

Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

Now that my boss has bought spiffy new computers for our newsroom and set up the programs, I've been sweating, swatting and swearing at my new toy in a process commonly called retraining.

As my new option-loaded behemoth calmly starts to do its stuff, I can hear a tiny voice from somewhere in the hard drive crying, "Captain! The engines canna take much more of this! Warp 11! Och! My poor little brains!"

I've used many different kinds of computers for about 15 years and tend to view them as overgrown Game-Boys because they're usually fun and challenging. (We won't discuss the hardware and software I'm retraining on.) Along the way I've acquired a set of definitions to fit nearly any computer and situation.

Hardware: Several large boxes containing mostly styrofoam packing peanuts and a strange assortment of small things which, when assembled, allegedly makes a computer.

Disk operating system or software: The stuff which supposedly makes your computer go. Yeah, on a good day, when the moon is in the seventh house and Virgo is squaring the hypotenuse of Mars.

Unfortunately, my computer's software and I don't speak the same language. It doesn't understand the juicy commands I give it late on Friday or Monday nights, when I'm trying to get home in time to see "The X-Files."

A computer glossary for the rest of us

Download: how the dog lets me know when he's upset with me for leaving him Home Alone, usually found in a large chocolate pile at the front door.

Upload: how the cat handles her nasty little hairball problem, usually on my bed.

Mouse: the stiff, furry, dead creature the cat left on my bedspread this morning because she thought Mommy wanted breakfast in bed.

Information overload: when the six-month-old pile of accumulated stuff on my desktop becomes topheavy from neglect and cascades onto the floor.

Desktop: where to find my information overload.

Head crash: what you do with your head on the table after a severe information overload.

Floppy disk: what's left of that little 3.5-inch hard plastic thing after I drop it a couple dozen times, stick it into the computer the wrong way or the dog eats it.

Network: relations between consenting adult computers.

Spell check: a complicated program I don't know how to use because I prefer to look things up the old-fashioned way, in a dictionary, so I can continue to make mistakes.

Escape key: Labeled "ESC," it also stands for Exit Screen Characters. If you have the right game program and hit ESC when you hear the boss coming, it automatically calls up a spreadsheet to cover your butt. Unfortunately that won't work for me because of a mathematical learning disability (dyscalcula), which means I have no business being in the same county with a spreadsheet.

Sound file/sound board: a neat little doohickey which lets you set up your computer to make a variety of interesting and disgusting noises instead of those boring little clicks or beeps. Our graphics wizard's computer screams like an elephant. I like Fred Flintstone's "Yabba-dabba-doo!" or the Tasmanian Devil's "Why for you say you monkey when you got fuzzy tail like wabbit, Wabbit?" (My boss doesn't.) Unfortunately I haven't figured out how to download my sound files onto the new computer.

Modem: a fascinating little device which helps computers talk to one another and runs up your phone bill fast.

The 'Net (Internet), a.k.a. the information superhighway: a mad-dening international computer conspiracy, in which modem-equipped computers can talk with one another. It can access communications in Klingon, obscene speculative material about Barney, UFO bulletin boards and other neat stuff.

Server: the connection at the telephone company which links your modem and the 'Net, costs big bucks and never does what the nice salesperson promised you it would.

Surfing the 'Net: using the Internet for extended periods of time to read messages in Klingon and other neat stuff, in order to help run up your phone bill.

Hacker: someone who surfs the 'Net to pull cool stunts like breaking into low-level security at the Pentagon. I know a guy who did this several years ago at Penn State and actually got away with it for about five minutes. Neither the Pentagon nor the university were amused.

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

Oliver Stone seems bent on giving us a box office skewed version of history, regardless of how his product squares with the facts.

His most recent cinematic misadventure is riveting, emotionally committed, and damnably without much historical evidence to support its conclusions....Nixon was the father of institutionalized political murder in this country????

Stone often insists that his conclusions are the inventions of movie watchers. That's like Nixon himself saying, "I'm not a crook," all the time knowing that he was answering only the material aspects of that question or, in the case of Stone, trying to say that increasingly larger numbers of dead mice have nothing to do with invention of the mousetrap.

Who was Richard Nixon? Look more at what he and his followers didn't do to answer that question.

It began in California. When he said, after losing the election for Governor there, "you're not going to have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore", he spoke for millions of Americans...who refuse to speak for themselves...who don't participate in republican democracy...who, instead, stand on the sidelines, mouthing bad things about those who do...becoming the silent ones who are among those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Still, Nixon, and despite an almost painful introversion of personality, did thrust himself into the public arena...where he was eventually seen to be one of the silent ones...participating in his daily life by memo, and in private life by conspiracy and crudity.

And lest we forget, and notwithstanding the renowned American credo of forgive and forget, it would do us well to remember that the man who was so honored upon his death, was also the man who very nearly destroyed this nation's constitutional government.

At every turn, and ignoring

No matter what the movie says, Nixon was a crook

many opportunities to stand tall, Nixon instead lied, abused power, broke the law and slunk behind the coats of his subordinates. More to the point, and to the day he died, the only regret he expressed was that he got caught.

Perhaps the greatest crime committed by the 37th President of the United States is that he permanently, and with mean spirited self-interest, diminished greatly our faith in the political process.

He forever tarred the office of the president with a brush of indifference to the idea of constitutional government; to a separation of powers; to truth, justice, and the American way; to simple, honorable behavior by simple, honorable persons placed in incredibly complex and trying situations.

It's almost as if Nixon himself dropped an atomic bomb on American politics; the radioactive glow of his actions can still be seen today in the cynicism about politics in general.

He spent the last 20 years trying to rebuild his place in history. With speeches, books, and occa-

sional diplomatic missions around the world, Nixon, and with political lovemaking, sought to cloud the lens of history with an afterglow of good citizenship.

If he truly wanted to prove his innocence, he should have rejected the pardon offered by President Ford and stayed around for a trial. And if he wanted forgiveness, he should have admitted his guilt and said he was sorry.

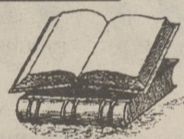
He did neither.

Instead, and when he died, it was clinging to the notion that he had at least partially redeemed himself. From this chair, he should rest in peace, and he deserves the respect of someone who has been in the arena...and certainly more respect than afforded him by Stone's movie.

However, he does not deserve the respect of someone who made a positive difference. Whatever positive differences he made are outweighed by what he stole from the American people.

He was a crook. And what he stole was faith in our system. For that, may history always remember him.

LIBRARY NEWS



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is now receiving items for the 50th annual Library Auction to be held in July, 1996. The Book Booth chair Benny Matchett and Jeff Matus have expressed a need for children's books, cookbooks, crafts, gardening, art and antique books especially as these are good sellers. Another good seller is music books and magazines on crafts and country things. Anne Aston is serving as a co-chair of the booth. The Odds and Ends booth, supervised many years by Sybil Pelton and Mary George and the Women of Kiwanis, will be happy to accept useable items in good condition for that booth also. The 50th Auction will be held Thursday through Sunday, July

Library is now accepting donations for the auction

11, 12, 13 and 14, with Ernest Ashbridge as general chairman.

New books at the library: "Intensity" by Dean Koontz is the story of Chyna Shepherd, a twenty-six-year old woman whose deeply troubled childhood taught her the hard rules of survival, and whose adult life has been an unrelenting struggle for self-respect and safety. Rare trust has blossomed for Chyna into friendship with the woman whose family home she is visiting for the weekend; a farm in the Napa Valley surrounded by vineyards and hills. Suspicious she learned in childhood still make her uneasy.

"Poet" by Michael Connelly is a searing work; a new departure that ranks as a thriller. Jack McEvoy specializes in death. As a crime reporter for the 'Rocky Mountain News', he has seen every kind of murder. His profes-

sional bravado doesn't lessen the brutal shock of learning that his only brother is dead, a suicide. His brother was a homicide detective and had been depressed about a recent murder case, a hideously grisly one, that he'd been unable to solve. He decides to write on police suicides.

"The Hellfire Club" by Peter Straub not only creates a villain as diabolical, clever, and fascinating as Hannibal Lecter, but has also given us a gripping, concentrated, and starting novel. At stake are the fates of both a loyal and courageous woman and a long-established publishing house. Nora Chancel is unwillingly drawn into a treacherous double mystery: One involves a series of vicious murders; the other concerns an otherworldly novel so influential that admirers give over their lives to it.

Have a bright idea?

Share it with your neighbors by writing to The Dallas Post. We welcome letters to the editor and longer pieces that may run as guest columns. Send yours to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612, or drop it off at our office at 45 Main Road, Dallas (across from Offset Paperback). Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number.

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