ICANN History Project
Interview with Ram Mohan
28 June 2016

STEVE CROCKER: So, thank you very much. I have a little bit of structure in mind and it's going to flow pretty quickly here. So, Ram, thank you very much for agreeing to spend some time. This, as I believe it is the first session that we've scheduled in the grand history project of trying to capture ICANN's history, so we'll feel our way a little bit.

I'll ask you a couple of framing questions, and then we'll be off and running. You'd been involved with ICANN and with the community that ICANN serves for a long time, which is one of the reasons why we've selected you as one of the people we want to talk to.

Two questions. One, an easy one, and then we'll get into some more stuff. Describe roughly your timeframes, your involvement, your position, and so forth, just to give a quick history so we can place you at various points in the sequence, and then I'll come and ask the more interesting question.

RAM MOHAN: It's a pleasure to be here. I got involved in ICANN itself in 2001. I had been following ICANN in the late '90s, when the Clinton administration helped create it, but only from afar, and I'd been following it because I had started up a company that was tracking what companies were doing online. And one of the things, one of the ways we were tracking what

companies are doing online, was to look at the WHOIS registrations of domain names registered by companies.

And so, my first exposure to ICANN really was in, I think 1998, late '98, or something like that, where this product that I had helped create, we found that the CTO of MCI, a telecom company at that time, had registered a domain name, SkytelWorldCom.com. And the servers that I had created had found that a name had been created, and I looked at a WHOIS look up for it, and it turned out that Skytel, a publicly traded company - its name had been registered by the CTO of MCI WorldCom.

And it got us on *The Wall Street Journal*, and Sky Tel's stock price went up 23%, once it came out - *The Wall Street Journal*, and everybody from both companies denied there was any deal in the work, and that Thursday, they announced the acquisition of Skytel by WorldCom. They were planning, apparently, to announce it Monday, the week after, right?

And that was because, you know… So, that was kind of the very early introduction, if you will, but in 2001, I had managed to put myself out of a job, and I was looking for what the next thing to do was. And there was a little company called Afilias, had applied for and then had won from ICANN the license, if you will, to go and open up the first new gTLD ever, after com, dot org, which is dot info.

And they were looking for somebody to go run the shop, and I took it, and it has been a fun ride from then on.

STEVE CROCKER: My goodness. You and I met because of SSAC, and you were one of the charter members, recruited by Andrew McLaughlin, prior to my

involvement, in a sort of, what felt sort of slightly backwards. I was recruited to chair SSAC after all of the members had been recruited.

RAM MOHAN: That's right. I remember Vint telling me, "Ram, you're going to like the guy who I've recruited," because I was asking him, "so, who is going to be the chair?" He said, "I can't tell you yet, but you're going to like the guy." And little did he know how prescient he was going to be.

STEVE CROCKER: And already, you've gotten me into… I really hadn't intended on drawing you out on things, but just as long as we're touching on it, drawn into chairing a group that had already been put together - that I had not had a plan. I quickly realized that my first job was to build a relationship with each of the people, and to establish both a degree of knowledge and a certain amount of credibility that it was okay for me to step in.

So I chatted with each of the people before we assembled as a group. Well, SSAC is a whole bunch of stories. There are many ways to come at capturing the history of ICANN. There are tons and tons of written material in the archives, and transcripts, and all of that. I want to try to get at a kind of different dimension, which is the more interesting, big, well, I'm going to modify this. The big stories, but not the so big that it seems simple-minded. You know, we've created ICANN and changed the world kind of thing. But where the real energy, controversies, energy, work went into and that absorbed us as individuals, that made a difference, sometimes negatively even, but made a difference usually positively, so that, [we] get at, at the inner-life, if you will, of the process.

So, let me ask you to pick out some number, one, two, three, whatever number of stories you want to tell that may span some time, and may cut across organizations or subject matters, or whatever, and may involve other people, but from your perspective, episodes or, as I say, stories, that come to mind and stand out in this whole experience.

RAM MOHAN:

I agree with you, Steve. I think the history of anything, especially an organization and a community like ours, is best told by stories, and the tipping points come from small things rather than the big things. The big things are often the combination of a series of smaller things that happened from before. And the fun thing and the, I think the real skill of a history project, is to be able to assemble and understand what were the several small things that eventually led to that big moment, because as you said, everybody understands a big moment.

So, I'll say a couple of things -as interesting stories that pop into my mind. And for this one, let me just focus on the early days. You know, 2001, 2006, and that timeframe.

You know, 2000, 1999/2000 was marked by the first time for ICANN to bring out new registrars. There used to be just one registrar, Network Solutions. I used to pay $100 a name, and I had 3,500 names with them. And Network Solutions would, I mean, my postman knew Network Solutions really well, because the way Network Solutions invoiced me was to send me, every year, one envelope for each domain name I had.

So I received, every year, 3,500 envelopes from Network Solutions, which of course, at $100 a pop, they could afford to send a thousand of those and not worry about it. Right? But I remember going and registering,

creating accounts with Register.com, and creating accounts with Domain Bank, and there were four testbed registrars, I don't remember who the other four or the other two were.

But that was a seminal moment, because it was not… The moment was not about all of the sudden there is competition, the moment really was, there was actually choice for the first time, and you're not stuck with just one place that does everything, right? And in my perspective, I don't think actually Network Solutions reacted well to the competition that was coming in.

They had the monopoly, they had the top position, they could have doubled up, but they kind of took a perspective of, we're just going to consolidate and milk this cow. But I remember, registry names at register.com, and trying to transfer them out, and nobody knew what the heck to do.

I'd come to ICANN, and ICANN's chief janitor and chief troubleshooter, was at that point, Louis Touton. Right? And I remember sitting down with Louis, and he and I set down and we mapped out what that process should be to transfer a name from one registrar to another. And that was cool to go and do.

Here we are with more acronyms than we could hold today, but you know, in the early days, even that very first thing was a pretty big deal. And I would say that it was a lot of heroic efforts from a few people in the early days that really brought this organization up and got the whole system going. The other story that is very fresh in my mind, and it really changed my life in a very big way, was when ICANN decided to take dot org and put it up for bid.

STEVE CROCKER: Yes, let me interrupt for just a second. I want to hear that story, but backing up to the prior thing. I heard references that I want to flag for follow-up, not only with you but others of three things. One is the introduction of choice slash competition among registrars, the whole creation of the registrar system.

Certainly that is a very major chapter, and has to be… But it's good that… I think it's quite salient that it comes quickly to mind as one of the big things from your life. You also mentioned that your estimate the way Network Solutions handled the competition. That strikes me as a classic potential Harvard Business School case, or a Harvard Business Review case, of what choice a business makes, and I don't have enough information to know whether they made a good choice or a bad choice, because there are some seemingly perverse things that companies do that turn out to be exactly the right thing, even though they look funny from the outside. And now, I'm trying to remember the third thing.

RAM MOHAN: Louis?

STEVE CROCKER   Oh, yeah, Louis is many, many stories, but the particular one is the working out of the inter-registrar transfer process, and you know, it's a quick competition and all of the sudden you've got a new problem that didn't exist before, and should have been obvious in a sense, and then that leads to quite a lot of work.

So, I want to flag those three things. And I wanted to make sure that we heard what the next story is, and we didn't lose track of that. So, we come back to dot org.

RAM MOHAN:

Yeah. And just back on the previous one though, for just a second. The, it was, the inter-registrar transfers, I think actually a story that should be dug from multiple facets. The story that is often and usually going to be told, is going to be the story of people like me. Registry folks, registrars, etc., but the real story has to be of me as a registrant, or somebody else as a registrant, what actually happened to them?

Because let me tell you, I spent many hours on the phone with these two registrars, and they were perhaps trying to be helpful. I don't think they were actually trying to be helpful, but each were trying to hold on to me. And there was nothing in the way to actually come in and speak for me, and take my side.

And to me, there is a pretty big story of, has ICANN actually helped do that? Does ICANN actually take the side of the actual user of an Internet identity? Because to me, that is actually fundamentally a big part of the mission of this organization. It's not just consumer choice. It's actually, have you helped the person who has made an investment, of time, and effort, and money, to use the resource on the Internet?

STEVE CROCKER:

That's a big and very important topic. And what you're saying, is, if I can put some words in your mouth, it seemed obvious to you that ICANN should, somebody, and presumably ICANN should be on your side, and it

was also not obvious that they were, or perhaps, that they had not yet evolved and developed the processes and so forth.

And, "oh my goodness, have they done so yet?" And so there is a big theme that we can follow at various points about ICANN's role with respect to being the advocate of the registrant. Good point.

RAM MOHAN: So, I have a couple of other stories, but the other one that is always bright in my mind, is dot org, because of two things. Number one, ICANN did the unthinkable. It took a big TLD, a well-known brand, a trusted name, and it put it up for a global bid.

It was the kind of thing that actually for many of the industry insiders were sitting there saying, "it ain't going to happen, you know." VeriSign, Network Solutions, VeriSign, has got it all stitched up. Right. And it was actually a sense of pride in watching this little organization that had just a few people in it, actually go and make it happen.

And so that speaks a lot to the character of the place. I think they actually put together a pretty good process. There were three parts of the evaluation. There was the first time that there had been any competitive bidding for a TLD ever. There was a 2.7 million name TLD, and if it had gone from VeriSign to somebody else, it was going to be a massive transition.

There was going to be a huge amount of risk, and I dare say that today, today's ICANN would not have done what yesterday's ICANN actually did, because there was no safety net at all. And with the exception of

VeriSign, there was really nobody else who had a significant amount of experience running a registry of scale.

And it was actually a pretty big roll of the dice. But I was very glad to be on the side that turned out to be selected as part of the role of the dice. The story there that I think is interesting, is intertwined. The Internet Society was in dire straits, had financial trouble, and the company I was working at, Afilias, we had an idea.

We were looking to bid, to go run dot org. We didn't have any USP, so to speak, Unique Selling Point, right? And we were concerned about how do you compete against VeriSign. We were expecting VeriSign to bid. They were not barred from bidding.

STEVE CROCKER: Oh, I didn't know that.

RAM MOHAN: And it was saying, how do you differentiate yourself from the 800 pound gorilla? And our thought was, maybe we can form a partnership, or something like that. Then we talked about, this is org, and the monies really from org ought to go back to the community, and it ought to serve the community that helped support it and build it.

And ISOC was the right kind of place, at least in our minds. We went and talked to the ISOC folks, and it was a very close vote. ISOC wanted to have nothing to do with it, and I remember Lynn St. Amour, then the CEO of ISOC and myself, have made a presentation to the ISOC Board explaining why if this worked and we won, it would provide financial

security and stability for the organization, and then you're asked to step out of the room because the Board was going to deliberate.

We stood outside for three and a half hours, because the Board was split on whether to get involved or not. And it turned out that a big part of why the Board, the part of the Board that didn't want to do it, a big part was because ICANN was this kind of somewhat dirty, somewhat squeamish, commercially oriented organization, that was pretty ad-hoc in its approach, and really not at the scale and at the size that -- the true, there was not purity.

But the… If you fast-forward, ICANN ran a big international competition. 11 international competitors came in. VeriSign actually had two bids out of the 11. And I remember being at the ICANN meeting in Bucharest, it was a Board meeting, in Bucharest, in Romania. There was a stage and the way it was structured, there was a finalist, there was a competition.

It got to finalist, and the ISOC-Afilias bid was one of the finalists. There were four finalists, we were one of the finalists. And each finalist had 15 minutes to make a presentation to the Board. It was timed. You could not exceed the 15 minute time. Vint [Cerf] and I arrived in Bucharest five days or four days prior to the meeting, and you know, we were working very hard to put a good PowerPoint together, get the message, and all of that right, etc.

It was going to be presented out of Lynn's laptop. She had a Mac at that time, and the appointed time came. We stood in front of the Board. Vint was the chair at that time. And we spent… The clock started to tick, the first minute went, the second minute went, and nothing came up on the screen.

We had about 16 slides to cover in 15 minutes, and nothing came up on the screen. And the tech comes running over, jiggles the little dongle, and if he held it a certain way, then it came up, he let it go, it dropped, and the clock was ticking.

And eventually the tech ended up coming, and taking a screwdriver, and screwing the dongle into the slot of the computer. And Vint ended up saying to the people running the clock, "reset the clock, I want to make sure that Lynn doesn't get screwed." Right? Which was, absolutely broke the tension for both of us.

Right? Because this is a big deal, but here is Vint making a joke, and the whole audience erupted in laughter. We did the presentation, 15 minutes, it went through, and there is a Q&A session in there, and one of the Board members ended up asking us, "so, about half of us here on the stage, as Board members, about half of us on the stage are members of the Internet Society, isn't that a conflict of interest?"

And Lynn gave a very memorable answer. She said, "what's wrong with the other half of you?"

STEVE CROCKER: Exactly.

RAM MOHAN: Again, a lot of laughter. But that to me, signified kind of the spirit of how it should be, or what it ought to be, which is you declare that you have an interest in something, but that doesn't stop you from actually engaging in important stuff.

And I think that's a pretty important principle to hold in ICANN. It was there at the start, that character was there at the start, and I'm very hopeful, and I think it's really important to try and preserve that kind of a character going forward, because sometimes you can get lost in the nuances of conflict, and it's an important thing, but at the same time, openness and honesty is actually a pretty good antidote to suspicion and conspiracy theories.

STEVE CROCKER: Lots of, even in that short thing, several different things come quickly to mind. You mentioned this sense among the ISOC Board that they didn't know if they wanted to get involved with the ICANN, because it had an odor to it, kind of. I encountered the same thing when I made the one on one discussions with, made the rounds of the…

And each, I talked to each person individually. There was no cross-talk, and one theme emerged in a repeated way, which was, security on the Internet is important. We are interested in doing this, and we don't know if we really want to be involved with ICANN, but if we can sort of hold ourselves apart, and focus just on security issues, we'd be willing to get involved.

So, I think there is a kind of a thing that emerges there. I was very interested in your, you described that you initiated searching for partner for this. It was really the case that you approached ISOC and they had not been thinking about this prior to that?

RAM MOHAN: That's right. We decided we needed a partner. We didn't have anyone, we didn't know anyone at that time directly on the ISOC Board, so we ended, Ken [Stubbs] ended up talking to Don [Heath], who had been on the ISOC Board before, and that got us an introduction to Lynn.

And then we met Lynn, and we just, all of us hit it off. We had shared ideals, shared principles, and she got it that there was… It's not just that there was a deal to be done, but the terms that we were offering were very straightforward. We will foot all of the bills. We will pay for all travel, etc.

All of it would be created as a loan, that would be completely written off if the bid is lost, and that will be paid back with no interest if the bid is won, right? And along the way, there were, I think, three payroll cycles that we put checks in for, but yeah, that's how it started, was - ISOC was approached by us, and Lynn tells me by IFC.

And the choice that they had to make at that point was, do you do any of it at all? And if you don't do, if you do it, then with who among?

STEVE CROCKER: With whom? That's interesting. So two points. One is, Lynn St. Amour is one of the most important people, even though she's not ever been an ICANN person, but the interrelationship between ISOC and ICANN is important, and she is even beyond her very, very strong role at ISOC, one of the important people in the Internet community.

So, let me flag that she needs to be interviewed. I had not known about the competition with IFC. What…? Are you aware of why ISOC went with you instead of them?

RAM MOHAN: I don't know why ISOC went with us instead of them, but I know… I have a sense of why Lynn went with us instead of them. I think number one was, there was a sense of shared mission, a sense of shared principles, there was just personal chemistry between… There was a few of us who interacted with Lynn in those days, there was Hal Lubsen, the CEO, Ken Stubbs, myself, Roland [LaPlante], there were four or five of us, and uniformly, there was a common shared mission.

The other reason, I believe, was that we were financially far more stable than IFC was, even at that time. And the last reason was that we had, we were able to demonstrate to Lynn, the level of technical investment we were making in the registry technology, in the DNS space, and the level of commitment that we had to it, we had grown from 2001, where we were four people in the company, we had grown into - At the end of 2001, there were about 20 people. But out of the 20 people, about 17 of them were engineers. Right? And it was a team that I helped grow, but there was a very strong, clear focus on: get the engineering right. Build a solid registry. Build a solid system, right? And I think that made an impression because we were focused on the long term.

And I think Hal was able to show that this is a private company that was looking five, 10 years down the road.

STEVE CROCKER: You mentioned the presentation in Bucharest - it happens that that was my very first ICANN meeting, and it also happens that in checking in for the flight to go to Bucharest, at Washington Dulles Airport, and so there is no direct flight from Washington to Bucharest, you fly through, I think,

Frankfurt, and so I'm checking in on the flight, and there was a woman next to me checking in for the same itinerary. What are the chances?

So, of course, she was, in fact, going to the ICANN meeting, and we spent the entire flight - she was somewhat involved with the bidding process on this. So, I had not been involved but I thought I knew something about the community, so I asked her to walk me through the 11 bidders.

She walked me through the 11 bidders, and each one was a combination of two or three groups, and my head was spinning. I could not make sense. I couldn't handicap, I thought I ought to be able to pick out likely ones or not. So, I was surprised in the objective sense of not having a prediction, but very pleasantly so, that you guys won the bid.

I thought that was an excellent result, and I'll just note for the record that it was Miriam [Sapiro] who is another very interesting and important person to talk to at some point. What were the evaluation criteria, do you know?

RAM MOHAN: There were, it's public. It's still on the ICANN website. In fact, all the bids are up on the ICANN website, and the evaluation criteria. There were three pieces to it. One was technical. One had to do with something like doing good, or social effectiveness, or something like that. I don't remember the precise words for it.

Where ISOC creamed the competition, right? And there was a third component which was some sort of a consensus of opinion that came from a group of academic CIOs, who evaluated all of the bids, and came out with a rating scheme that blended the technical viability of each of

the bids, and came up with an evaluation of who, you know, was placed best.

And in that one, we beat everybody else. So, that's how it came about.

STEVE CROCKER: So, are you saying that you came out in the top of two of those categories?

RAM MOHAN: Two of the three, right? So, in the third, which is a pure tech one, we came in second. There was someone else who was first, but when you took it across all three, we prevailed.

STEVE CROCKER: Wow, that's right. That's very good. I had a slightly different picture, but…

RAM MOHAN: What was your picture?

STEVE CROCKER: It was, so I didn't look at the first…the data… I just, somebody made a remark that the bid wasn't excellent across the board, but it was very good across the board, and what you're telling me is it's even better than I had remembered. So I thought it was sort of choppier, but that's great. That's good. So, that speaks very, very well of you.

If VeriSign was competing, I imagine it would have been extremely hard to show up compared to them in terms of a technical operation. So, that's speaks extremely well.

RAM MOHAN: Look, there were a couple of things that were different, right? VeriSign did not propose the next generation of technology at all. VeriSign had a protocol called Registry Registrar Protocol, RRP, and their proposal, they were running it on RRP. Their proposal was to continue running it on RRP, with no risk, because it was already working.

Well, our bid proposed going to a new, brand new protocol, that actually had not even gotten to RFC status. It was an ID draft, it was a 06 ID in the IETF, and we picked it up, and they said, we're going to do it. It's going to be XML schema, XML was just brand new at that time. We said it was going to be XML schema.

We said that it was going to be thick registry, it had never been done. Right?

STEVE CROCKER: And you've got guys like Vint on the Board who are doing the evaluation, I can just see, yes, that's exactly right. Go do that.

RAM MOHAN: So, I think that helped qualify us higher than VeriSign, because we were… If you look at it, we were taking bigger risks, right? We were the… There were only two bids of the 11 that proposed an open source database; we

were one of them. Because we proposed running the entire registry on postgreSQL, right?

And there was an open source database, and in the evaluation process, the ISOC Afilias got wacked badly by all of the competitors, VeriSign had a senior vice-president from IBM. They were using DB2. From IBM, commenting in the public comments, put an absolute, you know, hell and damnation on open source in general, and postgreSQL in specific, right?

And I forget who the other company was. Maybe it was Neustar, they were using Oracle, and they had an Oracle VP coming in and saying how open source was unsafe. The code was made public and therefore it could be exploited, right? And when I saw that, I was actually feeling pretty good because there were techies on the Board who would look at that and see it for the lie it was.

STEVE CROCKER: Right. Very interesting. I hadn't a clue about all of that, that's interesting. Today, and pretty early on, and I want you to speak to it, another entity emerged out of this process, Public Interest Registry, PIR. Where did that come about in the process? But the original idea when Afilias went and spoke to ISOC, was for ISOC to be the registry operator, and for the Afilias to be the registry service provider.

And that all of the money that would come out of the registrations of dot org would go to ISOC, and ISOC would pay Afilias a fee for running the service. But, the ISOC Board, the two things, at least, that I remember, were the factor of – and Lynn will know more - but the first was this desire to put a little bit of distance between ICANN and ISOC.

But the second more important factor was that there was a clear probability of issue with the 501c3 non-for-profit tax status of ISOC. And as a result, ISOC decided to go create Public Interest Registry, a new non-for-profit, in which it would be the sole stakeholder. And get a little bit more protection from … for its tax status.

STEVE CROCKER: Was this after you two had won the bid?

RAM MOHAN: Yeah. The company was not formed until the bid was created, because we didn't want to waste the money. ISOC didn't want to spend the money. But in the application itself to ICANN at that time, the way it was created was, the bid was presented by the Internet Society for dot org, when you opened up the bid and you read it, what the application said was, the Internet Society will use Afilias as a registry provider.

And the agreement that ISOC and Afilias had at that time was: So long as you've org, we've got org, but the bid itself for ICANN, it said, should we prevail, we will create a new entity called the Public Interest Registry, which will have a mission to be an exemplary registry to set the example for the world of registry providers, which would be a separate entity with its own Board, with its own governance structure, etc.

A not for profit organization. So, ICANN knew that there was going to be actually a new entity, but if the bid was…

| STEVE CROCKER: | And was that an issue at all in the dialogue about the evaluation? Or did it raise any questions about who they were dealing with? |

RAM MOHAN: The competitors were allowed to comment on each of the other competitors' bids. Competitors raised that as an issue, and said that this was unnecessary complexity, and in addition, they also raised the fact that points should be taken away from the ISOC bid, because there was this idea to create a new entity, with an unknown governance structure, unknown Board, etc.

And that any points that were going to be given to ISOC, should all be taken away, because the actual entity that was going to run it was unknown.

STEVE CROCKER: Interesting. You mentioned a word that resonated a lot with me, that PIR was going to be an *exemplary* registry. So, I just want to flag that there is another story and thread there about the role PIR played in the constellation of registries, because the initial structure was VeriSign running com and net, and it had org.

And when did Neustar come along in this…?

RAM MOHAN: 2001.

STEVE CROCKER: 2001.

RAM MOHAN: December 2001.

STEVE CROCKER: And so those were established registries, and now we're bringing in… Were there any others? There weren't. So, we're bringing in a new registry, and when I got involved, I saw that ICANN had some, a lot of bureaucracy and a strong sense of restraint about what it could do and how it should behave.

So even though it wanted to act generally in the public interest, it also felt obliged to be somewhat neutral, and not apply too much pressure when [inaudible]. So, I had a thought, and I had multiple roles in all of this because I was on the ISOC Board for a period of time, after the bid, I was on the ISOC Board from 2003 until 2006.

And by that time, things were up and running, but still at an early stage. And I remember, expressing to, actually to PIR… I was invited to give a talk to their advisory committee, and to the staff one evening, that PIR had a natural, very special role of being exactly the word you said, an *exemplary* registry. Exemplary in three dimensions. They should be exemplary as a business.

They should actually be successful as a business. There is no question about that. They should be successful in leadership of clean operation. And they should be exemplary as a thought leader in the community.

We could look back at how PIR fared in all of this. Some good, some fall short of expectations, but generally pretty good. But I'm glad you mentioned that, because it resonated very strongly with me.

We're nearing time for this session. But we do have time for, a few more minutes. Another short story, or a thought, or an embellishment, or suggestions for how we should proceed with this?

RAM MOHAN: I'd love to hear your story of why you decided to agree to Vint's call to come and chair SSAC.

STEVE CROCKER: This would be, as my son would say, a very humble story, and since, and that's a pejorative term… I'll go back a few years. I had been involved in a very aggressive start-up to pioneer moving financial transactions on the Internet, a company called Cyber Cash. Founded in '90… We started discussions in '93, founded in '94. I joined it. We had a very fast rise, went public right away, and then got into progressive trouble.

In June of '98, I left the company. And I sent notes out to various friends that I was out of it. A very old friend, Bob Metcalfe, who was a well-known guy, sent me back a note saying, don't do anything for six months. And I said, really? He said yeah.

I took the summer off, and then gradually started to look for trouble. And I got involved in a start-up of my own, and it died a couple of years later. So, the sequence in 2001 was 9/11 hit, and that had a broad scale effect,

and among other things, it absolutely sealed the fate of this company that we were struggling with.

And on Halloween, October 31st, we closed the doors. So, at the end of October, 2001, I am unemployed. I am in good financial shape personally. The Cyber Cash venture and previously had put me in good shape. So, I'm now at a stage in my life where I'm, I have a lot of freedom that I never had before, and I'm sort of looking around for what to do.

And Vint calls me up. And I had watched from afar the creation of ICANN, but I hadn't been involved. And he said, explained that… So, one of the consequences of the 9/11 event was that ICANN, like every other organization in the world, said security is important, and they held a symposium in Marina del Rey in November, if I recall. I was not there.

RAM MOHAN: I was there.

STEVE CROCKER: And you were there.

RAM MOHAN: There was seven of us.

STEVE CROCKER: And there was some very good presentations, which are still available online. And Vint had explained that that had happened and the intention was to create an Advisory Committee, and if I would just… Vint and I go

way, way back. If I would just step in and get it going. Six months would be enough.

So, I knew full well that was an underestimate to say the very least. But I thought it would be fun, and I had some background in that. I had previously been the first area director for security in the IETF. So, when the security area was put together in the IETF, and they were looking around for somebody to do, I wound up with that job.

So this was, in a way, related, sort of a natural segue in another way. And as I said, it caught me at a point in time when I had free time, and was looking for various involvements. I took on three separate involvements, but this one - One of them died away. One of the was the company I had created, and one of them was getting involved with ICANN.

And I enjoyed it. I liked the challenge of structuring SSAC and trying to get an agenda together and a sense of direction. The people were good, and ICANN, my reaction to ICANN was not as negative as some of the people you know, I recognized the politics, but I also recognized that it had a positive mission.

And in at least a few cases, there were some fantastic people, of which you are at the top of my list.

RAM MOHAN: You're very kind.

STEVE CROCKER: No, truly so. That one of the personal pleasures, in addition to people I already knew like Vint or others, but in terms of new people, I was at, sort

of, later stage in life was getting to know you. You're an amazing person, but that's maybe a separate story. And so, that's the answer to how I got involved, and then it was a long, downhill slide from there to chairing the Board.

RAM MOHAN: Charing the Board, yes. And then you enticed me to get on the Board, after you.

STEVE CROCKER: Yeah, so there is another set of stories. Thank you very much. You've now seen the attempt at a process here. You are hereby inducted into the advisory process for this, as well as a primary contributor.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]