

There's Family... and then There's Family

An observation by Alan Sadowsky

Well, believe it or not, we're at another milestone in our journey. This issue of ACP • TPF Today marks the start of our 11th year of publication. As TPF'ers, many of you reading this now have been with us as subscribers since the beginning. As vendors, many of you have advertised with us repeatedly over the years. And, as contributors, many of you have written articles and commentaries, which we've shared with the rest of the TPF world. As a collective group, we are all professional technicians, but if you take a closer look, you'll also see that we are family.

There is no question that as a technology, TPF is unique. Not only by design, but by the simple fact that it is such an unknown within the data processing field. With a comparatively insignificant number of installations running TPF, and a proportionate number of people working with the product, we are in many ways a family.

Many of us are considered patriarchs, because we've been in the business for 20+ years. Others are viewed as the "next generation", filling in the empty slots as the old-timers retire. The new faces in the crowd are the future of TPF, and will ultimately carry the burden of keeping the family name alive. We are friends, colleagues, and co-workers. We are operators, programmers, and analysts. We are workers, supervisors, and management. We all occupy our respective branches on the organizational (family?) tree, and whether we like each other or not, we are undeniably related.

The wonderful advantage we have in recognizing that we are a family, is that we can actually control certain aspects of our destiny. For example, we have the ability to communicate opinions and experiences between our different "households". This communication typically relates to vendors or products, and tends to keep the vendors honest, and the products reliable. I would even go so far to suggest that our family has the power to dictate either success or failure within the third-party community strictly by word of mouth.

This is a family asset that should be valued above all else, because it's a tool (some might even say a weapon) that any one has the power to wield. It doesn't take a consensus of opinion, or approval from senior management. All it takes is a phone call to a "distant cousin". TPF is so small, and so close, that the information will be disseminated through the tree in a matter of days if not hours. We should never abuse this "family jewel", but should also never hesitate to use it when we have to. The family comes first!

In a related vein, it's time to start making plans to attend the next TPF Family Reunion. Well what else would you call it when hundreds of family members get together for a few days to swap stories and catch up on old times? Some people might call it the TPF User Group Conference, but underneath all the trappings it's just the family getting together to take care of business. Mark your calendars, and plan to make it out to the Loews Ventana Canyon Hotel in Tucson, Arizona, October 15th to the 18th. We've got work to do! Additional information on the conference is available on our own website at www.tpftoday.com, or the TPFUG website at www.tpfug.com.

On a closing note, there is just one more familial announcement I want to make. On May 12th, our daughter presented us with our first grandchild - Spencer Alan - a healthy baby boy. Not just another branch on the genealogical tree, but another life filled with opportunity and promise. Of course the grandparent in me is bursting with hope and pride. But there are children born every minute of every day, and among them are those that will make their mark in this world and change the course of history.

Now I'm not saying that Spencer is one of those children. I'm just saying that he might be. The parents of today's world are producing the leaders of tomorrow's. The scientists, and explorers, and yes, the programmers of this new century are asleep in their cribs while their parents and grandparents keep watch over them. It's not a problem, and it's no big deal. We do it because we want to do it. We do it because they're family.

