

An Interview with

BRUCE WILSON

OH 441

Conducted by Thomas J. Misa

on

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Control Data Corporation History Project

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Abstract

In November 2013, CBI director Tom Misa conducted a series of oral history interviews with 13 former employees of Control Data Australia (1963-89) including the details of each person's career, before and after working for Control Data. Topics that are common to many of the interviews include Trevor Robinson's key role in organizing Control Data Australia; the early computer sales in Australia to the Bureau of Census and Statistics, Department of Defence, Postmaster General, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Bureau of Meteorology, and several prominent Australian universities. Control Data Australia did business data processing for such large concerns as Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), Telstra, and others. A distinctive emphasis was its work in developing computer systems for race-track betting for the state of Victoria's Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) as well as for other Australian states and New Zealand. Other topics include relations with Control Data's headquarters in Minneapolis, business data processing, data centers, database management, networking and Cybernet, and projects done in several Far East countries.

Interviews were conducted with Richard Bament, John Baxter, Ron G. Bird, Tony Blackmore, Lyle Bowden, Marcel Dayan, Ian Downie, Julie James, George Karoly, John O'Neil, Garry Pearce, Rob Robertson, and Bruce Wilson.

Misa: My name is Tom Misa. I'm here in Melbourne, Australia; it's 19 November 2013. I'm talking with Bruce Wilson, who worked for Control Data Australia, especially in the personnel and training division of CDA. Bruce, to start with, could you tell us how you came to CDA, and your industry background and education in HR or computing?

Wilson: I came to CDA by a referral from a colleague. I had been building a career in personnel and training, especially training and development. I was working for another company at the time and my colleague in Sydney knew the personnel manager personally, and he knew there was a vacancy in Melbourne for a training specialist and suggested I apply, which I did. And after a long sorting process, I finally had the job. My knowledge of IT or data processing, it was probably called then, was fairly minimal. I didn't even know the difference between software and hardware. So my area was in terms of developing people. I took on the role of mainly employee development, and organization development consultant, which was an internal consultant role, and basically provided a service of training, guiding, mentoring, and coaching to the operational people.

Misa: And what year did you come to CDA?

Wilson: I joined CDA in 1977, and I left in 1984. So, seven years. And they were probably the best seven years of my working life.

Misa: We'll have a chance to talk about it today. When you came in 1977, was HR a formal process, or was it more informal?

Wilson: No, it was very formal. It was structured; it had two of the three elements in place. It had a sound compensation structure, a sound recruitment structure, but at that time it didn't have a training and development component, which is the one I provided.

Misa: So the training and development was the area that you added your expertise to the company.

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: You said that you had a career prior to CDA, could you make any comments about those early years at CDA, about the type of company CDA was, something about the culture, not connecting to Minneapolis — we'll want to talk about that later — but just coming to CDA from your previous background.

Wilson: From my previous background, I found it very challenging, and I mean that in a positive way because I think part of its culture was to encourage people to perform and to be innovative. So I found I had more opportunity to do new and exciting things in CDA than I'd ever had done before. I think it was a business that was in a very new industry; it was exciting and we were all in our early thirties then, and it was just an exciting place to work.

Misa: How did the CDA management or your supervisor end up encouraging that sense of being innovative and encouraging you to do different things?

Wilson: Well, I think that was part of the culture. To me, it was setting quite stretching goals; it was giving me the opportunity to experiment and do new and different things; and a sort of sense that once a plan was agreed, I could self-reliantly go and implement it.

Misa: So you agree with your supervisor, but had a lot of latitude in terms of implementing and working out the details.

Wilson: Yes. And I think one of the strengths that made the company strong in Australia was that I think Australians are probably good implementers. We relied a lot on the corporation for some of the groundwork, or, if you like, the theoretical work. They had a personnel research department, from then which — it had 15 or 20 people in it — people with PhDs in psychology who were producing human resource tools. But we found that the success that we had came from implementing them properly, as different from just importing them. I think one of these I found about some American training, from an Australian perspective, was that it was quite procedural. Here's one step, now you do this, and then you do that. So it sort of worried us that it taught people what to do, but not necessarily how to do it. So for a lot of things like work planning, and employee development, and performance appraisal, we would deconstruct a lot of that and rewrite

it, in the same context but including training in how it should be applied, rather than just what should be applied.

Misa: Could you give me an example about that shift from what to do, to **how** to do it?

Wilson: Yes. For example, we implemented a process called work planning. And work planning and review was a really important and effective process for planning people's jobs. Everyone in the company had to create a work plan, in a relevant period of time. That work plan described things like the tasks they were to perform, what objectives they would accomplish, by when, and so on. And I think that was an important part of Control Data's culture because it meant that we had a very unambiguous sort of culture as to what was expected of people. It was clearly defined and people would perform to that or not perform to that. So it wasn't a large amount of subjectivity or politics in the organization. It was pretty clear cut. Here is sort of the contract I had as to what I was meant to accomplish. And everyone had one of those. The American manual on how to implement work planning was really just a series of steps; you know, at the beginning of the year you do this, then you do that, then you do this, then you do that.

Misa: A kind of schematic.

Wilson: Yes, a schematic, and I'll call it procedural. But what we ended up doing was people amended the process in a way that we would, in our training, we would include case studies, and worked examples, and we would have role plays, and we were building;

coaching and mentoring on discussions and how to [handle] grievance with your people, and how to handle disputes. And I think we ended up with a really strong implementation of those things.

Misa: And so Australian habits about how you talk to people, that couldn't come from the [center], it needed to be developed here.

Wilson: I think so. I think there are some cultural differences between Australia and America. Many of the people I've talked to would say Australia is very like America. Some very strong similarities but there're also some significant differences, I think. One is Australians tend to be more casual. Secondly, we have less respect for authority than I think Americans have. You might take the word of a vice president and respect it because it because it was a vice president speaking. We look at whether he's a good guy first, and then we'll respect it. So there's the little parts like that we needed to work out locally. One of the reasons — I was thinking over the weekend — one of the reasons why I think Control Data was quite successful in Australia is because there is a relatively strong similarity between Australian culture and American culture and what worked in the States generally worked here. Far more, say, than maybe in France, or Korea, or Greece. I got some experience in working in those countries while I was at Control Data.

Misa: What would the similarities be? You accented some of the differences, but what would you say some of the similarities would be?

Wilson: I think a preparedness for pay-for-performance. A preparedness to accept individual results. I think an understanding that Australian customers would probably buy in a similar way to American companies, which would be very different in other parts of the world; they have different buying criteria, or different political criteria. So I think there's a fair match between Australia and the States.

Misa: I appreciate your comments because when we were doing a background one of the things we were trying to figure out; why was Australia seemingly a notable and consistent success? Some places made a lot of money and then lost the money, but CDA had a sustained record of solid profits across years and years. It really stands out of all the overseas divisions.

Wilson: I think we might've had some good management, as well. I think that probably contributed.

Misa: You had an interesting position, then, because you had contact with people coming in, but then did you also have contact with people each year, if they did a review or something like that?

Wilson: Absolutely. I would've known every person in the company above supervisor level, and every salesman; salesperson.

Misa: And can you give me just a general sense about how many people that was?

Wilson: There was 600-and-something people in the company; I think 620 or 600, roundabout. Probably would've been familiar with maybe a couple hundred of them.

Misa: Couple hundred.

Wilson: Yes. And they would've been right across the business. Not so much in waging project, but in engineering, analysts, sales, Control Data Institute, across the whole board.

Misa: Did you see any significant differences, then, between Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Perth was another place.

Wilson: There were a few but they tended to be local differences. For example, because Canberra's a government center; just consider Washington, D.C. to Canberra; it was mainly government sales so there was a strong government bias there, where in other cities like Melbourne and Sydney, not so much commercial because Control Data was never into commercial computing like some of the other companies in the industry. I think it was more of an education focus, or a waging focus; or in some cases, it would be a manufacturing focus. So that would be the difference. In terms of ability or in terms of style, I think it was fairly homogenous.

Misa: Fairly homogenous.

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: People have told me that Australia doesn't have the strong regional differences that a country like the U.S. has. People in the U.S. that get transferred, for instance, from whatever, the Northeast to the South, or to the Far West, they experience quite significant cultural differences. That wouldn't be the case so much in Australia.

Wilson: Oh, subtly, but not overtly.

Misa: Not dramatically?

Wilson: No, not dramatically. No.

Misa: In terms of your working in Australia, how did you communicate with people in Minneapolis?

Wilson: I probably got to Minneapolis four times, I think, out of my seven-year time with Control Data. I found out very early the importance of networking, and my boss was pretty supporting about that.

Misa: Your supervisor was?

Wilson: My supervisor was the Personnel Manager for Australia and New Zealand.

Misa: And his name would be?

Wilson: Brian Donnelly, D-O-double N-O-double L-E-Y. He's really also one of the reasons why personnel was successful. He had a strong, driving style. He made sure that personnel was a central part of the organization and not a peripheral part to be overlooked, and a pretty core part. He controlled; well we, as personnel, controlled areas like compensation very heavily, and recruitment. So the gateway into the company, and then, you know, the mechanism for rewarding people was pretty much controlled by personnel. Personnel had more influence in Control Data than I've ever seen in any other Australian company.

Misa: Controlling who's coming in and who's getting compensated are both important functions, for sure.

Wilson: Well, yes, but it wasn't only that. It was actually serve as a department that had a positive offering, and resources to offer, rather just a service department.

Misa: You mentioned the importance of networking; what types of activities?

Wilson: So when I would go to the States, I would build up a list of people in different disciplines or departments that I wanted to go and see. And I would try and spend an hour

with someone. I might spend an hour with a manager for international compensation; that wasn't my area but it was usually the person we were talking to. Or the people doing international training; or the people doing sales training; or the people in personnel research; or the people who were developing PLATO software. I would go and spend time with them, and sit down and talk with them about what they were doing, what their goals were, what their plans were; and mainly, not only understanding where they were going, but also just to build a personal relationship because I found that I could call them and say hey, I'm wondering whether you could help me with this, and they would know who I was.

Misa: Were you ever posted in Minneapolis? Or were these just periodic visits?

Wilson: I was half offered a job in my later years, in Minneapolis, but I decided not to take it.

Misa: So you were in the U.S., you said, what, four trips.

Wilson: Yes. Two or three weeks at a time.

Misa: Two or three weeks.

Wilson: Think the first one might've been five.

Misa: Besides this important informal networking, were there formal trainings that you also went through?

Wilson: I attended a number of training programs, but not because of any requirements, just because I was interested in attending to see how they worked.

Misa: Would it be a good time to review a couple of documents that you brought in?

Wilson: Yes. I brought our training program, for the beginning and the end of my time, virtually, because it evolved; and I wanted to just say that we actually had a structured development curriculum.

Misa: I just want to identify this; do you want to do this 1979 version first?

Wilson: I'll leave that as background. Let's start with the 1983 one.

Misa: Control Data's Human Resource Development Program 1983, to just identify the document.

Wilson: One of the distinctions between me and other countries was that I also had responsibility for sales training . . .

Misa: Sales training.

Wilson: . . . as well as management training. So we had a curriculum of training programs, of training modules, that we expected every one of our people to go through over their life in Control Data.

Misa: I'm just reading here, it says, "Sales Training Curriculum"; it looks to me like there's nine different modules.

Wilson: Nine modules, yes.

Misa: "Effective Sales Calls," "Telephone as a Sales Tool," etcetera. These are pretty hands-on; these aren't lofty principles, but pretty much hands-on tools.

Wilson: Yes, and especially things like negotiations training, and selling skills. They're a really practical approach. In the early days, we had people from the States who would come out and deliver them, and then generally we took them over and developed them, and delivered them locally. As I said, with management training, we had a number of programs that you could do as a supervisor, and then some basic management programs, and then some of them go on to continuing development. But we had an expectation that everybody above supervisor level would probably get exposed to 10 days of training a year.

Misa: Ten days per year.

Wilson: Per person.

Misa: Would that be on an ongoing basis? So not just coming into the company.

Wilson: There were things you would've done early on as part of an induction process. But then after that, for the next couple of years, you would've had some [training] time mapped out.

Misa: That's the 10 days?

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: When you came into the company, how extensive was the training at that time?

Wilson: It was very minimal because it really relied on — I'm actually not quite sure what they did — I think they relied on people coming out from the States *ad hoc* to come and deliver training. There was no regimen or structure that existed.

Misa: May I ask the question slightly differently; during your time, when somebody came in, a new recruit, did they have a formal training before they would take up their responsibilities? Not ongoing, but recruiting.

Wilson: Oh, yes; I understand. I referred to that as induction training. We had people who early in their time, always had exposure to things like company history and work planning, but we did hire people, obviously, that were expected to be able to go out and do a job. I think we just culturalized them and tempered them to Control Data.

Misa: Do you think the 10 days of ongoing training would be about average for Australian companies, at the time?

Wilson: No, well in excess.

Misa: In excess.

Wilson: Absolutely.

Misa: So that, again, speaks to the significance and seriousness of HR.

Wilson: And in excess of the competitors. I think you might've heard the term that there was in the industry at the time, that there was IBM and the "bunch."

Misa: Right.

Wilson: I think we were well ahead of the "bunch" in terms of providing training. When I left in 1984, I went and set up my little consulting business and I worked for 29 years as

a one-man band consultant. And I got to a number of the other companies like Honeywell, and Camden, and Hewlett Packard; and I don't think they did nearly as much training as Control Data did.

Misa: All were companies operating here in Australia.

Wilson: Yes, we just had a really strong development focus.

Misa: And can you give me your understanding, at least, of where that focus came from? Why was Control Data Australia notable and different?

Wilson: I don't know that we were that different from the corporation. I think a lot of the basic philosophy and I think the values came out of people like Bill Norris, and Jim Morris, and Norb Berg. But I think because we were a relatively small company, we were also able to implement things pretty effectively; and you would've seen that closeness with us guys who were at lunch the other day. I mean, after 35 years or so.

Misa: It's quite notable.

Wilson: Yes, still get together.

Misa: Some people worked for 20 or 30 years, and other people worked for relatively shorter time, like yourself, and still had a notable bond.

Wilson: Yes. I think that was part of this culture of being expected to produce results, being able to innovate, being young and it was exciting, and it was a new industry. And I think the company was also profitable so we could afford those things. In my consulting work afterwards, I've been at companies as late as last year or so, where they still are not nearly as advanced as Control Data was 35 years ago.

Misa: 35 years ago.

Wilson: It was a leading edge company.

Misa: Can you give me an example in which something that Control Data was doing say 30 years ago, may be passing into current practices?

Wilson: Having an employee assistance program was one. You know, it was one of the early adopters of that.

Misa: That was EAR?

Wilson: EAR, yes.

Misa: Can you say a little about how you understood that?

Wilson: Well, I actually can't remember whether we had an EAR process in Australia. I think in the latter years, we might have. We might've contracted it out to a supplier. But it was designed to be a resource for employees who needed help, coaching, counseling, assistance in both sort of — in any way — making career decisions, issues in their personal lives, and they had access to professional providers who could support them with counseling and coaching.

Misa: And it was not normal then?

Wilson: Not then.

Misa: Not then.

Wilson: Normal now, but in those days it was brand new. I think probably another reason, if I can blow my own trumpet for a bit. One of the other reasons why I think that we did well in personnel administrator, was that we were all pretty good at it. You know, I traveled around the world quite a bit with Control Data and got asked to do some training in different countries, and on a couple of assignments. It's interesting for an American company, but the strongest employee development countries were in Australia, the U.K., and Canada.

Misa: Really?

Wilson: All British Commonwealth countries.

Misa: Really.

Wilson: Yes. And I really enjoyed the time that I was able to spend with my counterparts in those countries because we had a lot in common, and we were doing good stuff.

Misa: Can you say a bit about how those trips were arranged?

Wilson: Some of them were things that we just arranged personally on the side. For example, I'd get to the States and try to make a side trip up to Toronto. But some of them were quite formal. For example, we were working at one stage as a project team to create a PLATO program that was aimed to be a cross cultural supervisory program.

Misa: Cross cultural.

Wilson: Yes. We worked out that around the world there were different cultural blocks. There was a Western block, like U.S., Australia, England; there was an Asian block, which had quite different values, like Korea, Taiwan, and Japan; and there was a Southern European block, which was Spain, Greece, Italy; and a Northern European sort of culture. And what we were trying to do was to create a supervisory training program which would teach people the elements of supervision. But for each exercise, for

example, they would go off to one of those streams, based on the culture of where they living or coming from.

Misa: So it's taking a general model, but then trying to localize it and make it culturally appropriate for these different regions. This is an interesting way of thinking about anthropology.

Wilson: Pretty much. And I had a fascinating experience. I was in Greece at one time, because this team of seven or eight people assembled in Europe, and we went off and piloted our program with some live workshops, then came back to compare results. I can remember being in Greece and talking about performance review discussions, and I had a couple of great managers role playing this discussion with an employee that wasn't performing effectively, and they were pounding the table, ranting and raving. And I said to them afterwards, how do you think that went. And they said oh, pretty good. And I said well, I thought we talked about principles of confrontation, and maybe being less authoritative, and how important it was for the employee to be involved in the process. Is there anything you could've done better? Yes, they said, we should have been firmer.

[Laughs.]

Misa: Firmer, okay.

Wilson: So that was quite an eye opener as to how different cultures worked. But I ended up running some workshops in such diverse places as South Africa, Korea, Singapore,

France. It was just interesting and that was part of what made it very exciting for me because, you know, in my thirties and being sent overseas to do it, it was a pretty big thrill.

Misa: And where would South Africa fit?

Wilson: South Africa didn't have a training development function, but they did have a strong personnel function. They were people we respected.

Misa: And these trips, were those again relatively short duration?

Wilson: Yes, five or six weeks.

Misa: Were you ever actually stationed or assigned to an overseas area?

Wilson: No, it was all done from Australia, and it was typically requested by their headquarters, wanting a resource to go do some work in those countries.

Misa: Do you want to make any other comments about the 1983 document? You also brought in, it says, Announcing Control Data's 1979 Human Resource Development Program; either one of those?

Wilson: No, I think you can see just on the back, the sort of typical timetable that we would've run in Australia, New Zealand for a series of workshops. So at a constant through the year, they were active.

Misa: Let me just read this into the tape; this is a 1979 program, in January, it looks like most weeks there's something.

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: January 8, Marketing Orientation Seminar; 9-12 Introduction to Selling Skills Workshop; on the 24th of January, Coaching For Sales Performance Workshop; and then it looks like there's two sessions January 25 and 26, January 30 and 31 on Effective Presentations; and that's basically similar to the rest of the year.

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: So there was a lot of training, and workshops; these would be focused on CDA people, right?

Wilson: That's right. And New Zealand, the CDA ones. Yes.

Misa: Now, the people coming to this; you mentioned that there were 10 days or so each year that would be part of an assignment. [Your] supervisor says oh, it's time for you to do the Effective Presentations.

Wilson: Yes, you haven't done that yet so I've scheduled you for the May session.

Misa: So that would be part of the work assignment?

Wilson: Yes. And it would appear in their work plan, by the end of the year you will have done this training.

Misa: Was that structure the same across your seven years at CDA, or did that change?

Wilson: No, it changed and evolved into more sophisticated training, but the quantity pretty much stayed the same.

Misa: You mentioned PLATO before. PLATO, of course, is one of those very attractive and ultimately quite controversial projects at Control Data. So I'd be interested in your sense about what it was like, and how extensively it was used here in Australia and New Zealand.

Wilson: In most of my time, it wasn't used extensively at all. We didn't develop a PLATO delivery capability here until about 1983, I think. I think roughly, or 1984.

Before then, we had to get a connection from the States, and in those days of communication, you know, 9600 baud line was about all that was available.

Misa: And expensive.

Wilson: And terribly expensive, yes.

Misa: The mainframe would be in the U.S., you'd have the PLATO terminal here.

Wilson: Yes. In the later stages of that training, 1983 program you'll see some PLATO courses. We would develop the capability then, but we would really use it pretty much peripherally. It was still a bit of a toy and we hadn't really integrated it as individual learning would be integrated into an organization now.

Misa: So it would be an option, but not part of the mainstream?

Wilson: Yes. And it would be sort of something interesting to do, no more than it was really funded, though. It's still a bit of a toy and wasn't really compulsory or required. We really didn't have a lot of formal programs, apart from some technical subjects, on PLATO.

Misa: Do you remember any reactions or responses to the CDA people that were using the PLATO terminals?

Wilson: No I don't. No. I think probably, generally, they were excited by it; they found it fascinating from a technical point of view. I don't think they thought too much about a learning process.

Misa: Did we have a chance to do a good amount of comparing the difference between Control Data Australia and the HR back in Minneapolis; are there other observations to add to that?

Wilson: I think it gets back to what I was saying before. That I think one of our capabilities in Australia was being a good implementer. When I first joined Control Data [in] 1977, I was just finishing my degree in psychology. I missed school, not thinking I had the brains to go to university, and it wasn't until I got drafted and had a couple of years in the army that I matured a lot. So I went back and studied part time. In those days, you could get registered as a psychologist as long as you had more than half your bachelor's degree in psychology subjects, and two years' supervised experience.

Misa: So you could work as a psychologist.

Wilson: Yes. So I had just graduated. I found the most interesting people in Minneapolis were the personnel research people, that worked for Walter Tornow in his group. And they were really, really deep specialists in one particular area, not across the board. They seemed to know a lot about performance review, but not a lot about compensation. And

they knew a lot about motivation and leadership, but not much about mentoring. So I found the benefit I had on talking to them was that I could actually work right across the discipline and at least have a, I guess, more than skin deep understanding of the issues they were working on.

Misa: HR was such a big juggernaut, the company back in Minneapolis took it seriously. One question I've been asking people, because there's a lot of innovation going on here in Australia, can you think of any examples where your innovations here went back and had an influence back in Minneapolis, or somewhere else; could be in Europe or Asia?

Wilson: No, I'm not sure that I can, other than some of the programs we developed were the ones I took to places like Korea to develop.

Misa: That would be a direct connection.

Wilson: For example, I ran a management training program once in Korea. I don't think my value was teaching them much about management techniques because they were so culturally different. I think my value was more helping them understand how Westerners thought about management. [Laughs.]

Misa: Oh, okay. Giving them some tools to understand . . .

Wilson: Why do we get these dumb instructions? Why do we have to do that? And what's the purpose of this? I think that was more my value to them than it actually was helping them become better managers.

Misa: Teaching them not the instrumental tools, but some cultural insight.

Wilson: Yes. Yes. And I don't know that Control Data Corporation was very strong on its cultural insight. I seem to recollect only a small number of people ever had passports, so its worldliness was not huge.

Misa: From early on, in the early 1960s, we know that Control Data was an international company but, of course, most of the people were U.S. based. CDA was largely done not by shipping over hundreds of Americans, but essentially by organizing a group of Australians.

Wilson: That's right. They started out with an Australian agency and incorporated into the business there. Yes. It's an interesting view that I think your countrymen have about the world, because I was just got a note from a friend; fact, he's actually, my ex-functional boss, guy called Ron Hillbin [sp?], who lives in Boston now. He was VP of personnel for [Control Data] International, once, and we still keep in touch. And he was telling me the other day that Boston Red Sox just won the World Series. And I said to him well, if it's the World Series, where did the Australian team go? [Laughs.]

Misa: World Series, just from the Pacific to Atlantic.

Wilson: That's it, yes, that's the world. [Laughs.]

Misa: Americans have a very big country, but sometimes it's also very small.

Wilson: Yes.

Misa: Well, Bruce, are there any other topics we should include in our conversation today?

Wilson: No, I wanted to talk about training, which you've done. How we are thinking about it. An example of being innovative which I haven't covered is I tried to create, at one time, new and different ways for people to learn. I mainly used it for some team building work and instead of just having indoor sort of activities, I actually took people out into the forest for three days.

Misa: For three days?

Wilson: Yes, we found a conference center that was in the country and we ran outdoor activities. They weren't the typical activities that some ran, like carrying logs of wood and all that sort of busy stuff. I developed a whole series of exercises that related to organizational problems, like I got people to build a log bridge across an area. One team

there, and one team to either side; and left it quite ambiguous as to whether they were working on the same bridge or little bridges. And then we talked at the end of that; teamwork, and how you integrated that. And I found that that environment really, really worked. I still get people coming back and say remember that bridge we built? I really learned a lot from that, you know, even after 30 years.

Misa: Do you have any reflections on why that different mode seemed to be memorable?

Wilson: I think it was connected to the overall culture of achievement, being young, something different, and it was sort of done, I think, — or I tried to do it — professionally and constructively, you know, rather than just make it a game.

Misa: So there was an important purpose behind it.

Wilson: Absolutely, yes.

Misa: That's a good example; little bit off the normal path.

Wilson: And many local companies wouldn't have had that opportunity; that wouldn't have been, not so much permitted, but it wouldn't have been accepted as easily as this.

Misa: For something like that, did you typically have to ask permission of somebody or was it the case that you had the responsibility to just go ahead and do it?

Wilson: No, I would've positioned it with relevant people, saying here's my suggestion as to what we could do, and have to sell it to them.

[TELEPHONE RINGS — BREAK IN TAPE]

Misa: Okay, back on.

Wilson: I think our reward for performance system was very strong. One of the things that Control Data did right around the world was to recognize individual contribution. So as well as having very clear reward systems for salespeople, in terms of their commissions and bonuses, and attendance at things like the 100 Percent Club, there were reward systems for things like analysts, for engineers, for administration people, and I think it really made people feel valued.

Misa: With the salesmen, the 100 Percent Club is company-wide, but what kinds of recognition would there be for the analysts and engineers?

Wilson: I can't remember the details, but there was a recognition program, there was the same thing in administration, and in engineering, I think.

Misa: And then admin, too.

Wilson: Yes. In fact, a good example of that would be that one year, we had a lawyer looking after contracts and the general view of salespeople would be we don't want a lawyer looking after contracts because we review it ourselves; where this woman went out of her way to be helpful and cooperative, so they took her into the 100 Percent Club one year.

Misa: Brought her in and basically made her an honorary salesperson.

Wilson: So that was part of what happened.

Misa: You know, you could have a tension between individual recognition and a team focus or team orientation. How does that work out?

Wilson: I think we had a good mix of that. I think the individual recognition was quite clearly defined because of the work planning system, the work plan and review system. But there was an element of teamwork that ran across that as a separate layer. So you'd find that engineers, for example, would have strong levels of cooperation with their peers. There's always a bit of conflict between some departments in any business, but I don't recollect that being either strong or disruptive.

Misa: So that idea about having rewards for individuals was something that permeated the company as a whole?

Wilson: Yes, absolutely.

Misa: Do you know whether that was the extent also back home in Minneapolis, or was that something distinctive here?

Wilson: No, it was right across the corporation.

Misa: So that was a value then that came from Minneapolis and was implemented here in a satisfying way?

Wilson: Yes. And in an effective way here.

Misa: Well this has been really splendid, thank you so much. Anything else that we can do.

Wilson: No, I think I've covered the things I was thinking through that might've been of interest to you.

Misa: Well, splendid, this is really helpful. Thank you so much.