MARISSA MAYER INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Marissa Mayer
Business Executive
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Interviewed by Chris Durrance
Total Running Time: 37 minutes

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America

Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Marissa Mayer

Business Executive

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

So let's start with your upbringing. Tell me about your hometown.

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin, which is a small town in the middle of Wisconsin. It's about 35,000 people; with the surrounding area, it's about 100,000. And it was great. Actually, my mother likes to say that I had a childhood that was 5 minutes away, because we had a world class ballet teacher and ballet studio five minutes from our house. Piano lessons, ice skating, Brownies and Girl Scouts, and every possible kind of lesson, and it was all really close by.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And tell me about your parents as well. What did your father do?

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MARISSA MAYER:
My father is an engineer, and so he works on water and cleaning water. And my mother was an art teacher, and then she stayed home with us.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And so you have siblings.

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MARISSA MAYER:
I have a younger brother. His name is Mason.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Did your parents have, what you think now as traditional roles in the household?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I guess they had traditional roles in the household. I mean, my father did the yard work and my mother did a lot of the indoor work. They actually shared responsibilities on cooking, so I think that they were somewhat of a modern couple.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Was there a sense that expectations for you were different from your brother?

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MARISSA MAYER:

Not really that I noticed. So I didn't really notice any difference in expectations between me and my brother. I think that I was always very good at math and science, and I guess I never really knew that that was strange.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And who did you look up to, of your parents, most?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I think that I've got a great relationship with both my parents. So my mother is my best friend. And my father and I, we just think alike, and so we really- when it comes time to make a difficult decision or talk something through, he and I will reason about a problem the same way.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When you were growing up, I'm thinking of high school years, were there any expectations about, would you have a career, or would there be marriage?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Sure. I think that I was always very good at math and science. It was very clear that I was going to go to college. I wanted to be a doctor. My parents

were very, very supportive of that. I actually didn't think that I would get married. And I was willing to get married if the right person came along, but I really didn't think that that would happen. And I knew that I really wanted to have a career and really do something, particularly in the fields of math or science.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What about high school? Were you big into sports? What got you going in high school? What was exciting there?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, in high school, I did almost everything. So I went to a high school that actually had a modular scheduling system, which means instead of having 8 periods a day like a lot of schools, there were 21 20-minute mods, making up a 7-hour day. And it actually allowed for a scheduling that was a lot more like college, because you might have your chem lab on mods 10 through 12 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, meaning that was an hour long block, but your English section might be Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, just mods 5 and 6 for 40 minutes.

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And so that flexible scheduling left a lot of independence, and also left all kinds of opportunities to pack your schedule. So I remember the first person

in my high school to take all five offered AP courses. I remember my junior year managing to take ten classes. I had a very good friend who was at the more traditional high school across town- There is Wausau East, which is more traditional, and Wausau West where I went, which was on the modular system. And even giving up lunch and study hall, she could only take 8 classes, and I actually managed a way to figure out how to take 10.

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But I also did a lot of extracurriculars, so I was on the pompom team, which is the Midwestern version of a dance squad, and I also did debate, Spanish club, Key Club, all kinds of volunteer work. I think all in, I probably had about ten different extracurriculars.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And what were your parents- Were your parents carrying you around, like here and there, to make everything work…

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MARISSA MAYER:
My brother and I were both very busy, and so my mother played a good part of her time as chauffeur.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

Coming out of high school, you're thinking college, you're thinking pre-med, that's the path you're on…

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MARISSA MAYER:
Sure. Well, one of my vices is that I like to overwhelm myself with options. And coming from a small town in Wisconsin, we really didn't know what kinds of colleges I would get into. So I applied to ten schools. And so I applied to major research universities like Harvard, Stanford, Duke, Yale. I applied to University of Wisconsin–Madison, that's the great school in my home state. I applied to a lot of small liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, Carleton, Macalester, all kinds of schools in that category.

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And I also applied to Johns Hopkins because it's great for medicine, to Northwestern in Illinois. And I got in everywhere, and so that- which was really lucky and I was really happy about that, but it left me with a lot of hard choices. And so, as I thought about college and what I wanted from it, it really for me came down to Stanford and Duke. And then I realized that, while Duke is a wonderful school,-

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-a lot of what they wanted me to do there was dance team, was debate, was the college version of Key Club which is Circle K, and I realized that I didn't really want my college experience to be just like my high school experience. I wanted something more academic and more intellectual, and I was really

inspired by a lot of what was happening out here at Stanford. I had come to visit the campus and I loved it. And so ultimately, I picked Stanford.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Growing up, had you traveled a lot?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I traveled a lot in the Midwest and somewhat- I shouldn't say that. Not only the Midwest, but all through the country, but I have not- I actually didn't leave the country until I was 22. So basically, my parents, I think, in an effort to make sure that we were really well rounded- and that means that we spent most of our weekends either in Milwaukee, Chicago or Minneapolis, going to art openings, going to the theater. So my mother being an art teacher, it was very important to her that we really understand culture.

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And we'd also done a lot of travel in the U.S. So we had been to Florida, we had been to Arizona. I had taken one trip with my church youth group down to Dallas. We had done a driving tour out to Yellowstone. And so I had seen a good part of the country, but I actually hadn't left the country until I was 22.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

Was it unusual- I mean, it strikes me that for a small town in the Midwest, you just had this large vision already at a very young age.

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I think that for my parents, it was very important for them that we have a good worldly view. And I remember that actually, when I was picking my schools, my mother went to see her doctor who had gone—I forget which school he had gone to—but he had gone to a school in the Midwest and he said, "Look the schools in the Midwest are wonderful, but she grew up in the Midwest. And if you really want her to have vision like this, as opposed to vision like that, and really have seen more of it-" He was like, "Send her somewhere outside of the Midwest, and really try and get her exposed to more."

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And so, it was interesting. I think that that was something that really shifted my mother's viewpoint. She had always worked to make sure that we were very worldly and cultured, but this notion that if I had only experienced the Midwest all the way through college— as much as I love the Midwest—that somehow my view would be narrower. I think that that's something that really made her more comfortable with the idea of sending me far away for school.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
So you choose Stanford. You get there, what are your first impressions?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I think that- Actually before I move on to that, let me just say that one of the reasons I opted against Johns Hopkins and against Northwestern- Northwestern actually had accepted me into a special program, where you went for undergraduate and then straight into med school. You were already accepted into med school as you were a freshman in college. But I realized that I might not want to be a doctor. I was very certain that I thought I might be, but there was something in me that, I think, thought, what if you get there and you decide you might want to do something else?

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And if you're on this program, or at a school that's really, really excellent in medicine, will you have the opportunity to change into something else? And so, that was something that weighed on me. I came to Stanford, I took the chemistry courses and started taking the different biology courses, and I liked it and I was very good at it, but it was a lot of memorization. And so, when I went home after my freshman year and compared notes with a lot of my friends who were also interested in medicine, I realized that while I was going far away and to a much more expensive school, I was basically taking the same classes.

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So we were all memorizing the same flashcards, we were all memorizing the same equations, and I really thought about, well, how can I get the most out of my Stanford experience? And one of the ways to get the most out of it is to do something you can only do at Stanford. So I started looking at, what is Stanford good at? It's very good in psychology, it's very good in computer science, and I found this interesting interdisciplinary major called Symbolic Systems, which combines philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and computer science. And so, that was one of the things that led me into computer science and got me really interested.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What was the buzz about that course?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I think that one of the- There were a couple of different things that happened along the way. So the tail end of my freshman year, I took an introductory CS course, computer science course, specifically called Computer Science for Non-Majors. And I remember that the professor, Stephen Clausing, started the course by saying- There were about 400 of us there because it was a requirement you had to fill for graduation, and he said,-

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-"Studies and extensive data have shown that exactly 2 of you will go on to take any additional computer science at all. SO we're going to make this really, really easy for you." And we did a little bit of programming that was actually interesting, when the Mosaic browser and Netscape were just getting started 'cause this was the spring of 1994, and so we used those in that course. And what I really loved about it was that it was a different problem every day. You got to think about something in a new and interesting way. There was no formula, there was no recipe, there was no memorization.

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And growing up, I had gone to a science camp along the way, the National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia, where they send two delegates from each state. It was an amazing place. They got wonderful speakers, professors from different esteemed universities, the counselors are often Rhodes scholars, and there was this one lecturer named Zoon Wynn, who I was really taken with, as were all the other people in the camp. He was just very engaging, super smart, he could talk about almost everything and sound intelligent.

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He would give us different riddles like, "If I walk like this, which muscle of my body is injured?" And so, we'd all spend our whole day walking around the camp like that, trying to figure out what muscle we weren't using. And he was just a very inspiring person. And I remember one day, we were all talking about how smart Zoon was—and it was wonderful that his name was Zoon because it actually makes the whole thing sound like a Chinese proverb—but

we were going on and on about how smart Zoon was, and then one of the counselors—I think a little annoyed and probably a little envious of our Zoon worship—suddenly said, "You guys, you have it all wrong. It's not what Zoon knows, it's how Zoon thinks."

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And you can drop him into an unfamiliar situation, and within 5 minutes, he'd be asking the right questions and drawing the right conclusions. And it's not just what he knows, it's actually how he thinks. And while I was sitting there in my freshman organic chemistry courses and getting started on the biology course at Stanford with all of my flash cards, I just had this constant refrain in my mind. It's not what Zoon knows, it's how Zoon thinks. So fast forward to that computer science course spring of my freshman year, a different problem every day.

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It wasn't so much what we were memorizing, it was what we were learning and how we were learning to think about particular problems. So when I found Symbolic Systems, it was really exciting to me because I could take that computer science, that new way of thinking about new problems, and actually apply it. Because Symbolic Systems is cognitive psychology—how do people learn, philosophy—how do people reason, linguistics—how do people express themselves, and computer science—can you train a computer to do the same?

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And so for me, I realized I'd always been very interested in neuroscience and I wanted to be a pediatric neurosurgeon as I was growing up. But I realized that I was less interested in cutting up the brain, I was much more interested in how the brain worked. And so, I really felt that, what better way to look at that and what better way to really think about how people reason, how do they learn about new problems and new scenarios, other than to actually study how do people learn how do they reason, how do they express themselves, and really get to apply that.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And can you tell me the story of your first computer as well?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I was a prolific baby sitter as I was growing up, and so I saved up about $2000 by the time I got to school, and that money immediately went to a computer. So I went over to the Stanford bookstore and bought a Centris 610, which was just- It was a great, great computer at that time, and got it back to my dorm room, and I remember not knowing how to turn it on. And so, I had to have Harry Lye, our resident computer consultant come up, show me how to turn it on, show me how to use the mouse.

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It was really something that just was super foreign at the time—really interesting to me, but very foreign. That was Fall of my freshman year, and actually, it came full circle because by the end of my senior year, I was a Head TA of one of the courses. At Stanford, there's three introductory computer science courses: CS-106, 106B and 106X, and I was the Head TA for CS-106A and Harry was the TA for CS-106X.

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And I still remember when we stood up in front of all the section leaders to read our stats for the classes, Harry sort of looked and said, "How did you catch up to me? I remember me showing you how to use the mouse and even how to turn on your computer." But I think the amazing thing about computer science is that it is a field where you can make big gains quickly, and it's a fast moving young science and it's easy to catch up, especially if you're inspired.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
When was your first time you saw the Internet?

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MARISSA MAYER:
The first time I saw the Internet was Spring of my freshman year in Computer Science 105A, the introductory to Computer Science for Non-Majors. We had one assignment that wasn't programming, but instead was using the Mosaic

browser to browse to different sites. I guess at the time, it seemed so disconnected. Like in fact, I think at that point, I remember using or stumbling upon what would become Yahoo, but it was literally just a file that was called like, Jerry's list of links.

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And I think that's what ultimately what became Yahoo. I remember stumbling upon it then, but at that time the Internet was so disconnected, literally the assignment would tell you exactly what URL to type in the browser and it would bring it up. And so our assignment was type in this URL, find out the price of country fried steak at like, a local Palo Alto restaurant 'cause there was like, one restaurant that had their menu online.

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So it wasn't as impressive an experience as the Internet is today. It was just sort of a jumble of pages, it was hard to find your way, the pages weren't really connected to each other. And I remember navigating it basically using the Mosaic browser but not really getting a sense of the whole picture of what was to come back then.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Did you think it would amount to anything?

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MARISSA MAYER:

I definitely thought that it was something that was very interesting. As we learned about it, it was very clear that this was something that DARPA had been doing for years. It was a low barge interconnected system throughout the whole world. Interestingly, I thought it would have more to do with communication, e-mail, and routing all of that, and less to do with storing information and publishing information online, as now it really is all three. At the time, it was easy to imagine the communication uses, it was harder to imagine the publishing usage and the storage usage.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
So you're going through college, how many women are there when you shift majors?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I think that one of the unusual things about my experience is all throughout, I was always a geek. I was good at math and science, and if you're a geek, that just kind of neutralizes the issue of gender. But I also think that no one ever called out to me that it was strange to be a girl who was good at math and science. In high school, no one ever pointed that out. In college- I guess I was just kind of gender oblivious.

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Because I remember distinctly there was this one columnist at the Stanford Daily that I just loved, and I really looked forward to her column every Wednesday, and there was this one Wednesday—I forget her last name but her first name was Julie—and I was looking at Julie's column and she wrote a piece on campus icons, where she defined an icon as sort of memorable people around the campus where you often know them, but you know them more by description than even by name.

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Right there is the crazy guy in White Plaza that yells at everyone when you bike past. There is the librarian with the glasses and the chain over at Green Library. And so, she had a list of different campus icons and it was sort of fun to read through them and sort of chuckle to yourself as to, "Oh I know this woman, and I know exactly who she is talking about here." And then all of a sudden, there was a bullet point on the list that said, "The blond woman in the upper division computer science courses."

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And I was thinking, "Well, I should know that one. Who is that?" Right? And then I realized it was me. And I just never noticed up until that point that I was strange or stood out in any way due to gender or my coloring or anything like that. And so I think that I was lucky. It really wasn't until I was a professional woman that people said, "Look, you really need to do a lot more for girls in math and science and there's not enough of them." I really wasn't that aware that I was an anomaly until much later.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

You switched away from medicine, which is a very clear path, into something that's more about exploration, more about curiosity, more about a way of seeing the world. Was there a career apparent along that path yet?

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MARISSA MAYER:

No, I think that it was very hard actually for my parents to get a sense of, "Okay, well, she was going to be a pediatric neurosurgeon and she was taking all these classes in chemistry and biology, and suddenly, she's talking about something called Symbolic Systems and we don't know what that is, and there is no clear career path there." But I basically said, I really want to expand my mind this way, work on these kinds of problems. I can always specialize later in graduate school, and I did end up going on to do that, I did a masters in pure computer science at the end of this.

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But I really felt that getting a nice broad liberal arts education was something that was a really unique opportunity, and you can only do it once, and you can always specialize later. And so, I think all this was something I was really interested in, and Tom Wasow, the director of the Symbolic Systems program, sold me on it by saying- Interestingly, I knew that he would try and sell me on the program when I went to talk to him about whether or not I should end up

majoring in Symbolic System, but the way he sold me on it was very interesting.

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I thought for sure he would talk about his teaching and the courses, and I went in and I said, "Well, I'm thinking about becoming a Symbolic Systems major," and he said, "Oh, you absolutely should. All the most interesting Stanford students are." And I thought that was really interesting, he didn't try and sell me necessarily on the classes, on his teaching, on the curriculum. All of that was very good, but he really felt that it was important to be surrounded by interesting and thought provoking people, and I think that was something that really influenced me.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And how did you first hear about Google?

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MARISSA MAYER:
So I spent the summer of 1998 in Switzerland working for the Union Bank of Switzerland in their research lab. And it was a great experience, there were researchers from all over the world and interns from all over the world. I think we had 20 different countries represented in a group of 30 people total. And it was just a really exciting and wonderful time. And what I was working on that Summer was basically creating a web recommendation system.

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So if you, for example, visit sites A, B, and C, later if someone visits site B, could you recommend site A and C because they are adjacent in somebody else's path through the web? Probably they are related to each other or relevant. The Union Bank of Switzerland was interested in this because they thought it would make their traders more efficient in the morning. 'Cause if everyone comes in and starts looking at the price of gold or the price of oil, it would help people hone in faster if they had this recommender tool running alongside.

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So I spent the summer working on that, tuning constants, really getting the tool up and running on that. And when I came back, I met with Eric Roberts, who was my long time mentor at Stanford and who had hired me to teach for the first time. So I had been a TA, I had been a section leader, but I had never been a lecturer. So I was lecturing my first computer science course. And I sat down, and I met with him to get up to speed on teaching a course, the mechanics of it and getting advice that he had.

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And he also wanted to know about my summer, my summer project, and I told him about it and he said, "Oh, that's so interesting. There's these guys on the 4th floor that are doing what you're doing. They're not looking at where people go on the web however, but they're actually looking at the link structure of the web, where do pages link, and can you tell relevance and relatedness based on that, and they just dropped out to start a company." He's

like, “It’s Larry Page and Sergey Brin. It’s like, I don’t remember the name of the company that they started.”

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And I said, “Well, you know Eric, no matter. I just moved back into the country, I’m teaching for the first time, I’m pretty overwhelmed. I don’t have time to go and meet up with a start up and do work on a start up right now. So, no matter.” And then it wasn’t until 8 or 9 months later when I got an email asking me to come and interview at Google, that I realized, when I was reading that email, I was like, wait, like, I know this company. Someone’s talked to me about this before. And I realized this was the company that Eric had talked to me about the previous September, and I still give him a very hard time that he couldn’t remember the name Google.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And your first interview, when you go out and meet the guys?

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MARISSA MAYER:
My first interview at Google was with Larry and Sergey, and we sat at a ping-pong table that doubled both as a recreation for the office as well as a conference table. And I remember Sergey is very mathematical. He spent a lot of time really grilling me on artificial intelligence concepts, ‘cause my specialization was artificial intelligence, and so we spent a lot of time talking

about k-means clustering, and all kinds of different ways you can train mural networks.

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And so I spent a lot of time talking through all the equations, and what if you have this data set, what if you have that data set with Sergey. And Larry seemed really distracted throughout. It was clear his mind was somewhere else. Come to find out, as soon as they got up from the interview and they walked out, I heard most people in the office get up and leave. And they were headed to go and pitch one of the venture capital firms, I believe they were going to Kleiner Perkins. We ultimately got some of our funding from.

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And so they got up and left, and so, I think he was getting ready for his pitch and really thinking about that. But it was really funny, because the office manager, Heather, walked in and she said, "I know it was very important to you that we really get all of your interviews done today, but the entire company except for me has just left to go to the venture capitalist's office, so I think you're going to have to come back tomorrow."

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
What is Google?

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MARISSA MAYER:

The easiest way to think about Google is to think about it at its root, which is, at its root, it really is a search engine and that's where we started. But one of the things we recognized is with the explosion of information online and with the usefulness of search as a paradigm, it became so much more. Turns out that being able to store a lot of information and being able to search a lot of information is useful for email, it's useful for books, it's also useful for things like driverless cars.

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You have lots of different information coming in through the different sensors, figuring out which signal you should pay attention to, and how you should make a decision. Should you change lanes, should you go straight, should you swerve, all of those things are search problems, and they all have, as part of their characteristic, a lot of data, and the fact that search is a tool that can really help you when you have a lot of data.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And did you think it would get this big?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I think that I definitely saw some indications of success. I don't think I really saw this particular magnitude, in terms of an overall outcome. I think that when I was graduating from college, I liked to, again, surround myself with

too many options. So it was the height of the Internet bubble. It was 1999. Being a masters in computer science, graduating from Stanford, was a great place to be. I had 14 job offers. And I looked at all of them, and some of them were to continue teaching at places like Carnegie Mellon, some of them were big software companies like Oracle, management consulting firms, and then there were the startups.

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And when I looked at the start ups—it's interesting 'cause I still have some of them at different matrices I drew—but as I was looking at my options, I would look at things like location, salary, I sort of had a happiness index. Looking at all of these different factors, and one of the factors was percentage chance of success overall the enterprise, which really came into play for the start ups. And well, a lot of the start ups I gave a .02% chance of succeeding.

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I actually give Google about a 2% chance of succeeding, so it was about 100 times better than any of the other startups that I had met, but I still thought the odds were 50 to 1 that we would fail. But what really drew me to Google was I realized that I would learn more here, being part of the process of building a company, being part of the process of making something, than I would anywhere else failing. And so, for me, I was like, okay, let's take the job where I'm going to learn a lot.

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And maybe I'll learn a lot and will succeed, and maybe I will learn a lot and will fail, but I'm just ultimately going to learn more being inside a company

learning how the decisions get made, being in the room when the decisions get made, than I will if I'm not.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Many of the women we've talked to have said—very hard to generalize—but maybe one of the characteristics that a lot of women that they've noticed is this sort of, not wanting to lean forward, not wanting to push forward, and maybe not being comfortable with the prospect of speaking out too much and maybe failing. Has that ever struck you?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I think part of me finds failure kind of exhilarating. And I think that when I remember back to when I was choosing my job- as I said I was choosing between about 14 different offers, and they were across all kinds of different sectors—teaching, management consulting, large software firms, small startups. And I could pick the best job in each sector, but it was hard for me to decide across the different sectors.

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And I remember sitting down during spring break, before I even had the Google offer, and I remember thinking like, "You're going to need to figure out some criteria of how you're going to make this decision." And I said, "Well, why don't you think about the best decisions you have ever made and see if

they have anything in common?" So I made a list of the best decisions I had ever made. One was going to Stanford. One was choosing to major in Symbolic Systems. One was getting to work at Stanford Research Institute up in Menlo Park with all the legends of artificial intelligence for a summer.

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And the other was getting to move to Switzerland for the summer to work with the Union Bank of Switzerland's research arm. And I realized that they all had- even though they were really different, right? One is where do you go to school, one is where do you work in the summer, one is what do you major in, what's your discipline—they were all really different, but they all had two things in common. One, I always chose to work with the smartest and most interesting people I could find. And two, I always did something I was a little not ready to do.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
And what's your proudest achievement here, looking back at that time?

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MARISSA MAYER:
I think it's hard for me to pinpoint just one thing at Google. Throughout my time here, I started off as an engineer for the first 2 and a half years, actually writing the code which is the Google web server that answers your query. So when you talk to Google, the thing that produces those web pages that

answer you and write the search results page, those were things that I actually coded on. And so, between that and now having worked on somewhere between 75 to 100 different features or products that have come subsequently in the past 12 years, I think that my proudest achievement really is Google itself.

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I think that the company we built, the culture that we built, and the really positive impact that I like to think we have had on the world, in terms of helping people find more information and making their lives easier, more convenient, more well informed—that's really ultimately what I'm most proud of.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Why do you think it's such a struggle to have women involved in this field?

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MARISSA MAYER:
First I'd like to say that I think that one of the things that computer science and the technical fields have on their side is that they are young and new sciences and disciplines, and it is a fast moving place where it's easy to play catch up. That said, I do think that for a lot of girls, they may not spend a lot of their teenage years playing video games, and the applications of, "How would I use computer science," may not be as obvious. I'm hopeful that now with

Google and Facebook and Twitter and some of these things, and Zinga, some of these things that touch their lives every day, that will prompt more women to come into computer science.

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But that said, they often—the women I talk to—will feel that well, people have been programming- these guys have been programming since they were 10 and they have been playing video games since they were 13, like, I won't catch up. But the nice thing about computer science is that you can catch up, and it is possible to pick things up, and it is a new and fast moving field and I think that's something that's really exciting. And I also think that when you are passionate about something, it's a gender neutralizing force.

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For me, I'm not a woman at Google, I'm a geek at Google. This is a wonderful place to be a geek, right? For me, I'm excited, I've got my list of different apps I want to try, different gadgets I want to try, different websites I've heard about, and swapping stories here, "Have you tried that? What did you think of this? Was it fast enough? Did it work well enough? Did it seem like the recommendations were good enough? How was the relevance?" Right? All of these different things that we all love to try. That's really how I connect with my coworkers. And so for me it's much more being here amidst the geeks, and much less about the issues of gender.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

In a startup, it has just grown an astronomical rate. How do you keep boundaries? How do you keep a balance in your life?

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MARISSA MAYER:

I mean, for me, work is fun and fun is work. So I work a lot, I work really hard. I still do get a chance to have some fun. I love to travel. In the winter, I like to ski, and I still like to shop even though I shop more online these days and have things shipped to the office. But I do think that I still am able to do some cultural things and some things that are fun outside of work. But interestingly, more often than not, those things, for me, have connections back to work. Right?

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On the cultural side, on the arts side. That's something my mother had always really taught me to appreciate. Now I'm really involved with Google Doodles, the fun logos that appear on our home page. They're certainly not the technical side of my job, but there is something that is really fun to get to think about the art we could put there, and how we could expose people to new ideas, the artists we could work with. I think that it's fun for me to see how some of my extracurricular interests actually become some of my mainstream, part-of-work interests. And so, I don't worry about balance. I worry more about being inspired and being passionate about what I am working on.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:
Do you think situation for women has changed?

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MARISSA MAYER:
Well, I certainly think that the situation for women in technology has changed. I think that when you look today at how many different services there are that touch everyone's daily lives- When I was growing up, I knew one computer scientist. She worked at JC Penney on the catalog system. It was hard for me to envision what does her everyday look like? What is she building? What is she making? Today, if you're a lover of video games, you see those, but also you see all technologies—smartphones, the Internet—it was everything from Google to Facebook to all the different apps you could use on your phone.

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I think all of those are exciting ways where the services can touch a person's lives. And when you look at how far that's come from when I was a child until now, there's this huge growth and huge opportunity, and the fact that the new technology is now so tangible in our everyday lives, I think will inspire a lot more women to go into technology and I'm really heartened by that. I think that it's amazing to me because I remember watching *The Jetsons* when I was 5 and thinking awesome, "When I'm 30, there will be flying cars."

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And I think what's interesting is that the transportation industry has not really evolved and innovated much at all. And now we're trying for driverless cars- We're nowhere close to a flying car, they haven't even produced a prototype that's safe and sound. But I do think that the revolution that no one was expecting was that of the Internet and information technology, and I think that when you look at what's happened there and how different our world looks today than when I was 5- I remember I was always a curious kid.

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I remember having to go to the library to research the most mundane details. I remember one time we had a large group of kids that lived on my street growing up, and we would play games in the backyard and we were trying- We were all very precise, we were all really smart, and we wanted to set up a perfect professional size baseball diamond. And we got into a large argument about, "Was it 88 feet between the bases or was it 90 feet between the bases?" And we couldn't resolve it, and the group split. Half thought it was 88, half thought it was 90.

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And there was no way to resolve it because no one wanted to say, "Let's go and get our parents to drive us to the library to look up how many feet are between the bases of a baseball diamond." And today if you think about that, it's 30 seconds of someone running in the house typing it into Google and finding the answer. And I think that it's really amazing to think about how far, in particular that one dimension, we've come.

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CHRIS DURRANCE:

What's the most meaningful or the most useful piece of advice you ever had?

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MARISSA MAYER:

Well, I'll talk about the piece of advice that I like the most. I like to ask people what's the best piece of advice they've ever gotten, and one of those is, "Wait five more minutes." And I think "wait 4 or 5 more minutes" works in the proverbial sense. Something isn't going right in your career, is not going right in your project, wait five more minutes. Because the truth is you're in it, you can reason about it better than almost anyone can, and things will often turn around.

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If you're waiting for the bus, wait five more minutes, probably a bus will come. I think another piece of advice that I heard that I really loved is that if you don't have any shadows, you're not standing in the light. And I think that's just a really wonderful observation, and hopefully, especially with women, coaches them to lean in.

END TC: 00:37:00:00