Ron –

I have reviewed chapters 1 and 2 of The Informix Handbook and I have the
following changes and comments for you:

On page 3 is the first mention of the company starting in my garage. I never
did anything in the garage. The story of the beginnings of the company are
actually more interesting.

I received my Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from UC Berkeley in
1977. I was supposed to graduate in 1976 with a degree in Immunology, as a
pre-med, but medical schools were not going to admit me because of my
history of Hodgkin's Disease, which I was diagnosed, treated for, and cured
of in the 1974 through 1975 time fame.

My scholarships had run out at the end of my fourth year, so to switch
majors to Computer Science, I needed to make some money. I started work
while in school as a contract programmer to Bechtel Engineering, working
on a primordial database application project. During that work I realized that
custom programming was long and expensive, and as much of the solution
as possible needed to be packaged, development languages and tools needed
to be higher level and the early, rigid, data models of the databases of the
'70's needed to become more flexible.

After receiving my degree, I went to Silicon Valley looking for a job with
one of the new microcomputer companies. I thought that although the
machines were too small for multi-user DBMS software at the time, I felt
that the machines would grow to be more capable, and I thought in one of
these companies I would find the open-mindedness I needed to change how
development of data processing applications was done.

I interviewed at Apple in 1997, and this is the root of the erroneous Steve
Jobs story. I did interview with Steve Jobs, but I had problems. I did wear a
suit, because I had come straight from downtown San Francisco where I was
still consulting for Bechtel. I don't think that worked for him, culturally.
More importantly, he was looking for 6502 Assembly Language
programmers, and I didn't know that instruction set. Finally, I didn't like
low level languages at all, and my intentions of bringing thoughts regarding
business class higher level languages just didn't fit at Apple. Thus, I did not
get the job.

At another microcomputer company, however, Cromemco, they were having success selling their computers to businesses as word processor replacements. The IBM PC had not come out yet (it was five years away) and word processors were not software products, they were expensive hardware products from Wang. A microcomputer would be a cheaper word processor, and could do address management and mail/merge type applications, among others, which "closed system" word processors were slow to provide in their proprietary architecture.

I got the job at Cromemco. Laura King, who I had hired to help at Bechtel, was already there, and she had given me the lead. At Cromemco we designed what we discovered later was a relational database system, as well as a report writer and data entry facility. Cromemco wanted a multi-user operating system, in addition to their CP/M-like single user system, and I suggested licensing Unix, which Harry Garland and Roger Melen spent some time looking into. However, they had Roy Harrington write a smaller Unix clone, Cromix, instead, which ran on the Z80 eight bit processor.

I felt my DBMS products needed more than the 64K bytes of memory that the Z80 could address, so I asked Harry and Roger to allow me to start a company based on my designs. They generously licensed these designs to me, and allowed me to hire Laura. We implemented these products on 16 bit and 32 bit microprocessor based machines that ran Unix. Bill Hedge joined us to implement the Ace report writer, and later, Roy Harrington joined us to do everything correctly internally, and Bob Macdonald joined us to sell it and market it.

To start the company, my ex-girlfriend invested $20,000, in exchange for 10% of the stock. We inevitably got back together, in spite of the stress of the business, and have now been married for 18 years. The company had offices in Sunnyvale after incorporation, for our first 2 or 3 years, and then we moved to Palo Alto until, I think, 1986, and then to Menlo Park.

On page 4 you talk about a "still evolving" Unix market. It actually didn't really exist at all. The number of machines that ran the Unix operating system in the commercial environment were numbered in the dozens when we started the company. I don't mean models of machines, I mean machines. This quickly changed. However, the marketing problem that "Unix is for engineers and scientists, not businesses" persisted until the late 1980's. Until

then, DEC's VMS operating system is where companies like Oracle and Ingres got a fast start in corporate markets. We had to pioneer the OEM software business and the VAR markets, and were fortunate that these markets were available for us.

On page 4 you also talk about the first commercial product from the company being RDSQL. This is quite incorrect. I think the first thing we sent anyone in exchange for money was actually C-ISAM, which was the retrieval method that we were building for the internals of the DBMS itself. We felt Unix needed an indexed file system product anyway.

Our first DBMS system was called Marathon, but that was changed to Informix before we sold very many. It was a non-SQL relational DBMS product. It was successful, and it took a painful strategic decision to acknowledge that SQL was going to be a successful standard, and we would have to re-engineer the product. Informix-SQL was released in the 1984 to 1985 timeframe, I believe. The initials RDSQL look familiar, but I am not sure what they are associated with. It is possible that RDSQL was the name of the executable of the engine process, as opposed to the "user interface" or "front end" process, which might be a query language, a forms package, report writer or C program.

There was a table-oriented non-SQL C interface that used the data dictionary, but otherwise was like C-ISAM. This was in the non-SQL product. I can't remember if it was in the SQL product. Clearly, the SQL product needed a pre-compiler based product that provided all of the SQL syntax, and cursors, to C programmers.

Chris Maloney and I felt that C was still too low level for most programmers of data processing applications, so we designed Informix-4GL as an amalgamation (well, elegant amalgamation) of Betty Chang's Perform screen package, Roy's SQL engine and Bill's report writer, sewn together with a language that would provide powerful leverage of the data dictionary. This worked very well, and I am still very proud of that product. It allowed us to succeed when larger companies, such as Oracle, finally came to the Unix market in a serious way in the late 1980's.

Your time line on page 5 has many problems, most of which I have corrected with the discussion above. In addition, the timeline erroneously says that we merged with Innovative in 1986. Actually, we went public in

1986, did a second public offering in 1987, and I think we bought Innovative in 1988.

By the way, when we went public, our revenue was 20 million for that calendar year and we were forcasting 40 million for the next year. We had, I think, around 10 quarters of growing profit. A company with those numbers today would be worth between 400 million and 4 billion. After the successful public offering the company's total market capitalization was 54 million dollars. Somewhere in the book it says that I still owned most of the company when I left, but actually, I think I owned under 20% when it went public, and closer to 10% after the second public offering, but I was quite happy about the whole thing. A software company going public was still considered novel, and whether copyrights would be upheld, whether source code could be protected, whether a product could cloned, or be defended from clones still remained to be seen.

Hopefully, the above, combined with Laura's comments, corrects a great deal of misinformation on pages 22 and 23. On page 25, I think the dates are wrong, and the impression that I "departed to start a new company" in 1989 is incorrect. I believe it was late 1989 that I hired Phil White, and I stayed on as Chairman until 1992 or 1993. In 1990, I helped Steve Goldsworthy, who had been the Informix VP of Engineering through most of the '80's, start Vantive software, where I was on the Board of Directors and Chairman for a time. I never worked at Vantive, but I count it as one of my victories, with little right to do so. Vantive went public in 1995, and was acquired by Peoplesoft in, I believe, 1999.

My "third" company, then, would be Visigenic Software, but this was not started in 1989, but rather more like 1993 or 1994. Visigenic went public in 1997, I believe, and was sold to Inprise in 1998 or 1999. I am now a venture capitalist, in partnership with Jackie Macdonald, who is married to the Bob Macdonald mentioned previously, as Sippl Macdonald Ventures. And, yes, they did meet at Informix when they were both in the marketing department.

I hope this clears up some of the misunderstandings, and answers some of the questions that you have sent.

Yours,

Roger J. Sippl