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LINES

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International Spotlight



China and the Asia Pacific Region

By Les Spielman

Les Spielman is CEO and founder of Hospitality Automation Consultants Ltd.(HACL), an independent consulting firm. With more than 32 years of experience in the lodging technology industry, his company provides assistance with automation tasks on a personalized basis. Hospitality Automation Consultants Ltd. has successfully completed over 3,000 consulting projects throughout the world. HACL currently has offices in Sydney, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Mumbai, and Singapore. HACL also has affiliated offices in Beijing, Geneva and London.



At the Sands Hotel in Macau: A gigantic 850 by 800 foot screen displaying very high definition three-dimensional moving pictures of meals and attractions that are inside the hotel. It's the first one of its kind in the world and is outside in the elements, with no protection.

Photo courtesy of Les Spielman

China and the Asia Pacific Region present both opportunities and potential landmines for telecommunications and technology consultants. Qualifications and expertise required for a consultant are the same as in North America, but there are special challenges that are unique to the region.

Early Work in the Region

HACL's (Hospitality Automation Consultants Ltd., USA) involvement with Asia Pacific Hotels began in 1982. We were the technology consultants for the first five-star hotel in Australia. Even prior to construction, there was much work to be done on the project. The overall project took more than three years. I was traveling every two weeks from California to Sydney on a tiresome fourteen hour flight. After some time I opened a "temporary" office in Sydney to ease some of the travel burden.

This first hotel project was a success. The technology that we deployed was so far ahead of it's time that the hotel received worldwide press coverage about the many new and innovative technology features for guests as well as for hotel executives. Soon,

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A Tool of the Trade: Is It Time for Consultants to Consider Replacing Windows Computers with Apple Macintosh?

By William A. Morgan

There are no more important tools for consultants than their personal computers.

Today the majority of STC members are Windows users; however, there are members who have switched to Apple Macintosh. Should this change be considered by all STC'ers? This article addresses one person's findings and decision. I will tell you why I switched from Windows to a Macintosh Snow Leopard system and what I've learned along the way.

Why Did I Consider Moving to Mac?

I was having the same problems many people routinely report about Windows. I noticed there were an increasing number of Mac users, and they seemed to like their systems and software.

Why specifically had I grown to dislike Windows and Office?

Unexpected crashes requiring a complete restart (*I'm not talking about virus and malware attacks, just inherent software flaws*) and slowness in booting up and shutting down (both for applications and the OS). There is a continual need for massive antivirus, et al efforts and complexity in setting up new peripherals and networking. Also, there is incompatibility between versions of Office.

What Have I Found?

A Mac offers reliability, fast performance, outstanding photo, DVD and music applications, easy installation of

peripherals, networking and updates. Plus it offers the easiest backups I have ever experienced.

What had I found appealing about Mac's that has nothing to do with Windows or computing?

The high quality construction of hardware, esthetic appeal of devices' form factor and screen images, and the tactile feel of device keypads and buttons.

There is a learning curve to Macintosh.

Once the learning curve has been climbed, can switching to a Mac end up making a user at least as

productive as continued use of a Windows computer? I'd say probably yes, even inside the largest enterprises. But the learning curve is real. Is Mac easier to learn from scratch than a PC? If so, it probably is because Apple does not try to be all things to all people, which does allow Mac's to have a more elegant and consistent approach. I also suspect that the difficulty of learning a Mac can be inversely proportional to the square of the distance between a new user and the local Apple Store.

Security issues are minimized with a Mac.

Microsoft and Adobe software are a security nightmare. At the last BlackHat and Defcon security conferences, only employees of McAfee, Symantec, and Microsoft seemed to be using their employer's security products. However, none of the Mac users had security software installed on their Mac. While this is anecdotal, I think it also is valid.

Everybody Knows Windows Computers Are Less Expensive: "The Apple Tax"

If I only analyze hardware pricing, Mac's run at the low end from about \$500 more expensive than equivalent Windows iron to about \$1,500 more at the high end. However, over time Macs typically save money compared to Windows systems. When I analyzed in detail the costs of several "standard" systems with configurations that

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STC LINES

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About the STC

The Society of Telecommunications Consultants is an international organization of information and communications technology professionals who serve clients in business, industry, service organizations and government. For over 30 years STC consultants have delivered independent and ethical telecommunications expertise. This objective guidance and support enables clients of STC consultants to benefit from the efficient and effective use of information and communications technologies.

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Up Close and Personal

As an international organization, STC members are spread far apart and don't get a lot of opportunities for face-to-face encounters. Here is some information to help you get to know a few of our members a little better.

VAC Representative - Beth Cossette, Qwest, Denver, CO

Tell us about your company:

Qwest Business is a choice of 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies, offering a comprehensive portfolio of data and voice networking communications solutions to enterprises, government agencies and educational institutions of all sizes. The Qwest network backbone covers the entire continental United States and has one of the largest fiber footprints in the U.S., capable of supporting 40 Gbps data transmission rates now and 100 Gbps soon.

How long have you been an STC member?

Four months (since I joined Qwest)

What is the biggest challenge you face today?

Building awareness of the breadth of Qwest Business solutions and how they can help businesses nationwide optimize their communications.

What is the biggest benefit you have received from your STC membership?

Meeting great people, being able to making personal connections with STC consultants and creating a direct line for feedback and communication.

What are you reading right now? The Kind Diet by Alicia Silverstone

What do you do when you're not working?

Snowboarding and hot yoga. I'll tell you a great story. My husband and I moved from Boston to Denver in October for the mountains (specifically to snowboard). The first month we were here, my husband bruised his rib snowboarding, which sidelined us for a month. Then we get two weekends in and I have a snowboarding accident complete with a concussion and whiplash that leaves me off the slopes for weeks. I'm giving it a shot this weekend so here's hoping to no more injuries for the rest of the season!

What is your favorite food? Pizza. Specifically from Todd English's first restaurant, Figs, in Charlestown, MA.



If you are ever in Boston, you must go there.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would you go? First chair up Steamboat Springs after we got a foot of fresh powder the night before.

What is your favorite sports team?

Red Sox! Or anyone who beats the Yankees.

Consultant Member – Ben Sanford, Ben Sanford & Associates, Inc., San Antonio, TX

Tell us about your company:

BSA provides a full range of telecommunications consulting, including system design and acquisition, networking, long distance, and billing audits. Mr.



Sanford's clients include all types of companies with specialization in governmental entities.

How long have you been an STC member? Since October, 1984.

What is the biggest challenge you face today?

Dealing with the conversion to VoIP, both technical and working with client IT departments. It is getting easier than it was, though. Learning new technologies and client dynamics brings back memories of the 70's, when I started doing all this.

What is the biggest benefit you have received from your STC membership?

Sharing practice and technical issues with my peers. The networking and camaraderie.

Do you have any hobbies or interests? What do you do when you're not working?

Golf is my passion, plus trips to the gym keep me functional enough to get around.

What is your favorite food?

Mexican, especially when its in San Antonio.

How many kids/grandkids? Two boys, ages 28 and 30. I can't believe they're that old.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would you go?

Hawaii in the winter, Europe the rest of the year.

What is your favorite sports team?

Dallas Cowboys (sigh).



Legal and Regulatory Update

By **MARTHA BUYER**

LAW OFFICES OF

MARTHA BUYER, PLLC

As the STC's Regulatory Attorney, Martha is available to STC consultant members for consultations of up to 15 minutes, at no charge. She can be reached at 716-652-4413, or at martha@marthabuyer.com

Happy New Year!! As we all welcome 2010 with anticipation, I want to take this opportunity to highlight both some policy shifts for the new year, along with some newsworthy developments from the end of 2009.

FCC Update During the last week of December, I had the opportunity (and I say so with sincerity) to speak with an attorney at the FCC.

Although my call involved a complex question raised by an STC member, during the course of the conversation, the attorney shared with me the fact that the FCC's priorities have changed over the past 6 months. At the beginning of the Obama administration's FCC, there were several key priorities:

1. Completion of the migration to digital television;
2. Decisions on the complex issues of network neutrality; and
3. Reform of methodologies of the related Universal Service and Reciprocal Compensation mechanisms.

However, now that digital television has been implemented and much of the network neutrality brouhaha is off of the front page, there's a new issue in town, and it's

become the top—and virtually only—item on the list; nationwide broadband implementation. If you have carrier clients who were holding off making decisions until USF or reciprocal compensation policies changed, they may be waiting a long time. Expect the FCC to be devoting the bulk of its energies toward broadband implementation nationwide. While that's happening, it's fair to assume that the USF fee, which in Q1 2010 will be 14.1%, will continue to creep up, as demands for funds increase and sources to support the fund continue to be identified in strange and mysterious ways.

Quon v. Arch Wireless is the first known case where it will be argued that third party review of electronic messages constitutes an illegal search and/or seizure.

Privacy and Text Messaging

In mid December, 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that it would hear arguments in 2010 on the level of privacy that an employee can expect when using a non-individually-owned device to send text messages. The awkward language is intentional because in this case, the device was owned not by a business, but by a municipality, and the content of some of the text messages was not only non-work related, but inappropriate by any imaginable corporate standard. The case, Quon v. Arch Wireless will be argued in spring, and will address to what extent employees can expect

their communications to be private. In this case, the “owner” of the devices was the City of Ontario, CA which provided clearly worded notice to employees regarding the privacy of email and “other systems.” However, the supervisor of the employees in question had informed them that as long as they personally paid for the amount of “overage” time they used beyond the amount for which the city had contracted, their messages would not be reviewed.

In the current case, the issue of whether the wireless company acted illegally when it turned over the messages to the City of Ontario was dismissed, so the argument to the Supreme Court will be limited to the issue of whether or not Mr. Quon and his colleagues on the Ontario SWAT team had a “reasonable expectation of privacy” with respect to the text messages that they sent. Additionally, while government employers are in different shoes than are private employers, this case will be watched closely because it is the first known case where it will be argued that third party review of electronic messages constitutes an illegal search and/or seizure (4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution).

New Early Termination Fees Brought to you by your friends at Verizon During December, (relatively) newly-minted FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn sent off a strongly worded letter to Verizon Wireless regarding its recent doubling of early termination fees (ETF) imposed upon customers who

International Spotlight – China and the Asia Pacific Region *(from Page 1)*

many hotels tried to replicate what we had done, but most failed. The HACL office in Sydney started to receive many calls from all over the Asia Pacific region. It was clear that the “temporary” office in Sydney would be open for business far after completion of this project.

This was over 29 years ago. Since that time the Asia Pacific market place has become more sophisticated. Major hotel chains have moved into the various geographic areas. As these chains have proliferated, the variety of ideas and technology has grown as well. This has had the gross affect of driving HACL even further into being “futurists”, concentrating even more on strategic technology planning and innovation.

China

China has not been hurt by the global recession. In China, current business opportunities are unbelievably great. However, landmines are everywhere. A consultant needs the same qualifications as when working in North America, but the most obvious challenge is the language barrier. Speaking Chinese is mandatory, but which one of the 250 dialects will you choose? Having local people in country is essential to effectively conducting business.

The people of Hong Kong do not speak the same Chinese as the people of the mainland. The form of writing is also different. Recently we had to have a contract translated for a project in Shanghai. We used 4 different licensed and qualified Chinese interpreters and came up with 4 different translations. China is trying to rectify this by coming up with a new language called “simplified Chinese”. The younger Chinese who have graduated from colleges during the last 10 years almost all speak English, albeit sometimes very fractured. You can make yourself understood, and these younger people will understand you. Still, technical details are challenging and a lot can be misunderstood.

In North America, unbiased independent consultants sometimes have to explain their value when competing with “free” consultants provided by vendors or service providers. This is a larger issue in Mainland China. Chinese companies just don’t understand what value a consultant’s brings to them. There is an impression that that the vendors have all of the answers that they would

need, and they cannot understand why they have to pay for advice. They also do not understand western culture. This has been our biggest problem. For instance, there is a belief that cheaper is better. Chinese companies see no reason to pay more for better material, when cheaper material can be used for the same job, period. They see no reason to make a better product. If it breaks, they will sell more. Consultants are not necessary when they can just pay a vendor for advice that is incorporated into the cost of the equipment they are buying. Innovation is not necessary, copying is just fine.

Businesses in China tend to stick with their old ways for a long time. New products or innovation are unproven, so why take a chance? It’s not broken, so why fix it? It



The Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

They were the world's tallest buildings if measured from the level of the main entrance to the structural top before being surpassed by Taipei 101 in 2004. However, the towers are still the tallest twin buildings in the world.

Photo courtesy of Les Spielman

takes a major nationally recognized client to be the innovator and then the rest of the companies realize that they need to adapt and adopt the new technology or stand the risk of losing business. Once most of the businesses get the message, everyone wants it done yesterday.

Regulations in China

Just as there are different rules and regulations in our cities and states, each city and province in China have their own rules and regulations. Individual provincial politicians and officials play a much greater role in setting rules and defining acceptable practices, which can change quite rapidly. Just because you have successfully completed a project in province “X”, does not mean that you can duplicate the process in province “Y”; it may have totally opposite regulations. Arrangements must be made prior to starting any projects. Ground rules must be agreed upon in writing with provincial officials before any

Welcome New Consultant Members

Darren Chiappinelli - Executive Vice President, SABOT Technologies, Inc.

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BKP Telecom Consulting, LLC offers a variety of services to businesses and school districts. Specialty areas include Telecommunications Expense Reduction, Telecommunications Expense Management, Regulatory Tariff and Contract Analysis, in addition to E-Rate Consulting Services.

Welcome New VAC Representatives

Ben Crown – President, Mutare Software

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Mutare is an enterprise connectivity company. We write software solutions to leverage and organizations' existing communications infrastructure. We serve organizations looking to delight their customers and increase employee productivity while delivering a measureable return on investment. For 20 years, we have been trusted to provide unique solutions, sophisticated in design and simple in operation. Our reputation for personalized services and immediacy of response is unsurpassed.

In Memoriam

Gerald (Jerry) Frances Corcoran – Sixth President of The Society of Telecommunications Consultants

Gerald Frances CORCORAN Born July 10th, 1936 and raised in Rome, New York, Gerald passed away peacefully in the presence of his family on July 25, 2009 after a long battle with cancer. Gerald was an active fourth degree member of the Knights of Columbus. A true patriot, Gerald devoted his life to service giving to church, country and family. Throughout his illness Gerald never complained and continued to serve and care for others. Gerald is survived by wife Darlene, 4 daughters, 1 son and 13 grandchildren. Rest in peace Jerry, you will always remain in our hearts. A remembrance may be made to Benaroya Research Institute or Providence Hospice of Seattle Foundation.

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work begins. Another area that requires a good understanding of regulations is taxes. A consultant or company leading a project must be extremely careful with the taxation situations. You can very easily wind up paying taxes three or four times before a payment even reaches the states!

Different Labor Rates, Different ROI

Mainland China, and the surrounding areas have some very distinctive uses of technology. In mainland China and most of S. E. Asia, the employees live on a company owned campus. The employees are basically captive to the employer and usually cannot change jobs; employers are therefore not concerned with making their workers happy. If there is a problem, they tend to look for the least expensive way to resolve it. For more detail about this, see my article:

http://hacl.net/articles/labor_tech_cost.htm. To summarize, I noticed that outside of large cities, technology use was almost nil. My impression initially was that the cost of technology was too expensive for these regions. I was right, but not for the reasons that you and I would consider. Local labor rates are so much less than most technology acquisitions that there is no cost justification for ANY type of automation. The ROI would be many, many years, no matter how inexpensive the technology/automation cost. In many areas local laws want people to have jobs and therefore frown on technology. However, this does not apply to the large regional and international hotel chains. In our vertical, hospitality, the product that our client presents to their customers is extremely important. In many, many cases they lead the North American market in innovation and technology. Most of these issues mentioned refer specifically to mainland China. Hong Kong, Macau, or other countries are pretty much standardized and are more westernized.

Many Differences, but also Similarities

They use different terminology over there for the same products that we are accustomed to using every day. In some instances, there is a “cheaper is better” mentality, and in many areas price is the determining factor. However, in other areas, businesses are only interested in quality, and the devil with cost. So, it can be very tricky and you must know your client. But, that obviously, is no different than in North America!

Canadian Telecommunications Consultants Association (CTCA) 25th Anniversary Celebration and Conference

The CTCA will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary at the CTCA 2010 Spring Conference.

The conference will be held March 10 - 12, 2010 at the Americana Conference Resort and Spa in Niagara Falls, Canada. CTCA's keynote speaker will be John Mulrooney, PowerStream - Chief Operating Officer, who will address the Smart Grid network that uses information technology to deliver electricity efficiently, reliably, and securely. John will explore why it is critically important, telecommunications aspects to the Smart Grid and consulting opportunities.



For further information on the conference please visit www.ctca.ca, or email Mary Pawlus at manager@ctca.ca.

Note for LINES Contributors

The submission deadline for the April issue of LINES is Friday, March 26.

STC LINES exists to further the interests of the STC and help create value for its members. We welcome submissions from members of the STC community that will further the objectives of encouraging qualified consultants to join the STC, raising the visibility of the organization and promoting good internal communications. At this time, LINES does not carry advertising, and as a matter of policy does not publish purely promotional articles for specific telecom products or services.

Each LINES issue is posted on the public side of the STC web site and is thus accessible worldwide through the Internet. LINES is also pushed out to the STC's network of contacts in the telecom industry, as well as to the media. The editorial staff will review and respond to each article submitted for publication. Please submit articles in MS Word, with minimal formatting, to lines@stcconsultants.org.

Legal & Regulatory Update (continued from Page 4)

terminate their service agreements before the contract term has expired. Verizon Wireless's 77 page ETF response to Commissioner's Clyburn's pointed query indicates clearly that the increase in (read: doubling of) the ETF fee is used by the wireless giant to reward its sales staff and also to offset advertising, commission, network and store costs, all of which are only indirectly relevant to the actual cost of the device. Like many other telecommunications charges, this too bears only a passing resemblance to its original purpose (to offset the cost of a sexy device or "benefit the customer" in exchange for a long term agreement), particularly when there is still a significant penalty for termination even if the ETF is invoked in month 23 of a 24 month agreement. However this shakes out, the newest Commissioner has thrown down the gauntlet on the issue. There will be an interesting display of posturing until Verizon Wireless and the FCC come to some sort of consensus on what is equitable—or at least acceptable.

News from the North

In mid December, a decision made by the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission) was overturned by the Prime Minister's cabinet that has enabled Globalive Communications Corp. to immediately begin selling wireless services in Canada. This is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. First, the Canadian government had already sold spectrum to Globalive to the tune of about \$400 million. After completing the sale, and possibly (ha) under heavy pressure from competitors Telus, Bell Canada and Rogers, the CRTC then denied Globalive the right to use the spectrum (in the form of selling services to Canadian consumers) because of the composition of Globalive's ownership. Specifically, the CRTC was concerned about whether Globalive was "effectively controlled" by foreigners. According to Bloomberg.com, the company's voting shares are controlled by Canadian investors and at least 80% of Globalive's directors are Canadian, although the majority of the non-voting shares of the company are owned by Orascom Telecom Holding SAE, a Cairo-based company. However, while the CRTC determined that the majority of control rested beyond Canadian shores, the government of Prime Minister Stephen

Harper and his Industry Minister Tony Clement determined the opposite, and proclaimed Globalive to be a Canadian company. Its presence in the market, according to Minister Clement, "will give Canadian consumers more choices and lower prices." Time will tell.

If you have legal or regulatory questions, please feel free to call me at 716-652-4413 or write to martha@marthabuyer.com.

Up Close and Personal (continued from Page 3)

**Samantha Kane, Kane-MacKay & Associates Ltd.
Belleville Ontario Canada,
(a global practice with folks
in most of the US & an
office in Orlando)**

***Tell us about your company:***

The Kane-MacKay practice within the Customer Service environment is based on a People-Process-Technology-Culture Management Methodology, which links all four areas together in our designs, implementations and goals. Our 3 areas of competency are Call center, CRM and E911 Enterprise.

How long have you been an STC member? Since 1997

What is the biggest challenge you face today?

Clients understanding what we do and getting our bills paid. The larger the client, the slower they pay. We have seen 60-100 days recently.

What is the biggest benefit you have received from your STC membership?

Networking, finding partners to work with on projects and being comfortable they are doing a good job.

What are you reading right now? Snowball by Warren Buffet

What do you do when you're not working? Cooking, golf, gardening, my work.

What is your favorite food?

All good food, but onions (are my favorite). I think I am going to be an Onion Farmer when I grow up!

If you could go anywhere right now, where would you go? Machu Picchu ruins in Peru

What is your favorite sports team?

Miami Dolphins

Macs and Microsoft (continued from Page 3)

represent mainstream users' total systems costs, plus the prices of upgrading or purchasing software, over a 3-year life cycle (which is pretty accurate for Windows systems and way shorter than the average life of a Mac) the Windows systems cost more.

Time Savings with a Mac.

Not only have I determined that I save money by using a Mac, but I like using my Macintosh computer. And on the soft dollar side of the equation, I probably save a minimum of about 1.5 hours of my time per week by using a Mac for my work instead of waiting on Windows or messing with Windows. That saved time is a true value to me, seen each and every week since I went full-time to Mac. It now takes Judy's Windows computer about 13 minutes to boot from power off to beginning the download of her first email. My Mac takes less than 50 seconds. From hibernation to opening email takes her at least 4.5 minutes; I go from sleep to downloading email in about 11 seconds. Downloading emails took me about 50 seconds for 178 emails totaling 1 GB in size this morning; Judy's computer for 203 emails took about 7 minutes for 450 MB's. Shutdowns: my Mac takes about 15 seconds.

Software

I have chosen to use Apple's equivalent to Office, called iWork '09. So far nobody's complained when I saved my Pages documents into Word format, my Numbers spreadsheets into Excel, and my Keynote decks into PowerPoint. Of course, if necessary, I can always load Microsoft Office for Mac 2008 into my Macintosh. I've had quite a bit of experience with this software and with Office 2003 and 2007 documents. Apple's suite cost me \$49, is faster, and does everything I need to do. I learned to use it in about 1/10th the time that it took me to learn either Open Office or The Ribbon in Office 2007.

What about my past "Windows only"

applications? It costs \$35 to move Windows Mathematica to Mac Mathematica. Garmin GPS software for Mac I found to be better than Garmin's Windows GPS software. All Adobe products are

available in Mac versions; Adobe advertises a nominal fee to move from the Windows platform to a Mac. Since PDF is a format that Mac "speaks" natively, I find I no longer need Acrobat. Many vendors' client software are now accessible via browser; some vendors have developed Mac clients. However, if creating MS Project plans, SharePoint files, Visio and AutoCAD drawings, or SoftWright or MapInfo engineering documents is required, Windows will be needed. This means that a Mac user has three choices: (1) keep a separate Windows computer, (2) outsource the work, or (3) install Windows on the Macintosh.

Running Windows on a Mac also requires a choice. A user partitions the Mac's hard drive into a Windows partition and a Mac partition. Apple provides the ability to start a Mac as a Windows PC using BootCamp. Or a user may run Windows and Windows applications under either Parallels or Fusion virtualization software. The good news is that if a virtual session becomes infected, the user just "blows it up." The bad news: the user still



Photo courtesy of Apple

must use security software and program execution is slower than running in native hardware mode. Users who run Windows on their Mac's face all the challenges that any Windows user commonly experiences.

My Final Conclusion

I save money and time by using my Macintosh computer. I no longer seek to avoid using my computer. I'm writing this article seven days before Apple is supposedly announcing its "iSlate," "iPad," iWhatever convergence device. I don't know what impact this device, the coming fourth version the iPhone, and soon the incorporation of Intel's newest microcomputers inside MacBooks will make on my future technology choices. But I'm certain my final choices will not include returning to Windows or abandoning Apple's cellular products.

Once again, I am having fun with computing.