



It seems there were some elderly members of the Heavenly Host who discovered that their pensions didn't stretch as far as they used to, and so they looked for alternate sources of funds. They finally settled on the idea of pawning some of the angelic equipment that they had little use for (being retired), but couldn't decide what they would part with. Would it be their golden harps? Their white robes? Their wigs with the long golden tresses? (All angels are blonde when they're on duty — it's in the contract.) In desperation, they asked St. Peter for advice. The Gatekeeper pondered the problem for a moment and then offered his advice: "Hock the hair, old angels".

All of which is just a long way of saying that it's time for the 1988 Christmas Newsletter.

1988 opened with Janet dancing away, tripping the light fantastic — and then just tripping, period. While working on a routine in her jazz dancing class, she caught her foot underneath her in a funny way and broke a bone in it. This left her on crutches for five weeks, in a special wooden-bottomed shoe for three weeks more, and with a real appreciation for just how hard it is to carry a Coke from the kitchen to the den when your hands are busy helping you walk.

At last Easter's Egg Coloring XII (our twelfth annual egg-dyeing extravaganza), Steve pulled off an unprecedented coup by having his eggs voted to five of the six "worst of show" places in the competition, led by *Pi in the Sky* (no, that's not a typo). The sixth spot went to Bruce Vanderzanden for *In Absentia*, which is notable because Bruce didn't even attend or enter an egg this year: he was awarded the third-worst spot just on past history! We also had our youngest winner ever as four-year-old Kelly Dennis took the Miss Congeniality Award for *Crazy Quill*.

This year's Adventures in Home-Owning story took place just two nights ago at our Christmas party. Somewhere during the departure of our guests, the latch on the front door decided it would remain permanently in the "sticking out" position, making it impossible to close the door. So at 2 AM Steve took screwdriver in hand to fix it, with Janet standing by for moral support (those of you familiar with Steve's mechanical aptitude can see where this is going already). An hour later, we had (a) taken half the doorknob apart and put it back on (in an unsuccessful effort to get the mechanism out of the door), (b) taken it apart and reassembled it again (because we couldn't believe it hadn't worked the first time), (c) taken the door off its hinges (hoping that we could insert the latch into the frame first and then swing the door around so that ... oh, never mind), and (d) put the door *back* on its hinges, all without substantially changing the situation. We finally propped the door closed with our concrete penguin, set the alarm system so that the living room alarm remained on, climbed over the railing on the staircase so the alarm didn't detect *us*, and went to bed.<sup>1</sup>

**Now It Can Be Told Department:** The hush-hush project that Steve has been working on at Intel all these years has finally come out into the open. For the last five years, Intel and Siemens Corporation (the big German multinational) have jointly funded the building of a new computer system, and Steve's been part of the project. On July 1, the two companies announced the formation of BiiN,<sup>2</sup> a new company owned by the two parents, to market and continue development of the system. Steve, along with 200 or so others, resigned from Intel (or in some cases Siemens) and now works for BiiN. Same building as before. Same office. Same job. Just a new company. Still, it's pretty exciting to be announcing products and entering the marketplace. BiiN builds systems to handle mission-critical applications, defined as places where you need to use computers and can't afford to have them fail. This includes things like reservation systems, stock exchanges, power plants, steel rolling mills, etc. We demonstrated our first systems at the Federal Computer Conference in October and drummed up a lot of interest. The future, as someone once said, lies

<sup>1</sup>Yes, we did finally get it fixed the next day.

<sup>2</sup>Pronounced "bine". And no, the name doesn't mean anything.

ahead.

Janet hasn't let the grass grow under her feet, either. After finishing up the courses at Portland State University for her post-baccalaureate degree in accounting, she quit her job at Intel in August to start studying for the CPA exam. She took the exam in November (just in time; her brain was seriously threatening to go on strike by then) and is awaiting the results. In her spare time, she interviewed with a passel of public accounting firms and accepted a position with Ford Black & Company. She puts on her CPA suit and starts the new job right after the first of the year.

The switch from Intel to BiiN brought along a few changes in corporate lifestyle. Intel was a firm believer in starting work promptly at 8 AM, with latecomers being counted by a security guard with clicker in hand; Joe Kroger, our new CEO, thought the clicker could be safely retired. And Intel had closed off one of the entrances to the building a few years ago as a cost-saving measure. At the time, some of us had "sealed" that door with wax and dire chants, pronouncing it anathema for all time. But BiiN was going to open the door again ....

So on July 1, Steve led a group of robed, chanting acolytes through the building with bell, book, and candle to the sealed door to open it with proper ceremony:

Steve: Let this portal be unsealed; let its bindings be loosed; let its hinges swing freely.

Acolytes: Let it be ever thus, in the name of Kroger, Blessed of BiiN.

*<Oiling of the door by Curate Kohlmeier.>*

Steve: Let the prohibition on ingress and egress be revoked; let this portal be passable by the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea.

Acolytes: Let it be ever thus, in the name of Kroger, Blessed of BiiN.

*<Sprinkling of water upon the door by Curate Dale.>*

Steve: Let this portal be opened to people of good will; may those who pass beneath its lintel be blessed with wisdom, productivity, and strength.

Acolytes: Let it be ever thus, in the name of Kroger, Blessed of BiiN.

Whereupon we broke the seals to the door, paraded to the main building entrance, obtained the clicker from a bemused security guard, had our pallbearers carry it out with proper reverence, and mixed up some concrete. Then we buried the sucker. It was a glorious day.

In amongst the vocational excitement, we found time to do a little traveling. In June, we spent a week in Miami visiting Janet's folks, and in October we spent a week in Hawaii (Maui and Kauai). Both were wonderfully relaxing; we *still* have visions of palm trees dancing in our heads.

And as the palm trees duke it out with the sugarplums for dancing space, we'll end this year's edition of the newsletter without even discussing the elephant stampede that Steve organized at work as a going-away surprise for the general manager or the way Janet's heart stopped three times as we drove our rented mini-van through the fog on the slopes of Haleakala. Stay healthy and happy, and keep in touch.

With much love,

Steve and Janet Tolopka