

In 1993, Microsoft stole my colleague's car

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I remember walking between buildings at Microsoft back in the 1990's and seeing a moss-covered, rusted-out jalopy in one of the parking spaces. It clearly hadn't moved in ages. The person I was with said, "Oh, yeah, Microsoft owns that car. They stole it from Bob." (Bob is my generic name for a Microsoft employee.) The Inaugural Day Storm of 1993 left felled trees and other wind damage in its wake on the Microsoft Redmond campus. One of my colleagues was out of town when the storm hit, and he returned to stories of fallen trees, wind damage, and howling winds. Bob also returned to find that his car had been stolen out of the parking lot outside his building. (It was at the time a common practice to use Microsoft's parking lots as personal vehicle storage.) Bob filed a stolen-car report with his insurance company and received his payment. As far as Bob was concerned, that was the end of that. But that's not the whole story. Right after the storm, the Facilities department set about cleaning up all the trees and branches and leaves that were strewn across the parking lots. They waited until after work hours so the parking lot would be empty, but that didn't work in one particular lot, because Bob's car was still there. To permit the cleanup to proceed, they towed the car to the far corner of the parking lot to get it out of the way. Thus, when Bob returned from his trip, he found that his car was gone. It was actually not that far away, but this particular parking lot was nestled in a densely-wooded area, with the lot divided into sub-lots, each separated by a small stand of trees, so if you didn't know where to look, you could easily have missed the car. This left the car sitting abandoned in a Microsoft parking lot. Technically, the car was owned by Bob's insurance company, and technically Microsoft stole it.

Pre-emptive snarky comment: "Wouldn't be the first time Microsoft stole something."

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