

CROSSTALK: The Long and Winding Road

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On CROSSTALK's 20th anniversary, please join me as I open up the archives, pull back the curtain, and journey down the long and winding road of CROSSTALK success. Discover the founders, the famous, the flippant, the firsts, the feckless, the facetious, and the fait accompli that is CROSSTALK. Kick off your shoes, slide on your slippers, grab your favorite beverage, lay back, and enjoy the read.

In project management, milestones are marked by time and deliverables. In life, milestones are marked by events and beckoned with the wistful question, "Where were you when?" The attack on Pearl Harbor, the JFK assassination, the Apollo 11 moon landing, Woodstock, the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster, Chernobyl, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the events of September 11 are examples of life's milestones. Whether tragic or euphoric, a milestone emerges from events of indelible emotional impact. In celebrating CROSSTALK's 20th anniversary, the foremost question is, "Where were you when CROSSTALK was first circulated?"

Get Back

Need help? It was July 22, 1988. There were nine pages in a two-column newsletter format. The publisher was Bill Frost, the editor was Susan Kelsey, and the main topics were Ada, artificial intelligence, and a Software Engineering Institute's (SEI) affiliates program. Ring a bell? Granted it was not a rock-your-world event, but a seed was sown that would yield future fruit. This article journeys through the CROSSTALK archives to give you a behind-the-scenes look at your favorite publication set to a soundtrack by Lennon and McCartney.

Yesterday

First things first: Let's take a look at CROSSTALK firsts. The first organization to publish CROSSTALK was the Software Technology Office. CROSSTALK's sister product, the Software Technology Conference, was first advertised in February 1989, and 200 people attended. The first obituary (the journal dabbled in obituaries in the early days) was Howard L. Yudkin in July 1989. The first mathematical equation appeared in October 1989 in an article on neural networks.

The March 1991 issue had an article on SEI's Process Maturity Model – the forerunner to the Capability Maturity

Model®. That issue also had CROSSTALK's first attempt at wit and humor with an article titled, "To Disc or not to Disk."

The January 1989 issue was the first funded by the Embedded Computer Resources Support Improvement Program, CROSSTALK's sponsor for nearly 15 years, and later changed to the Computer Resources Support Improvement Program. The January 2004 issue was the first sponsored by multiple

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organizations. The Software Technology Support Center (STSC) currently reviews, edits, designs, and publishes CROSSTALK.

In an era when joint operations engendered lip service, CROSSTALK reached across services to a broader defense community. Although it started in the Air Force, the first Navy article appeared in August 1991; NASA's first article appeared in June 1991; the first Army article in December 1993; the first Defense Information Systems Agency article in January 1994; and the Marines joined the party in October 1997. The June 1994 issue was the first

official Department of Defense (DoD) issue.

The first double issue – one publisher's attempt to get back on schedule – was August 1991. The first interview, conducted with Dr. Delores Etter, appeared in July 1999. CROSSTALK's Top 5 Projects Awards arrived in April 2001, and I am sure you are dying to know that this author's first byline surfaced in a feature column in February 1995.

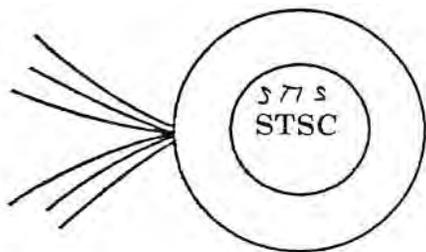
A Day in the Life

CROSSTALK's intent has always been to entice software engineers and managers in the defense industry trenches to talk – thus, the name – and provide a forum to share software engineering experiences and insights. CROSSTALK was there for the young lieutenant saddled with Ada; for the chief information officer concerned about Y2K; for the new software engineering process group lead ordered to achieve Level 5; for the colonel who learned peer reviews offered him the best return on investment; and for the commander implementing net-centricity. All readers gained insight into the software development of the Lockheed Martin/Boeing F-22 (October 1992) and Boeing 777 (January 1996). It certainly was ironic that Col. Gary Case provided a retrospective on the Integrated Computer Automated Software Environment (I-CASE).

With CROSSTALK, you do not bleed on the edge of technology nor wade through the tall timbers of advertisements. It is concise, timely, applicable, and practical. It does not contain all the answers, but does help weary software soldiers on their way to a solution. Connecting software warriors continues to be the heart and soul of CROSSTALK.

Help!

Although grounded in practicality, CROSSTALK also knew it did not hurt to tap the industry's brightest brains.

Figure 1: *The Original Logo*Figure 2: *The STSC "Football" Logo*

CROSSTALK has had its share of thinkers, in order of first appearance: Lloyd K. Mosemann II, W. Edwards Demming, Paul A. Strassmann, Capers Jones, Will Tracz, Tom DeMarco, Thomas McCabe, Elliot Chikosfsky, Grady Booch, Dave Cook, Watts Humphreys, Mark C. Paulk, Tom Gilb, Rayford B. Vaughan, Jr., Barry W. Boehm, Tim Lister, Alistair Cockburn, David Card, Gerald Weinberg, Bill Curtis, John Gilligan, Lt. Gen. Charlie Croom, and the Honorable John J. Grimes.

There have also been some atypical and dubious contributors. In August 1992, Tim Allen pontificated on Ada. It must have been before the gig with the tools. Darleen A. Druyun authored an article and no, it was not on the ethics of acquisition¹. In the February 1989 issue, you could order the Computer Software Management and Information Center software catalog softbound (\$25); 3.5" floppy disk (\$30); 5.25" floppy disk (\$30); nine-track magnetic tape (\$50); or microfiche (\$10). How ironic that the only media still viable today is the soft-bound copy. Hmmm ... might there be something to learn here?

Figure 3: *The CROSSTALK "Stutter" Logo*

SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY
SUPPORT CENTER
--- CROSSTALK ---
-- CROSSTALK --
- CROSSTALK -

Figure 4: *The Logo Today*

Movie fans will be surprised to know Jason Bourne penned an article in June 1995 under his real name, David Webb (it must have been prior to his Treadstone assignment). Gandhi (Robin A., not Mohandas K.) offered enablers for software assurance – non-violent enablers, of course. Finally, my first article appeared in October 1995, and my first BACKTALK article in June 1999; atypical, for sure. A \$50 Ruth's Chris Steak House gift certificate awaits the first reader to e-mail me and tell me in which issue the author's picture appeared.

Let It Be

While substance is paramount in a professional journal, CROSSTALK learned through the years that style and readability led to recognition, respect, and loyalty – branding for our business readers. CROSSTALK style and format has truly taken a long and winding road.

The lanky nine-page, two-column newsletter had a bizarre logo in the upper right corner (Figure 1). I challenge any-

**“CROSSTALK is the
original shareware:
free from ads
and subscription
cost – it was wiki
before wiki
was cool.”**

one to tell me what the logo represents. I have no idea. In July 1989, an STSC football logo appeared – not my favorite (Figure 2), and in May 1990, CROSSTALK developed a stutter (Figure 3). The then-publisher felt it necessary for the journal's name to be repeated three times in a Star Wars-style descending manner. The football logo came back in a special issue in 1993. This special issue was the only one to not have a monthly designation – it is a special issue just like the “White Album” is special. Finally, the familiar CROSSTALK diamond logo you enjoy today made its debut in July 1996 (Figure 4).

Starting out white as the pure driven snow, in March 1991 CROSSTALK switched to yellow paper. In January 1993, the yellow faded to cream. In 1996, the then-manager of the STSC, sent the staff on a search for the color *DoD purple*.

Although it did not exist, they found it anyways and in July 1996, CROSSTALK went DoD purple and white and eventually developed a purple stripe on its spine in May of 1997. Finally, the new millennium (actually July 2000) ushered in the full-color glossy cover you enjoy today.

The forerunner to the online edition of CROSSTALK was the Electronic Bulletin Board System. At first, it did not contain CROSSTALK online, just related material. In April 1990, CROSSTALK was available online via file transfer protocol – pre-Internet. The STSC and CROSSTALK went online in December 1992, and the current online version readers enjoy began in October 1997.

CROSSTALK has matured from a humble newsletter to a technical report to a professional journal.

A Hard Day's Night

Behind the glossy cover are the managers, publishers, editors, and staff that make sure CROSSTALK delivers. After the Frost-Kelsey duo, the vaudeville act of Alder-Klipper took over in January 1989 with Rudy Alder publishing and George Klipper writing and editing. What they lacked in resources and skill they made up for in vision and determination. November 1990 brought a new publisher in: Steve Wirick. The Wirick-Klipper team brought a bluegrass-roots feel to the publication as they expanded on Alder's basic groundwork.

In January 1992, Verlon Duncan replaced Wirick as publisher, Robert Bliss (Curmudgeon Bob) relieved Klipper, and in April of that year, John Fritschle joined as managing editor. The jazz trio worked their magic attracting a broader software audience as they infused topics outside the original embedded software sheet of music. Major Alan Miller expanded the trio to a quartet in June; performing as publisher and Duncan as manager.

In January 1994, Richard Smith replaced Duncan as manager, Major Pete Vaccaro replaced Miller, and Brent G. Wynn alternated with a returning Alder as associate publishers for the next two-and-a-half years. This group, like a marching band, was focused on efficiency and precision.

In July 1996, Rudy Alder assumed the manager's role and brought in a brilliant young publisher: Tracy Stauder. Together, they turned the marching band into an orchestra of substance, efficiency, and style. Heather Winward brought in the best authors, and Randy Schreifels and Mark Nielson took CROSSTALK online.

In June 1999, the first professional editing staff was brought onboard, with Kathy Gurchiek as managing editor. Kathy was replaced by Pam Bowers in September 2003, then Kase Johnstun in February 2006. Currently, Drew Brown is the managing editor supported by Associate Editor Chelene Fortier and Article Coordinator Nicole Kentta.

Beth Starrett joined Tracy in November 2000 as an associate publisher and eventually replaced Tracy in March 2006 under the leadership of managing director Brent Baxter. Recently, Brent tapped Kasey Thompson to assume the publishing duties. All are commended for their contributions.

I Am the Walrus

All work and no play makes Jack a grumpy engineer. From the first foray into humor with "To Disc or Not to Disc," CROSSTALK found that laughter is the best medicine for the software blues. A decided effort at wit took root in March 1992 with Curmudgeon's Corner – the brainchild of Robert Bliss. Loren May took over in August 1996 and offered an outsider's view of the inside world of software engineering. In July 1997, Curmudgeon's Corner was renamed BACKTALK, which has been a mainstay ever since.

Since June 1999, BACKTALK has been composed by the professor (Dr. Dave Cook) and the madman (yours truly) with occasional guest writers when the publisher was mad at the two of us. For rookie readers, the proper way to read CROSSTALK is to start with BACKTALK. It warms up the mind in preparation for the technical feast inside. To quote Tracy Stauder, "BACKTALK [has] always been a favorite – engineers need humor!" I say most engineers have a screw loose that needs a droll tweaking once in a while.

Come Together

CROSSTALK is the original shareware: free from ads and subscription cost – it was wiki before wiki was cool.

Like shareware, CROSSTALK depends on your contributions to stay alive. The easiest contribution is your feedback to the publisher on how CROSSTALK has helped improve your software engineering efforts, saved your project money, or boosted product quality. I cannot tell you how valuable this is to CROSSTALK, the staff, and you the reader. Please take time to impart CROSSTALK's contribution to your success by e-mailing the publisher at

<stsc.customerservice@hill.af.mil>.

You can contribute an article on your victories (what to do), your failures (what not to do), or your experience as a software engineer or manager (what I did).

Finally, if you are a successful, innovative leader in the industry, please consider sponsoring an issue or two per year. You know what they say: Those who can, do. Those who cannot, teach. And those who care, sponsor CROSSTALK. Make your contribution count. Be a part of the next 20 years.

Here, then, is a toast to the dreamers and schemers, the movers and shakers, the editors and publishers, the authors and sponsors and especially to you, the writers and readers: to CROSSTALK – may the next 20 years outshine the last 20.

"I get by with a little help from my friends."♦

Note

1. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darleen_Druyun> for more information.

About the Author



Gary A. Petersen is the Executive Vice President of Arrowpoint Solutions, Inc., where he develops new business opportunities and manages small teams of software engineers, IT professionals, instructional designers, and the editing staff of CROSSTALK. His experience includes six years as a lead software engineer designing, developing, and testing operational flight software for the Air Force F-16 Fighter Jet, seven years as a technical lead and manager of the Software Technology Support Center, one year in automated testing purgatory, and 10 years developing small businesses to serve the best customers on planet Earth. Petersen can still put his socks on without sitting down, is addicted to Coca-Cola, and frequently contributes BACKTALK articles where he ensnares, fillets, and displays his inner child on garnish-encircled ice.

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COMING EVENTS

September 9-11

AIAA Space 2008 Conference & Exposition
San Diego, CA
www.aiaa.org

September 10-11

*7th Annual QAI & QAAM
Regional Conference*
Baltimore, MD
[www.qaiworldwide.org/
conferences/qaam08/index.html](http://www.qaiworldwide.org/conferences/qaam08/index.html)

September 15-18

4th World Congress for Software Quality
Bethesda, MD
www.asq.org/conferences/wcsq

September 22-25

*3rd Annual Software Engineering Institute
Team Software Process Symposium*
Phoenix, AZ
[www.sei.cmu.edu/tsp/
symposium.html](http://www.sei.cmu.edu/tsp/symposium.html)

September 26

*Making the Business Case for
Software Assurance*
Pittsburgh, PA
[https://buildsecurityin.us-cert.
gov/daisy/bsi/events/972-BSI.html](https://buildsecurityin.us-cert.gov/daisy/bsi/events/972-BSI.html)

September 29–October 3

*STARWEST 2008
Software Testing Analysis & Review*
Anaheim, CA
www.sqe.com/starwest

October 14-16

Software Assurance Forum
Gaithersburg, MD
[https://buildsecurityin.us-cert.
gov/daisy/bsi/events/930-BSI.html](https://buildsecurityin.us-cert.gov/daisy/bsi/events/930-BSI.html)

2009



*2009 Systems and Software
Technology Conference*
Salt Lake City, UT
www.sstc-online.org

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