



Oral History of Dan Ruby

Interviewed by:
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Hsu: All right, so you know, I got in touch with Simson [Garfinkel].

Ruby: Had you known Simson or had another connection?

Hsu: No!

Ruby: You just tracked him down.

Hsu: So, it turned out that I had gotten in touch with some people at NIST [National Institute of Standards and Technology] last year. And then—

Ruby: Something unrelated?

Hsu: It was something completely unrelated. So yeah, we've had collaborations with the National Software Reference Library [at NIST]. And we were interested in looking at how they preserve software in that library, and comparing that with what we do.

Ruby: Uh huh, interesting.

Hsu: Anyway, somehow I found out that Simson had worked at NIST, and so I got them—

Ruby: And you knew his name, or—

Hsu: Right, yeah, well, 'cause through [my doctoral research]—so, I knew about Simson and yourself. Because I had—

Ruby: You'd done all the research—

Hsu: Yeah, because of the research from the *NeXTWORLD* [Magazine] archives.

Ruby: That he had put up. [After NeXTWORLD Magazine closed in 1994, Garfinkel took it upon himself to make the full-text magazine archives available online.]

Hsu: Exactly. Those were, you know, in terms of my historical research, at the time, those were one of the only sources that I could find—primary sources from the time about—

Ruby: I mean, there's all of NeXT's own materials, marketing materials, technical—

Hsu: Yeah, marketing materials, but those are—they're not easy to find in archives. Things like that. And a lot of other things are owned by Apple and so, yeah, just in terms of archives, it's not easy to find NeXT stuff. Maybe because it's so recent. But I found the *NeXTWORLD* Magazine really useful for just getting into what the community cared about, what the developers cared about, what users seemed to be caring about. And sort of looking at things from a different perspective than the present.

Ruby: [It] can take you right there, if you have time to read them.

Hsu: Exactly.

Ruby: But to me, I hesitate to go back and read old issues of magazines, because [of] the embarrassing things that are probably in there.

Hsu: I mean, yeah, of course it's dated, but that's precisely what's interesting for a historian is to look at what were the concerns of the people at the time? You know, what was NeXT trying to sell itself as? And because my dissertation sort of asks this question why are Cocoa programmers so enamored with the technology? And those arguments go all the way back to NeXT. So there's a continuity there.

Ruby: Right, and I've been waiting, actually, to read more [about] the technical evolution of NeXTSTEP into the various Apple technologies, and how that happened. Because I had just a general picture of what happened, you know, once it went to Apple. But to come across your sort of sociological, cultural analysis of that time, that was really interesting to me.

Hsu: Oh, thank you. Yeah, so I guess, you know, this is maybe in some ways like an extension of that work. But you know, I just sort of wanted to speak to you about how did you get into the *NeXTWORLD* magazine and that community?

Ruby: Well, actually, I saw you were interested in sort of the whole connection to *Wired*, and—

Hsu: Oh, yeah, that too. Yeah, exactly.

Ruby: And you know, sort of the whole scene and stuff like that. So the first issue of *NeXTWORLD* was edited by Mike Miley. And that's the one that has Alvin Toffler on the cover. And is more what you might have called *Wired*-like than the magazine became after they hired me. What happened was, Steve J—the magazine was done on a deal between NeXT and the publishing company, which was called International Data Group, or IDG.

Hsu: Ohhhh!

Ruby: And Steve Jobs and IDG had done business before when they created *Macworld* magazine [in 1984]. And so this was now, I don't know how many years later, and Steve Jobs came back to Pat McGovern, who was the Chairman of IDG., with the idea of, "Let's do *Macworld* magazine for my new company, my new product." And so in both cases they were sponsored, I mean, there were contractual terms, and actually the *NeXTWORLD* deal ended up going south along with everything else with NeXT. <laughter> It ended up in a lawsuit between the companies, and it got a little bit ugly at the end.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: So anyway, after Steve approached Pat McGovern about doing a magazine for NeXT, Pat handed it off to a division in the San Francisco office that was doing workstation publications. Because the idea was that NeXT was, of course, was a different market than the Macintosh or PC magazines. So he put it in with the workstation group. The head business guy of the group was Gordon Haight, who was a charismatic, interesting guy, but he didn't really get the technology. And he didn't get Steve Jobs at all. And after a couple of meetings, they never talked to each other again. But myself and other people ended up being managers of the relationship.

Hsu: So you were at IDG at the time.

Ruby: Yeah, I had [previously] been at an IDG newsweekly called *InfoWorld*.

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: And before that, I was the editor of a Macintosh weekly, which was *MacWEEK*, [from another publishing company].

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: So anyway, I don't want to give you my whole resume, but I started in Boston, well, actually I started in New York at *Popular Science* for a number of years, and had also been with *PC Week* in Boston after that. So I was more like a magazine professional. Although, I had a lot of affinity and interest in all the cultural fun stuff that was going on. [But I was not the editor of] the first issue, Gordon had put together a team. A bunch of people were hired from another Mac magazine, *MacUser*, and so a lot of the original team came from *MacUser*. There was a woman, Jeanine Barnard, who was the business publisher. And she came from *MacUser*, and Mike Miley, the editor, came from there. And they came in, and I think Gordon, in particular, who was skeptical about whether NeXT was a viable business for IDG. And so I think he gave license to the editorial team to go a little wild on that first issue.

Hsu: Okay.

Ruby: I mean, all that stuff was in the air, and Mike Miley was a good editor at *MacUser*, and they told him to—and *Wired* was not yet out yet, I think. So he put out that first issue. Steve hated it!

Hsu: Ah!

Ruby: From the first moment he saw it, and within a few days, Miley was fired.

Hsu: Oh, wow. <laughter>

Ruby: And I think [NeXT was] very close to pulling out of the deal altogether. And so that's when various people there reached—they found me, and thought that I was the solution to the problem. Apparently, because I had this sort of professional magazine background, but also having an affinity to the kind of stuff that was going on. Dan Lavin was already on staff. And quite honestly it was probably Lavin more than anybody that identified me and brought me in, or that got me first talking to IDG. And then once it looked like there was a fit there between me and Gordon and Jeanine. Then they had to run me past Steve Jobs. So that was a fun, you know, interview that I had. Went down to—

Hsu: Wow!

Ruby: —Redwood City for that. And actually we had, that meeting was fine. He was pretty charming. I think he wasn't—he was a little bit probing, and wanted to know who I was, and what my history was. He knew I'd been at *MacWEEK*, which he thought had been a significant thing. On the other hand, I also wasn't an original Macintosh person. So again, because I had come from—I'd been in Boston, and I'd been on this magazine, *PC Week*, so I was a little suspect to him from that point of view, because I hadn't been around in the early days of the Macintosh.

Hsu: Yeah, hm.

Ruby: So anyway, I had a little bit of a sales job to do, but it wasn't that hard initially. Later on, of course, he and I had a few fireworks. But then also, you know, some great interaction. My story's not different from really anybody else's around that. So anyway, that was how I came in. So then as I came in, Steve sort of re-upped the contract and committed to, you know, a certain amount of money. And for me, actually, it was really exciting, because they paired us—they brought me in, but [instead of working with an IDG art director], Steve wanted it to be outsourced. So we got to work with some very high-end, advertising-agency-type art directors on the next issue of the magazine. And then after that, it got passed off to a [freelance designer who was a] friend of theirs. That was one of the good things about [the experience] from my point of view. So anyway, so that's how I got there.

Hsu: Huh, well, now that's a fascinating story. So then the magazine only lasts until '93. And I mean, I guess NeXT itself only lasted till '96, until they were purchased. But in that period, what were you kind of seeing in terms of the high level, the state of NeXT as a platform?

Ruby: Well, by the time I got there, which I actually didn't review the dates, so you probably have it better than I do when the first issue was, and—

Hsu: Yeah, I think it was '9—

Ruby: One.

Hsu: '91, yeah.

Ruby: Must have been early in the year. I can't remember. I actually went and got a couple of old issues out, but didn't take the time to really look at them closely. The whole idea of the magazine and the model we were trying to replicate [from] *Macworld*, was a magazine like that is aimed at the user, is written for the user. But it creates a market, a channel for users who want to buy product. And so its other clientele is the advertising base, which included software developers as well as hardware developers, and you know, makers of whatever peripherals and things. So the whole idea of a magazine like that is to create community around third parties.

Hsu: Right. Actually, let me go back a quick—like so the—*Macworld* had been in this model. And then there was like a direct connection with the platform vendor, with Apple. Like, was this the first time that had been done, or were there other magazines that were devoted to a specific company's product?

Ruby: Yeah, there are certainly other cases where product vendors, platform makers seeded, you know, helped to create markets and stuff like that. I don't think, for the most part, not in the same way that Steve Jobs did it. Very deliberately and very much with, you know, the same kind of intensity that he applied to other things. And so—

Hsu: But especially in terms of like actually sponsoring a magazine devoted to—because I had not known that *Macworld* had been started in partnership with Apple.

Ruby: I'm pretty sure that after a period of years, it was weaned off of direct support. And I don't know the details. They're out there. There are some articles that have been written about it. There was a guy, David Bunnell, who sadly passed away just recently, who was the founder of *Macworld*.

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: In that case, Pat McGovern gave him the deal. And so David Bunnell put the *Macworld* team together and they were in on the original launch of Macintosh and all of that. And so I don't know the specifics, whether it was several—well, part of it was direct financial support. Part of it is a guaranteed amount of advertising dollars. Part of it is the exclusive right to have your magazine in the box.

Hsu: Oh, that's right!

Ruby: And that was key, actually, in both of these deals was the value of the "in the box." It turned out that in the case of *Macworld* that that probably was really an important thing, because they were competing with *MacUser*, and it wasn't in the box.

Hsu: Right, yeah.

Ruby: And they kept that deal for quite a long time, I believe. And then of course, they also had the exclusive deal to produce the trade show for Mac.

Hsu: That's right, yeah.

Ruby: Which ran for quite a few years and finally Apple took it over or decided they didn't need it anymore.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: But that was part of our deal as well, is there would be a trade—a *NeXTWORLD* show. So all of that was kind of built into the model. However, by the time I arrived, it was sort of already clear that there wasn't enough of the hardware sales to support a vibrant third-party market, and therefore that model of a magazine. But despite that, that's what we continued to do for a couple years. And then, of course, NeXT did its own transition, they got out of hardware, and so we followed them through those various transitions.

Hsu: So then in terms of like the magazine being sort of this forum for creating community, I mean, was that fairly successful?

Ruby: Well, again, just because the community was relatively small, you didn't have the critical mass that you did on all these other magazines that we've been talking about—you know, that I'd been working on. Even *MacWEEK* which was so much smaller than *PC Week*, where I was before, still there was [a market. NeXT] didn't get to the point where it was self-sustaining, or there was enough critical mass. However, within the community that existed, both the developer community, the user community, which in the case of NeXT, in many cases started to merge, I think we did a pretty good job of you know, gathering a diversity of voices. That's definitely what we would have tried to do. You know, [John Perry] Barlow, I guess his role in the magazine is probably a good example of that. I guess Lavin, even before we get to Barlow, Lavin is important, because much more than me—I mean, we all had different roles. But Lavin was the real aggressive and sort of social guy. So as far as making connections, finding people and so forth, he was sort of our—the guy that made a lot of that happen. And I reckon you haven't met him yet.

Hsu: No, I haven't, yeah.

Ruby: He's—I haven't really been close to him now for quite a few years, but he's a brilliant and really interesting guy. He also was kind of a handful to manage. I had him and Simson, and each of them in their own ways were brilliant and challenging.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: So but anyway—

Hsu: So you were managing them.

Ruby: Yeah, so when I got there, Lavin was there, and we had—there was a managing editor and a copy editor. I think that's about it. And over time, I was able to expand the staff to maybe up to seven or something. And one of the first things when I got there, Simson's—I had a letter from Simson in a pile, which I probably saw on my first or second day on the job. And it just like jumped out of the pile. He was

in Cambridge at the time, and it wasn't the first time I had hired people from Boston and moved them to San Francisco. And so Simson became the next example of that.

Hsu: Oh, so Simson was—so you hired Simson, okay, when you saw his res—CV—

Ruby: It wasn't a resume or CV. It may have been an article submission. I think maybe it was just an over-the-counter article submission is actually what it was. And I was so impressed by his combination of technical depth and journalistic skills.

Hsu: It was a unique thing, right, like he's at the MIT Media Lab, and he's getting a degree in journalism? I mean, that's—how often do you find that?

Ruby: Exactly. So I did, you know, whatever I could to get him hired. And I was able to.

Hsu: Was it an explicit thing for you and the magazine to sort of get into more, you know, the technical and the developer issues, or was that just a byproduct of hiring Simson?

Ruby: No, I think we knew that we wanted to be more technical. And yeah, so, and you know, even at the other magazines that I'd been at before that, you always wanted to have—even if you had kind of your journalist side that did the news and stuff, you wanted to have your analysts that were probably hired out of the industry or something, at least columnists that came from that side of the world, that weren't writers but were technologists. So yeah, but the fact that Simson was both was truly unusual.

Yeah, and then he came out here with just an amazing amount of energy, and did great stuff. So, yeah, so between the two of them—and there were some other people. Eliot Bergson was a guy on the staff—he started as our copy editor—whodid great stuff. And then on the business side of the magazine, Jeanine Barnard, who I mentioned earlier had a sales staff. And it was their job, because they were trying to sell to the third party developers and so forth—to also be, you know, trying to make these connections and building community and so forth. So between our editorial side and our publishing side, there was quite a lot of social activity and so forth between ourselves, and also the people at NeXT and most of the various third-party people that were out there.

Hsu: Right, huh. What was your strategy from the editorial side in terms of what you guys wanted—the story you guys wanted to tell, or like how did you decide what would be on the editor's page for each issue? What things to focus on.

Ruby: Yeah, when I got there, it became clear that what was needed right away was a big focus on user success stories, like you know, case studies, applications. And so I think as you noted in your dissertation, we did an awful lot of stuff on Wall Street and intelligence agencies. And because it was important to show how those places were successfully employing the technology. There had been a change in the marketing focus at NeXT from trying to sell to a general market with desktop publishing and things like that, but instead focusing on corporate custom applications and so forth. That change was already happening at NeXT, and so of course the magazine needed to reflect that as well. So while we continued to do things, regular things that computer magazines did with software reviews and so forth, it became a little less important than showing applications.

Hsu: Right. So in a lot of ways trying to make sure that—basically trying to show the potential viability of the platform in order to keep the platform alive.

Ruby: Yeah, I think that the whole time we were there, there was a sense that this was this wonderful company, wonderful technology that was teetering on the edge, and we were a part of the ecosystem that was supposed to help drive its success, but it was pretty clear as we were running along that it wasn't gonna really happen. So—I mean, I don't want to say that it was immediately clear, but over the period of whatever it was, two-and-a-half, three years.

Hsu: Yeah, it does seem like it from a lot of the little editorials that there seems to be a lot of, I don't know, anxieties and worries about, "Oh, what should NeXT be doing?" And questioning about its strategy. You know, "Maybe NeXT should open up its platform to be more open," or you know, things like that, that struck me.

Ruby: Yeah, I mean, I think that that's always the case with these magazines that there's all these kibitzers that write columns—about technology, about business, whatever. .

Hsu: Yeah, but there's also a sense that the magazine is trying to show these positive stories and trying to keep a brave face in a way, in the face of—there's an undercurrent of worry that you can read through.

Ruby: I think that's probably very fair. And, yeah, the fact that it's right out there in the open is probably not something that you would have wanted the readers to be absorbing. But you know, when you're in the moment, you do the best you can. <laughter> And with the budgets that you have and so forth.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: The trade shows were interesting. I think we did two of them. And again, that was part of the contract, and there was some kind of, like I don't know all the financial terms, but IDG had committed that

they would do a *NeXTWORLD* trade show, and so the first year it was done sort of in the model of the *Macworld* ones, only on a smaller scale. The nice thing was we got to use a lot of IDG's systems. But our little team, you know, kind of ran the editorial and the content for the conference. In the second year, NeXT took a lot of it over, and it became—and it needed to be, honestly—more about the educational content. And they did a lot of their—I mean, it was one of the ways that they would do their developer training and so forth.

Hsu: Oh, so they ran their Bootcamps, their Developer Camps at *NeXTWORLD*.

Ruby: They did. I think, actually, they did it both years, but the second year was more integrated into the main conference program. Although we still had our own conference track—we did an awards ceremony that was a lot of fun. And Barlow played a big role in the—I think we had a live Lavin-Barlow debate that was in the tradition of—what was it on 60 Minutes, you know, that they satirized on SNL with "You ignorant slut!" ?<laughter> That was kind of the concept. You know what I'm talking about, right?

Hsu: Yes! <laughs>

Ruby: So that was the concept. But that was my idea to bring Barlow in. It was kind of a coup that I was able to engineer.

Hsu: Yeah, talk about how did that happen?

Ruby: I got to know him—because the *Wired* crowd was already holding a lot of events. This was in the year before *Wired* launched. Maybe even two years. That group, Louis and Jane—I don't know if you know them —Louis Rosetto and Jane Metcalfe, were the entrepreneurs behind *Wired*. And they were holding salons, and editorial roundtables, discussion groups, bringing in interesting people. And they had their office right across the street from the IDG Building on Second Street in—[San Francisco] south of Market. And so we got to be quite friendly. They were right across the street. We would go hang out at their office quite a bit. And there was a sort of interchange of ideas. But they really kind of had this critical mass developing of—I don't know whether they had their funding in place yet at that point, but there was—as far as the kind of community developing around the idea of a magazine that was going to = focus [on digital culture]—they were making great progress. There were, you know, as I said, lots of other people with similar ideas, including myself.

So I brought some of those ideas to *NeXTWORLD*, and then I was able to bring in some other things later. I got to know Barlow, I think through *Wired*, actually. I was excited because [of] his connection with Grateful Dead, [since] I had been a Deadhead. And then the fact that he was very interested in NeXT. He didn't yet own a NeXT machine, but I believe it was—yeah, I'm almost certain this is correct—that in [the arrangement]bringing him into our fold, he was gifted a machine directly by Steve,. And he got very

excited about the platform and the technology, and he started writing about it. There was kind of agreement between him and I, and I don't know if Louis maybe was party to it as well, that he could write for us, but he was going to be a *Wired* contributor—he was really a *Wired* guy. So it was—he had this passion about NeXT, and wanted to write for the NeXT magazine, as well as being one of the regulars at *Wired*. And a lot of places were more exclusiyou would try to be exclusive with somebody who was going to be a superstar columnist or something. You wouldn't want, if you were at *Wired*, you wouldn't want them also writing for the guy across the street. But so the fact that that deal kind of worked out, to me, is kind of an indication of a kind of collaborative spirit that was in place at that time.

Hsu: Hm.

Ruby: I got—they offered me a chance to go to *Wired* before they launched. It was a pretty senior editorial job. And I didn't take the job. Instead I recommended—they hired two of the people that I sent to them. One of them, John Battelle, ended up being a key person there for quite a few years.

Hsu: I think there was a woman who worked for, or wrote for, *Wired*, that I think also occasionally wrote for *NeXTWORLD*.

Ruby: Yeah, I think you're talking about Paulina.

Hsu: Yeah, Paulina Borsook. Is that how you pronounce?

Ruby: Borsook <rhymes with hook>, I think it is. Yeah, she was a *Wired* writer and she also wrote for us. That may have been the same kind of deal where I met her and invited her to write for us. And she was just a freelance writer. That's a different kind of deal than sort of a named columnist.

Hsu: Right, if you're a freelancer, then—yeah, yeah.

Ruby: So actually, Paulina ended up—I ended up several—some years later doing a magazine called *Knowledge Management*, which was a pretty—it was a fun magazine, too. Although it never got the attention it should have. And I used Paulina on that magazine, and she ended up getting pissed at the way I edited one of her articles. And she might have been right, that I might have taken liberties.

Hsu: Oh. Huh.

Ruby: It's the kind of thing that happens in editing. We wanted to do a story on—and it was kind of early to cover this subject—the conflict between privacy and personalizedinformation, the benefits and

downsides to the user and what's the right balance of those things. Obviously, this is something we're really familiar with today, but this was in the mid-90s. It was quite an interesting topic at the time. And so I gave it to Paulina to write about for *Knowledge Management*, maybe in '96 <inaudible>. And I should have realized—this magazine was also trying to promote technology solutions, let's say, including how to use collaborative filtering and all these various technologies to deliver [personalized] content or products. So Paulina came down hard on the privacy side, and I ended up editing her piece to make it more [balanced], in my mind. So we—

Hsu: Oh, okay!

Ruby: We [had a] falling out. And so that's the kind of thing that sometimes happens between, you know, in the journalism business.

Hsu: Right, well, I found it interesting, because the article that I read from her in *NeXTWORLD* was, I think, all about promoting the use of NeXT in finance. And then she later writes this book on libertarianism, the culture of libertarianism in Silicon Valley, and it's almost in a way a critique of that previous thing. So that's why I found that kind of fascinating.

Ruby: Yeah, well, that may be sort of a precursor of the thing that I'm describing that happened a little bit later. Her personal beliefs were on the libertarian side. And you know, wanted to do, you know, to write that kind of journalism that would be more advocacy for that. So fitting her into any of these—I mean, it's true for *Wired*, too, any media product is influenced to one degree or another by its business side. And so—

Hsu: Yeah, hm. I mean, and I think a lot has been written about how *Wired* explicitly had a sort of both a techno-futurist and a libertarian viewpoint. But for a magazine like *NeXTWORLD*, which is supposed to be a user-oriented magazine, is not supposed to have that, although it does kind of start with that techno-futurism, in that first issue, and then it becomes more of like *Macworld* in its later issues.

Ruby: And that was what the company wanted, and what I was brought in to do. I like to think that, though, we still had some flavor of the ferment that was going on.

Hsu: Well, with Barlow, you definitely had that voice, right?

Ruby: Yeah, certainly Barlow, and I don't know, again, I should go back and review it, but I think that one could go through and find articles that would show our interest in kind of techno-futurism, whatever you might want to call it. But we were explicitly [told], you know, not to go hard in that direction, so.

Hsu: Right, yeah.

Ruby: I mean, again, I had some use—when I was at *PC Week*, there was almost none of that. It was strict, you know, this is for business executives, and I got to *MacWEEK*.

Hsu: Let me make sure this is—

Ruby: I get to *MacWEEK*, it's—I was new to San Francisco. I came in 1987, and right into this scene that was already underway, obviously, but would continue to gain momentum over the next five years or whatever. And so at *MacWEEK*, I was able to do quite a lot of what I would say was socially conscious kind of stuff. One thing that with me, and I think that if I'd gone to *Wired*, I probably wouldn't have lasted, because I'm not libertarian. I'm more of a, you know, old-time liberal. Not very fashionable in the tech industry. <laughter> And I didn't—you know, it took some years to sort of realize that I was kind of out of step on some issues with the culture. But I think that it was already, to me, starting to become apparent to me and I was aware of that. So, you know, not that I have anything against how technology leaders developed in their political positions and so forth. I mean, that tension is there even now between more activist tech leaders versus those who were [not interested in social issues]. Now, where we are today, I'm very glad to see most of the technology companies stepping up and—

Hsu: Right, yeah.

Ruby: Yeah. I mean, the thing about Steve, he was pretty expressly not political. He didn't want to hear anything about politics except the Ross Perot thing, which I think you noted. <laughter> But, the fact that his father was a Syrian immigrant is kind of interesting in the light of this whole—his natural father.

Hsu: But he kind of repudiates his natural father, right? He—

Ruby: Right, but even so, if you think about banning immigrants [from the Middle East], Steve Jobs wouldn't have been in America, or wouldn't have been born.

Hsu: Right, yeah, that's tr—that's true.

Ruby: Regardless of whether, whatever his relationship turned out to be.

Hsu: Exactly, yeah. <laughs> Yeah, hm. So let's—I mean, going back to Barlow, what do you think was—did Barlow bring to the magazine with his sort of particular voice?

Ruby: Well, you know, a hipness, an insider-y kind of thing. A connection. Not necessarily to the music world, but more to the techno-cultural scene, because he was starting to be [well known]. [He was a founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.] Before *Wired*, I don't remember exactly where he'd written but I'm pretty sure he had bylines in various places before that time. So he was known. As far as interest in NeXT, part of it was that he wanted to meet Steve. And I think at the bottom, that that was really what it was about.

Hsu: Right, is this shared love of the counterculture kind of a thing.

Ruby: Yeah. So through me—and again, I would have to go back and recall whether he got his machine because of the relationship, but I'm pretty sure that that was it. But anyway, so he became a columnist at the same time he was using the machine for the first time. <laughter> So a lot of the times, you know, he didn't have all that much to say. But he said it dramatically, you know, with a [witty] turn of phrase. And so actually teaming him up with Lavin turned out to be a good solution, because they got the dialog going and mainly it was just done through emails and then we put it together.

Hsu: But he wasn't technical in the way that you normally expect a writer from *Macworld* to be technical, right?

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: Or knowledgeable about maybe the ins-and-outs of the products themselves, or the—

Ruby: Right, yeah, no, it wasn't like hiring somebody to do in-depth reviews, or whatever. But actually in some ways, his being, his perspective as a newbie, if you wanted to say that, since they were trying to appeal to a lot of newbies, was relevant. That had a certain amount of celebrity and expressed himself in a way that was fun to read—all of that was good for me.

Hsu: Right, yeah.

Ruby: So, and then he hung ar—you know, we paid him, but you know, not a lot, and so—<laughter>.

Hsu: And he would still write for *Wired* as well.

Ruby: Yep.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: Exactly.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: [So that leads to what happened at the second NeXTWORLD trade show.] The thing, I think, if you ever talk to him, do you know anything about his marriage and then the woman that died?

Hsu: So I found out about this through Andrew Stone, who apparently he met because of his—

Ruby: It was actually at the show.

Hsu: At the trade show, at the *NeXTWORLD* trade show.

Ruby: [Barlow has written about this so I am not speaking out of school.] It was actually on the day that we had this big awards ceremony, and that he played a major role in it as an emcee.

Hsu: That Barlow played a big—yeah.

Ruby: And so I don't remember if he'd met her just before the event, or just after, but it was that day. And then, you know, he decided she was the love of his life. And it was kind of amazing to me, 'cause a guy like that had, you know, lots of experience with women. And anyway, he fell really hard for her, and then she had this tragic thing.

Hsu: Yeah. Yeah, Andrew's told me that story a couple times. So it's—

Ruby: Yeah, I haven't been in touch with Andrew for all these years.

Hsu: Oh!

Ruby: I'm not very good in keeping up all my relationships, but I know he's still out there.

Hsu: Yeah, he's still—he's recently retired from developing—development, because he discovered that the government had inserted code—the NSA had inserted some backdoors into Xcode, into the developer tools, and therefore was—had a way into every iPhone app, or something like that. And he was just really, really upset about it. And you know, Andrew also shares that countercultural perspective, so it was very—it just was—

Ruby: Right, Andrew was a key player, you know, with Barlow and the show. I think I read [in your dissertation]—you talked in there about the rave. That happened—I think that was probably—at the first show.

Hsu: I think it was the first show—the '92 show, right?

Ruby: Yeah. Right, because that was at—well, the show was at, you know, the Civic Center auditorium, what do they call it? It's not called Bill Graham—

Hsu: Oh, the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium?

Ruby: Yeah, so that was where the first show was. And we didn't have the money to do it at Moscone, which Steve hated, the fact that it wasn't in Moscone was a terrible thing. But anyway, yeah, Andrew—I didn't remember that Andrew actually hosted the rave, but it makes sense that he did. And it was at the Exploratorium.

Hsu: Ohhhh!

Ruby: And I guess it was that night, or one of the nights of the event. So yeah, it was a party at the Exploratorium.

Hsu: So then, so wait, so then Barlow meets basically the love of his life at the second NeXTWORLD?

Ruby: That was the second one, yeah.

Hsu: Oh, the second *NeXTWORLD*.

Ruby: Yeah, which was at Moscone.

Hsu: Okay, huh! Okay, I had not—I had conflated those two in my mind. I had not realized that there were two separate shows.

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: Okay, huh. Fascinating.

Ruby: The second year was a bigger deal. And again, NeXT had taken over a lot of the programming, although we still had our track. The first year, we did all the content. I think they probably weren't happy with the technical depth of it, and they were probably right. S the—first year I got to introduce him for his keynote. Which was fun.

Hsu: Oh, Steve's first keynote?

Ruby: Yeah, at *NeXTWORLD*. They didn't ask me to do that the second year.

Hsu: I do find it kind of fascinating how, you know, I mean, the community was so small that Barlow would—could form this personal relationship with Andrew Stone, who was just an independent developer, and you know, this would lead to this whole relationship, and like all these things happening. I found that just absolutely fascinating that—

Ruby: Yeah. Well, again, that's the—you know, a magazine or a medium, a store, anything, the idea is to bring people together and hopefully sparks happen. So yeah, Andrew—I don't remember, I think he made other visits to San Francisco besides for those shows. I remember him being in our office once. So I don't remember exactly when he met Barlow. But yeah, they were two people in the community that, you know, shared interests in certain aspects of the culture.

Hsu: Simpatico.

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: And Barlow—

Ruby: And again, myself being, I'd been a [Grateful] Dead kind of person, and so I shared some of that, too. So did some of the—outside of our small group in the wider community, you know, there were also people who were doing that sort of thing. I mean, yeah, I did go to a number of raves. I met Timothy Leary

at one of them. I guess it was just probably a few years before he died. Yeah, through Barlow, I think I met Timothy Leary, and who else?

Hsu: Gilmore?

Ruby: Yeah, John Gilmore, I knew. He was friends, yeah, I ran across John Gilmore quite a bit at those events.

Hsu: Hm.

Ruby: He was interesting, because he had both a political outlook, as well as a techno-sort of futurist—and of course, you know, was an advocate for sharing and that whole ethic.

Hsu: Free software.

Ruby: Open software and stuff.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: So yeah, so he was very definitely in the scene.

Hsu: Right, hm. Yeah, I think I remember Barlow writing about Andrew Stone being his favorite NeXT developer. Like I think there's a specific line in one of his columns, I think, where he writes that. <laughs>

Ruby: Yeah, probably a good editor would have taken that out. <laughter> But we gave him the support—

Hsu: I think it was an editorial—I think it was like a conversation. Like one of those where there's multiple voices in the column.

Ruby: That's the Barlow-Lavin [column that we were talking about].

Hsu: Yeah, that's the Barlow—so he's explicitly quoted as saying that, so it's not like it's him writing an article.

Ruby: Yes, as I said that Barlow and Lavin were mainly email exchanges that were edited to make them feel like they were more conversational.

Hsu: Oh! So they weren't physically in the same location.

Ruby: Well, the only time—well, not the only time—I mean, the only time like that they really did a thing like that was at this event when we did a live version of—

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: But Barlow was in our office quite a bit. So there was a lot of interaction. But it wasn't like they sat down and we recorded it.

Hsu: Right. Hm, yeah.

Ruby: So.

Hsu: There's another article that Barlow wrote in *NeXTWORLD* where he's kind of worrying about NeXT's pivot into the enterprise market, and he's sort of saying, "MIS is this hidden market? Like what's going on? I thought, you know, Steve Jobs was all about, you know, anti-corporate." Like, and he's starting to worry that, "Well, <inaudible> is NeXT going to turn into like the CIA or something, like what's going on?"

Ruby: Yeah, that was happening. And yeah, I think—I can't remember exactly when he wrote that, but my guess is that it was sort of early on, because I think he didn't continue to fight that. And because I remember—I have to think hard about the exact thing, but him having interactions with people from, you know, the various banks, or some of the [government users]. I don't think we ever had any real spooks in the—<laughter> that came through. Of course, we [joked about] that—our rumor columnist was supposedly a CIA guy.

Hsu: Oh, really?

Ruby: Yeah. <laughter> And he—we, yeah, we had a thing called Lieutenant Sullivan. It came out of all those previous weekly magazines that all had their rumor columnists.

Hsu: Oh, so this was that little thing—

Ruby: Yeah, so what happened was—I think the magazine under the original deal was supposed to be a bi-monthly, meaning six times per year. And I think we were on that schedule for maybe as much as a year when one of the first cutbacks was that we went back to quarterly. But in an attempt to be more timely, we also started putting out a monthly tabloid news sheet, which was bound into the quarterly magazine and mailed it to subscribers on the off months. And again, so that was meant to be sort of like a weekly journalism, as opposed to monthly, even though it was monthly. And the leading computer weeklies all had these rumor columnists. In *PC Week* they had a thing called Spencer Katt, who had gotten to be quite influential. And so the [model for it] was Spencer, and then later at *MacWEEK*, we had Mac the Knife.

Hsu: Oh, yes! I remember that!

Ruby: And Mac the Knife was like—you know, later on, there became this huge industry of Apple leaks, and scoops and all that. But Mac the Knife was sort of the beginning of all that.

Hsu: Yeah. MacRumors.

Ruby: So anyway, when we decided to put out this more frequent news sheet to supplement the quarterly, and we were trying to figure out what goes into that, we decided to put in a rumor column. Although it was funky, because in the case of, you know, we couldn't really publish NeXT's secrets, because we were on the payroll of NeXT, and <laughter>—and in fact, but there were a couple of incidents where we, from their point of view, stepped over the line, and we got slapped down.

Hsu: Oh really? Huh!

Ruby: There was a guy there named—a marketing guy there, Mike Sh— [Mike Slade,]. One of the early marketing people at NeXT who was responsible from their end for managing our relationships. And he blew up at me one day about some item that we had in Lieutenant Sullivan, who was supposedly a spook, you know, spy and a user of NeXTSTEP. In that column we were able to sort of drop authorized leaks and then you'd also, you know, just kind of write fun stuff. And so—

Hsu: Yeah. I think the rave is actually mentioned in one of those.

Ruby: I'm sure it is, yeah. <laughter> So I don't know how I got to that. We had a freelance guy, Rick Reynolds, who wrote that, and then I re-wrote it, basically. And—

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: I never had much to do with Spencer Katt, even though I was on the magazine. It was done by a different department. But Mac the Knife I had a lot to do with, and so for me, Lieutenant Sullivan was a fun thing to do.

Hsu: Right, so you pretended you were the CIA spook, like spy.

Ruby: Yeah, it was this fake persona. I mean, everybody knew, just like you know there's no Spencer Katt. But then you also put in a phone number and an email address for people to submit their tips and information. In the case of Spencer Katt, he did make a lot of scoops over the years. And I think probably Mac the Knife did as well. And maybe Lieutenant Sullivan, too. <laughter> But a lot of times it would be because Andrew [Stone] called us, "Well, the next release is coming, and it's going to have this feature," and then Lieutenant Sullivan could put that in. Or the same thing from Glenn Reid, or—Lighthouse Design was pretty tight-lipped. We didn't get much from them.

Hsu: Oh, really? Huh.

Ruby: But you know, we [had connections with] most of the developers, certainly the local ones.

Hsu: So I mean, you mentioned Glenn Reid, you mentioned Andrew Stone, you mentioned Lighthouse Design, like were those the three major indies, or were there other ones? I guess there was Adamation that was profiled [in NeXTWORLD].

Ruby: Yes, Adamation, although, I don't think their product ever made much—you know, got that far. You know, on the way down I was trying to think. Because I think I'm missing one significant one that for some reason I'm not thinking of, that was local. And then there were a lot of others. The one that comes to mind that's made a huge difference is the Omni Group.

Hsu: Oh, right.

Ruby: And they were active at that time.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: And then, you know, there was also the major guys. Lotus was already—had dropped out [of the NeXT market] by the time I got there.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: But Adobe was, you know, an important—and so we had some relationships there. I'm forgetting one or two other companies, but—

Hsu: Well I mean, was it—well, obviously, there's a difference between the big companies and the small guys, right? Like from your perspective what were those relationships like? How would you characterize—

Ruby: Well, I was sort of surprised when I came to this new market, that I found these one- and two-man companies making what appeared to be very professional software. What I was used to, even in the Mac world, especially in the PC world, where you know you had teams, and you know, there was Microsoft, or Borland, or one of these companies, they had different groups working on the different projects. And yeah, the idea that a one-man shop, basically, could [replace that]—was pretty interesting to me. And I came to understand pretty quickly, that it was because of all the benefits of the environment of NeXTSTEP, and the developer kit, and the Interface Builder and all of the other libraries and all that. So I kind of got religion fairly quickly. You know, so we were paid to be kind of a fan magazine, but there's also some satisfaction in that if you're a fan of something that's worthy of it.

Hsu: Right, so for you it wasn't just that you were being paid to hype the technology, you became a true believer in the technology?

Ruby: I did. Now, you know, I was not a programmer, and so I wasn't deep into [coding], you know, but I think even at a higher level of—I mean, even just as a user, the NeXT environment [had a lot of advantages]. I mean, as an editor there's a lot of kind of systems that you build— assignment lists, schedules, budgets that are usually done in various spreadsheets or databases. [We had tools] like [Lotus] Improv, that made it more fun to do those things in the NeXT environment than it had been on the Macintosh or the PC. So yeah, I saw those benefits. And I started thinking of it from my point of view as a user, you know, how could you build editorial systems with the technology to implement the process, conceivably even [to the point of], you know, replacing people <laughter>. [It fit with] the whole object-oriented mantra, you know. So we used to talk about editorial objects and like that, yes.

Hsu: Huh. Wow. Hmm.

Ruby: So yeah, we bought into it. And of course, the other fun thing that was happening was—I just read the Isaacson book, do you know which one I'm talking about, *The Innovators*? Which was—

Hsu: Oh, the other Isaacson book.

Ruby: Yeah, not the biography. Which I read, too, but—

Hsu: Right, *The Innovators*.

Ruby: *The Innovators*. I hadn't read that before, but just in the last week I did. And which [I thought] was really good, although he's a little heavy handed, I think, with his summaries and conclusions.

Hsu: Mm hm.

Ruby: But he does a lot of great research, and I learned a lot. Why did I bring that up? <laughter> Oh, the Internet was exploding. So there was all this object-oriented development stuff, but really the bigger thing personally for me was that we got a somewhat earlier exposure to the culture of the Internet than people on—not workstation platforms. So the Mac and PC people were all still going to America Online, or The Source, or whatever. They didn't know anything about Usenet and so—but at NeXT, we got a kind of crash course in that culture. So that was very exciting to me.

Hsu: Right, because all the UNIX-based workstations were more Internet friendly and then NeXT was the most friendly of the UNIX workstations, and of course, the web was developed on it, so this [was a] natural platform for that.

Ruby: Right.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: So as far as starting, you know, to see how the future was going to be different and so forth, it was that early exposure to the Internet for me. We had—I told this story in the past, and again, I should talk to Lavin, or if you do, you should ask him about it. Tim Berners-Lee came to our office—

Hsu: Oh, wow.

Ruby: —to show us the World Wide Web. And I'm not—I think we wrote a little tiny thing in, like a paragraph or two about it. We may not even have done that. He just came in one day without an appointment.

Hsu: Huh!

Ruby: And I remember—I had an office, a glassed-in office, and Lavin had a cubicle outside. And he starts waving me to come over and said, "Take a look at this thing!"

Hsu: Hm.

Ruby: So I don't know what that date was, it must have been '91 or whatever, still a year before Mosaic came out. So anyway. All that was going on. And—

Hsu: Yeah. Wow, hm.

Ruby: The programming technologies and so forth were really interesting to me, but maybe didn't personally affect me as much, except for the editorial object thing, as the access to the Internet and the implications of that.

Hsu: Right, hm, wow. Want to go back to—I mean, earlier you mentioned sort of your relationship with Steve Jobs. Could you maybe talk about that, and maybe talk about what it was like to interview him?

Ruby: Yeah. Yeah, and I'm trying to remember the—that interview that was published. And I didn't go back and actually read it again.

Hsu: I think he's talking—

Ruby: Off the top of my head, I don't remember the circumstances of that interview, where it was done.

Hsu: I think, I don't remember where it's done, but I think he's talking about the pivot for NeXT into mission critical custom apps. And so I think your part of the interview is, you know, you're sort of like you're trying to ask him, "Well, why is *this* now the Holy Grail market?" Because obviously they've been saying—there's been all these other markets, right? There's been Education, there's been Desktop Publishing, there's been this and there's that. Why is this one—

Ruby: Yeah, and one of them was Interpersonal Computing.

Hsu: Right, Interpersonal Computing, yeah.

Ruby: That was the one they were on when I arrived, Interpersonal Computing. Right, so by then they were recognizing that it was in custom development, which I think was—I mean, they had a lot of really smart people at that company, including in marketing—and so I think that a lot of that analysis ended up being right.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: As far as my interactions with Steve, there was that first meeting, which I mentioned. Over the next, I don't know, I'd say two or three months after I was hired, we then did the—produced the next issue. And so it's—this is the one that has the woman plunging into a bucket of paint. Can you picture that on the cover?

Hsu: Okay.

Ruby: It's actually it was a really interesting cover, and it was, as I mentioned before, this high-end art director that we were able to work with. And so we actually, you know, I'd been around magazines, but not in consumer magazines, where you'd go out and hire a model and makeup person and do that kind of shoot. But that's what we were doing for this cover.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: So during that period, he stayed—Steve—quite in the loop on how things were developing. I'm pretty sure that we sent him a list of articles we were working on. The look and feel, of course, was his biggest thing.

Hsu: Ah! So he wanted very tight control over the look and feel of the magazine.

Ruby: Well, that's why we used his art director at that point. After that first issue, then we were handed off to a [freelance designer] who was more at our level. And that guy, Chuck [from Earl Office] did a wonderful job for us for the rest of the time. And our design was pretty hip for what it was, compared to the other publications at the time.

So anyway, during that period there were a number of—I used to go down to the NeXT offices pretty frequently—at least once a week, sometimes more than that—for meetings. Sometimes Steve would be in the meeting. Other times I'd be meeting with other people. There were maybe a few other one-on-one meetings with him. But I do remember several group meetings when he displayed some of the characteristics that he's famous for, being mercurial and demanding. He was right down there in the

details, and you know, he didn't like this, or he didn't like that. And so I was exposed to a fair amount of that. You know, a couple of times Steve was critical of things that we did. But by and large, I think he was fairly satisfied, with at least the first couple of issues that I was responsible for. And then after that he didn't have to pay that much attention to it anymore. Although I still had plenty of interaction with him for the next couple of years—a couple of times for interviews., but [more often] for briefings where we would be learning what's coming up and stuff like that.

Hsu: Oh, right.

Ruby: And so it was other people as well, but frequently he was in those meetings.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: The one that I do remember, I mentioned that we couldn't afford Moscone for the... And so I remember being in a meeting with him where we were brainstorming about where we could have the show, and I was living in Oakland at that time and I made the suggestion that the Kaiser Convention Center, do you know it? Over in downtown Oakland?

Hsu: Uh-huh.

Ruby: Might be an option. And he thought that was the stupidest idea he ever heard.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: Why would you put, you know, his company in Oakland of all places?

Hsu: Right. <laughs>

Ruby: So I was made to feel about that big at the meeting for [making] that suggestion. But whatever, you got used to it. And quite honestly, it was exhilarating and I enjoyed those years of my career as much as anything else I did.

Hsu: Right. Seems to be a common—

Ruby: I hear that.

Hsu: —sentiment that like, despite the difficulties of working with him, people really, really enjoyed it.
<laughs>

Ruby: Well, yeah. I mean, he set an ideal and he made everybody feel like this was something really, a goal worth striving for and to all be working together towards that. And that even though it might be uncomfortable at the time, when you look back at it, later you realize that somehow or other he did motivate you to do some of [your] best work.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: That you've done.

Hsu: Yeah, yeah.

Ruby: And I felt that way. I had worked on a lot of different magazines, but some of what we did there was, you know, it was good.

Hsu: Yeah. Huh.

Ruby: So yeah. You know, you didn't really have any illusions that he really cared about you personally or anything like that.

Hsu: <laughs> Right.

<laughter>

Ruby: You were being used. But you kind of felt okay about it.

<laughter>

Hsu: Yeah, yeah. So what was sort of the magazine's relationship like with NeXT as a company over the years?

Ruby: All right. Well, so it started out with this business deal. One of the problems was the executive that it was given to was a sort of charismatic figure in his own right, this guy Gordon Haight, and he and Steve did not hit it off at all. So that part of the relationship was somewhat troubled. Pat McGovern, who was the head of the company, and Steve, always had a—wouldn't say close, but friendly kind of relationship. Pat was an important figure because he controlled, you know, all these different magazines—from ComputerWorld to, you know, many others. So I think Pat and Steve continued to have a good relationship. But it kind of fell to Jeanine, who was the publisher of NeXTWORLD and myself as the editor, to become the hands-on, you know, what these days might be called a relationship manager. From our end. And so for me, as the editor you're kind of positioned to be the good guy. You can dispense coverage or, you know, say something nice or whatever. So that was kind of my role, as well as to make as good a magazine as [possible].

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: Over time, I became—well, as the relationship started to founder because of business problems. I can't remember which one sued, but they ended up in court. I had to give a deposition and I was in a funny position because I was much more sympathetic to NeXT than I was to my employer.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: And I couldn't quite say that in the deposition, but that was my true feeling. Although, it really wasn't either one's fault. It was that there just wasn't a business there after a time for a print magazine, whether it's quarterly or monthly or in any form. At some point, if there are not enough users...

Hsu: Right. If there's not enough buyers of the magazine. Yeah.

Ruby: You know, when they got out of hardware, at first we thought that would be good, because there were, you know, a number of hardware manufacturers that were interested in the market. Toshiba and some of the big companies started making NeXTSTEP PCs. And the thought was that that would expand our market as well as—

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: But it didn't really. I think their strategic shift to software was too late and wasn't destined to [succeed]. I don't know when the last magazine [issue] was and then how much longer after that NeXT continued before they did their deal with Apple. But it was another maybe three years or something, I think.

Hsu: Yeah. I think so.

Ruby: [Eventually] either Gordon or Pat killed the magazine.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: I stayed on with IDG, with a group that was going to do an Internet magazine.

Hsu: Ah.

Ruby: And I spent a year or so producing a launch issue for this thing that came to be called NetSmart. We had the trademark for DotCom, which was what I wanted it to be but—

Hsu: Huh.

Ruby: —the idea was there were other consumer-oriented Internet magazines that were starting to happen. This was going to be the business Internet magazine. So anyway, they ended up deciding not to launch it. And then after that, I left IDG.

Hsu: Mm-mm.

Ruby: [A year or so later], I was the editor of New Media Magazine at the time that the [Next-Apple] deal happened when—

Hsu: Ah.

Ruby: And I wrote a column there, because at that point the press was being brutal. You know, Apple was bringing Steve Jobs back and was buying this boat anchor software.

<laughter>

Ruby: Nobody was saying anything nice about the deal.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: And so anyway, I wrote a column predicting that Steve Jobs was going to do great things and—

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: —revive Apple and....

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: So anyway, that's the trajectory with the company.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: Basically because the business was broken. I think it would've been, you know, if NeXT had taken off as a company, and as a platform, we would've continued to have done it and it would've been, you know, probably pretty amazing.

Hsu: Right. Yeah. How did you or other members of the staff feel about sort of the failure of NeXT as a user, end-user platform, at least, during that time?

Ruby: Yeah. I think I was still at MacWEEK when the original NeXT announcement happened. At War Memorial, when Steve first announced the company.

Hsu: Uh-huh.

Ruby: So I don't know what year that was. Must've been—

Hsu: '85? When the company was first announced?

Ruby: Or maybe not the company, but the product.

Hsu: Oh, the Cube.

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: When the computer was announced. It was at Davies Symphony Hall, right?

Ruby: Yes. Right.

Hsu: That was '88, I believe.

Ruby: Was it Davies or War Memorial? They're right next to each other. Maybe it was Davies. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was. The keynote was in Davies.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: There was something else that happened across the street at the War Memorial. But I may be conflating it with some other event. Anyway, you know, I remember then, I mean, Steve was the darling. He was probably on the cover of Time Magazine for it. And, you know, it was like great hope about this. Actually at MacWEEK we did a NeXT supplement at that time. And, you know, as you know, the thought was that it was going to be, you know, was a higher end system and it was going to find a different kind of user probably. But the thought was that there would be a traditional third-party software market for it. And, you know, Improv was a great product and there were a few other things. So the question was would you have to have enough users for a third-party market to develop, that, you know, they're going to make money. And, I mean, the nice thing about a company like Stone Design was you don't need a lot of people. But nevertheless, the economics, whether you're a small company or a somewhat larger software company, you needed to have a thriving market.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: So as it started to become clear that that wasn't happening, that coincided with NeXT realizing that and getting to the custom apps focus.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: I think we were all, would've liked it, if it worked in the other way. I mean, certainly people were making an investment, a Glenn Reid or somebody like that was doing good work and deserved a bigger audience than he got.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: And the same for the various other companies we talked about.

Hsu: Right. Yeah.

Ruby: So yeah, it was disappointing. But then this other idea developed and that made some sense too. For me, when I'd been at PC Week, one of the main things I did there for over two years was user application stories. And they had a big budget and they sent me all over the country to places to go do interviews on how organizations were applying PCs. So I had a feel for corporate culture and computing issues in organizations. So as that change happened at NeXT, when that became more of their focus, I did have some affinity with that. The packaged software model didn't work, so this new one seemed like a reasonable approach to try.

Hsu: Right. Hm. So I guess maybe wrapping up, like, in terms of the decision to shut down the magazine, how did, you know, maybe describe that process in a bit more detail and how you and the staff felt during that period.

Ruby: I'm trying to remember when the news came down and how. I have to think here little bit. I know that Gordon had been fed up with the relationship for some time. As I said, he wouldn't even talk to Steve. And so... But he was still our boss. And, you know, so he'd always be giving us a hard time about, "How come your stupid magazine doesn't make any money?" and...

<laughter>

Ruby: As if it was our fault.

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: Jeanine's and mine. And so somewhere in there they came to blows. And again, whether Gordon sued NeXT or the other way around, I don't know for sure. I'm inclined to think though, it was that NeXT failed to make a scheduled payment that they were contractually obligated to, and Gordon sued for it. And then they probably countersued. It became sort of ugly. So that was still going—and we were still publishing for a while during that, but then it was during that period when a decision was made to close it. But I don't really remember the moment that happened. Obviously the staff were all unhappy and we had a, you know, great group that had real camaraderie. That was sort of unusual—because it was a small team. A place like MacWEEK, where the staff was 50, 60 people and there were real divisions. By and large, editorial didn't talk to sales, which is more typically the case in magazines. But at NeXTWORLD we were a small little cohesive group and we kind of did everything together and had a lot of fun. And so it was sad that we were going to be losing that.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: There were some reunions for a while.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: Jeanine tried to keep the group together. I'm trying to remember what happened to all the individuals. Eliot, who I mentioned, got a job at Netscape editing their web page. And he became suddenly—because Netscape was—

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: —blowing up. And suddenly Eliot was like king of the world because he had this job.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: So he did pretty well. He actually made some money on their IPO. I don't know exactly where Dan went right away. And Simson just sort of moved into his more academic stuff. And he had lots of options and books he was writing and it didn't make that much difference to him. For this nerdy, sort of socially awkward guy, it was important to him, I think, to have that experience, to be a part of that, you know, that group.

Hsu: Hm. Hm.

Ruby: So he went on. He wrote for a lot of publications. And then he ended up in academia, [and worked] in Monterey for a number of years at the Naval academy or whatever it is down there.

Hsu: Right. Yeah.

Ruby: So yeah. And now, he mentioned to me he's got a big new job, but I didn't quite hear exactly what it is.

Hsu: Yeah. So he just moved from the National Institute of Standards and Technology to a new job at, I think—I can't—

Ruby: This is the Census Bureau or something?

Hsu: Yeah. I can check my e-mail and double check that, but yeah. <Simson Garfinkel is now at the U.S. Census Bureau>

Ruby: So anyway, I didn't [worry]. Everybody I knew was going to do fine because they were smart people and...

Hsu: Yeah. Had [Simson] already written the NeXT programming book by then?

Ruby: Yes. He had written a lot of that before he ever came to NeXTWORLD.

Hsu: Oh.

Ruby: But then I think he finished it while he was on our staff.

Hsu: Oh, okay.

Ruby: I'm pretty sure that was how that went.

Hsu: Right. Hm. Yeah. Andrew Stone gave me a copy of that book actually. <laughs> From his personal library.

Ruby: Uh-huh.

Hsu: That was pretty cool.

Ruby: I've got a lot of old memorabilia in my basement. I — some hardware and...

Hsu: Oh, really?

Ruby: Some old things.

Hsu: Hardware-wise, there's only one thing that we're looking for and that's the fancy NeXTdimension Color Board that went into the, I think, the second version of the Cube, I believe. I think that's the one we're looking for.

Ruby: Ah.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: And how would I know if my Cube is the second version?

Hsu: I'm not quite sure actually.

<laughter>

Hsu: Because I think they look exactly the same.

Ruby: Uh-huh. But there's probably serial numbers.

Hsu: And just a different motherboard or something like that. I'm not really exactly sure.

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: But, I mean, if you have any, like, documents or, like, you know, software or marketing materials or any of those things, we might be interested in collecting those.

Ruby: I will go down there and try to organize it and see what I've got.

Hsu: Yeah. Or anything that you have from the production of the magazine might be interesting too.

Ruby: Like boards and stuff like that. The one thing that I have that's kind of fun was—

Hsu: Or like interviews. Like, the raw text of interviews or things like that.

Ruby: Yeah. Well, on those machines, maybe on the Cube, are probably the documents of the old, my old files.

Hsu: Oh, wow.

Ruby: I'm thinking. It's been a while since I fired it up, but...

Hsu: Oh, yeah. <laughs> Hopefully—yeah.

Ruby: It wasn't that long ago, I actually did turn it on, the Cube. I've got a slab I think as well. It booted up.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: I think it even was on my Wi-Fi, but...

Hsu: Really?

Ruby: Oh, yeah. Is that possible? I don't know. But it sort of worked. But that was a few years ago. I'll maybe give it a try and see what's on there. One thing I do have that's kind of fun is, do you remember the [NeXTWORLD issue] that had "Help!", [with] the Beatles on the cover?

Hsu: Oh.

Ruby: It was our “Help!” issue, with several articles about how to do stuff. And so on the cover we put “Help!”

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: And The Beatles’ album has these four guys in kind of a—

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: Can you picture it?

Hsu: Yeah, yeah.

Ruby: Where they’re hand-to-hand. So that, there’s a—

Hsu: Right.

Ruby: We reproduced the Beatles [album] cover, but then we put Steve’s face in it instead of, I think, John Lennon.

Hsu: Right. <laughs>

Ruby: So what I do have is a close-up of just that figure, the Beatles “Help!” thing with Steve’s face in it. And that he signed.

Hsu: Oh, wow.

Ruby: He wrote something nice, you know, like, “Go NeXTWORLD,” or something like that. I don’t know what he wrote exactly, but actually, after he passed away I knew I had that and I couldn’t find it for the longest time, but then it finally turned up maybe six months ago. And the only thing that’s wrong with it is

the inscription is in kind of light ink and it doesn't pop as much as you'd like. But anyway, that's <laughs> one piece of memorabilia I have.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: But my guess is that there are—there's more things. So I will take a look and see what I have [for donation].

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: Aside from [possible] donations, how does this interview fit with what are you working on?

Hsu: So, you know, I've sort of been interested in NeXT history for a while. And as I guess part of the, as part of the museum staff, you know, this is sort of one of my sort of projects. I've been, you know, interviewing other people, like, Brad Cox, who created Objective-C. And I've done an interview with him. And this—we don't have, like, a big project on this. It's sort of an ongoing process of collecting archival material.

Ruby: Well, I mean, I guess you're talking to the people that were there. That is the way to do that.

Hsu: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Ruby: And I'm happy to help any way I can, and...

Hsu: Yeah, no. Thanks for coming in. And this has been a really great conversation and—

Ruby: Cool.

Hsu: —I've learned a lot <laughs> about just journalism. Journalism <inaudible>.

<laughter>

Ruby: Yeah. Unfortunately, a lot of these models of journalism are dying.

Hsu: Yeah.

Ruby: You know.

Hsu: Being killed by the web, <laughs> so...

Ruby: Right. But, you know, new ones obviously are being created, so...

Hsu: Right. Yeah.

Ruby: But, I mean, when I started as a young man at—I was at Popular Science Magazine, I remember thinking that right away, “This is a dying industry that I’m in.”

Hsu: Oh, really?

Ruby: In—

Hsu: Wow.

Ruby: In what would that be, like, in the late '70s.

Hsu: Really? That early?

Ruby: Yeah.

Hsu: Huh.

Ruby: It wasn't that hard to see that, you know, electronic media would overtake print. I always figured that I wasn't really concerned about it because whether it's on print or some other form, they still need editors and writers and stuff. I didn't really foresee the whole idea that professionals could get supplanted by ordinary people and so... I mean, so there's a lot that I didn't necessarily see. But it was pretty clear

that print as a medium was dying, but that I was of the right age to sort of be there for the last generation of it.

Hsu: Right. Huh.

Ruby: With, you know, being at Popular Science was kind of fun because I was exposed to a lot of technologies of all kinds, including information stuff. I remember I was involved with an article on, I edited an article, on voice recognition. This might've been in about 1981 or something like that. And I didn't do the reporting, but the author had gone out and talked to various, you know, experts and computer scientists and so forth. And the general consensus was it'll never happen.

Hsu: <laughs>

Ruby: That you'll have reliable machine recognition that could do something like take an airplane reservation and there's like, "It can't be done." And here we are today. So...

Hsu: Yeah. <laughs>

Ruby: It's just kind of amazing.

Hsu: Yeah.

[The changes I've seen] in my career, having started as a science writer, ended up being more of a business journalist. Anyway, I ended up talking more about my career than I expected to.

<laughter>

Hsu: No, no, no. That's all part of the thing. Well, I'll stop this.

END OF THE INTERVIEW