

Computing Educators Oral History Project
Practice interview transcript

Nell Dale

Interviewer: Leslie Schwartzman

Recorded SUNDAY, June 26, 2005

Location: Lisbon, Portugal

Corresponding audio available on CEOHP's website, ceohp.org, under "Short Practice Interviews".

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Nell Dale, a practice interview from 2005, Computing Educators Oral History Project. Online: ceohp.org.

Conducted as a training session during the ITiCSE 2005 Working Group meeting in Lisbon, Portugal.

- 1 [0:00]
2 **Leslie Schwartzman:** This is being recorded on June 26th {2005} in Lisbon, Portugal. I am
3 Leslie Schwartzman and I am interviewing Nell Dale. And would you just tell just us your
4 name exactly and where you come from?
5
6 **Nell Dale:** My name was originally Nell Boylan and so it's Nell Boylan Dale. And I have no
7 middle name, so my maiden name became my middle name. And I was born in Savannah,
8 Georgia, but my father was a career army officer. So I came from everywhere and then
9 finally ended up in Texas.
10
11 **L: You have a southern accent.**
12
13 **N:** I have a generic southern accent.
14
15 **L: Uh huh.**
16
17 **N:** I can go deep south if I need to. {distorted short segment}

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18 N: I have an undergraduate degree in mathematics and psychology. And I went immediately
19 from undergraduate school to work on a Master's. I had gotten my undergraduate degree at
20 night school and so I wanted to be a full-time student. And I went to The University of Texas
21 at Austin to get a Master's in mathematics. And then, before I finished my thesis, I went to
22 Houston and worked for Shell Development Corporation. And I have a great deal of love for
23 Shell because I did a lot of interviewing before I took that job. This was in 1961 and I
24 remember two job applications, one in which they were going to invite me back for that
25 second interview. I had computing in my Master's program. I had fallen in love with
26 computing and out of love with mathematics. So there was math and there was computing.
27 And I got called back and they said, "Don't bother for the second interview. The rest of the
28 staff feels that they could not work for a woman." Then there was an interview in which it
29 was set up and the gentleman's secretary called and said "He just realized you were a woman.
30 He thought the name was Neil and not Nell. And don't bother to come." And then I went to
31 work for Shell Development, a wonderful organization. I had a change of supervisors from a
32 woman to a man at the end of two months. And the man called me in and said, "I have
33 looked at your resume and Ernie Jones's resume. You have the same background and they
34 pay him more. So I'm giving you a raise retroactively." So I always tell my best students that
35 Shell ...

36

37 I spent two years working for Shell and then married and went back to The University of
38 Texas. And worked at the Linguistics Research Center, which was involved in language
39 translation. And that was great fun. And then the Computer Science Department was formed
40 at The University of Texas. And I had finished my Master's thesis while I was there at the
41 Linguistics Research Center. I got intrigued by what this new department was going to be. It
42 was made up of people from linguistics and psychology and mathematics and engineering,
43 and the general topic really intrigued me. And so I [applied and was one of the first three
44 PhD candidates in that department].

45 [4:05]