

Changing the World, One Pixel at a Time

The story is part of Silicon Valley lore. In 1979, 28-year-old Steve Jobs, trying to convince Pepsi-Cola president John Sculley to come work for Apple Computer, feeds the Pepsi Generation guru this line: "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"

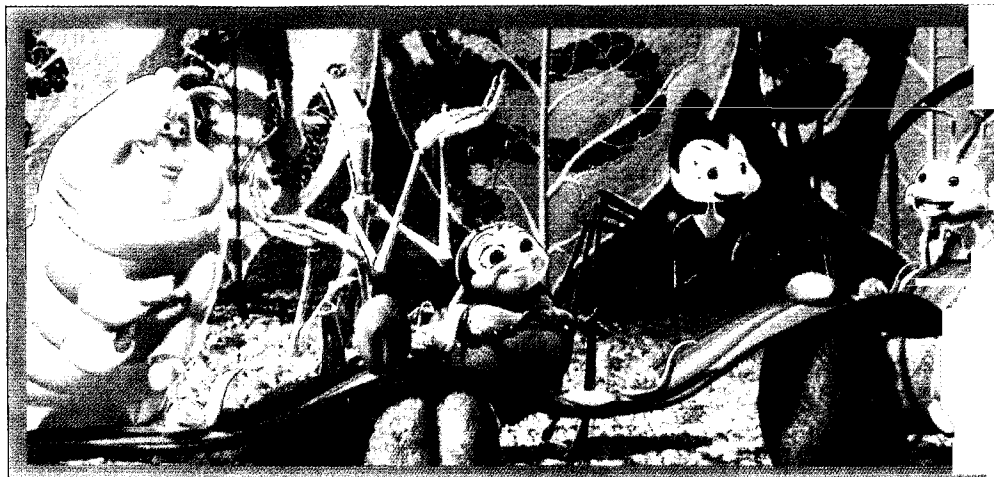
Sculley couldn't turn that one down, and took the position as CEO of Apple. And in what is now the long, strange history of the company, Sculley also eventually took away all of Jobs' responsibilities.

Now, after a decade in the Silicon Valley wilderness, Steve Jobs seems to be asking himself: "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling computers, or do you want a chance to change Hollywood?"

At 44, Jobs is chairman and CEO of Pixar Animation Studios, the place behind such hits as 1995's *Toy Story* and last winter's *A Bug's Life*. *Toy Story II*, like the original, features the voice of Tom Hanks and is slated for a Thanksgiving roll-out. Expectations are huge; revenue from the other two pictures stands at half a billion dollars and counting.

Jobs says Pixar "has the opportunity to be the next Disney," but he isn't taking his cue from the kind of traditional fare churned out by Uncle Walt. Pixar characters and scenery represent a remarkable step in technology. Characters in *A Bug's Life* are capable of 3,900 possible movements, making them extraordinarily lifelike. The process starts with sculptors designing three-dimensional models, then turning them over to animators who generate computer versions. "Such a high-resolution, highly detailed, three-dimensional medium is a dramatic leap in capabilities for storytellers," Jobs told the *Los Angeles Times* last fall.

Such strides are a Steve Jobs trade-



mark. In the early 1980s he was running magazine ads touting something called "electronic mail": "Send mail at 670,000,000 mph. Instead of paying an overnight service nine dollars to rush a four-page report from Winnemucca to Wanamassa, you can arrange to have it sent electronically—anytime during the night—for less than 40 cents." So when Jobs begins talking about a new kind of filmmaking, one ought to take notice.

In 1986 Jobs purchased Pixar from George Lucas for \$10 million. Where *Star Wars'* producer Lucas saw Pixar as a tool for special effects, Jobs saw it as a moviemaking factory, a sort of Digital Age Disney. Now the 400-employee company plans to release one picture every year, in a deal that has Disney itself handling marketing and distribution.

While Macintosh computers made Jobs rich, Pixar, which he took public in 1995, turned him into a billionaire. And in a strange twist, two years ago the Apple board brought Jobs back on as interim chairman, a move that had some observers scoffing. Insiders say Jobs sees the appointment as a chance to vindicate himself in the business that sent him packing in 1985. And with the company selling more than a million iMacs bearing the Jobs imprimatur in less than a year, the plan appears to be working. Not bad for someone who just four years ago said he "wasn't really following the computer industry anymore."

So Jobs is torn between the business he built with friends in the garage of his par-

ents' Los Altos home and his newfound love for Hollywood innovation, and the tension may be what's making both companies a success. Critics say Jobs doesn't have time to cause the kinds of problems he previously did at Apple precisely because he's now so busy. "He has a really talented team of people and he stands on the outside, using all his best skills without being in the thick of it and doing damage," says *Forbes* ASAP editor Michael S. Malone. Author of a new book on Apple, *Infinite Loop*, Malone says Jobs' employees once viewed their boss as an egomaniacal monster, more in the tradition of Picasso than Rockefeller.

In the June TNT movie *Pirates of Silicon Valley*, Jobs is depicted as a cultural revolutionary. Not far off for the man who spent a good part of the 1970s taking up, experimenting with an all-fruit diet (useful when naming his company), and palling around with Jerry Brown, aka "Governor Moonbeam." But the '90s have mellowed him: Jobs has gone from living in communes to house-swapping with Bill Clinton.

Moviemaking seems to be what holds Jobs' attention these days. "When *Toy Story* and *A Bug's Life* are re-released 60 years from now, somebody at Pixar will get a check. I guarantee you nobody will be booting up a Mac in 60 years," he said.

No doubt Jobs has a leg up on most in this business. As a frustrated Hitchcock once said of the animator Disney, "If he doesn't like an actor, he can just tear him up."

— John Meroney

AP Photo/Walt Disney, HO

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Flashback

TO KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN
IS TO REMAIN EVER A CHILD—*Cicero*

The John Wilkes Booth of Poetry

Once upon a time, Americans bought books of poetry, and no volume was better loved than Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), that erstwhile staple of high school English class in which an Illinois town is revealed by the epitaphs on its cemetery tombstones.

Masters was a Chicago lawyer and one-time partner of Clarence Darrow, whom he disdained as a headline-hogging welscher. (He refuses to mention Darrow by name in his splenetic autobiography.) But he came from the Land of Lincoln—Menard County—and his single most enduring poem mythicized the girl whose early death may or may not have been the emotional climacteric of Abraham Lincoln's life:

I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath
these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!

In a span of 16 years, Masters went from cherished prairie poet to reviled heretic. For in 1931 he published *Lincoln: The Man*, a biography of passionate bitterness and patriotic rage. Masters, you see, was a Stephen Douglas man who thought it time to even the score, given that "the political history of America has been written...by centralists and...New England."

The poet was an old-fashioned states-rights Democrat with a populist bent and a burning enmity toward the Republican Party, which was "conceived in hatred and mothered in hatred." His grievance was that "every President since Lincoln has imitated Lincoln instead of

Jefferson," and his intention was to bring all those statues of Honest Abe crashing to the ground, for only by smashing the Lincoln myth might America "rise out of the hypocrisy and the materialism into which it was sunk by the War."

In Masters' telling, Lincoln was "cold," "undersexed" (Mary Todd was no Anne Rutledge!), and a "Jehovah man" who may not have believed in God but fancied himself in the role, Old Testament style. Masters is relentless, scourging Lincoln for over 500 pages as intellectually lethargic, unkempt, utterly lacking the milk of human kindness, and a mediocre lawyer to boot.

The book was an act of professional suicide for Masters—himself a cold, though decidedly not undersexed, man—but one that he was born to write. His family homestead was just seven miles from Lincoln's New Salem, Illinois. Masters' grandfather had once retained lawyer Lincoln in a land dispute—which Lincoln lost. Grandfather Masters served in the Illinois legislature, where he voted against U.S. Senate candidate Abraham Lincoln "because he thought Lincoln's policies would bring on war between the states."

Hardin Wallace Masters, the poet's father, was a law partner of William Herndon, Lincoln's old law partner and the author of the frankest biography by a Lincoln intimate. (Herndon was also an Anne Rutledge partisan; Mary Todd hated him.) Hardin Masters wanted to write his own Lincoln book, based on Herndon's recollections and the gossip of old timers; he never completed it, though in a way his son did, in an act of filial piety.

Lincoln: The Man was published in February 1931, just in time for Lincoln Day, and for a few weeks the icon-smashing poet became a new John Wilkes

Booth. ("Booth's bullet was the last one fired for States' Rights," wrote Masters.)

Edgar Lee Masters had grown up in Petersburg, Illinois, where Lincoln was not yet a deity but just a man (and of course a prophet is always without honor in his hometown—leaving aside the question of whether the prophet was Lincoln or Masters). But by 1931 the sixteenth President was encased in myth even in Petersburg: Angry Lincolnians threatened to erase Masters' verse from Anne Rutledge's tombstone, on which it had recently been incised. (Some regarded it as an insult to Mary Todd Lincoln anyway.)

Masters, something of a misanthrope and most emphatically not a cockeyed optimist, was not exactly shocked by the envenomed response to his book. In his own young adulthood, he confessed, "I had an admiration for Lincoln, even believing the falsehood that the War Between the States was inevitable and the result of an irrepressible conflict, though my grandfather, who knew Lincoln there in the Petersburg-New Salem country, had given me the materials for a very different judgment of Lincoln." But while the poet had his grandfather, the rest of the country made do with Carl Sandburg's hagiography.

As an old man, Masters dreamed of returning to Petersburg, the site of his Lincoln-washed youth, but he had long lost his prairie spirit. In his last years, he cocooned himself in a New York City hotel and refused even to cross the street. Only death took him home to Petersburg, where he is buried four graves down from Anne Rutledge, wedded to her not through union but through verse.

—Bill Kauffman