

The Silicon Valley Chapter: 23 Years and Counting

By Lawrence J. Udell

It was April 2000 when the Silicon Valley Chapter of LES USA & Canada was officially launched. It started with an evening reception hosted by Jim and Dora Ferguson, a colleague and friend of many years. Jim was the world-renowned inventor of LCDs (Liquid Crystal Displays). They opened their beautiful home in Palo Alto, CA for the event which was followed the next day by an exciting all-day program held at Hewlett-Packard world headquarters in Palo Alto.



Attending the reception and speaking the next day were Todd Dickinson, head of the patent office and Vladimir Yossifov, head of outreach programs for WIPO (United Nations) from Geneva, Switzerland. Many other notable corporate executives, researchers, scientists, and friends of mine were enjoying the evening. I cannot remember all the folks attending, but I know the fellowship and excitement were contagious.

Through personal contacts at HP, we held our special annual all-day meetings at their beautiful facility with an average of 100 attendees at each. Our monthly meetings were hosted by law firms and sponsoring companies. The popularity grew over the early years to an average attendance of about 75. The subjects ranged from Basic IP and licensing practices to special programs devoted to “From Inventor to Entrepreneur” and all the various legal aspects of protection, along with commercialization and monetization. Guest speakers talked about how they transformed an invention into a success-

ful product and the emphasis on marketing by experts such as Bill Seidel of AmericanInvents.

We held several meetings at the USPTO offices in Silicon Valley. When Hewlett-Packard decided to give up its corporate campus, I arranged through the IP counsel at Oracle to have our larger meetings (now attended by 140) at Oracle’s beautiful headquarters complex in Redwood Shores. The new board consisted of devoted LES members and changed regularly over 23 years. However, we did not institute a designated service time, as long as they were working on behalf of the Chapter they stayed on the board. We also held on-site quarterly board luncheons. The primary emphasis was on increasing membership, which resulted in our Chapter receiving a reward almost every year from LES at the annual meeting. We even arranged with the SV Business Journal for advertising to promote our meetings, which a representative attended and provided free copies of their journal.

I find it hard to believe it has been 23 years when in many respects mentally it seems like just a couple of years since that memorable time. Our Chapter is proud to have achieved international recognition for its many activities and accomplishments. I am also proud to announce that Efrat Kasznik took over the chairmanship as of January 2023. I intend to stay on the board and be as active as ever.

Larry Udell is the founder and Chairman of the non-profit California Invention Center created at California State University in 1995. He has taught courses on New Ventures for over 40 years at universities throughout the United States and in foreign countries for WIPO (United Nations). A member of the Licensing Executives Society since 1982, he founded the Silicon Valley Chapter in 2000. Professor Udell provides consulting to both start-ups and Fortune 500 companies, and lectures frequently at inventor, corporate, and government functions throughout the United States. He has also created special inventor educational programs for the USPTO. In his decades of consulting, he has launched over 20 new ventures and worked with the world famous; Stephen Hawking, Bill Lear, Jim Ferguson, Forrest Bird, Paul MacCready, etc. He is Vice President of American Innovators for Patent Reform and a Senior Consultant to General Patent Corporation. He also serves as a corporate officer and board member of companies and in his illustrious long career has mentored hundreds of inventors and their startups. He can be reached at: larry@les-svc.org.