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People Profile: Dick Weatherford

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Seattle, WA. Have lived in the
Pacific Northwest most of my life except for three years
in Los Angeles when I was getting my Ph.D. in English at
UCLA and 10 years while teaching at The Ohio State
University.

FAMILY: Father (executive at Sears) and mother (school
teacher) married more than 50 years; 2 brothers, one older
and one younger, both successful business people.

EDUCATION: M.A. in English from Univ. of Washington,
Ph.D. in English from UCLA.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Taught for 10
years at The Ohio State University (1970-1980) and retired
there (Associate Professor of English) to pursue a career in
the antiquarian book field. I know. Crazy! Gave up a tenured
position, but I have never regretted it. I loved teaching, but
the book field was where my heart was, and thank
goodness my wife and sons supported my choice.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Play with my grandchildren,
go for long walks with my wife (preferably in Venice or
Paris!), go book scouting, and enjoy the view from our
home on Puget Sound in the Seattle area.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Most any book about, books, great
libraries, booksellers, and bookkeeping, including those by
Nicholas Basbanes, Jack Matthews, Charles Evertt,
adventure books by Gregory Gibson (bookseller), novels of
David Gregor, and books on book thefts, forgery, and
mystery.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Very little. I avoid
selfish, insensitive, nasty tempered, and prejudiced people
at every opportunity.

PHILOSOPHY: I approach life with a positive attitude.
I believe that people are capable of great creativity and
sensitivity, and that they thrive better in a trusting,
supportive atmosphere.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: The
founding of Interloc and Ailbris. This has opened new
markets for used and rare books, has made millions of
people aware of new choices offered them, has made the
job of finding new and replacement copies of books and
building collections for libraries much easier, and has allowed
many more booksellers to pursue the careers they love.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:
I plan to continue working in the used and antiquarian book
business in one capacity or another.

HOW WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:
Computers and the Internet have dramatically changed how
libraries, businesses, and individuals find and acquire
books and all sorts of information. Libraries were pioneers
in using computers to catalog and store information, and
now businesses are working with libraries to make more
information resources available to more people worldwide.
The first stage of the information access revolution is
nearly over. Now we are in the mode of refining, of fine-
tuning the results. This, of course, will go on for several
years, at least five and probably more. Individual
businesses will come and go, merge and change, but the
fundamental need of people for information will only
increase.

Furthermore, we would have to design and code software for both the back-end
system and for the booksellers to use, software that had never been conceptually
written. We would have to create a hardware architecture that supported the flow of
information we envisioned. It would have to be totally secure, and reliable, and yet be
capable of working through existing telephone lines on most computers. We would
have to make the whole thing work on a fully automated basis, controlled by the
very booksellers who would make use of it. And, we would have to do it with three
people in six months.

The whole idea was, frankly, crazy. But I had learned in working in the book business
for about a dozen years that honesty and trust are essential to the working of the
book trade. Would it be different working with programmers and technical
consultants? I might, I believed, so we formed a corporation, issued the stock,
rased some money from friends and a few booksellers, and launched what was
actually the second iteration of Interloc in mid-1993.

For anyone interested, the name “Interloc” was one I derived from the term
“interlocutor,” meaning a person who facilitates a communication between two
other parties. For me, at the time, it defined the nature of the listing service model
for books. Interloc customers were the booksellers. We were like a newspaper
classified advertising service. We derived income from booksellers, but we did not
participate in the transaction between the booksellers who subscribed to the service
and their customers. Our advertising campaign was directed toward getting more
dealers to subscribe. We held workshops all over the US and even in London,
England, to help train booksellers on the use of the system and our software, the
Interloc Record Manager. We also advertised in bookseller magazines, like
Firsts, BookSource Monthly, and others.

During its first two years, from 1993 to 1995, Interloc created many of the features
we take for granted today, but it did so in a pre-Internet world. For example, we developed a very sophisticated and successful Wants matching service, and we created “Best Seller” and “Most
Wanted” lists.

The Internet Begins —
In 1995 the Internet went commercial. Within a year, two Interloc customers,
Michael Selzer of Harshaws Books in Mass., and Rick and Vivian Pura of
Timeline Books in Victoria, BC, launched listing services similar to Interloc, namely
Bibliofind and The Advanced Book Exchange. The Internet made the investment
in such services relatively small; while the companies needed to develop software to
search and display books online, they did not need to develop any software for their
bookseller clients (Interloc already had

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