Kenneth Barnes

Interviewed by

Richard Sharpe

19th October 2016

At the

WCIT Hall,
32a Bartholomew Close, London, EC1A 7JN
Kindly provided by The Worshipful Company of Information Technologists

Welcome to the Archives of Information Technology. It's Wednesday the 19th of October 2016, and we are in the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists in the City of London.

Now to be a real success in the IT sector you need to understand technology, you need to understand finances, you need to be able to manage companies, you need to be able to start companies, you need to consult with people, and you need to have as well an advocacy of this technology. And here's the man who's done all of those. It's Ken Barnes. Welcome to the archives Ken.

Thank you.

You started work in the 1950s, in 1954, in EMI Electronics.

That's right.

Was that in west London?

It was in Hayes in Middlesex.

Right. And what was your job there?

I was just a junior engineer. Initially, I joined EMI from the Army where I did my National Service. I went through a short training programme, and then I was sent to the embryo computer department in 1955.

And where was that?

That was in Hayes.

And what were you working on there?

We were building a little machine called the EMI pilot model, and I was responsible for developing the wire-wound delay lines for the registers.

Right. Who were you working with?

The interesting thing about this computer was that, the origin started in the National Physical Laboratory when Alan Turing helped design a machine called ACE Pilot Model, ACE, Automatic Computing Engine. And, they built, eventually, the main ACE, but the Pilot Model was worked on by two brothers, Ronald Clayden and Tubby Clayden. Ronald Clayden left and joined EMI, and designed the EMI pilot model, which was a copy of the ACE Pilot Model, and, Tubby Clayden went to English Electric where he designed the DEUCE, ACE DEUCE, which was a copy of the Pilot Model in NPL. And so, that was the origins of the machine on which I worked.

And what applications were they thinking of for this machine?

They weren't thinking of any applications. They were just a group of engineers who had got together and decided to try and turn Boolean logic into reality through electronics. And, I don't think they had any ambition for this machine at all, but just to learn how to build a computer.

And how many did they build?

One.

Just one.

Just the pilot model, yes.

And did it, did anything come after it?

Subsequently EMI had the EMIDEC 1100 series, which was worked on by Ronald Clayden and Godfrey Hounsfield. Hounsfield was the man who designed the very first MRI scanner, and won the Nobel Prize as a result. But EMI had one or two other little machines, big machines, knocking around, the EMI 2400, which never saw the light of day, and the pilot model just died.

Right. And they stripped it, or, what did they do?

I imagine they put it in the dustbin. Yah, I shouldn't think anything happened to it. It was just a valve machine of course. It was before transistors.

Yes.

And, it had no real… It had a punch paper tape input. But frankly, it was where I learnt to program. I was an engineer to begin with, but after it began to work, it used to work for about a couple of hours at a time before it broke down, and, I learnt to program on this machine. And I used…

[03:32]
Why did you step into programming?

Interesting. I… There were two young mathematicians working at EMI then using this machine, and they were writing programs, Tony Hetherington and, I can't remember the other guy's name. I'll remember in a minute. And, I was fascinated by what they were doing. I thought, this is very interesting, I could do this sort of stuff. And so I learnt to program from them. And so, as a result, I really enjoyed programming. It was, I just loved it.

And this was at the machine code level?

Absolutely. I used to sit at the machine with, at the console, with two rows of 36-bit switches, it was a 36-bit word, that's all we had, and, I would put the programs in in binary. [laughs]

And so, you would flick the switches…

Up and down.

Press a button, flick the switches, press a button.

Absolutely.

And it would just be loaded manually.

Yah, absolutely.

Wasn't that rather time-consuming.

Well, once you got the initial program in there, then, you designed a program which could then read paper tape.

Right.

So, basically, it was getting that program… Well…

Bootstrapped...

Once you've got that in there, then, then you could actually access it by putting the…

Right. So you bootstrap, and then you…

Absolutely.

…build something more complex, and something more complex.

Absolutely. The machine only had, the only functions on it were, add and subtract. And, obviously a few other interesting functions like shift and, you know, whatever it may be. So I had to write programs for multiply and divide. [laughs]

Right. And was that floating point?

Absolutely not.

No?

No no no, absolutely not. No. No. It was just straight binary word.

OK.

And, if you want me to tell you, I can tell you what 236 minus one is. It's 68719476735. [laughter]

[05:32]
Good. Very good. Good memory test. You're five years at EMI.

Absolutely.

Yes?

Yup.

Did you get involved in management of a team?

No. I was purely, initially I was, as I say, working as an engineer on this machine, then writing programmes for the machine. Latterly I was helping some other engineers use the machine to drive machine tools, produce paper tape. But then I left and joined ICT.

So you join ICT in 1959.

Yup.

Again, research and development.

Yes. Yup.

What drew you to that?

Well, I had already some good experience in programming and writing software, although we didn't call it software in those days. And there was a new little research team being worked up in Stevenage, at ICT in Stevenage, working on new machine designs, and writing software for the new machines. And so I thought, this is good, I'll get involved in this, and that's what I did.

Right. At what level?

I was just a, a software programmer.

Software programmer.

Yah. Yup. But after about…

What was your actual title, can you remember?

Mm… Couldn't tell you.

OK.

I couldn't tell you. But, after about, a couple of years, they were working on a new machine which had been designed I think in Manchester, the ICT 1301. I had worked on a couple of machines that were installed in the research labs at Stevenage, one was from America, a huge file drum machine, never saw the light of day itself. It was designed I think for the Chase Manhattan Bank. And their instructions were, we wanted a big machine please, because we want it behind a glass wall, people can see it. So they built a very big machine, with these huge file drums. And, I did work on that for a while. But then the 1301 came along, and they wanted a high level language. So I then became a team leader writing a compiler for a high level language, which I and the others designed. We actually designed the language.

What language was that?

It was called the, 1301 Assembly System.

Right.

TAS.

And how high is high level?

You could write sort of, English instructions to it, you know, like, add A to B, and, put it in C, and that sort of stuff.

Oh right, OK.

So it was just a straightforward English language type program.

Which was written on paper?

Absolutely.

Program was written on paper.

Flowcharts.

It was punch card or…?

Punch card.

Punch card input.

Absolutely.

And a single, single program I imagine to be run at one time?

Yes.

Right. And what was the operating system?

pf! There wasn't really an operating system on the 1301. Well there was, but I mean, it wasn't, it wasn't…

It was just an IO controller really.

Yes, that's right. Yah.

Yes. Yah, OK.

Yes.

[08:27]
OK. And how did you learn the craft of writing a compiler?

Mm. [pause] That's a good question. I, I don't know, is the answer. I think, I think, it's just that, I understood what was needed. We could write the, draw the diagrams, the software, you know, the flowcharts, and we knew what we wanted to achieve. There wasn't any special knowledge required I don't think to write a compiler.

Right.

The great thing about the compiler was that, it was a single pass compiler, which was quite interesting.

Yes, for that time, certainly.

Yah.

Certainly. And this wasn't a particularly big machine?

No. No, no, tiny. The 1301, which still exists in a barn somewhere in, it was in Kent, I'll tell you about that in a minute, it was a simple machine, a very simple machine. Punch card input, punch card output. It was…

What was… Sorry. What was it specified for?

It was a general purpose computer. It wasn't for anything in particular.

Right.

No.

So, ICT built, about how many of those?

Oh, quite a lot. I mean they were sold throughout Europe. In fact, when I come on to my later career… The 1301 was sold to a lot of banks in Scandinavia, it was sold in France, it was sold in Italy. They did very well with the 1301. And of course there were subsequent machines. And this is before the 1900 which was the later machine from ICT.

Yes.

But what happened, when I had got this compiler off the ground, and it was going well, I was then sent to the United States by ICT on a three-month…

Can we just pause a moment?

Yup.

And just deal with that. Not moving to the States, but…

OK.

[10:17]

How disciplined were you in that process of software development? Did you go through a cascade process, or, did you do iterative work building the software and then building more of the software?

Yah, we did. We did. We, we…

It was the latter?

Yes it was. It really was. It really was. We hadn't… We were dreaming things up as we went along.

OK.

And deciding that, you know, this is perhaps what we would need, and, in this language, and, could we do this? And, yes we could. So then we'd write another bit of program. And that's how it went.

So it wasn't what's taught as a classic cascade model?

No. No.

OK. OK.

No.

It was much more iterative.

Yup.

OK.

Yup.

And much more exciting?

I loved it. It really was. And we had some really great guys working there, very interesting people. We had the opportunity, being in Stevenage, to get trips up to Cambridge, to meet some of the real pioneers working on EDSAC up there, and, listen to some very interesting lectures on computing. So we had a good exposure to a whole range of people involved in computing at that time.

How large was your team?

About, five I should think.

Right.

Five or six, yah.

Did that test you in terms of management?

[pause] Nnn… Not… We were a very close-knit team, you know, there wasn't a lot of management required, we all knew what, what each other was doing. He was doing that bit, I was doing this bit. And we knew how to knit it all together. And so, the management aspect didn't come into it very much. That was just a little later, that I got into management.

Right. And this team looks as if it's quite flat in hierarchy.

Absolutely. It was, it was… There was a team leader who, well he was the, I think he was the manager of this little software group. But I was the team leader of the, of people developing the compiler.

Yes.

But the manager, whose name escapes me, was looking after other people in the software division.

Right. Right.

Yah.

[12:28]
Then you got sent to America.

Yes we did. I did. Yup. That was a…

That must have been something else. This was 1960?

1962 I think.

'62.

Yah. What happened was that, ICT had made a deal with RCA, and the RCA, mm, 301, was re-designated the ICT 1500. So they sold it in this country as the ICT 1500, but in America it was the RCA 301. And they were developing a COBOL compiler. And I was sent with a group of other people to work with the software engineers writing this COBOL compiler. And the idea was that I would go for three months. If EMI had – sorry, ICT had sent me for three months and a day, I think they would have had to have sent what I had then, my wife and family, two little girls. But they decided to send me one day less, and so I went by myself. I'm absolutely convinced that if my wife and family had come with me, we would have stayed in America.

Really?

Yup. I knew a lot of people in America who had left this country to work for the Rank Corporation and various computer companies in the United States, and were having a wonderful time, a wonderful life. And I met up with them when I went over for this three-month stint. So it was really, really interesting. I can't say I did a lot of work on this compiler, but I had a very interesting time. [laughs]

Where were you actually based?

In Camden, New Jersey. Cherry Hill, which is just outside Philadelphia. And, very nice American people, got invited to some lovely homes. I had a grand time. But I can't say I did a lot of work. [laughs]

[14:21]
Now COBOL had been designed, had been designated, if you're going to sell a computer to the US Government, it's got to have COBOL.

Absolutely.

And that's what spread it.

Yup. Absolutely. And, so, so RCA had to have a COBOL compiler. And of course, ICT were interested in having a COBOL compiler on their 1500, so they were very keen to see their own people involved in the development of this compiler.

14:48]
Right. Then you came back to head office at Putney.

I did. I came back, and they asked me to run a small commercial group in Putney, head office, on the north bank of the Thames then, there was only one. And, Riverside House. It's still there. And, I worked with a group of about, six in my team, as a manager, writing commercial programs. I can't think what we were writing but we had a number of clients. One was the, one of was the, New Zealand and something bank, Australia and New Zealand Bank, or something like that.

Right. Right.

And they wanted to produce a list of their shareholders, because they were going to have a share issue. And so we had to write the program on, they ran it on a Friday because they wanted to do the issue after the stock market had closed on Friday, because, having printed out all the list of shareholders, I don't know how many hundreds there were, with their holdings, and what their new holding would be if they

took up the offer, it was then taken away, and all written out in copperplate handwriting over the weekend. Because that's how the…

That's how you did it.

That's how you did it. [laughs]

So ICT would be selling, or leasing, a computer to a user.

Yup.

And you would basically be doing the application for it.

Absolutely right.

Right.

Correct.

And that would be part of the same contract would it?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yup.

And, was that software free, or did ICT ask money for it?

Mm… Good question. No idea.

No idea.

I have no idea whether ICT made charges for the software we wrote.

Right. OK.

Probably. Probably.

So, you had to be this interface between the customer and the technology.

Yup.

And you were dealing with this slippery thing called software.

Yup.

And did you write it in COBOL?

Probably not. I should think in those days we were still writing in machine code. [laughs]

Right. Right, OK. OK.

Yup. Yup.

Because it's faster?

Well it was easy. I mean, it was a one-off bit of software, and, you know, and you could write it quickly in code, and if you were slick at that, which we all were, there were a lot of slick programmers around then in ICT, it was quicker. Yup.

[17:10]
And I presume some light bulb went on in 1964 in your brain.

What happened was, in '63, and this is a little story, is it OK to tell a story?

Ooh, indeed it is. These are the archives.

They were building the Forth road bridge, and they wanted to determine what the level of toll should be on the Forth road bridge, based on the frequency of traffic, and, time of day and all this sort of stuff. And I was approached by two guys who were…

And presumably, the people building the road bridge, or, somebody up there in Scotland, had got an ICT 1301. And two guys from the ICT office in Edinburgh approached me and said, 'Ken, we want to have a program that will determine the level of toll that we should charge, based on all sorts of factors.' And I said, 'Well I'll write that for you myself.' And they said, 'That's fine Ken.' And I said, 'I'll charge you.' And I charged them, personally charged them money to write this program so they could determine the value of the, or the price of the toll. There were two guys working at ICT in those days, Alan Benjamin, who we know, and Jim Holding. who you may not know. They had been working for a company called ISIS, International Shipping Information Services, for a chap called John Georgiardis. And they had stumbled across a problem at the University of London, who had bought an ICT 1301 to process the O and A Level results. It was installed at Senate House. And the whole computer department had collapsed. And they were coming up to the, they used to run the exams twice a year and in the winter they would produce the results in February. And then again in the summer of course. And, they were desperate. And Alan Benjamin and Jim Holding approached me, they knew I was a little bit of an entrepreneur at ICT, and said, would I leave and set up a company? And this was at the back end of 1963. And I said, 'Yah.' Because I had nothing to lose. If it failed, I could get a job anywhere. It was no problem at all getting a job, as an experienced programmer by then, ten years in the business.

Yes.

And so, I left ICT and set up SPL, as a result of that.

[19:52]
So this is SPL, Systems Programming Limited.

Absolutely, yah.

And what were your first clients?

The first client was the University of London.

Right.

And, I went to ICT and pinched a couple of really, really great programmers, guys I knew and trusted, and said, 'Would you like to join me?' And they said, 'Certainly.' And, we got this thing off the ground instantly. It took us… We worked day and night. And, we made it all work for the University of London. And they were absolutely bowled over by what we could do with this dark machine. And our name got known at ICT, and there were a lot of people at ICT in the sales sector who were selling machines to people like gas boards and electricity boards. And I was approached by a young lady who said, the West Midlands Gas Board had a problem, could we solve it for them? Yes. Went up there. Instantly solved. East Midlands Gas Board heard about it. Southern Gas Board heard about it. And suddenly we worked for all the gas boards. And, I went from three people to nineteen people in about, six months, all working for gas boards and electricity boards, and, then it began to snowball. Just writing generalised software for these people, in…

For these utility companies.

Yes. In machine code.

All in machine code?

Absolutely.

And all for ICT computers?

Yup. All ICT then, yup.

[21:22]
Where were you based?

I was determined to have an office in Newman Street. Newman Street, [laughs] as you may recall, was the centre of computing. You had IBM, you had CSC, and various other companies down there. And I thought, that's where I've got to be. And

I rented a little tiny garret office on the top floor of a, number 21 Newman Street. And that's where we were based.

And you expanded to about nineteen people within about six months did you say?

Yup. Yup. Yup.

So this was testing your management skills yet again.

Fortunately, by this time Alan Benjamin had left ISIS and he joined me, and he was my finance director, and, I had with Alan quite a lot of management skill. My main role was, as the entrepreneur, building the company, winning new business, getting the people on board who I thought could do the work. And, so my management skills were largely confined to that role, rather than hands-on project management.

Right. Where did you get the initial capital?

We didn't have any.

You just didn't have any?

We didn't have any. Didn't have any at all. I think we, we started the company with £400, or maybe even less. And Alan and Jim Holding owned most of it, but then after six months, because I was doing so well, I bought most of the shares from them.

Right.

And…

Why did you do that?

I think, they were getting to a point when they thought, this company… Oh they could make some money. So they, they thought, if I would give them £6,000 for their shares, that was lovely. Which I did. But then, we grew and grew very, very rapidly.

You did.

And we then needed capital. We then needed some sort of back-up as it were. And that came from a private bank.

Right. You went to them, and you showed them your cash flow, you said…

Alan Benjamin knew these people, they were Manchester, Knowsley and Company, a small private bank. And we said, look, you know, we write this software, and he thought software was something to do with ladies' underwear. And we need some money. And he said, 'Right,' and he took an equity stake and, loan capital.

Right.

And that's how we managed to carry on building the business over the next, two or three years.

So, you had to give up some of your ownership, to get the funds.

Absolutely.

About how much did you raise then?

We ended up with a loan capital of about £360,000, and, I think, the equity capital was still only in the order of, forty or fifty thousand.

[24:09]
Right. As long as the projects kept rolling in, this was quite a good cash cow as well wasn't it?

Absolutely. Absolutely. We, the cash flow was, was the key, you know, a small business like that. Our overheads were low because we were based on people only, and so, the overheads were only the office and…

In Newman Street.

In Newman Street. Well…

Which was not cheap.

Well, we were squeezed out of Newman Street quite quickly, because, it just wasn't big enough, and we went over the road to Store Street, which was just over the other side of Tottenham Court Road. And we rented a floor of an office in Store Street, which is quite near the university, but, I suppose we had a couple of thousand square feet there. And the thing just grew and grew and grew.

[24:51]
This was the period when IBM had just launched the 360. Did you look at that seriously?

No, it was, it was 1401, 1440, prior to the 360. By this time we were moving outside ICT, we had a lot of IBM people, we were working on IBM software for various clients. We began to work on other machines. DEC, 3Cs [the Computer Control Company], another small company. Prime I suppose. Honeywell.

So you had quite a range, from mainframes down to minis?

Absolutely. Yah. Well, yah, yah but, minis weren't… The small machine work we did was mainly in rather esoteric areas such as, mm, engineering and, flight simulators and this sort of stuff. We worked for Redifon, which was a flight simulator developer.

Yes.

And, some interesting stuff. Quite, quite fascinating work. And there were people who I couldn't, you know, understand what they did. [laughs] I mean they were

brilliant. All I did was, oh, you know, got these guys on board, and grew the business, and found more money, and, as the dreaded entrepreneur, you know.

[26:11]
How big was the business?

We were, within, within about two years we were employing, 150 people I suppose, something like that. And we had, already had offices in many European countries. And we were approached in 1964, after the company had been going for nine months, by a bank in Stockholm who had heard about us, had a 1301, had some problems. Could I supply them with three programmers for a year? Oh yes, certainly sir. [laughs] And, we set up an office in Stockholm. That was our first overseas office, it was in Stockholm.

So you were willing not only to write software but also to hire out your expertise by seconding people into a bank?

Yes. I mean they… What happened was, the three people from the UK went out to work for the bank, under a contract of course, and, they were there. So they set up on office. And we recruited a Swede to be manager of the office. And more work was won with other banks in Stockholm and other organisations in Sweden. And so, the office began to grow, and I was shipping more and more English guys out there to work in, in various jobs in Sweden. And then came Finland, and Denmark, and Switzerland, and Holland, and Spain, and Italy, and throughout the whole of Europe.

And did you manage, how did you manage that process? Did you regionalise it, or did you run it from London, or…?

It was, it was, the head office was in London, but there were regional offices in each country, and they had their own funding and they had their own management structure and, and…

Their own funding?

Yah. And… Well, they would get… Many of them were self-funding, they earned so much money in the various jobs they earned, that, we didn't have to actually provide them with funds. So, it grew on a regional basis in each of these countries.

[28:15]
Right. And you were eleven years with SPL?

Yes I was.

Till '75.

Yah. Yah.

Why did you leave?

In 1970, when the bank, who by this time were well embedded in terms of loan capital and equity capital, were getting slightly nervous, and we were a sufficiently large and well-known organisation by then to be quite attractive to buyers. And we were approached by four or five organisations, both in the United States and in this country, to see if we would sell the business. The bank were pretty keen, they were pretty keen to say, 'OK, we...'

They wanted out?

'We've had enough. We want out.'

Mm.

The buyers in the United States were, Honeywell, but Honeywell… A part of Honeywell, I can't remember what it was called now, but it was in the engineering side. And, we couldn't understand how we would integrate with Honeywell as a UK business. Another company was called Recognition Equipment, which did, I don't know whether you know this company, they did readers, they, read, printed material.

Right.

And, they were based in Dallas, in Texas. And we were shipped out to Dallas, and, they tried to buy us. But, we couldn't understand it at all. PA Management Consultants were very, very keen to buy us, and spent a year trying to put us together with the PA IT group, but they didn't have enough money. And eventually we were sold to Simon Engineering, which is a northern engineering company in Manchester, to a part of a business called Simon Handling Engineers, who made equipment to, made cardboard boxes. [laughs] And, they wanted a software company, they thought, to help them drive these, this machinery. They bought us, and the bank were very happy with the amount of money they paid. And, we never actually, ever saw them, we just carried on as we were before. We never got any work with Simon Handling Engineers. [laughter] We just carried on as SPL. And then we began to expand quite rapidly.

How much did they buy you for?

It was a million pounds. A million pounds.

A million pounds.

Yes. [laughs]

Which, when a million pounds was a million pounds.

In 1970.

Yes.

It was quite a lot of money.

Yes.

Yah. Yah, it was a million pounds, yah. And the bank were very happy, they had paid off the bank loan. The bank walked off, by that time they had about, fifty per cent of the equity, they walked off with half a million pounds for their investment of about, £40,000. So they were very, very happy. And, we as little, young men, were very happy as well.

[31:19]
So this new parent just, didn't interfere. You carried on.

They put a, they put a gentleman on our board of directors, the chairman, Geoffrey Wilkinson, who was a tough guy, and… But nevertheless, we just carried on as we were. And we just carried on developing software for, and by this time we were divisionalised, we had the real-time division, we had the medical division, we had the engineering division, the banking division, as well as all the regional offices.

And your title now was what?

I was, I had been Chairman and Managing Director, but now we had a new chairman so I was just Managing Director. And, that was an interesting time. We had a whole group join us from BOAC as it was at the time, Peter Adams and his whole real-time group who developed all the software for BOAC, left and joined SPL. The whole team. And they built it up to a fantastic division. And when I left he became managing director.

Right.

Yup.

Did you go in for acquisitions?

We did, we did. We did… We subcontracted a lot of work to smaller software companies, and eventually they became so dependent on us, they became part of us. So it wasn't an acquisition per se, but they were integrated into the business. I did have a little conversation with, gosh, I can't remember the name of the company, but,

a well-known software company, but we didn't get anywhere with them. They wanted too much money I think. So we didn't make any specific acquisitions but we did integrate a lot of smaller businesses into SPL.

[33:02]
What was your unique selling point? Why, why would you argue, when you went into a customer, why would you say, 'You've got to come with us, you can't go with those other guys'?

I think, historically we, we were recognised as a really, really good, slick programming group of people. Really good software, on time, to budget. One of our most well-known bits of, well not well-known but, something we did, were very proud of, we were approached by ICT, and they said to us, 'Could you write some software to run IBM 1401 programmers on the ICT 1900?' And we said, 'Don't know. We can't write a translator, but we might be able to write a simulator.' So, David Rodway, who was one of my most brilliant programmers, decided to see whether we could write… And then they gave us a three-month contract, to see whether we could write this simulator, and if we thought we could, then they would give us the contract to write the simulator. And in three months David Rodway wrote the whole simulator. [laughs] So then they gave us a contract, and for a year, we had this already [laughs], we collected a year's worth of income from ICT, with a team of six people writing the simulator we'd already developed, so we knew it would work. So that was, we were rather proud of that actually. And that was a, we were well known as really good, slick software developers. We were well known as working in a number of different environments. We talked about the gas boards, the banks, hospitals became one of ours, engineering became one. And so, I think our reputation enabled me to go and say, 'Look, we've done it all before. We know how to write programmes. We know all about your machines. I can put in a team of people which will do it for you on time to budget.' And we did.

[35:02]
Who was the competition?

Oh, Logica. I guess, they were the biggest competition at the time. And they grew much more rapidly than us, and Philip Hughes was a brilliant guy. SDL was the other company I as trying to think of, I tried to buy, Systems Designers Limited.

Right.

I can't remember his name now. Who was, who was SDL? No. And, I think that, I suppose, Computer Sciences Corporation.

Mhm.

Mm. I can't remember all of the software companies around then, but there was competition. But our uniqueness was the fact that we had offices throughout the whole of Europe. Nobody had offices throughout Europe like we did. We were actually the biggest software company in Europe, because we had more offices throughout Europe than anybody else. Which was, you know, pretty good.

Quite something for a British company.

Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. [laughs] Absolutely.

Started with one contract.

That's right. That's right. Yah.

[36:04]
1975 you left.

Yup.

Why?

When I was taken over in 1970 by Simon Engineering they said, 'Here's a five-year contract Ken.' And five years to the day they said, 'Right, you can go now Ken.' So I said, 'Right.' So I left.

So, you were in golden handcuffs.

Yes. Yup. I had been…

Did that irk?

Um…

You had owned this company, you had built it.

Yes. It, it did. It did, quite a lot actually. The man they put on my board, Geoffrey Wilkinson, was a really hard taskmaster, and, I found it very difficult to work for him and with him, if you know what I mean. He was my boss then. And if you've worked for yourself for, as long as I had, you become effectively unemployable. And I found it very hard to work for Geoffrey Wilkinson, and I found it very hard to work with him, because he was such a difficult man. He didn't know anything about software, and he didn't know anything about running small companies. But, nevertheless, he, he tried to impose himself on the whole business. And I found that very difficult indeed. So I was happy to leave. I wasn't happy at the time, but, on reflection I was happy to leave.

Right.

In fact, in truth, I think, as the entrepreneur who had started the business, and by now it was quite big, with multiple offices and multiple divisions, it needed a lot more skilled management than I had. So you needed a better manager than I was. I was great at building, but not good at running.

[37:48]
Right. And you are about 42 now?

[hesitates] Was I? [laughs] Probably. Yes.

I think so. And you moved into management consultancy.

What happened was, I, after I left, I didn't do a lot for a year, and then, Derek MacLaren from PA Management Consultants, who was running the IT operations at PA, approached me and said, would I like to become a director of PA, and I did. So I went to them for, about a year or two.

What were you doing there?

I was helping them sort out their operations in Scandinavia. They had a…

Which you had knowledge of.

Yes. And, and a lot of people I knew in Scandinavia. And… But, I suppose, performing general consulting roles. But not a lot of, face-to-face consulting with clients Mainly, I was mainly as a director, sort of, running around being PA, if you know what I mean.

Yes.

That was my, my job.

Do you enjoy that?

It was OK. One thing I did, benefit enormously, is, I met a group of people called PA Developments, who were working for the Merchant Officers Pension Fund, and their role was to help the pension fund make investments, in small companies, or big companies or whatever it may be. And I watched how they did this, and I thought, that is very interesting. I think I might be able to do that. So I put that in the back of my mind, about manging investments, and making investments. And then I left PA

after a year or two and joined John Diebold as the director of consulting. Diebold was a US consulting company. And, they…

Did you get on well with him?

[pause] I probably only met him a couple of times. He used to swan around in a white suit. Did you know him? I don't know whether you did.

I know of him.

Well, well the people who preceded me at this company was Butler and Cox. Now, David Butler and George Cox, who are well known in the industry of course, left John Diebold and set up their own business, which competed directly with John Diebold's conference group.

Yes.

That was their main role, is running conferences on technology throughout Europe. And my role was consulting, separate from the, from the conferences. So I managed a small, tiny, two-, three-, four-man consulting group, doing proper consulting for real clients, and advising them on technology and how to, you know, use it, and how to benefit from it in their own businesses. Whereas the main bit of Diebold was to run these conferences in Europe. So I attended a number of conferences with Diebold in, in Venice and Stockholm, again Stockholm, where I was happy to introduce John Diebold to all of the top people in Stockholm who I knew extremely well, the Walenbergs and the, all these, the chairman of Volvo and chairman of Asea, and all these people. Which wowed him, you know, he thought it was absolutely the cat's whisker. And we had lunch with Marcus Wallenberg at the bank in Stockholm, which he thought was wonderful. And the man who was running the bank then was a chap called Jacob Palmstierna, who was an extremely well-known man. And, anyway, so, my role at Diebold was to, principally, run the consulting bit, and on the other hand, help John Diebold in the conferences that Butler and Cox effectively had set up. But then I thought, after a couple of years, this is not for me. I know what I want to do.

So I left again, and formed my own company, which was called Royce Cook Associates Limited.

Right.

[42:11]
Royce Cook…

Why was it called that?

My father's name was Royce Cook Barnes.

Oh I see.

And I thought Royce Cook was rather a nice title.

Yes, Rolls Royce. Very good. Thomas Cook, very good.

So, it became Royce Cook Associates Limited. And, we were a little consulting company, and one of my first clients was C&A, who had been a client of Diebold, but when I told the manager there that I was leaving, he said, 'Right Ken, come and work for me directly.' Which I did. And I did a lot of work for C&A both in this country and in Holland – in Amsterdam, at the head office, and got to know the Brenninkmeijers.

And that idea that you put in the back of your head about mergers and acquisitions came to the front of your head.

Absolutely. I thought, now here's an opportunity. And, I did quite a lot of mergers and acquisition work for companies wanting to acquire, or sell, or merge businesses in the technology field, as a part of Royce Cook Associates' general consulting work. And, during this time I was approached by Robin Hall from CIN. CIN is Coal Industry Nominees. It was a part of the British Coal Pension Fund, and the British Coal Pension Fund was the largest pension fund in this country, they were servicing

God knows how many hundred thousand miners, and future miners, for their pension. So it was a very very large pension fund. And they had spun off a bit called CIN, who did specialist investment in small businesses rather than general investment. And Robin said, 'Ken, we're thinking about setting up a technology investment fund.' And I got into conversation with them. But I realised that, my skills, whilst they were good in terms of understanding how to start up and grow a small business from scratch, my financial skills were not great. So, I approached a chap called David Thomson. Now David, astonishingly, had taken over as managing director of SPL some years before. I hadn't realised this at the time, but anyway, that's how I came across him. And, I began a conversation with David, and, initially about perhaps doing some consulting work for him, but then I began to realise that he was the right man to join me if I ever got this investment idea off the ground. And then astonishingly he got sacked from SPL. He tried to do a buy-out, and they found out, and said, 'David, you can leave.' And he went to the office and couldn't get in. So he called me up and said, 'Right Ken.' And so he joined. So, David Thomson came to Royce Cook, initially in a consulting role, because we hadn't got the idea off the ground by then, but within a year or so, about 1983, '84, I'm sorry, '84, we had got the idea of a venture capital fund, which was largely funded by CIN and the NatWest Bank at the time. And then we brought in other investors as well. And so we had got our little venture capital fund off the ground.

Who did you invest in?

Oh. I can't, I can't think of how many companies we invested in. Twenty or thirty companies. Quite small.

Some failures?

If you, if you get ten per cent success in a venture capital fund, you're doing pretty well.

Really? Ten per cent.

Absolutely. One in ten makes a big hit. Perhaps four of them, just lumber on, and half a dozen just, or, five, just fall by the wayside. And so you lose money, and you try and limit the amounts of losses you make. You try, but you don't make any money. But the ones you make money on, you make lots of money.

Right.

And so, David and I began this idea of investing in computer companies. Some were big successes. We had IPOs in the United States, and in this country; we had trade sales in this country and in the United States. So we did a lot of travelling. We did a lot of talking. We sat on many many, many many boards of directors. I probably sat on the boards of directors of seventeen companies or something like that. Some of them quite tiny.

Yes, I've noticed your list. You're on at least 21 boards.

[laughs] Well there we are. And, and, it was good fun. It was really, really good fun. Well of course, I was interrupted between getting Royce Cook off the ground and getting the venture capital fund off the ground by 1982.

[47:20]
So there's a new Minister in a new, completely new role.

Absolutely.

A Minister for Information Technology.

Absolutely.

A man called Ken Baker.

Absolutely.

Who's basically made his own job.

Yup.

And he went to Margaret Thatcher and said, 'You ought to have a Minister of Information Technology,' and she said, 'Do you think so Ken?' And he said, 'Yes.' And she said to him, presumably, 'Who do you think should do it?' And he said, 'I should do it Prime Minister.'

[laughs] I know the man.

And so, we have a new Minister, who is keen on information technology.

Absolutely.

And he looks around the industry and thinks, OK, we need a campaign.

Yup.

We need somehow to motivate people to look very seriously about the applications of information technology in this country. Because it's one of the great things that's coming along.

Yup.

And he therefore looked around, with his civil servants, to find a man to be chief executive of this campaign.

It, it wasn't quite like that. It was sort of like that. What had happened was that, Mr Alan Benjamin again was working with a group of people in the industry, largely from the British Computer Society, who decided that it would be a good idea to have a campaign. And they approached Ken Baker, and said, 'Look Minister, we think we should have a campaign, and we should try and get the general public, and businesses, and industry, to learn more about the impact that this technology is going to have on them.' And of course, he thought this was a great idea, and so he then approached

Margaret Thatcher and said, 'Look, you know, this is a good idea, and, you know, we should get it off the ground.' And she agreed, and designated 1982 as Information Technology Year. Alan Benjamin then said to his little group, 'We've got to find a guy who can do this, and I know the very man. [laughs] Ken Barnes.' So, Alan approached me and said, 'Ken, do you want to do this?' And I said, 'I'll think about it.' And I had a meeting with this group. I can remember it clearly. There was Philip Hughes, Alan Benjamin, Donald, mm… About ten or fifteen guys from the computer industry who were enamoured by the idea. Philip Virgo. Who were enamoured by the idea of this Information Technology Year. And, I went into a room with one of them, and they said, 'Well how much are you going to charge us Ken?' And I said, 'Well,' whatever. And they said, 'Fine.' And I went back, and, they agreed. They had brought me into the room, and said, 'Here's Ken Barnes, he's going to run this Information Technology Year.' And I said, 'Yes I am. And the first thing I'm going to do is sack the whole of this committee.' [laughter] Which Philip Hughes thought was brilliant. So I got rid of them all. And created a new committee from people who had nothing to do with technology, a banker, a schoolmaster, a small business person, a woman, a trade unionist, a person from the arts. From every other… We had, of course we had a computer guy, and a consultant there. And Alan Benjamin and me. So we created a committee of about, a dozen or more, drawn from all the different walks of life, engineering, commercial business, as I say, banking, education. And, they became our committee that was responsible for getting this programme running. This was about the middle of 1983 I guess – sorry, '81.

'81.

[51:05]

'81, I beg your pardon. The middle of 1981. And, it snowballed from there. I built up a team of people. We got the funding from the Department of Trade and Industry through Ken Baker, and they were tremendous in, in supporting this whole programme. They put lots of money in. I approached all sorts of industries, companies, the Bank of England, IBM, you name it, and got them to put money into this thing, on the basis that it was going to affect them, computing was going to affect them. And so we, we built up a programme of quite a substantial amount of money. We employed agencies to run the PR programmes; the Department of Trade built

these huge transporters with stuff that you can ship around the country; we had demonstration aisles, we set up in shopping malls where people could walk through and see computing. So it was quite a fun thing to do. And, it started off in '82 as you know, and, ran for the whole year. We would meet regularly, once a month. I was responsible for all the financial side of the thing, making sure that the money was well spent. I was responsible for ensuring that the projects which the regions, we had regions throughout the country, wanted to enact, whether it be in Scotland or Wales or the East Midlands, West Midlands, wherever. And, I would allocate funds to them. I would agree the projects. Each had its own little group of people running the programmes. And, it was a major national enterprise. It was a really big...

Was it a success?

Absolutely. Absolutely it was. It ended the year with a conference at the newly-opened Barbican Centre, and the keynote speaker was Margaret Thatcher. We had the whole of the Cabinet there. And, it was measured by MORI, MORI poll measured people's knowledge and understanding of the technology, or awareness of the technology I should say, awareness of the technology, at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. And it had increased enormously over that period of time. So I think, it can be regarded as a big success.

[53:29]
And interestingly, what it's doing, it's softening up a marketplace that is now going to be hit with PCs, with that type of technology.

It was just on the cusp of when the PC was coming along, in '84 I guess.

Yes.

Or '83 And, we had a, a small computer in the office, it was a, I forget whose it was. It wasn't IBM or anybody like that, or, or Microsoft or anybody. It was a, it was a little machine from, some company. In fact we had a mock-up we used to take around with us of a portable computer, which was in an attaché case with a keyboard and a screen.

Right.

And so many people wanted to buy this thing, but unfortunately it wasn't real. [laughs] Just a pretend machine. So, yah, it was, it was, great.

[54:16]
So the company… So, the Government said, thank you very much.

Yes they did.

And you walk back into Royce Cook.

I did. Then, I was able to get this venture capital fund off the ground.

Yes.

So, we formed Barnes Thomson Management Limited, which was myself and David Thomson, just the two of us, and we set up Syntech Information Technology Fund. It was originally going to be called c-i-n tech, because CIN were the biggest investors, but they wouldn't let us do that, so we called it s-y-n instead, Syntech Information Technology Fund. And that ran for, mm, seven or eight years I guess.

And some 40 million in total was raised for the company.

Yup. Yah. Yup. Yup, we, we, our own fund was about ten million, and the rest of the money was raised in conjunction with other investors, to put into these companies. And some of the companies were extremely successful. What they call "ten baggers", you put a million pounds in and you get ten million pounds out.

Oh right.

You know, in two years or something.

Yes.

Which made people very happy.

Yes.

So, so they, the investors, of which there were about a dozen I suppose in the first fund, and, a few more in the second fund. Went away very happy. We did a decent job.

[55:31]
So you were running Royce Cook on the one hand, until 2000?

That had by and large vanished, by the time we got Syntech off the ground with David Thomson, then, then the consulting work had been put aside, and we focused entirely on the venture capital side.

Twenty-three investments.

Yup.

Yes?

Probably. [laughs]

Apparently, according to my notes.

OK.

On both sides of the Atlantic.

Absolutely.

Why?

Fun. I mean, to be able to… When we say both sides of the Atlantic, it was largely as a result of UK companies obtaining IPOs in California.

Oh right.

Yup. Rather than direct investments into US companies.

[56:16]
OK. And then you retired.

Not quite. We thought we were going to retire when Syntech was wound up. We had, we had made all the investments, we had realised all the investments. We had tucked it away. All the investors had got all their money back plus a lot more. And we thought, that's it. And then Nat West said to us, 'Oh Ken, would you like to come and run a venture capital for us?' a venture capital fund for us. Which was IT-focused. And we said, 'No. But, we'll be consultants, plus a percentage of whatever you make, please.' [laughs] So, we acted as consultants to NatWest Bank for about, six or seven years maybe, I don't know. And, every time they had a success, you know, they floated a company maybe, or they sold a company, then we collected a percentage of the action, which was, very good.

Very good indeed.

It was.

[57:18]
So you moved from your technical expertise into interfacing with customers.

Yup.

Into start-ups.

Yup.

Into projecting the industry into society and raising awareness about it, quite substantially in '82.

Yup.

Into fund management, and into consultancy.

Yup. Yup. All of those things.

All those things. Thank you very much Ken Barnes.

OK.

[pause in recording]

[57:44]
Welcome back to the Archives of Information Technology. And entering the archives today, with his experiences, is Ken Barnes. Welcome back Ken.

Thank you.

This is the section about you.

Right.

You were born in 1933 in Oxford.

Yup.

What did your parents do?

My father was a sugar boiler. That meant he made hard boiled sweets. And my mother was a housewife. And I had three odder brothers, two of whom were born in Cambridge and myself and my next older brother were born in Oxford.

So you're Oxbridge children.

We are, but, nothing to do with the university.

Nothing to do with the university. Had anybody in your family been to university?

No. Not as far as I'm aware.

And what would you say was the socioeconomic group that your family came from?

We were a pretty ordinary family. Interestingly enough, my father, presumably, had learnt his trade in Cambridge with a firm there, I don't know, who he worked for in Cambridge. I knew who he worked for in Oxford. But, he, we learnt, after he had died, and we, none, myself and none of my brothers knew, he had been adopted. And his natural mother, my nieces found out subsequently, was a young milliner who had had this baby and had to give it away, and he was adopted by the Barnes family who I think were living in Ely in Cambridge, or, near about, thereabouts. He went into the war, the First World War, he was born in 1892, and he went into the First World War, and was wounded at the first Battle of the Somme. He was just an ordinary infantryman with, I think the Cambridgeshire Light Infantry. Came back to this country, was patched up and sent out again as an officer. Because, they had to make people up from the ranks. And he ended the war as a, lieutenant or captain or something like that. Went straight back into sugar boiling. He didn't use his elevation in the services to change his role in life. And he struggled bringing up four boys on a very humble income. But nevertheless, he was a very diligent man. He bought his own house, which was, you know, pretty unusual.

Mm, unusual.

In Oxford. And, brought up these four boys on, as I say, a meagre salary, in my opinion.

[1:00:22]
What did your father teach you, that you've still got?

[pause] I think, to be self-reliant, but also, and this is an awful thing to say, I grew up thinking, I don't want to be like my father. I want to do more than my father did. I felt my father, he was a very clever man, but didn't extend himself in any way whatsoever. Two of my brothers were a bit like that as well, and yet, my eldest brother and myself were very much more entrepreneurial, driven. My eldest brother was very successful in South Africa, he built up a construction business, retired at the age of 45, had a lovely house in Plettenberg Bay, had a lovely lifestyle. My middle two brothers were just, relatively ordinary people. They weren't ordinary in the sense of, they didn't have any character or personality; they were, didn't have any ambition.

[1:01:24]
Right. What did you get from your mother?

[pause] I tell you, there's one thing I got from… This is a very interesting statement that I'm going to make here. It sounds silly. I'm, I was, a very, very good programmer. And I believe my mother taught me how to program. When I was three years old, I can remember it quite distinctly, she would sit me on the dining-room table while she was in the kitchen, making the food or whatever, with a jigsaw puzzle, and I was able to do jigsaw puzzles, like that. I was absolutely brilliant at solving jigsaw puzzles. And I believe the concept of having the whole picture in your mind and being able to put all the pieces together to make that picture is the essence of programming. And that's what I got from my mother. [laughs]

[1:02:17]
Excellent. You went to East Oxford Primary School from '38 to '45.

Yah.

These are war years.

Yup.

How did the war affect you?

Little. Oxford never got bombed. My father made sweets. I didn't feel deprived in any way. We certainly weren't wealthy, we had no money, but, war really didn't exist for me. It didn't have any impact at all.

Right.

Not, of course, as it impacted my wife, who was born in the East End. Her father was a docker. Her two eldest brothers were sent, were evacuated in 1940, or, at the beginning of, perhaps 1939, 1940, were sent to Oxford. She was three or four years old, in the Anderson shelter; they came out in the morning and the house had gone. Completely demolished. And so they were sent to Oxford as well. So they were all reunited in Oxford, in about 1940.

Right. So that was your first school.

Yup.

You were there then for about seven years.

Yup.

[1:03:30]
You then went to Magdalen College School in Oxford.

I did.

From '45 to '52, doing your O's and your A's.

I did. Basically, as with a lot of schools like Magdalen College School, they were very, very short of money at the end of the war. 1945, there were not many people who were able to afford to pay the independent fees that were required. And, the Government then, the, presumably it was the Labour government, came in with the concept of a direct grant for schools like this, and they became a direct grant school, as did many private schools around the country. And the deal was, if you are going to be a direct grant school, you've got to take Eleven Plus scholarship boys. And, Magdalen agreed, and they said, 'We'll take the top twelve Eleven Plus scholarship boys in Oxford please,' and I happened to be one of those. I was a bright little bugger. Can I say that? [laughs]

Right. You just have. Good.

And, and so I went to Magdalen College School.

Latin, French, English, chemistry at O Level.

Yah, something like that.

Yes. And then A Levels, physics, pure maths and applied maths.

That's right.

So maths is coming to the fore here.

Absolutely.

Because, pattern-solving again?

I loved it. I, I like mathematics. I like physics more, that was my favourite subject at school. And so, yah, maybe it was just, yah, I like the problem and the solutions to the problem, I like that.

[1:05:00]

Right. Then, National Service I imagine.

Absolutely.

Doing what?

Just, ordinary, bombardier in the Royal Artillery. What happened was, I was called up to do my National Service, did my basic training as a surveyor in Larkhill in the middle of Salisbury Plain. And then I decided I wanted to go into the Royal Air Force. Because they were offering, five-year or seven-year arrangements where they'd send you to Cambridge to take a degree, providing you stopped in the Air Force for another, several years. I went to the Selection Board and passed all that stuff, and they discovered I was deaf in my left ear. So they wouldn't let me in. So I had wasted about, nearly a year messing around doing this, and I was based in Woolwich Barracks, which was the Royal Artillery headquarters, doing very little, hanging about trying to get into the RAF. In fact, whilst I was there I got a civilian job. There was a major who ran the Royal Artillery Tattoo, and he wanted somebody to come and help him in his office. So I turned up, and he said, 'You can't wear uniform Barnes. Get into civvies.' So I had to wear civvies. 'That's an order.' So I spent a lot of time wandering around Woolwich Barracks in civilian clothes. And I was a pretty sharp dresser, always was a sharp dresser, and I had my trousers narrowed, and I wore a cheese-cutter cap. And all the sergeants used to salute me as I went in. I never told them. [laughter] Anyway. So, after about, a month or two, I was sent to Germany. And I went over to a small battery. It's a, it was a sound ranging battery. In those days in the, in Korea, they used to put up these microphones in the field and attach them with wires to the centre, and then, they would have a guy sitting right at the front with a button, and when he heard a gun go off he would press the button, and you could record the soundwave and watch it on, on a paper tape reader, and determine where that gun was, with a calculation. All done by hand of course, we didn't have computers in those days. All done by four or five guys sitting around doing numbers and checking on the wind speed and the direction and all that sort of stuff. And the way the Army did it was awful. I mean, they had no idea how to ensure that the, the resistance between the centre and each of the microphones was the same. So I solved it for them. I went down to a local shop in a village in

Germany and bought some resistors, variable resistors. Strapped them altogether. And was able to set it all up in a fraction of the time that the Army took you see. [laughs] So I thought it was wonderful. [laughs] So, I…

Again, problem-solving.

I did. It was, I just applied my mind to it. I thought, this is ridiculous. And solved the problem. And, I think it was adopted by the Army, I don't know.

[1:08:40]
So two years of that.

Yup.

And then you didn't go to university.

No.

Why not?

When I left school in, when I was eighteen or, eighteen or so, with A Levels, I knew my father could never afford to send me to university. It was impossible for me to go to university. And a lot of the people I was then at school with were going to Oxford or Cambridge or, you know, university. And I could have gone if my father had been able to afford to send me. So, I didn't. But when I came out, I thought, well I'd better get a degree. So, I enrolled with the University of London, external degree course. And so I would come home, by now I was married and had one child, come home and go off to night school, and I'd have one day off a week to go to lectures. And I was taking a degree in physics and maths. But it was a strain, it was very, very hard.

And you failed your finals.

I did.

Because of that strain.

Absolutely. Part I I passed OK, but Part II, I just found it too hard to focus, after having spent a day at work, to come home perhaps two or three days a week and go to night classes, and then, perhaps one day a week go to a full day's lectures.

Do you regret that, not getting a degree?

[pause] No. Not at all. Not at all. It didn't have any impact on my life.

Right.

I was able to do what I did without having any qualification.

[1:10:16]
Do you have children?

Absolutely.

How many?

Two.

What are they and what do they do?

My eldest daughter, who will be 59 this year, is an estate agent.

Someone has to be I suppose.

Absolutely. She enjoys it. And she lives in Norwich. And the youngest daughter has her own company which is, she's 56, helps children who have personal challenges. She's got her own organisation which, she does consulting work for local authorities and schools and that sort of thing.

Would you have wished to have a boy?

[pause] That's a very good question. [pause] Having looked at… No. I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't know why, but I, somehow or another…

I don't mean, instead of your two daughters.

No no, I know. As well as.

But as well as. Because you are in a female household then.

Absolutely. Yah.

Three of them.

I quite enjoyed that.

Did you?

Yah.

Are you pampered, were you pampered?

[pause] Probably not. Probably shouted at more than pampered I think, you know. No no, it was fine. It was fine. It was fine. And they, they, of course, they went to private schools, and, and one of them went to university, and, the eldest one didn't go to university, but the youngest one did. And, she took a degree in marine biology and is now running programmes for challenged children. [laughs]

Right.

Which is, you know, probably par for the course.

[1:11:47]

What is your biggest mistake you've ever made in your career?

Mm. [pause] Not living in America. If my wife and two daughters had come with me to America, I think I'd have done exactly the same as I did in this country, but I might have had a little more success, a little more opportunity. We were at the beginning of what was clearly going to be a huge revolution in the world, and, I know I would have enjoyed it more there. We go to America all the time, California and the East Coast, and, I always enjoy it when I go. I did enjoy it when I was there. And I think I would have liked my wife and children to have been there. But we didn't.

But you're very English.

Absolutely. Yah.

Do you consider yourself English or British?

British… At one point when, when we had the offices in, SPL throughout Europe, I was very European. I loved it. My skill in languages is zero. I learnt to speak a single line in Swedish which is *Jag kan inte tala svenska, endast engelska*, which means, I can't speak Swedish, only English. Which is the only line you need. [laughter] But, I really loved it. I regard myself as European. But British rather than English. I, I quite like being English, but, British, yah.

[1:13:16]
Right. What's your biggest success?

Mm. [pause] Marrying my wife. [pause]

In your career.

I think, I think SPL was, but then, subsequently I really, really felt that we did well with the venture capital funds, I thought that was, that was good. I enjoyed that.

[1:13:41]

You like to move on to projects.

Yup.

What drives you?

I always like a new challenge. Always like something new to do.

Partially not to be your father, as well apply to you?

[1:14:52]
Oh there's another thing I regret. I regret not being an architect. That's what I would really, truly, have liked to have been. I've always enjoyed buildings. I've always enjoyed looking at architecture and drawings, architectural drawings. My wife buys me books of plans of buildings to look at, which I love. So that's something I do regret, not being an architect.

Well why weren't you?

I didn't have the opportunity.

OK.

When I joined EMI, I joined it because, I quite liked the idea of electronics, that fascinated me, and there was a chap from my old school, at Magdalen College School in Oxford, who was already working there. So I thought, that sounds good to me, I think I'll go and join him and work in electronics. But that's, the opportunity of becoming an architect didn't, didn't arise.

[1:14:50]
OK. You became Chairman of the European Union of Baroque Orchestras Development Trust.

Yup.

You love baroque music?

What happened was, a very good friend of mine, who was this gentleman who worked for C&A I mentioned earlier, great on music, loves opera, unfortunately died, he was Chairman of the Development Trust, and when he died they asked me if I would take over from him. I had already been to many concerts with my wife, many concerts with him, in this country and in Europe, and, we, I decided, yes, that was something I'd like to do. So, I became Chairman of the Development Trust, which was essentially there to raise funds for the orchestra. And I happily did that for about five years until I was 80.

Right. And that's the Europe Union, and now we're getting out of it.

Well, it's a big problem. I've had awful pleading letters from the guys who run this orchestra, which is based in Luxembourg, but is run by two people from a small farmhouse building in Woodstock in Oxfordshire. And, and they started it in 1985. And, they don't know where they're going to go. They are extremely worried as to whether it's going to exist. And if it did exist, whether they could run it from a small farmhouse in Oxfordshire.

Yes. And you, you said, felt European.

Yes I did. Yah. I did. And I really, really did enjoy going to Europe with this orchestra. We spent… It's been to many countries. And they've played at wonderful churches and wonderful venues throughout Europe. And we really, really enjoyed it. And I've always had great rapport with the, the people; whether they be German or French or Dutch or Swedish, we've always had tremendous times with them. I felt very at home with them.

[1:16:45]
Now you live in London and in Bath. Why Bath?

We, before we were married, my wife and I, going back to my love of architecture, used to wander round Georgian squares in London and say, we'd love to live in a Georgian square. The opportunity arose when I was, I think, it was probably just about the 1982 period, when I was going down to various, well round the country looking after the regional offices, and one was in Bristol, based in Bristol. And I had the opportunity to go through Bath, and I thought, mm, this is a very nice place, and they've got some lovely Georgian houses here. And then, a situation arose where we needed to sell the house we were living in in Surrey, it was a large farmhouse place, and we sold it, and bought a house in Bath. Because it was a, a Georgian terraced house, in a square, and we thought, we've made it. That's it. And that's why Bath.

Thank you very much Ken Barnes.

OK. Thank you.

[End of Interview]