

1 **Alison Young**
2 **28th of February 2006**
3 **Houston, Texas, USA**
4 **Interviewed by Barbara Boucher Owens**

5
6 {Noise of adjusting recorder and several seconds of dead time}

7
8 **B: Ok, This is an interview with Alison Young from Unitec New Zealand**
9 **conducted by Barbara Owens. The interview is being recorded on February 28,**
10 **2006, in Houston, Texas. It is part of the computing education oral history series.**
11 **Did we give your name and pronounce it correctly?**

12
13 A: Yes, you did.

14
15 **B: Hi, Alison. How are you?**

16
17 A: I'm very good. Thank you, Barbara.

18
19 **B: You've just come off a half a world around trip.**

20
21 A: Yep, New Zealand to Singapore to Germany to Italy.

22
23 **B: And then clearly Italy to Texas.**

24
25 A: Italy to Texas.

26
27 **B: All right. We're going to start way back when, way back when. Did your**
28 **parents have college degrees?**

29
30 A: My dad, yes, but not my mum. And that was not by her choosing. She was not
31 allowed to.

32
33 **B: I see. Would you like to expand on that?**

34
35 A: Ok. Yep, sure. My mum. We're going back to the 1930's here. My mum was
36 born in 1923, and her parents, she was an only child and her parents were separated. But
37 in the 1930's you didn't separate or get divorced. It was very, very socially unacceptable.
38 My dad, my Granddad, her dad, stayed at home until she was 21 because she was his
39 responsibility until she was 21. So even though she said she lived in a house where her
40 Mum and Dad didn't speak, but he was just living there because she was his
41 responsibility. The day she turned 15 which is the age you can legally leave school he
42 said, "You're not going to school anymore, I've got you a job." And she had to go and
43 have a job and she always in her life wanted to be a nurse but she wasn't allowed to stay
44 at school and be a nurse, she had to work. They didn't have much money but and my
45 grandmother worked, too. That was in the days when wives and mothers didn't work
46 outside the home. So, she went to the job. That was it.

47 **B: Well were either of your parents interested in any kind of computing-related,**
48 **mathematical related field?**

49

50 A: Not really. On my Dad's side both parents, both his parents, were school
51 teachers. It just seems like in our family that you go into education, or health because
52 everybody is in education or health. And I can -- we'll probably come onto that, later, I
53 can tell you about how everybody is in those fields.

54

55 **B: So which was your father?**

56

57 A: He's a doctor. But when he, my Dad, and (I have other theories on the children of
58 two teachers,) but he went to school too early because his parents were teachers in a
59 country school so he just went to school with them and he had actually finished what you
60 would call grade school when he was 10. So they held him back a year because he
61 couldn't really go to high school then. And then he won a scholarship to an important
62 high school and had finished high school at 16. And went to university and he has since
63 told us that he was far too young at 16 to know what to do. So he went to university to
64 do a double degree in Latin in the arts and languages and in maths. He at the same time
65 became a school teacher and he was one paper of finishing his double degree and was
66 teaching school at the same time and thought I don't want to do this for the rest of my life
67 so went to medical school.

68

69 So, no, no, they don't. They have a -- Yes he has a mathematical bent of some sort
70 because he was doing his degree in maths, his first degree. And my mum never did
71 anything from the time she left high school at 15. But my mom and dad were both
72 champion, New Zealand champion bridge players. And the days before computers you
73 had to do all the bridge scoring by hand and bridge scoring is adding up rows and rows of
74 numbers and then cross checking them. We used to help Mom and Dad do it when we
75 were kids. My mother could add columns of figures in her head quicker than anybody.

76

77 **B: Let's talk about you. Were you a good student in your early years of school?**

78

79 A: Yes, because I had to be because I couldn't let my father down.

80

81 **B: Did you take courses in math and science?**

82

83 A: Yes, that's all I took, math and science. At our high schools for the first three
84 years I was in the top class (it was all streams) the top class took maths and science and
85 languages, so yes I took Latin and French for the first three years and the fourth year you
86 could specialize so went to biology, chemistry, physics, maths. So I was a math science
87 student.

88

89 **B: You started to allude to the family educational theory that you had. Do you**
90 **have brothers and sisters who went on to college and a professional career?**

91

92 A: Absolutely. I have only one sister and she is 2 ½ years younger than me and she
93 did math and science as well. But, no butts, she's extra clever. Even though she's 2 ½
94 years younger than me she was always better than me at everything. Sports , music, and
95 she's got her letters in the piano and the violin. I learnt music for 5 years and I can't play
96 a note.

97

98 [both laugh]

99 **B: She hits her head after that one!**

100

101 A: And all I ever wanted to do was dance and I was never sent to dancing.

102

103 B: Tell me about your parental support of your education? Did they treat you
104 differently? Or

105

106 A: Not at all. My father was absolutely brilliant. We were too scared not to succeed
107 because Dad wanted us to. My mother put my father on a pedestal and we had to live up
108 to his expectations but he gave us the most amazing support. And he was able to identify
109 very early our strengths, and guided us into those sorts of things. For example, my sister
110 was a great sports person --we did a lot of sports. My dad was a great sportsperson too.
111 He represented several different provinces in New Zealand at tennis, rugby, cricket, surf
112 lifesaving and when I was born two weeks early he was away playing in the final of the
113 New Zealand badminton championships. He was a great sportsperson and my sister is
114 very good. I was certainly above average at sport. I won the senior year physical
115 education prize at high school. Yes I was certainly above average at sport. But my father
116 must have seen some sort of I'll call it leadership ability early on in me, or maybe we just
117 call it bossiness, and so when I didn't make the top netball team (read basketball here), he
118 actually guided me into refereeing and I became the youngest New Zealand referee for
119 women's netball at 16.

120

121 B: I see. I see. Was there a teacher or somebody else early in life who helped inspire
122 you to pursue a degree in computing or math or science?

123

124

125 A: No, I think our inspiration was our father. And our mother. She always used to
126 say things like, "You don't have to help with the dishes, because I can't help you with
127 your homework so my best help will be to do those sorts of things so you can go away
128 and do your homework. Homework in our house was a thing that you did and you didn't
129 do anything else until it was completed, every night.

130

131 **B: Let's go on**

132

133 A: Ok. That's all right.

134

135 **B: Was there a favorite subject in high school?**

136

137 A: Maths, absolutely.

138

139 **B: Any particular math that was more interesting?**

140

141 A: No, maths absolutely; algebra probably. Yes algebra.

142

143 **B: Ok. So you got out of high school. Why did you choose --- did you go to**
144 **directly to school? and why did you choose the undergraduate institution that you**
145 **did?**

146

147 A: OK, we are right back in the mid-60's here and in New Zealand there were no
148 computers, sorry there were 5 computers, maybe 6 in the whole country. Obviously
149 going to boom and there were no computer personnel, programmers. There just weren't
150 any. And there were no college or university courses for them to do. So we didn't have
151 degrees in computer science. We didn't have degrees in computer anything. So the
152 people from Auckland Technical Institute, the emerging computer industry in New
153 Zealand went to the Auckland Technical Institute and said we desperately need, people
154 trained in computer programming quick like yesterday and the industry in Auckland said
155 they would put money into training these people by giving them scholarships. And of
156 course, I was always going to be a physiotherapist, physical therapist, or something in the
157 health sector. I also never thought I was good enough, intelligent enough, to be a doctor.
158 That was what my sister was going to do because she was clever. In hindsight, looking
159 back 50 years ago if I had my life again I now know I was wrong. So I went to the
160 careers advisor who said, "Ah you are doing maths and science you could be a computer
161 programmer". It was a visiting careers advisor from Auckland who had come to our
162 country school. And so I went home and I told my dad I don't know what I want to be
163 and I was too young to go to physiotherapy school at Otago University to physiotherapy
164 school to become a physical therapist, and I really should have had another year at high
165 school. It is slightly different high school than they do in the States. Normally if you
166 were going to go to university you'd go to high school for 5 years, not 4, and then 3 years
167 to do the degree, so you've got the 8 years. You just do it slightly different. And I'd only
168 been at high school for 4 years, so if I was going to go to university I'd have to back to
169 school for a fifth year and for various stupid teenage reasons I didn't want to stay at high
170 school. And I also wanted to travel a lot which is a very New Zealand thing that all
171 young people in New Zealand travel when they finish their education. And I saw this as a
172 quicker means to travel, so my dad went to ICT in Auckland. When I say ICT most
173 people correct me and say ICL, and it didn't become ICL until 1968. This was 1966 and
174 it was still International Computers and Tabulators. Anyway it was this company and he
175 got all the brochures about what being a computer programmer means and they said if I
176 would like to apply to join this new course that was coming up the next year at Auckland
177 Technical Institute I could but to do that I had to go and sit an aptitude test.

178

179 Now where we lived was 35 miles from the big city even though our high school was one
180 of the biggest in the whole of the country, because it was out of Auckland, out of the big
181 city, going to Auckland to the big city in the 60's was a big deal. And my mother was the
182 greatest shopper ever. And I loved shopping and I loved going shopping with Mum. So
183 here I am 16 years old, 17 years old just turned 17 and I got the opportunity of going to

184 the big city shopping with my mother for a day. I would sit any aptitude test or any
185 stupid test that they want me to sit if I can go shopping, take a day off school and go
186 shopping with my mother. So I said I'll sit your silly test for you. So Mm and I drove
187 into Auckland that morning and I sat the test and I did it as quickly as I could because I
188 didn't want to lose any shopping time. Well I must have done very well on this test
189 because by the time we got home they had rung up and said "Quick, we want you.
190 You've topped this test and we want you for this course." So it gave me a whole lot of
191 things. It gave me the opportunity to leave high school, it gave me the opportunity for a
192 career that was going to earn me lots of money so I could travel and I could get their
193 quicker than if I went and did five years at medical school or something. I got my day's
194 shopping with my mother.

195

196 Who else would have a silly story like that. But anyway, So I was thinking well, then,
197 ok if I've done really well on this test, it must mean I am suited to do this computer
198 programming thing . So I'm not going to find it enormously difficult or beyond anything
199 I want do. I mean it was all too new. We had hand card punch machines without any
200 things on the buttons so you had to remember them. We -- our first programs we wrote
201 we had to convert to binary and punch in binary on your cards, nine-edge leading. We
202 wrote in a very, very basic, with a little B, basic assembler language and the very first
203 machine that we ever programmed we also had the huge big plug panels where you load
204 the piece of paper across and you had to plug the panels and then load your program in
205 and between the two of them it would do something and I still have the cards and the
206 printout from that program.

207

208 **B: I see. This didn't lead to a university degree?**

209

210

211 A: No, no. There were no university degrees to do back then. When I finished this
212 course, I came third in the class, I said ok, what do I do now -- a university degree? No
213 there aren't any. A maths degree, but no I didn't want to do a maths degree. I want to do
214 a computer programming degree. We'd already learnt three languages by that stage, 4
215 languages. There was also the fact that every student in that course was sponsored by a
216 company so all our fees were paid. We had living scholarships and also they were
217 desperate to employ us so they gave us good money when we left.

218

219 **B: I've been looking at your resume, trying to figure out how you went from**
220 **industry into education. I see you started out {....talk-over not understandable**

221

222 A: Yeah, after I finished this course, we graduated and then I worked in industry in 5
223 years. And I had met a friend through hobbies and the hobby at that stage was motor
224 racing, and I was also still refereeing netball and playing basketball, I met... Hang on, I
225 have to back up a bit here. It was somebody I met through work. The head programmer
226 at one of the big companies I worked for, we all got together in motor racing and then I
227 shifted to another company because in those days people were head hunting you all the
228 time. And he had been doing some part time teaching at Auckland Technical Institute and
229 I wasn't that overly happy with my the company I was working for, I was a systems

230 analyst for this company. I wasn't overly happy with the company or the work we were
231 doing. And I had met Peter one day and he said "I am resigning from my teaching
232 position. You'd make a good teacher. Why don't you apply for it, seeing that I know
233 you're unhappy where you are?" So I did. I just applied for the job five years later. And
234 I got it. But then this bossiness streak must have come out, or this natural teaching
235 ability that runs in the family must have come out. So I got the job with no teaching
236 qualification, no undergraduate degree at that stage although I was qualified in New
237 Zealand's eyes because of we have a different educational system. That was, while not
238 equivalent to a degree, it was certainly more than anybody that had a degree had, in terms
239 of the fact I had a computer programming qualification as opposed to a math degree or
240 something else. So they said "Yes please, lots of experience, industry experience and " I
241 don't know where they picked up the teaching ability or maybe there weren't enough
242 applicants for the job, who knows? That's something I never asked, did I? Maybe I was
243 the only applicant for the job.

244

245 **B: So ..**

246

247 A: I started teaching in 1972. at ATI, Auckland Technical Institute. And had 2
248 classes at that stage.

249

250 **B: Were you still working?**

251

252 A: No, I totally stopped working and totally went into teaching in 1972. And then got
253 very active in '73 and '74 on a national scale because by this stage computer
254 programming courses were popping up all over the country and we decided to coordinate
255 it nationally and set up the very first New Zealand-wide certificate in data processing.
256 We had to change the name later, of course, but in those days it was data processing.
257 Keeping going??

258

259 **B: [agreeing] Um-Um**

260

261 A: Ok, so 1972 to 1974 I worked full time at Auckland Technical Institute. At the
262 end of '74 I had my first baby, beautifully planned, oh she wasn't that beautifully
263 planned. I really wanted her to be born in February, got pregnant a couple of months
264 before I thought I would and she was born on the 30th of November. And they actually
265 put me in hospital two weeks into November because of high blood pressure so I thought
266 well stuff you, so I took all my marking (grading) into hospital because I was still
267 teaching so I took it all to hospital, did the marking, and they said, oh you can leave
268 hospital now so I did and went back to work. But that's the end of our semester, the end
269 of our academic year, mid-November. So when the academic year finished a week later I
270 had her, and then went back to work in the February teaching again. I taught all through
271 '75 part-time, I wasn't teaching full-time at that stage. And then at the beginning of '76 I
272 was almost teaching full-time in about may seventy --. Sorry, try that again Barbara,
273 sorry. I was teaching part-time until up until May '76 and in May '76 they said won't
274 you please, please come back full-time, but I realized I was pregnant again so I said no,
275 but still taught all part time through all of '76 and my second child in January of '77,

276 which is in the middle of our big summer vacation. And did I go back in the beginning of
277 '77? Sometime in '77 I went back (I don't know whether it was the start of semester in
278 February or not) and taught right through to August 1978 and we weren't on semesters
279 then, we were on three terms. So we had a May break and an August break. My third
280 baby was due on the Saturday, the August break we went on August vacation on the
281 Friday and he was due on the Saturday, and I had a class at 9 o'clock, two Mondays later,
282 because it was a two week break and he was born at half past 10 that Monday. He was
283 two weeks late. So he was supposed to be planned for -- due in the holidays so I could go
284 back, but I didn't. So that was the first time I had stopped teaching was September 1978
285 and I didn't go back again until 1982 for family reasons.

286

287 Well, I had three children in 3 ½ years. And my husband had just bought a business, so I
288 helped him in the business until 1982. And in 1982 my next-door-neighbor was
289 somebody that I had taught with at Auckland Technical University. He wasn't in
290 computing , but I had taught with him. And he said oh, we have just opened this new
291 polytechnic and they have just started a computing course here and the two people
292 they've got in have been sent away on training, teacher training. Everybody had to do
293 compulsory 6-weeks of teacher training if you had come from industry. Would you be
294 interested in coming back just to cover for this 12 weeks while each of them goes away
295 for this 6 weeks training? I said ok. It was a wee bit early for me I didn't really want to
296 go back when my son was 3 ½, I would really have liked to have waited until he was 5
297 years old and went to school. But the opportunity arose and at the time money was a
298 huge issue so I could see 12 weeks of good salary, so I went back to work and I went
299 back for 6 weeks and stayed for 6 years. Absolutely loved it.

300

301 How much do you want me to go into non – professional stuff?

302

303 **B: Well, [talk over] mostly professional stuff -- We are looking at professional**
304 **stuff, in part how you're balancing things that is important, what other kind of**
305 **things were taking your time. One of the things that would be interesting to people**
306 **is that you didn't have the typical college degree that other people had, and yet**
307 **when I look at your resume now, you have a lot of research publications. You are a**
308 **prime mover, and you will address that in a while, but I really interests me is how**
309 **did you from there to where you are now? Can you share that path, because its got**
310 **to be terrifically interesting.**

311

312 A: When I went back to work in 1983 the two oldest were at school and it was just
313 my 3 ½ year old that I had to get daycare for. But it wasn't too difficult in that we had a
314 garage, we sold petrol and did car repairs so some of the time Mark could spent at the
315 garage with his dad, although when he went to school I then got after school care,
316 somebody would come. The kids walked to school and walked home again. When they
317 got home somebody would come in after school to look after them. Plus I also organized
318 my own timetable, by this time I was doing the timetable, so I organized my own lecture
319 time so that I had one day off a week – one day non-teaching a week. So you'd do your
320 preparation and grading at home. So I'd work Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
321 Wednesdays would be an at home day for me. I was also at this stage moving up the

322 ranks as a basketball referee, actually I was playing too. I still represented our -- played
323 in a representative team and started to referee then and was starting to move up the ranks,
324 probably a bit too quickly, not quickly enough for me at the time looking back, probably
325 a bit too quickly. You'd see somebody coming along who can control a men's national
326 league game, you tended to be promoted and pushed a bit so that was good. And also a
327 marriage that I wanted to get out of very quickly. But it took me seven years to get out of
328 it. When I went back to work I was totally .. I'm searching for the right work here ... my
329 ex-husband or my first husband had totally taken away any self-esteem, or self-belief that
330 I had, so I went back to work totally amazed that people believed things that I said
331 because I had absolutely no belief in my own ability at that stage. He had taken that all
332 away from me. I have to add in here at some stage because that's an enormous part of
333 my growing up during that stage. For years and years and years he called me fat, dumb
334 and ugly, and I believed him. So when you are told something like that for so long you
335 actually believe it, I really believed I was really dumb and I had nothing to offer. And I
336 went back to work and all my colleagues would ask me questions and I 'd answer them
337 because I knew the answers and they would say thank you and walk away. I'd be
338 standing there open-mouthed that they believed me. So how did I get where I am today?
339 In 1988 I finally got rid of that first husband and found another one and shifted to another
340 town. I was I suppose it would be the equivalent of the chair of the department by the
341 time I left in 1987.

342

343 1988 I went to a new school just as a lecturer, an academic staff member, as faculty. And
344 I absolutely loved going back into the classroom. I absolutely adored it. I loved the
345 students. I was getting huge success from my students. They were topping national
346 exams, and international exams, so I was having great success with my teaching. And
347 then a couple of years later I was made chair of the department. But I was also still
348 active, or became active from 1986 in creating a new nationwide qualification in
349 computing and I chaired that national committee from 1990 to 2002. I was on it from '86
350 to 2000- sorry from '86 to 1990 and from 1990 to 2002 I chaired the national committee.

351

352 **B: Would you explain a little bit about this qualification to people who would be**
353 **looking at that and wouldn't quite understand what that education is about?**

354

355 A: Ok. In New Zealand we have two types of tertiary education the polytechnic
356 sector and the university sector. The polytechnic sector is more geared to vocational, it is
357 more industry driven than the pureness of the university sector. Now 20 years later they
358 are merging a lot more. So the polytechnic sector can give degrees. In New Zealand you
359 have 5 years of secondary school and a three year degree, 5 years of high school and
360 three year degree, so you still get your 8 years but you do it in 5 and 3 rather than 4 and 4.
361 And we know what the equivalents are, because there are international comparison
362 journals printed so that when we are trying to do cross credits of American students
363 come to New Zealand or English students we know what the equivalents are. So the last
364 year in high school is the equivalent of the US first year at college. So what we did
365 nationally is we set up a three year national diploma in business computing. Now we
366 debated the name. We didn't want to call it computer science. We, I don't know why the
367 word business got in there but it did. We set it up so that all of the 20 polytechnics in the

368 country would be teaching the same curriculum. And as a national body we looked after
369 the curriculum and kept it up to date. But you could then very easily move between
370 schools because you could doing all the same curriculum. And that national body, called
371 the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications, is still going today and it
372 still looks after the content. We do a lot of moderation between institutes so you would
373 send, every year, you'd send in all your assessment items, and they are looked at to make
374 sure that the levels are exactly correct so that one school isn't teaching way above or
375 way below the rest of the country. So all the levels are correct. And it is at that national
376 body that we have set up big research programs. Because if we are teaching in the degree
377 area then we must be doing research in that area. So from 1990 onwards when I was very
378 active in that national association seeking out and implementing the qualifications we had
379 to do it one year at a time. We also started to set up research. Now I also ran the national
380 conference for too many years. I chaired it for 12 years. And at that stage I saw it evolve
381 and looked internationally at what was happening in computing education throughout the
382 world and tried to put that into our national conference. Now that sounds like I'm behind
383 the rest of the world, but I would actually debate now and argue that national conference
384 is as good if not leading in a lot of areas -- education conferences throughout the rest of
385 the world. So during the mid-90's I started to introduce a whole lot of new things into
386 the conference. Now I didn't have a huge conference committee and I persuaded them
387 anyway to put a lot of things I wanted to into it, because none of them were looking
388 beyond their own school enough, I felt. I had a huge overview because I was chairing the
389 national committee. I knew all the chairs of all the departments throughout the whole
390 country. I could probably name most of the faculty in every school throughout the
391 country as well. Because this was all new, they were all looking for advice. So two or
392 three times a week I'd get a telephone call from some school in the country saying how
393 do you teach such and such or I am having trouble assessing such and such, how do you
394 do it? and I would know somebody that was doing it. And I would be able to put them on
395 or guide them in how to teach, how to moderate, or what little of the assessment they
396 should be using and if I couldn't do it, I would certainly know somebody that was doing
397 it.

398 37:42

399 I was also very active and led the curriculum development of each of these three years of
400 the qualification; wrote a lot of the curriculum myself. And then I thought, right, we've
401 got that in place now we have to look at the research as well. So I started myself writing
402 up what we had been doing in computing education. At that stage I introduced the very
403 first degree program in computing in the country outside the traditional university sector.
404 And I had introduced that one into my own school. Once we had that in place we had to
405 start building the research that supported that degree teaching. So I myself started doing
406 research, started publishing and then thought gosh, I can't just do this myself. I have to
407 have my own faculty and my own school doing it and I also have to have the whole
408 country doing it. Because it's no good just us doing it, the whole country has to be doing
409 it. Bossy old me again, So I said right-o, this is what we are going to do. Now how are
410 we going to do this? Are we going to do this properly. Now at this stage, I had met this
411 absolutely wonderful colleague called Tony Clear and who had come through a very
412 different path. He had master's degrees in Latin and Old English and Icelandic and
413 languages and but had done a heap of research. He had got into computing as a second

414 career. But was able to adapt the research that he had done for his classics career into
415 computing, Plus I had my own colleagues so we got together and thought OK, we can do
416 this, could we get the rest of the country doing this as well. So we set up getting started
417 in research workshops so we set up our first national one in 1998, a two-day workshop.
418 We got everybody in the country to come together in Wellington. We ran this two-day
419 workshop on getting started in research. We still run them now. I'm don't know if we'll
420 run any in 2006 but we certainly ran them in 2005. And we've run them anything from
421 two days and one-day ones and then we've run part two of getting started in research –
422 how to publish, where to publish, how to write, how to get your own faculty motivated to
423 do research.

424
425 We've actually increased the research output. We had to create our own journal, There
426 were no journals in New Zealand in computing. There was actually one – the computing
427 society had one, but it seems to have faded away. It was not very good anyway. I didn't
428 like what they had published, so we create our own one. And we publish at least twice a
429 year, and have done for 6 years. And we have also the conference itself has evolved. It
430 had evolved from 18 years ago when we discussed curriculum and how we teach to now
431 fully refereed research papers. We've had fully refereed research papers for the last 6
432 years. Prior to that we might have accepted on abstracts, that weren't fully refereed but
433 in 1999 we decided. right, they are going to be fully referred papers, double blind
434 refereed, and we have had papers like that ever since. And each year we raise the bar
435 and we've raised it again for 2006. I keep my fingers crossed that on the last submission
436 date, the 17th of March, everything will be -- we'll know if we raised the bar too high.
437 Wide variety of research papers, much wider. I've just been at the ITiCSE planning
438 meeting and much wider than the ITiCSE papers. 24 of their 40 papers are on CS1 and
439 CS2. Ours are much wider variety than that. So we've got our journal, our national
440 conference, we've got international speakers at our conference every year, some
441 absolutely fabulous speakers we've had in the past, keynote speakers. Hopefully this
442 year will be just as good.

443
444 And along all of that in 1997 I changed jobs again and I left that other town that was in,
445 in that school to go back to where I was in 1982 – to Unitec. It had changed its name in
446 that time, But Unitec in New Zealand was always seen as the leading, the most
447 proactive, the most leading edge and innovative school in the country and I got to be the
448 chair of the department. In New Zealand it's not cyclic (The Chairs position). In the
449 states it can change every 3 years or however many years. In New Zealand it's a
450 permanent (tenured) position that you go to. And it's one that is highly sought after and I
451 got the Unitec chair in 1997. Very, very excited.

452

453 **B: [some mumbling] We'd kind of like to know something about your attitude**
454 **toward research. We know you value it, but your own research. Are you finding**
455 **that exciting, are you engaged in it now? And are you still teaching?**

456

457 A: OK. I haven't taught for the last 2 years. Prior to that I taught on the master's
458 program on instructional design and interactive learning. While I was doing all this I also
459 got very involved in multimedia in the early '90's when it was just emerging and it was

460 something that all of a sudden that after years and years of cutting code, something that
461 really inspired me again. And I did a post graduate diploma in computer based learning
462 at that stage. First time I had done educational psychology type papers. Sorry, I've lost
463 my track. Was I still teaching? Two years ago was the last time I actually taught a class
464 and it was in the master's program in instructional design and interactive learning. And I
465 haven't done much undergraduate teaching lately – I've supervised our capstone projects.
466 Our undergraduate degree ends with a capstone project, and so I've supervised those.
467 But last year in the 2005 academic year and the 2006 academic year I won't be teaching
468 though.

469

470 I was a very prolific researcher and publisher up until 2005 and I had a slow year last
471 year and I'm going to get started again, all inspired to do research again this year. I
472 think one of things as the chair is that you should lead by example. And I'd certainly led
473 by example up until 2005. And pulled along people, other faculty with me, who can now
474 take over that mentoring role for younger faculty.

475

476 **B: I see. I noticed that on your resume that you have an honorary PhD. Do you**
477 **have any plan of getting a true PhD? You do all this research ---**

478

479 A: It was certainly been on the back burner for the last year. Maybe I'll get inspired
480 again, but nothing will happen until June when --- I won't even think about it until June
481 of this year.

482

483 **B: I see. One of the things you have alluded to is you have created professional**
484 **organizations almost, it sound so. Is that right?**

485

486 A: Yep.

487

488 **B: Professional organizations seem to mean a lot to you and to your career.**

489

490 A: Yes, yes they do. The national organization where we had a national curriculum,
491 where we made sure that everybody was teaching to the same standard and level was
492 very, very important. And we created an enormously supportive structure through all the
493 schools in the country where this could happen without any of them feeling bad about it,
494 so we know that if you graduate with this qualification from this school it is exactly the
495 same as graduating from Unitec.

496

497 **B: You are now involved internationally.**

498

499 A: And now involved internationally. Yes, and that is important to me, too. To
500 make sure that we can have that standard nationally and we know that it is the same as an
501 international standard. New Zealand are two tiny islands at the bottom of the Pacific.
502 We are very, very isolated. I want to make sure that any graduate coming out of New
503 Zealand can hold their heads up and be held to an equivalent or better standard than the
504 rest of the world.

505

506

507 **B: I see. You have talked about challenges that you had with your own personal**
508 **life , having a career and juggling those kind of things; And you also mentioned**
509 **something that is one of our wrap up questions actually, is if you had to do**
510 **everything over again is there one choice you made that you would have done**
511 **differently -- either academic or career wise?**

512

513 A: If I had my whole life over again? Very easy to look back and say yes, I'd have
514 gone into medicine.

515

516 **B: Then we would probably have lost a lot had you done than! But I can**
517 **understand.**

518

519 A: Yes, that's what I would have done.

520

521 B: You also talked about some outside interests. You were interested in basketball,
522 net ball and motor car racing. Are there – do you currently have some outside interests
523 that.

524

525 A: No, Sorry. Just to tell the tape there was lots of smiling going on then. That's
526 because I have been so involved in my career in the last few years that my father tells me
527 I get stressed because I don't have a hobby. And it just made me laugh when I think of
528 all that stress that I went through last year and he says, "Your problem is you don't have
529 a hobby." A few years ago I got injured. I have a permanent knee injury and that is when
530 I had to stop refereeing immediately. I was at the end of my career when I got the knee
531 injury, so it wasn't like I was just starting out. I had surgery on it and they said no, give it
532 all away. I wasn't ready to give it all away in my head, so it took my head a long while
533 to get over that. So do I still have hobbies? I am still involved in watching my son-in-
534 law referee at an international level. He was my first protégé referee and now he is my
535 son-in-law, so while I don't actually have or am putting-- I'm only involved in basketball
536 now as a spectator when he referees. I had a -- my younger son was a national basketball
537 player, spent two years in the states, playing in high school. He also has exactly the same
538 knee injury and he can't play again, now at a professional level, he had to give up at that
539 level. So really the last 8 years 6 years has been really dedicated to building that. Well,
540 yes a PhD, well a professional doctorate was on the list, but Tony's has taken priority.
541 And that is in my head is a good excuse not to have to do it.

542

543 **B: I see. One of the questions that never came up except in your early**
544 **expectations of what a woman does in terms of your mother, have you felt any, has it**
545 **been any different as a woman going through these career steps than what you**
546 **perceive men going through the same career steps might have had?**

547

548 A: Absolutely. I had three children in 3 ½ years. The first two were – I had to go to
549 the infertility clinic, so they were both with the aid of fertility drugs. The third one was a
550 huge surprise from nowhere. He was my Immaculate Conception baby. But I had three
551 children in 3 ½ years. I had a career as a teacher that I absolutely loved, I got huge

552 satisfaction out of it and my students did so well on national exams. Remember the one
553 year that the student won the international exam I was just over the moon because I
554 thought Yep, that's what the satisfaction is all about, isn't it. To actually to see the penny
555 drop, particularly when you are teaching introductory programming and all of a sudden
556 you see oh wow, I've got this and off they go. It just gives me enormous satisfaction as a
557 teacher. Now I had that, I had three children in 3 ½ years, I had a failing marriage, and a
558 business that could have been good but my ex-husband decided that sailing was much
559 more important than running a business and let it fade away. And I had to juggle it. I got
560 no support at home, with child care. I got no support at home with bringing up the
561 children. My children were very active. My daughter was a national gymnast, rhythmic
562 gymnast and played netball. My sons played rugby and went to all their activities as
563 well. That was before they started playing basketball. And I thought I didn't want them
564 to not have the things that or the parental support so I would take them to all their
565 activities that they went to. My daughter went to ballet as well and I took her to all those
566 things. Took my sons to all their things with no other parental help because he was off
567 doing his own thing. No wonder I left him. So yes, I did find it difficult because my
568 other colleagues were just able to go and keep their career going. They didn't have to
569 worry about going all day on the plane to Wellington, a plane ride away to a national
570 meeting who was going to watch the children after school so I would have to organize the
571 children's after school care because I knew I wouldn't be home until 7 o'clock that night
572 when the plane got back in and I drove back through the traffic. Very lucky of course
573 that being in education I had the school holidays off, sort of. You'd still have work to do
574 but at least you could do it at home.

575

576 **B: But as we wrap this up, is there advice you would give to a young woman**
577 **thinking about a career in computing and especially computing education? Any**
578 **words of wisdom looking back on your career for that young woman?**

579

580 A: Go for it. Go for it because it is enormously satisfying, Especially in education
581 too, if you are having a family you have the opportunity of vacation time as the same
582 time as the children have off school especially over the summer. I think education is
583 enormously satisfying and it does suit a family life more than a career in the industry
584 where you don't have that vacation time at the same time as the children. Also think it is
585 important that I did go back to work to show my children how important education was.
586 They all have degrees, two of them looking at post graduate. But it also showed them that
587 education was important and that I was dedicated to their education. So my advice is go
588 for it.

589

590 **B: [repeats] Go for it. I see. Is there one story you would like to leave us with?**
591 **Any story you can think of?**

592

593 A: I'd like to think about that and leave you with something absolutely amazingly
594 brilliant but I can't think of it at the moment. Um – what I don't want to lose is those
595 early years in the '60's when we were writing in assembler. I don't want to lose in my
596 memory those panels that I plugged all those years ago. And the hand punches that we
597 used. Somehow I'd like that preserved. It's not a story, but it's something I'd like

598 preserved. I also, the thing I am probably most proud of, this could be a story, is making
599 sure that New Zealand at the bottom of the Pacific is actually as good as anywhere in the
600 world because of the national things that we have set up to make sure that we do compare
601 and we continuously comparing and making sure that we are as good as the rest of the
602 world.

603

604 **B: Well. I thank you very much for sharing today. Thank you Alison, this has**
605 **been a pleasure and people listening will also thank you.**