Computer Oral History Collection, 1969-1973, 1977

Interviewee: Sandy Lanzarotta
Interviewer: Robina Mapstone
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MAPSTONE:

The date is September the 12th, 1973. This is Bobbi Mapstone and I am interviewing Mr. Sandy Lanzarotta (L-A-N-Z-A-R-O-T-T-A) and this is an interview for the Smithsonian Computer History Project. Why don't we get started by talking about the Datamation. You're getting the job and that whole story.

LANZAROTTA:

Well, I guess that for me it started in a rather strange way, and I will give you some background. It might not be right, but I'm not going to worry about that. I was working as a P.R. man for a shipyard in Northern California, Mayor Island Naval Shipyard. And it is in Vallejo, at the top of San Francisco Bay. And the shipyard was run by the Department of the Navy, and the pay was, as Civil Service jobs are, kind of meager. So I had decided that I would really like to get back down to Southern California where I had come from. And I began looking for jobs down here. And I couldn't find much of anything because I was still fairly young and not too much experience in journalism. I edited a college newspaper and I edited a newspaper in the Army, in Austria of all places for eighteen months.

I came back to Los Angeles in '53 after my Army career and I had worked for City News Service and the Los Angeles Examiner for about nine months. And then those jobs kind of petered out. I had a part-time job--well, no; I had a full-time job with the City News Service. And then I was taken on by the Examiner for a summer to fill in while people were on vacation. And that lasted beyond the summer into the fall of '53. Anyhow, I was job hunting in Los Angeles and I made a call on a magazine called Western Metal Working News. And they said, "We don't have a job down here, but we need a man in Northern California to cover the metal working industry--the North Force. And would you like to be a stringer for us up there?" And I said, "Fine." And they hired me and I went to work for them and they gave me my first assignment.

My first assignment was to cover Westcomp in San Francisco. It was at the Cow Palace and the headquarters hotel was the Fairmont Hotel. So I went to that conference for them. Brought my Rolli along and took pictures and covered it and took pictures of the exhibits at the Cow Palace and this kind of thing. But in the course of that I met another man, Don Thompson, who was Editor of Western Electronic News. We struck up a conversation and I saw him several times during the Conference. And he said before he left San Francisco, he told me he was looking for an Associate Editor for that magazine.

Western Electronic News was part of Thompson Publications. They were based in Chicago and had a couple of other successful magazines. One of them was called Industrial Engineering. They have since changed the name to Research and Development. It was Industrial Engineering or something like that. I can't remember the name of that magazine, but they had three or four successful magazines and Western Electronic News, at the time, was one of the most successful. It was a king-sized magazine. Larger than the normal magazines and very thick. It ran a lot of advertising. The editorial quality was just so-so.

MAPSTONE:

This was when?

LANZAROTTA:

This was in '57 when I finally ended up looking for a job down here. I started up in Northern California, I guess, in '54 and I worked there for a couple of years before I started to look down here.

MAPSTONE:

Was Western Electronic News into the computer side of electronics or was it mainly...

LANZAROTTA:

Well, they covered everything, kind of the way Westcom does now. They include everything. It did include computers, but they ran very little on computers. They were mainly a components kind of general electronics. Anything that had to do with electronics they covered. And you know, that covered the waterfront. It was kind of an ill-defined magazine, but it fit the times in that there were no organized, specialized journals the way there are now. Regional publications, which this one was, were still doing well.

MAPSTONE:

I was wondering if it is a journal that I should be looking through in those early years for information.

LANZAROTTA:

Well, I don't know where in hell you would find it. It is not in publication anymore.

MAPSTONE:

It would be in the library.

LANZAROTTA:

Yes. You could find it in libraries. So Don hired me and I went to work for them in October, 1957. I moved from Northern California, came down to Los Angeles and went to work for Western Electronic News. They had offices on Pico Boulevard and Beverly Glen. And, I went to work for Don and the month that I went to work for him, Thompson Publications bought a property called Research and Engineering, a magazine that had been started by a former Sales Manager of the Thompson Publishing Company who had kind of split off on his own, started this magazine and it wasn't going anywhere. So Thompson bought it. It was kind of an investment. He didn't know quite what he was going to do with it, but the very month I joined the Company was the month they bought this property. And between October of 1957 and the end of the year, they decided, the Company decided that they would try to start a magazine in the computer business. And they decided that this magazine, Research and Engineering, they would turn into a computer magazine. And for tax purposes and other reasons, they had to keep the name of that magazine. So the original name of Datamation was Research and Engineering, the Magazine of Datamation. And, I guess what now looks like a rather naive hope was to turn the word datamation into a generic term the way automation had become a generic word. But in any case, that is what they called the magazine.

The first few issues of Research and Engineering, the Magazine of Datamation [laughter] were produced in, printed in Stamford, Connecticut, and kind of produced out of the New York offices of Thompson. And the reason they started back there was because they knew the Eastern Joint Computer Conference that year was going to be held in New York and they figured they might start it back there. But, for a lot of reasons, I guess primarily because the impetus for turning that property into a computer magazine had come from the west coast, from people like Don Prell (whom I mentioned to you the last time we met, when we had lunch before). Don is really, probably, the primary source of advice and I don't know how the Company knew him, but he became very influential in the early years of Datamation as I will explain. There was Don and there was another chap by the name of Earl Wilkin--W-I-L-K-I-N--Earl Wilkin, was a salesman for one of their magazines and saw real potential for a computer magazine. And they had been the primary guys to influence the company to try to produce a computer magazine. They produced the first two issues on the west coast and that was the October issue and then they produced a November-December issue, because after putting out the first issue they decided that Datamation would be six times a year; and I guess that's semi-monthly.

Let me give you the setting, as I remember it, as far as the rest of the industry was concerned. This is the end of 1957 and the beginning of 1958. It was about that time that ACM decided to start Communications of the ACM. The only other computer publication that I know of at that time was Computers and Automation, produced by Ed Berkeley up in Massachusetts. And, depending upon who you would talk to, it was not a very highly-regarded publication, because among other things, if you can believe it, Berkeley published fiction about computers. It was almost a, an amalgam of a semi-technical publication and a sci-fi publication, if you can believe that. There wasn't a hell of a lot of that. But he did a little of that. He ran fiction in there. He ran just about

anything. It was really a magazine that was an extension of Ed Berkeley's interests and tendencies, and wasn't really regarded as a serious entry in the computer field. So you looked around at that time and, you know, this was ten years after the advent of the first successful computer that IBM had marketed. There were a lot of companies in the business by then. And yet, there were almost no publications specifically devoted to computers.

There were a lot of publications that covered computers even then. Electronic News and others, Electronics, the magazine Electronics, a private publication, wrote a lot about computers, but there were no--aside from Communications of the ACM, which, as I remember, started in January of '68-

MAPSTONE:

Si—

LANZAROTTA:

'58, pardon me. And the said Berkeley publication. There were no magazines in the field and Thompson just figured that--this is Frank Thompson who was the President of the Thompson Publications--and I guess his chief lieutenant at the time, who is still very active in the Company, a guy by the name of Gardiner F. Landen, nicknamed Joe Landen; they were the two real movers in the thing--decided that they would take a flier on this thing. So they put the first two issues out in New York.

And they had gotten as an editor a fellow by the name of Charles Cluge, and that was his name. [laughter] And Charlie Cluge was a staff member on one of their magazines in Chicago. I wish I could remember the name of that magazine because it was the thing that I think really influenced them to take a chance on Datamation. Oh, I do remember it. The name of the magazine was Industrial Laboratories. And they had started that magazine a few years earlier, and it had immediately become successful, which is very rare in the publishing field. You figure when you start a magazine and you've got about a year or more of breaking ground. And maybe if you are lucky by the second or third or fourth year it will be profitable. But this one was profitable almost immediately – Industrial Laboratories. So they took one of the editors (he wasn't the chief editor) one of the editors, Charlie Cluge and put him on this Datamation project and he produced the first two issues in New York. And then they moved him to Los Angeles where there were a number of people who were interested in this new property and they decided they had a good chance of making it succeed out there. I guess primarily because then, even as now, but much more so back then, you could identify two centers of competence for the computer industry. One was very large and one was smaller but highly concentrated.

And the two centers were the corridor between Washington and Boston, extending up through Jersey, through New York and up to Boston, where there was a hell of a lot of computer activity. And the Los Angeles area, where, because of the aerospace industry and the government concentration here during World War II, there were just a hell of a

lot of people involved in computing. And so, I guess, for reasons that are not too well defined, but because, again, this fellow Prell that I mentioned earlier was a Vice President of Benson-Lerner Corporation in Santa Monica. The other fellows had been assigned out here from Thompsons. They were out here.

So they asked Charlie to move to the West Coast and to put the magazine out here. And he did that. He moved to Los Angeles and moved into an apartment over the offices on Pico Boulevard as an interim thing while he found his own place. And by that time I had been with the company for three months. He came out and moved into the offices and I met him. I guess he moved in around Christmastime of '57--January of '68. He was there about two weeks and one day we came to the office and Charlie wasn't there. It turns out that Charlie had left town. He had gone back to Chicago because he couldn't stand Los Angeles. He hated the place. And he said, "I don't want any part of that or your magazine and I will go back to Chicago. If you want me to work on the magazines there, I am your guy, but you can have Los Angeles." Just hated it.

So here they were. They had decided that they would produce the thing out here. They looked around and tried to figure out who the hell could do this. Well, by this time I had been working on Western Electronic News for three months and I guess they figured I halfway knew what I was doing, at least as an editorial kind of person. And they said to me, "How would you like to become Acting Editor of this new magazine?" And I said, "Well, I know nothing about computers." And they said, "Neither does anybody else that we can very quickly identify in the computing industry, so why don't you take a crack at it?" And I said, "Fine." And I began immediately. I went off Don's staff and became the Editor, Acting Editor, and began trying to find out what this industry was all about. And, I guess, what transpired from that point--oh, I began meeting people in the industry. I met Paul Armour. I met a fellow by the name of Fred Gruenberger. Fred is teaching out in the Valley now. I think at Valley State or someplace like that.

MAPSTONE:

Yeah. I've been to Fred. Cal State Northridge.

LANZAROTTA:

Is that where he is now? Yea. I met a number of people at Rand and began to meet people in various other companies out here. But, for some reason, I can't remember a hell of a lot of names. Probably because I quickly decided that if I were to be successful at all in this thing, I had to find out a hell of a lot about the industry in a hurry. So I talked the company into having Fred kind of bring me up to speed and they hired him on as a tutor in the computer industry for me. And the early months of '68 I spent—

MAPSTONE:

'58.

LANZAROTTA:

'58. I keep saying '68.

MAPSTONE:

It is hard to get back that far.

LANZAROTTA:

It is. The early months of '58, I spent a lot of time with Fred. Two hour sessions, two or three times a week in which he kind of told me about the industry, told me about computers, peripherals, explained how computers worked, explained programming peripherals, companies in the business. I immediately became aware of the dominance of IBM in the industry. It was one of the strange phenomenons of this industry that Rand, which was exclusively an IBM user, wasn't very high on IBM. They knew of all their foibles and all the shortcomings and the fact that some of their practices were, even then, somewhat questionable in the way they were organized to sell and how they competed and how they dominated the industry.

MAPSTONE:

But apparently IBM still gave them what they needed.

LANZAROTTA:

Pardon?

MAPSTONE:

IBM still gave them what they needed.

LANZAROTTA:

Sure, sure. Well, and I suspect too that it was, you know the syndrome that exists today was even in existence then, and it was that while they could knock them as far as they were concerned, there wasn't a viable alternative around that could provide the service and the attention that IBM gave. And IBM had the scope and the breadth of a wide range of products and they kind of stuck to them and, I guess, ran still pretty exclusively as an IBM center even these days.

MAPSTONE:

Do you recall, as a neophyte coming into the industry, do you recall how you felt about the computers, what they meant, their significance? Did that kind of get to you in any way?

LANZAROTTA:

I guess it didn't get to me beyond having a neophyte's view, which was a very dim understanding of what computers were. Kind of a fear of them as kind of mysterious black boxes that did things that people couldn't understand very well. If people don't understand computing today, you can imagine--wow! Wow! I began to sense in '58, that the industry, at least in terms of the current state of the art then, was pretty far along. There weren't all that many computers installed compared to today. And the tendency up to then had been strictly closed shop operations. A computer center was a thing apart in a company run by people who understood that. People were still buying (and probably for several years after that) were still buying computers because you had to have a computer if you were--it was a prestige kind of thing to buy a computer. Management didn't really understand what the hell these things would do for them. But they knew they had to have them because everybody said they had to have them.

I guess I didn't have any misgivings about computers then, but I knew very little about that industry. I couldn't really have told you then what was different about a computer system than any other part of electronics, which I didn't then. I was a typical liberal arts product of the time and had got thrown into this situation and had to find out about it in a hurry. Well, I guess I would have died. I guess Fred kind of brought me along for maybe about six months, at which time at the end of that, I was able to program a PDP-15 computer. I wrote a little program and it actually ran. And that was the graduation exercise kind of thing that I had come that far. PDP-15--is that right? Yes, that is right. It was a Bendix computer. They are long since gone, but they had a lot of little computers around. While I was doing this, however, I had to get a magazine out. I wrote to several computer companies and most of the ones who are around now were around then. A few, well, quite a few have gone by the boards, but I made contact with most of the companies that were in the business then: Bendix, Philco, Ford. I guess that's right.

MAPSTONE:

[Inaudible].

LANZAROTTA:

Packard Bell. Pardon?

MAPSTONE:

Philco-Ford. That is or was Air Neutronics?

LANZAROTTA:

Air Neutronics. Yeah. See, you are going to be more help than I probably at this point. Packard Bell, Burroughs, UNIVAC, NCR, GE I guess came into the business in '58. I

will tell you about a press conference that I attended there which was kind of funny.

But I had to get this magazine out and, the way I did it was I would get news releases and leads from all over the place. And I would have a stack of material. One stack would be IBM. The other stack would be all the other computer companies. The third batch of information would be various leads that I had. And, I would go down to Benson-Lerner and get with Prell and we would go through this stuff and he would kind of help me evaluate what was good for the issue and what I ought to pursue and what I shouldn't pursue. He was very influential in the first year of the magazine in determining what went in and what kind of articles we ran. I made contact with a number of people including Fletcher Jones, who founded Computer Sciences Corporation some time later. I think Fletcher was with North American. I got to know Frank Wagner at North American and other people. But I would say the first year of the magazine it was just about anything that I could get my hands on that looked half way decent we would run.

MAPSTONE:

In other words, you didn't have any really basic philosophical direction.

LANZAROTTA:

No. There was no philosophical direction. Practically none at all. It was a hodge-podge of material. Just gathering it together and publishing it was an achievement, much less trying to evaluate it--you know, just getting a lot of information into one publication and getting it out.

MAPSTONE:

I suspect it was a highly needed one anyway.

LANZAROTTA:

Yeah, it was. It was, because Communications of the ACM had staked out their ground and it was heavily programming-oriented with a lot of highly technical stuff. Berkeley was still putting out his stuff. Which was okay; I don't want to really demean that magazine all that much. But it wasn't, as I said, it wasn't highly regarded. And so this thing came upon the scene at the right time. We began publishing a lot of material. Let's see. Paul Armer at Rand was a constant source of help to me, too. Run things by him on a very unofficial basis.

MAPSTONE:

But, what really was happening was that your input, I guess, was all predominately West Coast.

LANZAROTTA:

West Coast. Right. Aside from the trips that I made to the East, which probably that first year I made two or three trips East and did touch a lot of bases and did establish a lot of contacts back there and, unfortunately I can't remember names of people back there. I wish I could. I wish I could reconstruct that but it's been some time.

MAPSTONE:

Did you become aware because of your West Coast location that there was sort of, heavy East-West Coast differences?

LANZAROTTA:

Only in this sense. That the West Coast at that time was much more scientifically oriented, because of the aerospace and university influence out here. There was plenty of university influence in the East, but the business applications seemed to be developing much stronger in the East. And that was something I had to pick up on and get accustomed to. But, if you will remember, I think it was in '58 that IBM introduced the 1401, which was their first really mass-produced business computer. Up to that time, they had computers that could handle business applications, but they had been a primarily scientific large computer operation. And then the 1401 came along and kind of changed the cast of things. I can't remember my first contacts with IBM itself. I guess I got to know the western--the guy who was western manager of information, a fellow by the name of Chuck Francis, who ended up three years later hiring me and who now is the number two guy in communications for IBM So I guess my primary contacts with IBM were through Chuck. And then when I went east, I met a few people back there, too. But they were usually the P.R. side of the house rather than the people who were involved in the industry. IBM even then wasn't noted for exposing its people too much.

Well, let's see. I guess the first year things kind of went along like that. I was learning about the industry. I had two or three major people that I worked with out here. And the magazine came out six times that year. It was very slim on advertising. It was a marginal operation, and it was recognized as such. But to the credit of Thompson, they had decided that they would really stick with it. They saw enough potential there and really felt that they had a good property, and decided that they would really just hang in there. And they did. And I guess after about the first year, they took the "Acting" away and I became Editor of Datamation in '59. And the magazine in that year was also still produced only six times a year. And, let's see, I think one other thing happened in '58. About half way through the year, another magazine appeared on the scene. And this was Business Automation, a magazine which was published in Chicago, and, as the name implies, had staked out its ground. And that was to concentrate on business applications of computers rather than try to cover the whole waterfront, because, perhaps they sensed that even then Datamation had kind of staked out the ground as the broad horizontal magazine for the industry and they were trying to establish a different tone to their magazine. So they started Business Automation about that year.

Well, let's see. '59-- By this time I had attended a couple of Joint Computer Conferences and my circle of contacts had grown. I guess I can't really say that even in '59 we had developed an editorial philosophy beyond covering new announcements, new products. And there were plenty of them in that period. All kinds of people were introducing new computers then.

MAPSTONE:

I was going to ask you, when did you start to get into an established philosophy?

LANZAROTTA:

It probably didn't even happen that year. I would say we probably went through the major part of '59 without deciding what kind of a philosophy the magazine would have, if you could define one. But, in '60, 1960, I guess I had felt--I don't mean to skip over '59 that lightly and maybe we can double back; it's just that I try to dredge up some of the--well, one of the things that happened in '59 is that the day-to-day, week-to-week advice that I had sought wasn't necessary anymore. By then I had enough contacts in the industry, knew enough people and was confident enough about what I was doing so that my sessions with Fred had stopped mid-year in '58 and I wasn't seeing Prell anymore on a regular basis and I guess I felt I knew enough about the industry to know more or less what I was about.

And I think in '60 I decided that what I would try to cover in the magazine would be new product introductions, new innovations ... new uses of computers were concerned and initial installations of computers. And any large and small companies where computers were being introduced for the first time. What happens when a company that has been doing things manually converts to computers? And, I guess, that if we had any kind of a philosophy, any kind of thing that I tried to concentrate on in '60, it was in those three areas. There were a great number of new products and new innovations that were being introduced. The new uses of computers that were being uncovered both by the manufacturers and more by the users who were buying computers and really not sure what the hell they were going to do with them. And then finding that, gee, their view of what they were going to do with computers was really quite limited compared to what the opportunities they then saw opening up. And then initial installations with computers in government, in industry, science and whatever. And that's the direction I took the magazine in the sixties.

And I also started, I guess sometime during the early sixties, to start to run a lot more unfavorable information, primarily about manufacturers. The shortcomings of their machines. Some of the things they were doing that weren't all that great, because by then I knew enough and had enough confidence to start going after people, after companies. I felt that this was a legitimate kind of activity. In other words, rather than be a needy pea weekly which essentially was what Datamation was in '68 (we printed whatever we got) we started to apply some judgment and some criticism to some of the things we saw going on.

MAPSTONE:

You took an editorial stand.

LANZAROTTA:

Shortcomings of computers. Royal McBee came out with a computer I seem to remember in the '59-'60 time frame, and made a lot of claims or it. And I ran a comparison on the Royal McBee-- 300? (The names kind of get away from me).

MAPSTONE:

Yeah, that was a--it started off as the LGP-30.

LANZAROTTA:

That's what I was trying to think of. The LGP-30, comparing it to the—

MAPSTONE:

I don't know--it was the RPC something or other.

LANZAROTTA:

Yeah, it was the LGP-30, the Bendix PDP-150 and the IBM 1130, I think it was. And I compared the three computers and Royal McBee came off very badly. And they were incensed, because nobody had done this before really. Nobody had really, aside from a few well written articles in publications of a general nature that started to cover shortcomings, nobody had really come out in a computer magazine talking about comparisons of computers, and shortcomings of some of them compared to others. I'll never forget that the Royal McBee people caught me when I was in the East once and told me to come out to their place, which, as I remember, was on Long Island, and invited me out there to kind of talk about that article and give them an opportunity to tell me about the LGP-30. I drove out there in a blinding snow storm. I almost didn't make it. Dead winter. This had to be the winter of '59-'60, about. And I got out there and they had an array of technical people lined up to talk to me. And they kind of sat me down in a chair and poured it on for several hours. And I didn't understand a God damn word they said. [laughter]. Just didn't understand anything. Didn't know what--didn't have a clue. You know, because while I was beginning to get a clue, I sure as hell wasn't equipped to talk speeds and nuances of control programs and all of this stuff. And it was really hysterical, because I had to sit there acting as though I understood what was happening and taking notes of one sort or another and underlining things to give them a warm feeling that I actually understood what was going on [laughter] and I went away from there and I think I threw the notes away and just forgot about the whole incident. So, I guess it was in 1960.

Well, let me tell you a little bit about the, by this time, the organization that was producing the magazine. Well, into the second year of publication, '58, now we are talking '59, I was producing the whole magazine. And when I say that I was producing the whole magazine, I mean that I personally was writing every word that went into the magazine. I was submitting my copy to a typesetter who happened to be, as he still is, a guy who ran the print shop that produced the magazine, typesetter's name. It was in Chicago, and sometime during the '59-'60 period moved to Minnesota. So I would have to mail my copy to Minnesota and I would get galley proofs back and I would proofread them, send them back for correction. And I would cut out the galleys and I would lay out the magazine with a paste pot. I'd work with a gal that's now the Art Director of Datamation, Cleve Butel, who was then kind of the production coordinator or something, who got the ads in. Then she and I would place the ads and I would paste down all the editorial and I would send the pages back to Minnesota, or Chicago at that time ... .They would then put the pages together and send me the page proofs, which I would again read and send back East. And then they would produce the magazine. Now, the wonder was that the damn thing got out at all. And you consider that I was the reporter; I went out and got the information; I was the editor that looked at articles and decided which would go in and which wouldn't; I was the feature writer who wrote the features in the, what now is "Look Ahead," the little teaser in the front. And I did this all by myself.

MAPSTONE:

Lanzarotta's view of the industry.

LANZAROTTA:

The new product, the new products editor, the new literature editor.

MAPSTONE:

That is incredible. It really is.

LANZAROTTA:

And it went on for some time that way. At the time I was highly critical of the company and was making waves in the company. I was becoming very unpopular because I kept telling them that you can't produce a publication this way. You need an editorial staff if we are ever to become believable. Because, you know, by this time, I can't remember, the publications I've already mentioned, Computers Automation, Computers and Automation, Business Automation, and Communications of the ACM. I don't know that there were any other publications that appeared on the scene at that time.

Those are the only three I can remember. But they were doing a job and getting the magazines out and vying for the advertising and I kept telling our people, "I really need some help." They were trying to put out a magazine on a shoe string that was losing

money. And they were obviously reluctant to add to their overhead by giving me more editorial help. But, I guess it was in 1960, probably the summer of 1960--let's see if I have said enough though, about the staff. I had a pretty good secretary then, who eventually married Don Prell, this guy we've been talking about. She was from England and her name was Betty Howe. She ended up writing the "New Product" and "New Literature" sections of the magazine. My secretary. So I got at least that much help. And she was a pretty good writer. I guess it was about mid-1960 when I got agreement that they would let me hire somebody to help me. And I forget how I got the lead. I don't know whether it was through a newspaper ad that we placed in Los Angeles or whether it was a resume that I had seen. It was more likely that Hal Bergstein was a walk-in. I'm not really quite sure. But a young fellow came in one day and his name was Hal Bergstein. He had just moved to Los Angeles from New York with his wife. They decided they wanted to live out here. He had no job. He had some magazine experience and some writing experience. He was looking for a job and he struck me as a particularly bright guy. So I hired him. And Hal became Assistant Editor of Datamation. And immediately we hired Fred Gruenburger to put him through the paces because I had to get the magazine out. I couldn't do that and anyhow, I couldn't have done nearly the job that Fred did. So Fred kind of tutored Hal. And Hal turned into an extremely aggressive reporter. A very good writer who took the meager beginnings that I had made and turned the Datamation that I had made into a kind of contentious publication, which incidentally I would say was regarded then about the way Computer World is regarded now as a not too reliable and kind of feisty publication that's going after a lot of people and we're not sure they know what they are talking about kind of thing, but there it is. And that is probably unfair to the editors of Computer World now because I think that publication is getting better and better all the time. But at the time they started, they had kind of a reputation for going out and trying to make their mark. And Hal really took, as I say, took the beginnings that I had made and really started to make some inroads. He was extremely good at interviewing people and half aggravating, provoking them into saying things that they later wished they hadn't. He alternated between that and being very nice and drawing them out a great deal and then come back and write scathing articles or scathing little items which certainly didn't help our reputation with the purists in the computer industry who, I think, really felt that everything about computers was fine. Nothing was wrong. They were going to remake the world. And those people who kind of recognized that there was a lot wrong decided that it was an interesting magazine. They kind of got a kick out of all the stuff we were writing. And you can imagine that especially whenever we attacked IBM, the rest of the industry was delighted. IBM was furious. And IBM would say, "Why is it that you go after us all the time?" And I would say, "Because you are ninety percent of the industry. You can't expect us to devote equal negative material to all manufacturers in the business when you are ninety percent of it. So you are kind of ubiquitous and that is the way we are going to cover you." And I guess it was also in '60 that I tumbled upon STRETCH. Remember STRETCH, the IBM computer? Surely then at White Sands. The first STRETCH computer went in at White Sands. And it was heralded as the first supercomputer and, at the time, the epitome of the computing art. Not only then but for many, many years to come. Kind of the absolute apex of computer know-how.

MAPSTONE:

It was really the first Edsel of the computing industry, wasn't it?

LANZAROTTA:

Well, I'm not sure.

[End of Side One]

LANZAROTTA:

I said that I'm not sure that it was so much an Edsel as a, what they considered to be the peak of computer technology for that year and many years to come. (Do you have any cigarettes incidentally?) So they had ballyhooed this thing and the first one, as I remember, was installed at White Sands. I had heard through some people at General Electric that IBM had installed this computer and that people at White Sands weren't too happy with it. This was probably four to six months after they had installed it. And so I checked with the people at GE once more and they said that they had gone through White Sands and that a fellow by the name of Carlson there (I can't remember his first name) who was in charge of the project for which STRETCH was supposed to be applied, was extremely unhappy. So I called him one day, cold, told him who I was and said that I had heard STRETCH was there and asked him what he though of it. And the IBM people had just left and he was in a foul mood, and he really unloaded on it. He said some terrible things about them and I was right on deadline. I kind of synopsized what he said and published it in the section of Datamation which started the magazine then as it does now. I forget what I called it then. I do remember. The name of the section that they now call "Look Ahead" was then called "Datamation in Business and Science." And I quoted this man as saying the STRETCH just isn't working out. The hardware hasn't been working well. The programming is a disaster and the damn thing is just a total disaster as far as he is concerned. I published that. And the roof must have blown off in White Plains, because I got many calls from IBM then saying that it just wasn't true. This machine was working very well and I kept quoting this man saying, "I'm looking at my notes. They are right in front of me." And then they got to him and he wrote me a letter, a letter to the editor, in which he said, "The stuff you published in Datamation last month, or the last issue just wasn't true. And the machine had a few problems, but the machine is performing well, and I am quite happy with it." So I ran a little editor's note under that in which I said, "Contrary to Mr. Carlson's letter, I have my notes and I have telephone company receipts which prove that I talked to him about something for twenty five minutes on such and such a day, and, you know, Datamation sticks by its story."

Well, I'm jumping ahead, but I've got to tell you the funny part of this was that this was in early '61. In March of '61, Chuck Francis who was Information Manager of IBM, called me one day and offered me a job. And I was very interested in that because, contrary to the present time, Datamation editors weren't making very much money and I was one of the two editors and the Editor-in-Chief and I was making what seemed to me a fairly

modest salary for the job that I had been doing. I had been agitating for more money for a little time. It didn't look like anything much was going to happen. So I accepted the job at IBM. And this item, as I say, ran in, I think it ran in February and the exchange of letters that we wrote were in March, about the same time that I was offered this job. And while everyone has kidded me about this, that IBM hired me to defuse Datamation, it had to be apparent to them that with Bergstein waiting in the wings, they really weren't going to change anything about the magazine. And I guess my ego caused me to think that they just saw this tremendous talent that they wanted to have. So I joined IBM, and one of my first assignments in the western office was to cover the Western Joint Computer Conference, which that year was held in Los Angeles. And it was that year that Mr. Watson came out--Mr. Tom Watson, President of IBM-- came out to Los Angeles to make a keynote address at the Western Joint Computer Conference in which he discussed many things about the industry, including the fact that STRETCH didn't turn out to be the computer they thought it would. And he used this allegory, "We aimed at the center field bleachers and we only hit a double."

MAPSTONE:

[laugh].

LANZAROTTA:

And, I had to really reflect on what my future in that company was going to be as the guy who had started this big mess. I really do believe that Datamation was responsible for really questioning the legitimacy of this giant new computer. Because after I ran that item, all kinds of things began to come out about STRETCH and the fact that it really wasn't all they cracked it up to be.

MAPSTONE:

That is great because this is already, what, fifteen years after the [inaudible word] of the first computer and it seems like it was really time for some critical analysis.

LANZAROTTA:

Well, now don't forget they announced the 701 in '51 so it was exactly ten years later.

MAPSTONE:

Yeah. After IBM's. But I was talking about since ENIAC.

LANZAROTTA:

Since ENIAC, yeah.

MAPSTONE:

Since the industry was really spawned.

LANZAROTTA:

That's right. Well, let me jump back to another anecdote too, and I guess this one occurred in--I don't know if these are useful to you.

MAPSTONE:

Delightful. They are really good. They are sort of environment.

LANZAROTTA:

Yeah. This one occurred, I guess--I hope I'm not just bandying these years around, but I don't think I am--this may have occurred in '59, but I am almost sure it occurred in 1960.

Sometime in 1960, I think it was in the spring, I was invited by General Electric to attend a press conference in Scottsdale, Arizona to dedicate their brand new computer facility in Scottsdale that they had just built where they were going to produce their computers. This marked the evidence for all to see that GE was serious about the computer business and was coming in to stay and had really made the commitment and investment in facilities and space and location to become a serious contender and challenge IBM. We were invited out to Scottsdale and a number of reporters attended, including big city newspapers and trade publications. I'm trying to think of who the hell--a guy named Evan Herbert, Evan Herbert, who at that time, I guess, was a reporter for a McGraw-Hill magazine and I honest to God can't remember which one. But Evan, as far as I could see when I got there, was the only other person beside me who knew anything at all about the industry. The rest of the people were general business reporters or editors or newspaper reporters or editors. A couple of trade guys there, Evan and I. And GE proceeded to talk about their intentions in the industry. I think they chose that occasion to announce a new computer, though for the life of me I can't remember which it was. I think they were just announcing their production facilities and all it was going to mean to the industry. I guess it was Evan who said, "Well, you know, about two years ago in '67 or '68, you ran a full page and about all these computers you were going to produce and how you were going to compete across the board, and whatever happened to that?"

And this caused great embarrassment because they weren't producing a full line of computers. They were producing two or three computers, some of which were control computers. Only one or two, I think, were general purpose computers. And so there was great consternation on stage. Hurried conferences and they responded to that as best they could. And then, I guess, a little while later, I asked a crucial question. I said, "Well, that's very impressive. How many GE computers are installed in General Electric?" And again, there was a long pause and there were conferences whispered behind the hands, people leaning over the table and conferring. Then the spokesman, whoever he was, stood up and said, "Two." And this was a good year after they had announced their

newest general purpose computer. And I said, "That is very interesting. You fellows have been in the business for two or three years. You are producing computers; you are paying IBM something like eleven million dollars annually in revenue and your own units won't use your computers. Why is this?" And they came back with a lot of talk about "Well, our divisions are autonomous and we allow them to make their own decisions and that is the General Electric way and that is the way we are operating." And I said, "Call it whatever you want, but," I think I even quoted that New Yorker cartoon and I said, "I don't care, I don't care what you call it. I say it's spinach, and I say to hell with it," or something like that. And there was a lot of laughter. Well, they were really very incensed at Evan and I. And we were approached after the press conference by a couple of guys who really had blood in their eyes. They wanted to know who had sent us and why we had come to destroy their press conference or words to that effect. And we kind of said, "Gee fellows, we didn't come to destroy anything. We figured if you invite the press you have got to be ready to answer questions like that." And they were really quite upset. They came around a little bit and kind of recognized well those were valid questions. Whether they said this or not, the thing that obviously occurred to both of us was that they sure as hell should have done a little more homework before they invited a bunch of people to tell them about how great they were going to be. And I don't really mean to pick on GE, but it was one of the few incidents that really sticks in my mind.

I don't know what to tell you about Datamation. I guess I feel that it came along at the right time. It is a mystery to me. It is a wonder to me that other publishers didn't recognize the potential there. Because I will tell you without question that had a Fairchild Publications, which produced Electronic News, or had McGraw Hill, with the editorial capability that those organizations had, had they decided to produce a computer magazine in '58, '59 or even '60, Datamation probably wouldn't even be around today. Nor would a number of other computer publications that are now in existence be around. Someone who had the perception to understand what this industry was about and could have devoted the editorial talent that they probably already had in their organizations, and people who wouldn't have been nearly so naive as, or unwashed is more the word, as I and a few other editors that were trying to put out computer magazines. Had they marshalled the editorial power that they had to produce a computer newspaper or a computer magazine, Datamation probably wouldn't be around. And there would probably be a McGraw Hill publication today called Computer Week that would run two hundred and fifty pages an issue.

MAPSTONE:

Do you have any feeling about why it did take ten years before anybody really jumped onto the band wagon?

LANZAROTTA:

In the publishing field, I guess, simply because starting a magazine is a very chancy operation. You have got to realize, Bobbi, that, well there are a couple of things about publishing magazines. You have got to very carefully define what you are talking about

when you talk about any kind of publication that appears in this country.

There are all kinds of classifications of nuances. There are daily newspapers. There are business publications and business publications range from the Wall Street Journal to the Journal of Commerce to Business Week to Forbes, Fortune, Dunn's Review ... horizontally business-oriented publications. There are technically oriented publications like Electronics and Electronic Design and that whole selection. There are publications that can be classed generically. There are publications that can be classed horizontally. You name for me something that you are interested in and without checking, I can almost guarantee you that there are at least two publications that serve that audience and probably more like five. I don't care if it is Tropical Fish or Garbage Weekly, sanitation, nuclear physics, pets. You name it and there are some magazines there. And the magazines range from terribly poor to very excellent. And they range in circulation from a few hundred to many, many hundreds of thousands. And there is very little rhyme or reason. My son is subscribing to a magazine called Surfing that he gets. It is about surfing and pictures of guys surfing. It comes out every other month.

MAPSTONE:

I used to publish a magazine for the western Canadian horseman.

LANZAROTTA:

There you are. Okay. If you are a businessman starting a magazine, you have really got to invest a hell of a lot, and the return is very questionable. It is just like producing a movie, writing a book. The chances of your hitting are fairly slim. You know, they are in the very low percentile. Now I guess people really didn't understand about electronics and computers. They really didn't grasp that. There is an industry out there and it is a pretty discretely identifiable industry and you can put some boundaries around it and write about it. Don't ask me why they didn't understand this. But, they didn't. Now McGraw Hill has been on the brink of publishing a computer magazine for as long as I have been in the industry. They were talking about it when I started. Fairchild Publications that publishes, among other things, Womens' Wear Daily and Electronic News, has been on the brink of starting a computer newspaper and they have never done it. If you look at Electronic News today, they have got a very heavy orientation toward computers. That's their solution to their cop-out depending on where you sit and how you are looking at it. I guess there is just a real fear that there is not enough there. And yet how they can look at this multi-billion dollar industry and not have seen the potential way back when in the early sixties--never mind the late fifties.

MAPSTONE:

What about the reaction that the industry had to you? Was it good? Did they want a magazine?

LANZAROTTA:

Yes. I think they did. Well, the proof of the pudding, we were able to go monthly about three years after we started publication. We started in, essentially (I'd say, forget about those two issues in '57) we started in '58. '58, '69--pardon, '58, '59 [pause] and '60. I think all three of those years we published every other month. In '61 we went monthly. That wasn't bad. And what determined it was pure and simple, the number of advertising pages coming in. When did they think they could bite the bullet and try going monthly? Well, they went monthly in their fourth year, which is probably about average. I'd say the stages that the industry went through in terms of its receptivity to something like Datamation: I write off ['58] as the year of the novice or what you want to call it. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. So I can't believe that anybody read that magazine and thought that I was doing much of anything. '59 was a little better. At least the quality of the material I was running was better. I think the potential for advertising products that you could be--I keep talking about advertising, but you have to when you talk about a profit-making magazine--advertising products that you had a fair degree of confidence that people who were in a position to make decisions about computers were reading. ... Then in ['59] when it really started to get kind of sophisticated, the market was there.

MAPSTONE:

Yea. Because actually Datamation really started as the second generation of computers.

LANZAROTTA:

Mhm. That's a good point. Yes, it did. It did probably for the reason that it wasn't until the second generation came along with transistors and more sophisticated programming that you could see the quantum jump in the number of units being produced every year. The vacuum tubes machines, they were pumping them out alright, but how do you keep them running and what do you do with these crazy things and they are so goddamn big and they take up two rooms to put the equipment in and all the air conditioning and the heat problems. People didn't know what the hell they had there. Transistors changed it all. That's a good point, that it was with the second generation machines that the industry really became a mass production kind of viable industry that said "Yeah. Everybody is going to have one of these things."

MAPSTONE:

In a way you were sort of sitting in a position where you could, as you became knowledgeable, look at the industry from a non-partisan point of view. I was just wondering about, did you see any clear groups of people or organizations that were really influential, and I'm now thinking more about the West Coast.

LANZAROTTA:

The government was extremely influential. I don't know the extent that you can say that they are still influential. But, government applications, government users in the fifties

and early sixties were extremely influential. Universities, very much. It is the whole bit about why is the ACM the way it is today, still so highly programming and scientific--oriented? Because that was the big thing. You know the users were the DPMA people of the world, the card punch people, \ the lower caste, the unwashed, the money grubbers, the people that were after this business for a profit, if you can believe it, rather than all of the scientific and technological advances that we can provide to the world. And it was a real split. I don't even pretend to know, because I have been away from an objective view of this industry because I have been with IBM and Xerox now for twelve years. But back then, boy it was very clear. There were the real people who really understood things like programming would lead to the scientific computing people, people that founded the ACM, and then there were these other types. We really don't know quite what they are about, but boy they are not purists like we are. They are really interested in a lot of things that we are not interested in. We are really looking for efficiencies and-- I'm being overly sarcastic, but for a purpose. I think this really existed then.

MAPSTONE:

Mhm. Oh, I think—

LANZAROTTA:

I think there is another observation to be made too. You talk about why weren't--I don't think you asked this in just these words--but why weren't there more publications in the field? You have got to look around the industry even today and say, "Why isn't there a professional association that represents the computing industry that is in better shape than what we have now?" What have we got? We have DPMA, which is thinking of merging with ACM. We've got ACM, which for all the time that's passed, is still kind of ineffective, kind of a seedy organization now. Really. I attended an ACM meeting about a year ago. And I was appalled. There were about thirty, forty people there and they were all kind of the--it was like attending a class reunion of twenty years ago. There were no young people there and they were all the kind of people that had banded together in the fifties and early sixties and were still hanging around together because they really didn't have a hell of a lot else to do.

MAPSTONE:

So when people who go to the ACM—

LANZAROTTA:

And, man, I attended ACM meetings out here in the late fifties and early sixties and had twelve, fifteen hundred people there. The L.A. Chapter got so big they had to form a San Fernando Valley chapter. They couldn't get everybody in one room. They had crazy organizations like the Association for Com--now, what the hell was that thing?

MAPSTONE:

DCA?

LANZAROTTA:

DCA, Digital Computer Association. Those were the funny times. Those were the craziest meetings you will ever want to attend. The Marching and Chowder Society of the computer industry.

MAPSTONE:

[laughter].

LANZAROTTA:

They'd meet every month and the deal was you showed up at some restaurant down on Sepulveda or someplace like that, and everyone marched in about an hour and a half before dinner and proceeded to get bombed. Then they'd have dinner and then they would have some poor guy get up there and give a talk.

MAPSTONE:

[Laugh].

LANZAROTTA:

And I will never forget, they had a guy from IBM one of those years, '59, '60, one month. He was a guy I knew and he was a nice guy and a pretty good programming specialist. And he got there, and guys like Jack Strong and Bob Patrick and I guess Frank Wagner and a few other guys proceeded to get this guy really loaded. And he stood up and started to give his talk and making some points, and he went to the blackboard which was kind of on the side of the stage and was drawing some stuff on the blackboards, programming formula of some kind, and he finished and he pointed to the thing and said, "And that's what I am trying to tell you," and he stepped back and he stepped off the stage and fell over backwards and passed out. It was just bedlam in the place. And he never did finish the talk. It was just hysterically funny. But the industry was in its early days then. There were a lot of young guys who have risen to much more prestigious jobs now, who would probably rather forget about the old DCA days.

MAPSTONE:

Uh-uh.

LANZAROTTA:

I really wonder. I haven't gone to a DCA meeting for a few years. I ought to go to one.

MAPSTONE:

I went last year.

LANZAROTTA:

Did you?

MAPSTONE:

It was a [laugh], it was a drunken brawl.

LANZAROTTA:

Well, I was talking about associations. Why the hell hasn't there been a really serious effort to put together an organization that really represents this industry? ACM doesn't. And AFIPS doesn't pretend to try to. They are an organization of organizations.

MAPSTONE:

Right. But, it goes back to the fact that right from the beginning you have this split. It started off as a scientific and university-oriented, and the business applications, somehow they were always looked down upon, as you said; they were the unwashed. And DPMA has never reached any degree of esoteric quality. And, although, and this is the point I was about to get to, there is a point, and I'm not sure where it came, where the business data processing really started to become very influential.

LANZAROTTA:

Yeah. I would—

MAPSTONE:

I am wondering if you had any feel about when this did start to swing.

LANZAROTTA:

Remember, Bobbi, I left Datamation in '61 and joined IBM.

MAPSTONE:

Was science still, the scientific side of it still more prominent?

LANZAROTTA:

I would say that--No. Business was coming on strong even then. Business applications were really coming to the fore and people were talking and had been talking for a couple of years about business computing. But, I would say by '60,'61 period that-- Well, you know, IBM had two product lines even then, scientific computers and business computers. I can't remember which was which.

MAPSTONE:

701, 702 was business. 704, 705 was business.

LANZAROTTA:

Business. Yeah. And then they had the 1401. Yes, that was business. 1130 was science.

MAPSTONE:

It took through '60 really, didn' it, before--?

LANZAROTTA:

Yeah, and by that time I was in IBM and part of that mass. Well, I think that probably, about the turn of the decade, '59 to '60 was when the real potential for business application became so un- ignorable and so massively obvious that people in the business, users--forget about the men behind the machines--users really began to understand that "God, the real potential for these things is massive, the effect they are going to have on all aspects of business and therefore all aspects of everything we do." I talk about this like it was the stone ages. Hell, even then probably it touched all of our lives. Even then, all the credit card stuff was starting and all the automatic processing of a lot of things.

Here is another thing that might be useful with you, useful for you, that I can talk about a little bit that you might try out on other people. Because I think I can classify three different terrifically dominant, pervasive concerns that troubled people about the computer industry, generally. And I can almost root these into three time frames. In the fifties it was automation and no employment. Computers are going to put people out of work. The more these things become accepted and used by business and industry, in twenty years you are going to have buildings full of machines and people on breadlines. And that was really a massively written-up concern that appeared everywhere. And they were worried about automation, unemployment, machines displacing people.

MAPSTONE:

Dark visions. Yes.

LANZAROTTA:

There were even cartoons of people advancing on computer rooms with hoes and rakes and shovels ready to smash the computer. Then I think somewhere around the very end of the fifties and the very early sixties the whole area of social responsibility of computer people and computers and "what are we doing with these machines?" And, "what effect are they going to have on our society." And "are they a tool for good or evil?" And "let's stop thinking about these machines as scientific machines or business machines and let's start thinking about them in terms of this all pervasive influence they are having on our lives" kind of thing. And that took the form of "don't fold, spindle and mutilate me, because I am not a punched card that can be dealt with in that way." And there is some of that even today.

But, it was really the kind of thing you talked about at Joint Computer Conferences in the early sixties. And the kind of thing you ran forms and symposia about. And Paul Amour ran several symposia of Social Implications of Computers. "What are they going to do to us? And what are we going to do to them? And who is in charge around here?" kind of thing. And then I guess, I think, that in the late sixties and up to the present day and including the present day, one aspect of the social implications, the concern about social implications, split off and has become, I feel, the predominant concern about computers and computing in our society, and that is privacy. "Who is going to control"--not "who is going to control," pardon me, "who knows what about me and what the hell can I do about it? Who has got the data bank and what is in the data bank and how do I know what is in there? And don't I have a right to know? And, in fact, don't I have a right to have something to say about what they are doing with that information? How are we going to restrict the use of information, either by government or by anybody who chooses to try to get to it and build a dossier from it?" And that is a very valid concern. It is part of the history and current problems, I think, surrounding the industry. People, you know, you talk about people back then, people back when I first got started in the industry, and they were pretty naive. And what they knew about computers: giant brains, buzzed and blinked. Some publication actually started the story of the giant brains that buzz and blink, or something. I think it is fair to say that the general public, whoever that is, but the people who think and worry about things and who don't know a damn thing about computers and electronics, sure as hell understand that problem.

MAPSTONE:

What is really interesting is how far back that fear went. I'm not sure it came through science fiction writing. But, you know you have got someone like Chaplin, Making Modern Times. And, really that was a tremendous statement of just exactly where we are today. Well, not exactly where, but it was automation and so it was the late fifties and sixties. But the sort of infringement in that of because one is automated, one also loses control of one's self and therefore one's privacy. And it seems that there was from the unwashed public, there was some kind of fear that they saw. And it was only the computer people who got absolutely wrapped up in making these damn machines and caught up in the technology. But is happened in other things.

LANZAROTTA:

Caught up in the technology and refining that technology and improving it and increasing the capability and making, devising vastly larger, almost limitless now, memories. The capacity to store vast amounts of information and access that is incredibly fast and in great detail. And I don't know what the implication is of that because, what should they have been doing? Should they have been worrying about that--get back to that old saw of the mid-sixties when the privacy issue first started to surface in '64, '65, '66, when computer manufacturers began trying to liken computers to automobiles? "We just make them; we don't tell you how to drive them. We make the computer; we can't govern how they are used. It is not our responsibility." Well, first of all, is that a fair analogy.

[Telephone rings. Recorder off]

. ... The difference, of course, is that everybody understands about cars. You know that if you push the pedal it is going to go fast and if you don't push the pedal, it won't go so fast. Computers ... . "Well, yes, I have got this form to fill out and I filled it out. Yes, I understand that is how my bills come in. Well, yes the hospital did ask me a lot of odd questions, but I guess I didn't think much about it. I wonder why the hell in the bank they wanted to know about the medical history of my family, not my family, but my brother's and sister's. I wonder why that is pertinent." And then it suddenly begins to dawn on people that they must be doing something with that information. I just think it is terrifically unfair. I don't even know where I am headed now. I guess I was talking about those three areas—

MAPSTONE:

We were talking about those three areas which are really good. Especially because I had wanted to get into the social responsibility, because I had thought that it had started to appear in the late fifties and sixties, and apparently it did.

LANZAROTTA:

I'll tell you. It really didn't appear in the late fifties, Bobbi. And it didn't even appear in the early sixties. Where I started to--oh, social responsibility, okay, I was thinking privacy--social responsibility yes. The early sixties. Nobody cared a damn about it in the late fifties. But if there were people talking about it they were really very few in numbers and probably classified as kooky. I don't think anybody started to take them seriously until '62, '63. What does it really mean to our society to have all these things around and what are they going to end up dong to us? The privacy thing, though, I can really pretty definitely pinpoint for you, and it was late '64, '65 that that really began to surface. And I wish to hell that I were more dishonest than because I had an assignment in 1965 or '66 to do a white paper on computers and privacy, and specifically on the confidentiality of information as far as IBM's ability to protect information. I was given that assignment by Dean McKay, who was Vice President of Communications for IBM at that time.

And I spent several weeks on it. I went down to Washington and talked to a number of people in our federal agencies about privacy and I talked to people in White Plains, and I put together a White Paper. And I think I came out with a pretty obvious conclusion which was, "yea, we've got a problem. But outside of the security agencies, where they have computers in lead rooms and they have locks and keys on some terminals, things like that, that according to the information that I have gathered, there isn't a computer program that can't be broken by a clever programmer." And what have we been reading in recent years about computer embezzlement, guys who've really figured it out and can really make off with a hell of a lot of money if they know how. And that's the least of it. If you stop to think about what they can do to individuals. If a malevolent organization, if they ever automate the Mafia, you know, we are all in trouble. The potential for blackmail or worse is tremendous.

MAPSTONE:

Terrible. On such a very simple scale, my ex-boss had a terminal in his office, and his fourteen year old son who is a sort of computer whiz type, one day his terminal started to click. His son had found a way to get in on his terminal. There was something in the message. It was really incredible. You talked about Don Prell and Benson Lerner.

LANZAROTTA:

L-E-R-N-E-R, Benson Lerner Corporation.

MAPSTONE:

Okay, that is a corporation I've had no contact with. I don't know if I should have any contact with it.

LANZAROTTA:

I don't think they exist anymore.

MAPSTONE:

Should I be in touch with Don Prell? Is he someone; is he someone I should put on this significant list?

LANZAROTTA:

Well, let me put it this way. I would not classify Don, as you will see if you ever meet him, as a computer specialist per se. Prell is one of these super bright individuals who, among other things, has a knack for making money, but, put that aside. He is just one of these incredible individuals who, I guess you could say, basically, at least up to five, six, seven, eight years ago was an electronics kind of guy. Benson Lerner Corporation made plotters. Okay. It was in Santa Monica. And they made other electronic

instrumentation. And Prell was a very knowledgeable technologist, but he was also a kind of a financial man of all seasons. I think he is associated with Union Bank now, down in L.A. somewhere. And if you are really interested, if you are interested from the standpoint of learning more about the early days of Datamation or just getting his observations in the industry. Fascinating guy. He is a kind of serious, well-organized, successful Herb Grosch. Okay?

MAPSTONE:

[Chuckle].

LANZAROTTA:

He has got that kind of personality. He is kind of a dynamic guy that can talk about damn near anything and is erudite, sophisticated, and knowledgeable, smart as hell, and was around when a lot of these things were going on. I don't know. I can't really tell you that it would be the greatest interview you could possibly have. I can almost guarantee you; it will not be a waste of time. He is also a very--I haven't seen Don for years--a very busy guy. You would probably have to go down there and talk to him. I don't know. I would be willing to try to call him and set it up for you, if you'd like me to. Let me sit back and think a minute. I think, on balance, I don't know what it is you are after, or what it is you really, ultimately want to produce. The definitive document that kind of says that here is where the industry came from and where we are now?

MAPSTONE:

No. We are not into a definitive document. What we want to do is present to anybody, the future, the people who, someone who wants to come and look at the industry--how did it happen, what were the influences--who were the people?

LANZAROTTA:

Yes. He would be great. Let me retract what I said. He would be a great interview. That son of a gun was around when a lot of things were happening out here. The Bendixes, the Packard Bells, the aerospace soar and then plunge, in terms of computing I'm talking about now. The North Americans, the Douglasses, the computing people that made it all tick. He knew Max, he knew Bernard Benson, he knew ...

MAPSTONE:

But, he wasn't partial, like partial, I talked earlier about, you know the people who have built a specific computer or a specific technology and felt that was the way to go.

LANZAROTTA:

More an observer of the scene.

MAPSTONE:

Okay!

LANZAROTTA:

A participant, but an observer. A participant in whatever line of work they were in. And a guy who was obviously capable of looking at a neophyte like me and kind of direct me along, producing a computer magazine.

[End of Tape]