

Alex Laird  
April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006

It was a beautifully cold Wednesday evening in early November. The sun had set; the air was still; one of the first internet-distributed computer worms to get any serious attention had been released: The Morris Worm—Created and secretly released by Robert T. Morris Jr. The year was 1988.

Nearly as monumental as the very first computer worm was the birth of a child in the evolving metropolis of Cedar Rapids in the Midwestern state of Iowa. At approximately 7:10 PM, Alexander D. Laird came into the world—a name that would be both feared and highly regarded around the world in the years to come. It is rumored that a global moment of silence followed the birth of this child, but this has yet to be proven as fact. However, the rumor currently holds as much regard among scientists and world leaders as the somehow still highly esteemed theory of evolution.

As earth-shaking as Alex Laird's birth was, it was nothing compared with the legacy of his antecedents. Dr. Laird's legacy would not have been the same without wonderful grandparents to encourage him along and push him in the direction he should go. It was the great Rudolph Giuliani who once said, "What children need most are the essentials that grandparents provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, kindness, patience, humor, comfort, lessons in life. And, most importantly, cookies." This statement couldn't have had more truth to it. Without the Laird Grandparents, the name of Alex Laird would not echo around the globe today.

It took me several months to secure an interview with the famed Dr. Laird. He had this to say after reminiscing for a while about his grandparents and grandfather specifically.

I credit much of my fame and success to my grandparents. I firmly believe that everyone should have a grandfatherly and grandmotherly figure in their lives—if they don't already have one, a legal adoption should be in order to get one. I credit my grandfather for most of my success in the computer industry. Grandmother was always a great motivator, always cheering me on, but it was really Grandfather who drove me crazy enough to design the most user friendly computer to date—thus winning me the Nobel Prize again this year for the third year in a row. I remember when Grandfather would call many years ago and my mother would answer the phone. "Hello, may I have the IT department, please?" Grandfather would ask. "Please hold while I transfer you," always

followed this question. I would answer the phone and start to diagnose the problem which, on most occasions, could be solved by restarting the computer. I also remember the times he allowed me to borrow his Jeep. I think one of the most inspiring times in a young man's life is when he's cruising in a powerful car with all four windows down and the system up. I think that was when I made some of my most serious life choices.

Upon further questioning, Dr. Laird had this to say about his grandmother.

Now my grandmother, she avoided computers for the most part, so I didn't have the joy of her constantly bugging me with such issues. I remember my grandmother most of all for the genuine care she always showed for my life and interests. She always knew exactly what to get me for my birthday, for Christmas, or just because. She always knew which type of ice cream to buy to hit the sweet spot in my tummy just right. And she never failed to take all of us grandchildren shopping whenever possible!

As a final comment, Dr. Laird confessed that his massive scientific discovery and Nobel Prize would never have been possible without the large cash contribution by his grandparents (hint, hint). With a simple sentence, Dr. Alex Laird ended the interview with "I love my grandparents very much!"