Figuratively Speaking.

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Let's talk about computers.

My first computer was a Commodore 64, which was an 8-bit home computer released by Commodore International in August, 1982. Back then it was considered to be an impressive machine. It attached to a TV and programs came on tape cassettes. I didn't do much with it because, really, you couldn't do much with it. At about that time Apple computers were being set up in schools, but remained out of reach for me mainly because of cost and my ignorance and perhaps fear of the new technology.

Later in the 80's, Apple brought out the MacIntosh, named after a particular variety of apple. The first Macs were like a brick, had no hard drive, 128 Kb of memory, worked off 3½ inch floppy disks, had a tiny, very sharp monochrome screen and cost the earth.
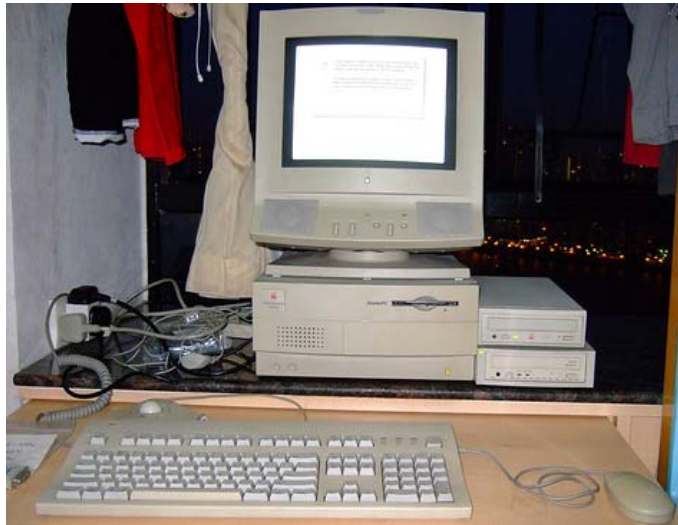
But they were a revelation in personal computer use and they had a GUI (graphic user interface) and were WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get). The more popular computers using MSDOS (Microsoft Disc Operating System) were cheaper, great for number crunching, but appallingly slow to use if you wanted to produce anything that could be printed. The computers weren't slow, but the user interface was awful. There was no mouse and they certainly weren't WSYWYG. I saw a computer teacher in one of the independent schools where I worked, take 15 minutes to produce a heading for a document, something that took about 10 seconds on a Mac. I think it is about that time that the term 'user friendly' was coined. The picture above is of a 128 Mac with an extra floppy drive. Hard drives were to come later. This model was replaced with a 512 Kb version and that in turn with the MacPlus which had 1 Mb of RAM, astonishing for its time. My first Mac was a Mac Plus. I eventually got it an external hard drive and Apple Stylewriter printer. Apple had made the decision that they were going to have 100% control of their operating system and manufacture. This was of course the big

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mistake Apple made and allowed Microsoft under Bill Gates to have the chance to 'rule the world' and for Bill to consequently become a multi-billionaire.

After the Mac Plus I graduated to a PowerMac 7100 with AV monitor, at great expense. This was a stunning computer with a built-in CD drive and great sounding speakers. The system shown at right was similar to mine, but without the built-in CD drive. Sadly, my home was broken into and the Mac stolen. I later got a Mac Powerbook 190CS and managed to spill a glass of red wine on the keyboard (now who would have thought?) and had to have it repaired.

Soon I was sick of the high cost of ancillary bits for Macs and took the plunge and bought a PC with Windows 95. Of course, the Mac fraternity were highly amused and said 'Windows 95 equals Mac 86' and it was about right, except that Mac 86 was stable and although it was capable of giving you a bomb symbol on the screen, you didn't get the frequent BOSD (blue screen of death) with Win95. Eventually jokes found their way around the traps like:

Bill Gates dies and goes to hell. The Devil meets him and says 'so you're bill Gates, I've heard a lot about you. I'll give you a choice of places to remain in hell'. So Bill is shown a room and in it are monsters and all manner of filthy things. In another room there is hell fire and torture. In the third room there is a desk, a chair, a blonde, a bottle of wine and a PC. Gate selects the third room. One of the Devil's assistants says 'What are you doing? That's Bill Gates!' The Devil replies 'It's OK, the bottle has a hole in it, the blonde doesn't and the PC has Windows 95 installed and we have removed the Control, Alt and Delete keys'.

What happens to all your memories when you die?

Having said that I did enjoy using the PC. Eventually I upgraded to Windows 98, truly the Work of the Devil. In my experience Win98 is the worst OS I have ever used. An Australian in New York produced a program called Win98 Lite and it was a free download. It removed the connection between the Windows OS and Internet Explorer, cleaned up the desktop and left you with a computer which was more reliable, faster and easier to use. Experts wondered how a company could charge so much for a program that routinely reduced its users to tears every

month or so. Perversely I was grateful for inadequacies of Win98 as I was forced to learn how to reformat a hard drive and reinstall the system and appropriate drivers. Even installing and uninstalling a program was complicated and after uninstalling, there was always something left behind. On a Mac, you simply grabbed the program folder and dropped it on to the hard drive to install it and if you wanted to do the reverse, just grab it and dump it into the trash. So, I am thankful for Windows forcing me to learn more about computing. Whilst I was in China I used PC's, mainly because the locals knew little or nothing about Macs. Eventually out of frustration, I imported an old G4 PowerMac from America.

A little old lady was going up and down the halls in nursing home.
As she walked , she would flip up the hem of her nightgown and say,"Supersex."
She walked up to elderly man in a wheelchair.
Flipping her gown at him, she said, "Supersex."
He sat silently for a moment or two and finally answered," I'll take the soup"

Apple, from the first Mac, had used Motorola processors, 68000 (meaning the number of transistors on the chip). 68020, 68030 and finally 68040 which by this time had millions of transistors on the chip. Then came the 603 processors and finally the G3, G4 and G5 series. It was during the reign of the G4's that Apple released to new operating system OS-X or OS-10. It was beautiful and made Windows look bad. More than look good, it was stable. As they upgraded the OS, surprisingly, they ran faster on the same computer. As Windows was upgraded, the process ran more slowly and required more RAM and a faster processor, hence to move from Pentium, to PII, PIII and finally PIV, and wonderful processors they were.

Apple had cornered itself by sticking to Motorola. The G5 processors were fabulous, but got hot and could not be used in laptops. So the fastest Macintosh laptop had a G4 processor whereas the desktops were using the superior G5's. Apple had to change and shocked us all when they transferred favour to Intel. Many Mac purists were appalled that a Mac would have the same processor in it as found in a 'Wintel' machine.

Going back in time now, Apple had produced a series of stunning desktops, some would call funky. These were the all-in-one iMacs in 'fruit flavours', even one in 'strawberry pink'. These iMacs used the G3 processor and were popular in schools. The most popular Mac school model was the eMac (I presume the 'e' referred to 'education'). These eMacs used the faster G5 processor and were made tough, kid proof.

Today they can be picked up very cheaply on eBay as many education institutions upgrade their computer labs. Where the G3 iMacs had a 15" screen, the eMacs had a 17" flat screen.

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Bill Gates, in one of his more ungenerous moments, stated that the only innovation Apple made was in plastic. This was rubbish of course, especially as Microsoft copied so much of what was Macintosh. Maybe it was the release of the G4 iMac that prompted that remark from Gates. When Widows was first released by Microsoft, using a mouse and a graphic user interface (GUI), Apple unsuccessfully sued Microsoft for copying their platform. Windows XP was released after Apple had OS-X running for a couple of years. It is said that the 'X' in XP was copied from the 'X' in OS-X for the Macintosh.

Back to the first G4 iMac. Talk about beautiful! If you go to a NSW RTA office, you will see these Macs being used by the counter staff. The picture on the Time cover is that of Steve Jobs on the screen of a G4 iMac, the CEO of Apple. While we might say that it was the philosophy of Jobs that leads to Apple's extraordinary success nowadays, I believe that his decision to control the Mac OS and not allow for other developers to produce 'clone' Macs all those years ago, that allowed Microsoft to steal a march.

In 2004 Apple rocked everyone again with the all-in-one G5 iMac, a stunning creation that PC Magazine said was the computer that should have been built years before.

These things were fast and came with 17" or 20" screens. But, apart from RAM or HDD upgrades, they could not be changed.

Now, if you wanted the flexibility found in tower PC's using Windows, you needed to go to the PowerMacs. They came in G3, G4 and G5 forms.

These PowerMacs had PCI slots and all manner of cards could be added, such as faster video cards, sound cards or whatever. They also had Airport which allowed remote printing and wireless internet, well before this was available on a PC. There was space for at least 2 HDD's and as can be seen in the photo, very accessible. These machines became the standard for production of publications. In fact, it was recently found that Microsoft advertisements had been produced on the Mac platform. During the G4 era, Apple introduced dual processor models.

The G4 PowerMacs were replaced by the G5's, faster still. In fact, there was at one stage in the Mac development that the US government considered

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banning the sale of these things internationally because of the computing power they gave to potential enemies. Maybe typical US paranoia.

Above is the G5 PowerMac, showing the dual processors.

> 20 IT executives board an aircraft and are told that the flight that they are about to take is the first-ever to feature pilot-less technology: It is an un-crewed aircraft. Each one of the CEO's is then told, privately, that their company's software is running the aircraft's automatic pilot system. Nineteen of the CEO's promptly leave the aircraft, each offering a different type of excuse. One CEO alone remains on board the jet, seeming very calm indeed. Asked why he is so confident in this first un-crewed flight, he replies: "If it's the same software that runs my company's IT systems, this plane won't even take off."

In 2000, in response to the world-wide criticism of Windows 98, Microsoft released Windows ME (Millenium Edition), sometimes called Windows ME (Multiple Error). My experience with ME was good. I found it more stable than 98 and more attractive. It was in fact an upgraded version of Windows 95, but with good USB support. I upgraded to Windows 2000 and finally to Windows XP, by far the best operating system Microsoft has produced (Vista?...more on that later). Still there was the problem that if you left your computer on, XP would accumulate errors and would eventually have to be reinstalled. Wiser users made sure their hard disk was partitioned so that saved data and files would not be lost during the reinstallation. Always back up!

What am I using now? I use two computers; I don't need two, but they interest me. My Mac is the newer Intel iMac, the one with the aluminium look. The only upgrading that can be done is with the RAM. I can't open the case and therefore I cannot upgrade the HDD (hard drive). It has 2.0 Gb RAM, a 250 Gb HDD, an 128Mb video card and a 2.0 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo processor. The display is 20" and it cost me $1699 when I got it. I think the new price is $1599. My OS is OS 10.5 (Leopard). I love it.

My other computer was put together for me in a local computer shop and has an AMD 64 X2 (dual core) 2.6 GHz processor and 2.0 Gb RAM. I have added a dedicated display card with 256 Mb RAM for about $50. This was done because the mother board has its own display card, but uses some of the system RAM, thus reducing the RAM available for program use. Vista is memory hungry. I used a couple of 80 Gb HDD's I had spare. It is installed with Vista Ultimate as the OS. Cost (without the OS) $289. I've since added a new TV card I got from eBay, cost $51 and so I can watch HDTV. I bought a 24" Acer monitor, a beauty, cost $349 + $19 delivery. Total cost (minus the TV card) $657 plus the cost of Vista, which I already had.

If I added the cost of a reasonable level of Vista, say Home Premium, the total cost would have been $826, then add the cost of a new 250 GB HDD, total ($895, about $740 cheaper than the iMac and with a better monitor than on the iMac). On the face of it, a superior machine to my iMac.

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	iMac (2GB RAM)	PC (2GB RAM)
Initial cost	$1,699	$289
Extra memory	$50	
Display card	Has its own dedicated card	$50
Operating system	Comes with OS	$169
Monitor (inc delivery)	Has its own monitor	$368
250 Gb Hard Disk	Has a 250Gb HDD	$69
Total	**$1749**	**$945**

This article is being typed on the iMac, but I am using Microsoft Word and Windows XP SP3!!!! I can use Windows on the Mac, but I cannot use any Mac programs on the PC. I have installed onto the iMac a program called Parallels 3.0 which allows me to install and use Windows programs and the Mac OS at the same time. In front of me I have both Mac desktop and Windows desktop! I never do anything to do with money on the PC, such as internet banking. Why? Because the Mac is more secure and there are no viruses (none significant anyway) for the Mac. Apple does routinely send security updates, as does Microsoft, but I don't believe a 'thief' will be able to easily break into the Mac.

Above is a screen capture showing the WinXP desktop in operation on the Mac desktop. If I click outside that window I have a Mac; inside the window I have a PC.

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Let's talk about speed of use. My PC has both Vista and XP SP3 installed and I can choose which I prefer to use. The following table shows some times comparing the 3 different systems.

	iMac (10.5)	iMac (XP SP3)*	PC (Vista)	PC (XP SP3)
Start up time	30 seconds	20 seconds	70 seconds	60 seconds
Shut down time	10 seconds	25 seconds	50 seconds	18 seconds
Get to sleep time	2 seconds	5 seconds	30 seconds	5 seconds
Wake from sleep time	5 seconds	6 seconds	15 seconds	20 seconds

* this is the Windows startup time once the Mac is running. The Windows OS has only 512 Mb of RAM allocated to it from the 2.0 Gb RAM of the Mac. XP is not as memory or resources hungry as Vista.

Vista is a very attractive looking interface, not unlike the Mac in many ways and better looking than that of XP, but it is a slug. I have turned off the security in Vista so it is less annoying, but then it keeps telling me that I have turned off the security. I have read that the next incarnation of Windows will not be so annoying. Sadly, many new computers are now being offered with Windows XP as an alternative to Vista. By the way, the word 'Vista' has been dropped by Microsoft because of the negative feedback they have received world-wide. The new Windows operating system will be called Windows 7 with no reference to Vista and will address many of the complaints made about Vista, but probably won't be commercially available till 2010 or even 2011. I just get the feeling that Windows as a platform has probably reached its final stage of development. The new Windows is said to be an upgraded version of Vista and some cynics are calling it Vista SP?

A man woke up one morning to find his wife packing her bags. "Where are you going?" demanded the husband. The wife replied, "You know all that free sex I've been giving you all these years? Well I just found out I can get $200 a shot for it in the Cross"

With that the husband jumped out of bed and began packing his bags, too. "Where do you think you're going?" demanded the wife.

"I want to see how you can live on $400 a year!"

Did you know that when you buy a Vista disk, it contains all levels of Vista, from Home Basic up to Ultimate? When you type in the product code, the system you paid for is selected and installed. That is a kind of meanness that deserves censure. When you buy a Mac operating system, you get the full system, the 'ultimate' for the same price, about half the price you will pay for the Microsoft system. Apple offers only one 'level' of OS-X. On top of this there are no compatibility issues with hardware, because there is a limited range of options and Apple can easily include these with the OS. The Mac OS is multilingual. In fact, I have used a program called 'Monolingual' to remove the dozens of languages from my Mac OS, which can slow the

system down a bit, so they tell me. With the Microsoft OS, you have to buy separate disks for different languages. My wife uses a computer with XP (English) and XP (Chinese) operating systems.

I must add that in terms of compatibility with hardware or software, I have had no problems with Vista. Perhaps the exception was Nero, a disk burning application, but the version that works with Vista is cheap on eBay. Nero is a good program once you wait for it to get ready for use. It also takes an unnecessarily long time to install. I might also add that some of the troubles with Vista lies not with Microsoft, but with other software producers and hardware manufacturers who have not taken the trouble to provide decent drivers with their products, again Microsoft cannot be blamed for this.

Why is Windows so enthusiastically targeted by smart-arse virus programmers? Well, I suppose because Windows is easier to penetrate due of its sloppy design, except that Vista has many more safeguards built in. There may also be a 'hate Microsoft' element. Perhaps the most important reason Windows machines are targeted by computer virus developers is that they are by far the most used computers in the world. If the Macintosh share of computer sales and usage were to increase significantly, then it would be worth the trouble for cyber criminals to find ways to attack Macs. Perhaps this is already happening. Apple have been successful in their advertising in getting Windows users to change over to Mac and some people who did this are beginning to worry that they may have made the wrong decision.

> Never underestimate the power of very stupid people in large groups.

The best advice is don't download anything that looks suspicious. Don't open emails that have an attachment which was not expected, especially if the attachment has '.exe' in its title. The cyber criminals are well aware of human frailty and know how to get you in, so to speak. Beware of identity theft, so if you use Facebook, don't give too many details about yourself. Watch out for bogus sites such as those that claim to be PayPal or eBay, requiring you to give banking details so that their files can be kept current.

Now, talking if installation: I downloaded Service Pack 1 (SP1) for Vista and installed it. This process took over an hour! I then downloaded SP2 (beta) and that took another 20 minutes to install, a total time of one hour, 50 minutes! The original installation of Vista took less than 30 minutes.

Do I like my PC with Vista installed? Yes I do! It's a bit of an enthusiast's interest really as I don't use it for serious work; I have the iMac for that, but with the PC I can watch HDTV and record TV programs to the hard disk and easily edit them to put on to DVD. It does some things faster than the Mac. To watch TV on the

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Mac would be more costly. But now I'm using Windows on the Mac and XP SP3 is blazingly fast. MS Word (Office 2003) takes about one second to be ready for work after booting. For reasons I don't understand, it is faster on the Mac than on the PC.

Now about software. One of the arguments put forward in favour of Windows over the Mac platform is that there are more programs available for Windows machines. That is the case, but how many programs do you need to use? Most business software is written for both the Mac and Windows platform. You can have MS Office for both. I am currently using Office 2008 for the Mac and it is faster than the older version because it has been written for the new Intel processors. Of course you can have OpenOffice.Org for both (free download); I have used this set of applications and don't really like them, perhaps because I am used to Microsoft Office (Excel is excellent as is PowerPoint).

Adobe Photoshop was originally a Mac program, but has been rewritten for the PC and there is an excellent lens correction filter for the PC version of PS that is not available for the Mac version. However for US$29 I downloaded PT Lens for both Mac and PC. This little program corrects lens distortion and perspective distortion and has in its database data for most digital cameras and lenses up to 2007. MYOB can be found for both platforms. Quark Express was the most used desktop publishing program (for the Mac) ahead Adobe Pagemaker for the PC. The best music programming applications are found on the Mac platform.

My PC's processor is faster than that in my iMac, but is slower to use and that is because of the operating system. I decided to install WinXP on one hard disk on the PC, so now I have a choice of XP or Vista, but still I prefer Vista because of its interface and have worked around some of the slowness problems. My son uses a Pentium 4 (2.8 GHz) PC with XP installed and is plenty fast enough. By the way, in terms of slowness, avoid Symantic (Norton) software. Norton anti-virus is known to slow down computers as is their Norton Utilities. For anti-virus I use Free AVG and I have read American experts who have found that AVG picks up viruses that Norton misses. If I ever use Norton utilities to repair Windows errors, it is from the CDROM and not installed on to the computer.

Reaching the end of a job interview, the H.R. manager asked a young Engineer fresh out of Uni, "And what starting salary were you looking for?" The Engineer said, "In the neighbourhood of $125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."
The interviewer said, "Well, what would you say to a package of 5 weeks vacation, 14 paid public holidays, full medical and dental benefits paid, 15% super paid and a new company car leased every 2 years - say, a 5 series BMW?"
The Engineer sat up straight and said, "Wow! Are you kidding?"
And the interviewer replied, "Yeah, but you started it."

I have tried to use Linux distributions such as Ubuntu, but I'm just not geeky enough. Years ago a friend of mine, a computer systems analyst, told me she did not like Macs. 'Why?' I asked. Her answer 'Because anyone can use a Mac.' The greatest thing about Windows and the Mac operating systems, is that they have taken most of the mystery out of computing and some power out the hands of those who service the things.

If you would like to have a laugh, here is a website which has the 'I'm a Mac' advertisements. Surely a little exaggerated, but effective enough for Microsoft to be worried and employ an

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advertising agency to produce a set of counter advertisements (actually produced on a Macintosh computer). http://www.apple.com/getamac/ads/

There clearly is a lot of disappointment with dedicated PC users concerning Vista: Here is a typical letter to ZDNET, 08/01/2009

'Let's face it, Windows 7 is Windows Vista Service Release 2, more than a service pack but less than a major release, with only a few added extra features, or as I am now in the custom of calling it, Windows Fixta. And since Windows 7 is essentially a performance and usability fix for a defective product, I'm of the increasing opinion that a Windows 7 upgrade should be free to anyone who was conned into buying Windows Vista.

Yes, you heard me. If you own a copy of Windows Vista — Microsoft should be giving you a download entitlement to whatever corresponding version you have. So if you have Home, you should get Windows 7 Home. If you have Ultimate, you should get Windows 7 Ultimate. For Microsoft to do anything less would be a disservice to their loyal customers, especially to the enterprises that actually bought into Enterprise Agreements for Vista desktops. It isn't just good business for Microsoft to redeem itself in this way, it's simply the right thing to do. Anything less than a complete "Mea culpa, we'll do anything to make this up to you" move by Microsoft is likely to open them up to further litigation, especially by angry EU lawmakers who are just looking for another excuse to hit the company with billions more in fines as well as an expansion of existing class action in the United States.'

A quick update (29th January, 2009):

A malicious Trojan Horse has just been found attached to a pirated copy of iWork09. iWork is Apple's suite of business programs, a word processor, a spreadsheet and presentation application. Using the pirated software, the Trojan is installed as soon as iWork is installed and allows Macs on the internet to 'see' each other. Hence an outsider could view the contents of your Mac.

If something hasn't broken on your helicopter, it's about to.

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