Remembering Ryan

In April 2011, former Juiced.GS *editor Ryan Suenaga passed away. On pages 11–15 of this issue, friends and fans of his writing, podcasting, programming, and KansasFest sessions remember this pillar of the Apple II community.*

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this issue ...

And much, much more!!

Memories of Ryan Suenaga

He who spoke softly and wore loud shorts

Ryan Suenaga, former editor-in-chief of Juiced.GS, passed away on April 24, 2011, at the age of 44. He was hiking the Olomana Trail in his native Hawaii when he became separated from his group and fell 150 feet. Ryan was a writer, editor, programmer, podcaster, KFester, social worker, brother, uncle, nephew, and son. The Apple II community will miss him terribly, as reflected in these memories of him.

Max Jones:

In the seven years I was editor and publisher of *Juiced.GS*, I wrote tens of thousands of words for this upstart publication before I turned over the editorial reins in late 2002 to Ryan Suenaga. These words will be the most difficult.

To say Ryan was among the earliest and most stalwart supporters of *Juiced.GS* would not do justice to his contribution to the magazine. Within hours of my initial announcement about the magazine in late 1995, Ryan sent me an email offering his assistance as a writer. (A couple days later, his check arrived in my mailbox, making him the fourth paid subscriber. I'm convinced he would have been subscriber No. 1 if his envelope hadn't had to come all the way from Hawaii to Indiana.)

Ryan followed through on his offer, and his work appeared in every issue published during those years. What's more, he helped me develop the long-term vision for the magazine. I got to know him well. We spent a lot of time together at KansasFest, and he stayed at my house one night before we headed for the annual event in Kansas City.

When *Juiced.GS* published its first compilation CD, Ryan was the one who actually burned the first batch of CDs on his equipment, then shipped them to customers directly from his home. We also collaborated on the name of that product: the "Friends for Life" CD.

Thinking back on all Ryan did from Day One to make *Juiced.GS* successful, I now consider him in many ways a co-founder. He helped make it happen. I'm glad I didn't have to do it without him.
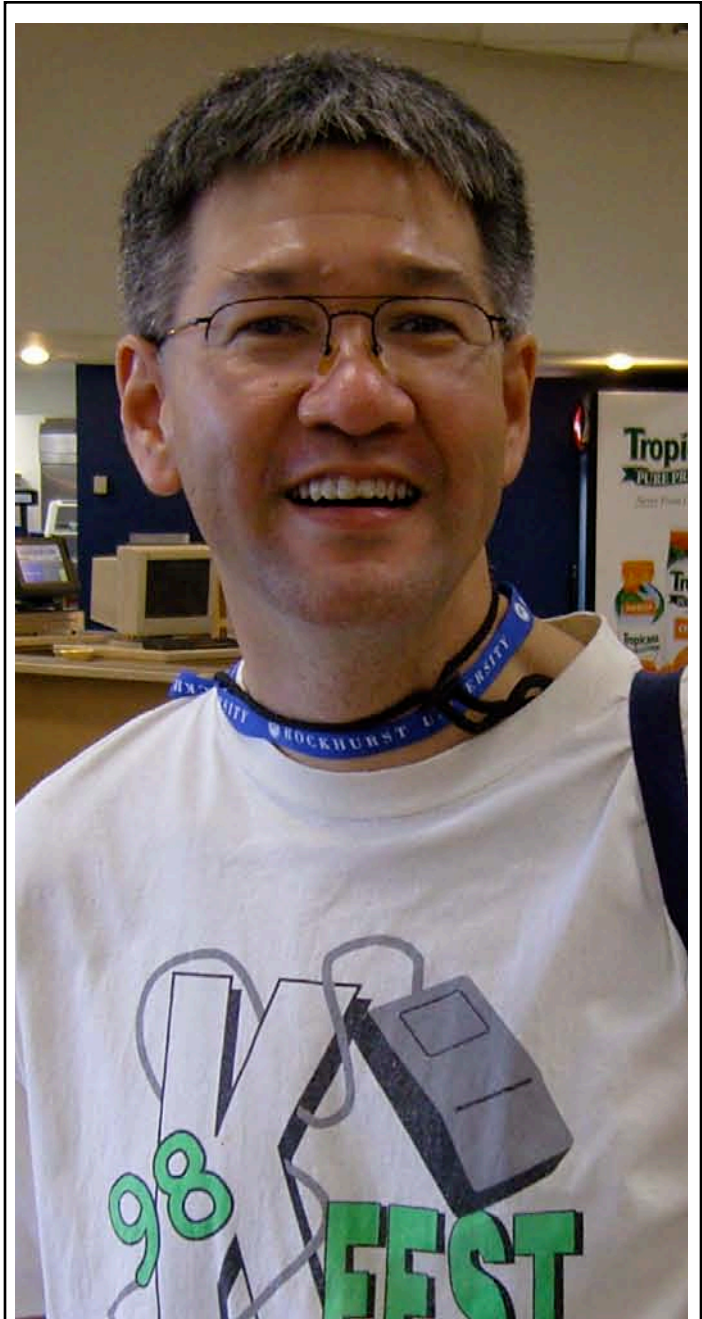
Class clown*: Ryan's infectious smile and raucous laughter were a hallmark of KansasFest for over a decade.*

Juiced.GS Tribute: Remembering Ryan Suenaga

Ryan was a special guy, a rare breed. He was loyal to his friends, and that's probably why he had so very many of them. It's hard to imagine the Apple II world without him in it. He was a leader, a doer, and a steady and consistent partner. I felt honored to know him. Although he no longer walks this earth, I will think of him often, and always consider him a "friend for life".

Geoff Weiss:

Ryan Suenaga really understood the concept of "community". Not only did he have relationships in the communities where he lived, but also more globally with the Apple II. As Apple II use became more dispersed, it took a global network to keep the interest alive.

Ryan took over GEnieLamp, an online publication, in 1997, taking information from the closed GEnie network and making it available to the Internet as a whole. The depth of each monthly issue could take an hour or more to read. I am pretty sure most people did not realize the effort it took to produce a single GEnieLamp. But Ryan felt it was important that the information be shared.

As fewer online resources became available for the Apple II, Ryan helped to get Syndicomm Online up and running. Even though I was not part of the Syndicomm staff, Ryan made sure I was one of the early users of the system. I was finally absorbed into the part of the Apple II community that seemed to make the most new developments. If not for Ryan's invitation, I wouldn't have been a part of Syndicomm. As I think back, I am flattered that Ryan went out of his way to contact me directly.

As there were fewer and fewer active participants in the Apple II, Ryan started taking on a bigger and bigger role. I am sure he struggled with all of his time commitments. Not only did Ryan post useful information, help users, and build a community infrastructure, but years later, he started to develop Apple II software as well. He modeled the belief that if you have the motivation to learn how to write programs, then it could be done.

Ryan took on many thankless responsibilities when nobody else would or could. Today, the Apple II community is better because of what he has done. Thank you, Ryan; you will never be forgotten.

Sue Utter:

I remember first meeting Ryan at KansasFest 1994 and being intrigued by the colorful shorts that he wore.

It was then that he first met my now late husband, Gary, in person, though Ryan was such a wonderfully outgoing person that they'd already been friends for years through GEnie.

En route to KansasFest on one of his stateside trips, Ryan stopped in Rochester to visit us, coinciding with Gary's sister's birthday party. Ryan became what we like to call a "PseudoUtter", immediately making himself part of the family. I wish that he could have stayed longer, but he was on the way to visit Ken in Massachusetts—he had too many friends and too few hours to enjoy them all.

I would like to think that Gary and Ryan have relit the GEnie lamp and are happily discussing Apple II products together now.

Tony Diaz:

It's now been two months, and not a day—probably not a few hours—have gone by when I can't help but think of that morning we got the news. I'm still in disbelief.

It seems like I can't go an hour without encountering evidence of Ryan's contributions to our community. Throughout the changes and evolution that the Apple II community has taken, he brought us all closer together. Even though we are all far apart physically, we are close—just an email or a phone call away, or a line of text blurted into the IRC channel. An answer may not be instant, but we've all helped each other when possible—especially Ryan.

If you had a problem, or something happened, most people, myself included, would probably start looking to place blame. Ryan had a different outlook. "I'm not into placing blame," he would say; "It's not going to solve the problem." Ryan would just forge ahead. As an aviator, I'm familiar with the saying, "The fuel in the truck, the runway behind you, and in many cases, the altitude above you are useless." All Ryan knew how to do was to deal with what mattered.

Ryan rarely complained; he would just keep on going, producing when able. When he released a new newsletter, podcast, blog post, or program, he'd do so as if it were flipping a light switch and moving on. It wasn't a big deal: "Oh, it's just a new episode, nothing special."

Maybe not to you, Ryan, but to some, it was a lot. You had a unique way about you; may your vision continue. Mahalo!

Juiced.GS Tribute: Remembering Ryan Suenaga

A global citizen: *Ryan established community wherever he went. Here, Australian and Apple II programmer Andrew Roughan visits Ryan in his native Hawaii in August 2004.*

Andrew Roughan:

I did not know Ryan well, but our involvement in the Apple II community meant that our paths crossed frequently.

I occasionally saw Ryan in the A2Central chat. His Hawaiian evening time overlapped with my Australian morning time, so he was just going to bed as I was getting going. Ryan would share what was going on for him in his life at that time. He was a busy person with looking after his relatives, his social work, exercising, hunting the latest bike gear on eBay, and working out how he was going to pay the least amount for it after using coupons and various reward schemes. He'd drop in, say hi, and be off again in a flash.

Ryan apparently never watched movies. Unfortunately, that meant that a number of movie-inspired geek jokes that I tried on him had to be explained, and no matter how hard I tried to convince him, he was never inspired enough to watch one himself. It seems he preferred to use his time constructively instead.

Ryan was unapologetically a Pascal evangelist. While others prefer using 65816 assembler or C, Pascal has the aura of a restrictive legacy language and is seen to be 'uncool'. Yet Ryan continued to code in Pascal. He was more focused on getting stuff done than looking good.

Each utility he developed was an opportunity to extend his programming knowledge. He would chat about how he was struggling with some issue but never went into detail about what that was—and then one day, he'd have solved it. Rather than ask for help from anyone who was listening, he kept what he was working on to himself and refused to be stopped.

The range of things that Ryan accomplished in the Apple II world was an inspiration to me. His challenge to not suck come KansasFest was something that motivated me on numerous occasions and one that still drives me now. Ryan Suenaga's memory will live on with me. Thank you, Ryan. Aloha.

Eric Shepherd:

When Ryan Suenaga wandered into the A2 RoundTable Real Time Conference room on GEnie one evening, I had no idea the impact that would have on my life. At the time, he was just another name dropping in to chat about the Apple II. New names came and went all the time; there was, at the time, no way to know that he would become one of my best friends.

Time passed, and he became part of our regular nightly chat crowd, talking about not just the Apple II but goings-on in real life. As always, conversations in our Apple II chats were widely varied and a lot of fun. It was maybe two years later that my wife and I got married, and we invited Ryan to be a groomsman in our wedding, alongside my new brothers-in-law and old friends. It seemed only natural. Many of you have seen the photo of the two of us in our tuxedoes at my wedding. The smiles there weren't just about the day, but about the nature of our friendship.

Ryan was a guy who would listen when you were upset or angry, and then dole out gentle advice. That is, he'd say things that would make you think, and would help you come to a decision on how to cope, without actually telling you anything you didn't already know. It was his way, and it worked well for him both in his personal life and in his career as a social worker.

Indeed, Ryan's entire life was about helping people.

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He helped take care of his niece and his mom. He helped Apple II users figure out what to do with their computers. And, most important, he helped children and families cope with terrible situations. He would always comment on his selfishness, but I have to assume he was joking, regardless of how seriously he talked about it; nobody who gave so much and demanded so little in return could ever be truly regarded as selfish.

In truth, Ryan was the most selfless person I've ever known. Despite his sometimes crude humor and his even cruder clothing (I mean, come on—really!), he was a gentle spirit and among the most decent people in the world.

More important to me: he was, I think, my best friend. I don't make friends easily, for various reasons. Losing him was a painful blow. I miss him terribly, more than I can say. Even though I write for a living, I simply don't have the words for grief like mine.

Richard Bennett:

Good, nice, and important people aren't supposed to leave early and without notice. Ryan was all three. And that's before we even start to talk about his work with the Apple II community.

Looking back on my near twenty-year friendship with Ryan, I notice that key points in my Apple II history seem invariably to align with his involvement to some degree. I've lost count of the private groups and email lists that I've shared with him over the years, in what's been a fairly wide range of Apple II-related areas. And yet I'd never really noticed the correlation until recently.

Ryan worked tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the Apple II community alive, when neither Apple nor the mainstream computing industry cared. Magazines, newsletters, product manuals, product testing, new project development, conferences, forums, moderation, helping users solve their Apple II problems, forging new friendships and relationships between like-minded people, and eventually even software programming— Ryan did it all. Humbly, he never sought credit, and he knew how to get along with everyone. He was one of our community's greatest strengths, a developers' best friend, and he was never thanked enough. I never thanked him enough.

To register for Marinetti 1.0 back in 1997, you had to write a little spiel about yourself, and even though

Editors, unite: Ken Gagne, Ryan Suenaga, and Steve Cavanaugh, former editor of The Apple Blossom, *enjoy some seafood in Boston in the week prior to KansasFest 2004.*

Ryan was one of the inner circle of testers on that project, including having written the user guide, he still felt inclined to register like everyone else. Ryan's personal spiel was "Ryan Masanori Suenaga, B.A., M.S.W., L.S.W. Big time Apple II geek, social worker, bicyclist, basketball player, Smile contributor". I have no doubt he'd say the same today. It was one of the Apple II community's greatest understatements, from one of its greatest understated.

Kirk Mitchell:

My friendship with Ryan started online. He was an avid poster on the online service GEnie, helping any who asked, while I didn't have an ISP in my small town and called through the 800 phone number at 10 cents a minute. My first introduction was as "Kirk the Lurk", although I did post more when we finally got an ISP.

Of course, KansasFest was always a major topic on GEnie and later on Delphi when GEnie died. After reading how much fun everyone else was having, I convinced myself to attend. In 1997, I finally met Ryan and many of the other Apple II celebrities that I was in awe of. His real-life personality was exactly like his online presence. He was friendly to newbies, was fun to hang out with, and wore brightly colored Jams. We didn't become KansasFest roomies until 1999, but we then requested each other through 2009. The nearly 50

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days and nights I spent at KansasFest as Ryan's sidekick always made the rest of the year brighter.

One tradition Ryan started while at KansasFest was Krispy Kreme night, sharing tempting and fattening warm donuts with his fellow geeks. Ryan carried on this tradition until 2010, when he was unable to attend the event—but even then, he wired money to Ken to ensure the donuts would continue.

Rooming with Ryan was of course the high point of my year, but the thousands of hours spent chatting online with him and my other online friends hold my fondest memories. He helped me through several rough times, and I hope I helped him through his. We shared jokes, ribbed each other, and did what friends do, even though separated by thousands of miles. Learning that this distance had suddenly become infinite has shaken me to the core. Ryan was truly everyone's best friend.

Doug Cuff:

Ryan kept in contact with me over a lot of years, and each time he popped up, his presence made me feel good. Ryan was there for me when I was at my wit's end. I had fallen on hard times, financially and emotionally, and he came to me with an offer of work. I was pleased that I was still on his list of people who could contribute. The emotional boost that I got from Ryan's offer, I have treasured and talked about ever since. It was a lifesaver. Ryan taught me to be mindful of quiet good deeds by doing so many of them for me.

The hard times that Ryan supported me through were replaced by adequate times. Rather than waiting for the time when I could really make a difference, I sent Ryan what I hoped would be the first of many little and overdue thank-yous. He responded by mentioning me by name in his podcast, and he did it in a very classy way. If you listen for it, you'll be able to identify the moment, but you won't have the context to recognize its classiness. That's going to stay between him and me.

For the past four months, I have been going through the hardest thing I've had to endure, and there's no end in sight. I am grateful that the last time around, Ryan taught me how to endure the next turmoil on my own.

Because of this current turmoil in my life, I had been considering returning to KansasFest this year after a single previous visit and a long absence. I thought it might be a chance to reconnect with Ryan, my truest friend from the Apple II realm—not to ask

him to prop me up again, but to do one simple thing that we would both have enjoyed: Meet in person for the first time.

Knowing Ryan, he wouldn't have been there this year. This is, after all, Ryan Suenaga we're talking about—one of the people who showed me you can have imperfections and still be a good man.

It's not important that we will fall short if we try to be what Ryan was. It's just important that we try.

Sean Fahey:

I've thought about Ryan nearly every day since he died. It's not because he and I were particularly close; we shared an interest in the Apple II and were both involved in the KansasFest community, and we often chatted about life in general but rarely anything serious. Still, after more than a dozen years, you get to know a person. You get used to them being around. You might even take him for granted.

Every time I log into A2Central.com's IRC chat room, boot up an Apple II, or pick up a copy of *Juiced.GS*, I invariably think of him. I followed Ryan on Twitter from which I had a sense of connection with his daily life. He tweeted about everything: shower times, daily weight and blood sugar, where his personal and professional business was taking him. Sometimes, he opened up about personal challenges he was facing. I admired his humility, his tenacity, and his compassionate spirit. Ryan always strove to do the right thing. And a better friend you couldn't ask for.

The Ryan Suenaga Scholarship Fund has been established at the Kapiolani Community College. Donations may be made by mailing a check, with the memo "@rsuenaga", to

University of Hawaii Foundation
P.O. Box 11270
Honolulu, HI
96828-0270

Donations may also be made online with a credit card:

http://www.uhfoundation.org/rsuenaga

Contributions will also be accepted at KansasFest 2011 at the inaugural Ryan Suenaga Memorial Krispy Kreme Night.