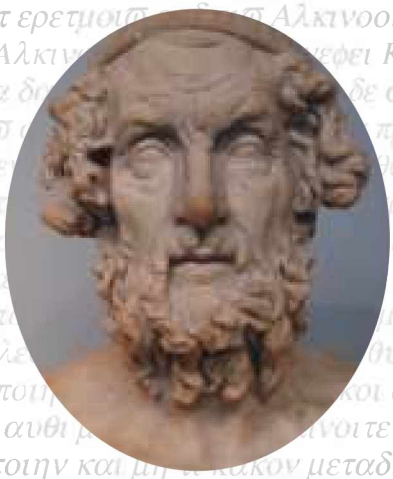σιον αιθοπα οινον αιει πινετ εμοισιν ακουαζεσθε ο αοιδου ειματα μεν δη α
τη ενι χηλω κειται και χρυσοϖ πολυδαιδαλοϖ αλλα τε παντα δωρ οσα Φα
ηφοροι ενθαδ ενεικαν αλλ αγε οι δωμεν τριποδα μεγαν ηδε λεβητα ανδρακα
αγειρομενοι κατα δημον τεισομεθ αργαλεον γαρ ενα προικοϖ χαρισασθαι
νοοϖ τοισιν δ επιηνδανε μυθοϖ οι μεν κακκειοντεϖ εβαν οικονδε εκαστοϖ
νεια φανη ροδοδακτυλοϖ Ηωϖ νηαδ επεσσευοντο φερον δ ευηνορα χαλκον
τεθηχ ιερον μενοϖ Αλκινοοιο αυτοϖ ιων δια νηοϖ υπο ζυγα μη τιν εταιρω
οντων οποτε σπερχοιατ ερετμοιϖ   Αλκινοοιο κιον και δαιτ αλεγυν
ϋν ιερευϖ ιερον μενοϖ Αλκιν   εφει Κρονιδη οϖ πασιν ανασ
αντεϖ δαινυντ ερικυδεα δ   δε σφιν εμελπετο θειοϖ αοι
δοκοϖ λαοισι τετιμενοϖ   προϖ ηελιον κεφαλην τρ
χνοωντα δυναι επειγομε   θαι ωϖ δ οτ ανηρ δορποι
ανημαρ νειον αν ελκη   ον ασπασιωϖ δ αρα τα
 ηελιοιο δορπον εποιχε   οντι ωϖ Οδυ σση ασπα
 ηελιοιο αιψα δε Φαιηκα   Αλκινοω δε μαλιστα πι
υθον Αλκινοε κρειον π   μπετε με σπεισαντεϖ απ
τε δ αυτοι ηδη γαρ τετελε   θυμοϖ πομπη και φιλα δα
εοι Ουρανιωνεϖ ολβια ποιη   και ακοιτιν νοστησαϖ ευρο
εεσσι φιλοισιν υμειϖ δ αυθι μ   αινοιτε γυναικαϖ κουριδιαϖ κ
δ αρετην οπασειαν παντοιην και μη τι κακον μεταδημιον ειη ωϖ εφαθ οι δ α
ϖ επηνεον ηδ εκελευον πεμπεμεναι τον ξεινον επει κατα μοιραν εειπε και
κα προσεφη μενοϖ Αλκινοοιο Ξοντονοε κρητηρα κερασσαμενοϖ μεθυ νειμ
ον οφρ ευξαμενοι Δι πατρι τον ξεινον πεμπωμεν εην εϖ πατριδα γαιαν ωϖ
νοοϖ δε μελιφρονα οινον εκιρνα νωμησεν δ αρα πασιν επισταδον οι δε θεα
σαν μακαρεσσι τοι ουρανον ευρυν εχουσιν αυτοθεν εξ εδρεων ανα δ ιστα
σευϖ Αρητη δ εν χερσι τιθει δεπαϖ αμφικυπελλον και μιν φωνησαϖ επεα π
υδα χαιρε μοι ω βασιλεια διαμπερεϖ ειϖ ο κε γηραϖ ελθη και θανατοϖ τ

So, now I've commented up to the current mailing, which is the closest I've been to caught up since mailing 237. And I've got ten days before this has to be mailed to Sheila. I'm going to get caught up. (Fingers crossed.) (Making it hard to type.)
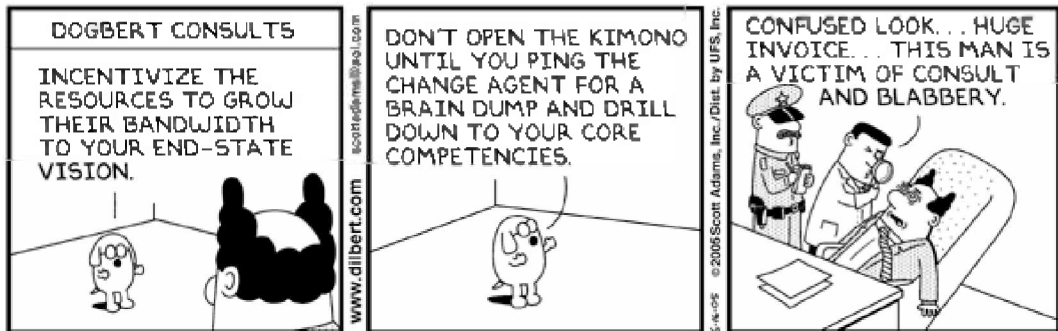
Things for which I'm grateful: When I had lunch with the guy I most respect in my management chain the other day, he pointed out that when Windows Vista ships, the people who get the big rewards will be the ones who did what they said they were going to when they said they were going to, not (as usual) the ones who caused the panic at the end — since my team has been within a day of the plan I've built for them for 18 months, this made me happy. Allie helped me on my annual wardrobe acquisition expedition. James nailed his introduction to accounting final.

Skip to the reviews on page 7 if you aren't interested in some geek minutia. I realize that **mike weber** did a similar software excursion in his zine in the September mailing, but I thought the compare-and-contrast would be interesting. This is, in large part, a story of backing off and retrying a couple of times to get things installed absolutely correctly so that I'd have maximal flexibility later.

I mentioned last time that I'd gotten a new chassis for Bywater, the boy computer at our house. Much faster CPU and bus, built-in USB ports, integrated video and audio. This moves me, hardwarewise, into the current century. I did this, in part, because Bywater crashed back in the first week of July when I had booted from the Linux drive. I now believe that a glitch in the Linux disk drivers scrambled the sector indexes on the Windows drive. A Windows repair installation fixed the immediate damage. However, at the time, I was concerned about the stability of the main drive in that machine. Liz offered me the secondary 40 gigabyte drive out of her computer — she'd gotten that drive to install Linux on, and realized she wasn't likely to actually do so.

Note that I wasn't very worried about losing the data. I was raised Catholic, but (as I quipped in e-mail to mike) when I discovered computers I converted to Backupitarianism, and have learned that when I violate the basic tenets of that faith, the Gods smite me. My last full backup was six months old, but I had incremental backups covering the intervening months, and I got a fresh full backup in the middle of July.

So, the first step was to move the hardware out of the existing Bywater chassis into the new one. There were three disk drives involved — the original Windows and Linux drives from Bywater, and the new drive from Liz's computer, which would become the new system drive — a CD drive, a DVD burner, a floppy drive, and a new USB memory card reader. The external peripherals — ZIP drive, printer, handheld scanner, Palm cradle, speakers — would come later.

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So:

1. Lock the cats out of the family room. This is a project for which feline help is completely contraindicated.
2. Confirm that the on-board controllers in the new chassis are actually IDE, not SATA as someone in the office had suggested. No problem.
○ The plan is to mount the new drive and the old Windows drive in the new system. Do a fresh install of Windows on the new drive, copy the data files from the old drive, pull the old drive, put the Linux disk in the new machine, do a fresh Linux install on the old Linux drive, and then set aside the old Windows drive for safekeeping in case I need additional data off it.
3. Mount the new system disk and the old Windows disk in the new chassis as master and slave respectively on IDE controller 1. (Yes, with new controllers, placement on the cable is sufficient, but I like to jumper the drives themselves anyway.) Set the old Linux drive aside, since there was no data on it, only operating system and utilities.
4. Mount the CD and DVD drives in the new chassis.
5. I realize that I've forgotten to run the "Files and Settings Wizard" on the old computer. Remount the old Windows disk in the old chassis. (Yes, the Files and Settings Wizard can be run from disk to disk, but I wanted to have the settings on a memory card just in case.)
○ When the boot fails, I remember that the Linux GRUB booter is actually loaded on the Linux disk, not the Windows one. The boot sector on the Windows disk points to the Linux disk to actually find the boot loader.
6. Remount the Linux disk in the old chassis. Run the Files and Settings Wizard.
7. Remount the old Windows disk in the new chassis.
○ Realize that life would be easier if Windows and Linux were on different partitions on the same physical drive and I retained the old Windows drive for data. (Most of the user files on this computer — particularly for me — are in directories other than the Microsoft canonical `Documents and Settings`

Homer

directory. More about this in a minute.) This means that the drive to be retired is actually the old 20 gigabyte Linux drive.

8. Remount the old Windows disk and the original Linux disk back in the old chassis so that I can figure out how much space the Windows and Program Files directories take. With that data I can figure out how to partition drive 1 on controller 1. (The answer is about 6 gigabytes.)
9. Return the old Windows disk to position 2 in the new chassis.
10. Start to install the floppy drive and floppy bay memory card reader. Realize that I've put the hard disks in the floppy bays. At this point, the family room floor is beginning to look like Fry's exploded.
11. Move the two hard drives down in the drive bays.
12. Start attaching IDE cables. Realize that the cables won't reach all the way to the bottom of the chassis.
13. Move the hard drives (for the fourth time) up in the stack. Attach cables. Label the hard drives on the outside of the bays with size, manufacturer, model number, and controller position. Label the removable disk drives on the outside of the bays with type and manufacturer.
14. Attach the floppy cables. Reposition the IDE cables so that the drives really are chained in the right order. Run the audio cable from the DVD drive to the sound card.

And then it was time to go and get raw fish for dinner, *and the morning and the evening were the first day.*

On the next day, I installed Windows on the new system disk, partitioning the 40 gigabytes into 25GB for Windows and 15GB for Linux. The Windows activation dialog insisted that I had used this Windows XP installation key too many times, and asked me to activate Windows over the telephone. Twenty minutes later, and a conversation with an 18-year-old in India — "tell me, please, sir, how many machines do you have this copy of Windows installed on now?" "I am moving the license between machines; so only the one." — in which I did not have to beat him up ("Look kid, my boss is Jim Allchin, who signs your paycheck. Walk down the hall and tell Srini Koppolla, the Vice President at your site, that I said hello."). I installed anti-virus software, and applied the 33 critical patches since XP Service Pack 2.

Except that after I'd done that, I took a break for a shower and breakfast, and I realized that sometime in the future — I might even be able to wait until Vista is released — I was going to want to reinstall the operating system again. Maybe I should break that 25 gigabyte system partition into an operating system partition and an applications partition.

So back for the second Windows installation on the new machine. I partitioned the disk into three bits, a 10GB partition for Windows, a 15GB partition for applications, and a 15GB partition for Linux. After Windows was installed, and the anti-virus software, and the patches, I started installing some of the applications software. And discovered that, first, much of the applications software wants to go into `Program Files` on the same disk as Windows boots from, and that, second, and worse, the `Documents and Settings` directory, which contains the frustrating `My Documents` directories, must also be on the boot disk. (There's a work around for that, but it's not officially supperted. And anyway, as I said, most of my files live outside of `My Documents` and most of James's live on floppy disks so that they're portable to school.)

So installation three of Windows began, returning to the original partitioning: 25GB and 15GB.

I had time to install Services for Unix and the Hummingbird X server.

But by then *the morning and evening were the second day.*

Because each new Windows installation changes the security tokens for users, I could no longer read the data files on the old disk. There's a simple fix to that, though: I log in as Administrator, bring up a Unix shell, and run the command `chmod -R jeff:none /D/home`.†

So far, so good. I now own my own data files. But I don't own the files from the old Services for Unix installation. I need those so that I can apply the add-ons and updates I've handcrafted to fix the bugs in SFU.

To fix that problem, I go to the root directory of the old SFU installation and run roughly the same command. Except that from the root directory, I have access to all the devices, so that when I run that command, it begins grubbing through the C drive, changing the ownership and access control on the LocalService and NetworkService accounts.

Crap.

And *the morning and evening were the third day.*

After an attempt to scrape the SFU installation, preparatory to reconstituting the LocalService and NetworkService accounts, I discover once again that the SFU installer and deinstaller, which were built by the development team in Hyderabad, still fails on any but a virgin installation. This may go part of the way toward explaining why I have to collect add-ons and bug fixes for SFU.

So, I manually remove the SFU directories. Except that, because the registry entries for SFU are partially complete, the installer believes that I've got a damaged

---

† Yes: there's an equivalent command I could type in a Windows command window, but I can never remember what it is.

SFU installation, and won't let me install a new installation until I've repaired the existing one. Which fails.

So, back to square one, and I do an *ab initio* installation of Windows again.

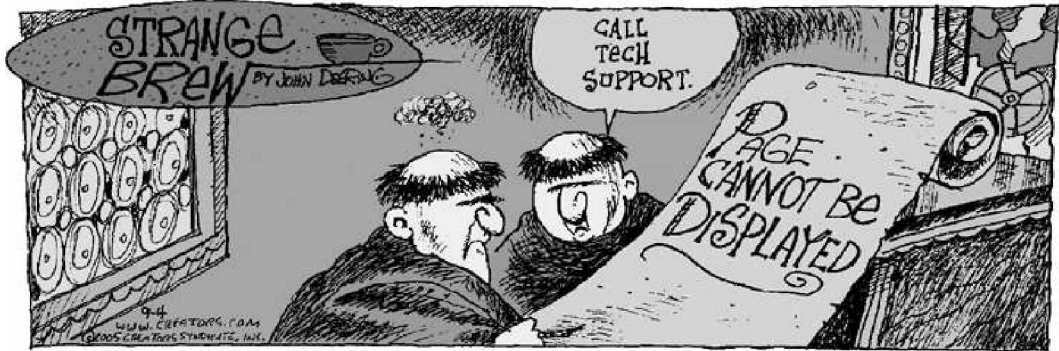And add the patches from Windows update.

And reinstall the anti-virus software.

And reinstall Services for Unix.

And change the ownership of my files.

And *very carefully* change the ownership of the files on the old SFU installation.

And the morning and evening were the fourth day.

The project lay fallow for about a week and then I took a couple of days off at the end of October, and spent the afternoons finishing up the software installation.

1. Installed the audio and serial port drivers for my motherboard, which are not part of the Windows distribution.
2. I organized the updates off the old SFU installation, and applied them to the new one. I built an archive of the files that constituted the add-on and bugfix package, so that I could apply them easily if I had to start from scratch again.
3. While I was organizing files, I consolidated all the PostScript font files, which had been scattered across several directories, into one place.
4. Added icons on the desktop for my remote login to Caltech and the SFU korn shell.
5. Reinstall the Hummingbird's Exceed X-windows server.
6. Reinstalled TeX.
7. Installed the drivers and utilities for the handheld scanner.
8. Added the Google toolbar for Internet Explorer.
   And the morning and the evening were the fifth day.

The next afternoon, I started installing the remaining application software:
1. Downloaded and installed Firefox, and set it as the default web browser.

2. Downloaded and installed the Adobe Acrobat reader.
3. Opened the box containing Microsoft Office 2000, and discovered that I had a virgin distribution of Microsoft Office 2003 so I installed that instead.
4. Updated Office to Service Pack 2, with patches from the Microsoft Update website.
5. Installed Palm Desktop.
6. Installed the SplashWallet utilities for Palm. (These are really useful: my favorite is SplashId, which keeps all my passwords in one place on the Palm in a highly-encrypted data file. The next best is SplashShopper, which does a generalized shopping list that I use for books to read and movies to see and things to pack when I travel.)
7. Installed the USB driver for the Palm cradle.
8. Added PalmInstall tool from Envicon, which allows me to syncronize the clock on the handheld to the NIST-syncronized clock on the desktop. It also installs files without automatically setting the backup bit on the files — this is useful when I don't want to sync very transient text files to the desktop.
9. Did the interminible first sync on the Palm, which took quite a long time.
10. Updated the Palm Desktop to version 4.1, which conflicted with the USB driver.
11. Uninstalled all the Palm software, and reinstalled:
12. Palm Desktop 4.1,
13. Palm HotSync,
14. SplashWallet.

And the morning and the evening were the sixth day.

When I got up the next morning, I installed the media, DVD and CD-burner software.
1. Real Player.
2. Windows Media Player 10, which includes code my team wrote.
3. Veritas RecordNow – the CD burning software.
4. Veritas Simple Backup.
5. Power DVD, the DVD viewing software, which I discovered wants to reset the screen refresh rate to 60Hz on my new video adapter.
6. I put in the screws on the side panels, and set the CPU box in the rack next to my desk.

And the morning and the evening were the seventh day.

And on the eighth day, I began composing SFFA comments.

> This gap between accepted reality (computers make us more productive) and the quantifiable result (they don't), has come to be known as the Productivity Paradox.. . . . . . Still, I think the paradox is a useful tool to assess the hours we spend focusing on our tools instead of using them — as in the better part of two days I spent trying to locate the source of my Macintosh troubles. This was a process in which I had never engaged back in the bad old days when I toiled on a typewriter. In a certain sense, those days were not bad at all. I never spent a whole morning installing a new ribbon. Nor did I subscribe to *Remington World* or *IBM Selectric User*. I did not attend the Smith-Corona Expo twice a year. I did not scan the stores for the proper cables to affix to my typewriter, or purchase books that instructed me how to get more use from my Liquid Paper.
>
> — Steven Levy, *Insanely Great, the Life and Times of Macintosh, the Computer That Changed Everything*

Reviews

Before I can review John Ringo's new technothriller, *Ghost*, which Toni described as "a boy story", I have to filter out the right-wing spew. That means ignoring the assertions that liberal journalists cause terrorism, that Fox Izvestia is the only truth, and that when Hillary Clinton is elected president she'll start publishing the names of secret operatives on the front page of *Pravda*.‡

That said, what's left is a story that starts with an ex-soldier — a character who could be much like Stephenson's small-town sheriff in *Cobweb* — thrust back into the fight. However, Ringo spends pages — in one case an entire chapter — on the glory of the kill and the details of the battle. The effect is to make most of the characters mere spear carriers in support of the brawny hero. This is a problem he doesn't have in the Prince Roger books he's written with David Weber.

If the first part of the book is battle porn, the second part of the book is bondage porn, and that compares unfavorably in both quality and continuity with the stuff you can get on the internet or even the sex scenes you can read in modern romance novels. (Though, I will allow that the chapter in which the hero gets permission to tie up his girlfriends *from their mothers* is somewhat amusing, if outright warped.)

And if the second part of the book is bondage porn, the third part is rape porn and French bashing. The former is of exactly no interest to me, and the latter is done better in the pages of the *National Review*.

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‡ Though how publishing secret agents' names in *Pravda* is different from having Karl Rove leak them to Robert Novak, I'm not sure.

Ringo is kind enough on the last page to provide a (mostly heavy metal) soundtrack for the book. And yes, predictably, Warren Zevon's "Lawyers, Guns, and Money" and "Roland the Headless Thompson Gunner" are on it. It would have been a nice tip-of-the-hat if it had included Blöödhag's° songs to either James Triptree, Jr or Robert Heinlein, or even Joe Haldeman (if they'd gotten around to writing their Haldesong yet).

¶In parallel with reading *Ghost* at bedtime, in the gym I was reading ***Zenith Angle***, Bruce Sterling's post-September 11th novel. The hero is an MIT-trained nerd, who ends up following in his grandfather's and father's footsteps and working on intelligence matters. Good dialog, good characterization, good plot.

¶In parallel with *Zenith Angle*, I listened to ***Jarhead*** in the car. About a war. The Gulf War. The first one. By a guy who was a sniper in the Marines. Lots of short sentences. Declarative sentences. In the form of imitation Hemingway. Except Hemingway didn't say "fuck" as often. In the end, it's anti-war book, but chock full of non-linear narrative, much of which seems rather pointless.

The Movie Critic's Day C_j f

¶As I wrote some time ago, I found Robert Crais' novel ***Hostage*** good except for the *deus ex machina* ending. The movie, starring Bruce Willis, kept up much of the tension, at the cost of some plot smoothness. Not the best movie of the year, but a good thriller.

¶On the other hand, ***XXX: State of the Union*** was a complete disaster. Bad plot. Stupid McGuffin. Totally failed suspension-of-disbelief. Any notion MGM had of building *XXX* into a younger, hipper successor to the Bond franchise went up in smoke with this one.

° Looking for other appropriate soundtrack songs for Ringo, I tripped over Blöödhag's lyrics to their ode to "Neal Stephenson", which wonderfully includes the lines, "Away in a mainframe, no crib for a bed / Born and bred by Propellorheads!"

Mailing Comments on SFPA 247/September

Ned Brooks ✍ The New Port News ☆

ct *Hlavaty: "I was really surprised that you had never ridden a bicycle. But then I never could stand up on roller skates."* See my reply to Arthur last time in the form of a picture of Einstein on a bicycle. Used to have a poster of that. I'm not sure where it's gotten off to.

ct *Lillian: "In the nature of the CIA rendition program, it is unlikely that we will ever know how many people they shipped off to be tortured. One was too many."* When our only President says "We don't torture," out of one side of his mouth, and then threatens to veto any defense bill that includes a ban on torture out of the other, he's either a liar or a flip-flopper. I'm seeing remarkably similar letters in the papers talking about "what if we had captured

an al Queda member who had information about a nuclear bomb in your child's school and the only way we could get him to tell us where it was would be to torture him?" This misses the two important points: ① torture never works — someone being tortured will tell you anything you want to hear to make it stop, which is why confessions under torture (such as are being used to imprison "non-combatants" without trial) are useless and ② assuming torture was illegal, and assuming was a legitimate national security reason for doing it, and assuming that the people doing it were actually caught and convicted, then perhaps the President might pardon the people who had committed the heinous acts in defense of freedom. After all, Bush Senior pardoned Caspar Weinberger for lying to Congress to prevent an impeachment over Iran-Contra. *"And apparently the culture is being tuned to accept this sort of thing - the heroic detective Stabler on Law&Order SVU assaults a suspect on every other show - tonight alone he bullied a paranoid schizophrenic right over the edge, and kept pushing another suspect's head under water in an attempt to extract information."* The counter-example to this was Rod Lurie's new series *Commander-in-Chief* in which a terrorist whose cell is planning to bomb elementary schools in the US is captured, and the woman President tells the attorney general that "she doesn't want to hear that the terrorist was tortured." When the attorney general turns the terrorist over to the CIA to be tortured, she's fired, not the least because the information they needed was obtained by raiding a terrorist camp.

ct weber: *"It hadn't occurred to me that the Germans were also subjected to Nigerian spam bet they don't get as much, German is harder to write. I wonder how many of them fall for it."* Had an amusing Nigerian spam t'other day claiming to be from a Catholic church in Dorset, saying Dennis Thatcher had left me £950,000 in an unpublished codicil to his will. "This may sound strange and unbelievable to you, but it is real and true," the note assures me. Yes, and I am the grand duchess Anastasia.

ct me: *"Is it true – as I read in some forgotten source – that Microsoft sold the Chinese government software to block the words (or the ideograms?) 'democracy' and 'freedom' from web sites?"* Not *per se*: all web services in China have to filter certain sites. I believe this actually happens in the transport layer — that is, at the broadband or ISP — not at the services themselves. That said, Yahoo recently responded to a subpoena (or however you say that in Mandarin) and turned over the name of some democracy activist in China who was using a Yahoo mail account. Jerry Yang at Yahoo rationalized this by saying that they were bound by the local laws if they wanted to do business in the country. I'm torn between the papa Bush's argument for contructive engagement and Bill Buckley's argument for not doing business with thugs.

ct Cleary: *"Thirteen computers - that's not too many."* Let's see: since I gave away the old boy computer when I built the new one, we're steady at boy computer, girl computer, Liz laptop, Jeff work laptop plus an Allie Mac in the summer: five. Plus the three old NEC laptops stored in Jeff's office: eight.

ct Strickland: *"If it's on the WWW, it's probably in HTML. The point is that by looking at View/Source you can see how it was done. The sites done by Dreamweaver however with probably have bloated incomprehensible code. But is the purpose of the course to learn HTML or to learn to use a software that makes HTML? I seem to recall being told that MSWord will do it for you."* Yes, Word will produce HTML. (File / Save As / select "Web page" under "Save as Type:".) However, when I do that, I always have to go through the HTML it produces and cut out all the extraneous stuff. That tends to decrease the file size by at least a third. Talk about bloated incomprehensible code. Well, not incomprehensible, but certainly bloated.

Norm Metcalf ✍ Tyndallite ✶

ct weber: *"Thanks for your plug for Nora Roberts' 'J. D. Robb' 'sorta SFish' near-future police-procedural novels. And thanks for specifying that they should be read in order. So what are the titles and what is the order?"* They're near-future, police-procedural, mystery, SF, romance. As everyone will be telling you, their titles are all `Something` *in Death*: *Naked*, *Glory, Immortal, Rapture, Ceremony, Vengeance, Holiday, Conspiracy, Loyalty, Witness, Judgement, Betrayal, Seduction, Reunion, Portrait, Imitation,* (out-of-pattern) *Remember When, Divided, Visions, Survivor,* and *Origin*.

Richard Dengrove ✍ Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette ✶

Your title page pulp cover reprint has the wonderful title: *"DEATH RIDES AN ELEPHANT"* We just re-watched *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, so the only logical response is "No, not on an elephant: Death awaits you all with nasty, big, pointy teeth."
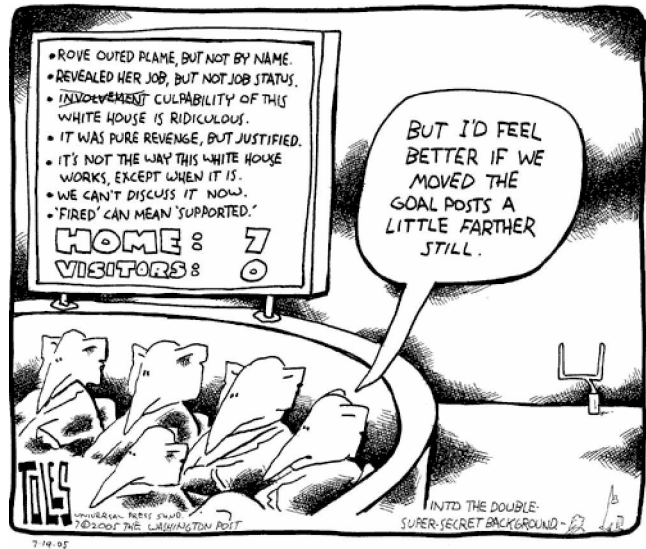
"TRIPS TO NEW JERSEY" I'm sorry settling your mother's estate is turning into a circus. At least you're getting to visit New Jer... oh, never mind.

ct Hlavaty: "A Rabbi Fundamentalist? We use the word Orthodox. For the crazies, we say Ultra-Orthodox. Fundamentalist Christians emphasize literal belief in the Bible while Orthodox Jewish people emphasize strict practice of the ritual." Interesting article in the paper the other day about how so many of the hip and trendy — Madonna, Britney — are studying Kabbalah, and the commercialization and pablumization of mystical Jewish teaching had been done by a single guy. My immediate reaction was "ah! it's yet another version of Scientology for the rich and gullible."

ct me: "That was one of the stupidest things to appear in the news: ...Rove's claim that since he referred to her as ...Wilson's wife, he didn't actually name her." In other words, Rove's arguing about what the definition of "wife" is, which I supposed is a step beyond arguing about what the definition of "is" is. But I'm particularly amused at last week's trial balloon: it didn't matter that Cheney's chief of staff and Shrub's deputy chief of staff conspired to leak the name of a covert CIA operative to the press because the CIA believes her name had been leaked years ago to the KGB by Alrich Ames. Well, Ames hadn't leaked her name to either the *Washington Post* or to the North Koreans or the Pakistanis or the Iranians. We've now descended into the same varying excuses that we had in the runup to the war on Iraq: we'll just make shit up and see what sticks.

"When it comes to Windows, Microsoft should figure out what capabilities its customers want and the simplest programming that will provide them." That's the problem, Richard: Microsoft knows what features its customers want, and it's all of them. Each customer only wants a dozen features, but each customer wants a *different* dozen, resulting

in a total of several dozen dozen.* And assuming you were going to throw it all out and start again, and only add new features when they could be completely thought out, completely coded, completely tested, and completely integrated, what minimal set would you start with? And remember that the list for the operating system (Windows) has to be interdependent on the list for the applications (Word), since features of the applications depend on facilities in the operating system. And remember that historically many applications carry around duplicates of facilities in the operating system because the development and release of the two is not synchronized.

"We were suckered into war by a group of Iraqi con-men? I thought it was a bunch of crazy Neo-cons: e.g., Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and William Kristol. Chalabi was only telling the Administration what it wanted to hear." I want to hear, "Hi, I'm Monica Bellucci, and I'm here to model exciting underwear," but wishing doesn't make it so, any more than Chalabi telling Dick Cheney that there wouldn't be any resistance to the invasion made *it* so.

"How can the guards at the National Gallery be nicer than the guards at the Smithsonian Institution? My understanding is that the National Gallery is part of the Smithsonian Institution." Nope: the National Gallery is a separate institution. It is interspersed on the Mall among the museums of the Smithsonian, but it's separately funded — most recently by large capital grants from the Mellon family. It surprised me, too, when I found it out. Look at the Smithsonian web page: the National Gallery appears on their maps for reference, but not in their lists. The NGA web pages are in a separate domain. ✉ *"I imagine what you meant was that the guards at the National Gallery were nicer than at another Smithsonian museum. I bet you were thinking of the Castle. That has the words 'Smithsonian Institution' on it."* Oddly enough, I don't think I've actually ever been in the Smithsonian Castle. Walked and driven by it, but I've never been inside.

Guy Lillian ✍ Spirtus Mundi ✱

"It's all over now as you read this, in late September or early October. I envy you knowing how it's all worked out. But today I wish I was a believer. Today, I hope that everyone who does believe raises his eyes to heaven and says a prayer for the Big Easy." Indeed. Prayers, good wishes, horror, disbelief, anger.

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*   And as you know, a dozen dozen features is just a gross.

Hank and I had some conversation about this at NASFiC. Hank's observation was right: this was notice that first-responder help has to come from local sources. When I pointed out that the looters should be shot because they were damaging social order, Hank again corrected me: "Not the guys who are getting food and water," he pointed out.

However, FEMA – the Feds – need to be there to backup the local first responders with logistical help, with water, with food, with communications gear, with transportation. In fact, that would be exactly what FEMA did in Florida in 2004, staging supplies and personnel north of the storm's path before Frances struck. But then the President's brother was governor of Florida, and Kerry was ahead in the polls.

(FEMA would also be the agency that sent $31 million in relief funds Dade County after Frances. Except that Dade county was one of the counties in Florida not hit by *any* hurricane in 2004.)

ct weber: "I like that story of ENIAC-on-a-chip ... how far science has gone in a lifetime." ENIAC-on-a-chip is a cute idea, but more practical was a PDP-8 on a chip. The '-8 was Digital's first minicomputer, and was used as a controller for lab equipment — even though it came in a three-foot square rack about 7 feet high. As soon as microprocessors started coming out, somebody had the bright idea of building this, and it simply replaced the existing lab controllers with a single board. The *really* cute trick was that the PDP-8 had only about a dozen instructions (the Pentium chip in your desktop computer has about 200) and the way they made the microprocessor version fast was to execute them all possible instructions in parallel and pick out the right result at the end.

✉ *"Pirates of Zan didn't win the 1960 Hugo for Best Novel - that was* Starship Troopers *but it may have been nominated."* Quite so. That's what it says on my spreadsheet of Hugo nominees — and in the version of that I published as a zine a couple of years ago.

ct Gelb: "Nobody's talking about Karl Rove in these days of Katrina and the death of William Rehnquist. But that doesn't mean he's gotten away with outing that whistleblower's CIA wife." However, there was a week in October where that was *all* anybody was talking about. The Shrubster wasn't going to comment. He said, "There's a lot of chatter, a lot of speculation." (That's a direct quote.) Which is, I point out, exactly what he was saying about all those bogus terrorist warnings during last year's presidential campaign.

ct LCopeland: "I love Molly Ivins' work. Her columns appear daily for me (selections from The New York Times *come to my e-mail) and are strong, on point, and righteous."* How are you managing the *Times* clipping service? Except that Molly isn't syndicated by the *Times* or it's wire service. When she was employed by the august *Times*, she was fired for filing a story in which she described the chicken preparation contest at an east

Texas county fair as "a gang pluck." Generally, I go to http://www.creators.com, and read her directly from her syndicate.

ct me: *"You notice that no one in D.C. is talking about the Rove 'outing' of Valerie Plame anymore. The national press nowadays is thoroughly cowed by W's administration; methinks the networks are terrified of being called liberal or even critical - so they dress up their headlines with such phrases as 'The President remained steadfast in the face of anti-war mom Cindy Sheehan ...' Gutless toadies."* The press may have been gutless before, but I'm seeing new evidence of a spine. Not just in the press — who are now filing articles asking who knew what when, and why the "intelligence" provided to Congress was different from the intelligence the President received, and the *Washington Post* published a page 1 fact-check of the president's self-defending "These baseless attacks send the wrong signal to our troops and to an enemy that is questioning America's will," speech on Veteran's day — and an open rebellion by Republican Congressmen over appropriations bills, including pulling the pork barrel allocation for Ted Stevens' bridge to nowhere in Alaska.

My marginal note said "Yup: and Shrub's approval is down to 37%," — the article in *USA Today* going with their 14 November poll said, "A 53% majority say they trust what Bush says less than they trusted previous presidents while they were in office. In a specific comparison with President Clinton, those surveyed by 48%–36% say they trust Bush less." — except that this morning (November 18th) it's down to 34%.

✉ *"I disagree. Seattle's closeted mayor, who spent his career schmoozing wingers with rhetoric condemning gay rights, is unfit for office on that basis alone, but when he trolls the Internet offering*

perks of his office (like internships) in exchange for sex, then he's misusing his job and ought to be immediately canned." It was Spokane, actually, but his closeted sexual preference should have nothing to do with his fitness for office, and I'm certainly willing to allow a duplicitous liar to hold public office — there are so many already there — but it was the using his office to buy favors to seduce barely legal young men that disqualifies him.

✉ *"Trust Berkeley to come up with an efficient computer program. I mention to mike how often I saw student engineers toting around boxes of punchcards; my roommate Eliot Seideman used to stay out till 2AM trying to get the program he'd written for class to run."* That's the danger of engineering students. Engineering — like math — tends to happen at crazy hours. Of course, you liberal arts types wasted you college educations doing things like chasing co-eds at two in the morning.

✉ *"Rosy's family sent us a 'new' computer, by the way, one she's spent the weekend cleaning. I don't I understand; it looks nice and shiny to me."* It's amazing how hard it is to vacuum a computer. You have to take it apart and get in all those little nooks and crannies. See my multi-page explanation earlier. (Though, I suspect Rosy was cleaning up the software on the machine.)

✉ *"Favorite commercials these days: the charming ad for the eHarmony.com lonelyhearts club, shown to the tune of 'This Will Be My Once in a Lifetime'. I love torch songs anyway."* Is that the Internet dating service with the gray-haired guy who looks vaguely like Mr Rogers? He was interviewed by Terry Gross on *Fresh Air* earlier in the year, and is a fascinating character. If I'm not garbling the details too badly, he was a practicing shrink who did a study with some students of his to figure out what characteristics between people made relationships made it last. But he's also an evangelical

christian, who won't let gay people sign up for the service. His explanation of that was actually kind of interesting: he said that their study was done on heterosexual couples, he didn't know for sure that the statistical workups even applied to gay or lesbian couples, and he didn't want to risk screwing up lives, or take a risk at dilute his success.

ct Dengrove: "Speaking of Pluto, have they named that tenth planet yet? I heard the the 'X' denoting '10', and the name denoting the fact that nerds like to fantasize about Lucy Lawless." In the intervening months, the Hubble telescope appears to have caught two additional moons around Pluto.

"If there is a God, and He regrets the obscenities like Katrina He unleashes on this world, then He has mercy, and at the end of her dreams Cindy's grandfather and Aunt Betty came to her where she lay by the elevator, touched her and woke her and carried her away from there, into peace and happiness and beauty and light. Where we will see her again, when we rest with Christ in Paradise." All the rage at the stupidity and malfeasance is dwarfed by my sorrow at your loss, Guy. The Cindy has a friend like you to care about her was a blessing for you both.

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So close and yet so far:

Marge got my comments up *to* the September mailing, and was finished on Veteran's Day. In the normal course of events, *Homer* would gotten my comments completely up-to-date. But, experience over the past six years, one month, and 28 days have taught me that every time I make a plan for my personal life, something is thrown into the path by work.

Thus, as I'm within striking distance of being caught up on comments for the first time since the spring of 2001, I have to spend the Monday and Tuesday of the week of Thanksgiving on a European customer visit. In Scandinavia. In the winter. Where the forcast is snow. Getting there will eat my Saturday afternoon and full Sunday, killing my fanzine time. So, I'll spend my airplane time to finish up comments in *Maggie*, which will be a continu-

Art Credits

The front cover: A photo of the classic bust of Homer, surrounded by text from *The Odyssey*, translated on the fly from the original UTF-8 encoding on the web to the POSTSCRIPT symbol font. Unfortunately, I don't have a polytonic font handy, so all of the diacritical marks are missing from this passage. But then, it's all Greek to me, as I suspect it is to you, too. Page 2: *Dilbert* from 16 Jun. Page 5: *Strange Brew* from 4 Sep. Page 8: P Chapman from *The New Yorker* of 10 Apr 1926. Page 9: Mike Peters editorial cartoon from 3 Mar. Page 11: Tom Toles editorial cartoon from 19 July. Page 12: Monica Bellucci in a still from *The Matrix Reloaded*. Page 14: Ben Sargent editorial cartoon from 14 Nov. Page 15: *Frazz* from 13 Nov. Back cover: The classic photo of Lisa. A fitting counterpoint to last issue's back cover photo of Bart. (And yes, the text ends in the middle of sentence.)

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