**A Personal Look Back and Forward at IEEE’s Ethics History**

**Walter L. Elden, P.E. (Ret)**

IEEE and SSIT Life Senior Member

w.elden@ieee.org

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**INTRODUCTION**

Recently, after speaking at a local IEEE Section Meeting on IEEE’s history of ethics, the Chair asked me:

***“Why, at your age and being a Life Senior Member of IEEE, are you spending so much of your time on this, when you could be out there playing golf or something else?”***

Well, I have devoted most of my past 60+ years, since becoming first AIEE and IRE Members back in college, towards understanding, applying, and supporting our Codes of Ethics, and have been one of the architects who created the IEEE Member Conduct Committee to provide both ethical discipline and support, I have felt that seeing that today since around 2000 our Board of Directors have placed restrictions on the Ethics and Member Conduct Committee to not provide ethics advice nor ethical support to its Members, I just could not walk away from something I, along with others, worked so hard to create. I just want to do what I can to correct this injustice and restore the EMCC back to what it originally, as the MCC then in 1978 was created to do.

Then, when I requested for Dr. Steve Unger, a Past IEEE Board Member and Ethics Committee Chair, whom I considered to have been my ethics mentor for over the past 50+ years in IEEE, to review and comment on one of my contributions to a SSIT Task Force, he wrote these prophetic remarks to me:

***“I admire you for having the stamina to take another stab at getting the IEEE to re-start ethics support. I think that the key element will be the extent to which some young IEEE members get excited enough to pick up the torch. In all the years since we got crushed in the late 90s, I can't recall ever receiving any inquiry from a young IEEE member about IEEE ethics support”.* Stephen H. Unger, 12-24/2015**

**IEEE’s Ethics History of the Past**

This IEEE Ethics History Repository, which I proposed and helped get started, houses key documents about how the IEEE first got started in ethics, the creation of the Member Conduct Committee, and now its replacement, the Ethics and Member Conduct Committee. This new EMCC, is now being restricted from giving ethics advice and ethical support by past and current IEEE Boards. The vast amount of written material in the Repository and provided links, shows that a lot has been written on the subject of ethics in the IEEE. It will be therefore helpful to future students, educators, researchers and practitioners to be able to come to one place to begin their learned work and not have to each conduct the extensive search which I did, to find the material they need. I hope the Repository will be utilized a lot for these purposes. I wish to thank Michel Geselowitz, Senior Director of the IEEE History Center, for supporting this Repository and to Nathan Brewer, Online Staff Member, for his technical assistance.

**IEEE’s Possible Future Ethics History**

We can speculate on where IEEE might go in the future in the ethics area. I will offer my opinions on this now. I offer three papers on this, discussed as follows.

**Paper1:**

[**How\_Internal\_Ethics\_Advice\_and\_Support\_Achieved\_a\_WIN\_WIN\_Outcome\_in\_an\_Employee\_Emloyer\_Dispute.docx**](http://ethw.org/images/9/9a/How_Internal_Ethics_Advice_and_Support_Achieved_a_WIN_WIN_Outcome_in_an_Employee_Emloyer_Dispute.docx) **‎**

In this writing, I share a personal experience I had while working in industry, where I was in a System Architect Supervisory position, and provided ethical support to a subordinate enginee, a Member of the IEEE, who had brought an ethical conflict to me for advice. I was able to go to Management, discuss the situation, point out where the ethics conflict existed and was successful in getting it resolved, in a WIN-WIN outcome. This shows that even within an employment situation, providing both ethics advice and ethical support can produce positive outcomes, not only for the employee but for the employer too. It is hoped that the IEEE Board of Directors will draw this same conclusion and reverse its current dual restrictions on the EMCC to not offer ethics advice or ethical support to its own Members.

**Paper 2:**

[**IEEE’s\_Board\_of\_Directors\_Need\_to\_Comply\_With\_Article\_10\_of\_Its\_Own\_Code\_of\_Ethics\_by\_Supporting\_its\_Ethical\_Engineers-Technologists.docx**](http://ethw.org/images/1/18/IEEE%E2%80%99s_Board_of_Directors_Need_to_Comply_With_Article_10_of_Its_Own_Code_of_Ethics_by_Supporting_its_Ethical_Engineers-Technologists.docx)

This writing was directed to the IEEE Board of Directors, by way of the current 2016 IEEE President, President-Elect, and Past President. It made the point that Canon 10 of the Code of Ethics applies to each IEEE Member, including Board Members, and to not support Members in upholding the IEEE Code of Ethics was a violation of this Canon 10. Therefore, it was hoped that the Board would see this and act to restore to the EMCC the charter to offer ethics advice and ethical support, as it was first established to do when the earlier MCC was created in 1978, which offered both for the next 20 years, successfully.

**Paper 3:**

[**A\_Strategy\_and\_an\_Alternative\_to\_the\_Ethics\_and\_Member\_Conduct\_Committee\_to\_Offer\_Advice\_and\_Support.docx**](http://ethw.org/images/f/f2/A_Strategy_and_an_Alternative_to_the_Ethics_and_Member_Conduct_Committee_to_Offer_Advice_and_Support.docx) **‎**

This final paper proposes an alternative to the EMCC, to offer ethics advice and ethical support, in the event that the IEEE Board of Directors do not take steps to restore these roles to the EMCC. The alternative would be a Conflict Resolution Committee already established under the Technical Activities Board, which could expand its current role and perform these important services for all of IEEE.

**CONCLUSION**

With the establishment of the new IEEE Ethics History Repository, I am hopeful that many Members will avail themselves of the vast number of papers and writings now in this one central place, become informed of IEEE’s changing roles in ethics advice and support, and work to have both of these services restored to be performed by IEEE’s Ethics and Member Conduct Committee. That is why I proposed and worked to create this Repository on IEEE’s Ethics History.