



Peta Walmisley

Interviewed by

Elisabetta Mori

14th September 2022

Via Zoom

Copyright

Archives of IT

(Registered Charity 1164198)

Welcome to the Archives of Information Technology. It's the 14th of September 2022, and we are on Zoom. I am Elisabetta Mori, an interviewer with Archives of IT, and I am recording from Tuscany, Italy.

[00:00:14]

Today I'll be talking to Peta Walmisley, who is in Lymington, UK. Peta Walmisley worked with the British Computer Society from 1968 to 2004 in different positions. From 1987 to 2001 she was also Secretary of the Council of European Professional Informatics Societies, CEPIS, which is the representative body of national informatics associations throughout greater Europe. From 1987 to 19992 she helped found the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists as the Clerk.

[00:00:56]

Welcome Peta. Let's start with where and when you were born.

I was born in Ryde, Isle of Wight, on the 29th of April 1944, and I lived there until I was six, when we moved to Lincolnshire, because my father was in the RAF, and he was a navigator and an instructor. My mother was very keen on horses, and I remember we, she had bought a horse once and we had it in the garden, and it ate everybody's hedges. [laughs] I went to school, first of all, the station school on the RAF Hemswell, and then to a local private school, where one evening my mother got home from looking after horses and said, 'Where is Peta?' And, the au pair said, 'Well you were supposed to collect her from school.' And, the teachers had turned me out. I had to stand in the, in the rain, in the porch for a couple of hours waiting for my mother. We then went to Copenhagen, where my father worked with NATO, and, I went to a French convent for two years. Did all my lessons in French. And, I've just noticed that Queen Margrethe of Denmark is celebrating her fiftieth anniversary this year, and I remember seeing her in 1954 with her parents on the balcony in the palace. Is that good enough, for that bit?

[00:02:44]

What about siblings?

Sorry?

What about siblings?

What was...

Siblings.

CEPIS?

Siblings. Have you got any brothers or sisters?

Oh, sorry, siblings. Sorry. Yes. I have a younger sister, who is four years younger than me. Her name is now Claudia, but she was known as Topsy as a child. She is very different. She has brown eyes and dark hair. And, she and my mother enjoyed the same things, sailing, and riding horses, and sport, and I was the one who always read my book.

[00:03:33]

Who were the important influences on you in your early life?

I think probably my grandparents.

Can you describe them?

I can remember at the age of about four, when my sister was first born, taking my doll in a pram and going round the village to say, 'I've come to stay the night,' [laughs] at my grandparents. They, they seemed very old, but they were probably only about 65 I suppose. But I think in those days, people seemed much older. Whether it was because we were young, or whether it was just that they, they got old fa- I remember my grandfather coming home, he was always late for lunch, went down to the yacht club for a drink, came home, said, 'Oh I've been talking to this terrible old bore.' And we said, 'Yes, but, he is 20 years younger than you.' [laughs] He died at the age of 98. My mother was 99 when she died.

[00:04:36]

So, what were your grandparents' occupations?

My grandfather also was in the RAF. He was in the Indian Army first, the British Army in India, and came back in 1914. Joined the Royal Flying Corps, and then the RAF. He organised the air show between the two World Wars at Hendon. And had several qualifications from the Queen. My grandmother, I don't think she ever worked. She was a housewife. My two brothers – sorry, my mother's two brothers were both in the RAF as well. The younger one was killed in 1940, shot down over France. And that's why I'm called Peta. He was Peter. My other uncle, Freddie, was quite a bit older, and my mother used to call him 'my bloody brother'. [laughs] They didn't get on at all well. But then she was, she was the... She used to say, 'I'm not a he, I'm not a she; I'm an it.' And so, my aunt called her Nitty. So... She, she really wasn't very keen on women. She didn't feel as though she was a woman. It was quite interesting I think in those days.

[00:06:12]

Yes. So... What about school? Which schools did you attend?

I went to St Anthony's, which was a convent outside Sherborne in Dorset, from the age of eleven to the age of seventeen I suppose. I loved it. The nuns were very, very caring. My sister hated it, but then she would have hated anything that was discipline I think. I did a lot of reading. I made the mistake of having one year in sixth form and not doing my A Levels, and I, when my mother died, read all, all my school reports. One of them said, 'Peta has not developed her memory.' Which turns out now to be completely false, but anyway, that was at the time I suppose. Unnoticeable really. I've got a, still got three or four very good girlfriends from that time.

Which were your favourite subjects at school?

Needlework.

And what was your relationship like with your teachers and tutors?

I remember we had a... Well, we had a very good English teacher, who made us do spelling bees and précis, which stood me in great stead when I joined the British

Computer Society in the Publications Department. We had a fantastic woman teaching us maths for a year, and I understood it. And then she went off to become a nun, and that was it, that was the end of that. Sad, but there we are. I gave up Latin very early on, maths very early on. [laughs] Concentrated on geography. Loved history, but not very good at remembering the dates. [pause] Yah. No, I got, well, I suppose I got four O Levels, two Englishes, geography. I can't even... Well I don't think I got history. Oh, and French.

[00:08:53]

And, so what did you do when you finished full-time education? Did you travel...

I did, I went and did domestic science at the local college, technical college on the Isle of Wight. And at the end of the first year I still didn't know what I wanted to do, so I did another year. I did get a Distinction in needlework, dressmaking. And I joined the British, I joined Hardy Amies in London, in the couture showroom, helping the vendeuses. That was amazing. There were five of them, women, mostly all frustrated. [laughs] That was fantastic. The Queen came in, when she was expecting Prince Edward she came in for one visit. I remember we all hid behind the curtain and peeped in to see her. But there was... And one of my co-workers couldn't afford to live on her own, so she moved in with her boyfriend, and she became pregnant, so she took an overdose. Rang her girlfriend to tell her, and it was Miss Amies who actually rescued her and made sure she had the baby, and went off to, studied to be a secretary. Parents didn't want to know. Very sad in those days. That was, no, it was... And while I was there, I, I did bookkeeping and typing part-time, in the evenings, and then I went to America. And I, I went on the *Queen Mary*, because it was cheaper than flying. And, I went to look after a little girl in Aspen, Colorado.

What year was this?

That was '65, 1965.

What was your impression of the United States when you moved there?

I remember arriving in New York, and having quite a big suitcase which they put down in the Customs hall and opened and threw everything around, so, you know, to make sure they hadn't got anything. Oh, and when I went for my visa, 'Are you a communist?' 'No.' [laughs] Fingerprints, you know, all these sort of things. Yeah. No, I loved Aspen, and the little girl was very good. And my, my boss had a, a thing called a ski lodge. It was probably a bed and breakfast, equivalent. And I helped with the breakfasts, and then I looked after the little girl. And then, he had an intercom, so I went out in the evenings. And, skied a few days a week, which was, I enjoyed that. I was called the Red Bomb. [inaud].

[00:11:58]

Did you ever, had you ever seen, at the time, a computer?

No. I went to New York... I went to San Francisco after that, and I worked for a chartered bank, and they used the Wells Fargo computer. So, although I wasn't involved in computers, we had to do the microfilm to go on to the computer. That was my, my nearest equivalent. It wasn't until I came back to London, and went to an employment agency, and they offered me two jobs. One was in the Publications Department of the British Computer Society, which was paying £2 a week more than the other one. So that's why I took that one. But that, that was my first introduction to computers. And, my boss did Pitman shorthand, and I had learnt Gregg shorthand. So he typed up the minutes of the committee meetings, and I had to then retype them. [laughs] But, that, that was just a normal typewriter in those days. And that was the *Computer Bulletin*, [inaud] computers.

[00:13:15]

One step back. So you are in the US, you are in San Francisco, and, you are working for the bank. And then what happens?

I then went to Newport, Rhode Island, worked as a waitress. And then met somebody who was, actually I worked with in London, who took me to a party, and I met the manager for the *Dame Pattie* syndicate, which was America's Cup challenger from Australia, and they invited me to be the secretary for the summer. So that, that was... The only problem was, the only boat I got on to, when I was coming off, I got my

knee caught underneath the pontoon, so, I had to keep it up for six weeks. But, it was a good summer, it was a lovely summer. And then I came in the *Queen Elizabeth*.

[00:14:21]

And, what happened when you came back to the UK?

I went home, and then I went to London, and got a job to start on the, it was the 16th of March 1968, which was the day the British Computer Society voted to have professional qualifications.

So what... Do you remember your interview?

[pause] No, I don't. But I remember going to the Imperial College for the, the BCS AGM, and helping sign the members in. And, Professor Stanley Gill was President of the BCS at that point.

[00:15:03]

What got you involved in this?

It was just... Well, to start with, it was just another job.

So... Yes. You had no preference for computers, at the time?

Not at that point, no.

And then, how... Did your relationship change with computers after being involved in the British Computer Society?

Very much, because I then started being production editor of the *Computer Bulletin*. And then my boss, who was actually the assistant editor, because we had a, we had a voluntary editor, who was head of the computer department when [inaud] university was built, Tom Goodwin. And, I suppose that was really when got interested in it. And then, when Alan Dockery left, and we produced the, I did the BCS paging and computing when that was launched in 1973. And then I became involved in

production of the *Computer Journal*. And, what happened then? Then I moved on to sort of, information, and then on to technical, and then on to external relations. And so the external relations was when we started CEPIS, and it was the... Because they had a meeting in Brazil, there was a big computer conference in Brazil, where some of the European secretaries had gone. I think there were five of them, and they decided that they were going to organise this, this European association. And it was Jim Brookes at the BCS who sorted the starting point of that. And at that point David Hartley was my vice-president. And so we, we started getting that, coordinating that.

[00:17:16]

Can you describe...

Sorry?

Can you describe David Hartley?

Can I describe David Hartley?

Mm.

Well he's still, he's still part... He's, he's a past, past Chairman of the Computer Conservation Society. So you've probably met, haven't you?

Yes.

Mm. How would I describe him? He was sort of, brown hair, brown eyes, not very tall. Very slim. He was, he was head of, he was head of the computer services at Cambridge University.

Yes.

And I remember going up, as I was producing the journal, I had to go to Cambridge, because, at the beginning, the editor was Eric Mutch, who was very much involved in

the Computer Laboratory at Cambridge. And then Peter Hammersley took over from him when he died. That was, yes, we went through that green door. [laughs]

No, what I had in mind is to describe your professional relationship, how it was working with him, all these things.

Well I think... I, I've been very fortunate, I don't think I ever thought of them as professional relationships. They were much more friends. I think, one of the problems was that my vice-president at the BCS, when I was organising, particularly CEPIS, which was two days a week of my time, and then, for the last year that I was doing the Information Technologists Company, that was also two days of my time. And David Mann only had one day of my time as, as his, when he was Vice-President, External Relations, of the BCS, because I was doing too much else [laughs] for other people. But, they, they're all very good friends still.

[00:19:26]

What about Dame Stephanie Shirley?

I remember Dame Stephanie, Steve Shirley, when she was the vice-president, education, at the BCS. Now that must have been, probably late Eighties. And then she went on to be President of course. And, when, when I was Clerk, she used to give me a lift home after the dinners and events, in her car. I... I don't know whether she felt that she wanted to have a man as the clerk, rather than a woman, but, I remember we went, we went to a dinner, I think the Sackler's Hall, and there were only four women, Princess Royal and her lady-in-waiting, Steve Shirley and I.

What do you remember of that night, apart from this?

I remember that they had to find a loo for us. [laughs] [pause] Well, when I... I mean, when I was Clerk, I was only one of four lady clerks. Now, about 50 per cent are women. And the Merchant Taylors Company, when we had, the first time I went there, in 1987, they had to decide at the council, at their committee meeting, whether I was going to be able to have dinner with the men, or go into the dining room with the

women. They did decide that as I was Clerk, and it was a dinner for masters and clerks, that I was allowed to stay.

[00:21:15]

So, in 1987, you also worked for two other [inaud] both [inaud].

Yah. Well the, the Information Technologists I did at home.

Yes, basically [inaud]...

For four years.

Yes. So what I would like to talk with you about is the CEPIS and the WCIT. So I want to start with the WCIT. In 1987 you helped found the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. So who involved you in this project, what happened, how you became involved in [inaud].

Well when it, when it was started in 1985, my boss, who was Derek Harding, as the Secretary-General of the BCS, was invited to be the Clerk. And I helped him set up the first list of members to be invited to join. And then, after a year he decided that, he was moving on to do, he went to the Statistical Society, and, he wasn't computer literate, and I don't know whether it was because he didn't think he was getting enough money, or, or whether it was just that he was too busy, but, then Alan Benjamin and Barney Gibbens, who were at CAP at that point, invited me to become Clerk. And we started with 100 members, who had to contribute a certain amount of money, because, under the rules of the [inaud] City of London, you had to produce well thought of people as members, and finance to invest in charitable objects, charitable projects. And, that is, that's the, the basis on which the Company is founded. There are four different strands. There's the, the computer work, social activities, the educational support, and the fundraising and charitable donations. It's regulated by the Court of Aldermen of the City, which is headed by the Lord Mayor, and, liverymen of all these livery companies, of which there are now 110, we were number 100, in '92, when we got livery, we became number 100. And the Mercers, who were number 1, were very keen that 1 and 100, which of course in binary is 2, so

I mean it's, you know, should be associated. And so, Steve was actually the Master, the first master of the livery company. And she was installed actually in the Mercers Company, and they have their own chapel, so, the installation service was actually held in the chapel of the Mercers Company. [pause] What else can I say? We had, we had... Barney Gibbens was the first Master, Sir Robert Reid was the second. He was the Chairman of British Rail in those days. And, talk about the iron fist in a velvet glove. He was, he was charming, but you could see that there was the, the iron will behind that. Who did we have after them? Alan Roussel, who was ICL. And we had a big dinner when we became a livery in Guildhall, and it was Alan's secretary who helped me organise that. Alan Benjamin was the Master when we actually got livery, and then Steve took over from him, in '92.

[00:25:37]

Is there any anecdotes that you would like to share with us?

[pause] We had, we had some honorary freemen. We had a Japanese. Who else did we have? Oh, Cotmontier, of the European Commission, Michel Cotmontier. Not that they did very much. I think we, we've now had Bill Gates, but I don't think he does very much either. [laughs] [pause] Yes, there was one. We had a committee meeting, a court meeting. We used to have our meetings at the Tallow Chandlers Company, in their court room. And, Barney Gibbens sat on his chair and leant back, and it broke. Steve had the brilliant idea of actually getting everybody to sign their names on the broken bit with her diamond ring. The only trouble was, that it was a about 400 years old, this chair, so they weren't going to allow us to have it. So we had, they all had to pay to have it re, re-fixed. [laughs] Oh it was, it was a good time. They were, they were a lot of very friendly, very important people in the IT industry. [pause] We had Lord Weinstock, and we had Colin Marshall of British Airways. [pause] No, it was... So it was... It was... I was... It was a good five years.

[00:27:41]

And during the same years, you also started, like, I'm talking 1987, also to work as a secretary for the Council of European Professional Informatics Societies, CEPIS. Can you tell us about this experience?

My husband used to say, 'You have your meetings on Fridays and Saturdays. Why don't you come home on Saturday night?' We always stayed till Sunday night, wherever we went, all round Europe. Might just as well as have it in Heathrow Airport if we didn't go and visit the places that we were, you know, having the meetings, and see a bit about the, the city or whatever it was, and have a, an enjoyable evening after all the formal meetings. We started with about, five or six countries I think. UK, Italy, France, Germany, and Holland, the Netherlands. And then, from then we had other people asking to join, so, by the time of, I suppose, '90-, '92, we probably had all the countries of the European Union, as it was then, which was twelve I think to start with. And then, we, we adopted the Finnish, European Computer Driving Licence, and created it as the European Computer Driving Licence, which was very attractive to the Eastern European members of Europe, because they could make some money from that. Yes, I can remember we, we had a meeting in Saville, and there was a battle between the incoming president and the outgoing president, and, we went to Finland, and the President invited us to his home, and we sang, because he was in a number of choirs, we sang a song from each of the countries of the members of the committee, which was lovely. We went to Cyprus. In fact we went to Nicosia before that was closed down. I remember dancing on the tables, and breaking, breaking the crockery, you know, throwing the plates around. [laughs] What else? [pause] That was, that was a good time.

[00:30:38]

What is your memory of Gavin Kirkpatrick?

Gavin? Oh Gavin... Oh poor thing. He had worked for ICL, and, the British Computer Society had got into financial troubles. So they, they had asked Jim Brookes as the chief executive to, to leave. And, the financial account-, the chief accountant, also went. Gavin was brought in to rescue the BCS, which was actually saved by the money that the branches and specialist groups had [inaud] that time. This was the early Nineties.

OK.

Funnily enough, I am still in touch with the assistant accountant then, in fact I saw him in July. He just finished, had just retired, but he had moved on from the BCS, and was also at the Mission to Seafarers, so, I knew him there as well. Gavin, yes, lovely man, but not really suited to being chief executive of the BCS. I think he found it very trying, very difficult. He was much more involved in rebuilding the cathedral in Dresden, and Bach Society. And when he died, they played quite a lot of Bach at his funeral.

[00:32:16]

And what about Giorgio Sacerdoti from Italy?

When Giorgio arrived... I only met him a couple of times. Because it was Giulio was actually the representative at CEPIS. So Giorgio was sort of, there in the background, and he came to London when we had a meeting in London.

Do you mean Giulio Occhini from AICA?

From AICA. Yes. But then we had another, we had a second society from Italy as well. I think of API, the Association of Professional Informatics. But that was quite late on, that was much later on. Yah. I don't [inaud] got, whether that's still going or not.

They were from AICA. Yes.

Yah.

[00:33:10]

So... Did you have any kind of relationship with another European level institution that was like the Ecma, European Computer Manufacturers...

Computer Manufacturers Association.

Yes.

Not particularly. I mean we did, but, but mainly we were on the professional side. Although it was quite difficult, because, the European Associations did not have the same ethos as the BCS, which is, is based on professional qualifications, specifically in Germany where the qualifications are awarded by the universities, rather than a professional organisation. I think now, they have actually adopted the, and I can't remember what it's called now, but, they have actually got a European professional thing. Is it called... [pause] No, I can't remember the name. Anyway. But it was, it was the Computer Driving Licence that really acted [inaud] quite a big gel, glue. There was a battle about that, because, when we, when we formally established CEPIS, the European Commission advised us, a) to establish it in Holland, because we could then have a, a profit-making subsidiary to work in English, which caused some problems to the French. And when the Computer Driving Licence came along, the Norwegians particularly, Danes and the Norwegians, insisted on it being a separate organisation which would pay royalties to CEPIS, rather than it being a subsidiary of CEPIS, where they would have got the money. So that, it was a limited time for the, for the commissions to come in to CEPIS, which I think has made it less important than it could have been. I know, ECDL now is, is, has been overtaken by Microsoft and all sorts of other organisations, but at that time it was, it was quite an important establishment to [inaud] a basic level of computer skills for people working in offices and things like that. [pause] I think they have, they had, CEPIS now has an office as part of the ECDL Foundation in Dublin, and a manager in Brussels. But I haven't, I haven't kept up with it since, since I left. I've kept, I've still got four or five friends from those times, but they're mainly the, the original founders, like the Dutch and the Finns and the Germans and, and the Italians, and the Austrian. I still, I still visit them.

[00:36:40]

How have you seen the evolution of the CEPIS in terms of relationship with Europe and expanding towards other nations, you were talking about Eastern Bloc, how have you seen these development going?

I think it, it turned from being a friendly family into being an organisation when the Europeans came, when the Eastern Europeans came in. Because before that it was, it was quite small, and friendly, and much more about personalities and computer

people. Whereas with the ECDL and the European, the Eastern Europeans, they were much more interested in, in actually developing the, not professional qualifications so much as the financial side of it. [pause] I've... Yeah, I've heard of, heard of Figovic from Hungary, and, I think that was the only really Eastern European one that I, I kept up with.

[00:37:56]

And what about the evolution, you... you have seen in the BCS? You started in 1968. Of course, your roles evolved. And then, you left them in 2004. So, can you briefly outline your career and the evolution you have seen in the BCS in parallel?

[pause] Well, as I said, when I joined in '68, that was when they voted to have professional qualifications. And the branches and specialist groups were very very active, and, prominent. I'm not sure how prominent they are in the consciousness of the BCS. Because, it started, it went from being a secretary general in charge of the BCS, to being a chief executive. And, I think the whole ethos changed from, from that, you know, being a professional organisation to being something that had much more a financial idea, publications, and, and, they've, OK, they've developed their professional courses and things, but not to the same extent as they were, I think. I, you know, I'm an affiliate member, I'm not a full member. And I'm a member of the Computer Conservation Society. But I haven't been involved really in any of the other parts of the BCS since I retired in 2004.

[00:39:43]

When did you join the Computer Conservation Society, and what role have you had there?

I'm... I joined it in 2004 when I retired. I am a member of the committee because I am the administrator for the Tony Sale Award, when we had one. We're now trying to find another sponsor to have another in 2003. We had to cancel the 2020, because of COVID, and not, not being able to organise it. So we're still looking. [pause] A lot of the people on, or, members and past members of the Computer Conservation Society, of course I had known, going back 20, 30, 40 years, 50 years even. It's... Yah. I mean, a lot of my vice-presidents have ended up as presidents of the BCS and

presidents of the CCS. It's a, it's an interesting organisation, and they do a lot of good work, maintaining and collecting the artefacts as well as holding meetings and talks.

[00:41:22]

So what other activities have you pursued since you left the BCS in 2004?

As... When I was Clerk of the Information Technologists, we, we adopted the assistant secretary general at that time of the Mission to Seafarers as our honorary chaplain. And, so I joined the Mission to Seafarers. And in, I think when we moved down here, I became a member of the committee of the Southampton branch of the Mission to Seafarers, and in 2015? no, perhaps not quite, I became the chairman. Which is, is very rewarding, and, I have had a lot of good contacts there. The... Glynn Jones, who was the honorary chaplain at the Information Technologists, died in 2020, but we had his memorial service in April this year, which I went to. And he ended up as the chief executive, but they call them the secretary general. And now we're just getting a new chaplain. So, he has just taken over. And, the job comes with a house, and when we looked through the house, there was one piece, one chair, and two bottles of tonic water. Oh I think there's a fridge. [laughs] That was it. So, managed to find some furniture, and he arrived last week. So... He's going to be good, it will be good. And I've, I've just been very fortunate, because, I've just fallen in to all these things. I mean you said, you know, you asked me how I made decisions. Well I never made any decisions. They just happened. My sister said that she, at the age of seven she could control her own destiny. Don't know if she has, but she thinks she has.

[00:43:53]

So if you look at your career, what are the proudest achievements of your career?

I would say forming CEPIS, and being Clerk to the Information Technologists. And I've been involved with the WCIT since I retired from the BCS, I helped do some fundraising at one point, and, get more members, and I'm probably now just a member, attending events, and loving it. And through that I've also been Commodore of the City Livery Yacht Club, which is members of livery companies of the City of

London. I've got... Yeah, I've got all sorts of things on my wall here, you probably can't see, but I've got my, my livery, my Liveryman of the City of London, and, British Computer Society 25th anniversary celebration, and me in my clerk's gown. Outstanding service for the Council of European Professional Informatics Societies. [laughs]

[00:45:11]

So, from your perspective, how are you seeing the role of women evolving during all...?

Well sadly, actually, interestingly enough, when I joined the BCS in '68, I think as a proportion of IT people, there were more women than there are now.

Why do you think is that?

Because, in those days they were systems analysts, and programmers. I mean Steve Shirley, for instance, set up FI employing women who weren't able to get away from the house. Now of course, computing is into everything, so there are a lot more, a lot more people in the IT industry anyway. I think, women have a particular skill in communication. The only problem is that a lot of girls, I remember we, we had a, in the early Nineties the BCS had a task group on computers in society, and they, they went in to visit a school, a junior school, and there, the children were all, the girls and the boys, were all using computers for various things, estate agents and things like that. But then when they went to a secondary school, the boys sat in front of the computers and the girls went off and did needlework or, you know, whatever else they wanted to do. And it's quite difficult to encourage women actually to think of computers as being something that women can do.

Why do you think is that?

Maybe the careers teachers aren't, aren't aware of it. Maybe it's just that, they look at these screens and they think, mm, you know, don't want to be sitting in front of those all the time. I don't know.

[00:47:14]

What do you think we should do, to involve more women in computers?

[pause] Not [inaud] I could do anything. [laughs] I don't know. I mean people have tried. But it's got to start quite young. You know, if you... I can't remember who it was, was there a, a Catholic saint who said, if you get them at seven, they're there for life. Maybe the same thing in the IT. You know, you can see a computer in front of you, but you can't always know what you can do with it. I mean a lot of, I think, the social media, and that is probably involving a lot more women, or girls, but whether they see that as being a way into actually have a job, is something different.

[00:48:25]

Is there any anecdotes or topics that we haven't discussed that you would like to discuss?

No. Not really. No, I think I'm, I'm much more an observer than actually getting involved in, in debates. And I notice sometimes I think of myself as being on the outside looking in, rather than actually taking part in anything. I don't... [pause] I just, I just enjoy being, actually being around, you know, with the people and the, and the concepts. I've just, just had a fantastic life. My husband wasn't an IT person at all, and in fact when I retired I ended up having to be his secretary. [laughs] It was only then I really understood what he was doing, because I used to go with him. And then, he used to come with me on CEPIS, CEPIS events, when he retired.

[00:49:43]

What did he do as a job?

He, he started in the product development department of Lyons Maid, ice cream company, and became a production manager. Then he was made redundant. At the same time that he was made redundant, because they sold the company, it went bankrupt, he was invited by the Spanish company to go and advise them. And then, he was headhunted to go and help an ice cream company in, Czech, or, Czechoslovakia, because he was there when it split, Czechoslovakia divided, and he

found that, it would, all this man wanted was him to get some more money, which he was spending on bigger cars and fur coats for his wife. And Richard went back to the bank and they said, 'We're not giving any more money, but would you like to sell the big plane that's sitting on the tarmac?' [laughs] And he said, 'Well, I don't know anything about planes.' Well he did actually, but, not to sell it. And then, he went to China, and he worked in China for a couple of years, and again, he said, 'You would be much better off selling this huge amount of land for building, rather than trying to develop an ice cream company.' So, yeah, he... Ice cream was his livelihood and his love. I mean he, he really was very knowledgeable. I didn't realise how well thought of he was until I retired and went with him, and met people, and, he ended up as one of probably half a dozen ice cream experts at the end of his life. But we, we went out first, I remember, at seventeen. My parents were very impressed, because we walked, he got a taxi home from the cinema, when we missed the last bus. But he, [laughs] I don't think he and my mother really got on very well.

[00:51:00]

And, at Lyons, did he ever use a computer?

No, but one of his colleagues was, was doing product development and production on a, a PDP-8.

So what years are we talking about?

Sorry?

What years are we talking about here?

What year? [pause] We got married in '69, so it was probably early Seventies. Yah. He was... He was a bit of a bully at the beginning, but at the end he told me I was a bully, because I tried to get him to go to the doctor and he wouldn't, so... He, he became very ill, unfortunately, at the end.

I'm sorry.

I still remember, I've got a, a montage of 60 photographs on the wall above my bed. But, it was Steve Shirley said, 'Have you got a boyfriend?' 'No.' 'Are you going to get married again?' 'No.' No, I'm very happy as I am. I've had a, I had, the last, oh gosh, 2004, what's that, eighteen years? Can't be. It is eighteen years. I've had a great time. I've done a lot of travelling. When Richard died he left me the money he had earned overseas to travel. I've got a niece in South America, and a brother-in-law in New Zealand. I'm going off to Australia and New Zealand for Christmas, just booked my flights.

[00:54:05]

What was your favourite computer during your career?

Well, Apple. Barney Gibbens gave WCIT an Apple Mac for me to work on in 1987, and I was converted to that. I mean, PCs at BCS are, you know... Apples are so much easier. So much simpler. Apart from the fact that my, I have a trackball, because I had RSI. At the moment, and I don't know whether it's because it's too dirty or whether it's just breaking down and I need to get a new one, it's not working very well. [laughs]

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No, I think I've spoken a lot.

OK. So, thank you very much, it's been very nice talking to you today. Thank you.

Thank you Elisabetta. And good luck with you, and we look forward to see you when you come back to London in November.

Absolutely. So, thank you very much.

Thank you. Bye.

[End of Interview]