

Excerpt... pg 36-37

Brock: Well, could you tell me a little bit about how-- once you got to know Dennis Ritchie, and you have this very early, important collaboration, what was that like? Yeah!

Meyer: I mean, what's poignant about it, I never got to know Dennis Ritchie.

Brock: Huh!

Meyer: Okay? Dennis and I really had just a-- I liked him. He was a very sweet, easy-going, unpretentious guy. Clearly very smart, but also kind of taciturn. I'm kind of a voluble, you know, conversational person.

Brock: Yeah, right.

Meyer: And I love talking about things, and arguing about them, and stuff like that. And that was not Dennis' style, at all. So we talked a little, and we talked about this paper that we wrote together, which I wrote, I believe. I don't think he wrote it at all, but he read it. The first one he read and made comments on, and so on, and he explained loop programs to me. But we never actually collaborated. It was a disappointment. I would have loved to collaborate with him, because he seemed like a smart, nice guy who'd be fun to work with, but yeah, you know, he was already doing other things. He was staying up all night playing Spacewar in the basement of MIT.

Brock: Oh, okay.

Meyer: And it wasn't-- was it called Spacewar, or it was some kind of space thing with early-- very early computer game of a—

Brock: Shooting ships?

Meyer: Well, the main thing was that they were in the gravitational pull of a strong sun. I mean, you can navigate in trajectory, so that you didn't fall into the sun, but you could use it to make amazing curves, getting up behind your opponent. So apparently Dennis was all caught up in that. That summer apparently that we were both working on this problem, he was spending many hours at night hacking this computer game. And so, in fact, I would say that although we collaborated on that paper, we never really worked together. And there was a second paper that we-- he was a co-author with me on which was stuff of mine that was related to what we were doing, and I felt that he should be a co-author, because it grew right out of what we were doing. And, but, and I think I remember trying to get his attention, and maybe even his formal permission to put his name, and I never heard from him. He never responded. He just wasn't interested anymore.