

LEAPING INTO THE MAC WORLD

by
Bob Magnant



I wrote this story about 'The Prince' a dozen years ago, approximately six months after I had bought my first personal computer, the Macintosh IIfx with a speedy 50 KHz Motorola processor, a 230 Mb Hard drive, 16 Mb of RAM and System 7, the first 32-bit operating system. A lot of water has gone over the dam since then, but my love of all things Apple has only grown and the Prince of Persia has continued to pursue bigger and better adventures.

– RSM 2/1/04

A few months back, I never thought that a passing conversation with my next-door neighbor would catapult me into the confusing state of excitement and awe that I currently find myself. For those who are unaware of the addictive nature of the Macintosh, be forewarned. Living next to a computer salesman can be dangerous! But I won't blame everything on this now infamous reseller. About two years ago, an Apple systems engineer gave me my first "multimedia" demonstration and piqued some latent curiosity within me.

Then, there were the magazines. I wanted to know more about the hardware and those glossy tomes of the trade, specifically MacUser and MACWORLD, were ready to share their secrets with me. They beckoned to me from every newsstand, the message from each of their 300+ pages a simple one. "Buy me! Buy me! Buy me! Learn all about the System 7 Wonders of the Mac World". I was hooked.

When I attended my first Electronic Design Association meeting last March, my Mac IICI was already on order and I was chomping at the bit to get it home and get involved. The enthusiasm of those that I met at the EDA only bolstered my belief that this was just one of the many doors that my new Mac would open for me. Now, I'm not a stranger to the technology world, but when I left it nearly ten years ago to exercise other parts of my brain, 56 KB of RAM was a big deal! I knew I had to do some catching up, but I never realized how many new areas had suddenly blossomed and how many new terms and languages there were to be learned. PICTs, INITs, TIFFs, SIMMs, QuicKeys, QuickTime, Quickdraw, Quark, Bezier, Bernoulli, flopticals, kerning, Photoshop, pixels, rasters, scans, CDEVs, CMYK, VGA, RGB and even EDA! But EDA is helping me, at least to get the buzzwords down pat. Now all I have to do is figure out what they mean, what they do and why they do it.

You're really a "MacVirgin" until you've attended your first MACWORLD Expo. I made the ultimate pilgrimage to Boston in August in search of enlightenment and some measure of my personal growth. With more than 500 exhibitors and over fifty thousand attendees, to describe my reaction as "overwhelmed" is a serious understatement. And for \$33, I found a program to take home with me that has changed my outlook forever. It's an integrated software package that teaches computer skills, measures individual performance and clearly communicates the results with sophisticated graphics that are without equal. It's a true yardstick, it's called "Prince of Persia" and it's wonderful!



The Prince's objective is to find the Princess and rescue her from the Sultan's palace. Navigating the palace is like navigating the Mac; it's full of magic and surprises that may either help or hinder the effort. And the Prince, much like a Mac user, must take several 'leaps of faith' in his pursuit. With one wrong step, you'll plummet into the dungeon's depths; other paths will lead you to increased strengths and capabilities. Like the Mac, the Prince can rebound at the touch of a button. Even when you meet your 'alter ego' and believe that all is lost, a quick keystroke will allow you to 'hang on', pull yourself to safety and get a little closer to 'saving the Princess'. Isn't that what life's all about?

I'm proud to report that I've reached the eighth of twelve levels within the palace, and I've still got fifteen minutes to go! When I stumble into trouble, I usually learn at least one new thing that prepares me for the next obstacle. Every time I lose my way -'or my life', I always come right back, either strengthened or sharpened by the experience.

My Mac and I are currently wrestling with 184M bytes of information in 3632 files and each day I learn something new about how my programs interact or how the equipments interface. Not long ago, salesman friend had to rescue me; my Mac had four systems folders that just weren't cooperating with each other!

I guess I hadn't read the instructions, or had I read them too closely? I dragged everything to my hard drive. Or how was I supposed to know that the reason you must reinsert the Mavis Typing disk for each session is because that's how the program has been copy protected? That wasn't written anywhere! Another day, I found myself on the phone with a Silicon Valley engineer, experimenting with the SCSI port of my CD-ROM drive, double terminating it to eliminate data buss transfer problems - common to newer Hci's? I've taken that analysis on faith for the moment. It's better known as 'SCSI Voodoo'.

I took on the Mac 'cold', to put 'user-friendly' to the ultimate test. There's always more technology available than we know what to do with, and while I'm not sure where this technology is leading me, I've taken 'the leap of faith'. If the Mac transforms my world, as I think it can, then there can be a lot of hope for all of us!

***Bob Magnant
September 1992
Juno Beach, Florida***