

When I was a Lad

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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 computing 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 filled up the chad-box with ones.
 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 plugboards
 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.

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