

# CHARLES BABBAGE INSTITUTE, OUR 1ST VISIT

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, 1/12/2006

Dick Lundgren, LM retiree/VIP Club member

### CONTENTS

Background:.....	1
Visit to CBI 1/12/06:.....	2
Meeting with Dr. Arthur Norberg, CBI Director and Carrie Seib, Archivist .....	2
Investigation of the archival materials.....	4
Author .....	5
Editor .....	5

### BACKGROUND:

I found the idea of creating a company Legacy History project to be irresistible! The potential was huge for so many people, who had invested major portions of their lives, to be involved and provide valuable inputs from their memories and documents. And so many people in the future could use the result of the project [if it's done right] to see just what an impressive legacy our company has brought to Lockheed Martin and Minnesota. I knew that one possible source of information could be the Charles Babbage Institute (CBI) [<http://www.cbi.umn.edu/>] at the University of Minnesota, located in the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the West Bank. CBI is the repository for archival material in all forms related to the history of information technology. I didn't know just how valuable CBI would turn out, so I decided to pay them a visit.

My first visit was a very impromptu visit last September [2005] when I was on an outing with my grandson. He needed a lot of attention, so mainly it was to find the place and start the process of becoming a "familiar face." In October I scheduled a meeting and met with CBI archivist Carrie Seib (<http://www.cbi.umn.edu/about/seib.html>). Carrie had brought out two archive boxes of stuff filed under our past company names [ERA/Remington Rand/Univac/Sperry/Unisys, etc.]. I took a quick look into these sample boxes and knew immediately that it was the tip of the iceberg. A further visit would definitely be required. Carrie then gave me the tour including two levels of underground storage caverns below the subbasement of the Andersen library. She also walked me through their web site which shows a lot of ERA>Univac>Sperry>Unisys stuff. I would bet they have at least 80 archive boxes of stuff just on our legacy alone. Much of it is detailed and not directly useful for the project, but it would trigger a lot of memories [as it did for me] that could help decide what to put in the project. They have a reading room into which they bring the boxes we want to see, and then we can go over stuff as we like.

The director, Dr. Arthur Norberg [<http://www.cbi.umn.edu/about/norberg.html>], was not available at the time, but Carrie said he would be a good guy to meet with and discuss ideas/options for what our end "Product" might be. His Ph. D. is in the history of science and technology, and he has been the director there for quite some time. He's also coming to the end of his stint. His replacement sometime this summer will be Dr. Thomas Misa (<http://www.cbi.umn.edu/newsletter/article1.html>).

Carrie also told me about Carol Pine [<http://pineandpartners.com/>] who has a local firm that specializes in putting together company histories. They could be useful if it is decided to pursue that route.

In mid December, I called Carrie to establish a mutually agreeable date/time where a group of us could visit CBI and meet with Dr. Norberg. That became the 1/12/06 meeting. We also identified about two dozen boxes of archival material that CBI would retrieve from storage and have available in the reading room.

## VISIT TO CBI 1/12/06:

The visit to CBI evolved into two parts. The first hour was the meeting with Dr. Norberg and Carrie Seib; then the next hour and a half was the archeological dig into the company archives. It should be noted that CBI's holdings do not contain the "official" company records, but they do contain many boxes of technical material, personal papers, ERA 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary event memorabilia, and other documents donated to CBI at various times by various people. At the time Unisys was formed, the "official" Sperry company records went to the Hagley Museum and Library [<http://www.hagley.lib.de.us/>] in Wilmington, DE. The official Burroughs records came to CBI.

## MEETING WITH DR. ARTHUR NORBERG, CBI DIRECTOR AND CARRIE SEIB, ARCHIVIST

The company attendees were a coalition of the willing [and able.] They were John Skonnord, a Lockheed Martin employee and three very active retirees: Bernie Jansen, VIP Club President; Lowell Benson, VIP Club Director; and Dick Lundgren, Legacy Committee Liaison to CBI. We met in Dr. Norberg's office.

The main points and highlights, as I recall them, are as follows. [We did not have an official recorder of the minutes.]

- John Skonnord explained the background for the project with the corporate directive coming to LM in Eagan from MS2's communication director Quigley. Satisfying that directive is one issue, and then Eagan's desire for documenting its own history [which may well go beyond MS2's requirement] is another.
- Dr. Norberg mentioned how he had been at CBI a long time when ago when CBI received a lot of stuff from Sperry [not the official company records.] Dr. Norberg said that it was at

Dick Seaberg's behest that CBI came to the company and took possession of historical data. Yet there did not appear to be much photographic data at CBI, and Norberg seemed surprised that we still had so much of this information. Dr. Norberg had known Dick Seaberg well, and in fact Mr. Seaberg had been a trustee of CBI. Dr. Norberg also knew Tom Lindquist. Tom had been at CBI before he left to go to Sperry.

- A discussion took place about what we might donate to CBI as we accumulate historical materials. Eagan [LMCO] may want to keep some, but there might be a lot more that could go into the CBI archives. Dr. Norberg was very willing to take whatever we would offer. It would be reasonable to do some screening to avoid duplicates of stuff CBI has already, and perhaps Dr. Norberg or another CBI representative could come out to Eagan to review the material before taking custody. It should be noted that CBI has and does a rigorous indexing of their holdings. It is easy to peruse their index quickly to locate materials of interest.
- The rules for using the material in the reading room were explained. Pretty straightforward. Sign in. Handle materials judiciously. Don't mix up their filing system. Identify pages to be copied using their copy request form. Keep the noise down if other researchers are in the room. And keep an eye on the clock to respect their 4:30 closing time.
- I raised a general question about major developmental milestones in the computer industry in general, and how our legacy history would play against that. Dr. Norberg said that there was no simple/single chart or timeline available, but that there were several well done books on the computer industry history [including Dr. Norberg's own writings, [studies, books, etc.] John Skonnord recorded the names of the seven books, and they are as follows:
  1. Computers and Commerce: A Study of Technology and Management at Eckert-Mauchly Computer Company, Engineering Research Associates, and Remington Rand, 1946-1957, **A.L. Norberg**, MIT Press, 2005.
  2. The Supermen, Charles J. Murray, John Wiley, 1997. [On Seymour Cray.]
  3. The Eye for Innovation, Robert Price, Yale U. P., 2005. [On Control Data.]
  4. A History of Modern Computing, Paul Ceruzzi, MIT, 1998.
  5. The Computing Industry, **Jeffrey Yost** (*also of CBI*), Greenwood Press, 2005.
  6. Computer: A History of the Information Machine, Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray, Basic Books, 1996.
  7. Information and Secrecy: Vannevar Bush, Ultra, and the Other Memex, Colin Burke, Scarecrow Press, 1993.
- We discussed what might be the end "product" of our legacy history project. We explained the many options [brochure, book, video tape, website-based approach, etc.]. I asked Dr. Norberg if any other companies had done a website approach to chronicle their history. He

said none had. **We could be the first. It would fit with our history of innovation.** He offered to "work with us" on this approach. I think he can envision the advantages of such a product with multiple linkages to archival institutions [CBI, Hagley, IEEE, etc.], linkages to our own documents [both those already written and those yet to be written to support this project], ease of use [on-demand availability at your computer terminal], searchable, correctable, expandable, dynamic and [importantly] updatable as future developments take place, active customer programs end and become history, and as more documents are written and submitted to become part of the project. I did not specifically ask Dr. Norberg what he meant by "work with us," but I understood it to mean occasionally review our "product" and offer informal advice. The input of an unbiased academician can be invaluable here.

- Lowell Benson stated that he has a personal website from which he will create a link to a rough draft of what our Legacy History website can look like. [He has done this already, so we have a starting point.]
- Other points were made by Dr. Norberg. One point was very important - that if we do oral histories, then we need to get releases from the interviewees. Another is that CBI has cataloged everything they possess related to our company. And a third is that CBI would be interested in anything of a documentary nature that we find.
- There was a brief discussion about the "Original Geek Squad" article that appeared in *Minnesota Monthly* magazine about 6 months ago. Dr. Norberg expressed his opinion about the role of Norris of CDC in the early development years.

## INVESTIGATION OF THE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Following the meeting in Dr. Norberg's office, we went across the hall and into the reading room where two anonymous researchers were already busy. The two dozen boxes we requested were arranged on four different tables. Conveniently and coincidentally our four "coalition" members could then divide up and search different sets of boxes simultaneously. It was an efficient approach given our time limitations. We looked through the following selected boxes:

- "Computer Product Manuals Collection, ca. 1948 - [ongoing]" - CBI 60, boxes 185, 190, 191, 192, 193, 206, 208, and 209
- "Engineering Research Associates (ERA) - Remington Rand - Sperry Rand Records, 1945-1988" - CBI 176, boxes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 16, 18, 20, 26, 32, 35, and 39
- CBI 124 ERA & RR UNIVAC Records 1947-1971
- ERA 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event exhibit materials (a 1986 event at CBI sponsored by Sperry)
- CBI 129 SR Corp Univac FSD ca. 1968

- CBI 57 ERA Univac Scrapbooks 1947-1981
- CBI 56 Rolland Arndt Papers 1952-1987

As we went through the material, I had almost wished that those other two researchers hadn't been there so we could have hollered and whooped it up a bit more with memories and "Oh-my Gosh, get a load of this stuff!"

Only about 10 pages were flagged for copying. CBI does the actual copying and then lets us know when they're ready. I picked up the sheets Friday 1/20. The nature of the pages we copied was: computer evolution [computers of our company], computer company evolution [spring-offs from Sperry Rand and from Control Data], major highlights/technical achievements in the early Remington-Rand Univac days, and technical characteristics of certain computers. The latter was missed in the copying and we'll get it later.

A real hoot was the "ERA Univac Scrapbooks 1947-1981." An employee, Robert Leacock, had maintained two scrapbooks with all sorts of stuff of his own choosing - stuff from company newsletters, stuff from local newspapers, photos, items from social events, and more. The two scrapbooks were called "*My First 25 Years with ...*" and "*My Second 25 Years ...*" The second book ended about 10 years into the "second half."

## AUTHOR

Richard F. Lundgren was an employee of UNIVAC/Sperry/UNISYS/LMCO from 1967 to 2004. He was a computer and peripheral hardware maintenance instructor for most of his career. Dick was also in the Field Service organization for a few years and worked as a technical writer for a bit. He has been active with the VIP club Legacy committee since its inception; serving as liaison with the Charles Babbage Institute and as the principal Legacy reporter for the VIP Club's newsletters.

## EDITOR

Lowell A. Benson was an employee of UNIVAC/Sperry/UNISYS from 1960 to 1994. During those 33.5 years he progressively was a file clerk, technician, technical writer, computer operator, design engineer, installation engineer, instructor, engineering supervisor, project engineer, marketing support engineer, engineering manager, program manager, technical director, and senior staff engineer. He is presently the VIP Club President and continues as co-chair of the Legacy committee.

