

Meet Intel's "Mr. Chipset", Ron Smith

Interview and Article by Gene Murphy

There have been a few people at Intel, who because of their product's or technology's impact have made their names synonymous with those achievements.

AMAZING THINGS HAPPEN!

The Integrated Circuit might mean Bob Noyce to you; the EPROM perhaps Dov Frohman; the microprocessor Ted Hoff or maybe Dave House. Gordon Moore even has a universal law named after him. However, when the word chipset comes up, there is only one name that comes to mind and that is Ron Smith. During the 1990s Ron was the General Manager of the PCI Component Division (PCD), which accomplished some amazing things. Not only did his team create leadership chip sets, but also drove the creation of industry initiatives like PCI and USB. These technologies helped to convert Intel from a component to the primary platform supplier of the PC industry.

WHO IS RON SMITH

Ron's story begins in Allentown, PA. He comes from Pennsylvania Dutch stock, which predates the American Revolution. Ron takes great pride in his heritage and the impact it's had in U.S. history. He graduated from Gettysburg College in 1972 with a degree in Physics. He then went on to get an MS and PhD from the University

of Minnesota. While he was there, he depended on Steve Nachtsheim, who was in charge of the Computer Center at that



time. Ron doubts, though, whether Steve remembers any of their interactions. In 1978 Ron joined Intel as the Technology Department's (TD) first device physicist. Besides the accomplishments he and his PCD team made, Ron is also very proud of the time he spent as the project manager for P446, the first high speed logic CMOS process. Because of this technology Intel was able to design and manufacture the 386. After his time at PCD, Ron was promoted to Corporate Vice President in charge of the Special Products Group, which eventually became the Computer Enhancement Group (CEG). His last assignment at Intel was with the Wireless Communications and Computing Group (WCCG) where he was the Senior VP/ General Manager.

CHALLENGES AFTER INTEL



Marathon success!

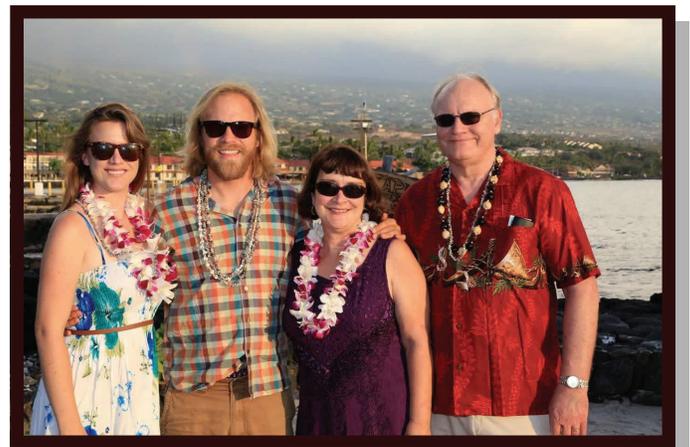
In 2004 Ron decided to retire and move on to his next challenges. After years of heavy business travel and long hours spent working, Ron felt he needed to

improve his physical conditioning. First, he began regularly jogging, then running and biking. Being a self-described type “A” personality, Ron only understands how to do things at one speed: full open throttle. He then began to compete in triathlons, constantly increasing his distances. In 2006 he even was the age group champion for a series of Olympic distance events called the Tri-for-Real series in the Sacramento area.

Unfortunately he learned that intense competition at a senior age can cause an assortment of injuries, which take a lot of time to heal. Because of these injuries, particularly damage to his rotator cuff, he gave up competitive training during 2007. Ron is now enjoying a more modest physical fitness regimen. However, he made use of his newly developed swimming skills by becoming a certified scuba diver. He’s been able to dive with his son and daughter in Monterey, So Cal, Hawaii and even Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, which he says is one of the world’s most remarkable places.

MOVING ON - “REAL” RETIREMENT

Ron says he has now moved on to a “real” retirement. I guess that means he’s dialed it down a bit. He says he has reduced his commitment to serving on company boards from three to one, but he is maintaining his position as a Trustee of Gettysburg College. Recently he has devoted much of his time to become a “lifetime learner”. Since 2013 he’s completed 80 college courses on a wide range of topics. He says he watches many of the lectures while he’s walking on his treadmill. I guess this is what “real” retirement is all about. In his spare time (Is there any?) Ron has been researching his family genealogy. As I alluded to earlier, the Smith family (which was originally “Schmidt”), has a rich history in Pennsylvania. In fact Ron’s great X5 grandfather was a captain in the PA militia and fought in the American Revolution. The pursuit of his family’s genealogy has energized a deep interest by him in American history. Ron warns folks that genealogy can become addictive, if you decide to explore it.



The Smith family on vacation- Robyn, Justin, Diane and Ron

INTEL MEMORIES

When we asked Ron about his Intel memories, he said there were so many, it was difficult to list them. However, he decided to cite two in particular. First, he said that the experience he shared with his PCD team was special. They not only were able to grow a business into something big for Intel, but also made significant changes to the industry, that still exist today. The teamwork and energy exhibited by the group, he feels, was exceptional. Secondly, on a lighter note, he remembers a time he played a practical joke on Gordon Moore during his TD days. As he tells the story, Gordon was visiting the test area to see the first checkout of the SRAM yield vehicle on a new process on which the 8086/88 was being built. Ron's team decided they would load a tray with defunct wafers. When the technician, who was carrying the tray, entered the room where Gordon was sitting, he pretended to trip. The wafers went flying and shattered on the ground. He said the shocked look on Gordon's face was priceless. He quickly had to let Gordon in on the joke before it caused him to have a heart attack!

THE INTEL VALUES CONTINUE

Some of the Intel values like goal setting and risk taking, still play a prominent role in Ron's retirement. Whenever he attempts a new endeavor like scuba diving, triathlons or enriching himself through further education, he feels it's critical that he set personal goals to be successful and gain satisfaction. Likewise, he believes it's important for him to take risks and challenge himself. He never imagined he'd

be scuba diving, let alone with sharks, but he learned to get past his fears and now he loves doing it.



Ron and Justin diving in Hawaii

ADVICE TO RETIREES

Ron's advice to fellow retirees or those thinking about retiring is pretty practical. First, he feels you should have your "nest egg" in order and properly balance risk in your retirement accounts. Next, he suggests that you give yourself a break from things that might have been a grind while you were working. There are endless things for you to do. You should weigh your options. He believes you should be careful about jumping into something too soon, particularly if it has a large time commitment. In other words keep your options open.

Ron and his wife, Diane, currently live in Granite Bay, CA. They are particularly proud of the accomplishments of their two children: Robyn, who is finishing her M.S. in Ecology at Utah State and Justin, who is completing his PhD in Genetics at Stanford.



Diane and Ron

Ron remarked that the things being done in the genetics field are just as exciting for his son as were those semiconductor advances for us in our days at Intel.

If you'd like to contact Ron to discuss scuba diving, training for a triathlon, new frontiers of science, genealogy, American history or just reminisce, his email is ronjsmith360@gmail.com.