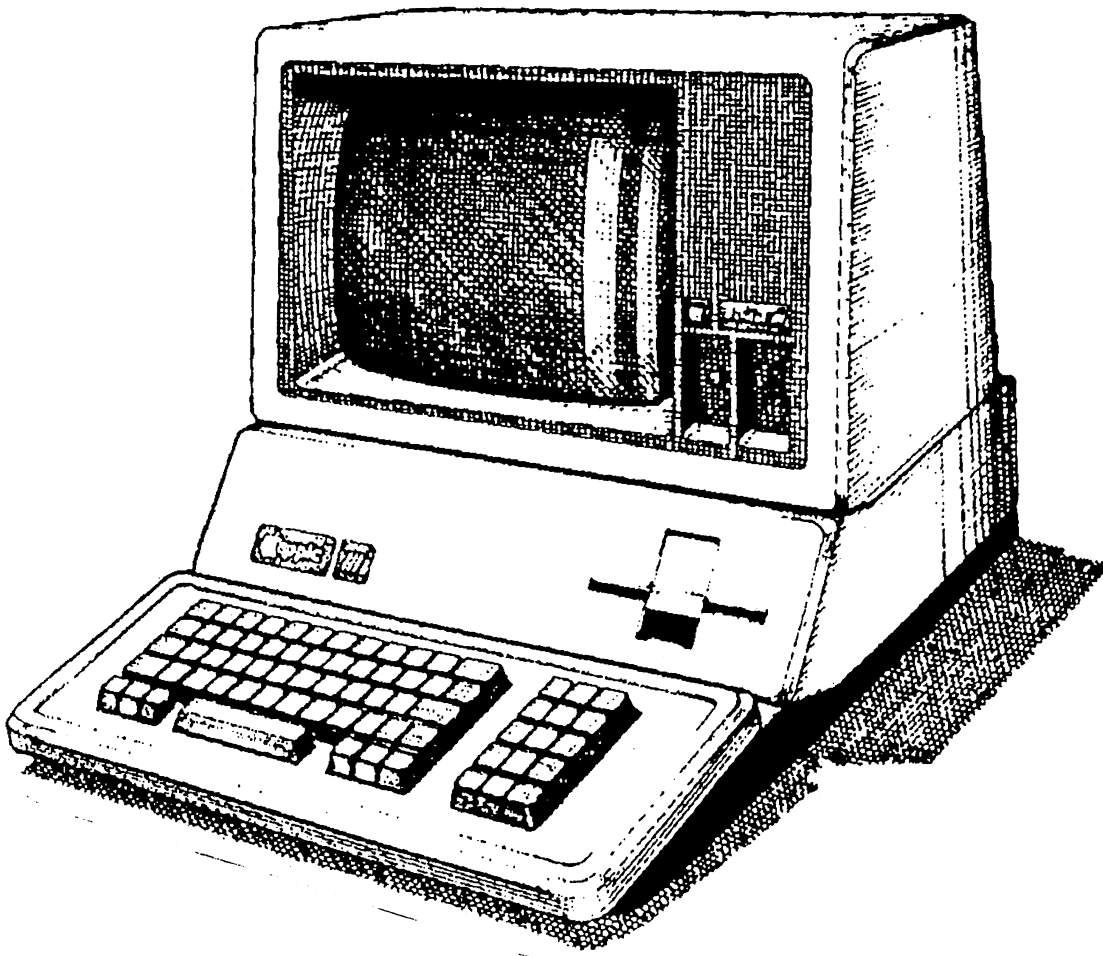




Apple /// Computer Information



DOCUMENT NAME	#
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROCKY CLARK (STEVE WOZNIAK INTERVIEW) 1982	127

Ex Libris David T. Craig

JUNE 1982

SOFTALK

Apple III - p142

141

3 pages

The Life and Times of

Rocky Clark

BY JONATHAN MILLER

Call it fate or opportunity seized, but Apple inventor Stephen Wozniak has a plane crash and a brainstorm to thank for his latest milestones—graduation from the University of California at Berkeley and a second career as a promoter of rock and computer fairs.

As Wozniak tells it, he was at the controls of a private plane about a year ago, flying from San Jose to San Diego to collect the wedding rings for his then upcoming marriage. For reasons still unexplained, the craft decided to merge with Mother Earth just after takeoff, leaving pilot Wozniak with a busted tooth and a busted memory. Five weeks after the fact, the whiz with ROMs and RAMs realized he'd been suffering from amnesia. Even more surprising, it seemed to be just what the doctor of destiny ordered.

Amnesia to Apple to Alias. "Things were pretty intense at Apple back then," the bearded Wozniak explained while dining at a Berkeley pizzeria not far from his off-campus apartment. "They had certain expectations of me and of what and who I am. Also, I had to read memos and go to meetings, and do all this stuff that was fairly easy but time consuming. I wasn't getting down to the problem solving I loved.

"And then I had the plane crash. I'd been off work for five weeks and I said, 'Perfect! There's no way I'm going back. I'm taking a year off and combining it with school.'"

Assuming the alias of Rocky Clark (he has a Siberian husky named Rocky and a wife with the maiden name of Clark), thirtyish Steve Wozniak, merry prankster of blue-box fame, returned to the school he'd dropped out of ten years earlier to pursue his computer passion. He didn't need a degree in computer science and electrical engineering for itself, and certainly not for career advancement, he conceded. But it would be nice, and certainly neat, to be able to tell your kids—he and his wife are expecting a child in September—that you'd graduated from college.

Returning to school after a ten-year absence has been an education for Wozniak in more ways than one. He's found it a lot harder than he figured; he's routinely up until two a.m. and sometimes all night. He's determined that academic computer instruction inhibits creative problem solving and, heresy of heresies, has concluded that computers are not a student's godsend, at least not yet.

"The computer cost me a ton of time in school. I felt that since I have a computer, I have to use it, so I used the word processor for my homework. It was much slower using the computer and that's the truth, and I don't care what anyone says. Computers have to get a lot simpler to use."

Computer Illiterate? According to Wozniak, the culprit is word processing. While his fellow classmates were finishing assignments by hand in a couple of hours, Wozniak was fiddling around with margins, reading proofs, and making corrections, because some words had to be in bold face and some in red ink.

"I went through so much using it that I would spend eight hours where everyone else would spend two. I get every word processor that comes out and no one has written one for the Apple that's any good at all. *SuperScribe*"—*ScreenWriter*—"comes closest. *Format II* isn't close and *Executive Secretary* isn't close and *Easy Writer* is the worst and *Apple Pie* is un-

usable. Nothing has been any good. *Apple Writer II* is not good even. It doesn't do what *WordStar* does. There are none. You have to go CP/M and I'm mad. Everyone of them claims to be so great. They're all complicated, they're hard, they don't do very much, and they don't work with many printers."

If Wozniak has reservations—to put it mildly—about word processing, he's decidedly more upbeat in his evaluation of his alma mater. Ten years ago, circa the Cambodian incursion when Wozniak was striking snapshot poses beside smoking tear gas canisters, students had only one thing on their minds—the war. Looking back, says Wozniak, it's obvious the war did more than tear the country apart; it distorted college educations as well. Today, swelling ranks of conservative business and engineering majors are positively directed toward, as Wozniak puts it, "earning money for life." The inspirational symbol of Berkeley in the eighties is that of paraplegics and quadraplegics tooling around the hilly East Bay campus in their Jennings motorized wheelchairs—of people, in short, getting on with the business of living.

Changing Subject. Cory Hall, the engineering building where Wozniak took most of his classes this past year, looks very much as it did in 1970, but the instruction in computer science doesn't. The computers were new; now, they've become a part of the bureaucratic problem.

"Back then," Wozniak explains, "they were teaching by saying, 'Here are some problems, find a solution.' They were teaching techniques that would lead you to find a solution. Now they're teaching the complete solution. It's not as creative as it used to be. A lot of good or alternative solutions get passed over."

But Wozniak isn't down on education; far from it. He's an optimist with seemingly boundless faith in the young and in the self-teachability of computer technology.

"The kids are getting so far ahead of people like me," marvels Wozniak. "When you're young, you can learn as many languages as you're brought up with, and computer just happens to be one of them. It's incredible to see so many people get down to the instruction-set level, bit by bit, and understand it so thoroughly. They've learned, they've educated themselves, just by studying what they could and playing tricks with it."

Computers are ideal learning machines, according to Wozniak, because they give you feedback. It's the constant repetition, the over and over, the backtracking on your own, the recovering from errors. "And," he says, extrapolating universally, "repetition seems to be the biggest factor in anything, whether it's winning the Olympics or designing a computer."

An Apple for the Student. For youngsters, the problem isn't designing computers, it's getting their curious little hands on them. Which brings us to Apple's offer to give every primary and secondary school in the country a bright, shiny Apple, provided Congress goes along with a modest tax bill to offset the giveaway partially.

"It's more important for children to get a good education in elementary school, and yet that's where the least money goes," Wozniak stumps. "Universities get tons of donations, fancy computers, and all sorts of tax write-offs that don't apply to lower grades. And that's wrong."

Giving computers away could pay off for Apple one day. To Wozniak, it's merely something he likes doing. An unpretentious multimillionaire if ever there was one, Wozniak is generous with his time and often with his money. His generosity and openness are evident in his development of Apples I and II. He built them for the problem-solving fun of it, to be shared with fellow hobbyists in the Silicon Valley's Home Brew Computer Club. It took the marketing insight of Steve Jobs, Wozniak's partner in pranks and computers, to see the commercial potential.

"I wanted an instruction set I could play with and that's all I wanted," Wozniak recalls of the inception of the first Apple. "That meant a printed circuit board on the floor, some wires connected to a keyboard, and a monitor." When it came to the Apple II, which Wozniak also designed, he still wasn't thinking product, but trying to solve another problem—putting some color on the machine.

Open Roads Go Two Ways. The genesis of the I and II as noncommercial designs proved, ultimately, to be a commercial blessing, since it led to the opening of the Monitor program to would-be software peripheral designers. "We didn't have enough software to write a complicated operating system at this stage," Wozniak says. "Since there wasn't anything in existence, we had to give access to the Monitor." Given his hobbyist disposition, Wozniak would have liked to have seen the III opened through to the Monitor and all the listings given out, but several factors conspired against it—among them, the numerous inquiries concerning weird calls to the Monitor, expected by experience with the II, and a lack of interest in the system's openness on the part of potential business users. Having to concede compromises like this added much to the impetus Wozniak felt to lay back about business and return to school. With the degree as good as gotten, it came time to look ahead again.

The Biggest Bash of All. It was last summer when Wozniak was tidying up academic accounts, taking time to get in touch



with himself and his ideals, that an idea occurred to him and wouldn't rest. Why not combine a computer fair and a musical festival on the order of a Woodstock—sans the drugs, of course, and the ripoffs and the lack of planning? Throw it on a three-day weekend and add activities for participation and you've got just the kind of wild and crazy notion that would excite the public imagination and dyed-in-the-wool computer hobbyists like himself.

The idea soon evolved, with input from promoters and educators, into UNUSON Corporation, founded by Wozniak last August to produce educational computer materials, develop a national data computer network, and run the fair. UNUSON preaches the upbeat technological gospel of the eighties that home and school computers can bring people together by revolutionizing the nation's information and education systems. Its fair in Devore, California, this Labor Day weekend, dubbed the Us Festival, is meant to usher in a new decade of dedication in which computer-literate people, recalling the cadences of John F. Kennedy, will ask, "What's in it for us?" before asking, "What's in it for me?"

"I want to make it big and I'm one of the few people who can do it." Wozniak's excited voice rises above the pizzeria din. "I really don't care about the bottom line. Sure, I hope to break even, but it's got to be done right and it's got to be done well."

By doing it right, Wozniak means having thirty top-name musical groups (rock, country western, and folk—no anti-social punk); attracting upward of a half-million visitors; providing comprehensive facilities for accommodations, including ample power sources and camping facilities; and topping it all off with the biggest computer fair ever. The fair would feature problem-solving competitions between individuals, groups, and brands of personal computers; hardware and software exhibits; and demonstrations of exciting new applications of computer technology in communications, education, small business, music, and ecology.

For hobbyist Wozniak, the paramount concern of the moment—short of finishing his school work—is getting word of the festival out to computer club soulmates and other users. To that end, he is offering *Softalk* readers and other Apple owners the opportunity to make reservations beginning June 1, a month before tickets go on sale to the general public. (See the accompanying announcement for details.)

Simplicity of Things To Come. A lot of calls to the Monitor have hummed along circuit boards since Apple's inception, but Stephen Wozniak remains virtually unchanged. Wiser, of course, but no less committed to the technological gospel that denies the zero sum paradigm that one man's gain is another man's loss.

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think people get rich because they make poorer people richer." As to the glorious future, inventor Wozniak is playing mum. He's got ideas on software, hardware, and even cpus, but many are off-the-wall type things. "Whatever I do," he confides, "it has to feel good." What will make him feel good, and also sell, he strongly believes, is a product that's a whole lot simpler to use than anything available today.

"Computers have to be easier. Computers aren't easy, Apples aren't easy. They're very hard to use. It's hard to pick up a manual for any major word processor—command this, command that—and that's got to change. I believe Apple's going to be the leader in that revolution. It's going to become so easy, you'll know what to do without reading the manual."

Such breakthroughs may or may not be unveiled at the Us Festival, but for Steve Wozniak 1982 is looking like a very good year. He's turned 1981's plane crash into wide-ranging opportunities, and come the end of September he'll celebrate the birth of his first child. "I get to name the baby if it's a boy," says the man who's toying with Karp, Rocky, and leaning to Clark, as in Kent. "Like I said, I like simple solutions." ■

"A lot of people tend to think that way about everything," says Wozniak, "but I relate to that from a different point of view, that there are a lot of cases of somebody doing something really well, where everyone wins out. I'd say Apple is a good example of that, that technology is benefitting everyone. I

Us Festival Tickets

The Us Festival will be held in Glen Helen Regional Park in Devore, California, in San Bernardino County. Readers of Softalk can reserve choice locations beginning this month—one month prior to public sale—by ordering advance tickets from Us Festival, Box 95108-1157, San Jose, CA 95108. Price is \$35 for one to three days. Tickets may also be purchased by using the SOFTALKTCW \$14.

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