

Briefly describe your early experiences with science and/or technology. I grew up and was educated in England. They start teaching physics and chemistry (as opposed to general science) at a relatively early age – 13-14 years – in preparation for formal, National exams at age 16.

I enjoyed physics from the very beginning. My recollection is of one of my first physics lessons experimenting with simple electronic circuits. I loved everything about it: stylized circuit diagrams (I wasn't a very good artist); concise abstracts and conclusions (I didn't enjoy writing verbose essays); and I was thrilled with graphs and plotting data! (Interesting, since I do a lot of that now).

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

I finally decided on physics, rather than engineering, the year before applying to college. At the end of my junior year in High School, I participated in a one-week residential engineering course at Brunel University in London. The program was called 'Insight into Engineering' and it was for girls who were thinking about studying engineering at University.

It was held just after the end of the university academic year; there were approximately 50 girls at Brunel and we stayed in the university dorms. We were introduced to various types of engineering by the professors there and we were assigned to groups of four to tackle various projects.

The main project was to build a vehicle out of Legos that would carry a cargo of ping-pong balls, follow a track of white tape along the floor and unload the pin-pong balls at the end. Along the way, the vehicle had to stop at an obstacle that was placed on the track. We used a small photo-detector to sense the white tape and played with the gearing to make sure that the vehicle traveled at a controllable speed. Our team ended up winning the competition, which was an added bonus to an enjoyable week.

The most memorable event for me that week, though, was the day we spent visiting a local company. The company our group went to was called Picker International. They design and manufacture medical diagnostic imaging equipment. I remember standing beside a prototype MRI, the engineer was telling us stories about how powerful the magnet was and was showing us some of the cross section images of a brain. He was describing the

diagnostic information they could glean from this technology and I remember thinking – ‘this is what I want to do’. So, I asked the engineer where he went to university and what course he studied. I don’t recall what university he went to, but he studied physics...not engineering. That was when I decided that I definitely wanted to study physics. I wanted to make sure that my education was broad and would prepare me for working in this field whether it was on the electrical, mechanical or software aspect of making such a wonderful machine.

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

My family was always enthusiastic about any career goals I had. I used to want to be an airline pilot; then an astronaut; then a medical physicist. It never occurred to me that certain jobs were not open or available to women and my family and teachers never suggested that I couldn’t do anything I set my mind to.

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

I currently have two mentors at IBM. Both are technically accomplished and, in my opinion, have a good work/life balance. One has continued in management as is now a second line – she and I tend to discuss general aspects of work at IBM, the business climate and the qualities needed in an effective leader and manager. My other mentor was in management for a while, before stepping back into the technical track and is now an STSM (Senior Technical Staff Member). We work in sister departments and so collaborate on some projects. I look to him for specific guidance on things that I do well and things that I need to work on.