vice President who hired me said, "Sorel, you've gotta know what the Japanese are thinking. They are going to close the division and let you all go." So I did have a lot of warning, and I started fishing around for a job, when I got called by Korn Ferry – they were recruiting for a company called Thorn EMI.

At the time EMI (who owned Capital Records, the Beatles, Abby Road Studios, etc.) had bought a technology company call Thorn – who had invented CAT scan machines - and they called the whole thing Thorn EMI. Then they started a company called Thorn EMI Software, it was British based but with an American headquarters in Costa Mesa. They wanted a vice president of development. And so I was interviewed and was recruited by them. It was a good job; it was fun; but they were going out of business almost from the day they launched. [My kids tell me I'm a jinx!] When they finally closed the Costa Mesa office two years later, they kept me as vice president of research with a home office,

commuting monthly to England. It was kind of an interesting experience but it was not a position with a future. When they let gave the British guy who my boss notice, I knew I was done. Coincidentally, a friend of mine told me there was an opening at Cal State Fullerton, a tenure track of position, of which there were few at the time. I always wanted to be a professor because my wife said she wanted to be married to a professor, and I wasn't a professor yet. [Laughs.] So I applied, and, while I had been away from academia for a long time, since it was a business school position, it matched, not my academic experience, but my practitioner credentials -- so I applied, got hired, and eventually went through the tenure thing. Those days they hired you as Associate professors. It was hard to recruit faculty at low assistant professor salaries. So I as hired as an associate and got tenured six years later. And here I am.

Yost: And within the business college, this was the department of Information Systems and Computer Sciences. What was the size of that department and what were the types of research people were doing?

Reisman: There were three groups — still are — there's the IS part. It was actually called; they changed it; it was actually called Decision Sciences and Information Systems. And so there was OR, Statistics, and IS; and there was one IS person, and the department was completely monopolized by OR and Statistics people. They changed the name of it eventually, to reflect that kids really were more interested in computing; kids that dropped out of computer science and wanted an easier pathway into this industry would switch over to our department -- so there was a big demand for IS. They eventually changed the name; it's now ISDS (Information Systems and Decision Sciences), and there are now a lot of Information Systems people. It was all hard core OR, industrial engineering kinds of faculty; it was really difficult because they didn't understand anything about Information Systems; nothing. But because they are all statistician-type people, and they knew Excel, they knew everything about everything; but of course they didn't.

Today, it's different. Today, it really reflects IS; there is all kinds ofIS research going on; mobile computing; it's not all hard core technology, it's some of the softer stuff about IS; social networking; they've hired a lot of different people. But I've been away from my department for a while.

Yost: At the CSU Chancellor's office.

Reisman: Yes - at the CSU Chancellor's office; I'm on leave without pay from my department so I'm not employed by Cal State Fullerton, I'm employed by the Chancellor's office but I have retreat rights. I'm not a part of the faculty at all, but at any moment if they (the Chancellors Office) say we don't want you anymore, or I say I don't want you anymore, I just knock on my department chair's door and they have to take me back. So I've been out of it for a while; no department meetings; I hardly ever go to my campus. I've probably not been in 10 or 12 years; I haven't been to the campus a dozen times, I think. So I don't even know what's happening; I have an e-mail address, I see all the department e-mails but I don't know the people. All my friends, those guys I knew, almost every one of them is retired. But on e-mail, I see who they're hiring and I see what the seminars are, and so forth; and I see what's changed.

Yost: Can you tell me about your research, once you came to Cal State Fullerton, before you switched to the Chancellor's office?

Reisman: Yes. I didn't have a research program at firsts. I mean, when you're in industry, what's your research? You don't do research; you manage operations; especially with senior positions in management; and it wasn't in education. And it wasn't really stuff that I had done as a graduate student.. So I had to figure out a program when I came to the university; I thought well, what do I now? I knew about multimedia computing because of the stuff I had done at IBM; I knew about it because of my DiscoVision days; but I hadn't done it at all after I left DiscoVision; so I thought maybe I can capitalize on this. I knew about products, I knew how to review products; I mean, part of my job in industry was to say yeah, we want to do this, no, we don't want to do that because the competition

is doing this and that. I understood the microcomputer business really well because it was my job, hardware and software. So I was groping around there for a while; I didn't know what to do.

In late fall of 1986 the Dean's Office put out a request for proposals for grants to do something with multimedia. I don't remember exactly what; can't remember. But this is right up my line, so I applied and I got the grant. The grant let me investigate opportunities to do something with multimedia and instruction in the business school. And so, with the grant, I reconnected with some of my old contacts, traveled around the U.S. a little bit — in those days there was money in education, oh my how things have changed — unbelievable. Anyhow, so I called friends at IBM, and to make a long story short, I built at the university, a multimedia lab — you won't find it in there [the resume] I don't think — a lab with 10 multimedia instructional terminals. I got IBM to donate — InfoWindow terminals - this was a product that they were selling for training — I got them to donate 10 of these things. And I got a local company — AST Research, they're gone now — to donate 10 personal computers. I got the library to give me space; I got furniture; I got the whole ball of wax; and we created the lab in the university library, this multimedia teaching system. I got video discs donated, all this stuff; and that was sort of the kernel of the multimedia "research" that I started to do. I also developed some multimedia applications that we could use in business, with some of my colleagues. And this became the stuff that got me more towards the academic; remember it's a business school, it's not *research* research. It got me into case studies and so I was able to publish things related to that. So, yeah, that's what got me moving into the academic multimedia side.

Yost: When you were in industry prior to joining the faculty at Cal State Fullerton, had you become a member of the Computer Society?

Reisman: No. I'm pretty sure that when I was in my last year of undergraduate engineering, I was a student member. Then I joined ACM when I got out. [Laughs] I wasn't working as a real engineer, I really moved into computing a lot. I belonged to

ACM for years and years and years, and then dropped ACM when I went into marketing and I never rejoined. As I said, when I was there at Fullerton - I think it must've been in the fall of 1986, maybe it was 1987, I saw this solicitation for product reviewers for IEEE Software Magazine, that's when I joined/rejoined.

Yost: I know in 1994, you were one of the founding members of *IEEE Multimedia*.

Reisman: The magazine, you mean?

Yost: Yes.

Reisman: Yes.

Yost: Did you have much involvement, as a volunteer of the CS, prior to that and if so, can you describe that?

Reisman: 1994. See, the years all run together. Yes, I did; I was; I wrote — I don't know the years but I'll tell you the chronology. I wrote product reviews for Software Magazine; I remember to this day the first product review I did. It had to do with a laser printer driver, or something, somewhere; some kind of a company down in San Diego. Dick Eckhouse asked me to review this software. I don't have the printer; I don't have the hardware; I don't have anything. So I called the guy who wrote the software and asked if I can I come down to review his stuff, see how it works? So I drove down there. Anyway, that was it. So I was doing product reviews for a while; Dick Eckhouse was the editor of Reviews of *Software*; then he became something else. I think he was on the Pubs Board; I don't remember; anyway I didn't know what any of that was. When he said he was going to leave *Software*, he was going to stop being the editor, would I like to do it? So I said yes, sure, why not? So I had reviewers and I continued to do reviews; and then I got on the board of *Software* magazine. Carl Chang invited me. Have you talked to Carl?

Yost: Yes, I interviewed Carl.

Reisman: You know he is the lead of COMPSAC; are you aware of that?

Yost: Yes, of course.

Reisman: I'm taking that over from him; did you know that?

Yost: I did not.

Reisman: It was just announced the other day.

Yost: Big responsibility.

Reisman: Tell me. [Laughs.] Anyway, Carl invited me to be on the board of *Software* magazine. So that was my first formal thing, I wrote all this stuff, all these reviews and that. Then I don't remember how the multimedia thing, how I got involved with that; I guess there was a task force or something; I don't even remember who led it.

Yost: Was it Aylor who was president at that time, do you recall?

Reisman: Who?

Yost: Aylor?

Reisman: Jim Aylor? I knew Jim. What happened to him? Have you talked to him?

Yost: No I haven't.

Reisman: I haven't talked to him in years. But anyway, the task force, I didn't have anything to do with these presidents and vice presidents; I didn't have anything to do with that stuff; I didn't even have a clue about this stuff. I'll tell you in a sec about that.

Somebody started a task force on multimedia computing and maybe they asked me; I just cannot remember at all, but I stuck around with this thing and helped whoever did the launching. I didn't even know what launching meant in those days; I didn't even know about this phase one and phase two thing; I don't even know if they had that stuff. But I was on the first editorial board. So I was part of that launch,; I can't remember how many times I was on the board; but it was for a while. I don't think I wrote for the magazine.

Yost: In the late 1990s, I believe it was in 1999, you were one of the founding editorial board members of *IEEE IT Professional* magazine?

Reisman: Ah, that's different.

Yost: Can you tell me about the launch of that journal?

Reisman: So there I was, I hadn't been in computer science for decades and I was aware of the stuff going on but I wasn't myself involved. The multimedia stuff I did was all practitioner and systems stuff. I always liked systems; I was involved with systems through those IBM days. But in the Computer Society, it was all computer science; nothing that I was doing. I don't even know why I was involved with so many things, to tell you the truth; so I always felt there was a need for the stuff that *IT Pro* does now. I don't remember who initiated the proposal, but there was a proposal written, and there was a resonance among senior staff and senior volunteers that there needs to be involvement of the Computer Society into more of this practitioner stuff; and *IT Pro* could be a vehicle for the Computer Society to get into this and it wouldn't just be the Computer Society to support the magazine; there would be more IT-type activities around the magazine; conferences, and I don't remember what else – there was a long list; and there would be investment in going after the practitioner information systems market or IT market; because there wasn't previously. I was part of the proposal writing; I gotta tell you I can't remember it at all; and all these things that we said would come about if we had an *IT Pro* magazine, it would be the seed around which this would grow. So I was a part of that. Again, the vice president of publications, I don't remember who that was,

maybe it was Dick, I don't know; I don't know how they got publications approved in those days, maybe they just did it. I don't know. Anyway, *IT Pro* started. I was on the search committee; I tend to be - I can't control my mouth; I talk a lot, sometimes I'm domineering. So I was a part of the search; I helped to get -- I might even have done more than help get -- the first EIC, Bill Chu, because I can be a bully sometimes. And I've been on *IT Pro* ever since. I wrote for *IT Pro*. I was some kind of editor or something in the beginning; department editor, columnist. I wrote all kinds of stuff there; and I guess when I became Computer Society president, or president elect, I just couldn't keep writing; I just didn't have the time. I don't know how David [Grier] does it. So they put me on the advisory board; and last year, they made me the chair of the advisory board. The advisory board didn't exist before; that's a construct that Carl Chang invented for *Software* magazine. I don't do much; I write occasionally, now. I think the last thing I wrote was about a year ago, with Kathy Land about certification; the importance of certification. I go to *IT Pro* meetings. Have you talked to Frank Ferrante?

Yost: No I haven't.

Reisman: You should talk to him; he's a good guy. He's been around a long time and I should call him and see how he is. Anyway, he was the second EIC of *IT Pro*. So he's been around, on it for a long time, also. So I go to the *IT Pro* editorial board meetings once a year; shoot my mouth off and go home. [Laughs.]

Yost: In launching the magazine was there a conscious sense that this was a differentiating point from ACM, that the Computer Society was being more responsive to the professional practitioner community, an area that ACM perhaps does not cultivate as fully?

Reisman: I can only speak from an *IT Pro* perspective. I don't know what else was going on in the Computer Society; and if I knew, I forget. We launched the magazine, and did not get the kind of support we'd hoped for it from the Computer Society. Maybe we did, but we didn't perceive that we were getting it. There was not a revolutionary

change in the Computer Society as a result of the launch of *IT Pro*. However, I think what's happened is that because the industry has really changed so much, that we have evolved into what we've become, where *IT Pro* kinds of stuff is more important now in the Computer Society. For example, there's now a Practitioner's Activity Board. They have that; that's a pretty important concept.

Yost: Do you know when that was formed?

Reisman: In 2010, something like that. Do you know?

Yost: No I don't.

Reisman: Something like that; 2009, 2010; it was a committee before they turned it into a board. So anyway, that exists, now. *IT Pro* is holding this month, its first ever conference, IT Pro Conference, back in D.C. If you read *Computer* articles, really, a lot of them are quite different than they were 20 years ago. There's certification as an IT CS activity. We never had any kind of certification before. Now it's a big deal around here. So there's a lot of activity addressing professionals. I mean, I'm very impatient. I would've liked all that to happen the next day after the launch of *IT Pro*, but that is not realistic.

Yost: You wrote a column for *IT Pro* called The Ivory Tower. Can you tell me how that came about and what your ideas were in deciding to do that column?

Reisman: [Laughs.] I might take this out of anything I see that you write, but I have an opinion about everything; not always the right opinion, but I have an opinion about everything and everybody tells me that, too. I wanted to expound on stuff and I want people to hear my opinions, whatever it is, and so that was really the makings of *The Ivory Tower*. Even when I wrote those software reviews; there's no such thing as a right or a wrong review, it's what you think, and I love to do tell people what I think. I guess I

wrote stuff like that, too, before *IT Pro*. I think I did reviews or something for *Multimedia*, too; I just don't remember. Somewhere I have a big long resume that has all these things.

Yost: In 2006, you published a column in *IT Pro*, for The Ivory Tower, arguing that the CIO is the only competent university administrator.

Reisman: Oh, I said that; not even all of them. [Laughs.]

Yost: Did that get a big response and cause controversy in the academic world?

Reisman: I don't know. I only wrote one column I'm really sorry about. It was a column I really wish I could retract. It talked about self-esteem of American students. And we all know this today, self-esteem isn't enough. I didn't want to say it at the time. *Performance* is what you need to have when we're getting killed by the Chinese and a lot of Indians. But I didn't want to say that at the time; but I knew it, and I've always regretted not being honest on that. I was teaching at the time; I knew it was so. Do you teach?

Yost: I don't have a regular teaching assignment; I work on a lot of grants, but I do teach a class from time to time.

Reisman: What do you teach?

Yost: History of science and technology.

Reisman: That's gotta be fun.

Yost: . . . U.S. history of technology to be more specific, yes it is a lot of fun… specially to help educate graduate students. You were on the Computer Society Transformation Committee, and the Planning and Membership Committee. Can you talk about those committee roles?

Reisman: I think that's when Anne Marie and Angela were co-executive directors. You know who's the best person to get information on this is Kasturi. I think he was president elect, at the time. I was on the selection committee to find the consulting company who would lead us through this transformation. I remember reviewing the proposals on an airplane, as part of the selection of those guys. So we met fairly often. They led us through, I remember, very hot temperature-wise meetings in the old office there on Massachusetts Avenue. I guess, in retrospect, the CS didn't have a really good direction; we didn't know exactly what we were doing. We had inertia and we needed a focus. And these consultants wanted us to build this transformation plan; so when was this? Kasturi is before Kathy; 2010, 2009, 2008; something like that; 2008. We put a lot of effort into it; how did we do this? I kinda remember this flow chart that said here is the past, and these are the changes, but we can't do them all, the changes, today. So we'll do this one and maybe that was the practitioner path, I can't remember. And then when we've self-actualized over here, we'll come back and readdress this one. I don't remember what the "thises" and the "thats" were. I have this all on my computer. Do you have that plan?

Yost: I don't and I don't recall seeing it in doing a review of the archives. That would be something that would be very valuable for the archives. My guess is that there is a copy in the DC office.

Reisman: I do have it I think. Send me a reminder and I will find it. I've got at least some of it; or some of the slides.

Yost: They probably have it, but I can follow up with Anne Marie to be sure.

Reisman: I have a lot of documents somewhere, electronic ones. Anyway, I remember one of the line items was to capitalize on CSDA and CSDP, and I remember saying to Angela [Burgess]; I don't know where I got his awareness before, years before; a company that's got only one product is really on shallow, thin ice. And I said to Angela, you know our dependency on the success of these certification programs — about which we had no clue at the time — is very tenuous. If these don't make it, we don't make it.

We don't make these projected numbers, this is risky. She knew; and we didn't; and we haven't. [Laughs.] It's just almost an impossible battle to try to build a business on the basis of certification. It's okay for a professional society; we should be doing this stuff. But a business? I don't think so. Anyway, I don't remember that much about the transformation stuff, but it was a lot of meetings and a lot of good stuff came out of it; it gave us a direction. You know we had 125, or 123 staff members back then. Now it's like seventy-odd.

Yost: Yes. It's a much smaller staff.

Reisman: It's part of the IEEE takeover.

Yost: Reorganizations can yield results. IBM in the early 1990s had several consecutive years that they took losses and really downsized, then thrived leading the IT services field.

Reisman: I have a huge amount of IBM shares from when I was an employee. I'm glad I kept them. I had a program planned with IBM when I was at the university – a program with the IBM Canada Lab An ex-colleague of mine and I were coordinating this thing. And I phoned up there, I don't remember, in 1992 or 1993; I phoned up; "Hi, I want to speak to Doug XXX." "He's no longer here." "What do you mean he's no longer there? I just talked to him last week." "Sorry, I can't tell you any more than that." Whoa, they had wiped out everybody that I knew; all the old guys.

Yost: In the 2000s before becoming president you served on a number of committees including VP of the Electronics Products and Services Board. Can you tell me about that?

Reisman: Oh yeah, I'll tell you about that. In 19-something-or-other, I had been on the Pubs Board for a long time and they said to me, you can't be on the Pubs Board anymore, you must do something else. So Angela suggested that I be on — I can't remember — there were all these committees; there was the web redevelopment; there was the digital library committee, and there was a something else committee; and they were all the same

guys on these committees. She said, you want to get involved with them? I can't remember his name, was chair of all these committees; anyway, I got off Pubs, which was a sort of alienating feeling, and I got on these other committees, and they all met at the Board of Governors' regular meetings, from 10:00 to 11:00, 11:00 to 12:00, and 12:00 to 1:00. So it was fun to be on them and they eventually put the whole thing together into a board called the Electronic Products and Services Board, and they made Jim Moore the vice president. I don't know what exactly what the story was, but after a few months, he said he didn't know what to do with this board; there were all these things, and he didn't want to be vice president anymore; would I like to? I don't remember exactly who made me vice president. That has to be approved by the BoG, so I became vice president of the EPSB. I'd been on all those subcommittees for a while; and then became vice president; I don't remember how long I was vice president. And my last act as vice president of that was to write a report saying there shouldn't be this board because it didn't make any sense; it was just a goofy thing. And I don't remember when, but we disbanded it and turned it into a committee; now called Emerging Products and Services Committee. It's still kind of an outlier in the Computer Society. Anyway, that's the story.

Yost: Can you tell me about becoming VP of Pubs? And what year was that?

Reisman: So that was 2010, 2009; maybe 2008. I'd been elected to the board and I don't remember whoever was the president, asked me what would I like to do? I said I'd like to be vice president of the EAB. And he asked, "Do you ever want to be president?" And I said yes; and he said then don't be the VP of EAB. [Laughs.] You should be VP of Pubs; I said okay; and that was that.

Yost: In taking on that role, what did you see as the greatest opportunities and greatest challenges?

Reisman: This plagiarism thing was a big deal.

Reisman: Publishing was everything in the Computer Society. It was our major source of revenue. Across the boards, volunteers were involved in a lot of things I thought they didn't need to be involved with. For example, they didn't need to be involved with negotiating contracts. e-Learning -- that was the other committee I was on (when I was off Pubs), -- and we were involved with negotiating contracts with SkillSoft, or whomever those guys were at that time. We were involved with selecting courses that we would offer to volunteers. What a waste of volunteer time. I have always worked to get volunteers out of stuff like that. That's what we pay staff for.

Anyway, on Pubs, we had the POC, Press Operating Committee, as part of Pubs. It was like we were appointing people to a position for responsibilities that didn't even exist. I got rid of that and pushed it over to another board where it became obvious that it wasn't really useful. I think that this committee is gone now – as it should be.

There were all these silos and committees I thought where people were just taking advantage of being a chair; not doing anything. There was nothing for them to do even. So there was a lot of this cleaning up, which I think I've done a lot of, over the years. I helped to get rid of a lot of things. The CS Digital Library was another thing; and I helped to move us forward on that. When I was right here in this room, there was a meeting — maybe it was upstairs — it was when I was appointed Vice President of Pubs. In the fall before I started, the IEEE sent two guys here to talk about why we should move some of our CSDL stuff, over to them. And I listened to their presentation — to Tony Durniak and his cohort, and it all made sense to me. Why are we spending money to do some of this — to keep our identity, but — all this infrastructure, we shouldn't be doing, they should do it. And I appointed Phil LaPlante the Digital Library Committee chair when I was VP of Pubs. I've known Phil forever; he was key. It was a lot of politics and he was key in working with me to start that activity going – to move stuff to Xplore. Little did I know, we were giving the show away, in a manner of speaking. So anyway, that started with me, that's something I wanted to do. Not give away the whole show, but that was important. What else did you ask me?

Yost: Was that shift to IEEE XPLORE; were there significant financial issues, in terms of revenue with that change?

Reisman: It was supposed to reduce our costs. It didn't evolve the way. I thought it was going to evolve -- but maybe it's okay now, the way it did evolve. And so the answer to your question, you'd have to ask Angela. The presidential years really stand out for me more because they were like a 24/7 job for practically three years. Not the vice president stuff so much -- except perhaps for the plagiarism thing - that was a huge deal. I remember one Christmas season, it might've been my second year as VP of Pubs, when the problem of computer-generated-papers hit the fan; I remember the whole month of December was ruined for me because of all the e-mails and all the stuff we had to do to deal with that. There were no policies in place; what do you do with a paper like that? And all we wanted to do was kill the guy that did that; I'm not kidding; not that we knew who it was. It took a lot of time to work it all out. That really led to the plagiarism committee and policies, the whole thing. That was a big deal; took a lot of time.

Another thing I did - I got the publication *Transactions on Affective Computing* going; that's where I learned how hard it is to launch a publication; I don't think it's doing so well. I was also part of the support for the launch of the *Transaction on Web Services*. When it launched, I was part of the support that kept it alive; that was almost a disaster in the first year. I had to pick up the management of that thing, with staff and volunteer calls every week. Where are we? And are you doing this? And you have to do that. And the whole thing took me back to my days of project management in industry. But we got that pub on the road; it's since evolved and supported our Congress on Web Services, and Cloud, and all of that.

I managed us through a lot of EIC searches without difficulties. After me, though, there were some other people that didn't manage that so well. I also ran a lot of searches; you'll never find that because I never made a note of those things. Actually, that probably helped me as VP of Pubs, now that I think about it. There was a disastrous search for something and they had no time to recover, and the then-president — might've been

Gerry Engel — called me and asked if I can lead the search for this EIC; we've only got three months. I said sure, and pulled that off okay. One of the other things, by the way, you know the evaluation matrix? Have you been on search committees?

Yost: Yes.

Reisman: You know the (candidate rating) matrix?

Yost: No.

Reisman: I'm the guy that took that, and formalized it; you might not like it but it's a good guide. I cleaned that thing up, and it's relatively unchanged from when I started it. I don't remember if I did that as VP of Pubs or before; it must've been.

Yost: What are some of the most important strategic directions you wanted to take the Computer Society in, as you ran to be president-elect?

Reisman: When I was Vice President of Publications I saw that everybody got *Computer* magazine, and unless you subscribed to one of the other magazines you had no clue about what was going on in other publications. So if you were interested in multimedia, you had no clue about anything related to education. If you were interested in education at the time, there wasn't an education department then. I helped to start that in Computer Magazine. I got Ann Sobel to be the first editor of that department. Anyway, every magazine writes something about education, writes something about multimedia. You almost never get to see this stuff. So I thought we need a construct that helps people, without having to spend all that money, to see and to have access to content written about these things in these other places.

I also dreamed up the concept of special interest groups, and I wrote a White Paper saying we need special interest groups, and because the world is shifting online — everybody knows this now but they didn't know this then — I knew it, we need communities, online communities. I also learned in my president-elect year, that our TCs

are a little dysfunctional; a lot dysfunctional. Not all of them, but a great many of them; and the Computer Society has moved to cleaning that up some. It always offended me that TCs can have people on their committees who aren't members of the Computer Society; they don't pay the $129 anymore; don't pay anything. So I invented this construct, I wanted to call SIGs, and it wasn't "instant communities." That's a Jim Isaak thing that I thought was a stupid idea. I wrote about what I thought they should be; and I started to think about how we can make this happen here. And I knew I couldn't make it happen alone so I recruited David Grier, John Walz, and Dejan Milojicic and we all became friends, better friends, and sort of manipulated the creation of those things, Special Technical Communities - STCs. They didn't like the word SIG because ACM has SIGs, but everybody has SIGs, it's a generic term. So I argued with them forever but finally I said okay, Special Technical Communities,. I'm just amazed, now; I remember sitting, writing the paper, and I remember drawing the matrix and all that on the paper. And now it's happening; it's great. That was the biggest thing, I think.

Yost: Speaking of Dejan, can you tell me about any role you had with, and your opinion of, the launch of *Computing Now*?

Reisman: Well, yes. First of all, I didn't know Dejan. *Computing Now* was — what's the word? — there's an expression. He did that without authorization of other volunteers; he worked with the staff. He's a doer and he made it happen, and it was the right thing to do. It wasn't political but he turned around, and now here's *Computing Now*, so that's how I got to know Dejan. And I'll tell you, that's why I wanted him to be part of the STC activity. This guy knows how to make things happen. David's good because he's a great orator; Dejan's good because he can make things happen; John's the greatest analytics guy in the world, to a fault. I would say this with all of them being there. I think I'm pretty creative, so it was a good group. That's how I approached him. And by the way, I'm not sure — it wouldn't matter anymore — when I was on the nominating committee. Dejan didn't come up through the ranks like all the rest of us did; it was me who brought him in, and I said, Dejan should run for president. He's smart, he's wise, he's a doer, and we need to shake up the place a little bit. I think I shook it up some. I got him on the

ballot to be a candidate — who did he run against? I don't remember, but anyway — that was really quite a disruptive change and I'm proud of that. I think he's doing a great job.

Yost: You created the Academic Advisory Board? Is that correct?

Reisman: Oh, that never happened. That was one of the few things, if you read my "Here's What I Want to Do" column, that never happened.

Yost: Okay, that must be where I saw it.

Reisman: In fact, I wrote here's what I'm gonna do; and at the end of the year, this is what I did; and that was one that I didn't do, that one. You know about my efforts with ACM, right?

Yost: Yes. I want to ask you about that. But first can you talk about the relationship between the Computer Society and IEEE during your tenure as president?

Reisman: I had a lucky year. I even mentioned that when I did my roast thank-you. It was pretty tumultuous before; I don't think it's tumultuous now. That year was a year of peace, with regard to IEEE. There's a handful of people, just a few of them; you know how the world would be a better place without certain rulers. [Laughs.] I think you'll identify four or five of them. Same thing with IEEE. I think IEEE would be a better place today without two or three people who are, clearly, have never been our friends. So nothing much happened there while I was president and I was glad about that. But before I was president, they (IEEE) held the $99 Associate Member fee to compete with ACM. The year after I was president, they didn't give a damn about ACM, because that was a competitive price, so they raised it to around $130; now it's $129 or something. I don't know why they did that, because once you're not president — these things become another person's problem, I think; but anyway, I don't know what the effect of the $129 was. I have this impression that our membership is pretty flat; around 60-65,000 members. Depends on when you measure it. I remember when it was 103,000. But

anyway; so for me, the IEEE takeover hasn't, didn't much happen when I was president but it's incrementally happening now. The thing is, since we're losing money — and we've always lost money — Angela's had to outsource many of our services. The services [for] which we're paying IEEE; that's a tax, $99 or $129. So I think she's pretty smart to make them give us some of those services over the years for which we pay anyway. We are no longer as independent as we were 10 years ago and we toe the line a lot now.

Yost: Were there any initiatives that you launched that were specifically directed at targeting student members, or strategies specifically addressed to a long term reversing of the trends of the last decade or so with membership declining?

Reisman: More when I was Past President, chairing the ICC -- Intersociety Cooperation Committee. When I was President I made many presentations to students all over the world, -- why you should be a member of the IEEE Computer Society. When you're ICC Chair, you're supposed to reach out to organizations. My fantasy was that I would do that; we would sign MOUs; we would offer these guys — especially in Third World countries — you'd offer them a really low membership rate, because you can do that, and our membership would go up. ACM did that, they gave away a year or two for free membership, to China, and suddenly their membership went up like this. I thought what the hell, let's do that same thing. So I did do that; problem was, is — and we have all kinds of MOUs and things — problem is you only have a year to do what you want to do, and you can't do a thing like that in a year. It's got to be a longer period of time otherwise your successor's must to pick up the ball -- and they don't. Usually, they do what they want to do, and it's rarely what you started the previous year.

So I did a lot of that, with China, with India, with Brazil. Has that paid off? Not so much. I made a lot of personal contacts and stuff. I'm still trying to do stuff like that. I'm trying to bring people into COMPSAC. Carl Chang always had this fantasy about making COMPSAC the flagship conference. We need a flagship conference. We had one voice, a loud voice, speaking out against COMPSAC, so you've got to maneuver that.

Yost: Is that a goal you have?

Reisman: Yes, very much; very, very much. Dejan, for example — have you spoken with him?

Yost: No, not yet. We are waiting to interview all past presidents after their "Past President" year.

Reisman: Oh, right.

Reisman: He came up with an idea — I don't know why none of the rest of us thought of it — we need to make COMPSAC more; it's gotta do what it does but we've got to add flavor to it. So for example, the Computer Society needs an event; perhaps a Computer Society Fellows event. I think that's a great idea; why don't we do that in COMPSAC? So we're talking about that now for next year. Co-locating COMPSAC with a Board of Governors meeting, and that's an objective. I'm not sure how realistic it is, but that's an objective; more to legitimize its relationship with the Board of Governors. Some other stuff, too, but sort of speculative right now. But anyway, it's one of my objectives.

Yost: The Computer Society and the ACM have had both competition and cooperation in their history. CSAB was a major collaboration on education and computer science model curriculum and accreditation. You partnered with the ACM President to do a joint column one in Computer and one in CACM.

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Reisman: Oh yes.

Yost: Can you talk about how that came about and what you see as the significance of it?

Reisman: I met Alain Chesnais, ACM president at an SC Conference, in — I don't remember, president-elect year or something — and we were giving out awards together. We have these joint awards. And we started to talk in the wings before we were to go out onstage in front of thousands of people. And he's from Toronto; we started to talk; and we became friends. We met many times through the year; how do we get our guys working together? Why are we at odds with each other? There's so much overlap between the two memberships, it's incredible. Why don't we merge?

So we sent out notices and emails; and wrote that column together. Actually, I wrote it. Apparently, a;; this had been tried a number of years before. We expected a lot resistance, but the resistance did not come, as it turned out from *our* staff. Angela was very cooperative.

But the ACM staff was very resistant. Speculation is — whether that's mine or not is beside the point — that ACM is managed differently than we are; it's managed by its staff. Computer Society is, as I said before, a cooperative effort. John White (ACM CEO at the time, now retired) had a position of authority and power and he didn't want to relinquish it.

But also, IEEE was kind of a reluctant wooer. The CS wanted to do it, but IEEE was a little goofy about letting us do it. IEEE told Angela, yes, go ahead, make the approach; then they stepped back and said they don't really understand what we do. They suddenly got unsupportive.

When I was on the IEEE Pubs Board (PSPB) the first time, there was a proposal to put into Xplore, the *IBM Systems Journal*. I was astounded at the conversation I was hearing: "What is the *IBM Systems Journal*? Is that any good?" Are you guys crazy, I thought? Is it any good! [Laughs.] So they (IEEE) never understood what we do. So when it came to the ACM thing, I don't think they really understood, and we really needed [their go-ahead]. I mean, we're just a branch office of the big IEEE. We can't just go and do what we want, especially these days. So with the ACM resistance; they

brought it to their board. I don't know if you know that — and the president brought it to their board and he was chastised for not socializing it beforehand, and they rejected our then efforts.

You only have a year as president; you can't do anything in a year. We moved pretty far along, actually, to get them to bring it to their board. I was in Venice in 2012, and I got a call from the IEEE president; "Tell me the story about what happened there [with ACM]. I was sitting in the lobby of a hotel talking to him on Skype, or something, telling him the whole story – especially how IEEE lost interest in the whole merger thing; and there was never any follow-up by IEEE.

To get anything done as president, you need to be a missionary; you need to be evangelist because you only have one year to do anything. That's why getting David and subsequent presidents, to be the force behind STCs, that's why it worked because every year - had it only been me – and only one year, nothing would've happened. We're doing the same with COMPSAC; Carl's started that, getting past presidents involved. I'm doing it too. That's why COMPSAC will grow and get better.

Yost: What do you find most rewarding about your year as president, in terms of what you accomplished?

Reisman: First all, I made incredibly good friends. I don't have time for friends outside of the Computer Society. [Laughs.] I don't have time for anything. I made good friends in the Computer Society; a few in IEEE, not so much. You're supposed to say you're helping improve your profession and all of that. That's true. I mean, it's mostly making really good friends. Look, Dick Eckhouse has been my friend now for 30 years almost, even though he's not a part of the place anymore. John, I have an interesting relationship; very interesting; John's kind of strange guy. My wife's a part of this; she meets other women; like John's wife, she's friends with. Kathy Land, we're friends. Angela, Christ, she came on staff almost the same time I joined. I met her when we didn't have this building; I met her here, almost the week she started. Shared memories, like with Carl.

But I know you supposed to say you're helping to improve the profession and all of that; yeah, but we're all selfish. Why are *you* doing what you're doing? *You* like to do this; *you* like to see your work product. Me too.

Yost: Can you tell me a little bit about the history of MERLOT and your leadership of it?

Reisman: MERLOT started in 1987. It's 17 years old. Some people at Sonoma State University, one of the Cal States, had this idea of sharing learning objects, which is a formal term. In IEEE we have a standard for learning objects; anyway, so that people wouldn't have to reinvent wheels they built this digital repository of shareable learning objects. Then some other universities around the country said hey, this is a great idea; we want to participate. They got an NSF grant and they built the first-ever learning object digital library. There've been a number that have come and gone since. But MERLOT survives. It's grown a lot. As a system — and it's the system part that interests me, the infrastructure was re-architected about eight or nine years ago. But the interface, which is of greater interest to me, has been really crappy for decades; hasn't changed too much over the 17 years. Oh, why don't we add this; why don't we add that; why don't we add another thing? Anyway, it got to be, in my view, practically unusable so about 2 ½ years ago —I kept saying to my boss, this system is unusable, this is unusable, it needs to be fixed— so he said okay, go and do it.

So I fought with my development team and I them since I'm in charge, this is how it's going to be. [Laughs.] So in October of last year, we launched a completely new MERLOT, which is fantastic. Speaking about this, many times in my career, I started projects but was unable to finish them; including the development of new systems, -- many things. And for me, this was ***the*** milestone; I started this, I designed it, the developers built it, I saw it through all its development phases, its release; the whole thing, and there it is, and it's fantastic. I finally was able to finish a project. I mean, it's a bizarre industry. I don't know anybody who starts a project and finishes it; hardly ever. So it was a really great accomplishment. You know, since I've been Managing Director of the thing, we have changed MERLOT, aside from what I just talked about, some

architectural changes that have allowed it to be useful worldwide. Used to be you could only use it in English and as a consequence, it's become attractive to countries that don't operate in English. About seven years ago we were approached by a group of Israeli universities, they wanted to build a MERLOT. I said, don't build a MERLOT; we have a MERLOT. It's got millions of dollars invested in it; just tell us what you need and let's see if we can make it work for you. So we really made a lot of middleware changes, and now there's a consortium of all the universities in Israel, essentially — and those are good universities — who now use MERLOT in Hebrew, where it couldn't be done before. And Chile, because we generalized it for language, they formed a consortium of Chilean universities to use MERLOT in Spanish. It's fantastic! I did that. [Laughs.]

Yost: I watched the YouTube video that talked to a group in Israel and . . .

Reisman: Oh yeah?

Yost: Saw the enthusiasm of your audience.

Reisman: Good, you saw that. And now, I was in Ljubljana, I don't know, three weeks ago; the Open Courseware Consortium, which is now the OEC, Open Education Consortium, and MERLOT signed an MOU. We're going to be hosting all the — that's a spinoff of the M.I.T. Open Courseware activity — we're going to be hosting all their 20,000 courses. The Open University of Japan, when I was in Lubliana, we're going to host all their Japanese courses. It's just incredible. And the best part about promoting MERLOT, unlike when I worked at IBM, I can go in and say look, I don't want anything from you guys, nothing. I'm the gift horse you can look in the mouth. I never said that before but it's true. It's a great service for anybody who wants to use technology for their teaching; mostly higher ed. Whether it's for an online course or you just want to do a standup presentation, demonstrations, embed stuff in your PowerPoints, whatever it is you want to do with your learning management system, this is great. I love the thing.

Yost: Before we conclude, are there any topics that I haven't asked you about you'd like to discuss?

Reisman: I'm surprised I talked so much about the past. Yes, this business; I don't know how you include this but this business about a one-year presidential term is a real irritant to me. When they gave me my roast, I think it was all friendly. I found my roast, a video of it, on my laptop when I was coming back from Europe last week and had a lot of time. I watched it and I thought it was very interesting. It was more or less how I remembered it. They appointed me president for life — not for real — because I had something to say about everything and I want things to be the way ***I*** want them to be, not the way anybody else wants them to be. [Laughs.] I know that, and they were teasing me about that. They gave me a picture, framed, with me on *Computer* magazine, "Reisman Appointed President for Life." One of the things I did, and made happen, was creation of this thing officially called President Emeritus. I don't know if you know, but you're president elect, president, past president, and then what are you? Past past president? Have you spoken to Steve Diamond?

Yost: Dave Walden will be interviewing him.

Reisman: Steve always had talked about he's past past past president for life. And we used to laugh, until you become one, then it's not so funny. You spend decades in training — and I said this when Jim Isaak was at his roast — and then they put you on an ice flow and your expertise is gone. There's really, unless you meddle — which I do — you have no contributions and you've got all this institutional memory, most do, and there's no way to capitalize on it. It's dumb. When Moshe Kahn was president of IEEE, he was at one of our meetings and in a side comment he said the same thing. He was much more outspoken on that than I am and a little bit more abrasive, much more; and he said the same thing; it's dumb. President of IEEE one year; can't do anything. That's a real error to me. You should check it out with the others; the difference is, some presidents have jobs and they're glad when it's over, they can go back to their jobs. I have a job but it's not the same as being in industry. They let me do this stuff. Most jobs,

like Kathy Land, she had to negotiate hours that she could do her presidency. I didn't have to do that; guys that are retired don't have to do that. Steve Diamond, though he had a job, I think he was more like me; he could do the stuff. So this is really is an irritant to me. The ICC was a lot of fun because I like doing that MOU stuff, reaching out and negotiating all of that. But then you make these friends in that one year, and there's no follow-up at all. Period. It's bad for the Society and it's unsatisfactory; at least it was for me. *Is* for me. So we created this emeritus thing and I haven't had much time to think about it. They created it; I brought it up when I was president and they said oh no, no, you don't want to do that; you just want to be around forever. I said yeah, it's true.

So anyway, they did it the following year so I'm thinking to myself, how can I bring the emeriti together in some useful fashion? All I need is a little more time. One other thing that I did; most presidents run for IEEE-level director. When Jim Isaak was the president elect, he's the guy who was at the time, in charge of the constitution and by-laws, he brought in a change that didn't allow the president to run for director. Stupidest, dumbest thing that ever happened. So here I was president, I couldn't even run for director. So I undid that. So Isaak couldn't run, and I couldn't run, maybe I'm an ass too, but I couldn't run. But the guys after me could run. David could run, although he withdrew — I don't know if you know — and all the other presidents can now too. So there was this discontinuity, at least for me, and I ended that. I couldn't benefit from it but it's good for all my successors. So that was a big deal. I don't know, there's probably a million other things. If I looked at my trillions of e-mails I could tell you more.

Yost: Thank you so much for your time, this has been very fascinating and valuable.

Reisman: I love to talk. [Laughs.] I still have a few minutes; I've gotta go find Evan; oh, that's another thing, I'm still trying to do that stuff.