

Computing Educators Oral History Project

Matthias Felleisen video snippet transcript

Recorded Thursday, March 10, 2011

Available both via the ceohp.org website and on CEOHP's YouTube channel
<http://www.youtube.com/user/CEOHP#p/u/17/N1ZDd42kbN0>

Copyright Statement

This video transcript is being made available for research purposes only. All literary rights in the transcript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the Computing Educators Oral History Project. No part of the transcript may be quoted for publication, except by the interviewee, without the written permission of the Director of the Computing Educators Oral History Project.

Request for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to Barbara Boucher Owens, either by email at ceohp@ceohp.org or via postal mail at Computing Educators Oral History Project, Southwestern University, P.O. Box 770, Georgetown, TX 78627-0770 USA. The request should identify the specific passages to be quoted, describe the anticipated use of the passages, and identify the requestor.

We recommend that this video transcript be cited as follows:

Matthias Felleisen, "Path to collaborating on 'The Little LISPer'," a video interview from 2011, Computing Educators Oral History Project. Online: ceohp.org.

Path to collaborating on "The Little LISPer"

So, when I was in grad school, just started in grad school, I was assigned as a ... Dan [Friedman] requested me as a teaching assistant. Everybody who worked for Dan had to be a teaching assistant in this course on programming languages for juniors, seniors, somewhere around there. And I would sit in his course and TA and grade and understand how students failed to see what he was trying to bring across. And I would start arguing with him about why his book was wrong, why "The Green Little LISPer" didn't teach what he thought it was teaching. And it was in class in front of students. I would sometimes get up and say, "Don't teach it like this, say it like that!" And he tolerated this for a couple of weeks and then he took me out. And said one day, "Come with me." He took me to his secretary's office, Nancy Garret, and gave me a couple of hundred pages of drafts and partial drafts and re-writes of "The Little LISPer" and said, "Re-write it any way you want, but don't ever come back to class!" -- although his TAs were usually required to attend class. That moment launched me on ... it was one of the launching points of my career as somebody who wants to explain things the right way, who wants to articulate how to explain it properly, how people can go from 1) the problem statement to 2) the final solution. And yeah, I went ahead and wrote this book with him and it was a great partnership from there on out.