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Middle Tennessee Chapter of The Society for Technical Communication **Feb 1998**

Telecommuting…

Now There's a Concept

Shannon Thurman—President

There's an old saying: "Be careful what you wish for. You just might get it." Well, I think that, when it comes to telecommuting, this adage applies to me.

It wasn't long ago that I eagerly consumed magazine articles that talked about telecommuting, how it was the latest and greatest thing for businesses and corporations. It was such a wonderful idea—that employees could have more freedom, that they could stay at home with a sick child or stay at home to let the plumber in. How amazing—employees could stay home and still finish that report, that project, that coding. Yes, indeedy, what a marvelous thing.

As I sit in my hotel room in Atlanta, typing this article, I ponder the joys of telecommuting. Just because I'm 250 miles from my workplace doesn't mean a thing. I can check my voicemail, download my e-mail, answer my e-mail, write reports on my laptop, fax documents to clients, and work all night long looking at PDF files, dialing into databases.

How utterly efficient. How amazingly tiring.

Whatever happened to going home at the end of the day so you could be with your family or even just be with yourself and whatever hobbies you might still have? Isn't it enough that I have an herb garden that needs weeding, that my cat needs to go to the vet, that my Christmas novel is still unread, that my son's shirt still needs a new button?

Instead, I have telecommuting aftermath. Instead of leaving my work at work, I always have it with me. Even when I'm taking a vacation day, I'm just a click away from what's going on at the office. And hey, as we all know, the office is not just the office. My office is my projects, and they're in London, San Francisco, Detroit, and Tampa. So I end up tripping the lines fantastic.

I have to say: as a concept, telecommuting is grand. But as a lifestyle, I think it might be a bit much. Technical communicators have a duty to help shape the work world of the future. Let's find a way to balance utter dedication to work with utter dedication to play. It'll make all of us better communicators, trust me. (Even those of us furiously typing away at midnight in a hotel room in Atlanta.) ■

MEETING INFO

What: Telecommuting
Where: Tanner Corporate Services [directions below]
When: Tues. Feb. 10, 6 pm

Tanner Corporate Services
2323 Hillsboro Road, Suite 301
Nashville

Join us for a discussion on telecommuting led by Tanner staff members. We'll discuss the pros and cons of telecommuting, offer tips on making it work, and help you decide whether telecommuting could work for you.

To get to Tanner Corporate Services: from I-440, exit 21st Ave. Drive through one stoplight; 2323 Hillsboro Road is on the left. Park in lot and enter through door in back under covered parking. Take elevator to third floor.

There is no charge for the meeting, and nonmembers are welcome.

For more information, contact George Cassidy at 292-8686.

Learn About Your Candidates

Nominees for Second Vice President

Elizabeth Babcock

Each year, when you receive your ballot for the STC election, you're faced with a series of difficult decisions—and this year, I believe the Nominating Committee has made those decisions harder than ever by naming a slate of outstanding candidates.

Of all the choices on the ballot, perhaps the most significant is that for second vice president, since whoever you elect will be managing Chapter Affairs (the director-sponsors) this year and the administrative committees of the Society next year. The following year, 2000-2001, that person will manage the first entirely 21st-century STC board as the Society's president. All that will depend on this year's vote, since STC has an automatic succession through the presidential "chairs."

In an attempt to help you make an informed decision about the candidates for second vice president, the STC Nominating Committee posed an open-ended question to the excellent candidates, Jamie Conklin and Mark Hanigan, who are running for that office this year. Here are their answers.

What would you like to emphasize to the STC members as they consider you as a candidate this year?

Jamie Conklin: I believe that the most important issue facing the Society is change.

The economy is changing, and the everyday world of work is changing. Our tools and media are changing. And to fill our new roles and responsibilities, we are changing our own values and behavior.

This spirit of change is evident in STC through our internationalization, our increasing focus on interactive electronic media, and our growing interest in understanding how we add value to our organizations. We have the opportunity to become one of the leading professions in the new information economy. Senior executives proclaim the need to gain a competitive advantage by harnessing the intellectual capital within organizations, and they are looking for skilled people to lead the way. Their eyes are often coming to rest on us.

How can STC manage this change? By scanning the horizon for emerging trends, and adapting the Society's governance and services accordingly. By promoting increased internationalization that gives us the global perspective that we need. And by offering services that help our members make the transition to new information technology and new organizational responsibilities.

Years ago, Marshall McLuhan wrote of the time when people would "learn a living." The phrase

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Submissions are welcome in hard copy or as an e-mail attachment (preferred method). Send to: Jim Giordano, Square D Company, 295 Tech Park Drive, Suite 100, LaVergne, TN 37086. E-mail giordanj@squared.com.

Colophon—This document was designed by Jim Giordano and created using Adobe Pagemaker 6.5 on a Macintosh. Fonts used include Century Gothic for body copy and headlines, and Adobe Garamond for deck heads and the Communiqué nameplate.

Regional News and Views

From the Region 3 Director/Sponsor

Michelle Ratcliffe—Director/Sponsor

In January, the STC Board of Directors met in Vancouver, BC, to take care of winter business items. The Canada West Coast chapter hosted the meeting and planned an evening event at the First Nations House of Learning (The Longhouse) on the University of British Columbia Campus, replete with a salmon dinner and aboriginal dancers. It was wonderful - and the weather was not even that cold to a Floridian like me!

These are some of the results of the board meeting:

Technical Editing SIG Created

The STC board approved a new Technical Editing SIG and named Tom Hoyt of the Willamette Valley chapter as the SIG manager.

Board Reaches Out to Chapters

The STC Board approved several action items which facilitate chapter activities, including establishing a travel budget for visits to chapter and regional activities for the Society Immediate Past President, Society Secretary and Society Treasurer, starting in the STC Year 1998-99.

The Board approved adding a "roadmap" and other information to the Chapter Handbook, which will assist small, medium, student, and non-North American chapters in planning activities.

The Board has provided an area at the annual conference for organizations related to STC to display materials to members who might be interested in their organization.

The STC Board encouraged chapters to enter their web sites in the Public Relations Competition. All entries must be postmarked by February 28, 1998.

STC Awards Grants and Loans

STC supports and encourages special chapter events and activities that further the goals of the Society through the Grants and Loans to Chapters Program.

The STC board approved a $3,000 merit grant for the Chicago chapter to launch a publicity campaign for their chapter members' professional development and visibility of the profession among Chicago area businesses, students, and educators — through its publicity and education committees.

The STC board approved a $2,000 merit grant for the East Tennessee chapter (region 3) to make the J. Paul Blakely Scholarship, instituted in 1975, closer to being self-sufficient. This fund provides a $500 annual scholarship and a $100 Blakely Award of Excellence for undergraduate students of technical communication at The University of Tennessee.

The STC board approved a $1,500 loan for the SpaceTech chapter (region 3) for the administrative costs associated with the Region 3 Student Conference to be held on March 28, 1998. Way to go ETC and SpaceTech!

Committee Managers Named

The STC Board approved Austin Brown as the 1997-98 Manager of the Nominating Committee and Annette Reilly as the 1997-98 Manager of the Strategic Planning Committee.

STC Approves Changes to Bylaws

The STC Board approved changes to the bylaws in Article VI - COMMITTEES, Section 4. Standing Committees that tightened up the wording and changed the bylaws to more closely reflect the current functions of the Conference Advisory Committee and the Recognitions Advisory Committee.

Michelle Ratcliffe
MRatcliffe@msn.com 813-920-3539 404-631-2303 (work voice mail)

PS. Don't forget Currents - March 20-21 in Atlanta and the Region 3 Student Conference - March 28 in Melborne, FL! ■

STC's 45th Annual Conference

Offers Opportunities for Fun

Jerri L. Houdayer:
Orange County Chapter

If you are planning to attend STC's 45th Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, you are probably making arrangements for hotel accommodations, determining what type of sessions you will want to attend, and deciding what kinds of fun you'll have in your free time. Well, deciding what to do outside the conference may be the most difficult choice, because Southern California has literally hundreds of attractions, shopping options and learning opportunities. Where do you start?

Here are a few things to do and see in Southern California. And remember: for more information about the conference in general, consult the *Preliminary Program*. (Note: This year's *Preliminary Program* will be the March issue of *Intercom*.)

Fast Rides

Hold on to your fanny packs, kids, and get set to roller coast, splash, scream, bounce and whirl to a bevy of exciting rides for riders of all ages at Knotts Berry Farm and Disneyland. Both of these famous theme parks have recently increased their "scream factor" by adding additional roller coasters, or increasing the size of existing ones. In fact, Knotts Berry Farm has recently added two roller coaster rides and is currently planning construction on the world's largest all-wooden roller coaster. If you've got smaller passengers, and are interested in smaller thrills, check out Adventure City, just down the street from Knott's Berry Farm. Adventure City is a miniature theme park, set inside a collection of hobby shops.

Beachin' It

Orange County's beaches are arguably the most beautiful in the world, and best of all, there are lots of them! There is a beach setting to suite any taste, including Laguna Beach with its world-renowned art community, Newport Beach, where the rich and famous glide their yachts into private harbors; Huntington Beach, the surf capital; and Mother's Beach, where alert lifeguards patrol a calm sandy inlet while toddlers splash in the warm sun.

> *Just about anything you can think of to do for fun is available in the Southern California area.*

Museums

Southern California has its fair share of the cultured and traditional historical museums. But what may be of greater interests are the eclectic collections that have helped define California. Such museums as Bower's, in Santa Ana, illustrating the vivid and often violent history of the old Southwest, Mott's Miniatures Museum, the Queen Mary (now the world's largest floating hotel), The Los Angeles Car Culture Museum, and even Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum.

Recreational Activities

Skydiving, trampoline lessons, surfing, wine-tasting, murder-mystery dinner theatres, shopping, scuba diving, whale watching, bird watching, hiking, world class golfing, baseball games, blimp rides—just about anything you can think of to do for fun is available in the Southern California area.

The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor and Convention Bureau can help with more information about fun activities in the area. You can contact them through their Web site at http://www.anaheimoc.org or at (714) 999-8999. ■

Candidates...

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resonates for me. Our profession proves that McLuhan was right. I know that I "learn" for my living, and I am willing to bet that most of you do, too. These are exciting days, and I would be honored to work with all STCers to ensure that we contribute meaningfully to the creation of a new world of work.

Mark Hanigan: I have spent the last year completing a term as the Society secretary. This, in combination with my other Society experience as director-sponsor, as manager of the International Technical Publications Competition, and as a member of various other committees, gives me the broad-based experience I need to manage STC at the Society level.

But more important, I feel that all of my life's experiences prepare me for this position. I have had my share of victories, but I have also had my share of days that were not mine to win. I think I have learned the most from the latter. I learned to accept the outcome with grace and dignity, I developed an empathy for others, and I strengthened myself so that I would have a better chance to succeed the next time around!

Briefly, I think that I bring these qualities to the proverbial table:

- Experience—I have over 19 years in our profession; almost as many in STC.
- Dedication—I am committed to STC, to our profession, and to you, our membership.
- Warmth—I genuinely like people and am an approachable person.
- Leadership—I believe that we get the most out of involvement; my leadership style is a participatory one in all facets. I also enjoy learning from others and providing a platform for them to demonstrate their strong suits!
- Humor/Fun—I believe in the adage: "Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously."

If I win, I promise to serve to the best of my ability. ■

Currents '98

Informing the World

The STC Atlanta Chapter announces it's annual conference: Currents '98, "Informing the World." The conference will be on March 20 and 21, 1998, at the Mariott Perimeter Center Hotel in Atlanta. The two day conference includes a workshop on Friday on "Writing for Usability." On Saturday you can choose from 12 sessions on writing and editing, online communications, and help topics.

For the latest information about Currents '98, contact conference manager Mary Menz at 770-998-0791 or marymenz@mindspring.com. Or access the STC Atlanta website, www.pobox.com/~stc-atlanta. You can download the program and registration form. ■

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Mark Your Calendar

STC Meetings and Other Important Events That You Won't Want to Miss

The Middle Tennessee Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication normally meets on the second Tuesday of the month. The tentative meeting schedule is shown below. Watch this newsletter for exacting meeting locations, dates, and times.

Tentative Chapter Meeting Schedule

February 10	Telecommuting (see page 1)
March	Distance Learning
April	Online and Publications Competition

Other Dates to Remember

February 28	Deadline for STC membership dues
March 20–21	Currents Conference in Atlanta
March 28	Region 3 Student Conference
May 17–20	STC Annual Conference at Anaheim

society for technical communication

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