1996: A MOST PRODUCTIVE YEAR

An overachiever remembers

John Smith

Digital still from *Being John Smith*, 2024, a film by John Smith.

Rereading *Webster's Timeline History: John Smith, 1580–2007* (as I often do, despite its errors), I was heartened to remember just how busy and productive 1996 was for me. Early in the year, a compilation of my short films was published on VHS tape by London Electronic Arts. In late February, much to my surprise, a couple of colleagues and I secured a patent for a "packet voting server and associated method for performing voting services on multiple radio channels simultaneously." The very next week, my dear friend Kathleen was informed out of the blue that our joint patent application for a low-paper-level sensing apparatus had also been successful. Soon afterward, yet another piece of good news on the patent front arrived when I became the sole patent holder on my "quick hitch assembly," a project that had been very close to my heart for many years. I couldn't believe my luck.

When I engage in academic writing, especially when it involves practical research, I am not usually partial to collaborations. But when summer turned to autumn and I finally saw *Trace Element Concentrations in Soils from Rural and Urban Areas of Australia* in print, I must admit I felt more than a little proud of our team's diverse efforts, brought together by Heather's exemplary editing. On the subject of editing, I was equally happy with my own editing work on the short film *Rêves en Cage*, which I also directed, released during the same month. Centered around the imagined dreams of caged animals in a French provincial zoo, the film incorporates fragments of a little-known but exquisite text by Jean Genet.

regions thereof adhere to the zone of cells of interest to be extracted. The transfer surface includes a selectively activatable adhesive layer which provides, for example, chemical or electrostatic adherence to the selected regions of the tissue sample.

London Electronic Arts: Publisher of "John Smith." Publisher: London Electronic Arts (London). Published in 1996.

Mario Frank Derango, et al.: "Packet voting server and associated method for performing voting services on multiple radio channels simultaneously" is patented by Mario Frank Derango, Gregory Allan Dertz and Paul John Smith. Abstract: A packet voting server and associated method for performing voting services on multiple radio channels simultaneously and including capability to be dynamically assigned (trunked) to service any given radio channel, for example, on a packet by packet, call by call, or less frequent basis.

Michael John Smith and Kathleen Maginnity: "Low-paper sensing apparatus" is patented by Michael John Smith and Kathleen Maginnity. Abstract: The present invention features a photosensing mechanism for a receipt-printing machine which senses a low condition of a paper supply roll housed within a bucket of the receipt-printing machine. The paper-supply roll has a "floating" characteristic; that is, no fixed rotational mounts align the roll within its feed bucket. The photosensing mechanism adjusts to different supply-roll positions within the feed bucket, the different positions of which result from different mounting orientations of the receipt-printing machine.

Norman John Smith: "Quick hitch assembly" is patented by Norman John Smith. Abstract: A quick hitch assembly mountable to a hydraulic arm of heavy duty machinery for hitching an implement having at least one pair of outwardly extending parallel connector brackets. The assembly includes two or more parallel load transmitting plates on a common shaft which are dimensioned to be located parallel to at least one of the bracket pairs. The assembly also includes one or more hook elements for hooking onto the implement, and at least one hydraulically activated ram with a link pin displaceable between a bracket and a plate to form a positive lock between the implement and the assembly.

Olszowy, Henry: Author of "Trace element concentrations in soils from rural and urban areas of Australia." Henry Olszowy, Peter Torr and Paula Imray; in collaboration with Peter Smith, John Hegarty and Grant Hastie; edited and prepared for publication by Heather Hill. Publisher: South Australian Health Commission (Adelaide). Published in 1996.

ONF: Publisher of "Rêves en cage (enregistrement vidéo)." Producteur, Sam Grana; réalisation et montage, John N. Smith. Publisher: ONF (Montréal). Published in 1996.

Paul E. Hayes, et al.: "Towing apparatus for golf cars" is patented by Paul E. Hayes, Donald G. Samuelson, James R. Kerlin and John D. Smith.

Peter John Smith and Harbans Kaur Mangat: "Cobalt glass compositions for coatings" is patented by Peter John Smith and Harbans Kaur Mangat.

Philip John Smith and David Wynford Faulkner: "Access network" is patented by Philip John Smith and David Wynford Faulkner. Abstract: A telecommunications access network includes a plurality of customer terminals and a plurality of network nodes. Each network node is connected to a plurality of the customer terminals by respective local access lines, whereby each customer terminal is connectable to a switch of a telecommunications core network via one of the network nodes. At least one of the customer terminals is connected to two of the network nodes by respective local access lines.

Plaidy, Jean: Born in 1906 and died in 1993, authored "The King's adventurer: Captain John Smith and Pocahontas." Publisher: Robert Hale (London). Published in 1996.

Robin Berg, et al.: "Female-molded underground storage tank and method of making" is patented by Robin Berg, John Burwell, Neil Olson and John Smith.

Ronald Brown Miller, et al.: "Controlled release tramadol" is patented by Ronald Brown Miller, Stewart Thomas Leslie, Sandra Therese

Although I really love making films, there's not a lot of money in it; with *Rêves en Cage*, I even ended up with a sizeable debt. Fortunately, I always have my inventing work to fall back on when times get hard. As winter approached, I was relieved to discover that new patents had been simultaneously granted for a towing apparatus for golf cars, a cobalt glass composition for coatings, and a telecommunications access network. The golf car towing apparatus eventually turned out to be quite lucrative and enabled me to pay off all the debts I'd accrued filming dreaming animals at the zoo.

As the year drew to a close, a perfect Christmas present appeared in the bookshops—*The King's Adventurer: Captain John Smith and Pocahontas* by Jean Plaidy. It contained a few factual errors but was, for the most part, accurate and very well written. Ms. Plaidy's vivid descriptions really took me back to the idyllic days that Pocahontas and I spent together so many years ago. I'm eternally grateful to Pocahontas, the love of my life, without whom I could never have conceived of the female-molded underground storage tank.

Read John Smith's review of Webster's Timeline History: John Smith, 1580–2007 *here.*

John Smith is an artist filmmaker who lives in London. His recent film, *Being John Smith* (2024), has been awarded major prizes at numerous international film festivals. In 2025, he had solo exhibitions at Secession, Vienna, and at Kate MacGarry, London.