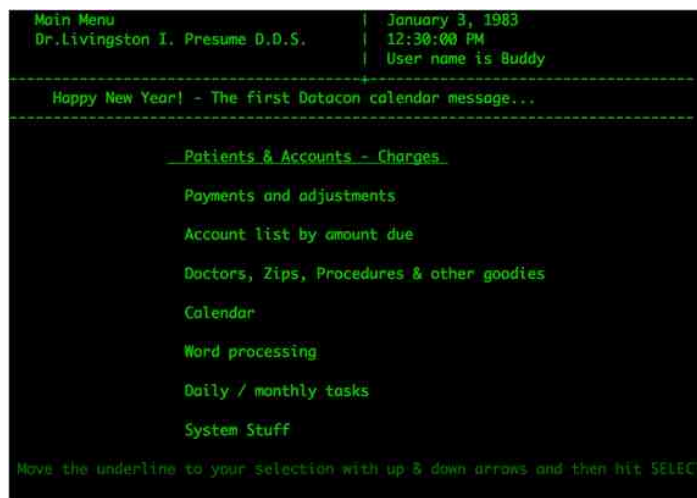# Auld Lang Syne

by Buddy Kurz

Written in 1788 by Scottish poet and lyricist Robert Burns, this well known song commonly used to ring in the New Year begs the question as to whether it is right that old times be forgotten. The title literally translates to "old long since" meaning "long, long ago", or "days gone by".

I am a person with a love of science & technology and one eye squarely on the future as well as an appreciation for the past. For me the answer to the question posed by Scots of old is "No, old times should not be forgotten". Therefore today, as the song says: "for the sake of old times", let's hop into the Way-Back Machine and return to...

"1983"

What was happening thirty years ago?

• President: Ronald Reagan - Vice President: George Bush

• Top Song: Every Breath You Take - The Police

• Superbowl XVII: Washington Redskins over Miami Dolphins, 27-17

• Sally Ride became the first US woman astronaut in space on the Challenger

• The introduction of the CD sent the vinyl record into a steep decline

• Federal Debt: $1.37 trillion

• Price of a new home: $89,800

• Average income: $20,885

• Gallon of Gas: $1.24

• Postage: 20¢

• Time named "The Computer" as the person of the year.

• Apple's announcement of the Macintosh and the commercial birth of the graphical user interface was still a year away.

• IBM PC Home computer was a few months old and Windows would be released nearly two years later in November of 1985

• Most importantly, thirty years ago this month, after 6 months of intense development effort, Datacon installed it's first system in a dental office in Santa Rosa, CA.

Datacon's Main Menu circa 1983

That's right, this month is the 30th anniversary of the first sale of the Datacon Dental System.

The original Datacon Dental System sold for $15,995 - What did you get for this?

• Alpha Micro AM1000 mini-computer with a 10MB hard drive, 128 KB ram, 3 serial ports, and one parallel port

• Alpha Micro VideoTrax VCR based tape backup

• Alpha Micro AM-60 terminal

• Prism P-80 dot-matrix printer

• The Datacon Dental System software

The first release of our dental software was pretty basic. It was primarily a billing system handling charges, payments & referrals and generating printed statements, financial reports, and insurance forms. We handled three types of forms: the Denti-Cal continuous feed short form, the CDS form, and a "Universal" form. There was a single user defined list - you could use it for anything you like. The source code consisted of about 30,000 lines of instructions vs. well over 500,000 lines in the current version.

We used to keep a printed copy around the office to show to prospects who argued that they had a "brother-in-law" or "college buddy" who could write something like this for a lot less money. That printed copy was about 2 1/2 inches thick. Now it would take a bookshelf to hold all of the pages.
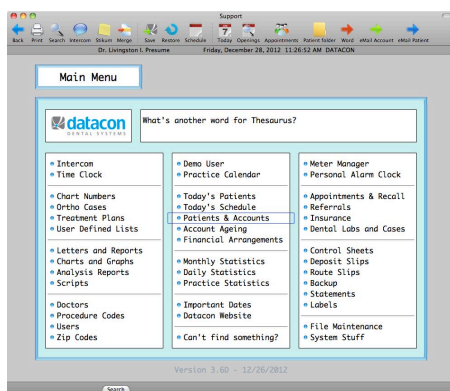
Auld Lang Syne (Cont'd)

Although the original Datacon software was simplistic in many ways, it was very advanced in others. Nearly two decades before the Y2K crisis our first software release could handle dates out to 2155 and we handled 10 digit ZIP codes before they were made available. At a time when most computer systems required users to enter codes or numbers to navigate thru a menu system, our Up/Down/Select/Exit navigation system combined with real-time on-screen information made it simple for a new user to find their way around the software. Today, you see the same type of menu navigation in iPods, AppleTV and other devices.

Back to the Future

Jumping forward to 2013, we can look back and see that while the original Datacon software appears extremely dated, it has proven to be a good foundation with flexibility for growth and change. We have many many clients who started using Datacon in the early 80's and the information they entered using those dumb terminals is now available on a mobile phone. Thirty years ago we would not have imagined this software running over the Internet, connecting to digital imaging systems, and having gigabytes of storage available for scanned documents, digital x-rays, and other information. Something like the iPad or a mobile phone was science fiction and using these devices to access your patient information would have been a mind boggling concept. The times keep changing and Datacon keeps changing with the times.

Out With The Old!

The start of the new year could be a time to think about doing some housekeeping. We have lots of utilities for cleaning out the nooks and crannies in your database.

• Remove duplicate insurance carriers

• Clean up old insurance forms

• Remove old recall dates

• Remove old financial data

• Purge sensitive HIPAA protected data from patients who will never return to the practice

• Remove providers who are no longer needed

• Remove users who are no longer needed

Your monthly software support fee entitles you to 45 minutes of free training per quarter. Consider taking the time to learn about cleaning house.

In With the New!

2012 brought many new features to your Datacon software. There were lots of changes to the look and feel of the software and many enhancements designed to make it easier to use. Many of you are still using the 3.6C software last updated nearly two years ago. Others are using various releases of the 3.6D software released last year. This is a good time to catch up as the 3.6D software is very stable and we are not planning any major changes. We are looking forward to making more changes in several areas of the software in a new version to be released later this year. If you have concerns about doing an update, please contact us. If you would like to update but just can't set aside the time, we may be able to handle the update for you on a day you are out of the office or over a weekend.

We are constantly working to improve your Datacon experience and we want to make sure everyone benefits from this effort.

Don't Forget to Visit our Website

In addition to the valuable information and how-to's on our website, you can also find out what's going on in the Dental World, post your comments on our blog and read what others are saying.

Visit www.datacondental.com today!