



WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION

BY SHANE STEINMAN

MOST PEOPLE WOULDN'T ASSOCIATE SEYBOLD SAN FRANCISCO with summer travel since it usually occurs some time after Labour Day. This year was different. Seybold came early.

Not only was the timing askew, but the entire voyage seemed beset by a certain kilter. Imagine, if you will, an excursion to California with the primary objective being to attend a respected industry trade show and conference. Now,

something catches your eye, at which point, stopping, pondering and questioning. Within this natural conference, however, there are no marketing reps to respond.

At last I ascended the rugged cliff, donned my consultant's cloak (a mantle well-worn by more than a few Seybold seasons of use), and made out expeditiously for the Bay.

Driving through Silicon Valley, the Apple billboard above the roadway exhorted me to *Think Different*. The message

was a welcome one, but superfluous in my case, since I had already diverged from the beaten path.

I returned the rental car and checked my bags at the King George Hotel, which was erected a scant decade after the devastating 1904 quake. The builders of the relatively tall (and disconcertingly thin) nine-storey edifice must have been seen as tempters of fate.

The following morning was the big kick-off for the show and Steve Jobs was the designated kicker. Knowing this, my roommates and I resolved to make it an early night — then promptly set off in search of a good bar. I can

recall an arm wrestling contest, a pool table, and a handstand event, but cannot be entirely certain how I placed in the finals of this bizarre Seybold Triathlon.

Fact One.

Light travels at a consistent speed of just under one billion feet per second (982,080,000 ft/sec).

Fact Two.

When a computer changes a binary value from "0" to "1", or vice versa, this is called a flop (floating point operation). If you can execute this one billion times in a second, this is called a gigaflop.

In his keynote address, Jobs unveiled the new G4 processor and informed us that the speed of this "supercomputer on a chip" was rated between one and four gigaflops. Steve brought out a scientist to do the math for us. The G4 chip

Artist's rendition of Big Sur. Note the sea monster in the upper right of the frame.



Illustration by Jake Steinman

run a *Photoshop* Wave filter over the entire voyage, and you'll get the idea.

I flew to Los Angeles instead of San Francisco, rented a car, and wound my way up the Pacific Coast Highway at a leisurely pace.

Big Sur is a rocky stretch of craggy coastline with intermittent patches of sand and glorious inland stands of redwood and fir. In short, a perfect solitude for inward reflection and resetting the urban odometer. I wanted to drink in the offerings of Seybold with new eyes, unjaded by the shortfallen promises of previous technologies.

I began to wonder if I could possibly make the transition from this sublime exposition to one conceived by mortal committee as, along desolate strands of crushed shell and rock, I picked my way from one "exhibit" to the next. Yet, after a fashion, how similar they were; walking along until

will execute an instruction (flop) before the light from the computer monitor reaches your face.

Fact Three.

Steve is a marketing genius.

Still suffering from the effects of poor cabin pressurization and a lingering cold (the combination of which had rendered unto me a 90% hearing loss in my right ear and a 50% reduction in my other aural capacity) and being sufficiently deluded by the impact of several brands of decongestant, I

traffic on the sidewalk was quite tight, I seemed to find plenty of room to walk, and made good time.

With 30% of my aggregate hearing, 60% of my normal voice, 72% respiratory capacity, and halfway into a Drixoral-induced stupor, Steve's scientist would have told me that I had a 97% chance of spewing complete nonsense while at the podium. He would have said that this was the inverse corollary of the G4 "light-foot" analogy, i.e. the groggy speaker's words will reach the incredulous audience's ears before the brain can compute what the mouth has uttered.

Illustration by David Steinman



Squaring off against the muscular Michael Jahn, noted PDF Terrorist and covert armwrestler.



Calm and detached under the pressure of a Seybold presentation.

sat down to finish working on the presentation I was to deliver that afternoon — at which point, I promptly fell asleep.

Waking with an hour to spare before showtime, I was horror-struck to find that my voice had disappeared. Quickly changing clothes and making strange squawking noises that should have resembled words, I simultaneously jotted down notes for my speech on preflighting tools and procedures.

On the way to the Moscone Center, I improvised several voice exercises that I was certain would help me find my lost pipes. These routines consisted of alternating barks, wheezes, shrieks, coughs, growls and huffs. Although the

I probably could have begged off the assignment for health reasons and, believe me, I considered doing just that. Then I figured, what the heck, I'll take my chances — all three per cent of 'em!

I spoke about preflighting, introducing the room to some of my personal ideas as well as the upcoming paradigm shift in technology that will soon be available from both Extensis (under the name *Checkpoint*) and Markware (a product called *MarkzNet*): web-based drag'n'drop file analysis.

Under this new architecture, printers and prepress houses would subscribe to an on-line service (*Checkpoint* — www.creativepro.com) or purchase a number of remote seats for their clients (*MarkzNet* — www.markzware.com). In either case, the client doesn't have to buy any software. Since both systems operate by means of a browser plug-in, the files are analyzed on the client's local machine without the need for actual transfer of the data. Once the procedure is complete, clients are issued a report on their browser screens and, if the file check is successful (according to the prescribed guidelines established by the experts at the print/prepress shop), the client is presented with the option to upload the files at that time.

This represents a tremendous leap forward in the concept of inter-company file handling, not only because it limits the chances of sending a bad file, but because it merges the tasks of "outgoing" preflight and "incoming" preflight into one procedure and binds this to the actual file transfer. Before, this would have been four different functions spread across two separate businesses.

Eventually, I stopped talking and hoped that this wasn't the only reason that the audience began to clap.

Your entire body is sentient; not just your brain. You can think of people as land-based jellyfish. Just imagine away the protective husk and the structural, locomotive and energy-processing mechanisms that provide sustenance and support to our experiential endeavours. What you have left is a soft, dome-shaped object with thousands of neuro-tendrils

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flowing from beneath. I saw hundreds of similar creatures gently roaming the harbour at Monterey.

Scientists have recently discovered how to make a jellyfish discharge an electrochemical pulse of energy. Armed with this knowledge, they can now program jellies to retain and process information. Every time you turn a jelly on or off, that's a jellyflop.

majority of production companies will automatically include The Customer as part of the workflow. Currently, many printers and prepress companies still consider The Customer to be somewhat of a necessary evil; an insular frame of reference predicated chiefly upon short-sightedness, but owing much to classic hubris.

I would even say that if you are looking for any job-tracking/project-managing/estimating/purchasing/asset-locating/archiving/workgroup-facilitating/error-logging (or any combination of said attributes) solution, then you will definitely need an intuitive browser interface. This will appeal to your clients, suppliers and internal staff, not to mention any remote workers that your company may retain. Note: You likely already have more remote contributors to your workflow than you realize. This number will only grow.

You should probably keep in mind that the decision to enlist any collaborative workflow solution should not be made lightly. This will, in the not-too-distant future, become

your primary client interface and it should be flexible enough to accommodate future growth and the easy addition of new product/service offerings.

With more and more attention being focused on connectivity and the Internet, it would probably make good sense to investigate some heavy-duty encryption technology to protect your vital resources. Among the many things that I encountered on this trip (many of which had little or nothing to do with the show) was a unique security offering from a little known company called MegaNet (www.meganet.com).

Utilizing ten levels of encryption to secure sensitive data, one level of which is a million-bit key, MegaNet has strived to create a safety net which is

impervious to hackers — regardless of how many jellyflops they can devote to the task. It seems that they may have succeeded. Tens of thousands of would-be hackers have downloaded sample “secrets” from their website and, despite the incentive of huge cash rewards, have not succeeded in breaking the code.

Vacations don't last forever. I consider good holidays to be those where, upon reaching their inevitable end, I have few regrets about the things I didn't manage to see or do.

Often, the blame for this remorse lies squarely on my own shoulders; due to poor time management, probably. Other times, it is shared with those who helped me delude myself into a state of exaggerated expectation.

Is it just me, or has Seybold deteriorated in recent years? Am I looking back at past shows with undue nostalgia, waxing melancholic for the pioneering spirit that Seybold used to represent? Am I errant in recalling the excitement of the Halftone Screening Shootout or the fights that almost broke out over stochastic imaging?

The crescendo of my trip was meeting Harvey Korman (formerly of the Carol Burnett Show) at a gas station washroom! Something must be amiss if half of my memorable moments occurred nowhere near the convention centre. Sure, I saw some interesting things, but they seemed to reflect incremental improvements rather than revolutionary advances.

If this was the beach at Big Sur, I'd just wait to see what the next wave brings to my shore. Maybe that's an appropriate strategy.

I'll just look ahead to Seybold Boston where I will once again cast my net in search of a true change in the tides of technology. *

SHANE STEINMAN IS TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF ARCHANGEL MEDIA INC. OF TORONTO AND PROJECT LEADER OF THE DMACS INITIATIVE (WWW.DMACS.ORG).

Illustration by Jake Steinman



The Seybold show floor. Obviously, this needs no explanation.



Harvey Korman and I waiting for a gas station restroom in Ventura. He was on his way to shoot an episode of Hollywood Squares.

Supercomputers beware. There are billions of jellies out there. Backgammon enthusiasts should check out www.jelly.effect.no/whatis.html.

Resembling an enormous, tentacled neural net, the graphic industry is growing increasingly dependent upon the networked sharing of information and resources between production partners. Aiding in this communication process are companies like Impresse (www.impresse.com), the aptly named, Collabria (www.collabria.com) and PrintBid.com — nor should we forget the inexplicably dubbed Noosh (www.noosh.com).

Systems such as these, with their on-line tracking, management, estimating and purchasing capabilities, are paving the way for the day when a vast