Gooding, Idaho, is an old railroad town, a tight grid of buildings organized not by the point of the compass but around the Union Pacific tracks. The land is a rugged volcanic soil that bakes to a fine gray powder during the hot summers. Some 20 miles to the northwest sits a series of volcano cones that are now known as the Craters of the Moon National Monument. To the north are the rugged Sawtooth Mountains. A century ago, this land attracted scores of young families who were hoping to make a prosperous life.

Two generations later, when the country was fighting a world war, the sons and daughters of Gooding left town on those Union Pacific Tracks. Some were patriotic. Some were pulled by the excitement of war. Some merely saw more opportunity in the big industrial centers of the two coasts. Many of these young people left town with some basic technical skills they had gained by working on a potato farm, by playing with a radio set, or by working on the local electrical co-op. This exodus was repeated in the other small towns across the country: Pueblo, Colorado; Burlington, Iowa; Climax, Nebraska; Flandreau, South Dakota; Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin; Yakima, Washington; Big Bend Nebraska; and Casper, Wyoming. Among these emigrants were the founders of the modern computer industry: Robert Noyce, Jack Kilby, Howard Aiken, David Packard, and Gene Amdahl.

The distinguished son of Gooding was Frank Cary. Cary was the chief executive of IBM from 1973 to 1981 and the chairman of the IBM board from 1973 to 1983. He is generally remembered for introducing the original IBM PC, a computer that many company executives resisted. He died 1 January of this year, just as this magazine was going to press.

By considering Cary in the context of his small town peers, we’re reminded that the electronic computer was heavily influenced by people who were born in rural areas and raised during the Great Depression. Jack Kilby, the only engineer to win a Nobel Prize, is perhaps the most prominent example of this phenomenon. At the same time, this rural cohort also included the early business leaders of the industry, such as Frank Cary. At a more humble level, it also included my father, who was raised in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

When this magazine was founded, it dealt primarily with the history of computing technology. Over the years, it has expanded its scope to include the computer industry. Increasingly, we have come to see the two subjects as tightly related. Many of the founders of this industry—including pioneers like Herman Hollerith—were originally engineers. Few of the technical advances in computer science could have been done without the support of the industry.

In this issue, we return to a subject that combines the topics of technology and business—the company Bolt Beranek and Newman (BBN). Guest editors Dave Walden and Ray Nickerson have assembled a new collection of articles that describe the technical accomplishments of BBN and its contributions to the modern Internet. Their work forms a companion to the *Annals*’ April–June 2005 special issue on BBN. That issue considered BBN as a business institution. The articles in this issue focus on technical themes.

Many of the accomplishments described in these pages were completed at roughly the same time that Frank Cary was pushing IBM to build its PC. The structured world of IBM was very different from the open atmosphere of BBN.

While working on this issue, Dave Walden told me that BBN designed its logo to be the inverse of IBM’s symbol and thereby communicate the idea that BBN was the antithesis of IBM. Yet, I hope that he and Ray Nickerson will not mind sharing a little of the spotlight with Frank Cary. Dave and Ray are a generation removed from Cary, but Dave came from rural California and Ray was born in Bangor, Maine. Like Cary, they have spent their careers working in this field that demands both technical skills and business acumen. Their two companies may have appeared to be quite different. One was a large New York corporation, while the other was a small Boston company with the atmosphere of academia. Yet, as the articles in this issue will attest, they both, in their own way, successfully combined the business and technical skills that were needed for success.

Readers may contact David Alan Grier at grier@gwu.edu.