Instant Karma

Whil Hentzen

Things happen for a reason. I love it when a plan comes together. This can't be coincidence. And many, many more. I just returned from the annual Microsoft MVP summit in Redmond, only to find yet another email about FoxPro being dead. While I'm scrolling through the diatribe, the news that George Harrison died came over the radio, and about ten minutes later, another email showed up. The timing was eerie.

This second email was a forward of a post I had made on CompuServe about five years ago – one that I'd forgotten about a long time ago – indeed, I had to read it twice to realize that, yes, they were my words. Given the juxtaposition of these three events, I had to share the email with you.

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From: Whil Hentzen 70651,2270
To: All
Date: 09/04/96 05:13 AM GMT
Subject: The Top 15 Signs
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"Well, even the diehards among you secretly worried, didn't you? Sorry to say, I've now got undeniable proof that the worst has happened. Culled from around the globe, here are the top 15 signs that FoxPro is dead:

15. Picture of Walt K. missing from CD cover of VFP 5.0.

14. Yoko Ono overheard giving Ken Levy pointers about object orientation.

13. Susan Graham seen demoing VFP at recent MSFT event; only MSFT presenter without shoes.

12. Fox on cover of VFP/Mac brochure has eyes closed.

11. Developer team takes retreat to India, seeking spiritual advice from, well, you know...

10. VFP 4.0 never released.

9. Yoko Ono plans release of own DBMS this fall.

8. Incense wafts through corridor of Building 2.

7. Peter Max signed to design cover of Dev Studio 1.0 CD.

6. Bill Gates declares Microsoft to be bigger than Jesus. Oh, wait, that's not funny. That really happened...

5. Dave Fulton ditches wife, marries rich blonde with tin ear, never has to buy film again.

4. Play the VFP 3.0b CD backwards. You'll see...

3. Linda Teh spending far too much time in the walrus exhibit at the Seattle Zoo.

2. Yoko Ono seen dating VFP developers.

And the number one sign that Fox is dead:

1. Jon Sigler getting marketing advice from Timothy Leary.

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Sorry, Flip Wilson made me do this. Now I'll never speak at DevCon.

Whil

You may not recognize all of the names (and wish that you didn't recognize one or two others), but take this in the spirit it was penned back then. While John's passing marked the end of a legend, it's possible that we'll all miss George more. But neither of them will be forgotten.

At the same time, it always seemed to me that they never took themselves too seriously – even in their most ridiculous days, they seemed to be poking light fun at those who wanted to believe in the four lads as larger than life.

Same goes here. Many of the details of the MVP event are under NDA, but I did get permission to give you a brief overview. Of 800 MVPs worldwide, about 380 attended. Of the 46 Fox MVPs, over 30 attended, making the Fox contingent the best represented group there. Even better, though, was the set of events during the two day summit. By the time everyone called it a night late Friday, it was clear to everyone (well, everyone who was paying attention – it did seem that one or two folks were just in attendance for the food and goodies) that VFP 7.0 is a solid part of the .NET tools offering at Microsoft with it's support for XML Web Services.

Nearly all of the Fox MVPs wore matching shirts both Thursday and Friday, a fact that was not lost on the other groups, none of whom had done the same thing – it's a safe bet that MVP leads at Microsoft will be coordinating similar efforts next year for their groups.

The solidarity of the Fox group was emphasized when the MVP leads at Microsoft were brought up on stage Thursday morning – and our own Jim Saunders was greeted by a seemingly spontaneous standing ovation by all of the Fox MVPs. (Sorry, Jim, no, it wasn't spontaneous – we knew what we were doing!) Throughout the rest of the day, the various session leaders included Visual FoxPro in references during their talks – quite a refreshing breath of air.

Fox's visibility was further enhanced during Ken Levy's hour long demonstration Friday morning in front of the entire MVP gathering, just before Bill Gates' keynote. In it, Ken discussed the use of the Internet and Web services as tools for building communities, an activity that MVPs know a thing or two about. Throughout his talk, he demonstrated Visual FoxPro as an excellent tool for creating and consuming Web services by showing the Universal Thread, the Wiki, and FoxCentral.net.

By the end of the weekend, nearly every MVP knew that Fox was just as much a player in the Microsoft community as any other product, and left no longer feeling that Fox was the ill-favored stepchild.

And that's good karma.