

Random Musings

By Darryl Richardson
Editor-in-Chief

"Computer users soon learn that the miraculous powers of personal computers are based on avoidance of error." — Robert Burchfield

Well, our good friends at Microsoft have done it again. They were back in court this week squaring off against the Justice Department in one of the most interesting antitrust suits ever brought against a company.

But that wasn't the highlight of the week for company chairman Bill Gates. No, this week saw an even better episode for the much-maligned multi-billionaire. Gates showed up at the Spring Comdex convention in Chicago on Monday to unveil the latest in high-technology: Windows 98. This is supposed

to be the greatest thing since sliced bread, or at least since Windows 95 came out. However, when Gates and another company employee were showing off the new program, it crashed!

"I guess we still have some bugs to work out," Gates said.

No kidding, Bill!

Now I'm one of the teeming millions who has run most of Microsoft's operating systems. I haven't had too many problems over the years on my personal computer that could be traced to the Windows program. In fact, I've even bought other Microsoft programs, just for the hell of it. So I'm not willing to sit here and bash Bill Gates and Microsoft for making too much money. In fact, I applaud them for having the initiative to make a good product and get people

to use it.

But Monday's folly points out a glaring flaw in the microchip minds of the world's computer and software manufacturers. How many times have you gone to your local software store and bought the latest and greatest program that either didn't work when you got it home or crashed repeatedly once you got it loaded? Sounds like a common occurrence at my humble abode. You end up having to wait for the company to issue a patch or an update or, even better, a whole new version of the program for you to buy before it will work the way it was supposed to in the first place.

Why don't computer software companies just get the damn thing right the first time instead of waiting for version 2.0? Is it just a way to make more money (stupid question)? Or are they just lazy? What if other businesses ran themselves like computer companies?

For example, what if Boeing would have released an unfinished version of the 777. After the first crash, here comes 777 (v. 2.0).

Going back in history, what if Hoover Dam would have had a undiscovered flaw? Would we have seen Hoover Dam (v. 1.1) after the flood?

I'll bet that God wouldn't mind releasing Human (v. 3.0), with new and improved features, every now and then.

Nobody in their right mind would be willing to have anything to do with the companies involved if things like this happened. Yet, we willingly line up when the computer makers shaft us for a few extra bucks every year.

Like I said, I'm as guilty of this as the next person. I have bought some computer games right off of the truck, only to be sadly disappointed when something went horribly wrong. So, I waited around for the patch or, more likely, just tossed the game aside and went along with my life.

But a major program like Windows 98 is a whole different story. I'm sure that everyone heard horror stories several years ago when

Windows 95 was first released about the program crashing and destroying all the data on the computer. Probably it was due to human error as much or more than a software glitch. But still, the program had some flaws until Microsoft released an update.

Is it really that hard to hold off on releasing a program until it's ready? I realize that there are thousands, if not millions, of lines of code in such a program and I remember from my Fortran classes how easy it is to make a simple error, but, let's face it, the people writing the program are getting paid very well to do it right. All we're asking for is that things get checked out before the program ships to the stores.

So, my advice to all of you is to wait a couple of months before buying Windows 98. To paraphrase the immortal Fred from GMF Motors, if it crashes on Bill Gates, and it will, it will crash on you.

Hmmm, I wonder if I can get version 2.0 of this article?

Thanks for the memories

By Dmitry Lev

Contributing Opinion Writer

Going home to Chicago for spring break didn't seem like a big deal at first. See the family, eat some real food, see some friends... Yes, friends... Seeing those who were so close throughout high school and in some ways still seem close, but somehow in a different way. I couldn't quite put my finger on it at first. Guess there's a certain sense of awkwardness that comes between us with all of the time that has passed. Almost three years for me now...

But the awkwardness wears away. Swapping college stories and pictures I was amazed to really and truly understand how my close-knit group of friends ended up scattered throughout the country like grains of sand swept by an ocean wave; a wave of reality that carried us away from the familiar and peaceful suburbia of our childhoods. There are only some two or three occasions per year when we have a chance to get back together and really see each other. Oh, of course we E-Mail and call and send cards, but somehow it's just not the same as finally sitting in one room across from one another.

And everyone has stories. Grandiose ones, lame ones, stupid ones, funny ones. And every now and then someone from the group will slip an accidental, "Well, my best friend and I went to the..." and then pause, give us a long look and clarify, "my best friend from college that is... there's never a replacement

for you guys..." And as cliché as it may sound, moments like that really mean the most.

Of course we have all changed. The geeky math nerd with the thick glasses (whom we still love dearly) is interning at Microsoft this summer. The mommy's daughter who had a 9 P.M. curfew has her own place and is a T.A. at her college. The quiet and shy kid who could never get a date is now engaged to be married. In ways it's frightening how while growing up so much we are still trying our best to preserve our old selves. Does that explain why our parents seem so messed up?

As a few days pass, the awkwardness wears off completely and we truly recapture what it meant to be close during our own "glory days". We remember with laughter how the things that were so utterly important to us in high school don't matter one bit anymore. What's a detention anyway? And mandatory gym class? Puleaze! Feeling on the same wavelength once again, we start comparing our current schools. We talk about how our professors are outstanding and famous, how our dorms have dirty bathrooms, how loud the parties are, how bad the food is, and how the music that our roommates like is always the wrong kind. And while the Princeton students may feel proud that their professors were Nobel laureates, I felt proud as well since my very own Geography professor here at UNLV just happens to be the Chancellor of

UCCSN, the irreplaceable Richard Jarvis.

The evening pauses and shifts into a more personal gear. We remember how even within our group there were quite a few crushes, love triangles, broken hearts, and other rebellious teenage interpersonal endeavors. But even as we matured beyond our high school horizons, it was still tough and challenging to look my first love in the eyes and chat about our own current relationships so far from home.

And everyone has grand plans. Each one of us has changed our major once or twice already, but all of us are nonetheless future doctors, attorneys, educators; people who want to move mountains and change the world.

Then we laugh, take pictures that are to be taken back to our schools and shown to our friends there. Finally, we put on a tune from our prom and rejoice the moment.

I look around and immerse myself in deep thought. Involving ourselves in our utterly important everyday lives we often times lose track of and sometimes even forget what our foundation is, what we grew up on, and what got us to where we are today.

Happiness is a difficult abstract and sometimes we are so busy doing our routine things, that when happiness is right there outside knocking on our door, all we can do is complain about the noise... I look around and meet the others' warm

LAND OF NOTT BY ALEX RAFFI



smiles. We all know that this is a priceless moment. Time pauses for us and we indulge in the now.

Time to say good-bye and last hugs are exchanged. Most of us aren't coming back for the summer, but hey, maybe we'll see each other again next Thanksgiving...or maybe not. There must be a reason I am get-

ting teary eyes. But memories are here to stay, and pictures from this break will be on the Web within a few weeks for us to download over and over again.

The lifeline continues. Thankfully it pauses once or twice a year and shines its bright light onto the past.

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