Lines & Letters
Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter

President's Column: Annual evaluation

By Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com)

It's the start of the new year and everyone is making resolutions to improve themselves. Losing weight, exercising more, cutting back on TV — all great goals.

The beginning of the year also marks the time for annual employee evaluations at my company. As I look back over this past year at the work I've done, I see growth and also areas I can improve upon. Time to put career resolutions into effect as I fill out my employee evaluation forms.

Let me challenge you to also take a look at your career path and make some resolutions for yourself, as well as taking off those last 5 pounds this year.

In what areas can you grow? Have you been debating as to whether you should take a seminar, earn more credits toward that master's program that's been on hold for the last two years, or even read the latest XML book? Do you need to learn to focus more and be more efficient in your day-to-day tasks? As you consider what areas of improvement you can insert into your job skill set, take a hard look and challenge yourself. Please don't allow yourself to be content in what other's may think as the "humdrum writer's life." Spice things up and give yourself big goals this year — nurture yourself and make your job exciting!

Monthly meeting February 8: Inside the Translators' Studio

How does your company source translation? Who bears responsibility for translation quality? Representatives from STAR International (Alan Horvath) and the Kent State University Institute for Applied Linguistics translation program (Keiran Dunne and Sue Ellen Wright) examine the synergy between technical writing and technical translation in today's localization market. The experts explore best practices with the goal of decreasing time to market, enhancing translation quality and building effective partnerships between translation service providers and their clients.

- At Kent State University.
- Hosts: Alan Horvath, Star Group; Dr. Sue Ellen Wright, Kent State University; and Dr. Keiran Dunne, Kent State University

Please note: The chapter is billed per registration. If you register but do not attend, you will still be expected to pay for the meeting.

For more information, see http://www.neostc.org/calendar.

We look forward to seeing you!

November meeting review: Being your own boss

by Alex Meske (ameske@datavantagecorp.com)

At the November STC meeting held at Datavantage, Robert Dianetti gave a talk on the topic of owning your own business. Using his own experiences as the president and founder of Radcom, a 10-year-old documentation and training company, he offered his advice and knowledge about what it takes to be your own boss.

One of the first things Mr. Dianetti established is what not to expect from running your own business. As he says, you should not expect to make more money, have lots of free time, be an absentee owner, be able to make all your own decisions, have lots of respect or be any happier in your new job. Instead, anybody who wants to start their own business should expect to make about the same amount as their current job, work hard and put in long hours, have a lot of bosses, keep track of many details and constantly take financial risks. Overall, it is far from easy, far from lucrative and far from ideal.

However, for some, the rewards more than make up for the risks and the pleasures well worth the problems. As Mr. Dianetti points out, you can make your own decisions about what you want to learn and accomplish professionally, your schedule is flexible, outsiders admire your perceived success and you can receive awards and recognition that you would not receive in a job with a larger company. And, for Mr. Dianetti, the simple joys of dressing nicely and networking with other small business owners is a reward not to be missed. Plus, when everything is working well, it truly is a beautiful thing.

What you need to ask yourself before trying to start your own business is, first of all, whether you can sell. Selling is the most important part of making a business work and you will need to be able to do it. Also, you will need to ask yourself how much money you have in the bank, how much you enjoy taking risks, whether you will be able to put in a lot of time, how well you can handle rejection and whether you need peer approval to keep going. However, the most important thing is whether you have a passion for your business. You need to have a scorching desire to be in your business. Your own interest in your business needs to be enough to carry

you through the tough times and keep you motivated in the good.

Honestly, most businesses fail, many because the business owners get discouraged and burn out. And hitting the big time is very rare. But also, after a few years in business, you will be pretty much unemployable because if you can make it that long, losing one business will just make you want to try again.

When starting out, it is good idea to find a mentor to provide you with mental and emotional support you in your endeavors. Also, it is a good idea to learn to sell and to take a class on starting a business. Don't worry about business plans unless you need financing; however, a sales and marketing plan will be much more useful for you. But don't forget to dream either. That is the one place where everything starts.

If you have any questions about starting or operating a small business, visit a Small Business Development Center office, Ohio's 1st Stop Business Connection (http://www.odod.state.oh.us/onestop/index.cfm), or SCORE (http://www.score.org/). If you have specific questions for Robert Dianetti, feel free to contact him at rdianetti@radcomservices.com.

December holiday wrap-up

Thanks to everyone who came and contributed to the December Holiday Happy Hour. We were able to donate $230 dollars and 10 pounds of food to the Cleveland Foodbank. Hope everyone had a terrific holiday season!

Upcoming events

- 1/25: Free Webinar: An Itty Bitty DITA: Understanding the Basics. 1:00 pm ET/10:00 am PT. Presented by: Kay Ethier of Bright Path Solutions and Mary Hush of Vasont Systems. Register at http://www.vasont.com/vasont/news/events.asp. Contact: Suzanne Mescan, Vasont Systems, smescan@vasont.com

- 1/31: ANSI Z535.6 — A New Standard for Safety Information in Product-Accompanying Literature; Presenters: Steven Hall and Elaine Wisniewski; Level: Intermediate/Advanced. *Thanks go to Rockwell Software for hosting this Webinar locally!* For detail on registering, see http://www.neostc.org/calendar/index.htm

- 2/7: Creating Indexes on Web Sites and Intranets.* Presenter: Heather Hedden.

- 2/8: Local meeting: Inside the Translators' Studio. Presenters: Alan Horvath, Star Group; Sue Ellen Wright, Kent State University; and Keiran Dunne, Kent State University.

- 2/13: Networking lunch. TGI Fridays, 1641 Golden Gate Plaza, Mayfield Heights.

- 2/21: Working in Global Teams.* Presenter: Makarand Pandit.

- 2/28: Deadline for payment of 2007 membership dues to be eligible to vote in STC's annual election.

- 2/28: Last day of Early Bird registration for STC's 54th Annual Conference.

- 3/14: Networking lunch. Blue Canyon Kitchen & Tavern, 8960 Wilcox Dr., Twinsburg.

- 4/12: STC election ends.

- 5/4: Last day of advanced registration for STC's 54th Annual Conference.

- 5/12 to 5/16: Technical Communication Summit — STC's 54th Annual Conference — in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

* Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these Webinars. If you would like to host a seminar, please e-mail us.

Reminder: If you RSVP but do not show up for a meeting, it costs the chapter money — we have to pay upfront for meals. Please remember to let the Programs Committee (programs@neostc.org) know in advance if you have registered but cannot make it to a meeting.

Can you host an upcoming Webinar?

STC is offering a couple of fantastic Webinars in February, and we would love to find hosting volunteers for both:

February 7: Creating Indexes on Web Sites and Intranets.

- Presenter: Heather Hedden

- Level: All Levels

February 21: Working in Global Teams.

- Presenter: Makarand Pandit

- Level: All Levels

If you are interested in hosting, please let Denise Kadilak (denise.kadilak@blackbaud.com) know.

For a list of all STC Webinars, visit http://www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp.

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Region 4 Conference coming this fall!

Mark your calendars now! The Region 4 Conference — The Crucial Communicator — is to be held October 12, 2007 in downtown Cleveland. Although this sounds far away, preparations are already underway for this event. If you are interested in helping (an assortment of tasks are needed), please see (Bob Young (bobyoung@maximus.com)) or Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com).

NEO STC board meeting January 30

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for January 30 from 6 pm to 8:45 pm at the Independence Library at 6361 Selig Drive in Independence. Officers and committee chairpersons are expected to attend this important meeting.

Committee chairpersons are to write a one-page report on what their respective groups have accomplished to date toward their goals. Please provide several copies of your committee report for all in attendance.

Please let President (Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com)) know if you will or will not be attending. For directions to the library, see http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org and click the *Branches* tab.

Philadelphia Metro Chapter Conference coming soon

On March 16 & 17, 2007, STC-Philadelphia Metro Chapter will host its Annual Conference in the Conference Center at Penn State Great Valley, in the Philadelphia suburbs near Valley Forge, PA.

Featured speakers include: Keynote by Robert Glushko (Document Engineering); Cheryl Lockett Zuback; Neil Perlin; Ed Marshall; Stephanie Morgan; and Nicky Bleiel.

Come for the pizzazz, glitz, and glamour … leave with increased knowledge, improved skills, and new friends!

Don't forget to inquire about how your chapter can become a Chapter Sponsor, which entitles your members to attend at STC-PMC rates.

For more information, click on the STC-PMC Conference link from our home page (www.stcpmc.org).

Welcome a new member and congratulations to new senior member!

Welcome new member Tom Duggan. We look forward to seeing you at future events!

Congratulations to Jessica Hendricks for achieving Senior Member status. Thanks for staying with us and for everything you do for NEO STC!

Member profile: Lisa Mileusnich

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Joining NEO STC in 2005, Lisa Mileusnich was previously a member of the Bowling Green State University student chapter. Currently a co-editor of our NEO STC newsletter, Lisa often contributes handy hints. As she puts it, I try to come up with a tip for a different software program every month.

As a graduate of Bowling Green State University with a BA in English and a minor in technical communication, Lisa worked for several years at Gale Group (a unit of Thomson Corp.), where she indexed and abstracted articles from business and trade periodicals.

In 2004, Lisa transitioned to Parker Hannifin Corp. as a contractor and was hired on full-time in the spring of 2005. She works in Technical Support in the Corporate IT Technical Communications department, documenting internal IT functions.

Last summer, Lisa bought a condo in Willoughby, spending a lot of time now on what she calls happy homeowner chores. She enjoys old movies and Indians baseball, stating that she is incredibly jealous of NEO STC past president Bob Young, referring to Bob's adventures as an Indians bat boy, as described in a previous issue of this newsletter.

Congratulations on newsletter article reprints!

Two book reviews that ran originally in *Lines and Letters* have been reprinted in other STC newsletters!

Kim Lindsey's book review of *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric: Leadership Wisdom from the World of the Wizards* was reprinted in the November issue of the *Silicon Valley Connection* (http://www.stc-siliconvalley.org/newsletter/HTML/currenttoc.htm) and the December issue of *The Border Line* (see www.stc-saz.org).

Jeanette's book review of *Elements of Style Illustrated* was reprinted in the January issue of *The Border Line* (see www.stc-saz.org).

Other groups have also expressed interest in reprinting — great job Kim and Jeanette!

World Usability Day Card Sort was a Success

Approximately 500 people around the world participated in the card sort exercise on World Usability Day 2006, held Nov. 14, according to Rahel Bailie, co-chair of STC's World Usability Day Committee. Participants represented six of the seven continents; only Antarctica was not represented. Slightly more than half of the card sort participants were from the U.S., with strong participation from the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, and Israel. Participants ranged from high-school students to retirees, from minimal to heavy weekly Internet users. The only predominant commonality was the type of work — only about two dozen participants did something other than an indoor desk job.

Card sorting is a common analysis technique used to group objects in order to understand how users categorize information. Card sorting is often used by information architects and usability professionals to find latent structure among menu items, Web pages, and the like. Participants logged onto a Web site that was active on Nov. 14, completed a brief survey, and then conducted the card sort, which focused on how different users categorize weather-related terms. Users were given lists of these terms and asked to create names for the categories under which they would group them.

The card sort was conducted in two languages, English and Farsi, and the two sets of data amalgamated. Over the next few weeks, the results will be analyzed for similarities and differences in how participants categorized these weather-related terms. Bailie explained that weather was chosen for the sort because it is universal, and different users apply their personal experiences and connotations with weather-related terms, leading to a varied assortment of data.

Once these data are compiled, World Usability Day volunteers will be publicly sharing the results, so be on the lookout for more information.

Scholarship applications due by February 15

Scholarship applications for the 2007-2008 academic year are due by February 15, 2007. Please help spread the word to potential scholarship candidates. Information about the scholarships, and application forms can be found online at:

- http://www.stc.org/edu/scholarshipInfo01_maryNorby.asp
- http://www.stc.org/edu/scholarshipInfo01_national.asp

Please note that this year we are pleased that a new scholarship, the Mary Norby Scholarship, will be offered for the first time. Mary Norby Scholarship applicants must be women working in the federal government, full or part-time as a secretary or administrative assistant.

Should you have any questions, please direct them to Mr. Scott DeLoach, scott@userfirst.net or 404-522-0003.

Technical communicator certification — boon or bane?

By Bill Thomas, Sr. member, Rocky Mountain Chapter

Since I first joined STC in 1974, there have been discussions of whether Technical Communicators form a profession and whether certification would be a good idea. There have been roundtables, articles, recommendations, and hallway discussions in companies, chapter meetings, and presentations at STC conferences.

With the STC re-vitalization and transformation initiative, there has been renewed interest in certification and a new task force has been formed to look into answers. From STC President Paula Berger's July Board Meeting Minutes, "I have asked Jonathan Baker and Dan Wise to lead a Certification Evaluation Task Force. The purpose is to investigate the issue of certification from all sides — value to employers and members, financial impact, feasibility of implementation, interest level — and report to the Society in May 2007 about their findings." Jon Baker is a Program Manager within Technical Publications Operations within EMC Corporation and Dan Wise is an editor with the International Code Council.

Meeting weekly for the last month, Jon and Dan and a cadre of 18 STC members all across the country and in Canada have been meeting via conference call to determine the starting point and progress of this task. Once the questions have been hammered out and

organized, the task force members will take these questions and attempt to get them answered in preparation for making a formal report to the STC board.

Questions typically asked have been along these lines: Is there a body of knowledge defining this profession? What would be the core competencies required? Would certification help or hurt the cause of the technical communicator in the field? How would employers react to certification? Would academia respond positively to a professional body of knowledge and teach standard courses to develop certified students? Would STC provide post-graduate, continuing education courses? Should certification be based on knowledge, experience or both? Would there be levels of certification (basic, advanced, master)? Will there be financial concerns on the part of STC, academia, employers, or practitioners that need to be addressed? Are there international or cultural considerations needing to be addressed? How would certification be marketed to sell the value of such a program and the profession to practitioners, employers, and academia? Would professional certification enhance the group or cause some to leave?

If you have comments or recommendations that this task force might consider, please send your information to STC_CTF@yahoogroups.com. If you would like to participate in the research the task force will be doing, contact Jon Baker, jbaker2525@earthlink.net, or DWise@iccsafe.org. We look forward to representing you and the profession to the Board in May 2007.

Review: How the Web Is Changing Language

Reviewed by Jeanette Evans
(jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Linguists used to simply be called nerds. Now, they're moving proudly into the geek category as part of the techno-scene.

The growth of language blogs, fringe dictionaries, and, of course, grumpy comments from would-be grammarians and lexicologists on all manner of sites have brought our definitions, phrases, symbols, and usage into the digital age with speed and even joy.

The online world of linguistics is fast, funny, and bears little resemblance to the hours you may have spent in a classroom diagramming sentences.

That is how Neal Conan introduced the dialog that started the 5/28/2006 segment of *Talk of the Nation*, on

National Public Radio, when he tackled the subject of how the Web is changing language. His guests included:

♦ Martha Barnette, author of three books on word origins and co-host of A Way with Words, which is a weekly radio program that PBS sponsor KPBS (of San Diego State University) calls a joy ride through the English language featuring calls from word-loving listeners

♦ Grant Barrett, professional lexicographer working on the Historical Dictionary of American Slang and editor of the Official Dictionary of Unofficial English and Double-Tongued Word Wrester Web site

♦ Geoffrey Pullum, professor of linguistics at the University of California Santa Cruz, co-author of the Language Log blog, and author of a new book with Mark Liberman, *Far from the Madding Gerund*

The discussion of how the World Wide Web has affected our worldwide language, our words, our usage, our grammar included these topics:

♦ The use of paper and online dictionaries

♦ How new words enter a language

♦ Attitudes and strong feelings about language use

The discussion is lively, insightful, and fun. It is available for listening at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5518444

One example of the discussion concerns Grant Barrett's work as a professional lexicographer developing a book called the Historical Dictionary of American Slang. Barrett gathers information on slang from sources such as Web logs and discussion forums. He feels he can track language and word use changes from such sources, especially because he can see material that, while written, is actually more a reflection of how people talk in an informal way. Change he feels is more likely in spoken language rather than in written.

The discussion turned to how this work is similar to that of H.L. Mencken. Barrett said that Mencken published in the 1940's a three-volume work called American Language. Mencken did his research on new language in places such as coffee houses.

Another example of the discussion concerns dictionaries. The group discussed that googling a term produces often unsatisfactory results. Instead, a source such as OneLook or Dictionary.com or Merriam-Webster.com gives better results. These sources are like traditional

ones in content but with online search features. Martha Barnette points out that OneLook.com is especially useful in that it gives a look at different dictionaries giving you a chance to see how lexicographers sometimes differ on pronunciations, definitions, and etymologies.

Ms. Barnette noted that she finds her listeners are using online searches of, for example, the Oxford English Dictionary. It used to be that you had to pay hundreds of dollars for such access in the past. Now, through libraries you have access to this resource that allows even for reverse searches.

Other topics included discussion of the word podcast, lack of a good online thesaurus (though there is a pay service that provides an impressive visual map of words), and complaints about decaying of our language with the statement made that there is documentation to show that these complaints date back to 1660.

Concerning proper spelling and use of grammar, Geoffrey Pullum noted that while spelling was largely settled by the 1800s, proper grammar usage varies more widely. He feels that if someone uses grammar that is not quite like yours, do not be too quick to assume something bad about that person's intelligence.

I noticed that the group used the word google several times as a verb. That word, it would appear, has certainly become part of our current vocabulary.

The world of technology, where many of us in technical communication work, has added its share, for sure, of new words, so it is useful for us to be tuned in to the type of discussion in this program — useful and fun.

Results of the 2006 WritersUA Skills and Technologies Survey have been posted

Results of the 2006 WritersUA Skills and Technologies Survey are posted at
http://www.writersua.com/surveys/skillstech06/index.html

What is a director at the Society level, and what can I bring to the position?

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net), NEO STC Immediate Past President

As many of you know, I am running for a director position at the Society level. In March, you will have the choice of electing three new directors from the seven-candidate field.

I humbly ask for your support to carry on the proud tradition of past and present NEO STC members who have served in Society-level leadership roles. Our own Bob Dianetti is entering his third, and final, year as a valued director and board member. I hope to have the opportunity to learn from him so I can continue his fine work when his term expires.

A director's duties include communicating the Society's objectives to geographic communities and virtual special interest groups (SIGs). This task will be especially important this year as STC builds on its Strategic Plan. Interestingly, many of the objectives of this plan — beefed up Public Relations and Marketing Committees, more training opportunities and corporate sponsorships, and recognition of member achievements — were successfully implemented in our chapter last year. Therefore, I believe I could make an immediate impact in these areas.

Perhaps my biggest asset is getting others involved with the process. Participation is a key element for achieving any goal, whether at the local or Society level. I firmly believe that encouraging members to get involved instills pride and the willingness to help with tasks. It also breeds future leaders. In turn, a member develops skills and friendships to further strengthen the bonds of membership. As proof, just look at the success of our membership campaign last year — an 18% gain — which was due to the outstanding teamwork of the committees.

To further increase participation, I would like to assist in the development of templates that provide chapter leaders with clear instructions on how to implement committees and programs. A lot of the STC literature is outdated or does not provide innovative steps on starting/maintaining programs. A good example is the recognition program for saluting senior members and the work of volunteers. I learned of this program by talking with members of the Florida STC chapter at the annual Conference. NEO STC packaged its own guidelines and we incorporated the recognition program into the membership campaign.

By providing constructive guidelines, such as how to start up and run a successful Public Relations committee, it will undoubtedly contribute to more communities starting PR campaigns. This will allow STC to better explain its message, and, thus, reach out to more potential members.

Thank you for your support to NEO STC and my bid for a director position.

If you have questions, please email me at ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net.

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Web site link for information on copyright law

Check out http://fairuse.stanford.edu for a variety of information on copyright law. The site is maintained and sponsored by Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources. You can even sign up for their free newsletter.

Article on using Microsoft RD fields to create tables of contents

Cathy Clarke, Senior Member in the UK chapter of STC, has a nice summary article on using RD field codes at http://www.stcuk.org/newsletters/April2006/word-refdoc.htm#Top

Handy Hint: Converting new Microsoft Office products to your existing software

By Barb Philbrick (caslon@alltel.net)

Soon, you will see a .docx .xlsx or .pptx file and wonder what the heck to do with it. Microsoft Office Word, Microsoft Office Excel, and Microsoft Office PowerPoint versions 2000 through 2003 cannot natively open these documents. They are files that are in the Office Open XML Formats, generated by 2007 Microsoft Office programs.

If you are not ready to upgrade, you can get the Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats. It is available now at http://tinyurl.com/y5w78r. The Compatibility Pak lets you open, edit, and save documents, workbooks, and presentations in the new file formats.

Handy hint: Adding a Drop Cap in Word 2003

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

A drop cap (which is basically the first letter of a paragraph displayed in a large font) can add a touch of style or class to a document. Used sparingly, this feature can spice up a series of plain paragraphs.

To add a drop cap to a Word 2003 document:

1. Position your cursor at the beginning of a paragraph where you would like to see a drop cap.

2. Click **Format>Drop Cap**. The Drop Cap dialog box appears.

3. Select **Dropped** or **In margin** for the drop cap. (You can also remove an existing drop cap by selecting None.)

4. Select the font to use for the drop cap.

5. Increase or decrease the Lines to drop to adjust the size of the drop cap letter.

6. Select the **Distance from text** to change how close the drop cap is to the paragraph. (To adjust by a small amount, you can use decimals.)

7. Click **OK** to apply the changes.

Hot jobs

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the current chapter website for details.]

Check out just a few of the hot jobs from our Web site at http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php!

Technical and scientific communication

♦ NAMSA, the world leader in medical device testing, has an immediate opening for a Technical Writer. Responsibilities will include writing technical documents as they relate to non-compendial toxicology studies.

♦ Intuit is looking for a Senior Technical Writer who serves as a core member and/or leads project teams to generate new content.

♦ Summit Racing Equipment is seeking a Technical Writer to develop, write and edit material for reports, manuals, briefs, proposals, instruction books, catalogs, and related technical and administrative publications in print or electronic media regarding amateur radio antenna systems.

Web design and development

♦ Suarez Corporation Industries is looking for a Web Designer possessing excellent design and conceptual skills in combination with an in-depth knowledge of technology and software applications used to create web pages on multiple eCommerce platforms.

♦ Progressive Insurance is looking for Web Experience Specialist II to provide programming, information architecture and user experience skills for their award winning web sites.

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Training and instructional design

- Progressive Insurance is looking for Instruct Designer III who creates, designs, develops, and maintains new training.

Graphic design and technical illustration

- Ohio Savings Bank is looking for a talented Graphic designer for their award winning in-house advertising agency.

- Enviro-Cote, Inc is looking for a Graphic/IT Production Manager who will be responsible for coordinating all production in the graphic arts dept of a growing Akron area printer, as well as managing local IT network and software functions.

Editing

- Jo-Ann Stores, Inc is seeking a Copy Specialist who will be responsible for coordination, production and communication of clear promotional, directional, positional, and thematic sign copy to support all initiatives to enhance the guest experience.

Marketing communications

- STERIS Corporation in Mentor is looking for a Proposal Writer for a 3 to 4 month contract position.

- Doner is seeking a Copywriter to interpret creative briefs and client input; produce engaging, memorable and strategically sound copy appropriate for the project and audience; attend meetings; present work to internal and external audiences; and revise work according to feedback.

If your company has a job opening, please contact Namrata (Nams) Malik at Nams Malik (nmalik@ra.rockwell.com)

Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience!

Lines & Letters information

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Love it? Hate it? Let us know! Contact us: newsletter@neostc.org