

Alice Wilder Hall's Farewell to PARC

Around the time PARC was forming in Palo Alto, I was working as an editor at an evening newspaper in Mississippi. In those days before the intersection of computers and publishing, putting out a daily was a dirty and dangerous job. The clanking of the Linotype machines was enormous, the ink and lead debris everywhere. By 2 p.m., when we were smudged with ink from elbow to fingertip, the reporters and typesetters would go home and the managing editor and I would settle in to wait until the press run was complete. It was a two person job to check the first run, to watch a press jam being wrestled clear and count the damaged copies for a reset, to call a doctor if someone got injured in the terrifying huge machines. And so the two of us spent warm southern afternoons together arguing over the crosswords, writing obituaries, and consuming countless bottles of peanuted "Co-Colas" while we did our real job. Our real job was to just sit and listen carefully for a change in the hum of the presses - to listen to them in the same way and for the same reasons you listen to a new baby sleeping in the next room.

It is fair to say that PARC and PARC folk had a large part in making the enormous changes that led to the very different and comparatively painless way writing and typesetting and publishing are done today. At 5:30 on Wednesday, June 17 at the Pake Auditorium, Bay Area Computer History Perspectives and The Computer Museum History Museum will present "The final live demonstration of the Xerox Star." Though the Star was developed for office workers and had a profound impact on the personal computer industry, it was also fertile ground for growing knowledge about desktop publishing, network connectivity and distributed printing. It forever changed and eased the way many of us do our work.

*** My Last IC News**

I was privileged to be an early guinea pig and devoted user of both Star and Alto, adventures that I will not forget. This is my last contribution to IC news as I leave PARC and move on to my next great adventure. Thanks for listening.

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