Podcast Title: *ACM Bytecast*
Episode Title: Maria Klawe

In this episode of *ACM Bytecast*, host Rashmi Mohan interviews Maria Klawe. After 14 years as the president of Harvey Mudd College, Maria knows a thing or two about engineering. Throughout her career, she has established herself as a mathematician, computer scientist, teacher, administrator, and vocal supporter of equity in academia and the tech industry. She is the recipient of numerous awards, holds 17 honorary doctorates, and - rumor has it - knows every student on the Harvey Mudd campus by name!

As the conversation gets underway, Rashmi asks Maria to introduce herself and her work. Maria explains her career shifts prior to taking up her post at Harvey Mudd; these shifts took her from IBM Research to various university posts. Most of Maria's career has been spent in academia, and mainly in leadership positions, but she has also interacted a great deal with industry. She originally intended to be a mathematician, but through a series of circumstances, she decided to pursue computer science, as well. The initially challenging transition provided the eventual opportunity for Maria to meet her husband, Nick, and to join him in industry as an IBM researcher. And ever since the transition, Maria has spent her career navigating two intersections: that of mathematics and computer science, and that of academia and industry.

Maria describes some of the ways in which industry seeks to capitalize on the academic space, and shares the personal details of why she as an academic found a foray into industry in her early career helpful. Not only were she and her colleagues able to help foster collaboration between academia and industry in Canada, but she herself was able to develop connections, focus on raising your children, gain career development unavailable in academic spaces, and ultimately position herself well to transition later into high level academic positions.

Maria has made a career of breaking glass ceilings, and has grown used to being the first woman in various roles. But many of her career steps - particularly those that put her in leading academic administrative roles - were motivated not merely by her pursuit of excellence in her fields. Rather, Maria is outspokenly committed to fostering diversity and inclusion in the math and computer science fields. She wants to demonstrate that things like gender and ethnicity have no bearing on a person's ability to excel, and ultimately, she wants to change not just the spheres of academic and industry, but the world.

And she is well on her way to doing so in ever-increasing ways. Maria details the ways in which she and her colleagues at Harvey Mudd have approached their efforts to foster diversity and inclusion, which centered on getting their whole community involved. She also shares about a current initiative listeners can consider becoming involved in (developed by Sathya Narayanan), and shares her optimism about how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the number of women in tech in the long term. On a final personal note, Maria shares an unexpected fact with listeners: she is a prolific watercolor artist, and even paints during some of her meetings!

Key Takeaways:
0:27 - Rashmi introduces today's guest, Maria Klawe.
1:03 - Rashmi asks Maria to share about herself and her career.

2:12 - Maria intended to be a mathematician, only later adding study in computer science.
5:45 - Maria took steps and roles in order to change the world.
7:26 - Was the transition from math into computer science seamless?
9:47 - Maria shares how computer science stands apart, and how it helped her meet Nick.
13:19 - Rashmi wonders about what areas of research most interested Maria.
16:29 - What is happening today between academia and industry?
18:04 - Part of why Maria and Nick transitioned to UCB was for their family.
21:37 - There were many benefits to Maria's early-career move into industry.
24:48 - Rashmi asks how Maria felt becoming Harvey Mudd's first female president.
28:12 - There were unexpected challenges adjusting to Maria's new role.
31:01 - The conversation turns to how Maria worked toward change at Harvey Mudd.
39:00 - What does Maria think about how the pandemic is impacting numbers of women in tech?
45:00 - There are ways for practitioners to get involved in initiatives for change.
49:52 - As a final note, Maria is a watercolor painter!

Links:
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