

## Operating System/360 1965-1972

The not-unexpected passing away of OS/360, in its 21st release, was announced in every major city of the world on August 2, 1972 by its guardian, IBM. With the statement of functional stabilization (a corporate euphemism for euthanasia), OS joined the ranks of IBSYS, SOS, and IOCS, collateral ancestors of the deceased. Following the announcement of April 7, 1964 of its impending birth, OS was conceived in Poughkeepsie on April 8 of the same year. The gestation was long and difficult, and it was widely reported at the time that miscarriage was avoided only by the careful attention of a large medical team. Supporting evidence for this conjecture was provided by the number of headless bodies observed floating down the Hudson River during this period.

OS, originally intended to weigh 6K and to be nurtured in a 16K cradle, displayed all the characteristics of its parent and grew in an almost uncontrollable fashion, despite strenuous efforts to control the birth-weight of the progeny.

The offspring first saw the light of day in December 1965 and the birth announcement recorded a weight of 64K. It rapidly became apparent that OS, in spite of its unusual size was more than normally subject to childhood diseases. For a long period, this weak and sickly baby hovered close to death despite almost continuous transformations and major transplants of several vital organs. Many experts are of the opinion that the huge weight of OS at birth contributed greatly to its early ill health. At the age of 3, OS began to show signs of long-term survival and entered a period of adolescence. During this time, it demonstrated an unusual capacity for self-reproduction. By a process known technically as "System Generation" ( a variety of the biological process known as parthenogenesis, normally found only in certain insects, such as wasps), OS was able to manifest itself in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes. All of these were closely related and displayed the same genetic deficiencies, such as excessive size and poor health. Although self-reproduction was theoretically possible in 6 to 8 hours, most cases took 3 to 6 months to attain reasonable health.

During adolescence, OS became increasingly complex, due mainly to the very large number of organ transplants. As a result, temporary incapacity to successfully reproduce often occurred. This complexity led also to obesity of a scale never before encountered, a condition which is widely believed to have been the major cause of death. In its prime OS achieved a hitherto unprecedented size and, like the cowbird, kept growing until it filled its environment. This is believed to have been a significant factor in the growth of its corporate parent.

During its mature years, OS was apparently in good health. However, almost continual repair since birth has taken its toll, and it became apparent the OS had reached the level of its incompetence. Indeed, usually reliable sources indicate that it had already been promoted at least one level above that.

OS is survived by two lineal descendants, OS/VS1 and OS/VS2. It will be mourned by its many friends and particularly by the over 10,000 system programmers throughout the world who owe their jobs to its existence.

Funeral arrangements have not been released by IBM, but OS is expected to lie in state in a large number of 360s and 370s for at least two years. Memorial services are being arranged by GUIDE and SHARE, but details are incomplete at this time.

Final interment will be in the Smithsonian Institution.

D. A. Jardine (OK) August 9, 1972