Angela Shore Access Summary

00:00:00 - Interview Introduction

Gavin Clarke introduces the oral history and the purpose of the recording. Angela Shore states her name, place and date of birth for the record.

00:00:33 – Upbringing and family life

Born in Scotland, Angela's dad migrated to Italy from Scotland after the Second World War. Her mother was from Ireland. Angela went to school in Scotland and left when she was 16 years old. She studied Computer Science at the University of Strathclyde. Computing was, as Angela describes "very new and shiny". She was one of very few people with a Computer Science degree at the time and became very sought after due to the many jobs available. Angela's first job was in Fife, she worked on banking terminals. Once married, Angela moved to the South of England where she started working for Digital in the early 1980s.

00:01:55 – Women in Computing

Angela describes how Computer Science was a very new course. Only 28 of the 150 people on her course were women. Of these 150 people, only 40 students completed the final year. Almost all of the 28 women stayed and finished the course. Angela is still in touch with these friends.

00:02:41 – Maths and computing in the 1970s and 1980s

Towards the end of the twentieth century, there was no Computer Science at school. Angela's love of maths allowed her to pursue a maths related degree and then obtain a job that was "new and interesting". She had never used a computer before going to university.

00:03:02 – Memories of the Computer Science course

Angela remembers her university course (programming, networking, cabling 'hardware stuff'). In her final year, she made what we now know as a computer. She brought a processor, memory, soldered all the chips to the board and used the assembler programmes Pascal and ALGOL.

00:04:03 – Parents' background

Angela's father was a geology teacher and mother was a housewife. They had six children, all of which went to university. Angela's older sister studied music whereas her brother started studying law, but then changing to Computer Science.

00:04:44 – Memories of first job at Fortronic.

Fortronic was a small company in Fife. Angela was an assembler programmer, writing code that made the bank terminals print (to provide users with a receipt). She remembers feeling very excited after writing code and seeing the printer print a character. After writing code, she had to download it onto a prom which got plugged into the computer and tested. When she was debugging, she would count the binary (ones and zeros), translate that into HEC and then translate that into an assembler. She would transport code abroad using a prom.

00:06:08 – Working as a woman in computing

Angela describes how women were very much the minority group in the workplace during the 1980s. She was a young woman with unique skills and people were interested in that. The company liked being able to state that they had a women working for them. At university she loved the detail that came with programming whereas most men trained in marketing and project management.

Angela found that she was initially judged, because she was a woman. However, once she proved herself and showed that she was capable, this sidelined any concerns that others had. She remembers how her company would always choose her if there was a public facing role needed.

00:08:28 – Working for Digital

Once married, Angela moved to the South of England and worked for a company called ITL. They were based in Winchester and did automation software. She wrote file system software (the delete command, the move command, the copy command – word processes before Office was available). ITL moved to Hemel Hempstead from Winchester and asked employees to move with them. Angela left the company as she didn't want to move and started looking for jobs. She found the Digital job advert and liked the idea of working for a big company (she had only worked for small companies prior to Digital). When she went for the interview, she thought it very modern and was excited to be around other people with the same interests as her.

The Digital job was advertised in a computing magazine, she started as a programmer for All in 1. She would customise this for customers so that they could do business tracking and processing.

00:10:47 – Digital job interview

Angela remembers having two interviews, the first with lots of people and the second was one to one with the manager. Both were in Basingstoke. She remembers being impressed with how modern and exciting the place was, said that it felt American. As a programmer, Angela didn't want to sit in a booth all day and Digital didn't have this. She had a desk in an open office and could engage with lots of people.

00:12:38 – Digital versus IBM

At the same time as her Digital interview, Angela was also considering a job at IBM. IBM was very different. It was in Hursley. She remembers driving into the office and seeing cows in the field. Coming from Scotland she thought this was odd as they didn't have cows close to buildings. The IBM office had corridors of glass rooms, everyone had a partition between them. In the interview, all the paper in front of her was turned over. When she asked about the job, they would say "I can't tell you about the job". Angela didn't accept the offer. In contrast DEC was completely open, friendly and very approachable. IBM was secretive and no one really spoke to you.

When Angela saw the DEC advert, she liked the idea of working for a big American company. At the time, she knew that IBM were the big computers and that DEC had the mini computer and PDPs. The latter felt new and modern and ahead of the rest.

00:14:51 – Staff training at DEC

Angela joined DEC in 1986. She received 'personal effectiveness for professionals' and 'effective communication' training as she struggled to write memos. Some training was technology specific. Other training was conducted in Shire Hall in Reading. When the company had big upgrades, she would deliver some of the training in Shire Hall for over 300 people. DEC were always very supportive with training. Angela used her throughout the whole of her working life.

Writing was an important skill to master and this training course was 3 or 4 days long. This course changed the way she wrote. Angela went on to do a Masters degree and wrote a 15,000 word thesis, something that she wouldn't have been able to do without the training.

As a consultant, Angela wrote reports for customers, presented her reports to the managing director. When she was a project manager, she wrote status reports.

00:19:25 – Career progression at DEC

Angela started at DEC as a programmer and worked to become a consultant. She worked with All in 1 and got to know it well. Only four people in the UK worked on All in 1 and Angela was one of them. This helped her see how customers could use it for the better and become a consultant.

00:20:24 – All in 1

Angela explains what All in 1 was and its different uses. It was introduced to companies as a business processor so that they could see the value of it, then customised for their business needs.

She remembers how some companies struggled with the transition from paper to software. She had to find the thing that meant that they wanted to use the computer, rather than just need it.

Angela notes that All in 1 was ahead of its time and explains some of the business processes that it could do (authorisation to travel, purchasing, financial authorisation). Companies were always looking to find a process that saved money.

00:27:50 – Programmer knowledge

Gavin notes that not all programmers like dealing with the public. Angela explains that she was very comfortable going into a workplace and speaking with people. Her programmer background helped her spot an inefficient process.

00:29:25 – Working at DEC

Angela describes how she was always nervous before meeting with customers. As a young woman, she always had to prove herself.

00:30:55 – DEC culture

Angela reflects on her time at DEC and the confidence and trust that they placed in her to visit customer sites. Managers were always very approachable. They had access to Lotus Notes which provided her quick access to on-site developers and engineers. Often she was provided with an answer to her question within minutes. She remembers feeling like there was always someone there to help.

00:35:11 – Women in DEC

Angela believes that there were times when she was pushed for progression because she was a female, or because DEC should have had a female at that level. She remembers that being a woman did not hold her back from promotions.

Angela recounts her memories of a site visit to a bank during the 1980s. They asked for a team of all men so DEC took the female off the customer team. This shocked Angela. She loved the fact that she was a female who could programme, assemble and do technical things and loved surprising people with her skillset.

Angela explains that her daughter has shared similar experiences through her career in IT to date.

Angela feels that DEC always supported their staff. If you were the right person for the job then you were put there, regardless of gender.

00:38:20 – Working in DEC offices

Angela was not in the DEC offices often but does remember the communal dining facilities. If she was working on a big project, you would have a team on site.

She recounts working for British Aerospace. Males were called Mr … whereas the females were called by their first names. Angela remembers disliking this. She had her own office in the directors corridors and the other females didn't know what to call her. DEC wasn't like this. She loved going into the office as it was very relaxed. She mainly worked in the Basingstoke office.

00:41:10 – Working in the Basingstoke DEC office

Angela explains that most people in the Basingstoke offices were customer based so she got to know them well. She met other staff at the ceremonies and the engineers when working on products. The All in 1 engineers were based in DEC Park. They trained the programmers.

00:42:10 – The importance of training

Angela describes the training process involved when an upgrade for a product emerged. DEC would have to upgrade the base product and then work with its customers to upgrade all the different customisations. The engineers taught Angela how to use the programme and then she would go out and train the team in the UK. One upgrade was in Shire Hall; hundreds of engineers on site.

00:44:25 – External knowledge of computing

Angela explains that many companies didn't have computing departments so relied on DEC to make sure that the software and IT equipment worked.

00:46:10 – Working for Western helicopter

Angela has fond memories of working for Westen helicopter, because of the helicopters that she saw onsite.

00:46:45 – Having a passion for programming

Angela explains the importance of having a passion for your job and why she ended up leaving the IT industry; the job became deskilled.

00:48:00 – The mini computer

Angela notes the importance of the mini-computer and why it worked for DEC customers. She compares it to the size of the IBM mainframe. The mini-computer was smaller, modern, trendy and the smaller companies, who couldn't afford a mainframe, could afford the mini-computer.

00:50:50 – Excellence Awards

Angela fondly remembers achieving her three excellence awards; two of which are still on her wall at home in her study. The award included a night stay in a five star hotel, something which the young Angela had never experienced. Despite winning three awards, Angela has mixed

emotions of this system. She believes that they were a great motivator, but felt bad for staff who had worked hard but didn't achieve one.

00:53:30 – DEC culture

Angela explains the DEC culture and that Ken Olsen was keen on doing right by the customer.

00:55:50 – Leaving DEC

Angela remembers leaving DEC in 1994 as the company had changed. Angela explains that she left DEC to become a contractor (she needed more money to pay off her mortgage). She left DEC to work with mobile phone companies.

00:58:00 – Working for Vodaphone

After DEC, Angela explains that she worked on a project with Talkland (later brought by Vodaphone). She worked in the billing department, supporting the process where the phone was sold in the shop, until later becoming the IT executive of all the billing divisions in the UK. Angela explains that her role at DEC provided her with the foundations and skills needed to work for Vodaphone (despite still feeling a sense of "imposter syndrome" when walking onto customer sites).

01:04:30 – The high pressured environment of DEC

Angela notes that people were supported, especially when working on big projects.

01:07:40 – Reflecting on DEC's demise

Angela remembers feeling very sad when DEC came to an end. She believes that DEC were not moving with the trends fast enough.

01:09:30 – DEC's legacy

Angela reflects on the supportive environment that DEC created, the training and its products. She is unsure whether people still remember DEC, except from its workers. She explains that DEC should be remembered for its technology (the mini computer) as this was the stepping stone for what we have now.