

pam.

Oh, yeah. How many of us who have with e-mail accounts know that this word means more than just canned luncheon meat? Probably everyone.

You see, spam has taken the place of the old fashioned chain letters your annoying friends used to send your way. You know the ones I mean?

“Send ten copies of this letter to your friends or you will be hit by a bus.” It’s far easier to bang out an e-mail message and forward it to every name in your address book than it is to write a letter, address an envelope, and actually purchase and affix a stamp.

Yes, Spam greets me when I go to retrieve my mail. Get rich quick! Visit the hottest site on the Internet! The government is out to take your rights! I had Elvis’ space alien child!

The favorite piece of spam I have ever gotten was the one about Craig Shergold. You know the story—teenage boy has incurable cancer and he just wants to get into the Guinness Book of World Records by collecting the largest number of business cards.

As far as chain mail goes, this one is pure industrial-strength hokum. I should know—I worked for the Make-A-Wish Foundation for almost two years. We got dozens of calls on this story a week from people who just wanted to help out. Of course they were surprised to learn that the letter was a hoax, especially after they had spent months collecting business cards from every store owner and industrial park they could find.

The true story of Craig Shergold actually is an interesting parallel for Macintosh.

You see, Craig was actually a real person who was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer. Doctors didn’t really give him much chance to survive. So, he wanted to make his mark in history by collecting the largest number of get-well cards and get listed in the Guinness Book of World Records.

In much the same vein, Apple Computer and its Macintosh line were labeled a dead company over the past few years. You were a fool to buy a Macintosh because everyone knew that the company was going to fold...any day now.

No less respected media outlets than the Wall Street Journal and NBC News were letting the world know that Apple was indeed on the way out. The obituary was being written in real time across newspaper financial sections and on market watch TV shows. Apple owners were

told to pray.

Well, I am happy to report that Apple has made a comeback which is just short of miraculous. A little ingenuity, a little showmanship and a little touch of uniqueness have lit a fire under a company. Not a fire like a funeral pyre, which the mainstream media believed was Apple's fate. Instead, more like a Saturn V rocket main-stage ignition.

The flames of this ignition have propelled the company into frontiers it has not been to for a while. The company has vigor. Its commercials are funny. Its products sell very well, thank you. And, it is turning quite a healthy profit quarter by quarter.

Many developments have given Mac boosters this chance to celebrate. The original iMac has dropped in price to \$999. Finally, the \$1,000 barrier has been broken by this machine. Oh, sure, I had my doubts when it first hit the market, but this little computer has delivered for customers. It won some converts from the PC world. It cemented the bond Mac fans have had with the OS for years. And, it grabbed a fair amount of people who had never made the leap to use a computer before. Imagine, people who have heard nothing but gloom and doom from the media getting onto the Mac bandwagon?

The reason the original iMac dropped in price was due to Apple's release of the multi-colored line of iMacs which hit the marketplace in January. These fruit-flavored iMacs come with a faster processor and a beefier hard drive. While they don't necessarily put the first iMac to shame, they offer their better performance for \$100 less than the first iMac. Not too shabby...

And, hey, if it works for the iMac, why not adapt it for the rest of the line? Apple has given the curves and translucent plastic body to its G3 minitower and monitors as well. These new, powerful computers definitely look at home with graphic artists and other creative professionals—a segment which helped keep Mac afloat during the lean years.

The news from Cupertino looks so good, in fact, that I nearly fell out of my chair when the media began to back Apple. At first, I had read some good reports about sales in the local paper's business section, and, of course, the iMac was considered as one of the best designs of the year. The moment I knew Mac Apple was definitely taken off the death watch was when on the NBC Nightly News, Tom Brokaw pitched to a segment talking about the Comeback Kid of 1998, Apple Computer.

The segment was exactly what I would have written had I scripted it from the point of view of a Mac-Boosting Columnist. The reporter showed the roll-out of the new iMacs. He interviewed Jobs. He talked about how the media had counted Apple out and even showed some of the magazine covers which touted the demise of Apple. Steve Jobs called the new iMacs with their fruit-flavored names Life Savers. Indeed, they have proven to be.

I don't remember much else of the segment. After all, I was in bliss. I ran around our house, pumping my fist in the air and screaming, "Vindication is ours!" My wife quickly removed our son from the room, fearful of how else I was planning on celebrating this victory.

Oh, and what ever happened to that Shergold kid? Well, he came to the United States from his native Britain and was operated on by one of the leading cancer specialists in the states. He has since gone on to live a full life, and the cancer has never reappeared in his system. He truly beat the odds and has demonstrated that he is definitely a comeback kid.

In fact, if you want to check out his story, you may want to go to the Make-A-Wish site at

<<http://www.wish.org>>. And, if you want to contribute to a charity that does some really good work, give 'em a call...

Yes, indeed, 1998 was amazing. And, in 1999, as Macintosh turns 15 years old (yes, it has been 15 years since the fabled 1984 commercial), it has become quite the spunky teenager.

Of course, you realize this means that next year we have to give Macintosh the car keys and enroll it in driving school!

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