

The Egg and I



A collection of thoughts
captured during the Data
Egg's first year of daily use

by Gary L. Friedman



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June, 1992

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2 Introduction

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----- June 24, 1991 -- 1:17:37 A.M.

Diary entry: Sunday, June 23, 1991: Today I legitimately
used the Data Beeper more than ever, starting with ideas
on
the road to work to a memo to Steve Jenkins to billions of
quotes and random ideas on the plane (including group

e-mail) to the diary entry I'm typing now on my way to my hotel in Washington D.C. Boy, am I glad I invented this, or what?

The above paragraph, appearing at the end of a day-long session, summarizes the spirit of the Data Egg and gives a flavor of the utility provided by this invention. Constantly plagued by a brain which insists on coming up with important ideas at the worst possible times, I came up with the idea of this handheld electronic companion in April of 1990. Thirteen months later, after much prototyping and clay sculpting, I created a working prototype which is still in daily use to capture thoughts dealing with spacecraft-related projects, loose ends to put on my ever-expanding "to-do" list, ideas for inventions or improvements to everyday items, and sentiments about things that bug me.

The idea for the device was sparked by my evaluation of a unique pocket organizer back in 1989, designed to compete against the popular Sharp Wizard and Casio BOSS. The device, called the AgendA, was unique because it used a 7-button, one-handed typing scheme to work around their competitors' deficiencies: tiny and unusable keyboards.

The AgendA's biggest problem was that its design needlessly required the user to be anchored to a desk and a chair; despite its portability, a user simply could not use it easily while walking or driving. A simple enhancement came to mind: "Why not take the brilliant 7-button scheme, and wrap the buttons around a shape that is easy for the hand to hold, such as an egg?".

Such a subtle modification resulted in tremendous advantages. For the first time, it was possible to access a computer while walking, driving, running, or lying down; positions in which it's

impossible to use a laptop or palmtop computer. When tethered to a personal computer and a head-mounted display device, it can finally provide better computer access to the bedridden. (You DON'T need a healthy back to use a computer, right?) I often use this setup to handle my electronic mail in the morning when I'm too tired to get up but want my colleagues to think I'm already at the office.

The invention actually began as a plastic Easter egg with seven buttons glued to where my fingers naturally fell while holding it. At the time it was necessary to strap the device to my hand while in use, but this proved to be such a nuisance that new shapes were quickly sought to alleviate this problem. A four-month brainstorming period then ensued, and clay sculpting undertaken to further prove out the large variety of shapes.

One of the shapes from the brainstorming phase was tiny and fit snugly in the palm, and was actuated not by the fingertips but rather by the first joints of the fingers. Too small for me to build in my laboratory, I had to compromise and enclose a working prototype of the Data Egg into an old, gutted-out Motorola beeper, which fit comfortably in the hand and, as a fringe benefit, was a socially acceptable device to wear. (Later on I took advantage of its deceptive packaging by adding a "beep" function that allows me to excuse myself from boring meetings.)

Since then the Data Egg has been my constant companion, and has set my mind at ease by allowing me to capture thoughts and ideas before they evaporate. I also write letters and memos (and introductions to small books) while I drive; not because I'm driven to be more productive, but because I know that if I wait 'till later, the lost thoughts will never be recaptured.

The Data Egg has a few advantages over using a tape recorder, which is the tool of choice for people who work in creative fields: 1) no transcribing is needed to achieve paper output (although the text often has to be polished once downloaded to a personal computer), 2) it can interface directly to a

computer (when tethered to a PC, as in the Bedridden Workstation), and 3) discreet operation; it's user doesn't call attention to him/herself while at the symphony. The Data Egg is not meant to compete with voice recognition technology; rather, I see it as a useful complement to facilitate the quiet capture of ideas while away from the workplace.

The volume you're holding contains roughly one third of the thoughts captured during the unit's first year of regular use; it is what remains after the to-do-list items and the work-related thoughts are extracted. (For an idea of what a day's worth of thoughts look like, kindly refer to the Sample Dump located in the Appendix.) All of the entries have since been expanded and polished so as to be coherent to the casual reader.

I've assembled this book for two reasons. The first is to see if these extraneous ideas are even worth capturing, and if they are, what's the best thing to do with them? (The rest of the ideas -- the two-thirds not included in this text -- are work-related, and help me become less absent-minded in general. Those ideas are definitely worth capturing.)

The second purpose is to help 'further the cause'; to show the world the potential of this simple little device from the perspective of a real user. As a fringe benefit, it also spreads to the world some thoughts which would otherwise just sit on a diskette and gather dust.

3 Andy Rooney/George Carlin Type Random Thoughts

JPL employees are restricted as to what products they can buy. The vending machines only stock Mars and Milky Way bars, and the credit union only authorizes auto loans for Saturns and Voyager

mini-vans. (We're also restricted to buying Pioneer audio equipment.) I thought our situation was bad until I learned that Northrop employees can only choose items B-2 or F-5 from vending machines.

Howdy Doody is a dangerous TV role model. If kids see that a dummy puppet can be in charge, when they grow up they might elect one as Vice President.

I need to apply to a graduate school which takes the Oz-ian philosophy: "I can't give you brains, but I can give you a diploma!" (I think USC already works this way.)

The Little Green Sprout probably lives in Brussels.

What's all this nonsense about naming a baseball team after Indians cheapening their heritage? If that team were to suddenly change their name to the "Nazis", people would then complain that they're being glorified!

\$1.50 for a tiny bottle of water? Is it any wonder that Evian spelled backwards is "naive"? [Ed. Note - Maybe it should have been called "Rekcus".]

How can we work towards a standard computer user interface when we can't even standardize on hotel shower interfaces?

Can I get my VCR to flash 1:00 for daylight savings time?

Back in the 60's there used to be a Dick Tracy television cartoon. What bugged me about these cartoons, even when I was young, was that Dick Tracy didn't actually *do* anything in these cartoons. Each episode would start with Dick talking to his boss over the phone: "Right, Chief. I'll get on it right away!"

Then

he'd instantly subcontract the assignment to some cartoon character better suited to children's attention spans than a boring, expressionless, devoid-of-distinguishing-features-save-his-square-chin Jack Webb-like cop which Tracy was.

Questions that I hate #3,017 - "Those are great pictures. What kind of camera do you have?"

Did you ever notice that Oscar the Grouch and Danny DeVito are the same person?

Full circle department...At one time typewritten letters carried much more authority than the handwritten letter. Today, with the advent of computerized form letters, handwritten letters are treated with more importance and urgency. (Typewriters were also created because manual writing was too slow. Today we're seeing computers that boast of handwriting-recognition software because they're perceived as being "better".)

Why do people always clap at the Daily Doubles?

America treats its murderers better than it treats its homeless.

"London Bridge is falling down". God, what a dumb lyric! Why not update it and call it, "Hartford Civic Center roof is falling down?"

Molly invented a stainless-steel sink. It's called the Unbrownable Molly Sink.

New logo for JPL's Information Systems Division: A picture of DATA (From Star Trek: The Next Generation), in the kitchen with his hand caught in a Cuisinart. The slogan reads: NEXT GENERATION DATA PROCESSING.

More examples of evolving non-racism - the opening of Showboat had the title song "Niggers all work on the Mississippi", which was put into the show's opening for shock value. Since then it was changed to, "Colored men work on the Mississippi", and soon, no doubt, will give in to political winds and be titled, "African Americans all work..." (Don't you just love evolving euphemisms? We're now adopting the term "physically challenged" instead of the word "handicapped", which in turn was a euphemism to replace "crippled".)

"He didn't Chez." - Favorite Jerry Lewis punch line.

Oliver North is getting into the foot apparel business. His first product will be the Iran Contra Sandal.

Monopoly was originally designed to teach students about monopoles. (The next version should address dipoles. Diopoly?)

Chevrolet should now come out with the Scotia (a follow-on to the Nova).

Have you ever seen a hostess be seated?

It was a mistake to hold the Welcome Home Desert Storm Veterans parade in Hollywood. As all those Generals were cheered on by Hollywood types, they must have thought "I went to war to protect THIS???"

A rolling stone gathers no moss, and software is moss.
[Translation: There's something to be said for hardware standards.]

New product idea: A new industrial hot-air blower which is SO hot, it spews out a vacuum!

How come Capt. Picard doesn't ever do bureaucratic paperwork?

Is proverb the opposite of reverb?

Back in the olden days, amateur cameras were basic in functionality, with the nifty features being saved for the 'pro' models. Nowadays, with such new models as the EOS 10s and the Maxxum 7xi, the features (far too many in my opinion) are all on the amateur models, and the pro models are no-frills basic functionality.

Only on an MIT application form: "Which Star Trek do you like better?"

"Buy American cars to insure the health of the auto industry." That kind of thinking was responsible for keeping the Yugo alive. The issue is one of Nationalism vs. Capitalism. It's apparent we don't believe in Capitalism anymore...We keep putting up protectionist trade barriers with countries against whom we can't compete like Japan.

#3 on my list of boring jobs - laying down the drum track for reggae music.

We're here so when the sun goes nova and obliterates all life on this tiny speck of a planet, we'll be able to appreciate the loss.

The joys of traveling on a NASA budget: The water pressure in the hotel room was so high, I could use the shower as a water pick.

"So what does a person your age do with a Ph.D. in Philosophy?"

"Get depressed."

You know the old Neil Sedaka song, "Waking up is hard to do"?

Before she graduated in June, Marcie was a poor starving college student. Now she's just a poor starving college.

Politically incorrect things you cannot say in public: 1) Stereotypes contain some truth. 2) The Emperor has no clothes. 3) Fantasia is boring.

Shouldn't someone apply computers to tailoring?

If people argue over the intuitiveness of a user interface, then it probably isn't that intuitive to begin with.

Can you believe that 976-WAKE is still in business?

The fact that people keep coming up with ways to improve on the mouse merely indicates that there's something fundamentally wrong with it.

Stereotypes are composed of three elements: ignorance, tunnel vision, and truth. (If it wasn't, it would be the Irish who would be accused of being cheap.)

"You know, I really have contempt for people who have contempt for other people."

Never let engineers design things. And never let programmers write their own instruction manuals.

Imitation is the sincerest sign of lazy people who wish to capitalize on your success without having earned it.

With knowledge comes disillusionment.

Politics is just another symptom of human nature.

Isn't it just like an American to concentrate on things they don't have and ignore the things they do?

The amount of legroom on an airplane is directly proportional to the previous quarter's financial statement.

Universities are wasted on college students.

20th Century Insurance offers discounts if you have a technical degree. If cops aren't allowed to make judgements based on stereotypes, then why can insurance companies?

It should be illegal for bosses to manage things they don't understand.

If I ever got a Labrador Retriever, I'd have to name him J.P. (for Jet Propulsion).

"Welcome to Irvine - The City Without Entropy"

A Hassidic photographer probably uses tflash.

The new Cray-3 is so fast it can run an infinite loop in 6 minutes.

Perception is 90% of interpretation.

Tests reveal that an over-trained neural network produces a bureaucrat, duplicating empirical results we see in humans.

Why doesn't the government tax entropy?

The instant unions cease to exist, the need for them will instantly re-emerge.

"You're a human being, not a guy!" - The kind of compliments I get.

Corporate secrets are an excuse for being less competitive than you could be.

I'm wasting my time getting to know all these software packages

for a living. All of the experience which makes me valuable to my employer today will be obsolete in 2 to 5 years.

Why does The Tonight Show open with the words, "From Hollywood"?

It comes from Burbank! [Historical Note: This was the 'old' Tonight Show, which starred Johnny Carson. -Ed.]

Would 'Marionette' be the name of Marion's daughter? (How about Annette?)

"I don't think that Patrick Swayze movie stands a GHOST of a chance."

Will they want to ban re-runs of "Good Times" in 20 years, the same way they ban WWII cartoons because they're now being interpreted as racist?

In the future, will software development be looked upon the way animation is viewed today?

Do Eskimos catch cold? (If so, how do they recover?)

VCRs of the 90s are like home computers of the 80s... everyone has to become their own systems integrator, denying the inherent power to the general public.

Capt. Kirk must have had one of these Data Eggs - that's how he was able to write all those Captain's logs while in jail or all tied up or etc.

Use a magnifying glass when viewing an eclipse to enhance the detail. [Don't try this at home, kids! -Ed.]

A goal without a plan is a dream.

In ten years, the only two economic powerhouses that will be left in the world will be Japan and Disney.

The last people in the world that will abandon the keyboard for voice input will be programmers and civil servants.

Bad taste department: I heard a reggae version of Exodus today on KCRW.

We support a Doug-free America. Doug must be angry.

General Mills' marketing department wants to cater to Vietnam vets: Their new Trix has Raspberry Red...Lemon Yellow...and Agent Orange.

MC Hammer must have got his fashion inspiration from rental tuxes.

The only way to tell the old and the new Jetsons apart is by the sound of the phone ringing.

Bandwidths will always expand to whatever the new technology will provide, if nothing else for higher resolution cameras.

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----- Friday, 9/13/91 -- 11:13:32 P.M.

New battery put in on 9/13/1991 after 10 weeks of heroic service. Strange, there was no early-warning battery failure (red light) this time, it's as if the analog-to-digital converter had changed its readings. I shifted the threshold from less than 44 to less than 46. That should fix it. I also changed the rest of the characters to decimal and fixed the Function key array. I still need to add a colon (and a slash, if not already there) to the character set.

Why does it take so long for cognitive paths to form?

Vivaldi was played at Ralph Klestadt's wedding. Yup, it was a Maps to Star's Homes educational wedding.

The best cure for baldness is self-confidence.

For years I've heard predictions that computerized cash registers will ultimately lead to inept cashiers. In fact, the complexity of some of today's new registers prohibit even a mathematician from using one without having had a one-week training course! Those who made the original predictions didn't anticipate that engineers, with their finely-honed skills of obfuscation, would play an important role in their design. Had they known that, they would have gone, "Whoa! *Engineers* are going to be designing these things? Then I take back everything I said!!!"

They should sell used, broken-in saxophone reeds for beginners.

There's a bank in Los Angeles called "Lippobank". I guess that's where they suck the assets right out of you.

There's also a bank named "Marathon National Bank." Hmm...I wonder...

- 1) Is it owned by Dustin Hoffman?
- 2) Will they go the extra mile for me?
- 3) Are they open round the clock?

Marvin Minsky's [The father of Artificial Intelligence, now resident at the MIT Media Lab - Ed.] idea about fixing bugs by writing new code to patch old bugs is modeled by our own legal system.

Brew ha ha - Funny beer.

Techno-regression - Etch-a-sketch, having gone digital in the 70's, has now reverted back to the mechanical glass version. I wish more people would realize that hi-tech isn't always the best way of doing things.

I'm working on my Master's Feces.

Learning should be like rock climbing. It should be challenging without being painful.

Admissions office - A new name for confession.

It's as basic as FORTRAN.

Mouse pad slogan - "I have a Macintosh, so I *must* have three hands!"

Only in Southern California - an oriental restaurant called "Casa de Oriental", in a Spanish-style architecture.

How can technology set you free when it's tied to an AC outlet?

Why hasn't Ronald McDonald been phased out like his parent company had promised in the late 70's?

Now I know why there aren't any English restaurants. [Ed. Note - Food in England isn't as...ummm...Tasty as it is in America.]

Analog neural networks will never be able to argue competently with Americans, who still stick to the binary way of seeing things.

Strange moments in life...When I start making lots of grammatical and sentence structure corrections to my College Professor's letter of recommendation.

Should I get the Robert Maplethorpe calendar for anybody this holiday season? :-)

----- Wednesday, 11/27/91 -- 9:49:00 A.M.

Today's notes are being typed in by hand whilst on the plane

coming back from 'Meet the Professors' night at MIT. For the first time, the software in the egg crashed during normal use. While trying to repair it last night (and failing because I forgot to save the software in non-volatile RAM), I witnessed that just the act of storing 0 into PORT1 can indeed make the egg crash. Although I knew that the unit crashing and the light being on were related, I never was able to correlate cause-and-effect down to that instruction before.

MIT was really great. I did all the touristy things: visited the Boston computer museum, the Aquarium, Harvard, the place where they filmed CHEERS, gave myself a self-guided tour through MIT (Caltech is tiny compared to this place)... I also visited music stores where I found the perfect digitally-sampled piano (from Roland) and discovered that plastic-coated reeds sounded absolutely perfect in my Xaphoon. (And Howard Herman said they weren't any good! Well, neither was a calculator when the guy snubbing them was using a slide rule!)

I was in such a good mood after that 7-hour session that I got up enough guts to go down to the subway and play the Xaphoon. (I always wanted to do that!) Although my playing was clearly that of an amateur, the perfect sax sound coupled with the subway acoustics sounded absolutely wonderful. I think subways were built so that saxophones would finally be able to sound good when played inside. That transportation stuff is merely a fringe benefit. :-)

We need to write a short Jerry Pournell-type story about Dad's VCR logistics and switchology. It would be a good reference point for historians to relate just how ridiculous it is to use today's consumer electronics before the turn of the century.

A religious argument is one where both parties have already made up their minds beforehand, and have an equal amount of hard

facts
to back up their position. (Typically, that amount is zero).

"I've been tampered with!" Don't these speech-capable car
alarms
know that you're not supposed to end an alarm caption with a
preposition?

Early computers of the 30's and 40's used a Remington
typewriter
as the means of I/O. This looked pretty primitive to me until
I
realized that computers of today are no better; they just use a
fancier kind of paper.

The technology may improve, but TV stores are still are showing
I
Love Lucy reruns in their showrooms.

Americans are constantly being told that beauty is synonymous
with happiness (with the possible exception of ugly, disfigured
men who habitate either sewers or old French opera houses).
They
should be introduced to Norwegians, who are all healthy, blond
hair, blue eyes, and have the highest suicide rate amongst
countries. Guess some other factor is at work, huh?

Poundal cake - The snack for Physicists.

You know, it's funny... When I was applying to Northridge I
made
fun of the application form because it wanted to know all the
awards, publications, Nobel prizes, etc. that the applicant has
earned. Now that I'm applying to MIT, my complaint is that
there
isn't enough space to list all of those things!

MIT cannot be more work than JPL project SANTA II. MIT cannot
be
more spirit-crushing than Cal State Northridge.

What good is knowing the right answer if nobody listens?

User feedback is never wrong. Problem is, it's also never consistent.

Life is a metaphor. [But life is also like a simile. -Ed.]

Why don't eyeglasses double-correct when you look at mirrors?

It's a strange world...It costs less to extract money from Carl's Jr. than to withdraw it from my bank's automated teller machine.

How about skunk pellets instead of mace as a means of self-defense? [It's been done! -Ed.]

I wish newspapers would just once run a story without the prerequisite clever or punny headline.

The Heisenberg principle as applied to computer systems...Even if you know everything about a computer, from having the schematics and source code in front of you as well as all the printed documentation and expert tech reps, you still cannot completely predict the behavior of the system once your application is developed.

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One day I was commenting to a high school student about how advertisers are sending the wrong message and instilling the wrong values in America. For example, Budweiser now has these inane ads which go, "Why ask why? Try Bud Dry."

"Do you realize what that means?", I yelled, waving my arms wildly, "That means that you're not supposed to think, contemplate, or reason. They're telling you just give them your money, have a beer, and veg out!"

"Chill out, Gary! It's only a commercial." was the insightful

response. And therein lies the crux: the recipients of these messages have no idea of how powerful and subtle the message is, or even that they're being manipulated at all. This high school student saw nothing at all wrong with the commercial, and thought my "bad message" complaint was paranoid and overblown. Nobody really pays attention to those anyway, right?

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More hybrid names: Kennedy Space Center for the Performing Arts

[Last night was spent walking around the Santa Monica Pier and capturing the constant brainstorming related to the Nintendo Telephone device. I had about three pages worth of ideas/details/procedures. Boy, I love this Data Egg!]

If VRTech starts selling the Nintendo GamePhone I designed, my job dilemma will be choosing between The Final Frontier and The Decline of America.

Hmmm...Morton Thiokol is the same company which makes table salt. I didn't know that! I heard that soon after the Challenger explosion the salt division shortened its name to just Morton.

Valerie said that being a monk in Greece makes you humble. So does being a graduate student.

Prevention is much better than postvention.

If post- is a postfix that infers 'after the fact', then what should the term "post office" mean to us?

Lessons learned - it is often the case that when comparing two alternatives the technical strengths of the arguments might be equal, but the emotional positions are vastly different. Procurement must run into this all the time with Sun purchases.

(I sure did with that Sparcstation/X terminal debate with Alan Morrisett!)

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----- Tuesday, 2/25/92 -- 11:08:34 A.M.

The whole world is myopic. Ross Wentworth kept preaching about why the IBM PC succeeded when their competitors offered better products. Ross would say, "It's *obvious* why the IBM PC beat out Apple and CompuColor and IMSAI. It's their marketing!" If that's true, then why did IBM have a string of marketing failures

shortly thereafter, like the portable (luggable) PC, their laptop, the PC jr., and the PS/1?

Skip Mathews from Intel (and the other folks at PPC) also think they have the reason that palmtops and pocket organizers are selling so well despite their unusable keys and unreadable screens. "It's the price!" "You can't put the Poqet in your pocket, it's too big!" (Nevermind that other machines, such as the Atari Portfolio is larger and cheaper, and all others have a smaller screen and unusable keyboard, yet they are all selling respectably well.)

I have my own opinions about why these illogical successes are taking place... 1) capitalism contains more randomness than most people are willing to admit, and 2) the world is not full of model capitalists who carefully consider every purchase and design decision.

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----- Wednesday, 2/26/92 -- 11:07:09 A.M.

I thought that a planetarium is supposed to project stars as they appeared hundreds and thousands of years ago (or 'Billions and Billions of years ago', if you're a fan of Dr. Carl), taking into account the fact that the universe is expanding and the relative

position of stars to each other will change. Yesterday's tour at the Griffith Observatory revealed that this isn't the case; the stars are essentially "fixed" slides divided into two hemispheres, with only the planets capable of independent motion. They *lied* to me!!!

"Miz Dos personal computers." - television journalists once again show off their deep understanding of the field.

A lot of laptop ads are now showing alleged users sitting on the beach at sunset, using technology which is supposed to set them free. Who wants to recalculate a spreadsheet during a beautiful sunset? [Ed. Note - Come to think of it, who would want to capture ideas while driving or lying down?]

On the David Letterman 10th anniversary show a few weeks ago, Bob Dylan was one of the musical guests. He was truly awful. Unshaven, on some type of drugs, and mumbling to the point that I couldn't understand anything he was saying...and I knew the words! After the song he got a standing ovation...not because he was good, but because he was Bob Dylan. (I referred to this as the Marvin Minsky syndrome.)

We can predict the weather better than we can the economy, leading me to believe we don't understand how the economy works.

Why do educational films still insist on using those gigantic lantern batteries for their electricity experiments? NOBODY uses those anymore!

In about 100 years, driving a car will be like horseback riding - an obscure sport only for the elite.

Roger Hill (one of the Gods in PPC) is a math professor who could work out incredibly complex math problems in his head. Why, then, does he need a calculator to begin with?

President Bush just awarded Sam Walton (the owner of Wal-Mart) a Presidential medal of honor. In return, Mr. Walton should have thanked Pres. Bush and his predecessors for creating the depressed conditions in which his stores could thrive.

Who was the idiot who decided to put speakerphones inside cars in order to make cellular phones hands-free? Speakerphones are characteristically sensitive to background noise, something that automobile interiors have in abundance. Either a headset or a very directional steering-wheel-mounted mike would solve the problem properly, but I've yet to talk to anyone who sees the current speakerphone solution as being a problem.

The Brady Bunch haven't come out with an album for quite a few years, now. Wonder if they're going to break up?

Arrogant saying of the week..."Democracy doesn't work as well with a mass of stupid people."

The magic field hasn't changed in 20 years. It's still the same old shit. [Ed. Note - The preceding was observed after taking Seth to a magic show at Caltech. I had never had contempt for the field until now, even though I practiced the art enthusiastically 20 years ago.]

The DSN [Deep Space Network] appears to be a good example of how a Soviet tracking station might look and operate. In NASA's eyes, the DSN meets its stated objectives and therefore is in no need of additional funding. I proposed that the DSN get its funding solely by selling its data by the byte, thereby providing

capitalistic incentives to upgrade their infrastructure and improve the archaic operator interfaces. Such radical ideas, however, were deemed outside the scope of our meeting.

I wonder what MacGyver would have done at the Union Carbide poison gas incident in India?

People are always complaining about mechanized telephone voice mail. Nobody notices that these services, bad and impersonal as they are, are still better than department store phone systems used to be.

What an ironic turn of events...A month after being turned down by MIT, within a year the guy who signed my rejection letter might be working for me!

In France a decade ago, Wheaties were packaged and sold under the name, "80's". [Ed. Note - If you don't get it, ask someone what the french word for '8'.]

Chick Hearne should start announcing chess tournaments. Might acclimate them more toward the TV viewing audience.

Seen on the cover of the April '92 "Bride" magazine: SPECIAL WEDDING ISSUE!

"I don't know exactly how much memory my Macintosh has, but I can tell you that I'm able to load a Microsoft program plus at least one other." - Me, explaining that I had a *lot* of RAM.

How about a GUI [Graphical User Interface - industry buzzword meaning it looks and feels like a Macintosh. -Ed.] which uses controlled spitting as a pointing device? (Camels would love it!)

4 Brainstorms/Invention ideas

"Hologram Wallpaper" will allow interior decorators to make rooms look bigger without having to resort to mirrors. With holograms, the perspective changes as the person walks across the room, making the effect that much more complete.

Problem: Paranoia about airport X-rays ruining film refuses to die, allowing manufacturers of lead-lined film bags to live off of unconfirmed hype.

Solution: A specially-calibrated radiation-sensitive card, similar to those worn by nuclear plant workers, can be sold to professional photographers to be included in their film bag. When passed through the numerous airport X-ray machines, these cards will accumulate and display total exposure levels, letting you know if your film has been/is about to become fogged. This device will eliminate once and for all the paranoia that feeds lead-lined bag sales, as well as inform and reassure the professional photographer about the status of his images.

VCR interfaces that the average American can program: 1) Use voice; the ideal interface would be as if you were talking to a butler: "Charles, record 'Cosby' for me!". 2) Use a light pen, and manipulate a large clock and calendar in the same fashion as a kindergartner. [See below for an expansion on this idea. -Ed.]

The world needs an overhead projector that displays something other than a partially-focused trapezoid onto the wall. This can be achieved via a lens-shifting technique that architectural photographers have employed for years to correct perspective. It amounts to a larger diameter lens and an additional \$5 mechanical adjustment. [More people would benefit from this than all of

that 'Neptune' stuff a few years back.]

The world also needs an expert system that brings up the radio station that's playing the good song right now.

How about a video-to-FAX frame grabber? Sticking your transmitted sheets under a lens for .1 seconds would be much easier than having it scanned in slower; plus you can send photos and magazine articles without having to make copies first!

Why not embed ultraviolet-responsive barcodes onto postage stamps; that way post office machines can automatically check for proper postage instead of just the existence of a stamp.

A video camera mounted in the car with a date and time stamp running whenever the car is in motion would be great for settling insurance claims. The camera could be mounted in the trunk, facing up toward the speaker panel, which would have a hole. Above the hole, occupying the same space as a third brake light, would be two mirrors oriented at 45 degree angles: one deflecting the image of the rear window; the other of the front. Both images appear stacked at the camera in a horizontal split-screen fashion. Now, the next time an airhead sorority girl runs a red light, smashes into three other people (including me), and the cop believes her story that everyone else was at fault, I'll have some sort of recourse.

In a virtual office you could sit in the middle of an infinitely long circular desk; kind of like a condensed coil squeezed into 2-D space. You could swivel around to get to papers behind you, but the more you swivel the further away you actually get from your starting point; in the real world, you'd instead end up in

the same place.

I need a magnifying dental mirror so I can see the camera's viewfinder when it's near the ground and pointing upward.

Car Phones should use an operator-type headset with voice command; this way they can be used without requiring the driver to take his/her eyes off the road and creating a dangerous situation for the rest of us. Feed the sound into one ear only;
this way sirens can still be heard.

Include fiber optic lens in headset microphones; applying a pattern recognition system to the shape of the mouth should increase voice recognition efficiency by an order of magnitude.

(Would have been a good MIT Master's thesis.)

A great anti-theft device for camera bags would be a loud buzzer which sounds off if the device gets more than X feet away from a beeper/radio receiver which the photographer wears.

Classical musicians need modern technology to turn pages of music during a symphony.

A non-intrusive device to add trap focus to the Maxxum 9000 camera: a bandpass audio filter (or hook up a sensor to the LED) to trip the shutter as soon as focus confirmation "chirp" is achieved. This way you can set the camera on a tripod, pre-focus, and when ever an animal or athlete or whatever appears at the correct distance, the shutter is tripped. Surprisingly, nearly all autofocus cameras don't have this obviously (my opinion) useful feature.

Sell a program that runs in the corner of the computer screen (or calculator screen for the HP48) and displays an update of the

national debt every second.

What the world needs is electronic mail that sends acknowledgments of delivery and whether it was read or not.
[We have it; the Macintosh mail has this feature. -Ed.]

How about a car radio whose volume increases as the car's ambient noise gets louder? [It's been done; check out the Nissan Maxima. -Ed.]

Integrate an electronic camera and voice recorder into the Data Egg/beeper. When memory gets small enough, this will only mean the inclusion of a charge-coupled device, a microphone, and a lens. A full-screen display on the face will show the image instead of many lines of text. Indispensable, portable, and un-encumbering tool for journalists.

Book idea: Technical achievements of the Apollo program. It'll give a deeper appreciation of the amount of work involved, and will be ancient enough to not be seen as propaganda.

PA systems on airlines desperately need an audio limiter. (Alternatively, a toothpick perpendicular to the mouthpiece would do the job as well.)

Why not invent a machine that broke in saxophone reeds? Maybe by pulsating air at it or stick it into a pulsating yet highly viscous fluid.

Put spare thyme in a fire extinguisher glass case. The sign on it should read, "Spare Thyme. Break glass when under pressure."

What the world needs is a microwave oven that opens on the right.

What the world needs is a vanishing cane to umbrella.

There exist programs that can look at text and break it down into speakable phonemes, and there are speech recognition systems that can do the same thing. Why not match the two outputs with fuzzy logic and then proceed from there? [That would have been my approach to my MIT Master's thesis.]

Snooze control - "Wake me up when I get there!" - for the Intelligent Vehicle Highway system proposal.

The ideal companion device to these increasingly popular pocket organizers would be an rf-coupled wristwatch. Watches are handy display devices and alarms, but they are severely input limited.

An ideal system would have the watch automatically download all alarms and appointments whenever it's within the vicinity, like whenever the user accesses the organizer...If the watch is in proximity, a connection is achieved, data is downloaded, and the watch will always be up-to-date with annoying reminders.

What we need for a carpool business is a delivery van with exercise equipment inside so the members can get their half hour workouts in during the trip. Put in lifecycles, Nordic Track, etc. Would really be great on trains, too. This way you can relax when you get home instead of eating up precious free time by exercising.

VCR anti-theft device - put ALL the functionality into the remote control, then keep the remote in a secure area when the house is vacant. (Given the current trends, such a design should be unintentionally introduced within the next few weeks!)

Why doesn't someone make a Xerox machine that takes standard 500

sheet blank paper denominations? The current method of tearing open neatly packaged 500-sheet blocks and stuffing them sloppily into poorly-designed trays takes too much time and makes the copy room "unneat". [Ed. note - Xerox machines must be designed pretty well if this is my only complaint!]

To save bandwidth on criminal identification systems, why not assign a number the finite permutations of the police sketch handbook, and just transmit the numbers (rather than the entire image) to the remote terminal for a full picturephone or videophone implementation? (Great project for the media lab.)

We need an APL interpreter for the HP-48.

I finally figured out what's causing that short flash in the HP-71 controlled slide show: When the tone signals are transferred to the CPU and the decisions are being made, the operating system stops feeding the control lines. What's needed to solve the problem is some latch circuits on the OR8 and OR9 lines, plus an additional control signal (OR7, which blocks interrupts to the CPU, might be used for that as well, meaning no software changes are necessary).

--

We need a device which forwards voice mail from the phones to the MacII. Maybe something which calls voice mail periodically, digitizes the contents, and then sends to Quickmail. Here's how it would work:

 You could do the automatic retrieval of software on a SPARCstation, which has the requisite development tools and sound input jack. Will need dedicated dialing circuitry and sound input, but just use a Cermatek for that. The tough

part will be reformatting the Sun sound format to Apple sound format so it arrives properly.

Understanding the verbal prompts of the voice mail can be sidestepped by paying careful attention to the duration of speech and the pauses between sounds (words). (Lack of messages can be inferred by a short message, for example.)

Since UNIX doesn't guarantee that you'll be seeing the bits in real time, infer the time lapse by the number of bits that flow through. The program can inquire every five minutes or so and then forward immediately.

Try sending a voice mail message to myself @ sun and see if

I can decode the format. Better yet, look up the published standard. May also have to translate sound encoding from the Sun to the Mac.

Friendly VCR Interface Design Brainstorms

I would like to devise a friendly VCR interface using a new approach to speech recognition: syllables. Using syllables as a common middle ground, we should be able to get high accuracy rates from a limited domain vocabulary, such as TV show names occurring throughout the week. The project will encompass three domains, attacking the problem from both ends:

- 1) a speech-to-syllable conversion program,
- 2) a text-to-syllable conversion program, and
- 3) a specialized method of downloading a weekly TV schedule into a database. (An OCR text-to-database program might work, or perhaps the information could be had from special text catalogues embedded within the vertical blanking

signal.)

Like any problem in Artificial Intelligence, intelligence will be perceived if the knowledge domain is limited. In this case, all it has to know is the names of TV shows (a finite list) and the following limited command set:

"Would you [please] record xxxxxx...."
"What [time is] xxxxxx...."
"Show me [what you're recording so far]"
"When is xxxxxx..."
"Cancel [that]"
"Nevermind" "Forget it" "Lo Siento"

The unit could also be expanded to control items throughout the house rather than just a VCR. Use signaling methods superimposed over AC power lines, like the BSR X10 system does. The search software can also be influenced by the viewer's viewing history, so commonly-viewed shows will have a much higher weight associated with it. Throw the number of invocations into a field at the end of a record; that way when there's doubt or conflict then this field could be consulted. It could also employ a telephone line interface so you can call in your shows while away from the home (which is usually when you think of them).

The VCR Butler should be built into a cable TV converter box, with a powerful infrared expander in front so a VCR located just below it will be able to "see" the commands. Such a configuration will also solve the age-old problem of how to program the VCR to record regular as well as pay channels automatically.

Problems of distinguishing verbal commands from background noise can be eased by subtracting ambient noise (if there is any)

from
the sound track of channel three, the program currently being
viewed.

The TV screen (again, channel 3) should be used for visual
feedback when displaying lists, and to resolve conflicts; voice
response alone should be employed for simple acknowledgments.

--

Non-verbal Cartoon For Getting The Data Egg Idea Across

Line drawing about a kid sitting under a tree daydreaming. You
can tell he's daydreaming because all these thought balloons
keep
growing out of his head, containing icons of ideas -- fulcrums,
large buildings, equations, lightbulbs, speaker at a podium,
etc. Soon after they're created they all start to fly off into
space, until they just burst like soap bubbles, representing
the
ideas evaporating.

The kid gets up and starts to walk around a white background
and
the same thing keeps happening. You can tell he's not pleased
with this situation because he keeps walking around with his
shoulders down and had looking at the ground all the time.

Finally he walks by a store, gets an idea, runs in and buys a
big
box called the Data Egg, with a picture of a hand using it on
the
front. He opens the box and pulls out a butterfly net and a
big
bag, which he proceeds to use to catch his subsequent ideas and
then puts them in a bag for preservation. Clearly his body
language is happier, as he starts to dance around and play with
the butterflies, etc. as ideas of greater variety form and are
caught at an increasing rate.

Maybe a last scene where he goes into his room and pours them into his Ideas closet which by now is overflowing every time he opens it.

The last closing title simply says, "The Data Egg. A tool for capturing your ideas. (Available at all fine stores.)"

5 Lists

Progress we can do without:

- Zircon Corp.'s Ultralevel Six electronic carpenter's level.

No

perceivable advantages over the battery-less bubble type.

- Digital tire pressure gages. The only advantage it has over the mechanical kind is that the battery can die.

- Tri-Star's \$1500 microprocessor-based wire stripper (!)

- Computerized office building directories. (Yes, you heard right. A PC with a touchscreen interface replaces the large signs that you only have to look at to find your way.)

- Auto-on drinking fountains and wash basin faucets which stop delivering water when the electricity goes out. (Water is a crucial resource when disasters strike. Often during such times

the electricity is the first thing to go out, while the water flow is rarely interrupted.)

- Digital phones - (the power in Building 525 went out yesterday

killing the phones as well) will make us just that much more reliable on power.

Semi-annual list of oxymorons:

Express Mail

All Natural Ice Cream
Regular Unleaded (only an oxymoron if you're over 15)
Software Management
Turbo Diesel (or Clean Air Diesel; take your pick)
Jordan Technical Institute
Elementary Linear Algebra
Mexican Deli
Management
unbiased opinion
constant variable
undecided major
firm estimate
exact science
student teacher
partial solution
UNIX Security
Beirut University College (a two-level oxymoron -- kind of like
"Sears Savings Bank")
Intelligent graphical user interface
American Honda
Cuisine of Ethiopia
"..as easy to use as a PC."

Stupid Advertising Slogans

"Adray's...Where you go to buy...not shop"

"If it doesn't say Kodak, it's not Kodak film."

"Texaco System 3 - It's that good".

"New Diet Pepsi is 100% 'Uh-huh'."

Skinless Kentucky Fried Chicken is advertised as being
healthier. (Further evidence of America's decline.)

In the "It's not a bug, it's a feature!" department:

- "Domenico's - Pizza worth going out for." (Lack of delivery
is

now a feature.)

- L.A. Times newsstands proclaiming "Now 35 Cents". (The price was never higher.)

- Winston Cigarettes had an ad campaign in the 60's that read, "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should". After someone pointed out that this was bad grammar, they changed it to "What do you want -- good grammar or good taste?" (Boy, they sure got my respect with that move. First thing I'm going to do when I get old enough is buy a pack of Winstons!)

- The Bic disposable razor commercial from the 70's, which pointed out that the handle (whistle) was actually hollow.

- The phone company will, for an additional fee, give you the privilege of canceling the Call Waiting feature (for which you're already paying monthly) for when you're using your computer over the phone.

Things I Pioneered Years Before They Were Commercially Successful
Yet Didn't Make A Dime Off Of Any Of It

Joke Line ("Runch II", 1975) - was followed up by 976- and (900) numbers (1985)

Shoe Phone (1981) - Sports Illustrated offered an inferior version as a subscription premium (1990)

Hold On (tm) (1990) - A nearly identical device (liquidated thru DAK) was a poorer design than my Hold On (which in turn was a poorer design than the passive version by the patent holders), and sold well because of the cheezey, square-wave version of Beethoven's "Für Elise" that passed as "music-on-hold" for 100,000 people. (If only I had no taste...)

Ultrasonic Tape Measure (1986) - Small device sold in luggage shop for \$35 that does the same thing (1990)

Telephone Touch Tone Decoding device that allows you to turn appliances on and off by remote control (1984, also outlined in Chapter 7 of Control the World with HP-IL) - An identical device appeared in the Heathkit Catalog (1990)

An answering machine that has a speech synthesizer which tells you how many calls you've received, and puts a verbal date and time stamp on each message. (1984) - Brian Grossman bought an answering machine in 1991 which does the same thing. (But it doesn't allow you to turn appliances on and off by remote control, so Nyyyah!!)

The Data Egg (1991) - Infogrip developed one in parallel with my efforts, and planned to sell it in July '92 -- roughly 14 months after mine was functional. [Never happened. - Ed.]

Graphical network management software (1987) - Young Lee and I worked on an expert system to help detect and isolate faults, and show the system manager what's wrong graphically. A database of the machine's configuration was also accessible by double-clicking on the machine's icon. Today, all the commercially-available tools behave this way.

Times People Have Approached Me And Said, "Gary, You And I Are Going To Make A Million Dollars!"

Guy from UPS: Build illegal ON TV decoder boxes (1979)

Roma Rubinov: Build an infrared-activated electronic bathroom soap dispenser (1985) (I rejected the idea because it couldn't be used during a power failure. Why would people want to replace a simple mechanical device to one that uses power and is

difficult to install? I saw one in an airport in 1990, making this a ripe entry to the next category below.)

Ed Zorn: Build ultrasonic obstacle detector for trucks going in reverse; then get some exclusive contract to corner the market and ignore potential liability suits (early-80's)

Ed Ryu: Hold On device (1989)

Steve Silsby: Work on FORTH module to interface to HP48 for hotel room locks or some such (1990)

Mike Varnen: Biorhythm program and 900 number stuff (1990 -)

Jenni Levine: Write software to schedule part-time hours for retail stores, given constraints. (1991)

Sheri Hastings: Make a phoney beeper; she even has a friend who looks for things to invest in like this. (1991)

Brian Beckman: "Let's start a company making Nintendo peripherals. I know a venture capitalist!"

Brian Beckman: "Forget Nintendo! Let's do Virtual Reality instead. I know a venture capitalist!" (1991; two weeks later)

Things I've Thought About Doing Years Before It Was Actually Done

- Handheld order-taking system for waiters/waitresses which transmitted order to kitchen and added things up and kept track of all orders in memory. (Mine would have done it via infra-red; the one I saw on 2/91 at the Rusty Pelican used radio frequency links.)

- Putting a video camera in the car. (Actually, it hasn't happened yet, but since the Rodney King beating, someone's bound to do it soon.) (1991)

Things I've Done That Someone Else Improved Upon Either During
Or
Just After My Version Was Completed

- Portable Touch Tone (r) generator (1976) - a dedicated IC came out just when my second re-wiring was half-completed. (Years later, Casio came out with the same thing in a @#!\$%^&* wrist watch!)
- When I just completed the intelligent autodialer which recognized busy signals, that afternoon the phone company changed their busy signals to one long, one short. (Footnote: It reverted two days later without adequate explanation.)
- During Data Egg construction, Blue Earth Research (the company that made the computer board) announced a slimmed-down version (without connectors or lithium battery, two things I had already removed) for half the price.
- I was all set to piece together an HP-71-based laptop, when Poqet Computer did the same thing in the same size, but with an 80C88 chip inside. (A few years later, HP95LX did the same thing, but you couldn't type on theirs.)
- My 'autobody experience' joke [See Guide to Quality TV Viewing for said joke] appeared on the TV show 'Married with Children' about two months after I thought of it.
- Baton Systems came out with a unit which allowed two geographically different people to play the same Nintendo game via telephone. By that time I had already worked out a detailed scheme to keep synchronization using standard game cartridges and even handle call waiting properly.

Things I've worked on that turned up later in a Patent Search

- Hold On (tm) - Patented by two folks who lived in Sherman Oaks. (Their design was better than mine, too!)
- Data Egg (tm) - A patented was granted to a guy in Virginia about six months before I thought of the idea.

Times When I Couldn't Believe That I Was The Only One To Have Encountered This Problem

- The new Kodak slide projectors only autofocus *after* the lamp turns on, making dissolve unit slide shows call attention to themselves. The old ones never did that. When I called Kodak to mention this design deficiency, they acknowledged that there was a problem, but said, "Nobody's ever noticed THAT before!".
- Upgrading the RAM on the Atari 1040 ST was impossible because the Korean instructions left out the crucial step of disabling some internal RAM. Thousands of people must have purchased the upgrade kit; how come the technicians at the Atari center never noticed the instructions were bad?
- Sony Corp.'s video editing console (EVS-9000) can't insert steps while in program mode. (This case is different; they *knew* about that deficiency but decided it was OK to market it anyway.)

Peter Pan's little-known siblings:

- Tai
- Baking
- Ja
- Verichrome
- Glass Pan Flute (his sister, after marrying Jaques Flute)

Pan Dora (and her Box)
Pan Demonium
Pan-O-Rama Mall.
Pansies.
The Pan is mightier than the hook.
Peter Pan Handler.

Phrases with inexplicable origins

Happy as a lark.

Pig in a poke

Sick as a dog.

Sleeping like a log

(And really, I've never seen how snug a bug in a rug really is.)

Disillusioning translations:

Kamikaze - divine wind (Japanese)

Gung Ho - work together (Chinese)

Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday (French)

Pravda - Truth (Russian)

Minolta - sun rays on rice fields [or some such]

(Japanese)

Redundant phrases: The La Brea Tar Pits (literally translated:
The The Tar Tar Pits)

Top 10 Recommendations to Help Get the Economy Moving

- 10) Sell Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Savings Bonds.
- 9) Replace Food Stamps with Disney Dollars
- 8) Levy a tax on entropy. (Would generate more money in Japan.)
- 7) Put Home Shopping Network on a VHF station.
- 6) Offer to go to Mars with Japan; will drain their economy so
that we'll be on more equal footing.
- 5) Charge admission to political refugees upon entry to the

U.S. [They're actually proposing this one!!!! -Ed.,
1995]

- 4) Employ spokespeople like Hulk Hogan or Arnold Schwarzenegger to make televised national policy speeches instead of the President.
- 3) Put a stop to arbitrary protectionist measures, and just build a wall around the US "like we shoudda done all along".
- 2) Charge \$1.45 for 1040 Tax Forms
- 1) Have Emelia Marcos buy socks at Gucci's

Old engineers attitudes:

"With Radio, you had to use your imaginations"

"Slide rules made you think about the answer and would have you recognize wrong answers instantly! Today you young kids blindly believe whatever the calculator tells you!"

"Vinyl LP's are superior to these new digitized CD's. The digital sampling causes stress!"

Jokes overheard at an engineering conference:

What's an engineers' punishment? (60 Hertz.)

What's the common phrase heard at the HP user's conference? ("Does anyone here have a calculator?")

What's the difference between a used car salesman & computer salesman? (The used car salesman knows when he's lying.)

How many software engineers does it take to change a lightbulb?

(None; it's a hardware problem.)

What's the sound of a 747 make when it hits the ground? (Boeing! Boeing! Boeing!)

What did the old disk drive say to the young disk drive?
("Long
time no seek.")

Characteristics of a good play:

- You shouldn't be able to predict the ending 10 minutes into it.
- It should challenge your mind.
- It should force you to re-examine old values.
- It should change your perspective.
- It should teach me something I didn't already know.
- The audience shouldn't feel as if it's emotions are being manipulated.
- The audience should witness performers possessing true talent.
- The story is not formula (well, not obviously formula, anyway.)

Organizations From Which I've Been Rejected Even Though I Was More Than Qualified

- Life Magazine
- Jewish Big Brothers.
- Hewlett Packard.
- Pacific Bell. (They yawned when they saw the Shoe Phone.)
- Walt Disney Imagineering (Twice; the first time it took them 2 years just to acknowledge the receipt of my resume!)
- Silicon Systems design contest. (Contest was to design the best application for their Touch Tone (r) decoding and generating chips. 1st prize was a trip to anywhere for two. Less than 10 entries, two of which were mine. They decided to call it off.)
- Johns Hopkins National search for technology to help the handicapped.
- MIT Media Lab

A lot of fundamental "givens" in my life have changed during the past 20 years:

- IBM is now coming out with leading-edge products first.
- TI is now making products worthy of my consumer dollar.
- Communism has fallen in Eastern Europe.
- General Telephone offers top-notch service.
- Microsoft might actually be worth working for despite their reputation of programmer burnout.
- The long-time goal of having the computer be as easy to use as a telephone has been met. (This happened with the introduction of telephone voice mail.)

6 Other people's quotes

Anyone who thinks that the government doesn't tax the air we breathe has never had a scuba tank refilled.

- Dan Sabath

"One definition of competence is the sustained appearance of outrageously good luck."

- Brian Beckman

"When your money works for you, you're rich. When you work for your money, you're not rich."

- Bill Cosby

"Algorithms, like friends, are the most fun when they're really smart or really stupid."

- Joseph K. Horn

"I would give my right arm to be ambidextrous!" - Sergio Morales

"If you wanna get to heaven, you've gotta raise a little Hale."

have

- Alan Hale, Sr.
[Well, he would
said it had he
thought of it!

-Ed.]

"I have a receipt, therefore I exist."

- Scott Burleigh

"I would have written you a shorter letter, but didn't have the
time."

- Thomas Jefferson
[paraphrased]

"One day I can see 40 or 50 transistors on a single chip."

- Dick Lee, Texas
Instruments after

he

had created the
first IC flip

flop.

"People don't know what they like, they like what they know."

- Kevin

"Volkswagon is now offering job loss insurance. If you lose
your
job, they'll pick up the payments and insurance for as long as
you're unemployed. Boy, sounds like if you're a GM employee,
now's a really good time to buy a Volkswagon!"

- Jay Leno, Feb. 4,
1992 [Historical
note: that week GM
announced some
71,000 layoffs.]

"All he did was stand up on top of a bunch of tanks! What's
the
big deal?"

- Mike Varen on
Yeltsin standing

up

to the Gorbachev
coup attempt.

"The house was so cold, Walt Disney stopped by and asked if he
could spend the night."

-Kevin

"I know engineers, they love to change things!"

- Dr. McCoy

"You know, defecation will do you good."

- David's old Indian
genetics

professor,

referring to 'the
vacation'.

"The sign of a good negotiation is when both sides walk away
aggravated."

- Kevin Gershan.

"NIH was invented in the United States."

- My Dad

"We all have an infinite capacity for self-deception"

- Harry Bertucelli

"Being a good programmer requires total immersion. Being a
good
manager requires total dispersion."

-Brian Beckman

"America is the only country where you get a second chance."

[One of the fringe benefits of a mediocre educational system.]

- Dan

Why must hale stones always be the size of something else?

-George Carlin, The
Tonight Show
starring Johnny
Carson, May 14,

1992

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."
- Derek Bok,
president
of Harvard.

"(The computer) seems to me to be an Old Testament God with
lots
of rules and no mercy."
- Joseph Campbell,
The
Power of Myth

7 Guide to Quality TV Viewing

Gary's Guide to Quality TV viewing.

[Ed. Note - These were originally written for an internal JPL publication for which I was editor. Many of these were then recycled into Christmas cards destined for family and friends. The complete collection appears below, although most of the JPL-specific jokes were relocated to the end for fear of alienating everyone else.]

Sunday

8:00 (7) The Cartridge Family - Shirley Jones stars in this NRA-sponsored family show. Songs include "I shot the Sheriff", Happiness is a Warm Gun, Better Off Dead, and selections from "Annie Get Your Gun". (30 min.)

8:00 (13) The Secret of NiMH - Mrs. Frisbee discovers that intelligence comes to rats who feed off of Nickle Metal Hydride rechargeable batteries. (2 1/2 hr.)

8:30 (9) The Grudge Match - Darwin was right.

9:00 (7) 20/20 - Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas points out

that some things go better with Coke cans. (1 hr.)

9:30 (11) Jack And The Bean Stock - Jack sells his shares of B&H after the market climbs skyward. (1 hr.)

9:30 (LIFETIME) The Lone Ranger Returns - Having developed cancer, Kimosabe undergoes Chemotherapy. (2 hr.)

10:00 (56) Ire of 'Chi' - Jewish Scottsmen get a kilty conscience.

10:00 (4) Dear John - John moves to a farm in the midwest, and starts getting 'John Deere' letters. (30 min.)

10:30 (PBS) Into the Hoods (PBS) - a psychological profile of the Ku Klux Klan. (1 hr.)

11:00 (11) Movie (SciFi) "Something Wicked This Way Thumbs" - Stalin tries to hitchhike. (3 1/2 hr.)

11:30 (5) Wumpus Woom -Elmer Fudd plays this classic computer game in his new wing.

12:00 (PBS) Arafat - Part three of this six-part series introduces us to Yassir's Italian relatives, who are a-skinny. (1 hr.)

12:30 (37) Mom's the word - Mom keeps a secret.

12:30 (4) Knight Ridder - Michael Knight goes for a career change, and decides to become a publishing giant.

1:00 (Infomercial-Net) The World ACCORDing to Honda - This show is an ACCURate PRELUDE to last week's show taped at the CIVIC Center.

Monday Evening

7:30 (22) Islam Today - Report shows that the new leader of Iran isn't just some Rafsanjahni-come-lately. (444 Days)

7:45 (TNT) Predator - Arnie stars in this first violent film which pre-dates all the others. (Hence the name.)

7:30 (4) "Mario, Cuomo Esta!" - Hilarious comedy about the New York Governor's childhood antics. (1/2 hr.)

8:00 (MTV) Word to Yo-Yo Ma (Music) - Vanilla Ice hosts this tribute to the cellist.

8:30 (DISNEY) Beauty and the Yeast - Belle Bakes Bread.

8:30 (2) Nazis of Hazard - David Duke drives a 69 Charger through a hazardous waste dump to oust J.D. "Gestapo" Hogg.

9:00 (4) The \$65,536 Dollar Pyramid - The show's name gets changed to an exact power of two when IBM becomes the show's primary sponsor.

10:00 (TNT) Westinghouse (Comedy) - Elmer Fudd moves to a retirement home.

11:00 (4) Raiders of the Lost PARC - Indiana battles bad guys who dig up a Research Center in Palo Alto.

Tuesday

7:30 (7) Rocky and Bullwinkle - Once again Bullwinkle gets into the ring with Rocky Balboa and the punches start flying. (2:37)

8:00 (2) The Communic Haitians - Comedy-Drama set in Haiti about a commune that strikes oil and then tries to install its own telephone system.

8:30 (7) The Incredible Mr. Min (Drama) - Mr. Min travels back

in
time and returns a library book before he borrows it.

8:30 (2) 60 Minutes - Harry Reasons that he'd be Safer looking like Bradley Rather than Wallace.

9:00 (13) Olmos There (Zoot Suit) - Edward James Olmos stars in this series about never finishing. (1 hr.)

9:30 (14) Ouuuuuuuu! - Adventures of a French roller-coaster.

10:00 (28) Cosmos: The Really Special Edition - Dr. Sagan grapples with an entity that is represented by only 5 digits. (2 Hr.)

10:30 (11) Movie (Drama): Lentil - Barbara Streisand works in a soup kitchen. (2 hr.)

11:00 (5) Al's Heimers (comedy) - Al forgets where the shipment of Heimers is supposed to go.

11:00 (ESPN) Greenwich Mean Time - Darth Vader opens a clock shop in England.

11:30 (13) Next Generation Data Processing - DATA, while in the kitchens of the Enterprise, gets his hand stuck in a Cuisinart.

11:30 (11) Ian O'Sphere - The famous meteorologist from Ireland gets his own talk show.

Wednesday

8:00 (7) Battlestar: Galileo (Fantasy) - Due to an ironic programming error, Galileo slams into earth and lands on a bunch of anti-nuke protesters.

8:30 (13) Star Trek Classic - Spock mind-melds with a tree; produces vulcanized rubber.

9:00 (PBS) Evangelicals Can, and Evangelicals Do (Documentary)
-
Ernst Angley, while relaxing in his 100-acre estate, orders his dog to 'heal'.

9:30 (Z) The Black Scallion - Most folks call them Green Onions, but they're really scallions.

10:00 (0) Phantom of the Oprah - Oprah Winfrey is haunted by her skinny alter ego.

11:00 (11) Phantom of The Phantom - the ghost of the old comic book hero lives on.

Thursday

7:30 (4) Candid Canberra - Alan Funt stars in this show which demonstrates how hilarious people can be when they're unaware an Australian ground tracking station is monitoring them.

8:00 (5) My Mother the Barr - Rosanne Barr's children star in this National Enquirer production exposing what life is like with the real star of "Rosanne".

8:30 (11) It's Garry Friedman's Show - A half-hour of self-referential comedy. (Repeats in real time.)

9:30 (4) Jeers - Sam, Cliff, and Norm stow away on a spaceplane headed for the moon of Endor.

| Closeup: NOVA "AI: A Historical Perspective" examines the
|
| various hype phrases used by Artificial Intelligence the past

40 |
| years, noting that actual capabilities have changed little.
|
| Examples include: "AI", "Expert System", "Expert Assistant",
|
| "Little Bird over your shoulder", "Computerized Conscience"
(tm), |
| "Divine Revelation", "Voice of God", and "AI". (1 hr.)
|

Friday

12:00 (37) CRAYmation - This Japanese animated short demonstrates how to run an infinite loop in six minutes.

8:00 (7) Amazing Stories - Ella Fitzgerald marries Darth Vader, goes by the name Ella Vader.

9:00 (28) The Importance Of Being Zero - This 7-part miniseries teaches the arduous process of long division using Roman numerals, instilling in the viewer a deep appreciation of what the Roman engineers had to endure. (Don't miss its sister show, "Easy as Pi", which theorizes as to why little of their architecture had curves.)

9:30 (11) The Six Million Dollar Man - Steve Austin picks up a Winnebago in slow motion and throws out his back.

9:30 (18) Friday the 13th, part LXVII: Jason slashes NASA's budget.

10:30 (3) Movie (1934) "Who framed Charles Babbitt" (3:20)

Sunday

7:30 (5) My Life As A Dog - The head of the Dachshunds moves to change the name of the breed to Nissan.

8:00 (7) Magellan the Menace (Drama) - Mission Specialists try to debug a spacecraft with bad memory. (1 hr.)

8:30 (11) People's Copyright Infringement Court - Judge Wapner litigates a case which claims that Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and the ABC Song are the same tune.

8:30 (4) St. Elsewhere - Dr. Craig dreams that he's Captain Nice driving around in a black Trans Am in 1776.

8:30 (28) Return to Latvia - Gary Friedman hosts.

9:00 (2) Warren Peace (Drama) - Warren fights with his high-school literature class to try to get them to read Russian classics.

9:30 (7) The Wonder Years - Kevin Arnold learns to use an IBM cardpunch. Then, in a dream, his grandchildren are astonished that computers in our day had mechanical disks spinning inside.

10:00 (2) Spencer for Fire (Drama) - 1/2 hour commercial for products from the Spencer Fire Extinguisher Company.

10:00 (5) Still Hazy after all these years - Documentary on Pasadena's questionable air quality.

11:00 (11) Police Navidad - Chief Daryl Gates hosts this holiday special.

Monday

9:00 (4) That's Incredible! - FIST member Pearl Haw marries actor Raymond Burr, and Japanese Americans start visiting Pearl

Haw-Burr.

9:30 (28) AI Update (Docu-Drama) - Part VII of this 6-part series examines the common litmus tests for Artificial Intelligence functionality: The New York Times crossword puzzle, and the ability to figure out how to use an intuitive GUI.

10:00 (4) LA Law (Drama) -- Over-zealous lawyers still want AT&T to divest its Bell Brand Potato Chip division.

10:00 (14) The Sioux and the Jew - Rabbis move to South Dakota.

Tuesday

7:00 (2) General Lee Speaking - The Dukes add speech synthesis to their Chrysler, but it never gets around to specifics.

8:00 (7) 20/20 General Motors and the former Surgeon General team up in the promotion of safe sex and announce a car with no back seat, calling it the C. Everett Coop de Ville.

8:00 (4) Firing Line with Andy Rooney (Pseudo-News) - Andy blows away people who ignorantly say, "Wallah!" instead of "Voila!" (1 hr.)

9:00 (11) Flipper (Annoying) - Flipper's lawyer argues that the alleged violation wasn't done on porpoise. (1/2 hr.)

9:30 (40) Nero Cry Wolfe - The famous detective accepts an assignment in the Arctic.

10:00 (56) Tequila Mockingbird (color)

Wednesday

8:30 (7) Bali High - The girls in a South Pacific high school wash men out of their hair on some enchanted evening. (I could have made some reference to someone scoring well on a pinball machine, but that's stretching it a bit too much, don't you think?)

9:00 (4) Geraldo: The Motion Picture - Geraldo investigates whether there are too many TV shows that have been adapted to the big screen.

9:30 (13) Uncle Fadda of Palestine - Fadda's wife, Auntie Fadda, rebels against Israeli soldiers in the occupied territory.

9:31 (47) Jocularly - French Athletes try to be funny.

9:32 (13) Gilligan's Island of the Blue Dolphins.

9:39 (A&E) Salvador Dahli Llama.

10:00 (2) Zachrey All in the Family - Archie Bunker gets into the clothing business and coins the phrase 'shortly portly'.

11:00 (11) Arsineo Hall - Guest musical group Milli Vanilli wonder if a tree falls in the forest, does something else make a sound?

11:30 (4) The ToKnight Show - Yet another in a series of infinitive television show names. In tonight's episode, William Shatner talks about his toupee, which is an infinitive hairpiece.

11:45 (DIS) Swiss Family Cheese - Disney's newest film export.

Thursday

7:30 (2) Here's looking at Euclid - A hilarious spoof on Geometry.

7:30 (7) My Mother the Czar (Comedy) - Mom invades Latvia, and locks its children in the refrigerator to keep them from getting spoiled.

7:30 (8) Things to Come - (Drama) Gary goes in search of another job that actually rewards hard work, and gets serious offers from Motorola, Teknichron, and Walt Disney Imagineering. Will the lab make it worth his while to stay? (Part 1)

7:30 (ESPN) Esperanto Today - Larry Wall writes a PseudoCode compiler, giving the world a truly universal programming language.

8:00 (13) Star Trek Classic (color) - Kirk opts for caffeine.
8:30 (27) Like A Version - Madonna releases 3.3.
8:58 (5) Movie (Drama) "To Sir, with Loin" - Tarzan orders steak.

Saturday

7:30 (2) Bond Babies - In the tradition of Muppet Babies, Disney Babies, Flintstone Babies and Young Sherlock Holmes comes this action-packed rip-off relating the early adventures of Bond (James Bond), M, Q, and Miss Money Penny at their pre-school in Yorkshire. In the first episode, James plays "Doctor" and is given his license to Bill.

8:00 (9) Movie (1982) "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" - This musical adaptation includes the hit song, "I've Got A Hunch They Don't Like Me." (2 1/2 hr.)

0:00 (1) Just Kidding! - (Disclaimer) Since this is the April Fool's edition, everything I say is false. (Including this.) Therefore, please ignore that self-serving blurb about seeking a

higher-paying job earlier. (Besides, I was just kidding about Teknichron.)

10:00 (17) Chez What? (Comedy) - Run DMC moves to France.

10:30 (22) Cheeses of Nazarith - Sitcom about a dairy shop near Bethlehem.

11:00 (4) A New World Odor - Something smells up in Washington.

1:30 (11) The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr. (Documentary) - Sammy starts a rock band that only plays on the Jewish High Holidays, called 'Rosh Hashana Na Na'. Earlier in his life, he also joined an Oshkinazi Jewish synagogue named Temple Beyis Yewiz Mywoman.

Sunday

8:00 (28) The Grapes of Wrathbone (Colorized) - Basil gives us a tour of his vinyard.

9:00 (40) Miss Muffett News - Saddam Hussain has his whey with Kurds.

9:42 (37) Movie (Drama) "Hello Dolly Llama" - Carol Channing turns into an animal living in Tibet. (2 1/2 hr.)

10:00 (TNT) Midnight Expresso - someone smuggles coffee out of Turkey.

10:30 (PBS) Camero Rhouge. - Pol Pot gives up on Cambodian repression and buys a General Motors car.

11:00 (NICK) Pearly Gates - Former police chief Darryl Gates and Microsoft president Bill Gates jointly commission a statue of themselves made out of pearl.

11:30 (CSPAN) Tutu Twain - South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu reads the works of the famous riverboat captain-turned-author.

Monday

8:00 (7) Thistle Fixit - Comedy about the successful thistle sifter turned handyman.

9:00 (4) Of Mice and Men (Documentary) - The Walt Disney Story.

7:30 (3) Mikhail's Navy (Comedy) - Gorbachev gets demoted.

10:00 (11) Movie (Drama) - "The Sounds Of Silence Of The Lambs"
Jodi Foster turns deaf.

10:40 (13) World Top 40 (Marketing Propaganda) - Casey Kasem Hosts. Top ethnic videos include: "You can't hide your H'waiian Eyes" (Eagles), "Secret Asian man" (where they're givin' you a number and takin' away your name.), and "You and I and a dog named 'Chi'" from the Israeli top 13.

Tuesday

7:30 (14) That's Incredible! - Psychic guest helps Earl Sheib to have an autobody experience.

8:00 (4) Justin Case - Attorney at Law (In Color) This week, Justin takes the job of a backup lawyer.

8:30 (40) Mothering Heights - Extreme maternal characteristics set precedents. (30 min.)

9:00 (18) Wind Chill's Doughnuts - Series about the cops who stop in at Wind Chills, the best doughnuts in Alaska.

10:00 (2) 60 Minutes (Sensationalism) - The SM crew investigates American Express, and catches spokesperson Karl Malden sticking his nose into other clients' businesses.

11:00 (3) Finder's Kieffer's - Kieffer Sutherland stars in this docu-drama about finding happiness in a small filming town.

11:30 (2) Dairy Aire (Special) - Documentary about the rear end of Wisconsin. (45 min.)

JPL-Specific Entries

7:00 (2) MO' Better Blues - Spike Lee and the Mars Observer spacecraft team up for this latest race-sensitive film.

8:00 (2) aSFOCalypse Now (The Horror) - Microsoft adds SFOC.EXE to version 8.009 of MS-DOS and puts a billion maintenance programmers out of work.

9:00 (7) E.T.: The Series - E.T. phones home, but the transmission causes Magellan to go south.

8:00 (4) Sanguan Chow, agent of F.I.S.T. (Color) - Sanguan accidentally creates a program that passes the Turing test against valley girls. (1 hr.)

7:30 (4) Twin Freaks - Randy Parlier and Mike Civita star as two zany system administrators. (1 hr.)

8:00 (7) My Mother the DAR - This week, Developmental Anomaly Reports give birth to a sub-class of forms: the Failure Report.

8:00 (9) My Mother the Char (Debut) - Documentary on the life of 8 bits living in a UNIX machine. In the first episode, the parent starts to fork its own children. (Buckey Productions.)

9:00 (7) Tony Orlando and Spawn - Tony spawns processes without providing pid's.

7:30 (2) Yokohama! - After suffering eleven consecutive funding hits, the FIST lab gets bought out by a Japanese interest, and

its members suddenly start prototyping poorly-made pocket AM radios.

10:00 (13) Gilligan's ILAN - The Professor installs an inter-hut communications system made out of palm leaves, bamboo chutes, and color-coded vines.

11:00 (11) America's Funniest Form 18s. (cc)

10:00 (7) Fantasy Island - Mr. Roarke (Sergio Morales) visits JPL and begins to fantasize about heavenly bodies.

8:00 (4) Pat the Bunny (Color) - Pat Liggett stars in this hilarious look at life in the Playboy Mansion West.

9:00 (13) FIST: The Next Generation Gary demands control of more resources for his next management project, and FPSO complies by offering him a toothpick.

10:00 (11) Movie (1970) "Terminator II" - Arnold Schwarzenegger sells 100 ohm Ethernet ends. (20 ms.)

11:30 (DTV) tlm-etry (comedy) - Teresa McKillop uses her login name to help process telemetry for MOSO. (Color)

8 Appendix: A Sample Dump

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----- Friday, 2/28/92 -- 9:36:29 A.M.

Elementary Linear Algebra -another oxymoron.

714 625-7463 Rick Markley.

Call Bubby. How did she like the tape?

Write to Chris Schmandt.

Seen on the cover of the April '92 "Bride" magazine: SPECIAL WEDDING ISSUE!

John Housman should have hosted Jeopardy.

Write to Joe. Tell him I didn't hear anything either.

Call AJ on Distributed Computing Environment.

E-mail to Brian Beckman - Shall VRTech buy out data egg effort?

Better set the baud to 9600 just before dump, and then to what it was before right after. This covers the improbable scenario of using the egg in tethered mode to arrange a dump.

Bring the camera with black and white film.

Why doesn't someone make a Xerox machine that takes standard 500 sheet blank paper denominations?

3-5836 schwartz.

Call Bill Love with names of keyboard port devices. 800 952-5288 or 509 773-3677

Have the gamephone answerback message contain and look for our copyright. If the Nintendo folks want to reverse engineer that, let them; we'll win our reverse-engineering lawsuit right away!

Call Seth end tell him when next time will be.

Ouiiiiiiii! - Adventures of a French roller-coaster.

Does the Contax have two low-battery warnings? Early on I recall the low batt. warning flashing in the display; but just now when I finally replaced the battery it was solidly illuminated.

Fill out Spectrum survey and congressional letter.

E-mail to tlm and cindy - FIST has a noontime group meeting on Friday. How about today?

Kevin - What's the name of the sports complex roof that fell in?

Call Jenni - What time is her performance today?

Questions that need research...

To look up:

How to spell Kemosabe and Chemotherapy?

Where do the Sioux live?

How do you spell Terminae Sentavos Por Favor?