

# ``Speed is life, life is speed''

Scott MacDonald



These words are often uttered by myself in reference to a popular yet silly (aren't they all?) game named ``X-Wing." Speed gives you more of an advantage: your objectives are completed faster and you're much safer. But isn't that like the rest of life? The faster we are, the less time we must spend on our tedious, boring work, and the faster we can go on to something *fun*!. Also, we all get a certain sense of pride in completing work quickly. When was the first time you were the *first* to leave the room of fellow students in an exam? There is hardly a person that can't tell me it doesn't feel great. Speed is something that is becoming increasingly more important in our society. ``**Faster, faster, faster**", we hear these words silently spoken in the vaults of our minds. An eternal race towards the clock, as if we can feel our own life force slowly seeping out of us. We spare no expense to feed this insatiable craving.

I was thinking all this as I was trying to convince my newly purchased, \$100 ethernet card that it wanted to go in that expansion slot (it took me about 20 minutes to do that). I was wondering why I even bought the damn thing. I do have a modem, and while my parents and friends complain that the phone line is always busy from modem use, it seems a bit silly to shell out that kind of money to let my mother have direct access to nag me. And do I *really* need an incredibly fast connection? As I mulled over it, I finally decided that until I had my ethercard running (we have ethernet connections in the dorm rooms) my roommate, who had had his running for a couple of days, would continually rib me about it, and shutting him up was well worth \$100. But how long until I would have to dump this net card and get something faster? My *one* year old 486DX/33 is already becoming outdated, though last year it was near the top. How it hurts to fall so far so fast. My solution to this problem is to give it to my younger brother when he enters college in 2 years, and get my parents to replace it (using some fast talking of course) with the latest and greatest. But this is only a temporary solution. How advanced will my system need to be to stay useful for years to come? It seems there is no winning in the technology race.

And yet we keep running anyway, running until we lose sight of the slow reality outside this speed

realm. We grow impatient with any delay, no matter how small. And our impatience doesn't stop with a piece of slow software (e.g., MS-Windows), but it spills from our lives to the lives around us. For example, we forget sometimes that the person to which we've just emailed a question is not a machine, and we grow irritated when we don't get a prompt reply, no matter that this person may actually have a life beyond the keyboard. Patience is no longer a virtue. Shortcuts become a way of life. Talk face-to-face with someone in the lab across the hall? No. We opt for a quick net talk instead, with fingers tapping impatiently while waiting for the connection to be established. It doesn't work for some reason to actually *stand* and cross the hall. Precious seconds or even minutes gone...

Yet, as I mentioned above, speed offers us safety, more of a chance to meet the ever-creeping closer deadline. Remember learning to ride your bike? If you went quickly, you would stay straight, instead of cracking your head on on the road. Speed kept us upright, safe. But it also allows us to avoid long encounters with other human beings. We rush in and out of each others lives in a whirlwind, sometimes without a fading thank you as we run off into the sunset. People become obstacles or stepping stones on the way to the current goal, as we are for others. Safe? Soloness often is. Its so much easier to pretend no one else has a real meaning, a real life, a real heart.

We are slowly becoming the silly game. Goals are the enemies we blow out of the air on the way to the next mission. People are wing men, useful, but if they go down? It's only a game. Speed allows us to grab the goal and avoid the shots fired at us while we try. While faster will make our work somewhat easier, and make technology better, we sometimes grab as much speed as we can just for the reassurance of having it. And then we expect the same from the people we work with, love, or hate. GAME OVER.