

## Today's event

- Take a stroll through bits of George Farley's life: indulge him a little, please.
- Mainly chronologically
- I will largely ignore my many non-IT business ventures

## Where I came from to get here

- Born Glasgow September, 1942
- Came to Australia (Leicester Street, Carlton) 1952: aged 9

# Parkhead, Glasgow 1942 – The Forge



## Parkhead, Glasgow, 1942 - The Back



## My Early Education

- Taught by my 6 year-old sister to read: 1945, aged 3.
- Various Catholic Schools: 1947- 1956 (left at age 13).
- Geo Taylor & Staff (Night School) 1957-1960.

# Melbourne University

- First contact with MU: Wilson Hall after the fire July 1952

# Old Wilson Hall fire, 25 January 1952.



# Old Wilson Hall fire, 25 January 1952.



# Melbourne University

- Vladimir Kutts training during 1956 Olympics.
- Engineering Faculty 1961.
- Arts Faculty (Pure Maths) 1963
- Tagore's "The Sacrifice", 1964

## My Public Service Career

Worked for Victorian Railways: 1957-1960

Worked for PMG/Telstra: 1962-1963

Worked for Education Department: 1964-1965

From these I learned that there had to be a better way.

## Preoccupations up to “adulthood”

Sex, booze, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll.

Chess, cars, motor bikes, mathematics, reading.

Science Fiction, theatre (acting), poetry.

Money (the lack of it).

## 1958 – My first whiff of data processing

- Vic Railways - Power Sammas
- Basically a machine for punching holes in cards in a certain order which went through a tabulator and were printed out as facts and figures.

## KDF-6: EELM

- Golden Fleece: speed/method of hiring: wages
- Paper tape, magnetic tapes, 2 x 4k x 3 x 6 bit words, 160 column printer
- Ultra low-level language
- Serial processing

# KDF 6 (EELM) 1964 – 1 of 12



## Who was Who in my 1964 EDP world

- EDP Managers
- Programmers (Elite, scarce, well paid, mainly young men, "flyers")
- System engineers/programmers
- Air conditioning "experts"
- Operators
- Data Prep (girls)

## 1964 - What I designed and wrote

- Debtors Ledger
- Creditors Ledger
- General Ledger
- Share registry (rudimentary)
- I learned to read a Balance Sheet (more or less)

## 1965 – I become a “consultant”

- Datec poached me to work for ...
- My old Company – Golden Fleece
- PMG/Telstra (modelling exchanges in Fortran)
- Mercedes-Benz, Borg-Warner

## 1966 – I move to Adaps

- Adaps had an IBM 360/30
- Adaps agreed to let me write in COBOL
- Adaps taught me what “outsourcing” meant
- Adaps refused to let me work for Golden Fleece

# 1966 – The Big Issues

- High Level COBOL, RPG, Algol, Fortran, Vs  
...
- Low Level Autocoder, assembler
- Bespoke software Vs Packages
- Paper tape Vs punched cards

## 1967 – I return to Golden Fleece

- I'm a consultant programmer on their new ICL Model 4
- Everything is in COBOL
- I design and write their Heating Oil delivery suite

1967

- Atac (G Farley & Associates) founded on 14-July-1967.
- Richard Clews (an Oxford graduate and IT expert) tells me I'm mad "In a year or two all software will be written by users"

## 1967-1970 – I design and write ...

- Pathfinder
- TAB
- FindEx
- Heating Oil delivery system for Shell
- Various sub-systems for non-life insurance
- Share Registry (full system)

## Caddell, Segall, Farley, Monaghan - 1970



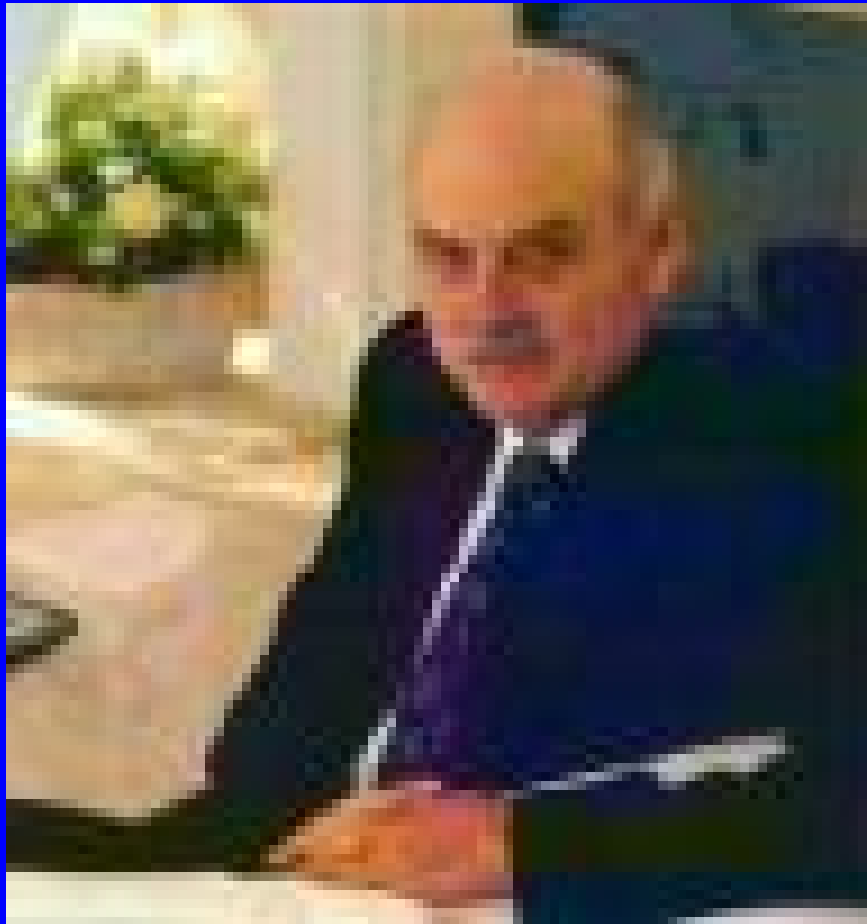
# Grace Hopper [COBOL] (not to scale)



## 1970 – Atac expands

- Codd convinces us that RDBMS is the way to go
- Hopper cements our faith in COBOL
- Atac starts processing for clients using the “night shift” at AVJ, IBM, Adaps

## Edgar Codd [Relational Databases]



# LEO III/20 Colonial Mutual Life, Melbourne.



## The 1970s rolls on

- The dangers of fixed price quotes – Ford & DEC
- IBM/Control Data settlement force IBM out of the service bureau business. I decide to get into it.
- JV with U&I to buy an IBM System 3

## The IBM System 3

- COBOL
- Rugged, low air-con needed
- Cheap
- Eventually processed for 7 Insurance Companies running 24 x 7: some operators passed out one hot summer's day.

## The IBM compatible – the FACOM

- Unbreakable – good & bad
- Cheap
- Appalling documentation
- Unable to admit to software bugs
- Bond Directors gazumped me

## The Franklin Mint tale

- Was paying IBM \$25,000+ per month – charging algorithm a nightmare
- I proposed a used System 3 fully installed for less than \$100,000
- We replaced a serial lookup with a binary search: over 100:1 improvement

# Genlsys

- Public Service Vs Private Enterprise
- Developed jointly for Bishopsgate, U&I, CIA, Oak, Shield.
- Eventually sold as a package to about 15 Insurance Companies

1976

- Atac designs its first Life Insurance system
- Atac attempts version #1 of it's "SQL for Users"
- Atac looks at micros, having missed the "mini" age more or less: Zilog Z80, Altos, CP/M.

1976 -1977

- Atac develops full Share Registry system package (HW and SW) on Altos
- I predict that the IBM PC will be a total flop
- We convert the Share Registry package to the IBM PC.

1977 - 1978

- My daughter is born
- I discover Buddhism and go to Nepal
- The world of not-for-profits is unveiled to me

1979

- 111 Little Lonsdale St
- IBM 370 155 located in Hamburg and shipped in
- JOL, ACEP, VS1
- Genlsys V written for 4 Insurance Companies
- Near death experience for Atac and a few individuals

## 1980 -1981 Expand, expand, expand

- I take a Sydney based partner
- Atac moves into the “old iron” business: IBM and DEC
- Atac starts a 2<sup>nd</sup> bureau in Sydney
- Atac grows to 150 employees

## 1982 – The split

- I discover from the Federal Government that I'm an entrepreneur
- Enterprise workshops
- Atac splits in half: I keep the southern bits
- The Dalai Lama's 1<sup>st</sup> visit to Australia

1982 -1986

- Dbase II, FoxPro, CPM, PC-DOS, Microsoft Vs IBM
- Two PC-DOS packages
  - EmmaA: SMB Financial Management
  - Stir: Fundraising/Membership for not-for-profits

## 1986-1991 AXIS

- Atac's BIG gamble
- AXIS – a total IT solution for Life Insurance Companies
- Cost? About \$10m
- Sales? 1.5
- Why? Wrong partner, MVS, UFO, not credible, under resourced selling effort

## 1992 – IBM/Amdahl

- Near new large Amdahl found in Sweden (ex Siemens)
- Cheap: \$2.5m
- IBM 370/155 decommissioned and sold for \$5,000
- The best HW decision ever: air con problems gone

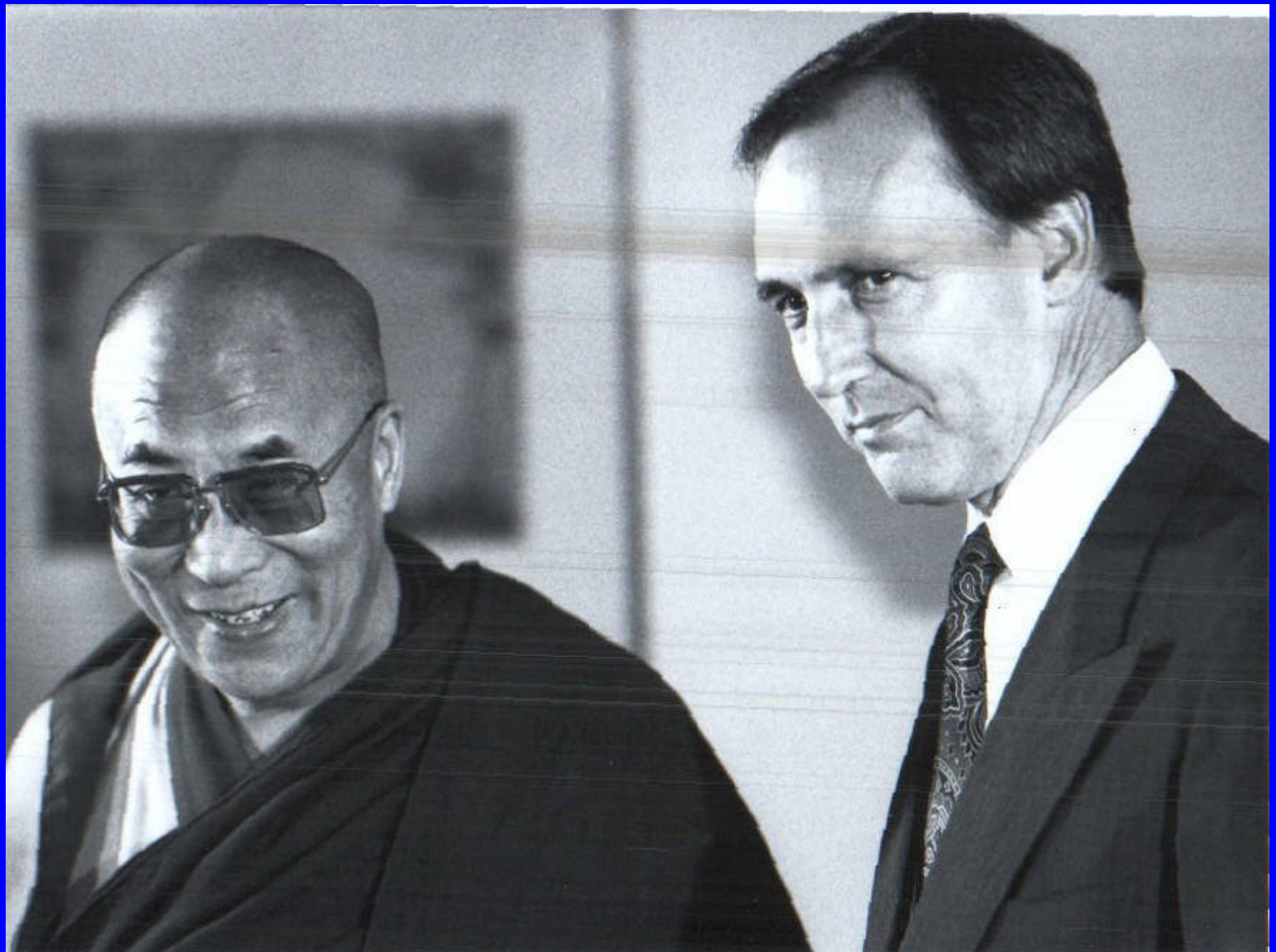
# The 370/155 Front Panel – The Last Light Show - 2 men to lift.



## 1992-1995

- Greeting card business
- Manufacturing, warehousing, distribution; sales analysis
- Decommissioning of a very old Burroughs mainframe
- Dalai Lama's 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Australia

## HH Dalai Lama & PM Paul Keating 1992



1996

- IBM back into the “service bureau” and outsourcing business
- Dalai Lama’s 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Australia
- Atac (sadly) decommissions its Amdahl mainframe

## 1997-1998

- Atac focuses on Barr data transport products: MVS and PC-DOS/Windows experience
- “Insight” designed: Atac’s first Windows product.
- Insight wins "Best New Australian Software" prize at the Melbourne PC Show: we sell 1,000 but make nothing!

1999

- Atac decides to become a 100% “virtual” organization
- Insight marketed on the Web: fewer numbers but profitable
- Focus on BARR: Office started in Singapore

## 2000 – DOT.COM and .NET

- On behalf of RMIT I lead the pitch for the Fed'l Govt BITS program.
- I raise \$15m of \$-for-\$ capital in 3 days but we still fail.
- Meetings with Eifel author & OO expert Bertrand Meyer at Monash: very excited about .NET
- Forced to reappraise Microsoft

## 2000-2007

- Barr sells successfully: helps to close many MVS sites
- Emtex (print stream transformation) successfully launched in Oz
- Dalai Lama's 4<sup>th</sup> visit to Australia
- GuruTaxi & OzLend under development: Web-based services

## Local, Oz-wide, International

- Date
- Time zones
- “pop in and see us next week“
- Currency
- Law, tax, bad debts, "sensitive" technology

# Atac Barr/Emtex sites - 2007



Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan, USA

## Farley's desk (Atac's HQ) 2007



# Predictions and Observations

- IBM PC
- Google (just another search engine)
- Design the data/files/RDBS: a flash UI is just a distraction
- EBooks
- Telecommuting/virtual office (Move information, not things or people).

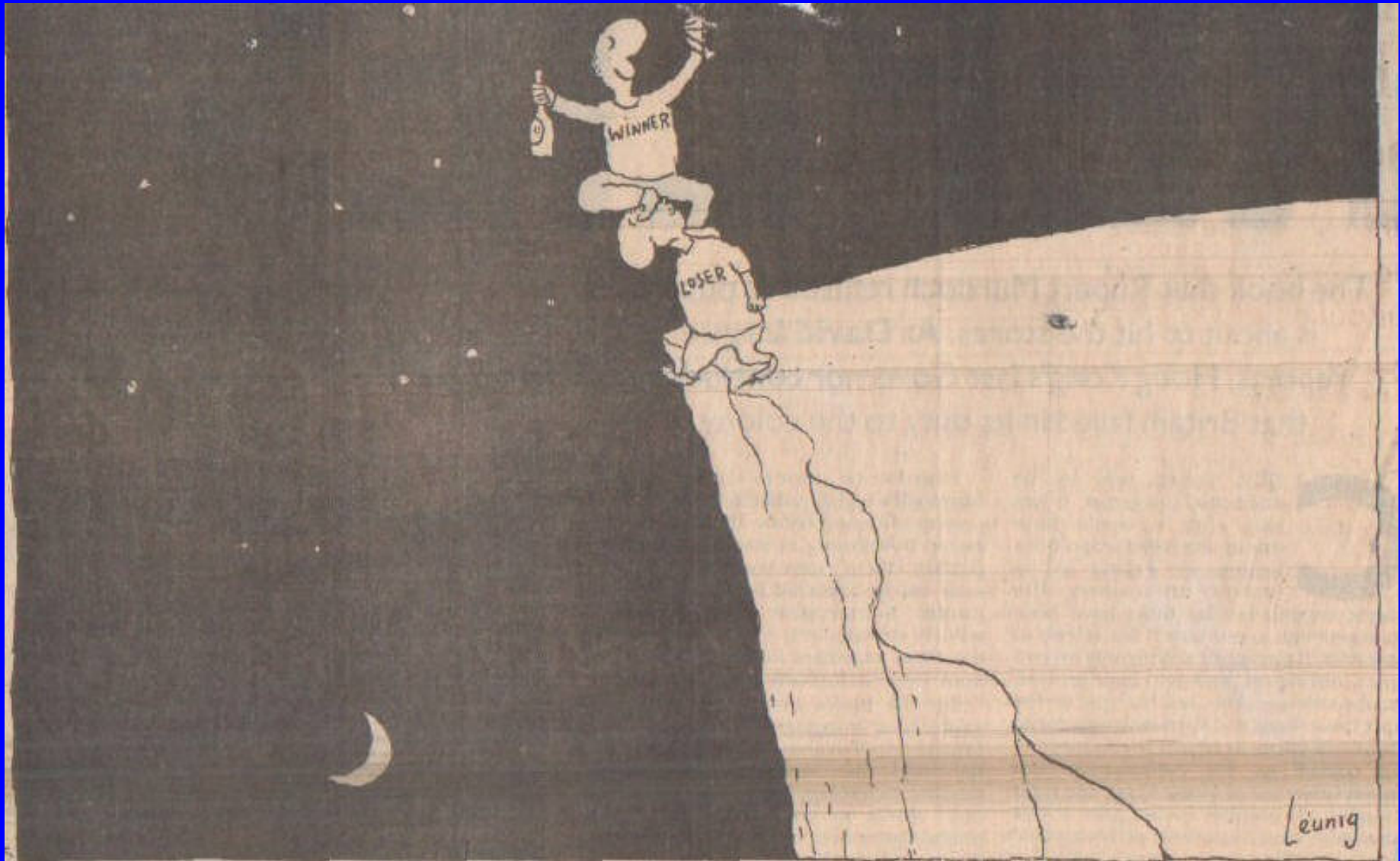
## The future

- Be Careful what you Measure:  
Temp/Rain/Wind; P&L/Balance-Sheet/  
Cash-Flow
- Population, resources, climate, travel
- CEBIT, XPLORE, AusTrade
- The Web: escape from the PC/Windows environment: viruses, scams, complexity
- ASP.NET, C#, Visual Studio

## A few quotes

- **Einstein:** Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler.
- **Max Born:** The belief that there is only one truth, and that oneself is in possession of it, is the root of all evil in the world
- **HH Dalai Lama:** Never give up. No matter what is happening. No matter what is going on around you. Never give up.

# Winners and Losers – Michael Leunig



# Thank you

- Thanks to NICTA and Norbert Nimmervoll for asking me to give this talk