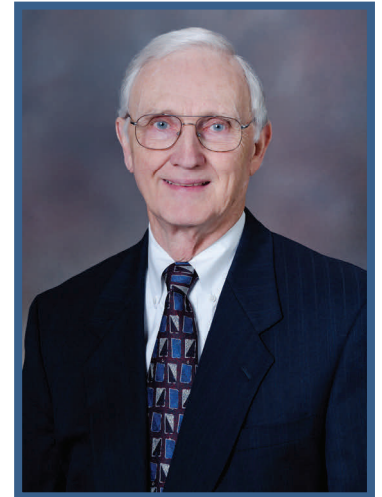


Keith Thomson, Retired Intel VP

“Performance + Perception = Reputation”

Interview by Judy Goodman and written by Debbie Watson

Interested in hearing about the guy who helped plant the first “trees” in the Silicon Forest in Oregon? Read about the fascinating career and post retirement life of Intel Vice President Keith Thomson, employee #110.



Keith Thomson

Remember Intel Vice President Keith Thomson?

- ◆ Perhaps you remember him from when he was responsible for Production Control, Assembly and Test in Santa Clara and later building assembly and test facilities in the Far East.
- ◆ Or maybe from when he was the VP of Manufacturing for Microma (1972-1977) – when Intel was in the watch business (later sold to Timex). That endeavor produced the first end user TV commercial for Intel – starring William Christopher of MASH fame (Father Mulcahy).
- ◆ Perhaps, like me, you remember him from when he was Co-GM of the “systems biz”. Keith describes that time started as “Intel enlightened self interest”. The Systems Group would develop systems, software and products to help engineers in development of their own products to use Intel chips (DRAMs, microprocessors, EPROMS, etc). The design tools business led to embedded single board computers and to being a major designer and producer of motherboards for the PC marketplace.
- ◆ Keith’s last role, prior to retirement, was creating and running the office of Public Affairs in Oregon. His mantra, “Performance + Perception = Reputation”. Intel was a large and growing company but our community had no idea what went on in our clean rooms. Our performance was excellent in environmental areas but we did not spend any time to educate our community (perception) so our reputation could be tarnished by others.

Keith joined Intel in 1969, coming to us with experience from both Lockheed Missiles and Space Corporation, and the Semiconductor Division of Fairchild Camera and Instruments. He retired in 1998 after nearly 30 years with Intel.

An interesting story was Keith's involvement in selecting Oregon for the first Intel site outside of California. Someone from Tektronix suggested to Gordon Moore that Intel should consider Oregon. Portland fit within the parameters of site selection – the site needed to be within 90 minutes by commercial flight. Keith flew to Portland and met a commercial realtor. That yielded only two potential development-ready 30 acre sites, one in Wilsonville and one in Aloha. Two years later, Fab 4 and the Silicon Forest were “born.”

Post retirement, Keith and his wife Julie enjoy visiting family regularly. He has a daughter who is married and lives in Jackson, WY. She is a nurse practitioner. Keith's son is a copywriter who lives in Virginia with his wife and two children.

Keith loves boating and has a 63-foot powerboat (he had a sailboat in the Bay area but switched to power when he moved to Oregon). He enjoys boating in the northwest, particularly in the San Juan Islands where he journeys every other summer – in spite of getting seasick on the Washington coast each time! He does the maintenance himself each winter when it's back in Oregon.



The Thomson clan at Jackson Hole, Wyoming

In addition to cruising on his own boat, Keith and Julie often enjoy letting someone else handle the work and go on cruise lines. He and Julie have been through the Panama Canal to New Orleans. They have also done a barge cruise in France and several paddle wheel cruises on the Mississippi River.



Keith at the helm of their boat

As for pursuing another career after retirement, Keith's last role at Intel got him involved in community boards and commissions, so he likes to say "I failed retirement and am busy but just not being paid by anyone". He had no desire to join many for-profit boards.

In the volunteering arena, Keith is busy. He volunteered for the Oregon Business Council where he worked on education issues. He was appointed to the Port of Portland by the Oregon governor and was on the board of the Oregon Graduate Institute, which merged with Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU). Speaking of OHSU, the governor appointed Keith to their governing board and was Chairman until 2005. Following the governing board, Keith chaired the OHSU Foundation Board and continues to be an active board member. Finally, Keith was asked to join the University of Oregon Foundation where he was Chairman and Trustee for 10 years.

When asked if he had any words of wisdom or learning that he would be willing to share with the Intel retiree community, he said, "Enjoy what you are doing. If not, change it." Also, "Value the culture that you learned working at Intel, it is sorely missing outside of Intel. Cherish those skills and practice them."

Like most other subjects of these interviews, Keith misses the people at Intel. He's noticed that Intel moves and changes so fast it is hard to keep connections. He believes it is important to work hard at staying involved and keeping in contact with your Intel friends.

The interview closed with tips for new retirees that can make the transition easier. Keith says to "Be aware that you are made up of two parts. The first part is associated with Intel and the status that brings in the community. When you leave Intel, that part disappears. You need to rationalize this to yourself. The second part is your personal whole self." Finally, Keith says to "Find something to do. You have skills that add value and are highly desirable."

If you would like to catch up with Keith, he can be reached at Keith_Thomson@msn.com.