Naples MacFriends User Group
A Little History

Written by Martin Reff based on information from Robert Demarest, Phil Teders, Dennis Vasey, issues of the MacFriends Report November 1993 – January 1995, and his own experience.

Early in 1984, when Robert Demarest, then Director of the Collier County Library system, opened the box from Apple, then setup and turned on the M0001, he must have cried "Eureka". It was no Lisa and, of course, not a PC. It didn't even sport a hard drive: it used a floppy. But it did things that rippled the good mind. It was the first Mac!

The cognoscenti soon gathered and began to grow. Folks with an IBM 5150 were already organized as the Personal Computer Business User Group or 'PC BUG' of Naples. But it was the Mac that appealed to extraordinary people and it took them time to get their act together. Loose meetings were held and members, as they do today, presented programs. Phil Teders, who arrived in 1987, gave an early demonstration of Photoshop and he still remembers his wonderment at seeing a 1 GB hard drive that Demarest showed them all. Others there included Dean Lester, a young man who could take a Mac apart and put it back together again.

The computer room in the Naples Public Library was located on the north side of the west main aisle. The room is now used as an office for Friends of the Library. Then it was already crowded with PCs (actually two), a printer, but that first Mac took its sovereign spot next to a scanner. One Mac cost $2,485 and probably equaled that of three PCs. "Mac people would use it regularly," said Demarest. "Professionals began to come in to use it for graphics. For a time it really got crowded."

Mac users began to show up and share their joy and, of course, the challenging tech problems with solutions lying in a mass of code or series of commands stretched the brains of that group. Newsletters were prepared and members of the local Mensa group began to pop in, stay, and contribute. Demarest's office was in the Central Avenue Branch which was, at that time, was headquarters for our county public library system. With Demarest's enthusiasm and support, the lively but informal group met regularly in the Library Meeting Room through the late 80's.

In 1992-3 the Mac group numbered (in season) about 30-40 members and in 1993 Demerest joined the Fischer International Systems Corporation, a software company based in Naples. Marilyn Mathis, Assistant Director of the Collier County

Library System at the time, made sure that the Mac Friends Users Group still had a friend at the library. Dean Lester, who had been giving given monthly demonstrations, went off to school.

At the September 1993 meeting the loose group organized themselves, electing a president (Martin Reff), a secretary (Ruth Anderson), and a treasurer (Jim Stewart). The club began to take on its form. It joined the User Group Connection: Apple's newly organized special company that distributed software and other proprietary packages to users groups. A publicity campaign was undertaken. And a membership structure was created with dues and member ID numbers. Alex Hart had donated money for a post office box and assigned member number #1.

Bill Carlson volunteered to serve as the newsletter editor. The MacFriends Report appeared in November 1993 and more than a dozen new users were reported to have joined for a total of 60 members. Bill Carlson wrote about the Performa, "My Favorite Mac..." and Furman Burge reviewed the new magazine, MacHome Journal.

In the months that followed, meetings with demonstrations were formalized. Brochures were distributed to computer vendors. Dennis Vasey, who had become or our Librarian, started the monthly beginner's group. SIGs were organized and a small group of members met regularly to prepare a set of Bylaws.

In January 1994 Jerry Brubaker became Assistant. On April 10th, 1994 the Bylaws were adopted. Dennis Vasey was elected Vice President. Alex Hart and Phil Teders were elected directors. Ruth Anderson, Jim Stewart and Martin continued in our positions as Secretary, Treasurer and President. Newsletter reporters included Furman Burge, Larry Fay, Carol Glassman, Martin Laibow, Sue Squires, Wallace Snyder, Jim Stewart and Dennis Vasey.

In February 1994 Melody Hainsworth, International College Librarian, made a presentation on the development of a community free community Internet service and demonstrated a connection to the Tallahassee Free Net. She said the group goals were to unveil their system by July 1995.

In October 1994 Dennis Vasey was elected president, Jim Stewart - Vice-President, Joe Williams-Treasurer and Ruth Anderson - Secretary. The Club's weekly help group led by Vasey blossomed to become one of the mainstays of the Club...a place where literally hundreds of Mac users in, and visiting Collier County could seek and find answers to problems and beguiling questions.

Nancy Dykes created and presented several classes on ClarisWorks that were taught at the International College. Over time the course materials were revised

and eventually evolved into AppleWorks and adopted as one of the benefits of NMUG membership and a revenue source.

Locally the World Wide Web arrived in Naples in June 1995 as the Naples Free-Net, a local community Internet Service Provider originally planned for PC users. Although it took some time, Martin prepared and distributed floppies with instructions and software to club members and Mac users throughout Collier County for Free Net access. Those were the days of a dial-up modem, Eudora, Telnet, Fetch, Anarchie, Gopher, Mosaic, Netscape, PPP, and TCP/IP.

The Free Net adopted Martin's TCP/IP software and Mac users were online months before the first Windows software was made available to PC BUG and community members.

Duke Vasey was one of the Free Net Macintosh Help Team members where he has served since 1995. He passed Chairmanship duties to Jerry King to take care of family business in early 2001.