

❖ Consultants in Minnesota ❖

October 1996

President's Letter

"Joan Barnes", INTERNET: jebarnes@igc.apc.org

So I'm really struggling with this newsletter letter. I hate to write, and I'm not particularly happy about what I have to write about this month. Except for - Jane Bersie, thank you for rounding up a wonderful speaker on ergonomics - interesting, informative, and good supporting documents.

And also except for the national conference in Stl Louis. I hope everyone learns a lot and has a great time. I am obliged to stay home and try to get some landscaping done before the contractors (construction-type) arrive to put up a pole-barn before it snow and freezes.

Now here's the part I don't want to write about. Karl Hella has submitted his speech of resignation from editor of our chapter newsletter. We all tried sticking our fingers in our ears so we wouldn't hear, but it didn't work. I'm not sure quite how long Karl has been editor, but it's been a long time - maybe even 10 years - and he has done a really fine job. It seems that I recall that he received an award - printer and not just a wall plaque - in some newsletter contest some years back. Thank you, Karl, for your time and energy. Thank you, too, for your tolerance in dealing with officers (and not just the current batch) who have waited until the last minute to submit articles and info on upcoming meetings.

And now for the part that I really don't want to write about: Who wants to volunteer to be the new editor? Actually, we will be holding a chapter board meeting currently scheduled for 5:00 at

the Wyndham prior to our next regular monthly meeting on October 15. We will be looking at ways to simplify the running of the association: membership lists, mailing lists, newsletters, etc. It would be nice if officers could spend time on the development of the association rather than routine maintenance. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions, please give one of us a call - or come to the meeting. Hope to see you all at the October 15 meeting with the ever-popular consultants toolkit panel discussion - this time sponsored by Bill McTeer with help from Gordon Schesel and Jerry Wallace.

This is Bill McTeer

by Dick Kalin, INTERNET: dkalin@kalin.com

Almost everyone can recall their first MN ICCA meeting. You walk around the edges of the group, trying to ease your way in. Unexpectedly, a tall, lanky person, tie slightly askew, reaches out. "I'm Bill McTeer. Nice to meet you. This character is .. And we were discussing ... What do you think?" In one rapid fire declaration, Bill has made you one of the group.

William D. McTeer--everyone calls him "Bill"--is "a strong believer in these professional associations." His actions prove it. He's very active in the ICCA, past President of the Minnesota chapter as well as chairing almost every committee sometime during the past seven years. But, Bill isn't in these organizations to get business. Instead, "...it's the relationships..." and the opportunity "to meet new, interesting people."

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INDEPENDENT
COMPUTER
CONSULTANTS
ASSOCIATION

Newsletter
of the



Minnesota Chapter

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Bill McTeer is more than just an association activist. He's also McTeer Systems, Inc., a successful eight year old company that has been helping clients by "...maximizing the benefits which can be achieved from [the] automation of business processes..." Primarily focusing on front-end analysis, McTeer Systems will usually pass implementation on to others. Bill mentioned that McTeer Systems is always trying to establish rational expectations for a project's scope and cost benefits, "...making computer changes almost enjoyable..."

McTeer's clients include anyone who's "pushing around information in a professional way." Typically, clients have 15 to 500 employees. However, when McTeer Systems does work with an organization of more than 500 employees, "the role shifts to more of a team style or that of an external verifier." McTeer Systems is obviously doing something right; many of his first clients are still active customers today. "Repeats are the life blood of my business."

Bill's involvement with computers started in 1966 at Brown University in Providence, RI. As a chemistry major, he was doing visualizations of molecules using plotter graphics and storage vectors. A short time later, Bill followed his wife, Joan, to Champaign, IL where he spent two years with the ILIAC IV project, writing automated routines for hardware diagnostics and another two years on a Ford Foundation project to analyze and display natural resources in the Chicago area. When Joan moved to another opportunity, this time, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Bill's expertise in land-use planning landed him a programming job with Ellerbe-Becket Architects. During the twelve years with Ellerbe, Bill rose to become their inhouse consultant. Then, in 1989, he left Ellerbe to become an independent.

This is Bill McTeer.

From "William B. Smale", smale002@gold.tc.umn.edu

Top Ten Signd You're Not Spending Enough Time On Internet Chat

10. You've never used the pickup line, "What's your URL?"
9. You don't need carpal tunnel surgery yet.
8. Poor spelling annoys you.
7. You've seen the inside of a shower stall at least once

in the past 48 hours.

6. You only replaced your worn-out keyboard once last month.
5. Daytime soaps don't challenge you mentally.
4. Your closest friends call you by your name, not your handle.
3. Your favorite singles hangout isn't called #LonelyAdult.
2. You still have the capacity for speech.
1. Your repertoire of emoticons hasn't hit double figures.

Dear Dr. Science,

I know that if I put a red sock in with my white laundry, all the laundry turns pink. What would happen if I put a white sock in with colored laundry?

Kyle DeWees, Muncie, IN

It would, as you've probably already surmised, suck all the color out of your clothing. This is how they bleach blue jeans, without resorting to expensive and environmentally dangerous chlorine bleaches. It's actually a form of osmotic pressure, bland substances leaching the essence of their more colorful neighbors. This is why so many Minnesotans visit places like Mexico, or New Orleans. Like blind albino trout in a cave, they know they're missing something, even if they can't define what that something is.

Jane Bersie: Renaissance Woman

I need to apologize again. This time I received a profile of Jane and read it, but it is "on the other machine!" It really will appear one of these months

Avoiding a Pain in the Neck

by Robert C. Kelsey

The subject of the presentation for the September meeting was ergonomics. The program sponsor was Jane Bersie and the presentation was made by Rick Stodieck.

I have to admit that I was not enthusiastically looking forward to yet another meeting about some esoteric subject when I read the newsletter announcement. I knew a little about ergonomics, and it really sounded boring. So I also admit that my primary rationale for attending was to have some social opportunities with other ICCA members.

However, I was very pleasantly surprised. Rick gave a very lively, interesting, well-paced presentation. Not only does he know his subject very well, but he has a very relaxed manner of speaking that gets a lot of information across. My observation was that everyone found his topic interesting.

Ergonomics, as he pointed out, is the study of how people interact with their working environment. It could also be termed "Human Factors." There are some common phrases that describe the process: fit the job to the person, "user friendly", design for success, work smarter, not harder.

The main focus of ergonomics is to protect the spine. This was enlightening to me, since I had not really thought about the central role the spine plays before. Rick talked primarily in terms of the tools we use everyday in our profession: desk, chair, keyboard, monitor.

He explained that the common height of a desk, 30 inches, was decided by the Army after World War II. They measured the men in the Army, took the average, and came up with an optimum height of 27". Then, they added 3" for a drawer. Unfortunately, this height is wrong, even for the average height of the person in the Army.

Rick explained office ergonomics in terms of what he called three neutral postures. The importance of these neutral postures is in preventing injury. What really made me sit up and take notice was when he told of the company that had been experiencing an average of eight injuries per month. After redesigning the workstations, their incidence of injuries went to zero for four straight years. That is impressive. And, when you include the average cost of an injury at \$8,000 to \$15,000, it adds up very quickly to some real dollars.

For myself, I know that if I experience an injury that limits or prevents my working, it would be extremely serious. After that point,

I started paying close attention.

The neutral postures are: knees to hips; elbows to wrists; and head. The knees should be at the same height as the hips when seated. If the knees are lower, there is a pressure on the lower back. Of course, all of these assume good posture sitting in a chair: hips back, back supported and straight.

As with the knees and hips, the wrists should be level with the elbows. The arms should hang straight down from the shoulders, elbows in, very much like playing a piano. The wrists should be straight. Rick prefers a flat or negative tilt to the keyboard. He also recommends against arms on chairs.

Again, the head should be looking straight ahead. There is a natural 15 degree downward tilt to the head, so the height of the display should be such that the top 1-2 inches of the screen (not the cabinet) is even with the height of the eyes. For those of us who require bifocals or trifocals, he recommends "computer glasses". These have a correction such that it is unnecessary to tilt the head back to see the screen, and the keyboard is in focus without having to look down.

Finally, he gave some advice about exercises that can be done at the desk, to release muscular tension and to keep the skeletal frame aligned. He emphasized the importance of good posture, and keeping the shoulders relaxed. He even pointed out how, for most men, it is detrimental to carry a wallet in a back pocket, because it causes the spine to be off center.

I think this was a most interesting subject, presented in a lively and informative manner. I certainly learned many things, some of which I hope to integrate into my work environment. As Rick said, many workers get trained how to use their tools very carefully. We should not assume that our tools are any different. It is best to know how to use them correctly to avoid injuries that could potentially be very serious.

Meeting Reservations: Members may phone your reservation to Joan Barnes' office at 257-2570, by 3:00 PM, Friday, October 11. Non-members should mail this form to ICCA Minnesota, c/o Sheridan Timms, 6940 Tartan Curve, Eden Prairie, MN 55346.

Name: _____ Company: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ Phone: () _____

Marinated Flank Steak Member \$20 non-member \$25 x _____ = _____
 Chicken Stir Fry Member \$20 non-member \$25 x _____ = _____
 Enclosed is a check for: _____

October Meeting Consultant's Toolkit: Different Solutions for Different Practices

by Bill McTeer, INTERNET:wmcteer@mcteersys.com

"Familiarity breeds contempt." It is a paradox that the things we do everyday, that consume significant parts of our lives, often impress us as being unworthy of serious contemplation. Thereby, we miss opportunities.

This presentation will discuss, via examples from three different consulting practices, the "familiar" infrastructure we all use to make our businesses run and the reasons particular approaches work, or don't. The three consultants will talk about the nitty-gritty of their telephone/communications, scheduling/timekeeping and library/filing systems. They will describe (to our possible amusement) the contents of their business offices and portable offices as well as (to our probable amazement) tips, tricks, and techniques they wouldn't be without.

Bill McTeer concentrates on project planning and

issues analysis. A significant portion of his work is reports and recommendations created off-site. He also does off-site programming, generally for commercial Windows applications.

Gordon Schesel has expertise in a large variety of IBM AS/400 business systems including financials and manufacturing applications. He has experience in both project lead and project management. He works primarily at on-site development projects.

Jerry Wallace is heavily involved in Unix system configuration and management as well as custom application development. He works primarily off-site and maintains an office separate from his home.

The October meeting of ICCA—Minnesota will be Tuesday, October 15, at the Wyndham Gardens Hotel on the north frontage road to 494 between France and Hiway 199. Networking at 5:30, dinner at 6:30 and program at 7:15.



Next Meeting

Consultant's Toolkit
Tuesday, October 18
Wyndham Gardens Hotel
Edina

FUTURE MEETINGS

Nov 20	Communications
Dec	Holiday Fun
Jan 21	Vendor Fair
Feb 19	
Mar 20	



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