

The "Company" That I Keep

by Michael A. Ginsburg



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At the end of a phone conversation about some other unrelated Board matters, Chair Johnny Covin, in his most charming and persuasive Texas drawl, asked me, "Mike, how would you like to write the article for the next "Board Room" column in *M Computing*?" Always willing to pitch in, I, of course, replied that I would be happy to. But, what should it be about? I inquired. "About 750 words," he said, "and thanks for your help!" as he hung up.

Well, having been born with terminal writer's block, I decided that I needed some serious guidance and inspiration if I were to deliver this article as promised. So I called Maureen Lilly, our esteemed administrative director, who has a knack for clear and direct thinking.

"Maureen," I pleaded, "what can I write about?"

"Well," she answered, "you've chaired committees for MTA, chaired the Annual Meeting and are now the

executive director. Why don't you talk about what motivates you to be so actively involved?"

Great idea and good question, I thought. What is the value of membership in this organization and what is the attraction of being active in the MTA? I came up with some answers that work for me; perhaps they'll work for you, too.

First, I like to talk shop. Over the years, the MUMPS community has developed its own technical jargon, of which the programming language is just the alphabet. So whether we are discussing a technical aspect of M itself and some aspect of the technology that I don't quite understand, or some issue of application design, it is truly a luxury to be able to converse with knowledgeable individuals who I know will understand what I'm talking about (usually better than I do myself!). When I talk to you about a "global," I don't have to explain parenthetically that it's "our name for a file." You know that and more, because we share a common culture and idiom.

We also share a common history and, perhaps most important, a common future. I recently gave a presentation where I displayed a current edition of *Open Systems Today*. The front page featured headline articles about Intel's Pentium announcement, Digital's Alpha chip, the 32-bit versus 64-bit controversy (which was news to me!), an announcement from Sun about Solaris, and so forth. The point I was trying to make then, as I am

now, is that we work in a very volatile and unpredictable industry where change is the only constant.

Unfortunately, as individuals, most of us aren't in positions that allow us to have much direct influence over the forces that shape the computer industry. But, as a users' group, or whatever we choose to call ourselves, we can exert control over our professional destinies. Some of the control results from the basic dynamics of our marketplace. Implementors know what you expect from us. So you can be confident that M will run on Pentium, and on Alpha, and on Solaris, and who cares about how many bits! Many of us have lived through the transition from 16 to 32 and we'll survive 64, as well!

Our potential for influence, though, goes well beyond the marketplace issues. We have the ability to influence the books and periodicals we read, to decide what technology issues are important to us, who we want to educate us about them, and even where, when, and how we will gather. Which brings me to how I got involved.

It was simple: I volunteered. I approached the program chair and told him I wanted to help out for the next Annual Meeting. Bang! Just like that, I was on the committee; and the following year I got to march around the meeting wearing one of those neat blue ribbons on my badge. Even better than that, I had the opportunity to meet and work with many exceptionally bright and creative people.

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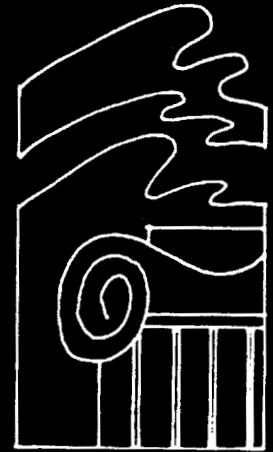
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After this congenial first experience, continued participation in MUG/MTA took on increasing relevance in my professional life. The very concept of having a "professional" life that you can influence is a distinct attraction.

Now you may be thinking that I take myself too seriously, but in fact, it is *you* I take seriously. I believe that we draw energy and esteem from each other. As the old saying goes, "A person is known by the company that he keeps." I am pleased to be keeping your company. **M**

Mike Ginsburg holds a two-year term as Executive director of the Association, and recently joined Greystone Technology Corporation.



22ND ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 21-25, 1993
Washington, DC

CALENDAR

June 17-20, 1993

MDC Meeting, Washington, D.C.

June 21-25, 1993

MTA-NA 22nd Annual Meeting—The Challenge of Change,
Washington, D.C.

July 21-22, 1993

MUG—Brazil XIV Annual Meeting, São Paulo, Brazil

August 19-20, 1993

MDCCE—Rotterdam, the Netherlands

September 17-19, 1993

MUG—Japan 20th Annual Meeting, "Focus on the Future of MUMPS." Izumo Municipal Hall, Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture. Contact Dr. Kazuko Yamamoto, Shimane Medical College, Dept. of Medical Informatics. Phone: 81-853-23-241 #2941 Fax: 81-853-25-2764. Call for papers extended by Dr. Kazuko Yamamoto, program chairperson.

October 22-25, 1993

MDC Meeting, Dublin, Ireland

October 25-29, 1993

MUG—Europe Meeting—"The Future of Information Technology." Dublin, Ireland. For more information contact Steve Gillman. Phone: 353-1-8420022.