CONTROL DATA IS PLEASED AND HONORED TO MAKE THIS CONTRIBUTION TODAY TO THE COMPUTER MUSEUM.

IT'S A COMMENTARY ON THE TECHNOLOGY OF OUR INDUSTRY THAT A COMPANY LIKE Ours -- STILL A VERY YOUNG COMPANY -- HAS NONETHELESS MATURED SO QUICKLY THAT OUR OWN EARLY EFFORTS ARE NOW IN THE CATEGORY OF RELIC AND FOSSIL. IT'S BEEN A REMARKABLE QUARTER-CENTURY, NOT ONLY FOR THOSE OF US AT CONTROL DATA, BUT FOR EVERYONE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PHENOMENON OF COMPUTERS.

LET ME EXPLAIN BRIEFLY HOW THIS MACHINE CAME ABOUT, AND WHAT IT MEANT TO US AT THE TIME.
IN JULY OF 1957, CONTROL DATA WAS INCORPORATED BY BILL NORRIS AND A SMALL GROUP OF ENGINEERS. THEIR INITIAL CAPITALIZATION WAS $600,000, WHICH THEY RAISED BY SELLING SHARES AT A DOLLAR APiece, AND THEY SET UP SHOP IN A WAREHOUSE JUST A FEW BLOCKS FROM WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW. THEIR PLAN WAS TO ATTRACT DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS FOR ENOUGH OPERATING REVENUE TO FUND DEVELOPMENT OF A LARGE SCALE COMPUTER.

BY SEPTEMBER, SEYMOUR CRAY, BOB KISCH AND PETE ZIMMER WERE DOING DESIGN WORK ON CIRCUITS. THEIR INITIAL IDEA WAS TO CREATE COMPONENTS FOR A VARIETY OF POSSIBLE PRODUCTS. BUT VERY QUICKLY THEY BECAME FASCINATED WITH THE IDEA OF DESIGNING A COMPUTER USING THE NEW TRANSISTOR TECHNOLOGY, RATHER THAN THE VACUUM TUBES THAT HAD BEEN STANDARD UP UNTIL THEN.
BY USING TRANSISTORS IN A NOVEL BUILDING BLOCK CONFIGURATION,
CONTROL DATA APPEARED TO HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO COMPETE IN THE
DIGITAL COMPUTER MARKET. ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE DISCOVERY, AND
ANXIOUS TO START WORK ON A COMPUTER DESIGN, THEY CONVinced
NORRIS OF ITS POTENTIAL.

IN OCTOBER OF 1957, A BUDGET FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
FULL-SCALE DATA PROCESSOR WAS APPROVED. DESIGN WORK BEGAN IN
NOvEMBER.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE NAVY'S BUREAU OF SHIPS ANNOUNCED IT WAS
SOLICITING BIDS FOR A LARGE-SCALE COMPUTER FOR ITS
POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL IN MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA. THE SCHOOL
NEEDED A COMPUTER WITH A LONG WORD LENGTH -- PREFERABLY
48-BITS, FLOATING POINT ARITHMETIC, AND SUBSTANTIAL COMPUTING
POWER. CONTROL DATA BELIEVED IT COULD WIN THE CONTRACT, AND IT
WAS AGREED THAT A PROPOSAL WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE BUREAU OF
SHIPS IMMEDIATELY.
A DESIGNATION WAS NEEDED OF THE PROPOSAL DOCUMENTS. Since plans called for a memory of more than 16,000 words and four tape drives, the name "CDC 1604 DATA PROCESSOR" was picked, and this would become the trademark of the company's first computer.

As 1957 came to a close, the engineers began work on a small demonstration unit, dubbed "LITTLE CHARACTER." Only one-tenth the size of the proposed 1604, it was to serve a test vehicle for the building-block concept.

This was now the midway point of Control Data's first fiscal year, and the company was experiencing some financial difficulties. Day to day expenses were draining the company's cash supply. To satisfy Bureau of Ships requirements, work continued on a design basis, but actual commitments for most of the production material were delayed. Obviously, this was a critical time for Control Data.
THE KEY EVENT CAME TWO MONTHS LATER, ON APRIL 10TH, WHEN THE
1604 DEMONSTRATION UNIT WAS TESTED. "LITTLE CHARACTER" WORKED.

HOWEVER, A DECISION HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE BY THE BUREAU OF
SHIPS AND BY NOW THE CASH WAS RUNNING OUT. EXPENSES WERE CUT
DRASTICALLY, AND EVERYONE IN MANAGEMENT TOOK A 50 PERCENT
SALARY CUT TO KEEP THE 1604 PROJECT ALIVE. NONETHELESS, IN
JUNE OF 1958, OUR BALANCE AT THE BANK WAS DOWN TO ZERO. THERE
WERE BILLS COMING IN THAT COULDN'T BE PAID, A PAYROLL THAT
WASN'T GOING TO BE MET. CONTROL DATA WAS LITERALLY HOURS AWAY
FROM FAILURE.

THEN, ON JUNE 27, 1958, THE BUREAU OF SHIPS ANNOUNCED ITS
DECISION: A $600,000 COMPUTER CONTRACT TO A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN
LITTLE COMPANY IN MINNEAPOLIS -- CONTROL DATA.
THE REST, AS YOU KNOW, IS HISTORY. THE 1604 WENT ON TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIAL COMPUTERS EVER BUILT, AND CONTROL DATA WENT FROM THAT LITTLE WAREHOUSE TO THE FORTUNE 100.

BUT TODAY I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO HAVE A LOOK BACK TO APRIL 10, 1958, AND THE MACHINE CONTROL DATA HAD EVERYTHING RIDING ON. LIKE MANY HIGHLY TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS, IT WAS REFERRED TO IN VERY HUMAN TERMS -- IN THIS INSTANCE "LITTLE CHARACTER."

AND, IT'S MY PLEASURE TO DONATE THIS BIT OF COMPUTER HISTORY -- ON BEHALF OF CONTROL DATA -- TO THE COMPUTER MUSEUM.