

My Computer Communications Company Launched

I started the Enjoy Colorado company based on selling individualized travel information in 1974 just before I got involved for two years with the Centennial-Bicentennial in 1975-1976. I also started working on the Redevelopment of Old Colorado City in 1976 and 1977 - when I moved to the Westside. I agreed to act as director of the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club, for pay, for only 1 year from 1977 to 1978. It was a critical time when the City Council was going either to back the businessmen through the Commercial Club or the CS Urban Renewal Authority - whose staff and Board already showed that they did not understand or care about the way the merchants, and I, wanted Old Colorado City to be redeveloped via small business loans and Historic Preservation.

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Category: Old Colorado City Communications (1980-2010)

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Here is me using a very early portable computer - Radio Shack Model 100 connected by modem to a cell phone, outside one of famous "Horse Alleys" of Old Colorado City. You can see the black sign that announces Colorado City as a National Historic District. I used my computers for everything, including me applying for National status.

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During that year we succeeded - with the support of our Councilman, - black Leon Young - and the City Manager - to oust Urban Renewal from anything to do with Old Colorado City. From then on the redevelopment of the Westside would be run by (1) City Community Development Staff headed by Jim Ringe through his westside director Bob Patoni - applying City HUD funds for Public Works (2) the Old Colorado City Development Company - headed by Wes Colbrunn answering to its Board of Directors made up of Old Town business owners- which reviewed and approved Bloc Grant Loans to new small businesses and (3) the West Colorado Springs Commercial Club run by me for a year as its Director both answerable to its Board, but also (4) the Organization of Westside Neighbors which I helped create in 1978 and got Bob Traer, homeowner, to head up while I was a Board Member.

But of course I continued to just do, invent, back, or explain as a freelance advocate and visionary for the whole project. So I had lots of irons in the fire.

That was about the same time I had bought my first Radio Shack computer and set it up as the City's first Computer Bulletin Board in all Colorado Springs, but especially supporting local Electronic Democracy.

It was clear to me that computer communications with the explosion of small personal computer sales was going to be a core business. So I told the Board of WCSCC that I would stay very much involved with them and the Redevelopment of Old Colorado City but that I wanted to go into business for myself. In fact I would occupy the floor right above the Commercial Club, and the Development Company, and the City's Westside Community planning office. For it had enough modern electrical outlets.

Just about then I was approached by a local man, Louis Jaffe, who had gone through the NYU Interactive Communications courses, had some money left to him by his father who published the Norfolk, Virginia newspaper, and wanted to get into the personal computer communications business himself somehow.

So we partnered, and leased the offices 202 and 203 in the historic 3 story Templeton Block Building at 2502 West Colorado Avenue, Colorado Springs right in the middle of the 3 block long Old Colorado City Commercial business district. You can see the antennas on the roof I later needed.

Old Colorado City Communications occupied the 2d floor of this building for 20 years.

The AT&T Miniframe

Our timing was right. For just as we moved in, AT&T, who had developed Main Frame computers based on the Unix Operating System software - large and costly machines - brought out the first 8 Modem-Port 'Miniframe' computer, livening it with powerful Unix, which only AT&T had as a Patented Process. It cost us about \$2,000 as I recall. Cheap for what it could do.

Such a machine would not only permit us to have a 8 modem-port machine - that could handle

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up to 80 normal-use dial up paying customers, but whose operating system and processors were designed from the git go to be a 'multi-tasking, multi-user' process machine permitting at least two persons working on it with terminals and keyboards at the same time all 8 modem ports might be in use. It was a scaled down version of the heavy duty larger machines used in its corporate and government communications business. Affordable to us, yet powerful small business class.

The First Hacker's Conference - 1984

To my surprise, even though I was a 53 year old retired Army Colonel and Colorado West Pointer in Colorado who made no apologies for my fighting in the Vietnam War, my creative uses of my Old Colorado City Electronic Cottage computer Bulletin Board for Electronic Democracy, and my account on the National "Source" and "Compuserve" national services - where I was called 'Sourcevoid Dave' seemed to resonate with the California Silicon Valley Centered Computer Hacker Hippie Crowd. First of all Steve Levy from the East Coast - who did an article on me and my online poetry called "Word Dance" named me "Poet Laureate of the Network Nation" and brought out the book "Hackers" in 1984. It covered the three generations - the mini-computer all night coders at MIT and Stanford in the 60's, the hardware hackers of the Homebrew Computer Club who made the first personal computers in the 70's and those who brought out the first novel software programs like Visicalc and Choplifter.

That inspired Stewart Brand, who had pioneered and backed the publication of the "Whole Earth Catalog" and was launching a Counter-Culture dial up Computer Service in Sausalito, CA, to announce the First Hacker's Conference.

I was invited to attend by Brand, who, somewhat older than the young Silicon Valley crowd, and had served in the Army too, had no problem with inviting me, a well decorated, Vietnam and West Point retired military man, who, nevertheless was pioneering the social uses of connected personal computing.

A whole slew - perhaps 75 - computer 'hackers' - including Wosniak, Steve Jobs partner who built the first Apple II, Dick Stallman of MIT who designed EMACS, John Draper "Cap'n Crunch" who hacked his way over telephones of the world - without paying for the calls, Art Kleiner, editor of the Whole Earth Review, Lee Felsenstein who designed the CPM based Osborne 1 (which Serial #640 I bought) and put up the 'Community Memory' BBS, Ted Nelson the creator of Xanadu - all assembled at the old decommissioned Fort Cronkhite as a California State Park facility just north of San Francisco. And even Tom Jennings - designer of Fidonet and other hackers, some who were flat broke - others already millionaires from their computer inventions attended.

I was quoted in Stewart Brand's article about that 1985 Hacker's Conference - (which is still going on in 2015) as below.

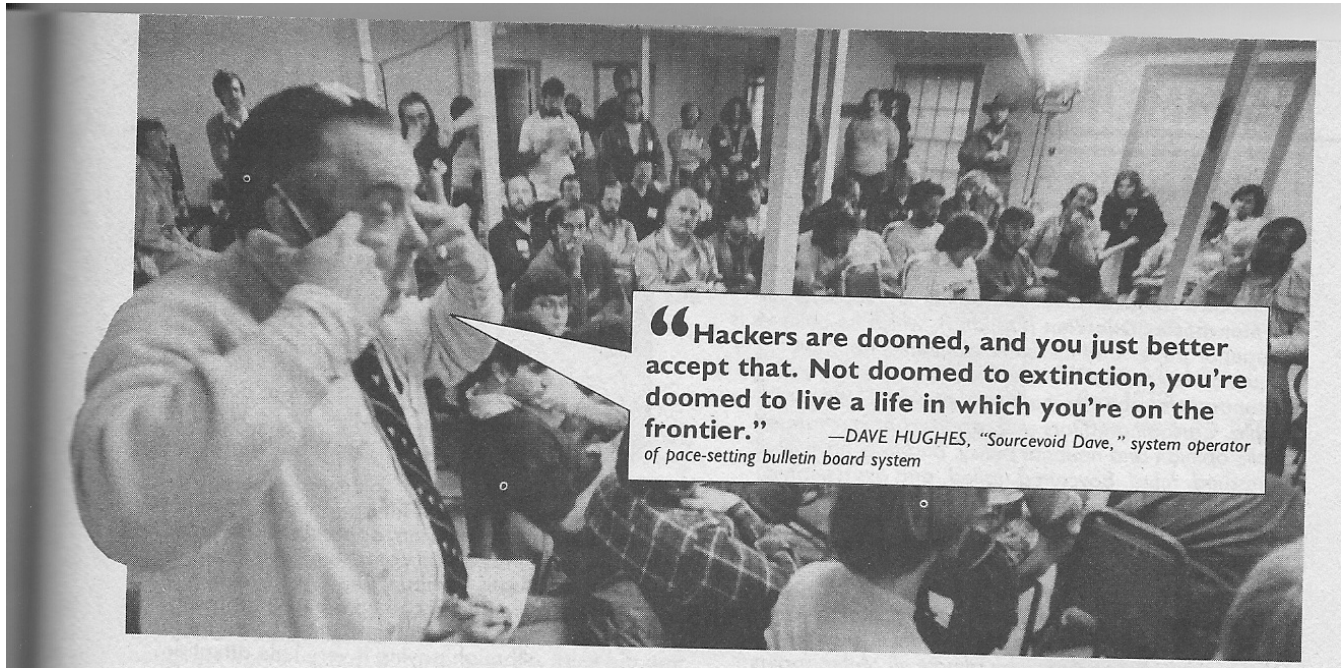
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secret how they do things, it appears to be magic to John Q. Public, and they're gonna make a living, but as soon as everybody has a computer and knows how to program and we have languages that don't require any special knowledge, your income's gonna go away.

DAVID LUBAR: But there are more people willing to buy games and play them than are willing to write them.

JEWELL: Right. Because they don't know how to write them.

WOZNIAK: I remember what I was gonna say. The company wants to keep it secret to make as much money as they can, but here's how we get beyond that level. We say that the whole world wins because other people are more inspired to go write their own programs and design their own hardware because they're gonna make money. They're gonna make so much product and do so well off it that they'll go out and do the most incredible things. They're inspired. That's the American way.

RICHARD GREENBLATT: There is a force in this world for standardization. If there's a knowledgeable marketplace people will say, "Gee, we want to do things a standard way." That's what IBM really did right. They said, "We're gonna have an open architecture on the PCs," and they advertised that and it was the one thing they did right, and look where it got 'em. In software that same thing can happen. If you have something done right and it's standardized and it's public, people will want that as opposed to the proprietary thing. And it's not necessarily because it's better today than the proprietary thing, but they realize that it is building a foundation and over the long term maybe it will get to be better than the proprietary thing.

WOZNIAK: Customers set the standards.

GREENBLATT: Customers inevitably will set the standards, no matter what.

DAVE HUGHES ("Sourcevoid Dave," system operator of pace-setting bulletin board system — 303/632-3391):

Hackers are doomed, and you just better accept that. (Hssssss) Not doomed to extinction, you're doomed to live a life in which you're on the frontier. Nobody pays for my WORD-DANCE, nobody paid for your early stuff, nobody paid for T. S. Eliot's first goddamn poems. When he got commercial, then the ethic meant when he made it he damn well better cycle back, and at least Apple and a few companies try to give it back, and the Shareware and Freeware is an attempt to try to reconcile that boundary toward an ethic and a commitment.

HENRY LIEBERMAN (MIT A.I. Lab): How does the frontier get supported? How do the centers of research and the centers of education get supported? I think there is another kind of software piracy going on that's not discussed very much, and the villains are not high school kids who copy discs and break secret codes. They're executives in three-piece suits that work for large corporations and drive Mercedes. They make money off the results of research and education, and they don't kick very much back to support the next generation.

VOICE: They will argue that they paid the taxes that funded the MIT A.I. Lab.

LIEBERMAN: That's true, and that is the only reason that places like MIT and Stanford don't disappear entirely off the face of the Earth. We have this paradoxical situation where the computer industry is booming and yet places like MIT and Stanford don't have secure support. It's very likely that I will be out of a job in a year. Places like the MIT A.I. Lab get no direct benefit from places like IBM or Apple. Well, that's not true, that's not true. They give us discounts on their machines, and that's very helpful.

And they contribute some cash, but the amount they contribute is piddling in the sense that when it comes time to pay my salary, the people I work for have to go begging to people like ARPA and they have to promise to build bombs (*murmuring*) [ARPA is Advanced Research Projects Agency, part of the Defense Department] and that disturbs me deeply. I and my colleagues come up with important ideas which people acknowledge helps support the industry and makes money for people. I would like to be able to pursue my



Left, John Draper (Cap'n Crunch) with one of the original "blue boxes" used for hacking up the planet's telephone system.

Above, Scott Kim, author of *Inversions*, designer of the *Hackers' Conference* logo and T-shirt (p. 44).

Right: Diana Merry, Xerox PARC.



Journalist Steve Levy's Kudo's

Here as a readable PDF page is what Steve Levy had to say about me - even seeing a 'theological' thread in my online ravings. Click on Steve Levy's name here -->> [SteveLevy](#)

It began to dawn on me that I saw societal human communications possibilities 'beyond' mere text and graphics on connected computer screens in these new 'personal communications' technologies. And others seemed to recognize that I had a much further vision than most others did for them. Social and Political change, not just the tech business and a new computer hacker hobby.

So with Old Colorado City Communications equipped with a Unix communications Server connected at the beginning to 8 dial in modem phone lines for paying 'customers' a place - office and tech work room - I had the elbow room to both provide services and continue to experiment.

The Super Lively Online 1980s

The 1980s saw an explosion of innovation, commentary, experimentation, with personal computers connected to networks one way or another. As a very early pioneer in the uses of connected personal computers I seemed to be visited, quoted, and photographed endlessly - in publications from the New York Times Magazine, Time Magazine, Washington Post down through the Denver Post, Rocky Mountain News, Gazette Telegraph to Counter Culture publications like the Whole Earth Review, New Age Journal, Hacker's "2.0". And that spread to my appearances on the McNeil-Leherer News Hour, National Public Radio and scores of 'Computer' on air programs.

There were conferences coming out of my ears. "Boardwatch Magazine" founded in Denver and covering 'computer bulletin boards' all over north America had annual large - 1,000 to 1,500 attendees - BBS Conferences, to which I was invited to attend and speak. Always they started the great plenary session by asking everyone to stand up in chronological order of their first 'BBS' use as they ticket off the years from the time the first - Ward Christiansen's BBS - in Chicago in 1979 was launched. Then sit down. I always was the only one who was left standing by the back year 1980. The numbers of attendees who had set up early BBS's didn't start really until 1981.

Then the Source had its face to face conferences, and so did 'BBS-Law' and "Computers Privacy and Freedom" and the 'Hackers Conference' - to all of which I was invited - urged - to attend and contribute.

Foreign publications had begun to pick up on the BBS phenomena, and BBS's were set up in scores of Foreign cities. In fact the first Foreign BBS I ever dialed up was in London! Especially Hacker Tom Jennings Fidonet BBS systems became rapidly popular. It was designed to be set up anywhere on the globe, and with only a dial up phone line connection and a unique Fido

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number as well as the next "higher numbered" Fido BBS, all the FidOs would call their closest neighbor at 2AM and in less than 2-3 minutes of the long distance call send out addressed (by the unique Fidonet numbering system) email, and bring in all those addressed to someone on the local BBS. Fido BBSs emulated the same 'hop, hop, hop' technology that Unix UUCP capitalized on for its data communications between main frame corporate and government computers around the world, which had spawned 'news groups' that technical staffs used to talk with other technicians.

There was one amateur Fido BBS in Istanbul, Turkey run by a young hacker Turk - Tolga Uduri . He reached my Fidonet computer in Old Colorado City Communications Offices via hops through Germany asking if I would come there to Turkey and address a communications conference.

I flew in to Istanbul, was hosted and paid by a Turkish non-profit technical association (www.interpro.com.tr) www.interpro.com.tr to be the main speaker at one of their communications gatherings. I was quartered at an inn right on the Bosphorous. Which inn was close to a Minaret where I was awakened very early by a Muzzin chanting - over electronically boosted speakers - calls to Muslim Prayer I also was met by young Tolga Uduri and his then tech partner Elyem who were really the inspiration for my trip. Thanks to their Fido BBS with its world wide reach - they got me invited by interpro and compensated for the trip. Which visit included a driving trip across the Bosphorous Bridge - so I could say I had been in two continents) while Tolga drove at a madcap speed of 80khr, which, apparently everyone does)

Below is a picture of me, Tolga (in foreground) and Elyem (Tolga's partner then) with an Istanbul Television crew who interviewed me for an onair program about personal computers.

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But Tolga, was determined to get out of Turkey to pursue his technical dreams because it was clear to him that Islamic politics was bound to change the character of the so-far non-sectarian national government. (Which has indeed happened increasingly over the decades since)

So Tolga even travelled to visit me later in Colorado Springs. He wanted to pursue a technical career - as an entrepreneur in net communications - which he did in both Canada and Germany.

Below is a picture of Tolga on the left, with his then girl friend who visited me to learn as much as possible on data telecommunications from me, together with my son Edward on the right and his wife from China, Haning.

He even got involved - politically at the international relations level, after he installed a UUCP link (which linked institutional main frame systems to the rest of the world) for a State (country) of Georgia observatory and got Press and White House attention via that one UUCP link carrying news about a threatened Russian takeover of Georgia. He even sent it to me asking me to spread news of the threat. When the US government and the UN in New York learned about it - only because of his link after the Russians had blocked all other communications in Georgia - the takeover was averted by US and UN diplomacy.

Which certainly confirmed in my mind the potential global political power of net communications, from linked BBS like Fidonet, and linked via institutional Mainframes by UUCP, and soon to include the greatest global revolution at all - the Internet. Which could be spread by Wireless, not only by wired networks.

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I was very much in on the ground floor of the Communications Revolution.

I was then invited to speak in politically agitated Caracas, Venezuela, where BBSs were beginning to sprout up.

I was then invited to be a speaker at a university-centered telecom conference in Budapest, Hungary, which I attended and participated in.

It began to dawn on me that personal global communications between individuals, not just organizations, was becoming a world wide reality. As much from the bottom up, as via larger corporate or government networked mainframe computers.

Many More Pioneering Projects

In the next series of articles I will cover a number of things Louis Jaffe and I got into, and then me alone when he moved to California. For a time, we called our Service 'Chariot Communications.' But soon switched to the more descriptive "Old Colorado City Communication." I was able to use the network to attract new businesses to the Westside of Colorado Springs.

- (1) The Well and UUCP Connectivity
- (2) Computer Conferencing - beyond BBSing
- (3) Big Sky Telegraph and online Education.
- (4) NAPLPS and Word Dance with the Russians.
- (5) Changed Partners - Louis gone, Larry Fox arriving.