

Lyrics ©2001 Stephen Savitzky. Some Rights Reserved¹.
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. (reference²)

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

¹This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License.

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