Briefly describe your early experiences with science and/or technology.

I enjoyed math and science in school, and liked to take part in math competitions when I could. Outside of school, I remember that any time my parents got a new electronic device or appliance, like the VCR, CD player, microwave, etc., I would always try to figure out how it worked and then explain it to them. Independent of the instructions (which I never read anyway), I liked learning how things worked.

When did you know you wanted to be an engineer/scientist? How old were you?

I always enjoyed math and science when I was in school, and I really started to know that these were the subjects I liked the best when I was in 7th and 8th grade (13 - 14 years old). I high school, I took as much math and science as I could; my favorite class was 11th grade honors physics. After 11th grade, I participated in a week-long summer program at the University of Dayton called "Women in Engineering." In this program, I learned about the different disciplines of engineering, toured a manufacturing plant (the Honda plant in Anna, Ohio), gained an idea of what engineers did for a living and how engineering differed from pure science. After this experience, I began considering engineering as a college major. This experience, combined with my work on the "National Engineering Design Challenge" in high school, convinced me that I wanted to pursue engineering. Thus, when I started at Penn State in August, 1996, I declared EE as my major, and I never changed it.

Did your family and/or teachers provide encouragement? If so, how?

My family was very encouraging of my aspirations, particularly my dad because, before he retired, he was a civil engineer and an engineering manager. Additionally, through high school and college, my twin brother and I pushed each other do be our best. There was always a healthy level of competition between my brother and me, and that drove us develop a strong work ethic and to do as well as possible at school. My family continues to stand by my career decisions, and they encourage me to be a strong leader, even though I am a young woman in a job that has historically been dominated by men. I continually look to my parents and my twin brother for their advice and support.

As far as teachers are concerned, I had a number of excellent teachers in high school. Specifically, the teacher in charge of the "National Engineering Design Challenge," a gentleman by the name of Richard Saccani, influenced my decision to become an engineer by getting me involved with the NEDC project when I was a senior in high school. Mr. Saccani appointed me as the "Team Leader" for the design team that worked on this project, and I always appreciated the faith that he had in me and the fact that he looked to me to help the team be successful. He encouraged me to try engineering in college, and his influence on me was a positive one.

Have you had a mentor at any time during your career or life? What role did s/he play?

Since I have been with IBM, I have had the good fortune of working with some excellent technical people. My mentors have been Sheri Lovejoy, who is one of my peer managers with 20 plus years' of experience as an engineer and manager; Jennifer Howland, a Director in Systems group, and John Deegan, my current manager.