

George Glaser

George Glaser, 74, well-known and highly regarded information technology management consultant and advocate, died at his home in Los Altos, California, on Friday, March 17, 2006, from complications of Lewy Body Dementia. He was surrounded by his devoted and saddened family members.

George's special charm, caring nature and gentle wit will be sorely missed by those who remember his dedication to integrating then-new information technology into the business world, and his extensive volunteer services to the information technology profession.

George was born on September 26, 1931 in Wheeling, West Virginia, and he grew up in Weston, West Virginia and Bellaire, Ohio. He received his B.S. degree in electrical engineering magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame in 1952 and later studied business administration at the University of New Mexico.

Early in his career, he worked as an aviation electronics officer for the U.S. Navy (USNR), in engineering for Sandia Corporation in Albuquerque, and in product planning and management at Ampex Corporation in Silicon Valley.

In 1961 George joined McKinsey and Company, Inc., in San Francisco as a consultant, and he became a principal in 1967. He specialized in project and data processing management and economic modeling for clients in the United States, Canada, and Europe. In 1970 he foresaw the future of Silicon Valley and opened a McKinsey office in Palo Alto, California.

In 1973 George established an independent management consulting practice for large-scale, long-term corporate high tech projects. Also during this time he was managing partner of Centigram Enterprises in Silicon Valley. In 1977 he founded and was president and CEO of its successor Centigram Corporation, a voice recognition and response technology company. In 1981 he incorporated as George Glaser, Inc. in Los Altos, California, and continued his corporate project management practice until he retired in 2004.

George is noted for his service to the information technology profession as a whole, through his leadership, enthusiastic support, and tireless work for its associations and foundations. On learning of his passing, his colleagues have said, "When discussions might get a bit spirited, George could ask just the right question or make a thoughtful comment that helped the entire Board to focus on our priorities" and "George always had the best interests of the Club at the forefront rather than a personal agenda" and "The passing of George is a huge loss to the field of computer history and to CBF."

He was president of the board of the American Federation of Information Processing Societies (AFIPS) and chairman of the National Computer Conference (NCC) board from 1973 to 1975. His hallmark speech, "E3: the Role of the Computer" was delivered at the NCC in 1994. He was instrumental in restructuring the AFIPS biannual, regional Joint Computer Conferences into a successful annual National Computer Conference for vendors and information technology professionals. He was the General Chairman of the 1966 Fall Joint Computer Conference, held in San Francisco.

In 1980 he was appointed as the AFIPS delegate to the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) and was a trustee and then vice president of IFIP from 1982 to 1988. He was instrumental in establishing the IFIP Activity Management Board and the Marketing Committee, and in re-directing the mission and activities of the Congress Committee. In 1988 he persuaded the General Assembly of IFIP to consider the need for guidelines for member associations for codes of conduct and ethics. He worked closely with a number of IFIP Technical Committees, and he was a key host for World Computer Congress '89 in San Francisco. He was a holder of the IFIP Silver Core Award.

George was president and member of the board of directors of the Charles Babbage Foundation. According to CBF president Jim Cortada, George's contributions were extraordinary. "He chaired the Software History Taskforce that led the historical community to start research on the history of software. He guided CBF through its redefinition of its mission, strategy, and organizational structure in the early 2000s. He recruited trustees, raised money, and provided strong leadership for the board." CBF honored George by appointing him a Trustee Emeritus.

George was treasurer of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), 1968-1972, and council member-at-large, 1973-1975. He was a member of the Data Processing Management Association's (DPMA) Education Foundation Board of Regents from its founding in 1975 to 1977. He also was a Governor of the International Council for Computer Communication, 1998-2005.

He was one of the earliest members of the Churchill Club, Silicon Valley's business and technology forum, and served four full terms on the Club's Board of Directors beginning in 1995 leading to Board Emeritus status.

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He was author of numerous articles in professional journals and trade publications on various management and technical topics, and a frequent speaker at technical conferences. For example, he presented a paper, "Industry Transformation Through Information Technology: Dominant Designs as a Source of Competitive Advantage" at the IFIP Congress in 1994 and "Commercial Speech Recognition: Definitions, Capabilities and Applications" at the Jerusalem Conference on Information Technology in 1978.

His extensive collection of personal papers, mostly concerning the ACM, AFIPS, IFIP, DPMA, and the NCC, is archived at the Charles Babbage Institute for the History of

Information Technology where it will contribute mightily to the history of information technology.

George was devoted to the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and to following professional tennis. He enjoyed his extensive stamp collection that focuses on post-WW II European issues, United States stamps, and numerous small islands. The stamps of one island group, the Faroes, were so beautiful that George and his wife Karen traveled to enjoy the islands personally in 1998. He and Karen enjoyed travel, especially exploring the capitals of Europe and the sites of ancient civilizations. His travels included rafting on the Colorado River and crossing the border from Israel to Jordan on a local bus in 1978. He enjoyed playing semi-classical piano, backgammon, and tennis and, most of all, attending stand-up parties with his legions of friends. He and Karen, were patrons of the musical, theatrical, and fine arts as well.

George is survived by his wife of 26 years, Karen Duncan; his son John and his wife Denise and daughters Julia, Jessica, and Theresa of Boston; his son Michael and his wife Kate and daughters Marion, Johanna, and Sarah of Seward, AK; his daughter Elizabeth of Boston; and his sisters Katherine, Alice, and Elizabeth and their families, including eight nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his father Ralph George Glaser and his mother Katherine Sleigh Glaser of Westin, West Virginia.

The family held a private service for George at St Ann Chapel in Palo Alto which included a concert of sacred music by the Stanford Early Music Singers. A public Memorial Celebration of George's Life will be held on Saturday, April 1st, 3-6 pm, at the Computer History Museum, 1401 N. Shoreline, Mountain View, CA. In lieu of flowers, a memorial donation in George's name may be made to the Lewy Body Dementia Association (www.lewybodydementiaassociation.org) or Pathways Hospice Foundation (www.pathwayshealth.org).