

Photo courtesy of Warren Bazemore
You may know this face of the guy on the right or you may not. Regardless, he's sophomore Warren Bazemore (with friend Mike Myers) and he's a part of many's childhood.

Slinky Boy

Slinky. It's a wonderful toy. Fun for a girl and a boy. If you don't think so, just ask USC student Warren Bazemore. He knows Slinky.

STEPHANIE SONNENFELD Features Editor

Picture it: you're little. Eight or nine years old. You're watching "You Can't Do That on Television" on Nickelodeon or the "Smurfs" on Saturday morning. In between heavy plot lines, the commercial for "Slinky," the ever popular staple of childhood fun and games, comes on.

You think it's cool that the Slinky on TV rolls down stairs and bounces back and forth. Funny, you think, mine can't do that. Don't worry, it's not supposed to — ask USC sophomore Warren Bazemore, he should know. He was the little kid joyfully extolling his praises on "Slinky" and rolling it down stairs in those commercials that were definitely all illusion.

Although his days as the "Slinky Boy" are all gone, they will really never end. Bazemore, a political science major from Irmo High School, has been involved in acting since he was four. Bazemore got the opportunity to try out for the Slinky commercial after his mentor, Bette Herring, initiated the idea of signing with an agent. Bazemore's agent got word that James Industries, the maker of Slinky, was holding open auditions in Columbia and throughout the southeast for the next Slinky commercials. He passed the tip on to Bazemore and the rest is history.

"I went in and sang the (Slinky theme) song and talked to the guy (running the audition). Within five minutes, he said, 'you've got it (the part),' Bazemore said. "It was the only audition

that happened like that."

The commercial consisted of Bazemore singing the famous Slinky song and rolling the Slinky down the stairs.

"It took us 75 takes to get it (the Slinky) to go down the stairs. We spend a lot of money making them go downstairs," Bazemore laughed.

"I've still got the Slinky I used in the commercial. It's something my parents won't let me get rid of," Bazemore added. "I've still got the shirt I wore in the commercial back home. This is special stuff."

Although Bazemore was only in the fourth grade at the time of the commercial's initial release, he was already somewhat of a seasoned showbiz professional. He had already done commercials for Woodhill Mall and J.B. White's. Bazemore admits that seeing himself in the Slinky commercial wasn't strange at all.

"What was really strange was one of my neighbors for many years moved to New York and he came back home to visit. He said 'yeah, I saw your (Slinky) commercial last week.' To know that it had been seen in other places than Columbia blew my mind," Bazemore said.

But, at the time Bazemore filmed the commercial, being on TV and a part of toy history was anything but blowing his mind. Like most fourth graders, fame was essentially the last thing on his mind.

Bazemore admits that at the time of the commercial's filming, he thought the "neatest" part of the whole process was that he got to miss

school.

Now, older and wiser, Bazemore looks back on his Slinky stint with a bit of fondness. One of the things about the commercial that amazes Bazemore is that it is still aired.

"I saw it (the commercial) the first semester of last year. I had just woken up and was getting ready to go to class. I just turned on the t.v. and heard it [the commercial] and thought I was hearing things. I didn't think that was really it and I was like, 'that's me!'"

Bazemore's connections with Slinky aren't severed just because he's not a kid anymore. In addition to being featured on the Slinky commercial, Bazemore was also on the box of another toy manufactured by the makers of Slinky called Tangles.

Recently, Slinky celebrated its 50th anniversary and sent Bazemore a 14-karat gold Slinky along with a t-shirt that had the words to the Slinky song imprinted on it.

"They (the makers) of Slinky said something about doing a 50th anniversary Slinky commercial and having all of us who have ever done the Slinky commercial coming back and doing something," Bazemore said.

"Slinky was a neat thing to do and it was fun, but I've never viewed it as an essential part of my life," Bazemore added.

Now that he's all grown up the question remains if he ever has children, will he encourage them to play with Slinky?

"I'll buy the store out," Bazemore said.

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—Political Science Sophomore, Warren Bazemore, on his memories of being in the Slinky commercial.



Photo courtesy of Warren Bazemore
Young Warren Bazemore at his height of Slinky fame.

What do you really do when your hard drive goes soft?

This weekend, I decided it was time to get some classwork done on my trusty Power Macintosh 6115, so I sat down at my desk and fired her up. But, instead of being greeted by the cheery "Welcome to Macintosh" screen that I know and love, I was chilled to see a picture of the "Sad Mac."

For those non-Mac users out there, a "Sad Mac" is an image of a small Macintosh computer that frowns, followed by error codes. Its appearance means that something has gone horribly wrong with your machine, and I knew immediately this "Sad Mac" was going to lead me to become a "Sad Marc." I could already feel the tears welling up in my eyes.

Now, I could tell you the terrible tale of technical support lines and Macintosh error codes that consumed my Sunday morning, but I think it might be more beneficial to discuss what you as a user can do when you encounter computing problems. For those of you who have not experienced a serious problem and are wondering what it's like, I think it can be justifiably compared to having a root canal done with a blow torch. My tips on handling problems:

1. Preventative maintenance. You can prevent problems from occurring by making backup copies of important data and keeping your equipment well maintained. This means you should backup religiously. It's also a good idea to periodically use a good disk repair program to find and eliminate any bugs that might be creeping up in your system.

2. Remain calm. While the following may sound like it goes without saying, I feel compelled to mention it because I have seen too many people go crazy over computing problems: Do not hit your computer. Do not attempt to throw

out of the window. If you must relieve stress, try calling your computer names or shouting at it with four letter words. (I find this works well for me).

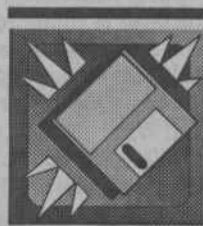
3. Use some common sense. It's amazing how ordinarily intelligent and rational human beings become blithering idiots when you sit them down in front of a computer. They can become so intimidated by the technology that they don't even try to logically figure out the problem.

There are documented cases of people calling technical support lines claiming to have printer problems, only to find they forgot to add a little thing like paper. Another classic is when modem users forget to plug the phone line into the modem. If these people had used their heads, they would have had a lot less stress.

If you encounter a problem, don't immediately go into orbit. Try and think. Think about what you might have done differently in recent operations to make the problem occur. Reason through the problem before blindly blundering for a solution.

4. RTFM. RTFM is perhaps the most important thing to remember when troubleshooting a problem. It's an acronym born from the Internet that stands for Read The Fu...uh...Manual. Too many users insanely assume they can solve a problem if they play around with a machine or program long enough. This can actually create additional unintended problems. Read your manual when you hit a brick wall.

5. Call technical support. I'm not gonna lie boys and



TECHNOBABBLE
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girls, it ain't never fun when you have to call tech support at a major company. Chances are you will be placed in a telephone waiting queue, where you will be forced to listen to Barry Manilow for half an hour or so. Personally, I find "Copa Cabana" somewhat annoying when my computer sits before me in ruin, but maybe that's just me.

In addition to Barry, you must also deal with numerous computerized voices and phone number options before you have a remote chance of actually speaking with a live person. When you finally get someone on the line, you then must go through the explaining of the problem and having it diagnosed.

By this point you will probably be sick of waiting, and sick of Barry Manilow and feel like going off on the tech person you are speaking with. But, keep things in perspective. It isn't the techie's fault that you have this problem and he or she didn't create the telephone queue either. Be nice to them and you will get much better service.

To make your ordeal with tech support more bearable, there are a few things you should do. Be in front of your computer and have it on so you can perform any tasks the techie asks of you. Also, be prepared to give information such as product serial numbers and software version numbers. All of this will help your problem be diagnosed more quickly and hopefully your problems will be solved.

6. Are ya insured? In some cases, problems can be beyond technical support's ability to solve. Something may be physically wrong with your disks, machine, etc. In these cases, it is important that your computer and peripherals be under warranty. Most products come with a warranty of some duration. Often, the store selling them will also have

a warranty and a return/refund policy. Pay attention to the terms of these. They may bail you out of hot water later.

If you have a piece of equipment that is vital to you and your work, consider purchasing an extended warranty for it. Many major computer makers often extended warranties, as do many resellers.

7. You're not insured? Ok, panic! If common sense, and manuals and tech support have failed you and your computer isn't under warranty, you aren't gonna be happy. Depending on the severity of the problem, you may have to buy new software, pay a technician to work on your machine or even buy a new machine altogether. In other words, don't go without a warranty unless you are certain you can accept the financial consequences.

In case any of you are wondering how the "Sad Marc" situation turned out, I ended up on the phone with Apple tech support where I waited for half an hour to speak with someone. And yes, I really did have to listen to "Copa Cabana."

Tech support finally decided my machine has a bad logic board and possibly a bad hard drive. Since I am still under warranty, these are being replaced. So, a happy Mac will hopefully soon be adorning my screen once again.

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