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Chapter 15b
Idaho Falls 1978-1980

Our Return to Idaho Falls

We arrived in Seattle the first of August 1978 after two weeks of touring in Europe. We stayed with LaRue's brother Ross and family in Kent for a few days visiting and went clamming with them.

The first things we noticed was the litter and rusted out cars on the roads. We did not see such things in Switzerland.

Our first priority was to buy a car. I was looking for something large and a 4x4 for camping and skiing. I found a slightly used 1978 Chevrolet Suburban in north Seattle for $8,000. It was an ugly brown and tan but that was ok. It was huge after our little Audi 80 sedan in Switzerland.

We couldn't stay too long as a Gibbs Family reunion was being held at Bear Lake in Northern Utah in a few days. We proceeded across Washington to visit Tom and Beverly in Sandpoint, Idaho, and collect our mail that had been forwarded to them.

CB radio was the big new thing and Tom helped me install one in the Suburban. Then it was on to Salmon to see Mom and Dad at the Motel Deluxe. From there it was on to Idaho Falls to check on the house and pick up Kathleen and Brian for the reunion.

While in Idaho Falls we discovered our furniture was held up due to a dock strike on the east coast. No telling when it would arrive in Idaho Falls. I had two weeks of travel expenses covered by Control Data and another two weeks expense covered by EG&G for relocation. We would be ok for a month or so.

LaRue's brother, LeGrande, was working on a ranch near Dell, Montana. We made a trip up to get him and go to Bear Lake for the reunion. The whole Gibbs clan was at the reunion. It was a great get together.

We returned to Idaho Falls and got a large suite with a kitchenette in the Driftwood

Inn next to the Westbank Hotel. Our suite on the 2nd floor overlooked the river and the falls. Watching NFL exhibition games on TV was really a treat.

My termination package from Control Data arrived in the mail . I was required to sign papers and return them. I was surprised to see that Bob Hayden had entered that I was not eligible for rehire. That was fine with me.

From hero to goat in less than two years. I briefly thought about challenging it in Minneapolis and get even with Bob Hayden and Walt Chase. It was not worth the effort. The direction Control Data was going was something I wanted no part of.

I began working for EG&G in mid August. My job was to be liaison between the LOFT Reactor Program and the computer center.

The computer center had become overoaded with personnel and oblivious to customer service. The cost of using the Cyber 76 had continually gotten higher. The LOFT program was being severely impacted. My job was to fix the problem.

Since we had no furniture and couldn't move into our house we worked evenings and weekends washing walls, painting, and wall papering. New carpets were installed on the main floor. We gave the house a good overhaul.

Early September we received word that our furniture had arrived by ship in San Francisco and was on its way to Idaho Falls. We were moved in by mid September and everything was in excellent condition.

Our packers had done a great job in Switzerland. The Allied moving company in Idaho Falls unpacked us. They were the same father and son team that packed us for the move to Switzerland. It was not the last we would see of them.

We were barely in the house and unpacked and it was time to get Kathleen moved to attend Boise State. We loaded her stuff into the Suburban and went to Redfish Lake and rented a cabin. We had missed Redfish Lake and wanted to spend a night there. We continued to Boise the next day going out through Lowman and Idaho City.

My New Job with EG&G, Idaho

I was on the job a short time when the computer center manager, Orlando Lopez, came to me asking for help. He would like me working for him and help straighten

things out between the computer center and the user community.

I was obligated for one year with the LOFT Program. I talked to my manager, George Schultz, and he agreed that I could probably be more effective in the computer center. He talked to senior management and I was transferred. I was back in the frying pan of the computer center.

Turmoil in the Computer Center

It was a Friday afternoon and I heard loud talking and commotion in the hallway. Orlando Lopez had just been terminated and his managers under him demoted.

Two engineers, Jim Zane, and his right hand man, Dick French, were in the building and now in charge. They were both from the engineering side of the house. I didn't know either one. Those in the know said they were tough and ruthless. I was not sure I wanted to know them.

It wasn't long until I was called in and told that I would report to Dick French. He would be over operations and report to Jim Zane.

My old friend Dick Gipson, the manager of the systems programming group for several years, took it very hard. When Jim Zane called him in and told him he was demoted, he kicked Jim on the foot. Jim called security and had him hauled off for mental evaluation. It was a wild Friday afternoon.

Dick Gipson was given two weeks off without pay and returned as a non-manager.

New Management and My Computer Upgrade Plan

A new manager, Bob Cox, from Kaman Nuclear Science in Denver was hired to manage the systems programming group and advanced planning.

Bob had a good record of managing a computer center with Control Data computers and I liked him. I would report to him and have the advanced planning function. He didn't believe in maintaining the status quo and was receptive to my ideas about how we should proceed in the future.

We were struggling with the ageing Cyber 76 and frontend 173 that I installed years before.

The system did not have interactive capability and the user community was demanding it. This was the same problem CERN was facing when I was there. It did not turn out well for Control Data. There were too many options available with low cost engineering workstations, and the emerging personal computer.

I now had management that would listen to me. I believed in Plan B that I introduced at CERN but was rebuffed by my management.

The option to upgrade a Cyber 76 so that it could support interactive computing had recently been listed in the Control Data pricing manual for $300,000. It was just what we needed.

There was no money in the budget for an upgrade. Any request for funding for computer acquisitions had to be in the DOE five-year plan for automatic data processing equipment (computers). I worked it anyway.

I presented Plan B to Bob Cox. He liked it and arranged a meeting for me to present it to Jim Zane. We walked into his office and Jim said, "What are you two crazies up to now?" We took it as an offhanded compliment.

I gave my presentation and then it was, "ok, now get out of my office." Apparently, I was to continue working it.

My old friend, Chris Christofferson, was still the salesman for Control Data in Idaho Falls. I told him what I was thinking.

Chris got back to me and told me the option couldn't be applied to a system in the field. However, there was nothing in the pricing manual that said that. Control Data would be in a bind with the government if they could not deliver what we ordered.

I saw the possibility of CDC having to trade for a new Cyber 176 if we ordered the upgrade.

Chris was desperate for a sale of any kind. Also, Control Data as they were not selling computers. Cray Research had taken over the supercomputer market, and low-cost engineering workstations were proliferating as well.

We decided to work the $300,000 upgrade. Chris floated it up through his management chain. It came back that we should place the order and see what

happens. I went back through my management chain and got their backing. Now we had to convince DOE for funding out of cycle, which is nearly impossible.

Jim Zane was a bulldog. He had a good working relationship with the acting director, Bob Tiller, of the Idaho Falls DOE office. He was a bulldog also and was looking for a success story, being he was the acting Director.

They both wore cowboy boots and were a bit of a cowboy. I was told to put a presentation together and we would go to DOE Headquarters in Washington DC.

I had done that in 1975 to support EG&G trying to sole source a CDC 7600. We got nowhere and not treated well. I dreaded the upcoming meeting.

I put together a presentation and ran through a couple of dry runs to fine tune it. Then Bob Cox, Jim Zane, myself, and Bob Tiller flew to Washington DC.

I wondered at the time why Tom Rhodes, who was our oversight manager at the DOE, Idaho Operations Office was not with us. Anything computer related went through him. I later found out he was not included because he was against it. It was not in the five year plan.

DOE Headquarters was in Gaithersburg, Maryland and we booked a hotel nearby.

The next morning we walked into the conference room and there was a room full of people. It was far beyond my expectation. I saw the DOE Headquarters computer planning and budget people. I knew them and they had a serious look.

I was nervous when it came time for me to give the presentation. I launched into what this would do for computing at the INEL and supporting the DOE mission.

 I had a good flow going and was enjoying it. After about 15 minutes Jim Zane signaled me to stop.

He announced, "Well folks that concludes what we have to say".   A few questions were asked and the meeting was over. On the way out Jim said, "You had it sold, so it was time to shut up and sit down".   I didn't know it was sold.

 I now wonder if they already had agreement and we were just jumping through hoops for show.

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(Note: Bob Tiller was the acting manager for DOE Idaho <u>and also the DOE Idaho</u>
<u>*manager for the LOFT Program, which was the most important program at the*</u>
<u>*INEL.*</u> *He had a vested interest.*

*It probably helped that I was hired into the LOFT Program when I came back
from Switzerland. Also, Jim Zane and Dick French had a close relationship with
Tiller as they had been engineers supporting LOFT.)*
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We returned to the hotel and Bob Tiller had a bottle of booze in his room. He said
we will have a drink and celebrate. Bob and Jim Zane considered our upgrade
proposal a done deal.

We went to dinner that evening and more drinks into the night. I was hearing
things discussed about INEL politics and people that I should not be hearing. I
eventually bowed out and they kept going.

We returned to Idaho Falls and I was tasked to write the justification for a sole
source procurement. Then work with purchasing to issue a purchase order to
Control Data.

Chris was clued in that if the upgrade could not be installed in the field for
$300,000 we wanted an exchange of our Cyber 76 for a new Cyber 176.

It took time, but Control Data agreed to the exchange. We would be one of the first
Cyber 176 installations.

We would also be the first with a new version of the operating system that would
run on a dual system with full interactive capability for the users. It had been
tested in the Control Data manufacturing facility but never utilized in full
production at a customer site. The operating system that was utilized on the
existing Cyber 73 had the same look and feel as the new system but there was
massive new capability to operate as a dual system with the new Cyber 176.

The operating system that the users had been using on our outdated Cyber 76
would be replaced with the new interactive operating system on the new Cyber
176. It would have a totally different look and feel for the user. It had never been
tested in a user production environment.

We had a very meager and inexperienced systems programming staff. It was a scary situation and I owned it.

My Promotion

My manager, Bob Cox, was not happy living in Idaho Falls. He gave notice and moved back to Denver. That left systems programming and advanced planning with no manager.

I was asked to take the job but had no desire to become a manager. Jim Zane and Dick French kept up the pressure until I finally accepted.

I had a staff of 8 people consisting of two systems programmers for the IBM business computer, and two systems programmers for the Control Data scientific computers maintaining two different operating systems. I also had four hardware maintenance people for small computers around the site.

I called a staff meeting to discuss goals and expectations. Morale was low after the purge of the computer center management and hardnosed new management in place.

My people were accustomed to working in a country club atmosphere and were not happy. They proceeded to tell me how to do business. They would take the system from 6-9 am the mornings they needed test time for fixes.

I laid down the new rules. Test time would be no later than 4-7 am and not impact the user community. In addition, changes would not be made to the operating system without extensive testing, review, and authorization by me. System stability had been a major issue and we needed to fix it.

The two systems programmers for the Control Data system were greatly upset about the new rules and let me know it. They threatened to go elsewhere. I did nothing to discourage them.

I took the threat seriously and began looking for replacements. A tried and true systems programmer on the IBM system, Don Jones, had been coming over to observe what was going on with the Control Data computers.

I asked him to switch over and he accepted. A young engineer, Gerald Litteer, wanted to be a systems programmer and asked for a job. His management

informed me he was hard to control and advised against it. However, he was bright and eager, so I went ahead with the transfer. Both turned out to be excellent.

Bill Gray was still based in Idaho Falls with Control Data, and they were going to transfer him elsewhere. I seized the opportunity to contract for his services on a part time basis to keep him in Idaho Falls. I needed him to work with Don Jones and Gerald Litteer and get them up to speed.

Jones and Litteer learned the system quickly. They became as good as you could find anywhere. My two unhappy people found other jobs. I was glad to see them go. My little group became close, loyal, and dedicated.

It was late spring 1979 and the new computer would be installed over the Labor Day holiday. We would shut down the computers Friday afternoon and would have to be up and running Tuesday morning.

A Control Data employee, Bob Scott, became aware of what was going on in Idaho Falls. He had worked at the INEL after college for a few years. He wanted more excitement so joined Control Data where his job was to plan facility upgrades and install Control Data computers in Europe. He had done that for about 10 years and would like to come back. He was a hippy type, but would be a valuable addition.

He was hired and arrived in Idaho Falls with a new wife, Denise, from Switzerland. He was driving an old Dodge van with a crescent moon window in the back.

There was not enough space, electrical capacity, or cooling capacity to install the new Cyber 176 next to the old Cyber 76 and then switch over at our leisure. The Cyber 76 would have to be moved out and the Cyber 176 installed. These were big mainframes. Each had a footprint of about 20x20 feet with different size and shaped modules.

The raised floor cutouts for electrical cables, signal cables, and air conditioning would have to be changed before the Cyber 176 could be put in place. To top it all off it had to done in three days.

 A normal installation was around 2 weeks. We had to do it over a long weekend.

Control Data had an excellent facility engineering department. Bob Scott worked with them preplanning and orchestrating an installation plan. Control Data would

also bring a highly experienced installation team.

We had about sixty days to get ready. I felt we were up to the task. Jim Zane demanded a flawless cutover and I agreed to it. Jim said heads would roll (mine) if it didn't work.

I needed to beef up our systems programming staff with an expert in Control Data computers, communications, and interactive computing. I talked to an old acquaintance in Livermore who was now working at Princeton to see if he was interested. He wasn't but recommended Gary McConnell who was at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania.

 I called Gary and he was hesitant to leave Lehigh. However, he loved to ski and owned a condo in Jackson Hole, so he would come for an interview.

Gary arrived and we were in my office when I got word that the system had crashed, and critical files were lost. This was serious. My two new systems people needed guidance. I left Gary in the care of my secretary. It was chaos all day until we got files restored and the system running again.

When I got back to Gary he was less than impressed with his interview and our operation. He would think about it for a while.

Weeks went by before he called and said he was ready to move to Idaho Falls. He could not be here in time for the arrival of the new computer. At least he had accepted the offer.

Installing the New Computer

I had been counting on having Bill Gray on contract to help Jones and Litteer with getting the new system up and running. About a week before installation Bill had family matters to attend to in Minnesota and would not be available. So, it was up to my rookie crew and me.

The refrigerated electronics moving van rolled in the Friday morning before the Labor Day weekend. We shut down the system in the afternoon and work began around the clock.

 Doors were too small and moving space limited. Our facilities people had previously cut a huge opening in the cinder block building and constructed a

temporary loading dock. It made it easy to move the old computer out and the new one in.

Then it was miles of underfloor wiring and cables to hookup equipment before the engineers could begin system checkout. The Control Data team was excellent. By late Monday morning the system was checked out and turned over to me.

It would require several hours to build the operating system to match our configuration and requirements. My job was to keep things organized and hang the proper magnetic tape on a tape drive in the order they were required.

By late Monday evening we had the operating system generated. It was time for the smoke test. There was no smoke, no flashing lights, and no running computer.

We went back and checked everything to no avail. Around 3am I decided to go home for some sleep and come in and face the music. I sent Gerald Litteer home also as we might have a long day ahead. Don Jones said he would sleep for a while on the floor as he lived halfway to Blackfoot.

I went back to the computer center around 7am dreading to face the music and the consequences. I walked into the computer room and Don Jones was sitting in front of the console, and lights were flashing.

The system was live and there were users doing things. I was dumfounded.

Don said he slept for an hour then decided to recheck the engineering deadstart (bootup) panel. It consisted of several columns and rows of switches. The engineers would set them for their tests and when they were done they would reset them for loading the operating system from magnetic tape. The switches toggled up and down. It was how the system got basic information for starting up.

There were around 100 switches and he found one in the wrong position. Don flipped the switch, and the system booted up and was live. Wow, what a relief. We had checked the switches, but somehow in our hurry, and being tired, missed it.

It was a happy bunch of people around the computer center that day. We had pulled off what most thought was impossible. I still had a job.

The new computer transformed computing in a major way and greatly increased user productivity and satisfaction.

(Background information--The old system was a batch processing system. The user submitted their work at the front desk where it was read into the Cyber 73 front end computer. It would go into a queue and then be transmitted to the Cyber 76. When the Cyber 76 finished the job the output was sent back to the Cyber 73 where it was printed. The user then went through the computer listing and did whatever they had do. With the new system the user sat at their desktop terminal where they could prepare and submit their job to either the Cyber 73 for small non compute intensive work or to the new Cyber 176 for number crunching. The output then went directly back to the user at their terminal. It was a great improvement.

This was before wireless communication and wifi. The terminals had to be connected by coax cable to the communications controller in the computer room. This in itself was a huge task and one of the reasons I hired Gary McConnell was to orchestrate it.)

Moving On and Up

EG&G went through a major reorganization in early 1980. Jim Zane was recognized for excellent work straightening out the computer center. He was promoted to be one of four Associate General Managers reporting to the General Manager. He would be over all INEL site services.

(Note* Jim Zane would eventually be promoted to General Manager of EG&G, Idaho.

Dick French would report to Jim Zane as the Division manager over the computer center and software development for all specialized small computers supporting research programs. This included the new hot item which was personal computers (PC's). His approval was required to get a PC. They were generally only approved for secretaries for word processing.

I replaced Dick French as Branch Manager of the computer center and now had about 80 people reporting to me. I moved into the corner office where my old friend, Orlando Lopez, sat when he was fired. I was now in the hot seat and did not really want it.

Our Life Back in Idaho Falls 1978-1980

It was good to be back in Idaho Falls and our home on 245 Ronglyn Avenue that we liked so well. We joined the Idaho Falls Ski Club and bought season passes at Kelly Canyon just out of Idaho Falls. We made sure we got our money's worth night skiing and weekends.

The ski club organized out of town ski trips, had great parties, and sponsored the annual ski swap. The Suburban was the perfect vehicle for loading up and going skiing and then camping in the summer.

Brian graduated from Idaho Falls High School in May, 1979. He had a part time job in a men's clothing store and bought a used Chevelle Malibu two door hardtop. He would be going to Boise State in the fall.

With two going to college LaRue went to work for Idaho National Bank on First Street as a teller.

We needed a 2nd car, so I found a used 1978 Dodge Colt (made by Mitsubishi) at Hertz. It saw us and Julie through high school, BYU, her getting married, and later move to Logan. It was the best little car we ever owned.

We planned to do a lot of tent camping and still had the large plywood box that I built in Las Vegas in 1965. It fit on the roof rack of our station wagons, held a lot of camping gear, and was weather proof. We didn't need it anymore with the large capacity of the Suburban. I tore it apart and used the plywood to make two camp kitchen boxes to hold our kitchen supplies and groceries. Each was about 24 inches wide by 30 inches tall and about 20 inches deep. The front closure was hinged at the bottom and when unlatched at the top lowered down for a formica surface to prepare food on. Sitting on a picnic table or on the lowered tailgate of the Surburban they made a nice organized camp kitchen. We used them until we got a travel trailer.

Our first trip with the camp kitchen boxes was Memorial Day weekend in 1979. We met Mom and Dad with their camper and Roy and Lois with their small motorhome up Morse Creek Canyon east of May, Idaho. Garry and Bonnie and girls came the next day pulling their Security trailer. Our camp was a small campground up the canyon where my friend Richard and I once camped. Richard and I had also camped further up the canyon and a mountain lion approached us and we saw bear tracks. It was there we lost the car keys and had to walk to May.

The fourth of July weekend we decided to go to the upper Pahsimeroi. It is where I camped with my folks when I was a kid.

LaRue's brother Val was the Challis National Forest ranger based in Challis. We would be in his territory, so I checked with him about the roads, trails, and the lakes. I also told him we would be at the head of the Pahsimeroi the 4th of July weekend.

Ron Raymond. who worked in the computer center, and his girlfriend were invited as well as Bob Scott and Denise. After work we caravanned by way of Mackay, over Double Springs Pass, and over Horse Heaven Hills to Mahogany Creek where the going got tough.

It took about 2 hours from there to bump and grind the last 8 miles. We got there about midnight and to my relief had the area to ourselves. It was the end of the road with no facilities. The water source was the creek which was also good fishing. It was a beautiful place to camp.

There were two high mountain lakes that we planned to hike to and fish. The first hike was to Marion Lake which was up the right fork of the creek towards the base of Mt. Borah. It was only a little over 2 miles, but steep and tough the last half mile. It was a beautiful lake with lots of fish, but they were not biting on anything we offered.

We had not planned fish for dinner and brought all we needed for a great dinner around the campfire.

The next day we took the trail up the fork that went south until we would turn west and on up to Pass Lake. The lake was between Leatherman Peak and Mt. Borah.

This hike was a long gradual hike of over 5 miles with a tough mile at the end.

 I remember sitting on a high rock looking down. Llarge fish were swimming by. They wouldn't even look at my hook. I went back to where the others were fishing and there was a local rancher that arrived on horseback to fish. I remarked that the fish ignore everything. He took a big breath and drawled, " b'out the only thing that works up here is a Dupont spinner". It took me a minute to realize he was talking about dynamite.

We headed down the trail to return to camp. We were on the trail descending East.

Looking down I saw two people coming up the trail from the South before it made the bend towards us. I decided we should bushwhack across the bend. It would shorten our hike and we would bypass the people coming up. So, we cut across and picked up the trail.

I was surprised to see two people running down the trail towards us. To our surprise it was LaRue's brother Val and sister-in-law Loi. They had seen what we were doing and turned around.

We suspected something had to be wrong. Val told LaRue their father had died of a heart attack that morning. They knew we were up here and had followed our tracks.

We returned to camp and they sat and visited for a while before returning to Challis.

 We decided to spend the night and pack up early to return to Idaho Falls and then to Providence, Utah for the funeral. Before we departed we vowed to return next year.

When we got to Utah for the funeral Val and Loi had quite a story. When they left our campsite to return to Challis they had a mishap. Val was driving fast and hit a big rock and broke a tie rod. They were a long ways from nowhere and nobody came along. They decided to walk to a remote ranch in the distance and get help. Nobody was home. They waited for someone to show, and they never came. Val looked in a car in front of the ranch house and the keys were in it. They decided to leave a note and borrow the car.

Down the road they met the rancher who thought they were stealing his car. It was a difficult situation until Val explained things. Finally the rancher recognized him as the forest ranger in Challis. They continued home in the borrowed car and retrieved their car the next day.

Val hinted that we should pay for the repairs. Hey, it wasn't our problem that you were driving too fast and wrecked.

1980

The new employee, Gary McConnell, was anxious to get out in the wilds,

experience the country we were talking about, and fish. He was single and had taken up with Loretta who worked in the computer center and was divorced. She had a teenage daughter and teenage son.

We invited them for this years 4th of July trek to the upper Pahsimeroi along with the Scotts, Ron Raymond, and his girlfriend.

 I was worried about Gary's car that was a small under powered 4 cylinder Fiat station wagon. He thought it could handle the bad roads as it had good road clearance. A problem was how to haul the camping gear for four people. He built a platform that hung on the back bumpe . He had bungee cords and straps all over to attach the platform and secure the gear. The ugly pea green Fiat with all that stuff on the back platform was a sight to behold.

We got away from work early as it was raining. I was afraid the road would not be passable. We also wanted to get there and secure the camping area at the end of the road.

The trip went well until we got to Mahogany Creek and the start of the really bad road. The first bad spot was a long incline that was wet and muddy. The Fiat couldn't make it. The heavy load on the back made the front steering light and barely steerable on the muddy incline. It also lost traction being front wheel drive.

We were in the lead and backed up. I planned on hooking on with the Suburban, but Gary said he would turn around and back up the hill. It worked and we continued on.

 It was now dark and still raining. I was in the lead and we were communicating by CB radio to warn those behind of detours, bad rocks, holes, and such.

 We turned a corner and entered a narrow ravine just wide enough for one vehicle. There was a dead cow in the middle of the ravine. There was no way to get around it. The others had not turned up the ravine yet, so I got on the CB and told them to stop in case I had to back out.

I got out to survey the problem. It was a big cow that was stiff and laying on its side. I figured I could grab a front leg and a hind leg and roll it over to get enough clearance to drive by. I gave it a try and slipped in the mud and manure and landed on the cow. Julie was on the CB describing the scene to those behind us with, "Dad slipped on some stuff and landed on the cow". I got off the cow and tried it

again avoiding the slippery stuff.

I got the cow pinned to the side of the ravine, but it rolled back into the road. I got some rocks ready and when I got it pinned again I kicked rocks in to hold it. It worked and we had just enough room to get by and continue our rough journey. The guys following us got a good laugh about me landing on the cow.

It was around midnight when we reached our destination at the end of the road. We were happy to see nobody there. We got a fire going and set up our tents and enjoyed a beer in the rain. We agreed that nobody in their right mind would have come up here on that road with the rain coming down.

We did the hikes to the two lakes and had a great camping trip. We planned to return in 1981. Meanwhile it was back to the grind.

High Stress Job Decisions

Being a manager reporting to Dick French and Jim Zane was high stress. It was always, "You are overstaffed ". Then it would be, "Hire more minorities", or "You need more females in supervisor positions". It was a meat grinder. Then came the order to reduce staff by 10%. Terminating 8 people was the toughest thing I ever had to do.

I started the process around 3pm on a Friday. I would send my secretary to get the person and bring them down the hall to my office. From there they were escorted out the front door by Human Resources for termination.

Bill Kirschner was a computer operator and one of my favorites. He soon noticed that when people were summoned to my office they never returned. My secretary said Bill would get visibly nervous when she came through the door to the computer room, and he would try to stay out of sight.

When the grim task was over I told her, "Let's have some fun with Bill", and had her go get him. He was white as a ghost when he got to my office. I told him to have a seat and let him squirm. Then, "Happy hour tonight at the Sandpiper, if you want to stop". It was cruel, but was fun with Bill as he was always quick to dish out verbal barbs. I considered it payback.

Chance Meeting with Control Data European Sales Manager

Being the manager of the computer center I went to the annual meeting of Control Data computer users in the United States. This meeting was in Minneapolis. I stayed near the airport at the Thunderbird Hotel within sight of Control Data Headquarters.

I checked in and went to the bar to relax after the flight. I walked in and saw a familiar face. It was Fred Mobbs who was over all the CDC country managers in Europe. He was Bob Hayden's boss when I was at CERN. I figured I might as well say hello as I knew him. He was cordial and asked me to sit down.

We chatted and he asked for my side of the story of what went on with Walt Chase and Bob Hayden when I was in Switzerland. I told him what happened and that I had enough. I had no option but to resign. Bob Hayden had added later that I was not eligible for rehire.

He thanked me and went on to be highly critical of Walt Chase and Bob Hayden. I could come back to Control Data anytime I wanted. It was good to hear, but I had no desire to return.

(Note* Walt Chase and Bob Hayden returned to low level jobs. I ran into Walt Chase about five years later when he was attending a sales class at ETA Systems. I was the instructor.)

Unexpected Job Opportunity

In late November 1980 I got a call from an old friend and former coworker, Carl Haberland. He was the Control Data analyst at CERN in the early 1970's. He moved to the Portland, Oregon office after I transferred to Idaho Falls. He was a good analyst and I liked him.

Carl was now working for Floating Point Systems (FPS) in Beaverton, Oregon. He was the product manager for a new computer (FPS-164) that FPS was ready to hit the market with. It was designed for scientific computing with 64-bit accuracy to compete with Control Data and Cray Research. It was also competitive in speed. The big advantage was that it was very affordable. It was in the $300k-$500k range versus millions for them.

I knew that FPS was highly regarded as the builder of 16-bit array processors utilized by the oil companies and in CAT scan equipment in the medical field. It was the size of a VHS player and cost in the range of $15,000-$20,000. FPS

owned the market and was looking to get into bigger things.

Carl called as they needed someone that knew how to talk to people in government labs and elsewhere. He thought I was the person they were looking for. He wanted me to come to Beaverton to talk about it. I told him I was just two years in a new job and not interested. Carl was relentless and I finally agreed. It was more out of curiosity about the new computer than anything.

I flew over and Carl picked me up at the Portland airport. FPS was in a new facility on Murray Blvd between the east-west freeway and the main street of Beaverton. It was located on a large wooded area with nothing around it but trees. On the other side of Murray Blvd was a small building that was Nike World Headquarters.

We pulled into FPS and I saw an older guy with long hair sitting on the tailgate of a pickup. It was driving around while he took pictures of the building and grounds. Carl waved and said that's Norm Winningstadt, the founder, President, and CEO.

Carl went on to tell me Norm had worked at Tektronix in Portland as a design engineer. He got the idea of the array processor, so he left Tektronix and designed and built it in his garage. It was highly successful and he moved into larger facilities. Then he built this new FPS World Headquarters. The company was his family and he treated everyone as family. With success came a helicopter that he flew, and a couple of Ferrari's he drove and raced.

Carl showed me around and introduced me to Norm and several key people. He then asked me to speak to the sales and marketing staff about how I saw the potential of the FPS-164 in the high speed computer market. I envisioned the potential as huge as labs were buying engineering workstations as low cost alternatives to super computers.

Workstations were not designed for high accuracy high speed number crunching. The FPS-164 attached to one of these workstations gave them the capability of the fastest Control Data or Cray Research computer for a tenth of the cost. I found myself getting enthused about the FPS-164.

Carl had a job offer to me in a few days. The product and company was exciting. I missed the sales and marketing world and my current job was a daily grind with very high stress.

This was an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of something that could be huge. Beaverton was a nice small town and appealing. Another plus was that Max and Loa had a cabin about 30 miles towards the coast and Tillamook,

I decided to accept the offer, gave notice, and recommended Bob Scott as my replacement.

Dick French understood the lure of FPS and the new computer and wished me well. If it didn't work I could come back anytime I wanted. He would have a job for me.

End Chapter 15b