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Cray

Für viele Wissenschaftler und Ingenieure stand sein Name gleichbedeutend mit schier unglaublicher Rechenleistung: der Cray Supercomputer. Heute jedoch ist jeder Desktop-Rechner hundertmal schneller als die erste Cray. Ein Blick zurück.

In 1992, when I first set foot in the Zachry Engineering Center at Texas A&M, I was drawn to the *centerpiece* of its massive lobby. There, housed behind glass, were the *distinctive* lines of a Cray supercomputer. It stood as tall as a person and had a circular footprint about fifteen feet around.

Beginning in the mid seventies and lasting for well over a *decade*, the name Cray was *synonymous* with the world's fastest supercomputers. They were the *brainchild* of designer Seymour Cray. Cray had his first introduction to computer-like equipment doing work for the U.S. Navy following the Second World War. His interests led him to start Control Data Corporation, which quickly became known for its high performance computers. In time, the company would *cease* to *focus* on building high-end machines. But not Seymour Cray. By the early seventies, he left Control Data to start Cray Research.

Cray computers were faster than any of the *competition*, making them *all the rage* in research communities. And they were expensive, running into the tens of millions of dollars. If a national laboratory or university could *cobble together* enough money to buy one, it was faced with carefully managing time on the *precious* resource. Texas A&M, like many schools, built a special place to *showcase* its Cray and, by extension, the school's engineering *prowess*.

Cray computers used the latest component technology. But Seymour Cray's real genius was in knowing how to get the many parts working in *unison*. Moving data and instructions to and from a computer's brain – the CPU – is as important as how fast the CPU processes that information. Cray proved to be a master at putting it all together.

By the 1990s, the *panache* of owning a Cray was *waning*. A number of low-end supercomputer makers entered the market with *competitive* products at a *fraction* of the cost. And by the beginning of the twenty-first century, PCs were powerful enough to handle most scientific computing. By any measure, today's standard desktop computers are faster and more powerful than those old Crays. If you're willing to spend about a thousand dollars, it's possible to buy a PC that's almost a hundred times faster than a *vintage* Cray.

I last saw the Cray in the Zachry Engineering Center while working in my office late one evening. A *moving company* was breaking it apart and *unceremoniously hauling* it away on *hand trucks*. The irony was not lost. A multimillion dollar monument that surely arrived with great fanfare was being treated like well worn student furniture. But it was an *oddly* fitting end. With the arrival of a new era comes the passing of an old. And, less poetically, when your computer's out of date, it's time to get a new one. ∎

Andy Boyd

www.cray.com/About/History.aspx
Mehr über die Geschichte der Cray und ihres Erfinders.

old	
removal firm	
without ceremony carrying	
handcarts	
highlight strangely characteristic	
*see list … equivalent	
idea	
stop	
concentrate	
rivals … the big thing	
piece together	
valuable	
present	
expertise	
harmony	
flair	
fading away	
inexpensive	
tiny part	

all the rage	*der letzte Schrei, angesagt*
brainchild	*Idee, geistiges Kind*
cease, to	*beenden, einstellen*
centerpiece	*Herzstück, Kernstück*
cobble together, to	*zusammenstoppeln*
competition	*Konkurrenz, Wettbewerb*
competitive	*konkurrenzfähig*
decade	*Jahrzehnt*
distinctive	*unverwechselbar, markant*
focus, to	*konzentrieren, richten*
fraction	*Bruchteil*
hand truck	*Handkarren, Sackkarre*
haul, to	*transportieren, zerren*
moving company	*Spedition*
oddly	*seltsamerweise*
panache	*Großtuerei, Elan*
precious	*kostbar, wertvoll*
prowess	*Können, Fähigkeiten*
showcase, to	*groß herausstellen, präsentieren*
synonymous	*gleichbedeutend*
unceremoniously	*kurzerhand, ungezwungen*
unison	*Einklang, Gleichklang*
vintage	*alt, altmodisch*
wane, to	*abnehmen, abflauen*