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Oral History Project

Going into the interview was a bit stressful for our group. We got background information on Mr. Radigan less than a week before we were to meet him, and because of a rescheduled AP Biology test that four out of the five us were taking, we had almost no time to go over the information and come up with good questions. We ended up with questions- enough to get us through the hour and a half, we hoped- but it was still a bit tense walking into the interview.

The very beginning wasn't much easier. We got off to a slow start, even though Sam did a great job presenting the questions. As time went on, however, we relaxed a bit, and some of us began to ask questions, too (even though we weren't really supposed to). I found that that really helped open it up- I could clear up confusion on my part, and it gave Mr. Radigan a chance to really explain what he knew. And he knows a lot. He went from a degree in biology to working at Dudley with micrometeorites, then grading rare coins, and finally working as a software developer. I was really interested in how he managed to move from career to career so easily. He contributed it to his short attention span, but really he was just anticipating the next big thing. He got into personal computers just before they exploded, and taught microprocessing as it was becoming the thing everyone needed to know. Even now he's looking ahead- apparently biology will be the next gold field.

I was amazed at how well he knew everything he had worked on. He didn't go to a job, work for a bit without really learning anything, and move on. He immersed himself in it, learned everything that was known, and tried something new when he had gotten everything he could out of it. He was able to easily explain things that would take years to learn, and made it exciting enough that I wanted to listen to how these projects worked for hours. He's a bit of a free spirit, and is happy that way. He's followed his heart, from Dudley up here in New York to computer companies in New Orleans and Phoenix. That's not something you expect from a scientist- you always assume they stay in their lab and do experiments all the time. But Mr. Radigan went out into the world to see what was happening and what was coming next. That's impressive. He's just so comfortable to be around, which helped with our nerves, and he's happy with what he's doing. You don't find many people who are really happy like that- but, then again, not many people are brave enough to try new things all the time like he does.

The interview kind of changed my thinking about working in a science field. Before, it seemed that once you were in a certain field, you were there forever. You could go into more and more detail, but it would be hard to jump to something new entirely. But Mr. Radigan showed me that it's not impossible. He tried new things all the time, and I think I might like to do something like that. Being able to look at fresh topics can help you develop new ideas, which could lead to the next big discovery. You just need to keep an open mind.