

KANSASFEST

PILGRIMAGE

By Stephen Buggie

For some, a religious pilgrimage is said to become an obsession. Often, a notable expense and much inconvenience is involved; yet, there is the promise that one's life will be changed thereafter.

So it is for Apple II loyalists who squirrel away funds, rearrange vacation schedules, and make the trek to KansasFest.

It all began seven summers ago. AppleFest had become a large commercially-oriented exhibition dominated by Mac vendors and Mac topics. With the Apple II being elbowed to the sidelines, Tom Weishaar of "DOS Talk" fame organized "a real Apple Festival" in Kansas City, within easy driving range of his home in Overland Park. As a grassroots gathering of Apple II programmers, hardware hackers, and other enthusiasts, KansasFest proved an instant success.

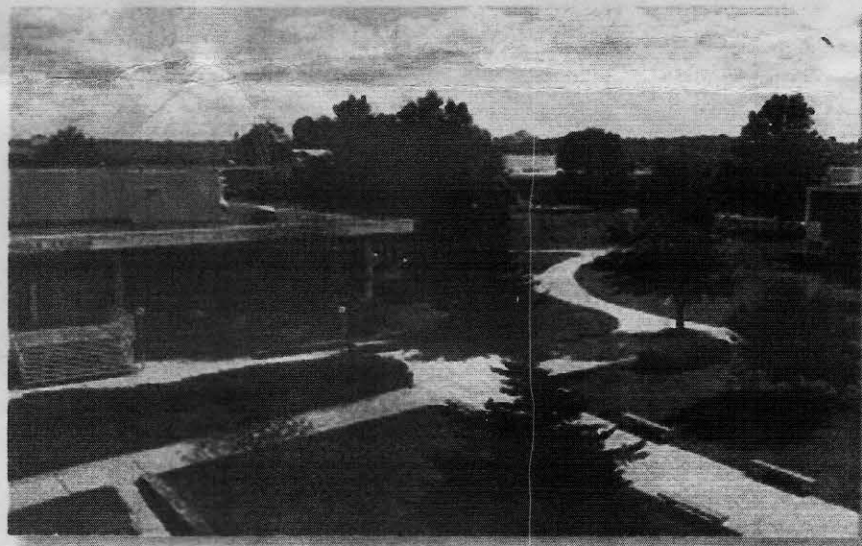
The 'Fest has been the central annual event of Apple II computing for some time. I'd long planned to attend; but, each year, something seemed to interfere—got to buy more hardware, got to work, don't have enough time, dates are wrong, etc.. This summer was not especially convenient, either; but with Joe Kohn's prodding, I decided to take the plunge; no further delays!

KansasFest is like an intensive, extended users' group meeting. Spread

around the comfortable Avila College campus, it manages to occupy nearly every hour from Wednesday through Saturday. I soon discovered that, with 90 'Festers occupying two floors of a dorm, each day's scheduled events were sure to be followed by all-night

presenters and many of the attendees are knowledgeable about computers, the sessions were a valuable opportunity to get 'up to speed'.

Nearly half the presentations were on hardware-related topics — mainly on customizing and repairs. Just a sam-



conversation and computing sessions. In fact, chronic sleepiness seems to be a tradition— you're out of form if you are fully rested!

The eight-page program stated that the conference is oriented toward Apple II, Mac, and Newton. However, the emphasis was overwhelmingly on the Apple II. Formal sessions, most lasting 90 minutes, spanned the full range of computing interests. Since

plunging includes Repairing the IIgs keyboard, Customizing the Zip-GS accelerator, Hacking the Disk II drive(!), and Robotics.

A Monitor Repair session was most impressive. Five or six dead IIgs monitors were brought to the hardware-hacking room, and expert solder-slingers Doug Pendleton and Dave Ciotti restored each to life! Users were cautioned about monitor hacking

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because dangerous high voltages lurk near the picture tube and other circuits; however, the monitor wizards let everyone watch as repairs were done.

Thanks to Alltech's Tony Diaz, "Mark Twain" showed up, too. Everyone was interested in checking out the never-released prototype for a new GS.

Many 'Festers are programmers; so, several sessions highlighted software. Presentations looked at Diagnostics, the IIGS Toolbox, Appleworks Ultramacros, Applesoft BASIC, Spectrum, Wolfenstein 3-D, Hypercard, and lots more.

Possibly the most interesting software presentation was given by Cindy Adams and David Kerwood. They served as beta-testers for Gus, a soft-

ware, and literature. Most vendors were the authors, inventors, or builders of the products they sold.

Informal sessions, of course, went on throughout the day and night—at meals, in hallways, and especially in the dorm rooms. About half the attendees, mostly those who arrived by car, brought computers and related accessories. (And, yes, I brought along five of my "Buggie Power Supplies".)

KansasFest etiquette allows one to wander the hallways and peer into rooms. (So, as *II Alive's* intrepid reporter, I did.) No one seemed to mind having a fellow user barge in to see and discuss the setups being used. On the other hand, such visiting is a

night owls as he'd done in earlier years.

Following the banquet dinner on Friday night, Joe Kohn, publisher of *Shareware Solutions II*, was publicly "roasted" by his friends, each of whom spoke a few minutes about Joe's shortcomings and eccentricities. It was a fun, good-natured way to honor Joe for his many contributions to II computing.

COMPLAINTS? WELL, NOT MANY.

Cafeteria meals were okay, but not outstanding. (Kansas City's renowned steaks were sorely missed.) Also, perhaps, there was a bit too much attention given Mac and not enough for 8-bit Apple II's. Still, there's no question: Avila College was a fine host and organizers Cindy Adams, Steve Gozdziwski, and Tim Kellers did an outstanding job of putting together a great 'Fest 1996!

My KansasFest pilgrimage was a very satisfying, enlightening experience. I learned much in face to face exchanges with Apple II gurus, experimenters, and other users. Emotionally, it was uplifting to meet so many fellow Apple II enthusiasts; and, it will be fun, from now on, to be able to match faces and voices to all those internet signatures.

Possibly, the "pilgrimage" metaphor is faulty. Supposedly, one feels no compulsion to repeat such a journey; yet, KansasFest is surely different. Having attended once has recharged my interest in II computing and stirred a resolve to return in 1997 and again and again thereafter! ■

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ware IIGS emulator for the Mac PowerPC. Incredibly, once loaded, Gus does seem to come close to turning the Mac into a IIGS! The demos, as well as the distributed docs, were really impressive.

All of this provoked a good deal of discussion. Some felt that Gus may provide a viable pathway to IIGS portability—you just pop Gus into your Power-PC laptop. Others expressed serious concern that Gus could lure IIGS users to a different platform.

Large swap meet style sessions were held on Friday and Saturday mornings to demonstrate the latest Mac products and to give participants the chance to

good way to develop an inferiority complex. Some IIGS systems were so absolutely loaded with prestige equipment and wares that, during boots, the init icons totally filled the screen!

As the Apple II world's premier event, KansasFest is an opportunity to meet many II computing leaders and celebrities. Besides those already mentioned, you could compare notes with Ego System's Steve Disbrow, ORCA author Mike Westerfield, Max Jones (publisher of *Juiced.GS*), and games programmer Bill Heineman. Hyperstudio developer Roger Wagner missed the event, but made amends by arranging for free pizzas for KansasFest

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