The Grey Eagles learned everything they know at Data General—how to design, how to sell, and how to party. Now their careers are soaring, and DG's nest is empty.

Never mind that one attendee of the Grey Eagles' reunion party remarked that he was "pleasantly surprised that there wasn't a food fight." Never mind that this October gathering of high-tech cowboys came in pinstripes, wing tips and, for the most part, smooth corporate chins. Even though the look has gone conservative and the antics are now merely verbal, don't think for minute that these guys have gone soft. They've just grown up a bit, that all. They've figured out there's more to living than esprit de corps and 48-hour days. Oh, there's still life in this group all right. You only have to listen a minute to realize the kick-ass, macho culture that Data General thrived on an exploited is no myth. Just look at the

By Brian Tarry
n Electric eyes piercing,nest like peck

darion eyes. Are and money? You want to
talk about money? Good God! The
brain of all the executive employees of
the Data General Corporation: The Grey
Eagles are worth $4 billion or more.

At least that's what the Eagles say if
John de Castro, chairman of the board of
de Castro & Co.,>Addlefield, and
Data General and Dig are struggling
at $3 billion. If the data is true, then
his report is based on the few
executive management changes
and new products. But the
result is a $3 billion company.

Isn't money Good God!
The brains of all the
Eagles are worth $4
billion. They say if
de Castro could have
kept them, Dig would be
a $3 billion company.

One of the most important
and most successful
changes has been the
change in the way
business is conducted.

The new management,
led by John de Castro,
and Richard J. Snyder,
has completely
transformed the
company. They have
created a new, more
aggressive, and
successful approach
to business. The
results are impressive.

But even more important
is Wallach's bold move to
acquire a major
company, Digital
Corporation. This
move has been
embraced by the
industry and has
caused a stir. The
company is now
known as
Advanced Automation
Associates, Inc.

The new firm,
Advanced Automation
Associates, Inc.,
was formed to
represent

PROTECH, INC.

The face firm of
O'Connor, Brodie, Snyder & Aronson
was pleased to represent

PROTECH, INC.

In its initial public offering

The face firm of
O'Connor, Brodie, Snyder & Aronson
was pleased to represent

ADVEANCED AUTOMATION ASSOCIATES, INC.

In its acquisition by Syntax International, Inc.
branch sales manager in Wellesley, and currently a health officer, was standing there, holding glasses of wine, with Massarelli, YPI, wine and Miller.

Much to his surprise, des Castries, who is the head of the wine division at des Castries, did not accept the job.

The Eagles were described as "a locker room at 200. You played hard, you gave a big room, you threw a few boxes, and then you went out for beers after. Nothing ever deterred. Everything was on the table. You kept your wine on the table where everyone could see it.

The Eagles' description of the DG management style included "fengen negligence," "organizational chaos," and "involuntary anxiety." It all added up to the same thing: you don't need your hand held. If you're smart, you'll figure it out. Now, get out of the office, disappear, and they'll get there. But don't come back until you're successful. Oh, and hurry up.

The middle of the night was often the middle of the workday for these guys, and the rule was alcohol was off limits. But in the end, it worked. The Eagles were able to work hard, and they weren't afraid to play Russian roulette.

Work hard and play hard. Then work harder. It took a certain kind of individual, says one Eagle. "The type who likes to play Russian roulette.

That's it. That's Data General's official position on alcohol. Of course, at the same time Data General was asked to comment on the Eagles, the company was busy announcing a fourth-quarter net loss of $25 million. For the first nine months of 1986, the net loss was $712.7 million.

The Eagles were no longer the best of times for Data General. Nor, apparently, the time to discuss the success of the company when the Eagles were in their heyday. Thousands of layoffs have been announced, and so for incompetence. Many top-level managers have been replaced or given new assignments.

But whether the company survives its or not, its former success is why the Grey Eagles exist. It was the company's only ten years from its birth in a small office in a small town. The Eagles have contributed to Data General's initial success.

The people who made up the Eagles were the first to write a book. "The Eagles and the Army," the company's advertising, Digital Equipment Corporation, "the gentleman." The Eagles were the image. After all, they— with a lot of help from Tracy Kelder— changed the image of computer programmer from the stodgy, drab, and in some cases, a capitalistic cowboy harnessing a new market with creativity and growth.

But as representing it was, somewhere along the way people began to realize that Bill Joe has a job, you never get out of that camp.

And boot camp was changing. Michael Butter, a thong-sneaker first with perhaps the most intense DG eyes at the party, said, "The bean counters had at issued." Butter, who was in the special systems million-dollar sales club at DG, is now with Venture Europe Associates of London.

Estimates vary, but the prevailing theory is that it happened somewhere between $500 million and $1 billion in sales. "Any organization at a certain point becomes a bureaucracy," said Mike Lanagan, that bureaucratic crust with creativity.

Lanagan, who was regional sales manager for DG in Denver, is currently Eastern regional director for MIPS Computer Systems. MIPS Computer Systems is the parent company of Bill Joe's MIPS Technologies, Inc.

Oh, how evil was this bureaucracy. Data General brought in "ex-BMMs, ex-Eagles, ex-salesmen players who changed the rules in a place where nobody played any games.

The company started believing their own bullshit," said Freyd.

Quite simply, most people think that Data General lost its direction. The Eagle at the party, who worked on this project, said it this way: "When I was there in the 1970s, building the computer of the 70s was more challenging. And in the first half of the 1980s, they still really well selling the computers of the 70s. But in the second half of the 80s, they were still building the computers of the 70s.

This particular Eagle was more than happy to share his views, but he was stopped by another Eagle who worked for the same company in 1981.

"Gee, you've had some beers.

Data General, you see, was at its best as a place to speak your mind freely for all, where results were the only thing that mattered. "We were all corporate misfits. We weren't organization guys," said Butter. "We had a high tolerance for unconventional behavior.

"For instance," said Massarelli, "there was one guy we called the Avon lady. He literally lived at the company. He worked most of the time in the company didn't pay much attention to what time of day it was. One day, right in the middle of a business day, he decided to take a shower. So there he was, walking down the hallway from the bathroom to his cubicle, his handkerchief in hand. And nobody really paid much attention. That was just his way.

There were food fights at sales meetings; in the early days, calls girls would somehow find their way into the occasional meeting to, shall we say, banter about. As an Eagle at the party put it, "All the anecdotes that come to mind— I'm not going to tell you."

The theory of why Data General stalled is what Joe talks about: the Ten Rule. The theory is that each sales go up by a multiplication of ten—say from $5 million to $50 million— organization must undergo fundamental changes. That happened at $50 million, says Joe. Although there was a cross—modem of communications, Joe says the company survived. Figured it out, and prospered. "But then they went up to $500 million, and they never solved it. It was time for Joe to delegate more authority and he didn't.

Joe said with expectation. "I didn't even have the authority to give a customer a $500 credit on a field service invoice even if the problem was DG's mistake. It required the signature of Ed de Castries.

The bottom line was everything, say the Eagles. In many ways this is a policy they learned and took with them to their respective companies. To be good is to be successful, they say. Make do on limited resources. It was an essential lesson in the art of business, yet they say it was taken to such an extreme that it made the employees unhappy.

Though the pay and stock options were good, "Data General wasn't a company that recognized individual and group achievement and celebrated suc cess," said Bob Washburn. Washburn is vice president of sales and marketing with Apple. He is also the new president of the Grey Eagles. "The company didn't take to the role that you didn't expect at the party.

A later interview, Washburn said he knew what celebrating success can do for employees. "I worked eight years at Data General and eight years for Apple. They were opposite Apple and overdosed it, they celebrate everything."

Nevertheless, Washburn and others

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Anthony Atenas President

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Ed McManus, the only DG employee who is also an Eagle—an honorary Eagle because he helped organize the DG 20th-birthday party—says current DG employees regard the Eagles as “one of the best networks you could have if you were looking to find a job.”

One person at the party said, “Most of the people in this room are millionaires.”

Another scoffed, “This crowd?” he said. “Half of ‘em are unemployed. I get approached constantly by Grey Eagles seeking work.” He does not mind at all.

Yet, for all its naked opportunism, there is something deeper to the Eagles. It’s the boot-camp thing. They once suffered together in the trenches of a new industry and they survived. More than that: they prospered.

And there is a basic admiration the Eagles have for Edson de Castro. For one thing, he let them flourish both financially and intellectually. For another, as they all know, he taught by example. In 1968, de Castro left Digital Equipment Corporation to form Data General in Digital’s backyard. Although the Eagles think de Castro sometimes kicks himself for letting us go,” they also believe deep in their hearts that he is proud. His eagles have left the nest, but they have not faltered. They have flown.