

My Personal Bio

By Louis Abeyta

My life after high school graduation began in September of 1957 when I began my undergraduate college studies at New Mexico Highlands University. Like so many of us I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. Because of the encouragement and mentoring I received from our dearly departed, Miss Bertha Lee Parker, I decided to major in Mathematics. Along the way I thought about getting a law degree following my undergraduate work so I ended up enrolling in the speech and public speaking curriculum as part of that preparation. And surprise, surprise I ended up graduating in June of 1961 with a double major, one in Mathematics and one in Public Speaking. So following graduation came the moment of truth. Did I want to pursue a career in the legal profession or one where I could use my math background? Well, I didn't exactly flip a coin to decide but I did realize there were probably a lot fewer jokes leveled at Mathematicians than Lawyers so I opted for the former. (BTW, do you know how many lawyers.....(-))

Back in the late 50's and early 60's computers were not found anywhere except in large government agencies and mainly in the DOD. Computer Science degrees at universities as we know them today were non-existent. The closest thing any of us had to automation was the slide rule. Today when you mention the slide rule to your grand kids they think you're talking about what baseball coaches teach in little league. When these large organizations recruited for computer programmers at universities they mainly sought out students with Math degrees. So guess where I ended up going.

Not wanting to be a full time student following completion of my undergraduate work, I applied for and was hired by a naval research facility to do computer programming. The facility is located just outside Washington, D.C. and has changed names several times over the years. It was first known as the David Taylor Model Basin then it changed to Naval Ship Research and Development Center and today is known as the Carderock Division of the Naval Surface Weapons Center. That assignment was my first exposure to computers and thus began my love affair with computers that's still alive and well today. The first computer I ever worked on was known as the **Univac I**. My son is now very fond of reminding me that this computer is now on display at the Smithsonian Institute. Your notebook computer today is hundreds of times more powerful and costs a teeny weenie fraction of the price of those early behemoths.

While living in the DC area, I took the opportunity to enroll in the master's program in Mathematics at American University. It turned out to be very convenient because some of the classes were here held right at the naval research facility where I worked and taught by research scientists (mainly German) working at the lab. Eventually though I had to brave the DC traffic for classes taught only on campus.

Before continuing I have to say word or two about my military service obligation. In September of 1961 shortly after the Berlin Wall went up, the Selective Service came calling needing my "services". Since I was working for an arm of the DOD, my department manager applied for and I was granted a deferment on the basis of the work I was doing at the naval research facility.

Overall it was a great career enhancing experience and educational opportunity but eventually I got home sick and longed to be back in the "red or green?" state, our beloved New Mexico. So I went from working for the Navy in the DC area to working for the Army and Air Force at the White Sands Missile Range affectionately known as WSMR. Actually it was for a contractor doing work for the Army and Air Force at WSMR. The name of the contractor was, appropriately enough, Computing and Software. The work involved developing computer programs to analyze test data from the various missile tests conducted at WSMR which included ICBM's. A standing joke while I was there was that we should consult with the Eskimos. They had ICBM's long before WSMR

even came into being. (-)) Computing and Software had their offices located at Holloman AFB so Alamogordo was our residence until the late 60's.

In the summer of 1967 I went to work directly for a computer manufacturer by the name of Control Data Corporation. The company was started by several engineers from Remington Rand one of which was the late and legendary Seymour Cray of super computer fame. Seymour Cray was to super computers what Bill Gates is to personal computers today. My first assignment was as the on-site support analyst for the CDC 6600 super computer at the Air Force Weapons Lab (AFWL) at Kirtland Air Force Base.

Having spent the first 10 years of my career in defense related work with the Navy, Army, and Air Force, I decided it was time to move on to other industries in the private sector. In the early 70's computers were still out reach for most businesses. To fill that need, computer companies set up big data centers at strategic locations around the country. Businesses, both large and small, could tap into large computer resources over telephone lines and pay only for resources used. Control Data set up one such network called Cybernet with centers located in New York, Houston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. Control Data's headquarters were located in Minneapolis so I got to experience the "lovely" weather in the winter time and the giant sized mosquitoes in the summer.

My assignment in Cybernet took me around the country working with various industries including mining, banking, utilities, engineering consulting firms, and state and local governments. During the late 70's we began to see the emergence of the mini-computer followed closely by the personal computer. And as some of you know the mini and personal computer pretty much put the mainframe and super computer out of business. And they also put me out of the business of working for Control Data.

In 1992 following a rewarding and exciting career with Control Data I decided to go where the computer industry was going – software development. Computer hardware of all descriptions had become a commodity. Consulting and software development was where the action shifted to. So in April of 1992 I began my third career with Sandia National Laboratories, AKA, SNL and not to be confused with Saturday Night Live. And to paraphrase Paul Harvey, that was the "rest of the story".

And so what about retirement you might ask. Well, I do think about it once in a while. But at the moment I'm having too much fun to give it up. In addition to the software development work I do at SNL, I also teach a web development class at the continuing education program at the University of California, San Diego better known as UCSD. And if you'll allow me a bit of shameless self promotion, the name of the class is "Building Your Own Database Driven Web Site Using PHP and MySQL" and is run once a quarter.

Well, that wasn't really quite the rest of the story because I saved the best for last, namely my family and personal life. My wife and I have been married for 46 years. We have two lovely daughters, one son and two adorable granddaughters. My oldest daughter graduated from UNM with a Mechanical Engineering degree. She is now program director and office manager for the branch office of Martinez International in Colorado Springs. My middle daughter, the one with the two daughters, lives here in Albuquerque and is self employed. My son is now completing his dissertation for his PhD at UCSD. He is presently director of student services at UCSD and will move on to full professor later this year following completion of his dissertation.

Scroll to the next page to see a photo of my kids and grand kids.

This photo is slightly dated (about 5 years) but it's "close enough for government work". My two granddaughters are obvious from the photo. But can you identify my son, my two daughters, my daughter-in-law, and my two sons-in-law? Anyone who can correctly identify all of them will get a personally autographed copy of my "World Famous" salsa recipes at the reunion. Everyone is eligible except Patsy Johnston. Patsy can tell you why she's not eligible.

