Spinner-Dinner 27 April 2015
Transcript of Audio Files

Audio file #1

00:00 (**Les Earnest** begins speaking)

> Given that the central theme of this reunion dinner it is likely to be about bragging, let me get it started. I plan to read part of this story and blow my referee's whistle to declare that I am talking too long, and hand the mike to somebody else.<pause> I should step aside you're saying. <since there was feedback from Les being too close to a ceiling speaker. Sound improves…> Later on I will post this story online, so that you can read more of it if you are interested. Also the people who are not here, will have a crack. The online version will include links to additional documentation in case anyone would like to refute any of my claims.

01:08

> First, I will offer a warning: Over the years, I witnessed a number of entities identified below that have engaged in corrupt acts either illegal or grossly unethical, I will add links below to stories in which I bad mouth them which will be handy for lawyers. <audio glitch>. However those contemplating such actions should keep in mind the following facts…

01:41 One,

> I generally tell the truth which under U.S. law provides a strong defense against civil or criminal actions except in cases where classified information has been disclosed. Of course classified information has been used extensively since world war two to hide government corruption from the public and I would consider it an honor to be persecuted as a whistle blower like Edward Snowden. (slight applause)

02:20 And second,

> I have not held a top secret security clearance since 1965 so everything I knew then should have been declassified but some can play games with that.

02:37 Third,

> I have the means to defend myself in court. And since turn about is a fair play, potential

adversaries should consider the fact that I have initiated law suits against a number of entities both individual and corporate and have won them all with sometimes a net profit.

03:03 What am I ?

Most spinners probably think of me as an ancient bureaucrat, this is true. But I also did some other stuff. You may think that musician Willy Nelson is also rather old, but I view him as a youngster because he is three years younger than me. Let's see, Given that I am several years past the age by which most people are dead, I believe it is time to start bragging. Incidentally, I have five great grand children so far and if I last another ten years or so I am likely to start seeing great great grand children as my mother did. She made it past a hundred.(background voice "wow")

03:55 OK,

Let me say a little bit about SAGE corruption. As you may recall, when president Eisenhower left office (Large Laughter ! *Les this is equivalent to referring to George Washington's farewell address as being in the near present of your audience. It is just not so for us baby boomers who were in the 8th grade or less, and Alison wasn't born.*) I am not sure why that's funny. (and so more laughter) He gave a speech in which he warned about the military industrial complex. He was being discrete in two ways in that he did not identify the particular program he was talking about and he also didn't mention the third group of participants in this corruption namely the U.S. Congress. Before coming to Stanford, I spent a dozen years in the corrupt military industrial congressional complex and invented or helped invent a number of things including the first computer network which is the SAGE system which became operational in 1958.

05:00

I also did the first cursive handwriting recognizer in the period 1959-1962. The first spelling checker in 1961. The first search engine called "route" beginning in 1961. Later on I initiated the development of a bunch of firsts sometimes alone but generally with a lot of help from my colleagues including the first hand-eye robotics project which I initiated in 1966 the first attempt at an autonomous road vehicle anywhere in the world, that was the Stanford Cart in 1967 which unfortunately didn't work because of computer performance limitations at the time. I served on the startup committee for the first general purpose computer network namely ARPANET 1967-68 where we foolishly

neglected to include email on the first round.(background voice "and security") SAIL bit map display system in 1971 put interactive displays on everyone's desk.

06:23

We were the first facility in the world I believe to do that. Including the first computer controlled video switch which I designed and built And an Audio switch using digital components to handle analog signals that is pulse width modulation instead of amplitude modulation. I designed the SAIL keyboard (rise of inarticulate background muttering) which was subsequently adopted by AI groups at Carneige Mellon and MIT and also some corporations. Some of the features are found in keyboards of modern personal computers.

07:15

In the early 1970s with Larry Tesler we developed the PUB document compiler which I claim was the first to provide spread sheets although Larry disagrees. Along with enumerated sections, and sub-sections, compilation of table of contents, keyword index, handling of internal and external references. However its deficiencies in mathematical notation inspired Don Knuth to invent the TeX compiler, or whatever he calls it.

08:01 In 1971,

working with Ralph Gorin we developed the first Spelling Corrector called 'Spell' which gave assistance in finding the correct spelling unlike my original spelling checker. It soon spread around the world via the blossoming ARPANET.

08:27 In 1973,

when I served as local chair on the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence I put together a booklet of reviews of local restaurants, from multiple viewpoints. Later working with Casey Menkee we turned it into a Restaurant Review notebook called Yum Yum. It was sold at the Stanford Bookstore. I also put it up on ARPANET as a free service for those who had access to that. Eventually Yelp turned that into a business.

09:09 Also in 1973,

I wrote a program called Finger to snoop on what people were doing at SAIL but the users soon turned it upside down on me and turned it into the first social network blogging service. Though those terms did not come into general use until about 28 years later.

09:30 In 1974,

> responding to a food emergency, I designed and built the world's first computer controlled vending machine, called the Prancing Pony, after the pub in Tolkein's Middle Earth. It sold for cash or credit by billing by email occasionally giving things away offering a gambling option - double or nothing.

10:02 In 1974,

> with Marty Frost and John McCarthy we developed the Network News Service, called NS, that processed incoming stories from the Associate Press and the New York Times news wires in real time and provided automatic notification to individuals of stories that matched their search descriptions as well as allowing later retrieval. (background "cool idea") It was used by emergency response teams dealing with the Three Mile Island nuclear malfunction and the Chinese students during the Tianamen Square protests of 1989.

10:47 In 1974,

> I became chair of the ACM (bad audio, then "what's wrong", microphone battery failure, "batteries usually", microphone units swapped, talk continues) special interest group on Artificial Intelligence that is SIGART for a couple of years.

In 1975, with John McCarthy and Mark Crispin, we developed a computer networking scheme called DIALNET that used switched telephone lines and modems to provide the same kinds of data and email services as ARPANET at a much lower entry cost. It never caught on.

11:43 In 1978,

> after becoming editor of the cycling federation rule book, I rewrote all the bike racing rules to make them more compatible with international rules and I added standardized penalties for infractions for all races. I used the pub document compiler to maintain this annual publication until 1985 when I lost my seat on the board of directors because of my advocacy of a strong helmet rule for all races. However they later figured out that I was right and it was later adopted by racing organizations all around the world and after that the recreational riders, so that turned out all right. Saved thousands of lives I claim.

12:55 Anyway in 1979,

> I initiated development of a desk top publishing system using lasers, given that Canon

gave us a prototype. Louis traPardo stepped up to that challenge and made it work using a small microprocessor, the Z9000, and we later tuned that into a spinoff, Imagen.

13:23 Also in 1979,

we moved SAIL into the newly constructed Margaret Jacks Hall, which I had helped design. (giggling - since the original Sanford Campus architect was) I included a music room that cost a couple of hundred thousand dollars extra and also I sort of replicated the Prancing Pony by putting the coffee room on the third floor next to the stairs and a lounge next to it so that people could meet by chance and chat and it worked but it was not replicated when we moved to the next building, Gates Hall.

14:07 Anyway, Unfortunately the music group, of course, got abandoned up on the hill with the decaying D.C. Power Lab and they had a rough go; but they somehow survived, and are thriving today ("happily", sotto voce: "on a different hill", Earnest "yah right")

14:36

Ok let's see

When we moved to Margaret Jacks Hall, I had hoped it would reduce the tension between SAIL which had most of the computer science research funding and the rest of the department, However in 1980 I learned that John McCarthy had a different motive for making that move. Namely avoiding the small amount of administrative duties that I had been unable to protect him from. Towards that end in 1980 he shut down SAIL and fired me, uh let's see now - maybe that's enough.

15:36 (Les blows the referee's whistle, applause 10 or 15 seconds dead air then)

(anon says: "**Ed Fiegenbaum**" who then begins talking…)

15:55

I too am going to do some reading, sorry about that,but I wrote it all out, um

I am really glad to be here, that is I am really glad to be here considering the alternative (laughter) I want to make my comments brief because there are so many other people who will ,I am sure, want to speak, but to paraphrase a famous scientist no more brief than is necessary.

16:19

This is my view, We are here tonight because Les Earnest took the trouble to bring us together (anon: Here! Here! applause) It is a family reunion, Les's extended family, and he has always done things for us, his extended family. For me, this is the night we honor Les, for his remarkable contributions he made to SAIL and to AI as the chief executive officer of SAIL. His work at SAIL was of great competence, diligence with compassion for people and their situations and the highest integrity. Les was as well as the chief executive, chief human relations officer, the chief engineer, the chief architect AND now he is our chief patriarch. Now it was not easy doing these things among the visionary but highly variable demands of John McCarthy, the rest of us, the Stanford Bureaucracy and ARPA.

17:34

Most of you don't know how McCarthy and I managed to find Les. Was it divine intervention? No. It was the intervention of Ivan Sutherland, who had just signed off on a rather large amount of research money that we had asked for in our 1965 proposal to ARPA.

17:48

Ivan had taken over from J.C.R.Licklider as the head of ARPA's information processing research office. He had just signed off on an ARPA contract to give us a lot of money to two professors who probably did not know how to manage it, but in any event these were two professors who needed adult supervision. Anyway we got the adult supervision. We want to thank Les. If there is such a thing as a heart and soul of the laboratory, then Les was the heart and soul of SAIL. Thank you.

18:35 (applause continuing to 19:09 voice "**Ed Fredkin** is next")

19:10 By the way Les's path and my path crossed an amazing number of times. I met him when I was a freshman at Cal Tech in Blacker House and I remember that in my sophomore year when it started Les was elected Pope (laughter) The Pope as I recall was in charge of the lack-of-morals or of introducing the lack of morals <cut to next file> amongst the students.

20:00 (End of first of three audio files)

Audio file#2
(summary: Edward Fredkin, reports on Marvin Minksy being too frail to attend. Fred recites his John McCarthy talk - Trie memory. BBN. 1960 Time Sharing.Compares the Q32 to the Raspberry Pi.LISP has died more often than any other language in the world.

(David Luckham … Relates the Muhamman Ali incident)

Audio file#3
(Penti ConNerva re Suppes and the PDP-1 that John McCarthy left behind)

new speaker
TVEDIT
about Pat Suppes, IMSSS in 1963 with PDP-1 and Time Sharing

Les Earnest resumes speaking - would anyone like to refute what you have heard.

new speaker - Bernard Mont Reynon - re Electronic music

Les Earnest declares end of talks.
Thanks to Chef Chu and Robert (upstairs restaurant manager)