



A VIRTUAL MEETING WITH WORLD'S BEST PROGRAMMERS

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As a creator of ACM-ICPC Programming Contest Training Site ACMSolver (<http://www.acmsolver.org>), I met several programmers worldwide from some renowned universities over the Internet, I could share knowledge and thinking with them and it became a pleasure for me, here goes some interviews with world's best programmers. I think it will encourage new programmers to enter into the world of programming Contest.

A Meeting with Steven Halim, National University of Singapore



Arefin : Hello Steven! How is life? Would you please give us a brief introduction about you, your current works and activities?

Steven : Hello I'm an Indonesian, currently 21 years old at the time this page is written. I'm studying Computer Science in National University of Singapore, NUS. My Honors Year Project (thesis) regarding human guided Tabu Search (a local search algorithm). I'm currently active in Christian campus ministry and my church. I have been interested in programming since 7 years ago. My first programming language is Visual Basic 4. Amazed with the ability to create 'windows' similar to other programs in Win 95, I become interested to explore more about visual programming. However, my competitive programming experience started 4 years ago when I joined local programming competition. That is the first time I realized the importance of "algorithm" underlying our codes. Switching from visual programming to learn basic algorithm and data structures leads me to be able to compete in several other programming competitions, including International School Software Competition 1999 @ NUS, Singapore and ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest 2001 @ NTU, also in Singapore.

I've never won a programming contest anyway, but I managed to get valuable experience from those several contests. Now programming and solving problems has become my hobby and when I have free time, sometimes you can see me thinking in front of my computer solving one or two problems from UVA website.

Arefin: What is the basic difference between "problem setter" and "problem solver"?

Steven: Assume that we are referring to the same set of problems...In mathematical notation, "problem setter" \supseteq "problem solver", or equivalently, "problem solver" is subset of "problem setter".

Arefin: What is your opinion about the programmers of Bangladesh?

Steven: I have known several Bangladeshi who contacted me through e-mails or msn. From my experience, Bangladeshi programmers are all very interested in programming and it will be a good asset for Bangladesh future in Information Technology.

Denis Koshman From Russia

PETROZAVODSK STATE UNIVERSITY



Arefin : Hi! headden! How is life? Would you please give us a brief introduction about you, your current works and activities?

Denis: My name is Denis Koshman from Russia, Petrozavodsk. 21 years old. I started programming on 8086 BASIC and Assembler when I was 10. Games were also important part of my life and remain so until now. At age of 12 I started programming C/C++ and never left this area, even now. Perl, PHP, Java, .Net...

whatever else got minds of some of my friends, all of these passed by without my attention and until there is still work to be done under C/C++, I am not going to leave this area. Life is good. Not as good as it was before my 2nd World Finals, but getting better. It's because I've lost an aim I headed towards for about 7 years. Just work seems not so fun for me, so I am looking for some achievement I could do and strive reaching it. Money never were my primary target. When professionalism reaches some threshold, your goals change as well. You become an artist who works for the art, rather than for cash. Cash, of course, is also very very important, at least to buy new brushes 😊

Arefin: Question about personal life, What is hobby / What do you do else programming or studying?

Denis: Well, I have wife Olga whom I love very much. And a dog Jarry whom we treat as our son, not just as a pet. It was very important for me to know they love me especially when I came from my 2nd Finals. The goal was lost, but I knew that I am not returning to nowhere and someone awaits me there. Parents of course too, but this is quite different. Please don't think this was another way of getting for some respect from someone, not at all! My hobby... Well, games (anything. quakes, UT, NFS, strategies). I used to play Starcraft almost as much (or even more) as I programmed at acm.uva.es. Also I like music (Enigm and alike, and Goa Trance especially, BTW it's the reason of my nickname at acm.uva.es, but I don't spend time just listening to music. I listen to it during whatever activities I do at my computer (except games which have their own sounds).

Lawrence Leung with from Hongkong



Arefin : Hi! Lawrence, Would you please tell us something about you and your life ?

Lawrence: My name is Lawrence Leung. But my username on uva judge is "..", so many people will write me email start with "Dear Mr .." 😊 I am now studying for my master degree in computer science and engineering at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. My research interest is Graph theory and algorithm. I start learning C programming in 2000. I participated in ACM Asia regional contest in 2001/2002. Unfortunately I only get 4th place(twice). It is not enough to put me in world final. Now I am retired from contest. I am a member of VOJ ALGORITHMIC TEAM(<http://acm.uva.es/problemset/algorithm.html>). Mostly I do the bug report to the judge and I am willing to write some programming problems for the judge.

Arefin: What is your method to get the top Rank ? How much time you spend for problem solving?

Lawrence: I don't have any magic to get top rank. I just keep solving then my rank comes up slowly. (My uva user id is 4 digits only, I registered the account almost 4 years ago) Of course, to keep solving so many problems, you have to pay time to learn many new thing. I have to read many reference books/papers/websites to find the method to solve. Sometimes I will make discussion with Vincent(uva id 5656), he is an intelligent programmer and also has a high rank. Making discussion with him helps me much. On average, every day I use 1 hour for solving problem. Luckily I am not so busy this year so I can

pay so much time a day. I think the time on problem solving will be decreased after I graduate from university and start my career.

Arefin: What is your main inspiration and goal?

Lawrence: Now my first goal is to get my master degree in coming few months. I think it ok to achieve this without big problem. My second goal is, get the first rank of uva 😊 I have fought for this for 4 years. I hope that can be done within 3 to 6 months. I also want to write some programming problems for uva.

Per Austrin from Sweden



Arefin: Hi! Per Austrin! How is life? Would you please give us a brief introduction about you, your current works and activities?

Austrin: I am currently (November 2004) 23 years old, living in Stockholm (Sweden (Europe)), and life is a bit too hectic but otherwise fine. Recently, our team placed second in the North Western European Regional of ICPC (which we won last year), earning us tickets to the World Finals in Shanghai next spring. Last year, in Prague, we placed second, so we have high hopes of getting a good position this year as well.

Arefin: What is your method to get the top Rank ? How much time you spend for problem solving?

Austrin: When I started solving problems at UVA, the chances that I would know how to solve a randomly chosen problem were pretty high, so I could basically just pick problems and solve them. But of course, all things come to an end, and sooner or later you run out of easy problems to solve. Nowadays I tend to read through a problem or two and put them somewhere in the back of my mind, and hopefully a solution will pop out after a while. And of course, it doesn't hurt to have vast amounts of spare time lying around. I've kind of run out of that by now, but I still try to squeeze in a few moments of problem solving every now and then (more than I should, I guess). Another good thing is having clever and experienced people around you to discuss things with as you learn to ``play the game", so to speak.

Arefin: Please make a comment for the new programmers.

Austrin: There's no use going somewhere if you are not going to enjoy the trip.

Concluding Remarks: Here I have tried out to make some interesting talks with world's best programmers. I thankful to the programmers who seriously have participated the conversation sessions over the Internet. But this is not the end rather it is the beginning, I wish many new programmers will come out time to time and I will take a chance to talk with them and bring them under lime light. May be that's the beauty of ACM-ICPC!