
K of C Council 12749

HIGH TECH

February 1, 2012

Technology is fascinating.

I bought my first computer in the 1980's – an IBM. I can remember the salesman asking me what I was going to use it for. I told him I didn't know – I just wanted to know what computers could do. I had some sense they could be important.

It was big, ungainly, slow and didn't really do that much. And the whole setup cost about \$5,000 in 1980 money.

You had to type the commands exactly or else rather than doing something it would do nothing. Sort of frustrating – but fascinating no less. I remember going over to Brother Joe Marandola's house (you remember me mentioning him last month – my earthly angel) and he showed me his computer – a really cool new kind of computer made by a company with a rather odd name: Apple. Brother Joe proudly demonstrated how, when he wanted to delete something from **his** computer he didn't have to type anything – with his mouse he just dumped what he wanted to get rid of into, of all things, a miniature trash can on his monitor's screen. Whoa. Almost **too** cool. I guess I was like the commercial PC nerd guy verses the Mac cool guy. I went slinking back to my PC.

So it came as a pleasant surprise when one of my kids gave me the Steve Jobs biographical book, by Walter Isaacson, last Christmas. I had been curious about Jobs for a long time but really didn't know much about him. Really a very interesting story of a giant of our era.

I think he was really an artist; basically an industrial designer. He seems to have forced his ideas into creation by the sheer power of his personality. And his personality itself had many contradictions and sharp edges.

Job's parents were religious Lutherans who took him to church most Sundays. Then in 1968 Life magazine published a cover that showed starving children in Biafra. According to the book Jobs took the magazine to Sunday school to confront the church's pastor. He said, "If I raise my finger, will God know which one I'm going to raise even before I do it?"

The pastor answered, "Yes, God knows everything."

Jobs pulled out the Life magazine cover and said, essentially, that if God knew what was happening to those children he didn't want to have anything to do with worshipping such a God; and he never went back to church. Coming to grips with evil in the world is difficult and it's always a narcissistic blow when we first realize God does not run the world as we would run it.

Jobs grew up in the San Francisco and Santa Clara Valley area. It was a time and place of the fusion of flower power and processor power, enlightenment and technology. As the book points out, Steve Jobs was the embodiment of all of it. Jobs noted the best music, like the Grateful Dead, the integrated circuit, and such things as the *Whole Earth Catalog* all came from that era and area.

The *Whole Earth Catalog* came out in the late 1960's when I was doing an internship at the Hospital of the Good Samaritan in Los Angeles. It had been to that hospital, just as I was starting my internship, that Robert Kennedy was brought after he had been shot at the Ambassador Hotel while campaigning.

I was very busy at the hospital and didn't have much discretionary time to read such things as The *Whole Earth Catalog*. So when I read the reference in Isaacson's book it perked my curiosity to check it out from the library a couple of weeks ago.

By the way, has anyone noticed how high tech our library has become? Searching for books in multiple libraries online, ordering online, using you Library Card code and personal PIN number to check out with a machine; a librarian is not even

directly involved (although they are there in the background to show you how to use the machines and computers).

The *Whole Earth Catalog* begins by discussing its purpose:

“We are as gods and might as well get good at it.”

... Boy, talking about humility or the lack thereof. It goes on to read:

“So far, remotely done power and glory – as via government, big business, formal education, church – has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains.” Hmmm

I guess you can say this is a book that tries to empower the individual through a catalog of other books and tools with a counterculture flavor to it. I can understand why Steve Jobs admired it.

In the catalog various books are reviewed. There is the iconic “The Complete Walker” by Colin Fletcher; reviews of THE standard for image projection: the Kodak Carousel Projector; where to buy Kama Sutra Oil; an encouragement to buy generic drugs over brand names; a review of the newspaper “The Green Revolution” “The mother of Community newspapers – A world-wide effort for decentralization and rural revival;” a book on the “Direct Use of the Sun’s Energy;” one on “Goat Husbandry” and another on “The Mushroom Hunter’s Field Guide, Revised and Enlarged.”

You would think towards the end of his life Steve Jobs would rail against government, big business, formal education, and church. Rather, nearing the end of his life and ill, he noted that he really wanted to see his son graduate from college. He said “When I was diagnosed with cancer, I made my deal with God...or whatever.”

Well, I guess that’s better than nothing.

I can hardly wait to see in what direction Brother Joe points me next.