

Interesting & Funny Apple Tidbits

This chapter is here to tell interesting and funny stories behind easter eggs, code names, and those who make your Mac.

An E-Mail Chat With an Apple Engineer

I received a good deal of information from an Apple engineer who explained how easter eggs are dealt with at Apple. I asked some questions and these were the engineer's answers.

Q. If an easter egg is slipped into a final release and managers hear about it, will they take it out?

Usually they will leave it in because it is so hard to requalify all of the CD bundles, etc. The worst one I heard of was an engineer who hid a picture of himself on one of the system software CD's. There was a poster in the picture of a certain scantily clad female music star. When this was discovered and the lawyers decided that we would get sued, they had to stop the production lines, redo the CD, open all of the boxes of computers in storage and replace all of the CDs. That whole snafu cost a couple of million to fix, not even including the downtime on the production line. Needless to say, that engineer is no longer here.

Q. Would you know how the term 'easter egg' came about?

No one seems to know where it came from.

Q. What is the legal background of code names over at Apple?

We aren't supposed to use trademarks or names of living people anymore for code names. One group just got permission from Berkeley Breathed to use the Bloom County comic strip theme for their CPU project - Opus, Bill the Cat, etc. Another group just had to change their project name from Jumanji because in Taiwan that's very close to a bad word.

Q. What makes a programmer a Blue Meanie?

That term is a little out of use, but it applies to anyone in the Trad OS group (Traditional OS--System 7.x, as opposed to Copland OS or hardware, ATG, etc.). It actually comes from when the groups were identified by colors from the Apple logo. Blue just happened to be the color code name applied to that group (also a code name for System 7). Pink, for example, was spun off to become the basis for Taligent. They adopted the "Meanie" part themselves, and I really don't know where that comes from. [explained below]

Q. How am I doing with my list? Has anybody else seen this list at Apple?

Pretty good. However, your guess is as good as mine. There's definitely some in there that I wasn't aware of. I actually got your list from an old-timer engineer who forwarded it around because he was impressed. There's a number of people I know who have seen it. A lot of people here in desktop land like to read about the Newton eggs.

Q. Are the people who put easter eggs in the system programmers or engineers?

That's really the same thing here. Most of the senior engineers, who are the ones that can best sneak this stuff (easter eggs) in, do both architecting and programming. The more junior engineers (everyone is called an engineer here) do coding but not architecting and are more likely to get busted.

Q. Why are easter eggs put into the system?

Most people do want their eggs to be found at some point. Some want to be able to do something cool in the store or have other programmers find them and see how cool they are.

Q. How strictly do the managers try to enforce the absence of eggs?

As you yourself pointed out, backdoors and easter eggs can contribute to system incompatibilities, crashes, slowdowns, etc. Generally they have to be very cleverly designed and hidden in order to make it into a release, which can also waste expensive engineering time. That's why they can be a bad thing. The testers' secret movie on the 7200 CD is one notable exception. That was officially sanctioned by management as a reward for the QA contractors, and as a result pissed off many engineers that have to work hard to get their eggs shipped.

The absence of eggs is enforced in a number of ways. First, we have to review code written by other engineers. This happens several times during the product development cycle and is where most of them are weeded out. This is also where the "buddy factor" comes in to play - you can keep yours if I can keep mine. Eggs that affect performance tend to also be noticed, as do eggs that are installed or activated by someone else's code (they get found during normal debugging). Finally, the last thing that happens to the software about to be shipped is a string search. A special tool runs through all of the code looking for names, code words, etc. That's done by QA, so we can't do anything about it, and they are rewarded for finding secret about boxes.

Things like the 7.5.2 secret about box that use a specific string to be activated have to be extremely well made in order to not cause performance problems from checking for a long string in some complex way every time something is typed. That particular easter egg, though, is a little different in that it is sort of sanctioned by our management. They all knew about it because it was so cool, but didn't say anything and just made sure that we didn't use any copyrighted material. The ROM picture [secret ROM image] actually has a couple of managers in it. In general, they would rather have one well-known and "safe" secret about box than have a bunch of rogue engineers running around making their own.

OK, it's Friday, it's been a long week, and now it's time to have a beer.

Blue Meanies--The Truth From A Meanie

Why Blue Meanies? Well, System 7 was "Blue". We were mean (we were also known as the "arrogant bastards"). Blue Meanies were actually characters in the Beatles movie "Yellow Submarine". There were also Apple Bonkers, which became the name of an important server which our team used.

Why was System 7 blue? Because that's the color of the index cards that features, at a Pescadero off-site meeting, went onto for the "next release". "Future release" stuff went onto pink cards, hence the precursor to Taligent was called "Pink". There was also Green

and Red, but that's for another time.

We had a good time. We were on a mission. System 7 was a good system to work on. It was a bit much to do all at once, and it could have been planned better, but it was a big accomplishment, and an all-around excellent thing for Apple and its customers.

DogCow Poem in TechNote #31

(also see "SpInside..." in the Apple Programs chapter)

🐕 First, a quick history of Clarus:

In April 1989, a Technical Note by the name of Tech Note #31 was distributed to developers in a serious packet of information starting as an April Fools' prank. Clarus soon after became a big hit and the Dogcow started appearing Page Setup dialog boxes. "History of the Dogcow" later appeared as a two-part story in "Develop", The Apple Technical Journal.

The Tech Note's author is Mark Harlan who spent most of his six years at Apple finding employees who were hired by Steve Jobs and asking them, "So how does it feel knowing that the way you changed the world is by putting Windows on all PCs?" Find out more about Harlan in "The Mac Bathroom Reader".

Here is the poem that appeared in TechNote #31. The trick is that if you take the first character of each line of the poem you see APRIL FOOLS!

A dogcow is what I want to be.
Pictured in dialogs,
Running through the weeds,
In and out of advertisements,
Loving my naughty deeds.
Feeling in black and white.
Over the edge of cliffs,
Out with the tide in the sea.
Living life to the fullest,
Sweet survival in 2 D.

Here's why (from an employee at Apple):

"Sports Illustrated had run a great fake story about a Zen baseball pitcher sometime earlier and we borrowed the idea of having the words 'April Fool's' spelled out within the article from them -- in our case using the first letter of every line of the poem at the closing."

D. Bruce Yolton (db Yolton@interport.net)

you can see the original technote page at:
<http://www.info.apple.com/dev/dts/tn31.html>.

There is a detailed DogCow page at:
<http://www.info.apple.com/dev/dts/dogcow.html>

🔥 Another Dogcow Poem

From: Dieder Bylsma (bylsma@unixg.ubc.ca)

Yea, and if It will be done, even in spite,
Then lend Thine hand to the masses,
Lest It be done incorrectly or woefully worse
By those not versed the the ways of the Dogcow.

(Found in a tech note about creating/implementing INITs properly.)

🔥 Business Card Humor

Apparently Apple is pretty layed back when it comes to business titles. They give a lot of latitude to employees in deciding how they present themselves to the outside world. Owen W. Linzmayer collected many Apple business cards and displayed some of the quirky titles in his book. Notice the similarity between these and the eggs you find on your Mac.

Allen J. Baum: Cheif Wirehead

Mike Boich: Software Evangelist

Frank Casanova II: Lord of High End Mac

Donn Denman: Crank Inventor

Steve Goldgerg: 7.0 Guy

Martin Haerberli: Hardware Wizard of Macintosh

Andy Hertsfeld: Software Artist, Macintosh Software Wizard

Don Louv: Wild Newt Tamer

John Scully: Cheif Listener

Burrell Smith: Hardware Wizard

Explanation of the Blue Meanies

Of course everyone knows that the Blue Meanies are those mean furry blue guys that were killing the peace in the Beatle's movie "The Yellow Submarine". See "Current Systems" to see the egg that sparked the public's interest in the Blue Meanies.

The fictional story behind the Blue Meanies can be found at:

<http://www.spies.com/greg/bluemeanies.html>

The Story Behind "Sosumi"

From: Macworld's Mac Secrets (For more info. see credits at last chapter)

Have you ever wondered what the name of the staccato E-flat diminished triad sound called "Sosumi" means? Okay, well I haven't either, but there is a story behind its name... no, actually there are three stories. They are all alike but each has a slightly different perspective.

Story 1:

Early in Apple's career as a computer-making superstar, there was a little legal trouble. That trouble was with, believe it or not, the Beatles. The Beatles' lawyers claimed that Apple, in making a computer with sound capabilities, was trying to get into the recording industry, causing confusion in customers' minds. After all, their companies had the same names and were doing the same thing, right?

So Apple sighted and promised Apple Records, in writing, that it would never get into the recording industry. Apple Records backed off, and Macintosh went forth in the world.

A few years later, however, Apple started including a microphone with most Mac models. And guess what your suppose to do with that mike? Yup-make recordings! It certainly would take a hypersensitive record company to interpret giving away a free microphone as "entering the recording industry." But you never know. Some wily Apple Engineer, recognizing the potential litigation, gave the alert sound a name that serves as a subtle tribute to Apple Records; Sosumi!

🔥 Another Variation to the Sosumi Story

This is a similar twist to the Sosumi story by an Apple Employee sent via e-mail to another employee.

It was late in the release cycle of system 7, and Jim Reekes was working on the sound manager in engineering when Apple legal called. Due to the pending Beatles lawsuit, we were not allowed to have anything that even remotely resembled music to be associated in any way with the macintosh. The reason they were contacting Jim was because one of the sounds in the Control Panel was called "Xylophone." This was absolutely unacceptable, there could be no references to musical instruments.

Jim's initial reaction was to name the sound something quite inappropriate but had second thoughts figuring that it too probably would not make it past the Apple legal sharpies. Under a sudden stroke of genius he named the sound, "Sosumi". Of course he needed to cover all his bases, so he quickly passed a story around that if anyone asked, sosumi was Japanese for, "a light pleasing tone." The name stands to this very day.

🔥 AND another story!!!

Here is another Apple Engineer's story. It seems that they weren't very clear on the cover story.

It's true that the (then) new microphones were causing some ripples in Apple's legal department. They were wondering how Apple Records might, or might not, react to them. From our point of view in engineering they were being too sensitive. Then something happened and we *knew* they

were way too touchy. We had held a contest to select and name some new sounds for the Sound control panel. One of them was named Xylophone. It sounded like a xylophone. Someone in the legal department saw one of the beta releases of System 7 and went nuts. They were certain that a system beep sound with the name of a musical instrument would send Apple Records right over the edge. Engineering got a call *demanding* that the name of the sound be changed.

A bunch of us were grumbling about the order that night when someone suggested that the new name should be So Sue Me!. I suggested the spelling: s-o-s-u-m-i. Our cover story was that Sosumi was a Japanese word describing a kind of flower (as far as I know it's gibberish in any language). We went to the project manager and begged to be allowed to use our new name. We all huddled around the phone while she called the lawyer and told him the new name. Instead of pronouncing it, she spelled it to him -- a wise move, I think. She reported his reaction as, "Oh, that sounds nice! That'll be just fine."

 MacWorld April Fools Easter Egg Joke
From: Jim Henson (saton1@aol.com)

This was printed in Macworld as an April Fools joke on its readers:

By Lon Poole

According to the law of averages, every so often a perfect Mac rolls off Apple's highly automated assembly line. Every trace is soldered perfectly. Every chip is the best of its batch. This ultra Mac, literally 1 in 10,000, is capable of vastly greater performance than a run-of-the-mill Mac. About four years ago Apple considered testing for these ultra Macs at the factory, putting them in special dark gray cases, and selling them at a premium as a separate Macintosh Pro line. As part of the evaluation process, a special activation sequence was added to System 7's Finder, then under development. The Mac Pro line never saw daylight, but Apple did use the dark gray color for its PowerBooks.

Statistically, there are probably about 2000 Mac Pros out there. The aforementioned activation sequence was never removed from the System 7 Finder. To see if you have a Mac Pro, bring up the About This Macintosh window. In the upper part of the window between the title bar and the divider bar, where the type of Mac is reported, click each of the four corners starting in the upper left and proceeding clockwise. Then press option-P-R-O. If you do in fact have one of these special Macs, the Mac icon will immediately turn dark and the word Pro will be added to the end of the Macintosh model name. Best of all, your Mac will now operate four times as fast!

If you're not one of the fortunate few blessed with a Mac Pro, sorry. Can I interest you in computer vitamins (eensy-weensy pills you pop into the floppy disk slot to double performance)? No? How about an ADB booster that triples your typing and mousing speed? A SCSI workout video that improves hard drive access time (but only if you run it for half an hour three times a week)? Somebody stop this April fool, please!

Stories Behind the Code Names

Find the complete list of code names at: <http://www.macworld.com/tccafe/codenames.html>

A little History Perhaps...

From: The Mac Bathroom Reader (See below) by Owen W. Linzmayer

Before Apple publicly announces a product by its official name, internally it is referred to by a code name. Usually lead engineers or managers get to name their own projects whatever they want, but a few recurring trends are evident. Early in its incarnation, Apple favored female names for projects. More often than not, the projects were named after the children, girlfriends, or wives of the team members (for example, the Lisa was named after Steve Jobs' daughter born out of wedlock). Jef Raskin rebelled against the sexist notion of female code names and looked instead to apple varieties as the inspiration for his Macintosh project, purposely misspelling McIntosh. For a while, the names of different types of apples (Pippin, Johnathan) were often whispered in the R&D labs. Having exhausted the apple varieties, project managers now tend to choose whimsical code names that either reflect pop culture or contain awful puns. Perusing the list of code names is like walking down memory lane, checking out the fads and trends that swept through Apple cubicles and lab benches over the years.

Apple takes the code-naming business seriously, often assigning the same project different code names, one to be used internally, and another for external use. Also, a single project may have separate code names associated with hardware, software, documentation, and marketing. Furthermore, outsiders - - such as developers and the press - - may be told about the same project, but each will be told a different code name. And just to keep everybody guessing, Apple sometimes changes code names in the middle of a project, or reuses old code names for new projects. Not only does all this create confusion in Apple-watchers, it also serves as an audit trail to trace leaks to their sources.

BOB W-Powerbook Duo

The code name was known as "BOB W". This confused people

for a long time until they showed the title of a popular Star Trek show which said "Best of Both Worlds." It shouldn't be hard to figure out the connection.

Can This Bird Fly?

From: The Mac Bathroom Reader by Owen W. Linzmayer (see below)

Apple's top-of-the-line, 68040-based PowerBook 540/540c project was code-named Blackbird, after the high-flying SR-71 reconnaissance plane, because both feature dark colors, curves, and speed. However, it's known informally inside Apple as the Spruce Goose because some people feel that introducing a 7-pound laptop in 1994 is as ill-fated an idea as the Howard Hughes' huge aircraft which flew only once. On a related note, the Blackbird's innovative new trackpad was code-named Midas, after the Phrygian king who had the power of turning whatever he touched into gold.

Cosmos Carl Code Name Complaints (Power Macintosh 7100/66)

From: The Mac Bathroom Reader by Owen W. Linzmayer (see below)

The November 29, 1993 issue of MacWEEK featured a cover story on three computers Apple would later introduce on March 14, 1994, as the Power Macintosh 6100/60, 7100/66, and 8100/80. The story mentioned in passing that the computers went by the code names PDM, Carl Sagan, and Cold Fusion, respectively. Upon reading this tidbit of information, the real Carl Sagan fired off the following letter to MacWEEK:

"I have been approached many times over the past two decades by individuals and corporations seeking to use my name and/or likeness for commercial purpose. I have always declined, no matter how lucrative the offer or how important the corporation. My endorsement is not for sale. For this reason, I was profoundly distressed to see your lead front-page story 'Trio of PowerPC Macs spring toward March release date' proclaiming Apple's announcement of a new Mac bearing my name. That this was done without my authorization or knowledge is especially disturbing. Through my attorneys, I have repeatedly requested Apple to make a public clarification that I knew nothing of its intention to capitalize on my reputation in introducing this product, that I derived no benefit, financial or otherwise, from its doing so. Apple has refused. I would appreciate it if you would so apprise your readership."

Carl Sagan
Director, Laboratory for Planetary Studies
Center for Radiophysics and Space Research
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Sagan's letter appeared in the January 10, 1994 issue of MacWEEK and

elicited howls of derision from the Macintosh community. Most people wondered why Sagan was complaining; he should have been honored to have a computer named after him, they felt. Besides, it was never meant to be the final product name, so lighten up. It has been suggested that what upset Sagan the most was being grouped with two discredited scientific discoveries/hoaxes, Piltdown Man and Cold Fusion.

In deference to the noted star-gazer, Apple changed the Power Macintosh 7100/66 code name to BHA. Things were beginning to return to normal when Sagan learned that BHA supposedly stood for Butt-head Astronomer. He put pressure on Apple's lawyers, who insisted the project engineers come up with a new code. They settled on LAW, which stands for Lawyers Are Wimps. Nonetheless, in the third week of April, 1994, Sagan sued Apple in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, charging it with defamation of character. He sought unspecified damages, probably hoping to reap "billions and billions" of dollars.

Fortunately for Apple, judge J. Baird dismissed the suit, finding that "Plaintiff's libel action is based on the allegation that Defendant changed the 'code name' on its personal computer from 'Carl Sagan' to 'Butt-Head Astronomer' after plaintiff had request that Defendant cease use of Plaintiff's name....There can be no question that the use of the figurative term 'Butt-Head' negates the impression that Defendant was seriously implying an assertion of fact. It strains reason to conclude that Defendant was attempting to criticize Plaintiff's reputation or competency as an astronomer. One does not seriously attack the expertise of a scientist using the undefined phrase 'butt-head.' Thus, the figurative language militates against implying an assertion of fact... Furthermore, the tenor of any communication of the information, especially the phrase 'Butt-Head Astronomer,' would negate the impression that Defendant was implying an assertion of fact."

Gibbly - System Enablers

From: Develop Magazine, Issue 14, Page 108

Avi Drissman (ad406@detroit.freenet.org) [<http://www.science.wayne.edu/~adrissmn/>]

As you may know, there is a hamster named Gibbly in the story of the Blue meanies (<http://www.spies.com/greg/bluemeanies.html>). His name comes from the System enablers that have a file type of "gbly", and actually had a code name of "gibbly" or "gibblies" for plural. Here is the story...

Gibbly History by Chris Derossi

When system enablers were being designed, it was clear they were going to be a mechanism for extending the system. Engineers began calling them INITs, since they served much the same purpose. This caused some confusion with people who thought we really were talking about INITs, and

issues were raised about possible conflicts with other INITs, loading order, and so on. (These issues don't apply to system enablers at all.) It was obvious to me that we needed to change the name to differentiate system enablers from other types of system extension mechanisms. We couldn't use the term extension because that was the public name for INITs. We couldn't use addition because that term already referred to things like QuickDraw GX and AOCE.

So, I decided to use a made-up word. I wanted a word that would be memorable and one that would sound funny when used in all seriousness by executives and upper management. Hence the name "gibblies." The engineering documentation for gibblies states that the singular is "gibbly" and the plural is "gibblies." It also states that the "g" may be pronounced hard or soft depending on the speaker's preference. In practice, the hard form (as in "give") became the one used by those in the know. There you have it. And, yes, it was very amusing to hear the made-up word being used all over the company in serious conversation.

PDM (Power Mac 6100/66)

From: Macworld's Mac Secrets (For more info. see credits at last chapter)

The code name for the PowerMac 6100/66 was PDM which stands for Piltown Man. This was the name for the the man whose skull was found by an archeologist in 1909 in Susses, Englang. It was believed to be the missing link between man and ape. In 1953 it was found to be a fake.

Lisa

From: The Mac Bathroom Reader by Owen W. Linzmayer (see below)

"Lisa" was the name of Apple's first big hit computer. It is supposedly named after Jobs' daughter but if you read "The Mac Bathroom Reader" you will find out that people still don't know for sure due to many mixed reports. Anyways, when Apple tried to find a name that would appeal to the business market Lisa (the code name at the time) had received so much press that they kept the name for the computer released to the public explaining that Lisa stood for "Local Integrated Software Architecture". This was so obviously contrived that industry wags suggested a more accurate explanation was that Lisa stood for "Let's Invent Some Acronym".

MAC

From: The Mac Bathroom Reader by Owen W. Linzmayer (see below)

Apple also once considered shortening Macintosh to MAC, which would stand for Mouse-Activated-Computer. Internally it would be known as Meaningless Acronym Computer.

The Mac Bathroom Reader

Owen W. Linzmayer has put a lot of work into his book, The Mac Bathroom Reader. It seems only appropriate to tell you how to obtain it... The Mac Bathroom Reader, published by SYBEX, is available in better bookstores for \$12.99. If your local bookstore doesn't carry it, ask them to place a special order for ISBN #0-7821-1531-4. Or you can order an autographed copy direct from the author, Owen W. Linzmayer (71333.3152@CompuServe.com).