

An Australian, a Talker and a Tax

by
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G'day mate. On October 29th at 10 AM, Apollo-Ridge and Leechburg High School students, St. James grade school students, the StrongLand Chamber of Commerce, Senator Melissa Hart and Representatives Terry Van Horne and Joe Petrarca are connecting onto the Internet to discuss the Regional Renaissance tax on a small piece of memory housed at Apollo Trust Company. A clever whiz kid is conducting the conference remotely from Sydney. Downunder?

Let me explain. A few years ago, I purposely hung out on-line in Australia because I heard their country was a little more advanced with the Internet than the United States. Since I wanted to understand what technological innovations were coming next, I thought Australian sites would be a good place to start. I was not disappointed.

I boomeranged around New Zealand over to Chad sitting in front of a "talker" in Sydney on the Internet. A "talker" is simply a typing chat area that might look a little confusing at first. People converse with their keyboards. It is a subculture of communication that is rapidly moving into our mainstream culture. This talker quickly revealed to me that the Internet was becoming the melting pot of the world with American English as both the preferred language and slang of choice.

During my first conversation with Chad I learned he was just entering college and enjoyed programming. He wanted the opportunity to demonstrate his computer skills but Australian sites were saturated with talker whiz bangs. I told him that I had a computer site with whiz bangs but none with talker whiz bang experience. "Would you like to bring "a talker" to America," I asked. "Heck yeah," he replied.

So I took the risk. I gave this student from Australia a few pieces of computer memory to work with remotely. Within a few weeks there were Australians hovering in Apollo through virtual reality. Like worker ants they quietly went about their business assembling bits and bytes of information necessary for Apollo Trust's own talker.

My idea was to bring the world to the Kiski Valley through this talker. The rules were simple. I wanted only family channel stuff. Chad and his mates were to see to it that the rules were enforced or the talker was history. Amazingly, it worked. A talker was born in Apollo and it was aptly dubbed "the Sea of Tranquility" by our new Australian friends.

Ricky Shank, Apollo-Ridge student and computer guru was our first local Internet cop. One day while directing traffic, I watched Ricky expand his horizons. Chad, the Australian was tutoring Ricky, the Apollonian on the finer points of programming. No high school class could touch the informal distance learning which was taking place.

There are many kids throughout the Apollo area who can tell you that their first encounter with the Internet was conversing with Australians through our pre-Internet electronic bulletin board system. And there are many others who can tell you that their first encounter has been through our expanded system with residents around the world.

The Regional Renaissance tax issue seems a natural for the talker. It is a forum where everyone will come out a winner because the talker is a triumph of ingenuity in our little town. Although the discussion will be limited to the participants listed above, anyone is allowed to tune in by clicking on the Sea of Tranquility at www.apollotrust.com or by telnetting to [apollotrust.com](telnet://apollotrust.com) 7000.

The discussion may not provide new revelations and we may run into the usual glitches which are inevitable when coordinating something untried. However this little experiment may provide a glimpse of our future democracy. Today's generation of students will one day be adults who engage in interactive debates through videoconferencing over the Internet while they vote at home with their computers.

The Kiski Valley may not be the Silicon Valley but it doesn't have to take second place when it comes to unlocking the power of the mind and imagination. See you at the Sea, mate.



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