



Oral History of Peggy Burke, part 1 of 2

Interviewed by:
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Hancock: Well, good morning and welcome to the Computer History Museum. Today is September 26, 2018, and we're here with Peggy Burke to conduct an oral history. And we're just thrilled, Peggy, to have you here and to welcome you into the collection not only because of the tremendous artifacts that are now part of our collection that reflect your work, but also now to add a more extensive part of your personal story. So thank you.

Burke: Yeah. Well, thank you for having me, Marguerite. It's wonderful to be here after so many years of being involved with the museum. It's great.

Hancock: And there's a special gratitude the museum has. You've been a trustee for many years and have helped shape and build the museum. You've been involved with so many of the core parts of defining who we are and the program, so it's a particular privilege now to have this opportunity to interview. As we begin, I'd like to start at the beginning of your story and ask about where you were born and, for the record, to talk about your early childhood, the people and the places that mark the beginning of your story. Can you tell us about that?

Burke: Sure. So I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I was born in 1956. I was the fifth of ten children, so there were five girls and five boys in our family. We were Irish Catholic, right; you can probably pick that up. We had a very vibrant, happy childhood, I would say. My father owned the stockyards, or a portion of the stockyards, in Cincinnati, which was a thriving, booming business. All of that changed for us in the '70s, and what happened was we had a recession and the middlemen were cut out. So essentially, the meatpackers went directly to the farmers, so that had a massive impact on our family. We pretty much lost everything, and that's really where I think my story began because I went to work in a factory for the summer. I was in a private school, an all girls' school, and I wanted to stay there. I only had two years left of my high school education and I figured if I stayed at St. Ursula that I would be able to get a scholarship to college and put myself through school, and that's what I did.

And so at 15, I got a job in a factory. It was a book bindery, and I flannelled a thousand books a day. I said that was the best possible introduction to work that anyone could have. It was torturous, painful, repetitive, mind numbing, but it was a great introduction to the world of work. I had so much respect for all the people that went there every day and did these jobs and made such rich lives for themselves and their families doing this kind of piecemeal work. But I knew that that wasn't what I wanted to do with my life. So I was happy to start there, and of course I had many other jobs over a long period of time. I went to the University of Cincinnati and—

Hancock: And how did you decide on that place? Was it a continuation of your interests that you had developed in your earlier years in school or was it about the place?

Burke: That's a really good question because I was at an all-girls' Catholic school and in my day, girls were actually encouraged to be nurses, teachers or nuns in the case of St. Ursula. So I baby-sat for a family and they were a very creative family. I spent a lot of time with them and I would draw their kids; I would bring my sketchbooks and my homework and I would sketch their kids. And one night they came home and I was asleep-- it was like three in the morning-- and they flipped through my sketchbooks. I was

on the path to be a nurse as were all my friends. And they said, "Why do you want to be a nurse when you-- when the kids get sick or they cut themselves you practically faint?" And I said, "Because I know that I'll be able to be a nurse and I know that it'll be a good income and I'll be able to support myself." That's essentially what I thought. And they said, "Well, there is this thing called design." And Cincinnati had the number-one program in the country at the time, so I applied to it. It was the most difficult program to get into and the recruiters were very discouraging, I have to say. When they came to St. Ursula they basically said, "They only take 60 people out of hundreds so don't even apply." So I applied to nursing school and I applied to design school and I got in.

Hancock: That's tremendous. So with that encouragement they recognized these gifts that you had. And had you been exposed to the world of design? Did you have an idea of what you might do or fit into that kind of professional life or was this a new idea for you?

Burke: It was a brand-new idea for me. It was a way to actually get paid and still be creative at the same time. I definitely understood the world of advertising through this family. The father was an animator and he produced commercials, so he was very much in the advertising space. So I was exposed to that and I got that piece of it, but graphic design was very different once I got into it.

Hancock: And can we just ask a little bit before we jump into your education? Where do you account for the seeds of your creativity? You were sketching. Where did that come from? Was it just something you had at a very young age or was that influence from your elementary school years or--

Burke: I think yeah. I mean I was actually a good sketcher and from the time I was little my mom would tell me, "Teach yourself how to draw cats," and then that moved on to people and she sort of seeded that interest in me. She was very creative. So over the holidays we would paint all the windows in our house with nativity scenes and Christmas themes and so I would end up painting those themes and helping her. Every year we did that; we painted all the windows in our house and they were like stained-glass windows essentially. And then there was a little community, like a little main street, near us, and every year they would have an art competition and it would be around Halloween. And every year of course I would participate in that and many years I would win in my age group. So I was encouraged not just by my teachers, but I think by my parents, to explore that side of my ability more than anything so—

Hancock: And was that your natural leaning or was that the thing that you thought about and breathed? Or were there other areas as well that intrigued you at that age?

Burke: I loved writing. I really loved history. I was a voracious reader and I really enjoyed biographies and history and so when I was a kid, I thought, "Well, I could be a teacher and I could teach history, something that I have a passion for." I never, ever thought design would be a part of my life; it just didn't occur to me. I didn't think I could make a living doing what I do now.

Hancock: Well, you've proved that--

Burke: Yes—

Hancock: --to be--

Burke: --but I was very wrong about that and I'm incredibly grateful to the Kelliher family for setting me on the right path and my mother because she really encouraged it so—

Hancock: Thank you for sharing that. Take us now to your time as you began your program in design at the University of Cincinnati. Were there particular classes or professors or other students that really made a difference as you were developing as a young student?

Burke: I think the overall program, the essence of the program, is that design has meaning. It's not arbitrary; it's not just an aesthetic, if you will. It's steeped in a conceptual basis or foundation and the way it manifests actually makes a tremendous difference. And getting to the essence of what you're trying to articulate was really the big takeaway from design school, I think. Every course, no matter what it was, that was really the kernel of everything we learned as it had to have a conceptual foundation; every line, every shape, every color-- it didn't matter what it was-- had to be tied to a concept that continued to reinforce whatever the meaning of that graphic was, if you will.

Hancock: And it sounds like it gave it a deeper foundation. Do you remember any of your early projects that you worked on during those days, or assignments?

Burke: Typography was really my favorite class, I think, designing with type, and to this day I think it's one of the things that's lacking in design school is teaching students really the essence of typography. Capturing the essence of that, the way that you articulate things through typography graphically and otherwise is essential. It's the difference between an extraordinary outcome and a mediocre outcome because if you don't nuance the typography, you run the risk of not articulating the power of the message. I mean, you lose the message. People will not stop and sequence through the message, they just won't. So the projects I did through typography I think had the most impact on me, so it was great.

Hancock: You're very articulate in such a powerful way. So with that training, how did you decide where to go next?

Burke: The great thing about the University of Cincinnati, the thing that helped me as I was putting myself through school was, they had a co-op program. And the co-op program was fabulous because you worked in your field and you worked in many, many different places. So one place I worked, I worked for the "T" in Boston and so I spent six months there as a graphic designer. There were a lot of Cincinnati grads who would work through the "T" and I worked for the Central Transportation Planning staff, which was a division of the "T."

At that point they were getting ready to do what they called the big dig. It was pre-big dig and we had to produce a CTPS, the historical overview of the waterfront where the big dig was taking place. For the dig, they were taking a central artery and putting it underground and then they were bringing the waterfront to life. So what had happened is, over the years that waterfront had just been under the shadows of this big freeway, and convincing investors and the government to actually invest billions of dollars in reconstruction, if you will, to bring that waterfront back to life was a big job. So I got to go up in helicopters and photograph aerial views of this whole area, and go back into the archives of history and bring the

history of the Boston waterfront to life. There was lots and lots of literature at the time. And so it was an incredible job, really extraordinary job, so that was one.

Hancock: That's amazing.

Burke: I felt very fortunate. I worked for a company called Cincom at the time as well and that was a technology software company for mainframes. That was my first introduction actually to technology and that was interesting. And then I also co-op'd in publication, so I was an art director on Cincinnati magazine. I learned how to work under deadlines and work very, very quickly at laying out and prototyping articles. It was an extraordinary education, really. So I was lucky.

Hancock: When you think about your co-op program and how that related to your education, how was it that you were so lucky to be connected with those particular projects, such an array of different kinds of projects that were important and also really diverse?

Burke: It's really the University of Cincinnati. They had an extraordinary program and their alumni would go primarily to the East Coast and I'd say Chicago, Cincinnati, all over the Midwest essentially. Now they're national. And as the alumni scattered, they would reach out to the university and ask for students to come and do internships. So they were in every possible field. Procter & Gamble was one; I actually worked there as well. That was a given because that's Cincinnati's sort of signature company, if you will, and they had a lot of co-ops there. And then there were many, many opportunities in Chicago. There was an extraordinary spectrum of companies and opportunities and you essentially would interview and then be offered a position. But every student lands somewhere, so by the time you graduate you would have at least a year and a half of work experience and a great portfolio. So it was a lot easier to get a job walking in on that program. Of course you had to stay in the program for an extra year and a half, but it was worth it.

Hancock: Sure. So then I think you went to Chicago. Is that right? Where did you--

Burke: I went to Chicago and I worked for a company called Multimedia that was in television and publishing. So my first job was as an art director. I had a lot of publishing experience by this time and I had worked in the animation studio of the family I baby-sat for, so I knew animation as well. I had a little bit of broadcast and a lot of print. So there was a company called Multimedia down in the Loop in Chicago and they published two magazines, *Snowmobile News* and *Cycle Times*, which was motorcycles. So six months of *Snowmobile News* and six months of *Cycle Times*. And they were really industry rags; you know what I mean. They were tabloids essentially and they were all about snowmobiles, which I knew nothing about, and they were all about motorcycles, which I knew nothing about. So I learned a lot about both of those things.

I also learned a lot about publishing and it's very fast-paced, hard-core; we were always two months in advance of publishing so we were two months out. Let's say it was an October issue coming out. We were going to press actually with our June issue at that point but we had already started on October, so it was constant. It was absolutely relentless and there was no down time. Those magazines had to go out and they had a huge subscription, 600,000 subscribers-- that's what we printed all over the country-- of

snowmobilers and motorcycle people. It was incredible. So it was really an interesting experience. We would print on a web press. I mean, it was very exciting for your first job, so I learned a tremendous amount.

Hancock: In another interview, you mentioned that there were some magazines that were accidentally bound upside down during that time and--

Burke: Yes, and so--

Hancock: Can you tell us a little bit of that story--

Burke: I can—

Hancock: --that not everything goes perfectly the first time around--

Burke: Yeah. So this was a glossy edition of the magazine, we did it annually and it was *Snowmobile News*. I was very proud of this particular edition and we were printing it in Lincoln, Nebraska. And one of the signatures, 12 pages of one of the signatures bound in the center of the book, I had laid them out backwards. So when they printed it on the web, we got the copies after it was finished and the signature in the center of the book had been bound upside-down. Here is this beautiful book and I was so proud of it, and then I opened it and there were 600,000 copies with a 12-page signature bound upside down. And of course my job didn't last very long after that. <laughs> I mean, my boss was ready to shoot me; it was just an incredible experience. I never made that mistake again. And I went on to do a lot of publications, but I never made that mistake again. But it was my first job, I was a brand-new college grad, so it was amazing they gave me that opportunity to screw up that magazine. <laughs>

Hancock: Well, it's helpful to know that people aren't infallible and that we learn from mistakes--

Burke: We learn from mistakes for sure.

Hancock: --that experience.

Burke: That was an expensive mistake but anyway, I definitely learned from that mistake.

Hancock: And what came next? Was the Valley after that or was there something else in between Chicago and that job? After Multimedia what came next?

Burke: The next job I had was in television. I don't know if you remember something called subscription television?

Hancock: Tell us about that.

Burke: So it was the precursor to cable. Cable TV didn't exist at this time and this was probably 1983, so cable did not come on yet. It was just sort of an emerging market and a different paradigm for television actually, and it wasn't ubiquitous; it didn't actually exist yet. So the precursor to that we called subscription television, and you as a subscriber would buy a box and we would go and install it just like you buy cable

boxes today. It's the same deal, except now you can actually watch things when you want, how you want; you can record them; you can pause them. None of that existed. You bought the box. We had all the latest movies. We had a program guide that you would get in the mail, an analog guide which I produced, and it was all the latest movies, so it was very popular.

So that was a great experience because I would come to Los Angeles and I was part of the programming department, so I would meet with program providers. Filling all those slots on television is a huge deal, so having enough content to pump through those hours and deliver is really a big deal. We had every kind of movie you could possibly imagine, the features that had just been released actually. It's sort of like getting on an airplane today; you see the feature movies that might still be in theaters but are probably just leaving. So those were the features that we were showing, but you had to sit down at seven o'clock and watch it. It wasn't taped; it was playing at seven and that's when you had to watch it. So that was really interesting.

The challenge in that job for me was we had a blue channel and that was all pornographic films. Being the good Catholic girl that I was, part of my job was to sit and choose those films. And that was brutal, so I finally went in to my boss and said, "I can't do this anymore. I have to quit. I can't do this anymore." So they took me out of the reviewer's role essentially; there were other people they had to do that as well but I just couldn't stand it. So eventually a friend of mine was out here and that's what brought me to California. I was down in L.A. on a programming trip and she said, "Come up here and visit and bring your portfolio." So I did, and I ended up getting a job at Boole & Babbage. And so I quit and I never had to watch pornography again. <laughs>

Hancock: So just to mark that time, how many years total, then, were you in the TV role?

Burke: I came out here at the end of '83, so I had been in television for probably three years-- a little over three years, publishing and TV both.

Hancock: As you think back about that experience, aside from the blue channel, what did you take away that was sort of a building block for what was to come next?

Burke: I would say that both of those first jobs out of school were incredibly challenging jobs. From a time perspective, I worked constantly because we had publishing deadlines. And so they were tremendous growth years for me. I made a million mistakes and every single mistake I made, I learned something new. My biggest takeaway from working in that field was, I wasn't afraid of anything. If someone said, "You have a deadline at five o'clock today, I was like, "No problem. I got this." Whereas when I was in college, you would have three months to do one project. And that was a great learning ground. I mean, it was really tremendous for me to actually have the opportunity to be pushed like that, where I had to make deadlines every day. I had no choice; I had to work-- pull all-nighters three times a week just to get my deadlines done.

So that was really great because when I eventually did start my own agency -- it's all deadlines and you can't miss your deadlines. And if you have to stay up all night you've got to stay up all night. But you know that you're going to push through to get the best work, so you're not looking at your clock and going, "Oh,

it's six o'clock. I got to go home," no matter what. So that was really a terrific way to start a career given what I chose to do.

Hancock: Yes. So you mentioned that you had this friend who invited you to come and connected you with Boole & Babbage, introduced you. Is that right?

Burke: Right, yeah.

Hancock: Describe Silicon Valley. This is early days and Boole & Babbage was really a pioneer. Can you just paint a picture of the landscape, what was happening in Silicon Valley and what Boole & Babbage was doing and why it was significant for that time?

Burke: So this would have been at the end of 1983; I moved out here in October of 1983. That's when I started my job at Boole & Babbage, and I was setting up an internal creative team, design team essentially. It was really fun. It was a very different culture from the East Coast or the Midwest. The office was in Sunnyvale. I chose to live in the city and I commuted with two Italian programmers and one of the other programmers. And so the four of us would drive to work-- to and from work every day from the city. They worked many, many, many hours, so we would be down in Sunnyvale until eight o'clock at night.

But every Friday they had a beer bust behind the building. It was a very different culture than the Midwest for sure, very different. It was a very supportive entrepreneurial culture. You felt unencumbered, there weren't a lot of rules, and that was completely different than anything I'd experienced. And yet there were a lot of layoffs, and I hadn't experienced that yet. I was there for two years I think, two and a half years, and in that time frame I had five different bosses. So it was a very dynamic situation where if revenue wasn't hitting its mark then "boom," marketing would be sort of cut right then.

Hancock: And you survived for those two and a half years. That was in software, right?

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: What was the substance of your work? And as the creative director there, what were some of the projects that you were working on?

Burke: Pretty much everything related to communications we worked on. So the entire look and feel is pre-web for sure. We didn't have a website, it was all print. And there was a lot of collateral, so creating the entire system for Boole & Babbage was a big project. But the pace of working in house was dramatically different than working in publishing, than any job I had ever had. My other jobs I worked around the clock; this job we could leave at six or seven o'clock at night. <laughs> It was so easy.

Hancock: So short.

Burke: It was so easy compared to my old jobs and I liked it. It was great because I had a life on the weekends; I didn't have to go to work on the weekends and that was a first. I loved the people that worked in that company; I thought they were incredibly interesting. They were from all different parts of the country. Working in Chicago, most of the people I worked with were from the Midwest, whereas in

Sunnyvale people were from all over the world. The Italian engineers, they were both from Milan and they were so interesting. So for the first time I was introduced to a variety of cultures that I had never experienced before and I became friends with many, many, many of those people, still know them today. And many of them have gone on to start companies and do incredibly well. So that was a lot of fun.

We had our own little in-house print shop so everything was printed internally. I did the annual report for the company and I got to befriend Pitch Johnson, who at the time was the chairman of the board. And the way that I met him is he and his wife, Cathie, came in the first week I was there and they wanted to create a Christmas card on the genealogy of venture capital. It was 1983 and so I didn't know anything about venture capital. It was a crash course in the whole venture capital world and documenting all the VCs. So it ended up being a giant poster that was like three feet square. I don't know if you've ever seen this poster.

Hancock: We displayed a copy of that, which Pitch had donated to the museum at a recent event about venture capital--

Burke: Oh, okay.

Hancock: --it's big, red and green--

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: Yes, we've seen your work.

Burke: Oh, my gosh. Well, that was very early on.

Hancock: --an amazing chronology really of this genealogy.

Burke: It was an amazing chronology.

Hancock: --who and when and connections.

Burke: So you can see the colors were green and red at Stanford and silver because it was supposed to be a holiday card originally.

Hancock: I didn't realize that was the genesis of it, that it was a holiday.

Burke: Yes. So it was really a holiday card but it ended up being a poster. And that was before computers, so it was all laid out by hand on this huge board and it took forever -- I would say six months. Those two walked into my office, Cathie and Pitch, and they plopped down boxes and boxes and boxes of all of these files on every VC, what company they were with, where they went. So we had to make this huge map or chronology of the history of venture capital from the '50s to the '80s. And Pitch has always said, "We should do that again," and it's like, "Oh, my gosh." It would definitely be electronic and it would be dramatically different from what it was in 1983.

Hancock: From 1983 to 2018. That's amazing. The industry has changed. It's grown; it's shrunk; it's changed. That would be a huge contribution. If Pitch and you ever decide to do that, we would love to be partners. We've been collecting these interviews and artifacts with people. So that's how you met them and--

Burke: So that's how I met them. And I had always said from the time I started college that I wanted to start my own business before I was 30. I had all these goals. I didn't want to get married before I was 30; I wanted to start a company before I was 30; at some point I didn't want to be a smoker. I had smoked cigarettes. I started when I was 19 stupidly and I thought, "I'm not going to be a smoker at 30." I just had all these little boxes I had to check. So I went in to my boss at Boole & Babbage on my 29th birthday and I gave my notice. And he said, "Well, do you have clients?" and I said, "No, I don't. But I have \$3000 saved up and that's enough to get me through a few months and if I fail, I'll get a job."

And so the great thing was, I said, "I don't have any clients. Basically, I can stay until my replacement comes. I'm happy to train him. I can stay for months; I can stay for two weeks, whatever you want." So they had a party for me when I left and they put me on a retainer, and that saved me. Boole & Babbage totally saved me because I started my company with a retainer from them, so I owe them a debt of gratitude for that. And then of course Pitch was amazing because when I left he said, "You need to meet all the VCs because they start companies and you could actually help with their branding." And so he took me around and introduced me to all the venture capitalists, and it was a tremendous gift because I started working with the VCs right away.

Hancock: Who were some of those people that you started working with in that time?

Burke: The first one is a firm that's not here anymore, but it was called Rodgers & Whitney. They're long gone but they had some very early companies that I worked with. I then started working with Mayfield shortly after that. I worked with all the early partners at Mayfield. I worked with them for many years, actually. And then it just snowballed. I started working with all the VCs. I worked with Pitch, of course, at Asset Management. I worked with him for many years there. But then the doors started opening up for companies, working directly with companies. Of course, they introduced me to companies. And I worked directly with them. They sort of funneled business to me. But then companies started coming to me directly, not through VCs.

Hancock: So, you were a designer turned entrepreneur. You had this goal to start your company. And let's talk about the starting of your company. You have a very particular date, I think, that you started it.

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: How did you choose that date and the name, which is related to that? And tell us about the formation of your agency or company.

Burke: Yeah, so I didn't actually choose that date. It sort of chose me. What happened was, I stayed at Boole & Babbage until they hired my replacement. Then I worked with her for a couple of weeks. And I

gave my notice on October 1st, which was my birthday. Then I ended up, six weeks later, leaving. So I went to file my fictitious name statement and incorporate the business in San Francisco. And when I went in, it was 11/11/85. And my address was 1185 Pine. So, I kept writing 1185, 1185. And then my phone number was 885-1185.

Hancock: No.

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: Really?

Burke: Yes. And of course, this was pre-cellphones, as you know. So I thought, wow. There's sort of a pattern here. I think I'll just call the company 1185 Design. And so, that became the name. But it was just a coincidence. I had just finished Boole and Babbage, and I went into the city to file all my papers and become official. And I just kept filling out 1185, so it was 11/11/85.

Hancock: Very auspicious numbers for you.

Burke: Yes, it was. It was very auspicious.

Hancock: As a founder, what were your hopes and visions for 1185?

Burke: Well, my goal was, I would collect beautiful, beautiful design pieces that I would find. And the vast majority of design that I saw in Silicon Valley at the time was really mediocre. It was terrible, actually. And I knew I could do better. So I really started with the intention of just doing really great work. I didn't start with any intention of making money. That was not my goal. I just needed enough money to pay my bills. And I think all of my bills were a thousand dollars a month. So, really, that's all I needed was enough to cover that and pay my taxes. That was it. That's why I quit with three thousand dollars in the bank. And I'll never forget David Kelly coming over to my office one day and saying to me, "So, how much money do you want to make?" I looked at him, and I thought-- I was thirty at the time. I said, "If I could just make my age for the rest of my life, I'd be happy." And he goes, "Oh, great. That's great." I said, "If I could just make thirty thousand dollars this year, that would be incredible." So, anyway, I ended up making my age. So that was good.

Hancock: And more. And more.

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: Can you talk about where you were located when you first started 1185, your office, and then people that you met and how you started to build your business?

Burke: So I started in a little office that I shared with another designer in San Francisco on Water Street. I had a tiny little corner. I had my drawing table set up and all my supplies there. And I spent so much time

initially driving down to the Valley from the city that I was spending all my time in my car driving back and forth. Then I would have to go up to the city and work all night on my projects. So, I finally decided that I needed to move the office down to Palo Alto and still live in the city. I would go home late at night like at midnight or whatever, go to bed, get up, and then come back down. But at least my commuting to all these companies, which were all down here, was so much easier. So my friend Elizabeth Warren, who had started a film company, she had a little office where the Gatehouse was on Lytton in Palo Alto.

Hancock: I remember.

Burke: And we were in the back. It was four hundred dollars a month for this tiny little office in the back. It was a really cute little spot. And so we split the rent. She was two hundred and I was two hundred. And it was great. It was a great location. It was a great place to be. Most of my initial clients were through Pitch, and then Boole & Babbage people who had left, so Cooper Vision, companies like that. A lot of the marketing people had left Boole & Babbage and gone to different companies. And they hired me. And then Boole & Babbage was still a client. So that's how I started. Then I met Andy Cunningham, and she started working with Motorola. And they were kind of my first, sort of, signature company after I had started.

Hancock: Well, let's talk about Motorola at that time. Can you talk about the products that you were involved with? Here at the Computer History Museum, we're interested in, what was the technology at the time and how did you work with helping describe and message, communicate what that technology was and what Motorola was? Talk about those early projects that you were involved with with Motorola.

Burke: So, Motorola was launching the O20, which was a chip that was used in the Macintosh. Andy had worked at Regis McKenna. Then she ended up working with Motorola. And she knew all about the Macintosh and really understood the whole microprocessor industry. I knew nothing about that industry. So, it was great for me. I got to take a deep dive into it and really understand what was possible with these chips. And when the 88000 came out, the RISC chip, that was a brand-new concept. It was a brand-new microprocessor. And the promise of this technology was extraordinary. You have to go back to like 1984, or well, let's see. 1984 is when the Mac came out. But this would be like 1988 to be exact, because it was called the 88000. And it was 1988. So, this is sort of three years in, or maybe two years into my business. And the RISC architecture was touted to enable people to translate on demand. So whatever device would have an 88000 RISC chip in, you could essentially translate in real time someone speaking Mandarin in English. I mean it was stunning. There was nothing like that.

Hancock: Transformative.

Burke: There was nothing like that. So it never actually did that, to my knowledge, then. But that was the promise of that kind of technology. And it was incredibly exciting. To be a part of that very early on, the wonderful thing about being a part of Silicon Valley in the early days is, there were no rules. So, today, as a designer, there are many, many rules that you are constrained by. And the web is a great example of that. The way that you structure a site today is dramatically different from where we started because we had no rules. We had no guidelines. We had no A/B testing. We had nothing. You could throw anything

up on the web and see if it worked. And that was true in print. That was true in everything that we produced back then. So, for me, as a designer at the time, oh my god. I did whatever I wanted. If I wanted to produce a brochure out of metal, or I wanted to etch something to make it look like a chip on a different substrate, or I wanted to make the thing as big as that wall over there and fold it up like origami -- it was experiential. So, it was completely different. It was tactical and experiential and very, very graphically rich and immersive. And you could do anything, absolutely anything, back then.

So the collection that I gave to you, a lot of that work, you'll see is very experiential. I mean the way that you engage with those pieces, those print pieces, first of all, they're very tactile. And whatever the texture is or the shape or the die cut, it's all reinforcing what that product was capable of doing and what differentiated it. We had so much fun doing that work. And it didn't matter that we worked around the clock. We had so much fun doing that work because nobody was pushing back on us. Everybody said we have constraints when it comes to producing this stuff, money constraints or whatever, or budget constraints. But I would say, "Eh, we're not going to worry about that now. We're just going to worry about getting to the most legendary piece that will absolutely set us apart in the industry." And as soon as we would show that work, people would come up with the money. They always came up with the money. And so, we had so much fun doing that work. We were winning awards everywhere. It was really an incredible time.

And here's the other thing. Being a designer and working in marketing at that time, everything was new. Nothing had been done before. So, walking into Cisco-- I've told this story actually to Chuck House, but walking into Cisco and meeting John Morgridge for the first time, and listening to him talk about networking and what that was-- there was no such thing as networking until he started talking about it, in my world. So, leaving there, I thought, oh my god. If they can do what they say they can do, this is going to change the world. I knew it. I got it immediately. And I ended up going and buying stock at Charles Schwab. I've told Chuck House¹ that story. So, that was good.

Hancock: That was very good.

Burke: That was good. It worked out great. But just, Marguerite, I wish I could take the world back to that moment when everything was new in technology. The chips that were being produced, the semiconductor industry was just like pushing the envelope on what was possible now. And that just blew open the doors to so many opportunities.

Hancock: So, you have this-- and it wasn't just an observation, a seed of observation. You were partners with people and their companies and technologies because you were articulating for the first time to new customers, to new partners, to the press, to the world what these things were, what these technologies would be capable of, what the vision was.

Burke: Yeah.

¹ [Editor's note] The interviewee is referring her to an interview she recorded at the Computer History Museum on May 10, 2018. The interviewer was Chuck House.

Hancock: Could you give an example of a case of a conversation, and then your thought as a designer, and how did you then create the packaging or the campaign or the logo of a company?

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: Walk us through that. Open the window a little bit more so we can experience what you were working on.

Burke: Well, let's go directly to a window. If I think of a project that comes to mind right around 1991-- So we've gone through the RISC chip, and the semiconductor industry is really transforming our ability to do new things. Well, then fast forward to a whole new era in software where suddenly you don't have to actually ship tapes anymore for developers. I was introduced to Sun in 1991. And in 1991, they were taking the company and parsing it into little satellite companies. So SunSoft was born and SunPro, and they basically took different parts of their business and spun them out. And so, I was brought into SunSoft, and then I was brought into SunPro. I worked with all of them. But SunSoft is where I started.

And I will never forget when we launched Solaris, which was a new operating system. That was a different idea as well, right? So we launched a new operating system called Solaris. And like everything else, we had this incredible opportunity at that time to do something that we thought would change the world. But we wanted to capture people's imaginations. So when we produced that package for Solaris, we were making the CD that absolute focal point of that packaging. Unlike any other package that had ever been developed. CDs were brand new. So we cut a window. We built a plex box. We created kind of a trapdoor that all the manuals sat in. The CD sat in this little sleeve in the front of the box. And no one had ever done that before, because we were showcasing the fact that this entire operating system was now on a CD-ROM. It's not on tapes from here to the ceiling. It's on this little CD-ROM.

And we shipped that box all over the world. It had a little trapdoor. And we had Bill Joy sign a bunch of gold boxes when we first shipped. It was so incredible. But that's a perfect example of Sun coming to us and saying, "Listen, we're changing everything. We're not shipping software on tape anymore. We're launching a new operating system. We're calling it Solaris. And we need a way to launch this product." And of course, we did all the launch materials. We actually did kites for Solaris because we were launching it in a big way in Mountain View. And I mean, it was just so exciting. It was such an immersive time.

Hancock: How did people, customers respond? This was a new form factor. This was a new technology.

Burke: It was totally different. They loved it. People loved it. And they kept those boxes. It's sort of like, you put this thing on your shelf. And we launched it at the developer conference, so every single developer got the plex box, the launch box in plex. And then we did a box that wasn't in plex. But it was still a very complicated, expensive package, if you will. And it was great. But it really brought to life the transformation, what was dramatically different today versus the day before when everything was shipped on tape.

Hancock: I love that story. You were a part of the growth of companies like Sun, and I know we've already interviewed about Cisco. So we'll combine those together. We don't need to talk about that. There was in the Valley what followed then after that, if we could go to the kind of bubble--

Burke: Oh my gosh.

Hancock: This kind of witch's hat, this irrational exuberance of thousands of companies getting funded. And the sense that every one of them believed they were going to change the world, or at least got funding. And as I understand it, companies were pounding on your door to say, "Please help us." What was that like in that era?

Burke: It was completely insane. People say, "Oh, you know, you're so successful. You did this, that and the other thing." And I said, "Listen, during the bubble, you just needed to have a heartbeat and know how to use a computer to make money."

Hancock: You're being too modest.

Burke: It was unbelievable. I mean, we would have a hundred new business calls a week, a week. And I would basically stay up every night until three o'clock in the morning and return every one of those calls, because they were all referrals. I couldn't ignore them. I just had to stay up and return all those calls and say, "We can't take this work. We can't take this work." You know, just very kindly have to decline the opportunities. But I can't even describe it. It was an endless flow, the streets were lined with money. It didn't even matter how much you charged. People didn't care. They just wanted you to develop their identity, create a website for them.

The web was pretty new at that time, as you know. And some of them were the craziest ideas that you could possibly imagine. Some were incredible. I mean, they were really extraordinary companies who were doing infrastructure technology that actually enabled all of these nascent bubble companies that were really in the consumer-facing, I would say-- you know like the Pets.com and those kind of people. But everybody had an idea for something. So, like MyCIO.com, it was My CIO. It was an online CIO idea, first time that that concept or construct had ever been put together. And Win.com, a calendar. I mean, think of anything. It would be shoe.com. It would be anything. Everybody was a dot com.

Hancock: What was one of the craziest ones? What were some of the craziest ideas that you heard about during that time? Do you remember?

Burke: Well, some of the ideas, I would say they all had potential to some degree. But they were so convoluted. They were so complicated. It's almost like people just wanted to take these very complex ideas and attach dot com to it and then hope that their evaluation would go through the roof as a result of that. And it was so frothy and so crazy that, in some cases, it did. A lot of these products were not that great. And yet, they flipped them so quickly that they got in and out. They made a lot of money. But I'm trying to think of some of the crazier ideas. There was one that was going in Walmart. And it related to video. So it was sort of like the precursor to Netflix in a way. But it was all CD based in Walmart. It was a

kiosk. But you had to actually go into your computer or go up to this kiosk at Walmart to get your CD. And it was so complicated. I thought, this is crazy. It's the craziest idea. And there were many, many, many like that. I wish I could go back and videotape half of the meetings I had from that day. It was just so amazing. But it was a very exciting time. And again, the companies that we did work with, we were completely immersed in what they did.

Hancock: So, can you say about the criteria or process, or maybe it's instinct? How did you make the decision of who to work with, who to take on as clients? You had more opportunity than you had time. And so, choosing who you wanted to work with was a really important part of you shaping and defining your work as well as making a mark. How did you choose your clients?

Burke: A lot of that decision was made by who was running the company and who were the people I knew that were related to that company. So if I had a history with any of those people, that was an advantage because I trusted them. Whereas if somebody just walked in off the street, which most people did at that point, I would probably turn them away unless it was really interesting. One interesting story is that Google was on the corner. I was High Street in Palo Alto. And Google was right around the corner, literally, from me. And they walked in one day and said, "We need a logo." But we were working with Inktomi at the time. And they were competing with Google. So we couldn't work with Google. That's just one example of the number of opportunities.

It was like you would trip over these companies just stepping out into the streets of Palo Alto because there were so many startups there. And it was just, again, an incredibly exciting and exhausting time. It was a very different pace. And I'll never forget one of my clients said to me, "We will never ever see this again in our lifetime. We'll never see anything like this again." And he's right. I don't think we will ever see it, and for good reason. It doesn't mean that history isn't doomed to repeat itself, because it probably will. But I don't think I'll be alive when it happens again. I just think it was just so crazy, absolutely crazy during that time.

Hancock: So, can you tell a little bit about your business at that time? You've grown some. It sounds like you've moved to Palo Alto. And there's more work than just you.

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: Can you describe 1185, the place and the agency, what's in your team and the scale of work that you had at that time?

Burke: So, during this time, starting in 1991, I moved my office down to University Avenue. I had thirty people at that point. And then we were busting out with-- we had to keep hiring more people. And all of my clients had an East Coast presence. We worked with companies like Goldman Sachs. We did a lot of work in the financial world as well as the venture world back there. Plus Cisco and IBM, I did a lot of work with IBM. Pretty much everybody, Sun, Cisco. Everybody had an East Coast office. So, I opened an office on the East Coast. I had six people back there.

And then I went around the corner on High Street at this point. By now, it's like 1998. We took over another eight thousand square feet over there. Then I grew to sixty people there. And at that point, I think I worked on almost every block in downtown Palo Alto. I've had these little clubhouse offices that would be a block away where I'd have maybe eight people working. We had our own little campuses going at that point. And so, I consolidated everybody into this building on High Street. And it was great. It was beautiful. It worked out terrific. That was during the big bubble days. I had been in that building for three years when things started to get shaky. The bubble just began to fray. We were still incredibly busy and doing very well at that time, but you could feel a kind of tension in the market.

And then 9/11 happened. That was catastrophic for technology. It was catastrophic for the whole country. But it basically threw a wet blanket on anything promotional. Anything that even smelled like marketing was completely squashed. It was all shut down. Every single one of my clients called and shut down their projects except one company, Cisco.

Hancock: Every single client except--

Burke: Every single client except Cisco, they all shut down their efforts. And Cisco, aware of how bad things were, actually upped our retainer during that time. So, again, I'm eternally grateful to them for that. But I had to cut my company in half at that point. That was devastating. It's the only time in my life I ever got pneumonia. That was really hard.

Hancock: So hard.

Burke: And all the agencies were shutting down during that time. So, a lot of my friends in the industry were calling and saying, "Could you take my staff?" Because we were the biggest at that point in tech, I would say, definitely in Palo Alto. They were all calling and saying, "Could you take my staff?" And I said, "Oh, my god. I would love to take them, but I have to cut my company in half." It was really tough. So, we hunkered down through that nuclear winter period. And we got through it. Then I ended up buying a building because I thought, I can't deal with this. So, that changed the business, too, for the better.

Hancock: Sometimes, when we talk to young entrepreneurs or young leaders, they say one of the things that's a challenge is they look at people's stories, and we talk a lot about success, but we don't talk enough about how to really face challenges and dark moments. And those inevitably come. Can you say a little bit more about some of the key decisions that you made during that time, what you were facing, and what you see as key decisions that you had to make? And how did you make them? How did you face those dark moments? How did you survive and then start to rebuild?

Burke: So, that is an excellent question. And it's something, you're right, that we don't talk enough about. The word that I wrote down on that card that you gave me was, "tenacity." And I think that, as an entrepreneur, or any company, you have to anticipate that every seven, maybe ten years, you're going to hit a pretty big bump. There is going to be some really serious headwinds every seven to ten years. So, I'm in my thirty-third year now.

Hancock: Congratulations.

Burke: Thank you. And I have been through at least three really significant cycles in the business that have been incredibly challenging. The bubble is the first for me. So when the bubble burst, I woke up in the shower one morning. It was a month after 9/11. So, it was October 2001. And I remember distinctly almost having a panic attack doing the math in my head in how much money we were losing. We were losing four hundred thousand dollars a month at that point because of our overhead and the fact that all of these accounts had shut down.

And I had just socked away all the cash from the bubble in the business. The good news is that I had a war chest of cash that I had put away. I didn't spend it. I just stuck it in the bank. So, when I sat down and did the math, I went in. I grabbed my controller. I said, "Run all these numbers. I want some projections for the next three months. And then we have to make some decisions." So, that's when we did that. But the key to being able to do that was having the cash. And that's very difficult for small companies, especially startups. Cash is really the lifeblood of your business. You've got to have it.

Hancock: How did you have the idea or the discipline to put away that cash when everything was pointing up and to the right, when it would have been a very natural and even sensible thing to be spending and increasing your burn rate?

Burke: Yeah.

Hancock: How did you build that war chest?

Burke: Well, part of it is, I just didn't have time to spend money. That was really and truly a big part of it. Secondly, I think growing up and seeing what happened to my father's business and living through that very, very difficult time has just made me more conservative, more cautious. And so, I've always put away cash just because of that. And I've seen too many people lose so much because they weren't planning for it. So I think I was lucky that I had that experience early on in life and it sort of taught to me lean on the conservative side of spending. And yet there are limitations to that, too, right? So, I'm not advocating that. It just worked for me.

But it did allow me to give everyone six months' severance as they walked out the door. And that made me sleep at night, knowing that at least they had something. They had a few months to figure out how to manage. So, that was good. And then we just hunkered down and slowly but surely-- I went off payroll for two and a half years. I mean, you just had to do what you had to do. You had no choice. But that's what entrepreneurs don't realize is, you're going to hit a bump, and it's on you. It's not on your employees. So, it's on you. You have a responsibility to your, if you have shareholders, to them. And you have a responsibility to your employees. But you're the one that has to go without a paycheck for a while. And if you do that, and you're tenacious enough to hang in there, things always come back. They always come back. You have to hunker down and get through the tough times, but they will come back.

And I would say anybody in an operation role in a business is so busy kind of focusing on day to day and getting through the day to day or week to week or month to month or year to year. And when you hit a really big bump, or you start feeling those headwinds, you absolutely stop and say, "Okay, it's coming. What do I do right now to actually course correct before we go off a cliff?" Because it's right there. So I just think being vigilant about how you manage the business. And I have a tiny business. I mean at that point, it was sixty people and bi-coastal. So it's not like most of the companies around here that are thousands. And most of my clients are hundreds of thousands of employees. But I just think the fundamentals are basically the same, being vigilant. But nobody could have predicted 9/11. I mean, none of us saw that coming. So, you can't prepare for it.

Hancock: You can't prepare and can't control.

Burke: No, you can't control it. No.

Hancock: Except with how to respond. So you mentioned that was your first of three big times.

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: Could we talk about the other two?

Burke: Yeah, that one was by far, to this day, the most catastrophic. When 2008 came around, I didn't even feel it. It was like a blip.

<laughter>

Hancock: Global recession, no problem.

Burke: It was just like a blip. It didn't even affect me, because I had just restructured the business so that we could hunker down and get through those things. I didn't even feel it. But what happened was, over time, in my business, you have to change with the demands of the industries, right? And we don't just work in technology. We work in healthcare, but primarily tech. We're almost ninety percent tech. But we do work with consulting firms that are in HR and benefits. They all have a tech component, but that's not their primary business. So diversifying was really important. I did that immediately after I did tech. I started doing television. I worked with NBC. Started taking a lot more healthcare accounts on both coasts, as well.

Hancock: Around what year was this that you started your diversification?

Burke: 2002, right after 9/11. Right after I laid people off, I said, "Okay, tech is shut down. We have to diversify." We were one hundred percent tech at that point. A hundred percent. And so we had to diversify. So we did. That has really helped quite a bit. But one thing that changed, and something that I always admire in Dennis's company, IDEO, is they are always reinventing themselves. Always. And they're always looking at the next thing. So I started to adopt some of that behavior, and one thing I

noticed is the work I was doing was more strategic than just pure design. The design was strategic, right, because it was all conceptually based and steeped in the technology. But it was the language that we were infusing into the work that started to resonate with so many of our clients. And so, more and more people wanted a strategic piece. So we started creating these narratives. I started writing these narratives called 360s. Those became the foundational pieces for the brands, and over time I heavily weighted on designers. As an example, during the bubble, I probably had 50 graphic designers. Huge. Huge pool of graphic designers.

Hancock: Fifty. And some sense of the number of projects or things that you were doing during that period? Fifty designers working on how many different clients, roughly?

Burke: Hundreds.

Hancock: Hundreds.

Burke: Hundreds of clients. From tiny little “let’s bang out a business card” to entire rebrands. Tons of web. The web was so early. And we were doing hundreds of websites. Anyway. So because I was born a designer, I’ve always skewed on the creative side, and what I was finding is that the strategy piece was absolutely what people wanted. We were doing it in a completely different way, so the way we were articulating or crafting the language was more visual. That was beginning emotionally. It was very emotive. That was resonating with a lot of our clients. So my revenue started shifting, and-- this is really over the past eight years. It started shifting towards that work and away from pure design. At first it was like 40/60, then it became 50/50, then it became 60/40. And at that point, I’m the only one doing it. I’ve hired writers off and on. It’s hard to do it because it’s a combination of visual and written. So then I had to make a very tough decision to change the company and reconfigure it so that now it’s evenly weighted between the strategist and the designers. That was a big change. That was hard for me because I’m so focused on the design piece of it.

Hancock: Was there a year that you could pinpoint where you felt like you had achieved your current model? Was that in the last--

Burke: This year.

Hancock: This year.

Burke: It would be this year. So a really good example of when this completely took off is, Flextronics came to us. Their margins were like one-and-a-half to two percent on a \$36 billion business. So I went in and did a 360 for them. The narrative. And then created an entirely new brand and positioned them out in front of IoT versus just talking about supply chain or sort of the mechanics of what they do. And then created the Sketch-to-Scale platform that helped their salespeople articulate this continuum of what they offer. Renaming the company, we had to convince the board that they’re no longer a “tronics” company. They are a Sketch-to-Scale innovation platform. And just those epiphanies, if you will, changed the business. Changed the company completely in the last three years. That was all steeped in the strategy

piece to begin with. And it's reinforced with very rich imagery to support it. It had to have somebody like a Michael Mendenhall, who was the CMO, to really sponsor it internally and get everybody on board. If he hadn't been there, it wouldn't have happened.

Hancock: Connecting the dots you talked about, your big dig experience and needing to have this truly bird's-eye-- not only literally, but this understanding-- historic and contemporary, and the industry, and the waterfront, and all that. And the same kind of broad and deep understanding of Flextronics-- its industry, where technology is going, where the business could be going-- it's remarkable. This is not just a rebranding. This is a re-creation, as you say, of a company. You've talked a little bit about your role in that and how that's evolved. Can you talk about another theme of understanding how do we people partner and have great partners to work with to create this kind of transformative change? You just mentioned Michael. Would that be an example? This is affecting executive leadership. This is company strategists. This is board. Who did you work with and what were some of the things that you did to help get from there to where it is now?

Burke: I would say from the beginning of my career, the most successful initiatives that we've launched in branding have been from the top down. So Cisco, the John Morgridge meeting I had, he was committed to developing the brand of the company and supported that effort all along. His CMO, his entire marketing organization and board all bought into it. And that's very much the case where you have to have a CMO who can champion this work and has the respect of the CEO and the board. You have to. If you don't have a CMO, you have to have a CEO who cares intensely about this and acts as a CMO in that capacity of embracing this new vision and supporting it in every possible way. You have to have champions inside companies. If you don't, you will not succeed. Because the execution has to be flawless. It just has to be flawless. Every touchpoint of the brand has got to be executed flawlessly or it won't work. It just won't.

So it's a waste of money if you don't execute flawlessly. And that takes an infrastructure of either partners or people internally to make that happen. In the case of Flextronics-- rename the company Flex-- that's a big deal for that company, but they did it. They couldn't get the URL, and they just doggedly went after it until they finally got it. Mike McNamara is a huge champion of that effort. He's a champion because Michael Mendenhall was so brilliant at presenting it, supporting it, inspiring it. I mean, if you have a partnership like that, you cannot lose.

And there are so many companies I've worked with over the years, so many people in Silicon Valley, who are stunningly capable at doing this work. They're few and far between, but everything they touch-- it's like they have the Midas touch. So I got a call from one yesterday. And I started screaming on the phone I was so excited to hear from him. Because I know whatever he asked me to work with him on, to partner with him on, will be truly, to borrow his word, legendary. To find people like that over many years, and develop relationships, and know that what you're going to produce will absolutely change the world as it relates to that company, is super exciting. It's super exciting.

I mean, I'm so glad that I've had the career I've had in Silicon Valley for 33 years. I could not have landed at a better time. I could never have landed in an industry in the Midwest or the East Coast where I would

have had this much flexibility and opportunity. Just an extraordinary time to be in this place where everything was new and we were just inventing things and making it up as we went along to see what worked. It's amazing.

Hancock: It is amazing. As you look back and reflect, there must be so many high points. Are there some moments, whether it's a conversation, or an aha moment where you had a design idea, or maybe it was seeing some branding work that you did become public-- I don't know what it is for you, but is there a moment or two, a high point, that you can describe that we could be with you, in your shoes? A highlight for you over your career?

Burke: There are so many, it would be hard to describe. From working with Scholastic in New York and doing their first digital books in the very, very early days of CD-ROMS. Working in that capacity to working with every networking company, practically, in Silicon Valley at some point, and seeing how the Internet actually evolved as a result of that, and then where that's taken us. Being a part of all of it, all of it, is really extraordinary.

But I'll tell you what gets you very excited is, you work so hard for months and months and months and months to take a deep dive into these businesses, really understand them. Internalize them. They become part of your DNA. Then you begin to peel back the onion and start getting to the essence of that business. And then you have to create an epiphany that really differentiates them that they haven't thought of yet. We just launched a new brand for a company called TriNet. And they're actually a benefits/payroll/technology business across the country. The exciting moment is when all of that work actually is revealed. It's when you do what my friend Christopher Lochhead would call "a lightning strike," where everything hits at once. So two weekends ago we launched with a full-page spread in the Sunday New York Times, and then, the next morning, in the Wall Street Journal, and then USA Today. And we're taking over all of Grand Central for the month of October.

So to be the creator, to be part of this team of people imagining, creating, articulating, and bringing this new message to life, and this new brand to light, and then to see it go live-- it's like giving birth. It's like your baby is being born. It's so exciting. It's exciting for the company, but for you, who have been in the trenches and started out with a blank sheet of paper, to then have this whole thing. Every commercial on CNN, and MSNBC, or the radio. Every time you hear it you just go, "Wow, it's so exciting."

Hancock: Sounds great.

<laughter>

Hancock: Well, you've birthed a lot of children.

Burke: Yes, we've birthed a lot of children.

Hancock: One of the questions I wanted to ask you revolves around technology. You've not only been helping others and been a partner of, as you said, all these network companies in the changeover. Actually, technology has changed your business and the way that you've worked. You started in print.

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: Can you talk about print to digital and how that's affected your work? And how you actually physically do your work as well as how you reach your audiences and create impact as we've moved to this fully digital, mobile, social, all these things?

Burke: Yes. It's fully digital. Everything's digital. Yes. So starting in 1985, obviously there was no digital. It was the very beginning of digital, if you will. The Macintosh had been launched the year before. It was very rudimentary. I had a Mac, and just trying to format typography was very clunky.

Hancock: Is this in your office? You used a Mac, is that what you mean?

Burke: Yes. And it was very, very, very, very clunky, right? And then Aldus, which was up in Seattle, came to me. We ended up working with them on PageMaker. Quark came to me. I ended up working with them, and they gave me their products to use. Autodesk, I worked with them. Adobe, I ended up doing rebranding, you know, everything for them at one point. And along the way all those companies were tools that were designed for me and my team. We would get all the beta versions of their products, so they were full of bugs. We would identify where all the bugs were and it was kind of frustrating, actually, to work in those very early beta products. But it was great in hindsight to be very early on, because we learned how to use those products and embraced everything digital very early.

So what I saw happen is, I had done all the mechanicals for print by hand for years, because that's how you did it. And I worked with typesetters. I remember, in the late '80s, very quickly these incredibly talented typesetters all went out of business. Almost overnight. Because the technology started to catch up and we were able to start formatting our own text digitally. We didn't have to get galleys and paste them up anymore. That happened-- it felt like that. <snaps fingers> And they were wonderful people who I loved. They'd stay up all night and kern type. They were exceptional at what they did.

So then we went through a very rough period in the early digital age where the typography was horrible. The kerning, the leading, the fonts, the resolution, it was horrible. And you had a bunch of young designers actually hacking away at laying things out with typography. It was just hack. We went through a terrible period, I would say, in the late eighties, where everything just looked awful. And then the tools got better. Now I think we'll never have the quality of the typesetting that-- for 50 years, these typesetters were craftsmen. Extraordinarily talented people. And that was just their focus, one hundred percent. So I don't think we'll ever have the quality of typography we had in those days or the nuance of that typography, but we're getting a lot closer now with technology.

But very early on it was terrible. I would be apoplectic. I would just go, "Oh, my gosh, look at this type. It's just a mess. We can't even possibly publish this." So that was a huge difference. Massive difference.

And people thought, "Oh, it's going to make your job so much more efficient." Well, it really accelerated our life. We used to have time to actually create those mechanicals. We would have a couple of weeks. Now we'd have <snaps fingers> two days to get them done digitally. And we could do it. It was just, everything got accelerated. There was more and more and more, and to this day, it's that way. So that was one big change.

The wonderful change, the other change that is quite different, is, when you look at an analog piece that was produced back in the early days of the Valley, that was well-crafted, well-designed, and tactically very immersive, right? No one could come in and change that. Now we spend months creating these beautiful websites and within weeks it's already hacked up with all these violators on the home page. It changes like that. <snaps fingers> And you can't control it as much. It's not set in stone like print used to be. So that was a big, big difference that we had to adapt to. Because we would just launch a beautiful site and, the next thing you know, there would be this giant violator. The internal webmaster, who was not really a design person, would just slap up some image and it would be devastating. But now, even that has gotten much better because people understand the integrity of the web far more than they did back then. They still blow up sites and destroy them, but nothing like they used to. So that's gotten a lot better, too.

And now I think it's very exciting because you can really bring these stories to life. Literally. The web is digitally a very living, vibrant, immersive experience. Print is static. Everything comes to life on the web. And so that part to me is fantastic, especially coming from an animation background. Just being able to sequence stories and bring them to life. Even scrolling. Just the act of scrolling. It's a very tactile, immersive experience. It's very exciting, I think, and helps reinforce the story far better.

Hancock: So many industries that have been in print-- journalism and other things-- have been disrupted. You talked about looking ahead and preparing. As you're thinking about your work and where the industry's going in the next two years or five years, beyond our current ways that we use digital websites, what do you see ahead?

Burke: Well, I see a greater need for people in my field who are in the digital branding space, if you will, who really understand the value of producing something at a very high level. I see that as being even more valuable as we move forward. I think UX is absolutely exploding and will continue to explode, for good reason. I think the devices-- you'll be accessing the web, and, basically, your world could be on your watch. I couldn't possibly predict what's going to come next, but I can only imagine it's not going to be on big screens, computer screens, over time. I access half my days on my phone. Think about just today.

Hancock: It's so much more personalized than that.

Burke: Yes. And so that experience has to be as rich as having a big screen like that one behind Max. It's exciting.

Hancock: It is an exciting time. As you think about your experience and your role in Silicon Valley as it's grown and had its rise, these times of disruption and retrenchment, bubbles and bursts, how would you describe some of the DNA of the Valley? You've had this opportunity to work with many people and many companies. What do you see as that sort of DNA of the Valley that sets this place apart, that's made its culture or its success?

Burke: I think the word "intrepid" comes to mind. I think people are fearless here; they're willing to take enormous risk, at least from my experience in the last 30 years. People have been willing to lose everything because they truly believed that what they were doing would change the world. That's so unique to this culture. And the fact that it's supported in so many different ways. The ecosystem here is designed to actually fuel that intrepid nature. It's an incubator to be fearless and do anything. It's so unusual. It's not like that in Cincinnati when I go home. It just isn't. There might be elements of it there, but it's not the whole package. It's not a milieu that entrepreneurs thrive to the level that they do here. You can do anything here. You really feel it.

Hancock: You shared a little advice earlier about tenacity. Can you share anything about some of the biggest challenges-- not from your business point of view, but that you've needed to surmount and advice that you might have. A challenge that you've had and how you've been able to face that.

Burke: I would say one of the biggest challenges, I think, of working in an environment like this and working the way we work here is parenting. I don't just mean being a mother. I think that's a special set of challenges all by itself. But I think being a parent in general. I think fathers, mothers, grandparents who are raising kids-- in this environment the demand and expectation to be the absolute best at what you do is ever present. And that poses a number of challenges, I think. If I were to look back on my life, especially the last 30 years. I have a 29-year-old and a 23-year-old, so they were born in this period. And if I could go back and change one thing in my life I would change the amount that I worked. I think creating some level of balance was not even remotely possible for me. To do what I needed to do I felt like I just had to put the hours and weekends and nights into being the best at what I did.

But the reality is, in hindsight, that's not true. I think there are always people you can surround yourself with who can give you advice, and you can make changes in your business so that the burden is not all on you or your employees. I really believe that's a challenge that I've had, and to a certain degree, I continue to have. But if there is one thing I would change, it would be that. That is probably the only regret I have: not having much more time with my children. My kids are great. My boys are amazing. They're wonderful, and I think they're very proud of me. I know they're very proud of their dad. And we're very proud of them. But I just wish I could go back and reclaim some of that time. It sounds cliché because you hear people say that a lot, but that is one challenge, I think, that we have in Silicon Valley.

Hancock: Thank you for sharing that. That gives pause for reflection and is a call to action. So thank you for sharing that. If you have energy for just a few minutes--

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: I'd like to talk about your work outside of your business, because you've given your time to other kinds of causes and institutions, including this museum. I'd like to ask you, for a person who's phenomenally successful, you've also given back. You've chosen to give back beyond building your business. Could you talk about some of those roles? Here at the museum you started as a trustee, I believe, in the year 2000. How did that start? And some of the experiences that you had as you chose to be a trustee here, in building this place.

Burke: I just love the story of the Computer History Museum, I have to say. Andy Cunningham, in the year 2000, tapped me. She was on the board. She said, "Peg, the museum would really like to entertain you becoming a trustee." And I thought, "Wow, that would be incredibly exciting for me because I live and breathe the same pixels that these people are living and breathing. So we're all inhaling and exhaling the same stuff every day. It would just be incredibly exciting to be a part of something that's archiving and preserving the history of what we're living through." But what I loved is that we didn't have a museum then. We were at Moffett Field, and we were in these sort of trailers. The collection was crammed in this little warehouse out there. My very early memories of the museum are of going to little cocktail parties in this warehouse. It was just the very beginning of the early days of the museum.

But there were so many visionaries, and I give all the visionary credit to people like Len Shustek, Donna Dubinsky, Dave House and Gardner Henrie. So many dedicated people. I mean, I can list all the trustees, many of whom are still here and dedicated. Talk about tenacious. They were not going to give up, no matter what. When we hit the downturn, shortly after that is when we bought this building that we're sitting in today. There was a lot of discussion about this, because sitting out at Moffett Field in those little trailers, the idea was that we were building a brand-new museum, kind of a signature iconic building that would represent technology and all that that stands for. We had met with architects. I hadn't, but they had met with architects and had been working away on plans for this new building at Moffett Field.

And then we had this big crash and everything changed. This building was a bargain, I would say. It didn't feel like a bargain at the time, but in hindsight, of course it was. And they had the foresight to buy this building. As a trustee, it was incredibly exciting because we finally were out of these little trailers at Moffett Field and into a real building. And we could start to build Revolution. The vision of the museum came to life like that. And I take very, very little credit. I had a wonderful time in the very early days talking about the mission and working on that as part of the marketing committee, and creating an identity for the museum which didn't exist yet. That was all wonderful and really, really great to be a part of.

Then to see people like you arrive and open up doors to so many new opportunities to build on. The education portion of the museum, the exhibitions, everything that's happening-- just driving in today, I got goosebumps. I thought, "Oh, my gosh, this place has come so far in 18 years." It's just come so far. And to be a part of it in the early days was such a privilege. Really and truly. I was so fortunate. And the friendships that I've made with the other trustees and people who work in this museum are extraordinary. I'm very grateful to have had that opportunity, I have to say. And all I see is this bright future, because technology is changing and always has been, but now it's just like at warp speed. Everything is being captured here, and it's such a vibrant, dynamic place now. It's not quiet at all. It's like the hum of

technology is reflected in this building and it's so exciting to see that. So I was really very, very fortunate to be tapped to be a part of this.

Hancock: Well, you're modest in what you contributed. The identities and messaging and vision-- you've been part of it for so many years. I think 16--

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: --years of this journey. I came later in this part of the journey, but we're so grateful to you and glad to have on record here, as part of the oral history, your reflections on being part of the museum.

Burke: Yes, the people that are a part of this organization, who are so dedicated-- you know, Len Shustek and Dave House-- so many of them. I have to stop because I don't want to leave anyone out, because there are so many dedicated people who are absolutely brilliant and so selfless. They truly have given so much of their lives to this place. It's amazing. We're all indebted to them, I think. All of us.

Hancock: Well, we feel fortunate to have you now part of our oral history collection and so much of your work. 1185. Part of the artifacts for telling the story of the people and the companies, the whole ecosystem that is, as you say, the hum of this place and has really changed the world. And now to have your personal part, and 1185 as part of this important ecosystem. So on behalf of the museum I want to thank you very, very much for this interview. We'll have a chance, I hope, to do another chapter when we dive more deeply into some of the other work.

Burke: Yes.

Hancock: But for today, I want to thank you.

Burke: Thank you, Marguerite.

Hancock: Thank you.

Burke: Thank you very much. It's such an honor to be asked to do this, so thank you for inviting me to be a part of it.

Hancock: Thank you very much.

Burke: It's great.

END OF THE INTERVIEW