

**SWE STORYCORPS INTERVIEWS**

**Elizabeth Bierman And Allison Pedersen Interview**

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**Elizabeth Bierman and Allison Pedersen**

Elizabeth Bierman is a senior product support manager at Honeywell Aerospace. She earned a B.S. in aerospace engineering and a master's degree in systems engineering from Iowa State University, and an MBA from Bentley University. A member of the Society of Women Engineers since college, Bierman received SWE's Distinguished New Engineer Award in 2006 and served as the Society's national president in FY15.

Allison Pedersen is an engineering manager within the Air Data Systems Center of Excellence at United Technologies (UTC) Aerospace Systems (formerly Goodrich Aerospace). She received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of North Dakota. Active in the Society of Women Engineers since college, Pedersen has held numerous national positions within SWE and received the Society's Distinguished New Engineer Award in 2007.

In their 2008 SWE StoryCorps interview, Bierman and Pedersen discussed how they became interested in engineering; their careers in the aerospace industry; challenges they have experienced as women engineers; work / life integration; and their involvement in SWE.

## **Elizabeth Bierman**

Elizabeth Bierman is a senior product support manager at Honeywell Aerospace. She earned a B.S. in aerospace engineering and a master's degree in systems engineering from Iowa State University, and an MBA from Bentley University. A member of the Society of Women Engineers since college, Bierman received SWE's Distinguished New Engineer Award in 2006 and served as the Society's national president in FY15.

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- July 2016

## Elizabeth Bierman and Allison Pedersen Interview

**Elizabeth Bierman:** My name is Elizabeth Bierman, and I'm thirty-two. Today's date is November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008. I'm at the SWE National Conference in Baltimore, and my relationship to Allison is we are friends in the Society of Women Engineers—Minnesota section.

**Allison Pedersen:** And my name is Allison Pedersen. I am also thirty-two. [Today is] November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and we are at the SWE Convention in Baltimore. And again, we are friends and both members of SWE Minnesota.

**EB:** So Allison, tell me why you got into engineering.

**AP:** So, I really enjoyed math and science, and my father is an engineer, and my mother's a nurse. So, my mother's idea was that I should be a doctor, and my father's idea was that I should be an engineer. So, I pursued both of those and decided engineering was for me. And why did you become an engineer?

**EB:** So mine's a bit more silly. I remember in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I went and got a lunchbox, and the only one they had left was a young astronaut's lunch box, and in there was a flyer that you could sign up to be a young astronaut, so I did. And this was in 1985, I think, because in 1986, the Challenger blew up. And so, I was telling everyone I was going to be

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an astronaut, and then when the Challenger blew up they all made fun of me, because of the Challenger accident. And I just became persistent that that's still what I was going to do, and I continued on that path, and my father was very influential in helping me pursue that. I was good in math and science, and I guess the engineering route was what I was going to do. So, that's why I went into engineering.

**AP:** And was there a teacher that helped you make that decision, or was your father—

**EB:** My father was probably the most—

**AP:** —the main influencer?

**EB:** —influential. I think back on my teachers and I did have a good relationship with my physics teacher in high school. I did have a teacher—I took drafting, and he was not influential. He didn't understand why women would want to go into a field like engineering, which just made me want to do it more. So, I think both those teachers in high school were influential for me. What about you?

**AP:** I had a math teacher that was really good that talked to me about engineering, as well. So, it was really my parents—my mom is an advocate of "Women can do whatever they want."

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So, she said, "If this is the degree you want, we're going to go for it, the career you want." So, that's what I did.

**EB:** So why did you pick North Dakota for college?

**AP:** I picked North Dakota. I went up to North Dakota. Well, my father went to South Dakota State University, so I went and looked at the North Dakota and South Dakota major universities. And when I went to the University of North Dakota Joyce Medalen was there. She was the Society of Women Engineers counselor. She was also the Women in Engineering [director] for the department at the University of North Dakota. And she talked to me about cooperative education, what the Society of Women Engineers had to offer students—things that nobody else had talked to me about, and things that were very exciting to me. So, she is the main reason I went there, and if you talk to a lot of SWE members from UND, they'll say the same thing.

**EB:** So, you heard about SWE before you even—?

**AP:** I heard about SWE before I started, because I went up my senior year of high school and talked to her. And why did you choose Iowa State?

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**EB:** So I chose Iowa State because I knew I was going to be going into aerospace engineering—I mean that was what I knew. And I looked at Purdue University, and I was looking at Stanford University, because my Mom lived out in California at the time. But Iowa State was obviously close to home, since I was going to high school in Iowa. And my father and I just sat down one day and we were talking about it after I visited, and he's like, "You're going to get a good education if you go there." And so he influenced me to at least try it out, instead of moving far away from home and going to Purdue, because that was something I was having some reservations about at the time. So I did, I chose Iowa State and I felt like I got a wonderful education. So I started college in 1994, and the aerospace market must have been not well then or something, because everyone's like, "You're wasting your time in aerospace engineering, and you should get out." And again, that just made me want to stay in it more.

**AP:** And so you work in the field of aerospace.

**EB:** I do.

**AP:** So, who do you work for?

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**EB:** I work for Honeywell Aerospace, currently, and I'm a product support program manager for them, with navigation and guidance equipment. So that's interesting. I feel like my job—granted it has a technical background, and it is in the aerospace field, but I feel like it's not directly related to an aerospace engineering, typical job. I think that's the wonderful thing about engineering, especially your first two years of your education, you become such a broad engineer and learn all of your technical skills, basically, which have a background of problem solving, and then you just kind of specialize in a field. And so I appreciate what engineering has given me, to be able to move around to different types of jobs, because of the problem-solving skills and the fundamentals of engineering.

You told us how you first learned about SWE—so, did you know you were going to join SWE when you went to North Dakota?

**AP:** I joined SWE my freshman year. Did I know right away? That's—yes, I mean Joyce talked to me about what SWE was. It's a network opportunity, professional development, outreach—those were the things that were important to me outside of getting the education piece. And so I did join



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my freshman year. I became active, as far as taking a position in SWE, my sophomore year at the University of North Dakota in their section.

**EB:** And did you stay active?

**AP:** I did. I was the president of our section, my junior year. So I held three different positions at the UND SWE section. And I felt I got a lot out of it, as far as leadership skills at a young age. Things I wouldn't have gotten outside of that experience.

**EB:** Was UND a small section?

**AP:** Yes, UND was a small section.

**EB:** Okay. Did you end up going to conference during—

**AP:** I did go to conference, because I was the president. They always sent the president.

**EB:** To national conference or regional conference?

**AP:** National conference. We also hosted a Region H Conference the year I was president, so at that point I had the opportunity, which is something a lot of students wouldn't have. I had the opportunity to talk at our keynote banquet,

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in front of—now we have how many people attend our region conference?

**EB:** Like, seven hundred.

**AP:** Seven hundred people attend our conference. Now, that was in '96. So, we probably had, four hundred, let's say. So I get to stand up in front of four hundred people and talk, which is pretty impressive for somebody who's a junior in college. So it was a good leadership experience, I thought. And what did you with SWE at Iowa State?

**EB:** So, when I went to college at Iowa State it was 1994, and the first week of school, the Society of Women Engineers gave every woman entering engineering a postcard that says, "We have a picnic" kind of thing, and not knowing anyone or anybody, so I just went. And they broke us up into groups of what discipline you were going into, and I was just very impressed with the people that I did meet in this organization, and I was like, "I'll give it a shot." So I joined, right, my first or second week of school, and then a leadership position came open second semester of my freshmen year, and they asked me if I was interested. And so I got involved right away doing that, and just did a variety of different things at Iowa State.

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We were very fortunate to be a large section. We did have over a hundred members. It was one of the, I'll say premiere organizations in the engineering college, and so that was a great opportunity. People wanted to be members because corporations utilized SWE to be able to reach out to the students, and so it was really good. You know, I didn't really go—we had one region conference at Iowa State when I was a student. I think that was my sophomore year. And then I didn't go to any other region conferences, but I did go to national conference my fourth and fifth year of college. And so that really opened my eyes to what else SWE was going to be able to provide more at the professional level, because you don't see that very much. Our professional section near Iowa State was very small, and so we didn't have a lot of interaction with them. So national conference really did open my eyes to—for me to know that I was going to continue to stay in this organization.

**AP:** And when I attended my first national conferences as a student, I remember going home and saying to my parents, "I'm going to be a member of this organization for the rest of my life." When I saw all the people, and how extraordinary all the women were, and what there was to offer as a professional member. So I actually am a life

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member, because I decided to make a donation to the society that would help me maintain my membership for the rest of my life because it's something I truly believe in.

**EB:** So then when you graduated, did you join SWE, Minnesota section, right away?

**AP:** I did. I joined SWE Minnesota as soon as I graduated, and I took a leadership role that same year. I met the president—I did graduate in December, so for one semester I didn't do as much. I went to the national conference—it was when it was in the summer—and I met the president of SWE Minnesota, the incoming president, and as soon as I got back from conference she called me and said, "Hey, we need someone to chair-up our professional development committee, will you help out with that?" And I said, "Sure." And I've been active in the section ever since.

**EB:** So when I graduated from Iowa State I moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and was working for Rockwell Collins at the time, and there was not a SWE section—a professional section. Another friend of mine from Iowa State who was in SWE, was like, "What are we going to do?" Because a big part of our college career was being involved with SWE, and we were like, "We can't just not be in SWE now." And I

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guess I didn't know about the MAL organization—members-at-large—where I could just have been a MAL and still have been a member, but not part of a section.

But anyway, we decided to charter our own section. And so for the next year-and-a-half that's what we did. We chartered the east central Iowa section, which was really great, to just take a bunch of women that were in interested in starting a section and getting that up and running, and to this day still doing well. So, that was good. So I was able to have a leadership position in that small group since it was newly chartered. And then quickly, within two years, my husband and I decided to move to Boston, so I went to Boston. And again, going to an area where you don't know anyone, what's the best thing to do is look up their SWE section. So it was really eye-opening to move from east central Iowa to Boston, where they have three hundred-plus members. Totally different environment, but again, still accepting for me to get involved with SWE. And I was able to do some leadership positions with them when I was out in Boston. And so then I moved to Minnesota, and now it's been five years.

**EB:** So do you remember the first time you met me?

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**AP:** I do remember the first time I met you. It was at the SWE Minnesota open house.

**EB:** Yeah, right. Right.

**AP:** I don't remember what my position was at the time. I'm assuming I had some leadership role of some—

**EB:** You did.

**AP:** —I think it was the COR, on the Council of Representatives.

**EB:** Yes, that's probably right.

**AP:** [To recording technician] Elizabeth and I have a mutual friend—the one that helped her start the East Central Iowa section. And Elizabeth came right up to me and said, "Erin Penne told me I should come find you." And I said, "Really?" And she said, "Yes! So, I'm Elizabeth, and it's a nice to meet you."

**EB:** (laughs)

**AP:** And that was about all you said, but I thought it was really brave to say, "Erin Penne told me I need to come find you and talk to you because you guys are friends." And I think ever since then I think we became friends because of a mutual friend.

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**EB:** Um-hm.

**AP:** Because I decided, okay, this is someone that's friends with Erin. I already had a leadership role in the section, and within a year you had a leadership role in the section, because you said, "I want to be more involved."

**EB:** Yep. And again, I moved to Minnesota, and yes I had some friends just because of it being in the Mid-west and that's where I grew up, But still, you want to make more connections and SWE was the way that I was able to make those connections. And SWE Minnesota and yourself were very inviting for me to get involved and be able to help out. So, I was appreciative of that. So how has SWE benefited you, and how do you see it benefiting others?

**AP:** Benefiting me, personally, the big example I give is as the SWE Minnesota President every month I had to stand up and give announcements on what was going on in the section at our professional development and networking meetings. And I was comfortable talking to people one-on-one, but I wasn't as comfortable as I should have been talking—giving a presentation, or talking in front of a group at a podium. And I became a lot more comfortable at that, and that helped me in my professional life. I work at Goodrich

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Cooperation—I'm a project manager—and it helped me stand up and give presentations to the customer. And then it also helped me be able to talk in front of groups in general. And then the other thing I wanted to say about that is, SWE is a very inviting environment. If you screw up while you're giving your announcements to the section, they don't care, but you get the practice. So that was the really big thing to me—was nobody cares if I fail, or if I don't do a good job at announcements, but it gives me the confidence. So, what do you think the benefits are?

**EB:** Well, I agree with public speaking was an issue for me, as well. So, I was able to become a leadership coach for SWE and that gave me the ability to get up and present in front of people—especially people I don't know—but be able to talk about something that I felt comfortable with and something I felt that I knew, being in the organization for a while. And so I do—I appreciated the skills that it's able to give me in a very inviting environment.

I also see the benefits of an organization that I can be with the rest of my life. No matter where I go—if we do choose to leave the Midwest or go anywhere—I've made my best friends through this organization and that's a benefit



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to me personally. I do see my company valuing my involvement in the organization, and they see the benefits that they do get from it. It's given me the ability to, I think, take more risks, because I've been able to take risks within SWE with different leadership positions. There's a huge variety of different things that you can do, and if I didn't feel comfortable with an area I could always try that out. And like you said, if it doesn't go as well as you thought they're still going to accept you in that organization.

**AP:** So what is your position right now within SWE?

**EB:** Well right now, I am the Region H Governor. And so the Region H is the Midwest region, so I oversee our professional and our collegiate sections for the Society. And it's good—so it's a leadership position at the region level, but it also has a tie into the national level. It's been good to see how the organization works at the national level, and still being able to keep a tie-in with the local sections. So I've enjoyed my position. And what do you do for SWE right now?

**AP:** I'm the SWE Outreach Chair for the national committee that does outreach. So K-12 outreach—teaching students that

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engineering is a good career option, especially girls. And just kind of opening eyes to engineering as a career path, an option. And we do talk to lots of girls who haven't even thought about it. They haven't been introduced to it. I mean both of us talked about our parents being really influential, and there's lots of parents that have no idea what engineers do. So, it's been beneficial to me to talk to those parents and those students about what we actually do and the fact that we don't sit at our desk everyday. We interact with people, and I know both of us have jobs where we really interact with people.

**EB:** Um-hm.

**AP:** And we help society. We both work on aerospace products. We make it safe to fly. And that's something when you tell a student that they don't even think about it. They don't think about the fact that engineering touches everything, and we're making it safe and we're helping you fly places.

**Recording Technician:** I was just wondering, Allison, would you follow-up on—can you think about a memorable time where you had to give an outreach presentation, or a memorable person—

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**AP:** I have a really memorable one. Okay, (laughs) so I have a really memorable parent—

**RT:** (unintelligible)

**AP:** —and you were there and you know which one—

**EB:** Yeah.

**AP:** —I'm thinking of. I'm from Minneapolis. I went to a large high school. Elizabeth is from Iowa and went to a small high school in a small town. So we had a parent who said— she raised her during the presentation and said, "My daughter's school counselor said—

**EB:** A seventh grade student.

**AP:** Seventh grade, was it? Okay. [resumes quoting parent] "Said to me, 'Your daughter is not—well, she tested to be in AP math—she didn't get in.' And they said, 'If you're daughter can't be in AP math in seventh grade and throughout her career in high school, she can't go into engineering. She's just not qualified.'"

And so she asked me, "Did you take AP classes?" I said, "I did—they were offered at my school." But Elizabeth's response was, "I didn't, and I got into Iowa State, and I

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have an engineering career." And the other thing is, I said, "Even if I hadn't have taken AP classes, I still could have gone into engineering." And it was eye-opening to Elizabeth and I that there's school counselors and teachers out there saying things like that.

**EB:** Or discouraging them—

**AP:** Discouraging.

**EB:** —that student—

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** —at seventh grade that this is not a career for you.

**AP:** And then other parents started commenting that they had gotten similar messages at their schools. I think you had a really good example, because you said, "It wasn't even offered at my school."

**EB:** Right.

**AP:** "There was no way I could have even done it." So, that was eye-opening. That's my best example.

**EB:** That's a good example. We try and stress—and I think this is something SWE does—is that yes, you need to enjoy math

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and science, but you just need to have the passion to go into the industry, and hard work and persistence will get you there. It doesn't matter if you have A's—straight A's in math and science—

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** —as long as you're enjoying it and passionate about that area, you'll be fine.

The other thing I think SWE does a good job about is—if a girl says, "I like math and science," she's tended to be pushed into a medical discipline. If a boy says, "I like math and science," they're pushed into engineering. And I think it's important for SWE—which they spend a lot of time and put programs together—is to let them know that engineering is an option too. And that's all we can do, is to give the girls the option to even consider. And when we do talk to the students about—we make plans safe. You're right, they do take it for granted. I think—

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** —ninety percent of what engineers do people take for granted. They don't think they realize that everything that they're touching is done or had influence by an engineer.

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**AP:** Right.

**EB:** And so, I do appreciate SWE being there for—

**AP:** Um-hm.

**EB:** —these students, to at least give them that viewpoint. My favorite memory of one of our outreach experiences was during National Engineer's Week. We were doing our Connecting Educators to Engineering event at a middle school in a suburb of Minneapolis. And we sent twelve female—

**AP:** Yeah.

**EB:** —engineers to this school, and we were doing an outreach event to three hundred-plus middle school (laughs) kids.

**AP:** At one time.

**EB:** At one time.

**AP:** (laughs)

**EB:** It was absolutely chaotic, but wonderful, and at the end we did questions and answers, and this little boy honestly raised his hand—

**AP:** Yep.

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**EB:** —and asked a question and said, “Are there any men that are engineers?” And it was just the best question we’ve ever received. (laughs)

**AP:** And I was holding the mike [microphone]—

**EB:** Yep.

**AP:** —and I said, “Nope!”

**EB:** (laughs)

**AP:** That’s what I said.

**EB:** You did.

**AP:** And then I said, “No, I’m kidding.” But it was one of the best, I agree—

**EB:** Yes.

**AP:** —from a student standpoint, that was one of the best stories.

**EB:** Yes.

**RT:** What kind of challenges do you think that women, even today, in the workplace face, and what kind of advice would

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you give to someone who's young—a young woman going into engineering?

**EB:** The challenges are—I think as an engineer you tend to not be a perfectionist, but you really are a hard worker and you like to accomplish a lot. And then as a woman, if you decide to begin a family, I think that adds a lot of challenges to doing it all. And I find engineers have a hard time trying to do it all in a way that the beginning of their career has always been. So you work so hard and do well in college and then you start your career, and you work hard and do so well. And then you're adding new dynamics to your life constantly, and then to juggle your work-life balance is hard. Whether that includes kids, or this organization, or if its your husband or your family—whatever that is.

I think that's been my biggest challenge, is trying to be true to myself and keeping my priorities in check. I still want to have a successful career. I want to have a successful home life. I want to be successful in SWE. And trying to do that is a challenge. So, for a young woman going into engineering, I would tell her to be true to



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herself and just enjoy the ride. And don't—try and keep the outside influences at bay as much as you can.

And I say that and then in the back of my mind I'm always saying, "Well, maybe I should say 'the challenges, working in a male dominated field,'" and all that kind of stuff.

And I am very grateful for what the women before me have done, but I don't see that as a challenge as much anymore.

Is it equal? Maybe, maybe not. But I don't feel like that's been a big challenge in my career, being a woman in a male dominated field. I feel that I work for companies that have given opportunities to both men and women. Allison, you can rebuttal, or answer.

**AP:** Well, why don't you talk about—I had a question—

**EB:** Okay.

**AP:** —based on what you said. You talked about flexibility and doing it all, and I think it's important to talk about the fact that you have a—I have a flexible work schedule. I have no children, Elizabeth does. I have a flexible work schedule in general, to leave early and attend SWE events for example, and then make the hours up the next day, or whatever. But you have even a little bit more flexible schedule. And I find it interesting that you asked for

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that, and I think someone [else] wouldn't. So could you talk about—

**EB:** I did.

**AP:** —that a bit?

**EB:** So I do, I do. I have two young children, and I wanted to continue working and I knew that. I personally enjoy my career, but I also knew I was going to have a child, so I did ask my employer if I could work at home two days a week, and see how that goes. And they were agreeable—it was done on a six-month trial basis. And after those six months we talked and it was going well, so I've continued to do it for the past two years now. I've been using this schedule. It's interesting, though, because again I've added a new dynamic into my life and so what does that make me do? I think it makes me work harder because I want to keep it this way.

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** I enjoy having the flexible schedule. I enjoy having my career and I enjoy my family time and so that has given me the energy, I think, to do it and to do it well. I've had my best performance revue in this environment of my

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flexible schedule, which I think is important for my employer to see that I can work hard and get my job done, and then for myself to say that I'm working hard enough to do it. You're right, it's good. I mean, it's a challenge—long term, what's this going to do to my career? I don't know. I'm very happy where I'm at right now.

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** When your manager says, "Where do you want to be in three to five years?" I'm like, "Oh my God."

**AP:** (laughs)

**EB:** That's just hard for me to comprehend right now, but we'll see. Right now it's really good.

**RT:** I don't know if you wanted to get into this, in terms of the aerospace industry, but—

**AP:** Yeah, I was wondering—

**RT:** —for the layperson, what do you guys do?

**AP:** So I work at Goodrich, I mentioned that. Goodrich Aerospace or Goodrich Corporation. I work in the sensors division—Sensors and Integrated Systems. And we have probes outside of airplanes that measure pressure and temperature

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and calculate altitude and air speeds—so how high and how fast you're going. And when I talk to students about this this is what I say, "You want to be on time, right? So you need to know how fast you're going." That's the way I explain it. And you want to know how high you're going because you don't want to run into another plane. So, it's a safety-critical product, because of that.

And those are really my best examples of how I explain it to a student and then other people I talk to—to say, "This is actually really important." And it's safety-critical, which is the part with making it safe to fly. If our product didn't work and you didn't know how high you were, you could crash into another plane, or there's other things that could happen. So there's redundancy on planes to make it safe, so don't worry about that (laughs)—

**EB:** Um-hm.

**AP:** —everything's redundant. That's what I work on.

**EB:** And then to tie into that—so, I work on commercial navigation, and we call it an air data inertial reference unit, which kind of scares people off, but it's a fancy black box that tells the airplane how to get from A to B.

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And so we use gyros and accelerometers to determine the position of the airplane in reference to the earth and direct the airplane in the direction it needs to go. And we actually use some of the data out of Allison's product into our box to be able to determine where we are—how fast we're going and parameters like that, and then to get the airplane to the airport.

**RT:** This question goes back to you, in terms of the challenges or advice that you would give to young women?

**AP:** I mean, the challenges—. I—this is harder for me. There is a flexibility issue at all—you do want to do it all. And that's a woman thing, and that's an engineering thing.

**EB:** Um-hm.

**AP:** Especially when you go into this career, you're really strong-minded and you want to do it all. So that is a challenge. I don't necessarily think everything is equal.

**EB:** Okay.

**AP:** That's how I feel. But I think that there's people—you will be recognized by people in your organization that believe in you. Regardless of sex or anything—age, any of that—as a future leader in your company. So, I think it's

definitely possible and doable, and we're seeing role models all over the place that are women that are achieving high success. I think the flexibility's important, even the flexibility when we talk to students and parents. Even the flexibility, financially. There's a lot of flexibility because we have good incomes, and Elizabeth and I are both married to engineers so we have two engineering incomes in both of our homes. And we are able to travel more than other people, and buy nice clothes, and do things that students really do value. Money's not everything, but it's nice to be flexible, especially in a time of a recession, to have flexibility.

**EB:** And that's the other thing I would tell a young student who's maybe not sure what about they want to do with their life. I can't think of a better degree to get than engineering. It is fundamentally probably the most versatile degree you can get. If you finish your four years, you can go get a great job. If you decide after four years that's not what you want to do, you can go in to financial services. I mean you can go into marketing. I mean everyone can look at an engineering degree and be like, "You're going to know how to think and handle problems," which is what every job has to do.

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**AP:** Right.

**EB:** So yes, you're going to work your butt off in college and yes, it's hard. But I think it's going to take you anywhere you want to be. And so for young women, I hope they can see that and step back and be like, "It's going open doors for me that don't exist right now."

**AP:** Right.

**RT:** What has been your favorite conference, or any particular person that you see as a role model here at SWE, or any funny, anecdotal stories about—

**EB:** Well, Allison and I have both received the Distinguished New Engineer award for SWE. So I received mine at the Kansas City conference, and Allison received hers at the Nashville conference. So, sentimentally I think those are important conferences to us, just to be recognized for all the work we've done with SWE. Funny [stories]? (laughs)

**AP:** The only thing I would talk about [that's] funny—I don't know if you've heard about it yet—

**EB:** (laughs)

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**AP:** There is an Over the Hill suite at conference, and it's a place where you go to talk to the much more "seasoned" women, and in that suite you find past presidents of SWE. Last night I met one from 1961 to 1963—she was the president. And then I got to talk to her about her career, where did she work, and she actually said, "Where didn't I work." And then she went into a long line of all the places she had worked. And it's just interesting to connect with people before us—you mentioned this Elizabeth—and see what they've done.

**EB:** Right.

**AP:** And see how they've paved the way for the "less seasoned" attendees of the event. And we have been going there—we had a member who was on the board of directors for several years quite a while ago. So we've been going there since she introduced us to the Over the Hill suite. We go every year. We actually went last night. We go every year just to see who's up there and talk to them and find out—

**EB:** And every year—

**AP:** —what they have to say to us.

**EB:** —you hear a new story from them.



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**AP:** You do! And it's just amazing to hear what they went through, compared to us.

**EB:** Um-hm.

**AP:** You can tell your Carolyn Phillips story.

**EB:** Yeah. So you do, you hear the challenges they had when they did graduate with an engineering degree in the fifties. There weren't jobs for women in engineering, and they received letters saying, "You're qualified, but we don't know how to utilize you in our mechanical engineering group." I'll never receive a letter like that.

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** And I'm fortunate to them for that. But it's fun.

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** We have a great time at conference, and the Over the Hill suite is a very—

**AP:** It's a highlight.

**EB:** —fun place. And they're very opening to us, for us to come and—

**AP:** Um-hm.

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**EB:** —talk to them. And they love to meet the new students and see what their passion is and what they're going to do.

**AP:** Right.

**RT:** We have about three minutes left—is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to get on tape?

**EB:** I would just end with—Allison and I are both passionate about this organization. We became really good friends through it. And I think that we're both life members and we're going to be a part—

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** —of this organization for the rest of our lives. And hopefully, we'll see changes that we can't even understand that we have today—

**AP:** Right.

**EB:** —of where this industry is going to go. So, it's fascinating.

**RT:** Thank you.

**AP:** Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW