

Computing Educators Oral History Project (ceohp.org)

Mats Daniels

Video transcript

Recorded June 29, 2011

Available on the CEOHP channel at www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7hFY5Csl

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Mats Daniels, a video interview from 2011, Computing Educators Oral History Project. Online: ceohp.org.

Taking Thirty Years to Get a Ph.D.

Oh, well. So let's talk about taking thirty years to get a Ph.D. [chuckles] And ... now it's been a long road. And it's been rather fun, actually, getting it in the end. And ... well, to make a long story short, it's a ... I did ... when I started finishing up, I was looking at, "So, when do I want to have my defense?" And I found my paper where I got enrolled and I was enrolled April 9, 1981. So I thought, "Well, maybe I should defend on that date!" And I found out it was a Saturday and I said, [whispering] "Bummer!" I didn't think one could defend on a Saturday. But then I was going to go into the Web and book a date, a date Friday. It turned out I could actually book on a Saturday! So I did that. And one of the more frequent questions I got was, "Why do you have it on a Saturday? Didn't ... what happened?" So, I had a reason to tell people: "Well, it's thirty years since I actually got enrolled!" And it was ... yeah, the benefit of actually taking this time is that I really, really enjoyed defending it. Although I really didn't get all that much opportunity to defend it because people weren't really questioning what I was doing. But it felt really, really fun and cool to sit there and listen to people describing my work and getting questions and not feeling worried at all about not being able to say something. I mean, I knew there were things that weren't good, things that could have been done better. But I knew I could discuss with any of these guys about what I really, really enjoy doing. So it was ... [recording cuts off last few words] [a pleasure to be there defending my work, knowing that even things I wouldn't have a direct answer to would be fun to discuss. Many years ago, when I first set out on my Ph.D. studies, I did envision it being a daunting experience to defend a thesis. But the time writing the thesis was almost relaxing.]