

Monsieur Pierre Buffet Speech **Receiving the IPI-Award 2006**

March 2006
Athens, Greece

Thanks for giving me the floor for an introductory remark: I learned something new from Bob Stenbridge's talk this morning: Dinosaurs are definitely dead, but Whales are not. I am afraid that people like me, i.e. often seen as a dinosaur, will have to learn swimming.

I am deeply honoured to receive this award, and I do so on behalf of the entire Questel•Orbit staff.

What I will do with the award

I will remember what our first Finance Director told me: *“when you receive a cheque and you do not know why, cash it immediately. Then you have plenty of time to see if it was for you or not.”* But, allow me to move to serious matters: some people know that I enjoy life in many ways, for instance tasting wines, cooking and gardening to mention a few. This award will be of great help to start a rose garden!

Thanks again to TPR and especially to Ford to contribute to the improvement of the environment in France.

How I entered this world of IP

As a French fellow, when drafting this paper, I tried to be very logical but very quickly I had to realize that life was a series of accidents. And the challenge was to see these accidents as a series of opportunities. In other words: be innovative and combine this with the power of third parties through co-operations. This is still my way of looking at business opportunities.

Accident #1

One of my first tasks at CNRS where I started my professional activity was to participate in the French version of the so called UNISIST Reference manual, a standard for Indexing and Abstracting services data. At this occasion, a top expert of WIPO, Paul Claus explained, or tried to explain, what a patent was to the working team. I just retained, and I think I was not the only one, that it was a bizarre animal.

Accident #2

When joining Questel to build the Scitech database offering, I had been asked by my boss to visit INPI. There: big surprise. When meeting with Irène Savignon, the lady in charge of investigating electronic information at INPI at that time, she was with Richard Yung, whom many of you have known at the EPO and whom I met in my former life at CNRS. So no choice: we had to do something together. And we did: firstly with the French Patent database, followed by the EPO and PCT registers.

Accident #3

One of the Questel duties was to make the CAS Registry File available through the DARC software. Other surprise: it worked despite the complexity of the agreements between the various partners involved: the Ministry of Research and Jacques Michel, the Paris University and Professor Dubois, CNIC and Pierre Creyssel, ... and Questel. A few years later, this led to discussions with Monty Hyams and Irène Savignon for

introducing a similar capability on both DWPI and PHARMSEARCH. Questel won on 2 fronts: building a new search engine, QUESTEL Plus for full text, and Generic DARC for the crazy Markush formulae.

Accident #4

When Jacques Michel was in charge of CNRS-INIST, he pushed many projects including TRANSDOC aimed at handling electronic facsimile documents. I recall a meeting with the potential partners – CNRS-INIST, EDF, Questel and others – during which I proposed to include INPI in the group as my feeling was that a customer was ready to pay more for a patent fax than for a scientific paper fax. Everybody knows what happened next: CNRS-INIST and INPI built their systems and the EPO joined the club with BACON and BNS...

Three other important events in Questel's life

1989

It was the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. However a much more important event occurred: EPOQUE, making use of the EPO's 4 cylinder engine derived from our QUESTEL Plus engine, was born. This was the start of a new era: la "*Belle Epoque*" as I liked to say to Annemie Nuyts. Today, this is used by over 5,000 people at the EPO, over 1,500 in Beijing, and just a few espacenet users...

1994

A big bridge was built across the Atlantic with the merger of Orbit and Questel, merger of 2 cultures and of 2 search engines, a challenge which has never been replicated. Thanks to all at Questel.Orbit especially David Dickens our IPG man. You know for sure that IPG has at least 2 meanings "*Intellectual Property Gold*" but, if you refer to David's favourite patent examples, it most probably means: "*I Play Golf*".

This confirms how co-operations generate innovation. This a permanent objective for Questel.Orbit. There is still a lot to do: today on recomposed families and on full text abstracting, in the months to come on machine translation (You know how I am bad at speaking foreign languages: *je ne parle que français*).

1999

France Telecom decided to focus their activities on their core business: telecoms. Consequently, they decided to spin-off Questel.Orbit. This was when Jean Besson entered the game. This gave the company a real opportunity to start a new exciting venture, to be more responsive in the decision making process and to focus on what was seen as most important.

Few more words on my predecessors

2000 Monty Hyams

I have been very, very lucky to work directly with him and his team from 1983 onwards. It was a big challenge for a young Frenchy and it allowed me to resist many demanding users in Europe, in the US and in Japan. So many different behaviours. It is there that I met with Ford for the first time... Another accident...

2001 Stu Kabak

The first to use EPAT on Questel from overseas; an excellent member of our Advisory council, also very vocal at the ACS meetings.

2002 Wolfgang Pilch

The “Inpadoc family father” We tried hard to get this file at Questel, but were competing against Infoline supported by Robert Maxwell who had close contacts with both Geneva and Vienna. We eventually succeeded in getting the file ... when Orbit and Questel merged.

2003 Ursula Schoch-Grübler

PDG-san and maggots in her garden, without forgetting the many times we met and tried to benefit from her experience. She taught me one word: quality.

2004 Jacques Michel

First contact just yesterday in 1973. Since then, I have known Jacques in many places on many projects: Ministry of Research, CNRS-INIST, ICSTI, Questel, Inc, Télésystèmes-Questel and, last but not least, the EPO.

2005 Edlyn Simmons

For me she will remain the one able to compare grapes and water melons. This is another garden. As a Questel.Orbit advisory council member, she always reminded us how expertise was important.

2006 Pierre Buffet

I am number 7 on the list. It is great luck or maybe another accident.

Thanks

Renewed thanks to the Award committee.

Many thanks to the 7 people having proposed my name as number 007, Jean Besson, Brian Gore, Michael Lipp, Liliane Meyers, Peter Rusch, Georg Schultheiss and Henk Tomas.

Many thanks to all our existing and future *customers*. In order not to miss any names, please look at the attendee list of this conference...

Thanks to all our partners who gave me the opportunity to learn more everyday in Europe, in the US and in Japan. Let me list a few not already mentioned:

At EPO, Robert Baré, Gérard Giroud and their teams for their skills and friendliness,

At JAPIO and then PATOLIS, Yutaka Wada with whom we set strong cooperative agreements,

At JPO, Tadashi Ishii, who allowed us to enter the Japan Patent world,

At PDG, Mino Philipp to restrict the list to the today's President,

At WON, it always has been a won-won situation,

Needless to mention PATCOM,

without forgetting Harry Collier who accepted me as programme committee member of the must attend Infonortics ICIC Conference in Nîmes, a very good complement to this conference.

A special reference to Henri Alardo who passed away, not known by most of you, but real father or even "grand-father" of the Questel / Epoque (4cylinders) / espacenet search engine.

Last, but not least, my most fervent thanks go to my family and my wife, whose support and patience give credence to the adage: "Behind every successful man, there is a woman who made it happen."