Gwen Bell

Born July 20, 1934, Elkadez,[1] Iowa; founding president, Computer Museum, Boston, Mass.

Education: BA, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1955; MURP, Harvard University, 1957; PhD, geography, Clark University, 1967.

Professional Experience: Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, 1966-1973; founder, Computer Museum, Boston, 1980.

Honors and Awards: president, ACM, 1992-1994.

While on a Fulbright scholarship in Australia, Bell was introduced to the English Electric DEUCE, a computer designed after the Pilot ACE of Alan Turing. Returning to Cambridge, Mass., she used the TX-0 at MIT to analyze a redevelopment area of Boston, being the first person to develop a "geographic information system" on a computer and to produce a variety of maps. After receiving her doctoral degree she taught at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh. During the 1970s she was active as a United Nations consultant on planning; she also edited a journal and three books. In 1978 Ken Olsen (President of DEC) asked Bell whether the TX-0 could possibly be recreated faithfully at a Marlboro facility of DEC. This got her started on collecting and exhibiting the artifacts relating to the history of computing. By 1980 she saw the need for a true computer museum and in 1981 applied for non-profit status, which was given to the museum in 1982. She moved the museum to downtown Boston and opened the new facility in 1984.

UPDATES

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[1] The town was the most northerly outpost of Spanish settlement in America, originally with the Spanish name El Kidir.