To All The Members of The Original St. Helens/Vesuvius Project Team:

Greetings from Niels Nielsen in Corvallis. March of 2014 marks the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the ThinkJet printer and St.Helens printhead. At the time I was working on testing and tuning the St.Helens printheads in our mop closet lab in Corvallis back in 1981, I had absolutely no idea that this product would start a revolution which fundamentally redefined the marketplace for printers, and firmly established HP as the undisputed world leader in that market. Neither did I in my wildest dreams ever imagine that the St.Helens technology (in an improved form, thanks to the folks in Boise) would still be on the corporate price list thirty years after intro, still shipping in 2014. This makes it by far the longest-lived product in HP's corporate history.

HP had some very hard years back then, during which various of our businesses dried up and blew away or, in some cases, went through the windshield and onto life support. But by launching a new business for HP, the ThinkJet team built a safety net that eventually enabled many HP people whose jobs went away during those years to stay at HP and build themselves new careers in the inkjet field. Our growth also provided career advancement opportunities not just for the armies of recent college grads we hired in during those years but also for people who started out here as materials handlers and security guards and eventually became skilled specialists in a whole new branch of high technology. Our growth also provided careers for people in locations all around the world, and the community of HP inkjet technologists eventually had representatives from places I barely knew existed as I sat in that dark and cramped mop closet in 1981 and spilled ink on my shirt. By 2004, inkjet printing had become a bigger business than all of HP was back when I started there in 1979.

In the same sense that those who watched our astronauts walk on the moon on their TV sets weren't thinking at that moment of the Saturn 5 rocket that lifted those astronauts off the launch pad several days earlier, it is easy for the world to forget the ThinkJet printer today. The office printers that HP now ships have as many as 70,000 nozzles in them, compared to the 12 that the ThinkJet had, and print at 1200DPI in full color instead of black-only at 96DPI. Like that booster rocket, the ThinkJet printer existed for just a brief moment before its fuel was spent and it detached itself from the rest of the payload to tumble out of the view of the cameras, all of which were focused intently on the next stage (in our case, TIJ2) as it burst into life. But in the same sense that those astronauts would not have walked on the moon had the booster exploded or fizzled out on the launch pad, HP would not have pushed forward with TIJ

technology if ThinkJet had failed in the marketplace. And just like that booster rocket, the people who invented ThinkJet did the heavy lifting that launched a fantastic journey for all the rest of us.

Each of you has a lot to be proud of. Thanks once again for making all this happen, and for letting me (metaphorically) walk on the moon for a little while. It was the greatest ride of my entire engineering career.

-Niels J. Nielsen, formerly of the HP Inkjet Components Operation, Corvallis
 March 7, 2014

(First dot matrix text message printed with a thermal inkjet printhead in Corvallis)