

Kevin Eric Saunders, Systems Programmer/Analyst III
CIT/NR
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David Lambert
Director, CIT/Network Resources

For your eyes ONLY:

Dear Dave,

I'm writing to give you a chance to help resolve my problems, so they might be worked out without causing too much hassle and bad feeling. I have come to believe that my job as a Systems Programmer III under Dick Cogger is a dead end. I do not intend to linger any longer in his dismal empire. Since I've achieved my goal of producing a version of *Comet* which I believe is free of malignant bugs, I feel free to pursue other opportunities. (I'm referring to Version 2.0D25, and also Version 2.1D3, which adds support for scrolling text windows—but has not yet received enough criticism and polishing to be ready for broad release.) I am willing to continue working on *Comet* (although I'd rather work on UNIX machines) and/or on other projects in Network Resources, *but* if I am to do so I wish 1) to be made a half-time employee, 2) under some other manager's authority, 3) with a promotion to Senior Systems Programmer. If these requests cannot be met, I request that I be granted a Leave of Absence so I can seek other employment within Cornell.

My grievances have been festering for years, so I beg your patience as I catalogue the prime pricking points and related matters... to summarize briefly, I don't *dislike* Dick, but I don't really trust him, and I am *bone-tired* of being his subordinate. It's not that he doesn't have lots of good ideas; it's just that he has trouble figuring out when he has *bad* ones.

1) I first asked Dick that I be returned to half-time status in December 1988. I have clearly reiterated this request, more than once, since January 1990. No action whatsoever has been taken to fulfill this simple, straightforward request. In contrast, when I requested four years ago that my status go from 20 to 30 hours/week, and then requested a change from 30 to 40 hours/week, my requests were fulfilled *retroactively*.

2) I have not received a job performance review this year, which should have been performed in May. Curiously, Dick had promised his staff that *we* would get a chance to report on *his* performance during this review. Despite the fact that I deliver high quality software products with *truly minimal* supervision, and have progressed steadily in my knowledge of technical *arcana*, I have not received a promotion, or a pay raise *in real terms*, since I was first hired as a permanent half-time employee in early 1986 (after my promotion from a *radically* underpaid casual employee—I was the *only* one of the employees in Dick's Little Shop of Network Planning and Development who already knew C when I was hired). I am not being paid in accordance with my skills or my contribution to Cornell: new hires with no experience relevant to their job are being paid more than I am.

Over the years Dick has acknowledged this repeatedly *to me*, but maintains that the Personnel Department is the obstacle. I find this increasingly difficult to believe. Does the Personnel Department really want to promote job-hopping? have they never heard of The Peter Principle? The difficulty of programming the Macintosh at the Toolbox level is by now legendary, and it gets more difficult with every System release. Both *Comet* and the OmniTalk driver/bridge which I completed to *Corvus' satisfaction* are highly complex high-performance C-language programs, interfacing to Pascal Toolbox routines, and also use 68000 assembly language extensively. Applications programs for the Macintosh are ordinarily developed by programming *teams*. Surely the Personnel Department is not completely deaf to their own rhetoric regarding pay for merit.

Even though Dick has claimed he sympathizes, he has discouraged me from applying for job openings within NR/T&S, including the position which Rich Kennerly now holds and the two (undefined) full-time positions which will open when the IBM contract is signed. In response to my complaints, he claims some new position will be created for me in the IBM project so I can get the raise he claims to believe I deserve, but I am dubious, and I no longer want to work under Dick's supervision.

Dick is an exceptionally clever guy, but he *does not know his limitations*. *He shoots from the hip*: this works well for infighting, but is *not* good for hitting targets at a long range. Dick believes that he can evaluate programmer quality and productivity without examining code; his evaluations are, as a consequence, arbitrary and without merit. Furthermore, the development process as practiced in T&S lacks *all* formal rigor, including the one requirement I believe is essential for both for developing quality code and improving staff skills: peer review through the process of structured walk-throughs.

In addition, Dick has an obstructionist, negativist attitude which limits the development of systems to suit his (largely arbitrary) preferences. Dick is famous throughout Cornell for stubbornness. I've *defended* him and some of the policies he was crucial in formulating. But I myself have learned NOT to ask Dick for approval of work I think must be done, because almost invariably Dick's response to my proposals is "DON'T do it/DON'T do it *that way*." E.g., I proposed to write an almost-trivial Macintosh Desk Accessory which would allow the user to set a fixed AppleTalk bridge address. This would have the twin benefits of 1) enhancing security by foiling any security cracker on the network who runs a program posing as a router by transmitting RTMP packets (admittedly, it's probably a lot more likely that someone would just use AppleTalk Peek!), and 2) enhancing performance of LocalTalk networks which have an AppleTalk bridge used to extend the length of the network or provide dial-up AppleTalk access, which results in packet transmissions, as packets intended for the backbone router get re-directed to the bridge to some nodal network. Dick's response was "we don't promise AppleTalk users security." I told him, damn, I'll do it anyway—but what's the point, if it couldn't be distributed?

The fast OmniTalk driver died a similar death after I spent an 25-hour work-weekend designing and recoding the Omninet driver interface to do AppleTalk *right*—Dick dumped cold water all over it, saying we should try to get Corvus to pay for it first, and generally disdaining my ability to implement the Zilog SCC chip interface code, even though I vowed that a working driver was but weeks away (that's a lot less time than it took to debug the background bridge,

which *I* had *always* thought would be a bear). Now Corvus *has* come back, flourishing dollars once again, but... "we're no longer interested in Omninet development."

Dick does *not* get the best out of his employees. *I* produced *Comet* because I'm a hacker born and raised (honest! I've got a pedigree from the Arkansas Valley Model Railroad club... *my dad was a hacker!*) and I decided to bypass Dick and **do what needed to be done according to the most common user requests and my own sense of priorities:** provide color support, extend the fast screen drawing routines to support arbitrary screen locations and offer a larger (and FASTER) font, implement the Telnet Terminal Type Negotiation RFC, support the library character set, etc. (I'd love to convene a committee of some sort to get broader agreement on what *Comet* should offer and promote more consensus, but Dick would kill that *pronto*.) When Dick saw my first implementation of color, he didn't say, Gee Whiz, that's Nifty! Nope. It was: "Hmmm. Why didn't you provide a way to make the controls appear in color and let the user change the colors?" BAH! This is management by negation...

(Parenthetically—I'm really disturbed by the attitude that Cornell management seems to have toward the security issue; rhetoric about morality is just not enough, you've *got* to make an effort to *nailed* the perpetrators. After all, Marxism is a dead ideology because the promised transformation of human nature toward altruism failed to occur. And hey, come to think of it—who *knows* what *Comet* does except me? *Nobody!* Is *Comet* logging user IDs and passwords and transmitting them discreetly via UDP to a host of my choice? All you have is my assurance that this is not the case! This a good argument, by the way, for restricting distribution of the source... God only knows whether the copy of NCSA Telnet you yank off some random AppleShare server is *really* NCSA Telnet...)

3) I am not provided with the tools I need to do my job, nor am I provided the authority to acquire them. (A sad contrast with our "In Search of Excellence" video training, which stressed that *employees must be empowered to get the job done*.) When I am in Caldwell 125, I do not even have my own *phone*, and I am interrupted *continually* by calls for Rich, who is often not at his desk. Dick knows this; nothing has been done. Dick's attitude when I request equipment is that I should scrape it up somewhere. When I took my Mac II development system home in May 1990—I sure didn't ask Dick—my productivity *soared*, because I could perform my primary duty of developing and debugging software, which requires *intense* concentration, in a comfortable environment free of distraction. *A programmer needs a private office. Two programmers sharing an office is an often fun but inevitably distracting company. Three programmers is a crowd in need of control.* Furthermore, as a father, it is not possible for me to turn in the 80 and 100 hour weeks in the office—but I worked those long hours *regularly* in developing *Comet* this summer.

My productivity as a developer of Macintosh software has been hampered as the Macintosh hardware upgrades I receive lag behind that of other CIT Macintosh programmers, and indeed, *non-programmers*, by more than a year. The IIfx is the first upgrade I've received in over two years—and it came long after it would have been most useful, during the grinding edit/compile cycles required to extend TN to offer support for multiple windows. If I hadn't wiped A/UX 1.0 off the 80MB drive I use—in direct violation of Dick's orders, I made the mistake of asking him whether I could do it—*Comet* would be a real *Kohoutek*, i.e., nowhere in sight. I have repeatedly

requested, and have been promised, that I will get a UNIX workstation, but in five years it has yet to materialize—although a PS2/80 running AIX sits almost unused under Dick's desk. *If I had not purchased a sophisticated workstation of my own at extravagant expense and installed my very own home Ethernet, the current state of development of Comet would have been unreachable.*

4) *Comet* and its predecessors are good products which get lousy distribution and support by CIT. I respond to user input. Yet... the CIT/Information Resources "Look and Feel Committee" developed a memorandum slamming TN3270 (stating, roughly, that "Brown TN3270 is the preferred program for both demonstrations and internal use in IR") and listing its demerits, but *somehow* failed to distribute it to *us*—an action which I can only attribute to bad blood between Dick and the IR management. IR politics practiced in response to my incorporation of a driver interface in TN3270 for use by Mandarin had a similar flavor: after more than a year of waiting for IR to produce some response beyond "it mostly works but it needs a few changes," suddenly the interface deemed "unacceptable" and "buggy" (when HyperCard 1.2.5 was the source of the bugs!). In contrast, the HyperFTP HyperCard stack, developed by Doug Hornig of IR, has been distributed nationwide. Development versions of NCSA Telnet, Brown TN3270, and other products similar to *Comet* are freely available *nationwide* via FTP servers. These products benefit substantially from having a broader base of users of development versions who can and do report bugs. PC/IP and Stanford licensing provisions restrict distribution of *Comet* to academic sites that have signed a license, but there is no reason why licensees should not have access to more recent versions via restricted FTP access. As far as I know, there is not even an electronic mailing list of licensees for *Comet* and PC TN.

I thought the distribution situation would improve with the Technology Fair release—which happened *only* because *I* was insistent that the TN1.1, TN1.1U, TN32701.1, TN32701.1U, C191.1, and C191.1U products which *Comet* replaces were unsatisfactory as a basis for the mail system documentation to be offered at the Technology Fair, and because *I swore* to the CIT Products Committee *that Comet would be ready*, and Steve Worona supported me by averring that my promises were generally reliable. Tom Young was incredulous; he was assured by *his* staff that it would be *impossible*. Dick was not supportive, saying he'd rather wait for the program to be more stable. *I insisted, I swore I would deliver, I worked my ass off, and I succeeded in delivering a usable if still buggy version which incorporated numerous features demanded by the critics.* Cecilia Cowles later told me it was one of the most exciting meetings she had attended because we agreed to *do something*. I had to tell her it was depressing for me to hear so much negativism when I had been working so hard, and was *volunteering* even more hard work against a close deadline—not just making *Comet* work, but agreeing to provide documentation which Tom Young demanded as a prerequisite for the release. (Documentation which Dick has always told me not to do, "that's not what you're being paid for, someone else should do it"—but until recently, that job was disdained... speaking of which documentation, Teresa Craighead told me "I'm amazed you did such a good job in so little time!" Why is it that I receive positive feedback on my work from users and other employees, who apparently can figure out that I'm working hard, but *rarely* from my own management?)

So why do I receive a call last week from Oscar Larsen of Admissions asking how to get a copy of *Comet*? I have to tell him that I'm not allowed to distribute my current development version outside CIT, whether it's better or not, and that even then I have no straightforward means of offering 2.0D15, which I would rather he not use—no AppleShare server visible outside CIT, no FTP server. (Thinking about it now, I suppose I should get Mark to put it up on nmc...) He wants to know why he can't get it off an IR or WR server; I have the same question. He has the illegitimately-distributed TN1.2D9: "There are a lot of people using this program—why is it so hard to get?" I told him I would appreciate it if users would complain, because I don't think my complaints will register. Should I sally forth and impolitically offend yet more CIT directors and ADs? I don't want to—I really don't think pestering the managers in IR or WR is part of my purview, even if I *was* compelled to respond to the *absolutely hideous* Technologies Draft 0.8. (Which scared me shitless, because I thought it was about to become CIT *policy*—Draft 1.0 is fairly realistic. Recall that the timeline in 0.8 slated the 68000 for demise by 1991: just in time for the arrival of the Mac Classic!).

When I suffered through the Employee Job Review survey, I was told by Dick that I should fill out the form with the prescribed responses, that that would be 'mature' and would be rewarded, even if it would mean that my response would be, in reality, fraudulent: that I had no managerial or administrative role whatsoever, no communicative role whatsoever, no real involvement in the design of the major development project that is now *Comet*, that I worked under close supervision, etc. As usual, I stuck with what I believe to be the truth. But I'm fed up with having to behave like an entrepreneur while I'm stuck within a web of bureaucracy, and I'm very unhappy when worthy rhetoric from top management regarding the need for collaboration across the matrix and UNIXification is ignored by middle management.

I hope that we can work something out, because I've got a family to feed and I really enjoy the parts of my job that are not intertwined with the politics of personality in CIT and connotations of wage slavery. If you think that some arrangement can be worked out, or if you'd like to discuss some of the issues I ~~raise~~ about Dick's management style, I'm free to meet with you anytime.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders