



Life After HP

For Bob Farquhar the Medium is the Message

Old newspapermen never die; they just get recycled, or so the saying goes. But retiree Bob Farquhar, former vice president of Media Industry Marketing for Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), may prefer the word "reinvent." Farquhar says he is a newspaper editor who got hooked on the digital dimension. Since he left Oklahoma City for Maynard, Mass., in 1986, technology has trumped the printed word. His path, though, may be coming full circle.



Bob Farquhar

During his 27 years in the newspaper business, Farquhar was fascinated by the power of online content. As a user of DEC equipment and software, Farquhar automated the newsroom at *The Oklahoman* in Oklahoma City and spearheaded a print revolution by digitizing libraries of news stories.

A big fan of DEC, Farquhar became the president of the DEC Newspaper Computer Users group and caught the eye of Bob Hughes, DEC's vice president of Industry Marketing, who asked him to leave the Midwest for snowy New England and a career in high tech. "It's a shock I've never gotten over," Farquhar readily admits, but adds that it was the right move at the right time, both on a professional and personal level.

At DEC, he found professional challenge and growth. In New England he found excellent medical care for his son, who suffers from a rare medical condition. Doomed by doctors at age four, Farquhar's son is now 37 "and can put me to shame on the golf course," Farquhar says. He "salutes" HP for providing DEC retirees with great healthcare benefits that have helped his family tremendously.

In his DEC job in Industry Marketing, Farquhar and his team learned to recruit partners—200 of them—to complement DEC's technology. He put together an integration team of 16 people that won seven contracts in two years. He says Ken Olsen used to call him "the newspaper guy" and jokes that Olsen never cared for marketing, but tolerated it as a necessity to help sell DEC's computer systems.

He recalls being asked to interview a finance administrator, a position he wasn't convinced he needed. The woman was strong, assertive and "the best thing that ever happened to the group," he says. Farquhar and the woman he eventually hired, Chi Potter, have remained friends. He's so fascinated with how Potter has reinvented herself that he is writing a book about how she overcame war, hurricanes, family illness and a culture that favored marriage over education for women to become a success in every aspect of her life.

Potter, who retired from HP in 2007 after 27 years of service, immigrated from Vietnam, holds advanced degrees, managed finances for HP and has reinvented herself as a teacher of Vietnamese dance.

Farquhar retired from DEC in 1998 and now runs his own consulting company helping clients create business plans, find suitable technology partners and create user groups. At the same time, he is working on the book and enjoying his first love, the printed word. He and Potter spend at least three hours each week on the book and according to Farquhar, the research is 90 percent complete. The writing will take a bit longer.

Although he's a long way from the newsroom in Oklahoma City, Farquhar is still primarily a writer at heart. "My e-mails show that," he says. "They are too long. I have a dying need to tell it all."

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