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From paper tape to the internet to BlueGene—forty years of computing history

In September 1965, the class scheduling system at the new University of Alberta at Calgary declared me a “double impossible”. The only way that I could complete my timetable was to take CPSC 351, an introductory course in computer science. Thirty five years later, at IBM Research, I led a project that resulted in the creation of BlueGene/L, officially certified in 2004 as the world’s most powerful supercomputer. This forty-year span covers two thirds of the history of modern computers. I will discuss some of the events that occurred during this time period, and speculate on what may be coming next.