

Lyrics ©2001 Stephen Savitzky. Some Rights Reserved<sup>1</sup>.  
To the tune of *When I was a Boy* by Frank Hayes

### Stone knives and bearskins: the real story

When I was a lad our computer  
Had vacuum tubes and a drum  
And we wound paper tape for our input  
Between our forefinger and thumb.  
Back when smalltalk was sports and the  
weather  
And an object was what you could see  
And we watched Captain Video in black and  
white  
Before there was color TV.

And we walked seven miles to the school-  
house –  
It really was uphill both ways –  
Through weather in summer and winter,  
Back in the good old days.  
Back before fortran 77  
When the PC was only a fad *Nobody'll ever  
need more than 640K*  
And we entered our programs on punched  
cards  
When I was a lad.

When I was a lad all our networks  
Ran on modems and UUCP  
When the ARPANET had only sixteen nodes

And it didn't support FTP.  
Now you kids who think your T1 line  
Is fast, better watch what you say  
And consider the speed of a truck full of tapes  
As it barrels along the highway.

And we walked...  
Back when fortran was not even fortran IV  
And Unix was only a fad *For serious com-  
puting you need VMS*  
And we entered our programs on paper  
tape  
When I was a lad.

When I was a lad our IS shop  
Used mechanical sorters and such  
And we numbered our decks with a drum-  
card  
To protect them, though not very much  
Back when space travel was science fiction  
And a mainframe weighed fifty-five tons  
And we programmed in ones and in zeros  
\*with a hand-punch!\*

And we walked...  
Back when fortran was not even fortran II  
And the mainframe—Ha! Only a fad *we'll  
only ever sell six of 'em*  
And we entered our programs on plug-  
boards  
When I was a lad.

OK, the chronology is screwed up, it was only three miles, and I never actually programmed a plugboard (but our IS shop did). Everything else is true. Note that “vacuum” in the second line has three syllables.

“Only six computers will ever be sold in the commercial market” has been attributed to Howard Aiken of IBM. (reference<sup>2</sup>)

Also note that I'm about 10 years older than Frank Hayes, so I don't *have* to exaggerate.

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<sup>2</sup><<http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,44489,00.html>>