

James Idell

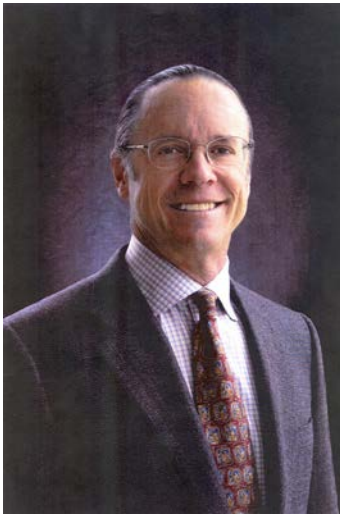
*Interview conducted by
Helen Weiss, Historian
November 30, 2016*

SAN DIEGO TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVE



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James Idell



Mr. Idell retired in 2007 as a Senior Vice-President of Corporate Development after 30 years with Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). For the last 21 of those years, he reported directly to the CEO and was responsible for keeping track of business development throughout the corporation and for organizational development and change. Prior to that, he served in various capacities, as a Group level business development lead, senior program manager, and system engineer.

Prior to joining SAIC, Mr. Idell worked as a systems analyst for Systems Development Corporation and 4 years as an Air Force project engineer with the Air Force Satellite Control Facility. Mr. Idell graduated with a BS and an MSEE from Cornell University in 1972.



THE SAN DIEGO TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEWEE: James Idell

INTERVIEWER: Helen Weiss, Historian

DATE: November 30, 2016

1 **WEISS:** I'm Helen Weiss for the San Diego Technology Archive housed at the
2 Special Collections at the UC San Diego Geisel Library. I'm interviewing Mr. James
3 Idell on November 30, 2016 in the Geisel Library. Mr. Idell joined SAIC in 1977 and
4 served in various capacities as a group level business develop lead, senior program
5 manager and system engineer before becoming senior vice president of corporate
6 development. When he retired in 2007, he had served for 21 years in this capacity
7 where he was responsible for keeping track of business development throughout the
8 corporation and for organizational development and change as SAIC expanded its
9 scope and workforce.

10 Thank you, Mr. Idell, for making time for this oral history interview. We'll be
11 walking through your background, education and then find out about your
12 experiences at SAIC especially here in San Diego. So tell me about your background
13 before you joined SAIC. Where did you grow up?

14 **IDELL:** I grew up outside of Boston – my whole family is still back there – in the
15 town of Wellesley, Massachusetts. I went to Cornell University undergraduate and
16 then one year of graduate school. I got my master's in electrical engineering with a
17 specialization in information theory.

18 After leaving the graduate program, I spent four years in the Air Force. I had joined
19 an Air Force ROTC detachment after my junior year at Cornell because my draft
20 number was four and it was a way to go to grad school in the era of the Vietnam War
21 and the draft. I had an opportunity with the Air Force to come to Southern
22 California and worked as a project engineer for the Air Force Satellite Control
23 Facility working on upgrade projects to ground data processing and telemetry
24 support systems for both Air Force and classified satellites. In 1976 I left the Air
25 Force. I spent a year with System Development Corporation in Santa Monica doing

26 systems analysis work on various largely government contracts. Wasn't particularly
27 happy there.

28 Through a friend – we were on an outing one day – and I was complaining about my
29 job. He said, "Well my neighbor works for this company called Science Applications,
30 SAI, and he's looking for somebody with just your background." So through my
31 friend, I met Don McPherson who was a division manager in El Segundo, a small
32 office at SAI and within a month I had hired on. So that was January of '77. The
33 company, at that time, had just finished a year of \$44 million in annual revenues.
34 Had about 1,400 employees.

35 My employee number was in the 2,600s which were consecutively given. When I
36 retired there were well over 150,000 numbers used and the company had grown to
37 \$10 billion annual revenue and over 44,000 employees worldwide. So my time at
38 SAIC saw great growth, great change, and great opportunity. Joining SAIC turned
39 out to be a life-changing decision.

40 **WEISS:** So before we move into your life at SAIC, tell me a little bit about the
41 System Development Corporation. I understand that it was founded in 1955 in Santa
42 Monica and was the first computer software company in the U.S. Tell me about that
43 whole experience and also how your Air Force background transitioned to help you
44 with what you were doing at that company.

45 **IDELL:** I was responsible for contracts that the Air Force had to upgrade ground
46 data processing systems both for real time control and telemetry support systems for
47 satellites. I was recruited by SDC through contacts that I had made as an Air Force
48 officer and went to work on a program with the Defense Meteorological Satellite
49 Program in Omaha, Nebraska looking at future upgrades to their support systems.
50 So it was similar work from a contractor basis to a different Air Force organization
51 than one I had worked on as a blue-suiter.

52 **WEISS:** As a blue-suiter – where were you actually trained and did you see any
53 overseas posts?

54 **IDELL:** I was what they used to call a Hollywood Solider. My entire four years were
55 spent in El Segundo, California living on the beach at Manhattan and Hermosa
56 Beach. L.A. Air Force station is really an office park and has, other than the gym and
57 the exchange, few of the trappings of a military base. So my hair was always just a

58 little bit too long. I lived the life of a commuter who had an engineering job. I
59 traveled as part of my job probably once or twice a month to Sunnyvale, California
60 where the Satellite Control Facility's principal operating location was but never other
61 than temporary duty never had any overseas commitments or responsibilities. I also
62 traveled back to Washington on occasion.

63 **WEISS:** So you left Systems Development Corporation, got hired on to SAIC. When
64 did you first meet Dr. Beyster? I understand he was an excellent recruiter himself,
65 but you were then recruited through somebody else.

66 **IDELL:** I was, but Bob's recruiting skills had more to do with me staying in the
67 company. As I said, through a friend, I met a man who had some contracts and
68 needed help and I fit right in. I hired on and was working. I met Bob probably within
69 a year of being hired. So in my mind, I was a fairly junior employee.

70 In '77, I would have been 28, 29 rather, but I took responsibility for a contract that
71 had some growth potential with the Air Force Space Division. Bob, at that time, was
72 the chief business development officer of the company, informally. He took an
73 interest in and traveled extensively to the various operating locations of the
74 company and really wanted to meet the young people who were in charge of and
75 who had the technical knowledge that were the guts of our support to important
76 contractors. Through his normal travels to the various locations, he met me because
77 the contract that I was responsible for had some growth potential.

78 He knew of me and he used to truly enjoy meeting the young technical people and
79 program management people that were in the company, because he wanted to get
80 their ideas. He wanted to see who was smart, who was contributing in the long run.
81 At that time the company was sized so that he could take an interest in every
82 operation and wanted to meet personally every key person in the company. A tall
83 order even then but it was something that he endeavored to do.

84 **WEISS:** So you were based in the Santa Monica area?

85 **IDELL:** When I worked [for SDC]. SAIC, when I hired on to them, had an office in
86 El Segundo, California right down the road from Air Force Base Division. Had maybe
87 40-45 people total in that office spread between a couple different SAIC divisions.

88 **WEISS:** When did you come to San Diego for SAIC?

89 **IDELL:** I will get to the recruiting part directly as it affected me. Two years into
90 SAIC, I was fairly ambitious at the time. I was doing well at SAIC, but I had some
91 friends who worked for Control Data Corporation, CDC. Back in the late '70s, they
92 were industry leaders in super computing and also had classified technology for
93 high-powered onboard spacecraft computers. They recruited me to come to the Bay
94 area and be a salesman for the Air Force because of my background with classified
95 space programs and my data processing information theory background. They had a
96 very small group of people that supported the classified community and interfaced
97 for the various products and research activities that CDC was involved in. It would
98 have been a big pay jump for me and was exciting at the time to be back working
99 with the classified community.

100 So I told my immediate boss in El Segundo that I had taken this job. He said, "Oh my
101 goodness. Good luck." He happened to tell his boss, the operations manager in San
102 Diego and he said, "Well good luck." He told the group manager that I worked under
103 at the time who was a fellow named Gene Ray. Gene said, "Wait a second."

104 He sent me out to Dayton to meet a business development individual named Bill
105 Hall who was working in the classified community and brought me down to La Jolla
106 and said, "No, you're not leaving the company. First of all, I want you to sit down
107 with Dr. Beyster." I had met Gene through program reviews. So he was somebody I
108 knew but not well. I had met Bob one or two times. This was back in La Jolla in the
109 1200 Prospect Building.

110 They brought me up to the fourth-floor corner office and I was ushered in to see
111 Bob. We sat down. Before we really could get started, his administrator walked in
112 with a very officious air and gave Bob a pamphlet and just said, "Excuse me, Mr.
113 Idell. Dr. Beyster, you really have to look at this and sign this correspondence. It's
114 very important." So he said, "Excuse me."

115 Helen, Bob's administrator, left the room. He opens the folder and said, "Really, this
116 has got nothing to do with any [correspondence]. This is a memo from Gene telling
117 me what I'm supposed to say to keep you in the company." So this was typical of
118 Bob's disarming, informal interactions – I mean he was recruiting me at the time. He
119 said, "Well if you want to work in the classified community, we can make that
120 happen."

121 He got me introduced to an SAIC division in Tucson that had some classified
122 contracts. He said, "You want to do business development? Well Gene's going to
123 take you on his staff and you can be a business development staff person and work
124 with the classified programs in Tucson and also in Space Division." He explained the
125 equity system at SAIC and why there was long term benefit.

126 At some time in this oral history discussion, I think you'll probably want me to talk
127 about employee ownership. Let me do it in bits and pieces. At that time, it was the
128 intent of Bob and the board that every key person in the company – and this was
129 broadly speaking, not just some senior executives – should see 25 percent of their
130 annual remuneration in unrealized capital gains based on SAIC stock holdings. That
131 was the goal. I had had the opportunity when I first joined SAIC to participate in the
132 equity, when I went from SDC to SAIC, I was very happy.

133 One of the things that enticed me was the broad bonus program that included
134 equity. Very shortly after I joined the company I got an offer to buy \$2,000.00 worth
135 of stock, receive \$2,000.00 of vesting stock as a result and then receive options worth
136 at the time \$2,000.00. So for the first two years or so I had gotten grants like that.
137 Then shortly before I got this offer from CDC, I got a third offer of this sort.
138 \$2,000.00 for a 29-year old in 1978, '79, I was living on the beach still. That was a lot
139 of money.

140 I said, "No, they're going to keep asking me if I want to buy stock until I turn them
141 down." So I said no thank you to that one. Years later, I went back and tried to
142 calculate what the value of that decision was or what I had lost. It was about a half a
143 million dollars in the sense that if I found another \$2,000.00 back in '79 when I
144 retired that would have turned into a half a million dollars. Oh well.

145 But back to Bob, his personality, I mean he was funny. He's warm. He's very informal
146 and as I said, disarming relating to the people he's trying to hire, the people he
147 works with. He answered all my questions. Just the exposure to him was important.
148 He talked a bit about the company, about employee ownership, what he was trying
149 to build, what his philosophy was and it was all enough to keep me in the company.
150 That was the last time I had pursued an offer outside of the company. Twenty-eight
151 years later, after 30 years I retired.

152 **WEISS:** Some of the SAIC pioneers who spoke at Dr. Beyster's Celebration of Life
153 talked about the Beyster Book. Do you have any stories about the Beyster Book?

154 **IDELL:** Well in '86 when I went down to work directly – I guess it was '84 – it was
155 '84 – I went down to work directly for Bob. It was clear that if I put a Beyster Book in
156 my pocket and pulled it out on occasion, that would be deemed a smart thing to do.

157 Bob kept notes. He had on his desk a spiral bound notebook, which I adopted as
158 well for my active listening on phone conversations and in meetings. But the Beyster
159 Book was more for when he left his desk. He always had a handy way to make a note
160 of a name of somebody that he might have met, a contract or a contact or when he
161 promised that he'd do something, a to-do list to follow-up on. It was just something
162 that was ubiquitous in his person. He kept track of an incredible number of people
163 personally in the company, contracts, opportunities, customers. So it was clear that
164 it helped him keep straight what he needed to remember.

165 **WEISS:** So what does this Beyster Book look like? I understand you still use one
166 today?

167 **IDELL:** I do. They are spiral bound at the end and perhaps they're chest-pocket size.
168 So it's about two and a half by three and a half inches and you just flip it over to a
169 new page. I still use them today when I travel to keep track of travel expenses, when
170 we have addresses of what museum or when we have theater tickets or which
171 restaurant and what phone number. It just helps me to have ready access when I'm
172 in an unfamiliar place or even a familiar place outside of home of what we're doing
173 next or what bus line or what subway line to take.

174 **WEISS:** Dr. Beyster convinces you to work for Gene Ray and that part of the
175 company. So you go from where you are in Santa Monica area?

176 **IDELL:** El Segundo. I stayed in El Segundo for another couple of years. Let's see. So
177 it was '79 where Bob convinced me to stay in the company and I was in El Segundo
178 until September of '84. I worked for Gene on his staff and I was responsible for
179 working across divisions and across groups on some major classified contracts that
180 we had. The customer at the time was based in Los Angeles. So I stayed in L.A.

181 I worked with the Porcello Division based in Tucson and the McPherson Division,
182 which was my old division, based on El Segundo. I worked the vagaries of a larger
183 contract that spanned multiple SAIC divisions. This was fairly unusual at the time
184 where we had a contract big enough to need support from multiple divisions. So I
185 was – my job was, number one, to support the customer and the customer's needs;

number two, to ensure that SAIC or SAI at the time brought the appropriate technologies and technical support people to bear on the contract no matter where they were in the corporation.

Now at this time, every individual division was incentivized to maximize the work that went to their own home organization. At some point, you'll want me to talk about Bob's overarching philosophy of keeping individual local organizations incentivized to do what was best for themselves to grow, keep their entrepreneurial zeal active, reward them fairly for growth that they saw in their own organizations and yet, in some ways contradictorily speaking, keeping those same people incentivized to understand that their long term benefit was for the corporation as a whole to grow. So as a division manager, you wanted to have contracts to feed your people, support your own customers, control your own customers, grow your own business because your annual bonus pool and success in the near term was based on what you kept in-house. At the time, divisions were like \$3 to \$5 million in annual revenues and anywhere from 20 to 60 people.

But on the other hand, overall long-term growth through equity participation was based on the company as a whole succeeding. So I was an early—in the company's history—practitioner of getting organizations that have their own interest in the business to work together and share business for the good both of the customer and of the corporation as a whole. Sometimes that was easy and sometimes not as people struggled to balance their short term incentives of what they control themselves and the longer term incentives of how best to grow a contract and how best to serve a customer that benefitted the corporation as a whole.

WEISS: I understand these were classified? Were all your customers aerospace related vessels and satellite?

IDELL: Yes, even their existence was classified, but today you can talk about a government agency called the National Reconnaissance Office, which was responsible for reconnaissance satellites. That's probably all I should say. But its existence today is unclassified.

WEISS: That's good. So you were there until around '84. Then did you come to San Diego or go to Tucson?

217 **IDELL:** I got more exposure to Bob. I became program manager of a fairly high-
218 visibility support program to this classified customer. Bob had come up for program
219 reviews with the customer and I had brought the customer down to San Diego to
220 talk to Bob. So I interacted with Bob in that regard. We sought the advice of Admiral
221 Bob Inman, who was on the board at the time. Bob Inman suggested to Bob Beyster
222 that they establish a special projects coordinating council that could, to the extent
223 compartmentalization and classification rules allowed, talk to some degree and
224 coordinate our activities across the corporation for what we're doing.

225 We met quarterly and met in a vault, in a secure environment here in San Diego. I
226 got to know Bob Inman. He asked me to be the secretary, if you will, of the council,
227 to bring people and projects to this special projects coordinating council so that Bob
228 Inman and Bob Beyster could make sure the corporation was acting in an
229 appropriate way for these very important customers.

230 **WEISS:** You were dealing with classified information? I mean, over the years, had
231 you kept some level of active security clearance?

232 **IDELL:** More so then, and as I transitioned down working for Bob directly – and
233 probably through the end of the '80s, early '90s – but at that point my
234 responsibilities were too diffuse to really require that level of classified access. So I
235 dropped away from that.

236 **WEISS:** Were you responsible for bringing in colleagues that had been in the
237 military and was that an appeal in your particular division because of having worked
238 with classified material?

239 **IDELL:** Part of the culture of the company is that everybody in the broadest sense
240 who supports customers would be looking to grow business and to find out what we
241 can do better for our customers. We're also on the lookout – again, everybody's
242 incentivized – to find smart people. Back in the '70s and '80s, we did not recruit at
243 colleges very often because we wanted people with experience. So one of our
244 informal strategies, in the aerospace side of things, was to look at companies like
245 TRW, Hughes Aircraft, Lockheed Martin. These companies would hire people out of
246 college and they'd spend five years and train them and then they would get kind of
247 stuck in a giant organization.

248 That's when they were ripe for us to come in and say, "You've been trained. You have
249 some skills. You understand customers. You understand contracts and technologies.
250 [Your knowledge] has matured from scholastic to practical. Come join us and we'll
251 give you the opportunity to build business, to be recognized much more quickly and
252 with many more opportunities to grow than you will see in your large organization."

253 So, whenever we met people, subcontractors, teammates, we were always on the
254 lookout for younger people who had that five years after college to be trained by the
255 bigger aerospace corps and bring them in and give them opportunities as we
256 developed them. Bob was always looking out for the best and the brightest. His view
257 was you grow the company with smart people and you incentivize them to be
258 responsible for their own well-being, for their own customers, to build their own
259 business and be rewarded fairly with equity for doing that.

260 **WEISS:** So Gene Ray at a certain point breaks off and starts Titan. Was he trying to
261 lure you to Titan and how did that go over with the company and with Dr. Beyster?

262 **IDELL:** Well I know you've talked to Gene, so I'll let Gene speak for himself.

263 **WEISS:** I didn't personally.

264 **IDELL:** [I mean Gene's been interviewed by the archive initiative.] Gene and Bob
265 had some differences about how the company should grow and the direction the
266 company should take. I was there when the split between Bob and Gene happened,
267 when Gene left. I was an observer. I was not a principal. I would say that there was
268 one event that was contributory. I won't say that this is why Gene left, but it
269 certainly was something that I knew he was bothered by. That had to do with
270 something that I became very intimate with for the last 15 years of my role in the
271 company.

272 Bob believed in every year looking at the corporation and making organizational
273 changes at the margins. He felt that every year conditions change, customer
274 priorities and needs change. Addressing the situation in our company, we need to
275 restructure on an annual basis to be best suited and to address the customers that
276 we have and that we see in front of us and best able to exploit the technologies that
277 we have in-house.

278 Now you would say, "Well that sounds like it would throw the company into turmoil
279 on an annual basis," but what he did was do it on the margins. So it's not like the
280 whole company would be get tossed up in the air and rejiggered every year but he
281 did some things every year and it grew to be known as reorg season, everybody
282 would say with a wry smile. I'll get back to Gene in a minute. For 15 years I was
283 responsible for bringing ideas to him. In many situations, I was responsible for
284 affecting change or at least talking to the principles. We can talk more about this
285 later.

286 But back to Gene Ray. Within Gene's system group in the corporation, there was a
287 fellow named John Warner who was an operations manager and John's organization
288 had just won a fairly large, at the time, contract at the National Training Center in
289 Northern California for simulation software and instrumentation for a range that did
290 training exercises for Army [tanks and] units. It was a fairly large systems integration
291 contract. It had a lot of growth potential. So John and his people had a big effort to
292 swallow.

293 As I said, John worked for Gene Ray – and John Warner I think felt at the time that
294 he needed more independence to grow his business and he needed more resources. I
295 mean every step up in the organizational line—the higher step took a bit of the
296 discretionary resources from the lower organizations. So Bob certainly knew John
297 well because, again, Bob doesn't necessarily respect organizational ties. He would go
298 down to the principle people involved whether they were technical people,
299 marketing people, management people and talk to them directly when there was a
300 program as important as the NTC program was.

301 So in conversations, John said, "Hey I can grow this business if I have more
302 discretionary resources. Why don't you move me out from under Gene's
303 organization and set me up as a parallel directly reporting operation?" This of course
304 took away from the resources that Gene had to run his group. I think Gene felt it
305 diminished the importance of what he and his group staff had done in support of
306 getting the NTC contract. It was frankly something he was not pleased with at the
307 time. That happened, I would say, within a year before Gene left the corporation.

308 It was an example where Bob did not believe a senior manager should just rest on
309 their laurels and grow a big organization. For all the time I was with SAIC, we looked
310 for those younger people who had opportunities to build a bigger business and pull

311 them out from under already successful senior managers and set them up and
312 incentivize them to grow. Of course those already successful senior managers did
313 not appreciate having the resources and control pulled out from under them.

314 Now ironically, fast forward 20 years, in the 2000s, John Warner had a very large
315 sector at the time. We changed names and the sector was the new name for a group.
316 I had a couple of conversations with John where we wanted to take bits and pieces of
317 his organization out from under him. It was the health care business, centered
318 around a large health care contract, which we wanted to move out from John's
319 organization. John had gotten a leg-up on his start by being pulled out from under
320 Gene and 15 or 20 years later, Bob pulled big pieces out of John's organization to
321 encourage the [healthcare] people to grow. We were always balancing it. But Bob
322 was always most interested in the younger Turks who were hungry and trying to
323 build something than people who had made their mark and had established their
324 empires and might be content just to manage.

325 **WEISS:** You became senior vice president of corporate development in 1988, but the
326 world's changing a lot at that point. We're talking about Glasnost. I assume that
327 many of these contracts had to do with defense, the former Soviet Union.

328 **IDELL:** Certainly the company was [largely built on national security business]. But
329 let me back up a bit. In '84, Bob recruited me to come down to La Jolla and work for
330 him. He, at the time, was still trying to keep track of all the major new initiatives in
331 the corporation. We had grown beyond just defense certainly at the time. We had
332 health. We had energy. We had environment. We had the kernels of what would
333 later grow and be major lines of business for SAIC.

334 He put it simply, "I need somebody to understand what's important and tell me so I
335 won't miss anything." At that point the company was a couple hundred million in
336 revenue and he kept, in his little Beyster Book and in his head, track of everything
337 that was important that he wanted to touch. He couldn't do it anymore and he
338 wanted some help. His first task to me was, "Make a list. What are the top business
339 development initiatives that we have ongoing in the company?"

340 At that time, I spent a couple weeks and I called and talked to every senior business
341 leader, every senior business development guy. Introduced myself to those that I
342 didn't know. I was from corporate so at that point, there was always a bit of
343 suspicion of how I was going to use the information and how I could help them. It

344 was sensitive at first, but I worked my way into a position of trust with most of the
345 senior people. I put together a 3-page, single-spaced memo with some 25 or 30 major
346 opportunities. I said, "Bob, this is the hot list. This is what's important."

347 He used that as a basis for going out and making his daily calls to people, to business
348 leaders, to business developers, to technology people. As the company grew, that
349 [list] grew into a marketing information system, which had 300 items. It was
350 computer data bases. I had a little staff of IT people and we had administrators
351 around the company who [managed the data]. Ten years later, it was a thick
352 computer printout.

353 My business development role first identified the things that were important. Then
354 as Bob looked for ways to impact, hear about and understand what was going on, I
355 developed a monthly teleconference for him, which we used to call a business
356 acquisition council. I would tee up 6 to 8 major opportunities on the teleconference,
357 get not just the line manager but the key business developer responsible for that
358 business opportunity to speak for 15, 20 minutes to a broad council of leaders,
359 including Bob, and answer questions.

360 Now we had some money in corporate to invest in business development
361 opportunities that were called 'guidelines.' It is just an arcane name related to our
362 accounting systems but in effect it was discretionary resources that Bob could pass
363 from corporate to a line organization to help them in a business development
364 pursuit. It was a way we incentivized people to come to the business acquisition
365 councils. It was the focal point for making decisions on allocating corporate
366 resources in support of various business development activities.

367 **WEISS:** But this was all intra-SAIC, let's say. What did you see as the technological
368 landscape, having seen early Silicon Valley from when you were just in the Air Force
369 and looking around afterwards to when you first met Dr. Beyster here in San Diego
370 to now you are in corporate? I mean what is going on in the technology community
371 in San Diego, the software community? What did you see really happening here or
372 did you really have time to think about that?

373 **IDELL:** Not as much as others. But major impacts in the mid-'80s were the strategic
374 defense initiative, sensor technology, communications and satellite communications
375 technologies, command and control, and complex systems integration, systems of
376 systems, workstation development, simulation systems for training. Those were all

technologies that were important that we were involved in and were working with others. Many other local companies were working in these areas as well. I would highlight, General Atomic, as a local example. That's where Bob came from, [prior to starting SAI], working on nuclear weapons, and weapons effects modeling and analysis.

WEISS: Were you competing against General Atomic? Were you competing against – was ViaSat in that level of business at that point and was there anybody else on that technology and software landscape?

IDELL: We competed not just here in San Diego but broadly around the country. All the aerospace businesses were involved in one extent or another and the smaller companies as well. There were many SAIC spinoffs. I am not best versed to tell this story but I think in Bob's book there's a list of all of the various companies that were started from people, by people who left SAIC and took their experiences at SAIC and formed technology related companies that to one extent or another were similar to Bob's model. I mean there are 50 or 60 technology concerns that here in San Diego and around the country – like Titan Systems – that resulted from people who got to a point at SAIC and wanted to run their own show and left.

WEISS: As Qualcomm came through, certainly the Cornell connection, another huge company on the landscape here. Did you ever have any interest in looking at Qualcomm?

IDELL: I had a good friend who came to SAIC who had worked at M/A-COM which was one of the companies that grew into what today is Qualcomm. I didn't pursue opportunities there but I got to know a little bit from – the fellow's name was Nick Del Vecchio – about his background. At that time, I was pretty much consumed with what I was doing at SAIC. I mean I was awfully busy and I was energized.

The company was growing. Equity was growing. Bob's view of employee ownership was to manage the growth of the company so that we could see a steady year on year growth of let's say 15 percent in revenues. The idea was that stock price would double every five years. Bob never had the vision of SAIC being kind of a typical startup today of in three to five years you'll go from zero to a billion dollars.

Bob was in it for the long haul. Money was one of the least important things for him. He gave a bit of equity away at the very start, but by the time he retired it was less

than one percent of the company equity. So where did that equity go? It was distributed to the people who he brought into the company, who helped grow the company.

To a large extent, SAIC was services based, people based. Frankly, what I'm good at is dealing with people. Working technology, corporate business development issues across organizational lines with customers, dealing with people. I was less interested in product development and understanding what's the next best thing we can build that we can sell hundreds or thousands of or whatever. So naively I would say, at the time and certainly in the '80s and the early '90s I was pretty locked into SAI's view and vision and not so much interested in a company, [like Qualcomm] that was a commercial venture that would have big years and lean years up and down.

WEISS: So as I understand, the whole vision for SAIC started off in [technology services]. You mention health care at a certain point. In the mid-'90s they secured a contract to provide computing and technological services for the National Cancer Institute.

IDELL: Right.

WEISS: This was life sciences. Were you involved at all in that?

IDELL: Only in support of the business development pursuit and some of the individuals who were chasing that contract. I noticed in your questions you asked, "Was that our big foray into health care?" In the early '70's we had contracts and I forget whether it was the VA – I believe so but it could have been the NIH – supporting epidemiological studies for the effects of Agent Orange on returning Vietnam veterans.

So back in the early and mid-'70s we had people working with health care professionals, with veterans' groups understanding, pulling together data and making sense of epidemiological data. So we had entrees in a health related business where we had MDs on staff back as early as the mid-'70s. There was a long, slow run up to our NIH major contract. We had a reputation. We had people. That was not just something that grew out of whole cloth, so to speak. But no, in terms of personally involved with customers, no. I supported the business development pursuit with resources and peripheral help.

440 **WEISS:** So you talked about being quite busy and maybe not interacting that much
441 in the more general business community here. I understand it was somewhat of a
442 workaholic environment there.

443 **IDELL:** Bob's view was hire the smartest people you can find. Why was the
444 company going to succeed? He said on many occasions early on, "Because I'm going
445 to work harder than any of my peers at other companies." He expected people
446 around him to work hard as well. Now I have to tell you a funny story, a Beyster
447 story.

448 When he recruited me to come down – this was '84. I went sailing with him. He was
449 talking about what he wanted in the way of help. He said, "You know, Jim, I have to
450 tell you this company is the most important thing in my life and I want the people
451 around me – I want the company to be the most important thing in their lives as
452 well." I looked at him and I said, "Bob, I can't do that. I've got two young sons who
453 moved down here. I get involved in Little League. I get involved in this and that. It
454 can't be the most important thing in my life." He looks at me. He kind of glares at
455 me for a minute. He says, "Well you can lie to me at least, can't you?" I go, "Bob, fair
456 enough."

457 Years later, when Bob had moved and bought the facility on Cave Street in La Jolla,
458 he had maybe a dozen people on his senior staff and various folks based in Cave
459 Street. Bob worked a 12-hour day. He got to work, made phone calls on his way to
460 work. A lot of times you'd find him in the parking lot back of the Cave Street
461 building finishing up a phone call. He worked 12-hour days, 6:00 to 6:00 pretty much
462 every day. But he always ran mid-day. He worked Saturdays from 6:00 or 7:00 till
463 lunch at 2:00. He had a group of folks, senior staff that worked with him on
464 Saturdays.

465 Typically, they'd go for a run with him and then eat lunch. I never was part of that
466 group. I didn't work Saturdays. At one point, one day, somebody said, "How come
467 Idell doesn't work Saturdays?" He says, "Idell? Oh he doesn't work Saturdays." Bob
468 said that because from the very start I had kind of laid the groundwork. So his
469 expectations were such that, "Of course Idell doesn't work Saturdays. I mean he told
470 me."

471 It's like he said, "What are you talking about?" The unstated inference from the
472 people around him was, "Why am I working Saturdays?" Because they didn't tell him

473 they couldn't work Saturdays. I mean Bob was not going to look after your personal
474 life, but if you told him, he [would respect it]. He could treat people as individuals.
475 I won't say that he took advantage of people but people who didn't speak up and
476 kind of declare their boundaries sometimes got overworked.

477 Take vacations. I always took two to three weeks off every year. I would tell Bob
478 when I would be gone. He'd grumble a little bit. Everyone would say, "How did you
479 get three weeks off?" I didn't get three weeks off; I took three weeks off. It's like,
480 "Okay, Idell's gone."

481 So the best way to deal with him was kind of set your own boundaries, tell him what
482 you would do and what you wouldn't do and then work like the dickens to perform
483 within those constraints. He wasn't going to look out for you though. He wasn't
484 going to ask you, "Are you working too hard? Are you working too late? Isn't it time
485 to go home?"

486 You were expected to set your own boundaries and live your own life. I never didn't
487 tell him that the company was the most thing in my life. I kept to his early
488 statement of, "You can lie to me."

489 **WEISS:** You mentioned going sailing with him originally. Were you ever part of the
490 sailing group in the America's Cup venture?

491 **IDELL:** Well I certainly sailed a good bit with him especially in the early days. I got
492 involved with some of the initial briefings about decision making of how we should
493 get involved, after the loss of the America's Cup in I think it was '83 and I had been
494 in Newport with the group that was following the races there. We looked at our
495 technologies that could support the '87 rematch – not rematch but the '87 regatta to
496 win back the Cup. I was in on some of the early discussions that we had internally of
497 what we could do in terms of hull design and simulation of results, looking at
498 different hull designs and especially different weather, wave and wind conditions,
499 how different design concepts would work.

500 We had been doing hydrodynamic modeling for the Navy and so it was an offshoot
501 of this existing technology that led Bob to say, "Hey, I think we can help Dennis
502 Connor. I think we can help the America's Cup campaign if we look to apply what we
503 do know to the America's Cup racing platform."

504 So once that decision was made to invest both in our own people to give them the
505 time and resources to adapt hydrodynamic modeling from submersibles, Navy
506 submersibles to America's Cup hull and keel design, I was out of it after that. I
507 certainly [followed our activity]. I did not go down at Perth, Australia in '87. There
508 was a crowd of SAIC-ers that did go down there to see the races. So I was involved
509 only in the initial phases and in some of the initial discussions but once a decision
510 had been made I was off on other things.

511 **WEISS:** So you mentioned having your own life outside of the company. SAIC made
512 some efforts to get involved in charitable organizations. Did you ever try to pull
513 them into community organizations of your world?

514 **IDELL:** While I was with the company, I certainly was involved in discussions
515 related to decisions about where to invest charitable money, and was involved in
516 some of the formative meetings of the FED, Foundation for Enterprise Development,
517 but I cannot say that I was a principle. I was there. I was involved. But once things
518 got started, [I was off on other things]. Since I left [the company], when I retired in
519 2007, to be honest, my interests grew away from technology and business.

520 When I went to college, I was an engineering major. I studied engineering, math,
521 science. I had the technology theme throughout my career. When I retired, it was
522 my time to go back and be involved with the humanities subjects that I'd missed. My
523 wife is an English major who was a high school teacher and then a docent at San
524 Diego Museum of Art and Timken Museum of Art.

525 Interests such as reading, art, history, music, opera, symphony, taking piano lessons,
526 singing in choir, supporting my Unitarian Universalist church that I belong to,
527 traveling and now grandkids fill up my life. I haven't followed up with either the
528 technology or business interests that characterized my career. When I first retired I
529 thought that I could get involved through CONNECT or through other means as a
530 mentor for technology companies but it just didn't work out that way. I found myself
531 most drawn to the humanities.

532 **WEISS:** You decide to remain with SAIC and you retired, you said, in 2007. Several
533 years before, in 2004, Dr. Beyster had retired. Then there was the IPO. Can you tell
534 me how it affected you? You were still an employee at that time and could observe
535 the effect of these events on the company morale, the environment and company
536 culture.

537 **IDELL:** Well it's complicated. Certainly the challenges that SAIC had to face as we
538 grew, the more successful we were, the larger we grew, the harder it was to continue
539 that growth. The model that Bob had developed worked great for the first 25 years
540 but it became harder as we grew. We had to marshal our forces, so to speak, to go
541 after larger and larger contracts to make a bigger impact on the company's top line
542 and bottom line growth. To do that, we needed larger organizations. We needed
543 more people who were [engineers], coders, systems integrators, people [to work on
544 the larger contracts] and fewer, as a percentage, of key technologists, program
545 managers, business developers, line managers. We needed bigger staffs to do these
546 bigger contracts.

547 So the percentage of people that were touched by and incentivized by the equity
548 participation necessarily shrank as a percentage [of the employee population as a
549 whole]. It still was broad. It still was a lot but we started having the challenges of the
550 major aerospace corporations that we successfully competed against 20 years before
551 for people and contracts.

552 There were also challenges with respect to the type of work we did. We were broadly
553 diverse in our support for customer communities and we would have organizations
554 in the company who were providing system engineering and technical support to a
555 customer agency who was letting a big system engineering contract. We had another
556 piece of the company that wanted to compete for that big system integration prize
557 but who might have a conflict of interest with the small group that was doing the
558 support to the customer program office. So we had these situations where in some
559 cases we had to decline contracts and in some cases we had to pass up major
560 opportunities.

561 In some cases, we had to walk a narrow line between the two. This meant we had to
562 have more control, if you will, from corporate for the businesses we were in. We
563 used the annual reorganization to prune and coalesce and bring together like
564 businesses so that there would be fewer of these disparate parts of the company
565 going after similar customers. But I think as the company grew, it was evident that it
566 was harder and harder to have this decentralized focus.

567 The other issue was that Bob was aging. The board was concerned about his ability
568 to continue to manage the company as he was doing. There were a couple, three,
569 succession plans that came on the horizon that just didn't work out for one reason or

another. The board finally stepped in and insisted that there be a firm date for succession and a search for a new CEO. I would be disingenuous if I told you that Bob was fully on board with this.

Now I was a bit in the middle because I certainly had worked directly for Bob from '84 till – what was this – 2003, 2004, somewhere along that line. But I was also involved with board members who were looking at ways to implement change. I was not the only one but I was one of the few people who got involved in negotiations between individual board members, factions of board members and Bob in terms of how to go about a transition.

When Ken Dahlberg was hired to be a successor CEO, he kept me around to help with the transition. I suspect I could have stayed working for the company as long as I wanted. But my real value to him was in the first year to 18 months because he wanted to restructure the corporation to give a more significant role to the senior line managers and more of a traditional pyramid-shaped organization.

At the time I was kind of the knowledge base, knew all the people, knew all the businesses, who did what. I helped him restructure and look at how he could consolidate and get fewer, larger organizations lined up. I did help him do that for 18 months to 2 years after he came on board. Once that reorganization was completed, his style of management was such that my role was significantly decreased. That led to the period when we went public.

As a longtime SAIC-er, going public was a big deal. I understood why we were doing it – to create equity, liquidity and also because of the size of the corporation. The challenge of trying to get an external assessor to quarterly help the board set a price, I mean that was just becoming unwieldy. Others can speak better to this. Once we went public and because my role at that time wasn't as vital or as important and I didn't see a new role that I wanted to pick up, I thought that this would be a good time to leave and retire. I was lucky enough to be able to do this because of the equity that I had built up as a long-term employee. I was comfortably situated where I could make that transition. So in 2007, when I was 58, I left the company and have been thrilled to be retired ever since, to be quite honest.

WEISS: So was that the feeling among many of the people throughout the company?

602 **IDELL:** You know, there was an old-timer/new-timer kind of thing. Many of the old
603 timers were unhappy when we went public. They were unhappy when Bob left
604 because Bob was not happy leaving. We all were very thankful for him, for what he
605 had done for the company, for what he had built, for the person he was. So it was
606 not a happy time for those who knew him. I'm not talking about 20. I'm talking
607 about 2,000, 3,000 old-timers. I mean there were lots of people that Bob had brought
608 into his personal relationship web that really had some significant interaction with
609 him on a regular basis.

610 His capacity for reaching out and knowing the people who worked in his company
611 was huge. So the people who had been around a long time, I think they were
612 disheartened and certainly didn't appreciate the change. Many of them understood,
613 but it just wasn't the same excitement. We had become a big company and many of
614 us joined SAIC because we didn't want to work for big companies. But there was
615 plenty of newer people, in the 10 to 15-year range for whom the challenges were still
616 there. The excitement was still there and they believed probably more than the old-
617 timers that this was the way to go. So there's not a uniform answer, but if you want
618 kind of rough view, the longer you'd been at SAIC perhaps the less you were
619 interested in the new vision of the company.

620 **WEISS:** In terms of the image of the company when it went public, you had been
621 involved in some public relations and marketing. Did you have to get involved at all
622 in explaining what the company was doing and why? How did that all play out?

623 **IDELL:** At the time we were going public, that was a very controlled message and
624 had to be because of the SEC regulations. I was involved in helping working with our
625 team crafting that message. But in terms of public statements surrounding and
626 leading up to the IPO, that was a very controlled thing. What we said to customers
627 was scripted.

628 **IDELL:** I did speak internally. I spent a lot of time talking to people within the
629 company about the whys and the wherefores and what management was thinking.
630 At this time, however, there were constraints about what could be said internally as
631 well.

632 **WEISS:** Did you travel to many of the SAIC sites in the U.S. and internationally?

IDELL: Yes, in the U.S. I never took a business trip abroad with SAIC, but around the country absolutely. I visited just about all of the major office – places where we might have 75 to 100 people or more – to talk to business leaders, talk about business development opportunities. For several years, I also traveled with Bob.

WEISS: What was it like supporting him if he's doing a presentation or were you doing the presentation? Was he sitting there making notes?

IDELL: Well certainly I gave talks. Bob was more one on one or one on a few. When he had a "presentation" to give, it was usually to a customer where there was an SAIC person who was key to that customer that would be with Bob. I was there more when it was informal stuff. For both recruits and customers, I would go with Bob and just give him a second pair of ears to remind him of what was said, what he promised and to follow-up things that came from the meetings either with customers or with recruits.

WEISS: You talked about early on you were trying to build the workforce from people that had been at TRW and some of the other companies that had about five years in and would come ready to work for your company. Did this change and as San Diego evolved? Were you trying to then find ways or not you personally but somehow through people in your company to interface with UC San Diego, with San Diego State to draw in engineers, marketing people, science people?

IDELL: Some of our initial efforts at corporate recruiting when we grew to the point where we realized that entry level people were important were directed at SDSU and UCSD, certainly. In the local [technology] community, we were always trying to hire smart people from the other San Diego based companies. Bob was not the last person to come over from GA to SAIC, for instance. I was not personally involved in the corporate recruiting, or in on-campus initiatives. But we really in effect learned about what it would take to do corporate recruiting broadly using our experience with the local universities.

WEISS: So what did it take here in San Diego? Many people went to the Silicon Valley or off to other places but especially Silicon Valley. What did it take to keep people here in San Diego?

IDELL: I think the people who went to Silicon Valley, it depends on whether it was before or after the Internet bubble burst in the 2000s. The people who would be

excited about going to Silicon Valley were really looking for the rockets, the companies that could take off – the companies that could get big in a hurry. We still had that slow but steady mantra. So what appealed? It was really more the type of personality that you had whether slow but steady was what you wanted or the exciting chance at a skyrocket.

People are different. People break down in different ways. In terms of more senior level people, Bob could pull people in. For instance, I came here in '84 I would never leave San Diego. So there's another slice of folks that would say, "The notion of going to the Bay area, for instance, sounds interesting but really I'd just as soon stay here." So there's a San Diego bias. We exploited people who wanted to be around smart people, who were slow and steady, and who wanted to stay in San Diego. Is that fair?

WEISS: In the early days when the company was founded in 1969, there was mainly military. There was a little bit of technology. How has this whole landscape evolved now? I know SAIC has recently since 2013 done a split and has the Washington presence.

IDELL: Right.

WEISS: Within a few months after Dr. Beyster started the company it had to have a Washington, D.C. presence. Tell me about that whole Washington, D.C. presence because you manage so many contracts that were federally or military, large military contracts.

IDELL: Yes. Bob wanted to live in San Diego. He built his home in La Jolla Farms in the late '50s. This is where he was going to start his company. We did have the benefit of a substantial Navy customer that we built up over the years. When I left the company in 2007, 80 percent of our business was still to the federal government.

The customers are in Washington. The ultimate customers are. It was very clear that we needed people in Washington to interact with federal customers. There were a much more diverse set of customers in the Washington area. We also had very early operations in Huntsville, Alabama, Dayton, Ohio, Omaha. Our idea was always to place an SAIC organization close to a customer.

We wanted the customer to be able to walk across the street or down the road to see their project officer or program manager. Not get on an airplane. So we were quick

696 to establish local offices. Certainly Washington was an obvious one. Bob's initial
697 contracts for the Defense Nuclear Agency were in Washington and he needed
698 somebody sitting there who could run over and talk to them on a heartbeat's notice.
699 Because of the diversity of customers in the greater Washington area, that quickly
700 became our largest location.

701 **WEISS:** On the board, there were some very high-ranking people in the U.S. military
702 that came aboard with SAIC for periods of time. Could you talk about interacting
703 with them and did that help since you did have a military background?

704 **IDELL:** We recruited from the government. You could say that I had four years in
705 the Air Force and I had a way station at SDC but in effect, I have a government
706 service background. For people who had served, it was a natural to join a company
707 that was technology based but focused largely on serving the federal government.
708 Eighty percent of our business. We diversified over the years, but we've never really
709 had the character in my tenure to be other than a largely federal support entity.

710 There was a significant belief in the importance of federal service, importance of
711 federal government, importance of serving the country that did appeal to our
712 customers both in the way we comported our business, trying to be in their best
713 interests and also it was appealing for people leaving the government who are
714 looking for expanded opportunities within the private sector. We certainly hired
715 from the government being careful that people would work on things they weren't
716 influential on while they were in the government but work on other things. In terms
717 of our senior board members, we've had a number of former secretary of defenses on
718 our board; Mel Laird, Bill Perry, Bob Gates. We did important work.

719 We supported important agencies, helped solve important problems. They weren't
720 always the biggest, splashiest or well-publicized activities that the company did and
721 they weren't all stuff that we could tout. But we were recognized at senior levels of
722 government. Bob sought out the advice and support and help of senior leadership
723 like the Bob Inmans, the Mel Lairds, the Bill Perrys, the Harold Browns, and others
724 that I'm not remembering, but several others, not just one or two. They would help
725 guide us, help provide some perspective from a strategic standpoint of what's going
726 to be important tomorrow. I mean we were always looking for what's next, where to
727 hire people, where to place people, what's important, where are we going. Those

senior people would have the perspective of understanding what a broader vision of the future.

WEISS: SAIC for many years did not have a huge name recognition in San Diego among emerging businesses, but was a huge company. How did that whole culture evolve and if you were involved in marketing at all, how did you deal with that?

IDELL: Bob did not believe in touting or flouting our existence or our name. It just wasn't in his personality. For decades, the company reflected that personality. We were low-key. We did not advertise. I mean we do now. We did after the turn of the 21st century.

But we did not advertise. We did not tout our existence. We did not want to make ourselves a target for our competitors. I mean they knew who we were but we didn't want to push ourselves in that competitive landscape. We wanted to build our business through relationships, through having smart people who understand what customers' problems needed to be solved and how to best solve them.

We built our business based on relationships and customer interactions. It was business development, very little of the classic marketing, positioning, branding. We had a couple of attempts at developing a brand. We had some consultants come in and talk about what would our brand be, how we could project that brand, but it never really took hold in the core company. When we bought Bellcore in the mid-'90s, they were a commercial business trying to expand beyond their niche as a captive software R&D house of AT&T before divestiture. We got involved in helping them with that branding but it never caught on in the company as a whole.

Clearly, if you are a public company you have to tout the company, not so much who you are, what you can do for customers or to impress customers but rather you need to tout the company to the security analysts and the people who make buy/sell recommendations for public stock. If you're on the public market, it's appropriate to look out and project yourself. But since we weren't public, we had no reason to do that. The customers who knew us, knew us. And we weren't shy about going in and introducing ourselves to the ones who did know us.

WEISS: Well Dr. Beyster in the SAIC Solution, his book, he quoted you in terms of the yearly reorganization saying that you preferred "evolutionary rather than revolutionary changes that would have left our people feeling whipsawed and too

internally focused." So what did that mean? What would have somebody seen as a revolutionary change versus an evolutionary change?

IDELL: Ken Dahlberg made a revolutionary change in the company when he came in, [changing the character of the organization]. What I meant by an evolutionary change is where we made some changes every year, [consistent with the existing organizational philosophy, but never affecting more than 10 to 15 per cent of the people]. People knew that. I would show up at a certain time of year in a sector manager's office and he'd say, "What are you going to do to me this year? What are you going to take from me?"

They knew the process. If you only did it on the margins, affecting, say, five to ten percent [of the business], and you did it every year so that change was relentless, but largely pruning and trimming and if no one was a loser every year and no one was a big loser any year, the changes were viewed as evolutionary. In a reorg there's always people who feel better afterwards and there are people who feel not so good. The idea was you didn't want to make senior management feel like they got their apple cart overturned.

We wanted to do it continually such that people understood that this was how we worked but we didn't want to upset people so much that they were either confused or so upset that they would leave. With some of the more senior people it was a balancing act. I got thrown into the situation where I would go in and tell a very senior guy what we were planning on doing and a couple of times they'd get very upset and then go back to Beyster.

Of course before they saw Bob, I would say, "Okay, here is what he was upset about, here's what he'll give on, here's where he'll draw the line." The guy would come in all upset to Bob and Bob would say, "Oh Idell got that all wrong. He was going out on a limb. He doesn't know what he's talking about. Come talk to me."

Of course, he would use what I'd tell him to negotiate the final deal. But the idea – we didn't want people feeling threatened. We want them to feel accustomed to a process that continually changed and evolved our organizational structure so that our technologies would be best focused towards customer needs without them feeling like they've built something for nothing.

791 **WEISS:** So in the non-classified projects that you brought in or managed over the
792 years, are there any that you're particularly proud of as you look back? If this is an
793 inappropriate question, that's fine.

794 **IDELL:** Oh sure. Bob had an interest in strategic weapons, strategic weapons
795 employment. That grew out of his early work in nuclear technology and nuclear
796 weapons effects. He was well known in the strategic community. He served on a
797 strategic advisory council advising Air Force Strategic Air Command and Strategic
798 Forces. He was a technical advisor. He kept active in that I think through the end of
799 his career.

800 So there were two different support contracts for [strategic forces customers] that
801 were important to Bob and the line units. There was one to the Navy strategic
802 systems program office back in Washington that the line organization that was
803 following that business was not going to bid. There was two weeks left before
804 proposals were due. Bob was furious. "What do you mean they're not going to bid?"

805 I told him this wasn't a big dollar contract but it was in his interest area and it had a
806 lot of growth potential. So he pointed his finger at me and started stabbing me in the
807 chest and said, "Make it happen. Go win that contract." So I went and sat down with
808 the group manager and said, "Look, here's the deal. We're going to bid this. I know
809 you made the decision not to but I come with resources and a mandate."

810 We assembled a team and put together a proposal. I led that effort and we won.
811 There was a second example pretty similar to that of one at Omaha for a support
812 contract for the Strategic Air Command where Bob asked me to go and be
813 responsible for red team review of the proposal. Two weeks out I said, "It's a loser,
814 Bob."

815 I was supposed to fly back with him to Washington. He said, "You stay here and win
816 it." So I stayed there and kind of pushed aside the proposal managers, called in
817 people I knew from around the country and said, "It's important; come," and helped
818 put together the cost proposal and made sure we were competitive. So those were
819 examples when I was working for Bob that were important.

820 **WEISS:** How about SPAWAR here and the Navy? I mean what kind of relationship
821 did you maintain here?

IDELL: Me personally, I was more blue suit Air Force than Navy. I met Navy customers but I was not directly involved. I certainly interacted with our organizations that interacted with NOSC, Navy Ocean Systems Command, then SPAWAR. But no, I had more of an Air Force experience base. In terms of the customers I interacted with, it was more in the Air Force and classified community than the Navy. Navy was crucial here to keeping a critical mass of SAIC people locally.

Bob wanted to stay in San Diego. He did not want to move to Washington. He was comfortable going once or twice a month to Washington but his home was here. Here was where the company was going to be managed from. So we worked hard to keep a significant technical presence here in San Diego. The Navy support work had the bulk of our technical people locally.

Other major programs supported locally were the National Training Center range activity that we had for many years. When we won the Comprehensive Health Care System for the automation of the VA health information systems, we had a good number of technical folks here on that, as well. Then we had lots of technology related smaller businesses that were led by people that wanted to live in San Diego. When Ken Dahlberg came on board, and certainly when he was replaced, there was no longer a personal imperative to keep our headquarters here. Certainly to outside eyes, looking at how the population in the greater Washington area expanded and the limits on the number of customers and the growth opportunities here in San Diego, it was clear that as long as the company was supporting the federal government that our headquarters should be back East.

WEISS: So the company physically split. Now there's Leidos – is it Leidos?

IDELL: I think so.

WEISS: Then SAIC. So I know this was 2013. You've been out of the company for a while. What was your understanding? Do you stay in touch with former SAIC colleagues?

IDELL: To be honest, after the IPO when I retired, I divested myself of the SAIC stock. I no longer had insight into how the company was doing and my interests in retirement pulled me away. Now there's a group of former SAIC employees that I see but it's because we're all Padre fans. So we see each other at the ballpark. But no, I

854 have not – I could not give you even an uninformed opinion about Leidos and the
855 split.

856 **WEISS:** Are there any other SAIC stories or anything about Dr. Beyster you just
857 want to add because we're pretty well, yeah, wrapping unless there's something else
858 important that you want to contribute.

859 **IDELL:** There's one thing I think is important. You might ask how did Bob, running
860 a broadly decentralized organization incentivizing people at very low levels to build
861 business, to gain equity, to run their own small businesses, how did he keep the
862 company together? One of the things that Bob instituted very early was quarterly
863 pre-board dinners.

864 The board met four times a year. So we would have a dinner and invite senior people
865 to that dinner to interact and mix with board members both to educate the board
866 members about what we're doing and give people who were important in the
867 company some visibility with the board members. So that was in the '70s. That grew
868 into what became meetings weeks where four times a year we'd pull people from
869 around the country together in the '90s and 2000s.

870 There would be like 1,000 people coming for a series, 2, 3, 4 days of technology
871 focused meetings, 2 or 3 parallel tracks, business development meetings culminating
872 in a Thursday morning management council where Bob and senior leaders would
873 speak. I used to give business development summaries at each management council
874 and other senior leaders would speak to up to 1,000 people about the state of the
875 company. Then we had a big dinner that night, the pre-board dinner. From what
876 used to be back in the '70s maybe 40 or 50 people, now would be several hundreds.
877 Board members would still attend and interact with people from around the
878 company.

879 This was an important way to pull people together. The meetings weeks served the
880 larger purpose of cross-pollinating technologies, business development interests and
881 also to give this disparate group of people an understanding that their real future is
882 based on the long term goal of keeping the company strong, keeping the company
883 solid and growing equity. The company's succeeding as a whole was important to
884 them in the long term while their short term priorities were to gain contracts to
885 support themselves and their staff.

886 The other thing I'd like to say about Bob is he had an offbeat sense of humor. He was
887 a very serious guy. He was capable of getting angry at people, at times. I've been
888 yelled at plenty of times, but the thing I learned early on that Bob appreciated was
889 for you to look him in the eyes and tell him, "Bob, I screwed up. That's on me." Then
890 he wouldn't know what to say.

891 Then you'd leave and it would be good to get back in front of him within 24 hours on
892 some unrelated matter, tell him something and act like nothing had happened. It
893 would totally disarm him. He would be able to vent his anger, he would be able to give
894 you the message and then it would be over. He respected people who took
895 responsibility for their actions as opposed to evading, giving excuses or putting the
896 blame on somebody else. If you acted like, "Okay, Bob, you yelled at me but you're
897 not going to hurt my feelings and we've still got a business to build," then he could
898 rely on you to be there, be supportive and if he got angry at you, not be intimidated.

899 Back to his sense of humor. When I left the El Segundo office in '84 and came down
900 to La Jolla, my coworkers put together a prank video where they went around to
901 people in the office and said, "Well what do you remember about Idell," or, "What
902 do you want to say to him." Everybody in the video had Groucho glasses on, you
903 know the funny nose with moustache and big glasses. They would say their thing but
904 they'd have on Groucho glasses. Well the guy who did the video came down to La
905 Jolla before I got there. This was when I was kind of in the transition.

906 He got Bob to wear a pair of Groucho glasses and speak to the video camera. "Why
907 did you bring this guy down? What are your hopes?" So here's Bob giving rational
908 answers except he's got Groucho glasses on. So they made me a transparency slide
909 from the video. I probably am the only person who has an image of Bob with
910 Groucho glasses on. So that's an example of his sense of humor.

911 He had a nose for people who were nervous or uncertain about their thing and he
912 would push at you if he sensed that you weren't quite sure of what you were saying.
913 But on the other hand, if you acted like you knew or believed in what you were
914 doing, if you were prepared you could get away with a lot. Every time I got up and
915 talked, gave a business development report, all of those management councils,
916 probably 70 in my career, 4 a year, I always told a bad joke. It was expected. My
917 friends would tease me mercilessly if I didn't say something funny.

918 I've got many fond recollections of my uncertain humor looking out on this crowd of
919 500 to 700 people and seeing Bob at the head table with his head in his hands
920 shaking his head side to side. But he understood it. Anyway, it was part of the
921 culture. He could take a joke. He could tell a joke. So I wanted to get that in.

922 **WEISS:** Well thank you so much Mr. Idell. It's been really interesting to hear about
923 your perspectives on the company, your career journey and looking back over the
924 years and your close working relationship with Dr. Beyster because that really helps
925 us to understand a little bit more of his personality and his commitment as well as
926 the way that the management team was evolving over the years.

927 **IDELL:** Well glad to be of help.

928 **WEISS:** Okay.

929 **END INTERVIEW**

Recommended Citation:

Idell, James. Interview conducted by Helen Weiss, November 30, 2016.
The San Diego Technology Archive (SDTA), UC San Diego Library, La Jolla, CA.



The San Diego Technology Archive (SDTA), an initiative of the UC San Diego Library, documents the history, formation, and evolution of the companies that formed the San Diego region's high-tech cluster, beginning in 1965. The SDTA captures the vision, strategic thinking, and recollections of key technology and business founders, entrepreneurs, academics, venture capitalists, early employees, and service providers, many of whom figured prominently in the development of San Diego's dynamic technology cluster. As these individuals articulate and comment on their contributions, innovations, and entrepreneurial trajectories, a rich living history emerges about the extraordinarily synergistic academic and commercial collaborations that distinguish the San Diego technology community.