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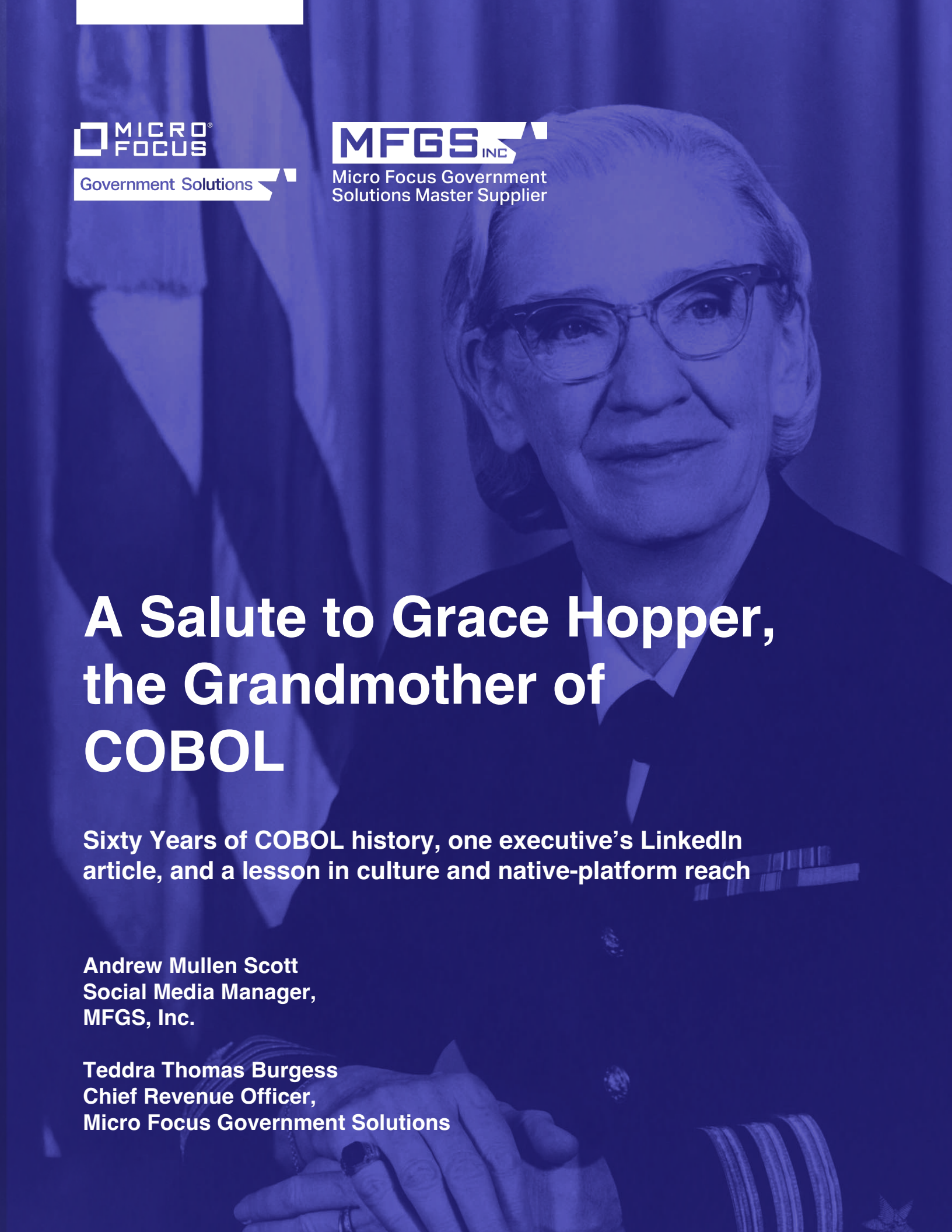


A Salute to Grace Hopper, the Grandmother of COBOL

Sixty Years of COBOL history, one executive's LinkedIn article, and a lesson in culture and native-platform reach

Andrew Mullen Scott
Social Media Manager,
MFGS, Inc.

Teddra Thomas Burgess
Chief Revenue Officer,
Micro Focus Government Solutions

GOAL

In December 2019, two anniversaries converged on the same date: the birthday of Rear Admiral Grace Hopper — the "grandmother of COBOL" — and the 60th anniversary of COBOL itself, the business-critical language Micro Focus has stewarded since developing its COBOL compiler in 1976, and one still quietly running many of the federal, state, and local government systems MFGS, Inc. supports today.

Rather than mark the occasion with a standard corporate anniversary post, Teddra and I built a narrative around a single authored LinkedIn article, "A Salute to Grace Hopper, the Grandmother of COBOL," published under her own byline that paired her established platform on women in technology with a connection to Hopper's legacy that Micro Focus's own COBOL heritage made directly relevant. The goal was to cultivate Teddra's individual thought leadership while tying that heritage to Hopper's own story, rather than let the anniversary pass as an internal-only milestone.

OBJECTIVES

- Cultivate personal thought leadership for Teddra Thomas Burgess, Chief Revenue Officer of Micro Focus Government Solutions, anchored in her established platform around women in technology
- Promote Micro Focus's underlying connection to Hopper's legacy through three anchor points: her birthday, COBOL's 60th anniversary as a Micro Focus-led celebration, and Micro Focus's own government COBOL modernization work
- Ground the tribute in specific public-sector proof points — federal agencies like the Small Business Administration and state and local governments like the City of Miami — rather than abstract corporate history

STRATEGY & PROGRAM DETAILS

Anchoring the Story to a Personal Platform, Not a Corporate Channel

We wrote and published the piece under Teddra's own LinkedIn byline rather than through a Micro Focus corporate channel. Teddra had already built a public reputation around women in technology, so a Hopper tribute was a natural extension of a platform she owned — not a topic being grafted onto her voice for the occasion. That distinction mattered for credibility: the piece could speak with the authority of someone who had a genuine, pre-existing stake in the subject.

Weaving Micro Focus's COBOL Heritage Into Hopper's Own Story

Rather than treat Hopper's history and Micro Focus's business as two separate threads, we traced a direct line between them: Hopper's role at the 1959 CODASYL conference and her FLOW-MATIC language as the technical basis for COBOL, through to Micro Focus's own stewardship of the COBOL compiler since 1976. Specific, named public-sector modernization work — including federal and local government COBOL systems — grounded that lineage in current and relevant business rather than nostalgia alone.

Publishing Natively, Not Linking Out

I made a deliberate strategic recommendation to publish the piece as a native LinkedIn long-form article rather than a company blog post promoted with an outbound link. LinkedIn's algorithm has long rewarded content that keeps users

on-platform — long-form articles, documents, and video — over posts that route traffic externally. Publishing natively wasn't a formatting afterthought; it was a proactive bet, based on prior platform experience, that the format itself would potentially earn distribution reach an off-platform link never could.

KEY FINDINGS / RESULTS

As a single-authored article the piece generated:

75,000+	14,270	686	819
Total post reach	Reactions	Comments	Shares

Registration & Engagement Breakdown

Metric	Result
Total post reach	75,000+
Reactions	14,270
Comments	686
Shares	819
Total engagement (reactions + comments + shares)	15,775
Engagement rate (reactions ÷ reach)	~19%
Engagement rate (total engagement ÷ reach)	~21%
Profile views, two-week window vs. prior average	+883%

A Broad, Cross-Industry Audience

Engagement came from a wide range of voices, not a narrow product or industry audience: working COBOL programmers reflecting on their own careers, technology executives and consultants, military veterans connecting Hopper's Navy service to her technical legacy, and self-identified women in technology citing her as a personal influence. That breadth is itself a signal that the piece resonated as a genuine cultural moment, not just a promotional post that happened to perform well.

Tapping a Real Cultural Zeitgeist

Part of what made that breadth possible is that Hopper wasn't purely an internal industry figure to begin with. She had already crossed into mainstream recognition most technologists never reach: her 1986 appearance on Late Night with David Letterman introduced her to a national television audience years before her death, and her name now anchors the Grace Hopper Celebration (the largest annual gathering of women technologists in the world) as well as the Navy destroyer USS Hopper. She occupied rare territory: a public-sector figure with genuine celebrity crossover. This piece wasn't publishing COBOL history to a COBOL audience; it was tapping a cultural icon who happened to also be a government technologist which was almost certainly why engagement extended so far past a narrow product or industry readership.

2026 RETROSPECTIVE: TODAY'S BENCHMARKS + AN EARLY, UNPLANNED WIN FOR AEO

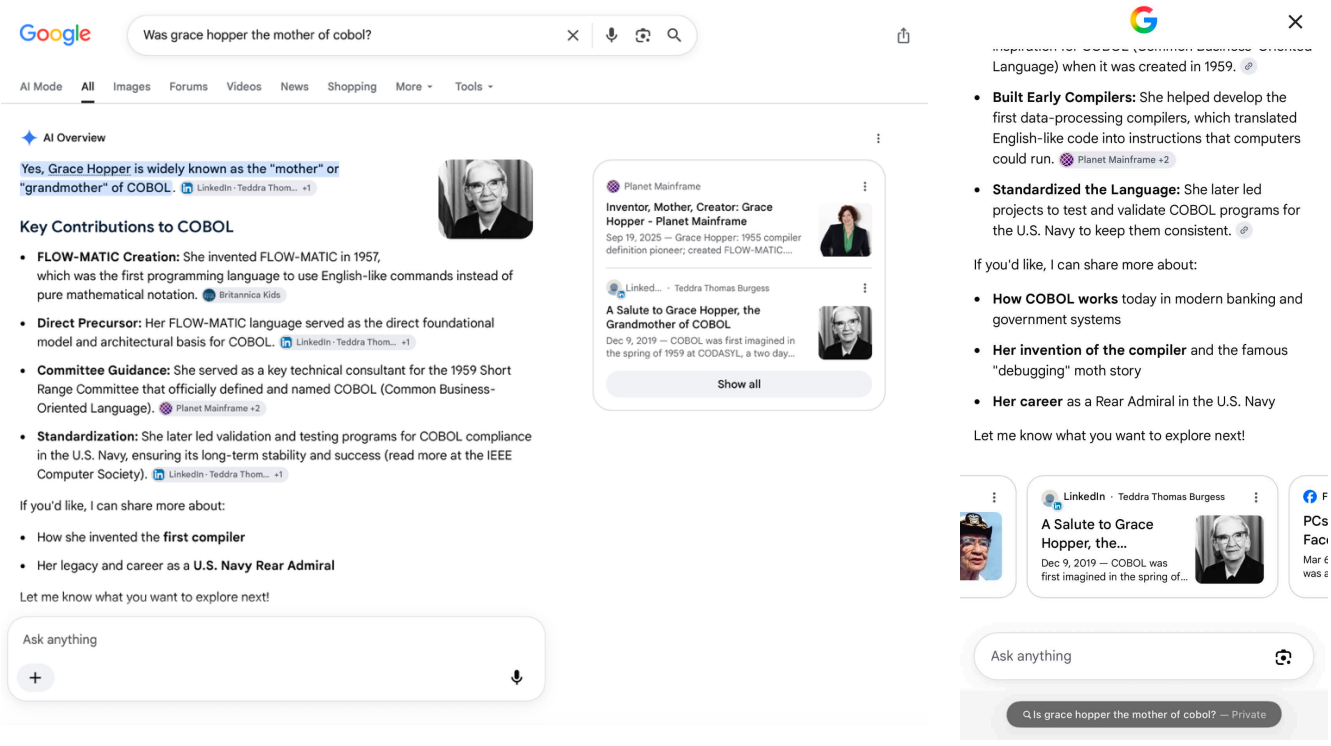
Seven years after publication, the piece continues to surface as a named source in Google's AI Overviews which are the AI-generated summaries that now sit above traditional search results for many queries. Confirmed appearances, across both desktop and mobile search, include:

- "grace hopper cobol mother"
- "Was grace hopper the mother of cobol?"
- "Is grace hopper the mother of cobol?"

For each, Google names Teddra's LinkedIn article directly by title and original December 2019 publish date in the same source set as Britannica, IEEE Computer Society, and Planet Mainframe. The piece also continues to surface as a standalone organic result for related searches, title and date intact.

This wasn't something the piece was built for. **Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)** — writing to be cited by generative AI systems rather than just ranked by traditional search — didn't exist as a discipline in 2019. Durable, well-sourced writing on a subject with thin competing coverage earned this piece a lasting seat in that emerging discipline years before it had a name.

The piece also holds up against current general performance standards, not just historical ones. Long-form LinkedIn articles today typically run a 1–3% engagement rate (ContentIn, 2026), a bar that has generally risen since 2019 as the platform and its algorithm have matured. Measured against that current benchmark, the piece's original ~19% reactions-only engagement rate still lands 6x–19x above typical performance for the format which is evidence the result wasn't just strong for its era, but would still be considered an outlier today.



Google AI Overviews citing the article by name, author, and publish date — desktop and mobile, six years post-launch.

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

2020 MarCom Gold Award

The piece received a 2020 MarCom Gold Award, administered by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals, which recognizes excellence in marketing and communications work from across the globe. The program attracts over 6,500 print and digital submissions annually from dozens of countries across the globe – only a third of which rank high enough to receive award designation.

PARTNERS

MFGS, Inc. / Micro Focus: Program led by Andrew M. Scott (Social Media Manager), in partnership with Teddra Thomas Burgess (Chief Revenue Officer, Micro Focus Government Solutions), who served as the featured author and thought leadership voice.

A Salute to Grace Hopper, the Grandmother of COBOL

Teddra Thomas Burgess
Fractional CRO & GTM Architect for public-sector tech | I scale AI + cyber companies and the executives who lead them | Ex-...

December 9, 2019

Today, I'm celebrating a very special birthday of an incredible American computer scientist and Rear Admiral, whose innovative mind helped to build some of our foundational computer languages. Her life and career continues to inspire women in technology and encourage women to consider careers in technology.

Happy birthday, Grace Hopper, who was born this day in 1906!

Celebrating COBOL @ 60

Not only is today Hopper's birthday, but this year also marks a very special occasion as the Micro Focus community celebrates the 60th Anniversary of information technology's most enduring business language, **COBOL - the Common Business-Oriented Language**. Known for its innovation, portability, readability and business-centricity, programs written in the programming language are still quietly running some of the world's largest companies and powering our nation's public sector.

The language has adapted to a changing IT landscape over the decades, and it has been constantly improved upon to incorporate innovations and support new standards, enabling enterprises to modernize while helping the language remain viable.

Since starting with the development of a COBOL compiler in 1976, Micro Focus has spearheaded the evolution and innovation of the language and the modern technology that supports it. Micro Focus Government Solutions and MFGS, Inc. **continues that commitment** to COBOL's bedrock business processing to leverage digital transformation in areas of the public sector, from supporting Federal agencies like the **Small Business Administration**, to state and local agencies like the **City of Miami**.

A Language Built on Public Sector Innovation and One Woman's Influence

We're extremely proud to be part of such a long standing source of modernization. The very origins of COBOL come from fresh, innovative minds within the public sector itself! Created in 1959 as a U.S. Department of Defense project to assist data processing, the revolutionary language was truly built to last. COBOL was first imagined in the spring of 1959 at **CODASYL**, a two day conference that brought together computer experts from across industry and government.

And one of the key actors during this pivotal movement was Grace Hopper, affectionately referred to as "the (grand)mother of COBOL" for her previous coding work that served as a precursor to the language as well as her instrumental guidance in the language's creation and expansion. Hopper served as a technical consultant to the conference, and many of her former employees served on the short-term committee that defined the new language. COBOL extended Hopper's FLOW-MATIC language.

Hopper had an adamant belief that programs should be written in a language that was close to English (rather than in machine code). According to Hopper, "programming is more than an important practical art. It is also a gigantic undertaking in the foundations of knowledge."

> "Programming is more than an important practical art. It is also a gigantic undertaking in the foundations of knowledge." - Rear Adm. Grace Hopper

Hopper went on to serve as the director of the Navy Programming Languages Group in the Navy's Office of Information Systems Planning from 1967 to 1977 and was promoted to the rank of captain in 1973. She developed validation software for COBOL and its compiler as part of a COBOL standardization program for the entire Navy.

A Legacy Beyond COBOL, Inspiring Women in Tech

Hopper first joined the Navy during World War II and was assigned to program the Mark I computer. After the war, Hopper remained with the Navy as a reserve officer. As a research fellow at Harvard, she worked with the Mark II and Mark III computers. Although she originally retired from the Naval Reserve in 1966, her pioneering computer work on languages like COBOL meant that she would be recalled to active duty—at the age of 60—to tackle standardizing communication between different computer languages. She would remain with the Navy for 19 more years until retiring in 1986 (at age 79) as a rear admiral as well as the oldest serving officer in the service.

For her lifetime of accomplishments, Hopper was elected a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (1962), was named the first computer science Man of the Year by the Data Processing Management Association (1969), and was awarded the National Medal of Technology (1991) — becoming the first female individual recipient of the honor. She was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2016).

Today, future women in tech have the opportunity to participate in the **Grace Hopper Program at Fullstack Academy**, an immersive software engineering course for women with no upfront tuition costs. The program provides world-class education with an advanced curriculum developed and taught by experienced instructors.

And every year, women technologists in computing convene at the **Grace Hopper Celebration**, presented by AnitaB.org and the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), to highlight the contributions of women to computing.

Hopper once said, "A ship in port is safe, but that is not what ships are for. Sail out to sea and do new things." She certainly did and her incredible legacy lives on.

> "Sail out to sea and do new things." - Rear Adm. Grace Hopper

Comments

14,270 · 686 comments

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John Thomasson · 3rd+ — Retired HR Director at Pilgrim's — 6y
She was an amazing brain with a great attitude.
Like | Reply

Harsha Sastry · 2nd — Helping Choose One when Three Options ... — 6y
Wonderful Insights
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Rajendra Pradhan · 3rd+ — PSM1 certified Mainframe professional ha... — 6y
I am a COBOL programmer. I made a living being so. My salute to her and definitely I need her blessings to do well in the years to come in my career being a COBOL programmer.
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Mary Walling · 3rd+ — METRIEDX Technical Marketing Specialist -... — 6y
Mike met her! She gave a talk at the Constitution Model Shipwrights Guild when Mike was a member. Happy New Year!
Like | Reply

John Thomasson · 3rd+ — Retired HR Director at Pilgrim's — 6y
She was an amazing brain with a great attitude.
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Like | Reply

Dick Stagnone · 1st · 3rd+ — Law School — 6y
Years ago there was a great interview with her on 60 Minutes
Like | Reply

Max Patel · 3rd+ — Senior Business Analyst/Consultant - ERP|... — 6y
What a remarkable lady!
Like | Reply

Donna Hussain CBCP, MBCI · 3rd+ — Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Ma... — 6y
She was an inspiration to all of us who were young women entering the field. I started out on a System 3 15/D with Cobol and RPG 2.
Like | Reply · 1 reply

Mark Carroll, MBCP, FBCI... · ... — Founder - Enterprise Risk Managem...
First COBOL mainframe was a mid-70's Honeywell 2070, but progressed to an IBM 360/40 (and added RPG to the repertoire).
Like | Reply

Ron Weisman · 3rd+ — Retired in San Diego and enjoying life — 6y
I attended two seminars with Grace presiding. She gave each attendant her "nanosecond" wire.
Like | 1 | Reply

Kreig Fields · 2nd — We Don't Replace Analysts, we make them... — 6y
I saw Grace speak a couple of times. She said she had to basically steal office equipment and people to build COBOL. She said it was easier to beg forgiveness than to get permission.
Like | 1 | Reply

Shane Downey BASc|Comp... · ... — Executive Leadership | Data Governance | ... — 6y
Ahh COBOL. The only programming language I've used where you write in essay form.
Like | 1 | Reply

Robert Burrage · 3rd+ — Principal Data Engineer at Apex Fintech S... — 6y
You cannot get cooler than Admiral Grace Hopper!
Like | 1 | Reply

Beth Powell · 3rd+ — QA Supervisor USN, Retired — 6y
A great lady, a stellar mind. and a great military woman. I was privileged to meet her. She holds my highest respect.
Like | Reply

Jason Frank, ITIL · 3rd+ — Senior Front End Developer at Internation... — 6y
Great story...very inspiring. Thanks for sharing
Like | Reply

Tarik Bellarhrib · 3rd+ — Manufacturing Alt Cell Leader at Dell Tech... — 6y
Good Model....for future innovators
Like | Reply

Maria Moore, Ph.D. · 3rd+ — Educator - Maria T. Moore, Inc. — 6y
I can just imagine what a strong woman she must have been for the Navy and the Blue Oceans beyond!
Like | Reply

Mercy Cortez · 3rd+ — Human Resources at Sunshine Communities — 6y
Amazing story, I am uninspired, thanks for sharing
Like | Reply

Nelson Godbey · 3rd+ — Senior Database Engineer | Senior Databa... — 6y
And, Admiral Hopper is also accredited to coining the term "Bug" when describing programming errors.
Like | Reply

Edward Carlisle · 3rd+ — Retired — 6y
Owe my career to her...
Like | 1 | Reply

Bill Harper · 3rd+ — Technical Leader | Customer Success Lea... — 6y
And inventor of the concept of a BUG
Like | Reply

Paul Anastas · 3rd+ — Principal/Senior Java Developer in Retirem... — 6y
When I started writing Cobol programs many years ago, we first wrote them on Cobol Coding Forms. The only computer language that gave me "writer's cramp". I was fortunate enough to work at Digital Equipment Corporation wl ...more
Like | Reply

John Mitchell · 3rd+ — Writing, mentoring and pro-bono advice o... — 6y
A great programming language which separated data from procedure. Nicely structured to enable good documentation and associated governance.
Like | Reply

Dick Stagnone · 3rd+ — Law School — 6y

Teddra Thomas Burgess
Fractional CRO & GTM Architect for public-sector tech | I scale AI + cyber companies and the executives who lead them | Ex-Google | Board Member + Investor
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