

Sloppin' the Hogs

by Alex R. Mayer

One of the rules **Elaine Bonow** and I set up when we created the **Belltown Messenger** was this: Do Not Bash the Locals. Luckily (for me), most of the bash-worthy locals aren't local: the bulk of Seattle's media outlets are owned wholly or substantially by big out-of-state corporations, and I'm talking about both of our alt-weeklies, both dailies, cable TV, and all local TV stations except the morally and fiscally bankrupt PBS station **KCTS-9**. Even many small provincial-sounding specialty mags like **Seattle's Child** and **Evergreen Monthly** are actually owned by out-of-staters. If you work for a company that has hijacked our homegrown media conveyances in order to bombard Puget Sounders with ads for SUVs and bogus oil wars, then be here forewarned: the time of your bashing is at hand.



Former **KCTS-9** president
BURNHILL CLARK

BOO BHU

Folks have been asking me about this guy **Bhu Srinivasan**, former publisher of the **Downtown-Belltown Review**, so I thought I'd check up on him for you. The **Belltown Review** was this toss-together monthly hash of syndicated material with no **Belltown** content whatsoever other than some condo listings. One of the more bizarre publications I've seen in 15 years in this very bizarre town, the damn thing didn't even have contact information other than **Bhu's** phone number. And the graphics (before he wisely hired a design firm to help him out) would have been deemed unoriginal and derivative in an elementary school art class. What **BR** did have was full color ads for real estate and the **Seattle Athletic Club** and such, and a budget fat enough to pay for direct mailing to every single downtown resident.

Seems **Bhu** had made millions (in 13 months) at **Naveen Jain's** Eastside Internet company **InfoSpace**. This quick infusion made him a very swingin' young man-about-Belltown during the go-go pre-911 days.

After being fired from **InfoSpace** ("I work horribly with authority," he explained), **Srinivasan** quickly started his own dot-com,



His company owns 49.5% of the **Seattle Times**:
TONY RIDDER

ThinkView. If for whatever reason you're curious about what sort of corporate climate prevailed at **ThinkView**, get this: **ThinkView's** CIO & VP of Technology was a young man named **Daniel Feussner**, who moved on to a cushy job at **Microsoft**, where over several years he ordered 9 million dollars worth of software (on the company's dime), resold same, and used the ill-gotten gains on such as a Ferrari, a Hummer, a Mercedes, an \$8,000 diamond ring, a \$2,200 Rolex and a \$186,000 51-foot yacht, pictures of which he posted on his personal website. When the feds lazily got around to putting the pinch on him, he killed himself (by drinking anti-freeze), leaving his young wife to sort out the mess. [Hey, dead dude? **Bill Gates** didn't become the world's pre-eminent monopolist by letting people steal from him.]

Anyway, that was **ThinkView's** CIO & VP of Technology. **Thinkview** crapped out lickety-split ... I defy anyone in Seattle to tell me what **Thinkview** actually did. [**InfoSpace** is still in business, although **Jain** was forced out in 2002 and is dealing with securities fraud charges. He allegedly used inside information to sell over 400 mill of **InfoSpace** stock at inflated prices, among other transgressions.]

Hundreds of millions of easily-gotten dollars can really have an effect on a young person, and one of the first things **Srinivasan** did with his **InfoSpace** bounty was buy a Jag. "I really like fast cars," he soberly explained to the **P-I** at the time. Former internet porn king **Seth Warshavsky** (now in hiding in Thailand) also tooled around Seattle in a pricey Jag. Ordinary people wouldn't buy a Jag because they're garish and fall apart, but of course we don't have that kind of money.

In 2001 **Srinivasan** generously offered to buy **Salon.com**, fire the writers, and turn it into a syndication clearinghouse for material from **The New Yorker** and other highbrow rags, but that didn't work out. So where is the 27-year-old **Bhu** nowadays? Well, he's still in Seattle and still publishing **BR**, although now it's called simply **The Review**; according to his website, it's "distributed as a magazine supplement inserted into metropolitan and suburban newspapers targeted at very wealthy communities." Which may explain why he did not really respond to repeated interview requests from this upstart, threadbare paper. Yoo-hoo! We'd like to hear from you, **Bhu!**



InfoSpace founder
NAVEEN JAIN

Rex Lerner

alex@belltownmessenger.com