



Oral History of Alvar Green

Interviewed by:
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Alvar Green

Conducted by Software Industry Special Interest Group

Abstract: Al Green describes his family background in England and then migrating to the United States. He followed an unusual path to the computer software industry through a series of accounting positions. When recruited by Autodesk, he was brought into a Finance role which morphed over time to have a variety of other administrative and management tasks since the Autodesk founders were principally technical period who wanted to program, not run a business. This led to his becoming the CEO for a number of years, during which time the company grew exponentially. When John Walker felt that he was unhappy with some of the directions that Autodesk was going, Al agreed to resign, but continued on the Board for a few years. He then went on to become an investor in other software companies and was able to retire and enjoy travel and living in various places in the United States.

Doug Fairbairn: Okay. We're ready to begin this oral history with Alvar Green otherwise known as Al Green. He's recording from his home in Tiburon, California. My name is Doug Fairbairn and I'm in Roseville, California and we're recording this on June 10, 2021 for the benefit of the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California. This is done as part of the Software Industry SIG oral history project. Al, welcome.

Al Green: Thank you.

Fairbairn: Thank you for doing this. I understand it's not the most comfortable activity you might be involved in today. But I really do appreciate it and the rest of us do as well. So, in these oral histories we like to really not only talk about your professional life but things leading up to that, things that lead the groundwork, how you came to be who you are. So, if you could just give me a brief introduction to where and when you were born, a little bit about your early family life, what your father and mother did at the time. So, let's sort of set the stage for what comes later.

Personal Background

Green: I was born in a small country town in England by the name of Crowland. It's about 20 miles from Cambridge. It's a farming community. My parents had upbringings that were right out of a Charles Dickens' novel. It was pretty miserable. My father was pulled out of school at 12-years-old to support a family that didn't want him, and my mother came from an

abusive family that sent her off into what they euphemistically called “in service” which means she was sent to a rich person's house and did pretty much whatever they wanted her to do, and they gave her a roof over her head and a stipend. So, moving along, these two met each other.

Fairbairn: Inauspicious beginning.

Green: Yes. So, these two met each other and had my oldest sister, Rita, in about the late nineteen-twenties. Had the next daughter, Betty, in the mid-thirties. Along comes 1939. Germany invades Poland, England declares war. My father is sent off from 1939 to 1945 along with everybody else. My mother is left at home with two young children and is now conscripted into what they used to call Land Girls and they were basically sent off to work on farms to provide food to feed the country during the war. So now, fast forward to 1946 then I come along.

Fairbairn: Your sisters were 20 years older than you.

Yes. My oldest sister is 20 years older than me. The next one, the younger of the two sisters, is 11 years older than me. So it was pretty much three families. My sisters had left home before I really knew what was going on. My younger sister left home at about 18, so I would have been 7 or 8-years-old. What happened after the war, the government built all of this prefabricated housing to house the troops coming back from the war, and we went to live in one of these prefabricated housing estates which they called council houses. Now council houses in England are, basically, if you come from a council house you are automatically pegged at the lower end of the rung. I mean, your chances of getting out of there are pretty slim. But it was actually a great childhood because all of the other people that were coming back from the war had children my age so it was like an estate of, you know, 15 cousins and everybody was your parent. If you did something wrong, somebody else's parents would tell you to get on the right track. So, it was actually a pretty good childhood insofar as we were out in the country, you could go off and get into as much mischief as you liked and come home when you liked and it was pretty safe and pretty idyllic.

Fairbairn: Just be home by dinner time.

Green: Just be home by dinner time. So, the educational system was, at that time, it was just kind of not many steps out of the Victorian era. So, I went off to a primary school. Once you finish that then they send you off to a secondary modern school and then they jettison you out into, you know, life.

Fairbairn: What was your father doing once he returned from the service?

Green: Once he returned from the service, he worked for various people he knew who were landowners around there. He worked on the farm doing various things for various people. Also, some of his friends would give him work. He would drive lorries for people or buses for people. It was pretty much odd jobbing until about when I was 8 or 9-years-old, when he got a job at Perkins Engines. They're probably more famous today for making marine engines, but they were the largest employer around that area at that time in a town called Peterborough. So, he worked for them until his retirement. My mother stayed home with the children until I was once again probably 8 or 9 when she got a job, and then I used to have lunch at school and come home about the same time as my mother. So, everything was fine.

Fairbairn: Did they encourage your education? Was that a big deal? Or were they just trying to keep their head above water?

Green: I think it was pretty much, you know, in those days, can we keep them alive. Education was not foremost in their mind. However, my father always wanted more for me because of the fact that they had not very much when they were growing up. Then after I left school, I had an interest in mechanics. On the weekend I would go to the local train station and watch trains all day and, tear motorcycles apart and goodness knows what else. So, I had a great love for mechanical things. My father wanted to encourage me to be a mechanical engineer. Okay, I didn't have any better ideas. So, I applied for an apprenticeship at Perkins Engines and they would issue maybe 5 or 6 apprenticeships and there might be 50 or 60 people apply for them, from all walks of life. I took this exam and figured, after I'd taken the exam and goodness knows what else, I thought, I'd better intercept the postman before my father gets the results of this exam. Much to his delight and my surprise, I was admitted into this apprenticeship program.

Fairbairn: How old were you at the time?

Green: At the time I was 15.

Fairbairn: Okay. Wow.

Green: The apprenticeship program was pretty much this -- you went to a technical college for 2 to 3 days a week and then applied it in practical applications for the company that was paying for you to do this. And what happened, when you're 15 you go on to one of these programs, and at about age 21, you come out with what they call a City and Guilds Certificate, which is basically the same as a Bachelor's degree in Engineering. Anyway, I did this for more than 2 years, and at about the age of 17 and 1/2, I thought, "You know, I really don't want to do this." I couldn't see any prospects beyond that in England at that time, actually. Although England in the early nineteen-sixties was a great place to have fun, it was not a great place to

look at the future. My sister, the middle sister, the one that's 11-years older than me, married an American who was stationed at an Air Force Base close by when she was about 20-years-old. She went off to live in America. In those days, nobody had telephones, so we corresponded through letters. My sister and I used to write to each other and she said, "If you ever think of coming to America, you know, you're more than welcome to stay with us." And I thought, "Well, that doesn't sound like too bad of an idea."

So, I went off to the American Embassy to apply for a Visa and they said, "What kind would you like?" I said, "What kind do you have?" He said, "Well, we have temporary-- a visitor's Visa where you can stay in the country for 6 months but you can't work. Or we have a permanent Visa." In those days it was very easy to get a Visa into the U.S. if you were English. Each country had its own quotas. For instance, the Irish and the Italians filled their quotas; the English didn't. All I had to do is jump through two more hoops, fill out some paperwork, and I had a permanent Visa which allowed me to get a green card.

Fairbairn: So how old were you at this point?

Moving to the United States and Joining the US Marine Corps

Green: I was about a couple of months short of my 18th birthday. I did my parents a favor and left home and left the country at the same time. So, anyway, I arrive in the United States and before I could go to school or apply to college or anything like that in the U.S., I had to have these varying subjects like Civics, Economics, so on and so forth, to get you into college on some kind of a program.

Fairbairn: Right.

Green: So I went to high school. The town that I moved to was called Ecorse in Michigan. It was pretty much a steel town, a working-class town. I went to high school. I went to school during the day and I got a job as a laborer at the Steel Mill at night. I used to go to school, then work the night shift. I'd get off work and go to school, then come home and do it again.

Fairbairn: Oh, my gosh.

Green: I'd sleep a little bit and mess around. I did this while I was in high school. I did this for a year. So along comes 1965. Now I apply to Eastern Michigan University, but they can't take me until the next semester. Well, between then and the next semester I get a draft notice from the U.S. Government. And I thought, "Well, you know, they can't draft me. I'm English." <laughs>

Green: "And besides, I know nothing about the military. They don't draft in England." So, I go down to the draft board and, "Yes, you're 1A and we'd like to invite you to come back and you'll be drafted on January the 10th." I go back on January the 10th, 1966. There were about 60 to 80 guys in line, a straight line, all in alphabetical order. And they said, "Congratulations. The Marine Corps started drafting today. We're taking the first 16 into the Marines." I didn't know the Marine Corps from the Boy Scouts.

I'll interject a little funny story here.

Fairbairn: Yes, please do. 1966 is not a good time to be entering the U.S. military.

Green: It isn't. Believe me, it isn't. I'm standing next to the only person that I know, in this line of 80 people. My name's Green, his is Heskett, so alphabetically we're next to each other. Of these 16 guys who were drafted into the Marines, 14 are screaming, "I don't want to go in the Marine Corps. I don't want to go in the Marine Corps." I turned to my friend and I said, "Why don't they want to go in the Marine Corps?" He said, "Well, my father was in the Army in the Second World War and the stories he tells," he says, "You don't want to be in the Army. It's really tough." I said, "Well, what's the Marine Corps like?" Talk about babes in the woods. So anyway, he said, "Have you ever seen those billboards with the guy with the sword and the white hat and the blue uniform?" I said, "Yes." He said, "They give you all that stuff and they stick you in front of an embassy." I said, "This sounds great." Needless to say, I never saw an embassy, a white hat, a blue uniform or a sword. <laughs>

Anyway, now I'm sent off to Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, which was the good news out of it all, as this was my introduction to California. You know, I went from England to Michigan, which my body wasn't really fond of, and then it saw San Diego and it quite liked it. So, I go to do my basic training there, go to infantry training at Camp Pendleton and then I shipped off to Camp Lejeune then to Okinawa, and then from Okinawa to Vietnam in late 1967.

Fairbairn: God, you think you're going to college and six months later, you're in the US Marines.

Green: Well, you know, I always had this kind of shall we say wanderlust when I was a child. I always wanted to get into some kind of mischief and I always had some kind of a feeling of adventure. But this was a little more than I had in mind.

Fairbairn: This is a little over the edge when it comes to adventure.

Green: Yes, it was. And you see, to my parents who were in England, that was French Indochina when I took geography and I'm sure it was when they took geography. I mean, I didn't

know what the Marine Corps was, and I didn't know where Vietnam was. Anyway, they would write to me and my mailbox would be FPO San Francisco. So, my parents would send their mail to San Francisco and then the Military forwards it to wherever you are.

Green: They would often write and say, "How do you like it in San Francisco?" I said, "It's very nice." Actually, I'd never set foot in San Francisco. But, you know, they were in a small town in England, no point in getting them involved.

Fairbairn: How long were you in Vietnam and were you in combat?

Green: No. I was a truck mechanic.

Fairbairn: Oh, you kept up your mechanical work--

Green: I think I must have been one of the only people in the Marine Corps that actually did apply what you knew to your job, but, but, yeah, pretty much a mechanic. But the thing with being a Marine, they put you wherever they want to. There was a friend of mine who was a truck mechanic and he ended up being a machine gunner on a helicopter. It depended on where you were and what they needed. But I was fine.

Fairbairn: So how long were you in Vietnam--for a year?

Green: No. I went from Camp Lejeune to Okinawa. I was supposed to go from Camp Lejeune to Vietnam, but they took about half a dozen of us off the plane and left us in Okinawa which was fine with me. I was on Okinawa from about October-November of 1966 to about the end of summer 1967, then went to Vietnam, then came home about October-November of 1967.

When I came back, I had a couple of months left in the Marine Corps. The good news about being drafted into the Marine Corps was that everybody else was in for four years. There was a little group of us that were only in for two years because we were draftees, so that was good. They could only send you over there once.

Fairbairn: Could have been much worse. So, now you're back in San Diego?

College and Working for Ford Motor

Green: So now I'm back in San Diego and then I go back to Detroit. One of the rules back in those days was, whatever job you left they have to guarantee it for you when you get

back. Well, I was a laborer in a steel mill, so I got that fine job as a laborer in the steel mill back and started college. So actually, during my college, I worked full-time at the steel mill and took a full load in college as well.

Fairbairn: Oh, my gosh.

Green: So, the good news is I came out with no debt and a new house and a college degree.

Fairbairn: You were in really good physical shape too, I presume.

Green: Yeah. Then at the end of, this was the beginning of 1968 that I got out of the Marine Corps, so I met my wife on my last leave and then a year later in November of 1968, we were married. She's from England also. She came over as an au pair when she was 18-years-old. So, we ran into each other in Detroit of all places. The dating capital of America!

Fairbairn: And you graduated from Eastern Michigan University?

Green: I did. Yes.

Fairbairn: In what subject?

Green: Business.

Fairbairn: Okay.

Green: I worked at the steel mill on the midnight shift, and when I went to college I had to figure out what I wanted to do and my thought was, I want to do anything where you don't have to work at night. So, I went into accounting and finance. I got out of college with a Finance degree. I applied at Ford Motor Company, which then in that area was a pretty good job to have.

I applied and they put me on a management training program. I did that from 1974 to 1976. I was a cost analyst at that time. And then in May of 1976, I came out of work and my car was covered in snow. I came home to my wife and I said, "People are not designed to live in climates where it snows in May." So, she said, "Well, what should we do?" I said, "Well, when I was in San Diego it was pretty nice there." She said, "So what are we going to do?" I said, "Why don't we just go to California?" We stuck a for sale sign on the lawn. Five days later, the house sold. Six weeks later, we threw everything we owned in the back of a U-Haul truck and drove to California. That was it.

Moving to California and Work Assignments

Fairbairn: A lot of people came to California because of their having passed through there in the service.

Green: It's true. The first leave I had, I hopped on a bus and went up the coast to look at small towns and got off in Laguna Beach, which I thought was just absolute paradise. I thought, "Well, okay. I'm going to live here one day." So, we did.

I thought, "Well, if we don't have a job, I might as well live where I want to live and then look for a job." I then got a job at Ford Aerospace in Newport Beach as a financial analyst. I worked for them for a couple of years, it was during the Jimmy Carter era. They made weaponry for the U.S. government. They were a government contractor.

Fairbairn: Right.

Green: So under the Carter era we had, you know, 15, 18 percent inflation and also a wage freeze on anyone who worked for a government contractor. With no raise in pay and an 18 percent interest rate this was a way to get poor real fast. So, I thought, "I'll go and look for another job." I found a job at a company called C.E. Miller. It was a startup company in the oil and gas industry. It made gas compression modules which basically compresses gas, shoots it down into the wells and forces the oil back up and also acts as storage for the natural gas. I worked for C.E. Miller as assistant controller at that point.

Fairbairn: And it's still in Southern California?

Green: Still in Southern California. This is in Irvine. Ford Aerospace was in Newport Beach, C.E. Miller was in Irvine.

C.E. Miller was then acquired by a company called KTI, Kinetics Technology International. It was a Dutch-based oil company on an acquisition binge in the U.S., so they acquired C.E. Miller. Another company they acquired was a small company called Cascade Graphics Development started by a gentleman named Dan Johnson. They were actually one of the first to put CAD software on a desktop computer. The only problem was they did it as a standalone unit. They would bundle the software and the hardware and sell a standalone unit, which is fine if you're Intergraph and you're selling machines for \$300,000 dollars, but if you're selling pretty much a PC with CAD on it, that's not a way to stay in business.

Fairbairn: Can I interrupt you before you progress?

Green: Yeah.

Fairbairn: You're going through all of these steps, financial analyst, similar kinds of jobs. Is that what you envisioned for the future? Did you have other ideas about what you'd like to get to in the future, you know, or was anybody giving you advice?

Green: No. No advice at all. The only advice I did get was from a supervisor I had at Ford Aerospace. I noticed that he spent more of his time buying and selling houses than he did actually working. One day he said to me, "Al, you'll never get rich through salary. You need to do it through capital gains." Okay. So, I thought, "Well, if I'm going to get another job next time, we need to go the capital gains route, not the salary route." But that came later. I'm still on the salary route at C.E. Miller and Cascade Graphics.

With Cascade Graphics, my title was Financial Director. It wasn't a very big company, hardly anybody there, but I was the Financial Director. One day, Dan Johnson leaves. I liked him. He was a great guy, a great entrepreneur, a nice guy. He left and they put another person in as CEO in the company. I wasn't really too keen on the whole situation there at that point. And one day I was sitting at my desk, the 'phone rang, and Dan Drake from Autodesk called, this would have been about fall of 1983. He gave me background on how they'd started Autodesk and they were looking for a finance person and that I'd been recommended to them. Little did I know until years later that it was actually Dan Johnson, who I worked for at Cascade Graphics, who met them at a Comdex show and said, "You know, if you need a financial guy, this is the guy to call."

Getting Hired by Autodesk

Fairbairn: I was wondering how the heck did they make that connection.

Green: Yeah, right. So, he was at Comdex I think it must have been 1983, Comdex of 1983. Dan calls me in the fall of 1983. It was, "We're looking for a finance guy. We don't have any money. You'll have to move yourself up here. And we could be out of business in six months, but we'll give you a bunch of worthless stock." How could you ever turn an offer like that down? So, I told my wife. And she said, "Tell me you didn't say yes." I said, "Well, look," I said, "I hate what I'm doing and I'm going to change my job anyway. Why don't we give this a flyer for six months and see what happens?" So, she stayed in the house in Laguna Beach.

Fairbairn: You really weren't happy where you were.

Green: No, I was not happy where I was.

Fairbairn: The path you were on was not a good one.

Green: No. No. So, my wife stayed in the house in Laguna Beach, and I moved up to Northern California. At that time some of the offices were in Mill Valley and some were in Sausalito. Let's see. So, I came and I interviewed with Dan Drake, John Walker, Mike Ford and Keith Marcelius. There was an empty room with four metal folding chairs in one line and one facing them, so I figured that one must be mine. I got to the interview first. Eventually, they showed up. It was a beautiful day in Laguna Beach and it was pouring with rain in Mill Valley and I thought, "Oh, what am I doing here?"

Fairbairn: At least it wasn't snowing.

Green: It wasn't snowing. And after about 15 minutes I think the link was with the CAD that Cascade Graphics had, you were not going to get anywhere bundling it with hardware. And these guys, that's exactly what they felt. This is a software company. We don't want to touch hardware. I think there was a something that synched there and after about 15 minutes I thought, "These are some very bright people." I agreed to join them and joined them in the spring of 1984. I moved North and stayed in one room at the Best Western Motel in Corte Madera which inspired me to spend a lot of time at work. I stayed there, and I would go down to Laguna Beach on the weekend. One weekend my wife would come up from Laguna Beach, the following weekend I went there and that's kind of how we did it. After about three to four months, it was pretty obvious that this was going to make it. So, Elaine sold the house in Southern California and moved up and we got an apartment in Sausalito in 1984.

Fairbairn: Moving from Laguna Beach to Sausalito is two nice places to be.

Green: They are nice places to be, yes. So far, so good.

Fairbairn: So tell me, What's the state of the company at this time? You came up in 1984? The company was only doing about a million dollars a year but growing very rapidly?

Green: Yes. Exactly. I'm not sure what you know about the company so far, but basically, when John wrote a letter to about 20-- stop me if this has already been repeated and you can edit it out if you want to-- but John wrote a letter to about 20 people that he had worked with or knew, had business contacts with in the past, that he thought were bright people. He mentioned to them that the 1980s is going to be the decade of application software for this new thing called the personal computer, and what we need to do is develop 5 software packages, and based on the 80-20 rule, 4 will fail and 1 will succeed. The one they thought would succeed was a product called Autodesk, which was kind of a software version of Apple Lisa at that time. So that's where the founders came in and then I joined.

Fairbairn: I did get a history on the company, which was really, I mean, I've been involved in startups myself. And, you know, this was a bizarre way to start a startup.

Green: It was.

Fairbairn: And, you know, this collective of programmers said let's throw a bunch of shit at the wall and see what sticks, right?

Green: And believe me, I tell you what, it was just up my alley, though. I just loved that environment. In fact, the most fun I ever had at Autodesk was in the early days when we were working hard and scrambling. It's when it becomes a real corporation and you've got things going on you never ever wanted to be involved in, you know, lawyers and goodness knows what else.

Fairbairn: So, John Walker seems to be quite a character in one form or another, an unusual guy. In some ways, totally not a leader, but in other ways, you know, a very natural leader.

Green: Yes, look, here's the thing. John is probably, even to this day, the brightest guy I've ever run across. I mean, whatever he applied himself to, he would be the best at it. I came into Autodesk as Chief Financial Officer. Went up to VP of Finance and then became CEO. John would have made a better VP of Finance than me and a much better CEO than me. He just had that ability. He was an incredibly bright guy.

Fairbairn: Well, that's the kind of people you want to associate with.

Green: It was. And that was fun.

Fairbairn: So, what about the others, Drake and the other founders that you had interviewed with? Did they all get along with each other? Was this a family? Was there a lot of contention? In the early days, when you first started.

Green: No, there was no contention. I wouldn't say a close family, but it was a group of people that got along well. And so, no, there was actually no contention.

Fairbairn: It always struck me that, here each one of them came in with their own project, their own program or whatever they'd written.

Green: Right.

Fairbairn: And for them to all abandon something and go to what was the winner just didn't seem like a natural act. But it sounds like it worked very well in that environment.

Green: Yeah. Absolutely, I agree.

CFO at Autodesk

Fairbairn: Okay, so when you came in, it was growing so fast it was hard to kind of pin down what it was at the moment you came in. But it was in the process of going from \$1 million to \$10 million to hundreds of millions.

Green: Right.

Fairbairn: And over the period in which you were there.

Green: Yeah, I came to work and my first day on the job was in Europe. They had a lady there who was the Controller, and an accountant. That basically comprised the Finance Department. So, I was the CFO of a two-person department. The Controller and I went off to Europe and this is when I met Richard Handyside. These guys were all founders, too. They met John through Marinchip. Richard Handyside was in London. Rudolf Kunzli was in Switzerland, and Lars Moreau was in Sweden. They acted, in the beginning, as distributors of John's Marinchip product. Then when Autodesk came along, they became distributors of the AutoCAD product. We needed, at some point, to make them into wholly owned subsidiaries of Autodesk. That was the initial reason for making the trip to Europe.

Fairbairn: Just as a sideline, was this your first time back to England since you had left at age 15?

Green: No, no. I had been back before. I went back in 1965. I left in 1964, came to the U.S., went back in 1965 to see if I really missed England or not. After I went back to my parents for a month and after about two weeks, I was ready to come back to the United States. I realized I did want to live in America.

When I came back to the U.S. from the trip to the European offices, it was brought to my attention that the two people in accounting were misappropriating funds, shall we say. I had to dismiss them and now I'm the CFO of a no person department. My being in charge of accounting was a very scary thought.

Fairbairn: Now, I'm sorry. I'm going to interrupt you. So, you came from fairly large companies in the past where there was a lot of structure and, you know, jobs were fairly well-defined, I presume.

Green: Yes.

Fairbairn: Now you're thrown into a situation where you're responsible for everything in a startup, which is totally different than the kind of companies you'd come from.

Green: Which I loved. Because what I learned more in managing a company was from looking at all the companies I'd worked for and how they managed to demotivate people. And I thought, "You know, I wonder if you actually reverse that, can you actually motivate people?" And lo and behold. Anyway, I think with John, Dan and myself, that's also something we had in common. Rather than giving lip service to people being your most valuable asset, they actually are your most valuable asset, and you treat them that way. So eventually every employee was issued Autodesk stock. It was distributed pretty horizontally.

Fairbairn: So that was also a whole new thing. I mean, the issue of stock distribution and I mean, you'd never been involved in that before either, is that correct, right?

Green: No. Because I worked for the pretty typical type of company where the CEO rolled up in his corporate Mercedes Benz, parked right in front of the office, and they're the ones who scarfed up all the good stuff. So, I thought maybe if you distribute the good stuff to the people who were actually doing the job, you can actually get more production out of them.

Fairbairn: So, was there anybody to sort of mentor you or guide you in all of this or help you make decisions? Or did you just sort of go seat of the pants? "This is what I see."

Green: Yeah. Pretty much. Yeah, that was it. So, we didn't have a lot of cash and we were starting to grow at a pretty good rate, and we needed to hire people. We needed facilities. You know, the facilities were really stretched. I went to the local bank and asked for a \$10 million-dollar unsecured line of credit with no personal guarantees and the guy looks at me...

Fairbairn: Yeah, so how does that go?

Green: Well, actually, amazingly, he gave it to me. So, I said, "Look, here's the thing. You give me the \$10 million dollars and we will run all of our funds through your bank." Well, we didn't have very many funds then, but later on, we had a huge amount of funds, and he was very happy we did. And to go along with that story, we never did tap into the \$10 million dollar line of credit.

Fairbairn: Oh, is that right?

Green: Yeah. We never had any debt in the company, but we needed money. So, John and I went off to a financial conference in Monterrey. Basically, companies would get up and would do a Dog and Pony Show. Most of the companies would be there for the tenth round of financing because they'd already blown through the other nine. So, we get up and we show them the growth path we're on and we start to get some attention. We were looking for an influx of capital but a lot of the problems were not so much financial but philosophical. The people who were looking at Autodesk were trying to pigeonhole us into a hole that looked a lot like all the other failing companies had been in. There was a gentleman by the name of Jim Marver who worked for LF Rothschild at that time. And he came up to me and said, "You know, Al, you might, on this track, you might want to think of taking the company public." I ran this idea by the principals at Autodesk and it didn't go over really well, shall we say.

And yes, it would have been much better to have not been a public company. Being a public company is a real pain in the neck. However, it gave us a lot of capital, and we needed a lot of capital for the growth of the company. And it allowed us to hire people. It allowed us to get new facilities. And so, John and I went off and did our Dog and Pony Show on the road show for the initial public offering.

Fairbairn: When was that and how did that go?

Green: That would have been 1985. We started the whole process probably around the end of 1984. We hired Larry Sonsini. Well, actually, his law firm was reasonably new at that time. Larry Sonsini came and visited us in our very small offices and he was pretty entrepreneurial at that time too. Basically, he said, "I'll give you a cut rate on legal fees but if you do go public, and once you become successful, you have us as your attorneys." So, I said, "Sounds like a good idea," so we did. And they represented us during the public offering. We had Arthur Young as accountants and L.F. Rothschild as the lead underwriter and I believe Alex Brown was the secondary on the offering.

Fairbairn: And so, the company went public in 1986?

Green: No, 1985.

Fairbairn: Tell me, when you came in, was there a strategy or it was just, "Well, we're going to continue to do this and we're just going to work hard at it?" Was the idea of a vision or anything like that? Or was it just, "Let's just sell as much software as we can?"

Green: I remember Mike Ford who was the head of Marketing at that time and he said to us one day, "You know, we've got an opportunity here. It's like this green field full of gold bars and all we have is a pickup truck. We've got to get all those gold bars into the back of the pickup truck before they come with bulldozers."

And that was kind of a strategy, I suppose. Now, technically, yes, there was a strategy. I mean for AutoCAD and the development of AutoCAD, there was a strategy and that was carried out pretty much by Dan, John and the technical people. So, what happened then was at this point, I think I was VP of Finance and it became, well, there was John and Dan taking care of the technical aspects and I would be taking care of the other stuff. So, it became if it wasn't technical, then it must be Al's. That was basically how that came along.

Becoming CEO of Autodesk

Along comes 1986 and John comes to Dan and me and he said, "Look, I don't want to be CEO anymore. I hate this stuff. It's taking up way too much of my time. I'm a very productive programmer and I need to be spending my time programming. So, one of you guys are going to have to be CEO." It was a real power struggle! I looked at Dan and I said, "I don't want to be CEO." And he looked at me and he said, "I don't want to be CEO." And then Dan looked at me and he said, "But I can program." And then John kindly said, "Well look Al," he said, "You've built the company, you might as well run it." So that was how that all came about.

Fairbairn: So, what do you think were your major contributions in the first two or three years? Tell me what you think your major contributions were in getting it ready to go public?

Green: Well, that's a tough one. I've never really thought of that. Basically, my concentration was on making it a stable, financially successful company, building it up, getting the facilities in order, getting the employees in order, you know, the right employees in the right areas so that when we went public, it did look like, you know, a real company.

Fairbairn: You had responsibility for basically everything but the technical stuff, I mean in terms of your management?

Green: That is correct. Now, at that time I think when John and Dan came to me, Mike Ford had already left and there was a new fellow, Tony Monaco, I think was his name, who came in as the Marketing person. Well then, I would have been CEO at that time, so I would have been overlooking marketing at that time anyway. But pretty much, yes, prior to all of that, if it wasn't technical, then I took care of it, whether it was accounting, whether it was facilities, whatever it was.

I can remember one lady came to me one day and said, "I'm pregnant. What's your maternity leave policy?" I said, "Well, we don't have one. What do you think it should be?" So, then we sat down and made one up. I went to Dan with this and he said, "Look, we don't have policies and procedures and I hate them." And I said, "Me, too." He said, "So what we'll do, if we make up policies and procedures, they have to be on one half of one side of a sheet of paper. If it's any larger than that, we don't have it." So that was it.

That was pretty much how we went. Each time we came into a situation we looked at it and looked at it reasonably.

Fairbairn: So again, I'm going to come back to the issue that you were on a very rapid growth trajectory. I mean, during your time there, even, multiplied by 10 or 100 or, So, growth, that rapid of growth requires capital as you had indicated.

Green: Right.

Fairbairn: But there are regular strains on the organization in terms of how you organize and who does what, and levels of responsibility and all that. What were the plans there?

Green: And that was probably, looking back, some of the things I would have done much differently. The company grows so you manage the growth, then all of a sudden it starts to really pick up speed and grow at a rapid rate. You need to put different people in different responsibilities, but you don't have time to do it. So, I would start assigning, "Look, we need to fill these vacancies here. We need to get something put in over here." I would assign that to someone. And the problem is once you then start delegating, I don't know, maybe I like to have too much control. But it just got to the point where we started to get people into spots that I, if I had it to do over again, I'm not sure I would have done that. And that also comes with things you learn.

In the early days of the company, the board of directors consisted of myself, John Walker, Dan Drake, Greg Lutz and Mike Ford. You'd have your meeting, they're in the office all the time, they fully understand marketing, fully understand finances, fully understand the technical. Everything was fine. We came out of the meeting, we had a plan, everything was great. Okay, once you become a public company, and I understand why, but they say, well, you must have outside members on your Board of Directors.

Fairbairn: Right.

Green: And one thing I did, I said, to this one guy, "Look, I'm up to my neck here. Go out and find some members for the Board of Directors." I think he had been to Harvard for 20

minutes and belonged to the Harvard Business Club or whatever, and came up with two guys who belonged to the Harvard Business Club. Now you're piling this on top of a bunch of people who are renegades, shall we say? It doesn't really work that well. And so now you've got Board of Director people who may have been successful in their industries, but those industries had nothing to do with what we were doing. They show up one day a month. They have their doughnuts and coffee and get their check and there isn't a lot of value added. I don't know how you correct it. The value added was when we all were on the Board of Directors, and we knew it and we had the responsibility. But then you start diluting it. And then of course, John leaves the Board of Directors and Dan leaves the Board of Directors and then pretty soon I'm in there with a Board of Directors.

Fairbairn: So, Sonsini was the corporate legal guy, right?

Green: They were the outside attorneys. We had a person in the legal department. Chris Record was our first in-house attorney and he later left and that job went to a person named Sandy Marin. I was busily trying to get Marcia Sterling from Larry Sonsini's office. I would have loved to have had her in there, but she kept turning me down, and then the rascal went and jumped on board when Carol Bartz came along,

Fairbairn: Yeah. Marcia Sterling, I know Marcia Sterling. She worked with our company as well, VLSI Technology.

Green: Yeah. She's a great lady. I loved her. She was just perfect for the job, but she wouldn't take it.

Fairbairn: So you were just trying to keep this ship sailing in the right direction with the very rapid growth and with a Board of Directors that wasn't adding a lot of value and so forth. Did you continue to stay on good terms with the founders? I guess several of the founders left. You said Mike Ford left.

Green: Yeah.

Fairbairn: How did it evolve with the founders? Did they leave because they were bored? They made their money and they had the time to do something else? They didn't want a big company?

Green: Well, some of the founders hardly came into the office at all, from the very beginning. And I'm talking about, maybe two or three of them. The other founders, Richard Handyside, Rudolf and Lars, were all heading up subsidiaries, they were fine, they were doing their jobs. They're all very bright people and turned those subs into great organizations. As far

as Greg Lutz, for instance, he stayed. He stayed in the technical department. Dan stayed in the technical department. Later on, John, once he wasn't CEO, he would work more from home and then come back to the office, probably in the evening time. And Dan, he started working more from his home in Mill Valley. But let's see, like Maury and Dave, they all were there in the technical department and stayed there.

Fairbairn: Were they fully on board and continued doing what they were doing?

Green: Yeah..

Fairbairn: And Mike Ford, he had left?

Green: He left in 1986. He was replaced by Tony Monaco and that was it.

Fairbairn: What would you say were the biggest challenges? Obviously, growth sounds like the number one challenge, but what would you categorize as the one or two other major challenges you had to deal with during the time when you were CEO? Were there legal issues? Strategy issues?

Green: Not so much conflicts with strategy. There would be, I wouldn't call them conflicts. There may have been disagreements, but they were resolved pretty quickly. There were no major issues as far as conflicts of interest in what the product should be, or what we were doing, or the direction we were going in. Like I said, if I were to do it over again, I think I would have staffed it a little more heavily at the top. Maybe I should have gotten a COO and let them take some more of the burden. The other issues as you become a larger company, especially when you become an international company, are that when you're a small company and you're starting up, everybody goes home at night, and at night they're sleeping. When you have an international corporation, somebody is screwing up somewhere in the world 24 hours a day.

And so, you don't know what they're going to present you, but they will present you with something. You go home at night and you think everything is fine. You come back in the morning and "Well, you know, we've got this going on in Russia. We've got this thing going on in Austria. We've got--" So that would be challenging. The other thing too is when you're a startup company and you have no money, you're of no interest to the lawyers at all. You start to get money and, I had more shareholder lawsuits thrown at us than you can shake a stick at. And that's basically if your stock goes down, there would be companies that would own stocks of various technology companies. If it dropped X number of dollars, they'd automatically kick out a shareholder lawsuit. They knew that it would cost you about \$5 million dollars to defend the company against it. So, they would often kindly settle for \$4M.

Fairbairn: Right.

Green: So it was pretty much that kind of thing. It's the normal thing, but it's the stuff that eats up your time. And then you get the analysts. I would say 90 percent of them were good, and fully understood what we were doing. Then there were 10 percent who had absolutely no clue what we were doing. Then you would have journalists who had come in to write articles about the company, and already had their article written in their head. All they wanted you to do was just sign off on it, and most of it wasn't true anyway. So, I wasn't really fond of the media or a lot of attorneys. However, I think most CEOs would say pretty much the same thing.

Fairbairn: Yeah. How were decisions made about, say technical direction? Was that mainly done by John or somebody else came in to head up the R&D? Tell me a little bit about how you managed the R&D side of things and how that evolved, how the strategy for that evolved.

Green: We had a person come in, the head of R&D. But basically, when I took the job of CEO, I turned to Dan and I said, "Look, I don't really want to do this, you don't want to do this. But if I do this, will you keep an eye on the technical stuff?" And he said yes, so pretty much the technical direction, and it was throughout the company, was directed by John and Dan. We had a head of R&D and that was pretty much a day-to-day management of the technical staff. But the major strategies really came from John, Dan, Greg and that was-- that would be the direction.

Fairbairn: So when the question came up, "should we pursue this new program or should we buy this company or whatever?" from a technical point of view, they would make their recommendations and you would all sign off on it? Is that sort of the way it worked?

Green: That's correct. For instance, an example would be when Steve Jobs came out with his NeXT product. He called me up and we met. He was trying to convince me that AutoCAD should run on NeXT. Well, NeXT wasn't a widely distributed platform, you know. Do we really want to write for something that really isn't going to sell too many units? But you know Steve, he's pretty convincing. So, I said, "Look, here's the deal. If you can convince our technical staff to write a product for your product, a product for your machine, then I'll consider it." So, we set up a meeting in the Marin Civic Center. Steve Jobs got on the stage, and we had the whole Technical Department attend, and a few other people who wanted to come and watch. He gave a speech on why he thought we should put AutoCAD on NeXT and it got shot down. So, we didn't do it.

Really what I was trying to do, and as a side negotiation, I was trying to get Alvy Ray Smith out of his contract with Pixar and bring him over to Autodesk; that was my motivation.

Fairbairn: Yeah, Alvy Ray Smith is quite a guy. I've met him a few times. That would have been an interesting addition to the group.

Green: Yes, it would.

Leaving as CEO of Autodesk

Fairbairn: So you ended up departing as CEO in 1992. What led up to that? And sort of what are the confluence of events that made for that change?

Green: Well, there were a few things going on at that time. First of all, from a personal standpoint, I was getting to where, like I said, the most fun I had with the company was in the early days when we were building a company and building a product. As it gets larger, it becomes more political, a little more bureaucratic, less fun and you're more of a fireman than you are a CEO. You have that. Plus, you know, John had concerns with the direction of the company, but that's a question you'll have to ask John.

Fairbairn: Well, actually, from what you describe, it sounded like from a technical point of view, a product point of view, there were others who were making those recommendations and choices. That you were not from the beginning directly involved in--- I mean, obviously you had to buy in and so forth, it had to make sense-- but you were not the technical leader from the beginning.

Green: That is correct. Yes.

Fairbairn: So, John had some concerns. Was there anything that you were doing that kept them from going the direction he thought? Or that needed leadership from the CEO level to make the changes? Or what was he looking for?

Green: You know, I'm not sure it was so much that, but I think as the company got larger and it became more political, John moved to Switzerland, and Dan for a great amount of time was at home in Mill Valley. So, people who had issues would either bring them to Dan's attention or to John's attention, and then John would bring them to Dan's attention. I think it got to the point where John wanted to go to Switzerland and do what John does best. And all of this political stuff, I believe is exactly the kind of thing that John hates, as do I. So, it was turning into a little bit of a political cesspool. I think John just threw a hand grenade in the cesspool, and that's what happened. The problem is that when you're the CEO, you're the one standing closest to the cesspool! It was interesting to see as the hand grenade went into the cesspool, who ran for the hills. You know, the outside directors I believe were the first ones. They didn't want splattering.

Fairbairn: In doing the research, there was a fellow, Mark Stiegler. who was VP of R&D at that time. Does that ring a bell?

Green: No. [Ron] McElhaney I believe was VP of R&D. And then he left. I don't remember who came in after that. It might have been Stiegler.

Fairbairn: Things really got messy. So, at some point you decided, okay, it's time for me to step aside. Is that late in 1991?

Hiring Carol Bartz as the new CEO

Green: It would have been. Yes. And so, I gave my resignation and stayed on until they found a replacement, who was Carol Bartz.

Fairbairn: Who spearheaded that CEO search? Did you have an outside recruiting firm?

Green: We did and I can't remember the name. I'm thinking it's Heidrick & Struggles or something like that.

Fairbairn: Oh, yeah, they would have been the one. And were there a lot of other candidates? Was there controversy about Carol Bartz being chosen? Was there competition? Somebody else almost made it?

Green: There were a few people that were eliminated right away. I think it came down to Carol Bartz and there was one other fellow and it, and I would know the name if I heard it, but it slips my mind right now. I can't remember who it was.

Fairbairn: Technically it's the board of directors that makes this decision. But, I mean, John Walker was not on that board at the time, right? So, who really made the decision?

Green: So, yes, the Board of Directors makes the decision on who's going to be CEO, but John had a huge amount of influence over the Board of Directors.

Fairbairn: And was John Walker fully on board with that and was he the prime recommender of that? Or what was his belief?

Green: I don't think he recommended that Carol Bartz should be CEO. He went along with who the Board of Directors chose. And I think the people who interviewed the candidates, which included me, were Dan, Greg, John, the outside members of the Board of Directors. But

John left the decision entirely up to the Board of Directors. So, John wasn't influential in who became the next CEO.

Fairbairn: Right, so he wasn't really trying to insert himself in that.

Green: No, he was not.

Fairbairn: Okay. So, what was the overall state of the company as you were leaving? I mean, I think it grew by like a factor of 10 under your stewardship.

Green: Yes. When I joined, let me see. Along the way we opened up a subsidiary in Japan. We put in \$2 million dollars into that organization. It became, I believe, the most profitable software company in Japan after just a \$2 million dollar investment. We opened up offices in the Soviet Union, and other parts of Eastern Europe out of our Swiss subsidiary. As they grew, we would keep the capital in those subsidiaries, to grow those subsidiaries. We didn't repatriate overseas proceeds back into the U.S.

We did a lot of expansion in those areas. We set up the new international headquarters in Neuchatel. So, when I left, Autodesk, as a software company had about an 80 percent market share in CAD sales. Also, the company had a market Cap of close to \$2 billion dollars. Ever since we went public, we never had a down quarter. Every quarter was progressively better. Plus, we never had any debt, never tapped into our line of credit. And we never had any venture capital, and we were, I think, the fourth or fifth largest software company in the world at that time. So you know, starting from joining the company when it was about a million in sales, and scattered around offices in Mill Valley and Sausalito, I'm perfectly fine with the results.

Fairbairn: Well, yeah, It's a spectacular story of success in an area where lots of companies attempted, but few, if any, grew to the size that Autodesk was able to achieve. You must have spent a lot of your time on the road at conferences, financial conferences, those sorts of things.

Green: I did, but I tried to avoid it wherever possible. That is, if it was beneficial to the company, I would do it. But a lot of times brokerage firms will want you to come and put on a presentation for their customers in New York or something else. And I just hated that stuff. I felt it was more promoting the CEO than the company. If it was promoting the company, I didn't mind it, but if it was promoting the CEO, I just didn't like that stuff at all.

Fairbairn: Was there any question at the time when you were going to step down as there being an internal candidate? Was there anybody that you considered internally or was it obvious to everybody that you were going to go outside?

Green: We were going to go outside. There were no internal candidates.

Competition

Fairbairn: How involved did you get in the CAD industry itself? You know, in terms of the other companies? I guess one thing we didn't really talk about was competition. You said you had vast market share. Who did you perceive as competition?

Green: Well, in the very early days, there was a product called PCAD, I believe, and another one called VersaCAD. They were probably the closest things to competitors. Then, of course, there were the big ones. There was at that time, Intergraph, McDonnell Douglas, you name it. There were all kinds of companies which had CAD programs that were for sale. But they were more standalone mainframe types rather than desktop. Desktop would have been PCAD and VersaCAD.

Fairbairn: And did any of those larger companies, the Intergraph or others, did they come calling to ask about a purchase?

Green: You know, what's absolutely amazing and this is part of why I wanted to take the company public. I think what was happening was that they were looking at us not as a real CAD product. It was desktop software only. It's not a real CAD product. I thought as long as we can, we need to keep them thinking that, because we don't have the capital to compete with them. All we needed was Microsoft to decide they wanted to get into the CAD industry and they could throw more money at that overnight, than we'd probably earn in the next 10 years. So, I'm absolutely amazed and delighted, because that's the one thing that if something kept me up at night, that'd be it. I expected to wake up in the morning and learn that IBM or Microsoft had just entered the CAD business. But none of them did. And nobody, nobody came calling. Oddly enough, the one company that we looked at which was going to put an investment in Autodesk was McGraw Hill, which was a book company.

And you know, we entertained them, and we listened to them. But what was happening was the perception of AutoCAD or Autodesk, was that there's a pie and you've got IBM, McDonnell Douglas, and Intergraph. Then you've got this little sliver in the corner of the pie called Autodesk. What was really happening, was we weren't in that pie. We had created a whole new pie, and we owned the pie. and nobody was seeing that and...

Fairbairn: And you were eating all of that pie.

Green: And we were hoping nobody would see the pie. But that was more of the philosophical issue we had. Anybody who was coming in to put venture capital into the company

was trying to pigeonhole us into companies that were not really in the same business we were in.

Fairbairn: Right. So, did you turn down venture capital investments? I mean, was that an option? You said you were looking for cash?

Green: We turned down some. I think, once again, it was based more on philosophical differences, because we would have loved to have had money, but the price of the venture capital would have been to put someone on the Board of Directors and insert them into this group that we had, which wouldn't have worked really well.

Fairbairn: Yeah, it was a very nontraditional company from so many different perspectives.

Green: Oh, it was. It was quite an experience, you know. You don't quite realize it when you're signing up for it, but it certainly gives you a lot of experience out there in the world, that's for sure.

Fairbairn: All right, so Carol Bartz comes in. Did you have any ongoing relationship with the company after that?

Ending Autodesk Involvement

Green: I stayed on the board of directors for about a year after that, and that was about it. What was great with Carol coming in, too, I mean, when I joined the company and took over as CEO, it was very much like a family. So, I'm part of the family, one of the family members. Carol came in and had the great opportunity of not being directly involved with anyone and could come in and have a blank sheet. She could pretty much look at the company and arrange it the way she thought it should be arranged. And quite honestly, when I was CEO, I was the CEO of that company at that time at which I believe was a good thing. At the next level, I think it needed somebody different. And evidently, Carol Bartz was that person because it certainly did well under her.

Fairbairn: Yeah, she was there for quite some time, right?

Green: Yeah.

Green: So, you were there for at least a year afterwards, and she brought in this fresh look. Did that fresh look create a lot of angst? This used to be a nice family, and now everything is becoming too bureaucratized? Or other changes, strategy changes, whatever?

Green: Look, the way I look at it is things would happen and I'd say, "Well, you know, I don't particularly like that, that's not the way I would do it." But that's exactly why I wasn't there. You know if I was saying, "Well, I think you should do it this way," then I should have stayed as CEO. She was the CEO of the company at that time. And whether you agreed with what she did, or didn't do, is irrelevant. I mean, it worked. You know, if she had gone down in flames, I could have said, "Oh, my goodness, I should have stayed," but no. I'm glad I went and I'm glad she came.

Fairbairn: So you were still a young man at the time? You were 46?

Green: Yes, I was. Yes.

Post-Autodesk Activities

Fairbairn: So what does Al Green do post-Autodesk?

Green: Well what's kind of interesting. Ever since I was in school in England, I had worked. I had a paper route in the morning, then I went to school, and I worked in the bakery in the evening. Then I went on to school, and I worked at the steel mill in the evening. I feel as though I've had a full-time job since I was 12-years-old, in fact two. So, it was actually quite a relief. But it takes a couple of years to kind of shake that off. But what was interesting about that, you now have the wherewithal to start doing the things you want to do, travel, and we did a lot of traveling, did a lot of sailing. Much to my chagrin, I was on the Board of Directors of a couple of companies. I hated being on the Board of Directors of a company, because I always viewed myself as one of those people who don't really know what's going on because I'm not there every day. Why should I be imposing my views on somebody who knows what they're doing? Anyway, that introduced me to a couple of people who then I did a little angel investing and did well. So, who knew?

Fairbairn: You want to mention a couple of those companies?

Green: One of the companies that I did quite well in was a company called Agile Software; are you familiar with that?

Fairbairn: I know it. I know the CEO, but I don't remember his name.

Green: Was it Tom Shanahan? Oh, no. I think he was the VP of Finance there for a while.

Fairbairn: No, he lived in Saratoga. I don't know if the times overlap, but I know he was CEO for quite some time. Knew him through my kid's school.

Green: Yeah. This fellow I was on the Board of Directors with at a non-mentionable company. He was the one who turned me on to it and said, "These guys have a great idea. They need some capital to get going." And so, I put some money in and I think it was about 10 cents a share and it ended up, like, \$200 bucks a share or something.

Fairbairn: Much more. So, yeah, have you lived in Tiburon, Marin County area from those days?

Green: Yes. We rented in Sausalito, my wife and I, when Autodesk was first starting and actually right across the road so my whole world revolved around walking from home to work to the gym to the store and back home.

That was Sausalito. We then moved to Tiburon in, I think, in around 1990-ish and then to make a long story short, we moved to the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe there for a while, when I sold everything in California for tax reasons. Once we sold that, then I thought, well, you know, I'm retired. What do you do when you're retired? I thought, well I'll go to Hawaii and play some golf. So, I went to Hawaii and learned how to play golf and actually got quite bored and came back to Tiburon.

But, yeah, so we've been around. Yes, we've spent most of the time here in the house we currently have. It was built in the fifties and we tore it apart and remodeled it, and moved in a couple of years ago.

Fairbairn: Well, it looks spectacular from what I can see.

Green: It's a nice place to spend time and to be locked up in during the pandemic.

Fairbairn: Exactly. So are there any other comments you want to make about Autodesk or, you know, your time there or you think we've covered it?

Green: Well, here's the thing. I joined the company. They were a good group of people. I got along with them. Everything was fine as far as John and Dan, the founders. I mean, they were two of the smartest people I've ever run across. John is certainly unbelievably adaptable to anything. The bottom line is, without them, I wouldn't have had the opportunity. I have no regrets at all.

Fairbairn: And under your leadership, it grew by a factor of 10 or more, it seems.

Green: Yeah. So, you know.

Fairbairn: It sounds like a good relationship.

Green: It was, yeah, it was good. And so, that's it.

Fairbairn: So, have we made this less comfortable than you had anticipated coming in? Are you glad that we're winding up here?

Green: Well, actually it was perfectly fine. And I think the anticipation was worse than anything else. One thing I absolutely hated doing was going to New York and standing up in front of a group of people and giving speeches. I hated that.

Fairbairn: Yeah.

Green: But this is much more comfortable, doing it from home. I didn't even have to drive to Mountain View. So, that's an added bonus.

Fairbairn: So that's a benefit of this pandemic. Before we absolutely insisted that people come to our studio in Mountain View. And now we say, "Well there's no choice. We have to make this other work." And it has actually worked out quite well. And we've been able to get people to participate that we might not otherwise be able to. So, it's been very beneficial from that point of view. So, do you ever make it down to the Computer History Museum? Have you ever heard of it before I called you?

Green: I've heard of it, but I haven't been there. And I thought this was going to be my first time. My wife and I were actually going to come down and take a look around. We'll come at some point and it'd be great to meet you down there.

Fairbairn: Well, it opens up again in the September-October timeframe. Don't know exactly when. And I can guarantee you, it'll be a worthwhile trip and one that you'll quite enjoy. People are quite amazed to find such a world class museum hidden away in Mountain View. Somebody from Washington D.C. that had come to visit said that it was sort of Smithsonian class. And you know, and on the way out he said, "Better."

So, it's a first-class institution. We have a couple of major exhibits and as well as a bunch of other things. So, I strongly encourage you. And if you are going to be down there, please let me know ahead of time and I'd love to give you a personal tour.

Green: Great, I appreciate it. Well, thanks. Doug.

Fairbairn: All right, Al. Thank you very much for taking the time. Glad it wasn't too painful and we'll certainly remain in touch and get you the transcript of the recording.

Green: Great. Thanks a lot.

Bio of Alvar (Al) Green: Al Green was born in the UK after the Second World War. He had a limited education there and after an apprenticeship, decided to come to the US, where he was able to get a high school equivalent degree and was accepted at Eastern Michigan University where he majored in accounting. He worked for Ford Motor and Ford Aerospace before working for companies in the oil and gas industry. He then became the finance director for Cascade Graphics which led to his being recruited as the finance director at Autodesk. He helped bring the company public and then was elected CEO when none of the founders wanted the position. During the next 6 years Autodesk sales grew by 10 times. In 1992, he agreed to step down as CEO but remained a Board member. He then was on the Board of Agile Software and benefited from the success of that company. He lives in Tiburon, California and has thoroughly enjoyed his retirement.