

The appended pages are from a document that was available for a time at the following URL:

http://tomapple.org/pdf/IBM_at_Central_Square_57.pdf

As we had no idea how long this assignment would last, and where I might be transferred next, we decided to sell the Titusville Road house. So for a few weeks, I commuted to Boston, driving up on Sunday evening, and returning on Friday evening. I stayed with Dorothy's father during the week. My first trip was eventful. It was November, 1956. While it had not yet snowed, it was cold and wet. The Massachusetts Turnpike, though started was not yet open. So I traveled state roads and US highways across Connecticut up to Massachusetts. The road was quite hilly, and as you went up the hill, you ascended into fog (low clouds) and it cleared as you descended into valleys. It was dark and unfamiliar and a memorable trip.

After Dorothy sold the house, we moved in with her father at 26 Alfred St in Woburn. Muriel and Laura had married, only Sylvia remained at home with her father. Sylvia was now eighteen and because of the limited space when we arrived, moved in with her older sister Alversa. Warner had been a mailman for many years and had become something of a recluse. When we moved in he moved into the small bedroom (Dorothy's old room) at the top of the stairs. He would come home from work, go to his bedroom and drink until he fell asleep. The house was pretty run down, and Dorothy set out to make it a little more livable for our growing family. The house was two story, three large rooms down (living room, dining room and kitchen, with a pantry and small bathroom, toilet only) and three rooms up (two large bedrooms, one small bedroom) and large bathroom with stairway to the attic off the bathroom. First, we reworked the bathroom replacing the sink, toilet and bathtub and tiling the bath and the floor. We put in a new hot water furnace system replacing the old furnace which heated the house only through a single large register in the entry hall. Finally we completely rebuilt the kitchen/pantry/bath complex. We removed the large old cast iron coal stove that was used for cooking and heating (including for hot water). Where the pantry/bath had been, we turned it into one long room, closing off one of the doors, removing the toilet, and installed a new electric stove, sink and refrigerator. We added a hot water heater in a small closet in the old kitchen and tiled the floor in both rooms. I built two room in the attic, which had a fairly normal ceiling, for the boy's bedroom. We also fixed up a new rear entrance off the half kitchen with porch and stairs, and retrofitted the front porch and stairs as well as doing other fixup around the house. For all this investment and our agreement to take over mortgage payments, Dorothy and her father agreed on deeding over half the house to her.

On my IBM duties, at first I was located in the Cambridge office reporting to Truman Hunter who in turn reported to Carl Reynolds, the Cambridge Branch Office Manager. I mention both because they will show up later in my IBM career. As the plan progressed, a manager was named, Dr. Martin Greenberg, who was about my age, but provided the academic credentials to work with the MIT staff. Mr. Hunter was later replaced by Dr. Jack Blackburn. The new MIT support group was housed at Central Square, about halfway between Harvard Square and MIT. We also had a small office with secretary off the 704 computer complex. It was about a 15 minute walk from Central Square to campus, and we generally chose to walk rather than deal with the difficulties of parking at either place during the day. We began hiring, one of the first programmer hires was Dick Hatch, who was to become a lifelong friend. Brian Gagnon was hired as a computer operator. Dr. John Rossoni and Kurt Eisman were also part of the group. Rossoni was assisting with the Vanguard program and Eisman was working on the "traveling salesman" problem. I hired another programmer, who, after a short period, it was obvious he just

wasn't going to make it as a programmer. I had to make my first real managerial decision. I decided to let him go, concluding we were wasting his time when he should be finding his true career. It was there at Central Square where I bought the two Chinese paintings from a vendor selling door to door that today reside on our living room wall.

Early on in my time there, I decided to go back to school. I met with a counselor at MIT. In going over my transcript from Purdue, he told me my grades weren't good enough to be accepted. I was surprised as I had ended up just shy of a B average (while working). He said they weren't interested in any grades but science and math. Perhaps that explains why there are few "captains of industry" among MIT graduates. Anyway I ended up taking a couple of courses at Northeastern in the evening on Probability and Statistics. That was the extent of my post graduate schooling.

At IBM, we had no particular assignment at first, but when Sputnik was sent into orbit by the Soviets, as the only experienced programmer, I was assigned to work with Smithsonian Lab astronomers to plot its course. We worked quickly, meaning long hours, they giving me formulas to translate into code and within a few days, the 704 was cranking out minute by minute plots on where the satellite could be seen in the night sky. This provided my one TV moment. Several of us, Dr Blackburn, the Harvard astronomer, and I were asked to discuss Sputnik and our computer program on Channel 2, the PBS station in Boston.

After that I was asked to mentor a couple of MIT students. In trying to come up with a project for them to develop their programming skills, I decided to build a simulator for the 709, which was about to be shipped. As the instruction set was based on the 704, it was a fairly simple but still significant program for them to design and build..

Another event that happened in the Cambridge office is worth note. A young fairly new salesman was called out to the MIT Lincoln Labs in Lexington, where he was asked about using the IBM 704 for a secret Air Force project. That turned out to be the SAGE system (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi_Automatic_Ground_Environment). The rumor at the time was that he sold 7 systems to the project and retired a wealthy young man. The actual SAGE system used a computer based on 704 technology but was a completely new design, so I don't know how true the story actually was.

In the meantime, events were happening on the home front. A few months after our arrival, David was born May 1, 1957 at the Woburn hospital, our fifth boy. Muriel, Dorothy's next youngest sister, had married Dick Durlin a couple of years earlier, a boy she had met while he was in the Navy. They had moved back to his home state of Michigan. She had had a baby, nicknamed Chip. From phone calls and letters it was clear she was desperately unhappy and homesick living amongst his family. It was a completely different culture in upstate Michigan where people worked during the summer and drew unemployment during the winter. Dorothy decided we should drive out to Michigan, pick her up and bring her back to live with us at Alfred Street until she could sort out her life. We did so during the summer of '57. Eventually Dick decided to move back to Woburn to be with her and lived with us, getting a job at a nearby gas station as a mechanic. Chris started school that fall.

Dorothy learned she was pregnant again. On June 25, 1958 Kathleen Apple was born. When I went into work the next day, someone had written on the blackboard "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, try, try again". Although we had loved each of the boys dearly when they arrived, it was the happiest day of my life, happy not for myself but for Dorothy who so long had wanted her baby girl. In those days, you had no foreknowledge of what gender the baby would be. So during each long pregnancy after Chris, Dorothy had looked forward hopefully to getting her girl. Now finally she had arrived. As our family was now complete in her mind, she visited Planned Parenthood and made sure. As I look around today, at the mothers out shopping with small families, I wonder with amazement at how Dorothy dealt with dragging that brood along with her when she went shopping.

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Muriel and Dick continued living in the house. The Ames had had a small library of old books in a cabinet in the dining room. Later we learned Dick had moved the books down to the cellar. The cellar was very damp and after several years the books were mostly destroyed. On one of our visits, we rescued a few of less damaged ones.