

September, 2005

Rest in Peace, Drew and Brent

By Tamar E. Granor, Technical Editor

I can't remember whether I first met Drew Speedie through articles he wrote or through online discussion, but it rapidly became apparent that he was extremely bright and talented. So when there was a last-minute opening for a speaker at a conference I was helping to organize, it was a no-brainer to ask Drew to fill in. That invitation was the beginning of an unusual friendship that ended abruptly with the tragic death of Drew and his 13-year-old son, Brent, in a hiking accident on September 16.

Today, Drew is best known in the FoxPro community as the author and architect of the Visual MaxFrame Pro framework. He began work on it in the early days of VFP and continued to improve and enhance it through several job changes and buy-outs. But FoxPro veterans may also remember that he was one of the key developers for a FoxPro project for Mobil Oil that dwarfed nearly every other system on the planet.

Drew was the first editor of FoxPro Advisor's Tips column. He turned that experience into a franchise and, until his death, regularly presented a VFP Tips and Tricks session at conferences. He also wrote many articles for FoxPro Advisor and coined the "LISA G" formulation to explain the order of form instantiation. The bios he wrote for his articles always reflected the article topics and were usually good for a chuckle.

Drew's sense of humor was unusual, but lots of fun. He was comfortable heckling just about any speaker in any setting; almost every conference keynote included at least one zinger from Drew. For one conference, the organizer asked speakers to come up with something new in VFP that they were "jumping up and down 'bout to wet their pants PASSIONATE about." When Drew's turn came to present his item, he faced the audience with the crotch of his pants soaking wet.

Having Drew attend a session you gave was always an interesting experience. He would sit in the back, with his notebook open in front of him, looking for all the world like he was hard at work. Then, he'd proceed to ask the absolutely toughest questions about the session topic.

Drew was different than most of the FoxGang. Though he enjoyed going out for a good meal and a couple of beers as much as anyone, most of his time, even at conferences (and after that first one, there's hardly been a FoxPro conference where Drew didn't speak), was spent working or with his family. Because Drew and his wife Irene chose to home school, Brent and Irene frequently accompanied Drew to events. We all watched Brent grow from a precocious toddler to a sweet teenager, who hadn't yet started to drive his parents crazy.

When I first met Brent, he was about two. He was polite and articulate. Seeing him only a couple of times a year, his growth always surprised me. In addition to learning the three R's, Brent's education included plenty of computer programming. More than once, he served as Drew's assistant for a session and at conferences, he could often be seen testing his father's code. In fact, Brent is the top bug finder for Visual MaxFrame Pro. Brent was one of those "I can't wait to see how he turns out" kids; the loss of his future is tragic.

Drew has been one of the cornerstones of the FoxPro community for more than a decade. His family has been part of our family. It's hard to imagine our little corner of the world without Drew and Brent. Everyone at Advisor joins me in sending our deepest sympathies to Irene and other family members.