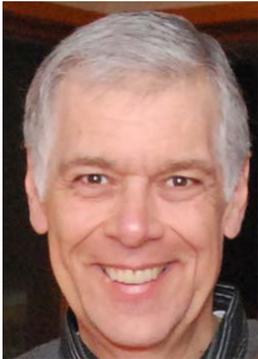


From Employee to Retiree and Back Again!

Mike Richmond tells about his decision to retire and his subsequent decision to return to Intel.



Mike Richmond

I backed into retirement, and then I backed out.

I took a personal leave starting in Q1 of 2006 and was getting set to return in Q4 when the great SET wave was underway. Intel offered voluntary separation; my manager said he hoped I would turn it down. With the mess of SET, being done with a five-year gig and hitting 55, I heard the retirement bell ringing.

My last job before retirement was managing the group that delivered the industry's next generation BIOS architecture. It was a 10 year program. I managed the group for the middle five of those years, cementing it within Intel, winning Apple to our codebase and learning more about the PC business than I had managed to do in all my years at Intel from 1981. But in 2006 Intel felt exhausted and was an exhausting place to be.

In my first two years of retirement I acted the part of an Intel retiree. I bought a Mac Pro and digitized 20 years of kid videos. I converted my entire extended family to Apple (except for my oldest daughter who thinks Macs are a cult). I drove several home improvement projects in parallel to optimize completion. I worked on my Fiat repair projects and helped my Fiat buddies do the same. My Mac-hating daughter got engaged and I served as 'associate program manager' for the wedding that was held in our back yard. We shot the wedding with three HD cameras and I edited a Blu-Ray video of the festivities.



Mike's latest Fiat came with a warranty.



Mike with daughter, Emily, July 2009

My wife, Sue, and I traveled and connected with cousins long-missed. It was great to be able to travel off-peak, stay an extra day and be available to loved ones. My health improved, I lost weight and exercised more. Sue and I took up ballroom dancing.

But when the wedding memories had been framed, I started to get antsy and decided I wanted to do something else... I wanted to go back to Intel. Maybe it was the 2008 financial crisis- not so much the hit to the portfolio, but the feeling that the best way for me to help society was to pay those higher taxes headed our way. I watched some videos from the Intel Developer Forum - they were depressing... I knew about all those projects, where was the new good stuff? Only visible on the inside.

In Q2 of 2010 I returned to Intel with a blue badge.

My last manager was supportive of me returning, but it took me a full year to regain that blue badge. First, I did two small green badge assignments, one of which was interviewing senior principal engineers and Intel Fellows to inform a technology roadmap for planning Intel Press books. To my surprise, all the senior technologists focused on the upcoming mobile revolution, the challenges for Atom and not their own specialized technology projects. And there was very little discussion of Microsoft compared to what I had remembered in earlier times. It was clear to me that Intel had changed a great deal in the two years while I was retired.

When I finally did get rehired, my assignment was running a small product marketing group focused on the MeeGo mobile OS Intel did with Nokia. I did that job for a year, and it was shocking to me how long it took me to come up to speed, how many mistakes I made and how much product marketing had changed since I had done it last in the mid-90s.

The last 18 months have been much better. I'm an individual contributor now in the Open Source Technology Center. My focus is HTML5 strategy and plans across Intel. I'm a much better manager with nobody working for me! I promised myself that org boundaries would not dictate my point of view coming back to Intel, that I'd always act like the highest-level management was my boss no matter who I reported to. This approach has helped me act as an enabler of collaboration, something Intel needs now more than ever. I also teach 'soft skills' to engineers, and spent three weeks in Europe doing that at new Intel sites. My grey hair and experience increases credibility with these new-to-Intel engineers.

What lessons have I learned from my boomerang retirement experience? Retiring is like getting a new job. In mid-career one would never leave a job without having an offer in hand, but I retired with only a vague idea of what was next. Next time (and there will be a next time), I'll know what I'm headed for. On the positive side, I've recommended to several people that they take the time to do a Windows detox program. With all our Intel experience, we think we know computers, but until you see the Apple take on things, you really don't.

I miss the time to work on Fiats and the extra time with Sue, but I love being back inside. The company's business is a much more interesting now that we're trying to enter markets with tough competition, where the outcome is uncertain. Sue is doing more now that I'm out of the house...rediscovering her oboe, and learning French. Fortunately, our ballroom dancing lessons have survived my return to Intel.



Mike and Sue dance the cha-cha.

If you'd like to know more about Mike's Life After Intel (and back), he can be reached at mike@symphonicman.com.