

Apple Computer Keynote Address – AppleWorld

There is a legend of a young warrior whose destiny stood evenly balanced between the forces of good and evil. Armed with purity of heart and purpose of mind, he travels to the corners of time seeking the counsel of a wizened old Jedi master known as Yoda. Impatient to learn his fate, the young warrior accepts the old master's challenge to raise a sunken fighter ship from the waters of a nearby swamp. Focusing intently, summoning strength of will, the boy tries and fails.

Discouraged, but undaunted, he vows to try again. "There is no try," cautions Yoda. "Only do and do not. Show you I will."

Turning quietly toward the misty swamp, the old master closes his eyes and bows his noble head. Raising his arm, he points to the fighter ship. Slowly, almost majestically, it begins to rise above the darkened shore, moving silently toward them.

"I don't believe it," the astonished warrior protests. "And that," replies Yoda, "is why you fail."

And so it was, not so long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, that a visionary young film maker, a wookiee, a corps of robots, a wizened little man and a questing young warrior, Luke Skywalker, captivated us in the epic of our times.

Like many fairy tales, George Lucas' space age version left us with a challenge. That it is not enough to believe – that in order to win, in fact, the only way to win – one has to believe. That the true measure of conviction is found, not in peeking through the crack between the worlds, but in walking through the door.

It is these myths and dreams that sustain our spirit, charting new courses through the wilderness of space and time, christening voyages that probe the nooks and crannies of new lands, universes, and galaxies.

It is these same intergalactic fairy tales that open our children's eyes to the possibilities of one day roving the surfaces of Pluto, Saturn and Mars. Testing the unknown. Exploring the undiscovered, not for the cold, hard artifacts of the twenty-first century, but for the simple romantic joy of the excursion, perhaps in the hope of finding a 'wookiee' up there.

Fairy tales have served us well, providing our children with dreams to get back the tough times, mythological signposts pointing the way to growing up.

Companies, too, are scarcely immune to the charms of enchantment, creating mythical kingdoms where knights convene at corporate round tables and do battle with the mighty swords of laser. Rumors abound of capitalistic Camelot's springing up virtually overnight in far off valleys somewhere in the north of a land called California.

No, the Fortune 500 is no stranger to "Once upon a time..." We are, in fact, its custodian, tethering the ties of tomorrow to those of the past. Its defender, preserving old dreams in new ways. And its ambassador, hurtling Voyager II through the milky way, with the song of the humpback whale the only on-board passenger, searching the galaxy for a language more intelligible than our own.

All of us, companies and citizens alike, are on the brink of a new era, entering an age unlike any other. Just as the steam engine, the factory and the interchangeable part opened the industrial age, so the silicon chip, the satellite, and fiber optics are ushering in this age of information. An age of staggering possibilities. A time when a beam of light, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, is our cosmic measuring stick, capable of transmitting the entire bible from any place on the planet to any other, or carrying every telephone call, radio report and television broadcast in the United States – simultaneously.

There are times of enormous promise bequeathing unimagined wealth to the future. Silicon, for example, which next to oxygen is the most abundant element on earth, now enables that other electronic miracle, the computer, to perform tasks previously reserved for the human mind.

In the last ten years, we have learned more about that mind than in all of history and we are putting it to good use. Today, knowledge is being recreated in computers that will enlarge the horizons of both memory and mind. Just as machines extend the muscle, so now, can the computer extend the mind.

It is no longer a matter of any dispute – these are fast times we live in, glutted with ideas, overloaded in information, tangled in technology. We are a world well past ‘go’ and like all significant times in history, times of revolution and change, it promises to be a fight to the finish.

Some of us won’t make it. Some of us will never break a sweat, catch our stride, or see the finish line. Still others have yet to hear the starting gun.

But there are those among us who planned impeccably. Prepared well. Trained consistently and hard. Gave the race meaning, definition. Setting our sites straight and focusing forward, we’ve never looked back.

It’s difficult to know what it is that sets some of us apart. Those of us, that is, who had the foresight, the vision to know what was coming, the purpose to get started and the resolve to see it through. Those of us who managed to catch a glimpse of the future, liked what they saw, and waited for it to catch up.

And now that it has, we’re ready for it. Ready to harness the dreams of fantasy with the facts of technology. Strike a deal with the planners of tomorrow and the practitioners of today. Not content, any longer, to sit back and wait for the future to come to us, Apple, National Geographic, and Lucas Film, today, made a commitment to take us to the future.

It is not often that a collaborative effort of this kind, with principles of this stature occurs. But it was inevitable. For each of us long recognized the future as a friend, and did all that we could to make its acquaintance.

In our hearts, we always knew this time would come. Knew we had this appointment to keep, this destiny to meet. Now that it’s here, we can do no less than what’s expected. Pledge our collective support in bringing out the best in our selves and the best in the heirs to this earth – our children.

For nearly a century, the familiar yellow-bordered cover of National Geographic has opened our eyes and its pages to the world, and what makes it tick. Dedicated to documenting our lives as we live them, it has taken us from the heights of Hilary’s Everest to the depths of Cousteau’s seas.

And while National Geographic was telling the tales of the here and now from far away places, someone closer to home was creating new versions for tomorrow. Perhaps more than any other individual of this generation, George Lucas found what we thought we’d lost and restored it. His

filmed fables of ugly ducklings turned into heroes and knights forced to face their destiny are nothing more than our own fairy tales comes true.

The pledge we make here today is to carry on together what we've already begun individually. To lead our children into the next century carrying the only weapon that will get them there – knowledge.

Within each child lies a not fully developed, yet infinitely valuable potential for understanding, imagination, creativity, innovation and a sense of solidarity with others. At this moment in time, we are capable of unleashing this great human potential through the powerful alliance of education, entertainment and technology.

As a nation we're past the point of wondering whether such an alliance is a good idea. Not when faced with the facts:

By the time most of our nation's thirty three million children leave high school, they will have spent more time in front of a television screen than in the classroom.

For the first time in history, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach those of their parents.

This is the legacy we carry into the age of information.

It is evident we can no longer compete for our children's minds through conventional learning. We must design new lesson plans. Create contemporary high-tech-curriculum.

Fire up powerful search lights to scan the skies, signaling children far and wide, calling them away from where they live – behind movie screens, television monitors and video games – to beam them into tomorrow.

The technological warriors, Compact Discs, Videodisks, and Computers have already begun to invade the classrooms of the future. Once in place, like cell division, they will continue to multiply, turning young minds to precision, sculpting young thoughts with imagination, honing young skills to perfection.

Fluency in several languages will always find a place to impress, computing mathematical equations remain something of an academic feat, but the ability to run a computer program, or access any one of the sixteen thousand, three-hundred-page books contained on a 12-inch disc is to join the real world.

We've got our eyes on the future, but our hearts refuse to leave the past. At times, we may wonder why we started this journey at all. Particularly, during those trying and unsteady moments when we lose our footing, stumble, and occasionally fall. Or when fear holds us at bay, or doubts send our fleeing back to the familiar. But like Yoda's warning to Luke, the only limits are within ourselves. We are what we believe. In the end, it is lack of faith that will, ultimately, unequivocally, break us.

We cannot help but be intimidated by the responsibility that awaits us. Yet together, Apple Computer, National Geographic and Lucas Film can bring endless possibilities to our citizens, our society and this wondrous and fragile planet we call home. Like old friends, it is our hope that this new partnership *will have an enduring and fruitful association, that it will be only upon reflection that the richness of our efforts, one day, be evident.*

The poet St. Exupery once said, "If you want to build a ship, don't gather men to provide wood, to make tools and to assign the different tasks; no, just kindle the yearning for the wide-open, endless sea."

And so we are. And will continue. To encourage the curiosity of our greatest human resource – our children – making them homesick for the future.