PC WEEK

SPECIAL REPORT

Ten years on the beat

By Dan Farber

Ten years ago this week, 20 journalists labored long into the night to produce the premier issue of PC Week.

The front-page banner headline announced new graphics capabilities for IBM's 3270 PC. Apple's Motorola 68000-based Lisa workstation was expected to give it stiff competition. Compaq had just completed its first year of business with $110 million in sales, President Reagan was entering his fourth year in the White House, and Lotus was minting money with its 1-2-3 spreadsheet.

Fast-forward to 1994. Sam Whitmore, John Dodge, Matt Kramer, and Beth Freedman—original PC Week staff members—are still toiling at their trade. The crew of 20 has grown to more than 100 writers, editors, product-review analysts, designers, and artists. Spencer F. Katt has barely aged, and remains our chief intelligence officer (see Page 77).

In 1984, about 30 percent of our readers had LANs. Today, 100 percent are connected.

PC Week readers are still trying to connect to mainframes, but not primarily for terminal emulation. Host connectivity is no longer the centralizing force governing large computing sites. In 1984, about 30 percent of PC Week's readers had LANs at their sites. Today, 100 percent of our readers are connected, and they are involved in managing enterprise computing environments that link multiple locations and integrate heterogeneous systems.

During the last decade, the PC brigades and information-systems visionaries have redefined corporate computing, and are now engaged in a struggle to re-engineer their information systems. Terms like downsizing, upsizing, rightsizing, and scalable have become part of every manager's vocabulary.

One point is clear. The exponential growth in power and performance of PCs has created an environment ripe for client/server computing. Mainframes are sharing processing duties with low-cost PCs, and rapid application-development tools that provide seamless data access are beginning to proliferate. Legacy operating systems such as CICS, MVS, and VMS are finding their way onto modern RISC platforms, and new enterprise operating systems from Microsoft and IBM are starting to emerge.

Spreadsheets, word processors, and databases—the standard applications that defined computing—are becoming powerful, multimedia tools for collaboration. E-mail is now the hub application for global corporations. And mobile computing has evolved from the 15-pound portables 10 years ago to handheld devices with wireless connections and mainframe access.

It is also clear that the monumental changes that occurred over the last decade will be dwarfed by changes in the years ahead. It is our job at PC Week to reflect those changes in our weekly coverage, and to highlight the products, trends, strategies, and companies that will enable you to make critical technology choices.

We look forward to serving you for another decade. ■

Ten years of events that shook our world

A DECADE OF 10 COMPUTING

By John Dodge

In terms of important events, the last 10 years could be evenly split between IBM and Microsoft Corp. IBM ruled the first five; Microsoft took over in the last five. Apple Computer Inc., Compaq Computer Corp., Lotus Development Corp., Intel Corp., and Novell Inc. all enjoyed their moments in the sun, but the time line is notched mostly by IBM and Microsoft milestones.

Recurring themes were the progressively faster pace of technology, constantly dropping prices, and the end of IBM mainframe tyranny. Seven-figure computers have largely gone away, replaced by smaller, cheaper, faster RISC- and X86-based PCs, workstations, and servers, all routinely networked.

Here are the key events, trends, and people of the past 10 years.

TRIBUTE TO A PIONEER

Who knows what Don Estridge would have accomplished or where he would have ended up, had he not tragically died with his wife in an August 1985 jetliner crash? Without a doubt, it wouldn't have been with IBM.

Had the Big Blue hierarchy a clue to the direction of computing in 1985, Estridge wouldn't have been shunted from IBM's red-hot PC unit to an irrelevant manufacturing job. He would have helped to mold what IBM should have become—at least, that's what we'd like to think would have happened.

As a 22-year IBM veteran, Estridge that March quietly accepted his new position and was not heard from again until he met his untimely end. Almost all of his colleagues from the glory days of the Entry Systems Division are now gone from IBM.

Estridge's accomplishments within IBM's smothering atmosphere of the early '80s were nothing short of remarkable. He ramrodded the PC through IBM's notoriously slow and rigid management committee, delivering it on time Aug. 12, 1981. Not content to rest with that, he then built a $5 billion business that, by the time he was "promoted," accounted for 10 percent of IBM's sales. The rest is history.

What colleagues remember most about him was his energy and unflagging optimism in the face of setbacks. Dan Wilke, who worked for him, summed up Don Estridge as follows in a 1989 interview in PC/Computing magazine: "With Don, if you tripped or fell, you didn't worry about somebody shooting you in the kneecaps. He'd tell you to get up, brush yourself off, and keep on running. It made you want to climb mountains for the guy."

IBM'S HEALTH FALTERS

In 1985, IBM came down with a nasty cold, which by 1987 had worsened into the flu. When, in 1992, it reported a $5 billion fiscal loss, the patient entered the ICU with a new team of doctors. Let's look back at the origins of IBM's poor health.

Blinded by 1984's record profits, IBM brass over the next two years rightfully believed customers wanted to tie their disparate systems together, but wrongly concluded that the only important computers brandished the Big Blue placard.

IBM not only ignored, but flaunted its disdain for open standards such as the PC AT architecture it introduced in August 1984. The company's arrogance was symbolized by the Micro Channel architecture, the bus technology for the new six-member PS/2 family rolled out on April 2, 1987. OS/2 was unwrapped that same fateful day. Micro Channel architecture was billed as a "four-lane highway" compared to the PC AT's two lanes.

Reviled for strong-arming users into buying a new standard that obsoleted AT add-in cards, IBM never won wide support for the Micro Channel. The following September, it acknowledged defeat by launching the PS/2 Model 30-286, an ISA-based PC (what the AT standard became once IBM relinquished it). ISA and its superset, EISA, are still going strong.

OS/2 also got off to a rocky start. Standard Edition 1.0 shipped in December 1987 amid a spike in RAM prices and a subsequent shortage. Rumors that IBM would corner the world's RAM supply and give it to needy OS/2 customers turned out to be untrue. Even if it had, there were virtually no applications for OS/2, and its touted GUI, the Presentation Manager, was nowhere in sight.

In 1987, IBM's Vietnam was a one-page statement announcing SAA (Systems Application Architecture). Although never sure why it was doing SAA, IBM poured a ton of resources into it. SAA has since been abandoned and replaced by individual strategies.

SAA and Micro Channel constituted two egregious strategic errors. The jury is still out on OS/2. In April 1993, an outsider, Louis Gerstner, took the helm from the fallen John Akers. In terms of employment, IBM is now half the size it was when it caught the cold.

EXPANDABLE MACS SHIP

In early March 1987, Apple Computer introduced the $2,769 Mac SE and the $3,699 Mac II.

For the first time, the Macintosh had expansion slots, enough memory (1M byte standard, expandable to 8M bytes) to run the Mac GUI half decently, and a hard disk built in. We could have anointed Jan. 24, 1984—the day the Mac was introduced—as the most important Mac date. But the original Macintosh was overpriced and underpowered, much like its ugly predecessor, the Lisa.

The SE and Mac II made the Mac viable in information-systems departments and it began making appearances in corporate America. The IS drive culminated in 1992, when PowerBooks achieved a 20 percent share of the portables market. Many executives gave up their X86 notebooks for the jazzy PowerBooks.

Apple's IS drive has since fizzled, but with PowerPC Macs arriving next month, 1994 should prove to be a crucial year in Apple's roller-coaster existence.

NETWARE DOMINATES

Novell may lack the *sturm und drang* of a Microsoft/IBM feud, but NetWare, with 20 million users, is the undisputed standard networking operating system.

The proprietary S-Net hardware server arrived in 1983, becoming Advanced NetWare 1.0 in 1985—the network operating system file server was born. Advanced NetWare 2.0 came the following year, growing in power and popularity with nothing in its way.

With NetWare 3.0 (a.k.a. NetWare 386, delivered in August 1989) and NetWare 4.0 (delivered in April 1993), Novell has since

moved into the enterprise.

The geniuses behind NetWare's popularity are Drew Major (technology) and Ray Noorda (strategy).

Noorda's goal was simple—drive down the price of networking and enjoy the subsequent market growth.

Despite critics' complaints that Novell lacks vision, the company has defended its turf from rivals, including Microsoft.

NOTES DEFIES SKEPTICS

When Lotus Notes rolled out on Dec. 6, 1989, PC Week didn't play the story on Page 1. At the $62,500 entry price, it was expensive, weird, and inaccessible. Few could figure out what it did except E-mail, and coming off the blurry and overhyped Lotus Agenda (a PIM whose internal jingle was "it works the way it works"), reporters and analysts were wary. If reporters couldn't describe it, how could corporations relate to it? No one believed you could "organize all those random bits of paper" in your worklife . . . or should. Noxious hyping by IS executives from Reuters, Price Waterhouse, and Manufacturers Hanover Trust was unconvincing.

Today, Notes, which one former Lotus executive wanted to sell for around $20 million, is the product by which collaborative software is measured. With robust security, replication, connection flexibility, tools, and discussion databases, corporations have grasped its ability to bring users closer together. In one sense, Lotus Notes signaled the end of the mainframe era, proving that an enterprise could go beyond vanilla E-mail on NetWare and PCs. You know it's good when Microsoft is still trying to figure it out.

WINDOWS THE WINNER

Our May 22, 1990, lead headline—"Heralded Windows Faces an Uphill Climb"—was the ultimate non sequitur. Windows 3.0, for all intents and purposes, was a "new" product and, like all new products, it faced an uphill climb.

Our not-so-cogent analysis of Windows 3.0, perhaps reflecting the misery of the OS/2 experience, reeled off objections like too much hardware required, no one would give up their DOS apps, and not revolutionary enough.

But Microsoft wasn't betting the company on a whim. Those objections crumbled as a buggy Windows 3.0 took off like a shot, exceeding the wildest projections. As the saying goes, Windows was in the right place at the right time. The world was sick of DOS and wanted a standard graphical user interface even if it routinely crashed.

Microsoft smoothed out the bumps with the arrival of Windows 3.1 in April 1992. The upgrade immediately hit ship rates of 1.5 million a month. Not even IBM nor the FTC nor the Apple lawsuit has since been able to slow down Microsoft.

Windows' installed base is expected to top 60 million by the end of the year. Its strength lies in the breadth of applications and Microsoft's unmatched ability to lay down a road map of where it is going.

FORGOTTEN HERO

Since Rod Canion was fired as Compaq's president and CEO in late October 1991, he has slipped into relative anonymity as president of Insource Management Corp., a Houston consulting firm. The soft-spoken ex-Texas Instruments engineer is an unassuming man whose life plan was to make a good PC and probably a decent living. As PC Week reporter Mike McPhee remarked in 1984, "Rod is a real regular guy, the type of guy who would take his family shopping at K mart on a Saturday night."

Three overlooked accomplishments of his are the creation of the IBM PC clone industry, wresting the standard from IBM, and accelerating the pace of PC technology.

With fellow TI engineers Bill Murto and Jim Harris, Canion launched Compaq in February 1982 with a 30-pound arm-wrenching "portable" based on Intel's 8088 CPU. While other cloners like Corona, Hyperion, Columbia, Televideo, Leading Edge, and Eagle either self-destructed or were put out of business by IBM's lawyers, Compaq got instant respect for quality and sidestepped legal questions about copying the IBM BIOS. In September 1986, Compaq stole the technology initiative away from IBM by coming out with a Deskpro 386 PC, a year before IBM delivered a 386 box.

Two years later, Compaq resisted pressure to adopt a RISC platform (even though it had a stake in MIPS Computer Systems Inc.'s customer Silicon Graphics Inc.) as those chips outperformed Intel's X86. Instead, it told Intel to get with it, which it did, and the RISC crisis went away. Ironically, Compaq faces the issue again today.

Of course, Canion must share credit with the other founders and financial backer Ben "*et tu*" Rosen, but he lasted longer. In the end, however, he said the possible couldn't profitably be done: building a low-cost PC. His successor, Eckhard Pfeiffer, has disproven that with the ProLinea, Contura, and Presario lines.

IN THE CHIPS

In 1982, IBM pumped $250 million into a struggling Intel to ensure a steady flow of CPUs for its exploding PC business. It held onto that stake until 1987, when it was sure the chip maker could fly on its own. Today, the erstwhile allies are positioned to meet head-on, Intel defending its rich X86 turf, IBM wanting to pilfer some of it.

Who wouldn't? With Intel reaping $2.3 billion in profits from its $8.8 billion in 1992 sales, it's clear where the money is made in the computer industry. That's a 25 percent net profit, vs. a high of about 8 percent selling PCs.

Driven by fear and intense competitive fires, Intel is a feared competitor. Its rivals, many former Intel-ites, are in for a bloody fight.

SUBLIME ALLIES

The biggest consequence of the Apple-IBM alliance announced July 3, 1991, was how it changed the way business was done. Networking and frustrating incompatibilities prompted foes to embrace.

Specifically, Apple and IBM joined forces to stop Microsoft, but so far have not come close to achieving their goal. The PowerPC, Taligent, and Kaleida dramas have yet to play out, and both companies have been consumed by their own difficulties.

The PowerPC notwithstanding, the alliance has come up short. It has generated some enthusiasm, but the big question remains: How well will low-cost PowerPCs run Windows and Chicago applications?

But as a momentary diversion from Microsoft, the pact was thoroughly enjoyable.

From 16K-byte PCs to 100MHz Pentiums, from no networking to total connectivity, and from desktop metaphors to no desks or offices, we've come a far piece in the past 10 years. The next 10 should be a screamer. ■

Products that made a difference

PCWEEKLABS

Client/server products

With the 1987 introduction of SQL Server, Sybase Inc. was the first vendor to legitimize the use of client/server technology by integrating the program logic with the data stored on the server.

Front-end development tools further legitimized client/server technology. Powersoft Corp.'s PowerBuilder, introduced in 1991, was ahead of the game here, providing easy connections to and the ability to work with multiple servers, while allowing the developer full control over each server's functionality.

Microsoft Corp.'s Windows

Microsoft Windows 1.x and 2.x were technologically primitive and painful to use, but Microsoft stuck with it.

Windows 3.x, introduced in 1990, has been a driving force in the software industry unlike any other product. Although many disparage it as half-baked and unstable, Windows has created an effective standard for users and a first priority for developers. Indeed, all other operating systems are judged, in part, on their ability to run Windows applications.

IBM's PC AT

In 1984, IBM's AT-bus architecture offered new life to the comparatively restricted market succeeding the PC XT. The PC AT's 80286 processor and its higher memory capacity ushered in improved software, as well as a manufacturing blitzkrieg—in the form of PC "clone" makers—that established the DOS-based PC as a serious tool for business use.

1987's 386 processor, a quantum leap over the 286, made the use of Windows and other PC-based GUIs on the desktop practical, but the system architecture established for the AT persists to this day.

SEE PRODUCTS, PAGE 74

Products

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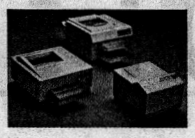
Apple Computer Inc.'s Macintosh

Apple's Macintosh, introduced in 1984, was the first real GUI for microcomputers. Many industry observers still consider it to be the easiest, most powerful operating system. As the Mac enjoys its 10th anniversary, it will make its first major architectural leap: the shift to PowerPC processors.

Novell Inc.'s NetWare

NetWare, which debuted in 1985, is the king of the PC networking hill. By releasing a low-impact, high-performance network operating system when Microsoft and IBM were caught up in plans too grandiose for their times, Novell captured a remarkably large "brainshare." Corporate America may use IBM PCs and Microsoft OSs, but those products run on Novell networks.

Hewlett-Packard Co.'s LaserJet



In 1985, Hewlett-Packard launched the first worthwhile laser printer, and the LaserJet has kept its excellence and technological leadership to remain the trendsetter in the low-end and midrange printer markets.

Ink-jet printers

While the LaserJet was a major force in diverting buyers from daisy-wheel and dot-matrix printers, the 1984 introduction of the ink-jet, with its low cost and color capabilities, finished off those technologies as desktop output devices.

Turbo Pascal

1984's Turbo Pascal is a dirt-cheap programming environment that allowed even kids to write programs on allowance money. Its integrated development environment set standards for ease of development that still apply today.

Video Graphcs Array

The VGA display, which was introduced in IBM's PS/2 line in 1987, redefined the minimum acceptable graphics standard with its 640-by-480-pixel resolution.

Lotus 1-2-3, dBASE, and WordPerfect

For software with staying power, Lotus Development Corp.'s 1-2-3, Borland International Inc.'s dBASE, and WordPerfect Corp.'s WordPerfect have been, and still are, staple applications. Of the three—all introduced in the early '80s—dBASE has been the most influential in and out of its category. Even so, it is declining in influence and innovation due to design limitations.

Borland's dBASE

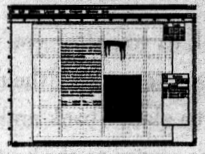
NEC UltraLite and Toshiba T1100

Despite some important improvements in size, weight, and functionality, these two original primordial subnotebooks, introduced in 1990, set an ergonomic design standard that has been threatened (by PDAs, for example) but not displaced. Although NEC Technologies Inc.'s UltraLite was the first out the door, Toshiba America Information Systems Inc.'s T1100 and its subsequent product line were more successful.

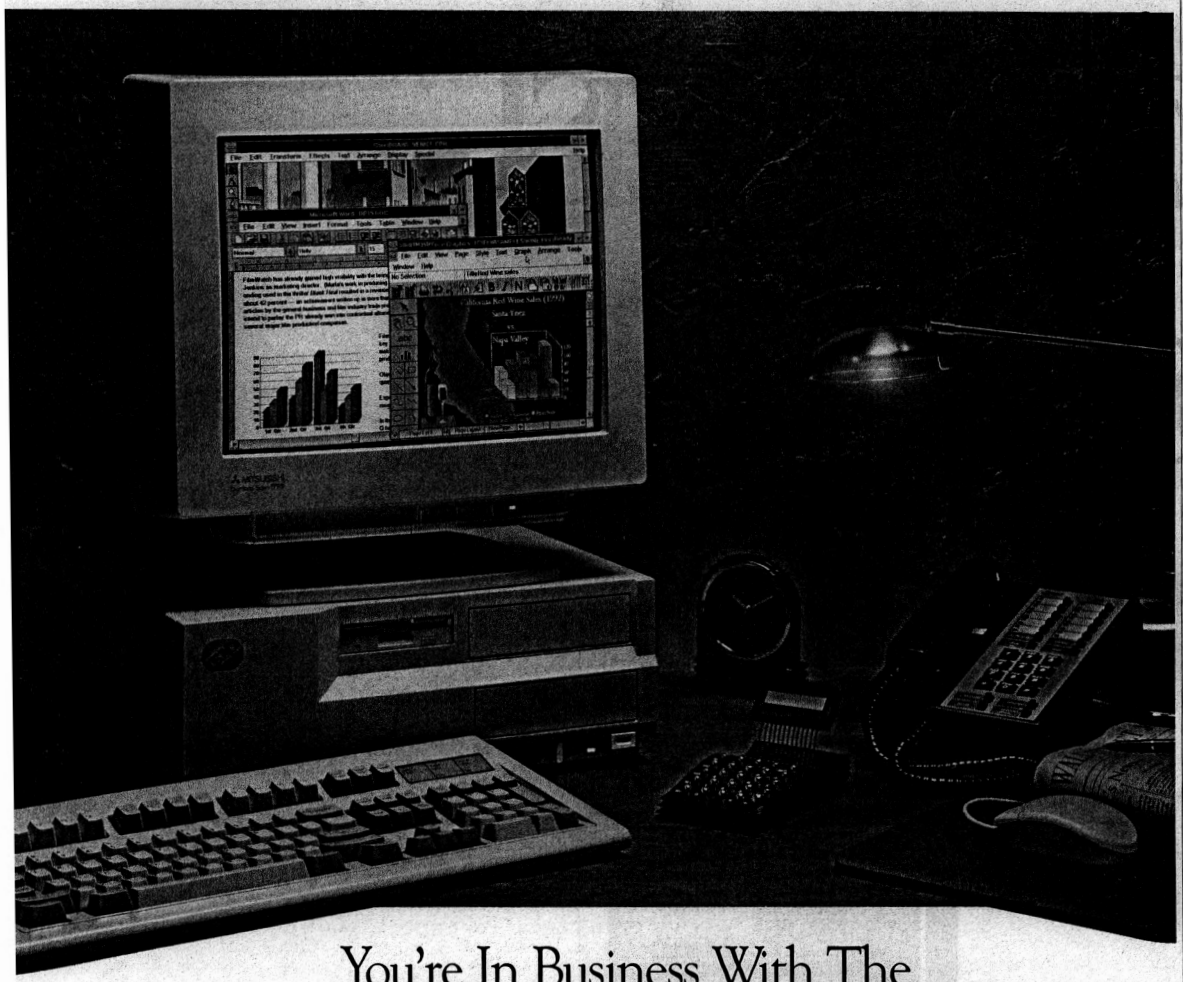
NEC UltraLite

PageMaker and Ventura Publisher

Aldus Corp.'s PageMaker and Ventura Software Inc.'s Ventura Publisher revolutionized the desktop—both the Apple and IBM kind—as legitimate tools for producing low-cost, professional-looking documents. PageMaker, which debuted in 1984, was a key in the Mac's success. And marketing departments haven't been the same since. ■



Aldus' PageMaker



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The PC Week stat sheet

1983 8,500 — Number of cellular phones in the United States — **1993** 14.3 million

Source: Quantum Sciences Group, White Plains, N.Y.

In the past 10 years: 5,708 — Number of mergers and acquisitions in the information-technology industry — **In 1993 alone:** 713

Source: Broadview Associates, Fort Lee, N.J.

Number of individuals in the top job (CEO) at IBM between 1984 and 1994: 3

1984-1986 *John R. Opel*

1986-1993 *John Akers*

1993-present *Louis V. Gerstner Jr.*

Source: IBM, White Plains, N.Y.

1983 26 — Number of states with computer crime laws — **1993** 49

The one state without computer crime laws: **Vermont**

Source: National Center for Computer Crime Data, Santa Cruz, Calif.

Number of staffers, columnists, and contributing editors working with PC Week for more than 7 years: 26

1983 379,000 — Installed base of fax machines in the United States — **1993** 5,694,000

Source: Quantum Sciences Group, White Plains, N.Y.

1984 54,129 — Number of hotel rooms available in Las Vegas — **TODAY** 86,053

Source: The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

1983 2.6 — Number of mips Intel's top-of-the-line CPU executed — **1993** 112

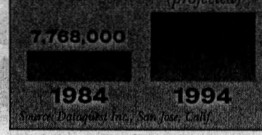
Source: Intel Corp., Santa Clara, Calif.

Number of private U.S. companies extending benefits in 1994 to domestic partners: 40

Of that group, number of high-tech U.S. companies extending these benefits: 9

Source: The Conference Board, New York, N.Y.

Number of PCs shipped in the United States



Source: Dataquest Inc., San Jose, Calif.

1983 136 — Number of bachelor's degrees in computer science awarded at MIT — **1993** 97

Source: Office of the Registrar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

1984 27.3 — Percentage of students in U.S. public schools using microcomputers — **1989** 42.7

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, D.C.

Number of Spencer F. Katt's offspring making an appearance in his column: 1

Number of IBM employees worldwide

1984	1993
395,000	256,000

Source: IBM

Number of Microsoft employees

1984	1994
500	14,500

Source: Microsoft Corp., Redmond, Wash.

1983-84 37 (3 women, 34 men) — Number of individuals listed as "computer-industry executives" in Who's Who in Finance and Industry — **1993-94** 351 (66 women, 295 men)

Source: Reed Reference Publishing's Who's Who in Finance and Industry (New Providence, N.J.)

1984 1 — Number of female CEOs in the Fortune 1000 — **1994** 3

Source: Catalyst, New York, N.Y.

1983 $193,807,630 — Computer companies' advertising expenditures in consumer magazines — **1993** $365,699,843

Source: Publishers' Information Bureau, New York, N.Y.

1984 $10,683 million — Total revenue from PCs shipped in the United States — **1994** $29,793 million **(projected)**

Source: Dataquest Inc., San Jose, Calif.

Number of Americans with access in 1994 to on-line information: 13 million

Of that number, those with access to the Internet: 8 million

Source: Forrester Research Inc., Cambridge, Mass.

Five top-selling software packages

1984	1993*
1. Lotus 1-2-3	1. Intuit Quicken 4.0
2. Borland SideKick	2. Microsoft Word 5.1
3. MultiMate	3. Microsoft Excel 4.0
4. Lotus Symphony	4. Microsoft Word 5.1 upgrade
5. Ashton-Tate dBASE III	5. Claris ClarisWorks 2.0

**Sold through the retail channel*
1984 Source: Meisel Inc., El Segundo, Calif.
1993 Source: Ingram Micro, Santa Ana, Calif.

1988 75,000 units — Number of CD ROM drives sold worldwide — **1993** 4.8 million units

Source: Dataquest Inc.

The Long and Winding Road

'84

Apple Computer Inc. announces the Macintosh

Sales of IBM's PCjr stagnate

IBM announces the PC AT

Reagan and Bush defeat Mondale and Ferraro in presidential election

Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia

PC Week publishes first issue

Apple co-founder Steven Jobs ousted

'85

IBM stops production of the PCjr

Intel Corp. announces the 386 processor

IBM announces Token-Ring network

Space shuttle Challenger explodes

Earthquake kills thousands in Mexico City

'86

Microsoft Corp. goes public at $21 per share

Chernobyl nuclear power plant suffers major accident

Mitch Kapor steps down as chairman of Lotus Development Corp.

Compaq Computer Corp. introduces the first 386-based PC

PC Week moves into new offices at Boston's Prudential Center

IBM announces the PC Convertible

'87

Dow Jones Industrial Average tops 2,000 for the first time

IBM announces PS/2 line; inclusion of VGA marks the first time graphics are included as an integral part of a system

IBM announces OS/2

"Black Monday" sees Dow drop 508 points in one day

Microsoft

Apple announces two expandable machines: the Macintosh SE and the Macintosh II

Microsoft's stock is at $126 per share, a 500 percent increase over the previous year

Compaq enters the laptop arena with SLT-286

'88

Ashton-Tate announces dBASE IV

Novell Inc. abandons hardware sales to focus on software

Apple sues Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard Co. over "look and feel" of interfaces

Intel announces 486 processor

Chinese freedom fighters slaughtered in Tienanmen Square

Lotus releases 1-2-3 3.0

IBM revives AT bus with PS/2 Model 30-286

Bush and Quayle defeat Dukakis and Bentsen in presidential election

Fall of the Berlin Wall

'89

Exxon Valdez oil tanker runs aground off Alaska

NEC ships the UltraLite notebook

Lotus and Novell threaten to merge

Iraq invades Kuwait

Borland International Inc. announces Quattro Pro 2.0

Borland

Earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale hits San Francisco

Pen-based PCs come to market

PC Week relocates to new offices in Medford, Mass.

'90

CNN broadcasts 24-hour coverage of Operation Desert Storm

Microsoft spends $10 million to introduce Windows 3.0

PC Week is awarded "Best Computer Newspaper" by the Computer Press Association

Borland buys Ashton-Tate

IBM restructures, announces plan to lay off 40,000 workers

IBM and Apple form strategic relationship

Compaq reorganizes, ousts CEO Rod Canion

'91

Advanced Micro Devices Inc. ships first 386-compatible processors

Federal Trade Commission probes Microsoft

Croatia and Slovenia declare independence from Yugoslavia; Serbo-Croat battles erupt

Soviet Union disbands, replaced by Commonwealth of Independent States

"PDA" Apple CEO Sculley coins the term "personal digital assistant" at the Consumer Electronics Show

Compaq announces the ProLinea line, which makes the company No. 1 again in sales

'92

Digital Equipment Corp. pushes out founder Kenneth Olsen

Clinton and Gore defeat Bush and Quayle in presidential election

Zenith Electronics Corp. and General Instruments submit designs for HDTV to Federal Communications Commission

John Akers announces plans to step aside as CEO of IBM

Intel introduces Pentium processor

Apple's "look and feel" lawsuit against Microsoft and HP is dismissed

Apple rolls out the Newton MessagePad

'93

World Trade Center in New York City is bombed

Louis Gerstner takes the reins at IBM

Novell announces NetWare 4.0

Mississippi River floods the Midwest

Michael Jordan retires from basketball

Figure skater Nancy Kerrigan is clubbed at the national championships

'94

First Pentium PCs arrive

PC Week celebrates 10 years of publishing

Buffalo Bills lose their fourth straight Super Bowl

PCWEEK A DECADE OF COMPUTING

The Katt Meows

Reminiscing doesn't come easily to Spencer F. Katt. Our Feline Flyboy always looks ahead, never down or back.

So it was with considerable effort that PC Week Editorial Director Sam Whitmore and other stalwart staffers recently persuaded our redoubtable rumorist to reflect on his decade in the dark hallways of PC Week's Rumor Central.

We're talking a decade, we implored. More than 500 columns. Thousands of rumors. Millions of loyal fans worldwide. It was time, we supplicated, to pause and admire the accomplishments of the one and only Spencer F. Katt.

Feasting on this most delicious ego bait, our hero herded us into his gleaming new Cherokee and whisked us to a mountain lair even we didn't know he had, escorted us down the narrowest of stairways to a dimly lit, plushly appointed room with velvet drapes and cashmere carpeting, and one by one began cracking open those dusty ol' Rumor Central scrapbooks.

"Remember when I was in front-of-book?"

Few recall the early issues of 1984, when Spencer's column ruled Page 3; even fewer recall that the primordial puss was not a reporter but rather a grammarian, charged only with turning PC Week's gossip column into a light and lively read.

The Katt proudly pointed to his early reporting coups: IBM's Peanut (PCjr), Glass (TopView), and the Advanced PC (the PC AT). Only he, he reminded us, dared to report IBM's interest in 3.5-inch disks 20 months before they showed up in the ill-fated IBM PC Convertible laptop. "I told them to skip ahead and start with the ThinkPad," chided Spence. "But did they listen? Noooooooooo . . ."

1984

1990

1991

1992

VEGAS

No payoff policy

We hailed his chutzpah for offering $100 cash for every publishable news tip. "I should have stood up to [former IBM PC executive Don] Estridge on that one," he growled, conveniently forgetting that our almighty attorneys—not the aggrieved Estridge—were the brutes that quashed that policy.

Cracking open the Courvoisier, Spencer showed us his spellbinding collection of Katt memorabilia, ranging from his world-famous T-shirts to playing cards, gym bags, lapel pins, and buttons.

The Katt waxed ambivalent, however, when asked about his smashingly successful pajama parties, now *the* event at all major trade shows. "They're fun, of course," he mused, "but sometimes I long for the days when my parties constituted me and my sources sitting around talking news. Today, well, I don't know . . . I suppose the Rolling Stones can't play clubs anymore, either, right?"

Snap out of it, we said. You are journalistic royalty: the Tattling Tabby, the Wired One, the Seeing Eye Katt, the Power Meower.

Spencer snapped out of it. "Indeed, only I, the legendary Spencer F. Katt," he bragged, "could be clever enough to bribe the hotel maid into breaking into ex-Lotus czar Mitch Kapor's hotel room and slipping a Katt business card onto Kapor's pillow."

Only the Katt himself, he exclaimed, could pose as the technician sent to fix John Akers' telephone and photograph to microfilm the complete set of PS/2 and OS/2 blueprints.

Predictably, such derring-do turned up in the pages of Rumor Central. IBM became the Big Blue Meanies whose mistakes were "Big Bluepers." Microsoft became the Bellevue Bullies—long before the world came to recognize this trait. Kapor became "Metaphysical Mitch."

But then the Katt came clean: "What I really love about myself is my preachy, moralistic side." He proudly relived how he tongue-lashed Intel for its four-color math-coprocessor brochure depicting an attractive woman bound and gagged, his fund-raising for AIDS, and his appeals to get out and vote.

Private parts

He remained nearly mum, however, about that fateful 1991 day when his illegitimate son Cal arrived on his doorstep. His only comment: "Some things are best left undisturbed."

Of course, loyal readers will never forget Spencer's minimalist make-over as part of PC Week's 1992 redesign. "It started out as a regular old haircut, but the image people got the best of me," he confessed.

The hour was late. The bottles were empty. The spell was wearing off.

It was time to look ahead.

"It's been real," Spence declared, rising to his feet and shaking our hands. "Compaq's PowerPC unit arrived today and I haven't unpacked the box yet, so if you'll excuse me . . ."

He handed us a crinkled-up Ben Franklin. "Call yourselves a cab," he said.

"Keep the change." ■

Headlines we wish we hadn't written

April 2, 1985; Page 1

IBM to Launch PC-2; PC, XT Price Cuts Loom

We're still waiting.

May 7, 1985; Page 1

One of them was probably right.

New Products Fuel Interest In Comdex '85

By Sam Whitmore

May 14, 1985; Page 1

NAD—will give away *DisplayWrite1* and the *Assistant* series with XTs.

Absence of New Technology Marks Quiet Comdex/Spring

July 9, 1985; Page 1

'Javelin' Will Challenge Lotus '1-2-3' Supremacy Among Corporate Users

By Paul Gillin

In addition, Javelin offers

Was Javelin the code name for Excel or Quattro Pro?

July 28, 1987; Page 109

The Story's Not Here So the Hed Cain't Be Written

Continued from Page 1

Asleep at the switch.

August 18, 1987; Page 1

DOS Now Can Run on Everything

Our bold precursor to "Windows everywhere."

May 22, 1989; Page 1

IBM OfficeVision Heralds Dawn of SAA Era

Corporate Buyers First SAA Package

Should've said "dawn of bad groupware era."

April 16, 1990; Page 1

Lotus/Novell: A Powerhouse in the Making

Pitfalls Abound;

Lotus-Novell-WordPerfect Trolka

They didn't make much.

October 8, 1990; Page 1

Pen-Based PCs Herald Era of Handwritten Input

...plications NCR Readi...

We were a bit ahead of the curve on this one.

August 26, 1991; Page 1

For current users of 50MHz

Noorda on Road To Retirement?

By Jane Morrissey

As Novell Inc.'s stock soared to a 52-week high last week fol-

That's one looooong road.